



Islamabad POST

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Australian PM commends Pak team's conduct

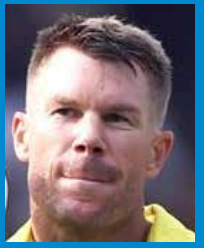
Detailed News On Page-06

Zelenskiy vows 'wrath' against Russian forces

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ODI: Warner announces retirement

Detailed News On Page-06



Nawaz, Imran others fate to be decided

SC to hear lifetime ban case today

The bench will determine once and for all the raging debate on whether aspirants disqualified under Article 62(1)(f) of the Constitution could contest polls in light of the amendments in the Elections Act 2017

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

ISLAMABAD: With the upcoming general elections around the corner, a seven-member bench of the Supreme Court will take up the issue of lifetime disqualification today (January 2). Headed by Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Qazi Faez Isa, the bench comprises Justice Syed Mansoor Ali Shah, Justice Yahya Afridi, Justice Aminuddin Khan, Justice Jamal Khan Mandokhail, Justice Muhammad Ali Mazhar and Justice Musarrat Hilali. It was constituted by a three-judge committee — comprising the CJP, Justice Sardar Tariq Masood and Justice Ijazul Ahsan — under the Supreme Court (Practice and Procedure) Act 2023. The bench will determine once and for all the raging debate on whether aspirants disqualified under Article 62(1)(f) of the Constitution could contest polls in light of the amendments in the Elections Act 2017. The law, which sets the precondition for a member of parliament to be

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SC fixes PTI's contempt plea
Three-member SC bench will hear PTI's plea on Jan 3

COURT REPORTER

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court of Pakistan (SCP) has fixed the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf's (PTI) contempt plea on the level playing field for hearing on January 3 (Wednesday). A three-member bench of the Supreme Court will hear Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf's (PTI) petition on the level-playing field. The PTI lawyer had appeared before CJP Qazi Faez Isa. He said, "The court had ordered us to provide level playing field. We have filed the contempt of the court plea." The CJP said, "We will resume the hearing after the break." However, the PTI

lawyer had not appeared before the court after the hearing was resumed. The apex court had decided to fix the PTI's plea on the level playing field for hearing on January 3 (Wednesday). Few days back, the PTI had filed a contempt of court petition in the Supreme Court on the issue of non-implementation of the orders regarding the provision of level playing field to the party. The petition maintains that the Supreme Court should ensure the implementation of its orders of December 22 as well as issue directions against the arrest and harassment of PTI candidates. The petition states that the PTI candidates were being prevented from submitting their nomination papers for the upcoming general elections despite court orders.

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LAHORE: Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar receives briefing about the overall working and current progress of the Business Facilitation Center in Lahore. — DNA

Earthquake of 7.6 magnitude strikes Japan

Tsunami warning issued by Japan Meteorological Agency urged people to quickly leave coastal areas

NEWS DESK

TOKYO: A powerful 7.6 magnitude earthquake — measured as the "strongest" on the Japanese scale — rocked Japan on Monday prompting a tsunami warning for a broad swath of the country's western coast. The tsunami warning issued by the Japan Meteorological Agency urged people to quickly leave the coastal areas of Ishikawa, Niigata, Toyama and Yamagata prefectures, public broadcaster NHK reported. Tsunami of up to five metres high are believed to be reaching Noto in

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PM Kakar accuses RAW of financing Baloch separatists

Caretaker PM Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar says the federal govt will provide all possible facilities for promotion of business in the country

ABID RAZA

LAHORE: Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaarul Haq Kakar on Monday issuing a stern warning against terrorism in Balochistan said that separatists are receiving funding from India's RAW. Speaking to the media in Lahore, Mr Kakar acknowledged the right to protest within the constitutional framework but firmly stated that terrorism would not be tolerated. He also condemned the recent clashes in Islamabad where protesters, allegedly linked to separatist groups, engaged in stone-pelting, leading to baton charges and water cannons by the police. "We accept the right to protest, but we will not tolerate terrorism from the relatives of missing persons," affirmed the interim PM. He went on to say that "Armed organisations are plotting to break Pakistan, and I will openly address this issue when I leave office,"

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Delay in polls could prove ominous: Murad

NAZIR SIYAL

SEHWAN SHARIF: Former Sindh chief minister Murad Ali Shah says delay in elections will be a bad omen as it will embolden terrorists to silence the people. He told media on Monday that the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) would emerge victorious in the Feb 8 elections. He said Bilawal Bhutto would become the prime minister as the rivals didn't have candidates. The political opponents were at daggers drawn over symbols. The PPP would spring a surprise on election day as its

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Briefs

Dharna commission summons Shehbaz

ADIL SHAHEEN

ISLAMABAD: An inquiry commission formed to probe the 2017 Faizabad sit-in has summoned Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) President and former prime minister Shehbaz Sharif on January 3 (Wednesday), sources told Geo News on Monday. They said Shehbaz has been summoned as former Punjab chief minister to record his statement in connection with an inquiry into the sit-in staged by Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan (TLP) in the federal capital against the then PML-N-led government in November 2017. In November last year, the caretaker federal government constituted the inquiry commission for the implementation of the top court's 2019 Faizabad verdict.

Bilawal convenes CEC meeting

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari on Monday convened the Central Executive Committee (CEC) meeting on Jan 3 to discuss the election strategy. PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari will preside over the meeting at Bilawal House, Lahore. The CEC will discuss the overall political situation in the country. The meeting would be attended by the senior leadership of PPP. Discussion will also be held on the PPP manifesto and election campaign for the Feb 8 polls.

Pak-India exchange prisoner, nuclear installations lists

Total of 418 Pakistanis are languishing in Indian jails, says Foreign Office

FAISAL SHEIKH / DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan and India Monday exchanged their lists of prisoners and nuclear installations and facilities, following up on a years-long agreement between the two arch-rivals who have fought numerous battles since their independence in 1947. Both nations, who parted ways after ousting the Britishers, exchange the lists of prisoners on the first of January and July each year, while they share details of nuclear installations and facilities on the first date of each calendar year. In a statement, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs said the Agreement on Prohibition of Attacks against Nuclear Installations and Facilities between Pakistan and India, inter alia, provides that both countries shall inform each other of their nuclear installations and facilities, falling within its definition. Signed on December 31, 1988, the agreement

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Pakistan condemns banning of TeH

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan condemns the Indian authorities' decision to declare the Tehreek-e-Hurriyat Jammu and Kashmir (TeH) as an "unlawful association", for a period of five years. The TeH is the second Kashmiri party banned under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) in less than a week's time. With its banning, the total number of outlawed Kashmiri political parties increases to six. The party was founded by iconic Kashmiri leader, Syed Ali Shah Geelani, who passed away in 2021 during a

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Palestine rejects any evacuation attempt from Gaza

Ministry of Foreign Affairs warns Tony Blair against involvement in Gaza evacuation plan

DNA

RAMALLAH: The Palestinian presidency today expressed its strong rejection of any suspicious attempts to name Tony Blair or anyone else in charge of displacing the Palestinians from the Gaza Strip, considering it a condemnable and rejected act.

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PTI chief Barrister Gohar Khan deplores chaotic run-up to polls

Seeks Supreme Court immediate intervention to ensure free polls, to save democracy

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Barrister Gohar Khan urged the Supreme Court (SC) to immediately intervene and take notice of the unjust step of en masse rejection of nomination papers of the PTI's candidates on false and flimsy grounds by Returning Officers (ROs) to ensure holding fair, free and transparent elections in order to save democracy in the country. During his informal conversation with journalists here on Monday, PTI Chairman highlighted that PTI and its leaders, workers as well as affiliates were being subjected to the worst reprisals and coercive actions. He said that in the first phase of election, the nomination papers of more or less all the top PTI's candidates were rejected in an unbelievable manner, opening a door of unnecessary legal proceedings aimed at entangling the party and its candidates in needless legal battle so as to keep them away from the masses. However, he expressed optimism that Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) would prompt action to reverse the unjust and unlawful decisions. PTI Chairman pointed out that the manner in which PTI and its candidates were being subjected to

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Nomination papers of 6,449 candidates accepted for NA seats

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) unveiled the number of candidates who filed nomination papers for the 2024 general elections as well as the number of nomination papers rejected and accepted by the top electoral body. As per the details made public by the ECP, nomination papers of 6,449 candidates have been sanctioned, including 6,094 male candidates and 355 females, for National Assembly seats from Sindh, Balochistan, Punjab, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Islamabad Capital Territory. The returning officers (ROs) have rejected the documents of 1,024 candidates, including 934 men and 90 women,

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36 projects completed so far under CPEC

The minister Sami Saeed concluded by affirming the government's commitment to Balochistan's development, recognizing and addressing the challenges faced by the province

DNA

ISLAMABAD : Caretaker Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Muhammad Sami Saeed on Monday said that 36 projects with a cumulative value of 24 billion dollars have been successfully completed under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). Additionally, 22 projects with a total investment of five billion dollars are currently under construction, he said while concluding a debate on motion under rule 218 in Senate, focusing on the underdevelopment of Balochistan despite the claims of successive governments to promote the region's growth through CPEC and other Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) projects. Providing further insights in CPEC at the national level, the minister informed the House that negotiations are underway for 26 projects, totalling 27 billion dollars under the CPEC framework. Furthermore, 27 other projects dedicated to the social and economic development of Balochistan are actively under implementation. Sami Saeed highlighted the significant allocation for Balochistan in the Public Sector Development

Program (PSDP), emphasizing that the province has received a higher share compared to other regions in recent years. For the current year, the PSDP stands at Rs. 950 billion, out of which 400 billion is allocated to national projects. Specifically, 15 percent of the program is dedicated to Balochistan, with an additional 14 percent for province-specific projects. This totals to one-third of the PSDP, amounting to 285 billion rupees, earmarked for projects related to connectivity, roads, and water, including the implementation of various dam projects. The development of Gwadar city and Gwadar port remains a central focus of CPEC, as the minister outlined the completion of 36 projects worth 24 billion dollars and the ongoing construction of 22 projects with a budget of five billion dollars. Additionally, 26 projects, valued at 27 billion dollars, are under negotiation within the CPEC framework, while 27 other projects aimed at Balochistan's social and economic development are actively underway. Providing specific updates on Gwadar, Sami Saeed stated that significant milestones, such as the completion of the master plan for Gwadar city, the East Expressway, and an international airport

(anticipated completion in June), showcase the progress. The first phase of the Gwadar Free Zone covering 60 acres has been completed, with Phase-2 in progress. Various completed projects, such as the Pakistan China Vocational and Technical Institute and the 1.2 MGD desalination plant, were highlighted by Minister Sami Saeed. He noted the Pak-China Friendship Hospital with 300 beds and modern facilities, along with the completion of the port-dredging project under the federal PSDP. Focusing on social and economic development in Balochistan, Minister Saeed mentioned initiatives such as the China-Pakistan Joint Horticulture Laboratory in Quetta, the distribution of ten thousand solar lighting units, and the establishment of a 20-bed burn center and medical emergency center in Quetta. Phase-1 of the Bostan Economic Zone has been completed, with Phase-2 currently under consideration by the Balochistan government, pending court proceedings. The minister Sami Saeed concluded by affirming the government's commitment to Balochistan's development, recognizing and addressing the challenges faced by the province.



ISLAMABAD : Jamal Shah, Caretaker Federal Minister for National Heritage and Culture inaugurating Shah Alla Ditta Caves development, conservation & preservation project.—DNA

SRB collects Rs 21.3bn in Dec 2023

KARACHI : Caretaker Sindh Chief Minister Justice (ret'd) Maqbool Baqar has said that the Sindh Revenue Board (SRB) during December 2023 made a record revenue collection of Rs 21.3 billion as compared to Rs 17.5 billion collected during the corresponding period of 2022 (Dec 2022) which shows a growth of 22 percent. In a statement issued from the CM House, the CM said that during December 2023, the Sindh Revenue Board made a record revenue collection of Rs 21.3 billion as compared to Rs 17.5 billion collected during December 2022, thus registering a growth of 22 percent. During the first six months of the financial year 2023-24, SRB collected Rs 108.6 billion as compared to the collection of Rs. 80.2 billion during the first six months of the last financial year 2022-23, posting revenue growth of 35 percent, and thus showcasing its commitment to fiscal excellence even in challenging economic times. The success in achieving the phenomenal revenue growth during and up to December 2023, is attributed to the continued trust and cooperation of SRB taxpayers, and the relentless efforts of the SRB officers and staff, the CM said.—APP

Minister lays foundation of Alla Ditta Caves project

ADIL SHAHEEN

ISLAMABAD : Caretaker Federal Minister for National Heritage and Culture Syed Jamal Shah on Monday laid the foundation stone of Shah Alla Ditta Caves development, conservation, preservation and restoration. Federal Secretary of National Heritage and Culture Division Humaira Ahmed, Director General Department of Archaeology & Museums (DOAM) Dr Abdul Azeem and other senior officials were also present on the occasion. Speaking on the occasion, the minister said that the Department of Archaeology & Museums (DOAM) Islamabad has declared the site a "Protected Antiquity" under the Antiquities Act 1975 on 13-08-2016. He said that DOAM, National Heritage & Culture Division, has started conservation, preservation, restoration & development of

the caves during the current financial year. He said that the work includes Archaeological excavation, complete documentation of the site, geotechnical study of binding materials, construction of drainage works as well as Soft and hard landscaping. Shah Alla Ditta caves are situated on the southern side of the Margalla hills in a small picturesque valley, 14 kilometers northwest of the capital city of Islamabad. Caves consist of two natural rock shelters of Kanjur stone situated on either side of a natural spring of hot water. The front side of the eastern cave is covered with a wall of undressed kanjur stone laid in mud mortar. The facade of the cave is covered with mud plaster having many coatings of red color. On the smooth surface of the wall, some paintings are executed in black color but in the later period, the paintings are covered with a layer of

whitewash. The paintings are of Hindu origin, probably of god Vishnu (the savior). Interior of the cave is divided into upper and lower halves. Walls are treated with mud plaster having many coatings of white wash but now the color of the walls become blackish due to the smoke of the fire used by the dwellers. In front of the cave are the remains of a paved channel and a square water tank constructed in limestone blocks laid in lime mortar. Many Hindu families were living in Shah Alla Ditta village before partition and the caves were used by them for their daily worship and remained in occupation till 1947. It may be mentioned here that Jamal Shah, Interim Federal Minister for National Heritage and Culture recently inaugurated the preservation and development of Mai Qamro Mosque and Muqarab Khan Tomb located in a small village 'Bagh Jogan' in the vicinity of Islamabad.

