



Islamabad POST

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UN aid chief Martin Griffiths voices support for Afghan women

Detailed News On Page-08

Tayyip Erdogan warns Sweden on NATO

Detailed News On Page-07



Babar Azam Captain of ICC ODI team 2022

Detailed News On Page-06



Briefs

Fawad calls for fair snap polls

DNA

LAHORE: PTI senior leader Fawad Chaudhry fired on Tuesday a broadside at PDM. Speaking to media, the former federal minister slammed the PDM-led government, saying that it seemed as if the coalition government had no connection with the country. Underscoring the importance of elections, Mr Chaudhry recalled the demand of transparent polls. Talking about the matter of the PTI lawmakers' resignation in the National Assembly, Mr Chaudhry said, "First the resignations of the PTI lawmakers were not accepted, but when talks were made to oust opposition leader Raja Riaz, the resignations of the PTI MNAs were accepted."

CEC seeks polling dates from governors

BUREAU REPORT

LAHORE: The Election Commission of Pakistan has said that it is ready to hold elections in Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa provinces. An important meeting was held in this connection at the ECP under the chair of Chief Election Commissioner Sikandar Sultan Raja on Tuesday. The meeting was told that preparations regarding setting up of polling stations and voters' lists had been made. The CEC directed to spur efforts for conducting the polls in both the provinces.

Karachi to have mayor from JI

ABID RAZA

LAHORE: Jamaat-e-Islami Karachi Emir Hafiz Naemur Rehman claimed on Tuesday that future mayor of Karachi would be from his party. Addressing a ceremony in Lahore, the JI leader called Karachi a 'mini Pakistan' and said the people of the metropolis had voted for the Jamaat-e-Islami. The tax from the masses ensured state's functioning and people should stand up for their rights, he added.

ECO FMs moot in Tashkent

FM stresses joint efforts to resolve issues

Warns against climate change; holds meetings with counterparts from Uzbekistan, Iran, Turkey, Tajikistan

NEWS DESK / DNA

TASHKENT: Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari has stressed for a collective approach to address the issues faced by the region including the climate change. Addressing the 26th meeting of Council of Ministers of Economic Cooperation Organization in Tashkent, Uzbekistan on Tuesday, he said the regional countries need to develop a strategically robust emergency response mechanism to respond to any climate crisis in future. He noted that the issue of climate cooperation is very significant. The Foreign Minister welcomed the proposal of Uzbekistan for the establishment of a high level dialogue platform on environmental cooperation within the framework of ECO. Alluding to the devastation caused by floods in Pakistan, the Foreign Minister said Pakistan's urgent priority is to ensure rapid economic growth and lift millions out of destitution and hunger. He said we will not only build back better but do so in a climate resilient manner. Bilawal Bhutto Zardari said Pakistan believes the ECO led by shared principles of solidarity and mutual support has the collective strength to measure up to the challenges. Together we can and should make a difference. The Foreign Minister said regional preferential trade framework amongst the ECO members will help us in enhancing cooperation. He

India invites FM for SCO moot

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: The Indian government has extended an invitation to the Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari to attend the upcoming foreign ministers conference of the SCO countries being held in the resort city Goa. Moreover, India has also invited the Chief Justice of Pakistan to India for a conference. However both these dignitaries are yet to accept this invitation. The diplomatic sources believe the Pakistani foreign minister ought to take part in the SCO moot in order to not only strengthen Pakistan's relations with the organization but to help achieve some sort of normalization in relations with the arch rival.

said Pakistan will continue to accord high priority to trade promotion and facilitation within the ECO. Earlier, Pakistan and Uzbekistan resolved to further promote their cooperation in trade, energy and connectivity.

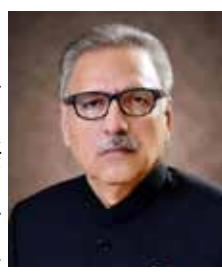
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President condemns desecration of Holy Quran in Sweden

Calls for collective resolve against Islamophobia

DNA

ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi has strongly condemned the abhorrent act of desecration of the Holy Quran in Sweden which, he said, has insulted the holy scripture of Islam and hurt the feelings of the billions of Muslims under the guise of freedom of expression. He termed the act as senseless, provocative and Islamophobic which has hurt the religious sensitivities of Muslims around the world. The President said that this immoral incident was an act of needless incitement and a serious provocation to the feelings of Muslims in the world, was against the internationally accepted norms and principles of legitimate expression of the right to freedom of expression or opinion, which obliged everyone to not resort to hate speech and incite people to violence. The President said that Islam preached respect and reverence for



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Palestine condemns Quran tearing incident

DNA

RAMALLAH: The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates has condemned in the strongest terms the racist phenomena in burning or tearing the Holy Qur'an, the latest of which happened in the Netherlands, and considers it an extension of the culture of hatred, racism, lack of recognition of the other, and an attempt to prejudice and attack the principles of human rights, peaceful coexistence between followers of different religions, freedom of opinion and other opinion. It is also a flagrant attack on the feelings of millions of Muslims. The Ministry calls on all international bodies to take the necessary measures and legal measures to prevent

Continued on Page 06

Govt allows disclosure of Toshakhana details

The decision was taken at a meeting chaired by PM Shehbaz Sharif

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: The federal cabinet on Tuesday allowed making the details and records of Toshakhana, a state repository that stores gifts received by public officeholders from other governments and foreign dignitaries, public in a major shift in policy. The decision was taken at a meeting chaired by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and attended by federal ministers and advisers in the federal cabinet. The participants also reviewed the report of the intra-ministerial committee on the Toshakhana. The Toshakhana department, which was established in 1978, and all the public officeholders, including parliamentarians and bureaucrats, are bound to report the gifts to the Cabinet Division. The department came under the spotlight when proceedings were initiated against former Prime Minister Imran Khan for "not sharing details" of Toshakhana gifts retained by him.

Cabinet directs strategy to prevent power outages

ISLAMABAD: The federal cabinet on Tuesday ordered the authorities concerned for formulation of a comprehensive strategy to prevent the recurrence of prolonged power outages in the future and to do away with the factors causing it. The cabinet, in a meeting chaired by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, also approved a nationwide public awareness drive on conservation of power, water, gas and other resources to make the people develop such habits. The meeting also called for inclusion of the subject of best international practices on energy conservation in the educational curriculum.

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TASHKENT: Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari in a group photo with his counterparts from Economic Cooperation Organization member states during 26th meeting of Council of Foreign Ministers of ECO. - DNA

PAK BUDGET

IMF asks for more details

Loans of \$8 to \$10 billion cannot be managed IMF help

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has requested additional information about the budget and other areas from Islamabad before beginning virtual negotiations, amid the country's urgent need to generate \$10 billion in foreign loans for the remainder of the current fiscal year to prevent default. "The remaining loan repayment requirements and external financing of managing current account deficit to the tune of \$8 to \$10 billion cannot be raised without backing and revival of the stalled IMF programme," said one government official. One senior official of the Finance Division when contacted said that the IMF sought some additional information that they were just sitting in the Finance Ministry for responding back to the IMF tonight. Meanwhile, the government is all set to table its plan to erase the circular debt of gas sector before the upcoming meeting of the federal cabinet by hiking gas tariff and bringing changes in the existing slabs to fulfil the IMF condition. Earlier, Pakistan shared the contours of areas for accomplishing the pending 9th review under the \$7 billion Extended Fund Facility (EFF).

Continued on Page 06

US ties with Pak, India 'stand on their own'

PM Shehbaz had offered Modi to hold serious sincere talks



CENTRELINE REPORT

WASHINGTON: The State Department Tuesday said that even though the United States wants to see regional stability in South Asia, its relationships with Pakistan and India "stand on their own". State Department Spokesperson Ned Price expressed these views during a press briefing on Monday while talking about the strained ties between Pakistan and India and Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's

Continued on Page 06

PTI mulls court option

Resignations of 43 more PTI MNAs accepted

The approval of the resignations comes a day after 45 PTI MNAs had tried meeting the speaker

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

ISLAMABAD: National Assembly Speaker Raja Pervez Ashraf has approved the resignations of further 43 Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf's lawmakers in the lower house, sources told Geo News on Tuesday. Officials of the speaker's office, who spoke on the condition of anonymity, said that Ashraf had approved the resignations a few days ago and has sent a summary to the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP). The approval means that only dissident PTI lawmakers remain in the National Assembly now. Interestingly, the approval of the resignations comes a day after 45 PTI MNAs had tried meeting the speaker to withdraw their resignations.

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Govt wants election results to its liking, says Qureshi

ABID RAZA

LAHORE: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Vice Chairman Shah Mehmood Qureshi has said the government wants to get election results to its liking and for this purpose a controversial person has been appointed in Punjab. In a statement, PTI leader Shah Mehmood Qureshi said they had no intention return to National Assembly; however, the government wants a friendly

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Former No. 1 Azarenko sets up Rybakina semi-final - Page 06

FMs of Uzbekistan and Pakistan mull future coop - Page 07

Govt to probe 'foreign hand' behind power system failure - Page 08

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Zia appointed coordinator PAJCCI KP

OUR CORRESPONDENT

PESHAWAR: Noted businessman and former Senior Vice President (SVP) Sarhad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI), Zia-ul-Haq Sarhadi has been appointed as Coordinator Pak-Afghan Joint Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PAJCCI) Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The appointment of Zia-ul-Haq Sarhadi has been made by Chairman PAJCCI, Muhammad Zubair Motiwala. "Zia ul Haq Sarhadi also holds the post of Director PAJCCI and will perform additional duties as Coordinator PAJCCI KP", reads the appointment order. The decision has been taken due to selfless efforts of Zia ul Haq Sarhadi for promotion of Pak-Afghan trade and in highlighting the problems being faced by business community of both the countries. While reacting over his appointment, Zia-ul-Haq Sarhadi thanked Zubair Motiwala for reposing confidence in him by awarding an additional charge and duties. He said the dynamic leadership of Zubair Motiwala is a source of inspiration for all businessmen of the country and has helped a lot in removal of hindrances being faced by businessmen of Pakistan and Afghanistan. He expressed the resolve of coming up to the expectation of high ups of PAJCCI by working round the clock to promote trade between not only in Pakistan and Afghanistan but in the whole region involving Central Asian Republics (CARs). Zia said enhancement of commercial activities is a need of hour while realizing tough economic challenges faced by country and for this purpose everyone has to play his role effectively.



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif inaugurates PM Youth Loan Scheme for Business and Agriculture.—APP

Hundreds of students attended AEO's Global Education Expo

DNA

LAHORE: With the world moving back to normal, it is heartening that the borders of all the top study destinations have reopened. It is the best time that the students gear up and start preparing themselves to realize their dream to study at top ranked international universities. With over 5000 alumni and 300,000+ IELTS registrations, AEO Pakistan over the past two decades has established itself as Aus-

tralian & Global Education Specialists, the most trusted IELTS Official Test Centre and the preferred official OET Test Centre in Pakistan. AEO Pakistan operates as the official Liaison office for over 40 leading Australian Universities/Institutions and facilitates the enrolment of international students at these Universities / Institutions. Since 2002, AEO Pakistan has been conducting Australian Education Expos providing an excellent opportunity to Pakistani students plan-

ning to Study in Australia. Over the years thousands of students have benefitted from AEO expos held twice annually, across all major cities of Pakistan. This January once again AEO's 43rd Global Education Expo is being organized across 10 major cities of Pakistan i.e., Lahore, Islamabad, Karachi, Multan, Sialkot, Faisalabad, Abbottabad, Peshawar, Bahawalpur and Hyderabad. The AEO expo is providing an ideal platform to prospective students across the country, to

get free expert advice and counselling about how to apply to study in at top ranked international universities in Australia, USA, Canada and UK. Representatives of more than 20 universities/institutes are participating at the expo providing golden opportunity for Pakistani students to get free guidance and counseling for their future study endeavors. Information about IELTS test and preparatory classes is also being provided at the expo. The first exhibition of the series was

successfully held today in Lahore at PC Hotel. Hundreds of students along with their parents participated at the expo with great interest and excitement to enroll for admissions at top ranked Australian and other leading International Universities. The participants appreciated AEO's effort in provision of a perfect platform offering free counseling sessions with official representatives of international universities to explore the options of enrolling for a degree of their choice. The next expo of the

series is scheduled to be held in Sialkot on 25th January at Hotel the Jeeven's, Islamabad 26th January at Serena Hotel, Faisalabad 26th January at Hotel One, Multan 27th January at Hotel One, Karachi 28th January at Marriott Hotel, Abbottabad 28th January at Hotel One, Peshawar 29th January at Serena Hotel, Hyderabad 29th January at Indus Hotel and Bahawalpur 29th January at Four Seasons Restaurant. Entry to the exhibition is FREE with a mask and Scholarships opportunities are also available.

