



Islamabad POST

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New Zealand PM Jacinda Ardern to resign next month

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Ankara and Baku sincere for peace with Yerevan

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World Bank rejects rumours of loan delay

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Briefs

Ch Shujaat foresees polls' delay

DNA

GUJRAT: President of Pakistan Muslim League-Quaid (PML-Q) Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain said on Thursday he foresees delay in next general elections, let alone snap polls. In a statement, Chaudhry Shujaat stressed that all political parties need to sit together over economic issues and said the CJP should chair a conference on economy's revival. Talking about differences between PML-Q leadership, the party head said he has no intention to expel Moonis Elahi from the party and show cause notices were only served to stop Chaudhry Parvez Elahi from taking a wrong step.

NA Speaker defends his decision

DNA

ISLAMABAD: National Assembly Speaker Raja Pervez Ashraf on Thursday defended his decision to accept the resignations of PTI lawmakers, saying he only did so after they were able to "satisfy him" by proving that it was a "voluntary decision and not under pressure". In an apparent bid to scuttle the PTI's purported plan to bring a confidence motion against Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, Ashraf on Tuesday had accepted the resignations of 34 PTI lawmakers alongside Awami Muslim League chief Sheikh Rashid, resulting in their de-notification by the Election Commission of Pakistan.

Elections only solution to crisis

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PML-N) Senior Vice President Shahid Khaqan Abbasi has said that elections are the only solution to the current crisis, media reported on Thursday. Shahid Khaqan Abbasi favoured the organisation of fresh elections in the country. The PML-N senior leader said that Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif can make difficult decisions and each political party would pay the price for its decisions.

Pak keen to upgrade ties with Russia

PM meets Russian Minister, exchanges views on supplying oil and gas from Russia

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has expressed Pakistan's keen desire to upgrade its bilateral cooperation with Russia in trade, investment and economic matters. He was talking to a delegation led by the Russian Energy Minister Nikolay Shulginov, which called on him in Lahore on Thursday. Welcoming the delegation, the Prime Minister highlighted the importance Pakistan attaches to its relations with the Russian Federation. He recalled his meeting with President Vladimir Putin in Samarkand in September 2022, and said that the meeting had reached important decisions to further strengthen Pakistan-Russia relations. The Russian Energy Minister reciprocated Prime Minister's sentiments and delivered a special message of Russian President Vladimir Putin to the Prime Minister. In his message, President Putin referring to Pakistan as Russia's important partner in South Asia and the Islamic World reiterated Russia's strong interest to deepen the bilateral relationship. Both sides agreed on the importance of energy sector for the development of bilateral economic and trade relations. In this regard views were exchanged on supplying oil and gas from Russia to Pakistan on a long term basis. Matters related to gas pipelines were also reviewed. The Prime Minister provided guidance for the work of 8th Round of Pakistan-Russia Inter-Governmental Commission meeting scheduled to be held in Islamabad.

Pakistan, Russia finalize consultations

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan and Russia have finalized consultations to enhance cooperation in areas of mutual interests, including energy, oil and gas, trade and commerce, science and technology, investment, industry, economy and agriculture. These consultations were held on the 2nd day of 8th meeting of Inter-governmental Commission on Trade and Economic, Scientific and Technical Cooperation of Pakistan and Russia in Islamabad on Thursday. Both sides have finalized the draft protocol of these meetings. This draft protocol will be agreed and signed at the plenary session of 8th Session of Inter-Governmental Commission of Pak-Russia being held tomorrow. The aim of these consultations is to enhance the level of trade and cooperation between both states. Both sides shared

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LAHORE: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif receives Russian delegation headed by Shulginov Nikolay, Minister of Energy, ahead of their meeting. - DNA

Moscow warns West of escalation

The warning comes on the eve of a key donor meeting

NEWS DESK

MOSCOW: The Kremlin on Thursday warned of escalation in Ukraine if the West gives the pro-Western country more weapons capable of striking Russia. "Potentially, this is extremely dangerous, it will mean bringing the conflict to a whole new level, which, of course, will not bode well from the point of view of global and pan-European security," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters. The warning comes on the eve of a key donor meeting as Western countries consider sending more powerful weapons to Ukraine. On Friday, the United States will gather its allies at its airbase in Ramstein for a new round of talks on backing Ukraine militarily. Peskov spoke after Moscow's ambassador to the United States Anatoly Antonov said Russia would retaliate if Ukraine uses Western-supplied weapons to target Russia or the Crimea peninsula, annexed from Ukraine in 2014.

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Imran Khan warns against any delay in general elections

Says caretaker setup of people of impeccable credentials could hold polls fairly

ABID RAZA

LAHORE: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan made it clear that any delay in the elections would not be tolerated come what may and added that only the caretaker setup consisted of well-reputed and able people could perform this important task in a befitting manner. Talking to members of PTI Parliamentary Committee, who called on him in Lahore on Thursday, PTI Chairman said that PTI was nominating personalities of best reputation, ability and impeccable credentials. PTI Central Senior Vice President Fawad Chaudhry was also present in the meeting. During the meeting, PTI Chairman vowed that the jeopardizing the transparency of the elections would be tantamount to enmity with the country. In the meeting, they held detailed consultation on important issues regarding nomination of Caretaker Chief Minister in Punjab. They also discussed names of

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Pak eyes meeting IMF conditions

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Planning, Development, and Special Initiatives Ahsan Iqbal said Thursday that the government would meet the International Monetary Fund's (IMF) conditions for completing the programme, however, vowed that the common man would not be affected. During his address at a meeting in Islamabad, the federal minister said the previous government had "recklessly" agreed upon the programme, therefore, the current administration has no option but to continue it. "We have to do a lot of adjustments, but we will take decisions in the larger interests of the state," he said and added: "We will try to put a minimum burden on the poor and common people." The government faces an uphill task on the economic front amid a devaluing currency, rising inflation, depleting forex reserves, and a stalled IMF programme. Despite the government's repeated assurances that inflows would begin this month, their claims have not yet materialised, resulting in a market frenzy. The minister said Pakistan's economy was in a dismal state when the current government took over, and given the shortage of time, it had decided to take short-term measures to turn the economy around.

Iqbal stressed the need for mobilising all available resources to increase productivity and exports of the country to get rid of foreign loans permanently. "Pakistan's productivity capacity is very low as compared to the standard average", he said, adding that in the agriculture sector alone, the country could earn billions of dollars by taking measures to increase the crops' yield per acre. For instance, he said, the per acre wheat production in Pakistan can be increased by up to 80% by improving on-farm management. Similarly, he said, "our industrial production possesses numerous inefficiencies due to which we are not competitive with the world". The biggest challenge in 75 years, the federal minister said, is that Pakistan's productivity capacity could not be integrated with the global markets. Iqbal pointed out that export-led growth is important to resolve the balance of payment issues, therefore, he stressed the need to take all measures to earn maximum foreign exchange reserves. "We have to do resource mobilisation and also have to increase tax to GDP ratio up to the global average of over 18% which is only at 9% in Pakistan". He said in the previous four years, the debt servicing burden had increased to Rs 4500 billion, so if the resources are not mobilised, the country's tax would be spent on debt repayment.

India sets condition for talks with Pak

DNA

ISLAMABAD: In response to Islamabad's desire to normalise bilateral ties with its nuclear-armed neighbouring country, India has yet again set a condition before resuming talks with Pakistan. "India reiterated its position on relations with Pakistan and said that a 'conducive atmosphere free of terror' is needed for talks," state-run news agency quoted the Indian foreign ministry's spokesperson as saying on Thursday. Replying to a question during a press briefing Arindam Bagchi, the Indian foreign ministry's spokesperson, said: "We have already said that we have always wanted normal neighbourly relations with Pakistan." He added, "But there should be a conducive atmosphere which does not have terror, hostility or violence. That remains our position." The comments came four days after Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, during an interview with Al Arabiya news channel, asked his Indian counterpart Narendra Modi to hold "serious and sincere talks" - to resolve the burning issues with New Delhi, including Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK).

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Pakistan urges Iran to hunt down terrorists

FO Spokesperson says Pakistan has shared its concerns with Iranian authorities

SHUJAAT HAMZA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan has called upon the Iranian authorities to investigate the cross-border terror attack in the Panjur district of Balochistan and bring the perpetrators to task. Foreign Office (FO) Spokesperson Mumtaz Zahra Baloch, at her weekly media briefing in Islamabad on Thursday, said the terrorists used Iranian soil to target a convoy of security forces patrolling along the Pakistan-Iran border. She said Pakistan commits that its territory will not be used for undertaking cross-border attacks in Iran, and we expect the same from Iran. Baloch added that communication channels are active, and Pakistan has shared its concerns regarding the attack with the Iranian authorities. The Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR), on Wednesday, reported that four security personnel were martyred in a terrorist attack carried out from "Iranian soil". The FO spokesperson, responding to a question, said Pakistan wants pleasant

Iranian Embassy condemns terror attack

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: The Iranian Embassy in Islamabad on Wednesday condemned a terrorist attack in Pakistan's Balochistan Province that left four security personnel dead earlier in the day. The embassy in a statement said that terrorism is a common problem facing Iran and Pakistan, with both neighboring countries being victim of that "evil phenomenon." The Iranian diplomatic mission in Pakistan's capital also expressed sympathy with the families of the victims of the terror attack that took place in Balochistan's Panjur district. According to Pakistan's

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ISLAMABAD | RAWALPINDI | LAHORE | PESHAWAR

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Adding of more water reserves inevitable

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Power Division Khurram Dastgir on Thursday said that the flood in 2022 was a serious indication of climate change and it was inevitable to add more to water reserves in the country. Addressing at a ceremony here that there was a dire need to prepare for such situations in the future. The flood caused severe damage to power supply infrastructure for which the government was making all-out efforts to restore it, he said. He said in most of the power supply infrastructure has already been restored in the effected area. Flood brought havoc to areas of Sindh, Balochistan and South Punjab, he said. The minister said the flood not only affected people but also destroyed agricultural land and crops. Drainage of water from the flood-affected areas was a difficult task but the government utilized all available resources in this regard, he said. Dastgir said we have to decide in which direction we want to take the country. The new generation will have to contribute to the development of the country, he said.—DNA

CTD arrests five suspects

LAHORE: Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) claimed on Thursday to have arrested five suspects from various parts of Punjab. A team of CTD conducted 13 combing and search operations and interrogated 664 suspects. After biometric verification of 355 people, law enforcers arrested five suspects and recovered explosive material and weapons. Six cases were registered against the arrested suspects in Nankana, Rawalpindi, Chakwal, Sargodha and Rahim Yar Khan. Further investigation was underway.—APP

Haleem calls on IK; rejects local body election conduct, result

LAHORE: Opposition leader and Member Provincial Assembly of Sindh Haleem Adil Sheikh Thursday met with Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) chief Imran Khan and announced rejection of the extremely poor conduct and results of Sindh Local Body elections second phase. While discussing the political conditions and the recent local body elections of Sindh, Imran Khan directed Haleem Adil Sheikh to raise and highlight this matter with full force coordinating with the provincial organization. In the meeting, Imran Khan and Sheikh strongly condemned the retaliatory attacks against Tehreek-e-Insaf officials, members of National and Provincial Assembly and PTI workers from the Sindh Government and also the filing of fake cases and arrests of PTI workers and officials with the help of police and administration. Haleem Adil Sheikh said that he will not allow the mandate of Sindh, especially Karachi, to fall prey to People's Party's bullying and the incompetence of the Election Commission. First they eloped from the elections and when it was held, they came back as mobsters and tried to rob the mandate. We will fight the wrong as much as we can staying in the limits and boundaries of the law and protect the vote of the public of Sindh.—DNA

Over 200 investors attend investment conference



DNA

ISLAMABAD: Investment readiness conference was held at Serena Hotel Islamabad. More than 200 investors

belonging to various sectors attended the event. The event was organized by KP Culture & Tourism Authority. Director General CTA while addressing the occasion elaborated the

concept of integrated tourism zones and offered these zones for private sector investment. GM investments CTA Omair Khattak gave detailed presentation of integrated zones. Pres-

ident RCCI Saqib Rafiq, MD PTDC Aftab Rana, VC Board of investment Engr Said Mahmood, SVP ICCI Mr Fahd, Chief Economist Go-KP Mr Asghar Khan highlighted the efforts of

KP Government on the occasion. Key note address was given by Sardar Yasir Ilyas EX President RCCI and CEO Centaurus appreciated the efforts of KP CTA and extended full

support in making these zones the next big investment opportunity on the province. The investors took keen interest in project scope and pledged to invest in tourism sector of the KP.

