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EU parliament chief moves to lift two MEPs' immunity

Detailed News On Page-08

Ex-CJP Nisar denies giving 'NRO' to Khan

Detailed News On Page-08



Rafael Nadal beaten at United Cup

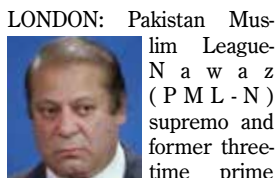
Detailed News On Page-06



Briefs

Nawaz tells party to prep up for polls

DNA



LONDON: Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) supremo and former three-time prime minister Nawaz Sharif has directed his party to expedite preparations for the upcoming general elections. Sources said Sharif also asked his party to roll up the sleeves amid developing political situation in the Punjab as Chief Minister Pervaiz Elahi is expected to seek vote of confidence from the provincial assembly this month. It also emerged that the Governor House and the State Guest House would be opened for PML-N leaders to hold open courts where they would listen to the public issues and take steps to address them.

Goons uniting to counter PTI

ALI HAMZA



LAHORE: Former information minister and Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leader Fawad Chaudhry has lambasted the unification of Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM) factions, saying that 'goons' were uniting in Karachi to counter PTI's popularity, media reported on Monday. Speaking to ARY News programme 'The Reporters', the former federal minister criticised the unification of Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM) factions, saying that every stakeholder has played a role to end the politics of violence from Karachi.

I want my father and brother back

NEWS DESK



LONDON: Britain's Prince Harry said his troubled relationship with the royal family "never needed to be this way" and he wants to get his father King Charles and his brother "back", in an excerpt from an interview with broadcaster ITV released on Monday. "It never needed to be this way," he said in the clip. "They've shown absolutely no willingness to reconcile," he said. "I would like to get my father back; I would like to have my brother back."

Inside...

Indonesia sends additional logistics for flood victims
— Page 02

Chinese anti-smog tech introduced to Pakistan
— Page 03

President urges expatriates to uplift areas of their origin
— Page 04

Cognitive hacking an invisible parasite in today's digital world
— Page 05

Pakistan halt NZ on 309-6 after Conway's century
— Page 06

ICCI invites Pakistan diaspora to explore JVs in Pakistan
— Page 07

Pakistan demands access to missing war soldiers in India
— Page 08

No mercy for outlaws, resolves NSC

PM says war against terrorism would be led by federal and provincial governments

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

ISLAMABAD: The National Security Committee on Monday reiterated its resolve to have zero tolerance for terrorism in Pakistan and reaffirmed its determination to take on any and all entities that resort to violence. "This will be dealt with full force of the state. Pakistan's security is uncompromisable and the full writ of the state will be maintained on every inch of Pakistan's territory," the Committee resolved, according to a press release issued after the meeting concluded. The 40th meeting of the National Security Committee, chaired by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, was attended by relevant federal cabinet members, Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee, all services chiefs, and heads of intelligence services. The forum was apprised of the security situation of the country with a particular focus on recent terrorist incidents in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan. The prime minister emphasized that the war against terrorism would be led by federal and provincial governments as per National Action Plan in accordance with National Internal Security Policy with people-centric

Continued on Page 06

Kabul: Sanaullah's remarks 'provocative'

NEWS DESK

KABUL: The Afghan Taliban administration on Sunday rejected Interior Minister Rana Sanaullah's remarks pertaining to the outlawed Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan's (TTP) hideouts in Afghanistan, calling them "provocative" and "baseless". In an interview with Express TV last week, Sanaullah had said that Pakistan may target TTP militants in Afghanistan if authorities in Kabul did not take any action against them. "Afghanistan is our brotherly country and we will first talk to them to dismantle the TTP hideouts and hand over

Continued on Page 06

Islamabad Polls Court to hear ECP appeal on 9th

A single bench had ordered Election Commission to hold polls on Dec 31

COURT REPORTER

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Monday accepted intra-court appeals of the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) and the Federation with regard to the local government elections in Federal Capital. A two-judge bench headed by Chief Justice Aamer Farooq heard the ICAs against the decision of a single-member bench of ordering the ECP to hold LG elections on December 31. A two-member bench of the IHC, headed by Chief Justice Aamer Farooq, decided to hear the intra-court appeals on January 9. The ECP's counsel Mian Abdul Rauf argued that the institution had postponed the elections due to increase in the number of union councils, and that its notification of

Continued on Page 06

IHC grants bail to PTI leader Azam Swati

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad High Court has granted bail to senior PTI leader and former federal minister Senator Azam Swati in controversial tweets case. The court on Monday also ordered the PTI lawmaker to submit surety bonds of Rs200,000. IHC Justice Aamer Farooq pronounced the verdict which he earlier reserved

Continued on Page 06



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif chairs a meeting of National Security Committee. — DNA

ISIS claims responsibility for Egypt attack

ISTANBUL: The Daesh/ISIS terror group has claimed responsibility for an attack on a security checkpoint in Egypt earlier this week. Two gunmen on a motorbike attacked a police checkpoint in the canal city of Ismailia on Friday. Local media said an attacker was killed in the attack, without giving any information about casualties among police forces. Foreign media, however, said three policemen were killed in the attack. The Daesh/ISIS's Amaq News Agency said a "cell of its soldiers" had attacked a police roadblock with a machine gun. It said policemen were killed and injured in the attack, without providing further details. There was no comment from Egyptian authorities on the Daesh/ISIS claim. Friday's attack was the first in nearly three years in mainland Egypt. The Welayat Sinai group, affiliated with the Daesh/ISIS, has staged an insurgency against Egyptian security forces since 2013, particularly in the Sinai Peninsula, killing hundreds of security personnel.

Masses should be apprised of fiscal problems: Imran

Former Prime Minister says he never claimed he was a pious person

BUREAU REPORT

LAHORE: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) supremo and former Prime Minister Imran Khan on Monday directed the party's stalwarts to apprise masses of the ruling Pakistan Democratic Movement's (PDM) "failures" in a bid to stabilize the country's economic situation. Sources privy to the development said that the deposed premier presided over PTI's spokespersons meeting at his Zaman Park residence in Lahore. He said when former army chief told him that there were videos of PTI leaders and he himself used to be a playboy to which he told former army chief that he never claimed that he was a pious person.

Imran Khan changes his narratives like weather: Marriyum

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Information and Broadcasting Marriyum Aurangzeb on Monday alleged that Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan consistently changed his narratives which were nothing but packs of lies to mislead the people. "Imran Khan has been changing his narratives like weather (since his ouster from power)," she said in a news statement while responding to the PTI chief's remarks in the media. The minister said Imran Khan claimed that it came to his knowledge last summer that

Continued on Page 06

Continued on Page 06

MQM's re-unification; breaking of BAP does not augur well for coalition govt

Prima facie MQM is being reunited only to contain the PTI in Sindh

ANSAR M BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: The political climate of Pakistan appears to be taking a surprise turn after the MQM threat that it would part ways with the government if its demands were not met. The MQM is already enjoying a huge pie in the government despite the fact that its numerical strength is quite low. The party perhaps feels dejected ever since the name of its nominee for the slot of Sindh government was overturned by the Federal government. The incumbent governor Sindh Kamran Tesuri albeit belongs to the MQM, his nomination came from somewhere else. As the election season is drawing near the process of political wheeling-dealing and formation of new alliances has kick started. As a surprise move, the Sindh governor has incurred upon himself the task of re-uniting various factions of the MQM with a view to contesting the upcoming elections as a unified force. Ostensibly there are some forces who want them to unite and thus be in a position to pose a serious challenge to the PTI and PPP in Sindh. A united MQM may improve its positions in Sindh however it is not possible that it would be able to cause any serious dent to PTI popularity. Prima facie, MQM is being reunited only to contain PTI in Sindh. According to political analysts, even a united MQM may not be a threat for PTI provided elections are held in a free and transparent manner. Another purpose of MQM re-unification may be

to bring the federal government under pressure and at any stage when it refuses to hold early elections or wants to prolong its tenure the MQM may be asked to pull out. In this case the federal government will collapse. Another interesting political development is seen in Balochistan where the members of the Balochistan Awami Party (BAP) have been made to leave BAP and join the PPP. It means if BAP is diluted, the PML N government may land in trouble albeit another coalition partner PPP will get strengthened after it gets sympathies of BAP parliamentarians. It is possible that the powers-that-be want to make PPP strong for it is easy to manage this party as compared with the PML N. In the given scenario if the PML N refused to pave way for the early elections when the powers-that-be desire so, then these allied parties may be asked to pull out of the government just like they did when they were part of the PTI government and after their departure the Imran Khan regime could not remain in power. The ruling elite, political, non-political forces all are on the same page when it comes to holding of general elections at the same time. Probably that is the reason the Punjab government dissolution was hindered and the PTI was asked not to dissolve the KP assembly as well. The PTI leadership too wants to have elections at the same time. Efforts are on to find a way out. The PML N supremo and former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif has asked his party men to get ready for the elections however Shehbaz Sharif camp still believes they should complete tenure.

Inflation edges up to 24.5% in December

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: In line with the market expectations, consumer prices increased rather slowly to 24.5% in December amid persistent inflationary pressures, indicating no letup for

Continued on Page 06

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A PUBLIC SERVICE MESSAGE BY MURREE SPARKLETTS

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SAY NO TO INVISIBLE CORRUPTION.

Indonesia sends additional logistics for flood victims

The two governments signed grant agreement on 22 December in which the Indonesian government presented assistance amounting to around USD 1M to NDMA of Pakistan

DNA

KARACHI: The third and fourth batch of humanitarian assistance from the people and the Government of Indonesia for people of Pakistan have arrived in Karachi. The logistics worths around USD 193,000 contains hygiene kits, tents, clothes, blankets, sleeping bags, and mosquito nets with total weight of 15 tons. Consul General Dr. June Kuncoro Hadiningrat representing Indonesian government delivered the assistance to the representative of

National Disaster Management Authorities (NDMA) of Pakistan in Karachi. The two governments signed grant agreement on 22 December in which the Indonesian government presented assistance amounting to around USD 1 Million to NDMA of Pakistan. The grant previously pledged by President Joko Widodo during telephonic conversation with PM Shehbaz Sharif will be utilized in the recovery and rehabilitation of the most vulnerable population in the aftermath of the 2022 Pakistan Floods. Floodwaters continue to recede in many flood-affected areas across

Pakistan. Last report of UN on 06/12 indicated around 11 districts of Sindh and 2 districts in Balochistan are still submerged. As the two biggest Muslim majority countries, Indonesia and Pakistan have strong bonds of brotherhood and friendship. The two countries have always supported each other at the time of natural calamities. Early on September 2022, the government of the Republic of Indonesia has sent first batch of assistance weighing around 90 tons, followed by the dispatchment of 29 health professionals to the affected areas in Sindh Province.



PESHAWAR: President SCCI M Ishaq and Vice Chancellor Sarhad University of Science and Information Technology exchange documents after signing the MoU.—DNA

Identity of Lyari is sports: Murtaza

DNA

KARACHI: Spokesperson of Sindh Government and Adviser for Law Barrister Murtaza Wahab has said that the identity of Lyari is sports and the People's Party government is actively working to maintain this identity. He expressed these views while talking to the officials on a visit to the Boxing Arena under the Karachi Neighborhood Improvement Program (KNIP) at Lyari Kukri Ground today. On this occasion, the officials of KNIP gave a briefing of the program to the Spokesperson of the Sindh government. Spokesperson of the Sindh Government directed to expedite the development works. He said that the construction of a modern sports stadium in Lyari will further boost the sports activities here as there is immense sports talent in Lyari which we have to utilize.

He further said that the Boxing Arena will be inaugurated in Lyari Kukri Sports Stadium this week, while in the second phase preparations will be started to activate the Karate Arena and Sports Pavilion.

Zaki, Fasih elected President, VP EFP

KARACHI: Zaki Ahmed Khan and Fasihul Karim Siddiqi were elected President and Vice President of Employers Federation of Pakistan for the term 2023-25 by the Board of Directors.

The following eighteen persons out of thirty candidates were elected Members of Board of Directors of EFP by the General Body while two were elected unopposed from Chambers and Associations category. The new Board consists of Ismail Suttar, Zaki Ahmed Khan, Majid Aziz, Mian Akram Farid, Malik Tahir Javed, Fasihul Karim Siddiqi, Asif Zuberi, Mohsin Tabani, Sharon Dias, Mehnaz Kaludi, Yusuf Mirza, Feroz Alam, Humayun Nazir, Khalid Junejo, Athar Iqbal, Naila Naqvi, Sadaf Hatif, Athar Iqbal, Khalid Zaman Khan, and Mazhar. —DNA

President expresses condolences with families of Shuhada

ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi on Monday phoned the bereaved families of Shaheed personnel of Pakistan army who embraced shahadat in different incidents. The president, during his conversation, said that sacrifices of Shuhada to eliminate terrorism from the motherland would be remembered forever. He paid tribute to Shuhada, expressed sympathies with the bereaved families and prayed for them to bear the losses with fortitude. The president contacted father of Shaheed Sepoy Muhammad Wasim who embraced martyrdom in Janikhel area of Bannu on December 31, President Secretariat Press Wing said in a press release. His father expressed the resolve that he had three sons who were ready to sacrifice themselves for the motherland. The president lauded the sacrifice of Shaheed sepoy and the patriotism of his father. The president also contacted Muhammad Ashraf, brother of Shaheed Sobedar Shujia Hussain, who laid down his life in Kurram district on December 29.—APP

Bani Gala case

Ex-CJP denies giving 'NRO' to Imran Khan

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Former chief justice of Pakistan Saqib Nisar rejected the allegation of extending relief to PTI Chairman Imran Khan in a case related to purchase of the Bani Gala property.

Mr Nisar, who served as the 25th CJP from Dec 2016 till Jan 2019, issued the statement after Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's Adviser on Sports and Tourism Awn Chaudhry, the former PTI leader, claimed he had prior information that

the PTI chief would be given the "NRO" in the case. In a statement, the former top judge maintained that no one, including the PTI chairman and military leaders, could dare contact him for relief in the case. He said retired Justice Faisal Arab and Justice Umar Ata Bandial, currently serving as CJP, were part of the bench and no one could question their integrity. Last week, Awn Chaudhry, while speaking to a private media group, claimed it was pre-decided that Mr Khan would not be disqualified and former

PTI stalwart Jahangir Khan Tareen would be sent packing. The PM's aide said he had prior information that Mr Tareen would be disqualified despite submitting all the documents to the court. In December 2017, the apex court dismissed a plea to disqualify Imran Khan while it had disqualified then PTI Secretary General Jahangir Tareen for not declaring the assets in the nomination papers. The SC had issued the verdict after almost a year of hearings on the petition filed by Pakistan Muslim

League-N's Hanif Abbasi, seeking disqualification of Mr Khan and Mr Tareen. The PML-N leader had accused Imran Khan of obscuring his off-shore company, collecting international prohibited funds for his political organisation Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), stating fabricated facts in his nomination papers, purchasing the Bani Gala property under his wife's name, making illegal use of the tax amnesty scheme, and taking different stances in his affidavit.

