



Islamabad POST

Tuesday, January 28, 2025

Pakistan's Credible Daily Newspaper

Price Rs. 30

'No one will tolerate this,' Shan gets angry on captaincy question

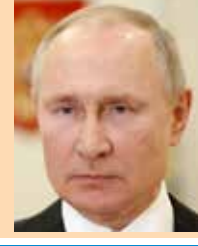
Detailed News On Page-06

Heroism of Leningrad will live on Forever

Detailed News On Page-08

EU to agree easing Syria sanctions

Detailed News On Page-08



Rejects 'baseless allegations'

Pakistan reaffirms commitment to 'One-China' policy

Reaffirms Pakistan's "unwavering commitment to foundational principle of One-China Policy"

MAHNOOR ANSAR / DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Foreign Office (FO) has categorically rejected "baseless and unfounded allegations" targeting Pakistan-China friendship on Monday, a day after Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi's strong reaction against media speculations over his alleged participation in an anti-China event during his recent visit to the United States (US). Naqvi had vehemently rejected allegations of involvement in any anti-China event in the United States, labelling them as "malicious fabrications" and "baseless campaigns" designed to tarnish his reputation. In a statement issued on Monday, FO Spokesperson Shaqat Ali Khan reaffirmed Pakistan's unwavering commitment to the foundational principle of the One-China Policy. He added that the commitment "is a consistent cornerstone of Pakistan's foreign policy and remains unchanged" and emphasised that China was Pakistan's all-weather strategic partner. "This relationship is characterised by mutual trust, shared values, support on issues of core concern and a commitment to regional and global stability," he concluded.

Chinese investment and financial support for Pakistan since 2013 have been a boon for the nation's struggling economy, including the rolling over of loans so that Islamabad is able to meet external financing needs. Beijing has over \$65 billion in investment in road, infrastructure and development projects under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) as part of the Belt and Road Initiative. The clarifications come after reports in Indian and local media outlets, as well as social media posts, claiming that the interior minister attended a lobbying group's event which was involved in campaigning against China's ruling Chinese Communist Party. Naqvi had clarified that he did not attend any event against China in the US, adding that his attendance at a youth event was

Continued on Page 06

'Chinese nationals approaching SHC on police harassment against protocol'

I would meet Chinese consul general to get policy statement on this matter, says Lanjar

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: Sindh Home Minister Ziaul Hassan Lanjar said on Monday that the petition filed by six Chinese nationals to "seek protection against extortion" was not legally valid as the foreigners should have approached the authorities via the consul general. "All foreign citizens, including Chinese nationals, should follow the Foreigners' Act," said Lanjar while addressing a press conference in Karachi, adding that the petition filed by them in the Sindh High Court (SHC) has no legal grounds. Amid the worsening law and order situation in Karachi, six Chinese "investors" filed a petition in the SHC three days ago, seeking protection against extortion and alleged harassment by police officials in the metropolis. In the petition, the foreigners alleged that police officials, after receiving bribes, took them to their residences in their vehicles.

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ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of the Kingdom of Morocco Amb. Mohamed Karmoune calls on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif. - DNA

Moroccan Ambassador meets PM

Japanese ambassador also called on PM Shehbaz Sharif

ANSAR M BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of the Kingdom of Morocco calls on the Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif at the Prime Minister House, earlier today. During the meeting, the Prime Minister expressed Pakistan's deep appreciation to the King of Morocco, His Majesty King Muhammad VI and the Government of Morocco for the support extended in rescuing stranded Pakistanis who survived

Continued on Page 06

President, PM felicitate Lukashenko

Lukashenko wins presidential election with 86.82% of votes

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari and Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif have extended heartfelt felicitations to President Aleksandr Lukashenko on his election to a 7th term as the President of Belarus. In their separate statements, they expressed hope that under his leadership, bilateral cooperation between Pakistan and Belarus will be further strengthened. In his statement, President Asif Ali Zardari conveyed best wishes for the continued success of President Aleksandr Lukashenko and the well-being of the people of Belarus.

Continued on Page 06

'Would cut tax rate by 15%'

PM orders issuance of red warrants for human traffickers

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif optimistic of substantial cut in power tariffs in coming months

MEHTAB PIRZADA / DNA

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Monday directed the relevant authorities to further strengthen the legal framework to curb human smuggling. The prime minister, chairing the maiden meeting of the task force formed to curb human smuggling asked the interior ministry to extend cooperation to the law ministry for the purpose. Calling for a swift enforcement of the Federal Prosecution Act 2023, he asked the Federal Investigation Agency to submit the data on human smugglers collected during the investigation to the Foreign Office to ensure their early extradition. The prime minister ordered the issuance of red warrants of proclaimed offenders in human smuggling cases, emphasising collective effort to do away with the menace. He also instructed for an accelerated induction of the required workforce for the

Continued on Page 06

FM reaffirms commitment to business-friendly environment

Finance Minister Reviews Progress of PM's Committee on IT Export Remittances

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb, chaired another meeting of the Prime Minister's Committee on IT Export Remittances today at the Finance Division. The meeting focused on reviewing the preliminary findings of the working group and formulating

Continued on Page 06

Briefs

CJP Afridi calls JCP meeting

The session would take place on February 11

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: Chief Justice Yahya Afridi on Monday convened a Judicial Commission of Pakistan (JCP) meeting to deliberate on the appointment of eight new judges to the Supreme Court (SC). Sources said the session would take place on Feb 11 at around 2pm in which names for eight judges of the apex court would be considered. In the session, the names of five senior judges from each high court would be considered. Earlier on Jan 23, the Judicial Commission approved with a majority vote the appointment of 12 additional judges to the Sindh High Court (SHC).

ATC dismisses Imran Khan acquittal plea

Jailed PTI founder filed acquittal plea under Article 265

DNA

RAWALPINDI: An ATC in Rawalpindi has dismissed the acquittal petition of incarcerated PTI founder Imran Khan in GHQ attack case related to May 9 violent protests that broke out in the country in 2023. The development came during a hearing of the former prime minister's acquittal petition - filed under Article 265 of the Constitution. ATC Judge Amjad Ali Shah conducted the hearing of the case at a make-shift court in Rawalpindi's Adiala Jail. During the hearing, Public Prosecutor Zaheer Shah noted that the prosecution had sufficient evidence against the accused and the trial in the GHQ attack case was underway.

Irfan Siddique meets PM

Government may disband negotiation committee

Contacts and negotiations among political parties spirit of democracy, says PM Shehbaz

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: Senator Irfan Siddiqui, a spokesperson for the government's negotiation committee, on Monday warned that their committee would be dissolved if the PTI boycotted the fourth round of talks slated to be held today (Tuesday). The development came days after the Imran Khan-founded party decided to boycott the fourth round of talks with the government for a "delay" over the formation of judicial commissions to probe the May 9, 2023 violent protests and a crackdown on party protesters in Islamabad on November 26 last year. Taking to a private news channel, Siddiqui termed PTI's stance related to the ongoing talks "illogical", saying that the former ruling party took six weeks to share their demands with the government's team, while the ruling coalition just sought seven working days for a written response to the Khan-led party's demands. "In the joint declaration, seven working days are mentioned," he added. The PTI and the ruling coalition have been

Continued on Page 06

Gohar reiterates PTI will not attend meeting

Says political parties are united to address Kurram issue

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Barrister Gohar has announced that the party will not participate in talks with the government scheduled for tomorrow, stating that the decision has been officially conveyed. Speaking to journalists alongside Asad Qaiser and other media representatives, Barrister Gohar criticised the government for rushing legislation since coming into power. He claimed that under the proposed bill (PECA Act), anyone could be arbitrarily accused of spreading fake news.

Continued on Page 06

Supreme Court withdraws contempt notice against addl registrar

Six-member bench headed by Justice Jamal Mandokhel disposed of Addl Registrar plea upon withdrawal; Justice Athar, Justice Shahid Waheed refused to be part of the bench if it continues hearing on the same issue in coming days

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court on Monday withdrew a contempt notice served on Additional Registrar (Judicial) Nazir Abbas following the controversy regarding fixing cases. A two-member bench consisting of Justice Mansoor Ali Shah and Justice Aqeel Abbasi announced verdict reserved last week. It discharged the additional registrar from the case, saying he did not intentionally commit contempt of court. The bench ruled that the Practice and Procedure Committee and the Judges' Constitutional Committee had disregarded the judicial order. It has referred the matter to the chief justice of Pakistan, asking him to form a full bench in this regard. The bench further noted that the administrative committee could not withdraw the case, and the constitutional and judges' committees had violated the court's order. The Supreme Court had on Jan 20 last issued a show-cause notice and removed Additional Registrar (Judicial) Nazir from his post, declaring him guilty of "serious misconduct." The court directed the registrar to look into the matter. According to an announcement, the additional registrar (judicial) had inadvertently scheduled a case,

Continued on Page 06

SC CB dissolved after Justice Ayesha recuses to hear case

Constitutional bench addresses appeals as Justice Malik steps aside

COURT REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Supreme Court's Justice Ayesha Malik has recused herself from hearing a constitutional case concerning the legality of Section 221-A of the Customs Act, raising questions over its future deliberations. During the hearing, the eight-member constitutional bench, led by Justice Aminuddin Khan, convened to address appeals regarding the constitutional validity of the Customs Act provision, DNA reported. Justice Malik, however, stepped back, stating, "I cannot hear this case. I will provide separate reasons for my recusal."

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Punjab CM discusses environmental initiatives with WB VP

The delegation acknowledged the government's decision to merge the Population Welfare Department with the Health Department, calling it a positive move. Martin Raiser expressed optimism that this merger would enhance service delivery for the people of Punjab

DNA

LAHORE: A high-level delegation led by Martin Raiser, the World Bank's Regional Vice President for South Asia, called on Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif at CM's office here on Monday. During the meeting, Martin Raiser commended Punjab's efforts in environmental improvement, declaring the province a 'Regional Champion' for its effective measures in this area. The discussion also focused on joint initiatives for poverty alleviation, further advancements in IT and infrastructure, and resolving environmental challenges. Both parties agreed to accelerate the ongoing World Bank projects in Punjab, while also launching new ones to address

these key sectors. Martin Raiser praised Punjab's public welfare projects, noting that they align well with the World Bank's country partnership framework. He expressed the World Bank's full support for improving environmental conditions and sanitation systems in the province. The delegation acknowledged the government's decision to merge the Population Welfare Department with the Health Department, calling it a positive move. Martin Raiser expressed optimism that this merger would enhance service delivery for the people of Punjab. Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif expressed her gratitude for the World Bank's continued collaboration in the province's development. She highlighted several key projects, including the launch of the Punjab Clean Air Program with World Bank's support, aimed at tackling environmental pol-

lution. The program will introduce electric buses, rickshaws, and bikes, alongside the establishment of Vehicle Inspection Stations. The CM emphasized that eliminating pollution is vital for Punjab's survival, and the World Bank's ongoing support is crucial to this effort. The CM also mentioned the introduction of special training programs to equip Punjab's youth with skills to engage in the global IT market. She further reiterated the province's commitment to enhancing education, health, tourism, and environmental projects with continued support from the World Bank. World Bank VP Martin Raiser reaffirmed the Bank's commitment to strengthening its partnership with Punjab, particularly in the areas of education, IT, and climate change adaptation. He commended Punjab's exemplary steps in addressing these challenges.



ISLAMABAD: Fiction writer Mazharul Islam presenting Aks-e-Khushboo Award 2024 to the British author and broadcaster Mishal Husain for her book 'Broken Threads' at a ceremony organized by the Perveen Shakir Trust at the Islamabad Club. Chairperson of the Perveen Shakir Trust Mrs Parveen Qadir Agha and Secretary General Raana Seerat are also present on the occasion.

