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Detailed News On Page-08

Fazl stresses dialogue for democracy

Detailed News On Page-08



Billings signs up for PSL 10 player draft

Detailed News On Page-06



PM addresses NAP Apex Committee

'It's time to root out Fitna al-Khawarij'

Premier Shehbaz calls for unity, says national interest is above all

MAHNOOR ANSAR / DNA

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Friday declared that the time has come to put an end to "Fitna al-Khawarij," referring to the outlawed Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), responsible for multiple attacks on security forces and civilians. Addressing the meeting of the Central Apex Committee on the National Action Plan (NAP), the prime minister urged provinces, federal authorities, and institutions to devise a comprehensive plan to combat terrorism and ensure peace across Pakistan. Today's meeting to review the security situation in the country was attended by the civil and military leadership. Welcoming participants to the meeting, PM Shehbaz noted that improving law and order situation in the entire country is important to achieve the agenda of progress and development. He specifically pointed out the presence of infiltrators, particularly in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and said recent cross-border attacks by terrorists were met with a robust response. PM Shehbaz expressed concern over external and internal elements conducting anti-Pakistan campaigns. "Agents sitting abroad, disguised as friends, are propagating against Pakistan. This is a significant threat," he warned. "We are also cognizant of the foreign hands who are hatching conspiracies against Pakistan from within Balochistan," he added. The premier warned that enemies with malicious intent are lying in wait, emphasising the need to stay vigilant against such threats. He also emphasised the need for equipping police with modern equipment and ensuring merit based induction in the force. PM Shehbaz expressed satisfaction over

Continued on Page 06

Gandapur stresses joint efforts to eliminate terrorism

KP CM calls PM's remarks about Nov 26 PTI protests inappropriate

MEHTAB PIRZADA

KHYBER Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur expressed gratitude to the Grand Jirga for successfully resolving the longstanding Kurram dispute. Speaking to the media following the National Action Plan (NAP) Apex Committee meeting in Islamabad, the chief minister said the committee decided to collectively combat terrorism and maintain peace in Pakistan. Gandapur described the Apex Committee meeting as pivotal, highlighting its decision to fight terrorism jointly. "The security personnel, forces, and the nation are already making sacrifices to eradicate terrorism. It is now our shared responsibility to eliminate terrorism together," he stated. The CM also claimed that Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif mentioned the November 26 PTI protests in Islamabad, calling the remarks and the attitude inappropriate.

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ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's Ambassador Designate to France Mumtaz Zahra Baloch calls on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif. - DNA

Ishaq Dar to undertake landmark trip to Dhaka

This is going to be the first visit by any Pakistani foreign minister since 2012

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar will travel to Bangladesh next month in a groundbreaking development that shows warming ties between the two countries after the ouster of the pro-Indian government in August last year. This is going to be the first visit by any Pakistani foreign minister since 2012. Dar told a news conference on Thursday that he would be visiting Dhaka in February at the invitation of his Bangladeshi counterpart.

Continued on Page 06

Omar Ayub warns Talks hinge on Imran's release, commissions

Ayub also stated that the govt must allow PTI representatives to meet Imran Khan

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: Opposition leader of the National Assembly and Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leader Omar Ayub has emphasised the party's clear stance on key issues, including the release of founding chairman Imran Khan and other detainees, along with the establishment of two commissions. Speaking to the media outside a district court, Ayub said PTI's position for negotiations revolves around the release of its leadership and investigations into the 9 May and 26 November incidents. He added that the government must allow PTI representatives to meet Imran Khan, who he claimed is being held illegally. "The government's failure to adhere to the law is fostering lawlessness, which will deter investment and harm the country," Ayub stated. He also criticised the administration,

Continued on Page 06

Achakzai seeks remedy against 'stolen mandate'

He reiterated his demand for the restoration of the constitution

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pashtunkhwa Milli Awami Party (PkMAP) Chief Mahmood Khan Achakzai has demanded the restoration of the Constitution and remedy against the stolen general election mandate. Speaking alongside Majlis Wahdat-e-Muslimeen (MWM) leader Allama Raja Nasir Abbas during a media talk on Friday, Mahmood Khan Achakzai stressed the need for a roundtable conference involving

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Briefs

PM message on World Braille Day

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has issued a special message on the World Braille Day. In his message the prime minister said, 'on World Braille Day, we join the global community in celebrating the transformative power of Braille, a remarkable system that has opened doors to knowledge, communication, and independence for millions of visually impaired individuals worldwide. Braille is not just a tool for reading and writing; it is a window to inclusivity and equal opportunities, empowering individuals to lead independent and dignified lives.'

ATC grants bails to 250 PTI activists

Rejects pleas of 150 others

COUER REPORTER

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad's ATC announced its reserved decision on bail petitions filed by 400 PTI protesters involved in cases related to the November 26 protest. The verdict, delivered on Friday morning, approved bail for 250 accused while rejecting the requests of 150 others. The court granted post-arrest bail to 18 individuals implicated in the case registered at Thana Bani Gala. Additionally, in the Kohsar Police Station case number 1032, bail was approved for 43 individuals, while one application was rejected.

Holiday Notice

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

Post bunker removal

'Aggressors in Kurram to be treated as terrorists'
Kurram to be cleared of arms, bunkers; peace pact in progress, says KP CM's adviser

SHAMIM SHAHID

PESHAWAR: The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government has announced that any party resorting to aggression in the Kurram district will be treated as terrorists once the existing bunkers are dismantled. KP Chief Minister's Adviser Barrister Muhammad Saif said on Friday that as per the Apex Committee's decision, Kurram will be cleared of arms and bunkers to ensure long-term peace. Barrister Saif emphasised that both sides involved in the conflict have been given 15 days to provide a detailed plan for surrendering arms. Additionally, there will be a strict ban on the public display and use of weapons in Kurram. Fundraising for arms purchases in the region will also be prohibited. According to the KP CM's adviser, the construction of new bunkers is forbidden under the recently signed peace agreement. All existing bunkers must be dismantled within a month, after which any faction engaging in hostilities will face strict action as terrorists. He added that travel and security arrangements are

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'Nothing seen' in negotiations: Kundi

Says without opposition, apex committee has no value

BUREAU REPORT

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Governor Faisal Karim Kundi on Friday said that "nothing was seen" in the negotiations taking place between PTI and the government. The PTI yesterday sought more time from the government to consult party founder Imran Khan on the final negotiation agenda, ahead of the third meeting scheduled for next week. The first meeting between committees representing the government and the opposition PTI took place on Dec 23, kicking off long-anticipated talks between the rival parties to defuse prevailing

Continued on Page 06

Pakistani flag installed at UNSC

Pakistan will play key role in resolving international disputes: Ambassador Asim

DNA

NEW YORK: Pakistan is a responsible country and it will play key role in resolving the international disputes worldwide. It was stated by Pakistan's Alternate Permanent Representative in the United Nations, Ambassador Asim Iftikhar Ahmad. The Pakistani national flag was installed in front of the United Nations Security Council chamber as Pakistan began its eighth term as a non-permanent member (2025-26) of the 15-member body. Ambassador Asim Iftikhar Ahmad installed the national flag at the ceremony.

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Boat tragedy: FIA arrests 6, including key human trafficker

During the raid in Gujrat, authorities recovered several passports from the suspect, further incriminating him in human trafficking activities

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: The Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) has arrested six suspects including a highly sought-after human trafficker, in connection with the Libya boat tragedy. According to an FIA spokesperson, the suspects were apprehended during operations in various areas of Gujranwala and Gujrat. Among the arrested is Khurram Shehzad, identified as a key operative for international agents based in Libya. The FIA revealed that the accused charged a family Rs1mln to send a minor child to Europe via a boat. During the raid in Gujrat, authorities recovered several passports from the suspect, further incriminating him in human trafficking activities. Earlier, the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) Gujranwala zone arrested a notorious human trafficker wanted in connection with the Libya boat tragedy. As per details, the accused identified as Yasir Mehmood was on the Red Book's most-wanted list and had over five cases registered against him in Composite Circle Gujrat in 2023. Mehmood allegedly extorted millions of rupees from victims, promising to smuggle them to Europe. He would illegally transport people to Libya via Egypt and Dubai, where they were kept in inhumane conditions in safe houses.

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Sara Sharif's father attacked in prison

The attack occurred on New Year's Day and is believed to have been premeditated

AGENCIES

LONDON: Irfan Sharif, father of the late Sara Sharif, was reportedly attacked by two inmates in Belmarsh Prison, leaving him injured, according to UK media. The attackers used the lid of a steel can to cut his throat and inflicted wounds to his face. The attack occurred on New Year's Day and is believed to have been premeditated. Despite efforts by prison staff to intervene, Irfan Sharif sustained serious injuries and required stitches. British media reports state that a prison officer acted swiftly to save Sharif's life during the assault. His condition is described as critical, as authorities investigate the incident. Irfan Sharif has been under custody in connection with the death of his 10-year-old daughter, Sarah Sharif,

Continued on Page 06

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NA body calls for regularisation of railway land

The meeting concluded with a unanimous commitment to work towards strengthening Pakistan Railways and improving its services for the public

DNA

LAHORE: The National Assembly's Standing Committee on Railways Friday stressed the need to regularize railway land and lease out commercial properties to enhance revenue generation. A meeting of the National Assembly's Standing Committee was held on under the chairmanship of Rai Hassan Nawaz Khan at the Railway Headquarters Lahore. During the meeting, CEO of Pakistan Railways Amir Ali Baloch briefed the committee on the performance of the organization, its operational matters and other sectors. The meeting was attended by committee members Abrar Ahmed, Wasim Qadir, Zulfiqar Sattar Bachani, Ramesh Lal, Muhammad Ilyas Choudhry, Syed Shah Ahad Ali Shah, Muhammad Jamal Ahsan Khan, Shafiqat Abbas and Ahmad Saleem Siddiqui, along with senior Railway officers including Chairman Pakistan Railways Syed Mazhar Ali Shah, CEO Amir Ali Baloch and IG Railways Rao Sardar Ali. Amir Ali Baloch provided a detailed briefing on the facilities being offered on passenger trains, including the introduction of modern dining cars,

water dispensers and Wi-Fi on the Green Line, Shalimar, and Karakoram trains. He also highlighted the launch of e-ticketing, refund policies, internet services and a Rabta app, which have significantly improved passengers' trust in the railway services. The committee expressed satisfaction with these developments. Additionally, the committee was briefed on the efforts to remove encroachments and lease railway land, as well as address issues related to 'Kachi Abadis'. Committee members stressed the need to regularize railway land and lease out commercial properties to enhance revenue generation for Pakistan Railways. In response to a question on the Quetta Railway Station suicide bombing, IG Railways Rao Sardar Ali shared detailed information about the attack. He informed the committee that compensation for the martyrs and injured was in its final stages. He suggested the construction of security walls at railway stations, the installation of walk-through gates, increased personnel for railway police and the allocation of funds for the Quick Response Force (QRF). The committee approved these suggestions and assured that the issues related to personnel and scales would be

addressed. Chairman Rai Hassan Nawaz Khan expressed the committee's commitment to sending recommendations to the government for improving railway services. He also approved the minutes of the previous meeting, praising the informative railway station visit that had taken place earlier on Thursday. He appreciated the cleanliness system at the Police Helpline Centre and the Executive Washrooms built under the Public-Private Partnership at Lahore Railway Station. Furthermore, he proposed a special grant for the renovation of Lahore Railway Station, which was supported by the committee members. He instructed the railway authorities to expedite the ML-1 Project and ensure timely train operations. The meeting focused on reviewing the performance and progress of Pakistan Railways and included comprehensive briefings, site visits, and discussions on improving railway operations. On the first day, the committee was given detailed briefings on the functioning of various departments of Pakistan Railways. The meeting concluded with a unanimous commitment to work towards strengthening Pakistan Railways and improving its services for the public.



FAISALABAD: Senior photojournalist Muhammad Tahir distributing certificates among participants of photographic workshop.—DNA

Photographic workshop held in Faisalabad

DNA

FAISALABAD: Department of Communication, University of Faisalabad organized photographic workshop in which Photojournalist Muhammad Tahir Educated Students about the importance of digital photography. He also taught them how digital photography can be done in a practical way and told about the camera for the new student in photography. He highlighted about three things are very important in a camera ISO - Aperture - Shutter Speed. He shed light on types of photography, landscape, wildlife, portrait, briefing on this occasion.