Punjab govt to also acquire two helicopters

DNA

LAHORE: Punjab Chief Minister Chaudhry Pervaiz Elahi has decided to acquire two helicopters on rent. It may be mentioned here the provincial government has already in process to acquire a plane on rent for which Rs120 million have been earmarked. After completion of the tendering process for the plane, work for acquiring two helicopters for three months will be set into motion. Sources said the Punjab government's present helicopter needs maintenance for which funds worth over Rs20 million had been approved. Officials said the new helicopters can also be used for police and rescue operations.

Solo show by Nazia Ejaz concludes

ISLAMABAD: An exhibition of exquisite artworks by Australian/Pakistani artist Nazia Ejaz concluded here Monday at Tanzara Art Gallery. The artist, who successfully built a niche at the local and international art market, has worked with various artistic themes exploring them in myriad new ways. This exhibition titled "Full Circle" was the continuation of the artist's innovative reflection on the subject of Eve and beyond. "My previous work was a subject connected to so many threads within my own practice over the last decade, that it would require a much larger body of work to fully explore the ideas. Hence this body of work was my attempt to tug at those threads and allow them to lead me where they may.—APP



ISLAMABAD: Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari poses for a photo with Ambassador of China, Nong Rong. — DNA

Sohail Mahmood assumes charge of DG ISSI

ISLAMABAD: Ambassador Sohail Mahmood on Monday assumed charge as Director General of the Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI). Ambassador Sohail Mahmood took over from Ambassador Aizaz Ahmad Chaudhry whose term has been completed, said a news release. Ambassador Sohail Mahmood brings with him vast experience of diplomacy and high-level decision-making. He served in the Foreign Service of Pakistan for nearly 37 years and rose to the rank of Foreign Secretary, serving in that position from April 2019 to September 2022. Prior to



that, he served as the High Commissioner of Pakistan to India from 2017-19. Earlier, he served as Ambassador to Turkiye (2015-17) and Thailand (2009-13). He has also served as Additional Secretary (Afghani-

stan/West Asia) and Director-General (Americas) and Director-General (Foreign Secretary's Office). Earlier, in his diplomatic career, he served in Pakistan Embassies in Ankara and Washington, D.C., and as a Counsellor at Pakistan's Permanent Mission to the United Nations in New York. He had also served as Director (Iran & Turkiye). Ambassador Sohail Mahmood holds a Master's degree in International Affairs from Columbia University, New York, and a Master's degree in History from Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad.

by domestic and industrial consumers. In addition to lacunae in the existing laws, the rise in global oil prices due to the Russia-Ukraine conflict, and the devaluation of the rupee had further aggravated the energy crisis in Pakistan. That's the reason, power outage in the name of load shedding has become a new normal in the country. Like other provinces, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa was also facing the brunt of load shedding where power stealing continued mostly in

periphery areas of Peshawar, DI Khan, Nowshera, Charadda, Bannu, Karak, and Khyber districts. As a result, the power distribution system gets overloaded and then trips down. An official of the Peshawar Electric Supply Company (PESCO) told APP on Monday that the power shortfall in KP has swelled to 1138 megawatts. "Currently, KP's total energy demand is 2,916MW and supply is 1,778MW, thus facing a shortfall of 1,138MW," he said. — APP

Energy crisis haunts KP

PESHAWAR: Pakistan, like other developing countries, is confronting the major challenge of the energy crisis that not only is affecting the common men adversely but also hindering the economic and industrial growth in the country. The energy

crisis is an old phenomenon for Pakistan, but it deepened in recent years, thanks to the previous government that delayed the completion of several ongoing and new dam projects. Another factor responsible for the crises is power pilferage

SCCI, Sarhad varsity ink MoU to develop academic linkages

OUR CORRESPONDENT

PESHAWAR: A memorandum of understanding (MoU) was signed between Sarhad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI) and the Sarhad University of Science and Information Technology Peshawar, aiming to develop academic, industrial and social cooperation and linkages and carry out a joint research program. The MoU was signed by SCCI president Muhammad Ishaq and Vice Chancellor of the Sarhad University of Science and Information Technology Peshawar Prof Dr Saleem ur Rehman during a ceremony held here at the chamber's house on Monday. The chamber senior vice president Shahid Hussain, the university officials/senior faculty members Dr Wisal Khan, Engr Muzamil, secretary general of the chamber

Sajjad Aziz and university media coordinator Bilal Akbar were present during the signing ceremony. Terming the signing of MoU as a milestone initiative, Mr Ishaq disclosed that SCCI is going to launch a 2.0 program. The SCCI chief claimed the 2.0 program is the first ever step in Pakistan which has been taken by this chamber, whose prime purpose is to enhance capacity building of the business community while keeping in view modern requirements, provision of relief and incentives, initiatives for business/trade and industries improvement, etc. Ishaq stressed the need for enhancement of capabilities and skills of the business community on mode lines, adding that the SCCI has undertaken pragmatic steps in this regard. He viewed signing of MoU with Sarhad University as part of the efforts of SCCI

under 2.0 vision/plan, hoping to reap the benefits of this mega program and provide its benefits to the business community. Ishaq earlier explained the main objectives of SCCI, its importance, role, and initiatives that had been taken for relief and welfare of the business community. Saleem ur Rehman, VC of the university also spoke on the occasion and highlighted the purpose and objectives of the MoU. Shahid Hussain called the MoU an important step toward enhancing industrial and academia linkages and expressed the hope that collaboration would be further strengthened with the university after this agreement. Later, SCCI chief Muhammad Ishaq and Vice Chancellor of the university Saleem ur Rehman formally signed on the memorandum of understanding.

PTI MNA Nasir Musazai to join JUI-F

PESHAWAR: PTI MNA Nasir Khan Musazai on Monday confirmed that he has accepted the JUI-F invitation and would formally join JUI-F in the next few days. Talking to media men here in Peshawar Press Club (PPC), he said that he had joined PTI in 2018 and was impressed by the slogans of bringing change and improvement in the public sector entities. However, during the four years' rule it had miserably failed in taking a single step towards the achievement of these goals, rather it played havoc with constitutional institutions like the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP), establishment and others. The MNA said that the PTI leadership has turned the popular slogan of change into the slogan of destruction, adding that he was definitely impressed by that slogan. But, now his political goals will not be achieved through PTI, then there is no need for him to remain within the ranks of the party. To another query, he said that the vision of PTI was only how to enter the power corridor and that was also its case in 2014 when they after defeat in the general elections boycotted the National Assembly proceedings and even today they were not ready to tender resignation from the provincial assemblies of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Punjab.—APP



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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

Hotels & Restaurants

Serena Hotel.....111 133 133

Marriott.....051- 2826121

Monal.....0334-5421812

Airlines

Turkish Airlines.....8494949

Emergency

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

PIAFlightInfo.....114

PIA Cargo.....9280979

Railway Inquiry.....117

Railway Exchange9270831-5

WASA Rawalpindi..555489

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

Rawal Town.....5773343

Water Tank

Islamabad.....0321-5744480

ISLAMABAD: People standing in long queue to purchase wheat flour bags on subsidized rate at Lehtrar Road. – APP

Chinese anti-smog tech introduced to Pakistan

Chinese Consulate Lahore has provided comprehensive documents regarding smog-eating towers built in China to Chief Minister Office Task Force Smog

DNA

ISLAMABAD: In order to combat hazardous smog and air pollution across Punjab, home of more than 100 million people, Punjab government springs into action to use Chinese anti-smog technology by installing smog towers in Lahore and other parts of the province in 2023. Development made headway in the backdrop of successful meeting between Punjab CM Ch Pervaiz Elahi and Chinese Consul General Lahore Zhao Shiren, Gwadar Pro reported it on Monday.

According to the Chinese Consul General Lahore Zhao Shiren, bearing in mind that good air quality is beneficial for people of Lahore, the Chinese Consulate Lahore has provided comprehensive documents regarding smog-eating

towers built in China to Chief Minister Office Task Force Smog.

“We managed to collect all the required data and information by establishing connection with relevant authorities in China,” the Chinese Consulate Lahore official said. If the CM office needs further help, we will surely do accordingly,” he added.

CM secretariate official told that in the face of unhealthy air quality in Punjab, Chinese smog towers appear to be an antidote of air pollution. “We noted that smog has become a global problem and the government wants to use Chinese technology to control it in Punjab, especially in Lahore. Chinese technology will be beneficial for installing air purification towers in Lahore and other cities. Air-purifying towers will be installed near border areas and

industrial areas,” he added.

He said that in accordance with the information he learnt China’s Institute of Earth Environment has constructed the world’s largest air purifier in the northern city of Xi’an. “The smog-sucking tower stands at over 100 metres tall and

is designed to improve air quality in the city, where standards regularly fall short of expectations set by the World Health Organization,” he added.

To monitor the tower’s impact, he said, pollution monitoring stations in the surrounding area discovered that levels of PM2.5 – the fine particles in smog considered most harmful – fell 15% during times of heavy pollution, compared to average.

Environmentalist Naseem Shahid said that as the Punjab government has declared an environmental emergency, smog-free towers are direly needed for Punjab.

“Around the base of the tower is a system of greenhouses that covers an area about half the size of a soccer field. It sucks polluted air in and heats it up with solar energy. The heated air then rises

up through the tower and passes through multiple layers of cleaning filters. The Xi’an tower has managed to produce more than 10 million cubic metres (353 million cubic feet) of clean air a day since its launch. Furthermore, on severely polluted days the tower was able to reduce smog close to moderate levels,” he added.

He said that purpose of this project is to find an effective and low-cost method to artificially remove pollutants from the atmosphere.

China has already housed what was previously thought to be the largest smog tower in China by Dutch artist Daan Roosegaarde at 798, a creative park in Beijing. That one was only seven meters (23-feet) tall and produced about eight cubic metres (282.5 cubic feet) of clean air per second, he added.

NDMA issues instructions for awareness, surveillance

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) on Monday issued instructions to the authorities concerned to ensure mass public awareness about the novel coronavirus variant that threatens the resurgence of the disease and ensure surveillance of travellers to avoid any risk of infection.

Chairman NDMA, Lieutenant General Inam Haider Malik presided over the review session held with the team of the National Institute of Health (NIH) and Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) on the COVID-19 situation and surveillance mechanisms at airports in the wake of the threat posed by the new BF.7 Omicron variant of the deadly virus, a news release said.

The NIH showed detailed statistics on COVID-19 Management and Vaccination Admin-

istration Data in Pakistan. It was briefed that Rapid Anti-Gen Tests (RATs) & Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) tests of inbound passengers have been conducted at all airports of the country as per policy in vogue. NIH officials told the forum that vaccination and screening tests of pedestrians are being executed at the Torkham border on daily basis.

The CAA informed that an efficient system with a proper management team was fully functional at airports to remain vigilant and related logistic arrangements had been made to deal with any sub-variant of Covid-19. Chairman NDMA expressed confidence in the country’s anti-covid strategies and national preparedness regime. However, he instructed NIH

to issue precautionary advisories for educational institutes, social gatherings, and communities and conduct weekly media briefings to sensitize the public and stakeholders. He emphasized continuous monitoring of the global spread and behavior of sub-variant, and measures undertaken by other countries accordingly to counter the strain.

Universities urged to implement revised education roadmap

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Higher Education Commission (HEC) has issued letters to the heads of all public and private sectors universities and degree awarding institutes for the implementation of revised Teacher Education Roadmap in line with the recommendations of National Curriculum Review Committee in the discipline of Education. According to the revised Teacher Education Roadmap, candidates having Associate Degree in Education (ADE) will be allowed to enrol in the 5th semester or third year of a four-year B.Ed. programme. Similarly, candidates with an Associate Degree in disciplines other than Education or two-year erstwhile BA / BSc degrees (now defunct) shall be admitted in the 5th semester or third year of a four-year B.Ed. programme through a bridging semester after completing the deficiency courses (15-18 credit hours) as determined by the admitting university on case-to-case basis.

Moreover, MA Education, M.Ed. and BS Education shall be considered equivalent to B.Ed. 4 years / B.Ed. (Hons), B.Ed. 2.5 after 14 years qualification and B.Ed. 1.5 after 16 years qualification for the purpose of employment and further education. The graduates having sixteen years or equivalent qualification in disciplines other than Education and desirous to acquire B.Ed. degree will be allowed enrolment in B.Ed. 1.5 comprising of 45-54 credit hours course work. However, such graduates having sixteen years non-relevant qualification desirous to acquire admission in MS/MPHil Education, shall be required to complete deficiency courses of minimum 18 credit hours as part of the said degree programme as determined by the admitting university on case-to-case basis.

Railways all set to resume Green Line Train

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Railways is all set to resume Green Line Passenger Train operations from Islamabad to Karachi in mid-January as a superior service to facilitate the passengers and generate revenues for the department. “The train is comprised of two AC Parlor, five AC Business, six AC Standards, and four to five economy class coaches which will facilitate the passengers on the route,” an official in the Ministry of Railways told APP.

He said the decision was taken on the directives of Minister for Railways Khawaja Saad Rafique, who wanted the best arrangements for the Green Line passenger Train for travelers.

The official said that the minister also directed the official concerned for reducing the travel time of the Green Line from Lahore to Karachi to less than 20 hours which would restore the confidence of the passengers. “It is also decided to provide the best travelling facilities in the Green Line train including the provision of high-quality food and keeping the ticket price at an affordable level. Besides, a separate LCD will be installed on each seat of the AC Parlor to let passengers enjoy favourite videos through headphones,” he added. It is pertinent to mention here that the Green Line Train had been scheduled to start operations from December 20 last but due to some financial and other issues now it would start operations from mid-January. – APP

ECP imparts training among election officials last year

ISLAMABAD: The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has given capacity building training to 375,149 election officials in 2022 for ensuring free, fair, impartial elections in a befitting manner. According to an ECP official, the polling staff was told about dealing with the voters to maintain transparency and impartiality in the polling process. As many as 10,719 training workshops were conducted during the last year for imparting basic knowledge and fundamental techniques among the polling officials.

