



Islamabad POST

Saturday, December 24, 2022

Pakistan's Credible Daily Newspaper

Price Rs. 25

China warns United States to stop the 'unilateral bullying'

Detailed News On Page-07

Court extends Kaili's pre-trial detention

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NZ will not underestimate Pakistan team

Detailed News On Page-06



Cop martyred in Islamabad suicide attack

PM Shehbaz condemns suicide attack, pays homage to martyred policeman; Country heading towards destruction: Asad Umar



ISLAMABAD: Bomb disposal squad inspecting the bomb blast site in the Sector I 10 area. – DNA

STAFF REPORT/DNA

ISLAMABAD: At least one cop was martyred, while multiple were injured on Friday in a suicide attack in the Federal Capital's I-10 area, Deputy Inspector General Operations Sohail Zafar Chattha told the media. The law enforcement agency has cordoned off the area after the explosion. Addressing the media at the blast site,

DIG Chattha said that members of the Eagle Squad stopped a suspicious taxi for checking when the suicide attacker detonated himself. The DIG said that the attacker blew himself after he came back in his car. He added that a woman and man were in the taxi when the explosion occurred. "Police personnel saved Islamabad from a major disaster with courage and presence of mind," said DIG Chattha. He added that four cops

were injured in the attack. Meanwhile, Director of Pakistan Institute of Medical Sciences (PIMS) Dr Khalid Masood said that they have received 10 injured. He added that apart from the martyred cop, two other dead bodies had arrived at the hospital. The martyred cop was identified as Head Constable Adeel Hussain. Interior Minister Rana Sanaullah, while terming the man and woman terrorists, said that they had plans to attack a "high value target". The security czar of the country said that the attackers had come in a car as they planned to enter an important building such as the Parliament House, Supreme Court, Prime Minister House, PTV, and high courts. He added that the car had not been stopped then there would have been many casualties. "This would have been a shame for our country if the attack had taken place at a high-value building or Red Zone area," the interior minister told Geo News. Sanaullah said that security forces were on high alert after the Bannu incident and Islamabad is always on alert.

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ISLAMABAD: Kazakhstan's delegation led by Deputy Prime Minister H. E Serik Zhumangarin calls on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif. – DNA

Bilawal, Imran condemn blast

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari expressed sorrow over the death of the policeman in the blast. Paying tribute to the brave men of the police force, Bilawal said the police officials performed their duties without caring for their lives. Meanwhile, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan strongly condemned the suicide attack in federal capital and said that fast deteriorating law and order situation across the country was a clear reflection of total failure of imported government and intelligence agencies. PTI Chairman, in a statement on Friday, strongly condemned the suicide terrorist attack in Islamabad. "Salute the brave police officer who was martyred saving lives and greater destruction," he added. Imran Khan stated: "The law and order situation is deteriorating rapidly across the country reflecting total failure of imported government and intelligence agencies."

Medvedev slams 'stupid' EU move

MOSCOW: Former Russian President Dmitry Medvedev has expressed skepticism about the EU's move to impose a cap on spot gas prices. It indicates that European energy prices will remain high for the foreseeable future, he said. "The decision on a gas-price cap is stupid," the top official, who currently serves as deputy chair of the Russian National Security Council, said in a social media post on Friday. – Agencies

'Khan's govt ended due to incompetence'

Marriyum says Imran Khan took anti-people steps, violated the constitution

SHUJAAT HAMZA

ISLAMABAD: Information Minister Marriyum Aurangzeb said that Imran Khan knows that his power ended by losing the majority. In response to Imran Khan's statement, Information Minister Marriyum Aurangzeb said that he had imposed on the country by stealing the mandate of Nawaz Sharif. "Imran Khan ended his government with his lies, corruption and incompetence. The one who drowned the country in the swamp asks why I was taken out" she added. "Anything that is not yours must be returned to the original owner", she said. She said that Imran Khan was fully aware that his government would fall when he lost majority in the National Assembly and his lies, corruption and incompetence

were the reasons behind PTI regime's downfall. "Hundred per cent Pakistanis say that the only solution to the country's problems is transparent elections, but after the completion of the constitutional term by October 2023", she maintained. Castigating PTI chairman, she said Imran Khan took anti-people steps, violated the constitution and played with the country's interests, especially on Kashmir issue. She reminded Imran Khan that today was December 23, the day he had claimed, "Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa assemblies would be dissolved."



KPK assembly Dy Speaker attacked

SHAMIM SHAHID

PESHAWAR: Unknown men fired on Deputy Speaker Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) Assembly Mahmood Jan on Friday in the provincial capital's Regi area, police confirmed. "Unknown men restored to aerial firing and their search is underway. The deputy speaker has been shifted to his home safely," KP SSP Operations Kashif Aftab Ahmad Abbasi told Geo News. The police officer said the deputy speaker was involved in a property dispute. Abbasi added that he came under attack during the inauguration ceremony of a development project. In his statement, the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leader said he was attacked while addressing a livestock-related event. He added that the

guards fired back at the attackers.

Jan added that he or anyone else was not injured in the attack; however, the attackers escaped. The incident comes just days after militants overpowered a counterterrorism department centre in Bannu and took personnel over there hostage. The facility was later cleared by the Pakistan Army's Special Services Group (SSG). In a press conference Friday, Additional IG KP Police Mohammad Ali Babakhel said that during ongoing year, the police conducted 2,715 operations against terrorists.

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Army focusing on destroying nexus of terrorists: Gen Asim

NEWS DESK

RAWALPINDI: With the country facing a new wave of terrorism, the Chief of Army Staff (COAS) General Syed Asim Munir on Friday said that the military was determined to take the battle to the terrorists and break their nexus with facilitators to ensure lasting peace. He said this on Friday while visiting troops deployed along forward lines in North Waziristan and the headquarters of the country's elite special forces in Tarblea. According to a statement issued by the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) on Friday afternoon, COAS Gen Munir visited Miranshah, which has seen intense terrorist activity in recent months. He laid a floral wreath at the martyr's monument and paid homage to brave soldiers who had laid down their lives defending the country. Later, he was briefed by field commanders on the latest security situation in the area and response mechanisms set up to thwart the terrorist threat. The COAS also visited frontline troops deployed along Pakistan - Afghanistan Border. While interacting with officers and troops, the army chief commended their professionalism, high morale and operational



readiness. He said that the army remains focused on the evolving security situation in the region. Gen Munir said that they were determined to take the battle to the terrorists and break their nexus with facilitators so as to ensure lasting peace. The army, he said, will consolidate the hard-earned peace, made possible by the sacrifices rendered by resilient Pakistanis and law enforcers alike. Later, the army chief visited the headquarters of Pakistan's elite special forces, the Special Services Group (SSG), in Terbel. COAS met the SSG commandos stationed there, including soldiers from Pakistan's elite Zarrar Company. Soldiers from Zarrar Company had led the surgical operation to clear the CTD complex in Bannu.

Briefs

Italian PM visits Erbil, Baghdad

DNA

ERBIL: Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni arrived in the Iraqi capital Baghdad on Friday and is set to visit the Kurdistan Region later in the day, where she is expected meet with her country's troops and the Region's PM Masrour Barzani. "It is a symbolic gesture to give an important signal to these people who certainly sacrifice themselves more than us," said Meloni on Thursday during a meeting with the MPs of her party for an exchange of Christmas greetings.

Opp. not interested in debate

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Climate Change Senator Sherry Rehman on Friday said the opposition was not interested in debating the law and order situation in the country, particularly the recent wave of terrorism. Speaking in the Senate, she said the session of the Upper House of Parliament was requisitioned in the wake of increasing incidents of terrorism, especially the attack on Counter-Terrorism Department in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

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

Pervez Elahi reinstated as Punjab CM

The LHC wanted an undertaking from Elahi that he would not dissolve the assembly before he takes confidence vote

PA to be 'dissolved in any case': Fawad

BUREAU REPORT

LAHORE: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Senior Vice-President Fawad Chaudhry insisted on Friday that provincial assemblies will be dissolved "in any case" after Chief Minister Parvez Elahi assured the Lahore High Court (LHC) that he would not dissolve the Punjab Assembly. Earlier today, the court restored Elahi as the chief minister following an undertaking submitted by him stating that he would not dissolve the legislative – but the PTI seems to be on a different page than its ally. "The undertaking that Parvez Elahi has given is technical. However, the PTI does not agree with



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ALI HAMZA / DNA

LAHORE: The Lahore High Court (LHC) Friday restored the provincial cabinet and Pervez Elahi as the chief minister after he assured the court that he would not dissolve the Punjab Assembly once regains control of the office. The LHC wanted an undertaking from Elahi that he would not dissolve the assembly as if he would resort to the move, it could deepen the ongoing political turmoil in the province. Punjab Governor Baligh-ur-Rehman de-notified the Pakistan Muslim League-Quaid (PML-Q) leader as the chief minister as he did not take a vote of confidence despite the passage of several hours. A five-member bench – headed by Justice Abid Aziz Sheikh and including Justices Justices Chaudhry Muhammad Iqbal, Tariq Saleem Sheikh, Asim Hafeez and Muzamil Akhtar Shabir – heard the case. The court took two breaks – of 10 minutes and an hour – and asked Elahi's counsel Barrister Ali Zafar to consult his client about the undertaking. Following the assurance of not dissolving from the PML-Q leader, the court reinstated him as the chief minister. The LHC also issued notices to all the parties in the case and summoned them on January 11. The court also did not make it compulsory for the chief minister to take a vote of confidence on the Punjab governor's orders.

Punjab Govt to remain: CM Elahi

DNA

LAHORE: Punjab Chief Minister Chaudhry Parvez Elahi has said that this government will remain in place no matter what the enemy does. Speaking in the Punjab Assembly on Friday, he said that Allah created this government and He will maintain it. Will continue to serve the religion. Imran Khan and I have been blessed by Allah to serve the religion. "I thank Allah Almighty for passing the Khatam-ul-Nabin University and the Quran Act Bill by the Punjab Assembly. I thank Speaker Punjab Assembly Sabtain Khan, PTI, PML-Q and PML-N members of the assembly for unanimously



Continued on Page 06

Climate challenge needs coordinated actions

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: Overseas Investors Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OICCI), the collective body of over 200 foreign investors, launched a whitepaper titled, "Synergizing the Climate Ambition: A Blueprint for Achieving NDCs through Private Sector Engagement in Pakistan". The paper was presented at a Round Table which featured Dr. Shamsad Akhtar, Waqar Hussain Pulpoto, Ali Tauqeer, and experts from academia, corporates, and social sector organizations. The white paper incorporates the key learnings and insights from Pakistan Climate Conference 2022, organized by OICCI in Karachi on March 16, 2022. The conference brought together global climate experts, policy makers and corporate decision-makers including global CEOs, Mr. Alan Jope (Unilever), Mr. Jesper Brodin (IKEA), Mr. Bill Winters (Standard Chartered Bank), and Mr. Alok Sharma, President COP26. This white paper also showcases the best practices from the industry, highlights the commitment of OICCI members, such as Chevron, Indus Motors, Engro Corporation and Unilever etc. to promote positive climate actions accompanied by an outline for action to boost public-private investment in climate change adaptation and resilience. Pakistan made an ambitious commitment, according to the OICCI white paper, of reducing 50% emissions by 2030 in the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) targets presented at the 26th Conference of Parties (COP26). Under Pakistan's NDCs, about 15% of the total proposed emissions reduction is unconditional whereas the remaining 35% is to be achieved subject to conditional support from bilateral and multilateral sources. Dr. Shamsad Akhtar while addressing the round table mentioned, "PSX launched ESG taskforce and interaction with all the corporates in Pakistan. ESG compliance is very important for attracting foreign direct investment and is a very attractive instrument to attract long term investment." "With ever-rising greenhouse gas concentrations and accumulated heat, the past eight years have been the warmest on record. Heatwaves, droughts, and floods have affected millions making it evident that climate change is a grave and mounting threat globally", said Vice President OICCI.

34th convocation of Pakistan Engineering College Karachi

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: Convocation Ceremony of Pakistan Navy Engineering College (PNEC) was held at Karachi. Chief of the Naval Staff Admiral Muhammad Amjad Khan Niazi graced the occasion as Chief Guest. Naval Chief conferred 382 graduates with PhDs, Masters and Bachelor degrees whereas 41 medals were also awarded to students in various academic disciplines for outstanding performances. While addressing the audience, Chief of the Naval Staff highlighted Pakistan



Navy commitment to train its officers at par with regional and international

navies. The Admiral appreciated that the growing number of foreign

students is a testimony to the college's credentials in the engineering sector.

Naval Chief extended his heartiest felicitations to the graduating students

for earning honours and distinctions for their outstanding performance in academics. During welcome address Commandant PNEC highlighted that College is imparting quality education in the field of engineering and its graduates are spread across the globe in top organizations of the world. He apprised the audience that team of PNEC participated in five international and four national competitions and won laurels for Pakistan. The convocation ceremony was attended by officials of defence forces, civil organizations and parents of the graduating students.

