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Netanyahu, 'butcher of Gaza,' should be tried for 'war crimes'

Detailed News On Page-07

Politicians shouldn't do 'blame game'

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Salman Butt loses Afghan appointment

Detailed News On Page-06



CPEC to move forward Pak will follow Chinese model for poverty alleviation

Those who think to change the course (of CPEC) by force, violence or any other means are committing historic blunder, said PM Kakar

BUREAU REPORT / DNA

GWADAR: Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar on Monday urged the people of Balochistan, particularly, the youth to avail the historic opportunity of development in their province as the detractors of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) were about to lose their relevance very soon. The prime minister, addressing the inauguration ceremony of Pak-China Friendship Hospital and Gwadar Seawater Desalination Plant here, said the journey of CPEC would surely move forward, not the backward, so joining the development course would be a prudent decision. "Those who think to change the course (of CPEC) by force, violence or any other means are committing historic blunder as their relevance will be over very soon. The prudent decision in the nation's fate is to join the course of development, instead of resisting it and miss the opportunity," he remarked. The ceremony was attended by federal ministers Sami Saeed and Shahid Ashraf Tarar, Caretaker Chief Minister of Balochistan Mir Mardan Domki, Chinese Ambassador in Pakistan Jiang Zaidong and the Chinese and Pakistani officials attended the event. The prime minister said the ease in the form of reduced travel durations across the province was just due to CPEC intervention. He told the gathering that trade worth \$36 trillion was expected to take place in and around China in the near future, therefore it was a must to join the journey through skill development and claim the share, instead of showing hostility. He said the journey of China's modernisation was significance and steering millions of people out of poverty was unprecedented. The prime minister said that the development of China had a positive impact across the region, particularly Pakistan and its Balochistan province.

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Election funds to be released within 2 days

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: Following concerns raised by the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP), Finance Secretary Imdad Ullah Bosal on Monday assured the electoral watchdog that funds for upcoming general elections will be released in a day or two. Bosal was summoned by the electoral body after the Finance Ministry was irresponsible regarding the provision of funds, allocated for the polls, in the budget. The development came as Pakistan is preparing for general polls scheduled to take place on February 8, 2024. The secretary said that the Finance Ministry will release the required funds by the Election Commission. The ministry said that the letter written by the electoral body on November 14 was received on November 18. "Disbursement of funds requires approval at various levels," the secretary added. The secretary was speaking to the media after holding a meeting with the ECP. The secretary had arrived at the ECP after sources had told Geo News that the

Continued on Page 06



GAWADAR: Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar addresses the inauguration ceremony of Pak-China Friendship Hospital Project and the China-Aid Gwadar Seawater Desalination Project in Gwadar. - DNA

Feb 8 polls

EU to send 3 experts as observers

EU Observers in 2002 had produced a 100-page report about the elections declaring the entire drill flawed and full of rigging

ANSAR BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: The European Union, unlike past practice, is sending only three experts for monitoring the upcoming elections in Pakistan. A high-level EU diplomat told this scribe that this time the EU will not send a fully-fledged delegation as was the case in the past. Instead only three persons with expertise in the election monitoring shall come to Pakistan. In 2002 elections, which were conducted under the supervision of the military dictator Pervez Musharraf, the EU had sent a high-powered observer mission headed by the Irish MP John Cushman.

That Observer had produced a 100-page report about the elections declaring the entire drill flawed and full of rigging. Initially, the EU praised the delegation for compiling a comprehensive report however after huge reaction from the Pakistani side and the US as well, because at that time the US was very much on Pakistan's side, the EU had to distance itself from that report. The observer missions that came afterwards produced favorable reports. The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has invited observation missions for next year's election. The EU Election Observation Mission (EU EOM) has monitored polls in the country five times.

Prefer death over 'deal' Will name Bajwa, US embassy officials as witnesses: Imran

Special court sets Dec 12 as the indictment date for Imran, Qureshi in cipher case

COURT REPORTER

RAWALPINDI: Former Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) chairman Imran Khan on Monday stated that he will include former army chief General (ret'd) Qamar Javed Bajwa and US embassy officials as witnesses in his defence in the cipher case. "Will include General Bajwa and US embassy officials as witnesses [in the case]. General Bajwa did everything on Donald Lu's directives," claimed Khan during an informal conversation with journalists in Adiala jail during the cipher case hearing. A special court established under the Official Secrets Act 2023 held an open court hearing in Adiala jail where Imran Khan and Shah Mahmood Qureshi are incarcerated. The court is conducting the trial afresh after the Islamabad High Court nullified the jail trial on November 21. Both of them were indicted on October 23 but the indictment stood

Continued on Page 06

If tapes revealed

PTI leaders can't face public: Rana Ahsan Iqbal and Daniyal Aziz, both should wait for the party's decision,

ABBAS HASHMI

LAHORE: Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) Rana Sanaulah slammed Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leaders for their alleged involvement in inciting party workers to violence during events of May 9, saying that Murad Saeed or anyone won't be able to face the public if their

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Briefs

Miftah dispels reports of joining PPP

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: Former Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) leader Miftah Ismail on Monday dismissed media reports claiming that he was joining the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP). In a post on X, formerly known as Twitter, Miftah said that there was a "newspaper report in Tribune today" and a TV report aired a day earlier claiming he was joining the PPP. "The news is not true. I have for now stepped back from politics and am not joining any political party," said the former finance minister.

Nawaz, Fazl meeting

PML-N, JUI-F 'agree' on seat adjustment

PML-N, JUI-F leaders discuss seat adjustment formula for the upcoming general elections

ABID RAZA

LAHORE: In a significant development, the supremo of Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), Nawaz Sharif, and the chief of Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (JUI-F), Maulana Fazlur Rehman, convened a crucial meeting at the PML-N Secretariat in Lahore's Model Town on Monday. The meeting focused on strategising a seat adjustment formula for the upcoming general elections scheduled for February 8, 2024. Express News reported that the leaders engaged in extensive discussions regarding the political landscape of the country, analysing the current political scenario and formulating strategies for the crucial elections. The meeting carried added significance as Maulana Fazlur Rehman is also the head of the

Continued on Page 06

ECP failed to address MQM-P's concerns

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: Muttahida Qaumi Movement Pakistan (MQM-P) Convener Dr Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui on Monday said that the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) failed to address the concerns raised by the party as the country gears up for elections on February 8 next year. "The ECP resolved the issues raised by the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) in Sindh but failed to address the concerns of other parties," said Siddiqui while speaking to journalists after meeting with Chief Election Commissioner Sikandar Sultan Raja in Islamabad.

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Only the corrupt should fear NAB

DNA

LAHORE: National Accountability Bureau chairman retired Lt Gen Nazir Ahmad says his department will penalise those who deprive people of their hard-earned money. He resolves to transform NAB into a professional department and dispel the impression of fear. He says, "our duties augmented after formation of new NAB laws." He expresses hope that the bureau will conclude delayed cases swiftly. He says: "Corruption is a menace. No one needs to feel fear from NAB as our duty is to capture thief only, not to disrupt whole community."

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Israel widens Gaza offensive as death toll nears 16,000

Almost 1.9 million people, or over 80 percent of the population, have been displaced across Gaza since Oct 7

NEWS DESK

KHAN YUNIS: In an intimidating move typical of Israel, the regime has forced the Palestinians to evacuate several more areas in the besieged Gaza Strip. Residents said the military dropped leaflets reading Khan Yunis was "a dangerous combat zone." The people have been forced to move to the border city of Rafah or a coastal area in the southwest. The Israeli aggression on the Gaza Strip entered its 59th consecutive day on Monday, with intensified airstrikes, artillery shelling, and forced displacement, as well as more massacres and acts of genocide, while the infiltration axes witnessed fierce clashes and heroic resistance. Gaza's Ministry of Health says at least 15,899 Palestinians have been killed in Israeli attacks since October 7. Gaza's Health Ministry has accused Israel of intentionally striking hospitals to shut them down, creating a "circle of death" for wounded and displaced Palestinians. "The Israeli occupation is deliberately bombing hospitals in Gaza to put them out of service," Health Ministry spokesperson Ashraf al-Qudra said, adding that it was causing a "circle of death" for

'Israel is driven by instinct of revenge'

FOREIGN DESK

RAMALLAH: Prime Minister Mohammad Shtayyeh said that Israel, driven by the instinct of revenge, has cut off the lifeline to the Palestinian people in the Gaza Strip in one of the bloodiest military campaigns against the Palestinian people since the 1948 Nakba with more than 15,000 people killed and tens of thousands wounded. Speaking at the start of the weekly cabinet meeting held in Ramallah, the Prime Minister said that the Israeli machine of killing, destruction and genocide has resumed the killing of children, women and the elderly, devoid of reason, conscience and humanity. He said that United Nations data indicate that 312 Palestinian families lost 10 or more members in the Israeli bombing,

Continued on Page 06

Austrian envoy, Mandviwalla foster constructive dialogue

The discussion delved into various aspects, with Senator Saleem Mandviwalla outlining the economic challenges facing Pakistan and expressing the urgent need for robust reforms

ADIL SHAHEEN

ISLAMABAD: Austrian Ambassador to Pakistan, H.E. Andrea Wicke, called on Senator Saleem Mandviwalla, Chairman of the Senate's Standing Committee on Finance and

Revenue, at the Senate Secretariat in Islamabad on Monday. The meeting focused on strengthening bilateral relations and addressing mutual concerns. The discussion delved into various aspects, with Senator Saleem Mandviwalla outlining the economic

challenges facing Pakistan and expressing the urgent need for robust reforms. He also highlighted Pakistan's vital geographical factors, including its coastline, road connectivity, and the strategic potential of Gwadar Port. Among the critical issues addressed was the delay in the

Iran-Pakistan Gas Pipeline Project and the significant energy scarcity impeding progress in Pakistan. Trade relations between Pakistan and Austria were thoroughly examined, with Senator Mandviwalla shedding light on governance issues and emphasizing the necessity for comprehensive reforms. Austrian Ambassador Andrea Wicke underscored the challenge of population growth in Pakistan and stressed the importance of focusing on socio-economic development and education. The discussion extended to (GSP+) status and trade relations with the European Union. Senator Saleem Mandviwalla briefed Ambassador Wicke on the upcoming General Elections in Pakistan, emphasizing the commitment to the democratic process. The meeting concluded on a positive note, with both parties expressing their commitment to fostering stronger ties between Austria and Pakistan and addressing shared challenges for mutual benefit.



Naqvi launches first Business Facilitation Centre in Punjab

LAHORE : Caretaker Punjab Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi inaugurated first Business Facilitation Centre in the province. The initiative introduces a streamlined one-window operation, consolidating services from 20 provincial and federal departments, all accessible under a single roof. The CM, during the inauguration, also officially unveiled the online system for the Business Hub at the centre. The one-window operation aims to facilitate investor by providing comprehensive services, including NOCs, registrations, and certificates, through departments like LDA, TEPA, and more. The Business Facilitation Centre garnered praise from the Consul General of Turkey and China, who attended the event. They commented the novel approach to supporting investors and fostering a conducive environment.—DNA

Dr. Zahidullah assumes responsibilities as Chief Traffic Officer

PESHAWAR :Chief Traffic Officer Dr. Zahidullah assumed his responsibilities here on Tuesday. The traffic police personnel warmly welcomed him, providing a briefing on their work and achievements in ensuring road safety and adherence to traffic rules. Dr. Zahidullah attended a memorial for the martyrs and laid wreath. He emphasized that traffic wardens and staff should interact courteously with the public as they carry out their duties in the service of the community.—DNA

LESCO detects 125 power pilferers in 24 hours

LAHORE :The Lahore Electric Supply Company (LESCO) has detected a total of 125 connections from where customers were pilfering electricity in all its circles of five districts (Lahore, Sheikhpura, Nankana Sahib, Kasur and Okara) on the 86th day of grand anti-power theft campaign. The LESCO spokesman told media here Monday that the company has also submitted FIR applications against 125 electricity thieves, out of which 65 FIRs have been registered in respective police stations, while two accused have been arrested. Grand anti-power theft operations against electricity thieves are being conducted on the directives of the Federal Power Division and the LESCO Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Engineer Shahid Haider is supervising these operations.

The LESCO chief vowed that the operations would continue without discrimination until the complete end of electricity theft. The electricity pilferers as well as the LESCO officers and employees who facilitate them are also being brought to justice. On the 86th consecutive day of the anti-power theft campaign, the spokesman added, large commercial consumers were also found involved in electricity theft and all of them were also disconnected and charged with detection units. Among the seized connections 4 were commercial and 121 domestic, and all these connections were disconnected and charged with a total of 123,100 units as detection bill amounting to Rs 5.152 million. Apprising the media about some major power pilferers, he explained that

LESCO charged 24,000 detection units to an electricity pilferer in Bhaati Gate area; 7,605 detection units to a customer stealing electricity also in Bhaati Gate area; 7,605 detection to a power thief in area of Chah Miran; and 7,000 detection units to a power thief in Data Nagar area. During the 86 days of grand anti-theft campaign, the spokesman mentioned, the LESCO detected pilferage on 32,505 power connections and submitted 32,122 FIR applications against electricity thieves in the relevant police stations out of which 31,128 FIRs have been registered, while 15,420 accused have so far been arrested by the police. The LESCO has so far charged a total of 54,741,728 detection units worth Rs 2,146,418,299 to all the power pilferers.—APP

CDA introduces fast-track approval system

It should be noted that Fast Track Services is the first and modern facility of its kind across the country, the scope of which will be extended to other desks later.

ISLAMABAD: Building Control Directorate of Capital Development Authority has introduced state-of-the-art fast-track service by modernizing the system of providing amenities to the citizens. In this context, on Monday, CDA has started to ensure the approval of the building plan in the facilitation center on fast track. Under this modern and fastest system, residential buildings of 356 yards will now be approved with an additional fee of 20,000 thousand with required documents within 2 days, while residential buildings larger than 356 yards will be approved with a fee of 30,000 thousand. Additionally, commercial buildings up to 10000 square yards will also be approved within 3 days. A separate desk has also been established for all these matters. It should be noted that the citizens coming to this place will not have to stand in the line of one window separately. Similarly, arrangements have been made to sit in a good environment for the citizens who come here. After receiving the token, the citizens come to the fast track service will be able to go to the relevant desk on their number and get their case processed by the relevant desk. It should be noted that with the establishment of fast track service, the citizens coming to the CDA Facilitation Center will neither have to wait for a long time nor will they have to stand in lines. Similarly, after the paper documents are completed, the citizens will not have to wait unnecessarily and their case will be approved immediately. It should be noted that Fast Track Services is the first and modern facility of its kind across the country, the scope of which will be extended to other desks later.—DNA

Wafaqi Mohtasib – A Glimmer of hope

SYED M ILYAS

OVER the years, the institution of the Wafaqi Mohtasib has emerged as a strong and effective bulwark against bureaucratic red tape, maladministration, arbitrary decision making and delays, thereby providing relief to millions of downtrodden Pakistanis, who are often at the receiving end and remain a victim of such delays and hiccups. At independence, the country inherited a colonial type of bureaucratic machinery typically rooted in archaic rules and regulations, which have seldom been updated to meet the requirements of the present age. It seriously hampered the capacity to address public grievances and to provide prompt relief. Secondly, the bureaucracy itself was neither trained nor motivated to respond to such challenges and to find out of the box solu-

“The silent prayers of the people were finally answered in 1983 when the government decided to establish the office of the Federal Ombudsman through a Presidential Order to address such issues. However, in the beginning, it's functioning remained subdued and the bulk of the people were either unaware of its existence or simply didn't understand its utility & methodology how to get relief, in case of any wrongdoing by a govt agency”

tions. Resultantly, the public kept suffering for too long as the outdated system continued to take its toll. The silent prayers of the people were finally answered in 1983 when the government decided to es-

tablish the office of the Federal Ombudsman through a Presidential Order to address such issues. However, in the beginning, it's functioning remained subdued and the bulk of the people were either un-

aware of its existence or simply didn't understand its utility & methodology how to get relief, in case of any wrongdoing by a govt agency. It was only at the turn of the new century and with the onset of the communication technology proliferation particularly the private media, mobile & Internet, which had helped to turn over a new leaf & gave a big boost to its working. During the last one decade or so, the institution of the Wafaqi Mohtasib has been catapulted into prominence and the people of Pakistan are literally heaving a sigh of relief over the silver lining that emerged amidst dark clouds. Metaphorically, it's a whiff of the fresh air, heralding a new era of hope and promise. Free of cost justice and that too at their doorstep is really something taking the people by surprise. It is unparalleled in the country's 75 years of chequered history.



ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Federal Minister for National Heritage and Culture, Jamal Shah inaugurating National Music Academy at PNCA.—ONLINE

Governor for equipping youth with technical education

DNA

BAHAWALPUR : Governor Punjab Muhammad Balighur Rehman here on Monday said that youth were a valuable asset to our country and investing in them was pivotal for development and prosperity. It is the need of the hour to equip the young generation with technical education, he said and added that technical education was a source to achieve the goals of national production and development. He expressed these views while inaugurating the Advanced IT Lab in the Government Technical Training Institute of Bahawalpur which was established with the cooperation of China. The Governor said that the journey of national development can only be paced up with the supremacy of the constitution and rule of law. He said the previous government had pushed the youth into the darkness of despair during its four years tenure. He said the societal progress when merit prevails. Chairman TEVTA Brigadier (Retd) Mohammad Sajid Khokhar, Director General Operations TEVTA Aamir Aziz, Vice Chancellor the Islamia University Professor Dr. Naveed Akhtar, Commissioner Bahawalpur Division Dr. Ehtsham Anwar, RPO Bahawalpur Rai Babar Saeed Deputy Commissioner Bahawalpur Zaheer Anwar Jappa and others were also present on the occasion.

Minister desires elected representatives to serve people

KARACHI :Sindh Caretaker Information, Minorities Affairs and Social Protection Minister Mohammed Ahmed Shah while desiring the elected representatives to serve the people, said that the general elections would take place. Talking to media persons during his visit to the Karachi Press Club (KPC), the minister said that his meeting with the caretaker Sindh chief minister was scheduled, in which he would raise journalists' issues for timely resolution. Ahmed Shah said, 'I am focused on working journalists' and the issue of murdered journalists

including Jan Mohammed Mahar would be taken up with the Inspector General of Police (IGP) Sindh. The minister said that the issue of journalists' dues would also be discussed with the quarters concerned. He said that the Karachi Press Club had been his first place of training and he had been associated with it almost for 45 years. He said that the resolution to issues of journalists' community would be among his priorities. He further said that a training workshop would be held for the working journalists. To a question, the caretaker information minister said that

the ongoing projects must not be stopped in the province. Ahmed Shah said that the way to make the country stronger could only be achieved by working at the cultural level. He said that they had worked so much in that area. He said that the KPC had always stood for the truth and it was the oldest Press Club in the country, adding the club had progressed so much. Earlier, KPC President Saeed Sarbazai and Secretary Shoib Ahmed along with senior journalists welcomed the caretaker minister and raised issues of journalists with him.—APP

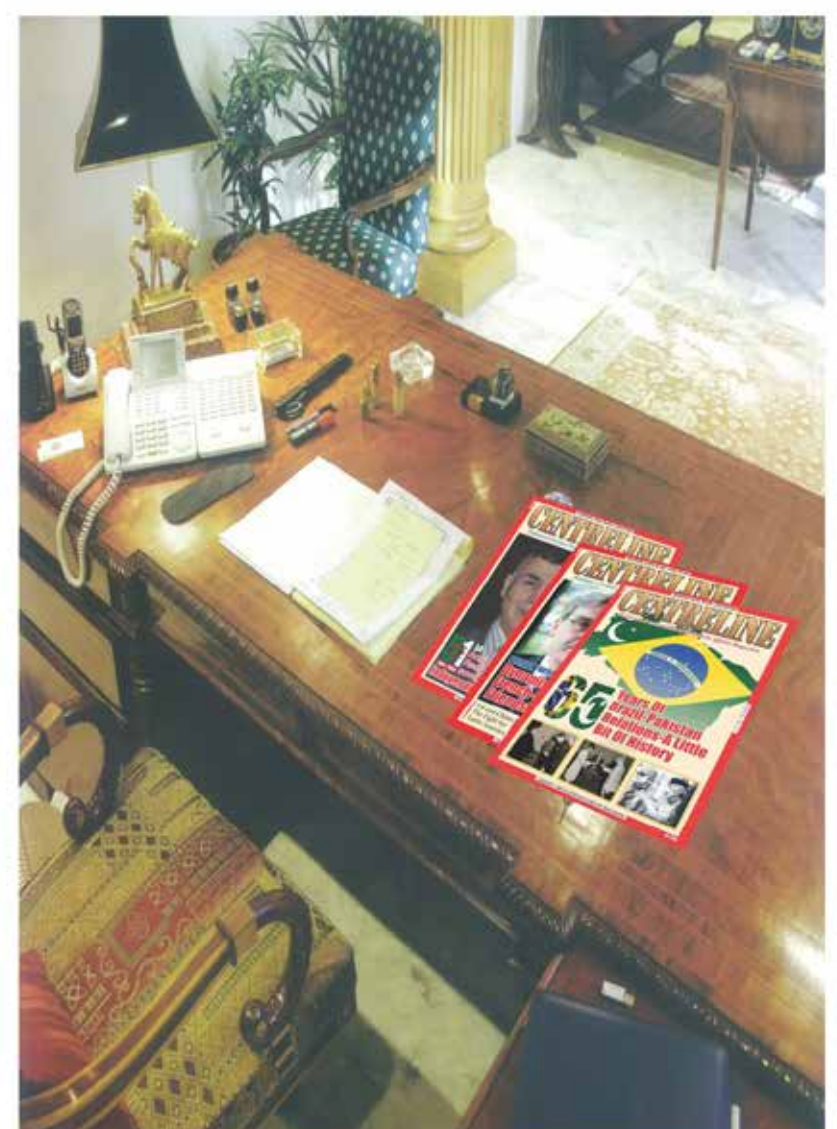
Pakistan gets \$100m support for polio eradication

The first pillar involves collaboration and engagement with all stakeholders, the second pillar focuses on integration

ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Federal Minister for Health Dr. Nadeem Jan on Monday said that a support of \$100 million had been obtained from the Islamic Development Bank (IDB) for the eradication of polio. Addressing the "Reaching the last mile" forum related to Polio in COP-28 in UAE, the minister said that this was a major accomplishment. He said that the efforts towards the eradication of polio had achieved significant success. He expressed special grati-

tude to the IDB, the United Arab Emirates and Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation for their support in providing assistance for the eradication of polio. Dr. Nadeem Jan pledged full determination for the eradication of polio from Pakistan. He said that the grant allocated for the eradication of polio was being efficiently utilized, ensuring effective expenditure. The minister said, "We are ensuring the fulfillment of the desired objectives for the eradication of polio with utmost

certainty." He added that for the eradication of polio, existing resources would be utilized in line with the broader agenda of Global Health Security. The minister emphasized that our strategy for the eradication of polio was based on four practical pillars. The first pillar involves collaboration and engagement with all stakeholders, the second pillar focuses on integration, while the third pillar is innovation and fourth is investment sensitive operations, he added.—APP



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National Days and Armed Forces Days

DECEMBER

- Dec 01/Romania National Day
- Dec 02/United Arab Emirates National Day
- Dec 02/Laos Republic National Day
- Dec 05/Thailand National Day
- Dec 06/Finland Independence Day
- Dec 07/India Armed Forces Flag Day
- Dec 09/Tanzania National Day
- Dec 11/Oman Armed Forces Day
- Dec 12/Kenya Independence Day
- Dec 12/Turkmenistan Neutrality Day
- Dec 16/Bahrain National Day
- Dec 16/Kazakhstan Independence Day
- Dec 18/Qatar National Day
- Dec 18/Niger National Day
- Dec 23/Philippines Armed Forces Day
- Dec 23/Japan National Day

Hotels & Restaurants



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



Turkish Airlines.....8494949



Emergency

Rescue (Police).....15
Bomb Disposal.....15
Fire Services Rawalpindi/ Islamabad.....1122 & 16
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DHQ.....5556311-4
RGH.....9290301-7
Holy Family.....9290322-7
PIMS.....9261170-79
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CDA.....9221334-43
CDA.....9208301-04
Met Office.....9250360-6
RDA.....5555864
TMA.....5770886
Cantonment Board 9270151-3

Water Tank

Islamabad.....0321-5744480

Special person awarded Japan FM commendations for FY 2023

WADA Mitsuhiro, the Ambassador of Japan to Pakistan, on behalf of the Government of Japan, on 4 December 2023, conferred the Foreign Minister's Commendations for FY 2023 to Mr. Muhammad Shafiq ur Rehman

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD* The Government of Japan has awarded the Foreign Minister's Commendations for FY 2023 to Mr. Muhammad Shafiq ur Rehman, President of Milestone Society for the Special Persons, in recognition of his significant contribution towards the promotion of mutual understanding between Japan and Pakistan.

H.E. WADA Mitsuhiro, the Ambassador of Japan to Pakistan, on behalf of the Government of Japan, on 4 December 2023, conferred the Foreign Minister's Commendations for FY 2023 to Mr. Muhammad Shafiq ur Rehman. The commendation ceremony was held at Ambassador's official residence in Islamabad.

Mr. Muhammad Shafiq ur Rehman, himself is a wheelchair user, and due to his strong leadership, he dedicated his sincere efforts to work for the special persons in Pakistan to expand their opportunities. In collaboration with Sakura Wheelchair Project, he has been carrying used wheelchairs from Japan and distributing to wheelchair users in Pakistan. It is a great connection between the special persons in Japan and Pakistan. In addition, he established a local NGO, Milestone Society for the Special Persons, and under Grant Assistance of Japanese Government in 2018, constructed a special education self-support



training center for persons with disabilities in Lahore. He has been fully working to improve living standards of the persons with disability. H.E. WADA Mit-

suhiro, while speaking on the occasion, congratulated Mr. Muhammad Shafiq on receiving this prestigious commendation by the Government of Japan. H.E.

appreciated his dedicated efforts to promote mutual understanding between Japan and Pakistan.

H.E. said "I look forward to his continued success in the future,

and I hope that his activities will inspire the further mutual understanding and cooperation between the people of Japan and Pakistan."

COMSTECH holds Seminar on tropical diseases

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD* COMSTECH Organized International Seminar on "Advances in Neglected Tropical Diseases", on Monday. The seminar was delivered by Prof. Dr. Paul Denny, and Prof. Dr. Ehmke Pohl, Department of Chemistry, Durham University, UK.

Prof. Dr. M. Iqbal Choudhary, Coordinator General COMSTECH welcomed the participants. He said the experts of the seminar are not only excellent in terms of their education and experience in the field of NTDs but also because of their mission. Prof. Choudhary mentioned that the Leishmaniasis disease burden in Pakistan is increasing. He said that COMSTECH is collaborating with the NTD network since last three years and through this link-

age have conducted several activities including a series of online lectures, and a training course in Nairobi. We are also planning another activity in CTD Ethiopia in March, and then a lecture/training visits to west African countries in September/October 2024. Prof. Choudhary informed that the health and economic burden of NTDs are greater than malaria, tuberculosis, and HIV combined. Prof. Choudhary mentioned that global investment in R&D for treatment and diagnosis of NTDs is remarkably low. As a result, NTDs continue to adversely affect the lives of people in Global South, with increasing prevalence due to climate change.

Prof. Dr. Paul Denny delivered lecture on "leishmaniasis, drugs and diagnostics for a disease of neglect", and Prof. Dr. Ehmke Pohl

lecture was on "structure-based and AI supported drug discovery targeting protozoan amino-acid biosynthesis".

Prof. Dr. Denny Paul, Departments of Biosciences and Chemistry, Durham University, has been studying the single-celled protozoan parasites of humans and domestic animals since 1993. Currently his laboratory works on model pathogens from both the trypanosomatid and apicomplexan families. He is particularly interested in the identification of novel drug targets and inhibitors. Much of this interdisciplinary work is conducted in collaboration with colleagues within the Biophysical Sciences Institute at Durham and partners at GSK Tres Cantos, MRC Technology Ltd, London, Aureogen Ltd and Bayer Crop Sciences.

Professor Dr. Ehmke Pohl, Departments of Biosciences and Chemistry, Durham University. After his PhD from the University of Göttingen (Germany) he joined the European Molecular Biology Laboratory as independent staff scientist and Team Leader combining his research interest in method development and structural biology of medically important targets. He joined Durham University to build up a new group in structural biology. In 2015 he was appointed Co-Director of the Biophysical Sciences Institute. He is Co-investigator of the Durham-led MRC GCRF consortium on Neglected Tropical Diseases. The seminar was attended by 76 researchers from different OIC member states online and more than 50 scholars attended in-person at COMSTECH.