Electric wheelchairs to be given to persons with impairment

PESHAWAR: The Social Welfare Department Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has sought the data of the persons with mobility impairments to provide electric wheelchairs to them, said a letter written to the office of the Chief Secretary. The letter states that the Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has issued directives for the provision of electric wheelchairs to government and semi-government employees with mobility impairments. In this regard, a special task was initiated by the office of the Deputy Director PMRU, Office of the Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and data of 189 eligible employees were also collected. However, the collected data was falling short of the target set by the Chief Minister. Furthermore, the Google form previously utilized for data collection was discontinued by the Google due to health-related information, particularly concerning disabilities. To address the issue an MIS Team of the Social Welfare Department has developed a QR code-based system to ensure secure and safe data collection. For this purpose, the Social Welfare Department has further requested for the creation of a special task for all administrative departments and Deputy Commissioners to provide the required information through the specified QR code link within a timeline of one week (January 24, 2025, to January 30, 2025).—APP

PST confers Akse Khushboo award on British author Mishal

STAFF REPORTER

ISLAMABAD: The Perveen Shakir Trust (PST) has conferred the prestigious Akse Khushboo Award on former BBC journalist and a renowned British broadcaster and author Mishal Hussain for her book 'Broken Threads.' The award was presented during a programme 'Meet the Writer & Award Ceremony' organized by the PST at the Islamabad Club. High Commissioner of the UK, Jane Marriott was the Chief Guest at the ceremony while noted speakers including former Information Minister Mushahid Hussain Sayed, former Rhodes Scholar at Oxford and Associate Dean at the Lahore

School of Economics (LSE) Dr Raja Amir Naseem Khan, Chairperson of the PST Parveen Qadir Agha, General Secretary Raana Seerat, Dr Munazza Yakoob and the author herself spoke briefly on the occasion discussing various chapters, themes and aspects of the book. Eminent fiction writer and life-time member of the PST, Mazharul Islam presented the Akse Khushboo Award 2024 to Mishal Hussain in recognition of her painstaking work—writing a 272-page memoir which was in fact initiated by her grandmother Tahira Butt who wanted to pay a debt of honour to her husband Shahid Hamid, (an army officer and Mishal's grandfather) by writing something for him. Tahira could not finish it yet, 30 years later, her

granddaughter a BBC journalist undertook the gigantic task and went through various sources—diaries, notes, manuscripts, letters, interviews and archival papers and put them together into a touching account of the events that were witnessed and experienced by no one else but her own four grandparents: Tahira Butt and Shahid Hamid; Mary Quinn and Mumtaz Hussain. 'Broken Threads: My Family from Empire to Independence' is a valuable addition to the books on The Raj days, said the speakers while paying rich compliments to Mishal Hussain. The UK High Commissioner Jane Marriott praised Mishal for introducing her to a marvellous work combining history with personal narrative.

Grand wedding ceremony held under Dhi Rani program

LAHORE: A grand wedding ceremony for 47 couples was organized in Sahiwal district under the Dhi Rani program, launched by Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz. The event was graced by Provincial Minister for Social Welfare Sohail Shaukat Butt and Member of National Assembly Pir Imran Ahmed Shah Wali as the special guests, said a handout issued here on Monday. Provincial Assembly Members Malik Qasim Nadeem, Malik Muhammad Arshad, Naveed Aslam Khan Lodhi, Pir Wilayat Shah Khaqa, Commissioner Sahiwal Shoaib Iqbal Syed, Deputy Commissioner Shahid Mehmood, DG Social Welfare Khawaja Zeeshan Sikandar, DPO Sahiwal Rana Tahir Rehman, Director Social Welfare Asma Noreen, and Deputy Director Muhammad Abbas were also present. Each couple received gifts worth Rs200,000 and a special salami of Rs100,000. Addressing the ceremony, Sohail Shaukat Butt highlighted the Dhi Rani program as a historic initiative aimed at promoting social welfare. He also conveyed the best wishes of Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz to all the newlyweds, saying that the Chief Minister has dedicated all available state resources to benefit the common people. The minister emphasized that the government has a responsibility to implement far-reaching measures for the welfare of society.—APP

Judicial Reforms to ensure supremacy of constitution

SWAT: Federal Minister for States and Frontier Regions, Gilgit Balistan and Kashmir Affairs, Engr Amir Muqam here Monday said that the judicial reforms introduced through 26th constitutional amendments were aimed to ensure supremacy of law and constitution besides strengthening democracy in the country. Addressing the Swat Bar Association here, Engr Amir Muqam said that the 26th constitutional amendment has been passed by the political parties with consensus aimed at providing relief to the masses. He said that increasing the number of judges in the supreme

court would help clear the rising cases backlog. Engr Amir Muqam said that great responsibilities rest on the bench and bars to provide speedy justice to the litigants. He said that the people of Malakand had rendered great sacrifices for the country and held their sacrifices in fight against terrorism in high esteem. The Federal Minister said that he had raised voice on every forum for rights of people of Malakand and took credit for exempting Malakand division from taxes keeping in view of their long sufferings due to terrorism and floods in the past. He said progress and prosper-

ity of the nation was linked with peace and the Govt would make no compromise on peace and rights of masses. Engr Amir Muqam criticized the PTI leadership over unilaterally ending talks with govt committee, adding Govt started negotiations with PTI with open heart and sincerity that was unfortunately not reciprocated well by the PTI leadership. Later talking to reporters, Engr Amir Muqam clarified that there was no difference among political parties of the ruling alliance and 'we all are united to take the ship of democracy forward.—APP

PU, US library sign MoU to protect digital manuscripts

LAHORE: Punjab University and The Hill Museum and Manuscript Library (HMML) have signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) to collaborate on the digital photography, description and online access to the manuscripts of the PU Library. In this regard, the MoU signing ceremony was held at VC office. On this occasion, PU VC Prof. Dr. Muhammad Ali, HMML USA Executive Director Dr. Columbia Stewart, Field Director for the Middle East, Africa and South Asia Mr. Walid Nabih Mourad, Regional Representative HMML Pakistan Mr. Ahmad Atta and Director External Linkages Prof. Dr. Yaamina Salman, Chief Librarian Dr. Haroon Usmani and others were present. PU VC Dr. Muhammad Ali shared that this collaboration is a significant step towards promotion of protecting and digitizing rare manuscripts at PU. Dr. Stewart expressed his gratitude and said they are really looking forward to working on this project.—DNA

Farah highlights govt's commitment to education, innovation at ICCI ceremony

ISLAMABAD: Farah Naz Akbar, Parliamentary Secretary for the Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training, reiterated that education remains the foremost priority of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's government. During a speech at a ceremony organized by the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) to mark International Day of Education 2025, Akbar emphasized the government's dedication to securing a brighter future for the youth and enhancing the country's economic well-being through comprehensive educational reforms. Speaking at the event, titled "AI and Education: Preserving Human Agency in a World of Automation," Farah Naz Akbar underscored the significance of equipping students with modern technological tools such as IT and Artificial Intelligence (AI). She highlighted that these tools are essential in preparing Pakistan's youth for future leadership roles, both in the country and globally. In her address, Akbar shared that under Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's vision, the Ministry of Education has initiated numerous reforms to improve educational standards across the nation. She highlighted the significant progress made in public schools, with 342 public sector schools in Islamabad receiving modern facilities, ensuring equal access to education for both urban and rural students. "There is no distinction between urban and rural schools in Islamabad. All are being equipped with the same high-quality facilities," she stated, emphasizing the government's commitment to equal opportunities for all students. She also praised the efforts of the ICCI in organizing the event and stressed the importance of public-private partnerships to achieve educational milestones and build a better future for Pakistan's youth. Mohyuddin Ahmed Wani, the Federal Secretary of the Ministry of Education and Professional Training, provided a comprehensive presentation on the ministry's achievements. Wani shared several initiatives launched by the government, including the PM School Free Meal Programme, Wash Stations, Eye Screening Facilities, and Mother and Children Health Centres. He also highlighted the development of IT and digital training institutions, AI Robotics Labs, smart classrooms, mind sports rooms, and the PM's Free Pink Bus Initiative—all aimed at modernizing education and promoting holistic student development. Dr. Rizwan Riaz, Pro-Rector for Research, Innovation, and Commercialization at NUST, reinforced the need for a positive outlook, urging Pakistan's youth to capitalize on the nation's natural resources and the potential of technology. He stressed that hard work, combined with the country's talented youth, could overcome challenges and unlock immense national progress.—APP

IIUI's 5 disciplines show improvement in QS ranking

ISLAMABAD: Five disciplines of the International Islamic University, Islamabad (IIUI), have shown an improved Quacquarelli Symonds (QS) ranking in 2024-2025, according to the latest information released in the QS Subject Rankings for 2024-2025 here Monday. These disciplines include Computer Science (501-600), Physical Sciences (501-600), Business and Economics (601-800), Engineering (601-800), and Social Science (801-1000). Notably, IIUI had previously been ranked in 'Theology, Divinity, and Religious Studies (51-100), Mathematics (351-400), and Physics & Astronomy (601-

640) within the QS subject ranking system, said a press release on Monday. While IIUI has sustained its 2024 ranking in these domains, additional fields have also made their debut in the 2025 rankings. This growing presence in the QS rankings reflects the dedication of the Directorate of Quality Assurance and Development (QAD), led by Professor Dr. Rahmat Ellahi, as well as the strategic vision and timely initiatives spearheaded by the Vice President of Research and Enterprise, Engr. Prof. Dr. Ahmed Shuja Syed. As a consequence, the IIUI achieved a QS regional ranking of 51 in South Asia and

243 in Asia. The QS rankings serve as a global metric that determines the standing of universities worldwide based on diverse criteria. These rankings assess academic reputation (40 percent), employer reputation (10 percent), faculty/student ratio (20 percent), citations per faculty (20 percent), international faculty ratio (5 percent), and international student ratio (5 percent), thereby reflecting a university's academic excellence, research impact, teaching capacity, and global diversity. The primary goal behind these rankings is to promote transparency, facilitate informed decision-making for students and faculty.—APP

Muslim Aid Pakistan constructs smart houses for vulnerable families in Chitral

PESHAWAR: Muslim Aid Pakistan held the closing ceremony of its landmark project, "Chitral Relief and Recovery - Empowering Communities through Immediate Relief and Recovery Initiatives", on Monday. The event brought together a diverse group of stakeholders, including government officials, representatives from disaster and relief organizations like NDMA and PDMA KP, NGOs, INGOs, philanthropists, and other prominent figures from the humanitarian sector. As per the

details, Muslim Aid had constructed 50 smart houses equipped with latrines for the most vulnerable families in Upper and Lower Chitral, empowering 200 women through economic training in embroidery and the dry-fruit sectors while providing them with essential toolkits. Additionally, the project distributed 1,000 fruit plants to 100 households in collaboration with the KPK Social Conservation Department, rehabilitated eight irrigation water channels, and restored WASH facilities in

four healthcare centers and four schools. Furthermore, eight water supply schemes were repaired, ensuring clean water access for affected communities. The Chief Guest, Mr. Adnan Qadri, Provincial Minister for Auqaf, Hajj, and Religious Affairs, lauded Muslim Aid Pakistan's relentless efforts in reaching Chitral's disaster-prone and remote areas. He emphasized the importance of community engagement programs and pledged the KP Government's full support for similar initiatives.—APP

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Water Tank

Islamabad.....0321-5744480



Islamabad: Geetika Srivastava, Chargé d'Affaires of the Indian Embassy, along with embassy staff, posed for a group photograph during the Republic Day of India reception at the Islamabad Serena Hotel. The event was graced by a large gathering of distinguished guests from various walks of life. —DNA

Resilience not just about infrastructure: Sherry

Highlighting the country's position at the frontline of global warming, she stressed that it is critical to invest in vulnerable communities to help them withstand the growing impacts of climate shocks

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Senator Sherry Rahman, Chairperson of the Senate Standing Committee on Environmental Change, emphasized the urgent need for Adaptive Social Protection (ASP) to support vulnerable communities in Pakistan during her address at the National Dialogue on Adaptive Social Protection. Highlighting the country's position at the frontline of global warming, she stressed that it is critical to invest in vulnerable communities to help them withstand the growing impacts of

climate shocks. Senator Rahman explained that ASP is essential to build resilience against climate risks, which are disproportionately affecting Pakistan. "As a nation, we are on the frontlines of global warming, facing high impacts. Therefore, we need to create strong protective measures to safeguard our communities from increasing fragility," she said. She emphasized that resilience should go beyond infrastructure and should be integrated into all aspects of community planning. "Resilience must include higher development buffers, access to safe water, sanitation, education,

and healthcare to ensure that people can survive climate emergencies with greater resilience," Senator Rehman stated. Senator Rehman highlighted the importance of continuing and expanding social protection programs like the Benazir Income Support Program (BISP), which provided assistance to 2.5 million families during the 2022 floods. She noted that these programs play a vital role in ensuring communities are protected and can recover from climate-related disasters. Senator also stressed the critical need to empower women as key agents of change in climate resilience

efforts. "Women must be not only recipients of adaptive actions but also active participants in shaping climate resilience strategies. A good example is Sindh's initiative to give women rights to their reconstructed housing, recognizing that women are disproportionately impacted by climate and other emergencies. Senator Rehman pointed out several key social challenges in Pakistan, including the growing number of children out of school, particularly girls in areas where schools are far from their residences. She stated that these education barriers further hinder progress, particularly for girls. The senator

also highlighted the increasing poverty in the country, which is contributing to a range of large-scale problems. She warned that during floods and other natural disasters, diseases like dengue spread rapidly, affecting both humans and livestock, with mosquitoes becoming a deadly threat. Moreover, Senator Rehman stressed the severe economic impact of these disasters on families, many of whom suffer significant financial losses. She called for immediate action to address these interconnected issues to prevent further damage to both the environment and vulnerable communities in Pakistan.