DC Abbottabad launches 7th agricultural census

ABBOTTABAD: Deputy Commissioner and Census District Officer Abbottabad, Sanaullah Khan Friday officially inaugurated the field operations for Pakistan's 7th Agricultural Census at a ceremony held at the Deputy Commissioner's Office. DC Abbottabad provided tablets to the field teams for data collection and emphasized the importance of accuracy and diligence in their work. He stressed that the census data would play a crucial role in developing plans for the advancement of the agriculture sector.—APP

Air pollution persistent threat to lives of Peshawarites

PESHAWAR: Once known as City of Flowers, Peshawar is presently confronted with a monster challenge of air pollution that are posing a serious threat to its residents due to an unchecked smoke emission of hundreds of thousands of vehicles, brick kilns and industrial units mostly operating in its urban areas. The visitors that once impressed by the fragrance of Gul-e-Dawoodi in Peshawar, is now inhaling the growing thick air smoke mostly emitting from thousands of vehicles, brick-kilns, marble units of Warsak Road and chip board factories operating at Hayatabad Industrial Estate, burning of tyres, hospitals waste's burning, which

could be seen even with a naked eye while standing on top of Suray bridge near Jinnah Park, Peshawar City. In Peshawar, the Particulate Matter (PM 2.5) pollution is higher than limits set by the National Environmental Quality Standards (NEQS) with a bigger impact on people's lives having more exposure to toxic air increases age-specific mortality risk. "The PM 2.5 pollution enhances an age-specific mortality risk, and the residents of Peshawar are highly vulnerable to it mostly due to an unregulated traffic, brick kilns and chip board factories," said Professor Dr Muhammad Shafiqul Rehman, former Chairman Environ-

mental Science Department at the University of Peshawar while talking to APP. "Basically, PM 2.5 pollution is a complex mixture of extremely small and light particles that stays for longer in the air and once inhaled, can affect people's hearts, nose to lungs, respiratory system besides leading to high blood pressure, strokes, asthma, cancers and other chronic chest related diseases," he said. Dr Shafiqul Rehman said that the air quality of Peshawar is very poor. He said air quality should be around 25 milligrams (mg) per cubic meter as per WHO standards, adding if the amount of dust, smoke.—APP

PIC performs over 2000, heart surgeries in 2024

OUR CORRESPONDENT

PESHAWAR: Peshawar Institute of Cardiology (PIC), the only dedicated cardiac hospital in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, on Friday announced the year 2024 as highly successful by performing over 2,000 cardiac procedures, including 1,901 open-heart surgeries (236 on children), thus becoming one of the largest heart centers in Pakistan. The hospital's annual performance report highlights a significant impact on cardiac care in the region. According to the spokesperson Miss Rifkat Anjum, in 2024, PIC's outpatient department (OPD) received over 69,489 patients, including over 10,363 children. The hospital

performed 15,143 angiographies and angioplasties. PIC also provided a beacon of hope for children with congenital heart defects, successfully closing atrial septal defects (holes in the heart) in 811 children using minimally invasive devices. PIC's emergency department treated 16,895 cardiac patients, including 653 children. Under the Sehat Card Plus program, 19,701 patients received free angiography, angioplasty, surgeries, and other treatments. In a significant advancement, PIC performed 16 transcatheter aortic valve implantations (TAVI), a minimally invasive procedure, setting a new standard for cardiac care in the province. PIC also provided exceptional care to patients from other provinces of Pakistan and neighboring

Afghanistan. Approximately 1,100 Afghan patients received OPD consultations, and 300 underwent angiography, angioplasty, cardiac surgery and other cardiac treatments. She added. The hospital's state-of-the-art facilities, including cardiac MRI, CT scans, ultrasound, X-rays, and general MRI, benefited 35,756 patients. PIC's internationally (CAP) accredited laboratory conducted over 556,706 tests. In 2024, PIC achieved several national and international recognitions and milestones. The hospital became the first in South Asia to introduce TherOX super saturation oxygen therapy. PIC also gained national recognition for its minimally invasive valve replacements and other procedures on both children and adults.—APP

Manshera woman becomes trailblazer by introducing snail farming

PESHAWAR: Inspired by international practices where snail mucus is highly valued for its cosmetic benefits, Sidra Sajjad, an ambitious female entrepreneur from Manshera district in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, has become a pioneer in introducing snail farming to Pakistan. With prior experience in herbal business, Sidra was intrigued by the economic potential of snail farming after reading an article highlighting its benefits. This spurred her to conduct extensive research online and convinced her father, Sajjad Akhtar Swati, a retired primary school teacher, to support her vision. In 2021, she established a snail farming operation on a three-kanal (approximately 16,335 square feet) plot in her hometown. "Snail farming is a burgeoning industry centered around the extraction of snail slime, which is a sought-after ingredient in cosmetics and skincare products," Sidra explained while speaking with media. She noted that snail mucus contains antioxidants known to combat signs of aging, such as wrinkles, uneven skin tone, and sagging. "I faced a lot of problems and became extremely worried at several stages after facing hardships and even failures, but remain committed as a result of which my experience proved successful," she shared. Her enterprise, branded as Prime Snail Mucus, has become a success story, thanks largely to the unwavering support of her family. "Our farm houses over 500 kilograms of wild snails in a natural environment maintained by a team of 32 workers," Sidra shared.—APP

Pak Navy holds fleet annual efficiency competition parade

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Navy fleet annual efficiency competition parade was held Friday at Pakistan Navy Dockyard, Karachi. Chief of the Naval Staff (CNS) Admiral Naveed Ashraf, was the chief guest, said a news release issued by Directorate General Public Relations (Pak Navy). Pak Navy holds fleet annual efficiency competition parade. The event marked the culmination of a professionally rewarding and eventful operational year for the combatants of Pakistan Navy Fleet, including warships, submarines, and aviation assets. Upon arrival, the chief guest was received by Commander Pakistan Fleet, Rear Admiral Abdul Munib, and a smartly turned-out contingent pre-

sented the Guard of Honour. In his address, Chief of the Naval Staff expressed complete satisfaction and confidence in the operational readiness of Pakistan Navy Fleet. He lauded the dedication and professionalism of officers and sailors in safely and efficiently achieving the operational objectives and milestones for the year 2024. The CNS acknowledged the valuable contributions of Fleet towards maritime security and the protection of national and international Sea Lines of Communication. He highlighted Pakistan Navy's efforts to ensure the security of strategic maritime zones, particularly Gwadar Port and maritime projects under CPEC. The CNS also elaborated on the evolving dynamics of the region, particularly the maritime security environment,

which necessitated that Pakistan Navy remained ever-ready to address any threats to the nation's maritime frontiers. Earlier, in his welcome address, the Commander Pakistan Fleet highlighted the operational achievements of the Fleet during the preceding year. He emphasized that the Fleet maintained a high level of combat readiness throughout the year, with its units participating in various bilateral and multilateral exercises in both home and foreign waters. The Fleet undertook multiple Regional Maritime Security Patrols and Overseas Deployments. During the ceremony, the Chief of the Naval Staff presented efficiency awards and trophies to the best-performing squadrons and units of Pakistan Navy Fleet Command.

ISSI holds seminar on latest discriminatory U.S. sanctions and assertions about Pakistan's missile program

ISLAMABAD: The Arms Control and Disarmament Centre (ACDC) at the Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI), hosted a Roundtable Discussion on "Latest Discriminatory U.S. Sanctions and Assertions about Pakistan's Missile Program - Implications and Challenges." Eminent speakers included Ambassador Zamir Akram, Advisor to the SPD; Dr. Zafar Nawaz Jaspal, Dean of Social Sciences and Professor at the School of Politics and International Relations, QAU; and Ambassador Tahir Hussain Andrabi, DG ACDIS, MOFA. The event brought together senior diplomats, renowned scholars, and practitioners to reflect on the nature of the U.S. sanctions and their implications. In his welcome remarks, DG ISSI Ambassador Sohail Mahmood highlighted the recent U.S. sanctions against Pakistani entities and the surprising statement by a senior U.S. official, Jon Finer, about Pakistan's long-range ballistic missiles. Highlighting the Foreign Office's response to these developments, he noted that the alleged threat perception from Pakistan was characterized as "unfortunate" and U.S. allegations as "unfounded, devoid of rationality and sense of history." The Foreign Office had also underlined that U.S.'s discriminatory policies accentuated military asymmetries in South Asia and undermined strategic stability in the region. The Foreign Office had also affirmed that Pakistan's strategic program and capabilities were a 'sacred trust' of the people, it enjoyed complete consensus in the country, and was not subject to any outside intrusion or compromise. Ambassador Sohail Mahmood stressed the importance of constructively engaging the U.S. in order to: (i) ensure that the U.S. recognized Pakistan's legitimate security concerns and legitimate defence needs; (ii) stress the imperative of fair, equal and non-discriminatory treatment; and (iii) effectively address the unfounded claim made by Mr. Jon Finer. He concluded that, in the end, strategic clarity and national resolve would carry the day for Pakistan. Earlier, in his introductory remarks, Malik Qasim Mustafa Director ACDC ISSI, highlighted the continuing challenges posed by the U.S.'s inconsistent approach towards Pakistan. He stated that by imposing these discriminatory sanctions the U.S. has ignored the fragile dynamics of strategic stability in South Asia. Pakistan has faced misperceptions about its strategic program in the past and it has always sought to address international concerns, while countering baseless allegations. Pakistan would remain committed to promoting peace and stability in South Asia.—APP

The importance of sunscreen and how to choose the right one

DR MUBASHIR DAHA

Living in Islamabad, known for its picturesque landscapes and vibrant urban life, means that we often find ourselves outdoors, exposed to the sun's rays. While soaking up the sun can feel refreshing, especially in Islamabad's moderate climate, it's essential to protect your skin from harmful UV radiation. Sunscreen plays a crucial role in maintaining healthy skin, preventing premature aging, and reducing the risk of pigmentation and skin cancer. Islamabad experiences long sunny days for much of the year, making sunscreen more than just an accessory—it's a necessity. Ultraviolet (UV) radiation from the sun

is one of the leading causes of skin damage. Without sunscreen, prolonged exposure to the sun's UVA and UVB rays can lead to sunburns, dark spots, and wrinkles. Even during Islamabad's cooler months, UV rays can penetrate the clouds, causing harm. Exposure to UV rays without protection accelerates the appearance of fine lines and wrinkles, making your skin look older than it is. Sunscreen helps prevent photoaging, keeping your skin youthful and vibrant. Islamabad's diverse weather conditions can trigger hyperpigmentation issues, especially for people with sensitive skin. Sunscreen prevents these dark patches caused by sun exposure. Skin cancer, particularly

melanoma, can be triggered by excessive UV exposure. Daily sunscreen reduces this risk by acting as a shield between your skin and harmful radiation. Not all sunscreens are created equal, and it's essential to choose one that suits your skin type to ensure maximum protection. Some people have their natural skin oily or acne-prone. Oily skin can become more pronounced in a city like Islamabad, where the humidity levels fluctuate, especially during the monsoon season. They should use Sebum Control sunscreen which is gel-based or water-based. These are lightweight, non-greasy, and won't clog pores. Look for Non-Comedogenic sunscreen that won't cause breakouts. A broad-spectrum

SPF 40 or higher is good enough for protecting against both UVA and UVB rays for oily skin people using sebum control sunscreen. Some people have their natural skin dry which becomes more dry during Islamabad's colder months. If your skin feels tight and flaky. Choose a Moisturizing Sunscreen. Look for products that have hydrating ingredients like hyaluronic acid, glycerin or aloe Vera. Opt for Cream-Based Formulas, these tend to provide extra hydration and are better for dry skin. SPF recommendation is 60 and above is ideal, especially during sunny winter days. If your skin easily reacts to products or gets irritated under the sun, pick a physical (mineral) sunscreen,

these contain zinc oxide or titanium dioxide and are less likely to irritate sensitive skin. Go for sunscreens, labeled fragrance-free and hypoallergenic. SPF Recommendation is at least 60 or above is sufficient for daily protection. Combination skin can be tricky, as some areas may be oily while others are dry. For those living in Islamabad, where weather conditions fluctuate, you need a balanced sunscreen. Use a lightweight, lotion-based sunscreen. This provides hydration without making oily areas greasy. Look for matte finish, this will keep your skin shine-free, especially in Islamabad's warmer months. SPF recommendation is 60 or higher for balanced protection.



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National Days and Armed Forces Days

JANUARY

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

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Motorway Police.....9270601-20
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Polyclinic.....9218300-09
Shifa International 4603666



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RDA.....5555864
TMA.....5770886
Cantonment Board 9270151-3

Water Tank

Islamabad.....0321-5744480

Naqvi announces upgradation of National Police Academy

National Police Academy would be transformed into an international-standard institution, attracting officers from other countries for training. Commandant National Police Academy and relevant officials were also present on the occasion

MAHNOOR ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Federal Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi visited the academy and announced its upgradation. During his visit, Interior Minister conducted a detailed inspection of the academy, hostels, and mess, and reviewed the facilities provided to the probationers. He met with the under-training officers and inquired about the facilities. He also visited the officers' mess, where he had a meal, checked its quality and praised food. He directed that high-standard residential facilities should be provided to the probationary officers and also sought the master plan of the National Police Academy. Mohsin Naqvi stated that a new master plan for the NPA should be prepared by an international consultant. He announced that a check of Rs. 250 million from the National Police Foundation would be handed over to the NPA soon. He added that NPA should be made a financially autonomous institution. He directed that the reorganization of the National Police Academy should be completed within three months. He also emphasized that all necessary measures must be taken immediately to grant the status of university to the National



Police Academy. Mohsin Naqvi underscored the need to update the ASPs' courses according to modern requirements. He also announced the addition of new courses on counter-terrorism, anti-riots, cyber, and other fields at the academy. He stated that the best officers would be appointed in the National Police Academy like the Military Academy Kakul. He said that officers appointed in the police academy would receive better allowances and facilities. He stated that a model police station and training laboratories

would also be established at the National Police Academy to provide training to the officers in this regard. Federal Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi also chaired a high-level meeting to discuss the reorganization of the National Police Academy. He stated that the

National Police Academy would be transformed into an international-standard institution, attracting officers from other countries for training. Commandant National Police Academy and relevant officials were also present on the occasion.

