

## MNAs agree talks are way forward, but neither side willing to take first step

ISLAMABAD: (news desk) The National Assembly witnessed relative civility on Tuesday, as lawmakers from the ruling PML-N and opposition PTI agreed on the need for dialogue to settle their issues, though neither side seemed willing to take the first step.

The tone was set by a comment from Defence Minister Khawaja Asif, who, responding to PTI lawmaker Sher Afzal Marwat's reconciliatory note, said, "For the first time, a breath of fresh air came from the opposition," though Mr Asif maintained that talks could not proceed "at gunpoint".

Mr Marwat, in his speech just before Mr Asif's, abandoned his firebrand ways to propose the formation of a parliamentary committee to determine terms of reference (ToRs) for dialogue between the two sides. Mr Marwat also emphasised that any dialogue must involve all political forces and, once ToRs were finalised, the establishment could also be brought on board. But while PM's aide Rana Sanaullah seemed to welcome the offer, he was adamant that the party had not formally approached them for talks. "I request (Sher Afzal) Marwat sahib that if you have made

this committee for talks with us — which you have not said a word about till this day — then officially come and say you have formed this committee for dialogue with the government or PML-N or allied parties," he said. The system could not run if the government and the opposition did not hold a dialogue, he said and asked the PTI to officially hold political dialogue with the government, especially in light of the committee formed by the opposition party. Mr Sanaullah emphasised that the National Assembly speaker's office was a "neutral venue" suitable for dialogue.

"Speaker Sardar Ayaz Sadiq has always maintained his neutrality. It is as much yours as it is ours," he stressed. Khawaja Asif, while appreciating the shift in tone of PTI, rejected the possibility of dialogue under duress. "You are holding a gun of civil disobedience. Let us cross that bridge and we will talk after that," he said. He also insisted that the PTI first create a "conducive environment" for talks. The defence minister criticised the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government for prioritising political marches over governance, particularly in the wake of the Kurram clashes.



This photo combo shows PTI's Ali Muhammad Khan (L) and Defence Minister Khawaja Asif (R) speaking in the National Assembly

## Sindh's law officers dominate nominations for high court judges

KARACHI: A number of provincial and federal law officers, the Sindh prosecutor general, relatives of former judges, some district judges and a leader of the PPP lawyers' wing are among the names nominated for appointment as additional judges of Sindh High Court by various members of the Judicial Commission of Pakistan (JCP). At present, the SHC is functioning with 28 judges against a sanctioned strength of 40, and the JCP is likely to consider these nominations to fill the dozen vacant positions, in its meeting scheduled for Dec 21. Initially, SHC Chief Justice Mohammad Shafi Siddiqui had nominated 13 individuals as proposed additional judges of SHC, as the appointment of additional judges was also on the agenda of the JCP meeting held on Dec 6. However, the item was deferred till the 21st, while the date for submission of nominations for appointment of additional judges was also extended until Dec 10. Former Karachi Bar Association president Amin Lakhani's son Muhammad Umar Lakhani; one of the partners in PPP leader Raza Rabbani's law firm Zee-shan Abdullah; and, partner at Karachi mayor Murtaza Wahab's law firm, Jaffer Raza, were also on the chief justice's list of nominees. The duo also named various lawyers, including Mohsin Kadir Shahwani, Shazia Hanjrah and Jamshed Malik. Besides, they recommended four of the names already put forward by the SHC chief justice.

## Attempts to curry favour from JCP 'should be met with disqualification'



ISLAMABAD: The proposed Judicial Commission of Pakistan (Appointment of Judges) Rules 2024 stipulate that any individual who directly or indirectly approaches a member of the JCP to influence the initiation of his or her nomination will stand disqualified from consideration for appointment as a judge of the superior judiciary. The proposed rules, finalised by the JCP's rules-making committee on Monday, aim to seek public opinion and feedback by publishing the draft rules on the Supreme Court's website. These draft rules will be presented to the JCP for final approval on December 21. On the rules online, the committee's chairperson Justice Jamal Khan Mandokhail expressed gratitude to the panel's members for their efforts in drafting the proposed rules of procedure for the appointment of judges to the Supreme Court.

