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Detailed News On Page-07

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Detailed News On Page-06



Temporary relief

PTI's electoral symbol restored

PTI spokesperson vows people to bring most peaceful, unprecedented revolution on Feb 8 through power of vote

SHAMIM SHAHID/COURT REPORTER

PESHAWAR: In a major legal victory for the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), the Peshawar High Court (PHC) suspended the Election Commission of Pakistan's (ECP) order, restoring the party's iconic election symbol — "bat" — till a final decision on the petition. While announcing a verdict reserved on PTI's petition challenging the Election Commission's order declaring the intra-party polls as "illegal", the court stated that a double bench will hear the matter after winter vacations. The electoral body on December 22, stripped the party of its iconic "bat" symbol — a sign that depicts its founder, Imran Khan's former life of cricket, in a decision on former PTI leader Akbar S Babar's petition challenging the intra-party elections to be in line with the rules. During today's hearing, PHC's Justice Kamran Hayat Mianhel remarked that the ECP would have to allot the electoral symbol to PTI as it can't be revoked after the issuance of the election schedule. The party had named the ECP and those who challenged the party elections as respondents in its plea filed today with a request for an urgent hearing of the matter. Reacting to the development, PTI's Barrister Gohar Ali Khan said the PHC's ruling "put the final nail in conspirators' coffin". He said that the conspiracies against the PTI failed after the PHC ruling today. "The PTI was being cornered and the suspension of the ECP's verdict was necessary," he added. He said that the judiciary has not only restored the election symbol but it also regained the confidence of the nation. The court has reviewed the entire set of regulations and suspended the ECP's order, he added. He urged the ECP to immediately publish the certificate of the PTI on its website in the interest of justice to restore its election symbol and take effective steps to hold a fair election. Barrister Khan also expressed hopes that the ECP order declaring the PTI's intra-party polls and election symbol will be nullified in the next hearing.

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PPP fears pre-poll rigging

Senator Taj Haider raises questions on transfers of eight police officials

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) has expressed its concern over the transfers of senior police officials in Sindh. In his letter to the chief election commissioner (CEC), the party's Central Election Monitoring Cell in-charge Senator Taj Haider, while referring to the transfers of eight police officials made by the Sindh government in the ongoing month of December has said that this step by the provincial government is a violation of section 230 of the Election Act, 2017. The senator writes that a few days ago seven, of eight officers, of the rank of superintendent police (SP) and senior superintendent of police (SSP), had been directed to report to the CPO. It is further written in the letter that eight police officials have been posted in district Kashmore after transferring the SSP to the station. "There is no emergency which has necessitated the transfers of these officials on such a large scale," the senator writes, adding,

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ISLAMABAD: Newly appointed Ambassador of Pakistan to China Mr. Khalil Hashmi calls on the Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar. — DNA

Custodial killing

Thousands attend funeral prayers

Talk to Pakistan to save J&K from turning into another Gaza, says Farooq Abdullah

DNA

JAMMU: Thousands of people, today, attended the funeral prayers of three civilians, who were killed in custody by Indian troops in Poonch district of Indian illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir. The troops arrested the civilians, Safer Ahmed, Mohamed Showkat and Shabbir Ahmed, during a cordon and search operation in Surankot area of Poonch and later killed them in custody in Bafiaz area of the district. After the dead bodies of the victims were handed over to their families, thousands of people gathered in Topa Peer area of

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PSX sees biggest single-day decline

DNA

KARACHI: The Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) witnessed the biggest single-day decline on Tuesday as the benchmark index plunged by over 2,500 points with analysts attributing the slump to year-end correction. The KSE-100 dipped to a low of 59,170.97 points, down by 2,534.12 points or 4.11%, from the previous close of 61,705.09 points, according to the PSX website. According to Karachi-based brokerage firm, Arif Habib Limited, KSE-100 index witnessed highest ever decline

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Govt to extend all-out support for uplift of KPK merged districts

Pakistan committed to strengthening ties with China: Prime Minister Kakar

ANSAR M BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar on Tuesday said that despite the availability of limited resources, the government would extend all possible support to the provincial government for uplift and welfare of the merged districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK). The prime minister, chairing a meeting to discuss the matters about KPK, said that being cognizant of their problems, the federal government stood with the government and people of the province. He also instructed the authorities concerned to resolve the issues confronting the KPK province that had rendered immense sacrifices against terrorism.

The prime minister instructed to form a secretarial committee to resolve the KPK's financial matters and formulate recommendations regarding the payment of net hydel profits and the royalty of oil and gas. To be headed by the federal finance secretary, the committee would consist of federal secretaries of planning, water resources, and petroleum. Prime Minister Kakar also called for expediting the process of granting the university status to Khyber

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ECP bans govt employees' participation in election activities

17,500 highly sensitive polling stations nationwide will be under close surveillance

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: As Pakistan gears up for its upcoming elections, the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has issued stringent directives aimed at maintaining a fair and transparent electoral process. In a bid to uphold impartiality, the electoral watchdog has enforced strict guidelines barring government officers and employees from engaging in any election-related activities. The ECP explicitly restricts

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Briefs

Qureshi rearrested under 3-MPO

ADIL SHAHEEN

RAWALPINDI: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) vice-chairman and former foreign minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi was put under detention on the orders of deputy commissioner under MPO 3 for 15 days. The deputy commissioner issued detention orders on the recommendation of Rawalpindi CPO. The CPO claimed that the police force have to investigate the PTI leader as he was nominated in the case of May 9 vandalism. It may be recalled that Qureshi was released from Adiala Jail as he was granted bail along with the PTI founder in cipher case by the Supreme Court. The apex court had asked him to submit surety bonds worth Rs1 million.

Nawaz should face cases: Shah

NAZIR SYAL

KARACHI: Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) leader Nasir Hussain Shah said on Tuesday that Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) supremo Nawaz Sharif should face cases against him. Expressing his thoughts, Sanaullah said: "We [PPP] had welcomed Nawaz Sharif on the occasion of his return to the country. Nawaz Sharif had not even said a single word about the elections." "It has been said that the PPP will have a tough time in the elections," he said. He made it clear that every political party will take part in the elections according to its own manifesto.

Feb 8 polls most important in Pak history: Shehbaz

Sharif stressed that no development and prosperity without political stability in country

ABID RAZA

LAHORE: PML-N President Shehbaz Sharif on Tuesday described the February 8 elections as the most important in Pakistan's history and promised that they would emerge victorious under the leadership of Nawaz Sharif — the party supremo who is eyeing a record fourth term as prime minister. He listed the achievements of the last Nawaz government, including restoration of peace in Karachi and ending hours-long power outages after winning the 2013 elections. It was Nawaz who tackled the menace of terrorism, Shehbaz said, adding that people still remembered the development works carried out during that period across Pakistan. Addressing the party's parliamentary board meeting at his party's Model Town headquarters, the PML-N President stressed that no development and prosperity without political

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'Benazir stands as nation's radiant torch'

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: Chairman Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Bilawal Bhutto Zardari eloquently commemorates the indelible legacy of Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto, the first democratically elected woman prime minister of the Islamic world as well as esteemed leader of the world, saying that the

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Death toll near 21,000 in Gaza as Israel intensifies attacks

The United Nations has said it was "gravely concerned" by Israel's continued bombardment of central Gaza

NEWS DESK

GAZA CITY: As the US-backed Israeli genocidal war on the Gaza Strip entered day 81 on Tuesday, massive aerial and artillery strikes continued to pound and level whole blocks and homes and massacre more civilians, mostly children and women. The casualties resulting from Israeli attacks on the Gaza Strip have risen to at least 20,915 killed and 54,918 injured since October 7th, according to a statement by Gaza Health Ministry spokesperson Ashraf al-Qudra. Moreover, the statement said 241 people had been killed in the past 24 hours and 382 injured. Palestinian Information Center (PIC) said that the Israeli occupation army continued to attack different areas of Gaza last night and on Tuesday morning, targeting homes, civilian gatherings, and shelter centers and massacring dozens of citizens. The occupation warplanes launched fire belts on the Batn al-Sameen area and the Morag area and bombed the house of Dr. Khamis al-Najjar in Qizan al-Najjar, south of the city of Khan Yunis. At least two people were killed and dozens were injured during the attack, while many others are still under rubble. The Israeli warplanes also launched

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US, Israel facing 'two-sided' defeat

Urges resistance front to bolster itself as a "superior" power

FOREIGN DESK

TEHRAN: Iran's top security official says the United States and Israel are both suffering a "two-sided" defeat in the ongoing war on Palestinians in the Gaza Strip as they can neither stop the aggression nor continue it in the besieged territory. Ali Akbar Ahmadian, who serves as Secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council (SNSC), made the remark in a meeting with former Iraqi Prime Minister Adel Abdul-Mahdi in Tehran on Tuesday. Stressing that the US and Israel are both in a state of defeat from two aspects, Ahmadian said, explaining,

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PRCS hosts joyful Christmas celebration

PRCS organized a lively Christmas celebration at its National Headquarters, uniting a diverse audience to mark the joyous occasion

ADIL SHAHEEN

ISLAMABAD : Embracing the festive spirit, the Pakistan Red Crescent Society (PRCS) organized a lively Christmas celebration at its National Headquarters, uniting a diverse audience to mark the joyous occasion. The event was graced by the esteemed presence of Chairman PRCS, Sardar Shahid Ahmed Laghari, and saw enthusiastic participation from the Head of Delegation and representatives of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) in Pakistan, as well as partner National Societies such as the Turkish Red Crescent, German Red Cross, Norwegian Red Cross, PRCS staff, and dedicated volunteers. The celebration featured the ceremonial cutting of a Christmas cake, symbolizing solidarity and offering prayers

for the organization's strength and resilience. The entire auditorium was adorned with festive decorations, creating a warm and inviting atmosphere. Adding to the spirit of inclusivity, a Pastor and a Bishop from the Christian community graced the event, offering prayers and commending the PRCS for its exemplary service to humanity. They extended their gratitude to Chairman Laghari for spearheading this inclusive celebration. Chairman Sardar Shahid Ahmed Laghari, speaking on the occasion, expressed, "Christmas is a day of spreading love, peace, and compassion. Beneath the banner of humanity, we are all one." Chairman Laghari announced plans to facilitate visits for Christian employees to their holy places, emphasizing PRCS's commitment to diversity and inclusivity. He also distributed Christmas gifts among the Christian staff. Special prayers were offered

for the well-being of the Christian community, along with seeking blessings for the progress and prosperity of the nation. In his opening remarks, Secretary General PRCS, Muhammad Abaidullah, emphasized the significance of the occasion and the unity it fosters among different communities. Piwi Ophoff, Head of Country Delegation, IFRC in Pakistan, in his address, praised the long history of humanitarian services within the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement. He commended PRCS for organizing the wonderful event and conveyed a message of peace, stability, and religious harmony on the eve of Christmas. The Christmas celebration at PRCS remains a testament to the organization's commitment to spreading joy, solidarity, and respect for all faiths. As Chairman Laghari reiterated, "Under the banner of the Red Crescent, we stand united as one humanity."



KPK highlights women's educational achievements

ABBOTTABAD : Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Haji Ghulam Ali has emphasized the crucial role of education in global competitiveness. He said that the enrollment of female students in the province now surpassed their male counterparts in both primary and higher education. He not only highlighted the greater number of female students but also their excellence in getting prominent educational positions. Addressing at the first convocation of the Government Women's College of Commerce and Management Sciences here Tuesday, the Governor urged the female students not to let their education go to waste, emphasizing the transformative impact educated women can have on societal and national development. Expressing pride in educated women, he recognized them as a source of family pride and contributors to the nation, underscoring their potential to initiate businesses from home using modern technology. In a broader context, Governor Ghulam Ali stressed the importance of equipping all students, regardless of gender, with modern technology to prepare them for future challenges. During the convocation, the Governor personally distributed degrees among 136 students who successfully completed their education in Bachelor of Business Administration, Bachelor of Commerce and Associate Diploma of Commerce. He extended congratulations to the successful students, their parents and dedicated faculty members. The Principal of the Government Women's College, Iram Nisar presented the annual performance report of the institution to the Governor.—APP

IGP expresses police resolve to eradicate terrorism

DNA

PESHAWAR : In a resolute stance against terrorism, Inspector General of Police (IGP) Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Akhtar Hayat Gandapur, announced the launch of a robust campaign to eradicate terrorism from the region. During the inauguration of a new police station in Khyber Bara, he underscored the police force's unwavering commitment to protecting the lives and property of the citizens. Besides tribal elders, CCPO Peshawar, Aijaz Khan, DPO Khyber, Saleem Abbas Kolachi

and other officials were present. IG Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Akhtar Hayat Gandapur also held meetings with tribal elders, emphasizing complete cooperation and mutual collaboration to combat criminals, drug traffickers, and social issues. He praised the tribal elders, stating that the community and police must work together as one entity for the region's security, addressing issues like lawlessness, drugs, and other serious crimes. While acknowledging the sacrifices of the people of Khyber district in collaboration with national institutions, he highlighted the importance of collective efforts to control crimes, including the menace of drugs. He urged the police force and the public to unite in eliminating these crimes and ensuring the region's peace and security. Tribal elders expressed gratitude for the government's concern for the well-being of the people. The IGP provided instructions to police officers and youth, emphasizing alertness, avoiding mobile phone use during duty, and using helmets and jackets for personal safety. He also instructed the police to maintain a respectful attitude towards the public and prioritize solving their issues on a preferential basis.