PML-N sacrifices political interests: Rana

Responding to a question about the military court's decision on individuals involved in the May 9 incident, Rana Sanaullah commended the Army Chief's balanced approach

ISLAMABAD: Special assistant to PM on political affairs Rana Sanaullah Khan Friday stated that the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) has sacrificed its political interests to rescue Pakistan from default and revive the country's economy, which was in a state of emergency. In a recent interview with a private news channel, Rana Sanaullah stressed the importance of collective effort to strengthen Pakistan's economy, urging all stakeholders to work together with the government to achieve a better economy. By working together all stakeholders including PTI can pool their resources, expertise and knowledge to drive economic growth and development, he added. In a firm response to PTI's upcoming demands, he declared that Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf will table a 'Charter of Demands' in the next round of talks with the government, adding, once PTI submits its formal, written demands we will convene with our legal experts and deliver a decisive rebuttal. Responding to a question about the military court's decision on individuals involved in the May 9 incident, Rana Sanaullah commended the Army Chief's balanced approach. He advised PTI to refrain from making provocative statements, acknowledging that the military has its own system of accountability and justice.

China's approach to addressing ecological issues a role model

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Ms. Sabheen Ghoury, Parliamentary Secretary for Information Technology, called for consistent policies among governments to achieve sustainable progress, stating that environmental challenges were transnational and necessitate a collaborative approach. She spoke at a roundtable on "Pak-China's Vision for a Sustainable Future: Ecological Civilization, Environmental Security, and Global Harmony," organized by the Institute of Regional Studies (IRS) in collaboration with China Global Television Network (CGTN) Urdu. President IRS Ambassador Jauhar Saleem opened the session by stressing the roundtable's significance amid major environmental changes. He commended China for its efforts to mitigate the adverse envi-

ronmental impacts of rapid industrialization. He noted that, like their cooperation in economic and defense sectors, Pakistan and China also collaborate on critical issues such as climate resilience, mitigation, and adaptation. Mr. Tasawar Zaman Babar, Program Coordinator at CGTN Urdu, commended Pakistan's longstanding friendship with China, which has persisted through various administrations. He emphasized the importance of aligning economic development with environmental concerns in light of the current climate crisis. Mr. Khalid Taimur Akram, Executive Director of the Pakistan Research Center for a Community with Shared Future (PRCCSF), echoed Ms. Ghoury's sentiments, emphasizing that environmental hazards have regional, rather than national, implications. He argued that policies should reflect this regional scope and

praised CPEC for its alignment with China's Clean Green Energy initiative, which includes various renewable energy and water conservation projects. Mr. Asif Shuja Khan, former Director-General of Pakistan's Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), highlighted the challenges of the 18th Amendment, which has led to a disconnect among provincial EPAs. He recommended focusing strategically on the transport and agriculture sectors and suggested measures such as utilizing low-sulphur coal, conducting Strategic Environmental Assessments (SEA) for the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), and planting trees along its route to promote carbon neutrality. Dr. Shakeel Ahmad Ramay, CEO of the Asian Institute of Eco-civilization, Research, and Development (AIERD), discussed the Chinese notion of Ecological Civilization,

rooted in Confucian teachings. He warned against hastily adopting Electric Vehicles (EVs) without sufficient infrastructure and emphasized the need to balance green transitions with livelihood concerns. Mr. Irfan Tariq, former Director-General of the Ministry of Climate Change, emphasized the need for Pakistan to focus on improving air quality and preserving glaciers by learning from China's experiences. Dr. Rizwan Naseer, Senior Research Fellow at IRS, discussed China's role in global governance, especially concerning unconventional security challenges like climate change. He praised China's Green Revolution and its commitment to green energy, noting that China was the largest producer of various renewable energy sources, including hydro, wind, and solar. ...

CDNS achieves Rs 700b savings target

ISLAMABAD: The Central Directorate of National Savings (CDNS) has realized a target of Rs 700 billion in fresh bonds and achieved 42.42 percent of the annual target for the first half of the current fiscal year, from July 1 to December 31st. The senior official of CDNS told APP on Friday that the CDNS has set an annual target of Rs 1650 billion for the current Fiscal Year, 2024-25, which will promote the country's saving culture. Similarly, the CDNS has set a target of Rs 170 billion in investment in Islamic finance for the Current Fiscal Year, which will lead to the growth of the Islamic economy in the country. Replying to a question, he said that the CDNS has realized a target of Rs1.742 trillion in fresh bonds and exceeded 100 percent of the annual target in the last fiscal year 2023-24, from July 1 to June 30. National Savings has set an annual target of Rs 1.7 trillion for the year 2023-24; it is encouraging that this year, "We surpassed the 100 percent of the annual target." The CDNS surpassed the annual target and achieved the target of Rs 1.6 trillion in fresh bonds in the previous fiscal year 2022-23, he said. He said it was an Rs 200 billion additional annual target than the target of Rs 1300 billion for the previous financial year 2021-22. The CDNS has set a reviewed saving target of Rs 1.4 trillion for the financial year (2021-22) which will promote a savings culture in the country, he said, adding that given the current market trend in the country, the ambitious target had been set to further improve the savings culture. The official said that work was being done on institutional reforms in CDNS and new reforms and innovations were being introduced. At this time Automated Teller Machine (ATM) has also been introduced in CDNS which will provide enough facilities to the users," he added. The official said that the directorate had set a target of Rs 75 billion for the new financial year 2023-24 for Islamic finance bonds. Replying to a question; he said the CDNS aimed to introduce new dimensions in the Islamic finance sector. Islamic finance has a very important role in the global financial sector at this time and a large part of the economy of many major countries currently includes Islamic finance," he added. -APP

President condoles death of Nayyar Bokhari's wife

ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari on Friday offered his heartfelt condolences to Secretary General Pakistan Peoples Party Parliamentarians Nayyar Hussain Bokhari over the death of his wife. Expressing deep grief and sorrow, the president conveyed his sympathies to Nayyar Hussain Bokhari and his family. In a press statement, President Zardari prayed for the grant of eternal peace to the departed soul and courage for the bereaved family to bear the loss with patience. -APP

ANF recovers over 10 kg drugs in 5 operations

RAWALPINDI: Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) while conducting five operations recovered over 10 drugs worth Rs 1.8 million and arrested five accused, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman on Friday. He informed that 1.605 kg drug was recovered from the possession of an accused rounded up near a hospital in Korangi, Karachi. The arrested accused confessed to selling drugs to the students of educational institutions. 3.6 kg hashish was recovered from the possession of the accused arrested near a mosque in Sector G-9, Islamabad. 3.6 kg hashish was recovered from a drug dealer arrested near Sona Khan Chowk, Quetta. 1 kg ice was recovered from the accused held near Bohana Chowk on Jhang Road, Faisalabad. -APP

IRSA releases 28,100 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD: Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Friday released 28,100 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 39,100 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1473.51 feet and was 75.51 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 16,200 cusecs and 6,000 cusecs respectively. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1132.95 feet, which was 82.95 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded 4,800 cusecs and 4,000 cusecs respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded as 13,600, 20,600, 9,000 and 1,100 cusecs respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 11,800 cusecs of water released at Nowshera and 6,300 cusecs released from River Chenab at Marala. -APP

پیشکشیں مطلوب ہیں

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ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Somalia Sheikhnur Mahamed Hassan called on Dean of the African Group Mohamad Karmoune, Ambassador of Morocco. Both sides discussed matters of mutual interest. Ambassador of Somalia has recently arrived in Pakistan. -DNA

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Briefs

PM condoles death of Nayer Bokhari's wife

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Friday expressed his deep grief over the demise of the wife of former Senate Chairman and Pakistan Peoples Party's senior leader Nayer Hussain Bokhari. The prime minister condoled with Nayer Bokhari and prayed for peace for the departed soul and strength for the bereaved family to bear the loss, according to a PM Office press release.—APP

Police arrest 8 accused over renting rules violations

RAWALPINDI: Rawalpindi District Police here on Friday carried out search operations in the jurisdiction of different police stations and arrested eight renting rules violators. According to a police spokesman, the search operations were conducted in order to maintain law and order and flush out suspects following the directions of City Police Officer (CPO) Syed Khalid Hamdani. He informed, senior police officers and police personnel including women police took part in the search operations. Police checked houses, shops, hotels, tenants and a large number of individuals during the search operations. Police arrested eight suspects namely Anayat, Aslam, Akseer, Aziz, Fayyaz, Essa Wali, Husnain and Shahzaib. He said that police were more vigilant to keep an eye on suspects and maintain law and order in Rawalpindi.—APP

Syedaal discusses progress on Balochistan uplift projects

ISLAMABAD: Deputy Chairman Senate Syedaal Khan here on Friday held meetings with Members of the National Assembly, Senators and tribal leaders to discuss legislative matters, progress on development projects in Balochistan, and other key issues. During a meeting with Shahadat Awan, Hidayat Ullah Khan, Manzoor Ahmed Kakar and others, the Deputy Chairman Senate highlighted the government's successful economic policies and said that the country's economy is on the right track. Referring to the Urhaan Pakistan initiative, he described it as a testament to these policies and expressed confidence that it would fulfill Pakistan's vision for economic progress. "The Uraan Pakistan initiative is gaining public support and reflects our commitment to economic growth," he said, applauding Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and his team for their commendable efforts. Syedaal Khan reiterated the government's priority of providing relief to the common man, stressing the importance of collective efforts to address national challenges.—APP

Combating air pollution

ABDUL REHMAN

Air pollution is one of the most pressing environmental challenges facing the world today. It refers to the contamination of the atmosphere by harmful substances, including gases, particulates, and biological molecules, which pose risks to human health, ecosystems, and the planet as a whole. With rapid urbanization, industrialization, and increasing energy demands, the issue of air pollution has escalated, making it a global concern that requires urgent action.

1) Understanding Air Pollution Air pollution has two sources: natural and man-made. The main natural sources include volcanic eruptions, wildfires, and dust storms, which have the capacity to emit a great amount of particulates and gases into the atmosphere. However, human activities remain the largest sources of air pollution. Industrial processes, vehicular emissions, fossil fuel combustion in energy generation, and agricultural activities emit a host of pollutants including CO₂, NO_x, SO₂, and PM_{2.5} and PM₁₀. Urban areas are more susceptible because of the concentration of vehicles, factories, and construc-

tion activities. In addition, the use of household fuels such as coal and wood in developing countries contributes significantly to indoor air pollution, which worsens the problem. 2) Health Effects of Air Pollution Air pollution is one of the high health risks that affects millions of people around the world. Fine particulate matter, or PM_{2.5}, penetrates deep into the lungs and bloodstream and is associated with respiratory and cardiovascular ailments. Long exposure to polluted air causes a chronic condition among individuals, like asthma, bronchitis, lung cancer, and heart disease. According to the World Health Organization, there are around seven million premature deaths annually because of air pollution. It tends to affect vulnerable populations such as children and the elderly. This exposure during the early years affects lung development while the elderly is more susceptible to chronic diseases. Airborne pollutants also cause neurodegenerative diseases, especially cognitive decline and Alzheimer's. 3) Environmental Impacts The environmental impact of air pollution is equally alarming. Nitrogen oxides and sulfur dioxide are pollutants that contribute to acid rain which affects the soil, water

bodies, and vegetation. Airborne particulates reduce visibility and damage ecosystems by depositing toxic substances on plants and water surfaces. Air pollution accelerates climate change. Greenhouse gases, which include carbon dioxide and methane, trap heat in the atmosphere and cause global warming. Black carbon, a constituent of particulate matter, absorbs sunlight and contributes to the melting of glaciers and polar ice caps. These changes disturb ecosystems, imperil biodiversity, and increase extreme weather events. 4) Economic and Social Impacts The economic burden of air pollution is substantial. Healthcare costs associated with treating pollution-related illnesses strain public health systems, while reduced workforce productivity due to illness or premature deaths affects economic growth. Furthermore, air pollution damages infrastructure, agricultural yields, and tourism, leading to significant financial losses. Socially, air pollution increases inequalities, influencing poor people as they usually live near industrial stations or freeways. These communities have a higher exposure level and do not have good health care so are worse off against the effects of polluted air. 5) Dealing with

Air Pollution 6) Issues of air pollution require a multi-dimensional approach. The government needs to enforce stricter rules on industries' and vehicles' emissions. Investing in renewable sources such as solar and wind can minimize reliance on fossil fuels. Public transportation, car pooling, and electric vehicles can be encouraged to minimize the vehicular form of emission. At the individual level, using energy-efficient appliances, reducing waste, and planting trees can contribute to cleaner air. Public awareness campaigns are necessary to educate people on the need to reduce pollution and adapt to sustainable ways of living. International cooperation is essential in tackling trans-boundary air pollution. The Paris Accord has emphasized global efforts to mitigate climate change and reduce air pollution. Conclusion This is a critical challenge that requires attention now. Far-reaching impacts of air pollution in health, environment, and economy make it very necessary to bring people together in collective action. Sustainable practices, stricter regulations, and awareness would help humanity breathe cleaner air for the betterment of generations to come.