CM KP launches 2nd phase of 'Insaf Rozgar Scheme'

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Mahmood Khan on Friday launched the second phase of 'Insaf Rozgar Scheme' with a total cost of Rs 700 million. Under the scheme, interest free loans ranging from Rs 50,000 to Rs 1 million rupees will be provided to the jobless people of newly merged districts. People between the age 18-50 years, who are permanent residents of the newly merged districts, are eligible to apply for the loan. Briefing the participants on the 'Insaf Rozgar Scheme', Bank of Khyber Managing Director said that the first phase was launched in June 2020 with a cost of Rs 1.1 billion. In the first phase, 4,576 jobless people had been provided with interest free loans enabling them to start their own business.--APP

CM launches ambulance, Urban Search & rescue services through 1122

KARACHI: Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah has said that the State-of-the-Art Central Command & Control (CC&C) has been established in Karachi to provide Ambulatory services, Fire Services, Urban Search & Rescue Services, Water Rescue Services through one number 1122. "It's the very First-time government-owned Emergency Rescue service launched in the province. This he said on Friday while talking to the media just after inaugurating the headquarters of Sindh Emergency Service, Rescue 1122, and its Central Command and Control at Gulshan-e-Iqbal. He was accompanied by his advisors Rasool Bux Chandio and Murtaza Wahab. The CM said that state-of-the Art post-medical health facilities have been established in 4 districts of Karachi and one in Larkana along with the establishment of Rescue stations. "The central command & control is established in Karachi and the Ambulatory Service, Fire Service, Urban Search & Rescue Service, and Water Rescue Service shall be provided through one number 1122," he said. He said that the Water Rescue Service would deal with the issues of urban flooding and the plan was underway to integrate police emergency service into Rescue 1122. Mr. Shah said that the 1122 service was working in all districts of Karachi, Larkana, Thatta, Sujawal, Qambar-Shahdadt, and Hyderabad and it would be launched in District Badin within the next two days. He added that 12 districts would be added to Sindh Emergency Service Rescue 1122. Murad Ali Shah announced that the Rescue service would also be established on main highways after every 50 km for which locations have already been identified where work was in progress. The CM said that the first batch of 107 cadets was provided with specialized rescue training from Punjab, and another batch of 315 cadets was under training. "These are purely technical positions," he said and added the Sindh Emergency Service Rescue-1122 was modeled after successful emergency services elsewhere in Pakistan. He said that he himself dialed

the 1122 number from his mobile phone and lodged a complaint about the fire in the Sadar area and the operator asked him the location. He added that he has advised the Central Command and Control administration to update/upgrade the 1122 Service software so that the location of the complainant could automatically start reflecting on the screen. "In this way, fake complaints could automatically be identified, and genuine complaints would be addressed at the earliest without indulging unnecessary queries with the complainer. Q&A: In reply to a question, the chief minister said that Muttahida was not a coalition partner of his government, but we have developed a good working relationship. He added that MQM leaders have no issue with his government but one of them might have some reservations individually on which the media should not waste its time. To another question, Murad Ali Shah said that the Governor [of Punjab] under Article 130(7) of the constitution has the power to call the assembly session for the chief minister to take a vote of confidence. The objection made by the speaker on calling the session by the Governor was not valid. The Sindh CM advised his counterpart in Punjab to take the vote of confidence instead of going to the court of law. He added that the chief minister has to take a vote of confidence to show his majority. Talking about law & order, the chief minister said that he had held a high-level meeting a day before and had given clear instructions to the law enforcement agencies to launch a vigorous operation against street criminals. He added that during the last two weeks some such incidents have happened the citizens have lost their lives while resisting the muggers. "The police have made some arrests and the killers would be brought to book at any cost," he said and added that some of the habitual criminals have been released by the court for which he has directed his prosecutors to focus on investigation and made the cases strong.

Working rural women's rights must be protected

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Rural women working in agricultural fields are the largest contributors to the informal economy in Pakistan, but they are not acknowledged, counted and protected. These women have same rights as working women

men and are deprived of basic rights and protection. She stressed on the need of creating awareness among Women Agricultural Workers (WAWs) through mass media and effective role of local governments in addressing these issues. The study titled "The Hands That Feed Us: Struggles of Women Agricultural

Most of them are married in early age and forced to work in fields on behalf of in-law families as bonded laborers. Highlighting the need to carry out this study, Mr. Rehman said that "There are several women empowerment studies but limited research is available on the measurement of empowerment in the agricul-

hida Rehmani, Chairperson Women Parliamentary Caucus, Ms. Shandana Gulzar, Ex-Convenor Parliamentary Committee on Agriculture, Chairperson Common Wealth Women Parliamentary Forum, Ms. Madiya Sultana Member, National Commission for Status of Women, Ms. Mahwish Afridi, Head of SDG Program, Hashoo Found-



in cities but in remote areas there is no recognition of their contribution and rights. These thoughts were expressed by Kamala Tariq, Federal Ombudsman for Protection Against Harassment at the national launch of study on women agricultural workers rights organized by AwazCDS Pakistan. She also said that there is a strong need to implement laws already in place for women agricultural workers' rights as they often earn less than

Workers in Pakistan" was conducted by AwazCDS-Pakistan in collaboration with Forum Asia and Bread for the World in the aftermath of COVID-19 pandemic. Chief Executive AwazCDS-Pakistan Zia-ur-Rehman highlighted in his address that women agricultural workers (WAWs) often earn less than 50 percent of men wages. WAWs traditionally face malnutrition, discrimination, violence, and ill-treatment by their partners, including exploitation and sexual harassment.

tural context. Therefore, it was decided to carry out a study to assess, identify and articulate the contributing factors associated with socio-economic, legal, gender and political empowerment of Women Agriculture Workers (WAW) in Sindh and Punjab Provinces of Pakistan. The event centered a panel discussion moderated by Zia-ur-Rehman and Maryam Amjad, Program Manager AwazCDS-Pakistan about the issues brought up within the study. The speakers included Dr. Sha-

hida Rehmani, Chairperson Women Parliamentary Caucus, Ms. Sameena Nazeer, Executive Director PODA, Aftab Alam Khan, Chief Executive Resilient Future International threw light on the situation of rural women rights and how they are deprived of their basic rights. The study findings suggested appropriate measures and recommendations to address identified policy and practice level gaps. The study findings and recommendations also highlight the WAWs right to work, right to safe.

Pakistanis far ahead of leaders

ISLAMABAD: Experts at a special seminar on Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah's leadership and thinking Thursday said the people of Pakistan were far ahead of their leaders and waiting for someone bearing Jinnah's vision and integrity. The seminar 'Muhammad Ali Jinnah: His Vision and Struggle' was organised by the Centre for Aerospace & Security Studies (CASS), said a news release issued here. The panel included former federal minister for Information and Broadcasting, Senator (Retd.) Javed Jabbar, President of Anjuman Faiz-ul-Islam, Prof. Dr Riaz Ahmad and former dean Faculty of Arts & Humanities, University of Punjab, Prof. Dr Iqbal Chawla. Javed Jabbar, in his keynote address, shared that Jinnah's vision of

Pakistan evolved decades before the word 'Pakistan' was even conceived or the freedom movement even began. "In fact, his concept of what 'Muslims' were or should be, did not begin with the Lahore Resolution." He observed that one only needed to study Jinnah's speeches, over a span of 42 years, to see how futuristic he was; his acute clarity of thought, desire for change, combined with willingness to be pragmatic rather than obstinate. He argued that one major example of Jinnah's vision could be seen from the fact that he (Jinnah) stressed on the importance of compulsory elementary education for all children in the subcontinent at a time when no one was interested in such a model. The keynote speaker further shared that more than equality, equity was the cardinal principle of Quaid's political life, vision and thinking, be it political, gender or institutional equity. On the current and future trajectory, Jabbar strongly urged that the political equity for Pakistan could only come through electoral reforms. He also called for direct political representation of women and the need to practice austerity, following Jinnah's model, in the current economic crisis. Prof. Dr Riaz Ahmad, while giving an account of Jinnah's struggle, political journey and case for Pakistan, informed the audience that Quaid-e-Azam learnt politics by spending hours and hours in parliament, observing how politicians argued in parliamentary debates. -- DNA



ISALABAD: Mr. Faisal Karim Kundi, Minister of State for Poverty Alleviation and Social Safety cutting Christmas Cake with members of Christian Community at BISP Head. -- APP

Invitation to Bid
(CUI/Proc/TN-11-23/255)
Supply of Desktop Computer Systems

COMSATS University Islamabad (CUI), a public sector University of Ministry of Science & Technology (MoST) invites Expression of Interest (EOI) from bidders registered with Income Tax/Sales Tax departments and are on Active Tax Payer List of FBR (IT & GST) for "Supply of Desktop Computer Systems".

- Tender procedure will base on "Single-Stage One Envelope" bidding method as prescribed under PPRA's rules.
- The "Financial" Bids must be accompanied with the earnest money **Rs. 200,000/-** in the form of Call Deposit/Bank Draft (refundable) drawn in favor of COMSATS University Islamabad (FTN/NTN: 9013701-9).
- Tender documents are available online for the interested firms/parties on PPRA's website as well as CUI's website which can be downloaded. Interested firms/bidders are required to submit their bids proposals along with tender fee of **Rs. 500/- (non-refundable)** in shape of Pay Order/Demand Draft in favour of CUI Islamabad.
- Sealed EOIs prepared in accordance with instructions of EOI documents must reach at the given address latest by **January 10, 2023 by 1100 hrs. (Closing Time)**
- Bids will be opened in public on the **same day half hour** after the closing time in "Room No. G-6, Faculty Block-I, COMSATS University Islamabad, Park Road, Tarlai Kalan, Islamabad."

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"SAY NO TO DRUGS" www.comsats.edu.pk

Telecom industry starts issuing SIMs through MBVS

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Telecom industry has started issuing SIMs through an enhanced version of Biometric Verification System (BVS) called Multi Finger Biometric Verification System (MBVS). This was stated in a ceremony held at PTA Headquarters for signing of the contract between NADRA and Cellular Mobile Operators (CMOs) after smooth transition to the new BVS. The BVS devices available at sale channels have been upgraded to meet the requirements of the new system through NADRA and CMOs. The new system requires impressions of multiple fingers for authentication and applicant antecedents while issuing new or duplicate SIM. Moreover, the control for choice of fingers for verification purposes has been

shifted from the seller representative to the system which asks for two different fingers' impressions randomly. The implementation of new system will make the illegal use of fake fingerprints impossible. The signing ceremony was attended by Chairman PTA, Maj. General Amir Azeem Bajwa (R), Chairman NADRA, Mr. Muhammad Tariq Malik; Member (Compliance & Enforcement) PTA Dr. Khawar Siddique Khokhar; Additional Director General FIA and representatives from CMOs. Chairman PTA, while lauding the untiring efforts of CMOs and NADRA in the upgradation of MBVS, said that the new system will be a catalyst in controlling the sales of SIMs issued illegally. Speaking at the occasion, Chairman NADRA stated

that MBVS has the immense potential to keep fraudsters and scammers away. He said MBVS is a smart solution which uses an indigenous smart algorithm where choice of finger is proposed by the system rather than pre-fixed finger positions. "The MBVS will not only eliminate silicon-based fingerprints used for issuance of mobile phone SIMs but also will hamper the attempts to purchase illegal SIMs. The new system will combat fake SIM issuance, ID fraud, protect privacy and strengthen national security of Pakistan", he added. MBVS has been made possible due to strenuous and continued efforts of the teams from PTA, NADRA and CMOs. It is pertinent to mention that BVS was implemented in 2014 in order to offer secure online biometric

verification for each SIM related transaction as well as assigning Unique Sale ID and logging of each transaction so that the person responsible for misuse

is identifiable. However, to further enhance the system and counter problems regarding SIMs issued using illegal means, MBVS has been introduced. The new

verification system will be helpful towards eliminating the use of SIMs attained through illegal ways in fraudulent financial transactions and other criminal activities.



National Days and Armed Forces Days

December

Dec 01 / Romania

National Day

Dec 02 / UAE

National Day

Dec 02 / Laos Republic

National Day

Dec 05 / Thailand

National Day

Dec 06 / Finland

Independence Day

Dec 07 / India

Armed Forces Flag Day

Dec 09/ Tanzania

National Day

Dec 11/ Oman

Armed Forces Day

Dec 12 / Kenya

Independence Day

Dec 12 / Turkmenistan

Neutrality Day

Dec 16 / Bahrain

National Day

Dec 16 / Kazakhstan

Independence Day

Dec 18 / Qatar

National Day

Dec 18 / Niger

National Day

Dec 23 / Philippines

Armed Forces Day

Dec 23/ Japan

National Day



Hotels & Restaurants

Serena Hotel.....111 133 133

Marriott.....051- 2826121

Monal.....0334-5421812



Airlines

Turkish Airlines.....8494949



Emergency

Rescue (Police).....15

Bomb Disposal.....15

Fire Services Rawalpindi/ Islamabad.....1122 & 16

Emergency Ambulance.....1122 & Rescue Services.4451122

Motorway Police....9266044

Motorway Police..9270601-20

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Rawalpindi.....9270601-20



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CAA.....9281092



Hospitals

CMH.....5611111

MH.....561116

Cantt Hospital...9270907-11

DHQ.....5556311-4

RGH.....9290301-7

Holy Family.....9290322-7

PIMS.....9261170-79

Polyclinic.....9218300-09

Shifa International.4603666



Departments

CDA.....9221334-43

CDA.....9208301-04

Met Office.....9250360-6

RDA.....5555864

TMA.....5770886

Cantonment Board 9270151-3

Islamabad Metropolitan

Corporation.....9209224

Potohar Town.....9209224

Rawal Town.....5773343

Water Tank

Islamabad.....0321-5744480



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif chairing a meeting on the construction of housing units for Overseas Pakistanis in Islamabad. – DNA

Women play vital role in development of country

Islam has given equal rights to women but unfortunately, these rights were misinterpreted

STAFF REPORT

RAWALPINDI: Federal Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Prof. Ahsan Iqbal here on Friday said that women play a vital role in the development of any country and the development process remains slow where women are not given equal opportunities. Speaking as chief guest at the concluding event of 16 Days of Activism against Gender-based violence at Fatima Jinnah Women University, the minister said that Islam has given equal rights to women but unfortunately, these rights were misinterpreted. The Minister stressed the need to empower women for the development of the country as their role is of great importance and has been acknowledged worldwide. No country could achieve its full potential if women don't have the same rights and opportunities as men. "We have recently witnessed the progress and development of China and Bangladesh," he said

adding, both the countries provided equal opportunities to women and achieved the goals of progress and development. He said, unfortunately in our country, females were not provided equal opportunities in the past. Though, the women of the sub-continent played a vital role in Pakistan Movement under the leadership of Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah but after the independence of Pakistan, the journey of women witnessed a break

which increased gender disparity in various sectors. Now the gap which was being observed particularly in education was swiftly being filled as the enrollment percentage of females in schools, colleges and universities is more than male students. The female students are proving their abilities in all fields, he added. Citing the enrollment of medical colleges where admissions are offered purely on merit, the minister said, nearly 70 percent of students are females. Similarly, the percentage of women in civil services of the country particularly in most competitive services has also reached 50 percent, he added. Educating a woman would not only empower an individual but an entire family, he said. The recent decades have observed a variation in the females and males educational performance across Pakistan. There is a trend of females' outperformance and males' underperformance in tertiary education. Young Development Fellows programme was initiated by the government to provide public policy experience to outstanding young professionals, he informed. Ahsan Iqbal said provision of a safe and conducive environment for women entrepreneurs is our national responsibility and our religion and constitution also guarantee the protection of women's rights. He further said at the onset of Islam, the Prophet Muhammed (PBUH) expanded women's rights to include inheritance, property and marriage rights. Ahsan Iqbal said the Planning Commission had established a Gender Unit in the ministry in which all development projects would be planned according to principles of gender responsiveness so that the projects should not be approved without ensuring the interests of the women. In vision 2025 several projects were added to empower women, he said adding, similarly, in recent floods, several initiatives were taken during their rehabilitation.

