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We are closer than ever to peace in Caucasus: Fidan

Detailed News On Page-07

Galey: France committed to protection of HR

Detailed News On Page-08

Warner hits ton as Australia take control in 1st Test

Detailed News On Page-06



Rejects Indian SC verdict

PM reaffirms Pak support to Kashmiris

India's illegal actions to further strengthen Kashmiris' freedom struggle

DNA

MUZAFFARABAD: Caretaker Prime Minister Anwar-ul-Haq Kakar on Thursday reaffirmed Pakistan's moral, political and diplomatic support to the people of Kashmir, and rejected the recent verdict of the Indian Supreme Court calling it a politically motivated and a tool to consolidate Indian illegal occupation. The prime minister, in his address at the special session of the Azad Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Assembly (AJK LA), called for India to desist from consolidating its occupation, revoke the illegal unilateral actions of August 5, 2019 and not change the demography of the disputed territory. Chaired by AJK LA Speaker Chaudhry Latif Akbar, the session was attended by AJK Prime Minister Chaudhry AnwarulHaq and Assembly members. PM Kakar also stressed upon India to halt the human rights abuses in the Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu & Kashmir (IIOJK), repeal emergency laws, withdraw heavy military presence and provide unhindered access to the United Nations bodies and the international media. The prime minister, who was the first-ever caretaker PM to address the AJK Legislative Assembly, paid tribute to the martyrs of the Kashmir movement and those living along the Line of Control and suffered losses due to the Indian ceasefire violations. He said Pakistan would continue to stand alongside the people of Kashmir in their struggle and wished them to enjoy their due rights. "Kashmir is Pakistan's jugular vein. The word 'Pakistan' is incomplete without Kashmir. The people of Pakistan and Kashmir are bound by unique affinity. We share joys and sorrow. Pakistan cannot

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Nawaz Sharif eyes nation's Feb 8 'judgment'

Alleges that NAB initiated witch hunt against him

DNA

LAHORE: In his maiden televised 'address to the nation' after ending four years of exile, Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) supremo Nawaz Sharif expressed confidence that the people will back his party in the upcoming general elections after he secured major victories from courts. "I am hopeful that you [nation] will announce your judgments on February 8, [2024] and end the punishments meted out to you," the former three-time prime minister said in a recorded message, aired on television channels Thursday. Nawaz has time and again — since he returned to Pakistan in October after a four-year self-exile in London — reiterated the call for holding those accountable who were behind his government's ouster in 2017,

Continued on Page 06



MUZAFFARABAD: Caretaker Prime Minister, Anwar-ul-Haq Kakar visits Yaadgar-e-Shuhda to pay tribute to the martyrs. — DNA

Sarah murder case Court hands death sentence to Shahnawaz

Mother of accused acquitted

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: A district and sessions court in Islamabad on Thursday sentenced accused Shahnawaz Amir to death and imposed a penalty of Rs1 million in Sarah Imam's murder case. Sessions Judge Nasir Javid Rana delivered the verdict which was reserved last week on December 9. However, the court acquitted the Shahnawaz's mother, Samina Shah, due to lack of evidence. She was indicted in December last year by the sessions court and was named co-accused in the case. The proceedings of the case lasted for more than a

Continued on Page 06

Pakistan urges Taliban govt to take 'stern action' against terrorists

"Afghanistan must take strong action against perpetrators of this heinous attack," says FO spokesperson

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan has urged the Taliban-led interim government of Afghanistan to take "strong action" against militants involved in the December 12 terror attack on security forces in Dera Ismail (DI) Khan district of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. "We have noted the Afghan interim government statement that it will investigate the terrorist attack of December 12," Foreign Office Spokesperson Mumtaz Zahra Baloch said while addressing a weekly press conference in Islamabad on Thursday. Earlier this week, at least 23 soldiers embraced martyrdom when militants rammed an explosive-laden vehicle into a Pakistani military base, the army said, in an attack claimed by affiliates of the banned Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP). The News reported. "In early hours of December 12, 2023, a group of six terrorists attacked a security forces post in the Daraban area of

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UN accuses Taliban of imprisoning women with no male relatives

Women have been increasingly confined since Taliban takeover

NEWS DESK

ISLAMABAD: Taliban officials are sending Afghan women to prison to protect them from gender-based violence, according to a U.N. report published Thursday. Before the Taliban seized power in 2021, there were 23 state-sponsored women protection centers in Afghanistan where survivors of gender-based violence could seek refuge. Now there are none, the U.N. report said. Officials from the Taliban-led administration told

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Briefs

'Reduce driver's test time to two weeks'

DNA

LAHORE: Chief Minister Punjab Mohsin Naqvi Thursday paid a surprise visit to the Liberty Police

Service Centre and interacted with the citizens who came for driving licenses. During his visit, he ordered to reduce the time for re-taking the driver's test to two weeks. He listened to their complaints and grievances and issued orders on the spot for their redressal. He also announced that from December 25, citizens will be able to book an appointment in advance through a mobile app or a website to avoid long queues and delays. He said that app will be available for both Android and Apple users soon.

PTI chairman demands timely polls

DNA

LAHORE: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Gohar Ali Khan demanded on Thursday that the next general elections take place in a timely manner. During a press conference, the PTI chief stated that the Lahore High Court's decision did not allow for the postponement of elections. He argued against the appointment of district officers as returning officers (ROs), emphasising that it could potentially lead to rigging. Khan expressed concern about the possibility of the election being annulled due to the Election Commission of Pakistan's notification regarding ROs.

Judge removal case

SC orders nominating former DG ISI, others

Following order, ex-judge files plea seeking to make ex-COAS Bajwa, Faiz parties in case SJC allows Justice Naqvi to respond to allegations

COURT REPORTER

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Judicial Council on Thursday allowed Supreme Court judge, Justice Sayeed Mazahar Ali Akbar Naqvi to submit his reply over show cause notice issued to him over the charges of misconduct. A five-member SJC led by Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Qazi Faez Isa on Thursday conducted open proceedings of Justice Naqvi's case at courtroom number one. Justice Naqvi appeared along with his counsel Khawaja Haris. The SJC adjourned the hearing until January 11. Justice Naqvi has been instructed to submit his reply, along with a

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MONITORING DESK/DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court on Thursday ordered former Islamabad High Court (IHC) judge Shaukat Azizi Siddiqui to nominate former spy chief General Faiz Hamid and others in the plea against his dismissal. Earlier today the apex court resumed the hearing of a plea filed by the former judge against his removal by the Supreme Judicial Council. The court gave the petitioner a day to nominate the former general and others in the case. A five-member bench led by

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French envoy meets FM Shamshad

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Nicolas Galey Ambassador of France to Pakistan called on Caretaker Federal Minister for Finance, Revenue and Economic Affairs Dr Shamshad Akhtar at Finance Division. During the meeting, matters of mutual interest, economic relations between the two countries and collaborative efforts in various sectors were discussed.

Picture on Page 2 / Another news on Page 8

Finance Minister Dr. Shamshad Akhtar welcomed Ambassador of France to Pakistan to Finance Division. She stated that both countries enjoy deep and

Continued on Page 06

ECP to 'announce' general election schedule on Dec 17

Commission sources say ECP fully prepared to hold elections

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) will announce the election schedule on December 17 (Sunday) and nomination papers will be submitted on the next day of the schedule's announcement. The News quoted sources as saying on Thursday. As per the publication, the electoral watchdog will take 54 days to complete the process to finally hold balloting for the provincial and national assemblies on February 8, 2024. Under Article 220 of the Constitution, the federal and provincial governments would be bound to assist the ECP in conducting the elections after the announcement of the schedule. The Constitution provides under "Executive authorities to assist Commission, etc." Article 220 of the Constitution that reads: "It shall be the duty of all executive authorities in the Federation and in the provinces to assist the Commissioner and the Election Commission in the discharge of his or their functions." The election body has sped up its preparations for the polls. The chief election commissioner (CEC), whose engagements have been increased on several counts, has set up a hotline in his office to maintain contact with all offices of the commission. Training for the district returning officers and returning officers started on December 13, and it would

Continued on Page 06

PTI trying to delay elections: Shahbaz

In 2018, bureaucracy had carried out the responsibility of DROs, says Shehbaz

ABID RAZA

LAHORE: The Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) on Thursday accused the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) of hatching a conspiracy to delay the February 8 general elections. In a statement on Thursday, PML-N President Shehbaz Sharif said the PTI was conspiring to defer the general elections scheduled to be held on February 8 next year. Referring to the PTI petition in the Lahore High Court (LHC) against hiring district returning officers (DROs) from bureaucracy, the PML-N president said the plea

Continued on Page 06

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PPP urges CEC to remove reservations of political parties

Faisal Kundi said that law and order, economy, inflation and unemployment were the key challenges being faced by the country and PPP has the solution of all these issues

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Information Secretary, Pakistan People's Party (PPP) Faisal Karim Kundi Thursday urged the Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Sikandar Sultan Raja to remove the reservations of all the political parties and ensure provision of level playing field to them during the upcoming general elections on February 8. "PPP's stance on general polls is very clear that the ECP should conduct timely, free and fair elections in the country," he said while addressing a press conference here. Faisal Kundi said that a delegation of PPP already met the Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) and apprised him about the reservations and need to provide level playing field in the upcoming polls. The CEC has assured them that there will be no delay in the elections,

he added. Faisal Kundi said that the masses should decide to vote for any political party in general elections as it was the right of the people to vote and elect the party to rule in the country. "The masses will not accept any government unless free and fair elections are ensured. The credibility of the Parliament will be nothing if free, fair and transparent elections were not conducted in the country," he added. About the rumors regarding the ban on social media during elections, he said that PPP would fully oppose the restriction of social media as it was important tool to approach the masses during the elections. Faisal Kundi said that the country was facing critical law and order situation especially, in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan and the social media was the best tool to access the people in the situation, adding that the ECP should

also address the issue. "PPP always talked about the implementation of the National Action Plan (NAP) in letter and spirit to root out the terrorism from the country," he added. He said that President Pakistan People's Party Parliamentarians (PPPP) Asif Ali Zardari has categorically stated that transparent and timely polls was the only solution to get rid of all the challenges being faced by the country. Faisal Kundi said that law and order, economy, inflation and unemployment were the key challenges being faced by the country and PPP has the solution of all these issues. He said that this time, if the selection process was adopted instead of transparent elections, the nation would not accept it because now there was majority of young people who were conscious and they would not accept the selection.



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of France Nicolas Galey meets Finance Minister, Shamshad Akhtar. — DNA

Religious scholars denounce DI Khan attack

ISLAMABAD: Religious scholars on Thursday condemned the terrorist attack on the security personals in Dera Ismail Khan, urging the masses to identify anti-social elements to protect the country of the scourge of terrorism. Dr. Abdul Rehman, Head of the Shaykh Zayed Islamic Research Centre, Islamia University Peshawar, said the country is going through a critical situation and the entire nation stands shoulder to shoulder with its brave soldiers who are always ready to lay down their lives in defense of the motherland. Speaking to Radio Pakistan, he paid rich tribute to security personnel who embraced martyrdom during this cowardly attack. "No power on earth can undo Pakistan and such cowardly acts cannot weaken the spirit of armed forces," he remarked. Maulana Muhammad Tayyab Qureshi, Chief Khateeb, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, said the martyrs are our real heroes; their great sacrifices will not go in vain, adding that the whole world recognized the eternal sacrifices of the security forces in the war against terrorism. "These cruel people want to destabilize the country; they are not only enemies of Pakistan but of the whole humanity and the entire Ummah," he added. —APP

Govt committed to wipe out terrorism

PESHAWAR: Caretaker Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Syed Arshad Hussain Shah on Wednesday said that the federal and provincial governments, law enforcement agencies and the people were on the same page to wipe out terrorism and extremism from the country in all forms and manifestations. Talking to a delegation of trainee Assistant Superintendent of Police (ASPs) here at his office, he said that the morale of the law enforcing agencies and security institutions was high and they were ready to cope with any challenge for peace in the country. "Whoever is against the country is the enemy of all of us and whoever does not follow the country's Constitution will be dealt strictly," the chief minister

said. He said that the role of police was important in maintaining law and order in the society and protecting the lives and properties of the people, adding that KP police always fought against terrorism bravely in the province and had rendered great sacrifices. The CM said that the welfare and development of the merged districts was a priority of the government and a formal plan had been chalked out for the areas. He, however said that due to financial problems at national level, the welfare and development of the merged districts was being affected. He said that the promises made at the time of merger could not be fulfilled adding that due to this reaction, the process of de-

velopment in the merged districts was hampered. The chief minister said that the issue of funding had been raised by the Prime Minister and he had assured to address this issue. Arshad Shah said that the stability of the entire country was related to peace and stability in the merged districts and soon the government would launch "Khushal Khyber Pakhtunkhwa" program under which the youth would be given technical training and sent abroad for employment. The CM urged the ASPs to consider themselves public servant and improve the image of the police by setting new trends by performing their duty with honesty, dedication and commitment.—APP

10 Years of CPEC

ISSI launches special edition of PIVOT

FAISAL SHEIKH

Islamabad: The China Pakistan Study Center (CPSC) at the Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI) hosted the launching ceremony for the special edition of PIVOT Magazine, titled "10 Years of CPEC: Unlocking Pakistan's Potential and Future Prospects." The event featured eminent speakers and experts, who delved into the CPEC's remarkable journey over the past decade. The special issue focuses on the transformative impact of CPEC on bilateral relations between China and Pakistan, regional integration, and overall development. It highlights the journey from a conceptual framework to a tangible reality — advancing the goals of economic development, regional connectivity, and shared prosperity. The event commenced with introductory remarks by Dr. Talat Shabbir, Director CPSC, who emphasized the historical significance

of the CPEC initiative. He highlighted the evolution of CPEC from its inception to its current role as a catalyst for change in Pakistan and the broader region. Sohail Mahmood, Director General ISSI, highlighted the commendable progress achieved during the ten years of CPEC, as flagship project of President Xi's visionary Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). He underscored the abiding friendship between Pakistan and China and its key attributes of mutual respect, strategic mutual trust, and mutual support on issues of each other's core interest. Ambassador Mahmood highlighted the concrete outcomes of CPEC projects in terms of Pakistan's energy security, transportation infrastructure, and employment generation. Noting the key elements of CPEC's next phase, he also stressed the inclusive nature of CPEC, welcoming third-party participation in various sectors. Ambassador Sohail Mahmood further stressed that CPEC was in

sync with Pakistan's 'pivot to geo-economics.' Ambassador Masood Khalid, Former Ambassador of Pakistan to China, lauded the PIVOT Magazine for contributing immensely to public understanding of CPEC and China-Pakistan relations. He emphasized the achievements of CPEC, including completed projects in energy, transport, and infrastructure, as well as the injection of almost \$26 billion into the Pakistani economy. Mr. Irfan Shahzad, Executive Director Eurasian Century Institute (ECI), appreciated the concise and effective presentation of important issues in the magazine. He highlighted the significance of periodicals like PIVOT, providing condensed and valuable information for researchers and experts in the field. Ambassador Naghmana Hashmi, Former Ambassador of Pakistan to China, emphasized the importance of CPEC in unlocking Pakistan's sea trade route, leading to a shift towards the blue economy. She under-

scored the need for proactive measures to ensure the success of Special Economic Zones (SEZs) and Industrial Economic Zones (IEZs). Ms. Bao Zhong, Counselor of Political and Media section, Embassy of China to Pakistan, conveyed congratulations on the successful publication of the special edition. She highlighted the achievements and progress made in various sectors, including healthcare and agriculture, as a result of CPEC. She also enumerated the recent developments in China-Pakistan relations, resulting in further deepening of cooperation in diverse fields. Muhammad Aamir Khan, DG China, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, commended ISSI for its excellent work in contributing to China-Pakistan friendship discourses. He emphasized the unique and enduring nature of the Pakistan-China relations, engrained in the two people's DNA, and reflected on the beneficial insights provided in the magazine.

