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Greek PM lauds progress in ties with Türkiye

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Asif demands 'open hearing' of commission

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Muhammad Haris left baffled by T20I omission

Detailed News On Page-06



Palestine Ambassador, staff visit SA embassy

World must take note of genocide in Gaza: envoys

High Commissioner Mthuzuzeli Madikiza says South African decision to engage the International Court of Justice (ICJ) was rooted solely in humanitarian principles, free from any political or regional motives. Palestine ambassador Ahmad thanks SA for unflinching support

ANSAR MAHMOOD BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: In a resolute demonstration of unwavering solidarity with the Palestinian cause, the High Commissioner of South Africa, Mthuzuzeli Madikiza, announced the South African government's decision to bring the Gaza genocide case before the International Court of Justice (ICJ) was based on his country's strong resolve and commitment to upholding and protection of human rights. This move underscored the nation's commitment to seeking justice and addressing the acute humanitarian crises inflicted upon Gaza by Israeli aggression. High Commissioner Madikiza articulated these sentiments during a warm reception extended to a delegation from the Palestine embassy, headed by Ambassador Ahmad Rabaei and comprising diplomats, members of the Palestine committee and the students representatives. The visit aimed to express sincere gratitude for South Africa's steadfast and bold support in the face of the ongoing challenges in Palestine. The High Commissioner emphasized that resorting to suppression, the killing of innocent people, and causing destruction on trivial pretexts is fundamentally unjustifiable. He firmly stated that the South African decision to engage the International Court of Justice (ICJ) was rooted solely in humanitarian principles, free from any political or regional motives. He underscored that the plight of those who suffer, akin to the challenges faced by the concerned parties, serves as a poignant reminder of humanity's shared history. He noted a burgeoning wave of support for the people of Palestine and warmly acknowledged Pakistan's endorsement of South Africa's

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South Africa accuses Israel at World Court of genocide

WEB DESK

THE HAGUE: At top UN court, South Africa on Thursday accused Israel of subjecting Palestinians to genocidal acts at the opening of hearings at the top UN court on a case brought against the devastating Israeli military campaign in Gaza. In the case brought to the International Court of Justice (ICJ), also known as the World Court, South Africa demands an emergency suspension of Israel's military campaign in the Palestinian enclave. "South Africa contends that Israel has transgressed Article Two of the (Genocide) convention, committing acts that fall within the definition of genocide. The actions show a systematic pattern of conduct from which genocide can be inferred," Adila Hassim, advocate of South Africa's high court, told the ICJ. South Africa points to Israel's sustained bombing campaign which has killed over 23,000 people in the small, densely populated Gaza Strip, according to Gaza health authorities.



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Palestine Ahmad Rabaei and his staff visited the South African High Commission to thank the South African government for taking Israel to the ICJ over Gaza genocide. Another picture on Back Page. - DNA

Pakistan not supporting Fazl's private visit to Kabul

PM Kakar to attend World Economic Forum in Switzerland on January 15-19

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: The Foreign Office Thursday distanced itself from the Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam Fazl (JUI-F) chief Maulana Fazlur Rahman's visit to Kabul, stating that the government of Pakistan is not supporting it. FO Spokesperson Mumtaz Zahra Baloch, addressing the weekly press briefing in Islamabad, first refused to comment on the visit, but later maintained that the politician has gone to

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Strong quake rattles Afghanistan, Pakistan

DNA

KABUL: A powerful earthquake hit northeastern Afghanistan on Thursday, shaking buildings in the capital Kabul. The quake also rattled Pakistani cities especially, Peshawar and Islamabad. The epicentre of the 6.4-magnitude earthquake was in Jurm district in the Afghan province of Badakhshan in the mountainous Hindu Kush region, according to the US Geological Survey. There were no immediate reports of damage or injuries. It struck at a depth of around 200 kilometres (125 miles) just before 2:00 pm (0930 GMT) and was felt in

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Upheaval in top judiciary as Justice Ijaz resigns

Ahsan would have become the chief justice, the highest judicial office in the country that comes with supreme power - after CJF Isa's term concluded in October this year



KHAYYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: In a shocking development, Supreme Court Justice Ijazul Ahsan on Thursday resigned from his position, a day after Justice Mazahar Ali Akbar Naqvi did the same. Justice Ahsan was slated to be the next chief justice of Pakistan (CJP) after CJF Qazi Faez Isa. According to the resignation addressed to the president,

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SJC gives ex-judge Naqvi another chance

