



Islamabad POST

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Mushaal: Christian community playing key role in Pakistan

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Turkish FM laments EU view of Türkiye 'rival,' not 'partner'

Detailed News On Page-08



Khawaja contests ICC charge

Detailed News On Page-06



CIPHER CASE CONTROVERSY

Supreme Court grants bail to Imran, Qureshi

Apparently PTI's allegations regarding level-playing field are correct; Justice Minallah



KHAYYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court on Friday approved former Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) chairman Imran Khan and party's Vice-Chairman Shah Mahmood Qureshi's post-arrest bail in the cipher case against surety bonds of Rs1 million each. A three-member bench, headed by interim Chief Justice Sardar Tariq Masood and comprising Justice Mansoor Ali Shah and Justice Athar Minallah, conducted the hearing. On December 13, the PTI founder and vice-chairman were indicted in the cipher case again by the special court established under the Official Secrets Act 2023 after the Islamabad High Court (IHC) declared their jail trial null and void. Both politicians have pleaded not guilty to their involvement in

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PTI to challenge ECP decision

ECP strips PTI off its 'bat' symbol

Election commission says party's polls were unlawful; PTI has option to forge an alliance with any party

ANSAR M BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) Friday evening stripped off the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) of its iconic 'bat' symbol – a sign that depicts its founder, Imran Khan's former life of cricket. Announcing its reserved verdict, a five-member ECP bench – headed by Chief Election Commissioner Sikandar Sultan Raja – declared PTI's intra-party elections unlawful. The 11-page order was announced on the petition of Akbar S Babar, a former PTI member, who claimed that the PTI did not stage the elections in line with the rules. This serves as a

major blow to the party as it gears up for the February 8, 2024, elections, with its founder – PTI's voter driving force – already behind for months – and his release does not seem soon. "PTI has not complied with our directions [...] and failed to hold intra-party election in accordance with PTI prevailing Constitution, 2019, and Election Act, 2017, and Election Rules, 2017," the order read. Geo News reported that with the elections being declared unlawful, Barrister Gohar Khan, who replaced Khan as the party's chairman, is no longer the party's top head. PTI also seems to be running out of time as the extended

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ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar in a group photo with the President, Directing Staff of National Defence University and graduating Civil Service officers of National Security Course-2024. – DNA

Türkiye nabs 304 suspects linked to Daesh

Majority of the suspects were detained in Ankara, Istanbul and Izmir

FOREIGN DESK

ANKARA: Interior Minister Ali Yerlikaya announced a nationwide operation against the terrorist group Daesh on Friday. Authorities have detained 304 people suspected of having ties to the terrorist group in operations across 32 provinces. The majority of the suspects were detained in Türkiye's three biggest cities of Ankara, Istanbul and Izmir, Yerlikaya said on social messaging platform X. He said the operation, "Operation Heroes-34,"

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FM saddened over Prague shooting

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Foreign Minister Jalil Abbas Jilani on Friday expressed his condolence over the loss of life in a tragic shooting that took place at Charles University of Prague on Thursday. As per media reports, a student opened fire in a Charles University of Prague, killing at least 14 people and injuring more than 20. Expressing heartfelt condolence to the families of the victims, the foreign minister also prayed for the recovery of all the injured. "Deeply saddened by the tragic shooting that took place at Charles University Prague,

Continued on Page 06

Bigwigs enter into arena

Feb polls: Nomination papers submission process intensified

Bilawal Bhutto to contest from Lahore; Imran Khan papers also accepted from Mianwali

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: The nationwide process of submitting nomination papers for the upcoming 2024 elections continued on Friday. The candidates are actively submitting their nomination papers from the respective Returning Officer (RO) offices situated in Islamabad and various provinces. Former prime minister Mian Shahbaz Sharif is contesting elections from Lahore and Kasur constituencies simultaneously. Malik Rasheed Ahmed Khan, former MNA, sacrificed his constituency NA-138 (Kasur-II) for his leader. Malik Ahmad Khan has submitted his nomination papers for Constituency PP-179 while Malik Ahmed Saeed Khan submitted papers for Constituency PP-178. Mian Shehbaz Sharif along with the Malik brothers accompanied by

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ECP extends deadline for nomination papers

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has extended the deadline for submitting nomination papers by two days, allowing submissions until Sunday. According to the revised schedule issued by the Election Commission, candidates interested in contesting elections can obtain and submit their nomination papers from 8:30 am to 4:30 pm until Sunday. The initial list of candidates is set to be released on December 24, with the

Continued on Page 06

Briefs

Tariq Mahmood appointed PIO

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Tariq Mahmood, a distinguished senior officer within the Information Group, has assumed the position of Executive Director General/PIO, marking a significant development in his career. The official announcement of his appointment has been made through a recently issued notification. Having previously shouldered the responsibilities of PIO on an interim basis, Tariq Mahmood's elevation to the permanent role underscores his valuable contributions and expertise in the field.

IPP committed to changing people's destiny

DNA

SIALKOT: Former federal minister and Central Information Secretary IPP Dr. Firdous Ashiq Awan has said party is determined to change the destiny of people, under the leadership of Jahangir Khan Tareen and Abdul Aleem. She urged people to support the election symbol Shaheen of the IPP in election for a secure and prosperous future of coming generations.

Holiday Notice

The offices of daily Islamabad POST shall remain closed on Saturday on account of weekly off therefore there will be no newspaper on Sunday. – Editor

IHC CJ reprimands IG for crackdown on Baloch protesters

The police action against the Baloch women and men triggered widespread condemnations from human rights bodies and political parties

COURT REPORTER

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad High Court (IHC) Chief Justice Aamir Farooq on Friday chided Islamabad Inspector General (IG) Dr Akbar Nasir Khan over the recent crackdown against the Baloch women and men during a demonstration against "enforced disappearances" outside the National Press Club in the federal capital. On Wednesday night, the Islamabad police used "excessive force" and rounded up all the Baloch protesters, who converged in the capital to stage a protest demonstration. The long march led by Baloch women had started their journey from Balochistan on December 6. The police action against the Baloch women and men triggered widespread condemnations from human rights bodies and political parties. Even the federal ministers admitted that

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President, PM hold express concern

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi and Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar on Friday held a telephonic conversation wherein they expressed concern over the inappropriate police treatment with the Baloch protesters. Discussing the situation, both the president and prime minister viewed that the police should not have dealt with the protesters strictly, a President House press release said. During the conversation, the prime minister told the president that the detained protesters were being

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Israeli intensifies aggression in Gaza amid humanitarian crisis

1,000 Jerusalemite citizens performed Friday prayer in the Al-Aqsa Mosque in Occupied Jerusalem, despite the tight Israeli measures on Palestinian access to the holy shrine

NEWS DESK

GAZA: Israeli occupation forces continue their brutal aggression on the Gaza Strip for the 77th consecutive day Friday, with dozens of airstrikes and artillery shelling, committing massacres against civilians and carrying out horrific crimes in the infiltration areas as part of the genocide, amidst a catastrophic humanitarian situation resulting from the blockade and the displacement of more than 90% of the population. The Palestinian Resistance in Gaza continues to confront the Israeli Occupation Forces, which have been waging a ground offensive for eight weeks now, inflicting significant losses on them. Fierce clashes broke out between the Palestinian Resistance and the occupation forces on all axes of combat on the outskirts of the Jabalia camp in the northern Gaza Strip. Local media reported that Tel al-Zaatar was the focal point of armed confrontations, noting that the IOF failed to infiltrate the camp under the valiant defensive efforts of the Resistance fighters. Our correspondent also reported intense clashes breaking out between the Resistance and the occupation forces in the Qisayyib neighborhood, and several axes in

Continued on Page 06

– UNSC adopts resolution on Gaza

DNA

NEW YORK: The UNSC has ADOPTED UAE-backed resolution seeking immediate resumption of relief work in Gaza. Besides, the resolution also called for supply of necessary aid to Gaza people. Earlier the US vetoed the UNSC resolution calling for immediate ceasefire. 10 members voted in favour of the resolution while the US vetoed. The United States had indicated it will back a watered-down United Nations Security Council resolution on the Israeli-Palestinian war to call for more humanitarian aid for Gaza, after a week of negotiations and four postponements, but some countries wanted a stronger text that would include the now-eliminated call for a truce.

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ISSI holds round Table “COP28: An analytical view”

CS, ISSI in collaboration with Civil Society Coalition for Climate Change, organized a roundtable discussion on “COP 28: An Analytical View”

ADIL SHAHEEN

ISLAMABAD: The Centre for Strategic Perspectives (CSP) at the Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI), in collaboration with Civil Society Coalition for Climate Change (CSCCC), organized a roundtable discussion on “COP 28: An Analytical View.” The keynote speaker at the event was Mr. Asif Hyder Shah, Secretary, Ministry of Climate Change and Environmental Coordination. Other panelists at the event included: Ms. Aisha Khan, Executive Director, CSCCC; Dr. Imran Saqib Khalid, Director, Governance & Policy WWF, Pakistan; Dr. Shafiqat Munir, Head, of Resilient Development Program, SDPI; Dr. Ilhan Niaz, Professor, QAU; Mr. Ahsan Tehsin, World Bank; Mr. Nadeem Ahmad, Climate & Energy Attache at Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, and Ms. Fiza, Fatima Jinnah University,

ISSI Ambassador Sohail Mahmood noted that COP28 has undeniably set the stage for discussions on a crucial subject with far-reaching consequences. The decision to operationalize the Loss and Damage Fund on the conference's first day marked a historic moment, especially for the developing world. Another significant decision involved increasing the role of nuclear energy and reducing fossil fuel usage in the energy mix. He further stated that Pakistan's engagement at COP28 was robust and dynamic, showcasing collaboration among different ministries and the synergic connections developed. Moving forward, Pakistan needs to focus on mitigation and adaptation strategies by adopting sustainable practices. He stressed that a comprehensive approach on 'green transition' had to be placed high on the national agenda. In her opening remarks, Ms. Khan highlighted that COP28 marked the first Global

need for integrating GST into the National Stock Take (NST) for Pakistan. Given the country's extensive climate change challenges, a multi-sectoral approach is essential for effective resolution. In his keynote address, Mr. Shah underscored the substantial progress achieved during COP28, culminating in a host of positive outcomes and increased transparency in climate finance. Notably, Pakistan secured a position on the board of the Loss and Damage Fund, demonstrating its commitment to addressing the impacts of climate change. Additionally, Pakistan's representation on the Santiago Network for Loss and Damage (SNLD) further solidifies its global engagement. Mr. Asif Shah emphasized that GST talks were about means of implementation and transition towards renewable energy. Further, Pakistan needs to diversify its energy mix. Reducing GHG emissions by 2030 is a big challenge and Pakistan has to upgrade its Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC) targets accordingly. Recognizing the cross-cutting nature of climate change, Mr. Shah stressed the vital role of every institution in Pakistan, emphasizing the need for collaborative efforts. Concluding his address, Mr. Shah acknowledged the competitive landscape for accessing the Green Climate Fund, highlighting the imperative for Pakistan to enhance its capacity to secure international funding. Dr. Khalid emphasized that climate change represents a global security issue, underlining the persistent challenge of escalating GHG emissions since the initial COP where global emissions first took center stage. He stressed the imperative for COPs to prioritize transparency in negotiations, recognizing the potential for vested interests to dilute the core issues. Addressing Pakistan's role, Dr. Khalid highlighted the need for the country to enhance its climate change policies to effectively navigate emerging challenges.



Rawalpindi. In her opening remarks, Dr. Neelum Nigar, Director of CSP, highlighted the significance of key decisions made during COP28. She underscored the necessity for a comprehensive analysis of the outcomes and their impact on stakeholders, providing valuable insights for policymakers. In his welcome address, DG

Stock Take (GST) post the 2015 Paris Agreement, focusing on advancing the global agenda. Recognizing the time-consuming nature of resolutions on climate change issues, COP28 witnessed crucial decisions, particularly regarding climate finance. Emphasizing Pakistan's strong representation at COP28, Ms. Khan underscored the

SMIU to organise 6 International Conferences

KARACHI: Sindh Madrasah Islam University (SMIU) has decided to organise six International Conferences during the 2nd Global Research Congress scheduled on 28 and 29th February 2024. According to a statement issued here by the university's media department, international conferences will be held on the sideline of the Global Research Congress-24. Among these conferences the Faculty of Information Technology will organise the 3rd International Conference on Computing and Related Technologies, the Faculty of Sciences its 2nd International Conference on Green and Sustainable Environment, the Faculty of Social Sciences its 2nd International Conference on Media and Social Development, the Faculty of Language and Culture its 2nd International Conference on Re-Imagining Applied Linguistics and Language Practices, the Faculty of Education its 2nd International Conference on Teacher Education for Sustainable Development and the Faculty of Management, Business Administration & Commerce will organise its 3rd International Conference on Management, Business and Leadership.—APP

Christian community playing key role in Pakistan's development, prosperity: Mushaal

RAWALPINDI: Special Assistant to the Prime Minister for Human Rights and Women Empowerment, Mushaal Hussein Mullick, congratulating the Christian community on Christmas, has said that the Christian community was playing a key role in the development and prosperity of the country. She said that the Christian community members were performing significant services while all the

minorities including the Christian community had equal rights in Pakistan. Addressing a ceremony organized by Archbishop Rawalpindi-Islamabad Dr Joseph Arshad in connection with Christmas celebrations, Mushaal said that atrocities were being committed on minorities in India and the international community should take notice of that. Station Commander Rawalpindi Brig. Ahmad Nawaz, Pakistan Mus-

lim League-Nawaz leaders Chaudhry Tanveer, Barrister Danyal, Chaudhry Osama, Malik Abrar, Ziaullah Shah and Rashid Khan, Pakistan Peoples Party's Sibtul-Hasan Bukhari, businessman Sheikh Muhammad Hafeez, Shoaib Sadal, Member of the peace committee, Babu Sajid Amin Khokhar, Frayad Francis, Napoleon Gomez, Sanobar Gill, ambassadors of various countries.—APP

KP Caretaker Cabinet ensures fair elections security

SAID ALAM KHAN

PESHAWAR: The Caretaker Provincial Cabinet of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has reiterated its commitment to provide a level playing field to all political parties and has asked them to follow the Standing Operating Procedures (SOPs) during their election campaigns. Besides the directives of the Election Commissions, these SOPs include holding large political gatherings in designated areas notified by the provincial government during daylight to ensure efficient security and safety of the participants.