70-KW solar system installed at WASA office

DNA

LAHORE : Punjab Secretary Housing Sajid Zafar Dall on Monday inaugurated a 70-kilowatt solar system at the Water and Sanitation Agency (WASA) head office, with the aim to save Rs1.5 to 2 million on electricity bills monthly. A simple but impressive ceremony was held here at the WASA head office, which witnessed participation of Managing Director WASA Ghaffran Ahmed, other officers and staff members, MD WASA Ghaffran Ahmed briefed the secretary about solar projects and said that all WASA offices were being shifted to the solar system, adding that prior to this, solar systems had been installed at Mahmood Booti Disposal Station and Multan Road Disposal Station. The MD also briefed the secretary about WASA Lahore's initiatives in Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition (SCADA), GIS, solarization, revenue, and IT reforms. Secretary Sajid Zafar Dall appreciated all the projects, and said that reforms similar to those in WASA Lahore would be implemented in all WASA offices of other cities. Additionally, the Secretary Housing received briefings on Moonsoon preparations and Digital Complaint Management System among other projects and visited the Digital Complaint Management Center in Gulberg. The secretary also directed WASA prompt resolution of public complaints at the doorstep besides taking strict action against those dumping waste in water and drainage lines. MD WASA Ghaffran Ahmad presented a shield to the Secretary Housing in recognition of his collaborative efforts.

Traffic police collects 34.14 mln in 2023

DNA

ABBOTTABAD : The traffic police Abbottabad tightening the noose on the violators collected a huge amount of fines amounting 34.14 million rupees during 2023 as compared to the previous year, the annual report of traffic police said. According to the report, a substantial number of cases were recorded, particularly targeting those without helmets motorcyclists, without proper registration motorcycles, and underage riders. Following the directives of Deputy Inspector General (DIG) Hazara police, Muhammad Jaz Khan, and under the supervision of SSP Traffic

Arif Javaid Khan, the Abbottabad traffic police intensified their crackdown on traffic law offenders in various traffic circles throughout the year. Various checkpoints were established during these operations, leading to the imposing fines to 4,830 motorcycles, accumulating penalties totaling 9,743,180 rupees. Specifically, 658 motorcycles were seized for operating without proper registration numbers, falling under section 523/550 of the Motor Vehicle Ordinance. Moreover, fines amounting to 1,018,200 rupees were imposed on 4,600 vehicles for the improper use of pressure horns. A substantial penalty of 2,332,800 rupees was enforced on 4,354 vehicles for violations related to wrong-side driving and illegal parking. The use of tinted windows on 36,080 vehicles were fines totaling a staggering 18,040,000 rupees. Additionally, 30,127 vehicles faced penalties for utilizing fancy and illegal number plates, with fines reaching 3,012,700 rupees. In a statement, authorities emphasized their commitment to an ongoing crackdown against traffic law violators, ensuring the stringent enforcement of regulations and the preservation of road safety. The measures aimed to instill a sense of compliance with traffic laws among the public, contributing to overall community safety and well-being.

Zafar making progress towards achieving development goals: ACS

MULTAN : Additional Chief Secretary South Punjab Capt Retd Saqib Zafar said on Monday that the South Punjab Secretariat was making significant strides towards its established goals. During a review meeting on Monday, Additional Chief Secretary South Punjab, Capt. (ret'd) Saqib Zafar, directed the completion of all schemes according to their timelines. A substantial allocation of Rs 97 billion had been earmarked for ongoing 2022 projects in South Punjab, with 45% of the released Rs 37 billion already utilized for development initiatives. Similarly, work on hospital upgradation in South Punjab is also progressing rapidly, and projects aimed at advancing the agriculture and livestock sector are in motion. Captain (ret'd) Saqib Zafar mentioned the completion of the Nishtar Hospital II project and ongoing interviews for medical staff. Under the guidance of Caretaker Chief Minister Punjab Mohsin Naqvi, the upgrading of all Territorial hospitals in South Punjab is also underway, with the Bahawalpur Hospital set for completion by February 27. Development work on the OPD and Emergency facilities of Children's Hospital Multan had finished, and the upgradation of Nishtar Hospital-1 is expected to be concluded by January 31, the meeting was apprised. Captain (ret'd) Saqib Zafar stressed the need for the quick repair of machinery in all hospitals. He also directed the acquisition of a NOC from the Railway for the construction of the Shujaabad Flyover and ordered rigorous monitoring of project completion. In the agriculture sector, the wheat cultivation target was surpassed, against the set target, said Saqib. Captain (R) Saqib Zafar expressed optimism about the far-reaching results expected from livestock sector projects. Livestock officers highlighted the significance of allocations for projects such as feedlot and genetic improvement, beef, milk, and mutton production, and efforts to increase livestock production in Cholistan. Updates on pension and inquiry cases, waste management, public toilets, and healthcare initiatives, including cornea transplants and revamping of barrages, were also shared in the meeting.—DNA

KU to facilitate students through SAF

KARACHI :The University of Karachi is facilitating students who have secured their admissions but cannot pay the admission fee due to financial difficulties with the Students' Admission Fund. The KU initiated the SAF project during the COVID-19 pandemic and since then the University of Karachi has been facilitating such students. The in-charge KU Directorate of Admissions Dr Saima Akhtar said that such students can get/submit the form from the SAF Counter till January 04, 2024. She mentioned that the SAF Counter is established in the campus gymnasium hall and would remain open from 10:00 am to 4:00 pm. According to her, students who want to avail of the Students Admission Fund should submit the income certificate of the father/guardian.—APP

Mushaal expresses concern on IOJK situation

DNA

ISLAMABAD : Special Assistant to Prime Minister on Human Rights & Women Empowerment Mushaal Hussein Mullick Monday has expressed serious concern over the deteriorating political and human rights situation in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK). While talking to Pakistan Television, Mushaal Hussein Mullick warned

that brazen demographic change by India in Occupied Jammu and Kashmir is creating tensions that could push the region to a disastrous war, adding, "India is expected to register up to 2.5 million new voters from Indians in the contested Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu Kashmir (IIOJK)". In replying to a question, she regretted that the prisons inside the IIOJK jails were still waiting for basic facilities of medi-

cines and lawyers, adding, that they were deprived of basic needs. She also called upon International organizations and human rights platforms to speed up their efforts and raise voices for the rights of innocent Kashmiri people. Additionally, she also shared her own experience of being targeted during a journey to Norway where she had faced significant harassment from an Indian national.



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Education role in nation building

SH BANGASH

ISLAMABAD: As Education is the most essential ingredient for the development of a nation to survive according to its Sovereignty and compute the world. It is the education that provides creative minds to strengthen the nation. But unfortunately with all other issues education is also worst in Pakistan. Due to the negligence of relevant authorities education mafia is playing with the future of students. In consonance with budget 2022-23 where there was massive relief on duty and tax to uplift the showbiz industry, a 1.5% decrease was noticed in the annual education budget. Which is an open sign of negligence in considering the importance of education by the government. Furthermore, there are more aspects of education issues like:

1. Poor Education System: Education System is facing crises just like other major sectors of the country. One of the ugliest facet of education is inequality, where Government schools have outdated Syllabus and untrained teaching staff, Private

schools have extremely high fee structures, which is unaffordable for the common people. Education in Pakistan is the most profitable business and many businessmen are running it very proficiently. They have unique ideas day by day to increase their income instead of enhancing the quality of education that's why there are a number of schools in every street of the cities but the level of the students are even lower than our neighbor country India. 2. Quality of Education: The quality of education in Pakistan is extremely worst. The reason for that is the outdated syllabus and untrained teaching staff. The syllabus that is being taught to the students is 15 to 20 years old and has no convenience for them. After taking power, every government promises youth that they will start working to provide quality content but after 75 years, promises are still waiting to come up with it. The other aspect is non-qualified and untrained teaching staff due to the negligence of Board management there is no proper way to appoint skilled teaching staff, especially in Baluchistan and Sindh province

including the slums of Punjab and KPK. Teachers are not delivering the lectures according to the mentality of the youth. 3. High Fee Structure: Due to the quality of education compared to the government schools and the lack of proper checks and balance private schools become the mafia now, as parents are satisfied with their performance not for their hardworking but for no other choice parents have, Private schools are charging extraordinarily high fees. Which are unbearable for common people. And paying after a huge amount of admission fees, and monthly fees, students have to pay examinations and other undisclosed charges too, as I mentioned before that education is business in Pakistan so the traders of education are earning well and the youth, who are the future of our country going down day by day. Which is a question mark on our society. 4. Corrupt Board Management: It is a bitter truth that corruption is spreading day by day in the different government departments and the education department which is bound for the character building of the Na-

tion must be corruption free, which is a dream yet, private schools are a golden goose for them as for affiliation private schools provide any kind of individual support to the officers of the board in the shape of bribery and other assistance. Teachers, who are the backbone of the education department are still appointed on a political basis, which is the main reason for the selection of unskilled and untrained teachers. All the funds by the government for the maintenance of schools and funds that are appropriate for the deserving students are only existing on the papers and have no audits and hence have heavily embezzled. The only solution for the reforms of education is an "Education Emergency"

5. Special Education: According to the census of 2017 around 31 Million people are unfortunately disabled. The rehabilitation and looking after of those people are the responsibility of the government to make them useful citizens of the country. But unfortunately there are only few institutions for such people that are existing in the urban area only as which shows that there is no proper and comprehensive planning for them.

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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Emergency Ambulance.....1122 & 16
& Rescue Services.....4451122
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CAA.....9281092



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MH.....5611116
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DHQ.....5556311-4
RGH.....9290301-7
Holy Family.....9290322-7
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Polyclinic.....9218300-09
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CDA.....9208301-04
Met Office.....9250360-6
RDA.....5555864
TMA.....5770886
Cantonment Board 9270151-3

Water Tank

Islamabad.....0321-5744480

ICCI congratulates Atif on being elected as President FPCCI

He assured that he would extend all possible cooperation to Atif Ikram Sheikh in his efforts to resolve the key issues of the business community

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Former President of Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry Atif Ikram Shaikh has assumed the charge as the newly elected President of the Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI). In this regard, a ceremony was held in the FPCCI House in which UBG Patron-in-Chief S.M. Tanveer, President Zubair Tufail, Secretary General Zafar Bakhtawari, outgoing President of FPCCI Irfan Iqbal Sheikh and others were present. They congratulated Atif Ikram Sheikh and expressed best wishes for him. Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari, President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry congratulated Atif Ikram Sheikh on being elected as the President of FPCCI and expressed his best wishes for him. He said that the business community has expressed full confidence in the leadership of Atif Ikram Sheikh and UBG in the election of the FPCCI and hoped that the new President FPCCI will play a proactive role in resolving the key issues of the business community and reviving the economy. UBG Patron-in-Chief S.M. Tanveer said that the success of UBG in the elections of FPCCI reflects the confidence of the business community in its performance. He said that this great success is not only a historic moment for him but also the first step in his journey for the



betterment of the business community. He said that under the patronage of UBG, Atif Ikram Shaikh will work hard for the welfare of the business community and will try his best to restore their dignity. The newly elected President of FPCCI, Atif Ikram Shaikh, thanked all his voters for giving him an overwhelming victory and reaffirmed to use all his ability to solve the major problems of the

business community of the entire country. He said that his doors are always open for the business community and he will serve everyone without discrimination. Zubair Tufail, President, UBG said that the business community of the country has started a new journey of success by posing full confidence in the UBG and hoped that the newly elected leadership of FPCCI will spare no effort for

the better protection of the interests of the business community. UBG Secretary General Zafar Bakhtawari said that the success of Atif Ikram Sheikh is the fulfillment of the wishes of the late S.M. Munir, the former Patron-in-Chief of UBG. Appreciating the role of the armed forces, he said that Chief of Army Staff General Asim Munir has undertaken the responsibility of reviving the

country's economy and the business community will fully support him in this mission. The outgoing President of FPCCI Irfan Iqbal Sheikh congratulated Atif Ikram Sheikh on his election as the President FPCCI and wished him well. He assured that he would extend all possible cooperation to Atif Ikram Sheikh in his efforts to resolve the key issues of the business community.

New govt may reverse the reform process popular decisions to push int'l financial institutions away

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Chairman of National Business Group Pakistan, President Pakistan Businessmen and Intellectuals Forum, and All Karachi Industrial Alliance, and former provincial minister Mian Zahid Hussain, said on Monday that international financial institutions fear what may happen after the election as the newly-elected administration might undo the reforms. The new government will be under pressure to reverse reforms and make popular decisions, which will push away multinational financial organizations, he said. Mian Zahid Hussain said that international organizations also want timely elections in Pakistan and are also afraid

of the post-election situation as the government formed as a result of the election can stop the process of reforms to increase its popularity. Speaking to the business community, the veteran business leader said that the concerns and reservations of the international organizations that are playing a major role in saving the country from bankruptcy must be addressed. He said that there was no option other than accepting the dictates of international organizations to save the country from default. Problems will increase for the country's economy if the reforms are reversed, and foreign investors will also stop planning to invest in Pakistan. The business leader noted that some international organizations believe that the

benefit-seeking elements have become active even before the elections, and they are making efforts for subsidies, tax exemptions, various types of packages, etc. These influential classes will resist an increase in the tax base and pile up unnecessary imports into the country, widening the current account deficit and making the economy lean again for personal gains. Mian Zahid Hussain further said that the property sector has also become active in eliminating new taxes; those buying electricity and gas are also active, while the sectors that evade more than \$4 trillion in taxes are also running their campaigns. Mian Zahid Hussain further said that at present the government is saving unnecessary expenses, due to which the value of the

dollar is decreasing and the value of the rupee is improving, but international organizations are afraid that the elected government will start spending unnecessarily to please the people. Some believe that the government will not be able to withstand the pressure of its supporters and financiers for a long time, which will worsen the economic situation. The main objective of every political party is to please its voters at any cost, and the possibility of the same happening in the future is very worrying. He said that it is also a fact that if the new government is irresponsible, the international organizations will withdraw, in the absence of which the help of friendly countries will also be limited to statements.

