



Islamabad POST

Saturday, January 14, 2023

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EU Parliament chief vows to review laws, trips

Detailed News On Page-07

EU should end its sanctions on Russia

Detailed News On Page-07



Fakhar Zaman scores hundred in 3rd ODI

Detailed News On Page-06



Briefs

'Will meet again': Dr. Turner bids farewell

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Christian Turner, who arrived in Pakistan as the British high commissioner, bid farewell to the country on Friday as his three-year diplomatic posting tenure has come to an end. In a tweet, the official said "it was a pleasure knowing you," adding that "we will meet again". He also posted a video on his official Twitter handle, wherein he can be seen packing his belongings that include traditional Pakistani attire and food, as well as a cricket bat. "Long live UK-Pakistan friendship," he said in the video message. Last month, Turner announced that he will leave Islamabad in January and assume a senior diplomatic position in London as the director general geopolitical (Political Director) at the UK's Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO). "Pakistan, I will miss you," he added in a tweet sharing the news.

Iran FM for restoration of Saudi ties

DNA

BEIRUT: Iran's Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian expressed hope that diplomatic ties between Tehran and Riyadh could be restored through dialogue between the two regional arch-rivals, as he visited Lebanon on Friday. Saudi Arabia cut ties with Iran in January 2016, after protesters attacked its embassy in Tehran and consulate in second city Mashhad following Riyadh's execution of Shiite cleric Nimr al-Nimr. Amir-Abdollahian told a news conference in Beirut that he hoped "diplomatic missions or embassies in Tehran and Riyadh will reopen within the framework of dialogue that should continue between the two countries". He also hailed a potential rapprochement between Iranian ally Syria and Turkey, after their defence ministers met last month. Iran and Saudi Arabia back opposing sides in various conflicts in the region, including in Syria.

FO probes Indian professor's claims

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Foreign Office has announced that it is investigating claims made by an Indian academic that the Pakistan High Commission had questioned her inappropriately. Criticising the timing and the manner in which the issue was raised, FO spokesperson Mumtaz Zahra Baloch said: "We attach high importance to proper etiquette and behaviour towards all visa and consular applicants. All our diplomatic staff is under strict instructions to conduct themselves professionally."

Holiday Notice

The offices of daily Islamabad POST shall remain closed on Saturday on account of weekly off therefore there will be no newspaper on Sunday.
— Editor

LB polls in Karachi, Hyderabad

ECP rejects Sindh govt's delay request

Earlier, Sindh govt had postponed the local bodies elections due to reservations of MQM-P, MQM to announces its strategy today

NAZIR SIYAL / DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) Friday decided to hold local government polls in Karachi and Hyderabad as per schedule on January 15, rejecting the Sindh government's request to postpone the elections. The decision was taken in a high-level meeting chaired by the Chief Election Commissioner Sikandar Sultan Raja in Islamabad. The ECP took stock of the situation after the provincial government's announcement. The MQM has convened an emergency meeting of its workers and is likely to announce its decision whether to take part in the elections or otherwise. PPP Co Chairman Asif Ali Zardari also called Maqbool Siddique and assured to him to consider MQM proposals. The PPP government in Sindh, in a surprise late-night move, had postponed the local bodies elections due to reservations of its coalition partner Muttahida Quami Movement-Pakistan (MQM-P) over existing delimitations. It was the fourth time that the polls were delayed by the Sindh government. The second round of LG elections was scheduled to take place on July 24 last year, but the Sindh government excused itself from holding

Continued on Page 06

MQM says no to ECP's decision

BUREAU REPORT

KARACHI: The Muttahida Quami Movement (MQM) on Friday rejected the decision of the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) to hold the Sindh local government (LG) polls on Jan 15. MQM leaders including Senator Faisal Sabzwari, former Law minister Farogh Nasim, Farooq Sattar and others held a press conference. Mr Sabzwari said the party was not fighting for itself but the people of Karachi. "The number of seats stipulated for Korangi Town are not proportional to the area's population," he added. While mocking the political opponents, Mr Sabzwari said those who wanted elections at the earliest were in a hurry to see themselves on the mayoral seat, adding that it would not benefit them. "We will go to every length for transparent delimitation,"

Continued on Page 06

President may ask PM to seek trust vote

Fawad Ch. says KP CM has also prepared the advice to dissolve the assembly

ALI HAMZA



LAHORE: PTI leader Fawad Chaudhry on Friday urged Governor Balighur Rehman to dissolve the Punjab Assembly (PA) forthwith instead of waiting for the 48-hour deadline to pass. He said it is likely that the President may ask Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif to take a trust vote. He said final decision in this regard shall be taken by PTI Chairman Imran Khan. "We advise the governor to not wait 48 hours and to sign the summary already," he said while speaking to the media outside former prime minister Imran Khan's Zaman Park residence in Lahore. The remarks come a day after Punjab Chief Minister Chaudhry Parvez Elahi, hours after regaining the confidence of a majority of lawmakers in PA, formally advised the governor to dissolve the provincial legislature. During media talk, Fawad said contact was being initiated with Leader of the Opposition in the PA Hamza Shahbaz to begin discussions over the caretaker setup and that Elahi would be forwarding him a few names. "We hope he (Elahi) sends the names of those

Continued on Page 06

PDM calls emergency meeting

DNA

KARACHI: The ruling Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) on Friday called an emergency meeting as consultations between the senior leadership continued through the night and remained resolute that the National Assembly will not be dissolved and the government will push to complete its term. The agreement of the ruling alliance comes after Punjab Chief Minister Pervaiz Elahi on Thursday night advised Governor Balighur Rehman to dissolve the provincial assembly, fulfilling the promise to Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan and paving the way for fresh elections. Shortly after the news broke, sources told The Express Tribune that the PDM leadership at the highest levels was making contacts to consult on the development. The leaders included PML-N

Continued on Page 06

Russia claims capture of Soledar; Kyiv dismisses claim

The capture of Soledar was made possible by the constant bombardment of the enemy by assault and army aviation, missile forces and artillery of a grouping of Russian forces," Moscow's defence ministry said

CENTRELINE REPORT

KYIV: Russia said on Friday that its forces had taken control of the town of Soledar in eastern Ukraine, claiming Moscow's first big battlefield gain in half a year, but Kyiv said its troops were still fighting in the town. Media could not immediately verify the situation in Soledar, a salt mining town that has been the focus of relentless Russian assault for days. If confirmed, Russia's capture of the town would at last give Moscow a trophy for one of the bloodiest campaigns of the war, following major battlefield setbacks throughout the second

half of 2022. Kyiv and the West have played down its significance, saying Moscow sacrificed wave upon wave of soldiers and mercenaries in a pointless fight for a bombed-out wasteland, unlikely to affect the wider war except insofar as the huge losses have sapped manpower on both sides. "The capture of Soledar was made possible by the constant bombardment of the enemy by assault and army aviation, missile forces and artillery of a grouping of Russian forces," Moscow's defence ministry said. Seizing the town would make it possible to cut off Ukrainian supply routes to the larger nearby city of Bakhmut, and trap remaining Ukrainian forces

there, it said. Moscow has been trying to seize Bakhmut for months. But Serhiy Cherevatyi, spokesperson for Ukraine's eastern military command, told Reuters by telephone Soledar had not been captured: "Our units are there, the town is not under Russian control." A Ukrainian officer in the area, speaking on condition of anonymity as he was not authorised to speak to the media, also told Reuters by telephone the Russians had not fully taken the town. "Last night artillery fire was like from hell, both sides. From what I know, our boys have managed to exit some parts (of Soledar) in an orderly

Continued on Page 06

PAKISTAN-ITALY COOPERATION

DNA



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Italy to Pakistan Andreas Ferrarese called on the Deputy Chairman of Senate Mirza Muhammad Afridi. Both sides discussed matters of mutual interest. — DNA

Pakistan keen to expand ties with Italy

Italian envoy calls on Dy Chairman Senate

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Italy to Pakistan Andreas Ferrarese called on the Deputy Chairman of Senate Mirza Muhammad Afridi. Both sides discussed matters of mutual interest. The Deputy Chairman Senate said that Pakistan was keen to expand relations with friendly country Italy. He said Italy was very important country in the European Union adding a large number of Pakistanis were working in Italy. Mirza said both countries can cooperation in various sectors. He also briefed the Italian ambassador about the working of the Upper House. The Italian ambassador thanked the Deputy Chairman Senate for receiving him.

NZ trounce Pakistan to take ODI series

SPORTS DESK

KARACHI: New Zealand beat Pakistan in the third and final one-day international (ODI) by two wickets to take the series 2-1. Pakistan playing first scored a knock of 280 runs which was quite a good target. However the guest team scaled this target with one over still to go. NZ tale-ender Phillips played a winning knock and scored 63 runs.

PM invites UAE entrepreneurs to explore Pakistan

The Premier encouraged members of the Abu Dhabi chamber to visit Pakistan

NEWS DESK

ABU DHABI: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Friday invited the entrepreneurs from the Abu Dhabi state of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) to invest in multiple sectors in Pakistan. His offer came at a meeting with a delegation of Abu Dhabi Chamber of Commerce, led by chairman Abdullah Mohamed Al Mazrouei. During the meeting, the premier stressed the need to enhance chamber to chamber cooperation between the two countries, saying "we will urge Pakistani chambers to reach out to the Abu Dhabi chamber and develop new linkages." He encouraged members of the Abu Dhabi chamber to visit Pakistan to experience the excellent opportunities of growing their business.

Continued on Page 06

PM Shehbaz decides against obstructing Punjab assembly's dissolution

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister and Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) President Shehbaz Sharif on Friday decided not to create any hurdles in the dissolution of the Punjab Assembly. The surprise move comes a day after Punjab Chief Minister Parvez Elahi had sent a brief summary advising Governor Balighur Rehman to dissolve

Continued on Page 06

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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



Hotels & Restaurants

Serena Hotel.....111 133 133
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Airlines

Turkish Airlines.....8494949



Emergency

Rescue (Police).....15
Bomb Disposal.....15
Fire Services Rawalpindi/ Islamabad.....1122 & 16
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Holy Family.....9290322-7
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RDA.....5555864
TMA.....5770886
Cantonment Board 9270151-3

Islamabad Metropolitan

Corporation.....9209224
Potohar Town.....9209224
Rawal Town.....5773343

Water Tank

Islamabad.....0321-5744480

CDA asked to focus on better development of D-12 Markaz

Ahsan Bakhtawari said that D-12 Markaz has the potential to become a hub of business activities in future and emphasized that CDA should adopt a futuristic approach to develop this market on modern lines



DNA

ISLAMABAD: Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari, President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) said that D-12 Markaz is a new commercial centre which lacks modern facilities and stressed that CDA should focus on better development of this market that would facilitate the traders in promoting business activities. He said this while addressing a delegation of the Traders Welfare Association, D-12 Markaz, Islamabad during their visit to ICCI led by Muhammad Nauman, President, Gul Andaz Abbasi Senior Vice President, Malik Mubashar Nazir Vice

President, Haider Cheema Secretary General, Hafiz Inamul Hassan Finance Secretary, Yasir Khan Information Secretary, Imtiaz Ali Rajput Press Secretary, Asif Hussain Shah Patron-in-Chief, and others were in the delegation. Ahsan Bakhtawari said that D-12 Markaz has the potential to become a hub of business activities in future and emphasized that CDA should adopt a futuristic approach to develop this market on modern lines. He said that due to development work on IJP Road and Margalla Road, the traffic rush in the city has increased and sometimes, traffic remains jammed for hours on some roads. He stressed that CDA should expedite the completion work

on these roads to ease the traffic issue in the city. He said that traders should cooperate in saving energy to improve the production of export-oriented industries in order to boost exports. He assured that Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry will co-operate with the TWA D-12 Markaz in resolving the key issues of the traders. Muhammad Nauman, President, Traders Welfare Association, D-12 Markaz, speaking on the occasion, said that due to lack of parking facility in their market, the traders are facing problems and demanded that CDA should develop a parking facility in their market to address this major issue. He said that khokhas and pushcarts on the footpaths in the market are creating nuisance and

demanding that a separate place should be allocated for such businesses in D-12 on the pattern of G-11 to remove encroachments from the market. He said that public toilets should also be constructed in D-12 Markaz for the facilitation of traders. He said that the traders are doing plantations in D-12 Markaz and desired that CDA should cooperate with them in further promoting tree plantation in the area. Khalid Chaudhry Convener, ICCI Traders Committee, Imtiaz Abbasi, Akhtar Abbasi, Ashfaq Chatha, Gul Andaz Abbasi, Asif Shah, Malik Mubashar, Zahir Abbasi Ch. Irfan and others also spoke at the occasion and stressed that CDA should expedite development works in D-12 Sector.