No shortage of petrol in Peshawar

PESHAWAR: Chairman PSO Tankers Association, Muhammad Irshad on Tuesday categorically said that there was no shortage of petrol in Peshawar and news circulated in this regard were totally baseless. Talking to the media here, Muhammad Irshad said people have nothing to worry about petrol availability in Peshawar adding there was no need to pay heed towards such rumors. He said the district has sufficient stock of the petrol that was being provided on a regular basis to the vehicles. Even though the petrol pumps were witnessing a rush, however, all the consumers were being provided the commodity, he added. "We have sufficient stock of petrol and more tankers are on way to supply petrol to the gas stations in Peshawar," Irshad said. He informed that some of the oil tankers were facing delays in reaching Peshawar however the situation with regard to the availability of petrol was totally under control.—APP

President appoints four senate members of Federal Urdu University

ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi on Tuesday approved the appointment of four members for the Senate of Federal Urdu University for Arts, Science and Technology. As per details shared by the Presidency, Shahid Shafiq has been appointed as Senate member from the Society of Federal Urdu University. Prof. Dr. Sarosh Hashmat Lodhi, Prof. Dr. Muhammad Khalid Anees and Prof. Dr. Tanveer Khalid have been appointed as Senate members from the teaching department. The president made the appointments under Article 48(1) of the Constitution, Rules of Business and the University Ordinance.

Pakistan Navy, PMSA and Customs seized 1450 kg of drugs

KARACHI: Pakistan Navy, Pakistan Maritime Security Agency (PMSA) and Collectorate of Customs Enforcement seized 1450 Kg narcotics in a joint intelligence based counter narcotics operation in North Arabian Sea. During the successful joint operation, security forces apprehended largest amount of narco in-terms of quantity that included 586 Kg of Ice crystal and 864 Kg of Heroin.—APP

Millennium Education hosts teacher development conference

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Keeping its legacy, Millennium Education organized Pakistan's largest Teacher Development Conference TDC 2023 on the visionary theme- "Future- Quests-Challenges - Journey" at Pak-China Friendship Center, Islamabad last day says a press release. Keeping in view the accelerated pace at which changes are occurring in teaching and learning, the conference endeavoured to preserve the finest and most worthy means of talent development, while at the same time looking to the future of education and talent pedagogy for sustainable growth. Nearly 1000 teachers from The Millennium Education Group nationwide and organizers were enthusiastic and highly motivated to take the learning initiatives and training



ahead to their classrooms. This year's conference brought together leading national and international speakers including Mr. Abbas Husain, Director Teachers Development Centre, Dr. Mariam Chugatai, Director National Curriculum Council of Pakistan, Yousaf Bashir Qureshi, actor and social worker, Fahd Husain, Special assistant to the Prime Minister on Public Policy and Strategic Communications, Shireen Naqvi Founder School of Lead-

ership, Dr Moiz Hussain, Founder Institute of Mind Sciences, Amir Ramzan, Director British Council, Izza Farrukh Senior Education Specialist The World Bank, and Faisal Aftab, Founder BitRate Digital, who motivated and injected new ideas into the conference delegates comprising the Millennium Education Founder & CEO Dr. Faisal Mushtaq TI. Millennium Education Annual Teacher Development conference TD/C is the largest gather-

ing of educators, teacher educators, reformers and thinkers who are fiercely committed to transform teaching and learning practices. For the past many years, this platform has provided a phenomenal opportunity to think tanks and classroom practitioners to engage in discussions and dialogues on issues that matter the most for the students, they serve, to achieve educational excellence and equity. Dr. Musadiq Malik, Min-

ister of State (Petroleum Division), graced this auspicious occasion as the worthy Chief Guest, who presented awards and certificates to teachers who had completed their Cambridge Professional development qualifications, foundation courses and Microsoft Innovative Educator Expert certificates. The respectable Minister appreciated Millennium Education commitment to the overall development of learners who, alongside academics, are seen in the forefront in all the international and national mega events. H.E. Andreas Ferrarese, Ambassador of the Republic of Italy, President RCCI Mr. Saqib Rafiq and President ICCI Mr. Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawar were the Guests of honour on this famed conference. The worthy ambassador highlighted the multifarious responsibility of teachers in an era of interconnected dimensions.

BISP Beneficiaries can receive cash on 24/7 basis

ISLAMABAD: In pursuance of the directions of Honorable Chief Justice Lahore High Court, Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) has taken up the matter of unavailability of biometric ATM cash withdrawal to BISP beneficiaries with HBL. As per directions, it has been ensured that all 149 HBL ATMs in the Multan region are biometrically enabled and operational 24 hour basis to provide cash withdrawal facility to BISP beneficiaries. Besides, A massive crackdown against delinquent mafia, who are found involved in malpractices and illegal deductions from BISP beneficiaries through ATMs & POS agents, has been taken, in order to ensure transparent disbursement of BISP funds among beneficiaries. The Director General BISP Punjab, Zonal Director of South and other officials are personally paying field visits to monitor the smooth distribution of BISP funds under the directions of Honorable Court. As per recent report from BISP Punjab dashboard till date, the Punjab Region has blocked 312 POS agents on account of established embezzlement complaints, wherein 30 FIRs have been lodged in local police stations and 01 case has been referred to FIA Cyber Crime Circle Lahore, while 19 POS agents have been put behind bars. In pursuance of Honorable Court directions, the Director General BISP Punjab, Arshad Liaquat Chaudhary urged the BISP beneficiaries to receive their full amounts from HBL ATMs through biometric verification. Furthermore, in case of any complaints they must visit the nearest BISP office for complaint lodging & immediate redressal. The DG Punjab further added that stern legal action would be taken against anyone who found involved in malpractices.—APP

PTI leadership laments NA resignations

PESHAWAR: After acceptance of resignations of the Pakistan Tehreek e Insaaf's lawmakers by the Speaker National Assembly, the PTI leadership was now seemed lamenting their decision as the party has lost its due role of becoming part of the constitutional process regarding formation of the caretaker government in the centre. Political and legal experts said the acceptance of resignations of the last 43 PTI's MNAs by the Speaker Raja Pervez Ashraf has shattered

the hopes of PTI leaders to re-enter the National Assembly to fulfill their personal agenda. With the new development, the PTI had lost a golden opportunity to nominate a caretaker Prime Minister with the government after completion of the constitutional tenure of the National Assembly. "PTI's MNAs should blame themselves for their immature and irrational decision of 'tendering uncalled for resignations' from the National Assembly in April last year that would

further cost them politically in the upcoming elections," said ANP leader and former Minister Wajid Ali Khan while talking to APP on Tuesday. He said no justification was left with PTI's de-notified MNAs to protest outside of the speaker house for withdrawal of resignations after its acceptance, adding the Imran Khan-led party apparently wanted to replace MNA Raja Riaz as a leader of the opposition. Wajid Ali said PTI leadership seemed unnerved after the Speaker's bold deci-

sion that had been taken in line with the assembly rules and constitution, adding once a resignation was tendered by MNA can't be withdrawn. He said the speaker was left with no choice but to accept PTI's lawmakers' resignations after they turned down his several requests to appear one by one for verification. On Tuesday, National Assembly Speaker Raja Pervez Ashraf approved the resignations of another 43 lawmakers of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaaf. Earlier, the resignations of 70 PTI's MNAs were accepted in two phases by the speaker, who waited for nearly eight months for verification of their resignations before their de-notification by the ECP.—APP

PTA receives Rs. 24.24b from Jazz

Islamabad : Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) has received deposit amounting to Rs. 24.24 Billion (equivalent of USD 105.80 Million) from Pakistan Mobile Communications Limited (Jazz) on account of license renewal fees. The amount is being deposited in Federal Consolidated Fund (FCF). With this deposit in FCF, the cumulative deposit by PTA in FCF during the current financial year i.e. 2022-23 will become Rs. 56.57 Billion (equivalent to USD 253.78 Million).—DNA

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Presentation Convent holds annual ceremony

KAMRAN GUJJAR

JHELUM: What a happening day at Presentation Convent Jhelum. On this day the annual A+ ceremony to award the high achievers of the previous year 2021 to 2022 was held. The ingenious efforts were put to make this day happen at its best. The guest of honour was Major General Mohammed Nadeem Ashraf. He arrived around 10:30 and was received with traditional hospitality. The School band then escorted him to the venue grounds where the present and the former students and parents of A+ holders gave him a warm welcome. The ceremony incepted with hosting of the national flag by the guest. Right after this girls performed to a prayer song. After an auspicious beginning the four toppers Zahra Ali,



Zainab Zafar, Tehreem Fatima and Sibgha Anwar were adorned with Shields and medals respectively. The rest of the stellar were broken into five groups to be announced one after the other with a performance break between each. All of

them were awarded with medals. The special acknowledgement was made by presenting honorary shield to Alishba Kamal, the former student of the school of the session 2019 to 2020 for scoring first position in her FSC result in

the current year. Towards the end, the proud mother of the toppers Zahra Ali expressed her gratefulness to Almighty Allah and the teachers for enabling her daughter to shine bright on the horizon of success. Sister Bina also proposed vote

of thanks to the guest and appreciated students' efforts and asked them to be role models for the juniors. The conclusive address was made by General Nadeem whose words sparked up the cherisma of the audience.

National Days and Armed Forces Days

JANUARY

Jan 01 / CUBA	Revolution Day
Jan 01 / Palestine	Palestine Revolution Day
Jan 01 / Sudan	National Day
Jan 04 / Myanmar	Independence Day
Jan 06 / Iraq	Armed Forces Day
Jan 12 / Tanzania	Armed Forces Day
Jan 14 / Uzbekistan	Armed Forces Day
Jan 15 / Nigeria	Armed Forces Day
Jan 20 / Mali	Armed Forces Day
Jan 20 / Laos	Armed Forces Day
Jan 25 / Thailand	Armed Forces Day
Jan 26 / Australia	National Day
Jan 26 / India	Republic Day



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Airlines

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Rawal Town.....	5773343

Water Tank

Islamabad.....	0321-5744480
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ICCI slams hike in policy interest rate to 17 percent

Ahsan Bakhtawari said that hike in interest rate would also increase the budget deficit and foreign debt of Pakistan as according to a conservative estimate, one percent increase in interest rate surges the foreign debt by 170 billion rupees

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari, President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) said that due to the current economic crisis and high prices of electricity, gas and petroleum products, the business community is already facing great difficulties as the cost of doing business has increased manifold. In these unfavorable business conditions, the State Bank of Pakistan has further increased the interest rate to 17%, which will prove disastrous for business and investment activities besides further increasing inflation for the common man. He said that in order to revive the economy, Pakistan needs a boost in economic activities, but further increase in interest rates would make bank credit almost unaffordable for the private sector leading to further contraction in business activities. Ahsan Bakhtawari said that hike in interest rate would also increase the budget deficit and foreign debt of Pakistan as according to a conservative estimate, one percent increase in the interest rate surges the foreign debt by 170 billion rupees. He said that interest rate in China is 3.65%, Bangladesh & Vietnam 6% and India 6.25%, but the 17% interest rate in Pakistan is higher in the region which would make our exports more uncompetitive in the international market. He said the developed world including USA and Europe has kept the interest rate less than 5%, but in Pakistan, it has been increased to 17%, which would put the private sector at great disadvantage. He said that the business community of the entire country has always been



demanding of the government to keep the interest rate in the single digit level in order to provide cheap credit facility for promotion of business and industrial activities and attract FDI. He stressed that the State Bank of Pakistan should withdraw the recent hike in interest rate and consider further reducing it to save the businesses and the economy from further troubles. Faad Waheed, Senior Vice President ICCI,

said that no foreign investor will invest in Pakistan in an environment of such high interest rate. He said that the industry has to take credit from banks to acquire machinery, plant and other equipment, but further hike in the interest rate would hamper the growth of industrial activities and reduce exports. He demanded that the government should withdraw the hike in interest rate to save the industry and economy from further damages.

Engr. Muhammad Azhar ul Islam Zafar, Vice President ICCI, said that the builders and developers have to finance many construction projects through banks and a hike in interest rate would hit the construction industry. He urged that the government should bring down the policy interest rate to single digit, which will pave the way for the better growth of business and economic activities and help revive the economy.

'Govt committed to end poliovirus transmission soon'

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for National Health Services, Regulations and Coordination, Abdul Qadir Patel on Tuesday renewed the government's commitment to completely eradicate the crippling disease of polio from the country. In a statement, he said that Pakistan and Afghanistan were working together in their fight against polio. He said that while the isolation of the virus was a cause of concern, it was excellent to note that it was detected promptly. This timely detection of the virus in the environment was crucial to protecting children from being paralyzed by the poliovirus, he added. Patel said, "The only way to stop the virus is to vaccinate all children under the age of five. It is critically important that parents and caregivers, particularly in Lahore, ensure that their child is vaccinated in the February round." Dr Shahzad Baig, Coordinator of the National Emergency Operations Centre (NEOC), said this is not unexpected since Pakistan and Afghanistan are considered as one epidemiological block in which polio viruses move across borders as there is widespread population movement. "In the past year, we have worked very closely with the Afghanistan programme and treat the virus in either country as our own. Neither Pakistan nor Afghanistan can be free of polio until both countries can interrupt transmission," Dr Baig said. Pakistan's first detection of wild polio virus in 2023 has been detected in an environmental sample in Lahore. The virus found in Gulshan Ravi has links to a poliovirus found in Nangahar, Afghanistan last November, the Pakistan Polio Laboratory at the National Institute of Health (NIH) said. - APP

President for integrated efforts on mental health initiatives

ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi on Tuesday stressed the need for integrating the initiatives taken by various public departments to address the challenges pertaining to mental health. Chairing a follow-up meeting on mental health, he said the initiatives on mental health taken by the Prime Minister's Office, Ministry of Planning and Development as well as the President's House, which showed the focus and importance being accorded to providing mental health services to the target population to reduce stress levels in society. This, he said, was paramount for a healthy society and for the progress and development of the country. He said the financial needs may be determined by the relevant stakeholders keeping in view the technical requirement, hiring of expertise and setting up of required essential physical infrastructure. The presi-

dent said that available psychiatrists and psychologists of the Pakistani diaspora in the United Kingdom and in other countries should be integrated into the system to provide quality, authentic and professional advice. He noted that there were around 2,000 psychiatrists of Pakistani origin in the UK, who could be integrated into the system. He said that mental health service provider systems should be integrated with the existing resources available in health institutes, both public and private, and should have a futuristic outlook to allow for expansion, modification, alteration and improvements in the system to fully exploit opportunities which come to light during its operation in future. The president said the artificial intelligence-based system should have the capabilities to cater to the entire target

population and the ability to filter out the number of patients, which need expert advice according to the available psychiatrists and psychological resources. Dr Alvi said that suicide was now distinguished from crimes in Pakistan and considered a mental health issue, which has opened up new avenues to provide mental health advice to prevent suicide. He said that a comprehensive media campaign would be needed after testing and making the mental health providing system fully functional to ensure its credibility and advocacy. He said that the system should have an integrated mechanism to record the calls to ensure consistency, accuracy and effectiveness of the advice rendered by the experts with the permission of the help seekers regarding respect for the patient privacy.

