



Islamabad POST

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Pakistan's Credible Daily Newspaper

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Türkiye committed to anti-terror operations, says Defense Minister

Detailed News On Page-07

PTI will defeat opponents in elections: Omar

Detailed News On Page-08

Pollard joins England's T20 coaching team

Detailed News On Page-06



Briefs

Quaid's birthday today

DNA

ISLAMABAD: All is set to celebrate the 147th birth anniversary of the Father of the Nation, founder of Pakistan, Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah on Monday, 25th of December with full zeal and fervor. Special programs have been arranged by various social, political, governmental and non-governmental organizations and forums to celebrate the birth day of the founder of Pakistan with great enthusiasm and devotion. The day will dawn with special prayers in mosques for the integrity, solidarity and prosperity of Pakistan. Similar special ceremonies will also be organized by various social, political and intellectual organizations in all our the country.

Govt not against peaceful protests

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Federal Minister for Information, Broadcasting and Parliamentary Affairs Murtaza Solangi said on Sunday that it was an effort of govt to go towards the solution of the problem of protestors from Balochistan through negotiations. Talking in a programme on "GTV" the minister said that it was desire of the interim set-up that the protestors should go back to their homes with dignity, honour and safety. "We want to solve the problems of the protestors and talks should be held in Balochistan or Quetta instead of Islamabad," Solangi said. The minister for information said that most of the protestors from Balochistan were women and at this time, they were present in front of the National Press Club.

Hawkins shares joy with orphan children

ABBAS HASHMI

LAHORE: United States Consul General to Lahore Kristin Hawkins brought joy and happiness to the disadvantaged orphan children when she visited the charity SOS Children's Village under 'Marines Toys for Tots' programme here on Sunday. The US marines distributed gifts of books and toys among little boys and girls of the SOS Village and held a 'story-telling session' besides taking part in different sports a day before the Christmas. Talking to media Kristin Hawkins said the Marines Toys for Tots programme works beyond religious ties, adding that all religions teach love for children and US Marines have been visiting these orphan SOS Village children for the past two years. Consul General Hawkins intermingled with little boys and girls and played different sport including badminton. Later, she shared table for lunch with the children and exchanged pleasantries during a four-hour stay at the orphanage.



ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Chief Minister Punjab Syed Mohsin Raza Naqvi calls on caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar. - DNA

Baloch long march 'Detained protesters being released after bail approval'

Concerns rise over 'missing' status of over 100 Baloch students

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad police on Sunday said that detained Baloch protesters, who were taken into custody during a crackdown on demonstration demanding an end to enforced disappearances and extrajudicial killings, are being released after their bail was approved. The Baloch Yakjehti Committee (BYC), the main organiser of the long march, delivered a three-day ultimatum to authorities. Their demands included the dismissal of cases against students and activists and the release of all protesters. The march initiated in Turbat on December 6 following the alleged extrajudicial killing of a Baloch youth, reached the federal capital on Wednesday. The Islamabad police's use of force to disperse and detain the demonstrators, with over 200 taken into custody, drew

Continued on Page 06

Baloch marchers Tabled unlawful demands: Achakzai

BUREAU REPORT

QUETTA: Caretaker Balochistan Information Minister Jan Achakzai Sunday termed the demands tabled by the Baloch marchers 'unconstitutional' and also rejected any kind of torture on women or use of water cannon in Islamabad. While addressing a press conference, Jan Achakzai claimed that women were neither tortured in Islamabad nor anyone targeted with water cannon. He said that Baloch

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PTI fields lawyers Nawaz, Maryam, Bilawal, Imran file nomination papers

The revised list of candidates will be published on Jan 11 and the last date for withdrawing one's candidature is Jan 12



KHAYYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: The Election Commission of Pakistan's (ECP) deadline for filing nomination papers for the February 8 general election ended today (Sunday) at 4:30pm. With little than over a month left for polls, the electoral watchdog has entered election mode. On December 15, the commission issued the election schedule, putting an end to uncertainty surrounding the exercise.

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Govt to probe complaints about hurdles in electoral process

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar has assured that the government would investigate the complaints about hurdles to stop some people from taking part in the electoral process, Radio Pakistan reported on Sunday. In an interview with a private TV channel, he said people are free to vote for the candidates of their choice and there is no

Continued on Page 06

Cipher case 'major national security breach': Bilawal

We are the only political party that believes in democracy and not political vendettas

NAZIR SIYAL

LARKANA: PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhatti-Zardari on Sunday said the cipher case against former prime minister Imran Khan was a very "serious issue" that merited an investigation since it was a "major national security breach". The cipher case pertains to a diplomatic document that the Federal Investigation Agency's (FIA) charge sheet alleges was never returned by Imran. The PTI has long held that the document contained a threat from the United States to oust Imran as prime minister.

PICTURE ON BACK PAGE

On Friday, the Supreme Court had granted Imran and ex-foreign minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi bail in the case. Asked about the development while talking to the media in Larkana after submitting his nomination papers, Bilawal said it was visible that Imran was getting "relief" in the case. "The cipher case is a very serious case.

Continued on Page 06

SC returns Imran Khan's appeal

Registrar Office says documents attached to the appeal are incomplete

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court (SC) Registrar Office returned the Pakistan Treeke-e-Insaf (PTI) founder Imran Khan's appeal challenging his conviction in the Toshakhana case. The SC office raised objections to the appeal saying the documents attached to the appeal were incomplete. The appeal could be refilled with all the relevant documents on January 6, it added. PTI founder's lawyer Sardar Latif Khosa filed the appeal under Article 185 of the Constitution.

Continued on Page 06

Pak condemns custodial Killing of 3 Kashmiris

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan strongly condemns the barbaric custodial killing of three Kashmiri civilians in Baffliaz, Poonch district of the Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK). The slain civilians were tortured to death at a camp of the Indian occupation Army. A purported video clip of the Indian personnel stripping three men and sprinkling chilli powder on them is viral on social media. The incident, once again, exposes

Continued on Page 06

Pak condoles martyrdom of 12 Turkish soldiers

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan condoles the martyrdom of 12 Turkish soldiers during Counter-Terrorism Operations. "We are deeply saddened to learn that 12 Turkish soldiers have been martyred during counter-terrorism operations on 22-23 December 2023" said the statement.

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Death toll surges Genocid in Gaza continues

Government Media Office noted that 166 Palestinians were martyred and 384 were injured in the Gaza Strip in the past 24 hours

NEWS DESK

GAZA: As the US-backed Israeli genocidal war on the Gaza Strip entered day 79 on Sunday, massive aerial and artillery strikes continued to pound and level whole blocks and homes and massacre more civilians, mostly children and women. The death toll from the Israeli aggression on the Gaza Strip has risen to 20,424, according to Gaza's Health Ministry, reporting an additional 54,036 people injured. Meanwhile, the Government Media Office noted that 166 Palestinians were martyred and 384 were injured in the Gaza Strip in the past 24 hours. It further detailed that the Israeli occupation ordered citizens from eight neighborhoods in the central governorate to leave for the Deir al-Balah area, and once they did, the occupation army committed five massacres in the area they forced them out to, killing 28 and injuring 88. A reporter for the Palestinian Information Center said that the Israeli occupation

Continued on Page 06

Pentagon says Iranian drone 'attack' hit tanker near India

AGENCIES

WASHINGTON: A drone launched from Iran struck a chemical tanker in the Indian ocean early on Saturday, the US Department of Defense said. "The motor vessel CHEM PLUTO, a Liberia-flagged, Japanese-owned, and Netherlands-operated chemical tanker was struck at approximately 10 a.m. local time (6 a.m. GMT) today in the Indian Ocean, 200 nautical miles from the coast of India, by a one-way attack drone fired from Iran," a Pentagon

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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 the Pak Secretariat, Islamabad, therefore, no fund has been spent on the 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

Christian community all set to celebrate Christmas today

RAWALPINDI :The Christian community is all set to celebrate the grand festival of Christmas across Rawalpindi division and other parts of the country on Monday, December 25, in a befitting manner, while 5000 policemen will be deployed to ensure security. In churches, special services would take place where prayers would be offered for peace, progress, and the prosperity of the country. The Christian community has finalized all the preparations to mark this festivity, and they were just giving last-minute touches to their shopping and decorating Christmas trees. The festival of the Christian community would be marked through different activities ranging from big official gatherings to cake-cutting ceremonies, illuminating houses, and observing prayers in churches. Special cake-cutting ceremonies are being arranged at different departments to share the happiness of the festival with the Christian staff members.

Students to follow footsteps of Quaid-e-Azam

RAWALPINDI: Director of Arts Council, Waqar Ahmad has urged the need to follow Quaid's guiding principles to achieve success in every segment of life. He said hard work, honesty and a democratic approach were the main three pillars of the personality of the founder of the nation. "We can achieve success in every segment of life by following his gold principles," he added.—APP

Serena Hotel hosts enchanting Christmas eve celebrations

Guests gathered in the festive ambiance, sharing joyous moments with friends and family as they embraced the holiday spirit

ADIL SHAHEEN

ISLAMABAD : Islamabad Serena Hotel Wraps Up Christmas Eve with Magical Carol Singing and Extravagant Dinner at Zamana Restaurant. The festivities commenced on Sunday, 24th December 2023 with a captivating carol singing, featuring a talented choir that filled the air with the joyous melodies of the season. Guests gathered in the festive ambiance, sharing joyous moments with friends and family as they embraced the holiday spirit. The highlight of the night unfolded when Santa Claus made a surprise entrance in the Hotel Lobby. Laughter and excitement filled the air as Santa personally handed out gifts, ensuring each child felt the magic of the season. Following this delightful surprise, Zamana Restaurant opened its doors to offer a delectable Christmas Eve Buffet dinner. The carefully curated menu by the hotel's expert chefs showcased a festive array of culinary delights, providing the perfect backdrop for an exquisite dining experience. Guests indulged in a festive feast that included traditional Christmas delicacies, signature dishes, and a selection of decadent desserts.



ISLAMABAD : Visitors taking interest in Christmas celebrations at Islamabad Serena hotel. photo by Mudassar Raja.

COAS's narrative on Palestine, Kashmir resonates : Ashrafi

DNA

ISLAMABAD : Prime Minister's Special Representative for Religious Harmony and Pakistani Diaspora in Middle East and Muslim Countries, Hafiz Muhammad Tahir Mahmood Ashrafi on Saturday said Chief of Army Staff (COAS), General Syed Asim Munir received widespread acclaim from both Pakistan and the Muslim world during his successful visit to the United States (US). He said the COAS's articulate narrative on the issues of Palestine and Kashmir resonated not only in Pakistan but all over the Muslim world, emphasizing the importance of a diplomatic approach and international collaboration to resolve longstanding conflicts. Ashrafi who is also the

Chairman of Pakistan Ulama Council said Pakistan and Muslim leaders praised General Asim's commitment to promoting peace and stability in the region. He said the COAS's visit underscored the significance of fostering global understanding and cooperation on these critical matters. In a diplomatic stride towards enhancing bilateral ties, he said General Asim concluded his successful visit to the US, fostering collaboration between Pakistan and America. He said the visit, marked by high-level meetings and discussions, not only strengthened military cooperation but also delved into critical international issues, notably addressing the longstanding tension between Palestine and Israel. Ashrafi said General Asim, leading a delegation of high-ranking

military officials, engaged in strategic talks with top US military and political leaders. He said discussions revolved around bolstering defense collaboration, counterterrorism efforts, and regional stability. He said the US acknowledged Pakistan's pivotal role in the region and expressed commitment to fortifying the longstanding partnership between the two nations. Ashrafi said a significant aspect of the visit was General Asim's emphasis on addressing the Palestine-Israel conflict. In an interaction with media persons, he said the COAS urged for immediate measures to ease the ongoing tension in the region. He said General Asim emphasized the humanitarian aspect of the crisis, advocating for a peaceful

resolution that respects the rights and aspirations of the Palestinian people. During closed-door meetings, Ashrafi said General Asim presented Pakistan's perspective on the Palestine issue, emphasizing the need for a just and comprehensive solution that ensures the establishment of an independent Palestinian state. He said the COAS underlined the importance of international cooperation in facilitating dialogue between conflicting parties and encouraged the US to play a proactive role in mediating the dispute. Ashrafi said the visit also saw understanding in various sectors particularly at enhancing military cooperation, intelligence sharing, and joint training exercises.

Jinnah, a leader of great eminence: Saqib Rafiq

DNA

RAWALPINDI: Quaid-e-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah was a leader of great



eminence and the dream of a separate homeland for the Muslims of the subcontinent was impossible without him. Jinnah changed the direction of history of the Subcontinent by transforming the Muslims of South Asia from a minority community to a nation. RCCI President and Chairman RWMC Saqib Rafiq in his message on the eve of birth anni-

versary of Quaid e Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah said that Quaid's personality was a beacon for us and we could put our country on the way to success and prosperity by following his teachings. The objective of inheriting a prosperous Pakistan to the next generation was only possible by complying with Quaid's motto of Unity, Faith and Discipline. Our ancestors gave many sacrifices for the country and it was our duty to strive for a stable, peaceful and developed Pakistan. We pledge to follow his ideals to make Pakistan a strong and prosperous country, he added. Saqib Rafiq emphasized upon the business community, youth and members of the RCCI to adopt Quaid's attributes of honesty, hard work, perseverance and dedication. He informed that RCCI will celebrate the birth anniversary at chamber house and a special documentary will be presented on the life of Quaid-e-Azam.

