



Islamabad POST

Tuesday, December 19, 2023

Pakistan's Credible Daily Newspaper

Price Rs. 30

President El-Sisi declared victorious in Egypt election

Detailed News On Page-08

PML-N ended 'Daku Raj' from Karachi

Detailed News On Page-08

Wahab aims to create a good sports system

Detailed News On Page-06

Supreme Court shuts all doors to election delay

Top court rules that no objections can be raised on delimitations after announcement of polls schedule; The decision was announced on ECP's appeal against the delimitation of two provincial seats in Quetta. The SC also nullified the BHC's decision on delimitation

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court on Monday ruled that no objections can be raised on the delimitations after the announcement of the schedule for the upcoming general elections. A three-member bench of the top court, headed by interim chief justice Sardar Tariq, took up an appeal filed by the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) against the Balochistan High Court's (BHC) decision to change the delimitations carried out by the polls organising body. The decision was announced on ECP's appeal against the delimitation of two provincial seats in Quetta. The SC also nullified the BHC's decision on delimitation. The top court's order has virtually closed all doors to election delay as courts across the country would not be able to entertain any petition challenging delimitation carried out by the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) any more. If the petitions against the delimitations were admitted, the lengthy litigation process could lead to delays in the elections. The development comes days after the apex court nullified the Lahore High Court (LHC) order that halted the training of returning officers, raising prospects of polls delay in the country and paved way for the elections to take place on its scheduled time. Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Qazi Faez Isa-led bench directed the electoral body to announce the election schedule, ending uncertainty surrounding the polls.

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PHC reserves verdict on PTI plea

"We are bound by SC verdict, can't go against it," says PHC Chief Justice

SHAHMIM SHAHID

PESHAWAR: The Peshawar High Court (PHC) Monday reserved its verdict on the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf's (PTI) plea seeking the holding of the upcoming general elections under the judiciary's supervision. Two-member PHC bench led by Chief Justice Mohammad Ibrahim Khan and comprising Justice Shakeel Ahmed presided over the hearing. The development comes after the PTI's Advocate Muzammam Butt had moved the PHC seeking the holding of upcoming general elections slated for February 8, 2024, under the judiciary's supervision. The plea challenged the Election

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ISLAMABAD: Chief of the Naval Staff, Admiral Naveed Ashraf exchanging views with Ambassador of UAE to Pakistan, Hamad Obaid Ibrahim Salem at Naval Headquarters. - DNA

Pak-Norway celebrate 75 years of ties

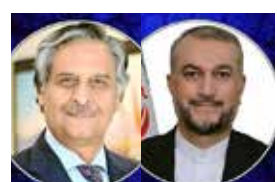
Looking forward to boost bilateral cooperation

ANSAR BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: In a celebration of seven and a half decades of diplomatic camaraderie, Pakistan and Norway are commemorating the 75th anniversary of the establishment of their bilateral relations. The enduring partnership, rooted in mutual respect and shared values, has blossomed across various sectors, fostering political, economic, academic, environmental, social, and cultural ties between the two nations. Pakistan and Norway have continued to grow over the past 75 years on the basis of mutual respect and shared values.

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Pakistan-Iran FMs discuss bilateral issues



KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: Foreign Minister Jilani Abbas Jilani held a telephone conversation today with Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir Abdollahian. They discussed matters of bilateral importance and the regional situation. Foreign Minister Jilani expressed Pakistan's deep concern over the dire situation in Occupied Palestine especially in Gaza. He emphasized the urgency of a ceasefire, lifting of the siege, provision of

Continued on Page 06

PML-N to win election I was sentenced only to install a 'selected person'

"We have never violated the Constitution and law. We have always followed protected the constitution," Nawaz remarked

ABID RAZA



LAHORE: PML-N supremo Nawaz Sharif on Monday said he had spent more time in exile than as the country's prime minister - a reference to the fact that his governments were dismissed thrice prematurely and he was sent abroad twice. Again calling for fixing the responsibility and holding them accountable for his removal from office in 2017, Nawaz said the only purpose to get him sentenced through fake cases and a manipulated process was to install a "selected government" [of PTI's former chairman]. He was addressing a meeting of the PML-N parliamentary board which interviewed the candidates aspiring for tickets to contest the Feb 8 elections from Sindh for

Continued on Page 06

Imran warns against voting rights erosion

ECP reserves verdict on plea against PTI's 'fraudulent' intra-party polls

ADIL SHAHEEN

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Founding Chairman Imran Khan urged his party's workers and people of the country that vote was their basic constitutional, legal and democratic right and they should not allow anyone to rob them of their basic right to

Continued on Page 06

Briefs

Sarfraz Bugti joins PPP

DNA

QUETTA: Former caretaker interior minister Sarfraz Bugti Monday joined PPP just days after he resigned from office - a legal requirement to contest polls. "Respected leader Asif Ali Zardari came to Turbat and directed me to join PPP," Bugti told the party's workers convention in Turbat in the presence of the PPP co-chairman and other leaders, as he expressed delight to be entering into the general elections with PPP's support. The general elections will take place on February 8, 2024, after much fear of them being delayed again, but ECP issued the polling schedule on the Supreme Court orders, ending worries to an extent on the issue.

Court approves Fawad's bail

MEHTAB PIRZADA

RAWALPINDI: A special court in Rawalpindi on Monday approved the post-arrest bail of former federal minister Fawad Chaudhry in a corruption case. The court directed the authorities to release the ex-minister from custody and ordered the accused to submit a surety bond of Rs200,000. Fawad, a former PTI lawmaker, was arrested in November and initially remanded in police custody for two days in connection with an August 2022 case, where he was alleged to have accepted a Rs5 million bribe from a citizen. Following an extension of his physical remand by a day, he was subsequently placed on judicial remand and is currently incarcerated at the Adiala jail.

PPP will surprise everyone, if gets level playing field

Asif Ali Zardari expressed commitment to significantly improve Balochistan



BUREAU REPORT

LAHORE: Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) chairman Bilawal Bhutto said on Monday if the PPP got a level playing field in Punjab, it would surprise everyone. Talking to media, he said the regime of Nawaz Sharif proved no less than a dictatorship for the PPP workers. "The PPP is a political party and the doors of a political party should always remain open for discussion," he underlined. Bilawal said it was an interesting experience, reaching Lahore as the PPP was

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JUI-F mulls seat adjustment with PPP

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam-Fazl (JUI-F) on Monday mullied the seat adjustment with the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) in the upcoming general elections. The PPP and JUI-F leaderships held negotiations in Peshawar. On this occasion, PPP leader Zahir Shah said: "The activities in line with the general elections had been started. It is common practice for all political parties to meet each other before the elections." The discussion in

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Won't compromise national security by accommodating 'aliens': PM Kakar

"Our ultimate aim is to build safer, more peaceful, and prosperous Pakistan," says interim prime minister

NEWS DESK / DNA

ISLAMABAD: Reiterating his firm stance on the repatriation of illegal foreign nationals, caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar has said that Pakistan can no longer compromise its national security by accommodating huge numbers of undocumented foreigners, including Afghan nationals. In an op-ed published in The Telegraph, PM Kakar said: "Our ultimate aim is to build a safer, more peaceful and prosperous Pakistan with associated benefits for our own people, for the region, and the wider world." The repatriation of illegal foreign nationals including Afghans to their homeland is continuing in a "dignified and safe manner", according to the government. So far, 436,790 illegal Afghans have been repatriated to their homeland. The premier said at least 16 Afghan nationals have carried out suicide attacks inside Pakistan since August 2021. He added that 65 terrorists killed in encounters with security forces were



Continued on Page 06

Foreigners can't stay indefinitely without visa

Solangi says There are about 20,000 Afghans in Pakistan

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Federal Minister for Information, Broadcasting and Parliamentary Affairs Murtaza Solangi on Monday said that foreigners including Afghan citizens could not stay in Pakistan indefinitely without a visa. Talking to "media" the minister said that some foreign countries had criticized Pakistan for sending illegal immigrants back to

Continued on Page 06

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Business: BUSINESS CLASS PASSENGERS CAN STOP OVER FOR FREE IN A 5 STAR HOTEL.

Steel industrialists urge withdrawal of PHL surcharge

ICCI President said that the steel industry is making a significant contribution to the economic development of Pakistan

ADIL SHAHEEN

ISLAMABAD : A delegation of Pakistan Association of Large Steel Producers (Quality Producers) led by its Secretary General Syed Wajid I. Bukhari visited the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) to highlight the issues being faced by the large steel producers due to the levy of PHL Surcharge and other taxes on the electricity bills and demanded that the NEPRA should withdraw this surcharge to save the steel industry from collapse. Khalid Javed, Nasir Khan, Dawood Khan, Javed Iqbal, Rafta Farid, and others were in the delegation. Addressing the delegation, Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari, President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry said that the steel industry is making a significant contribution to the economic development of Pakistan through its vital role in construction projects, infrastructure building, and industrial development. He said that the government's handholding with this industry has the potential to make a significant increase in its exports. However, he said that this industry is currently facing great problems due

to high taxes including the imposition of the PHL surcharge, and stressed that the government should rationalize high taxes on the steel industry to facilitate its revival and better growth. He said that the industry provides employment to over 300,000 persons and is a robust support system for numerous downstream industries, therefore, saving it from troubles is crucial to ensure millions of jobs in its downstream industries. He emphasized that the government should engage the steel industry stakeholders in consultation to address its key concerns so that this industry could play a more effective role in the economic development of the country. Speaking on the occasion, Syed Wajid I. Bukhari, Secretary General, Pakistan Association of Large Steel Producers (Quality Producers) said that the NEPRA had imposed an additional surcharge (Rs.3.82 per unit from March-June 23 and Rs.3.23 July onwards) to cover the markup charges of PHL loans, which is unjustified. He said that this tax has further increased the cost of production for the steel industry which would badly affect its business activities. He said that electricity is a key input for the steel industry and its cost has

doubled during the last 2 years due to which many steel units have closed down while the remaining are struggling for survival. He stressed that the government should address the inefficiencies and T&D losses of the power sector instead of imposing new taxes on the steel and other sectors as it will cause deindustrialization and hurt the business and economic activities in the country. Khalid Javed, Nasir Khan, Dawood Khan, Javed Iqbal, Rafta Farid, and others also expressed concerns over the high taxes on the steel industry and urged that the government should rationalize them to save this industry from further troubles. Khalid Iqbal Malik, Group Leader ICCI said that the Prime Minister should intervene to save steel industry from further troubles. He said that the government should privatize DISCOs and renegotiate agreements with IPPs to save consumers from high electricity prices. Zafar Bakhtawari, former President ICCI and Secretary General UBG Pakistan also underscored the importance of the steel industry in the development of the national economy and stressed that the government should address its key issues for its sustainable growth.



Commissioner chairs meeting regarding plantation drive

HYDERABAD : Commissioner Hyderabad Syed Khalid Hyder Shah on Monday said that to promote urban foresting, local saplings like Neem, teak Babool, Sukh Chain, Moringa, sirhin, amalats, Jaman and Gulmor should be planted in urban areas particularly in those areas facing a shortage of water. The Commissioner said this while presiding over the meeting about the preparations for the plantation campaign on the instructions of the Chief Minister Sindh. He said that Corno corpus and Eucalyptus trees should be planted where there is water logging and saline land or where there is more water. He said that these trees should never be planted in urban areas but the sea coast is a suitable place for these trees. Commissioner Hyderabad Khalid Hyder Shah further said that the Forest Department should conduct a joint meeting with the Agriculture Department to encourage the growers to plant more trees. —APP

FIU launches campaign against corruption in Baluchistan

QUETTA : The Anti-Corruption Establishment Balochistan (ACEB) has launched a Financial Investigation Unit (FIU) established at Quetta under a project funded by the U.S. Embassy's Office of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement (INL), implemented through the Accountability Lab. The Director of ACEB, Abdul Wahid Kakar emphasized to the media the need for a proactive approach in combating corruption, given

the changing patterns and complex nature of financial crimes, said a news release. As an anti-corruption agency, ACEB faces complex challenges of identifying corrupt transactions, uncovering crime patterns, locating stolen assets, and addressing situations involving multiple jurisdictions for asset repatriation and confiscation. Investigating such challenging cases requires a specialized unit with enhanced investigative capabilities and resources. The FIU enhances the

ACEB's efforts to investigate cases related to corruption and money laundering in the province. In addition to conducting inquiries and investigations, the FIU will also enhance the sharing of information on corruption cases with other law enforcement agencies at strategic levels. Yasir Amanat, Program Specialist for Rule of Law, and Corrections at INL, commended ACEB's proactive role in leading the implementation of this important project. —APP

Police arrest three burglars , recover Rs 30 mln computers

MULTAN : Police on Monday claimed to have arrested three accused involved in the theft of computers worth Rs 30 million from a shop in Khan Plaza a week ago in the limits of Cantt police station. Speaking at a news conference, ASP Cantt, Talib Wazir, informed the police that the incident was reported by Waqar Farooq, who informed them about the newly established shop named Al-Aziz Computer in Khan Plaza. He stated that unknown burglars stole 100 laptops and other items valued at Rs. 3 crore from the shop on December 7. Promptly responding to the incident report, the police reached the scene, gathered information from the suspects, and initiated a search, he said, adding that after the case, number 2179/23 under Section 380, was registered with Cantt Police Station, CPO Multan, Sadiq Ali, directed ASP Cantt to form a team to trace and arrest the suspects, and under the supervision of ASP Cantt Taib Wazir, SHO Cantt Rao Ali Hasan, along with other officers, including Inspector Islam Masih, Inspector Ibrahim Saif, ASI Muhammad Sahil, and Incharge CRO SI Muhammad Javed Ansaari, successfully traced and arrested three suspects, including Muhammad Shahadat, Zulqarnain Haider, and Hasan Ali, the ASP noted. The arrested suspects have led to the recovery of the stolen laptops and other items valued at Rs 30 million. He concluded that the laptops and items recovered had been handed over to the complainant. —APP

Rawalpindi embarks on infrastructure upgrade for progress

Dr. Jamal Nasir has said that the repair and carpeting work of 36 roads including Asghar Mall Road will be started soon and it will be completed as soon as possible

DNA

RAWALPINDI : Provincial Minister for Primary and Secondary Healthcare and Population Welfare Dr. Jamal Nasir has said that the repair and carpeting work of 36 roads including Asghar Mall Road will be started soon and it will be completed as soon as possible with 'Mohsin Speed' and another long-standing demand of the people of Rawalpindi will be met. He said this while meeting a delegation of Anjuman Tajran Asghar Mall Road under the leadership of Central General Secretary Anjuman Tajran Rawalpindi City Tahir Taj Bhatti. Group leader Sheikh Usman, Patron Amir Hussain, Joint Secretary Muhammad Abbas and Vice President Abdul Samad were also included in the delegation. Provincial Minister Dr. Jamal Nasir said that the establishment of a Business Facilitation Center in Rawalpindi will be set up soon by which the process of investment in the province is being made easy and convenient. He said that representatives of 20 federal and provincial departments will be present in the facilitation center and all

necessary NOCs for investment will be provided within two weeks. He said that Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi inaugurated the first Business Facilitation Center in Lahore a few days ago and such centers will also be

established in Rawalpindi, Multan, Gujranwala and other big cities. Provincial Minister Dr. Jamal Nasir said that 25 schools are being upgraded in Rawalpindi and this includes Government Muslim Higher Secondary School and

similarly boys colleges are also being upgraded. He said that funds of 10 crore rupees are being provided for the upgradation of parks in Rawalpindi to provide healthy entertainment to the citizens.