Food security vital for Pakistan's national security

ISLAMABAD: National security cannot be guaranteed unless there is food security in Pakistan. Urgent attention needs to be given towards reforming and modernising the agriculture sector as well as controlling population growth. This was the key message of the eminent speakers at the seminar on 'Food Security for Pakistan' organised by the Centre for Aerospace & Security Studies (CASS) in Islamabad. Syed Fakhar Imam, Former Federal Minister, Ministry of National Food Security and Research, Government of Pakistan was the Keynote Speaker, while other eminent speakers included Dr Abid Qaiyum Suleri, Executive Director, Sustainable Development Policy Institute, Islamabad; Mr Ashfaq Mahmood, Former Federal Secretary for Water and Power, Government of Pakistan; and Ambassador Shafiq Kakakhel, Chairman Board of Governors, Sustainable Development Policy Institute, Islamabad. The seminar was concluded by President CASS Air Marshal Farhat

Hussain Khan (Retd), while Dr Zia Ul Haque Shamsi Director at CASS moderated the proceedings. Dr Zia Ul Haque Shamsi, while delivering the Opening Remarks, highlighted that Pakistan being the fifth largest state in the world, and a predominantly agri-based society, unfortunately faces serious concerns of food insecurity for various reasons. This was especially concerning because while efforts were in hand to improve farming processes through modern methods, better seeds development, and resource management, Pakistan still had a long way to go in ensuring food security for its growing population at an affordable cost, he said. In his Keynote Address on 'Role of Agriculture Sector and Food Security in Pakistan', Syed Fakhar Imam pointed out that national security, international security, and food security were all interlinked and could not be divorced from each other. He lamented that of the five major crops, wheat was grown on 36% of the land which was where the problem lay. Sadly,

Pakistan had failed to evolve high-yield crop varieties. Mr Imam argued that despite having five major agri-universities and affiliated colleges, they were not at par with international standards and had outdated curriculum. In his view, population explosion was also a major reason why Pakistan had become an importer of wheat. According to the speaker, mechanisation, modernisation, agricultural extension, human resource development and research were key for strengthening the agro-economy of Pakistan. Dr Abid Qaiyum Suleri underlined that triple C Crises 'COVID, Conflict & Climate Change' were forcing states across the globe to question and rethink their healthcare systems, economic policies, and ways of producing and consuming food, but Pakistan, had tetra-C crises given its 'Complacency'. He pointed out that even before Pakistan's super floods and Russia-Ukraine war, the country was ranked 9th in the list of countries facing worst food insecurity. In his assessment, the Punjab Food

Department released subsidised wheat to flour mills in April 2022, as opposed to its earlier policy of releasing the stocks in September, had resulted in the current wheat flour crisis as it allowed the private sector to hoard its reserves. Dr Suleri warned that future generations of Pakistan faced heightened risk of malnourishment, wasting, stunting as well as low IQ. He urged shifting to precision agriculture technologies; adopting climate-smart agri-practices; integrating social safety nets for farmers, including weather index based insurance; improving agri-institutional arrangements; offering smart subsidies; and solarization of tube wells, among others. While analysing the availability of water for agricultural needs, Mr Ashfaq Mahmood provided an overview of the water resources of Pakistan under the Indus Waters Treaty and transboundary waters. He informed that glaciers, snow melt, and rains were major sources of water for Pakistan.—DNA

Gender responsive budget; essential tool to empower women

ISLAMABAD: National Assembly Speaker Raja Pervez Ashraf on Wednesday said that effective budgeting for Gender was one of the most effective ways to ensure that women's needs and rights. Addressing the launching ceremony of "Gender Responsive Budgeting Report" organised by Women Parliamentary Caucus (WPC) and Friedrich Ebert-Stiftung (FES) here, he said that legislators in Pakistan had been working to increase women's participation in the budgeting process and to ensure that gender considerations were integrated into development planning and implementation. He stressed the need to ensure that gender responsive budgeting was integrated into all levels of government and that it was effectively implemented and monitored. The speaker appreciated the efforts of Dr. Rehmani's efforts to launch today's summary paper on Gender Responsive Budgeting in Pakistan. He said that the party he belonged to have been the staunch believer of women emancipation because empowered women make empowered nations. He said that his party had always provided unwavering support to promote meaningful participation of women in politics

and always advocated the fact that, without them, no democracy was a true democracy. He urged all participants to support the implementation of gender responsive budgeting in Pakistan. Earlier, Dr. Shahida Rehmani, in her inaugural remarks, said that WPC had been working dedicatedly to institutionalize the gender budgeting process. Women's Parliamentary Caucus has launched the summary paper on "Gender Budgeting in Pakistan". The purpose of summary paper for Women's Parliamentary Caucus is to put forward key strategies and methodologies for implementation of Gender Budgeting in Pakistan. This paper will serve as a source of inspiration and guidance for further work, especially for WPC but also for other institutions interested in promoting a coherent approach in Gender Budgeting work including civil society. This strategy paper is the first step towards the process. She highlighted that to better understand the public spending, we need a gender lens to analysis it. In addition, involving women in the budget-making process can ensure that their perspectives and needs are taken into account that policies.—APP

Governor Punjab participated in GCU Convocation

MIAN RASHID ASGHAR

FAISALABAD: The 10th convocation of Govt College University was held at Quaid-e-Azam Auditorium, New Campus here today. The Governor Punjab, Muhammad Balighur Rehman participated as the Chief guest. Vice-Chancellor GCU Professor Dr. Shahid Kamal along with University Deans, Directors and Principals took part in this ceremony. Here 38262 male and female students of different sessions of Associate Degree, Master's Degree, LLB and BS Honors were awarded degrees. 249 students were awarded gold medals for achieving distinguished positions in the academic field, while 7 students were awarded gold medals in co-curricular activities. Whereas 8 Faculty members and officers who retired from the university, including former controller of examinations Prof. Dr. Mazhar Hayat as controller of examinations were also awarded honorary certificates in recognition of their services. The Controller of Examinations Raja Shahid Javed, Professor Dr. Mazhar Hayat and Deputy Registrar Zeeshan Ahmad Khan proceeded with the convocation process. Governor appreciated the efforts of the university administration in highlighting the professional skills of the students & the Governor of Punjab expressed that it is a matter of pride for me that GC University Faisalabad won the first position not only in Punjab but also globally in the "World Times Higher Education Ranking". He exhorted the students that be a part of positive activities on the social media and develop leadership within yourself.

Attock police arrests 4 gamblers

QAZI SHOAB KHAN

ATTOCK: Attock police arrested four gamblers red handed for organizing and betting on cockfight matches here at the outskirts village Shadipura within the jurisdiction of Police Station Pindibheb on Thursday. Police said, on a tip, a Police party raided the crime scene and apprehended four gamblers identified as Ikhaq Hussain, Safdar Khan, Sohail Ahmed and Ghulam Kosar. Cocks, bet money was also seized during the raid. Later on, case was registered and further investigation are underway.



ISLAMABAD: Hamad Obaid Alzaabi, the UAE Ambassador in Islamabad, receives Hannu Ripatti, the Ambassador of Finland, and discussed general situation in region and world and joint work and bilateral cooperation between the two countries.—DNA

Rehabilitation of flood victims

PRCS organizes historic mega youth gathering

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Red Crescent Society organizes mega youth gathering and marathon event of 5000 youth including students of different institutions of twin cities of Rawalpindi and Islamabad for the relief and rehabilitation of flood-affected families. The event was held at Jinnah Convention Centre here today. Addressing the ceremony, PRCS Chairman Sardar Shahid Ahmad Laghari said that the main purpose of this event was to raise funds, mobilize youth and volunteers and to channelize their efforts for relief and rehabilitation activities for the flood-affected communities. He said the Red Crescent Movement has 15 million volunteers and PRCS has a batch of 750,000 trained volunteers.

"The volunteers associated with the PRCS in the flood affected areas have made history and the role of volunteers in rescue and relief has been key", he added. Sardar Shahid Ahmad Laghari said that PRCS has provided humanitarian assistance to over 2.3 million people through health care, Mobile Health Units, provision of food, non-food items,

tents, cooked food, health and hygiene promotion. He requested the participants to join PRCS and play their effective part for the rehabilitation of flood victims. "What can be a greater good than if someone's day is enlightened by your donation, if someone gets a warm quilt from the given charity, the prayer coming out of the trembling lips will

give you joy, your small part can become someone's happiness", he added. The Guest of Honor, former Deputy Speaker and Federal Minister for Poverty Alleviation and Social Safety Faisal Karim Kundi said that the Red Crescent has comforted the nation in every difficult time. He said equipping the youth with training in first aid and

disaster management is the distinction of the Red Crescent. He said the current leadership of PRCS has shown its iron. The Patron-in-Chief of Pakistan Sweet Homes, Zamard Khan, in his speech, praised the efforts of PRCS, describing the youth as a symbol of change. He said that the youth role in the rehabilitation of the flood victims is highly commendable. Chairman PRCS Gilgit-Baltistan Brigadier (Rtd) Saleem Mahmood, Chairman PRCS Punjab Justice (Rtd) Sheikh Ahmed Farooq also addressed the participants. Earlier, Secretary General Obaid Ullah Khan in his welcome speech thanked all the participants and highlighted the history of Red Crescent, and voluntary services.—DNA



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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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Serena Hotel.....111 133 133
 Marriott.....051-2826121
 Monal.....0334-5421812



Airlines

Turkish Airlines.....8494949



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Rescue (Police).....15
 Bomb Disposal.....15
 Fire Services Rawalpindi/ Islamabad.....1122 & 16
 Emergency Ambulance.....1122 & Rescue Services.4451122
 Motorway Police.....9266044
 Motorway Police.....9270601-20
 Women Police Stations Islamabad.....9222596
 Rawalpindi.....9270601-20



Enquiry

Edhi Ambulance.....115
 PIA Flight Info.....114
 PIA Cargo.....9280979
 Railway Inquiry.....117
 Railway Exchange 9270831-5
 WASA Rawalpindi.....5555489
 CAA.....9281092



Hospitals

CMH.....5611111
 MH.....561116
 Cantt Hospital.....9270907-11
 DHQ.....5556311-4
 RGH.....9290301-7
 Holy Family.....9290322-7
 PIMS.....9261170-79
 Polyclinic.....9218300-09
 Shifa International.4603666



Departments

CDA.....9221334-43
 CDA.....9208301-04
 Met Office.....9250360-6
 RDA.....5555864
 TMA.....5770886
 Cantonment Board 9270151-3

Islamabad Metropolitan

Corporation.....9209224
 Potohar Town.....9209224
 Rawalpindi.....5773343

Water Tank

Islamabad.....0321-5744480



ISLAMABAD: Boxing players exhibiting skills on the occasion of Armed Forces Day of Thailand. Chief guest Air Marshal Ifran Ahmed, Ambassador of Thailand and others also witnessed the performance. - DNA

Ease of doing business

Islamabad Chamber demands simplification of regulations

ICCI President says that the new environmental laws are creating more problems

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari, President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry said that the prevailing complicated business regulations are a barrier to promote business and investment activities in Pakistan and stressed that the Board of Investment should speed up its process of regulations reforms to promote ease of doing business in the country. He said this while talking to a delegation of Board of Investment (BoI) that visited ICCI led by Zulfiqar Ali, Director General (Reforms) and briefed the business community about the Pakistan Regulatory Modernization Initiative to facilitate the business community.