SMIU VC presents tribute to Quaid-e-Azam

DNA

KARACHI :The Vice Chancellor of Sindh Madressatul Islam University, Alma Mater of Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, Dr Mujeeb Sahrai has presented a great tribute to the founder of Pakistan on his 147th birthday anniversary. He said that Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah was unique in his thinking, character, struggle and actions. He said the Quaid was a popular personality and political leader of the subcontinent during the period when influential figures among Hindus, Sikhs and even Muslims were present, but Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah proved himself to be the beloved leader of the Muslims due to his intelligence, truthfulness, honesty and unparalleled leadership skills and the Muslims of undivided India unanimously accepted him as their leader. Dr Sahrai has further said that while Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah had a modern concept of the development and efficiency of other sectors for the development of his country and people, he also had a different view and outline about education. Apart from this, he gave great importance to education. That is why when he wrote his last will in Bombay on 31 May 1939, he bequeathed his personal property to three educational institutions Islamia College Peshawar, Aligarh University and Sindh Madressatul Islam.

CM discusses financial problems of public universities

DNA

PESHAWAR : Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Justice Retired Syed Arshad Husain Shah Sunday chaired a high-level meeting wherein a detailed review of the financial problems of public universities and other matters were discussed. The meeting was also attended by the concerned provincial ministers and administrative secretaries; the chairman of the Higher Education Commission and other officials were also present. The decision was also taken to complete the process for the appointment of vice-chancellors in the government universities of the province as soon as possible. The government has agreed to make grants given to universities subject to the better financial discipline of these universities.



ISLAMABAD : Australian High Commissioner Neil Hawkins and his wife wishing Merry Christmas to those celebrating.—DNA

Education guarantee of development for any nation

PESHAWAR : Mayor Peshawar Zubair Ali has said that education is the basic need of every human being, which is also a guarantee of development for any nation or society. The mayor of Peshawar, Haji Zubair Ali, was the chief guest at the annual day ceremony of the University Model School. Professor Dr Saleem, former Provincial Minister Amanullah Haqqani, Principal, and other members of various faculties were also present with him. Addressing the ceremony, Mayor Peshawar Haji Zubair Ali said that the need for education is very important in today's era. No matter how much time has progressed, the importance of education has its destiny, he added. A good society can be formed due to moral education.—APP

Alvi urges business unity for foreign investment boost

The President has improved the business environment in the country and ease of doing business and business activities

DNA

ISLAMABAD : The closing ceremony of "Third Pakistan International Property Housing and Construction Exhibition" organized by Pakistan Association of Exhibition Industry was held yesterday at the President's House. President Dr. Arif Alvi was the chief guest in his speech. While doing so, the President urged businessmen and property developers to initiate joint ventures with foreign companies to attract foreign investment to pave the way for economic development in the country. The President said that the whole world And especially in the fields of business and construction, great

progress is being made, in this regard, Pakistani businessmen should take advantage of the opportunities available abroad. He said that Pakistani businessmen have a lot of potential, but in order to move forward, there is a need for reform, unity and better utilization of intellectual and human resources in the society. Business organizations should adopt the values of social responsibility. And while making a profit, we must conduct our business operations in a manner that is beneficial to the environment. Property developers should follow the construction norms and government regulations and deliver the projects as promised to the customers as this will increase

their credibility and trust. He urged the property developers to focus on vertical construction as it would ensure better utilization of land and would also not adversely affect the agriculture sector. He also emphasized on the need for one window operations to improve the business environment in the country and ease of doing business and further promote business activities. Talking about the tax culture in the country, the President said that the rich class should pay their share in paying taxes so that the government can spend funds on poverty alleviation projects and ensure the education of out-of-school children. can be made He said holding such exhibitions provides

an opportunity for local companies to attract foreign investment, develop business and organizational skills, improve the quality of their products and meet potential investors face-to-face. He added that there is also a need to introduce environmentally sustainable construction materials that can also help reduce the cost of construction for the public. Organizers of the event including Khurshid Barlas highlighted the various aspects of the property expo and the keen interest of people in purchasing residential and commercial units. Chairman Khurshid Barlas said that a conference is being held in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia on February 24, 2024 to support the Pakistani

economy.in which Companies from tourism, medical tourism, minerals, aviation industry, dairy and agriculture, information communication technology, education, real estate industry and other sectors will participate. The purpose of the conference is to encourage Saudi Arabia to invest in Pakistan. To play an important role in increasing investment in Pakistan is being held in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia on February 24, 2024, Khurshid Barlas. Companies from tourism, medical tourism, mining, aviation industry, dairy and agriculture, information communication technology, education, real estate industry and other sectors will participate in the conference.



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National Days and Armed Forces Days

DECEMBER

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

Hotels & Restaurants



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



Turkish Airlines.....8494949



Emergency

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



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Railway Exchange 9270831-5
WASA Rawalpindi.....5555489
CAA.....9281092



Hospitals

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



Departments

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

Water Tank

Islamabad.....0321-5744480

Ehsan Bhatta visits RCCI, BFC to open on January 15

Secretary Industries appreciated the efforts of Rawalpindi Chamber for the establishment of Business Facilitation Center and assured full support from Punjab Government for the early completion of the center

DNA

RAWALPINDI: Secretary Industries Punjab Ehsan Bhatta visited Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (RCCI). During the visit, RCCI President Saqib Rafiq gave a detailed briefing on RCCI activities, discussed development projects and shared an update on facilities being provided to the business community for the promotion of trade activities in the region. Secretary Industries said that in the light of the instructions of Chief Minister Punjab Mohsin Naqvi, business facilitation centers in six cities including Rawalpindi are being established. Business Facilitation Center (BFC) in Rawalpindi will be inaugurated on January 15, he added. He said that after the success of Business Facilitation Centre in Lahore, it is being started in Rawalpindi, Multan, Sialkot, Faisalabad and Gujranwala on the insistence of the business community. Its aim is to bring investment in these districts by promoting economic activities and play an important role in national development.



Secretary Industries appreciated the efforts of Rawalpindi Chamber for the establishment of Business Facilitation Center and assured full support from Punjab Government for the early completion of the center. On this occasion, President Sa-

qib Rafiq said that the BFC for business community in Punjab will serve as major step towards ease of doing business which will provide seamless interaction between the business community and 36 different departments. Within the centre, representatives

of 18 departments, including Wapda, Nadra, SNGPL, environment, livestock, tourism, local government, PHA, Wasa, irrigation and police and other concerned departments will be stationed who will be responsible for guiding and taking prompt action on requests

of the business community. Earlier, the Secretary Industries also visited the Business Facilitation Center site in RDA where he was given a detailed briefing on various parts of the proposed center, one window facility and operational matters.

Minorities enjoy political, economic, social rights in Pakistan

ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi has said that minorities in Pakistan enjoy all political, economic, and social rights guaranteed by the Constitution of Pakistan. "Our religion, Islam fully recognises and protects the rights of minorities. The Government of Pakistan provides equal opportunities to all citizens irrespective of their colour, class and creed," the president said in a message on the occasion of Christmas which is being celebrated on December 25. The president said that Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, the founder of the nation, in his historic speech of August 11, 1947, had stated that everyone, irrespective of colour, creed, and religion, would have equal rights, privileges, and obligations, along with complete religious freedom in the new State of Pakistan. "As we gather with family and friends to celebrate the festive occasion, let us also remember the values that bind us together as a nation—respect for diversity, protection of minority rights, and a commitment to building a tolerant and inclusive society—DNA

Expensive gas and power hitting industry

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: The high gas and power prices have made the local as well as the export industry uncompetitive on the world market resulting in an 8 per cent monthly and 7 per cent annual decline to \$1.3 billion in November. The BMP Chairman and FPCCI former president Mian Anjum Nisar observed that the government would have to sustain its top focus on enhancing the share of renewable energy and hydropower projects to lower energy costs through an improved energy mix, although financing for such projects remained a key challenge. He said that enhancing the share of renewable energy (RE) and hydropower in the energy mix was the government's priority and needed to be sustained over a longer horizon as it was the only way to provide affordable energy to the people. Quoting the figures, he said that in rupee terms, the country's textile exports clocked in at Rs376bn, down by 7pc month-on-month but

rose 19pc year-on-year owing to rupee depreciation against the dollar. Basic textiles witnessed a fall of 14pc MoM and a rise of 20pc YoY to \$243m in November. The YoY substantial increase resulted from the 12 times YoY increase in raw cotton exports due to the significant growth in cotton crop this year as compared to last year, which was greatly affected by floods. Value-added textile exports reached \$920m, up by 6pc MoM while it fell by 12pc YoY. Towels remained the major contributor to the segment with 21pc MoM and 20pc YoY drop in exports. Knitwear saw a 5pc MoM and a 12pc YoY decline. Bedwear posted a 16pc MoM and 8pc YoY fall followed by 12pc YoY decline in ready-made garments but a 5pc MoM rise. In 5MFY24, textile exports shrank by 6pc to \$6.9bn from \$7.4bn in the same period last year due to an economic slowdown and a reduced demand for textile products worldwide. The government has set a textile export target of \$25bn. However, textile exports for FY24 will reach \$17bn, up 3pc YoY. Pakistan's Information Tech-

nology (IT) exports rose nine per cent month-on-month to \$259 million in November, which was also higher than the 12-month average of \$222m. The jump is due to a relaxation in the permissible retention limit by the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP), increasing it from 35pc to 50pc in the Exporters' Specialised Foreign Currency Accounts, and the stable rupee which encourages IT companies to repatriate their foreign income and deposit it in local accounts. IT export number indicates the amount remitted back to Pakistan by technology companies. FPCCI former president and Businessmen Panel (BMP) Chairman said that the drop shows the government would find it difficult to achieve the industrial growth and export target, leading to more pressure on foreign exchange reserves of the country. He asked the government to address the underlying structural vulnerabilities through smooth energy supply at competitive rates, as country's overall export proceeds continued to shrink for the fifth consecutive month in a row.

PIAF stresses need for solid steps to boost remittances

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Industrial and Traders Associations Front (PIAF) on Sunday said that foreign remittances flows are crucial which can support the country's account balance amidst low volumes of foreign direct investment (FDI) and nominal growth of exports. The PIAF Chairman Faheemur Rehman Saigol said that overseas Pakistanis living in Gulf should further be motivated to maintain an upward momentum in remittances, as they contributed more than 60 per cent of the total inflows during last couple of months. He said that remittances can help not only in financing the deficit in import payments but also in foreign debt repayments, suggesting the government to focus on structural reforms, which can revive Pakistan's economic growth with major focus on incentives for overseas Pakistanis workers. The PIAF Chairman said that Pakistan has been witnessing a significant decline in workers' remittances on a year-on-year basis, however it surged by 5.34% on a month-on-month basis, reaching a total of \$2.21 billion, owing to several positive factors, including improved transparency and the implementation of stringent measures against dollar smuggling. These initiatives have helped create a more secure and regulated environment for remittance transactions. Faheem Saigol said that remittances for Sept came in at \$2.21 billion, according to data shared by the State Bank of Pakistan. This figure, while an improvement from last month's \$2.09 billion, was significantly lower than market expectations of \$2.4-2.5 billion.—DNA

Curbing underage driving a shared responsibility

USMAN KHAN

ISLAMABAD: With the mounting traffic load in the federal capital, Islamabad Traffic Police (ITP) has tightened belts to penalize violators for streamlining smooth traffic flow and the safety of residents. Robust enforcement strategies are implemented with heightened fines and registration of FIRs for serious violations, particularly involving underage driving as this phenomenon has emerged as a serious issue in the recent past. Taking cognizance of the gravity of this issue the ITP embarked on rigorous enforcement of traffic rules penalizing thousands of violators by

imposing fines and impounding their motorbikes. These measures showed some positive results with statistics showing a decline in violations 38,000 fewer violation cases registered in October and November 2023 as compared to the same period last year. But, it should not be a one-sided story but rather a shared responsibility of everybody. When the police are trying to do their bit, the parents and other family members must also ensure to stop their underage kids from driving freely on roads endangering their and other's lives. "Under-age driving is a serious issue," remarked Chief Traffic Officer Islamabad, Muhammad Sarfraz Virk. "A significant portion (65 per cent) of traffic violations is attributed to amateur drivers. We recently witnessed some lethal encounters due to underage drivers." "But, we are diligently focusing on this area," he stated revealing that during 2023, the authorities actively registered FIRs against underage drivers, impounding over 35,000 motorbikes and seizing 17,000 vehicles involved in various violations. "We also called their parents, asked them to submit affidavits to ensure that this practice is not repeated and sought their cooperation to impose discipline at homes to discourage repetition of this practice," he informed.



CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Ignite is incorporated with Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan, under Section 42 of Companies Ordinance 1984 (repealed by Companies Act, 2017), by the Ministry of IT & Telecom, Government of Pakistan. Ignite funds startups and innovative projects that utilize 4th industrial wave tech to solve local problems and target global opportunities in health, education, energy, agriculture, telecom, finance and other verticals. Our network of incubators across Pakistan nurtures startups and engages them with investors and corporations, among which some startups have graduated with notable success. Our digital skills training program, DigiSkills.pk, employs an online training platform and AI predictive analytics to provide marketable skills at scale. Applications are sought from dynamic individuals with credentials and vision to head this Company.

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The candidate must possess a degree, equivalent to sixteen years of education or higher, from a national or international university/institute accredited by HEC in Engineering, ICT, Business Administration, Finance, Marketing, or related fields.