President gives assent to laws

ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi on Friday gave assent to the Criminal Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2022. The bill repeals Section 325 of the Pakistan Penal Code 1860, relating to the punishment for attempted suicide. President Arif Alvi also approved the Foreign Investment (Promotion and Protection) Amendment Bill 2022, under which an amendment has been made in Section 1. The approval has been given in line with Article 75 of the Constitution. – APP

ITP distribute gifts among christian employees

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Traffic Police (Traffic Wing) on Friday arranged a ceremony in connection with Christmas and distributed gifts among these employees. Chief Traffic Officer Dr. Syed Mustafa Tanveer joined a ceremony held here at traffic police Headquarters in honor of Christian employees on their holy occasion. The event was held following the directions of IGP Islamabad Dr Akbar Nasir Khan and was attended by Christian employees and other senior police officers and officials of traffic police. The Chief Traffic Officer said, "We are proud of Christian employees who are serving in various wings of the force. The minorities enjoy equal rights in the country and are contributing significantly to its development." – APP

PBM serves 1099355 beneficiaries under IFA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Bait-ul-Mal (PBM) has disbursed an amount of Rs. 9,269,125,641 among 1099355 beneficiaries under the Individual Financial Assistance (IFA) programme during the period from July 2019 till December 01, 2022. Among total amount, Rs. 2,213,357,531 has been disbursed among 24400 beneficiaries belonging to Islamabad Capital Territory, Rs. 3,464,532,641 to 41,521 beneficiaries of Punjab and Rs. 1,280,441,735 among 15489 beneficiaries of Sindh. According to an official source, the program has disbursed an amount of Rs. 1,886,489,786 among 21557 beneficiaries of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Rs. 312,588,311 among 4590 beneficiaries of Balochistan

and Rs. 111,715,637 among 2378 beneficiaries of Gilgit-Baltistan. Under the IFA program, PBM is providing financial assistance to the marginalized segments in different sectors including education, medical, special friends and general category. During the period from July 2019 till December 01, 2022, IFA has utilized an amount of Rs. 545,546,562 to support 19497 beneficiaries in the education sector while Rs. 8,096,311,579 has been disbursed to provide medical assistance among 54960 beneficiaries. IFA has benefited 17544 special friends through spending an amount of Rs. 240,502,500 while 17935 beneficiaries were giv-

en assistance worth Rs. 386,765,000 in the general category. Through Individual Financial Assistance (IFA), PBM supports the poor, widows, destitute women, orphans and disabled persons through general assistance, education, medical treatment and rehabilitation. The objective behind this initiative includes fulfillment of the immediate need of the poor, provision of medical treatment of major ailments and disabilities of the poor patients, ensuring economic empowerment through rehabilitation and provision of education stipends to deserving and brilliant poor students of educational and technical institutions in the public sector. – APP

ICCI condemns suicide blast in Islamabad

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari President, Faad Waheed Senior Vice President and Engr. Muhammad Azhar ul Islam Zafar Vice President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry in a statement have strongly condemned the suicide blast in I-10/4, Islamabad in which one policeman embraced Shahadat and many police officers as well as civilians got injured. They expressed condolences with the bereaved family and paid tribute to the courage and valour of the martyred policeman. They also wished early recovery to the injured ones. They said that the resurgence of the incidents of blasts and terrorist attacks are creating a lot of concerns in the business community of the country as they are feeling insecure due to such incidents. They said that the economy of Pakistan has already suffered a huge loss of over US\$ 150 billion due to fighting terrorism and the country cannot afford re-emergence of terrorists in its land as it would badly damage the economy and tarnish the image of the country at national and international level. They said that Pakistan needed a peaceful environment to promote business and investment activities to steer the economy out of current challenges. However, the incidents like terrorists' attack at CTD Bannu and suicide blast in I-10/4, Islamabad are worrisome as any further rise in such incidents would disturb the peace of mind of businessmen and shake the confidence of local and foreign investors. This situation would further weaken the already fragile economy. They urged that the government should fight out terrorism with full force in all its forms and manifestations and break the nexus between terrorists, their supporters and sympathisers to achieve a peaceful and stable environment. They further stressed that the writ of the state should be established at all costs and no one should be allowed to derail the hard-earned gains of the war on terror, which Pakistan had achieved after the unparalleled sacrifices of the armed forces and the nation. They assured that the business community of the entire country would fully stand with the armed forces and the security agencies to purge Pakistan of the terrorism and anti-peace elements.

Minorities Heritage Photo contest on Jan. 31

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Hindu Council, in order to identify non-Muslim holy places of worship across the country, has announced the All Pakistan Minorities Heritage Photo contest under the theme "Non-Muslim Religious Heritage sites". The last date for participation in the photo competition being held with technical support by the Press Network of Pakistan is January 31, 2023. The contestants submitting outstanding photos will be awarded winning prizes worth Rs 50,000, 30,000 and 20,000 respectively in addition to special prizes and certificates of appreciation. Patron-in-Chief of Pakistan Hindu Council and Member of Parliament Dr. Ramesh Kumar Vankwani, in a statement, said that there are countless unknown historical holy places in the land of Pakistan that are in dire need of our attention. "The land of present-day Pakistan, having thousands of years of ancient history, is full of hidden architectural wonders and unique sites that make up part of our rich heritage. Undoubtedly, these sites are silent witnesses of our glorious past," he stated. Dr. Vankwani further said that God Almighty has blessed Pakistan with such a priceless treasure in the form of historical sites, which by paving the way for religious tourism, can not only rid us of foreign debt, but also strengthen our national economy, said in a press release issued here on Friday. According to him, an effort is being made under the All Pakistan Minorities Heritage Photo Contest to highlight and showcase the historical sacred buildings of non-Muslim minority religions including Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist, Jain, Parsi and Christian communities, which have a glorious past despite the passing of hundreds of years. – APP

Capital's hospitals to remain on high alert

ISLAMABAD: The Ministry of National Health Services, Regulations and Coordination on Friday directed all the administrative heads of hospitals located in the federal capital to remain high-alert, keeping in view the prevailing situation after an explosion in Sector I-10/4, Islamabad. According to the ministry's order, hospital heads have also been directed to ensure the availability of medical and para-medical staff as well as essential services in their respective hospitals around the clock. The directions have been issued to the heads of PIMS, Federal Government Polyclinic (FGPC), and National Institute of Rehabilitation Medicines (NIRM). Meanwhile, following the directions of the ministry, the administrations of all three hospitals have started taking special measures to keep the emergency department on high alert for the provision of medical facilities to injured persons. Similarly, all vehicles or ambulances will be on standby in the premises of the hospitals to cater to any emergency situation besides making other necessary arrangements to meet any untoward situation. – APP

DECEMBER 2022

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Briefs

Noor Jahan
remembered
on 22nd
death
anniversary

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's iconic music legend, Melody Queen Noor Jahan's 22nd death anniversary was observed here on Friday as her fans and music lovers remembered her work in the field of music. Her career spanned more than six decades (1930-1990). She was renowned as one of the greatest and most influential singers of all time, especially throughout South Asia and was given the title of Malika-e-Tarannum in Pakistan. She had a command of Hindustani classical music as well as other music genres. She earned the record for having given voice to the largest number of film songs in the history of cinema in Pakistan and she has the credit to have more than 40 films and sung around 20,000 numbers during a career that lasted more than half a century. She is thought to be one of the most prolific singers of all time. She is also considered to be the first female Pakistani film director. "Personalities like Noor Jahan are born in centuries and the Pakistani film industry is blessed to have the name of these personalities connected to it. Such artists are the academy of performing arts within themselves and no one can ever replace them," said Ayub Jamali, Director General of Pakistan National Council of the Arts (PNCA) while talking to APP. He said that National Heritage and Culture Division and PNCA hold programs regularly to remember and acknowledge the services of artists and promote their art to the coming generations.—APP

NHMP urge
motorists to
use fog lights
during winter

ISLAMABAD, Dec 23 (APP): National Highways and Motorway Police (NHMP) has advised travelers to use fog lights following dropped visibility and high concentration of smog hovering in the air. Talking to APP here on Friday, an official of NHMP Inspector Saqib Mumtaz said that yellow fog lights are designed to be used at low speed in fog, heavy mist, snow, and other poor-visibility situations. He said fog lights are different from daytime running lights, mounted low on the vehicle, with the thinking that fog does not settle on the road surface but hovers 12 to 18 inches above it. He informed that headlights can be too bright in low visibility situations and reflect into the driver's eyes while fog lights are safer and more preferred by road safety experts. Saqib said that fog lights are angled in a particular way so that the light directly illuminates the road ahead, instead of several feet off the ground without disturbing the other traffic. He said that frontal fog lights are designed to help the driver see the ground better in low visibility circumstances while rear fog lights help other drivers in interpreting distance. Furthermore, he instructed to dial the number at 130 for any official assistance required during driving in the intense situation and to use the mobile application titled Hamsafar for finding the exact location to reach the destination.—APP

Lok Virsa
holds colorful
Christmas
celebrations

ISLAMABAD: The National Institute of Folk and Traditional Heritage (Lok Virsa) celebrated Christmas in a befitting manner here Friday at Shakarparian. A day-long Christmas festival was organized which featured special attractions like congregation of Christian community, Christmas cake-cutting ceremony, the erection of a Christmas tree, an exhibition of artisans-at-work with master artisans in different specialized craft fields, folk songs, folk dances, video documentaries on Christmas and performances by traditional drummers (Dholis). Lok Virsa complex remained the center of Christmas celebrations throughout the day.—APP

Chinese company to provide
free cancer screenings

According to Sun Xiaorong, founder and President of Landing Med, as Pakistan has a huge population, there is a large number of women who need cervical cancer screening

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Landing Med, a medical technology company based in Wuhan, China, dispatched three self-developed cervical cancer screening devices along with 5,000 sets of supporting consumable items to Pakistan. With these AI-powered devices, 10,000 Pakistani women will receive free cervical cancer screening and early diagnosis of tumors, China Economic Net (CEN) reported on Friday.

This is the first batch of devices under the China-Pakistan AI Cervical Cancer Screening Program. In the future, more will be provided to Pakistan. Landing Med will also establish a Cloud Diagnostic Research Center for Akbar Niazi Teaching Hospital to pro-



vide nationwide cervical cancer screening in Pakistan. Compared with artificial diagnosis, AI screening excels in speed and accuracy. Even an experienced pathologist can only examine up to 100 cell slides a day. In addition, some patholog-

ical cells that do not show obvious changes in the early stage may be missed when being observed through the microscope. The AI-powered screening device, on the other hand, can automatically find traces of cancer cells in digitized images

within minutes based on decades of manually accumulated diagnosis data and algorithm models. According to Sun Xiaorong, founder and President of Landing Med, as Pakistan has a huge population, there is a large number of women

who need cervical cancer screening. In this regard, efficient testing methods are required to enhance coverage. To benefit women in remote areas with scarce medical resources, the company has developed a 5G+AI cloud diagnosis platform

where experts from over ten countries can hold consultations on reports uploaded to the cloud platform, which saves patients the trouble of repeatedly visiting the hospital for sample collection and report analysis. The China-Pakistan AI Cervical Cancer Screening Program started in 2019 on the ninth meeting of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor Joint Cooperation Committee when two think tanks of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences signed an MoU with Pakistan's Ministry of Health to jointly provide AI cervical cancer screening services in Gwadar Port and other cities in Pakistan. Landing Med signed an agreement with its Pakistani partner in November 2021 to execute the program.