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Court reserves verdict in LNG reference

ISLAMABAD: An Accountability Court (AC) on Tuesday reserved its judgment on the acquittal pleas of co-accused in LNG reference against former prime minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi and others. AC-II Judge Nasir Javed reserved the decision after listening to arguments from the respondents. At the outset of the hearing, the NAB prosecutor opposed the acquittal pleas and prayed the court to decide the matter with regard to the jurisdiction only instead of acquitting the accused. The forum for this case would be different, he said, adding that there was a corrupt and nontransparent practice in LNG agreement. He further said that it was the top court which took suo-moto action on LNG agreement, adding that anti-money laundering clauses were also included in the reference. The prosecutor said that the NAB was also viewing the cases of money laundering and fake bank accounts. Former prime minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi arrived at the court rostrum and said that these cases were prepared on political grounds. He said that every witness who arrived here should tell what the allegation was against him. He was being dragged in this case for the last four years, he added. After this, the court reserved the judgment on acquittal pleas. - APP

Policeman shot dead

DNA

RAWALPINDI: A policeman was shot dead over a petty dispute, in the jurisdiction of Airport Police Station here on Tuesday. According to police spokesman, Head Constable Mohammad Zahid was outside his house when his neighbor opened an indiscriminate fire and shot him dead. He then managed to flee from the scene. Zahid was posted in Murree Police. SSP Operations along with other officers reached the site and collected relevant evidence. However, investigations are being done with all angles. City Police Officer CPO Syed Shahzad Nadeem Bukhari while taking notice said, "The accused involved in the incident will be arrested and brought to justice."



ISLAMABAD: Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Religious Harmony Maulana Tahir Mehmood Ashrafi addressing a press conference at Jamia Masjid Maaz Bin Jabal. - APP

Kashmiris to observe Black Day on January 26

ISLAMABAD: Kashmiris all across the globe would observe India's Republic Day on January 26 as Black Day with the objective to give a clear message to the world community that they reject the occupation of their motherland by India. The call for observing Black Day was given by the All Parties Hurriyat Conference (APHC) and has been supported by many pro-freedom parties in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK). Chairman APHC, Masarrat Aalam Butt in his message from the infamously Tihar jail has appealed to Kashmiris living in IIOJK and the world over to mark this day as Black Day. He said since India was involved in war crimes against humanity in the occupied territory so it has no right to claim itself to be a democracy. Meanwhile, urging Kashmiri masses to observe India's Republic Day as Black Day, senior APHC leader Nayeem Ahmed Khan said that the fascist country that had usurped the fundamental rights of Kashmiris has no justification whatsoever to celebrate republic day. In his message from Tihar jail, the incarcerated leader denounced India's illegal and forcible occupation of Jammu and Kashmir and said, "notwithstanding their commitments of holding a free, fair and impartial plebiscite to let the people of Jammu and Kashmir decide their political fate, the Indian rulers have chosen a violent path to suppress by dint of force the aspirations of Kashmiri people", Khan said. He said, it was incumbent upon the international community to take serious notice of the illegal occupation of Kashmir by India and its belligerent occupation of Kashmir, which he said has been a major cause and consequence of unrest in the region. - DNA

PRCS Chairman calls on Governor Punjab

PRCS Chairman Sardar Shahid Ahmed Laghari says all the branches are arms of National Headquarter; stresses upon the need to build synergies in Punjab on disaster preparedness and disaster contingency planning just like at national level

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: The Governor of Punjab appreciates the role of Red Crescent during floods in mitigating the suffering of the vulnerable and distressed; says all possible measures will be taken to strengthen PRCS Punjab Branch, its coordination mechanism and district branch network for efficient service delivery. PRCS Chairman Sardar Shahid Ahmed Laghari says all the

branches are arms of National Headquarter; stresses upon the need to build synergies in Punjab on disaster preparedness and disaster contingency planning just like at national level. Chairman Pakistan Red Crescent Society Sardar Shahid Laghari called on Governor Punjab Baligh Ur Rehman at Governor House here on Monday. In the meeting, Governor Punjab appreciated the role and services of Red Crescent in dealing with climate change and natural calamities. He lauded

PRCS services and humanitarian assistance in mitigating the suffering of the vulnerable and distressed during flood response 2022. The Governor of Punjab assured that government will fully support PRCS Punjab Branch and would take all possible measures to strengthen its programs and interventions in the province and to improve its coordination mechanism and district branch network for efficient service delivery. Speaking on this occasion, PRCS Chairman Sardar Shahid Ahmad

Laghari said that Red Crescent was in the forefront of serving the suffering humanity. He said that PRCS Punjab branch should build synergies at province level on disaster preparedness and disaster contingency planning just like we have at national level. He said all the branches are arms of National Headquarter and he is visiting all the provinces and meeting with PHQ leadership to bring harmony among all the branches. He requested the support of Governor of Punjab in increas-

ing the district branch network, volunteer base and coordination mechanism of PRCS Provincial Branch. He said that Red Crescent will expand the scope of its welfare projects in Punjab with the support of its Movement Partners and stakeholders. Chairman PRCS Punjab Branch Justice (R) Sheikh Ahmed Farooq, Secretary General PRCS Muhammad Obaidullah Khan, Secretary PRCS Punjab Muhammad Zahid and others were also present on this occasion.

Briefs

Four drug dealers arrested

RAWALPINDI: Police arrested four alleged illegal arm holders, drug dealers and recovered arms, ammunition from their possession during a crackdown here on Tuesday, said police spokesman. According to details, the Pirwadi Police recovered a 30 bore pistol from Abdul Rahman and recovered 600 grams of hashish from Shahab. Similarly, the Chontra Police held Wasim and recovered a 30 bore pistol from his possession.

Meanwhile, the Morgah Police recovered 160 grams of hashish from Fahad. Police have registered separate cases against the accused arrested and started further investigation. SSP Operations appreciated the performance of police teams adding that strict action will be continued against such elements. Also, the Rawalpindi police arrested 39 professional beggars during crackdown. According to the police spokesman, the professional beggars were held from different areas of the city.—DNA

Rs. 240,566,109 utilized to cater health expenditures

ISLAMABAD: The Ministry of Poverty Alleviation and Social Safety has utilized Rs. 240,566,109 to cater the catastrophic health expenditures of deserving patients under Tahafuz Program through twelve empanelled hospitals across the country during the year Fiscal year 2021-22. According to an official source, Tahafuz Program is a Public Sector Development Program (FY-2021-2024) demand-driven initiative designed to protect the extremely poor from catastrophic health expenditures. Tahafuz Program is providing healthcare services across Pakistan to the patients in its empanelled public sector hospitals irrespective of geographical limitations and domicile. The program is also providing healthcare assistance to the poor who fall under the pre-defined eligibility criteria primarily based on BISP or National Socio-Economic Registry Poverty scores i.e. PMT. During the Fiscal Year 2021-22, a total amount of Rs. 46,200,000 has been utilized under the Tahafuz initiative by providing health services to deserving patients in Islamabad Capital Territory. Rs. 47,176,180 has been utilized to cater the medical needs of the patients through three hospitals in Punjab while Rs. 5,038,441 has been utilized in treating patients through four hospitals in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. A total of Rs. 130,747,501 has been utilized for patients in Sindh through a hospital in Gambit, Sindh while Rs. 7,172,222 has been utilized for the patients in Balochistan through providing treatment in two hospitals in Quetta. In Azad Jammu and Kashmir, a total of Rs. 4,231,765 has been utilized for the patients through a hospital in Muzaffarabad.—APP

IRSA releases 54,800 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD: Indus River System Authority (IRSA) Tuesday released 54,800 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 40,600 cusecs.

According to the data released by IRSA, the water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1496.50 feet, 98.50 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. Water inflow in the dam was recorded as 14,700 cusecs while the outflow as 28,900 cusecs. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1126.30 feet, which was 76.30 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water were recorded each as 7,200 cusecs. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded as 27,500, 35,200, 19,700 and 7,100 cusecs respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 11,500 cusecs of water was released at Nowshera and 7,200 cusecs were released from River Chenab at Marala.—APP



ISLAMABAD: Head of Pakistan Sweet Home, Zamrud Khan along with the children of Pakistan Sweet Home, presenting a commemorative shield Ambassador of United Arab Emirates, Hamad Obaid Al-Zaabi.—DNA

Turkey, KSA to establish warehouse in Gwadar

Since Jabel Ali is expensive and congested, companies desire their trade in Gwadar

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Turkish and Saudi delegation has shown keen interest to make massive investments in the Gwadar Free Zone with tax holidays.

Ahmad Emran Ayubi, representing the Turkish delegation, along with Pak-Saudi Business Chamber official Sohail Siddiqui, Lahore Chamber of Commerce and Industry official Adeeba Sheikh and Pakistan Transport Council President Tanveer Ahmed met high-ups of COPHC, traders, businessmen and marketers in Gwadar. The delegation aspired to establish warehouses in Gwadar Free Zone,

dubbing it more cost-effective, commercially prolific and productive. "As of now, Turkish companies utilize the port and zone facilities in Jabel Ali, UAE. Since Jabel Ali is expensive and congested, companies desire their trade in Gwadar. From here onward, the supply of the products which includes tyres, automotive parts and batteries will be shipped to markets in Central Asia, South Asia and Middle East," Ahmad Emran Ayubi said. Gwadar warehousing offers storage services with complete inventory management through modern IT-based WMS that meets the demand of customers like FIFO, LIFO, FEFO and LIFO; Batch /Lot expiry con-

trol and ABC analysis. Its bonded Warehousing Services also offer storage spaces for custom bonded cargo. A GPA official said that Gwadar Free Zone phase II is fully capable of meeting Pakistan Vision 2025 which seeks to enhance the modern warehouse industry embedded with national transportation infrastructure and logistics system. Establishing industrial parks and developing SEZs along the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) will strengthen warehouse networks the transportation network and the logistics infrastructure, he added. "Road freight contributed over 90% of the goods transported by land. Rail freight is likely to gain a share

due to modernization and expansion with ML-1. High priority is given to road, rail, sea and air network development. Private sector participation in logistics infrastructure development has already gained momentum, and transportation and warehousing are likely to lead logistics industry growth during 2023-2025," he added. After Gwadar New International Airport, a CAA official said that Pakistan's international freight forwarding industry will enter into a brand new chapter of growth. The international freight forwarding industry is the largest contributor to Pakistan's GDP in the service sector. The importance of the industry lies in managing the logistics of the

country's international trade. The services provided by international freight forwarding companies facilitate exports and imports on large scale. Gwadar trader Imtiaz Gul that deals with services of warehouse and logistic told Gwadar Pro that Gwadar is becoming hub of warehouse services, freight forwarding and logistics industry that plays a vital role in the overall economy of Pakistan. "Logistics Service Providers assist trade in all processes including sea freight, air freight, custom clearance, warehousing, road transportation, rail transportation, packaging, warehousing and other allied value added services," he added.