Civil servants explore e-governance at ICT's DC office

ISLAMABAD: A group of civil servants on Monday visited the Islamabad Deputy Commissioner's Office to learn about its governance practices, digital initiatives, and citizen facilitation systems. A delegation of Grade 18 officers from various civil service groups participated in the study visit as part of their Mid-Career Management Course. On the occasion, Additional Commissioner Rabia Aurangzeb welcomed the participants and briefed them on key features of the district administration's working model. The briefing covered the district's e-governance system and the open-door policy designed to ensure public accessibility and transparency. The participants also learned about the Digitalization Policy and the Islamabad City App, which aims to streamline public services and enhance administrative efficiency. Meanwhile, the delegation visited the Citizen Facilitation Center, a hub where multiple services are provided to residents under one roof. Officers reviewed the facilities and operations at the center, observing how the administration handles public needs effectively. The participants expressed their appreciation for the initiative, highlighting the center's role in addressing citizens' concerns efficiently. —APP

Fertilizer company receives 1.5 MW power supply in Gwadar north free zone

ISLAMABAD: Agven Private Limited, a fertilizer company in the Gwadar North Free Zone, began receiving 1.5 MW of electricity as part of its allocated share, following a significant infrastructure development. This comes in the wake of a 10 MW power supply established to support the growing number of companies operating in the zone. The development was made possible after the installation of underground power cables in multiple phases. Shaukat Khan, Head of the Electrical Engineering Department at Agven, described the event as a turning point for the company's financial health. He emphasized that the new power supply would not only reduce production costs but also ensure a stable, round-the-clock electricity supply. Previously, in the absence of grid power, the company had been relying on costly diesel generators, which significantly increased operational expenses. Khan revealed that the cost per unit of electricity from diesel-powered generators had been over Rs. 100, whereas grid electricity will cost just Rs. 40 per unit. Agven Private Limited is the first company to set up an industry in the Gwadar North Free Zone. It stands out as the largest in terms of both size and product type in the region. The company's production facility has an initial annual capacity of 20,000 tons of sulfuric acid. As part of its broader plans, Agven aims to create significant business opportunities for local communities, both in daily commodities and the supply of raw materials, Gwadar Pro reported on Monday. —DNA

POL imports up by 1% to \$8.085 b in 1st half

ISLAMABAD: The imports of overall petroleum group increased by 1 percent during the first half of the current fiscal year (2024-25) as compared to the corresponding period of the last year, the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) reported. The total imports of the petroleum group during July-December (2024-25) stood at \$ 8,085.915 million against the imports of \$ 8,005.779 million during the same months of last year. Among petroleum commodities, the import of petroleum products declined by 7 percent, from \$ 3,193.845 million last year to \$ 2,970.293 million during the period under review year whereas the import of petroleum crude went up by 3.03 percent from \$ 2,611.179 million to \$ 2,690.363 million. Similarly, the imports of Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) increased by 1.95 percent from \$ 1,852.995 million last year.

CTP launches campaign for use of safety helmets

RAWALPINDI: City Traffic Police (CTP) Rawalpindi has launched a comprehensive awareness campaign to encourage use of safety helmets to ensure the safety of the motorcyclists. The aim of this campaign is not only to persuade the citizens to obey the traffic rules but also to ensure the safety of both the riders, said a CTP spokesman. He informed that on the directives of the Chief Minister Punjab, Chief Traffic Officer (CTO) Rawalpindi Beenish Fatima made the use of safety

helmets mandatory for the motorcycle rider and the person sitting next to him on bike in Rawalpindi city from February 1. An awareness campaign has been launched in this regard and it will be strictly implemented from February 1, he added. On this occasion, the CTO said that ensuring the safety of the motorcyclists is top priority of the CTP and through this campaign, not only the motorcycle rider but also the person sitting behind is being made aware of the importance of using safety helmets

and adopting other safety measures. He further said that this measure is not only necessary to prevent road accidents but also to ensure the safety of the lives of the citizens. During the awareness campaign, the message is being conveyed to the public through social media pages, circle officers, sector in-charges and field staff that it will be mandatory for both motorcycle riders to wear safety helmets and strict action will be taken against the violators from February 1, with a fine amounting to Rs 2000

and the motorcycles will also be impounded in police stations. The CTP has launched special campaigns to make the public aware of the benefits and importance of this measure. The field staff is directly informing the citizens, while the message is being widely disseminated through social media of the CTP (ctprwp). The CTO Rawalpindi appealed the citizens to obey the traffic rules to protect themselves and their beloved ones. She said that wearing a helmet is not only a legal requirement. —APP

Romina for African crop strategies to combat food insecurity

DNA

ISLAMABAD: UNICEF Representative in Pakistan Abdullah A. Fadil met with Coordinator to the Prime Minister on Climate Change, Romina Khurshid Alam here on Monday. They discussed critical issues related to climate change, food security, and the protection of vulnerable populations, particularly children. The meeting underscored the importance of joint efforts between the government and international organizations to combat the impacts of climate-related disasters, including droughts and extreme weather events. They emphasized the severe challenges posed by climate change, which have exacerbated



food insecurity in Pakistan. Alam highlighted that food security is one of the greatest challenges of the future, as increasing droughts and

climate variability threaten agriculture, disrupt food production, and exacerbate water shortages across the country. To address this, she

called for widespread promotion of climate-resilient agricultural practices, including the plantation of at least three fruit trees—avocado.

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Briefs

Govt providing all possible facilities to expatriates

ISLAMABAD: Ministry of Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development (OP&HRD) was taking various measures to provide all possible facilities to Overseas Pakistan across the globe to invest for the prosperity and development of the country. According to an official source, the government was committed to facilitate all business community of Pakistanis those are living abroad to invest in the homeland to boost the national economy.

The Government of Pakistan attaches high priority to the overseas Pakistanis and is keen to promote, nurture and sustain a mutually beneficial and symbiotic relationship between Pakistan and Overseas Pakistanis. Overseas Pakistanis can contribute much more than making foreign exchange remittances.

Their role in image building, transfer of technology, and investment growth is important and with sustained efforts Overseas Pakistanis can produce tangible results. Today, in Pakistan, there are substantial investment opportunities with an active privatization initiative, large infrastructure-related investment projects (especially under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor), growth in local consumption and a largely untapped export potential.

With a massive diaspora of highly qualified Pakistani executives and a large reserve of domestic talent, capital investing in Pakistan is entering a sustained and rewarding phase. The growth and return potential in Pakistan has yet to be unlocked by domestic and facilitate Overseas Pakistanis for investment in Pakistan, an 'Investment & Facilitation Centre for Overseas Pakistanis' has been established at OPF, Head Office, Islamabad. The IPC is mandated to respond to queries on all investment related opportunities, regulatory framework and incentives offered in Pakistan.—APP

Screen writer Zia Sarhadi remembered

ISLAMABAD: The renowned film director and screenwriter Zia Sarhadi was remembered on the occasion of his death anniversary on Monday. Born in 1914 in Peshawar his real name was Fazl-e-Qadir Sethi whose career spanned what is widely considered the Golden Age of the sub-continent film industry. As a director, he was best known for his films Humlog (1951), Footpath (1953) and Tahguzar (1960). As a screenplay writer, his famous films include Ladies Only, Elan, Beti, and Lakhon Men Aik. Described as an "Unaffiliated Marxist", his films were known for dealing with social issues of the period. His film "Footpath", for instance, dealt with issues of moral guilt in the 1950s. He was the father of renowned television actor Khayyam Sarhadi and grandfather of model and actress Zhalay Sarhadi.—APP

PM directs Railways to provide better travel facilities

He asked the Railways to utilise its land for commercial purposes in collaboration with the private sector and also formulate a strategy to enhance trade activity in the region, particularly with the Central Asian states

MAHNOOR ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Monday directed the Pakistan Railways to provide improved travelling facilities to passengers through the public-private partnership. The prime minister, chairing a meeting to discuss the matters pertaining to the Pakistan Railways, called for a strategy to attract customers by offering them competitive rates and facilities, according to a PM Office press release. He asked the Railways to utilise its land for commercial purposes in collaboration with the private sector and also formulate a strategy to enhance trade activity in the region, particularly with the Central Asian states. The prime minister also instructed to utilise the services of professional and capable manpower and replace the conventional railway system with the modern one using the latest technology. He also called for measures to ensure the profitability of the freight as well as the passenger services. During the briefing, it was told that the 2022 floods



had inflicted a Rs10 billion loss to Pakistan Railways as rail tracks remained inundated for 35 days. After the 2022 floods, Pakistan Railways improved its functioning and also earned a

profit equaling the initial cost through its freight operations as the department had almost 8% share in the freight market. The meeting was told that 18% of unnecessary workforces has been

dismissed as part of the right-sizing process. Besides, work on the communication linkage of Thar Coal was going on swiftly. Federal ministers Dr Ahsan Iqbal, Muhammad Aleem Khan,

Muhammad Aurangzeb, Khawaja Muhammad Asif, Jam Kamal Khan, Ahad Khan Cheema and Sardar Awais Leghari, and relevant senior officers attended the meeting.

Al-Shifa Trust treats 29m patients in 30 years

Growing vision problems necessitate prompt government action. Digital eye strain is emerging as a serious issue: Gen Rehmat Khan.

DNA

RAWALPINDI : Al-Shifa Trust Eye Hospital said on Monday that by 2050, Pakistan's population will double, and so will the number of people confronting eye problems. Eye problems are on the rise due to factors such as prolonged screen time, poor lifestyle habits, urbanization, and aging populations, and the government should brace to address these problems, it said. Major Gen. (Retd) Rehmat Khan, President of Al-Shifa Trust (AST), said that the private sector will not be able to cope with the problem of this magnitude; therefore, the government should intervene immediately. He said that the government should upgrade the existing facilities and build

state-run eye clinics at every basic health unit to provide eye treatment to patients who cannot afford costly private treatment. He informed that a large number of people are facing digital overload, as prolonged screen time leads to digital eye strain, which causes symptoms like dry eyes, headaches, and blurred vision. Maj. Gen. Rehmat Khan said that AST has treated 29 million patients over the last three decades, and it performs 9000 surgeries monthly at its Rawalpindi, Chakwal, Kohat, Muzaffarabad, Sukkar, and Gilgit hospitals. He said that GB Hospital, which is under construction, is already providing services to the public lacking quality eye care. AST treats 80 percent of patients free of cost, and we run one of the

widest spread outreach programs for the prevention of blindness in the country. Throughout the year, school screenings, free eye camps, awareness campaigns, and primary eye care sessions are arranged in far-flung areas of the country. The AST president underlined that the private sector cannot cope with the challenge of increased eye problems in the masses; therefore, the government must mobilize its resources. AST can train doctors and paramedics at its School of Ophthalmology. He said ignorance and poverty prevent people from visiting doctors, and blindness is rising, especially among poor rural people. Eye care facilities were mostly concentrated in big cities, and in many districts and towns, there are simply no

government-run eye care facilities, he added. Gen Rehmat has said that approximately 4% of the world's blind live in Pakistan. About 2.2 million people are completely blind; many have limited or no access to eye care. With 90% of the world's visually impaired living in developing countries, Pakistan is no exception to this ongoing global healthcare challenge. The combination of aging, sugar, and a growing population has significantly increased the number of people with vision impairment. There is an enormous financial burden of vision impairment in countries such as Pakistan, which, despite making many advances in addressing eye conditions, cannot progress enough to keep pace with the growing population's eye care needs.