PBM making all out efforts for social protection of people

ISLAMABAD: Minister of State for Law and Justice Shahadat Awan on Friday said Pakistan Bait-ul-Mal (PBM) was making all-out efforts for the social protection of marginalized segments of the society by utilizing all available resources. Responding to a question raised by Senator Pawzia Arshad, the minister said Women Empowerment Centres (WECs) were making poor widows and orphan girls self-reliant, improving their living standards and providing them financial security. He said the WECs were inculcating traditional and non-traditional skills based on the market needs/demands through various training programs. The PBM had established 163 WECs so far throughout the country in a phased manner, he added. Shahadat said the PBM initi-

ative Schools For Rehabilitation of Child Labor (SRCLs) had been established to pull out the children from labor and to educate them, in line with the United Nations and other International Labor Organization's Conventions. 159 SRCLs were functional all over the country so far, he added. He said the children involved in child labor were enrolled in these schools and free education was being imparted up to the primary level. They were provided free of charge books, stationery, uniform/ shoes, and Rs10 daily stipend/parents subsistence allowance of Rs 300 per month, he maintained. Shahadat informed that at present, 17,589 children were enrolled in these schools and 47,441 students had been passed out since the inception of this project.

He said a person who has a monthly income of up to Rs 30,000 would be treated as poor and eligible for receiving financial assistance under Individual Financial Assistance Medical. The PBM also provided financial assistance to the individual destitute for the provision of Hearing Aids, Artificial Limbs, Education, General, Sewing machines, and Wheel Chairs, he added. He said it had established 51 orphanages titled as 'Sweet Home' throughout the country since 2009. The objectives of its establishment were to develop a modern approach towards the welfare of orphans, to provide modern education, and impetus to participate in the mainstream of life with pride and dignity. Special individual attention was given on the physical,

mental, and psychological condition of each child, and a clean and hygienic environment was provided to these sweet angels, he said adding the children were admitted to the renowned and well-reputed schools of the city for formal education from Class-1 to Class-10. He said each center accommodated 100 orphan children and the age limit for enrolment was 4 to 6 years. The state minister said a 'Old Home' was established in Lahore in 2014 and serving senior citizens of Pakistan. At present, 29 residents were provided with well-furnished accommodation, food, clothing, and medical facilities in this center, he added. He said the main goal of this program was to provide care, love, hope, and security in the 3rd phase of life to the uncared senior citizens. - APP

NEPRA approves increase in power tariff

ISLAMABAD: National Electric Power Regulatory Authority (NEPRA) has approved Rs 1.49 to Rs 4.45 per unit increase in power tariff for various categories for K-Electric while issuing decision on the motion of federal government regarding uniform power tariff for all power distribution companies (DISCOs) and K-Electric. The authority conducted public hearing on December 27, 2022 into the motion regarding uniform tariff submitted by the federal government with Chairman NEPRA in the chair. The NEPRA had approved average Rs 3.30 per unit increase in the tariff of DISCOs under 4th quarter adjustments for year 2021-22. The Federal government has also requested the same increase for K-Electric like other DISCOs. - APP

HBAC discusses legislative business

ISLAMABAD: The House Business Advisory Committee (HBAC) on Friday discussed in detail the legislative business to be transacted during the 324th session of the Senate. Chaired by Muhammad Sadiq Sanjrani, Chairman Senate at the Parliament House, the Committee decided that the current session would continue for four weeks and it, besides legislative business, would take up discussion on current situation of important national and international issues. - APP

FJWU organizes 2-day training workshop

RAWALPINDI: Peace is the key ingredient for cohesive and inclusive society, suggested by the key scholars at two-day training workshop for the faculty and students organized by Peace Chair, Fatima Jinnah Women University (FJWU) in collaboration with Shaoh Foundation under the Peace Advocacy through Teachers (PACT) project. The objective of the workshop was to sensitize the young faculty and students regarding peace and tolerance as vital elements of community engagement. Peace Chair at FJWU, Azhar Shahbaz Khan emphasized the role of peace in present times. Moreover, he asserted the significance of tolerance and was of the view that elimination of cultural and structural violence from Pakistani society can cure the societal ills in a short time. The Chairperson, Behavioral Sciences Department, Dr. Iram Gul shared different strategies to cope with stress at workplace. The Chairperson, Department of Anthropology, Prof. Dr. M. Bilal oriented the participants regarding the need for countering hate speech and intellectual bullying in academia. The Dean Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences Prof. Dr. Sarwat Rasul concluded the session and highlighted importance of the conflict resolution mechanism in recent times. - APP

AIOU to offer new admissions

ISLAMABAD: Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) was commencing admissions of Spring 2023 semester (first phase), across the country including Azad Jammu Kashmir (AJK) and Gilgit-Baltistan (GB). According to AIOU sources, the admissions of matriculation, middle-tech, intermediate, I.Com and certificate courses offered in the first phase will continue till February 21, 2023, while admissions in BS, MS, M. Phil and PhD programs will be open from January 15 to February 15, 2023. Admissions in the second phase will be offered from March 1, which includes teacher training programs, associate degree (BA) and BS (ODL) programs. Students can also register themselves in offered courses. It is pertinent to mention here that the AIOU is striving hard to ensure that no one is deprived of education. In this regard, the university has started a policy of free matriculation education for the people of Balochistan, Gilgit-Baltistan and the merged tribal districts. In addition, AIOU is the

Prospectus and admission application forms for all the programs will be available online on the university website (www.aiou.edu.pk) on January 15, 2022 and will also be available at the regional campuses and countrywide established prospectus sale points

only university in the country which is providing free education to the disabled, prisoners and transgender, and provides different scholarships to needy students. Students are advised to visit nearest regional offices for further details and scholarships. Prospectus and admission application forms for all the programs will be available online on the university website (www.aiou.edu.pk) on January 15, 2022 and will also be available at the regional campuses and countrywide established prospectus sale points. Admission in BS (face to face), MS/M.Phil and PhD programs can only be applied via online system whereas admission application forms for matriculation, intermediate and I.Com can be submitted manually as well as via online mode. In case of online submission of admission application form, the candidates are not required to dispatch printed application form to the university. - APP

Pakistan's economy based on strong footing

The major pledges made at the conference, co-chaired by Pakistan and the UN in Geneva, Switzerland, included \$4.2 billion from the Islamic Development Bank (IsDB), \$2 billion from World Bank, \$1.5 billion from ADB, \$1 billion from AIIB) and \$1 billion from Saudi Arabia

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Ahsan Iqbal has said despite economic challenges Pakistan was not defaulting in any case. "Although we are facing economic challenges, there is zero percent chance of defaulting", Ahsan Iqbal said while talking to British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) on Thursday night. The minister said Pakistan's economy had a strong footing therefore it would come out of crisis very soon. Speaking about the flood damages in Pakistan, Ahsan Iqbal said over 1,700 people died across the country during the torrential

rains and floods last year. More than 9 million people slipped under the poverty line while over 8 million people were facing malnutrition due to the devastating floods and rains, he added. He informed that in the Geneva Conference held earlier this week, the international community and the development partners had pledged the support of over \$10 billion to help Pakistan recover from the damages caused by the floods. He said the rehabilitation and reconstruction process was underway in the flood-hit areas across the country, however, he added that the complete recovery would

a three years agenda for the revival of the flood-affected people. As per the national reconstruction agenda, the government would provide 50 percent of total expenses in the rehabilitation and reconstruction process from its own resources. While rest of the funding gap would be bridged by the pledges made during the Geneva Conference, he added. Pakistan on Monday (January 09) secured over \$10 billion in pledges from international financial institutions, donor agencies, and development partners for the rehabilitation, recovery, and reconstruction of flood-affected areas,



take two to three years' time. To a question, the minister explained that the government had prepared

during an International Conference on Climate Resilience. The major pledges made at the conference, co-chaired by Pakistan and the United Nations in Geneva, Switzerland, included \$4.2 billion from the Islamic Development Bank (IsDB), \$2 billion from the World Bank, \$1.5 billion from the Asian Development Bank (ADB), \$1 billion from the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) and \$1 billion from Saudi Arabia. Ahsan Iqbal said Pakistan would complete the reconstruction process with the help of the international community and development partners. - APP

Six arrested for alleged involvement in immoral activities

RAWALPINDI: The Rawalpindi District Police have busted a brothel and arrested six persons, including two women allegedly involved in immoral activities. According to the police spokesman, Bani Police acting on a tip-off conducted a raid in its jurisdiction and netted six accused identified as Sarfraz, Ayan, Sajjad, Maqsood and two women. A case has been registered against the arrested accused while further investigation is underway. Superintendent of Police, Rawal Babar Javed Joya directed the police officers to continue their raids against lawbreakers and send them behind bars. - APP

MCI merges EDM, DoC for efficient crisis management

ISLAMABAD: The Metropolitan Corporation Islamabad (MCI) on Friday decided to merge the control rooms of the Directorate of Emergency & Disaster Management (EDM) and the Directorate of Cares (DoC) to cope with emergency situations more efficiently and effectively. The decision was taken in the review committee meeting of Directorates MCI held on Friday, a press release said. While chairing the meeting Deputy Commissioner Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) Irfan Nawaz Memon said that the decision was aimed to tackle every type of emergency situation under one platform through a joint and coordinated effort. The DC said that the emergency number for the control room would remain '1122'. Memon directed the officials to present a progress report and take every possible measure to ensure the merger on a prompt basis. The meeting was attended by Additional Deputy Commissioner, Assistant Commissioner and MCI officials. - APP

YouTube, TikTokers entry banned in Parliament House

ISLAMABAD: National Assembly Secretariat has banned the entry of unauthorized social media influencers, YouTube, TikTokers in the precincts of Parliament House. The banned imposed as a consequence of an incident of misbehavior with parliamentarians by some unauthorized YouTube/social media influencers at Gate No.1 of Parliament House on December 23, 2022. These YouTube entered in the precincts of Parliament House without authorized entry. The same incident was also conveyed to President Press Reporters' Association (PRA) to seek PRA stance in this regard. The PRA formally conveyed that it is only responsible for its members and PRA detached itself from YouTube and social media influencers. Furthermore, PRA also decided to ensure a ban on entry of unauthorized individuals in the Press Gallery and Press Lounge of House. - APP

ANF recovers 874 kg drugs in six operations

RAWALPINDI: The Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) while conducting six operations recovered over 874 kg narcotics, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman here on Friday. He said, ANF foiling an attempt to smuggle drugs managed to recover over 700 kg charras from 'Jiwani' Balochistan area. In a joint operation, ANF and FC conducted a raid in Balochistan General area and recovered 110 kg Ice, 20 kg opium and four kg charras. ANF and FC in another operation conducted in Khyber area recovered 23.5 kg charras. - APP

Briefs

Operation
against flour
hoarders

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) administration on Friday booked hoarders who were illegally stocking government subsidies wheat flour sacks. Assistant Commissioner Potohar conducted a crackdown against illegal hoarders in different areas and arrested two absconders who were hoarding 141 government subsidies wheat flour bags, said a press release issued. The arrested persons were shifted to the Shamsabad police station and flour sacks were confiscated by the authorities. One of the accused Zafar Ali from Sawabi was carrying 60 flour bags in an auto-rickshaw (RIU-4002) also hid 40 flour bags in the shop, he was arrested and FIR also was registered against him. The second accused Nazir Khan Abbas was booked while hoarding 41 sacks, he was purchasing flour from different sale points and hiding them in a shop.—APP

Elusive
Leopard Cat
specimen
added to
PMNH
collection

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Museum of Natural History (PMNH) has added a newly discovered specimen of an endangered elusive Leopard cat to its collection which will be a source of attraction for wildlife lovers and researchers. The Leopard cat (*Prionailurus bengalensis*), a small cat belonging to the family Felidae was found dead on the 76th National highway towards Murree in Islamabad late Wednesday night, December 14, 2022. Renowned wildlife lover and an official of the Pakistan Institute of Parliamentary Services, Rana Muhammad Riaz, found the dead specimen and reported the incident to the Pakistan Museum of Natural History (PMNH). A team under the supervision of Muhammad Asif Khan, Curator Zoological Science Division PMNH, approached Rana Muhammad Riaz to receive the specimen and shifted it immediately to PMNH. The leopard cat is listed as the least concern on the IUCN Red List, it generally ventures out at night to search for food and water. According to a study, 46.6 percent of roadkill in the Potohar plateau occurs in Rawalpindi and its surrounding areas. The 76 National highway has a dense green cover on both sides and the area is rich in wild flora and fauna. For the currently reported road killing of ecologically important wildlife, it is mandatory to install wildlife signs boards along the highway for public awareness and to minimise such incidence in the future.—APP

Workers'
remittances
down 11% in
H1 FY23

ISLAMABAD: The overseas workers' remittances posted a decline of 11.1 percent during first half (Jul-Dec) of fiscal year 2022-23 as the remittances fell from \$15.8 billion in first half of FY22 to \$14.02 billion in the period under review. On year-on-year basis, the overseas workers' remittances recorded an inflow of US\$2.04 billion in December 2022, posting a decrease of 19 percent as compared with the previous month's inflow of \$2.5 billion. On month-on-month basis, the remittances in December 2022 also witnessed a decline of 3.2 percent when compared with the inflow of \$2.1 billion recorded in November 2022. According to a recent data released by State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) on Friday, remittances' inflows during December, 2022 were mainly sourced from Saudi Arabia (\$516.3 million), United Arab Emirates (\$328.7 million), United Kingdom (\$314.2 million) and United States of America (\$230.5 million). During the corresponding month, the overseas Pakistanis living in Bahrain sent \$32.6 million, from Kuwait \$60.4 million, from Qatar \$72.2 million whereas \$73.2 million were dispatched from Oman.—APP