ISLAMABAD: Coordinator to PM for Climate Change, Romina Khurshid Alam presenting shield to CEO of AKF in Pakistan Akhtar Iqbal during signing ceremony of Letter of Understanding on Friday.

NADRA revamps services with technology, awareness push

He revealed that NADRA plans to expand its reach by opening new office branches in multiple cities across the country, aiming to reduce congestion and provide more convenient access to its services for citizens

ISLAMABAD: NADRA Spokesperson Syed Shababhat Friday said that NADRA Friday stressed the importance of national and civil registration awareness for public, unveiling plans to revolutionize services with cutting-edge technology and new offices nationwide. "NADRA is committed to revolutionizing its services through cutting-edge technology and enhancing public awareness about the importance of civil registration," said Syed Shababhat, NADRA Spokesperson said while talking to a private news channel. He emphasized the importance of registering life events, such

as deaths, marriages and births, with NADRA, stressing that it would greatly facilitate citizens in obtaining other essential documents and traveling. Moreover, he highlighted the crucial role of the media in raising awareness about the significance of registering life events, appealing to the media to encourage citizens to take advantage of NADRA's services. By doing so, citizens would not only ensure their own convenience but also contribute to their safety and security. He emphasized that these documents are vital for civil registration, which in turn plays a crucial role

in national registration. Essentially, identification documents serve as a bridge between citizens and government services, facilitating access to essential services and benefits, he added. Responding to a question, he revealed that to combat child trafficking and safeguard minors, NADRA is set to incorporate advanced security features in the B Form registration certificate for children above 10 years, clarifying that this new measure will not be retroactive for existing B Form holders. He pointed out that these enhanced security features will effectively prevent identity

theft and misuse, thereby playing a vital role in curbing crimes such as fraudulent identity cards, illegal passport issuance and human trafficking. To another question, he also encouraged mobile users to shift to digital platforms, advising them to visit NADRA's social media sites and website before physically visiting the office. By doing so, citizens can utilize the NADRA PAK ID website and mobile app to fulfill their document requirements, thereby avoiding office rush, he added. He announced that NADRA is set to introduce further modifications and technological advancements

in its services, revealing that Artificial Intelligence (AI) technology will soon be integrated to enhance efficiency and user experience. He advised citizens to call NADRA's helpline number prior to visiting the office, ensuring they have all necessary documents completed to avoid any inconvenience and facilitate a smoother experience. He revealed that NADRA plans to expand its reach by opening new office branches in multiple cities across the country, aiming to reduce congestion and provide more convenient access to its services for citizens.

Call for improved punctuality, strict encroachment action

ISLAMABAD: The National Assembly Standing Committee on Railways emphasized the need for the Ministry of Railways to prioritize punctuality in train operations and take stern action against individuals encroaching on commercial land. The committee meeting, chaired by Rai Hassan Nawaz Khan, MNA, in Lahore highlighted train punctuality as a major issue, to which the Chief Executive Officer responded that Pakistan Railways was working to improve it. The committee was briefed by the Divisional Superintendent of Pakistan Railways, Lahore, on various aspects, including the organizational structure, human resources, jurisdiction, total track length, number of stations, closed sections, punctuality, commercial earnings, land lease revenues, removed encroachments, encroached lands, infrastructure improvements, public facilities, measures to enhance land

revenue, and the work plan for the Financial Year 2024-25 of the Lahore Division. A committee member later inquired about the ministry's policy on encroached land. The committee advised the Secretary of the Ministry of Railways to provide a detailed briefing on the matter in the next meeting. A committee member raised concerns about the security and cleanliness of the dry port, to which the Divisional Superintendent responded that the issue was being addressed. Another member inquired about improvements in Pakistan Railways' public service. The committee had directed the Chief Executive Officer of Pakistan Railways to provide a detailed briefing on the matter in the next meeting. Following this, the committee visited the Lahore Railway Station and the Old Diesel Locomotive Shed of Pakistan Railways. Later, the committee proceeded to the of-

fice of the Divisional Superintendent of the Workshops Division, Pakistan Railways, in Mughalpur, where the concerned Divisional Superintendent briefed them on the overall workshops under his jurisdiction. The Secretary of the Ministry of Railways briefed the committee on the history of the Workshops Division and informed them that the ministry had halted the import of freight wagons, which were now being manufactured in Mughalpur to Chinese standards. The chairman suggested increasing the capacity of freight trains to meet high demand, a suggestion acknowledged by the secretary. The committee recommended that the ministry prioritize freight trains to boost revenue. The meeting was attended by MNAs Ramesh Lal, Waseem Qadir, Ibrar Ahmad, Zulfiqar Bachani, Syed Shah Ahad Ali Shah, Shafiq Abbas.—APP

DIG orders strict action against criminal elements

ISLAMABAD: Deputy Inspector General (DIG) Syed Ali Raza chaired a high-level meeting on Friday to review crime statistics and discuss strategies to curb criminal activities. A police spokesperson told APP that the meeting assessed the performance of all police stations, with a particular focus on apprehending proclaimed offenders involved in heinous crimes, eliminating drug dealers and criminal elements, and making patrolling more purposeful and effective. DIG Raza emphasized that the protection of citizens' lives and property remains the Islamabad Police's foremost priority, he said. The meeting was attended by Zonal SPs, SDPOs and SHOs. During the session, DIG Raza issued strict instructions to prevent incidents of robbery, burglary, and theft. DIG Raza directed officers to ensure the arrests of proclaimed offenders, habitual criminals, and court absconders.—APP



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MoCC&EC signs MoU with AKF for rural areas uplift

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Ministry of Climate Change and Environmental Coordination (MoCC), Government of Pakistan and the Aga Khan Foundation, Pakistan (AKFP) signed a letter of Understanding to collaborate on livelihood security of the people living in rural areas of Pakistan including coastal areas of Sindh and rural areas of Gilgit-Baltistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The signing ceremony took place at the Ministry of Climate Change and Environmental Coordination where senior officials from the Ministry including Ms. Rumina Khurshid Alam- Coordinator to the Prime Minister on CC & EC, Secretary - Ms. Aisha Humera Ch. and from Aga Khan Foundation, Pakistan, Mr. Amin Feerasta, Chairman of National Committee AKF, Pakistan, Mr. Akhtar Iqbal, Chief Executive Officer of AKF, Pakistan, Ms. Laila Naz Taj, Director, Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN) Pakistan Communications, Mr. Irshad Khan Abbasi, Programme Advisor, Rural Development, Civil Society and Habitat and Mr. Naveed Sethi, Chief Financial Officer, AKF Pakistan participated in the event. Pakistan faces significant climate-related challenges, particularly in the coastal areas of Sindh and the mountainous regions of Gilgit-Baltistan and Chitral (GBC). These areas are grappling with extreme weather events, glacial melting, rise in sea-level, agricultural vulnerabilities, and water scarcity, all of which threaten the livelihoods and well-being of communities. The Ministry acknowledges the need for targeted action to mitigate these impacts and support the socio-economic development of these regions. Recognizing the urgent need to address the growing challenges of climate change in Pakistan's vulnerable regions, the Ministry of Climate Change & Environmental Coordination (MoCC&EC) and the Aga Khan Foundation, Pakistan (AKFP), have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to enhance resilience and promote livelihood security in rural and underserved areas.—APP

How likely is a ceasefire in Gaza?

AS the Gaza ceasefire talks stall yet again, some analysts argue that Donald Trump's inauguration could be the key. However, the prospects for ending the war are dependent upon a variety of other factors that are making an Israeli victory impossible. Despite the recent progress towards securing a ceasefire in the Gaza Strip, the Zionist regime has again employed its delaying tactics in order to find the opportune moment. While the Resistance in Gaza has proven flexible on the fine details of a prisoner exchange and cessation of hostilities, it has also proven steadfast on the battlefield, making an Israeli victory declaration implausible. The popularly accepted analysis at this stage is that with the start of Donald Trump's second term in office, the possibility of a Gaza ceasefire will increase greatly. It is believed that Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu could even present the implementation of such a deal as a gift to Trump; kick-starting his Presidency with a diplomatic breakthrough. It is also true that the Zionist Entity's richest billionaire, Miriam Adelson, had pledged 100 million dollars to the Trump campaign, with the quid pro quo that in return for backrolling his presidential bid, he would permit an Israeli annexation of the occupied West Bank. The reality that must be accepted when it comes to the Israeli approach to a Gaza ceasefire/prisoner exchange agreement is that the United States will not use its leverage to secure one and instead only seeks to support the Zionist entity towards securing the best possible deal. Therefore, arguments presented about the possibility of the Trump administration actually using Washington's leverage are ludicrous and should be discarded as fanciful. The reason why Donald Trump could make a difference in this case comes down to two major factors: His support within the Zionist regime and his willingness to permit them to completely crush the idea of a so-called "Two-State solution". There is no one that commands quite as much public support amongst Israelis as Donald Trump, in fact, he is more loved by them than his own population in the United States. This means that his word carries weight and him throwing his support behind the Netanyahu-led coalition could force the more fundamentalist elements of his government to fall into line. In addition to this, there will be no hesitancy when it comes to permitting an Israeli annexation of the occupied West Bank. These two components are essential for ensuring that a Gaza deal will not collapse the current Israeli coalition. If the Israeli PM is going to secure the support he needs for such a ceasefire, he needs the extremists on his side and can only do this by fulfilling the pledge to annex the West Bank. Another major issue, besides the domestic Israeli political divisions is the activity and risk of battle across a variety of fronts. In order to annex the West Bank, the Israeli military will need to deploy enormous numbers of soldiers, private security forces and occupation police into the territory. In the event of mass civil unrest, or even a worse scenario for them like the collapse of the Palestinian Authority, they will need to send a force that could amount to hundreds of thousands of fighters, into the territory in order to control the situation.

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The trusted mediator: Sardar Ayaz Sadiq's legacy in bridging political gaps

Muhammad Mohsin Iqbal



Sardar Ayaz Sadiq's ability to build trust across party lines has been a defining feature of his political career. Leaders from the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP), Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (JUI), PTI, and other opposition parties have often expressed their confidence in his impartiality.

His leadership style, characterized by inclusivity and respect for diverse viewpoints, has enabled him to foster a culture of collaboration even in the face of intense political rivalry. This respect is not only a testament to his personal integrity but also an acknowledgment of his efforts to prioritize national interests

IN the complex political landscape of Pakistan, the role of the Speaker of the National Assembly is crucial in maintaining parliamentary decorum and ensuring a balance between opposing factions. Sardar Ayaz Sadiq, a seasoned parliamentarian, has emerged as a pivotal figure in bridging the gaps between the opposition and ruling parties. His statesmanship, impartiality, and commitment to democratic values have earned him widespread respect across the political spectrum, making him a symbol of unity in turbulent times. Sardar Ayaz Sadiq's journey in politics is closely intertwined with the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), where he has consistently upheld the party's principles while demonstrating a unique ability to engage constructively with political opponents. His tenure as Speaker during his first term was marked by several challenges, most notably when the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) submitted en masse resignations from the National Assembly. At that time, Pakistan was navigating a highly charged political environment. Ayaz Sadiq handled the crisis with remarkable composure, employing a blend of constitutional wisdom and political tact. Instead of escalating the tensions, he facilitated dialogue and worked diligently to ensure that the sanctity of the Parliament was upheld. His approach highlighted his dedication to democratic processes and showcased his potential as a mediator.

Sardar Ayaz Sadiq's ability to build trust across party lines has been a defining feature of his political career. Leaders from the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP), Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (JUI), PTI, and other opposition parties have often expressed their confidence in his impartiality. His leadership style, characterized by inclusivity and respect for di-

verse viewpoints, has enabled him to foster a culture of collaboration even in the face of intense political rivalry. This respect is not only a testament to his personal integrity but also an acknowledgment of his efforts to prioritize national interests over partisan agendas. In his current tenure as Speaker, Sardar Ayaz Sadiq faces the formidable task of navigating a deeply polarized political landscape. The growing rift between the government and the PTI threatens the stability of Pakistan's democratic institutions and poses significant challenges to the country's economic and social development. Recognizing the urgency of the situation, Ayaz Sadiq has taken on the role of a mediator, striving to bring both sides to the negotiating table. His reputation as a fair and credible interlocutor places him in a unique position to achieve a breakthrough in the impasse.