Audiences losing interest in serious content

ISLAMABAD: Renowned drama writer Arshad Chahal has expressed concern that audiences are losing interest in serious content that focuses on societal issues. Talking to APP on Monday, Arshad said that Iranian TV content is strong and has yet to gain popularity in the Pakistani industry. He observed that audiences want to escape their problems and watch luxurious lifestyles on screen. However, he stressed that television's role is not only to entertain but also to inform and educate people. Sharing his career journey, he stated that he started by writing a Punjabi novel, "Cheerhan Di Chaan", which was later dramatized by Pakistan Television (PTV). His novel earned him the Masood Khaddar Posh Award and Warish Shah Award from the Academy of Letters, he added. Arshad Chahal highlighted that writing a drama is a serious task that requires extensive homework. He explained that writers must first decide on a subject, such as comedy or social issues and then develop a storyline with character details. He noted that a writer can condense a story into a 50-minute episode or expand it into multiple episodes by adding character details and events. Arshad Chahal differentiated between drama serials, which follow a story and soap operas, which focus on character development. He praised PTV for always following the story and concluding dramas in 13 episodes. Commenting on Turkish plays, Arshad Chahal said that initial productions like "Fatima Gul" and "Ishq e Mamnu" were outstanding, but later soap serials had unnecessary details. He advocated for the production of dramas that tackle societal issues, behaviors and solutions, stressing the need for responsible storytelling.—DNA

Pakistan becomes paradise for tax evaders

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Business leader and former President of the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI), Dr. Shahid Rasheed Butt, on Monday said Pakistan has become a paradise for tax evaders. He said the country would remain in misery until the tax-evading elite was dealt with a heavy hand. Shahid Rasheed Butt said in a statement issued here today that the tax concessions for the former FATA and PATA should be abolished as it is causing billions of rupees

of loss to the economy. He said that some smugglers have also set up factories in tribal areas, due to which factories located in urban areas are being closed, which is causing a loss of revenue and employment. Shahid Rashid Butt said that industrialists from Punjab and Sindh have also opened factories for ghee, oil, steel, and other items in tribal areas, the production of which is many times more than the local needs. The business leader said that the surplus production of these factories is smuggled to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Islamabad, and Punjab, causing huge losses. He said that while giving tax exemption to the tribal areas, it was decided that the production there would be

sold locally so that the people could get cheap goods. However, some elements took advantage of this facility and started plunder in the business's name. He said that the current government had decided to abolish tax incentives in the previous budget, which was later withdrawn for some apparent reasons. There is a twenty-seven percent difference in the cost of ghee and edible oil production in the tribal areas compared to other parts of Pakistan, which is taking a toll on the economy. He said that many raw materials are being imported without duty for factories located in the tribal areas. Still, these goods are sold in Karachi, Hyderabad.



ISLAMABAD: Renowned businessman, Managing Director of Ashraf Industries, from Sialkot Ijaz Khokhar, posing for a picture with the Ambassador of Italy, on the occasion of the Indian Republic Day reception.—DNA

Crackdown on kite flying, selling, six nabbed

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) Police intensified its crackdown on Monday against individuals involved in kite flying and selling, arresting six suspects and recovering a large number of kites and strings. A public relations officer told APP that teams from Bhara Kahu, Shehzad Town, Noon, and Khanna police stations conducted the operations, leading to the recovery of a significant quantity of kites and strings. "Kite flying is a dangerous activity that can cause permanent disabilities or even loss of life," said DIG Syed Ali Raza. DIG Raza added that announcements highlighting the risks of kite flying and selling, as well as preventive measures, have been made in mosques across the district.—APP

ANF seizes over 150 kg drugs

RAWALPINDI: Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) while conducting nine operations across the country managed to recover over 150 kg drugs worth Rs 30 million and arrested 13 accused, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman here on Monday. He informed that 4.5 kg hashish was recovered from two suspects arrested near Petaro Toll Plaza Jamshoro in Sindh. 600 grams heroin was recovered from a vehicle intercepted near a university in Islamabad and 2 suspects were arrested. The arrested suspects confessed to selling drugs to the students of educational institutions. In third operation, 2 kg ice was recovered from the trolley bag of a passenger going to Dammam at Islamabad International Airport. 16 intoxicated tablets were recovered from the trolley bag of a passenger going to Sharjah at Multan International Airport. 40.8 kg hashish and 26.4 kg opium were recovered from the secret cavities of a vehicle rounded up near GT Road Toll Plaza Nowshera in Peshawar and an accused was arrested. 28 kg opium and 10 kg crystal heroin were recovered from Winder area of Hub in Balochistan. 5 kg ice drug and 20 kg hashish were recovered from two vehicles intercepted near New Sabzal Road in Quetta and 3 accused were arrested during the operation. In 8th operation, 2 kg ice and 10 kg hashish were recovered from two vehicles checked in Jinnah Town, Quetta and 2 accused were arrested.—APP



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Member APNS / ABC Certified

Vol: 05 Issue: 341

Email: dailyisbpost@gmail.com

Phone: 051-2266165 / 051-2261960

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

Allowing Gaza genocide

It is hard to think of any moment when a major international institution has taken a decision of genuine import to challenge Israeli impunity. The UN Security Council has done so on occasions, but typically a US veto, or even just the threat of one, prevents this. However, a year ago on Sunday, Jan. 26, the International Court of Justice decided to order legally binding provisional measures against Israel to protect Palestinians in Gaza from the possibility of genocide. Such a grim anniversary merited great respect from those who cherish human rights. Yet no major leader commented. There were no laments about the failure to prevent genocide. The media generally ignored it, despite this being one of the most seminal judgments the court has ever made. The case as presented by South Africa, involving just over six hours of forensic legal analysis and evidence, was powerful. It was still a jaw-dropping moment when the judges issued their historic verdict. Was Israel, for once, going to be held to account? The decision of the 15 judges acknowledged there was a genuine risk that the rights of the Palestinian population in Gaza not to be exterminated could have been breached. For some, it was even controversial that the court determined that the Palestinians are a people with rights. The South African submission demonstrated the intent of the Israeli leadership to destroy the Palestinian people "in whole or in part." Intent is the key factor in determining genocide, not any success in destroying large numbers of a specific group. That was a year ago and the Israeli actions since have not softened, but rather got harsher. If there were any doubts about it being genocide last January, they have long since dissipated for many. The three months in northern Gaza before the recent ceasefire deal were the worst period of the entire genocide. Can anyone deny that the Israeli leadership's intent was not geared toward "causing serious mental and bodily harm" to the Palestinians there? The International Court of Justice is the world's highest judicial body. Provisional measures are its trigger warning to the world to act. Nobody has done so, even after the court added further provisional measures in March and May. Instead, the arms have kept flowing. The countries that are supplying Israel with weapons are complicit in what it is doing. Yet other states have joined South Africa, including European countries such as Ireland and Spain. Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch, two of the world's largest human rights groups, have determined Israel has committed genocide. Holocaust and genocide scholars have warned of this as well. One provisional measure was that all parties should prevent and punish incitement to genocide. As yet, however, not one of the Israeli leaders, from the president downward, have been punished for their genocidal comments. Following warnings from their lawyers, some have calmed their language, if not their actions. But not all. Israeli Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich last week said that Gaza is "an animalistic society that sanctifies death." It is a rare thing to find a senior American or European politician who has demanded that the incitement stops and that those who have made such statements be punished. A key charge against Israel was that it was using starvation as a weapon of war. The court ordered Israel to "take immediate and effective measures to enable the provision of urgently needed basic services and humanitarian assistance" in Gaza. Israeli leaders and anti-Palestinian groups have spent months spreading the lie that it was the UN and Hamas that was holding up aid, despite the evidence to the contrary.



Trump's America and rising BRICS

THE year is shaping up to be one of shake-ups in global geopolitics and power. Donald Trump has assumed the US presidency for a second term with a resounding victory, after the Democrats failed in their appeal to working-class and other voters during a time of uncertainty, inflationary pressures and worries over immigration. Trump has promised much, from tax cuts and tariffs to ending the Ukraine war, amid US trade tensions with China. Trump has replaced Pax Americana with "America first". Meanwhile, Russian President Vladimir Putin has the upper hand in the war he commenced against Ukraine, winning territory at a considerable cost from an exhausted but resistant Ukrainian military. Putin, under sanctions and pressure from the United States and its allies, has shifted the geopolitical centre of gravity away from Western institutions to one that is fashioned more to his liking. What do we mean? We see a rising, empowered and enlarged Brics grouping that could eclipse the G20 as the key forum for many states. Last October, Putin hosted the 16th summit for Brics, which has grown from a body comprising Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa to include Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, the United Arab Emirates and, most recently, Indonesia. Chinese President Xi Jinping has added his considerable support to the forum's rise. At the meeting in Kazan, Russia, he said: "We must make full use of this summit, maintain the momentum of Brics, and consider and devise our strategy to address issues that have a global impact." The Kazan summit was a major step change for Brics. It was attended by dozens of countries that had applied for or are considering membership in the expanding club. If it was meant to show the world that Putin was not isolated, it worked. Brics has become an alternative power base for presidents Putin and Xi, one outside the reach of the US and its allies. Achieving this shift was neither inevitable nor expected by Western states. The forum is much broader and larger, potentially economically and diplomatically influential and consequential. The attendance of UN secretary general Antonio Guterres at Kazan shows this. At the summit, Guterres urged Brics leaders to work on the global finance system, climate action, access to technology and peace, particularly in Gaza, Lebanon, Ukraine and Sudan. In other words, the forum is now a useful multilateral mechanism for UN goals. What does a rising Brics mean for geopolitics and US interests? For the Group of 20, it bodes ill. South Africa has the G20 presidency this year, but with the Trump administration showing little interest in G20 meetings, South Africa could fail to make G20 breakthroughs on climate, global rules and trade. The US will take over the G20 presidency at the end of the year. Can we hope for US re-engagement in diplomacy? We doubt it, unless the G20 becomes a more limited, transactional gathering where Trump can claim victories, even at the expense of other leaders. So, Brics is a rising counterweight to US influence globally. Where might we see this in effect? Firstly, on Ukraine, Brics members show relative consensus in their support of Russia. The Trump administration will be looking for a peace deal with Ukraine.

Setbacks encountered in Trump's immigration crackdown

Qamar Bashir



The Trump administration's policy of deporting illegal immigrants is based on both common sense and legality. While there may be justifications and counterarguments to this approach, on the touchstone of legal principles and rational policymaking, the deportation of individuals who have entered the country through illegal or shortcut means must...

RECENT developments have posed challenges to the U.S. deportation policy under President Trump's administration. On January 24, 2025, Mexico denied permission for a U.S. military aircraft, specifically a C-17 transport plane, carrying approximately 80 deported migrants to land in the country, citing concerns over sovereignty and the treatment of deportees. Similarly, Colombia has rejected U.S. military flights carrying deported Colombian migrants, with President Gustavo Petro emphasizing the need for dignified and respectful treatment of migrants while rejecting their criminalization. Unauthorized immigration remains a complex and multifaceted issue in the United States. As of 2022, the United States is home to approximately 12 million unauthorized immigrants. Among them, Mexico has the largest share, with an estimated 4.81 million unauthorized immigrants. Guatemala follows with 750,000, while El Salvador and Honduras account for 710,000 and 560,000, respectively. Beyond Central America, the Philippines contributes 350,000 unauthorized immigrants, Venezuela 320,000, Colombia 240,000, and Brazil 230,000. Additionally, India and China have significant unauthorized populations, with 220,000 and 210,000 individuals, respectively. Many individuals from these countries initially arrive through legal channels, such as student or tourist visas, and subsequently overstay their permitted duration, thereby becoming unauthorized residents. The Trump administration described illegal immigration as "invasion," highlighting that over 13,000 individuals with murder convictions, nearly 16,000 rapists and sexual predators, and more than 425,000 individuals with criminal records have entered the U.S. illegally. Noting that drug trafficking and human trafficking affect communities nationwide, describing the situation at the southern border as a "war zone," requiring urgent intervention. Concerns were expressed over 70,000 Afghan refugees who were brought to the U.S. without proper vetting. According to the data over 13,000 individuals with murder convictions and nearly 16,000 rapists and sexual predators have entered the U.S. illegally. Additionally, more than 425,000 individuals with criminal records are currently residing in the country without legal authorization. Reports indicate that over 300,000 migrant children are currently