The official said that during the training workshop, election officials were trained to ensure free and fair elections at their respective polling stations. The ECP has also launched an awareness campaign titled Mainstreaming of Youth in Electoral Processes Programme to raise awareness about the importance of electoral process. The ECP organized as many as 520 awareness sessions in different universities and colleges across the country to make youth aware about the importance of electoral process. – APP

OGRA advises careful use of gas appliances

ISLAMABAD: A spokesman for the Oil and Gas Regulatory Authority (OGRA) has advised consumers to ensure careful use of gas appliances including heaters and stoves to avoid any untoward incidents.

“Gas heaters and stoves pose serious health risks and are the main cause of many fatal incidents, so due care is needed in the use of gas appliances,” OGRA spokesman Imran Ghaznavi said in a statement.

He said carbon monoxide was colourless and odourless, adding “high levels of carbon monoxide in the air are very dangerous and may cause people to pass out or even die.” In the winter season, he said people should consider “safe alternative” ways of keeping themselves warm and remain extra careful, especially while using indoor gas appliances.

Highlighting necessary precautionary measures, the spokesman suggested regular service of gas heaters, ensuring appropriate ventilation, and keeping away all flammable materials like clothes at least one meter away from heater. – APP

AIOU admissions to commence from January 15

ISLAMABAD: Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) is commencing admissions for the Spring 2023 semester (first phase), throughout the country including AJK and GB on January 15, 2023. The admissions of matriculation, middle-tech, intermediate, I. Com and certificate courses offered in the first phase will continue till February 21, 2023, while admissions in BS (face to face), MS, M.Phil and PhD programs will be open from January 15 to February 15, 2023, a press release on Monday said. Admissions in the second phase will be offered from March 1, 2023. AIOU has extended its educational network for overseas Pakistanis and now Pakistanis residing in any country of the world, or any international student can get admission in matriculation, intermediate and I Com programs to enhance their educational qualification. These admissions are offered through the online management system. All academic activities ranging from admission to the issuance of certificate/degree will be managed online. Prospectuses and admission application forms for all the programs will be available online on the university website (www.aiou.edu.pk) on Jan 15, 2022. – DNA

CDA to solarise buildings

ISLAMABAD: The Capital Development Authority (CDA) has decided to install solar systems at all of its buildings and offices as a part of energy conservation efforts. The Capital Development Authority Chairman Captain (r) Muhammad Usman Younis has chaired a meeting to finalize the plan to convert all the building housing offices of the civic body. It was also decided all streetlights of all the roads being constructed based on the government-to-government formula would also be converted to solar energy as a part of the pilot project. The meeting also decided to operationalize the solar project in Sector F-9 and follow the same formula in other parks and recreational facilities. – DNA

Govt disburses Rs 224.5 bn

ISLAMABAD: The Federal Government has authorized the utilization of development funds amounting to Rs 224.5 billion out of a total allocation of Rs727 billion for various ongoing and new social sector uplift projects of the federal ministries and division in the first five months (July-November) of the fiscal year 2022-23 under its Public Sector Development Programme (PSDP).

Out of the total authorized/dispursed amount, the total amount spent so far on the development projects during the corresponding period stood at Rs130.6 billion. According to the disbursement mechanism of the Planning Division, the development funds allocated in the federal budget are released at the rate of 20% in the first quarter (July-September), followed by 30% each in the second and third quarters, and the remaining 20% in the last quarter (April-June) of a fiscal year. The govt also authorized/dispursed Rs100 billion for the Earthquake Reconstruction and Rehabilitation Authority (ERRA) out of which Rs 96.33 billion have been spent, according to the latest data released by the Ministry of Planning, Development, and Reform.

The detail shows that Rs 64.8 billion out of a total allocated amount of Rs 160.2 billion

have been disbursed to corporations while Rs 159.6 billion have been disbursed to the federal ministries out of a total allocation of Rs 563.3 billion. For National Highway Authority (NHA), the government has disbursed Rs 30.2 billion out of a total allocation of Rs 117.2 billion, whereas for NTDC/PEPCO, the government has disbursed Rs 34.69 billion.

The federal government has also disbursed/ authorized Rs 87 billion out of a total allocation of Rs 87 billion for various development projects of the cabinet division, however, only Rs 11 billion have been spent on the development projects of the cabinet division so far. Similarly, the data shows that Rs 495 million has been disbursed to Aviation Division, and Rs 161.5 million have been disbursed to the Board of the Investment. The government also authorized the utilization of Rs 1.9 billion for Climate Change Division out of which only Rs 58 million have been spent during the period under review. For HEC, the government has authorized the release of Rs 7.78 billion, Rs 25.2 billion for provinces and special areas, Rs 435 million for Commerce Division, Rs 36 million for Communication Division (other than NHA), and Rs 445 million for Defense Division. – DNA

Briefs

New Year brings new resolutions for all

ISLAMABAD: Along with welcoming the New Year, people across the globe including Pakistan are ready to make different resolutions to keep the score of good deeds in the upcoming year and abstain from bad habits by analyzing their last year's journey, behaviors with family, friends and outsiders, their contributions towards humanity and religion. A New Year's Resolution is a commitment that an individual makes, a habit, or often a lifestyle change that is generally interpreted as advantageous. New Year Resolutions being a famous tradition of early Babylonians provide an opportunity for improvement through analyzing past mistakes. Popular modern resolutions include the promise to work hard, quit smoking, lose weight, and obey religious principles properly. Most psychologists suggest planning the resolution in advance, instead of waiting until New Year's Eve as extra time would allow one to reflect on what he really wants to achieve. Usually, on the last day of the year, youngsters share the happiness of the New Year with each other through exchanging sms and cards carrying good wishes and sweets, and gifts. But apart from celebrations, adopting some resolutions for the upcoming year could improve their lifestyle. Salman Karim, a youngster, said that this year he made only one resolution, that he will reduce his screen time and ensure to spend more and more time with his family which was more important but is being neglected due to excessive use of mobile phones and social media. Shazia Khan, a housewife while sharing her views said that the new year was a great opportunity to make positive changes in her life and thinking. The new year is like a new start which gives us a chance to learn from our past mistakes and make a new beginning with an optimistic mind, she said and added that for the new year, she had decided to spare some time for social work and would start teaching some street children living near our area to make my positive contribution towards building a healthy society.—APP

NHMP intensifying safety measures for two-wheelers

ISLAMABAD: National Highways and Motorway Police (NHMP) have been active to enhance the safety of two-wheelers and sensitizing stakeholders about the proper use of rear mirrors and helmets. Talking to APP here on Monday, spokesman of NHMP Asad Shabbir said that two-wheelers were violating the rules on highways causing loss of property and lives. To address this issue a letter was written to the engineering board for sensitizing the motorcycle manufacturers regarding the adoption of security measurements as per law, he informed. He said NHMP gave safety briefings to the motorcyclists about the importance of helmets and gave away complimentary helmets. Asad said a vigorous campaign #nomore was launched as per the directions of the Inspector General of NHMP Khalid Mahmood, in order to create awareness among two-wheeler riders about the traffic rules. He informed that all officials were directed to ensure the implementation of traffic rules and regulations irrespective of status and rank and demonstrate patience and politeness while issuing traffic violation tickets to the road users. "NHMP aims to help road users while observing the highest level of courtesy, integrity, and professionalism" he added. He urged the parents for now allowing their underage children to ride bikes till the age of maturity. It is worth mentioning that Islamabad Capital Police issued 211,279 fine tickets to motorcyclists riding bikes without helmets during the ongoing year.—APP

President urges expatriates to uplift areas of their origin

The President expressed these views while talking to a delegation of eminent UK and US-based Pakistani expatriates, at Aiwan-e-Sadr, on Monday

DNA

ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi has urged Overseas Pakistanis (OPs) to maintain close and strong connections with the people of the areas of their origin, and with their intellect, expertise, experiences, and investments uplift their social, economic and financial outlook. He added that expatriates should take steps to improve Pakistan's image and highlight the human rights violations in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir and the persecution of minorities in India in their host countries. The President expressed these views while talking to a delegation of eminent UK and US-based Pakistani expatriates, at Aiwan-e-Sadr, on Monday. The delegation included amongst others Lord Qurban Hussain, Lord Wajid Khan, Mr Imran Hussain, Ms Yasmin Dar, Mr Kamran Hussain, Mr Arshad Rachyal, Raja Najabat Hussain, Mr Majid Nazir, Mr Aaman Majid, Mr Hammas Majid, Ms Tahira Mohammad, Mr Nawab-ud-Din, Syed Ali Kamran Kirmani, Mr Shakoor Ahmed, Mr Naqash Mushtaq Diwan, Mr Sherbaz Munir Choudhary, Mr Mehfooz Ullah, Mr Sharafat Ullah, Mr Sajid Khan,



Mr Nadeem Ahmed Khan, Brig (r) Iftikhar Ali Khan, Mr Afzal Butt, and the leadership of the Khubab Foundation. Talking to the delegation, the President termed the Pakistani diaspora around the world a great asset who were contributing with their hard work, knowledge and intellect to the progress and prosperity of their host countries. He asked the members of the delegation to invest their knowledge, intellect and expertise to create enabling conditions in Pakistan to retain its precious educated and high-quality human resources which were direly needed for Pakistan's socio-economic

development. He also expressed his concern over media reports of the brain drain of over 700,000 educated and skilled human resources abroad in the last few months. The President said that although Pakistan was facing difficult economic and financial situations but they were surmountable. He said that Pakistan was on the right track in empowering women and differently-abled people, providing patronage to orphans, and shifting its focus from curative treatment of diseases, which was expensive and unaffordable, to preventive mode of treatment which would help ensure health

at a minimal cost. He said that Pakistan had an excellent record of hosting 4 million Afghan refugees for nearly 40 years, mostly out of its own resources, which was an example of hospitality, morality and care for the suffering humanity. He said that the recent war in Ukraine had brought to light the incidents of discrimination in the treatment of refugees. The refugees from Ukraine were being welcomed by the EU countries whereas the refugees from other parts of the world were expelled and allowed to be drowned in the sea, he opined. The President said that the primary aim behind

the creation of the United Nations (UN) was reducing the conflicts around the world, however, it was unfortunate that conflicts were reduced mostly in Europe whereas remained unabated in other parts of the world, especially in Muslim Countries due to vested interests and ethics and morality deprived world order. He said that the UN could not stop wars and conflicts in Iraq, Syria, Libya and Afghanistan and other parts of the world which were waged primarily by spreading misinformation, fake news, and disinformation to achieve certain objectives of the developed world. The Issue of Indian Illegally Occupied Kashmir Jammu and Kashmir was one of the oldest but unresolved agendas still waiting for implementations of several UNSC resolutions which was unfortunate, he added.

While referring to the rising tide of Islamophobia and the extremist Hindutva philosophy in India, the President said that religious extremism was on the rise in India, and the majority Hindutva-inspired Hindu population was being pitched against all religious or ethnic minorities of the country. He said that minorities were being discriminated against, harassed, victimized, and intimidated across India on the basis of their religion.

CGGC working nonstop on Nelum Jhelum HP

DNA

ISLAMABAD: China Gezhouba Group Company (CGGC) is carrying remedial works day and night at Tail Race Tunnel of the Neelum Jhelum Hydropower Project (NJHP), according to a report published by Gwadar Pro. The Electricity generation from NJHP had to suspend in July 2022 due to blockage at one location of the Tail Race Tunnel, out of the project's tunneling system which is about 68 Kilometers long. Chairman WAPDA Lt Gen Sajjad Ghani (Retd) visited Neelum Jhelum Hydropower Project on Friday and reviewed progress on remedial works in Tail Race Tunnel of the project. The Chief Executive Officer of Neelum Jhelum Hydropower Company (NJHC) and representatives of the CGGC and



the consultants were also present on the occasion. WAPDA had awarded the remedial contract to CGGC in August 2022 after seeking approval from the federal government. Since then, the remedial works are being carried out day and night at the site. While witnessing the construction work at the site

in the Tail Race Tunnel, the Chairman emphasized upon the project management to complete the remedial works in accordance with the schedule. He further directed that recommendations made by the International Panel of Experts be also adhered to in carrying out the remedial works. Earlier in a briefing, Chief Exec-

utive Officer NJHC apprised the Chairman about progress achieved so far on the remedial works. The 969 MW-NJHP started electricity generation in April 2018. Prior to suspension of electricity generation in July 2022, the project had provided more than 18 billion units of electricity to the National Grid.

ECP announces polling for Senate seat on Jan 25

ISLAMABAD: The polling on Senate seat that declared vacant after the resignation of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Senator Faisal Vawda would be held on January 25, 2023 in the Sindh Assembly building, Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) announced on Monday.

According to the schedule, the polling on vacant Senate seat would be held on January 25 and the polling would be held from 9:00 am to 4 pm. The public notice for inviting nomination papers by the candidates would be issued on January 4. The nomination papers could be filed from January 5 to January 7, while names of nominated candidates would be published on January 9. Similarly, January 12 has been fixed as the last date of the scrutiny of nomination papers while January 14 is fixed for filing of appeals against acceptance or rejection of the nomination papers. The last date fixed for disposal of appeals by the tribunal is January 18 while revised list of the candidates would be published on January 19 and last date of withdrawal of the candidature is January 20. The Election Commission has called upon the members provincial assembly of Sindh to elect a member to general seat in the Senate from Sindh which has been fallen vacant due to resignation tendered by Faisal Vawda as senator, who was elected against general seat in Senate Elections 2018 from the province.—APP

PBM serves 1099355 beneficiaries under IFA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Bait-ul-Mal (PBM) has disbursed an amount of Rs. 9,269,125,641 among 1099355 beneficiaries under the Individual Financial Assistance (IFA) programme during the period from July 2019 till December 01, 2022. Among the total amount, Rs. 2,213,357,531 has been disbursed among 24400 beneficiaries belonging to Islamabad Capital Territory, Rs. 3,464,532,641 to 41,521 beneficiaries of Punjab and Rs.