FBISE announces 2nd annual results 2023 of class 9 & 10

ISLAMABAD* Federal Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education (FBISE) Islamabad has announced the results of the second annual examinations of Class IX and X for the year 2023. The overall success ratio of Class IX remained 76.99%, while Class X was 65.91%. Chairman Federal Board Qaiser Alam announced the results of the second annual examination and congratulated all the successful students. According to the details, around 64,401 regular students enrolled in class 9 second annual exams in 2023, out of which 50,463 students passed the exams with a success ratio of 79.65%. Similarly, 5196 private students enrolled in the exams, out of which 2313 students have remained successful with a ratio of 44.57%. The total annual enrollment of the Federal Board exams was 69,697 in class 9, out of which 52,776 students passed the exams. The overall success ratio remained at 76.99%. Out of the total, as many as 436,344 regular students of class 10 in the second annual exams 2023, passed the exams with a success ratio of 81.13%. The ex-private enrollment in the exams has remained at 13,363 out of which 8271 students passed the exams with a success ratio of 65.40%. The total annual enrollment of the board exams was 13,799 in class 10 out of which 8615 students passed the exams. The overall success ratio was 65.91%. The result has been uploaded on the website by the board, and students can also check their results by SMSing their roll number to 5050.—DNA

WWF doubles marriage, death grants of its registered workers

ISLAMABAD* The Workers Welfare Fund (WWF), an attached department of Ministry of Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development has doubled the marriage and death grant for the registered workers of Federal Capital territory. An official source told APP here on Monday that the grants had been increased in pursuance of the decision of governing body of the WWF. The previous amount of the marriage grant was Rs 200,000 and the amount allocated as grant for death was Rs 400,000. But now, new revised amount of the marriage grant has been fixed at Rs 400,000 and death grant Rs 800,000 respectively. The transport amount has also been increased from Rs 1500 to Rs 6000 and ambulance services are also being provided to all newly merged districts in Khyber Pukhtunkhaw. The official said that the Finance Section of the WWF was playing a key role in providing and managing different services and activities for which funds are generated through the contributions by employers under various laws along with a sustainable income from profitable, safe and secure investments in approved Government financial institutions. He said that all such commendable achievements were indeed the outcome of the complementary, coordinated and concerted efforts of the government.—APP

Energy minister participates GRA session at COP 28

ISLAMABAD* Minister of Energy Mr Muhammad Ali participated in a session organized by the Renewable Energy Alliance (GRA) between the government of Pakistan and Renewable Energy Investors at the United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP 28). Minister for Energy led the Pakistan delegation to discuss the investment potential for Renewable Energy in Pakistan, according to a statement received from the United Arab Emirates (UAE) here Monday. The opportunities regarding solar, wind, hydel, geothermal and green hydrogen were presented. The Investors shared their deep interest in investing in Pakistan in several projects. GRA was represented by Debbie Gray (Climate policy manager of the International Hydropower Association).—APP

UBG & BMP (P) to play role for reviving economy after winning FPCCI elections

DNA

ISLAMABAD* Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari, President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) said that the business community is passing through a difficult phase, however, the alliance of UBG and BMP (P) have a clear vision to address the key issues of the business community, increase exports, strengthen foreign exchange reserves and boost industrialization to revive the economy after winning the upcoming elections of FPCCI. He said this while addressing a reception hosted by Zafar Bakhtawari, Secretary General UBG at his residence in honor of the candidates of UBG & BMP (P) alliance for the President, Senior Vice President and Vice Presidents of FPCCI. Over 40 General Body and Executive Committee members of FPCCI from Rawalpindi/Islamabad, Rawalpindi Division, Gilgit Baltistan and other areas were present in the reception. Atif Ikram Sheikh, Presidential candidate of UBG & BMP (P) alliance for FPCCI said that they have a 2-year plan to address the key issues of the business community and steer the economy out of troubles. He said that they would realize the mission of late SM Tanveer after winning the elections of FPCCI to make Pakistan a strong economy of the region. He thanked all the voters and supporters and assured them that he would deliver up to their satisfaction from the platform of FPCCI. Saqib Fayyaz Magoon, alliance candidate for Senior Vice President of FPCCI said that after winning elections, they would work hard to revive the honor and dignity of FPCCI and make it a strong apex trade body of the country. He said that the stakeholders of respective sectors would be involved in meetings with the government to address issues of the business community. Facilitation Desk for women entrepreneurs would be made in FPCCI and efforts would be made to establish more women chambers of commerce in the country to facilitate women entrepreneurs. Asif Inam, candidate for Vice President and current Chairman APTMA said that high energy cost is a major hurdle for business and industry and after winning FPCCI elections, they would work on cheap energy solutions to reduce production cost and facilitate the growth of business and industrial activities.—DNA

Students paint endangered species of mountain ecosystems

DNA

RAWALPINDI* The students from different universities and colleges of the twin-cities enthusiastically take part in a live painting competition on the theme "Restoring the Mountain Ecosystems" on Monday at the Rawalpindi Art Gallery. Over twenty students take part in the competition organized by Devcom-Pakistan in connection with ongoing 10-day long 13th edition of Pakistan Mountain Festival (PMF). The collaborating partners included the Punjab Arts Council Rawalpindi and the Snow Leopard Foundation. The participants used oil and acrylics on their canvases to reflect the mountain ecosystems. They especially highlighted the challenges confronting the endangered species including brown bear, snow leopard, markhor and several others. They also painted the struggle of communities in combating real-life challenges in the changing climate, women in mountain ecosystem conservation, and cultural heritage from the northern parts of Pakistan. They depicted the impact of climate change on life in mountains besides the aesthetic value. Speaking on the occasion,

Devcom-Pakistan Executive Director and founder of Pakistan Mountain Festival Munir Ahmed said: "Mountains are the hub of valuable natural resources that are being compromised because of irrational practices. Different organizations with the participation of communities are playing their key role in environmental protection and socioeconomic development in the mountain areas. We need to put every effort into keeping the mountain ecosystems intact. The

communities are often the primary managers of mountain resources, guardians of biodiversity, keepers of traditional knowledge, custodians of local culture and experts in traditional medicine. Somehow, mountain women's potential and contribution to conservation has been undermined." The Director Punjab Arts Council Rawalpindi asked the educational institutions to engage the students into environmental conservation and to reduce the consumption of natural re-

sources. He said creative arts are the best way to engage students in environmental awareness. He also appreciated Devcom-Pakistan for its annual flagship event to mark the International Mountain Day that falls on December 11. The assistant director Snow Leopard Foundation Shoab Hameed also visited the competition and appreciated the participants' work. He said restoration of the mountains' ecosystems under the framework of climate resilience shall

be the focus to empower communities to protect their homelands. He said the SLF is engaged in snow leopard conservation and protection in 12 countries. Riffat Ara Baig, the coordinator of the event, said the students have shown their creative flare in the best way possible. Their potential and talent may be used for highlighting the conservation efforts. She said "Mountains play a significant role in providing water and food supply to millions of people in the world. Mountains cover around 27 percent of the surface of the earth and 13 percent of the world's population that live in the mountains. This shows the importance of mountain conservation." Kanwal Maqsood, a student of Rawalpindi Women university, painted the Himalayan brown bear. She said millions have been spent on the conservation of this species. But, the irrational tourism interventions in the Deosai National Park have compromised the conservation efforts. Another participant, Zoha Khan painted the endangered snow leopard, saying efforts shall be enhanced to protect the snow leopard habitats.



Briefs

Services' exports increase by 3.34 percent to \$2,416 mln

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The exports of services increased by 3.34 percent during the first four months of the current fiscal year as compared to corresponding period of last year, Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) reported. The services exports during July-October (2023-24) were recorded at \$2,416 million as compared to the exports of \$2,338 million during July-October (2022-23). The services' imports into the country also increased by 19.57 percent by going up from \$2,729 million last year to \$3,263 million during the first four months of current fiscal year. Based on the figures, the services' trade deficit increased by 116.66 percent during the period under review by going up from \$390 million last year to \$847 million this year. Meanwhile, on year on year (YoY) basis, the services' exports from the country increased by 5.63 percent by going up from \$621.07 million in October 2022 to \$656.03 million during October 2023. The imports also went up by 18.11 percent by growing from \$701.10 million to \$828.07 million, according to PBS data. On month on month (MoM) basis, the services exports increased by 5.11 percent in October 2023 when compared to exports of \$656.03 million in September 2023.

Minister rejects reports of polls delay

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Minister for Information and Broadcasting and Parliamentary Affairs Murtaza Solangi has vehemently rejected the notion of any delay in the upcoming general elections scheduled for February 2024. "Holding elections is the responsibility of the Election Commission and the caretaker government will fully assist the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) in this regard," the minister said while talking to a private television channel in a current affairs programme. He said the caretaker government was fully prepared for holding free, fair and transparent elections in accordance with the schedule issued by the ECP. Every political party has a right to express its views and all of them wished to have a level playing field in accordance with their own whims, Murtaza Solangi emphasized. Both the conditions and environment, he said, were conducive for elections and all political parties were actively engaged in political activities. To a query, he said the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) demanded transparent election and ironically it did not want democracy within its own party which was reflected from its own intra-party polls that were marred by controversy.

CPEC and Gwadar port pillars of Pak future: Sanjrani

They underscored the importance of collaboration with the government to promote economic prosperity, attract investments, and facilitate a conducive business environment in the region

Faisal Sheikh

ISLAMABAD: A delegation from the Gwadar Chamber of Commerce and Industries (GCCCI) called on Chairman Senate, Muhammad Sadiq Sanjrani, today at the Parliament House. The discussions focused on fostering collaboration and addressing key economic issues, providing a platform for GCCCI officials to share insights on regional economic development and trade dynamics. Chairman Senate expressed unwavering commitment to supporting the chamber's endeavors in promoting economic growth and displayed keen interest in understanding the challenges and opportunities facing the business community in Gwadar. Economic policies, infrastructure development, and strategies to boost trade and investment in the Gwadar region were also discussed in detail. Chairman Senate recognized the pivotal role of the business community in driving economic progress and affirmed the



Senate's dedication to creating an enabling environment for sustainable economic growth. Chairman Senate highlighted the significance of China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) and Gwadar Port as driving

forces behind future economic initiatives in Pakistan. He emphasized that Gwadar Port is not only important for Pakistan but for the entire region. The Gwadar Chamber of Commerce and Industries, represent-

ed by its officials, expressed gratitude to Chairman Senate for his time and attention to the economic concerns of Gwadar. They underscored the importance of collaboration with the government to promote economic prosperity, at-

tract investments, and facilitate a conducive business environment in the region. Senator Palwasha Muhammadzai Khan and Senator Prince Ahmed Omer Ahmedzai were also present during the meeting.

Pakistan emerging as hub of ICT: Dr. Saif

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Federal Minister of Information Technology and Telecommunication (MOITT), Dr. Umar Saif, has said that Pakistan is emerging as the hub of information and communication technology (ICT) and digital innovation in the region. During his address at the Pak-Qatar IT Conference in Doha, Qatar, he highlighted Pakistan's abundance of talent and success stories in innovation and entrepreneurship. He said Qatar is home to abundant Pakistani knowledge workers, urging Pakistani IT companies to leverage this resourceful Qatar diaspora to establish a foothold in the Qatari market. Earlier, Dr. Umar Saif inaugurated the Pak-Qatar IT Conference, a collaborative effort mainly involving the Ministry of IT and Telecom (MOITT), the Embassy of Pakistan in Qatar, and Pakistan Business Council

delegation to Qatar, led by IT Minister Dr. Umar Saif, comprising representatives from the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC), Officials of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Pakistan Software Houses Association (P@SHA), and 30 leading IT companies, is on a 4-day official visit to attend the first-ever Pak-Qatar IT conference. The primary objective of this delegation was to foster synergy between the two nations in the IT domain and explore opportunities for trade and collaboration. Alongside the IT conference, there are a series of meetings aimed at establishing a conducive environment for business collaboration in the IT sector for both nations. The Pak-Qatar IT Conference served as a platform to unlock new possibilities for Pakistani IT businesses in Qatar, creating opportunities for collaboration and trade. The event was deemed a tremendous success, paving the way for unprecedented business opportunities and collabora-

tion in Qatar by fostering a conducive environment between the two nations. Dr. Saif also appreciated the efforts of the Ambassador and his team in organizing such a wonderful event. Yousuf Mohamed Al Jaida, the Chief Executive Officer of Qatar Financial Centre, emphasized the organization's dedication to fostering an environment that promotes robust knowledge exchange, propels the development of IT, and embraces the seamless adoption of digital innovations. He expressed his honor in being part of the event, highlighting its alignment with their commitment to advancing technological landscapes. Pakistan's Ambassador to Qatar, Muhemmed Aejaz, lauded the success of the event, noting its significance in the longstanding relationship between the two brotherly countries. He emphasized the potential for cooperation in the IT sector to create a secure technological ecosystem, thereby enhancing mutual trade and economic ties.

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Punctuality of trains reached 93 percent in last three months

ISLAMABAD: The overall punctuality ratio of trains has improved from 76 to 93 per cent in three months owing to close monitoring and stern measures taken by Pakistan Railways at the divisional and ministry levels. "With the punctuality of trains and concrete measures taken by the department in last three months, the number of passengers has increased by over 20 million, which is ample proof of the department's achievement," an official in the Ministry of Railways told APP. He said that Pakistan Railways is also set to introduce the "Train Driver Assistant System" (TDAS) to help train drivers a clear view of the railway tracks up to an impressive distance of 700 meters. "The technology aims to enhance the safety, punctuality and efficiency of train operations during adverse weather conditions, particularly in the presence of dense smog and fog," he added. The system, he said the TDAS is set to revolutionize the way trains navigate through

foggy landscapes. It promised not only to avert potential accidents but also to facilitate smooth train travel when visibility is severely compromised. He said the capabilities of this digital system extend beyond improved visibility; it can also identify and monitor vital elements such as signals, level crossings, gates, track obstructions, and other potential hazards within the same 700-meter radius. The official said this comprehensive approach to training management promises to reduce the risk of accidents significantly. Initially, he said the department was planning to install the anti-fog device in four engines. However, Pakistan Railways has outlined a strategic expansion plan, with the ultimate goal of equipping all trains with this life-saving technology in the coming year. He said in a move to combat the persistent challenge of fog-related train delays, Pakistan Railways has joined hands with the University of Engineering Taxila (UET) to introduce a cutting-edge 'Digital Railway Driving System.'—APP

PTDC planning to establish TIC at Gwadar airport

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Tourism Development Corporation (PTDC) is planning to establish a modern Tourist Information Center (TIC) at New Gwadar International Airport to facilitate the foreign and domestic tourists about their destination. Talking to APP, a PTDC official said the establishment of the center would provide complete, accurate and comprehensive information to the tourists thronging to Pakistan from different countries to enjoy the beauty of recreational sites of Balochistan province. He said that TIC would not only play a crucial role in promoting tourism but also emphasize the need for state-of-the-art.—APP