NDMA, WB to form working group on climate-resilient communities

ISLAMABAD: The National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) and World Bank on Tuesday agreed to form a working group to chalk out a collaborative framework for building

aspects of disaster management system in view of recent floods and sustainable disaster risk reduction models to protect vulnerable communities. The Chairman NDMA

disaster predictions, early warnings and preventive measures and generating Common Operating Picture for preparedness of all relevant departments for proactive response and

to create a collage of national universities and international organisations for researches and studies on climate change and disaster risk management in Pakistan.



climate-resilient communities in Pakistan. The World Bank's team for Pakistan called on Chairman NDMA, Lieutenant General Inam Haider Malik here, said a news release issued here. They discussed the various

highlighted the transformative idea of an artificial intelligence (AI)-based National Emergencies Operations Centre (NEOC) at NDMA as a leading forum for managing, collating and disseminating critical information pertaining to

simulation exercises in advance. He also informed the visiting team about the creation of the National Institute of Disaster Management (NIDM) as the National think tank on the emergencies' spectrum which would be mandated

He emphasised on conducting training programs for emergency responders and volunteers along with maintenance of their database for their active engagement in the future during an emergency.—APP

Climate financing vital for developing countries

ISLAMABAD: While there had lately been several debates about the significance of climate financing tackling the unavoidable impacts of climate change, there was an inherent ambiguity in what finance entailed for various developing countries, said Mr. Mujtaba Hussain, Additional Secretary MoCC. He was addressing a Roundtable titled 'International Climatic Negotiations: Key Challenges and Pathways to a Safe Future' co-hosted by Institute of Regional Studies (IRS), Civil Society Coalition for Climate Change (CSCCC) and the Embassy of France. He

said that while Pakistan had played a vital role in bringing together the most climate stressed countries, at home, there was a serious need to strengthen our capacity in order to formulate workable project-oriented solutions to deal with the impacts of climate change. For this, he added, the Ministry of Climate Change was adamant in strengthening the climate finance unit as a major functional outlet to carry forward the planned tasks. A major challenge in the development of a longer lasting transformative roadmap was the full access to available finan-

cial opportunities and also capacity issues. Jourdan Valliant, member Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs said that the window of opportunity was shrinking on a daily basis. He said that while the Paris Agreement was a wholesome framework to deal with the challenge of climate change, international provisions and initiatives could not be coupled with or viewed as domestic or national implementation plans. Solutions to climate change had to be organic and home driven, he said. Mr. Valliant further added that while the significance of climate financing was

quite true, it was noteworthy that soft loans instead of grants and aids were only a means to ensure that goals were achieved and intended to add to the worth of the money while making sure that development remains consistently underway. Other experts on the panel included Mr. Ahmed Kamal, Dr. Zeba Sathar, Dr. Irfan Khalid, Brig. Rashid Wali Janjua and Dr. Fayaz Hussain who agreed that since the goalposts were constantly changing, climate finance needed to be redirected towards adaptation instead of negotiation and improving ease of access.—DNA

PMNH generates grand revenue through visitors

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Museum for Natural History (PMNH) has generated a grand revenue of Rs 6,398,755 million during the year 2021-22, through visitors of its galleries. The visitors were 86,587 in total, including 102,085 students and 658 foreigners during the time period.

According to an official source, 16 technical reports were prepared for the field surveys and baseline studies of floral and faunal diversity in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) merged districts under the '10 Billion Tree Tsunami (BTTP)' project. The collections made were 10,783 specimens including the flora, fauna, rocks and fossils from across the country. Some 33,111 specimens or samples of plants, animals, rocks, minerals and fossils were curated during the stipulated time period. The cataloging of 21,193 specimens was done and 7,695 samples were also digitized. The scientific divisions published 51 research papers in the reputed scientific journals. As many as 12 officers were appointed in Grade-17 and above along with ten in Grade-16 and below in the reporting period while 12 officers were promoted in Grade-17 and above along with nine in BS-16 and above. PMNH which is the only Natural History Museum in the country was established in 1976 as an attached organization of the PSF, Ministry of Science and Technology, which has four principal divisions namely Botanical Sciences Division, Earth Sciences Division, Zoological Sciences Division and Public Services Division. First three scientific divisions are engaged in the collection, identification and research activities pertaining to plants, animals, fossils and mineral resources of Pakistan, while the fourth one is responsible for mass education and popularization of natural history through various displays, exhibits and dioramas. Researchers of PMNH carry out extensive field works from the Coast of Arabian Sea to the Alpine Regions, roamed through barren areas for the collection of Flora and Fauna, Rocks, Fossils and minerals not only for research work but education is also one of the main objectives of the museum. For this purpose, PMNH regularly organizes trainings, workshops, seminars, symposia and other educational interactive activities related to natural history, environment and biodiversity of Pakistan. International days are also observed. PMNH has formed many national and international liaisons with the other research institutes in the country and abroad. Due to the collective efforts of scientific and technical staff and collaborations with other research institutions.—APP

AIOU announces scholarships for deserving students

ISLAMABAD: Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) on Tuesday announced to continue offering different scholarships and fee concession schemes to deserving students across the country. AIOU, as a prestigious national educational institution is striving hard to provide quality educational facilities to the Pakistani population and particularly its underprivileged and marginalized strata located in the far-flung areas of the country. In this regard, AIOU is providing scholarships, fee concession and financial assistance schemes so that no one is deprived of education owing to a lack of financial resources. It is pertinent to mention here that the university is playing its due role in the process of national progress and development by providing free matriculation education to the people of Baluchistan, merged districts (former FATA) and GB. Moreover, AIOU has decided to continue offering different scholarships and fee concession schemes to prisoners, transgenders, dropout girls and children of martyrs. To utilize these schemes, deserving candidates are required to contact their respective regional offices to get admission to the programs offered during the ongoing first phase of the spring 2023 semester. The last date for admissions to matriculation and FA programs is 21st February, while the last date for admissions to BS, MPhil and PhD (face-to-face) programs is 15th February.—APP

NA Speaker stresses for provision of quality education

ISLAMABAD: Speaker National Assembly, Raja Pervez Ashraf on Tuesday stressed the need for the provision of quality education for all in Pakistan.

In his message on the eve of International Education Day being held today (Tuesday), he extended the warmest greetings to all educators, students, and families in Pakistan and around the world. Education is the foundation of any society and is essential for the development of individuals and nations, he added. Today, he said we celebrate the power of education to transform lives and build a more peaceful and prosperous world.

As the Speaker of the Pakistan National Assembly, "I am proud to note that Pakistan has made significant progress in expanding access to education over the years. However, there is still a long way to go to ensure that every child in Pakistan has the opportunity to receive a quality education".—APP

Kashmiris to observe 26 Jan as Black Day

ISLAMABAD: Kashmiris on both sides of the Line of Control and the world over will observe India's Republic Day, the 26th of January, on Thursday as Black Day to impress upon the world to take notice of New Delhi's continued denial of right to self-determination to the Kashmiri people. Call for the observance of the Black Day has been given by the All Parties Hurriyat Conference, according to the Kashmir Media Service (KMS). The day will be marked as a black day in occupied Kashmir, Azad Kashmir and abroad with anti-India demonstrations and rallies being held in Azad Kashmir, Pakistan and world capitals to give a strong message to the world that India is a usurper in the occupied territory. People through statements, message and posters, by Sadai Mazloom, Jammu and Kashmir Democratic Movement, Tehreek-e-Azadi Jammu and Kashmir, and Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Alliance, Jammu and Kashmir Political Resistance Movement and Youth Freedom Fighter in Srinagar, and others areas of the valley asked to boycott all Indian official celebrations and hoist black flags on the rooftops of their houses, shops and other buildings. The posters continue to surface since last one week in different places of the territory. The APHC reiterated its call for imposing civil curfew in every nook and corner of the territory. It castigated India for unleashing a reign of terror, repression, frequent cordon and search operations, random arrests and restricting businesses and social activities.—APP

Minister for Narcotics Control commissions AVS for operations

RAWALPINDI: Minister for Narcotics Control, Nawabzada Shazain Bugti has commissioned Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) Vigilance Squads (AVS); a swift, smart and service-oriented modern proactive mobile patrolling unit, for operations aimed at countering drug prevalence around educational institutions, community centres and public transport terminals in urban areas. The AVS in the first phase would operate in Islamabad, Rawalpindi, Lahore and Karachi. The Minister during his visit to ANF Headquarters was briefed about the performance of the Force. Chief of Staff ANF, Brig. Riffat Ali Khan presented a comprehensive review of ANF's performance for the year 2022. Shazain Bugti was received by Director General (DG) ANF Major General Muhammad Aneeq Ur Rehman Malik, HI(M). Secretary of the Ministry of Narcotics Control, Ms Humaira Ahmed was also present on the occasion. Performance appraisal encompassed efforts undertaken in a drug supply reduction, drug demand reduction, international cooperation and training domains.—APP

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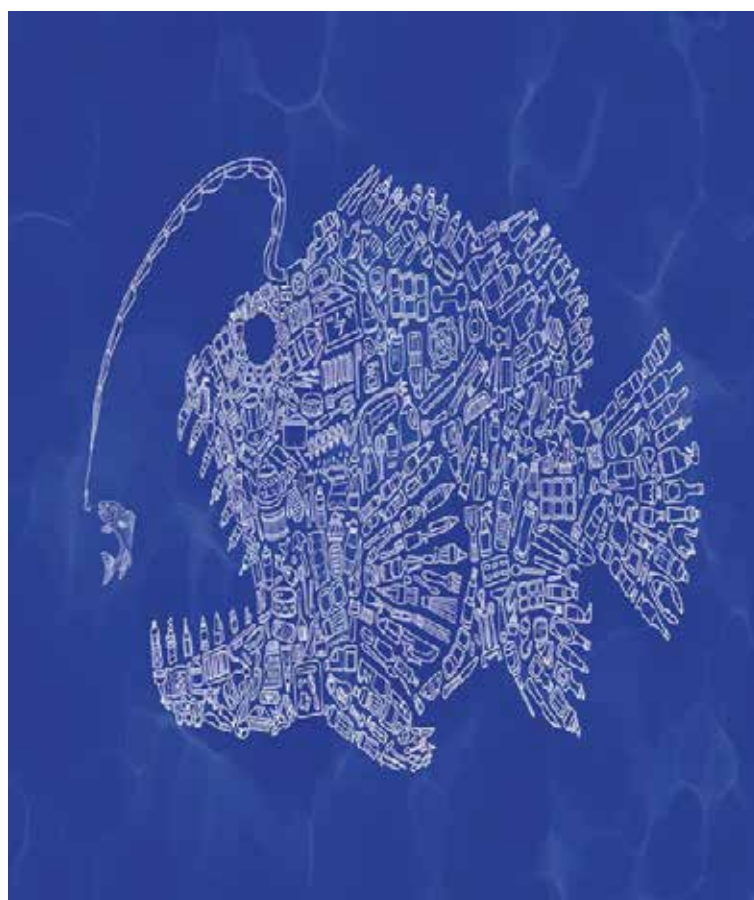
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Germany and Ukraine: a fateful hesitation

As Sherlock Holmes once pointed out, something that does not happen can be as significant as something that does. Friday's meeting of defence ministers at Ramstein in Germany had been billed as the moment when the western allies, Germany above all, would finally commit the battle tanks that Ukraine has been demanding. It didn't happen. As our own weekend report delicately expressed it, Germany declined to take a decision. Although tanks dominated the headlines, a lot of military commitments came out of Ramstein. A US package, worth \$2.5bn, includes fighting vehicles, air defence and rockets. Nine other allies gave more support, too, including tanks from the UK. These are the latest steps in the gradual extension of western military support and hardening of attitudes. They are a recognition that the spring will be decisive and that Ramstein will shape the military outcome. Germany nevertheless hesitated to commit tanks itself or to allow allies with German tanks to do so. It did this for many reasons, each individually understandable but which cumulatively underestimate the larger reality of Russian aggression. The worries include American caution, German history, reluctance to be Europe's military leader, divisions in German public opinion, coalition government unity, a new defence minister and, above all, future relations with Russia. Berlin may be Ukraine's biggest European backer in spending terms, but it is often slow to act. Reactions to Ramstein in the Baltic states, but also in Germany, suggest the hesitation over tanks may in fact be temporary. It was not an irrevocable rejection. It nevertheless embodies lingering indecision about how far to engage in support of Ukraine. That will be read in Moscow as European weakness, not unjustly. Yet the case for supporting Ukraine has not changed by one iota. The need to resist the threat from Russia has not declined. The threat from Putin in eastern Europe and to democracy is undiminished. Overall, as the UK's Ministry of Defence claimed at the weekend, the military situation in Ukraine is currently a winter stalemate. But Russia is engaged in a massive buildup of troops in the east and south of occupied Ukraine, and hints at a fresh push from Belarus. Although the Russian effort is riddled with disinformation, logistical shortcomings and factional rivalries, not least between the official defence forces and the parallel Wagner Group, Vladimir Putin is determined to escalate the assault. Large deployments of western tanks would reshape Ukraine's war effort. Western battle tanks are faster than Russian ones, have bigger and more accurate firepower, are better protected and can operate at night. They would be a crucial part of any integrated Ukrainian military advance, aiming to retake territory from the Russians and perhaps creating conditions for some kind of provisional peace talks. They would also be essential to any large-scale defence of Ukrainian gains in the face of Russian counterattacks. Last Friday's hesitation is logistical as well. Getting tanks to the frontline is not straightforward. In the end, though, all of this comes back to German political will. Berlin has already given Ukraine more arms – including self-propelling heavy artillery and armoured personnel vehicles – than is sometimes acknowledged.



