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Nadal roars back with 'emotional and important' win

Detailed News On Page-06

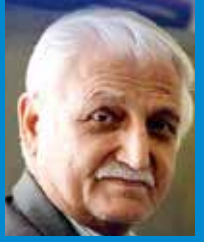
Pakistan eyes to boost ties with US: FM

Detailed News On Page-08



PPP's Farhat criticizes remarks of PM

Detailed News On Page-08



Lifetime or 5 years

CJP Isa hints at concluding case on Jan 4

'Even Quaid-e-Azam would have been disqualified under Article 62(1)f'



CJP Qazi Faez Isa (left) (clockwise) Justice Syed Mansoor Ali Shah, Justice Yahya Afridi, Justice Aminuddin Khan, Justice Jamal Khan Mandokhel, Justice Muhammad Ali Mazhar, and Justice Musarat Hilali.

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

ISLAMABAD: Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Qazi Faez Isa has said the Supreme Court will try to conclude the hearing on the lifetime disqualification case on January 4 (Thursday) – an important judgment that will determine whether lawmakers' ineligibility to contest polls should be for a lifetime or five years under the amended Election Act 2017 in line with Article 62 (1)(F). A seven-member larger bench led by CJP Justice Qazi Faez Isa heard the case of lifetime disqualification of lawmakers. The other members of the bench include Justice Syed Mansoor Ali Shah, Justice Yahya Afridi, Justice Aminuddin Khan, Justice Jamal Khan Mandokhel, Justice Muhammad Ali Mazhar and Justice Musarat Hilali.

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'Private armies are illegal': CJP

COURT REPORTER

ISLAMABAD: Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Qazi Faez Isa Tuesday maintained that private militias are illegal and they cannot be against the state, as the Supreme Court conducted the hearing of a case pertaining to missing persons and enforced disappearances in the country. The case was taken up by the apex court following petitions filed by multiple individuals including veteran politician and lawyer Aitzaz Ahsan. The timing of the case is also significant, as Islamabad is currently witnessing a sit-in by the families, including women and children of the Baloch missing persons, who arrived in the capital after starting a long march from Turbat. A three-member bench headed by CJP Isa and comprising Justice Muhammad Ali Mazhar and Justice Musarat Hilali took up the case and conducted its hearing. The chief justice, following the adjournment of the hearing till tomorrow, said the court will now ensure the resolution of the missing persons issue, also summoning the Attorney General for Pakistan, Mansoor Usman Awan, to arrive before the bench in the next hearing.

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LAHORE: Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar meets with the President of Pakistan Muslim League (Q) Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain. – DNA

6 kidnapped and murdered in North Waziristan

In this scenario, running election campaign has become a huge challenge

STAFF REPORT

MIR ALI: Six people were killed by unidentified armed men in Mir Ali – a town in North Waziristan district of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa – as the province wrestles with worsening law and order situation due to the rising terrorism at a time when the much-awaited country-wide elections are just over a month away. Mir Ali is located 12 kilometres east of Miran Shah, the district headquarters, and 40 kilometres west of Bannu. The erstwhile tribal region is now part of Bannu Division.

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Japan earthquake kills nearly 50

DNA

TOKYO: More than 40 people were killed after a strong 7.6-magnitude earthquake struck Japan on New Year's Day with rescue teams on Tuesday struggling to reach remote locations where buildings had collapsed to look for possible survivors. Monday's quake that struck in the middle of the afternoon, prompted residents in some coastal areas to flee to higher ground as tsunami waves hit Japan's west coast, sweeping some cars and houses into the sea. Thousands of

Continued on Page 06

PM meets Chaudhry Shujaat Kakar: No one has impunity to spread violence

Prime Minister Kakar voices concern over country's judicial system

ABID RAZA

LAHORE: Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar on Tuesday reiterated that the State would not allow anyone to unleash violence and kill people in the name of political, ethnic and religious divides as it was its responsibility to ensure law and order. The prime minister, in a lengthy interaction with the students of the Beaconhouse National University, said that no one could be given a licence to kill and eliminate others on the basis of political, ethnic and religious differences. "To maintain law and order is the responsibility of the State, and I assure you that such elements will never prevail on the State of Pakistan," he asserted.

Continued on Page 06

Senate told TTP to resettle

ADIL SHAHEEN

ISLAMABAD: The Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) reorganised itself during the peace talks, the interior ministry informed the Senate, adding that recruitment training of suicide bombers in the merged tribal districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa after the return of terrorist organisation was an

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Briefs

'No seat adjustment with any party'

DNA

PESHAWAR: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf Parliamentarians (PTI-P) head Pervaiz Khattak ruled out possibility of seat adjustment with any political party in general elections 2024. As per details, the PTIP chief said his lawyer informed him they had applied for the election symbol 'bat' however he directed him to take back the application as such steps would create problems for the party. Pervaiz Khattak claimed that several people will join the party before January 13 however PTIP will go solo in the general election 2024.

Pak facing 'uncertainty'

BUREAU REPORT

PESHAWAR: Awami National Party (ANP) Central Senior Vice President Ameer Haider Khan Hoti has raised concerns over the "unprecedented uncertainty" prevailing in the country ahead of the February 8 elections, which he said was never seen before. Ostensibly, the comments came echoing Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam-Fazl (JUI-F) chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman's fear that he expressed a day ago that he did not foresee the February 8 elections happening as the country's security situation was not suitable for polls. Maulana Fazl's convoy came under attack from multiple sides at Yarik interchange in Dera Ismail Khan on December 31, luckily, the JUI-F chief was not present in the vehicles at the time.

PTI to contest even if it has to field U-19 team: Gohar

Asks PTI workers to remain calm, focus on poll day to foil polls sabotaging bid

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Barrister Gohar Khan expressed his optimism that elections would be held on the fixed date of February 8, 2024 come what may, as the Supreme Court (SC) had already shut the door to any delay in general elections. During his informal interactions with the international media here on Tuesday, PTI Chairman hoped that the polls would not be postponed due to the security related concerns expressed by a political party after a terrorist attack in district Deralsamail Khan because the police clarified that the terrorists did not target the convey of the political party but a police station was attacked. He stated that polls postponement was no answer to any problem but a free, transparent and inclusive elections was the sole remedy to all issues. Barrister Gohar Khan ruled out any possibility of boycotting the polls,

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JUI-F ready to work with PML-N: Fazl

SHAMIM SHAHID

DERA ISMAIL KHAN: As political parties are in full gear to win the trust of each other, Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam Fazl (JUI-F) supremo Maulana Fazlur Rehman has hinted at forming an electoral alliance with the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) for the forthcoming general elections – scheduled for February 8. Talking to journalists in DI Khan on Tuesday, he said the country had witnessed development and prosperity during the PML-N's tenure. Fazl added that his religio-

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COAS Asim Munir applauds PAF's operational preparedness

4 terrorists killed in North Waziristan IBO: ISPR



DNA

RAWALPINDI: An Induction and Operationalization Ceremony was held at an operational base of Pakistan Air Force, today. General Syed Asim Munir, NI (M) Chief of Army Staff, attended the distinguished ceremony as the Chief Guest. Upon his arrival at the base, Chief of Army Staff was received by Air Chief Marshal Zaher Ahmed Baber Sidhu, Chief of the Air Staff, Pakistan Air Force. The ceremony showcased the newly inducted weapon systems and

defence assets of PAF. Upon his arrival, a smartly turned-out contingent of Pakistan Air Force presented Guard of Honour to the COAS. During his speech CAS highlighted the latest inductions in the PAF's arsenal comprising of J-10C fighter jets, air mobility platforms, modern Radars, Unmanned Aerial Systems, Loitering munition capabilities and Long Range Vectors which have significantly bolstered the aerial defence capabilities of the country. CAS also mentioned that Center of Excellence for Air Mobility & Aviation Safety, College of Air Defence and reinvigoration of Air Power Centre of Excellence alongside operationalization of National Aerospace Science and Technology Park has provided PAF the capability to stay abreast with the evolving challenges. He emphasized upon the progress achieved by PAF in the emerging domains of Cyber and Space technologies to ensure an impenetrable defence of the country. COAS in his speech lauded the operational preparedness of Pakistan Air Force in incorporating state-of-the-art weapon systems, substantially contributing in ensuring the balance of power in the region. While emphasizing the significance of indigenization and human resource development, COAS wholeheartedly endorsed PAF's dedication to technological advancements and operational excellence, reassuring that the Armed Forces of Pakistan are fully prepared to thwart any aggression.

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UAE'S cloud seeding team calls on Naqvi

CM thanked the team members for their endeavors to induce artificial rainfall to reduce smog and expressed gratitude for the UAE's cooperation

ABID RAZA

LAHORE: Ahmed Al-Kamal, head of the cloud-seeding team from the United Arab Emirates' (UAE) meteorology department, chief pilot Michael Anstis and pilot Col Ubaid called on Chief Minister Punjab Mohsin Naqvi at his office. The CM thanked the team members for their endeavors to induce artificial rainfall to reduce smog and expressed gratitude for the UAE's cooperation, acknowledging it as the first-ever successful attempt at artificial rainfall in Lahore's history. Chief Minister Naqvi stated that the Punjab government appreciates the collaboration with the UAE, and reiterated

the need for artificial rainfall to combat smog. He assured that further efforts would be made to induce artificial rainfall, once again, when the required atmospheric conditions are met, with the assistance of the UAE team. Highlighting the success of the first-ever artificial rainfall in Lahore, CM mentioned that air quality levels remained below 200 for several days. He expressed hope that, with suitable atmospheric conditions in January, artificial rainfall could once again be employed to bring further reduction in smog levels. The chief minister commended the UAE's team for their dedication and emphasized that the people of Pakistan will not forget the efforts of the UAE in this crucial initiative.

The successful artificial rainfall operation in Lahore now stands as a significant milestone in the history of weather modification, he added. Acknowledging the unparalleled cooperation from the leadership of the United Arab Emirates, Mr Naqvi thanked Ahmed Al-Kamal and his team members. Al-Kamal expressed optimism for another successful artificial rainfall experiment in January, and expressed gratitude for the warm hospitality in Lahore, stating that Pakistan is their second home. Provincial Ministers Amir Mir and Bilal Afzal, weather modification expert Brig. Nadeem, DG EPA, Chief Meteorologist Ch. Muhammad Aslam and CAA's Senior Joint Director Muhammad Altaf were also present.

Hazara Police nabs 2022 individuals in 2023

ABBOTTABAD: Hazara Police Tuesday successfully apprehended 2022 proclaimed offenders involved in various crimes during the year 2023. The initiative aimed to expedite actions against advertising offenders across all districts. This was disclosed in a yearly performance report of Hazara police. According to the report, following the directives of Deputy Inspector General (DIG) Hazara police Muhammad Ijaz Khan, a targeted campaign was launched to apprehend individuals implicated in various serious cases during the year 2023. In district Haripur 402 proclaimed offenders were arrested, 309 in Abbottabad, 418 in Mansehra, 437 in Bagram, 08 in Torghar, 196 in Kolai Palas, 92 in Lower Kohistan, and 160 in Upper Kohistan. DIG Hazara, gave instructions to DPOs, stressing the urgency of expediting actions against proclaimed offenders. He directed DPOs, Sub-Divisional Police Officers (SDPOs), and Station House Officers (SHOs) to focus intensively on accelerating the apprehension of advertising offenders.—APP

Birth anniversary of veteran actor Lehri observed

ISLAMABAD: Birth anniversary of famous comedy actor Saferullah Siddiqui, popularly known as Lehri was observed on Tuesday. Born in Kanpur on January 2, 1929, he moved to Karachi after partition and began working as a stenotypist during his teenage years. Side by side, after completing his hours at the office, he would make ends meet by selling hi-fi items. His big break came in the 1950s, when director Sheikh Lateef cast him in his film Anokhi. After bagging the role of a comedian in the film, Siddiqui was christened Lehri.—APP

SECP organizes financial reporting workshop on capital markets

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan (SECP) on Tuesday hosted a financial reporting workshop for journalists to elaborate on various factors and elements that can impact performance and cause volatility in the equities market. Senior journalists from print and electronic media attended the seminar, said a press release issued here. Ms. Musarat Jabeen, Executive Director and the chief spokesperson of SECP, while welcoming the participants, briefed them about various reforms initiated by the SECP to strengthen the capital and equity markets, especially the recent reform for safeguarding the interests of minority shareholders. She talked about SECP's measures to deepen the market and enable market growth through the digital taking on board the retail investors. She also appraised participants on liquidity, leverage, volatility, holdings,

redemptions, solvency risk, reinsurance, and investment risk. Abdul Rehman Warraich, Commissioner Securities Market Division (SMD) defined the stock exchange as a place for capital formation, financial inclusion, channeling savings, and diversifying investments. He gave detailed responses to queries on various functions of the stock exchange and explained the regulatory regime. The participants were briefed on the trading, clearing, and settlement functions of the Pakistan Stock Exchange, the National Clearing Company, and the Central Depository Company of Pakistan Limited. The SECP officials gave a detailed presentation on the digital online account opening process, the KYC framework, and the newly introduced Centralized Gateway Portal for retail investors across all asset classes, i.e., the securities market, asset management companies, and insurance companies. The new process required filling out one-time account opening

forms, KYC, and CDD with standardized information and documents. The market surveillance team briefed the participants about the SECP's mandate with respect to the market surveillance function. Participants were informed about different types of market abuse, such as insider trading, market manipulation, etc., and briefed about various modern tools for surveillance that have been deployed at SECP and PSX. Different triggers for the detection of market abuses, such as system-based alerts, referrals, complaints, etc., were explained to participants. Case studies were presented to participants to help them develop an understanding of market abuses, especially insider trading and market manipulation. The participants were also told about various risk indicators, such as the index, liquidity, settlement-to-trade ratio, relative strength index, broker exposure, volume leaders in leverage, and those being overseen by the SECP.