Experts stress for adopting latest technology

DNA

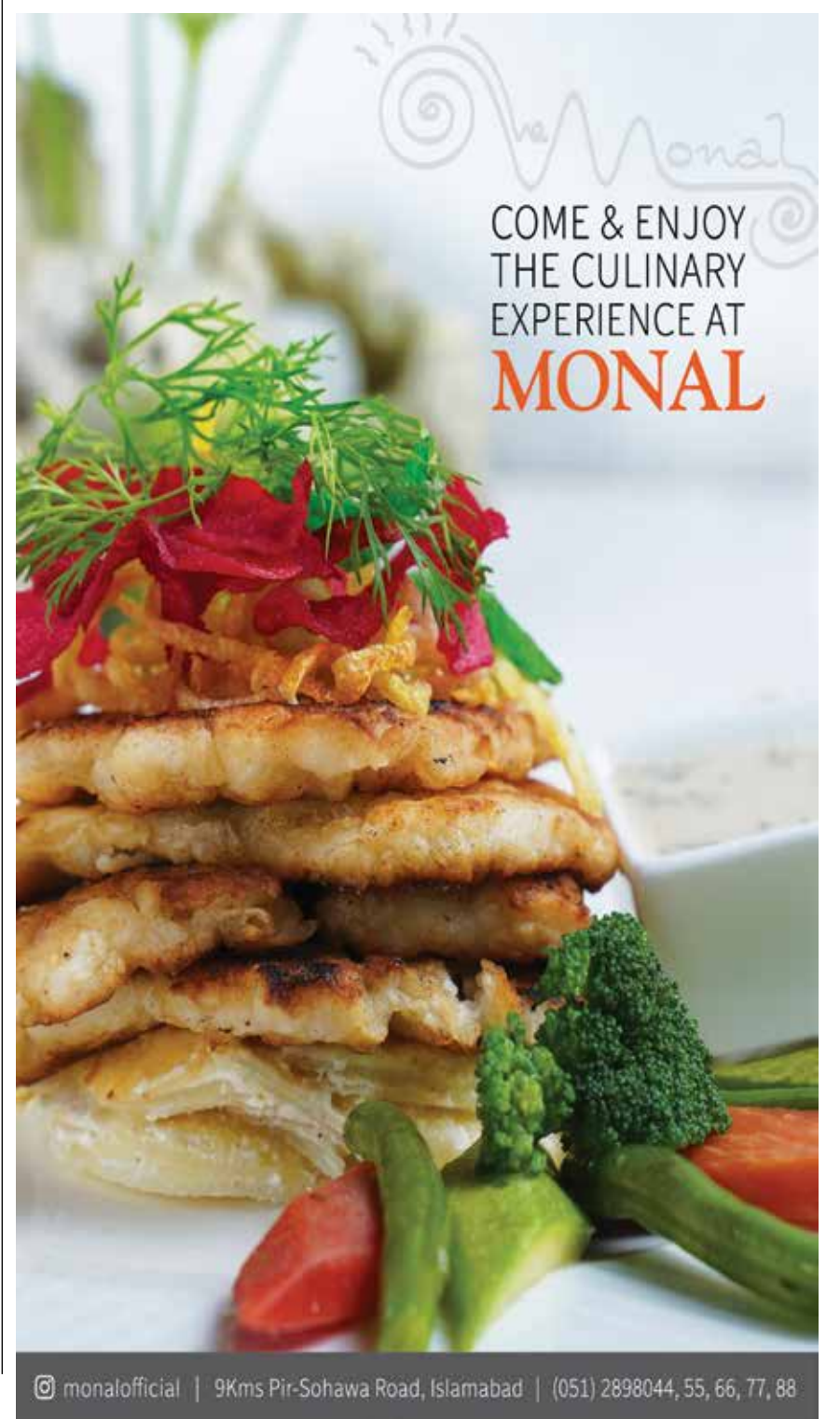
ISLAMABAD: Educational experts have come up with the notion of adopting proper planning, distance learning and the use of the latest technologies to reduce education costs at schools. For them, it might initially seem counterintuitive to invest in new technology, however, choosing the right software and tools can reduce the need for working capital and minimize the use of material resources. "In many cases, private institutions are charging hefty amounts, and the government should actively engage with them to get fee structures rationalized," remarked former Vice Chancellor Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) Dr. Shahid Siddiqui. "When they are earning millions of rupees, the chargeable amount is becoming unbearable even for middle-class parents, while kids of poor people cannot even think of studying at these institutions." "The government and the owners of private institutions should sit together and think out a way forward to address this issue," he added. He pleaded in favour of the idea of distant learning through the latest online techniques and said, "It will make us technologically efficient and help save money." distance Dr. Siddiqui said different schools use bulk paper to maintain records of teachers and students and prepare reports, timetables, syllabuses, and much more. "Imagine how much money is spent on maintaining this physical record. But, by going paperless and moving databases to the cloud, they can cut down on a sizeable amount of money." He regretted that non-formal education had been a deprived area since 1974, as after AIOU, only Virtual University was established to provide distance education. "Virtual or distant learning is an easy source for students to access quality education on lesser fees than to physically approach the educational institutions."

No plot in G-14/1 sector canceled: FGEHA

ISLAMABAD: The Federal Government Employees Housing Authority (FGEHA) Monday on clarified that no plot in Sector G-14/1 of the federal capital has been canceled. According to information available with the APP, there were circulating rumors on social media in recent days suggesting that FGEHA had canceled eleven hundred plots in the mentioned sector, causing concerns among allottees. Regarding the alleged cancellation of plots, the FGEHA said that there is no truth to the rumors. The facts are that the layout plan for the sector was prepared by the Capital Development Authority (CDA), excluding five small graveyards within the sector. Subsequently, a land possession issue arose, leading to a review of the plot acquisition process. In response to the plot acquisition situation, the FGEHA has revised the layout plan and renumbered the plots accordingly. The authority emphasized that no plots have been canceled; rather, a renumbering process has been implemented. They urged the public to disregard the baseless rumors and assured that all changes were made in accordance with the legal process.—APP

AIOU to hold Int'l moot on Arabic in connection with Golden Jubilee celebrations

ISLAMABAD: A two-day international conference on "Modern Trends in The Arabic Novel in the 2nd Half of the 20th Century" is being held in connection with the Golden Jubilee celebrations of Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU). According to AIOU, the conference will take place on December 13 and 14, and more than 50 international scholars have submitted their papers to participate. Out of these, 13 papers have been selected for presentation. The opening session of the conference will commence at 10:00 a.m. on December 13, and it will be presided over by the Vice Chancellor of AIOU, Prof. Dr. Nasir Mahmood. Dean, Faculty of Arabic and Islamic Studies, Prof. Dr. Mohyuddin Hashmi, will explain the aims and objectives of the conference. There will be two parallel sessions held simultaneously on both days. Dr. Hashmi believes that this conference will be a milestone in the promotion of Arabic. Vice Chancellor AIOU, Professor Dr. Nasir Mahmood, has emphasized that Arabic is the language of the Holy Quran and it is very broad and sweet.—APP



COME & ENJOY THE CULINARY EXPERIENCE AT MONAL

77+ China countries need to unite for indigenous financial solutions

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Executive Director, Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI), Dr. Abid Qaiyum Sulteri on Monday while attending various sideline events at COP-28 global conference underscored that the developing countries, G-77 plus China need to establish unity for working out indigenous solutions as just energy transition without proper finances was elusive. The SDPI Executive Director is participating in the 28th Conference of the Parties (COP-28) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) as special delegate in various plenaries, group discussions and other important deliberations taking place at the critical environmental moot of the world. In his exclusive chat with media, the SDPI Executive Director said that the G-77 plus China countries should revive

the same spirit as it was demonstrated at the previous COP-27 in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt. Dr. Sulteri noted that it should be floated as a proposal for the next or the other successive COP meeting to achieve tangible results. "This requires some sort of financing that I call DAI (Data, Action and Investment). So, when we have investment then we require data to understand investment prospects and action again not only by the development partners but also by the recipient country and the people working on it," he added. The SDPI head hoped that the COP-28 would come up with some kind of oil and gas initiatives and climate funds of its own helping in transition as just energy transition to clean energy is important. "This is something we should add from developing countries to our composite and transitory phase finance and it is being called transit finance by civil society groups." He added that the climate finance,

Loss and Damage Fund and Transit Finance can work for the developing world that SDPI is advocating for these countries. "We have more than one economic giant and majority of them today are not part of the global financial institutions as per proportion to their GDP and economic might. There is a push from the countries like China to IMF, WB, ADB and economic chains for a bigger role," he added. Dr. Sulteri further elaborated that the global decarbonization initiative was being signed by the countries at COP-28 that was basically about carbon removal through capture and sequestration measures that was brought under discussion under this initiative. "If business as usual continues amid carbon removal then it can be further promoted whereas nuclear technology is being discussed as a potential source of it," he added. Secondly, the negotiation is on Adaptation Fund where developing countries (G77 plus Chi-

na) are demanding increase in it. Third focus of agenda is GST which is indicating that the world is lagging behind its required target that indicate to review the fossil fuel consumption and the discussion is stuck on phase out and phase down of petroleum. Dr. Sulteri added that the next agenda much debated point is on climate financing that is having a new dimension where the developing countries are questioning the efficacy of global financial institutions in addressing the climate change demands like the IMF, World Bank and others. "The SDPI stance is that global financial system should be revamped and this point should be addressed but we don't want the funding to stop due to this. We are happy if interim arrangements like those for loss and damage fund is operationalized under World Bank but we want to have an independent climate financial institution in the long run," he added.

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Editor-in-Chief: Ansar Mahmood Bhatti
Deputy Editor: Abid Raza

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Email: dailyisbpost@gmail.com

Phone: 051-2266165 / 051-2261960

Off: Awan Plaza, Block 18-A, G-8 Markaz Islamabad

Trust deficit primary challenge to overcome

NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg warned on Sunday that the military alliance should "be prepared for bad news" from Ukraine as Russia's special military operation there continues into its 22nd month. "We have to support Ukraine in both good and bad times," Stoltenberg said in an interview with German public broadcaster ARD. Commenting on the situation in Ukraine, Stoltenberg said that there had been no significant developments on the battlefield over the past few months and the course of events was difficult to predict, describing it as "a battle for efficiency, a battle for logistics". A few days earlier, ahead of the meeting of NATO Ministers of Foreign Affairs, he said there was intense fighting along the front line and NATO "needed to be prepared for more fighting". The front line on the battlefield has basically remained unchanged this year despite the sustained supplies of military equipment and other support NATO has provided Ukraine.

Winter is expected to freeze the battlefield stalemate in place, while the upcoming US presidential and congressional campaigns have prompted speculation that Ukraine will receive less military and economic assistance from the United States, which has been the main sponsor of Ukraine. The US has directed more than \$75 billion in assistance to the country since the conflict started nearly two years ago. Yet a recent Associated Press poll in the US showed nearly half of Americans think too much is being spent on Ukraine. An increasing number of Republicans are not in favor of sending more aid, and it is not clear if or when a request from the White House for additional aid will be approved by Congress. Considering all this, as well as the increasing casualties, economic suffering and destruction throughout the country, a negotiated settlement may be becoming a more tempting choice for Ukraine. Continued hostilities benefit no parties, and dialogue and negotiation are the only viable solution to the Russia-Ukraine conflict. All countries should support Russia and Ukraine deescalating the tensions and working toward resuming direct dialogue as quickly as possible, which may pave the way for a cease-fire or even a permanent agreement based on the principles of the UN Charter.

That will mean turning a deaf ear to the insidious warmongering of hawks such as Stoltenberg, who as a cobwebbed Cold War warrior animated by outdated animosities has done much to harness NATO to Washington's war chariot. Exhilarated by this, he is now keen for NATO to crusade into Asia. In his remarks to the media after the NATO foreign ministers' meeting he again tried to yoke China with Russia as an "aggressor", and implied that Russia was becoming much more dependent on China, "mortgaging its future to Beijing", as he said three times in a brief news conference. It is such perfidious talk that makes it hard for some to embrace the vision of common, comprehensive, cooperative and sustainable security. The issue of security bears on the well-being of all countries and peoples. Overcoming the trust deficits that exist is the primary challenge that needs to be overcome to ensure that the historical trends of peace, development and win-win cooperation prevail.



Remarks unbecoming of a commerce secretary

SHOWING the extent to which Washington and the Joe Biden administration have lost the plot, US Secretary of Commerce Gina Raimondo in a speech to exposed how the country's makers and shapers of policy are fueling and manipulating the pervading sense of paranoia in the country to support their zero-sum, burn-it-all approach to global affairs. Defense means to resist attack; national security means to safeguard a nation against threats; commerce is about large-scale buying and selling, to the benefit, it should be added, of both buyer and seller. Yet in her incongruous appearance at the Reagan Defense Forum, which describes itself as the nation's premier defense forum — where "key stakeholders come together to address the health of (the country's) national defense and to promote policies to strengthen the US military" — Raimondo delivered a speech that calculatedly conflated the three.

Pitching for more funding from the US Congress for the Bureau of Industry and Security, which handles export controls, she said "It needs to be funded so we can do what we need to do to protect America." Based on her remarks that seem to be more "washing powder" threats to the US. Although serving as the US commerce secretary, Raimondo's remarks were more befitting of a general trying to drum up more money for her forces by scaring the populace of a citadel with wild surmises about a barbarian horde that will soon be at the gate.

Such scaremongering is nothing new in the US, as its economy is so dependent on the military-industrial complex. One threat after another has to be fabricated to feed the insatiable beast that has been created. This time the menu masters seem to have hit pay dirt as China's rapid economic growth and technological progress are ready gist for scuttling like Raimondo's.

"The most high-end computer semiconductors, we have in America, they don't have, and those are the chips that run and train AI models that the PLA would want to operate into their military," Raimondo told Defense News. "If we can deny them the chips they can't run the models, then they can't use that to advance their military capability. We cannot let China get these chips. Period," she said. "This is the biggest threat we've ever had and we need to meet the moment." It's like some B-movie from the 1950s. China may be a competitor to the US' tech leadership in some areas, but it is not an existential threat to the US whatever susceptible minds coddled in Cold War mumbo jumbo are willing to believe to the contrary. China seeks to develop and modernize. The US doesn't want it to as that would mean a loss of privileges. But the US' chip attacks aimed at stymieing China's technological progress will prove futile in the end.

It's the 4.7 million science and engineering graduates every year, from whom emerge tens of hundreds of scientists and engineers that lay the foundation for the advancement of China's research and development. Technology is all about talent, and China is paying increasingly more attention to its talents, which is what the US should pay attention to if it wants to retain its competitive edge.

Can Pak leverage China in strategic minerals?

Qamar Bashir



The options rest with Pakistan to choose one or all of the top three countries which lead the world in terms of exploration of strategic minerals, rare earth elements and radioactive elements and possess the technology and know how to use them in making semiconductors and other high tech products. China is the world's leading producer of rare earth elements, accounting for over 80% of global production. The country is also a major producer of strategic minerals such as chromite, tungsten, and molybdenum. China has a well-developed mining industry and is investing heavily in the development...