ISLAMABAD : President Dr Arif Alvi addressing the event to celebrate Award Winning Project Green Presidency, at Aiwan-e-Sadr.—DNA

Punjab ECP official meets IGP

LAHORE: Punjab Election Commissioner Saeed Gul along with a delegation visited the Central Police Office, met with provincial police chief Dr Usman Anwar and reviewed the security arrangements for the upcoming February 8, 2024 polls. The delegation accompanying the provincial election commissioner included Joint Provincial Election Commissioner Punjab Sain Bakhsh Channar and Director Elections Punjab Abdul Hameed. In addition, AIG Operations Punjab Dr Asad Ijaz Malhi and other officers were also present. Punjab Election Commissioner Saeed Gul reviewed the security arrangements of the Punjab Police in the run-up to the February 8, 2024 general elections. AIG Operations Punjab Dr Asad Ijaz Malhi briefed the election official on the security arrangements. Punjab IGP Dr Usman Anwar, while talking to the delegation, said that Punjab Police are fully prepared to maintain law and order during the upcoming elections. "In view of the current situation, the security will remain on high alert on the day of elections, he added.

The Punjab IGP further said that operational, logistics and strategic matters are being finalised for the general elections 2024, adding that more than 51,000 polling stations of the province had been divided into three categories on the basis of sensitivity. He said that more than 150,000 officials of the Punjab Police will perform security duties during the general elections in the province. "Compliance with the instructions and code of conduct issued by the Election Commission will be ensured at all costs." —APP

Police register 158 cases against underage drivers

RAWALPINDI : Rawalpindi District Police have registered 158 cases against underage drivers during last 24 hours, said a police spokesman here on Monday. Total 3603 FIRs were registered under the campaign launched against underage drivers while 158 cases were registered during last 24 hours. All possible steps were being taken to improve the traffic situation on the city roads and facilitate the citizens, he added. The spokesman informed that police, on the directives of City Police Officer, Rawalpindi were taking action in accordance with the law against underage drivers. The CPO had directed the officers concerned to take solid steps to control traffic rules violations and underage driving, he said. —APP

Ashrafi promotes interfaith harmony, enhances pilgrim facilities

PESHAWAR : The Prime Minister's Special Representatives on Religious Harmony, Maulana Tahir Mahmood Ashrafi here Monday said that Hajj was one of the most important five pillars of Islam and reiterated that the government was committed to ensuring maximum facilities to all Pakistani pilgrims next year. Addressing Tazameem Al-Haramain Al-Shareef Conference here as chief guest, Maulana Tahir Ashrafi said that a significant decrease in the expenses of Hajj has been recorded this year after decreasing prices of dollars due to Govt's effective economic and financial policies. He said Hujjaj were like ambassadors of Pakistan and urged them to strictly abide by the rules regulations and laws of Saudi Arabia. He said Pakistan highly valued its time-tested and all-weather friendship with Saudi Arabia having strong bonds of religion, history, culture, and

enormous respect for the custodians of the two holy mosques. While appreciating the overall Hajj arrangements, he directed the Hajj Organization Association of Pakistan to concentrate on the training of intending pilgrims so that they could achieve maximum blessing while staying in the holy land during Hajj. He said Pakistan was our country and its problems could be addressed through hard work, commitment, and self-accountability. Maulana Ashrafi who is Chairman of the Pakistan Ulema Council said that Inter-faith harmony and mutual co-existence in society are vital for the progress and prosperity of Pakistan. He said all minorities enjoy complete religious freedom in Pakistan. He said Pakistan has all the resources to become an economic giant. He said Pakistan can earn huge revenue worth millions of dollars by promoting religious tourism. Besides the scenic beauty

of northern Gilgit Baltistan, KP, and Azad Kashmir, he said Pakistan was home to centuries-old Indus and Gandhara civilizations besides several other religious tourism sites if properly showcased on digital media could bring economic turnaround for the country. Tahir Mahmood Ashrafi said that Pakistan wanted cordial and brotherly relations with all its neighbors and peace in Afghanistan was in the interest of Pakistan. He said anti-Pakistan and Afghanistan elements wanted to create a rift among both the countries but they would never succeed in their nefarious designs. He said Pakistan's stance on the Palestine issue was very clear. He said atrocities in Gaza should be immediately stopped. He said the sacrifices of the people of Palestine would not go to waste. He said an independent and sovereign Palestine state with Al-Qudus Al-Sharif as its capital would help. —APP

KP CM approves BoGs for 9 MTI hospitals

PESHAWAR: The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister has acceded to the appointment of new chairmen and members of board of governors (BoGs) of nine MTI hospitals of the province after an approval of the Election Commission of Pakistan. According to the notification of KP Establishment department, the appointment of the BoGs would be for a period of three years, adding that Ghulam Qadir Khan has been appointed as chairman of BoGs Hayatabad Medical Complex Peshawar, while Professor Mahfooz Hussain, Akhtar Naveed, Dil Roz and Dr Muhammad Ali Chohan nominated are the members. Similarly, Malik Mushtaq Ahmad Dar has been appointed as chairman BoGs

MTI-MMM DI Khan while Dr Muhammad Iqbal, Khalid Mahmood, Samin ullah Khan, Musa Khan and Esa Khan were appointed as the members. Prof Dr Ejaz Hassan Khan was appointed as chairman of BoGs MTI-Bacha Khan Medical College, Swabi while Prof Mohammad Ishaq Khattak, Sher Bahadur Khan, Prof Noor Jehan, Muhammad Irfan and Prof Sajjad Muhammad Khan were appointed as the members. Dr Damsaz Khan was appointed as chairman BoGs of MTI Khalifa Gul Nawaz Hospital, Bannu while the members included Malik Niamat Ullah Khan, Abid Ullah Khan, Dr. Muhammad Hashim and Atta Ullah Khan. Dr Umar Ayub has been appointed as chairman MTI-KTH Peshawar while Prof Dr

Tahir Ali, Mir Yaqoob Khan, Gohar Zaman and Qari Abdur Rauf Madni have been appointed as the members. Prof Dr Khalid Anwar Khan Khanzada and Asad Ullah Chamkani were appointed as members of MTL-LRH, Peshawar, it said. Prof Muhammad Hafiz Ullah was appointed as chairman of BoGs Peshawar Instituted of Cardiology (PIC) while the members included Muhammad Anees, Justice (R) Sahibzada Khurshheed Ahmad, Asad Akbar and Abdus Siddique. Dr Muhammad Arshad was appointed as chairman of MTI Mardan Medical Complex, Mardan while Misal Khan, S A Shakeel, Prof Dr Zia Muhammad, Pir Waheed and Arif Khan were appointed as the members of BoGs.—APP

CAPITAL DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY (METRO BUS INFRASTRUCTURE DIVISION)

TENDER NOTICE (Single Stage Single Envelope)

1. CDA invites sealed tenders on Single Stage One Envelope basis under Bidding Process, PPRA 2004 36(a) from eligible bidders on percentage basis duly filed in figures as well as in words from the contractors registered with Pakistan Engineering Council (PEC) in Category C-1 and Income Tax Department for the year 2023-24 as per details given below: -

Sr. No.	Name of Work	NIT Cost (Rs.)	Earnest Money (Rs.)	Tender Fee (Rs.)	Bid Submission Date & Time	Bid Opening Date & Time
1	Construction of Bus Depot at Zero Point	1,013,798,708/-	20,000,000	10,000 (Non-refundable)	08-01-2024 @ 11am	08-01-2024 @ 11:30am

2. Tender documents can be obtained from Room No. 24, Wing-II Block-IV, CDA on any working day before the closing date i.e. 05-01-2024. Tender documents will be issued to the contractors/firmson written application of company's letter head to Project Director (BRT), CDA and providing attested copies of following documents;

- Valid PEC Registration of Firm in category C-1 or above with specialized codes in CE-01, CE-09, CE-10, BC-01 & EE-04. (In case of JV, All Members Combined must meet requirement of specialized codes, each Member must be registered with PEC and Lead Member must be registered in Category C-1 or above.
- At-least 02 No. infrastructure works completed in last five (05) years of cost Rs. 800 million or above, involving concrete component for the construction of rigid pavement/under-pass/flyover of value of at least PKR 100 million. (In case of JV, All Members Combined must meet requirement)
- Audited financial statements for the last three (03) years reflecting overall Turnover of PKR 1500 Million.
- Earnest Money in the form of CDR, in favor of Dy. Director MBI Div.1 CDA, Islamabad.
- Certificate of incorporation, Income Tax registration certificate, valid Professional Tax certificate, National Tax Number certificate and ownership proof in shape of partnership deed/sole proprietor /power of attorney in favour of authorized representative (by each Member of JV).

For the Bidder, consisting of Joint Venture (JV), maximum number of joint venture partners allowed are "three (03)". The lead partner of the joint venture (i.e., partner-in-charge) must have financial share of more than 50% under the JV Agreement.

- The Bidder (in case of Joint Venture (JV), each member of the Joint Venture) should never have been a black listed company in any of the government organizations and not barred by any law, contract or any litigation from becoming privy to such assignments/projects. An Affidavit on Judicial stamp paper worth Rs.100 regarding non-blacklisting/non litigation is to be provided at the time of bid submission. JV should be registered with PEC at the time of award of work.
- Bids will be received and opened as per date and time given above in the office of Project Director, BRT, located at Block # IV, Room No. 26 Wing-II, CDA Head Quarter Building G-7/4, Islamabad in the presence of Bidders or their Authorized Representatives who wish to attend.
- CDA reserves the right to accept or reject any/all tenders as per PPRA rules and no conditional tender will be entertained. CDA upon request of bidder/contractor who submitted a bid, will communicate the grounds for its rejection, but is not required to justify those grounds.
- On verification of documents provided vide Serial No. 2 above, if any of the document found non-compliant, the Bid shall be treated as Non-Responsive.
- Advertisement is also available on CDA web site www.cda.gov.pk and PPRA web site www.ppra.gov.pk.

PROJECT DIRECTOR (BRT)
Capital Development Authority
Room No. 26, Wing-II, Block-IV, Khayaban-e-Suharwardy, G-7/4, Islamabad.

PID (I) No. 3713/23

National Days and Armed Forces Days

DECEMBER

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

Hotels & Restaurants



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



Turkish Airlines.....8494949



Emergency

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

Enquiry

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



Hospitals

CMH.....5611111
MH.....5611116
Cantt Hospital...9270907-11
DHQ.....5556311-4
RGH.....9290301-7
Holy Family.....9290322-7
PIMS.....9261170-79
Polyclinic.....9218300-09
Shifa International 4603666

Departments

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

Water Tank

Islamabad.....0321-5744480



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Education and Vocational Training Madad Ali Sindhi 3rd Pakistan International Property Housing and Construction While inaugurating the exhibition, Chairman PAEI Khurshid Barlas, Fahad Barlas Convener Exhibition, Executive Committee Members and others are participating on this occasion.—DNA

Pakistan's exports to China soar to \$1.3 billion

In July-November of the fiscal year 2023-24, Pakistan recorded \$1307.89 million (1.31 billion) in exports to China, reflecting a significant increase of 72.78% compared to the \$756.98 million exports registered during the same period in the fiscal year 2022-23

Faisal Sheikh

ISLAMABAD: During the initial five months of July-November in the fiscal year 2023-24, Pakistan experienced a remarkable surge of 72.78% in exports to China compared with the corresponding period in the preceding financial year. Pakistan's export growth this fiscal year is primarily attributed to the China-Pakistan Free Trade Agreement and favorable prices in the Chinese market. In July-November of the fiscal year 2023-24, Pakistan recorded \$1307.89 million (1.31 billion) in exports to China, reflecting a significant increase of 72.78% compared to the \$756.98 million exports registered during the same period in the fiscal year 2022-23. Rice exports to China: During the first five months of FY 2023-24, Pakistan has exported rice worth \$1.4 billion to different countries

of the world including China. According to the Pakistan Trade Perspective quarterly trade analysis (1st Quarter), for Pakistani rice, China, the Philippines, and Nigeria are primary buyers. Pakistani rice like wholly milled and broken rice is becoming popular in the Chinese market. In 2022 Pakistan exported rice worth over \$455 million to China. This year, Pakistani exporters are eyeing the Chinese market for a greater share. Cotton Yarn & Refined Copper: In the initial five months of FY 2023-24, Pakistan experienced a significant uptick in exports, including a 49.77% increase in cotton yarn, reaching \$480.01 million, and a 49.89% surge in refined copper exports, totaling \$300.56 million compared to the same period in the previous financial year. A major portion of these commodities was exported to China, owing to the China-Pakistan Free Trade Agreement and

handsome prices in the Chinese market. Sesame Seed Exports to China: Pakistan predominantly exports sesame seeds, comprising 99% of its total oil seed exports. In early December, the first 50 tons of sesame seeds cultivated through a program initiated by the Chinese company CMEC left for China. Launched in early 2023, this innovative agricultural cooperation aims to expand to 30,000 acres with an anticipated export volume of 10,000 tons to China. Out of total sesame exports, over 80% were exported to China. Pakistan's sesame seed exports witnessed an upward trend during FY 2023 and FY 2024 owing to the China-Pakistan Free Trade Agreement and good prices in the Chinese market. Pakistan's sesame seed exports to China surged to \$148 million during the Q1 of FY 2023-24, showing a growth of 405.8% on a quarter-on-quarter (QoQ) basis. In November sesame

seed exports to China reached an unprecedented high of 64,711 tons valued at \$113.66 million, a substantial increase from the 16,728 tons worth \$25.57 million in the same month the previous year. In the past, Pakistan sold most of its sesame to the Middle East before China opened its market for Pakistani sesame. The Chinese market offers a wide range of opportunities for Pakistani sesame exporters. Meat Exports to China: Pakistan, a major global meat producer, primarily exports to six Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, along with Vietnam, Afghanistan, Indonesia, and China. Meat and by-product exports from Pakistan surged over 25% to \$427 million in the last fiscal year and increased by \$20 million to \$113 million in the first quarter of the fiscal year 2023-24. The Organic Meat Company Limited (TOM-CL) has achieved a milestone by becoming the first Pakistani com-

pany to gain approval from the GACC (General Administration of Customs of the People's Republic of China) for exporting cooked/heat-treated frozen beef to China. This approval opens up significant opportunities for Pakistan, given the high demand for such products in China. Handmade carpet exports to China: Pakistan's significant handmade carpet manufacturing sector stands to benefit from a boost in exports to China through their inclusion in the free trade agreement. Initially facing challenges such as increased freight fares, rising tax duties, and customs clearance and warehouse expenses leading to a decline in exports, the recent incorporation of hand-knotted carpets into the China-Pakistan Free Trade Agreement offers a potential turnaround. This inclusion grants duty-free access to China, presenting new opportunities for Pakistani carpet exporters.

