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GOP faces stalemate as Kevin McCarthy seeks speakership

Detailed News On Page-08

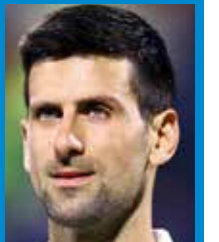
India warned to halt 'frivolous' propaganda

Detailed News On Page-08



Djokovic set to miss major US events

Detailed News On Page-06



Briefs

Senate nominates Erdogan for Nobel Prize

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Senate of Pakistan on Wednesday nominated Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan for the Nobel Peace Prize for his "efforts to resolve the Ukrainian crisis." "Russia-Ukraine war had quickly turned into a nuclear flash-point that could have ended in catastrophe for the whole world. Due to his (Erdogan) untiring efforts, timely and effective interventions with both sides, he singlehandedly averted a global disaster," Muhammad Sadiq Sanjrani, chairman of Pakistan's Senate, wrote in a letter to Norwegian Nobel Committee.

CM Elahi rewards rescuers

DNA

LAHORE: Chief Minister Punjab Chaudhry Parvez Elahi gave a prize of five lakh rupees and a certificate of appreciation to rescuer Abdul Rehman who led the rescue operation of safely descending a man who ascended the clock tower in Faisalabad. He also gave a reward of one lakh rupees each and certificates of appreciation to rescuers Arsalan Ahmad, Rafiqat Beg, Fahad Amin and Engr Ehtisham for their role in rescue operation.

Society must condemn vile campaigns

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Information and Broadcasting Marriyum Aurangzeb on Wednesday urged FIA to initiate legal action against those elements who were involved in the character assassination of female actresses on the social media networking sites. The minister, in a news statement, strongly condemned the campaign against the female actresses. "The entire society must condemn those who are promoting culture of such malicious campaigns aimed at character assassination and spreading insolence and incivility."

Govt trying to hold peace talks with TTP

Interior Minister Sanaullah says govt taking effective steps to counter terrorism

SHUJAAT HAMZA / DNA

ISLAMABAD: Amid an uptick in terrorist activity in the country, Interior Minister Rana Sanaullah on Wednesday assured the nation that the government was taking steps to counter terrorism. Pakistan has seen a rise in terrorist attacks across the country, believed to have been planned and directed by the outlawed Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) leaders based in Afghanistan. Addressing a press conference in Islamabad today, Sanaullah said the state's efforts against terrorism could not be publicised as it would compromise its success.

"But this should not be taken to mean that nothing is being done," the minister said, adding that tremendous efforts against terrorism were underway and the nation should rest assured about the matter. Commenting on the recent meeting of the National Security Committee (NSC), he said that the forum had resolved to adopt a "zero tolerance" policy against terrorism with "no mixed messages and no differentiation between good or bad terrorists." "Whoever is involved in terrorism is a terrorist," he asserted. Sanaullah further said that authorities would take pre-emptive action against terrorist schemes and those involved would be apprehended in order to prevent such incidents from occurring in the first place. He said that the NSC had also decided that the provincial counterterrorism departments (CTDs) would be provided training by the federal

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TTP issues threat to PPP, PML-N

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: The Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) on Wednesday announced that it is considering taking concrete steps against the two major parties of the ruling coalition - the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) and Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N). A statement issued by the TTP said that "if these two parties remain firm on their position and continue to be slaves of the army, then action will be taken against their leading people". "People should avoid getting close to such leading people," added the statement. The TTP claimed that the whole world is aware that the "Jihadi field of TTP is only Pakistan and our target is the security agencies occupying the country". It added that it has not taken action against any political party for a long time but "unfortunately... [Foreign Minister] Bilawal Bhutto Zardari gave the United States (US) the status of mother to quench the thirst of his mother's love",

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Imran Khan attacked by 3 shooters: Fawad

The former prime minister. Fawad said, was attacked from three different sides

ALI HAMZA

LAHORE: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf Senior Vice-President Fawad Chaudhry Wednesday claimed that the attempted assassination on his party Chairman Imran Khan was carried out by three attackers, all of whom struck him from three different sides. "An attempt to kill Imran Khan was made in the assassination attack. Investigations proved three attackers were involved in the attempted assassination attack on Khan," the PTI leader said while addressing a press conference in Lahore.

A day earlier, a forensic report revealed that Imran Khan had been hit by three pieces of bullets and a metal shard when he was standing on a moving container near the Allah-wala Chowk in Gujranwala's Wazirabad city. The former premier was injured in an assassination attack on November 3, 2022. The former prime minister. Fawad said, was attacked from three different sides and the same number of weapons were used in the attack. "No shot was fired by Imran Khan's guards." He also alleged that the attack on Imran Khan

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Imran moves LHC against ECP's proceedings

BUREAU REPORT

LAHORE: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) chief Imran Khan on Wednesday moved the Lahore High Court (LHC) against the Election Commission of Pakistan's (ECP) proceedings to strip him of his party chairmanship. The PTI chief in his petition maintained that the electoral watchdog was exceeding its powers by trying to remove him as PTI chairperson. It furthered that the ECP had issued the notice "illegally". Imran Khan pleaded with the LHC to suspend the ECP notice as well as stop the electoral watchdog from taking further action before the final verdict. In October, the ECP disqualified Chairman Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) in

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Dar terms PTI's white paper on economy 'misleading'

Ishaq Dar said that they oversaw a period where the GDP of the country improved from \$244 billion to \$356 billion

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

ISLAMABAD: Federal Finance Minister Ishaq Dar on Wednesday rejected a white paper on the national economy issued by the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) the other day, termed the narrative of poor state of economy as 'misleading'. Largely comparing the economic performance of the PTI ten-

ure to that of the previous tenure of the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), Dar said that they strengthened the national economy and handed it in a good state to the PTI in 2018. But mismanagement by the PTI ruined the national economy, he said, noting that they improved the economy while working dealing with challenges such as heavy expenditures on ensuring better security in the country apart from

tackling crushing load shedding and circular debt. Recalling the economic feats achieved by the PML-N government from 2013 to 2018, Ishaq Dar said that they oversaw a period where the gross domestic product (GDP) of the country improved from \$244 billion to \$356 billion. "During our tenure, we increased the size of the country's economy by \$112 billion in comparison to the PTI raised \$61 billion in their last tenure from 2018 to 2022," he added. Economic chaos due to mismanagement of 42 months of PTI A visibly angry Ishaq Dar said that the current economic chaos in the country was the outcome of the 42 months of economic mismanagement of PTI, not the result of eight months of the Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) government at the helm. Federal Planning Minister Ahsan Iqbal chimed in that the terms for the IMF loan had been agreed to by the PTI government.

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ISLAMABAD: Finance Minister flanked by Ministers of Planning, Commerce, Power, Information addressing a press conference.



QUETTA: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif inaugurating the new building of Govt. Boys Secondary School, Ghulam Rasool, Jia Khan in Sohbatpur, Balochistan. - DNA

Putin sends hypersonic missiles to Atlantic

NEWS DESK

MOSCOW: President Vladimir Putin sent a frigate to the Atlantic Ocean armed with new generation hypersonic cruise missiles on Wednesday, a signal to the West that Russia will not back down over the war in Ukraine. Russia, China and the United States are in a race to develop hypersonic weapons which are seen as a way to gain an edge over any adversary because of their speeds - above five times the speed of sound - and manoeuvrability. In a video conference with Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu and Igor Krokmal, commander of the frigate named "Admiral of the Fleet of the Soviet Union Gorshkov", Putin said the ship was

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Pak slams Israeli Minister's Al-Aqsa visit

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan has strongly condemned the insensitive and provocative visit of Israeli Minister of National Security to the Holy Al-Aqsa Mosque compound. Al-Aqsa is a holy site revered by Muslims around the world. Violation of its sanctity offends the religious sensitivities of Muslims and inflames an already tense situation in the occupied Palestinian territories.

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Shehbaz hopeful of world support at Geneva conference

The prime minister says he is inviting the leaders of the friendly countries

STAFF REPORT

SOHBATPUR: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday expressed the hope that civilised societies would come up to support the reconstruction and rehabilitation of flood-hit Pakistan at the International Conference on Climate Resilient Pakistan scheduled to be held in Geneva on January 9. The prime minister, addressing a public gathering here after the inauguration of a rebuilt Government Boys Secondary School of Kilijia Khan, said he was constantly contacting the leadership of the friendly countries to invite them to the conference. "Yesterday, I talked to Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim...He assured of sending a delegation to the conference. He will also join through Zoom," he said and mentioned his telephonic interactions with the leaders of Turkey, Qatar and UAE for the purpose. The prime minister said he would co-chair the moot with the United Nations Secretary-General Antonio

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Climate Resilient moot on Jan 9

MAHNOOR ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif will co-host, along with United Nations Secretary General Antonio Guterres, the International Conference on Climate Resilient Pakistan in Geneva on 9 January 2023. The Conference will serve as a platform to marshal international support for the people and Government of Pakistan to build back better in a resilient manner after the recent devastating floods, as the country transitions from the rescue-and-relief phase towards the monumental task of recovery, rehabilitation, and reconstruction. Pakistan will present the Resilient Recovery, Rehabilitation and Reconstruction Framework (4RF) at

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Khamenei slams West's fake support for women's rights - Page 06

Armenian statement on Lachin protests 'baseless' - Page 07

Pakistan's trade with UAE to surpass US\$10.6 b in 2023 - Page 08

LAHORE: Federal Minister for Railways and Aviation Khawaja Saad Rafique on Wednesday said that general elections could only be held in time if the country was allowed political sustainability by Imran Khan Niazi. Talking to media at Model Town here, he said that lies created uncertainty and the country could not progress. He said that the government had decided to take legal action on fake news. He said that earlier a fake news was spread that the government was selling out Roosevelt Hotel in the United States, then privatization of three airports and now another fake news was published about the imported railway coaches. He said that Chinese coaches were quite fit for operation, adding that the government was outsourcing some services of the airports instead of privatization and there was no option of selling of the Roosevelt Hotel was under consideration. He said that cases would be registered through cyber crime against the elements involved in spreading fake news and lies. The minister said that change of habits were needed to save energy so early rising could bring a big change. — **APP**

ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi has said that Digital Transformation was at the heart of the country's vision to create a conducive environment for technology development and growth, which included inviting and facilitating foreign investment in the IT sector and transforming the youth bulge into Information Technology savvy Human Resource for large-scale entry of the country into the fast-growing international IT market. This, he said, would help in building Pakistan's image, harnessing its business potential and promoting the export of the country's IT services and products around the world.

The President expressed these views while talking to a delegation of DigitalOcean, led by its CEO, Mr Yancy Spruiell, who called on him, at Aiwan-e-Sadr, on Wednesday. The President said that a high level of



their issues with due diligence on a top priority basis. He said that the government was focusing to review the entire education system of the country to transform it from a non-market to a market-oriented system by imparting market-oriented knowledge, techniques, and skills to graduates to enable them to be readily absorbed in the market and play their role in the development of the country. The President appre-

ciated DigitalOcean for investing in Pakistan by acquiring a Pakistani IT company at \$350 million, which was the largest IT acquisition in the history of Pakistan. He said that this step would help in the exponential growth of Pakistan's IT companies, besides helping IT professionals and companies to promote and enlarge their businesses, services, and outreach. The President emphasized that DigitalOcean should take tangible steps for imparting high-quality training to the youth which would provide them with an excellent resource for their operations, besides helping the start-ups to scale up their existing ventures and encouraging other IT companies to benefit from the services of DigitalOcean. He said that DigitalOcean's slogan "IT for All" would help in the large-scale entry of Pakistan's youth into the fast-growing in-

ternational IT market, besides helping build Pakistan's image, harnessing its business potential and promoting the export of the country's IT services and products around the world. He also cited the example of PM's digiskills programme where 2.5 million people from different educational backgrounds participated and 1 million completed their training and were earning decent livelihoods. He said that Presidential Initiative on Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Computing (PIAIC) sensitized the youth and IT-skilled persons regarding the importance of AI and Computing for the growth and development of all sectors of the economy. During the meeting, the CEO of DigitalOcean, Mr Yancey Spruill, briefed the President about DigitalOcean, its growth strategy in Pakistan, future investments, and tripling its business size in Karachi.

MIRPUR: AzadJammu and Kashmir Prime Minister Sardar Tanveer Ilyas Khan while terming the Kashmir issue as a matter of the right to self-determination of millions of Kashmiris has said that it was the responsibility of the British government to play its role in resolving the dispute in line with the wishes of the Kashmiri people. The AJK premier said this while talking to a delegation comprising members of the British House of Lords, British and European Members of Parliament, and representatives of Khubaib Foundation in the State metropolis on Wednesday. Speaking on the occasion, the PM said that the world was remorselessly watching the continued bloodshed and violence in occupied Kashmir and no action whatsoever was being taken against Indian government that has let loose its forces to kill Kashmiris in the occupied Kashmir.

ISLAMABAD: The Ministry of Planning, Development & Special Initiatives on Tuesday approved project to construct a 300 megawatt coal-fired power plant to cater to the energy needs of Gwadar. According to Gwadar Pro, the approval was granted in a follow-up meeting under the chairmanship of Planning Minister Ahsan Iqbal, Jawwad Akhtar Khokhar, Advisor Maritime Affairs at the Planning Commission of Pakistan, told Gwadar Pro. The coal-fired power plant will cater to the base load of the port city, which has central importance in the China-Pakistan Economic



the transmission line to connect Gwadar with the national grid will be a dual carriage line which will be able to evacuate excess energy from Gwadar to the national grid in the future. He said that there were also other projects to generate energy from alternative sources including solar and wind in the pipeline for Gwadar. The Advisor said that the Gwadar coal-fired power plant will procure cost-effective coal either from the

international market or Thar, or any other sources, to ensure the generation of low-cost energy. "For the purpose to transport coal from Thar via Port Qasim, we have asked COPHC to construct a coal jetty at the Gwadar Port. Also, we have asked the National Highways Authority and the Pakistan Railways to establish a coal transportation corridor between Gwadar Port and Karwat, the location of the coal-fired power plant, to ensure uninterrupted coal supply to the plant," Khokhar said. The Advisor also informed that the Power Purchase Agreement for the power plant was currently being reviewed by the Private Power and Infrastructure Board.

