



# Islamabad POST

Friday, January 06, 2023

Pakistan's Credible Daily Newspaper

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**UK's Harry says in new book Prince William attacked him**

Detailed News On Page-08

**Najib petitions UN for relief in corruption case**

Detailed News On Page-07

**Mbappe named highest earning footballer of 2022**

Detailed News On Page-06



## Briefs

**Pak has right to self defense**

NEWS DESK



WASHINGTON: The United States and Pakistan have a shared interest in ensuring that the Taliban acts against terrorist groups, including TTP, and not allow them to use the Afghan soil for their actions, State Department Spokesperson Ned Price said on Wednesday. "Terrorism remains a scourge that has taken so many Pakistani, Afghans, and other innocent lives. The United States and Pakistan do indeed have a shared interest in ensuring that the Taliban live up to the commitments and that terrorist groups like ISIS-K, like the TTP, like al-Qaeda, are no longer able to threaten regional security," he said in response to a reporter's question at his daily press briefing.

**Elahi terms governor's letter illegal**

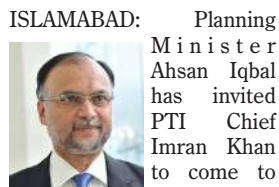
DNA



LAHORE: Punjab Minister Chaudhry Parvez Elahi Thursday ruled out following Governor Baligh-ur-Rehman's orders for taking a vote of confidence and termed the directions "illegal". In a press conference in Lahore, the chief minister said: "I don't accept the letter that the governor has written for the vote of confidence. If I take the vote of confidence, then it means that I am accepting the letter."

**PTI Chief must return to parliament**

STAFF REPORT



ISLAMABAD: Planning Minister Ahsan Iqbal has invited PTI Chief Imran Khan to come to the National Assembly and work for a consensus electoral reforms package. Talking to media in Islamabad on Thursday afternoon, he said next elections will be held as per schedule. He said Pakistan, on this point of time, needs collaboration and not conflict. The Planning Minister said it will help providing resources for rehabilitation in flood affected areas of the country.

## Inside...

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US provided \$ 60m in 2022 for Afghan refugees  
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CPEC presenting new hopes for Pak economic growth  
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Australian HC wishes Pak team ahead of Australia tour  
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Israel's new govt unveils plan to weaken Supreme Court  
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Miftah blames Ishaq Dar for orchestrating his removal  
— Page 08

## Commander Hafiz also killed Forces kill 11 terrorists in Waziristan

The TTP, which has ideological linkages with the Afghan Taliban, executed around more than 100 attacks last year

STAFF REPORT/DNA

RAWALPINDI: Security Forces conducted an Intelligence Based Operation in general area Wana, South Waziristan District and successfully foiled a high profile terrorist activity. According to Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR), 11 terrorists including Terrorist Commander Hafiz Ullah alias Tor Hafiz and 2 suicide bombers, were killed during intense exchange of fire. A huge quantity of weapons and ammunition was also recovered from the killed terrorists. The killed terrorists remained actively involved in terrorist activities against security forces and target killing of police in South Waziristan District. 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. The TTP, which has ideological linkages with the Afghan Taliban, executed around more than 100 attacks last year, most of which happened after August when the group's peace talks with the Pakistan government began to falter. The ceasefire was formally ended on Nov 28 by the TTP. Last week, a soldier of Pakistan

Continued on Page 06

**Talks with Afghan Govt, not terrorists**

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: Federal Interior Minister Rana Sanaullah on Thursday announced that it has been decided not to negotiate with any terrorist or terrorist organization and if there are negotiations, it will be with the Afghan government. According to a private news channel, Interior Minister Rana Sanaullah held a press conference with Mufti Abdul Shakoor, Federal Minister for Religious Affairs and Inter-faith Harmony in Islamabad on Thursday. Talking to the media persons, Rana Sanaullah said political stability is essential for economic stability so they will go in talks with the Afghan government if needed. He strongly criticized the political style of Imran Khan and said the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman is a

Continued on Page 06

**Imran Khan says**

**'Powerful' committee must probe bid on life**

**Insists 3 shooters involved in assassination bid**

ALI HAMZA



LAHORE: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan Thursday demanded the formation of a powerful committee, under Chief Justice Umar Ata

Bandial's supervision, to probe the Wazirabad assassination bid. In a press conference, Khan said: "I earlier stated this as well that I only hope for justice from one place [SC] as powerful people will not allow the investigation to take place." Khan was shot in the leg on December 3 as he waved to crowds from a truck-mounted container while leading a protest march to Islamabad to pressure the government into announcing an early election — but it was cut short in Rawalpindi. Hinting at the involvement

Continued on Page 06

**Independent MPA to vote for Elahi**

BUREAU REPORT

LAHORE: Independent Member of Punjab Assembly Bilal Warraich called on Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan and announced to vote in favour of Punjab Chief Minister Chaudhry Parvez Elahi during the vote of confidence in the provincial assembly. The meeting was attended by PTI Central Senior Vice President Fawad Chaudhry and Senior Provincial Minister Mian Aslam Iqbal among other leaders. Fawad Chaudhry said that Bilal Warraich met PTI Chairman at Zaman

Continued on Page 06

## PPP wants neither delay nor snap polls: Bilawal

Accusing Imran of recent incidents he said Khan was the first to release the perpetrators of APS tragedy

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: In another twist to high drama in the country's political arena as Pakistan Peoples' Party (PPP) chairman and Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari quashed the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf's (PTI) dire demand to hold snap polls across the country saying that PPP will not support delay or early elections. Addressing a presser flanked by other PPP's top guns in Karachi, the minister briefed media persons about today's CEC meeting and urged all political parties to throw weight behind the supremacy of democracy, adding that they should run election campaigns under the code of conduct as eco-

conomic stability hinges on political stability. The PPP chief commenting on the string of terror incidents carried out by outlawed TTP said that "We have a clear policy towards terrorism. These miscreants are enemies of Pakistan and humanity. While accusing the deposed premier Imran Khan of recent terror incidents Bilawal said that the PTI chief was the first to release the



perpetrators of the APS tragedy and sent them outside the country, adding that the prisoners of Afghanistan were also invited to stay in Pakistan, as a result of which we are facing terrorism again today. The foreign minister on ongoing political uncertainty in the country said that the election should be held on time, adding that PPP will not support delay or early elections.



**RIYADH:** Chief of Army Staff General Asim Munir in a meeting with Saudi Arabia's Defense Minister Prince Khalid bin Salman. The Army Chief is on an official visit of Saudi Arabia and UAE.=DNA

**Palestine MOFA salutes Kareem Younis**

DNA



RAMALLAH: The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates salutes Kareem Younis, who after four decades of unlawful imprisonment by the Israeli occupation authorities, gained his freedom. His freedom has been long-deserved and long-awaited. In this regard, the Ministry reaffirms that Israel, the occupying power, uses the systematic and widespread policy of arbitrary detention, long-term imprisonments, and discriminatory trials as persecutory tools to punish and intimidate the Palestinian people. Since the beginning of its settler-colonial occupation, Israel has imprisoned and detained over

Continued on Page 06

## Islamabad, Beijing agree to fast-track bilateral relations

The Prime Minister briefs Chinese Premier Li on progress in post-flood rehabilitation

**British Envoy calls on PM Shehbaz**

MAHNOOR ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif says Pakistan-UK relations are rooted in history, shared legacy and strong people-to-people bonds, which have gone from strength to strength.

Picture on Back Page

He was talking to outgoing British High Commissioner Dr Christian Turner, who paid a farewell call on him in Islamabad on Thursday. The Prime Minister lauded the services rendered by Dr Turner for the promotion of Pakistan-UK ties, especially in the fields of trade, investment, and economic cooperation. He said the United Kingdom is Pakistan's largest European trading, investment and development partner. He said the trajectory of the bilateral relations

Continued on Page 06

SHUJAAT HAMZA



ISLAMABAD: Pakistan and China have agreed to maintain close communication to fast-track the bilateral cooperation agenda for mutual benefit of the people of the two countries in 2023 and beyond. The agreement reached during a comprehensive telephone conversation between Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Chinese Premier Li Keqiang on Thursday. The two leaders' discussion was characterized by warmth and cordiality, in keeping with the best traditions of the Pakistan-China

Continued on Page 06

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# Governor says promotion of investment vital

Finally, the Chairman On behalf of Pakistan International Property Expo and Convention, an invitation letter and shield were also presented to Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Ghulam Ali

## OUR CORRESPONDENT

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government is also focusing on development of construction and housing sector, Ghulam Ali The 2nd Peshawar Property Housing and Construction Expo and Convention will be held from 17 to 19 February 2023 at Marbella cave Marquee, Peshawar Khursheed Barlas. Chairman of Pakistan Association of Exhibition Industry Khurshid Barlas along with his delegation met Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Ghulam Ali at Governor House Peshawar. About the Property Expo and Convention which is being held from 17 to 19 February 2023 at Marbella Cave Marquee, Warsak Road, Peshawar, in the three-day exhibition, prominent builders, developers, allied construction

industry from across the country, including bank projects and related to the tourism industry. A large number of different business community will participate Khurshid Barlas invited Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Governor Ghulam Ali to attend the 2nd Peshawar International Property Expo and Convention as a Chief Guest, which was accepted by the Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and assured him that he would grace the occasion with his kind presence at 2nd Peshawar International Property Expo. During the conversation, Governor Ghulam Ali said that holding the Expo exhibition is a good tradition, it will open new avenues for development in the country. The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government is also focusing on the development

of construction and housing sector, thereby taking steps to create employment opportunities in the country, promote economic development and meet the housing needs of the growing population. In the current situation, promotion of investment is very important for Pakistan. Khurshid Barlas told Governor KP that Pakistan International Property Expo and Convention aims to promote the construction and development of Pakistan, to improve the reputation of Pakistan and to increase trade and investment in the country. Finally, the Chairman On behalf of Pakistan International Property Expo and Convention, an invitation letter and shield were also presented to Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Ghulam Ali.



**KARACHI:** Foreign Minister, Bilawal Bhutto Zardari along with other party officials cutting cake on the occasion of 95th birth anniversary of Shaheed Z.A. Bhutto. — DNA

## Disabled girl burnt to death

QAZI SHOAB KHAN

ATTOCK: 15 years old disabled girl burnt to death by running gas stove in her house at Shah Faisal Colony within the jurisdiction of police station Attock City on Thursday. As per details, 15 years old blind daughter of Naeem Akhter was sitting before the running gas stove when she engulfed in the fire. Soon after the incidence, the fire brigade of the Municipal Committee Attock reached the spot and over powered the fire while the victim was rushed to Asfandyar Bokhari District Headquarters Hospital Attock by Rescue 1122 in a critical condition but she could not survive despite hectic efforts of the doctors. Later on, she was laid to rest in the local grave yard.

## Earthquake jolts Attock

QAZI SHOAB KHAN

ATTOCK: In line with other parts of the country, earthquake also jolted the inter provincial bordering district Attock and its surrounding areas creating a panic like situation among the public at about 19.30 hours on Thursday. As per details, the earthquake shocks have been recorded 5.8 at the reactor scale while the centre was from the Koh-e Hindu Kush mountains territory of Afghanistan. The people of the areas came out from their houses and praying to Allah Mighty for safety of their lives and their acquaintances.