"Question of judge's dismissal is now irrelevant," remarks Justice Isa

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Judicial Council (SJC) on Thursday gave Justice (ret'd) Sayyed Mazahar Ali Akbar Naqvi - who faces complaints of misconduct - another chance to present his viewpoint before the body. The development came a day after

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Briefs

Imran sent on 14-day judicial remand

FAISAL SHEIKH

RAWALPINDI: The Anti-Terrorism Court (ATC) of Rawalpindi sent former prime minister Imran Khan to jail on judicial remand for 14 days on Thursday. He is being investigated in connection with 12 cases related to the violent protests that erupted across the country on May 9th, 2023, following his own arrest. The hearing was being conducted in Adiala Jail by ATC Judge Malik Ejaz Asif. Imran Khan's lawyers as well as seven investigation officers of the case also appeared for the hearing. During the hearing, the plea for further physical remand of Imran Khan for further investigation into the 12 cases of May 9 violence against him was rejected. The PTI founder was produced before the Anti-Terrorism Court in Adiala Jail on completion of his two-day physical remand.

IMF board approves \$700 million for Pakistan

ADIL SHAHEEN

ISLAMABAD: The Executive Board of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) completed the 1st review of Pakistan's economic reform program supported by IMF's Stand By Arrangement (SBA) today. The Board's approval allows for an immediate disbursement of SDR 528 million (around US\$ 700 million) bringing the total disbursements under the SBA to US\$ 1.9 billion.

'Bat symbol' ECP challenges PHC verdict in SC

PTI also files contempt plea against ECP in PHC for not complying with order

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) on Thursday moved the Supreme Court against the Peshawar High Court (PHC) verdict that annulled the electoral body's decision to declare PTI's intra-party polls "unconstitutional" and stripping the party of its iconic bat electoral symbol. "The Peshawar High Court decision should be declared illegal. PTI did not hold intra-party elections as per the Election Act," the ECP stated in its plea submitted to the top court. The petition comes after ECP had held a meeting to review the PHC decision. The sources shared that the meeting had reviewed options whether to approach the Supreme Court or not against the PHC decision. Minutes before the plea was filed in the apex court, the PTI filed a contempt of court petition against the ECP over its failure to comply with the order issued on the party's petition against the electoral watchdog's

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PPP prioritises people in polls, says Bilawal

NAZIR SIYAL

TANDLIANWALA: Pakistan Peoples Party Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari asserted on Thursday the PPP was contesting elections for the people of Pakistan, while other political groups were engaged in personal battles, whether to avoid jail or emerge from it. Addressing a party workers convention in Tandlianwala, Bilawal affirmed that once again, the PPP aimed to have jiyalas (PPP loyalists) as prime minister and chief minister. He said he had come to Tandlianwala to seek the

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Fighting terrorism: nation indebted to security forces: PM

He pointed out the terrorists were hampering the process of development and prosperity of country. He said they were not worthy to be sympathized in any manner. "They are cowards, cruel, senseless and shameless"

SHAMIM SHAHID

PESHAWAR: Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar on Thursday said the entire nation was highly indebted to the KP police which was fighting against the terrorists with bravery and valour. "You are God's chosen group who are fighting for the State's security, the martyrs deserve paradise while the opponent group is destined to be the hell forever," he said while addressing the officials of KP Police at 'Police Darbar'. He said the security forces always fought fearlessly with the terrorists, keeping in mind Allah's promise that those who were on the right path, would never get afraid of the enemy. "The war you are fighting is morally correct; you should do your duty with utmost belief, courage and confidence," he remarked. Paying tributes to Shaheed Siffat and Shaheed Malik Saad, the prime minister said that they were

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IHC voids Imran's in-camera cipher trial

COURT REPORTER

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad High Court on Thursday declared the trial court's order in the cipher case, issued on Dec 14 last year, as null and void. According to details, Justice Miangul Hassan Aurangzeb of the IHC voided the trial court's decision while hearing appeals filed by the founder of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), who sought to halt the jail trial in the cipher case and its in-camera proceedings. The court lifted its stay order on the former PTI chairman's in-camera trial after Attorney General for Pakistan Mansoor Usman Awan assured that the statements of 13 witnesses would be recorded afresh. According to the written order issued by the high court,

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PayPal payments for freelancers begin in Feb: Minister

The minister further mentioned that in March, the program would be scaled up and everyone would have access to payments from PayPal and Stripe across the country