ICCI President said that the new environmental laws are creating more problems for the private sector as their compliance is not possible, especially for old businesses and industries and stressed that BoI should work in consultation with stakeholders to reform and simplify them.

Engr. Muhammad Azhar ul Islam Zafar, Vice President ICCI said that BoI should take a focal person from every chamber of commerce and associations for its Pakistan Regulatory Modernization Initiative (PRMI) to bring



concrete reforms in the business regulations and a timeline should be set up for this project.

Zulfiqar Ali, Director General (Reforms) and Anadun Munir Director (Regulatory Modernization) BoI gave a detailed presentation on PRMI to the business community. He said that BoI is establishing a Pakistan Business Portal to provide one stop shop facility to businesses for licensing, registration and no-objection certificates through an online system linked to all relevant government departments.

This project is likely to be completed by 2027. They said that BoI has received over 230 proposals for reforms in regulations out of which 115 reforms have been completed while more are in process. They said that under PRMI activities, mapping of all business regulations is being done to analyze and eliminate unnecessary regulations and simplify and automate remaining regulations in order to facilitate the business community.

Ameer Hamza, Maqsood Tabish, Muhammad Shabbir, Muhammad Naeem Executive Members ICCI, Khalid Chaudhry and Muhammad Naveed Malik former Senior Vice Presidents ICCI also gave many useful proposals for making regulations more business friendly.

Prioritising good governance only way forward: Experts

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The second day of the Regional Dialogue 2023 hosted by IRS featured discussions on contemporary nontraditional challenges confronting the region, climate change and food security and industrial development and technological innovation. Discussing the potential areas of development, Haroon Sharif, former Minister of State said that Pakistan needed to aggressively focus on governance issues, low productivity and the growing challenge of underutilised youth faculties. He stressed the need to invest more in knowledge-based and cultural aspects in addition to augmenting CPCEC infrastructure development in sync

with relevant policy and institutional frameworks. Dr Sabina Durrani, DG Population Planning Wing while deliberating upon the challenge of rising population growth rates said that the disharmony between available resources and the current growth rate was highly alarming and required multi-sectoral interventions on part of governments in the region. Health and population were interlinked and while Pakistan did possess a reasonable health infrastructure, low budget allocation for its sustenance was a major factor behind the hiccups in the system, she added. Dr Shumail Daud Arain said that while there was a clear burden on the urban areas due to reasons of better access and

AIOU issued around 2.5 lac degrees, certificates in 2022

ISLAMABAD: AIOU has issued certificates and degrees to almost 2.5 lac students enrolled in various programs from matriculation to Ph.D in the calendar year 2022, and more than fifty thousand certificates and degrees were verified as well. According to the AIOU, it is an honor for university that hundreds of thousands of students graduate every year and are able to play a role in the socioeconomic development of the country. AIOU admin has prepared an academic calendar and the heads of all departments are instructed to manage all the academic activities as per that calendar. - APP

WB contradicts reports of delaying loans for Pakistan

ISLAMABAD: The World Bank on Thursday termed reports in some sections of media claiming delay in approving loan for Pakistan as "unfounded" and baseless saying that it was not delaying approval of any loan for the country. "The press reports that refer to a World Bank decision to delay approval of potential Bank operations in Pakistan are unfounded", Country Director of the World Bank for Pakistan Najm Benhassine said on his official Twitter handle.

Earlier, reports in some sections of media had claimed that the Washington-based lender had delayed the approval of two loans for Pakistan worth \$1.1 billion until the next fiscal year for some pending steps on the country's energy debt and tariffs. However, Benhassine made it clear that all the dates for approval of loans were already scheduled.

"The tentative Board approval dates of all of our proposed operations, as well as their amounts, are indicative, and the World Bank decides on the timing for sharing project proposals for Board consideration following due process and based on the proposed projects' readiness", the WB Country Director added. - APP

IMCG Bhara Kahu holds Inter collegiate competitions

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Model College for Girls (IMCG) Bhara Kahu hosted Inter Collegiate competitions of "Qirat" and "Embroidery". Students from various girls colleges participated in the competitions. A renowned religious scholar Qari Gulzar Ahmed Madni was the Chief Guest of the event.

In the Qirat competition Aneela Andaleeb from IMCG F-7/2 was crowned the winner by securing 1st position. Javeria Iqbal from IMCG I-14/3 and Sadia Saeed from IMCG F-7/4 grabbed 2nd positions. Faseeha Asif from IMCG I-10/4 and Ayesha Arshad from IMCG Bhara Kahu secured 3rd position in Qirat competition. In the Embroidery Competition 1st position was secured by Amina Khan from Federal Government College of Home Economics & Management Sciences F-11/1. Nadia Bibi from IMCG Bhara Kahu and Irum Fazl from IMCG G-10/4 secured second position. Bibi Fatima from IMCG F-7/4 secured 3rd position.

NA to meet on Jan 27 instead of Jan 20

ISLAMABAD: The National Assembly session will be held at the Parliament House in Islamabad on Friday (Jan 27) at 11 am instead of Friday (Jan 20). According to a notification issued by the National Assembly Secretariat here Thursday, the National Assembly Speaker has rescheduled the session in exercise of the powers conferred to him by the relevant rules. Besides legislative business, the House will discuss matters of national and international importance. - APP

Financial sector capable to provide riba-free services

DNA

KARACHI: It is the religious and constitutional duty of all to lay out a roadmap for the conversion of the financial system of Pakistan to riba-free according to the injunctions of Islam and implement it accordingly. All sectors of government borrowing, external debts, the banking sector, the non-banking sector, capital market, as well as legal and regulatory framework need to bring changes at strategic as well as operational level. This was underscored during a session titled "Implementing the FSC Judgement on Riba: Addressing the How", jointly organized by the Institute of Policy Studies (IPS), IBA-CIEF (Institute of Business Administration's Centre for Excellence in Islamic Finance (IBA CEIF), and Centre of Islamic Economics (A division of Jamia Darul

Uloom, Karachi) at the IBA City Campus. The session was addressed by Ahmed Ali Siddiqui, director, IBA-CEIF, Omar Mustafa Ansari, secretary general, Accounting and Auditing Organization for Islamic Financial Institutions (AAOIFI), Mufti Irshad Ahmad Ajaz, chairman, Shariah Advisory Committee, State Bank of Pakistan and Securities & Exchange Commission of Pakistan, Farukh Raza, CEO, Islamic Finance Advisory & Assurance Services (IFAAS) Group, Dr. Imran Usmani, vice chairman Shariah Supervisory Board, Meezan Bank, and Khalid Rahman, chairman, IPS. The experts highlighted that all of these financial and related sectors already have the capacity to convert existing non-Islamic procedures and means to Islamic standards by reinforcing the appropriate ways and means to implement the Federal Shariat Court judgment.

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Briefs

IHC adjourns appeals regarding LG polls till Jan 26

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Thursday adjourned hearing till January 26, on intra court appeals with regard to the local body elections in federal capital.

A division bench headed by Chief Justice Aamer Farooq heard the appeal of Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) against the decision of single member bench. Additional Attorney General Aamir Rehman, Additional Attorney General Munawar Dogal, petitioner's counsel Ali Nawaz Awan and others appeared before the court. The chief justice remarked that the court of hearing only urgent cases, adding that the main cause list had been canceled as he was not feeling well. Justice Aamer Farooq asked the respondents to exchange the documents with themselves and the court would fix the case for next week. The court also accepted the miscellaneous application of the federation for submission of more documents. The court adjourned further hearing of the case till January 26. The single member bench had ordered the ECP to conduct elections on December 31, while setting aside notification for postponing the polls.—APP

'Ijzat' weaves magic on social media

ISLAMABAD: Falak Shabir, known for his charismatic personality and soulful tracks has woven magic on social media as he dropped a brand new, remixed version of the mega-hit track 'Ijzat'. Rose to unprecedented fame with back-to-back hit tracks like Rog, Yaar Mila De, Judai and many more, the heartthrob never failed to impress his huge fan following. This time around, the starlet left netizens in awe, as he unveiled the spellbinding remix of his much-loved song 'Ijzat' following one of the most interesting trends in today's music industry. Turning to his official Instagram account, Shabir shared an enchanting reel donning a black suit along with the caption "Ijzat revamped is out now" followed by the tracks YouTube link. Adding a distinctive touch to the already catchy beat, the latest version managed to garner thousands of views, likes and comments from Shabir's fans as well as showbiz bigwigs. "This song simply revives the old memories," a fan commented. Another comment read, "This song reminds me of my college days. Always gives me nostalgia." On the professional front, Shabir is all tuned up for electrifying live concerts in major cities of Pakistan throughout the months of January and February.—APP

Pak wheels car Mela postponed in capital

ISLAMABAD: Long awaited Pak Wheels Car Mela, which was scheduled to take place on January 22 on Sunday, has been postponed due to unforeseen circumstances. Talking to APP, an official of PakWheels, Shan Gill said, "The car show of Islamabad has been postponed while the Lahore's Car Mela will be held on January 29, as per plan." He said, "The new date for the event has not yet been announced, but the organizers will provide updates as soon as they are available." Meanwhile, he said, "Car lovers can enjoy the car show at Lahore as it is one of the most highly-anticipated events in the Pakistani automotive scene, which attracts thousands of visitors from all over the country." He said, "The event features a wide range of vehicles on display, including classic cars, muscle cars, sports cars, and luxury vehicles." He acknowledged, "Many car enthusiasts are expressing their disappointment at the postponement of the event and looking forward to the new date being announced."—APP



ISLAMABAD: Women posing for a picture on the occasion of the Armed Forces Day of Thailand.—DNA