BISP saving scheme attracts 5,372 applications

ISLAMABAD : The Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) has recently launched its 'Savings Scheme' with the primary goal of instilling financial independence and promoting a savings culture among consumers enrolled in the scheme. Under BISP Saving Scheme 5,372 applications have been received to date. Following the application submission, a 'Registration' process will be initiated, and upon successful completion of this stage applicants will become eligible for the 'Savings Scheme.' This initiative aims to provide a financial buffer for unexpected expenses and emergencies. Eligibility for the scheme is extended to needy families of BISP whose poverty score is up to 40 PMT not having regular employment. A substantial number of applications have been received from various regions, including 3,416 from Punjab province, 1,135 from Sindh province, 397 from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, 176 from Azad Jammu and Kashmir, 117 from Balochistan, 79 from Gilgit Baltistan, and 52 from Islamabad. These applications have been submitted through the web portal provided by BISP. In the initial phase, the scheme will accommodate one hundred and fifty thousand customers on a first-come-first-served basis. The Savings Scheme is open to both men and women, with one person per family eligible to apply. Upon joining the scheme, customers commit to a two-year tenure, during which they must save between Rs 500 to Rs 1000 in their dedicated 'Savings Accounts.' BISP will provide an additional forty percent of the gross savings to customers on a quarterly basis. Notably, while the additional amount provided by BISP can be withdrawn, the principal amount deposited for savings is non-withdrawable. Participants retain the flexibility to terminate the scheme at any stage of their choosing. The scheme is free of any application fees, and applicants are cautioned to be vigilant against potential fraudulent activities. In case of complaints, individuals are encouraged to reach out to their nearest BISP offices or contact the toll-free number 080026477.—APP



LAHORE :Punjab Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi inspecting the ongoing construction works during a detailed visit to the Southern Loop 3 project of Lahore Ring Road.—DNA

5 injured in accident due to intense fog

PATTOKI : At least five persons got injured in a collision due to intense fog and slippery road near Phool Nagar on Tuesday. According to rescue sources, a tragic accident occurred on Multan Road near Phoolnagar, as a dozen vehicles collided due to intense fog, resultantly, five people got injured. The injured have been identified as 20-year-old Rizwan, 22-year-old Salim, 25-year-old Jabar, 36-year-old Amir, and 55-year-old Rahmat. Rescue teams reached the site and transferred the injured to a nearby hospital for medical assistance.—APP

Annual matric exams to start from March 1

FAISALABAD : The annual matriculation examinations 2024 will start under the aegis of the Board of Intermediate & Secondary Education (BISE) Faisalabad from March 1, 2024 followed by the commencement of annual intermediate examinations 2024 from April 15, 2024. A spokesman for the Education Board said here on Tuesday that the candidates could submit their admission forms for matric exams 2024 with double fee up to January 5 and with triple fee up to January 13, 2024, as dead line for submission of admission forms for matric exams had expired. Similarly, students could apply for inter exams 2024 up to January 20, 2024 with single fee while the admission forms would be received with double fee up to February 2, 2024 and with triple fee up to February 9, he added.—APP

Anti-polio drive from January 8

FAISALABAD : A week-long round of an anti-polio drive will commence across the district from January 8, 2024. A spokesman for the health department said here on Tuesday that 4,869 teams had been constituted to administer polio drops to 1.536 million children up to the age of five years during the drive which would continue till January 14, 2024. In this connection, all necessary arrangements are being completed rapidly to achieve 100 percent results. All types of media will also be used besides making announcements through loudspeakers of mosques to persuade parents for cooperation with anti-polio teams, he added.—APP

Lahore ring road project approaches completion under CM supervision

ABID RAZA

LAHORE : The Lahore Ring Road Southern Loop 3 project marks a significant stride towards completion, reaching the 60% milestone. Today, Punjab Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi conducted a comprehensive review of the ongoing progress at Adda Plot Raiwind, personally inspecting the Lahore Ring Road Southern Loop 3 project. The Chief Minister personally examined the ongoing construction activities spanning 8 km from Adda Plot Raiwind to Maraka Multan Road. He closely observed the works on the entire route, including the construction of bridges. In

response, Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi issued directives for the expeditious completion of the project. During a meeting at the FWO camp office chaired by Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi, Colonel Jamal and Colonel Ahmed provided a detailed briefing on the project's progress. The meeting addressed various issues related to the project. Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi emphasized that the completion of Ring Road Southern Loop 3 would enhance transportation facilities for the public. He highlighted the adherence to high standards in executing the project and expressed confidence in achieving its timely completion. Speaking to the media af

ter the visit, Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi underscored the significance of SL 3, Gujranwala Expressway, and Band Road projects. He assured relentless efforts to complete these projects with the highest quality, overcoming challenges and working around the clock. The SL3 project, valued at over 17 billion rupees, spans 8 km and consists of three lanes. Chief Minister Naqvi informed that the project, initially planned for two years, is on track to completion in the coming months. Responding to a question, the Chief Minister acknowledged weather-related challenges, particularly fog affecting motorway operations and causing traffic congestion.

Punjab shift from conventional transport to electric vehicles

ISLAMABAD :Caretaker Provincial Minister for Transport, Livestock, and Mines & Minerals Ibrahim Hassan Murad Tuesday said that the Punjab government was making a big push for electric vehicles to provide a sustainable and eco-friendly mode of transportation to control air pollution. "Punjab wants to become a 'global hub of manufacturing of electric vehicles', he said while talking to a Private news channel. The government is also planning to offer incentives for manufacturing electric vehicles and batteries to boost economic growth and encourage local manufacturing, he said, adding, that other prov-

inces should also focus on shifting their auto industry towards EV systems. The minister stressed that the use of electric rickshaws and bikes in Punjab will substantially decrease both air and noise pollution. With the provision of additional insights, these electric rickshaws boast an impressive range, capable of travelling up to 150 km on a single charge, he said. The adoption of electric vehicles, including cars and bikes, has gained prominence worldwide due to their efficiency, fuel-saving benefits, and zero emissions, contributing to a healthier and more sustainable environment, he explained.

Many charging stations have already been established, with commitments to construct even more. It is a clear indication that the industry is committed to enabling widespread EV adoption, he added. Replying to a query, he said that to meet the growing demand, the government of Punjab with the help of the private auto industry are spearheading efforts to add more charging points to EV charging networks. This includes offering software solutions that make daily charging accessible. The government is working with private players to boost the presence of charging stations, he added.—APP

Self-sustenance inevitable for success in the world

Addressing as chief guest on the occasion of the 35th Convocation ceremony of PNEC, he said that the world needed intellect at the moment and there was no dearth of it in Pakistan

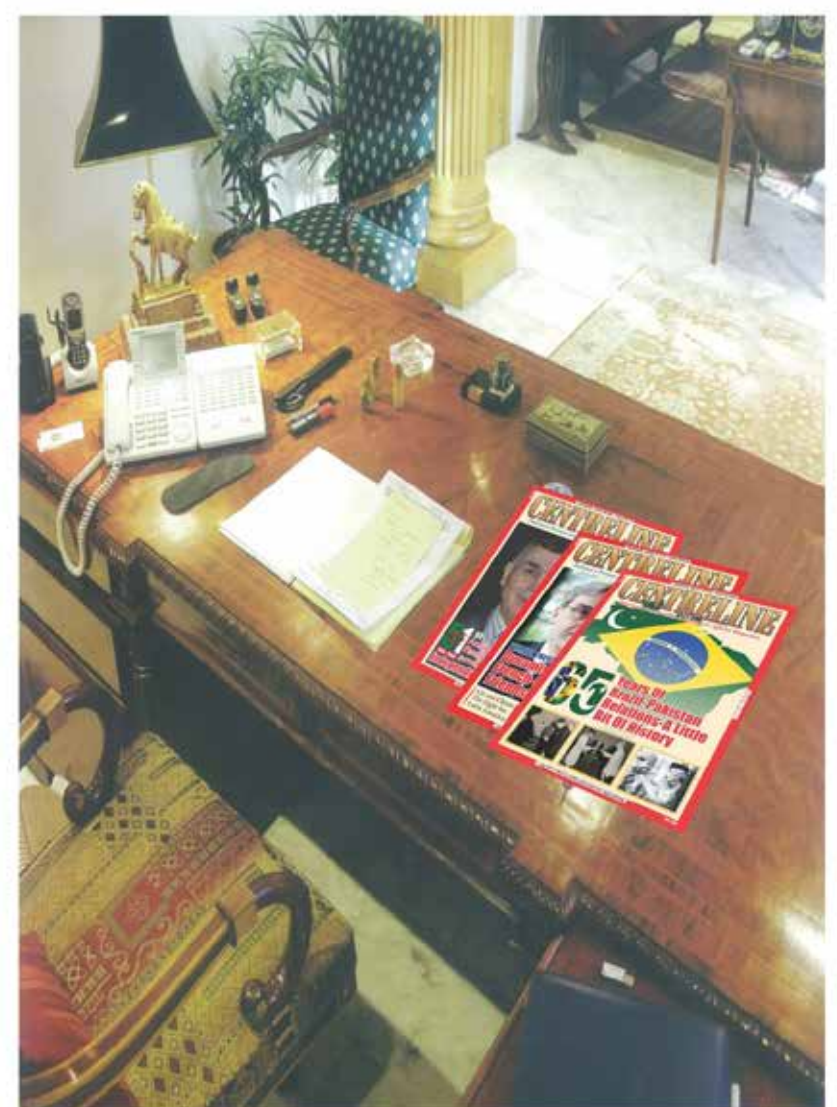
NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI :President Dr. Arif Alvi on Tuesday said that self-sustenance is inevitable for the success in the world and expressed the confidence that Pakistan would progress and develop. Addressing as chief guest on the occasion of the 35th Convocation ceremony of Pakistan Navy Engineering College (PNEC) at Baharia Auditorium here, he said that the world needed intellect at the moment and there was no dearth of it in Pakistan. Rector National University of Science and Technology (NUST) Lt General (R) Mehmood and

Commander Karachi Rear Admiral Muhammad Saleem were also present. During the convocation, a total of 368 graduates were awarded Bachelors' and Postgraduate degrees including the foreign students. The President also awarded 39 medals to the students on their outstanding performance. Addressing the convocation, President Dr. Arif Alvi appreciated the efforts put in by the PNEC for maintaining high standards of education by providing quality engineers to the evolving industry of Pakistan. He emphasized that responsibility of PNEC has further increased in present realm of emerging technologies like Artificial Intelligence and Robotics. He also acknowledged

that foreign students were a testimony to the College's credentials in the engineering sector. He highlighted that NUST PNEC will continue with its legacy of being the premier engineering and technology institution, fulfilling present day engineering needs of the country. The President facilitated the graduating students and their parents and advised the graduates to be active members of society in building a stronger and prosperous Pakistan and keep themselves abreast and with fast changing advancements in technology. resident Dr. Arif Alvi termed the completion of degrees by students as an opening of the doors to the knowledge

for the students and said, they must learn more and more. Earlier, Commandant PNEC Commodore Tauqeer Ahmad Khawaja apprised that PNEC was making all out efforts to provide the best engineering education to its students in multiple disciplines. Further, he highlighted the achievements of students in various events held at national and international levels. He highlighted the opportunities provided to the students at different forums in order to groom and nurture the young engineers. The ceremony was attended by a large number of military and civil dignitaries and parents of graduating students.



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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

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Emergency Ambulance.1122 & Rescue Services.4451122
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MH.....5611116
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TMA.....5770886
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ICCI urges academia-industry links for industrial boost

Pakistan needs productive entrepreneurs to create new jobs, introduce new technologies, increase productivity, and enhance exports: President ICCI

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD : Pakistan needs productive entrepreneurs to create new jobs, introduce new technologies, increase productivity, and enhance exports to steer the economy out of current troubles and put it on the path of sustainable growth, therefore, students should focus on entrepreneurship that offers them a prosperous career. This was said by Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari, President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry (ICCI) while addressing the students of Bahria Business School, Bahria University Islamabad during their visit to ICCI led by Dr. Danish, Assistant Professor Ahsan Bakhtawari briefed the students about the workings of ICCI and the initiatives being taken by the Chamber to resolve the key issues of the business community and promote the interests of the business community.

He informed the students about the contemporary business skills that are essential to succeed in the current competitive business environment. He also briefed them about the potential



of various sectors of the economy including IT, industries, retail sector, and agriculture sector. He said that the developed countries have achieved better economic growth by promoting strong academia-industry linkages and Pakistan should adopt the same approach to promote

industrialization and revive the economy. He thanked the students for visiting ICCI and hoped that their visit would be a good learning experience for them.

Dr. Danish, Assistant Professor, Bahria University thanked the President ICCI and his team for hosting the students and giving

them a detailed briefing on various dynamics of the business field. He said that such regular interactions with students would motivate students to entrepreneurship and business startups. Adnan Mukhtar, Convener, ICCI HEC Committee also spoke on the occasion and highlighted the

importance of academia-industry linkages to improve the economy. The students asked many business-related questions and got detailed answers. They also got many tips about becoming a successful entrepreneur and listened to the speech of President ICCI with great interest.