unaccounted for, raising fears of trafficking and abuse. Additionally, illegal migrants were involved in drug cartels and human trafficking, including fentanyl, illegal firearms, and large sums of cash that continue to flow across the southern border due to inadequate enforcement measures. The Trump administration presented a robust strategy to counter illegal immigration, focusing on stronger enforcement, judicial reforms, and national security enhancements. The plan prioritizes securing the border, deporting criminal migrants, dismantling human trafficking networks, and improving transparency between federal and state agencies. The administration is also committed to addressing the growing backlog of cases to clear the pending immigration cases, from 1.4 million to 3.5 million between 2021 and 2024, with over 340,000 asylum claims, and to investigating the status of missing migrant children and strengthening enforcement against traffickers who prey on vulnerable individuals. Since President Trump's inauguration, his administration has aggressively pursued its illegal immigration deportation policy. Within the first few days, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) conducted raids in multiple cities, resulting in the arrest of 538 undocumented immigrants, including individuals identified as gang members and those convicted of sex crimes against minors. Additionally, the administration's plan to deport migrants with temporary residence permits granted during the previous administration has sparked legal and ethical debates. However, refusals of Mexico and Colombia to reject deportation flights have given a first setback to the speed and efficiency of deportation efforts. This situation poses a challenge to Trump's policy, forcing the U.S. to engage in diplomatic negotiations, establish clear deportation mechanisms and methodologies, and adhere to both local and international laws and protocols before implementing a unilateral deportation strategy. The Trump administration's policy of deporting illegal immigrants is based on both common sense and legality. While there may be justifications and counterarguments to this approach, on the touchstone of legal principles and rational policymaking, the deportation of individuals who have entered the country through illegal or shortcut means must be handled strictly in accordance with the law. Immigration laws exist to ensure national security, eco-

nomics stability, and public order, and failing to enforce them undermines the legitimacy of the legal immigration system, encourages further illegal migration, and places undue pressure on public resources. The responsibility lies with the countries of origin to take back their citizens with dignity and respect, establish rehabilitation centers, and provide them with the necessary support to reintegrate into their societies or apply legally for migration in the future. Ironically, many of these nations refuse to accept their own deported citizens while expecting the United States to grant them legal residency or citizenship, an approach that lacks both logical and legal justification. While the USA has the full legal right and authority to deport these individuals, it may consider demonstrating magnanimity and compassion by ensuring that illegal immigrants are treated with dignity and respect. Additionally, it should exercise extreme restraint in addressing this critical issue with wisdom and diplomacy, seeking appropriate diplomatic solutions rather than resorting to coercion, pressure tactics, or the use of military force to enforce its immigration policies. A measured and strategic approach would uphold international norms, strengthen bilateral relations, and promote cooperation, ensuring that the issue is resolved in a manner that aligns with both legal principles and humanitarian values. Moreover, the USA, as a champion and advocate of human rights and decency, bears an additional moral responsibility beyond common sense and legality toward illegal immigrants who have arrived in search of better opportunities for themselves and their families after enduring immense hardships and suffering. Furthermore, those who are genuinely hardworking, law-abiding, and contributing to the U.S. economy and growth should be given a pathway to remain in the country, provided they meet the bare minimum legal requirements. Such an approach would not only uphold the nation's humanitarian values but also recognize the contributions of immigrants, who play a vital role in various sectors of the economy.

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

By rejecting truth, Meta is imperiling public safety in the Global South

Ashfaq Zaman

In fact, according to the World Economic Forum's 2024 Global Risk Report, the risk of narrative attacks from this region ranks among the highest globally. Information as a weapon These social media posts and fake news articles have been allowed to proliferate across social media like wildfire. This doesn't just stir social discontent; it can and does ignite violence. One need only look at the Herdsman-farmer conflict in Nigeria in 2018. These clashes, triggered by resource conflicts driven by desertification, have been ratcheted up online by misleading information shared on social media. A BBC report has pointed to multiple instances where in the vacuum of official...

META CEO Mark Zuckerberg's decision to end independent fact-checking on his platforms may well be an attempt to build a frictionless relationship with the United States' incoming president. Indeed, Zuckerberg joined Tesla's Elon Musk, OpenAI's Sam Altman, Amazon's Jeff Bezos and Apple's Tim Cook in their obsequious attendance at Donald Trump's inauguration. Beyond this display of allegiance, Silicon Valley's policies are more broadly signalling a desire for a cosy alliance between the incoming presidency and Big Tech. However, Zuckerberg and the rest of the Tech Bro class must understand that their content policies have implications that stretch far beyond the American cultural and political zeitgeist. Prioritising corporate convenience has dangerous real-world consequences for individuals and states across the world, especially in the Global South. For a long time, countries across African and South-East Asian regions have been little more than an afterthought for Big Tech companies. This is astounding when according to Facebook's own SEC filings, 72 percent of its user base is outside of North America and Europe. Take the Cambridge Analytica scandal. We know that through Facebook, Cambridge Analytica's military-grade digital technology could paint false pictures of political realities across the developing world, and change the outcome of dozens of elections. Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg admits to betraying the trust of the social media giant's more than two billion users over the Cambridge Analytica scandal, but is it too little, too late? Perversely, by interfering in elections in, for example, Kenya and Nigeria, Cambridge Analytica was merely training its algorithm in advance of the "real thing" in 2016 - the American election and the Brexit vote - where Britons voted for the United Kingdom to exit the European Union. In short, entire electorates were treated as lab rats under Meta's watch. Even before Meta recently decided to remove its third-party fact-checkers, its platforms had been used by nation-states to sew deliberate misinformation campaigns against their neighbours and rivals. In my home country of Bangladesh, we have experienced this first-hand. In the wake of our country's revolution and the fall of former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, our nation has been the victim of a targeted disinformation campaign, proliferating largely across social media. Like many disinformation campaigns, this one appears to have piggy-backed onto the fog of chaos caused by Hasina's exit to peddle a narrative designed to malign Bangladesh's reputation and instil fear in its minority populations. During the revolution, it is true there have been attacks on police

stations. There have also been (very few) instances of violence against minorities. However, the roots of these instances of violence were not racial, unlike claims suggested by various state-linked social media accounts. Instead, they were about land rights and personal disagreements. Take the Durga Puja festival in October, Bangladesh's largest Hindu festival. The Puja celebrations proceeded without any major, notable forms of violence. However, at least 14 social media rumours were spread between October 6 and October 12. According to the voluntary fact-checking organisation Rumor Scanner, all of the rumours were based on old or edited videos of other countries. These are not isolated incidents. Analysis from the Intelligence platform Blackbird.AI has revealed and debunked doctored images, spread by social media supporters of certain interests, of a fire at the Bangladeshi cricket captain's house, Hindu women being held captive, and videos of fires at restaurants, among others. Although it's hard to track the exact cause and effect of disinformation, having so much misleading information out there undoubtedly contributes to the confusion and chaos. These types of narrative attacks are not new. A previous 15-year campaign referred to as the "Indian Chronicles" was designed to undermine neighbouring states and serve geopolitical interests by influencing international organisations through at least 750 fake news outlets across 119 countries. In fact, according to the World Economic Forum's 2024 Global Risk Report, the risk of narrative attacks from this region ranks among the highest globally. Information as a weapon These social media posts and fake news articles have been allowed to proliferate across social media like wildfire. This doesn't just stir social discontent; it can and does ignite violence. One need only look at the Herdsman-farmer conflict in Nigeria in 2018. These clashes, triggered by resource conflicts driven by desertification, have been ratcheted up online by misleading information shared on social media. A BBC report has pointed to multiple instances where in the vacuum of official information, rumours of herdsman violence, along with misleading images, have been shared thousands of times across Twitter, (now X). It's hard to separate the spread of online hate from instances of violence in real life. Research has shown that misinformation can be especially potent in regions that suffer from an information vacuum. In the absence of independent journalism, backed up fact-checking, misleading information spread on social, deliberately or otherwise, can fill the void far more rapidly and persuasively. Equally, take the reports illuminated in the Facebook Files, suggesting that Facebook knew that its platform was be-

ing used to incite violence while doing little to prevent it. Francis Haugen, ex-Facebook manager and whistleblower behind the Facebook papers stated one of her core motivations was how badly the platform was handling the stem of harmful information and calls for violence during Ethiopia's civil war. Chillingly, she stated: "I genuinely fear that a huge number of people are going to die in the next five to 10 years, or 20 years, because of choices and underfunding." Weaponised information is particularly dangerous. Unlike traditional weaponry, where impact and collateral can be roughly predicted, the effects of information on the mind can be wild and unpredictable, and they can linger far longer than intended. Just as a fire can be controlled in the beginning, with enough fuel, the damage becomes exponential. Despite its unpredictability, disinformation has become a favoured tool in the warfare of ideas. It is notoriously difficult to trace the roots of disinformation campaigns, and they are comparatively cheap to launch. BREAKING: Zuckerberg makes a huge announcement about free speech at Meta "It's time to get back to our roots around free expression. We're replacing fact checkers with Community Notes, simplifying our policies and focusing on reducing mistakes. In many regions in the Global South, social media sites are essentially a public service. Given their eye-watering profits, you might expect these executives to take this responsibility seriously. Yet, these platforms are still calibrated to profit off engagement, and nothing drives engagement like outrage. The truth or safety of the information provided has become even less of an afterthought. Not only have sites like Meta failed in their responsibility to their customers, but they've actively allowed top advertisers to circumvent content moderation procedures. This indicates that tech companies like Meta are not only uninterested in regulating their platforms, but their business model incentivises them not to. Meta must remember that its influence is not merely domestic, but global. Social media can still be a powerful tool for the unvoiced and unheard. Meta's policy changes must reflect the needs and wishes of its entire customer base, instead of simply mirroring the mood music of the US. That means ensuring that its platform cannot be used as a disinformation weapon but as a reliable, trustworthy and impartial vehicle of civil discourse. With the right corrections, Meta and the like can still rebuild themselves as the champions of gatekeeper-free communication that they once were. If governments and the international community fail to grow a backbone, the cowboys of the new Wild West will lead the world so far down the post-truth rabbit hole that we may never see sunlight again.

Briefs

Pakistan reaffirms...

FROM PAGE 01
"misinterpreted and blown out of proportion". The interior minister also accused certain elements of instigating the US Congress against Pakistan, urging political opponents not to harm the country for political gains. He also highlighted that the purpose of his visit was to meet American politicians to devise an effective plan against terrorism. The interior minister further said that his meetings with members of the Congress were productive, stressing that terrorism is not just Pakistan's issue but a collective fight.

'Chinese nationals...

FROM PAGE 01
In addition to this, the Chinese nationals said that they had been deprived of the right to free movement and holding business meetings. The Chinese "investors", while expressing their disappointment over the "culture of bribe" in the local police, claimed that they would be left with no other option but to go to Lahore or return to their homeland.

Supreme Court...

FROM PAGE 01
which was for the constitutional bench, for hearing before a regular bench, resulting in a waste of time and resources of the Supreme Court and the parties. In response to the contempt of court notice regarding the rescheduling of the case related to powers of bench, Additional Registrar Nazir Abbas had also submitted his reply. He had requested the withdrawal of the show-cause notice, asserting that he did not defy any judicial orders.

SC CB dissolved...

FROM PAGE 01
The Attorney General requested a one-week adjournment, while Barrister Salahuddin highlighted ongoing controversies, including a prior order related to powers under the act. He also urged an expedited hearing for the related Dewan Motors case. Justice Aminuddin Khan assured that the court would take up the matter promptly, stating, "We will hear this case tomorrow." Justice Muhammad Ali Mazhar further added, "You may provide your reasons, Justice Malik."

Govt may disband...

FROM PAGE 01
engaged in talks aimed at defusing political tensions in the country for nearly a month. Both sides have held three rounds of talks so far. The dialogue process hit a snag as the Khan-founded party is of the view that they would attend the fourth round of talks only if the government formed the judicial commission while the ruling alliance stated that they would give their written response to the PTI's demand in the next round of negotiation.

Gohar reiterates...

FROM PAGE 01
"We stand with the legitimate rights of the media. Media is the fourth pillar of the state. It helps us identify issues, and now efforts are being made to suppress its voice," he stated. Barrister Gohar further said that even if the law is passed, it will be challenged in court, expressing hope that the judiciary will address it. On the matter of Kurram, he highlighted that all political parties have united on one platform.

PM orders...