Power suspension schedules for 02nd January 2024

ISLAMABAD: According to Islamabad Electric Supply Company (IESCO)'s spokesman, System Maintenance/Development Work is in process. Therefore power supply of below mentioned feeders/areas will be temporary suspended as per given schedule: On Dated 02 January 2024, 09:00 AM to 02:00 PM, Islamabad Circle, Imran Khan, CDA Flats, Kohsar Market, ADBP, Wahidabad, Burma, Khanna Dak, Sharifabad, Tufail Shaheed, F-10, G-9 Express, GOR, I-10/2, G-11/2, Pir Meher Ali Shah, Bhara Kahu, Bhara Kahu 2, Company Bagh, Ghariyal, MCM, Kotli Sattian, Balawara, Burhan, Shafi Chauhan, Terat Feeders, Rawalpindi City Circle, E-Block, Ojri Camp, Shamsabad, Muzmal Town, Air Force, Tariq Shaheed, Gangan, Dhok Hakmdad, Arya Mohalla, Major Masood, Industrial,

Mohammadi Chowk, Abu Bakr, Azizabad, Chairing Cross, Ameer Hamza Colony, Shams Colony, MFM, I-14/3, Ratta Feeders, Rawalpindi Cantt Circle, Major Riaz, Kaliyal, Hayal, Garja One, Chongi No. 22, Padyal, SPD, Hyder Road, Tipu Road, Makkah Chowk, Jail Park One, Mohra Nagyal, Jhanda, Morgah, Rawat, Chowk Pandori, Lahtrar 1, Khawaja, Panjar, Mandira, Pind Jatlan, Jatha Hatial, Bisali, RWM, IFM, Bhangali, Syed Kasran, Bhal Feeders, Attock Circle, Nawaz Shah, Ghor, Haru, Balut, Bin Bhol, Shahul-lah Dutta, Sarai Kharboza, Shaiya, Munirabad, AWC Housing, Rashid Minhas, Burhan, Shafi Chauhan, Nad Topa, Hazro, Darya Sharif, Gondal, Tin Mela, Boliwal, Sarka, Shadi Khan, Pindi Gheb, Malhwali, Mianwala, Bahtar, Nara, Galial, Dharnal,

Khanda, Gul Muhammad, Hanjara Feeders, Chakwal Circle, Kariala, Line Park, Mureed, Manara, Islamia Chowk, Dera Muslim, Latifal, Malhal Mughlan, Pinwal, Basharat, Dhariala Jalap, Dhalwal, Ahmedabad, Kachhari, Sugharpur, Kot Chaudharyan, Dinda Shah Bilawal, Dhok Ghazan, Malkwal, Akwal, Bilalabad, Dharmad Feeders, Jhelum Circle, Ajmal Shaheed, F-13 Garmala, Mandi Bhalwal, Sarai Alamgir, Shamsabad, Chapran, Akram Shaheed, Borian, F-2 Chipboard, Industrial, F-10 Kala Base, Dinah 3-Rohtas, Chamala, Gadari, Padial, Safdar Shaheed, Sanghui, Nathwala, Khokhran, Hayat, Sir Road, Main Bazar, Baba Shaheed, Kantrala, Islampura Feeders and surrounding areas will remain closed.—APP

CDA introduces state-of-the-art fast-track services

ISLAMABAD: Building Control Directorate of Capital Development Authority (CDA) has introduced state-of-the-art fast-track service by modernizing the system of providing amenities to the citizens. In this context, CDA started to ensure the approval of the building plan in the facilitation centre on the fast track. Under this modern

and fastest system, residential buildings of 356 yards will now be approved with an additional fee of Rs 20,000 thousand with required documents within two days, while residential buildings larger than 356 yards will be approved with a fee of Rs 30,000 thousand. Additionally, commercial buildings up to 10000 square yards will also be approved within

three days. A separate desk has also been established for all these matters. It should be noted that the citizens coming to this place will not have to wait in the line of one window separately. Similarly, arrangements have been made to set a good environment for the citizens who will visit here. After receiving the token, the citizens who come to the

fast track service will be able to go to the relevant desk on their number and will get their case processed by the relevant desk. It should be noted that with the establishment of fast-track service, the citizens coming to the CDA Facilitation Center will neither have to wait for a long time nor they will have to stand in lines.—APP

'We aim to make education accessible and affordable' says VC AIUO

ISLAMABAD: Vice Chancellor, Allama Iqbal Open University (AIUO), Prof. Dr. Nasir Mahmood, congratulated the students on the beginning of the new year and said that our 2024 resolution is to make education accessible and affordable for everyone. He emphasized the importance of hard work and education as the key to success. Dr. Nasir highlighted education as the ladder of development and urged the younger generation to prioritize education and play an active role in the progress of the country and the nation. Our New Year resolution is to make education accessible and affordable for everyone. Dr. Nasir Mahmood stated that Allama Iqbal Open University is committed to keeping its doors open for those who seek education and is ready to provide them with all possible support to include them in the educational network. Admissions for the spring semester of 2024 will commence on January 15. The university will be awarding scholarships to talented and deserving children nationwide, who cannot afford the fees. In his message, the Vice Chancellor has directed the regional heads of the university to take special care of the students' facilities and provide them with full support.

Mobilink Bank closes 2023 with 41% increase in MSME Disbursements

ISLAMABAD: Mobilink Bank stood out for its commitment to empowering Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), constituting a significant 36% of its total loan portfolio and a noteworthy MSME Growth (YoY) of 41% in 2023. The Bank strongly advocates for social mobility, especially in empowering MSMEs and women across remote rural regions, offering tailored financial products and services. Mobilink Bank's inclusive loan offerings are pivotal in bringing about positive transformations within communities nationwide. In a dedicated effort to address the gender-specific impacts of natural disasters driven by climate change, the Bank has allocated PKR 1.7 billion to climate financing. Additionally, the Bank's strong commitment to environmentally sustainable practices is evident, with 10% of its branches successfully transitioning to solar power, underscoring its dedication to green initiatives. Also contributing to the Bank's growth is its flagship program, Women Inspirational Network (WIN), which propelled Mobilink Bank to the top of State Bank of Pakistan's (SBP) 'Banking on Equality' Index. The Bank allocated over PKR 12 billion in subsidized financing to 66,000 female borrowers, with plans to increase its female borrowers' portfolio by 50% in the next three years.—APP

Famous poet Syed Zamir Jafri remembered

ISLAMABAD: Famous poet Syed Zamir Jafri was remembered on his birth anniversary here on Monday. Born at Chak Abdul Khaliq, Jhelum, on January 1, 1918, Zamir Jafri became famous for his humorous Urdu poetry. He also wrote humorous columns in the newspapers and periodicals. He wrote dozens of books in Urdu, including 'Aag Ik Tara', 'Sar Goshian', 'Meray Pyar ki Zameen', 'Musadas Badhali', 'Nishan-e-Manzil', 'Bhanwar aur Badban', 'Ras Mela', 'Zameeriat', 'Zameer Zaviye', 'Mafi-ul-Zameer', 'Pehchan ka Lamha', and 'Zameer Hazir Zameer Ghaib'. He died on May 12, 1999, leaving behind an unmatched work for lovers of Urdu literature.—APP

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Briefs

ANF recovers over 2 tons drugs in 10 operations

RAWALPINDI: The Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF), while conducting 10 operations across the country, managed to recover over 2 tons of drugs and arrest three accused, including a woman, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman here on Monday. He said that 1.5 kg of ice was recovered from a Bahrain-bound passenger on Flight No. GF-0791 at Faisalabad Airport. 100 grams of hashish were recovered from a parcel booked for Dubai at a courier office near Jinnah Airport. 1460 kg of hashish and 215 kg of heroin were recovered from the Mazai Adda area of Qila Abdullah. 510 kg of hashish was recovered from Pishin, while 335.6 kg of hashish was recovered from the Toba Achakzai area of Chaman.

The spokesman informed us that 68.4 kg of hashish was recovered from the Morgah Border, Khyber area, in four separate operations. 180 kg of hashish was recovered from the Gali Alam Khan area of Pishin, and 17 kg of crystal heroin was recovered from a hilly area of Chagai. In an operation, 6 kg of heroin was recovered from a drug manufacturing factory in the 'Kabari' market of Khyber. 4.8 kg of hashish was recovered from a vehicle intercepted near Tarnol Pathak Islamabad, while the husband and wife were arrested along with four children.—APP

Pak earns \$372.930m by exporting transport services

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan earned US \$372.930 million by providing different transport services in various countries during the first four months of the current fiscal year (2023-24) as compared to the corresponding period of last year. This shows an increase of 26.01 percent as compared to \$295.959 million earned through the provision of services during the corresponding months of the fiscal year (2022-23), the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) reported. During the months under review, the exports of sea transport services witnessed an increase of 120.49 percent, going up from \$65.700 million last year to \$144.860 million during the months under review. Among the sea transport services, the exports of freight services dipped by 62.56 percent from \$53.370 million last year to \$19.980 million whereas the exports of other sea transport services however increased by 912.81 percent from \$12.330 million to \$124.880 million current year, the PBS data revealed. The exports of air transport witnessed a nominal decline of 1.95 percent going down from \$222.779 million last year to \$218.440 million during July-October 2023. Among the air transport services, the exports of passenger services increased by 3.57 percent, from \$144.650 million to \$149.810 million, whereas the exports of freight services dipped by 32.51 percent, from \$11.350 million to \$7.660 million, in addition, the export of other air transport services also dipped by 8.70 percent from \$66.779 million to \$60.790 million.—APP

Workshop on 'ethical research in clinical trials' next month

The workshop, scheduled to be held from February 07-09 in Cairo, Egypt, is aimed at imparting knowledge and training about research integrity and creating a network of professionals working in the field for continuous learning and exchanges

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Two-day International workshop on 'Ethical Research in Clinical Trials' will be held under the auspices of COMSTECH and UEARS in February to address the challenges of research integrity in clinical trials in low-middle-income countries and propose the best suitable guidelines to improve the quality of research in this domain. The workshop, scheduled to be held from February 07-09 in Cairo, Egypt, is aimed at imparting knowledge and training about research integrity and creating a network of professionals working in the field for continuous learning and exchanges. According to an official of COMSTECH, the meeting and its workshop will help devise solutions for the challenges faced in clinical trials

by low-middle income country. Students, scientists, researchers, experts, healthcare managers, government officials, think tanks, health NGO's, policy makers from the domain of multicenter clinical trials research from across the world and global south countries can register for the workshop for physical or virtual participation. Globally the pursuit and dissemination of knowledge enjoys a place of distinction, and the public expects to reap considerable benefit from the creative and innovative contributions of scientists. As science becomes increasingly tangled with major social, philosophical, economic, and political issues, scientists become more accountable to the larger society of which they are a part. Therefore, it is more important than ever that those individual scientists and their institutions periodically reassess the values, and

professional practices that guide their research as well as their efforts to perform their research work with integrity. Behind every medicine and intervention that people have ever taken, are thousands of patients who have volunteered to participate in clinical trials, which have led to many breakthroughs in disease prevention and treatment in the last few decades. Without the willingness of these individuals, many would have suffered. The value of clinical trials depends on the quality of information produced and the relevance of the data to address public health needs. Nevertheless, there are many less-developed countries that do not have well-prepared medical infrastructure and little or no experience in conducting trials. Moreover, there is considerable heterogeneity across countries and even within each country, when it comes to

health care systems. This may result in some differences in many aspects starting from the review process itself to all the other steps of conducting trials such as data monitoring and patient safety. To overcome these challenges, UEARS invited COMSTECH to engage the OIC researchers (as part of the audience) in training and development in the area of research integrity in clinical trials. About the expected outcomes of the workshop, the official informed that a draft of recommendations concerning research integrity in clinical trials will be documented through this event. The other goals include giving certification to participants concerning research integrity training in clinical trials and distribution of statement to relevant institutions. On the first day of the workshop, COMSTECH distinguished scholar, Prof. Dr. Khalid Khan will pres-

ent introduction to the workshop while there will be three sessions on the topics including Critical appraisal of clinical trials, Ethical issues in multicenter clinical trials and Design and statistical analysis of clinical trials. On the second day of the workshop, three sessions will be held on the topics including Regulation and oversight of clinical trials, Publication of clinical trials and Presentation of recommendations for feedback and finalization. COMSTECH Distinguished Scholar, University of Granada, Professor Dr. Khalid Saeed Khan; London College, UK and UEARS Distinguished Scholar, Professor Dr. Yacoub Khalaf and UEARS Cofounder, Dr. Mohamed Fawzy are likely to be the speakers of the workshop. The intended participants can get details of the workshop through the web link: <https://comstech.org/workshop-on-ethical-research/>.

Pakistan saw over 115% increase in tourism in 2023

ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Minister of State for Tourism Wasi Shah Monday said that in the year 2023 Pakistan saw a 115% increase in foreign tourism which has helped the country earn \$1.3 billion in foreign exchange revenue.