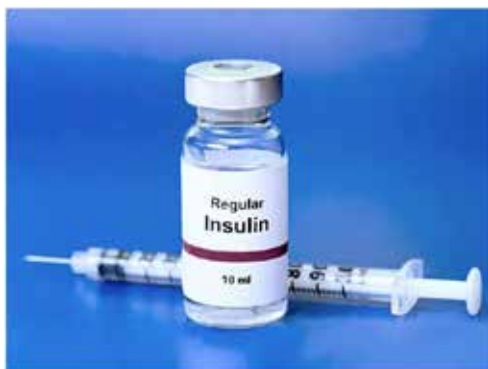
DRAP Pakistan approves
Chinese diabetes medicine

The health corridor construction is a key part of this process. Cao Wei believes that Pakistan is China's all-weather strategic cooperative partner, and the cooperation prospects between the two sides are broad, with more Chinese enterprises willing to vigorously participate in the process

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The insulin glargine injecta BASAGINE developed by a Chinese pharmaceutical company received approval for registration by the Drug Regulatory Authority of Pakistan (DRAP). China Economic Net (CEN) reported it on Friday. According to the company, it is the first insulin glargine injection (prefilled injection pen) biosimilar drug in Pakistan. Insulin glargine injection is an essential long-acting insulin analogue product in the treatment of diabetes for its efficacy and safety. In Pakistan, 33 million people aged 20-79 were living with diabetes in 2021, ranking third in the world after China and India. The prevalence of diabetes among adults aged 20-79 in Pakistan is 30.8%, the highest in the world, as per the latest data released by the International Diabetes Federation (IDF) Global Diabetes Overview 10th Edition (2021). It is learned that the overall market for insulin in Pakistan is over \$50 million. Sanofi, Novo Nordisk and Eli Lilly have taken the majority of the market share in the country, and the Chinese product will bring more quality options to Pakistani patients. "Since 2010, the pharmaceuti-

cal trade between China and Pakistan has maintained good momentum. As China eases its Covid restriction, we believe that this momentum will continue to strengthen", the company's public relation department told CEN in an interview. Meanwhile, according to CEN, Chinese patent medicine are listing in Pakistan promoting intensive collaboration Lianhua Qingwen capsules, a Chinese patent medicine owned by Shijiazhuang Yiling Pharmaceutical Co., Ltd. (stock code 002603), has obtained permission to be listed in Pakistan recently. This is the third Chinese patent medicine to be marketed in Pakistan after Tai Ji Huoxiang



Zhengqi oral liquid and Jian Zhi syrup were licensed for sale and use in Pakistan. As a representative drug for the treatment of infectious diseases of respiratory system viruses, Lianhua Qingwen capsules have been included in the diagnosis and treatment protocols or guidelines for infectious public health events such as influenza A, influenza B and COVID-19 issued by China's National Health Commission and the State Administration of Traditional Chinese Medicine for more than 30 times, and has shown unique value in the prevention and control of the epidemic worldwide. The launch of Lianhua Qingwen in Pakistan is another overseas marketing license, following registration approval or import licenses in nearly 30 countries and regions including Canada, Thailand and Singapore. Lianhua Qingwen capsules distributor, Pakistan Huazhilong International Trading Company and Tai He Tai Law Firm worked together for 31 months to apply for the listing approval number from the Drug Regulatory Authority of Pakistan. The application process was a major success for the company team and the Chinese law firm.

Cao Wei, CEO of Huazhilong International, said in a recent interview with

China Economic Net (CEN) that "listing in Pakistan is of great significance to the internationalization of Lianhua Qingwen and other Chinese patent medicine. Even the sale and use of Lianhua Qingwen in Pakistan has played a role in the country's fight against the pandemic. In the future, China-Pakistan medicine collaboration can be expanded to the treatment of common cold, various pathogens, hyperglycemia, hypertension, etc." Tang Yunxia (also known as Donna Tang) from TAHOTA Law firm in China highlighted that "we can use these similar cases to help Chinese investors in the pharmaceutical industry invest in Pakistan, improve the local capacity to produce medicines, and also export to Middle Eastern countries." The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) has entered its second phase of high-quality development, with a focus on enhancing cooperation in industries, science and technology, agriculture and people's livelihood. The health corridor construction is a key part of this process. Cao Wei believes that Pakistan is China's all-weather strategic cooperative partner, and the cooperation prospects between the two sides are broad, with more Chinese enterprises willing to vigorously participate in the process.

President rejects appeal of
accused in harassment case

ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi has rejected the appeal of a person, accused of harassment at workplace and referred the case back to the Federal Ombudsman Secretariat for Protection Against Harassment at Workplace (FOSPAP) for final adjudication after appraisal of the evidence. While deciding on an appeal filed by the accused, President Alvi held that the request to once again cross-examine the complainant after the engagement of a fresh counsel, had no ground. The president endorsed Ombud-

person's observation that the appeal filing by the accused was an apparent attempt to prolong the impugned case indefinitely to enhance the anguish and agony of the complainant. It was further observed that the matter had already consumed sufficient time in the disposal due to the accused's miscellaneous applications and was tantamount to initiating a new round of litigation which prima facie was against the spirit and scheme of the Act 2010. The president observed that the complainant who had filed a case of sexual

harassment under section 8 of the Protection Against Harassment of Women at the Workplace Act 2010 before the Ombudsman on 27.05.2019 had yet not been adjudicated. The accused had filed a representation before the President against the order of 23.09.2021 for seeking permission to re-examine the complainant again by a fresh counsel which was rejected. Dr Alvi, in his order, observed that the complaint was filed under the Harassment of Women at the Workplace Act 2010 before the Ombudsman on 27.05.2019.

The accused had earlier filed a representation before the president against interlocutory order dated 23.09.2021 for seeking permission for the cross-examination of the complainant which was rejected on 26.01.2022. The accused filed another representation despite the fact that the proceedings of the complaint were pending before the learned Ombudsman and a decision in this regard had yet to be made after appraisal of the evidence on the question of whether the element of harassment had been established or otherwise.—APP

Pakistan to start
local manufacturing
of SIMs

ISLAMABAD :Pakistan is planning to start local manufacturing of SIMs and smart cards for protecting the country from the threat of cyber-attacks, creating employment opportunities and saving precious foreign exchange. "Pakistan is planning to start local manufacturing of SIMs and smart cards to shield the country from the threat of cyber-attacks amid a brewing cyber war," said an annual report of Pakistan Telecommunication Authority. Digital transformation and the creation of an enabling ecosystem are one of the key objectives of the government, and in the era of digital services, SIMs and smart cards assume pivotal importance. The local manufacturing of SIMs will massively benefit the economy as millions of SIMs are currently imported. PTA fully supported the requisite role of performing authorization, compliance, and adoption of SIM card manufacturing, etc., in the telecom sector. The local SIM and smart card manufacturing industry has already become the principal sector in many national economies and is playing an important role in creating sustainable economic growth. The role of the said industry will not be restricted to the domestic engineering perspective or transfer of technology.—APP

PRCS
provides
medical
treatment

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Red Crescent Society (PRCS) has provided medical treatment to 141,063 patients through 28 Mobile Health Units (MHUs) under the Monsoon Emergency Flood Response Operation 2022. The PRCS has reached out 99,697 people through health and hygiene promotion activities and distributed 410,871 inclusive health and hygiene kits in the flood hit areas. The health facilities included provision of free-of-cost check-ups, tests, treatment and medicines while the society has also provided first aid services to 3124 people. Besides health and hygiene facilities, the PRCS has provided 2.80 million liters of safe drinking water regularly (3.818 households are benefiting from 02 water treatment plants on daily basis). The PRCS has distributed 31,269 family tents, 247,586 hot meal packs and prepaid cards to 1700 households for restoring family links. Pakistan Red Crescent (PRC) is a humanitarian organization, dedicated to improving lives of vulnerable segments of society, since 1947. PRC endeavours to strengthen the humanitarian and social values by promoting the ideals of tolerance, non-violence, sympathy, love and respect for others in the society.—DNA

Yousuf
terms death
of Begum
Akhtar as
great loss

ISLAMABAD: Chairman Pakistan Academy of letters (PAL) Dr. Yousuf Khushk (Friday) termed the recent death of noted travelogue writer, Begum Akhtar Riazuddin as a great loss to the Urdu literature. "Begum Akhtar Riazuddin was the writer of exceptional travelogues 'Thank Par Kadam' (1969) and 'Sat Samudran Par' which differentiated her from the other writers in terms of her unique depiction of country's landscape and cultural aspects", the chairman PAL said in a statement. Begum Akhtar Riazuddin was not only a unique writer but a feminism activist who focused on the uplifting of women in the society. She is the first female modern Urdu-travelogue writer who crossed the social barriers and highlighted the women as an active part of the society, Dr. Yousuf Khushk said while sharing his views about the legendary writer on her demise. Dr. Yousuf said that Begum Akhtar Riazuddin was one of a group of 1,000 women nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize in 2005 as part of the 1000 Peace Women Project. Begum Akhtar Riazuddin travelogues were not only having unique descriptions and amusing allusions but picturized the whole culture and landscape of the countries, she visited. He said that Begum Akhtar Riazuddin was a multidimensional person and her travelogues not only portrayed the beauty of landscapes and lives of the people but also include civilization, value, behaviors and hidden facts of life along with human attitudes which add colors in her writings.

Over 43,000
e-challans
issued
through
cameras

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad police issued more than 43,000 e-challans to motorists over various traffic violations through safe city cameras during the last one and half years and succeeded to decline the ratio of road mishaps. The e-challans are being issued over red-signal violations, lane violations, over-speeding, zebra crossing, violating one way and other traffic rules violations. Legal action is also being taken against the traffic rules violators who did not pay challan fees. In case of non-payment of fines, police said that vehicles of violators are being seized within seven days of issuance of e-challan. So far, more than 20 vehicles have been impounded in different police stations. A copy of the challan is also attached with the master file of the vehicles at the excise office over non-payment of penalty amount within the given time.—APP



ISLAMABAD: A Czech citizen is casting his vote for presidential election in polling station sets up at Czech embassy Islamabad. – DNA

Denmark
pledges DKK
26.7 million
assistance

Floods show all too clearly the severe consequences that climate change has for the world's most vulnerable people

ISLAMABAD: Denmark has announced additional humanitarian assistance of DKK 26.7 million to United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) for supporting the flood relief efforts of Pakistan. "The Danish assistance will provide health, nutrition, WASH, child protection services and education for 10 million children in Pakistan through UNICEF-Pakistan", Denmark's Minister for Development Cooperation and Global Climate Policy made an announcement while addressing International Conference on a Climate Resilient Pakistan recently held in Geneva. According to a news release from Denmark's embassy in Pakistan, the Danish minister said; "The scale of the destruction is almost beyond comprehension. Yet it is the harsh reality for the 33 million people who were affected by them. The floods show all too clearly the severe consequences that climate change has for the world's most vulnerable people." He further said that Denmark had already supported Pakistan by providing water purification and humanitarian aid in connection with the floods. "I am happy that we announced a further DKK 26.7 million through the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) to support the nearly 10 million children, who continue to need humanitarian aid" he added. The minister said, "We are looking forward to further deepening bilateral relations between Denmark and Pakistan and developing a Resilient Pakistan."

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for National Food Security and Research Tariq Bashir Cheema on Friday said that now Pakistan is importing wheat worth \$2 billion annually, at one time, Pakistan used to export wheat. Addressing a press conference here, he said that this time "we have to import 2.6 million tons of wheat from Russia, out of which we have received 1.3 million tons. The minister said that after the decision of the review committee, the government has decided to import 2.6 million tons of wheat this year. He said that the government had stored 1.8 tons of wheat in the Strategic Reserve last year, which will contain 1.5 million this year. The minister said that there is no shortage of wheat/flour anywhere in the country, "we have wheat in abundance and the provinces have also been asked to tell how much wheat they want." He said that provinces including Punjab are

not releasing wheat; they are getting wheat as per requirement. Tariq Cheema said that the shortage of wheat in the country and noise about prices is unnecessary and the government is ready to face all kinds of challenges. He said that after the 18th amendment, agri-

cultural commodities including wheat are the issue of provincial governments. He said that all the provinces including Khyber Pakhtunkhwa are getting quota wheat and there is no shortage of wheat anywhere in the country. The minister said that when provincial govern-

ments released wheat from the provinces, the prices of flour in the country decreased. He said that Pakistan Agricultural Storage and Services Corporation Ltd (PASSCO) does the procurement of wheat and all the provinces also deal with it in terms of wheat. Replying to

a question, he said that efforts were being made to reduce the reliance on imported food commodities, and enhance the local output of food commodities, including that of wheat and oil seeds as edible oil imports swelled to \$ 4.5 billion during last year and

wheat imports to \$ 2 billion. He said that a strategy was being devised for stabilizing flour prices to ensure the provision of flour at affordable rates. "The shortfall is being fulfilled by purchasing the commodity from the open market, due to which we faced price fluctuation", he said adding "the government has also established about 38 sale points to provide wheat flour to the lower income groups." The government was also inspecting the grinding capacity of flour mills in order to operate them to their optimal capacity to produce sufficient quantities of flour to meet local needs, he added. The minister further said that out of the total procurements, the government was procuring about 20 to 21 percent of the total wheat produced, whereas the remaining 80 percent was procured by the private sector. He said that it was needed to streamline the price differential to maintain prices.