Pakistani brothers shine in Hong Kong Police Force

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistani brothers with humble background shine in Hong Kong Police Force. The recent attention on the Chinese internet has focused on the story of He Shawen and Shi Zhishen, two Pakistani brothers who spent their formative years in Hong Kong. According to a Gwadar Pro's report on Monday, Fluent in Cantonese, English, Mandarin, and Urdu, the duo successfully joined the police

force with support from the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region government and the Hong Kong Police Force. Renowned for their exceptional operational skills and enriched by their multicultural and multilingual background, the brothers navigate tasks seamlessly, particularly in areas with a concentration of ethnic minorities. In recent years, backed by the support of the Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (China), the local police force has introduced the

"Himalaya Program," a program aimed at assisting non-Chinese ethnic youths in integrating into the community and realizing their dreams of becoming police officers, while also improving their Chinese language proficiency and understanding of the police force. The brothers have successfully joined the Hong Kong police force through this program, with He Shawen (Simon) stationed in the Tuen Mun District Uniformed Patrol Team 3 and his brother Shi Zhishen (Sam) in the Yuen Long District Uniformed

Patrol Team 1. "Our dream has always been to become police officers since we were young," shared Shi Zhishen. During their high school years, the brothers attended a lecture where they first met Hong Kong's first non-Chinese Inspector, Lü Wendi. "Lü Wendi said, 'Don't be afraid to try. Success often comes after failure. Even if you fail, stick to your original intention and continue towards your goal,'" the two recalled. "Hong Kong is a diverse society, bringing together people from various countries and ethnicities.

Pakistan delegation visits Xinjiang Muqam Art Theater

ISLAMABAD: If anybody from the West and other part of the world want to see Uyghur muslims and their bustling quality life, "Muqam" known as the "mother of Uyghur music," is one of the barometers. Muqam's artistic charm blooms in the peaceful and tranquil social atmosphere of Xinjiang, Gwadar Pro reported on Monday. Does it make sense that oppression is growing on the one hand and music is booming on the other? It could be said that the Western media must come out of the information cocoon of their own creation and accept the reality - the so-called national government supports the suppression of Uyghur Muslims is just a absurd fantasy. Some members of Pakistan Journalists and Think Tank delegation recently visited Urumqi, the capital of Xinjiang. They visited the Xinjiang Muqam Art Theater and watched live singing, dancing and music performances. Immersed in the beautiful singing, dancing and music, the rumors about the so-called "Uyghur Muslims are being oppressed" were disproven. The delegation had the opportunity to enjoy the Music of Muqam and its theatrical performances. Xinjiang Muqam Art Theatre Director Dilshad Farhat during exclusive interview told that cruel brutality and musical exuberance cannot coexist. Therefore, the flourishing development of Muqam music in Urumqi proves that Uyghur Muslims enjoy wonderful music and a peaceful life. Encapsulating about Muqam, he said that it integrates song, dance and folk music and is a part of the tapestry that makes up the culture of Xinjiang, a hub on the ancient Silk Road. In 2005, Xinjiang's Twelve Muqams were inscribed on the UNESCO List of Intangible Cultural Heritage. He added that President Xi Jinping paid special visit to Muqam Art Theatre and praised the folk performances.—DNA

Senate delegation visits Kuwait Embassy

ISLAMABAD: A Senate delegation led by Chairman Senate Muhammad Sadiq Sanjrani paid a visit to the Kuwait Embassy in Islamabad to convey heartfelt condolences on the passing of the esteemed Emir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. The delegation, comprising Senators Naseebullah Bazai, Mohammad Abdul Qadir, and Danesh Kumar, led by Chairman Senate expressed deep sorrow with the Kuwaiti Ambassador, over the great loss of the Emir of Kuwait, said a news release issued here on Monday. As a gesture of respect, Sadiq Sanjrani penned poignant condolence remarks in the memorial book dedicated



to guests, underscoring the significant loss felt not only by Kuwait's royal family but also resonating profoundly with the people of Pakistan. "In the demise of Emir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, we have lost a true friend and a dynamic leader," Chairman Senate remarked. "His personal commitment to regional stability, global development, and his role in fostering international harmony will be remembered and cherished for generations to come". —DNA

Gaza situation

HAFSA ALI

Assalamoalikum, my name is Hafsa today I am writing this letter to tell you about Gaza situation as you already know what happening in Gaza. So I just want to help Gaza people, as the situation in Gaza is incredibly challenging. The people there are facing ongoing conflicts, which have resulted in significant loss of life, destruction of infrastructure, and limited access of resources such as food, water, and healthcare. The humanitarian situation is dire, with many families struggle to meet their basic needs for immediate action to address these issues. By raising awareness and calling for support, we can contribute to making a positive impact. I hope this information is useful for you.

COMSTECH, PASTIC sign MoU

ISLAMABAD: COMSTECH- the OIC Standing Committee on Scientific and Technological Cooperation and the Pakistan Scientific and Technological Information Centre (PASTIC) have officially inked a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) towards a landmark collaboration to advance scientific knowledge among OIC member states.

The MoU was signed during a ceremony held here on Monday. The MoU, signed by Prof. Dr. Muhammad Iqbal Choudhry, Coordinator General COMSTECH, and Prof. Dr. Shahid Mahmood Baig, Chairman, Pakistan Science Foundation (PSF), signifies a strategic partnership aimed at enhancing the COMSTECH Inter-Library Network Resource Services. The signing ceremony, held at COMSTECH, was attended by high-profile dignitaries, including Prof. Dr. Muhammad Akram Sheikh, Director General PASTIC, and senior officials from COMSTECH and PASTIC. The event highlighted the shared vision of COMSTECH and PASTIC in fostering stronger ties within the scientific community, facilitating seamless access to resources, and ultimately contributing to the advancement of knowledge and technology across OIC member states.—APP

DECEMBER 2023

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Briefs

NADRA clarifies false news

ISLAMABAD: National Database Registration Authority (NADRA) on Monday clarified that no policy was changed in the issuance of "Form B" to the general public. In a message, it said that no deadline was set for obtaining "Form B" but some elements spread wrong information on social media regarding the change of policy. The clarification further said that some of the statements coming out on the internet from some quarters are contrary to the facts and are misleading the citizens. Nadra also advised that being a responsible citizen requires avoiding spreading such false news. It said that there has been no change in the policy of issuance of "Form B" by NADRA and no change is contemplated.—APP

TIP

Facilitation center FIA operates in full swing

ISLAMABAD: Newly launched Trafficking In Persons (TIP) Hotline in Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) headquarters, for national referral mechanism and management information system (MIS) for the general public to ensure the provision of service to victims of human trafficking under one roof, in collaboration with the International Labour Organization (ILO), starts functioning in full swing. Shireen Malik Sher, Additional Director, FIA, who is the focal person of the project said that the hotline was launched to provide quick services to the victims of human trafficking and the redressal of the cases in more organized way. Miss Shireen Malik Sher, said that the project was done within a very short span of time under the supervision of Israr Ahmed Khan, Director Anti-Human Smuggling Directorate of FIA. Shireen told that after the launching of the hotline by the Director General FIA Mohsin Hassan, along with ADG Immigration, FIA, country representative of UNODC, Australian Deputy High Commissioner, Director ILO, US Political Advisor, other dignitaries, senior FIA officers from the provinces, in very simple and dignified ceremony, the hotline started functioning in full swing for provision of better services. She said that the project was funded by Australian High Commission through the International Labour Organization (ILO). Shireen Malik Sher, sharing the main features of the project, said that this was the first-ever initiative which would have the mechanism to ensure a prompt response. After receiving the complaint on hotline, the official concerned at TIP facilitation center would send complaints against the traffickers to the concerned police stations across Pakistan with a single click and trafficking victims will be referred to the concerned departments for welfare, she added.—APP

ANF recovers 81 kg drugs in six operations; arrests 11 accused

RAWALPINDI: Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) while conducting six operations across the country managed to recover 81 kg drugs and arrested 11 accused, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman here on Monday. He informed that 44 grams weed was recovered from two parcels sent from the UK at the courier office in Rawalpindi. 30 kg hashish was recovered from a vehicle near M-1 Motorway Islamabad while four suspects were arrested. 20.4 kg hashish was recovered from a vehicle near Kakpul Islamabad while an accused was arrested. 17 kg hashish was recovered from Tera Zakhakhel Khyber while 8.4 kg hashish was recovered from a vehicle in Chishtiabad, Islamabad and four accused including a woman were rounded up. 4.8 kg hashish was recovered from a vehicle near GT Road Peshawar and two suspects were arrested.—APP



ISLAMABAD: Pastor and District Superintendent of St Thomas Church Rev Emmanuel Lorraine cuts the cake along with Superintended Police Abdul Aleem and others during the celebrations of Christmas in Federal Capital.—ONLINE

Climate Change: Alvi for improving energy efficiency

The Green Presidency of Pakistan is a flagship initiative under which a one-megawatt solar PV system was installed, along with effective implementation of energy conservation and efficiency measures

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi on Monday called for improving energy efficiency, adopting sustainable practices, and changing attitudes and priorities to mitigate the adverse impacts of climate change. "Mitigating carbon emissions involves transitioning to renewable energy sources, improving energy efficiency, reforestation, and adopting sustainable practices to curb the adverse impacts on the planet's climate and ecosystems," the president said while addressing an event with respect to a project "Green Presidency of Pakistan" here at Aiwan-e-Sadr. The Green Presidency of Pakistan is a flagship initiative under which a one-megawatt solar PV system was installed, along with effective implementation of energy conservation

and efficiency measures. The president said the initiative would result in a reduction in energy usage by Aiwan-e-Sadr by 42.5%. This energy savings is equivalent to a reduction of 3,144 tonnes of greenhouse gases or a plantation of 142,090 mature trees. "It is a matter of great pleasure that, out of 129 projects from around the world, the Green Presidency Project of Pakistan has been conferred with the prestigious award of "International Energy Project of the Year 2023", he added. He also expressed gratitude to the Association of Energy Engineers USA for recognizing with the esteemed Best International Energy Project of the Year Award for 2023. As regards the climate change impacts, President Alvi said the modern world with changing priorities and attitudes, was becoming dangerous which must be stopped. He also called for promoting peace in the world

and discouraging wars that were a big cause of deviating the world's focus on mitigating global warming. He said despite contributing less than 1% in carbon emission, Pakistan suffered huge losses in last year's devastating floods that occurred due to global warming and climate change. He recalled that despite abundant resources by mid mid-20th century, the people were conscious about utilizing natural resources, but now the priorities had been changed, the needs and wants had been mixed due to which they started using abundant resources for their ease. He said the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) had also taught to consume the natural resources with the utmost care by demonstrating the same in his life. The president pointed out that the world was witnessing a much-needed transition towards clean energy in the

wake of climate change. "The need for plentiful, sustainable energy that doesn't disrupt the delicate balance of the Earth's atmosphere may be the single most important issue facing this generation." He said the decisions to be made and the technologies to be developed over the next few decades would have profound implications for geopolitics, wildlife, food production, and almost every sphere of human endeavor. He maintained that stakeholders from a range of fields including the architectures could play their role in efficient energy conservation. Further, he said the children should also be engaged to make them aware of the value of natural resources and the impacts of climate change. The new generation should also be taught this way, he added. Earlier the president gave away

souvenirs to the project director, head of the project, and representatives of Engro, Huawei and Osaka Lights for their contributions in the project. In his video message, Executive Director Association of Energy Engineer (AEE) Bill Kent said the Association had been awarding for four decades, the individuals and organizations to recognize their efforts in efficient usage of energy. He congratulated the team of the project Green Presidency on winning the award due to their efforts, a remarkable achievement of saving energy of the building by over 42%. The Managing Director National Energy Efficiency and Conservation Authority (NEECA) said an investment of \$50 billion would be required to achieve the set goals of producing 60% renewable energy by 2030.

Effect of climate change on human health

RAFIA NAWAZ

Temperature is increased day by day. Warmer temperature shift weather pattern can worsen air quality. Extremely small particles and liquid particles suspended in the atmosphere. Some particulate matters such as dust, wildfire, smoke and sea sprays occur. While some is created by human activities such as

the burning of fossil fuels to produce energy. Some particles may be emitted in the atmosphere in the chemical reaction of the gases such as sulphur dioxide, Nitrogen dioxide and volatile organic compounds.

When we inhale the fine particles by atmosphere lead to lung cancer and chronic disease. And polluted air lead to Asthma attacks and other respiratory and cardiovascular

disease. Level of carbon dioxide also increased and it lead to airborne allergens.

Between 1999 and 2018 Pakistan ranked 5th in the countries affected by extreme weather. According to scientific research climate change played a substantial role in the devastating floods of 2022 which had a direct impact on over 30 million people in Pakistan resulting in the loss of lives.

Al-Shifa to construct eye hospital in Gilgit

He added that the trust provided all the services free of cost to 80 percent patients

DNA

RAWALPINDI: The government of Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) had allotted prime land to Al-Shifa Trust for constructing a state-of-the-art eye hospital, said President of Al-Shifa Trust, Maj. Gen. (Retd) Rehmat Khan here on Monday. While briefing a board meeting of the trust, he said that the GB government had issued the allotment letter during his recent visit to the area. Khan said that the 20-kanal land situated on Karakorum Highway near Aga Khan Hospital was accessible to people from remote areas for treatment.