In an exclusive talk with a private news channel, minister mentioned that according to the 'World Tourism Barometer' published by the World Tourism Organisation of the United Nations, Pakistan made a remarkable 92 per cent recovery to pre-pandemic levels in 2023, as the country experienced a 115 per cent surge in tourist arrivals compared to the previous year.

Minister hoped that the year 2024 will bring more tourist travel landscape in changing the country as a powerhouse in the tourism sector.

He said that Pakistan is promoting tourism and would identify more unexplored tourism destinations of Sindh and Balochistan comprising adventure, religious, nature, weekend, rural and tribal tourism.—APP

'A few lakh taxpayers cannot run the nation'

ISLAMABAD: Former President of the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI), Dr. Shahid Rasheed Butt, said on Monday that a few lakh taxpayers cannot run a country with a population of 240 million. Paying taxes is not only the responsibility of the salaried and poor classes, while the rich and influential have been given a free ride, he said. Shahid Rasheed Butt said in a statement issued here today that those who earn millions and billions are kept out of the tax net for political favours which has ruined the country. The elements that distort the economy for personal interests should be dealt with strictly.—



ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar chairs a meeting on availability of Urea Fertilizer in the country on 1 January 2024.—DNA

Admissions start at Dar-ul-Madina Int'l University

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Dar-ul-Madina International University, has officially announced the commencement of admissions for Bachelor's programs in Arabic, Education, Islamic Studies, and Islamic Banking and Finance. The university, located on Sector G-11, Shabbir Sharif Road, Islamabad, chartered by the government of Pakistan and recognized by the Higher Education Commission, has gained prominence for its commitment to providing quality education in the realm of Islamic studies. Dar-ul-Madina International University offers a comprehensive BS Arabic program, aiming to equip students with a deep understanding of the Arabic language, literature, and culture. The BS Education program at the university is designed to prepare

future educators with the skills and knowledge necessary for a dynamic and evolving educational landscape. Renowned for its expertise in Islamic studies, the university offers a BS program that delves into various facets of Islamic theology, history, and jurisprudence. Reflecting the university's commitment to contemporary relevance, the BS Islamic Banking and Finance program integrates traditional Islamic financial principles with modern banking practices. Talking to media, Muhammad Adil Attari, Member, Board of Governors, said, "Prospective students can submit their applications through the university's online portal, providing them with a convenient and streamlined process." "The admission criteria include academic merit, entrance exams, and interviews to ensure the selection of qualified candidates," he maintained. Adil said Dar-ul-Madina,

"International University boasts state-of-the-art facilities, including well-equipped classrooms, libraries, and research centers." He said, "The campus provides a conducive environment for academic growth and fosters a sense of community among students." Adil said, "The university's vision revolves around nurturing individuals who are not only well-versed in their chosen fields but are also grounded in Islamic values. With a mission to contribute to the intellectual and moral development of its students, he said Dar-ul-Madina International University strives to create future leaders with a global perspective." As Dar-ul-Madina International University opens its doors for admissions, Adil said, "It continues to play a pivotal role in shaping the academic landscape, emphasizing the fusion of traditional Islamic knowledge with contemporary educational practices."

'HRDN's 24th annual conclave

Uniting forces for gender equality and beyond!

DNA

ISLAMABAD: "Breaking Barriers: HRDN's Pioneering Event Spotlights Unpaid Care Work and Political Inclusion Strategies." Relive the grandeur of HRDN's 24th Annual Conclave! We assembled to forge the path towards gender equality and beyond. With a vibrant community of 180+ organizations and 800+ individual members, HRDN's Annual Conclave is the ultimate gathering of minds, ideas, and progress.

This year's 24th Annual Conclave, themed "Continued Actions for Gender Justice and Equality," witnessed Senators Ms. Fauzia Arshad, Mr. Walid Iqbal, and Ms. Fajar Palsha, Advisor for Girls Education, sparking discussions on the care economy and empowering women in every facet of life. Distinguished

panelists, including CEOs Mr. Zafrullah Khan (Vi-

gies. The event, graced by HRDN's visionary

a heartfelt thank you to our esteemed members



sion 2027), Mr. Ali Kemal (SDG Unit), and Syed Reza Ali (PJN), applauded groundbreaking studies on unpaid care work and gender inclusion strate-

Chairperson, Dr. Roomi S. Hayat, was a fusion of insights, networking, and camaraderie. HRDN's CEO, Ms. Ro-beela Bangash, extends

for making this event a resounding success—a celebration of unity, progress, and the ongoing journey towards a future marked by gender equality.

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Prudence urged in dealings with Taliban

Afghan history over the past few decades has shown that externally imposed solutions aimed at securing peace and stability in the country only end in failure. That is why Beijing chose to abstain in a United Nations Security Council vote. Thirteen of the 15 members of the UNSC passed Resolution 2721, which calls for the appointment of a special envoy for Afghanistan to increase engagement with the country and its Taliban leadership. China and Russia abstained. Based on a UN-commissioned independent assessment report on the conditions in Afghanistan, the resolution is considered a step toward the country's reintegration with the international community. But the envoy, who is anticipated to facilitate communication, may become an obstacle to it instead. While Kabul welcomes "more robust and enhanced engagement" with the UN, special envoys "have complicated situations further via the imposition of external solutions", said a spokesman for the Afghan Foreign Ministry. The UN report linked recognition of the Taliban authorities to their compliance with international treaty obligations and commitments, particularly with regard to the rights of women and girls. What the UNSC resolution deems as appropriate and indispensable may end up becoming what in the Taliban's eyes is undue meddling in its domestic affairs. The Taliban authorities have called the idea of a special envoy to promote gender and human rights "unnecessary". The Taliban has made clear that it will not bow to external pressure. "The approach of the government of Afghanistan will ultimately be guided by the unaltered religious beliefs, cultural values and national interests of the people of Afghanistan," said the Taliban official. Thus appointing a special envoy may not be such a forward-looking recommendation for an integrated and coherent international approach to Afghanistan as anticipated. Geng Shuang, China's deputy permanent representative to the UN, expressed the Chinese government's wish after the vote that the UN secretary-general proceed with prudence. He urged the UNSC and secretary-general of the UN to communicate fully with and respect the opinions of the country in question, and make a decision after "broad consultations with all stakeholding parties". Appointing an envoy in disregard of the Taliban authorities' opposition "may result in the envoy being unable to perform his/her duties," Geng warned. Thus while a special envoy might sound like a good idea, it may not be the right prescription for Afghanistan. Instead, it may only worsen the contradiction and antagonism between the international community and the Taliban.



Manila provocation raises concerns in Washington

The Chinese Foreign Ministry has once again stressed that the country will take resolute measures in response to any provocation or violation of China's sovereignty, and that Beijing will firmly safeguard the country's sovereignty, territorial integrity and maritime rights and interests. That this was necessary is due to the irresponsible behavior of the Philippines, whose recent moves have been extremely provocative. By repeatedly sending vessels to the waters adjacent to China's Ren'ai Reef and even making moves endangering China Coast Guard vessels, the Philippines has walked back on its commitment to resolve its sovereignty dispute over the reef with China through talks. Showing that it has no intention of easing the rising tensions that it has triggered, Armed Forces of the Philippines spokesman Medel Aguilar said last week that the Philippine government was considering building a permanent structure on the reef. This would renege on the commitment Manila has made to Beijing and be in contravention of the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea signed by China and members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, in which all parties agreed to maintain the status of the reef without people or facilities. The Philippine government's latest inflammatory remarks are a further indication of the disruptive designs of the United States in the South China Sea. It is only after it once again fell under the sway of Washington that Manila has been engaging in such antics, while pretending to mend ties with Beijing. Considering the improvement in relations between the two countries that had been fostered through the joint efforts of Beijing and Manila, it is particularly disappointing that the incumbent Philippine government under President Ferdinand Marcos Jr should be willing to put itself in hock to Washington to try and grab what it can. Early last year, the Philippine government identified four new military bases, including some across the sea from China's Taiwan island, where rotating batches of US forces are to be allowed to be stationed. It is clear that the Philippine government believes that it can take advantage of the increased US military presence to leverage gains from China. It fails to recognize the reality that in doing so it is acting as a pawn of the US, with all the risks attendant on that role. The Philippine government should be aware that the presence of US troops in the Philippines only functions as a scarecrow, and China will not hesitate to act if push comes to shove. As Chinese Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Mao Ning said, it is against the principles of international law and legally untenable for the Philippines to cite the "award" of the South China Sea arbitration, "which is illegal, null and void", to claim that Ren'ai Reef falls within its exclusive economic zone and continental shelf and deny China's sovereignty over it. Manila should beware where Washington is leading it.

The collective responsibility for global well-being

Dr. Muhammad Akram Zaheer



In response to these pressing issues, the United Nations introduced the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2015—a comprehensive framework consisting of 17 goals aimed at addressing the world's most urgent problems. While the SDGs represent a collective commitment to fostering a more sustainable and equitable future, their effectiveness has come under scrutiny as the world grapples with the complex interplay of social, economic, and environmental factors

The 21st century has brought forth unprecedented challenges to the global community, ranging from climate change and environmental degradation to poverty and inequality. In response to these pressing issues, the United Nations introduced the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2015—a comprehensive framework consisting of 17 goals aimed at addressing the world's most urgent problems. While the SDGs represent a collective commitment to fostering a more sustainable and equitable future, their effectiveness has come under scrutiny as the world grapples with the complex interplay of social, economic, and environmental factors. Global environmental sustainability is a paramount concern that transcends borders and encompasses the collective responsibility of nations, communities, and individuals alike. As the world grapples with escalating environmental challenges, such as climate change, deforestation, pollution, and biodiversity loss, the imperative for sustainable practices becomes increasingly urgent. Achieving global environmental sustainability requires a concerted effort to reduce carbon emissions, promote renewable energy sources, conserve ecosystems, and implement environmentally conscious policies. The interconnectedness of ecosystems and climate systems underscores the need for international collaboration and a shared commitment to sustainable development. Initiatives like the Paris Agreement serve as important frameworks for nations to collectively address the pressing issues threatening the health of our planet. From sustainable agriculture to circular economies, a holistic approach that integrates economic, social, and environmental dimensions is essential for building a resilient and sustainable future for generations to come. Only through a unified global effort can we hope to mitigate the impacts of human activities on the environment and safeguard the well-being of our planet. Economic inequality and poverty represent formidable challenges that continue to shape the social and economic landscapes of nations worldwide. At its core, economic inequality refers to the vast disparities in income and wealth distribution among individuals or groups within a society. This phenomenon often exacerbates the issue of poverty, as those at the lower end of the economic spectrum face limited access to resources, education, and opportunities. The consequences of such disparities extend beyond mere financial constraints, impacting health, education, and overall well-being. Tackling economic inequality and poverty requires a multi-faceted approach, involving policy interventions, educational initiatives, and efforts to create more inclusive economic systems. By

addressing these issues at their roots, societies can strive towards fostering a more equitable and just future for all.

Global social development and well-being represent the collective progress of societies in fostering positive living conditions, equitable opportunities, and overall quality of life for their citizens. This multifaceted concept encompasses various dimensions, including economic prosperity, access to education, healthcare, social justice, and cultural enrichment. Efforts to enhance global social development involve addressing disparities and promoting inclusivity to ensure that individuals of diverse backgrounds have equal opportunities to thrive. Sustainable development goals, set by international organizations, play a crucial role in guiding nations towards creating societies where people can lead fulfilling lives. The pursuit of global social development and well-being recognizes the interconnectedness of nations and the importance of collaboration to tackle shared challenges such as poverty, inequality, and environmental sustainability. As the world becomes increasingly interconnected, fostering social development on a global scale is not only a moral imperative but also a key factor in building a more resilient and harmonious world for present and future generations. Global social development and well-being represent the collective progress of societies in fostering positive living conditions, equitable opportunities, and overall quality of life for their citizens. This multifaceted concept encompasses various dimensions, including economic prosperity, access to education, healthcare, social justice, and cultural enrichment. Efforts to enhance global social development involve addressing disparities and promoting inclusivity to ensure that individuals of diverse backgrounds have equal opportunities to thrive. Sustainable development goals, set by international organizations, play a crucial role in guiding nations towards creating societies where people can lead fulfilling lives. The pursuit of global social development and well-being recognizes the interconnectedness of nations and the importance of collaboration to tackle shared challenges such as poverty, inequality, and environmental sustainability. As the world becomes increasingly interconnected, fostering social development on a global scale is not only a moral imperative but also a key factor in building a more resilient and harmonious world for present and future generations. The implementation of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is a formidable task that faces a myriad of challenges. One of the primary obstacles lies in the diversity of global contexts, as each country grapples with unique socio-economic,

political, and environmental conditions. Achieving the SDGs requires a collective effort, and fostering international cooperation can be hindered by geopolitical tensions and conflicting national interests. Additionally, financial constraints pose a significant challenge, especially for developing nations struggling with limited resources. The integration of the SDGs into existing policy frameworks also demands substantial institutional capacity building and effective governance, which can be impeded by corruption and bureaucratic inefficiencies. Moreover, addressing the interconnected nature of the goals necessitates a holistic and interdisciplinary approach, further complicating the implementation process. Overcoming these challenges requires sustained commitment, innovative solutions, and a shared sense of responsibility among governments, civil society, and the private sector to ensure a more sustainable and equitable future. The implementation of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is significantly influenced by the role of technology, serving as a catalyst for positive change across various sectors. Technology plays a pivotal role in addressing the complex challenges outlined in the SDGs by providing innovative solutions that enhance efficiency, accessibility, and sustainability. In sectors like healthcare, education, and agriculture, technological advancements facilitate the delivery of essential services, bridge gaps in information access, and promote inclusive development. For instance, mobile applications, data analytics, and artificial intelligence contribute to monitoring progress, identifying areas of improvement, and fostering informed decision-making. Additionally, renewable energy technologies contribute to achieving environmental sustainability goals, while digital connectivity empowers marginalized communities and promotes economic opportunities. The integration of technology in the implementation of SDGs not only accelerates progress but also fosters a more interconnected and data-driven approach, creating a foundation for a more sustainable and inclusive future. The scrutiny of the global sustainability goals underscores the need for a collective and intensified effort to address the interconnected challenges facing our planet. Achieving the SDGs requires a holistic approach that recognizes the interdependence of environmental, social, and economic factors. International collaboration, innovative solutions, and a commitment to inclusivity are essential for navigating the complex terrain of sustainability. As the world continues to grapple with evolving challenges, it is imperative to reevaluate strategies, enhance accountability, and renew the commitment to building a more sustainable and equitable future for all.