PIA's privatization being carried out under govt's policy

ADIL SHAHEEN

ISLAMABAD: Adviser to Prime Minister on Aviation Air Marshal (Retd) Farhat Hussain Khan on Tuesday informed the Senate that the privatization of Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) was being carried out under the government's policy to privatize loss-making entities. Responding to a question during the Question Hour, he said the process of privatization of PIA is being completed transparently through open tender. The Adviser said initially, PIA will be privatized as a flight entity and the decision on its other properties will be made later by the Privatization Commission. Regarding outsourcing of airports in the country, the Adviser mentioned that a

Transaction Advisory Services Agreement (TASA) had been signed between the Pakistan Civil Aviation Authority and the International Finance Corporation (IFC), a subsidiary of the World Bank Group. This agreement, approved by the then Federal Cabinet in line with the Public Private Partnership Authority (P3A) Act and its relevant regulations, aims to outsource the operations of three international airports in Islamabad, Karachi and Lahore, he told. The Adviser highlighted that the IFC would act as a transactional advisor for the outsourcing of airports. Islamabad International Airport has been selected as the first airport to be outsourced. The outsourcing period for Islamabad International Airport is set at 15 years,

while the time frames for the remaining two airports will be determined by the Federal Government based on a detailed study prepared by IFC, he added. The Adviser said, the successful bidder for Islamabad International Airport will be disclosed after the bidding process is completed and the award of concession for outsourcing is expected to be completed before June 2024. The Adviser clarified that only the operation and management of specific airport components would be outsourced, while critical services such as the Air Traffic Control Tower, Rescue and fire Fighting Services and Air Navigation services would remain under the control of the Pakistan Civil Aviation Authority. He said the fi-

nanial aspects of the outsourcing involve a fixed initial amount to be paid by the successful bidder and a percentage of revenue earned from the airport. He said a one-time initial payment of US \$100 million is required from the successful bidder. The financial details for airports in Karachi and Lahore will be finalized based on the analysis prepared by IFC. In response to another question, the Adviser informed the Senate that PIA earned operational profit in January 2023. However, due to high financing costs and exchange losses, it incurred a net loss of Rs 61.6 billion as of June 30, 2023. He said that PIA has accumulated liabilities of Rs. 809 billion as of the same date.

Mehbooba exposes high price of Kashmir's 'Facade of Normalcy'

ISLAMABAD : Peoples Democratic Party President Mehbooba Mufti referring to the normalcy mantra being propagated by Narendra Modi regime in Indian illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir, particularly in the wake of the abrogation of Article 370 in August 2019 has said that "the facade of normalcy exacts a heavy price from the people of Jammu and Kashmir". Mehbooba Mufti in an article said, Kashmiri youngsters are packed off to jails in and outside Jammu and Kashmir on trivial grounds while the rest pay with their lives and liberty to maintain a sullen silence. "Even religious heads like maulvis and imams are told what to include in their weekly sermons. The masses cannot protest peacefully even about day-to-day issues like grueling power cuts that affect their lives," she deplored. "The scale of violence and atrocities that I have witnessed during my political career has ensured nothing shocks or rattles me anymore. But I was left stunned by a gruesome, abominable video that is doing the rounds over social media. The video, a little less than a minute long, shows Army jawans clad in uniforms using abusive language while mercilessly thrashing civilians who appear to be half dead. Not satisfied with lashing them with sticks, they then go on to strip them naked and pour heaps of red chili powder on their gashed and wounded bottoms. A few hours after the video was verified, another disturbing fact came to light. One of those innocent civilians was already dead while this act of violence was carried out," Mehbooba revealed. She went on to add: "A deeply distressing question came to mind. Who would dare to shoot such a video under those circumstances? Certainly not a civilian. It was one of them. The video was deliberately leaked and disseminated with the diabolical intention of conveying a chilling message. By the very same persons whose unprecedented presence through every nook and corner of Jammu and Kashmir is justified in the guise of securing our lives. This is the side of the story that the media doesn't want you to see." Mentioning armed resistance, she said, it contradicts Modi "government's false claims that it has wiped out" militancy from J&K with the abrogation of Article 370. "This couldn't be further from the truth. If anything, it has now engulfed even a region like Rajouri and Poonch which have remained peaceful even during peak insurgency years," she said. Regarding the Indian Supreme Court's controversial verdict on the special status of Jammu and Kashmir, Mehbooba Mufti said, "To put facts into perspective, in cases like Sampat Prakash, Vijay Lakshmi Jha and State Bank of India, the top court upheld that Article 370 through a temporary provision can be scrapped only with the recommendation of J&K's constituent assembly to the president. -DNA

Gwadar University delegation visits Pakistan-China Institute

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD : An eleven-member delegation of students of the University of Gwadar has visited the Pakistan-China Institute (CPI) under the Balochistan Youth Engagement Programme. "This multifaceted endeavour, strategically crafted to deepen bilateral relations between Pakistan and China, unveiled a comprehensive agenda, aimed at enriching the understanding and col-

laboration between Pakistan and China," a news release said on Tuesday. The initiative's primary focus is to empower the vibrant youth of the Balochistan region, recognizing their pivotal role in shaping the future landscape of both nations. At the core of this enlightening experience was the 8th CPEC Media Forum, providing an immersive platform for the delegation to gain profound insights into the far-reaching impact of the China-Paki-

stan Economic Corridor (CPEC) on Balochistan. Beyond a conventional information-sharing session, this forum facilitated dynamic and thought-provoking discussions, fostering a nuanced and deeper comprehension of this transformative strategic initiative. The students had an exclusive session with Mustafa Hyder Sayed, Executive Director of the Pakistan-China Institute, which provided a unique space for a rich exchange

of ideas and perspectives, amplifying the depth of understanding for both the delegation and the hosting institute. The delegation further enriched their experience with a guided visit to the Parliament House and Senate of Pakistan. Engaging with Muhammad Mushtaq, Special Secretary/Advisor (Legislation), National Assembly Secretariat, provided valuable insights into the intricate legislative processes shaping the nation's policies.

Foods exports surge by 37.12% in 5 months

ISLAMABAD : The food exports from Pakistan increased by 37.12 percent during the first five months of the current fiscal year as compared to the corresponding period of last year, Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) reported. Food exports during July-November (2023-24) were recorded at \$2,640.905 million as compared to the exports of \$1,925.969 million in July-November (2022-23), a surge of 37.12 percent, according to latest PBS data. The food products that contributed in the positive growth in of food trade included rice, the exports of which increased by 49.37 percent, from \$749.407 million last year to \$1,119.406 million during the ongoing fiscal year. Likewise, the exports of fruits increased by 15.27 percent, from \$111.160 million to \$128.139 million, leguminous vegetables by 79.01 percent, from \$0.047 million last year to \$0.084 million and spices by 19.21 percent, from \$37.898 million to \$45.179 million. The exports of oil seeds, nuts and kernels increased by 263.82 percent, from \$226.47 million to \$350.378 million, sugar by 100 percent, from zero exports to \$21.070 million, meat and meat preparations by 21.81 percent, from \$160.657 million to \$195.701 million. The food products that witnessed negative growth in the trade included fish and fish preparations, the exports of which declined by 12.87 percent, from \$185.802 million to \$161.896 million, vegetables by 27.15 percent, from \$121.800 million to \$88.728 million and tobacco by 31.23 million, from \$24.357 million to \$16.750 million. The exports of all other food items increased from \$438.537 million to \$513.574 million, an increase of 17.11 percent, according to PBS data. Meanwhile, on year on year basis, the food exports during the month of November 2023 increased by 60.65 percent to \$696.183 million compared to exports of \$433.365 million, showing growth of 60.65 percent. On month-on-month basis, the food exports increased by 4.85 percent in November 2023 when compared to the exports of \$663.984 million in October 2023. It is pertinent to mention here that country's merchandise trade deficit contracted by 33.59 per cent during the first five months of the current fiscal year compared to the corresponding period of last year.

Court Notice

In the court of Khalid Hussain Jatoti family judge west Islamabad. Mst. Asia Aslam vs Ali Ahmead Hassan suit for dissolution of marriage on the basis of khula. Next Date of Hearing 21/12/2023

IPO, PITB join hands for automation, digitalization of IPO-Pak

ISLAMABAD : The Intellectual Property Organization (IPO) and Punjab Information Technology Board (PITB) on Tuesday joined hands and signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for the digitalization and automation of IPO- Pakistan. The MoU was signed by Director General, IPO Ms. Shazia Adnan and Director General, PITB Saima R. Shaikh for automation and digitalization IPO to facilitate the common masses and business in the country. On this occasion, Chairman IPO, Ambassador Farukh Amil said that the visibility on indifferent platforms and public awareness are the major priority of IPO at this time, which will make it accessible to the business classes and especially the youth. The Chairman IPO said that at present we were working on digitalization of IPO with the support of PITB, which was an important tool for modernizing institutions in the modern world, which provided facilities to the public and business classes. He said that a large part of the population of Pakistan consisted of youth and the youth were currently mostly connected to IT and social media and after this facility, they would be able to make online complaints or other facilities in IPO. Farukh said that IPO was currently making the youth aware of IPO in universities and educational institutions, which would increase the trend of financial education among them. He said that after automation in the IPO, there would be transparency and simplification of processes in the institution. On this occasion, Director General, IPO, Shazia Adnan said that after this agreement with PITB, online payments and another documentation process would be made easy in the next two months and this would also promote Ease of Doing Business (EODB) in IPO. She said with this agreement, you can do documentation or payment processes through 27 different channels including online banking which will provide convenience to people. -APP

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Briefs

CDA fosters Christmas joy for employees

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The administration of the Capital Development Authority (CDA) arranged Christmas Celebrations for all Christian employees who are working in the institution as well as for the residents of the city. Christmas Celebrations were held on Tuesday 26th December, 2023 at Open Air Theatre Shakirparian, Islamabad like every year. Christian employees of the Authority were attended the celebrations along with their families. Special entertainment items for children were also presented. The purpose of organizing this event was to participate in the happiness of Christian employees and to encourage them. It should be noted that the CDA administration has already been approved Christmas allowance and advance salary for all Christian employees working in the institution on the occasion of Christmas. In this regard, non-gazetted employees have been paid full basic salary while gazetted employees have been given half basic salary as bonus payments. Similarly, allowance payments were also made to the regular and daily wages employees as per the regular pay scales.

Former diplomat Riaz passes away

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's Former Foreign Secretary Riaz Hussain Khokhar passed away here on Tuesday after a brief illness, according to private news channels. Senior leader of Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP), Sherry Rehman expressed her sincere condolences with the family and loved ones of the late ambassador. "The late ambassador was always such a strong advocate of a progressive Pakistan and fiercely independent who served as Pakistan's foreign secretary among many other diplomatic posts in tough situations. Khokhar was always on the phone or Secretary of Pakistan at the Foreign Ministry.—APP

Gold rates up by Rs.300 per tola

ISLAMABAD: The per tola price of 24 karat gold increased by Rs.300 and was sold at Rs. 219,600 on Tuesday compared to its sale at Rs.219,300 on last trading day. The price of 10 grams of 24 karat gold also increased by Rs. 258 to Rs.188,272 from Rs. 188,014 whereas the prices of 10 gram 22 karat gold went up to Rs. 172,582 from Rs.172,347, the All Sindh Sarafa Jewellers Association reported. The price of per tola and ten gram Silver remained stagnant at Rs. 2,650 and Rs.2,271.94 respectively.—APP

COMSTECH launches 3 day course on infectious disease

Iranian Ambassador highlighted Iran's remarkable scientific achievements, despite challenges and sanctions. He said that Iran has emerged as a global leader, publishing over 78,000 scientific articles in 2022

MEHTAB PIERZADA

ISLAMABAD: A three-day international course on "Outbreak Investigation and Control of Infectious Diseases" has been started at the Secretariat of the OIC Standing Committee on Science and Technology (COMSTECH). The course, facilitated by 5 renowned experts in virology and infectious diseases from the Pasteur Institute of Iran and two from ICCBS has attracted over 100 participants from Pakistan, Afghanistan, Russia, Iran, Yemen, Nigeria, Uganda, Indonesia, Malaysia, Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, Jordan, and Bangladesh, participating both virtually and physically. The course is jointly organized by COMSTECH, Pasteur Institute of Iran, and Dr. Panjwani Center for Molecular Medicine and Drug Research, ICCBS, University of Karachi. The inaugural ceremony graced by the Chief Guest, H.E. Dr. Reza Amiri Moghaddam, Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Pakistan who expressed gratitude to the COMSTECH team for organizing these unique and valuable capacity-building events.



Dr. Moghaddam pledged full support for such collaborations, emphasizing the enduring cooperation between COMSTECH and Iran.

During his speech, the Iranian Ambassador highlighted Iran's remarkable scientific achievements, despite challenges and sanctions. He said that Iran has emerged as a global leader, publishing over 78,000 scientific articles in 2022 and ranking 15th worldwide. He underscored

Iran's commitment to scientific development, with notable progress in various fields and a focus on inclusivity, evident in over 50% of Iranian students being women. He assured of the full support of Iran in COMSTECH Inter Islamic Cooperation in Science and Technology. Addressing the audience, Coordinator General COMSTECH, H.E. Prof. Dr. M. Iqbal Choudhary, expressed enthusiasm for the collaboration with the Pasteur Institute

of Iran, considering it the beginning of a fruitful partnership with a leading institution of the Muslim World. Dr. Choudhary highlighted COMSTECH's mission to advance the Muslim Ummah in S&T, Technology for Health, and all fields. Furthermore, Dr. Choudhary announced plans to collaborate on vaccine development in Pakistan with the Pasteur Institute. He shared the vision for the training of 10 virologists in each Muslim country, promoting

scientific exchange and fellowship in the area of infectious diseases. This international course, with participants from various countries, is a stepping stone towards fostering a collaborative approach to tackle infectious diseases. The three-day course, scheduled to continue until December 28, 2023, symbolizes the commitment of COMSTECH and the Pasteur Institute of Iran to advancing scientific knowledge and cooperation within the OIC community.