## Polio drive in Balochistan postponed for two weeks

QUETTA: (news desk) The polio vaccination campaign, scheduled to begin this week in all 36 districts across Balochistan, has been postponed for two weeks, an official announced on Tuesday. Balochistan Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) coordinator Inamul Haq said the polio vaccination drive would commence from Dec 30 across the province. He said a high-level meeting held on Dec 16 reviewed preparations for the campaign.

It was observed during the meeting, which was attended by officials from all districts, that further preparations were essential to ensure an effective campaign in the wake of the widespread presence of polio virus in Balochistan. Of the 63 cases reported from across Pakistan so far this year, 26 cases (41pc) have been detected in Balochistan, 18 in KP, 17 in Sindh, and one each in Punjab and Islamabad. At the meeting, it was

noted that key focus areas must include micro-planning, team training, and improving communication with the community to achieve the desired outcomes. However, sources said, the polio campaign was postponed due to the strike of health workers on the appeal of a health alliance which had announced they would not take part in the vaccination campaign until the acceptance of their demands. Their demands include re-

ruitment of doctors and other health officials on a permanent basis, end to public-private partnership in hospitals, and provision of medicines, equipment and other medical facilities. The sources said the members of the health alliance had threatened the authorities even before the announcement of this polio drive schedule that they would boycott all campaigns if their demands were not accepted.



Volunteers of private welfare organisation Edhi with security personnel surround a plane carrying medicines for victims injured in clashes, upon its arrival in Parachinar, Kurram district, KP on Dec 17, 2024.

## 'Desperate' Parachinar needs swift help, says Faisal Edhi

KURRAM / KARACHI: (news desk) Philanthropist Faisal Edhi has said the humanitarian crisis in Parachinar was worsening as the shortage of medicines and other supplies had put people's lives at risk. "We are in dire need of essential medicines here. In addition, dozens of children are suffering from pneumonia, and the situation has become critical,"

he told Dawn from Parachinar, where he arrived via helicopter on Tuesday with supplies. Choppers are being used to airlift medicines and essential items to remote parts of Kurram as some key roads were still blocked, weeks after dozens lost their lives in clashes motivated by sectarian and tribal rivalries. On Tuesday, the Edhi Air Ambulance Service bro-

ught medicines to Parachinar and shifted several injured and sick people to Peshawar for treatment. The Parachinar-Peshawar highway and the Pak-Afghan border are both closed, following last month's attack on a convoy of vehicles and subsequent armed clashes that left over 130 people dead. The closure of roads has resulted in a dire shortage of food, medicines and

other daily-use items in villages located close to the Pak-Afghan border. Mr Edhi told Dawn that health facilities in Parachinar were ill-equipped to deal with the mounting number of patients, many of whom are in dire need of critical care. "There is no infrastructure in place to keep these patients warm, and we don't even have enough firewood to provide heat."

## Prosecution winds up arguments in £190m case against Imran,

ISLAMABAD: (news desk) The trial of former prime minister Imran Khan and his spouse, Bushra Bibi, in the £190m corruption reference is nearing conclusion as the prosecution has completed final arguments. The defence would start its rejoinder today (Wednesday). Accountability Court Judge Nasir Javed Rana presided over the hearing inside the Adiala Jail on Tuesday as Mr Khan and his spouse appeared before the court. The prosecution, represented by NAB's lawyer Amjad Pervaiz, shed light on developments in the case and allegations against Mr Khan and his associates. In its reference against Mr Khan, the NAB alleged that the former prime minister's cabinet approved a confidential deed in 2019 to give £190m.