PESHAWAR: Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Mahmood Khan on Wednesday paid a day long visit to district Swat where he participated as the chief guest in the passing out parade of the first batch of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Tourism Police and distributed shields amongst the police personnel who achieved prominent positions in the training. He also attended and addressed the Prize Distribution Ceremony of the Sports Festival 2022-23 which was held by the Elementary & Secondary Education department. 37 different games were organized in which 56000 students participated from all over the province.

The Chief Minister during his visit laid the foundation stone for the Khapal Kor Nursing & Health Science College which is being established under Khapal Kor Foundation. The provincial government has provided a grant of Rs 150 million for the project. The Chief Minister also performed the groundbreaking of Paraplegic Center in Barikot. The project will be completed at an estimated cost of Rs 1.38 billion which will consist of 110 bedded ward, 40 private rooms, Physical Therapy OPD, Pathology Lab, Pharmacy, Pediatric Rehabilitation unit and other allied facilities. Addressing the groundbreaking ceremony of Nursing and Health Science College, the Chief Minister said that free educational facilities will be imparted to orphan students in the proposed nursing college. The Chief Minister said that his government is working for the welfare of the vulnerable segment of the society as per the vision of chairman PTI Imran Khan. He said that Imran Khan has gone all out to help and facilitate the venerable segment of the society. Shaukat Khan Hospital is no doubt a land mark achievement which is providing state of the art treatment facilities to the cancer patients. Besides, he launched Ehsas program under which multiple welfare measures have been initiated. Later on, in the passing out ceremony of the first batch of Tourism Police, the chief minister congratulated 173 passed-out police personnel and hoped that they will play proactive role in facilitating tourists in the province. The Chief Minister said that introducing Tourism Police Force is a unique initiative, with the purpose to provide a peaceful, safe and conducive environment to the tourists coming to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. He made it clear that the Tourism Police will be different from the traditional police adding that its basic responsibility is to protect tourists at tourist destinations. Touching upon the other tourism related initiatives, the Chief Minister said that the provincial government is working to develop tourism as an industry.

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Energy Dastgir Khan on Wednesday said that there was complete consensus among the coalition parties on democracy, economy, rehabilitation of floods affectees, and terrorism. Talking to a private channel, the federal minister clearing the air over the matter of the energy conservation plan, Khurram Dastgir said it was a fact that consultations were done before taking the decision, adding that the trading community was informed on the matter. Orders have been issued to reduce electricity consumption by 30% in all government ministries and divisions, he added. Criticizing Imran Khan-led government federal minister said that the ex-government was responsible for the reduction in the production of wheat and sugar which was a major reason for the price hike in consumable commodities. The worst floods destroyed standing crops and destroyed infrastructure that also played part in inflation, he added.

LAHORE: Pakistan Business Forum (PBF) demanded a charter of economy of 20 years and it should be a consensus document consist of all stakeholders, political and military. While chairing the PBF Provincial Executive Committee on Wednesday, Chairman Punjab Muhammad Naseer Malik said PBF announced its support to the government's decision of early markets and restaurants closure while we have astonished on the behaviours of Punjab and Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa (K-P) governments as they have refused to comply with the federal government's conservation plan to save energy and reduce its consumption nationwide. Though Pakistan could save \$300 million annually through energy conser-

vation policy. He said political polarization in Pakistan is one of the major reason for the country's economic downfall. When politicians and dictators came into power, they focused more on perpetuating their political careers rather than promoting national interests. The country's initial economic models lacked consistency and continue to do so. We have to think for out of box solutions and say good bye to IMF after completion of the ongoing program. The political parties of Pakistan have now huge responsibility on their shoulders. There is a need for a proper and sustainable economic model. Stakeholders should come together and make a proper economic model which

should be there for at least 10 to 20 years and should not be changed even if the regime changes. To bring economic stability, an effective fiscal and monetary policy is needed. There is a requirement for the two following mechanisms for economic prosperity; stability in politics with good governance, and reforms in the present economic structure. Naseer Malik further said federal government is working on a mini-budget including some tough measures like imposing a "flood levy" and increasing duty on petroleum products. PBF Punjab Chairman says was decided to slap "flood levy" in the range of 1 to 3% through the promulgation of a presidential ordinance and firm up a proposal for unveiling the mini-budget.



ISLAMABAD: Adviser to Prime Minister on Kashmir Affairs and Gilgit-Baltistan Qamar Zaman Kaira address at a consultation event regarding the rights of overseas Pakistanis. — DNA

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Climate Change Senator Sherry Rehman said that collaboration of international organizations was imperative for building climate resilient Pakistan as the country was gearing up to support rehabilitation and recovery, amid funding constraints of 33 million affected population devastated by unprecedented floods of the history. The Minister said this in a meeting with the delegation of country directors of International non-governmental organizations (INGOs) on the panel of Pakistan Humanitarian Forum (PHF) as part of consultations for the International Confer-

ence on Climate Resilient Pakistan, scheduled to be held in Geneva on January 9, 2023, said a news release received here on Wednesday. Talking with the delegation, Senator Rehman said, "This high-level Conference in Geneva aims to marshal international support for the people and Government of Pakistan to move forward on recovery as soon as possible after the country went through the world's worst climate event in living memory." "The plan to rehabilitate, recover and rebuild with resilience is urgent, but we faced a huge funding gap even for first order recovery needs, given that we are servicing

rehabilitation and relief for 33 million people. This is too large a number for any country to rehabilitate on its own," she added. The minister underlined that the government's costing of \$16 billion for reconstruction of damaged infrastructure in a flood-resilient mode was not enough to cover full climate resilience, adding, "but we cannot wait, as another season of extreme weather could well hit us before we even begin rebuilding." To this end, she said the government of Pakistan was co-hosting an international climate resilient Pakistan conference where its objective would be to present the Resilient Recovery. Rehabil-

itation and Reconstruction Framework (4RF), comprising of plans and arrangements for the post-floods recovery, rehabilitation, and reconstruction and forging long-term partnerships for building Pakistan's climate resilience and adaptation.

"The conference will be co-chaired by the Prime Minister of Pakistan, Mian Muhammad Shabbaz Sharif and Secretary General of the United Nations, Antonio Guterres. We are grateful to the support of our international partners and we are looking forward to exploring concrete ways and means to build Pakistan's long-term climate resilience and adaptation including

the articulation of provincial perspectives." The federal minister commended the humanitarian relief efforts done by the INGOs in Pakistan, especially in the aftermath of the catastrophic floods that impacted 33 million people. The PHF member INGOs mobilised \$150 million for flood response. "The Ministry of Climate Change looks forward to working and collaborating with the INGOs on a sustained institutional basis. MOCC and INGOs need to collaborate on building awareness on climate resilience and adaptation at the grassroots level," Senator Sherry Rehman said. —DNA

ISLAMABAD: Adviser to Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Kashmir Affairs Qammar Zaman Kaira said on Wednesday the issues of Pakistani expatriates needed to be resolved. Addressing a seminar on overseas rights by the Parliamentarians Commission of Human Rights, he said the PPP used to highlight the issues of expatriate Pakistanis in the assembly as they held the right to vote. "We are still entangled in religious debates while on the other hand, the new generation is challenging these norms," he added. He said overseas Pakistanis played a crucial role in the development of a country, especially the developing country like Pakistan. "Expatriates are worried whenever they come across some bad news from Pakistan," he added. — DNA

LAHORE: Jamaat-e-Islami emir Sirajul Haq has warned the rulers against the country's worsening economic and security situation. Addressing a training workshop for JI workers at Mansoorah on Wednesday, he added that nuclear Pakistan had remained a target of enemies of the country since it achieved the capability, and they have been continuously hatching plans to disable it. He said the enemies wanted to create Sri Lank and Ukraine like situation in Pakistan to take advantage to unleash further propaganda against the country.

The PDM, the PPP and the PTI, Haq said, were equally responsible for the prevailing situation. He said they jointly created economic, social and political crises, adding that the troika fought to protect their self-interests, ignoring real issues. He said the government of the PDM was the continuation of the PTI as both failed to fix the economy and provide relief to the masses. They, he added, desperately failed to bring down inflation and address the problem of rising unemployment. The provincial governments, he said, were afraid of holding local bodies elections as they could not face people. He said the governments in Pakistan were in constant habit of taking direction from Washington. He said the attitude of democratic governments also remained undemocratic in the country. He said the families and individuals run political parties in the country.

Haq asked the rulers to address the demands of the people of Balochistan. He said the residents of Gwadar were demanding their rights. The rulers, he said, must embrace them instead of pushing people to the wall. The JI chief said the elections were the need of the hour to put the country on track, but polls without reforms would bring no solution. He said the country needed civilian supremacy, a free judiciary, and an independent and powerful election commission. He said the JI would continue struggle for the rights of the people. – DNA

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Jan 12 / Tanzania	Armed Forces Day
Jan 14 / Uzbekistan	Armed Forces Day
Jan 15 / Nigeria	Armed Forces Day
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Women Police Stations Islamabad.....9222596
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WASA Rawalpindi..555489
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Hospitals

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MH.....561116
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DHQ.....5556311-4
RGH.....9290301-7
Holy Family.....9290322-7
PIMS.....9261170-79
Polyclinic.....9218300-09
Shifa International.4603666



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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

Traders oppose construction of slaughterhouse in sector 1/11

Engr. Muhammad Azhar ul Islam Zafar, Vice President ICCI said that according to the SOP of Food and Agriculture Organization of UN, the slaughterhouse should be away from residential areas and emphasized that CDA should follow the international practice for setting up this

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Agro Trade Promotion Committee of Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) during its meeting at Chamber House has expressed serious concerns over the CDA plan to construct a slaughterhouse in I-11/4, Islamabad at an area of over 5-acre land as the fruit and vegetable businesses need a hygienic environment while the existence of an abattoir near Sabzi Mandi would create unhygienic conditions and would have a negative impact on the health of fruit and vegetable consumers as well. Therefore, they strongly opposed this move and called upon the CDA to cancel this project immediately in the larger interest of the citizens. Addressing the meeting, Faad Waheed, Acting President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry said that fruits and vegetables businesses need a neat



and clean environment, but the construction of a slaughterhouse in the vicinity of Sabzi Mandi in Islamabad would be against the interest of these businesses as it would create smell in the area and affect the environment. He said that the concerns of the business community of Sabzi Mandi are genuine and stressed that the CDA should reconsider its plan of constructing an abattoir near the

largest fruits and vegetables market of the twin cities and move this facility out of the city to save the businesses and citizens from its unhealthy consequences. Engr. Muhammad Azhar ul Islam Zafar, Vice President ICCI said that according to the SOP of Food and Agriculture Organization of UN, the slaughterhouse should be away from residential areas and emphasized that CDA

should follow the international practice for setting up this facility away from the city. Tahir Ayub, Convener, Agro Trade Promotion Committee of ICCI said that the I-11/4 sector is already facing the issue of water shortage while an abundant supply of potable water and adequate facilities for treatment and disposal are required for a slaughterhouse, which is not possible in the said

area. He urged that CDA should immediately withdraw this project to save the Sabzi Mandi businesses from its harmful consequences. He further said that Sabzi Mandi is also facing double taxation from the Market Committee and CDA, which is unjustified. He said that after the establishment of the Market Committee, CDA is not doing any development works in Sabzi Mandi due to which the condition of its infrastructure and other services has deteriorated. He stressed that this issue should be resolved in consultation with the stakeholders to save businesses from further troubles. Babu Muhammad Aleem, Ch. Muhammad Arshad, Arsalan Jawaid, Ch. Safer Hussain, Rizwan Farooq, Shakeel Ahmed, Imtiaz Ahmed, Abdullah Chaudhry, Muhammad Shabbir, Sheikh Salman and Muhammad Sohail Chaudhry and other members of Committee also strongly opposed the construction of slaughterhouse near Sabzi Mandi and urged that CDA should cancel this project forthwith.

Pakistan needs to address water security issue

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Experts at a multi-stakeholder consultative workshop here on Wednesday said that Pakistan needed to establish an effective network of all segments of the society from scientists to policymakers to civil society with a focus on mainstreaming youth and gender to address growing water security prevailing across the country. The workshop "Transformative Futures for Water Security (TFWS)", setting priorities for water research, knowledge, and innovation" was organized by the International Water Management Institute (IWMI) in partnership with the Pakistan Council of Research in Water Resources (PCRWR), Federal Flood Commission, Ministry of Water Resources, Federal Water Management Cell, Ministry of National Food Security and Research. Over 60 representatives from the federal and provincial governments, donors,

civil society, academia, and public and private sector organizations participated in the workshop. IWMI had developed the TFWS Initiative with the foundation of a bottom-up approach rooted in South-South dialogue, and youth to co-guardianship among others. In his welcome note, Dr Mohsin Hafeez, Country Representative Pakistan and Regional Representative of Central Asia, IWMI, briefed the participants regarding the objectives of the consultation. According to him, "Pakistan has the lowest water security in terms of urban, economic, environmental, and other factors linked to the subject. There is a need to take bold steps for addressing water scarcity prevailing across the country. We need to build joint commitments to science-based action on water security across policy, development, business, and science constituencies for greater water security." Dr. Mark Smith, Director General, IWMI through his video message, introduced

the Transformative Futures for Water Security (TFWS) Initiative led by IWMI, its rationale and the need for ensuring water security in the region. According to Dr. Smith, "The latest IPCC report's message on climate change and water are obvious, that climate change is intensifying hydrological water cycle which means an increase in water risks and extreme floods and droughts. Behind our initiative is an underlying question of who to lead this bold step towards water security. The answer to it is that the youth, policymakers, business, communities, farmers, conservation organizations, and sectors beyond water will lead this action."Dr. Muhammad Ashraf, Chairman PCRWR said, "Pakistan will face a 30 percent water shortfall by 2030 whereas at present over 60 percent population in the country is drinking unclean water. We are facing groundwater depletion in Islamabad at one meter/ annum, as groundwater is helping meet our require-

ments by 60 percent in agriculture, 90 percent for drinking purposes and by 100 percent for the industry. The situation needs to be immediately addressed." Simi Kamal, Board Member, IWMI, said that water security needed to be looked at from the perspective of how water is used, as up to 90 percent of our water resources are used in agriculture. She said that the youth were technology savvy, entrepreneurial, understanding of the audience, eager to study and learn new things and work hard to change the world. She further said, "Group action for water is political and is needed not based on elite groups' interest but on the survival of climate change affected communities."The consultation was followed by the formation of five working groups to discuss multifaceted issues on water security that provided key indicators and suggestions to address the issue with a systematic approach guided by ground realities and scientific evidence to deal with the climate shocks.