"The site allocated for the eye hospital is three kilometers away from the city, and the hospital will be able to treat 150 OPD patients per day and conduct 50 surgeries daily," he informed. Rehmat Khan said that the hospital would be constructed with the help of the Rupani Foundation Pakistan, which had been reaching out to

vulnerable populations for the last 16 years. This hospital will be the first state-of-the-art hospital in the area, which will cost around 220 million rupees, and the Rupani Foundation will bear half of its cost while the trust will arrange the remaining cost through donations, he informed. The trust's president said the hospital's groundbreaking ceremony would be held in March 2024, and the grey structure would be completed by July 2025. He noted that people of GB were badly affected by eye diseases, and a large number were facing blindness due to cataracts; therefore, it was necessary to provide them with a facility at their doorstep. The hospital will also establish an attachment of medicines and mental health to treat general patients, he said, adding that training of paramedics would be started at Rawalpindi Eye Hospital. In this regard, a diploma course was being offered to the GB students on a preferential basis, he added. He

had already started serving the patients, and a two-day free surgical eye camp and general medical camp had already been organized at RHQ Hospital, Chilas, along with school screening activities in collaboration with FCNA (Pak Army). The camp was visited by Section Commander Damer Bhasha Dam, Col Irfan Ghazi, M Iqbal, Medical Superintendent RHQ Hospital Chilas, and Dr Javid Ur Rehman, Provincial Coordinator for the Prevention and Control of Blindness, GB, he informed. President of Al-Shifa Trust, Maj Gen (Retd) Rehmat Khan said that the camp in Chilas was a part of Al-Shifa's outreach activities to offer specialized eye care in remote areas of Pakistan. After Rawalpindi, Kohat, Sukkur, Muzaffarabad, and Chakwal, and Asia's largest children's eye hospital located at Rawalpindi, the GB hospital would be the 7th established center by the trust. He added that the trust provided all the services free of cost to 80 percent patients.

MEDA held seminar on "Entrepreneurship"

ISLAMABAD: The Small and Medium Enterprises Development Authority (SMEDA) will organize a seminar on "Entrepreneurship as a viable Career Option" on December 21 (Thursday). The Seminar will be held at the University of Gujrat (Hafiz Hayat Campus), said a source in the authority on Monday. The session will provide information about the concept and importance of entrepreneurship, the steps involved in starting a small business, and the framework and tools available for managing a small business. The program also highlights preparation for business start-ups, aiming for business finance, SMEDA's services and support, legal aspects, and business strategy/implementation towards sustainable business growth. The seminar has been designed for faculty members, administration staff, students and alumni.

Police arrest 14 lawbreakers

RAWALPINDI: Rawalpindi District police in an action against suspected drug peddlers, bootleggers, illegal weapon holders and other lawbreakers here on Monday arrested 14 accused besides recovering over 2 kg charras, 10 liters liquor, six 30 bore pistols, ammunition, fireworks and other items from their possession. A police spokesperson said that Sadiqabad police held Taj Muhammad for having 1550 grams charras and Taxila police rounded up Amir for possessing 520 grams charras. Gujrat police netted Imam Husain for carrying 520 grams charras. Rattaamral police conducted a raid and held a bootlegger namely Yousaf with 10 liters liquor. Naseerabad police managed to nab two accused namely Umar Khan and Qamar Zaman for using fireworks at a wedding ceremony.—APP

Railways to restore Bolan Mail, Akbar Bugti Express

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Railways has decided to restore two more passenger trains from Quetta to Karachi and Quetta to Lahore to facilitate the passengers of the routes. "The decision to restore trains including Bolan Mail and Akbar Bugti Express has been taken on the directions of the caretaker government," an official in the Ministry of Railways told APP. The official said that the Bolan Mail would resume its operations by the end of December this year, while Akbar Bugti Express would be restored in March next year. He said the two trains would facilitate the people of Sindh and Punjab provinces to travel to Balochistan and vice versa. Currently, the Jaffer Express is the only operational passenger train in Balochistan being run between Quetta - Peshawar, besides local Chaman and Hurnai trains.—APP

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Child abuse

HAFSA ALI

Assalamoalikum, I hope you are doing well I am writing this letter to express my deep concern about child abuse. It's a serious issue that needs our attention. We must work together to protect children from harm and create a safe environment for them to thrive.

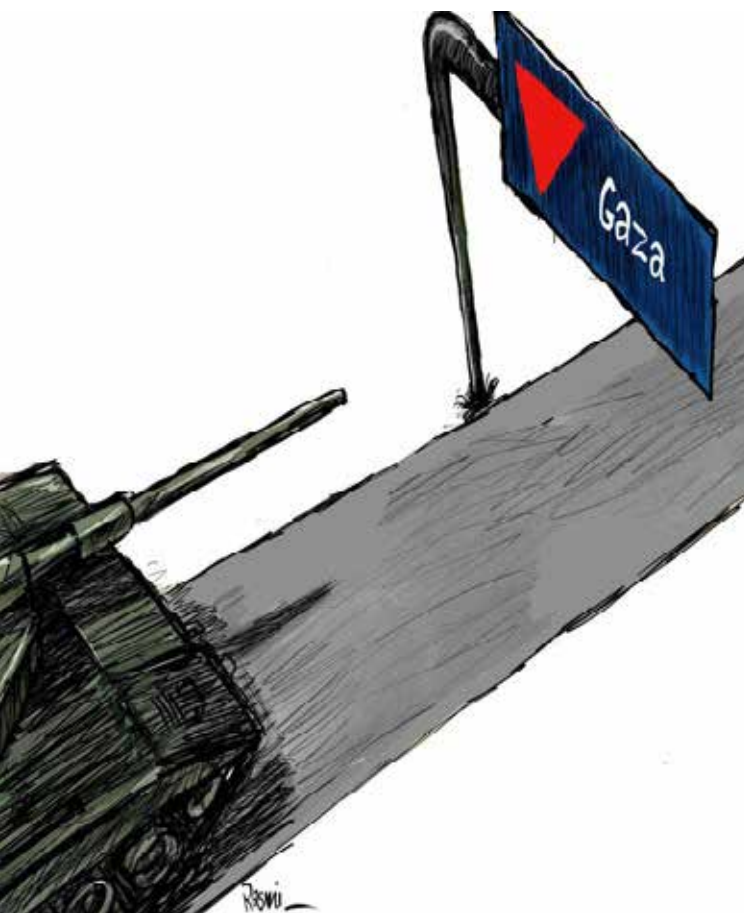
I urge you to implement stricter laws and regulations to punish those who commit child abuse. We also need education and awareness program to empower children, parents, and communities to prevent abuse by taking action, we can make difference in the lives of countless children who are suffering. Let's be their voice and advocate for their rights. Together we can create a brighter future for our children. Thank you for your attention in this matter.

Minister overturns FDE's restrictions

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Federal Education and Professional Training, Madad Ali Sindhvi has stepped in to overturn restrictive measures imposed by the Federal Directorate of Education (FDE) that hindered teachers and staff from approaching the offices of the Ministry of Federal Education & Professional Training (MOFEPT). The FDE had issued a circular just days ago, asserting that seeking resolution from MOFEPT without prior permission was a violation of conduct rules, potentially leading to disciplinary action. The circular, which raised concerns among educators, not only restricted staff from accessing the ministry but also warned of consequences if this directive was defied, even after work hours. Principals were instructed to prevent their staff from approaching the ministry, creating an atmosphere of constraint and limiting avenues for issue resolution. However, responding promptly to the growing concerns, Education Minister Madad Ali Sindhvi took to Twitter, asserting that teachers.—APP

China-Latin America cooperation not a threat

For the past more than two decades, China has developed close economic and trade relations with many Latin American countries, including Brazil, Argentina and Venezuela. This has raised unwarranted concerns in Washington, with some fearing that "China is eating our lunch in the region" while others express concern about the Chinese presence and influence in what the United States is used to regarding as its "backyard". Florida Republican congresswoman Maria Elvira Salazar went so far as to say that "the Chinese are not here for trade. They're here for war" when she voiced concerns about the Deep Space Station, a joint aerospace program between China and Argentina, which Argentina's ambassador to the US rejected as false and "absurd". US President Joe Biden spat out the old chestnut of China's "debt trap diplomacy" at the recent Americas Partnership for Economic Prosperity Leaders' Summit at which he pledged billions of dollars in support to help build up infrastructure throughout the Western Hemisphere. How to counter what it sees is China's ascendant power in the region seems to have become a pressing priority in Washington. Indeed, the mutually beneficial partnership between China and Latin American countries, based on equality, reciprocity and inclusiveness, has been growing over the past two decades. Bilateral trade has grown from \$180 billion in 2010 to about \$450 billion, and it is expected to surpass \$700 billion by 2035. So far 21 Latin American countries have signed on to China's Belt and Road Initiative, and China now ranks as South America's top trading partner and the second-largest for Latin America as a whole, after the US. But that partnership does not target the US. That the comprehensive cooperative partnership of mutual benefit and common development between the two sides has thrived is mainly due to China and Latin American countries being highly complementary in terms of market demand, resource elements and product structure. For example, China enjoys advantages in machinery and processing industries while the Latin American countries have strong agricultural and energy sectors. Also, as developing countries, China and Latin American countries are in similar development stages and shoulder the same task of development, which gives them impetus to continuously strengthen cooperation. It is the zero-sum thinking that prevails in Washington that has led to perceptions that China's gains in Latin America are US losses. Instead of criticizing China for what it seems to see as a "silent invasion" of Latin America, Washington should review its own engagement with the region, which is characterized by military and economic interventions. The US has caused only poverty and high inequality there. It should change its approach and do more to help the countries in Latin America develop their economies and improve the well-being of their people. Any effort to try to open a new Cold War front there will lead nowhere.



Pakistan's First And Only Diplomatic Daily
 Editor-in-Chief: Ansar Mahmood Bhatti
 Deputy Editor: Abid Raza
 Member APNS / ABC Certified
 Vol: 05 Issue: 64
 Email: dailyisbpost@gmail.com
 Phone: 051-2266165 / 051-2261960
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UK's 'sunset fleet' surfs the internet

The UK's Carrier Strike Group will visit Japan in 2025, as announced by Defence Secretary Grant Shapps recently. This visit is a part of the "Hiroshima Accord" agreed upon by the leaders of the UK and Japan in May of this year. Normally, fleet visits are a normal aspect of military exchanges between countries, but Shapps claimed that the deployment of the Carrier Strike Group "sends a strong deterrence message," which has added a significant geopolitical competition element to this potential visit. He even said, with a somewhat threatening tone, "The strength and global reach of the UK's Armed Forces should never be underestimated." Shapps did not specify whom his threat was directed at, but he mentioned the Taiwan Straits, which is believed to be an attempt at "restraining China." If that is the case, it is indeed an overestimation of UK's capabilities. If his target audiences are countries in the Asia-Pacific region, apart from a few allies, most countries in the region would simply laugh it off and not take it seriously. The UK once had many colonies in the Asia-Pacific region, but it should not misjudge the current times. Today, this region is the most dynamic in the world, with a majority of countries pursuing independent and autonomous diplomacy. In fact, no one "underestimates" the UK. It is the UK itself that cannot position itself correctly. Some Europeans criticize the UK, saying "there are two kinds of European nations; there are small nations and there are countries that have not yet realized they are small nations." This satirizes the UK's lingering "imperial dream." The British Royal Navy currently has two aircraft carriers, the HMS Queen Elizabeth and the HMS Prince of Wales, both of which have been plagued with problems and have experienced serious water leakage incidents, earning them the nickname "sieve ships" by foreign media. As early as 2021, the HMS Queen Elizabeth embarked on a "global cruise mission," during which a fighter jet crashed into the Mediterranean Sea, becoming a laughingstock. Now, the British Royal Navy is unable to assemble enough aircraft and escort fleets for two aircraft carriers. The fate of this "sunset fleet" reaching the Pacific without encountering any breakdowns along the way is uncertain, and even if it manages to reach its destination, it is likely to do so with diminished capabilities. London should have some understanding of these issues. Why did it set the deployment of the Carrier Strike Group for 2025? There is a mystery behind this: 2024 is the year of the general election in the UK, so this is like an empty promise made in advance to the voters. Regardless of the reasons behind the British side's considerations and whether the Carrier Strike Group will actually be deployed to the Asia-Pacific region in two years, such hype and performance will not enhance the international image of the UK but only bring it closer to becoming a laughingstock. In recent years, the UK and Japan have promoted a lot of bilateral and multilateral military security cooperation, including joint development of next-generation advanced fighters, and the signing of a reciprocal access agreement and so on.