Pakistan's exports to China surge by 39.44%

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's export of goods and services to China witnessed an increase of 39.44 per cent during the first five months of the current fiscal year (2023-24) as compared to the exports of the corresponding period of last year, State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) reported. The overall exports to China were recorded at US \$1223.532 million during July-November (2023-24) against exports of US \$877.444 million during July-November (2022-23), SBP data revealed. On a year-to-year basis, the exports to China also surged by 36.29 per cent from \$199.058 million in November 2022, against the exports of \$271.316 million in November 2023. Meanwhile, on a month-on-month basis, the exports to China decreased by 14.90 per cent during November 2023 as compared to the exports of \$318.842 million in October 2023, the SBP data revealed. Overall Pakistan's exports to other countries witnessed an increase of 4.99 per cent in the first five months, from US \$11.915 billion to US \$12.510 billion, the SBP data revealed. On the other hand, the imports from China into the country during the months under review were recorded at US \$4741.099 million against US \$5045.390 million last year, showing a decline of 6.03 per cent in July-November (2023-24). On a year-on-year basis, the imports for China witnessed an increase of 10.71 per cent from US \$906.128 million in November 2022, against the imports of US \$1003.248 million in November 2023. On a month-on-month basis, the imports from China into the country witnessed a nominal increase of 0.99 per cent during November 2023, as compared to the imports of US \$993.401 million during November 2023, according to the data. The overall imports into the country witnessed a decrease of 16.02 per cent, from \$25.341 billion to US \$21.281 billion, according to the data.—DNA



ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Federal Minister for IT and Telecommunication Dr. Umar Saif in a meeting with British High Commissioner to Pakistan Jane Marriott.—DNA

Akhuwat Foundation denies fraud liability

ISLAMABAD: The Akhuwat Foundation on Tuesday distanced itself from any responsibility for fraudulent activities conducted under its name, emphasizing non-accountability for dishonest transactions. In a statement, a spokesman of the Akhuwat Foundation clarified that Akhuwat Islamic Finance operates as an interest-free loan provider, offering loans and managing installments through its branch network. The spokesman noted that individuals are misusing the institution's name and educational services for fraudulent activities. The Akhuwat Foundation explicitly states that it will not take responsibility for any fraudulent or deceptive transactions carried out by these individuals. Students seeking admission to educational institutions within the fraternity are not paying any fees or charges. Additionally, the fraternity does not offer scholarships, compensation or any similar benefits for students to pursue studies in other educational institutions. The spokesperson reported that individuals with malicious intent and fraudulent entities are exploiting the name of Akhuwat Educational Services, falsely claiming to offer scholarships to students for test fees.—APP

AIOU gears up for convocation on Jan 31

ISLAMABAD: The convocation of Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) is scheduled to take place on January 31, 2024, at Jinnah Convention Center in Islamabad. The preparation review meeting was chaired by the Vice Chancellor of AIOU, Prof. Dr. Nasir Mahmood, and during the meeting, it was decided to include the students of Azad Jammu and Kashmir region in the convocation being held in Islamabad. The meeting was attended by the Deans, Professors, and principal officers. It is pertinent to mention here university had previously planned a convocation on June 30, 2024 in Muzaffarabad to facilitate students from AJK. However, now students from Islamabad, Gilgit-Baltistan, AJK and Rawalpindi Division (Attock, Chakdala, Jhelum and Rawalpindi) will participate in the convocation on January 31 at the Jinnah Convention Center in Islamabad.—DNA

BARRACUDA-XII int'l exercise kicks off

The ceremony was attended by observers from 13 friendly countries and officers of Pakistan Navy and PMSA

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: International Exercise BARRACUDA-XII formally commences today at Headquarters Pakistan Maritime Security Agency (PMSA), Karachi. The event started with an impressive flag hoisting ceremony followed by wreath laying on Shuhada monument. The ceremony was attended by observers from 13 friendly countries and officers of Pakistan Navy and PMSA. Exercise BARRACUDA-XII is scheduled from 0204 Jan 24 and comprising Harbour and Sea phases. Opening brief of the exercise was held at Karachi. Federal Minister for climate change Ahmed Irfan Aslam graced the occasion as Chief Guest. Foreign Observers and delegations from relevant stake holders also attended

the brief wherein the Aims and objectives of Exercise BARRACUDA-XII were highlighted. Moreover, scholarly papers on response of Oil Spill and Search and Rescue at sea were presented by both National and International speakers. During his address Chief Guest thanked all foreign delegates for their participation in the event. He further added that the exercise will continue to crystallise our preparedness for maritime disasters management. Pakistan has always been and will continue to be an ardent advocate of safe & secure seas for the wellbeing of the region and the world. Earlier during his welcome address, DG PMSA Rear Admiral Intiaz Ali apprised the audience about Government of Pakistan's endeavour to curb pollution at sea and reiterated resolve of PMSA to fight Marine pollution. He further highlighted the role of PMSA in implement-

ing the laws in National seas. He thanked the foreign participants and national maritime stakeholders for their support. DG PMSA Rear Admiral Intiaz Ali also called on the foreign observers and discussed the matters of mutual interest. Exercise BARRACUDA is a marine pollution response exercise conducted biennially by PMSA since 2007. Focused on refining response mechanisms and enhancing coordination among stakeholders. The exercise serves as a critical platform to prepare for and address potential oil spills and other marine pollution incidents. BARRACUDA-XII will unfold as an immersive experience in the North Arabian Sea providing a platform for participating countries to engage in scenario-based simulations and comprehensive drills starting from 2 Jan 24.

KP govt invests in youth prosperity: CM

PESHAWAR: Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Justice (Retd) Arshad Husain Shah said on Tuesday that youth are our assets, and the KP government is investing in them to build prosperity. He addressed the inaugural ceremony of the Khushhal Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Program, which aims to create technical training and employment opportunities for the youth. He expressed concern over the longstanding issue

of unemployment in the country, emphasizing the distress caused by witnessing the youth facing joblessness. "We have implemented a program prioritizing the training of the youth on preferential grounds," he said. He highlighted that this training program is a crucial component of the Khushhal Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Program, describing it as a comprehensive initiative that will have lasting effects. He stated that

this is a program for the welfare of humanity, and its success requires collective efforts. In the first phase, over one hundred thousand young individuals will undergo vocational courses, aimed at equipping them with skills beyond just information technology. Chief Minister outlined the program's definitive goal of providing training to at least five hundred thousand youth, ultimately facilitating their employment.

First lady leads integrated child protection

Begum Alvi suggested that there should be a single and integrated helpline to receive the public complaints and calls for emergency assistance

KARACHI: The First Lady Samina Arif Alvi, Tuesday, stressed the need for effective implementation of Zainab Alert Act, an integrated single helpline, and close coordination among all the relevant organizations and stakeholders for speedy recovery of missing children. The first lady, during a visit of Roshni Helpline—a non-governmental organization working for recovery of missing children—emphasized that a universal helpline for receiving public complaints and joint and coordinated efforts through a single platform would result into more effective and timely outcomes. There were several organizations both in public as well as private sector working separately to provide relief to citizens and they have different helplines to receive grievances, she noted adding that

however it might confuse the aggrieved citizens about who should be contacted with in a certain situation. Begum Alvi suggested that there should be a single and integrated helpline to receive the public complaints and calls for

emergency assistance and all the organizations working in different domains should work under one umbrella so that citizens could access the helpline easily and the matter could be referred to the most relevant organiza-

tion for prompt and effective action. Founder of Roshni Helpline Muhammad Ali and other board members briefed the First Lady about vision, performance and initiatives of the organization for protection of children par-

ticularly recovery of missing children. They informed that Roshni Helpline has close coordination with ministry of Human Rights, Sindh Police, provincial child protection agencies, Pakistan Railways, Council of Islamic Ideology and many other government and non-governmental organizations. They informed that Roshni Helpline served more than 20,000 families and assisted in the recovery of over 9000 missing children since its inception while several steps were taken to enhance the awareness and outreach. Begum Samina Arif Alvi appreciated Roshni Helpline for its endeavor and services for the recovery of missing children. Later, Roshni team presented a souvenir shield and its performance report to the First Lady.—DNA



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National Days and Armed Forces Days

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- 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

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Bomb Disposal.....15
Fire Services Rawalpindi/ Islamabad.....1122 & 16
Emergency Ambulance.....1122 & Rescue Services.4451122
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RGH.....9290301-7
Holy Family.....9290322-7
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Polyclinic.....9218300-09
Shifa International 4603666



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Met Office.....9250360-6
RDA.....5555864
TMA.....5770886
Cantonment Board 9270151-3

Water Tank

Islamabad.....0321-5744480

Alvi advocates enabling work environment for women

President Dr Arif Alvi said that our religion Islam granted property rights to women and it was our responsibility to give them their due share and create a safer society for them

MEHTAB PIERZADA

ISLAMABAD :President Dr Arif Alvi in a group photo with the officials of the Federal Ombudsman Secretariat for Protection Against Harassment at Workplace (FOSPAP) during his visit to FOSPAP Head Office, DNA Islamabad: President Dr Arif Alvi has underscored the need for taking measures to improve the status of women, provide them employment opportunities and enabling working-environment to increase their economic participation. He highlighted that our religion Islam granted property rights to women and it was our responsibility to give them their due share and create a safer society for them. The President expressed these views while chairing a meeting during his visit to the Federal Ombudsman Secretariat for Protection Against Harassment at Workplace (FOSPAP) Head Office, in Islamabad, today. Federal Ombudsman for Protection Against Harassment at Workplace, Ms Fauzia Viqar, Secretary FOSPAP, Mr Arif Karim, advisors and officials of FOSPAP attended the meeting. Ms Fauzia Viqar gave a detailed presentation about the role and achievements of FOSPAP in protecting women's rights. She informed that FOSPAP was providing speedy justice in harassment at the workplace and property cases of women who had been deprived of their ownership rights. She informed that 725 harassment cases were registered with FOSPAP, during 2023, out of which 517 cases had been decided. She said that an upsurge had been witnessed in the registration of harassment and women's property cases with FOSPAP due to the awareness



campaign about its role and functions. She apprised the meeting that harassment of women and denial of property rights to women were pervasive issues in Pakistan. Appreciating the continued support of the President Dr Arif Alvi, she told the meeting that so far 208 representations against the decisions of FOSPAP had been filed with the President, out of which only 10 were under process with the office of the President while the rest had been decided. Addressing the meeting, the President called for taking ap-

propriate legislative measures at the federal and provincial levels to ensure the protection of women's property rights, besides discouraging the transfer of property by women to their family members due to pressures. He said that he was conducting personal hearings of the Ombudspersons' cases to expedite the process of justice. He stated that highlighting important decisions of FOSPAP in harassment and women's property cases through media would help increase awareness about the role of the Ombudsman. He said that

police at the local level needed to improve their response to women's complaints in property cases, adding that police officials should be educated about the provisions of the Enforcement of Women's Property Rights Act, 2020. The President urged FOSPAP to further increase its outreach and efficiency to provide speedy justice to women in harassment and property cases at their doorsteps. He also advised FOSPAP to enhance its linkages with NGOs and women's rights organizations in Pakistan to seek suggestions for

improving women's status. The President said that providing a harassment-free and enabling environment to women in both the public and private sectors was essential for their economic and social empowerment. He underlined the need for increased engagements with the business community, particularly the chambers of commerce and industries, to provide employment to women as well as sensitize them about the importance and provisions of the Protection against Harassment at Workplace Act, 2010.

Panel emphasizes Robust oversight in construction industry

ISLAMABAD: Robust monitoring of environmental regulations as well as protection of labor rights is crucial for a just and sustainable transition in the construction industry. This was the crux of a panel discussion titled: "Socially and Environmentally Compliant Construction Industry in Pakistan", at the Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI) in collaboration with NED and SC. Geir Thomas Tostol, the Country Director of the International Labor Organization, Pakistan, said that the construction sector transforms source materials into capital assets, contributing significantly to economic activity and thus holds immense potential for poverty reduction and income generation. However, he said, the lack of specialized skills and high risks of occupational hazards have made it one of the riskiest sectors globally. The high prevalence of informal employment further weakens social security and workers' rights, he said, adding that coordinated efforts are required by the government, employers, and workers with initiatives focusing on promoting greater compliance and fostering decent working conditions in the construction industry in Pakistan. Dr Saifullah from Development Impact Solutions, highlighting the hazardous working conditions in brick kiln industry, said that out of 4.4-5.2 million brick kiln workers, 68% are doing bonded or forced labor, with 19% being under 18 years of age.—APP

BISP savings scheme empowers vulnerable communities

ISLAMABAD : The newly launched 'Savings Scheme' by the internationally acclaimed Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) will prove as a landmark step towards instilling financial independence and promoting a savings culture among the vulnerable sections of society. The BISP Saving Scheme is aimed at providing a financial buffer to the piece-rate workers for unexpected expenses and emergencies, making them self-reliant. According to the Director General National Socio Economic Registry (NSER) BISP, Naveed Akbar, the piece rate workers were the biggest affectees during the COVID-19 who found it hard to earn their livelihood as they lacked savings. Therefore to mitigate their

sufferings, the government provided one-time financial assistance to them of Rs. 12,000 during that difficult time. Keeping in view those circumstances, BISP Savings Scheme has been initiated to motivate those piece-rate workers to save a little amount from their daily earnings to cope with any untoward situation, the DG said. The BISP has been receiving applications under the 'Savings Scheme' from those applicants both men and women living in Islamabad, Muzaffarabad, Neelum, Peshawar, Lucky Marwat, Quetta, Qila Saifullah, Lahore, Multan, Karachi, Sukkur, Gilgit and Astore. Following the application submission, a 'Registration' process will be initiated, and upon successful completion of this stage

applicants will become eligible for the 'Savings Scheme.' The applicants, having a PMT score below 40, are required to apply through a web portal: savings.bisp.gov.pk to become a part of this scheme without paying any fee. In the initial phase, the scheme will accommodate one hundred and fifty thousand customers on a first-come-first-served basis. The Savings Scheme is open to both men and women, with one person per family eligible to apply. Upon joining the scheme, customers commit to two-year tenure, during which they must save between Rs 500 to Rs 1000 in their dedicated 'Savings Accounts.' BISP will provide an additional forty per cent of the gross savings to customers every