Ruling coalition has disappointed masses

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Economy Watch (PEW) on Wednesday said the ruling coalition has not been able to give the people anything but inflation and unemployment. Instead of the welfare of the people, the government's focus is on fulfilling the demands of the allies and silencing the opposition, it said. This style of governance is undermining the economy while millions of people are falling below the poverty line, said Dr. Murtaza Mughal, President of PEW. He said that the economy is in ICU but the burden on it is being continuously increased, the economy is being neglected, and political issues are being given full attention. Except for the elite, the whole country is worried, but the government is not listening to anyone and keeping itself busy in fruitless meetings, useless briefings, and flowery press conferences, he added. He said that country was already suffering from various crises and now a flour crisis has spread across the country which can turn into famine at any time, but the government seems indifferent to the situation and it is relying on encouraging statements. Dr. Mughal said that the country's treasury is empty, and no institution or country is willing to give loans because they have no hope of return, while a large number of people are thinking that the experience of forming a government by combining all the major parties of the country has failed. It seems that country's economic growth will be negative by the end of the current fiscal year if the situation was not improved. He said industries were shutting down while large-scale manufacturing, agriculture, exports, and remittances were all in the negative zone. The textile sector, which constitutes 64 percent of the country's export, was seeing a decline in its export of around 2.2 billion dollars per month and over 1.5 million textile workers have been laid off. If the government continues like this, the country may go bankrupt, he warned.

ISSI bids farewell to Amb. Aizaz Ahmad Chaudhry

DNA

ISLAMABAD: In a special-ly-hosted event, the Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI) bid a fond farewell to Ambassador Aizaz Ahmad Chaudhry upon completion of his term as the Director-General. Ambassador Aizaz Chaudhry joined the ISSI in June 2018, following his retirement from the Foreign Service of Pakistan after having served as Ambassador to the United States and earlier as Foreign Secretary. During his tenure, the Institute undertook extensive reforms, upgraded the infrastructure, and established four centers of excellence. Ambassador Chaudhry launched several new initiatives and strengthened the policy advocacy role. Speaking on the occasion, Dr. Talat Shabbir, Director (Admin)/ CPSC, Malik Qasim Mustafa, Director (ACDC), Ms. Amina Khan, Director (CAMEA),



Dr. Arshad Ali, Director (ISC), Dr. Neelum Nigar, Director (CSP), and several other Research Fellows/Research Associates shared their rich work experiences with Ambassador Chaudhry and highlighted the progress achieved in research and dialogue under his stewardship. Chairman ISSI's Board of Governors Ambassador Khalid Mahmood lauded the transformative contribution of Ambassador Aizaz Chaudhry in enhancing the quality of the

Institute's research activities as well as enlarging its outreach and policy input role. He also appreciated his role in the uplifting of the Institute's premises. Ambassador Chaudhry was a mentor to his ISSI colleagues, Ambassador Khalid Mahmood added Former Foreign Secretary and the new Director General of ISSI, Ambassador Sohail Mahmood expressed the hope that the Institute would continue to benefit from his support and wise guidance.

Planning Minister awards appreciating certificates

ISLAMABAD : Minister for Planning Development & Special Initiatives, Professor Ahsan Iqbal on Wednesday awarded appreciation certificates amongst the best performing employees at the Ministry while reviving the decade-old tradition which was started in 1999 to encourage the employees. The basic objective of this exercise is to recognize, appreciate and improve the working of the ministry which I started in 1999 and continued till 2018, said the Minister, while distributing the awards among the best employees on Wednesday. Total 21 officials and officers from all the cadres were shortlisted who were awarded appreciating certificates for their outstanding performance in respective fields. Speaking on the occasion, the Minister noted that the public sector cannot punish employees because they come with a job security unlike the private sector which has the power to hire and fire; this has led to the lagging of the public sector. The Minister stressed the employees to increase their efficiency and productivity for productive output, people work for a mission and do not see their working hours as a burden, he remarked. "Irrespective of any government in power, such an exercise should continue to recognize the services of the employees," he added. Furthermore, the Minister hoped to continue such initiatives in the future to uplift the working of the public sector and emphasized to evoke courage and hope in public to pull the public out of the current crisis. "Bad times encourage people to make an extra effort to pull themselves out of trouble instead of giving up in the face of troubles," remarked the Minister.—DNA

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FDE making efforts to cater educational needs

ISLAMABAD: Federal Directorate of Education (FDE) is endeavoring to cater educational needs of inhabitants of Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) in the priority areas, where the land has been offered by private housing societies despite the limited availability of finances in PSDP. According to official sources, in recent years, the number of private housing so-

cieties has increased in the ICT, therefore the establishment of new educational institutions is need of the hour. Several new educational institutions are in a phase of finishing and will be completed by June 2023 but classes have been initiated from the academic session 2022-23 in the completed part of these Institutions. —APP

AIOU promotes Islamic values; Prof. Dr. Nasir Mehmood

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) in its press release issued yesterday, has clarified that the University was promoting Islamic teachings and Pakistanis' social values through its books and other teaching materials. Prof. Dr. Nasir Mehmood, Vice-Chancellor AIOU in his briefing to the National Assembly Standing Committee on Federal Education and Professional Training said that AIOU had a comprehensive mechanism of courses and books development. He was clarifying AIOU position before the Committee on printing of a book that allegedly contain Islamophobic content. He informed the Committee that the said book "Aina e Imraniyat" has nothing to do with AIOU. This book is published by a private publisher keeping in view the syllabus of Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education, Punjab, Azad Kashmir and Federal Board Islamabad, he told. Further, Allama Iqbal Open University prepares syllabus for its students through a comprehensive system that ensures the proof reading and content quality of the written material before publishing. It is pertinent to mention here that Allama Iqbal Open University is playing a significant role in the promotion of social and moral values in the country and working for the promotion of Islamic teachings. AIOU has created a seerat studies corner in the central library and the Seerat chair has also been established under which seminars and conferences are organized frequently.

4000 CCTV cameras to be installed under Rwp Safe City Project

RAWALPINDI: The administration is finalizing a plan to install 4,000 closed-circuit television (CCTV) cameras under Rawalpindi Safe City Project on the roads to monitor all the city areas. According to a Commissioner Office spokesman, Commissioner Saqib Manan had chaired a meeting to review progress of Rawalpindi Safe City Project. He informed that in order to boost surveillance and keep a vigilant eye on criminal activities in Rawalpindi, the Punjab government had decided to enter into an agreement with the Safe City Authority to install CCTV cameras in the city. The meeting was informed that 950 locations had been identified in Rawalpindi where around 4,000 cameras would be installed to monitor the city. These CCTV cameras would work under an integrated system which would help control crime and improve law and order situation in the city, he added.—APP

ANF seizes over 1.8 kg Ice drug

RAWALPINDI, Jan 04 (APP):Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) Pakistan while conducting three counter-narcotics operations seized over 1.8 kg of Ice drug, 100 charras-filled capsules, and 137 liquor bottles besides netting three accused, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman here on Wednesday. He informed in an operation at Bacha Khan International Airport, Peshawar, ANF recovered 100 charras-filled capsules from the possession of a Doha-bound passenger resident of Swat going on flight no PA-601. In another raid conducted near Karkhano Market Peshawar, ANF recovered 1.8 kg of Ice drug from the possession of a drug smuggler resident of Khyber. The spokesman informed that in the third raid conducted near DHA Karachi, ANF managed to seize 137 bottles of liquor from the possession of a bootlegger resident of Ghotki.—APP

Briefs

Investment under CPEC to reach \$62b by 2030

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The total planned investment under China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is \$62 billion between FY2015 and FY2030, out of which \$27.4 billion projects have been realized, with energy sector (power generation, coal mining and transmission lines) representing 76 percent. It covers power generation projects, both fossil fuel and renewable, of about 11 GW. To date, about 5,520 MW energy projects have been completed. More than half of these projects are coal-based power plants, according to an annual report on renewable energy released by Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI). The report says the completed projects under the corridor include 1320 MW Sahiwal Coal-fired Power Plant, 1320MW Coal-fired Power Plant at Port Qasim, Karachi, 1320MW China Hub Coal Power Project, Hub, Balochistan, 660 MW Engro Thar Coal Power Project, 1000 MW Quaid-e-Azam Solar Park, Bahawalpur, 50 MW Hydro China Dawood Wind Farm, Ghara, 100 MW UEP Wind Farm, Jhimpir, Thatta, 50 MW Sachal Wind Farm, Jhimpir, Thatta, 100 MW Three Gorges Second and Third Wind Power Project, Matari to Lahore ±660 KV HVDC Transmission Line Project, and 720 MW Karot Hydropower Project, AJK/Punjab. The projects that are under construction include 1320 SSRL Thar Coal Block-I (2×660MW), 330MW HUBCO Thar Coal Power Project, 330MW HUBCO ThalNova Thar Coal Power Project, 884MW Suki Kinari Hydropower Project, KP, and 300 MW Coal-Fired Power Project, Gwadar.—APP

PBM disburses Rs. 23.598m among 692 families

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Bait-ul-Mal (PBM) has disbursed an amount of Rs. 23.598 million among 692 families under the Orphans and Widow Support Program (OWSP) since December 2020. According to an official source, OWSP which is a Conditional Cash Transfer intervention was basically designed to provide financial assistance to widows with a focus on orphans, especially girl's education. The OWSP provides Rs. 8000 per month and Rs.16,000 per month to families having one child and more than one child respectively upon meeting compliance of 75 percent school attendance.—APP

PFC offers free training for prisoners

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Furniture Council (PFC) has offered the convicts in Punjab jails a free specialised training to produce the best quality skilled wood workers to meet ever increasing demands of furniture industry. Talking to Inspector General of Prisons Mubashar Ahmad Khan in Lahore on Wednesday Chief Executive Officer Pakistan Furniture Council Mian Kashif Ashfaq offered totally free training package and discussed its modalities and scope of enhancement of cooperation between public and private sector, according to a press release received here. He said that at present Pakistan is facing acute shortage of highly skilled wood workers so it was decided to meet this alarming scarcity of artisans by training the convicts on modern scientific lines to meet market driven demands. He further offered that on successful completion of proper training, all convicts after release, will be absorbed in furniture manufacturing factories with good pay packages. Dr Waqar Ch, Advisor PFC said "PFC may also consider offering reasonable good monthly stipend to all convict trainees to attract maximum number of participants". Mian Kashif Ashfaq said initially 6 months short duration course will be lunched in Central Jails of Lahore, Bahawalpur, Faisalabad and Rawalpindi.—APP



ISLAMABAD: A view of construction work of 9th Avenue flyover at IJP Road during development work in the city.—APP

Kashmiris to observe Right to Self-Determination Day

The situation in occupied Jammu and Kashmir has become more terrible since August 05, 2019, when the Modi regime revoked the special status of the territory and snatched away all the basic rights and freedoms of the Kashmiri people

ISLAMABAD: Kashmiris on both sides of the Line of Control and the world over will observe the Right to Self-Determination Day, tomorrow, with the pledge to continue their liberation struggle till it reaches its logical conclusion. A call for observance of the day has been given by the All Parties Hurriyat Conference. The day will be marked by various activities including protest demonstrations, rallies, seminars, and conferences in Indian illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir, Azad Jammu and Kashmir, Pakistan and in all major capitals of the world to remind the UN that it must implement its relevant resolutions to settle the

Kashmir dispute to save the Kashmiris from the Indian brutalities, said a press release. It was on 5th January 1949 when the United Nations Security Council passed a resolution supporting the Kashmiris' right to decide their future by themselves under an UN-supervised plebiscite. The unresolved Kashmir dispute has become a nuclear flashpoint in South Asia. January 05, 1949 resolution provides the base for the settlement of the lingering dispute, however, India's continued intransigent attitude had impeded in the way of achieving this objective. Unfortunately, the World Body has failed to implement its

resolutions, resulting in the continued suffering of the Kashmiri people. The principles laid down in the communications of India and Pakistan with the UNCIP (United Nations Commission for India and Pakistan) on Kashmir dated December 23 and December 25 and adopted by the Commission, are supplementary to the Commission's Resolution of August 13, 1948. Argentina, Belgium, Colombia, Czechoslovakia, and the US were members of the commission. The Resolution was unanimously adopted by the UNCIP on January 05, 1949. Earlier, a ceasefire came into effect between Pakistan and India one minute before mid-

night on the first of January 1949, following the agreement arrived at through the Commission's resolution of 13th August 1948. Today 75 years have lapsed, but no concrete steps have been taken to implement the resolutions of 13th August 1948 and 5th January 1949. The Narendra Modi-led fascist Indian government is using the Indian army establishment and dreaded agencies RAW, Intelligence Bureau (IB), National Investigation Agency (NIA), and Enforcement Directorate to unleash every kind of oppression to suppress the people of IIOJK. East Timor and South Sudan were granted freedom by holding plebiscite while the peo-

ple of Jammu and Kashmir are still facing state terrorism at the hands of Indian occupation forces. The situation in occupied Jammu and Kashmir has become more terrible since August 05, 2019, when the Modi regime revoked the special status of the territory and snatched away all the basic rights and freedoms of the Kashmiri people. Thousands of Kashmiris including APHC Chairman, Masarrat Aalam Butt, Shabbir Ahmad Shah, Muhammad Yasin Malik, Aasiya Andrabi, and Nayeem Ahmad Khan are languishing in Indian jails and the rest are facing hardships due to Indian state terrorism in IIOJK.—Agencies

Economy in shambles, people mired in poverty

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Chairman of National Business Group Pakistan, President Pakistan Businessmen and Intellectuals Forum, and All Karachi Industrial Alliance, and former provincial minister Mian Zahid Hussain on the economy is under rumors and has become weak due to various problems while the people are sinking in the mire of poverty. Economists are failing to manage the situation therefore difficult decisions are being postponed, while the public is overwhelmed by inflation, which requires targeted subsidies urgently, he said. Mian Zahid Hussain said that political compulsions should not be prior-

itized over the economy and serious efforts should be made to revive the economy otherwise the situation will go out of control. Talking to the business community, the veteran business leader said that going to IMF is the only option that is being delayed which is tantamount to destroying the country's economy. Some politicians are claiming on a daily basis that the solution to all the problems is the election but they are not ready to give a plan beyond the election, which is an attempt to throw dust in the eyes of the people. In the past too, they had claimed to make Pakistan a paradise with the help of two hundred economists, but after getting power, they ruined the economy. Mian Zahid Hussain

said that political instability and inflation are increasing rapidly, which has increased the anxiety and restlessness of the people and the foundation of the economy is shaking. The burden of the government structure is increasing while various institutions are suffering from degradation. Rising deficits and debt payments have perplexed experts, he noted. There has been a huge flour crisis in the country and its price has reached Rs145 per kg. Currently, there is a shortage of dollars in the country, its value and demand are constantly increasing due to artificial measures, leaving the value of the dollar to the market can overcome the shortage of dollars, he observed. The business leader said that

the electricity and gas bills have kept the public and the business community puzzled and no one not getting any relief. Apart from this, millions of flood victims are waiting for relief under the open sky in this cold weather. In these circumstances, the ruling coalition will have to give priority to improving economic affairs, ensuring national security, ending terrorism, improving relations with important countries and reducing its expenses, and reducing the focus on the opposition. He welcomed the recent decisions of the National Security Council and said it will give the necessary confidence to the government to take tough measures.