FROM PAGE 01
arrest and prosecution of human smugglers. Prime Minister Shehbaz told the meeting that 27 human smugglers involved in the Morocco boat capsizing incident had been identified and five of them had already been arrested. Federal Economic Affairs Minister Ahad Khan Cheema and relevant senior officers attended the meeting.

2nd Chief of Army Staff Inter Club tourney

Rising Stars Hockey Club beats Gilgit to qualify for Lahore round

President of the winning team, Rising Stars Hockey Club, Mahmood Ahmad, General Secretary Sohail Akram Janjua, team manager Ansar Mahmood Bhatti and coach Asif Bhatti congratulated the team



ISLAMABAD: High Commissioner of Brunei Kamal Ahmed giving winners award to the Captain of the Rising Stars Hockey Club Awais Bhatti. - DNA



ISLAMABAD: High Commissioner of Brunei Kamal Ahmed giving runner's up award to the Captain of the Gilgit-Baltistan team. -DNA



ISLAMABAD: Team Management of the Rising Stars Hockey Club with the High Commissioner of Brunei. DNA



ISLAMABAD: Second Chief of Army Staff Inter-club Hockey Championship 2024-25 Provincial Round 3 in the name of Rising Stars Hockey Club Islam* According to the details, in connection with the ongoing second Chief of Army Staff Inter-

club Hockey Championship 2024-25, Islamabad. Gilgit-Baltistan and Azad Kashmir region competitions were held at Naseer Banda Hockey Ground Islamabad, in the final match of which Rising Stars Hockey Club Islamabad qualified for the National Round of the Inter-Club Championship by defeating Young Stars Hockey Club Gilgit 3-4 after a

nerve-racking match. Waqqas Shah of the winning team nominated by the Chief Guest and Jury as the Player of the Match and the goalkeeper of the Gilgit team as the Best Goalkeeper of the Match for his best performance. special guest of today's final match was Mr. Kamal Bashah Ahmad, Ambassador of Brunei Darussalam, who praised the performance of

both teams in his speech after the distribution of prizes, and President of the winning team, Rising Stars Hockey Club, Mahmood Ahmad, General Secretary Sohail Akram Janjua. Congratulating the players along with team manager Ansar Mahmood Bhatti and coach Asif Bhatti for becoming the regional champion and expressed good wishes for the next stage.

Shan Masood gets angry on captaincy question

Pakistan to overcome mistakes to improve performance: Masood

DNA

MULTAN: Pakistan skipper Shan Masood on Monday said that it was a tough contest and Pakistan would overcome the mistakes to improve performance in the upcoming fixtures. Holding a press conference following his team's 120-run defeat to the West Indies in the second Test at Multan Cricket Stadium, bringing the two-match series to a 1-1 draw. He acknowledged the team's shortcomings and highlighted key lessons for the future. "We did not get the result we wanted," Masood admitted, "Batting in the fourth innings on this pitch was extremely challenging and credit to the West Indies they battled brilliantly in their second innings and took the game away from us." Reflecting on Pakistan's batting collapse in the first innings, Masood pinpointed critical moments that swung the match. "We were 119 for 4 and got bowled out for 154. That moment was decisive. On top of that, their lower-order partnership hurt us badly and widened the gap. He stressed the importance of collective responsibility for the defeat, rejecting the idea of blaming individuals. "This was a team sport, whether we win or lose, it was on all of us. Everyone has a role to play and it was never about one player." Masood also highlighted recurring issues that need immediate attention, such as struggling to dismiss the opposition's tailenders. He said that getting the tailout quickly has been a concern for us and we need to address this in upcoming games.

Raducanu loses in Singapore Open first round

WEB DESK

SINGAPORE: Britain's Emma Raducanu suffered a disappointing defeat to world number 101 Cristina Bucsa of Spain in the opening round of the Singapore Open. The 22-year-old was playing for the first time since her 6-1 6-0 third round loss to Iga Swiatek at the Australian Open and the news her coach Nick Cavaday was stepping back from the role to "prioritise getting back to full health". But in a grueling encounter lasting three hours and three minutes and featuring 17 breaks of service, Bucsa came through 5-7 7-5 7-5 against the seventh seed in the pair's first meeting. The Spaniard had served for the opening set at 5-4 up but Raducanu, ranked 56, rattled off the next three games to take control of the match.

Jasprit Bumrah named ICC Men's Test Cricketer of the Year 2024

Bumrah beats stiff competition from England's Root and Brook and Sri Lanka's Mendis

WEB DESK

DUBAI: The International Cricket Council (ICC) on Monday named India's Jasprit Bumrah the Men's Test Cricketer of the Year, recognising his exceptional performance in the longest format in 2024. The right-arm pacer beat out stiff competition from England's batting duo of Joe Root and Harry Brook and Sri Lanka's Kamindu Mendis. Bumrah, who made his long-awaited comeback in late 2023 after recovering from a back injury, delivered several match-winning and record-shattering performances in 2024. The right-arm pacer was instrumental in India's home series victories over England and Bangladesh, while he was equally impressive in away assignments against South Africa and Australia. Bumrah also finished as the leading wicket-taker in Tests in 2024, topping the chart with 71 scalps, 19 clear of second-placed England's Gus Atkinson. The 31-year-old bowled a humongous 357 overs in the format but maintained an astounding average of just 2.96. The previous year also saw Jasprit Bumrah becoming only the fourth India bowler to take more than 70 Test wickets in a calendar year,

joining the ranks of Ravichandran Ashwin, Anil Kumble and Kapil Dev. Overall, only 17 bowlers have thus far picked 70-plus wickets in a calendar year in Tests but Bumrah achieved the milestone boasting the lowest average, showcasing his ability to restrict opposition's batters from scoring freely. For the unversed, Jasprit Bumrah is also nominated for the prestigious Sir Garfield Sobers Trophy for the men's Cricketer of the Year 2024, alongside Australia's Travis Head and England's Joe Root and Harry Brook.



Moroccan Ambassador meets PM

FROM PAGE 01

the recent boat capsizing off the coast of Dakhla. He thanked the local Moroccan authorities for extending their full cooperation to the Pakistani officials involved in repatriation of the survivors as well as the remains of those deceased. While recalling the excellent historic and brotherly ties between Pakistan and Morocco, the Prime Minister said there was a need to strengthen trade and investment cooperation between the two countries. He recalled the great affection and goodwill between the peoples of the two countries and emphasized upon fostering more people-to-people contacts.

President, PM felicitate Lukashenko

FROM PAGE 01

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, in a post on X, said we will keep working together to realize our shared vision for stronger Pak-Belarus ties. Incumbent Belarusian leader Alexander Lukashenko has won the presidential election with 86.82% of votes, according to preliminary results, Central Election Commission Chairman Igor Karpenko said at a press conference. "You can congratulate the Republic of Belarus, we have elected a president," he said.

FM reaffirm

FROM PAGE 01

next steps to enhance the flow of IT export remittances. The meeting was attended by Minister of State for IT & Telecom Ms. Shaza Fatima Khawaja, Secretary IT, Special Secretary IT, CEO Pakistan Software Export Board (PSEB), and senior officers from the Finance Division and IT Ministry.

WI create history with 2nd Test win over Pakistan

The historic win in Multan now adds to their list of achievements in Pakistan

DNA

MULTAN: West Indies made history on Monday by securing a dominant 120-run victory over Pakistan in the second and final Test of the two-match series. This landmark win marks the Caribbean team's first Test victory on Pakistani soil in 35 years, dating back to their last triumph in 1990 in Faisalabad. The 1990 victory was a seven-wicket win under the leadership of West Indies legend Desmond Haynes, and since then, the Caribbean side had been unsuccessful on Pakistani turf. The historic win in Multan now adds to their list of achievements in Pakistan, along with the following details of previous West Indies Test victories in the country.

West Indies Test wins in Pakistan:
• (Margin, Venue, Year)
• 120 runs, Multan, 2025
• 7 wickets, Faisalabad, 1990
• 115 & 10 runs, Lahore, 1986
• 156 runs, Faisalabad, 1980
• 115 & 156 runs, Lahore, 1959

West Indies' spin bowlers played a pivotal role in securing the victory, as they bowled Pakistan out for just 133 runs while chasing a target of 254. Pakistan's batting lineup crumbled on Day 3, with the hosts resuming their innings at 76/4. However, they



soon fell into deep trouble, losing wickets rapidly within the first 20 minutes of play. The breakthrough came when Kevin Sinclair dismissed Saud Shakeel for 13, reducing Pakistan to 76/5. Kashif Ali followed soon after, dismissed by Jomel Warrican for

a single run, leaving Pakistan at 76/6. A brief resistance from Mohammad Rizwan and Salman Ali Agha revived hope with a 39-run partnership, but that was short-lived as Salman was dismissed by Warrican for 15, followed by Rizwan's dismissal for 25. Pakistan's tail crumbled, with Noman Ali being dismissed for six after hitting a six off Motie's delivery. The final wicket fell when Sajid Ali was dismissed by Warrican, giving West Indies their first Test win over Pakistan since 1990. The West Indies' victory was set up during the second session on Day 2 when Pakistan's first innings faltered. Pakistan was reduced to 76/4, with Shan Masood and Mohammad Hurraira falling early, scoring just two runs each. Kevin Sinclair and Gudakesh Motie were the bowlers who made the breakthroughs, dismissing both openers. Babar Azam and Kamran Ghulam provided some stability with a 43-run partnership, but Ghulam was dismissed by Warrican for 19. Sinclair then removed Babar Azam for 39, leaving Pakistan in a precarious position.

Briefs

EU to agree easing Syria sanctions

BRUSSELS: EU foreign policy chief Kaja Kallas said she expected the bloc to agree Monday to begin easing sanctions on Syria after the ouster of Bashar Assad. "It is a step for step approach," Kallas said at the start of a meeting of EU foreign ministers in Brussels to discuss the move. Europe is keen to help the reconstruction of the war-ravaged country and build bridges with its new leadership after the end of the Assad family's five-decade rule. But some EU countries worry about moving too fast to embrace the new Islamist-led rulers in Damascus. The 27-nation EU imposed wide-ranging sanctions on the Assad government and Syria's economy during its civil war. Brussels says it is now willing to ease sanctions on the expectation the new authorities make good on commitments to form an inclusive transition. "If they are doing the right steps, then we are willing to do the steps on our behalf as well," Kallas said. France's Foreign Minister Jean-Noel Barrot said the EU could start by suspending sanctions on the energy, transport and banking sectors. Diplomats say the EU will only suspend the sanctions and not lift them definitively to maintain leverage over the Syrian leadership. Syria's new de facto leader Ahmed Al-Sharaa, and the Islamist group he led Hayat Tahrir Al-Sham, remain under EU sanctions. Diplomats said there was still no discussion about lifting those designations, as with others on the Assad regime.—APP

19 arrested after Turkiye hotel inferno disaster

ANKARA: Turkish authorities have arrested 19 people as part of an investigation into a fire at a ski resort hotel that killed 78 people, Anadolu state news agency reported Monday. Those detained include a deputy mayor for the town responsible for the Kartalkaya resort, a deputy fire chief and the head of another establishment belonging to the hotel owner, the agency said. The investigation into the January 21 disaster has focused on the hotel management and the actions of the emergency services and authorities in the town of Bolu. On Friday, the owner of the Grand Karta hotel, his son-in-law, the hotel's chief electrician and its head chef were arrested. Survivors and experts have highlighted the absence of fire alarms and sprinklers, working smoke detectors and proper fire escape routes at the 12-story building that overlooked the ski slopes.—APP

Guiding principles for PSDP 2025-26 approved

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Professor Ahsan Iqbal on Monday chaired a meeting to review the proposals for the Public Sector Development Program (PSDP) for the fiscal year 2025-26. The meeting, attended among others by Secretary Planning Awais Manzoor Sumra and senior ministry officials, approved guiding principles for incorporating new projects and carrying forward ongoing ones in the annual development plan, according to a news release. The minister issued clear instructions to reduce the throw-forward of the PSDP, stressing the need to prioritize completing projects where 80 per cent of the cost has already been incurred. "Timely provision of funds for high-priority projects must be ensured, while low-value projects should be frozen," he added. The meeting also decided that new projects aligned with the objectives of "URAAAN PAKISTAN," the National Transformation Plan 2024-29, would be incorporated into the upcoming PSDP. Ahsan Iqbal stressed that the development budget would be linked to achieving the desired outcomes, making the allocation of public resources accountable.—APP



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif inaugurating an International Hotel.