# CM hails approval of mega project

## OUR CORRESPONDENT

PESHAWAR: The Executive Committee of National Economic Council (ECNEC) in its meeting held recently, has accorded approval to a mega developmental project of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government regarding Gravity Flow Water Supply Scheme Mansehra City. The newly approved Water Supply Scheme would be completed at an estimated cost of Rs. 18.583 billion which will provide clean drinking water to over 2,000,00 population of Mansehra City. In a statement issued to this effect here on Thursday, Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Mahmood Khan has termed the approval of

this mega scheme as an important achievement of the provincial government and good news for the people of district Mansehra. He said that the project on completion would provide all time solution to the long standing issue of clean drinking water in the city. The Chief Minister made it clear that his government is working under a comprehensive strategy to resolve public issues across the province adding that work on drinking water supply schemes in different parts of the province is underway. He said that the provincial government has initiated Cities Improvement Project worth Rs. 97 billion which is aimed at streamlining the civic services delivery with special focus on the drinking water

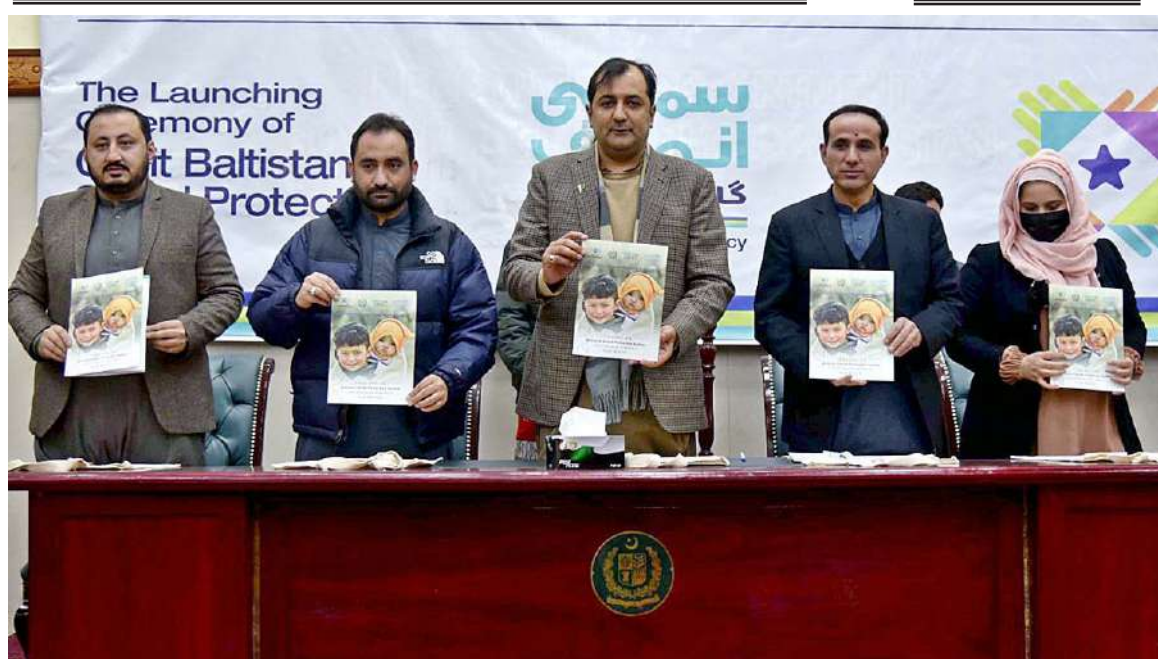
supply and solid waste management system. Under the project, work on drinking water supply schemes has already been initiated in the different divisional headquarters of the province. He said that the provincial government is committed to resolve the issue of drinking water for inhabitants of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in general and major cities in particular. Keeping in view the drinking water shortage due to limited ground water resources in Mansehra city, Gravity Flow Water Supply scheme has been planned with around 62.5 Km long supply line. The project, on completion, will provide uninterrupted clean drinking water to citizens, he concluded.

## PESCO notifies power suspension

PESHAWAR: Peshawar Electric Supply Company (PESCO) on Thursday notified power suspension of various grids from January 07 to 14 due to unavoidable maintenance work. The power supply would remain suspended from 132 KV Jamrud Grid Station on January 7, 10 and 14 from

9 AM to 3 PM, resultant, consumers of 11 KV Hayatabad 1,2,3,4,5, New Hayatabad, Health Care Hospital, Health Excellence North West Hospital, Kidney Center, RMI, Gulabad, PITC, Mohmand Steel, Northern Botling, Hayatabad Surgical Hospital, Peshawar General Health Net Hospital,

Shakas 1 feeders would face inconvenience. The power supply would remain suspended from 132 KV Hayatabad Phase 7 Grid Station on January 7, 10 and 14 from 9 AM to 3 PM, resultant, consumers of 11 KV Hayatabad 6,7,8,9,10,11,12,13,14, Hayatabad Old, Danish Abad, Shoukat Khanam, Hayatabad 4, PC Hotel, Frontier Ceramix, Frontier Greenwood, Cel Wood, Khyber 1,2 feeders would face inconvenience.—DNA



**GILGIT:** Chief Minister Gilgit-Baltistan Khalid Khurshid Khan launches the volume of Gilgit-Baltistan Social Protection Policy during the launching ceremony of Gilgit-Baltistan Social Protection Policy. —APP

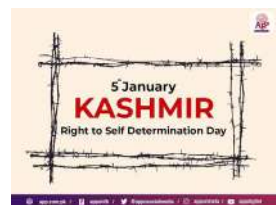
# APHC reminds UN over Kashmir resolution

Govt and people of Pakistan have always stood with Kashmiris to get freedom from India. The support would continue till Kashmiris achieve their goal of freedom

ISLAMABAD: Kashmiris across the Line of Control and worldwide Thursday reminded the United Nations (UN) of its forgotten commitment regarding their right to plebiscite to decide their future through a democratic process. Every year, Kashmiris observe January 5 as Right to Self-Determination to reaffirm their commitment to continue their struggle for freedom from India. It was on this day, the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) passed a resolution, guaranteeing impartial plebiscite to Kashmiris. “The question of the accession of the State of Jammu and Kashmir to India or Pakistan will be decided through the democratic

method of a free and impartial plebiscite,” the resolution said. “As the Kashmir dispute enters into 76th calendar year it is the responsibility of the UN and all the influential world governments to play their role to seek a peaceful solution of the lingering dispute awaiting final settlement,” said senior All Parties Hurriyat Conference (APHC) leader, Shabbir Ahmad Shah in his message form Tihar Jail. He urged the UN Secretary General, Antonio Guterres, to take immediate notice of the systematic genocide of the Kashmiris by the Indian forces in Kashmir and put pressure on India to give the Kashmiri people the right to decide their political future by themselves.

“Decades have passed since Kashmiris were promised right to self-determination, however they are still waiting the World’s biggest forum to fulfill its commitment,” An APHC leader, Mushtaq Gilani told APP. He said, it was responsibility of the United Nations to ensure implementation of its own resolutions however deplored that Kashmiris, who are fighting for right to self-determination, have been facing worst kind of



state terrorism at the hands of Indian occupation forces. He said, India’s rejection of Kashmiris’ basic right to self-determination was violation of UN charter and the denial of right to self-determination to Kashmiris was contrary to Indian claim of being a democratic republic. APHC (AJK Chapter), Secretary Information Imtiaz Wani also reminded the UN of its obligations towards the peaceful settlement of the lingering dispute. In a statement issued here, he said, it was high time that the international community especially the UN comes forward and plays its much needed role to resolve the Kashmir issue

and stop the ongoing violation of human rights in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir. It is pertinent to mention here that India on August 5, 2019, through a unilateral action revoked article 370 and 35 A of its constitution, depriving the state of its special status. Since, then the Modi’s fascist regime has intensified its crackdown and intensified state terrorism to silence Kashmiris’ cry for right to self-determination through military might. The government and people of Pakistan have always stood with Kashmiris to get freedom from India. The support would continue till Kashmiris achieve their goal of freedom.—DNA

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JANUARY

Jan 01 / CUBA

Revolution Day

Jan 01 / Palestine

Palestine Revolution Day

Jan 01 / Sudan

National Day

Jan 04 / Myanmar

Independence Day

Jan 06 / Iraq

Armed Forces Day

Jan 12 / Tanzania

Armed Forces Day

Jan 14 / Uzbekistan

Armed Forces Day

Jan 15 / Nigeria

Armed Forces Day

Jan 20 / Mali

Armed Forces Day

Jan 20 / Laos

Armed Forces Day

Jan 25 / Thailand

Armed Forces Day

Jan 26 / Australia

National Day

Jan 26 / India

Republic Day

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Serena Hotel.....111 133 133

Marriott.....051- 2826121

Monal.....0334-5421812

Airlines

Turkish Airlines.....8494949

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Shifa International.....4603666

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CDA.....9221334-43

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Met Office.....9250360-6

RDA.....5555864

TMA.....5770886

Cantonment Board.....9270151-3

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# US provided \$ 60m in 2022 for Afghan refugees

Since the beginning of 2022, U.S. humanitarian assistance for Afghan refugees and host communities has also improved health infrastructure in refugee-hosting areas of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan

DNA

ISLAMABAD: “The United States is grateful to Pakistan for generously hosting Afghan refugees for more than four decades, and we are proud to continue our support for this worthwhile cause,” said U.S. Ambassador Donald Blome. Since 2002, the United States has provided more than \$273 million (nearly Rs 62 billion) in humanitarian assistance for Afghan refugees in Pakistan and Pakistani host communities. In Fiscal Year 2022 alone, the U.S. provided nearly \$60 million (more than Rs 13 billion) in assistance to the refugees and their host communities. This U.S. assistance is increasing

school enrollment for Afghan and Pakistani children in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan; improving Pakistani health care services and boosting nutrition programs in areas hosting Afghans; promoting livelihood activities for refugees and host communities; improving water, sanitation, and hygiene infrastructure; and supporting recovery from the health and economic effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. “Thanks to the generous and compassionate support of the American people, UNHCR was on the ground immediately to respond to the devastating floods of 2022 – providing life-saving relief items to Pakistanis and Afghan refugees,” noted UNHCR Representative to Pakistan Noriko Yoshida. “The

invaluable support of the United States has also been felt across the entirety of the UNHCR program – from increasing girls’ access to formal and informal education, saving lives through donations of critical equipment in provincial hospitals, and also giving entrepreneurs an opportunity to thrive thanks to an increase in vocational and skills trainings.” UNICEF Representative in Pakistan Abdullah Fadi added, “Thanks to generous support from the United States, UNICEF has been able to make a positive difference in the lives of Afghan refugees and of the Pakistani host communities living next to them. We have helped prevent and treat children suffering from severe acute malnutrition, establish

maternal and neonatal services which help mothers and newborns survive, and provide families with access to safe drinking water and adequate sanitation. We have also supported girls’ and boys’ access to education so that they too can one day become agents of sustainable change within their own communities.” Since the beginning of 2022, U.S. humanitarian assistance for Afghan refugees and host communities has also improved health infrastructure in refugee-hosting areas of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan. The United States supported UNFPA and UNICEF to conduct renovations to health facilities, including updating labor rooms and purchasing advanced newborn

care equipment, furniture, and patient care equipment. In addition, health facilities received solar panels that ensure a continuous electricity supply. With U.S. funding, UNICEF also helped families access essential health, nutrition, water, sanitation and hygiene services in 70 health facilities, and provided nearly 50,000 mothers and close to 110,000 children with preventative and curative nutrition services. Pakistan’s Chief Commissioner for Afghan Refugees Saleem Khan said, “We are grateful to the U.S. government for their generous contributions towards the welfare of Afghan refugees in Pakistan and assistance to the host communities.”

## Speaker for futuristic, innovative parliaments

ISLAMABAD: National Assembly Speaker Raja Perwaiz Ashraf said on Thursday that the Parliaments have to be innovative for inventing new ways to resolve the challenges faced by nations. Addressing the participants of 26th Conference of Speakers and Presiding officers of Commonwealth (CSPOC) on “Role of Speaker and Presiding Officer in Leading Parliamentary Innovations,” in Canberra Australia, he said, “the world is going through sweeping changes”. As representatives of the people, the onus of innovating new socio-cultural, socio-political and socio-economic order falls upon parliamentarians. He said that the global upheaval caused by the Coronavirus pandemic called for a new working and social environment while the catastrophes brought by the steep climate change also desired a new approach to human living, said a message received here. —APP

ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Morocco Muhammad Karmoune meeting with Secretary Senate Muhammad Samad Khan, on Thursday.—DNA

## Govt launching internship program to support 30,000 unemployed graduates: Ahsan

Ahsan Iqbal maintained that the main task of Ministry of Planning is to plan the future of the youth adding that the development of Pakistan depends on the active role of youth and the private sector

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Planning and Development Professor Ahsan Iqbal Thursday said the government is launching the “Talented Youth Internship Program” for 30,000 unemployed graduate youth. Presiding over a meeting of private sector representatives to provide internship to youth, the minister said the dura-

tion of internship will be 6 months and a monthly stipend of Rs 25,000 will be given to the youth. He said future of the country depends on purposeful education and skill acquisition of youth as two-thirds of Pakistan’s population is below 30 years. Ahsan Iqbal maintained that the main task of the Ministry of Planning is to plan the future of the

youth adding that the development of Pakistan depends on the active role of the youth and the private sector. Under this program, he said some 30,000 youth would get an opportunity to work in the industry. The minister also stressed the need to forget all the differences and work together to get the country out of the economic crisis. The economy of a country

with a population of 220 million does not sink in 8 months, he said adding that when there is a fire in the house, the first thing to do is to extinguish the fire. He said that every Pakistani should play role in bringing the country out of economic crisis. “Every Pakistani would have to become champion of Turnaround Pakistan Campaign.”

## Chinese envoy ensures support for education

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Chinese Ambassador to Pakistan Nong Rong appreciated the initiative taken by Tang International Education Group Pakistan Subsidiary for promoting technical/skills education and vocational training programs in the country. He promised to provide all possible assistance to achieve this task. He was talking with Max Ma, Executive President of the group during a meeting held here at the embassy. About the meeting, Max Ma told WealthPK that it was very productive and we exchanged views as to how to expand the educational network in Pakistan through the support of Chinese institutions. Mr. Max Ma highlighted their

work that was carried out over the past decade and said, they have adhered to the principle of servicing the educational industry. Utilizing Internet technology to enhance teaching and learning efficiency, he said the organization is steadfastly committed to assisting people from all walks of life to study the Chinese language and comprehend Chinese culture. About the main disciplines of

Tang International Education group, Max said, the ongoing Sino-Foreign Joint School Dual Diploma Joint Education Program of the China Cooperation, Chinese Commerce Culture, Technology Training, Education Employment (CCTE) is designed for international students who wish to obtain additional China education experience and certificates while continuing their national higher education.