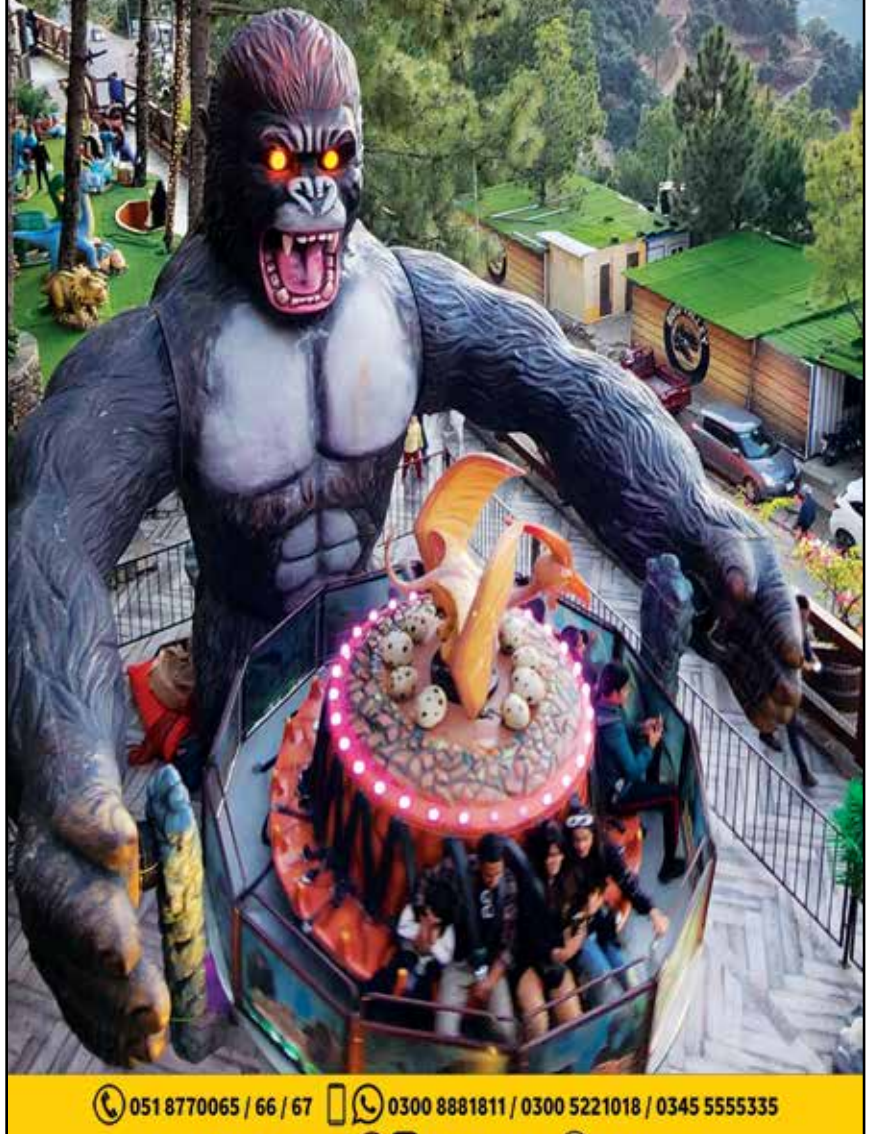
quarter. Notably, while the additional amount provided by BISP can be withdrawn, the principal amount deposited for savings is non-withdrawable. The participants retain the flexibility to terminate the scheme at any stage of their choosing. The scheme is free of any application fees, and applicants are cautioned to be vigilant against potential fraudulent activities. In case of complaints, individuals are encouraged to reach out to their nearest BISP offices or contact the toll-free number 080026477. The beneficiaries will get an additional 40 per cent of their savings from the BISP. The duration of the scheme is two years at the end of which the beneficiaries will be able to withdraw their entire amount.—APP

APHC to observe Jan 5 as right to self-determination day

ISLAMABAD : All Parties Hurriyat Conference (APHC) has announced that Kashmiris will observe 5 January as Right to Self-Determination Day by organizing protest demonstrations, rallies, seminars and other programs to invite world attention towards the urgency of resolving the long-pending Kashmir dispute to avert Jammu and Kashmir from turning into another Palestine. According to Kashmir Media Service, APHC spokesman in a statement issued in Srinagar said, the unresolved Kashmir dispute is a big question mark on the credibility of the United Nations. "If the UN wants to restore its credibility it needs to implement its resolutions on Kashmir without further delay," he said. It was on 5th January in 1949 when UN Security Council passed a historic resolution saying, "The question of accession of the State of Jammu & Kashmir to India or Pakistan will be decided through the democratic method of a free and impartial plebiscite". The APHC said that seven decades have passed but the promised plebiscite remains unfulfilled till date. The APHC said that by deploying over one million trigger-happy troops, India has turned Kashmir into a gigantic prison. Indian troops who have been given license to kill Kashmiris are trampling humanity under their jackboots, he added. "Martyrdom of over one lakh Kashmiris, destruction of thousands of houses and structures, molestation, blinding youth is a glaring proof how India is hell-bent on annihilating Kashmiris and occupy their land," he informed.—DNA



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119th Advance Railway Course participants visit EAD

ADIL SHAHEEN

ISLAMABAD : The international delegates participating in the 119th Advance Railway Course, conducted by the Pakistan Technical Assistance Programme (PTAP) here on Tuesday visited the Economic Affairs Division (EAD) to attend a meeting for fostering collaboration and addressing critical aspects of the ongoing program, said a press release issued here. Chaired by Dr. Kazim Niaz, Secretary of the Ministry of Economic Affairs, the meeting was attended by senior officials from both the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Pakistan Railways, alongside senior-level participants from Azerbaijan, Uganda, Ghana, Tanzania, and Sri Lanka. The Secretary Economic Affairs extended a warm welcome to the participants, expressing gratitude for their active engagement in the 119th Advance Railway Program. He underscored

the significance of PTAP as a demonstration of the Ministry's unwavering commitment to enhancing technical expertise and promoting global collaboration. The Government of Pakistan has been providing technical assistance to friendly developing countries through PTAP since its establishment in 1976, he said. The Secretary emphasized that international collaboration is instrumental in establishing global partnerships that transcend geographical boundaries, fostering joint initiatives, research, and development for the collective well-being of nations. During the meeting, the participants expressed their sincere gratitude to MoEA for sponsoring their training program under the PTAP Initiative, and thanked Pakistan for investing in their growth and fostering international collaboration. The delegation expressed overall satisfaction with the training program and was

hopeful that it would contribute immensely in their professional development. The participants shared valuable suggestions, including the implementation of an analysis program to measure effectiveness, with a specific focus on lecture room experiences. In response, the Secretary proposed collaboration with partner training institutions like Pakistan Railways Academy to further improve the training modules. He underscored the importance of meticulous course planning, balancing lecture room learning with field tours. The optimization of the program's duration and the proactive sharing of brochures with participants before the training were identified as essential improvements. The meeting concluded on a positive note, with constructive suggestions made for enhancing the effectiveness of the 119th Advance Railway program.

Dr. Nadeem advocates 2% GDP for health

ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Minister of National Health Services, Regulations and Coordination, Dr. Nadeem Jan on Tuesday proposed allocation of two percent of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) for the health sector. In response to a calling attention notice moved by Senator Prof. Dr. Mehr Taj Roghani regarding the non-availability of vaccines, especially the anti-diphtheria serum in the country, with a specific focus on Khyber Pakhtunkhwa leading to the unfortunate deaths of children, the minister said that our request to the next government would be to allocate at least two percent of the GDP for health, a sector that has been overlooked by all previous governments. Regarding the Anti-Diphtheria Serum (ADC), he clarified that the provision and procurement of ADC was the responsibilities of the provinces. However, he added that the federal government can play a role in facilitating resource generation and providing guidelines in this regard.—APP

Briefs

HEC sets Jan. 3 deadline for Centralised Test applications

ISLAMABAD :The Higher Education Commission (HEC) has announced January 3 as the last date to apply for the Centralised Test for the graduates of Computer Science (CS) and Information Technology (IT) to get apprenticeships at the top IT companies in the country. According to the official sources, the test is being conducted by the Higher Education Commission (HEC) in collaboration with the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC), Ministry of IT & Telecom (MoITT), Pakistan Software Export Board (PSEB), Pakistan IT Industry Association (P@SHA) and National Computing Education Accreditation Council (NCEAC). The Centralized Test will be taken for the students of the 7th Semester of CS and related disciplines through the Virtual University Platform. This is part of an academia-industry cooperation programme to facilitate the placement of talented IT students in the IT industry to acquire hands-on experience on the latest technologies for better job opportunities in local and international markets. As per HEC, the last date for registration of the test is January 03, while the test will be held on 7th January. However, as per eligibility criteria for the test, the students who are currently enrolled in the 7th Semester of BS/BE Computing or related disciplines. The student application submission is through this portal. The students were asked that the focus areas of the test include Operating Systems, Software Engineering, Data Structures, Networking, Programming, Databases, Problem Solving/Analytics. An HEC official urged the students to not miss this chance to bag an apprenticeship at the top IT companies in Pakistan through the HEC Centralised Test for CS & IT Graduates.—APP

ECP removes excessive candidate ads nationwide

ISLAMABAD : The Election Commission of Pakistan's (ECP) monitoring teams have started removing the illegal advertisement hoardings of the candidates aspiring to participate in the elections of National and Provincial assemblies. Monitoring teams deployed nationwide are currently removing advertisement hoardings that exceed prescribed limits, stated an official of the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP). According to the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP), the monitoring teams in Multan and Sialkot are removing promotional materials of candidates who have erected advertisement hoardings in contravention of the code of conduct. In accordance with the Election Commission of Pakistan's Code of Conduct issued on December 20, 2023, individuals and political parties are prohibited from affixing or distributing posters, handbills, pamphlets, leaflets, banners, or portraits larger than the specified sizes outlined by the ECP.—APP



ISLAMABAD: Laborers are busy during the construction of "Yadgar-e-Dastoor" in the memorandum of the completion Golden Jubilee of Constitution of Pakistan outside Parliament House in Federal Capital. —ONLINE

Success of UBG in FPCCI election a landmark development

President ICICI, Secretary General UBG has said that UBG's historic success in the FPCCI elections is a result of joint efforts of the business community

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD : Zafar Bakhtawari, former President of Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) and Secretary General, United Business Group (UBG), has said that UBG's historic success in the FPCCI elections is a result of joint efforts of the business community. This victory is the trust of the business community in the visionary leadership of UBG led by SM Tanveer. He said this while talking at Islamabad Airport on his return from Karachi to Islamabad. He said that SM Tanveer has remarkably promoted the mission of his father by earning the trust and confidence of the entire business community of the country. The historic victory



in the FPCCI elections is a testament to this fact. Zafar Bakhtawari said that the success of Atif Ikram Sheikh as Pres-

ident and Saqib Fayyaz Magoo as Senior Vice President of FPCCI is a landmark positive development in the current economic situation.

The new leadership of FPCCI will effectively elevate the business community's voice on policy forums. He said that in Pakistan's

challenging economic conditions, the business community has taken significant steps through its mandate to formulate better policies. The Secretary General of UBG further emphasized that FPCCI should consult ICICI, and other major trade organizations to make effective policies for the better growth of the economy. The government, institutions, and political parties should involve the business community as stakeholders in policymaking to steer Pakistan out of difficulties. He said that the next month, Pakistan will witness general elections where the nation will choose new leadership. All political parties should ensure in their manifestos that they would work to sign a charter of the economy to ensure stable, sustainable.

DC unveils plan to manage Murree tourist influx

DNA

ISLAMABAD : Deputy Commissioner (DC) Murree Agha Zaheer Abbas Tuesday said that in view of the snowfall prediction, the Punjab caretaker government with the coordination of the Pakistan Meteorological Department has issued a travel advisory for tourists and prepared a comprehensive plan to tackle visitors by establishing 13 facilitation centres.

Talking to a private news channel, he assured that all final arrangements and essential items such as petrol and meals have been arranged for tourists at these centres, underscoring the commitment to ensuring the well-being of visitors during their snowfall experience. The vehicles entering the city were being monitored through digital counting and will limit excessive vehicle moving towards the express highway to Murree, he added.

He further said that the website is also updated for tourists and they would be able to get the latest information about the weather, traffic conditions at various intersections, hotels and other necessary updates before coming to Murree. Replying a query about Parking space, he said that the Punjab government with the coordination of Private hotel associations have arranged free of cost parking spaces for visitors, adding, more other parking spaces were also being identified in Murree and adjoining areas.

To another question about Car maintenance awareness drive, he urged tourists to contact the traffic police for immediate assistance in case of any traffic-related challenges or emergencies, adding, the visitors are advised to come in warm clothes, maintain capacity vehicles with full fuel tanks and avoid unnecessary travel. Travellers should also keep all important food items with them while travelling to Murree, he added.