ghanistan into the country during the period under review was recorded at US \$ 11.523 million against US \$73.120 million last year, showing decline of 84.24 percent in July-November (2022-23). On year-on year basis, the import for Afghanistan witnessed also decreased by 94.58 percent from US \$25.368 million in November 2021, against the imports of US \$1.373 million in November 2022. On month-on-month basis, the imports from Afghanistan into country dipped by 31.03 percent during November 2022.—APP

Pakistan's exports to Afghanistan increased

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's export of goods and services to Afghanistan witnessed an increase of 2.83 percent during the first five months of current fiscal year (2022-23) as compared to the exports of corresponding period of last year, State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) reported. The overall exports to Afghanistan were recorded at US \$213.282 million during July-November (2022-

23) against exports of US \$207.407 million during July-November (2021-22), showing growth of 2.83 percent, SBP data revealed. On year-to-year basis, the exports to Afghanistan however decreased 23.46 percent from \$48.686 million in November 2022, against the exports of \$37.263 million in November 2021. Meanwhile, on month-on-month basis, the exports to

Afghanistan also dipped by 23.73 percent during November 2022 as compared to the exports of \$48.860 million in October 2022, the SBP data revealed. Overall Pakistan's exports to other countries witnessed a decrease of 2.01 percent in first five months, from US \$ 12.313 billion to US \$ 12.065 billion, the SBP data revealed. On the other hand, the imports from Af-

US celebrates 75 years of Pak-US friendship

Testaments to our strong and abiding commitment to Pakistan include the 37,000 Pakistanis who have benefited from U.S. government-sponsored professional and educational exchanges and the \$97 million for flood relief, food security, and disaster preparedness the U.S. provided to Pakistan in 2022

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The United States Embassy in Islamabad is marking 75 years of bilateral partnership with Pakistan by illuminating the building at One Constitution Avenue in the capital. The illumination starts the evening of January 3rd and will continue through January 11th. Using innovative technology pioneered by partner organization 3D Illumination, the three-dimensional, moving projection highlights key themes and images of Pakistan-U.S. relations from the past 75 years. Previously used with famous landmarks such as the Washington Monument and Eiffel tower, this type of projection has rarely been seen before in Pakistan. U.S. Mission Chargé d'Affaires Andrew Schofer said, "Through 75 years of diplomatic relations, the United States has worked with Pakistan to support energy, agriculture, public health, education, infrastructure, and people-to-people connections. We are proud to use this unique technology to show the Pakistani people the breadth and depth of our longstanding bilateral partnership and look forward to exploring opportunities for future collaboration and partnership, including through the U.S.-Pakistan Green Alliance framework." Over the past 75 years, the United States and Pakistan have created a relationship based on mutual respect and shared values, building a partnership which has been advantageous to both countries. Over the decades, the United States has invested more than \$32 billion to improve the lives of the Pakistani people, strengthen our bilateral collaboration, and advance our shared interests. Testaments to our strong and abiding commitment to Pakistan include the 37,000 Pakistanis who have benefited from U.S. government-sponsored professional and educational exchanges and the \$97 million for flood relief, food security, and disaster preparedness the U.S. provided to Pakistan in 2022.

Mohammad Ali Jauhar remembered

ISLAMABAD: Mohammad Ali Jauhar, a wearer of many hats ranging from Muslim activist, a prominent member of the All-India Muslim League, journalist, and poet, was remembered here on Wednesday on his 92nd death anniversary. Mohammad Ali Jauhar was born in 1878 in Rampur. He was schooled in Rampur and Bareilly and then graduated with distinction from Aligarh. Pleased with his good performance, his brother, Maulana Shaukat Ali sent him to Oxford where he chose History and Law as his subjects. Besides English, his mastery of Urdu was also perfect. He started a daily Urdu Newspaper 'Hamdard' and English Newspaper Comrade for the public in 1913. He expressed his opinions against the British fearlessly and spent a major part of his life in imprisonment for participating in the Freedom movement. Jauhar was among the founders of the All-India Muslim League and attended the first meeting in Dhaka in 1906. He served as its president in 1918 and remained active in the League till 1928. In 1919, he started the Khilafat Movement in which Indian Muslims supported him wholeheartedly. Later, he participated in Non-cooperation Movement. Ali also founded Jamia which is now a Central University. Apart from being a master author, he had prowess in poetry and prose. He was interested in poetry since his childhood which proved to be a blessing for him. Jauhar became interested in eternal love for God, 'Ishq-e-Haqeeqi', and two brief collections have been published entitled "Kalam-e-Jauhar".—APP

Trade deficit narrows by 32.65%

ISLAMABAD: The trade deficit witnessed a decline of 32.65 percent during the first half of the current fiscal year as compared to the corresponding period of last year, Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) reported. The trade deficit during July-December (2022-23) was recorded at \$17.133 billion against the deficit of \$25.438 billion in July-December (2021-22), a decline of 32.65 percent. The exports during the period were recorded at \$14.249 billion against \$15.125 billion last year, showing a decline of 5.79 percent. On the other hand, the imports witnessed a sharp decline of 22.63 percent by falling from \$40.563 billion last year to \$31.382 billion during the current fiscal year. On year-on-year basis, the exports from the country witnessed a decline of 16.64 percent and were recorded at \$2.304 billion in December 2022 against the exports of \$2.764 billion in December 2021. The imports also decreased to \$5.161 billion in December 2022 from \$7.580 billion in December 2021, showing negative growth of 31.91 percent. On month-on-month basis, the exports during December 2022 declined by 3.64 percent when compared to the exports of \$2.391 billion in November 2022. The imports into the country also declined by 0.41 percent in December 2022 when compared to the imports of \$5.182 billion in November 2022, according to the data.—APP

IHC issues written order in LG case

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Wednesday issued written order on the appeal of the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) in local body elections case. A two-judge bench headed by Chief Justice Aamer Farooq issued the written order regarding the hearing on the appeals against the verdict of single member bench. The court granted permission to ECP for submission of extra documents related to the court and also served notices to Pakistan Tehreek e Insaf (PTI) and Jamat e Islami (JI). The court said that the petitioner had adopted the stance that it was not possible to implement the decision of single member bench. The ECP had expressed willingness to conduct LG elections on new date against 101 union councils. It was of the view that there would be effects on the elections if the law was changed during the process.—APP

HRRD to build 1,000 houses for flood-hit people

ISLAMABAD: Helping Hand for Relief and Development (HRRD) has planned to build 1000 houses for the people of flood-hit areas of the country. Talking to APP here on Wednesday, Abid Bukhari, an official in the organisation said that HRRD aims to start the construction of houses from January 15 and the project would be completed approximately by the end of the current year. He said the complete plan and details of the structure had been submitted to the higher management committee and after approval, ground work would be initiated. Bukhari said over 33 million people were affected, 7.9 million displaced, and 2.1 million homes damaged/destroyed and stressed people of Pakistan were still struggling to resume their life. He informed that HRRD had been providing newly-constructed homes, food, hygiene items, household essentials, medical services and farming facilities to the flood victims. Bukhari said that to provide relief to the flood-affected people in Quetta, South, Punjab, and Sindh, HRRD supplied building materials including doors, windows, mud house rods, and polythene sheets, along with Rs 5000 in cash for house construction.—APP

HEC reviews performance of 133 universities so far

The second step was the execution of the review (physical inspection) and the third step was post-review activities that includes sharing of the IPE review report with the universities

ISLAMABAD: Higher Education Commission (HEC) was performing the quality assurance review of the universities on regular basis and so far, 133 universities across the country have been reviewed on standards set forth by HEC. According to official sources, HEC by its ordinance was empowered to cause evaluation of the performance of institutions. The Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) of HEC was mandated to initiate several

programmes to safeguard minimum standards of quality among Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) across the country. Institutional Performance Evaluation (IPE) was one of the key components of QAA-HEC Pakistan to safeguard standards and provide a platform for improvement and promote a culture of quality in the higher education sector across Pakistan. IPE was a holistic evaluation program that provides

a platform to have an institution-wide review of the HEIs. It was a Peer Review Process that aims at improving the overall institutional quality IPE consists of eleven (11) standards and these standards are used to review overall institutional development and the effectiveness of teaching and learning. The standards include Mission Statement and Goals Planning and Evaluation, Organization and Governance, Integrity, Faculty, Students,

Institutional Resources, Academic program and Curricula, Public Disclosure and Transparency, Assessment & Quality Assurance, and Student Support Service. IPE review was a five-year cyclical activity to evaluate institutional performance on the aforementioned standards. IPE (the review process) was divided into three steps: the first being the pre-review step (data collection process through University Portfolio Report (UPR).

Reciprocal arrival measures justified

Authoritative medical experts from different countries have said that entry restrictions on travelers arriving from the Chinese mainland, or with any travel history there within seven days, are unnecessary. China firmly opposes some countries' politicization of their virus control measures for arrivals exclusively from the mainland. These discriminatory practices are devoid of any scientific basis and do not serve their stated purpose. Instead, they seek to strengthen the image some China-bashers in Western countries are dying to create that China is the source of all troubles. But that has not prevented China from acting responsibly as the major exporter and donor of essential medical supplies and life necessities for the rest of the world, including those countries doing nothing to control spillovers of the virus or taking the initiative to smear China with baseless charges, slander and lies. China always distinguishes the few bad apples from the rest of the foreign peoples, and it has never stopped doing all it can to help foreign countries overcome their practical difficulties while protecting its own people from the virus. And contrary to the claims of those trying to tar China with a malign brush, the country has been sharing relevant information and data in an open and transparent manner with the international community, including sharing the genome data of the virus from the latest COVID cases in China via the Global Initiative on Sharing Avian Influenza Data. Therefore, it is fully justified for the spokesperson of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of China to say, on the one hand, that China stands ready to step up communication with the rest of the international community and work together to prevail over COVID, and on the other, that it firmly rejects using COVID measures for political purposes and "will take corresponding measures in response to varying situations based on the principle of reciprocity". Predictably this has provoked a reaction from the China-bashing politicians, who claim it is proof of China's "double standard", referring to the fact that China has carried out stringent entry virus control measures for three years. However, as always, their smears are selective as they intentionally omit the fact that many countries controlled their borders at that time as well. Nor did China target arrivals from any particular country or region. The measures were an integral part of the country's overall COVID policy, based on science and the actual pandemic situation. So there are fundamental differences between the politicized and discriminatory entry restriction measures arrivals from the mainland are being subjected to now and those that China previously applied. It is these China-bashers that have been criticizing China's strict virus control policies as a grave mistake, and it is also these people that are doing the same now that the country has lifted its controls at the proper time. That is not a coincidence.

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China's Covid crisis: zero preparation

China's citizens know this winter is a deadly one. But they do not know how deadly. According to leaked information, health officials estimated that about 250 million people – 18% of the population – were infected with Covid in the first 20 days of December and that as of Christmas Eve, the rate of infection was still rising. Yet the authorities' public pronouncements have been extremely limited and clearly misleading or downright ludicrous. The virus rips through the country and bodies wait days for collection – but on Monday, China reported 76 Covid deaths, of which all but two were in Hong Kong, not on the mainland. Relatives report loved ones dying of Covid but having something else recorded on the death certificate. The government's U-turn probably reflected concern about the economic impact (which the International Monetary Fund predicts will grow at or below global growth for the first time in decades), public discontent with zero Covid and the realisation that infections were surging despite its harsh rules. Its big mistake was neither initially pursuing a zero-Covid policy nor lifting it – others did so and kept mortality rates low – but shifting without warning, much mitigation or, apparently, preparation. Other governments, including the US and the UK, have been largely forgiven by many of their citizens for deadly errors in their pandemic response. Chinese authorities are expert in rewriting history. Yet at least some citizens are radically reassessing their assumptions about the party-state and "authoritarian competence". The reckless unlocking has made them more bitter about the apparently pointless restrictions preceding it. For many of the younger generation, this is their first experience of real hard times; for their elders, it may recall previous party follies. It is absurd for Beijing to attack testing requirements imposed on inbound passengers by other nations; it still insists on a negative PCR test to enter the country, and is patently failing to offer full and accurate information on the pandemic's progress. Sampling of passengers and wastewater from planes is sensible so that potentially dangerous new variants can be identified and monitored. But for countries that have otherwise essentially given up on Covid-reduction measures (unlike, say, Japan), and which seem largely unconcerned about the known XBB.1.5 variant from the US, to insist on negative PCR tests from all passengers seems largely performative. The EU offer of free vaccines – though rejected by Beijing – was a more useful response. Given the disturbing increase in anti-Asian hate and violence since the pandemic began, politicians must not promote further prejudice that could endanger those of east and south-east Asian origin or heritage, and Chinese citizens who have already suffered at their own government's hands.