Disappointed with Monetary Policy

Industry expecting a rational, single-stroke cut by 500 bps: Atif

Sheikh reiterated the apex body's stance that cost of doing business; ease of doing business and access to finance in Pakistan is at the lowest as compared to all its competitors in the export markets.

DNA

KARACHI: Atif Ikram Sheikh, President FPCCI, has apprised that the business, industry and trade community of Pakistan is disappointed with the monetary policy as it continues to be based on a heavy premium vis-vis core inflation as the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) announced a grossly-insufficient reduction of 100 bps only on Monday. Currently, inflation as per government's own statistics, stood at 4.1 percent in December 2024; but, the policy rate is 12.0 percent as of today – which

reflects a premium of 790 basis points vis-vis core inflation, he added.

Mr. Atif Ikram Sheikh continued that, after deliberations across all industries and sectors, FPCCI demanded an immediate and single-stroke rate cut of 500 basis points, in the Monday's monetary policy committee (MPC) meeting, to rationalize the monetary policy; and, align it to the vision of special investment facilitation council (SIFC) and the Prime Minister's vision for economic growth and exports' growth. It is pertinent to note that the core inflation is expected to be in the range of 3 – 4

percent for the month of January 2025, he added. Atif Ikram Sheikh explained that the international oil prices are also expected to remain relatively stable; whereas, oil is one of the major contributing factors in creating ripple effects in inflationary pressures in Pakistan. The authorities in Pakistan now had all the prerequisites to announce a substantive rate cut; and do not hold onto their regressive, counterproductive, contractionary and anti-business monetary policy practices, he added. Sheikh reiterated the apex body's stance that cost of doing business; ease of doing business and access

to finance in Pakistan is at the lowest as compared to all its competitors in the export markets. Fortunately, the decisive downward trend in inflationary pressures has been continuing for the past many months; and, the only viable solution to get back on economic growth trajectory is to support industry and exports, he added. Mr. Saquib Fayyaz Magoon, SVP FPCCI, proposed that the interest rate should come down to single digits immediately to enable Pakistani exporters to some extent to compete in the regional and international export markets through reducing the cost of capital in

a meaningful way. This should be accompanied by the fulfilment of government's promise to rationalize electricity tariff for industry; and, the government should renegotiate all independent power producers (IPPs) power purchase agreements (PPAs) on take-and-pay basis; which means that the industry and consumers will be set free from paying capacity charges in their electricity bills, he added. FPCCI, the apex trade & industry body of Pakistan, has persistently questioned the approach of government, on behalf of the entire business, industry and trade community of

Pakistan, in bringing transparency & consultation in the economic policymaking; and, has reiterated its stance that the government should provide answers to the two sets of questions for businesses to plan their investments, : (i) what are the measures or commitments that are being undertaken to stay on course the new IMF program and how would they affect cost of doing business in Pakistan (ii) what steps will be taken to put Pakistan back on an expeditious growth trajectory and how & when the government plans to take the business community into confidence on these measures.

Russia drone barrage sparks fire in western Ukraine

KYIV: A barrage of more than 100 Russian drones sparked a fire at an industrial facility in western Ukraine and damaged residential buildings in other regions, Ukrainian officials said Monday. The Ukrainian airforce said Moscow had dispatched 104 drones, including attack drones, and that 57 of the unmanned aerial vehicles had been shot down. Emergency services in the western Ivano-Frankivsk region said the strikes had resulted in two fires at an industrial facility, and that firefighters were working to extinguish one. They did not specify the type of facility hit but said there were no casualties. The airforce said there was damage in four Ukrainian regions including Kyiv, where AFP journalists heard drones flying overhead and air defense systems countering the attack.—APP

Hashmi greets people of China on Spring festival

BEIJING: Pakistan's Ambassador to China, Khalil Hashmi extended his warmest greetings to the people of China and readers of the Global Times on occasion of the Spring Festival. "As we celebrate the joyous occasion of the Spring Festival, I extend my warmest greetings to the people of China and the readers of the Global Times. The Year of the Snake, a symbol of wisdom, resilience, and renewal, offers us an opportunity to reflect on the achievements of the past and look forward to a future of shared prosperity and collaboration," he said in his message of China's Spring Festival published by Global Times. He said that the Spring Festival is not just a celebration of cultural heritage, but also a testament to the strength and harmony of the Chinese nation. Over the past decades, China's remarkable journey has been a source of inspiration for the world. It is during moments like these that we are reminded of the enduring values of unity, progress, and hope that the festival embodies. For Pakistan, this celebration holds special significance as we cherish the iron-clad friendship between our two nations. Pakistan-China relations are a shining example of mutual trust, respect, and cooperation, built on a foundation of shared aspirations for peace and development, he added. "On this occasion, I also wish to commend the Global Times for its invaluable contribution to strengthening this relationship. Through its objective and insightful reporting, the Global Times has played a pivotal role in enhancing global understanding of China's vision and fostering greater appreciation for Pakistan-China relations. The platform's ability to amplify the voices of developing nations and provide nuanced perspectives on global issues is truly commendable. Your efforts in bridging cultures and promoting dialogue are vital in today's world." Ambassador Hashmi said that looking ahead, the Year of the Snake calls for a renewed focus on innovation, sustainability, and inclusivity. Pakistan and China are poised to further expand our cooperation in areas such as green development, digital transformation, and cultural exchanges.—DNA

Heroism of blockaded Leningrad will live on forever

MOSCOW: The heroic resilience of Leningrad against Nazi invaders during WWII will remain etched in history forever, Russian President Vladimir Putin said before a ceremony to award the city's war veterans. "The unbelievable heroism shown in the besieged city will never fade into oblivion. Those people - our veterans - showed all of us that followed the best of humanity, selflessness, compassion, unity, and true patriotism. These timeless qualities have always given us confidence and strength, and will endure through the ages," Putin emphasized. "For us, the residents of Leningrad, January 27, 1944, is a special date; it is marked in every family," the president, a Leningrad native himself, noted. "For our entire country, the Leningrad victory will forever remain a symbol of the triumph of life, courage and spirit of our people, as well as a key milestone in the heroic war against Nazism and a turning point on the way to the crushing defeat of our enemy, the death machine created by the Nazis that had destroyed entire nations.—APP

UBG delegation condoles over death of Jamaluddin

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The high leadership of the United Business Group (UBG) visited the residence of the late prominent businessman Jamaluddin from Balochistan, who tragically passed away in a traffic accident, to offer condolences and pray for the eternal peace of his soul. UBG's Chief Patron SM Tanveer, Secretary-General Zafar Bakhtawari, Hanif Goher, Ahmad Channay, Ahsen Zafar Bakhtawari, and Furqan Abdul Qadir specially traveled from Lahore, Karachi, and Islamabad to Quetta. The UBG leadership expressed deep sorrow and grief over the death of Jamaluddin, conveying condolences to his brothers, Dr. Kamaluddin, Haji Salahuddin, Haji Alawaluddin, Haji Sirajuddin, and his sons Mir Wais Khan, Idris Khan, Waris Khan, Mohammad Humayun Khan Advocate, and Mohammad Yousaf Khan Advocate. The UBG leaders praised the business and social services of the late Jamaluddin, stating that

his death has created a void in the business world. They expressed their commitment to always remembering his services and supporting his family. SM Tanveer said, "Jamaluddin was an unparalleled businessman and an active member of the community. His passing is a great loss not only to his family but also to the entire business community. We stand in solidarity with his family and pray for the eternal peace of his soul." Zafar Bakhtawari added, "Jamaluddin's character and his services will always be remembered. His loss is deeply felt by all of us. We pray that Allah grants him forgiveness and provides patience to his family." Hanif Goher stated, "The death of Jamaluddin is a huge loss. His absence is being felt by all of us, and we extend our deepest sympathy to his family. We pray for the eternal peace of his soul." Ahmad Channay said, "The absence of Jamaluddin will be felt in the business community. We stand with his family, and his memory will forever live in our

hearts." Ahsen Zafar Bakhtawari remarked, "The loss of Jamaluddin is not only a sorrow for his family but also for UBG. We have lost our fearless, loyal, and important leader." Furqan Abdul Qadir stated, "Jamaluddin's passing is a shock to all of us. He held an important position in the business community, and his absence has left a gap. We pray that Allah grants him forgiveness and provides patience to his family." In addition to the UBG leaders, former President of FPCCI Daru Khan, Ghulam Farooq, Jumma Khan, Wali Khan, Asfandyar Mandokhel, Taro Khan, Haji Khojal, Alawaluddin Mari, and other members of the business community were also present for the prayer. Dr. Kamaluddin and Mohammad Idris Khan thanked the UBG leadership, saying that their visit brought some comfort to their grief. "The arrival of UBG's leadership for condolences has eased our sorrow," they said.

India minister pledges to evict 'illegal' immigrants from capital

NEW DELHI: Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's closest political ally has pledged to rid the capital of "illegal" immigrants if his party wins looming elections, in a forceful appeal to his party's Hindu constituency. Interior minister Amit Shah said every unlawful migrant from neighboring Bangladesh would be expelled from New Delhi "within two years" if his party succeeded in next month's provincial polls. "The current state government is giving space to illegal Bangladeshis and Rohingyas," Shah told an audience of several thousand at Sunday's rally. "Change the government and we will rid Delhi of all illegals." India shares a porous border stretching thousands of kilometers with Muslim-majority Bangladesh, and illegal migration from its eastern neighbor has been a hot-button political issue for decades. There are no reliable estimates of the number of Bangladeshis living illegally in Delhi, a city to which millions have flocked in search of employment from elsewhere in India over recent decades. Critics of Modi and Shah's Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) accuse the party of using the issue as a dog whistle against Muslims to galvanize its Hindu-nationalist support base during elections. Delhi, a sprawling megacity home to more than 30 million people, has been governed for most of the past decade by charismatic chief minister Arvind Kejriwal and his Aam Aadmi Party (AAP). Kejriwal rode to power as an anti-corruption crusader a decade ago and his profile has bested upon him the mantle of one of the chief rivals to Modi and Shah's party. His popularity has been diminished by extensive water and electricity subsidies for the capital's millions of poorer residents. But he spent several months behind bars last year on accusations his party took kickbacks in exchange for liquor licenses, along with several fellow party leaders.—APP

Plan to uproot Palestinians from Gaza would be 'ethnic cleansing': Arab League

CAIRO: The Arab League on Sunday warned against "attempts to uproot the Palestinian people from their land," after US President Donald Trump suggested a plan to "clean out" the Gaza Strip and move its population to Egypt and Jordan. "The forced displacement and eviction of people from their land can only be called ethnic cleansing," the regional bloc's general secretariat said in a statement. "Attempts to uproot the Palestinian people from their land, whether by displacement, annexation or settlement expansion, have been proven to fail in the past," the statement added. Earlier Sunday, Egypt vehemently expressed its objection to Trump's suggestion. Cairo's



GAZA: Hundred of thousand Palestinians returning to north Gaza after breakthrough on hostages.

foreign ministry in a statement expressed Egypt's "continued support for the steadfastness of the Palestinian people on their land." It "rejected any infringement on their inalienable rights, whether by settlement or annexation of land, or by the depopulation of that land of its people through displacement, encouraged transfer or the uprooting of Palestinians from their land, whether temporarily or long-term." After 15 months of war, Trump said Gaza had become a "demolition site" and he would "like Egypt to take people, and I'd like Jordan to take people." Moving Gaza's inhabitants could be done "temporarily or could be long term," he said. Since the start of the Israel-Hamas

war in October 2023 both countries have warned of plans to displace Palestinians from Gaza into neighboring Egypt and from the West Bank into Jordan. Egyptian President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi, with whom Trump said he would speak on Sunday, has repeatedly warned that said displacement would aim to "eradicate the cause for Palestinian statehood." El-Sisi has described the prospect as a "red line" that would threaten Egypt's national security. The Egyptian foreign ministry on Sunday urged the implementation of the "two-state solution," which Cairo has said would become impossible if Palestinians were removed from their territories.—Agencies

Briefs

Imran Khan, Bushra challenge conviction

COURT REPORT

ISLAMABAD: PTI founder Imran Khan and his wife, Bushra Bibi, have challenged their conviction in the £190 million case in IHC. An accountability court in Islamabad convicted the former prime minister and the former first lady in the £190 million case in a much-anticipated ruling earlier this month.