Experience

- The candidate should have demonstrated experience of at least ten (10) years, with a minimum of five (5) years in a leadership role (at least N-1 level where "N" is the Head of the Organization), in ICT sector or funding organization with managing research & innovation, fund management or nurturing startup ecosystem experience.
- Must qualify Fit and Proper criteria for appointment as Chief Executive of a Public Sector Company as defined in the State-Owned Enterprise Act 2023, and applicable rules, guidelines, and procedures including competence capability, personal and financial integrity.

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The candidate must possess:

- Excellent interpersonal skills for working with senior academicians and industry leaders.
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- Demonstrated experience in evaluating and applying emerging technologies in solving problems of the society.
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- Copies of the degrees/testimonials, duly verified by the Higher Education Commission or the professional body or association, whichever is relevant, shall also be emailed along with the application. Applications with requisite supporting documents received through email before the closing date will be treated valid application. However, the Company may seek physical/documentary evidence/record from the shortlisted candidates, if so required.
- Submit complete application in all respects on prescribed format via email ceojob@ignite.org.pk latest by **January 08, 2024**.
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Briefs

Dialogue with protestors will continue

ISLAMABAD: Interior Secretary Aftab Akbar Durrani on Sunday said that on the directions of Prime Minister Anwar-ul-Haq Kakar, the dialogue with the Baloch protestors will continue but no violence would be tolerated. In a statement regarding the ongoing protest in Islamabad, the Secretary said every Pakistani citizen has the right to hold peaceful protest, but no one will be allowed to take the law into their hands. He said that on the instructions of the Prime Minister, it had been ensured that the protestors do not face any kind of violence or harassment. He said that negotiations with the protestors' committee set up by prime minister were going on and the implementation of court orders would be ensured.—APP

Iftikhar Ali praises FTO for outstanding services

ISLAMABAD: Former President of the SAARC Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Iftikhar Ali Malik on Sunday praised the commendable services provided by Federal Tax Ombudsman (FTO) Dr. Asif Mahmood Jah. He said Dr. Asif has efficiently addressed genuine tax-related grievances of taxpayers, notably the business community nationwide, accomplishing this within a record-short time of 34 days, said a news release here. Talking to delegation of industrialists led by Muslim Khan Buner, he said since he assumed the responsibility on 29th September 2021, an extensive public awareness campaign reached every corner of the country. As a result first time in the history, thousands of aggrieved tax payers approached the regional offices nationwide through email, FTO portal, WhatsApp, Mobile App, Fax and written complaints. Remarkably, these issues were resolved within a record time of 34 days from the date of complaint, he said Malik said Dr. Jah's commitment to resolving issues in such a timely manner reflects a proactive approach that fosters a business-friendly environment. He appreciated the principled bold stance of Federal Tax Ombudsman's advocacy for timely payment of taxes and the expansion of the tax base. Recognizing the urgency of these measures, Dr. Jah's stance aligns with the broader goal of strengthening the national economy.—APP

CDA to develop bicycles lanes in capital city

ISLAMABAD: The Capital Development Authority (CDA) has announced a plan to implement the "Cycling as an Alternate Transport" project. CDA said in a statement that over 146 km of dedicated two-way bicycle lanes and 98 km of one-way bicycle lanes will be developed all over Islamabad, aiming to reduce carbon footprints and traffic congestion. Introduce Paddle and E-bike The Islamabad administration will develop 100% protected and connected lanes with 72 bicycle parking stations all over the federal capital. CDA Chairman Anwarul Haq said while presiding over a meeting that the objective of this project was to establish a secure citywide bicycle route network to promote safe and accessible cycling across Islamabad as well as an equitable commute option for citizens. According to the proposed plan, the project, through infrastructure interventions, would introduce cycling as an alternative mode of transportation in Islamabad. "The project is a concentrated effort to reduce the amount and impact of greenhouse gas emissions from automobiles and private vehicles." "Throughout the world, cities are making the shift to sustainable and eco-friendly transportation to reduce their carbon footprint.

The economy is now showing signs of revival: S.M. Tanveer

Zafar Bakhtawari, former President ICCI and Secretary General UBG Pakistan said that the private sector is the backbone of the economy and there is a need to promote business leaders as role models in the country to attract youth towards entrepreneurship so that youth could drive Pakistan towards progress and prosperity

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: S.M. Tanveer, Punjab's Minister for Industries and Commerce said that the government is working hard and pursuing reforms in various sectors due to which the economy is now showing some signs of revival and vowed that all possible efforts would be made to put Pakistan on track of sustainable growth. He said that a Business Facilitation Centre has been established in Punjab as a One Window Facility to automate the licenses and NOCs required for starting up or expanding businesses that would help boost business activities. He said this while addressing a dinner reception hosted by Atif Ikram Sheikh, former President ICCI and Presidential candidate of UBG for FPCCI at his residence. S.M. Tanveer said that UBG has a clear vision to address the key issues of the business community, increase exports, strengthen foreign exchange reserves, and boost industrialization and this vision would be implemented after winning the upcoming elections of FPCCI to revive the economy.

Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari, President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) said that the role of FPCCI is very important in promoting the private sector in the country and assisting the government in boosting exports, encouraging



foreign investment, stimulating economic activity and UBG will strengthen FPCCI to play this role effectively. He said that ICCI is a strong supporter of UBG and hoped that under the dynamic leadership of S.M. Tanveer, UBG would achieve a landslide victory in the upcoming elections of FPCCI to address the issues of the business community and promote the economy. Khalid Iqbal Malik, Group Leader ICCI said that the current leadership of FPCCI has failed to deliver for the business community and stressed that all chambers of

commerce and trade associations should support UBG in the upcoming elections of FPCCI so that this apex trade body could play an effective role in making Pakistan a hub of business and economic activities. Zafar Bakhtawari, former President ICCI and Secretary General UBG Pakistan said that the private sector is the backbone of the economy and there is a need to promote business leaders as role models in the country to attract youth towards entrepreneurship so that youth could drive Pakistan towards progress and prosperity.

Atif Ikram Sheikh, Presidential candidate of UBG for FPCCI said that they have prepared a plan to address the key issues of the business community and steer the economy out of trouble. He said that they would realize the mission of the late SM Munir after winning the elections of FPCCI to make Pakistan a hub of business activities in the region. Abdul Rauf Alam, Sheikh Abdul Razak, Waqar Bakhtawari, Zahid Maqbool, and others also spoke on the occasion and expressed strong support for UBG.

Mushaal says women rights protection priority

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: Special Assistant to Prime Minister for Human Rights and Women Empowerment, Mushaal Hussein Mullick, has asserted that the principles of human rights and women's empowerment are deeply embedded in the fabric of our religious, cultural, social, and political values. She was delivering a keynote speech at the launching ceremony of "Hundred Day Plan - Execution and Achievements by the Caretaker Government" held in Governor House Lahore. The launching ceremony was graced by the esteemed presence of Governor Punjab, Muhammad Baligh Ur Rehman. Focal Person to SAPM, Ms. Sabien Hussein Mullick, one of the architects of the 100 day plan, delivered a detailed presentation on the Execution and Achievements of 100-day plan. The launch-

ing event was organized in collaboration with infocomm, an organization renowned for its work on Women Empowerment and Financial Inclusion. Other dignitaries from civil society and organizations dedicated to women empowerment and human rights were among the attendees. Mushaal emphasized that the principles of human rights and women's empowerment are not only deeply embedded in the constitution of Pakistan but also find a robust foundation in our national heritage. She underscored the transformative capacity of Pakistani women and advocated for increased female engagement in social and digital arenas. She emphasized that the 100-day plan encapsulates innovative solutions poised to uplift and empower women across Pakistan. Mushaal underscored that despite its constrained mandate, the caretaker setup demonstrated a robust resolve to attain the objectives

outlined in the 100-Day Plan. She conveyed her hope that all stakeholders, driven by a shared commitment, would actively contribute to realizing the dream of advancing human rights and women's empowerment in Pakistan. Speaking on the occasion, Sam Ali Dada, Advisor to SAPM on Gender Inclusion, stressed the need of focused efforts on empowering women through financial inclusion. She emphasized that achieving women's financial independence stands as a pivotal pillar for advancing gender equality and unlocking the true potential of the nation. The 100-day plan, developed by the Ministry of Human Rights under the leadership of SAPM, stands as a comprehensive package of visionary ideas and initiatives. The plan is aimed at enhancing the overall human rights landscape and promoting women's empowerment in Pakistan. The plan encompasses a wide array of

initiatives spanning critical areas such as Gender Equality, Education, Economic Empowerment, Healthcare, Violence against Women, Political Participation, Legal Rights, Reproductive Rights, Freedom from Discrimination, Child Marriage, Access to Justice, Media Representation, Access to Technology and Social and Economic Safety Nets. In his address, the Governor of Punjab commended the dedicated efforts of those instrumental in shaping the 100-day plan. He acknowledged and extended appreciation to SAPM Mushaal Hussein Mullick for her personal endeavors in championing human rights in Pakistan and tirelessly working towards the empowerment of Pakistani women to a deserving status. The Governor also declared Mushaal as a source of inspiration and an emblem of the Kashmir freedom movement.

PST to observe 29th death anniversary of Parveen Shakir tomorrow

STAFF REPORTER

ISLAMABAD: The Parveen Shakir Trust (PST) is all set to observe the 29th death anniversary of Pakistan's legendary poet Parveen Shakir (died: Dec 26, 1994) on Tuesday, December 26, 2023. Literary figures, the poet's colleagues, friends and the Members of the Trust will assemble at H8 graveyard at 11.30 am on Tuesday, to pay tribute to the indomitable spirit and literary contributions of one of Pakistan's most celebrated poets. Parveen Shakir, a trailblazing figure in Urdu literature, left an indelible mark with her eloquent verses that continue to resonate with readers across the globe. The poet enriched Urdu poetry with her profound words. In order to commemorate her legacy, the Parveen Shakir Trust has organized a series of events on the solemn occasion of her 29th death anniversary. Floral wreaths will be laid on the final resting place of the poet followed by Fateha Khwani. This spiritual gathering will be an opportunity for attendees to reflect on Parveen Shakir's life and work, as well as to seek blessings for her departed soul. Following the wreath-laying ceremony, a Quran Khwani will be held at the residence of Mrs. Parveen Qadir Agha, PST's Chairperson. "We believe it is our responsibility to honor the memory of Parveen Shakir, whose poetry touched the hearts of many and continues to inspire generations. The 29th death anniversary is a time for reflection, remembrance, and a celebration of her enduring literary legacy," said spokesperson of the trust. To commemorate the 29th death anniversary of the renowned national poet The Parveen Shakir Trust extends an open invitation to the public, literature enthusiasts, and members of the media to join in this significant occasion. The Trust encourages attendees to share their thoughts, memories, and favorite verses of Parveen Shakir on social media platforms using the hashtag #ParveenShakir29.

Inflation keeps rising amidst record food and energy prices

ISLAMABAD - The All Pakistan Business Forum (APBF) has observed that the inflation measured by the Sensitive Price Indicator (SPI) continued to rise in the wake of higher prices of food and energy despite recent cut in the prices of petroleum products, as essential commodities have still not seen a decline in prices, leaving trade and industry frustrated. APBF President Syed Maaz Mahmood, quoting the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS), observed that the index spiked 38.28 percent when compared with the corresponding week of last year, as out of the 51 essential commodities covered by SPI, prices of 17 (33.33 percent) items increased, rates of another 17 decreased and prices of the remaining 17 items remained unchanged compared to the previous week. On a weekly basis, the price of tomato rose 6.28 percent, egg 3.48 percent, powdered salt 2.75 percent, cooked beef 1.06 percent, garlic 1.04 percent, tea (prepared) 0.73 percent, beef 0.39 percent and potato 0.35 percent. Among non-food commodities, the electricity charges for Q1 rose 8.59 percent, energy savers 0.55 percent, shirting 0.47 percent and liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) 0.31 percent, according to the PBS. The year-on-year trend depicted price increases in the range of 58-137 percent among different items. Maaz Mahmood said that Pakistan has been facing a high inflation for the past couple of years partly due to massive depreciation of the rupee against the US dollar and partly due to a surge in global commodity prices like energy cost. The country largely meets its energy demand through expensive imports. The monthly inflation reading, measured by the Consumer Price Index, hit a four-month high at 31.4 percent in September 2023 after reaching a six-decade high at 38 percent in May. Inflationary

pressures are expected to slow down from January 2024 onwards. The latest rupee appreciation of 10.62 percent in the past 27 working days to over three-month high at Rs287.62/\$ is expected to encourage the government to make a deep cut in petroleum product prices in the upcoming fortnightly review for the second half of Dec. However, the likely surge in gas prices under a condition of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) loan program may keep inflation elevated and not allow it to fall significantly in the near future. He stressing the need for putting the economy on a sustainable growth trajectory by providing incentives to the industry, lamented that the economy is facing multiple challenges of falling exports, high inflation, low growth and declining foreign reserves, with fiscal accounts under immense pressure on account of heavy interest payments. The APBF President said that the drop shows the government would find it difficult to achieve the industrial growth and export target, leading to more pressure on foreign exchange reserves of the country. He asked the government to address the underlying structural vulnerabilities through smooth energy supply at competitive rates, as country's overall export proceeds continued to shrink for the fifth consecutive month in a row. Quoting the data, he pointed out 1.7 billion dollars decline in remittances during the first half of the current year compared to the same period the year before (a decline of 11.1 percent), exports declined by 6.6 billion dollars (6.8 percent decline), foreign direct investment dipped by 654 million dollars (58 percent decline), portfolio investment plummeted from negative 45.5 to negative 1032 million dollars. Public Sector Development Program decreased by 122 billion rupees (48.4 percent) and credit to private sector.—APP