SC thwarted all attempts to disrupt elections

Qamar Bashir



The Supreme Court in the last two consecutive days asserted its authority and independence like never seen before. Day before yesterday (14.12.2023) it issued notices to the two spymasters to defend the charges of manipulating the election 2018, manipulating the superior judiciary to constitute benches of the judges cultivated by them, pressurizing the judiciary to keep the Nawaz Sharif and Maryam Nawaz in Jail until the conduct the election 2018 and visiting the judges of the superior

On the 15th of December 2023, the judiciary faced an immense challenge: safeguarding the impending elections scheduled for the 8th of February. The judiciary successfully averted attempts to sabotage, excessively delay, or even indefinitely postpone the elections. Such actions could have derailed democracy, leading to the imposition of an alternative system, the form and structure of which would have been uncertain and potentially detrimental to the nation's democratic process and stability. The impact of such disruptions could have been monumental, causing severe repercussions for the country's governance, rule of law, and the citizens' rights to participate in a fair electoral process. The Supreme Court in the last two consecutive days asserted its authority and independence like never seen before. Day before yesterday (14.12.2023) it issued notices to the two spymasters to defend the charges of manipulating the election 2018, manipulating the superior judiciary to constitute benches of the judges cultivated by them, pressurizing the judiciary to keep the Nawaz Sharif and Maryam Nawaz in Jail until the conduct the election 2018 and visiting the judges of the superior judiciary in private to pressurize them to give the decision in the impending political and administration case the way ISI wanted, please refine. The Supreme Court displayed unwavering determination to prevent any attempt to disrupt the upcoming elections. The court's extraordinary commitment was evident as it convened late into the evening, forming a three-member bench with available members, bypassing the usual protocol of bench constitution outlined in the Supreme Court Practices and Procedure Act. Despite the absence of the primary petitioner, PTI, the court proceeded with the session and announced its decision while still in session, led by the Chief Justice. At one point, when a lady lawyer interrupted the Chief Justice during the order dictation, the court responded sternly, rebuking the lawyer and instructing her to sit at the rear benches while maintaining silence. This resolute stance highlighted the court's uncompromising dedication to ensure the integrity and timeliness of the electoral process. The Supreme Court, despite being in a live session, openly expressed its discontent with the Chief Justice of the Lahore court. The single-bench order suspending the training of Returning Officers (ROs) and District Returning Officers (DROs) was critiqued by the Supreme Court, as it provided grounds for the Election Commission to delay announcing the election schedule. During the proceedings, the three-member bench was primarily supported by the Election Commission's lawyer and the Attorney General, with no representation to defend the initial petition filed in the Lahore High Court. The Election Commission's lawyer sought to challenge the La-

hore high court's order which had suspended the Election Commission's notification regarding the training of DRs and DROs. When questioned by the Chief Justice, the Election Commission clarified that it hadn't issued the Election Schedule yet, intending to do so after the training sessions concluded. However, this response triggered the Chief Justice's ire directed toward the Election Commission. He vehemently criticized the Commission for attempting to leverage the Lahore High Court's order to postpone the announcement of the election schedule. The Chief Justice firmly asserted that the training and the schedule announcement were distinct matters and held no direct correlation, deeming the Election Commission's attempt to link them as a malicious tactic to delay the electoral timeline. Despite attempts by the lawyers and the Election Commission's representative to defend their position, they couldn't substantiate any constitutional or lawful basis linking the announcement of the Election Schedule with the training of the ROS. When questioned repeatedly by the Chief Justice about the schedule's announcement, their response of "soon" didn't satisfy the Court. Frustrated by the lack of a clear response, the Chief Justice sharply rebuked them, affirming that the election schedule must be issued that day, despite having only three hours left until midnight. The Chief Justice made a resolute statement to the nation, affirming that while the Supreme Court won't micromanage institutions, it remains committed to ensuring their proper functioning. He stressed that any attempts, regardless of their size or influential backing, to delay or postpone the elections will not be tolerated. Such actions would be deemed contempt of the Supreme Court and face severe consequences. The Court's steadfast and decisive stance in safeguarding the constitution, the law, and democracy itself has quelled numerous narratives seeking to postpone or indefinitely delay the elections. These narratives, propagated in the media and public spheres, aimed to disrupt the constitution, disregard the law, and harm democratic institutions. The Supreme Court's principled stand has curbed these attempts to protect the integrity of the nation's democratic process. The narrative to extend the interim government until economic revival, improved security, and counter-terrorism measures were achieved lacked constitutional backing. Implementing this narrative without an elected government's legitimacy could have severely damaged the nation's democratic principles and international standing. It might have triggered economic collapse, jeopardized global financial operations, and led to severe currency devaluation. This move could have eroded trust in democratic processes, limited citizens' rights, and disrupted governance by subverting the electoral mandate essential for accountable decision-making. Such instability

might trigger social unrest and portray a power grab rather than national interest, sparking protests or civil disobedience. Internationally, postponed elections might tarnish a country's democratic image, straining diplomatic ties and aid packages. Delaying due to terrorism threats risks compromising democratic values and empowering extremist groups, undermining citizens' rights and democratic principles. The solution lies in reinforcing security measures to ensure safe elections, rather than postponing them. Upholding the election schedule despite security challenges showcases resilience against terrorism, safeguarding citizens' rights and democratic foundations. Delaying elections due to bad weather, despite being advocated by certain groups, lacks constitutional standing and is an unsubstantiated pretext. Around the world, election authorities implement contingency plans to ensure smooth elections, even in adverse conditions. Such delays may compromise fairness and representation in affected regions, undermining democratic principles. Balancing concerns about voter turnout with ensuring equal opportunities for all citizens in the electoral process is crucial. Such precedents could pave the way for future challenges to delay elections, potentially eroding democratic values. Countries facing harsher weather conditions employ alternative measures like transportation assistance, extended voting hours, or temporary polling stations to facilitate voting. The resolute stance taken by the Supreme Court to ensure the elections proceed on schedule stands as a beacon of hope for upholding democratic principles and constitutional sanctity. The court's unwavering commitment to safeguarding the electoral process against any disruption, whether through frivolous petitions or attempts to delay on flimsy pretexts, underscores the paramount importance of timely and fair elections. The dismissal of baseless narratives seeking to derail the electoral process, including the Lahore High Court's actions, signals a clear message: any attempt to impede the electoral schedule will be met with the severest consequences under the law. Upholding the sanctity of elections not only reinforces the democratic fabric but also reinforces the citizens' right to choose their representatives, ensuring the peaceful transfer of power and preserving the nation's integrity. The Supreme Court's firm stand in this critical juncture resonates as a testament to the resilience of democratic values and the unwavering commitment to uphold the rule of law above all else.

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

The US policy paradox on the war in Gaza is running out of time

Yossi Mekelberg

This being the case, what did we learn from the UN Security Council vote last week on a proposed resolution, tabled by the UAE, that called for an immediate ceasefire in the war in Gaza, and the subsequent similar vote in the wider UN General Assembly? We learned that the vast majority of countries in both of these UN forums support calls for an immediate ceasefire and the resumption of humanitarian aid. Regrettably, we also learned that the US was ready to block the resolution by using its power of veto in the

All conflicts have crucial moments that reveal the true intentions of the main protagonists and make the murky waters of war somewhat clearer. This being the case, what did we learn from the UN Security Council vote last week on a proposed resolution, tabled by the UAE, that called for an immediate ceasefire in the war in Gaza, and the subsequent similar vote in the wider UN General Assembly? We learned that the vast majority of countries in both of these UN forums support calls for an immediate ceasefire and the resumption of humanitarian aid. Regrettably, we also learned that the US was ready to block the resolution by using its power of veto in the Security Council. This begs the question: What are Washington's true intentions? On the one hand, American officials express grave concerns about the way in which Israel is conducting its war against Hamas using methods that are causing unimaginable devastation and suffering to noncombatant Palestinians in Gaza and an unbearable death toll. On the other hand, the US has used one of its most powerful diplomatic tools to prevent the adoption of a binding UN resolution calling for an immediate cessation of hostilities. Is this an inherent paradox the current administration simply fails to comprehend? Or is it more likely a deliberate tactic to gain Israel more time for its war in Gaza? There is a consensus around the world that the humanitarian conditions in Gaza are intolerable. The vote on the ceasefire resolution in the 15-member Security Council was 13-to-1 in favor, with the US voting no and the UK abstaining. The US decision to veto the resolution stood in complete contradiction to Secretary of State Antony Blinken's expressed concerns about the spiraling death toll in Gaza. In his own understated way he said that Israel's "intent" to limit civilian casualties in the Gaza Strip did not always "manifest" itself and "we see that both in terms of civilian protection and humanitarian assistance." In more explicit statements he has admitted that the number of casualties is unacceptable and "it remains imperative that Israel puts a premium on civilian protection." Until this translates into a policy that helps to bring about an end to the fighting, however, the US is becoming increasingly isolated in the international

arena and complicit in Israel's killings in Gaza. It is also creating an obvious rift with UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, who has become the most prominent and vocal moral compass in his demands for a ceasefire. On Oct. 7, Israel suffered its worst loss of human life in a single day since the country was founded. As a result, it not only held the moral high ground but was well within its rights to respond — but against, and only against, those responsible for the massacre that day. Most of the world understood this and many supported it. But based on past experience, they also feared that the response would be utterly disproportionate. Those fears were quickly realized. If the conflict is not halted its consequences will only get worse, and much of the blame for this can be attributed to the fact that the Israeli government has no clear plan for the war, or for the day after. This means the current situation remains open-ended and the people of Gaza are paying a terrible price for this. There is a consensus around the world that the humanitarian conditions in Gaza are intolerable. In the Security Council, Robert Wood, the US deputy ambassador to the UN, took a stance that reflects the Biden administration's confusing approach to the issue, an approach that is detrimental not only to efforts to end the war but also to US interests, by completely aligning his country with the government of Israel, a country led by an internationally discredited prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, whose own people no longer trust him and would like to see him go. Netanyahu argued that the US blocked the proposed resolution to give Israel a chance "to break the cycle of unceasing violence so that history does not keep repeating itself," and that a ceasefire "would only plant the seeds for the next war because Hamas has no desire to see a durable peace. Our goal should not be to stop the war for today but to stop the war for ever." This is not only wishful thinking, arguably a complete fantasy, but a dangerous idea in support of yet another never-ending war — and who is more experienced with involvement in such wars than the US? Not only does this approach prolong a war with no defined exit strategy, it also risks the lives of the remaining hostages held by Hamas, as well as the intensification of battles in an ever-smaller area

of Gaza in which most of the population of the territory who were forced to leave their homes is now concentrated. This is a recipe for an even worse humanitarian disaster than we have seen so far, bringing with it yet more hatred and radicalization. Amid the incoherence of this arguably hypocritical US approach to the war that is allowing Israel more time to complete its military objectives, Washington is at the same time signaling to the Israelis that its support has a limited time span and it is running out of patience. Nevertheless, every additional day, let alone weeks or months, of devastating bombardment are horrendous for the local population and might lead, as was suggested by Guterres, to civil order completely breaking down, resulting in a mass exodus of refugees to Egypt. Tacitly — and for some in Israel's ruling coalition, rather openly — this might be precisely what Israeli authorities would like to happen. But they should be careful what they wish for, as such an outcome would inevitably jeopardize relations with Egypt and other countries in the region, not to mention the fact that it would amount to ethnic cleansing. The tension between Guterres and the US is not helpful. The former is exasperated with the latter's refusal to recognize the fact that the UN's capacity to continue to provide any meaningful level of humanitarian relief in Gaza is rapidly diminishing, while Washington views the secretary general himself as an obstacle to the efforts of Israel to eliminate Hamas. The brave, and correct, decision by Guterres last week to take the extremely rare step of invoking Article 99 of the UN Charter, which permits him to bring a perceived threat to global security directly to the attention of the Security Council, might have infuriated Washington but it made his own role, and that of the Security Council, more relevant than it has been in a very long time. In contrast, it left the US increasingly isolated and irrelevant to this conflict. Consequently, the next step, considering what is happening on the ground in Gaza and the international fury about Washington's veto, must be to bring this resolution back to the Security Council for another vote and this time hope that no one will block it. Sourced by Arab news.

Briefs

Supreme Court shuts all doors...

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In its order on the ECP's petition, the three-member SC bench ruled that the LHC would not hold further hearings on the petitions related to the appointment of polling officers and that any matter pertaining to the issue should be referred to the top court. The LHC's decision, which came on a plea filed by Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) lawyer Umair Niazi, suspended ECP's decision to appoint the ROs and DROs from the executive branch. Following the top court's decision, the electoral body issued the much-awaited schedule for the general polls. A day earlier, the ECP also resumed the training for the ROs and DROs in line with the top court's verdict. Upon the advice of then-prime minister Shehbaz Sharif, President Alvi dissolved the 15th National Assembly three days before the completion of its five-year term.

PHC reserves verdict on...

FROM PAGE 01
Commission of Pakistan's (ECP) notification for the appointment of returning officers (ROs) and district returning officers (DROs). During the hearing, the PTI's Advocate Butt contended that the polling staff is to be posted two months prior to the elections. "How will the [ECP] hold transparent polls if [they] haven't made timely arrangements in this regard," he questioned, "he said. Meanwhile, responding to the PTI's plea against ECP's notification, PHC Chief Justice Ibrahim said: "We are bound by the SC decision and cannot go against it."

Won't compromise...

FROM PAGE 01
identified as Afghans. He said no responsible government can ignore such concerns. "Whenever we raised this with the interim Afghan government, they advised us to 'look inwards'. We have finally decided to heed to their advice to put our house in order." PM Kakar said the government's emphasis is on voluntary, safe, and dignified repatriation of individuals, along with their legally acquired assets, and not on deportation. He mentioned that some 93% of those who have returned to Afghanistan have done so voluntarily.

Foreigners can't stay...

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their countries. "There are about 20,000 Afghans in Pakistan who worked with the US coalition forces," Murtaza Solangi said. The minister said that the Taliban government was established in Afghanistan on August 15, 2021, but the US and its allies were not yet able to shift these 20 thousand Afghans to their own countries. He said that everyone knew the treatment of illegal immigrants across the world. When illegal immigrants were drowning in Greece, no one came to save them, Murtaza Solangi recalled. Pakistan's record about illegal residents was very good as compared to other countries of the world, Murtaza Solangi opined.

Pak-Norway celebrate...

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The two countries enjoy a mutually beneficial partnership in political, economic, academic, environmental, social and cultural domains. There is a common desire to promote regional and global peace, security and sustainable development. Pakistan-Norway relations are marked by high-level exchanges and contacts with frequent meetings at the leadership level. The two countries also actively collaborate in various multilateral fora. The bilateral economic relations between Pakistan and Norway are robust and growing with sizeable trade in multiple product lines and substantial investments of leading Norwegian companies in Pakistan including Telenor Group, Scatec ASA and Jotun Paints.

Pakistan women defeat NZ in a super over thriller

Pakistan set New Zealand to chase 12 runs in the super over and Sadia Iqbal successfully defended the total

SPORTS DESKS

OVAL: Pakistan women's cricket team registered a historic victory over New Zealand in the Super Over after the third ODI initially ended in a dramatic tie at Hagley Oval, Christchurch, on Monday. New Zealand won the three-match ODI series 2-1 after winning the first two games. This was Pakistan women's first-ever ODI victory over the White Ferns in New Zealand. Pakistan set New Zealand to chase 12 runs in the super over and Sadia Iqbal successfully defended the total as she picked their two allocated wickets after giving eight runs. Earlier, New Zealand opted to bat after the coin flipped in their favour but could not get the desired start as they slipped to 43-2 inside 15 overs. Amelia Kerr and captain Sophie Devine then raised a 56-run partnership for the third wicket, before Ghulam Fatima castled Devine to break the stand. Devine scored 29 runs from 32 balls with the help of four boundaries. Kerr was then joined by Maddy Green and they built a solid partnership of 73 runs, completing their respective half-centuries in the process. Ghulam Fatima once again broke the partner-



ship by dismissing Kerr at a total of 169. Kerr top-scored for New Zealand with an anchoring 77-run knock from 87 balls, laced with five boundaries. Green remained firm on her end, while wickets kept tumbling from the other end. However, she was involved in a brief 40-run

partnership with Jessica Kerr (19) to help push the team's total to 251-8 in their allocated 50 overs. Green remained unbeaten at 65 from 69, with the help of three boundaries. Ghulam Fatima and Nashra Sandhu returned with figures of 2-59 each for Pakistan, while Umm-e-Hani also bagged one

wicket. In response, the Pakistan women's team lost their first two wickets with only 37 runs on the scoreboard. However, Bismah Maroof and Aliya Riaz helped their side stabilize with a partnership of 101 runs for the third wicket before Jessica Kerr caught and bowled Riaz. Riaz scored a cautious 44 off 84, featuring four boundaries. Maroof was then joined by captain Fatima Sana and they added a quick 35 runs for the fourth wicket but Fran Jonas ended Maroof's stay at a total of 173. Maroof top-scored for the Pakistan women's team with 68 runs from 86 balls with the help of five boundaries. Sana also departed soon after a 36-run knock from 33 balls, followed by Natalia Pervaiz's cameo of 26 off 23. Najiha Alvi held on her end amid falling wickets and was required to score eight runs from the last over with only one wicket in hand. But she managed to get only seven, ending the match in a tie which enforced the super over. Alvi scored an unbeaten 26 from 29 balls with only one boundary. Lea Tahuu and Amelia Kerr picked two wickets each for New Zealand. Pakistan's Bismah Maroof was adjudged player of the match, while Amelia Kerr was awarded player of the series.