1,280,441,735 among 15489 beneficiaries of Sindh. According to an official source, the program has disbursed an amount of Rs. 1,886,489,786 among 21557 beneficiaries of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Rs. 312,588,311 among 4590 beneficiaries of Balochistan and Rs. 111,715,637 among 2378 beneficiaries of Gilgit-Baltistan. Under the IFA program, PBM is providing financial assistance to the marginalized segments in different sectors including education,

medical, special friends and general category. During the period from July 2019 till December 01, 2022, IFA has utilized an amount of Rs. 545,546,562 to support 19497 beneficiaries in the education sector while Rs. 8,096,311,579 has been disbursed to provide medical assistance among 54960 beneficiaries. IFA has benefited 17544 special friends through spending an amount of Rs. 240,502,500 while 17935 beneficiaries were given assistance worth Rs. 386,765,000 in the general category. —APP

HEC halts admissions in Isra University

ISLAMABAD, Jan 02 (AP-P): The Higher Education Commission (HEC) has warned the students across the country not to take admissions in Isra University. "In order to protect the future of students, admissions in all disciplines in Isra University have been stopped from Fall 2022" the HEC official warned the students across the country. This will include all admissions including medical colleges, in the principal seat in Hyderabad as well as Karachi and Islamabad till the resolution of the ongoing crisis.—APP

Man defrauding people arrested

RAWALPINDI: The police on Monday claimed to have arrested a suspect involved in taking millions of rupees from people on the pretext of providing them with government jobs. According to the Rawalpindi Police spokesperson, the accused identified as Chaudhry Shehbaz minted million of rupees from innocent citizens. The accused used to trap citizens by disguising himself as an official of the Punjab government and used to communicate with senior officers on bogus calls. The accused revealed that he robbed more or less 1,400 men and 500 women by fraud. The accused used to receive money from the people for providing them jobs in the name of various government contracts, and later blocked his mobile number and ended the contact. The accused also made fake cards and videos of fake interviews to cheat the people and was also involved in fraudulent activities in other cities. According to the police, the accused possessed a criminal record and has revealed scams worth millions of rupees.—APP

NHA refutes fee hike of paid washrooms on motorway

ISLAMABAD: The National Highways Authority (NHA) on Monday denied the reports circulating in different sections of the media regarding the increase in fees for paid washrooms on the Islamabad Peshawar Motorway. In a statement issued here, the spokesman said that there has been no increase in fees for paid washrooms on M1 and free washrooms of NHA were available on the highways. He clarified that the project of paid washrooms was with private companies, but the fee had not been increased.—APP

Efforts to be made to maintain coalition with MQM: Kundi

ISLAMABAD: Adviser to Prime Minister Faisal Karim Kundi on Monday said that the coalition parties would sit with Muttahida Qaumi Movement Pakistan (MQM-P) to resolve the issues through mutual discussion. Talking to a private media channel, Faisal Karim Kundi said that the difference of opinion was not a new thing in coalition governments, MQM-P grievances would be addressed, he asserted. Faisal Karim Kundi further said, "The census process will be completed in April. If any party, including MQM-P had objections on census, government will try to resolve it." Earlier, MQM-Pakistan has expressed serious concerns over the non-implementation of the agreement signed with the Centre and the Sindh government.

ANF seizes over 46 kg drugs; arrests two

RAWALPINDI: Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) Pakistan during four counter-narcotics operations seized over 46 kg of illicit drugs and arrested two accused, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman here on Monday. He said in an operation at Lahore International Airport Cargo, ANF recovered 7.8 kg of heroin from a parcel booked for England. In another operation at Faisalabad Airport, ANF recovered 60 heroin-filled capsules from the possession of a Sharjah-bound passenger, a resident of Sargodha, going on flight no G-9563. In a joint operation conducted in Khyber, ANF and FC recovered over 37 kg charras while two kg charras was confiscated in Sukkur and arrested the accused who is a resident of Sukkur. Separate cases have been registered at respective ANF Police Stations and further investigations are underway.—APP

COVID-19 may reach human brain

ISLAMABAD: The SARS-CoV-2 virus propagated throughout the body, including into the brain, and persisted for almost eight months, according to a study of tissue samples from 44 COVID-19 fatality autopsies. None of the patients were immunised, and they all passed away from COVID-19. 38 patients' blood plasma tested positive for SARS-CoV-2, three patients' blood plasma tested negative, and three patients' blood plasma was unavailable. The National Institutes of Health (NIH) in the US evaluated samples taken from autopsy carried out between April 2020 and March 2021. In 11 of the patients, they thoroughly sampled the neurological system, including the brain. The study was published in Nature. The median age was 62.5 years, and 30% of the patients were female. Three or more comorbidities were present in 27 individuals (61.4%). The median number of days between the onset of symptoms and mortality was 18.5. Virus replication was seen during the first two weeks after the onset of symptoms in a number of non-respiratory sites, as per the authors, Medical Daily reported. In addition, the researchers were able to isolate live SARS-CoV-2 virus from a variety of organs both inside and outside the respiratory system, such as the adrenal gland, eye, brain, heart, lymph nodes.—APP

Research and Development in Pakistan

Pakistan's education system is the byproduct of colonialism, which never supported critical thinking, analytical skills, knowledge sharing or debate

ABDUS SATTAR

Research and Development (R&D) has played a decisive role in knowledge creation. It is based on human resources and infrastructure. Innovation through R&D also triggers economic growth - US\$1 invested in R&D engenders about US\$2 in return. Global R&D has grown from US\$ 675 billion to US\$ 2.4 trillion over the last two decades. Countries such as the USA, China and Japan spent US\$721, US\$583 and US\$174 billion respectively in 2020. Israel, South Korea, UAE, Iran, India and Bangladesh spent 5.4, 4.8, 1.4, 0.88, 0.80 and 0.30 percent of GDP on R&D, respectively in 2020. Pakistan spent less than 0.20 percent of its GDP on R&D in 1997 and hit a peak of around 0.63 percent in 2007, while it fell to 0.20 percent of GDP in 2019. Pakistan's R&D expenditure is 216 times less than the USA and 73 times less than Japan's while 22 times less than India's, whose current science & technology budget is about US\$2 billion while Pakistan's science & technology budget is

only US\$0.02 billion, a hundred times less than that of India. In Pakistan, 243 public and private universities have 31 percent of PhD and 69 percent of non-PhD staff, while three to four thousand PhDs remain unemployed. A Pakistani university's average annual research budget is about US\$ 70 thousand. Unfortunately, Pakistan's education system is the byproduct of colonialism, which never supported critical thinking, analytical skills, knowledge sharing or debate. Most students' sole purpose of education is to acquire a degree for a government job. They are reluctant to conduct rigorous research on domestic issues to further their knowledge base. Moreover, universities and research institutions face poor research infrastructure regarding research laboratories and equipment. Professors are always overstrained in research projects, teaching, supervising students' thesis and administrative responsibilities. Most research institutions always rely on foreign-funded projects to fulfill their financial needs. Although over twelve thousand research papers are published annually in Pakistan, espe-

cially in agriculture and physics, research is still not addressing real domestic issues. The private sector has always played an imperative role in R&D and is strictly protected through intellectual property rights in advanced economies. The share of private spending remained more than 70-80 percent in the USA, Israel, Japan, China, South Korea and the OECD countries, while in India, it was 29 percent. In Pakistan, the private sector share remained around 5 percent. In Pakistan, most industries are not interested in product innovation and diversification due to fear of failure, unaware of how it can give them a competitive advantage. The other important reason is the lack of implementation of intellectual property rights or patent laws. If they spend money on product innovation, replicas of the same product are sold at a lower price in the market. So intellectual property rights and patent laws implementation is a big issue in the path of R&D. This series of events has been affecting R&D and the country's export potential for decades. The job market remained tightened if the domestic industry could not expand. So for-

eign-qualified Pakistani students, experts and professionals remain abroad. About 92 thousand professionals migrated from Pakistan in 2022. The rapid brain drain has been adversely affecting R&D for decades. Advanced economies spend billions of dollars on R&D. Any invention or innovation is protected through intellectual property rights and patent laws for 5 to 10 years. They earned billions of dollars by exporting goods and services based on R&D. However, no transfer of technology to the developing world was made. They only transfer it for their own benefit or when it becomes useless for their own country. Undoubtedly, R&D remained the least important subject due to financial and infrastructural constraints in the history of Pakistan. But how can it be improved in the current scenario? The 4000 unemployed doctorates should be inducted into education and research institutions urgently. Education and research institutions should promote analytical skills and critical thinking in science and technology. Pakistani universities and research institutions must strengthen their bonds in

the field of science & technology with the world's advanced universities and research institutions. Bright students should be sent on fully funded scholarships to advanced universities in demand driven research degrees like robotics, artificial intelligence, IT, biotechnology, genetic and material science. Students should delve into domestic issues during the research phase. Intellectual property rights and patent laws should be implemented strictly to encourage the private sector to contribute to the field of R&D. Strong coordination is a dire need among government, universities and the private sector for R&D augmentation within the country as well as with foreign universities and research organizations. The research conducted by universities and institutes should be disseminated through social, print and electronic media in a summarized form in the national language for relevant stakeholders. Government, universities, research institutes, the private sector and civil society should support R&D. The author is a researcher at the Pakistan Institute of Development Economics (PIDE).

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Sincerity key to better US-China relations

Communication was a key word in former Chinese ambassador to the United States Qin Gang's farewell talk on the phone with US Secretary of State Antony Blinken on New Year's Day. Qin, who took up his new post as foreign minister last week, said he appreciated the several "candid, in-depth and constructive" meetings that he had had with Blinken during his tenure, and that he looked forward to continuing close working relations with the top US diplomat for better Sino-US relations in the future. Blinken also remarked on the importance of the US and China maintaining open lines of communication during his talk with Qin. Although their talk was more of diplomatic protocol than of practical meaning, it has still raised the hope that communication between the two sides can effectively contribute to putting bilateral ties back on a healthy development track. That the new foreign minister was promoted directly from the post of Chinese ambassador to the US is a telling sign of the tremendous significance Beijing attaches to Sino-US relations, and that should also be a takeaway for the US side. That Qin took every opportunity during his time as ambassador to promote people-to-people exchanges and mutual understanding between the two countries indicates that maintaining communication between the two countries will be high on his to-do list in handling Sino-US relations. However, those pinning hopes upon Qin using his open and friendly style to help thaw the icy state of the ties should not ignore his other side, as he has resolutely defended China's core interests and bottom line in dealing with the US when challenged in his interviews with US media outlets. With the rebuilding of risk management and control mechanisms being an imperative and urgent task to handle the complicated relations between the two countries, Qin will undoubtedly show both sides of his style in his new role, as cordial by preference, and indurated by transgressions are defining features of Chinese diplomacy. The country is open to constructive and friendly exchanges and win-win cooperation, and it is dedicated to promoting the common interests of countries, but it will never allow its own core interests to be harmed or communication and cooperation to be conducted in an unfair and lopsided way. Qin's familiarity with the US, his fluency in English and the connections he has established with various parts of US society, will be valuable assets for him to contribute to easing tensions in Sino-US ties. However, it should be borne in mind that the change of foreign minister on the Chinese side does not alter the fact that the crux of mending the Sino-US ties primarily lies with the US side stopping saying one thing and doing another.



A trip of hope in 2023

2023 is coming, and its mast tip has emerged from the sea level. This represents more of a hope for the world that has experienced various uncertainties, crises, and changes in 2022. For both China and the world, 2022 is destined to be marked in a unique position. As the time comes to a new junction, people are faced with another choice and test on how to make the future better. The overlapping effects of changes unseen in a century and a once-in-a-century pandemic reached a phased peak in 2022. Climate disasters, geopolitical tensions and confrontations, soaring food and energy prices, a sluggish economic recovery - a series of crises in both traditional and non-traditional security areas put world history again at the crossroads of turmoil or stability and recession or prosperity. The sudden outbreak of the Russia-Ukraine conflict is the biggest "gray rhino" event. It is a consequence of the long-term US and Western push for bloc security and camp confrontation in Europe, and its spillover effects are still profoundly evolving. Today, more than 30 years after the end of the Cold War, it offers a sober reminder again for the world that security has become problematic and development has been threatened on this planet. If 2022 is a mirror, it probably reflects the world's confusion, perplexity and hesitation at a new junction. This is also the current state of many countries in the world. Needless to say, 2022 has been a difficult year for China as well. From external changes and impact of the epidemic to the economic slowdown, there was no challenge that can be easily tackled. Even at this moment, many Chinese people are still fighting COVID-19. But China is a major power that knows best where it stands and where it's headed. The report to the 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China contains both clear guidance on which direction to go and specific planning framework. It is foreseeable that the year 2023 will not be easy either. China is facing the new challenge of better coordinating epidemic prevention and control with economic and social development. It still needs to continue to overcome all the difficulties on the way. And the world is hovering on the edge of war and peace and the light at the end of the tunnel has yet to appear. The times are catching up. China has taken a big test in 2022, which made us stronger and more determined. We kept marching forward while biting the bullet. Navigating through wind and storm, we never stopped. As the new year's bell is about to ring, we embrace 2023 with open arms, expecting it to become a new year for China to "roll up our sleeves and work hard" and provide the world with an inexhaustible supply of positive energy.