Cultivating the indigenous spirit of Pakistani culture

GHAZALA ANBREEN

After the partition of the Subcontinent, a new determination had ensued that we had to surpass India. The limited number of Muslims were more zealous and far more ambitious than the Muslims in the rest of the world. They had a psychological edge. Their belief was staunch that despite being in the minority, they always defeated the majority. A battle cannot only be won on the battlefield, it can be won in the field of sports also. Pakistan used to be number one in hockey and for many years it continuously defeated India. It also took the lead

in the creative television drama and entertainment field. The films were liked by the majority, however, TV gradually created a new kind of entertainment that pleased all the classes. Our writers of that period wrote dramas that satisfied the demands and the needs of the visual screen. At that time our writers were very mature and they captured the pulse of the times. They understood the feelings and problems of the common man on the street. So TV plays and TV entertainment created a new kind of culture amongst the people of Pakistan. This credit does not go to one individual, rather

every individual was a warrior. From the 1900s to 1980s the passion and sincerity remained somewhat predominant. The Spirit of the past must be revived in modern times too. Unfortunately in the present times, people are very much impressed with Western culture. Artificial glamour has impressed them. But they have chosen the wrong model. This is the reason that although we claim to be modern, we lack the reform aspect. The part of the world where we dwell has remained very aloof from the rest of the world in the past. Our folk stories and Sufi poets were just limited to the

son of the soil and most of the time they were pleading with them to compromise with the system. Had those messages been of revolutionary orientation, the whole nature and struggle of this part of the world would have been more forward-looking. It is nice to know about one's past but it is necessary to learn from the mistakes that made us aloof from the world. Today is the age of global networking. Therefore, keeping in mind the universal message which also fulfills the needs of the present day times must be the target behind all the entertainment genres that must be produced and shown to the people.

AGPR says no delay in payment of salaries

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The spokesperson of Accountant General Pakistan Revenue (AGPR) has strongly refuted the news item aired by private news channels regarding any delay in payment of Salaries and termed it totally baseless, and false. The spokesperson has clarified that AGPR has released the pay, salaries and pension to the Christian community before Christmas while the salaries of the Federal employees other than Christian community will be released on 30.12.2023. It would have been appropriate for the news channel to contact AGPR office before airing such news, but unfortunately this was not done so, the spokesperson added.

AIOU organizes event for Christmas workers

DNA

ISLAMABAD: A Christmas celebration function was organized at Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) for Christian workers. Addressing the ceremony, Vice Chancellor AIOU, Prof Dr Nasir Mahmood said that all the prophets have taught love, tolerance, forgiveness and justice, while today in our society, instead of brotherhood and love, we are living with hatred and disgust with each other. Dr Nasir said, let's pledge that we will not do what our conscience forbids us to do. He said that most of us have to change ourselves for the establishment of a beautiful society. The Chief Guest of the event was Father, Aamir Yaqoob of Khatun Fatima Church, Islamabad. Registrar AIOU, Raja Umar Yunis, Additional Registrar Bibi Yasmin, Director Coordination and Follow-up, Dr Syed Aamir Shah, representatives of the Employees Welfare Association and around 120 Christian employees of AIOU participated. Christmas cake was cut in the ceremony, all prayed for the development and prosperity of the country and good wishes were expressed for the Christian community on this occasion. Pastor Shiraz read selected verses from the Bible and highlighted the importance of inter-faith harmony, national security and welfare of the human society. The event was jointly organized by the Employees Welfare Association and Director Works.

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Schools shaping guidance for inclusive gender identity

For years, schools have been trying to negotiate the complexities of safeguarding and equalities law as it relates to pupils questioning their gender identity, amid a highly contested political environment. Headteachers have been seeking guidance based on the law and clinical evidence to help them act in the best interests of children. But divisions within government have caused unacceptable delays. A draft version of this guidance was finally published by the government last week and is now subject to a 12-week consultation. The draft could undoubtedly be improved through consultation. But it is an important step towards putting child wellbeing at the heart of schools' approach. Labour's shadow education secretary has welcomed its publication. This suggests a political consensus is emerging – one that prioritises the interests of children, the law and clinical guidance – on the compassionate way to navigate this difficult territory. To date, it has been a toxic debate, pitting people with genuinely held views – including parents, teachers and children – against each other. Schools have to respond to pupils questioning their gender within the context of their legal obligations. They have a duty to keep all children safe. Schools are bound not to discriminate against staff and pupils on the basis of their protected characteristics. Schools are also bound not to discriminate against staff and pupils on the basis of their protected characteristics, including sex, gender reassignment and any protected beliefs, such as the belief that sex cannot be replaced by gender identity. They have specific legal obligations to provide single-sex toilets, showers, changing rooms and sleeping accommodation for children of a certain age, and they must provide equal opportunities for girls in competitive sports. Schools also have legal duties with respect to political impartiality: they should not teach as fact the contested belief system that everyone has a gender ID, or that sex is "assigned at birth". Schools also should pay regard to the emerging clinical view of how best to support gender-questioning children. Some argue that a child saying that they believe they have a gender identity different to their sex should be treated in the same way as a disclosure they are gay, because it can only be understood as a sign of a fixed trans identity. But this approach is not based on evidence about what is best for children. The interim report of the paediatrician Hilary Cass, undertaking a review for the NHS in this area, is clear that a young person's sense of their gender can be in flux until their early 20s, that gender dysphoria often naturally resolves itself through puberty, and that it can be associated with autism, children processing their same-sex attraction, childhood trauma and discomfort about puberty. Social transition – where a child is treated as though they are of the opposite sex, including the use of the opposite pronouns – is a psychological intervention. There is little evidence on its long-term impacts, including the risk that it could make otherwise-transient gender distress last longer. New draft NHS guidance recommends it should be done for adolescents only where it is necessary for the alleviation of clinically significant distress or significant impairment in social functioning and where a young person is able to fully comprehend the implications of social transition. There need to be good reasons for withholding information from parents. The new schools guidance says that teachers can listen to pupils questioning their gender without automatically alerting parents.



Benefits of science cooperation clear to all

The China-US Science and Technology Cooperation Agreement is an umbrella agreement that governs US government science and technology work with China and is part of a broader science and technology ecosystem of universities, companies, professional bodies and nongovernmental organizations. The objective of the STA is to provide opportunities for cooperation in areas of mutual interest, "on the basis of equality, reciprocity, and mutual benefit". The types of activities it covers include exchanges of scientists, scholars, specialists and students as well as scientific, scholarly and technological information; joint projects, research and courses; and conferences and symposia. Signed by Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping and US President Jimmy Carter on Jan 31, 1979, the STA was the first major agreement between the two governments after the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries. The agreement has subsequently been at the core of the productive relationship, and indeed has served both countries well. As perceptions of the relationship have evolved, however, especially with the US increasingly considering China as a strategic rival and primary threat, Washington appears to have become disenchanted with and suspicious of the agreement. Critics of the STA have called for it to be scrapped. They claim the agreement helps Beijing strengthen the military, which in turn undermines US national security. Proponents argue the STA has benefited the US greatly and killing it would inevitably hurt US scientific enterprises and research. Dithering over the decision whether to extend the agreement or not, with the STA set to lapse on Aug 27, the Joe Biden administration took a provisional step – extending the STA while it determines how to proceed. But with a little more than two months of that temporary reprieve remaining, the policy circle seems just as divided as ever. If the administration puts aside the ideologically tinted glasses that those who perceive the STA as being part of the "China threat" ubiquitously wear, it would recognize what it has done for the two countries and scientific advancement. In doing so, its practical significance should be evident. The US State Department has outlined the merits of STAs with other countries saying they "strengthen international cooperation in scientific areas aligned with American interests, ensure open data practices, promote reciprocity, extend US norms and principles, and protect American intellectual property". That also applies to the STA with China. The US scientific community is fully aware such cooperation, ranging from climate to public health concerns, has been instrumental to US scientific pursuits, and it is groundless to claim it unilaterally serves China. There are strict regulatory clauses in place that address such concerns as trade secrets and intellectual property, and all terms are mutually agreed. Interestingly, while the witch-hunting against "Chinese spying" that started during the Donald Trump presidency ended up fruitless, bilateral collaborations have led to significant advances including in influenza surveillance and vaccine development. Killing the STA with China may ease some US politicians' fears of China's tech progress. But beyond that, it would represent a net loss for the US and the global scientific community.

Perception of US versus China

Qamar Bashir



Despite substantial financial aid from the US, which in total might exceed Chinese assistance, the prevalent sentiment in Pakistan portrays the US as manipulative, self-serving, domineering, and unforgiving, perpetuating a negative perception that hasn't improved over time

During my tenure as Press Secretary to the President, I met with the newly appointed head of public affairs at the US Embassy who called on me in my office in mid 2022. During the ensuing discussion his primary concern was how to improve US perception which has historically been tainted and uneasy. In reply to one of his queries about improving US perception, I reframed the dialogue. Yes, we were historical allies, bound by pacts like SEATO and CENTO, and US contributions to Pakistan's military and development are documented. Yet, the common man on the street barely feels their touch. This disconnect is crucial. While grateful for aid, its conditional nature often overshadows its benefits, breeding a sense of strings-attached partnership rather than genuine collaboration. The challenge, I emphasized, lies not in revisiting the past, but in forging a future where the impact of US engagement reverberates directly on the lives of ordinary Pakistanis, transforming their perception from tainted legacy to tangible partnership. The

relationship between Pakistan and the US has been marred by suspensions, distrusts and disappointments. From coercing Pakistan into conflicts during the Cold War era to meddling in its political processes, supporting dictatorial regimes, and then swiftly disengaging once objectives were met, the US left a trail of shattered trust and unhealed wounds. The perception among common Pakistanis, politicians, and the bureaucracy remains that the US is often to blame for the nation's troubles, whether or not it's the actual cause. Despite substantial financial aid from the US, which in total might exceed Chinese assistance, the prevalent sentiment in Pakistan portrays the US as manipulative, self-serving, domineering, and unforgiving, perpetuating a negative perception that hasn't improved over time. The incident involving the US Navy SEALs violated Pakistan's airspace to execute the operation that led to the killing of Osama Bin Laden stands as a stark example of deep-rooted distrust. Instead of collaborating with Pakistan's armed forces, the US, driven by its sheer might, breached the sovereignty of an independent nation. This event, among many others, including the indiscriminate drone strikes causing civilian casualties labeled as "collateral damage," illustrates the severe humiliation and disregard faced by Pakistan. These actions highlight a pattern of disrespect for international law and human rights, with instances of abductions, extrajudicial detentions, and circumvention of legal processes, such as detaining Pakistani citizens in Guantanamo Bay prisons. Furthermore, the US's stance during India's airspace violation lacked condemnation, signaling a bias that overshadowed adherence to international norms, further straining relations and reinforcing a sense of betrayal among Pakistanis. In stark contrast to the US, China has stood as a steadfast friend to Pakistan since its inception. China's support has been unwavering, extending aid and assistance during Pakistan's most challenging economic, financial, and security crises. Unlike the US, China refrained from meddling in Pakistan's internal affairs or using coercion to achieve its goals. Notably, during critical moments, China didn't abandon Pakistan and didn't impose ultimatums, as seen with the US post-9/11, where Pakistan was given a stark choice: "with us or against us." China's approach has fostered a sense of reliability and trust, forging a longstanding bond between the two nations based on mutual respect and non-interference. Unlike the intangible aid from the US and the West, Chinese investment in Pakistan has been palpable and transformative, leaving a visible imprint on the nation's development. China's support extended beyond mere assistance, fostering tangible improvements across various sectors without imposing conditions or demanding allegiance. Notably, China aided Pakistan's defense industry without seeking alliance commitments or dragging the nation into its conflicts. It refrained from interfering in Pakistan's politics, maintaining a hands-off approach to internal and external affairs, unlike the US or the West. The impact of Chinese investment reverberates in numerous projects, ranging from alleviating power shortages, enhancing transportation networks with roads,