US should deeply reflect toward Brazil riots

What the Brazilians had feared happened. But when the shoe dropped, it still shocked Brazil and the rest of the world. On Sunday afternoon, thousands of demonstrators who were dissatisfied with the results of the presidential election invaded institutions such as the Congress, the Supreme Court and the presidential palace in the capital Brasília, clashing with police. This scene is almost a “perfect replica” of the US’ “Capitol riot” two years ago. The US-based Atlantic Monthly published an article, saying that Americans set an example for the rioters in Brazil. This speaks to the consensus of many people - without the example of the US, there is no place for others to learn from the ugliest manifestation of democracy. The riots were widely condemned immediately by the international community, which reflects that violent attacks on state institutions cannot be tolerated in any civilized society ruled by law. This is a matter of principle. It is noticeable that US President Joe Biden’s tone was the most aggressive. He said that the riots in Brazil were “outrageous.” Democratic officials have also denounced them one after another, associating them with the “Capitol riots,” while the Republican Party is evidently low-key. The stark contrast between the two parties gives the impression that Washington’s stance on this issue is based on the need for partisan infighting. To some extent, the riots in Brazil should prompt the US to conduct a profound review, and also adjust its internal and external behavior on the basis of self-reflection. If it only stays in condemnation with utilitarianism, the destructive impact of “American democracy” on the world will not stop in Brasília. The US calls itself the “beacon of democracy” and spares no effort to peddle or even sell its own democratic model by force around the world. But others are not only listening to what it says, but will also observe what it does. The US, who wants to be a “preacher of democracy,” needs to understand a Chinese proverb: Practice is better than precept. In today’s chaotic and intertwined international situation, a radical political virus can easily find a suitable hotbed for survival, and it has become more infectious and pathogenic. After Washington’s catalyst, its destruction will sharply increase. And it is bound to backfire on the US. The unrest in Brazil has once again sounded the alarm for the US.

Brazil’s failed coup is a nightmare revisited

Andrew Mitrovica

I will not elaborate on the cockeyed motives of the army of malcontents that launched an attempted putsch since that would mean giving their lunatic beliefs a patina of legitimacy. It would, however, be unwise to dismiss Sunday’s cacophonous events as a momentary spasm of pent-up grievances. Like January 6, Brazil’s insurrection

Oh no, the madness has mutated. Perhaps, like you, that was my reaction to the first, jarring images emerging from Brasília on Sunday after a swarm of crazed conspiracy theorists who support the defeated ex-president, Jair Bolsonaro, breached the three pillars of Brazilian democracy with such infuriating ease. The destruction and violence exacted by the marauders – clad in the South American country’s familiar colours of yellow, green and blue – on the offices of the president, Supreme Court and Congress were, of course, reminiscent of the mayhem and

carnage of January 6, 2021, on the US Capitol. It was a nightmare revisited. I felt a mixture of sadness, regret and simmering anger that we were obliged, yet again, to watch, impotent, as thugs masquerading as flag-waving patriots tried to thwart the will of millions of enlightened Brazilians who had elected Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva as president on October 30, 2022. I am not Brazilian. Still, I was surprised by how offended I felt at the shameless audacity of a bunch of petulant, tantrum-prone rubes who believe that they enjoy the right and license to overturn the results of a free and fair election. The festering, visceral belief that their pipped candidate should be president proves, I think, that the potent psychological residue of January 6 continues to plague many people outside the United States despite time and distance. I will not elaborate on the cockeyed motives of the army of malcontents that launched an attempted putsch since that would mean giving their lunatic beliefs a patina of legitimacy. It would, however, be unwise to dismiss Sunday’s cacophonous events as a momentary spasm of pent-up grievances. Like January 6, Brazil’s insurrection was a serious, coordinated effort to re-install a defeated, authoritarian demagogue as president. President da Silva seems to recognise this. His decisive actions to put down the revolt quickly and without, apparently, causing a single casualty among the “fanatical fascists” – as he described them – met the urgent moment with resolve and restraint. Beyond the hundreds of arrests, President da Silva appears to understand that the powerful players and forces behind the failed coup d’état must be held accountable if Brazil’s nascent democracy is to survive the current, as well as any future, storm. Towards that diffi-

cult but necessary end, it is incumbent upon democracies – young or old – to confront such brazen lawlessness within the bounds of the rule of law. President da Silva understands this imperative too. Last weekend’s dangerous turbulence in Brazil should, as well, give pause to anyone who sought to minimise the import or gravity of January 6 as an angry “protest” gone awry. The fear that what happened on that day, in that place, would serve as a template for others to repeat on another day, in another place, has proven to be prescient. Jair Bolsonaro’s insurrectionists took their cue from Donald Trump’s insurrectionists. That is beyond dispute. The wild, disfiguring consequences of their ideological solidarity were on graphic and disturbing display on Sunday. The other lesson that should, by now, have penetrated the myopic consciousness of leaders of so-called “liberal” democracies is that you can’t play nice with fascists. But that’s what they did year after shameful year in their dealings with Trump and Bolsonaro – often in the parochial name of keeping the two preening autocrats happy lest they scuttle lucrative bilateral or multi-lateral trade deals. Bolsonaro and his family stoked the rhetorical rationale for Sunday’s siege by insisting for years before the 2022 vote that the country’s “elites” would rig the election to deny him a second term. He warned that Brazil would, as a result, “have worse problems” than the US endured on January 6. He got his wish. Today, the same presidents and prime ministers who chose – out of their self-serving “national interest” – to look the other way while Bolsonaro assaulted democratic norms and institutions, are rushing to defend those same democratic norms and institutions threatened by the former president

and his rabid allies. The hypocrisy is as galling as it is blatant. I remember when, not too long ago, Canada’s then foreign minister, Chrystia Freeland, stood shoulder to shoulder with Bolsonaro in Davos, Switzerland to announce happily that the 12 “democracies” that make up the so-called Lima group had decided to engineer regime change in Venezuela – without the consent of Venezuelans. In early 2019, Freeland and anti-democratic company endorsed opposition leader Juan Guaidó – who unilaterally declared himself Venezuela’s “interim president” – as the country’s “legitimate” leader, the majority of the country’s voters who backed President Nicolás Maduro be damned. Video of the convivial t t e a t t e shows Freeland smiling and nodding approvingly as Bolsonaro – that avatar of Alexis de Tocqueville-like affinity for democracy – and the president of Colombia claimed that replacing Maduro would mean Venezuelans “freeing themselves from dictatorship”. For her condescending part, Freeland said “it was an important day for Venezuela” that Canada had joined Brazil to dictate to Venezuelans who was going to run their country whether they agreed or not. I suspect that Freeland, now deputy prime minister, and her boss, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, aren’t too keen these days to be reminded of Canada’s giddy alliance with Bolsonaro. Brazil might demand Bolsonaro’s extradition from Florida to face possible charges stemming from the aborted insurrection, which the country’s leaders have described as a “terrorist” act. So, Canada and other democracy-loving democracies that appeased Bolsonaro are busy re-writing history to erase their appeasement and confirm their unqualified kinship with President da Silva and Brazil. How lovely and convenient.

—Courtesy: Al Jazeera

Larger-than-expected aid pledges for Pakistan a good start

Dr. Abdel aziz aluwaisheg

Saudi Arabia and the Jeddah-based Islamic Development Bank accounted for about half of the pledges. Other countries and multilateral donors also pledged generously, more so than anticipated before the event. The floods have affected about 33 million people and, at their highest, covered about a third of Pakistan’s land area. More than 1,730 people were killed and many more injured. More than 2 million homes and thousands of schools and health facilities were destroyed or seriously damaged. According to UN reports, many of the affected areas remain under water, with millions living near contaminated

Dozens of countries and international institutions on Monday pledged more than \$11 billion to help Pakistan recover and rebuild from the devastating floods it experienced last year, which UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres called a “climate disaster of monumental scale.” Saudi Arabia and the Jeddah-based Islamic Development Bank accounted for about half of the pledges. Other countries and multilateral donors also pledged generously, more so than anticipated before the event. The floods have affected about 33 million people and, at their highest, covered about a third of Pakistan’s land area. More than 1,730 people were killed and many more injured. More than 2 million homes and thousands of schools and health facilities were destroyed or seriously damaged. According to UN reports, many of the affected areas remain under water, with millions living near contaminated or stagnant waters. The government of Pakistan and the UN estimate the damage to exceed \$30 billion. Rebuilding efforts are projected to cost more than \$16 billion over the next three years and the current funding gap is estimated at \$8 billion. Pakistani Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif told the conference that his country was racing against time to deal with those daunting damages. Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari described the floods as a “colossal calamity” and the “greatest climate disaster” in Pakistan’s history. Preliminary results from the International Conference on Climate-Resilient Pakistan 2023, held in Geneva on Monday, indicate that the world community has listened, donating more than \$11 billion, some of which had already been announced or disbursed beforehand. The final tally may be revised, usually higher, depending on the organizers’ efforts that usually follow such conferences to verify and record all pledges. The largest multilateral pledg-

es came from the Islamic Development Bank (\$4.2 billion), the World Bank (\$2 billion), the Asian Development Bank (\$1.5 billion), the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (\$1 billion) and the EU (\$544 million). The largest single-country contribution came from Saudi Arabia (\$1 billion), followed by France (\$384 million), the US (\$200 million), China (\$100 million), Germany (\$94 million) and Japan (\$77 million). Saudi Arabia has been at the forefront of efforts to stand with Pakistan before the flood and since. In addition to its pledge at the Geneva donors’ meeting on Monday, it announced on Tuesday that the Kingdom was considering a significant increase in its investments in Pakistan’s economy to \$10 billion, as well as increasing the ceiling on deposits into Pakistan’s central bank to \$5 billion from the current \$3 billion. During a visit by Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman to Pakistan in February 2019, he stressed Saudi Arabia’s faith in Pakistan’s future, saying that: “We believe Pakistan is going to be a very, very important country in the coming future and we want to be sure that we are part of that.” Deals valued at about \$20 billion were signed during that visit. They included plans to build an oil refinery and petrochemical complex, two liquefied natural gas-powered power plants and alternative energy and mining projects. In October 2021, during a visit by then-Prime Minister Imran Khan to Riyadh, it was announced that Saudi Arabia would provide aid worth \$4.2 billion, including \$3 billion as a deposit in Pakistan’s central bank to help stabilize the rupee’s value. In September 2022, after last summer’s floods, the King Salman Center for Relief and Humanitarian Aid launched a relief effort to provide aid to the victims and announced the arrival of the first plane loads of assistance. In October, it said it had sent about 4,000 tons of food relief, with the aid providing help for

about 800,000 people affected by the disaster. The compassion the world has shown toward victims of this immense disaster is admirable. The larger-than-expected tally of pledges in Geneva this week indicates the considerable goodwill the donors have toward the government of Pakistan and their trust in its ability to meet the needs of those affected. However, after pledges are made and verified, much more work is needed to speed up aid delivery. Many factors could affect the pace of disbursement and officials at both the national and international levels need to remain closely engaged to deal with those impediments. There are global factors to be considered so as not to affect the pace of aid delivery. For example, the Ukraine crisis, at some point, diverted much previously anticipated aid to poor countries. In addition, should political differences or stringent conditions arise between a donor and the recipient country, dialogue is needed to deal with them. More frequently, it is the small things that could delay aid, such as the capacity to prepare and articulate feasible aid packages. Bureaucratic and technical delays are very common, as well as mismatches between donors’ due diligence requirements and the recipient country’s funding procedures. Only through constant engagement between the two sides can these delays be avoided. Donor coordination and input from international organizations is always needed. Large donors such as Saudi Arabia, the Islamic Development Bank and the World Bank are especially important in this coordination. Rebuilding the devastated areas of Pakistan and providing for the victims has become a collaborative undertaking that will take years. The funds raised in Geneva this week represent the current needs in a three-year process. It could take more. If the recovery and rebuilding efforts are done properly, they could jump-start Pakistan’s economy, spur domestic demand and lead to considerable growth.