The cabinet met under the Chairmanship of the caretaker cabinet, Chief Minister Justice (Retd.) Arshan Hussain Shah finalized preparations for the upcoming general elections in light of the directives of the Election Commission reiterating that every effort will be made to ensure free and fair elections in the Province. The Chief Minister said that all resources have been mobilized for the purpose and every effort is being made to ensure transparency and efficient utilization of the taxpayer's money. The Cabinet was briefed in detail about the preparations for the up-

coming general elections, including availability and placement of human resources, mapping of missing facilities, availability and placement of IT staff and equipment, provision of ramps at polling stations to facilitate persons with disabilities, rationalization of sensitive and most sensitive polling stations, security arrangements, needs of CCTV cameras, transport arrangements for polling staff & equipment, security plan, SOPs for political gatherings, identification of spots in every district for political gatherings. The upcoming GE-2024 in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa will be



LAHORE: Punjab Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi is inquiring about the well-being of the girl under treatment during his visit to the Children's Hospital.—DNA

IPMG urges strengthening gender data for equality

LAHORE: The participants in the Inter-Provincial Ministerial Group (IPMG) discussed the use of data more effectively in efforts to promote gender equality in Pakistan. The two-day 21st IPMG meeting, held under the auspices of the National Commission on the Status of Women (NCSW), and with support from UN Women and the United States, concluded here on Friday during which speakers shared vision of a more inclusive society, where every woman can thrive and contribute to the nation's progress. The IPMG was established in 2009 to enhance coordination on gender equality and women's empowerment in Pakistan. Nilofar Bakhtiar, chairperson NCSW, said: "This assembly serves as a crucial platform, fostering collaboration and initiating positive change on the path to gender equality and empowerment of women in Pakistan. Together, let's unite to construct a society where every woman's voice echoes, and her rights and contributions are valued." Sharmeela Rassool, country representative of UN Women, said, "The IPMG functions as an inventive platform for devising tailored solutions that cater to unique needs of Pakistan. An exemplary illustration of this is the National Gender Data Portal. Acknowledging the crucial role of data, we recognise its importance in identifying policy gaps and empowering officials to make informed decisions.—APP

Call to make polio drive successful

QAZI SHOAB KHAN

ATTOCK: Deputy Commissioner Attock Rao Atif Raza on Friday while addressing the stake holders of health department has directed to make the successful administration of polio drops to over 0.3 million children of up to five years during the polio campaign being launched from January 08 to 12, 2024 in the inter provincial bordering district Attock amid tight security. A spokesman of DC Attock says on Friday. Among other the meeting was also attended by the Chief Executive Officer Health Authority Attock Dr. Asad Ismail, Medical Superintendent Govt Afsanwar Bokhari District Hospital Attock Dr. Jawad Elahi, District Health Officer Attock Dr. Kashif

Hussain. The Chief Executive district health authority Attock Dr Asad Ismail while briefing the session has said that arrangements are finalized to administer polio drops to over 0.3 million children across the district under the supervision of representatives from provincial and Federal health authorities and the World Health Organisation (WHO). He said that after the detection of the Afghan origin of Type-1 Wild Poliovirus (WPV1) in environmental (sewage) samples in the adjacent district Rawalpindi, the health authorities have also announced to launch anti-polio drive across the district. While talking to our scribe Chief Executive district health authority Attock Dr Asad Ismail has said that this was disclosed in a health

department meeting held under the chairmanship of Deputy Commissioner Attock Rao Atif Raza. All deputy district health officers (DDHO) of six tehsils, Superintendent Vaccination, Incharge Polio Control Room officials from education, health department, Punjab anti-polio program and representatives of WHO were also present on this occasion. Briefing the participants of the meeting, Chief Executive district health authority Dr Asad Ismail has said that arrangements are finalized to administer polio drops to over 0.3 million children across the district under the supervision of representatives from provincial and Federal health authorities and the World Health Organisation (WHO), he added.

India making IIOJK its Hindutva military colony

ISLAMABAD: India is treating illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir as its colony right from 27 October 1947 when it landed its troops in Srinagar and occupied the territory against the will of the Kashmiri people. A report released by Kashmir Media Service, today, said colonization of IIOJK by military policies has been a long-pending dream of Hindutva Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) and Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). It said Kashmiris have been victims of Indian state terrorism for over seven decades as India is using state terrorism as a matter of official policy to punish the Kashmiris. It said the Modi regime is

using every kind of oppression to subdue Kashmiris' freedom sentiment, adding IIOJK is witnessing new wave of state terrorism since Modi attained power in India. The report deplored that Hindutva government of India has intensified its state terrorism since August 05, 2019 in IIOJK. New Delhi is systematically paving the way for settler colonialism in the occupied territory after imposing several anti-Kashmir and illegal brutal laws, it added. The report pointed out that by the redrawing of electoral boundaries, the BJP government is advancing Hindutva's dangerous game plan in IIOJK after abrogation of Articles 370 and 35A. The report said the BJP re-

gime is creating colonial settlements in occupied Jammu and Kashmir on the pattern of Israel's occupation of Palestinian land and it removed the barrier to colonize Kashmir by revoking the Article 370 of the Indian Constitution, which granted special status to occupied Kashmir. The report maintained that India illegally changed laws and gave state subjects, lands and settlement entry to non-Kashmiri people, which damaged the demography of IIOJK in violation of the United Nations resolutions. India is freely violating the international law in Jammu and Kashmir, which is a disputed territory recognized by the United Nations Security Council.—APP

PRCS organizes National road safety conference

RCS Member Managing Body and Treasurer Dr. Irshad Mehmood emphasized the importance of upholding traffic rules and urged everyone to play their role in raising public awareness about road safety measures

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Red Crescent Society (PRCS), in collaboration with the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) and with the support of the Italian Red Cross, successfully organized the National Road Safety Conference 2023 at the PRCS National Headquarters in Islamabad. The event brought together distinguished guests, including PRCS leadership and management, Chairmen and Secretaries of PRCS Provincial branches, Head of Delegations from IFRC, ICRC, and National Societies, officers from Islamabad Traffic Police, National Highway & Motorway Police, PRCS staff, volunteers, and students from various private and government educational institutions in Islamabad. Chairman PRCS, Sardar Sha-

hid Ahmed Laghari, addressed the assembly, recognizing that despite Pakistan's abundant beauty and resilience, the country has grappled with significant road accidents and traffic challenges for years. Pakistan faces one of the highest rates of road accidents globally, resulting in the tragic loss of thousands of lives annually. Chairman Laghari underscored PRCS's dedication to fostering collaboration, sharing knowledge, and implementing effective strategies to mitigate the consequences of road accidents. He described the conference as a dynamic platform for experts, policymakers, and stakeholders to engage in meaningful discussions, share insights, and develop innovative solutions. He urged the youth to prioritize road safety measures, amplify public awareness, and implement policies that prioritize the well-being of every road user. Piwi

Ophoff, Head of Country Delegation, IFRC in Pakistan said, "The IFRC is supporting PRCS in the implementation of road safety project to strengthen safer road behaviors and first aid knowledge among the general public. Awareness is being raised through structured modules among children from 10-18 years and targeting schools, youth, teachers, PRCS project staff, and volunteers. Our commitment extends to backing the project's second phase in 2024, with the goal of continuing to advance road safety in Pakistan." PRCS Member Managing Body and Treasurer Dr. Irshad Mehmood emphasized the importance of upholding traffic rules and urged everyone to play their role in raising public awareness about road safety measures. Secretary General PRCS, Muhammad Abaidullah Khan, highlighted PRCS's Road Safety Project in his opening remarks, outlining the

essential training and awareness provided in 25 schools and activities in collaboration with the traffic police department in Islamabad. He expressed concern over the alarming rise in road accidents in the country and stressed the importance of adopting road safety rules. During the event, a documentary showcased the achievements of the PRCS Road Safety Project, sensitizing the public to road safety measures. Students from the Educator School Islamabad performed a tableau, emphasizing the need to follow road safety laws. In conclusion, Chairman Sardar Shahid Ahmed Laghari, along with the members of PRCS Managing Body and Heads of National Societies, distributed shields among the officers of ITP and NHMP who collaborated with PRCS under the Road Safety Project. Shields were also distributed among the representatives of private and government schools.



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National Days and Armed Forces Days

DECEMBER

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

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Chinese intercropping tech tailored for Pakistan

Dr. Sajad presented the practical and possible solution of soybean cultivation with intercropping technology in Pakistan

DNA

ISLAMABAD: "Rather than creating new/dedicated cultivation window for soybean production, the existing area under cultivation of sugarcane and maize bears the potential to produce up to 2.7 million tons of soybean with the same land, water and fertilizer resources that are being supplied to these major crops." This was stated by Dr. Sajad Hussain from the National Research Center of Intercropping (NRCI) at the just-concluded National Workshop on Soybean Production in Pakistan organized by FAO to make possible solutions for reducing soybean's import bill of \$1 billion by domestically producing 2-2.5 million tons of

soybeans, according to a report published by Gwadar Pro on Friday. In the technical session, representatives of different institutes shared their research, current challenges and status of soybean cultivation in Pakistan. Dr. Sajad presented the practical and possible solution of soybean cultivation with intercropping technology in Pakistan. He emphasized that designating new area for soybean as well as convincing the farmers for large scale mono-cropping of soybean at the expense of compromising cultivation area of major crops would be extremely difficult. "4 major crops i.e. wheat (9 million ha), maize (1.6 million ha), sugarcane (1.26 million ha) and cotton (1.9 million ha) are being cultivated extensively. To produce soybean of the target, we

will need to cultivate soybean on at least 2 million ha by replacing any other major crop," he said. According to Dr. Sajad, under the present challenging scenario of soybean demand in Pakistan, the strip intercropping of soybean with other major crops would be the best possible solution. Since 2018, Dr. Muhammad Ali Raza, a post-doc who graduated from Sichuan Agricultural University (SAU), China, and now acts as the Director of NRCI, has started to promote China's maize-soybean strip intercropping technology in Pakistan with his professor Yang Wenyu's support and guidance, which has received good response in recent years. "Up till now, over 2,000 farmers have successfully practiced intercropping in Pakistan," Dr. Muhammad Ali

Raza revealed. Currently, NRCI is working on the different cereal-legume intercropping systems including wheat-based and sugarcane-based intercropping system. Moreover, local scientists at the institute has already developed and optimized the maize-soybean and sugarcane-soybean intercropping systems as a possible solution to beat the rising import bill of soybean in Pakistan. "Through these optimized intercropping systems, we can harvest an additional 1 ton of soybeans at least, along with 72 tons of sugarcane or 7.5 tons of maize per hectare," Dr. Sajad concluded. The session chair of Formulation of National Plan for Soybean Production, Vice Chancellor, University Agriculture Faisalabad, Prof. Dr. Iqbal

Ahmad endorsed the potential of intercropping systems especially the sugarcane-soybean intercropping to address the soybean production problems in Pakistan. He stressed to include the soybean-based intercropping systems of NRCI as a potential solution to meet the targets in 5 years' production plan of soybean. Dr. Kausar Abdullah Malik, Caretaker Federal Minister for National Food Security and Research (MNFS&R), Captain (Retd) Muhammad Mahmood, Federal Secretary MNSF&R, Ms. Florence Rolle, Country Representative FAO in Pakistan, Dr. Ghulam Muhammad Ali Chairman PARC, Dr. Muhammad Arshad, Director, Crop Sciences Institute, NARC, etc. attended the workshop.