highways, and ports, to boosting connectivity, energy alternatives, infrastructure, and even grassroots initiatives like distributing solar systems in Balochistan. These initiatives directly and positively impacted the lives of ordinary Pakistanis, creating a profound sense of appreciation, gratitude, and respect toward China, fostering a deep bond that Pakistanis hold in high regard. The apprehension and opposition from the US and Europe toward the China-Pakistan fraternal and all-weather friendship is a sentiment of reluctance and apprehensions. They don't have the appetite to assist Pakistan towards development and progress nor want others to do so. As Director Media to the former President Zardari and deeply attached with the PML(N) leadership during Nawaz's period, I first hand witnessed Mr. Asif Ali Zardari and Nawaz Sharif made frantic outreach to the US and the West to help Pakistan out of its financial and economic woes but both declined involvement. Their refusal prompted Pakistan to turn to Chinese investment, a move born out of necessity to expedite progress and uplift millions out of poverty. The CPEC emerged as a crucial pathway for Pakistan's advancement when other avenues for support were unavailing. The criticism aimed at Chinese investment often includes allegations of creating a debt trap for Pakistan, yet Pakistan's experience tells a different story. Contrary to the accusations, Pakistan finds comfort in its debt owed to China, which stands out among its various creditors. According to Dr. Shamshad, Pakistan's Caretaker Finance Minister, the Chinese debt is the most forgiving and accommodating. Chinese creditors demonstrate a remarkable flexibility by extending payment deadlines upon Pakistan's request, showing understanding and support. Notably, Chinese debt boasts the lowest interest rates, further distinguishing it from other financial obligations. Additionally, China remains willing to bolster Pakistan's foreign reserves whenever the need arises, showcasing a level of generosity and support that Pakistan values. This stands in stark contrast to the portrayal of a debt trap and exemplifies the favorable terms and understanding within the Pakistan-China financial relationship. The criticism from the US and the West towards CPEC is though baseless, reflects their frustration and appears driven by concerns over being sidelined from Pakistan's strides in progress and prosperity. They knew very well that the success of the CPEC could potentially set a precedent for similar initiatives in the region and globally, making the US and the West uneasy. Critiques against the CPEC seem largely unfounded, with concerns raised about Beijing's influence, debt accumulation, altered trade dynamics, environmental sustainability, and social repercussions lacking substantial basis. These criticisms, seemingly founded on fears of geopolitical shifts and China's enhanced presence, underline the multi-dimensional impact of the CPEC on the region. The accusation of altering trade routes or imposing dominance by China in the context of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is baseless and lacks merit. Both China and Pakistan have extended invitations to countries across regions, including the Middle East

and Europe, to actively participate as equal partners in the expansive Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). Notably, this inclusive approach extends even to India and Afghanistan, offering them opportunities to join this transformative program. Such outreach negates the notion of China's intention to monopolize or manipulate trade routes. Instead, the BRI serves as a unifying platform that, when fully operational, connects the global community, minimizes distances, stimulates trade and investment, reduces transportation costs, and ensures year-round availability of essential commodities worldwide. By stabilizing prices and enhancing accessibility, this initiative fosters equal opportunities for all participating nations to progress and thrive, presenting a vision of shared development and prosperity on a global scale. The perception of the US in Pakistan is tainted by a complex history of fluctuating alliances, military interventions, controversial drone strikes, and a sense of conditional aid driven by perceived self-interest. These experiences have bred skepticism, undermining trust and sovereignty. In contrast, China's resonance in Pakistan is rooted in an enduring friendship characterized by non-interference, respectful bilateral relations, and unwavering support sans conditions. Tangible investments, notably through transformative projects like the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), have bolstered economic development and infrastructure visibly, fostering genuine goodwill. China's consistent collaboration during Pakistan's challenges without ulterior motives has solidified the perception of a true partnership, painting a sharp contrast to the perceived interests and interventions associated with the US-Pakistan relationship. My advice to him in reply to his question; how to improve the deeply entrenched negative perception of the US in Pakistan was straightforward: Emulate the Chinese model. Reflect on why China is embraced and cherished by the people of Pakistan. Consider why the Pakistani leadership, both civilian and military, find comfort in dealings with China, and why there's inherent trust in this relationship. Evaluate why the bond between China and Pakistan remains resilient despite changes in government or shifts in bureaucratic structures. Furthermore, the key lies in initiating projects in Pakistan that are tangible, visible, and directly improve the lives of ordinary citizens. Importantly, refrain from meddling in Pakistan's domestic politics and internal affairs. To recalibrate the bilateral relationship, it's essential to approach it as equals rather than fostering a dynamic of servant and master. This shift toward mutual respect and visible, impactful projects can pave the way for a more positive perception and a stronger bond between the US and Pakistan like it did between China and Pakistan.

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

The US stance and Pakistan's political Turmoil

Dr. Muhammad Akram Zaheer



They believe it is better to have a strong leader who can maintain order even if it means some level of control. In Pakistan, moderates are puzzled and feel abandoned by the U.S. They argue that the American attitude is confusing and risky. They emphasize that their movement for democracy has been peaceful and unique in the Muslim world. The U.S. has high stakes in Pakistan, especially because

Before the Iraq war, the United States might have liked the idea of promoting democracy. But when the war not went well, officials from both the Bush administration and other Democratic presidential candidates were being careful. They were wary that pushing for democracy might lead to instability. Despite concerns about the effectiveness of the country's military, there was a fear that any change, even if well-intentioned, could put American security at risk. The debate in Washington reflected a cautious approach. Some people from both on the right and the left argued that try to promote democracy in places like Iraq is a repeating the same mistake. They believe it is better to have a strong leader who can maintain order even if it means some level of control. In Pakistan, moderates are puzzled and feel abandoned by the U.S. They argue that the American attitude is confusing and risky. They emphasize that their movement for democracy has been peaceful and unique in the Muslim world. The U.S. has high stakes in Pakistan, especially because they think Al Qaeda are believed to be hiding there. While General Musharraf has targeted Al Qaeda members in cities, critics say he hasn't effectively dealt with the tribal areas. Some argue that political and economic approaches are essential, not just military ones, to counter extremism. They believe a civilian government can handle this better than a military one. Experts say that the majority of Pakistan's population and military remains moderate, reducing the risk of hard-line Islamists taking control. However, General Musharraf's popularity was declining, and there was a call for democratic reforms. Critics argue that the military's prolonged governance weakens democratic institutions and the only way for Pakistan to democratize is by practicing democracy. There is a debate about whether the intelligence service in Pakistan would cooperate less under a military or civilian leader. Some caution that democracy has failed in Pakistan before due to corruption and military interventions. The idea is raised that military and civilian leaders should negotiate a plan to gradually reduce the military's role in politics while securing its role in national defense, similar to what happened in Turkey and Latin America. Some members of Congress and experts have called for a review of American policy toward Pakistan, suggesting that aid should depend on better performance in the war on terror and increased spending on development and education in Pakistan. However, the U.S. administration has continued to express support for General Musharraf, with some advocating caution. Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton mentioned that General Musharraf had become "quite antidemocratic," but she also said the U.S. relies on him to control the tribal areas

where the Taliban and Al Qaeda fighters come from. Senator John Edwards was more straightforward, saying, "Given the power of radical Islam in Pakistan, there is absolutely no way to know what kind of government will take its place." Perkovich, the Carnegie analyst, emphasized the need for sophisticated American diplomacy to broker an agreement that shifts power gradually from the military to civilians but he noted that neither political party has figured out the right approach to Pakistan, making it a bipartisan problem in avoiding a solution. When Benazir Bhutto was killed, it happened in Rawalpindi, a historic town near a park named after another Pakistani Prime Minister Liaquat Ali Khan, who was also assassinated there in 1951. Benazir's father, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, another former prime minister, was executed in 1979 at the city's central jail, just a short distance away. The killings were different Liaquat Ali Khan was shot by a Pashtun separatist, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto was hanged after being found guilty by a court appointed by a military dictator and the investigation into Benazir Bhutto's assassination is ongoing. Despite the differences, the fact that all three leaders died in the same part of Rawalpindi highlights how violent events have often changed Pakistan's political landscape. It also emphasizes the fragility of the country's hopes for a stable democracy. In its 76 years since formation, Pakistan has swung between military rule and elected governments. Now, there's optimism about reviving democracy. However, both military and civilian leaders have contributed to the challenges. The United States had urged Pervez Musharraf, the current military ruler, to allow a return to democracy as a way to restore stability. Yet, with the recent death of Bhutto, the prospects for a successful transition have become more uncertain. While the focus is often on the failings of military rulers, civilian politicians in Pakistan have also struggled to bring stability. Many believe that both politicians and generals share responsibility for undermining democracy over the years. Benazir Bhutto despite being a proponent of democracy, raises the persistent question in Pakistan's history when, or if, the country will truly move towards building a democracy that lives up to its name. The narrative blaming generals for stifling democracy while appealing to Western views also seeks to excuse the politicians' role in weakening democratic institutions for personal gain or settling political scores. In April 2022, there was a crisis in Pakistan when the leader of the PTI Imran Khan, lost a vote of confidence and his position as the prime minister. People were also upset about the bad economy. Khan blamed the military and foreign powers for interfering. The opposition took over and Khan wanted a quick election and criticized the

military. Later, more than 200 cases were filed against Khan, including serious charges. He was arrested in May, leading to protests by his supporters. The Supreme Court released him but he was arrested again in August and given a three-year sentence for corruption. The Election Commission banned him from public office. Now the PTI party is struggling. Many supporters are arrested and key members left party because of pressure. In July, some parliamentarians formed a new group. The party is targeted by the authorities with Khan's successor also arrested. The outgoing coalition said a new election can't happen until the Election Commission redraws electoral boundaries which will take until December. This gives authorities more time to control the PTI. There is a risk of violence amid the political chaos. In July, the Islamic State killed many people by bombing a conference. More attacks could cause instability, giving the military a reason to get more involved in the election. However, using the internet for political discussions is risky because the government tightly controls it, limiting citizens' freedom of speech. Internet access is crucial for elections as people use it to learn about candidates, share their views and find voting information. But sometimes, the government restricts internet access like after the arrest of Khan in May 2023, when mobile connectivity nationwide was limited. The government is also directly punishing those who express their opinions. In February 2023, a court sentenced a supporter of the PTI party to three years in prison for criticizing the military on social media. Social media harassment is common especially against women journalists covering politics often at the encouragement of politicians. Human rights advocates say that social media companies haven't done enough to moderate content and respond to emergencies, leaving users in Pakistan to deal with the challenges on their own. The anti-PTI coalition passed controversial bills before leaving office, including the E-Safety Bill allowing the creation of a new authority to monitor and regulate online content. Existing authorities have a history of abusing their powers like blocking Wikipedia for two days in February for refusing to remove content considered sacrilegious. This control over the internet poses a threat to Pakistan's fragile democracy as authorities suppress the PTI and limit online freedom of expression. To ensure a fair election, the authorities should stick to the constitutional 90 days limit and stop punishing ordinary people for sharing their opinions. The military should not overpower the voice of the Pakistani people in its quest to strengthen its position.

Briefs

Genocide in Gaza continues

FROM PAGE 01
army continued to attack different areas of Gaza last night and on Sunday morning, targeting homes, civilian gatherings and shelter centers, and massacring dozens of citizens. According to local sources, a teenager identified as Mohamed Abu Anza was killed when an Israeli drone fired one missile at him near the Abasan junction in the east of Khan Yunis. Two journalists Mohamed az-Zeitunyah, from Al-Ray Radio, and Mohamed al-Af, from Al-Ray Agency, were martyred when the Israeli army attacked a house belonging to the family of az-Zeitunyah in Gaza City. Casualties were also reported when the Israeli army bombed displaced civilians in al-Mughraqa area, southwest of Gaza City. The Israeli army also attacked a group of citizens in as-Sunnayya Mosque in central Khan Yunis, killing two of them.

Pentagon says Iranian drone...

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spokesperson told Reuters. The incident highlights escalating regional tensions and new risk to shipping lanes after the Oct. 7 Hamas attack on Israel. The Iranian government, as well as its allied militant forces in Yemen, have publicly criticized the Israeli government's military operation in Gaza. Thousands of Palestinian citizens have been killed in the ongoing conflict, according to aid monitors. The Pentagon statement said this was the "seventh Iranian attack on commercial shipping since 2021." There were no casualties as a result of the attack and a brief fire on board the tanker was extinguished. The incident took place only 200 nautical miles from the coast of India. A spokesperson for the Iranian delegation at the United Nations did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

'Detained protesters...

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widespread condemnation from human rights organisations, politicians, the Islamabad High Court (IHC), and even the highest offices, including President Dr. Arif Alvi and caretaker Prime Minister Anwaarul Haq Kakar. A judicial magistrate had granted bail to 162 participants, though conflicting accounts from protesters and BYC claimed that the release was cancelled despite bail approval. Today, Islamabad police officially announced the approval of bail for the arrested protesters. The police statement stated, "Keeping in view the legal requirements, the bail of the arrested protesters has been approved. The detained protesters are being released." Relatives of the detainees were urged to contact the police for information and legal assistance.

Baloch marchers...

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marchers tabled unconstitutional demands. He said that the state could not unarm its institutions to leave the terrorists freehanded. Achakzai claimed that some elements were attempting to create chaos ahead of the general elections. The caretaker information minister said that the surrender of disgruntled Baloch leaders shocked India. He added that every Baloch is loyal to Pakistan like a Punjabi, Pathan and Sindhi. He vowed to make Balochistan a peaceful place.

Pak condoles martyrdom..

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We express deepest condolences to the bereaved families and wish speedy recovery to the injured. Pakistan stands in firm solidarity with Türkiye in this moment of grief. Pakistan strongly condemns the scourge of terrorism. We are confident that the brotherly Turkish nation will overcome this tragedy with characteristic grit and determination.



ISLAMABAD: Australian High Commissioner Neil Hawkins gifted Kookaburra hockey balls to Risings Stars Hockey Club. President of the Club Mehmood Ahmed and other players receiving the gift from the Australian High Commissioner. – DNA

Muzzamil seal Shaheed Benazir Bhutto National Tennis C'ship

In the second set Muzammil took a lead from the start and never allowed shoaib to come back as he won the second set 6-1 to win the Men's single title

AFZAL JAVED

ISLAMABAD: Muzzamil Murtaza halted Muhammad Shoaib's straight set victory in the final of 9th Shaheed Benazir Bhutto National Tennis Championship here at Islamabad Tennis Complex on Sunday. The housefull final were witnessed at the main tennis court of Islamabad Tennis Complex which played around two hour, it was all left between the country's two elite youngsters, Muhammad Shoaib and Muzzamil Murtaza. Muzzamil Murtaza who had beaten Pakistan's number one Aqeel Khan in the semi-final had shown their wonderful skills in the final against Shoaib as he also enjoyed overwhelming crowd support. The first set started at a high pace, both Muzzamil and Shoaib managed to break each other's serve countless times. It was a



see-saw battle, both displayed top quality tennis which was witnessed after a long time as Muzammil won the first set 7-5. In the second set Muzammil took a lead from the start and never allowed

lowed shoaib to come back as he won the second set 6-1 to win the Men's single title.