Pak lose WTC points due to slow-over rate

SYDNEY: Pakistan have been penalised for maintaining a slow over-rate against Australia in the first Test in Perth. The visitors received a fine equating to 10% of their match fee, and two ICC World Test Championship points were deducted from their total. Following a significant 360-run loss in the first Test, Pakistan slipped to the No.2 position on the WTC25 standings. However, due to the penalty, their percentage points dropped from 66.6af7 to 61.11. According to Article 2.22 of the ICC Code of Conduct for Players and Player Sup-

port Personnel, which relates to minimum over-rate offences, players are fined five per cent of their match fee for every over their side fails to bowl in the allotted time. In addition, as per Article 16.11.2 of the ICC World Test Championship playing conditions, a side is penalised one point for each over short. Consequently, two World Test Championship points have been deducted from Pakistan's points total. The Emirates ICC Elite Panel Match Referee Javagal Srinath imposed the sanctions after Pakistan were found two overs short

after considering time allowances. The charges were brought forth by on-field umpires Joel Wilson and Richard Illingworth, along with third umpire Michael Gough and fourth umpire Donovan Koch. Shan Masood, the Pakistan captain, pleaded guilty to the offence and accepted the given sanctions. The second Test of the three-match series commences on Boxing Day in Melbourne, while the third Test is scheduled from 3rd to 7th January in Sydney. It must be noted that during their chase of a 450-run target, Pakistan were dismissed for a mere 89 runs. Pakistan's improbable attempt to claim their first Test win in Australia since 1995 was shattered by Nathan Lyon and the home team's formidable pace attack, swiftly concluding the game within four days. - Agencies

Shadab Khan doubtful for T20I series against NZ

LAHORE: The Pakistan cricket team may encounter a potential setback leading up to the five-match T20I series against New Zealand, as all-rounder Shadab Khan is doubtful to participate due to a foot injury sustained during the National T20 Cup. The 25-year-old has been out of action since the injury, casting doubt on his availability for the upcoming series. With the final squad for the New Zealand T20I series set to be announced on December 19, Shadab is in a race against time to regain fitness for the series. The T20I series against New Zealand is slated to kick off on January 12. The selection committee, headed by Wahab Riaz, will evaluate performances in the recently-concluded National T20 Cup 2023-24 in Karachi. The training camp for T20I probables is scheduled to commence at the National Cricket Academy in Lahore on December 25.

PAKISTAN TOUR OF NEW ZEALAND:

January 12: New Zealand vs Pakistan - First T20I in Auckland
January 14: New Zealand vs Pakistan - Second T20I in Hamilton
January 17: New Zealand vs Pakistan - Third T20I in Dunedin
January 19: New Zealand vs Pakistan - Fourth T20I in Christchurch
January 21: New Zealand vs Pakistan - Fifth T20I in Christchurch.

Wahab aims to create a good sports system

LAHORE: Pakistan cricket team's chief selector Wahab Riaz, who is also serving as the advisor to the Government of Punjab on sports has expressed his aim to create a good sports system in Punjab to promote different sports in the region. Wahab Riaz also shed light on his plans to support young players in the region. "We have prepared the calendar for the next two years with the special focus on under-16 players, who will be given Rs. 10,000 monthly salary," said the former pace bowler. "A total of six sports tournaments will be held next month, the prize money of which will be Rs. 15.6 million." Wahab Riaz further opened up about dividing players into different categories and allocating monthly stipends for them. "Ninety players in different sports will be given monthly stipends in diamond, gold, silver and category. The player in the diamond category will get a stipend of Rs. 70,000, the gold will get Rs. 50,000 and the silver will get Rs. 30,000," added Riaz. "Players will get stipends from Punjab Sports Board's endowment funds." - Agencies

Mourinho predicts Premier League 2023/24 winners

LONDON: Former Chelsea boss Jose Mourinho predicted the Premier League 2023/24 winners during a podcast on Monday where he anticipated a top fight between two powerhouses. Arsenal currently sit on top of the league with 39 points from 17 matches but the Gunners couldn't make Mourinho's winning team, although he wished them the best. Mourinho, who created history with Chelsea in his first season in 2004/05 by winning the league with 95 points, stated that he is expecting a fierce fight between Manchester City and Liverpool for the elusive title. He ruled out Chelsea due to their

woeful start under Mauricio Pochettino, as, despite signing many players in the summer, The Blues sit 11th with just 22 points from 17 matches. "I would say Man City 51 [percent], and Liverpool 49 [percent]," Mourinho said on The Obi One podcast. When quizzed on whether Arsenal are in the running, he replied with a simple "Nah". "Rivalry apart, I would like them to win," he added. "Of course, Chelsea is not going to win. It is out of the question. "Of course Manchester United is not going to win it too, I don't speak about Man Utd. So it is between these three and out of these three I would like Arsenal to win it.

"But 51, 49. And I say 51, 49 because when the accumulation of matches are coming Man City has two teams." Both Man City and Liverpool failed to snatch points from Crystal Palace and Manchester United respectively while Arsenal managed to secure a comfortable 2-0 victory against Brighton. Mikel Arteta's men take on Jurgen Klopp's troops on December 23 while Man City's encounter with Brighton is postponed because of their participation in the Club World Cup. It is worth mentioning that last season, Arsenal had a nine-point lead over Man City by match week 29, but a series of disappointing results ended their title hopes. - Agencies

Australia trim squad for Boxing Day Test against Pak

Australia are on track to play an unchanged XI in the second Test against Pakistan in Melbourne

SPORTS DESK

MELBOURNE: Cricket Australia (CA) announced a 13-man squad for the squad Test against Pakistan which is set to be played at the iconic Melbourne Cricket Ground (MCG) from December 26-30. Australia trimmed their 14-man squad from Perth to 13 after omitting pacer Lance Morris as he is set to return to Big Bash side, Perth Scorchers. **Australia squad for the second Test:** Pat Cummins (captain), Scott Boland, Alex Carey, Cameron Green, Josh Hazlewood, Travis Head, Usman Khawaja, Marnus Labuschagne, Nathan Lyon, Mitch Marsh, Steve Smith, Mitch Starc, David Warner **Pakistan's squad:** Shan Masood (captain), Sarfaraz Ahmed (wicket-keeper), Imam-ul-Haq, Abdullah Shafique, Babar Azam, Saud Shakeel, Salman Ali Agha, Faheem Ashraf, Shaheen Shah Afridi, Aamir Jamal, Khurram Shahzad, Sajid Khan, Abrar Ahmed. Remember, Pakistan successfully negotiated an additional warm-up match to



Australian conditions. The visitors will touch down in Melbourne on the 19th of December. After a day of rest on the 20th, the Pakistani squad will open their training session to fans on Thursday, providing an opportunity for cricket fans to witness their favourite players in action. On December 24, the Pakistani players will take a break before resuming their training at the MCG on Christmas Day, December 25. It must be noted that during their chase of 450-run target, Pakistan were dismissed for a mere 89 runs, Saud Shakeel top scored for the dismantled visitors' side with 24 runs. Pakistan's improbable attempt to claim their first Test win in Australia since 1995 was shattered by Nathan Lyon and the home team's formidable pace attack, swiftly concluding the game within four days. In pursuit of 450 for victory, the visitors surrendered meekly with Lyon claiming 2-18. Mitchell Starc and Josh Hazlewood also secured three wickets each. Australia declared on the fourth day at 233-5 after Pakistan were dismissed for 271 in their first innings, responding to the hosts' 487. **Schedule of remaining matches** 2nd Test - Australia vs Pakistan - December 26-30: Melbourne Cricket Ground (MCG) 3rd Test - Australia vs Pakistan - January 3-7: Sydney Cricket Ground (SCG).

PPP will surprise...

FROM PAGE 01
organised here. "Inflation, poverty and unemployment had hit the common people hard," he stated, adding whenever the PPP came to power, it fought against unemployment and inflation. In the past, the PPP launched the Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) and programmes would be launched for the youth and workers in the future to give them relief, the PPP chief highlighted. Bilawal said he would surprise everyone across Pakistan if he got majority in the upcoming elections. "I will take everyone along with me, hard work will have done to again give rise to the reputation of the PPP in Lahore," he concluded. PPP co-chairman and former president Asif Ali Zardari expressed commitment to significantly improve Balochistan which he said was the heart of Pakistan, underscoring its geo-political importance.

JUI-F mulls seat...

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detail with the JUI-F leaders in line with the general elections happened," Shah said. JUI-F leader Atta Ur Rehman said: "We welcome the PPP delegation at the JUI-F Secretariat. Today, talks were held with the PPP regarding seat adjustments in the different districts." "The talks can be held with the PPP and other political parties in connection with the seat adjustment," he said. Five days back, JUI-F leader Hafiz Hamdullah said on Friday that his party was ready for the general elections on February 8. Expressing his thoughts, Hamdullah questioned: "What is the need for creating doubts in holding the elections? The decision regarding the elections had already been made."

I was sentenced...

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national and provincial assemblies through his party's platform. Those acting against the Constitution must face punishment, Nawaz said about his rivals who not only toppled his governments but also acted in violation of their respective oath in different capacities. "We have never violated the Constitution and law. We have always followed protected the constitution," he remarked, adding that those believing in the Constitution and law were eliminated to fulfil the nefarious designs. Nawaz said he was an elected prime minister but ousted in 1999 after being declared as a hijacker and for not receiving salary from his son on the basis of Black Law Dictionary which had no room or justification under Pakistan's law.

Imran warns...

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vote on February 8, 2024 in any circumstances. In his special message to the workers and people through the PTI Core Committee, the incarcerated PTI Chairman-for-life called upon the people that they should prepare themselves well for the upcoming general elections in order to make sure to cast their votes in a safe manner. Imran Khan made it clear that the deferment of the elections or any attack on polls transparency was not in the interest of the country and the party's workers and people should plan together to prevent and foil any such attacks. PTI Founding Chairman categorically stated that those who were hell-bent on pushing Pakistan into the darkness of destruction and lawlessness could not defeat PTI and the people standing behind it in the elections come what may.

Pak-Iran FMs...

FROM PAGE 01
uninterrupted humanitarian assistance including medical supplies to the people of Gaza, and the resumption of diplomatic efforts for lasting peace in the Middle East based on a just solution to the Palestinian question. The Foreign Minister strongly condemned the terrorist attack in Southeastern Iran on 15 December, resulting in the deaths of several Iranian security personnel.

Briefs

Russia's ruling party backs Putin's reelection bid

MOSCOW : Russia's ruling party unanimously backed Vladimir Putin's candidacy for the March 2024 presidential election at its congress on Sunday. The United Russia party held its 21st Congress in Moscow. In his speech at the event, Putin said the party has been working for the interests of Russian citizens and the development and strengthening of the state for many years. "Today, everyone has a great responsibility. We are faced with historical tasks. These require the unity of all nationalist forces," he said. Noting that Western countries are pursuing aggressive policies against Russia, Putin said "the Western elite wanted to destroy Russia's economy and social sphere. Moreover, they wanted to destroy our political system. They thought and think that they will be able to create confusion in Russia." "The methods of such destabilization are well known, and Western elites in many regions of the world have used them more than once during the so-called color revolutions. But these scenarios did not work, and I am convinced that they will never work in Russia - a free, independent and sovereign state. Our society, all branches of power and levels of government have proven their maturity, reliability and stability," he added. The country's Federation Council decided at the beginning of the month to hold the presidential election on March 15-17. Putin announced that he would be a candidate and sent a notification to the Central Election Commission. Running as an independent candidate, he will be supported in his election campaign by the United Russia party in the Duma, the lower house of the Russian parliament. Russia's last presidential election was held on March 18, 2018, and Putin was elected president with 76.69% of the vote.—APP

Burkina Faso's military leader sacks FM

KIGAL : Burkina Faso's military leader Capt. Ibrahim Traore on fired his foreign minister in a mini-reshuffle, according to a decree read on national television. Jean Marie Traore Karamoko, the minister delegate for regional cooperation, was named as the new foreign minister, replacing Olivia Rouamba, who served in the position for about two years. The sacking of Rouamba came as a surprise, according to analysts, because she was said to be in Traore's close circle. Traore also named Stella Kabre, who until recently served as consul general of Burkina Faso in Milan, Italy, as the new regional cooperation minister. Traore led a coup in September 2022 to become the West African country's new leader after ousting Paul Henri-Damiba, who had also come to power in January that year through an overthrow of then president, Roch Kabore.—APP

Thousands flee as storm hits Philippines

MANILA : A man went missing and thousands of people in the Philippines were sheltering in evacuation centres Monday as Tropical Storm Jelawat hit the large southern island of Mindanao, causing scattered flooding and power cuts. The storm weakened as it raked across Mindanao after making landfall in the morning, but the state weather service said the threat of floods and landslides remained. Police in Manay municipality, where Jelawat made landfall, reported one man missing at the swollen Casaoman River that bisects the coastal town of about 40,000 people. "A local man ignored warnings and went to gather coconuts floating on the river. It is suspected he's been swept away," acting Manay police chief Major Meliton Sango said.—APP

Ethiopia's parliament ratifies bilateral trade Pact with Pak

H.E. Jemal Beker Abdula, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the FDRE in Pakistan, described approval of the agreement a major breakthrough in the bilateral relations of the two countries

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Embassy of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE) in the Islamic Republic of Pakistan is pleased to announce that the House of the Peoples Representatives of FDRE has unanimously approved the bilateral trade agreement signed by the two countries on February 14, 2023 to boost bilateral trade. The trade agreement was submitted by the Standing Committee of the House on Trade and Tourism to the Ethiopian Parliament for approval on the 8th regular meeting of the 3rd year of the House of the Peoples Representatives held the other day. The bilateral trade agreement is aimed at boosting trade cooperation between the two countries for further strengthening the economic and commercial relations between Ethiopia and Pakistan.