BISP disburses huge sums among Kafalat beneficiaries

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) has disbursed an amount of Rs. 30,601,739,000 among 4,371,677 beneficiaries across the country under the quarterly payments of the Benazir Kafalat programme. Till January 19, around 55.43 percent quarterly payment amount has been paid to the bene-

ficiaries through the designated banks and retailers, following a smooth and transparent procedure. According to the BISP, those deserving women who still have not received their quarterly payment of Rs. 7000 may visit their nearest payment center to receive the amount. Around 7.7 million families would receive over Rs. 55 billion in the first tranche of Benazir Kafalat payments. The beneficiaries have

been advised to receive their full installment of Rs 7,000 and get the payment receipt by the quarter concerned in any case. To facilitate the beneficiaries, BISP has set up a special control room for the redressal of public complaints regarding the disbursement of Benazir Kafalat payments. The control room has been set up on the special directives of the Federal Minister for Poverty Alleviation

and Social Safety, Shazia Marri, to ensure transparency in the distribution of the first quarterly installment for the year 2023. BISP has asked the beneficiaries to immediately report to BISP's toll-free helpline 080026477 and contact the nearest BISP Tehsil Office if a person demands any kind of deduction or fee for payment. The message sent by BISP would come from 8171 only and no message

from any other number or code should be trusted, as it is faked and fraudulent. The beneficiaries facing problems regarding receiving the payments could register their complaint on Whatsapp numbers for Punjab: 03255365520, Sindh: 03449118336 and Balochistan: 03255365469 while the complainants from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Azad Jammu and Kashmir and Gilgit Baltistan could contact at

03255365476. The beneficiary women and transmitters of Islamabad, Punjab, Sindh and Balochistan have started receiving this money from Payment Centers or Biometric ATMs designated by Habib Bank; while in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Azad Jammu and Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan, the amount is being disbursed through Payment Centers or Biometric ATMs of Bank Al-Falah.

IHC rejects Gill's request

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Thursday rejected the request of PTI's leader Shehbaz Gill seeking to stop the special prosecutor from working in sedition case. Chief Justice Aamir Farooq, hearing the case, remarked that the trial in sedition case was yet to start, adding that the court would try to conclude Gill's plea as early. At the outset of hearing, Aleem Abbasi Advocate argued that the interior ministry had made the appointment on the recommendation of chief commissioner. He said that it was the right of petitioner to hire an advocate of his own choice but the prosecutor couldn't be appointed on his will. The court remarked that the petitioner's stance was that private lawyer couldn't be hired in issues of government.—APP

Securing life, property of citizens top priority

ISLAMABAD: Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Operations Malik Jamil Zafar Thursday warned the officers that no laxity towards safety and security of the citizens would be tolerated and strict disciplinary action would be initiated against officials showing negligence towards official duty. Following the special directions of Inspector General of Police (IGP) Islamabad Dr. Akbar Nasir Khan, SSP Operations Malik Jamil Zafar chaired a crime meeting to review the crime situation in the capital, said a news release. All the Zonal DPOs, SP Plan and Patrolling, SDPOs and SHOs attended the meeting. The meeting reviewed the overall crime situation in the capital. He further directed all officers to arrest the offenders involved in heinous crimes, vehicle and motorbike lifters especially those involved in murder cases adding that the ratio of challan of the cases and recoveries should be increased.

Imran given time to answer in Tyrian white case

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Thursday granted time to the counsel of Imran Khan for submission of initial comments in a petition seeking disqualification of PTI's chief for hiding information about his alleged daughter Tyrian White. Chief Justice Aamer Farooq heard the petition filed by a citizen Sajid Mehmood seeking disqualification of Imran Khan. At the outset of hearing, Imran Khan's lawyer Salman Akram Raja adopted the stance that they wanted to submit the answer but the registrar office had raised objections. The office had stated that Imran Khan had to come in personal capacity for biometric verification. The chief justice remarked that there were many outlets available now for biometric verification. The court asked the lawyer to ensure biometric of his client and submit receipt. Salman Akram Raja said that his client was no more a member parliament as he had submitted his resignation.—APP

NDMA chief for multi sectoral need assessment survey

ISLAMABAD: Chairman, National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA), Lieutenant General Inam Haider Malik on Thursday stressed the multi-sectoral need assessment survey during the pre-disaster phase and the strengthening of District Disaster Management Authorities (DDMAs) to protect vulnerable groups from adverse impact of disasters. The NDMA organised an interactive session with Humanitarian Partners at National University of Sciences and Technology (NUST

presided by Chairman NDMA, where members of Pakistan Humanitarian Forum (PHF) and National Humanitarian Network (NHN), as well as representatives of international non-governmental organisations (INGOs), participated in the meeting. The Chairman NDMA shared the Remodeled National Preparedness and Response framework with participants. He highlighted that National Disaster Management Think Tank and Emergencies Operations Center would be the

cornerstone of remodelled framework to transform the climatic emergency response from reactive to proactive mode. He also underlined the need of a technology-based early warning system, the common operating picture for early warnings and conducting simulation exercises to mitigate the impact of natural calamities. At a humanitarian front, he called for coordination among NGOs and INGOs with National Volunteers to steer disaster management and response in the country. The session

aimed at strengthening coordination and collaboration across the disaster management cycle with focus on disaster risk reduction for combating the vulnerabilities of natural hazards. It also discussed the key identified areas pertaining to the implementation of climate resilience and adaptation in Pakistan. The participants appreciated the determination of NDMA to synergise efforts and organise dialogue with academia and relevant stakeholders for active participation for the remodelling of disaster management in Pakistan.—APP

Higher tobacco taxes a key revenue source

ISLAMABAD: There's a dire need to adopt a sustainable National Tobacco Control Policy which ensures that no anti-child move is made now or in the future. These views by shared in a dialogue organized by the Society for the Protection of Rights of the Child (SPARC) with policymakers to stress the need of implementing strict tobacco control measures to save Pakistani children and youth from the tobacco pandemic. Key legislators from all political parties attended this event and supported the notion of increasing tobacco taxation and implementing other measures. Dr. Ziauddin Islam - Former Technical Head/Director, Tobacco Control Cell, Ministry of NHR&C shared that in Pakistan, smokers have reached up to 31 million. 466 people die daily in Pakistan due to tobacco-induced diseases such as cancer, diabetes, heart disease, stroke, and chronic lung diseases. Around 1200 Pakistani children between the ages of 6-15 years start smoking every day. To overcome this loss of life and healthcare resources, Tobacco Healthy Levy Bill which is pending since 2019 must be approved immediately. The policymakers agreed that Health Levy Bill must be presented in Parliament and implemented across the country as it is a sustainable solution to decrease tobacco consumption.—APP

Flood victims need essential health services

ISLAMABAD: United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) has urged the international community to invest in building human capital and resiliency, particularly in rural Sindh and Balochistan where much of the devastation occurred due to recent floods. "These vulnerable communities need reliable access to essential services such as healthcare, nutrition, education, protection, hygiene, and sanitation, especially those in remote and underserved communities," UNICEF Representative in Pakistan, Abdullah Fadil said at a press briefing at the Palais des Nations in Geneva.—APP



ISLAMABAD: Students of Islamabad model college for girls F6/2 performing in comedy drama competition held in connection with intercollegiate ceremony on Thursday.—DNA

HEC announces LAW-GAT test to enroll with Bar Council

ISLAMABAD: The Higher Education Commission (HEC) has announced Law Graduate Assessment Test (LAW-GAT) for eligibility to seek enrollment as an advocate with Bar Council. According to official sources, as per eligibility criteria persons having passed Bachelor's degree in Law or equivalent from a university recognized by HEC/PBC are eligible to apply for the test. The test will consist of Multiple-Choice Questions (MCQs), while revised curriculum of Law GAT Test can be downloaded from: <https://www.hec.gov.pk/english/services/students/etc/Curriculum-LAW-GAT-test.pdf>. The Law-GAT Test will be tentatively held on February 12, 2023. Any change in test date, due to unavoidable circumstances, shall be communicated to candidates through www.hec.gov.pk and <http://etc.hec.gov.pk>.

Applicants who register through HEC online registration process will download their Roll Number Slip through <http://etc.hec.gov.pk> a week before the test date. Email/SMS will be sent to registered applicants for test date, time and venue. The candidates are required to provide valid email/mobile number while filling online application form. A print of Roll Number Slip, original CNIC and deposited fee challan will be required to enter in test centre. The examination will be conducted at the following test centres i.e Bahawalpur, Hyderabad, Lahore, Quetta, D.I. Khan, Islamabad, Multan, Sargodha, Faisalabad, Karachi, Peshawar, Sukkur and Gilgit. The applicants may select any test centre from the list available in the application form. HEC asked students to note that said test will be held on any of above centre

if minimum 250 applicants will select that centre. Please also note that test centre once selected will not be changed after registration. Applicants are directed to visit the following link: <http://etc.hec.gov.pk> for online registration. In case of any difficulty during online registration, please visit onlinehelp.hec.gov.pk. It is pertinent to mention here that the Honourable Supreme Court vide its Order dated March 6, 2018 has directed restoration of the Law Graduate Assessment Test (Law-GAT) by the Pakistan Bar Council (PBC) through the Higher Education Commission (HEC). The objective of the Assessment Test is to ensure proper scrutiny and evaluation of a law graduate desirous to join the legal profession so that only competent individuals possessing necessary basic knowledge of law may enter the legal profession for practicing

law. Therefore, a law graduate only becomes eligible to apply to a Bar Council for enrolment as an Advocate if he/she qualifies the Assessment Test to be conducted by HEC, Pakistan having been so authorised by PBC, pursuant to the aforementioned Order of the Honourable Supreme Court and read with Section 26 (cc) of Legal Practitioners and Bar Council's Act 1973 and rules of the PBC. The students are asked to download bank Fee Challan while registering for the test at <http://etc.hec.gov.pk>. (Fee Challan is only available on ETC online registration portal). All candidates are required to upload paid and scanned Fee challan, duly stamped by an HBL branch, while completing the application form of ETC online registration portal to submit the application. The test fee is non-refundable and

non-transferable. It is mandatory to bring original applicant copy of paid fee challan on the test day along with your original CNIC/ original Passport; else candidate will not be allowed to sit in the examination. The last date for online registration is January 30, 2023(4pm). At least 50% score is required to pass the Law Graduate Assessment Test (Law-GAT) for the students. Applicants will have to meet other criteria, if any, as per Rules and Regulations of the Pakistan Bar Council. Applicants will have maximum of five chances to clear the test. HEC will conduct the test on a quarterly basis. The candidate must get any queries/complaints resolved before the closure of the web registration portal. Queries/Complaints handling beyond the registration deadline is denied by the system due to logistics/security reasons.