Cognitive hacking an invisible parasite in today's digital world

Sher Zada



Cognitive hacking" is a cyber-attack where peril actors manipulate victim's perceptions by appealing his/her psychological Achilles heels and making them addicted toward designed manifesto of perpetration. To perform their actions the perpetrators or group of perpetrators apply disinformation to catch readers' attention

Hardly anyone will be unaware of the term "hacking", while using the internet in this era of social networking. Every day, we hear people do complaints that their accounts are hacked or they are under threats of such attacks. Most often the hackers try to reach and get control of a person's or company's bank accounts, social media accounts to achieve their targets aimed financial gains or other malicious ambitions. There is another trend of phishing and scamming, the prior is an act of sending emails disguising

one's self as member of a reputed company offering financial benefits or packages, while the latter is fraudulent business deal either in physical or through online platforms. The basic difference between hacking and the phishing/scamming is the nature of the incidents. Where in first case one is totally unaware of who is attacking his/her account. While in the other case there is two-way communication between the perpetrator and the victim. However, in both cases the victim has no knowledge of the intentions of the attacker. Although hacking itself is not that much hard-hit issue as it considered by most of the internet users these days. There are two types of hacking, one is known as ethical hacking that's is used to secure the assets and system of an IT firm or an organization, where proper permissions are granted to the IT experts to apply hacking skills aimed to further strengthen the security of the firm and organization. While the other is malicious hacking where the perpetrator do attacks with malevolent intentions to get access to the accounts of internet consumers without their due permission. However, the risk factors of the above mentioned means of data thefts are not that much dangerous as the cognitive hacking, the practice that is trending very fast in the digital world of information blast. Whereas, news are spread in the blink of eyes without any confirmation whether it's authentic or fake. "Cognitive hacking" is a cyber-attack where peril actors manipulate victim's perceptions by appealing his/her psychological Achilles heels and making them addicted toward designed manifesto of perpetration. To perform their actions the perpetrators or group of perpetrators apply disinformation to catch readers' attention and attract audiences thorough showcasing wrong information in text writing, alluring audio podcasts and thrilling and thundering video broadcasts. Mostly this done to grab consumers attention to like, subscribe, share and retweet the contents created or edited by the perpetrators. Cognitive hacking causes riots, protests and creating challenges for the individuals, companies as well as create headache for the state's authorities. The era of information blasts and social media platforms bulge are the key elements that gave birth to the alarming trend of cognitive hacking. According to Finance Online report Nov, 2022 there is more than half (50.64%) of the global population now uses social media and, out of 4.57 billion internet users, 83.36% are active users. Such an excessive social media users have created challenges for the professional journalists, where they have been facing problems to bring at once truth-based news while following the canvas of ethics of journalism. The digital gadgets

i.e., smartphones, tablets, camera enabled smart watches and other portable devices are being used widely, where a million worth information is uploaded in a disinformant manner aimed getting popularity or fame to attract other social media users to like, share or subscribe one's profile. That on another side caused a postmortem of genuine information. Most of the social media platforms i.e., Meta (Facebook), twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram etc, use an algorithm setting that bring the news items, videos, photos and audios that have once watched by a social media consumer and displays an array of such elements for the consumer. Whenever a consumer scrolls on the screen the algorithm aligns similar trending materials that pops up on screen before the consumer. Indeed this not due to black magic but yes it's the cognitive hacking that works out in background. This male-informed and disinformant news are being shared by a social media consumer with his/her family, friends and others who are connected with him/her on social media platforms. As a result, when there real and accurate news have to come the fake news had already worked out on the cognitive sphere of the social media users, mobilizing their psychology to bluntly believe in false information causing chaos in society. Nonetheless, nowadays the world is considered as global village, not only the underdeveloped and developing countries are facing such challenges of cognitive hacking, but the technologically advanced developed countries i.e., United States, Russia, United Kingdom, China etc. are also under black shadow of cognitive hacking. The storming of the U.S. Capitol in Washington DC, on January 6, 2021 can be considered as one of the incidents of cognitive hacking in the United States, where the motive of storming was to pressurize the congress not to recognize the victory of the current U.S president Joe Biden by blaming him an enemy by mob supporters of Donald Trump, through social media campaigns, sharing images of riot control police through projection and textures as violent offenders of human rights and U.S laws. Such cognitive hacking has also been used in Russia-Ukraine war, where the states of both of the countries, including their allies, social media users are implicating fake news, disinformation and using as a tool to attract the world support in their favors. The scenario of cognitive hacking is also being utilized in India, Pakistan and rest of the developing countries in the world. In November 2022 an online digital website NapoleonCat reveals that There are 46 451 900 active Facebook users in Pakistan, which accounts 21% of its entire population. The majority of them are men - 77.2%. People aged 18 to 24 are the largest user group (17 100 000). The highest difference be-

tween men and women occurs within people of aged 25 to 34, where men lead by 12 700 000. It is not clear whether each person has a single social media account on a particular platform or having multiple accounts. On April 1, 2019 AFP reported that Facebook removed 103 pages, groups and accounts linked with Pakistan's Military. Similarly, On June 4, 2021 Facebook revealed that there are 6.5m fake accounts on its platform, out of which 40 Facebook accounts, 25 Pages, six Groups and 28 Instagram accounts were run from Pakistan, involved in spreading disinformation. Most of these accounts were pretending as representatives of Pakistan Army. The cyber war of fake news and disinformation has no territorial limits and its being used everywhere and in each field in contrast that was formerly limited to the field of media industry. However, Cognitive hacking is one of the most powerful psychological tools that is being used with various projected targets by its perpetrators. However, there are certain techniques that can play role to keep us safe not to become victim of cognitive hacking. First, if anyone comes across a news story that's quite alluring mental emotions, then a cross check should be applied to find out its authenticity before posting it to someone's social media account. Second, a news story that's received in the forms of social media banners, graphically well-designed pictures, video contents, should not be shared in haste with others without prior confirmation and authentication. Third, keep avoid following such profiles, groups and pages, which clinches your attention to keep clicking on hyperlinks or links to other pages, there is severe risk both of traditional hacking i.e., account hacking and cognitive hacking i.e., invisibly driving one's cognition to be an addict of particular contents and digital implants designed by the hacking mind sets. Fourth, there is no need to be excited at once while receiving a ping about financial offers in personal messenger or in email. However, if you are interested in such investments or offers then conduct deep research about the firm or company instead of relying on an online communication with someone through chat or email. The above mentioned techniques can vigilantly help one to keep him/her safe from malicious designs of hackers. To counter these challenges organizations committed to secure the ethics of professional journalism are continuously working to train professional journalists to overcome these challenges of misinformation, disinformation and male-information. There is dire need to combat this menace by devising effective policies by the states to discourage the trends of fake news, disinformation and cognitive hacking as well as global cooperation among countries in world.

—The writer is Journalist, Sociologist and Social Analyst

Palestinians: Caught between anxiety, lack of security, Israeli oppression

Yara Asi

I expected to hear stories of struggle, loss and trauma. And I heard dozens of them, particularly among the young, who feel acute despair. What I didn't expect was that my trip would coincide with the deadliest month in the deadliest year for Palestinians in the West Bank since 2006: At least 150 have been killed so far in 2022, including more than two dozen children, almost all as a result of Israeli military violence. Or just how directly I would experience the day-to-day violence that defines the lives of Palestinians

This year, during the lead-up to the Israeli elections, I returned to my hometown, Nablus, in the occupied West Bank, to work on a research project and spend time with my family there. I had received a grant to study the impact on Palestinians' health of Israel's restrictions on Palestinians' movement — such as checkpoints, travel permits (including those required for medical care), the separation wall spanning the West Bank and road closures. My previous work and the existing research done on Palestinian health and well-being gave me a good sense of what I would find: multiple burdens in access to health care and predictably high rates of depression, stress, anxiety and insecurity. I expected to hear stories of struggle, loss and trauma. And I heard dozens of them, particularly among the young, who feel acute despair. What I didn't expect was that my trip would coincide with the deadliest month in the deadliest year for Palestinians in the West Bank since 2006: At least 150 have been killed so far in 2022, including more than two dozen children, almost all as a result of Israeli military violence. Or just how directly I would experience the day-to-day violence that defines the lives of Palestinians. As talk swirls of even more severe crackdowns on Palestinians from the extreme right-wing coalition created by Benjamin Netanyahu, who became the prime minister of Israel again — and maybe even of the often predicted third intifada, or uprising — it's important to stop and take stock of how bad things have already been for Palestinians in the West Bank — especially in 2022. A few weeks into my trip, Nablus, a city of about 160,000, was blockaded by the Israeli Army in efforts to quell the Lion's Den, a newly formed Palestinian armed resistance group based there. The city was effectively cut off from the rest of the West Bank — an occupied territory already cut off from the world in many ways — by the Israeli military, a closure that was not lifted until three weeks later. This meant that all vehicles leaving or entering the city were subject to hours-long waits and searches (including, sometimes, searches of Palestinians' phones and social media accounts) or denied access to leaving or entering the city entirely. This had devastating effects on the city's economy and blocked access to health care, education and social

gatherings, not to mention immeasurable stress and uncertainty among the city's residents. The closure of the city at a time of already escalating military and settler violence was an act of violence in and of itself, a part of the collective punishment that is consistently justified on security grounds but operates under the assumption that all Palestinians are potential threats and must be treated as such. Palestinian youth have never known free movement or life without the constant and violent rule of the Israeli military. This is the context in which the Lion's Den, which has claimed responsibility for several shooting attacks on Israeli soldiers, has arisen. Israel's most recent clampdown on the West Bank, including the siege of Nablus, is in large part meant to dissuade popular mobilization around these groups. The crackdowns meant that all Palestinians had to adjust even the most minute aspects of their lives to avoid settler violence and encounters with the Israeli military, which is stationed all around the West Bank. During the closure, life for many living in and around Nablus was essentially put on hold as they waited for the Israeli government, an entity that Palestinians have no power to elect and that has no accountability to them, to make the decision to lift the closure and allow life to go back to some semblance of normal. The closure happened during the beginning of the celebrated Palestinian olive harvest season, preventing many families, including mine, from gathering to pick their olives and subjecting those who dared to do so to an even greater risk of attacks from settlers. Every one I talked to in Nablus said these were the worst conditions they could remember for decades — since the second intifada in the early 2000s, for those old enough to remember it. As I conducted a series of focus groups with doctors, nurses, patients and medical faculty members and students, it became clear that it was impossible for me to measure the extent of the damage caused by Israel's lockdown. The unrelenting buzzing sound of Israel's military surveillance drones, which patrolled Nablus 24/7 for weeks, for example — many people referred to it as a form of psychological torture. How can I measure that? For one focus group, a public health faculty member arrived 90 minutes late,

explaining that the road she tried to take to enter the city was blocked by a checkpoint, so she had to go a different way, recounting the experience as casually as someone might describe mistakenly putting on two mismatched socks. What does it say about a population's psyche when events like these are normalized?

I have long felt a responsibility to convey the reality of the situation for Palestinians not only as a researcher committed to justice and equity but also as someone whose family hails from the West Bank. I was born in Nablus to a woman from a nearby village and a man from a Palestinian town that was enveloped by Israel upon its establishment in 1948. My father taught journalism and political science in Nablus before he moved us to the United States, where I grew up. I'm now a professor myself, because I wanted to follow in his footsteps. I'm not a political scientist as my dad was; I'm a scholar of public health. Of course, the two subjects are intertwined in any setting: Health is inherently political. But in Nablus, I was reminded of just how deep that connection is.

That context has remained, for the most part, much the same for the past 50 years, with periods punctuated by slightly more freedom for Palestinians and other periods that featured heavy restriction and violence. I visited family in the West Bank every summer as a child and for most of my adult life. I remember the long, winding checkpoint lines, with hostile Israeli soldiers looking through our documents. I remember the electricity curfews imposed by Israel, leaving us to spend nights using only candles and lanterns. I remember being able to travel to the airport in Tel Aviv but having to switch taxis halfway through the journey to the West Bank because Palestinian taxis weren't allowed to pick us up. Now I and others of Palestinian descent, regardless of citizenship or country of residence, aren't even allowed to use that airport without special Israeli permission. Instead, because Israel bombed the last Palestinian airport and won't allow construction of a new one, we travel in and out of the West Bank through Jordan. (A lucky few have recently been able to fly out of an airport in southern Israel.)

—Source: Asharq Al-Awsat

Briefs

No mercy
for outlaws,
resolves NSC

FROM PAGE 01

socio-economic development as a priority while the armed forces would provide resolute deterrence and secure conducive and enabling environment. He said the provincial apex committees were being revived in full earnest and law enforcement agencies especially the counter-terrorism departments would be brought up to the required fighting standards with requisite capabilities. The forum concluded that no country would be allowed to provide sanctuaries and facilitation to terrorists and Pakistan reserved all rights in that respect to safeguarding its people. The Committee underscored that comprehensive 'National Security' revolved around economic security and that sovereignty or dignity came under stress without self-sufficiency and economic independence. The forum undertook a comprehensive view of the ongoing economic situation vis-à-vis challenges being faced by the common people of Pakistan, particularly the lower and middle-income classes. The finance minister briefed the forum about the economic stability roadmap of the government including the status of discussions with international financial institutions, exploring other financial avenues based on mutual interests as well as relief measures for common people. In order to strengthen the economy, the Committee agreed on undertaking concrete steps including import rationalization as well as preventing illegal currency outflows and hawala business. The emphasis will be specially made to improve agricultural output and manufacturing sector to ensure food security, imports substitution and employment.

Kabul:
Sanaullah's
remarks...

FROM PAGE 01

the group's members to Pakistan," the interior minister had said. In case of inaction by the Afghan authorities, Sanaullah had warned that "the international laws give you the right to target those who attack you". Sanaullah passed these remarks while talking about the decisions taken in the first round of the National Security Meeting — the principal decision-making forum on foreign policy and national security — which took place on Friday. It had decided to respond with "full force" to those who challenged the country. "There was an understanding in the NSC's meeting that there is no other option but to opt for a clearance operation," he had said.

Court to
hear ECP...

FROM PAGE 01

December 28 (2022) was never challenged. The ECP's director general law said the Commission announced its decision regarding the union councils on December 27 and the December 28 notification was based on it. Mian Abdul Rauf said the two houses of the Parliament had approved the bill (regarding increase in the number of UCs). The additional attorney general said even the notification dated December 19 was also not challenged. The chief justice remarked that the two sides were not coming towards the constitutional questions, and asked them to take time until the day after tomorrow for preparation.

Inflation
edges up...

FROM PAGE 01

the people, whose purchasing power has already hit rock bottom. The Consumer Price Index (CPI), the inflation monitor, rose to 24.5% in December from 12.3% in the same period last year, the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) reported on Monday. Despite a slight increase of 0.7% in the index movement, the majority of the consumer goods remained out of the people's reach. The inflation rate, however, was not in line with the Ministry of Finance's expectations, which ranged from 21% to 23%.

Pakistan halt NZ on 309-6
after Conway's century

Conway, who scored 122, put on 134 for the opening wicket with Tom Latham (71) after New Zealand won the toss on a National Stadium pitch that had traces of grass but did not initially support bowlers

DNA

KARACHI: Off-spinner Agha Salman and pacer Naseem Shah helped Pakistan derail New Zealand to 309-6 on Monday after opener Devon Conway scored a brilliant hundred on the first day in the second Test in Karachi. Salman grabbed 3-55 and Shah took 2-44 to trigger a New Zealand middle-order slump which saw the tourists lose five wickets for 45 runs during the final session, slumping from 234-1 to 279-6. At the close, Tom Blundell and Ish Sodhi were batting on 30 and 11 respectively as they try to revive New Zealand's innings. Conway, who scored 122, put on 134 for the opening wicket with Tom Latham (71) after New Zealand won the toss on a National Stadium pitch that had traces of grass but did not initially support bowlers. Conway steadied the innings with another 100-run stand for the second wicket with Kane



Williamson who made 36, but Pakistan pulled back after the visitors were 226-1 at tea. Salman had Conway caught behind by Sarfaraz Ahmed soon after

tea to make it 2-234 before six runs later Shah dismissed Williamson in the same manner. Conway struck 16 boundaries and a six in his 257-minute stay at the crease.

