



# Islamabad POST

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**Role of Ulema inevitable to eradicate polio: PM**

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**Dahani's hat-trick leads President's trophy triumph**

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## Briefs

**No new year celebrations: PM Kakar**

**MEHTAB PIRZADA**  
ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar announced Thursday that all celebrations related to the New Year are banned across the country as the South Asian nation stands in solidarity with Palestinians who have been facing the worst Israeli brutality since October 7. Pakistan has time and again raised its voice for the oppressed Palestinians at international forums and condemned Israel's genocide, that's cost thousands of lives. In a televised address, Kakar said: "Pakistani nation is in a sad state [...] so keeping in mind the situation, the Government of Pakistan has decided to ban all celebrations related to New Year's." "I appeal to all Pakistanis: show solidarity with the oppressed Palestinians and observe simplicity with the dawn of the new year," Kakar said, noting that the situation war was catastrophic.

**ECP dismisses plea seeking removal of Fawad**

**ABID RAZA**  
ISLAMABAD: The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) on Thursday rejected a plea that sought the removal of Fawad Hasan Fawad from the post of caretaker Federal Minister for Privatisation and Inter Provincial Coordination. The plea, filed by Advocate Syed Aziz Uddin Kaka Khel on September 29, requested the ECP to remove "biased ministers" from the interim government ahead of the general polls, scheduled to take place on February 8, 2024. The ECP, in its verdict, said the petition appears to be a result of a personal grudge. According to Geo News, the electoral body said that Fawad is the privatisation minister; therefore, he cannot influence the election process. The ECP added that the minister has been serving in important positions in the past. Advocate Kaka Khel had filed the petition against caretaker federal cabinet members Ahad Cheema and Fawad.

**Qureshi arrest: PTI seeks SC role**

**STAFF REPORT**  
ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) on Thursday condemned the "torture" and arrest of the party's Vice Chairman Shah Mahmood Qureshi, calling on the Supreme Court to take a suo motu notice of the matter. The senior politician was taken into custody on Wednesday by Rawalpindi police from Adiala jail in connection with a case related to May 9 violent protests, a day after being detained under Section 3 of the Maintenance of Public Order (3-MPO) following approval of his bail in the cipher case last week. The former ruling party maintains that Qureshi's latest arrest was "illegal" as he had been bailed out by the apex court and the orders for his detention under the 3-MPO were also withdrawn soon after being issued.



**RAWALPINDI:** Army Chief General Asim Munir addressing Corps Commanders Conference. - DNA

## Holding of smooth elections Pakistan Army to extend fullest support to ECP

The Corps Commanders were briefed on operational preparedness of the formations. COAS stressed the need for continuously maintaining operational excellence in cognitive and physical realms and pursuit of high standards of motivation and training

**STAFF REPORT/DNA**  
RAWALPINDI: General Syed Asim Munir, NI (M), Chief of Army Staff (COAS) presided over the two days long 261st Corps Commanders' Conference (CCC) held at GHQ, today. Forum paid rich tribute to the supreme sacrifices of Shuhadas including officers and men of the Armed Forces, Law Enforcement Agencies and Citizens who laid their lives for ensuring peace and stability in the country. Participants also offered Fateha for the Shuhadas including those of DI Khan attack. Forum reiterated Pakistan Army's resolve to defend the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Pakistan against direct and indirect threats. Forum expressed serious concern over continued repression and reprehensible human rights violations by Indian military forces in IOJK. The recent acts of abduction, torture and killing of civilians by the Indian Army were unequivocally condemned by the participants. Such acts constitute grave crimes against humanity and cannot dampen the spirit of the brave Kashmiris who are struggling for their lawful right of self-determination. Pakistan would keep supporting its Kashmiri brethren with all political, moral and diplomatic support for resolution of Kashmir issue according to international law and relevant UNSC resolutions. Forum was briefed on prevalent geo-strategic environment, challenges to national security and own strategy in response to evolving threat. The sanctuaries and liberty of action available to the terrorists of proscribed TTP and other groups of that ilk in a neighboring country and availability of latest weapons to the terrorists were noted as serious points of concern impacting security of Pakistan. Forum resolved that all terrorists, their facilitators and abettors, working on the behest of hostile forces to destabilise Pakistan will be dealt with full might of the state. The forum expressed full solidarity with the people of Palestine and condemned serious human rights violations and war crimes being perpetrated in Gaza while reiterating Government's stance of demanding an immediate ceasefire in Gaza and peaceful resolution of the ongoing conflict. Forum reiterated its support for ongoing efforts to promote socioeconomic growth and encouraging foreign investment under the umbrella of Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC). Forum also took holistic review of the ongoing actions being taken against smuggling, money laundering, power theft and hoarding of essential items amongst other illegal economic activities. Pakistan Army will continue to provide all out support to relevant government institutions and LEAs to curb such crimes. The Forum also noted that requisite and necessary support will also be extended to Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) for forthcoming general elections. The forum was briefed on operational preparedness of the formations. COAS stressed the need for continuously maintaining operational excellence in cognitive and physical realms and pursuit of high standards of motivation and training.

## Baloch protests in Islamabad FO regrets 'interference' by EU, Norway missions

The spokesperson's statement came in response to a question over the recent tweets by Norway's embassy and the European Union Ambassador in Pakistan who expressed "concerns" over the alleged mistreatment of Baloch protestors in Islamabad

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**  
ISLAMABAD: The Foreign Office on Thursday regretted the "interference" by some foreign missions in Pakistan for commenting on the Baloch protestors, saying the country was fully capable of handling its internal matters. Foreign Office Spokesperson Mumtaz Zahra Baloch, at a weekly press briefing, said the Constitution of Pakistan guaranteed freedom of expression to its citizens and the laws were in place to deal with such cases internally. The spokesperson's statement came in response to a question over the recent tweets by Norway's embassy and the European Union Ambassador in Pakistan who expressed "concerns" over the alleged mistreatment of Baloch protestors in Islamabad. "The interference of foreign embassies in Pakistan is regrettable," she said, adding the country was committed to protecting the rights of its people. She said the country's courts were independent and had taken decisions in this regard on several occasions. Asked if the coming year held any prospects of resumption of ties with the eastern neighbour, the spokesperson said India needed to take steps to create an environment for the dialogue. She, however, categorically pointed out that the dialogue with India could only take place based on "equality, respect and with discussion on Jammu and Kashmir as the priority issue." On relations with the countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), she said

**MoFA committed to promote Pak interests: FM**

**DNA**  
ISLAMABAD: Foreign Minister Jalil Abbas Jilani on Thursday said the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Pakistan's missions abroad would continue to promote the country's external relations and protect its interests at the global level. The foreign minister expressed these views in a year-end interaction with the beat reporters at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. FM Jilani gave a roundup of the achievements, made by Pakistan in the domain of global foreign policy and highlighted the high-level visits of the leadership that led to the strengthening of ties with key States. A Fateha was offered for the soul of former foreign secretary Riaz Khokhar who passed away in Islamabad on Wednesday. Foreign Office spokesperson Mumtaz Zahra Baloch, media persons from newspapers and television, foreign correspondents, and officials of the ministry, attended the interaction.

## Cipher case

# IHC halts Imran trial till Jan 11

Justice Aurangzeb issues stay order on PTI founder's plea challenging his indictment, trial in state secrets case

**KHAYYAM ABBASI**  
ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Thursday approved Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder Imran Khan's petition to halt his trial in cipher case till January 11, 2024. IHC's Justice Miangul Hassan issued the order on the PTI founder's appeals wherein he challenged his indictment, proceedings and gag order in the cipher case by the special court established under Official Secrets Act. Earlier during the hearing of the case, Justice Aurangzeb rejected PTI chief's plea to grant a stay on the trial, stating that the court would first serve notices before issuing an order. In this regard, the IHC issued notice to the federation and asked Khan's lawyer Usman Gul to submit all necessary documents related to the cipher trial at the next hearing. Highlighting the alleged irregularities in the cipher case, the PTI counsel contended in the court that a first information report (FIR) was lodged before the filing of a complaint. The judge asked the PTI

Continued on Page 06

## Qureshi sent on 14-day judicial remand

PTI vice chairman claims police subjected him to physical and mental torture after arresting him from Adiala Jail

**FAISAL SHEIKH**  
RAWALPINDI: A local court in Rawalpindi on Thursday sent Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Vice Chairman Shah Mahmood Qureshi on 14-day judicial remand in May 9 cases including the one pertaining to an attack on GHQ and directed to transfer him to the Adiala Jail. A day earlier, Qureshi was initially arrested in a GHQ attack case from Adiala jail, but later

Continued on Page 06

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## Governor for carbon free architecture, town planning

BAHAWALPUR : Governor Punjab Muhammad Baligh-ur-Rehman Thursday said that the historical buildings of Bahawalpur are masterpieces of architecture. He was addressing the Architects Convention and Workshop held at Noor Mahal under the auspices of the Pakistan Council of Architects and Town Planners. He said that town planners and architects play an important role in the development of a city. He said that correct and disciplined planning is important for the prosperity of the area. The governor said that town planners and architects must keep in view the future needs and climate changes for better planning and designing. Baligh-ur-Rehman said that the training workshop has been organized for architects of South Punjab in this regard. He said that zero-carbon buildings are the need of the hour. The Governor Punjab distributed certificates to the participants of the workshop. Chairman Pakistan Council of Architects and Town Planners Muhammad Arif Chingeezi said that the workshop has been organized for the architects of South Punjab to promote the architecture and town planning industry. He said that the construction of environment-friendly buildings and reducing the carbon in the environment is very important for the next generation.—APP

## Police seized smuggled petrol, diesel

PESHAWAR : Mardan Sadder Police in a successful operation has seized a significant quantity of smuggled petrol and diesel. The seized fuel, suspected to be non-custom paid, was illegally transported from Iran. Sadder Police Station has effectively cracked down on the smuggling of Iranian diesel and petrol. During the operation, three suspects were captured while attempting to smuggle 40,000 liters of petrol and 8,000 liters of diesel in two tankers. Police have taken swift action, arresting the three individuals involved in the smuggling operation and filing a case against them. The police continue their efforts to curb illegal activities and maintain law and order in the province.—APP

## Station Commander Dera visits Ejaz Shaheed policeline

DERA ISMAIL KHAN : Station Commander Dera Brigadier Amir Hayat on Thursday visited the Ejaz Shaheed police line and laid a floral wreath on Yadgar-e-Shuhada. Upon reaching, DS Headquarters Asghar Ali Shah and other police officers welcomed him. A smartly turned-out contingent of police presented him a salute after which the Station Commander visited various sections of the policeline. The station commander, DPO Dera Abdul Rauf Babar Qaisrani, and other army and police officers paid homage to the martyrs and laid floral wreaths on Yadgar-e-Shuhada. SP CTD Dera Asif Mahmood, DS Headquarters Asghar Ali Shah, Incharge BDU Dera Inayatullah Tiger, and other officers were also present on this occasion. DPO Dera Abdul Rauf Babar Qaisrani briefed him about the professional capabilities of the police.—APP

# Passing out parade held at PAF Airmen Academy

The chief guest said that PAF is a highly professional organization that is venerated as a combat efficient force



DNA

KARACHI: Passing out Parade of Aero Apprentices was held at PAF Airmen Academy, Korangi Creek, Karachi. Air Marshal Irfan Ahmad, Deputy Chief of the Air Staff (Air Defence), Pakistan Air Force, was Chief Guest at the occasion. Earlier, Air Vice Marshal Syed Imran Majid Ali, Air Officer Commanding, PAF Academy Korangi Creek, received the Chief Guest.

A total of 1410 Aero Apprentices including 66 trainees from Pakistan Navy and 01 trainee from Sri Lanka have successfully completed their technical training. While addressing the ceremony, the chief guest said, "PAF is a highly professional organization that is venerated as a combat efficient force and has always come up to the expectations of the nation during testing times through its historic valour, operational preparedness and professional

excellence". He further said that PAF is equipped with state-of-the-art weaponry and has full potential to defend the aerial boundaries of the motherland. The chief guest emphasized that the current security scenario calls for a fully harmonized training of PAF workforce that is fully capable of protecting and maintaining its next generation defence assets. He congratulated the graduating airmen and wished them a bright future and success in their upcoming

professional assignments. Deputy Chief of the Air Staff (Air Defence) also commended the Academy Instructional Staff for their sincere endeavors and commitment to the cause of training. Later, the worthy chief guest awarded trophies to the distinction holders. Chief of the Air Staff Trophy for Overall Best Performance was awarded to Aircraftman Talha Usman whereas Asghar Khan Trophy for the Overall Best Performance in

Aeronautics was clinched by Aircraftman Muhammad Arslan. Nur Khan Trophy for the Best in Avionics Technology was conferred upon Aircraftman Talha Usman whereas Air Officer Commanding Trophy for the Best Performance in General Service Training was awarded to Academy Sergeant Aircraftman Anees Ur Rehman. The Trophy for Best Performance in foreign trainees was lifted by LAC Abeykoon ABMS from Sri Lanka.