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US should make Iran nuclear deal a priority

International efforts aimed at reviving the Iranian nuclear deal were largely stalled in 2022, and US Secretary of State Antony Blinken's remarks on Tuesday that the United States no longer considers reaching an agreement with Iran over its nuclear program a priority paint a gloomier picture for the prospects of the multilateral agreement. At a news conference in Washington alongside United Kingdom Foreign Secretary James Cleverly, Blinken again put the blame on the Iranian side, alleging that Iran had long rejected the possibility of reviving the 2015 agreement, and warned Teheran of "consequences" for its actions. Obviously, the Joe Biden administration is allowing the US' political differences with the Islamic state to overshadow international negotiations on keeping the nuclear deal alive. When US President Joe Biden took office in January 2021, he announced he had decided to reverse his predecessor's decision to withdraw from the Iran deal, formally known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, and would rejoin it through rounds of indirect negotiations with Iran, alongside other relevant parties, starting in Vienna in April 2021. But the Vienna talks were suspended in March due to political discord between Teheran and Washington and were only resumed after a five-month hiatus in August. In the most recent round of talks, the European Union put forward the final text of its draft proposal for reviving the JCPOA. Indirect exchanges of views between Washington and Teheran on the EU proposal have so far failed to produce any favorable outcome. Worse, new developments in the international arena and inside Iran itself have been driving the two parties even further apart. Not only Iran's close ties with Russia but also the protests in Iran have drawn the ire of Washington. The latest US stance on the Iran deal sent a worrying signal that the US is backpedaling from its previous commitment that it would rejoin the multilateral agreement. The now-they-are-on, now-they-are-off talks in Vienna have already raised international concerns that the Iran nuclear deal is now dead in the water. But the Iranian foreign minister said on Tuesday that an agreement on the revival of the nuclear deal is within reach if the US stops setting new conditions and acts realistically. As the party which imperiled the international agreement in the first place, the US should put international denuclearization above its political calculations and engage with sincerity in talks with Iran. For the process of reviving the Iran deal to go smoothly in the new year, the bickering parties should honor the commitments they have agreed to and refrain from taking reckless and unilateral moves so as to create the right conditions for the talks to achieve a breakthrough and yield positive results.



Washington's tech curbs harmful to all

Although US President Joe Biden has discarded almost all the policies of his predecessor, one that his administration has picked up the baton on is the attempt to squeeze the space for China's development of high-technology. The Biden administration has ramped up those efforts. In October, it introduced measures aimed at nobbling China's ability to make its own advanced microchips. It has also stepped up the pressure it has been putting on Japan, the Netherlands and other allies to expand export restrictions to China. The Dutch company ASML, the world's largest lithography enterprise, is at the center of these efforts. Under pressure from the United States, ASML, which owns the world's largest lithography enterprise, has had to suspend exports of its extreme ultraviolet lithography equipment and export only earlier generation equipment with less accuracy instead. Although Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte claimed that he has not felt pressured by Washington to adopt more restrictions on semiconductor exports to China, that pressure is being applied nonetheless. According to a Bloomberg report, US officials have been lobbying the Dutch authorities to further expand the scope of the ban on the exports of EUV equipment to include the latest generation deep ultraviolet lithography equipment. In a television interview two days before Rutte's meeting with Biden, Dutch Trade and Development Cooperation Minister Liesje Schreinemacher admitted that the Dutch government had been talking "with the Americans for a long time", but Washington "couldn't say that because they have put pressure on us for two years", now that it had introduced its new restrictions, the Netherlands had to agree, "we will not". Nonetheless, Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida reportedly had "very productive" talks last week on semiconductor-related export controls on China, when he met with Biden in Washington on Jan 13. Japan's Ambassador to the United States Koji Tomita said after their meeting that it was a complicated issue that required coordination with the industry, but that both Japan and the US expected progress on the issue in coming weeks. And following his conversation with Biden, Rutte said that "step by step we will be able to reach a good outcome in cooperation". Which should serve as a reminder to China that it cannot pin its hopes on others. It must reinforce its resolve to secure self-reliance in science and technology. Contrary to what the US seems to believe, China is not trying to usurp the US' technological hegemony per se. The country's sights are firmly set on the global frontiers of science and technology as that serves national economic development and thus people's well-being. In doing so, that will also produce benefits for the world. Collaboration and cooperation are the driving force for scientific progress, the US attempts to dictate who can have dealings with who are vengeful spanners being thrown into the works.

The Biden presidency at two years: Halfway point of a forever war

Belén Fernández

However, Dubose said, Biden was still "failing humanity" in his handling of the humanitarian crisis on the US border – where families were "still being separated" and where Biden was unlikely to "creatively use executive authority to improve the lives of hundreds of thousands of immigrants living in limbo, with their backs to political violence and starvation in their countries and their faces looking to US for some relief". Obviously, relief is the least the US could provide after creating much of that violence and starvation in the first place

In 2020, during his campaign for president of the United States, Joe Biden pledged to make Roe v Wade "the law of the land". While the 1973 landmark ruling that legalised abortion nationwide was of course technically already the law of the land, its protections had been successively sabotaged in accordance with the national predilection for trampling on human rights. Fast forward to June 2022, a year and a half into the Biden presidency, and the US Supreme Court overturned Roe v Wade – a move that disproportionately harmed poor minority women and effectively aborted any pretences to progressivism on the domestic landscape. Then in October, Biden promised to push to codify Roe into law if Democrats retained both houses of Congress in the November midterm elections. Oops. Now, as Biden hits the halfway mark of his term in January 2023, how has he fared in terms of his other promises to the American left? Granted, this can be a tricky subject for consideration, since any minor deviation from the dominant right-wing US discourse and devotion to neoliberal dystopia is often cast as radical leftism. Take, for example, the radical leftist idea that we should not burn ourselves and the planet to death with climate change. Although Biden's pro-climate agenda initially gave the world some hope that the apocalypse was not absolutely imminent, Republican legislators are dutifully labouring to reverse any optimism. The Supreme Court has further rained on the parade by essentially ruling in favour of greenhouse gas emissions. The conservative majority court has also stymied Biden's student loan relief project, the fate of which is currently up in the air. In November 2021, the nation's top judicial body ended the Biden administration's moratorium on evictions, which had been implemented in the context of the coronavirus pandemic. And yet Biden's failures on the "left" cannot be en-

tirely deflected onto his right-wing detractors in Congress and on the Supreme Court. He is also part and parcel of a US political system that is perhaps best defined as a corporate plutocracy disguised as democracy. As the nominal figurehead of the whole arrangement, Biden inevitably acts to preserve elite power. Recently, he single-handedly betrayed railroad workers fighting for paid sick leave – despite his previous promise to be "the most pro-union president" in history. Nor is there any lack of hypocrisy surrounding Biden's sworn commitment to ending the "forever wars" of the US. After all, there is a vast chasm of difference between saying you have ended war and continuing to saturate the planet with US bases and military personnel. The chasm is especially vast when you unleash classified rules authorising illegal lethal force abroad, outside recognised war zones. As Hina Shamsi, director of the National Security Project at the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), observed in October: "President Biden promised to end America's forever wars, but this secret new extrajudicial killing policy will only entrench them." Then there are the "forever wars" on the domestic front, such as over gun control – an issue Biden was supposed to confront with guns blazing, you might say. The January shooting of a Virginia teacher by a six-year-old student is merely one of the latest indications that Biden is failing dismally to right the wrongs of the US – or to steer the country ever-so-slightly to the left. There is also the old "forever war" on asylum seekers, which has seen Biden out-Trump his transparently sociopathic predecessor Donald Trump even while promoting more humane immigration reform. According to Biden himself, he does not "like" Title 42 – a Trumpian policy that, using COVID-19 as a pretext, permits the US to summarily expel asylum seekers from US

territory without allowing them to apply for asylum as required by international law. But while Biden's ostensible efforts to suspend Title 42 expulsions have thus far been thwarted by US courts, the president announced on January 5 that asylum seekers from Cuba, Haiti, and Nicaragua who arrive "illegally" in the US will be summarily expelled and denied the right to seek asylum – a manoeuvre that is possible thanks to none other than the supposedly "disliked" Title 42. Beyond Cubans, Haitians, and Nicaraguans, of course, there are a whole lot of people victimised by the institutionalised xenophobia of the US – a country that has unilaterally endowed itself with the right to transcend international borders militarily and economically while simultaneously militarising itself against the fallout. When I asked Lou Dubose, the former longtime editor of The Washington Spectator, to comment on Biden's performance vis-à-vis the American left at the halfway mark of his term, he reckoned that Biden had "exceeded" the perennially low expectations of a US president. However, Dubose said, Biden was still "failing humanity" in his handling of the humanitarian crisis on the US border – where families were "still being separated" and where Biden was unlikely to "creatively use executive authority to improve the lives of hundreds of thousands of immigrants living in limbo, with their backs to political violence and starvation in their countries and their faces looking to US for some relief". Obviously, relief is the least the US could provide after creating much of that violence and starvation in the first place. Some sort of relief would also no doubt be appreciated by the poor and working-class folks in the US itself who are eternally brutalised by their own government. But with two more years of Biden, the US' forever war on humanity is far from over – and there is no relief in sight.

—Courtesy: Al Jazeera

Global action needed to counter rising violence in Afghanistan

Dr. Abdel Aziz Aluwaisheg

Degrading Daesh-K's capabilities would be in the interest of the Taliban and, as such, they may be willing to cooperate with or at least acquiesce to international efforts against the group. Such cooperation, albeit at arm's length, could open the way for work against other terror groups operating or sheltering in Afghanistan. That, in turn, could lead to dealing with other pressing issues, including the Taliban's

There has been no respite from terrorism for Afghanistan in 2023, but despite the formidable security challenges, Taliban leaders have contributed to the country's instability by escalating their draconian measures at home and increasing its isolation and estrangement from the rest of

the world. On Jan. 11, terrorists attacked a target near the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Kabul, killing and injuring scores of civilians. The terrorist group Daesh, through its local Khorasan branch, immediately claimed responsibility. Earlier, on Jan. 1, it also claimed responsibility for a suicide attack on Kabul airport. During 2022, there appeared to be at least one shooting or explosion every week in Kabul alone, according to announcements by the Taliban, although experts believe that the tally was higher, as the group may underreport such incidents as they undermine their claims of bringing peace to the country. One of Daesh-K's key targets are foreigners, especially those whom it perceives as potential investors. There have been universal condemnations of these terrorist acts. After the Jan. 11 attack, the UN Security Council convened immediately and called for holding "perpetrators, organizers, financiers and sponsors of these reprehensible acts of terrorism accountable and bring them to justice." It urged all states, in accordance with their obligations under international law and relevant UNSC resolutions, to "cooperate actively with all relevant authorities in this regard." Because of the bloody history between the Taliban and Daesh-K, which go back to at least 2015, it is expected that the Taliban will try to investigate the group's attacks and punish the culprits, but many are skeptical about the Taliban's capacity to get the job done. They also doubt their willingness to go after other terrorist groups known to have an active presence in Afghanistan, including Al-Qaeda and Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan. The Taliban have maintained that they will not allow foreign actors to use Afghan territory against any other country, but there are well-grounded fears that they lack the capacity to halt Daesh-K terrorism. Because of internal disagreements and for historical reasons, it is also doubtful that the Taliban are willing to shut down groups such as Al-Qaeda and TTP, even if there are some in the movement who favor such action. During the past two months, more than 100 attacks have taken place that are believed to have