KARACHI: Caretaker Federal Education Minister, Madad Ali Sindhi is being presented with memento during the 1st Annual Conference 2023 "Examination and Assessment Practices in Pakistan.—DNA

How SAP helps transforming into a sustainable business

DNA

ISLAMABAD: "Pakistan can achieve higher GDP growth and improve economic indicators, by adopting technology at government and private level," this was stated by Saqib Ahmad, Managing Director of SAP Pakistan, Iraq, and Afghanistan, while talking to media representatives at SAP's Islamabad Office. He emphasized the significance of embracing innovative technological solutions to drive sustainability both locally and on a global scale. Through partnerships and initiatives, SAP supports a network that drives sustainable practices across industries. Saqib said, "At SAP we do not set sales targets anymore, rather we work towards goals that are defined around sustainability. The business objective of SAP is to bring the carbon footprint to Zero. The solutions by SAP are being used by 62% of the coun-

tries for budget making, procurement, and taxation at the government level, and even at resident level in the form of billing, purchasing products, receiving pensions, etc." Reiterating the need to set a precedent, Saqib stated, "Our mission is clear, to innovate, adapt, and lead by example. SAP firmly believes that sustainability is not just an option but a fundamental responsibility. In line with this ethos, we have embarked on a transformative path towards sustainability, driven by innovative strategies, cutting-edge technologies, and a dedication to having a positive impact on the environment and communities we serve." SAP contributes significantly to sustainable business transformation by leveraging technology, data-driven insights, and collaborative initiatives, enabling companies to integrate sustainability into their core business strategies. By providing

data-driven insights and analytics, SAP enables governments and companies to make informed decisions about their resource usage, supply chains, and overall business operations. This empowers them to identify areas for improvement and implement sustainable strategies. SAP solutions help in tracking and managing energy consumption, waste, and emissions, facilitating the reduction of environmental footprints. This helps organizations in achieving their sustainability goals by improving resource efficiency. Contributing to the discussion, Fahad Zahid, Director, Large Enterprise SAP Pakistan, highlighted the enthusiasm of local businesses and SMEs for the adoption of technology. He said, "Sustainability is not just about adopting eco-friendly practices; it is about ensuring the long-term viability of business operations by harmonizing economic prosperity, environmental stewardship, and

social responsibility. Embracing sustainability in Pakistan's business landscape is not merely a choice but a strategic imperative for enduring success, fostering resilience, and contributing positively to society and the environment." SAP plays an important role in the economic growth of the country, Haroon Khan Account Director, Public Sector, said, "Public sector organizations aim to provide ease for the consumers and this aligns well with the basic philosophy of SAP. The government sector has been receptive to change and it has been a positive experience to work with them, we look forward to exploring more opportunities leading to a digitally empowered Pakistan." The corporate sustainability approach of SAP is to create positive economic, social, and environmental impact within planetary boundaries – with a special focus on climate action, circular economy, and social responsibility.

Police to provide secure environment to businessmen

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: Shehzad Akbar, ASP Rural along with Malik Rasheed, SHO Koral visited Islamabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry and assured that measures would be taken to provide a secure environment to the business community in the ICT area. Speaking on the occasion, Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari, President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry thanked ASP Rural and his team for making better security arrangements during the Islamabad Taste food festival, which was organized in collaboration with ICCI in Gulberg Green, Islamabad and hoped that the police would provide similar kind of cooperation to ICCI in such future events. He said that a peaceful environment is a key requirement to promote business and investment activities and stressed that Islamabad Police should take ICCI on board to further improve the security situation in the Capital. He highlighted the need for improved security in the rural areas in Islamabad and stressed that the police should work in close liaison with the trade associations of rural areas for this purpose. He said that police should register the data of all security guards deployed in the markets and housing societies of rural areas to verify their credentials and make sure that clean record holders are employed as security guards in rural areas. Shehzad Akbar, ASP Rural said that the business community is playing a key role in the economic development of the country, and providing them a safe environment is the important priority of police. He assured that efforts would be made in collaboration with ICCI and concerned market associations to further improve security arrangements in the rural areas. He said that police would collect data on security guards posted in housing societies of rural areas to verify their credentials. Zafar Bakhtawari, former President ICCI and Secretary General UBG Pakistan lauded the crackdown of Rural Zone police against criminals as the incidents of snatching motorbikes and mobile phones in the rural areas were on the rise. He assured that the business community would fully cooperate with the Islamabad Police to control crimes in the Capital. Zubair A. Malik former President ICCI and FPCCI highlighted the need for close cooperation between the Islamabad Police and the business community to make the Capital a crime-free city. Saif ur Rehman Khan Convener ICCI Police Committee, Ajmal Baloch President All Pakistan Anjuman-e-Tajiran, Malik Jallil Ahmed Awan, Maqsood Tabish, Faizan Shehzad, and others also highlighted various issues that needed the close attention of ASP Rural for redress.

ECP awareness drive likely to double women, youth turnout

ISLAMABAD: Special Secretary Election Commission of Pakistan Zafar Iqbal on Friday said that the Election Commission of Pakistan continued a media awareness drive among people with the overarching goal of motivating women and youth actively involved in the electoral process where youngsters of the country likely to double its voter turnout in upcoming elections. Talking to PTV news channel he ensured that ECP will provide a level playing field for all political parties and advocate the active involvement of youth and women to ensure inclusive in the electoral process. He said that elections will be conducted with strict implementation of gender equality and all political parties also strive hard through their election campaigns to increase youth voter turnout. He also mentioned that the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has issued a comprehensive code of conduct for the upcoming general elections scheduled on February 8. Additional Director General Election Commission of Pakistan Syed Nadeem Haider said that any violation of the code will be treated seriously, and allegations made by one candidate against another will require confirmation from both sides before prosecution can commence.—APP

ANF launches operation to rehabilitate drug addicts in Peshawar

RAWALPINDI: Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) has launched an operation in Peshawar to rehabilitate drug addicts. Operation "Da Haq Awaaz" was conducted with the support of Rehabilitation Center Peshawar. The operation was conducted in Hayatabad, Factory Market and Industrial Area. Initially, 26 drug addicts were shifted to "Da Haq Awaaz" Rehabilitation Center Peshawar and provided with clothes, food and bedding according to hygiene rules. Blood screening of these individuals was done to determine drug addiction. The best medical facilities are being provided to these people during the rehabilitation process. Efforts are also being made to search for the families of the victims. The district administration and social welfare department fully cooperated in the operation. In the next phase, 100 more drug addicts would be rehabilitated. The aim of the operation is to make the drug addicts useful citizens of the society, the spokesman said.—APP

Pakistan Railways to expand 96 trains network till Monday

ISLAMABAD, Dec 22 (APP)—In a bid to accommodate passengers, Pakistan Railways would expand the network of its express trains to 96 till December 25, running all over the country to better felicitate the commuters. "Before completing the network of 96 trains over the entire railway network, the last year the figure of trains is 86 which will be improved after the concentrate efforts of the department," an official in the Ministry told APP. He said the facilities being provided to the passengers at railway stations include waiting rooms, vending stalls, station restaurants, wheel chairs, information desk, computer reservation facilities, public address system to inform public about arrival/ departure of trains, provision of paramedics and 1st aid facility, online reservation facility, passenger insurance service and revival of help desks at stations facilities in trains. To a question, he said the overall punctuality ratio of trains has improved from 76 to 93 percent in three months owing to close monitoring and stern measures taken by Pakistan Railways at the divisional and ministry levels.—APP

Global peace can be achieved by uniting people across all faiths: Mushaal

ISLAMABAD: Special Assistant to Prime Minister for Human Rights and Women Empowerment, Mushaal Hussein Mullick, has emphasized that true global peace can be achieved through the unity of people from diverse faiths. Speaking at a Christmas cake-cutting ceremony arranged by the Nazriya Pakistan Council, she underscored the importance of fostering harmony and understanding among individuals of different religious backgrounds. Sabien Hussein Mullick (Focal Person to SAPM), Mian Javed (Chairman Nazriya Pakistan Council), Manzoor Maseh (Executive Member Nazriya Pakistan Council), Faisal Zahid Malik, Salahuddin (Former High Commissioner of Pakistan to United Kingdom), Ms. Nargis and Mr. Khalid Suleri were among the attendees. Mushaal highlighted the universal values of love, sacrifice and peace embedded in every religion. She said that during her meeting with Vatican pope she had emphasized fostering Multi-Faith Harmony as a key driver for enduring global peace. Mushaal asserted that the resolution of global conflicts, including those in Kashmir and Palestine, lies in the propagation of the messages of love, peace, and harmony embedded in all religions. She stressed the need to stand in solidarity with people who were oppressed. Mushaal underscored the unanimous condemnation from all segments of Pakistani society regarding the Jaranwala incident. She commended the measures taken by the Government in response to the situation. She also praised the peace rallies organized by civil society, noting the substantial participation of ordinary citizens in these gatherings. Mushaal voiced deep concern over the persecution of minorities in India carried out on daily basis. She attributed it to the influence of Hindutva-inspired policies within the Indian government.—APP

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Briefs

Wheat sowing completed over 99.63% areas

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The wheat crop has been sown across more than 22.14 million acres of land in various crop-growing regions during the current Rabi season in order to meet staple food requirements as well as to maintain strategic reserves throughout the year. The crop sowing targets for the current season (2023-24) were fixed at 22.23 million acres as the cultivation targets achieved by 99.63 per cent, said Food Security Commissioner Intiaz Ali Gopang on Friday. The crop sowing was in full swing across the wheat-producing areas in the country as Punjab Province has surpassed its wheat sowing targets and completed cultivation of over 103.08 per cent of areas against the set targets, he added. The Punjab, which is the largest wheat-producing province of the country, has completed crop sowing over 16.48 million acres as compared to the fixed targets of 16.00 million acres during the current season, he said adding that more areas to come under crop cultivation during the days to come. Meanwhile, Sindh Province has achieved 94.76 per cent of its targets as wheat cultivation in different divisions of the province was completed over 2.82 million acres as against the set targets of 2.97 million acres, he added. So far the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has achieved wheat sowing over 98.72 per cent of its set targets and crop cultivation was completed over 1.90 million acres as compared to the set targets of 1.93 million acres during the current sowing season, he added. He informed that according to the Provincial Crop Reporting Services, the wheat cultivation in Balochistan Province was completed over 0.94 million acres, adding that the province was assigned a task to grow wheat over 1.33 million acres during the current season. The Food Security Commissioner further informed that approximately 729,000 metric tons of high-quality certified wheat seeds would be available to the local farming communities during the current season which comprises over 46 per cent of the total local demand.

National Workshop on Soybean Production held

ISLAMABAD: At the National Workshop on Soybean Production in Pakistan organized by FAO, intercropping technology from China and developed in Pakistan according to local conditions by the National Research Center of Intercropping (NRCI) was approved by researchers, officials, industrialists and progressive farmers. The purpose of the workshop was to make possible solutions for reducing soybean's import bill of \$1 billion by domestically producing 2-2.5 million tons of soybeans. With the fast growing poultry industry in Pakistan, this import bill of soybean may surge to \$1.5 billion by the end of 2030, Gwadar Pro reported on Friday.—APP

PNCA arranges special Christmas celebrations

Federal Minister for National Heritage and Culture Jamal Shah was the chief guest on the occasion, with Adviser and Culture Expert Muhammad Kashif Irshad and Director General PNCA Muhammad Ayuob Jamali also in attendance. Zafar Francis moderated the overall programme

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan National Council of the Arts (PNCA) in collaboration with Saira Peter arranged special Christmas celebrations here at PNCA, Auditorium on Thursday titled "Bethlehem's Christmas". Federal Minister for National Heritage and Culture Jamal Shah was the chief guest on the occasion, with Adviser and Culture Expert Muhammad Kashif Irshad and Director General PNCA Muhammad Ayuob Jamali also in attendance. Zafar

Francis moderated the overall programme. The event began with a video message by a Palestinian pastor explaining how Palestinian churches are not celebrating Christmas this year due to the horrific bloodshed and tragedy befalling Palestine's children. Accompanied by a backdrop of powerful images, Sufi opera singer Saira Peter performed songs themed around Palestine's suffering children, calling for interfaith harmony and an end to violence. The programme also featured video messages of peace from around the world. In his remarks,

Federal Minister Jamal Shah highly praised Saira Peter for collaborating with PNCA to mark Christmas in a befitting manner. He said that the role of the Christian community is of key importance in the prosperity of the country. The Federal Minister commended Saira Peter's demonstration that music is much more than entertainment, remarking on the power of the Arts to communicate society's issues. He cited her moving depiction of the Palestinian genocide through a potent combination of songs, carols and images which could not be ig-

nored. The Minister commented on the irony that dark forces are unleashed upon innocent youth in the very birthplace of Jesus, whose whole life was dedicated to serving humanity and bringing peace in the world. In his opening, Zafar Francis elaborated the titled Bethlehem and Christmas celebrations. Zafar Francis said that Bethlehem is regarded by Christians as the birthplace of Jesus, Bethlehem is usually bustling with people this time of year, with streets full of holiday decoration and vendors selling ornaments and festive figurines. He said peo-

ple often forget that at the time of Jesus' birth the king had called for the killing of boys under two years of age, pointing to similarities with the current atrocities. The stage was beautifully decorated with eight imported Christmas Trees, lent by Saira Peter and her group. A showreel was also played featuring Saira songs and social work. The colourful celebration also featured cake-cutting ceremony which was led by Federal Minister Jamal Shah, DG Ayuob Jamali Saira Peter, Zafar Francis, Muhammad Kashif Irshad and Amna Shah.



ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi chairing a meeting on health related issues and role of Mosques, at Aiwan-e-Sadr. —DNA

Household pollution posing serious threats to public health

The air quality index in Peshawar in the current winter season has belled the alarm by recording a dangerous stage of more than 236 pollution levels; raising the status of the city to the most polluted in the country

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The increasing level of household pollution both in the shape of biomass and solid waste generation is posing serious threats to public health and the environment of the city. The air quality index in Peshawar in the current winter season has belled the alarm by recording a dangerous stage of more than 236 pollution levels; raising the status of the city to the most polluted in the country. According to environmental experts, the major source of air pollution is vehicular emission followed by household pollution in shape of the burning of fossil fuel, wood and waste for cooking at home. A recent study by Peshawar Clean Air Alliance (PCAA), a volunteer association of civil society individuals, found

that transport is contributing 58.46 per cent in air pollution and is followed by household pollution making a contribution of 11.66 per cent while waste burning 4.1 per cent and dust 17.67 burning. It showed that Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has one of the highest proportions of wood fuel usage, particularly in rural households and about half of Peshawar population lives in rural area. According to 2017 census, about 138000 households in Peshawar used wood as fuel for heating. The study titled "Status of Air Pollution in Peshawar" finds that the annual Fine Particulate Matter (PM2.5) in Peshawar has ranged between 61.40 ug/m3 and 80.09 ug/mg3, exceeding the current national and provincial standards by 4 to 5 times and WHO air quality guidelines by 12-16 times. High level of PM 2.5 have a considerable impacts

on the population of Peshawar as the Air Quality Life Index (AQLI) estimates that citizen of Peshawar can add up to 2.3 years to their life expectancy if air quality level meets the WHO's guidelines. "Peshawar has been declared as the third most polluted city in Pakistan and the 9th most polluted in the world in the 2021 World Air Quality report," says Dr. Adil Zareef, a public health expert and convener of PCAA. Talking to APP, Dr. Adil said while evaluating the current year data of Peshawar air quality, the city has jumped from third most polluted city in Pakistan to number one. In November and December 2023, sometimes the air quality index of Peshawar crossed the pollution level of Lahore, the most polluted city of Pakistan. He said according to Health Department Report, around 93,000 cases of pneu-

monia have been reported in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in the current year, an indication of an increase in chest and respiratory problems mainly due to toxic air. "It's time for chalking out a multi-sectoral policy to air pollution and safe public from different health-related ailments connected with poor air quality," Dr. Adil stressed. "Introduction of "Environmental Green Police" can be given a regulatory authority under Environment Protection Agency (EPA) KP to impose environmental penalties on the offenders as is practiced in many countries," he suggested. Green policing can also help in implementation by the regulatory authorities, as the visibly emitting vehicle should be considered a public crime and banned from plying on streets through strict administrative measures.

Ministry renovates 2,377 houses, flats in Islamabad

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Works Department (PWD), Ministry of Housing and Works has upgraded and renovated as many as 2,385 houses and flats in various sectors of Islamabad during the last five and half years. "The PWD has carried out

EM works of as many as 1,365 flats and houses while around 1,012 civil work is executed of different categories, an official in the ministry told APP. The official said the ministry has owned as many as 5,253 houses and flats

of categories-I to categories-V located in various sectors in the federal capital. He said the Capital Development Authority (CDA) was responsible for the maintenance and renovation of Pak Secretariat, Islamabad, therefore,

no fund has been spent on ministry's renovation. The official said the PWD has started sending notices to the allottees of government accommodation in Sector I-9/4 about payment of electric meter bills for water motors installed at residential blocks. He said the Finance Division had allocated funds for payment of utilities in the relevant heads of accounts of the users while utility bills of the residential accommodation including hostels, rest houses and judicial residences should be paid by the users.—APP

Jinnah: A charismatic leader who crafts Pakistan on world's map

ISLAMABAD: Father of the Nation, Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah was the charismatic leader of the 20th century, whose matchless peaceful and democratic struggle not only changed the world geography in the shape of Pakistan on the globe's map but also won applause from across the borders. Renowned US academics, historian and writer Stanley Wolpert, in his famous book 'Jinnah of Pakistan' published in 1984 while paying tribute to Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah said, "Few individuals significantly alter the course of history. Fewer still modify the map of the world. Hardly any-

one can be credited with creating a nation-state. Muhammad Ali Jinnah did all three." Similarly, Nehru's sister Mrs. Vijay Lakshmi Pundit was of the view, "If the Muslim League had 100 Gandhis and 200 Azads and Congress had only one Jinnah, then India would not have been divided." These remarks are solid proof that our great leader Quaid e Azam bravely fought the case of Muslims of the sub-continent and achieved historical success in the shape of Pakistan purely through a democratic and peaceful struggle. The renowned international experts had made a praiseworthy endeavour, to sum

up different aspects of the life, personality, and leadership qualities of the great Quaid during the Pakistan Movement, who created a separate homeland for the Muslims of the Subcontinent on August 14, 1947, within seven years of adoption of the historic Pakistan Resolution at Lahore on March 23, 1940. Pakistan Resolution had set a clear roadmap for the Muslims of the subcontinent and Quaid-e-Azam materialized it through his visionary leadership. The father of the Nation had laid always a great emphasis on education and constructive criticism on the government for the sake of improvement and reformation rather than

for political and personal gains. Seeing the charisma and strong determination of Muhammad Ali Jinnah, the Muslims got united under the flag of All India Muslim League (AIML) founded on December 30, 1906 gave new impetus to the Independence and Pakistan Movement. The historic movement witnessed further acceleration after the historic Allabad address delivered by the legendary poet Dr Allama Muhammad Iqbal during the 25th annual session of AIML in 1930 in which he outlined a clear vision of an independent state for Muslims majority provinces in northwestern India, thus becoming the

first politician to articulate about two nation-theory that Muslims are a distinct nation and deserve political independence. The independence movement had witnessed further momentum after Quaid-i-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah after formally joined the AIML. Dr. Allama Iqbal became the first politician to articulate the two-nation theory that Muslims were a distinct nation and deserved political independence from other regions and communities of the United India. Muhammad Ali Jinnah had reorganized AIML by making repeated visits to all muslims majority provinces of the then British India.—APP

Media Forum calls for objective narrative of CPEC

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The 8th CPEC Media Forum has called for objective narrative of CPEC amid fruitful outcomes, China Economic Net (CEN) reported on Friday. The Forum was held here and Gwadar both online and offline. It saw the unfolding of several key events, including the CPEC Golden Anchor Awarding Ceremony, the launch of the CPEC Media Forum Balochistan Initiative, and the unveiling of the Joint Statement of 8th China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) Media Forum.

The forum commenced with Cui Jun, President of China Economic Net, reading out a congratulatory letter from Sun Weidong, Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs of China, to the CPEC Media Forum. The letter stated, "Under the strategic guidance of the leaders of the two countries and the care and support of people from all sectors, China-Pakistan relations have grown in depth in recent years and bilateral cooperation in various fields has yielded fruitful results." The letter added that to further strengthen friendship and collaboration between China and Pakistan, media professionals of both countries are expected to undertake significant responsibilities and tasks. The positive role of CPEC in Pakistan was echoed by Murtaza Solangi, Caretaker Federal Minister for Information & Broadcasting, who stated that the economic corridor "has transformed Pakistan's socioeconomic landscape, addressing a dire energy crisis and crumbling infrastructure," and "has generated 236,000 jobs since 2013, and is set to create 1.2 million direct jobs, contributing to local workforce development and reducing regional disparities." In response to the use of "selective facts, emotions, and sometimes misleading stories" by the Western media against CPEC, Murtaza called for media personnel of both countries to engage in the objective reporting of CPEC and disseminate accurate and unbiased narratives responsibly. Zheng Qingdong, President and Editor-in-Chief of Economic Daily, highlighted the constructive role of Chinese and Pakistani media in creating an enabling public atmosphere for CPEC. He suggested that both sides are expected to jointly navigate through challenges for more development opportunities, enhance exchanges for people-to-people bonds and connectivity, and conduct impartial.

Educationist advocates for meaningful engagement

ISLAMABAD: An educationist on Friday emphasised the importance of purposeful activities to keep children intellectually stimulated during the winter breaks. "Winter breaks are not just about leisure; they are a valuable time to enhance a child's cognitive abilities and creativity," Dr. Ayesha told a private news channel, urging parents to consider activities that foster both the academic and personal development of kids. She suggested incorporating structured learning opportunities into the break, including reading challenges where kids explore diverse genres or even take on writing projects to express their thoughts. She stressed the need for family engagement in educational games, as it not only reinforces learning but also strengthens the parent-child bond. Board games, puzzles, and even strategic video games can be valuable when enjoyed together. Sadia also recommended hands-on learning for children through experiments and projects. "Simple science experiments related to winter phenomena can ignite curiosity. From creating a mini-snowstorm in a mini jar to studying the science behind frost, these activities stimulate a child's interest in the world around them. Similarly, she said art and music also contribute significantly to cognitive and emotional development of a child. Encourage kids to explore their creative side through winter-themed art projects or learning a musical instrument during the break, she noted. The educationist concluded by advising parents to view winter vacations as a golden opportunity for enriching a child's overall development. By combining structured learning, family engagement, hands-on experiments, and creative pursuits, children can make the most of their break while laying the foundation for a lifelong love of learning, she remarked.—APP

Tourist resorts witnessing rush after children's winter holidays

ISLAMABAD: With the start of children's winter holidays, most of the tourist resorts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, especially those in AJK, Abbottabad, Swat, Naran, Kaghan, and Malam Jabba have been witnessing a huge rush of visitors who are enjoying the picturesque beauty of hill stations with their family members. Famous hilly tourist destinations in Pakistan are no less than any other international vacation spots as scenic views and beautiful landscapes have been enhancing the beauty of nature during snowfall season every year, said a report aired by a private news channel. According to residents of the Northern parts, a large number of families have planned to visit these areas with their families to enjoy the picturesque beauty of hilly areas and enjoy snowfall, taking advantage of winter vacations, adding, several local as well as international tourists was witnessing significant increase after the first snowfall of the season. According to visitors, like every year this year too many tourists are interested in seeing snowfall.—APP

MOST EXPERIENCED MANUFACTURERS & EXPORTERS OF MARTIAL ARTS UNIFORMS IN PAKISTAN

WHERE EACH STITCH IS WATCHED

JUDO
KARATE
KUNG-FU
JU-JITSU
TAEKWONDO
BOXING
MORNING
TAEKWONDO

JUDO
KARATE
KUNG-FU
JU-JITSU
TAEKWONDO
UNIFORMS AND COLOURED BELTS

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KARATE
KUNG-FU
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US blocks space co-op, excludes China

RESPONDING to media inquiries about United States Ambassador to China Nicholas Burns' recent claim that Beijing has no plan to cooperate with the US in lunar exploration, a spokesperson for the China National Space Administration denied the allegation, stating the real obstacle is the barriers Washington has erected. Burns' comment stemmed from a US complaint that the Chinese space agency has refused to give NASA access to the lunar soil China's Chang'e 5 space mission brought back from the moon in 2020. The Chinese mission collected and brought home 1,731 grams of moon soil, and in a goodwill gesture to facilitate international collaboration, the Chinese space authorities offered to share the soil samples with interested international scientific institutions. Beginning October, interested parties could submit an application to obtain some of the soil. The US National Aeronautics and Space Administration also wants access to the soil for research purposes, because the site where the soil was collected may provide information of special scientific significance. Specifically, scientists believe the Chang'e 5 lunar sample may shed light on the late history of volcanic activities on the moon. Unlike its international peers, however, NASA faces a unique obstacle put in place by its own government, which prohibits it from collaborating with its Chinese counterpart. As the CNSA official pointed out, it is the so-called Wolf Amendment, rather than Chinese reluctance, that prevents NASA-funded research having access to Chinese lunar samples. The Wolf Amendment was passed by the US Congress in 2011 and prohibits NASA-funded research in direct, bilateral cooperation with the Chinese government and China-affiliated organizations unless approved by the Federal Bureau of Investigation and Congress. The legislation derived from a 1999 report, which claimed technical information provided by US commercial satellite manufacturers to China involving satellite launches may have been used to improve Chinese intercontinental ballistic missile technology. Subsequently, the Barack Obama administration began to put in place more rigid restrictions on technological exchanges with China. It is one thing whether or not the FBI and US Congress allow NASA to engage in some form and degree of collaboration with Chinese counterparts; it is another how the two sides approach such exchanges. As the CNSA spokesperson said, it has always been Washington that opposes bilateral space cooperation. Beijing, for "Britain Wrong in Northern Ireland Legacy" its part, has always been open to such exchanges and made repeated attempts to sustain interagency cooperation. Instead of accusing China, Washington should remove the artificial barricade created by the Wolf Amendment.