—Courtesy: Arab news

Pakistan’s First And Only Diplomatic Daily

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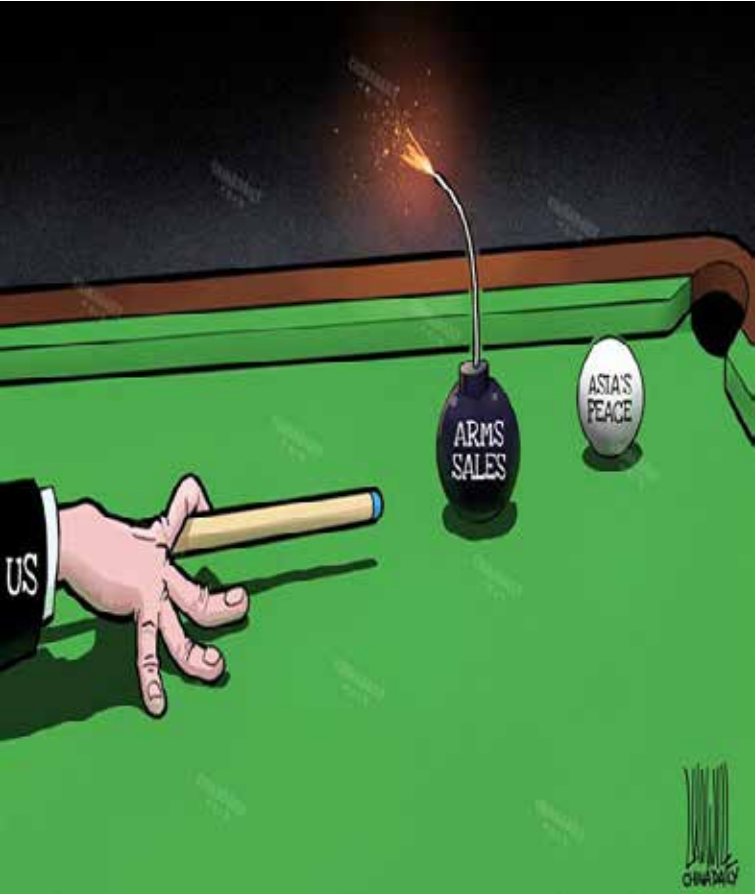
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Briefs

ECP rejects
Sindh govt's
delay request

FROM PAGE 01
the polls over the lack of security and police presence due to the flooding. The polls were then scheduled for August 28 and October 23 but were delayed back then as well. After the ECP's order, Sindh Information Minister Sharjeel Memon said police and Rangers will be deployed at polling stations, while polls will be held in line with the instructions. "The Pakistan Army has excused itself, so for ensuring law and order situation, we will deploy Rangers and police," the information minister said in a statement. Following the announcement, Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) had announced that the party will hold a sit-in outside the Election Commission of Pakistan's (ECP) office in Karachi today. However, the JI has now called off its protest. "There will be a sit-in today at 3pm outside the Election Commission's Sindh office," JI Karachi President Hafiz Naemur-Rehman had announced in a press conference.

MQM says
no to ECP's
decision

FROM PAGE 01
he added. No one among them, he said, moved courts against the delimitation. MrNaseem said up to 30,000 union councils were created in area where MQM did not have support from the masses, adding the population of the UCs was counted inaccurately. "When we moved the Supreme Court against the issue, we were ordered to consult the ECP" he added. It would be, he said, unconstitutional to hold elections on time as the ECP did not seek our opinion over the matter.

Russia
claims
capture...

FROM PAGE 01
manner and now (assault) groups are counterattacking, but we still hold the town." Ukrainian officials said on Thursday more than 500 civilians were trapped inside Soledar, including 15 children. In an overnight video address, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy thanked two units in Soledar he said were "holding their positions and inflicting significant losses on the enemy." He did not give more details. After Ukrainian forces drove Russia into humiliating retreats for much of the second half of 2022, the front lines have barely budged for the past two months. Meanwhile, the battles around Bakhmut and Soledar became what both sides called a "meat grinder" - a brutal war of attrition claiming the lives of thousands of soldiers. Kyiv's Western allies see it as a fight for marginal gains on a stretch of front where neither side can make a big breakthrough, a sideshow from battles further north and south, where Ukraine hopes to push through Russian lines. "Even if both Bakhmut and Soledar fall to the Russians, it's not going to have a strategic impact on the war itself," U.S. National Security Council spokesman John Kirby told reporters at the White House, "and it certainly isn't going to stop the Ukrainians or slow them down." Within Russia, victory in Soledar could also boost ultra-nationalist mercenary leader Yevgeny Prigozhin, whose Wagner Group of fighters-for-hire, including convicts recruited from prison with promises of pardons, has focused on the fight in that area.

PDM calls
emergency
meeting

FROM PAGE 01
President and Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, PPP Co-Chairman and former president Asif Ali Zardari and JamiatUlema-e-Islam (JUI-F) chief MaulanaFazlurRehman among others. Furthermore, PML-N supremo Nawaz Sharif has also been consulted. An emergency meeting of the ruling coalition leaders has been called at the earliest where the PDM's political strategy is to be decided.

Iran praises possible Turk-Syria rapprochement

The rapprochement, al-Assad said, "should be coordinated between Syria and Russia in advance in order to ... produce tangible results sought by Syria"

DNA

BEIRUT: Iran has welcomed the possibility of a rapprochement between its ally Syria and Turkey, the main backer of the political and armed opposition to Damascus for more than a decade. "We are happy with the dialogue taking place between Syria and Turkey, and we believe that it will reflect positively between the two countries," Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian said on Friday during a visit to Beirut. He made the comments on the heels of a statement by Syria's president, Bashar al-Assad, that said a Moscow-brokered rapprochement with his foe Turkey should aim for the end of Ankara's "occupation" of northwestern Syria, one of the few safe havens

for the opposition. He also said that Turkey had to halt support for "terrorism", an apparent reference to support for the rebels. Al-Assad made the remarks on Thursday in a meeting in Damascus with the Russian presidential envoy for Syria, Alexander Lavrentiev. The comments followed a meeting between the Turkish and Syrian defence ministers in Moscow on December 28. Moscow is supporting a rapprochement between Damascus and Ankara. The aim is to have meetings between the two countries' foreign ministers and eventually presidents. Lavrentiev said Moscow viewed the defence ministers meeting "positively" and hoped to develop talks "to the level of foreign ministers", Syrian state news agency SANA reported. The rapprochement, al-Assad said,

"should be coordinated between Syria and Russia in advance in order to ... produce tangible results sought by Syria". The comments were al-Assad's first publicly reported remarks on meetings between ministers from Ankara and Damascus after more than a decade of enmity between the two neighbours. Turkey has been a major backer of the opposition to al-Assad since the start of the civil war 12 years ago and has sent its own troops into large parts of northern Syria. But in late December, the defence ministers of Turkey and Syria held landmark negotiations in Moscow - the first such meeting since 2011. Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu said on Thursday that he could meet his Syrian counterpart, Faisal Mekdad, early in February. "There is no clear date yet, but we will hold this tri-

partite meeting as soon as possible, maybe at the beginning of February," Cavusoglu told Turkish reporters during a visit to Rwanda about a meeting that would also involve Russia. Analysts say Moscow is trying to bridge the divide between its two allies united by a common "enemy" of US-backed, predominantly Kurdish forces in northern Syria. Ankara describes those forces as "terrorists". Since 2016, Turkey has launched several incursions into northern Syria against the People's Protection Units (YPG), which it considers the Syrian branch of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK). The PKK has fought a war against the Turkish state since 1984 and is a designated "terrorist" group in Turkey, the United States and the European Union. The operations against the YPG, which makes up the bulk

of the US-backed Syrian Democratic Forces, has allowed Turkey to control areas along the Syrian-Turkish border. Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, who called al-Assad a "terrorist" in 2017, has opened up to the idea of meeting the Syrian leader, with whom he had good relations before 2011. The mooted reconciliation has alarmed Syrian opposition leaders and supporters, who reside mostly in parts of the war-torn country under Ankara's indirect control. After the defence ministers meeting, hundreds of Syrians in Al-Bab, a town controlled by rebel factions long backed by Ankara, demonstrated in protest. The US, Turkey's NATO ally, has made clear its opposition to improving relations with al-Assad, who Department of State spokesman Ned Price called "a brutal dictator".

PM
invites
UAE...

FROM PAGE 01

Pakistan and the United Arab Emirates have agreed to intensify consultation and coordination geared to strengthening strategic partnership with a view to developing tangible and meaningful bilateral cooperation in key areas. The bilateral ties were discussed during Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's interaction with the UAE leadership as the former paid an official visit to the Emirates at the invitation of President Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan on Jan 12-13. This was the prime minister's third visit after assuming office, according to a joint statement issued on Friday. During the interaction, the two sides agreed to enhance cooperation, particularly in the field of information and communication technologies, and work together for bridging the digital divide. The prime minister held a bilateral meeting with the UAE president wherein the prime minister was presented with a guard of honour at the Presidential Palace. In the "most warm and cordial" meeting, the two leaders held detailed discussions on concrete measures to strengthen the bilateral relationship while also exchanging views on regional political and security matters. They also discussed specific initiative to enhance cooperation in political, defense, economic, commercial and cultural areas, developing joint ventures, and strengthening collaboration in the human resource sector. The prime minister thanked Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan for UAE's generous assistance during the recent floods in Pakistan, particularly through an air bridge established for this purpose.

PM Shehbaz
decides
against...

FROM PAGE 01

the provincial assembly. In a meeting held at the party's headquarters in Lahore's Model Town upon his return to the country at the end of a two-day tour to the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Shehbaz heard about the legal options available at this stage. The meeting was attended by federal ministers, PML-N leaders and special assistants to prime ministers. Sources said that Shehbaz has asked Punjab Governor Balighur Rehman to fulfil his constitutional duties in dissolving the Punjab Assembly. Punjab Governor counsel Masnoor Awan also participated in the meeting.

President
may ask
PM to seek
trust vote

FROM PAGE 01

who are able to carry out free and fair elections," he said. Fawad added that Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Mahmood Khan and his cabinet were scheduled to visit the PTI chairman but were unable to do so due to bad weather. "We spoke to them on the phone," he said. "They have prepared the advice to dissolve the KP assembly".

Pakistan hands over
presidency of Group
of 77 & China to Cuba

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan has handed over the presidency of the Group of 77 and China to the Republic of Cuba. Speaking on the occasion via a pre-recorded message, Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari said the Group of 77 and China has been instrumental in maintaining development at the heart of the United Nations and focus of development partners towards the triple crises faced by the developing countries owing to Covid-19 pandemic, war in Ukraine and climate change. "It is my honour today to transfer the Chair of the Group of 77 and China to my dear friend, Foreign Minister Bruno Rodriguez Parilla of Cuba," Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari said in a video address from Islamabad to the 134-member group, the largest at the United Nations. After FM Bilawal's address, Ambassador Munir Akram, permanent representative of Pakistan to the UN, handed over the gravel to the Cuban Foreign Minister Rodriguez Parilla to a resounding applause from the delegates to the meeting, held in the Trusteeship Council. Upon taking over as chairman, the Cuban foreign minister praised Pakistan's "laudable" leadership of the Group of 77 during the year 2022. - DNA

Norrie continues Australian Open
preparation by reaching final

BRITISH number one Cameron Norrie reached the final of the ASB Classic in Auckland as he bids to complete his Australian Open preparation with a first title of the season. Norrie, the world number 12, will play France's Richard Gasquet on Saturday. The 27-year-old Briton recorded a 6-3 6-4 semi-final win over American Jensen Brooksby. Compatriot Jack Draper lost his Adelaide International 2 semi-final against South Korea's Kwon Soon-woo. Rising star Draper, 21, who will face defending champion Rafael Nadal in the Australian Open first round on Monday, fell to a 7-6 (8-6)

6-7 (2-7) 6-3 defeat by the 25-year-old. The Australian Open, the first Grand Slam tournament of the season, takes place at Melbourne Park between 16 and 29 January. Norrie, raised in Auckland, has won all six matches he has played this year as he warms up for his Australian Open first-round meeting with French wildcard Luca van Assche. With a victory over Nadal among his three victories at the United Cup earlier this month, Norrie maintained his fine start to the year with his first straight-set win in Auckland following victories over Marcos Giron and Jiri Lehecka. He admitted a lack of con-

centration "made it tricky" against Giron as the American forced a deciding set, but Norrie was able to recover from falling 2-0 down in his second set against Brooksby and won six of the next eight games to close out the match. Upcoming final opponent Gasquet, 36, was given a walkover against injured compatriot Constant Lestienne. "I was serving well, hitting my spots well and winning a lot of the longer rallies," said Norrie. "He's really tricky, Jensen, he puts the ball in such awkward parts of the court but I was able to use my legs and win some of the longer rallies." Norrie added: "I

Torino knock
AC Milan out
of Italian Cup

MILAN: Michel Adopo dumped AC Milan out of the Italian Cup at the last 16 stage on Wednesday with the only goal in 10-man Torino's 1-0 win at the San Siro after extra time. France's Adopo tapped home the winner from compatriot Brian Bayeye's low cross in the 114th minute of an engaging match in which Koffi Djidji was sent off with 21 minutes remaining of normal time. In the next month's quarter-finals, Torino will face either Sampdoria or Fiorentina who face off on Thursday. Roma host Genoa in Thursday's late match while the remaining four ties are scheduled for next week. Defeat for Milan, who started with a second string line-up, comes after they threw away a two-goal lead to draw 2-2 with Roma on Sunday. That draw allowed Napoli to extend their lead on the Italian champions at the top of Serie A to seven points. Stefano Pioli's tired-looking side rattled off 32 shots over the course of the match but only eight of those were on target, of which just three taking from inside the area. Milan travel to Lecce in Serie A on Saturday after Napoli host Juventus, who are level on points with Milan, on Friday night. Also through to the next round are Inter Milan after they squeezed past Serie B side Parma 2-1 on Tuesday, also after extra time at the San Siro. - DNA

Trump Organization fined
\$1.6 mn for tax fraud

NEW YORK: A New York judge on Friday fined Donald Trump's family business the maximum penalty available of \$1.6 million for committing tax fraud. The sum, paltry to the billionaire real estate developer, is symbolically significant as the ex-president eyes the White House again amid a host of legal woes. The Trump Corporation and Trump Payroll Corp., entities of the Trump Organization, were found guilty last month of running a years-long scheme to defraud and evade taxes through falsifying business records. They were convicted all 17 counts following a trial, marking the first time the companies had ever been convicted of crimes. Trump himself was not charged but the verdict inflicted further reputational damage as he seeks the Republican nomination for the presidency in 2024. - APP

Novak Djokovic in
ominous mood for
Australian Open

MELBOURNE: Novak Djokovic returns to next week's Australian Open as heavy favourite and with his ominous form in stark contrast to the struggles of defending champion Rafael Nadal. A year ago Djokovic was consumed by a legal battle over his Covid vaccination stance which he ultimately lost and was deported on the eve of the Grand Slam. It opened the door for great rival Nadal on the Melbourne Park hardcourts, his thrilling five-set win over Daniil Medvedev in the final earning the Spaniard a record 21st major crown. The 36-year-old made it 22 when he clinched the French Open. Serbia's Djokovic, who is a year younger, can draw level on 22 Grand Slam triumphs if he becomes Australian champion for a record-extending 10th time.