Sardar Ayaz Sadiq's efforts to bridge the divide are not just about preserving parliamentary decorum; they are also about safeguarding the broader interests of Pakistan. The country stands at a critical juncture, facing economic challenges, social unrest, and external pressures. In such times, political stability and collective action are imperative for progress. Sadiq's calls for dialogue and reconciliation aim to create an environment where all stakeholders can work together to address these pressing issues.

The respect Sardar Ayaz Sadiq commands across party lines is a rare and invaluable asset in Pakistani politics. His ability to engage with leaders from different ideological backgrounds, combined with his unwavering commitment to democratic principles, makes him a key figure in efforts to restore political harmony. His efforts to bring the government and PTI together are not just about resolving a political deadlock; they

are about fostering a culture of collaboration that can pave the way for sustainable development.

The potential for Sardar Ayaz Sadiq to succeed in this endeavor lies in his deep understanding of the political dynamics and his proven track record as a mediator. His leadership during the PTI resignations crisis demonstrated his capacity to handle complex situations with grace and efficacy. Today, as Pakistan grapples with economic challenges and the need for political unity, his role is more critical than ever. By bringing the government and PTI to the table, Ayaz Sadiq could help establish a framework for cooperation that prioritizes the nation's interests over individual ambitions.

Sardar Ayaz Sadiq's efforts to promote dialogue reflect his belief in the power of consensus to drive progress. His vision for a united political front is not just about overcoming immediate challenges; it is about laying the groundwork for a democratic culture where differences are resolved through discussion rather than discord. His emphasis on mutual respect and shared goals resonates with the aspirations of the Pakistani people, who yearn for stability, prosperity, and a brighter future. In conclusion, Sardar Ayaz Sadiq stands as a beacon of hope in Pakistan's turbulent political arena. His ability to command respect from all sides, coupled with his dedication to democratic values, positions him as a key player in efforts to foster political reconciliation. His leadership is a reminder that dialogue and cooperation, rather than confrontation, are the paths to a stronger and more prosperous Pakistan. At a time when the nation faces daunting challenges, Ayaz Sadiq's efforts to build bridges offer a roadmap for unity, progress, and the realization of Pakistan's true potential.

Up in the air whether US economic arrows will hit the mark

Andrew Sheng

The Ukraine and Gaza wars have upended all illusions of Western moral superiority – it was always about the raw power conflicts, whether over the control of energy, technology, military, media or finance. The US pumping out more oil to boost its GDP

would bolster confidence in the dollar, when dollar weaponisation has caused a shift to alternatives. The market capitalisation of cryptocurrency, for instance, has risen to over US\$3.6 trillion, while global gold reserves now exceed US\$3 trillion, more than the value of all US currency in circulation at US\$2.3 trillion

THE US looks set for simultaneous wars in three areas: deficits, currency and energy. That's incoming US Treasury secretary Scott Bessent's "three arrows" strategy – cutting the US fiscal deficit to 3 per cent of gross domestic product, growing the US economy at 3 per cent a year and expanding US oil and gas production by 3 million barrels per day. These ambitious goals, deeply tied to each other, mean Bessent is looking to deliver what financial markets want: growth plus stability. This is a high-wire job to be executed as part of a rumbustious cabinet that is expected to go gangbusters to fulfil Trump 2.0 policies to "Make America great again". It is fascinating that the United States, Europe and China are all aiming for rejuvenation – and unlikely that all three can return to glory at the same time. The nightmare scenarios are an unintended protectionist depression and/or nuclear war.

National aspirations are never executed in isolation. What the US wants will spark a backlash. So far, the mainstream Western view is that the Chinese economy is in deep trouble, whereas the mainstream Chinese view is that the West is not in great shape either. Still, the US is the world's largest economy and its aspirations must be part of everyone's strategic calculations. Let's unpack Bessent's three arrows. Having simple objectives allows the team to focus. But anyone familiar with bloated bureaucracies, fickle public opinion and infighting knows that a lot can prevent the arrows from hitting their targets. On paper, the three arrows plan looks achievable. But the US fiscal deficit Trump will inherit from the Biden administration stands at 6.4 per cent of GDP, more than double Bessent's 3 per cent target. The second target of 3 per cent GDP growth is not far off an expected 2.8 per cent for 2024 but the average growth rate since 2008 has been nearer 2 per cent per annum.

We can safely say the Biden growth record was achieved through above-average fiscal spending funded by unsustainable debt growth. That's not dealing with structural deficit spending. The third arrow of 3 million barrels of oil a day underlines Bessent's recognition that energy propels growth. As the world's largest oil producer, American output of 12.9 million barrels per day in 2023 was larger than Russia's 10.1 million barrels and Saudi Arabia's 9.7 million barrels. Adding 3 million barrels would mean upping production by 23.3 per cent, largely from shale oil extraction, which is possible only by ignoring the net zero carbon agenda. President-elect Donald Trump cares more about artificial intelligence and cryptocurrency, both hugely energy-dependent, so increasing oil production makes sense for Trumponomics. Geopolitics is driven by energy. Historically, the industrial revolution was powered by fossil fuel innovation. The British empire used coal to power its steam engines but the US industrial rise was powered by cheap domestic oil and gas. Today, half to two-thirds of global recoverable oil reserves are within 600 miles of Tel Aviv while half of the world's exportable oil and gas go through the Strait of Hormuz, according to Cambridge political economy professor Helen Thompson. Any blockage of oil through either Israel bombing Iran or the Houthi rebels shutting down the Hormuz Strait could cause oil prices to rise. But most countries don't want high oil prices, due to the adverse impact on inflation. Meanwhile, the US, Russia, Saudi Arabia and Iran wouldn't want prices to fall too low, since that would hurt their revenues. The Ukraine and Gaza wars have upended all illusions of Western moral superiority – it was always about the raw power conflicts, whether over the control of energy, technology, military, media or finance. The US pumping out more oil to boost its GDP would

bolster confidence in the dollar, when dollar weaponisation has caused a shift to alternatives. The market capitalisation of cryptocurrency, for instance, has risen to over US\$3.6 trillion, while global gold reserves now exceed US\$3 trillion, more than the value of all US currency in circulation at US\$2.3 trillion.

The trend towards de-dollarisation has not gathered much momentum, but de-dollarisation is something even Trump fears, considering he has threatened stiff tariffs on anyone who dares challenge the dollar's dominance. Trump threatens new anti-drug tariffs on 'day 1' for China, Canada, Mexico. All in all, China is bracing for increased tariffs and more sanctions from the new Trump administration. To reduce its vulnerability to imported energy, it is not surprising that China is building a mega dam in Tibet that will generate three times more electricity than the Three Gorges Dam. In short, how 2025 turns out economically will depend on whether different types of war break out, such as over energy shutdowns in the Middle East or over supply chain choke points elsewhere. Trump wants to get the US out of the Ukraine war and concentrate on China. But Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky depend on continued conflict to survive politically, it seems. Spending more on defence through higher fiscal deficits is not sustainable for the US. The country needs to get bigger bang for its buck, balance its finances, produce more oil and rejuvenate itself with higher growth and productivity. If the Trump 2.0 team is as uncoordinated as Trump 1.0, then we will see arrows flying everywhere. Meanwhile, the Wall Street consensus is for US corporate earnings in 2025 to grow by 15 per cent and the stock market to remain buoyant. Only time will tell if Bessent's three arrows land on target or shoot the US in the foot. Revel or unravel in the new year.

Briefs

'It's time to root out Fitna al-Khawarij'

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efforts towards increasing the capacity of counter terrorism department in provinces, saying Punjab is taking a lead in this regard. The prime minister also called for measures to counter "digital terrorism," where facts are distorted and spread on social media to mislead people. The remarks came in the light of recent attempt of infiltration by the khawarij and the Afghan Taliban via the border near Kurram and North Waziristan areas on December 28, which successfully thwarted by the security forces of Pakistan. According to security sources, a group of 20 to 25 khawarij, in coordination with the Afghan Taliban, launched an unprovoked attack on Pakistani posts using heavy weaponry this morning. Discussing the importance of collaboration, the premier urged provinces and military to work together to establish a coordinated system for maintaining law and order. He assured that obstacles on critical routes like Peshawar-Parachinar would not be tolerated.

Gandapur stresses joint...

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"The prime minister discussed the events of November 26, stating no bullets were fired, but such comments should be avoided. Any reservations should be addressed through dialogue," he remarked. He further said that he told the committee that 58 PTI workers had been injured, 13 were martyred and 45 were still missing following the November 26, 2024, protests. "Ishaq Dar said these issues will be discussed in the negotiation committee meetings," Gandapur remarked. Gandapur commended the efforts of the Grand Jirga members in resolving the Kurram issue. "A detailed agreement has been signed, ensuring peace and resolving this pressing issue. We owe a debt of gratitude to the Jirga members for their hard work," he added.

Boat tragedy: FIA arrests 6, including..

FROM PAGE 01
FIA used modern technology to apprehend Mahmood in Gujrat after multiple raids. An investigation has been initiated, and efforts are underway to arrest other accomplices. There have been two notable incidents of boats drowning off the coast of Libya in the Mediterranean Sea this year in which several Pakistanis had lost their lives. The first incident took place in February and the other in April. The then-Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif directed authorities concerned to investigate the human trafficking that led to the tragic incident of a migrant shipwreck near Greece with several Pakistani nationals on board. The premier directed concerned authorities for an immediate crackdown against agents involved in the heinous crime of human trafficking and called for bringing them to justice.

Sara Sharif's father attacked...

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whose case has drawn widespread attention. Sara Sharif was a 10-year-old British national. Her lifeless body was discovered at her family residence in Woking, Surrey on August 10, 2023. The police authorities discovered her body a day after her father Urfan Sharif escaped to Pakistan along with his partner Beinhaz Batool, and brother Faisal Malik. The British daily The Independent also reported that the three individuals booked one-way flights out of the country before her body was discovered. Sara's mother, Olga Sharif, said she married Urfan in November 2009, but the marriage ended in 2017. Her ex-husband was awarded full custody of both Sara and her 13-year-old brother in 2019.

Ambassador Saqib lauds Pak MMA's global success

"Happy New Year to the Pakistan MMA Federation and its incredible athletes," the ambassador said. "Your dedication and hard work have brought immense pride to Pakistan on the global stage"

**OUR CORRESPONDENT**

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's Ambassador to Bahrain, Saqib Rauf, extended heartfelt new year greetings to the Pakistan Mixed Martial Arts (MMA) Federation and its athletes, commending their remarkable achievements in 2024 and expressing hope for even greater success in 2025. "Happy New Year to the Pakistan MMA Fed-

eration and its incredible athletes," the ambassador said. "Your dedication and hard work have brought immense pride to Pakistan on the global stage. We look forward to witnessing your continued excellence and success in 2025." The year 2024 marked a turning point for Pakistan in mixed martial arts, with the federation, led by Omar Ahmed, delivering stellar performances that resonated on international platforms. Key achievements included Pakistan's standout participation in

Brave 92 in Bahrain and the IMMAF Championships, highlighting the nation's growing dominance in MMA, a proof to its athletes' talent and resilience. Ambassador Saqib also praised Sheikh Khaled bin Hamad Al Khalifa, the founder of Brave Combat Federation, for his visionary leadership in creating opportunities that empower nations like Pakistan. "Sheikh Khaled's commitment to promoting global talent has been transformative, and Brave CF's partnership with Pakistan

reflects a shared vision of mutual growth and unity," the Ambassador added. Sharing his views, President of Pakistan MMA Federation Omar Ahmed said: "As the federation gears up for 2025, its focus remains on sustaining its upward trajectory by nurturing emerging talent and expanding the sport's reach. With the ongoing partnership with Brave CF and platforms like the IMMAF Championships, Pakistan is poised to further solidify its position in the world of MMA."