Vast trade potential between
Kyrgyzstan and Pakistan: Ulanbek

ISLAMABAD, Ambassador of Kyrgyzstan to Pakistan Ulanbek Totuaev Friday emphasised the need to fully tap the existing vast trade potential between the two countries besides further cementing the existing economic relations on sound footing. Inaugurating the Kyrgyzstan Trade House, he said Kyrgyzstan products will be displayed here to attract Pakistani buyers and investors in diversified sectors. He said Pakistan and Kyrgyzstan are enjoying cordial relations, but their bilateral trade of around US\$ 8-9 million is much below the actual potential of the two countries. He said that both countries are doing trade in limited areas and they should focus on diversification of trade to achieve better-desired results. He said that Kyrgyzstan

exported coal this year to Pakistan and is a rich country in natural resources, can supply more products to Pakistan while Pakistan can export many products to Kyrgyzstan including pharmaceuticals, textiles, and agricultural products. He said Kyrgyzstan is importing marble from India and Pakistani marble exporters have a good opportunity to capture the market in Kyrgyzstan. Ulanbek Totuaev said that a China-Kyrgyzstan-Uzbekistan railway project would be extended to Peshawar through Afghanistan in the future which would help in boosting trade relations. He said it's a good omen that Pakistan and Kyrgyzstan on last Friday agreed to enhance the economic and trade cooperation and increase regional connectivity to provide regional economic and trade

integration with the Central Asian States. Chairman Kyrgyzstan Trade House (KTH) Meher Kashif Younis who is also Co-ordinator of Federal Tax Ombudsman and Vice President of Gold Ring Economic Forum, a think tank, speaking on this occasion said KTH will act as a bridge between the traders and investors of either country and interested Pakistani traders will be facilitated to visit Kyrgyzstan for investment and joint ventures. He said promoting bilateral trade and economic relations between Pakistan and Kyrgyzstan could be a milestone in regional and global trade integration and connectivity. He said the geo-strategic position of Pakistan and Kyrgyzstan highlights their geo-economic importance, which could play a significant role in promoting trade con-

nectivity amongst different regions and potential markets of the world. He said the geographical location of Kyrgyzstan offers many opportunities for trade with Pakistan as it is the shortest entry point of Pakistani products to the 'Eurasian Economic Markets' of 182 million people comprising Russia, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Belarus, and Armenia. Meher Kashif Younis said a trade delegation from Pakistan will visit Kyrgyzstan soon to look for new markets for our products including tourism and education. He said the trade turnover of the Kyrgyz with Pakistan amounted to 5.9 million dollars in 2021 with Pakistan's exports amounting to 5.3 million dollars and imports 0.6 million, which he added needs to be enhanced manifolds in the days to come.—Agencies

Police devise
foolproof security
plan for Christmas

RAWALPINDI: Rawalpindi District Police have devised a foolproof security plan to avoid any untoward situation on the eve of Christmas with over 3,200 police personnel would be deployed. Under the security plan, all churches have been divided into three categories and police personnel including Elite Force commandos would be deployed to ensure foolproof security. According to a Police spokesman, no one would be allowed to park vehicle near Churches. Walk-through gates would be installed at the entrance of the Churches and the visitors would be checked through metal detectors. Best possible security arrangements would be ensured to avoid any untoward incident in the city, he said. The security duty at public places including parks would be made more effective, he said adding security had also been tightened at the entry and exit points of the city and special checking was ordered for this special occasion. He said the City Police Officer (CPO) Rawalpindi Syed Shehzad Nadeem Bukhari had directed the SPs, DSPs and SHO's to ensure effective patrolling in their respective areas. Plain-clothed and well-equipped policemen would perform duties near churches and public places, he added. The security of the churches would be monitored through closed-circuit television (CCTV) cameras while a control room would be set up where all the departments concerned would work jointly to keep an eye on the security arrangements.—APP

Authorities fail to
implement ban on
burning of trash

RAWALPINDI: Despite the ban imposed on the burning of trash to control smog, the authorities concerned have failed to implement the order of the Punjab government and the incidents of garbage burning in city and cantonment areas could not be reduced. The burning of trash is causing air pollution as instead of properly disposing garbage and plastic bags in several residential areas, they are being burnt. The Dean of Public Health at Rawalpindi Medical University Professor Syed Arshad Sabir declared the situation dangerous for human health. He said that due to air pollution, problems could arise for the residents when they breathe, especially people who have asthma or respiratory diseases. Air pollution is also harmful to the health of pregnant women, he added. With the increase in the severity of cold compared to other cities in Rawalpindi, it became necessary to get heat by burning fire there and in some areas the sanitation staff and the residents are burning the garbage. Commissioner Rawalpindi Division Saqib Manan talking about the air pollution problem said that it is the responsibility of the Assistant Director of Environment to take action against smoke-emitting vehicles and stone crushers. He informed that 46 cases were registered against the violators. The Punjab government had imposed an environmental emergency to control smog and efforts were being made by the authorities concerned to implement the order in letter and spirit. Anwar, a resident of Mughalabad said that in some city and Cantt. areas, the piles of garbage were being set on fire instead of being properly disposed of. The citizens told APP that the sanitation staff of Rawalpindi and Chaklala Cantonment boards were found violating the orders of the government and burning the garbage instead of collecting and removing it, which causes air pollution, smog as well as the spread of various diseases. When contacted the officials concerned of the Cantonment Board said that the sanitation staff had been strictly prohibited and measures to prevent smog were being strictly enforced. According to Rawalpindi Cantonment Board spokesperson, Muhammad Rasiat the garbage was properly being collected from the cantt. areas and the complaints of burning garbage were not true.—APP



ISLAMABAD: Speaker National Assembly Raja Pervez Ashraf in a group photo with Somalian Delegation led by Minister of Interior Federal Affairs & Reconciliation Mr. Ahmed Moalim Figi Ahmed at Parliament House.—APP

Fruits, vegetables valuing
\$133.456m exported in 5 months

ISLAMABAD: Different fruits and vegetables worth \$133.456 million were exported during first five months of current financial year as compared the exports of the corresponding period of last year. The exports of vegetables from the country during the period under review grew by 20.86 percent, where as exports of fruits decreased by 37.24 percent as compared to exports of corresponding period of last

year. During the period from July-November, 2022 about 423,489 metric tons of vegetables valuing \$121.976 million exported as compared the exports of 278,244 metric tons worth \$100.926 million of same period last year. However, the exports of fresh fruits from the country during period under review decreased by 37.24 percent as about 187,744 metric tons of fruits worth \$111.480 million exported as against the

exports of 211,640 metric tons valuing \$177.631 million of same period last year. During the period from July-November, 2022, the exports of meat and meat products also grew by 20.64 percent as about 34,340 metric tons of above mentioned commodities worth \$161.310 million exported as against the exports of 30,870 metric tons valuing 133.714 million of same period of last year. It is pertinent to mention here that overall food group exports from the country during the first five months of the current financial year witnessed about a 1.03 percent decrease.—APP

as against the exports of 56,731 metric tons of fish valuing \$150.502 million of same period of last year. During the period from July-November, 2022, the exports of meat and meat products also grew by 20.64 percent as about 34,340 metric tons of above mentioned commodities worth \$161.310 million exported as against the exports of 30,870 metric tons valuing 133.714 million of same period of last year. It is pertinent to mention here that overall food group exports from the country during the first five months of the current financial year witnessed about a 1.03 percent decrease.—APP

ASH as pillar of climate
resilience needs adequate
funding in Pakistan

ISLAMABAD: Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH) is a pillar of climate resilience that needs adequate funding as currently, the WASH sector receives 22% of the total climate funding. This was the crux of a research-based "Climate Financing for WASH brief - Pakistan Scoping Brief" undertaken by IRC researchers and was launched at a ceremony jointly organized by the IRC and the Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI) here, a news release said. The research was led by IRC researcher Habib-ur-Rehman. The launch was followed by a Panel discussion on Climate Financing for WASH. The study calls upon international donors to allocate at least 35% of climate-related budget for WASH raising it from the existing 22% for Pakistan and prioritize the allocation of WASH and climate-related funding to the countries which are currently unlikely to achieve the WASH SDGs. In her welcome remarks, the IRC Country Director Shabnam Baloch opined: "WASH is a critical entry point to reducing community vulnerability to climate impacts, closing gender gaps, health and education disparity, economic inclusion and progress. Climate resilient WASH goes beyond climate infrastructure and is critical in climate-induced disasters". She further noted that while Pakistan needs 7-14 billion USD annually till 2050 for adaptation alone there is a dire need to address impediments such as the complexity of the process in accessing climate financing by CSOs, resource-intensive nature of issue and lack of community engagement during project.—APP

NHA to
start tree
plantation

ISLAMABAD: National Highway Authority (NHA) has planned to start tree plantation and maintenance work on the Punjab section of Motorway M-1 with an estimated cost of Rs 45,491,200. According to an official document available with APP, NHA will start planting 11,000 olive seeds, 7,000 ornamental plants, and 5,000 forestry plants from New Islamabad International Airport (NIIA) Gate to Thallian Interchange. The project will be carried out through a private partnership in an area of five kilometers and the partner would also be responsible for two years of maintenance. The plantation will have various benefits including dust control, reduced soil erosion, improved visibility, shade, carbon sequestration, and beautification.—APP

President
appoints
Mansoor
Usman AGP

ISLAMABAD : President Arif Alvi on Friday approved the appointment of Advocate Supreme Court Mansoor Usman Awan, as Attorney General for Pakistan. The president also accepted the resignation of Ash-tar Ausaf Ali from the post of Attorney General. The president gave the approval under the Article 100 of the Constitution.—APP

Export of
Sports goods
increases
29.36%
during July-
November

ISLAMABAD, Dec 23 (APP): The export of sports goods from the country witnessed an increase of 29.36 percent during the first five months of the current financial year (2022-23) as compared to the export of corresponding months of last year. The country exported sports goods worth \$174.034 million during July-November (2022-23) as compared to the export of \$135.034 million during July- November (2021-22), showing growth of 29.36 percent, according to the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS). Among the sports products, the exports of footballs rose by 60.16 percent as its surging from \$63.671 million last year to \$101.976 million during the current year. The gloves exports however dropped by 2.73 percent by going down from the US \$31.724 million last year to US \$30.857 million during the current year, the PBS data revealed. Likewise, the exports of all other sports goods increased by 5.56 percent to \$41.843 million from US \$39.639 million last year. Meanwhile, year-on-year basis the sports goods export witnessed an increase of 18.85 percent in November 2022 as compared with the export of the same month of last year. The sports goods exports in November 2022 were recorded at \$35.458 million against exports of \$29.835 million in November 2021. During the period under review, the footballs export increase by 52.52 percent whereas the exports of gloves and all other sports product however dipped by 14.52 and 4.74 percent respectively. Meanwhile, on month-on-month basis, the exports of sports goods decreased by 4.19 percent during November 2022, as compared to the exports of \$37.007 million in October 2022, the PBS data revealed. On month-on-month basis, the exports of footballs and gloves decreased by 7.22 and 9.04 percent respectively in addition the exports of other sports commodities increased by 8.27 percent. It is pertinent to mention here that during the first five months of the current fiscal year, the merchandise trade deficit witnessed a decline of 30.14 percent and was recorded at \$ 14,406 million this year against the deficit of \$ 20,621 million last year. According to PBS data, the exports from July-November 2022 were recorded at \$11,932 million against the exports of \$12,362 million in July-November (2021-22), showing a decline of 3.48 percent. On the other hand, the imports of the country decreased by 20.15 percent during the period under review by going down from \$ 32,983 million last year to \$ 26,338 million during the current year.—APP

HEC announces national top talent
foreign scholarships programme

ISLAMABAD: The Higher Education Commission (HEC) has announced 75 National Top Talent Scholarships Programme for Pakistani students to take admission to MS and PhD studies abroad. According to official sources, on the auspicious occasion of National Celebrations of 75th Independence Anniversary of Pakistan, the Government of Pakistan announced 40 PhD and 35 MS scholarships for Pakistani and Azad Kashmir nationals to study in the world's 25 top-ranked universities (QS or Times Higher Education (THE) Rankings only). The sources informed that the scholarships will be awarded on the provision of proof

of confirmed admission in desired universities and selected subjects only. Meanwhile, as per eligibility criteria, the applicant must be a Pakistani/Azad Kashmir national. The candidates must have a confirmed/unconditional admission/enrolment in any of the world's 25 top-ranked universities (QS/THE) in selected subjects. They must have a minimum qualification for MS Scholarships: BS/BE/Master's or equivalent to 16 years of education in relevant fields of study, while for PhD Scholarships: MS/MPhil/ME or equivalent to 18 years of education in relevant fields of study. Maximum one 2nd Division throughout the academic career prior to the

final degree, it added. The candidates must have a minimum CGPA of 3.0 out of 4.0 & 3.75 out of 5.0 in the semester system or 1 Division (in the annual system) in the terminal degree. The maximum age on the closing date should be 40 years for full-time regular faculty members of public sector universities/degree awarding institutions/colleges and employees of public sector organisations while 35 years for all others. The candidates must not be availing any other scholarship. The applicants are required to submit an online application via HEC e-portal, i.e., https://eportal.hec.gov.pk. It is worth mentioning here the schol-

arships will be awarded on a first-come-first-served basis. The candidates are required to fulfill the requirement of the host university to secure admission which may include international GRE, TOEFL, etc. They are advised to appear in these tests. Conditional admission/enrolment will not be considered. In case any information is found misrepresented/ incorrect at any stage, the application process will be terminated. The awardee will have to execute a bond with HEC to serve for a period of three years (for MS scholarship) and five years (for PhD scholarship) immediately after completion of his/her studies.—APP

Hostilities must be ended with reason, restraint

United States President Joe Biden conveyed the unequivocal message to the visiting Ukrainian leader on Wednesday that you'd better fight as long as we support you. That is in stark contrast with the call for a political settlement to the Russia-Ukraine conflict voiced by President Xi Jinping during his meeting with Dmitry Medvedev, deputy chairman of the Russian Security Council and chairman of the United Russia Party, in Beijing a few hours earlier on the same day. Biden's words might shed some light on why something always happens whenever Moscow and Kyiv have seemed to agree on cease-fire talks. Certainly, the fact that the generous military support the US is providing for Ukraine pales beside the exorbitant profits it is making from arms and energy deals provides a clue as to why it might not want the conflict to end any time soon. Likewise, Xi's words offer a clue as to why the Biden administration has switched its attention from trying hard to force countries to choose sides to spurring Ukraine to keep on fighting, as the neutral and pragmatic stance China has taken on the issue has won the recognition of the peace-loving world. China always decides its own position and policies based on the merits of a matter. It has taken an objective and fair position on the Russia-Ukraine conflict and, rather than do anything that adds fuel to the fire, it has made consistent efforts to facilitate peace talks. No matter how difficult the talks might be and how large the differences between Russia and Ukraine, China is steadfast in advocating that negotiations should take place until a cease-fire is agreed and peace is restored. As President Xi stressed, the parties concerned should show rationality and restraint, engage in comprehensive dialogue and address each other's security concerns through political means. China firmly believes the fighting will eventually come to an end, and the key is how to learn from the painful experience so as to safeguard the security of all countries in Europe and ensure peace on the continent, where the wounds of history have still not fully healed. China believes that a balanced, effective and sustainable European security mechanism should be established through equal-footed dialogue based on the principle of indivisible security. Upholding an objective and impartial position in this regard, China will continue to play a constructive role in its own way irrespective of how the US tries to smear its stance on the issue and its cooperation with Russia. Meanwhile, the normal bilateral exchanges and cooperation between China and Russia are not subject to the unilateral US-led sanctions that have no legitimacy in international laws. As Xi noted, over the past decade China-Russia ties have withstood the test of the volatile changes in the international landscape and maintained healthy, steady and high-level development. Any attempts by the US to hijack Sino-Russian ties with the Ukraine crisis are doomed to fail.