He brought a practice match against Medvedev to an early conclusion on Wednesday to protect a hamstring niggle, but prior to that called his preparations spot-on. "I couldn't ask for a better preparation and lead-up to the Australian Open," said Djokovic. "I love playing in Australia. My results are a testament to that." Djokovic's recent exploits, coupled with Nadal's iffy form, the absence of injured world number one Carlos Alcaraz and last year's retirement of Roger Federer, undoubtedly make him the man to beat. After ending a turbulent 2022 by winning the ATP Finals, he came through five tough matches to lift the Adelaide International trophy on Sunday. His fears of a hostile reception in Australia after the deportation saga



were alleviated by a warm welcome in Adelaide. Djokovic faces Spain's 75th-ranked Roberto Carballes Baena in his opening match. Nadal has been written off before but is facing fresh questions about whether age and injury are catching up with him. The top seed faces a tricky opening to the defence of his title against promising 21-year-old Briton Jack Draper. Spanish great Nadal has lost six of his past seven matches including both at the recent United Cup, going down to Cameron Norrie and Alex de Minaur. - DNA

Kudermetova, Badosa in injury
scares ahead of Australian Open

ADELAIDE: Veronika Kudermetova and Paula Badosa both pulled out of their Adelaide International semi-finals with injury problems Friday, leaving them in a race to be fit for the Australian Open. Their withdrawals gave Belinda Bencic and Daria Kasatkina free rides into Saturday's title match. Russia's Kudermetova, seeded nine for the

opening Grand Slam of the year, which starts Monday, cited a left hip injury for her pull-out against Switzerland's Bencic.

It followed epic three-setters in her two previous matches, with her quarter-final against Danielle Collins on Thursday extending beyond three hours. Olympic champion Bencic, who has won nine of her

last 10 matches, is aiming to claim a sixth singles trophy and her fifth on a hard court. She will face world number eight Kasatkina, who is gunning for a seventh WTA title and her second in Australia, having claimed the Phillip Island Trophy last year.

Kasatkina progressed when Spain's Paula Badosa, seeded 11th at Melbourne Park, opted out

because of a thigh injury. "Yesterday when I was playing it was a very tough match, especially physical, so I felt a little bit in my abductor. I felt like I pulled it a little bit," said Badosa. The Spaniard battled through a gruelling quarter-final clash with Brazil's Beatriz Haddad Maia that stretched beyond two-and-a-half hours. - Agencies

Sania Mirza bids adieu to tennis
in an emotional message

DNA

DUBAI: Indian Tennis star Sania Mirza Friday uploaded a tear-jerking "life update" on Instagram. The star who frequently updates her social media account in a bid to stay in touch with her fans has uploaded a post that has many in tears. Taking to the popular photograph and video sharing platform, the 36-year-old expressed her feelings regarding her retirement in a long heartfelt note. Earlier this month, Sania announced her retirement plans. She had announced that she would call time on her career after next month's Dubai Tennis Championships after her 2022. In the note, she detailed her journey in tennis and thanked her family and fans for their support throughout her career, and said that she was set to start a new chapter of her life and devote more time to her son. "Thirty years ago," the Indian tennis star begins in her message, "a six-year-old girl from Nasr School in Hy-

derabad, walked onto a tennis court at Nizam Club with her young mom and fought the coach to let her learn how to play tennis as he thought that she was too little [to play tennis]". She then described how having started to practice at the tender age of six, she had "dared to dream" of representing her country in a Grand Slam someday. The star wrote, "[Looking back], not only did I get to play well over half a century of Grand Slam tournaments but I was fortunate enough to win a bunch of them, too, with God's grace". Stating that she felt very emotional even as she wrote the message, Sania said winning medals for her country had been her "biggest honour" and was a humbling experience. She then thanked her family and her fans, along with her entire team, for their constant and endless support, and wrote: "It's all of you, who have helped me through the toughest phases of my life and helped this little girl from Hyderabad to not only dare to dream but to achieve those dreams, as well. So thank you from the bottom of

my heart." "[Tennis] is all I've known throughout my life," the star wrote as she recounted the extent and expanse of her Tennis career. "It's been 20 years of being a professional athlete and 30 years of being a tennis player," she stated. Commenting on her decision to retire in 2023, Sania said: "My Grand Slam journey started with the Australian Open back in 2005. So, it goes without saying that this would be the most perfect Grand Slam to end my career with." The Australian Open this year is set to start on January 16. Sania played her first Grand Slam in the Australian open 18 years ago. After playing in this Grand Slam, she plans to play in the Dubai Open in February. However, moved as she may feel, Sania wrote that her two most prominent feelings at the time of her retirement were "gratitude and pride". "I take pride in everything I have been able to achieve over the last 20 years of my professional career and I am so grateful for the memories that I have been able to create," she said.



Thirty (yes, 30!) years ago a 6 year old girl from Nasr School in Hyderabad, walked on to a tennis court at Nizam Club with her young mom and fought the coach to let her learn how to play tennis as he thought that she was too little :) The fight for our dreams began at 6!

With a lot of hope despite all the odds stacked against us, we dared to dream of playing in a Grand Slam some day and of representing our country with honour at the highest level in sport. As I look back at my career now, not only did I get to play well over half a century of Grand Slam tournaments but I was fortunate enough to win a bunch of them, too, with God's grace. To win medals for my country has been my biggest honour and I feel truly humbled to have been able to stand up on the podium, knowing that the tri color had been raised high to be seen and respected by millions all over the world - all because of something that I was privileged enough to achieve. I have tears in my eyes and goosebumps even as I type this.

Briefs

NATO to
deploy
surveillance
planes in
Romania

BUCHAREST: NATO will deploy Airborne Warning and Control System (AWACS) surveillance planes to Romania to monitor Russian military activities, the alliance said on Thursday. In order to support the Alliance's reinforced presence in the region as well as to monitor Russian military activity, NATO prepares to send surveillance aircraft, known as AWACS to Bucharest.

"As Russia's illegal war in Ukraine continues to threaten peace and security in Europe, there must be no doubt about NATO's resolve to protect and defend every inch of Allied territory," said NATO spokesperson Oana Lungescu. AWACS can detect aircraft hundreds of kilometers away, making them a key capability for NATO's deterrence and defense posture, she added. The aircraft are scheduled to arrive in Romania on Jan. 17.—DNA

Sweden
promises
to uphold
European
values

STOCKHOLM: Sweden has taken over the rotating presidency of the EU Council for the third time since joining the bloc. The first major meeting of its current term will take place on Friday. Stockholm has promised to uphold fundamental European values over the six-month stint but some EU analysts question whether domestic politics will have an impact. The Nordic country's new right-wing coalition government is propped up by the far-right Sweden Democrats and led by Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson. "Sweden is taking over the Presidency at a time when the European Union is facing unprecedented challenges," he said. "A greener, more secure, and freer Europe is the foundation of our priorities." Stockholm said its four priorities were: security, resilience, prosperity, and democratic values. "This Government will make Sweden's work in the EU a top priority," EU Affairs Minister Jessika Rosswall added. "It is in Sweden's interests to maintain unity in the EU and advance issues that require joint solutions." For the next six months, Sweden will be tasked with setting the political agenda and steering the debate among member states.—APP

Lutzerath
anti-coal
protest
cleared

BERLIN: German police on Friday said the eviction of anti-coal protesters, who were trying to block the expansion of a coal mine in the western village of Lutzerath, was almost complete. "The clearing of the above-ground structures is largely complete. We have evacuated almost all the houses except for one. The meadow has been cleared, most of the tree houses have been cleared ... there is not that much left," Aachen Dirk Weinspach, the head of the police in the city of Aachen, told public broadcaster WDR. On Thursday, numerous wooden huts and barricades belonging to the activists were razed to the ground by excavators. Two symbolic houses of the former residents of Lutzerath were also cleared. The eviction continued through late Thursday night as anti-coal activists who had cemented themselves in or chained themselves were also freed. On the third day of the eviction, police are now focusing on activists who have retreated to underground tunnels. "We don't know how stable these subterranean soil structures are. We also don't know how the air supply is there," said Aachen police chief Dirk Weinspach. Rescue workers ended their mission late Thursday without being able to get the activists out of the tunnel. Environmental groups had hoped that Lutzerath would be spared from excavation after Chancellor Olaf Scholz's center-left coalition, among them the pro-environment Green party.—DNA

Pak- Belarus joint ministerial
commission meets in Minsk

DNA

MINSK: The Sixth Session of Pakistan-Belarus Joint Economic Commission (JEC) was held in Minsk, Republic of Belarus from 12-13 January 2023. The Pakistan delegation was headed by H.E. Engr. Khurram Dastgir Khan, Federal Minister for Power, while the Belarusian side was led by H.E. Mr. Viktor Mikhailovich Karankevich, Minister of Energy of Belarus. H.E. Mr. Viktor Mikhailovich Karankevich welcomed the Pakistani delegation and expressed his interest in furthering the bilateral relationship between the two countries, and diversifying economic and commercial relations between Pakistan and Belarus, as well as technical cooperation in various sectors on mutual beneficial basis.

Noting the progress made on goals set during the last session of Pakistan-Belarus JEC held in November 2017, both Sides reviewed the ongoing bilateral cooperation in trade, industry, agriculture, healthcare, pharmaceuticals, science & technology, education



and culture. The two Sides agreed to take several measures for the enhancement of bilateral ties in various Sectors, including textiles, auto sector, agriculture equipment and mining. The JEC was concluded with the signing of the Protocol

of the Sixth Session of Pakistan-Belarus Joint Economic Commission by the two Ministers. The two Sides also signed two Memoranda of Understanding (MoU) on Cooperation in Tourism Promotion and cooperation between Lok Virsa Museum, Islamabad and National

History Museum, Minsk. Earlier on 11 January 2023, Federal Minister of Power Engr. Khurram Dastgir Khan visited the Embassy of Pakistan and formally inaugurated "Emerging Pakistan Exhibition Centre",

recently established within the Embassy premises. Pakistan and Belarus share warm and long-standing political and economic relations. It may be recalled that Prime Minister of Pakistan H.E. Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif and President of the

Republic of Belarus during their meetings held on the sidelines of SCO Summit and CICA Summit in September and October 2022, respectively, reiterated the need for furthering economic cooperation between the two countries.