ADIL SHAHEEN

ISLAMABAD : Caretaker Federal Minister for IT and Telecommunication Dr. Umar Saif on Thursday said that under the pilot project, 10,000 freelancers would start receiving payments from PayPal in February. Addressing a Tech Destination Pakistan event that featured the launch of E-Rozgar Centers in the country, he said, "In February, we are going to start the first pilot project in which 10,000 freelancers in Pakistan will be able to start receiving payments through PayPal." The minister further mentioned that in March, the program would be scaled up and everyone would have access to payments from PayPal and Stripe across the country. He clarified that while PayPal itself is not coming to Pakistan, an agreement has been reached where remittances would be channeled through PayPal via a third party. Under the newly devised program, the freelancers will not need to open a PayPal account. Instead, individuals outside the country will make payments from their PayPal accounts, and the funds will be promptly deposited into the freelancers' accounts, the minister explained. The minister said that the government has devised a mechanism for the opening of bank accounts for freelancers. He mentioned that only freelancers would have to provide evidence that they have an account on Fiverr, Upwork, Elance, Toptal, or Crossborder.

The minister added, "The IT industry would have a 50 percent dollar retention policy, which means that whatever you earn, you can keep 50 percent of that in dollars. You will get a debit card from that bank so that you can freely spend that money domestically or internationally." He highlighted that the government has allocated enough funds for the establishment of E-Rozgar centers across the country through a public-private partnership mode, facilitating an interest-free loan to shortlisted/qualified individuals and companies. He said that the main objective behind the E-Rozgar centers is to provide state-of-the-art infrastructure to enhance freelancers' productivity and bolster Pakistan's digital ecosystem. Under the program, more than 250 E-Rozgar Pakistan centers would be established through the public and private sectors. He said that the initiative would foster inclusivity in the digital, financial, and economic sectors by cultivating a culture of freelancing and entrepreneurship in Pakistan. Currently, he informed that work on almost 40 E-Rozgar centers is in progress, and it is expected that all these E-Rozgar centers shall be made operational by 19th February 2024. Dr. Umar Saif said that the first standardized quality test for the 75,000 information technology graduates would be conducted on January 15. He highlighted significant decisions made to revamp IT education in collaboration with various entities, including HEC, the National Computing Accreditation Council,

the Examination Testing Council, the Pakistan Software Export Board, and the Pakistan Software Houses Association. Dr. Saif said students who successfully pass the test will be offered job opportunities through the Industry Placement Program. He added that funds will be allocated to support special industry courses in universities, aiming to prepare students for current industry trends and needs. He mentioned that the students would get a stipend from the government, and the companies that give them apprenticeships would get cash awards from the government. At the same time, he said, the IT industry also needs highly skilled manpower, which is certified by international enterprise platforms Google's and Microsoft's, Cisco's. "So this year, we're going to train 16,000 people. These are people who already have IT skills but need international certifications in technologies like Salesforce, Cisco, Microsoft, Oracle financials, etc," he added. He said the government, under the SIFC, had taken some radical steps to facilitate the IT firms, which helped increase IT revenue by 13 percent during the last month. Federal IT Secretary Hassan Nasir Jami said within a short period, the IT ministry had introduced multiple initiatives to enhance IT exports and facilitate freelancers. He said the IT ministry was committed to developing an IT ecosystem and called upon entrepreneurs, students, and developers to take advantage of opportunities available.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Information Minister Murtaza Solangi addresses the seminar on upcoming general elections, organized by the Press Information Department. —DNA

Everyone enjoys equal rights in Pakistan

Ashrafi dispels myths on Non-Muslims' Madina Visit

DNA

QUETTA : Governor Balochistan Malik Abdul Wali Khan Kakar on Thursday said that the Constitution of Pakistan was the guarantor of equal rights, religious freedom and the right to express opinions to all citizens of Pakistan including all religious minorities. He expressed these views while talking to a delegation of religious leaders from different religions under the leadership of Sardar Iqbal Khilji at the Governor's House Quetta here. Governor Balochistan said that we were all residents of one country and one province due to our division, the nation as a whole suffers from internal weakness. Therefore, it is important that we eliminate the contradiction in words and actions and become the governors of character along with speech, he noted. He said that it was our national tradition that we share in each other's sorrows and joys. It is a fact that our primary identity is as human beings, and so are geographical, ethnic, linguistic and religious divisions, he said. He said that instead of representing the majority or the minority, there was an urgent need to ensure the observance of the rights and powers of all citizens based on equality. Governor Balochistan said that the need of the hour was to promote brotherhood, respect for differences of opinion, religious tolerance and harmony to make the country and province a cradle of peace and harmony. — DNA