Britain wrong in northern Ireland legacy

BRITAIN has long suffered from a failure to pay proper attention to Ireland. So the news that Ireland is to bring an inter-state case against the UK under the European human rights convention may have caught some on the hop. There can be no excuse for that. This state-against-state clash, only the second that the UK has faced from Ireland, has been coming for at least a year and a half. What is more, Ireland is in the right and the UK in the wrong. Boris Johnson's government launched the original Northern Ireland Troubles (legacy and reconciliation) bill in 2022. After some changes, it eventually became law in September this year. Its aim, in Mr Johnson's overstated words, was "to draw a line under the Troubles". The new act has not drawn any such line. Instead, it has been opposed every step of the way by almost everyone except the Conservative party and some UK veterans' organisations. Most important of all, it is opposed by all the main Northern Ireland political parties, from Sinn Féin to the Democratic Unionists. The legacy law sets up an independent commission for reconciliation and information recovery. Its central purpose is to enable the families of the more than 3,500 dead from the Troubles era - which lasted from 1966 to 1998 - to find out how their relatives were killed. Many cases remain unsolved, so this is a desirable goal. But the legacy law allows the commission to give conditional immunity from prosecution to those who reveal details of the killings, while closing down future alternatives such as inquests and civil actions. It is biased against victims' families. This is the nub of the argument for supporters and opponents alike. Rishi Sunak's government wants to end legal proceedings against British soldiers and members of the security forces because this is a hot-button issue for the Tory right and for some rightwing tabloids. But the chosen mechanism does not just antagonise nationalists, who think killers from the security forces should have to answer for their actions, it also angers unionists, who want relatives to have a say before any republican paramilitaries are given immunity. The legacy law lacks political friends. But it also lacks legal ones. Challenges were already under way in the Northern Ireland courts. The inter-state case is now likely to get priority. Much legal opinion thinks that the law infringes the European human rights convention because it weakens a "procedural obligation" to conduct effective investigations into deaths caused by state agents such as members of the security forces. The new commission itself has called for clarity. The legacy law is flawed and irresponsible. Pressing ahead in the face of such opposition was an act of bad faith, particularly after a better approach appeared to have been settled in the Stormont House agreement in 2014. It also places yet another post-Brexit strain on the Anglo-Irish relationship and on the peace process of which both states are guarantors. London should have agreed to Dublin's request to pause the law. In some ways this is now a phoney dispute. Few expect the Sunak government to survive the next UK election. For shortsighted partisan reasons, Mr Sunak may welcome the prospect of a human rights court finding against Britain.

The complex web from Ukraine to the pacific rim

Dr. Muhammad Akram Zaheer



The tensions in Southeast Asia, the Balkans, Eastern Europe, the Middle East, and Central Asia don't seem to be connected in any big way. Unlike World War II, where countries were linked by common interests, the current situation doesn't show a clear connection between the different wars and potential conflicts. It seems unlikely that there will be a huge global war, but it's puzzling why there are so many ongoing and possible conflicts without a common cause. It could mean that nothing major is really happening, and the idea of disagreements...

THE war in Ukraine has been going on for almost two years. People are talking about the possibility of a peace deal, but fighting is still happening. In the Middle East, there's a bitter and intense war between Hamas and Israel that has been happening for about a month. There's also talk about Serbia getting ready for war. Back in 1998-99, Serbia and Kosovo had a really violent war, and the U.S. and NATO supported Kosovo, even bombing Serbia. I hope the information I've heard is wrong, but I'm worried that this could lead to more conflict beyond the Balkans. In the Philippines, China has been causing trouble, and Japan is publicly saying they'll help the Philippines defend themselves by sending warships if China attacks. Japan is also working more closely with Malaysia. Meanwhile, China and India have been having an on-and-off border war. Japan told India that they're ready to offer some support. China is going through economic difficulties, and even though some people think they have a strong navy, I don't believe it's as powerful as they say. Japan's decision to challenge China, with U.S. support, is a big change for Japan in the Western Pacific, and China might have a hard time dealing with that. China's economic troubles are also making its government weaker. Turkey is getting involved politically in Central Asia, an area that really matters to Russia. This could lead to a dangerous situation. After Russia's invasion of Ukraine, Moscow's influence there rapidly declined. Nearby Azerbaijan's effective victory in the 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, with Turkish military support, also shifted the regional balance. With Turkey's rise as a regional power, Erdogan has moved to capitalize on

these geopolitical shifts to expand Ankara's influence in Central Asia. He has championed the idea of a "Turkic world" bound by historical, religious and cultural ties. Turkey is trying to be more involved globally, and this in its actions concerning Afghanistan, the Syrian refugee crisis, and its role in the Russia-Ukraine conflict. Recently, Turkey has been mediating peace talks between Russia and Ukraine, helping with Ukrainian grain release efforts, and assisting in a prisoner swap between the two countries. Turkey is also looking to play a bigger role in Central Asia and China, aiming to create new trade routes that don't rely on Russia. This move is influenced by Turkey's own energy needs and its efforts to connect culturally and economically with the region. With Russia at war with Ukraine, Turkey is strengthening its global ambitions and foreign policy goals, positioning itself as a key link between Asia, Europe, and the Middle East. This could bring new trade opportunities and better regional connectivity for Central Asian countries. Turkey's involvement also opens up access to European and global markets for these countries and China, without relying on Russia. However, the increased use of drones by Turkey might lead to conflicts between Central Asian countries, especially Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. In the larger picture, Turkey is striving for more geopolitical power on the world stage. Erdogan, Turkey's leader has stated that the country can and wants to pursue foreign policy goals that align with its own interests, rather than just those of NATO. However, it remains to be seen how successful Turkey will be in achieving these objectives. The tensions in Southeast Asia, the Balkans, Eastern Europe, the Middle East, and Cen-

tral Asia don't seem to be connected in any big way. Unlike World War II, where countries were linked by common interests, the current situation doesn't show a clear connection between the different wars and potential conflicts. It seems unlikely that there will be a huge global war, but it's puzzling why there are so many ongoing and possible conflicts without a common cause. It could mean that nothing major is really happening, and the idea of disagreements turning into wars might not be true. But there are always questions I can't answer. Why are the Japanese talking tough at the same time as the Palestinians and Israelis are at war, and the Balkan states are on edge? It's not just that there are war situations; it's that they're happening at the same time. The U.S. might be part of this complicated situation. Some people think the U.S. should get more involved in wars, even if they're not directly related to us. The U.S. is a major global power, with the biggest economy and military, so we're connected to a lot of countries, either through money or military alliances. Having choices is an advantage, but like Britain and Rome in the past, the U.S. needs to choose carefully where to get involved. The U.S. played a big role in World War II, the Balkans, the creation of Israel, and the shaping of Ukraine. As we look at all these wars and possible wars, the U.S. is deeply involved in many ways. The one country I didn't mention in the list is the United States, and sadly, we might get dragged into wars without much time to think. Historians will probably have to figure that out later. Right now, we're worried about whether my trusted friends really know what they're talking about. Most of the time, rumored wars don't actually happen.

EU must prove it is serious about enlargement

Luke Coffey

Finally, there is an important geopolitical matter that will need to be resolved before Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia join the EU. All three countries have Russian troops on their territory that are uninvited. It is also not well known that the EU contains a mutual defense clause (Article 42.7 of the Treaty on European Union) that is similar to NATO's Article 5 security guarantee. NATO's defense clause is the No. 1 roadblock when it comes to countries like Ukraine and Georgia joining the alliance. With Russian troops already occupying territory in these countries, NATO members are concerned that their entry into the alliance...

THIS has been a historic month for the EU. After months of deliberation, the Council of the EU last week voted to grant candidate status to Georgia and to begin membership talks with Ukraine and Moldova. This decision marks a turning point regarding the enlargement of the bloc. When the EU's predecessor, the European Coal and Steel Community, was created in 1951, there were only six members: Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg and the Netherlands. Over the course of the next 53 years, only nine new members were added to what became the European Economic Community and then later the EU, bringing the total to 15. This changed in 2004. After the collapse of the Soviet Union and the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact in the early 1990s, the EU focused on the enlargement prospects in Central and Eastern Europe. This initiative came to fruition in 2004, when the EU's single largest enlargement occurred. At this time, 10 new countries joined, including seven that were once either part of the Warsaw Pact or Soviet Union. However, since this so-called big bang enlargement in 2004, only three new countries have joined: Romania and Bulgaria in 2007 and Croatia in 2013. Of course, the UK formally left the EU in January 2020 after the Brexit vote. Today, the number of members stands at 27. Because of Russia's large-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, there is a newfound geopolitical impetus for EU enlargement for countries in Central and Eastern Europe. In the summer of 2022, just months after the invasion, Ukraine and Moldova were granted EU candidate status. This month, both began accession talks to formally join the bloc. Meanwhile, Georgia, which has long remained committed to Euro-Atlantic integration but has experienced democratic backsliding in recent years that raised concerns in Brussels, was given candidate status. However, before popping the Champagne, getting Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia across the finish line and into the EU will be no easy task. This is

not because Kyiv, Chisinau and Tbilisi will be unable or too slow at making the required reforms to join. Instead, the biggest obstacles will likely be found in Brussels and among certain EU members in Western Europe as they grapple with the institutional reforms needed to bring in new members. There are four particular issues of concern. Getting Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia across the finish line and into the EU will be no easy task. Firstly, since voting in the Council of the EU is, at least in part, based on a formula that includes the population of each member state, some countries in Western Europe stand to lose influence if bigger countries join. For example, upon joining, Ukraine would become the fifth-most-populous member, followed by Poland and Romania. This would make Central and Eastern Europe more influential in the decision-making of the EU in a way that will likely make Paris and Berlin uncomfortable. Secondly, there is also the matter of reallocating seats in the European Parliament if new members are added. Currently, there are 705 seats. These are distributed based on population, with the maximum number of seats for any EU member being 96 and a minimum being six. If a new member joins, the seats have to be redistributed. This means current members will lose seats, especially considering Ukraine's relatively bigger population. For the EU's smaller states, this will not make too much difference. However, the bigger states in Western Europe will lose out. Thirdly, the EU's Common Agricultural Policy will need to be reformed before Ukraine can join. This will be no easy task. The CAP was introduced in 1962 to facilitate a complex system of agricultural subsidies and to set agricultural policies across the EU. The CAP is hugely expensive as it is and today takes up about a third of the EU's entire budget. The number of agricultural subsidies received by member states under CAP is linked to farm size. Considering Ukraine has an estimated quarter of Europe's total farmland, billions of euros in subsidies will be shifted eastward and away from Western European countries

like France and Spain. Reforming CAP is already one of the most contentious issues inside the EU. A major farming country like Ukraine joining the EU would make CAP even more difficult to reform. Finally, there is an important geopolitical matter that will need to be resolved before Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia join the EU. All three countries have Russian troops on their territory that are uninvited. It is also not well known that the EU contains a mutual defense clause (Article 42.7 of the Treaty on European Union) that is similar to NATO's Article 5 security guarantee. NATO's defense clause is the No. 1 roadblock when it comes to countries like Ukraine and Georgia joining the alliance. With Russian troops already occupying territory in these countries, NATO members are concerned that their entry into the alliance would trigger an automatic war with Moscow. In theory, the same thing could be true regarding the EU's Article 42.7, but there has been no public debate about how to address this matter. However, as these three countries get closer to the EU finish line, you can bet that this will become a contentious issue. The biggest obstacles will likely be found in Brussels and among certain EU members in Western Europe. Right now, there is an understandable amount of euphoria in the EU over the prospect of Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia joining. However, as Kyiv, Chisinau and Tbilisi make progress on the difficult but necessary reforms to join the EU, Brussels also has an obligation to make the necessary institutional reforms. It would be tragic if Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia successfully underwent the political and economic reforms needed to join the EU, only to then have the process stalled because of Western European concerns over the allocation of European Parliament seats, voting weight in the European Council or farming subsidies. Even the challenges surrounding the EU's Article 42.7 are not insurmountable with the right leadership and creativity in Brussels. If the EU is serious about bringing in Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia as members, it must start the necessary reforms now before it is too late.

- Sourced by Arab news

Briefs

Supreme Court grants bail to Imran, Qureshi

FROM PAGE 01
SIALKOT: Former federal minister and Central Information Secretary Istehkam-e-Pakistan Party (IPP) Dr. Firdous Ashiq Awan has said the party is determined to change the destiny of people, under the leadership of Jahangir Khan Tareen and Abdul Aleem Khan. She urged people to support the election symbol Shaheen of the IPP in election for a secure and prosperous future of coming generations. Talking to the media before submitting her nomination papers at Sialkot Kutchery here on Friday, she said the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) had extended nomination papers submission date by two days; therefore, the IPP would issue the final list of candidates on the last day of filing of papers.

Israeli intensifies aggression...

FROM PAGE 01
Jabal al-Balad, where the occupation is attempting to infiltrate from the west. The Resistance was also reported to have confronted Israeli infiltrating units in the Sheikh Radwan neighborhood. It was also reported that Al-Quds Brigades, the military wing of the Islamic Jihad Movement, targeted a field command headquarters of the occupation forces in the al-Zanna area east of Khan Younis with a barrage of missiles. The Brigades also targeted military gatherings east of al-Qorm Roundabout in northern Gaza with a barrage of 60mm mortar shells. Additionally, they shot down an Israeli drone in the skies over central Gaza. They also targeted several points of concentration of IOF vehicles and forces in the al-Matahen checkpoint, Abu Holy checkpoint, and in the vicinity of the cattle farms in the axis of progress south of the central governorate with a barrage of mortar shells.

Feb polls: Nomination papers...