Belgian photo exhibition in Karachi

KARACHI: Pakistan — The Embassy of Belgium in Pakistan is proud to announce the opening of "Belonging", an extraordinary photo exhibition featuring the works of Belgian artist Wendy Marinissen and Pakistani artist Malika Abbas. This exhibition is a highlight and the closing event of the Belgian Week, celebrating 75 years of diplomatic relations between Belgium and Pakistan. Venue: VM Gallery, Karachi Opening: Friday 15/12/2023, from 17.00 to 20.00. Exhibition: From 15/12/2023 until 30/12/2023 (from 11.00 to 19.00) The exhibition, themed around the concepts of belonging, home, and identity, showcases a stunning interplay of light and shadow.—APP

SPARC highlighted harms of addictive nicotine products

ISLAMABAD: The Society for the Protection of the Rights of the Child (SPARC) unraveled the misleading narrative peddled by the tobacco industry about the purportedly "less harmful" nature of nicotine products. During a seminar organized by the SPARC at a local hotel here Thursday, the speakers showcased insightful discussions and contributed profound insights into this critical public health issue, particularly as it pertains to Pakistan. Former Senator Muhammad Ali Saif passionately underscored the role of policymakers in safeguarding Pakistani citizens. "Safeguarding our people from the harms of nicotine products demands not just attention but concrete legislative measures tailored to our cultural and social context. All political parties should leave their differences aside when it comes to public health, especially that of children. Everyone must stand united against the tobacco industry," he expressed. Dr. Maheen Malik, Director Tobacco Control South Asia Region-CTFK, emphasized the significance of sustained efforts within the specific challenges faced in Pakistan. "A holistic and long-term approach is essential to counter the nuanced threat posed by new nicotine products within our unique cultural and social landscape. CTFK is committed that, with the support of its partners, it will keep countering the efforts of the tobacco industry to derail Pakistan's health and economy." Dr. Ziauddin Islam, former technical head, Tobacco Control Cell, Ministry of Health, offered an in-depth exploration of traditional and new types of nicotine products. He said, "The myth of 'less' harm has been meticulously dispelled, exposing the specific health threats these products pose for both adults and children in the Pakistani context. The so-called 'less harm' is enough to cause serious risks to the physical and mental health of consumers." Malik Imran Ahmad, Country Head, CTFK Media and New Nicotine Products shared the insights from the field, stating, "Our scrutiny uncovered the target audience of these products. Evidence from the field has exposed that the tobacco industry claimed that new nicotine products are alternatives for adult smokers to quit cigarettes. Instead, they are products launched towards youth and non-smokers to get them addicted and reap profits from them too."—APP

HED bars Pro-VCs from taking major decisions

PESHAWAR: The Higher Education Department (HED) in a letter to 11 public sector universities of the province restrained the pro Vice Chancellors and Acting VCs from taking any major administrative and financial decision. It said that the pro or acting VC could only run day to day affairs of the universities and should not take any decision that might create financial implications and cause difficulties for future incumbents of VC. Meanwhile, Federation of All Pakistan Universities Academics Staff Association, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa chapter termed the decision of HED contradictory to the clause 12 A-3 of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Universities Act 2012.—APP

Speakers urge for proactive climate regulations

KHAYAM ABBASI

RAWALPINDI: A panel discussion on COP28 titled "Charting the Path Forward for Pakistan's Climate Action through a collaborative effort of Beyond Carbon Pvt. Ltd, a trailblazing environmental solutions startup, Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce & Industry (RCCI) and Global Entrepreneurship Week (GEW) at RCCI here on Thursday. This collaborative initiative underscores a shared commitment to fostering environmental consciousness within the business community, emphasizing the urgency of proactive measures in the face of evolving global climate regulations. The engaging panel discussion was tailored for budding entrepreneurs and business sector organizations, convened under the auspices of the RCCI. The panel thoroughly explored the expectations and broader implications for advancing global climate action. A comprehensive review of milestones achieved and commitments undertaken at COP28 was conducted. RCCI President Saqib Rafiq and SVP Hamza Sarosh of RCCI lauded

the efforts put forward by Beyond Carbon in instilling awareness of

Ms. Humera Qasim Khan, Advisor for Climate Change and Environ-

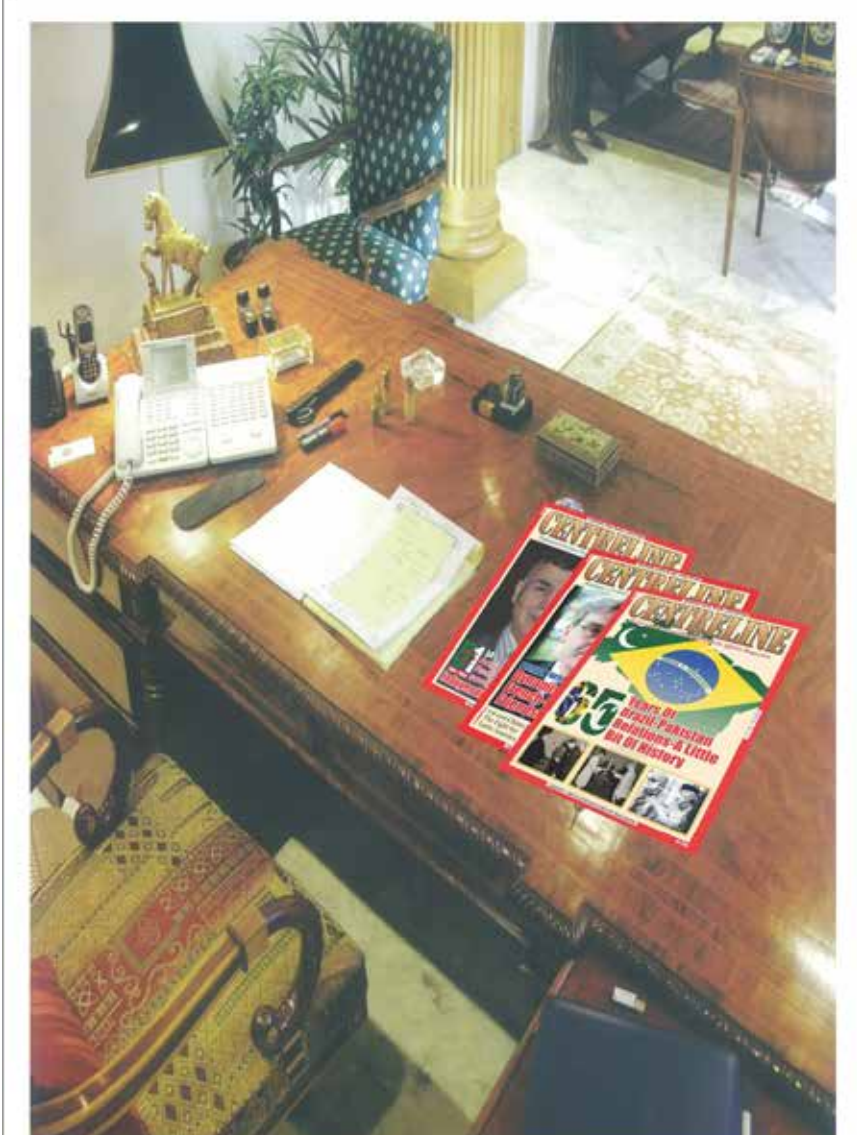
Pakistan. The discussion delved into the critical global conversation



climate change and its impacts among the younger generation. They suggested young entrepreneurs take maximum advantage of the services offered by Beyond Carbon. Esteemed panelists, including Dr. Mubashar Mukadas, Senior Advisor for Climate and Sustainability Growth at USAID;

ment Expert at Save the Children; and Mr. Kashif M. Khan, a former lawyer, academician, trainer, and entrepreneur advocate, provided valuable insights into the key points highlighted at COP28. They offered a comprehensive summary and discussed how future policies may impact businesses, particularly in

on climate change, emphasizing the post-COP28 roadmap. Panelists shared actionable ideas on how businesses can prepare for upcoming regulatory changes and collectively contribute to making a difference in the face of climate change. Key takeaways were summarized, inspiring businesses to join efforts in safeguarding startups.



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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
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- Met Office.....9250360-6
- RDA.....5555864
- TMA.....5770886
- Cantonment Board 9270151-3

Water Tank

- Islamabad.....0321-5744480

DNA



ISLAMABAD: The Floral Art Society of Pakistan (Magnolia Chapter) arranged a wonderful workshop on the topic of "New Trends and Techniques in Floral Art." The workshop was conducted by Aisha Zahid, an ace floral arranger and an international judge. The First Lady, Samina Alvi graced the occasion with her presence. It was a great learning experience. First lady Mrs. Samina Alvi was the chief guest.-- Photo Mudassar Raja

Pak committed to ICPD agenda, gender equity: Sami

"We are committed to the population conference agenda and our delegation to the regional conference made a bit of contribution in it"

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Muhammad Sami Saeed on Thursday said Pakistan was committed to the agenda of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD), held in Thailand last month. Addressing the launching ceremony of two reports jointly compiled by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and Pakistan Institute of Development Economics (PIDE) here, the minister said "We are committed to the population conference agenda and our delegation to the regional conference made a bit of contribution in it." The minister appreciated the research work carried out by the UNFPA and PIDE researchers, adding "Pakistan is the first country in the region to delve into this kind of effort which is very useful for policymakers, academicians and researchers." The reports titled "National Time Transfer of Account (NTTA); and National Transfer of Account (NTA)" have been meticulously developed by PIDE in close collaboration with the UNFPA. The primary objective of the NTA report is to elucidate the intricate link-

ages between population growth, evolving age structures, economic growth, public finances, and other pivotal facets of the macro-economy, addressing aspects of gender and generational equity. The NTA, however, has limitations in capturing unpaid work falling outside production boundaries. To address this, the study introduced

NTTA for valuing unpaid work and its methodology divides unpaid work into general household production, care work and learning activities. Sami Saeed said the population demographics had changed and the related themes were "very important" as Pakistan was a populous country and had a large youth bulge. "So, any analysis that

captures the inter-generational dynamics is very useful and also the computation of the unpaid work that women contribute is also very important," he said. The minister also highlighted the significance of the research work that had been done at the provincial level as "We have been struggling for many years to prepare provincial GDPs".

He said the government would use these reports in the process of policy-making and development planning initiatives. About the report regarding the gendered economy, the minister said these could make a valuable contribution to society in terms of family institutions and societal fabric and the economic well-being of the family and the country. "The report does well to confirm some of the generally known truths about the various aspects of this issue." He said it was a known fact that the burden of household responsibility fell equally on women and that had implications for women's participation in the labour market and overall economic development of the country. "The report also confirms the generally known fact that there is a correlation between the division of unpaid work and economic status of the households," he added. The minister said the provincial variations in these situations were also very helpful in addressing the issues of regional disparities, allocation of resources, youth and general specific policies. "I feel that these reports are very useful and in due course of time, we will take advantage of the research that has been done," the minister remarked.