## Customs official briefs the participants of the SMC

DNA

ISLAMABAD : The participants of the 34th Senior Management Course from the National Institute of Management, Islamabad, visited the Model Collectorate, Peshawar today for a briefing session hosted by the Chief Collector Khyber Pakhtoonkhwa. The visiting delegation comprised of the senior officers from various oc-

cupational groups and was led by the Directing Staff of the National Institute of Management Islamabad, Mr Muhammad Imran. The Chief Collector KPK Mr. Muhammad Ikram welcomed the officers and introduce himself and the key members of the Customs House Peshawar team which was followed by the introduction of the participants of the 34th Senior Management Course. The Chief

Collector KPK highlighted the importance of the Khyber Pakhtoonkhwa Province in the national trade landscape and the role of customs in facilitating legitimate trade while safeguarding the national interests through appraisal and enforcement drives. The Deputy Collector Ms Kashmala, delivered a comprehensive presentation about the Organizational Structure and

delved into the specifics of customs operations in the region, including import and export procedures, trade facilitation measures, risk management strategies, and enforcement activities. Memorabilia were exchanged at the conclusion of the briefing session. "Cheezious and Ideas Foundation Unite to Spread 'Cheezy Khushiyan' for 'Smile for a While 2024' campaign at SOS Village"

## Cheeziious ,Ideas foundation spread 'cheezy khushiyan' joy



ADIL SHAHEEN

ISLAMABAD : In a Heartwarming Collaboration, Cheeziious and Ideas Foundation Join Forces to Bring Joy and Laughter to SOS Village Children with the "Smile for a While 2024" Campaign. The event aims to raise funds for the children of SOS village. Ideas Foundation has long been at the forefront of advocating

for the well-being of children and inspiring positive actions within society. By teaming up with Cheeziious, a brand known for its commitment to social responsibility, the two entities aimed to spread 'cheezy khushiyan' among the young residents of SOS Village. The event was a resounding success, filled with engaging activities designed to bring smiles to the faces of the children. The event was filled with fun activities, cap-

tivating music performances, soul-stirring qawali, interactive poetry sessions, and a winter wonderland-themed decor which created a magical atmosphere. Cheeziious also provided food to all the kids & participants. Zohaib Hassan, Head of Marketing at Cheeziious, expressed that, "Service to humanity is a virtue that will be surely rewarded, and we must put our step forward in doing well for society. Happiness

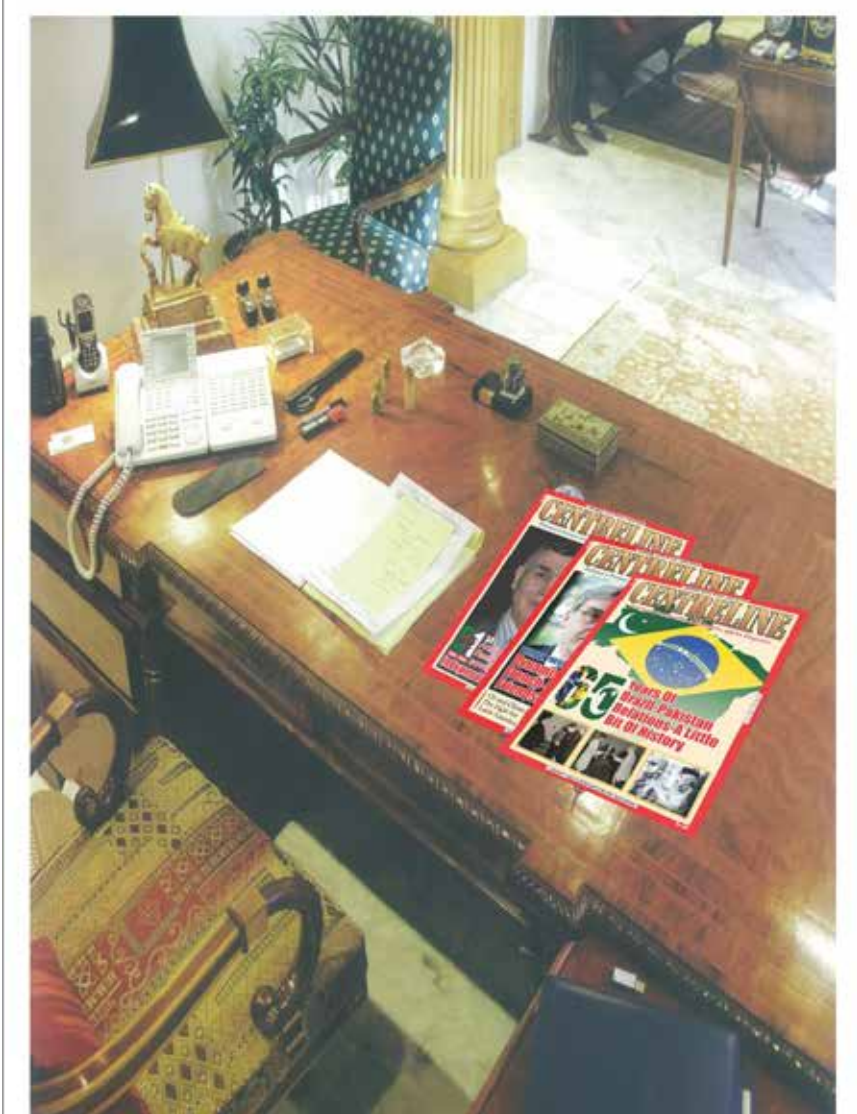
is doubled when it is shared, and spreading these 'cheezy khushiyan' among the kids of SOS is a joy to watch. Our collaboration with Ideas Foundation reflects our shared commitment to making a positive impact on the lives of those who need it the most." The event not only provided a platform for entertainment but also highlighted the importance of corporate social responsibility.

## ISSI holds Round Table on "Pakistan's Relations with Central Asia and Azerbaijan"

ISLAMABAD: The China-Pakistan Study Centre (CPSC) at the Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI) hosted a round table on "Pakistan's Relations with Central Asia and Azerbaijan: Imperatives of Regional Connectivity." The distinguished experts included Dr. Najam Abbas, Senior Fellow (Central Asia and Eurasia) East West Institute, Brussels, Belgium; Professor Shabbir Ahmad Khan, Director Area Study Centre, University of Peshawar; Dr. Farhat Asif, Founder President of the Institute of Peace and Diplomatic Studies (IPDS); Mr. Khalid Khan, Chairman Central Asian Cellular Forum; Ms. Reema Shaikat, Communication Strategist, Institute of Regional Studies. In his welcome remarks, Director General ISSI Ambassador Sohail Mahmood shared insights into Pakistan's relations with the region. He highlighted the multifaceted cooperation within the framework of 'Vision Central Asia' - encompassing five tracks, including political and diplomatic engagement; trade and investment ties; energy and connectivity; security and defence; and people-to-people exchanges. Ambassador Mahmood emphasized the importance of regional connectivity and its alignment with both Pakistan's foreign policy vision and its recent 'pivot to geo-economics.' Earlier in his introductory remarks, Dr. Talat Shabbir set the stage by elucidating the deep cultural and historical affinities shared by Pakistan with Central Asia and Azerbaijan. His emphasis on increasing collaboration across sectors such as IT, pharmaceuticals, trade, energy, transportation, agriculture, and culture underscored the comprehensive nature of bilateral relations. Dr. Najam Abbas's keynote address focused on connectivity's imperative, identifying trends and priorities for next five years, emphasizing global freight potential, alternative routes, and regional corridors. Dr. Abbas, known for his expertise in Central Asian and South Asian affairs, highlighted the imperative of regional connectivity in its multiple dimensions. — DNA

## South Punjab secretariat aims to eradicate poverty

MULTAN : Additional Chief Secretary (ACS) South Punjab Captain (Retired) Saqib Zafar said on Thursday that eradicating poverty was the basic aim of the south Punjab secretariat and it was emerging as a bigger challenge given the fact the poverty in the area was touching 42 percent on the graph. Talking to a 14-member delegation of the 34th senior management course, Saqib Zafar said that all out efforts were in progress with a major thrust on good governance to treat and address all individuals' problems on merit and bring modernity in every domain from arts to science education. Spread over 99,579 square kilometers, south Punjab has a large population with 23 percent of it living in cities and 58 percent in rural areas and mostly engaged in agriculture to earn livelihood, the ACS said.—APP



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## Toshakhana case and Imran Khan

The election symbol is the identity of any political party, which plays a prominent role in allowing voters to identify that party's candidates on the ballot paper

MUHAMMAD AFZAAL

After the decision in the Toshakhana case, a petition was filed against Imran Khan in the Election Commission for his disqualification and removal from the chairmanship, along with the Election Commission issued an order to hold intra-party elections within 20 days. As a result of which PTI conducted intra-party elections as per the orders of Election Commission, Barrister Gohar Ali Khan was elected as the new Chairman so that in case of Imran Khan's ineligibility,

there would be no questions raised about the party tickets given by him. PTI had submitted the results of the intra-party elections to the Election Commission. But now, five members of the Election Commission, in a unanimous decision, rejected PTI's intra-party election and withdrew the bat sign from PTI. PTI was accused that they did not hold the intra-party elections earlier but when they did, they were not in accordance with the constitution of PTI itself, in light of which Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf has been deprived of the bat sign just before the elections. The election symbol is the identity of any polit-

ical party, which plays a prominent role in allowing voters to identify that party's candidates on the ballot paper. So PTI is trying its best to save its representation "The bat", but the recent verdict has somewhat dashed its hopes. Barrister Gohar Ali Khan has claimed that he will be challenging this decision in the High courts and Supreme Court as well. In the past too, efforts were made to erase some political parties' election symbol effecting their existence. Those parties had been stripped of their election symbol but they still survived and have been able to identify themselves with a new

election symbol. Pakistan People's Party and Muslim League-N are the foremost examples among them. But now it is to be seen that Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf manages to hold up in the upcoming elections after having lost their identification of the bat symbol and their candidates forced to enter the polls with different election symbols, so the question is Will this party be able to maintain its existence in the future? Will it be recognized with a new symbol? Will it be able to take back the iconic mark of the bat? Only time will tell us the answers to these questions.

National  
Days and  
Armed  
Forces Days

## DECEMBER

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

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Restaurants

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



Turkish Airlines.....8494949



## Emergency

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- Cantonment Board 9270151-3

## Water Tank

- Islamabad.....0321-5744480

## Role of Ulema inevitable to eradicate polio: PM

“The people, who call polio vaccine un-Islamic are ill-fated. You have to stand with us against such people. This is our collective fight. We owe it to our future generation,” the prime minister said addressing the National Ulema Conference on Polio Eradication here

## FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar on Thursday calling the anti-vaxxers ill-fated people, urged the Ulema to stand against those spreading negative propaganda on the polio vaccine to make Pakistan achieve the goal of becoming a polio-free nation. “The people, who call polio vaccine un-Islamic are ill-fated. You have to stand with us against such people. This is our collective fight. We owe it to our future generation,” the prime minister said addressing the National Ulema Conference on Polio Eradication here. Attended by the Ulema from different schools of thought, cabinet members, diplomats and donors, the conference featured the adoption of a declaration that rejected the baseless propaganda against the polio vaccine and assured the Ulema's all-out support to the government in its fights against the crippling virus. The prime minister thanked the

donors and supporters on behalf of the entire nation for their assistance to Pakistan in its fight against polio, reiterating the country's resolve to eliminate the disease without showing any laxity. “I feel ashamed when I see a polio-crippled child because we put him in a situation that could have been avoided,” he remarked. He urged the Ulema to follow the guiding Islamic principle of probing before believing any notion in the case of polio vaccine as well as it would enhance the effectiveness of their message from the pulpit. “Don't our children have a right to live a healthy life and enjoy Allah's blessings as others do? This is their fundamental human right. Their right is our responsibility,” Prime Minister Kakar said. He said the real challenge was to convey the message to pulpits in the remote areas and at the grassroots level. Coming to the Gaza situation and the killing of around 9,000 children by Israeli forces, he called it a sheer failure of humanity as instead of being de-



clared a criminal, the killer was claiming to be a leader. Likening the killing of children in Gaza with the acts of Pharaoh, he said either Israel should give up calling itself the follower of Moses or leave the footsteps of Pharaoh. In his address, Caretaker Health Minister Dr Nadeem Jan said at the conference, the Ulema agreed and resolved to keep supporting the government's efforts in polio eradication besides promoting the messages on other health issues. He said besides its deadly impacts on

children, the polio disease was also a burden on the national national exchequer. This also raises questions on the national dignity, he remarked. He said considering it a national emergency, it was the duty of every individual particularly Ulema to play their role in making Pakistan a polio-free nation. He also paid tribute to the polio workers who served the very noble cause against a meager financial benefit. Prime Minister's Special Representative on Religious Harmony and Pakistani Diaspora in Middle East and Muslim Countries, Hafiz Muhammad Tahir Mehmood Ashrafi read out the declaration of the conference in which the Ulema unanimously declared the polio vaccine as permissible for children's safe future as it carried no harmful ingredients thus having no adverse impact on health. Calling the protection against polio essential for the children as well as the parents and society, the declaration urged the

Ulema to play its role and assured Ulema's supportive role in this regard. The Ulema urged the government to ensure the availability of polio vaccine across the country and take effective measures for the security of polio workers, besides paying tribute to those who sacrificed their lives or became paralyzed. The declaration also emphasized the media to spread a positive message on the polio vaccine and called for enhanced coordination with Ulema in the areas where polio cases were being detected. In his welcome remarks, Federal Health Secretary Iftikhar Ali Shalwani thanked Ulema for gathering under a noble cause of protecting the children from crippling diseases. Highlighting the Ulema's role, he said they should guide the masses about the essentiality of the polio vaccine as it was crucial to counter the negative propaganda for making Pakistan a polio-free nation by 2024.

## ANF recovers 2.4 tons drugs in five operations

## DNA

RAWALPINDI: Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) while conducting five operations across the country managed to recover over 2.4 tons drugs and arrested five accused, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman here on Thursday. He informed that in an operation at Allama Iqbal Airport, 85 Ice-filled capsules were recovered from a passenger's stomach. The accused was leaving for Saudi Arabia by flight number PA-470. 2 kg Ice was recovered from a Bahrain-bound passenger going on Flight No. PA-079 at Faisalabad Airport. 2000 kg hashish was recovered from a house in Qila Abdullah. 205.2 kg opium and 289.2 kg hashish were recovered from a vehicle near Sial Mor interchange on the highway. A total of 1 kg opium was recovered from three suspects netted from University Road Peshawar. Cases under the Anti-Narcotics Act have been registered against the arrested accused while further investigations are under process.