been carried out by TTP, including a suicide attack in Islamabad and the brazen capture of the Counter Terrorism Department in Bannu, about 300 km southwest of the Pakistani capital. Al-Qaeda's affiliates are still active in Yemen, Africa and elsewhere, inspired by the mother organization sheltering in Afghanistan. It is difficult for the world community to cooperate with the Taliban, even covertly, in the fight against terrorism because of the group's own conduct since seizing power in August 2021. Their systematic violations of basic rights, especially the rights of women to education and work, make it difficult to make any deals with them. They have repeatedly broken promises to respect basic rights and freedoms, and instead have increased their restrictions on women and created a hostile environment against them. Their ban on women's participation in humanitarian work is not only discriminatory, but quite dangerous in a country where the overwhelming majority of the population is in need of assistance and most of the relief workers before the ban were women. Harassment and physical abuse against women, especially those expressing their views on their exclusion from the workplace and from schools, have increased since the Taliban came to power. One of the latest attacks on women was the assassination on Sunday of Mursal Nabizada, a former member of Afghanistan's parliament. She and her guard were killed at her home in Kabul, police said. No one has been charged with the killing. Nabizada stayed in the country after the Taliban dissolved parliament in 2021, when many other politicians fled. In addition, the Taliban have also failed to form a truly inclusive government to include non-Taliban, which constitute a majority of the population, if you add women to Afghanistan's sizable ethnic, religious and political minorities. Opposition to the Taliban's rule appears to have grown significantly. Calls for armed resistance have also grown, threatening to further destabilize the country and increase the suffering of ordinary Afghans. In their own special ways, the Taliban and

the terror groups are holding Afghanistan hostage and making it difficult for the rest of the world to extend help, bring peace and stability, or provide humanitarian assistance to the beleaguered country. But despite these difficulties, the world should not abandon Afghanistan's 40 million people. Fighting terrorism is one of the important things that the world community can do, starting with Daesh-K. Since quitting Afghanistan in 2021, the US has used "over-the-horizon" security capabilities to deal with terrorist threats from Afghanistan, as in the assassination of Al-Qaeda leader Ayman Al-Zawahiri last July. It has not sought to cobble together a coalition akin to the Global Coalition Against Daesh, which was set up in 2014 and still operates against the terror group in Iraq and Syria, where it is committed to "degrading and ensuring Daesh's enduring defeat," according to its official mission statement. Extending the geographical mandate of the 85-member global coalition to deal operationally with Daesh-K appears to be more practical than creating a new body. Beyond the military campaign in Iraq and Syria, the coalition has publicly committed to tackling Daesh's financing and economic infrastructure; preventing the flow of foreign terrorist fighters across borders; supporting stabilization and the restoration of essential public services to areas liberated from Daesh; and countering the group's propaganda. In theory, Daesh-K would fall under these general objectives, but the coalition has not extended its military operations there. Degrading Daesh-K's capabilities would be in the interest of the Taliban and, as such, they may be willing to cooperate with or at least acquiesce to international efforts against the group. Such cooperation, albeit at arm's length, could open the way for work against other terror groups operating or sheltering in Afghanistan. That, in turn, could lead to dealing with other pressing issues, including the Taliban's treatment of women and minorities.

—Courtesy: Arab News

Briefs

15 Armenian soldiers die in fire at military base

YEREVAN: A fire at a military base in Armenia early Thursday killed 15 soldiers after they used gasoline for heating, the Defense Ministry said. The blaze quickly swept through a military barracks in the village of Azat, in Gegharkunik province, eastern Armenia. Authorities said that seven soldiers were injured, and three of them remained in grave condition. Armenian Defense Minister Suren Papikyan said at a Cabinet meeting that the fire erupted because soldiers used gasoline to fuel a stove in violation of fire safety rules. He said that the unit's commander and about a dozen other officers were also fired. Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan also fired Gen. Vagram Grigoryan, who was in charge of a group of forces in the region that includes the unit where the fire occurred. Prosecutors opened a probe into the fire. The Gegharkunik region borders Azerbaijan, which has been locked in a decades-long conflict with Armenia over Nagorno-Karabakh, which is part of Azerbaijan but has been under the control of ethnic Armenian forces backed by Armenia since a separatist war there ended in 1994. In six weeks of heavy fighting that began in September 2020, the Azerbaijani military routed Armenian forces and moved deep into Nagorno-Karabakh, forcing Armenia to accept a Russia-brokered peace deal in November that year. —APP

‘US should deploy nuclear weapons in S. Korea’

WASHINGTON: A US think tank has suggested that Washington should consider the deployment of nuclear weapons in South Korea in the future amid growing tensions in the region, local media said on Thursday. The Washington-based Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) has also recommended that the US and South Korea begin holding tabletop exercises to that end, Yonhap News Agency reported. “The allies should consider tabletop planning exercises for the possible redeployment of US nuclear weapons to South Korea,” the agency said, citing the latest CSIS report. “This planning should be explicitly pre-decisional. The timeline and scope of weapons ... should be left deliberately ambiguous,” it added. The report comes after South Korea said last week that Washington and Seoul intend to hold tabletop joint military exercises next month in the scenario that North Korea uses a nuclear weapon. Later, Pentagon Press Secretary Air Force Brig. Gen. Pat Ryder vowed that the US remains committed to defending South Korea in case of any “aggression” from North Korea as Seoul falls under the extended deterrence umbrella. —APP

S. Africa to hold joint naval drills with Russia, China

South Africa, which has resisted taking sides following Russia's invasion of Ukraine, announced Thursday it will stage 10-day joint maritime drills with Russia and China next month. “As (a) means to strengthen the already flourishing relations between South Africa, Russia and China, a multinational maritime exercise between these three countries ... will take place,” the army said. The exercises dubbed “Mosi,” which translates to “smoke” in the local Tsonga language, are scheduled for Feb. 17 to 27, off the port city of Durban and Richards Bay. It will be the second such exercise involving the three naval forces, the South African National Defence Force said. The first was held in November 2019 off the coast of Cape Town. More than 350 South African army personnel will take part “alongside the Russian and Chinese counterparts.” —APP

Ankara, Baku sincere for peace with Yerevan

Türkiye is one of the most active countries working to ensure a permanent cease-fire between Ukraine and Russia

NEWS DESK

WASHINGTON: Türkiye and Azerbaijan are “sincere” in their efforts to normalize relations with Armenia, Foreign Minister Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu said Wednesday, adding that Ankara expects reciprocal steps from the Yerevan side as well. “I can easily say this on behalf of brotherly Azerbaijan. Türkiye and Azerbaijan are sincere about normalization,” Çavuşoğlu told an event where he met Turkish American community members in Washington, D.C. In his remarks at the Turkish Embassy residence, Çavuşoğlu recalled that Ankara has formed various mechanisms with Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan and Georgia on the East-West Middle Corridor. “I hope Armenia will take part in this process, it will take sincere steps toward peace. Unfortunately, we have seen backward steps toward negotiations recent-

ly,” he said. Çavuşoğlu said that during his meeting with his U.S. counterpart Antony Blinken, the top American diplomat told him that Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan was also “sincere” about the normalization process. “But we want to see this through action, not words,” he added. Relations between the former Soviet republics of Armenia and Azerbaijan have been tense since 1991, when the Armenian military illegally occupied Karabakh, a territory internationally recognized as part of Azerbaijan and seven adjacent regions. Clashes erupted on Sept. 27, 2020, with the Armenian Army attacking civilians and Azerbaijani forces, violating several humanitarian cease-fire agreements. During the 44-day conflict, Azerbaijan liberated several cities and around 300 settlements and villages that Armenia had occupied for almost 30 years. Türkiye was a key backer of Azerbaijan during the 44-



day Karabakh War between Azerbaijan and Armenia. The fighting ended with a Russian-brokered agreement on Nov. 10, 2020, which was seen as a victory for Azerbaijan and a defeat for Armenia. However, the cease-fire has been broken several times since then. Recent tensions are said to have ignited because of protests by Azerbaijani environmental activists in the Lachin region over the illegal

exploitation of natural resources by Armenia in Karabakh. Armenia has called on Russian peacekeepers deployed to monitor the peace deal to unblock the Lachin corridor, the lifeline road connecting Karabakh to Armenia. Speaking on the ongoing Russian invasion of Ukraine, Çavuşoğlu underlined that it is not solely in the hands of Türkiye to end the war but that Ankara's efforts were continuing.

“At the beginning, we had made quite a progress. The sides approached a cease-fire, as you know. They had announced it themselves, but now the war prolonged, the conditions changed and became more complex. Unfortunately, there are different areas to negotiate now.” Türkiye is one of the most active countries working to ensure a permanent cease-fire between Ukraine and Russia. Its delicately balanced act of assuming a mediator role by keeping communication channels with both warring sides open provides a glimmer of hope in diplomatic efforts to find a solution and achieve peace in Ukraine. With the unique position of having friendly relations with both Russia and Ukraine, Türkiye has won widespread appreciation for its push to end the war. Since the beginning of the conflict, Ankara has offered to mediate between the two sides and host peace talks, underlining support for Ukraine's territorial integrity

and sovereignty. While Türkiye has opposed international sanctions designed to isolate Moscow, the country has also closed its straits to prevent some Russian vessels from crossing. In a breakthrough, Russian and Ukrainian delegations met for peace talks in Istanbul on March 29, 2022. Türkiye also hosted Russian and Ukrainian foreign ministers in Antalya earlier in March. On the other side, Çavuşoğlu said that Türkiye also strives for an end to the Syrian war. “As Türkiye, we want peace in the region. Recently, we launched a process with the Syrian regime for a political solution, namely the reviving of the political process to reach a result. The Turkish and Syrian defense ministers held landmark talks in Moscow last month to discuss border security and other issues. In November, Erdoğan said a meeting with Assad was a possibility after cutting diplomatic ties with Damascus throughout the 11-year conflict.

Lula fires 13 more military officers

BUENOS AIRES: Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva dismissed 13 more military officers Wednesday over the Jan. 8 attacks on government buildings in the capital. The soldiers were part of the Institutional Security Cabinet overseeing and assisting the president in matters related to national security and defense. Lula on Twitter underscored the importance of the armed forces in relation to border control, upholding the constitution and in defending Brazilians but insisted that “we cannot politicize the military.” The move comes a day after 40 soldiers overseeing security for Lula at the president's official residence in Brasilia, the Alvorada Palace, were relieved of their duties, while another 16 had been assigned to other areas. They remain part of the armed forces but will perform other duties, the G1 news portal reported. The changes follow allegations by Lula that supporters of former President Jair Bolsonaro were aided by security forces during the invasion and ransacking of the Planalto Palace, or President's office, the National Congress and the Supreme Federal Court following collusion between the armed forces and military police. —APP

Workers in Peru call for national strike

BOGOTA: Workers in Peru have called a national strike for Thursday to demand the resignation of President Dina Boluarte. The General Confederation of Peruvian Workers (CGTP), the union that is leading the strike, is also demanding an immediate call for general elections and the holding of a Constituent Assembly. Demonstrators have been told to meet at Lima's Plaza 2 de Mayo at 4 p.m. local time (2100GMT), which is why several trade unions and social organizations have marched to the capital city to join in. Boluarte spoke Tuesday about the protests that are set to take place. “We don't want more blood. They have said that rivers of blood will flow. We do not want it,” she said. “I call on people to take to the streets of Lima, but calmly and peacefully.” On Wednesday, the Ombudsman's Office requested that both security forces and demonstrators march in a peaceful manner. In a press release, it called on public institutions to “contribute to the protection of the fundamental rights of citizens.” The CGTP has denounced that the police are preventing demonstrators from carrying out protests. The government on Sunday declared a state of emergency for 30 days in some regions, which authorizes the army to intervene to maintain order. —DNA