Painting exhibition titled "Mother Nature"

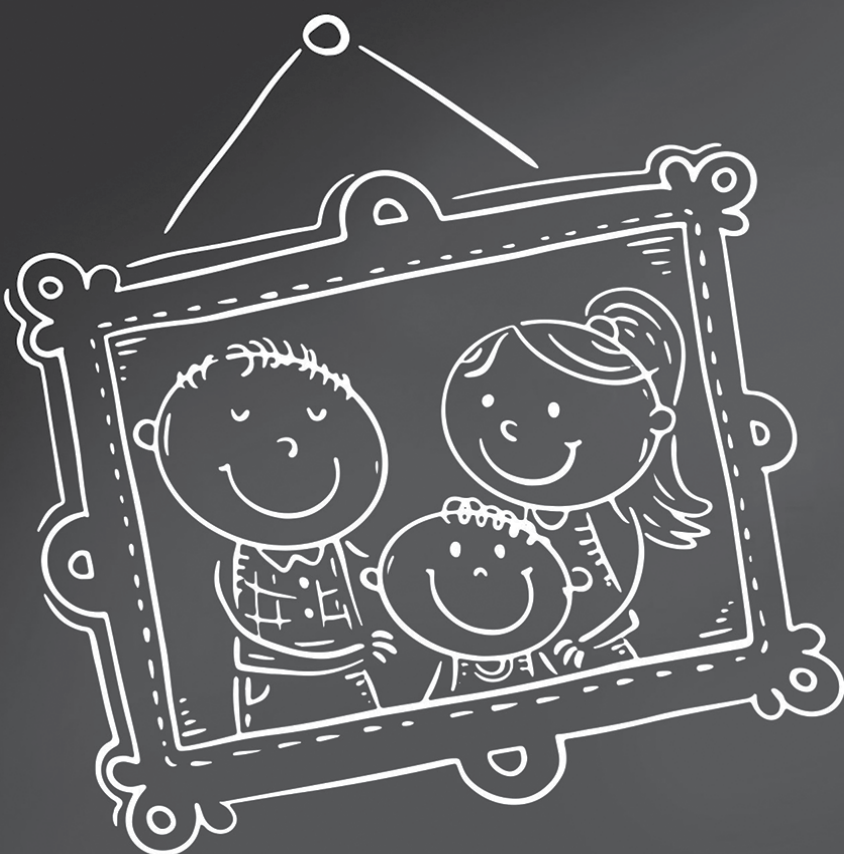
DNA

RAWALPINDI: "Mother Nature" Solo Exhibition by visual artist Qazi Zahoor Ul Hassan, Opened here on Wednesday. Provincial Minister for Primary & Secondary Healthcare Dr. Jamal Nasir was the chief guest of the opening ceremony. Solo Exhibition serves as a poignant reminder of the beauty and fragility of Mother Nature. The Solo Exhibition, titled "Mother Nature" is a testament to the importance of preserving and cherishing our natural environment. More than 50 works of art by Qazi Zahoor Al Hasan have been placed in the exhibition. While addressing the participants of the exhibition Dr. Jamal Nasir said that flowers are a symbol of happiness. The beautiful colors of nature have been created by Allah Almighty in the form of nature for the eyes of human beings. There are seven colors of the rainbow peeping from the dark clouds in the season of Moon Soon or on the earth in the season of spring. Nature has created not only beauty in flowers but also a fragrance that perfumes the heart and mind like no other. The spring of colors and scented flowers are the real beauty of this universe.

Renowned Urdu poet Jaun Elia remembered on birth anniversary

APP

ISLAMABAD: Renowned Urdu poet and scholar Jaun Elia was remembered on the occasion of his birth anniversary on Thursday. Born on December 14, 1931, in an illustrious family in Amroha, Uttar Pradesh, he was the youngest of his siblings. His father Allama Shafiq Hasan Elia was deeply involved in art and literature and also an astrologer and a poet. This literary environment modelled him along the same lines and he wrote his first Urdu couplet when he was just 8. He was fluent in Arabic, English, Persian, Sanskrit and Hebrew. He migrated to Pakistan in 1957 and started living in Karachi. His first poetic collection Shayad was published in 1991, when he was 60. The second collection of his poetry Ya'ani was published posthumously in 2003. Later his companion, Khalid Ansari, compiled and published his three consecutive collections, Gumaan in 2004, Lekin in 2006 and Goya in 2008. He died after a protracted illness on November 8, 2002 in Karachi



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- خوشحال معاشرے کی تشکیل
- ماں اور بچے کی صحت
- ذہنی و تولیدی صحت کا خیال
- بچوں کی بہترین تعلیم و تربیت کی منصوبہ بندی
- میاں بیوی کی مشاورت کا عمل

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Briefs

Annual canals closure to start from Dec 26

ISLAMABAD: The Indus River System Authority (IRSA) has decided to close down canals for annual maintenance and desilting between December 26, 2023 to January 30, 2024. According to Director Operation and Spokesman IRSA Khalid Idrees Rana the Mangla command canals would be closed from Dec 26 till January 13 in stage wise, and Tarbela command canals would remain closed from January 13 to 30, 2024. Under the canal closure programme, he said Punjab's lower Jhelum and Rasul Qadirabad Link would remain closed from Dec 26 to Jan 12 while Qadirabad Baloki Link from Dec 29 to Jan 15, central Bari Doab canals from Dec 27 to Jan 13 and Lower Bari Doab, Baloki, Sulemanki Link from Dec 29 to Jan 15. Similarly, Upper Pakpattan canal, and Eastern Siddiqua canal would remain closed from Dec 30 to Jan 16, while Upper Jhelum canal from Jan 12 to 29 and Lower Chenab canal (except Jhang branch), Upper Bahawal canal from Jan 13 to 30. Jhang Branch canal to close from Dec 27 to Jan 13, while Upper Bahawal would remain close from January 13 to 30, 2024. He said likewise, Tarbela command canals would also remain closed during Rabi season 2022/2023. As per programme, Thal and Lower Bahawal canals would be closed from January 13 to 30, 2024, while Trimmu canal and Trimmu Sidhni would remain closed from Jan 10 to Jan 27, while SMB Link canal and Sidhni canal from Jan 11 to Jan 28, Lower Pakpattan canal from Jan 12 to Jan 29, and Lower Bahawal from Jan 13 to Jan 30. Sindh's Kotri barrage would remain closed from Dec 26 to Jan 10, 2021 and Sukkur barrage from Jan 6 to Jan 20. —APP

SNGPL disconnects 158 connections, imposes Rs 14.7m fine

ISLAMABAD: The Sui Northern Gas Pipelines Limited (SNGPL) executed a series of targeted raids in Punjab, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and Islamabad, resulting in the disconnection of 158 illicit gas connections. Simultaneously, 649 cases of under billing were meticulously processed, and fines totaling Rs 14.7 million were levied. According to a spokesman for the company, Lahore team disconnected 14 connections and 15 for compressor use while an FIR was lodged against gas pilferer while in Rawalpindi four connections were disconnected besides two in Islamabad. The regional team of Multan disabled four connections, Sheikhupura 19, Peshawar and Karak 83 with an FIR, Sahiwal one, and Faisalabad faced four connections for illegal gas usage. —APP

Pakistan rejects speculations of talks with TTP

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan on Thursday rejected reports and speculations of talks with the banned Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP). Responding to the queries of media persons at her weekly briefing in Islamabad today, Foreign Office Spokesperson Mumtaz Zahra Baloch said there is absolutely no dialogue taking place with TTP. A Pakistani journalist had claimed this week that talks are underway with TTP with the mediation of the Taliban govt in a third country. The spokesperson said Afghanistan should take strong action against perpetrators of this heinous attack and hand them over to Pakistan along with the TTP leadership in Afghanistan. "We have noted the statement of the interim Afghan government that it will investigate Tuesday's terror attack that took place in Dera Ismail Khan," she said after the Taliban govt spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid promised to hold investigation of the DIK attack on security forces. —DNA

PTCL buys Telenor 100 per cent shares

The completion of the acquisition is subject to regulatory approvals and customary closing conditions. PTCL is actively working towards a smooth transition process to ensure minimal disruption for employees, customers, and other stakeholders

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Telecommunication Company Limited ("PTCL"), part of e& Group (e&), today announced that it has signed a Share Purchase Agreement with Telenor Pakistan B.V. (Telenor) to acquire a 100% stake in Telenor Pakistan (Pvt) Ltd (Telenor Pakistan) based on an Enterprise Value of PKR 108 Billion on a cash free, debt free basis. The acquisition brings together the strengths and expertise of both PTCL Group and Telenor Pakistan, creating synergies that will drive innovation and bolster our market, allowing us to reach a broader customer base and accelerate digital transformation journey. The milestone will add to PTCL's strategic growth and market expansion, solidifying its position as a key player. Our combined strength will revolutionize the telecom industry in Pakistan. Hatem Bamatraf, President and Group CEO, PTCL & PTML, said, "We are confident that the strategic synergies created by combining forces with Telenor Pakistan will result in enhanced value for our customers and stakeholders as they are the ultimate beneficiaries of this transaction. Both PTCL and Telenor possess strong and talented teams which would be dedicated towards developing a culture of delivery and teamwork by adopting the best of both companies. The combined entity will serve as a best-in-class provider across all domains with better coverage, seamless data experience, massive reach and a wide range of products and services for customers." Hatem Dowidar, Group CEO of e&, said, "The strategic acquisition of Telenor Pakistan presents a significant opportunity for market consolidation, empowering us to invest more in creating the best next-generation network in Pakistan. This move rein-



forces our commitment to the progress of the country's telecom sector, delivering added value to our customers and shareholders. In shaping a telecom legacy where innovation and connectivity merge to explore future opportunities, we aim to accelerate digital transformation to better serve our customers and community." Hassan Nasir Jami, Chair-

man PTCL Board, said, "PTCL Group has played a pivotal role in connecting the people of Pakistan. This commitment further solidifies our resolve to build a prosperous and digitally connected nation and to be the national champion to support Pakistan's digital transformation. This agreement will go a long way in ensuring that we provide

our customers with the most efficient and technologically advanced solutions." The completion of the acquisition is subject to regulatory approvals and customary closing conditions. PTCL is actively working towards a smooth transition process to ensure minimal disruption for employees, customers, and other stakeholders.

ANF seizes over 74 kg drugs, 1830 intoxicated tablets

RAWALPINDI: Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) while conducting 14 operations across the country managed to recover 74 kg drugs and 1830 intoxicated tablets besides netting eight accused, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman here on Thursday. He informed that 110.4 kg opium and 403.2 kg hashish were recovered from a vehicle intercepted near Aminpur Interchange, Faisalabad. In another operation, 130 kg hashish was recovered from Peshukan area of Gwadar. ANF conducted a raid on

Shikarpur Road Sukkur and seized 110 kg hashish while over 100 kg hashish was recovered from an uninhabited area of Chaman. The spokesman informed that 84 kg opium was recovered from an uninhabited area of Nokundi Chagai. Similarly, 51.4 kg hashish was recovered from Bajaur area. ANF conducted a raid and managed to recover 14.4 kg opium and 28.8 kg hashish from a vehicle intercepted near Warsak Road Peshawar. An accused was also arrested during the operation. 24

kg hashish was recovered from a nullah near Kuchlak Bypass Quetta. 10 kg Ice was recovered from a parcel being sent to Japan at a courier office located on Shahrah-e-Faisal, Karachi. 3.6 kg hashish was recovered from the possession of three accused rounded up in Zakhakel Khyber area. 900 grams Ice drug was recovered from a passenger's trolley bag at Bacha Khan International Airport. The accused was leaving for Doha by flight number QR-601. 2.4 kg of opium was recovered

from a vehicle intercepted at Labor Colony Peshawar while two accused were netted during the operation. ANF in a raid conducted at a courier office in Johar Town Lahore recovered 640 grams Ice from a parcel being sent to Qatar. 1830 intoxicated tablets were recovered from a parcel at Pak-Afghan border, Chaman. Separate cases under the Anti-Narcotics Act have been registered against the arrested accused while further investigations are under process. —APP

Indications of economic improvement become visible

ISLAMABAD: Former President of the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI), Dr. Shahid Rasheed Butt, on Thursday said that the country's economy is improving, so the price of electricity and fuel and the interest rate should be reduced. A reduction in fuel and power prices will provide much-needed relief to the masses while interest rate cuts will trigger economic activities, he said. Shahid Rasheed Butt said in a statement issued here today that the IMF and other international organizations are satisfied with the financial situation of Pakistan, the deficits have been controlled, and the back of the dollar mafia has been broken. The central bank should be relaxed in this regard and reduce interest rates without further delay, he said. SBP is not reducing the key interest rates for the fourth time since June, which shows that it is not willing to compromise on the goal of price stability. SBP thinks that headline and core inflation readings remain high, reserves are falling as foreign official and private inflows dry up, exchange rate stability is still fragile, and a shift to a monetary easing at this time is not suitable. Policymakers think that interest rate cuts will result in a spike in imports, drain reserves quickly, hit the exchange rate, and widen the current account deficit. The business leader noted that the IMF had saved the sinking economy from bankruptcy, after which the caretaker government also proved its responsibility. On the other hand, the performance of the investment council under the supervision of the military is also satisfactory. —DNA

The economy is moving towards stability

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Chairman of National Business Group Pakistan, President Pakistan Businessmen and Intellectuals Forum, and All Karachi Industrial Alliance, and former provincial minister Mian Zahid Hussain said on Thursday that the country's economy is on its way to stability. But there is a need to properly manage the repayment of debts so that the trust of foreign institutions as well as investors can be improved and confidence of local investors can increase, he said. Mian Zahid Hussain said that the financial, external and industrial sectors are improving, the deficit is reducing, the foreign exchange reserves are satisfactory, and the currency

is stabilizing. Still, there is a need to increase exports and remittances. Talking to the business community, the veteran business leader said that exports should be increased; otherwise, the fiscal deficit will remain in place. He added that governance and social welfare sectors are improving, and the investment climate is getting better due to the Special Investment Facility Council. Still, reforms and privatization need to be accelerated. C The business leader said that the involvement of the military in the SIFC has helped ensure policy continuity and stability and boosted investor confidence while seeking to increase cooperation with the Gulf States, China, the European Union and the United States. Mian Zahid Hussain said that at

present, the stock market situation is also satisfactory, and the large-scale manufacturing sector is also coming out of difficulties. The agricultural industry is also improving; revenue is increasing, and unnecessary expenditure is being reduced. He noted that unnecessary imports add to the deficit and devalue the currency; hence, they are not encouraged, which may lead to a fall in prices in the coming days. The appreciation of the rupee has improved the fiscal position, reducing the debt burden and creating fiscal space for development expenditure. Mian Zahid Hussain further said that despite all these positive indicators, some international institutions are expressing their concern about Pakistan's debt repayment capacity.