Pakistan's First And Only Diplomatic Daily

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Member APNS / ABC Certified

Vol: 03 Issue: 125

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COP15 deal and multilateralism

The Second Part of the 15th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (COP15) has made historical achievements. On Monday local time, Huang Runqiu, COP15 president and China's minister of ecology and environment, announced that the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework was adopted. After four years of tough negotiations and more than 10 days of heated discussions, at the last minute of saving biological diversity, the over 190 countries eventually reached a consensus. The Montreal summit is considered the last chance to save the biological diversity that is on the brink of extinction. The international community has a deep understanding and a strong sense of urgency about this. The most important sign of the success of COP15 is whether the "framework" can be achieved. The framework proposes the "30x30" goal, which is the goal of protecting 30 percent of the Earth's land, coastal areas and inland waters by 2030, which is also the minimum area of natural areas required for basic human survival and development. To date, 17 percent of the world's land and 8 percent of the waters have been protected. The adoption of the framework is exciting, but the process has been full of twists and turns. The biggest challenge is how to provide sufficient financial, technical and capacity support for biodiversity conservation, and establish an implementation mechanism and a national action plan. The developed world insists on the "30x30" target, while the developing world accuses developed countries of setting too high targets without providing enough money to help meet them. As presidency of COP15, China has successfully led this super-large-scale international negotiation. Chinese President Xi Jinping delivered two important speeches stressing to build a community for all life on Earth, which provided an important political impetus for the final positive results of the conference. In the toughest negotiation phase, China had proposed a package that favors developing countries in terms of funding and developed countries in terms of protection levels, which is believed to have provided the much-needed impetus to the sometimes contentious negotiations. Whether it is China, Canada, or other participants in COP15, they all meet each other halfway from the common interests and long-term interests of all mankind. The international community ultimately needs consensus to push forward solution to global issues. We should firmly grasp the priorities of human society and the greatest common denominator, prioritize the principle of right and wrong over intimate relations, get rid of narrow interest calculations as much as possible and reduce political interference on cooperation. We also noticed that the US has also expressed its gratitude for the diplomatic efforts made by China and Canada, and stressed that it hopes to have more in-depth cooperation with China in relevant areas. This scene is rare in the current international relations. Concerning global biodiversity governance, China has changed its role from a follower to an active participant, and finally to a leader and promoter. These changes have benefited the world. In this sense, the historic agreement reached at COP15 transcends the differences between East and West and the gap between North and South. Its significance goes far beyond the field of biodiversity conservation. It shows us the possibility and hope of mankind taking joint actions to deal with global challenges.

75 years of Pakistan Red Crescent

Sardar Shahid Ahmed Laghari



The Red Crescent covers all four provinces except Gilgit-Baltistan, Azad Kashmir and FATA. (Integrated Districts) and at the district level is busy to serve humanity, spread awareness, and train. Adhering to principles, Blaring Vansal continues to serve humanity without discrimination. Millions of victims of tragedies, natural calamities, accidents have been worried, supply of transparent blood is a distinction of Red Crescent.

I am at "Chaghmalai" in South Waziristan and I was told that the "Chairman" of Red Crescent has come here for the first time. The birthday of Pakistan Red Crescent was also on the same day (20 December). And seeing the feeling of his presence, the new type of hospitality, the spring of peace and order, Mr. Asif Mehsud is the head of the Pakistan Red Crescent branch in the merged areas. Here the most modern basic health center is also inaugurated by me and the 75th birthday cake of Pakistan Red Crescent is also cut. Credit goes to Pakistan Red Crescent for providing basic medical facilities here. State-of-the-art ambulance facility. Also available. If we talk about the Pakistan Red Crescent, the foundation of this great institution of humanitarian service was laid by Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah on 20 December 1947. Later, the Pakistan Red Crescent Society was formally approved under the Act of Parliament. The institution established by the founder of Pakistan is now 75 years old. The Red Crescent covers all four provinces except Gilgit-Baltistan, Azad Kashmir and FATA. (Integrated Districts) and at the district level is busy to serve humanity, spread awareness, and train. Adhering to principles, Blaring Vansal continues to serve humanity without discrimination. Millions of victims of tragedies, natural calamities, accidents have been worried, supply of transparent blood is a distinction of Red Crescent. Be it first aid, psychological aid or trying to reunite displaced people, helping in emergency situations or playing a role in reconstruction and rehabilitation, the Pakistan Red Crescent is always at the forefront. Spreading awareness about precautionary measures, advance arrangements, you will



find "Pakistan Red Crescent" ahead. If you look at the history, whenever the dear country fought for its defense, Pakistan Red Crescent stood by its side, provided medical aid to the injured, and transported them to hospitals, blood supply, reunification and survival of humanity has been the hallmark of the Red Crescent. This organization had also worked diligently in dealing with the problems faced after partition, resettlement and rehabilitation of refugees. In the 2005 earthquake, the Pakistan Red Crescent earned a good name by giving priority to the service of humanity, and this good name continued to increase day by day. 2010 Even in the floods of 2014, the Pakistan Red Crescent did an exemplary and admirable work. The monsoon rains of the current year and the subsequent flood disaster brought the whole country to a standstill. Millions of people were affected, deaths, destruction of crops, destruction of infrastructure Death of livestock, roads and bridges were swept away by

water, there were no schools, no hospitals and no grain, so this tragedy became a minor apocalypse in historical terms. Pakistan Red Crescent went above and beyond to serve the affected families. Pakistan Red Crescent made a name for itself by providing clean drinking water on a daily basis. Having won millions of hearts, the supply of medical facilities is still going well. The indiscriminate distribution and abundant distribution of food items boosted the confidence of the movement partners. The Pakistan Red Crescent is currently engaged in serving the victims in the flood-affected areas. Pakistan Red Crescent has gained a good reputation by organizing the first international and national donor conference of the country. Pakistan Red Crescent has supported the government's initiatives at all times. Active. The Pakistan Red Crescent is proud of the International Federation, the International Committee and our other movement partners. Our staff is hard-working and resilient. Our volunteers are trained and dedicated. This valuable asset is the identity of the PRCS. As the Chairman of the Pakistan Red Crescent on its 75th anniversary, I congratulate everyone associated with the organization and assure that this organization at the forefront of humanitarian service will be kept active, dynamic, strong and stable. All possible efforts will be continued. All the branches are an arm of the National Headquarters. Our presence at the district level is a sign of our credibility. We arrive first and return last. Our mission is selfless service to humanity, and this journey of service has been going on for 75 years. Go ahead and support the PRCS. Serve the suffering humanity. Bring smiles to faces.

RSS-BJP demagoguery of 2002 Gujarat Pogrom continues to thrive

Khalid Iqbal Retd

. Though Modi has always been in denial, his party leaders have never shied away from claiming "credit" for the massacre. On November 25, while on an electoral campaign in Gujarat, Home Minister Amit Shah said Muslims were "taught a lesson" in 2002. And that: "After they were taught a lesson in 2002, these elements left that path (of violence). They refrained from indulging in violence from 2002 till 2022. BJP has established permanent peace in Gujarat by taking strict action against those who used to indulge in communal violence."

RSS-BJP Demagoguery of 2002 Gujarat Pogrom Continues to Thrive The intimidation of India's over 200 million Muslims

has always been a norm in India, and Prime Minister Narendra Modi has taken it to new heights. Since his election to India's top elected office, Modi has elevated fellow right-wing Hindu extremists to positions of power in India. The entire Indian legal and administrative machinery is blindly pursuing the Hindutva-driven agenda of the ruling BJP-RSS nexus, where perpetrators of hate and violence are protected by law and enjoy impunity; where religious minorities are constantly threatened and denied the freedom to practice their faith without fear for their lives, property, and places of worship. The Modi government is making relentless attempts to remould Indian democracy aimed at empowering Hindus to make them constitutionally pre-eminent, and as a consequence relegating minorities to the status of second-class citizens. The US Commission on International Religious Freedom accused New Delhi of a "crackdown on civil society and dissent", and "religious freedom violations". The BJP government has repeatedly been seen making all-out efforts to cash in on its divisive policies even two decades after the horrific Gujarat massacre by seeking electoral approval of its well-orchestrated pogrom in 2002. Weeks before the recent State elections in Gujarat, the BJP government approved the premature release of 11 men convicted of rape and murder of Muslim women and children during the 2002 pogrom, a saga of appalling riots that led to the killing of over two thousand and displacement of over 200,000 Muslims. Hundreds of young Muslim girls were sexually assaulted, tortured, and killed. In June 2022, the Supreme Court of India handed a clean chit to Modi. The Supreme Court dismissed as many as 11 petitions, including one filed by the National Human Rights Commission of India, seeking an independent probe into the 2002 Gujarat riots cases. Though Modi has always been in denial, his party leaders have never shied away from claiming "credit" for the mas-

sacre. On November 25, while on an electoral campaign in Gujarat, Home Minister Amit Shah said Muslims were "taught a lesson" in 2002. And that: "After they were taught a lesson in 2002, these elements left that path (of violence). They refrained from indulging in violence from 2002 till 2022. BJP has established permanent peace in Gujarat by taking strict action against those who used to indulge in communal violence." The political dividend of this discordant electoral campaign was phenomenal. Modi's BJP won a huge majority of 156 seats, the most ever won by any party in Gujarat's history. The Indian National Congress fell to its lowest count in the state for 3 decades - 17, and the newcomer Aam Aadmi Party bagged five seats. "The butcher of Gujarat lives, and he is the prime minister of India," Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari told a UN briefing, on December 15. "He (Narendra Modi) was banned from entering this country (the US). These are the prime minister and foreign minister of RSS, which draws inspiration from Hitler's SS," he added. Madhav S. Golwalkar, considered among the founders of the Hindu Nationalist movement in India - whom Modi idealises and idolises - saw Islam and Muslims as enemies. He said: "Ever since that evil day when Moslems first landed in Hindustan, right up to the present moment, the Hindu Nation has been gallantly fighting to shake off the despoilers." In his book "We", Golwalkar heaped praises upon Nazi leader Adolf Hitler and his Holocaust against minorities and encouraged India to follow a similar path. In 2012, a former Chief Minister of Gujarat, Mr. Shankersinh Vaghela accused Modi's state government of having blood on its hands: "The foundation of this (Modi) government rests on the 2002 carnage. Governments are made, but not on conspiracies. And the people of Gujarat know this, and that's why we are requesting the people for a change," Mr Vaghela had said. Paul

Richard Brass, professor emeritus of political science and international relations at the University of Washington, believes these anti-Muslim riots are not spontaneous but planned and staged as "a grisly form of dramatic production" by well-known perpetrators from the Sangh Parivar of which Modi has been an ardent member since his youth. On November 28, The Guardian aptly commented editorially on India's ill-treatment of its Muslim community: "New Delhi's foreign policy won't be insulated from its domestic politics, which demonises India's 200 million Muslims". In a piece captioned: "The Danger of Exporting Hindu Chauvinism", the paper commented: "The US state department has recently told a court that India's Narendra Modi's failure as chief minister of Gujarat to prevent anti-Muslim riots in 2002 that left hundreds dead saw him denied entry to the US until he became Indian prime minister". And that "the ban had not been withdrawn, but suspended because Mr. Modi ran a country that Washington wanted to do business with". The ban will be back once Modi is out of power. It was an indication that India could find the international community less accommodating if the RSS-BJP duo continues to stir up hatred to win elections. The West is also worried about Modi's India exporting Hindu extremism to the Indian diaspora across the world. The international community, particularly Human Rights entities and activists needs to take serious note of the disturbing escalation of Islamophobia in India. The United Nations needs to immediately constitute an independent Commission of Inquiry to bring the culprits of the horrific Godhra-Gujarat massacre of 2002, to justice.

—Air Commodore Khalid Iqbal (Retd) is Director National Security at the Centre for Aerospace and Security Studies (CASS), Lahore, Pakistan.

Briefs

Cop martyred
in Islamabad
suicide attack

FROM PAGE 01
Soon after the blast, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif summoned a report of the suicide blast and also condemned the terror incident. The PM also paid tribute to the martyred policemen, adding that the nation pays tribute to its martyrs. He added that the whole nation will fight against terrorism. "The plan to shed innocent blood has failed due to the action of the law enforcement agencies," said the PM. He also announced a martyr package for the family of Head Constable Adeel Hussain. Reacting to the blast, opposition leader Asad Umar said that the presence of the suicide bomber shows how fast the country is "heading towards destruction".

PA to be
'dissolved
in any case':
Fawad

FROM PAGE 01
the undertaking that was given to the court. Assemblies will be dissolved in any case," Fawad told journalists in Lahore. The court restored Parvez Elahi, the provincial cabinet, and also did not make it mandatory for the chief minister to take a vote of confidence on Punjab Governor Baligh-ur-Rehman's orders. Fawad said the court has proved today that the PTI's stance was the right, and it nullified the governor's notification to remove Elahi. "The governor will be summoned to Punjab Assembly for questioning about the notification," Fawad, who was information minister in the previous government, also said that Elahi was ready to take the vote of confidence and that maybe he would ask the speaker to summon a session in this regard within a week. "Our only demand was that the session takes place once our lawmakers, who are abroad, return." The senior PTI leader added that Punjab Assembly Speaker Sibtain Khan would write a letter to President Arif Alvi for the removal of Rehman.

Punjab Govt
to remain:
CM Elahi

FROM PAGE 01
passing the bill" he added. He said that in all public and private schools, the teaching of Nazra Quran has been made compulsory up to FA. The CM Parvez Elahi further said that the approval of the Punjab Public Defender Service Bill to provide free legal aid to the common man is also a historic step. With the approval of this bill, the Punjab government will provide free legal aid to the common man. A thousand new jobs will be created.

KPK
assembly
Dy Speaker
attacked

FROM PAGE 01
"Ransom calls from Afghanistan and suicide bombings in Waziristan are huge challenges. However, we are witnessing positive outcomes of our operations in Malakand," he said. "Organised criminal organisations are also involved in operations against police. We have also punished 15,600 police officers in different cases, while 600 have also been fired from their jobs," he added.