Poet Munir remembered on death anniversary

ISLAMABAD: The 17th death anniversary of the distinguished poet Munir Niazi, renowned for his contributions to both Urdu and Punjabi literature, was observed nationwide on Tuesday. Born on April 9, 1923, in the city of Hoshiarpur in Eastern Punjab, India, Munir Niazi left an indelible mark on the literary landscape with his profound and evocative poetry. Munir Niazi's Urdu poetic collections include masterpieces such as "Is Bay Wafa Ka Sheher," "Tez Hawa Aur Tanha Phool," "Jangal Mein Dhanak," "Dushmano Ke Darmiyani Shaam," "Safaid Din Ki Hawa," "Aghaz-e-Zamana Mein Dohara," "Siyah Shab Ka Samundar," "Maah-e-Muneer," "Che Rangin Darwaza," "Saat Sayyar," "Pehli Baat He Aakhri Thi," "Ek Dua Jo Main Bhool Gaya Tha," and "Mohabbat Ab Nahi Hogi," along with the series "Ek Tasalsul Ke Naam." His Punjabi poetry collections, including "Char Chup Cheezan," "Rasta Dasan Wale Taare," and "Safar Di Raat Ke Naam," have also been widely acclaimed. Munir Niazi extended his literary talents to the world of cinema by composing melodies for numerous films. His exceptional contributions were duly recognized by the Government of Pakistan.—APP

Punjab health minister urges flu vaccination

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Punjab Health Minister Dr. Javed Akram Tuesday urged extra caution from the public, as Punjab is being affected by air pollution due to heavy smog and cases of the illness causing flu-like symptoms among people, especially among elderly citizens are increasing. Talking to a private news

channel, the minister of Punjab hinted that the new virus could be "COVID", adding, that currently, various types of viruses are affecting the health of citizens, and children and elderly people are more affected by this virus. He also asked citizens and residents to immediately take the seasonal influenza vaccine. An alarming increase in the cases of respiratory infections including in-

fluenza A, B and others were being reported in hospitals, he added. He advised citizens to use face masks, avoid close contact, and wash their hands to avoid the influenza virus as it is easily transmissible from an infected person to others. He also advised to adopt a healthy lifestyle as it played the main role in fighting against ailments. The minister urged the authorities to take neces-

sary measures to spread awareness about the flu while apprising the participants about the symptoms and precautions of influenza A and B. Patients with chronic diseases such as asthma, diabetes, cardiac and lung diseases, pregnant women, elderly people, and children under five years are at higher risk of developing severe or complicated diseases, he warned.

POL import bill shrinks by 16.19% in 5 months

ISLAMABAD: The imports of the overall petroleum group contracted by 16.19 per cent during the first five months of the current fiscal year (2023-24) compared to the corresponding period of the last year, the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) reported. The total imports of the petroleum group during July-November (2023-24) stood at \$ 6,453.914 million against the imports of \$ 7,700.269 million during the same period of last year. Among petroleum commodities, the import of petroleum products declined by 25.08 per cent, from \$ 3,552.323 million last year to \$ 2,661.234 million during the period under review. Likewise, the imports of Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) declined by 7.47 per cent from \$ 1,584.800 million last year to \$ 1,466.418 million this year whereas petroleum crude dipped by 9.71 per cent from \$ 2,273.328 million to \$ 2,052.542 million. The import of Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) went down by 5.53 per cent in the first five months of the current fiscal year and stood at \$ 273.641 million compared to \$ 289.671 million in the corresponding period in 2022. Meanwhile, on a year-on-year basis, the petroleum group imports witnessed a decrease of -13.44 per cent during November 2023 as compared to the same month of last year, from \$ 1,646.183 million to \$ 1,424.903 million. On a month-on-month basis, the petroleum imports into the country also came down by 6.70 per cent during November 2023, compared to the imports of \$ 1,527.147 million in October 2023, according to the PBS data.—DNA

HEC Sets up 100 smart classrooms nationwide

He said as component of the HEC's CPEC project, it enables simultaneous connections of 4000 participants, demonstrating a commitment to global education standards

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Higher Education Commission (HEC), with an unwavering commitment to advancing education in Pakistan, has achieved another milestone by successfully establishing 100 smart classrooms nationwide. An online ceremony, led by Executive Director HEC Dr. Zia Ul-Qayyum, showcased the technological advancements these classrooms bring to higher education in Pakistan. Chairman HEC Dr. Mukhtar Ahmad joined the ceremony alongside Vice Chancellors and senior management of universities/DAIs, while HEC

Member (IT) Dr. Jamil Ahmad, Project Coordinator HEDP Dr. Mahmood ul Hassan, In-Charge IT Division Mr. Naveed Tahir, and Huawei's team were also present on the occasion. Dr. Mukhtar Ahmad congratulated the HEC IT Division and universities for the successful completion of this project. He said that it is a significant milestone in higher education that will enhance the overall digital learning experience and elevate the quality of online education by fostering student engagement and facilitating a dynamic learning experience. He also highlighted the transformative potential of these smart class-

rooms, describing them as a game-changer that will significantly benefit higher education in the country. Dr. Zia Ul-Qayyum expressed gratitude to the Governments of Pakistan and China, M/s CRSC, and solution partner M/s Huawei for their support. He emphasised the role of these state-of-the-art classrooms in enhancing the accessibility of distance learning education nationwide. He said as component of the HEC's CPEC project, it enables simultaneous connections of 4000 participants, demonstrating a commitment to global education standards.

Jinnah the architect of Pakistan's independence

M HUZAIFA SHAHZAD

Muhammad Ali Jinnah was born on December 25, 1876, in Karachi, which was part of British India. He came from a wealthy Gujarati family and studied at the Sindh Madrasah-Islam. Later, he went to London for more education, focusing on law. Jinnah's passion for learning influenced his career as a lawyer and a significant political figure. His dedication to education played a crucial role in the creation of Pakistan in 1947, which he led to independence. Jinnah's early education reflected his commitment to knowledge and set the foundation for his historic contributions. Jinnah's political journey began in London, where he started as a lawyer and engaged with Indian nationalists like Gandhi. Disagreements with the Indian National Congress led him to reconsider his political approach, particularly concerning the Muslim Community. In 1916, an agreement between the Congress and the Muslim League marked a turning point in Jinnah's political awakening. His perspective changed, realizing the importance of defending Muslim rights in Indian politics. Over time, he became a strong advocate for Muslim rights, presenting the historic "Fourteen Points" in 1929. As demands for a separate Muslim state grew, Jinnah's leadership and negotiation skills became prominent, leading to the creation of

Pakistan in 1947. Jinnah believed that Muslims needed a separate homeland to protect their rights, leading to the demand for an independent Muslim state. The Lahore Resolution in 1940 outlined this demand. Key reasons behind the demand included growing discontent with Hindu leaders, issues related to civil and human rights violations, the Lucknow Pact in 1916, and the evolution of Jinnah's Two-Nation Theory. Founded in 1906 to protect the rights of Indian Muslims, the All India Muslim League, led by Jinnah, played a vital role in shaping Indian history. Jinnah became its president in 1934, holding the position until the creation of Pakistan in 1947. Under his leadership, the Muslim League transformed into a powerful force to advocate for Pakistan's creation. The Lahore Resolution of March 23, 1940, was a significant milestone, calling for the establishment of an independent Muslim state. Jinnah's leadership and the resolution remain integral to Pakistan's history. As World War II ended, people talked a lot about what should happen to India. There were fights between Muslims and Hindus, causing tensions. The leaders of the Muslim League used this time to talk to the British and build their case. Here are the key events. The British suggested a plan for India that gave provinces a lot of freedom. At first, Jinnah, the leader of the Muslim League, wasn't sure about it, but he saw it as a step

toward creating Pakistan. Eventually, he agreed to be part of the interim government under this plan. In Kolkata on August 16, 1946, there was a big fight between Hindus and Muslims, called Direct Action Day. The Muslim League leaders called for a nationwide protest against Congress. Many Muslims and League workers were killed. This event made Jinnah more convinced that Muslims needed their own country. As the British were leaving, talks between the Indian National Congress and the Muslim League led to the creation of two countries on August 14-15, 1947: India and Pakistan. Jinnah became Pakistan's first leader. He died on September 11, 1948. Jinnah's impact on Pakistan is immense. His ideas of tolerance, democracy, and equal rights still shape Pakistan today. He led during tough times, especially during the partition. Jinnah is respected as the founding father of Pakistan. He is remembered every year on December 25th as Quaid-e-Azam Day. Although Jinnah didn't see the final constitution, his vision for a fair and democratic state influenced its development. Pakistan got its first constitution in 1956, inspired by Jinnah's ideas. Jinnah played a crucial role in creating Pakistan. His leadership, dedication to the Two-Nation Theory, and negotiation skills were key. His legacy lives on, shaping Pakistan's politics and values. This day, celebrated on December 25, honors Jinnah's birthday and his efforts in creating Pakistan. It's a public holiday in Pakistan..

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Food crisis in Gaza Strip is unconscionable

Pointing out that since Hamas-led fighters attacked Israel on Oct 7, high-ranking Israeli officials, including Defense Minister Yoav Gallant, National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir and Energy Minister Israel Katz, have all made public statements admitting that Israel is deliberately depriving civilians in Gaza of food, water and fuel, as reflected in the operations of Israeli forces, Human Rights Watch last week accused the Israeli government of committing a war crime. The United Nations is warning that the quantity of food reaching Palestinians in Gaza is just 10 percent of what is needed to feed the territory's inhabitants amid the Israeli military's near nonstop bombardment of the Palestinian enclave and its ground operations, which are worsening the humanitarian situation there with each passing day. In a report published on Thursday, Integrated Food Security Phase Classification, a partnership of aid organizations, including UN agencies and NGOs, said that the proportion of households in Gaza that are in hunger crisis, or suffering from high levels of acute food insecurity, is the largest ever recorded globally, and it warned that the entire 2.3 million population of Gaza faces the risk of famine. On Friday, the United Nations Security Council passed a resolution urging steps to allow "safe, unhindered, and expanded humanitarian access" to Gaza and to realize the "conditions for a sustainable cessation" of the fighting. Although it fell short of calling for an immediate cease-fire, given it is the first resolution on Gaza to be passed by the UN Security Council, it should be taken as a crucial step to get urgently needed humanitarian aid into the territory. With the humanitarian situation in Gaza becoming increasingly dire, and the Israeli military action indefensible, even the United States, Tel Aviv's staunchest supporter, has adjusted its attitude, albeit slightly. While still refusing to call for an immediate cease-fire, US officials have said they want and expect Israel to shift its military operations in Gaza to a lower-intensity phase. They have urged Israel to ensure that its military operations are precise and targeted so as to reduce civilian casualties. Yet, this has not been enough to stop the Israeli military's onslaught on Gaza. On Sunday, one Israeli airstrike on the al-Maghazi refugee camp in the central Gaza Strip killed at least 70 Palestinians. There are now fears that the conflict is spilling over to other parts in the Middle East, with Yemeni Houthi militia intensifying their attacks on "Israel-linked" ships in the Red Sea. In response, the US is organizing an international coalition in the waters to try and protect shipping, which only adds more complexity to the crisis. Friday's resolution called on the warring parties to "allow, facilitate and enable the immediate, safe and unhindered delivery of humanitarian assistance" to civilians in Gaza and to "create the conditions for a sustainable cessation of hostilities." To avert the looming catastrophe in Gaza and prevent the conflict from escalating further concerted efforts are needed by all parties to ensure the UNSC resolution is now implemented.



BRI public good for an interconnected world

There is little doubt in the international community about the existence of a "development deficit", and the constraints it puts on humanity's pursuit of fairness, peace, stability and prosperity. Many of the global challenges facing humanity can be traced to the development gaps between countries and peoples. Yet until relatively recently more had been said than done to address this deficit. The Belt and Road Initiative, as a Chinese answer to the long-standing questions surrounding global development concerns, has been welcomed and endorsed as a pragmatic public good promoting international connectivity and cooperation. Its potential as a means to spur global development has been widely recognized. If its Western critics viewed it objectively, they too would appreciate both its achievements and its potential. Rather than vainly trying to hinder its impacts as a development driver, particularly for countries of the Global South, they should embrace it and act as multipliers for its effects. They should appreciate the initiative as an invaluable boon for the world, themselves included, instead of trying to distort it into something malevolent. Beijing put forward the initiative 10 years ago, and the BRI has established a new framework for international cooperation, with more than 150 countries and over 30 international organizations having signed documents on Belt and Road cooperation based on the principle of extensive consultation, joint contribution and shared benefits. As the Chinese leadership continues to connect the dots of a community of shared future for humanity with the Global Development Initiative and the BRI, the attempts to smear the BRI only serve to shine a spotlight on the zero-sum mentality that is a vestige of the developed countries' colonial mentality. Rather than being a means for extortion and bullying, the BRI revives the spirit of the ancient silk routes that facilitated exchanges among different peoples as well as the trade in goods. Those routes are remembered for fostering connectivity and communication between the East and the West. Behind the Chinese enthusiasm for the BRI is a keen Chinese understanding of the importance of infrastructure and connectivity for development, as learned from its own rags-to-riches story. There is no one-size-fits-all development path, the Belt and Road approach to international development, therefore, is also a process of evolution as its practitioners explore practical ways to manifest partnerships of cooperation. Proposed by China, the new Silk Road is being built by the world.