Understanding of political polarization

Mubeen Tariq



Political polarization is highly relevant in the present political landscape. It shapes the way we engage in politics, influences our decision-making, and affects the functioning of democratic institutions. Ideological differences play a significant role in political polarization. When individuals or groups hold deeply entrenched and opposing beliefs, it can lead to a widening divide

Political polarization refers to the division and separation of people into opposing political beliefs and ideologies. It occurs when individuals and groups become more extreme in their political views, often leading to increased hostility and a lack of constructive dialogue between different factions. Political polarization is highly relevant in the present political landscape. It shapes the way we engage in politics, influences our decision-making, and affects the functioning of democratic institutions. Ideological differences play a significant role in political polarization. When individuals or groups hold deeply entrenched and opposing beliefs, it can lead to a widening divide and an inability to find common ground. Media influence and the presence of echo chambers on social media are key contributors to political polarization. The media plays a significant role in shaping public opinion and can sometimes have biases that align with specific ideological perspectives. This can result in the reinforcement of existing beliefs and the creation of echo chambers, where individuals are exposed primarily to information that confirms their preexisting views. Socio-economic factors can contribute to political polarization. Disparities in income, wealth, and access to resources can shape individuals' political beliefs and priorities. Economic inequality can lead to different ideological perspectives on issues such as taxation, social welfare programs, and economic policies. Those who experience economic hardships may prioritize policies that address income inequality and provide social safety nets, while others may prioritize free-market principles and limited government intervention. Partisan gerrymandering is indeed a significant factor contributing to political polarization. When electoral districts are redrawn in a way that favors one political party over another, it can lead to a lack of competitive elections and a lack of representation for certain groups. This can result in a system where politicians are more focused on appealing to their base and catering to extreme ideologies, rather than finding common ground and working towards solutions that benefit the entire population. Partisan gerrymandering can reinforce the divide between political parties and make it harder to bridge the gap between different ideological perspectives. Deadlock in policymaking is a direct

consequence of political polarization. When there is a deep divide between political parties and ideologies, it becomes challenging to find common ground and reach consensus on important policy issues. This gridlock can result in a stalemate, where progress is hindered, and important decisions are delayed or even abandoned. Political polarization often leads to a lack of cooperation and compromise, as each side becomes more focused on advancing their own agenda rather than finding solutions that benefit the greater good. Decreased political cooperation is a direct consequence of political polarization. When there is a deep divide between political parties and ideologies, it becomes challenging for politicians to work together and find common ground. Instead of collaborating and seeking bipartisan solutions, there is often a tendency to prioritize party loyalty and advance partisan agendas. This lack of cooperation hinders progress and makes it difficult to address pressing issues effectively. Increased social division is indeed a consequence of political polarization. When political ideologies become more extreme and polarized, it can create a sense of "us versus them" mentality within society. People may become more divided along political lines, leading to increased tensions, hostility, and a lack of understanding between different groups. The erosion of public trust in institutions is indeed a consequence of political polarization. When political parties and leaders are deeply divided and engage in partisan battles, it can undermine the credibility and trustworthiness of institutions such as government, media, and even the justice system. People may become skeptical of the motives and actions of these institutions, leading to a loss of faith in their ability to serve the public interest. This erosion of trust can have far-reaching consequences for the functioning of a democratic society. When people are surrounded by information and opinions that align with their existing beliefs, it can create a distorted view of reality and limit exposure to diverse perspectives. This can further reinforce existing biases, deepen divisions, and hinder constructive dialogue between different political groups. The rise of misinformation and fake news has a significant

impact on political polarization. When false information circulates and is believed by individuals, it can reinforce their existing biases and deepen divisions between different political groups. Misinformation can fuel distrust, create echo chambers, and hinder constructive dialogue. The use of polarized rhetoric and partisan language has a significant impact on political polarization in public discourse. When politicians and public figures engage in divisive language and extreme rhetoric, it can further deepen the divide between different political groups. Promoting dialogues and understanding is key to bridging the divide of political polarization. When we engage in open and respectful conversations with individuals who hold different political views, we create opportunities for empathy, learning, and finding common ground. By actively listening, seeking to understand, and expressing our own perspectives in a constructive manner, we can foster a more inclusive and productive discourse. Encouraging media literacy is a crucial step in bridging the divide of political polarization. When we develop the skills to critically evaluate the information we encounter, fact-check sources, and identify bias, we become more informed and discerning consumers of news. This helps us navigate through the abundance of information and separate fact from fiction. By promoting media literacy, we can empower individuals to make informed decisions, engage in constructive conversations, and bridge the gaps that exist in political discourse. Fostering empathy and respect is key to bridging the divide of political polarization. When we approach conversations with an open mind and a genuine desire to understand others' perspectives, we create an environment where meaningful dialogue can take place. By actively listening, acknowledging different viewpoints, and treating others with respect, we can build bridges of understanding and find common ground. Supporting bipartisan initiatives is a great way to bridge the divide of political polarization. When politicians from different parties come together to work on common goals, it shows that collaboration and compromise are possible. By supporting these initiatives, we encourage cooperation and find solutions that benefit everyone, regardless of political affiliation. In the last I thank full to Sir Dr. Muhammad AkramZaheer for his invaluable assistance in helping me to write an article.

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Briefs

SC to hear lifetime ban case today

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"sadiq and ameen" (honest and righteous), is the same provision under which former prime minister Nawaz Sharif was disqualified in the Panama Papers case. Imran Khan was also disqualified under the same article in the Toshakhana case last year. The legal dilemma arose in view of a 2018 Supreme Court judgement when it shut the doors of parliament permanently for politicians disqualified under Article 62(1)(f) of the Constitution through a unanimous verdict, ruling that such ineligibility was for life.

PTI chief Barrister Gohar...

FROM PAGE 01
worst oppression and suppression in order to oust the party from the electoral battle had neither any place in the constitution nor in democracy. Barrister Gohar Khan reiterated that PTI fully believed in democracy and was in favor of providing equal and fair opportunities to all political parties to participate freely in the elections. He made it clear that despite the launch of the election process, PTI's workers and supporters were not safe from oppression and fascism, adding that all basic constitutional and legal rights as a party were being usurped and taken away.

Nomination papers of...

FROM PAGE 01
for NA seats. A total of 7,473 candidates filed nomination papers, including 445 women for the said assembly. The ROs appointed by the electoral body approved 16,262 nomination papers for the four provincial assemblies, out of the documents submitted by 18,478 candidates, including 17,670 male and 808 female. Nomination papers of 2,216 candidates, including 2,081 men and 135 women, failed to get approval of ROs for provincial assemblies. Overall, 22,711 nomination papers for NA and provincial assemblies general seats have been approved, ECP said adding that 21,684 of them are men and 1,027 women. A total of 25,951 papers were submitted.

PM Kakar accuses...

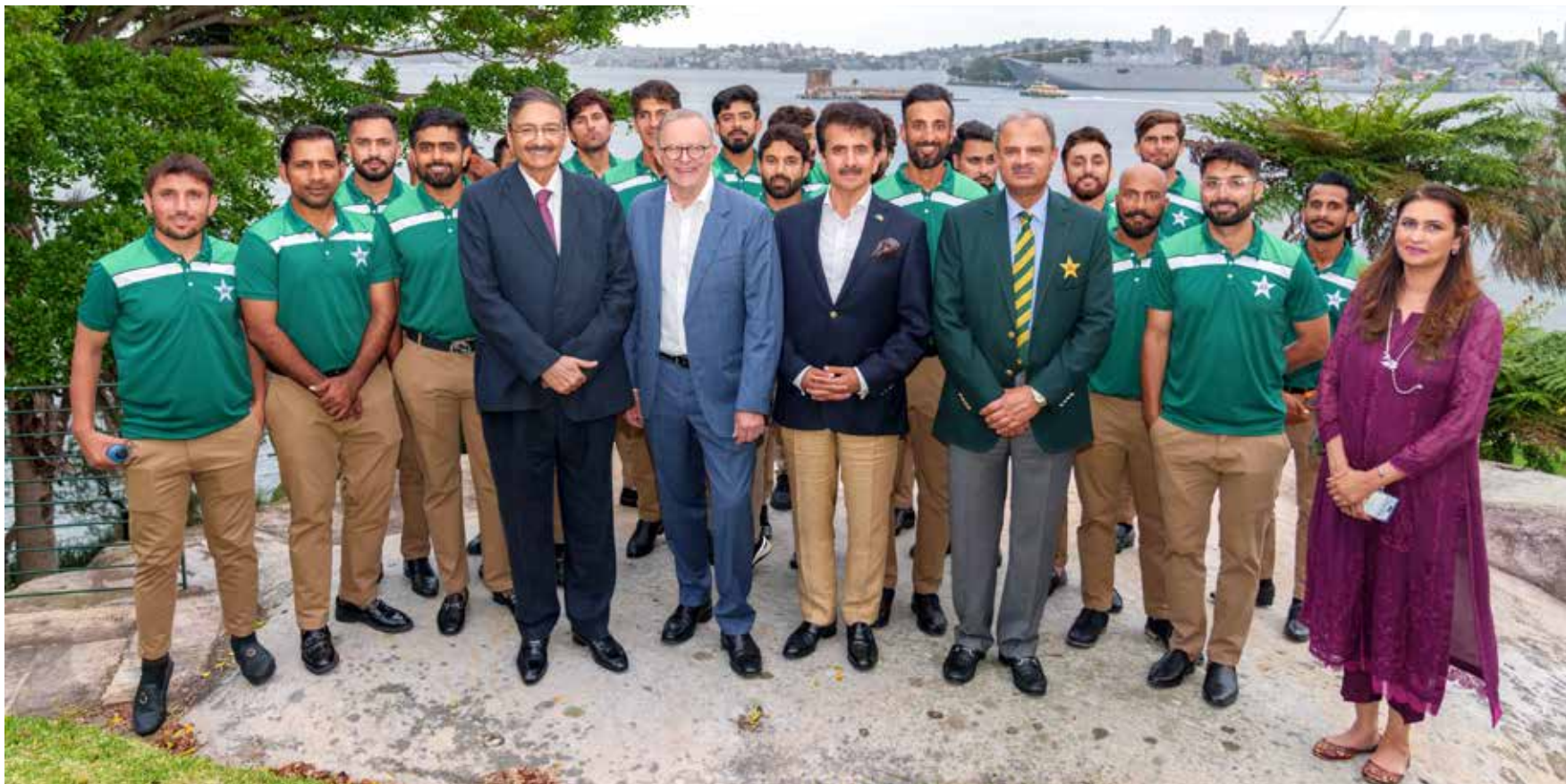
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added the caretaker premier. Rejecting the notion of granting a "license to kill" to critics, Kakar asserted that the government would not spare those supporting terrorists under the guise of protest. "The fight against terrorism is not for me but for the state. Talking boldly does not solve problems; action does," he stated, emphasizing the seriousness of the terrorism issue. Responding to concerns about the upcoming elections on February 8, Kakar reassured the public of their readiness, affirming his commitment to casting his vote. Meanwhile, Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar on Monday said that the development model, featuring a close liaison between the government and private sector, could yield positive results for national economic growth. The prime minister, interacting with the business community at the Business Facilitation Center (BFC), said the enhanced interaction between the business community and the government, would help increase employment opportunities, taxation as well as GDP growth.

SC fixes PTI's...

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Several letters were written to the provincial election commissioner but despite that, no action was taken, it added further. Strict action should be taken against those who are violating the court order, the petition mentions.

Australian PM to host Pak cricket team at PM house

Pakistan captain Shan Masood expressed his gratitude to the Australian prime minister for hosting the team. Shan highlighted how both teams are playing positive cricket in this series and mentioned that this serves as an opportunity to be an ambassador for your country through your conduct



SPORTS DESK

SYDNEY: Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese has extended a warm invitation to the Pakistan cricket team, led by captain Shan Masood, to visit the PM House on December 5. The Men in Green, who arrived in Sydney on December 1st, swiftly proceeded to Canberra. Their training sessions are set to commence at 10 am local time on Sunday, December 3rd. Pakistan is scheduled to play a four-day fixture against Prime Minister's XI on Wednesday, 6 December

at Manuka Oval in Canberra. In addition to the PM's invitation, Cricket Australia has also extended an invitation to Zaka Ashraf, chairman of the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) Management Committee. He is invited to attend the second Test at the Melbourne Cricket Ground on December 26, where discussions on crucial matters with Cricket Australia members are anticipated during his stay in Australia. Pakistan captain Shan Masood expressed his gratitude to the Australian prime minister for hosting the team. Shan highlighted how both teams are playing positive cricket in this series and mentioned that this

serves as an opportunity to be an ambassador for your country through your conduct. He also hoped that the team would do well in Sydney to end the series on a high note. The third Test match between Pakistan and Australia will be played at Sydney Cricket Ground starting Wednesday, 3 January. **PM's XI:** Nathan McSweeney (capt), Cameron Bancroft, Cameron Green, Marcus Harris, Nathan McAndrew, Todd Murphy, Michael Nester, Jimmy Peirson, Matthew Renshaw, Mark Steketee, Beau Webster. **Pakistan squad for Australia Tests:** Shan Masood (captain), Aamir Jamal, Abdullah Shafique, Abrar Ahmed, Babar Azam, Faheem

Ashraf, Hasan Ali, Imam-ul-Haq, Khurram Shahzad, Mir Hamza, Mohammad Rizwan (wk), Mohammad Wasim Jnr, Noman Ali, Saim Ayub, Salman Ali Agha, Sarfaraz Ahmed (wk), Saud Shakeel and Shaheen Shah Afridi. **Australia tour schedule:**
Four-day match: PM's XI vs Pakistan - December 6-9: Manuka Oval, Canberra
1st Test - Australia vs Pakistan - December 14-18: Perth Stadium
2nd Test - Australia vs Pakistan - December 26-30: Melbourne Cricket Ground (MCG)
3rd Test - Australia vs Pakistan - January 3-7: Sydney Cricket Ground (SCG).