## President congratulates defense team

## DNA

ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi on Thursday congratulated Pakistan's defense team on the successful test of the Fatah II missile. “Congratulations to our brilliant defense team on the successful test of Fatah II missile,” the president wrote on social media platform X. He said the dedication showcased Pakistan's commitment to safeguarding national security and advancing technological prowess.

## China Ice &amp; Snow tourism promotion season launched

## DNA

ISLAMABAD: The 2024 China Ice & Snow Tourism Overseas Promotion Season has been launched in Pakistan by China Cultural Center in collaboration with Culture Office of the Embassy of China in Pakistan. The event was launched in



Pakistan in December 2023 and will go through the end of January 2024. Numerous promotional videos, documentaries, and exhibitions will be aired on China Cultural Center in Pakistan's official Facebook page, as well as Official WeChat Account, Twitter Account of Zhang Heqing, Cultural Counsellor at the Chinese

embassy in Islamabad and the Center's Director, and other platforms. It aims to help Pakistani audiences and netizens worldwide have a deeper appreciation for China's ice and snow culture and tourism, which will encourage them to visit China and experience this beauty by themselves.

## FIA' media awareness-raising campaigns

ISLAMABAD: Director Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) Israr Ahmed Khan Thursday said that his department was taking revolutionary step towards warding off the menace of 'human trafficking' in all its forms and raising mass media drives to prevent vulnerable persons from becoming victims where they will be encouraged to report these cases actively. Talking to a Private news channel, he said that the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) had recently launched the National Trafficking in Person (TIP) Hotline for the registration of complaints against human trafficking. This innovative approach aims to provide comprehensive support to victims and streamline the process of reporting and addressing human trafficking cases throughout country, he mentioned. He also highlight efforts to provide care and support for victims of this crime, adding, we are educating people about how to report cases of human trafficking and the legal penalties facing those who commit this crime.

## India's falling justice system exposed: AKPM

ISLAMABAD: Azad Jammu and Kashmir Prime Minister Chaudhary Anwar ul Haq has said that the Indian supreme court's verdict upholding the abrogation of Jammu and Kashmir's special status has left India's falling justice system completely exposed. Addressing a Lawyers gathering, staged by Mirpur Bar Association here late Wednesday, the AKJ premier, while referring to the Indian judiciary's history of being biased towards the Muslims, said that India's pliant judiciary has miserably failed to do justice to Muslims, whether they are Kashmiri or Indian Muslims. The attended lawyers gathering was presided over by the President of the District Bar Association, Kamran Shareef Tariq Chaudhry Advocate, besides attending by several AJK cabinet ministers, office bearers of the District Bar Association including Secretary General Fazal e Raziq Advocate, Deputy Secretary General DBA Faisal Usman Advocate and others including city elite, Senior journalists. He said that the Babri Masjid and Afzal Guru cases serve as shocking examples of prejudice, discrimination and injustice on the part of the Indian judiciary. “Peace is

our top priority, but let me be clear that ruthless fragmentation of the state and forced integration of these areas into the Indian Union won't be tolerated under any circumstances”, the PM said, adding that the Indian government must not forget that Kashmir is an internationally recognized disputed territory awaiting final settlement. The Kashmiri people, he said, would never ever compromise on their dignity, honour and identity. Denouncing the Indian government's actions it had taken on and after 5th August 2019, the PM said that Modi's decision to abolish the special status of the occupied state of Jammu and Kashmir was a violation of the UNSC resolutions. In a bid to change the region's demography, he said, “Since 2019, Indian authorities in IoK have issued millions of fake domiciles to non-Kashmiris besides granting them citizenship rights”. Stressing the need for revitalizing the true role of the base camp, he said that concerted efforts were required to expose India's nefarious designs in the region. “We cannot afford to stay silent at a time when the Indian government is using all means of oppression and suppression to silence

Kashmiris, erasing their religious and cultural identity”, he said, adding that we have to fight and expose India at every world forum. He said that the RSS-influenced regime led by Modi was in the habit of using anti-Kashmir, anti-Muslim and anti-Pakistan rhetoric to keep its vote bank intact. Anwaar said that there was a dire need that we should work together in unity and play our role and galvanize world support in favour of the Kashmiris' right to self-determination. Reiterating his commitment to the Kashmir cause, the PM said Kashmiris would go to any extent in their struggle to materialize the dream of freedom from India's occupation. “Those who think that Kashmiris have given up their freedom struggle are living in a fool's paradise,” he said. He said that India would be given a befitting response in case it resorted to misadventure. Referring to the situation in which he assumed charge of the government, the PM said, “We took over the charge of government in a very difficult situation”. He said that the coalition government had been able to sort out the financial issues in a very short period of time. After establishing financial discipline, he said, appointments were made on merit.

ہمیں پلاسٹک کا متبادل بنانا ہے ملک کو آلودگی سے بچانا ہے

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ری مائیکرو پلاسٹک

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## 'High blood Pressure' affects 23% youngsters

ISLAMABAD: Health experts Thursday warned that a silent epidemic of high blood pressure affects over 3 million people in Pakistan with a shocking 23% prevalence among youngsters aged 18-29 due to unhealthy dietary patterns and less exercise habits. Talking to a Private news channel, A renowned Cardiologist Prof Dr Fawad Tariq expressed his serious concern over an alarming stage of high blood pressure patients in Pakistan where over 45 years old women population is suffering from this disease. He underlined the need to create more mass awareness drives about the use of healthy food, care, and prevention to control the spread of the disease. He said that high blood pressure (hypertension) is not just a concern for the elderly but for youth population which was increasingly falling victim to this silent threat. Fast food and processed snacks have become staples in the diet of many young Pakistanis, he said, adding, the excessive intake of sodium, unhealthy fats, and sugary delights wreaks havoc on blood pressure levels, setting the stage for hypertension. He suggested that adopting healthier lifestyle habits can potentially decrease your likelihood of developing high blood pressure and contribute to lowering it if already elevated. Youngster should practice such as meditation, yoga, and mindfulness can be powerful tools in mitigating stress and promoting overall well-being. Expert mentioned that according to recent Pakistan Adolescents Schools Survey that over 80% of adolescents in Pakistan had unhealthy diets. A WHO study revealed that 82.8% of boys and 87.3% of girls aged 13-15 were not sufficiently active. Another study reported that 54.3% of Pakistani adolescents were physically inactive, with factors like schools lacking playgrounds and lack of parental support correlating with physical inactivity. He stressed the importance of combined community education and healthcare provider education for hypertension control.—DNA

## Briefs

## 16 drug peddlers, illegal weapon holders netted

RAWALPINDI: Rawalpindi police in an action against suspected drug peddlers, bootleggers, illegal weapon holders and other lawbreakers here on Thursday arrested 16 accused besides recovering over 14.2 kg charras, 30 liters liquor, five liquor bottles, two pistols, ammunition and other items from their possession. A police spokesperson said that Naseerabad police held two drug traffickers, husband and wife namely Amir and Sher Bano, residents of Peshawar and recovered over 7700 grams charras from their possession. He informed that the accused were allegedly involved in supplying drugs to the students of educational institutions in twin cities. Saddar Wah, New Town, Dharmial, Taxila and Pirwadhai police held Adnan, Imran, Niaz, Qaiser, Aliyan, Abdul Qadir, and Naem and recovered over 6500 grams charras from their possession. Jatti, Kalar Syedan, Rawat, Sadiqabad and Dharmial police nabbed Husnain, Zahid, Akram, Amin, Hafeez ur Rehman, Akhtar, Ashfaq and Danish and recovered two 30 bore pistols, ammunition, 30 liters liquor, five liquor bottles and other items. Separate cases have been registered against all accused while further investigations are underway. City Police Officer, Rawalpindi had directed the police officers to accelerate ongoing operations against drug peddlers, bootleggers and other lawbreakers, he added.—APP

## Int'l Iqbal conference concluded at AIOU

ISLAMABAD: The two-day international conference on "Iqbal's Thought in the Perspective of the 21st Century and Two Great Poets of Islam: Iqbal and Akif" was concluded at Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) here Thursday. The conference resulted in devising a road map of joint efforts and initiatives to promote the ideas of the two great poets of the Muslim Ummah, Iqbal and Akif. Yunus Emre Institute and Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) will organize seminars, conferences and other academic activities to convey the ideas of Iqbal and Akif to the new generation. The closing ceremony was presided over by the Dean, Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, Prof. Dr. Abdul Aziz Sahir while the distinguished teacher and scholar of Urdu language, Dr. Tanzeem ul-Firdos was the chief guest. Dr. Tanzeem, Dr. Fatima Hasan and other speakers congratulated Vice Chancellor AIOU, Prof. Dr. Nasir Mahmood, Department of Iqbaliyat, Yunus Emre Institute and Prof. Dr. Abdul Aziz Sahir for successfully organizing such an important event. Dr. Abdul Aziz Sahir recited poetry by Allama Iqbal and emphasized that this poetry carries a special message for all of us.—DNA



ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar offers condolence on demise of Former Secretary Foreign Affairs Mr. Riaz Khokhar. — DNA

## PM visits residence of late former foreign secretary

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar on Thursday offered his condolences on the death of former foreign secretary Riaz Khokhar and paid tribute to his professionalism. During his visit to the residence of the late foreign secretary, the prime minister said the services of the deceased, rendered for the Government of Pakistan, would be remembered forever. PM Kakar said Riaz Khokhar was a dedicated officer of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs who efficiently presented the country's stance and policies at the international level. Foreign Minister Jalil Abbas Jilani also accompanied the prime minister.

## AJKU students receive over 1 million rupees in PEEF scholarships

ISLAMABAD: The Vice-Chancellor of Azad Jammu and Kashmir University (AJKU), Prof. Dr. Muhammad Kaleem Abbasi, expressed gratitude to the Punjab Government and the management of the Punjab Educational Endowment Fund (PEEF) for awarding scholarships totaling more than one million rupees to fifty students from Azad Kashmir. He also announced that efforts would be intensified to secure additional scholarships from PEEF for fifty more students enrolled in degree programs within the current financial year, according to a press release. Addressing the scholarship certificate distribution ceremony for PEEF recipients at the city campus of AJKU, the vice chancellor mentioned that the Student Financial Assistance Directorate of the university initially obtained scholarships worth 180,000 rupees from the Punjab Endowment Fund in the 2016-17 academic year. Furthermore, in 2021-22, nine students were granted scholarships totaling 2,332,000 rupees, and in 2022-23, 36 students were awarded scholarships exceeding 710,000 rupees. He emphasized that the Directorate of Student Financial Aid, led by Director Mujeeb Zafar, is committed to securing over 7.5 million rupees in additional scholarships for fifty university students before the conclusion of the current financial year.—APP

## Customs thwart drug smuggling attempt

ISLAMABAD: The collectorate of customs has thwarted an attempt to smuggle a substantial amount of drugs from Karachi airport to Saudi Arabia. The customs officials said that amphetamine drugs worth Rs 6 million in the international market were seized from the luggage of a Jeddah-bound passenger, according to a private news channel on Thursday. Later, upon inquiry, the passenger was also arrested, and a case was registered against him, it added.—APP

## ICCI asks MCI to consider affordable signboard tax rate

Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari, President ICCI said that the business community is not against the payment of taxes, however, MCI should finalize all taxes in consultation with the stakeholders to save the traders from unnecessary tax burden

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari, President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) leading a delegation, visited the Metropolitan Corporation Islamabad (MCI) and held a meeting with Yasir Farhad, Director Municipal Administration MCI to discuss the issue of the signboard tax rate for the traders. Ajmal Baloch President All Pakistan Anjuman-e-Ta-

jiran, Khalid Chaudhry former Senior Vice President ICCI, and others were in the delegation.

Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari, President ICCI said that the business community is not against the payment of taxes, however, MCI should finalize all taxes in consultation with the stakeholders to save the traders from unnecessary tax burden. He proposed that the MCI should consider a fixed signboard tax rate of Rs.20/per sq. ft. for small traders or make it af-

fordable for them. He further said that MCI should take the stakeholders into confidence about the property tax, water and sanitation charges as well as solid waste management fees to make them affordable for the taxpayers.

Ajmal Baloch President All Pakistan Anjuman-e-Tajiran and Khalid Chaudhry former Senior Vice President ICCI also shared the concerns of the traders about the increase in taxes of MCI and said that high tax rates should be

rationalized to reduce the tax burden on traders and facilitate the growth of trade activities.

Addressing the delegation, Yasir Farhad, Director Municipal Administration MCI said that the proposals of ICCI delegation would be given due consideration. He said that MCI wants signboard tax @ Rs.60/per sq. ft. He said that the main reason for increasing taxes is to reduce the gap between the revenue and expenses of MCI to provide better services to the citizens.

## Cadet college Petaro celebrates parents day

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ISLAMABAD: An impressive ceremony of 61st parents' day was held at Cadet College Petaro. Chief of the Naval Staff, Admiral Naveed Ashraf graced the occasion as Chief Guest. While addressing the gathering Chief Guest appreciated the quality of infrastructure, facilities, faculty and learning environment at Cadet College Petaro. He emphasized that such efforts will surely contribute in prosperity and progress of country as education is the only way out to progress. He also commended the collaborative efforts of Govt of Sindh, Commander Kara-

chi, college administration and faculty for all out efforts to augment educational standards at the college. Furthermore, he advised the cadets that besides education they should also focus on character building. Principal Cadet College Petaro, Commodore (Retd) Mushtaq Ahmed welcomed the guests and presented the annual college report. In his address, the principal highlighted the remarkable performance achieved by the cadets in academics, sports and co-curricular activities. He also mentioned about some of the development works completed during this year and progress on undergoing works at Cadet College Petaro.