In the ladies singles final, Sarah Mehmoob thrashed Amna Qayyum Ali by 2-0 in, Sarah won the first set 7-5, while Sarah simply demolished in the second set by 6-1. Senator Taj Haider, Senator Farhatullah Babar, Islamabad Tennis Complex director and former Pakistan Davis Cup coach Fazal-e-Subhan and other dignities were also present during the prize distribution ceremony.

Results: Men Singles Final: Muzammil Murtaza bt Muhammad Shoaib 6-1,7-5;
Ladies Singles Final: Sara Mehmoob bt Amna Ali Qayyum 7-5,6-1;
U-18 Girls Single Final: Amna Ali Qayyum bt Shiza Sajid 6-3,6-2;
U-12 Boys Final: Shayan Afridi bt Raziq Sultan 4-0,4-2;
Boys Under 10 Final: Rashid Ali Bachani bt Muhammad Faizan 4-2,4-2;

Pollard joins England's T20 WC 2024 coaching team

LONDON: England have appointed former West Indies captain Kieron Pollard to their coaching set-up for next year's T20 World Cup. The 36-year-old will join as an assistant coach for the tournament in the West Indies and United States to provide expertise about local conditions. England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB), in its press release, said Pollard has been added to the coaching panel to provide expertise

of local conditions. "Pollard will join the England men's team specifically for the T20 World Cup as an assistant coach and to provide expertise of local conditions," the ECB said in a statement. "Pollard was a part of West Indies' 2012 men's T20 World Cup success and has vast experience in the format having played more than 600 matches." England are the defending champions having won their second

T20 World Cup title in 2022 in Australia. All-rounder Pollard hit 2,706 runs and took 55 wickets in 123 one-day internationals, while he scored 1,569 runs and claimed 42 wickets in 101 Twenty20 internationals. He was also part of the West Indies squad which won the 2012 T20 World Cup and captained West Indies in 63 matches before his retirement from all formats of international cricket in April 2022. – Agencies



India women secure historic Test win against Australia

NEW DELHI: India's women's cricket team cruised to their first-ever win against Australia in Test cricket on Sunday, beating the visitors by eight wickets in a one-off match in Mumbai. India dominated play in the four-day match at the Wankhede Stadium, smashing 406 runs in the first innings to take a 187-run lead.

On the final day, Australia knocked out 261, with India's bowlers earning five wickets for just 28 runs, including right arm off-break Sneha Rana – later awarded player of the match – taking two wickets in two balls. Set a target of 75, India's skipper Harmanpreet Kaur's team chased down the runs in dramatic play in just under 19 overs for two wickets. For India's women, it was their first Test victory against Australia after 11 attempts since 1977. It follows India's victory against England last week, also in Mumbai. Jay Shah, the Board of Control for Cricket in India secretary, celebrated the back-to-back Test wins. – Agencies

Starc surprised by Pakistan's pace drop

MELBOURNE: Australia's left-arm pacer Mitchell Starc voiced his surprise at Pakistan's drop of pace during the Perth Test, which the home side won by a whopping 360-run to lead the three-match series 1-0. Pakistan, known for their fierce pace attack, couldn't trouble the Australian batters in the first match. However, two debutants, Aamer Jamal and Khurram Shazad, showed some positive signs but it was not enough, as their batting collapsed incompetently during the chase. Starc was surprised by Pakistan's pace drop as the 33-year-old, just like everyone, has seen Pakistani pacers normally bowl at 150 kph.

"I think everyone was slightly surprised at the lower pace of the Pakistan bowlers, when you're generally used to some guys getting in the 150s [kph]. I don't think that pace is the be all and end all but it certainly plays a part and can help," Starc said. However, Starc emphasised that pace is not the only factor citing his fellow Australian Scott Boland's example saying he doesn't always bowl with maximum pace, but knows how to trouble the batters with line and length. "Case in point, you look at Scotty Boland who can bowl good wheels, but he's not at your top end of pace bowlers. But he generates a lot of sideways movement here in Melbourne, obviously being his home ground. He's done it for a long time and we saw that obviously against England, where every ball he bowled could have been a wicket. So I don't think that pace is the be all and end all. Certainly, for our attack we all complement each other really well by doing things very differently," he added.

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

Cipher case 'major national...

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I cannot be in favour of political retribution against a politician because our party and family have suffered and we would not want the same for our opponents. But the cipher case is a very serious issue," he said. Bilawal gave the example of former US president Donald Trump, who has been indicted over his handling of classified documents after leaving office. Bilawal said the US government had raided Trump's home to retrieve the documents. "Pakistan's classified documents are the property of the state. We face a national security threat if these documents are somehow leaked. So there should be a full investigation on the cipher and the reality should be before the public and the nation since this was a major national security breach," he said.

SC returns Imran...

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The former prime minister was sentenced to three years in prison and imposed a fine of Rs100,000 by Additional District and Sessions Judge (ADSJ) Humayun Dilawar on August 5, 2023, after the judge found Khan guilty of graft in the Toshakhana case. Following his conviction, Khan was disqualified from holding any public office for five years. The PTI founder Saturday petitioned the SC against the Islamabad High Court's (IHC) order in the Toshakhana case as part of his efforts to overturn the conviction in the case to contest the general elections scheduled for February 8, 2024. The IHC had dismissed the PTI supreme's plea seeking suspension of the trial court's verdict in the Toshakhana case. In his plea filed in the IHC – the same court that had suspended his sentence – Khan had sought to nullify the conviction.

Nawaz, Maryam...

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As per the original schedule, the process to file nomination papers for national and provincial assemblies commenced on Dec 20 and was set to end at 4:30pm on Friday. However, the electoral watchdog later extended the deadline till today. In a statement, the ECP said the decision was taken in response to requests from political parties and to facilitate the candidacy process. "Political parties must submit priority lists for specific seats to returning officers within the stipulated time," it said. Returning officers (ROs) will examine the nomination papers from Dec 25 to Dec 30, as specified in the schedule. The statement underscored that "all activities as listed in the election schedule released on Dec 15 will be held as planned".

Govt to probe...

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policy to oust anyone from the political process. He said in his opinion those who showed disruptive behavior and were involved in the incidents of May 9 should not be allowed to hold public office. However, he said, the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) will decide about the qualification and disqualification of candidates. The premier said the state is a guarantor of social order, and anyone who challenges it is an anarchist. Talking about the protesters from Balochistan who came to Islamabad, he said everyone had the right to protest with lawful behavior. However, if a situation of law and order is created then law enforcement agencies would take action.

Pakistan condemns...

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India's relentless state-terrorism in IIOJK. The perpetrators of these custodial killings must be held accountable. India's brutal occupation is the root cause of all major issues in IIOJK. The Kashmiri people must realize their inalienable right to self-determination, as enshrined in the relevant UN Security Council resolutions.

Pakistan to host Davis Cup ties

Independent Tribunal says the DCC's decision to hold the tie in Pakistan has solid grounds

SPORTS DESK

ISLAMABAD: ISLAMABAD: Rejecting India's appeal against the International Tennis Federation (ITF) Davis Cup Committee's (DCC) decision, the Chair of the Independent Tribunal said the Davis Cup tie between Pakistan and India will be held in Pakistan, The News reported on Saturday. The 15-member DCC earlier accepted the Pakistan Tennis Federation's (PTF) arguments, making it clear that Pakistan has every right to host the tie to be held in the first week of February in Islamabad. On appeal of the All India

Tennis Association (AITA) against the decision, an independent tribunal was formed. The tribunal upheld the ITF decision saying since there was no solid reason for not playing the match in Pakistan, hence, the Pakistan-India Davis Cup tie will be held on February 4, 2024, in Islamabad. Judge David Casserly (Sports Resolution UK) rejected AITA's appeal against the committee's decision to allot the tie to Pakistan. After going through all the relevant documents submitted by both parties – ITF Committee/Pakistan Tennis Federation and AITA, the Tribunal upheld the decision maintaining that all the reasons quot-

ed by the AITA (such as raising Pakistan's general elections and law and order issues) seeking a neutral venue held no worth. "The DCC's decision to hold the tie in Pakistan has solid grounds and it is pertinent on all the nations to visit the venue (country) selected by the DCC for the Davis Cup ties," the Tribunal said. It is the first time that Pakistan has defeated India's point of view on an international forum twice in a couple of months. It was the DCC that rejected India's concern, allotting the tie to Pakistan and then came the turn of the Chair of Independent Tribunal which upheld the DCC/PTF stance, rejecting AITA concerns altogether.

The tribunal also took feedback from the security consultant before reaching the decision. It directed the Indian federation to send its team for the tie, failing which the tie will be awarded to Pakistan. "There is no such situation in Pakistan where an Indian team cannot travel and participate in the Davis Cup tie. Pakistan has hosted some important Davis Cup ties just recently in a successful manner so there is no solid grounds as to why Pakistan cannot host the tie against India in a befitting manner. Maintaining law and order is the sole responsibility of the host nation. Indian team should rest assured that required security measures

will be in order for their travel and participation," the committee opined. The PTF, in its presentation to DCC and later to the Tribunal, maintained that the tie is planned in the safest possible environments and AITA's concerns have no basis. The presentation also highlighted recent sports exchanges between the two countries, including India's baseball, kabaddi and bridge teams' visits to Pakistan. After going through the presentation, the ITF DCC decided the case in favour of Pakistan, directing the AITA to send their team for the tie, failing which the tie will be awarded to Pakistan. When The News approached President PTF

Senator Salim Saifullah Khan, he said: "Dismissal of the appeal by AITA is, indeed, a big and important decision for Pakistan tennis, and our fraternity who anxiously awaited the award of the Independent Tribunal. I am grateful to the DC Committee for upholding our views, the ITF management for their support in the matter, and to the Learned Chair of the Tribunal for appreciating the contents of our submissions in respect of on-ground realities in Islamabad. "The Indian team coming to play here would auger well for tennis lovers, and international sports, overall."

Briefs

Tunisia's local election begins amid boycott

TUNIS : Voting for Tunisia's first local council elections began on Sunday. Voting started at 8 AM local time (0700GMT) and will last for 10 hours in 4,685 election centers set up in 2,155 regions across the North African country. More than 9 million voters are expected to cast their ballots in the elections to choose their local representatives, according to data from the Supreme Electoral Council. The voting will be the first step in determining the composition of a new Local and Regional National Council. Each of the 279 local councils will send a member chosen by draw to their provincial council. Among the members sent to the provincial councils, 77 council members will serve in the Local and Regional National Council, according to the quota allocated to the regions. Parties across the political spectrum are boycotting the election, an Anadolu correspondent reported. Tunisia has been in the throes of a deep political crisis that has aggravated the country's economic conditions since 2021 when President Kais Saied ousted the government and dissolved parliament.—APP

Power outage continues as storm hits Queensland

SYDNEY : Thousands of residents in Australia's eastern state of Queensland remained without power after a "very dangerous" storm swept through the region for the second time in 12 hours, local media reported on Sunday. Storms are expected to continue along the entire Australian east coast until Boxing Day due to an unusual weather pattern, the Australian Broadcasting Corporation said, citing the Bureau of Meteorology (BOM). A storm cell that stretched from the Darling Downs to northern New South Wales brought heavy rain, strong winds, and hail. Thunderstorms have downed 120 power lines, leaving approximately 57,000 customers without power, said a spokesman for Energex, a Queensland government-owned electricity company that serves 1.5 million homes and businesses in the southeastern part of the state. Authorities have warned residents to prepare a backup plan because homes in Logan and parts of Brisbane could be without power on Christmas Day until at least midday. In New South Wales, authorities also warned travelers to be cautious of "widespread unsettled weather." On Sunday afternoon, a severe thunderstorm warning was issued for parts of Victoria's Central and Mallee districts, including Horsham and Warracknabeal. Severe storms were also expected to develop in the west of the state.—Agencies

Katumbi says election should be annulled as opposition plans protest

BENI : Moise Katumbi, one of the main opposition candidates in Democratic Republic of Congo's presidential election has added his voice to calls for the Dec. 20 vote to be annulled because of "massive fraud," a statement from his campaign said on Saturday. Katumbi's campaign added in the statement that the head of Congo's national election commission should resign because the commission had participated in a planned "electoral fraud." "In this face of this unacceptable situation, we are calling for the immediate annulment of this chaotic election tainted by massive fraud," the statement said. Katumbi's statement came as another group of opposition candidates who had called for a rerun of the election on Wednesday, wrote to the governor of the capital Kinshasa to say they will hold a joint protest next week over the election.—DNA



ISLAMABAD: A vendor is waiting for customers to sell traditional handmade trays at Fruits and Vegetables Market in Federal Capital.—ONLINE

Iran summons Russia's envoy again over islands dispute

This is the second time the Russian envoy to Tehran is being summoned over the same issue