## AIOU holds Int’l conference

Chairman, Department of Physics, Prof. Dr. Syed Zafar Ilyas will be the host the event. Scholars from 3 international and 70 Pakistani universities will present around 350 research papers

ISLAMABAD: Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) is going to organize a two-day international conference on “Material Science and Smart Materials (CMSSM-2023)” on 7th and 8th January at its main campus in Islamabad. Nuclear scientist Prof. Dr. NM Butt will be the chief guest of the opening ceremony while Vice Chancellor, AIOU, Prof. Dr. Nasir Mehmood will preside over the event. Chairman, Department of Physics, Prof. Dr. Syed Zafar Ilyas will be the host the event. Scholars from 3 international and 70 Pakistani universities will present around 350 research papers. This conference will be of great importance for scholars, universities, and industrialists. World has progressed a lot in the field of science and technology and new inventions have been made for social reconstruction. CMSSM-2023 has been organized to highlight the importance and usefulness of smart content for social well-being. According to Prof. Dr. Syed Zafar Ilyas, this conference is a part of the ongoing activities in the university to promote the research culture in the country. The purpose of the conference is to create awareness and use research in the social, and economic development of the country.—APP

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HANNU RIPATTI

Finland, Pakistan have every reason to solidify cooperation

Serena Hotels host Sarangi music evening

Argentina envoy celebrates football victory

Danish envoy visits Sialkot

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## Briefs

ANF seizes  
over 10 kg  
heroin, 39 kg  
opium poppy

RAWALPINDI: Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) Pakistan while conducting three counter-narcotics operations seized over 10 kg heroin, 39 kg opium poppy besides netting three accused, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman here on Thursday. He informed in an operation near Islamabad Motorway Toll Plaza, ANF recovered 1.5 kg heroin from secret cavities of a car and held two accused. In second operation, ANF raided near Jhelum G.T.Road area and recovered 39 kg opium poppy from the possession of an accused resident of Jhelum. In third operation, ANF recovered 438 grams heroin which was tactfully concealed in ladies suits being sent to London through International Courier Office Kamra. Separate cases have been registered at respective ANF Police Stations and further investigations are under process.—APP

Police  
arrest seven  
anti-social  
elements

RAWALPINDI: Rawalpindi District Police arrested seven anti-social elements including two kite sellers, two fraudsters, two robbers and confiscated 350 kites, six kite flying string rolls, two kg charras, Rs 45,000 counterfeit currency notes and other items from their possession here on Thursday. According to police spokesman, police arrested two kite sellers namely Raheem and Shafique in the jurisdiction of Bani Police Station and seized 350 kites and six kite flying string rolls from their custody. He informed that Bani police also arrested a bootlegger identified as Dawood and recovered 90 liters liquor from his possession. Gujar Khan police rounded up two fraudsters namely Imran and Saghir on recovery of Rs 45,000 counterfeit currency notes. The spokesman said that Civil Lines police in their operation against criminals managed to net two robbers namely Fardin and Jabar and recovered two kg charras, weapons and other items from their possession. Meanwhile, Rawalpindi police in their ongoing operation against professional beggars conducted raids in different areas and netted 30. Separate cases have been registered against all the accused while further investigations are underway. Senior Superintendent of Police Operations said no one would be allowed to violate the law and the violators would be treated with iron hands. He directed the police officers to accelerate ongoing operations against drug peddlers, bootleggers and illegal weapon holders.—APP

PES rescues  
12,925  
victims of  
RTAs in 2022

RAWALPINDI: The Punjab Emergency Service (PES), Rescue-1122, Rawalpindi rescued 12,925 victims of Road Traffic Accidents (RTAs) while conducting emergency operations in the year 2022 and maintained its average response time of less than seven minutes. According to the district emergency officer, Rawalpindi Eng. Kamran Rashid, a total of 13,013 RTAs were reported during last year while 12,925 persons including 11,204 male and 1,721 female victims were rescued. He informed that 6,593 victims were shifted to different hospitals and 6,167 people were provided first aid on the spot while 165 victims lost their lives. He further said that only a timely call could ensure a timely response from Emergency Service in case of any emergency. According to Media Coordinator Rescue-1122 Rawalpindi Muhammad Usman Gujar, most of the victims were bike riders. He informed that 1962 pedestrians, 2743 passengers, 8220 drivers and 709 underage drivers were victims of the RTAs. The minor injured victims were treated at the incident site by Rescue Medical Teams thus reducing the burden of the hospitals.—APP

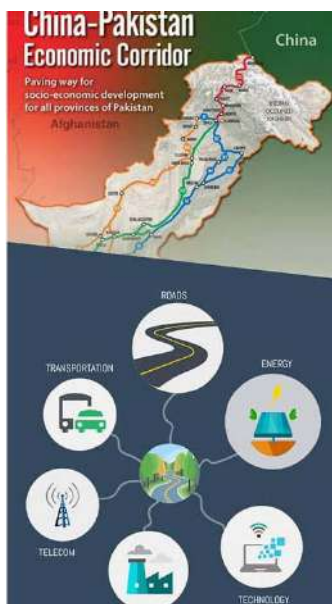
CPEC presenting new hopes  
for Pak economic growth

The CSAIL report says that 11 energy projects and seven infrastructure projects with a total investment of \$18.7 billion have already been finished

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The sun of 2023 has emerged with new hopes for the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) against the backdrop of fresh commitments to pump up more Chinese investments, roll-out of three new CPEC corridors, resumption of cultural exchange programs, and activation of Special Economic Zones. According to a report published by Gowder Pro on Thursday, in 2023, CPEC is all set to take a centre stage in the 72 years of Pak-China diplomatic relations. As per a report titled "Overview of Pakistan's Power Sector and its Future Outlook" issued by the China Three Gorges South Asia Investment Ltd (CSAIL), a total of more than 36 CPEC projects, with a projected expenditure of \$27.5 billion, are in the works and it is believed that many of them will cross the finishing line by 2030. The CSAIL report said that 11 energy projects and seven infrastruc-

ture projects with a total investment of \$18.7 billion have already been finished, while ten additional projects – four in energy and six in infrastructure – are now undergoing implementation and are anticipated to be finished in coming years. "Moreover, five Special Economic Zones (SEZs) will make tangible headways in 2023 with an investment of \$1 billion. Four of the nine identified Special Economic Zones (SEZs) would be completed in coming years with an expenditure of \$500 million," the report said. The year 2023 is also marking CPEC- Collaborative Research Grant (CPEC-CRG) which is one of the key component of recently launched HEC initiative namely "Academic Collaboration under CPEC Consortium of Universities". The overall objective of the said project is to understand and respond to the historic global geo-strategic and geo-economic transition and its impact on the region in general and Pakistan in particular, keeping in the view the broad Chinese Belt and



Road Initiative and its Pakistan-specific component – CPEC. The national response to the strategic opportunity arising out of the

emerging global dynamics is the CPEC Long Term Plan (LTP). The collaboration of Pakistan and China on education and cultural cooperation and exchanges witnessed an upward trajectory with each passing day, as thousands of Pakistani students are currently studying in various universities in China. Similarly, exhibitions and Chinese cultural events in Pakistan are expected to increase further in 2023. While briefing Pakistani media about the 2023 Happy Chinese New Year and upcoming events in connection with the celebrations of the Chinese Spring Festival, Xing Lijun, Second Secretary, Cultural Office of the Chinese Embassy in Pakistan told the media that The Chinese government is expected to resume the cultural exchange programmes in 2023. Similarly, the currency agreement between both nations is not only an economic masterstroke but it is also tipped as a strategic move. It is hoped that in 2023, Pakistan's dependence on the dollar will

decrease, as the central banks of Pakistan and China have signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) to establish RMB clearing mechanisms. Despite economic challenges, China remained at the top in the list of top foreign direct investors in Pakistan. The COVID-19 outbreak and the shift in Pakistan's government had both caused a slowdown in CPEC. But those barriers are no longer present and work on CPEC is expected to pick up more pace in 2023 in terms of China FDI in Pakistan. The second phase of CPEC has broadened its scope to include collaboration on projects related to socioeconomic development, education, tourism, industry, oil and gas, research, and technology. Since the China-Pakistan Free Trade Agreement phase I and phase II are in full-on operation, 2023 will see new depth in the Pak-China trade landscape so that Pakistan increases its exports to China to cure its economic imbalances and development trajectory.

DDPR NHA Saleem  
retires from service

DNA

ISLAMABAD: National Highway Authority's Deputy Director Public Relations Muhammad Saleem retired from Government Service. During his service span, he served in Administration, Secretariat, and Coordination wings of NHA. However, he mostly remained associated with Media Section of the Authority. Sohail Aftab Director Public Relations NHA, on this occasion, arranged a simple graceful ceremony in honor of the outgoing officer, participated by all the officials and staff members of media section of the Authority. Speaking on the occasion, Sohail Aftab commended the services of Mr. Muhammad Saleem extending over more than two decades in Public Relations section. Muhammad Saleem expressed deep sense of gratitude to his senior officers and the staff as well for extending



cooperation to make his stay in NHA, a success. It's been a wonderful experience working here and I am going to

miss you all very much. I am taking along with me fond memories and I request all of you to stay connected

with me. Thank you once again for this wonderful party and wish you all the very best for future!

CTP raising awareness  
among bikers about  
use of safety helmet

RAWALPINDI: Ioing campaign are raising awareness about use of safety helmet among motorcyclists. According to City Traffic Officer (CTO) Taimoor Khan, CTP were running a special campaign aimed at raising awareness about traffic rules, road safety and use of safety helmet. A large number of road users were also briefed about traffic rules, road safety and use of helmets during the campaign. Mobile Education Units of CTP arranged special briefing sessions on road safety and use of safety helmets at different educational institutions and other public places in the city, he added. In order to make the campaign more effective and meaningful, traffic wardens and officers had also been issued special instructions, he said adding, Education Wing of Traffic police was making efforts to spread awareness so that the road journey could be made safe and sound. Special efforts were made to educate the road users regarding traffic rules and road safety, he added. The CTO urged the people to cooperate with traffic wardens as they were on the roads to facilitate them. A special squad was also available to help and facilitate the citizens on Helpline 1915, he added. He said, civilized nations always observed traffic rules. The citizens should have knowledge about road safety and traffic rules that must be observed on roads. All traffic issues could be resolved by observing traffic rules which were for the safety and protection of the road users, he said. Traffic signals should not be violated as such violation with negligent driving might lead to fatal accidents, he said and informed that the traffic police was also disseminating information on various roads and traffic signals in all tehils of the district in order to educate citizens about traffic rules, signals and the damages caused by traffic violations.—APP

Homage paid  
to Martyrs of  
Islam

DNA

RAWALPINDI: In order to pay homage to the martyrs of Islam, especially the martyrs who defended Palestine and Kashmir, a program titled "Martyrs of Islam, Axis of Islamic Unity" was organized in Khana Farhang Cultural Center, Islamic Republic of Iran, in Rawalpindi. The speakers who add esed mentioned the eternal martyrdom of martyr Haj Qasim Soleimani and paid glowing tribute to his services for the unity of the Muslim world. The notable guests also appreciated the courageous stand and strategy of the Supreme Leader of Iran, Sayyed Ali Khamenei, on the issue of Kashmir. Speaking at the event, Seyyed Muhammad Ali Hosseini, the Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Iran to Pakistan, said that martyr Qasim Soleimani believed that the integrity of Pakistan is actually the integrity of Iran, and if there is any kind of attack on Pakistan, the survival of Pakistan is supreme and he himself will not hesitate to shed his blood for it. The secret of Shaheed Soleimani's success was steadfastness and sincerity.