Djokovic out of Brisbane in shock defeat by Opelka

Sabalenka sets up Brisbane semi-final with Andreeva

WEB DESK

BRISBANE: Top seed Novak Djokovic crashed out of the Brisbane International in a straight-set quarter-final defeat by Reilly Opelka. Djokovic, chasing his 100th ATP title, went neck-and-neck with the American in the first set before Opelka eased to a 7-6 (8-6) 6-3 victory in one hour and 40 minutes. Opelka, 27, will now face France's Giovanni Mpetshi Perricard, who beat Jakub Mensik 7-5 7-6 (7-5) to reach the semi-finals. "[Djokovic] is the greatest tennis player ever. But it's difficult being in his position," said Opelka, who is ranked 293rd in the world. "The reality is we have nothing to lose against him, so you end up playing



more freely and taking a lot more risks because it's your only chance. If you play your normal level, he wins every time." Opelka, who was sidelined for almost two years since 2022 after undergoing hip and wrist surgeries, is looking to win his fifth career title in Brisbane. "It was tough. There were a lot of uncertainties and doubt," added Opelka. "I watched a lot of my friends on TV which was fun, motivating and kept me interested in the sport. I also watched Novak become the greatest during that period." Meanwhile, 24-time Grand Slam winner Djokovic will shift his focus to winning a 11th Australian Open (12-26 January) title under his new coach Andy Murray. In the other Brisbane semi-final, defending champion Grigor Dimitrov, who received a walkover after Jordan Thompson retired hurt, will face Jiri Lehecka, who beat Nicolas Jarry 6-4 6-4. World number one Aryna Sabalenka reached the women's singles semi-finals by defeating Marie Bouzkova 6-3 6-4. The top-seeded Belarusian will now face 17-year-old Mirra Andreeva, who beat former world number two Ons Jabeur 6-4 7-6 (7-2). The duo last met at the 2024 French Open where the Russian teenager upset Sabalenka 6-7 (5-7) 6-4 6-4 to become the youngest player since Martina Hingis in 1997 to reach a Grand Slam semi-final. Czech Republic's Bouzkova made a good start in the quarter-final by breaking serve in the first game, but three-

time major winner Sabalenka fought back to win the opening set in 51 minutes. She then wrapped up the second set in 53 minutes as she eyes an 18th career title. "It's always tough battles against Bouzkova and I had lost the last one [in Washington]. I came into the match really focused and I'm happy I was able to put her under pressure and finish the match in straight sets," the 26-year-old said. "[Andreeva] is a great player. We recently played an exhibition tournament in Abu Dhabi where I got to know her better. She is also a great person and I am really looking forward to playing against her." Russia's Polina Kudermetova and Ukraine's Anhelina Kalinina will meet in the other women's singles semi-final.



Ancelotti expects close La Liga title race

'Barcelona and Atletico have the same chances of competing with us,' says Ancelotti

REAL Madrid's manager Carlo Ancelotti acknowledged the competition posed by arch-rivals Barcelona and current leaders Atletico Madrid in this year's La Liga, stating it is harder for a dominant victor to emerge. Barcelona, leaders since August, have slipped to third after winning only one of their last seven league matches, losing the top spot to Atletico Madrid in a 2-1 home loss last month. Ancelotti's Real, who are a point behind Atletico with 40 points from 18 matches, have a chance to provisionally take the top spot when they visit 19th-placed Valencia on Friday. "The level of competitiveness in LaLiga lowers a bit the points you need to win the title," Ancelotti, whose men finished 10 points ahead of second-placed Barcelona when they amassed 95 points during the 2023-24 campaign, told reporters. "The fact that Atletico are there also generates uncertainty and I think it will take less than 90 points to be champions." Ancelotti said while Barcelona's drop in form was unexpected, the club had a strong chance of staging a comeback. "You have a slump and then you get competitive like before. Barcelona and Atletico have the same chances of competing with us," he added. Ancelotti, who has led Real to two LaLiga titles since taking charge in 2021, said he did not expect to get an easy win at struggling Valencia. - Agencies

**TANVEER HUSSAIN**

If a person lives in a two-kanal house and has vast area of agricultural land along with some farmhouses, he is considered fortunate. If he also owns a hundred or two hundred villages or one or two islands, he is counted among the wealthiest people in

the world. But if we look at it on a larger canvas, this wealth is nothing. Religiously, worldly wealth is called the filth of impure hands, and there must certainly be a specific reason for this. These plots, these properties, these societies are nothing compared to the vastness of the earth. The land area of the Earth, which consists of seven continents, is approximately 510 million square kilometers. Whereas, three times this area is covered by water. This Earth is actually a planet, part of the solar system, along with the other eight planets and 751 moons, and it revolves around a star called the Sun. The Sun, which is the center of light, heat, and gravity, is so large that about 1.3 million Earths could fit inside it. There are countless stars like the Sun in the universe, and many

celestial bodies similar to Earth revolve around each star. Our Sun and its solar system are part of a galaxy called the Milky Way. In this galaxy, there are stars even larger than our Sun. For instance, the star Eta Carinae, which is the nearest star to us, is a million times larger than the Sun, while the star named VY Canis Majoris is 300 million times bigger than the Sun. Similarly, the enormous star UY Scuti is a billion times larger than the Sun. There are more than 200 billion stars in our galaxy. The volume of the Milky Way galaxy is equal to one hundred thousand light-years. And this galaxy is not the only one. There are countless other galaxies, and 200 billion such galaxies form a cluster. Furthermore, when billions of such clusters come together, they form

a super cluster. According to current research, there are more than 10 million clusters in the universe. All these celestial bodies appear as a network of colorful lights, almost like a web. What is even more interesting is that all these super clusters, clusters, galaxies, stars, planets, and moons are in constant motion along a designated path. Every planet orbits around a star, and every moon orbits around a planet. Their speed and gravity keep them bound. If gravity exceeds a certain limit, a moon will fall into its planet, and a planet will fall into its star. On the other hand, if gravity decreases even slightly, the planet, due to its speed, may drift out of its orbit and collide with another body, causing a massive disaster that could be a precursor to an apocalyptic event.

There is one power that organizes this entire system, sets the schedules and fixed paths, and ends it all after a set period. That power is our Lord. The greatness, power, and majesty of this Lord can be understood from the following verse of the Qur'an: "On that day We will fold up the heavens like a scroll of written parchment. Just as We began the first creation, We will repeat it. That is a promise binding upon Us. Indeed, We will do it." (Surah Al-Anbiya, 21:104) According to scientists, the universe is expanding day by day. What's interesting is that all of this is happening under one sky. According to Hadiths, there are seven more skies in the universe. How far this chain will extend is known only to the Creator, our Lord.

Sam Billings signs up for PSL 10 player draft

Billings becomes eighth English player to register for the draft

DNA

LAHORE: The Pakistan Super League (PSL) on Friday, announced that England's wicketkeeper batter Sam Billings has signed up for the highly-anticipated player draft for the upcoming 10th edition of the marquee league. The announcement was made on the league's social media handles with a compilation video of Billings' batting exploits from his previous PSL appearances. "English wicket-keeper/batter Sam Billings enters the #HBLPSLDraft." The 33-year-old has represented England across formats, having played three Tests, 28 ODIs and 37 T20s, and scored 1246 runs with the help of one century and five fifties. He also boasts a wealth of experience of franchise leagues, having Bangladesh Premier League, International League T20, Indian Premier League and Big Bash League. Billings has also featured in two PSL editions and won one title with Lahore Qalandars in 2023. He has played 20 matches and scored 402 runs at a modest average of 25.12 and a strike rate of 131.37 with the best score of 78 not out. Notably, Billings is the eighth English and 33rd overall foreign player to register for the PSL 10 draft, which will take place in Balochistan for the first time as Gwadar is set to host the landmark event on January 11, 2025. The pick order for the player draft has also been announced, with two-time champions Lahore Qalandars making the first pick in the opening round of the platinum category, followed by arch-rivals Karachi Kings. 2019 champions Quetta Gladiators will make the third pick, while Peshawar Zalmi will have the fourth. Last season's runners-up, Sultans, and reigning champions United will make the fifth and sixth picks, respectively. Registered foreign players for PSL 10 player draft: Sam Billings, Pathum Nissanka, Akeal Hosen, Charith Asalanka, Michael Bracewell, Mark Chapman, Jason Holder, Mujeeb Ur Rahman, Chris Lynn and others.

Rickelton puts South Africa in control against Pakistan

The hosts add 112 runs to their total without a loss in the second session

SPORTS DESK

CAPE TOWN: Left-handed opener Ryan Rickelton's unbeaten century lifted South Africa to 184/3 at the conclusion of the second session of the opening day of the final Test against Pakistan here at the Newlands on Friday. The home side dominated the second session's proceedings as they added 112 runs without losing a single wicket as Rickelton and skipper Bavuma frustrated Pakistan's bowlers. At the Tea break, Rickelton had scored an 106 not out from 149 deliveries, studded with 14 boundaries, while Bavuma was unbeaten on 51, laced with six boundaries. Opting to bat first, the home side got off to a solid start to their innings as their new opening pair of in-form Aiden Markram and Rickelton put together a 61-run partnership. The pair appeared in complete control until Markram was caught behind off Khurram Shahzad after scoring a cautious 17 off 40 deliveries with the help of three boundaries. All-rounder Wiaan Mulder, who returned to the side after recovering from a thumb injury, failed to prolong his stay at the crease as

he was dismissed by Abbas after scoring a mere five. Part-time spinner Agha gave Pakistan their third success when sent Tristan Stubbs packing for a six-ball duck an over later, which reduced the home side to 72/3. Meanwhile, Rickelton, who brought up his second fifty-plus score in the format remained firm and will resume South Africa's innings with skipper Temba Bavuma in the second session. For Pakistan, Khurram, Abbas and Agha have taken a wicket apiece.

**'Aggressors in Kurram to be treated...'**

FROM PAGE 01
underway for convoys heading to Kurram as part of the disarmament efforts. The district administration has also confirmed that the main Peshawar-Parachinar highway will be reopened for convoys, with obstructions strictly disallowed. The two warring tribes in Kurram finally reached a consensus and signed a peace agreement on Thursday after days-long negotiations. The agreement follows a grand jirga held in Kohat, where 50 sessions were conducted to reach a consensus. All parties played a pivotal role in the peace pact, which aims to restore stability in the conflict-hit region.

'Nothing seen' in...

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political tensions. Sources had said that the PTI had decided to limit itself to two initial demands in yesterday's talks; the release of under-trial political prisoners and the formation of a judicial commission to probe the events of May 9, 2023 and Nov 26. Background discussions with party leaders revealed that it was annoyed by the "illogical and absurd statements" about the talks, being issued by government ministers, and wanted the ruling party to review its "nonsensical approach and create a favourable environment for talks".

Talks hinge on Imran's..

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citing shortages of food grains and persistent power outages during winter as indicators of mismanagement. Earlier, the district sessions court extended Ayub's interim bail until 9 January in a case related to the 26 November protest at D-Chowk. The extension was granted due to the absence of the investigating officer, who was on leave. Ayub appeared in court alongside his counsel, Babar Awan. The second round of talks between PTI and the government have kicked off, with the opposition party presenting two of its major demands in the formation of a judicial commission to investigate the events of May 9 and November 26, as well as the release of all political prisoners, including the party's founding chairman Imran Khan.

Achakzai seeks...

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all institutions to address the country's pressing issues. He reiterated his demand for the restoration of the constitution and the return of the stolen mandate. Speaking on the occasion, Allama Raja Nasir Abbas stated that former prime minister Imran Khan emphasised that the rule of law is essential for the country's progress. "However, the nation is facing political, economic, and various other crises, with the current government's incompetence pushing the country further into turmoil," he held.

Ishaq Dar to undertake...

FROM PAGE 01
Dar was giving an overview of the major foreign policy events and achievements of the government and future challenges. The foreign minister also confirmed that Bangladesh Chief Executive Dr Muhammad Yunus also accepted Pakistan's invitation to travel to Islamabad at mutually agreed dates. Hina Rabbani Khar was the last foreign minister who travelled to Dhaka to extend an invitation to Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina Wajid for the D-8 summit.

Pakistani flag installed at UNSC

FROM PAGE 01
Addressing the ceremony at UN, Ambassador Asim said that it is an honour for Pakistan to become the non-permanent member of UNSC. "Pakistan always supported peace. We'll play our role in resolving the international disputes," he said.

Briefs

Gold rates increase by Rs.2,200 per tola

ISLAMABAD: The price of 24 karat per tola gold increased by Rs.2,200 and was traded at Rs.276,900 on Friday against its sale at Rs.274,700 on the last trading day. All Sindh Sarafa Jewellers Association reported. The price of 10 grams of 24 karat gold increased by Rs.1,886 to Rs.237,397 from Rs. 235,511 whereas that of 10 grams of 22 karat went up to Rs.217,614 from Rs.215,885. Per tola and ten gram silver were sold at existing prices of Rs 3,350 and Rs.2,872.08 respectively. The price of gold in the international market increased by \$22 to \$2,657 from \$2,635, the Association reported.—APP

Rupee gains 08 paise against dollar

ISLAMABAD: Pakistani rupee on Friday appreciated by 08 paise against the US dollar in the interbank trading and closed at Rs278.56 against the previous day's closing of Rs278.64. However, according to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of the dollar in the open market stood at Rs278.35 and Rs 279.85 respectively. The price of the Euro decreased by Rs2.31 to close at Rs286.57 against the last day's closing of Rs288.88, according to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP). The Japanese yen remained constant at Rs1.77, whereas a decline of Rs.3.33 paise was witnessed in the exchange rate of the British Pound, which was traded at Rs345.55 as compared to the last day's closing of Rs348.88. The exchange rates of the Emirates Dirham and the Saudi Riyal decreased by 02 paise each to close at Rs75.84 and Rs74.17, respectively.—APP

Israeli evacuation orders, airstrikes highlight ongoing insecurity in Gaza

UNITED NATIONS: Civilians are not safe anywhere in the war-shattered Gaza Strip, the UN humanitarian affairs office, OCHA, has warned. The warning came after Israel once again ordered the evacuation of large areas within Gaza, citing rocket fire into its territory. The new orders cover about three square kilometres in North Gaza and Deir Al-Balah governorates, according to initial analysis by OCHA. Strikes have since been reported in Al Mawasi area, where people had been ordered to move and take shelter. The UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) wrote on social media that five youngsters were reportedly killed on Wednesday night, and others injured, in a strike on a tent in Mawasi – a so-called 'safe zone'. OCHA recalled that currently over 80 per cent of the Gaza Strip is under unrevoked Israeli evacuation orders. Amid this situation, the ability of humanitarians to support people in need across Gaza is further diminishing, the agency warned. "December saw some of the toughest restrictions on humanitarian movement ever recorded. This includes blocking access to border areas for collecting supplies and denying attempts to deliver goods and services or assess needs across Gaza," OCHA said. Overall, Israel denied 39 per cent of UN attempts to move aid workers anywhere in Gaza, with another 18 per cent disrupted on the ground or hindered. Additionally, for besieged areas in North Gaza, access has been denied for 88 consecutive days, or since 6 October. Meanwhile in the West Bank, humanitarians have carried out an assessment in the aftermath of the Israeli forces operation in Tulkarm and Nur Shams refugee camps on 24 and 25 December. The exercise was conducted by OCHA, alongside UN Palestine refugee agency, UNRWA, and aid partners. Teams visited the area on Tuesday and estimate that over 1,000 housing units and about 100 shops were damaged from explosions or bulldozing.—APP



ISLAMABAD: A worker busy in welding of a pedestrian bridge as installing at Srinagar Highway in front of Rose & Jasmine garden, in Federal capital.