David Warner announces retirement from ODI

SYDNEY: Australian opening batter David Warner announced his retirement from ODI cricket on Monday ahead of his farewell Test against Pakistan at Sydney Cricket Ground (SCG). Warner previously announced that the Sydney Test, which would commence on January 3, 2024, would be his final appearance in Test cricket. He has also confirmed his retirement from ODI cricket, however, he has not ruled out the possibility of turning out to play in Champions Trophy 2025, only if the team needs him. David Warner announced his decision during a press conference at the Sydney Cricket Ground. "I've got to give back to the family and also on the back of that I'm definitely retiring from one-day cricket as well," Warner announced. "That was



something that I had said through the World Cup, get through that, and winning it in India, I think that's a massive achievement." Warner also stated the fact that leaving ODI cricket will allow him to feature in more T20 franchise leagues around the globe. "So I'll make that deci-

sion today, to retire from those forms, which does allow me to go and play some other (T20) leagues around the world and sort of get the one-day team moving forward a little bit," he added. But the veteran opening batter has left the door open for his return in

Champions Trophy 2025, which is scheduled to be played in Pakistan. "I know there's a Champions Trophy coming up. If I'm playing decent cricket in two years time and I'm around and they need someone, I'm going to be available," he concluded. Warner will continue to represent Australia in the T20I format with a T20 World Cup scheduled later this year in the United States of America (USA) and West Indies. The 37-year-old will his feature in his 112th and final Test against Pakistan, starting from January 3rd, having amassed 8,695 runs at an average of 44.58, with 26 centuries and 36 half-centuries. Meanwhile, he has featured in 161 ODIs, scoring 6932 runs at an average of 45.30 with 22 centuries and 33 half-centuries.

Mbappe's future to dominate transfer window

PARIS: The future of Kylian Mbappe and his protracted courtship by Real Madrid is expected to be the key theme of the transfer window that opens in Europe on Monday. Arsenal's search for a proven goalscorer to spearhead their challenge for a first Premier League title since 2004 could also loom large. Manchester City meanwhile are widely expected to let Kalvin Phillips leave the club, ending a disappointing stay for the former Leeds midfielder who has failed to make his mark at the world champions. Much attention though will again focus on Mbappe, Paris Saint-Germain's lethal finisher and the man who a year ago scored a hat-trick for France in the World Cup final only to finish on the losing side. Real Madrid are again the main suitors for the 25-year-old whose contract at PSG expires in June - will the 14-time European champions finally get a commitment from the player they have been pursuing for years? It is far from certain though as Mbappe triggers an extraordinary reaction in France, illustrated when President Emmanuel Macron intervened to persuade him to stay at PSG in June 2022 when a move to Real seemed almost cut and dried. Real are not sitting on their hands though. Endrick, the latest Brazilian starlet, will join the club from Palmeiras when he turns 18 in July 2024 for a fee reported to be 72 million euros. Toney to the Gunners? Arsenal's lack of a goalscoring edge could lead them to plunge into the market. For weeks, their rumoured target has been Ivan Toney, the Brentford forward whose ban for over 200 breaches of the Football Association's gambling rules ends in mid-January. - Agencies

Kenyan police arrest 2 suspects in athlete murder case

NAIROBI: Two people have been arrested after Ugandan athlete Benjamin Kiplagat was stabbed to death at the weekend, Kenyan police said on Monday. The two men - believed to be in their 30s - were arrested on the outskirts of the Rift Valley town of Eldoret, according to local police commander Stephen Okal said. "The two suspects are known criminals who have been terrorising the members of public," Okal told AFP. "We are in the advanced stage of the investigations and we will possibly be sending them to court tomorrow." The Kenyan-born Kiplagat was a renowned name in the 3,000m steeplechase and featured at several Olympic Games and World Championships. The 34-year-old's body was found in a car on Saturday night with a deep knife wound to his neck. While the motive of the killing was still unknown, police said investigations had shown that Kiplagat had been "waylaid" by the two men before he hit their motorcycle with his car. - APP

LONDON: UFC Hall of Famer Daniel Cormier reckons Conor McGregor is deliberately portraying the antagonist in the current scenario involving Michael Chandler. On New Year's Eve, McGregor shared a video on social media announcing his UFC comeback scheduled for June during International Fight Week against Chandler. Moreover, the Irishman mentioned that the fight would occur in the middleweight category, a weight division neither fighter has previously competed in. Cormier, an enduring enthusiast of professional wrestling, perceives this as a traditional protagonist versus antagonist setup,

UFC legend calls Conor McGregor 'manipulator'

suggesting that McGregor is entirely embracing the role of the villain. "Why is he saying 185? Well, you got to watch the video, and you hear the laugh at the end," Cormier explained in a video on his YouTube channel. "It's like Dr. Evil from the Austin Powers shows. You remember Dr. Evil would make these little jokes and he would laugh and put his finger in his face? Because he knew he was being bad.

That's what McGregor is doing. "McGregor is being bad. McGregor is playing the game. McGregor is being the villain right now. Because the villain manipulates. The villain pulls the strings, the villain is the puppet master. The villain makes you move to his music, the villain makes you move to his rhythm." Ever since Chandler joined the UFC in 2021, he swiftly rose to become one of the most favoured fighters in the promotion owing to his fighting technique, all the while radiating cheerful positivity. McGregor has also demonstrated a similar approach on occasions, yet he has also displayed a readiness to accept and engage with the contrasting aspects of his persona. "McGregor is being the villain, and you know why? Because Michael Chandler is a good guy," Cormier said. "Michael Chandler refuses to play the bad guy. Even if at times playing the bad guy would play to his benefit. He should have played the bad guy a little bit in this situation with McGregor and said, 'F*ck you.'" - Agencies

Swiatek sends Poland into United Cup quarter-finals

Swiatek and Hurkacz comfortably defeated Sorribes Tormo and Alejandro Davidovich Fokina 6-0, 6-0 in the mixed doubles decider

PARIS: An irrepressible Iga Swiatek unleashed on Spain Monday as Poland booked a 2-1 win to move into the quarter-finals of the United Cup. The world number one showed no mercy to Sara Sorribes Tormo in a 6-2, 6-1 singles victory before teaming with Hubert Hurkacz to clinch the tie with a 6-0, 6-0 mixed doubles thrashing in just 53 minutes. Hurkacz was ambushed in the day's opening singles, losing 3-6, 6-3, 6-4 to Alejandro Davidovich Fokina. The top-seeded Poles finished Group A play with a perfect 2-0 record and await a last-eight opponent. Iga Swiatek, who has lost only seven games in two singles matches to start her countdown to the Australian

Open, said playing mixed doubles was a good experience. "It's lessons for the future and great practice," the 22-year-old said. "I hardly ever play mixed. You use different skills, it's about feeling the geometry of the court." Swiatek credited his teammate with doing most of the hard yards. "She carried me throughout the whole match, in every game she was making amazing shots," the world number nine said. In Sydney, a sharp Casper Ruud won his second straight singles match before backing up in the mixed doubles to steer Norway past Croatia. World number

24 Donna Vekic ground past unheralded Malene Helgo 7-5, 3-6, 6-3 to give the Croats a winning start to the Group F tie of the United Cup. But three-time Grand Slam finalist Ruud swept past Borna Coric 6-4, 6-1 in just 89 minutes to level proceedings, then partnered with Ulrikke Eikeri to beat Vekic and Ivan Dodig 6-2, 3-6, 10-7. It was a much-needed win for Norway, who lost to the Netherlands at the weekend. "I'm motivated for the new year, I'm fresh and I'm

ready," said world number 11 Ruud. "Another great singles match. I'm very happy to start the new year that way." Follow us on our Official WhatsApp channel The win followed a similarly dominant 6-3, 6-4 victory over Dutchman Tallon Griekspoor on Saturday. Ruud has dropped serve just once through the two matches, and was not broken on Monday. He also won 12 of 13 net approaches and said he had been working hard to improve his volleys. "I'll never be the guy who is all over the net, but I'm trying to come into the court a little more," he said. Vekic needed two hours and 49 minutes to battle past Helgo, who played far better than her ranking of 539 suggested. "She's a really good player and her ranking doesn't do her justice," said Vekic, a quarter-finalist at the Australian Open last year. "Finally my serve showed up in the third set, which made it easier." The Alexander Zverev-led Germany meet France in Group D later Monday in Sydney, while the defending champions United States face Australia in Perth. - Agencies

Delay in polls could prove ominous...

FROM PAGE 01
Sindh government served the masses during the last flood, he said. He said the law and order situation had never been ideal and terrorism had raised its head again. He condemned attack on Maulana Fazlur Rehman's convoy and recalled Benazir Bhutto was slain by terrorists. It's unfortunate, he said, that the PPP had been facing terror threat. The terrorists could not silence the people, he added. He said Sindh was for Sindhis, and those who defied the ethnic spirit had no place in the province. He said Bilawal was contesting the election from Lahore, Larkana and Qambar.

Pak-India exchange...

FROM PAGE 01
entered into force on January 27, 1991, the statement mentioned, noting that the two countries have been exchanging the lists since January 1, 1992. Pursuant to Article II of the agreement, the list of nuclear installations and facilities in Pakistan was officially handed over to a representative of the Indian High Commission in Islamabad at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, today. "Simultaneously, the Indian Ministry of External Affairs also handed over the list of India's nuclear installations and facilities to a representative of the Pakistan High Commission in New Delhi," the statement read.

Pakistan condemns...

FROM PAGE 01
protracted house arrest. His dead body was ruthlessly snatched by the occupation authorities, and his near and dear ones were not allowed to attend his funeral. Banning of political parties is part of India's relentless campaign to subjugate the Kashmiri people, suppress dissent, and consolidate its occupation of Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IOJK). These actions blatantly violate democratic norms and international human rights and humanitarian law. India must remove the ban on all the political parties illegally outlawed in IOJK; respect the fundamental rights and freedoms of the Kashmiri people; release all the political prisoners and dissenters; and faithfully implement the UN Security Council resolutions on Jammu and Kashmir.

Earthquake of 7.6...

FROM PAGE 01
Ishikawa Prefecture, according to the weather agency. Waves more than 1 metre high hit the coast of Wajima City in Ishikawa Prefecture, NHK added. Hokuriku Electric Power said it is checking for any irregularities at its nuclear power plants, while a spokesperson for Kansai Electric Power said there were currently no abnormalities at its nuclear power plants but the company was monitoring the situation closely. Meanwhile, after reports of the massive quakes, Ambassador of Pakistan Raza Bashir Tarar released a statement saying that the "situation in the earthquake-affected areas is being monitored."

Palestine rejects...

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"We will demand that the British government not allow this meddling with the fate and future of the Palestinian people, and we will also demand that the Secretary-General of the United Nations do what is possible in order not to allow such actions that violate international law and international legitimacy, which is considered an interference and an endeavor that only serves Israel's interests and harms the Palestinian people and their rights by pushing them to abandon their land," it said in a statement. "It seems that Tony Blair is completing the Balfour Declaration issued by the British government with American involvement, which led to the catastrophe of the Palestinian people and started dozens of wars in the region," said the presidency, adding, "We also consider Tony Blair to be an unwelcome person in the Palestinian territories."