IN 2022, the global trade in strategic minerals surged to an estimated \$405 billion, marking a significant upsurge from \$285 billion in 2010. China led the export chart with \$125 billion, followed by Australia, Russia, Canada, and Brazil. As for imports, China remained the frontrunner, followed by the United States, Japan, South Korea, and Germany. These minerals play a pivotal role across industries, including electronics, defense, and aerospace. Forecasts indicate an ongoing surge in demand, driven by advancements in electric vehicles and renewable energy technologies. The race for control over strategic and rare earth elements has become an intense global pursuit, marked by nations leveraging military, economic, and soft power to secure these invaluable resources. A marking shift in global dynamics was also observed during the recent summit between Chinese President Xi and US President Joe Biden. Unlike the traditional discussions surrounding arms trade or economic rivalry, the focal point centered was semiconductors. These components, highly prized in today's technology landscape, have overshadowed the value of precious commodities like gold and silver. In 2020, while the total global gold demand reached \$241 billion, it paled in comparison to the \$405 billion strategic mineral trade. Remarkably, the semiconductor trade eclipsed both, signifying the escalating importance of these components in the global economy. Semiconductors surpassed the value of gold trade to a record-breaking \$556 billion, exhibiting a remarkable 26.9% surge from the preceding year. Semiconductors represent the bedrock of modern electronics, distinguished by their unique electrical characteristics. Their ability to conduct and resist electricity, akin to both metals and insulators, is pivotal for the functioning of transistors, the fundamental units of contemporary electronics. These semiconductors pervade virtually every electronic device, encompassing smartphones, computers, tablets, cars, and an array of industrial applications, spanning robotics, automation, and medical equipment. Their significance extends beyond functionality to the very structure of electronics. Over recent decades, semiconductors have driven the remarkable miniaturization of electronic devices, yielding smaller, faster, and more potent electronics. This evolution has underpinned groundbreaking advancements in various fields, propelling emerging technologies like artificial intelligence, the Internet of Things (IoT), and autonomous vehicles. As these innovations continue to burgeon, the indispensability of semiconductors amplifies. Economically, the semiconductor industry stands as a colossal force, galvanizing global growth and innovation. The industry's contribution is staggering, generating trillions of dollars in economic activity annually, further solidifying its pivotal role in the global economy. Notably, beyond economic realms, semiconductors play a crucial role in safeguarding national security, constituting vital components in a spectrum of applications including communications, radar systems, and guidance systems. Rare minerals serve as crucial components in semiconductor production, catering to an array of semiconductor applications. Elements like Indium, Gallium, Germanium, Selenium, Tellurium, Antimony, Arsenic, Bismuth, Hafnium, Scandium, and Yttrium play pivotal roles in diverse sem-

iconductor functionalities. The question arises: does Pakistan possess strategic minerals like rare earth elements and radioactive deposits? The resounding answer is yes. Pakistan showcases a diverse array of seventeen rare earth mineral deposits, featuring Scandium, Erbium, Europium, Neodymium, and more, according to the Geological Survey of Pakistan (GSP). These deposits, found in regions such as Koga, Swat, and Malakand Agency, present vast potential for applications spanning oil refineries, rare-earth magnets, nuclear batteries, and lasers. Furthermore, the GSP's discoveries of Pakistan's inaugural radioactive minerals in places like Baghal Chur in Dera Ghazi Khan and Reko Diq in Balochistan, alongside strategic minerals in the Sonmiani area, underline the nation's rich resource wealth. The significance of these rare earth minerals and radioactive elements transcends mere monetary value. Their pivotal roles in nuclear energy, healthcare, and technological innovation remain paramount. Their trade serves as a cornerstone in ensuring energy security, driving healthcare advancements, and propelling cutting-edge technologies that shape modern infrastructure and sustainable energy solutions. While estimated to possess approximately 2% of the world's REE reserves, Pakistan currently falls short of major producers like China, Australia, and Russia. The options rest with Pakistan to choose one or all of the top three countries which lead the world in terms of exploration of strategic minerals, rare earth elements and radioactive elements and possess the technology and know how to use them in making semiconductors and other high tech products. China is the world's leading producer of rare earth elements, accounting for over 80% of global production. The country is also a major producer of strategic minerals such as chromite, tungsten, and molybdenum. China has a well-developed mining industry and is investing heavily in the development of new technologies for extracting and processing rare earth elements. Australia is the world's second-largest producer of rare earth elements. The country is also a major producer of strategic minerals and possesses a strong mining industry and is a reliable supplier of rare earth elements and other strategic minerals to the global market. Russia is the world's third-largest producer of rare earth elements. The country is also a major producer of strategic minerals and has a strong infrastructure for supporting the mining industry. These three countries are all major players in the global market and are investing heavily in the development of new technologies for extracting and processing these minerals playing an important role in the development of new high-tech products. While Pakistan should explore its options with Russia and Australia, its strategic alliance with China presents a substantial opportunity to leverage Chinese expertise and resources in the exploration, production, and utilization of rare earth elements (REEs), strategic minerals, and radioactive elements. Collaborating with China will allow Pakistan to benefit from its advanced exploration and development techniques. Joint efforts in identifying, mapping, and extracting these resources from Pakistan's abundant reserves can optimize the utilization of these minerals for technological and industrial applications. China's advanced production techniques and experience can be shared with Pakistan, enhancing local capabilities in refin-

ing, processing, and manufacturing products utilizing these elements. This knowledge transfer can stimulate local industries, fostering innovation and technological progress. Pakistan can harness China's expertise in utilizing these elements in manufacturing high-tech products. This collaboration can aid in creating a diverse range of products, from electronics to clean energy technologies, thus boosting Pakistan's technological capabilities and industrial diversification. Leveraging Chinese investments and infrastructure development initiatives can facilitate the establishment of specialized facilities for processing and utilizing these elements. This not only supports local industry but also encourages foreign investments drawn by the potential of these resources. Engaging in joint research and development initiatives with Chinese institutions can drive innovation and knowledge exchange. This collaboration can lead to the creation of new technologies, processes, and applications, fostering a culture of innovation and advancement in Pakistan. Whereas seeking collaboration, joint ventures and other such modes of cooperation with other countries is of paramount importance but at the same time Pakistan should develop its own capacity in exploring and utilizing rare earth metals, strategic minerals, and radioactive elements. This will however, demand a multifaceted strategic approach. Firstly, substantial investment in research and development, particularly in cutting-edge exploration technologies, is crucial. This includes establishing dedicated institutions for mineral studies and fostering specialized educational programs focused on geology and materials science. These initiatives aim to equip the country with a skilled workforce proficient in the intricacies of mineral exploration and utilization, laying the groundwork for future advancements. Collaboration forms another critical facet, advocating partnerships with international institutions to facilitate knowledge exchange and gain insights into global best practices. Concurrently, forging public-private partnerships within the country accelerates comprehensive exploration projects and fast-tracks the development of these resources. Such collaborations pool resources, expertise, and funding, amplifying the potential for accelerated growth and utilization of these invaluable resources. The establishment of a robust regulatory framework remains pivotal, ensuring responsible utilization while addressing environmental concerns. Transparent and stable regulations attract investments and maintain sustainable practices, ensuring a balance between resource exploitation and environmental preservation. Bolstering infrastructure, including laboratories and refining facilities, further supports efficient resource utilization, making Pakistan an attractive hub for investment and technological advancement in this sector. Moreover, fostering technology transfer agreements, advocating eco-friendly practices, and raising public awareness solidifies Pakistan's position on the global stage. These collective efforts not only fortify industrial capabilities but also position the nation at the forefront of economic growth, technological innovation, and sustainable development.

— Former Press Secretary to the President
Former Press Minister to the
Embassy of Pakistan to France
Former MD, SRBC

Where does Washington stand on Gaza's future?

Eyad Abu Shakra

The actions and stances of US Secretary of State Antony Blinken were not reassuring for Arab countries. The words of Netanyahu and his Defense Minister Yoav Gallant — not to mention Itamar Ben-Gvir and Bezalel Smotrich — were clear and unambiguous. Although the Arab countries continued to bet patiently on a US stance that would rein in the Likud arrogance, the actions and stances of US Secretary of State Antony Blinken were never reassuring. Instead, they confirmed time and time again that Washington...

THE collapse of the temporary Gaza truce was expected, although some who do not like to acknowledge the facts were optimistic about a near-miracle, while the time for miracles has passed. However, the glaring truth indicated from the beginning was the need of both sides in this unbalanced war for a "warrior's break," in which both claim tactical victories, refocus psychological targeting, strengthen logistical mobilization and capitalize on the changes imposed on the ground, not to mention trying to give "moderation" a chance through prisoner and detainee exchange deals. The Israeli side, which has historically enjoyed an amazing ability to paint itself as the victim, was undoubtedly able to win the battle of the political decision-making corridors in most of the world's influential capitals. This achievement was further enhanced by its victory in the war of financial and communication blackmail — the clearest evidence of which was the visit of US billionaire Elon Musk to Israel, where he was humbly subservient to Benjamin Netanyahu after major international companies decided to boycott advertising on Musk's X platform. On the other hand, the eruption of global mass movements demanding an end to the Gaza war came more as a reaction to the ferocity of the bombing and the horror of the tragedies, than as a result of the skills of Hamas leaders in managing the public relations battle regarding what happened on Oct. 7 and its aftermath. In fact, some of the statements made by Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad leaders were disastrous, whether in terms of the arrogant handling of the humanitarian catastrophe across the Gaza Strip, or in their ignorance of the background and details of the war. Meanwhile, the Israeli propaganda machine went far beyond its "declared" goal of eliminating Hamas to the de facto implementation of its permanent strat-

egy, which is the complete displacement of the Palestinian people and the liquidation of a cause that is impossible to liquidate without eliminating its people. Indeed, even before the collapse of the temporary truce, there was a competition between the content of Israeli official statements and the blatant threats, exaggerations, provocations, fabrications and gloating spread by its "electronic army" on social media. Even in the middle of the prisoner and detainee exchange process, the uprooting and displacement plans were an open secret. There was no doubt among those who were following up on the "advice" given to the residents of the northern part of the Gaza Strip to leave it and head south, that the south — also targeted — was nothing but a temporary stop, whose turn will later come. The actions and stances of US Secretary of State Antony Blinken were not reassuring for Arab countries. The words of Netanyahu and his Defense Minister Yoav Gallant — not to mention Itamar Ben-Gvir and Bezalel Smotrich — were clear and unambiguous. Although the Arab countries continued to bet patiently on a US stance that would rein in the Likud arrogance, the actions and stances of US Secretary of State Antony Blinken were never reassuring. Instead, they confirmed time and time again that Washington, despite its tendency to express "reservations" about the fate and results of the Israeli war, stands fully behind Netanyahu and his government. Of course, the ready-made pretext to justify US condemnations of Hamas began with the Oct. 7 attack and continued with Hamas holding a number of hostages who could not be released during the first — and perhaps last — truce. Certainly, what contributed most to ensuring full US support for Netanyahu was the occurrence of individual violent incidents in the West Bank, some of which Hamas claimed responsibility for. However, despite this, save timid condemnations of the viola-

tions of armed settlers, one could say that Washington ignored the Israeli forces' repeated violations of the temporary truce by launching killing and arrest operations in several areas of the West Bank. This got to the point that the number of Palestinians detained, killed or injured during the truce period was greater than the number of released prisoners. Consequently, what we are facing now is the reality that Washington remains the nurturing, supporting and sponsoring power behind the Israeli scheme, and seems determined to follow it through. Here, it is explicitly supporting the Israeli "handling" of Gaza's residents, and perhaps the residents of the West Bank in the future, without taking into account the concerns of most of its friends in the region. It forgets, or chooses to forget — according to an Arab politician and diplomat well versed in the file of Israeli-Arab relations — that the Palestinian people in Gaza and the West Bank "have practically been living in a large prison besieged by Israel for about 20 years, left to their suffering without any political horizon." A situation that truly forewarned of a serious explosion. Washington also still insists on monopolizing the file of Israeli-Arab relations, even though it has completely abandoned putting forward any peace initiatives since 2014, during the days of former Secretary of State John Kerry. Hence, by its reluctance to undertake any serious political effort aimed at peace, it has turned the idea of a two-state solution into an absurd and useless distraction. Instead of objective, responsible work to encourage peaceful approaches and strengthen them by giving them political credibility, the region has been thrown into the illusion of the Abraham Accords, from which only one party benefited. Sourced by Arab news.

— Former Press Secretary to the President
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Briefs

Pak will follow Chinese...

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He said the clean drinking water had been an issue faced by the Gwadar people and the desalination plant project would address it to a great extent. Besides, the construction of a 150-bed hospital would provide quality healthcare to the people, he added. The prime minister also thanked the Chinese ambassador for announcing the solar power project and emergency services for Quetta. Prime Minister Kakar assuring the all-out support of the federal and provincial governments on the matter of security, reiterated that the Pakistan Army, police and law enforcement agencies would safeguard the Chinese workers even at the cost of their lives. He expressed the hope that Gwadar would complete its course of development soon to become a trade hub with the Pak-China cooperation for the benefit of future generations.

Election funds to be released...

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ECP has taken notice of the non-provision of funds by the government. The government, as per the sources, had allocated Rs42 billion for the general elections in the current financial year's budget. The Finance Ministry, however, only provided Rs10 billion to the ECP so far, they added. Disbursement of the remaining amount, according to the sources, is being delayed without any reasonable justification. "Rs17 billion are urgently needed for holding the general elections on February 8." The sources told Geo News that the Finance Ministry was repeatedly approached for the provision of this amount, while a written reminder was also sent to the ministry for immediate provision of money. However, no positive response has yet been given regarding the disbursement of money, they added.

Israel widens Gaza offensive...

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medical workers, along with the displaced and wounded. Al-Qudra added that Israel had bombed several areas where displaced Palestinians were taking shelter near Gaza City, including the Salah ad-Din school, a building near the al-Ahli Arab Hospital and a crowded square. Only nine of Gaza's 35 hospitals are still operational, and health officials warn that the Kamal Adwan Hospital in northern Gaza could close down within hours due to a lack of electricity. Air strikes are ongoing even where people are being forced to flee such as Rafah, the UN agency that provides aid to Palestinian refugees says. "No place is safe, not there and not anywhere in Gaza. A brutal war continues, unabated," the agency said on X. UNRWA's Gaza chief also said he has nothing to tell people asking the agency for advice on where to safely shelter.

'Israel is driven by instinct...

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while 594 families lost between two and five people, saying: "No words are useful, no screaming is useful, no numbers are useful, and the cries of children are not audible, and the suffering of the wounded is not felt by the Israeli criminal machine. These crimes must stop immediately." Shtayeh pointed out that "statements by the Israeli Prime Minister that he is at war with the Palestinian Authority are something we experience every day through settlement, seizure of lands, piracy of our money, repeated incursions, murder and genocide, arming the colonists, and the storming of Al-Aqsa Mosque, and we feel it with the incitement against the president, and against all of us."

CAS-Serena Hotels Int'l Squash C'ship concludes

The prize money for the men's championship was USD 1805 for the winner and USD 1140 for the runner-up, while the prize money for the women's event was USD 902 for the winner and USD 570 for the runner-up



The prize money for the men's championship was USD 1805 for the winner and USD 1140 for the runner-up

AFZAL JAVED

ISLAMABAD: CAS-Serena Hotels Men & Women International Squash Championship 2023, concluded with great success at the Mushaf Complex in Islamabad. The tournament saw among the players from Pakistan, Malaysia, Egypt, Hongkong and Spain. In the Men's final, Noor Zaman ranked 112 in the world,

secured victory with an impressive performance against the runner-up Asim Khan who held the 72 in world ranking. In the Ladies final Amina El Rihanny from Egypt played against Nadien El Hammamy and won the title of Women's Squash Championship final. The prize money for the men's championship was USD 1805 for the winner and USD 1140 for the runner-up, while the prize money for the women's event

No plan B for opening ceremony

PARIS: The French government on Monday insisted it would keep a plan to hold the 2024 Paris Olympics opening ceremony on the River Seine even after a deadly attack in the French capital at the weekend amplified security concerns. Sports Minister Amelie Oudea-Castera told French radio that the plan could still be adapted within the idea of the river flotilla, with media reports indicating grave concern within the security forces that the ceremony could be vulnerable to attack. A man known to the authorities as a radical with mental troubles on Saturday stabbed to death a German tourist close to the Eiffel Tower by the River Seine in what prosecutors are investigating as a suspected act of terror. "There is no plan B, we have a plan A within which we have several alternatives," the minister told France Inter radio. She said the "terrorist threat exists" but added "it is not new and it is neither specific to France nor specific to the Games". But she added that there were "a certain number of adjustment variables", notably the number of spectators who can attend which will be decided in the spring and can be "modulated". Also subject to adjustment could be "the number of events which will be authorised around the area and in Paris" on the sidelines of the ceremony and "the management of security perimeters". But asked whether any relocation of the ceremony was being considered, she emphasised: "this is not the hypothesis on which we are working". For the first time in Olympics history, the opening ceremony is set to take place outside the main athletics stadium, with competitors and officials set to travel through Paris on a flotilla of more than 100 vessels. - Agencies

Salman PCB appointment saga halts his Afghanistan job

DNA

LAHORE: Former Pakistan captain Salman Butt has landed in an unusual situation after his appointment saga in the Pakistan Cricket Board's (PCB) selection committee as a consultant. The 39-year-old was removed by Wahab Riaz a day after his appointment following massive backlash from various circles. However, Salman Butt has also potentially lost his job as the consultant of the Afghanistan cricket team. Afghanistan Cricket Board (ACB) had contacted Salman for a 25-day camp before the upcoming series but his appointment in PCB was also confirmed during the same period. Salman prioritised PCB's role over Afghanistan but



since he was removed, the left-hander awaits communication from ACB. Remember, former cricketers Kamran Akmal, Rao Iftikhar Anjum, and Salman Butt were appointed as consultant members for Wahab-led selection committee. However, a decision has been made to take Salman Butt's name back after the

decision drew severe criticism from the cricketing fraternity. Wahab stressed that it was he who made the decision to include Butt in the committee and now he has decided to remove him. "The decision to take Salman Butt's name back is solely mine." "Salman Butt has served his time, people have to move on now.