Belarus' and its ties to Russia

A show trial carries with it a noxious whiff of Soviet times and in the case of Belarus, a country trapped by its past, the allusion is wholly appropriate. Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya, elected president in 2020 in a contest stolen by Belarus's dictator, Alexander Lukashenko, was accused of treason by a court in Minsk last week. Her trial is a sham and a farce. The opposition leader is one among countless victims of an illegitimate rogue regime that oppresses its people and threatens the security of Europe. Lukashenko, in power since 1994, has long been notorious for his authoritarian rule. But the situation has steadily deteriorated since the huge pro-democracy protests three years ago that nearly brought him down. Belarus now holds about 1,500 political prisoners. Tsikhanouskaya is not among them; she is being tried in absentia. But many others are less fortunate, including her husband, Sergei Tikhanovsky, whom she replaced as opposition leader after his arrest. He was later jailed for 18 years. The regime also put the veteran rights activist and 2022 Nobel peace prize winner, Ales Bialiatski, on trial this month on trumped-up charges. Bialiatski, detained since 2021, shared the Nobel with two human rights groups – the Russian organisation Memorial, banned by Vladimir Putin, and Ukraine's Centre for Civil Liberties. In jail, and suffering health problems, is another leading pro-democracy activist, Maria Kolesnikova, who famously tore up her passport at the border to prevent her expulsion in 2020. Independent media battling regime propaganda have been particular victims of Lukashenko's crackdown. The television journalist Katerina Bakhvalova was arrested with a colleague, Daria Chultsova, while filming an anti-regime rally in 2020 and held in a penal colony for two years for "violating public order". Last year, Bakhvalova was handed an additional eight years for "state treason". Yekaterina Yanshina, a Russian journalist, was jailed this month for "hooliganism" while reporting Bialiatski's trial. Reacting to Tsikhanouskaya's case and the "continued repression" of opposition and civil society figures, the US imposed new sanctions last week, bringing to 322 the number of regime officials under visa restrictions. A range of European and UK measures is already in force. Yet Tsikhanouskaya argues that sanctions, which mostly relate to regime support for Russia's invasion of Ukraine, should go further and deeper – specifically to weaken Lukashenko. It's undoubtedly true the plight of Belarusians is overshadowed and to some extent obscured by Ukraine, as was demonstrated again last week by the huge attention paid to deadlocked Nato crisis talks over supplying German tanks to Kyiv. Yet, in practice, the two are inextricably linked. "Lukashenko would not have survived the uprising that followed the stolen 2020 elections if it wasn't for Putin," Tsikhanouskaya wrote recently. "Lukashenko's unpopular backing of Putin's war should hasten the beginning of his end." Reported Russian plans to use Belarusian bases to launch a spring offensive in northern Ukraine, Putin's visit to Minsk in December, talk of Russian nuclear weapons deployments, joint threats targeting Nato neighbours and combined military drills this month indicate how toxic this relationship is. But Lukashenko remains very much the junior partner, and to some degree an unwilling one.

'Terrorist' designation for Iran's IRGC would harm EU security

Hossein Amir-Abdollahian



Branding the IRGC a "terrorist organisation" would be a colossal mistake on the part of the EU – a mistake Iran cannot be expected to ignore. Such a designation would encroach upon Iran's sovereignty, flouting international law and the Charter of the United Nations. Such a serious escalation would further undermine

Recent disturbances in Iran, ignited under the pretext of protesting Mahsa Amini's death, have found a disproportionate echo in the West, mainly due to the security context created by the Ukraine crisis, leading

the European Union to assume a biased position and make unjustified decisions informed by a deluge of disinformation, faulty logic, and fake news. Attempts are being made within the EU to designate Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) as "a terrorist organisation". There are, of course, no grounds for such a decision. While throngs of EU citizens were rushing to our region to join "terrorist" groups across the extremist spectrum, the IRGC had entered Iraq and Syria's battlefronts on official invitation from their respective governments, to assist them in their fight against "terrorism" in general and ISIL (ISIS) in particular. Branding the IRGC a "terrorist organisation" would be a colossal mistake on the part of the EU – a mistake Iran cannot be expected to ignore. Such a designation would encroach upon Iran's sovereignty, flouting international law and the Charter of the United Nations. Such a serious escalation would further undermine Europe's trustworthiness in matters related to international security and have profound implications for the interests of European countries in the Middle East region. Therefore, it is of paramount importance that rationality prevail within the European foreign policy establishment to avert another crisis. Iran's foreign policy within and outside the region is not based on an ephemeral, wishful assessment of the state of affairs, and any hostile act will be met with a proportionate response in scope and nature. Iran has weathered the most turbulent political and security landscape in the Middle East in the past four decades – a landscape shaped by occupation, extra-regional intervention, wars and major political upheavals. That the country managed to stand its ground in such a tumultuous political and security climate proves that its policies are not malleable to hostile foreign parameters. The United States wove a web of sanctions to pressure Iran to bend to its will. During Donald Trump's presidency, as part of a so-called "maximum pressure campaign", the US also designated the IRGC as a "terrorist organisation". But Iran repeatedly

demonstrated that it would not be moved by such fear-based policies and warmongering. The US's interventionist policies in the region not only failed to produce the desired results, but also revealed the limits of its military power and so-called nation-building capacities. Now, Europe seems to be assuming the very same interventionist approach towards Iran. The European gamble to repeat a failed US policy vis-à-vis a fundamental part of Iran's sovereign military force, however, is doomed for failure – and even more so than its American counterpart – for several reasons. Here I would like to remind European colleague a couple of critical points: Iran's security interests in the Middle East are no different than any other state in the region. The only thing that differentiates Iran from its neighbours in this regard is the fact that it is being subjected to inhumane and illegal sanctions, as well as other violent threats including sabotage and assassinations, in an effort to pressure it to abandon its independent policies concerning its security and democracy. Under these circumstances, strengthening domestic security as well as reinforcing defences and creating deterrence against external threats are understandably Iran's priorities. In both areas, the IRGC plays a pivotal role. Thus, designating it as a "terrorist" group would link all national defence and deterrence work carried out by Iran to "terrorism". The IRGC is one of the most effective counterterror forces in the world and is actively fighting terrorists across the Middle East. It would therefore be highly ironic for it to be designated as a terrorist group by Europe. Although Americans and Europeans are loath to admit it, the IRGC's role in defeating ISIL and keeping all its affiliated groups at bay is undeniable. Many among the IRGC's rank and file, including many of its commanders, died fighting terrorism in the region. Indeed, it was Iran's commanders who led the fight against ISIL and helped prevent it from spreading throughout the region and committing more atrocities and even genocide against some religious and ethnic minorities. The US already assassinated one of

these commanders, General Qassem Soleimani, because it perceived him as an obstacle to its hegemonic policies in the region. If Europe opts to go down the same path and start targeting Iran's anti-terror forces and commanders, branding them "terrorists", what would remain of the rules-based international order? Designating an official military force of a sovereign country as a "terrorist organisation" is a foolhardy move that can be expected only from the most erratic and irrational of leaders, such as Donald Trump. That Europe is now considering doing the same is frankly unbelievable. Europe's security interests in the region are strongly tied to that of Iran. The Council of the European Union rightly described Iran to be "central to security in the region" in the conclusion it published on December 22, 2022. What it failed to fully acknowledge, however, is that the region's security architecture cannot survive an insecure Iran – it would be shattered. Therefore, if Europe targets Iran's key driver of security, the IRGC, it would be putting its own security interests in the region in jeopardy. It goes without saying that rhetoric cannot make up for the lack of actual means to project power, and fight terror, in the region. The EU designating the IRGC as a "terrorist" group would be a boon to warmongers who for long have been lobbying for a military face-off between Iran and the West. They would see this as a step towards fully severing all ties between Iran and Europe, which would be in no one's interest. Designating the IRGC as a terrorist organisation would have many unwanted legal and political consequences for all involved parties. This is why it is our conviction that dialogue and diplomacy is the best path forward. Constructive engagement between Iran and Europe is essential for finding sustainable solutions to disagreements and clarifying misunderstandings. Engagement begets more engagement. Threats, on the other hand, will be met by a commensurate reaction.

Courtesy: Al Jazeera

Jacinda Ardern, the public servant

Andrew Mitrovica

In her deeds and words, Ardern confirmed that while she enjoyed the lofty title of prime minister, she was, at her core, a public servant who tried, as best she could, to exercise her important duties and responsibilities with one aim: to attend to the concerns and promote the welfare of millions of ordinary people who entrusted her with high office. Did she sometimes fail? Yes. Could she have done more? Of course. For six challenging years, Ardern said, "hand on heart", that she had given New Zealand her "all"

Those two words best describe, it seems to me, Jacinda Ardern, New Zealand's prime minister who announced her shock resignation earlier this week. I think Prime Minister Ardern would welcome being acknowledged for having dedicated herself to the humble proposition that politicians – whatever their title or party – should serve the public, rather than any petty, parochial, interest. In her deeds and words, Ardern confirmed that while she enjoyed the lofty title of prime minister, she was, at her core, a public servant who tried, as best she could, to exercise her important duties and responsibilities with one aim: to attend to the concerns and promote the welfare of millions of ordinary people who entrusted her with high office. Did she sometimes fail? Yes. Could she have done more? Of course. For six challenging years, Ardern said, "hand on heart", that she had given New Zealand her "all". Only partisans or cynics could doubt or question her sincerity. Ardern's defining devotion to public service was on poignant and forthright display throughout her eloquent and, at times, emotional announcement when she explained why she was leaving behind the "privilege" of being prime minister. Ardern said that after a summer and Christmas time spent reflecting upon her past, present, and future, she no longer had enough "in the tank" to continue. It was a rare admission for any prime minister to make. Usually, the intoxicating perks and privileges of power are difficult to forego – voluntarily, at least. But true to her authentic nature, Ardern told her countrymen and women the truth, that the burdens and demands had taken a toll. Ardern was tired, perhaps even spent. And, as such, she would be doing them and the country she had long led a grave disservice if she remained prime minister to contest the next federal election in October. While Ardern has earned near-universal praise for her gracious, albeit surprising, decision to know when to quit, a few, less charitable commentators have accused her of betraying New Zealand and the Labour Party she leads. "Labour MPs

and supporters have every right to be furious. Ardern was facing a very steep hill at the October election, which explains more than any other reason her decision to leave," one scribe wrote. Wrong. Ardern made it plain that she was not giving up the job because it was too hard or that she faced turbulent political headwinds on the eve of another vote. Rather, Ardern said she was "human" and, in her heart and soul, she knew it was time to go. "I'm not unusual," Ardern said. "I am a politician who is first and foremost human. And so, leadership means willing to sit back and recognise when, actually, it's time for someone else to do the job." Ardern's frankness and introspection are a refreshing and welcome antidote to a gallery of, by now, familiar career politicians who – blinded by ego and hubris – stay on for too long and, inevitably, are humiliated by ambitious colleagues or angry voters eager to show them the exit door. Ardern has opted, instead, to pick the time of her departure from public life on her own, touching terms – to tend to herself, her marriage and her young daughter. Only the selfish and shortsighted would begrudge her making such a wise and loving choice. Ardern's short speech was, as well, a signature reflection of an elegant, accomplished woman who often reminded us that kindness and empathy could not only be guiding, but governing, principles in the unforgiving, hurly-burly of politics. "Unless you can at least work to comprehend the experience of others, [it's] very hard to deliver solutions and respond to crises without that starting point," Ardern said. "That has been a very important principle for me. Empathy." Asked how she wanted to be remembered as prime minister, Ardern said: "As someone who always tried to be kind." Unlike Canada's Prime Minister Justin Trudeau – who confuses staged, performative acts of contrition and solidarity with genuineness – Ardern's simple, impromptu expressions of empathy and kindness rang true. Indeed, the prime min-

ister of a small, distant island nation was a balm to the sinister politics of division and seething grievances practised by preening buffoons in much larger and more prominent places across a tumultuous globe. Ardern's grace and humanity catapulted her and New Zealand to the forefront of the world's consciousness at a time when so much ugliness and inhumanity dominates the news – day after grinding day. Still, beyond the taxing cut and thrust of political life, Ardern was tested by a stubborn pandemic, the urgency of the climate crisis, a lethal volcanic eruption, and the vile attacks on two mosques in the capital, Christchurch, by an "Australian terrorist" who murdered 51 innocents in March 2019. For outsiders like me, Ardern's moving response to the premeditated massacre of Muslims established her as a leader who met the awful moment with the compassion and decency it demanded. Wearing a hijab, Ardern spoke of her fidelity to, and kinship with, the grieving victims of hate – her fellows. "They are us. The person who has perpetuated this violence against us is not," Ardern said. "They have no place in New Zealand. There is no place in New Zealand for such acts of extreme and unprecedented violence, which it is clear this act was." She refused, quite rightly, to utter the attacker's name. "Speak the names of those who were lost rather than the man who took them," she said. "He may have sought notoriety but we in New Zealand will give him nothing, not even his name." To her credit, Ardern backed her stirring rhetoric with action and conviction. Despite the bitter blowback and dent to her popularity, she stiffened the country's gun laws, spearheading a ban on military-style and semi-automatic weapons just days after the attack. She also led efforts to counter online hate speech and hate crimes. From the beginning of her tenure as prime minister to the end, Ardern thought of others before herself. That is what real public servants do.

Courtesy: Al Jazeera

Briefs

FM stresses joint efforts...