In a major blow to the already incarcerated politician, Accountability 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 case, also known as Al-Qadir Trust case, involved allegations that Imran and some others 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.

The former ruling party strongly rejected the verdict that came after multiple delay over weeks, announcing to reach out to superior courts against it.

The petition, filed via Salman Akram Raja and Barrister Salman Safdar, focused on arguments and evidence refuting the claims presented by the prosecution in the notorious graft case.

It said that the conviction of Khan and his spouse was a result of political victimisation "orchestrated by opponents using NAB as a tool", while the former premier already faced "280 politically motivated cases", many of which ended in acquittals.

Independents landslide in Balochistan LB polls

DNA

QUETTA: The Election Commission of Pakistan Balochistan chapter announced the results of local government by-elections held across 25 districts in the province. Polling took place for 50 general wards in 25 districts, with a total of 167 candidates contesting for these positions. Independent candidates emerged victorious by securing 23 seats, making a significant impact, according to the initial results.

Meanwhile, political parties such as JamiatUlema-e-Islam (JUI), PPP, and Pakhtunkhwa MilliAwami Party (PkMAP) also claimed victories in various districts. As per the Election Commission's analysis, JUI candidates won seven seats, PPP secured five, and PkMAP pocketed four. Three seats were won by the National Party, while the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), Awami National Party (ANP), and BNP-Awami each claimed two seats.

Pak, Azerbaijan forge stronger economic and trade relations

The Ambassador assured support for a business delegation and suggested announcing the launch of Pakistan Azerbaijan Joint Chamber of Commerce and Industry



STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Commerce Jam Kamal Khan and Azerbaijan's Ambassador to Pakistan, Khazar

Farhadov, held a crucial meeting to bolster economic cooperation between the two nations. The discussion focused on preparations for Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's state visit to Azerbaijan, according to a release issued here Monday. Highlighting the importance of people-to-people con-

nections for fostering trade and investment, the meeting underscored the need for timely implementation of agreements. The Ambassador also shared plans to establish an Azerbaijan Trade House in Islamabad, Lahore and Karachi. The Minister proposed organizing a business-to-business (B2B) forum during the Prime Minister's visit, followed by a single-country exhibition in Azerbaijan later this year, possibly in July, to gauge the response to the PTA.

The Ambassador assured support for a business delegation and suggested announcing the launch of Pakistan Azerbaijan Joint Chamber of Commerce and Industry. Exploring trade opportunities, Minister Jam Kamal Khan suggested importing cotton from Azerbaijan for processing in Pakistan, with plans to export high-end garments to Cambodia. The Ambassador offered to connect Pakistan with Azerbaijan's leading cotton producers and highlighted mutual trade opportunities in agriculture and technology.

Both sides celebrated the doubling of trade volume compared to the previous year and emphasized building on this momentum. The Minister invited Azerbaijan to participate in the upcoming Foodag exhibition in Lahore, while the Ambassador reaffirmed Azerbaijan's commitment to establishing strong trade and investment links by sharing contacts of prominent businesses. The meeting concluded with a shared commitment to achieving successful outcomes, prioritizing the establishment of the Trade House and Chamber of Commerce as cornerstones of bilateral trade relations. This collaboration marks a significant step toward deepening Pakistan-Azerbaijan economic ties, with both nations aiming to create long-term partnerships and explore new avenues for trade and investment.

New deadline for APNS awards entries

DNA

KARACHI: The All Pakistan Newspapers Society has extended the last date of submission of entries for APNS Advertising Awards and APNS Journalist Awards from January 27, 2025 to February 03, 2025. Mr. Sarmad Ali, Secretary General, APNS has stated that the date has been extended on the request of journalists and advertising agencies to enable maximum participation in the contest of APNS awards. The Secretary General, APNS has advised all the prospective participants to positively submit their entries by February 03, 2025.

Wang meets Indian FS in Beijing

BEIJING: Wang Yi, member of the Political Bureau of CPC Central Committee and Foreign Minister Wang Yi held a meeting with Indian Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri in Beijing on Monday. Wang Yi said that since the meeting between President Xi Jinping and Indian Prime Minister Modi in Kazan last year, the two sides have earnestly implemented the important consensus reached by the leaders of the two countries, carried out active interactions at all levels, and accelerated the process of improving China-India relations, according to Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The two sides should seize the opportunity, meet each other halfway, explore more substantive measures, and strive to understand, support and achieve each other, rather than be suspicious of each other, alienate each other, and consume each other, he added. – Agencies

EU to agree easing Syria sanctions

BRUSSELS: EU foreign policy chief KajaKallas said she expected the bloc to agree Monday to begin easing sanctions on Syria after the ouster of Bashar Assad. "It is a step for step approach," Kallas said at the start of a meeting of EU foreign ministers in Brussels to discuss the move. Europe is keen to help the reconstruction of the war-ravaged country and build bridges with its new leadership after the end of the Assad family's five-decade rule. But some EU countries worry about moving too fast to embrace the new Islamist-led rulers in Damascus. The 27-nation EU imposed wide-ranging sanctions on the Assad government and Syria's economy during its civil war. Brussels says it is now willing to ease sanctions on the expectation the new authorities make good on commitments to form an inclusive transition. "If they are doing the right steps, then we are willing to do the steps on our behalf as well," Kallas said. France's Foreign Minister Jean-Noel Barrot said the EU could start by suspending sanctions on the energy, transport and banking sectors. – Agencies

Palestinians return to north Gaza after breakthrough

FOREIGN DESK

NUSEIRAT, Palestinian Territories: Masses of displaced Palestinians began streaming toward the north of the war-battered Gaza Strip on Monday after Israel and Hamas said they had reached a deal for the release of another six hostages. The breakthrough preserves a fragile ceasefire and paves the way for more hostage-prisoner swaps under an agreement aimed at ending the more than 15-month conflict, which has devastated the Gaza Strip and displaced nearly all its residents. Israel had been preventing Palestinians from returning to their homes in northern Gaza, accusing Hamas of violating the terms of the truce, but Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's office said late Sunday they would be allowed to pass after the new deal was reached. Crowds began making their way north along a coastal road on foot Monday morning, carrying what belongings they could, AFP TV images showed. "It's a great feeling when you go back home, back to your family, relatives and loved ones, and inspect your house – if it is still a house," displaced Gazan Ibrahim Abu Hassera said.

SBP cuts key policy rate to 12% on tame inflation

All actions required by IMF have been taken; fund review expected to proceed as planned, says SBP governor

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: The State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) cut its key policy rate by 100 basis points to 12% on Monday, central bank governor Jameel Ahmed told reporters, for a sixth straight reduction since June as the country attempts to revive business and economic sentiment amid easing inflation. The bank's governor said at a press conference that the inflation rate would ease further in January but noted core inflation remained elevated, adding that the forecast for full-year inflation in the year to June was an average of 5.5%-7.5%. "Considering these developments and evolving risks, the committee viewed that a cautious monetary policy stance is needed to ensure price stability, which is essential for sustainable economic growth," the bank's Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) said in a statement

accompanying the decision. "In this regard, the MPC assessed that the real policy rate needs to remain adequately positive on a forward-looking basis to stabilise inflation in the target range of 5-7%," the statement said. The central bank has been reducing interest rates since June 2024, slashing a total of 1,000 basis points from the record high of 22%. This marks one of the most aggressive rate-cutting campaigns among emerging markets, surpassing the 625 basis points cut during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. The committee said the impact of this significant reduction in the rate since June 2024 will continue to unfold and further support economic activity. The inflation continued to trend downward in line with expectations, reaching 4.1% year-on-year in December, the committee noted. "This trend is driven by moderate domestic demand conditions and supportive supply-side dynamics, amidst favorable base effect," the SBP said in its statement. Consumer inflation rate slowed to an over 6-1/2-year low of 4.1% in December, largely due to a high year-ago base. That was below the government's forecast and significantly lower than a multi-decade high of around 40% in May 2023. "At the same time, high frequency indicators continued to show gradual improvement in economic activity," it added.

Pakistan and UNDP strengthen cooperation on climate initiatives



FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb, today met with Dr. Samuel Rizk, the Resident Representative of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Pakistan, at the Finance Division. The meeting focused on the UNDP's ongoing initiatives and collaborations with both the public and private sectors in Pakistan. During the meeting,

Dr. Rizk provided an overview of UNDP's diverse initiatives across multiple sectors, including social development, climate resiliency, energy transition, digital transformation, and improving efficiency within the public sector. These efforts are aimed at driving sustainable development, enhancing Pakistan's resilience to climate change, and fostering long-term social and economic progress. Senator Aurangzeb acknowledged the importance of these initiatives and emphasized the need for well-structured, investable, and bankable projects that are monitored and reported according to international standards. He underlined that the success of such projects depends on proper planning, transparent reporting, and alignment with the country's overarching development goals. The Finance Minister also expressed his appreciation for the technical and financial support being provided by UNDP in priority sectors. He reiterated the government's commitment to fostering inclusive and sustainable growth, with a particular focus on addressing key challenges such as population growth, stunting, and climate change. He emphasized that these areas are central to the government's broader strategy for socio-economic development. Senator Aurangzeb further highlighted the recently signed 10-year country partnership programme between Pakistan and the World Bank, which aims to promote inclusive and sustainable growth by building human capital, fostering durable private sector growth, and enhancing the country's economic, social, and environmental resilience.

Afghan girls allowed to study under Taliban conditions

ISLAMABAD: The Taliban administration in Afghanistan has conditionally agreed to allow Afghan women to pursue higher education in Pakistan. This agreement hinges on the condition that their male guardians, or mahrams, are granted visas to accompany them. The announcement coincided with entrance exams held on Saturday, where hundreds of Afghan students competed for spots in graduate, postgraduate, and doctoral programs at Pakistani universities. Afghan refugees residing in Pakistan attended the tests in Peshawar and Quetta, while students within Afghanistan are scheduled to take the exams online in the coming days. Pakistan's special envoy for Afghanistan, Mohammad Sadig, revealed that approximately 21,000 Afghan students, including over 5,000 women, had applied for the upcoming academic sessions under the fully funded Allama Iqbal Scholarship program. HEC of Pakistan is tasked with selecting up to 2,000 students, with one-third of the spots reserved for female candidates. An official from the Pakistani government, speaking on condition of anonymity, confirmed the Taliban's conditional agreement and Pakistan's commitment to issuing visas for guardians to ensure compliance with Afghan laws. The Taliban, however, has not officially commented on this development. The scholarship initiative, designed to strengthen ties between the two nations, focuses on providing education in fields such as medicine, engineering, agriculture, and computer science. – DNA

ISSI hosts launch of HDF-HSF book on post-Taliban Afghanistan

Experts highlight need for inclusivity and human rights in Taliban governance

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: The Centre for Afghanistan, Middle East and Africa (CAMEA) at the Institute of Strategic Studies, Islamabad (ISSI) hosted the launch of the book 'Navigating Uncertainty: Perspectives on Post-Taliban Afghanistan and Geopolitical Footsteps,' edited by Mr. Sheharyar Khan and jointly published by the Hans Seidel Foundation (HSF) and the National Dialogue Forum (NDF). The speakers at the book launch included Ambassador Sohail Mahmood, Director General ISSI; Ambassador Khalid Mahmood, Chairman BOG, ISSI; Ms. Amina Khan, Director CAMEA, ISSI; Mr. Sheharyar Khan, Executive Director NDF; Ambassador Mansoor Ahmed Khan, Pakistan's former Ambassador to Afghanistan; Dr. Hassan Abbas, Distinguished Professor Near East South Asia Strategic Studies Centre (NESAC), Nation-

al Defense University in Washington D.C.; and Mr. Arno Kirchoff, Deputy Head of Mission, German Embassy, Islamabad. Mr. KhurramDastgir Khan, former Foreign Minister was the Keynote speaker and Chief Guest. Ms. Amina Khan, in her opening remarks, stated that the book represents a significant intellectual contribution providing nuanced and wide ranging perspectives on a subject of profound importance as reflected in the title. She further said that at a time when the discourse on Afghanistan often seems dominated by narratives from outside the region, it is encouraging to see such a compelling body of work emerge from within our own part of the world, not only adding to the academic discourse but more so providing authenticity often missing in external narratives. DG ISSI Ambassador Sohail Mahmood, speaking on the occasion, stated that for more than four decades now, Afghanistan has figured prominently in the news.

JAN/FEB 2025

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