H.E. Jemal Beker Abdula, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the FDRE in Pakistan, described approval of the agree-

ment a major breakthrough in the bilateral relations of the two countries. He said the landmark agreement would give a major boost to

the bilateral trade that currently stands at over 80 million USD. It would pave the way for establishment of joint action committee on

trade and establishment of strong institutional linkages between the two countries, he added. He congratulated the business community of Ethiopia and Pakistan over the signing of the agreement. The Ambassador said it was a welcoming news for business community of both the countries who had already explored each other lucrative markets through delegation exchange in the current year. The new year will open a new chapter in the history of bilateral trade and hopefully, bolster business and trade activity between the two countries, he said, while recalling visit of over 70 businessmen and investors to Ethiopia in March and trip of over 50 Ethiopian businessmen to Pakistan in May this year. These developments coupled with commencement of the Ethiopian Airlines set the stage for the bilateral relations of Ethiopia and Pakistan to flourish and thrive in the changing global dynamism, the Ambassador noted.

Irish PM denounces fire at migrant property

NEWS DESK

DUBLIN : Irish Prime Minister Leo Varadkar has expressed his "deep concern" about reports of suspected criminal damage at properties earmarked for accommodating migrants and asylum seekers, including a fire at a former hotel in the county of Galway overnight. Police said on Sunday that they are investigating a "criminal damage incident by fire" that occurred at the former hotel in the small western village of Rosscabill shortly before midnight on Saturday. A video broadcast by national broadcaster RTE and the Irish Times showed flames engulfing the premises, with parts of the building destroyed. Nobody was inside the building at the time, police said. Protesters had gathered earlier on Saturday

to blockade the entrance of the hotel in opposition to government plans to house 70 asylum seekers there from next week, RTE reported. "I am deeply concerned about recent reports of suspected criminal damage at a number of properties around the country which have been earmarked for accommodating those seeking international protection here, including in County Galway last night," Varadkar said in a statement. "There is no justification for violence, arson or vandalism in our Republic. Ever. Garda (police) investigations are underway." Mostly peaceful campaigns have grown across the country in recent months as Ireland tries to accommodate record numbers of refugees in the middle of a housing crisis. The government agency responsible for housing asylum seekers began handing out tents to some new arrivals last week

after running out of accommodation. Unprecedented riots also erupted in Dublin last month after a small group of far-right activists attacked police following the stabbing of three young children by a man Irish newspapers have identified as Algerian-born. Varadkar sought to assure people that all asylum-seekers are registered, fingerprinted, and checked against watch lists, and the circumstances surrounding their requests are examined thoroughly. "The response from many communities has been incredible. We've seen people open their homes, schools, clubs and communities to help those most in need. The people carrying out these crimes are a very small minority," he said. Housing crisis forces asylum-seekers to sleep in tents Ireland, which is experiencing a housing crisis, has seen

opposition to government policies designed to house a record number of foreign asylum-seekers of late, with largely peaceful protests being staged across the country in recent weeks. The problem has become so acute that the agency responsible for housing asylum-seekers resorted to handing out tents to new arrivals last week. Though Varadkar has sought to assure citizens that all of those seeking asylum in Ireland are thoroughly vetted and registered, the situation has remained tense. Last month, the capital Dublin saw a night of massive rioting when far-right agitators torched and looted the city, destroying businesses and public property after the stabbing injury of three children outside an elementary school by a man Irish media had said was born in Algeria — although police did not confirm.

Australia braces for intense rains and floods

SYDNEY : Stranded residents have sheltered on a hospital roof as flash floods swamped northeastern Australia, with raging waters severing roads and flushing crocodiles into towns. Damage was reported Monday along an expanse of coastline that stretched about 400 kilometres (250 miles) across northern Queensland. Rescue teams evacuated more than 300 people overnight, police said, and military helicopters were dispatched to help inundated areas cut off by the floods. With another deluge expected Monday, Queensland Treasurer Cameron Dick said the unfolding disaster would have a "billion-dollar impact" on the state. Nine people, including a seven-year-old patient, huddled for safety overnight on the roof of a hospital in the largely Aboriginal settlement of Wujal Wujal. "We know that those people are in a desperate way now," said Kiley Hanslow, the chief executive of the Wujal Wujal Aboriginal Shire Council. Police said the group eventually clambered to a safer location before flood waters rose again on Monday afternoon. Surrounded by a mountainous hinterland of tropical rainforest, hard-to-reach Wujal Wujal is one of the most disadvantaged regions in Australia. Hanslow told national broadcaster ABC the town centre was a "sea of dirty water and mud. There's also crocodiles swimming around in that water now," she added. Queensland Police Commissioner Katarina Carroll said flood waters would likely wash "crocs and all sorts of other things" into residential areas. "You would recall from past events we've had sharks, crocs, you name it," she told reporters.—APP

12 killed in attack on party in Mexico

MEXICO City : At least 12 people were killed and another dozen were wounded in an attack early Sunday on a pre-Christmas party in central Mexico, authorities in the state of Guanajuato said. The violence occurred in the town of Salvatierra, reportedly at a hacienda, or ranch, that can be rented out for festivities. "So far 12 people are reported dead," the state's prosecutor's office said on X, the former Twitter. Another 12 people who were wounded have been taken to hospital, according to authorities. The Tierra Negra foundation, which promotes social projects in the area, said the victims were young people who were participating in "posadas," religious gatherings that celebrate aspects of the story of Christmas. A person who was at the party but asked not to be identified for security reasons told AFP that some six people with long guns entered the venue and began circulating among the 100 or so young people gathered at the event. "We realized they were not invited, and when they were asked who they were, they started shooting," he said.—APP

Colombian rebels pledge to stop kidnappings for ransom

MEXICO City : A Colombian rebel group that caused an uproar by abducting the father of a national football star said Sunday it has agreed to stop kidnappings for ransom. The pledge by the National Liberation Army (ELN) was announced in a joint statement with the government of President Gustavo Petro as a fifth round of peace negotiations concluded in Mexico City. The talks are aimed at ending six decades of fighting between Bogota and one of the last active leftist rebel armies in a country torn by decades of fighting involving guerrillas, right-wing paramilitary groups and drug gangs. The ELN pledge to halt abductions for money — a common practice in years of conflict — "is an announcement that is critical for peace in Colombia," said Vera Grabe, the head of the government delegation to the talks. The negotiations followed the recent kidnapping — and release — by the ELN of the father of Liverpool footballer Luis Diaz, an act that had threatened to upend a delicate ceasefire. Sunday's statement said the truce will continue, however. The ceasefire is scheduled to conclude January 29, but both sides said Sunday they envision extending it. "It is feasible to extend it in February," said Pablo Beltran, the head of the guerrilla delegation.—Agencies

Tokyo stocks closed lower

TOKYO : Tokyo stocks closed lower on Monday as investors wait to see what direction the Bank of Japan takes in an upcoming policy decision this week. The benchmark Nikkei 225 index slid 0.64 percent, or 211.57 points, to end at 32,758.98, while the broader Topix index fell 0.66 percent, or 15.42 points, to 2,316.86. "There was a widespread mood to wait and see the outcome of the Bank of Japan's monetary policy meeting," Iwai Cosmo Securities said. Masayuki Kubota, chief strategist of Rakuten Securities, also agreed that the BoJ decision on Tuesday was key. "There could be some sort of message about lifting negative interest rates," Kubota said. The brokerage expects that the central bank will announce this week plans to end Japan's negative interest rates and lift them in January. "If (the Bank moves) as we forecast, the yen is likely to strengthen further," which will in turn weigh on the stock market, he said. The dollar traded at 142.28 yen in Asian trade, against 142.22 yen in New York late Friday. In Tokyo trading, Sony Group dropped 2.16 percent to 13,075 yen while Uniqlo operator Fast Retailing lost 1.18 percent to 35,160 yen. SoftBank Group fell 0.67 percent to 6,047 yen while chip-linked Advantest tumbled 1.75 percent to 4,760 yen.—APP

Russia, Ukraine exchange swarm of drones

KYIV : Ukraine and Russia launched a swarm of drones at each other's territories, as both sides step up attacks, with the Russian assault reportedly killing one person in Odesa and the Ukrainian strike targeting a Russian military airfield. Ukraine's air force said that on morning that it had destroyed 20 drones and a cruise missile that Russia launched overnight. Nine of the drones were downed over the southern Odesa region, with falling debris starting a fire in a residential house and killing one person. The Russian defense ministry said in a social media statement that its air defense systems destroyed or intercepted a total of 35 Ukraine-launched drones over Lipetsk, Volgograd and Rostov regions. It did not say what was targeted or whether there was any damage. Ukrainian Pravda media outlet reported late on Sunday, citing unnamed sources, that the Kyiv attack targeted the Russian Morozovsk airfield in the Rostov region in a reportedly joint operation of the Security Service of Ukraine (SBU) and the Armed Forces. Vasily Golubev, the governor of the Rostov region that borders Ukraine in Russia's southwest corner, said in a statement on the Telegram messaging app that air defense forces repelled "a massive attack" by drones in the area of Morozovsk and Kamensk and that most of the air weapons were destroyed. Several Russian military bloggers said, however, that one bomber at the air base suffered minor damage. The Morozovsk air base is home to Russia's 559th Bomber Aviation Regiment, according to Russian state media, and is armed with Russia's most modern medium-range Su-34 bombers.—DNA



RIYADH : SAPM Jawad Sohrab Malik meets with President of the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) at Global Labour Market Conference (GLMC) in Riyadh, KSA.—DNA

President Vucic claims his party has won elections Serbian Progressive Party wins more than 125 seats in 250-seat parliament, says Aleksandar Vucic

FOREIGN DESK

BELGRADE : Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic has claimed victory in snap parliamentary elections, saying his party is heading for an absolute majority. His Serbian Progressive Party, or SNS, is set to win almost 47% of the vote, according to projections. Opposition parties under the Serbia Against Violence (SPN) banner were well behind with around 23%. But they claimed electoral fraud favouring the government, and called for a recount. Initial results projected the SNS had won more than half of the 250 seats in the National Assembly. Mr Vucic hailed the results. "My job was to do everything in my power to secure an absolute majority," he told supporters, although he himself was not running for election. Wearing a grey sweater, he was flanked on one side by Prime Minister Ana Brnabic and on the

other by controversial Bosnian Serb leader Milorad Dodik. The loose opposition Serbia Against Violence alliance, or SPN, had hoped to win control of Belgrade in Sunday's local elections. It was formed after two mass shootings in May which sparked huge protests. The attacks killed 19 people, including 10 at a school in Belgrade. Despite the SPN's hopes, initial results showed Mr

Vucic's party slightly ahead in the capital. In a statement, SPN claimed electoral fraud. The coalition said: "More than 40,000 non-residents were brought to Belgrade." It demanded the annulment of the vote in the capital, and said it might call for protests. Results overnight from Serbia's 8,273 polling stations confirmed the ruling party's lead. The SNS has been in power since 2012 but

there have been three elections in the past three years. As well as voting for parliament, Serbians were deciding on Sunday who would control 65 local authorities. Graphic of projected results in Serbia's December 2023 parliamentary election - showing projected seats based on incomplete results from a sample of polling stations. The SNS is shown as winning 128 seats, compared to the SPN's 65 line. The protests grew into demonstrations against President Vucic and his SNS party. Opposition parties said the massacres reflected a culture of rhetorical and physical violence promoted by the ruling party and its allies in the media. As the projected results began to filter through late on Sunday night, the mood at one of the parties in the Serbia Against Violence coalition was uncertain. If supporters of the Green-Left Front had been hoping for a major swing away from the president's Progressive

Party, they soon realised that was not going to happen. There were a few catcalls from activists as the prime minister appeared on a screen to claim victory, rejecting claims of irregularities as "untruths, insinuations, unverified information and fake news". But opposition candidates for Belgrade city council at the post-poll event remained optimistic that they could still gain seats and prevent the Progressives from retaining control of the capital. Almost one in four Serbian voters lives in Belgrade, so any dent in the profile of the president's party there would count as a success. Earlier a former Belgrade mayor, Dragan Djilas, who is also a leader of the Serbia Against Violence coalition, told reporters that "changes in Serbia have begun". He suggested that people were determined to live "normally without crime and corruption, without prices going wild". Serbia is struggling with high inflation, which hit 8% in November.



Briefs

CNICs of Murad Saeed, Hammad blocked

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The government has blocked the CNICs of 18 Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf leaders, including former minister Hammad Azhar and Murad Saeed. The party leaders are currently facing charges in various cases following the May 9 riots. The list also includes Ali Amin Gandapur, Muhammad Aslam Iqbal, Malik Karamat Khokhar, Wasiq Qayyum Abbasi, Jamshed Iqbal Cheema, Zubair Khan Niazi, Malik Nadeem Abbas, and Ghulam Mohiuddin Dewan. Authorities said the CNICs were blocked at the request of police and will remain blocked till the investigation concludes. Authorities added that the party leaders will be deprived on legal rights if they do not appear before the anti-terrorism court (ATC).

Earthquake hits Islamabad, Azad Kashmir

DNA

ISLAMABAD: A magnitude 5.8 earthquake jolted Islamabad and its suburbs on Monday, according to the seismological centre. The depth of the earthquake was 140 kilometres, while its epicentre was the Doda district of Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK). The tremors that spread panic among the residents were felt at 3.19pm. Meanwhile, the tremors were also felt in other parts of the country including Samahni and Bhimbhar of Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) and Peshawar. No immediate casualties or damages have been reported in the aftermath of the quake. Zainab Tariq, a 27-year-old student in Islamabad told Geo.tv that she felt the tremors, but they weren't that strong. "I was sitting in my room when the building suddenly started shaking. I ran downstairs but couldn't see anyone else outside, so I thought it was not felt by many people".