## Experts call for anticipatory climate adaptation to cope crisis in region

ISLAMABAD: The experts at a high-level roundtable called upon Thursday, the government and policymakers to come up with an inclusive and holistic approach to meet the exacerbating climate crisis through anticipatory adaptation. The roundtable titled "Foresight and Futures Thinking for Anticipatory Adaptation in Pakistan" was organized by the Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI) in collaboration with the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD) to address how various stakeholders are thinking of future risks, and how these risks could be integrated into existing plans and policies. In his opening remarks, Dr. Babar Shahbaz, Faculty of Social Sciences, Institute of Agricultural Extension Education and Rural Development, set the

ground for the participants to deliberate on pertinent issues precisely. To become future-fit, he said, it is important to understand future risks and take anticipatory actions. Amina Maharjan, Senior Specialist Livelihoods and Migration, ICIMOD briefed the participants on the foresight and future thinking for anticipatory adaptation in the region, methods to explore future pathways in terms of foresight, scenario development, development of efficient strategies and understanding foresight beyond predictions. She briefed the participants on the emerging concept of foresight as the method of scoping, sensitization, participatory scenario development, integration into plans and policies, gender-inclusive steps to address data gaps, and other shortcomings hampering climate resilient fu-

ture development through a futuristic approach. Sultan Mehmood, the World Food Programme (WFP) representative, mentioned the climate adaptation-related interventions being implemented through the WFP collaboration, particularly the Living Indus Initiative. He underscored the need to address water management, governance, land cover area protection and multi-hazard vulnerability risk assessment (MHVRA) as crucial components to successfully meet the challenge of climate foresight. Muhammad Farooq, Senior Joint Secretary, Ministry of Climate Change and Environmental Coordination, briefed the roundtable about the steps taken by the Ministry in the aftermath of the rising magnitude of climate catastrophes.—APP

## Nutritionist calls for reducing sugar intake for optimal well-being

ISLAMABAD: A health expert on Thursday emphasized the need to reduce sugar intake to promote overall well-being and combat the rising health concerns associated with excessive sugar consumption. "Excessive sugar intake is a major contributor to various health issues, including obesity, diabetes, and cardiovascular diseases," Dr. Babar Saleem, a prominent nutritionist told a private news channel. He highlighted the alarming rates of sugar consumption in the general population, stressing that individuals to take control of their health by making informed choices about what they consume. Dr. Saleem noted that many processed foods and beverages, often staples in modern diets, are laden with hidden sugars, contributing to the health crisis.—APP

## Spices exports increase 19.21% to \$45 mln

On a month-on-month basis, exports of spices however decreased by 5.13 per cent during November 2023

ISLAMABAD: The exports of spices witnessed an increase of 19.21 per cent during the first five months of the financial year 2023-24, as against the exports of the corresponding months of last year. The spices exports from the country were recorded at US \$45.179 million during July-November (2023-24) against the exports of US \$37.898 million during July-November (2022-23), according to the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS). In terms of quantity, the exports of spices also surged by 82 per cent going up from 8,478 metric tons to 15,431 metric tons, according to the data. Meanwhile, year-on-year basis, the exports of spices increased by 4.29 per cent during the month of November 2023 as compared to the same month of last year. The exports of spices from the country during November 2023 were recorded at US \$10.428 million against the exports of US \$9.999 million in November 2022. On a month-on-month basis, exports of spices however decreased by 5.13 per cent during November 2023 when compared to the exports of US \$10.992 million in October 2023, the PBS data revealed.—DNA

## FM Jilani welcomes new Sri Lankan envoy

ISLAMABAD: Foreign Minister Hon Jalil Abbas Jilani welcomed new High Commissioner Admiral Ravindra C Wijegunaratne (Retd) to Islamabad and noted long standing brotherly friendship Sri Lanka-Pakistan had from time of Independence. He also conveyed his greetings to HE the President Ranil Wickremesinghe and acknowledged President's efforts and

leadership in steady recovery from Economic Crisis of Sri Lanka and Pakistan's support to that effort. Further he thanked Government of Sri Lanka and people for donating more than 35,000 eye corneas to Pakistan people. New High Commissioner explained his commitment to enhance bilateral trade relations and to improve air connectivity between two countries and

acknowledged Minister's support to Sri Lanka as Foreign Secretary of Pakistan and his efforts to have Political leadership visit to Pakistan in first quarter of next year. Also mentioned his personal attachment to Pakistan, specially to Pakistan Navy as a student at Pakistan Navy War College in 1995/96 and then as a visiting lecturer on Asymmetric Naval Warfare.—DNA



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## US biggest threat to other countries' security

Former US secretary of state Mike Pompeo, who was previously head of the Central Intelligence Agency, was at least frank and explicit when he said of the organization: "We lied, we cheated, we stole." His prideful admission underscores the extreme lengths to which the United States will go to compromise the national security of other countries in pursuit of its own interests. In yet another example of what dirty tricks the CIA has been playing overseas, current and former agency officials told The Wall Street Journal that China's national security agency all but blinded the CIA in the country a decade ago when it cracked its network in the Chinese mainland. As many as two dozen agents working for the CIA were rounded up. The CIA is still struggling to rebuild its human espionage capabilities in China, which according to the report is the agency's top intelligence target. That the US spy agency wants to be active in China is no surprise given its history, which is marked by illegal activities such as torture, kidnapping, assassination plots, illegal surveillance of foreign leaders and US citizens, as well as engineering civil unrest and the overthrowing of regimes. The blithe way in which the current and former CIA officials talked about how the agency has conducted and will continue to conduct activities targeting China reveals the double standard Washington has adopted in terms of national security. The US has used national security as an excuse to launch its full-scale campaign to contain China, which includes trying to prevent Chinese high-tech companies such as Huawei having access to any external markets worldwide, blocking high-tech US-based investments going toward the country, and trying to decouple China from the global industry and supply chains in the name of "de-risking". Washington has repeatedly – unwarrantedly and unsubstantiatedly – described China as the "most consequential threat" to US national security. Thus when a Chinese civilian balloon for meteorological research drifted off course due to strong winds and entered US airspace in February, anti-China hawks in Washington seized the chance to whip up anti-China hysteria by describing the balloon as part of China's extensive aerial surveillance program targeting the US, an accusation that was fabricated out of thin air for the occasion, as the Joe Biden administration later admitted. The latest disclosure of CIA's activities in China once again proves that it is the US, rather than any other country, that is the fundamental source of chaos in the international order, and poses the biggest threat to the national security of other countries and world peace and stability.



## Key focus in foreign affairs work

The Central Conference on Work Relating to Foreign Affairs that concluded in Beijing on demonstrates the great significance the top decision-makers attach to effectively managing external uncertainties and risks as the country pursues high-quality development. To that end, as the conference stressed, the country should put Xi Jinping Thought on Diplomacy in practice in a more agile way to appropriately manage the opportunities and risks in China's relations with major players on the world stage, stabilize the country's neighborhood, and advance its pragmatic cooperation with the underdeveloped countries to promote the building of a community with a shared future for mankind. It can be said that China has overcome tremendous difficulties on all the diplomatic fronts over the past year. In doing so, it has guaranteed a generally stable external development environment for the nation. Upholding the spirit of mutual respect, seeking common ground while reserving differences and seeking win-win cooperation, China has pursued friendly exchanges and cooperation with the rest of the world. Thanks to that, there is an increasing convergence of interests with other countries and this is leading to the formation of a network of global partnerships featuring equality, openness and cooperation. These in turn can lay a solid foundation for the building of a community with a shared future that the country has envisioned and proposed. In making remarkable contributions to the world's common development, peace and stability through the advancing of Belt and Road cooperation, actively upholding justice and fairness in international affairs, including peaceful settlement of the Ukraine-Russia and Israel-Palestine conflicts through negotiations, and by exercising considerable restraint and composure in the face of repeated provocations on issues related to its core interests, China is setting a good example of how to be a good member of such a community. To advance the building of such a global community, China is also working with other countries to realize reform of the global governance system to make it more inclusive and impartial. To expedite this, China has put forward development, civilization and security initiatives, which reflect its global governance philosophy and advocate for a shared commitment to openness and inclusiveness instead of seclusion and exclusion, to international law instead of might makes right, to consultation and cooperation instead of conflict and confrontation, and to progressing with the community spirit of the times instead of stagnating with a zero-sum mentality. These propositions chart a course for improvement of the global governance system to make it more fit for purpose in a rapidly changing world full of uncertainty. China's efforts to push forward the reform of the global governance system are not intended to reinvent the wheel. Rather, they aim to make it possible for all countries and peoples to coexist peacefully and mutually supportively.

## Terrorism on foreign soil, Int'l law & role of Int'l community

Dr. M Nafees Zakaria



India, the so-called world's largest democracy (mockery) has history of wars against people of various ethnic, religious and culture orientations including the Naxal-Maoist people, Sikh Community, peoples of the Seven states namely; Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura, Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram, Manipur and Nagaland. Successive Indian Governments have been endeavouring to suppress and terrorise these communities. Persecution of the people belonging to the identified states and Jammu & Kashmir have been going on during successive Indian governments but it

Terrorism is condemnable. Terrorism sponsored by a UN Member on the soil of another UN sovereign member is a punishable crime, whether it is seen under domestic law or International. When these terrorist acts are committed by a UN Member state on a community discriminated against for their belief, religion or culture with the aim of exterminating or terrorizing to deter or suppress them, or for causing displacement or mass exodus or crush their right to self-determination, then it falls in the domain of Crimes Against Humanity for which there are International Laws, Conventions and Judicial Mechanisms to call the perpetrators to account, irrespective of whether the sponsors are states or individual perpetrators. India, the so-called world's largest democracy (mockery) has history of wars against people of various ethnic, religious and culture orientations including the Naxal-Maoist people, Sikh Community, peoples of the Seven states namely; Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura, Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram, Manipur and Nagaland. Successive Indian Governments have been endeavouring to suppress and terrorise these communities. Persecution of the people belonging to the identified states and Jammu & Kashmir have been going on during successive Indian governments but it became more pronounced making headlines in the international media constantly ever since BJP Government under Modi's leadership assumed the helm. Extrajudicial killings, public lynchings, Enforced disappearances, and demographic changes are the hallmarks of PM Modi's regime. International Community's apathy, particularly the criminal silence maintained by the United States of America, which is nurturing India as a counterweight to China, and the double standards of the world's champions of democracy and human rights, have encouraged India so much that it has started carrying out assassinations of the leaders of the Sikh community on foreign soils. Assassination of Canadian Sikh Hardeep Singh Nijjar in Surrey, British Columbia, in June this year sent shock waves across the globe. Early this month, the US Department of Justice announced that it had foiled an alleged plot by an Indian official to assassinate a Sikh Activist and American Citizen in New York City. It is important to assess the reactions of both the US and Canada following the assassination in Canada of its citizen and the unearthing of assassination plot in the US. Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS) submitted a report in 2017 to warn the Canadian Government that Indian Intelligence Agency RAW's networks in Canada were planning attacks on Sikhs in Canada and influence elections in Canada with Indian diplomatic mission's facilitation. The Report identified two diplomats. CSIS had irrefutable evidence of Indian maneuvering in 2016 elections. But vested interest refrained

Canadian Government from taking action. The Indian activities continued while the Canadian Government looked the other way. However, the assassination of Hardeep Singh Nijjar compelled PM Justin Trudeau to reveal before the parliament that at G-20 he had told US President Joe Biden and PM Modi of India that India had killed Nijjar. Trudeau then went public. US Government's reaction to the Indian involvement in the killing of Nijjar has been a muted one. Even after US Justice Department's unearthing of assassination plot and US Canada close working under 5 Eye Intelligence Mechanism, there had not been any reaction of consequence to India. USA had always envisioned India as a lynchpin of its policy towards Asia Pacific to counter the China's exponential economic rise as a challenger to the US dominance and Russian assertion of its military might. The USA's vested interest to court India as its proxy in the region of its two historical Great Game adversaries and challengers, United States has crossed all limits to favour India. It did not sanction India over purchase of S-400 missiles from Russia while it sanctioned the others for the same breach of the US sanctions Act called 'Countering American Adversaries Through Sanctions Act (CAATSA) of 2017.' The US also did not object to Indian overtures with Iran despite the US sanctions against Iran. The US has been massively assisting India to build its arms with technology transfer. The US has signed three foundational and strategically very sensitive agreements during 2016-2020, called LEMOA, COMCASA and BECA. The USA exercises double standards selectively. Besides India in Asia-Pacific, USA courts relations with Israel in view of its strategic interests in the oil rich Middle East. Currently, a case in point is American racial bias against Palestine in the face of ongoing genocide by Israel in Gaza. Given the US influence over Australia and its practical demonstration on a number of occasions, it can't be ruled out that Australian discrimination against the Sikhs whereby it did not allow the Referendum for Khalistan, recently, could be under pressure of the US. Indian condemnable act of assassination of Hardeep Singh achieved two objectives. One, messaging to the Sikhs pursuing Khalistan movement that they were not beyond India's reach regardless of their location. Two, embarrass Canada for rejecting Indian objections to allowing Khalistan Referendum in Canada in September 2022 and issuing adverse travel advisory for visitors to India. It was a message for the Canadian leadership that India could kill its citizens at will and couldn't do damn about it. Even though India conspired to kill a Canadian citizen in their sovereign territory, the reaction was not close to what any other sovereign state would have taken. Lack of warranted reaction damaged Canada's reputation among its own citizens and expatriates'

community. Canada remains massively under the USA influence given Canada's economic and commercial dependence on the US to the extent of 80%. There is no doubt India mastered the art of staging terrorist attacks not just on its own soil while blaming others but also on foreign soils. Use of foreign soil for perpetrating terrorism by India is not a new phenomenon. A person none other than the US Secretary of Defence, Chuck Hagel, said in 2011 that: "India Finances Trouble in Afghanistan's neighbouring country using Afghan soil. His statement was later authenticated by the voluntary statements made by Ehsanullah Ehsan, who was first the spokesperson for the terrorist organizations viz. TTP and later Jamaat ul Ahrar (JuA). Ehsan shared how Indian state agency RAW funded the two terrorist organizations for terrorist activities. Departure of British Empire from the sub-Continent was envisaged as ushering in an era for coming into existence of a number of new states. Sikhs were among the significant entities with their history of sovereignty in line with the Sikh religious teachings of the founder of Sikhism, Guru Nanak. They eyed for Punjab to be their Khalistan but with Muslims majority, Punjab was divided. However, the connivance between the British Empire and Hindu Leaders was instrumental in the drawing of boundaries with inferior designs. Sikhs have ruled the part of the Sub-continent during 19th century under Maharaja Ranjit Singh and fought wars with the British Imperial Forces. It would not be beyond conception to think that the British adversarial past with the Sikh Empire and Hindus being Sikh Empire's subjects, devised the lasting problematic partition plan for 1947. Indian hostility against Sikh community is the most targeted one. The region and its people have been in turbulence ever since. Mistreatment of Sikhs as a minority, set an impetus to their separatist campaign called Khalistan Movement. 2023 witnessed overwhelming votes in a referendum in favour of an independent state for the Sikhs. In 1984, the then Indian PM Indra Gandhi ordered 'Operation Blue Star' to crush Khalistan Movement. Sikhs leadership was targeted while Sikh Temples or Gurdwaras including their most sacred Golden Temple. Were destroyed. A large number of Sikh leaders were killed in the operation. There are numerous reports of inhuman treatment meted out to the Sikh minority in India including Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch and other world human rights organizations. The assassination on foreign soil if goes unpunished it will set an ugly precedent that would render the UN and International Conventions irrelevant.