They are instead running agendas against myself and against Salman, and a few media houses are involved in running agendas. People were accusing me of nepotism too," he added. "I was getting criticised for appointing Salman Butt with an allegation of preferring friendships. I didn't want this to happen for which I reverted back my decision on Salman Butt," he maintained. Wahab also confirmed the appointment of Test batter Asad Shafiq to the committee. The 37-year-old will be seen assisting the team during the New Zealand T20I series as his initial assignment. The delay in Shafiq joining the selection committee comes as he is due to play in the Sindh Premier League (SPL), which is scheduled to take place this month.

Bavuma to miss white-ball matches against India

CAPE TOWN: World Cup captain Temba Bavuma will miss two white-ball series against India, Cricket South Africa announced on Monday in naming squads for the multi-format tour. Bavuma as well as fast bowler Kagiso Rabada will play no part in the limited overs series in order to prepare for two World Test Championship matches, starting in Centurion on December 26. Fast bowlers Gerald Coetzee, Lungi Ngidi and Marco Jansen will only play in the first two T20 internationals before returning to their franchises to play in domestic four-day cricket ahead of the Test series. One-day coach Rob Walter said the decision was made in consultation with Test coach Shukri Conrad. "We have a busy summer ahead starting with the T20Is and then ODIs against India and we have therefore taken the decision to omit several of our senior players," said Walter. "This decision was taken together with coach Shukri as we place emphasis on the red-ball leg of the tour, meaning they will in-

stead be preparing for the Test series by playing domestic cricket." Conrad said: "It is the start of a new ICC World Test Championship cycle and that itself is a huge incentive for everyone. We want to try and ensure we make a strong start to this sequence here at home against one of the best teams in the world." The Test squad includes three uncapped players in Durban and Western Province batter David Bedingham, left-arm fast bowler Nandre Burger and batter Tristan Stubbs. Burger is set to make his international debut after being named in all three squads. Another newcomer is all-rounder Mhlangeni Mpongwana, who was selected for the one-day series. The first T20 international will be played in Durban on Sunday. There will be three T20 internationals and three one-day internationals. India will also be without key players for the white-ball matches, with regular captain Rohit Sharma and former captain Virat Kohli rested ahead of the Test matches.

South African squads: T20 internationals: Aiden Markram (captain), Ottiel Baartman, Matthew Breetzke, Nandre Burger, Gerald Coetzee, Donovan Ferreira, Reeza Hendricks, Marco Jansen, Heinrich Klaasen (wkt), David Miller, Lungi Ngidi, Andile Phehlukwayo, Tabraiz Shamsi, Tristan Stubbs, Lizaad Williams
One-day Internationals: Aiden Markram (captain), Ottiel Baartman, Matthew Breetzke, Nandre Burger, Tony de Zorzi, Reeza Hendricks, Heinrich Klaasen (wkt), Keshav Maharaj, Mhlangeni Mpongwana, David Miller, Wiaan Mulder, Andile Phehlukwayo, Tabraiz Shamsi, Rassie van der Dussen, Kyle Verreynne (wkt), Lizaad Williams
Tests: Temba Bavuma (captain), David Bedingham, Nandre Burger, Gerald Coetzee, Tony de Zorzi, Dean Elgar, Marco Jansen, Keshav Maharaj, Aiden Markram, Wiaan Mulder, Lungi Ngidi, Keegan Petersen, Kagiso Rabada, Tristan Stubbs, Kyle Verreynne (wkt). - Agencies

Three Pakistan players granted NOCs for BBL

LAHORE: LAHORE: The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) has issued no-objection certificates (NOC) to fast bowlers Haris Rauf, Zaman Khan and leg-spinner Usama Mir for the Big Bash League (BBL) 2023-24. The board has issued the NOCs considering the workload of players and the future tour programme of the national men's team. The PCB understands that this decision is in the best interests of all the stakeholders involved while balancing the importance of game time with workload management. Haris Rauf and Usama Mir have been granted NOCs for a total of five matches whereas Zaman Khan has been granted NOC for four matches. All these games are set to take place from 7 to 28 December. Haris Rauf and Usama Mir are part of the Melbourne Stars squad, while Zaman Khan is part of Sydney Thunder in the BBL. Haris Rauf has been representing Stars since 2019 and has picked 30 wickets from 18 games in BBL at an impressive average of 16.4.
Melbourne Stars Squad for BBL 2023-24: Glenn Maxwell, Scott Boland, Joe Burns, Hilton Cartwright, Brody Couch, Nathan Coulter-Nile, Sam Harper, Joel Paris, Nick Larkin, Tom Rogers, Mark Steketee, Marcus Stoinis, Beau Webster, Haris Rauf, Usama Mir, Liam Dawson
Sydney Thunder Squad for BBL 2023-24: Chris Green (c), Cameron Bancroft, Ollie Davies, Matt Gilkes, Liam Hatcher, Nathan McAndrew, Blake Nikitaras, Alex Ross, Daniel Sams, Gurinder Sandhu, Jason Sangha, Tanveer Sangha, David Warner, Alex Hales, Zaman Khan. - DNA

Felix makes Atletico Madrid pay in La Liga title race

The forward's goal allowed Barca to reclaim third place from Atletico, now trailing leaders Real Madrid and second place Girona by four points in the La Liga points table

SPORTS DESK

LONDON: Joao Felix's superb dinked finish earned Barcelona a vital 1-0 win over Atletico Madrid on in the La Liga title race. The Portuguese forward, on loan at Barcelona from Atletico, made no secret of his pleasure to escape the Spanish capital this summer and made his parent club pay at the Olympic Stadium. Felix was criticised by some Atletico players ahead of the game and Barco coach Xavi Hernandez called on him to use those words as inspiration, which he duly did. The forward's goal allowed Barca to reclaim third place from Atletico, now trailing leaders Real Madrid and second place Girona by four points in the La Liga points table. Atletico have not won away against the champions in La Liga since 2006, a run now stretching to 18 matches, but arrived thinking this could be the time to snap that streak. Since crumbling to a defeat in the Clasico by Real Madrid at the end of October, Barcelona have struggled for form and confidence. Barcelona started well, carving

out chances and Felix broke the deadlock after 28 minutes, taking a brilliant touch to ride Nahuel Molina's challenge and then dinking the ball over Atletico goalkeeper Jan Oblak. Felix celebrated with arms

aloft, standing on the advertising hoardings in front of the angry visiting supporters, while Rojiblanco coach Diego Simeone appeared disgruntled as he flashed up on the big screens. The 24-year-old forward, a club



record signing at 126 million euros (\$137 million) in 2019, never settled in the capital and did not click with Simeone's management and playing style. "It was spontaneous... in the heat of the game and it was like a relief, for everything I lived through this summer," Felix told Movistar about his celebration. "Every week I'm talked about, whether for good or bad, I do my job, without looking at what they say or think." Perhaps not coincidentally, Axel Witsel was soon booked for hacking Felix to the ground shortly after. Felix came close to a second with a prodded effort from Ilkay Gundogan's cut-back, but this time Oblak denied him. Gundogan impressed in midfield alongside fit-again duo Pedri and Frenkie de Jong, as Barcelona controlled the game. Raphinha clipped the post at the start of the second half to get Barcelona fans out of their seats. Despite their high-calibre opponents, the attendance fell short of 35,000 and was the club's poorest this season, with supporters perhaps chastened by the colder winter evenings and the late kick-off. Atletico improved in the second half but not by enough to force an equaliser.

Will name Bajwa, US embassy officials...

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cancelled after the IHC order. Speaking to the media person today, the former prime minister predicted that his party would win the February 8 polls, adding that he was arrested under a plan. Khan said he was thankful to those PTI leaders jumping the ship. He also rejected reports that he held negotiations in jail. In November, PTI President Parvez Elahi claimed that officials of the European Union and the International Monetary Fund routinely visit Imran Khan at Adiala. He also shared that he did not face any difficulties in jail. Khan also spoke about the allegations put forward against him by Khawar Maneka - the former husband of his wife Bushra Bibi. He stated that he saw his wife's face for the first time after their nikah. The former prime minister also claimed that Bushra's sons were being pressurised to give a statement against their mother.

PTI leaders can't face public...

FROM PAGE 01
secret audio tapes are exposed. "Tapes of everyone including Murad Saeed are saved, if [audios] are played [PTI leaders] won't be able to show their faces to anyone," the former security czar said while addressing a press conference in Lahore after Nawaz Sharif-led meeting on the distribution of tickets. The rebuke came in response to a question regarding PTI Chairman Imran Khan's fresh "London plan" allegations for the May 9 riots in his latest conversation with his lawyers from Adiala jail. He asked if the directives for the rampage and arson on May 9 were part of the "London plan". Speaking about the recent criticism of PML-N leader Daniyal Aziz towards his partyman Ahsan Iqbal, Sanaulah said that it was due to some differences over the party ticket issue.

PML-N, JUI-F 'agree'...

FROM PAGE 01
Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) alliance, which assumed a pivotal role following the ousting of prime minister Imran Khan in 2022. Among the attendees were prominent leaders from both parties. From the PML-N side, figures such as Maryam Nawaz, Senator Ishaq Dar, Ahsan Iqbal, Khawaja Saad Rafiq, Mariyum Aurangzeb, and other key members participated in the discussions. Representing the JUI-F were its spokesman Muhammad Aslam Ghauri, Engineer Ziaur Rahman, Maulana Syed Mehmood Mian, Maulana Amjad Khan, Hafiz Naseer Ahrar, and Ghazanfar Aziz. The meeting delved into various aspects of the political landscape, including the overall political situation of the country. Both parties meticulously discussed their political strategies leading up to the upcoming general elections, highlighting the importance of unity and collaboration in order to navigate the complex political terrain.

ECP failed to address MQM-P's...

FROM PAGE 01
A delegation of MQM-P, led by Siddiqui, met with CEC Raja today to discuss the issues being faced by the party regarding the upcoming general elections - slated to take place on February 8 next year. The MQM-P leader said that the party expects a lot from the chief election commissioner, however, he does not believe that the issues will be resolved. Siddiqui said that Sindh has been divided into two parts politically, administratively, and electorally, adding that the crisis in the country will intensify if ECP and the caretaker government in Sindh fail to ensure transparent elections. "Provincial election commissioner is a sworn worker of PPP and he is doing anything he can for the party," claimed the MQM-P convener.

Briefs

At least 47 dead in Tanzania landslides

DAR ES SALAAM: At least 47 people were killed and 85 others injured in landslides caused by flooding in northern Tanzania, a local official announced, with warnings the toll would rise. Heavy rain hit the town of Katesh, some 300 kilometers (186 miles) north of the capital Dodoma, district commissioner Janeth Mayanja said. "Up to this evening, the death toll reached 47 and 85 injured," Queen Sendiga, regional commissioner in the Manyara area of northern Tanzania, told local media. Both warned that the death toll was likely to increase. Mayanja added the many roads in the area had been blocked by mud, water and dislodged trees and stones. Tanzania's President Samia Suluhu Hassan, in Dubai for the COP28 climate conference, sent her condolences and said she had ordered the deployment of "more government efforts to rescue people." Images broadcast on state television TBC showed many flooded homes and vehicles stuck in thick mud. After experiencing an unprecedented drought, East Africa has been hit for weeks by torrential rain and flooding linked to the El Nino weather phenomenon. The downpours have displaced more than a million people in Somalia and left hundreds dead.—APP

Turkish intelligence eliminates PKK's 'drone man'

ANKARA: The National Intelligence Organization (MIT) announced that Bager Öndes, a member of the PKK terrorist group in charge of the group's drones and technical equipment, was "neutralized" in Syria in a precision operation. "Neutralized" is a term used to describe terrorists captured dead or alive. In most cross-border operations by MIT, terrorists are usually eliminated by unmanned drones. MIT has stepped up operations in Iraq and Syria to eliminate PKK terrorists in the past years, utilizing field agents and drones. Öndes, also known as "Akif Amed," was in Syria's Tal Rifaat, working for the YPG, the Syrian wing of the terrorist organization whose presence stretches from Iraq's north to Syria's lawless northeast. Turkish security sources said Öndes, a math graduate, was working on improving drones the terrorist group acquired from Western countries.—DNA

Temperatures in Siberia dip to minus 50 Celsius

DNA

MOSCOW: Temperatures in parts of Siberia plummeted to minus 50 degrees Celsius (minus 58 degrees Fahrenheit) while blizzards blanketed Moscow in record snowfall and disrupted flights as winter weather swept across Russia. In the Sakha Republic, located in the northeastern part of Siberia and home to Yakutsk, one of the world's coldest cities, temperatures fell below minus 50 C, according to the region's weather stations. An abnormally early cold snap in Sakha pushed temperatures to even lower than minus 50 C in several areas of Sakha, a vast region just a little smaller than India. Almost all of Sakha is located in the permafrost zone. In the region's capital, Yakutsk, which lies some 5,000 km (3,100 miles) east of Moscow, the temperature was around minus 44 C to minus 48 C. Temperatures of minus 50 C have become less common in recent years because of climate change, with permafrost showing increasing signs of thawing. In the Russian capital, some of the biggest snowfalls ever seen caused delays at some airports on Monday, with runways covered in thick snow. At least 54 flights were delayed and five more were cancelled at the capital's three largest airports, the news agency reported.