Salman then struck twice, beating Daryl Mitchell's defence for three and had Henry Nicholls caught behind with a turning delivery for 26. Abrar Ahmed took his only

wicket by trapping Michael Bracewell for nought.

The two-match series is tied at 0-0 after the first Test — also in Karachi — ended in a tame draw. In the morning, Pakistan's three-pronged pace attack looked helpless until Shah struck in the sixth over after lunch, trapping Latham leg-before with a sharp incoming delivery. Latham, who scored 113 in the first match, hit nine boundaries in his 100-ball knock, his 24th Test half-century.

Conway was lucky to survive a sharp chance when Saud Shakeel failed to hold on to a miscued drive off Hasan Ali on 89.

Pakistan brought on Abrar Ahmed in the ninth over but there was no sign of turn as Conway smashed a boundary and a six off the spinner's second over. The hosts picked Shah and Hasan in place of spinner Nauman Ali and fast-bowler Mohammad Wasim after the first Test, while New Zealand picked pacer Matt Henry over Neil Wagner.

Nadal beaten again as Swiatek,
Tsitsipas cruise at United Cup

SYDNEY: World number two Rafael Nadal slumped to a second-straight defeat at the United Cup Monday in a setback to his Australian Open preparations, but Stefanos Tsitsipas and Iga Swiatek were both on song. There was also more misery for former world number two Alexander Zverev, who, like Nadal, suffered a second loss to start his season, this time at the hands of Taylor Fritz. Spanish 22-time Grand Slam winner Nadal surprisingly crashed in his season-opening match on Saturday to 14th-ranked Cameron Norrie. And he again succumbed after winning the first set, going down 3-6, 6-1, 7-5 to Australia's 24th-ranked Alex De Minaur in Sydney, including losing six games in a row in the second set.

"Honestly, I couldn't be happier that I managed to get my first win over Rafa on this court, it's no secret this is my favourite court in the world," said De Minaur. "Rafa is a hell of a competitor and what he has been able to do for this sport is truly astounding so I'm just honoured. It's a dream come true."

It went with serve to 2-2 in the first set, but Nadal played some loose shots and a double fault handed De Minaur a break point, then he sent a forehand long to go 2-3 behind. But the Australian couldn't sustain the pressure and Nadal broke straight back. After a slow start, the Spaniard found his groove and in a devastating burst won the next three games to take the set. De Minaur



appeared deflated and was broken again on his first serve of the second set, but he flicked a switch to reel off six games in a row to leave Nadal stunned. They exchanged breaks in the third set before a string of unforced errors from Nadal allowed De Minaur to break again for 6-5 and serve out for the win. The mixed-team tournament features 18 countries playing in Sydney, Brisbane and Perth. The

winners of the two groups in each city advance to a city final on Wednesday, with whoever comes through that making the final four. Neither Spain nor Australia can progress from Group D in Sydney, with Norrie's Britain already the confirmed winner. They will play the United States in the city final after Fritz and Madison Keys put their country through against Germany. — APP

Departmental
cricket formally
restored: Sethi

LAHORE: Najam Sethi, the Chair of the Pakistan Cricket Boards Management Committee, on Monday formally approved notifications for the restoration of Departments/Services Organisations, Regions and District/Zonal Cricket Associations under the PCB Constitution 2014.

The issuance of the notifications mean 16 Regional Cricket Associations will now participate in the Quaid-e-Azam Trophy and eight departments will compete in the Patron's Trophy during the 2023-24 season, beginning in August. In addition to these tournaments, Grade-II, 50-over and 20-over events will also be organised for the regional and departmental side during the 2023-24 domestic cricket season, details of which will be announced in due course.

The Departments/Services Organisation, Regions and District/Zonal Cricket Associations were replaced by the six Cricket and 90 City Cricket Associations in the PCB Constitution 2019, which was repealed in December 2022.

"In pursuance of Ministry's notifications dated 22 December 2022 regarding repealing of Constitution of the Pakistan Cricket Board notified vide SRO 1045(1)/2019 dated 19 August 2019 and Ministry's notification dated 22 December 2022 regarding restoration of the PCB Constitution 2014, the Management Committee of the Pakistan Cricket Board hereby formally announces the restoration of all Departments/Service Organisations, Regions and District/Zonal Cricket Association as recognised by the Board under the PCB Constitution 2014," the notification said, adding: "and further actions will be taken in due course."

Najam Sethi said: "I am pleased to confirm the formal restoration of Departments/Services Organisation, Regions and District/Zonal Cricket Associations under the PCB Constitution 2014. "It is our endeavor, resolve and commitment to all our cricketers that we will provide them equal and fair opportunities to display their talent so that they can make their careers in the sport. This can only be achieved when we will expand our cricket canvas, which was unfortunately restricted and limited to a small number of cricketers and teams in 2019. — DNA

DIG Amanullah
Memorial KP Tennis
Championship begins

PESHAWAR: The 9th DIG Amanullah Memorial KP Tennis Championship got underway at the Synthetic Tennis Courts of the Qayyum Sports Complex Peshawar with Senior Vice President and known cardiac surgeon Dr. Farhat Abbas formally inaugurated. Secretary KP Tennis Association Umar Ayaz Khalil, Pakistan No.1 Aqeel Khan, Tennis Coaches Shehryar Khan, Roman Gul, Nauman Khan, Zakirullah were present. In the Tennis Championship, boys U10, U14, U18, Men's single and doubles competitions will be held for which Rs. 200,000 cash prize has been allocated. Pakistan Police, Pakistan Air Force, SNGPL and other players of the province are participating. In the opening day matches, Abdullah Khan of KP defeated Uzair Khan, seeded number 8, by 6-2, 6-3 in the Men singles. In the second match, Hussam Khan defeated Muaz Khan by 6-2 6-1. Hayat defeated Shaun Mahmood by 6-1 and 6-1, SNGPL's Saqib Hayat defeated KP's Gibran Ullah 6-2 and 6-2 to reach the next round. Speaking to the media on this occasion, Senior Vice President Prof. Dr. Farhat Abbas said that the entry of the players has been made subject to Form B so that there is no room for unfair means rather should follow merit only. Pakistan's top-seeded players including Pakistan No. 1 Aqeel Khan, Pakistan No.2 Shoaib Khan and Pakistan No. 5 Yousaf Khalil. — APP

PBBF announce National
Basketball c'ship schedule

OUR CORRESPONDENT

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Basketball Federation (PBBF) has announced the final schedule of Inter-Departmental National Basketball Championship starting from January 25th at the Liaquat Gymnasium, Pakistan Sports Complex Islamabad. According to the organizing secretary of the championship and the Associate Secretary of the Pakistan Basketball Federation (PBBF) Ouj-e-Zahoor, all the arrangements have been completed for the successful five-day championship which will be held under the supervision of the Federal Basketball Association (FIBA). He said that defending champion Pakistan Army, POF, Railways, Navy will join group A in the tournament while

Pakistan Air Force, Wapda, Police will comprise Group B.

Ouj-e-Zahoor said that the inaugural match of the championship will be played between the defending champion Pakistan Army and Navy while POF and Railways, WAPDA and Police teams will compete in the first round of the championship.

He said that the semi-finals of the championship will be played on January 28, while the final will be held on January 29.

Schedule:

January 25 (Day-1): Army vs Navy; POF vs Railways; Wapda vs Police
January 26 (Day-2): Army vs Railway; PAF vs Police; POF vs Navy.
January 27 (Day-3): Army vs POF; PAF vs Wapda; Railway vs Navy.
January 28 (Day-4): Semi Finals
January 29 (Day-5): Final

Ouj-e-Zahoor said that the inaugural match of the championship will be played between the defending champion Pakistan Army and Navy while POF and Railways, WAPDA and Police teams will compete in the first round of the championship

IHC grants
bail to
PTI leader
Azam Swati

FROM PAGE 01

after completion of arguments. Earlier in the day, the Islamabad High Court reserved the judgement on the post-arrest bail of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leader Azam Swati. The special prosecutor did not appear in the court; Azam Swati's lawyer Babar Awan appeared in the court. Babar Awan told the court that Azam Swati's son wanted to present his stance before the court. "My father had written a letter. I would like to read the letter with the permission of the court," Azam Swati's son said.

"The court will constitute a larger bench on this issue. We want to settle this matter once and for all. The court normally does not see these types of letters," the IHC chief justice remarked. "The court should look into this matter today," Babar Awan pleaded with the court. "It is not possible to constitute a larger bench today," the court replied. "I have requested Azam Swati's son to withdraw the letter," Babar Awan told the court.

On the occasion, Deputy Attorney General Arshad Mehmood Kayani informed the court that the special prosecutor did not come that day. "There is no need for the special prosecutor. It is a case of Federal Investigation Agency (FIA)," the court answered. "I have been directed to withdraw the letter," Babar Awan informed the court after consultation. Azam Swati's letter of mistrust against the IHC chief justice was then withdrawn. Thereafter, Babar Awan argued before the court that the matter was not inquired into and Azam Swati was arrested. "The basic human rights were violated in this case. A total of 52 FIRs have been registered against Azam Swati," he stated. "You are saying that the SOPs were not followed," the chief justice asked from Babar Awan.

Masses
should be
apprised...

FROM PAGE 01

The PTI chief during the meeting instructed stalwarts to boost the "anti-inflation drive" against the incumbent government and also directed to apprise the masses of their failures behind current economic woes, sources added. Earlier, the former premier summoned a party meeting on January 8 to finalise the strategy for vote of confidence in Punjab.

Sources claim that the PTI has failed to reach a consensus on the matter and the trust vote faces further delay as PML-Q's Moonis is on a foreign visit. They say the PTI and PML-Q alliance has no other option but to seek vote of confidence as per directions of Punjab Governor Balighur Rehman. On the other hand, Punjab Assembly Speaker Sibtain Khan said on Monday they were firm on their decision to dissolve assemblies. The PTI leader clarified that Imran Khan had not backtracked on his decision and reiterated that the assemblies would be dissolved on the PTI chief's signal. He further said the provincial legislatures would be dissolved after addressing legal and constitutional complexities.

Imran Khan
changes...

FROM PAGE 01

Shehbaz Sharif would become prime minister which was contrary to his earlier statements. He (Imran) used to say that he even could think Shehbaz Sharif becoming the country's chief executive.

Imran Khan had already failed to materialize his plan to default the country, and he should better introspect on his four-year government's performance from 2018 to April 2022.

Ironically, "foreign agent Imran Khan", who had robbed Toshakhana and traded off national interests for diamonds, had the audacity to question what wrong he had committed, she remarked. Marriyum said Imran Khan acted like a dictator and took autocratic steps against his opponents on false allegations, however, not a single allegation was proved. Now the time had come that Imran Khan would have to answer for his wrongdoings, she added.

Auger-Aliassime, Rune stunned at Adelaide Int'l

"So to come out in my first main draw match of the year and beat a player of his quality, it just shows that the work I did in the off-season is paying off." Popyrin now plays American Marcos Giron who beat French veteran Richard Gasquet 7-6 (7/5), 6-7 (6/8), 7-5 on Sunday

ADELAIDE: Australian qualifier Alexei Popyrin stunned second seed Felix Auger-Aliassime in the first round of the season-opening Adelaide International on Monday as Novak Djokovic was given a hero's welcome in a rare doubles appearance. On a day of upsets, world number 11 Holger Rune also crashed out, as did women's third seed Daniela Kasatkina and fifth seed Danielle Collins. Canada's Auger-Aliassime was in top form towards the end of 2022, winning three tournaments in October and November before leading Canada to Davis Cup

glory when they beat Australia in the final. He rose to number six in the world and said before the tournament he wanted to ride the wave of momentum into the 2023 season. But he came unstuck against Popyrin, who dropped out of the top 100 last year, slumping 6-4, 7-6 (7/5). The 23-year-old Australian attacked at every opportunity, hitting 32 winners, including 12 aces. Popyrin broke Auger-Aliassime once in the first set and although he went down an early break in the second, he was able to claw back then clinch the tiebreak on

his first match point. "I had a really, really tough season last year," Popyrin said. "So to come out in my first main draw match of the year and beat a player of his quality, it just shows that the work I did in the off-season is paying off." Popyrin now plays American Marcos Giron who beat French veteran Richard Gasquet 7-6 (7/5), 6-7 (6/8), 7-5 on Sunday. Japan's Yoshihito Nishioka downed fifth seed Rune — the ATP Newcomer of the Year in 2022 after claiming three titles — in three sets. Rune, 19, won the first set comfortably but

but enjoyed overwhelming crowd support. The Serbian superstar, who is also playing singles in Adelaide, was deported from the country before the 2022 Australian Open for not being vaccinated against Covid-19 and was subsequently barred from re-entering for three years. But the ban was lifted in November and he will be attempting to win his 10th Australian Open title later this month. There was also a major upset in the women's draw when 18-year-old Czech qualifier Linda Noskova beat Kasatkina 6-3, 6-7 (2/7), 6-3. In a minor upset, world number 21 Elena Rybakina of Kazakhstan, the reigning Wimbledon champion, defeated 2022 Australian Open runner-up Collins 5-7, 6-2, 6-3. Fourth-seeded Veronika Kudermetova of Russia crushed American Amanda Anisimova 6-3, 6-0, Romanian Irina-Camelia Begu beat another American, Shelby Rogers, 3-6, 7-6 (7/5), 6-1, while Liudmila Samsonova finished too strongly for China's Zhang Shuai, winning 5-7, 6-3, 6-0. — APP

Briefs

Turkish exports hit all-time high

ANKARA: Türkiye's exports hit an all-time high of \$254.2 billion in 2022, President Recep Tayyip Erdogan announced on Monday, citing preliminary data. Despite global challenges, the figure increased by 12.9% from a year earlier, Erdogan told a news conference in Istanbul. "Our goal is to ensure that Türkiye takes its place among the top 10 exporting countries in the world," he said. The president underlined that Türkiye's exports in Turkish liras reached nearly 350 billion Turkish liras (\$19 billion) last year. "The number of countries and regions to which we export with our currency has reached 197," Erdogan added. Separately, Trade Ministry revealed that Türkiye's imports surged by 34.3% year-on-year to \$364.4 billion in 2022. The country's trade gap totaled \$110.2 billion last year, widening from \$46.2 billion a year ago, preliminary data showed. The export-import coverage ratio decreased to 69.8% in 2022 from 83% in 2021.—DNA