NEWS DESK

TEHRAN: Iran has once more summoned the Russian envoy to Tehran after Moscow signed another joint statement with Arab nations calling for negotiations over three disputed islands that the United Arab Emirates claims as its own. The Russian envoy was summoned to the Iranian Ministry of Foreign Affairs to receive Tehran's "strong protest" over the statement, the state-run website said late on Saturday. At the Foreign Ministry, the Russian envoy was reportedly told that respect for the territorial integrity of nations is a fundamental tenet in relations between any two countries. IRNA also said the official was told the three disputed islands "forever belong to Iran"

which renders any outside claims unacceptable. The islands in the strategic Strait of Hormuz, namely the Greater Tumb, Lesser Tumb and Abu Musa, have been governed by Iran since 1971 when its navy took control of them after British troops withdrew from what is today the UAE. The UAE claims them as part of its territory as well and has recently received increasing support on them from Russia and China, which Tehran also counts among its allies. Disputed Islands in the Strait of Hormuz Iran had summoned the Chinese envoy to Tehran over a similar joint statement with Arab nations of the region in December 2022 and had also summoned the Russian ambassador in July over an almost identical joint statement. Russia's joint statement this week, signed during the sixth edition of



the Russian-Arab Cooperation Forum in Morocco, supported "peaceful solutions and initiatives aiming to resolve the conflict through bilateral negotiations or the International Court of Justice, according to international law and the UN Charter". The Foreign

Ministry spokesman, Nasser Kanaani, had condemned it earlier this week, and Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian raised the issue with his Russian counterpart, Sergei Lavrov, who had led the delegation to Morocco. The Iranian Foreign Ministry said Lavrov told Amirabdollahian that Russia has always respected Iran's territorial integrity and "this official policy by Moscow must never be doubted". The joint statement also irked some Iranian lawmakers, who took to social media to try to make it clear that the issue is non-negotiable. Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf, Iran's parliament speaker, wrote on X, formerly known as Twitter, that increasingly warming ties with Russia are based on mutual respect and any claims that threaten Iran's territorial integrity will be met with

a "serious response". "Russia must be careful about the West taking advantage of its mistakes," he wrote. Ghalibaf also pointed out that Iran has not remained idle on the islands, and has been undertaking a variety of efforts to populate and develop them. He promised that the parliament would legally back efforts to develop the islands. Other lawmakers had harsher words for both Moscow and Abu Dhabi. "It looks like the language of kindness must change, at least with the UAE," Hadi Beiginejad wrote on X. Another MP, Ebrahim Rezaei, said "if they suggest negotiations, then we also invite the Russians to negotiate with Japan over the Kuril Islands", in reference to a dispute over four islands between Russia and Japan.

Russian attack on Kherson kills 4, injures 9

Moscow : Four people have been killed in Russian forces attacks in different regions of Ukraine, an official said, adding that its forces also shot down 14 drones. Oleksandr Prokudin, governor of Ukraine's southern Kherson region, said on Telegram that four people were killed and nine others injured during overnight shelling in his region. "The Russian military targeted the residential quarters of the populated areas of the region, medical institutions, an educational institution, and objects of critical infrastructure in Kherson," he said. In a separate statement, the Ukrainian military claimed that it shot down 14 Russian drones in attacks on multiple regions of the country. "On the night of Dec 24, 2023, the Russian occupiers attacked with 15 'Shahed' type drones from the Primorsko-Akhtarsk region," the Ukrainian Air Force said. Polish truckers ended their blockade of a border checkpoint with Ukraine, Ukrainian authorities said, days after the countries discussed resolving a row that has soured ties. Polish hauliers have blocked crossing points since early November to protest what they say is unfair competition from Ukrainian truckers. The Ukrainian border guard said on Telegram that the protest at the Medyka-Shehyni checkpoint ended at 9:30 am (0730 GMT), with the registration and crossing of trucks resuming "as usual."—APP

Saudi tourists get visa exemption to visit Turkiye

DNA

RIYADH: Saudi tourists traveling to Turkiye can avail of visa-free entry thanks to the transcontinental nation's efforts to encourage tourism. According to the Turkish Official Gazette, President Recep Tayyip Erdogan issued a decision on Friday granting citizens of Saudi Arabia, the US, Canada, Bahrain, the UAE and Oman with ordinary passports a visa exemption. The policy allows citizens of these nations to visit Turkiye for tourism without obtaining a visa in advance. They are allowed a stay of up to 90 days within six months. The move comes less than two months after Saudi Arabia's Ministry of Tourism announced that it has expanded access to its electronic tourist visa to nationals from six new countries, including Turkiye, taking the total to 63. Nationals of these countries can request the tourist visa online or upon arrival at one of the Kingdom's international airports. Holders of the tourist visa can visit Saudi Arabia for tourism purposes or to perform Umrah outside the Hajj season. They can also travel to the country to see friends and relatives and attend events, exhibitions, and conferences. Speaking to Arab News in June, Fatih Ulusoy, Turkish ambassador to Saudi Arabia, said that his country is focusing "very much" on tourism. "Last year, after the high-level visits between Turkiye and Saudi Arabia, as President Recep Tayyip Erdogan visited the Kingdom in April and Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman visited Ankara in June, we had around 500,000 Saudi tourists visiting Turkiye in the second half, until the end of the year," Ulusoy pointed out. He added: "And this year, our target for Saudi tourists visiting Turkiye is at least 1 million. We are hoping to see Turkiye become the number one destination for Saudi tourists." It is noteworthy that Turkiye's tourism income increased by 13.1 percent in the third quarter of 2023, reaching more than \$20 billion, with 16.5 percent of tourism income obtained from its citizens resident abroad. Expenditure by Turkish citizens residing in Turkiye and traveling abroad for tourism purposes increased by 74.8 percent compared to the same quarter of the previous year, reaching \$1.9 billion.—Agencies

Angelina condemns global injustice, Gaza bombardment

WASHINGTON : Actress and philanthropist Angelina Jolie expressed concern about the unequal pursuit of justice, noting its prevalence in various groups, including within the United Nations, where she highlighted disparities in seeking justice for different communities. Speaking with Syrian journalist and filmmaker Waad al-Kateab, Jolie said that 20 years ago, when she began working internationally, she had a notion of "good guys," whether they were specific countries or individuals, but later experience has told her that that's simply not true. The reality is that the world operates based on "business interests," said Jolie, a former U.N. goodwill ambassador and later special envoy until last year, calling this an "ugly state" of affairs. She said that she found this "disheartening" and "unsettling," especially "as someone who has witnessed war crimes firsthand." Governments, politicians, and decision-makers make promises and declarations, but these often lead to "nothing changed and nothing different," she said. She noted that though people were often raised with the idea that "colonialism ended," the control and abuse of developing countries still persists. "The attitudes, the control and abuse of developing countries is maybe worse than ever in the grab for resources ... The business interests (are) set even in the United Nations, who has the final veto power. It's always been that way," she added.—DNA

13 killed, 38 injured in Indonesia plant explosion

WEB DESK

JAKARTA : An explosion ripped through a nickel-processing plant in eastern Indonesia Sunday, killing at least 13 people while injuring 38 others, the owner of the industrial park that hosts the facility said. The island of Sulawesi is a hub for the mineral-rich country's production of nickel, a base metal used for electric vehicle batteries and stainless steel. "(The death toll) increased by one person, from 12 to 13," he told AFP, also revising the number of injured down one to 38. He identified the dead as eight Indonesians and five Chinese workers. An initial investigation showed the explosion happened during repair work on a furnace when a flammable liquid ignited and the subsequent blast caused nearby oxygen tanks to explode as well, the official said. The fire was extinguished Sunday morning, according to the statement. Tsingshan Holding Group, the world's biggest nickel producer and China's biggest stainless steel-maker holds a majority stake in ITSS. ITSS is a tenant in the industrial park, which is also majority-owned by Tsingshan along with local partner Bintang Delapan. It said the remains of several identified victims had been flown home. Video footage showed plumes of smoke emerging from

the facility with emergency services at the scene and workers looking on. A photo shared with the Agence France-Presse (AFP) showed the bodies of the victims lined up on top of orange body bags in a room in one of the clinics at the industrial complex. "Their faces were burnt, their clothes were all burnt," a worker at the industrial complex told AFP on condition of anonymity. Acting Morowali district head Rachmansyah Ismail told broadcaster Kompas TV that as of Sunday afternoon 25 of the injured - 15 Indonesians and 10 foreign nationals - had been immediately rushed to hospital after the blast. Seventeen were seriously injured while eight suffered moderate injuries, he said. In January, two workers including a Chinese national were killed at a nickel smelting plant in the same industrial park after a riot broke out during a protest over safety conditions and pay. Deadly fires are not uncommon in Indonesia, a sprawling country of more than 250 million people where safety regulations are often flouted. In June a fire at the same plant left one dead and six others injured, in another incident that has stoked concern over safety at facilities funded and operated by Chinese companies. The facility where the riot and fire took place is operated by PT Gunbuster Nickel Industry (GNI), a local unit of China's Jiangsu Delong Nickel Industry.

Türkiye committed to anti-terror operations

The total number of terrorists neutralised since the beginning of the year has reached 2,156," Guler

ANKARA : More than 2,150 PKK terrorists have been "neutralised" since January 1, Turkish National Defence Minister Yasir Guler said. "The total number of terrorists neutralised since the beginning of the year has reached 2,156," Guler told Turkish pilots who conducted airstrikes in northern Iraq and Syria to eliminate terrorists. "No treacherous member of any terrorist organisation can escape the grasp of our heroic soldiers," said Guler on Sunday. His remarks came after 12 Turkish soldiers were killed and six were injured by PKK terrorists in northern Iraq. Following the attack by PKK terrorists in northern Iraq, Türkiye reaffirmed its determination to fight and eliminate terrorism at its source. "The operations will continue with an unyielding offensive approach until the bloody terrorists disappear from this geography, regardless of whoever supports them, amidst escalating violence and pressure," stressed Guler. Defence chief's visit to Iraqi border Amid ongoing anti-terror operations, Türkiye's minister of national defence paid a visit to the country's southern border with Iraq. "Throughout the night, National Defence Minister Yasir Guler, who led operations from the Air Force

Operations Center, went to the Iraqi border with the first light of the morning," the ministry said on X, adding that Guler was accompanied by the military top brass. PKK terrorists often hide in northern Iraq to plot cross-border attacks in Türkiye. It also has a Syrian branch, known as the YPG. Türkiye launched Operation Claw-Lock last year in April to target the PKK terror group's hideouts in the Metina, Zap, and Avasin-Basyan regions of northern Iraq, located near the Turkish border. Turkish security forces have "neutralised" 16 terrorists in northern Iraq, the National Defence Ministry has said on Saturday, after 12 Turkish soldiers were killed in two days of terrorist attacks. The ministry added that an air operation was carried out at 1900 GMT (22:00 local time) on terrorist targets in northern Iraq and Syria, and a total of 29 targets including caves, shelters and warehouses used by terrorists were destroyed. The terrorists were "neutralised" in the Claw-Lock Operation region, a ministry statement on Saturday said, implying that the terrorists in question surrendered or were killed or captured. The terrorists' affiliation was not specified, but the PKK



terror group has been known to be active in the region. PKK terrorists often hide out across the border in northern Iraq to plot terror attacks in Türkiye. The targets were detected to have been containing terrorists responsible for the attacks, including some senior members, and many terrorists were neutralised, it added. Turkish authorities use "neutralise" to imply the terrorists in question surrendered, were killed or captured. In its more than 35-year terror campaign against Türkiye, the PKK—listed as a terrorist organisation by Türkiye, the US, and EU—has been responsible for the deaths of more than 40,000

people, including women, children and infants. Meanwhile, Türkiye has also initiated, together with the US, the Global Counter Terrorism Forum (GCTF), and has co-chaired this body between September 2011-April 2016. Türkiye also co-chaired the Horn of Africa Working Group within the GCTF together with the EU. Türkiye has co-led the GCTF initiatives to Address the Life Cycle of Radicalization to Violence" and the Antalya Memorandum on the Protection of Soft Targets in a Counterterrorism. Türkiye is an active member of the Anti Da'esh Coalition and is co-leading the FTF working group within this Coalition. Türkiye has also successfully concluded Operation Euphrates Shield that significantly reduced Da'esh influence in Iraq and Syria. With regards to the issue of countering the flow FTF's to conflict zones, Türkiye has been taking preventive measures before the implementation of UNSC Resolution 2178 (2014). Within this framework, Türkiye continues to enhance its security apparatus in order to prevent the flow of FTF's to the region and imposes restrictions to the entry of individuals suspected of being members or sympa-

thizers of terrorist organizations. Likewise, in accordance with UNSCR 2178, individuals suspected to have links to terrorist outfits which enter Turkish territory by illegal means are transferred to Deportation Centers and are subsequently expelled to their country of citizenship after notifying concerned officials of that country. Moreover, the Risk Analysis Groups located in various airports and bus terminals in Türkiye scrutinize suspected individuals and prevent their entry when necessary. Turkish security forces regularly conduct operations against Da'esh, Al-Nusra Front, and Al Qaida links located in Türkiye. Türkiye is also a member of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF), the global anti-money laundering/countering terrorist financing body. Türkiye is constantly reviewing legislation as well as implementation on countering terrorist financing, in order to be fully compliant with the FATF recommendations. Türkiye has also initiated, together with the US, the preparation of the FATF report on ISIL/Da'esh financing in 2015. Türkiye's Financial Intelligence Unit (MASAK) operates in cooperation and coordination with the law enforcement authorities.—Agencies

Briefs

Hamas calls Biden a 'partner in crime'

DNA

DOHA: US President Joe Biden is a partner in crime to Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu's massacre of the Palestinian people in the Gaza Strip, says a top Hamas official. On Saturday, Biden said he did not ask the Israeli prime minister for a ceasefire in the war between Israel and Hamas in Gaza in a telephone call between the two leaders. Izzat al-Rishq, a member of the political bureau of Hamas, on Sunday condemned Biden's remarks, which he said proved his complicity in the killing and destruction happening in the besieged Gaza. "The US president's remarks were an insult to the international society and the countries that demanded an end to the aggression against Gaza," he added. Earlier, Netanyahu's office said he "expressed his appreciation" for the stance taken by the US at the UN Security Council, adding that he also "made it clear that Israel will continue the war until all its goals are completed." On Friday, the Security Council passed a resolution on the Israeli onslaught on Gaza that demanded ramped-up aid deliveries to the besieged region, yet it fell short of calling for an immediate ceasefire to pause the genocide taking place there. The US also opposed the demand to create a UN monitoring mechanism for aid, saying Israel would continue to have a role in inspecting deliveries.