RDA issues 548 notices to illegal housing schemes

RDA had also directed the illegal housing societies to immediately stop their illegal advertisements and sale of the plots of unapproved housing schemes

DNA

RAWALPINDI : Rawalpindi Development Authority (RDA) in its ongoing operation against illegal housing societies has issued 548 legal notices and lodged 212 FIRs, said RDA spokesman. He further informed that the authority also sealed more than 183 offices of the illegal housing schemes and demolished 195 illegal constructions. He said that the authorities concerned on the orders of the Director General (DG), RDA Muhammad Saif Anwar Jappa were taking strict action against the rules violators. He said that the DG RDA, Deputy Commissioner Rawalpindi and City Police Officer, Rawalpindi were monitoring the operation against illegal housing societies, launched on the special instructions of the Commissioner Rawalpindi division Liaquat Ali Chhatta. RDA also sent 129 letters to the Cyber Crime Wing for legal action against the

rules violators. The operation was underway against illegal housing societies without any discrimination, he added. The citizens were advised not to invest in illegal housing schemes and check their status on RDA's website www.rda.gop.pk before any investment, he added. The offices of several illegal housing schemes had also been demolished and FIRs were also lodged against illegal and unapproved housing societies. Strict action was taken against illegal housing schemes including Blue World City, Multi garden, Abdullah City, Avalon city, Faisal Town Phase-2, Rudn Enclave, Capital Valley, Shaheen Garden, Atlantic City, Century Town, High Capital City, Royal Farm/Residencia/Apna Ghar, Chinar Enclave, Eman Garden, Theme Park View, Al-Imran Homes, Imarat Hoon Farm Homes, Khan Builders, Kashmir Homes/Imam Hassan Towns, Usmania Fort Housing Scheme, Haider Residencia, Khalid Colony,

Al-Baraka Garden, Zam Zam Villas, Eman Garden, Chinar Enclave, Gulshan-e-Abbas, Potohar Valley, Dua Garden, Anmol Garden, Ameen Housing, Watan Enclave, Cighu Farm House, Green Oaks (Harutus Flora), Manan City, Shakir Farms and others. He informed that on the special instructions of the Commissioner Rawalpindi division, Liaquat Ali Chhatta and DG RDA Muhammad Saif Anwar Jappa, the operation against illegal housing schemes would continue. He said that not only the operations were conducted against illegal housing societies, but, their offices were also demolished and FIRs were registered against those violating the rules. He said 218 challans were also issued during the operation against illegal housing schemes. The spokesman informed that nine accused involved in illegal housing societies' business were sent behind the bars while 28 housing societies owners.

FDE schools launch health camps for children

The Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training had already distributes 'Hygiene Kits' among students of government educational institutions

ADIL SHAHEEN

ISLAMABAD : Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training, in collaboration with the Ministry of Health is initiating comprehensive health camp for students within the institutions working under the ambit of the Federal Directorate of Education (FDE) to assess their health condition and ensure the well-being of the students. According to the official sources, Federal Directorate of Education (FDE),

in that regard, has directed all the Director colleges and schools and the Area Education Officers Rural area, Islamabad to arrange health camp in the educational institutions. FDE, in this regard, requested to direct all Head of Institutions to compile the necessary data of their students to share with the teams of Health Camp upon their arrival in the concern institution and compile the date by 05-01-2024. Meanwhile, commenting the arranging of health these camps, Riffat Ja-

been, Director Academics, Federal Directorate of Education (FDE) while talking to APP on Tuesday said that the aim of this activity is to ensure the health and well being of the students. She said that the camps will start work in next two weeks. She said that FDE has directed the heads of educational institutions specifically to encourage students to actively participate in health camps without compromising routine academic activities. She further informed that the doctors

team from all major public and private hospitals of federal capital will be hired for the check up of schools children. Under this Program, the Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training had already distributes 'Hygiene Kits' among students of government educational institutions within the ICT jurisdiction to ensure their good health. Doctors are also engaged to guide students on health and hygiene issues" Riffat Jabeen added.

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Argentina's shift not a rejection of BRICS

The decision by Argentina to not join the BRICS group of developing economies came as no real surprise given the pronouncements to that effect by the country's new president during his election campaign. The populist, self-defined "anarcho-capitalist", Javier Milei had previously said that his foreign policy would differ "in many aspects from that of the previous government" and "some decisions made by the previous administration will be reviewed". BRICS membership would have likely helped Argentina tap the "possibilities of joining new markets, of consolidating existing markets, of raising investment coming in, of creating jobs and raising imports", as the previous administration said when giving the reasons for it seeking Argentina's membership of the group. That Milei, in his letter to his counterparts of the five original BRICS members – Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa – proposed to "intensify bilateral relations" and increase "trade and investment flows" indicates that he is not looking to cut economic ties with the BRICS countries and that he is still hoping to release the immense potential that stands to be tapped in economic cooperation between Argentina and the BRICS members, old and new. Some in the West, however, are trying to use Argentina's rejection of BRICS membership as ammunition to attack China and other BRICS countries. A Fox News report crowed that Milei's decision was a "setback" for the global ambitions of China and Russia. Rather than viewing it as part of Milei's promise-for-votes and subsequent balancing act, they can only view it from the perspective of Washington's zero-sum "competition" with China and Russia. Argentina's economy is experiencing immense difficulties, with inflation reaching 150 percent and 40 percent of its population living below the poverty line. As some of Milei's policy changes aimed at revving up the economy have proved unpopular, the possibility of Argentina's new leader adjusting its foreign and economic policies to appease the public was always on the cards. BRICS now accounts for about 40 percent of the world's population and more than 25 percent of the world's GDP, and it contributes 50 percent of the world's economic growth. As an open and inclusive mechanism, it welcomes like-minded partners to join the big family. That Ethiopia, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Egypt and the United Arab Emirates have now become formal members of BRICS, starting Jan 1, underscores the aspiration among developing countries and emerging economies for a shared future of mutually beneficial cooperation. The door of membership to BRICS will always remain open to Argentina. It is welcome to join when it feels the time is right.



Tsai's New Year speech rings only bells of alarm

Secessionist-minded Tsai Ing-wen took advantage of her last New Year address as the head of the Taiwan authorities to brag that she had made the island "the world's Taiwan" rather than China's Taiwan. To cover up the fact that the island has never been so close to conflict with the Chinese mainland as it has been since she took office, Tsai played one word game after another in her 15-minute televised speech. Despite their refusal to uphold the 1992 Consensus and repeatedly buying arms from the United States to strengthen "national defense", she alleged her authorities have honored the commitment of maintaining the status quo of the Taiwan Strait. In spite of such blatant provocations as invitations to former US House of Representatives speaker Nancy Pelosi and attempts to inveigle independent status for the island in UN organizations, she claimed to have never taken the initiative to provoke the mainland. That nearly two-thirds of her speech was dedicated to defending her and her authorities' actions serves to show how little importance she has given to Taiwan people's well-being and livelihoods. Instead the focus of her work has been how to leverage Washington's support for her secessionist goal – it being regarded as an injurious thorn in Beijing's side – without precipitating a forceful response from Beijing. In a bid to put her eight years on the moral high ground and cover up the fact that the island has been downgraded to be a pawn in Washington's geopolitical game with Beijing, Tsai sought to portray the island as a symbol of "democracy and freedom". She portrayed it as being on the front line in the fight between good and evil, in the hope that the Taiwan people will regard the economic woes and regional tensions that have resulted from her speculating on Washington's support as being worthwhile. Moreover, by paralleling the Taiwan question with the Ukraine crisis and the Palestinian issue, and highlighting the necessity and inevitability of upholding "value diplomacy" in the global industry and supply chains, Tsai again sought to mislead the world about the nature of the Taiwan question by trying to deny the reality that it is an internal affair of China, and justify the US' "decoupling" in economy and trade. That Tsai openly promoted Lai Ching-te, her right-hand man and a DPP candidate in the forthcoming local election of the island in less than two weeks, as the "right choice" who can lead the island down the "right path" in the address should raise Taiwan people's full alert. Her speech reveals clearly the dangerous direction in which her earmarked successor will lead the island if elected.

Gaza war calls Middle East de-escalation into question

James Dorsey

The kingdom will need serious progress towards an Israeli-Palestinian peace agreement entailing the creation of an independent Palestinian state to justify the establishment of diplomatic relations with the Jewish state in the wake of the Gaza war. Even so, no Arab state has broken off relations despite mounting anti-Israeli sentiment across the region. Egypt may be the only Arab country that can counter public pressure with some justification, arguing that its border is the major funnel for humanitarian aid into Gaza. Egypt, one of the few countries with a direct line to Hamas, also plays a crucial role

In addition, Israel's devastating assault has complicated, if not made impossible, overt cooperation between Israel and Arab states, like the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain, that have diplomatic relations with the Jewish state. The war has also delayed US-led efforts to mediate Saudi recognition of Israel. The kingdom will need serious progress towards an Israeli-Palestinian peace agreement entailing the creation of an independent Palestinian state to justify the establishment of diplomatic relations with the Jewish state in the wake of the Gaza war. Even so, no Arab state has broken off relations despite mounting anti-Israeli sentiment across the region. Egypt may be the only Arab country that can counter public pressure with some justification, arguing that its border is the major funnel for humanitarian aid into Gaza. Egypt, one of the few countries with a direct line to Hamas, also plays a crucial role in arranging truces to facilitate prisoner exchanges and efforts to end the war. In a twist of irony, Qatar, which has refused to formalise relations with Israel without a resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, has emerged, alongside Egypt, as Israel's foremost Arab channel, particularly regarding war-related issues. The Egyptian and Qatari efforts have not earned them unambiguous acknowledgment by Israel, members of the US Congress, and some of Qatar's long-standing Arab critics. Long a football, in Israeli and American politics, Qatar, home to the United States' largest military base in the Middle East, has been taken to task for maintaining a relationship with Hamas, despite its proven utility and the fact that it enjoyed tacit Israeli and American approval. A headline in Haaretz, Israel's equivalent of The New York Times, read this weekend, "Netanyahu Wants to Make Qatar the Fall Guy for October 7 Massacre. Don't Let Him." In November, Qatar negotiated a one-week truce during which Hamas released more than 100 hostages kidnapped during its October 7 attack on Israel in exchange for 240 Palestinians held in Israeli prisons and a limited amount of humanitarian aid. That didn't prevent a senior Israeli official from questioning Qatar's role. "Right now, we need them. But when this thing passes from the world, we will settle accounts with them," said Israeli foreign ministry deputy director general for strategic affairs Joshua Zarka. Amid

calls on Qatar to crack down on exile Hamas leaders in the Gulf state, the outside world's link to the group, by Republican members of Congress, Qatar agreed in October with the United States to revisit its relationship with Hamas once all hostages have been released. Last month, the Middle East Media Research Institute (MEMRI), which was founded by Yigal Carmon, a former advisor to Israel's West Bank and Gaza occupation authority and Prime Ministers Yitzhak Shamir and Yitzhak Rabin, regurgitated documents leaked in 2019 indicating Qatari interference in the internal affairs of European, African, and Middle Eastern states. In 1993, Mr. Carmon resigned in protest against Mr. Rabin's signing of the Oslo accords, which laid the foundation for the establishment of an independent Palestinian state alongside Israel. The accords created President Mahmoud Abbas' West Bank-based Palestine Authority. The leaks, reportedly orchestrated by the United Arab Emirates, were part of a covert information war between the Gulf state and Qatar during a 3.5-year-long Emirati-Saudi diplomatic and economic boycott of Qatar in which both sides used leaks to portray each other negatively. The UAE and Qatar also hired intelligence companies to surveil and blacken their opponents' reputations in Europe and the United States. There was no obvious news peg for MEMRI to regurgitate a story with no updates that first broke three years ago and has lied dormant for the past two years as the media organisation documented in last month's publication. MEMRI did summarily reference Qatargate, a 2023 scandal involving European parliament members who allegedly were on the Qatari payroll, and Project Endgame, reportedly a Qatari-financed operation, involving a former CIA operative, to spy on the Gulf state's detractors in the run-up to the 2022 World Cup. Similarly, Israel has not made Egypt happy with calls to ethnically cleanse Gaza by moving a majority of its already displaced 2.3 million population to the Sinai Peninsula. In the latest incident, Israeli Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich called his weekend for Israeli re-occupation of the war-ravaged territory, arguing that "if there are 100,000 or 200,000 Arabs in Gaza and not two million, the whole discourse about the day after will be different." At the same, Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu insisted that Israel should

retain control of the Egypt-Gaza border zone. "The Philadelphi Corridor - or to put it more correctly, the southern stoppage point (of Gaza) - must be in our hands. It must be shut. It is clear that any other arrangement would not ensure the demilitarisation that we seek," Mr. Netanyahu said. Egypt has rejected both suggestions. Egypt and other Arab states fear that Israel's conduct of the war and expansionist ambitions will further inflame public opinion at home and upset, if not deliver a death knell to a fragile apple cart designed to shelve rather than resolve regional differences that like the Palestinian issue could spin out of control. Earlier this month, 96 per cent of Saudis polled favoured Arab states cutting all ties with Israel, while in a steep increase compared to previous surveys 40 per cent of those surveyed looked favourably at Hamas. Eighty-seven per cent believed the war had shown "that Israel is so weak and internally divided that it can be defeated some day." In a blow to Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman's effort to project the kingdom as a moderate and tolerant Muslim state, just 5 per cent agreed that Saudis should "show more respect to the world's Jews and improve our relations with them." Even so, 75 per cent supported Arabs engaging in diplomatic efforts to achieve peace between Israel and the Palestinians. In response to hardening public sentiment, Saudi authorities sought to restrict public support for the Palestinians. Last month's Red Sea Film Festival in Jeddah, the biggest film event in the Middle East and North Africa, welcomed Palestinian cinema but banned the donning by attendees of keffiyahs, the chequered black-and-white scarf, which is a popular icon of Palestinian identity. Similarly, the UAE disregarded optics when it last month put on trial on charges of terrorism 87 Emirati activists, some of whom have lingered for a decade behind bars, as it hosted what officials dubbed "the most inclusive Cop ever," the 28th United Nations Climate Change Conference. The charges did not involve Gaza-related issues but the opening of the trial as world attention focused on Dubai sent a message to Emirati nationals and residents that the UAE would not entertain public dissent, including in connection with the war and the Palestinians. Human rights groups and journalists reported the arrests of activists in the UAE, Bahrain, and Saudi Arabia who had expressed support for the Palestinians. Others were warned not to