—The writer is Ambassador a seasoned diplomat with expertise in Peace and Security, having served in various international roles. He is the Founder Patron-in-Chief of the Belt and Road Initiative for Sustainable Development (BRISD) and can be reached at [nafees111@gmail.com](mailto:nafees111@gmail.com)

## Info Ministry in evolving media landscape

Abdul Rashid Shakir



Their responsibilities also include determining stall value of publications; be they dailies, weeklies, fortnightlies, monthlies, biannual or annual; and issuing them ABC (Audit Bureau of Circulation) certificates accordingly, categorizing TV channels based on their viewership and penetration in the public, managing public

Perception building of the Government by showcasing its people-friendly policies through public diplomacy and persuasive communication by employing various tools like press releases, press notes, media talks, seminars and panel discussions; and projecting softer image of the country by leveraging its rich repository of arts & literature, culture & cuisine, history & heritage, hospitality & tourism, and topography & landscape by making use of different techniques of effective communication are the primary responsibilities of public sector media practitioners, working under the guidelines of Ministry of Information & Broadcasting. Their responsibilities also include determining stall value of publications; be they dailies, weeklies, fortnightlies, monthlies, biannual or annual; and issuing them ABC (Audit Bureau of Circulation) certificates accordingly, categorizing TV channels based on their viewership and penetration in the public, managing public sector advertisements on behalf of the Federal Government through Public Sector Advertisement Policy to get best value for public money spent for the purpose by ensuring maximum media coverage. Additionally, on behalf of the Federal Government, Ministry of Information & Broadcasting is obliged to coordinate with and trouble-shoot issues of journalists operating in print, electric, social and digital media; liaise with press clubs and media representative bodies like APNS (All Pakistan Newspaper Society), CPNE (Council of Pakistan Newspaper Editors), PBA (Pakistan Broadcasters Association), PAA (Pakistan Advertisers Association),

PFUJ (Pakistan Federal Union of Journalists), APNEC (All Pakistan Newspaper Employees Confederation) and others. Elections: Interim govt allocates Rs 17bn for security Managing administrative affairs of public sector broadcasters like Pakistan Television (PTV), Pakistan Broadcasting Corporation (PBC) and Shalimar Recording & Broadcasting Company (SRBC) besides those of the public sector wire service, Associated Press of Pakistan (APP). Moreover, acting as a watchdog for print and electronic media in the light of their respective ethical code of conduct through Press Council of Pakistan (PCP) and Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority (PEM-RA) respectively, besides exercising control on media production through the Central Board of Films Censor (CBFC) also comes under the purview of Ministry of Information & Broadcasting. And arguably perhaps one of its core functions is to build and promote a softer image of Pakistan internationally as an attractive trade and tourism hub, in sync with our foreign policy objectives, by exploring various tools of public and cultural diplomacy. Thick fog engulfs Punjab plains Once upon a time in the late 1940s and early 1950s when there were very few media outlets in the country both in the public and private sectors, this role was quite easy to perform both by the public sector media practitioners and their governing ministry, the Ministry of Information & Broadcasting. But with the opening up of private media outlets, especially after PEMRA Ordinance 2002, and the onslaught of social media, especially with the huge penetration of Facebook,

X, Instagram, YouTube, TikTok, LinkedIn and other similar platforms in 2000s and 2010s, this task has become much more challenging rather embarrassing sometimes. Digital and social media platforms have gained much traction especially in the youth which constitute some 65-68% of our more than 240 million population. Social media, one of the important means of interpersonal communication, has become a tool for manipulation in the modern tech-savvy world. As of January 2023, there were 71.7 million social media users out of the total 87.35 million internet users in the country. Therefore, social media has emerged as a robust tool of online communication and narrative building. It has enhanced our outreach by enabling us to share content on-line with a wider audience. Its platforms like Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, YouTube, X and others have revolutionized our social interaction behaviour, and are fast-changing trends and agendas on matters ranging from environment and politics to technology and entertainment. Our ways of gathering and disseminating information along with our social interaction patterns have significantly changed because of the ubiquitous presence of social media in our lives. But unfortunately, the Ministry lacks proper paraphernalia to handle this ever-evolving media landscape. Despite tremendous growth of print, electronic, digital and social media outlets, the ministry is still trying to fire-fight day-to-day coverage and promotion of various Government policies aimed at socio-economic development of people with its traditional human resource base and resources.

## Briefs

IHC halts  
Imran trial  
till Jan 11

FROM PAGE 01  
founder's lawyer what the point of the petition was. "The point is that the legal procedure was not completed before the indictment," said the lawyer, responding to the judge. He said that a legally authorised official can file a complaint directly in court. "You are saying that an authorised officer can file a complaint directly," asked the judge. At this, the lawyer requested that the IHC direct the trial court to conduct the hearing of the case after five or six days. "The court can complete the trial in the meantime," he mentioned. "How many witness statements have been completed so far?" the judge questioned. To which, the lawyer responded by saying that statements of 25 witnesses have been recorded, while cross-examination of three has been completed out of the total 27 witnesses. The cipher trial is being conducted on a daily basis, the PTI counsel told the court. FIA Prosecutor Raja Rizwan Abbasi received the notice in the courtroom. Attorney General for Pakistan (AGP) Mansoor Usman Awan also appeared in the court and informed that the statements of 25 witnesses have been recorded in the cipher trial. PTI lawyer Salman Akram Raja, who joined the hearing via videolink, said statements of many witnesses were recorded after the judgment of this court. Judge Aurangzeb said: "I can't ignore the court's previous proceedings regarding the cipher case. I am concerned about the way the cipher trial is being conducted." The court acknowledged that the trial court judge conducted the hearing early because he was ordered to do so. Expressing concerns over the in-camera trial, the IHC judge observed that the special court judge should have ordered conducting an open trial on every hearing of the case. To which, the AGP told the court that media is allowed to cover the trial proceedings. "Was the cross-examination of witnesses carried out in the presence of the media," Justice Aurangzeb inquired. The AGP said the statements of three witnesses were related to the secret code of the diplomatic cable, adding that the foreign secretary's statement will also be recorded in-camera. The judge observed that the cipher trial was being conducted in haste, and termed the trial the first of its kind. "The importance of open hearings is not clear to the special court judge, nor to the prosecutors," the court maintained. The court added that it has to be seen whether the right to a fair trial under Article 10-A is granted in such cases or not. "What facts were [presented] before the Supreme Court when bail was granted?" the IHC judge asked. There were statements from 13 witnesses before the SC, the AGP responded. "The Supreme Court was looking into the bail matter," he added. "This clarifies [my statement]," Justice Aurangzeb said. The apex court said that there is not enough material before them to deny bail, the IHC judge added. Both Khan and his party's Vice-Chairman Shah Mahmood Qureshi were granted post-arrest bail in the cipher case by the Supreme Court on December 22, 2023. Earlier on December 13, the PTI founder and vice-chairman were indicted in the cipher case again by the special court after the IHC declared their jail trial null and void. Both politicians have pleaded not guilty to their involvement in the offence related to the alleged misuse of diplomatic cable for political purposes.

Sherpao  
asks parties  
to join hands

FROM PAGE 01  
Following a thorough review, the Returning Officer rejected objections, allowing Nawaz Sharif to contest the elections from NA-15 Manshera. ECP fails to curb ongoing spree of abduction, harassment of PTI candidates, seconders, proposers PTI President district Attock vows to chant 'Imran Khan Zindabad' slogan despite all odds Raja Basharat's lawyer says RO refused to allow scrutiny of nomination papers



LAHORE: On the occasion of the passing out parade of the rescuers of the four provinces at the Punjab Emir Sexual Services Academy, the rescuers who landed on the ground with the help of a rope from the high-rise fire tower presented the national flag to CM Mohsin Naqvi. – DNA

Marsh, Smith rescue Australia  
against Pakistan for 2nd Test

Mitchell Marsh and Steve Smith help hosts to 241-run lead on day three

## SPORTS DESK

MELBOURNE: Pakistan were on top in the second Test against Australia in Melbourne after claiming four quick wickets in the second innings but Mitchell Marsh and Steve Smith helped the home side get back in the game with a crucial partnership. After the initial setbacks, Australia recovered to reach 187-6 at stumps with a lead of 241 runs. Marsh and Smith's 153-run partnership brought Australia back in the game, after they were reduced to 16-4, on a pitch that was assisting the bowlers. Marsh, who was dropped on 20 by Abdullah Shafique, scored 96 runs in 130 balls with the help of 13 fours. Salman Ali Agha took a sensational catch at first slip as Marsh was dismissed by Mir Hamza. He dived low to his right and completed a one-handed catch to end Marsh's game-changing knock. Meanwhile, Smith was dismissed on the final ball of the day by Shaheen Afridi after scoring 50 runs. Resuming at 6-2 after lunch, Mir Hamza took two wickets in as many balls to rattle the home side. David Warner (6) chopped one onto the stumps, meanwhile Travis



Head (0) was bowled by a sharp inswinger. Earlier on day three, the visitors were dismissed for 264 in their first innings in reply to Australia's 318. Cummins ended with 5-48, while Nathan Lyon grabbed 4-73 after Pakistan's tail wagged in Melbourne to narrow the hosts' first-innings lead to 54. It left the Australians with a tricky 15 minutes of the morning session to negotiate, which they failed to do miserably as they slumped to 6-2 at lunch. Khawaja was out for a duck second ball, caught behind by Mohammad Rizwan off Shaheen Shah Afridi. The same combination struck again on the last ball before lunch, when Labuschagne edged down the legside to be out for five, which left David Warner the not out batsman on one at the

break. Pakistan had looked comfortable in reaching 124-1 as they chased Australia's first-innings 318. But an electric spell from Cummins in the final session on Wednesday saw them collapse to 194-6, and he was at the heart of the action again on Thursday. After light drizzle delayed the start by 45 minutes, they resumed 124 runs adrift with Rizwan on 29 and Aamer Jamal not out two. Wicketkeeper Rizwan, picked ahead of Sarfaraz Ahmed for his batting prowess, made a confident start. But he was no match for a canny Cummins, who tempted him into a drive that flew straight to David Warner who had just been moved to cover from slip. Rizwan was gone for 42 to end a 45-run partnership with Jamal, who started to play shots with new partner Afridi as they chipped away at the lead. An enterprising Afridi crunched four boundaries before he was undone by Lyon's spin, trapped lbw for 21. Jamal looked in good touch, finding the ropes three times in six balls at one point in his 33 not out. Cummins grabbed his fifth wicket to dismiss Hasan Ali for two with a delivery that took out his off stump. Lyon then had Mir Hamza stuffed for two to collect his 505th Test wicket.

