

Cabinet okays deal with eight IPPs to cut power

ISLAMABAD: (news desk) The federal government on Tuesday approved settlement agreements with eight independent power producers (IPPs) running on bagasse, aiming to reduce electricity tariffs and save around Rs240 billion for the national exchequer. The decision was made during a federal cabinet meeting chaired by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif. The approval followed recommendations from the Ministry of Energy's power division. The power plants agreeing to revised production costs include DW Unit I, Unit II, RYK Mills, Chinot Power, Hamza Sugar,

Al-Moez Industries, Thal Industries and Chinar Industries. After the agreements' approval, the Central Power Purchasing Agency will seek approval from the National Electric Power Regulatory Authority (Nepra) for tariff adjustments. The Prime Minister's Office in a press release said these agreements are expected to reduce electricity prices for consumers and provide an estimated Rs238bn relief to the exchequer. In October, the government prematurely terminated power purchase agreements with five of the oldest IPPs, including Saba, Lalpur, Atlas,

Rousch and the Hub Power Company. These plants, collectively producing 2,463MW, were nearing the end of their contracts and set to expire within the next two to three years. The move was projected to save Rs411bn and lower average electricity tariffs by 71 paise per unit, which currently stands at about Rs36 per unit excluding taxes and duties. During the cabinet meeting, the prime minister said the government was taking all possible steps to reduce electricity prices for citizens. He emphasised that national interests should always be prioritised in every decision and action. He said promotion of the

private sector and industries in the country was a priority for the government. The federal cabinet was also briefed on the latest situation in Syria and the evacuation of Pakistanis from there. It was informed that out of 250 Pakistani pilgrims in Syria, 79 had reached Beirut, from where they would be brought back to Pakistan. Additionally, out of 20 teachers and students in Syria, seven teachers had also reached Beirut. The meeting was informed that officials of the Pakistani embassies in Syria and Lebanon were taking all possible measures to ensure the safe return of Pakistanis from Syria.



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif addresses a ceremony to mark the International Human Rights Day.

CJP Afridi seeks establishment of prison in each Balochistan division

ISLAMABAD: (news desk) Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Yahya Afridi on Tuesday visited Gwadar sub-jail as part of criminal justice system reforms, reviewed the facilities being provided to under-trial prisoners and called for enhanced focus on inmate welfare and infrastructure improvement. During the visit, he was accompanied by Balochistan High Court Chief Justice Hashim Khan Kakar, administrative judge for prisons Justice Abdullah Baloch, Gwadar district and sessions judge Rozi Khan Barrech and IG (Prisons). Realising the challenges posed by the jail's remote location, the CJP urged the establishment of a prison in each division of the province. In response, government officials assured him of their commitment to establishing a jail in Makran division. The CJP also visited Makran Judicial Complex and held a meeting with judicial officers and Makran Bar Association representatives. While addressing the bar members, he underscored the integral relationship between the bench and bar, noting that the judiciary to perform its constitutional duties needs bar cooperation. He highlighted the importance of ensuring access to justice for marginalised sections of society, including women, children and persons with disabilities.

15 terrorists killed in Zhob operation, says ISPR



QUETTA: Security forces killed 15 terrorists in an intelligence-based operation (IBO) in the border area of Zhob district on Tuesday when they were entering the Sambaza area from Afghanistan, the military's media wing said. During the heavy exchange of fire, a soldier embraced martyrdom. The Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) said in a statement that the operation was conducted in the general area of Sambaza in Zhob. It added that during the operation, security forces effectively targeted the Khawarij location, killing 15 terrorists. The government in July designated the banned Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan as Fitna al Khawarij, mandating all institutions to use the term Khariji when referring to the perpetrators of terrorist attacks in Pakistan.