NPO to organize workshop on Productivity Specialist

ISLAMABAD: The National Productivity Organization (NPO) is going to organize a three-day training program for "Productivity Specialists" from December 20, to introduce the latest techniques to improve efficiency and raise productivity. The objective of the workshop includes introducing the standards and requirements for APO certified Productivity Specialists based on Asian Productivity Organization APO-PS 101 Requirements for Productivity Specialists, discussing the knowledge of productivity improvement strategies at the firm and organizational level, and demonstrating the competencies needed by participants to act as productivity consultants, trainers, promoters and researchers. —APP



ISLAMABAD: The outgoing Resident Coordinator of United Nations in Pakistan, Mr. Julien Harneis calls on President Dr Arif Alvi, at Aiwan-e-Sadr. —DNA

ECP halts DROs, ROs training following LHC orders

ISLAMABAD: The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) suspended the ongoing training of District Returning Officers (DROs) and Returning Officers (ROs) in compliance with the orders of Lahore High Court (LHC). An ECP spokesman stated that the Lahore High Court has suspended the ECP's notification dated December 11, 2023, related to the appointment of 142 District Returning Officers (DROs), 859 Assistant Returning Officers (AROs), and Returning Officers from the executive for the upcoming General Elections 2024. The comprehensive training for District Returning Officers (DROs) and Returning Officers (ROs) began on Wednesday, December 13. Senior officers from the Election Commission conducted training sessions, focusing on election procedures, rules, and other administrative aspects. The commission has scheduled a one-day training session for 142 District Returning Officers in all four provincial headquarters on December 16. This includes 40 officers from Punjab, 36 from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, 36 from Balochistan, and 30 from Sindh. Likewise, 859 Returning Officers (ROs) are undergoing a two-day election training at their respective divisional levels from December 13 to 15. This comprises 441 ROs from Punjab, 160 from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, 191 from Sindh, and 67 from Balochistan. —APP

PAS elections for the year 2023

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Academy of Sciences (PAS) aims to promote education and research in the domain of pure and applied sciences in Pakistan. As per its Bye-Laws, the Election of the Council of Pakistan Academy of Sciences for the term 2024-2026 was held on December 1, 2023. Various Fellows of the Academy participated in the ballot. As per results of the Election, the following Fellows have been elected for the term 2024-2026: Prof. Dr. Kausar Abdulla Malik (President), Prof. Dr. Muhammad Ashraf and Prof. Dr. Mohammad Qaiser (Vice Presidents), Prof. Dr. M. Aslam Baig (Secretary General), Prof. Dr. Saleem Asghar (Treasurer), Dr. Abdul Rauf Shakoori (Associate Secretary General), Dr. M. Raza Shah, Dr. M. Waheed Akhtar, and Dr. Sardar Khan Secretaries.

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UN resolution on Gaza

With 153 votes in favor, 10 against, and 23 abstentions, the United Nations General Assembly passed a resolution demanding an immediate humanitarian cease-fire in Gaza. Despite a General Assembly vote only carrying moral weight, as UN spokesperson Stephane Dujarric said, the messages they send are "very important" since they reflect world opinion. And as CNN said, it is a rebuke to the United States which was the only country to veto a cease-fire resolution in the 15-member UN Security Council last week. All the other UNSC members approved the resolution apart from the United Kingdom, which abstained. Tuesday's resolution, which was passed at an Emergency Special Session of the General Assembly, calls for a cease-fire, for all parties to comply with international law, and for humanitarian access to hostages as well as their "immediate and unconditional" release. Although its language is tougher than the Security Council resolution the US vetoed – it demands, rather than calls for or urges the two sides to agree to a cease-fire – the US was one of the countries that voted against the resolution. US ambassador to the UN, Linda Thomas-Greenfield, indicated that the US is sticking to its guns, saying that since the resolution "failed to condemn Hamas", the US wouldn't support it. The death toll in Gaza, which has been described as the world's largest outdoor prison, continues to rise, 18,200 Palestinians plus 104 Israeli soldiers have been killed since Israel launched its military operation in response to the Hamas attacks on Oct 7 that killed 1,200 people and saw around 240 kidnappers. Over 100 hostages are still being held in Gaza, according to Israeli authorities. Israel has said it will not stop its military campaign until it eradicates Hamas. But it is generally believed that it will not be able to do that, and in the meantime, its military operation has left half of the 2.3 million people in Gaza starving, according to the UN World Food Programme. Hundreds of or even more newborns in incubators face the threat of death because the electricity has been cut off. And almost 40,000, or 18 percent, of the buildings in Gaza, have been damaged or destroyed. The Joe Biden administration's seemingly unconditional support for Israel is prolonging the humanitarian disaster in Gaza and causing more casualties with every hour that passes. It's time that the US acknowledged what is happening in Gaza and played a more constructive role by persuading Israel to agree to a cease-fire. The US should recognize that it is standing on both the wrong side of world opinion and history with its intransigence.



China-EU ties and geopolitics

CHINA-EU relations should not be hijacked by ideology and geopolitics, and the European Union should take advantage of the positive momentum generated by the China-EU Summit to promote bilateral cooperation rather than being dragged by hardliners that promote divergences, Chinese analysts said on Thursday, after the European Parliament adopted a report and a resolution interfering in China's internal affairs by hyping trade imbalance, human rights topics and the Taiwan question. The European Parliament, which has been described by some as the "anti-China" base, adopted a report on EU-China relations on Wednesday, claiming that China is a partner of the European Union, but also increasingly a competitor and systemic rival. It also calls for a review and update of the EU's 2019 strategic approach to China in light of the new geopolitical context and urges the EU to engage pragmatically with China on global challenges while continuing to confront China over human rights issues in its Xinjiang, Xizang, Hong Kong, and Macao. China firmly opposes the European Parliament's report and resolution for they seriously infringe upon China's sovereignty, interferes in China's internal affairs, and violate the basic norms of international relations and the political commitments of the European side, the Chinese Mission to the EU said in a statement on Wednesday. The Chinese Mission to the EU also noted that China-EU relations, in particular, should not be hijacked by ideology and geopolitics, noting that conflict and confrontation are harmful to both sides and the world. While the 24th China-EU Summit, which was held in Beijing on December 7, has offered opportunities for the two sides to promote exchanges and manage divergence, the report and resolution have shown that the perceptions on China within the EU remain mixed and complicated. Ideological prejudice inside the EU may have an impact on the stable growth of China-EU ties, analysts said. The European Parliament has always taken a hard-line stance toward China, and the report and resolution showed that in the triptych of being a partner, competitor and rival, some members of the European Parliament (MEPs) have only taken China as a competitor and rival, focusing only on the divergences between China and the EU, Sun Keqin, a research fellow at the China Institutes of Contemporary International Relations, told the Global Times on Thursday. While China has always valued cooperation with the EU as a partner, it does not agree with the EU referring to China as a systematic rival, analysts said. During his speech to the European Parliament plenary on Tuesday, EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell noted that he spent quite a long time trying to explain what "we mean to be a rival" and then used the example of Real Madrid and Barcelona to say being rivals means that they have different goals and each one wants to win. In the report adopted on Wednesday, some of the MEPs falsely claimed that "China is, of its own accord, clearly shifting the core of our relations towards systemic rivalry."

Pakistan: Embarking on high speed progress

Qamar Bashir



The query arises: why did the agreement specifically involve Huawei, rather than a company from the US or Europe? The rationale behind this decision is straightforward. China has established its dominance in both cyber defense and cyber power, holding the top position according to the SecureWorld Index. Furthermore, the Cyber Security Index (CSI) by e-Governance Academy highlights China's ranking at second place, attributed in part to Huawei's substantial contributions to government cybersecurity initiatives. Now, why Huawei? Huawei's trajectory is nothing short of remarkable. Originating as a distributor of imported

AS I perused today's newspapers, a glimmer of hope and inspiration sparked within me upon discovering the proactive stance taken by certain institutions in Muslim countries, particularly Pakistan, towards recognizing the significance of Cybersecurity, 5G technology, and Artificial Intelligence. The news that caught my attention was the signing of a partnership agreement between Huawei and COMSTEC. COMSTEC, established in 1981, represents the Ministerial Standing Committee on Scientific and Technological Cooperation within the OIC (Organization of Islamic Cooperation) and is based in Pakistan. While this agreement represents a forward-looking step, it also prompts several inquiries.

The query arises: why did the agreement specifically involve Huawei, rather than a company from the US or Europe? The rationale behind this decision is straightforward. China has established its dominance in both cyber defense and cyber power, holding the top position according to the SecureWorld Index. Furthermore, the Cyber Security Index (CSI) by e-Governance Academy highlights China's ranking at second place, attributed in part to Huawei's substantial contributions to government cybersecurity initiatives. Now, why Huawei? Huawei's trajectory is nothing short of remarkable. Originating as a distributor of imported telecommunications equipment in 1987, the company rapidly evolved into a global cybersecurity leader. Its journey began with a shift towards innovation in the 1990s, securing its footing in the Chinese market and introducing its inaugural GSM switch and mobile phone. Throughout the early 2000s, Huawei intensified its focus on research and development, emerging as a significant player in mobile networks and acquiring network businesses from Compaq and 3Com. By 2010, it had established the Global Cyber Security and User Privacy Protection Committee (GSPC). In the subsequent decade, Huawei dominated in 4G network equipment, although facing scrutiny regarding its affiliations with the Chinese government, and notably launched Cyber Security Transparency Centers. The underlying reason for signing an agreement on 5G technology with Huawei can be found in the diverse international rankings pertaining to both China and Huawei's standing. China has secured the top spot in various reports, such as GSMA Intelligence's December 2023 report on the deployment of 5G base stations. Additionally, it leads in the number of declared standard-essential 5G patents, according to the World Intellectual Property Organization's (WIPO) 2022 report. European 5G Observatory's 2023 assessment showcases China's rank at the forefront in terms of the percentage of time users spend on 5G networks, while the Global Internet Development Report 2023 positions it as second in a comprehensive evaluation encompassing internet infrastructure, access, and usage. Huawei stands as a leading global provider of 5G network equipment, highlighted by its top position in various metrics. GlobalData's 2023 report ranks Huawei first in the

market share of 5G network equipment vendors, while Clarivate's 2022 findings position Huawei at the forefront in the number of 5G standard-essential patents (SEPs). Furthermore, Huawei leads in evaluating key 5G Radio Access Network (RAN) capabilities such as baseband capacity, RF product portfolio, ease of deployment, and technology evolution, securing the top position in overall contributions to 5G development among numerous other accolades.

The rationale behind signing an Agreement on Artificial Intelligence (AI) with Huawei can be elucidated through various international rankings of China and Huawei's AI prowess. China's global standing in AI is noteworthy, ranking 2nd in the Nature Index 2023 concerning the number of AI-related research publications and citations. Moreover, according to the Brookings Institution Report on Global AI Governance 2023, China secures the top spot in government investment in AI research and development, policy frameworks, and talent acquisition. The World Economic Forum's 2023 AI Talent Report also positions China at the pinnacle in terms of the number of AI researchers, engineers, and developers, among other accolades. Huawei maintains a robust position in the global AI landscape, ranking 3rd in patent ownership and offering a diverse AI product portfolio with a notable 5th global market share. Additionally, Huawei has gained industry recognition through various awards and partnerships, showcasing its commitment to research, innovation, and collaboration despite facing competition and geopolitical uncertainties. This dedication cements Huawei's stature as a key player in the continuously evolving realm of AI. In today's digital-centric world, Pakistan's investment in Cyber Security, 5G, and AI isn't just a choice; it's a fundamental necessity for its future. Picture a scenario where critical infrastructure falls prey to cyberattacks, financial systems are hijacked by ransomware, and national security faces breaches. These aren't fanciful tales; they are harsh realities faced by nations ill-equipped for the digital battleground. For Pakistan, Cyber Security isn't an option; it's a critical national interest. It's the safeguarding of its digital economy's core, the protection of its citizens' well-being, and the defense of its data sovereignty in a world where boundaries are porous and threats lurk in the shadows of cyberspace. Investing in Cyber Security goes beyond firewalls and encryption; it's about fortifying a stronghold of awareness, resilience, and global collaboration. It's empowering citizens, nurturing a culture of cyber hygiene, and cultivating a skilled workforce to fend off the constantly evolving digital threats. In an era where every online action leaves a trace, Cyber Security in Pakistan isn't just a need; it's a national imperative. It's the distinction between vulnerability and invincibility, between trailing behind and leading the charge towards a secure, prosperous digital future. For Pakistan, 5G signifies more than just a technological upgrade; it marks a monumental stride forward. It's the vital link connecting vibrant urban hubs to remote villages, fostering economic expansion, and unlocking a future brimming with inno-

vation. Envision lightning-speed internet empowering farmers with AI-driven precision in agriculture and enabling remote diagnostics for doctors in rural clinics. Picture a Pakistan where smart grids efficiently manage energy, autonomous vehicles navigate bustling streets, and education transcends boundaries via immersive virtual classrooms. 5G isn't merely about speed; it's about unleashing a nation's potential, propelling Pakistan to shift from a follower to a leader in the digital era. It's about bridging the digital gap, connecting those untouched by technology, and ushering in an era of innovation that will reshape lives and redefine possibilities. This isn't just technological advancement; it's a national necessity, an opportunity for Pakistan to surge ahead and rightfully claim its place as a technology-driven leader on the global stage. In a world where algorithms steer the course, Pakistan's adoption of AI isn't merely a fleeting trend; it's a seismic transformation in its trajectory. Picture AI not as a remote sci-fi concept but as a potent tool shaping the nation's destiny. Envision farmers using AI-powered drones to optimize yields, doctors employing AI-driven diagnostics to reach remote areas, and engineers leveraging AI-driven robots to build a smarter, sustainable Pakistan. This isn't just a futuristic vision; it's the tangible promise of AI. For Pakistan, AI isn't solely about automation; it's about enhancement. It's about amplifying human capacity, empowering citizens to surmount limitations, and propelling them toward a future where innovation knows no bounds. AI isn't just a marvel of technology; it's an equalizer, a catalyst for leveling the playing field, and a key to unlocking the untapped genius within every Pakistani. Investing in AI isn't just about algorithms and programming; it's about nurturing an environment of creativity, fostering collaboration between academia and industry, and cultivating a talent pool fluent in the language of the future. In a world where data holds immense value, Pakistan's journey with AI isn't just a technical pursuit; it's a strategic necessity. It marks the difference between trailing on the fringes of the digital revolution and assuming a global leadership role in its transformative potential. This isn't solely a technological shift; it's a national awakening, a clarion call for a future where AI empowers, elevates, and propels Pakistan toward a brighter, more intelligent tomorrow.