Netanyahu, 'butcher of Gaza,' should be tried for 'war crimes'

The meeting to mark 50th anniversary of Qatar-Türkiye ties, established in 1973, says Qatari Ambassador Sheikh Mohammed bin Nasser bin Jassim Al-Thani

FOREIGN DESK

ISTANBUL: Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu should face trial for being a "war criminal," Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said on Monday, slamming him as the "butcher of Gaza." "We are not going to let the issue of Israel having nuclear weapons be forgotten," Erdogan said in his opening remarks at an Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) meeting in Istanbul. Those who try to ignore deaths in Gaza by keeping silent, even to legitimize it under the pretext of Hamas, have no longer any words for humanity, he said at the 39th ministerial session of the OIC Standing Committee for Economic and Commercial Cooperation. "Israel is not only a murderer but also a thief," said Erdogan, adding: "We cannot let Israel occupy Gaza once again." "There is a global structure that acts with will of a few countries. UN's corrupt structure

needs to change." The Turkish president said Islamophobia is spreading like an epidemic in the West. Türkiye is ready to be a guarantor country for the peace talks between Israel and Palestine, he added. "Gaza is a Palestinian territory. Gaza belongs to Palestinians and it will remain so forever," said the Turkish leader. "Those who invade Gaza will seek other places tomorrow. Gaza butcher Netanyahu revealed he has expansionist ideals," Erdogan said. Criticizing the UN's response to Israel's attacks on Gaza, Erdogan said the sincere efforts of Secretary-General Antonio Guterres were sabotaged by Security Council members themselves. More than 100 UN officials in Gaza have been killed in Israel's attacks, Erdogan pointed out, adding that the UN, founded to protect global security and peace, cannot even secure its own employees from the "barbarity of Israel." Recalling the UN resolution

calling for an "immediate, durable and sustained humanitarian truce" between Israeli and Hamas in Gaza on Oct. 27, Erdogan said this decision was an "valuable step in

representing the conscience of humanity." "However, due to the existing structure of the UN, this decision became obsolete." He said the will of countries that voted in favor

of the resolution and those that abstained was disregarded. "Just this fact alone is sufficient to show how the 2 billion-strong Muslim world is being confined. There is a global structure that acts with will of a few countries. UN's corrupt structure needs to change," he urged. The Israeli army resumed bombing the Gaza Strip early Friday after declaring an end to a week-long humanitarian pause. Israel launched relentless air and ground attacks on the Gaza Strip following a cross-border attack by Palestinian group Hamas on Oct. 7. The death toll from Israeli attacks on the Gaza Strip has surged to 15,523 since the start of the conflict on Oct. 7, the Health Ministry in the besieged Palestinian enclave announced on Sunday. The official Israeli death toll stands at 1,200. A total of 120 countries voted in favour of the resolution, 14 countries voted against including Israel and the United States, while 45 others abstained.



Japan, France support climate lending plan with SDRS

WEB DESK

DUBAI: Japan and France said on Monday they will support the African Development Bank (AfDB) and Inter-American Development Bank's (IDB) plan to leverage IMF Special Drawing Rights for climate and development. SDRs are rainy day foreign exchange reserves held at the International Monetary Fund, backed by dollars, euros, yen, sterling and yuan. The IMF created a \$650 billion allocation of new SDRs in 2021 in response to COVID-19 and said in June it had on-lent \$100 billion of SDRs to low income countries at

below-market rates. Multilateral development banks (MDBs) say they can bolster climate finance in developing markets by leveraging SDRs. "The MDBs can multiply by at least four times the SDRs allocated to them," AfDB President Akinwumi Adesina said during a roundtable at the COP28 climate conference in Dubai where Japan and France expressed their support. He added that five countries would need to re-channel their SDRs to the AfDB, which is also planning to issue a hybrid capital note, and other development lenders to make the proposal work. "Japan... will be ac-

celerating its best efforts to make a contribution to the proposed hybrid capital in the foreseeable future," Tomoyoshi Yahagi, the deputy director general of Japan's Ministry of Finance, said. "We are now in the process of clarifying the details." France cannot reallocate its SDRs due to European regulations, but will "issue a guarantee" via a "liquidity support agreement" that will backstop the SDR on-lending, French Treasury director general Emmanuel Moulin said by video message. Spain will explore supporting the proposal, its deputy prime minister Nadia Calvino said, while Britain

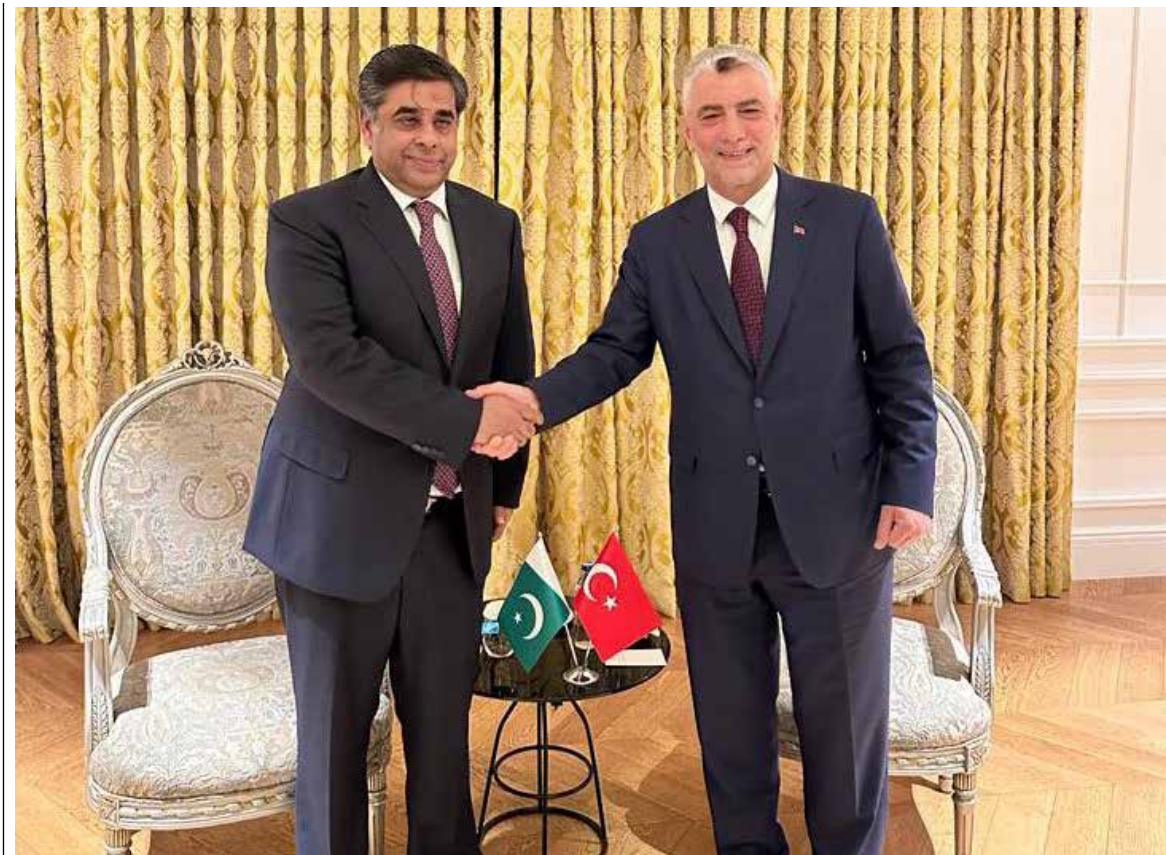
will examine backing the liquidity support facility, its development minister Andrew Mitchell added. The IMF executive board will also need to approve the SDR on-lending, which IMF staff will ask it to consider doing "in the next several months," IMF deputy managing director Bo Li said. "If this initiative by the AfDB and the IDB succeeds, we'll have taken something that was gathering dust," Rockefeller Foundation Vice President Eric Pelofsky, who chaired the roundtable. "Were AfDB to get \$5 billion of SDRs, we would hope to have a \$20 billion increase in lending and that's a big deal."

Indonesia volcano eruption leaves casualties, dozen missing

JAKARTA: Eleven hikers have been found dead and another 12 were missing after a volcano erupted in Indonesia, with rescuers racing to carry injured and burned survivors down the mountain on foot. Mount Marapi has stayed at the third highest of four alert levels since 2011, a level indicating above-normal volcanic activity and prohibiting climbers or villagers within 3 kilometres (1.8 miles) of the peak, said Hendra Gunawan, the head of the Center for Volcanology and Geological Disaster Mitigation. "This means that there should be no climbing to the peak," Gunawan said on Monday, adding that climbers were only allowed below the danger zone, "but sometimes many of them broke the rules to fulfill their satisfaction to climb further." About 75 climbers had started their way up the nearly 2,900-meter (9,480-foot) mountain on Saturday and became stranded. Eight of those rescued on Sunday were rushed to hospitals with burns and one also had a broken limb, said Hari Agustian, an official at the local Search and Rescue Agency in Padang, the West Sumatra provincial capital. Villages covered with ash All of the climbers had registered at two command posts or online through West Sumatra's conservation agency before they climbed, Agustian said. It was possible others took illegal roads or local residents were active in the area, but it couldn't be confirmed, he said.—DNA

China accuses US of 'illegal' South China sea entry

BEIJING: The Chinese military has said that an American naval ship had "illegally intruded" into waters near the Second Thomas Shoal, the site of a hot territorial dispute between China and the Philippines in the South China Sea. A Chinese naval force was mobilised on Monday to track the USS Gabrielle Giffords during the operation, according to a statement from the People's Liberation Army Southern Theater. The US Navy did not respond immediately to a request for comment. Chinese and Philippine naval and coast guard ships have confronted each other repeatedly around the Second Thomas Shoal in recent months as China tries to prevent the Philippines from resupplying and repairing a rusting warship that it intentionally ran aground in 1999 to serve as a military outpost. Dwarfed by China's military might, the Philippines has sought America's help, agreeing to an expansion of the US military presence in the country earlier this year and launching joint sea and air patrols with the United States late last month. Violation of international law' China says the US is meddling in waters far from its shores and renewed its accusation that America is the one raising regional tensions following the sailing of the USS Giffords, a littoral combat ship designed to operate in coastal areas, near Second Thomas Shoal. "The US deliberately disrupted the situation in the South China Sea, seriously violated China's sovereignty and security, seriously undermined regional peace and stability, and seriously violated international law and basic norms governing international relations, fully demonstrating that the US is the biggest threat to peace and stability.—DNA



Ankara: Commerce Minister of Pakistan Dr. Gohar Ejaz met Turkish Trade Minister Prof. Dr. Ömer Bolat during the 39th COMCEC Ministerial meeting in Turkey. Both sides reiterated their resolve to enhance bilateral trade and investment and to further deepen cooperation between brotherly Pakistan and Turkey.—DNA

Ukraine fund to run out by year's end :US

US Congress that failure to agree to fresh funds for Ukraine by the end of the year would "kneecap" Kiev on the battlefield

FOREIGN DESK

WASHINGTON: The White House budget chief warned the US Congress that failure to agree to fresh funds for Ukraine by the end of the year would "kneecap" Kiev on the battlefield. In a letter to the House Speaker, the director of the Office of Management and Budget, Shalanda Young, said time was rapidly running out to support Ukraine's fight against the Russian invasion. "I want to be clear: without congressional action, by the end of the year, we will run out of resources to procure more weapons and equipment for Ukraine," Young wrote. "Cutting off the flow of US weapons and equipment will kneecap Ukraine on the battlefield," she added. "There is no magical pot of funding available to meet this moment. We are out of money - and nearly out of time," Young wrote in the letter. Russian forces are assaulting the industrial town of Avdiivka in eastern Ukraine from two new directions, Ukrainian of-

ficials said, as Moscow expands its bid to capture the almost encircled town. Moscow has been trying for nearly two months to seize Avdiivka, an industrial town in the eastern Donetsk region that has become the fiercest flashpoint on the sprawling front line. "The current third wave of enemy assaults differs from the previous two in that they have conditionally opened two new directions," the head of the town, Vitaliy Barabash said. "The launching of new directions proves that the enemy has been given a command to capture the city at any cost," he added, speaking to state media. A Russian general has died while deployed in Ukraine, the governor of Russia's Voronezh region has said, the latest high-ranking Russian military figure to die during the 21-month offensive. "A piercing pain, Major General Vladimir Zavadsky, deputy commander of the 14th Army Corps of the Northern Fleet, died in the line of duty in a special operation zone," Voronezh governor Alexander Gusev said on Telegram, using the Russian term for

its offensive in Ukraine. Ukraine's forces attacked an oil depot in Russia-controlled Luhansk last night using combat drones, Russian news agency reported, citing Russian-installed authorities in the Ukrainian region. A fire that broke out after the attack has been extinguished and there was no information about casualties. The first 30 lorries passed through the newly opened Uhryniv-Dolhobychuv crossing on the Ukrainian-Polish border, which Kiev expects will unlock main land corridors amid protests by Polish drivers, Ukraine's border service said. Those protests, over what Polish truckers see as unfair competition from their Ukrainian peers, started on Nov. 6, with four border crossings now under blockade. Polish hauliers' main demand is to stop Ukrainian truckers from having permit-free access to the EU, something that Kiev and Brussels say is impossible. "As of the morning of December 4, border guards cleared 30 heavy vehicles with a total permissible weight of more than 7.5 (metric) tons for departure from Ukraine at the Uhryniv check-

point," the service said on Telegram. Russia launched 23 drones and a cruise missile overnight on Ukraine, Ukraine's air force has said, adding that its air defence systems destroyed the missile and 18 of the drones before they reached their targets. The anti-aircraft defence was deployed in at least nine regions of Ukraine, the air force said on the Telegram messaging app. The air force did not provide details on what happened to the drones that were not destroyed or whether there was any damage as a result of the attack. A Ukrainian prosecutor conducting a world-first war crimes investigation into allegations of Russian ecocide. The case, which Kiev plans to take to the International Criminal Court (ICC) in some form, is the latest in a string of investigations and challenges that Ukraine hopes will hold Russia accountable - and make it pay - for its invasion. The investigation in the southern Kherson region stems from the extensive flooding caused after the Kakhovka dam was partially destroyed on

June 6 in a series of early morning blasts. Dozens were killed as entire villages became submerged and the United Nations says there was \$14 billion of destruction. Ukraine says Russia blew up the dam and that the extent of the environmental damage constitutes a war crime. To build its case, it has dispatched a hundreds-strong team of ecological investigators. "We're going to use every possible method to gather evidence," Ignatenko, 32, told AFP. Donning a military t-shirt and scrawling in a notebook, he called the hundreds working on the case "pioneers." Russia has blamed Ukraine for the dam's destruction. Both sides have denied responsibility. NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg warned that the military alliance should be prepared for "bad news" from Ukraine as it continues to face Russia's offensive. "Wars develop in phases," Stoltenberg said in an interview over the weekend with German public broadcaster ARD, noting: "We have to support Ukraine in both good and bad times."