Briefs

Disney's enter public domain as US copyright expires

WASHINGTON : It was the animation that launched the House of Mouse. Steamboat Willie, a 1928 short film featuring early non-speaking versions of Mickey and Minnie, is widely seen as the moment that transformed Disney's fortunes and made cinema history. Their images are now available to the public in the US, after Disney's copyright expired. It means creatives like cartoonists can now rework and use the earliest versions of Mickey and Minnie. In fact, anyone can use those versions without permission or cost. But Disney warned that more modern versions of Mickey are still covered by copyright. "We will, of course, continue to protect our rights in the more modern versions of Mickey Mouse and other works that remain subject to copyright," the company said. US copyright law says the rights to characters can be held for 95 years, which means the characters in Steamboat Willie entered the public domain on Monday, 1 January 2024. Those works can now legally be shared, performed, reused, repurposed or sampled. The early versions of Mickey and Minnie are just two of the works entering the public domain in the US on New Year's Day. Other famous films, books, music and characters from 1928 are now also available to the American public. —DNA

6 killed in disputed region bordering Sudan

JUBA: Six people including a senior local administrator were killed in an ambush by armed men in the Abyei region claimed by both Sudan and South Sudan, local officials said. The oil-rich region experiences frequent bouts of violence, where rival factions of the Dinka ethnic group - Twic Dinka from South Sudan's neighbouring Warrap State, and Ngok Dinka from Abyei - are locked in a dispute over the location of an administrative boundary. Abyei Deputy Chief Administrator Noon Deng and his team came under attack along the road from Abyei to Aneet town when they were returning from an official visit to Rummamer county, where they were celebrating the New Year, government officials said. Bulis Koch, the information minister for the Abyei Administrative Area, blamed the Sunday evening attack on armed youth from Twic County of Warrap State, and said the bodies had not been retrieved as of Monday morning. His counterpart in the Warrap State William Wol said it was still early "to point fingers". —APP

Turkish intelligence agency nabs Daesh ringleader

ANKARA : The Turkish Intelligence Agency (MIT) has nabbed the Daesh ringleader in Syria's Aleppo city, Abdullah al Jundi, who planned attacks against the Turkish forces in the Operation Euphrates Shield, and Olive Branch zones. Al Jundi, codenamed Hattab el Muhacir, was responsible for planning actions against vehicles belonging to the Turkish security forces in Syria, according to information obtained from the security forces. The terrorist was nabbed on Monday during an operation conducted by MIT and the local security forces affiliated with the Syrian National Army in the Operation Euphrates Shield zone. The terrorist also provided information about the members of the organisation carrying out terror activities. Some digital material belonging to the organisation was also seized during the operation, disclosing Daesh's action plans, and disrupting the organisation's activities. In 2013, Türkiye became one of the first countries to declare Daesh a terrorist organisation. The country has since been attacked by the terror group multiple times. —Agencies

Zelenskiy vows 'wrath' against Russian forces

New Year's address made almost no direct reference to the situation on the 1,000-km front line or the limited success of a counteroffensive

NEWS DESK

KYIV: Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskiy has vowed in his New Year's address to unleash "wrath" against Russian forces in 2024, saying Ukraine had become stronger as the war moves toward its second year. But Zelenskiy's slick 20-minute video message, delivered from his Kyiv office, made almost no direct reference to the situation on the 1,000-km (600-mile) frontline or the limited success of a counter-offensive launched in June. Nor did he refer to the political and diplomatic difficulties in securing continued military and other aid from both the US Congress and the European Union. Zelenskiy said the war had taught Ukrainians to withstand Russian attacks and adapt to hardships, including blackouts, the operation of industry and threats to shipping its exports. "The major result of the year, its main achievement: Ukraine has become stronger. Ukrainians have become stronger," Zelenskiy said in the address,

interspersed with footage of cities under attack and meetings with leaders of Ukraine's western allies. "When, at the beginning of 2023 ... we surmounted, without exaggeration, the most difficult winter in history. When we proved that Ukrainians are tougher than cold and darkness. Stronger than power outages and blackout threats. "Ukrainians are stronger than any blockades and vetoes, disbelief or skepticism," he said. His message came amid further attacks. Ukraine's air force said that Russia launched a new overnight air attack, targeting Mykolaiv, Odesa and Dnipro regions. Local authorities reported that five people had been killed in Odesa. On Friday Moscow launched a barrage of missiles and drones at Ukrainian cities, killing 39 people in one of the biggest aerial attacks since the war began. Ukrainian shelling on the city of Donetsk early on New Year's Day killed three people, a Russian-installed official in the eastern region of Ukraine said. Seven people were injured in "heavy shelling"



by Ukrainian forces of the centre of Donetsk, Denis Pushilin, the Russian-appointed head of the broader Donetsk region of which the Donetsk city is the administrative centre, wrote on the Telegram messaging app. Zelenskiy pointed to Ukrainian successes in containing and attacking Russia's navy in the Black Sea, confirmed "by their large landing ships, missile-armed and patrol corvettes on the bottom of the sea." He said Ukraine would "definitely see" F-16s in the skies this year, while repeating a promise to boost domestic weapons production and produce at least one

million drones in the next year. "Next year, the enemy will feel the wrath of domestic production," he said. With the war now entering its third calendar year, Zelenskiy has urged his western allies to keep up support amid increasing signs of fatigue with the conflict. "Ukrainians are stronger than any intrigues, any attempts to diminish global solidarity, to undermine the coalition of our allies," Zelenskiy cautioned in his message. Despite billions of dollars' worth of western weapons, Ukraine struggled to make a major breakthrough in its 2023 counteroffensive against invading Russian forces. Moscow has meanwhile ramped up pressure along the frontlines, capturing the eastern town of Marinka earlier in December and pushing for control of Kupiansk in the north-east. Russian President Vladimir Putin did not broach the war in Ukraine during his New Year's Eve address, which was noticeably scaled back compared to last year's. The pre-recorded address, aired just before midnight in each of Russia's 11 time zones, was in

sharp contrast to last year, when he stood behind grim-looking soldiers to make a stern call for sacrifice in what he cast as a fight for survival. "To everyone who is at a combat post, at the forefront of the fight for truth and justice: You are our heroes, our hearts are with you. We are proud of you, we admire your courage," Putin said, this time with the more traditional backdrop of the Kremlin walls. Ukraine was not mentioned by name, nor the "special military operation", Putin's term for the war he unleashed in February 2022 by sending Russia's armed forces into Ukraine. There was no mention in his speech of the hundreds of thousands of Russian soldiers estimated to have been killed or wounded, or the repeated spilling over of the conflict on to home territory, seen dramatically in Saturday's Ukrainian attack on the city of Belgorod, 34 km (21 miles) from the border. The armed mutiny in June by the late Yevgeny Prigozhin, leader of the Wagner mercenary group, was also notably absent from Putin's speech.

600 pieces of EU-derived legislation revoked in UK

LONDON: Legislation to remove 587 pieces of Retained European Union Law (REUL) took effect Sunday in the UK following the passage of the Retained EU Law (Revocation and Reform) Bill in Parliament. The British government introduced the Brexit Freedoms Bill last year to end the special status of all retained EU law by Dec. 31, 2023. The bill, which relates to EU law, was introduced in the UK through the EU (Withdrawal) Act of 2018. "Brexit" is an abbreviation of two English words - "Britain" and "exit" - and refers to the withdrawal process of the UK from the EU. The bill contains a provision to extend the sunset of certain pieces of EU law until June 2024 if necessary and was initially intended to remove all EU-era law from the UK statute book. It was created to avoid large gaps in the statute book which would otherwise have emerged when the UK left the EU and EU law ceased to apply in the UK. Government officials said in May that around 3,000 pieces of European law would remain indefinitely. In the 2016 Brexit referendum, a majority voted in favour of the withdrawal of the country from the EU. After the Brexit agreement was signed by representatives of Britain and the EU on Jan. 24, 2020, the UK officially withdrew from the bloc on Jan. 31 that year. —APP

Yunus convicted in BD labour law case

DHAKA : Nobel peace laureate Muhammad Yunus has been convicted of violating Bangladesh's labour laws in a case decried by his supporters as politically motivated. Yunus and three colleagues from Grameen Telecom, one of the firms he founded, were accused of violating labour laws when they failed to create a workers' welfare fund in the company. On Monday, a labour court in the capital Dhaka convicted and sentenced them to "six months' simple imprisonment", lead prosecutor Khurshid Alam Khan said, adding that all four were immediately granted bail pending appeals. All four deny the charges. Dozens of people staged a small rally in support of Yunus outside the court. "I have been punished for a crime that I haven't committed," Yunus told reporters after the hearing. "If you want to call it justice, you can." Yunus is facing more than 100 other charges over labour law violations and alleged graft. Yunus told reporters after one of the hearings last month that he had not profited from any of the more than 50 social business firms he had set up in Bangladesh. "They were not for my personal benefit," Yunus said at the time. Another of his lawyers, Khaja Tanvir, said that the case was "meritless, false and ill-motivated". Irene Khan, a former Amnesty chief now working as a UN special rapporteur who was present at Monday's verdict, said the conviction was "a travesty of justice". "A social activist and Nobel laureate who brought honour and pride to the country is being persecuted on frivolous grounds," she said. —APP

Kosovo citizens granted visa-free access to Schengen Zone

An achievement after years of hard work, visa-free travel brings key benefits, further strengthening Kosovo's relationship with EU, says Foreign Ministry

WEB DESK

BELGRADE : Citizens of Kosovo welcomed 2024 by gaining the right to travel to the Schengen region without a visa on Monday. As of Jan. 1, Kosovars will be able to travel to the Schengen region without a visa for up to 90 days within a 180-day period, and thus there will be no country left in the Western Balkans that cannot travel to the region without a visa. "An achievement after years of hard work. Visa-free travel brings key benefits for citizens on both sides, further strengthening Kosovo's relationship with the EU," the Foreign Ministry said in a statement. In 2012, European Un-

ion institutions tasked Kosovo with fulfilling 95 criteria to have the right to visa-free travel. The process was blocked many times due to Kosovo's failure to meet some criteria. The EU side also used visa-free travel as "bait" or a "reward" for the steps it wanted Kosovo to take on many issues, including its dialogue with Serbia. Kosovo politicians also cited gaining the right to visa-free travel as the main promise in the campaigns of all elections held during the period. Approximately one in every three citizens of Kosovo lives in European countries, and therefore visa exemption for Kosovars means much more than a tourist visit. Kosovo was able to receive a positive

response from EU institutions for visa-free travel in the first half of 2023 after many EU countries, especially Germany and Austria, convinced pessimistic countries such as France and the Netherlands. Western Balkan countries Serbia, Montenegro and North Macedonia gained the right to travel to the Schengen region without a visa in 2009 and Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina in 2010. It is estimated that the country will become even closer to the EU after the visa-free travel decision is implemented. Although a year has passed since Kosovo submitted its EU membership application, it has not received a positive response in this regard. After Georgia

was granted EU candidate status in December, Kosovo remained the only country that applied to the union but still did not receive candidate status. Following tensions in the north of Kosovo throughout 2023, the EU imposed some punitive measures on the country. In particular, the measures prevent the country from benefiting from EU funds in several areas. Kosovo leaders say they are doing their part to lift the "unfair" measures and demand that they be removed as soon as possible. Leaders also hope to receive support from EU countries for Kosovo to become a full member of the Council of Europe and to become a member of the Partnership for Peace Program, a prerequisite for NATO membership.

US urges peaceful resolution in DR Congo

WASHINGTON: The United States called for the peaceful and transparent resolution of any election disputes in the Democratic Republic of Congo after President Felix Tshisekedi was declared winner of a second term in the turbulent nation. Provisional results showed Tshisekedi had won 73 percent of the vote, which opposition leaders have already dismissed as a "sham." The United States is following the process "closely," a State Department spokesperson said, stopping short of immediately congratulating Tshisekedi. "Any election disputes should be resolved peacefully and in accordance with Congolese electoral law," the spokesperson continued. "We call on the relevant authorities to ensure any complaints are handled in a fair and transparent manner." The Democratic Republic of Congo's Constitutional Court is expected to confirm the provisional results on January 10. Moise Katumbi - a wealthy businessman, football club owner and former provincial governor - was the election runner-up with about 18 percent. He and eight other opposition candidates on Sunday signed a declaration rejecting the results and calling for a re-run. Post-election tensions have been common in the poor but mineral-rich country. Analysts said Tshisekedi's vote tally was well beyond expectations. Over 4 million people out of the 100 million inhabitants of the huge country were registered to vote on December 20 for president, as well as for national and regional lawmakers and municipal councilors. Voting was officially extended by a day to account for problems, and continued for days afterwards in remote areas, according to observers. Earlier on, Congo opposition demands protests and rerun A group of opposition presidential candidates in the Democratic Republic of Congo asked supporters on Sunday. —DNA

Heavy rains pound Australia's east

SYDNEY : Heavy rains have lashed parts of Australia's east, triggering flash flooding, inundating roads and bringing more pain for some residents reeling after the intense thunderstorms that hit the region over the Christmas holidays. The northeastern New South Wales and southeastern Queensland regions were pounded by a wild weather system overnight, with several towns taking roughly a month's rainfall over 24 hours to Monday morning. There were no casualties reported but more heavy rain is forecast until Tuesday morning, with totals set to exceed 250 millimetres (9.8 inches), more than the January average. "This situation continues to be dangerous and dynamic," Miriam Bradbury, a forecaster at the Bureau of Meteorology, said in a video message on social media platform X. "This locally intense rainfall is most likely with thunderstorms through the day today and potentially could lead to life-threatening flash flooding." The popular Gold Coast tourist spot in Queensland is among the worst affected, with footage on social media showing vehicles stuck in flooded roads and low-lying areas underwater. "If you don't have to go out today, stay home," Gold Coast City Mayor Tom Tate said during a press briefing. Thousands of residents in Queensland are still without power after thunderstorms on December 25 and 26 uprooted trees and knocked down power lines. Authorities said the latest storms could delay reconnection efforts. —DNA



ISLAMABAD : Caretaker Federal Minister for Privatisation, Fawad Hasan Fawad in a meeting with Chinese Business Delegation at Privatisation Division. —DNA

Kim warns Korean peninsula nearing armed conflict

North Korea faces suspicions that it has supplied conventional arms for Russia's war in Ukraine in return for sophisticated Russian technologies to enhance the North's weapons programmes. The successful launch of the spy satellite came two months after Kim travelled to Russia where he held a summit with President Vladimir Putin and toured Russian weapons factories