Russian energy supply and Pakistan

Gul.i. Ayesha Bhatti



Since Russia invaded Ukraine in February 2022, things have gotten worse as a result of an energy stalemate with Europe. In May 2022 Gazprom cut off supply through the Yamal-Europe pipeline that crosses Poland, just 44 hours after Ukraine restricted the flow of natural gas through its territory into Europe and accused Russian forces of interfering. According to RIA Novosti, sanctions

Musadik Malik, Pakistan's State Minister for Petroleum, stated on 5 December 2022 that negotiations for the purchase of liquefied natural gas (LNG) are now under on with private Russian companies. He also mentioned that Islamabad has contacts with the federal LNG producers in Russia. Therefore negotiations over the pipeline projects with Moscow have advanced significantly. Russian Foreign Minister also mentions the supply of

Russian Crude oil to Pakistan. Russia, which is often referred to as an "energy superpower," is the world's top exporter of both natural gas and oil. It has long been the main source of petroleum and natural gas for the EU. Since Russia invaded Ukraine in February 2022, things have gotten worse as a result of an energy stalemate with Europe. In May 2022 Gazprom cut off supply through the Yamal-Europe pipeline that crosses Poland, just 44 hours after Ukraine restricted the flow of natural gas through its territory into Europe and accused Russian forces of interfering. According to RIA Novosti, sanctions imposed on EuRoPol GAZ, the parent company of Gazprom, led the business to halt shipments. Europe is currently experiencing the biggest energy crisis in years. After 11 months of Ukraine war, Russia has given indication to resume the energy supply to Europe. According to Russia's Deputy Prime Minister Alexander Novak, who spoke to the Russian state news agency TASS on December 25, 2022, Russia is prepared to restore gas deliveries to Europe via the Yamal-Europe gas pipeline and it can also send supplies to Pakistan and Afghanistan in the long term. "The European market remains relevant, as the gas shortage persists, and we have every opportunity to resume supplies. For example, the Yamal-Europe pipeline, which was stopped for political reasons, remains unused, and" Novak said, "The increased demand for Russian gas cannot be ignored" "Today, we can confidently say that there is a demand for our gas. Therefore, we continue to consider Europe as a potential market for the sale of our products. It is clear that a large-scale campaign was launched against us, which ended with acts of sabotage against Nord Stream," he said. These remarks are the most glaring proof yet that Russia is trying to put pressure on Europe to ease the economic sanctions imposed as retaliation for its invasion of Ukraine so that the taps may be switched back on over the winter. The overall supplies in November 2022 were 1.86 Bcm, compared to 10.09 Bcm in November 2021, revealing the magnitude of Russian supply restrictions. Traditional war is an expensive option and states lose economically even though they win it militarily. Russian eagerness to resume the gas

and oil supply and explore Eastern opportunities along with western demands is obvious. And here we can find its convergence of interest with Pakistan. Because of its energy crisis and high inflation, Pakistan is looking for cheaper and easily accessible options to manage the supply and demand of oil and gas for local consumers. In this regard, Moscow urged that Pakistan first honor its pledge to the Pakistan Stream Gas Pipeline (PSGP), the main project, which would be built from Karachi to Lahore, Punjab. The Pakistani government's response included a revision in the PSGP project's model. The Russian side claimed that, with the exception of a few ownership agreement elements, the project's GtG (government-to-government) model had already been decided upon. The Pakistan Stream gas project, also known as the North-South gas pipeline, is a long-delayed gas pipeline that is crucial to the economy of the south Asian nation. It is decided to be constructed in association with Russian companies. In order to transport imported Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) from Karachi on the Arabian Sea coast to power plants in the northeastern state of Punjab, the two states decided to construct a 1,100 km (683 miles) pipeline in 2015. Two important gas-related projects—the Pakistan Gas Stream Project and the Iranian offshore gas pipeline—have proved difficult for Pakistan to implement. These two projects have been in the works between Pakistan and Russia for a number of years, but have been stalled by US disapproval. The pipeline was initially to be built by Russia under the build, own, operate, and transfer (BOOT) model. According to this proposal, Moscow would finance 85% of the project and hand it over to Inter State Gas Systems (ISGS) of Pakistan after 25 years. RT Global was chosen by Russia, while ISGS was chosen by Pakistan to assist in making the initiative a reality. The US placed sanctions on RT Global not long after both states decided to forward with the venture. Later, Russia selected a number of companies to begin the project's construction. However, there hasn't been any progress to date. The framework of the gas pipeline project was altered during the rule of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), and the two states signed an agreement saying that Pakistani com-

panies would have 76% of the shares and Russia would keep the remaining 24%. The PGSP is not the only one in Pakistan, another collaboration pact was struck by Gazprom and the Pakistani Oil and Gas Development Company Limited (OGDCL) in 2017. In accordance with the agreement, Pakistan and Russia agreed to examine the possibility of supplying gas to Pakistan and other countries as well as to build hydrocarbon projects there and in other countries. A \$10 billion agreement was inked by Gazprom and Pakistan in 2018 to perform a feasibility study for the construction of an offshore pipeline between Iran and Pakistan. The North-South Pipeline Project and underground gas storage facilities in Pakistan were promised investments totaling \$14 billion by the Russian side back in 2019. These decisions are further influenced by other market actors. Pakistan receives significant amounts of oil from Kuwait and Saudi Arabia. Saudi Arabia supplies Pakistan with crude oil, whereas Kuwait supplies refined petroleum products. Some of the goods are arranged through spot cargo. Qatar has controlled the gas market in Pakistan while Saudi Arabia and Kuwait have dominated the oil market. According to authorities, "under this circumstance, Pakistan and Russia might have an energy agreement that would assist strengthen the strategic relationship between the two states." In order to provide the Pakistani delegation with virtual support while they are in Russia for negotiations, the government has also established a high-level committee made up of heads of oil corporations, primarily from the government sector. Another step is that Moscow intends to prepare a presidential order prohibiting Russian traders and corporations from selling oil to states that participate in the system to cap the price of Russian oil. In this case, Pakistan cannot trade oil with Russia if it is relying on receiving a No Objection Certificate (NOC) from the US. An oil and gas trade agreement is being negotiated between Islamabad and Moscow at a time when energy projects between the two states have been put on hold because of the conflict in Ukraine. Other participants are the US and the KSA, Kuwait, and Qatar.

—The writer is PhD Scholar in International Relations

The menace lurking in Palestine's beautiful green spaces

Jalal Abukhater

In recent years, however, Palestinian families visiting this forested space for picnics and nature walks started to be harassed and pushed out by armed settlers backed by Israeli soldiers. According to locals, the harassment began some four years ago, after settlers established an illegal "farm outpost" in the area. The outpost, called Havat Zvi, is supposedly for cattle herding but, in practice, serves to keep Palestinian locals and visitors from freely accessing the green spaces of Jibiya. Over the past few years, a few incidents of settler violence in Jibiya's forest made it into Israeli newspapers.

To the northwest of Ramallah, near the village of Jibiya, there is a large, green space that has long provided Palestinians living in the area a rare escape from the hustle and bustle of the dense population centres of the occupied West Bank. In recent years, however, Palestinian families visiting this forested space for picnics and nature walks started to be harassed and pushed out by armed settlers backed by Israeli soldiers. According to locals, the harassment began some four years ago, after settlers established an illegal "farm outpost" in the area. The outpost, called Havat Zvi, is supposedly for cattle herding but, in practice, serves to keep Palestinian locals and visitors from freely accessing the green spaces of Jibiya. Over the past few years, a few incidents of settler violence in Jibiya's forest made it into Israeli newspapers. In February 2021, Haaretz reported on a Palestinian family with Israeli citizenship being ejected from the area by soldiers after facing harassment from settlers. A few weeks later, a similar incident was reported where settlers harassed another Palestinian family, demanded to see their ID cards despite having no authority to do so, and pressured them to leave. In October of the same year, my friend Noor was targeted by settlers as she tried to enjoy a Friday picnic with three others in the forest. She told me that, just as they started eating, a settler emerged from the bushes, pointed an assault rifle at them, and demanded they "leave immediately". She said the settler followed them for six whole minutes, with his rifle pointed at them, as they rushed out of the forest. And last year, after reading and hearing stories like these for months, I got to experience the menace lurking in Jibiya's beautiful green spaces myself. In late November, I travelled to Jibiya with a group of journalists and volunteers to assist and document a Palestinian farmer's olive harvest. Less than half an hour after the olive picking began, eight armed settlers, backed up by four Israeli soldiers, surrounded us. The settlers accused us of "causing trouble" by attending the harvest and demanded that we leave. As they failed to make us move from the land officially owned by the farmer

accompanying us, the masked settlers went up a hill and started throwing stones at us. They also smashed parked vehicles belonging to farmers, journalists and volunteers who came there for the harvest. As I sought cover from the stones thrown by settlers, I fell off a ledge and impaled my leg on a metal rod. Thankfully, I managed to reach my car and escape the scene without sustaining more serious injuries. I later learned that a total of 11 vehicles were seriously damaged by settlers that day. It is important to note that Israeli soldiers were present throughout the masked settlers' attack on us. They chose not to intervene because they were clearly there not to keep the peace, but to provide cover for the violent, immoral and illegal actions of the settlers. Indeed, settlers who reside in so-called "farm outposts" like Havat Zvi and try to push Palestinians out do not act alone. Their actions are fully supported by the Israeli state and its armed forces. B'Tselem detailed how Israel allows settlers to live on farmland stolen from Palestinians to legitimise and expand its illegal settlement enterprise in a 2021 report titled State Business: Israel's misappropriation of land in the West Bank through settler violence. The report explains how these farm outposts, despite being unauthorised under Israeli law, thrive with the help of Israeli authorities. "Israel has ordered the military to defend the outposts or paid for their security, paved roads, and laid down water and electricity infrastructure for most of them," the report states. "It has provided support through various government ministries, the Settlement Division of the World Zionist Organization and regional councils in the West Bank." Since 2010, at least 65 illegal "farm outposts" have been set up in various locations across the West Bank. And, according to the B'Tselem report, just four of these outposts took more than 20,866 dunams (2,086 hectares) of Palestinian land between 2016 and 2021, by "employing systemic violence and terror", aided and protected by the Israeli military. In February 2021, in an incident that is emblematic of settler and state behaviour, residents of the illegally constructed Sde Ephraim farm outpost in the occupied West Bank shot and killed an unarmed Palestinian man local to

the area. Settlers claimed the man they killed, named Khaled Nofal, trespassed onto their (illegally occupied) land and tried to break into their home. Despite there not being any evidence of an attack beyond the testimonies of the settlers, the military quickly accepted the break-in story and branded Nofal, a tax clerk for the Palestinian Authority and father of a four-year-old girl, a "terrorist". There has not been any further investigation into the incident and the settlers who shot Nofal in cold blood remain free to this day. Last Friday, Israel's parliament swore in Benjamin Netanyahu as prime minister, inaugurating the country's most far-right, religiously conservative government to date. Under this new extremist government, settlers are expected to speed up their continuous theft of Palestinian lands and attacks on Palestinian locals. Indeed, to convince Itamar Ben-Gvir's Jewish Power Party to take part in his coalition, Netanyahu promised the new government would legalise (under Israeli law) dozens of illegally established outposts within its first 60 days in power. Furthermore, he agreed to hand over Israel's administration of the West Bank to another far-right partner, Bezalel Smotrich's Religious Zionism, which seeks not only to legalise all outposts but also to stop all Palestinian construction in Area C of the occupied West Bank. All this means that under the new government, we will likely witness not only the formation of many new "farm outposts" but also an unprecedented increase in the demolition of new and old Palestinian properties in the occupied West Bank. The beautiful forests and fields of Jibiya are symbolic of what Israel has stolen and continues to steal from us, Palestinians. Violent settlers, who feel entitled not only to our lands and properties but also to our lives, are constantly growing in number and power thanks to the support they receive from Israel's occupation forces. They are hell-bent on taking everything that is ours and confining us to dense, suffocating population centres that serve as prisons. But they will not win. The fields, forests, rivers and lands of Palestine are our home and we are not going anywhere – no matter how menacing the settlers, or the state that feeds them.

—Courtesy: Al Jazeera

Briefs

Govt trying to hold peace talks with TTP

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government in order to make them more effective. The minister said that the forum had also discussed setting up of a national body for coordinating with the various CTDs in an effort to make them more efficient. At the same time, Sanaullah said that efforts were underway to bring the outlawed TTP to the negotiation table but the group would first have to set aside arms and surrender before the law and the Constitution. He said Pakistan needed to deal with the situation in such a manner as to keep the TTP at the "lowest level" and keep the number of terrorist incidents to a minimum. "You will see the decisions that were made in regards to this being implemented in the coming days."

TTP issues threat...

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adding that by doing so "he openly declared war against TTP". "Although Bilawal sir is still young, this poor man has not yet witnessed the state of war," the statement added. The TTP further said that Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has also "pushed the whole party into this war going against TTP for the sake of pleasing the US". Without taking any names, the TTP also gave a message to the religious leadership and said that there is no scope for action against them in TTP's policy, "but we also request you to refrain from activities against us".

Dar terms PTI's white..

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He further said that the PTI never tried to control the prices of commodities. Quoting reports of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), Dar said that the economic growth rate this year will be 2.7%. Dar said that the budget deficit when they left in 2018 was at 5.8%. But towards the end of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) tenure, it had swelled to 7.6%. Addressing a news conference along with other members of the federal cabinet in Islamabad, he said that the economic growth rate in 2018 was 6.1%, but during the PTI tenure, it had shrunk to 1.5%. Sharing the breakdown, Dar said the economic growth rate was 3.12% in the first year of PTI. Reality check on inflation The finance minister said that the inflation was at 4.7% at the end of 2018. But it ballooned during the first year of PTI tenure to 7.3%. The interest rate in 2018 was 7.5%, and in July 2019, the interest rate rose to 13.25%.

Imran Khan attacked...

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was premeditated with the intention to kill him and instigate hatred. "Imran Khan spoke openly about the attacks on himself in two [PTI] gatherings," he said, reminding about the assassination of ex-prime minister Liaquat Ali Khan on October 16, 1951. Commenting on the injuries sustained by Khan and the amount of bullets fired at the attack site, Fawad said: "Imran Khan received eight wounds, there among those are bullet wounds. Fourteen bullets were found on the ground, 12 from one place, and two from another, while nine bullets were found from a building opposite [the attack site] of which seven were at one place and two at another."

Putin sends hypersonic missiles...

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armed with Zircon (Tsirkon) hypersonic weapons. "This time the ship is equipped with the latest hypersonic missile system - 'Zircon'," said Putin. "I am sure that such powerful weapons will reliably protect Russia from potential external threats." The weapons, Putin said, had "no analogues in any country in the world".

Khamenei slams West's fake support for women's rights

Men, therefore, have priority over women in terms of capitalism because they can earn more money than women, Ayatollah Khamenei argued



NEWS DESK

TEHRAN: Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei has roundly dismissed the Western governments' bogus advocacy for women's rights, stress-

ing that fake gestures come despite the fact that women and girls are subjected to different forms of abuse. Ayatollah Khamenei made the remarks in the Iranian capital city of Tehran on Wednesday as he addressed a group of Iranian women in the run-up to the cel-

ebrations commemorating the birthday anniversary of Hazrat Fatemeh Zahra (SA), the beloved daughter of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). "The absolute brazenness of the West comes into sight when it presents itself as the forerunner of advocacy for women's right, whilst

it is responsible for flurries of blows dealt to the dignity and prestige of women. This could be explained as utter shamelessness.