Dahani's hat-trick leads  
President's trophy triumph

ISLAMABAD: Shah Nawaz Dahani registered his best bowling figures in first-class cricket and also made headlines with a brilliant hat-trick on his way to a six-wicket haul in the third round of the President's Trophy. Sui Northern Gas Pipelines' (SNGPL) decision to bowl first against State Bank of Pakistan (SBP), paid dividends as they bundled out SBP for a modest total in 59.1 overs. Dahani took a career-best haul of 6-40 in a fiery spell that included a hat-trick as well. Umar Amin (48, 97b, 4x4s) top-scored while Zain Abbas (36, 84b, 4x4s) and Muhammad Irfan Khan (32, 66b, 4x4s) departed after showcasing some resistance. Shah Nawaz Dahani's hat-trick broke the back of SBP's innings as he reduced them to 133-7. Mohammad Awais Anwar struck twice while Bilawal Bhatti and Muhammad Ali picked a wicket each. SBP bowlers, Mohammad Ilyas and Sameen Gul, struck regular blows with the new ball to leave Sui Northern Gas Pipelines 48-4 after being dismissed for 170 earlier in the day. Asad Shafiq (4 not out, 24b, 1x4) and Bilawal (2 not out, 10b) will be on the crease for SNGPL at the start of day two. Khan Research Laboratories (KRL) notched the second-highest total of the President's Trophy as they raced to 411 for the loss of seven wickets in 80 overs. 20-year-old Abdul Faseeh (153, 171b,

15x4s, 6x6s) scored his fourth first-class hundred and set the tone of the KRL innings. Sharon Siraj (64, 74b, 4x4s, 3x6s) and Waqar Ahmed (60, 79b, 12x4s, 1x6) chipped in with valuable half-centuries. Maaz Sadaqat (46, 45b, 3x4s, 1x6) helped KRL breach the 400-run mark. Mohammad Azab bagged three wickets while Waseem Akram, Aarish Ali Khan and Mohammad Junaid picked up one apiece. Higher Education Commission (HEC) closed the day with 41-1 as Arshadullah dismissed Jahanzaib Sultan (4, 5b, 1x4) early on. Saad Khan (21 not out, 25b, 3x4s) and Mohammad Huraiera (14 not out, 19b, 2x4s) saw off the day as HEC trailed by 370 runs. Ghani Glass found themselves in the driving seat on day one of the third round of the President's Trophy as they posted 319 for the loss of nine wickets in the allotted 80 overs. In reply, Pakistan Television (PTV) lost two wickets in just 1.5 overs without a single run on the board. Shoaib Akhtar removed Hasan Nawaz and Mohammad Junaid for ducks before stumps were drawn. PTV opted to bowl first and reduced Ghani Glass to 48-4 in the first session. Later in the day, the tide turned in favour of Ghani Glass as Saad Nasim (150, 198b, 21x4s, 1x6) took team out of the trouble on way to his 10th first-class hundred. – DNA

India unlikely  
to travel to  
Pakistan for DC

ISLAMABAD: India could potentially have to forfeit a Davis Cup play-off against rival Pakistan, as the local tennis association stated on Thursday that the team awaited approval from New Delhi for travel. The All India Tennis Association (AITA) sought approval from the sports ministry to travel to Pakistan after the International Tennis Federation (ITF) tribunal rejected a request to move the fixture to a third country. "The proposal is still pending with the ministry, and we are awaiting a decision," said AITA secretary-general Anil Dhupar. Pakistan Tennis Federation (PTF) president Salim Saifullah Khan mentioned that 18 members of the Indian squad had applied for visas for the World Group 1 clash scheduled for February 3-4. "We have all the arrangements put in place. They will be given the best security and accommodation. Let politics be kept away from sports, and better sense prevails," he added. New Delhi last hosted the Pakistani tennis team in 2006, and the Indian Davis Cup team last visited Islamabad in 1964. According to India Today, a 2019 match was moved to Kazakhstan due to political tensions, as cited by the AITA. Sports matches between India and Pakistan are infrequent due to decades of hostility. They have a significant sporting rivalry in cricket, the most popular sport in both countries. However, bilateral series between their cricket teams have not taken place in over a decade, and they usually encounter each other in larger tournaments. – DNA

Qureshi  
sent on 14-  
day judicial  
remand

FROM PAGE 01  
he was booked in 12 other cases related to violent May 9 protests that broke out following the arrest of PTI founder Imran Khan earlier this year. During the hearing today, the prosecutor sought permission for investigation should be granted in all the 12 cases including attack on the GHQ, army museum and office of an intelligence agency. The prosecutor sought physical remand in the mentioned cases till January 2. Qureshi is also nominated in the case pertaining to setting the Metro Bus station on fire. Prosecution lawyer Akram Amin pleaded with the court for the physical remand of Qureshi saying that a remand of up to 90 days can be given in a terrorism case. "We have received reports from the FIA, PEMRA and intelligence agencies," said the prosecutor. He presented the video statement and Qureshi's tweets as evidence, the prosecution lawyer said Qureshi issued a protest call on his social media handle during the riots that broke out following the arrest of the PTI founder Imran Khan in corruption case earlier in May this year.

FO regrets  
'interference'  
by...

FROM PAGE 01  
Pakistan and GCC were on the verge of concluding a Free Trade Agreement soon, the first of such kind by the GCC with any country. She said negotiations in this regard were taking place, which would culminate in the signing of agreements "shortly". The FO spokesperson dismissed the report about India, demanding Pakistan to hand over the founder of Lashkare-Taiba, Hafiz Saeed in connection with the Pulwama incident. "This is based on speculative reporting," she said when asked if India had sent an official request to Pakistan to extradite Saeed. Mumtaz Baloch said Indian occupation forces in Jammu and Kashmir continued to put curbs on the residents and the Kashmiri leaders. She said Pakistan strongly condemned the decision of the Indian authorities to ban the Muslim League Jammu & Kashmir Masarat Alam faction, for five years. "Putting restrictions on Kashmiri leaders is India's disrespect for international norms," she said, adding India must lift the ban and release the incarcerated political prisoners. The FO spokesperson gave a yearly roundup of Pakistan's achievements in the international arena and the efforts made by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the domain of diplomacy.

Aqeel  
dominates  
National  
Ranking  
Championship

ISLAMABAD: Davis Cupper and Pakistan number one player Aqeel Khan comfortably progressed into the third round of the Serena Hotels National Ranking Tennis Championships 2023 men's singles event. Aqeel defeated Shahzad Khan 6-1, 6-2 whereas Muhammad Shoaib, Barkatullah, Yousaf Khalil and brothers Mudassar Murtaza and Muzammil Murtaza Shoaib outplayed Muhammad Huzaifa Khan 6-0, 6-4, and Barkatullah brought down Hamid Israr 6-2, 6-2 in the second round. Yousaf overcame a tough challenge from Hamza Roman 4-6, 6-3, 6-3 in his match. Mudassar eased past M Hamza Aasim 6-4, 6-0 and his younger sibling Muzammil won against Sami Zub Khan 6-0, 6-0 in a one-sided affair. In other matches Muhammad Abid outclassed Jubra ul Haq 6-0, 6-0 while Abdullah Adnan defeated Saqib Hayat 7-5, 6-4 in an intense match. In the women's first round matches, Natalia Zaman emerged as the winner against Kainat Ali 6-1, 6-1 and famed Pakistani player Sarah Mahboob Khan brushed aside Laiba Iqbal 6-1, 6-0 to make her way in the next round. Soha Ali and Sheeza Sajid played the most interesting match of the day which the former won 5-7, 6-4, 6-4. According to the press release issued by The Pakistan Tennis Federation this tournament is featuring top players including tennis ace Aisam-ul-Haq Qureshi, Aqeel Khan, along with others like Shoaib, Murtaza brothers, Muhammad Abid. – Agencies

## FIH could intervene amid Pakistan hockey crisis

There are fears there that the International Hockey Federation (FIH) may step in to stamp its authority, helping the Pakistan Hockey Federation (PHF) to restart working under its given constitution

## OUR CORRESPONDENTS

ISLAMABAD: Some immature decisions by leading stakeholders in recent times have dragged Pakistan hockey into serious crisis. There are fears there that the International Hockey Federation (FIH) may step in to stamp its authority, helping the Pakistan Hockey Federation (PHF) to restart working under its given constitution. The News correspondent has gathered all relevant information from inside and outside the country that ushers no good for the national game that erupts into crisis with the newly nominated President of the Federation's decision to suspend all the elected office-bearers and not to seek any election from the PHF Congress. The normal procedure as has been after the nomination from the Patron, the nominated president presents himself for election and leaves it to the Congress members to decide his fate. No one, it seems, has advised the newly nominated President PHF that taking along Congress members who have voted in previous meetings is a must for any legal working. Seeking election from the PHF Congress is a must for any lawful decision-making thereafter. The International

Olympic Committee (IOC), FIH, and even the existing PHF Constitution negate direct government interference in federation affairs. Every national and international watchdog however gives space to accommodate a fresh nomination but there are ways and means to make him part of the system. Pakistan sports has already suffered a lot in the past as there was no more dangerous misadventure than the one launched by the government authorities in 2012 to have a national Olympic Committee of its own. It took the government two years to realize that they were misguided by the people having Western interests. The then (2014) secretary of Inter-Provincial Coordination (IPC) was forced to travel to Lausanne to give an undertaking that the Pakistan government would respect the IOC Charter in a letter and spirit and that there would be

no more breaking the international norms when it comes to sports management. Yet again the same mistakes are being repeated in hockey where the next few weeks are most important to determine Pakistan hockey's international status/future. In almost twenty days' time, Pakistan is to compete in the Olympic Qualifying round in Oman. The country has already missed the last two Olympics due to non-qualification. This time around, Pakistan has got a good opportunity to make it to the Paris Olympics (2024) provided a competitive team handled by able coaches raised for the occasion. The fresh controversies that engulfed the game of hockey have already dampened the players' spirits. With fears of an international ban looming over, one wonders how the country's hockey team would be able to confront the challenges on both fronts. On one hand, Pakistan hockey faces FIH reaction while on the other there is not much time left for the start of the Olympic qualifying round. The FIH offices are to reopen on January 6 following the Christmas and new year's holidays. If the power-grabbing issues remained unsettled by that time, fears are there the FIH may step in to exert its authority. In that case, it will be yet another blow to Pakistan sports.



## Briefs

## Nigeria armed attacks: death toll hits 200

KANO : At least 200 people were confirmed dead in a series of armed gang attacks in central Nigeria, a local official said late Wednesday. Monday Kassah, head of the local government in Bokkos, told Anadolu that two more people died at hospital on Wednesday night, raising the death toll to 200. "I can assure you that the figure will definitely rise above 200 in one or two days to come. We are seriously in mourning as we lost our brothers and sisters," he said. The death toll is rising as some with serious injuries at hospital are dying, while many people are still missing and search for them in the bush is underway, Kassah added. Armed gunmen attacked 20 communities in the Bokkos and Barkin-Ladi local government areas of the Plateau state from Saturday into the early hours of Monday, killing people, burning houses, and looting farm products. According to Kassah, 221 houses were set ablaze and 35 motorcycles and motor vehicles were burnt down. On Wednesday, President Bola Ahmed Tinubu said his administration will not rest on its oars until victims of the gruesome attacks on communities get justice and the residents are safe.—DNA

## Iran, Russia shift trade to local currencies

MOSCOW : Iran and Russia have finalized an agreement to trade in their local currencies instead of the U.S. dollar, Iran's state-run news agency reported. "The establishment of new financial and banking platforms has opened a 'new chapter' in banking relations between Iran and Russia, with the two countries agreeing to ditch the U.S. dollar and instead trade in local currencies," said, citing information from the Central Bank of Iran. The deal was finalized at a meeting held in Russia between the central bank governors of the two nations, it said. Platforms such as non-SWIFT messaging systems and establishing bilateral brokerage relations using national currencies are now being used in Iran and Russia, it added. In July 2022, Iran and Russia announced plans to use their national currencies instead of the U.S. dollar in mutual trade. During a meeting that month in Tehran, Iran's leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei expressed the need to abandon the dollar in global trade.—Agencies

## Gas tanker blast in Liberia kills dozens

MONROVIA : At least 40 people have died following the explosion of a gas tanker in north-central Liberia, the West African country's chief medical officer, Francis Katch has said. The fuel truck crashed late on Tuesday in Totota, Lower Bong County, and soon after exploded, killing and injuring many who had flocked to the scene. Dozens of people are still in hospital with serious burns, and the death toll could rise, Katch told reporters. Poor road safety and weak infrastructure have made Sub-Saharan Africa the world's deadliest region for crashes, with the fatality rate three times higher than the European average, according to United Nations figures. Police earlier put the death toll at 15 and said at least 30 people were injured as locals gathered at the scene. "There were lots of people that got burned," said Prince B. Mulbah, deputy inspector general for the Liberia National Police. Another police officer, Malvin Sackor, said that after the crash, some locals had begun to take the leaking gas when the tanker exploded, killing some and wounding others. He said that the police were still gathering the total number of injured and killed. An eyewitness from Totota, Aaron Massaquoi, told AFP that "people climbed all on top of the truck taking the gas." —APP

## US, Mexico agree to keep border crossings open

"This agreement has been reached, the rail crossings and boarder bridges are already being opened to normalize the situation," Lopez Obrador

MEXICO CITY : Mexican and U.S. officials agreed to keep border crossings open, Mexican President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador said on Thursday, following a visit by U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken that focused on securing Mexico's help to stem record-high migration. The United States earlier this month temporarily shuttered several crossings, including two key rail bridges, to redeploy enforcement resources elsewhere across the border amid soaring migrant numbers, a pivotal issue in next year's U.S. elections. "This agreement has been reached, the rail crossings and the boarder bridges are already being opened to normalize the situation," Lopez Obrador told a morning press conference. "Every day there is more movement on the border bridges." Lopez Obrador said Wednesday's meetings with the U.S. delegation, which included Blinken and Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas, were "direct," and he praised the Biden administration's relationship with Mexico. "The relationship with Biden is very good, and he is very respectful of us, of Mexico," he said, adding that Biden "understands that this (migration) phenomenon has to do with poverty." Lopez Obrador earlier this month said he would help the



United States by boosting measures to curb migration, without giving details. U.S. and Mexican officials have not released any more information about possible agreements reached during the meeting so far. The bilateral talks come as hundreds of migrants and asylum seekers, many with small children, slowly walk across southern Mexico. The caravan, which Lopez Obrador has reduced to some 1,500 people, is unlikely to reach the U.S. border. But it has highlighted the plight of migrants and asylum seekers, who are fleeing violence, conflict, poverty, and climate change. The issue ofentanyl, a powerful and deadly opioid, was "hardly discussed" in the meeting, the president added. The United States has been pressing Mexico to do more to combat fentanyl trafficking, while Mexico has been pushing for stronger U.S. controls to prevent firearms from the neighboring country from reaching powerful drug cartels. Meanwhile, Mexico says it detected 680,000 migrants moving through the country in the first 11 months of 2023 and assigned over 32,000 military troops and National Guard officers – about 11% of its total forces – to enforce immigration laws. The National Guard now detains far more migrants than criminals. —Agencies

## West's strategy to defeat Russia has failed :Lavrov

Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov also said that Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy lacks "will to peace"