Youth and Pakistani politics

Shoab Safer Chaudhary



We have observed from past one decade, youth is more participating in politics than ever before. They are engaged in different activities by the political parties like protests, sit-ins, elections campaigns and other political gatherings. In last few years it has been observed that the political parties, and their activities are zilch without youth. Playing a part in political ventures, youngsters are even sometimes beaten by police, arrested, thrown water upon, shot with

Youth is an important forte of countries, especially a country like Pakistan which is one of the youngest countries in the world. Youth in Pakistan is competent in every sphere, they proved themselves in every realm worldwide. They always prove their adroitness if they are exposed to opportunities. The domain we are going to explore in the passage is politics. Youth in Pakistan is more political now due to social media and rising sense of democracy. We have observed from past one decade, youth is more participating in politics than ever before. They are engaged in different activities by the political parties like protests, sit-ins, elections campaigns and other political gatherings. In last few years it has been observed that the political parties, and their activities are zilch without youth. Playing a part in political ventures, youngsters are even sometimes beaten by police, arrested, thrown water upon, shot with rubber bullets, made to suffer tear gas and many other things to agonize. Political events seem to be impossible without the involvement, slog and stand of youth. It will not be inexact to say that youngsters are being utilized as fuel to all political activities. Political parties made different youth platform and students associations to keep youngsters engaged and to make them feel recognized by senior leadership so that they keep on participating in all above mentioned business. Participating in political activities is not unwelcomed but now the political parties must realize that youth is not there to participate in such activities only, the competent ones should be given opportunities to contest election and represent their people in the provincial and national assemblies. UNDP Human Development Report "Unleashing the potential of a young Pakistan" states: "Currently, 64 percent of the nation is younger than 30 and 29 percent of Pakistanis are between 15 and 29 (an age group which we define as the youth). Pakistan now has more young people than it has ever had, and this is forecasted to continue to increase until at least 2050. Youth have the power to transform a country's future. They could be the engines of development. Meaningful Engagement, the third E, is an important pillar of development in a country where the majority of the youth feel their voices are not heard and that they have little say in decision-making. Lack of social engagement is creating doubt, intolerance and distrust among young people. However, despite these limited ways to have their voices heard, the report finds the

youth of Pakistan want to be engaged" The point we need to go into is that the young population in country is engaged in almost every political affair by political parties except when these parties have to decide the tickets distribution for general elections, particularly the tickets for national assembly, where major legislation is done and where the representation of the youth is mandatory. In deciding for tickets, leadership of all political parties prefer old affluent women and men, could be called as BABAAs. Senate and National Assembly is full of these BABAAs. Majority of them neither have the sufficient qualification nor the competence to lead in this modern world of digitization. Those who do have these qualities, are not given the chance to make a difference. If we go through the results of last general elections, the results shows that only 4 MNAs entered into Parliament of Pakistan below the age of 30 and these are as follows, 1. Bilawal Bhutto PPP (29) 2. Raza Rabbani Khar (25) PPP (Brother of Ex. Minister of the State Hina Rabbani Khar) 3. Ch Hussain Elahi (26) PMLQ. (Son of Ch Wajahat Hussain and nephew of Ch Shujaat Hussain) (These 3 cannot be considered as the manifestations of youth empowerment as they all belong to well-known political families) 4. Shahid Ahmed (28) PTI These Four members below the age of 30 makes 1% of entire house which means 64% population have 1% representation in the parliament (Considering age factor only), as 64% of population in Pakistan is under the age of 30. If we extend this age filter from 30 to 35 years, only 4 more MNAs makes it to the list. Murad Saeed (35) Sardar Muhammad Bux Khan Mahar (34) PPP Syed Ahmed Mahmud PPP Mansoor Hayat Khan PTI (Son of Ghulam Sarwar Khan) (Ages at the time of election 2018 are mentioned) All these 8 MNAs makes 2% of the entire house. (Emendations are possible as data has been extracted from different websites) In 2012 Chairman PTI Imran Khan promised to award 25% of his party tickets to youngsters to contest election but the vow never brought about in any election. The question raises here is that shall it be continued by the political parties to utilize this remarkable potential of Pakistan (the young population) in just election campaigns, protests, sit-ins, rallies, hollow slogans and other political gatherings or will there be any active involvement of them in representing their people in the parliament and in legislation? Will political parties continue to uti-

lize them as a fuel for their short-term political gains or will they make them engage in decision making and policy formulation at the national level? All these questions need to be addressed and there could be many solutions to this subject. Two eminent solutions could be, 1. There should be a legislation in the parliament to reserve at least 15% of the seats for the youngsters. (Under the age of 35) or 2. In next general election each political party should commit to award at least 20 national assembly tickets to the youngsters. This figure of 20 tickets is for parties that contest election countrywide. For those political parties which does not participate in election countrywide should decide their proportions of tickets to be awarded to youngsters as per the number constituencies they are contesting in. In case of 2nd above mentioned scenario, political parties should be free to choose constituency where they want a youngster to contest election for national assembly but advantageous is that these tickets should be granted in cities where the literacy rate is high, as the people in urban areas are more welcoming and vigorous to such changes. Contesting elections in such areas where literacy rate is comparatively high will also help these young people to win the seats. These tickets must be awarded to bourgeois youngsters and financing to these youngsters for election campaign must be provided from the party funds. After this electoral process, few of them should be brought to federal cabinet to lead in certain fields of their knack. This will make youngsters feel engaged genuinely. They will deliver to their people, and they shall contribute to the headway of their country. This will permit the untapped potential of the country be availed. It will reduce the prevailing sense of disappointment and despondency among the young population. It could also work as a measure encourage youngsters to vote, as the stats shows very low turnout of young voters in Pakistan. It could work to bung and halt the brain drain from the country too. This is the need of the hour when world is progressing day and night, where the world is shifting towards automation and digitization, we need such competent young minds to lead in certain fields, who are more practical, who don't have these conflicts of interests, who don't think about their next election rather next generation and the time ahead.

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Time to get rid of short-sighted politics of migration

Ranvir S. Nayar

The bill was passed with a fairly comfortable margin of 43 votes in the House of Commons, despite a fairly united position adopted by opposition parties which voted against it. Coincidentally, across the English Channel, France's parliament was also voting on an equally controversial immigration bill brought by the government of President Emmanuel Macron. But Macron was unable to stem the revolt in his party and the bill was defeated, narrowly, in the Assemblée Nationale, the lower house of parliament, with 270 MPs voting against and 265

Earlier this month, developments took place in the parliaments of two European countries, with opposing results, but both incidents illustrate the same problem: that Europe continues to live in denial that it needs more immigrant workers for long-term economic prosperity. In London, Britain's Prime Minister Rishi Sunak surprised most by winning over rebels in his Conservative Party to push through a new law that allows the government to send some asylum seekers to Rwanda for resettlement. The bill was passed with a fairly comfortable margin of 43 votes in the House of Commons, despite a fairly united position adopted by opposition parties which voted against it. Coincidentally, across the English Channel, France's parliament was also voting on an equally controversial immigration bill brought by the government of President Emmanuel Macron. But Macron was unable to stem the revolt in his party and the bill was defeated, narrowly, in the Assemblée Nationale, the lower house of parliament, with 270 MPs voting against and 265 in favor. With minutes of having lost the vote, Macron promised to bring back the bill within days, which he did. And though he managed to get the bill passed in its second reading, with support from far-right MPs, it left Macron's party deeply divided, with several MPs voting against it, and calling it too harsh. While France's legislation did not propose sending asylum seekers to a faraway land like Rwanda, it did call for a crackdown on immigration, with several repressive measures aimed at preventing migrants from coming to the country, as well as provisions for expelling those who commit crimes. The far right in France, which has been on the ascendancy in the EU for over a decade, had dismissed the first bill as being too soft and not harsh enough to deter migrants. This position was stridently opposed by those on the left, who have maintained that these bills contravene international human rights laws. The matter in France is headed to the

courts because opposition parties have approached the Constitutional Court for its intervention. But politics aside, there are extremely strong economic reasons for the EU to not only temper its anti-migrant policies, but actually reverse them and do so rather urgently. For years, economists and businesspeople have been complaining of a shortage of workers in various sectors of the economy, starting with, but not limited to, areas where highly skilled people are needed. While most European governments have since woken up to these calls and are making it relatively easy for skilled foreign workers to enter the economy, the processes are far from smooth. And even now various studies point to a significant shortage of workers for the top-end of every EU nation's economy. While skilled people are needed for European economies to keep pace with the rest of the world, the shortage of workers is more pronounced as one moves lower down on the skills ladder. European nations need to open up their borders for their own long-term health and wealth. Take construction, for instance. It is a sector where skilled, semi-skilled and relatively unskilled workers are all needed. But construction firms throughout the EU have long complained of not being able to recruit locally and are often forced to turn to undocumented workers already in the country, even at the risk of penalties. Certainly, for some unscrupulous company owners, employing irregular workers is attractive because they can exploit them by not adhering to laws and regulations on minimum wages and other benefits. According to the European Trade Union Confederation, the construction sector faces a shortage of 1.5 million new workers between now and 2030, and needs a further 1.2 million to replace those who would have retired by then. A report by the European Commission also admits that a shortage of workers exists in all sectors and across all job profiles, from highly skilled to unskilled. It says that besides reskilling and involving more women in the workforce, the

EU has to look at "targeted" migration in order to boost its workforce. The report points to a worsening situation before the end of this decade as the total working-age population of the EU will drop from the current 265 million to 258 million, leaving a shortfall of at least 7 million workers to fill those jobs. Also, the COVID-19 pandemic has put a spotlight on the shortfalls in the healthcare and personal-care sectors of Europe. This is turning out to be the Achilles heel of a continent that has an ageing population, and no relief in sight from foreign replacements coming in, or citizens having more children. While Britain and France are still relatively better off than most European countries in terms of the working age of their people, they are still vulnerable to possible labor crises. Even with this being a looming possibility, the British government has already announced that it will tighten immigration laws for skilled migrants from 2024, including nearly doubling the minimum salary required for an immigrant worker to get residency visas for family members. Incidentally, these workers need to earn at least 15 percent more than the average British worker to be able to get their family members over. The British government will also tighten, or even possibly remove, the current rule that allows foreign students to stay on for two years after their studies without fulltime jobs. These restrictions fly in the face of moves being made by various European nations to get foreign students to study at their universities. Such muddled policies and seemingly knee-jerk responses to what are long-term and systemic challenges for European nations, can only lead to a further deterioration in their labor market, which in turn may cause a lasting and serious impact on their economies and society. European nations need to open up their borders for their own long-term health and wealth. It is time to get rid of short-sighted policies, and temper the politics surrounding migration.

—Source by Arab News.

Briefs

PTI's electoral symbol...

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Speaking to the media after the hearing, PTI's counsel Barrister Ali Zafar welcomed the PHC's verdict, saying that the high court upheld the ritual of justice. "The electoral symbol is the identity and a fundamental right of a political party", he said, adding that the court ruled that the PTI can continue its election campaign with "bat" as its symbol. He said that the suspension of the electoral body's decision was crucial. "I don't want to speak against the ECP, but it seems like the commission is against the PTI," Barrister Zafar said, calling on the electoral body for a free and fair election. It may be noted that the hearing will resume days ahead of the final date for the allotment of electoral symbols, which is January 13.

PPP fears pre-poll...

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"It appears that the Sindh government has made all such postings to exert pressure on voters and to pave the way for the rigging of elections through the involvement of police." The letter further reads that another matter of concern for the PPP is that a retired FIA DG is now PML-N Sindh president, who can use his connections and wield influence to rig elections. "The recent posting of SP District Matyari is especially noteworthy," writes the senator. He further states that keeping in view the above-mentioned facts, the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) is requested to declare all such postings cancelled.

Death toll near 21,000...

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airstrikes in the center of Khan Yunis, amid heavy artillery shelling. Another house belonging to Riyadh Abu Zarqa was also targeted in the Al-Hollandi neighborhood, west of Khan Yunis. On the other hand, two Palestinians were killed after Israeli forces bombed a house belonging to the Al-Amsi family near Al-Najma Roundabout in Rafah. In a similar attack, Israeli war boats bombed residential areas west of Nuseirat, amid heavy artillery shelling east of Bureij in the central Gaza Strip.

US, Israel facing...

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"This regime loses if it continues the war, and will lose again if it is forced to stop it. Whether the US leaves the region or not and whether it will expand the war or not, it is a loser in both cases." The SNSC chief also underlined the need for the resistance front to bolster itself as a "superior" power in the region, saying the resistance front's enemies are doing their utmost to prevent such a goal. "If the resistance front can become integrated in the economic field as well as in the political and military sectors and bring about achievements, it will attain the position of a superior power in the [regional and international] equations," Ahmadian said. "For this reason, our enemies are making every effort to prevent the realization of these goals," he added.

PSX sees biggest...

FROM PAGE 01
today, dropping 11% from its peak of 66,427 points. Head of Equities at Inter-market Securities Raza Jafri told Geo.tv that leveraged positions may possibly still be unwinding, however, volumes are on the thinner side. "It is possible the corrective phase runs its course out this week, and that January opens on a more positive note," he added. Khurram-Schehbaz, CEO of the Alpha Beta Core financial advisory firm, called it "Black Tuesday" for the PSX. Head of Research at Pakistan-Kuwait Investment, Samiullah Tariq, said that there were several factors affecting the market including year-end correction and profit taking.