NATO expansion in the hands of Turkiye's parliament

Zaid M. Belbagi

Just a few months after Russia's invasion of Ukraine, Sweden abandoned centuries of nonalignment to apply for NATO membership, with the conflict serving to show the extent of the threat to European stability. Despite its neighbor Finland's parallel membership application already being ratified, Sweden's accession has been delayed. The prospect of the accession of Sweden's impressive military to the bloc has been delayed by Turkiye, which has used its growing role within the organization to meet its

The conflict in Ukraine has put NATO membership under the spotlight, with the organization's 1,000-mile eastward expansion since the end of the Cold War being a primary reason for Russian mobilization. As is often the case, the future of the alliance is currently being held up by two states that do not border the northern Atlantic, namely Sweden and Turkiye. Just a few months after Russia's invasion of Ukraine, Sweden abandoned centuries of nonalignment to apply for NATO membership, with the conflict serving to show the extent of the threat to European stability. Despite its neighbor Finland's parallel membership application already being ratified, Sweden's accession has been delayed. The prospect of the accession of Sweden's impressive military to the bloc has been delayed by Turkiye, which has used its growing role within the organization to meet its own foreign and security policy objectives. Last week, the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Turkish parliament approved Sweden's accession to NATO. However, the overall process of Turkish approval is not complete until parliament ratifies the decision. The Swedish accession has stalled due to two conditions set by Turkiye. It called for Stockholm to take action against the Kurdistan Workers' Party, known as the PKK, and secondly it wants Canada to end its embargo on arms sales to Turkiye, alongside the US approving Ankara's request to purchase F-16 fighter jets. Sweden's involvement in the Kurdish question is not surprising. Home to a substantial and highly politicized Kurdish community, Sweden hosts several prominent Kurdish exiles and the PKK draws significant international, political and financial support from the diaspora. Six Kurdish-Swedish members of parliament are the visible embodiment of a wider political bloc that is active in Swedish politics. It is led by Amineh Kakabaveh, an Iranian of Kurdish origin, who

has been a fierce critic of Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan. So vocal has she been that Turkiye has repeatedly called for her extradition – a prospect that is unlikely given Swedish reticence about handing over its citizens. However, in a nod to a perceived warming of relations and to expedite its NATO talks, Sweden recently imprisoned a man who was found guilty of financing the PKK. Turkish-US relations went through various phases under the Trump administration and they have not improved under President Joe Biden. The chief issue of concern remains Turkiye's procurement of the advanced S-400 air defense system from Russia, which was not well received by the US and other NATO members. As a result, Washington suspended Turkiye's involvement in the F-35 jet fighter project, citing concerns about the potential sharing of classified features and technology with Russia, which would pose a future challenge to American national security interests. Turkiye has used its growing role within the organization to meet its own foreign and security policy objectives. Turkiye's defense cooperation with Russia has also delayed its intended purchase of 40 F-16 fighter jets and 80 associated modernization kits for its existing fleet. These negotiations were further strained when Turkiye rejected a US proposal that it move its Russian-made defense systems to Ukraine as part of NATO efforts to improve that country's defenses. Given NATO's initial opposition to Turkiye's purchase of the S-400 system from Russia, it was to be expected that Turkiye claimed the system is integral to its national security and not coherent with NATO systems. Due to Turkiye's importance to Eastern European security, as an interlocutor with Russia and indeed given the size of its military in an alliance plagued by dwindling European resources, movement on the \$20 billion F-16 order is expected, especially as and when Turkiye acquiesces

to Sweden's accession. Although Turkiye joined NATO more than six decades ago, its role has grown in line with its increased international influence and military strength. The country's geostrategic location remains of immense importance, as witnessed since the Russian invasion of Ukraine with its role in policing the Black Sea and securing the export of critical grain supplies from the conflict zone. With Ankara having the second-largest armed forces within the organization, NATO can ill afford to ostracize Turkiye at a time when its entire eastern flank faces constant Russian aggression and interference. Foreign policy divergences over Iraq, Iran, Syria and the wider Eastern Mediterranean have strained NATO's relationship with Turkiye, which is arguably more important than it has previously been, as the alliance deals with the most serious threat to its stability since the end of the Cold War. It is therefore critical that the organization seeks more common ground with Ankara. The approval of the Turkish Foreign Affairs Committee is a promising development in the context of NATO expansion; however, it also illustrates Turkiye's diplomatic influence over Sweden and the US. Though US National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan confirmed the Biden administration's readiness to approve Turkiye's purchase of the F-16 jets and modernization kits in July, this deal has yet to go through. Within this context, the Turkish parliament will continue to delay its approval of Sweden's NATO accession, simultaneously stalling Hungary's own decision on the matter, which is linked to Ankara's. As is always the case with old states with long memories, the current Swedish question is not without precedent. Just as when Charles XII of Sweden sought refuge with Sultan Ahmed III following defeat by Russia in 1709, Turkiye is once again an arbiter in the relationship between East and West.

—Sourced by Arab.

Briefs

CJP Isa hints at...

FROM PAGE 01

The proceedings of the case were broadcast live on SC's website and YouTube channel. On December 11, 2023, the chief justice while heading a three-member bench hearing a matter related to the disqualification of a former PML-N provincial lawmaker Sardar Meer Badshah Khan Qaisrani last month, took notice of the contradiction between its judgment and the legislation made through an amendment to the Election Act pertaining to the lifetime disqualification. The chief justice had observed that the Supreme Court's judgment on lifetime disqualification and the amendments made to the Election Act 2017 could not exist simultaneously. He further said either the legislation enacted by parliament to the Elections Act or the judgment delivered by the Supreme Court will prevail.

'Private armies are...

FROM PAGE 01

"If we solve it together, the problem of missing persons will be resolved," he said, adding that the resolution of this matter will strengthen Pakistan internally. CJP Isa also acknowledged the rights of citizens to conduct peaceful demonstrations who were protesting against the disappearances of their loved ones. "There are also concrete cases of missing persons," the CJP said. The chief justice also remarked that people in Pakistan often disappear after joining certain organisations, pointing at the anti-state entities present in the country. "The tradition of joining these organisations should end."

COAS Asim Munir...

FROM PAGE 01

COAS also appreciated PAF's efforts for transportation of Relief Goods for the victims of Gaza conflict. Following the ceremony, a spectacular airshow was conducted, featuring various PAF fighter jets, training aircraft and UAVs. The Chief Guest and the attendees later witnessed a static display showcasing the diverse PAF fighter, air mobility and UAV fleet. Meanwhile, Four terrorists were killed by security forces in an intelligence-based operation (IBO) in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's North Waziristan district on Tuesday, according to the military's media wing. A press release issued by the Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR) said security forces conducted the operation based on the reported presence of terrorists. "During the conduct of operation, intense fire exchange took place between own troops and the terrorists, as a result of which four terrorists were sent to hell, including a suicide bomber," the ISPR said.

Kakar: No one has...

FROM PAGE 01

The prime minister, elaborating his viewpoint while responding to a question, said that the one who reverted to fighting with the State and the countrymen would get the befitting response. He said that the government would not allow terrorists and militants to kill people with impunity as they had openly declared fight against the State and the civilians in the country. "We have accepted their challenge," he said and expressed the resolve to fully respond to all threats with full force. To another query, he said that the government functioned primarily on revenue generation system. The country had a tax collection of over Rs 9,000 billion, but there was tax evasion of more than almost Rs 10,000 billion. The lack of effective revenue system had been a persistent problem which required effective steps to rectify. He said that it was a consistent story with different past political setups and military dictators. For strengthening of economy, it was the first and foremost requirement to develop a robust tax system, he added, citing the Scandinavian countries with the highest tax revenue figures to their GDP (Gross Domestic Product).

Nadal roars back with 'emotional and important' win over Thiem

"I know Dominic has been going through hard times with injuries too, so happy to see him on court, wish him all the very best for the season."

BRISBANE: Rafael Nadal won his first match back from a year-long injury layoff when he beat former US Open champion Dominic Thiem at the Brisbane International on Tuesday, calling it an "emotional and important day". The 22-time Grand Slam winner looked in superb touch with a clinical 7-5, 6-1 victory over the Austrian in front of a full house at Pat Rafter Arena. He will now play Jason Kubler in the second round after the Australian wildcard progressed when Aslan Karatsev was forced to withdraw injured with the scores locked at one set apiece. The 37-year-old Spaniard had not played singles since a second-round loss at the Australian Open last year, undergoing two rounds of hip surgery. "Today, honestly, is an emotional and important day for me after probably one of the toughest years of my tennis career, without a doubt," he said. "To have the chance to come back after a year and play in front of an amazing crowd, and play I think at a very positive level for the first day is something that makes us feel proud." The former world number one did concede the result could have been very different. "I know I have been practising okay in the last week, practising I think at a positive level," Nadal said. "I'm talking with my hand on my heart and being



very honest with all of you.

"You really at the end hope that you're going to play at this level, but inside yourself you know that it can be a disaster, and that, of course, worried me." The long layoff raised fears that his career could be over, but Nadal said this week he was always determined to make it back for the 2024 season. He conceded before the

match there was "a high percentage" that it would be his last season, but left the door open to play on should his body hold up.

"I missed being healthy, I missed feeling competitive and to play in front of full crowds like this," he said courtside after beating Thiem in 89 minutes. Nadal spent time at his academy in Kuwait to prepare for the Australian

summer and trained there with fast-rising French teen Arthur Fils. He looked like he had never been away as he lost only six points on serve throughout the match and made few unforced errors in an almost perfect display against a quality opponent.

Former world number three Thiem, who has had injury concerns of his own, came through qualify-

ing to make the main draw and matched Nadal throughout the first set. But at 6-5 and with the set looking certain to go to a tiebreak, Nadal stepped up the pressure on Thiem's serve, forcing a series of errors and eventually winning the set when a Thiem forehand sailed long. Nadal then seized the advantage, holding his serve to love and then breaking Thiem to take a 2-0 lead in the second set. The Austrian's head then seemed to drop as Nadal lifted even further, wrapping up the match easily. "I think the first set was very equal, both of us serving well and then I was able to have that break for 6-5," he said. "I know Dominic has been going through hard times with injuries too, so happy to see him on court, wish him all the very best for the season." Earlier, fifth-seeded American Sebastian Korda and Argentinian sixth seed Sebastian Baez both crashed out. Germany's Yannick Hanfmann downed Korda 7-5, 6-4 while Baez lost to Lukas Klein, with the Slovakian qualifier winning 4-6, 6-3, 6-4. In the women's draw, former world number one Victoria Azarenka came back from second set jitters to see off Russia's Anna Kalinskaya 6-1, 7-6 (10/8), while Sofia Kenin, a former Australian Open winner, was stunned by Australian wildcard Arina Rodionova 7-5, 7-6 (9/7). - Agencies

Pakistan's lineup confirmed for Sydney Test against Aust

Shaheen Afridi and Imam-ul-Haq have been left out of the playing XI

DNA

SYDNEY: Pakistan have made two changes for the third and final Test of the series against Australia, which begins tomorrow at the Sydney Cricket Ground.

Saim Ayub will make his debut, replacing opener Imam-ul-Haq in the lineup. According to sources, the team management is unhappy with Imam's slow batting during the series so far. The left-hander has scored 94 runs in four

innings at a strike-rate of 31.22. The management has given clear instructions to the team about playing positive cricket, the sources added.

Meanwhile, spinner Sajid Khan has been included in place of pacer Shaheen Afridi, who has been rested, in order to boost the spin-bowling department since the pitch is likely to assist the slower bowlers. Shaheen has bowled 99.2 overs during the series, which is the most for both teams. Australia beat Pakistan in the

second Test by 79 runs in Melbourne to clinch the three-match Test series.

Chasing a target of 317 runs, Pakistan were dismissed for 237 in their second innings on Friday. A fired-up Pat Cummins bagged five wickets and 10 for the match to lead from the front and earn Australia a nail-biting win. The right-artermer also bagged the Player of the Match award. The hosts thumped the visitors by 360 runs in Perth during the first Test. Pakistan have performed poorly in Australia, losing

16 Tests on the trot with their last win in 1995. **Teams:** Australia: David Warner, Usman Khawaja, Marcus Labuschagne, Steve Smith, Travis Head, Mitchell Marsh, Alex Carey, Pat Cummins (capt), Mitchell Starc, Nathan Lyon, Josh Hazlewood.

Pakistan: Saim Ayub, Abdullah Shafique, Shan Masood (capt), Babar Azam, Saud Shakeel, Mohammad Rizwan, Agha Salman, Hasan Ali, Sajid Khan, Mir Hamza, Aamer Jamal.

Bangladesh's Shakib bats for ruling party in elections

MAGURA: Turning his star sports power to politics, colourful Bangladeshi cricketer Shakib Al Hasan is all but guaranteed to become a ruling party lawmaker with general elections on Sunday boycotted by the opposition.