FROM PAGE 01
This resolution came at a meeting between Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari and his Uzbek counterpart Bakhtiyor Saidov in Tashkent on the sidelines of the 26th meeting of ECO Council of Ministers. Bilawal Bhutto Zardari thanked the Uzbek minister for participating at Pakistan Climate Resilient Conference in Geneva. Meanwhile, Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari met his Turkish counterpart on the sidelines of 26th ECO-COM on Tuesday. Reaffirming the close fraternal ties between the two countries, the two Foreign Ministers resolved to further strengthen the entire spectrum of bilateral relations. Issues of global and regional importance were also discussed. The Foreign Minister also met his Iranian counterpart Amir Abdollahian on the sidelines of 26th ECO, on Tuesday. The Foreign Minister reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to further strengthen brotherly relations with Iran. The two Foreign Ministers also discussed important global and regional developments.

President condemns...

FROM PAGE 01
all religions of the world whereas this heinous act has hurt Muslims by insulting their sacred values, and reflected the alarming levels of Islamophobia. The President urged the international community to show a common resolve against Islamophobia, and underlined the need for international efforts to consolidate the values of tolerance and coexistence and criminalize all acts that promote the ideology of hatred and not allow extremist and radical elements to spread hatred against Islamic sanctities and values

Palestine condemns...

FROM PAGE 01
the recurrence of such provocative practices. It also calls on the Secretary-General of the United Nations and the relevant international bodies to quickly initiate an effective international movement to promote a culture of tolerance and criminalize the perpetrators of these violations and those behind them.

Govt allows disclosure...

FROM PAGE 01
The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) also disqualified the PTI chief as member of the National Assembly in the Toshakhana case for not disclosing the gifts last year. The cabinet's decision comes nearly a week after the federal government told the Lahore High Court (LHC) that public disclosure of Toshakhana details could cause unnecessary media hype and could be potentially damaging for Pakistan's foreign relations. However, the LHC remarked that it would hold off an order to make details of the Toshakhana gifts public until it would be satisfied that these gifts were kept secret. The LHC later postponed the hearing till Feb 7 and directed the government to submit an affidavit along with record of Toshakhana.

US ties with Pak, India...

FROM PAGE 01
invitation to Indian counterpart Narendra Modi to hold talks about the burning issues including Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu Kashmir (IIOJK). On January 17, PM Shehbaz, in an effort to resolve the burning issues with New Delhi, including Kashmir, asked Modi to hold serious and sincere talks. "We've long called for regional stability in South Asia. That's certainly what we want to see. We want to see it advanced. When it comes to our partnership - our partnerships with India and Pakistan, these are relationships that stand on their own. We do not see these relationships as zero-sum," said Price. The spokesperson said that the pace, scope, the character of any dialogue between India and Pakistan is a matter for those two countries.

Australian Opem-2023

Former No. 1 Azarenka sets up Rybakina semi-final

Nine-time Melbourne champion Djokovic is still on the scene, with a quarter-final against Russian fifth seed Andrey Rublev on Wednesday

SPORTS DESK

MELBOURNE: Two-time Australian Open champion Victoria Azarenka surged into the semi-finals on Tuesday and secured a date with big-serving Elena Rybakina, while Karen Khachanov reached the men's last four. Jessica Pegula was the highest remaining women's seed left in Melbourne at three, but the hotly tipped American simply had no answers to Azarenka's pounding forehand groundstrokes. The Belarusian Azarenka, whose two Australian Open titles came in 2012 and 2013, rolled back the years in a surprisingly one-sided quarter-final to triumph 6-4, 6-1. The 33-year-old is back in the last four in Melbourne for the first time since her 2013 victory. "Well, it hurts to beat her because I always want her to do well," the 24th seed said of Pegula, a close friend and practice partner. "I am very proud that I executed my game plan really well," added Azarenka, who had put on a Paris Saint-Germain football shirt. "So amazing to be in another semi-final of a Grand Slam," said Azarenka, admitting that playing at the 15,000-seat Rod Laver Arena had been "nerve-wracking". Asked how her young son Leo would receive his mum's latest achievement, Azarenka said: "He's more worried about his football and when we're going to play again. "He definitely wants his mum to be home."



Leo will have to wait at least a few more days because Azarenka faces Moscow-born Kazakh Rybakina on Thursday for a place in the final. Rybakina blasted her way into the semi-finals with a ruthless 6-2, 6-4 win over Jelena Ostapenko. The 23-year-old Rybakina sent down 11 aces to blow former French Open champion Ostapenko off court in 79 minutes. The 22nd seed has blasted 35 aces so far, more than any other



woman at the tournament. Ominously, she said her serve is better now than when she won Wimbledon last year. "I gained even more power. It's my weapon on the court and of course we are trying to work on it," she said, before adding: "Always a lot to improve." In the men's draw, the quarter-final between Russia's Khachanov and Sebastian Korda had been warming up nicely until the American hurt his wrist.

The 18th seed went through when Korda retired in the third set, down 7-6 (7/5), 6-3, 3-0. Khachanov's reward is a clash with either Greek third seed Stefanos Tsitsipas or unseeded Czech Jiri Lehecka, who play later, for a spot in Sunday's final. Tsitsipas is the highest remaining seed in the draw after a series of shock exits. The 22-year-old Korda, who had been attempting to emulate his father Petr's Australian Open victory in 1998, said afterwards that he could barely hold the racquet. He said he first felt the injury while playing the Adelaide International this month, where he made the final and forced a championship point before being beaten by Novak Djokovic. But it had not bothered him in the opening four rounds at Melbourne Park until he hit a return in the second set. "I had it in Adelaide and then it went away completely. Now it just came back out of nowhere," he said. "I have never had any wrist issues before. "I knew kind of what it was right away, right when I hit the return. I kind of felt that spot that I was feeling before. "Some forehands I couldn't even hold the racquet. Volleying was almost impossible for me, so it was a little tough." For Khachanov it is a second consecutive Grand Slam semi-final, having reached the last four at the 2022 US Open. Nine-time Melbourne champion Djokovic is still on the scene, with a quarter-final against Russian fifth seed Andrey Rublev on Wednesday.

Babar Azam named captain of ICC ODI Team of 2022



LAHORE: Pakistan's star batter Babar Azam has been named captain of the ICC ODI Team of the Year for 2022. In the nine matches Azam played in 2022, the 28-year-old registered eight scores of more than fifty. "Pakistan captain Babar Azam once again showed his prowess in the 50-over format, displaying once again why he has ruled the roost at the top of the ICC Men's ODI Player Rankings since July 2021," the ICC said in a press release. "It was a memorable year for Babar as captain of the Pakistan ODI team, winning three series out of three. Pakistan were unstoppable in the ODI format, losing just one match (against Australia) out of nine. His leadership skills means that he leads the ICC Men's ODI Team of the Year for 2022," it added. It must be noted that Azam was also captain of the ICC ODI Team of the Year in 2021. ICC ODI Team of the Year 2022 - ICC Azam has been slotted in the lineup at the top alongside Australia's Travis Head. "Usually an attacking middle-order batter, Head brilliantly reinvented himself as an opener in ODIs, becoming one of Australia's most consistent batters in the format. It was a year to remember for Head - who became one of the first names on the Australian team sheet - notching up 550 runs from nine games at 68.75," the ICC said. "His runs came at a strike-rate of 112.24 and included two centuries and three fifties." - DNA

Tsitsipas and Khachanov to meet in semi-finals

MELBOURNE: Stefanos Tsitsipas defeated Jiri Lehecka in straight sets to set up an Australian Open semi-final with Karen Khachanov. Greek third seed Tsitsipas reached his fourth Melbourne semi-final in five years with a 6-3 7-6 (7-2) 6-4 win. Lehecka, of the Czech Republic, had been one of the surprise packages of the tournament having beaten two top-12 seeds to make the quarter-finals. The 21-year-old had previously never won a Grand Slam match. Earlier on day nine, Russian Khachanov progressed to the final four of the Australia major for the first time when his quarter-final opponent Sebastian Korda was forced to retire with a wrist injury with the score at 7-6 (7-5) 6-3 3-0. The other semi-final will be decided on Wednesday, when Ben Shelton and Tommy Paul contest an all-American quarter-final before nine-time champion Novak Djokovic faces Russian Andrey Rublev. "A fair dinkum performance" Battling wins over 11th seed Cameron Norrie and sixth seed Felix Auger-Aliassime had catapulted Lehecka into the spotlight over the past week, but the world number 71 looked nervy in the opening exchanges with Tsitsipas. Tsitsipas, ranked fourth in the world, dominated the first set after breaking his opponent's serve early on but was pushed hard by Lehecka throughout the second. - APP



PESHAWAR: German Ambassador Alfred Grannas interacting with students of Sardar Bahadur Varsity. - DNA

Belgium, Australia through to semifinals

Belgium got its first shot in second minute itself but captain Felix Denayer could not connect in front of goal

WEB DESK

ODISHA: Belgium booked a semifinal spot in style, ending New Zealand's dreams of a maiden last-four World Cup appearance with a 2-0 win in the second quarterfinal here on Tuesday. The defending champion stayed in control for most of the game and, despite missing quite a few shots at the goal, never appeared to be struggling. The margin, in fact, could have been much bigger had Belgium not hit wide once too often. At the other end, New Zealand managed just a couple of half-chances that never appeared dangerous. Belgium got its first shot in the second minute itself but captain Felix Denayer could not connect in front of the goal. Tom Boon hit a backhand wide after a few minutes as the Belgian forwards appeared in a hurry to score but missing their targets as a result. Boon finally put his team ahead, flicking in the first PC in the 11th minute. Belgium doubled the lead immediately on resumption through a beautiful coordinated move that started with

Nicolas de Kerpel putting Simon Gougnard through, who passed it back to Florent van Aubel with a single touch on the run from the latter deflecting it in. The Black Sticks tried to fight back but the Belgians clearly had done their homework, and learnt from India's mistakes

against the same opponent two days back. Just for a moment, it looked like Australia will be served with a shock upset in the World Cup quarterfinals by an enterprising Spanish team. Spain went up 2-0 in the first half, but in a matter of seven minutes, Australia clicked into gear and turned

it around to win 4-3 here at the Kalinga Stadium on Tuesday to book a place in the semifinals. The Kookaburras were blunted in the first half by Spain's well-drilled defensive shape. The Spanish players were swift to cut down passes and closed down dribbling lanes inside their zone. The

Australians were misfiring from the penalty corners, where they have been reliably good this World Cup. While the Red Sticks saw less of the ball, they were composed when they regained possession and repeatedly targeted Australia's left, where the two goals came from, to create

overloads. The opening goal started from the right with a surging run from Ignacio Rodriguez which pulled Australian players into the left channel, opening space in the middle. Enrique Gonzalez squared the ball to Xavier Gisbert, who turned away from his marker in the circle before emphatically firing a tomahawk into the bottom corner. Four minutes later, Pepe Cunill played a square ball into the circle, which Lachlan Sharp failed to trap allowing Marc Recasens to flick it past Andrew Charter for the second. Things could have gone further south for the Aussies had Borja Lacaile made his run on time to pass the ball into an empty net. At the other end, Australia immediately got a lifeline on the stroke of half-time with a goal of its own. Matt Dawson fired in a pass into the circle, where an unmarked Flynn Ogilvie set himself up before striking with pace past Adrian Rafi. When the hooter for half-time went off, the Australians were rushing off the turf and were the first to be out for the second half.



Cabinet directs...

FROM PAGE 01

It was told that energy conservation efforts at public, private, domestic and commercial level would help reduce the import bill of the petroleum products which had increased remarkably during last seven years. Besides, the behavioral changes would also save billions of rupees of foreign exchange and reduce the electricity bills of individuals by 30 to 40 percent. - APP

Resignations of 43 more...

FROM PAGE 01

Reacting to the development, senior PTI leader FawadChaudhry said the main reason to return to the assembly in small numbers was to remove Raja Riaz as the opposition leader because the legislature had "no importance". "Right now, Shehbaz Sharif has lost the support of 172 members and is relying on lotas (turncoats) to save his government," tweeted Fawad. As a result of the speaker's actions to save Raja Riaz, 40% of seats are now vacant, he added. "Country is close to elections now. The only solution to this problem is general polls," said Fawad. On Monday, PTI lawmakers had requested the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) that they should not be notified if Speaker Ashraf approves their resignations. The PTI made the request after it informed the electoral body that their MNAs are withdrawing their resignations and the NA speaker has been informed about it. The MNAs submitted the plea in a meeting with the members of the electoral body after their protest outside the ECP's building. They had moved to the ECP after the authorities restricted them from entering Parliament.

Govt wants election...