French World
Cup winner
Matuidi
retires

PARIS: Blaise Matuidi, a World Cup winner with France in 2018, said on Friday he is retiring, a year after he last played. The 35-year-old, who started the World Cup final win over Croatia in Russia four years ago, had been omitted from Inter Miami's squad for this season. Midfielder Matuidi won Ligue 1 with Paris Saint-Germain and Serie A with Juventus after spending time with Saint-Etienne and Toulouse. – APP

PCB plans to add Quetta
as a venue for HBL PSL 8

The passionate cricket fans of Quetta have been waiting for long to watch high-profile cricket in their backyard and I am pleased that we will now bring HBL PSL matches to their doors

DNA

LAHORE: Mr Najam Sethi chaired the first meeting of the Pakistan Cricket Board's Management Committee at the National High Performance Centre on Friday. The Management Committee received a detailed update on the HBL Pakistan Super League 8 and desired to add Quetta as the fifth venue for the eighth edition of the PCB's annual marquee event, which is scheduled to be held from 13 February to 19 March. To ensure Bugti Stadium was ready to host the HBL PSL 8 matches, the Committee agreed that PCB will work closely with the local administration for upgradation and renovation of the Bugti Stadium, while separate discussions will take place between PCB security experts and local authorities to ensure the safety and security of all the participants, officials and spectators. Mr Najam Sethi: "I am delighted that seven years after launching the HBL Pakistan Super League, I am today announcing our commitment to add Bugti Stadium in Quetta as the fifth venue for our marquee event. Bugti Stadium is the home ground of Quetta Gladiators and we still remember the incredible scenes when the Gladiators visited the city after winning the 2019 tournament.



"The passionate cricket fans of Quetta have been waiting for long to watch high-profile cricket in their backyard and I am pleased that we will now bring HBL PSL matches to their doors. In this relation, I have already spoken with influential officials in the Balochistan province, who have assured me of their complete support from event delivery perspectives." The Committee also discussed Peshawar as a potential venue to stage HBL

PSL and international matches and agreed that subject to there being no restrictions imposed by the provincial and federal governments and the stadia boasting international standard facilities for cricket, broadcast, spectators and media, matches will be held in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa capital. The Management Committee also held preliminary discussions on The Women's League with further discussions to take place in due course. The

Management Committee discussed the domestic cricket structure under the PCB Constitution 2014 and, in the best interest of the players and event, decided to let the Pakistan Cup complete on 3 January. On the domestic structure, which mirrors the PCB Constitution 2014, it was agreed Mr Najam Sethi, Mr Shakil Sheikh and Mr Haroon Rashid will prepare the first draft, which will be shared with the Committee for further discussions.

Wasim-led PCB selection
committee sacked

DNA

LAHORE: The Pakistan Cricket Board's (PCB) Management Committee has removed all members of the cricket's governing body including Chief Selector Mohammad Wasim, sources said on Friday. It must be noted that Pakistan cricket chief Ramiz Raja was sacked just days after the national team suffered a humiliating first-ever 3-0 home series whitewash at the hands of England, according to a government notice. But a change had been on the cards since April, when Imran Khan – a former national captain – was ousted

Sana Mir withdraws
from PCB's committee

LAHORE: Former Pakistan's women captain Sana Mir has stated that she "will not be able to participate" on the Pakistan Cricket Board's (PCB) management committee. After Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's consent, Najam Sethi took over as head of the management committee on Wednesday. The government, led by the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), established a 14-member committee headed by Najam Sethi to monitor PCB operations during the 120 days preceding the election term stated in the 2014 constitution. Najam Sethi is the management committee chairman, including Shakil Sheikh, Gul Zada, Aized Syed, Tanvir Ahmed, Gul Muhammad Kakar, Ayaz Butt, Nauman Butt, Shahid Afridi, Shafqat Rana, Haroon Rashid, Sana Mir, Mustafa Ramday, and Chaudhry Arif Saeed. Sana, who recently became an independent director of the Federation of International Cricketers' Associations (FICA), was selected for the committee. – DNA

as prime minister and replaced by Shehbaz Sharif. Raja, a member of Khan's 1992 World Cup-winning side, was appointed chairman of the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) in September last year. A government notice seen by AFP said Sharif's cabinet had dismissed Raja, and the PCB would now be run by a 14-member committee headed by Najam Sethi, who has twice served as chairman. The committee also includes legendary all-rounder Shahid Afridi, who is a former captain of the men's team. The government notice also said the current constitution of the board has been scrapped, and one dating from 2014 revived.

FFF lodges complaint
against Argentine
goalkeeper

PARIS: The French Football Federation (FFF) on Thursday filed a complaint against Argentine goalkeeper Emiliano Martinez's taunting of France star Kylian Mbappe in the winners' victory parade. "This is going too far (after Martinez's provocations) ...," French football body chief Noel Le Graet wrote to his counterpart from the Argentine football body, and added that the French football's chief found "these excesses abnormal" in a sports competition. "And I find it difficult to understand. Mbappe's behavior was exemplary," he told Ouest-France, a local daily. "We have launched different procedures," Le Graet said, confirming that the FFF filed a complaint against Martinez. "It is very shocking. These are boys who gave their best for the French team to succeed. It is important that we support them," he added. Martinez, 30, jeered France forward Mbappe during Argentina's victory parade in Buenos Aires by holding a baby doll with the French forward's face on it. Following the final which Argentina won against France on penalties, Martinez trolled Mbappe, asking the whole team to observe a minute of silence. "A minute of silence for ... Mbappe!" he said while the whole team were celebrating their victory in the dressing room. On Sunday, Lionel Messi-led Argentina beat France 4-2 on penalties to win the 2022 World Cup in Qatar. – DNA

Rick Karsdorp is
victim of mobbing
campaign: FIFPRO

Italian media reported it was Karsdorp he was referring to. "Karsdorp has been accused in public of being a 'traitor', a hurtful and baseless term that club management has failed to address or apologise for, and fans have repeatedly used to confront him and his family," FIFPRO said in a statement. "Furthermore, he has been made the subject of an unjustified disciplinary case. These acts apparently are a way to deflect from the club's poor recent performances and aimed to put unjustified pressure on the player. "Such behaviour is incompatible with the FIFA Regulations..." Roma, who sit seventh in the Serie A standings, won only one of their last five league games and resume their Serie A campaign at home to Bologna on Jan 4. "Karsdorp has the full support of both FIFPRO and Dutch players' union VVCS," FIFPRO said. FIFPRO General Secretary Jonas Baer-Hoffmann said clubs must take care of their players. "We call on AS Roma to immediately comply with that duty of care and ensure that Rick Karsdorp is treated fairly, and that his rights are respected," he said. – DNA



RAWALPINDI: Students participating in 100 Meter race during Annual Sports Gala of The Smart School at Jannah Park. – APP

Annual Sports Gala
of Smart School held

SPORTS DESK

RAWALPINDI: The Annual Sports Gala of Smart School was held at Jinnah Park with zeal and fervor. The children were full of excitement as supportive parents, guardians and families grabbed refreshments and

took their seats on a sunny and clear afternoon. Divided into teams each child was challenged with activities at different stations. After the activities were over there were some traditional races. All children received a deserved medal for their excellent attitude and effort. Winners received

special prizes. The pride on each child's face was great to see. Energetic and vibrant displays of gymnastics were much appreciated by the parents. The students showed their strength and skills as they competed in races with fun hurdles, highlight of the event, enthralled the audience. Sheikh Umar the Di-

rector of Smart School grace the event with his presence and appreciated the well-organized event. A mother appreciated the efforts saying "such events are the true essence of education that were missed in the last couple of years" Another parent appreciated that "sports events as one of its kind and we always look forward to the annual sports!" Sports and games have benefits beyond health and fitness inculcating leadership, unity and competitive spirit among the students.

'New Zealand aren't underestimating Pakistan'

The former cricketer stated that spin will play a bigger part than what they had probably been used to normally, adding that they also saw some signs of reverse swing at times. NZ last played a Test match in Karachi in 1990 when Black Caps were defeated by 43 runs

DNA

KARACHI: New Zealand head coach Gary Stead has said that the Kiwis aren't underestimating Pakistan on their home soil ahead of the two-match Test series. The New Zealand team, which arrived in Karachi on Thursday, trained at the National Bank Cricket Arena on Friday. Stead said that although Pakistan suffered a whitewash against England in the three-match Test series in their backyard recently, the Black Caps won't take the hosts easily. "I have watched the series against England very closely, and we've got a lot of footage on it as well. I think whilst it was 3-0 to England, it was a very tight series and times could've swung either way. So were are certainly not underestimating Pakistan at all, especially on their home ground," Stead said in a press conference. The former cricketer stated that spin will play a bigger part than what they had



probably been used to normally, adding that they also saw some signs of reverse swing at times. New Zealand last played a Test match in Karachi in 1990 when the Black Caps were defeated by 43 runs.

On being asked if the Pakistan Test side can be beaten easily, he said: "I don't think Pakistan can be beaten easily. There are times in Test cricket when you get a rub of the green and things go your way. I think maybe

Pakistan haven't hit that recently. They've injuries to their key players." However, the ex-batter said there will be hard-fought Test matches in the series, with the opening match scheduled to take place in Karachi from December 26 to 30. "I think there will be tight Test matches, which will be hard fought and maybe very close as well. It's always exciting for us when we've come to a new country as you have to adapt fast, and that's what we will be trying to do," he added. The second Test between the two sides will be staged at the Multan Cricket Stadium from January 3 to 7. After the conclusion of the Test series, the Black Caps will play three ODIs from January 10 to 14 in Karachi. **New Zealand squad for Pakistan Tests:** Tim Southee (c), Michael Bracewell, Tom Blundell (wk), Devon Conway, Matt Henry, Tom Latham, Daryl Mitchell, Henry Nicholls, Ajaz Patel, Glenn Phillips, Ish Sodhi, Blair Tickle, Neil Wagner, Kane Williamson, and Will Young.

Madrid,
Barca's
opponents
confirmed

AGENCIES

MADRID: Spanish giants Real Madrid will face Cacereno in the Copa del Rey's round of 32 after the draw took place on Friday. The one-legged tie will be held at Caceres' Estadio Principe Felipe in the first week of January. The Los Blancos will start as favourites against a team which plays in the fourth division of Spanish football. According to Managing Madrid, Real Madrid manager Carlo Ancelotti is likely to make heavy rotations for the fixture with players like Eden Hazard, Mariano, Alvaro Odriozola, Nacho or Lunin could feature in the starting lineup, since the Whites will be keen to keep their players fresh after the FIFA World Cup 2022 break. Meanwhile, FC Barcelona will face CF Intercity, who play in the third tier of Spanish Football, in the third round. "The game will be played on the 3/4/5 of January and will be a one-off tie that will take place at the ground of the club from San Juan de Alicante," FC Barcelona said in a press release. "Barca will be aiming to win the trophy for the 32nd time in their history and extend their record as the most successful club in Copa del Rey history. "The Copa del Rey tie will be the first ever meeting between FC Barcelona and CF Intercity in official competition. The club from Alicante have reached the last 32 after disposing of CA Caribonero in the first round and then Segunda División club Mirandés in the next. Nevertheless, Intercity have hosted the blaugranes previously this season when they faced a Barça Atlètic side who are in the same group in the Primera RFEF. The game between Rafa Márquez's team and Barça's Copa del Rey opponents ended 0-0."

Copa del Rey:
Third round draw
CD Ibiza Real Betis
CP Cacereno-Real Madrid
Inter City-FC Barcelona
La Nucia-Valencia
UD Logrones-Real Sociedad
Eldense-Athletic
Nastic-Osasuna
Pontevedra-Mallorca
Linares-Sevilla
Ceuta-Elche
Alaves-Valladolid
Levante-Getafe
Oviedo-Athletic Madrid
Cartagena-Villarreal
Sporting-Ray
Espanyol-Celta

Indonesian families sue over deadly stadium disaster

JAKARTA: Seven Indonesian families whose relatives died or were injured in one of the worst stadium disasters in football history are suing officials they consider responsible, their lawyer said Friday. The stampede in the Javan city of Malang in October left 135 people dead, including more than 40 children.

It has been primarily blamed on an excessive use of tear gas by police, according to a preliminary investigation. The civil lawsuit targets eight parties, including Indonesia's football association, the national police, league organiser PT Liga Indonesia Baru, and the owners of Malang football club Arema FC. Indonesian President Joko Widodo is also listed as a co-defendant. Imam Hidayat, a lawyer representing the families, said they were demanding accountability and compensation. "We have to consider the livelihood of the families of those who died or were heavily injured," Hidayat told AFP. "They, in our view, need compensation, although lives cannot be exchanged with money." The families are seeking around 62 billion rupiah (\$3.9 million) in damages, he said.