In the dawn of Pakistan's embarkation on the journey towards high-speed progress in Cybersecurity, 5G technology, and Artificial Intelligence, lies a transformative potential that transcends mere technological advancement. This moment is not just about upgrading systems; it's a pivotal juncture where the nation chooses the path to secure its digital sovereignty, harness the power of connectivity, and unleash the untapped potential of innovation. As Pakistan embraces the digital tide, fortified by cybersecurity, propelled by 5G, and guided by AI, it's not merely adopting technologies; it's forging a destiny where resilience, connectivity, and ingenuity converge to shape a brighter, smarter, and more prosperous tomorrow.

US must coerce Israel into accepting a ceasefire

Dr. Dania Koleilat Khatib

This article had not been invoked in more than 50 years. The US single-handedly vetoed it in the UN Security Council. The US took a big risk by vetoing the call for a ceasefire. The UN General Assembly overwhelmingly voted in favor of one on Tuesday. If the fears of Guterres come true and the humanitarian system in Gaza collapses or if the situation escalates into a regional war, everyone

THE brave secretary general of the UN, Antonio Guterres, last week invoked Article 99 of the UN Charter to ask for a ceasefire in Gaza in order to preserve international peace and security. This article had not been invoked in more than 50 years. The US single-handedly vetoed it in the UN Security Council. The US took a big risk by vetoing the call for a ceasefire. The UN General Assembly overwhelmingly voted in favor of one on Tuesday. If the fears of Guterres come true and the humanitarian system in Gaza collapses or if the situation escalates into a regional war, everyone will blame America. The US is sinking with Israel in this war. Israel comes across as the one driving American policy in the Middle East instead of the other way around. The more the Biden administration transfers weapons to Israel, the more it is culpable in this mass murder. On Saturday, President Joe Biden bypassed Congress and used an emergency authority to approve the transfer of tank shells to Israel. Despite media reports saying that the US has given Israel until January to conclude its military campaign, claims of disputes behind closed doors and the shy American criticism that the Netanyahu government is not doing enough to minimize civilian deaths, what we see today is unwavering American support for Israel's unbridled behavior. The war is being conducted without any exit strategy or any political vision. Israel accepts nothing but the total defeat of Hamas, which is unrealistic. Hamas fighters will fight to the death if they are cornered and this is not something that is in anyone's interest. Time is not on Israel's side, but it is on Hamas' side. The more innocent civilians Israel murders, the more global public opinion will turn against it. The more Israeli soldiers that return home in coffins, the more the Israeli public will get angry. Every further day that the Israeli government fails to save the hostages, the more rage will grow among the Israeli people and the more they will mistrust their state. And as time passes and Ha-

mas holds on, it proves its strength and tenacity. Now, the Houthis are starting to attack any ships heading to Israeli ports. To begin with, these strikes were all intercepted, but a Norwegian tanker was hit by a missile on Monday and, if there is a miscalculation in future, the situation could get out of control. The same can be said on the northern front. Despite the fact that both Israel and Hezbollah want to keep the confrontation under control, an escalation could happen. A ceasefire is in the best interests of everyone. Nevertheless, any ceasefire should be coupled with a plan for the day after. The US should push for a ceasefire and a plan for Gaza. It should push for it now, before a day-after scenario is no longer possible. Israel is turning Gaza into another Stalingrad; its bombardment is making the Strip uninhabitable. There are mounting fears of a mass exodus from Gaza to Egypt, which would further complicate the problem. An expulsion of Palestinians to the Sinai – a project being touted by several Israeli politicians – would lead to a huge fallout with Cairo. It could destabilize the country and maybe lead to a war. Hence, the US should act before a de facto exodus can take place. A ceasefire is in the best interests of everyone. Nevertheless, any ceasefire should be coupled with a plan for the day after. Dr. Dania Koleilat Khatib In order to do this, the White House should be pragmatic and push Israel to give up on its maximalist goals. Biden on Tuesday warned that Israel is losing support, but this is not enough – he should make Tel Aviv come to terms with reality. Even if Israel was to achieve victory, it would be a Pyrrhic one from which it would never recover. The US, instead of acquiescing to the Israelis' demands, should make them realize that Hamas cannot be defeated militarily. But the group can be decommissioned by a political solution, as has been the case with many other armed resistance movements throughout history. A ceasefire should be coupled with a deal with Hamas that includes a safe exit

for the group's leaders and an amnesty for its fighters. A deal should be worked out with Qatar and with Iran. Doha can conduct the mediation and possibly offer the leaders refuge. Tehran would need incentives to pull the plug on its military support of the Al-Qassam Brigades. The deal could include Al-Qassam stopping its activities entirely in return for a promise to hold elections within 18 months for a new transitional government. That government would then negotiate on the final status issues for a Palestinian state. In the meantime, Gaza could be governed by an Arab/Islamic deterrence force under the UN, which would also work on building governance structures in the Strip. It is very important that the forces that take over Gaza have legitimacy among the Gaza population, otherwise they will face resistance. Here also, the US should not cater to Israel's whims. Washington should make it clear to the Israelis that they are not the ones who will pick and choose who governs Gaza, nor do they have the right to go in and out as they please. The same should be enforced in the West Bank. Israel's military should gradually withdraw and be replaced by a multi-lateral force. It should halt the building of settlements as a first step, before dismantling them in the second place to allow for a sovereign and independent Palestinian state. Israel would definitely not like this scenario and would use its domestic lobby in the US to repress it. However, the American administration should stand up to such domestic pressure, as a regional war would harm the US national interest and would kill any prospects of Biden's reelection. Israel is currently pushing others to the wall. It has just issued a warning to Hezbollah in Lebanon; if it acts on it, will Iran keep quiet? I doubt it. Can it target American interests in the Gulf? Of course it can. Now is the time for the US to show its resolve and coerce Israel into accepting a ceasefire – otherwise it will be too late and it will be Uncle Sam that bears the consequences.

Briefs

PM reaffirms
Pak support...

FROM PAGE 01
remain indifferent to the situation in Kashmir... Kashmir runs in our blood. Jammu and Kashmir remains an important facet of Pakistan's foreign policy," he remarked. He said across the political divide, the entire Pakistani leadership stood united to support the Kashmiris for their right to self-determination. Giving a historical account, the prime minister said the Kashmiris had suffered enormously from conflicts in history. Even today, the situation had not improved as the majority was still under the subjugation of an oppressor with a different name. Prime Minister Karar told the House that Kashmir was the oldest unsettled agenda of the United Nations as the UN Security Council resolutions remained unimplemented and the Indian government was bent upon consolidating its occupation of disputed territory through a series of legislative and administrative measures.

Nawaz eyes
nation's...

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claiming they not only punished him and his family, but Pakistan as well. "My people, you don't need to reach out to any court as you yourself are the judge," the former premier said as he addressed his supporters for the first time since his legal victory in the form of exoneration from major corruption cases against him. The three-time prime minister is eyeing a fourth stint in power after winning graft appeals that came as a boost for his bid to become the next prime minister of the country. The Islamabad High Court (IHC) overturned Nawaz's convictions in the Al Azizia Steel Mills corruption case and Avenfield case in separate rulings, which came earlier this week and last month, respectively.

ECP to
'announce'..

FROM PAGE 01
last till December 16. ECP organised training sessions for the officers with the assistance of the authorities concerned, sources said. The officers will be imparted the best possible training so that they can satisfactorily perform their duties. They would be also briefed about the most sophisticated communication system that has been put in place to undertake the election duties. Sources pointed out that 40 training sittings have been scheduled for imparting all-round training to the officers. The commission is providing training to 142 district returning officers and 859 returning officers. In the meanwhile, the commission sources said the ECP was fully prepared to hold free, fair and transparent elections in the country and no doubt should be left to hold polls according to the announced date.

PTI trying
to delay...

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amounted to sabotaging people's representation. "The PTI's petition in the high court is a plot to run away from the elections. PTI is hatching a conspiracy against the February 8 general elections just like cipher. As always, the PTI is applying double-standard and hypocritical policy here," he said. The former prime minister further said the PTI was filing petitions in the courts to postpone the polls, while publicly demanding to hold elections on time.

Pak urges
Taliban...

FROM PAGE 01
Dera Ismail Khan. The attempt to enter the post was effectively thwarted, which forced the terrorists to ram an explosive-laden vehicle into the post, followed by a suicide bombing attack. The resulting blasts led to the collapse of the building, causing multiple casualties; twenty-three brave soldiers embraced shahadat, while all six terrorists were effectively engaged and sent to hell," the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) stated in a statement.

Warner hits ton as Australia reach 346-5 on opening day

The 37-year-old Warner, in his 110th Test, responded in typical swashbuckling fashion, scoring 164 runs while hitting 16 fours and four sixes in his 211-ball knock

DNA

PERTH: Opener David Warner starred on the opening day of the first Test between Pakistan and Australia in Perth on Thursday. The home side reached 346-5 at stumps on day one with Mitchell Marsh (15) and Alex Carey (14) on the crease. In the lead-up, former pacer Mitchell Johnson questioned whether Warner deserved a hero's farewell given his recent poor red-ball form and involvement in the 2018 ball-tampering scandal. The 37-year-old Warner, in his 110th Test, responded in typical swashbuckling fashion, scoring 164 runs while hitting 16 fours and four sixes in his 211-ball knock. After struggling to pick up wickets in the first two sessions, Pakistan bowlers improved considerably to claim three wickets in the post-tea session. Aamer Jamal claimed two wickets, dismissing Warner and a dangerous-looking Travis Head (40). Steve Smith was sent back to the hut after scoring 31 runs by Khurram Shahzad.

Post-lunch session
The home side reached 210-2 at tea on the first day with opener David Warner scoring an unbeaten century. The left-hander has scored 111 runs in 149 balls with the help of 15 fours and a six. Khawaja and Warner notched up 126 runs for the first wicket. Pakistan managed to claim two wickets in the second session with Shaheen Shah Afridi dismissing Usman Khawaja (41) and Faheem Ashraf getting the scalp of MarnusLa-



buschagne (16). The visitors went wicketless in the first session of the day. Steven Smith was not out on 21 runs at the interval.

First session: In the morning session on day one, Australia reached 117-0 with David Warner and Usman Khawaja providing a solid start to the home side. Warner took the attack to the Pakistan bowlers and was unbeaten on 72 runs in just 67 balls at the break. He smashed 11 fours and a six. Khawaja was not out on 37 runs with the help of five boundaries. Aamer Jamal missed out on picking up his maiden Test wicket after Abdullah Shafique

dropped Khawaja when he was on 21.

Toss: Earlier, Australia won the toss and decided to bat in the first Test against Pakistan in Perth on Thursday. Pacers Aamer Jamal and Khurram Shahzad made their Test debut for Pakistan. Australia made just one change to the most recent side that took the field in the Ashes finale in August at The Oval, with the fit-again Nathan Lyon replacing Todd Murphy. "We've played a lot of cricket together and this year has been special. We play pretty well here, have a good record. An Aussie ground with pace and bounce. No secret [Nathan] is

the main guy in our bowling line-up, great to have him back," Australia's captain Pat Cummins said after winning the toss. Whitewashed in each of their last five Test tours of Australia, optimism will be in short supply for Pakistan ahead of a three-match series starting in Perth, with new captain Shan Masood's task made even more difficult by a depleted bowling corps. The last time Pakistan won a Test Down Under was in late 1995 when nearly half of the current side were not even born, and in Pat Cummins-led Australia they face the reigning world Test champions. Pakistan's unpredictability means they can never be ruled out but their chaotic buildup to the series makes the tourists tough to back in Australia. Masood inherited the Test captaincy from Babar Azam, who stepped down as all-formats skipper last month in the wake of their failure to make the semi-finals of the 50-overs World Cup in India.

Lineups: Australia: David Warner, Usman Khawaja, MarnusLabuschagne, Steven Smith, Travis Head, Mitchell Marsh, Alex Carey (wk), Mitchell Starc, Pat Cummins (c), Nathan Lyon, Josh Hazlewood
Pakistan: Abdullah Shafique, Imam-ul-Haq, Shan Masood (c), Babar Azam, Saud Shakeel, Sarfaraz Ahmed (wk), Salman Ali Agha, Faheem Ashraf, Shaheen Shah Afridi, Aamer Jamal, Khurram Shahzad
Series schedule:
First Test: December 14-18, Perth
Second Test: December 26-30, Melbourne
Third Test: January 3-7, Sydney

UCL: Teams confirmed for knockout stage

The Round of 16 matches will be played in February and March

WEB DESK

LONDON: The UEFA Champions League 2023/24 group stage concluded with 16 teams making their way to the knockout stage which will begin in February. The group stage saw some of the most thrilling encounters which contributed to upsets as teams like Manchester United and AC Milan failed to qualify for the round of 16. Real Madrid and Manchester City had a stellar group stage campaign as both powerhouses had a perfect record; six out of six wins and 18 points.