APHC to  
remind UN  
over Kashmir  
resolution

ISLAMABAD: Kashmiris across the Line of Control and world-over on Thursday reminded the United Nations (UN) of its forgotten commitment regarding their right to plebiscite to decide their future through a democratic process. Every year, Kashmiris observe January 5 as Right to Self-Determination to reaffirm their commitment to continue their struggle for freedom from Indian. It was on this day, the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) passed a resolution, guaranteeing impartial plebiscite to Kashmiris. "The question of the accession of the State of Jammu and Kashmir to India or Pakistan will be decided through the democratic method of a free and impartial plebiscite," the resolution said. "As the Kashmir dispute enters into 76th calendar year it is the responsibility of the UN and all the influential world governments to play their role to seek a peaceful solution of the lingering dispute awaiting final settlement," said senior All Parties Hurriyat Conference (APHC) leader, Shabbir Ahmad Shah in his message form Tihar Jail. He urged the UN Secretary General, Antonio Guterres, to take immediate notice of the systematic genocide of the Kashmiris by the Indian forces in Kashmir and put pressure on India to give the Kashmiri people the right to decide their political future by themselves.—APP

Water,  
hydropower  
projects  
under  
execution

ISLAMABAD: Water and Power Development Authority (WAPDA) is executing mega development projects both in the water and hydropower sectors worth Rs. 2,500 billion to ensure the food and energy security of the country. Sharing details of the mega projects, sources told APP here that these projects included Diamer Basha Dam, Mohmand Dam, Kurram Tangi Dam, Nai Gaj Dam, Dasu and Tarbela 5th Extension Hydropower Projects, etc. The under-construction projects were scheduled to be completed phase-wise from 2023 to 2029, they said. They said on completion of the projects, gross water storage capacity in the country would increase by 9.7 million acre feet (MAF) which would be sufficient to irrigate 3.5 million acres of land. In addition, these projects would also help double the hydel power generation capacity of WAPDA, they said. The sources said the water situation in Pakistan could only be improved by constructing more dams, conserving water, adopting modern irrigation techniques, and minimizing water evaporation losses. One more mega water reservoir after Diamer Basha Dam could bring a landmass, through which economic benefit worth \$ 10 billion per annum could be achieved. It is pertinent to mention here that per capita water availability in the country has come down from 5,650 cubic meter in 1951 to an alarming level of 908 cubic meters per annum.—APP

Dasu Project  
diversion system to  
be completed by May

ISLAMABAD: The "critical diversion system" of Dasu Hydropower Project (DHPP) will be completed by May 2023, as the China Gezhouba Group Company (CGGC), contractor of the main work, is leading the construction work of the project. According to Gwadar Pro, the Project management briefed Chairman WAPDA Lt Gen Sajjad Ghani (Retd) on Tuesday during his visit to DHPP, which is being constructed on the River Indus upstream of Dasu town in the Upper Kohistan district of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP). The construction work is continuing simultaneously on 12 different sites of the project, the official was informed, adding, "the critical diversion system will be completed in May 2023 while electricity generation from the project will commence by the end of 2026". The Chairman visited various sites of the project including diversion tunnels, the Stater dam area, and the project colony. During his visit to the project colony, the Chairman inaugurated the newly constructed office building of the project. China's CGICOP is executing the Project Colony and & Infrastructure package of the project. As per the detail of the project, CGGC is executing the construction RCC Dam and Allied Hydraulic Structures of the project; the construction of the underground Powerhouse and Allied Hydraulic Structures; the Right Bank Access Road from the Dam site to Utterghar; the relocation of Karakoram Highway RD 25+200 to RD 62+213. China Civil Engineering Construction Corporation (CCECC) is working on different parts of the construction of the Right Bank Access Road. Similarly, the construction of a 132 kV transmission line from Dubai to Dasu is being carried out by Power Construction Corporation of China Ltd. (PCCC). Zhongmei Engineering Group Ltd. is working at the resettlement site of the project.—APP

Al-Shifa becomes a clinical  
trial site in the region

China has adopted same model which was particularly highlighted in its fight against Covid-19 pandemic, he added

DNA

RAWALPINDI: The Al-Shifa Research Centre hosted its 2nd International Research Conference titled "Landscape of Clinical Trials in Pakistan" focusing on collaboration and integration for the rise of the clinical trial industry in Pakistan. The purpose of the conference, held at Al-Shifa Eye Hospital Rawalpindi, was to provide a comprehensive forum for experts and participants from the industry to exchange ideas and present a way forward for the promotion of clinical trial research in Pakistan. Chief guest Prof Dr. Muhammad Iqbal Choudhary, Director at the International Center for Chemical and

Biological Sciences (IC-CBS) Karachi and Coordinator General COMSTech highlighted the importance of promotion of the clinical trial industry which will lead to the development of the indigenous pharmaceutical industry and innovative medical devices in near future. He pointed out that instead of being a service provider, we can be innovators in this field with both economic benefits as well as health sector sustainability for our country. China has adopted the same model which was particularly highlighted in its fight against the Covid-19 pandemic, he added. President Al Shifa Trust Eye Hospital Maj Gen (R) Rehmat Khan shed light on the performances of the

Al-Shifa Research Centre and, highlighted the significance of clinical trials. He highlighted how the trust worked in bringing the clinical trials industry to Pakistan under Dr. Ume Sughra. He also mentioned services of the trust in recent floods including a donation of Rs60 million to the flood victims as well as providing primary medical care through free medical camps. Dean and Chief of Medical Services Al Shifa Trust Eye Hospital, Prof Dr Wajid Ali Khan, thanked Dr. Choudhary for showing the way forward with Al Shifa becoming a clinical trial site as Pakistan is being recognized in the international market as a region for conducting clinical trials which were previously limited to India in the region.

Seasoned researchers including Prof. Dr. Shahzad Ali Khan, VC and Dean Health Services Academy Islamabad; Prof. Dr. Tanwir Khaliq, Vice-Chancellor PIMS Islamabad; Dr. Sadia Asim, Director, Dow University of Health Science and Prof. Dr. Saima Saeed, Director Indus Hospital delivered keynote speeches. Mr. Asim Munir, GM of DRK Pharma Solutions; Mr. Muhammad Tanseer Ali, Country Lead Tigermed and Dr. Adnan Zia Shah, Metrics Research, were also among the notable figures. Researchers and attendees appreciated Al-Shifa Research Centre for organizing an informative and insightful event that provided a stepping stone towards the great potential of Pakistan for clinical trials.

## COMSTech lauds VC NSU Services

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Coordinator-General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation Standing Committee on Scientific and Technological Cooperation (COMSTech), Prof. Dr. M. Iqbal Choudhary, praised the services of Vice Chancellor National Skills University Islamabad (NSU) during the COVID-19 pandemic and popularizing skills education across the country. According to him, the world Skill has become a synonym for the NSU and its leadership. Notably, people across the country will remember the services of Prof. Mukhtar during COVID-19. He participated in more than 300 TV, radio, and general programs to apprise the



public regarding preventive measures for viral infections. Worth mentioning here is that the US Government recognized Prof. Mukhtar's services for viral research with a unique outstanding scientist's visa award. Prof. Iqbal

Choudhary also gave a prestigious COMSTech shield of appreciation to Prof. Muhammad Mukhtar, and both agreed that National Skills University Islamabad will serve as training partners for students from the OIC coun-



tries. Skills training will be through the digital platform and hands-on teaching-learning methodologies. Prof. Dr.

Mukhtar thanked the COMSTech Coordinator General for support towards popularizing technological

education in Pakistan and across the Muslim world, particularly the COMSTech members nations.



## Japan’s militarization plans brew troubles

Japan seems intent on stepping up unsettling efforts to strengthen its military presence in the Asia-Pacific region. According to a US Naval News website report on Tuesday, as well as two large warships dedicated to ballistic missile defense that it is building to replace the canceled land-based Aegis missile defense system, Japan plans to build two new destroyers equipped with the US’ Aegis missile system, increasing the number from eight to 10. That means that it will have more Aegis destroyers than the US Navy’s Seventh Fleet, which has nine Aegis destroyers stationed in Japan. The Aegis ship combat system is an integrated collection of sensors, computers, software, displays, weapon launchers and weapons deployed on all the US Navy’s cruisers and destroyers, except the three Zumwalt-Class stealth destroyers. To justify its militarization, which will overturn its postwar defense strategy, Japan has cited threats from Russia, the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea and, of course, China. According to the report, Japan has justified the need for more Aegis-equipped vessels with the claim that “Considering possible armed conflicts with China in the future, it is necessary to increase the number of Aegis destroyers to protect the fleet from Chinese anti-ship missile attacks”. Last month, the Japanese Cabinet approved three defense documents, the National Security Strategy, the National Defense Program Guidelines and the Mid-Term Defense Program, all of which, echoing the Joe Biden administration’s National Security Strategy, refer to China as Japan’s “biggest strategic challenge”. Of course, this is nothing but an excuse for Japan to let the military genie out of the bottle, which it has long hoped to do. The documents pave the way for Japan’s biggest post-war military build-up plan, under which Japan will spend 43 trillion yen (\$313 billion) over the next five years to strengthen its military, buying cruise missiles “capable of striking China” and developing hypersonic weapons, among other things. To match its growing military ambition, in mid-December Japan approved a record-high \$51 billion draft defense budget for fiscal year 2023, up 26.3 percent from the previous fiscal year, which roughly accounts for 2 percent of Japan’s GDP and breaks the 1 percent benchmark that had been maintained for six decades. Given that Japan has yet to truly repent for the war atrocities it committed in World War II, a right-leaning Japan that is breaking free of the constraints of its so-called pacifist Constitution should sound the alarm for all peace-loving people and countries in the region and beyond. Japanese politicians’ attempts to rebuild the country as an “Asian military and political power” through leveraging the strength of its alliance with the US are leading their country onto a dangerous road of militarization.

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## UK should straighten out its colonial past

The United Kingdom and Mauritius have begun talks on the sovereignty of the disputed Chagos Archipelago, Mauritian Prime Minister Pravind Jugnauth announced on Sunday in a New Year address, describing the latest developments on the Chagos issue as being “very encouraging”. The archipelago in the Indian Ocean was historically part of Mauritius’ territory but has been occupied by the UK since 1814. After Mauritius gained independence from the UK in 1968 following more than 150 years of colonization, it has long fought for the return of the archipelago to its territory. But the UK, which has a joint military base with the United States on Diego Garcia – the largest of the 60 small islands of the Chagos Archipelago – has rejected Mauritius’ rightful demand and continued to occupy the territory despite international support for the African country’s sovereignty claim. A 2019 International Court of Justice ruling backed the claim by Mauritius and said the UK should give up its “unlawful” administration of the islands. The decision by the United Nations’ highest court was followed by a UN General Assembly resolution in May 2019 that stressed, “The Chagos Archipelago forms an integral part of the territory of Mauritius”, calling on the UK to withdraw from it within six months. Yet it was not until November 2022 that UK Foreign Secretary James Cleverly announced that the UK and Mauritius had agreed to launch “constructive negotiations” on the disputed territory, on the premise that the joint UK-US military base will continue to operate regardless of the outcome of negotiations. The long-delayed settlement of the historical issue attests to denied justice that the UK owes to its former colony. One of the most aggressive countries in human history, the UK has invaded almost 90 percent of the UN recognized countries in the world, according to All the Countries We’ve Ever Invaded: And the Few We Never Got Round To by Stuart Laycock, which views the British empire’s incursion record as a whole. Yet rather than straighten out its colonial past, the UK continues to drag its feet on settling many of the territorial disputes left over from history through negotiations. Apart from Chagos, for example, the UK still occupies the Malvinas (Falkland) Islands and refuses to conduct talks over its sovereignty with Argentina that also claims them. This despite the UN Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf issuing a ruling in 2016 that confirms the extension of Argentina’s maritime territory to include the archipelago, and the Organization of American States in 2012 stating well-established and unconditional support for a peaceful resolution to the demand by Argentina for sovereignty over the islands. It would be in the interest of the UK to set straight its colonial past at an early date and abide by the spirit.

# Challenging China: Turkey walks a fine line on repressed Uighurs

**James Dorsey**

With Uighurs on their minds, more than half of Turks polled in multiple surveys over the past two decades express critical and/or negative attitudes towards China. In one of the latest polls, a survey conducted by the Center for Turkish Studies at Istanbul’s Kadir Has University concluded that only 27 percent view China positively. Meral Akşener, the leader of the nationalist Iyi or Good Party, one of the opposition parties aligned against the AKP, and Ankara’s mayor Mansur Yavaş, viewed as one of Mr. Erdogan’s potentially most serious challengers