## Web Desk

MOSCOW : Russia is resolved to achieve its goals in its "special military operation" in Ukraine, Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov has said, adding that what he called the West's strategy to inflict a strategic defeat on Russia had "completely failed". The G7 countries intend to discuss a "peace formula" proposed by Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, which they agreed on at a "secret summit" held about 10 days ago, Lavrov said in an interview with Russian state media. Russia's Lavrov says Ukraine's President Zelenskyy 'lacks will to peace'. Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov has said that Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy lacks "will to peace." Speaking in an interview with Russian state news agency TASS, Lavrov pointed out that the Ukrainian authorities speak only about war and use aggressive rhetoric. "Any cease-fire is out of the question (for the Ukrainian authorities). The ban on negotiations with the Russian leadership, established by Zelenskyy on Sept. 30, 2022, continues to be in effect. Draw your own conclusions," he said. Panama-flagged bulk carrier hits mine in Black Sea A Panama-flagged bulk carrier headed for grain loading to one of the Danube ports has hit a mine in the Black

Sea, the Ukrainian military said. "The vessel lost its course and control, and a fire broke out on the upper deck," Ukraine's southern military command said on Telegram messenger. One person was hospitalised, and another received medical help on board. Tugs were sent to the site, the military added. Ukraine air force shoots down 7 out of 8 Russian drones Ukraine's air



defence systems have shot down seven out of eight Russia-launched Shahed drones overnight, the country's air force said. Drones were downed in three central and southern regions, the air force said on the Telegram messenger. It was not clear whether the drone that was not shot down reached its target. The Russian Defence Ministry also said it thwarted a Ukrainian drone attack over Moscow-annexed Crimea overnight. US proposes G7 explore ways to seize \$300B in Russian

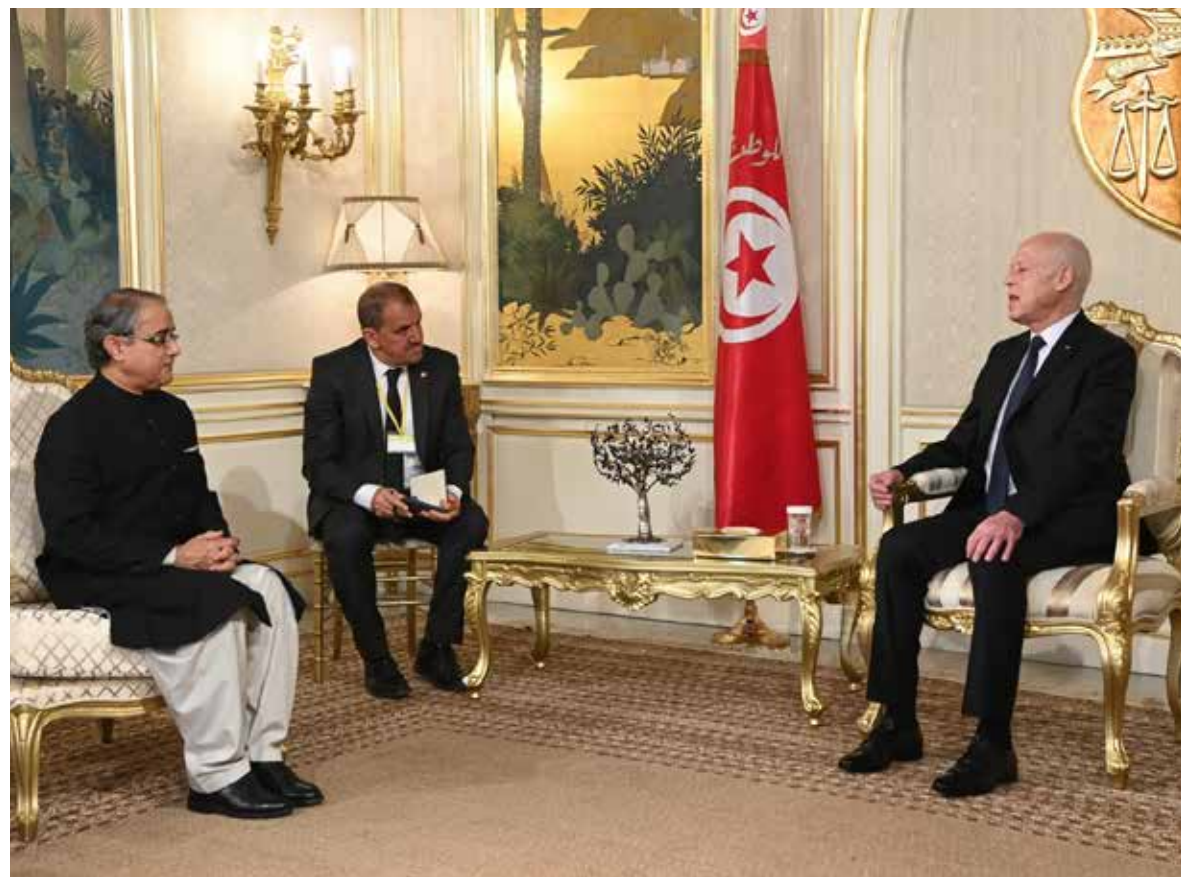
assets The United States has proposed that working groups from G7 countries explore ways to seize \$ 300 billion in frozen Russian assets, the Financial Times has reported. The United States, backed by the UK, Japan and Canada, has proposed moving forward with preparatory work so that options would be ready for G7 leaders to consider at a potential meeting around February 24, according to the report. The intrigues of Western countries whose dominance is ebbing away are largely responsible for pitching the world into turmoil, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov has said in an interview published on Thursday. Lavrov, in a year-end interview released by the official TASS news agency, warned that no one world-wide could be certain of escaping unscathed from Western machinations in 2024. Lavrov also restated Russia's complaint that Ukraine was unwilling to hold peace talks to end the 22-month-old conflict in Ukraine, which Moscow calls a "special military operation". "I must note an absence of any will for peace on the part of the regime of (Ukrainian President Volodymyr) Zelenskyy," Lavrov told media reporters. "His representatives think only in categories of war and resort to totally aggressive rhetoric. There is no consideration of holding peace talks ... Draw your own conclusions." Europe's efforts to boost arms production and help Ukraine to fend off Russia's offensive are facing an unexpected obstacle.

## Sudan RSF Leader visits Ethiopia amidst conflict

NAIROBI: The leader of Sudan's paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) arrived in Ethiopia on the second stop of his first trip abroad since war erupted with Sudan's army in April. Mohamed Hamdan Daglo's visits to Ethiopia and Uganda come as regional diplomats scramble to broker a meeting between the RSF commander and his rival, Sudanese army chief Abdel Fattah Al-Burhan. The warring generals have not met face-to-face since the outbreak of fighting between their forces that has killed over 12,000 people by some conservative estimates, and forced million to flee. Daglo was greeted upon arrival in Addis Ababa by Ethiopia's Deputy Prime Minister Demeke Mekonnen, according to a post on X by the country's foreign ministry that didn't provide any further details. On Wednesday, Daglo visited Uganda and met with President Yoweri Museveni, the RSF leader and Museveni's office said. Daglo said he "put forward our vision to engage in negotiations, cease hostilities, and rebuild the Sudanese state based on new, just foundations." He is also expected to visit Kenya in coming days, a source close to the RSF told AFP. "After having visited Uganda and Ethiopia, Hemeti will go to Nairobi in order to try to rally the member states of IGAD to his cause before going to Djibouti to meet General Al-Burhan," the source said, referring to Daglo by another commonly used name, IGAD, a bloc representing eight countries in the wider East Africa region, has been trying to bring Al-Burhan and Daglo together since war erupted on April 15. On Wednesday, Djibouti's foreign ministry said a meeting between the rivals planned for December 28 had been "postponed to early January 2024 for technical reasons." The UN Security Council last week voiced "alarm" at the growing violence in Sudan and the spread of fighting to areas previously considered a haven for those displaced by the conflict. By the end of November, at least 12,190 people had been killed in the fighting, according to a conservative estimate from the Armed Conflict and Location Event Data project. The United Nations says more than seven million people have been internally displaced by the war, while another 1.5 million have fled into neighboring countries.—APP

## Turkish parliament delays vote on Sweden's NATO

ANKARA : The Turkish Parliament is not expected to hold a full vote on Sweden's NATO accession protocol before mid-January, parliamentary sources told Media Reporters. Sweden's accession to the U.S.-led Western alliance was approved by the foreign affairs committee on Tuesday, bringing an end to a 19-month standoff that strained ties between Ankara and its Western allies. It must now be voted by the full 600-seat Parliament, where President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's ruling alliance holds the majority. The president would then need to sign it into law. Although Erdogan's party could call for a special session to discuss the measure, it will likely wait until after Parliament's scheduled return on Jan. 15. The Nordic country, together with its neighbor Finland, abandoned decades of military nonalignment and sought to join NATO after Russia invaded Ukraine in February 2022. Türkiye and Hungary were the only NATO members to oppose their applications. Türkiye eventually relented on Finland, ratifying its bid in April, but continued to oppose Swedish membership. Ankara has been angered mainly by the Nordic country's tolerance of members and sympathizers of the PKK. This terrorist group has led a bloody campaign against the Turkish state since the 1980s, killing over 40,000 civilians, as well as the Gülenist Terrorist Group (FETÖ), which orchestrated a bloody coup attempt in 2016. 'Fulfill commitments' Sweden tightened its counterterrorism legislation in response to Turkish pressure.—APP



TUNIS: Pakistan's Ambassador to Tunisia Muhammad Javed Umrani meets the President of the Tunisia after presenting his credentials. —DNA

## Turkiye 'neutralizes' 59 PKK terrorists: Erdogan

## FOREIGN DESK

ISTANBUL : Turkiye "neutralized" 59 PKK terrorists as part of anti-terror operations since Dec. 22, President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said on Wednesday. Speaking to local officials in the capital Ankara, Erdogan said: "If terrorism has come to the point of ending within our borders today, the operations we carry out in Iraq and Syria are the key reason for this." "Our red line is to uphold the principle of one nation, one flag, one homeland, one state under all circumstances, as this guarantees our national survival," he added. Turkiye will resolutely continue the anti-terror operations until the last terrorist is no longer a threat to the nation, he said. "We continue our operations beyond our borders. We do not allow terrorists to tarnish our homeland with their dirty feet," Erdogan added.

Turkish authorities use the term "neutralize" to imply the terrorists in question surrendered or were killed or captured. The recent anti-terror operations followed Friday's PKK terror attack that killed 12 Turkish soldiers in northern Iraq. Turkish airstrikes, since then, have destroyed dozens of terror targets in northern Iraq and Syria and "neutralized" senior terrorists. PKK terrorists often hide out in northern Iraq to plot cross-border attacks in Türkiye. It also has a Syrian branch, known as the YPG. Since 2016, Ankara has launched a trio of successful anti-terror operations across its border in northern Syria to prevent the formation of a terror corridor and enable the peaceful settlement of residents: Euphrates Shield (2016), Olive Branch (2018), and Peace Spring (2019). In its more than 35-year terror campaign against Türkiye, the PKK – listed as a terrorist organization by

Türkiye, the US, and EU – has been responsible for the deaths

of more than 40,000 people, including women, children, and in-

fants. The YPG is PKK's Syrian offshoot.

## Netanyahu's words on Erdogan are null and void

ANKARA : AK Party's Deputy Chairman and Party Spokesperson, Omer Celik, has declared that the statements made by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, targeting Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, are null and void. Celik lashed out at Netanyahu's remarks on President Erdogan in an X post shared on Thursday. Emphasising Netanyahu's history of indiscriminate aggression against civilian people, he stated "The words of Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu, who has committed the most brutal aggression in history without any distinction towards civilians, against our esteemed President, are null and void." Describing Netanyahu's actions as "war crimes, crimes against humanity, and attempted genocide against Palestinians," Celik asserted that the Israeli PM would be remembered with disdain and eventually held accountable before the law. "The fight against terrorism in Türkiye is the most legitimate struggle in the world, conducted within the framework of the law," he responded to the Israeli PM who tried to overshadow Türkiye's counter-terrorism efforts. "Türkiye's struggle against terrorism is in full compliance with all the rules of international law," he said. "Systematic massacre" Calling Israel's occupation of Palestine the longest-standing, planned and systematic massacre, Celik criticised Netanyahu's administration for bombing Palestinian civilians, forcing them to evacuate their ancestral lands, and even attacking hospitals where they sought refuge. "While our President addresses the world in the name of humanity and human conscience, Netanyahu represents the enemy of humanity and all forms of action against it," Celik remarked. Promising continued solidarity with innocent children, women, elderly civilians in Palestine, Celik concluded, "We will persist in supporting our Palestinian brothers and sisters in their legitimate quest for their rights."—Agencies

## Floods, landslides in eastern DRC kill scores

KINSHASA : Heavy rains overnight in South Kivu province in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) have caused flooding and landslides, killing at least 40 people, local media reported. At least 20 people were found dead in the provincial capital Bukavu while the bodies of 20 others were discovered in the surrounding village of Burhinyi, reports said on Wednesday, citing the governor's office. The Democratic Republic of the Congo is regularly hit by disasters such as floods and landslides, in part due to urban overcrowding, dilapidated infrastructure and shoddy house construction. Search and rescue efforts are ongoing, and there is concern that the death toll may rise. In May this year, at least 438 bodies were found in areas of Kalemie Territory in South Kivu hit by flooding due to heavy rains. The DRC, located in a tropical climate zone, frequently faces natural disasters during the rainy season.—DNA

## Apple secures watch ban pause victory

WASHINGTON : A federal court handed Apple a victory on Wednesday by suspending a ban on the US sale of its latest watch models in a feud over patents with health company Masimo. We are thrilled to return the full Apple Watch lineup to customers in time for the new year," an Apple spokesperson said in an email to AFP. "Apple Watch Series 9 and Apple Watch Ultra 2, including the blood oxygen feature, will become available for purchase again in the United States at Apple Stores starting today and from apple.com tomorrow by 12 pm (2000 GMT)," the email added. The ban on certain Apple smartwatch models came into effect Tuesday, after US President Joe Biden's administration opted not to veto a ruling on the patent infringements. But the federal court said the ban order would not take effect pending its consideration of whether to allow a pause on the ban throughout the full appeal process.