Teams qualified:
Bayern Munich, Copenhagen, Arsenal, PSV, Real Madrid, Napoli, Real Sociedad, Inter Milan, Atletico Madrid, Lazio, Borussia Dortmund, Paris Saint-Germain, Manchester City, RB Leipzig, FC Barcelona, Porto, Teams finishing top of their group



would be drawn to the runner-ups of other groups during the round of 16 draws which will take place on Monday (December 18). Also, teams who had faced each other in the group stage cannot face one another as well as teams from the same national associates. For example, Dortmund (Group F winners) cannot

play Leipzig (Group G runner-ups) as they are both from the same country. The round of 16 first legs will be held over two weeks. The first leg will take place on 13, 14, 20, and 21 February, meanwhile, the second leg is scheduled for 5, 6, 12, and 13 March. This is the 69th season of Europe's elite club competition and the 32nd since it was renamed the UEFA Champions League. The 2023-24 UEFA Champions League final will take place at London's historic Wembley Stadium. Real Madrid have won the Champions League 14 times, which is the most in history, they are followed by AC Milan who have seven titles in their trophy cabinet. Manchester City are the defending as Pep Guardiola's men clinched the title in June 2023 after beating Inter Milan in a nail-biter courtesy of Rodri's second-half strike that helped them claim their first European trophy.

Younger generation is afraid of Djokovic

LONDON: Former ATP star Nikolay Davydenko made a big statement about the younger generation of tennis saying that they are scared of Novak Djokovic as the Serb beats them with his "head". Djokovic, 36, continued to surprise the tennis fraternity as he not only won three Grand Slams – Australian Open, Roland Garros, US Open – and other elusive titles, but he also won them by beating the likes of Daniil Medvedev, Jannik Sinner, Carlos Alcaraz, and others. Djokovic also holds a winning record head-to-head against all top youngsters in the top 10 rankings, namely Alcaraz (3-2), Medvedev (10-5), and Sinner (4-2). Davydenko believes that Djokovic's longevity makes him special as he went from competing against the likes of Roger Federer and Rafael Nadal to the new generation. "This person is unique to me. He plays with the skill that he has accumulated over the entire time when he even played with us – with [Roger] Federer, [Rafael] Nadal, with me," the Russian told Championat. "Novak always adhered to his physical characteristics, tried to maintain strength and concentration. And he understood that he was beating everyone with his tennis. "The Big Three generation used to be a little stronger. Even Alcaraz, who, like Nadal in his youth, is a good runner, in tennis terms I can't say that he exceeds expectations." He also discussed the 24-time Grand Slam champion's resilience and quick adaptability in various situations. The Russian expressed his belief that the younger generation is still intimidated by the Serb because he outsmarts them mentally even before the match begins "If Djokovic gets into shape, even without playing a few tournaments, without injury, he is physically ready. It's more important that you have enough strength for every match. – DNA

UN accuses
Taliban of...

FROM PAGE 01
the U.N. Assistance Mission in Afghanistan that there was no need for such shelters or that they were a Western concept. The Taliban sends women to prison if they have no male relatives to stay with or if the male relatives are considered unsafe, the report said. Authorities have also asked male relatives for commitments or sworn statements that they will not harm a female relative, inviting local elders to witness the guarantee, it added. Women are sent to prison for their protection "akin to how prisons have been used to accommodate drug addicts and homeless people in Kabul," the report said.

SC orders
nominating..

FROM PAGE 01
Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Qazi Faez Isa and comprising Justice Amin-ud-Din Khan, Justice Jamal Khan Mandokhail, Justice Hasan Azhar Rizvi and Justice Irfan Saadat Khan conducting proceedings on the plea. The proceedings were broadcast live on the apex court's website as well as on its YouTube channel. Lawyer Hamid Khan represented the former IHC judge in the case. The case was fixed for hearing earlier this month after the judge filed a miscellaneous application with the Supreme Court to conduct an early hearing of his plea against the decision by the Supreme Judicial Council (SJC) on his dismissal. The SC order, issued by the bench, mentioned that allegations were levelled against some personalities who were not present at the case's hearing. It added that those accused in the case must be made parties.

SJC allows
Justice...

FROM PAGE 01
list of witnesses, by January 1. Furthermore, the council has directed the Attorney General for Pakistan to submit the list of witnesses within three days. The SJC earlier in the day accepted the request by Justice Naqvi to conduct open hearing of financial misconduct allegations levelled against him. In the six-page request filed earlier today, Justice Naqvi had asserted that the right to an open hearing under Articles 4, 9, 10A, 14, and 25 of the Constitution, citing the example of an open hearing in the Justice Shaukat Siddiqui case.

Court
hands...

FROM PAGE 01
year and three different judges conducted the hearings. Additional Sessions Judge Islamabad Muhammad Atta Rabbani and Azam Khan also heard the murder case. Sarah, a 37-year-old economist, was allegedly murdered with dumbbells by her husband Shah Nawaz Amir, who is the son of journalist Ayaz Amir, in Islamabad's ChakShahzad area on September 23, 2022. Shah Nawaz was detained by the police from a farmhouse in Islamabad's ChakShahzad area for being a suspect in his wife's murder and later confessed to killing her, saying he "thought" his spouse was having an affair. The couple was married for just three months.

French
envoy...

FROM PAGE 01
historical relations. Finance Minister stated that Pakistan highly values its bilateral ties with the France including trade and economic relations. The Finance Minister apprised the French Ambassador about the economic reforms of the government that have brought economic and fiscal stability in the country. She informed that the government has successfully concluded first review of the SBA with IMF recently. Finance Minister also shared reform agenda of the interim government which aims to bring economic and fiscal stability in the country. The fiscal and current account deficit has narrowed. She further informed the Ambassador on key reforms being undertaken by the caretaker government including SOEs, privatization, forex exchange regime, and reforms in FBR.

U19 AC: Pak to face
UAE in semi-final

DNA

DUBAI: Pakistan's thrilling journey of the ACC Men's U19 Asia Cup 2023 has reached its pinnacle as they prepare to face off against UAE U19 in the semi-final clash at the ICC Academy Ground Dubai, on Friday. The eight-team tournament has seen Pakistan U19 emerge as a standout force in Group A. The young talents from Pakistan proved their mettle by remaining undefeated in the group-stage matches. Mohammad Zeeshan earned the player of the match award in the seven-wicket win against Nepal U19 for his impressive performance, securing six wickets for 19 runs and contributing 20 runs off eight balls.

Azan Awais was then the highlight against India U19, remaining unbeaten with a stellar innings of 105 runs off 130 balls and leading the side to an eight-wicket win. Shamyul Hussain was named player of the match in the game against Afghanistan, displaying an excellent performance with the bat, smashing 75 runs off 54 balls and taking one wicket for eight runs with the ball as Pakistan claimed an 83-run win over Afghanistan U19. The semi-final clash promises to be an exciting battle as both teams vie for a coveted spot in the U19 Asia Cup finale. UAE U19, hosting the tournament and competing alongside Bangladesh, Japan, and Sri Lanka in Group B, have also been in form.

The last meeting between Pakistan U19 and UAE U19 saw the QasimAkram-led side win the match by 21 runs at the ICC Academy Ground in 2021. QasimAkram was the player of the match in that contest for his all-round contribution of (50, 67b and three for 52). Pakistan captain SaadBaig said, "We have done well in all three games played so far. However, this achievement is not our ultimate goal. Our aim is to win the U19 Asia Cup. We consistently strive to deliver on the big stage, as shown by our performances in the last three games. "We remain focused on identifying and rectifying mistakes after each match, improving ourselves for the upcoming fixtures."

Nominees for The Best FIFA men's player award revealed

LONDON: Erling Haaland, Kylian Mbappe, and Lionel Messi have been revealed as the three finalists for The Best FIFA Men's Player Award 2023. The award acknowledges the most exceptional performers in the men's game between 19th December 2022 and 20th August 2023. The distinguished winner will be announced at a ceremony in London on 15th January 2024. Initially, 12 players were nominated for The Best FIFA Men's Player award by a panel of experts. From this list, an international jury, consisting of men's national team coaches, captains, football journalists, and fans who voted on FIFA's official website, selected the three finalists.

Erling Haaland: Manchester City's prolific striker proved relentless, causing havoc for defenders in both domestic and European competitions, contributing to Pep Guardiola's side securing their first treble by clinching the UEFA Champions League, Premier League, and FA Cup trophies. Throughout 33 games in these competitions during the qualifying period, he scored 28 times, showcasing a blend of speed, strength, and finishing prowess that out-matched the world's top defenders. His impressive goal tally and composed style are magnified by the fact that the Norwegian forward turned 23 only in July 2023.

Kylian Mbappe: Mbappe resumed his stellar form from the FIFA World Cup 2022™ final upon his return to domestic play in late December 2022. He netted from the penalty spot in the 90th minute, aiding Paris Saint-Germain's triumph over Strasbourg in Ligue 1. The agile French forward ensured his team clinched their eighth domestic title in 11 years with his consistent goal-scoring prowess during the qualifying period for The Best 2023. He scored 17 times in the final 20 league games, including an astonishing streak of nine goals in six matches. These remarkable performances earned Mbappe the title



of Ligue 1 Player of the Year and the Ligue 1 top scorer, showcasing his resilience following the disappointment of his World Cup final hat-trick ending in defeat.

Lionel Messi: Messi, the recipient of The Best Men's Player award in 2022, returned after leading Argentina to triumph in Qatar to aid PSG in securing their latest Ligue 1 title, his second in France. He was also named in the Ligue 1 team of the season and finished the campaign leading the division's assists chart. In July, the diminutive maestro, who has surpassed 100 goals for his country and is the all-time leading scorer in the top five European leagues, embraced a new challenge by crossing the Atlantic to join Inter Miami. His transfer was greeted with immense celebration and fanfare befitting one of football's all-time legends. – DNA

Junior Hockey WC: Australia defeat Pakistan
Pakistan will now face Argentina for the 7th-8th place match

SPORTS DESK

KUALA LUMPUR: A goal-fest saw Australia defeat Pakistan 7-5 in the 5th-8th classification match of the Junior Hockey World Cup in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, on Thursday. The defeat means that Pakistan will now face Argentina for the 7th-8th place match. Meanwhile, Australia will take on the Netherlands in the 5th-6th place match. Both matches will be played on December 16. Cambell Geddes scored a hat-trick for Australia against Pakistan. Brodee Foster and Nathan Czinner scored a brace each for the winning side. For Pakistan, Abdul Qayyum scored two goals. Meanwhile, Umar Mustafa, Ahtisham Aslam and Suyfyan Khan scored one each.

Australia scored four goals in the third quarter which took the game away from Pakistan. Despite scoring three goals in the final quarter, Pakistan could not make

a comeback in the match. "Pakistan were not expected to be in the quarter-finals but all other seven teams were expected based on their rankings. I'm proud of the



boys and we have seen that we can give competition to those teams. People in Pakistan should be proud of this talented group," Pakistan coach RoelantOltmans said after the match.

It must be noted that the Green Shirts lost the quarter-final 4-2 against Spain on Tuesday. Pakistan qualified for the quarter-finals after levelling their third game in the group stage by 1-1 against Belgium. Pakistan also drew 3-3 against the Netherlands, while winning against New Zealand 4-0, in the group stage. Spain will face France and India will take on Germany in the semi-finals later today.

Pakistan squad: Ali Raza (Goalkeeper), Arbaz Ahmad, Sufyan Khan, Ghazanfar, MurtazaYaqoob, Zikriya Hayat, Arshad Liaqat, Abdul Rehman, HananShahid (Captain), Abuzar, ArbazAyaz, Abdul Rafay (Goalkeeper), Abdul Manan, Aqeel Ahmed, Ahtisham, Basharat Ali, AQeel Ahmed, Ali Murtaza, Umer Mustafa, and Abdul Qayyum.

Briefs

Poland's
new PM Tusk
sworn in

DNA

WARSAW: President Andrzej Duda, an ally of the previous administration, swore in the government after delaying the power transition as long as he could.

The new Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk and his Cabinet were sworn in by the president on Wednesday morning, in a ceremony which marked the end of eight tumultuous years of rule by a national conservative party, Law and Justice.

The swearing-in ceremony of the pro-European Union government, the final step in a transition of power, took place in the presidential palace in Warsaw. Tusk has returned to the job after nine years in opposition.

The change of government follows a national election on 15 October which was won by a group of parties that ran on separate tickets vowing to work together under Tusk's leadership to restore democratic norms eroded by Law and Justice and mend relations with foreign allies that were also strained. Tusk and his ministers arrived at the presidential palace in a bus in the white and red colours of Poland's flag and the words: "We thank you, Poland!" They were greeted by cheering supporters.

Tusk's government won a vote of confidence in parliament on Tuesday evening after an inaugural speech in which he vowed to demand that the West keep up its support for Ukraine. The confidence vote was delayed when a far-right lawmaker used a fire extinguisher to put out the candles of a menorah during a Hanukkah celebration dedicated to Poland's Jewish lawmakers of the 1920s and 1930s. Tusk and other leaders sharply condemned the antisemitic provocation.

Germany
warns of
waning
support for
Ukraine

BERLIN: German Chancellor Olaf Scholz has blasted Hungary for stalling EU efforts to assist Ukraine and open accession talks. Scholz has suggested holding a majority vote at the European Council Summit on support for Kiev, effectively removing any state's veto power on decision making in the bloc. His comments come as EU leaders meet on Thursday and Friday to discuss a wide range of issues, including further financial aid to Ukraine, as well as the possible opening of accession talks with Kiev. The European Commission initially recommended that the bloc start membership negotiations with Ukraine during the summit, arguing that Kiev had fulfilled most of the requirements to warrant such a step.

However, the proposed fast-tracking of Ukraine's accession has been strongly opposed by Hungary, Slovakia, and Austria, who have threatened to block any expedited negotiations. They insist that Kiev still has a long way to go while stressing that the EU itself is not yet ready to receive a new member. Budapest has also threatened to block a 50 billion (\$54 billion) EU aid package for Kiev.