UK to send warship to South America

DNA

LONDON: The UK is preparing to send a warship to Guyana in a show of diplomatic and military support for the former British colony. It comes after neighbouring Venezuela renewed its claim for a disputed part of Guyanese territory that is rich in oil and minerals. The Ministry of Defence confirmed HMS Trent would take part in joint exercises after Christmas. Guyana, a Commonwealth member, is South America's only English-speaking nation. HMS Trent - an offshore patrol vessel - had been deployed to the Caribbean to search for drug smugglers but was re-tasked after Venezuela's government threatened to annex the Essequibo region of Guyana earlier this month. This raised fears that Venezuela might invade and spark the first interstate war in South America since the Falklands Conflict in 1982. Venezuela has long claimed ownership of Essequibo, a 61,000 square mile region which comprises about two-thirds of Guyana.

US and Japan announce record defense budgets targeting China

US President Joe Biden on Friday signed into law the fiscal 2024 National Defense Authorization Act, authorizing a record \$886 billion in annual military spending, or about a 3 percent increase, and policies such as aid for Ukraine and a "push-back against China" in the Indo-Pacific

DNA

TOKYO: After the US and Japan on Friday announced record defense budgets for 2024, with media reporting both have China in mind, experts warned on Sunday that under a deteriorating global security situation, the US is giving tacit permission to Japan to break away from its self-defense-only principle to help maintain the US' global hegemony amid dangerous rises in Japan's right-wing militaristic moves. US President Joe Biden on Friday signed into law the fiscal 2024 National Defense Authorization Act, authorizing a record \$886 billion in annual military spending, or about a 3 percent increase, and policies such as aid for Ukraine and a "push-back against China" in the Indo-Pacific, Reuters reported on the day. Media on the island of Taiwan called the US defense bill "Taipei-friendly," as it reportedly requires the creation of a training program for the armed forces on the island and a status report on the delivery of weapons and services that the US has agreed to sell to the island. Citing publicly available

data, analysts noted that the US has been by far the world's top spender in military, with its annual defense expenditure higher than the figures of the second-ranking to 10th-ranking countries combined. Even so, the US is continuing to expand its military spending to maintain its global military hegemony, including by pouring resources into hundreds of overseas military bases that support its military operations on other countries' doorstep, or worse, on their soil, a Chinese military expert who requested anonymity told the Global Times on Sunday. In the Asia-Pacific region, the US frequently sends military aircraft and vessels to conduct close-in reconnaissance on China's coastal regions, makes transits in the sensitive Taiwan Straits, trespasses into waters off Chinese islands and reefs in the South China Sea and holds provocative exercises. In addition, it sells arms and provides military assistance to the island of Taiwan, seriously violating China's national sovereignty, security and development interests, the expert said. But current conflicts elsewhere in the world including the Russian-Ukrainian

conflict and the Palestinian-Israeli conflict have more or less hindered the US' strategy of focusing on containing China, as US begins to run low on military resources despite its increasing defense budgets, the expert said. The US will not give up its global military hegemony, so it has turned to its allies for support, even giving tacit permission to Japan to break away from its self-defense-only principle, observers said. Just as the US announced its record annual military expenditure plan, Japan's cabinet on Friday also passed its record defense budget, a hefty 16 percent increase to \$56 billion for the 2024 fiscal year, AP reported on Saturday. The moves come as Japan "accelerates the deployment of long-range cruise missiles that can hit targets in China or North Korea while Japanese troops increasingly work with allies and take on more offensive roles," AP said. It also eased Japan's postwar ban on lethal weapon exports, underscoring a shift away from the country's self-defense-only principle, with the Japanese government quickly approved to deliver US Patriot surface-to-air missiles produced in Japan under an

American license back to the US to complement US stock, AP reported. The easing of the ban would help strengthen Japan's defense industry and broaden the country's new official military aid designed for like-minded countries in the Indo-Pacific region in countering China, AP quoted experts as saying. Japan has opened a Pandora's box, Song Zhongping, a Chinese military expert and TV commentator, told the Global Times, citing another recent Japanese arms transfer that saw the delivery of radar systems to the Philippines that is in an ongoing tension with China over islands and reefs in the South China Sea. It is Japan's strategy to break away from its arms transfer ban, to contain China's development, and to coordinate with the US' Indo-Pacific strategy, Song said. Japan's history of launching a war of aggression during World War II, when not only China, but also many other countries in the Asia-Pacific region including the US suffered, meaning that both the US and Japan should draw lessons from history and be cautious about the revival of Japanese right-wing militarism, experts said.

14 Israeli soldiers killed in Gaza in Two days

TEL AVIV: 14 Israeli occupation troops have been eliminated in the Gaza Strip over the weekend, the spokesperson for the Israeli occupation forces (IOF) admitted early on Sunday morning. The Israeli media described the death toll of its army during the past 24 hours as "the biggest tragedy since the Israeli ground incursion" into the Gaza Strip. The Israeli outlets went on to say that this was one of the "most horrible events" during the war. This is not a "good morning", they said. Under the "permission to publish" clause, the occupation media announced the names of the slain soldiers and revealed their ranks and the units and formations under which they served. The spokesperson announced the names of nine soldiers and officers killed on Sunday, across the Gaza Strip. This means that the number of dead Israeli troops, since October 7, has risen to 486 while the number of those killed, since the occupation launched its ground invasion, has reached 153. - Agencies



LARKANA: PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari submits his nomination papers for the February 8 general elections. - DNA

Durrani warns against 1977-style election manipulation

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: Former federal minister and senior politician Muhammad Ali Durrani has expressed concern about the current ground realities leading up to the general elections scheduled for February 8, stating that they evoke memories of the 1977 elections, which were marred by the worst rigging in the country's history. In a statement on Sunday, Durrani asserted, "Revocation of electoral symbols, snatching of nomination papers, curtailing the right to campaign, and suppressing freedom of expression is not an election but a selection." "This war against democracy will result in the defeat for everyone," he warned. Durrani highlighted that pre-poll rigging by the Punjab administration is reminiscent of the shameful manipulation during the 1977 elections, which were universally rejected by the nation.

Durrani cautioned against expecting different results in the upcoming elections if the controversial tactics of 1977 are used. "If the tactics of 1977 are applied in 2024, the country, democracy, the people, and institutions will suffer the same dilemmas as in 1977 and harm the national interests." The former federal minister said that the administration is under Nawaz Sharif's control, causing restlessness among the people - to feel this public unease is the demand of patriotism, he maintained. Talking about the appointment of the chief election commissioner from the civil service and his conduct, he said that the failure would become an example of the failure of the civil service, just like the infamous judges of the past could not rid themselves of the stigma. He added that Nawaz cannot gain legitimacy by "disrespecting" the vote and his party would be the biggest loser of using these tactics.

Zero tolerance against meddling in ROs' work

LAHORE: Provincial Election Commissioner of Punjab Saeed Gull said on Sunday zero tolerance will be observed against any interference in returning officers' work in the province. In the backdrop of complaints of snatching nomination papers and meddling of police, the provincial election commissioner had a telephone talk with IGP Punjab Dr Usman Anwar. The Punjab EC said he would not tolerate any interference in discharge of ROs' official duties. He said the Election Commission of Pakistan was determined to provide level playing field to all political parties. He further said submission of nomination papers to contest election was a right of every candidate. He said action would be taken against police if they tried to stop any candidate from filing nomination papers. No hurdle will be accepted against conduct of transparent elections, he added. IGP Punjab Usman Anwar assured the provincial EC of every possible in this regard. The IGP said direction had been issued to all the regional police officers (RPOs). Dr Usman said police force was standing with the ECP to conduct transparent polls. He further said if any officer was found involved in committing any illegal act, action would be taken against him. -DNA

PTI will defeat opponents in elections: Omar Ayub

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Secretary General Omar Ayub Khan has categorically stated that fascism is touching a new high in the country to deter and petrify PTI's candidates but all such brutal tactics would not serve any purpose as PTI would trounce its political opponents conveniently in the next general elections. Strongly reacting to the torturing of PTI ex-MNA Bilal Virk and abducting his brother by Punjab police, PTI Secretary General said that PTI candidates were being brutally tortured, their homes invaded, ransacked and being blatantly threatened that they should not contest. He said that Bilal Virk ex-MNA PTI member was brutally tortured by Punjab Police when he went to file his nomination papers while his brother has been abducted. "Punjab Police is not registering any case and has openly told Bilal Virk that they are untouchable," Omar added. "Is this a 'Level Playing Field,' he asked. PTI Secretary General pointed out that PTI candidates were being brutally tortured, their homes invaded, ransacked and being blatantly threatened that they should not contest. However, he reiterated his party resolve that PTI will contest the elections in any circumstances and the party would be victorious with Allah's will and support of the people of Pakistan InshahAllah. - DNA

8 children, mother die in Abbottabad roof collapse

ABBOTTABAD: Nine members of the same family, including a mother and her eight children, were killed in a tragic incident after a roof of their house collapsed due to fire caused by a short-circuit. The roof of the kucha (mud) house collapsed in Abbottabad's Tahari village due to a fire caused by a short-circuit after which nine family members were trapped under the rubble, according to rescue officials. Locals initially retrieved seven bodies from under the rubble while the rescue operation for two other family members was underway. Later, the bodies of all nine family members were recovered from the rubble. The deceased family mem-

bers included a mother and eight children, added the rescue officials. The Rescue 1122, along with three ambulances and locals made concerted efforts to extinguish the fire and rescue the residents, according to state-run APP. Unfortunately, the wood and clay house quickly caught fire, impeding rescue activities. The deceased persons were identified as the wife of Zakir, four daughters and four sons, including Hashim, Qasim, Hasan, and Sufyan. The community mourns the loss as authorities work to investigate the cause of the tragic incident and ensure the safety of other residents in the area. In July this year, a deadly fire killed 10 members of the same family, including an infant and woman, when the compressor of their refrigerator exploded in a house in the Bhati Gate area of Lahore. The deceased included a man, his wife, two other women, five children and a seven-month-old baby. Only one member of the family managed to escape the deadly fire by jumping off the building. - APP

CM reviews different development projects

ABID RAZA

LAHORE: Chief Minister Punjab Mohsin Naqvi conducted a detailed 4 hours visit to the new Ravi Bridge, Shahdara Chowk projects, Islampur Police Station and Liberty Police Khidmat Markaz. CM Mohsin Naqvi monitored construction activities of the new Ravi Bridge project and reviewed piling work. CM by ordering to complete the piling work by 31st January directed to undertake day and night work on the project and wholehearted effort should be made to accomplish the project by 31st January. Mohsin Naqvi monitored ongoing development work on the project. Commissioner/DG LDA, Chief Engineer LDA and the contractor while giving a briefing informed that piling work has been accelerated with the installation of a new machine at River Ravi. For making a layer of stones at the underground level and piling work is being done 24 hours. 4 out of the total 52 piles of the project are ready while 20 gridders out of 96 have been prepared. CM while expressing his indignation over slow pace of work at the Shahdara Chowk during his visit said that despite the completion of the flyover project many days earlier, work on the Shahdara Chowk could not be completed which is a matter of grave concern. The

whole work has been halted which is absolutely inappropriate. First set a date and then complete 100 percent work. Mohsin Naqvi ordered an early completion of the roads surrounding the Shahdara Chowk along with the track of the metro bus service and park. CM directed that work on the surrounding roads of the Shahdara Chowk and other work should be completed by 5th January. Excellent traffic management arrangements should be made during ongoing work at the Shahdara Chowk. CM issued directions to Secretary Housing, DG LDA/Commissioner Lahore Division, DG PHA, CTO and Deputy Commissioner. Provincial Ministers Amir Mir, Azfar Ali Nasir, Secretary Housing, Secretary C&W, Commissioner Lahore Division, Deputy Commissioner Lahore, DG PHA and concerned officials were also present on the occasion. CM Mohsin Naqvi visited Liberty Police Khidmat Markaz, IG Police Dr. Usman Anwar and CCPO Lahore Bilal Siddique Kamyana also accompanied. Due to continuous monitoring and timely actions being taken by CM Mohsin Naqvi, there was no rush of people coming to obtain driving license at the Khidmat Markaz and the citizens were obtaining their licenses without waiting. The citizens present at the Khidmat Markaz, thanked CM Mohsin Naqvi on making excellent arrangements.

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