## Imran warns of remittance halt if demands not met

ISLAMABAD: (news desk) Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI) founder Imran Khan has warned that he would ask overseas Pakistanis to halt remittances if the government fails to meet his demands, including the release of incarcerated party workers and the formation of judicial commissions to investigate the May 9 riots and the Nov 26 crackdown on PTI workers in Islamabad, his sister Aleema Khan said on Tuesday. Talking to the media outside Adiala Jail after meeting the former prime minister, Ms Khan accused the government of economic mismanagement, claiming that millions of citizens had slipped below the poverty line following the PTI government's removal. She asserted that remittances from overseas Pakistanis were crucial in keeping the country afloat while criticising the elite for allegedly moving their wealth abroad.

She alleged that PTI's political downfall was orchestrated as part of a "London plan" to dismantle the party. She also condemned the crackdown on party marchers last month, in which the party said several of its workers were killed. Ms Khan reiterated PTI's call for a judicial commission comprising three senior Supreme Court judges to investigate the wrongful detentions of PTI workers. She stressed that her brother remained distressed by the situation but was committed to fighting for justice. He also condemned alleged incidents of racial profiling targeting Pakhtuns.

## Cabinet approves tweaks to CrPC

ISLAMABAD: (news desk) The federal cabinet on Tuesday approved proposed amendments to the Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC) to ensure cases registered under the law are decided within a year.

In another significant decision, the cabinet incorporated a column regarding the finality of prophethood in Nikkahnama (marriage certificate). The decision will be implemented within the capital territory. The cabinet meeting, which was presided over by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, approved the CrPC amendment bill, aimed at easing the procedure of registration of FIRs. The bill will be sent to parliament for approval. The police will be empowered under the bill to use modern technology and gadgets for investigation. It will also allow the recording of audio and video statements of witnesses. In order to strengthen the role of prosecutor, a few clauses have been incorporated into the bill as the prosecutor can identify any deficiency in the reports. Under the proposed amendments, women, children aged less than 12 years, senior citizens and those having any disability could record their statements at any suitable place. Under the bill, the trial court will decide the case in one year and in case of any delay, the trial court would be answerable to the relevant high court. Similarly, the appellate will have to decide the appeals in six months to one year. Besides, in a detailed briefing by the IT ministry, the meeting was apprised that the e-office system has been established 100 per cent in 18 divisions of the government.

## 5 security men martyred in D.I. Khan, Shangla

DERA ISMAIL KHAN / SHANGLA: Five security personnel were martyred and several others injured in two separate incidents — an IED blast in Dera Ismail Khan and a militant attack on a police checkpoint in Shangla district — on Tuesday. In the first incident, an improvised explosive device (IED) targeted a security forces' vehicle in the Zarkani area of Daraban tehsil in Dera Ismail Khan. Three personnel were martyred and two others injured in the incident, sources said.

The martyred soldiers were identified as Ashfaq, Mukhtiar Wali and Arif, while Farzand and Sami sustained injuries. The injured were transported to the Combined Military Hospital (CMH), Dera Ismail Khan. Following the blast, a heavy contingent of police and security forces arrived at the scene and started rescue and search operations. The Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR), the military's media wing, did not immediately confirm the incident. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

Governor Faisal Karim Kundi condemned the attack, stating that deteriorating security situation in the province was alarming. He also criticised the provincial government's alleged inaction, alleging that the administration remained a mere spectator. In a statement, the governor termed the attack on the security forces' vehicle a conspiracy by elements against Pakistan, Islam and humanity. He also prayed for the swift recovery of the injured personnel.

Terrorist attack In the second incident, armed gunmen stormed a police checkpoint in the Gunangar area of Chakesar tehsil, Shangla district, in the early hours of Tuesday, martyring two personnel, including an ASI, and injuring three others. Shangla District Police Officer (DPO) Imran Khan said the militants launched a coordinated attack with heavy weapons, including rocket shells and hand grenades, targeting the remote checkpoint near the Indus River.



Constable Nisar Ahmed was martyred on the spot, while ASI Muhammad Hassan succumbed to his injuries at Battagram Hospital. The injured were identified as Arshad Iqbal, Arshad Ali and Rafatullah. DPO Imran Khan said that one militant was also injured in retaliatory fire but managed to escape into nearby mountains, leaving blood stains along the route.