Better known as the leading all-rounder of his era, the 36-year-old skipper has been on a whirlwind campaign for the ruling party of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

The result is barely in question. Opposition parties withdrew from a vote they said would be neither free nor fair, accusing Hasina of ruling with an iron fist. Shakib conceded he was not facing any serious obstacle to his election, but told AFP while on the hustings that the contest still made him anxious. "The competition and challenges are always there, be it a small team or big team," he said in his hometown Magura, where he is contesting a seat for Hasina's Awami League. "Even when we know we will win against a team, we still feel our heart beat before the game." Shakib's campaign obliged him to take a temporary leave of absence from cricket. He skipped a New Zealand tour where the team has shone without him, making history with their first one-day and Twenty20 wins against the Black Caps on the hosts' soil. - Agencies

Arafat shows faith in young players for NZ tour

LAHORE: Pakistan's High-Performance coach Yasir Arafat on Tuesday showed his utmost faith in the young players selected for the upcoming T20I series against New Zealand. Yasir Arafat talked to the media after the conclusion of Pakistan's training camp for the T20I series, expressing confidence in top-order batters Haseebullah Khan and Sahibzada Farhan as well as applauding their dedication in training. "Haseebullah is a very exciting cricketer. I have been following him since he played Under-19 World Cup two years ago. Apart from him, Sahibzada Farhan has shown significant improvement," said Arafat. He further opined on pace bowler Abbas Afridi, hinting at his potential to become an all-rounder. "Abbas Afridi has the potential to become a good all-rounder. I really like his attitude. In current times, it is essential for a bowler to work on their batting as well," he added. Upon being asked about Ahmed Shahzad's performance in the training camp, Arafat praised the top-order batter highly for his batting and fitness prowess. "It was great to see Ahmed Shahzad back to form after a lean patch for the past few years. He was one of the fittest players in the camp and was good with the bat too," Arafat concluded. Pakistan is scheduled to play a five-match T20I series against the Black Caps commencing from 12 January 2024 to 21 January 2024 in New Zealand. - DNA

Hockey squad announce for Olympic Qualifiers

AFZAL JAVED

ISLAMABAD: Ahammad Shekil butt will lead the 18-member Pakistan hockey squad to take part in the upcoming Olympic Qualifier event announced by Pakistan Hockey Federation (PHF) on Tuesday. Following the recommendations of the National Hockey Selection Committee, operating under the supervision of Olympian Kaleemullah Khan, President PHF Mir Tariq Hussain Bugti's final approval has paved the way for the unveiling of the 18-member Pakistan hockey team. The committee, comprising Olympians Naseer Ali, Rahim Khan, and Leaque Lashari International, meticulously evaluated the players' performances during the conclusive trials. The Olympic Qualifier event, scheduled to take place from January 15 to 21 in Mus-



cat, Oman, will witness the participation of key players, including goalkeepers Abdullah Ishfaq, Waqar, Arbaz Ahmed, Muhammad Abdullah, Sufyan Khan, Imad Shakeel Butt (Captain), and Abu Bakr Mahmood (Vice Captain). The team also includes Murtaza Yaqoob, Abdul Mannan, Aqeel Ahmed, Moeen Shakil, Salman Razaq, Abdul Hanan Shahid, Ghazanfar Ali, Abdul Rahman Jr., Zikriya Hayat, Rana Abdul Waheed Ashraf, and Arshad Liaquat. The management team comprises Head Coach Shahnaz Sheikh, Coach Shakil Abbasi, Assistant Coach Olympian Dilwar Hussain, Goalkeeper Coach Amjad Ali, Physiotherapist Waqas Mahmood, and Physical Trainer Muhammad Imran Khan. With this formidable lineup, Pakistan aims to secure its spot in the Olympics Qualifier event, showcasing the skills and determination of the selected players under the experienced guidance of the coaching and management staff.

Emma makes spectacular comeback after 259 days

Also in Auckland, top seed and US Open champion Coco Gauff won her first match of the year by beating fellow American Claire Liu 6-4 6-2 while Svitlina defeated Caroline Wozniacki 6-4 6-3 as the Dane continues her own comeback

WEB DESK

AUCKLAND: Emma Raducanu said she is "grateful to be healthy" again after winning her first match following eight months out with injury at the Auckland Classic. The Briton, playing for the first time since wrist and ankle surgeries, fought through a tense deciding set to beat world number 134 Elena-Gabriela Ruse. She let slip a 5-2 lead in the third set and missed two match points at 5-3 before eventually winning 6-3 4-6 7-5. "It's pretty amazing to just be out here and playing," Raducanu, 21, said. "I'm just really happy to be back on the tour and can't wait to start this season and carry on hopefully injury-free and healthy. "It's difficult after having such a long hiatus, but I'm grateful to be healthy, grateful to be able to move my body, not bed-ridden and in a wheelchair." After the final point, the 2021 US Open champi-

on, who needed a wildcard to enter the tournament having dropped to 301 in the rankings, covered her

face with her hand in a celebration mixed with pleasure and relief. The tougher test of Ukrainian second

seed Elina Svitolina awaits in the second round. Raducanu said she felt "reborn" before her come-

back, having had surgeries on both wrists and her ankle in May. She showed little sign of rustiness in a comfortable first set in which she was particularly strong on serve. Ruse, 26, then raised her level and snatched the momentum with her powerful groundstrokes in taking the second set. After a tight start to the decider, Raducanu, who looked free of injury throughout the match, moved into the ascendancy by breaking to love for a 3-2 lead and continued by confidently taking the next two games. Ruse then swung freely and her attacks earned back the first break back before she saved the first two match points. When Raducanu double-faulted while handing back the second break, the Romanian looked favourite at 5-5. However, a fine backhand on to the baseline gave the Briton another break of serve and with it the third opportunity to serve out the match. The final game

was not easy as Raducanu fell 0-30 behind but timely and effective first serves gave her two more match points and Ruse netted on the second after being pulled out wide.

Raducanu's meeting with Svitolina will act as further preparation for the Australian Open, which begins on 14 January. Currently, she will have to go through qualifying to reach the main draw but the Briton will get direct entry as the first alternate if there any more withdrawals from the Melbourne Grand Slam. Raducanu, who has a protected ranking of 103, could also be awarded one of four remaining wildcard spots in the women's singles draw. Also in Auckland, top seed and US Open champion Coco Gauff won her first match of the year by beating fellow American Claire Liu 6-4 6-2 while Svitlina defeated Caroline Wozniacki 6-4 6-3 as the Dane continues her own comeback.



Talks enabled TTP to resettle

FROM PAGE 01

alarming development. In a written reply, the ministry said inaction on the part of Afghan interim government - led by the Taliban - after the US withdrawal from Afghanistan had provided an opportunity to the TTP expand its influence and range of activities. The interior ministry's response to the Pakistan's Upper House of Parliament is a damning indictment of the then PTI government which decided to hold dialogue with the TTP and allowed the return of its members to the erstwhile tribal region, which is responsible for a sharp increase attacks on security forces and law enforcement agencies as well as targeted killings of their officials and civilians.

PTI to contest...

FROM PAGE 01

as the party would take part in the elections with complete preparations and full force. PTI Chairman made it clear that PTI wanted elections in the given date of February 8 and the party enthusiasm could be judged from the fact that it fielded the highest number of candidates for the upcoming general elections. Barrister Gohar Khan reiterated that PTI wanted the SC's intervention because of the ECP's inability to perform its due duty, adding that the election body's sole responsibility was to hold free and fair polls; however the commission miserably failed in performing its constitutional obligations hitherto.

JUI-F ready to work...

FROM PAGE 01

political party is ready to work with the Nawaz Sharif party to serve the country. The JUI-F chief - who was also head of the Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM), the multi-party alliance which led the previous government - said that it would not be the first time for both parties to jointly contest elections. All political parties, he said, had always respected each other's mandate except for the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) whose mandate was rejected by the entire nation. MaulanaFazl has once again cast doubts over the staging of the most sought-after polls, saying that it would be a big challenge for the election organising authorities if they fail to establish polling stations due to cold weather.

6 kidnapped and...

FROM PAGE 01

Police say the victims were from Punjab and ran barber shops in the local bazaar, adding that they were abducted a day earlier and their bodies had been recovered on Tuesday from a nearby area. The increase in terrorism acts - including attacks on military and police as well as targeted killings - are on the rise in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, especially the former tribal belt. However, the region around Bannu and Dera Ismail Khan has been worst affected. In this scenario, running election campaign has become a huge challenge to certain political parties - JUI-F, ANP, PML-N and PPP - which are known target of terrorist groups.

Japan...

FROM PAGE 01

army, firefighters, and police officers have been sent to the devastated Noto peninsula in Ishikawa prefecture, but rescue efforts are hindered by damaged roads and difficulty in assessing the full extent of the aftermath. Many rail services, ferries and flights into the area have been suspended. Noto airport has been closed due to damage to its runway, terminal and access roads, with 500 people stranded inside cars in its parking lot, according to Japan's public broadcaster NHK. "The search and rescue of those impacted by the quake is a battle against time," Prime Minister Fumio Kishida said during an emergency disaster meeting on Tuesday, adding that helicopter surveys had discovered many fires and widespread damage to buildings and infrastructure.

Briefs

UK's Blair denies link to role in 'resettlement' of Gazans

LONDON: Britain's former prime minister Tony Blair has strongly denied an Israeli media report linking him to talks last week about the resettlement of Palestinians from Gaza in other countries. Channel 12 claimed on Sunday that Blair, who left office in 2007 and served as a Middle East envoy charged with building up Palestinian institutions, was in Israel last week. The news channel said he held meetings with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and war cabinet member Benny Gantz about a mediation role after the war with Hamas. He could also act as a go-between with moderate Arab states about the "voluntary resettlement" of Gazans, it added. Expelling civilians during a conflict or creating unlivable conditions which force them to leave is a war crime. The Tony Blair Institute for Global Change, a non-profit organisation he set up in 2016, said the report was "a lie". "The story was published without any contact with Tony Blair or his team. No such discussion has taken place," it said in a statement on Monday night. "Nor would Tony Blair have such a discussion. The idea is wrong in principle. Gazans should be able to stay and live in Gaza."—APP

Pak assistance to Gaza arrives at El-Arish

CAIRO: A special military aircraft from Pakistan, carrying 20 tons of much-needed humanitarian assistance and medical aid for the brotherly people of Gaza, arrived at El-Arish International Airport, Egypt on Tuesday. Officials from the Embassy of Pakistan in Egypt handed over the aid to the Egyptian Red Crescent Society for its onward delivery to the Palestinian Red Crescent Society in Gaza. Pakistan has delivered more than 200 tons of humanitarian and medical assistance to the people of Gaza so far. Pakistan will continue to provide them with essentially required relief assistance in the future as well.—APP

Turkiye 'neutralizes' senior PKK terrorist

ANKARA: Turkish intelligence has "neutralized" Abdulmutalip Dogruci, a senior PKK terrorist in northern Iraq, security sources said on Tuesday. The National Intelligence Organization (MIT) located the terrorist code-named Cesur Vedat, in the Iraqi city of Sulaymaniyah, said the sources on condition of anonymity due to restrictions on speaking to media. It was determined that Dogruci had been assigned by the PKK terrorist group to organize and supervise drug trafficking activities in the Sulaymaniyah countryside. The terrorist, tried for drug trafficking and looting in Istanbul in the past, moved to Iraq in 2017 and started operating in the countryside. Turkish authorities use the term "neutralize" to imply the terrorists in question surrendered or were killed or captured. The anti-terror operation came after the Dec. 29 PKK terror attack that killed 12 Turkish soldiers in northern Iraq. Turkish airstrikes, since then, have destroyed dozens of terror targets in northern Iraq and Syria, and neutralized senior terrorists. PKK terrorists often hide out in northern Iraq to plot cross-border attacks in Türkiye. The group also has a Syrian branch, known as the YPG. In its more than 35-year terror campaign against Türkiye, the PKK — listed as a terrorist organization by Türkiye, the US, and EU — has been responsible for the deaths of more than 40,000 people, including women, children, and infants.—DNA

33 nabbed over Mossad's abduction plot in Türkiye

Turkish intel alerted Malaysian authorities and secured his release from Mossad-linked abductors and brought him back to Türkiye, where he now resides in a safe house

FOREIGN DESK

ANKARA: The Chief Prosecutor's Office in Istanbul issued arrest warrants for 46 suspects in an investigation into Israeli intelligence service Mossad's alleged plot targeting foreigners in Türkiye. Thirty-three suspects were detained on Tuesday, authorities announced. Operations are underway to capture the other suspects. Authorities said operations were held in eight provinces against people suspected of involvement in espionage activities for Israel. The investigation found that Israeli intelligence was behind activities targeting foreigners residing in Türkiye, from reconnaissance to assaults and abduction attempts. No other details are available regarding the investigation, but Mossad was implicated in the past in investigations about attempts to kidnap Palestinians living in Türkiye. Interior Minister

Ali Yerlikaya shared a video of operations jointly carried out by police and the National Intelligence Organization (MIT). On a social media post, Yerlikaya said an investigation into international espionage activities led to the operations. "We will not allow espionage targeting our national unity," Yerlikaya said. The minister said authorities discovered more than 143,000 euros (\$157,300) and more than \$23,000 in the possession of suspects, along with one pistol and a large amount of munitions. Turkish intelligence sources told Anadolu Agency (AA) last month that Israeli intelligence was warned against any attempt to assassinate members of the Palestinian resistance group Hamas in Türkiye. Israel will hunt down Hamas in Lebanon, Türkiye and Qatar even if it takes years, and head of Israel's domestic security agency Shin Bet, Ronen Bar, said in a recording aired by Israel's public broadcaster Kan, before the state-

ments of Turkish intelligence sources. "The Cabinet has set us a goal, in street talk, to eliminate Hamas. This is our Munich. We will do this everywhere: in Gaza, in the West Bank, in Lebanon, in Türkiye, in Qatar. It will take a few years, but we will be there to do it," he said. By Munich, Bar was referring to Israel's response to the 1972 killing of 11 Israeli Olympic team members when gunmen from the Palestinian Black September group launched an attack on the Munich games. Israel responded by carrying out a targeted assassination campaign against Black September operatives and organizers over several years and in several countries. Hamas leaders reside in or frequently visit Lebanon, Türkiye and Qatar. Hamas political chief Ismail Haniyeh even attended a landmark meeting with Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas in the capital Ankara last summer, in talks hosted by Pres-

ident Recep Tayyip Erdoğan for improvement of ties between the Palestinian Authority and Hamas. The Turkish sources said such an action would result in serious consequences. The warning by Turkish officials, who asked not to be named due to restrictions on speaking to the media, followed an earlier Wall Street Journal story alleging that amid ongoing Israeli attacks on Gaza, Israel also plans to assassinate Hamas members living outside Palestine, including in Türkiye, Lebanon and Qatar. The necessary warnings against any such action were made to the Israeli officials concerned, Turkish officials said. The officials mentioned that various foreign intelligence services had previously tried to carry out illegal activities on Turkish territory but without success, stressing that no foreign intelligence service would be allowed to carry out such operations on the soil of the Republic of Türkiye. Turkish officials have condemned the brutality of Israel's

attacks on Gaza, taking more than 20,000 lives and stressed that Hamas, which Israel has said it aims to eradicate, is not a terrorist group. Türkiye, even at times of potential rapprochement with Israel after the two countries' relations deteriorated over Türkiye's support for the Palestinian cause, was uncompromising on Israeli intelligence's operations in its territories. Apart from dismantling the secret cells of Mossad, Türkiye most recently saved a Palestinian hacker from his abductees, according to reports in the Turkish media. Omar A., a hacker associated with Hamas who reportedly managed to disrupt Israel's Iron Dome defense system, was abducted in Malaysia, where he traveled from Türkiye. Turkish intel alerted Malaysian authorities and secured his release from Mossad-linked abductors and brought him back to Türkiye, where he now resides in a safe house.