The suit was filed to a court in Malang on Wednesday, Hidayat added. A court spokesman confirmed to AFP it had been received. The plaintiffs are also asking the government to cancel a plan to demolish the Kanjuruhan stadium, arguing it should be made a museum as a reminder of the tragedy. – APP

Briefs

Heavy snowfall kills 8 in Japan

TOKYO: At least eight people were killed and several others injured during heavy snowfall in Japan, officials said. "Heavy snow is continuing to cause problems on the Sea of Japan coast," NHK TV reported on Friday. Heavy snowfall was witnessed along the Sea of Japan coast in the northern and western regions of the country. "A typical winter-type pressure pattern around Japan is letting a cold air mass blow," said the Japanese Meteorological Agency. The rough weather is expected to continue through Monday, it added. Many areas in western Japan have witnessed new records in snowfall including Japan's western main island of Shikoku.—APP

Committee releases final report on Capitol riot

WASHINGTON: The House of Representatives committee probing the Jan. 6, 2021 attack on the US Capitol released its final report Thursday, concluding an 18-month investigation. The 845-page report was issued three days after the bipartisan committee's nine members voted unanimously to ask the Justice Department to pursue charges against former President Donald Trump for his efforts to overturn the 2020 presidential election. "The work of the Select Committee underscores that our democratic institutions are only as strong as the commitment of those who are entrusted with their care," House Speaker Nancy Pelosi wrote in the foreword of the report. The report consists of eight chapters and includes an overview of the evidence developed as well as legislative recommendations and referrals to the US Department of Justice and House Ethics Committee. The report recommended the Senate to pass the Presidential Electoral Count Act, which the House has already passed. "The Department of Justice should also take appropriate action to prevent its attorneys from participating in campaign-related activities, or (as described in the report) activities aimed at subverting the rule of law and overturning a lawful election," the report also suggested. "The Committee believes that those who took an oath to protect and defend the Constitution and then, on January 6th, engaged in insurrection can appropriately be disqualified and barred from holding government office—whether federal or state, civilian or military—absent at least two-thirds of Congress acting to remove the disability pursuant to Section 3 of the Fourteenth Amendment," the report said in the recommendations section.—APP

No contact yet about Putin-Biden meeting

MOSCOW: Russia and the US are not negotiating a possibility of a presidential meeting, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said on Friday. "There are no preliminary contacts in this regard. Of course, any conflict ends at the negotiating table, and this has been repeatedly said. "And of course, first of all, we are talking about the speedy completion of the special military operation by achieving the goals set by the Russian Federation," Peskov said at a press briefing in Moscow. On Thursday, Russian President Vladimir Putin said Moscow would seek to end the conflict in Ukraine "the sooner the better," followed by a statement from the White House that US President Joe Biden would "definitely be ready" to meet with Putin "if there was a serious and real" readiness on the Russian side. According to the spokesman, Russia has progressed in the implementation of one of the goals of its "special military operation," as a significant progress was achieved in Ukraine's "demilitarization." Commenting on the media reports about discussions between Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy and Biden on the possibility of a peace deal with Russia, Peskov said he knows nothing about it.—APP



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Economic and Political Affairs Sardar Ayaz Sadiq delivering the welcoming address at 11th Session of Pakistan-Kazakhstan Inter-Governmental Joint Commission. — APP

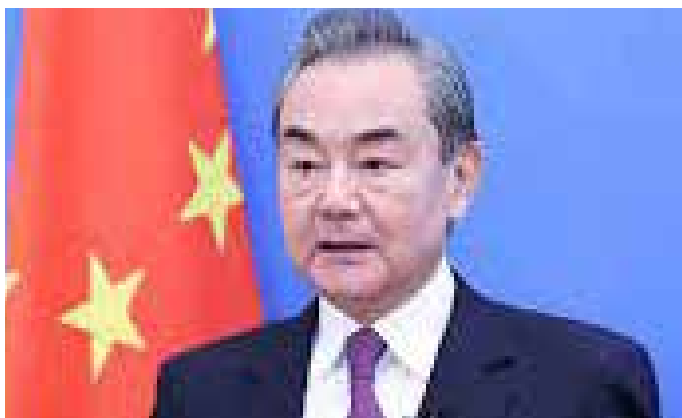
China warns US to stop 'unilateral bullying'

Back in August, US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi stirred controversy when she made a brief trip to Taipei and met with its president, which led to a major diplomatic row and inflamed military tensions

NEWS DESK

BEIJING: The US must abandon the "old routine of unilateral bullying" and stop suppressing China's development, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi has told his US counterpart Antony Blinken. Wang urged the US to pay attention to China's legitimate concerns, and stop trying to contain and suppress its development while warning Washington against trying to challenge China's red lines using "salami slicing" tactics. He was referring to the tactic of using a series of small actions to achieve a much larger result that is difficult to achieve with large actions. The latest remarks by the top Chinese diplomat underscored deep tensions that have marked

relations between the world's two largest economies despite direct and indirect channels of communication. Chinese President Xi Jinping's met with US President Joe Biden at the G-2 summit in Bali last month, where important issues including Taiwan were discussed between the two leaders. It was their first face-to-face conversation since 2017. According to a statement from the Chinese Foreign Ministry on Friday, Wang stressed in the phone call with Blinken that the two sides should focus on turning the consensus of the heads of the two countries into practical policies and concrete actions. "It is necessary to step up consultations on the guiding principles of China-U.S. relations, promote dialogue at all levels, and resolve specific is-



sues between the two countries through joint working groups," Wang was quoted as saying. China has sovereignty over Chinese Taipei, and under the "one China" policy, almost all world coun-

tries recognize that sovereignty, meaning they would not establish direct diplomatic contact with the self-proclaimed government in Taipei. This is while Chinese Taipei's secessionist president Tsai Ing-

wen has independence aspirations and views the island as a sovereign state. The United States, though professing adherence to the principle, has long courted Taipei and continues to sell weapons to the self-governed island in an attempt to affront Beijing. Some US allies in Europe have also been increasing their visits to Taipei, despite strong objections by Beijing. A number of countries, including France, Germany, Japan, and others, have sent delegations of their own to Chinese Taipei since then, further increasing tensions in the Taiwan Strait. Back in August, US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi stirred controversy when she made a brief trip to Taipei and met with its president, which led to a major diplomatic row and inflamed military tensions.

Court decides to extend Kaili's pre-trial detention

Kaili, one of the 14 vice presidents of the European legislative body, who is from Greece's central-left PASOK-KINAL party, was arrested on Dec. 9 by Belgian police after her house was searched on corruption charges allegedly linked to Qatar

BRUSSELS: A Belgian court decided Thursday to extend former European Parliament Vice President Eva Kaili's pre-trial detention by one month, Greek media reported. Kaili, a Greek Member of the European Parliament (MEP), is suspected of being at the center of one of the European Union's biggest corruption scandals. She is suspected of having been paid by Qatar to lobby for the Gulf state's interests. Earlier, Kaili's lawyer, Andre Rizopoulos, said her client is actively cooperating with the authorities conducting the investigation and rejects the corruption charges, according to public broadcaster ERT. Michalis Dimitrakopoulos, Kaili's other lawyer, reiterated that she is innocent. Both lawyers also confirmed that they demanded Kaili's release from prison with

an electronic bracelet. The broadcaster highlighted that her lawyers' arguments are in line with Kaili's pre-



vious testimonies in which she claimed she neither knew of nor participated in the acts for which her husband, Francesco Giorgi, is accused. In addition, she claimed she never had own-

ership or possession of the money found in her house in Brussels, was never bribed, and had no personal agenda

for Qatar. Greek news outlets and broadcasters, citing Italian media, claimed that Kaili also cleared Giorgi, who was accused of taking bribes from Qatar. She said the money that was recov-

ered at her house in Brussels belonged to former Italian MEP Pier Antonio Panzeri, whom Giorgi once worked for as a parliamentary assistant, and gave another Italian politician's name during her interrogation by Belgian police.

Kaili, one of the 14 vice presidents of the European legislative body, who is from Greece's central-left PASOK-KINAL party, was arrested on Dec. 9 by Belgian police after her house was searched on corruption charges allegedly linked to Qatar. She was subsequently removed from the European Parliament's vice presidency and dismissed from PASOK-KINAL over the corruption allegations. Qatar has dismissed the "baseless and gravely misinformed" allegations, "categorically rejecting any attempts to associate it with accusations of misconduct."

3 million-ton ship-to-ship oil blending facility in the offing

GWADAR: Chinese firm East Sea Group Limited (ESGL) plans to establish a 3 million-ton ship-to-ship (STS) oil blending facility at sea space in connection with a \$4.5 billion oil refinery project in Gwadar. After the venture materializes, Pakistan will earn \$20,000 to \$40,000 annually.

According to Gwadar Pro on Friday, three million-ton STS oil blending facility will be established solely on the sea surface without any contact or use of the land-mass of Gwadar. The rest of the 5 million-ton oil refinery will be on the land of the Gwadar Free Zone Area (phase II). With the 3 million-ton STS oil blending facility in the first phase and the 5 million-ton oil refinery in the second phase, Hong Kong-based Chinese firm East Sea Group Limited will build up an oil refinery with an annual oil processing capacity of 8 million tons. The mega plan of the STS oil blending facility was discussed at length in the 45th special urgent meeting of GPA board members. The meeting held at GPA head office Gwadar was participated by GPA board members, COPHC chairman, and ESGL officials. The meeting agreed to designate a specific sea area away from the 38 sq km anchorage area of Gwadar Port for the establishment of the STS oil blending facility. Instead of the northward side, the facility will be on the south side because the northward area has a depth of only 15 meters, while the southward side has a depth that ranges from 35 to 37 meters, which appropriately serves the purpose. Furthermore, Chairman GPA Pasand Khan Buleidi assured the visiting delegation of East Sea Group Limited of tax facilitation and duty exemptions set forth by all procedural and legal frameworks under Pakistan's transshipment rules. On the occasion, the ESGL officials committed that the company will buy 30 percent crude oil from the local market of Pakistan as Pakistan boasts 19 million tons of crude oil capacity. —Agencies

Foreign visits to Türkiye jumps 85%

ANKARA: The number of foreign tourists who visited Türkiye surged 84.8% year-on-year to 42.2 million in January-November, according to official data released on Friday. The January-November figure stood at 12 million in 2020 and 22.8 million in 2021 amid the COVID-19 pandemic, the Culture and Tourism Ministry data showed. Istanbul, Türkiye's most famous city and its largest by population, was the top draw for foreign visitors, attracting 14.7 million tourists. It was followed by the resort city of Antalya with 12.6 million visitors, while Edirne, a city in Türkiye's northwest bordering Bulgaria and Greece, welcomed 4.3 million tourists. At 5.5 million, Germans made up 13% of all visitors, followed by Russians at nearly 5 million, Britons 3.3 million, Bulgarians 2.6 million, and Iranians at 2.2 million. When the Turkish citizens living abroad are added to the count, the 11-month figure goes up to 47.6 million. In November alone, foreign arrivals in Türkiye soared 44.6% on an annual basis to 2.6 million. Russia was the country with the most visitors to Türkiye, with 312,486, followed by Bulgaria (232,709), Germany (207,340), Iran (154,643), and Georgia (151,057).—APP

Energy crisis in Europe prompts creative measures

LONDON: The global energy crisis remained a hot topic in 2022 as countries in Europe took measures to cope with rapidly increasing natural gas and electricity prices after economic sanctions were imposed on Russia over the Ukraine war. Some measures suggested by European politicians also made headlines and were criticized. Spain's Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez offered a creative proposal to save energy by keeping cooler: Ditching the necktie. "I would like you to note that I am not wearing a tie. That means that we can all save from an energy point of view," Sanchez said at a news conference on July 29. He called on ministers and office workers to ditch their ties as one way to tackle the energy crisis.

"And I would also like to ask the private sector that, if they haven't done it yet, when there is no need, they should not either wear a tie because, in that way, we will all be contributing to the energy savings that are so necessary for our country," Sanchez more likely intended to draw attention to cooling costs despite the controversy over how ditching ties would contribute to energy savings.—APP

UK's hospitality sector sees major cancelations

BIRMINGHAM: The already struggling British hospitality sector's hopes for a post-COVID boom in trade have miserably failed with 13 days of rail strikes during December's festive period. Britain is currently experiencing a wave of industrial action, including those from nurses, postal workers, and university lecturers, sparked by a bitter cost-of-living crisis amid soaring inflation and a deteriorating economy. After four-day long strikes last week, restaurants and hotels in the UK saw over 30% cancellations and the number is expected to further increase with the strikes on Dec. 24, 26, 27 and five more days in the first week of the new year.

Speaking to Anadolu Agency, Kate Nicholls, the chief officer of UKHospitality, a trade body representing more than 100,000 businesses in the sector, said the situation is grim as she fears the strikes will cost the hospitality sector £1.5 billion (\$1.8 billion) during the Christmas and holiday season. "The numbers are real. They're figures derived from surveys of UK-Hospitality members and they relate, in particular, to cancellations last week, into this week and over the Christmas period that is directly attributable to the rail strikes and the travel disruption," Nicholls said.—Agencies

Japan's record annual military budget

TOKYO: Japan has announced a plan to increase its military spending by more than a quarter in 2023, including \$1.6 billion to buy US-made Tomahawk cruise missiles in what will be the country's record military build-up even as inflation hits a 40-year high. The budget determined on Friday, which lawmakers have to approve before April, allocates 6.8 trillion yen (\$51 billion) for the defense ministry, up approximately 30 percent from last year. Japan will use almost half of the spending to develop new longer-range missiles including US-made Tomahawks, which will give it the ability to strike targets more than 1,000 kilometers away, said Reuters in a report. Some 110.4 billion yen will be allocated from the budget for acquiring equipment and training Japanese troops to operate the Tomahawks. The missiles will be deployed in 2026 at the earliest, officials said. The report pointed out that Tokyo will also increase spending on drones, cy-

ber warfare capabilities, ballistic missile defenses, reconnaissance and communications satellites, warships, and transport aircraft. Japan also plans to buy 16 Lockheed Martin Corp F-35 stealth fighters for 250 billion yen. This comes a week after the government approved a new security strategy including plans to double military outlays to about 2 percent of gross domestic product over five years and make Japan the world's third-biggest military spender after the United States and China. Japan announced a \$320 billion plan to buy missiles capable of striking China, flexing its muscles under the US plan to mobilize against their common foe. The rise in military spending also comes amid a push among Japanese leaders to discard the country's pacifist constitution despite opposition from the public. The constitution, which has been in place in its original form since it was drafted following Japan's World War Two defeat in 1947, was

engineered to prevent the country from waging war and maintaining a military. The record increase in military spending comes at a time when prices in Japan have hit the highest in four decades. According to data released by the internal affairs ministry, core consumer prices in Japan, excluding volatile fresh food costs and including energy costs, rose 3.7 percent in November on an annualized basis, marking the fastest pace since December 1981. An AFP report said that prices jumped the most for processed food items and were also higher for electricity and durable goods like air conditioners. Commenting on the inflation rates, senior economist Koya Miyamae said that the core consumer price index (CPI) rose in November due to rises in food prices and gas. "The index will likely rise further, nearing or potentially rising above four percent in December," he told AFP. In order to pay for his military spending surge, Prime Minister Fumio Kishida

said he plans to raise taxes. However, he has yet to provide a detailed plan of how Japan will fund the build-up. The US has been the key driver in spawning the seeds of militarism in Japan again as it seeks to mobilize allies in Asia to keep China in check. China has vastly upgraded its military infrastructure in recent years amid the constant US threats and interventions and has repeatedly warned the US against extending its military presence in Asia and the Pacific. Beijing says the United States military presence is a source of regional instability, reminding that Taiwan is an inevitable part of the Chinese territory and is an issue that is purely China's internal affair, which won't stand for any foreign interference. Amid ongoing tensions between Beijing and Washington over the US political and military interference in Taipei, Russia was an ardent supporter of China. Russia slams Tokyo's military build-up. On a related

note, Russia accused Japan on Thursday of abandoning decades of pacifist policy and embracing "unbridled militarization". In response to a \$320-billion military plan announced by Japan's Prime Minister Fumio Kishida last week, Russia's Foreign Ministry said "It can be clearly seen that Tokyo has embarked on the path of an unprecedented build-up of its own military power, including the acquisition of strike potential." Russia said such a move will "inevitably provoke new security challenges and will lead to increased tension in the Asia-Pacific region," criticizing Japan's military spending which has been increasing despite the growth of structural imbalances in the state budget. "Relations between Tokyo and Moscow have long been overshadowed by an unresolved dispute over a group of Pacific islands. The Kuril Islands, located in the Sea of Okhotsk, lie fewer than 10 kilometers from Japan's Hokkaido.—Agencies

Briefs

16 Indian soldiers killed as truck skids down slope

NEWS DESK

SIKKIM: Sixteen soldiers were killed in India's remote northeast on Friday when the military truck transporting them skidded down a steep mountain slope and crashed, the army said. The accident occurred in the state of Sikkim while the truck carrying the soldiers was negotiating a treacherous turn in a mountainous area near the border with China. "A rescue mission was immediately launched, and four injured soldiers have been air evacuated," the Indian Army's eastern command said in a statement, confirming three officers and 13 soldiers had died of injuries after the accident. Sikkim has some of India's most dangerous high-altitude roads, particularly along its isolated Himalayan border with Tibet. In August, six paramilitaries were killed in an accident in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu Kashmir (IIOJK) when an armoured vehicle carrying them rolled down a mountain slope.