Arms sales hindered by production challenges: Study

STOCKHOLM: Even with the war in Ukraine fuelling demand, revenue for the world's top arms suppliers dipped in 2022, as production issues kept companies unable to increase production, researchers said Monday. The sales of weapons and military services by the 100 largest arms companies in the world totalled \$597 billion in 2022, a decrease of 3.5 percent compared to 2021, according to a new report by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI). At the same time, geopolitical tensions coupled with Russia's invasion of Ukraine fuelled increased demand for weapons and military equipment. Diego Lopes da Silva, a senior researcher at SIPRI, told AFP that in this context the slowdown in revenue was "unexpected". "What the decrease really shows is that there is a time lag between a demand shock like the war in Ukraine and the ability of companies to scale up production and really meet that demand," Lopes da Silva said. According to SIPRI, the decline was in large part due to diminished revenues among major arms makers in the United States, where manufacturers struggled with "supply chain issues and labour shortages" stemming from the Covid-19 pandemic. The United States alone saw a 7.9 percent decrease but still made up for 51 percent of total arms revenue in 2022, with 42 companies among the world's top 100. US arms suppliers are particularly vulnerable to supply chain disruptions as many of the weapon systems they produce are more complex.—DNA

Man stabs 4 to death in New York

NEW YORK: A man wielding a steak knife killed four members of his extended family, including two children, at a home in the Queens borough of New York City early on before being shot dead by police, authorities said. The New York City Police Department said a girl called to report the incident in Queens' Far Rockaway neighborhood and said "her cousin is killing her family members". The suspect, a 38-year-old, stabbed two police officers who responded to the scene, police told reporters. One of the officers then shot him dead, they added. The suspect had previously been arrested over a domestic violence incident, police said. The two injured officers were taken to a hospital and were expected to recover. The four people stabbed to death included a 12-year-old boy, an 11-year-old girl, a 44-year-old woman and a man in his 30s, police said. The 11-year-old was found in front of the house, while the other three were found inside bedrooms, police added. A fifth person, a 61-year-old woman, was also stabbed and was in hospital in critical condition, police said.—Agencies

Brazilian lender Itau launches crypto trading

SAO PAULO: Brazilian bank Itau Unibanco has launched a cryptocurrency trading service for its clients as part of its investment platform. Itau, the largest bank by assets in Brazil and one of the leading lenders in Latin America, is debuting crypto trading with Bitcoin. The digital asset head Guto Antunes reportedly said. In the future, the bank plans to add more cryptocurrencies for trading, he noted. "It starts with Bitcoin, but our overarching strategic plan is to expand to other crypto assets in the future," Antunes stated, adding expansion would depend on regulatory developments. The move reportedly comes about a month after two local players announced they were leaving the crypto market. According to media reporters, brokerage and investment company XP recently shut down its crypto services without citing its reasons. The financial services firm PicPay, owned by conglomerate J&F, which also controls meatpacker JBS, cited regulatory uncertainties.—APP

Briefs
Netanyahu's corruption trial resumes

DNA
TEL AVIV: Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's long-running trial on a host of corruption charges resumes following a two-month halt due to the regime's war on Gaza. Netanyahu faces charges of bribery, fraud, and breach of trust in one case. In two other cases, he faces similar charges of fraud and breach of trust. Prosecutors say between 2007 and 2016 Netanyahu allegedly received gifts valued at \$195,000 in exchange for financial or personal favors. Netanyahu has denied any wrongdoing. A court in al-Quds was to start hearing the case. Bribery charges carry a sentence of up to 10 years in jail and/or a fine. Fraud and breach of trust carry a prison sentence of up to three years. When the Palestinian resistance movement Hamas launched its surprise Operation Al-Aqsa Storm against the regime on October 7, the trial was paused on an emergency order from the Israeli justice minister. In the event, Netanyahu ordered Israeli military forces to attack the besieged Gaza Strip with a force "like never before." Israel has so far killed more than 15,500 people, according to the Gaza health ministry. 70 percent of those killed are women and children. Netanyahu said on Saturday that the air and ground invasion of the besieged Palestinian territory will continue "until we achieve all our goals."

KSE-100 crosses 62,000 milestone

DNA
KARACHI: The Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) maintained a bullish run on the opening day of the week as it breached the 62,000 milestone, with hopes of the market continuing the positive momentum. The benchmark KSE-100 index reached 62,912.61 points during the intraday trading. However, it closed lower at 62,493.05 points after gaining 801.80 points or 1.30%, up from yesterday's close of 61,691.25 points. Raza Jafri, head of equity at Intermarket Securities, said that despite the Consumer Price Index (CPI) for November showing high inflation, some market participants expect a rate cut in next week's Monetary Policy Committee's (MPC) meeting. He added that cheap energy stocks were also attracting interest in hopes of improvement in circular debt, adding that there is "still a lot of room for money to rotate from fixed income into equities and it may have started to happen". Stocks ended last week on a triumphant note, with the benchmark index clinching a fresh all-time high on Friday, buoyed by a surge in foreign portfolio investment and a series of encouraging economic indicators, including a strengthened rupee following the rollover of a \$3 billion deposit by Saudi Arabia.

Afghanistan urged to hand over Gul Bahadur

DNA
QUETTA: Caretaker provincial minister Jan Achakzai demands that Hafiz Gul Bahadur should be handed over to Pakistan. Addressing a press conference, Achakzai said a decisive step had been taken to resolve challenges to Pakistan with a special focus on repatriating illegal immigrants. The minister said 400,000 people had already been repatriated - a step which, he said, would benefit both Pak and Afghanistan, especially amidst global concerns over terrorism originating from Afghanistan. The minister said 99 percent of the immigrants were Afghans, while the remaining were individuals from other countries.

German Christmas Market attracts huge audiences

Visitors flock to the venue to augment German embassy efforts to help those in need

DNA
ISLAMABAD: The Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany in Islamabad orchestrated a festive extravaganza by hosting an annual Christmas Market at Islamabad Serena Hotel. This enchanting event immersed attendees in the rich traditions of German Christmas celebrations, offering a delightful blend of culinary delights, shopping, and joyous merriment. The market showcased an array of authentic German delicacies that tantalized the taste buds of visitors, including homemade cakes and cookies meticulously crafted to capture the essence of German holiday traditions. Attendees were treated to a sensory journey, experiencing the warmth and flavors synonymous with Christmas in Germany. The air was filled with the spirit of the season as visitors strolled through the market, discovering unique treasures and handcrafted gifts that reflected the artistry and craftsmanship of German culture. From charming ornaments to exquisite trinkets, the shopping experience transported attendees to a winter wonderland brimming with festive cheer. The ambiance was further heightened by the vibrant atmosphere, resonating with laughter and the joyful sounds of the season. Families and friends came together to partake in the festivities, creating cherished memories against the backdrop of the embassy's beautifully adorned Christmas Market. In organizing this event, the Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany aimed to share the magic of German Christmas traditions with the local community, fostering cultural exchange and promoting the universal spirit of joy and togetherness during the holiday season. The Christmas Market served as a testament to the enduring bonds of friendship and goodwill between Germany and Pakistan, as both nations came together to celebrate the most wonderful time of the year in true German style. The German members of the embassy baked more than 60 kg of cookies and several square meters of delicious German cakes. In Santa's workshop they manufactured wreaths and chocolate as well as other delicacies and toys and Christmas decoration have been imported from Germany only for that occasion. There would be some stalls of Christmas



decorative items, seasonal delights and art and craft. The collection from the tickets would go in charity as every year. The German Ambassador to Pakistan, Alfred Grannas, said on this occasion: "With this bazaar we want to welcome the merriest time of the year - especially for



all those away from their homes. Christmas is all about sharing our joy. This is why the proceeds from this event will be donated to families in need." Last year, the German embassy successfully hosted a bazaar at the same venue. The event garnered significant

attendance, with diplomats and the general public alike participating in large numbers. Their presence reflected a shared commitment to supporting the German embassy's commendable initiative, which aims to provide substantial assistance to those in need.

Justice Naqvi urges early fixation of pleas

DNA
ISLAMABAD: Justice Sayyed Mazhar Ali Akbar Naqvi requested on Monday for early fixation of his constitutional petitions challenging the Supreme Judicial Council's (SJC) proceedings of misconduct against him. The advocate on record (AOR), on the instruction of Justice Naqvi, responded to the Supreme Court Registrar Office's notice to inquire as to whether the judge wanted to proceed with his petition. The application requested that the subject notice be withdrawn and both the petitions be placed before the committee for appropriate orders. It added that after this, the petitions along with the applications for interim relief be numbered and fixed for hearing before a bench of this court. It is contended that the notice and the order, purportedly passed by the registrar, are ultra vires the Supreme Court Rules, 1980 and the Supreme Court (Practice and Procedure) Act, 2023. "The Registrar has no authority to inquire from a petitioner whether he or she wants to proceed with a case or not. This notice is, therefore, without jurisdiction and of no legal effect," he maintained. The judge of the apex court requested in his reply to the assistant registrar (Civil-II) that the two constitutional petitions he filed should be fixed together for a hearing before a three-member bench committee. In his message, he maintained: "Both constitutional petitions raise questions of public importance relating to the enforcement of Fundamental Rights." He also revealed that his applications have not been numbered yet and that it "is in violation of the provisions of the 2023 Act".

Political parties shouldn't indulge in 'blame game'

DNA
KARACHI: Sindh Governor Kamran Tessori has revealed that he has communicated to former president and Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Co-chairperson Asif Ali Zardari that political parties should not indulge in the "blame game". Speaking to the media in Karachi on Monday during his visit to a school established by a welfare organisation, he highlighted the rising political temperature in the country and said: "All the political parties are mine and I am the governor of all. Parties should stop the blame game." Warning against hasty decision-making, in light of prevailing economic turmoil, the governor underscored that the upcoming general elections should be conducted in a way that is acceptable to all stakeholders. During his visit to the school, Tessori also distributed laptops among students and participated in various activities. "I will talk to the Sindh government to provide a grant to this school." He added that he prays more such schools are established in Sindh. Tessori's comments came as political parties including PPP, and Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) are trading barbs ahead of the February 8 general elections to woo their voters. PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari has been targeting "aged" politicians, especially PML-N supremo Nawaz Sharif, and is also blaming the party for inflation during the Pakistan Democratic Movement's (PDM) 16-month stint while PML-N has also clapped back at PPP for accusing Nawaz Sharif-led party. The PPP has also raised concerns about not being provided a level playing field and equal opportunities to contest in the upcoming elections. The party also sought Nawaz's retirement from politics. - DNA

Non-bailable arrest warrants issued for Malik Riaz

DNA
ISLAMABAD: An Islamabad accountability court on Monday issued non-bailable arrest warrants for property tycoon Malik Riaz, former special assistants to the premier Mirza Shahzad Akbar and Zulfi Bukhari, and three others in the reference filed in connection with the Al-Qadir Trust case. Non-bailable arrest warrants were also issued for Farhat Shahzadi, a close friend of the spouse of ex-premier Imran Khan, lawyer Ziaul Mustafa Nasim, and Riaz's son Ali Ahmed Riaz. Last week, the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) had filed the reference against Imran and seven others, including his wife Bushra Bibi, in connection with the Al-Qadir Trust case. The case alleges that Imran and Bushra Bibi obtained billions of rupees and land worth hundreds of kanals from Bahria Town Ltd for legalising Rs50 billion that was identified and returned to the country by the UK during the previous PTI government. The reference filed by NAB alleged that Imran, who is currently in jail, played a "pivotal role in illicit transfer of funds meant for the state of Pakistan into an account designated for the payment of land by Bahria Town, Karachi". It also claimed that despite being given multiple opportunities to justify and provide information, the accused deliberately, with mala fide intention, refused to give information on one pretext or another. Shahzadi, former special assistants to the premier Bukhari and Akbar, lawyer Nasim, and property tycoon Riaz and his son were also named in the reference. Today, Islamabad Accountability Judge Muhammad Bashir issued a written order, which noted that Imran was already in judicial lockup and was presented in court in connection with another case - the cipher case.

India building another hydropower project on Chenab

NEWS DESK
ISLAMABAD: India has started constructing the first-ever hydropower project on MaruSadar, the right bank tributary of the River Chenab that violates the provisions of the Indus Waters Treaty (IWT) 1960, a Pakistani newspaper reported Monday. Islamabad and New Delhi are already in a legal battle in the court of arbitration and neutral expert, the two international forums on the faulty designs of 330MW Kishanganga and 850MW Ratle hydropower projects being built on Pakistan's rivers. Pakistan has objected to the designs of the hydropower project which has live dam storage of 99,000 acre-feet and a capacity to generate 1,000MW hydropower generation. India is pretending that it will have live storage of 88,000 acre-feet with a faulty design of spillways in sheer violation of the IWT 1960, according to experts. The project will be completed within two years.

Iran, Cuba call for global coalition to support Palestinians

FOREIGN DESK
TEHRAN: President Ebrahim Raesi says Iran and Cuba have a common stance on the need to form a coalition to support the oppressed Palestinian people in different continents in cooperation with the allied countries. Raesi made the remarks in a meeting with Cuban counterpart Miguel Diaz-Canel, who is in Tehran on a historic visit. The Iranian president slammed the deafening silence of the international community on the Israeli genocide in Gaza, saying no international organization is trying to stop the Israeli killing machine. "Regrettably, the United States and the West are supporting these heartbreaking crimes," Raesi said, slamming those who claim to defend human rights for backing Israel's crimes against humanity. He expressed regret over the inefficiency of the international systems which have failed to stop the "war machine that the US has provided to the Zionist regime." "The United Nations, the Security Council, the Arab League and other global bodies have lost their efficiency," the Iranian president said. He stressed the need to end the current unfair international system and form a fair global system that supports the oppressed people and prevents oppression. Raesi said Iranians and all nations are saddened that the enemies are attacking the Palestinian people, who want to defend their homeland and lives. "The Zionist regime martyrs the Palestinian people with [acts of] racism, genocide and crime against humanity and massacres women and children," the Iranian president added. He noted that since the beginning of the Tel Aviv regime's large-scale attack on Gaza on October 7, more than 6,000 Palestinian children

and over 4,000 women have been killed, reaffirming the Islamic Republic's support for the Palestinian people. Israel waged the war on Gaza on October 7 after the Palestinian Hamas resistance group conducted Operation Al-Aqsa Storm against the occupying entity in retaliation for its intensified atrocities against the Palestinian people. Since the start of the offensive, the Tel Aviv regime has killed at least 15,523 Palestinians, mostly women and children, injured 41,316 others, and left vast swathes of Gaza in ruins. It has also imposed a "complete siege" on Gaza, cutting off fuel, electricity, food, and water to more than two million Palestinians living there. Diaz-Canel, for his part, said Cuba slams Israel's killing of thousands of Palestinian people and calls for the immediate establishment of a ceasefire in Gaza which would prepare the ground for the formation of an independent Palestinian state. He added that Iran and Cuba call for international efforts to condemn Israel's acts of genocide against the Palestinian people. The Cuban president lashed out at the US for interfering in Iran's internal affairs, saying that Havana defends Tehran's legitimate right to determine its own fate. Elsewhere in the presser, Raesi said both Iran and Cuba are resisting the arrogant system, warning the US and its allies of their miscalculation regarding the implementation of the policy of sanctions against the countries. He added that the resistance of Tehran and Havana against US hegemony and excessive demands has led to the imposition of sanctions. "The US and arrogant system think that sanctions can force countries to surrender, but this calculation is incorrect," the Iranian president emphasized. He said those countries that are under sanctions can exchange capacities in a bid to neutralize them, adding that Iran and Cuba decided to promote relations as a major step towards foiling the sanctions.

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