Boxing Day Test

Australia lose 3 wickets on rain-affected first day

The Boxing Day Test was affected by rain which is why only 66 overs were bowled during the day

SPORTS DESK

MELBOURNE: Australia reached 187-3 at stumps on the opening day of the second Test against Pakistan at the Melbourne Cricket Ground on Tuesday. The Boxing Day Test was affected by rain which is why only 66 overs were bowled during the day. Marnus Labuschagne (44) and Travis Head (9) will resume batting for the home side on the second day. Aamer Jamal claimed the prized scalp of Steve Smith, who scored 26 runs, after the rain delay. Agha Salman and Hasan Ali bagged one wicket each. Rain delay: The second Test between Pakistan and Australia resumed after a nearly three-hour-long rain delay. The match was interrupted due to rain during the second session on the first day. Australia were 114-2 as early tea was taken with Marnus Labuschagne (14) and Steve Smith (2) out in the middle. The only wicket to fall during the second session was that of opener Usman Khawaja, who scored 42 runs before being dismissed by



pacers Hasan Ali. First session: Australia reached 90-1 at lunch on the first day of the second Test against Pakistan at the Melbourne Cricket Ground on Tuesday. Agha Salman struck at the stroke of lunch to dismiss opener David Warner for 38. Earlier, Pakistan captain Shan

Masood won the toss and opted to bowl in the second Test. The hosts are looking to seal the three-Test series after thumping the visitors by 360 runs in Perth, and go into the game with an unchanged side. Pakistan preferred Mohammad Rizwan to keep wicket ahead of Sarfaraz Ahmed

while fast bowlers Mir Hamza and Hasan Ali both play after being overlooked for the first Test. They come in for injured pacerem Khurram Shahzad and Faheem Ashraf, who was axed. It means an all-pace attack led by the experienced Shaheen Shah Afridi and impressive newcomer

Aamer Jamal, with no room for a specialist spinner. "Just looking at the MCG pitch over the past few years and the bowling side has done well, and there's been a bit of weather around," Masood said of choosing to field. After heavy rain on Christmas Day, the weather had cleared Tuesday, although afternoon showers are forecast. Australia skipper Pat Cummins said he too would have bowled. "We all pulled up really well after Perth. We're in the fortunate position where everyone is going pretty well," he said in explaining why the team was unchanged. Pakistan have performed poorly in Australia, losing 15 Tests on the trot with their last win in 1995. Teams: Australia: David Warner, Usman Khawaja, Marnus Labuschagne, Steve Smith, Travis Head, Mitchell Marsh, Alex Carey, Pat Cummins (capt), Mitchell Starc, Nathan Lyon, Josh Hazlewood Pakistan: Iman-ul-Haq, Abdullah Shafique, Shan Masood (capt), Babar Azam, Saud Shakeel, Mohammad Rizwan, Agha Salman, Shaheen Shah Afridi, Hasan Ali, Mir Hamza, Aamer Jamal.

ACB delays central contracts for 3 key players

DNA

DUBAI: The Afghanistan Cricket Board (ACB) has sanctioned Mujeeb Ur Rahman, Fazalhaq Farooqi and Naveen Ul Haq over their desire to be released from the annual central contracts on Monday. The ACB announced that the spinner Mujeeb Ur Rahman, as well as pace bowlers Fazalhaq Farooqi and Naveen Ul Haq, will not be granted NOCs (no-objection certificates) for any franchise league for the next two years, as well as revocation of their current NOCs. Afghanistan board through a state-

ment also announced to delay their annual contract after these players expressed to opt out of central contracts and play more franchise cricket. "The insistence on not signing the central contract for these players was their involvement in commercial leagues, prioritising their personal interests over playing for Afghanistan, which is regarded as a national responsibility," the board statement added. "By opting for their release, the Afghanistan Cricket Board has decided to take disciplinary measures against these players." The statement further shed light on the fact that the decision to sanction the

trio stems from their prioritization of league cricket over national duty. "The decision by the Afghanistan Cricket Board is made with a focus on national priorities, aligned with the ACB's core values and principles," the statement further said. "It highlights the necessity for every player to maintain the ACB's principles and prioritise the country's interests above their personal ones." Notably, Naveen-ul-Haq was picked by Peshawar Zalmi during the Pakistan Super League (PSL) 9 Draft held earlier this month, while Mujeeb Ur Rahman and Fazalhaq Farooqi remained unpicked.

Imad Wasim makes history in T20 cricket



ISLAMABAD: Former Pakistan all-rounder Imad Wasim has etched his name in the history books after he completed 1000 runs and took fifty wickets in a calendar year in T20s. The 35-year-old made his debut for Melbourne Stars in Big Bash League (BBL) season 13 today where he scored 14 runs in ten balls. Imad is only the fourth cricketer to achieve this feat. Before him Kieron Pollard (2010), Azhar Mahmood (2012) and Andre Russell (2016) did it. Remember, Imad Wasim announced his retirement from international cricket last month. He has opted to play franchise leagues across the globe and was involved with Deccan Gladiators in the T10 League earlier this month. Imad's retirement came as a surprise to many as the left-handed all-rounder is still in great shape physically and featured in Pakistan's last T20I series against New Zealand where he performed well. He was also one of the best players in the Pakistan Super League (PSL) Season 8 where the left-handed batter amassed 404 runs in 10 innings at an impressive 134.66 average and 170.46 strike rate while also taking nine wickets with the ball. Imad also became part of one of the biggest trades in the history of

Ali Tareen wants player mics in PSL

LAHORE: Multan Sultans' owner Ali Khan Tareen expressed his desire to see the addition of the player mics in the Pakistan Super League (PSL). The Sultans' owner, who is known for his deep understanding of cricket, reacted to the post on X (formerly Twitter) about the Big Bash League (BBL), in which footage of Australian all-rounder Glenn Maxwell was shared, where the latter was chatting on the mic with the commentators. "I really wish we had player mics in PSL. Such great content," Ali Tareen penned. In another tweet, he said, "Ifikhar Ahmed on the mic would be fiery." Separately, Ali Tareen also shared his experience of indulging in the process of drafting the upcoming edition of the PSL. "A lot of work goes into a draft. Pre-analysis, lots of data, and then giving that data context and relevance. Draft simulations, team simulations, and more. We wanted to capture the process to show the fans. The team did a superb job," he stated. - Agencies

Wood hat-trick inspires Forest to win at Newcastle



SPORTS DESK

NEWCASTLE: Nottingham Forest striker Chris Wood scored a superb hat-trick against his former club Newcastle United at St James' Park on Tuesday to give his struggling side a much-needed 3-1 victory in the Premier League. Forest's first win under new coach Nuno Espirito Santo lifted them to 16th in the table on 17 points, five above the relegation zone, while Newcastle's fourth defeat in their last five league games

left them seventh on 29 points. It was another dull, disjointed performance from a Magpies side who had only conceded four goals at home this season, only to allow a striker deemed surplus to requirements to score three times in one game. Newcastle took the lead in the 23rd minute when Alexander Isak won a penalty as he tried to spin away from Forest full back Ola Aina, and the Swedish striker stepped up to stroke home the spot-kick low to left of keeper Matt Turner. Wood, who was loaned to Forest by

Newcastle in January before being signed permanently, brought his side level just before the break with a close-range tap-in from Anthony Elanga's centre. Forest's Morgan Gibbs-White flashed a header just wide and Elanga should have put the visitors ahead six minutes after the break, but his weak effort with the goal at his mercy was easily dealt with by Newcastle keeper Martin Dubravka. Newcastle's defence failed to heed those warnings, however, and Wood put them ahead in the 53rd minute with a brilliant solo effort from another counter-attack, dinking the ball past Dubravka with his left foot after a clever run. Newcastle enjoyed plenty of possession but once again their attack struggled to gel. Only Isak looked dangerous when he got hold of the ball around the Forest box, and the visitors were always ready to pounce once the attacks broke down. New Zealand international Wood completed his hat-trick on the hour mark with another well-taken goal on the counter, rounding Dubravka and coolly slotting home to secure a well-deserved win. Wood's goal celebrations during were muted, but he couldn't hide his delight as he took the applause of the Forest fans at the final whistle. "It is nice coming back to Newcastle, I really enjoyed my time here, it is a great bunch of lads and staff," he told the BBC. "We needed three points and it was fantastic for the side to get it. This is a tough place to come, the boys did extremely well."

Serena Hotels Tennis Championships 2023 kick off

The best match of men's singles 1st round was between Sami Zeb Khan and Ahmed Nael Qureshi wherein the former pulled off a stunning victory. Nael won the first set 6-3, but Sami staged a strong comeback to win the match 6-1, 6-4

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The 8th Serena Hotels National Ranking Tennis Championships 2023 rolled into action at the PTF-SDA Tennis Complex, Islamabad on Tuesday. International tennis star Aisam-ul-Haq Qureshi is also participating in the event. Pakistan's all the top players including, Aqeel Khan, Muhammad Shoaib, Muzammil Murtaza, Muhammad Abid, Barkatullah, Shahzad Khan, Yousaf Khalil, Sarah Mahboob Khan,

Meheq Khokhar, Sheeza Sajid, Esha Jawad and Amna Ali Qayum are participating in the mega event. The best match of men's singles 1st round was between Sami Zeb Khan and Ahmed Nael Qureshi wherein the former pulled off a stunning victory. Nael won the first set 6-3, but Sami staged a strong comeback to win the match 6-1, 6-4. Following are the results of different categories on the day first: Men's Singles 1st Round: Aqeel Khan bt Syed Nofil Kaleem 6-2,0; Yousaf Khal-



il bt M. Salar 6-1,6-3; Hamid Israr bt Uzair Khan 7-5,6-3; Saqib Hayat bt Ahtesham Humayun 6-1,6-4; M. Hamza Aasim bt Ahmed Babar 6-1,2-1 (ret); Muhammad Shoaib bt Shehryar Anees 6-2,6-2; Hamza Roman bt Waqas Malik 6-4,6-1; Muzammil Murtaza bt Asad Zaman 6-3,6-2; Mudassir Murtaza bt Mahatir Muhammad 6-2,6-2; Barkatullah bt Veqar Rahim 6-3,6-1; Shahzad Khan bt Parbat Kumar 6-0,6-0; M.Huzaifa Khan bt Aqil Khan 5-1,6-0; Jibran ul Haq bt Asadullah 6-2,6-1; M. Abid bt M.Talha Khan 6-4,6-1; Sami Zeb Khan bt Ahmed

Nael Qureshi 3-6,6-1,6-4 Boys 18& under Singles 1st Round: Asad Zaman bt Haziq Aasim 6-0,6-0; M. Hamza Aasim bt Rayan Khan 6-2,6-2; Shahswar Khan bt Talha Khan 6-2,6-2; Hamid Israr bt Kamran Khan 6-1,6-0; M. Salar bt Ruhaab Faisal 6-3,6-4; Mahatir Muhammad bt Inam Qadir 6-2,7-5; Amir Mazari bt Ali Zain 6-3,6-3 Boys 14& under Singles 1st Round: Saqib Ali bt Ehsanullah Kabir 4-5 (1), 4-0, 5-4 (4); Haziq Areejo bt Anis Khan 4-0,4-0; Junaid Meher bt M. Arsalan 5-4 (1), 4-2; M. Yahya bt Arsh imran 4-0,4-0.

Govt to extend...

FROM PAGE 01
Medical College of Peshawar and Ayub Medical College of Abbottabad. Earlier, Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar on Tuesday stressed upon focusing on the climate resilience and climate finance aspects in all the water projects of Balochistan province and reiterated that progress and prosperity of the people of province were among the top priorities of the government. The caretaker prime minister chaired a review meeting on the important matters pertaining to Balochistan province. The meeting was attended by Caretaker Chief Minister Ali Mardan Domki, Balochistan Education Minister Dr Qadir Baloch, Chief Secretary Shakeel Qadir, Caretaker Federal Minister for Planning Sami Saeed, Federal Minister for Law and Water Resources Irfan Aslam and other relevant senior officials, PM Office Media Wing said in a press release.

ECP bans govt...

FROM PAGE 01
government employees from participating in election-related events, emphasizing the importance of their neutrality during this crucial period. A conditional ban on holidays has also been imposed to ensure that government officers abstain from election activities, safeguarding the integrity of the electoral process. Approximately 17,500 highly sensitive polling stations nationwide will be under close surveillance through CCTV cameras. The Commission's control room in Islamabad will commence operations imminently, overseeing the monitoring of these stations.

Feb 8 polls most...

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stability in the country. The PML-N supremo's return had revitalised the party workers, supporters and voters, he noted - a move that was demanded by the senior leaders as well as rank and file, especially after the coalition government's poor performance. On Tuesday, the PML-N parliamentary board interviewed the aspirants for party tickets from Peshawar, Kohat and Dera Ismail Khan divisions to finalise the national and provincial assemblies' candidates in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The process of conducting interviews of intending candidates from Hazara and Malakand was already completed earlier.

'Benazir stands as...

FROM PAGE 01
"Daughter of the East" stands not only as a historical figure but as a living movement and a radiant torch, her nationalistic spirit, enduring struggle, and steadfast leadership destined to be engrained in the hearts and minds of the Pakistani nation." According to the press release issued by Media Cell of the Bilawal House, the Chairman PPP shares a reflective message on the occasion of Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto's 16th martyrdom anniversary due on Wednesday, saying that her mother remained ardently dedicated to the noble cause of transforming the country into a genuine welfare state, guided by the visionary ideals of nation's founding fathers.

Thousands attend...