Speaking at the German Bundestag on Wednesday, Scholz blasted Hungary for stalling EU support for Ukraine, arguing that "almost all" EU members wanted to continue providing financial assistance to Kiev. The German leader suggested that Hungary should not have the right to veto such initiatives and that more decisions in the EU need to be made by qualified majority, especially when it comes to the enlargement process. Scholz warned that Berlin may have to declare an emergency in the country in order to bypass laws governing national debt that could prevent additional assistance being provided to Kiev next year if the situation in Ukraine deteriorates. —APP

We are closer than ever to
peace in Caucasus: Fidan

Only US stands between massacre and cease-fire in Gaza: Turkish Foreign Minister Fidan

FOREIGN DESK

BAKU: Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan was received by Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev on Thursday before he met his counterpart Jeyhun Bayramov during a visit to Baku. The two ministers held a joint news conference following their talks that focused on relations between the two countries, which boast being "one nation, two states." Azerbaijan's ties with neighboring Armenia were also among other topics the two top diplomats discussed. Fidan told the news conference that they were "closer than ever" to regional stability and peace in the Caucasus region. "We always said that momentum in the process between Azerbaijan and Armenia would be reflected in the normalization process between Türkiye and Armenia. We will uninterruptedly continue cooperation with brotherly Azerbaijan to utilize this opportunity," Fidan said. He stated that Türkiye supported ongoing peace talks between Azerbaijan and Armenia. "We don't see any obstacles to normalization with Armenia. We anticipate completion of the peace agreement between Armenia and Azerbaijan," he said. Relations



between Azerbaijan and Armenia have been tense since 1991 when the Armenian military occupied Nagorno-Karabakh, a territory internationally recognized as part of Azerbaijan, and seven adjacent regions. Most of the territory was liberated by Azerbaijan during a war in the fall of 2020, which ended after a Russian-brokered peace agreement and also

opened the door to normalization. This September, the Azerbaijani army initiated a counterterrorism operation in Karabakh to establish a constitutional order, after which illegal separatist forces in the region surrendered. Türkiye itself suspended relations with Armenia for decades in support of Azerbaijan, while Armenia has been a stalwart in accusing Türkiye

of "genocide" of the Armenian population during the last days of the Ottoman Empire. After September's operation that fully cleared Karabakh of separatists, Azerbaijan and Armenia took strides on their path to peace and on Wednesday, the two countries exchanged prisoners of war on their border in a sign of reconciliation. Fidan said he congratulated

Azerbaijan once again for its successful operation in Karabakh last September and extended condolences for "heroes martyred" in the operation. "(Türkiye) pointed out that there was a historic opportunity for regional peace after a 44-day war three years ago. Today, we believe this opportunity has grown more and should not be missed.

Uyghur enjoys prosperity

Rumours of forced
labour stands baseless

NEWS DESK

ISLAMABAD: Rumours of forced labour stand baseless, as the Uyghur Muslims are enjoying prosperity, Gwadar Pro reported on Thursday. Ample provision of employment opportunities, professional training programs, abundant municipal facilities and mainstreaming are among the main reasons for the socio-economic growth of the local Uyghur Muslims, who account for 98% of the total population of Kashgar, China's Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region. As a Pakistani journalist and President of Think Tank "Institute of International Relations and Media Research", during my visit to "Jiashi Drinking Water Safety Engineering Project", I noticed two important points, which allowed me to understand

how the local Uyghur Muslims live and work in peace and contentment under the guidance of the local leadership. Jiashi County is a county under the jurisdiction of Kashgar City, Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region, north-west China. There was once a lack of drinking water here. Local residents are forced to drink unsafe water that poses a health hazard. Eventually, with the financial support of the Chinese government, the safe drinking water project was established in 2019 and the drinking water problem was solved in 2020. Talking to "Jiashi Drinking Water Safety Engineering Project" Director Han Huskies, he noted that it is an important step toward raising living standards and helping people escape poverty. "After the drinking water safety project for urban and rural areas of Jiashi County was completed.

Foreign Tourists
enjoy captivating
experiences

KASHGAR: Lately, Uyghur Muslims in the old city of Kashgar, Xinjiang have pioneered home tourism, providing Chinese and foreign tourists with new enchanting experiences. New avenue of livelihood have opened the door to wealth for local Muslims and greatly improved their living standards. Nearly 300 home tourist attractions have sprouted in the old city of Kashgar, brimming with history of 2000 years and prosperous civilization. According to a Gwadar Pro's report, roaming around freely and passing through Kashi market, integral part of ancient Silk Road, the delegation of Pakistani media and think tanks was welcomed by a family in their home converted into high-class tourism spot which was professionally bedecked by traditional exterior, colorful façade and mesmerizing arch. Having greeted at main door, the family members invited the delegation to enter with candid smile. They guided the delegation to sit on chairs and served local delights, special eating stuff and indigenous Kashgar tea. —DNA

15 India opp
MPs suspended
for protests

NEW DELHI: Fifteen Indian opposition MPs have been suspended after they protested against a security breach in the parliament. At least four people were arrested after two intruders shouted slogans and set off coloured smoke inside parliament. Their motive remains unclear. The federal home ministry has ordered an investigation into the incident. The security lapse occurred on the 22nd anniversary of a deadly attack on the parliament. On Thursday, a day after the breach, security was ramped up around the parliament building, with barricades outside the complex to restrict entry. Both houses were adjourned after protests by opposition MPs who demanded a discussion on the incident and statements from the prime minister and the home minister. In the Rajya Sabha, the upper house of the parliament, opposition MP Derek O'Brien was suspended for "ignoble conduct" after he shouted slogans demanding a statement from Home Minister Amit Shah. In the Lok Sabha, the lower house, 14 MPs from opposition parties such as the Congress and the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam were suspended until 22 December, when the session ends. Before the session was adjourned, defence minister Rajnath Singh said in parliament that the incident had been condemned by "everyone". "We all - ruling and opposition MPs - have to be careful about to whom we issue the passes (to enter parliament)," he said. Opposition leaders have demanded action against Pratap Simha, an MP from the governing Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) who allegedly signed the passes used by the intruders to enter the public gallery in parliament. Neither Mr Simha nor his party have officially commented. The BBC has emailed the MP for comment. A police official told Reuters that visitor passes had been suspended until a security review was completed for the parliament building. —DNA

US asks
Australia to
send warship
to Red Sea

WASHINGTON: The US has asked Australia to join a Washington-led maritime task force in the Red Sea to repel the Houthi group's targeting of Israeli vessels, local media said on Thursday. Australian Defense Minister Richard Marles said Canberra is considering the request by Washington but that the focus is on naval efforts closer to home, local ABC News reported. "I want to emphasize the focus of our efforts is on our immediate region and the regional presence deployments that we have been engaged in over the last few months," the broadcaster quoted Marles as saying. Last week, the Pentagon said it is ready to help set up a maritime task force to protect merchant shipping in the Red Sea following a series of Houthi attacks on ships which are believed to be Israeli owned, attacks amid Israel's over two months of attacks on the Gaza Strip. The Houthis on Nov. 19 announced the seizure of the Galaxy Leader cargo ship, co-owned by an Israeli company, saying the move came in solidarity with "the Palestinian resistance in the Gaza Strip." —Agencies

Kyrgyzstan,
Tajikistan
agree on demarcation
of border

DUSHANBE: Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan on Thursday agreed on the demarcation of 47 kilometers (29.2 miles) of their border. A statement by the Kyrgyz Cabinet of Ministers said that delegations from the governments of both countries had been meeting since Friday in the city of Batken in southwestern Kyrgyzstan. "The parties will continue to work on describing the remaining areas at the next meeting, which will take place on the territory of the Republic of Tajikistan," the statement further said. The statement also said that a corresponding protocol was signed by both sides following the meeting, adding that talks took place in "an atmosphere of friendship and mutual understanding." Tensions have been present between Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, primarily stemming from a border dispute, as well as matters related to irrigation, smuggling and illegal border crossings. This dispute has led to clashes between both countries, the latest of which broke out at a disputed section of their border in the Batken region on Sept. 14 last year. While 503 kilometers (313 miles) of the 970-kilometer (603 miles) border are well defined, the Kyrgyz and Tajik governments have not yet resolved their border dispute. —APP

Japan's PM replaces
4 ministers over
corruption scandal

TOKYO: Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida replaced four ministers on Thursday as the unpopular leader reels from a major corruption scandal in the ruling party. The furore centres on alleged kickbacks of 500 million yen (\$3.4 million) in the faction-riven Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), which has governed the world's third-largest economy almost uninterrupted for decades. Media reports suggested that prosecutors would begin raiding offices and interviewing dozens of lawmakers later this week. Chief Cabinet Secretary Hirokazu Matsuno was replaced by former foreign minister Yoshimasa Hayashi, a high-ranking member of Kishida's LDP faction. Ken Saito replaced Yasutoshi Nishimura as Economy and Industry Minister while Takeaki Matsumoto returned to his old post as internal affairs minister, replacing Junji Suzuki. New Agriculture Minister Tetsushi Sakamoto took over after Ichiro Miyashita also tendered his resignation. Michiko Ueno, a special adviser to the prime minister, also left office along with five deputy ministers. "The public's doubts are around me over political funds, which is leading to distrust in the government. As an investigation is going on, I thought I wanted to set things right," Nishimura told reporters. —APP

EU has 'lost credibility' due
to stance on Gaza: Irish PMEU countries now
seeking cease-fire

Despite some different approaches among member states, today more and more EU countries support a cease-fire in the Gaza Strip, the EU foreign policy chief said Thursday. Speaking to the press before a European Council meeting in Brussels, Josep Borrell said the leaders will discuss the war in Ukraine plus enlargement issues. "We will discuss also the situation in Gaza," he said, adding that they will have to take into account last week's vote in the UN General Assembly calling for a cease-fire in the besieged enclave. Europeans have to start thinking about how to deal with the problem using a political approach, he said. "Arab countries have already said that they will not participate in rebuilding Gaza unless there is a strong commitment from the international community to build a two-state solution. —APP

BRUSSELS: The European Union has "lost credibility" with young people and around the world due to its inability to take a stronger stance on the situation in Gaza, Taoiseach Leo Varadkar has said. "I'm a huge believer in the European Union," Mr Varadkar said on arrival to a crunch summit of EU leaders in Brussels. "But our inability to take a stronger and clearer position on the situation in Gaza, I think has undermined our credibility." The Taoiseach said he would tell fellow EU leaders at the summit that the union's image had been damaged due to its inability to take a stronger and more united position on Israel and Palestine. "We've lost credibility with the Global South, which actually is most of the world, because what is perceived to be double standards. And there's some truth in that, quite frankly," he told reporters. "There is a major issue with young people, and the credibility that the European Union has among young people," he continued, describing a "significant change" among young people towards having more sympathy with Palestinians than Israelis. —DNA

ICCI lauds the role of the Christian community

ADIL SHAHEEN

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) organized a Cake Cutting ceremony to celebrate the Merry Christmas with the Christian community. Mahesh Kumar Malani, former Minister of State for National Health Services was the Chief Guest and Archbishop Dr. Joseph Arshad was the Guest of Honor. Pastor Samson Sohail, Pastor Babar Waris, Ch. Ashraf Farzand Convener ICCI Interfaith Committee, Jamil Khokhar, Maqbool Khokhar, Sharon Masih, Simon Shehzad, Ms. Tehmina Tariq, Shahzad Safdar, Sharoon Arif, Emmanuel Siraj, Tanveer Bhatti, Ch. Junaid Ashraf, Azhar Anwar, Asif Pervez Cilo, Michael Gill, and a large number of people from the Christian community attended the event. Ambassador of Azerbaijan H.E. Khazar Farhadov, Ambassador of Syria H.E. Dr. Ramez Alraee, Ambassador of Nepal H.E. Tapas Adhikari, Ambassador of Myanmar H.E. Win Myint, Counsellors of Sri Lanka

and Egypt and others were also present on the occasion. Addressing the ceremony, Mahesh Kumar Malani former Minister of State for National Health Services said that Christians and other minorities in Pakistan are enjoying better protection of their rights and do not feel any insecurity.

He said that armed forces, judiciary and all institutions in Pakistan are fully cooperating with the minorities while minorities in India are facing oppression. He said that a certain mindset wants to destroy the image of Pakistan, but we all would foil them. He lauded ICCI for celebrating

Merry Christmas Day and added that such events contribute to promoting interfaith harmony in the country. Speaking at the occasion, Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari, President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry said that the Christian community is playing an important role in the

economic development of Pakistan, which is laudable. He said that Christians around the world are gearing up to celebrate the birthday of Jesus Christ who was a symbol of peace, brotherhood, and respect for the entire humanity. He said that Jesus Christ not only healed the ailing humanity, but he also preached the divine values of tolerance, love, and compassion, which are kept in high esteem in Islam as well. He said that Pakistan needs the adoption of these values to emerge as a strong country. He assured that ICCI would continue to play a role in promoting the business interests of all communities so that they could play a more effective role in the economic development of the country. H.E. Dr. Ramez Alraee, Ambassador of Syria lauded ICCI for organizing the Christmas ceremony and stressed promoting love, tolerance, and generosity to cooperation among nations and make the world peaceful. H.E. H.E. Tapas Adhikari, Ambassador of Nepal said that Merry Christmas is now a global festival, which promotes interfaith harmony.