Israel's SC overturns a key component of Netanyahu's judicial overhaul

JERUSALEM: Israel's Supreme Court struck down a key component of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's contentious judicial overhaul Monday, delivering a landmark decision that could reopen the fissures in Israeli society that preceded the country's ongoing war against Hamas. The planned overhaul sparked months of mass protests, threatened to trigger a constitutional crisis between the judicial and legislative branches of government, and rattled the cohesion of Israel's powerful military. Those divisions were largely put aside after Hamas militants carried out a bloody cross-border attack in southern Israel on Oct. 7, triggering a war that has raged in Gaza for nearly three months. But Monday's court decision could reignite those tensions even while the country remains at war. Justice Minister Yariv Levin, a Netanyahu ally and the architect of the overhaul, lambasted the court's decision, saying it demonstrated "the opposite of the spirit of unity required these days for the success of our

soldiers on the front." The ruling "will not discourage us," Levin said without indicating whether the government would try to revive his plan in the short term. "As the campaigns are continuing on different fronts, we will continue to act with restraint and responsibility," he said. In Monday's decision, the court narrowly voted to overturn a law passed in July that prevents judges from striking down government decisions they deem "unreasonable." Opponents had argued that Netanyahu's efforts to remove the standard of reasonability opens the door to corruption and improper appointments of unqualified cronies to important positions. The law was the first in a planned overhaul of the Israeli justice system. The overhaul was put on hold after Hamas militants carried out their Oct. 7 attack, killing some 1,200 people and kidnapping 240 others. Israel immediately declared war, and is pressing forward with an offensive that Palestinian health officials say has killed nearly 22,000 people in Gaza. In an 8-7 decision, the Supreme Court justices struck down

the law because of the "severe and unprecedented harm to the core character of the State of Israel as a democratic country." The justices also ruled 12-3 that they had the authority to overturn so-called "Basic Laws," major pieces of legislation that serve as a sort of constitution for Israel. It was a significant blow to Netanyahu and his hard-line allies, who claimed the national legislature, not the high court, should have the final word over the legality of legislation and other key decisions. The justices said the Knesset, or parliament, does not have "omnipotent" power. Netanyahu's government could decide to ignore Monday's ruling, setting the stage for a constitutional showdown over which branch of government has ultimate authority. The court issued its decision because its outgoing president, Esther Hayut, is retiring, and Monday was her last day on the job. Netanyahu and his allies announced their sweeping plan to reshape the judiciary shortly after taking office a year ago. It calls for curbing the power of the judges, including by limiting the Supreme Court's ability to review parliamenta-

ry decisions and changing the way judges are appointed. Supporters said the changes aim to strengthen democracy by circumscribing the authority of unelected judges and turning over more powers to elected officials. But opponents see the overhaul as a power grab by Netanyahu, who is on trial for corruption charges, and an assault on a key watchdog, the Movement for Quality Government in Israel, a good-government group that opposed the legislation, called the Supreme Court's ruling "a tremendous public victory for those who seek democracy." "Only an unreasonable government, one that acts unreasonably, that makes unreasonable moves, abolishes the reasonability standard," the group's chairman, Eliad Shraga, said. Before the Israel-Hamas war, hundreds of thousands of Israelis took to the streets in weekly protests against the government. Among the demonstrators were military reservists, including fighter pilots and members of other elite units, who said they would stop reporting for duty if the overhaul was passed. Reservists make up the backbone of the Israeli military.—Agencies

Japan plane in flames after collision, 5 dead

TOKYO: Five people aboard a Japan coast guard aircraft died Tuesday when it hit a Japan Airlines passenger plane on the ground in a fiery collision at Tokyo's Haneda airport. All 379 passengers and crew on board the passenger plane which burst into flames were safely evacuated, Japanese transport minister Tetsuo Saito told reporters. But five of the six crew members from the smaller plane — bound for central Japan after Monday's huge earthquake — died, Saito said. The captain escaped and survived but was injured, he said, cautioning that "we're not at the stage to explain the cause" of the accident. Television and unverified footage shared on social media showed the Japan Airlines (JAL) airliner moving along the runway before a large eruption of orange flames and black smoke burst from beneath and behind it. Video posted to social media platform X showed people sliding down an inflatable emergency slide from the side of the passenger plane while flames shot out from the rear of the aircraft. All 367 passengers plus 12 crew onboard were swiftly taken off the plane before dozens of fire engines with flashing blue lights sprayed the fuselage. They however failed to put out the flames coming out of windows near the wings and the blaze soon engulfed the entire aircraft. The plane, reportedly an Airbus 350, had arrived from New Chitose Airport serving Sapporo on the northern island of Hokkaido. Those on board included eight children. "Smoke began to fill the plane, and I thought, 'this could be really bad'", an adult male passenger told reporters at the airport. "An announcement said doors in the back and middle could not be opened. So everyone disembarked from the front," he said. A female passenger said it had been dark on board as the fire intensified after landing. "It was getting hot inside the plane, and I thought, to be honest, I would not survive," she said in comments shown on broadcaster NHK. The coast guard plane had been preparing to fly to Ishikawa prefecture to deliver supplies after the devastating New Year's Day earthquake which killed at least 48 people.—DNA

Iran's Raisi set to visit Türkiye

TEHRAN: President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan is expected to meet visiting Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi on Thursday in the capital Ankara. The long-delayed visit makes Raisi Erdoğan's first guest head of state this year. It comes at a time of tensions between the West and Iran over the latter's stance on heating the Red Sea. Like its neighbor Türkiye, Iran is outspoken on the Palestine-Israel conflict and backs the Houthis of Yemen. It reportedly deployed a warship at the Red Sea, at a time of tensions on the key shipping route. The Houthis have been targeting vessels in the Red Sea, those delivering goods to Israel in particular, in response to Israeli aggression targeting Palestinian civilians in the Gaza Strip since October 2023. Media outlets reported that the agenda of the Erdoğan-Raisi meeting will be the humanitarian crisis unfolding in Gaza after Israel's attacks and the delivery of aid to Gaza. Since October, Türkiye engaged in a diplomatic blitz to end the conflict, highlighting the need for a lasting solution favoring the rights of Palestinians. Ankara has proposed a guarantorship model to ensure a solution. The two leaders previously discussed over the phone steps for a permanent cease-fire in Gaza, with Erdoğan stressing the importance of the Muslim world adopting a "common stance against Israeli atrocities." Erdoğan and Raisi are also expected to discuss the Zangezur Corridor project, which will provide a direct land link between Türkiye's main ally Azerbaijan's exclave Nakhchivan and Türkiye. The corridor is a geopolitical link for Türkiye to Azerbaijan and beyond that, Central Asia. It will eliminate Nakhchivan's dependence on Armenian control for transportation.—DNA

S. Korea opp leader stabbed in neck

SEOUL: South Korea's opposition leader Lee Jae-myung has been stabbed in the neck during a visit to the city of Busan. Mr Lee, who narrowly lost the 2022 presidential election, sustained a 1cm laceration on the left side of his neck, reports said. He was airlifted to hospital. Doctors say the wound is not life-threatening. The 66-year-old man who attacked him said he had intended to kill Mr Lee, Yonhap news agency reported. The motive for the attack is unclear. The brazen daytime attack shocked the nation and prompted condemnation from political parties and politicians, including current President Yoon Suk Yeol. Mr Lee, who leads the Democratic Party of Korea, was addressing reporters at a news conference during a visit to a construction site in the port of Busan on Tuesday morning when the attacker reportedly approached him to ask for an autograph.—Agencies

Child among 8 killed in Syria clashes

BEIRUT: Eight civilians, including a child, were killed Monday during exchanges of fire between the army and rebels in northwestern Syria, with 19 others wounded, a war monitor said. The fighting pitted the army of Syrian President Bashar Assad against Hayat Tahrir Al-Sham (HTS), an Islamist group led by Al-Qaeda's former Syria branch. "An elderly man, a woman and her young daughter were killed and 10 other civilians were wounded in a bombardment by the HTS on the villages of Nubul and Zahraa, in a part of Aleppo province controlled by the Syrian regime," the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said. HTS and other groups control swathes of Idlib province and parts of neighboring Aleppo, Hama and Latakia provinces. The Syrian army retaliated by bombing residential areas of Darat Izza town in Aleppo, killing three civilians and wounding nine others, the Observatory said. The Britain-based war monitor, which has a network of sources inside Syria, said the bombardments struck a bakery, a mosque, a power plant and a popular market.—Agencies

Tebboune holds phone call with Macron

ALGIERS: Algerian President Abdelmadjid Tebboune has discussed with his French counterpart Emmanuel Macron his expected visit to France. The Algerian presidency said that the two presidents exchanged congratulations on the occasion of the new year. The state visit of Tebboune to France is "still the subject of preparations", affirmed the Algerian Minister of Foreign Affairs Ahmed Attaf, specifying that it depends on the settlement of five files. Attaf listed the issues of memory, mobility, economic cooperation, the French nuclear tests in the Algerian Sahara, as well as the return of symbolic belongings of Emir Abdelkader — the founder of the modern Algerian state. Ties between France and Algeria have been frosty since the statements made by Macron in October 2021 when he questioned whether Algeria had existed as a nation before French colonialism. The fact that French intelligence evacuated Algerian activist Amira Bouraoui from Tunisia to France in 2023 also caused tension in the ties between both countries. At the beginning of August, Tebboune declared that his state visit to France was "still maintained" but depended "on the program" of the Elysée, specifying that a "state visit has conditions" and "no 'It's not a tourist visit.'" In August 2022, Macron arrived in Algeria hoping to repair fractured relations with a nation whose oil and gas reserves have new strategic significance because of Europe's looming energy crisis. Moreover, Tebboune made a phone call with his Tunisian counterpart Kais Saied. They discussed bilateral cooperation and ways to develop it in all fields, in addition to international and regional issues of mutual interest.—APP



Islamabad : The Government of Pakistan dispatched the third consignment of relief goods for the people of Gaza. Foreign Minister Jalil Abbas Jilani sent off the cargo with a special Pakistan Airforce aircraft at Noor Khan Airbase.—DNA

Rebirth of neo-fascism: Armenians spur on Hitler's propaganda

Unfortunately, Europe, which was more suffered from fascism in the mid-XX century, is indifferent to today's current state of Armenia. Neo-fascist youth of Armenia trying to blame Azerbaijan by seeking the topic in each word could be a society that will lead Europe to another disaster

ASIM ALIYEV

One of the biggest threats around the world today is the resurgence of neo-fascism. Today, neo-fascist ideas are considered a bloody policy against humanity, and a decisive fight against them is an important task. After all, the international community is well aware that such hostile propaganda can once again lead the world to great disasters. However, at a time when humanity is moving towards greater development, there are still countries that promote neo-fascism to the rank of state policy. In this regard, Armenia today is better known for its

efforts to revitalize and spread the ideas of neo-fascism. Today, neo-fascism is experiencing a new stage of revival in Armenia and is gathering many supporters. After the Second Garabagh War, revanchist forces in Armenia increasingly began to proclaim neo-fascist ideas. In Armenia, Armenian criminals who had committed countless crimes against humanity together with the Nazis were presented as heroes, and monuments were erected to them. One of such hated "heroes" is the criminal general Garegin Yeghishkevich Ter-Arutunyan, nicknamed Nzhdeh. A few days ago, in an interview with journalists, Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev noted that fascism as heroism

has no place in the CIS. In Yerevan, in the center of the city, a six-meter-high monument to fascist executioner Nzhdeh is being erected, the opening of which is attended by the leadership of Armenia. What does it mean? "Nzhdeh's crimes are not limited to the crimes he committed during World War II. He committed cruelty and genocide against the peaceful population of Azerbaijan and killed thousands of innocent Azerbaijanis. All these are historical facts," the President said. The installation of a monument to Nzhdeh in Yerevan, who participated in the murder of tens of thousands of civilians, and committed numerous murders and robberies in Ukraine and Poland, shows the

love of the Armenian authorities for Nazism. Considering it as heroism, the installation by the Armenian authorities of a monument to an executioner who sold out to the Nazis and spilled the blood of thousands of people is the greatest disrespect, insult, and betrayal towards all peoples and nations who fought against fascism. Showing respect for fascists and terrorists is not something new in the social and political life of Armenia. Raising them to the rank of heroes is one of the erroneous priorities of Armenia's state policy. The installation of a monument to terrorists who served fascism in Yerevan is a clear propaganda of Hitlerism. Such events can only shape the principles of fascism

in Armenia itself. There is widespread news about people visiting this place as an avenue of honor. Armenia's leadership must realize that such revanchist and neo-Nazi thoughts can lead young people to the abyss. Unfortunately, Europe, which was more suffered from fascism in the mid-XX century, is indifferent to today's current state of Armenia. Neo-fascist youth of Armenia trying to blame Azerbaijan by seeking the topic in each word could be a society that will lead Europe to another disaster. For this reason, today's politicians of Europe, who are playing double standards and defending Armenia, need to watch these motives carefully. Because we simply enlighten before it is too late.—Source: Azertnews

Briefs

Ali Nawaz Awan granted interim bail

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Judicial Magistrate Abdul Ghafoor Kakar on Tuesday granted interim bail to the former member of the National Assembly, Ali Nawaz Awan, in the case of violating Section 144 in connection with the incidents of May 9. The defense counsel argued before the court that the cases registered against Ali Nawaz were baseless, and the accuser was actively participating in the investigation. After considering the arguments, the court granted interim bail to Ali Nawaz against the surety bonds of Rs20,000. Subsequently, the court adjourned the hearing till January 10.