Trump should never hold office again: US report

WASHINGTON: Donald Trump should never be allowed to run for public office again after inciting an insurrection, lawmakers investigating last year's assault on the US Capitol concluded in their watershed final report. The recommendation led a list of proposals from the 845-page document aimed at ensuring there is no repeat of the deadly riot the ex-president is accused of orchestrating in a failed bid to cling to power after losing the 2020 election. "Our country has come too far to allow a defeated president to turn himself into a successful tyrant by upending our democratic institutions (and) fomenting violence," the panel's chairman Bennie Thompson said in an introduction to the report, released late Thursday. The document urges lawmakers to legislate so that Trump and others who "engaged in insurrection" can be barred from holding office - "whether federal or state, civilian or military." Trump has announced he intends to run for the White House again in 2024. The report was the culmination of 18 months of work by congressional investigators who interviewed more than 1,000 witnesses to establish the primary cause of the attack, which they blamed squarely on the Republican billionaire. The committee also recommended reforms of election law, a federal crackdown on extremist groups and the designation of Congress's certification of presidential elections as a "national special security event" on a par with the annual State of the Union address. - APP

PA passes resolution against governor

DNA

LAHORE: The Punjab government Friday passed a resolution against the Punjab Governor's step to de-notify the Punjab Chief Minister Ch Pervaiz Elahi. The opposition including PML-N and PPP lawmakers staged a walkout even before the resolution against the governor was presented. Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf's (PTI) MPA Mian Muhammad Aslam Iqbal presented the resolution in the house, calling on President Arif Alvi to act against the province's governor. The resolution was approved by the treasure benches unanimously. "The Punjab Assembly approves under the rules and regulations that according to the constitution, the supreme power rests with the Almighty God and the powers are with the people."

ICT local body UCs matter
IHC directs ECP to decide after hearing Federation

The chief justice remarked that an increase in the number would reduce size of union councils, and asked whether it would not affect local area

Senate passes ICT LG Amendment Bill 2022

ISLAMABAD: The Senate on Friday passed the Islamabad Capital Territory Local Government (Amendment) Bill 2002, increasing the number of union councils from 101 to 125. The bill was moved by Minister of State for Law and Justice Shahadat Awan. According to the amended bill, the number of union councils has been enhanced from 101 to 125 within the Islamabad Capital Territory to cater to its existing population, while the mayor and deputy mayor will be directly elected as joint candidates by the voters. Under the amendment, the Federal Government has been authorised to increase or decrease the number of union councils from time to time. "If the office of the mayor of local government falls vacant during the term of the council for any reason, the Election Commission shall hold a fresh election to the office of the head of the local government," the bill reads. According to the statement of Objects and Reasons, Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) Local Government Act was promulgated in 2015 to establish an elected local government system to devolve political, administrative, and financial authority in order to promote good governance and effective service delivery through the institutionalized participation and involvement of people in day to day governance. Metropolitan Corporation Islamabad (MCI) is a municipal body established under the ICT Local Government (Amendment) Act, 2022. Administrator MCI has proposed amendments in sections 6, 12 and 29 of the Act to increase the number of UCs to cater to the existing population of Islamabad and to improve the procedure of mayor and deputy mayor's election. - DNA

responsibility to conduct delimitation. The chief justice remarked that an increase in the number would reduce the size of union councils, and asked whether it would not affect the local area. Advocate General Islamabad said the delimitation of UCs would be done by the ECP on the basis of population and it would not affect local area. AGP Ashtar Ausaf adopted the stance that the ECP was bound to conduct delimitation after the increase in the number of UCs and voters lists would also be changed accordingly. The additional attorney general informed the court that the local government bill had been approved by the National Assembly and it would now be presented in the Senate. Under the new law, mayor and deputy mayors would be elected directly, he added. He asked whether the ECP had the authority to disobey the notification of the Federal Government. The chief justice remarked that the ECP was of the view that the number of UCs was increased after the local government elections schedule was announced and that the next elections could be conducted as per the new UCs. - APP

Funeral Prayer of martyred cop offered

DNA

ISLAMABAD: A funeral prayer of martyred Head Constable Adeel Hussain offered at police lines headquarters, a police public relations officer said. He said that, in a funeral prayer a large number of police personnel including Secretary Interior, IGP Islamabad, CPO Operations, civil administration, Pak rangers and other senior police officers attended the funeral prayers of martyred police officer at police line headquarters. Later, the body of the martyr has been sent to his native village Pakpatan, where he will be buried with full police honors. He is survived by a widow, two sons and a daughter. According to details, security was kept on high alert in Islamabad and strict checking was going on at the entry and exit points of the city and the inner city. On Friday, the Eagle Squad officials signaled to stop a suspicious taxi on the I-14 sector Service Road. After which the suicide bomber present inside a vehicle blew himself up.

Pakistan taking measures to augment trade with Iran: Dar



ISLAMABAD: Finance Minister Ishaq Dar in a meeting with Ambassador of Iran Seyed Mohammad Ali Hosseini. - DNA

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar said here on Friday that Pakistan was committed to take all possible measures for resolving the bottlenecks to significantly augment bilateral trade volume with Iran. Talking to Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Iran to Pakistan, Seyed Mohammad Ali Hosseini, who called on him, the minister said the current trade volume between the two countries was not at the optimal level. He highlighted deep rooted cordial and fraternal relations between Pakistan and Iran based on centuries old religious and cultural affinities. He also emphasized that Pakistan always highly values its brotherly relations with its neighboring country. On the occasion, the ambassador extended felicitations to the

finance minister on assuming the charge of Finance Ministry and appreciated the economic policies of the government. The minister also underscored the deep-rooted historical cultural, economic, trade and political bilateral relations between the two countries and discussed various avenues for enhancing fraternal relations. He further stressed that the two countries have great potential for extensive collaboration in the fields of energy, trade and other areas. They also discussed the opening of border markets, barter trade, free trade agreement and mutual investment to enhance the volume of trade between the two countries. They expressed their satisfaction on mutual bilateral relations and showed keen intention for enhancing collaboration in various areas of common interest. - APP

China's health system braces for peak in infections

BEIJING: China is expecting a peak in Covid-19 infections within a week, a health official said, with authorities predicting extra strain on the country's health system even as they downplay the disease's severity and continue to report no new deaths. In the face of a surging outbreak and widespread protests against its "zero-Covid" regime of lockdowns and testing, China began dismantling it this month, becoming the last major country to move towards living with the virus. Its containment measures had slowed the economy to its lowest growth rate in nearly half a century, jamming global supply chains and trade. As Chinese workers increasingly fall ill, more disruption is expected in the short term before the economy bounces back later next year. China reported less than 4,000 new symptomatic local Covid cases nationwide for Dec. 22, and no new Covid deaths for a third consecutive day. Authorities have narrowed the criteria for Covid deaths, prompting criticism from many disease experts. Zhang Wenhong, director of the National Centre for Infectious Diseases, was quoted in Shanghai govt-backed news outlet The Paper as saying China "is expected to reach the peak of infections within a week." - Agencies

Three dead after shooting at Kurdish centre in Paris

PARIS: A 69-year-old gunman opened fire at a Kurdish cultural centre and a hairdressing salon in central Paris on Friday, killing three people and injuring three others, witnesses and prosecutors said. The shots shortly before midday (1100 GMT) caused panic in rue d'Enghein in the trendy 10th district of the capital, a bustling area of shops and restaurants that is home to a large Kurdish population. Witnesses told AFP that the gunman, described by police as white and known for two previous attempted murders, initially targeted the Kurdish cultural centre before entering a nearby hairdressing salon where he was arrested by police. "We saw an old white man enter, then start shooting in the Kurdish cultural centre, then he went to the hairdresser's next door," Romain, who works in a nearby restaurant, told AFP by telephone. Resident Emmanuel Boujenan told AFP: "There were people panicking, shouting to the police and pointing to the salon he's in there, he's in there, go in." He said he saw two people on the floor of the salon with leg wounds. The Kurdish community centre, called Centre Ahmet Kaya, is used by a charity that works to integrate the Kurdish population in the Paris region. The gunman was described by police sources as "Caucasian", of French nationality, and known for two previous attempted murders in 2016 and 2021. - APP

US to approve Ukraine aid after Zelenskiy visit

AGENCIES

WASHINGTON: US lawmakers were expected to approve a \$45 billion aid package for Ukraine on Friday, as President Volodymyr Zelenskiy returned from Washington with the promise of Patriot missiles to help fend off Russia's invasion. The military and economic assistance, part of a wider government spending bill, follows U.S. aid worth around \$50 billion sent to Ukraine this year as well as sanctions imposed on Russia by the West that now include a cap on Russian oil prices. Russia responded to the cap on Friday by threatening to cut oil output by 5%-7% early next year, through halting sales to the countries that support a measure that seeks to limit Moscow's ability to fund the war. Zelenskiy has long sought Patriot missiles to help counter relentless Russian air strikes, which have razed cities, towns and villages during 10 months of brutal conflict and knocked out power and water across the country over the past three months. U.S. officials say, however, that the single Patriot battery that President

Joe Biden told Zelenskiy would be supplied to Ukraine would not change the course of the war. Washington and its allies have been unwilling to supply Kyiv with modern battle tanks and long-range missiles called AT-ACMS that could reach far behind frontlines and into Russia itself. But on Thursday, the U.S. Senate approved the \$44.9 billion in new Ukraine aid as part of a US government funding bill. The Democratic-led House of Representatives was set to vote on the bill on Friday. The bill is expected to pass but it was unclear whether U.S. Congressional support to Ukraine would endure after Republicans take a narrow majority in the House early next year. Even as it fights for its survival, Ukraine is pursuing a fight against domestic corruption to help reassure international donors that their money will be spent well. Russian President Vladimir Putin said Moscow would find a way to counter the Patriots while also seeking to end the fighting. "Our goal is not to spin the flywheel of military conflict, but, on the contrary, to end this war," he said. In response, White House spokesman John Kirby said Russia's actions showed Putin was clearly set on escalating its invasion.

Historic 'bomb cyclone' freezes North America

PARIS: The extreme cold weather hitting North America in the run-up to Christmas holidays is due to a phenomenon called a "bomb cyclone". The US National Weather Service said this "once in a generation type event" has the power to turn deadly and is already breaking cold-weather records - with temperatures falling to minus 53 degrees Celsius (minus 63 Fahrenheit) in western Canada, minus 38 in Minnesota and minus 13 in Dallas. It's even snowing in subtropical northern Florida. A bomb cyclone, or bombogenesis, is a quickly intensifying storm that occurs when air pressure drops 20 millibars or more within 24 hours. This usually happens when a warm air mass collides with a cold one, according to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. This time air from the Arctic ploughed into tropical air from the Gulf of Mexico,

forming a depression bringing rain and snow. What makes this storm extraordinary is just how fast the pressure dropped - 40 millibars in 24 hours, according to meteorologist Yann Amice of analysts Weather'n'co. "This has led to the development of extreme storm conditions near the core of the low pressure system, with particularly harsh conditions," said Cyrille Duchesne, a meteorologist from the French Weather Channel. The unprecedented nature of this storm comes from the intensity and extremity of its low temperatures, Duchesne said. "That's what makes it exceptional," he said. The storm has sparked a "polar vortex plunge" where a particularly cold air mass from the Arctic heads south toward the lower, warmer latitudes. The result is a vertiginous drop in temperatures - in Denver, for example, temperatures dropped 33 degrees Celsius in barely seven hours. - APP

North Korea fires short-range missiles, South Korea says

WEB DESK

SEOUL: North Korea launched two short-range ballistic missiles on Friday, according to South Korean officials, the latest in an unprecedented year of weapons testing. The missiles were fired from Pyongyang's Sunan area at around 4:32 p.m. local time, South Ko-

rea's Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) said in a statement Friday. It added the two missiles were launched into waters between the Korean Peninsula and Japan. The Japan Coast Guard said it believed a ballistic missile had fallen outside of Japan's exclusive economic zone, citing information from the country's Ministry of Defense. This marks the 36th day that North Korea has fired missiles this year alone, often launching multiple weapons at a time. Under leader Kim Jong Un, the isolated nation has aggressively ramped up missile tests, with US and South Korean experts warning that Pyongyang could be preparing for a nuclear test - which would be its first in more than five years. Satellite imagery earlier this year showed activity at its underground nuclear test site.

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