An official visit to Xinjiang to assess the fate of Turkic Muslims in the troubled north-western Chinese Province is a risky proposition by any definition. Even so, it would be worth the risk if China and Turkey could agree on the terms of a visit. The problem is that the terms constitute a zero-sum game. China wins if it controls the program of a visit-

ing Turkish delegation as it does with whoever else is granted access to a region where in recent years, more than one million Turkic Muslims were reportedly incarcerated in reeducation camps dubbed vocational schools. “Why would we be a tool of Chinese propaganda?” Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu snapped at a recent news conference when asked about a visit to Xinjiang by Turkey’s ambassador in Beijing, Abdulkadir Emin Onen. “It’s been five years since (Chinese President) Xi (Jinping) proposed this. Why have you been preventing this delegation from visiting for five years? Why don’t you cooperate?” Mr. Cavusoglu said. The foreign minister conceded that “Turkish-Chinese ties have suffered over Beijing being disturbed by our attitude on the Turkic Uyghurs issue,” including a Turkish refusal to extradite to China Uighurs resident in the country. China and Turkey started discussing a Turkish visit in 2019. However, the talks were put on ice when China effectively closed to shield the nation from the Covid-19 pandemic. In an indication of the importance, both countries attribute to a possible visit, discussion of the terms restarted within weeks of China’s recent lifting of Covid-19 restrictions. By controlling Mr. Onen’s program, China is seeking to ensure that he walks away from his visit praising the Chinese administration of Xinjiang. Coming from Turkey, endorsement of China’s effort to Sinicise Islam and turn Uyghur identity into a folk tale would have particular significance. Turkey has long fashioned itself as the hub of a Turkic world that stretches from the Turkish Diaspora in Western Europe through the Balkans across the Caucasus and Central Asia into Xinjiang and a defender of threatened Muslim communities. Moreover, Turkey is home to the largest Uighur exile community. The blue flag of East Turkistan, as Uighurs describe Xinjiang, is banned in China but flies in shop windows and restaurants in Istanbul neighborhoods

heavily populated by the ethnic group. Mr. Cavusoglu’s rare public challenge of China could prove a first test for China’s newly appointed foreign minister, Qin Gang. China has yet to respond to Mr. Cavusoglu. A former ministry spokesperson, a deputy director-general of its information department, and most recently, ambassador to the United States, Mr. Qin made his name as a pioneer of China’s wolf warrior diplomacy involving confrontational and coercive responses to criticism of the People’s Republic. Positioning Turkey as unwilling to walk on a Chinese leash, Mr. Cavusoglu is brandishing the nationalist credentials of his ruling Justice and Development or AK Party (AKP) and President Recep Tayyip Erdogan in advance of a critical election later this year. With Uighurs on their minds, more than half of Turks polled in multiple surveys over the past two decades express critical and/or negative attitudes towards China. In one of the latest polls, a survey conducted by the Center for Turkish Studies at Istanbul’s Kadir Has University concluded that only 27 percent view China positively. Meral Akşener, the leader of the nationalist Iyi or Good Party, one of the opposition parties aligned against the AKP, and Ankara’s mayor Mansur Yavaş, viewed as one of Mr. Erdogan’s potentially most serious challengers, got significant traction on social media for commemorating the 1990 Baren Township Massacre during an armed clash between Uighur militants and Chinese security forces. Twenty-three people are believed to have died in the fighting. Mr. Erdogan is seeking a third term as president in an election scheduled for June 18, the centennial of the founding of the Turkish republic on the ruins of the Ottoman empire. Concerned that he could face the most serious challenge to date to his power, Mr. Erdogan uses every trick in the book to ensure that the election goes his way. Recent polls suggest that the AKP could win less than 30 per cent

of the vote. Challenging China on the Uighurs follows sabre rattling in Syria, where Mr. Erdogan again wants to intervene to subdue Syrian Kurds. At the same time, Turkey is engaging under Russian auspices with the regime of President Bashar al-Assad in a bid to open a pathway for the return of up to four million Syrian refugees in Turkey. Anti-migrant sentiment is a major topic in the election campaign. Mr. Cavusoglu’s refusal to “be a tool of Chinese propaganda” jars with the past acceptance by Turkey’s state-owned news agency, Anadolu Agency, and journalists working for other pro-government media, of Chinese paid and tightly controlled tours of Xinjiang designed to counter allegations of abuse against Turkic Muslims. Even so, a recent report by the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace noted that in the absence of much Turkish-language content in Chinese media that target foreign audiences, China “is now assertively developing new strategies to engage with local actors in Turkey.” The strategy emphasises China’s economic and commercial ties to Turkey at a time when the country is struggling with an inflation rate that peaked at about 80 per cent in 2022 but dropped last month to 64.7 per cent. It’s a strategy that may work. Chinese telecommunications giant Huawei, slated to build Turkey’s 5G network, has four times more Turkish followers on Twitter than the Chinese embassy in Ankara. Now and then, Turkey reasserts itself as a rare Muslim nation willing to tackle China publicly on the Uighurs. But, by and large, Turkey shines by mainly remaining silent. In the final analysis, domestic politics, rather than principled concern, determines if and when Turkey takes on China. This year, elections are the driver. As a result, Uighur exiles fear that their utility is temporary and that they ultimately could be sacrificed on the altar of Turkish-Chinese economic relations. Said one exile: “Our existence is tenuous. Our space in Turkey is shrinking.”

# The Hero of Fight against Terrorism Maj. Gen Qasem Soleimani

**Syed Mohammad Ali Hosseini**

Three years had passed and now many speak about the “Soleimani School of Thought”, he was a popular commander at the time, and is a legend and a personality beyond history right now. His supporters regard his assassination as the climax of his story and an inevitable end and goal to his devoted life. They say that his martyrdom is more destructive to those against whom he fought and more inspiring to those who loved him than his alive. being a philanthropist and a social and civil activist specially regarding the development plans



Three years ago, at the dawn of the January 3rd General Lieutenant Qasem Soleimani, the commander of the Quds Force of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, along with his companion Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis and several of their retainers, were targeted by a US drone strike at the Bagdad airport. Shortly after the attack, the then president of the US, Donald Trump blatantly confessed to be involved in this terrorist action and to acknowledge ordering and commanding the assault. That night Gen. Soleimani was supposed to call on some Iraqi officials and to talk about the ongoing events in the region. Therefore, the delegation traveled to Iraq based on an official invitation to call on Iraq prime minister. The assassination of Gen. Soleimani, except being a state terrorism against a high-ranking official military staff of the military forces of an independent country, was an obvious breach of international law and an act of aggression. Also, this was a hazardous maneuver that could negatively affect peace and security in whole of the region by eliminating a successful commander in fight against terrorism as well as by other consequences driven from the terrorist attack. In another point of view, the terrorist action was tantamount to breach of Iraqi sovereignty and an act of aggression against two members of the UN. This year is the third anniversary of the assassination of this valiant hero. It was just three years ago that Gen. Soleimani formally declared the termination of ISIS, and his dream came true when, at the time this terrorist group was totally enervated and at the edge of undermining. The bravery that Soleimani showed in the fight against extremism and terrorism catalyzed the annihilation of the ISIS in the region and

brought peace and security not only to the already warstricken geography of the Middle East, but also for the whole countries throughout the world including US and Europe. Soleimani reacted to the crisis of ISIS in the circumstances where the whole region had already been swept away by this atrocious terrorist group of ISIS as a result of which some countries were close to collapse. Many believe that if Soleimani had not mobilized an initiative against extremism and terrorism, the map of the region was not the way it’s today. He undertook commanding counter-terrorist operations at a time when ISIS declared the Islamic Caliphate and committed the most hideous and unprecedented crimes in the human history against civilians and armies. Here comes up a contradictory situation where, in different situations, the prevalence of ISIS and some other terrorist groups is revealed to be an American tactics. Trump’s confessions, among others, in the electoral campaigns, regarding the origin of ISIS is an evident example. Soleimani was a well-known hero against terrorism who spent his whole life combating terrorism and aggression. So what is the case? Trump: we created the ISIS. Aftermath, he same Trump said I personally ordered the attack to Gen. Soleimani. The answer could be found in the double standard politicization adopted by America. The assassination of Gen Soleimani was an obvious breach of international law, human right, and morality that can no doubt bring about the international responsibility of the perpetrators. Many jurists, diplomats, politicians and the experts of the international law daresay that the illegal assassination of a high-ranking military staff of a country is a threat to the peace and security of the whole region and the world. Because with the absence of the prudent commanders

who have long experiences in fighting against terrorism, there still remains anxiety about the resurgence of the extremist groups like ISIS (Daesh) in the region. Moreover, the terrorist strike against him is an obvious violation of international law, human rights as well as an act of aggression against the sovereignty of another country. The act is regarded as one of the evident examples of state terrorism committed by a country against another and being accepted formally by high-ranking officials of the country and via the confession of the perpetrator himself in front of the cameras. Three years had passed and now many speak about the “Soleimani School of Thought”, he was a popular commander at the time, and is a legend and a personality beyond history right now. His supporters regard his assassination as the climax of his story and an inevitable end and goal to his devoted life. They say that his martyrdom is more destructive to those against whom he fought and more inspiring to those who loved him than his alive. being a philanthropist and a social and civil activist specially regarding the development plans and aiding the poverty, flood and quake stricken people in different regions, he was truly favored by many even his critics. The spontaneous overflow of people in the funeral ceremonies is a proof to the claim. He was committed to work for the human dignity and for the betterment and welfare of the people regardless of race, religion, nationality and their life style. In a video getting viral in the social media, he strictly addresses those who encounter different lifestyles regarding women coverage, arguing that they are our sisters and daughters and our human resources. Three years ago, he was brutally and unmanly assassinated in another country. Time and history are the best teacher and

–The writer is the ambassador of the I. R Iran to Pakistan



## Briefs

## Forces kill 11 terrorists...

FROM PAGE 01

Army embraced martyrdom while four terrorists were killed during an intelligence-based operation in Bannu district, the military said. The Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) in a statement said that security forces conducted the IBO in general area Jani Khel of Bannu during which intense fire exchange took place between the troops and terrorists. "Own troops effectively engaged the terrorists' location. Resultantly, four terrorists got killed. Weapon and ammunition was also recovered from the killed terrorists," the statement added.

## Talks with Afghan Govt, not terrorists

FROM PAGE 01

fraud as he has not received any bullet in his body but pretended to get four shots. Sanaulah said it is fact that the wound heals in two weeks if there is no fracture by the reason of the bullet. The interior minister confirmed that there is footage from every angle of the Wazirabad incident and he is assured that the accused Naveed did the attack himself and no one was behind him. He added that only one shot was fired from the container and it hit Muazzam. Sanaulah said former Prime Minister Imran Khan sold the entire Toshakhana and now running an anti-national campaign about Pakistan's default. He said the Punjab government is active in covering up the crimes of Farah Gogi and his followers. He added that property worth 7 to 8 billion rupees has been registered in the name of Farah Gogi. The interior minister announced that the Ministry of Religious Affairs has compiled an authentic version of the Holy Quran which will be used as a reference at all levels. He added that the authentic version of the Holy Quran will also be approved by the Provincial Quran Board. On this occasion, Religious Affairs Minister Mufti Abdul Shakoor said protecting the Holy Quran is their religious duty.

## Islamabad, Beijing agree ....

FROM PAGE 01

All-Weather Strategic Cooperative Partnership. The Prime Minister and the Chinese Premier exchanged New Year greetings, noting that bilateral relations had grown to new heights in 2022, and agreeing to maintain the steady momentum of bilateral cooperation in 2023. Recalling his visit to China in November last year and wide-ranging conversations with Chinese President Xi Jinping and Premier Li, Shehbaz Sharif underscored Pakistan's commitment to fostering closer relations with China, and reiterated Pakistan's unstinting support on China's core interests. They also discussed regional issues of mutual interest. The Prime Minister emphasized Pakistan's unswerving focus on timely progress of China-Pakistan Economic Corridor projects and assured the Chinese Premier that Pakistan would provide a completely secure and conducive business environment for Chinese investors. Premier Li Keqiang assured the Prime Minister that China views Pakistan not only as a strategic friend but as a country whose stability and economic welfare is of utmost importance to the region and to China. He said China would always stand in solidarity with Pakistan. Noting the International Conference on Climate Resilient Pakistan being held in Geneva on Monday, the Prime Minister briefed Premier Li on the latest progress in post-flood reconstruction and rehabilitation in Pakistan and conveyed Pakistan's profound gratitude for China's prompt and generous support for the flood-affected people. Premier Li assured the Prime Minister of China's continued support for Pakistan's reconstruction efforts and the success of the Conference.

## Australian HC wishes Pak team ahead of Australia tour

HC also met with U19 Women's squad who are also practicing in Karachi for the inaugural ICC U19 Women's T20 World Cup scheduled to take place in South Africa later this month

## DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Australian High Commissioner to Pakistan, Neil Hawkins met Pakistan National Women's Cricket Team today in Karachi and wished them good luck ahead of their tour of Australia. Starting from Friday 16 January, hosts and reigning champions Australia will host Pakistan National Women's Cricket Team for an ODI and a T20I series scheduled in Brisbane, Sydney, Hobart and Canberra. The ODIs are part of the 2020-2025 ICC Women's Championship. Speaking at the event, the High Commissioner said, 'It is a great privilege to meet Pakistan National Women's Cricket Team today. Our countries share a passion for cricket. I wish the team a fantastic stay in Australia. They will receive a very warm Australian welcome. We expect some fabulous cricket.' The High Commissioner also invited fans and visitors from Pakistan to be part of the series and Pakistan Cricket Board's #BackOurGirls campaign. 'Australia is committed

to promoting inclusivity and gender equality in sports and would love to see the talented women I met today go head-to-head with the Australian women's team,' the High Commissioner added. The High Commissioner also met with Pakistan U19 Women's squad who are also practicing in Karachi for the inaugural ICC U19 Women's T20 World Cup scheduled to take place in South Africa later this month. 'The Australian High Commission has been supporting under-19 girls' cricket in Pakistan since 2016 as we believe cricket and other sports can help tear down barriers and stereotypes,' he said. The captain of the Pakistan Women's Cricket Team Bismah Maroof said, 'We had a good 2022 year, where we won five of the six ICC Women's Championship matches. We are looking forward to playing a competitive series in Australia. The series against Australia will provide an opportunity to players to express their talent on the field and make new fans in the tour Down Under,' she added. The Pakistan National Women's Cricket Team Manager Ayesha Ashhar



said, 'I am positive that the squad assembled here under Bismah Maroof shall give a good account of itself on the forthcoming tour, not

only on the field of play but also in terms of winning friends through great display of skills, discipline and sportsmanship.' The Pakistan Na-

tional Women's Cricket Team held a seven-day camp in Karachi and will be flying from Karachi to Brisbane from Karachi on 6 January.