SC bench not established solely for Nawaz

DNA

LAJORE: Former Federal Law Minister and Senator Azam Nazir Tarar Tuesday stated that the Supreme Court's bench, addressing the issue of disqualification, was not established solely for Nawaz Sharif. In a media talk at Hafizabad, he highlighted that the amendment in the disqualification case would not only benefit Nawaz Sharif but also approximately a hundred parliamentarians. The hearing of disqualification cases in the Supreme Court is deemed a progressive move by Chief Justice Faisal Issa, he hinted. "Chief Justice Faisal Issa's initiative aims to eliminate contradictions arising from judicial decisions. In cases where judicial rulings create ambiguity, the parliament has the authority to rectify them through legislative amendments, as explained in Section 232 of the Election Act," he remarked.

Faizabad commission broadens inquiry scope

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: The commission investigating the Faizabad dharna case has broadened its terms of reference (TORs) to probe the matter. The Faizabad dharna commission will also investigate the appeals against the case and the reasons for their sudden withdrawal, a private news channel reported citing official sources. The commission will also record the statements of relevant persons, if needed, and review all the reports, documents and statements related to the case. The commission has been given four more weeks to complete its work, sources said. The commission had also summoned former director general of Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) Lt-Gen (ret'd) Faiz Hameed for the second time, but it is unclear whether he appeared before the commission or not.

Israel maintains onslaught as Gaza death toll tops 22,000

Russia fired scores of missiles and drones at the Ukrainian capital Kyiv and the northeastern city of Kharkiv on Tuesday, killing at least five civilians, wounding dozens and causing widespread damage, officials said

NEWS DESK

GAZA: As the US-backed Israeli genocidal war on the Gaza Strip entered day 88 on Tuesday, massive aerial and artillery strikes continued to pound and level whole blocks and homes and massacre more civilians, mostly children and women. The total number of Palestinians killed in Gaza since October 7 now stands at 22,185, while at least 57,000 have been injured, the Hamas-run Ministry of Health announced on Tuesday. Meanwhile, air and ground attacks continued across the Strip, including in the south, where hundreds of thousands of displaced

people have been directed to seek safety. The Israeli army says that 31 soldiers have been injured in the Gaza Strip during the past 24 hours. According to the latest figures released by the army, 507 soldiers have been killed and 2,265 others injured since the outbreak of the Gaza conflict on October 7. At least 983 soldiers have been wounded since the start of the ground invasion at the end of October. Palestinian Information Center (PIC) said that the Israeli occupation army continued to attack different areas of Gaza last night and on Tuesday morning. According to local sources, Israeli attacks on central Gaza during the past 24 hours had killed at least 70 civilians and injured over 100 others. 15 civilians from the family of Matar were reportedly martyred following an Israeli airstrike on their house in Deir al-Balah in central Gaza. Palestinian Resistance fighters are engaged in fierce confrontations against Israeli occupation forces at multiple axes in the Gaza Strip, most notably in the al-Tawam area northwest of Gaza. Palestinian media reported that fierce confrontations with the Israeli occupation are ongoing on multiple axes in the Gaza Strip, most notably in the al-Tawam area northwest of Gaza, and in the eastern and central areas of Khan Younis, south of the Strip, as well as in the neighborhoods of al-Daraj and

al-Tuffah east of Gaza City. The Al-Quds Brigades, the military wing of the Islamic Jihad Movement in Palestine, announced that its fighters are engaged in intense confrontations with Israeli invading soldiers using automatic weapons, inflicting casualties among them in Bureij refugee camp in the center of the Gaza Strip. The Brigades also stated that they targeted Israeli military gatherings in Khan Younis with a barrage of mortar shells. Additionally, the National Resistance Brigades (the forces of the martyr Omar al-Qassem) succeeded in sniping an Israeli soldier in the vicinity of the neighborhood of al-Sheikh Radwan, near Gaza City, confirming a direct hit.

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Hamas Dy Head leader assassinated in Israeli strike

An Israeli drone struck a Hamas office in the southern suburbs of Lebanon's capital Beirut on Tuesday, killing four people

DNA

BEIRUT: The deputy head of the political bureau of the Palestinian resistance movement Hamas has been assassinated in an Israeli drone attack in the southern suburb of the Lebanese capital of Beirut. An Israeli drone struck a Hamas office in the southern suburbs of Lebanon's capital Beirut on Tuesday, killing four people, Lebanon's state news agency reported. Senior Hamas official Saleh Al-Arouri was killed in the incident, Al-Manar television station of Hezbollah reported. Al-Manar also said an explosion was heard near the Hadi Nasrallah highway close to a road junction. It gave no details of the explosion, which comes a day before a speech by Hezbollah leader Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah. A Reuters witness said the explosion may have been caused by a drone that hit the second floor of a building in the crowded neighborhood. Hezbollah, an ally of Hamas, has been exchanging near-daily fire with Israel across Lebanon's southern frontier since the eruption of the Israeli-Hamas war in Gaza in early October. Israeli air strikes and shelling have killed more than 100 Hezbollah fighters and nearly two dozen civilians, including children, elderly and several journalists, according to Hezbollah and security sources.



ISLAMABAD: UAE ambassador to Pakistan, Hamad Obaid Ibrahim Salem Al-Zaabi calls on Caretaker Minister for IT and Telecommunication, Dr. Umar Saif. - DNA

Top court strikes down PHC decision to suspend RO

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court on Tuesday nullified the Peshawar High Court's (PHC) decision to suspend the appointment of a returning officer in Kohat on the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) plea. Last week, the electoral body filed an appeal in the Supreme Court against the PHC order, suspending its order about the appointment of Iranullah as a returning officer (RO) for the provincial assembly constituency of PK-91 Kohat II, Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa (KP). The electoral body filed through its counsel Anwar Karim Kundi Advocate the leave to appeal under Article 185(3) of the Constitution against an order, passed by the PHC on December 27, in petitions, filed by a contestant of the constituency, raising objections on the returning officer's appointment. Approving the ECP appeal against the high court ruling today, Chief Justice of Pakistan Qazi-Faez Isa remarked that some tactics were ostensibly being employed to avert the elections. CJP Isa passed these remarks while hearing the Election Commission of Pakistan's (ECP) appeal against the suspension of PK-91 returning officer (RO) by the Peshawar High Court (PHC).

Over 500,000 illegal immigrants have been repatriated so far

ADIL SHAHEEN

ISLAMABAD: More than 500,000 illegal immigrants have been repatriated so far under the government's deportation drive against illegal aliens, the interior ministry informed the Senate on Tuesday. In October, the government had given an ultimatum to all undocumented immigrants to leave Pakistan by Oct 31 or else, risk imprisonment and deportation to their respective countries. After the deadline lapsed, the caretaker government formally initiated a nationwide campaign to expel illegal foreign nationals, the majority of whom are Afghans. While the move had prompted criticism from Afghanistan and human rights groups, the government refused to budge, insisting that it was not aimed at any particular ethnic group. In a written reply submitted to the Senate today, the interior ministry elaborated on the number of deportations. The reply was submitted in response to a question by Senator Mohsin Aziz on the number of illegal residents in the country as well as the number of those deported. "Around 1.7 million illegal aliens are unlawfully living in the country, the majority of whom are Afghans. They are living without any legal documentation necessary for staying in the country. 541,210 people have been sent back after the cabinet's approval of the deportation plan for illegal residents," the ministry said, adding that close to 1.15m were still residing in the country. The ministry said that continuous efforts were under way to identify and deport the remaining people. It further said that 271,985 people were repatriated via Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and 159,161 through Balochistan. It added that according to data from other systems such as the Integrated Border Management System, a further 110,064 had also left the country. An advocacy group and Afghan applicants say the government's deportation drive has forcibly repatriated scores of Afghans awaiting resettlement in the United States while also alleging that authorities often ignored US embassy letters of protection.

Pak eyes to boost 'momentum gained in bilateral' ties with US

US Ambassador Donald Blome calls on FM Jilil Abbas Jilani to renew commitment

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Tuesday underscored the need to further bolster ties with the United States in 2024, carrying forward the momentum gained during the past year. The commitment was renewed in a meeting between Caretaker Foreign Minister Jilil Abbas Jilani and US Ambassador to Pakistan Donald Blome today. Jilani and Blome held discussions focusing on some major aspects of bilateral relations including the recent visit of Chief of Army Staff (COAS) General Syed Asim Munir to the United States, according to an official statement issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The interim foreign minister underlined

that in 2024 both countries should continue to build on recent exchanges and the momentum gained in the ties. Blome, in his meeting with Pakistan's top diplomat, discussed a wide range of important bilateral issues, including expanded diplomatic engagement, the safe and efficient processing of Afghan citizens eligible for resettlement to the US, as well as other issues of mutual interest, the US Mission Acting Spokesperson Thomas Montgomery said in a statement. Last month, Gen Munir had paid his maiden two-day visit as army chief to the US, where he met key political and military personalities to discuss potential areas of bilateral and regional cooperation. The COAS had also met US Secretary of Defence Lloyd Austin at the Pentagon where he discussed regional security developments and potential areas for bilateral defence cooperation. The US Department of State spokesperson, amid COAS Munir's visit, stated that Pakistan was an important partner and "we engage with a wide range of interlocutors within the Pakistani government".

Farhatullah criticizes remarks of PM about 'disappearances'

ISLAMABAD: Senator Farhatullah Babar President Human Rights Cell PPP has issued the following statement. The remarks by the caretaker Prime Minister Mr. Anwaarul Haq Kakar at a press conference in Lahore on New Year eve about the Baloch women protesting in Islamabad are most insensitive, provocative and amount to deviously skirting the real issues of people of Balochistan. On the eve of New Year the caretaker PM who himself hails from Balochistan should have sought to put balm on the wounds of the people. Instead he chose, as people intoxicated with reflected power and glory often do, to rub salt into the wounds of the people of the province. This is most unfortunate and condemnable. Worse still Mr. Kakar said about those who raise voice for the victims of enforced disappearances, "Advocates of terror-

ism in Balochistan should go and join them so that we know where they stand and how to deal with them". Even those who are accused of involvement in enforced disappearances have not employed such lowly and provocative language. No one is advocating terrorists. By equating protests against disappearances with advocating terrorism the caretaker PM is either ignorant or deliberately deflects the issue. The demand is only that those enforcedly disappeared should be produced before courts and dealt with in accordance with the law and the Constitution and no more. What is wrong with it? The enforced disappearances in Balochistan and in other parts of the country are a fact and a black spot on the state. Strong voices will continue to be raised against it, no matter what threats the caretaker PM hurls at those who raise such a voice. Those who deny the very existence of enforced disappearances and or have any doubt about who are involved in it should read the SC verdict of December 10, 2013 in the case of disappearance of 28 inmates from Malakand internment centre. They may also read the minutes of the August 28, 2018 meeting of the Senate Committee of Human Rights. - DNA

Imran Khan, Bushra to be indicted in Nikkah case

DNA

RAWALPINDI: A judicial magistrate has decided to indict Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder Imran Khan and his wife Bushra Bibi in illegal marriage case. According to details, Islamabad Civil Judge Qudratullah heard the illegal marriage case in Adiala Jail, during which the deposed prime minister and his wife appeared in the court. After hearing the arguments, the court decided to indict PTI founder and Bushra Bibi in the next hearing - January 10. It is pertinent to mention here that the former husband, who had approached the court - has claimed that the marriage was illegal and against the laws of Sharia. Imran Khan and Bushra Bibi were originally accused of marrying within the three-month "iddat period" that follows a divorce. Additionally, Maneka has accused them of fornication.

'Bat' in or out: PHC adjourns hearing

Top electoral body had challenged PHC's single bench ruling which restored PTI's 'bat symbol'

SHAMIM SHAHID

PESHAWAR: The Peshawar High Court (PHC) will hear the Election Commission of Pakistan's (ECP) petition challenging its single bench ruling on Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf's (PTI) electoral 'bat' symbol and intra-party elections on Wednesday (today). The electoral body had filed a review petition at the high court against its December 26 decision which had suspended the ECP's order and restored the party's 'bat' symbol till a final decision on the matter. The ECP, in its order, had declared PTI's intra-party polls "illegal" and stripped it of using the 'bat' symbol. Following its order, the former ruling party approached the PHC seeking to restore its party symbol ahead of the general elections slated for February 8. In its petition, the ECP then requested the court to review the PTI's intra-party elections and its decision related to the election symbol. Earlier today, a single-member bench comprising PHC's Justice Ijaz Khan conducted the hearing and reserved the verdict. However, the PTI

lawyers did not appear before the court and later requested to hear them before deciding the plea. After this, the court adjourned the hearing till tomorrow. During the hearing, the ECP's lawyer presented his arguments and told the court that the body had filed a review plea against the high court's order. He added that the ECP also issued a notice to the PTI in this regard. "PTI did not conduct the intra-party elections properly. Questions were raised on ECP's powers and it was said that ECP's decision was unconstitutional," the ECP counsel said. The lawyer said that the single bench suspended ECP's order and issued a stay order without hearing the electoral body's arguments. The stay order granted by PHC was not an interim relief but is tantamount to final verdict on the matter, said the lawyer. "The PTI also filed a petition in the Lahore High Court (LHC) when you can't move second court after filing a plea in another," said the ECP's lawyer. Justice Khan asked if there was anyone present from the petitioner's party in the court. At this, the ECP lawyer said that there was no one.

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