FROM PAGE 01
the district and participated in their funeral prayers. The participants of the funeral raising pro-freedom and pro-Islam slogans demanded exemplary punishment to the troops involved in this heinous crime. Fatima Kouser, wife of Mohammad Showkat, spoke on heart wrenching killing of her husband along with Safer and Shabbir. She said they got married ten months back and were happy with their life but all her dreams are shattered now. She said that her husband was severely tortured during the custody. Meanwhile, National Conference leader, Mian Altaf, in a statement said that the occupation authorities did not allow him to visit Poonch to express solidarity with the families of the martyred civilians.

Briefs

Russian ship
in Crimea
damaged in
airstrike

MOSCOW: A Russian naval ship in Crimea was damaged in an airstrike by Ukrainian forces, Russia's Defense Ministry said Tuesday. The landing ship Novocherkassk was hit at a base in the city of Feodosia by plane-launched guided missiles, the ministry said, adding that two Ukrainian fighter jets were destroyed by anti-aircraft fire during the attack. Over the past several months, Ukrainian forces have conducted attacks around Crimea, mostly with sea drones. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy credits those attacks with allowing Ukraine to restore navigation in the Black Sea and allowing the export of millions of tons of grain. There was no immediate report of how badly the Russian ship was damaged, but videos circulating on Ukrainian channels showed an extensive fire in the port area. "The Russian fleet has become smaller," Ukrainian Air Force Cmdr. Mykola Oleschuk said in a mocking message on the Telegram app. He urged Russians to leave Crimea - which Russia annexed in 2014 - "while it's not too late." The Air Force did not say whether any of its planes were shot down in the attack.—APP

Venezuela
accuses
UK of
provocation

LONDON: Venezuela's Defense Minister Vladimir Padrino Lopez has accused the UK of provocation after London has announced that it will send a warship to Guyana. "A warship in waters to be delimited? And then? What about the commitment to good neighborliness and peaceful coexistence? And the agreement not to threaten and use force mutually under any circumstances?" Lopez said on X on Sunday, referring to a BBC report. He said Venezuela will remain vigilant against the "provocations that jeopardize the peace and stability of the Caribbean and our America." According to the BBC, the UK is preparing to send a warship to Guyana in a show of military and diplomatic support. The ship is claimed to be engaging in activities in the disputed Essequibo region between Venezuela and Guyana. The Venezuela-Guyana territorial dispute over the Essequibo region originated before Guyana's independence, with conflicting claims on Essequibo.—DNA

Yoon calls
for efforts to
tackle falling
birthrate

SEOUL: South Korean President Yoon Suk-yeol on Tuesday called for "extraordinary determination" to tackle the country's falling birthrate. "Time is running short. I hope that every government agency approaches the issue of low birthrates with extraordinary determination," Seoul-based Yonhap News quoted Yoon as telling his Cabinet. Urging officials to approach the issue from a "fundamentally different perspective," Yoon called for "effective solutions" to the declining birthrate, given that South Korea has the lowest birthrate in the world.—Agencies

Naval Chief attends Indian ocean naval symposium

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Chief of the Naval staff Admiral Naveed Ashraf visited Thailand to attend eighth Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS) Conclave of Chiefs at Bangkok. The event involved panel discussions on issues related to cooperation in maritime security of Indian Ocean and Blue Economy- ways forward for sustainable development of IONS members. During IONS Conclave of Chiefs bilateral meetings between Chief of the Naval Staff and naval leadership of IONS member states were also held. CNS called on Commander of Qatar Emiri Naval Forces, C-in-C of Royal Thai Navy, Deputy C-in-C of Russian Navy, Commander of Royal Navy of Oman, CNS of French Navy, Commander of Iranian Navy, Fleet Commander of Royal Navy, UK and Vice Chief of Japan Maritime Self Defence Force and discussed matters of mutual interest. Admiral Naveed Ashraf focused on PN contributions to regional maritime

Ten Pakistani companies
showcase products at Dakar

The products include sports goods, surgical instruments, textiles (men, women and baby garments), cosmetics, leather goods, furniture, jewelry and handicrafts

DNA

DAKAR: Ten (10) Pakistani companies are showcasing their products at the 31st Dakar International Trade Fair (FIDAK) being held in Senegal's capital till December 31. The aim of the Pakistani exhibitors is to explore the Senegalese market for developing strong business partnerships and introducing high quality Pakistani products in Senegal and West Africa. The products include sports goods, surgical instruments, textiles (men, women and baby garments), cosmetics, leather goods, furniture, jewelry and handicrafts. Pakistan Embassy in Senegal organized a number of activities on the sidelines of FIDAK 2023 to maximize the opportunities for Pakistani traders to develop business linkages. The activities include the inauguration of pavilion by the Ministers of Commerce of Senegal and Cote d'Ivoire, publicizing and promoting the products through social media campaigns and holding an Open House Journee du Pakistan (Pakistan Day) at the stalls. The embassy also arranged for the Pakistani exhibitors to attend a



business networking gala dinner, "Textile Night" organized by Senegalese Textile Association. Pakistan made its maiden official participation in 29th FIDAK as the Guest of Honour Country from 6-20 December, 2021. Since then, the mission has been encouraging companies with the support of Trade Development Authority (TDAP) to showcase their products in FIDAK2023 from December 7-31, 2023. The FIDAK was inaugurated on December 15, 2023

by the Minister for Commerce, Local Consumption and SMEs of Senegal, Abdul Karim Fofana and Minister of Commerce, Industry and SME Promotion, Republic of Cote d'Ivoire, Souleymane Diarrassouba. Both Ministers visited and inaugurated the Pakistan pavilion among others. The ministers appreciated "Made in Pakistan" products, especially footballs, surgical instruments, cosmetics and fabric and enjoyed making few shots with the football

at sports goods stand. They were also presented footballs and other souvenirs from the Pakistani stalls. The ceremony was inaugurated by Director General CICES (Centre International du Commerce Extérieur du Senegal), President of the Dakar Chamber of Commerce CCIAD and Ambassador of Pakistan Saima Sayed. President CCIAD in his remarks fondly recalled his visit to Pakistan for the 4th International Textile Expo in Karachi in May 2023

and appreciated the efforts of Pakistan Embassy for enhancing bilateral trade engagements. Ambassador Saima Sayed mentioned in her remarks that Pakistan and Senegal had a lot to offer each other for a win-win partnership. She invited the attendees to visit the Pakistani stalls in FIDAK that were showcasing high quality "Made in Pakistan" products like sports gear, surgical instruments, textiles and ready-to-wear women clothing, baby garments, cosmetics, furniture and handicrafts. The embassy of Pakistan also celebrated Pakistan Day, "Journee du Pakistan" at the Pakistan Pavilion set up at the Dakar International Trade Fair FIDAK 2023. The FIDAK echoed with Dil Dil Pakistan and Pakistani snacks were served to all those, visiting the Pakistan Pavilion. The Senegalese visitors appreciated the Pakistani products and hospitality. Pakistanis in Dakar joined in the festivity as well. A large number of Pakistanis also travelled from The Gambia for this event. The mehndi stall was extremely popular among the Senegalese girls. Pakistanis at the event heartily joined in the festivities and danced to the Pakistani tunes.

Lost war
against
Hamas,
Netanyahu to
be ousted

HAIFA: Former Chief of General Staff of the Israeli occupation army, Dan Halutz, said that "Israel" lost the war against Hamas, stressing that the only victory to be achieved is the overthrow of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. Israeli Channel 14's correspondent, Yishai Friedman, released a recording of his conversation with Halutz in 'Haifa' with anti-government protest activists, which took place during the war. In the conversation, Halutz stated, "There will be no image of victory because the image reflects the loss of 1,300 lives and 240 prisoners, despite their return, and approximately 200,000 refugees who failed to return to their homes." Halutz continued by expressing, "For me, the picture of victory will be when Prime Minister Netanyahu steps down." Israeli newspaper Haaretz highlighted earlier today the Israeli failure in the ongoing war in Gaza, emphasizing that a victory is unlikely. A few days ago, Israeli newspaper Yedioth Ahronoth suggested that reports of the Israeli army expanding its ground incursion into the Gaza Strip signify two things.—Agencies

Bangladesh govt warns of
deepening Rohingya crisis

NEWS DESK

DHAKA: Bangladesh warned on Tuesday of the deteriorating humanitarian crisis at its refugee camps hosting some 1 million Rohingya, as global aid for the oppressed stateless minority has sharply declined this year. The Joint Response Plan, the annual UN fundraising plan by international agencies, was among the best funded humanitarian responses when it was set up in 2017, after a military crackdown forced hundreds

of thousands of Rohingya Muslims to flee persecution in Myanmar. Data released by the UN Refugee Agency last week showed that in 2023 the plan received only 50 percent of the \$876 million needed to provide essential assistance to those sheltering in Bangladesh. "It's a very sharp decrease in the Joint Response Plan. This is the first time that we witnessed such a low response. In the previous years it was around 70 percent, sometimes more," Bangladeshi Refugee Relief and Repatriation Commis-

sioner Mizanur Rahman told Arab News. "It has been impacting the Rohingya. The fund crisis affects their food, medical facilities, education and overall living conditions." The drop comes at a time when the World Food Programme earlier this year reduced food assistance to the Rohingya by 33 percent, to \$8 a month per person, despite malnutrition being already widespread in the Cox's Bazar camps. Rahman said the deteriorating conditions will also affect security and increase the likelihood of human traf-

ficking as people try to flee hunger and hopelessness in refugee settlements. "The law and order situation inside the camps will deteriorate. It will increase the threat of more and more human trafficking ... it will trigger desperate attempts to leave the camps," he said. This year, the UN recorded at least 3,722 Rohingya refugees, mostly women and children, making desperate attempts to flee Bangladeshi camps by boat across the Andaman Sea - an increase from 3,705 last year.

Saudi Arabia welcomes
Yemen peace road map

RIYADH: The Saudi cabinet, chaired by Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman on Tuesday in Riyadh, welcomed the recently proposed road map to support the peace process in Yemen. The council of ministers reiterated the Kingdom's ongoing support for Yemen and its people, encouraging Yemeni parties to engage in dialogue for a comprehensive and lasting political solution under the UN's supervision. During the session, the council also discussed regional and international developments, with particular attention to the situation in the Palestinian territories. The council welcomed the UN Security Council's decision to increase humanitarian aid to Gaza and called on the international community to fulfill its responsibilities, urging an immediate end to systematic violations by the Israeli occupation authorities against civilians. In local affairs, the council reviewed the economic results for the current year and the accomplished development plans, programs, and projects contributing to comprehensive economic development across the Kingdom's regions, aligning with the goals of Vision 2030. The council praised the progress recorded by government agencies in the digital transformation measurement index for 2023, highlighting the state's support for enhancing services, improving the quality of life, boosting competitiveness, and facilitating business operations. The cabinet noted the Kingdom's second-place ranking among G20 countries in the ICT Development Index for 2023, according to the International Federation of Telecommunications.—DNA

Explosions reported in
Red Sea shipping lane

DUBAI: Explosions in the Red Sea off the coast of Yemen were reported on Tuesday after sightings of unmanned aircraft and missiles in two separate incidents, a British maritime authority said. Two unmanned aircraft were observed before two explosions occurred 5 nautical miles from a vessel located 50 nautical miles west of Hodeidah on Yemen's west coast, United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations authority said in an advisory. In an apparent separate incident, explosions were heard and missiles were seen 4 nautical miles from a vessel 60 nautical miles from Hodeidah, the authority said. It was not immediately clear if the incidents involved the same

vessel, which the authority did not identify. Cargo details or an indication where the vessel or vessels were sailing to or had sailed from were also not disclosed. In both incidents the vessel and crew were reported to be safe. The British authority did not say from where the reported drones or missiles originated and there was no immediate claim of responsibility. The reported incidents come a week after the United States announced a multinational maritime security initiative in the Red Sea in response to attacks on vessels by Yemen's Houthis. The Iran-backed Houthi militia has attacked commercial vessels in the Red Sea since October, a campaign the group says is in

solidarity with Palestinians besieged by Israel in Gaza. The group has said it is targeting Israeli-linked vessels and those heading to Israel, warning shipping companies against dealing with Israeli ports. Several shipping lines have suspended operations through the Red Sea waterway in response to the attacks, instead taking the longer journey around Africa. The Houthis have vowed to continue their attacks until Israel halts the conflict in Gaza and warned that it would attack US warships if the militia group itself was targeted. The Houthis control vast amounts of territory in Yemen after years of war and have since fired drones and missiles toward southern Israel.—APP

Palestine condemns Netanyahu's
plan to expel Palestinians

FOREIGN DESK

RAMALLAH: Palestine on Monday condemned Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's plan to encourage Palestinians to voluntarily leave Gaza, calling for an international stand against

it. "Netanyahu's confessions regarding the displacement of our people is a new blow to the countries supporting him in the genocidal war on Gaza Strip," the Foreign Ministry said in a statement. Palestinian group Hamas also condemned Netanyahu's plan, saying it is an attempt to "pro-

long the aggression." "The Palestinian people will not allow to pass any plan that aims to obliterate their cause or to get them out of their lands and sanctities," it said. Netanyahu is said to have told a meeting of his Likud party that he was ready to encourage the voluntary.

Briefs

Nawaz's nomination papers from NA-130 approved

DNA

LAHORE: The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) on Tuesday accepted the nomination papers of Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) supremo Nawaz Sharif from NA-130 Lahore constituency. Party leader Bilal Yasin confirmed the development two days after he submitted the papers at the ECP on behalf of the PML-N supremo. The former prime minister filed his nomination to contest polls from the Lahore and Manshehra constituencies, the papers for which were scrutinised today. Ahead of the scrutiny, the party tasked its legal team to brace for any likely objection to the supremo's submission. "By the grace of Allah, Nawaz Sharif's nomination papers were accepted from NA-130," said Yaseen, a senior political leader in the party. During a presser in Lahore, Yaseen - flanked by the party supremo's lawyer Amjad Parvez - said that Nawaz's papers have been approved without objection. "Nawaz Sharif will succeed from this constituency in the February 8 elections."