## Tearful Raducanu suffers injury scare ahead of AO

## SPORT DESK

AUCKLAND: Former US Open champion Emma Raducanu exited an Auckland warm-up tournament injured and in tears on Thursday, just over 10 days before the Australian Open starts. The 20-year-old Briton, who stunned the tennis world when she won the US Open in 2021 as a qualifier, retired with an ankle injury at the start of the third set against Viktoriya Kuznetsova in the last 16. Raducanu, who has suffered a series of injuries since her New York triumph, won the first set 6-0 before losing the second 7-5. She then received treatment before declaring that she could not continue. The Australian Open starts on January 16, leaving the world number 78 facing a race to be fit in time. Veteran Venus Williams was another high-profile casualty on a rain-marred day at the Auckland Classic. The



42-year-old American said it had been "more about surviving" than tennis after she blew a 5-3 third-set lead against China's unseeded Zhu Lin. United States teenager Coco Gauff, the top seed in Auckland and emerging face of women's tennis, meanwhile marched relentlessly on.

On another day of weather disruptions in which the outdoor matches were concluded indoors, Williams was outlasted by Zhu in a match badly drawn out by rain stoppages. "Outside it was really tough, it was rainy, windy. It was tennis, but it was more about surviving instead of playing

great," said Williams, a wildcard for the Australian Open. "Indoors it was completely different but I got to hit a lot of balls, so that's important." The seven-times Grand Slam champion was eyeing her first quarter-final berth since 2019 but her serve was broken twice in the closing stages as the 28-year-old Zhu took command to win 3-6, 6-2, 7-5. "Being the first match (of the day) is like being a guinea pig. I was the first one out there and seeing what happens," said Williams. In the quarter-finals Zhu will face Gauff, who beat 2020 Australia Open winner Sofia Kenin 6-4, 6-4. The 18-year-old Gauff avenged a loss the only other time the Americans clashed - at the Australian Open three years ago when Kenin claimed the title. In the first set Gauff raced to a 4-1 lead before Kenin began to fire. The second set went with serve until Gauff's critical break at 5-4.

## Ronaldo should address Saudi issues

LONDON: Cristiano Ronaldo should use his platform to speak about human rights issues in Saudi Arabia, says Amnesty International. Ronaldo, 37, has signed a lucrative deal reportedly worth more than £177m per year with Saudi club Al Nassr until 2025. Amnesty say Ronaldo's signing is part of a "wider pattern of sportswashing". The Portuguese striker called Saudi Arabia an "amazing country" as he was unveiled by Al Nassr on Tuesday. Saudi Arabia has invested heavily in sporting events, backing the break-away LIV Golf series, hosting world title boxing fights and a Formula One grand prix, while the country's Public Investment Fund backed a takeover of Premier League club Newcastle United in 2021. However, Saudi Arabia has also been accused of human rights abuses and women's rights campaigners have been imprisoned, despite some reform under crown prince Mohammed bin Salman, such as an end to the ban on women driving. Western intelligence agencies believe the crown prince ordered the murder of journalist Jamal Khashoggi in 2018 - which he denies. "Instead of offering uncritical praise of Saudi Arabia, Ronaldo should use his considerable public platform to draw attention to human rights issues in the country," Dana Ahmed, Amnesty's Middle East researcher, said. "Saudi Arabia regularly executes people for crimes including murder, rape and drug smuggling. On a single day last year, 81 people were put to death, many of whom were tried in grossly unfair trials. "The authorities are also continuing their crackdown on freedom of expression and association, with heavy prison sentences handed down to human rights defenders, women's rights activists and other political activists. "Cristiano Ronaldo should not allow his fame and celebrity status to become a tool of Saudi's sportswashing. He should use his time at Al Nassr to speak out about the myriad of human rights issues in the country." - Agencies

## Lazio fans racially abuse Umtiti

ROME: France international Samuel Umtiti reportedly left the pitch in tears after he and Lecce teammate Lameck Banda suffered racist abuse from visiting Lazio fans in Italy's Serie A on Wednesday. The referee stopped the game in the second half because of racist taunts "coming from the visitor sector occupied by Lazio supporters", Italian news agency Ansa said. Cameroon-born defender Umtiti, who won the 2018 World Cup with France and is on loan at Lecce from Barcelona, was the primary target of the abuse. Lazio fans also hurled racist insults at Zambian international Banda during the first half, Ansa reported. Lecce president Savero Sticchi Damiani said that the referee halted the game and after stadium announcers called for the abuse to stop, "Umtiti asked that the match resume". The 29-year-old Umtiti left the pitch in tears at the end of the match and also a standing ovation from the Lecce crowd, according to Italian media. "He wanted to respond on the pitch

to the insults. He reacted like a true champion," newspaper Gazzetta dello Sport quoted Damiani as saying. Lecce, who won 2-1, afterwards praised their fans for responding to the abuse by chanting Umtiti's name. "The racist insults were drowned out by the cheers of encouragement for our champion!" the club said on Twitter, along with the hashtag in English #KeepRacismOut. FIFA president Gianni Infantino also threw his support behind Umtiti and Banda. "Let's shout it loud and clear: NO TO RACISM! May the huge majority of fans, who are good people, stand up to shut up all the racists once and for all!" he wrote in an Instagram post. This is by no means the first case of racist abuse in Italian football, particularly among clubs that have connections to the country's far right. Fascist fan groups are common across Italy. Lazio's ultras group the "Irriducibili" have hardcore supporters with ties to the extreme right that stretch back to at least the 1970s. - DNA

## Mbappe named highest earning footballer of 2022

LONDON: In 2022, there were many major sporting events that fans had their eyes on, with the FIFA World Cup being the main attraction at the end of the year. During the World Cup, many international stars were under the spotlight, as Mbappe vs. Messi final showdown delighted the fans. Despite losing the FIFA World Cup final to Messi-led Argentina, French star Kylian Mbappe had a consolation title, being the highest-earning footballer of 2022, according to Forbes. Lionel Messi and Cristiano Ronaldo followed the French star on the top earners' list. The list also included unexpected names like 38-year-old Spanish veteran midfielder Andres Iniesta and Real Madrid's Belgian star Eden Hazard. Kylian Mbappe became the highest-earning footballer of 2022 with total earnings of \$128 million, \$110 million of which was earned on-field. The Paris-Saint Germain (PSG) star attacker rose three spots in the list as he was placed fourth in 2021 with approximately \$43 million. The 24-year-old World Cup finalist topped the list in front of his teammate Lionel Messi. Lionel Messi, who became the second-highest-paid player of 2022, definitely left his mark in the past year. He bagged his maiden FIFA World Cup with Argentina in Qatar 2022 to secure the only "prize" missing from his trophy room. With the historic final win against France, he now owns every top-tier title, including the Copa America, UEFA Champions League, UEFA Super Cup and FIFA Club World Cup. Messi earned \$120 million to keep his spot on the list for 2022, as he also placed second with \$110 million the previous year. Cristiano Ronaldo recently signed a massive deal with Saudi club Al-Nassr after leaving Manchester United, placed third

on 2022's highest-earning player list with \$100 million. The 37-year-old earned just \$60 million of the sum off-field and became the record holder of 2022 in this field. He moved down significantly on 2022's top earners' list after topping 2021's list with \$125 million.

## Neymar Jr.

Neymar Jr. is the third PSG player on 2022's top-earning players list. The 30-year-old Brazilian, who joined the Parisians with an all-time record fee of 222 million from Barcelona in 2017, became the fourth highest-paid player of 2022. Neymar earned \$87 million and moved down one notch from the previous year's list, in which he was third with \$95 million.

## Mohamed Salah

Liverpool's Egyptian star Mohamed Salah earned \$53 million in 2022 to be placed fifth on the list. The 30-year-old, who joined Liverpool from Serie A side Roma in 2017, netted 16 goals and made six assists in 25 matches despite Liverpool's sub-par performance this season. Salah held on to the fifth spot on the list he occupied the previous year.

## Erling Haaland

Rising Norwegian star Erling Haaland made one of the biggest transfer moves of the past year with his July 2022 move to Manchester City from Borussia Dortmund. Haaland placed sixth on 2022's top-earning players list with \$39 million.

## Robert Lewandowski

Barcelona's most popular signing of 2022 was possibly Robert Lewandowski's move from Bayern Munich in July. The Polish star scored 18 goals in 20 matches for Barca this season, making his transfer look worth it. The 34-year-old was paid \$35 million and became the seventh most-paid footballer of the year. He declined one spot from 2021's list, as the previous year, he earned about the same amount as 2022 but was placed sixth.

## British Envoy calls on PM Shehbaz

FROM PAGE 01

between our two countries shows immense potential of growth for the benefit of the two countries. The Prime Minister also commended the British High Commissioner for his proactive role in channelizing UK's support for relief and recovery of the victims of climate induced floods in Pakistan. He appreciated Dr Turner's role in bringing English cricket team to Pakistan after 17 years to play exciting cricket. The Prime Minister expressed his best wishes for the High Commissioner in his future endeavours. He also hosted a lunch in the honour of the outgoing High Commissioner.

## Palestine MOFA salutes ...

FROM PAGE 01

800,000 Palestinians. Currently, Israel holds around 4700 Palestinians in its unlawful detention centers, including 150 children and 34 women. The continued illegal detention of Palestinians and Israel's policy of mass incarceration are integral parts of the system of persecution and apartheid Israel maintains to preserve its colonial occupation of Palestine. Palestine will continue to reject and oppose these abhorrent practices and grave violations of international law and endeavor to free all Palestinian prisoners.

## 'Powerful' committee must probe bid ....

FROM PAGE 01

of the armed forces in his attack, Khan said that although the Pakistan Army was a top institution that serves its country, there are "black sheep" in every institute. "Now, I want the person who planned to have me killed to cooperate with the JIT. These people are intentionally obstructing justice," the ex-premier said. The PTI chief earlier blamed Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, Interior Minister Rana Sanaulah, and a senior military officer for allegedly being involved in his assassination bid. Khan further said that when Naveed, the suspect in the assassination bid, was arrested, his confessional video statement was released almost immediately "even when I had not reached the hospital after getting shot at". The PTI chief said that Naveed claimed he was working alone. "He was programmed to say this." The ex-premier minister claimed that the suspect was asked to say that he was working alone as if there had been someone aiding him, then he could not be called a "religious fanatic". Khan said the police quickly recorded the video statement of the suspect and disseminated it among "journalists and television channels" who work against the PTI.

## MPA to vote for Elahi

FROM PAGE 01

Park, who would give a vote of confidence to Parvez Elahi. He said that independent MPA Bilal was earlier in Hamza Shehbaz's camp and voted for him. He further said the MPA also endorsed PTI's vision after meeting Imran Khan and the Waraich family would soon formally join the ranks in PTI. Fawad went on to say that his inclusion in the party would increase one vote in the Punjab Assembly. On this occasion, independent MPA Bilal vowed to follow the ideology of PTI, adding that he was happy to join PTI. Bilawal stated that he would do politics according to the vision of Imran Khan and would vote for Chief Minister Punjab.



## Conte praises Spurs character after Palace win

## WEB DESK

LONDON: Antonio Conte praised Tottenham's character after they bounced back from their demoralising defeat to Aston Villa by reviving their top-four challenge with a 4-0 win over Crystal Palace. Spurs were without several key players at Selhurst Park but moved two points behind fourth-placed Manchester United thanks to a superb second-half display. The outstanding Harry Kane scored twice and created a goal for Son Heung-min, and the performance delighted Conte, whose recent negative demeanour has suggested he will need

to think long and hard before deciding to extend his contract before it expires at the end of the season. "It's always important to get three points and have this type of win," Conte said. "This brings confidence. The game against Aston Villa, after a good first half, we conceded the goal and our confidence dropped a lot and to recover in two or three days after a defeat at home where we are expected to win, and to go again, was not easy. The response was really good. My players showed great character, great personality." It was the first time Spurs had opened the scoring in 11 games. Conte's style of play has drawn criticism

and supporters have reacted to the team's disappointing form by calling for the chairman, Daniel Levy, to resign. However, while there were more "Levy Out" chants during the win over Palace, the performance suggested Conte's team will be in good shape when they face Arsenal and Manchester City later this month. Conte hopes that Richarlison, Dejan Kulusevski and Rodrigo Bentancur will return from injury for those games. "We know we face Arsenal and Man City, the two title contenders for this Premier League," the Spurs manager said. "To arrive with a good win is really important. I hope to

recover players who are injured. We are talking about important players. I hope in these 10 days to have all the players available: Richarlison, Kulu, Bentancur." Conte praised performances from the young duo of Oliver Skipp and Bryan Gil before going on to hail Kane, who now scored 264 goals for Spurs, only two behind Jimmy Greaves' club record. "We are talking about a world-class striker and he is going to beat every record with the goals," said Conte. "In the difficult moments you know Harry is on the pitch, ready to fight, ready to help teammates, ready to sort the situation with goals and assists."