Pak issues visas to Indian Hindu Pilgrims

DNA

NEW DELHI: Pakistan High Commission, New Delhi has issued 62 visas to a group of Indian Hindu pilgrims for their visit to Shree Katas Raj Temples, also known as Qila Katas, in Chakwal district of Punjab from 19-25 December 2023. Expressing his views on the occasion, Charge d' Affaires, Mr. Aizaz Khan, wished the pilgrims a safe journey and memorable stay in Pakistan. Under the Pakistan-India Protocol on Visits to Religious Shrines of 1974, each year thousands of Sikh and Hindu pilgrims from India visit Pakistan to attend various religious festivals/occasions. The issuance of pilgrimage visas to them is in line with the Government of Pakistan's efforts for facilitating visits to religious shrines and promoting interfaith harmony.

Israel using 'starvation' as war weapon in Gaza

Mossad chief joins in captives talks with Qatari PM, CIA Director

NEWS DESK

GAZA: As the US-backed Israeli genocidal war on the Gaza Strip entered day 73 on Monday, massive aerial and artillery strikes continued to pound and level whole blocks and homes and massacre more civilians, mostly children and women. At least 19,453 people, including 7,729 children, have been killed in Israeli attacks since the start of the war, according to new figures by the Health Ministry in Gaza. The number of people wounded also rose to 52,286, including 8,663 children, the ministry added. Qassam Brigades says it hit several Israeli targets. Hamas's military wing says its fighters have targeted: Israeli soldiers north of Khan Younis with mortar shells. Kissufim, which borders Gaza, with rockets. A military vehicle with anti-personnel weaponry east of Khan Younis. A Merkava tank with Yasin 105 in Khan Younis. A military jeep with an anti-armour missile north of the Gaza Strip. A truck carrying a large number of soldiers in Beit Lahiya with a missile, and then clashed with them with machine guns. A military jeep with anti-personnel weaponry northeast of Beit Lahiya.

Human Rights Watch (HRW) has accused the Israeli occupation government of using starvation as a weapon of war in the Gaza Strip. In a press release on Monday, HRW said that "Israeli forces are deliberately blocking the delivery of water, food, and fuel, while willfully impeding humanitarian assistance, apparently razing agricultural areas, and depriving the civilian population of objects indispensable to their survival." The use of hunger against the civilian population is a war crime, HRW stated, calling for world leaders to act. The press release cites statements from Israeli officials, interviews with survivors, reports from aid organizations, and evidence from satellite imagery to establish that Israel is engaged in the deliberate use of policies to deprive Palestinians of the resources necessary for daily existence. "For over two months, Israel has been depriving Gaza's population of food and water, a policy spurred on or endorsed by high-ranking Israeli officials and reflecting an intent to starve civilians as a method of warfare," Omar Shakir, HRW director in the occupied Palestinian territories, said. "World leaders should be speaking out against this abhorrent war crime, which

has devastating effects on Gaza's population," he added. Three women were among 35 Palestinians the Israeli occupation forces detained overnight and this morning in the occupied West Bank, according to prisoners' advocacy groups. A woman and her niece were detained during a raid at their home in a Tulkrum neighborhood in the north of the West Bank to force the woman's brother to turn himself over to the army. A third person, a university student, was also detained in the same neighborhood. A third woman, 30 years old, was detained during a raid in Jericho, east of the West Bank. Meanwhile, the army detained 14 people from the Ramallah district, 12 of them were from the village of Obwane, west of Ramallah. Detentions were reported also in the Hebron, Qalqilya, Bethlehem, and Jerusalem governorates, said the groups. Israel detained at least 4575 Palestinians in the occupied West Bank since the start of its aggression on October 7. In his latest statement on the conflict, Josep Borrell says "far too many" civilians have been killed in Gaza. "Certainly, we are witnessing an appalling lack of distinction in Israel's military operation in Gaza," he posted on X. "Worship-

pers, three Israeli hostages, and hundreds of other civilians have died during the most recent military operations. This must stop - a humanitarian pause is urgently needed." Martin Griffiths says he has seen no evidence that Israel's assault on southern Gaza is more precise than that carried out in the north. "I've been disappointed... We were promised this. The Americans did a lot of diplomacy on this. The truth of the matter is we have not seen it at all in the south. On the contrary, we've seen it grow more," the UN's under-secretary-general for humanitarian affairs told the Financial Times. He said that last month, he had worked on a 10-point plan that included the creation of relief distribution centres and was based on greater Israeli restraint. "I just threw it in the bin," he said in the interview. "I was a fool to even think that it was sensible... We turn around and find out the truth: the war ain't over yet, it ain't half over... I don't think we're halfway through this yet. We've got weeks and weeks to go of this savage war." Griffiths also said "impunity" has been rampant in the war and said special tribunals have the best record of bringing accountability. "Maybe there is a need for a special tribunal [for Gaza]," he added.

PML-N ended 'Daku Raj' from Karachi

DNA

LAHORE: Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) senior leader Ahsan Iqbal said on Monday that his party had ended the "Daku Raj" (bandits' rule) in Sindh. Speaking to media in Lahore, "Nawaz Sharif has the best record of serving the people of Sindh. Whenever Nawaz Sharif came to power, the people of Sindh witnessed peace." The former planning minister stated: "In a bid to address the water crisis in Karachi, the K-IV project was initiated for the people." "The Thar coal project had become a reality by becoming part of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC)," he said. Iqbal asserted: "Despite facing the opposition of the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) in Sindh, peace was brought for the people of the province." Few days back, Iqbal said on Friday that his party had nothing to do with the inflation in the country. Speaking to the media in Narowal, the former planning minister alleged that the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf's (PTI) government was to blame for the ballooning inflation in the country. "The ministry of planning and development has nothing to do with inflation."

SBP governor calls on Naqvi, discuss financial and Agri growth



DNA

LAHORE: Governor of the State Bank of Pakistan Jameel Ahmad called on Chief Minister Punjab Mohsin Naqvi to discuss the prevailing economic situation and matters relating to The Bank of Punjab & The Punjab Provincial Co-operative Bank. CM Naqvi expressed his commitment to increasing production by implementing measures such as providing subsidies and soft loans to the farmers. Recognizing the need to alleviate the financial burden on small-scale farmers, he emphasized that fostering higher production is paramount. The anticipated positive outcomes include widespread benefits from enhanced economic activities in the agricultural and other sectors, he noted. The CM also highlighted the significance of achieving record cotton production in Punjab, projecting substantial savings of two billion dollars in foreign exchange. Mr Naqvi pointed out that the rice export from Punjab has exceeded two billion dollars as the provincial government was following a policy of providing comprehensive facilities to invest-

ors and industrialists, foreseeing positive ramifications in the form of a thriving stock exchange. Recognizing that enhanced production of cotton, rice and other crops will contribute positively to the national economy, the SBP governor expressed optimism about the future economic landscape and commended CM Punjab for his valuable initiatives to improve different sectors including agriculture. Meanwhile, the 33rd meeting of the Punjab Safe Cities Authority (PSCA), held under the chair of Chief Minister Punjab Mohsin Naqvi, approved the DIC-3 project across 17 districts. In the first phase, the safe city project is set to be deployed in Gujrat, Sialkot, Sargodha and Sheikhpura, with 831 cameras slated for installation across these districts. Subsequently, 1234 CCTV cameras will be installed in Attock, Jhang, Sahiwal, Bahawalpur and Rahimyar Khan while over 500 cameras will be installed in Jhelum, Murree, Mianwali, Muzaffargarh and several other districts in the third phase. The meeting also deliberated on establishing safe city authority in the remaining districts of the province. IG police, Addl IG, chairman P&D, secretary home department, CCPO and others attended the meeting.

Three dead as building collapses in Karachi

NAIZR SIVAL

KARACHI: At least three people were killed and 17 others wounded on Monday as a two-storey building collapsed due to a gas cylinder blast in Machar Colony on Mauripur Road in Karachi. The blast took place in a gas cylinder shop in the building. One adjacent building was partially affected and a nearby vehicle was damaged. Police said a rescue operation was launched by rescue teams at the incident site. The Dr Ruth Pfau Civil Hospital Karachi administration said they had received two bodies and eight injured at the hospital. Police and rangers launched baton charge to disperse the crowd as it was creating hindrance in the rescue operation because of congested streets. Talking to Geo News, Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Keamari Arif Rao Aslam said police, rangers and rescue teams were working at the incident's site. He said a gas cylinder shop was situated in the building that collapsed because of the blast. He said the explosion happened during transfer of gas in the shop as a vehicle loaded with gas cylinders came to supply gas. The police officer said three people were killed and 17 injured in the incident. The injured included two children and four women, he said. "A fire erupted immediately after the explosion and six of the wounded people received burn injuries. Three buildings around the building that collapsed are also affected," he said adding that the said buildings were also vacated for inspection. The SSP Keamari said debris would be removed with the help of heavy machinery. On October 11, an under-construction building collapsed in Karachi's Shah Faisal Colony area, leaving at least three people dead and several others injured, according to police. Following the Shah Faisal Colony incident, Sindh Caretaker Chief Minister Justice (ret'd) Maghool Baqar had the next day suspended four Sindh Building Control Authority (SBCA) officers for their negligence.

Mexico violence: Gunmen kill 12

MEXICO CITY: Police in Mexico say 12 people were killed and another 11 injured when gunmen stormed a venue at which a group of young people had gathered for a pre-Christmas religious celebration. The attack happened in the early hours of Sunday local time in Salvatierra, a town in central Guanajuato state. The local mayor said that the victims had no links to any crime groups. While deadly shootouts are not unusual in this region, they normally occur when rival gangs target each other. Local media reported that a group of around 40 mainly young people had gathered on Saturday evening at a former ranch turned into a venue for hire. They were celebrating Las Posadas (Spanish for "the inns"), a tradition celebrated between 16 and 24 December during which participants re-enact Mary and Joseph's journey from Nazareth to Bethlehem. - Agencies

PM visits Kuwait, offers condolences

KUWAIT CITY: Caretaker Prime Minister visits Kuwait to offer condolences on the demise of His Highness Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah Caretaker Prime Minister of Pakistan Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar visited Kuwait today to offer condolences over the sad demise of the Amir His Highness Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. During his meeting with the new Amir His Highness Sheikh Meshal al-Ahmad al-Sabah, the Prime Minister offered sincerest and heart felt condolences on behalf of himself, the leadership, Government and the people of Pakistan. He said Pakistani nation stands united with our Kuwaiti brothers in this time of sorrow and grief. The State of Kuwait has lost a visionary leader, who transformed Kuwait into a prosperous State. He will be remembered as well-wisher and friend of Pakistan. He made great contributions in advancing bilateral relations between the two brotherly states. His Highness Sheikh Meshal al-Ahmad al-Sabah expressed gratitude to the leadership, Government and the people of Pakistan for standing with the people of Kuwait in this time of grief. He expressed full support for Pakistan-Kuwait relations and affirmed his commitment to further augment this relationship. - DNA

LHC orders release of Sher Afzal Marwat

LAHORE: The LHC on Monday ordered the release of PTI Senior Vice President Sher Afzal Marwat, who was detained under the Maintenance of Public Order (MPO) last week. Marwat was arrested from outside the LHC on Dec 14, where he had arrived to join a protest. Footage of his arrest shared by the PTI on X (formerly Twitter) had shown policemen dragging him by the collar as several lawyers tried to stop them. He was later moved to an undisclosed location. Police sources had told Dawn that the arrest was made under the MPO. The law empowers the police to detain a person considered "prejudicial to public safety or the maintenance of public order". The arrest was strongly criticised by PTI leaders and lawyers' bodies. A statement shared by the party had held the caretaker government responsible for "acting as a facilitator" during the "unabated lawlessness". On Friday, the LHC issued notices to the police and the Lahore deputy commissioner on a petition filed by Marwat's brother seeking the quashing of the PTI leader's detention orders. - DNA

Sisi declared victorious in Egypt election

Sisi took 89.6 percent of the vote to secure a third term, with turnout at 66.8 percent, says election authority.

CAIRO: Egypt's President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi has secured a third term as leader of the Middle East's most populous nation, officials said, after the counting of votes in the election held between December 10 and 12 was finalised. Sisi won 89.6 percent of the vote, the National Elections Authority said on Monday. Turnout reached an "unprecedented" 66.8 percent of voters, said authority head Hazem Badawy. Over 39 million Egyptians cast their ballots for Sisi, a former army chief who has ruled the most populous Arab country for a decade. The vote, the result of which was in little doubt, took place as Egypt dealt with various crises, including the Israel-Hamas war in neighbouring Gaza and the country's worst-ever economic crisis. Despite Egypt's afflictions, a decade-long crackdown on dissent has eliminated any serious opposition to Sisi, the fifth president to emerge from within the ranks of the military since 1952. Sisi was running against three other candidates, none of whom were high profile. The most prominent potential candidate ended his run

France FM set for Lebanon talks

BEIRUT: France's top diplomat was due in Beirut later Monday for talks on de-escalating near-daily exchanges of fire on the Israel border, which have triggered fears of all-out conflict. Foreign Minister Catherine Colonna was expected to call for responsibility and restraint in her meetings with Lebanese Prime Minister Najib Mikati and parliament speaker Nabih Berri, a key ally of powerful Iran-backed militant group Hezbollah. Since October 8, the day after the Israel-Hamas conflict started, the frontier between Lebanon and Israel has seen escalating exchanges of fire, mainly between the Israeli army and Hezbollah, which says it is acting in support of Hamas. Fears of a widening war have been growing, with other Iran-backed groups attacking US-led coalition forces in Iraq and Syria, and Yemen's Houthi militias targeting shipping in the Red Sea. In Israel on Sunday, Colonna called on all parties to "de-escalate" along the Lebanon-Israel border. "If things were to spiral out of control, I don't think anyone would benefit," she said. Grippled by political paralysis and a crushing four-year economic crisis, Lebanon can ill-afford another devastating conflict between Israel and Hezbollah, which last went to war in 2006. A French diplomatic source, requesting anonymity, expressed concern that Beirut could underestimate Israel's determination to protect its borders after the shock of Hamas's October 7 attacks. - Agencies

complaining that his campaign had been impeded and dozens of his supporters arrested. Runner-up Hazem Omar, who leads the Republican People's Party, received 4.5 percent of the vote. Next came Farid Zahran, leader of the left-leaning Egyptian Social Democratic Party, and Abdel-Sanaad Yamama from the Wafd, a century-old but relatively marginal party. Sisi is now set to serve his third - and, according to the consti-

tution, final - term in office, starting in April. Sisi came to power after the 2013 overthrow of the country's first popularly elected president, Mohamed Morsi. He was re-elected in 2018. In both previous elections he won with 97 percent of the vote. Sisi extended the presidential mandate from four to six years and amended the constitution to raise the limit on consecutive terms in office from two to three. - Agencies

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