Pak pushes for implementation
of UNSC resolutions

UNITED NATIONS: Citing the unresolved Kashmir and Palestine disputes, Pakistan has called for the implementation of United Nations Security Council resolutions that provide for the exercise of right of self-determination by the Kashmiri and Palestinian people, suggesting such a move would promote international peace and security. "The Security Council needs to actively promote the resolution of conflicts and disputes, not simply manage them, much less ignore them," Ambassador Munir Akram, permanent representative of Pakistan to the UN, told the 15-member body on Thursday. "The Council has not been able to secure consistent implementation of its own resolutions, such as the resolutions relating to Palestine or Jammu and Kashmir," he said in the course

of a debate on 'the Rule of Law among Nations'. "In these cases," the Pakistani envoy added, "the right to self-determination has been suppressed brutally and foreign occupation has been allowed to persist over several decades. It is essential to elaborate the modalities through which this principle can be implemented universally and consistently in the contemporary context." Noting that the international community has adopted laws to regulate the use of force, especially military force, he also pointed out that the Charter has placed explicit restraints on the use of force, except in cases of defence. It has laid down principles which have been a foundation to maintain world order over the past seven decades and prevent another world war. The Security Council's resolutions – whether adopted

under Chapter VI (pacific settlement of disputes) or VII (enforcement action) of the UN Charter, are legally binding since Member States are obliged, under the Article 25 of the Charter, to implement the Council's decisions, Ambassador Akram said. "Today," he said, "world peace, and the international security architecture, is under grave threat." Several issues need to be addressed, how to: – promote universal and consistent respect for fundamental principles of the UN Charter; – deal with the underlying causes of conflicts and disputes; contain great power tensions, which often paralyze the Council; – halt the escalating new arms race, including in new weapons and domains; and, – empower and fully utilize the United Nations and its organs to build a durable structure of international peace and security.—APP

Court's jurisdiction mandatory on issues that are on the agenda of the Security Council." The Rule of Law is critical for the maintenance of interpersonal, societal institutional relations at the national and international level, Ambassador Akram said. "Today," he said, "world peace, and the international security architecture, is under grave threat." Several issues need to be addressed, how to: – promote universal and consistent respect for fundamental principles of the UN Charter; – deal with the underlying causes of conflicts and disputes; contain great power tensions, which often paralyze the Council; – halt the escalating new arms race, including in new weapons and domains; and, – empower and fully utilize the United Nations and its organs to build a durable structure of international peace and security.—APP

Türkiye slams
PKK terror
demonstrations

ANKARA: Both the Turkish government and opposition parties have strongly condemned the supporters of the PKK/YPG terror group in Sweden that continued their provocations against Türkiye and President Recep Tayyip Erdogan. The reactions came right after terror supporters on Thursday gathered in front of the historical City Hall in the capital Stockholm, hung a figure of Erdogan in effigy by the feet on a pole in front of the building and shared video footage of the moment on social media. Footage posted later on a social media account affiliated with the terror group showed that threats targeting Türkiye and Erdogan were made with Turkish subtitles. Turkish Vice President Fuat Oktay "cursed" the demonstration in Sweden by the members of the "treacherous" terrorist organization and voiced expectations for Sweden to keep its promises under NATO membership initiatives and not tolerate such attempts. Presidential spokesman Ibrahim Kalin also condemned the "heinous" act in Sweden. "We conveyed our reaction and expectation to the Swedish authorities. Taking concrete steps is a requirement of the law and our agreement," Kalin said. Communications Director Fahrettin Altun said that PKK/YPG terrorists can challenge the Swedish government at the heart of Stockholm is proof that the Swedish authorities have not taken necessary steps against terrorism. "We condemn in the strongest possible terms the targeting of Türkiye and its democratically elected president by members of the terrorist organization PKK in Sweden.—APP

Ukraine says
it is 'de facto'
part of NATO

LONDON: Ukraine has effectively become a NATO member, its defence minister has said, despite the military alliance's reluctance to get embroiled in a wider conflict with Russia. Oleksiy Reznikov said he was confident that Western allies would shed their inhibitions about supplying Ukraine with heavier weapons such as tanks and fighter jets. "This concern about the next level of escalation, for me, is some kind of protocol," he told the BBC in an interview broadcast Friday, dismissing NATO fears about provoking Russia. "Ukraine as a country, and the armed forces of Ukraine, became (a) member of NATO," the defence minister added. "De facto, not de jure (in law). Because we have weaponry, and the understanding of how to use it." Formal membership would require the rest of NATO to defend Ukraine – and Russia has already warned of the risks of a nuclear conflict erupting. Short of that, Western countries including the United States have been supplying armoured fighting vehicles and rocketry to Ukraine, but balked so far at sending long-range missiles and heavier tanks. Tobias Ellwood, who chairs the House of Commons defence committee in Britain, has urged London to supply Ukraine's forces with heavy battle tanks.—APP

EU should
end its
sanctions
on Russia

BUDAPEST: Hungary's prime minister on Friday said that the European Union's sanctions on Russia due to the Ukraine war are a mistake and should be ended. Speaking to Hungarian state radio, Viktor Orban said that if the sanctions on Russia are lifted, energy prices and inflation would fall in half. According to Orban, a political decision must be taken by the EU bloc. "It is certain that America won the war and Europe lost. There's a debate over whether Russia won or lost. If we talk in terms of money, we can't say that Russia lost too much," he argued. Orban said that Hungary lacks the power to end the sanctions on its own, but that big states such as Germany or France could. Hungary has repeatedly called on Brussels to evaluate the impact of the bloc's sanctions on individual member states amid the ongoing energy crisis.—DNA

Italy backs
Türkiye's
efforts for

ROME: Türkiye has been striving to mediate peace in the ongoing Russia-Ukraine war and Rome supports the negotiation efforts, said Italian Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, Antonio Tajani, Friday. "Thanks to its geostrategic position and relations with all sides, Türkiye plays a key role in the start of peace talks," Tajani told Anadolu Agency (AA) ahead of his one-on-one meeting with Foreign Minister Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu in Ankara on Friday. "It's important that efforts to persuade Russia continue until the Russian side is open to talking about terms of a cease-fire and fair peace talks under Kyiv's full ownership," Tajani noted. Underlining that there cannot be peace without justice, the Italian minister said, "Türkiye can definitely make a difference on a diplomatic level with other international players. The grain deal was the biggest example of this and Italy has appreciated the positive outcome of the Ankara-led facilitation process." The Black Sea grain corridor agreement that Ankara, along with the U.N., helped broker between the warring sides last year released grain shipments from key Ukrainian ports that were blocked for months. It has been critical in staving off the worsening global food crisis. According to Tajani, Türkiye's offer to co-chair Italy's "Dialogue of Ministers" about food security in the Mediterranean to fend off hurdles from war-driven disruptions to global trade is "another proof" of solidifying ties between the two countries. In regards to what sort of challenging targets await Rome-Ankara relations in the near future, Tajani said bilateral ties between the two "based on cultural bonds and shared Mediterranean culture" have strengthened over time thanks to "productive political dialogue.—Agencies

Kazakhstan's multivector
foreign policy proves
its usefulness: FM

ASTANA: New challenges complicate the implementation of Kazakhstan's multi-vector foreign policy, but at the same time prove it is relevant and has no alternatives, said Kazakh Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Foreign Affairs Mukhtar Tileuberdi during the Kazakh Foreign Ministry collegium on Jan. 12, reported the ministry's press service. "Taking timely measures to adapt to geopolitical realities, without deviating from a proactive, pragmatic and balanced foreign policy course, is becoming critical for domestic diplomacy," Tileuberdi said. He highlighted the ministry's aims to ensure the effective implementation of the Foreign Policy Concept approved by President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev in 2020. Ensuring security and stability along the perimeter of the country's borders, increasing the country's role as a subject of regional and global politics, and protecting national interests remain the priorities of the ministry's work. Summing up the results of 2022, the ministry noted that a record number of international contacts had been established. President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev made 13 visits to foreign countries and participated in 26 international online and offline events, resulting in the signing of 175 documents. Kazakhstan also hosted the seventh Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions, attended by Pope Francis and the Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia (CICA) last fall. This year, the ministry will focus on developing good-neighbourly and mutually beneficial relations with strategic partners, leading global powers, and regional leaders.—Agencies



ABU DHABI: Minister for Tolerance of United Arab Emirates calls on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif.—DNA

EU Parliament chief vows to review laws, trips

FOREIGN DESK

BRUSSELS: The European Parliament will review undeclared trips from lawmakers and pieces of legislation that might have been unduly influenced as a result of the alleged cash-for-favours scheme that has unleashed a political storm across Brussels and beyond, President Roberta Metsola has said. "We're looking into everything," Metsola told during a media interview. "We're looking into trips that have been approved, we're looking into trips that were not declared. We're looking at the process of putting forward amendments, timelines, the way resolutions are negotiated." The investigation launched by Belgian authorities has shone a light on past legislative work, including a committee vote in early December that approved visa liberalisation for Qatar and Kuwait, as well as an array of paid-for visits

of multiple European lawmakers to the Gulf region. Alarms bells on possible "spheres of influence," Metsola noted, "should start to ring earlier." "We also need to be (more) aware ourselves," the president said. "And this what I will tell all the members (of the European Parliament) and the staff members: if they see something that is not right, something has to be said and something has to be done." Almost a month since the corruption scandal erupted, Brussels continues to deal with the shockwaves from the illicit lobbying allegedly conducted by Qatar in conjunction with a network of at least four individuals, including Greek MEP Eva Kaili and her life partner Francesco Giorgi. The latest revelations have considerably expanded the scope of the investigation, potentially involving two additional MEPs from the socialist group – Marc Tarabella and Andrea Cozzolino – as well as intelligence and diplomatic

officials from Morocco. Both Qatar and Morocco have vigorously contested the claims. Another socialist MEP, Maria Arena, who has not been charged nor detained, resigned this week from her position as chair of the parliament's subcommittee on human rights (DROI). Kaili, Tarabella, Cozzolino and Arena deny any wrongdoing. With new twists and turns emerging on an almost daily basis, Roberta Metsola has embarked on what she calls a "speedy" reform process to restore trust and crack down on misconduct. "In essence,



(to) re-introduce the concept of accountability, integrity and independence," Metsola explained. "We can be proud of our work, but we can do better." The parliament chief presented on Thursday a first draft package of reforms, seen by Euronews, featuring a total of 14 proposals, such as a cooling-off period for former MEPs during which they won't be able to gain employment as a lobbyist, a ban on unofficial friendship groups, the mandatory publication of all scheduled meetings, new rules of access to parliamentary premises, and more detailed declarations on conflicts of interests and personal finances. "I wanted to bring together all possible measures, but they are not exhaustive so they could be better enhanced," Metsola told Euronews. "Whatever needs to be done will be done. I'm confident in that." Transparency International EU and Corporate Europe Observatory, two civil society organisations that monitor EU lobbying, welcomed the pro-

posed reforms as an "overdue" and "promising" first step but criticised the fact they rely on "self-enforcement" and "self-policing" by MEPs themselves. "We need independent, outside oversight. Too much responsibility is handed to parliamentary assistants," Michiel van Hulten, Director of Transparency International EU, said in a statement. Asked about the criticism, Metsola defended her package and said she had received a "unanimous mandate" from all the political groups to move forward with her proposals, which can lead to "immediate" change. The president, who at no point mentioned either Kaili or Qatar by name, admitted the lack of compliance with existing rules – rather than the absence of rules – laid the groundwork for the corruption scandal. "There are rules that were enforced that were not put into place, that were not complied with by Members of the European Parliament or (their) employees. I would like that to completely change," Metsola said.

Briefs

LHC orders to produce Imran's attacker's kin on Jan 16

DNA

LAHORE: The Lahore High Court has ordered to produce the brother and nephew of the main accused involved in the assassination bid on PTI Chairman Imran Khan during his long march in Wazirabad in November last year. LHC Justice Alia Neelum on Friday heard a petition challenging the illegal confinement of accused Naveed's brother and nephew in a case of gun attack on Imran Khan. The petition was filed by the wife of accused Naveed. The petitioner said that police have illegally detained the brother and nephew of Naveed. Police have not revealed the arrest of the accused's kin, she claimed. She prayed to the court to order police to release Naveed's brother Shafiq and nephew Ali Raza from their illegal confinement. The court ordered Gujranwala RPO to produce both the alleged accused before the court on January 16.

Irregular EU border crossings hit 'highest' level

NEWS DESK

BRUSSELS: The number of irregular border crossings into the European Union increased by 64% last year compared to 2021, reaching the highest level since 2016, the EU's border and coast guard agency Frontex said on Friday. According to the agency's "preliminary calculations," around 330,000 entries were detected, with 45% through the Western Balkans region. "This was the second year in a row with a steep rise in the number of irregular entries," Frontex said. The Central Mediterranean route accounted for the second highest number of crossings, rising by more than half to over 100,000. The most people to attempt the dangerous sea route last year were nationals from Egypt, Tunisia and Bangladesh. The agency said that 2022 also saw the most people in five years arrive from Libya, the main departure point in northern Africa. The number of people leaving Tunisia hit the highest level in recent history, Frontex said. Regardless of entry route, Syrians, Afghans and Tunisians together accounted for roughly 47% of the attempted border crossings. "The number of Syrians roughly doubled to 94,000," Frontex said. Men accounted for more than 80% of the attempts to cross into the EU, Frontex said. The share of reported minors fell to around 9% of all irregular entries. The agency calculates entry attempts rather than the number of people trying to get into Europe because it is often difficult to identify migrants, who routinely travel without passports, and some may try to enter multiple times.