## Briefs

## Baku, Tashkent eye boosting trade

BAKU: Azerbaijan and Uzbekistan have discussed joint measures to expand trade, economic, and investment cooperation, Azernews reports. The discussion took place during the meeting between Uzbek Foreign Minister Bakhtiyor Saidov and Azerbaijani Ambassador Huseyn Guliyev. During the meeting, the parties noted that thanks to the regular and fruitful dialogue at the highest level, Uzbek-Azerbaijani relations of strategic partnership and multifaceted cooperation are developing dynamically in all directions. The parties considered the schedule of planned events, including the next meeting of the joint intergovernmental commission on cooperation between Azerbaijan and Uzbekistan, as well as the next round of political consultations through the foreign ministries of the two countries. Additionally, the sides discussed the implementation of joint projects in the automotive, petrochemical, energy, and agricultural sectors. Diplomatic relations between Azerbaijan and Uzbekistan were established on October 2, 1995. The embassy of Azerbaijan in Uzbekistan was established in August 1996, while the embassy of Uzbekistan in Azerbaijan was opened in July 1998. The friendly relations between the two countries are based on shared values and historical ties, as well as a number of joint statements and agreements signed during bilateral visits and meetings.—Agencies

## Najib petitions UN for relief in case

NEW YORK: Malaysia's former Prime Minister Najib Razak on Thursday petitioned the UN seeking relief in a multi-million dollar corruption case. Najib filed a petition with the UN Human Rights Council's Working Group on Arbitrary Detention (UNWGAD) "asking for a release or retrial" following a decision by Malaysia's apex court last year sending him to prison for 12 years. He is serving the term in Kajang Prison, located in the Sungai Jelok area of Selangor province. His lawyer Muhammad Shafee Abdullah said: "Najib was asking the UNWGAD panel, comprising five experts on international justice, to rule that the Federal Court's dismissal of his appeal on Aug 23, 2022 was unjust and flawed, and violated his basic rights as well as the Federal Constitution." "The (Malaysian) Federal Court proceedings failed to accord him a reasonable opportunity to argue his case and denied his lawyers adequate time to prepare it.—DNA

## France to deliver light combat tanks to Ukraine

PARIS: France will supply Ukraine with light battle tanks, the French presidency said on Wednesday after a phone call between the French and Ukrainian leaders, as Kyiv still fights a war against Moscow. According to a statement by the Elysee, Emmanuel Macron said the phone conversation with his Ukrainian counterpart Volodymyr Zelenskyy focused on the conditions of military assistance to Ukrain. Paris decided to deliver "French-made light combat tanks for the first time," the statement said. The exact date or details for the delivery of AMX 10-RC light battle tanks have not been specified in the statement. The leaders also decided to make the conference of solidarity organized in Paris on Dec. 13 operational. In this context, "France will deliver 63 high-power electric generators in the coming days as well as five million LED bulbs," the Elysee statement said. A statement revealed in December by the French parliament indicated that Ukraine requested military equipment and instruments, including Leclerc tanks. The French ambassador to Ukraine, Etienne de Poncins, said for such matters.—Agencies

## Israel's new govt unveils plan to weaken Supreme Court

"These reforms will strengthen the judicial system and restore public faith in it," Levin said in a televised statement.

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM: Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's justice minister has unveiled a plan to overhaul the country's judicial system and weaken the country's Supreme Court. Critics have accused the government of declaring war against the judiciary, saying the plan announced on Wednesday will upend Israel's system of checks and balances and undermine democratic institutions by giving absolute power to the most right-wing coalition in Israel's history. Justice minister Yariv Levin, a confidant of Netanyahu and longtime critic of the Supreme Court, presented his plan a day before the justices are to debate a controversial new law on Thursday that allows a politician convicted of tax offences to serve as a Cabinet minister.

"The time has come to act," Levin said of his plan to overhaul the court. His proposals call for a series of sweeping changes aimed at curbing the powers of Israel's high court, including by allowing legislators to pass laws the court has struck down and effectively deemed unconstitutional. Levin laid out a law that would empower the country's 120-seat parliament, or Knesset, to override Supreme Court decisions with a simple majority of 61 votes. He also proposed that politicians play a greater role in the appointment of Supreme Court judges and that ministers appoint their own legal advisers, instead of using independent professionals. Netanyahu's ultra-Orthodox and ultranationalist allies have also said they hope

to scrap Supreme Court rulings outlawing Israeli outposts on private Palestinian land in the occupied West Bank. They would also seek to allow for the protracted detention of African asylum-seekers and make official the exclusion of the ultra-Orthodox from the country's mandatory military service. Levin argued that the public's faith in the judicial system has plummeted to a historic low and said he plans to restore power to elected officials that now lies in the hands of what he and his supporters consider overly interventionist judges. "These reforms will strengthen the judicial system and restore public faith in it," Levin said in a televised statement. "That's not democracy." In a speech Wednesday

ahead of Levin's announcement, Netanyahu appeared to back his justice minister by vowing to "implement reforms that will ensure the proper balance between the three branches of government". Since being indicted on corruption charges, Netanyahu has campaigned against the judicial system. He denies all charges, saying he is the victim of a witch hunt orchestrated by a hostile media, police and prosecutors. Levin said his plan to overhaul the Supreme Court is "not connected in any way" to Netanyahu's trial. The planned overhaul has already drawn fierce criticism from Israel's attorney general and political opposition, though it is unclear whether they will be able to prevent the far-right government from

racing forward. Yair Lapid, former prime minister and head of the opposition, said he will fight the changes "in every possible way". Recent opinion polls by the Israel Democracy Institute found a majority of respondents believe the Supreme Court should have the power to strike down laws that conflict with Israel's Basic Laws, which serve as a sort of constitution. "It will be a hollow democracy," Amir Fuchs, a senior researcher at the Israel Democracy Institute think-tank, said of the proposed changes. "When the government has ultimate power, it will use this power not only for issues of LGBTQ rights and asylum-seekers but elections and free speech and anything it wants," Fuchs said. "We are already

in a very fragile situation when we talk about human rights and our constitutional foundations because we have almost no checks and balances." As part of negotiations to form the current government, Israel's parliament last month changed a law to allow someone convicted and on probation to serve as a Cabinet minister. That paved the way for Aryeh Deri, the leader of the ultra-Orthodox Shas party, to serve half a term as the minister of health and interior affairs, before becoming finance minister. He will also hold the post of deputy prime minister. Deri was convicted of tax fraud and given a suspended sentence last year. On Thursday, the Supreme Court is expected to hear petitions against Aryeh Deri serving as minister.—Agencies



ISLAMABAD: Secretary Senate, Muhammad Qasim Samad Khan exchanging views with Ibrahim Almadani, Ambassador of Jordan at Parliament House. —DNA

## Israel kills Palestinian teen as West Bank brutality continues

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM: A 16-year-old Palestinian boy was killed by Israeli fire during a raid in the occupied West Bank city of Nablus on Thursday, local authorities said. The Palestinian Health Ministry announced, "Amer Abu Zeitoun, 16, was killed by a bullet in the head fired by the occupation (Israeli) soldiers during the aggression on Nablus at dawn today." The official Palestinian news agency Wafa said Abu Zeitoun was shot during clashes between Palestinians and Israeli soldiers during an army arrest raid. It was not immediately clear if Abu Zeitoun was taking part in the confrontations. Israel's military, however, claimed that "armed suspects fired toward the soldiers, who responded with live fire" during an operation to arrest two people. The Lions' Den, a local Palestinian armed group, said in a statement its members had been involved in the overnight clashes in the Balata refugee camp in Nablus. It was the latest bloodshed in the region that has seen Israeli-Palestinian tensions surge for almost a year. Nearly 150 Palestinians were killed by Israeli fire in the West Bank and east Jerusalem last year, according to Jerusalem-based rights group B'Tselem, making 2022 the deadliest since 2004, when 197 Palestinians were killed. The United Nations, meanwhile, offered similar figures in December, while other sources have reported over 220 dead. Zeitoun is the fourth Palestinian killed by Israeli forces in the West Bank since the start of the year. On Tuesday, 15-year-old Adam Essam Shaker Ayyad was killed in Bethlehem as Israel said its forces fired on people throwing rocks and Molotov cocktails. The inauguration last week of the most right-wing government in Israel's history, led by Benjamin Netanyahu, has sparked fears of a military escalation in the Palestinian territory occupied by Israel since the 1967 Six-Day War. Two of Netanyahu's extreme-right coalition partners, who have a history of inflammatory remarks about Palestinians, have taken charge of critical powers regarding the West Bank.—APP

## Europe's gas prices at pre-war levels as 2023 kicks

## NEWS DESK

BRUSSELS: Europe's gas prices have reached pre-war levels as the new year begins under unusually warm temperatures that have tamed consumer demand and fended off the need to tap into underground storage. Trading at the Dutch Title Transfer Facility (TTF), Europe's leading hub, closed on Wednesday at 65 per megawatt-hour (MWh) for deliveries scheduled for February. The last time gas prices at the TTF fell below the 70 MWh threshold was 16 February, eight days before Russia launched the invasion of Ukraine, when they hit 69.5 MWh. Since the start of the war, the TTF has gone through extreme ups and downs, culminating in an all-time high of 342 MWh in late August. After that peak, gas prices entered a slow but steady path of stabilisation, even though they remain exceptionally

elevated. The downward trend offers a respite for European households and companies, which have for months struggled to cope with volatile and unpredictable energy bills. The news comes as 2023 brings record-breaking winter temperatures across the continent, a phenomenon that experts said fits into the wider pattern of human-caused climate change. Germany, Poland, Hungary, Denmark, the Netherlands, France and Switzerland are among the countries experiencing extraordinarily balmy weather, forcing some ski resorts to close down. Residents of San Sebastián, in northern Spain, were this week photographed sunbathing by the beach, while the Czech Republic registered 19 degrees Celsius. The atmospheric conditions have curbed heating use and protected emergency stocks. Underground gas storage in the European Union, which is meant to cover the

increase in demand during winter, is currently at 83% of total capacity. "It's a fairly good position to be in at this time of the year," said a European Commission spokesperson on Wednesday. "Due to the mild weather that we've experienced, there has been lower demand than in previous years. And those stocks have remained at a high level. I think that's had a calming effect on the market and reduced volatility and driven down prices." Despite the respite, gas continues to be billed at abnormally high prices. In January 2021, Europeans were paying over 17 MWh for their gas supplies, almost four times less costly than Wednesday's trading. The European Commission has warned high energy prices have become a structural element of the European — and global — economy due to a persistent supply-demand mismatch that was triggered by the lifting of COVID-19 lockdowns and

was later exacerbated by Russia's war in Ukraine. This new normal has led the Commission and EU member states to heavily promote energy savings as the most powerful tool to control spiralling prices. The bloc has established unprecedented plans to reduce gas and electricity consumption in a bid to re-balance supply and demand, together with a hard-fought cap on gas prices, which will be activated only when the TTF exceeds 180 MWh for three consecutive working days. "Demand reduction is key here," Simone Tagliapietra, a senior fellow at Bruegel, a Brussels-based think tank, told Euronews. Tagliapietra welcomed the recent drop in gas prices but stressed that Europe should have "no space for complacency" as a cold snap could arrive overnight and drive prices further up. "It's about temperatures," the analyst said. "And storage not being used but actually refilled."