US sees Türkiye ‘as a reliable ally’

WASHINGTON: The US sees Türkiye as “a reliable ally,” the White House said Wednesday, as the two nations' top diplomats met in Washington, D.C. White House spokeswoman Karine Jean-Pierre made the remarks in response to a question about Sweden and Finland's NATO bids. A reporter asked if President Joe Biden considers Türkiye “a reliable NATO ally,” citing “an impasse” over the accession of the Nordic nations to the military alliance. “We do see Turkey as a reliable ally,” Jean-Pierre responded. The Biden administration also hailed US relations with Türkiye, with State Department spokesman Ned Price saying, “We have a very constructive relationship with Turkey.” “We are grateful for the role that Turkey has played in helping to address many of the most pressing challenges of our time,” said Price. Earlier, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken met with Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu as part of the Türkiye-US Strategic Mechanism. The mechanism was launched last April following a meeting between President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and President Joe Biden on the sidelines of the G-20 summit in Rome. —APP

Ambassador Masood for tech sector linkages with city of Irvine, California

WASHINGTON: Farrah N. Khan, an American of Pakistani descent, who is the Mayor of Irvine, a city in the U.S. state of California, held a meeting with Pakistan's Ambassador Masood Khan Wednesday during which she highlighted Irvine's significant progress in sectors such as tech, meditech and artificial intelligence. The family of Ms. Khan, 52, migrated to the United States when she was three years old. In November 2022, the Lahore-born Ms. Khan became the first woman of colour and the first Muslim to lead the large American city. She is now serving her second term. The Ambassador, while con-

gratulating her on successful political career, said that her leadership qualities and successes make Pakistan and the Pakistani diaspora in the United States proud, according to a press release of the Pakistani embassy. He said the recent Punjab-California Sister Province Agreement provides a model to establish domain-specific state-to-province, city-to-city economic linkages between Pakistan and the United States. “The tech startups of Pakistan, manned by enterprising youth, and a vibrant tech sector of Irvine could forge strong partnerships for not only meeting the economic needs of the two sides but

also to strengthen people-to-people exchanges,” the Pakistani envoy added. Referring to his recent visit to California and signing of the Punjab-California sister state-province agreement, the Ambassador termed the agreement as historic which would bring Punjab, the largest populated province of Pakistan, and the state of California, the largest state of the US, closer and would open up vistas for enhancing economic interaction between the two countries. Ms. Farrah Khan thanked the Ambassador for warmly receiving her and highlighting tech, meditech and artificial intelligence as the major sectors in which Irvine

was witnessing significant progress. Higher education and advanced learning in the latest technologies was another promising area for enhancing mutual collaboration, she said. Farrah Khan also highlighted the valuable contributions being made by the Pakistani diaspora towards the socio-economic development of Irvine and the state of California. The Ambassador invited Mayor Farrah Khan to visit Pakistan along with a business delegation for promoting cooperation between the chamber and industry and to strengthen people-to-people linkages. —APP

Turkish, Saudi investors visit Gwadar Free Zone

ISLAMABAD: In a major development, Turkey and Saudi Arabia are mulling significant investments in the Gwadar Free Zone (North) with a magnitude of incentives as well as conducive business and trade activities in 2023. GPA official told Gwadar Pro that a representative of Turkish multinational corporation Nysan is visiting Gwadar Port on 18th January (Wednesday) with an objective to seek commerce & trade opportunities and potentials of establishing a warehouse in the Free Zone. Nysan Industrial Technology Group is a leading brand from Turkey operating globally. The Nysan Group deals in tyres, lead acid batteries, auto spare parts, CNC robotic machinery, lubricants and filters. Gwadar port which serves the primary purpose of transshipment offers lucrative prospects to potential investors. Another group consisting of senior office bearers of the Pakistan-Saudi Business Chamber, Lahore chamber and Pakistan Transport Council are also visiting on Wednesday. —DNA



Canada summons Russian envoy

TRENTON: Canada's foreign affairs minister summoned the Russian ambassador Wednesday to answer for a missile strike in Ukraine that killed dozens of civilians. The missile hit an apartment building in the city of Dnipro on Saturday, killing at least 45 people, including six children. “We do not accept the sheer brutality of Russia's recent attacks against civilians,” Melanie Joly told a press conference. The strike on the nine-story building also destroyed 72 apartments, leaving 400 residents homeless, while 23 units received extensive damage, according to the Dnipro City Council. Joly said Canada and its allies will hold Russia responsible for attacks on civilians in Ukraine. “We will ensure that those responsible for the horrific scenes in...Ukraine answer (for) their crimes,” she said. Russia denied the Dnipro attack, with Kremlin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov saying his country does not target residential buildings. He blamed a Ukrainian air defense missile for the attack. Russia rained cruise missiles on Ukraine and Ukraine's military said it does not have the capability to intercept the type of missile that struck the nine-story apartment building. Prime Minister Justin Trudeau called the strike on the apartment building “despicable, abhorrent and completely unacceptable.” He said last week that Canada will purchase a CAN\$406 million (US\$300 million) surface-to-air missile defense system for Ukraine. —APP



ISLAMABAD: Dr. Ramez Alraee, Syrian ambassador to Pakistan calling on Chairman Senate, Muhammad Sadiq Sanjrani at Parliament House. —DNA

20 January – National Mourning Day

DNA

BAKU: On the night of January 19-20, 1990, as a result of military aggression of the units of the Soviet Army and special forces, as well as contingents of internal troops against Azerbaijan, civilians, including children, women, and elderly were massacred in the cities of Baku, Sumgayit, Lankaran and Neftchala by order of the USSR leadership. As a result of the occupying forces' military aggression 150 civilians were killed, 744 were seriously injured, and 4 people went missing. The Soviet army sent to the country in order to forcefully suppress the mass protests of the Azerbaijani people and the national independence movement started in response to the discrimination policy of the USSR leadership against the people of Azerbaijan, the deportation of hundreds of thousands of Azerbaijanis from their historical lands in the territory of present-day Armenia, and Armenia's unfounded

territorial claims against Karabakh, committed an unprecedented massacre against the civilian population grossly violating international law and the Constitution. On January 21, 1990, immediately after the tragic events, at the Permanent Mission of Azerbaijan in Moscow, National Leader Heydar Aliyev, demonstrating his solidarity with the Azerbaijani people, strongly condemned the crime committed against the Azerbaijani people, demanded political and legal assessment of the massacre, and punishment of the perpetrators. At the special session of the MilliMajlis (Parliament) held in February 1994 the brutal killing of innocent people on 20 January 1990 was qualified as military aggression and a crime, and in March 1994 a decision “On the tragic events committed in Baku on 20 January 1990” was adopted. 20 January was declared the National Mourning Day. 20 January tragedy had a decisive influence on the formation of the national

identity of Azerbaijan and became a turning point in the restoration of the independence of Azerbaijan. Azerbaijani people, who were subjected to military, political, and moral aggression of the Soviet regime 33 years ago, showed commitment to their historical traditions of struggle. On

that tragic day, the sons of the motherland, who gave their lives in defense of justice wrote a brilliant page in the heroic chronicle of our people. On January 20, 1990, which was marked in our history as a day of tragedy, as well as of national pride, the Azerbaijani people conveyed

to the world that they deserve to live free, sovereign and independent. Despite the fact that 33 years have passed, the events of 20 January, one of the most terrible crimes committed in the 20th century, in which all international legal documents were grossly violated, were

not given an international legal assessment. The leadership of the former Soviet Union is directly responsible for this crime. According to international law, the 20 January tragedy should be qualified as a crime against humanity, and its instigators and perpetrators must be punished. Today, the souls of our heroic martyrs who gave their lives for the independence of Azerbaijan, as well as for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of our country are at peace. Under the leadership of the Victorious Commander-in-Chief, the courageous Azerbaijani Army liberated our territories, which were under occupation for 30 years, and the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan was restored. Actions against the independence, sovereignty, and territorial integrity of Azerbaijan will continue to be adequately countered. We once again commemorate with deep sadness the dearest memory of our compatriots who sacrificed their lives for the territorial integrity of our country, the freedom of our people, and the independence of our state.



Briefs

New Zealand PM Jacinda Ardern to resign next month

DNA

AUCKLAND: Jacinda Ardern is quitting as New Zealand prime minister ahead of this year's election saying she no longer has "enough in the tank" to lead. The shock announcement comes as polling indicates her Labour Party party faces a difficult path to re-election on 14 October. Ms Ardern choked up as she detailed how six "challenging" years in the job had taken a toll. Labour MPs will vote to find her replacement on Sunday. Ms Ardern, 42, said she had taken time to consider her future over the summer break, hoping to find the heart and energy to go on in the role. "But unfortunately I haven't, and I would be doing a disservice to New Zealand to continue," she told reporters on Thursday. Ms Ardern will step down by 7 February. If no would-be successor garners the support of two-thirds of the party room, the vote will go to Labour's lay membership. Ms Ardern became the youngest female head of government in the world when she was elected prime minister in 2017, aged 37. And a year later she became the second elected world leader to ever give birth while in office, after Pakistan's Benazir Bhutto in 1990. She steered New Zealand through the Covid-19 pandemic and its ensuing recession, the Christchurch mosque shootings, and the White Island volcanic eruption.

Number of Covid patients on decline in China

BEIJING: China has passed the peak period of severe COVID-19 patients at hospitals and fever outpatients, as well as patients in the emergency department, Guo Yanhong, an official with the National Health Commission (NHC) said on Thursday. The number of daily patients visiting fever clinics peaked on December 23 and has been going down since, Guo said, adding that by January 17, the number has dropped 94 percent, lower than that on December 7, when the NHC released ten optimization measures for COVID-19 control. He told a press conference. According to Guo, the number of patients visiting emergency wards on January 17 also dropped 44 percent from the peak on January 2. The number of hospitalized patients peaked on January 5 and then dropped 44.3 percent by January 17, CGTN reported. Guo said the outpatient departments in hospitals across the country are returning to normal, with COVID-19 patients covering only 0.5 percent of all visitors on January 17. For the inpatient department, the proportion of non-COVID-19 patients went up drastically to 85 percent, Guo told reporters. - APP

Zardari gets relief in another case

DNA

ISLAMABAD: An accountability court in the federal capital on Thursday sent back a corruption reference against former president and PPP co-chairman Asif Ali Zardari to the National Accountability Bureau (NAB). Accountability court Judge Rana Nasir Javed announced the verdict reserved after hearing arguments from both sides. The judge said the corruption reference did not fall under the jurisdiction of the accountability court after amendments to the NAB laws. The Thatta Water Supply is a supplementary reference in the fake bank accounts and mega money-laundering scam references, filed by the NAB against Zardari and others. The anti-graft buster is conducting probe in light of the Supreme Court's verdict in a case related to the money laundering of billions through fake accounts case.