Pezeshkian vows to continue Soleimani's path, urges unity

Pezeshkian said the whole goal and effort of Gen. Soleimani was unity and cohesion of the Islamic Ummah

TEHRAN: President Masoud Pezeshkian says the Islamic Republic will continue the path paved by legendary anti-terror commander General Qasem Soleimani with all its power. "We will stand for the truth and stay on this path with strength, where we will rub the nose of the cowards to the ground," Pezeshkian told a ceremony in Tehran Thursday to commemorate the fifth anniversary of the martyrdom of Gen. Soleimani. "We pledge that we



will continue the path of Martyr Soleimani with strength and stand against oppression as long as we live," he added. Gen. Soleimani, the president said, shamed the oppressors with his blood. "Such a person should have been martyred and showed that America, Israel and Europe, who falsely claim to support humanity and human rights, are liars. "They are in fact the enemies of humanity. You can see how barbaric they are and what crimes they

are committing," he added. Pezeshkian said the whole goal and effort of Gen. Soleimani was unity and cohesion of the Islamic Ummah. The top commander, the president said, did not know day and night wherever he was needed to defend the oppressed irrespective of their religion whether in Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Afghanistan or elsewhere. The president touched on the enemies' efforts to create divisions in Iran with the help of

some anti-revolutionary elements and carry out their conspiracies in the country. "We must try and not let their conspiracies and sinister plans come to fruition and this will be possible with the help of all dear Iranians," he said. Pezeshkian said the first step for unity is to obey and support the policies of Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei, and then move to solve the problems of the Iranian people.—Agencies

India, Bangladesh begin return of detained fishermen

DHAKA: Neighbouring India and Bangladesh have begun repatriating 185 incarcerated fishermen in a deal struck despite strained diplomatic ties, foreign ministry officials said. Dhaka is handing over 95 Indian fishermen while New Delhi is releasing 90 Bangladeshis, with the handover set to be completed at sea by coastguard units. New Delhi's foreign ministry said the Indian fishermen were arrested after they "inadvertently" crossed into Bangladeshi waters. Several Bangladesh fishermen were apprehended by Indian authorities in similar circumstances. Some of the men have been held since September. "The mutual exchange of fishermen and their vessels has been worked out keeping in mind the primarily humanitarian and livelihood concerns of fishing communities," India's foreign ministry said in a statement on Thursday. Touhid Hossain, in charge of foreign affairs in Bangladesh's interim government, said the exchanges of men would be completed on Sunday, Dhaka's Prothom Alo newspaper quoted him as saying on Friday. Two Bangladesh fishing vessels detained in India and six Indian fishing boats held in Bangladesh will also be exchanged, Bangladesh media reported.—Agencies

India engages with Trump admin to strengthen eco ties

NEW DELHI: India is looking forward to strengthening its economic relationship with the United States by engaging with the incoming Trump administration, India's trade minister Piyush Goyal told reporters in New Delhi on Friday. "We are looking forward to a very deep and substantive engagement with the new US administration," the trade minister said, noting that under Prime Minister Narendra Modi, India has bolstered bilateral relations with successive U.S. administrations, including those led by Barack Obama, Donald Trump and Joe Biden. Bilateral trade between India and the United States, India's largest trading partner, exceeded \$118 billion in 2023/24, with India registering a trade surplus of \$32 billion. Industry estimates suggest that trade could grow by an additional \$50 billion within two to three years, underscoring significant potential for stronger economic cooperation. The government and industry groups favour a broader trade and investment pact with the United States to help Indian manufacturers integrate into global supply chains while retaining policy flexibility to safeguard national interests. APP

PSX stays bullish, gains 467 more points

ISLAMABAD: The 100-Index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) continued with bullish trend on Friday, gaining 467.33 points, a positive change of 0.40 per cent, closing at 117,586.98 points as compared to 117,119.66 points on the last trading day. A total of 935,783,268 shares were traded during the day as compared to 1,037,862,969 shares the previous trading day, whereas the price of shares stood at Rs 39.620 billion against Rs. 46.570 billion on the last trading day. As many as 456 companies transacted their shares in the stock market, 167 of them recorded gains and 246 sustained losses, whereas the share price of 43 companies remained unchanged. The three top trading companies were WorldCall Telecom with 73,230,816 shares at Rs 1.70 per share, Snergys PK with 57,326,691 shares at Rs.7.55 per share and Fauji Cement with 54,376,196 shares at Rs.34.83 per share. Al-Ghazi Tractors Limited witnessed a maximum increase of Rs.62.97 per share price, closing at Rs 692.63, whereas the runner-up was Mehmood Textile Mills Limited with Rs 45.94 rise in its per share price to Rs.665.00.—APP

Short-term inflation falls by 0.26pc: PBS

ISLAMABAD: The weekly inflation, measured by the Sensitive Price Indicator (SPI), went down by 0.26 percent for the combined consumption groups during the week ended on January 2, the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) reported on Friday. According to the PBS data, the SPI for the week under review in the above-mentioned group was recorded at 326.10 points as compared to 326.96 points during the past week. As compared to the corresponding week of last year, the SPI for the combined consumption group in the week under review witnessed an increase of 3.97 per cent. The weekly SPI with the base year 2015-16 =100 covers 17 urban centres and 51 essential items for all expenditure groups. The SPI for the lowest consumption group of up to Rs 17,732 witnessed decrease of 0.51 per cent and went down to 320.01 points from last week's 321.65 points. The SPI for consumption groups of Rs 17,732 to 22,888; Rs 22,889-29,517; Rs 29,518-44,175 and above Rs 44,175, declined by 0.59 percent, 0.28 percent, 0.10 percent and 0.10 percent respectively. During the week, out of 51 items, prices of 18 (35.29%) items increased, 10 (19.61 percent) items decreased and 23 (45.10 percent) items remained stable. The items, which recorded major decrease in their average prices on a week-on-week basis included tomatoes (13.48 percent), electricity charges for q1 (7.48 percent), potatoes (5.59 percent), pulse gram (0.34 percent), eggs (0.23 percent), garlic (0.21 percent), LPG (0.18 percent), wheat flour (0.09 percent) and pulse mash (0.05 percent). The commodities which recorded major increase in their average prices on week-on-week basis included chicken (10.28 percent), onions (4.93 percent), bananas (1.68 percent), diesel (1.18 percent), pulse moong (1.08 percent), sugar (0.95 percent), gur (0.58 percent), firewood (0.55 percent), vegetable ghee 2.5 kg (0.53 percent), vegetable ghee 1kg (0.28 percent) and petrol (0.21 percent). On-year basis, the commodities that witnessed decrease included wheat flour (36.12 percent), onions (29.95 percent), chillies powder (20.00 percent), eggs (15.78 percent), electricity charges for q1 (13.92 percent), pulse masoor (11.24 percent), rice basmati broken (8.42 percent), diesel (6.39 percent), bread (6.01 percent), pulse mash (5.98 percent) and petrol (5.45 percent).—APP

SBP injects Rs2.43 trillion in the market

KARACHI: The State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) injected Rs2,429.65 billion in the market through reverse repo purchase and Shariah Compliant Mudarabah based Open Market Operations (OMO) on Friday. The SBP conducted Open Market Operation, Reverse Repo Purchase (Injection) on January 03, 2025 for 7-day and 28-day tenors and, as per results issued, accepted an amount of Rs2,245.65 billion offered through 23 bids. The central bank received 10 bids for 7-day tenor cumulatively offering an amount of Rs1,455.8 billion at the rate of return ranging between 13.04 to 13.09 percent while 13 bids were received for the 28-day tenor offering an amount of Rs1,145.65 billion at the rate of return ranging between 13.04 to 13.08 %. The central bank accepted an amount of Rs1,100 billion offered through 10 quotes for 7-day tenor at 13.04% rate of return. Total amount offered at 13.04% was Rs427 billion, out of which SBP accepted Rs100 billion on pro rata basis.—APP

China to boost funding for key projects, broaden trade-in programs in : NDRC

BEIJING: China will increase investment in major projects and expand the scope of trade-in programs in 2025, according to the National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC), China's top economic planner, on Friday. In 2025, China will increase the issuance of ultra-long special treasury bonds to implement major national strategies and enhance security capacity in key areas, according to the NDRC. The commission said that it will continue to prioritize key initiatives such as ecological and environmental protection, advancing green growth in the Yangtze River Economic Belt, the new western land-sea corridor, the public service system for the urbanization of rural migrants, and the quality improvement of higher education, Global Times reported. The scope of water conservancy support will be broadened to encompass medium and large irrigation zones and major water diversion projects nationwide. Additionally, intercity railway construction projects in key metropolitan areas will be included in the support framework, and nationwide measures will be adopted to effectively reduce logistics costs for society as a whole. The NDRC said it will fast-track progress on ongoing projects. Building on last year's early issuance of a project list worth approximately 100 billion yuan (\$13.69 billion) for this year, we will soon issue another batch of project lists to ensure swift and tangible outcomes, the NDRC said. The NDRC also said that China will increase the issuance of ultra-long special treasury bonds to broaden coverage and raise subsidy levels for large-scale equipment upgrades and consumer goods trade-ins this year. Subsidies will be implemented for the purchase of new digital products such as mobile phones, tablets, and smartwatches, offering financial incentives for individual purchases of these devices. Furthermore, the incentive levels for replacing new-energy city buses and upgrading power batteries, the updating of agricultural machinery, and the replacement of household furnishings and decorations are set to rise. Looking ahead to 2025, China's expansive consumer market advantages remain steadfast and the consumer market is projected to sustain steady growth, the NDRC said. To boost consumption, the government will aim to raise residents' incomes, diversify the supply of consumer products and services, identify new consumption growth areas and improve the overall consumption environment, the NDRC said.—DNA

Poor law, order in Tarnol inflicts heavy toll on local businesses

Zafar Bakhtawari, Secretary General of the United Business Group, praised ICCI's commitment to improving the local business environment and expressed optimism that the Chamber would succeed in establishing a favorable business atmosphere in the region

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The business community is committed to contributing to the country's economic development and prosperity through the growth of businesses. However, obstacles to creating a business-friendly environment must be addressed by those in positions of authority. The Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) remains dedicated to overcoming these challenges. This statement was made by Abdul Rehman Siddiqui, Acting President of ICCI while addressing a large delegation from Tarnol, led by Malik Shabbir Awan, the founder President of the Talagang Chamber of Commerce and Industry, which visited ICCI to offer congratulations. Siddiqui recognized Tarnol as an important business hub within the capital and



emphasized that collective efforts could dismantle barriers, create opportunities, and lead the community toward greater prosperity. He assured the attendees that ICCI would address issues such as encroachments, water shortages, poor road conditions, inadequate street lighting, and especially the deteriorating law and order situation by bringing them to the attention of the relevant authorities for swift resolution to enable businesses to flourish in a peaceful and secure environment. Zafar Bakhtawari, Secretary General of the United Business Group, praised ICCI's commitment to improving the local business environment and expressed optimism that the Chamber would succeed in establishing a favorable business atmosphere in the region. On behalf of the former ICCI President, Chairman of the Clean and Green Islamabad Movement

Briefs

No chance for anarchy to reign again

Planning minister acknowledges country's vast wealth of resources

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Planning Minister Ahsan Iqbal said on Friday that no, there will be no room for anarchy to prevail again in the country. Expressing his thoughts, Iqbal stated, "No country is richer than Pakistan, but anarchy, unrest, and political instability have let the country down." "There is no margin to do the negative experiment in the country," said Iqbal. The minister labelled the "Uraan Pakistan" initiative as the "game-changer" for the country. Stressing the need for embracing the unity in the country, Iqbal said, "Everybody needs to get united to give the country's economy a new takeoff." He acknowledged that the country had a vast wealth of resources.