Denmark foils
alleged terror
attack plot

COPENHAGEN: Danish authorities say they have foiled a planned major terror attack. Three people were arrested in Denmark and one in the Netherlands during dawn raids on Thursday, police said at a press conference. Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen said the threat was "as serious as it gets". Authorities did not immediately disclose details of the alleged plot they say they prevented, saying the investigation was ongoing. The three people arrested in Denmark will be charged with terror offences, police Ch Insp Flemming Drejer told reporters. He said an investigation had uncovered a transnational network of people preparing a terror attack, with links to criminal gangs. Security around Jewish sites will be reinforced and police patrols in Copenhagen made more frequent, he added. Former Copenhagen Police Dep Insp Jens Moller told TV2 Thursday morning's raids would have been co-ordinated down to the minute. "They must take place simultaneously within a minute of each other - preferably 10-15 seconds," he said. Danish intelligence chief Anja Dalgaard-Nielsen said the terror threat was linked to the Israel-Gaza war and burnings of the Quran in Denmark and neighbouring Sweden. —Agencies

Briefs

NAB gets physical remand of Imran

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Judge Muhammad Bashir of the accountability court in Islamabad on Thursday approved a two-day physical remand of former Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) chief Imran Khan in Toshakhana case. As per details, the Deputy Prosecutor General of NAB, Sardar Mazhar Abbasi, and the investigative team appeared before the court as the NAB sought a seven-day physical remand for the former prime minister. The NAB team argued that a thorough investigation is needed in the Toshakhana case, requiring the physical remand of the accused. Despite objections from the defence counsel, the court granted a two-day physical remand. Subsequently, the court adjourned the hearing till December 16. A day earlier, the court had dismissed Khan's interim bail in the case after the judge Muhammad Bashir announced the verdict on the former premier's plea which was reserved earlier. The court said that Khan will remain and interrogated in prison. Following the order, NAB also arrested the former prime minister, who is already imprisoned in the cypher case.

Hunger grows in Gaza amid Israeli attacks

Death toll in Gaza rises to 18,787

DNA

GAZA: As the US-backed Israeli genocidal war on the Gaza Strip entered day 69 on Thursday, massive aerial and artillery strikes continued to pound and level whole blocks and homes and massacre more civilians, mostly children and women. Ashraf al-Qudra, the spokesperson of the Health Ministry in Gaza, says at least 179 people have been killed and 303 wounded in Israeli attacks over the past day. In his latest update, he said the death toll since October 7 has risen to 18,787 with 50,897 injured. A large number of victims are still under the rubble and on the streets, al-Qudra added. Philippe Lazarini says it is getting harder to provide aid to people in UNRWA's shelters due to the crowding outside them. "People are stopping aid trucks, taking the food and eating it straight away," the agency's commissioner-general told journalists at a refugee event in Geneva. "Hunger has now emerged over the last few weeks and we meet more and more people who haven't eaten for one, two or three days." The Hamas Movement has affirmed that it is open to all the efforts that will help end the Israeli aggression against its people in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank and lead to the release of prisoners from Israeli jails. We have made a vow to our people that we will remain loyal to their sacrifices, pains and aspirations.

International Day of Human Rights

France committed to protection of human rights: Nicolas Galey

French ambassador says beyond institutional mechanisms, the promotion of human rights would be nothing more than empty words without the tremendous commitment of the actors of Pakistani civil society who are on the ground, sometimes in difficult conditions

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of France to Pakistan Nicolas Galey has said France will also endeavor to promote the fight against impunity and discrimination as well as the fight for women's rights, which are a priority for our domestic and foreign policy. The advocacy of France, Mexico and several other partners at the Generation Equality Forum in 2021 enabled the mobilization of more than \$40 billion in commitments in favor of sexual and reproductive health, education and economic empowerment of women. The French ambassador made these remarks while speaking at an event held in connection with International Human Rights Day. Federal Minister for Human Rights, Khalil George, Senator, Chairperson of the National Commission on the Rights of the Child, Aysha Farooq Raza also attended the event. The French ambassador further said, France intends to carry out with its partners, particularly our EU partners: the rights of minorities; the rights of LGBT+ persons; the rights and protection of rights defenders; freedom of the press and expression, which is so essential as violation of human rights can hardly be known and reported if freedom of expression doesn't exist. He said, the protection of human rights defenders is a priority which is reflected in particular by a program dedicated to human rights defenders from all over the world, who are invited to come to France and follow programs related to their action: the Marianne Initiative. "France will work on these objectives in a multilateral framework. Because multilateralism remains the best way to tackle contemporary challenges. In this regard, France was honored to be re-elected by the General Assembly, last 10 October, to sit as member of the Human Rights Council for a new period of 3 years", he added. While sharing the background information



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of France Nicolas Galey speaks on occasion of an event held in connection with International Human Rights day while Minister Khalil George and Aysha Farooq Raza look on. – DNA

the Ambassador said, indeed, 75 years ago, on December 10, 1948, 58 member states which then constituted the General Assembly of the United Nations, adopted by a large majority this founding document at the Palais de Chaillot in Paris. Pakistan and France were among those who supported this historic text. "The Declaration defines 30 rights and freedoms inherent to every human being and is one of the most translated texts in the world. It constitutes the essential basis of a fairer and more peaceful world through the proclamation of principles, rights and freedoms essential to the rule of law and democracy". The defense and promotion of human rights is an ongoing commitment, as the French Foreign Minister, Catherine Colonna has reminded last 10 December on the occasion of the UN Human Rights Day: "respect for human rights is an everyday battle. (...) this fight is (...) far from won". He said, as President Macron recalled during the ceremony celebrating the 75th

anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights he chaired in the building where the Declaration was adopted, on December 10, "Paris will not forget that it was the cradle of the Declaration (...) and that this filiation honors and obliges" France. In this particular year, France is more than ever committed to pursuing its policy of universal promotion and protection of all human rights: civil and political rights, social, economic and cultural ones as well. Ambassador Galey said, together, collectively, it means here with the Pakistani authorities which, notably through the voice of the Pakistani President reaffirmed on December 10 Pakistan's commitment to do everything possible to protect the rights of all Pakistani citizens without distinction, as promoted by the Constitution of Pakistan, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the international instruments that Pakistan has ratified. Furthermore, we welcome the legislative

progress in favor of women's rights, in favor of transgender persons, against torture or in favor of journalists. We also welcome the fact that the scope of death penalty has been reduced'. Like any other country, Pakistan still faces many other challenges and a lot remain to be done. The EU and its member states are alongside Pakistan to help move forward, particularly within the framework of the GSP+, a mechanism which provides for high standards in terms of human rights. A topic to which our public opinion and politicians, in particular, as you know, European parliamentarians, are quite sensitive, the ambassador added. "Beyond institutional mechanisms, the promotion of human rights would be nothing more than empty words without the tremendous commitment of the actors of Pakistani civil society who are on the ground, sometimes in difficult conditions. Ambassador Galey said, this embassy was honored to contribute at its level to the essential activities of several institutions represented here. "We recently wanted to contribute to two causes that are particularly close to our heart: the rights of children and the dignity of those called "sanitation workers", the Ambassador concluded. Aysha Farooq Raza also delivered a compelling address during the event, expressing gratitude to the French embassy for their invaluable support in bolstering the endeavors of the Pakistani civil society and various organizations dedicated to the safeguarding of human and child rights in Pakistan. Her words resonated with sincerity as she underscored the significance of collaborative efforts in fostering a society that prioritizes and protects the rights of every individual, particularly the vulnerable and marginalized. Aysha Farooq Raza's acknowledgment of the French embassy's contribution served as a testament to the importance of international partnerships in creating a positive impact on human rights initiatives within Pakistan.

Marwat detained from outside LHC

Sources say PTI leader shifted to unknown location; party condemns arrest, calls it "unlawful"

DNA

LAHORE: Police on Thursday detained Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Senior Vice President Sher Afzal Khan Marwat from outside the Lahore High Court (LHC), sources told Geo News, with his party also confirming the development. The sources within the police said Marwat was arrested under the GPO Chowk under the Punjab Maintenance of Public Order (MPO) Ordinance's Section 3. The sources said the PTI leader, after being detained, was shifted to an unknown location. In response, the party said Marwat's arrest shows that those in power were "worried". "This also shows lawlessness. The reason behind these unconstitutional, unlawful acts is that they want to run from elections," PTI said in a statement, without exactly mentioning whom 'they' referred to. "Sher Afzal Marwat should be released immediately," the party said, reiterating that the arrests of its top leadership would not sway them from their path to "haqeeqiyat (true freedom)". PTI Chairman Barrister Gohar Ali Khan, who was recently elected to the party's top office, also condemned his senior party leader's arrest. Marwat was briefly detained less than a week back in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Bathkela city, however, the police had denied detaining the PTI leader.



LAHORE: Philippines Ambassador Maria Agnes M. Cervantes calls on Caretaker CM Punjab, Mohsin Naqvi. – DNA

Bilawal vows to address businessmen's issues

SHAMIM SHAHID

PESHAWAR: Chairman Pakistan People's Party (PPP), Bilawal Bhutto held out assurance of playing his role with full dedication for resolution of problems being faced by business community of the country, especially of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Bilawal gave this assurance during meeting with office bearers of Federation of Pakistan Chamber of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI) and business community of KP under the leadership of Malik MeharElahi, Haji FazalElahi, Sartaj Ahmad Khan and Adnan Jalil here at Zahir Shah House on Thursday. During the meeting, businessmen apprised the PPP Chairman about the problems they faced and hardships

due to slump in business in the country in general and KP in particular. Earlier, Sartaj Ahmad of FPCCI presented a detailed briefing about the efforts being made by him and his team members from the platform of FPCCI for the betterment of business community of the province. He said majority of the districts from Chitral to D.I.Khan are deprived of official patronage from the center as a result of which, business community and industry is suffering due to non-resolution of problems they faced. He said that the wheeling policy of electricity was not given due consideration under which the industry would be provided electricity at cheap rates. Similarly, suggestions of business community for increasing border trade is given heed by quarters concerned, he continued.

SIFC approves investment-friendly visa facility

ISLAMABAD: Executive Committee for Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC) on Thursday began its two-day meeting to review the progress of various policy-level initiatives and projects in the key sectors. The meeting, chaired by Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Muhammad Sami Saeed, was attended by Federal and Provincial Ministers concerned, besides high-level government officials, a news release said. On the inaugural day, ministries concerned presented progress on various projects and related aspects, recommending various measures for further improving the business and investment climate. The committee appreciated the overall progress in various sectors and level of economic engagements with friendly countries, especially signing of MoUs and Agreements with the UAE and State of Kuwait. – DNA

Cipher case: Special court to hold in-camera trial of Imran, Qureshi

Court says family members of accused would be given access to the courtroom during the hearing

RAWALPINDI: A special court established under the Official Secrets Act 2023 on Thursday approved the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) plea to conduct an in-camera hearing of former Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) chairman Imran Khan and Vice-Chairman Shah Mahmood Qureshi in the cipher case. Special court Judge Abul Hasnat Zulqarnain announced the reserved verdict in the case. The court said that the family members would be given access to the courtroom during the hearing. The FIA had filed a petition under Section 14(a) seeking an in-camera hearing of Khan and Qureshi. The development comes after the former prime minister and PTI's vice-chairman were indicted by the special court for the second time yesterday. Both the leaders were indicted in the case on October 23 and pleaded not guilty to their involvement in the offence related to the alleged misuse of diplomatic cable for political purposes. Following Khan and Qureshi's indictment, the regular trial of the cipher case on the charges of leaking state secrets was being held in Adiala jail in Rawalpindi. Last month, both leaders challenged their indictment in the case, the Islamabad High Court (IHC) declared their jail trial "null and void" while allowing their intra-court appeals in the case.

However, the federal cabinet yet again approved the summary of holding the jail trial of both politicians following which the trial continued, leading to the indictment of both Khan and Qureshi on Wednesday. Speaking to media persons outside the jail, FIA's Special Prosecutor Raja Rizwan Abbasi said that the witnesses in the case will be produced before the court. He further said that the FIA has filed a petition seeking an in-camera hearing of the case under section 14 of the Secrets Act. Abbasi said that the process of the indictment was completed yesterday, adding that the accused doesn't need to sign on the charge sheet. Khan's family to approach international courts Speaking with journalists outside the Adiala jail, the PTI founder's sister Aleema Khan said her family were being told to take this case to international courts. Khan told the media that her family would go to the international courts and do everything possible while adhering to the law. "PTI founder will be saved from being hanged." The PTI founder's sister also said a case will also be filed against former United States Ambassador Donald Lu, as he was involved in the ouster of an elected government along with General Bajwa and Hussain Haqqani. "Salman, Qasim and family to file a case in the UK," she added, sharing that Khan's family in Britain would file a case there as he, too, has agreed to it.

Putin says peace possible after 'de-militarisation' of Ukraine

US engineered Ukraine conflict – Putin

NEWS DESK

MOSCOW: The US was responsible for orchestrating the 2014 coup in Ukraine that overthrew President Viktor Yanukovich and ultimately led to the current conflict, Russian President Vladimir Putin has said. He added that Washington "needed to create a conflict" for its own purposes. Speaking during a marathon Q&A session on Thursday, Putin said the US "plotted and organized everything" while European leaders "silently watched" and pretended they were not aware of what was happening. As a result, Ukraine has "largely lost its sovereignty" and has been making "many decisions to their own detriment" since then. Following the 2014 coup, the then-Ukrainian provinces of Donetsk and Lugansk, known as Donbass, refused to accept the new government, which increasingly embraced nationalist ideology, and proclaimed their independence instead. Kiev responded with a violent military campaign that prompted a years-long conflict. The Russian leader went on to accuse the West of having a short memory, pointing to the 2015 Minsk agreements, which were brokered by Russia, Germany and France and

were designed to end the hostilities. The West had "no intention" of implementing the agreements, which Putin said were "signed and immediately forgotten." Former German Chancellor Angela Merkel and French President Emmanuel Macron later admitted that the agreements were a strategic ploy aimed at buying Ukraine more time to prepare for a conflict with Russia. In an interview with CNN in 2015, then-US President Barack Obama also openly admitted that the US had "brokered a deal to transition power in Ukraine." In September 2022, the Donetsk and Lugansk People's Republics, as well as the parts of Kherson and Zaporozhye Regions under Russian control, voted to join Russia in a referendum which Ukraine and its Western backers denounced as illegitimate. Moscow has insisted that Kiev must recognize this "new territorial reality" as a prerequisite for any peace talks. Despite receiving a constant flow of weapons and aid from its Western backers since the current conflict broke out in February 2022, Kiev's six-month counteroffensive against Russia has failed to yield significant results and Ukraine has lost some 125,000 military personnel and 6,000 pieces of heavy equipment since the beginning of June, according to the Russian Defense Ministry.

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