FROM PAGE 01

opposition leader. The PTI wants free and transparent elections but PDM will leave no stone unturned to delay elections, he added. Mr Qureshi said opposition in Punjab proposed unreasonable names for Punjab caretaker CM. All this is happening according to a plan and we are not oblivious to it, he said. The PTI leader argued that the constitution requires announcement of date of the elections when assemblies are dissolved, but the electoral watchdog failed to do so and PTI intends to challenge the ECP's decisions. NNI

IMF asks for more details

FROM PAGE 01

Now the IMF has sought more details on the budgetary position which would be shared with the global lender soon. On other hand, Pakistan's near-term challenge has risen sharply as Islamabad will have to secure fresh loans of \$10 billion in the remaining five months (Feb-June) period to avert default. Against this backdrop, the government sent out SOS (Save Our Soul) to the IMF for reviving the programme that has been stalled since last November. Since then the country has been on a slippery slope to reach at the brink of total economic collapse. The State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) in its latest monetary policy conceded that near-term challenges for the external sector have risen despite the policy-induced contraction in the current account deficit during the first half of FY23. "The fresh loans requirements of \$8 to \$10 billion cannot be managed without blessings of the revival of the IMF programme" sources quoted the SBP's data stated while talking to The News on Monday. According to official data, Pakistan was required to pay back \$23 billion in the current fiscal year 2022-23 out of which it had already paid back \$15 billion in the shape of external debt servicing. Out of \$15 billion in debt repayments, the government repaid \$9 billion while securing a rollover of \$6 billion in the first half of the current fiscal year. Now there is a remaining repayment requirement standing at \$8 billion in the second half (Jan-June) period of the current fiscal year. The government has obtained a commitment to get a rollover of \$3 billion from the bilateral creditor coming March 2023. "

Briefs

Erdogan warns Sweden on NATO after Quran burning

ISTANBUL: Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan warned Sweden on Monday that it should not expect his backing to join NATO following the burning of the Koran outside Ankara's embassy in Stockholm. Erdogan's furious comments further distanced the prospects of Sweden and Finland joining the Western defence alliance before Turkey's presidential and parliamentary polls in May. Turkey and Hungary are the only NATO members not to have ratified the Nordic neighbours' historic decision to break their tradition of military non-alignment in response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban has promised that his parliament would approve the two bids next month.—APP

Ford to cut up to 3,200 European jobs

WASHINGTON: U.S. carmaker Ford plans to cut up to 3,200 jobs across Europe and move some product development work to the United States, said Germany's IG Metall union on Monday, vowing action that would disrupt the carmaker across the continent if the cuts go ahead. Rising costs for electric vehicle battery materials and projected slowdowns in U.S. and European economies are putting pressure on automakers to cut expenses. The EV price war launched by Tesla earlier this month has intensified that pressure, analysts said. The company wants to axe up to 2,500 jobs in product development and up to 700 in administrative roles, with German locations most affected, IG Metall said. Workers at the U.S. carmaker's Cologne site, which employs about 14,000 people — including 3,800 at a development center in the Merkenich area — were informed of the plans at work council meetings on Monday. Ford's spokesperson in Germany declined to comment, referring to a statement on Friday in which it said that the shift to production of electric vehicles (EVs) requires structural changes and it would not say more until plans are finalized. A spokesperson at the automaker's headquarters in Michigan said discussions with the German works councils were continuing and that the company needs to be "more competitive" as it transitions to EVs. He would not comment on specific job plans.—Agencies

Start training Ukrainians to use Leopard tanks, Germany says

BERLIN: Germany said Tuesday that allies could start training Ukrainian forces to use the Leopard battle tanks desperately sought by Kyiv to repel Russian troops, provoking a defiant response from the Kremlin. Berlin stopped short of granting permission for the tanks to be sent to Ukraine, but underscored that the pending decision was imminent. Poland sought to push Germany to speed up its decision, with Warsaw putting forward a formal application for the transfer of the German-made armament from its stocks to Ukraine. But in Kyiv, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky was battling a deepening corruption scandal within his government, sacking several officials over graft while others resigned. Ukraine has been urging Germany for weeks to allow the export of powerful German-made Leopard tanks, but Berlin has so far declined to give the green light. A US-led meeting of Kyiv's allies in Germany last week failed to yield a decision despite a growing clamour from several European countries ready to export the tanks. Defence Minister Boris Pistorius indicated Tuesday that a decision could be imminent, saying he had "expressly encouraged partner countries that have Leopard tanks that are ready for deployment to train Ukrainian forces on these tanks"—APP

FMs of Uzbekistan and Pakistan mull future coop

Foreign Minister of Pakistan congratulated the Uzbek side on the successful chairmanship of the Economic Cooperation Organization

DNA

TASHKENT: On January 23, 2023, Acting Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Uzbekistan Bakhtiyor Saidov met with Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari, who arrived in Tashkent to participate in a meeting of the Council of Foreign Ministers of the Economic Cooperation Organization. The parties considered the prospects for further development of the Uzbek-Pakistani strategic partnership in order to effectively implement the agreements reached at the highest level. Regional policy issues, including the situation in Afghanistan, were discussed. Both sides emphasized the importance of effective use of the existing potential of cooperation in the transport and communication sphere and activation of economic diplomacy. Foreign Minister of Pakistan congratulated the Uzbek side on the successful chairmanship of the Economic Cooperation Organization.



New mission must not delay normalization

NEWS DESK

BAKU: The new civilian mission established by the European Council on Monday to contribute to stability along the border of Azerbaijan and Armenia must not obstruct normalization between the two ex-Soviet nations, Baku said on Tuesday. "We remain of the firm position that such an engagement must not be exploited for derailing the normalization process between Azerbaijan and Armenia, including in the context of border delimitation process that should be carried out exclusively on a bilateral basis," a statement by the Azerbaijani Foreign Ministry read. The statement said it must be ensured that the deployment of the European Union Mission in Armenia

(EUMA) takes into account the legitimate interests of Azerbaijan. "The Azerbaijani side expects that in the process of deliberations on the EU mission, utmost care will be exercised to draw necessary lessons from the past experience," the statement further said. Baku looks positively at the EU engagement in Armenia as it would help the normalization process, but serious deviations were made from agreements during discussions in Prague last October following "biased approaches taken by some EU member states," the statement said. "This, in turn, affected the overall trust as regards to the credibility and transparency of decision-making within the EU," it read. Azerbaijan has communicated to EU representatives that the bloc's engagement

in Armenia through a mission must not "serve as a pretext for Armenia to evade" its commitments. The mission was launched on Monday. "The objective of the Mission is to contribute to stability in the border areas of Armenia, build confidence on the ground, and ensure an environment conducive to normalization efforts between Armenia and Azerbaijan supported by the EU," the council said in a statement. In response to Armenia's request, the EUMA will conduct routine patrols and report on the situation, as well as contribute to mediation efforts in the framework of a process led by European Council President Charles Michel. The mission will have an initial mandate of two years and its operational headquarters will be in Armenia,

according to the statement. Armenia's foreign minister welcomed the move, saying the mission "will contribute to the peace, stability and security of the region." Ararat Mirzoyan tweeted, "We will readily cooperate with the mission and support its activities." On Wednesday, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov warned Yerevan against the deployment of a "civil monitoring mission" on the border with Azerbaijan without Baku's consent. "The Armenian side prefers to negotiate with the EU so that a civilian observer mission can be stationed there (in Karabakh) on a long-term basis. This is the border with Azerbaijan, so if this mission unfolds without the consent of Azerbaijan, it may simply be counter-productive."

Finland suggests halting trilateral NATO talks

HELSINKI: The tripartite negotiations between Finland, Sweden and Türkiye over the Nordic countries' bid to join NATO should be suspended, according to Finnish Foreign Minister Pekka Haavisto. "Talks should be paused. It's best to resume after things settle down," Haavisto said Tuesday amid escalating tension between Ankara and Stockholm following a scandalous incident in the Swedish capital on Saturday. As Sweden's chances of getting on Ankara's good graces wane, Haavisto argued Finland "must consider joining NATO without Sweden." "We have to assess the situation, whether something has happened that in the longer term would prevent Sweden from going ahead," Haavisto said, adding that it was "too early to take a position on that now" and that a joint application remains the "first option". "My own assessment is that there will be a delay (in getting Türkiye's approval), which will certainly last until the Turkish elections in mid-May," Haavisto said. Danish anti-Islam activist Rasmus Paludan burned a copy of Islam's holy book in front of the Turkish Embassy and delivered a hatred-filled speech with permission from Swedish authorities under police protection last weekend, putting more strain on already tense ties between the two countries just as Sweden is looking to become a permanent NATO member. Since officially applying for membership in May 2022, spurred by Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the Nordic countries have been striving and struggling to secure Türkiye's approval for joining the bloc.—APP

UN RWA appeals for \$1.6 billion in funding

NEW YORK: The UN agency for Palestinian refugees, UNRWA, appealed Tuesday for \$1.6 billion for its work in 2023, as it struggles to overcome chronic budget shortfalls. UNRWA — which provides services to nearly six million Palestinians registered in the Palestinian territories, including Israeli-annexed east Jerusalem, as well as in Jordan, Lebanon and Syria — warned that "compounding challenges" had placed it under "immense strain". The agency, which counts nearly 30,000 staff — most of them Palestinian refugees — runs more than 700 schools that offer education to half a million children, and provides health, sanitation and social services, including food and cash assistance. Out of the \$1.6 billion requested, UNRWA said \$848 million.—APP

Commander USAFCENT calls on Air Chief

ISLAMABAD: Lieutenant General Alexis Grynke-wich, Commander of Ninth Air Force (U.S. Air Forces Central Command), called on Air Chief Marshal Zaher Ahmed Baber Sidhu, Chief of the Air Staff, Pakistan Air Force in his office today. During the meeting, matters pertaining to regional security situation, enhanced bilateral and defence cooperation were discussed. The visiting dignitary lauded the professionalism of PAF personnel and the exceptional progress made by Pakistan Air Force over the years, especially through indigenization. He also appreciated Pakistan's efforts in promoting regional peace and vowed to enhance cooperation in various fields. The AFCENT Commander offered heartfelt condolences to the people of Pakistan over the loss of life amidst devastation



caused by floods and appreciated the efforts put in by Pakistan Air Force for relief and rehabilitation of the flood victims. The Air Chief highlighted that both the countries enjoy cordial relations and

reiterated his resolve to further enhance the existing bilateral cooperation between the two strategic partners. Chief of the Air Staff also shared his vision of modernizing PAF to meet the evolving security

and geo-political challenges. The Air Chief further said, "Pakistan values its strong diplomatic, economic and defence relations with United States of America which are based on convergence on all im-

portant issues relating to regional peace, security and stability". Both sides agreed to further optimize military to military ties particularly in training and operational domains.—DNA

Ukraine corruption scandal: Several officials resign

Zelensky was elected in 2019 on the promise of wide-reaching reforms to battle corruption and improve the economy. During his time in office, the Ukrainian president sacked numerous ministers and officials as he battled to fight the malign influence of powerful people in the country

FOREIGN DESK

KYIV: Several senior Ukrainian officials announced their resignations on Tuesday, amid a damaging corruption scandal. Reports of foul play in Ukraine's high offices broke over the weekend, surrounding illicit payments to deputy ministers and over-inflated military contracts. Deputy Defence Minister Vyacheslav Shapovalov, Deputy Head of the Presidential Administration Kyrylo Tymoshenko and Deputy Prosecutor General Oleksiy Simonenko are among the officials who have quit. Ukrainian President

Volodymyr Zelensky said personnel changes were being carried out at senior and lower levels. However, the scandal could dampen Western enthusiasm for the Kyiv government, which has a long history of shaky governance, especially at a time when it is seeking more military support. Over the weekend, a Ukrainian newspaper investigation accused the Defence Ministry of signing off contracts to supply food to frontline troops at "two to three" times the regular price. The amount in question is 320 million for 2023, according to the ZN.UA news site. "Even if these accusations are unfounded, [the resignations]

will make it possible to preserve the confidence of society and international partners," said the Ministry of Defence in a press release. On Sunday, the ministry dismissed the allegations as false, claiming the reports are "deliberate manipulation". It warned it would open an investigation into the "dissemination" of "misleading" information, which "harms the interests of defence during a special period". Separately, anti-corruption police arrested the deputy infrastructure minister on suspicion of receiving a 367,000 euro bribe to buy overpriced generators last September, an allegation the minister denies.

The supplier has claimed this was a mistake and no money had changed hands. Again the timing of the allegations is sensitive, with Ukraine gripped by power cuts in biting winter weather. The scandal, which has sent shockwaves through Ukraine, comes as European countries bicker over giving Kyiv German-made Leopard 2 tanks — the workhorse of armies across Europe. Ukraine says it needs them to break through Russian lines and recapture territory, though some European officials have warned delivery of such heavy weaponry could escalate the conflict. David Arakhamia, head

of Zelensky's Servant of the People party, said officials should "focus on the war, help victims, cut bureaucracy and stop dubious business". "We're definitely going to be jailing actively this spring. If the humane approach doesn't work, we'll do it in line with martial law," he said. Zelensky was elected in 2019 on the promise of wide-reaching reforms to battle corruption and improve the economy. During his time in office, the Ukrainian president sacked numerous ministers and officials as he battled to fight the malign influence of powerful people in the country.