PYONGYANG : North Korean leader Kim Jong-un warned that the Korean peninsula is inching closer to an armed conflict and ordered his military commanders to prepare for the "toughest" response to any "provocation," state-run media reported on Monday. Kim met with his military commanders on Sunday and praised them for achieving their tasks in 2023, the Korean Central News Agency reported. Kim again criticized the US and South Korea for the ongoing tension in the region. "If the enemy opts for military confrontation and provocation against the DPRK (Democratic People's Republic of Korea), our army should deal a deadly blow to thoroughly annihilate them by mobilizing all the toughest means and potentialities without moment's hesitation," he said. A day earlier, Kim warned of a second Korean war and told the country's ruling Workers' Party meeting that the peninsula was undergoing an "uncontrollable crisis" due to "reckless" military provocations by the US and South Korea. On Wednesday, he also asked his

armed forces to prepare for war with the US as he blamed Washington for the current tension on the Korean peninsula. Earlier, the North Korean leader also



warned that his country "will not hesitate" to launch a nuclear attack if an "enemy" provokes it with nukes. In 2023, Pyongyang successfully launched a military satellite on its third attempt, besides dozens of missiles, including at least five inter-continental ballistic ones. Meanwhile, Pyongyang declared itself an "irreversible" nuclear power in 2022 and has repeatedly said it will never give up its nuclear weapons programme, which it views as essential for its survival. The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) has adopted many resolutions calling on North Korea to halt its nuclear and ballistic missile programmes since Pyongyang first conducted a nuclear test in 2006. With the US holding a presidential election in November, and Donald Trump once again in the running, analysts have suggested Kim may be hoping his expanded nuclear arsenal will give him leverage against the US should Trump be re-elected. In 2018-19, Kim met Trump on three occasions but the flurry of diplomacy collapsed after

the US rejected Kim's offer to dismantle his main nuclear complex, a limited step, in exchange for extensive reductions in US-led sanctions. Since 2022, North Korea has conducted more than 100 missile tests, prompting the US and South Korea to expand their joint military drills. North Korea has also tried to strengthen its relationships with longtime allies China and Russia, which blocked efforts by the US and its partners in the UNSC to toughen UN sanctions on North Korea over its weapons tests. KCNA said Kim and Chinese President Xi Jinping exchanged New Year's Day messages on Monday on bolstering bilateral ties. North Korea faces suspicions that it has supplied conventional arms for Russia's war in Ukraine in return for sophisticated Russian technologies to enhance the North's weapons programmes. The successful launch of the spy satellite came two months after Kim travelled to Russia where he held a summit with President Vladimir Putin and toured Russian weapons factories. —Agencies

SL receives over 1.48 mln tourists in 2023

COLOMBO : Sri Lanka received 1,487,303 tourists in 2023, an increase of 106.6 percent from 2022, the latest statistics released by the Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority (SLTDA) showed. Up to 210,352 tourists arrived in December, the data showed. India, Russia, Britain, Germany, Australia, and China were among the top source markets in December. In 2022, Sri Lanka received 719,978 tourists for the whole year, the SLTDA data showed. Tourism is one of Sri Lanka's top foreign revenue generators. In late November, the government waived visa fees for nationals from China, India, Indonesia, Russia, Thailand, Malaysia, and Japan to boost tourism. —APP

Briefs

Senators demand national dialogue

ISLAMABAD: The members of the Upper House of the Parliament on Monday called for initiating a national dialogue and highlighted the issue of Balochistan protesters in the Capital. The third convening of the 334th Senate session was held with Senator SadiqSanjrani in the chair that started with the call from Senators for allowing to speak on the issue of Balochistan protesters. The Chairman Senate in his welcome remarks felicitated the members of the House at the commencement of the New Year before initiating the proceedings. Senator Muhammad Akram of the National Party said the protest had started from Balochistan and the protesters reached the Federal Capital after a long journey. He pointed out the plight of the women and the protesters under open skies that also included children. He also called for addressing the missing persons issue without further delay. "There should be a debate on missing persons issue to start the dialogue. The stakeholders should be convened on a single platform under a separate committee that should be established to resolve the issue", he added. Senator, Maulana Abdul GhafoorHaideri of JamiatUlema-i-Islam Pakistan (JUIP) also highlighted the plight of women protesters and demanded the proper redressal of their grievances. - APP

248 people killed in IIOJK&K during last year

DNA
ISLAMABAD: A total of 248 people had been killed in multiple incidents of violence across Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK) by the Indian forces, according to an annual review report titled 'Human Rights Situation in IIOJK' released by Legal Forum for Kashmir (LFK). The armed action of India's occupying forces against the native population as a result of heightened military presence has resulted in the killing of 82 indigenous freedom fighters from January to December 2023, said a press release. According to the LFK annual report, January-December 2023 saw a new trend of state repression and counter-insurgency operations in the war-torn region of IIOJK. On the ground, the violations of International Human Rights law (IHRL) and International Humanitarian law (IHL) led to appalling human tragedies. Indian occupying authorities and the occupying forces stationed in IIOJK have perpetrated a series of 'Atrocity crimes': Indian occupying forces persisted in their repressive policies and disregard for international law and the principle of the Right of Self-determination.



ISLAMABAD: An enchanting tableau of fallen leaves, gracefully announcing the advent of a new season. Captured in a moment of serene beauty by Mudassar Raja. - DNA

Israel continues Gaza assault as death toll hits 21,978

Iran's Alborz destroyer has passed through the Bab el-Mandeb Strait and entered the Red Sea amid rising tensions in the region

NEWS DESK

GAZA: The US-backed Israeli genocide in the Gaza Strip reached day 87 on Monday, the first day of the new year, as the death toll in the war-torn coastal enclave neared the 22,000 mark. Gaza's Ministry of Health has said the total death toll in Israel's war on Gaza rose to 21,978, with 57,697 people also injured. In the past 24 hours alone, at least 156 people were killed and 246 others injured in 13 Israeli attacks, Ashraf al-Qudra, Gaza's health ministry spokesperson, said at a press conference. The total death toll includes 326 health staff, he said. Israeli forces have destroyed and put out of service 104 ambulances and 30 hospitals, and about 99 health personnel are held under arrest "in inhumane conditions", he added. Palestinian Information Center (PIC) said that the Israeli occupation army continued to attack different areas of Gaza last night and on Monday morning, targeting homes, civilian gatherings and shelter centers, and massacring doz-

ens of citizens. According to local sources, 10 civilians were martyred after the Israeli army bombed homes in al-Maghazi refugee camp in central Gaza, while six others were killed in an airstrike in Bir al-Na'ja area, west of Jabalia. An unknown number of casualties were also reported following an Israeli artillery attack on al-Zawaida town in central Gaza, while three kids were injured in a similar attack in Deir al-Balah. A fisherman was seriously injured when an Israeli gunboat attacked him off the shores of Gaza, west of al-Nuseirat refugee camp. Meanwhile, medical and media sources said today that they found out that Dr. Mohamed Matar, an orthopedic specialist at the Indonesian Hospital, had been martyred several days ago along with three of his children, while his wife and two of his kids were injured when the Israeli army fired artillery projectiles and live bullets directly at his house in al-Saftawi neighborhood in northern Gaza. Israel's Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich has said that "the right solution in the Gaza

Strip is to encourage the migration of Gaza residents to countries that agree to receive them", according to a report by Ynet, an Israeli news outlet. "We will permanently control the Gaza Strip to ensure security and establish an Israeli settlement there, and those who think that the solutions in the Gaza Strip will be similar to those tried in the past are mistaken," he said at a meeting of the Religious Zionist Party, which he heads. Meanwhile, Hamas's armed wing, the Qassam Brigades, has said its fighters had ambushed Israel's troops in the Bureij refugee camp in central Gaza, claiming to have killed an unidentified number of the occupation forces. Iran's Alborz destroyer has passed through the Bab el-Mandeb Strait and entered the Red Sea amid rising tensions in the region. The Iranian Navy's 94th flotilla of warships, comprising of Alborz destroyer, entered the Red Sea on Monday amid heightening tensions in the strategic maritime route, Tasnim news agency reported. Since 2009, Iranian warships have been operating in open waters

to "secure shipping lines, fight against pirates and carry out other missions," it added. The warship, overhauled and equipped with state-of-the-art systems, joined the Iranian Navy's fleet in 2019. The flotilla's arrival in the Red Sea comes amid rising tensions following Yemen's retaliatory attacks on Israeli-owned and-bound vessels in support of the Palestinians in the Gaza Strip. In a stern statement on Sunday, Yemen's Armed Forces warned the United States that Washington bears full responsibility for the consequences of a deadly attack by the US Navy on Yemeni boats in the Red Sea. Turkey's pro-Palestinian protesters have staged a protest rally in front of the US Consulate General in Istanbul to express their solidarity with Gazans trapped under Israeli fire. The demonstrators marched towards the US Consulate on Sunday after Islamic NGOs made a call for a protest march on New Year's Eve to protest the aid to Israel, which has been pounding Gaza since October 7. The protesters held up banners reading (Turkish) "We are cursing Israel's partner in crime, USA."

Senate resolution seeks 'severe punishment' for anti-army propaganda

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: Senate on Monday unanimously passed a resolution to impose stringent penalties on those propagating negative and malicious narratives against the Pakistan Army and the security forces, Express News reported. During the Senate session, chaired by Chairman Senate SadiqSanjrani, several bills were tabled. Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Senator Bahramand Khan Tangi sponsored a resolution which recommended the government to take necessary steps to award severe punishment as per law to those involved in malicious propaganda against the armed forces and other security agencies, which gained unanimous approval. "Cognisant of the huge sacrifices of armed forces and other security agencies in the war against terror and for the defence and protection of the country's borders; Acknowledging the fact that strong army and other security agencies is indispensable for the defence of the country, especially in view of the hostile neighbourhood; Expressing deep concern on the negative and malicious propaganda against the armed forces and other security agencies on various social media platforms.

HRCP expresses concern over lack of level playing field



KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: The Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) on Monday expressed concerns about the lack of a level playing field granted to certain political parties in the run-up to the upcoming February 8 general election. The comments come days after the PTI alleged that it was not being given a level playing field for the general election. The party had alleged that its candidates were mishandled by

authorities when they went to file their nomination papers. Further, the candidates successful in filing their nomination papers saw them being rejected during the scrutiny phase. Addressing a press conference in Islamabad, HRCP co-chairperson Munizae Jahangir said that the current situation was not the usual atmosphere present ahead of the general elections, adding that this would weaken democracy. "Our concern is that there will always remain a question mark on whichever government is formed as a result of this," she said. Jahangir added that elections needed to be transparent in order to prevent any questions that may arise. Responding to a question, she said the commission had not shied away from saying that the PTI was subjected to "systematic dismemberment", adding that the body had mentioned the issue several times. "I think we all know how the non-elected people have used their influence to monitor or direct politicians. We want the caretaker government and ECP to assert themselves and fulfil the responsibilities of carrying out free and fair elections that have been entrusted to them," she said. Meanwhile, human rights activist and former senator Farhatullah Babar lamented that pre-poll rigging was already being carried out, pointing to how candidates were barred from filing their nomination papers and how their proposers were harassed.

BNP-M being kept away from polls under conspiracy

DNA

QUETTA: Balochistan National Party-Mengal (BNP-M) Chief Sardar Akhtar Mengal has said that his party is being kept away from elections under a conspiracy. Addressing a press conference in Quetta on Monday, Akhtar Mengal said that 2018 election was 'Faizabadi' while 2024 election would be 'Faisalabadi'. He said that the BNP was being kept away from elections under a scheme. He predicted that the 2024 election would prove to be the worst 'selection'. In a shocking development, the Returning Officer in Khuzdar on Saturday rejected the nomination papers of Akhtar Mengal on the grounds that he owned an offshore company. Lamenting the RO's decisions, Mengal said papers of 12 BNP-M's candidates for NA seats were rejected. He rued that Balochistan was experimented in every era and an artificial leadership was created. He alleged that in Nasrabad area of Quetta, agencies people were going from house to house to change people's opinion. "If you want to bring the people you like, why you are holding the drama of election," Mengal asked. He said that after the announcement of elections, political activities could not be started in a democratic way.

Dasti alleges his 'family harassed during raid

DNA

MUZAFFARGARH: Former lawmaker and PTI leader Jamshed Dasti breaks down into tears as he accused the CTD and intelligence agencies of raiding his house and harassing his wife and other family members. The outspoken politician shared a video from an unknown location, saying his house was raided by CTD and intelligence agencies where his wife was stripped and children faced harassment. He accused law enforcers and intel officers of keeping his family hostage for several hours. Dasti claimed that he defied odds for nine months but authorities continued to break him down. The politician continued saying that residences of his friends was also raided and the entire area was kept hostage. He urged members of his tribe to take a stand as their honour was being attacked. PTI leader then urged chief justice to take notice of attacks on families of politicians. He ended the clip by saying injustice was destroying Pakistan and it must stop. On the other hand, SHO City Muzaffargarh dismissed allegations of Jamshed Dasti. The police officer called Dasti's allegations false and baseless, claiming that no such incident had taken place.

Taiwan and China will 'surely be reunified': Xi

KMT has traditionally favoured warmer ties with Beijing - though it denies being pro-China

BEIJING: Chinese President Xi Jinping, in his annual New Year's Eve address, reiterated his claim that Taiwan would "surely be reunified" with China. His message comes ahead of Taiwan's crucial 13 January elections that will determine the island's cross-strait policy for the next four years. He also struck a stronger tone than last year's message, where he spoke of Taiwan being part of the "same family". China has ramped up military pressure on Taiwan ahead of the elections. It sees the self-ruled island of 23 million as a breakaway province that will eventually be under Beijing's control. Taiwan considers itself distinct from the Chinese mainland, with its own constitution and democratically elected leaders. Separately, Taiwan's President Tsai Ing-wen said in her New Year's address that the island's relations with China must be decided by the "will of the Taiwanese people". Her government has repeatedly warned that Beijing is trying to interfere in the election, where a new president and government will be chosen. Taiwan's Kuomintang party (KMT) has traditionally favoured warmer ties with Beijing - though it denies being pro-China. The KMT's main rival, Ms Tsai's Democratic

Progressive Party (DPP), has ruled Taiwan for the past eight years and takes a stronger line towards China - insisting it is sovereign and not a part of China. Mr Xi's latest comments are in line with China's long-standing policy towards unification, but the message struck a more strident tone than the one Mr Xi gave last year, where he called "people on both sides of the Taiwan Strait... members of one and the same family". The issue of Taiwan has also strained relations between the US and China, with the latter condemning any perceived support from Washington for Taipei. Beijing has said that it "reserves the option of taking all necessary measures" against outside forces that interfere with peaceful unification. But both countries marked the new year with a positive message, with Mr Xi and US President Joe Biden exchanging congratulatory messages on Monday. Mr Xi noted that "adhering to mutual respect, peaceful coexistence, and win-win cooperation is the correct way for China and the United States to interact", according to Reuters, which cited Chinese state media outlet CCTV. - Agencies

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