After a complaint by Masimo, the United States International Trade Commission (ITC) decided in October to ban Apple Watch models over a patented technology for detecting blood-oxygen levels. Masimo contends it invented the technology and that Apple poached key employees to win access to the know-how. Apple last week paused its US sales of Apple Watch Series 9 and Apple Watch Ultra 2 in compliance with the order. But the iPhone-maker contends that the ITC finding was in error and should be reversed, and appealed the decision in the federal appeals court. Masimo declined to comment on the development. Apple did not immediately reply to a query from AFP.

## Jordan to restrict essential goods exports

RIYADH: Jordan has regulated the export and re-export of essential goods, including rice and sugar, amid soaring shipping costs following tensions in the Red Sea. Corn, sunflower, palm, and soybean oil were also among the main products covered in the ban. The government's restrictions align with the Food Security Council's recommendation to limit the trade activity for these items. The world's top transportation companies, including container giants Maersk and Hapag-Lloyd, stopped using Red Sea routes after Yemen's Houthi militant group began targeting vessels earlier this month, disrupting global trade. However, Maersk earlier this week said that it has scheduled several dozen vessels to travel via the Suez Canal and the Red Sea in the upcoming weeks, signaling that global shipping firms are returning to the route. According to new industry data by Flexport, diverted journeys around Africa can take as much as 25 percent. —Agencies

## Briefs

### Russia reopens embassy in Burkina Faso

OUAGADOUGOU: Russia on Thursday reopened its embassy in Burkina Faso after a gap of nearly 32 years, the West African nation's government and a Russian diplomat said. The mission was closed in 1992. The Russian ambassador to Ivory Coast, Alexei Saltykov, said Russian President Vladimir Putin would name the new envoy. The Burkinabe foreign ministry confirmed in a statement that "Russia formally reopened its embassy this Thursday in Ouagadougou." Saltykov said he would head the mission in Burkina Faso until the new ambassador is named and described Burkina Faso as "an old partner with whom we have solid and friendly ties." Burkina Faso last year experienced two military coups - both triggered in part by discontent at failures to stem a raging jihadist insurgency. Since coming to power in September 2022, the ruling junta has distanced itself from France, its historic partner and former colonial power, and moved closer to Russia. In October, Burkina Faso signed a deal with Russia for the construction of a nuclear power plant to increase the energy supply to the Sahel country where less than a quarter of the population has access to electricity. - APP

### Another hike in power tariff likely

DNA  
ISLAMABAD: Electricity consumers are expected to bear an extra burden of Rs33 billion if the National Electric Power Regulatory Authority (NEPRA) approves Rs4.66 a unit proposed increase in power prices in January 2024 bills, The News reported. The proposed price enhancement is attributed to the fuel adjustment for November 2023. The public hearing on the Central Power Purchasing Agency (CPPA) plea was conducted by the NEPRA. The CPPA was representing Discos in the case. NEPRA questioned the CPPA about operating power plants on imported fuel while shutting down more cost-effective plants for maintenance. Notably, the maintenance-related shutdown of the Thar coal-based plant contributed to higher electricity prices. Moreover, a 13% decrease in electricity consumption and the utilisation of power plants running on costly imported LNG fuel in November 2023 added to the financial burden on consumers. The NEPRA chairman stated that when demand falls below the reference level, negative growth in power generation raises costs. This leads to positive adjustments in monthly fuel charges (FCAs) and quarterly adjustments (QTAs).

# Israel offers new prisoner exchange deal: Israeli media

In the second phase, Hamas would release female Israeli captives, including female soldiers and the bodies of dead Israelis, as Israel retreats further into areas to be hashed out via Qatari and US mediation

CENTRELINE REPORT

ISRAEL, via the United States, has proposed a new prisoner exchange deal to mediator Qatar, Al Jazeera reported citing reports from Israel's Channel 13. According to media, the deal would first see Israel withdraw its troops from densely populated areas of the Gaza Strip and allow for more aid to enter the enclave. In the second phase, Hamas would release female Israeli captives, including female soldiers and the bodies of dead Israelis, as Israel retreats further into areas to be hashed out via Qatari and US mediation. The media outlet said Hamas has "so far rejected this proposal" as it does not call for a full ceasefire while hostages are exchanged. Meanwhile, two more journalists have been killed in Israeli bomb-

## Israel bombs Gaza as UN warns civilians face 'grave peril'

GAZA STRIP: Israeli forces on Thursday heavily bombed besieged Gaza as the centre of fierce combat against Hamas moves steadily south, where hundreds of thousands of displaced Palestinians are sheltering. The Israeli army has deployed an additional brigade to Khan Yunis, the hometown of Hamas leader Yahya Sinwar, said army spokesman Daniel Hagari. More than 80 percent of Gaza's 2.4 million people have been driven from their homes, and many now live in cramped shelters or makeshift tents

in the far south, in and around the city of Rafah near Egypt. UN World Health Organisation chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus called for "urgent steps to alleviate the grave peril" facing Gaza's people, including "terrible injuries, acute hunger and... severe risk of disease". French President Emmanuel Macron in a call with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu voiced his "deepest concern at very heavy civilian toll" and stressed "the need to work towards a lasting ceasefire", Macron's office said. -Agencie

ings, raising the total death toll of journalists in the enclave to 105, the Government Media Office has said, according to Al Jazeera. More than 30 people were killed in the Israeli army attack on a residential square in Beit Lahya, including photojournalist Ahmed Khair al-Din and journalist Mohammad Khair al-Din, Palestinian news agency Wafa reported. The high death toll resulting from the Israeli strike on the Maghazi camp was because the military used the wrong type of munition, earlier this week, The Times of Israel quoted an Israeli military official as saying. "The type of munition did not match the nature of the attack, causing extensive collateral damage which could have been avoided," said the official. At least 90 people were killed late Sunday when Israel struck the small refugee camp in Deir el-Balah, in one of the war's deadliest attacks.

## Sherpao asks parties to join hands for country

SAID ALAM KHAN

PESHAWAR: Qaumi Watan Party (QWP) Chairman Aftab Ahmad Khan Sherpao on Thursday said that all the political forces would have to join hands to address the challenges facing the country. Addressing a gathering at Tangi Tehsil in Charsadda, he said that all stakeholders should work together to come up with the 'Charter of Economy' to revive the economy. Holding former prime minister Imran Khan responsible for ruining the economy during his stint, Aftab Sherpao said that the ones, who had helped him reach the corridors of power, did not brief him to strengthen the economy and have working relations with the opposition in the National Assembly. "Before the 2018 general election, Imran Khan had claimed that he had a team of economic experts, but when he came to power his government miserably failed to deliver and instead reversed the wheel of economic development," he recalled. The QWP leader said the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) was getting unprecedented relief from the courts, therefore, its leaders were not justified in complaining about the lack of level-playing field. He said the Peshawar High Court' order on giving back the PTI its election symbol was a big relief for the party. He said the plea of the other respondents was not heard in the case.

## One killed in Jhelum accident

APP

ISLAMABAD: One woman was killed and several others injured in an accident occurred due to dense fog on the Grand Trunk (GT) Road near Chungi No 5 in Jhelum on Thursday. According to rescue sources, around 10 vehicles collided with each other as the visibility turned almost zero due to dense fog, as a result, one woman was killed and 30 others injured, private news channels reported. Police and rescue teams reached the spot and shifted the injured to the hospital. Five of the injured were said to be in critical condition, rescue sources added.



ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Minister for National Health Services, Regulations & Coordination Dr. Nadeem Jan and Special Assistant to PM for Inter-Faith Harmony Maulana Tahir Ashrafi presenting Caretaker PM Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar with the Islamabad Declaration supporting immunization and Polio Eradication at the conclusion of National Ulema Conference. - DNA

## Finance Minister chairs ECC meeting

ECC was informed that EOBI's contribution collection had remained stagnant during past years but had recently witnessed a substantial increase of around Rs. 100 billion

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Federal Minister for Finance, Revenue, and Economic Affairs, Dr. Shamshad Akhtar presided over a meeting of the Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) of the Cabinet, today. The meeting was attended by the Minister of Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Mr. Sami Saeed, Minister for Energy Mr. Muhammad Ali, Minister for Communications, Maritimes Affairs and Railways Mr. Shahid Ashraf Tarar, Minister for Law and Justice Mr. Ahmed Irfan Aslam, Advisor to PM on Finance Dr. Waqar Masood, Chairman FBR Malik Amjed Zubair Tiwana, Chairperson EOBI Ms. Naheed Durrani, Federal Secretaries, and other senior government officers of the relevant ministries. Pakistan Bureau of Statistics briefed the meeting on the inflation situation and the latest trends of prices of various essential commodities. ECC directed National Price Monitoring Committee to continue regular coordination with the provincial governments for measures to ensure price stability and to check hoarding and profiteering. The ECC also considered a summary of Ministry of Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development for approval of Budget of Employee Old Age Institution (EOBI). ECC was informed that EOBI's contribution collection had remained stagnant during past years but had recently witnessed a substantial increase of around Rs. 100 billion. ECC appreciated EOBI for its good performance and directed to strictly follow the budget calendar and prepare a long term plan to clear the Rs.2 trillion liabilities of pension dues. The forum approved the proposed budget of the organisation. The summary for approval of TAPI project as Qualified Investment Incentive Package under the Foreign Investment (Promotion and Protection) Act, 2022 (FIPPA) was discussed at length. The forum observed that it was a much-needed project and should be launched without delay. The ECC also observed that the proposal for inclusion of the project under the FIPPA Act required further deliberations and examination of the legal aspects, incentives and concessions.

# Dar caused billions loss to exchequer: Zubair

Zubair said the Sindh govt agreed to take control of the Steel Mills on the condition that its liabilities would be retained by the federal government

He said he disagreed with several decisions of Dar regarding privatisation. Regarding the Steel Mills privatisation, the PML-N leader said the final session of the cabinet committee on privatisation was being held when Dar proposed that the Steel Mills be not privatised but handed over to the Sindh government because then leader of the opposition Khurshid Shah

of the Pakistan Peoples Party wanted that. Zubair said he did not agree with Dar on that because he believed that such commercial entities should be run by those who were capable of running them and it was not the government's job to run them. He said the government had already caused massive losses by trying to run them. The former privatisation minister said that as the cabinet committee decided to hand the Steel Mills over to the Sindh government, the federal government wrote to then Sindh chief minister Murad Ali Shah in this regard and spent around eight to 10 months in correspondence with the Sindh government, but those efforts turned out to be useless. Later, he added, the decision to give the Steel Mills to the Sindh government was cancelled. Regarding the PIA, Zubair said its privatisation was discussed in multiple sessions of a parliamentary body that had representation of all parties.



KARACHI: Ex-privatisation minister Muhammad Zubair held former finance minister Ishaq Dar responsible for causing a loss of billions of rupees by halting the privatisation of loss-making public sector enterprises (SOEs) during the PML-N's 2013-2018 tenure. In an interview with a local TV channel, Zubair alleged that the privatisation of the PIA, Steel Mills and Fesco was in the final stages when Dar stopped it and this caused a loss of billions of rupees.

# 'India targeting high-profile journalists with spyware'

Amnesty said journalists Siddharth Varadarajan of The Wire and Anand Mangnale of The Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project (OCCRP) had been targeted with the spyware on their iPhones

NEW DELHI: India's government has again targeted high-profile journalists with Pegasus spyware, Amnesty International and The Washington Post said in a joint investigation published Thursday. Created by Israeli firm NSO Group, Pegasus can be used to access a phone's messages and emails, peruse photos, eavesdrop on calls, track locations and even film the owner with the camera. Watchdogs have documented widespread use of the spyware - which is normally only sold to governments or security agencies - against journalists and activists in dozens of countries, including India. Amnesty said journalists Siddharth Varadarajan of The Wire and Anand Mangnale of The Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project (OCCRP) had been targeted with the spyware on their iPhones. "Increasingly, journalists in India face the threat

of unlawful surveillance simply for doing their jobs," said Donncha O Cearbhaill, head of Amnesty International's Security Lab. That threat compounds an already hostile climate for reporters also facing "imprisonment under draconian laws, smear campaigns, harassment, and intimidation", he added. India's government did not immediately respond to the report, which said the most recent identified case of spyware use occurred in October. In 2021, New Delhi was accused of using Pegasus to surveil journalists, opposition politicians and activists, with leaked documents showing the spyware had been used against more than 1,000 Indian phone numbers. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's main political rival, Rahul Gandhi, was among those targeted. The government denied conducting "illegal surveillance" but refused to cooperate with a Supreme Court probe

into the allegations, the findings of which have not been made public. The OCCRP, one of the two target organisations named in Thursday's report, published an investigation in August into the financial dealings of Indian tycoon Gautam Adani, a key business ally of Modi. Adani's conglomerate shed more than \$100 billion in value earlier this year after a US short-seller investment firm made explosive allegations of accounting fraud, which the Indian company dismissed as an organised "smear campaign". Mangnale told AFP that he was targeted "within hours" of sending questions to Adani Group on behalf of the OCCRP. "I can't blame the Adani Group or the Government of India for it, because we don't have the evidence yet," he added. "But, the chronology itself is really telling." Varadarajan of The Wire suggested to The Washington

Post that he had been targeted for leading opposition to the detention of a prominent news publisher in New Delhi. Local media reported last month that authorities were again investigating allegations by opposition politicians of attempted phone tapping after they reported receiving warnings from Apple of "state-sponsored attackers". In that case, Ashwini Vaishnav, the information and technology minister, said the government was "concerned" by the complaints. Activists say that press freedom in the world's biggest democracy has suffered during Modi's tenure. India has fallen 21 spots to 161 out of 180 countries in the World Press Freedom Index, compiled by Reporters Without Borders, since he took office in 2014. Journalists reporting critically on the government say they are subjected to judicial harassment and relentless campaigns of online abuse. - APP

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