Seven dead in new California shooting

HALF MOON BAY: A suspected gunman was in custody Monday over the killing of seven people in a rural community in northern California, just two days after a mass shooting at a Lunar New Year celebration near Los Angeles. The latest bloodshed occurred at two farms around Half Moon Bay, a coastal community south of San Francisco. San Mateo County Sheriff Christina Corpus said seven people were killed and one wounded in the twin shootings, and that a 67-year-old Half Moon Bay resident named Chunli Zhao had been taken into custody.—APP

Saudis in Makkah can now rent out their houses

ISLAMABAD: The Pilgrims' Housing Committee at the Makkah Mayorality announced that it has started receiving requests from citizens to rent out residential units to accommodate the Hajj pilgrims. The committee called on owners of all residential units, who wish to rent out their housing units to accommodate the pilgrims, to contact immediately the designated engineering offices to complete the procedures for issuing permits for their residential units in this regard. The mayorality stated that it would continue receiving applications from citizens over the coming period. "There are a number of engineering consulting offices accredited by the mayorality and the Civil Defense to inspect the pilgrims' housing units to verify whether they fulfilled the terms and conditions stipulated in the regulations, and issue a fitness certificate accordingly. "On the basis of this, the Pilgrims' Housing Committee will issue permits for the housing units to accommodate the pilgrims," it said. The committee urged the citizens to contact it to know about the specified terms and conditions to facilitate the issuance of permits for using their housing units to accommodate the pilgrims, Saudi Gazette reported. The mayorality called on all building owners wishing to rent them to fulfil all the requirements, as well as all the safety and security elements required to be provided, in accordance with the regulations regarding construction and safety requirements.—APP

Türkiye summons Dutch ambassador

ANKARA: Türkiye on Tuesday summoned the Dutch ambassador in Ankara Joep Wijnands over "a vile attack" on Quran, Islam's holy book, in The Hague. "We condemn in the strongest possible terms the vile attack of an anti-Islamic person in The Hague, Netherlands, on January 22, targeting our holy book, the Qur'an," the Foreign Ministry said in a statement. "This despicable act, which, after Sweden, took place this time in the Netherlands, insulting our sacred values and containing a hate crime, is a clear declaration that Islamophobia, discrimination, and xenophobia know no bounds in Europe," it added. These actions directly target the fundamental rights and freedoms, moral values, and social tolerance of not only Muslims but all humanity and it also harms the culture of living together in peace, the statement stressed. Ambassador Wijnands was told that Türkiye condemns "the heinous and despicable act," and demands that the Netherlands does not allow such "provocative acts." "We expect the Dutch authorities to take necessary actions against the perpetrator of the incident and to implement concrete measures to prevent the recurrence of such incidents," it added. The statement came after Edwin Wagensveld, a far-right Dutch politician and the leader of the Islamophobic group Pegida, on Sunday tore out pages from a copy of the Quran in The Hague. Wagensveld's video on Twitter showed that he burned the torn-out pages of the holy book in a pan. It followed a protest in front of the Turkish Embassy in Stockholm on Saturday, which included the burning of a copy of the Quran with both police protection.—APP

Briefs

Lahore school expels five of bullying

DNA

LAHORE: A private school in Lahore expelled five students, including the victim of bullying, after a video of the girl being tortured by her classmates went viral on social media, prompting authorities to take notice and launch an investigation. According to police officials, the school management did not cooperate with the police and refused to provide the CCTV footage of the incident to the investigating officer. However, statements of four eyewitnesses were recorded. The seven accused named in the case of violence against the student include the principal Bilal and canteen employee Nasir, among others. A five-member committee was also formed by the education department to investigate the matter. The video footage, which was shared numerous times on Twitter on Friday, shows two to three teenage girls holding the alleged victim by the hair and pinning her to the ground. The girls could be heard verbally abusing the alleged victim and telling her to "say sorry". Another girl could be seen recording a video of the episode on her mobile phone. The official accounts of the Capital City Police Lahore and the Punjab Police had responded to the video shared on Twitter, saying a case was registered and that an investigation was launched into the incident.

Azerbaijan takes over chairmanship of ECO

WEB DESK

BAKU: Azerbaijani Foreign Minister Jeyhun Bayramov attended the 26th meeting of the Council of Ministers of the member countries of the Economic Cooperation Organization conference in Uzbekistan, Azarnews reports, citing the ministry. During his speech, the minister stressed the importance of the measures taken toward the creation of a transport corridor from the Eastern Zangazur economic region of Azerbaijan to the Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic. "The Zangazur corridor will be especially important for the growth of cooperation between the nations in the entire region," the Azerbaijani foreign minister said. The Tashkent communiqué, which was adopted following the meeting, expressed support for the settlement of interstate relations between Azerbaijan and Armenia on the basis of mutual recognition and respect for territorial integrity and sovereignty. Confidence was expressed that this would contribute to the establishment of good neighborly relations in the region, sustainable peace, and economic progress.

Hungary to oppose any EU nuclear sanctions against Russia

WEB DESK

BELGRADE: Hungary will not support any sanctions by the European Union that restrict Hungarian-Russian nuclear cooperation, Foreign Minister Peter Szijarto said Monday. Szijarto's remarks came at a meeting of the foreign ministers of EU countries in Brussels. "We will not support any step, no matter how small, that restricts Hungarian-Russian nuclear cooperation," Szijarto said of a new sanctions package planned by the EU against Russia. He said sanctions harm the bloc more than they do Russia. "Sanctions have taken the EU to a dead end. Sanctions harm us Europeans more than the Russians. Everyone can see that. This is not a political statement, it's a fact," said Szijarto. According to Szijarto, the Paks Nuclear Power Plant, Hungary's only nuclear plant, produces half of the country's electricity needs, so his country is dependent on nuclear power.

Countrywide outages

Govt to probe 'foreign hand' behind power system failure

Power Minister says Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has formed a three-member inquiry committee which will be headed by Minister of State for Petroleum Musadik Malik

SHUJAAT HAMZA

ISLAMABAD: Power Minister Khurram Dastgir Khan Tuesday said that the government is concerned about the back-to-back failure of the national grid and will investigate whether the system was "hacked" by external forces. While speaking at a press conference, 24 hours after the country plunged into darkness due to a "frequency" fault in the transmission system, the minister said that the "possibility of foreign intervention through the internet is low," however, the matter will be probed as there have been multiple incidents recently. The federal minister said that Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has formed a three-member inquiry committee which will be headed by Minister of State for Petroleum Musadik Malik. Dastgir further said that there will be a shortage of electricity and the citizens will face loadshedding in the next 48 hours. He added that the system will be completely restored by Thursday. He said that Nation-



al Transmission and Despatch Company's (NTDC) 1,112 grid stations across Pakistan have been restored. "The electricity was completely restored today at 5:15am," he added. However, people were complaining in Ka-

PM expresses regrets over power failure

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has expressed his regrets for the inconvenience suffered by the citizens due to countrywide power breakdown. In a tweet uploaded on Tuesday, Shehbaz Sharif said he had ordered a high-level inquiry to ascertain the reasons of this massive power failure. "Responsibility will be fixed," he added. The Federal Cabinet also took up the issue at its meeting in Islamabad on Tuesday. Energy Minister Khurram Dastgir presented a report on the power failure to the cabinet members who were furious over such a large-scale inconvenience to the public. - DNA

The power minister said that the nuclear plants will take about 48 to 72 to restart while the coal plant requires 48 hours to resume operations. He added that the power distribution system is safe. "We faced a technical challenge Monday morning. There was a voltage fluctuation in the transmission lines and the reason behind it is still unknown," he added. Dastgir added that electricity is required to start a power plant, adding that the country has plenty of oil to run power plants. Talking about the power outage in Karachi, the minister said that supply will be restored in the port city soon. "Routine loadshedding is being carried out," he added. He highlighted that this was a technical issue which led to the breakdown in the country. Dastgir said that the power in areas served by Peshawar Electric Supply Company (PESCO) and Islamabad Electric Supply Company (ISCO) was restored today morning. Moreover, the electricity in the flood-affected areas in Sindh and Balochistan was restored yesterday.

Three new Corona cases reported in last 24 hours

ISLAMABAD: Health officials on Tuesday said that only three new Coronavirus cases were reported during the last 24 hours across the country. As per data shared by the National Institute of Health (NIH), the case positivity ratio was 0.09 percent while 11 patients were in critical condition. No death was reported from the Coronavirus in the last 24 hours while 3,209 Covid-19 Corona tests were conducted. As many as 325 tests were conducted in Lahore out of which no case was confirmed, while 205 tests were conducted in Islamabad out of which no case was reported. One case was reported in Faisalabad out of 167 test with a ratio of 0.60%. Meanwhile, Minister for National Health Services, Regulations and Coordination, Abdul Qadir Patel said that the government has strengthened the role of Border and Health Services in Pakistan to deal with any sub-variant of Covid-19. The minister said that there was a surveillance system at all entry points of the country including airports. - APP



ISLAMABAD: High Commissioner of Canada Leslie Scanlon hosted women ambassadors and high commissioners based in Islamabad and discussed how they can work together to advance women related issues. Seen in the picture from left to right are Ambassadors of the Netherlands, Maldives, European Union, Kenya, Bulgaria and the Philippines. - DNA

Court serves notices on acquittal pleas of Imran & others

ISLAMABAD: A local court on Tuesday served notices to respondents for comments on acquittal pleas of Imran Khan and others in FIRs registered on violation of Section-144 and vandalizing the public property during PTI's Long March. Judicial Magistrate Waqas Ahmed Raja heard the acquittal pleas of the accused wherein PTI leaders including Asad Umar, Faisal Javed and Ali Nawaz Awan appeared before the court. However, the accused Qasim Suri, Sheharyar Afridi and Shah Mehmood Qureshi couldn't attend the proceedings. The defence lawyer moved the requests to the court, seeking exemption from attendances to Imran Khan on medical grounds, saying that Sheharyar Afridi was out of country and Qasim Suri was in Quetta. Lawyer Naeem Panjutha said that accused Sheikh Rasheed would reach the courtroom shortly. On this, the court said that whether the accused didn't know the court timing. The lawyer said that Sheikh Rasheed was out of country and he was reaching directly from the airport. - APP

SC judge recuses himself from US cypher hearing

ISLAMABAD: Supreme Court Justice Sardar Tariq Masood on Tuesday recused himself from the in-chamber hearing of the petitions seeking a probe into the US cypher - the cable allegedly threatening the ouster of Imran Khan's government. The apex court conducted the hearing on the appeals filed to probe the matter. During the hearing, Justice Masood refused to hear the petitions after which they were sent back to Chief Justice Umar Ata Bandial. The former prime minister, in a public gathering of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) workers on March 27, 2022, had pulled out a piece of paper from his pocket and waved it at the crowd, claiming that it was evidence of an "international conspiracy" being hatched to topple his government. Justice Masood said that the chief justice should assign the hearing of the in-chamber appeal seeking a probe on US cypher to another judge. The registrar's office then returned the petitions, raising several objections. The petitions were filed by Advocates Zulfiqar Ahmed Bhutta, Syed Tariq Badar and Naeemul Hassan. Advocate Bhutta had first filed a petition in the Supreme Court under Article 184(3) of the Constitution, naming the federation of Pakistan and the law secretary as respondents. He had argued that it was an unusual

situation that could destabilise the country's law and order by seeding hostility against cordial countries. He had implored the apex court that the respondents may be directed to deliver the "letter" to the civil and military officers to examine. However, the registrar's office returned the plea objecting that the petitioner had not pointed out what questions of public importance were involved in the case concerning any fundamental rights to invoke the jurisdiction of the Supreme Court under Article 184(3) of the Constitution. The registrar's office added that the plea did not meet the conditions required to invoke the court's extraordinary jurisdiction under Article 184(3) of the Constitution. The office added that the applicant drew the notice properly, neither mentioning the purpose of the petition nor providing a copy of the petition to the respondent. It stated that the applicant did not draw the petition as per the Supreme Court Rules, 1980. However, the applicant filed a chamber appeal against the registrar's objections in the apex court and pleaded for his appeal to be accepted and place the matter before the bench of the apex court. He had stated that his petition was fully apt under Article 184(3) of the constitution and that the registrar's objections to its fixation before the bench were unlawful. - DNA

UN aid chief concerned over Afghan women rights

NEWS DESK

NEW YORK: The UN's aid chief visited Afghanistan on Monday to engage with the Taliban, the country's de facto authorities, to convey messages on the need to reverse policies banning women from public life, said a spokesman. The latest visit by Undersecretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Martin Griffiths along with the President and Chief Executive Officer of Save the Children US, Janti Sorripto, the Secretary General of Care International, Sofia Sprechmann Sineiro, and the Deputy Executive Director of UNICEF, Omar Abdi, comes one month after the Taliban banned Afghan women from working in national and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs). The recent ban put some programs on hold, sowing fears that the already dire humanitarian situation in Afghanistan will get worse, said UN spokesman Stephane Dujarric. Some 28 million people are in need of humanitarian aid in Afghanistan, a 350% hike in just five years, according to the UN. The UN's top female diplomat Amina Mohammed, Ex-

ecutive Director of UN Women Sima Bahous and Assistant Secretary-General of the Department of Political, Peacebuilding Affairs and Peace Operations, Khaled Khari were also in Afghanistan last week to hold talks with the Taliban. The Taliban regime has recently moved to close universities to female students across the country until further notice and has barred girls from attending secondary school, restricted women and girls' freedom of movement, excluded women from most areas of the workforce and banned women from using parks, gyms and public bath houses. The Taliban's return to power in Afghanistan on Aug. 15, 2021 followed by the disruption of international financial assistance has left the worn-torn country in economic, humanitarian and human rights crises. Women and girls have been deprived of their rights, including the right to education, and disappeared from public life under the Taliban. Thousands of women have since lost their jobs or were forced to resign from government institutions and the private sector. Girls have been prevented from attending middle and high schools. Many women have demanded that their rights be reinstated by taking to the streets, protesting and organizing campaigns.

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