He stated that one would feel deeply ashamed to know about last year's social movement, in which Western women publicized their experiences of sexual abuse or sexual harassment.

"This is what they suggest by women's rights and freedom. This is by no means freedom, but rather utter slavery," the Leader said.

The Leader went on to say that the intermingling of men and women in Western societies, contrary to the propagated notion, has failed to diminish men's sex drive, and has instead amplified the latter's lust, and women and girls are sexually harassed on streets, workplaces, educational centers and even in military facilities. "Sex trade, sexual slavery, violation of all moral and humanitarian principles, and legalization of issues that are forbidden in all divine religions" are now widely prevalent across the West, Ayatollah Khamenei pointed out.

He noted that Western women are being "alienated," describing the Western capitalist system as a patriarchal one. The Leader also

criticized Western capitalism, saying people's capital has more value than humanity in the economic and political system. Men, therefore, have priority over women in terms of capitalism because they can earn more money than women, Ayatollah Khamenei argued. The Leader of the Islamic Revolution also underlined the importance of employing efficient, experienced, knowledgeable, and wise women at various levels of Iran's decision-making apparatus and expressed his satisfaction over the high number of women scholars and scientists in the Islamic Republic. Ayatollah Khamenei also pointed to motherhood and home-lovingness as the two main and primary roles of each and every woman. The Leader of the Islamic Revolution highlighted that caring and reformist thinkers have voiced serious concerns over family disintegration in Western countries, but the problem is getting complicated so quickly that nothing could be done either to stop or remedy it. He described hijab as a religious and inevitable duty for all Muslim women, emphasizing that no Iranian woman should be labeled as non-religious or anti-revolutionary if she fails to fully honor the obligation.

Real Madrid advance to Spanish Cup last 16

MADRID: Rodrygo scored the only goal and celebrated by paying tribute to Pele as Real Madrid advanced to the Spanish Cup last 16 on Tuesday with a hard-fought 1-0 win over fourth-tier Cacereno. The Brazilian broke the deadlock after 69 minutes beating two defenders to fire in and celebrated by jumping with an upward fist, the way football great and compatriot Pele used to celebrate his goals. Pele's funeral was held Tuesday in Brazil after his death last week at age 82. Madrid made their Cup debut in the round of 32 and coach Carlo Ancelotti rested star players including Karim Benzema for the trip to the western Extremadura side who had ousted top flight Girona in the previous round. On Tuesday, Valencia, Villarreal and Espanyol also advanced to the last 16. Espanyol eliminated Celta Vigo 3-1 after extra time in the only top-flight duel, after the match ended 1-1 following regular time. Sergi Darder scored Espanyol's second with Nico Melamed bagging the winner with two minutes to go after Celta lost Argentine goalkeeper Agustín Marchesini to a second yellow card. First division sides Rayo Vallecano and Getafe were eliminated by second division teams Sporting Gijón (2-0) and Levante (3-2) respectively. Valencia eased past La Nucía 3-0 in a regional derby with Justin Kluivert opening the scoring after three minutes.—APP

Mardan, Peshawar secure win in PM Youth Talent Hunt

PESHAWAR: Spirited Mardan and strong Peshawar recorded opening day victory in the Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif Youth Women Talent Hunt Hockey League which got underway here at Abdul Wali Khan Sports Complex on Wednesday. Former national athlete Mariyyah Samin, Deputy Director Shaheed Benazir Bhutto Women University formally inaugurated the Championship with representative and Assistant Project Manager Higher Education Commissioner (HEC) Ifthikhar Alam. Teams from Bannu, Mardan, Peshawar,

Swat and Hazara are taking part in the event which will continue till January 10. In the opening match, Mardan defeated Hazara by 3-0 in which Nida, Mehaq and Asma scored one goal each in the 45th, 59th and 66th minute on the field attempt. Both Mardan and Hazara tied the tally till the end of the first two quarters but these were the two last quarters in which Mardan kept up the pressure and scored three goals. Hazara team members played well but their front line missed some sure goals and thus giving opportunities to the Mardan team to strike back.

The Hazara goal-keeper Muqadas was the pick of the pack who saved some sure goal chances. Muqadas Jadoon was also declared as the best player of the match. In the second match, Peshawar defeated Swat by 2-0, Momina and Malika scored one goal each against Swat. The Swat team tried their hardest to level the match but failed and thus Peshawar won the match by 2-0. Muhammad Waseem, Muhammad Ali supervised the match while Qazi Najum and Kaleem Ullah acted as field judges. Earlier, the two-day Prime Minister of Pakistan Muhammad Sheh-

baz Sharif Youth Talent Hunt Program Girls' Hockey training and coaching camp under qualified coaches concluded at the same venue of the Astro-Turf of the Abdul Wali Sports Complex, Charsadda. A total of 125 selected girls players from Hazara, Malakand, Mardan, Bannu and Peshawar Division attended the camp. Adviser to the Prime Minister on Sports, Youth, Culture and Political Affairs for Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Engr Amir Muqam, Directorate General Sports Higher Education Commission (HEC), Directorate Sports Shaheed Benazir Bhutto.—APP

Medvedev breezes through in Adelaide but Sabalenka made to scrap

SPORT DESK

ADELAIDE: Former world number one Daniil Medvedev locked in an all-Russian Adelaide International quarter-final with Karen Khachanov on Wednesday, while Aryna Sabalenka stormed back to book her place in the last eight. Medvedev, runner-up at the last two Australian Opens, blew away the new year cobwebs with a 6-0, 6-3 romp over Serbian Miomir Kecmanovic. It came a day after the 2021 US Open champion had to save nine set points against first-round opponent Lorenzo Sonego before the Italian retired hurt. "I think it was a great match. Mimir is a tough opponent, a high-ranked player so there are no easy guys left in Adelaide," third seed Medvedev said of the 29th-ranked Serb. "I'm not sure there were any (easy opponents) from the first round, so really happy to be through, happy with my level." The



world number seven dropped just 12 points in a whirlwind 28-minute opening set before closing out the match comfortably. Next up is eighth seed Khachanov, who eased past Britain's Jack Draper 6-4, 6-2. Rising Japanese star Yoshihito Nishioaka also went through. Having dispatched

fifth seed Holger Rune in the first round, he backed up to beat American Mackenzie McDonald 6-4, 6-3. His reward is a last eight clash with qualifier Alexei Popyrin. The Australian, who stunned second seed Felix Auger-Aliassime on Monday, defeated American Marcos Giron 4-6, 6-4, 6-3. World number five

Sabalenka came back from 15 down in the first set to fight past dogged Russian Liudmila Samsonova 7-6 (10/8), 7-6 (7/3) and make the quarter-finals. She will meet Marketa Vondrousova for a place in the last four after the Czech player's dominant 6-0, 6-4 dismissal of Estonian Kaia Kanepi.

Djokovic set to miss major US tournaments

NEW YORK: Novak Djokovic is set to miss Indian Wells and the Miami Open after the United States extended its requirement for international visitors to be vaccinated against Covid-19. Proof of vaccination will be required to enter the country until at least 10 April but Serbia's Djokovic has previously said he is unvaccinated. Indian Wells and the Miami Open - two of the most prestigious tournaments on the tennis calendar outside the Grand Slams - start on 6 and 20 March respectively. Former world number one Djokovic, 35, is currently in Australia - 12 months after he was deported from the country before the Australian Open because of his vaccination status. Australia dropped its vaccine requirements in July and Djokovic's three-year visa ban was overturned in November. He is through to the second round of the Adelaide International as he continues his build-up to the Australian Open, the first major of the season, which starts on 16 January. Djokovic is a nine-time champion in Melbourne and is just one Grand Slam title shy of Rafael Nadal's men's record of 22. Speaking about his 2022 experience in Australia, in which he was detained and forced to stay at an immigration hotel, he said: "You can't forget those events. It's one of these things that sticks with you, it stays with you for I guess the rest of your life. "It was something that I've never experienced before, and hopefully never again." Analysis BBC tennis correspondent Russell Fuller The back-to-back tournaments in Indian Wells and Miami are not only extremely prestigious, but also often an important staging post to the three summer Grand Slams. It is possible Djokovic's absence from these events last year contributed to his quarter-final defeat by Rafael Nadal at Roland Garros, although there was the added complication of not being able to play in Australia either. Djokovic could possibly return to world number one by winning the Australian Open.—APP

Will North and South Korea tensions get even worse?

SÉBASTIAN SEIBT

South Korea called for joint nuclear exercises with the US on Monday, following another round of North Korean ballistic missile tests that capped a record-breaking 2022. Will tensions between the two Koreas escalate to the breaking point in 2023? After a year marked by repeated North Korean missile tests, the start of 2023 is looking an awful lot like 2022 - with Pyongyang conducting yet another short-range missile test on January 1. This came after North Korea closed the year with three tests on New Year's Eve. North Korean leader Kim Jong-un called on Sunday for an "exponential" increase in the country's nuclear arsenal this year, including by mass producing nuclear-tipped missiles. In his speech, the North Korean dictator also explicitly described South Korea as a "target". This is

very telling, said Christoph Bluth, an expert on the two Koreas at the University of Bradford, because Pyongyang historically avoided the term because it needed to maintain the idea of the "re-unification of two brotherly peoples". Several events from the past few days show that "we are in a very worrying situation" when it comes to North Korea, said Danilo delle Fave, an associate researcher at the International Team for the Study of Security in Verona. The first such event was North Korea sending five drones into South Korean airspace on December 27, defying Seoul's air defence system. "North Korea wanted to prove that it could demonstrate success in this field - which its southern neighbour hasn't yet done, even though South Korea has a technological advantage," Bluth said. Then South Korean President Yoon Seok-yeol gave an interview with newspaper

Chosun Ilbo published on Monday, in which he said that the US's "nuclear umbrella" and "extended deterrence" no longer suffice to reassure South Koreans. Yoon startled many observers by calling for joint nuclear exercises with the US. "This doesn't mean that Seoul is planning to acquire nuclear weapons in the near future," Bluth said. But, in any case, joint nuclear exercises with the US would be an "unprecedented step" for Seoul as well as for Washington, delle Fave pointed out. Such exercises would consist of simulating a North Korean nuclear attack and preparing for a response, "both conventional and nuclear", delle Fave said. The US would teach its ally how to support it in conducting a nuclear counter-attack on North Korea with US weapons from South Korean soil. "It would be the first time that a non-NATO

country [Washington classifies South Korea as a major non-NATO ally] has been trained to handle nuclear weapons," delle Fave added. According to Chosun Ilbo, Washington is open to the prospect - although the Biden administration has refused to confirm this officially, Reuters reported. When reporters at the White House asked US President Joe Biden if there were any ongoing discussions between the US and South Korea on joint nuclear exercises, Biden said no. However, the mere prospect of such exercises sends a signal to Pyongyang. Raising the prospect is a way of "making North Korea understand that in the event of a bombing on their part, there could very well be a nuclear retaliation, even if South Korea itself does not have any nuclear weapons", Bluth put it. It is also a way of applying pressure on

Kim's weak spot. "One of the North Korean regime's greatest fears is that its southern neighbour will acquire nuclear capabilities," delle Fave said. In this case, joint exercises with the US would allow Seoul to pull off something paradoxical - flexing its nuclear muscles while remaining officially committed to nuclear non-proliferation. The announcement is part of a broader change of tack enacted by Yoon Seok-yeol's conservative government, which took power in May 2022. "Yoon's government has made a complete break with his liberal predecessor's diplomatic openness towards the North; and the current escalation of tensions is in part the result of this much more hawkish stance towards Pyongyang," delle Fave said. Yoon has even indicated that he intends to designate North Korea as an "enemy" country in a white paper on national security, after that official label was ditched in 2018. Pyong-

yang, meanwhile, has been stuck since the 2018 summit with then US president Donald Trump, Bluth said. "[Trump's then national security advisor] John Bolton laid down the principle that North Korea had to completely get rid of its nuclear programme before any easing of sanctions - and Pyongyang absolutely could not accept that." Faced with the Trump administration's hawkish approach to North Korea, followed by the Biden administration's focus on Russia and China instead, Pyongyang chose to "increase the pressure on South Korea, in the hope that Seoul would push its American ally to soften its position towards Pyongyang", Bluth said. But this was a miscalculation on Kim's part, Bluth continued. "Yoon is not reacting at all as Kim expected - instead, he's pushing Washington to become more military involved in the region," he put it.

Source—France 24

Shehbaz hopeful of world support...

FROM PAGE 01

Guterres. However, he said the government and people of Pakistan would have to put in their efforts for rehabilitation. He said the government had already distributed Rs100 billion among the affected people through BISP but a lot more funds were still needed to pay compensation for one million houses destroyed by the flood and many people were yet awaiting assistance for their rehabilitation. The prime minister, who earlier unveiled the plaque of the newly built smart school building, announced to develop the facility at par with the Danish Schools of Punjab. He committed to inaugurate the upgraded school on March 23, to be equipped with IT facilities like e-library, hostel, solar energy and playgrounds. He also announced the construction of 12 Danish Schools across Balochistan to provide equal educational facilities to the poor children of the province. The prime minister highly applauded the performance of the government officers and provincial leadership for completing the school building within two months and also announced Tamgha-e-Khidmat award for three officers including chief secretary and secretary of education. The prime minister said the coalition parties inherited a country with a breached IMF agreement, skyrocketing oil prices and reduced wheat production. He said the previous government failed to purchase gas when it was the cheapest in the international market and the incumbent government had to spend \$27 billion for oil import.

Climate Resilient moot on Jan 9

FROM PAGE 01

the Conference, and seek international support and long-term partnerships for its implementation. The 4RF document outlines a prioritized and sequential Plan, defined at the Federal and Provincial levels, and includes the financial mechanism and institutional arrangements for its execution in an open, transparent and collaborative manner. The Conference programme will feature a high-level opening segment, to be co-chaired by the Prime Minister and the UN Secretary General, followed by the official launch of the 4RF document and partner support announcements. The Prime Minister and the UN Secretary General will also hold a joint press stakeout. At the Conference, the Prime Minister will outline Pakistan's vision for rehabilitating the affected population and reconstructing the damaged infrastructure in a resilient manner, with the support of development partners, and the country's transition towards a more dynamic and sustainable economic development model. Federal Ministers from Pakistan will elaborate on the 4RF document and also present Pakistan's long-term plan for building climate resilience and adaptation. The perspectives of the four provinces will be articulated by their representatives.