Night time Israeli arrests haunt Palestinian families

In response to a petition to the Supreme Court by HaMoked two years ago, there had been some small improvement when Israel asked the military to first summon Palestinian parents about their accused children. But the progress was short-lived

MONITORING DESK

BALATA REFUGEE CAMP: Yousef Mesheh was sleeping in his bunk bed when Israeli forces stormed into his home at 3 a.m. Within moments, the 15-year-old Palestinian said he was lying on the floor as troops punched him, shouting insults. A soldier struck his mother's chest with his rifle butt and locked her in the bedroom, where she screamed for her sons. Yousef and his 16-year-old brother, Wael, were hauled out of their home in Balata refugee camp in the northern West Bank. Yousef was in a sleeveless undershirt and couldn't see without his glasses. "I can't forget that night," Yousef told The Associated Press from his living room, decorated with photos of Wael, who remains in detention. "When I go to sleep I still hear the shooting and screaming." The Israeli military arrested and interrogated hundreds of Palestinian teenagers in 2022 in the occupied West Bank, without ever issuing a summons or notifying their families, according to an upcoming report by the Israeli human rights organization HaMoked. The charges against those being arrested ranged from being

in Israel without a permit to throwing stones or Molotov cocktails. Some teens say they were arrested to obtain information about neighbors or family members. In the vast majority of the military's pre-planned arrests of minors last year, children were taken from their homes in the dead of the night, HaMoked said. After being yanked out of bed, children as young as 14 were interrogated while sleep-deprived and disoriented. Water, food and access to toilets were often withheld. Yousef said soldiers beat him when he asked to relieve himself during his seven-hour journey to the detention center. The Israeli army argues it has the legal authority to arrest minors at its discretion during late-night raids. Lawyers and advocates say the tactic runs counter to Israel's legal promises to alert parents about their children's alleged offenses. In response to a petition to the Supreme Court by HaMoked two years ago, there had been some small improvement when Israel asked the military to first summon Palestinian parents about their accused children. But the progress was short-lived. Last year, the Israeli military rounded up hundreds of Palestinians in the West Bank ages 12-17 in late-night arrests, according to HaMoked.

Rights activists say they believe such tactics are meant to create fear. "The fact that the military is making no effort to reduce these traumatic night arrests indicates to us that the trauma is part of the point," said Jessica Montell, director of HaMoked. "This intimidation and terrorizing of communities seems actually part of the policy." According to figures reported to the Supreme Court, the army summoned Palestinian parents to question their children only a handful of times in 2021. Last year, not a single family received a summons in nearly 300 cases HaMoked tracked in the West Bank. Petty offenses and cases where children were released without charge — as happened to Yousef — were no exception. HaMoked said the numbers are incomplete because it believes scores of similar cases are never reported. "They are not implementing the procedure they created themselves," said Ayed Abu Eqtaiash, accountability program director for Defense for Children International in the Palestinian territories. "The beating and mistreatment of children during night arrests is really what we're concerned about." In response to a request for comment, the Israeli military said it tries to summon Palestinian children suspected of minor offenses who have no history of

serious criminal convictions. But, the army argued, this policy does not apply to serious offenses or "when a summons to an investigation would harm its purpose." The army would not comment on Yousef's arrest, but said his brother, Wael, faces charges related to "serious financial crimes," including "contacting the enemy," "illegally bringing in money" and helping "an illegal organization." These charges typically reflect cases of Palestinians communicating with people in the Hamas-ruled Gaza Strip. Although HaMoked found most cases were soon dropped, the late-night arrests haunted children long after. Since his Nov. 7 arrest, Yousef "is not like he was before," said his mother, Hanadi Mesheh, who also recounted her ordeal to the AP. He can't focus in school. He no longer plays soccer. She sleeps beside him some nights, holding him during his nightmares. "I feel like I'm always being watched," Yousef said. "I'm frightened when my mother wakes me in the morning for school." Similar stories abound in the area. The northern city of Nablus emerged as a major flashpoint for violence last year after Israel began a crackdown in the West Bank in response to a spate of Palestinian attacks in Israel.

Czechs vote for new president

PRAGUE: Polling stations opened in the Czech presidential election on Friday with a billionaire, a general and an academic leading a likely two-round vote seen as too close to call. The winner will replace Milos Zeman, an outspoken political veteran. The victor will face record inflation in the central European country of 10.5 million people, as well as bulging public finance deficits related to the war in Ukraine. Unless a candidate wins more than 50 percent in the two-day first round, which is considered unlikely, the two top contenders will go head-to-head in a second round on January 27-28. "If you asked me to place a bet (on the result), I wouldn't," Metropolitan University Prague political scientist Petr Just told AFP. Populist ex-prime minister Andrej Babis, retired general Petr Pavel and university professor Danuse Nerudova are vying to become only the fourth president since the Czech Republic was founded in 1993 following the collapse of the Soviet Union. Business tycoon and former prime minister Babis, 68, is the fifth wealthiest person in the Czech Republic, according to Forbes magazine. Pavel, 61, is a former paratrooper who was decorated as a hero of the Serbo-Croatian war during which he helped to free French troops from a war zone. — APP

Saudi envoy thanks to Allah for Iraqi twins' surgery

ISLAMABAD: Saudi Ambassador to Pakistan Nawaf bin Said Al Maliki on Friday expressed pleasure and gratitude to Allah Almighty for the successful surgery of Iraqi conjoined twins in Riyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Taking to his Twitter handle, he said, "In the humanitarian country - Saudi Arabia, the successful operation of conjoined Iraqi twins 'Umar and Ali' lasted 11 hours." According to the Saudi Press Agency, a specialist team of surgeons successfully completed the surgery to separate Iraqi conjoined twins Ali and Omar in Riyadh on Thursday. The operation, which took 11 hours and consisted of six phases, was completed by a 27-member team of consultants, specialists, nursing, and technical staff, and based on directives from King Salman and Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman. The team managed to separate the twins, who were conjoined at the lower chest and abdomen and shared liver, bile ducts, and intestines. Dr. Abdullah Al-Rabeeah, the adviser at the Royal Court and supervisor general of the King Salman Humanitarian Aid and Relief Center, said that "this operation comes in implementation of the generous directives of the Saudi leadership," making it the 54th such procedure of the Saudi Conjoined Twins Programme. Al-Rabeeah, who is also head of the medical team, said the Saudi program had been able to operate on 127 conjoined twins from 23 countries during the past 32 years, and stressed the Kingdom's pioneering role in humanitarian work in general and medical work in particular. — DNA

Covid cases in China touch 900 million

WEB DESK

BEIJING: Some 900 million people in China have been infected with the coronavirus as of 11 January, according to a study by Peking University. The report estimates that 64% of the country's population has the virus. It ranks Gansu province, where 91% of the people are reported to be infected, at the top, followed by Yunnan (84%) and Qinghai (80%). A top Chinese epidemiologist has also warned that cases will surge in rural China over the lunar new year. The peak of China's Covid wave is expected to last two to three months, added Zeng Guang, ex-head of the Chinese Center for Disease Control. Hundreds of millions of Chinese are travelling to their hometowns - many for the first time since the pandemic began - ahead of the lunar new year on 23 January. China has stopped providing daily Covid statistics since abandoning zero-Covid. But hospitals in big cities - where healthcare facilities are better and more easily accessible - have become crowded with Covid patients as the virus has spread through the country. Speaking at an event earlier this month, Mr Zeng said it was "time to focus on the rural areas", in remarks reported in the Caixin news outlet. Many elderly, sick and disabled in the countryside were already being left behind in terms of Covid treatment, he added. China's central Henan province is the only province to have given details of infection rates - earlier this month a health official there said nearly 90% of the population had had Covid, with similar rates seen in urban and rural areas. However government officials say many provinces and cities have passed the peak of infections. The Lunar New Year holidays in China, which officially start from 21 January, involves the world's largest annual migration of people. Some two billion trips are expected to be made in total and tens of millions of people have already travelled.

7 killed as tornadoes strike southern US

WASHINGTON: A giant, swirling storm system billowing across the South on Thursday killed at least seven people in central Alabama, where a tornado ripped roofs off homes and uprooted trees in historic Selma, while another person was killed in Georgia, where severe winds knocked out power to tens of thousands of people. In Autauga County, Alabama, 41 miles (66 kilometers) northeast of Selma, at least six fatalities were confirmed and an estimated 40 homes were damaged or destroyed by a tornado that cut a 20-mile (32-kilometer) path across two rural communities, said Ernie Baggett, the county's emergency management director. Several mobile homes were launched into the air and at least 12 people were injured severely enough to be taken to hospitals by emergency responders, Baggett told The Associated Press. He said crews were focused Thursday night on cutting through downed trees to look for people who may need help. "It really did a good bit of damage. This is the worst that I've seen here in this county," Baggett said. In Georgia, a passenger died when a

tree fell on a vehicle in Jackson during the storm, Butts County Coroner Lacey Prue said. In the same county southeast of Atlanta, the storm appeared to have knocked a freight train off its tracks, officials said. Nationwide, there were 33 separate tornado reports Thursday from the National Weather Service as of Thursday evening, with a handful of tornado warnings still in effect in Georgia, South Carolina and North Carolina. However, the reports were not yet confirmed and some of them could later be classified as wind damage after assessments are done in coming days. In Selma, a city etched in the history of the civil rights movement, a tornado cut a wide path through the downtown area, where brick buildings collapsed, oak trees were uprooted, cars were on their side and power lines were left dangling. Plumes of thick, black smoke rose over the city from a fire burning. It wasn't immediately known whether the storm caused the blaze. Selma Mayor James Perkins said no fatalities have been reported, but several people were seriously injured. — Agencies



ISLAMABAD: Speaker National Assembly Raja Pervaiz Ashraf welcomes Ambassador of China Nong Rong at Parliament House. DNA

Sri Lanka to slash military by a third

COLOMBO: Sri Lanka will slash its army by a third to 135,000 personnel by next year and to 100,000 by 2030, the state minister of defence said on Friday, as the country tries to cut costs in the face of its worst economic crisis in more than seven decades. "Military spending is basically state-borne expenditure which indirectly stimulates and opens avenues for economic growth by way of assuring national and human security," Premitha Bandara Thennakoon said in a statement. The aim of the move is to create a "technically and tactically sound and well-balanced" defence force by 2030, Thennakoon said. The size of Sri Lanka's armed forces peaked between 2017 and 2019, with 317,000 personnel. — APP

Rashid, nephew acquitted in sloganeering case

RAWALPINDI: Former interior minister Sheikh Rashid Ahmed and his nephew MNA Sheikh Rashid Shafiq were acquitted in the case of sloganeering at Masjid-e-Nabawi. Fateh Jang Judicial Magistrate Muhammad Arif issued the order Friday on the acquittal plea filed under Section A-249 of the Pakistan Penal Code (PPC). On behalf of the accused, Sardar Abdul Razzaq Khan Advocate gave arguments on the plea. It is to be noted here that during the visit of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif to Saudi Arabia, some people hurled insults at him and the members of his delegation at Masjid-e-Nabawi. Qazi Tariq of the Lawyers' Wing of the PML-N had got a case registered at the New Airport Fateh Jang police station. The names of former Prime Minister Imran Khan, Sheikh Rashid Ahmed, Pawad Chaudhry, Qasim Suri, Murad Saeed, Rashid Shafiq and others had been included in the case. Sheikh Rashid and Rashid Shafiq were implicated in the case on the orders of Shehbaz Sharif and Interior Minister Rana Sanaullah on the basis of mere political opposition. "They have nothing to do with this incident, nor can they think so," Sardar Abdul Razzaq Advocate asserted. "According to the law, the FIR of an incident abroad cannot be registered in Pakistan, nor can a private person file an FIR of blasphemy," he added. "Such a case can be registered by the federal or provincial government only," he stated. After hearing the arguments, the court pronounced the verdict. — DNA

Rioters likely had inside help: Lula

How can I have a person outside my office who might shoot me?" asked the president, who narrowly defeated Bolsonaro in an October vote following a deeply divisive campaign

BRASÍLIA: Brazil intensified a mop-up operation on Thursday after the shock weekend ransacking of government buildings in the capital, as President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva said the rioters likely had inside help. Lula told reporters he had ordered a "thorough review" of presidential palace staff after Sunday's violent uprising, which saw backers of his far-right predecessor Jair Bolsonaro storm the presidency, Congress and Supreme Court causing widespread damage. "I am convinced that the door of the Planalto (presidential) palace was opened for people to enter because there are no broken doors," the president said in Brasilia. "This means that someone facilitated their entry," added Lula, who also pointed a finger at "conniving agents" from the police and armed forces. Dealing with the aftermath of the violent reaction by so-called "bolsonar-



istas" to his brand-new presidential term, Lula added that "from now on we will be more cautious, more prudent." He said "radical sonarists found work for government will be

ed Bolsonaro in an October vote following a deeply divisive campaign. Human Rights Watch, meanwhile, urged the government to "thoroughly investigate all those who have incited, financed, or committed acts of violence in an attempt to negate election results." Pro-Bolsonaro rioters on Sunday looted government offices, destroyed priceless works of art and left graffiti messages calling for a military coup. Investigations continued into security lapses and to identify those who masterminded and financed the rioters. The attorney general's office announced on Thursday it had identified 52 individuals and seven companies suspected of having helped pay for the uprising. According to national broadcaster TV Globo, the suspects included leaders in the pro-Bolsonaro agro-business sector. — APP

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