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hundreds of workers reached the Deputy Commissioner Ground to submit nomination papers. The former chairman of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf has submitted nomination papers for the NA-89 constituency of Mianwali through his lawyer Bilal Umar Budla. Istehkam-e-Pakistan Party (IPP) leader Major Khurram Hameed Kohri also submitted nomination papers to contest elections from NA-89. Inam Ullah Khan Niazi submitted nomination papers for PP 87. The nomination papers of Chaudhry Pervaiz Elahi for the NA-69 constituency have been submitted. His nomination papers were submitted by many lawyers. PPP Senator Yusuf Baloch received the nomination papers on behalf of Bilawal Bhutto, who is contesting from NA-239.

IHC CJ reprimands IG for...

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the "protestors who reached Islamabad from Balochistan were not involved in the violence". They, however, were of the view that the force was used to avoid a "catastrophe" in the federal capital. Hearing a petition filed by long march organisers Sami Baloch and Abdul Salam a day earlier, the IHC ruled: "Let them protest who have come to protest, it's their constitutional right." The court sought a detailed report regarding the number of Baloch protestors arrested during the police action and adjourned the hearing by today. At the outset of today's hearing, the Islamabad IG apprised the court that 52 Baloch women were arrested and would be produced before the local court today. At this, the court ordered the police to hand over the detainees to organisers of the long march.



ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Senior Officer of the Information Group Abdul Rashid Shakir getting certificate from the Federal Information Minister Murtaza Solangi on completion of course at ISA. Federal Information Secretary Shahera Shahid and PIO and Executive Director General ISA Dr Tariq Mahmood also seen in the picture. Abdul Rashid Shakir is posted as the PRO to the Chief Minister Punjab. - DNA

Pakistan likely to make 3 changes for 2nd Test

Injured pacer Khurram Shahzad, wicketkeeper Sarfaraz Ahmed and all-rounder Faheem Ashraf won't be part of the XI

SPORTS DESK

KARACHI: Pakistan are likely to make three changes for the second Test against Australia, which begins in Melbourne on December 26. Injured pacer Khurram Shahzad, wicketkeeper Sarfaraz Ahmed and all-rounder Faheem Ashraf won't be part of the XI, according to sources. Sarfaraz, who only scored seven runs during the first Test while also fluffing couple of chances behind the stumps, will be replaced by Mohammad Rizwan and Faheem, who scored 14 runs in Perth and only claimed one wicket, is likely to make way for spinner Sajid Khan. Meanwhile, one of Mir Hamza and Hasan Ali will replace Khurram. It must be noted that Khurram has been ruled out of the remaining Tests of the series due to a stress fracture in his left 10th rib, as well as an abdominal muscle tear, according to the Pa-



kistan Cricket Board (PCB). The right-arter made his debut during the Perth Test and claimed five wickets during the match.

Pakistan suffered a heavy loss against Australia in the first game of the three-Test series. After being set a target of 450 in the

fourth innings, Pakistan folded for a measly 89 in 30.2 overs, losing the match by 360 runs. The visitors were dismissed for

271 in their first innings in reply to Australia's 487. Pakistan were also 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. Pakistan will now play a two-day practice match against Victoria from December 22-23 before the second Test.

Australia squad for the second Test: Pat Cummins (captain), Scott Boland, Alex Carey, Cameron Green, Josh Hazlewood, Travis Head, Usman Khawaja, Marcus Labuschagne, Nathan Lyon, Mitch Marsh, Steve Smith, Mitch Starc, David Warner
Pakistan's squad: Shan Masood (captain), Sarfaraz Ahmed, Imam-ul-Haq, Abdullah Shafique, Babar Azam, Saud Shakeel, Salman Ali Agha, Faheem Ashraf, Shaheen Shah Afridi, Aamir Jamal, Sajid Khan, Abrar Ahmed.

Khawaja contests ICC charge over armband row

SYDNEY: Australian cricketer Usman Khawaja has challenged the International Cricket Council's (ICC) charge for wearing a black armband during the first Test against Pakistan, raising questions about the application of regulations. Khawaja donned the armband in Perth after initially wanting to wear shoes emblazoned with "All lives are equal" and "Freedom is a human right" in support of the Palestinian cause. These messages were deemed to be in violation of ICC rules concerning political statements. While black armbands are permitted to honour deceased individuals, prior approval from the national board and ICC is mandatory. Khawaja, however, claims he informed the ICC the armband was for personal bereavement, adhering to regulations. Speaking in Melbourne ahead of the Boxing Day Test, Khawaja expressed his confusion over the inconsistency in enforcing rules. "The shoes were a different matter, but the armband... I followed all regulations and past precedents," he stated. He cited past instances of players customising bats or wearing unauthorised shoes and armbands without permission and repercussions. He said he had no political agenda, adding that he expressed his feelings for the killings in Gaza with what he wrote on his shoes. "Not religious or political, but I expressed solidarity on humanitarian grounds," Khawaja said, insisting that he had no hidden agenda, but it was all about human rights. Khawaja emphasised his respect for the ICC and its rules but contested the lack of uniform application. "I will be asking them to make it fair and equitable for everyone," he declared. "I was very open and honest. I'll deal with that with the ICC." He said he adhered to and respected the ICC rules, and vowed not to wear an armband ever again. Khawaja also clarified that he was only disturbed by the videos of innocent children being killed. The challenge throws the spotlight on the ICC's regulations and their implementation. Whether Khawaja's personal reason for wearing the armband holds weight and how the ICC responds to his concerns remain to be seen. The controversy adds another layer to the upcoming Boxing Day Test, sure to draw both cricketing and human rights-related attention. - Agencies

PCB plans T10 exhibition matches next month

DNA

LAHORE: With plans to kickstart a comprehensive T10 League, the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) is contemplating staging six exhibition matches in Rawalpindi next month, featuring both men's and women's teams. As per local media, to infuse an international touch, efforts are underway to collaborate with the English County club Middlesex for this potential venture. The PCB's fascination with T10 has been ongoing. A recent statement from Zaka Ashraf, head of the PCB Management Committee, hinted at his ambition to see the league established during his tenure. Rawalpindi has been identified as the potential host city.

Alex makes spectacular prediction about Carlos

PARIS: Former world No 2 Alex Corretja made an astonishing prediction about Carlos Alcaraz, saying that the Spaniard will win Grand Slams on all surfaces in his career due to his never-ending ambition and character. Alcaraz, 20, emerged as one of the best players in the world and already has two Grand Slams - US Open and Wimbledon - to his name. However, he is still missing the Australian Open and Roland Garros from his impressive CV, and Corretja believes that the Spaniard will aim to achieve victory in Paris in 2024. Alcaraz played the French Open semi-final last year against Novak Djokovic, he was off to a great start but suffered cramps and ended up losing the tie. "To me, winning a Grand Slam would make it a very good season," he said on Eurosport. "I think that this year, for example, Roland Garros is going to be a very big goal for him. "After what happened last year [cramps against Djokovic], I think he will manage it differently. He will have less anxiety and he'll be wanting to get to Paris to win, because he knows that it is a very long Grand Slam." Corretja backed Alcaraz to win all four Grand Slams and even the Masters as he believes that the 20-year-old possesses the quality to dominate future events. "I've said it a long time ago, I think Alcaraz is going to win all the Grand Slams on all surfaces, even the Masters," he added. "I think he is going to be a player who is going to win all the titles practically possible and it is because of the way he plays, his ambition, and his character. "I think his tennis is very high. So it seems to me that Alcaraz is destined to be one of the special ones." It must be noted that Alcaraz will begin the 2024 campaign in January at the Australian Open, but he will be without his coach Juan Carlos Ferrero, who is recovering from an arthroscopy on his left knee due to which he will not be able to travel alongside the rising star. - Agencies

ECP extends deadline for nomination...

FROM PAGE 01
scrutiny of nomination papers scheduled for December 25 to December 30. The last date for filing appeals against the Returning Officers' decisions on rejecting or accepting nomination papers will be Jan 03 and the final date for deciding the appeals of candidates by an appellate tribunal will be Jan 10. The revised list of candidates will be published on Jan 11 and the last date for withdrawing one's candidature is Jan 12. The revised list of candidates will be published on Jan 12. Electoral symbols will be assigned to candidates on January 13, and the general elections are scheduled to be held on February 8. The cost for acquiring the nomination papers is set at Rs. 100. Each candidate is allowed to submit a maximum of five nomination papers, each with different endorsers. For those contesting a National Assembly seat, the non-refundable fee is Rs. 30,000. Meanwhile, candidates vying for a Provincial Assembly seat contestant must pay a non-refundable fee of Rs. 20,000. Candidates must attach their income tax return documents from the past three years along with their nomination papers. The fundamental eligibility criteria for candidates include being a citizen of Pakistan and being at least 25 years old.

ECP strips PTI off its 'bat' symbol

FROM PAGE 01
deadline for submitting the nomination papers expires on Sunday and the party only has one day (Saturday) to move courts against the ECP's decision. The party also seems to be running out of time as the extended deadline for submitting the nomination papers expires on Sunday and the party only has one day (Saturday) to move courts against the ECP's decision. The PTI has complained repeatedly that it is being targeted and not being given a level playing field, but today, just hours before the order, the ECP has assured the party it would be provided equal opportunities.

President, PM hold express...

FROM PAGE 01
released on personal bonds. Meanwhile, Balochistan Governor Malik Abdul Wali Khan Kakar also called on President Alvi and discussed the overall situation in Balochistan province as well as police maltreatment against the Baloch protestors. The governor viewed that the police should show restraint towards the protestors. In the meeting, the two sides believed that the police should not have acted beyond their limits and powers. Both leaders emphasized the measures to improve the law and order situation in Balochistan.

Türkiye nabs 304 suspects...

FROM PAGE 01
was carried out simultaneously across the country. "We will not allow any terrorists to open their eyes, for the peace and unity of our people. We will continue our battle with the intense efforts of our security forces," he said, sharing footage of the operations that showed police entering apartments and buildings and dragging suspects into vehicles. Daesh controlled one-third of Iraq and Syria at its 2014 peak. Though beaten back, it continues to wage attacks. It has conducted numerous attacks across Türkiye, including on a nightclub in Istanbul on Jan. 1, 2017, in which 39 people were killed.

FM saddened over Prague shooting

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yesterday. In this hour of grief, I express my heartfelt condolences to the families of the victims and pray for the recovery of all the injured," the foreign minister wrote on social media platform X.

WI dominate England to clinch T20I series 3-2

The win is the third straight T20 international series win for West Indies in 2023

OUR CORRESPONDENTS

MADISON: Shai Hope's unbeaten 43 led West Indies to a four wicket victory over England and secured a 3-2 Twenty20 series win in a tense encounter. England were bowled out for 132 in the decider and while West Indies never got into their rhythm, Hope held their reply together and then won the game with a powerful six over extra-cover off the second ball of the final over. The win is the third straight T20 international series win for West Indies in 2023 as they prepare to host the World Cup for the shortest format in June. It was a disappointing end to the mini-tour for Jos Buttler's England side, who had also lost the 50-over series in

the Caribbean 2-1. The low-scoring contest was in marked contrast to Tuesday's game where England scored a team-record 267 but with conditions helping the bowlers, West Indies were able to add to their T20i series wins over South Africa and India. The surface at the Brian Lara Academy offered help to the spinners and slow left-arter Gudakesh Motie took full advantage, picking up three wickets for 24 runs in his four overs. West Indies' other left-arm orthodox spinner, Akeal Hosein, chipped in with two for 20 in his four overs as the home side restricted England to the lowest target set in the series. England skipper Buttler was removed for 11 when he stepped outside the off-stump and tried to turn seamer Jason Holder down

the leg-side but was caught by Oshane Thomas. Hosein then bowled Jacks before a beautiful delivery before Motie got significant turn as he claimed the prize wicket of Phil Salt (38). Salt had scored rapid centuries in both the last two games, won by England as they fought back to level the series at 2-2. Liam Livingstone threatened with a swift 28 before he was caught and bowled by Motie and

Moeen Ali was also aggressive before he was caught by a teamwork catch with Andre Russell throwing the ball to skipper Rovman Powell as he headed towards the boundary rope. England were bowled out with three balls remaining of their 20 overs when Sam Curran was caught by Sherfane Rutherford off Holder. The home side's reply got off to a flying start with 20 off the first two overs

before Brandon King was removed by Topley and when Woakes bowled Nichola Pooran there was hope for England. But Sherfane Rutherford (30) put on a 41 run partnership with Hope that stabilised the innings only for England to apply some late pressure after Rashid removed Rutherford and then Powell was dismissed by Topley in the 17th over. Left-arm seamer Sam Curran delivered an excellent penultimate over, removing Andre Russell and conceding just two runs to leave West Indies needing nine off the final over. An inside edge from Holder allowed West Indies to scamper three before Woakes went full and wide to Hope who smashed the ball over the rope to the delight of the home crowd. "We kept on losing wickets at key times but we always

knew that Shai Hope was going to be an important man on this wicket," said Powell. "We realized this wasn't a wicket that offered a lot of shots but if we have someone in the middle order who can get to 40 off 35 balls, that would serve us as batting group well," he added. Buttler said England had paid the price for trying to force their shots early in their innings. "We probably didn't quite manage to adapt quickly enough. I thought 160 would have been a decent score to try and defend. (Then) we needed wickets to try to win the game and I thought we did well to hang in as long as we did," he said. "If we would have had a few more runs to play with, we could have put a bit more pressure on the opposition but I thought it was a really good effort with the ball," he added.