Imran moves LHC against...

FROM PAGE 01

Toshakhana reference. Last month, the ECP initiated proceedings to strip PTI chief Imran Khan of his party's chairmanship following his disqualification in the Toshakhana reference.

Pak slams Israeli...

FROM PAGE 01

Israel must cease its illegal actions and respect the sanctity of Muslim religious sites in the occupied Palestinian territories. Pakistan reiterates its strong support for the legitimate struggle of the Palestinian people. Pakistan renews its call for a viable, independent and contiguous Palestinian State, with pre-1967 borders, and Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital, in accordance with the relevant United Nations and OIC resolutions.

Briefs

Germany misses 2022 climate target

FRANKFURT: Germany used more renewable energy than ever in 2022 but again failed to reach its CO2-reduction goal as Russia's war in Ukraine prompted a return to more coal and oil use, a think tank reported Wednesday. Europe's biggest economy emitted 761 million tonnes of greenhouse gases last year, just one tonne fewer than in 2021 and overshooting the target of 756 million tonnes, the energy think tank Agora Energiewende said in a statement. "CO2 emissions are stagnating at a high level, despite significantly lower energy consumption by households and industry," said Agora's Germany director Simon Mueller. "This is an alarm signal with regard to climate targets," he added. The German government had aimed to reduce carbon dioxide emissions by 40 percent by 2020 compared with 1990 levels, but has yet to achieve the feat. For 2022, Germany managed a 39-percent reduction from 1990 levels, Agora calculated. The setback comes despite a record 4.7 percent drop in energy consumption last year, partly in response to soaring fuel prices because of the war in Ukraine. But the energy saving gains were wiped out by the government's decision to burn more coal and oil to make up for the loss of Russian natural gas deliveries, Agora said. The turn to fossil fuels also overshadowed another milestone: renewables accounted for 46 percent of Germany's power supply mix last year, an all-time high. The increase was mainly down to favourable weather conditions for wind and solar power, Agora said. — Agencies

19 killed in central Somalia car bombings

MOGADISHU: Nineteen people have been killed in twin car bombings in central Somalia claimed by Al-Shabaab, a local militia commander in the Hiran region said. Two cars packed with explosives were simultaneously detonated in Mahas, a town in Hiran where a major offensive was launched last year against the Al-Qaeda-linked militant group. The attack was claimed by Al-Shabaab, which has been waging a years-long insurgency against the fragile central government, according to the SITE monitoring group. "Nineteen people, including members of the security forces and civilians, died in the blasts," said Mohamed Moalim Adan, a leader of a community militia allied with the government in Mahas. Abdikarim Hassan, a traditional elder in Mahas, said "nearly 20 people died in the blasts" and most were civilians. — APP

Greece urges solution to drug shortages

GREECE: Greece has called on the EU to devise a common solution to drug shortages that have hit multiple member states, the country's health minister said on Wednesday. Speaking to public broadcaster ERT, Health Minister Thanos Plevris said he addressed European Commissioner for Health and Food Security Stella Kyriakidou in a letter on possible solutions to the shortage. Noting that Greece introduced a series of measures on Tuesday to tackle the problem, he stressed the importance of finding a common solution. As an example, Plevris suggested that the centralized import and distribution of raw materials used in the pharmaceutical industry could serve as an immediate solution. He added that the EU should take steps to support the European drug industry as the crisis showed that the bloc could not depend solely on raw material imports from Asia. Plevris added that amid an ongoing outbreak of the flu and other upper respiratory infections, the current high demand for drugs used against them would ease as temperatures rise with the passing of winter, thus normalizing the market. — APP



QUETTA: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif interacting with the students after inaugurating the new building of Govt. Boys Secondary School, Ghulam Rasool, Jia Khan in Sohbatpur.—APP

Armenian statement on Lachin protests 'baseless'

Armenia still pursuing continued illegal economic, other activities on Azerbaijan's territory in wake of 2020 conflict over Karabakh, say Baku

FOREIGN DESK

BAKU: The statement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Armenia dated January 3, 2023 regarding the peaceful protest on the Lachin-Khankendi road, passing near Shusha, is completely unfounded and is aimed at causing bewilderment of international partners on this issue by artificially exacerbating the situation, Trend reports citing the Azerbaijani Foreign Ministry's Press Service. "It is not surprising that the Armenian Foreign Ministry makes distorted statements on the peaceful protests of Azerbaijani civil society representatives against plundering of the country's natural resources by Armenia during the 30-year occupation of Azerbaijani territories. Armenia seems to be still interested in continuing illegal economic and other activities in Azerbaijan," the statement said. Since November 2021, the Azerbaijani government has repeatedly sent appeals to suppress illegal economic activities in the area of



Russian peacekeepers' temporary deployment, and tried to resolve the issue for the last time through December 3-10 talks. Despite all these efforts, Armenia, by ignoring the appeals, blocked access to the relevant structures and attempted to continue illicit activities. All these actions resulted in a rightful protest of the Azerbaijani public, demanding these activities to stop, the ministry added.

"Each statement directed against these protests is a violation of the international law principles, such as the sovereignty, territorial integrity of Azerbaijan, as well as disrespect for the Constitution of the country,

and the rights of the protesters, which envisages that Azerbaijan owns all natural resources located on its territory," the statement noted. However, claims on the alleged blockade of the Lachin-Khankendi road and "humanitarian crisis" are baseless. The free daily movement of passenger cars, medical vehicles of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the peacekeeping contingent is indisputable. Moreover, the government of Azerbaijan and representatives of civil society declared their readiness to promptly resolve all humanitarian needs facing Armenian residents, said the ministry. "Despite

statements of Azerbaijan on the Lachin-Khankendi road's availability for intended use following the trilateral statement, provocateurs posing as representatives of the Armenians living in Karabakh dissuade the population from using the road, which proves once again that such people, giving a false impression of a peaceful protest, are pursuing the goal of continuing their illegal and heinous actions," the press service stated. As for the accusations of violating the trilateral declaration, Azerbaijani MFA reminds the Armenian side that, illegal extraction and transportation of natural resources from the territory of Azerbaijan, the continuation of military supplies to the Armenian armed forces, which have not yet been fully withdrawn from Azerbaijan, the strengthening of the mine threat by transporting mines across the Lachin road and installing them on the territory of Azerbaijan, illegal transit of citizens third countries, according to this document, also signed by the leader of Armenia, are unacceptable and a gross violation of the terms of the trilateral statement. "Despite the manipulative campaign of the Arme-

nian Foreign Ministry in connection with the meeting of the UN Security Council on December 20, 2022, it can be said that almost all UN Security Council member states have called for the fulfillment of obligations under the trilateral declaration, as well as mutual recognition and respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, thereby strengthening the position of Azerbaijan and not by supporting provocations by Armenia. Armenia's calls to send any mission to the territory of Azerbaijan are regarded as another provocation against the sovereignty and territorial integrity of our country and this should be put to an end," the ministry said. The accusation of Azerbaijan by the Armenian MFA of deportation and ethnic cleansing, besides being absurd, is also a futile attempt to conceal the systematic and consistent policy of ethnic cleansing against Azerbaijanis on the territory of Armenia and Azerbaijan, carried out by Armenians throughout the 20th century. Historical facts are both territorial claims that broke out once again in 1987, deportation.

EU envoy calls for maintaining status quo at Al-Aqsa

NEWS DESK

RAMALLAH: The EU Middle East peace envoy on Tuesday called for maintaining the status quo at



East Jerusalem's flashpoint Al-Aqsa Mosque complex. Tension escalated across the Palestinian territories early Tuesday when Israeli National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir visited the Al-Aqsa complex despite warnings that it could stoke tension. The EU's Sven Koopmans tweeted that the "internationally agreed" status quo on the holy sites in Jerusalem along with Jordan's custodianship over

these sites "are essential to regional peace, stability and the equilibrium between the major religions in Jerusalem." The status quo allows Muslims to worship at the Al-Aqsa complex and followers of other religions to visit the site. Ben-Gvir's visit triggered a storm of Palestinian and international condemnations, including from the US, Jordan, Türkiye, Qatar, and Saudi Arabia. In the face of growing condemnations of the visit, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said Tuesday he is committed to the status quo at the flashpoint site. For Muslims, Al-Aqsa represents the world's third-holiest site. Jews, for their part, call the area the Temple Mount, saying it was the site of two Jewish temples in ancient times.

Israel occupied East Jerusalem, where al-Aqsa is located, during the 1967 Arab-Israeli War. It annexed the entire city in 1980, in a move never recognized by the international community.

UAE, China call for UN Security Council meeting

NEW YORK: The United Arab Emirates and China called Tuesday for a UN Security Council meeting after Israel's far-right National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir entered Al-Aqsa Mosque's courtyards in occupied East Jerusalem amid warnings of unrest. The Council is expected to convene on Thursday, diplomats said. The visit drew fierce condemnation across the world, with the US, Israel's closest ally, expressing deep concern over the recent developments. "We're deeply concerned by any unilateral actions that have the potential to exacerbate tensions precisely because we want to see the opposite happen," State Department spokesman Ned Price said "The United States stands firmly for the preservation of the historic status quo with respect to the holy sites in Jerusalem." He added that any unilateral actions undercutting the status quo are "unacceptable." For Muslims, Al-Aqsa represents the world's third-holiest site. Jews, for their part, call the area the Temple Mount, saying it was the site of two Jewish temples in ancient times. Israel occupied East Jerusalem, where al-Aqsa is located, during the 1967 Arab-Israeli War. It annexed the entire city in 1980 in a move never recognized by the international community.—APP

Yunnan continues contributing for social uplift in Pakistan

The above mentioned initiatives by Yunnan are all set to contribute positively towards all-round development of Pakistan

DNA

CHINA: Yunnan province of China continues its valued contribution for uplift of underprivileged population of Pakistan and for safeguarding the environment of the country. A special ceremony was organized in Islamabad to introduce two initiatives of the province – "Yunnan Pani" and "Go Green Pakistan." Under Yunnan Pani, resident of various localities of Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) have been provided access to clean and safe drinking water through recently installed solar-powered wells / pumps. A sizeable number of people is benefitting from this facility, who earlier lacked it. It has visibly helped in raising their quality of life and reducing their hardships. In case of Go Green Pakistan, the Chinese province is planting over 6000 trees, with a target to ensure long-term survival of over 5000 of them at least, along M-5, in collaboration with National Highway Authority (NHA). This initiative is playing an important role in greening of an area which badly needs tree cover, in interior Sindh. The project was inaugurated by Federal Minister for Communications, Maulana Asad Mahmood, recently. Overseas Representative Office of the province and Yunnan Provincial People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries are playing a leading role in these initiatives. The above mentioned initiatives by Yunnan are all set to contribute positively towards all-round development of Pakistan. The province plans to continue and expand such social impact contributions in future as well.

Pakistani exhibits shine at int'l fair in China

DNA

BEIJING: Pakistani exhibits shined at International Cultural Industry Fair at the 7th Sanya International Cultural Industry Fair (SICIF) held in the coastal city of Sanya, Hainan, China. "Our expectation from this Fair is to get wholesale buyers who can do business with us in the future," said Abdul Basit Khan, CEO of Pak Link Enterprises, while showcasing the high-end Pakistani onyx handicrafts at the fair, according to Gwadar Pro on Wednesday. Scheduled from December 30, 2022 to January 2, 2023, SICIF brought together global "culture+" industry resources and tourism products, highlighting their role in trading and creating an important platform for more cultural exports. In the Pakistan National Pavilion, products with Pakistani characteristics like wood crafts, onyx, cashmere, handmade rugs and shawls shined and attracted a large amount of Chinese visitors. Consul General of Pakistan in Guangzhou, China, Dr. Diyar Khan represented Pakistan in the Fair and introduced Pakistani handicrafts and cultural items at Pakistani stalls and Pakistan's relations with China, particularly the province of Hainan. "Every year Hainan sees millions of people's visit, so we hope that through this window we can display Pakistani products and get good results," Abdul Basit Khan told the reporter, adding that their main goal for the Fair is not just the four days because they can continue to do business with customers they met here.

Last surviving astronaut of Apollo 7 dies

ISTANBUL: Walter Cunningham, the last living astronaut of NASA's first crewed space flight in 1968, has died at the age of 90, the US space agency announced on Tuesday. Cunningham, whose 1968 Apollo 7 mission opened the way for the first human moon landing a few months later in 1969, died on Tuesday morning in Houston, a NASA statement said. "Walt Cunningham was a fighter pilot, physicist, and an entrepreneur – but, above all, he was an explorer. On Apollo 7, the first launch of a crewed Apollo mission, Walt and his crewmates made history, paving the way for the Artemis Generation we see today," NASA Administrator Bill Nelson said. "NASA will always remember his contributions to our nation's space program and sends our condolences to the Cunningham family," Nelson added. Following his death, Cunningham's family also paid tribute to the late astronaut: "We would like to express our immense pride in the life that he lived, and our deep gratitude for the man that he was – a patriot, an explorer, pilot, astronaut, husband, brother, and father. The world has lost another true hero, and we will miss him dearly."

Dozens of Christian graves vandalised in Jerusalem

JERUSALEM: A Jerusalem bishop said Wednesday he was "dismayed" by the desecration of dozens of Christian graves on the edge of the Old City, as police probed the vandalism. Stone graves lay in pieces with crosses toppled at the Protestant cemetery on Mount Zion, where Christians believe Jesus's Last Supper took place. "We discovered that more than 30 tombstones and crosses were smashed to pieces," Hosam Naoum, an Anglican bishop, told journalists at the cemetery. Church authorities said the damage was discovered on Tuesday, while security camera footage from January 1 showed two men or boys vandalising the site while wearing Jewish attire. "These criminal acts were motivated by religious bigotry and hatred against Christians," the Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem said in a statement.—APP

Cluj-Napoca Romania: Europe's fastest growing city

"We brought in the community like two containers with showers and also, we brought Internet for them in the community, so they can search for jobs. Also, we managed to bring a bus for six months, so the access to the work, it's more easy to make."