Pakistan, Iran navies hold joint exercise

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: Pakistan and Iran held joint naval drills, Passage Exercise, to enhance interoperability between the two navies and promote shared learning through coordinated activities. The joint exercise was conducted when Pakistan Navy ships Rasadgar and Azmat, along with Pakistan Maritime Security Agency ship Dasht, visited Port Bandar Abbas, Iran.

The flotilla was led by Commander 14th Destroyer Squadron, Commodore Muhammad Umair. The Mission Commander held meetings with naval leadership of Iran. Matters of mutual interest, Navy-to-Navy engagements, and cooperation in maritime security were discussed. In December last, Pakistan Navy Ship Saif conducted Joint Patrol and Passage Exercise with Royal Navy of Oman Vessel, AL-Seeb and Spanish Navy Ship Santa Maria.

The exercise was conducted during Focused Operation 'Karakoram Resolve' under Pakistan led Combined Task Force. The exercises were aimed to develop synergy and mutual understanding between Navies operating in region while demonstrating interoperability to undertake Joint Operations. Pakistan Maritime Security Agency ship Kashmir also took part in the focused operation.

Yemen warns US, welcome to 'big hell'

SANA'A: Yemen's National Salvation Government has warned the United States and the Israeli regime over the dire consequences of continuing their deadly aggression against the Arab nation. "The Yemeni people are eager to engage in conflict with the nation's enemies, and have been shouting the 'death to Israel' slogan for the past 20 years, besides confronting the equipment that would be deployed by the US and the regime against it," Zaid al-Ghars, director of the Media and Cultural Affairs Department in Yemen's National Salvation Government, said on Friday.

"However, the people has entered direct confrontation against its adversaries today, and we tell this to them that they are welcome to [their] great hell." The remarks came amid intensified fatal attacks by Washington and Tel Aviv against Yemen, which began last October, when the nation launched its operations against Israeli targets in support of the Gaza Strip and Lebanon, which have respectively come under a war of genocide and escalated deadly assaults by the Israeli regime. The Yemeni Armed Forces have been responding by ramping up their strikes against strategic and sensitive Israeli and American targets, including the US warships and aircraft carriers that are deployed off Yemen's coastline. - Agencies

French, German FMs call for peaceful transition in Syria

French Foreign Minister Jean-Noël Barrot and his German counterpart, Annalena Baerbock, said they wanted to forge a new relationship with Syria and called for a peaceful political transition as they met Syria's de facto leader Ahmed al-Sharaa in Damascus on Friday



NEWS DESK

DAMASCUS: French Foreign Minister Jean-Noël Barrot and his German counterpart Annalena Baerbock were in the Syrian capital for talks on behalf of the European Union, in the highest-level visit by major Western powers since Islamist-led forces toppled longtime ruler Bashar al-Assad last month. One of their first stops was Syria's notorious Sednaya prison, north of the capital. Accompanied by White Helmet rescuers, Barrot and Baerbock toured the cells and underground dungeons of Sednaya, an emblem of atrocities committed against

Assad's opponents. Sednaya was the site of extrajudicial executions, torture and forced disappearances. An advocacy group said more than 4,000 people were freed from the detention facility when rebel forces took Damascus on December 8. Speaking to journalists at the French embassy in Damascus shortly after arriving in the Syrian capital from Lebanon, Barrot expressed his hopes for a "sovereign, stable and peaceful" Syria. It was also a "hope that the aspirations of all Syrians can be realised", he added, "but it is a fragile hope". The visit by the French and German foreign ministers came weeks after rebels, led by the Islamist group, Hayat Tahrir al-Sham

(HTS), ousted Assad from power. In an interview with FRANCE 24 and a group of foreign journalists last month, HTS chief Ahmed al-Sharaa called on Western nations to lift the international sanctions imposed on the Assad regime. In a statement issued before leaving for Damascus Friday, Baerbock said her visit was "a clear signal" - on behalf of the EU - to open the way for a "new political beginning between Europe and Syria, between Germany and Syria". She added that she was travelling to Syria with an "outstretched hand" after Assad's ouster and more than 13 years of civil war, which have devastated the country. "We now have a goal in mind that millions of

Syrians also long for: that Syria can once again become a respected member of the international community," she added. Since ousting Assad, HTS have sought to reassure Arab countries and the international community that they will govern on behalf of all Syrians, including the country's religious minorities. Western governments have begun to gradually open channels with Sharaa and HTS, a Sunni Muslim group previously affiliated with al Qaeda, and are starting to debate whether to remove the group's terrorist designation. Baerbock said she was travelling to Syria to express "clear expectations" of the new rulers, who she said would be judged by their actions. "We know where the HTS comes from ideologically, what it has done in the past," said Baerbock. "But we also hear and see the desire for moderation and for understanding with other important actors," she added, citing talks with the US-allied Kurdish Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF). The goal now is for Syria to once again become a respected member of the international community, she added. Baerbock also asked the new regime to avoid "acts of vengeance against groups within the population", to avoid a long delay before elections, and to avert attempts to Islamise the judicial and education systems. "This must be our common objective," she added. Syria's new authorities have announced curriculum changes, including scrapping poetry relating to women and love and references to "Gods" in ancient history courses, and interpreting a Quranic verse about those who had angered God and strayed as referring to "Jews and Nasara", a derogatory term for Christians.

Trade with Pak to be increased: Uzbek envoy

DNA

KARACHI: Ambassador of the Republic of Uzbekistan, Alisher Tukhtaev, while highlighting the progress in bilateral trade between Uzbekistan and Pakistan, stated that, as agreed by the leaders of both countries, the Uzbek Embassy is aiming to increase bilateral trade to US\$1 billion in the coming years. During a meeting at the Karachi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KCCI), the Ambassador added that bilateral trade has been progressing well, with mutual trade between Uzbekistan and Pakistan increasing from US\$122 million in 2019 to US\$387 million in 2023. Economic & Trade Counselor Bakhrom Yusupov, KCCI President Muhammad Jawed Bilwani, Senior Vice President Zia ul Arfeen, Vice President Faisal Khalil Ahmed, Former Presidents of KCCI Majid Aziz and Junaid Esmail Makda, along with KCCI Managing Committee Members, were also present at the meeting. Referring to the recent commencement of direct flights between Tashkent and Lahore, which is another significant step in facilitating closer ties between the two countries, the Uzbek Ambassador informed that efforts are underway this year to introduce direct flights from Karachi to Uzbekistan as well. "We encourage our Pakistani brothers and sisters to visit Uzbekistan and experience the warm hospitality of our people," he said. He noted that Uzbekistan and Pakistan share a long history of brotherly relations, strengthened by cultural and religious affinities. "The strong ties between our two countries continue to grow, and today, our two countries are closer than ever, thanks to the realization of the vision of regional connectivity between our countries," he said, adding that this vision has been reinforced due to the tireless efforts of both countries to enhance economic cooperation and strategic collaborations. The Ambassador further stated that starting in September 2024, Uzbekistan implemented a soft visa regime for Pakistani citizens, which includes both business and tourist visas, making it easier for people to visit each other and build stronger connections.

Teams working to resolve cable issue, says PTCL

People may experience slow browsing issues due to submarine cable outage, says telecom company

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Telecommunication Company Ltd (PTCL) on Friday said teams were "diligently" working to resolve the matter of disruptions faced by users since last night after a fault in one of the subsea internet cables connecting Pakistan slowed down the network speed in the country. According to PTCL, the fault developed in the Asia-Africa-Europe-1 (AAE-1) cable near Qatar. The Africa-Asia-Europe (AAE)-1 cable, which began operations in 2017, connects Vietnam, Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, Pakistan, India, Oman, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Greece, Italy and France. Faults with the ca-

ble caused internet users in Pakistan to experience frequent slowdowns and disruptions in 2024. While businesses and internet providers alleged that the government's attempts to monitor internet traffic were responsible, the PTA issued a statement in August attributing the slowdown to a faulty submarine cable. According to a statement issued by PTCL today, teams were working "diligently to resolve the matter as soon as possible". "Due to an international submarine cable outage, you may experience slow browsing issues," it said. "We sincerely apologise for any inconvenience caused during this time," it added. Separately, PTCL spokesperson Amir Pasha told media that the state-owned company was "in contact with the international teams" who were working on the issue. "We are receiving regular updates from them," he said, adding that the fault had occurred in the cable near Qatar. Yesterday, during a meeting of the National Assembly Standing Committee on IT and Telecom, minister, Shaza Fatima Khawaja, told the committee that IT or any other industry had not reported any issues related to the Internet.

Attempt to arrest Yoon suspended after standoff

The operation started out with a 20-strong team, but quickly multiplied to some 150 people. Even then, they were outnumbered

SEOUL: After a dramatic six-hour long standoff with security, South Korean police have called off an attempt to arrest suspended President Yoon Suk Yeol. The 150 officers involved found themselves helplessly outnumbered - first by the large number of pro-Yoon supporters who had gathered outside his residence before sunrise, and then by a human wall of security staff inside the property. Police were trying to carry out an arrest warrant issued earlier this week after Yoon ignored three summonses for him to appear for questioning. The politician is currently under investigation for abusing his power and inciting an insurrection when he tried to impose martial law in early December. Dozens of police vans lined the street outside

Yoon's residence in central Seoul early on Friday morning, before the arrest team - made up of police officers and members of the Corruption Investigation Office (CIO) - began moving towards the building at about 08:00 local time (23:00 GMT). The operation started out with a 20-strong team, but quickly multiplied to some 150 people. Even then, they were outnumbered. While about half of the team was able to get inside, they were locked for hours in a standoff with presidential security officers - who are still responsible for protecting Yoon, despite him being stripped of his powers - and a military unit responsible for protecting the city of Seoul. At one point Yoon's security team engaged in a "confrontation" with the investigating officers, an official with Seoul's Joint Chiefs of Staff told news agency AFP. If they had been successful, Yoon would have become the first sitting president to be arrested in South Korea's history. Yoon's "refusal of the legal process" is "deeply regrettable", said the CIO, which has been investigating Yoon's short-lived martial law declaration last month. It added it planned to call on the acting president - who is in charge of Yoon's security service - to intervene on their behalf. "Considering the situation at the site, as long as the security service continues to stand guard, the arrest is practically impossible," it said. Yoon's supporters, who have been camped out in front of the presidential residence for days, cheered in song and dance as the suspension was announced. - Agencies

Dialogue key to strengthening Democracy, says Maulana Fazl



Senator Siddiqui appreciated Maulana's efforts in resolving religious seminaries' issue

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: Government negotiation committee spokesperson Senator Irfan Siddiqui held a meeting with JUI-F chief MaulanaFazlurRehman on Friday. During the meeting, Senator Siddiqui briefed the JUI-F chief on the progress of the ongoing negotiations. Speaking on the occasion, MaulanaFazlurRehman emphasised that dialogue among political parties is a cornerstone of the democratic process. He stated that avoiding dialogue and fostering discord is

an undemocratic approach. He further stated that major issues can only be resolved through mutual discussions and that Pakistan urgently requires stability and unity. Political harmony, he added, is crucial for achieving this goal. Senator Siddiqui appreciated Maulana's efforts in resolving the matter of religious seminaries' registration in an amicable manner. Meanwhile, JamiatUlema-e-Islam-Fazl (JUI-F) chief MaulanaFazlurRehman urged Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Friday to play his role in the legislation in connection with the registration of madrassahs in the provinces. According to details, Rehman held a telephonic conversation with the premier. On this occasion, both the leaders exchanged views on the religious seminaries. Sources divulged that PM Shehbaz had assured Rehman of extending support to the latter pertaining to the legislation. The premier vowed to contact the chief ministers in line with the legislation.

CJP constitutes 5 benches to hear cases after vacation

The bench number 1 will consist of Yahya Afridi, Munib Akhtar and Malik Shahzad

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

ISLAMABAD: Chief Justice of Pakistan YahyaAfridi on Friday constituted five regular benches after the winter vacation to conduct hearings. The bench number 1 will consist of CJP YahyaAfridi, Justice Munib Akhtar and Justice Malik Shahzad Ahmad Khan. The bench number 2 will consist of Justice Amin-ud-Din Khan, Justice Naeem Akhtar Afghan and Justice Shahid Bilal Hassan. Justice Jamal Khan Mandokhail and Justice MusarratHilali will be the members of bench number 3. Meanwhile, bench number 4 will comprise Justice Muhammad Ali Mazhar and Justice Syed Hasan Azhar Rizvi. Justice Sardar Tariq Masood and Justice MazharAlam Khan Miankhal will hear the cases in bench number 5. It merits mention here that Justice Ayesha A. Malik and Justice ShahidWaheed will hear the cases at Supreme Court's Lahore registry. Earlier, the Supreme Court released details of cases disposed of in the last two months, making significant progress in judicial efficiency. Under the leadership of Chief Justice YahyaAfridi, the apex court expedited the decision-making process, disposing of 7,482 cases from October 28, 2024, to January 3, 2025.

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