Swiss ski resorts on slippery slope

GENEVA: The start of the year with unseasonably mild temperatures and unwanted rainfall is further exacerbating the already precarious snow cover at ski resorts in Switzerland. At various locations in the Swiss lowlands, mercury levels climbed above 20 degrees Celsius (68 degrees Fahrenheit) on Jan. 1. A first major ski resort, Splügen-Tambo, has drawn the consequences and closed "until further notice" on Monday. "Unfortunately, due to the lack of snow, the heavy rainfall and high temperatures, we have to close our ski resort from January 2, 2023, until further notice," the resort's operator said in a statement. "It is no longer possible for us to prepare the slopes because we have too much water ... and the snow does not freeze at night." The winter sports area in Splügen-Tambo sits at an altitude of 1,484 to 2,215 meters (3,280-6,561 feet). Data from the Institute for Snow and Avalanche Research (SLF) shows that ski stations, particularly in low-lying areas, are facing increasing difficulties. According to the SLF, the last 30 years have been uniquely low in snowfall, especially on the Swiss Plateau, with the trend statistically significant at ski stations below 1,300 meters (4,265 feet). SLF research shows the changes become more pronounced the lower a station is located. There is, however, no clear trend for snow depths in high winter – December through February – above 2,000 meters (6,561 feet). According to the SLF, which has been taking measurements since 1971, the vast majority of stations have seen a clear decline in days with snow-covered ground, regardless of their elevation or location.—APP

IESCO notifies power suspension programme

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Electric Supply Company (IESCO) on Monday issued a power suspension programme for Tuesday for various areas of its region due to necessary maintenance and routine development work. According to the IESCO spokesman, the power supply of different feeders and grid stations would remain suspended for the period from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m., Islamabad Circle G-6/3, Supermarket, Iqbal Town, Chara, CDA Office, Sharifabad, Khanna East, F-8 Markaz, G-9 Express, I-8/2, I-10/2, Golra-2, Kalingar, Bhara Kahu, Company Bagh, Barian, Patriata, Upper Topa, Peer Sohawah, Rehara, A.Q.Khan, NIH, Mahfouz Shaheed, Club-1 Feeders, Rawalpindi City Circle E-Block, Benazir Bhutto Hospital, Kuri Road, Al Noor Colony, Farooq Azam, Dhok Hekmad, City, Major Masood, Jama Masjid, Gwalmandi, Industrial, Gulzar Shaheed, Bani, Azizabad, Radio Pak, Goltra, MFM, Chakra.—APP



LAHORE: Member Provincial Assembly Punjab, Bilal Yaseen meets Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Monday.—DNA

ICCI invites Pak diaspora to explore JVs in Pakistan

Speaking at the occasion, Imran Hussain, Member Parliament UK and Shadow Minister for Employments said that they all are friends of Pakistan and want to act as a bridge between Pakistan and UK. He also invited ICCI delegation to visit UK and they will host it

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The UK and USA are major trading partners of Pakistan and Pakistan wants to further strengthen its trade and economic ties with these countries to achieve beneficial outcomes for its economy. This was said by Faad Waheed, Acting President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry while addressing a delegation of Pakistani origin politicians and business community from UK and USA that visited ICCI led by Imran Hussain Member UK Parliament and Shadow Minister Employments. Faad Wa-

heed said that Pakistan-UK bilateral trade is currently around £ 2.9 billion and Pakistan-USA bilateral trade is around US\$ 10.5 billion, which is still below its actual potential. He said that more serious efforts are needed to further improve Pakistan's trade with UK and USA. He said that Pakistani diaspora in UK and USA should play more effective role in further enhancing trade and investment relations of Pakistan with these important markets. He said that Pakistan is a huge market of over 220 million consumers with tremendous potential for joint ventures and investment in various sectors of its economy. He invited

Pakistani diaspora in UK and USA to explore JVs and investment in Pakistan and assured that ICCI would extend all possible cooperation to them in such efforts. Engr. Muhammad Azhar ul Islam Zafar, Vice President ICCI said that Pakistan has good potential to export more products to UK and USA. He stressed for regular exchange of trade delegations to explore all untapped areas of mutual cooperation of Pakistan with UK and USA. Khalid Iqbal Malik, Group Leader ICCI said that Pakistani diaspora should consider investing in housing & construction, oil & gas exploration, infrastructure develop-

ment, tourism and other sectors in Pakistan. He said that ICCI would provide its full cooperation to connect them with right partners in Pakistan. Speaking at the occasion, Imran Hussain, Member Parliament UK and Shadow Minister for Employments said that they all are friends of Pakistan and want to act as a bridge between Pakistan and UK. He also invited ICCI delegation to visit UK and they will host it. He thanked ICCI for giving warm reception to the delegation. Lord Wajid Khan & Lord Qurban Hussain, Members House of Lords UK, Yasmin Dar Deputy Mayor of Manchester and others also spoke at the occasion

and stressed that Pakistan should create conducive environment for young Pakistani diaspora in UK and USA for investing in Pakistan. Arshad Rachyal Secretary General Pakistan Press Club UK, Zahir Ahmed Maher Chairman Overseas Pakistan Global Foundation, Tahira Mohammad USA Chair of Pakistan Organization Worker Education & Rights, Nawab Ud Din USA Chairman Signature Limo NY, Syed Ali Kamran Kirmani USA Entrepreneurs 7 Politician, Nadeem Ahmed Khan Chairman Khubaib Foundation, Afzal Butt President Pakistan Federal Union of Journalists and others were in the delegation.

3 days needed for Manila airport operations

ISTANBUL: Following a major electricity crisis on New Year's day, it will take at least 72 hours to fully normalize flight operations in the Philippines' capital Manila, a senior official said on Monday. Ninoy Aquino International Airport is "not really fully" operational, said Cesar Chiong, general manager of the airport authority. "Prior to yesterday, we accept about 20 arrivals per hour. Right now, we are only accepting 15 arrivals per hour but there are no limits on the departures," Chiong told local broadcaster ABS-CBN. The country's main international airport in Manila saw a power outage on Sunday affecting flights and leaving thousands of passengers stranded. The electrical failure hit radar and communication equipment, canceling almost all flights from morning until the evening on Sunday. "Based on our experience in the last typhoon it will take about 72 hours for the airlines to normalize their operations. That is the estimate," Chiong said. He said two uninterruptible power supplies (UPS) serving the airport failed on Sunday and that authorities shifted to a commercial power supplier that "caused a power surge" of 380 volts instead of the normal 220 volts. "Because of the power surge, some of the equipment that they (airport) have actually failed ... that's part of the main issue why there was no radio, there was no radar, there was no internet and there was no communication," Chiong explained. Meanwhile, disaster management authorities in the country said on Monday that the death toll due to heavy rains and floods that hit the archipelago nation on Christmas had risen to 51, while 19 others remain missing.—APP

FTO disposes off 6034 complaints

OUR CORRESPONDENT

PESHAWAR: The office of Federal Tax Ombudsman (FTO) under the leadership of Dr. Asif Mahmood Jah has achieved a record disposal of 6034 complaints in the outgoing year 2022. "FTO office received 6959 complaints out of which 6034 have been disposed of, as compared to year 2021, wherein 3371 complaints were received, out of which 2868 have been disposed of," shared Zia-ul-Haq Sarhadi, a prominent businessman of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa serving as Honorary Media Coordinator of FTO. In a press statement issued here on Monday, Zia ul Haq Sarhadi said being a former Senior Tax Officer, Dr. Asif Jah has a vast experience of tax matters and has resorted to maximum utilization of Section 33 of the FTO Ordinance, 2000, regarding informal resolution of disputes. The FTO Office had its presence in seven cities when he took over last year on 29th September, 2021 and is expanded in year 2022 to other five cities, including Sargodha, Sialkot, Sukkur, Abbottabad and Hub to provide speedy justice to the aggrieved taxpayers at their doorstep. The FTO has appointed 34 leading businessmen as honorary advisors after selecting them from various chambers of commerce and industry to facilitate aggrieved taxpayers in filing the complaints to the office of FTO, Zia added. Sharing objectives of FTO, Zia said the department aim is to resolve tax matters of the aggrieved taxpayers on priority basis in a transparent, swift and cost free manner within the shortest possible time span. To achieve these objectives, the FTO has introduced an open door policy, quick disposal, merit based relief, awareness campaign (87 Sessions), advisory committee revamping (47 new Members added), creation of Overseas Pakistanis Grievance Redressal Cell, special research studies conducted, translation of FTO Ordinance, 2000, in Urdu and launching of Monthly Newsletter, he added. About working, he said no fee is charged against filing of complaint, and a complainant can file his complaint in written form or through what's app, on webpage or on mobile app of the FTO office.

Exiled Iran opposition figures in united 'victory' message

DNA

PARIS: A group of prominent exiled Iranian pro-opposition figures have issued a coordinated message predicting 2023 will be a year of "victory" with the regime shaken by protests. Those sending the message include leaders from the fields of culture, human rights and sports. The Iranian diaspora has long been seen as lacking unity, split into different political factions and strategies for dealing with the Islamic republic, that ousted the shah in 1979. But with protests still continuing in Iran over 100 days after they were sparked by the death of young Iranian Kurdish woman Mahsa Amini, the message appears an at-

tempt to find a long-sought unity. "The year 2022 was a glorious year of solidarity for Iranians of every belief, language and orientation," it said. "With organization and solidarity, 2023 will be the year of victory for the Iranian nation. The year of freedom and justice in Iran." The message was sent simultaneously on social media by a variety of figures, ranging from the influential US-based dissident Masih Alinejad to the son of the ousted shah, Reza Pahlavi, who also lives in the United States. Prominent actors Golshifteh Farahani and Nazanin Boniadi also tweeted the message, as did Zar Amir Ebrahimi, who won the best actress award at the Cannes Film Festival in France last year. "We are united to reach

freedom," Farahani wrote on her Instagram account. "We will stand together and will not be silent." Prominent rights activists to post the message included Nobel Peace Prize laureate Shirin Ebadi, and Hamed Esmaeilian, who has led the Canada-based campaign for justice for the victims of the Ukraine Airlines flight shot down by Iran in January 2020. From the field of sports, they were joined by former Iranian international football star Ali Karimi, who has been a vociferous supporter of the protest movement. The protest movement sparked by the death of Amini, who had been arrested for allegedly breaching the Islamic republic's strict dress code, is presenting the clerical leadership with its biggest challenge since the 1979

revolution. The crackdown has seen 476 people killed, according to Norway-based rights group Iran Human Rights. Two people have already been executed over the protests, while IHR says at least 100 detainees are at risk of execution. The United Nations says at least 14,000 people have been arrested, with several well known figures such as the actor Taraneh Alidoosti still in detention. Roham Alvandi, a history professor at the London School of Economics, said the message was a "hopeful sign in dark times." With the authorities showing little sign of offering concessions to protesters, the Fars news agency reported that Iranian police were launching a new drive to step up enforcement of the obligatory hijab.

Iranian embassy issues statement on martyrdom of Gen Qasem Soleimani

DNA

ISLAMABAD: On the third anniversary of the assassination of Lieutenant General Soleimani, the commander of the Quds Force of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, along with his companion Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis and several of their retinues, I.R. Iran Embassy in Islamabad once again strongly condemns this hideous terrorist action tantamount to state terrorism. The act of terrorism against an official and high-ranking military staff of the UN member state was an obvious breach of international law, Geneva Conventions and military customs and regulations. This action, being an act of crime and an act of aggression is considered to be a great threat to the peace and security of the world and the region. By assassinating one of the greatest and veteran commanders to fight against terrorism and extremism, the USA elevated the axis to combat against Takfiri groups and now the region is engaged in the negative consequences emerging from the lack of a proficient and stalwart commander. The so-called preventive assassination was categorically meant



to eliminate a competent and triumphant force, but soon after it proved to be a miscalculation strategic illusion exercised by an awkward quasi-politician, prompted by associate elements and facilitated by hypocrites. The state terrorism revealed the double standards even in the definition and implementation of the most evident and basic principle of international law and human right. Examples of this kind of double standard and hypocrisy by the USA are galore in the contemporary history of the international community. Nowa-

days, the people of the region are affected by the miscalculations, strategic errors, interventions and opportunism by the exterior countries. No nation like Iran and Pakistan has ever been affected by the plague of terrorism and it continues to exist. Terrorism is the common pain of the two Muslim nations and a lot of pure blood has shed on this path. Now, three years passes since the unmanly assassination of Gen. Qasem Soleimani, I.R. Iran is still restless to hold the committers, supporters and assistants of this brutal crime accountable and to prosecute them in a fair and equitable court of justice. This action is regarded as an international criminal act indictable in the international tribunals. International Criminal Court (ICC) being one, the scope of the mechanism of which the USA escaped some two decades ago in order to evade accountability under such crimes and to provide impunity for the committers of the international crime as such. However, the Islamic Republic of Iran will officially use its political, legal and international capacities in order to take action and prosecute and indict the perpetrators of this hideous crime through recognized legal mechanisms.