How do we meet the challenges of work automation? To answer this question, Cluj-Napoca in northwest Romania has set up the "Future of Work" project. This European initiative focuses on three pillars of action: adapting curricula, entrepreneurial training for creators, and helping the most disadvantaged neighborhoods. "I think that automatization needs to be seen as an opportunity, not as a risk. We can create more jobs relying on our creativity as humans," Ovidiu Cimpean says Ovidiu Cimpean, Project Manager Cluj's Future of work project.

Over the last two decades, Cluj became one of the fastest-growing economies for any European city. However, in order to maintain this growth, it realised that it needed to bridge the gap between knowledge and emerging technologies. It is estimated that 49% of the local economy is not up to speed with emerging technologies and automation. The Regional Centre of Excellence for Creative Industries and its three laboratories is one of the first projects to this success. Nearly 240 students practice here every day, adapting their skills to the market and to automation.

Teodora has just found a job with an IT giant IBM thanks to this tailor-made learning programme. "I learned a lot of new emerging technologies like virtual reality, 3D design, game development... I think in the future we will have like a lot of jobs that involve engineering and mostly technology and automatization," she says. The total budget of Cluj's Future of Work project is 5.6 million euros, 80% of which comes from the European cohesion policy and the remaining 20% from the 10 public and private-sector partners. The cultural and creative industry

is one of the driving forces in Cluj. Anadora Lupo says, a metal sculptor, was one of the artists who benefited from ad hoc support for the development of her business, thanks to "culture-entrepreneurs", one of the components of the project. Just five artists were chosen out of 69 applicants. "It completed somehow the need of knowing more about this area and not just in design or our expertise, but also on socializing and entrepreneurial level," Lupo says. Socio-professional inclusion is the third axis of this project which thinks about employment in a 20-

year period. The social divide is visible in Cluj. At Pata-Rât, close to a rubbish dump, more than 2500 people in poor and unhygienic conditions. Tasked with guaranteeing them a better quality of life is Alex Fecetea, a facilitator of the project in this Roma settlement. "We brought in the community like two containers with showers and also, we brought Internet for them in the community, so they can search for jobs. Also, we managed to bring a bus for six months, so the access to the work, it's more easy to make."—APP

Briefs

Pakistan has right to defend itself from terrorism: US

WEB DESK

WASHINGTON: The United States said that Pakistan has a right to defend itself from terrorism as the country has suffered tremendously from terrorist attacks. The statement from the US comes after Interior Minister Rana Sanullah threatened to target the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) militants in Afghanistan if Kabul does not take action to dismantle them. "We're aware of the recent statement by the Pakistani National Security Committee," the US State Department's spokesman Ned Price said, speaking at a weekly press conference in Washington. "The Pakistani people have suffered tremendously from terrorist attacks. Pakistan has a right to defend itself from terrorism." Price said that the US calls on the Taliban to uphold the very commitment they have made to see to it that Afghan soil is never again used as a launchpad for international terrorist attacks. "These are among the very commitments that the Taliban have been unable or unwilling to fulfil to date," he said. The spokesman said that it has been repeatedly said that there will be a response from the United States.

EU to present coordinated response to China Covid

NEWS DESK

BRUSSELS: European Union nations on Wednesday were finalizing a joint response to China's COVID-19 crisis. Over the past week, member states have been implementing their own individual travel restrictions on travelers arriving from China. Beijing has slammed the new rules, such as testing requirements in Italy and France, as "discriminatory" and vowed to impose countermeasures. Chinese government spokesperson Mao Ning said as the EU was fine-tuning its approach that "we sincerely hope that all parties will focus on fighting the epidemic itself, avoid the politicization of COVID." Doctors' groups and airlines have also complained that the disjointed approach was untenable. International Air Transport Association Director General Willie Walsh said that it was "extremely disappointing to see this knee-jerk reinstatement of measures that have proven ineffective over the last three years." "Research undertaken around the arrival of the omicron variant concluded that putting barriers in the way of travel made no difference to the peak spread of infections.

Pakistan's trade with UAE to surpass US\$10.6 b in 2023

"I have been tasked by the political leadership of my country to increase trade, promote business opportunities, between Pakistan and the UAE," Pakistan Ambassador to the UAE says

NEWS DESK

ISLAMABAD: The bilateral trade between Pakistan and United Arab Emirates is expected to grow up to double from the US\$10.6 billion volume achieved in 2021-2022, Pakistan's top diplomat in the UAE said on Wednesday. The last calendar year recorded a US\$10.6 billion in trade "the highest volume Pakistan had in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region," he added.

"The potential is much more. I have been tasked by the political leadership of my country to increase trade, promote business opportunities, investment and elevate cultural interaction between Pakistan and the UAE," Pakistan Ambassador to the UAE Faisal Niaz Tirmizi said in an interview with Emirates News Agency. The Ambassador said that the UAE and Pakistan were enjoying historic relations. "Pakistan was the first country to send its ambassador six months before the formation of the UAE. "We sent our economic, agriculture, and defence advisors way before that," Tirmizi said. "Pakistanis consider the UAE their second



home and vice versa. The close geographical proximity between the two countries gives a great opportunity to work together," he further stated. Around 1.6 million Pakistanis are residing in the UAE and during 2020-2021, they sent \$6.11 billion in remittances. The Ambassador confirmed that Pakistan has started negotiations on the Comprehensive Economic Part-

nership Agreement (CEPA) with the UAE and hoped to have significant progress by the year's end. "Yes, we are working on this, it is very important. The Ministry of Commerce of Pakistan is in touch with the relevant authorities in the UAE and hopefully, we will make some significant progress on this agreement before 2023." The UAE is the biggest trading partner of Pakistan in the MENA region, he said, adding that CEPA would provide an opportunity for the two countries to increase their bilateral trade many folds. The Ambassador highlighted three sectors namely Fintech, IT, and Startups, where Pakistan and the UAE can further collaborate. "Last year, our exports increased to US\$3 billion in these sectors. We have skilled manpower and new startups. I will be focusing very closely on this, because I think there are immense opportunities between the UAE and Pakistan to further collaborate."

Ambassador Tirmizi said that the UAE was the most generous country that provided humanitarian relief to flood-affected areas in Pakistan, thanking President Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, for his noble gestures. The UAE established an air bridge to transport

humanitarian aid to the people affected by the unprecedented floods. "They have sent over 70 flights carrying relief items," he said. "This was critical for those people affected by the floods." The ambassador said that the UAE has taken a lead in climate change as it is hosting COP28 in November 2023, and has the headquarters of IRENA, which is an intergovernmental organisation supporting countries in their transition to sustainable energy. "Climate change is something that is really impacting the lives and livelihood of so many people," he noted, adding that Pakistan is only contributing less than 1 percent to global greenhouse gas emissions and is one of the most vulnerable countries to the impacts of climate change. "We have one flood in 10 - 20 years and in 2010 and 2011 we had two floods and now the latest flood. Glaciers in the north of the country are disappearing," he said, stressing that climate change should be addressed "as climate and environment are the common heritage of our planet". He said that as chair of Group 77, Pakistan negotiated the establishment of loss and damage fund at the Sharm el-Sheikh Climate Change Conference (COP 27).

Bankrupt Sri Lanka to hold first polls since crisis

WEB DESK

Colombo: Crisis-hit Sri Lanka Wednesday announced its first nationwide elections since its president fled and resigned in the face of widespread protests, in what will be a test of popularity for his successor. Local government polls will be held before the end of February, officials said, after they were delayed by a year due to the pandemic. President Ranil Wickremesinghe, who replaced his deposed predecessor Gotabaya Rajapaksa, faces potential embarrassment in the vote, as he was his party's sole representative in parliament. Months of acute shortages of food, fuel and electricity since late 2021 led to mass agitation against Rajapaksa's administration which defaulted on the country's \$46 billion external debt in April. The 73-year-old Wickremesinghe, a six-times prime minister, won a parliamentary vote to replace Rajapaksa with the backing of Rajapaksa's SLPP party, but has no popular mandate.

Myanmar junta vows polls, lashes out at critics

YANGON: Myanmar junta leader Min Aung Hlaing vowed new elections during a national parade on Wednesday, while also lashing out at foreign critics of the country's military leadership. "Upon accomplishing the provisions of the state of emergency, free and fair elections will be held in line with the 2008 constitution, and further work will be undertaken to hand over state duties to the winning party in accordance with the democratic standards," the junta leader said in a speech to troops celebrating the country's 75th Independence Day from Britain. Myanmar has been under a state of emergency since February 2021, when democratically elected leaders such as State Counselor Aung San Suu Kyi were ousted by the junta. Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy party achieved a landslide victory in general elections the prior year, with the military claiming the outcome was illegitimate. The military could take steps towards new elections at the end of the month, when the latest six-month extension of the state of emergency ends. The election plan will likely be met with skepticism from Western countries, including the US. Min Aung Hlaing called on the international community and the country's own citizens to back "the genuine discipline-flourishing multiparty democratic system" in Myanmar. Supporters of jailed leader Suu Kyi claim she is imprisoned by the military to prevent her from taking part in new elections. Suu Kyi played a pivotal role in the country's democratic transition in the 2010s and challenged the military's firm grip over politics. - Agencies

Asif lauds PAF's professionalism

ISLAMABAD: Defence Minister of Pakistan, Khawaja Muhammad Asif, called on Air Chief Marshal Zaheer Ahmed Baber Sidhu, Chief of the Air Staff, Pakistan Air Force during his visit to Air Headquarters. Matters pertaining to evolving geo-strategic environment and regional security situation were discussed during the meeting. The Defence Minister lauded the matchless professionalism of PAF and stated that the government would utilize all its resources to modernize Pakistan Air Force to ensure an impregnable defence of the country. He admired the revamping of training by PAF to produce well-equipped and skillful work force to cope up with ever-changing challenges of aerial defence and national security. He also lauded the exceptional response of Pakistan Air Force during the rescue and rehabilitation of flood victims in the aftermath of recent floods in the country. The Air Chief briefed the visiting dignitary about various ongoing projects being carried out by Pakistan Air Force with special focus on modernization and development of indigenous capabilities. Chief of the Air Staff also briefed the Defence Minister about his vision of PAF's National Aerospace Science & Technology Park (NASTP) project and highlighted that the mega project was aimed at fostering collaborative research, development and innovation in the domains of aviation, space. - DNA



ISLAMABAD: Defence Minister of Pakistan, Khawaja Asif visits Air Headquarters. - DNA

China to work with Pak for shared future



DNA

BEIJING: China was ready to work with Pakistan, follow through on the important common understandings between the two leaders, make solid progress in comprehensive and high-level strategic cooperation in the new year, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning said on Wednesday. "China is also ready to stay committed to building an even closer China-Pakistan community with a shared future in the new era, and make even greater contribution to the two peoples'

well-being and peace and development of the region and the wider world," she said in response to a question asked by APP correspondent during her regular briefing. Mao Ning said that China and Pakistan were all-weather strategic cooperative partners and iron-clad friends. "Over the past year, our two countries have rendered each other mutual understanding and mutual support, addressed challenges together and marched forward shoulder-to-shoulder," she added. The spokesperson said that the two countries have strengthened high-level guidance, consolidated strategic consensus, jointly promoted the sound development of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), and expanded friendly exchanges and cooperation in various areas, sustaining high-quality development of bilateral relations. It may be mentioned that during a recent meeting, Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari and Chinese Ambassador Nong Rong reviewed achievements of Pakistan-China relations and agreed to maintain momentum through development of high quality CPEC and stronger people-to-people exchanges.

Republicans face stalemate as McCarthy seeks votes

NEWS DESK

WASHINGTON: Republican Kevin McCarthy's bruising quest to become speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives entered a second day on Wednesday, with the party's new majority fractured by a revolt among headline members of his party who oppose his candidacy. McCarthy weathered three failed votes for speaker on Tuesday as about 20 hardliners representing less than 10% of the caucus blocked his path to the powerful post that is second in line to the presidency. It was the first time in 100 years that the House has not elected a speaker on its first day. The standoff has raised fears among party members of a longer-term rift that could hobble their ability to move forward on economic, energy, spending and immigration priorities in the run-up to the 2024 presidential election. The slim 222-212 Republican majority gives greater clout to a small

group of hard-right lawmakers, who want rule changes that would give them greater control over the speaker and more influence over the party's approach to spending and debt. Supporters of McCarthy, who has served as House Republican leader since 2019, accuse some hardliners of conducting a "Never Kevin" campaign aimed solely at stopping him. A second day of voting was expected to get under way when the House meets at noon (1700 GMT) on Wednesday. McCarthy late Tuesday vowed to stay in the race and said he continued to have the backing of former President Donald Trump, who remains a powerful figure in the party. Trump weighed in early Wednesday, with a post on his social media site Truth Social urging Republicans to back McCarthy. "It's now time for all of our GREAT Republican House Members to VOTE FOR KEVIN," Trump wrote. McCarthy said no other Republican was in a position to win a majority of votes and warned against letting chaos rule. "It will turn out that either someone will make a mistake and elect a Democrat, or we're going to find a way to work together, to be able to govern," McCarthy said on Tuesday. In contrast to intraparty brawl going on among House Republicans, the top Republican in the Senate, Minority Leader Mitch McConnell, was due to appear with Democratic President Joe Biden in Kentucky on Wednesday to highlight infrastructure investments included in a bipartisan bill passed in 2021.

Envoy urges business community to discover Indonesia's market



RAWALPINDI: Indonesian Ambassador to Pakistan Adam Tugion Wednesday urged Pakistani businessmen to take advantage of Indonesia's emerging market. During his visit to the Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (RCCI), he said that Indonesia wanted to increase bilateral trade with Pakistan and strengthen business relations. Adam said that Indonesia could provide opportunities to Pakistan for trade and economic activities in the Association

of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) market with a population of 623 million, enhancing trade growth between the two countries. He said that Pakistan and Indonesia already had a preliminary agreement on the Preferential Trade Agreement (PTA), which had boosted bilateral trade in various sectors. "Pakistan has a lot of potential in traditional herbal medicines and pointed out that herbal medicines are receiving a very positive response from the world population." The Ambassador said that the Indonesian Embassy would participate in the food festivals and exhibitions organized by the Chamber. RCCI President Saqib Rafiq briefed the Ambassador about the ongoing activities of the Chamber. He said that there was a need to enhance links between the two countries at the Chamber level and between the private sectors to increase the trade volume. Saqib expressed the hope that after signing the Free Trade Agreement (FTA), bilateral trade and economic activities between both the countries would be increased. The RCCI president highlighted vital areas, including IT, Tourism, pharmaceuticals, education and culture, where bilateral cooperation could be increased through chamber platforms. - DNA

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