## Funeral held for Pope Benedict XVI

VATICAN: Thousands of mourners poured into St. Peter's Square on Thursday for the funeral of Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI. They were paying their final respects to the German theologian who made history by retiring and participate in a rare requiem Mass for a dead pope presided over by a living one. Thick fog enshrouded the Vatican before dawn as civil protection crews and police manned metal detectors and barricades to herd well-wishers into the square. Police had estimated some 100,000 would attend, higher than an original estimate of 60,000, Italian media reported. Pope Francis presided over the funeral, an event which drew heads of state and royalty despite Benedict's requests for simplicity and Vatican efforts to keep the first funeral for an emeritus pope in modern times low-key. Only Italy and Germany were invited to send official delegations, and German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier and Italian President Sergio Mattarella attended. Other heads of state and government decided to take the Vatican up on its offer and come in their "private capacity." Benedict's coffin was carried out from the basilica and placed before the altar as the faithful recited the rosary. The ritual itself was modeled on the code used for dead popes but with some modifications given Benedict was not a reigning pope when he died. After the Mass, Benedict's cypress coffin was to be placed inside a zinc one, then an outer oak casket before being entombed in the crypt in the grottoes underneath the basilica that once held the tomb of St. John Paul II before it was moved upstairs into the main basilica. Some 200,000 paid tribute to Benedict during three days of public viewing in St. Peter's Basilica, with one of the last ones Friar Rosario Vitale, who spent an hour praying by his body. He said Benedict had given him a special dispensation to begin the process of becoming a priest, which was required because of a physical disability.—Agencies

## Russian church head calls for Ukraine truce

KYIV, Ukraine: The head of the Russian Orthodox Church called Thursday for a 36-hour Christmas ceasefire in Ukraine at the end of this week, but his appeal looked unlikely to bring any breakthrough in halting the war that began last February with Russia's invasion. Moscow Patriarch Kirill suggested a truce from noon Friday through midnight Saturday, local time. The Russian Orthodox Church, which uses the ancient Julian calendar, celebrates Christmas on Jan. 7. That is 13 days later than in the Gregorian calendar. The proposal got short shrift from Kyiv officials, with Ukrainian presidential adviser Mykhailo Podolyak dismissing it as "a cynical trap and an element of propaganda." Kirill has previously justified Russia's war in Ukraine as part of a "metaphysical struggle" to prevent a liberal ideological encroachment from the West.—APP

## French hospital union calls for indefinite strike

PARIS: France's second-largest public sector hospital union has called for an indefinite strike starting on Jan. 10, 2023. On its website, FO-Sante called for "a radical change in health policy" and blames "government inertia" that has "only accelerated the closure of beds and departments." As a solution to the "overcrowded emergency rooms," the "recurring shortage of doctors" and the "great suffering" in psychiatry — among other complaints — the union is calling for no less than "200,000 new hires in the health, social and medico-social sectors." With the announced strike in hospitals, France is threatened with a second labor dispute in the new year. Since Dec. 26, general practitioners in France have also been on strike.—APP

## Pak-Iraq agree to increase bilateral ties

*Federal Minister Sajid Hussain Turi also raised the issue of Pakistanis imprisoned in different jails of Iraq due to minor crimes and lack of documents and demanded their early release*

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development (OP&HRD) Sajid Hussain Turi here on Thursday met with Iraqi Ambassador and reiterated his commitment to increase bilateral cooperation. Sajid Hussain Turi and Iraqi Ambassador to Pakistan, Hamid Lafta, were discussed bilateral relations and the problems of Pakistani pilgrims, especially those stranded in Iraq. Both expressed their desire to sign an MoU soon to increase bilateral cooperation to promote a comprehensive pilgrimage policy, employment

opportunities for Pakistanis in Iraq and to send Pakistani manpower to Iraq and curb illegal immigration. Federal Minister Sajid Hussain Turi also raised the issue of Pakistanis imprisoned in different jails of Iraq due to minor crimes and lack of documents and demanded their early release. The Iraqi ambassador formally invited the federal minister to visit Iraq in February to finalize the Hajj policy and export Pakistani manpower to Iraq, which he accepted. Both exchanged good wishes and hoped to further strengthen the bilateral relations between the two brotherly countries.—APP





## Briefs

US Embassy  
delegation  
visits  
Kartarpur  
Corridor

KARTARPUR: A delegation of US Embassy in Islamabad visited Kartarpur Corridor in Narowal under foolproof security. Political Officer of the US Embassy Kevin Chen and Deputy Public Affairs Officer Carl Rogers also accompanied the delegation. The Kartarpur administration welcomed the delegation and briefed them regarding Kartarpur Corridor. The guests were served food at Kartarpur Langar Hall and were given gifts of Kirpan and Sarupa by the management. The delegation also clicked memorable pictures at Kartarpur. On this occasion, Kevin Chan said that minorities enjoy full freedom and protection in Pakistan and Kartarpur Corridor is the best example of it. —DNA

ECP issues  
final notice  
to PML-N  
over party  
elections

ISLAMABAD: The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has issued a final show-cause notice to PML-N for not holding intra-party elections as promised. Chief Election Commissioner Sikandar Sultan Raja led the three-member ECP bench which heard its earlier notices issued to PML-N President Shehbaz Sharif and Ahsan Iqbal. The CEC remarked that how a party that could not hold its own elections would undertake the mammoth exercise of general elections. "You will hold party elections if we cancel your election symbol," he added. PML-N's lawyer Arshad Jadoon told the ECP that the party could not hold elections despite assuring the Commission that the vote will take place on December 30. He again assured the ECP bench that the PML-N will not hold party elections on January 31 and Ahsan Iqbal has already filed an application in the ECP in this regard. "Please, give us last chance," the PML-N lawyer begged the ECP. The CEC ordered to issue another show-cause notice for seven days to the party, declaring that this is the final notice. The CEC warned now they will issue notice for cancellation of the election symbol. "You are making excuses, sometimes it's coronavirus or other excuses," he added. —DNA

Myanmar  
to free  
over 7,000  
prisoners

ISTANBUL: The military junta in Myanmar will release over 7,000 prisoners to mark the Southeast Asian nation's Independence Day. A statement by the military rulers on Wednesday said it will free a total of 7,012 inmates from jails across the country for "the peace of mind of the public, being considerate of social circumstances, and in commemoration of the country's Independence Day," Myanmar Now news website reported. However, the junta administration added that those convicted on charges related to alleged "terrorism, the use of explosives, unlawful association, corruption, murder or drugs would not be among those released." Myanmar, earlier known as Burma, celebrates Independence Day every Jan. 4, the day when the Buddhist-majority nation declared independence from British rule in 1948. Reports said many people were already released, including former religious affairs minister under National League for Democracy (NLD), Thura Aung Ko. The Burmese military, locally known as Tatmadaw, launched a coup in Feb. 2021 which was met with widespread civic unrest. The junta repressed protests violently, despite UN warnings that the country had descended into civil war. The UN rights office has said at least 2,316 people, including 188 children, have been killed in Myanmar since the military seized power. —APP

## Miftah blames Ishaq Dar for orchestrating his removal

This is not the first time the two PML-N leader have openly confronted each other. Dar and Miftah have been in a verbal war since Miftah took over as the finance minister in April

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) leader Miftah Ismail has claimed that his successor Ishaq Dar ran campaigns against him for more than six months as he could not tolerate someone else from the party as the finance minister. In a podcast on a YouTube channel on Wednesday, the former finance minister said that Dar went on TV and claimed that he would bring the dollar rate to Rs160. He also claimed that the finance minister asked anchors to tweet against him and host TV programmes. The PML-N leader said Dar is closer to Nawaz Sharif because his son

is married to Nawaz's daughter and was with him in London. He added that Dar used to tell the PML-N supremo that he would bring the dollar rate and petroleum prices down. Miftah added that Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif was satisfied with his performance and did not want to replace him. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) deal was restored, and default risk had also minimised in my tenure, he said. The finance minister added that even though it was the PM's prerogative to remove him, the way it was done was not respectful. Nawaz Sharif called him to London and told him that he was being replaced in front of 12 people, Miftah said. On a question regarding Pakistan



Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) chief Imran Khan, Miftah said that there is no doubt that Imran is a good politician and no one is close to him when it comes to political

strategy and narrative building. However, he added that Imran lacks policy-making skills, adding that Imran wants to be the PM badly but does not know what to do after becoming the PM. Miftah-Dar row This is not the first time the two PML-N leader have openly confronted each other. Dar and Miftah have been in a verbal war since Miftah took over as the finance minister in April. Earlier in October, Miftah took a jab at Dar for slashing the petrol price by Rs12.63 per litre. In a tweet, the former finance minister expressed his displeasure over the government's decision not to increase the petroleum development levy (PDL) without IMF approval and termed it "reckless".

5.8-magnitude  
earthquake  
jolts parts of  
Pakistan

DNA

ISLAMABAD: A moderate earthquake of 5.8 magnitude jolted parts of Pakistan, confirmed the National Seismic Monitoring Centre (NSMC) on Thursday, with no loss of life so far. The seismic centre said that the earthquake tremors were felt in Gilgit, Jhelum, Chakwal, Pakpattan, Lakki Marwat, Nowshera, Swat, Malakand, Azad Kashmir, and other areas of the country. The epicentre of the earthquake was Afghanistan's Hindu Kush region, while its depth was 173 kilometres, according to the seismological centre. It shook not only parts of Pakistan but its neighbouring countries — India and Afghanistan — as well. A day earlier, a low magnitude earthquake measuring 4.3 on the Richter scale struck parts of Punjab at 3:04pm, the NSMC said. The tremors were felt in Lahore, Sheikhupura, Muridke, Farooqabad, Gujranwala, Sharaqpur, Jaranwala and other areas of the province. The epicentre of the quake was 20km away from Sheikhupura, the NSMC confirmed. —DNA

LHC bars  
ECP from  
removing  
Imran as PTI  
chief

DNA

LAHORE: The Lahore High Court (LHC) on Thursday barred the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) from removing Imran Khan as the chairman of the PTI in pursuance of the verdict issued in the Toshakhana case. The court issued the directives as it accepted Imran's petition against the ECP notice issued to debar him from heading the party. The LHC also issued notices to the attorney general of Pakistan and the ECP. The ECP had on Dec 5, 2022 initiated the process to remove Imran Khan as the PTI chairman in the light of its verdict in the Toshakhana case. He was disqualified under Article 63(1p) of the Constitution for making "false statements and incorrect declaration". It informed the Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Dec 13, 2022 that it had initiated proceedings to remove Imran from the post of PTI chairman.



ISLAMABAD: British High Commissioner Dr. Christian Turner pays a farewell call on Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif. —DNA

## William attacked me, says Prince Harry

NEWS DESK

LONDON: Prince Harry recounts in his new book how he was physically attacked by his older brother Prince William during an argument over his wife Meghan, according to an excerpt leaked days before the memoir's publication. In the latest salvo in the brothers' bitter feud, Harry says the alleged incident came after the heir to the British throne called Meghan "difficult", "rude" and "abrasive". Details of the row come as the British royal family braces for the publication on Tuesday of Harry's book "Spare". The undignified spat in 2019 — the year after Harry and Meghan married — allegedly saw William tackle his younger brother to the ground as they continued to argue. "He grabbed me by the

collar, ripping my necklace, and he knocked me to the floor. I landed on the dog's bowl, which cracked under my back, the pieces cutting into me," The Guardian newspaper quoted Harry's book as saying. Harry then told his older brother to leave. William looked "regretful, and apologised", Harry recalled, according to the left-leaning daily, which last year questioned the monarchy's role in modern Britain.



Quoting from the exchange between the two princes in the book, the report said William turned and called back: "You don't need to tell Meg about this." "You mean that you attacked me?" said Harry. "I didn't attack you, Harold," William responded, seeming to use a nickname for his brother. The revelation follows a string of other broadsides in the wake of Harry and Meghan's decision to quit royal duties in Britain in early 2020. A year after starting their new life in California in 2020, the couple told US chat show host Oprah Winfrey that Buckingham Palace failed to help Meghan when she felt suicidal and accused an unidentified member of the royal family of racism. And in a Netflix docuseries aired last month they blamed William's office for negative coverage, claiming it briefed the media against them.

## China calls for avoiding politicization of pandemic

BEIJING: Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson Mao Ning on Wednesday said China hopes that the focus will be on tackling the virus rather than politicizing the COVID-19 issue, and countries can step up solidarity and make joint efforts to defeat the pandemic at an early date. Mao made the remarks at a regular press briefing in response to U.S. State Department spokesperson Ned Price's remarks on China over COVID-19 information sharing. Mao said China has always put the people and their lives above

all else since the COVID-19 epidemic began, made the best effort to protect people's life and health, and effectively coordinated COVID-19 response with economic and social development. Noting that China has been sharing information and data with the international community in a responsible manner, Mao said according to incomplete statistics, China has carried out over 60 technical exchanges with the World Health Organization over the past three years. China continues to share the ge-

nome data of the virus via the Global Initiative on Sharing All Influenza Data (GISAID). Health experts from many countries have said that entry restrictions targeting China are unnecessary, Mao added. The Chinese government has taken responsible policies and measures, done its best and made important contributions to protecting Chinese people's lives and health, and promoting global solidarity against the pandemic and promoting world economic recovery and growth, said Mao. —APP

## Erdogan asks Putin for 'unilateral' ceasefire

Turkiye President accuses West of 'double standards'

ISTANBUL: Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan on Thursday pressed Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin to declare a "unilateral" ceasefire in Ukraine. "President Erdogan said that calls for peace and negotiations should be supported by a unilateral ceasefire and a vision for a fair solution," his office quoted Erdogan as telling Putin in a telephone call. Erdogan was due to follow the talks with a separate conversation with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy later on Thursday. Erdogan's call for a "unilateral" ceasefire followed a proposal earlier Thursday by Russia's spiritual leader Patriarch Kirill for an Orthodox Christmas truce this week. Meanwhile, Türkiye's President accused

the West of adopting "double standards" on freedom of media. Speaking at the 7th Anatolian Media Awards ceremony in the capital Ankara, Erdogan said: "Those accusing Türkiye of censorship remain silent about those (Twitter) doing real censorship. 'We are witnessing the same double standard in the process of a social media company, which has been recently taken over,' Erdogan said, referring to Twitter and the recent release of its internal files. He added: "With whom this social media platform, which supposedly never compromises on freedom and personal privacy, does business with, what it serves behind the scenes, and how it censors people and ideas that it does not like are

revealed one by one." He, however, said both international media organs and human rights organizations are silent on such scandals. "Those who usurped the right of communication of billions of people continue to talk about democracy and freedoms as if nothing happened," he said. Also criticizing those who embraced Fethullah Terrorist Organization (FETO) members who published state secrets while posing as journalists, he said they did not even hesitate to shut down media organs for much simpler matters. "We all know that those who have been criticizing democracy, human rights, and press freedom in Türkiye, how fascist they are when it comes to themselves and their interests," he said. —Agencies

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