Transport workers strike in Tunisia to protest delay in wages

TUNIS, Tunisia: A strike by state transport company workers brought life to a halt in the Tunisian capital Tunis on Monday. The protest was triggered by the delayed payment of wages and bonuses by the Tunisian authorities. "We have decided to go on open strike until a date is set for the payment of our wages and bonuses," Wajih Zaidi, secretary general of the Association of Public Transport Operators, told reporters. "We will continue the protest until the government and the Ministry of Finance meet the workers' demands," he added. Metro and bus services in the capital Tunis came to a standstill as part of the strike. According to a report by Anadolu Agency, hundreds of transport workers gathered in Kasbah Square in Tunis, holding banners demanding payment of their wages. Last week, cab drivers in the capital had gone on strike to protest rising fuel prices and poor living conditions. Tunisia is in the midst of a deep political crisis that has exacerbated the country's economic situation since President Kais Saied overthrew the government, suspended parliament and took over executive power in 2021.—APP

SECP issues consolidated circular for Modaraba sector

ISLAMABAD: In a bid to improve efficiency and compliance in the Modaraba sector, the Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan (SECP) has consolidated all statutory and regulatory requirements in one Circular. The step is taken as part of SECP's efforts for creating an enabling environment for the Islamic finance sector in the country, said a press release issued here. The consolidated circular SRO 2310 contains all prior circulars, notifications, clarifications, and directives that have been issued by SECP since 1999 for the Modaraba sector while all the duplications, repealed and redundant statutory requirements have been deleted. All the up-to-date statutory and regulatory requirements have been compiled in a systematic order. A comprehensive exercise has been done to review all previously issued circulars, clarifications, and notifications. The objective is to provide a comprehensive and prudent regulatory environment for the Modaraba sector while ensuring ease and efficiency in compliance.—APP

Kashif appointed as Chairman Kyrgyzstan Trade House

ISLAMABAD: Veteran industrialist Meher Kashif Younis, who is also the Coordinator to Federal Tax Ombudsman, has been appointed as Chairman Kyrgyzstan Trade House to promote bilateral trade between the two Muslim states. He is also the former senior Vice President of the Lahore Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Vice President of Gold Ring Economic Forum, said a press release issued here on Monday. The Kyrgyzstan Trade House (KTH) was inaugurated by Ambassador Kyrgyzstan, Ulanbek Totuaiev in the last week and was attended by top businessmen and leading industrialists representing different sectors. Meher Kashif Younis said all-out efforts would be made to increase the volume of bilateral trade between the two countries and importers and exporters of either side will be fully encouraged to avail all possible opportunities and explore untapped potential with frequent exchange of visits of business communities. He said various products of Kyrgyzstan will be displayed at the KTH to attract the business community and brief them on the scope of expanding the volume of trade. He said Ulanbek Totuaiev, Ambassador of Kyrgyzstan, had assured availability of KTH and the Kyrgyzstan embassy for facilitating the Pakistani traders to visit Kyrgyzstan.—APP

Briefs

Punjab
Assembly
session
summoned
on Jan 9

DNA

LAHORE: A session of the Punjab Assembly has been summoned at 2pm on January 9 next. The Punjab Assembly secretariat has also issued a notification in this regard. Punjab Assembly Speaker Sardar Sibtain Khan will preside over the session. Earlier, the Punjab Assembly session was adjourned till January 11 for the vote of confidence to the chief minister by the MPAs. Meanwhile, Punjab Chief Minister (CM) Chaudhry Parvez Elahi on Monday inaugurated new Punjab Assembly (PA) building that had been completed last year. It took 15 years to complete the building due to unavailability of funds and political impediments. The CM said the new building was constructed while keeping the needs of the next century in consideration. "The new assembly beside hosting 500 members of the assembly will contain Ayes and Noes lobbies with capacities of 200 each", he added. He said the guest gallery had a capacity 800 persons adding the offices of the CM, Speaker, Deputy Speaker, ministers, and Leader of the Opposition in the assembly were set up in the Secretariat building of the new building. "Three committee rooms, one conference room, library, cafe and a parking with a capacity of 400 are also included in the new building", he added.

SHC directs
police to not
arrest Gill

DNA

KARACHI: The Sindh High Court (SHC) has directed the Police to refrain from detaining Shabbaz Gill in cases registered in Karachi. The hearing was held in the SHC in the cases pertaining to the insulting statements against national institutions. Lawyers of Mr Gill were of the view that a plea had been registered in the SHC for declaring the cases null and void and unless a detailed judgement came, the Police must be barred from arresting Mr Gill. In his petition, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf senior leader said cases had been registered against him in Karachi - police stations Sarjani town and Rizvia, when he had already been nominated in a case in the Lahore's police station Manga Mandi. The SHC immediately accepted the plea of Mr Gill and ordered the Police to refrain from arresting him. The former advisor to the Prime Minister remained behind bars for few weeks in his controversial remarks against the state institutions.

Israeli occupation forces
kill two Palestinians

The fatalities in Kafr-Dan village were the first for Palestinians since Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu retook office last week at the head of a hard-right coalition

WEB DESK

WEST BANK: Israeli forces killed a Hamas militant and another Palestinian during clashes near the occupied West Bank city of Jenin on Monday that were set off when the army came to demolish the homes of two slain gunmen, Palestinian sources said. The fatalities in Kafr-Dan village were the first for Palestinians since Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu retook office last week at the head of a hard-right coalition. The Israeli army confirmed carrying out the raid to raze the homes of two Palestinians who killed one of its commanders in the West Bank last year before they were shot dead. Troops shot at Palestinians in Kafr-Dan who attacked them with gunfire, rocks and firebombs, the army said in a statement. There were no Israeli casualties in the incident. Hamas, an Islamist group that runs the Gaza Strip and has a following in the West

Bank, claimed one of the dead Palestinians, who was 17 years old, as its member. In a statement, Hamas, which rejects co-existence with Israel, vowed to "pursue resistance and confront the terrorism and fascism of the new Occupation government". There were no immediate word on whether the second slain Palestinian, 21, had any factional affiliations. In Kafr-Dan, Hani Abed, the father of one of the gunmen killed in the Sept. 14 clash, described the Israeli demolitions as "collective punishment". "This will not break our determination," he told Reuters as he stood by the rubble of his house. Last year saw the worst levels of violence in the West Bank in more than a decade, much of it concentrated around Nablus and the nearby city of Jenin, with at least 150 Palestinians and more than 20 Israelis killed. In Ramallah, Palestinian Prime Minister Mohammad Shtayyeh, held Israel responsible for any escalation that could result from "acts of killings and daily incursions".

Pakistan demands access to
missing war soldiers in India

"Pursuant to the agreement, the list of nuclear installations and facilities in Pakistan was officially handed over to a representative of the Indian High Commission in Islamabad at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on Monday

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan has demanded India to grant it access to its soldiers went missing during 1965 and 1971 wars, said diplomatic sources. According to the sources, Pakistan has enlisted its demand along with the list of prisoners it exchanges with India on the first day of every year. Indian Charge d'Affaires in Islamabad has been informed of the Pakistani demand, the diplomatic sources said, adding Pakistan has also sought consular access to 56 Pakistani civilian prisoners. On Sunday, Pakistan and India had exchanged lists of nuclear installations and facilities in their countries and as well as lists of prisoners in each other's custody in pursuance of agreements signed between the two countries. The Foreign Office statement issued a statement in Islamabad stating: "The Agreement on Prohibition of At-

tacks against Nuclear Installations and Facilities between Pakistan and India was signed on 31st December 1988 and ratified on 27th January 1991. The Agreement, inter alia, provides that both countries shall inform each other of their nuclear installations and facilities, falling within its definition, on 1st January of each calendar year. "Pursuant to the agreement, the list of nuclear installations and facilities in Pakistan was officially handed over to a representative of the Indian High Commission in Islamabad at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on Monday. Simultaneously, the Indian Ministry of External Affairs also handed over the list of India's nuclear installations and facilities to a representative of the Pakistan High Commission in New Delhi." The FO also stated that Pakistan and India exchanged the lists of prisoners in each other's custody through diplomatic channels. The simultaneous exchange of lists took place in pursuance of the Consular Access Agreement of

2008. Under the agreement, both countries are required to exchange the lists of prisoners in each other's custody on 1st January and 1st July, every year. The Government of Pakistan shared with the Indian High Commission in Islamabad a list of 705 Indian prisoners detained in Pakistan, including 51 civilian prisoners and 654 fishermen. The Indian Government also shared with the High Commission for Pakistan in New Delhi a list of 434 Pakistani prisoners in India, including 339 civilian prisoners and 95 fishermen. Separately, Pakistan has requested for early release and repatriation of its 51 civilian prisoners and 94 fishermen, who have completed their respective sentence and their national status stands confirmed. Furthermore, a request for grant of consular access to missing defence personnel of 1965 and 1971 wars, and special consular access to 56 civil prisoners has also been made, the FO concluded.



ISLAMABAD: President Dr. Arif Alvi pays a condolence visit to Senator Muhammad Humayun Mohmand on the sad demise of his father. - DNA

Russia says
Ukrainian rocket
strike kills 63
Russian troops

NEWS DESK

KYIV: Russia acknowledged on Monday that scores of its troops were killed in one of the Ukraine war's deadliest strikes, drawing demands from nationalist bloggers for commanders to be punished for housing soldiers alongside an ammunition dump. Russia's defence ministry said 63 soldiers had died in the fiery blast which destroyed a temporary barracks in a former vocational college in Makiivka, twin city of the Russian-occupied regional capital of Donetsk. It said the accommodation had been hit by four rockets fired from U.S.-made HIMARS launchers, claiming two rockets had been shot down. Kyiv said the Russian death toll was in the hundreds, though pro-Russian officials called this an exaggeration. Russian military bloggers, many with hundreds of thousands of followers, said the huge destruction was a result of storing ammunition in the same building as a barracks, despite commanders knowing it was within range of Ukrainian rockets. Separately, Ukraine said on Monday it had shot down all 39 drones Russia had launched in an unprecedented third straight night of air strikes against civilian targets in Kyiv and other cities. Ukrainian officials said their success proved that Russia's tactic in recent months of raining down air strikes to knock out Ukraine's energy infrastructure was increasingly a failure as Kyiv beefs up its air defences. Unverified footage posted online of the aftermath of the Makiivka strike on the Russian barracks showed a huge building reduced to smoking rubble. Igor Girkin, a former commander of pro-Russian troops in east Ukraine who has emerged as one of the highest profile Russian nationalist military bloggers, said the death toll was in the hundreds, later editing his post to include wounded in that figure. Ammunition had been stored at the site and Russian military equipment there was uncammouflaged, he said.

EU parliament chief moves
to lift two MEPs' immunity

BRUSSELS: The European Parliament on Monday announced its chief, Roberta Metsola, had launched "an urgent procedure" to lift the immunity of two MEPs amid a corruption scandal linked to Qatar. The parliament did not give the lawmakers' names but said it was in response to an investigation by Belgian law enforcement into the graft allegations. Sources briefed on the Belgian probe told AFP the two MEPs targeted by the procedure were an Italian, Andrea Cozzolino, and a Belgian, Marc Tarabella. Both are members of the centre-left Social and Democrats grouping in the parliament. The development follows a string of Belgian police raids in December on the addresses of MEPs, former MEPs and lobbyists that turned up a total 1.5 million euros (\$1.6 million) in cash. There are suspicions that the money was tied to alleged graft in the European Parliament benefiting Qatar. Qatar denies having a role in any wrongdoing. The scandal has shaken the European Parliament, with one of Metsola's vice presidents, Greek MEP Eva Kaili, among four suspects arrested in the raids in Belgium. Through her lawyer, Kaili has denied know-

ing of the existence of 150,000 euros found in her home and asserted she is innocent. A Belgian judge determined that parliamentary immunity did not apply in Kaili's case because she was allegedly caught red-handed. She remains in custody. Tarabella's home was searched by Belgian authorities on December 10, according to a law enforcement source. Metsola, tweeting about her procedure to lift the two MEPs' immunity, said: "There will be no impunity. None." The parliamentary speaker has sought to frame the scandal as an outside attack on European democracy, has also vowed reforms to clean up the parliament, including by strengthening whistle-blower protections, banning all "unofficial friendship groups" with foreign governments, and increasing vetting of MEPs finances. The parliament's statement said the next steps in lifting the MEPs' immunity Metsola detailing the request at the legislature's next plenary session on January 16. From there, it would go to the parliament's legal affairs committee for a closed-door vote, with a decision then to be put to the full parliament to approve or reject it. Metsola has asked for that process to be completed by February 13. - APP

Sri Lanka freezes
govt recruitment in
fresh austerity drive

NEWS DESK

COLOMBO: Sri Lanka began a fresh austerity drive on Monday, freezing government recruitment as new taxes and higher electricity prices kicked in with authorities trying to secure a bailout from the International Monetary Fund (IMF). The Indian Ocean island nation needs to achieve debt sustainability as a precondition to a \$2.9 billion bailout from the Washington-based lender after it defaulted in April

The IMF has also asked Colombo to trim its 1.5 million strong public service, sharply raise taxes and sell off loss-making state enterprises

as its economy went into crisis. The IMF has also asked Colombo to trim its 1.5 million strong public service, sharply raise taxes and sell off loss-making state enterprises. A record 20,000 civil servants retired at the end of December - eight times as many as usual according to the public administration ministry - after President Ranil Wickremesinghe reduced their retirement age from 65 to 60. They will not be replaced, the ministry said. Doubled personal income and corporate taxes kicked in on New Year's Day to shore up state revenue, while electricity prices went up 65 per cent after a 75pc tariff increase in August.

ISIS claims
responsibility
for Kabul
attack

WEB DESK

KABUL: Islamic State on Monday claimed responsibility for an attack on Taliban forces in Kabul. The militant group said on Telegram that the attack on Sunday had killed 20 people and wounded 30. A spokesman for Afghanistan's Taliban-run interior ministry said an explosion outside the military airport in the capital Kabul had caused multiple casualties. read more. The interior ministry denied the casualty figures claimed by Islamic State and said it would release the official death toll. Islamic State has claimed several high-profile attacks in Kabul, including the storming of a hotel that caters to Chinese businessmen and a shooting at Pakistan's embassy that Islamabad called an assassination attempt against its ambassador, who escaped unharmed.

Tens of
thousands
view body of
former Pope
Benedict

WEB DESK

VATICAN CITY: A steady stream of tens of thousands of people filed into St. Peter's Basilica on Monday to pay their respects to former Pope Benedict XVI, whose body was laying in state without any papal paraphernalia ahead of his funeral this week. Benedict, a hero to conservative Catholics who yearned for a return to a more traditional Church, died on Saturday at the age of 95 in the secluded Vatican monastery where he had lived since 2013, when he became the first pope in 600 years to resign. "I feel like he was a grandfather to us," Veronica Siegal, 16, a Catholic high school student from Baton Rouge, Louisiana, who is in Rome for a programme of religious study, told Reuters in St. Peter's Square after viewing the body. She said she had read one of Benedict's books on Jesus for one of her courses.

North Korea's
Kim sacks
No. 2 military
official

SEOUL: North Korea has sacked Pak Jong Chon, the second most powerful military official after leader Kim Jong Un, state media reported. Pak, vice chairman of the Central Military Commission of the ruling Workers' Party and a secretary of the party's Central Committee, was replaced by Ri Yong Gil at the committee's annual meeting last week, the official KCNA news agency said on Sunday. No reason for the change was given. Pyongyang regularly revamps its leadership and the year-end party gathering has often been used to announce personnel reshuffles and major policy decisions. - Agencies

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