Briefs

31 killed in floods in India's Tamil Nadu

CHENNAI: At least 31 people were killed in floods and heavy rain in India's southern state of Tamil Nadu this week, a top federal minister said on Friday, as rescuers struggled to reach scores still stranded in high waters. Heavy rains have paralyzed several districts of the state, inundating entire neighborhoods, roads and railway tracks, days after a cyclone hit India's south-eastern coast, causing widespread damage. "The (toll) number could change," federal Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman told reporters, adding that more than 40,000 people have been rescued so far and efforts are underway to reach those still stranded. The state is one of the major electronics and manufacturing hubs in India. Some southern neighborhoods remained waterlogged on Friday. "We're struggling to get tractors and boats with food and essentials through water in the worst-affected areas," said M. Balamurugan, who along with other volunteers has been distributing foods and essentials. Tamil Nadu recorded over 64 mm of rainfall this week, more than triple the 20 mm that would be normal at this time of year, the weather department said, predicting more rainfall in parts of the state over the next five days. For some the floods are reminiscent of rains eight years ago in state capital Chennai that killed 290 people and inundated large swathes of the city. —APP

Death toll in blast at Guinea's oil terminal rises

CONAKRY: The death toll from a blast and fire at an oil terminal in Guinea's capital, Conakry, has increased to 23 from 13 earlier, and the number of injured has risen to 241 from 178, the government said in a statement. The statement on Thursday said that 10 remains were still to be identified, adding that the government had received reports of several people still missing. The blast at the West African nation's main oil terminal that handles its fuel imports sparked fears of shortages. The government said in the statement that gasoline distribution was ongoing across the country. Investigations are continuing to determine whether more victims remain missing, the government said. Colonel Mamady Doumbouya, the head of the ruling junta who seized power after a 2021 coup, has announced three days of national mourning starting Thursday. Protesting youths and security forces clashed in Guinea's capital, Conakry on Thursday as demonstrators demanded petrol be restored at service stations whose supplies were suspended after a deadly explosion at the country's main fuel depot. —APP

2 Syrians charged in Germany with war crimes

BERLIN: German federal prosecutors said Friday that they had charged two Syrians with "war crimes" committed in Damascus a decade ago as part of the Daesh group. The two men, identified as Mohammad A. and Asmael K. per German privacy rules, were arrested in March and are accused of membership of a foreign terror organization and "hostage-taking resulting in death." Asmael K. was also charged with murder and killing people protected under international law. Mohammad A. is believed to have joined the Daesh group at the latest in 2013 and served as a commander of 200 fighters. "At the end of 2013, Mohammad A. together with the Daesh fighting unit in his command abducted two opponents of the organization," prosecutors said in a statement. The victims were held at a Daesh detention center and later "executed" with 10 other prisoners. —Agencies

EU considers Turkiye as rival rather than partner

Turkiye-EU joint committee calls for increased dialogue, the Turkish top diplomat urges the union to eliminate "the lack of strategic vision and common sense caused by the narrow self-interest of some of its members"

NEWS DESK

ANKARA: The EU considers Turkiye a "rival rather than a partner," and NATO members do not take Ankara's security concerns into account, the Turkish foreign minister said. That has led Turkiye "to develop more capabilities and alternative strategies," Hakan Fidan told parliament on Thursday. It is not a choice for us, said Fidan, underlining that it has become a necessity for the "survival of the Turkish state and nation." "I believe that if the Union takes concrete steps to revitalise our country's membership process, this will create new opportunities for both parties," he said. Stressing that Turkiye is determined to advance the integration process with the EU, he said the bloc must dispel the "necessary will." "It is essential for the EU to get rid of the lack of strategic vision and common sense caused by the narrow self-interest of some of its

members. Unfortunately, the EU does not take the same encouraging steps for Turkiye as it does for other candidate countries," he noted. Joint committee calls for dialogue At the 80th Turkiye-EU Joint Parliamentary Committee session on Thursday, a declaration promoted increased dialogue between the Turkish government and EU institutions, advocating for more active engagement, including high-level diplomatic discussions in Brussels. Co-chairs Ismail Emrah Karayel and Sergey Lagodinsky emphasised the significance of strengthening dialogue between Turkiye and the EU in all areas in a statement. The regular joint parliamentary committee meetings were acknowledged with "satisfaction" and included discussions with representatives, including Turkish Deputy Foreign Minister Mehmet Kemal Bozay, Marko Makovec from the European External Action Service and Luis Romera Pintor from the Spanish



Embassy representing the Council Presidency, among others. Emphasising the importance of deepening cooperation for Turkiye's future EU membership, the co-chairs affirmed the need for joint solutions in areas such as the rule of law, democracy, economy, security, defence and addressing Russia's aggression toward Ukraine as well as energy and food security. They called for a two-state solution for lasting peace between Palestine and Israel, urging an end to violence and civilian casualties. Turkiye, an official candidate for joining the EU, applied for membership in 1987, and accession talks began in 2005. In the years since, talks

have been essentially frozen due to political roadblocks by certain EU members for reasons unrelated to its suitability for membership, according to Ankara. As for relations with NATO, Foreign Minister Fidan said the alliance and bilateral relations in Euro-Atlantic geography have been important topics of Turkish foreign policy for the last 70 years. "When we look at the policies implemented by some NATO countries in recent years, the support given to PKK/YPG in Syria and the sanctions imposed on Turkiye in the defence industry create a contradiction," he said. Noting that Turkiye expressed the contradiction on every platform, he said it also harms the security of NATO countries and poses geo-strategic risks. For Sweden's accession process, Fidan said the Turkish parliament will make a final decision. Finland and Sweden applied for NATO membership shortly after Russia launched its war on Ukraine in February 2022.

Gunman kills 14 in unprecedented attack at Prague university

PRAGUE: A 24-year-old Czech student shot dead his father, then killed 14 people and wounded 25 others at his Prague university on Thursday before possibly killing himself, police said, marking the country's worst-ever mass shooting. The government declared a day of mourning across the central European country for December 23 to remember the victims, decided at a special cabinet meeting with President Petr Pavel. "I would express my great sadness along with helpless anger at the unnecessary loss of so many young lives," Pavel said. "I would like to express my sincere condolences to all relatives of the victims, to all who were at this tragic incident, the most tragic in the history of the Czech Republic." Police - who discovered a large arsenal of weapons at the downtown Prague Charles University building where the shooting took place - were tipped off earlier in the day the suspect was likely heading to Prague from his town in the Kladno region outside the capital with intentions of taking his own life. Shortly after that, the shooter's fa-

ther was found dead. Police evacuated a Faculty of Arts building where the shooter was due to attend a lecture, but then were called to the faculty's larger main building, arriving within minutes after reports of the shooting, Police President Martin Vondrasek said. Police had "unconfirmed information from an account on a social network that he was supposedly inspired by one terrorist attack in Russia in the autumn of this year," Vondrasek told reporters, adding the shooter was a legal holder of several firearms. "It was a pre-mediated horrific act that started in the Kladno region and unfortunately ended here." The gunman is also suspected in the killings of another man and his two-month-old daughter who were found last week shot dead in woods in a village outside Prague, Vondrasek said. The gunman's death was likely a suicide but authorities are also investigating whether he may have been killed by police who returned fire, Vondrasek added. Police said he was a high-achieving student with no prior criminal record

and that he acted alone. Police asked not to reveal the man's identity but his name reported by some Czech media matched a police search report. Interior Minister Vit Rakusan said the shooting had no connection to international terrorism. Read Three students of Palestinian descent shot in Vermont in suspected hate-crime Authorities sealed off the square and area adjacent to the faculty building, in a busy historical district across the river from Prague Castle on a popular street leading to Old Town Square. Media images showed students evacuating the building with their hands in the air, and others perched on a ledge near the roof trying to hide from the attacker while students barricaded classrooms with desks and chairs. "We always thought that this was a thing that did not concern us. Now it turns out that, unfortunately, our world is also changing and the problem of the individual shooter is emerging here as well," Prague Mayor Bohuslav Svoboda told Czech Television. The White House condemned the shooting and said the

United States was ready to offer assistance. Leaders across Europe including France's Emmanuel Macron offered their support. Witness Ivo Havranek, 43, told Reuters via Zoom that he initially thought the "couple of bangs" he heard might have come from loud tourists or a nearby movie set. Then suddenly there were students and teachers running out of the building. I went through the crowd not realising what is actually going on. I wasn't ready to admit that something like that could happen in Prague," he said. Only once he saw police officers with automatic rifles, he knew it was serious, he said. "They shouted at me to run away." People lit candles outside the historic headquarters of Charles University, central Europe's oldest set up in 1348. Gun crime is relatively rare in the Czech Republic. In December 2019, a 42-year-old gunman killed six people at a hospital waiting room in the eastern Czech city of Ostrava before fleeing and fatally shooting himself, police said. —Agencies

Russia, US in talks over prisoner exchange

MOSCOW: A top Russian diplomat said Moscow and Washington were still engaged in sensitive negotiations over a prisoner exchange, but accused the US side of leaking details to the media. The United States said on Dec. 5 that Russia had rejected a "new and significant" proposal for the release of Paul Whelan, a former US marine serving a 16-year sentence in Russia for spying, and US reporter Evan Gershkovich, awaiting trial in Moscow on espionage charges. Both men deny they are spies and the US has designated them as "wrongfully detained" by Russia. Deputy Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov told Interfax news agency in an interview published on Friday: "The issue of exchanges of citizens serving prison terms in Russia and the United States is extremely delicate. Decisions in this area are often hampered by being actively discussed in public." He said that contacts about possible exchanges were conducted by the intelligence services of both countries. "It is interesting that the participants in these contacts on the American side insist on their complete confidentiality. We also adhere to this line, but then certain twists occur when the White House regularly arranges 'leaks' and begins to discuss sensitive issues in the public space." Russian President Vladimir Putin said last week that Moscow hoped to reach an agreement but that Washington needed to listen to Russia's conditions, which he did not specify. US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said on Wednesday that Washington was very actively pursuing the release of Whelan and Gershkovich and would "leave no stone unturned" to find a way of getting them home. The two countries have agreed high-profile prisoner swaps in the past - most recently in December 2022 when Moscow traded Brittney Griner, a US basketball star convicted of a drugs offense in Russia - for Russian arms trafficker Viktor Bout. The Wall Street Journal has vehemently denied that its reporter Gershkovich is a spy. He was detained in March and accused of trying to obtain military secrets. —APP

China air pollution worsens in 2023

BEIJING: China's air pollution worsened in 2023, for the first time in a decade, according to a new research. "2023 is the first year that China's national average PM2.5 level has increased year-on-year since the beginning of China's 'war on pollution' in 2013," a study by independent research organisation the Centre for Research on Energy and Clean Air (CREA) said on Friday. PM2.5 particles, if inhaled, can have serious health risks, linked to premature deaths in people with heart or lung disease, as well as a host of breathing and other health issues, according to the US Environmental Protection Agency. The overall increase in emissions has "pushed the pollution level higher, in addition to unfavourable weather conditions," CREA said. An international consortium of climate scientists said earlier this month in a separate study that China is expected to see a four percent rise in fossil fuel CO2 emissions this year, with increases in coal, oil and gas as the country continues to rebound from its Covid-19 lockdowns. Chinese cities including the capital Beijing were once infamous for the thick smog that smothered their residents, especially in winter. But the country ramped up its anti-pollution campaign after winning the Winter Olympics bid in 2015, shutting down dozens of coal plants and relocating heavy industries. That has brought significant improvements, but air quality often remains below World Health Organization standards. Lauri Myllyvirta, a researcher at CREA, said that "besides the pandemic, the Winter Olympics were an important factor that kept the anti-pollution efforts going until 2021". —APP



RABAT: Ambassador Muhammad Sami called on HE Mr Ryad Mezzour, Minister for Industry and Trade of the Kingdom of Morocco in his office. They discussed topics of bilateral interest. —DNA

UK faces criticism for selling weapons to Israel

'Approximately 15% of components used in Israel's bombing of Gaza with F-35 aircraft are supplied by UK,' says International Centre for Justice for Palestinians legal officer