Army Chief's extension a wrong precedent: Qaiser

The former NA speaker says that the extension of the tenure of former army chief was not only a decision of PTI but a joint decision of all political parties

ALI FURQAN / VOA

ISLAMABAD: Former speaker of the National Assembly and leader of Tehreek-e-Insaf Asad Qaiser says that extension in Army chief tenure is a wrong precedent adding that parliament should revoke this legislation as institution is important not the person. In an interview with VOA's Ali Furqan former speaker termed the decision of extension given to former Army Chief General Qamar Bajwa a big mistake but extension was a collective decision of all political parties. He says that he does not want to talk about the circumstances under which this legislation was enacted, but the tradition of military chief extension is wrong. He said that the extension of the tenure of former army chief General (retd) Qamar Javed Bajwa was not only a

decision of PTI but a joint decision of all political parties. Discussing the current political situation Asad Qaiser says that the decision to go back to the assemblies will be revisited as the speaker accepted the resignation of 34 PTI lawmakers after their announcement to join the parliament. He says PTI leadership will sit on Friday to decide whether to rejoin the parliament or not but categorically says that there is no discussion with the government at any level. Asad Qaiser says that when his party announced the decision on the government's invitation to return to the National Assembly, the Speaker accepted the resignations of 34 PTI members. They say that this proves that the Speaker National Assembly's offer to PTI to return to Parliament was only a political statement and in fact the government does not want PTI to return to the House. On the question whether President Arif Alvi will ask Prime Minister to take a vote

of confidence, Asad Qaiser replied that there is an opinion within the party that the President should ask Shehbaz Sharif to take the vote of confidence, but he said that it is the prerogative of President Alvi whether he does so or not. On the question that PTI's resignation decision from the National Assembly Asad Qaiser says that it was a decision taken in consultation with the party leadership and that time his government was removed by an 'external conspiracy'. He says that they thought that after resigning from Parliament, general elections would be held soon, but as PTI's resignation was not accepted even after several months, the party decided to return to Parliament. He said that decisions have to be changed according to the situation and in the current circumstance the leader of the opposition has an important role in the formation of the caretaker government, therefore it was decided to go back to the assembly and play a role.

Bilawal, Belgian FM discuss bilateral matters

ISLAMABAD: Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari on Thursday met Foreign Minister of Belgium Hadja Lahbib and discussed bilateral, regional and global issues of mutual interest. Bilawal appreciated the support extended by the government of Belgium for the flood-affected people of Pakistan. Both sides expressed the resolve to further strengthen economic, trade, investment and cultural cooperation. Bilawal Bhutto also met Axel Van Trotsenburg, Managing Director Operations of World Bank and discussed its engagement with Pakistan. - DNA



LAHORE: Leader of the Opposition in Senate Dr. Shehzad Waseem calls on PTI Chairman Imran Khan. - DNA

Govt firm to revive IMF programme: Ayesha Ghaus

ISLAMABAD: State Minister for Finance and Revenue, Ayesha Ghaus Pasha here on Thursday highlighted that the government wants to continue programme with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in such a way that the common man should not bear the burden of tough decisions to be made as per the Fund's condition. Speaking to the media here after attending the Senate Standing Committee on Finance, Mrs. Pasha said that the government's economic team is having meetings with the Prime Minister to focus on its program with the IMF. She said the Prime Minister was not in favor of taking tax measures across the board that could put an extra burden on the poor and common people. To a question, she did not give any date when to start talks with the IMF team but she said that the government was firm to go with the program after having a detailed workout. She said the government would try to convince the IMF about the worst situation in Pakistan after the disastrous floods last year. "The people are already suffering due to the disastrous flooding and they are not in a position to afford any further measures". Earlier, briefing the Senate Committee on Finance she informed that Pakistan is going through an extraordinary situation. A representative of the Pharmaceutical Manufacturing Association briefed the committee that the pharmaceutical industry has a potential of \$6 billion. He said that this industry imports 93% of

raw materials and the remaining 7 percent is also ordered from India, however, the LCs are 100% closed. He said that we have made advance payments but still the LCs are not open adding that all the banks are saying that they don't have dollars. Replying to a pharma representative, the State Minister said that you should not say such things on such a platform, adding that Pakistan is going through an extraordinary situation. Senate Standing Committee on Finance and Revenue met under the chairmanship of Senator Saleem Mandviwala. Mrs. Pasha requested to understand that normal economic conditions cannot be provided yet and that we have inherited the current account deficit. She said that we have given instructions to the banks to open necessary Letters of Credit (LC's). If LCs are not open, it does not mean that the country is going bankrupt, she added. LCs related to essential food items, energy, pharmaceuticals exports, and agricultural products will be opened, she added. The State Minister said that we are trying our best to increase foreign exchange reserves but it takes time. The Committee directed the State Bank to immediately open LCs in the pharmaceutical industry. The committee also consider the matter of Exemption of FED/ Sales Tax to Industrial Traders of Ex-FATA and instructed the special secretary of finance to arrange a meeting with the state minister of the chamber of representatives. - APP

EU parliament head publishes list of gifts

STRASBOURG: The speaker of the European Parliament, Roberta Metsola, has disclosed the many gifts she has received on behalf of the institution in the past year, as the scandal-hit institution seeks to rebuild credibility. The European Union assembly has been rocked by a graft scandal that broke last month involving MEPs allegedly taking cash bribes to defend the interests of Morocco and Qatar. Metsola has promised more transparency and accountability, and this week vowed to impose new rules to tackle foreign corruption. Among Metsola's long list of gifts published on the parliament's website are a dried sausage, champagne, a scarf, books, chocolates and a blue statuette of a sheep. The gifts were registered in a public document published on January 12, 2023. However, internal rules stipulate that elected representatives must declare gifts by the end of the month following the month in which they received them.

"There are no 'undeclared gifts'. All gifts made to the institution have been declared internally and are kept by the institution, not by the president," parliament spokesman Jaume Duch told AFP. "The unprecedented transparency on publicly declaring the institutional gifts initiated by president Metsola aims to improve the existing practice on these institutional gifts." Alberto Alemanno, EU law professor at HEC Paris Business School, said on Twitter: "The EU Parliament President, being the sole enforcer of ethics rules under the current system, must be exemplary in her conduct. "Yet another story showing a pattern of misconducts making her culturally and politically unfit for the job of fixing Qatargate," he added. Nicholas Aiossa, of NGO Transparency International, welcomed Metsola's and other elected members' moves to reveal gifts and travel but said they "speak to a broken system". "The issue is that there are rarely sanctions given for not adhering to the rules," he told AFP. "We need ethical rules that are written down and not based on tradition." Individuals caught up in the corruption scandal include Greek socialist MEP, Eva Kaili, who was one of Metsola's vice-presidents at the time of her arrest in December. The measures Metsola announced on Monday include restricting parliamentary access for former MEPs; registering outside individuals who lobby, meet or speak at the parliament; a public MEPs' registry of gifts and travel received; and punishment for breaches. - Agencies

Israeli forces kill gunman, teacher in West Bank raid

NEWS DESK

JENIN: Israeli troops killed two Palestinians Thursday in the flashpoint West Bank city of Jenin, the Palestinian health ministry said, with the army saying they responded after being fired upon. The ministry said Jawad Farid Bawaqna was killed by a bullet to the chest, while Adham Mohammed Bassem Jabareen, 28, was hit in the upper abdomen by Israeli fire. "Counter-terrorism activity in the Jenin (refugee) camp, armed Palestinian gunmen fired heavily at the security forces, who responded with live fire," said the Israeli army said. The army said that "explosive devices were also hurled at the forces", and that troops arrested a "wanted individual suspected of involvement in terrorist activity", seizing an M16 assault rifle as well as military equipment, explosive materials and ammunition. A soldier was "lightly injured during the operation and evacuated to a hospital for further medical treatment," it added. The Islamic Jihad militant group said Jabareen was a mem-

ber. Bawaqna was a sports teacher and youth leader in Jenin refugee camp, the province's deputy governor said. There were conflicting reports on Bawaqna's age, with the health ministry saying he was 57, and the Palestinian official news agency Wafa reporting he was 58. Farid Bawaqna, Jawad's son, said his father was shot dead while trying to move Jabareen's body. "My father called me from the top of the house, and told me to 'get down, there is a young man who was martyred at the door of the house, come so we can drag him,'" he told AFP. The deaths raise the number of Palestinians killed in the occupied West Bank this month to 17, including civilians and militants, according to an AFP tally. The majority were killed by Israeli forces. A surge in violence in 2022 made it the deadliest year in the West Bank since United Nations records began in 2005. At least 26 Israelis and 200 Palestinians were killed across Israel and the Palestinian territories last year, according to AFP figures. The majority of deaths were in the West Bank, although the toll also includes 49 Palestinians killed in a three-day conflict in Gaza.

New polls possible in N.Ireland if stalemate continues: UK

DUBLIN: Fresh elections could be held in Northern Ireland if a deadline passes without the resumption of power-sharing government in Belfast, a senior British minister indicated on Thursday. Northern Ireland Secretary Chris Heaton-Harris said he would "assess carefully all options" if there is no change to the political stand-off sparked by a row over post-Brexit trading rules. "The restoration of the devolved institutions in Northern Ireland is an absolute priority for my government," Heaton-Harris wrote in the Irish Times before a British-Irish conference in Dublin. "If this stalemate continues, sadly, I will have to do more," he added. Northern Ireland has been without a devolved government for almost a year because of a walk-out by the pro-UK Democratic Unionist Party (DUP). The DUP collapsed the power-sharing executive with pro-Irish nationalist party Sinn Fein in February 2022 because of its opposition to the Northern Ireland Protocol. The protocol, signed between London and Brussels as part of the UK's Brexit divorce from the European Union, governs trade in the British province, and keeps Northern Ireland in the European single market and customs union. The DUP wants the deal overhauled or scrapped entirely, arguing it casts Northern Ireland adrift from the rest of the UK and makes a united Ireland more likely. It had been due to share power with Sinn Fein, who became the biggest party in the assembly after elections last May. - APP

Two cops martyred in terrorist attack

DNA

PESHAWAR: At least two policemen were martyred in another sustained injuries in a terrorist attack on a police check-post in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Khyber Agency Thursday. According to the local police, terrorists opened fire on the check-post in Tekhta Beg and used explosive material in the attack, after which the police station caught fire. The exchange of fire between the police force and terrorists still continues. Immediately after the attack, the traffic on the Pak-Afghan highway closed and a heavy contingent of police was dispatched to the check-post. The police said that the injured officers were being shifted to Hayatabad Medical Complex, Peshawar.

PPP invites JI for dialogue once again

DNA

KARACHI: Sindh Minister Saeed Ghani once again invited Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) for a dialogue. "The situation will worsen by fighting in the streets," he said while addressing a press conference in Karachi. "You can protest but be peaceful. Move according to the procedure where you have objection," he added. "The JI's concerns regarding six constituencies will be addressed," he stated. He advised the JI to sit and talk instead of giving threats of violence. "The behavior of the JI is not appropriate. Dialogue is the solution to all problems," he pointed out. "Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) wants to spread chaos in the entire country. The people of Karachi have rejected Imran Khan's narrative," he maintained. He also said that the results of the local bodies' elections were not a surprise for Pakistan People's Party (PPP).

MOST EXPERIENCED MANUFACTURERS & EXPORTERS OF MARTIAL ARTS UNIFORMS IN PAKISTAN

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