Haleem Adil's nomination papers rejected

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: The returning officer (RO) of NA-238 Karachi rejected the nomination papers of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leader Haleem Adil Sheikh on Tuesday. The nomination papers were rejected after three residents of the constituency, NA-238 Karachi, filed objections against Haleem Adil Sheikh. The objections noted that the PTI leader was involved in May 9 riots - the events wherein military installations were attacked following the arrest of party supremo Imran Khan. Meanwhile, Adil's lawyer announced the challenge the RO's decision in Sindh High Court (SHC). The election process entered its second phase with the returning officers (ROs) embarking on the week-long task of scrutinising the thousands of nomination papers filed during December 22-24 period for the National Assembly and the four provincial assemblies. The process of scrutiny of the nomination papers would continue until December 30 after which the candidates could challenge the decisions of the returning officers, if any, in appellate tribunals until January 3, 2024, which would be decided by January 10, according to the election schedule.

No chance of delay in elections: Talal

DNA

LAHORE: Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) senior leader Talal Chaudhry said on Tuesday that there is no chance of a delay in elections. Speaking to the media in Lahore, Chaudhry said, "Those who are the opponents of us are the experts in making fake narratives. The PML-N had never gotten the level playing field." "However, the PTI's applications can lead to a delay in elections," Chaudhry stated. Few days back, PML-N leader retired Captain Safdar Awan said that the country will become the "Asian Tiger" under the leadership of former prime minister Nawaz Sharif. Expressing his thoughts in Mansehra, Awan said: "Nawaz Sharif has the key to leading the country towards prosperity." He stated, "The Muslim world leader and country's next premier will be the MNA from Mansehra. Awan lambasted on Sunday the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), saying the party had "harmed" the country's economy."

Heydar Aliyev Auditorium inaugurated at the NUST

Heydar Aliyev: A visionary leader who shaped Azerbaijan's history, says Ambassador



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Azerbaijan Khazar Farhadov together with the Rector NUST and other officials inaugurating the Heydar Aliyev auditorium at the National University of Sciences Technology (NUST). - DNA

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Azerbaijan Khazar Farhadov has said that Heydar Aliyev was a visionary leader who shaped Azerbaijan's History. He was briefing the audience about the inauguration of Heydar Aliyev Auditorium at the National University of Sciences Technology (NUST). Ambassador said that Heydar Aliyev was born on May 10, 1923, in Nakhchivan City of Azerbaijan. As 2023 was declared the "Year of Heydar Aliyev" in our country, this important occasion is being celebrated solemnly in Azerbaijan and abroad. He said, Every nation has genius personalities who played the role of saviors in the history of national freedom and independence. Those geniuses with their determination led their people behind them and played the role of victor in the most fateful moments. He further said that the national leader of the Azerbaijani people, Heydar Aliyev, has left a bright and indelible mark on the history of the modern world as a great personality, an innate talent, and a wise statesman. The meaningful life path, and rich and diverse heritage of national leader Heydar Aliyev, who gained eternity with his exceptional services, is an inexhaustible lesson. Looking back on the past years, it can be once again witnessed the important historical achievements of the Azerbaijani people under the leadership of wise leader Heydar Aliyev. The renaissance and awakening of national consciousness started with Heydar Aliyev's coming to power, and thanks to him, the

independence of Azerbaijan became eternal and irreversible. Azerbaijan was able to rise to the level it deserves in the world thanks to the National Leader Heydar Aliyev's foresight, wisdom, determination, iron will, and rich statehood experience. Heydar Aliyev proved that he was a visionary and decisive politician when he first led the Azerbaijan Soviet Socialist Republic from 1969-1982. As a result of the intense activities of Heydar Aliyev, great successes were achieved in the economy, industry, agriculture, education, and culture. Numerous industrial enterprises, cultural and educational centers, and medical institutions were built. New mass housing and roads were built, and gas lines were laid in remote areas. In those years when Heydar Aliyev led Azerbaijan, the solid foundation of state independence was laid, and the national spirit and ideology of Azerbaijanism started to rise. Decisive steps were taken in the direction of nationalization of the cadres. Every year hundreds of young people were sent to the most advanced universities of the USSR to acquire various important qualifications, and Azerbaijanis were promoted to important state positions. Moreover, he said that the adoption of the Constitution of the Azerbaijan SSR in 1978 and the establishment of the Azerbaijani language as the state language are the services of national leader Heydar Aliyev. At that time, when the totalitarian Soviet regime ruled, the determination of the legal basis for the preservation and development of the moral wealth of the Azerbaijani people, especially the language, in the supreme law of the



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Azerbaijan Khazar Farhadov briefing the audience about the inauguration of Heydar Aliyev Auditorium at NUST. The ambassador also briefed the audience about various pictures displayed in the Auditorium. - DNA

republic is considered a very brave step. He was Heydar Aliyev who was able to cope with this difficult task, which was in complete contradiction with the requirements of the Soviet national policy. In this respect, the period after Heydar Aliyev's leadership of the republic is accepted as the beginning of national consciousness and national self-return. Later, it was a very proud moment that Heydar Aliyev, the only Muslim at that time, held a high position as a member of the Political Bureau, and first deputy chairman of the USSR Council of Ministers. In 1987, in protest at the policy pursued by the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, Heydar Aliyev resigned from his posts. Having returned to Baku on 20 July 1990, Heydar Aliyev left for Nakhchivan two days later, where he was elected as a member of the Supreme Soviet of Azerbaijan and Nakhchivan Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic. In 1991, Heydar Aliyev was elected as chairman of the Supreme Assembly of the Autonomous Republic of Nakhchivan, and in accordance with the legislation as deputy chairman of the Supreme Soviet of the Republic of Azerbaijan. He held this post until 1993. In May-June 1993, when Azerbaijan was at the verge of civil war and loss of independence, the people of Azerbaijan demanded to bring Heydar Aliyev to power. On 15 June 1993, Heydar Aliyev was elected as chairman of the Supreme Council of Azerbaijan, and on 24 June took the office of President of the Republic of Azerbaijan. On 3 October 1993, in a nationwide voting which

saw a high turnout, Heydar Aliyev was elected as President of the Republic of Azerbaijan. On 11 October 1998, Heydar Aliyev was re-elected as President of the Republic of Azerbaijan. When Heydar Aliyev came to power, he eliminated chaos and anarchy, economic and political difficulties in the country. The Agreement of the Century, the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline, and other internationally important projects are associated with the name of Heydar Aliyev. As a result of the great leader's wise policy, high-speed socio-economic development was ensured in Azerbaijan, and Azerbaijan became a country with a strong position in international relations. Thanks to him, the independence of Azerbaijan became eternal. Heydar Aliyev is the architect of the development of Azerbaijan-Pakistan relations. He attached great importance to Pakistan. On 9-11 April 1996, Heydar Aliyev paid an official visit to Pakistan. Several documents were signed between Azerbaijan and Pakistan during the visit. That visit played an irreplaceable role in the development of relations between the two countries. He said about 2 countries: "Pakistan and Azerbaijan have very good and friendly relations. These relations are based on our ancient historical traditions. It is no accidental that Pakistan is one of the first states to recognize the independence of our country after Azerbaijan declared its independence." Current President of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev attaches great importance to Azerbaijan-Pakistan relations, which were constructed by Heydar Aliyev. The ties between the two brotherly countries are at a high level in all fields.

PTI files contempt plea in SC over level playing field orders

COURT REPORTER

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) has filed a contempt of court petition in the Supreme Court on the issue of non-implementation of the orders regarding the provision of level playing field to the party. The petition maintains that the Supreme Court should ensure the implementation of its orders of December 22 as well as issue directions against the arrest and harassment of PTI candidates. The petition states that the PTI candidates were being prevented from submitting their nomination papers for the upcoming general elections despite court orders. Several letters were written to the provincial election commissioner but despite that, no action was taken, it added further. Strict action should be taken against those who are violating the court order, the petition mentions. It also asks for permission for PTI candidates to hold rallies and meetings. The petition makes all four chief secretaries and police chiefs parties, as well as the interior secretary, and the election commission secretary. The PTI has also requested an urgent hearing on the contempt petition. On December 22, the Supreme Court had directed the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) to hear the PTI's complaints against the provision of level playing field, and redress their grievances. The court had asked the commission to listen to all the complaints and resolve them. The court asked what the commission did about the complaints it received. The election commission and the attorney general for Pakistan assured the court of cooperation.

US launches strikes on Iraq over drone attack

Baghdad condemns strikes that killed an Iraqi security force member and wounded 18, as 'hostile' acts

FOREIGN DESK

BAGHDAD: The Iraqi government has condemned air strikes by the United States military on its territory as "hostile acts" after the Pentagon said it hit sites used by pro-Iran forces to target US forces. The US strikes killed one member of the Iraqi security forces and wounded 18 people, including civilians, the government in Baghdad said on Tuesday, calling them an "unacceptable attack on Iraqi sovereignty" that would "harm bilateral relations". Launched early on Tuesday, the US air strikes targeted three sites used by Kataib Hezbollah, a Shia armed group, and its affiliates, said US National Security Council spokesperson Adrienne Watson. The strikes were a response to a Kataib Hezbollah attack the day before on Erbil airbase that wounded three US service members, one of them critically, according to Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin. Austin said the "necessary and proportionate" strikes were intended to "disrupt and degrade" the capabilities of the Iran-aligned groups responsible for attacks against US personnel. "While we do not seek to escalate [the] conflict in the region, we are committed and fully prepared to take further necessary measures to protect our people and our facilities," Austin said.

Solangi grieved over demise of former FS

ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Federal Minister for Information, Broadcasting and Parliamentary Affairs Murtaza Solangi on Tuesday expressed deep grief and sorrow over the demise of former Foreign Secretary Riaz Khokhar. He, in a condolence message, prayed to the Almighty to rest the departed soul in eternal peace and grant courage and fortitude to the bereaved family to bear the irreparable loss with equanimity. The minister was saddened to hear the

news of the demise of the former diplomat. He paid tribute to the former Foreign Secretary over his diplomatic services for Pakistan. He said Riaz Khokhar had represented the country in the major capitals of the world, including Washington, Beijing and Delhi. Solangi said even after his retirement, he continued to contribute to different initiatives. His diplomatic services to the country would always be remembered, he remarked. - DNA

Turkey's parliament resumes debate on Sweden's NATO bid

ISTANBUL: The Turkish parliament's committee on Tuesday started a session to debate a number of issues including Sweden's bid to join NATO, a thorny topic that was further complicated after President Recep Tayyip Erdogan linked it to Ankara's request for F-16 fighter jets from its ally the United States. Sweden and Finland dropped decades of military non-alignment and sought to join the US-led defence organisation after Russia invaded Ukraine last year. Their bids won fast-track approval from all NATO members except Turkey and Hungary. The two ultimately relented and Finland was accepted as NATO's 31st member in April. Turkey and Hungary remain the only North Atlantic Treaty Organization members left to ratify Sweden's bid 19 months after it applied for membership. In November, the Turkish parliament's foreign affairs committee failed to reach agreement on a text for a full floor vote and met again Tuesday afternoon. "The committee meeting has started and Sweden's dossier is in the 10th place on the agenda," opposition CHP party lawmaker Utku Cakirozer, a member of the foreign affairs committee, told AFP. Erdogan in July lifted his objections to Sweden's NATO membership after Stockholm cracked down on Kurdish groups that Ankara calls terrorists. "We see that there is a change in policy in Sweden. We see some decisions taken in courts, albeit few," Fuat Oktay, a lawmaker from Erdogan's ruling AKP party and head of the parliament's foreign affairs committee said in a televised interview on Monday. "We had some requests for further steps to be taken," he added. If approved by the committee, Sweden's NATO bid will come to the parliament floor, where Erdogan's ruling alliance holds the majority of seats.

NATO allies have piled pressure on Turkey, with France saying the credibility of the alliance was "at stake". In December, Erdogan has linked Sweden's membership to the US Congress "simultaneously" agreeing to sell F-16 fighter jets to Turkey. He also said NATO allies including Canada should lift arms embargoes imposed on Ankara. "Sweden's NATO membership and F-16 sales to Turkey will be handled in coordination to some extent... because unfortunately, neither country trusts the other," Ozgur Unluhisarcikli, the Ankara office director of the US German Marshall Fund think tank told AFP. Turkey's ageing air force has suffered from Ankara's expulsion from the US-led F-35 joint strike fighter programme in 2019. This was in retaliation for Erdogan's decision to acquire an advanced Russian missile defence system that NATO views as an operational security threat. US President Joe Biden's administration has repeatedly promised to move forward with the \$20-billion F-16 sale but lawmakers have blocked it over concerns about Turkey's past tension with Greece. "There is no strong consensus in the parliament on Sweden's NATO membership, nor in the US Congress on the sale of F-16s to Turkey," Unluhisarcikli said. Erdogan's anti-Israel rhetoric after the start of its war with Hamas had raised concerns in Washington. "Although the issues are not related, Turkey's statements supporting Hamas further complicated the F-16 process," Unluhisarcikli said, adding that the killing of Turkish soldiers by Kurdish militants last weekend could also factor into Sweden's NATO membership. "But if Biden and Erdogan show the necessary will, we can expect the process to be concluded soon," he added. - Agencies