LONDON: Human rights groups and independent bodies in the UK have condemned London, asserting its complicity in Israel's alleged war crimes by continuing arms sales. They argue that failure to cease weapon exports to Israel, deemed in violation of international humanitarian law, warrants scrutiny and criticism. The Global Legal Action Network (GLAN) and the human rights organization, Al-Haq, in Ramallah, have initiated legal action against the UK. They accuse the UK of disregarding demands to halt arms sales to Israel, citing violations of international law. Al-Haq and GLAN have taken legal in the High Court, alleging persistent neglect of written requests to halt the arms sales. The application provides details on Israel's policies, including attacks on civilians, infrastructure and facilities

like hospitals and schools, as well as forced displacement and hunger-inducing measures. The independent International Centre for Justice for Palestinians (ICJP) and civil society group, Campaign Against Arms Trade (CAAT) have voiced support for the initiative. The case accuses the UK of complicity in Israel's violations of international law and war crimes. Complicity is aiding and abetting war crimes ICJP's Legal Affairs Officer, Dania Abu Elhaj, told Anadolu that the UK has approved military export licenses to Israel totaling at least £474 million (\$601 million) since 2015, covering items such as warplanes, missiles, tanks, small arms and ammunition components. Elhaj pointed out that approximately 15% of components used in Israel's bombing of Gaza with F-35

aircraft are supplied by the UK. "The F-35 aircraft is currently being used to bombard Gaza at the moment, helping kill thousands of innocent Palestinian civilians and bombards civilian infrastructure and houses," she said. "This complicity entails the aiding and abetting of the war crimes that are being conducted right now before our very own eyes on the ground. So we believe politicians who are providing moral support and any material support provided to Israel may be held accountable for aiding and abetting the commission of these crimes. "We believe the UK should not be granting any licensing agreements for its businesses to provide weapons to Israel or to any regimes actually that commit the scale of atrocities that we're witnessing today happening in Gaza. UK

has a legal obligation to abide by its own strategic arms licensing criteria, which is what the submission submitted by ICJP, GLAN and Al Haq provides," she stressed. Elhaj highlighted the UK's obligation to halt arms trade with countries posing a risk of serious violations of international law or using weapons to breach international legal standards. Demanding UK refrain from providing any support to Israel Elhaj said Al-Haq and GLAN, with ICJP's support, have commenced a legal examination of the Strategic Arms Licensing Criteria between the UK and Israel. She urged a review of the UK's Strategic Arms Licensing Criteria related to Israel and urged London to refrain from supplying any material support or components used in warplanes or weapons that may

facilitate crimes against the Palestinian people. "When it comes to our expectations of judicial review, we have seen in 2009 the UK suspending arms trading with Israel in light of Operation Cast Lead. We have also seen the UK review its licensed arms exports to Israel in 2014 and within that review, there was a suspension of the arms export to Israel until the review was conducted," she said. "We have also seen the UK admit in 2009 that their British-made arms had been used by Israel and they had misused the equipment and that this conclusion would inform future license applications," she added. Elhaj emphasized the need for accountability, stating that those responsible for war crimes and mass atrocities must be held accountable for their actions. —Agencies

Eurostar trains resume service after strike

PARIS: High-speed trains running the Channel Tunnel resumed service on Friday after French unions ended a wildcat strike that had stranded vacationers and held up freight just days before Christmas. The surprise walkout by workers that blocked the tunnel sparked hours of chaos at rail hubs in Paris and London. Neither side detailed the terms of the agreement or the issues on the negotiating table, but before the strike, French operator Getlink said unions had demanded a tripling of the end-of-year bonus of 1,000 euros (\$1,100). Eurotunnel unions later announced they were ending their action after negotiations with management that "bore results that satisfy us." High-speed services leaving London, Paris and Brussels "have gone back to normal today," Eurostar said Friday. Eurostar had said it would add six extra trains between Friday and Sunday after it had been forced to cancel 30 scheduled trains. At Gare du Nord station in Paris and St. Pancras in London - the main hubs for cross-Channel passenger train travel - frustrated travelers dashed to change their reservations during the strike, or find alternative transportation. —Agencies

Japan sees record high temperatures in 2023

TOKYO: Japan, like many other regions of the world, experienced the highest average temperatures ever recorded in the year 2023 amid unprecedented climate conditions, the country's weather agency said on Friday. Japan's projected annual average temperature for 2023 soared 1.34 degrees Celsius above the nation's average, calculated from the period of January to November, the Japan Meteorological Agency said in its latest report. The figure surpassed the previous record of 0.65 degrees Celsius above the average in 2020, marking the highest temperature since records began in 1898, it added. According to the report, particularly affected are the northern, eastern, and western regions of Japan, with significantly elevated temperatures. Since 1946, the northern and eastern parts of Japan have experienced consecutive record-breaking seasonal average temperatures in spring, summer, and autumn. Meanwhile, western Japan has seen the summer average temperatures tie for the highest on record. —APP

Chinese BYD to build car factory in Hungary

SHANGHAI: China's top electric automaker BYD will build a car factory in Hungary, the company said Friday, as it pushes forward with plans for expansion into Europe despite growing concerns around fair competition. BYD Europe said the factory in the southern city of Szeged would mark "a significant step toward green mobility in Europe" as it made the announcement on X, formerly Twitter. Earlier this year, the firm became the first global manufacturer to pass the five million milestone in electric vehicle (EV) production, crowning itself "the world's leading manufacturer of new energy vehicles and power batteries". The growing success of Chinese EV firms in foreign markets has started to draw scrutiny, however. In China, the EV sector has benefited from decades of subsidies issued by Beijing in related tech fields. The European Union this year announced an investigation into these subsidies, citing unfair competition. But Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban's longstanding policy to "look East" has seen Asian businesses offered lucrative tax breaks, infrastructure and job creation subsidies to lure them to his country. The factory "will be one of the largest investments in the history of the Hungarian economy", Foreign Minister Peter Szijarto said in a statement, without giving a specific figure. BYD already has operations in Hungary, including an electric bus factory. —DNA

Briefs

Repatriation of illegal Afghans continues

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: In a significant development, the repatriation of illegal Afghan nationals from Pakistan has gained momentum, with a large number choosing to return to their homeland voluntarily amid growing concerns of potential arrests. Even before the official announcement by the Pakistani government, hundreds have made the journey back to Afghanistan, seeking refuge from the looming threat of detention. On December 21, 2023, a convoy of 74 vehicles set out from different parts of Pakistan, carrying a total of 1,483 Afghan citizens, marking one of the largest single-day returns. Among the returnees were 325 men, 313 women, and 845 children, highlighting the diverse demographics affected by this repatriation wave. The latest departure brings the cumulative number of illegal Afghan nationals voluntarily leaving Pakistan to a staggering 443,376 as of December 21, 2023. This mass exodus reflects the palpable anxiety within Afghan communities residing in Pakistan, as they navigate the uncertain landscape of their future in a foreign land. The repatriation effort, spearheaded by both governments, aims to streamline immigration processes, address security concerns, and ensure the well-being of the affected families. With 128 families making the journey back on this particular day, authorities are working collaboratively to facilitate a smooth transition for those returning to Afghanistan.

Indian forces continue CASOs in Poonch, Rajouri

DNA

SRINAGAR: Indian forces' personnel continued massive cordon and search operations in Poonch and Rajouri districts of Indian illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir on the second consecutive day, subjecting the locals to severe harassment. According to Kashmir Media Service, Indian Army, paramilitary and police personnel launched violent search operations in these districts after the killing of five soldiers and injuring of several others in an attack in Surankote area of Poonch, yesterday. The incident deflates the Narendra Modi-led Indian government's tall claims of normalcy in the occupied territory. Local residents told the media that Indian troops forcibly enter the residential houses, terrorize the inmates and vandalize the household goods. The residents of Nowpora Wagoora area of Baramulla district staged a protest against the anti-people policies of the occupation authorities. The protesters, carrying empty pots and vessels, expressed their anger against the authorities for failing to provide drinking water to the residents. The demonstrators also blocked the road, leading to suspension of vehicular movement for hours.

ASEAN BBQ day festivities foster sense of shared prosperity; values

In his capacity as the Chairman, High Commissioner Azhar Mazlan expressed his gratitude for the collaborative efforts that made the event a success, underscoring the importance of such gatherings in promoting mutual understanding and friendship among the ASEAN nations



– Photos by Mudassar Raja



DNA

ISLAMABAD: The ASEAN countries recently came together to celebrate a vibrant BBQ day, fostering camaraderie among the ASEAN communities. The event was graciously hosted by the esteemed High Commissioner of Malaysia, Azhar Mazlan, who also serves as the Chairman of the Islamabad ASEAN Committee. As the event unfolded, High Commissioner Azhar Mazlan extended a warm welcome to the guests, emphasizing the significance of the day

in strengthening the bonds between the diverse ASEAN communities present. His opening remarks highlighted the cultural richness and shared values that unite the ASEAN nations. The BBQ day provided a unique platform for cultural exchange, where attendees had the opportunity to engage in lively conversations, savor delicious cuisine, and appreciate the diverse traditions represented within the ASEAN region. The festivities were a testament to the spirit of unity and cooperation that defines the relationship among the ASEAN countries in Islamabad. In his capacity as

the Chairman, High Commissioner Azhar Mazlan expressed his gratitude for the collaborative efforts that made the event a success, underscoring the importance of such gatherings in promoting mutual understanding and friendship among the ASEAN nations. Overall, the BBQ day served as a delightful occasion for the ASEAN communities to come together, fostering a sense of community and shared identity in the heart of Islamabad. The ASEAN member countries have collaboratively established vibrant food stalls showcasing a delectable array of culinary delights and cher-

ished traditional delicacies. These stalls were not just about nourishment; they offer a sensory journey through the rich tapestry of flavors, aromas, and textures that define the diverse culinary heritage of the region. From the sizzling street food to the aromatic spices of, each stall beckons visitors with mouth-watering creations that embody the essence of ASEAN's gastronomic diversity. The communal atmosphere surrounding these stalls fostered cultural exchange, inviting people to connect over shared meals and discover the unique stories behind each dish.

No justification to keep Khan, Qureshi in jail

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: PTI spokesperson lauded the Supreme Court three-member bench verdict approving the bails of PTI Founding Chairman Imran Khan and Vice Chairman Shah Mehmood Qureshi in the Cipher case, saying the judgement exposed the reality of the cipher before the nation and hence there was no justification to keep them in prison anymore. Reacting to the top court's decision, PTI spokesperson expressed gratitude and satisfaction on behalf of PTI and added that with the approval of the bails of Khan and Qureshi in the false, fabricated and bogus politically motivated case like cipher based on malice, hatred and antagonism met to its tragic death. PTI spokesperson contended that the state did not have any constitutional or legal justification to keep Imran Khan or Qureshi in prison any longer. He pointed out that the Cipher case and the actions taken based on the bogus and frivolous case spoke volume about the sick and corrupt structure of justice system. PTI Spokesperson stated that the sole purpose of this fabricated and baseless case was to force the PTI Founding Chairman to compromise on

the principles and withdraw from the just movement for the supremacy of constitution and upholding rule of law in the country. He went on to say that in reality no ambiguity was left in the mind of the nation pertaining to the contents of the cipher and its role in the country's politics. PTI spokesperson emphasized that the ongoing illegal crackdown on PTI candidates across the country when the polls scheduled was announced was shameful and despicable attempts to oust PTI from the elections through state coercion, which was clearly validating and putting a stamp on the position of PTI Founding chairman on Cipher. He lamented that unfortunately, the Chief Justice of Islamabad High Court provided judicial support for the execution of the nefarious plan to deprive the PTI leaders, especially Imran Khan, of the fundamental, legal and constitutional rights through open injustice. PTI spokesperson contended that over 180 other cases framed against Imran Khan were also a collection of lies and myths, hence taking into account the sensitivity of the issue, the top court should seek records of all these false, fabricated cases against PTI Founding Chairman, besides giving him the legal right to bail and stopping the shameful political revenge in the country through the justice system.

Russia warns of 'complete breakdown' in relations with United States

Ties could be destroyed if Washington seizes Moscow's frozen assets, Deputy FM Sergey Ryabkov has said

DNA

NEW YORK: Russia-US relations could sink to a new low if Washington makes more "reckless" decisions regarding the Ukraine conflict, Deputy Foreign Minister Sergey Ryabkov has warned. In an interview with Interfax published on Friday, the Russian official accused the US of pursuing a "misguided" and "dangerous" policy aimed at inflicting a "strategic defeat" on Moscow. These actions have left bilateral relations in a "comatose state," Ryabkov said. "I can't rule out that at some point in the future... Washington won't go below this near-zero level that our relations are currently at, if there is no brightening when it comes to... views on what is happening [regarding] Russia and

Ukraine," he stated. A "complete breakdown" in ties is even possible, Ryabkov added, suggesting this would mean a dramatic reduction in the respective diplomatic presence in the two countries. Even though the US is wary of completely dismantling relations, it is "not ready to find common ground... even in theory," the diplomat further claimed. According to Ryabkov, while the two powers continue dialogue in several narrow areas, this "equilibrium could collapse at any moment due to Washington's recklessness." The seizure of Russian assets or military escalation could be among the triggers for a further deterioration, he said. Ryabkov stressed that Russia is not seeking to sever ties, but cautioned that "the diplomatic relations in themselves are not a totem to be worshipped, or a

sacred cow to be protected." "We are ready for any scenario," he emphasized. Russia and the US could potentially restore relations, although this will be hard, Ryabkov acknowledged. "The problem is that it is extremely difficult for the US ruling circles to accept the changing world order. Many of them are simply organically incapable of moving away from thinking in terms of their own superiority," he explained. Ryabkov's comments come after the New York Times reported on Thursday that the White House had intensified talks to seize \$300 billion in Russian assets blocked in the West, which could be used to help Ukraine. Moscow has repeatedly denounced the freezing of its funds as "theft," warning of retaliation if the West goes ahead with the confiscation of the assets.