Former ISI chief Faiz Hameed indicted for misusing powers

ISLAMABAD: (news desk) The army on Tuesday said that the former chief of Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) had been indicted by a military court on three counts — engaging in political activities, violating anti-espionage laws, and abusing his authority. Lt Gen Faiz Hameed (ret'd) has been formally arraigned on charges of engaging in political activities, violations of Official Secret Act detrimental to safety and interest of the state, misuse of authority

and government resources and causing wrongful loss to a person(s)," the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR), the military's public affairs wing, said in a statement. The indictment marks the start of the trial of the former intelligence chief before a Field General Court Martial (FGCM). Gen Hameed has been in custody since August, and the military announced the initiation of FGCM proceedings on Aug 12 on the charges of violating the Army Act and misconduct

filed by the owner of a private housing society. The case against Gen Hameed was made following a Supreme Court ruling in November 2023, which directed petitioner Moez Ahmed Khan, owner of Islamabad's Top City housing society, to pursue grievances through appropriate channels, including the Ministry of Defence. Mr Khan had alleged that a May 12, 2017, raid on his property by Pakistan Rangers and ISI officials resulted in the seizure of

valuables, including gold, diamonds, and cash, under the pretext of a counterterrorism operation. This is one of the most high-profile court martial cases in Pakistan Army's history, as Gen Hameed is the second three-star general and the first former ISI chief to face such proceedings. The ISPR disclosed that Gen Hameed was also under investigation for alleged involvement in the May 9 riots, during which military installations and monuments were vandalised.



GWADAR: CJP Yahya Afridi addresses the office-bearers of lawyers' bodies and Makran Bar Association members.

PM ordered crackdown on PTI protesters, alleges Omar Ayub

ISLAMABAD: (news desk) On the opening day of the National Assembly's winter session, the opposition Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI) on Tuesday reiterated its call for a judicial probe into the alleged killing of its workers during the Nov 26 protest at Islamabad's D-Chowk. Opposition Leader Omar Ayub Khan accused Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif of issuing an "order to kill", al-

leging that security personnel employed lethal weapons provided by Nato for counterterrorism operations. As usual, Defence Minister Khawaja Asif took the floor to respond to the opposition's speech and refuted all accusations of the opposition, criticising it for using the "provincial card" to build up its false narrative. The opposition PTI took a surprisingly subdued tone by opting to

participate in the proceedings rather than disrupting it, marking a departure from its past behaviour, when even on minor issues, its members had sparked loud protests and disruptions. Earlier in the day, the PTI, in a statement issued after a parliamentary party meeting, had announced that its members would lodge a strong protest in the National Assembly over the alleged

use of brutal force against the party by the government. As it was the first sitting after the Nov 26 episode — when PTI workers led by Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur and former first lady Bushra Bibi had to retreat from Islamabad's Blue Area due to a crackdown — everyone in the Parliament House galleries was expecting to see noisy proceedings.

Bill to decide seminaries' fate shrouded in mystery

ISLAMABAD: (news desk) As the fate of the Societies Registration (Amendment) Act 2024 remains shrouded in mystery, a meeting between JUI-F chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman and NA Speaker Ayaz Sadiq on Tuesday failed to break the deadlock, with the former once again accusing the government of 'deception'. The proposed legislation, commonly known as the madrasah registration bill, was sent back by President Asif Ali Zardari with objections, even though it was passed by parliament at the time of the passage of the 26th Amendment. The bill had some 'typos' which was the reason it was returned by the president, but it was sent back to the presidency the next day after the errors were fixed, the JUI-F sources quoted the speaker as saying. However, the NA officials feigned ignorance when Dawn approached them about the objections and even suggested that it might have been forwarded to the parliamentary affairs ministry by the presidency.

Daily energy-only diet costs Rs18 in Balochistan, Rs32 in Sindh: World Food Programme

ISLAMABAD: (news desk) An analysis by the United Nations World Food Programme has estimated that the daily cost of an energy-only diet ranged from Rs18 per capita in rural Balochistan to Rs32 per capita in urban Sindh. The 'Fill the Nutrient Gap' (FNG) analysis released on Tuesday said nationally only 5 per cent of the population was unable to afford the costs of meeting energy needs.

The analysis on Pakistan is part of case studies carried out in 13 countries. The FNG is a methodology that estimates the cost and affordability of nutritious diets and combines this with secondary data on local food systems and environments. The daily cost of a diet that meets individual nutrient needs (nutritious diet) was substantially higher, ranging from Rs67 per capita in rural Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to Rs78 per capita in urban Sindh. Non-affordability of the nutritious diet was high — on average, 66 per cent of the population was unable to afford a nutritious diet. Across provinces, non-affordability ranged from 59pc in rural KP to 84pc in rural Balochistan. A failure to meet nutrient intake during this age also has lifelong consequences, warns the FNG analysis.

Pakistanis stay glued to Google in 2024

KARACHI: (news desk) Google's Year in Search 2024 released on Tuesday a captivating narrative of Pakistan's digital landscape, one where sports, entertainment, food and technology kept the users hooked to Google, showcasing the nation's content preferences. Cricket, as it usually does, dominated search trends, with the ICC T20 World Cup capturing the nation's attention. Searches for PSL 2024 schedules and matchups, alongside queries for star players like Shoaib Malik and Sajid Khan, further demonstrated Pakistan's love for the game. Olympic gold medalist Arshad Nadeem also attracted significant attention from Pakistani users after he won the first gold medal for the country in almost three decades. This enthusiasm for notable figures extended beyond the sports world, with searches for showbiz personalities Sana Javed and Zoya Nasir, Indian business tycoon Mukesh Ambani, and social media figures Hareem Shah and Minahil Malik. Entertainment also held a prominent place in Pakistan's digital landscape, with the enduring appeal of Pakistani dramas evident in searches for shows like Ishq Murshid and Kabhi Main Kabhi Tum. Bollywood films like Animal, Dunki, Bhool Bhulaiyaa 3, and Street 2 also generated buzz, along with reality show Bigg Boss and the eagerly awaited Mirzapur Season 3.

SC ready to hear PTI plea for judicial probe into post-May 9 'suppression'

ISLAMABAD: (News desk) The constitutional bench of the Supreme Court on Tuesday admitted for hearing a plea moved by PTI founder Imran Khan seeking the formation of a judicial commission to probe alleged 'state suppression' against party workers and leaders in the wake of May 9 violence. While the bench removed the objections raised by the registrar office, it did not give any date for fixing the case before it. In the petition, the PTI founder demanded that a

judicial commission look into alleged political and non-political interference in the functioning of the state authorities and violation of their constitutional oaths by the functionaries and identify those responsible for it. Filed by PTI Secretary General Salman Akram Raja, the petition asked the apex court to issue order to ensure the protection of fundamental rights of citizens, including the right to life, freedom of assembly, expression, movement, information and fair judicial redress.

It highlighted alleged disproportionate application of laws to stifle dissent, impede political participation, and erode public trust in democratic institutions, thereby undermining the rule of law and constitutional governance. When the matter of registrar's objections was taken up by the bench, senior counsel Hamid Khan remarked that the country was witnessing an 'undeclared martial law'. Justice Jamal Mandokhail intervened to remind the counsel that he was making a sweeping statement

though the civil government can seek assistance of the army under Article 245. Justice Mohammad Ali Mazhar observed the petitioner had to challenge the vires of the constitutional authority under Article 245, adding how the petitioner could call it an undeclared martial law. At this, Additional Attorney General (AAG) Chaudhry Aamir Rehman pointed out that the court had yet to determine the question as to how the petition was in public interest. Justice Aminuddin



Khan explained that the court was not hearing arguments on the merit of the case but on the objections raised by the registrar's office. Contempt proceedings separately, the constitutional bench suggested that the AAG may take fresh instruction from the government about its intention to pursue the 2022 contempt plea.