ISLAMABAD : Prime Minister's Special Representative for Religious Harmony and Pakistani Diaspora in the Middle East and Muslim countries, Hafiz Muhammad Tahir Mahmood Ashrafi on Thursday expressed concerns about the unjustified social media smear campaign against Saudi leadership. He, in a statement, stressed the need to effectively counter the tactics, aimed at creating emotional confusion and gulf among admirers of Saudi Arabia. He specifically referred to a controversy, following the visit of Indian delegation, led by Union Min-

ister Smriti Irani, to Madina Munawarah during her two-day official visit to the Kingdom. The purpose of the visit was to sign a bilateral agreement allocating a quota of 175,025 pilgrims for this year's annual Hajj pilgrimage, he added. Ashrafi, who is also the chairman of Pakistan Ulema Council, referred to a verse from the Holy Quran related to the prohibition of non-Muslims' visit, and clarified that this applied to just Masjid-e-Haram, according to the views of several Ulema and Mashaykh. He cited religious decrees from Saudi Mufti Azam Ibn Baz and other prominent scholars, affirming that non-Muslims could indeed visit

Madina Munawarah. Emphasizing the historical context, Ashrafi highlighted instances from the era of the second Caliph Hazrat Umar (RA) when non-Muslims visited the Madina for trade purposes. He also mentioned that even Christians from Najran visited Madina even during the lifetime of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him). Ashrafi discussed the two aspects of the visit, considering both Shariah and political dimensions. He asserted that Saudi religious scholars and leaders had a clear stance on the temporary visit of non-Muslims to Madina for specific purposes. Addressing the political motives behind the visit.

Faysal bank collaborates on advanced consumer-credit decision engine

KARACHI: Faysal Bank (FBL) one of the premier Islamic banks in Pakistan has partnered with DataCheck; forming the industry's first collaboration for "Hosted Decision Engine", licensed by Qarar. Through this initiative the Bank aims to enhance process efficiency in the consumer digital lending space through advanced credit-scoring techniques, for the enablement of instant decision-making. The signing ceremony took place at Faysal Bank Head Office, attended by Mr. Yousaf Hussain-President and CEO of Faysal Bank, Mr. Raheel Ijaz-Chief Operating Officer Faysal Bank, Mr. Tariq Jan-CEO DataCheck, Mr. Zaid Kamhawi-CEO Qarar, along with other senior management representatives from Faysal Bank, DataCheck and Qarar. Speaking at the occasion,

Mr. Yousaf Hussain, President & CEO, FBL said, "We feel privileged to collaborate with DataCheck and Qarar for this pioneering initiative. By harnessing the collective strength of our industry peers, we aim to deliver superior customer experiences, leveraging the latest advancements in 'Automated Credit Decisioning' technology. At Faysal Bank we strive to offer an inclusive and dynamic Banking experience. We are optimistic that this collaboration will play a key role in the expansion of the digital lending ecosystem in Pakistan." Reiterating the importance of data driven decision making, Tariq Jan, CEO, DataCheck said, "We are delighted to partner with Qarar to host a much-needed cred-

it decisioning solution for the industry, with Faysal Bank being the first to go. There is immense value in it for the lender since the end-to-end solution is managed by DataCheck and Qarar's teams, hence enabling automated decision for Faysal Bank's customer." Commending the efforts of Faysal Bank, Zaid Kamhawi, CEO, Qarar said, "We're excited to welcome and onboard Faysal Bank as our first hosted-decisioning customer in Pakistan. Qarar's proven expertise and deployment of DecisionSmart in other markets has created a robust platform whereby our hosted solutions can quickly and easily streamline the credit lifecycle and we look forward to creating a success story with Faysal Bank as our esteemed partner." —APP

355 dentists graduated at AIDM Convocation

KARACHI :The Convocation Ceremony of Altamash Institute of Dental Medicine, (AIDM) Karachi was held here at a local hotel on Thursday. The session was chaired by the Chief of the Naval Staff Admiral Naveed Ashraf NI(M) TBT), Vice Chancellor Jinnah Sindh Medical University, Karachi Prof. Dr. Amjad Siraj Memon, and President College of the Physician and Surgeon Pakistan, Prof. Dr. Khalid Masud Gondal (Sitara-e-Imtiaz and Presidential pride of performance). The ceremony was also attended by senior officials from the Pakistan Navy, Registrar Jinnah Sindh Medical University, and notables from medical, dental, allied health sciences fraternity, and other distinguished guests. Addressing the audience, Chief Guest, Chief of the Naval Staff Admiral Naveed Ashraf NI(M) TBT), congratulated the students, parents and faculty on their diligence and commendable performance. He further emphasized to the audience that this convocation marks the entering of graduates into their practical lives. It is the time to return what they have received and deliver the benefits of your knowledge to the community and nation. He expected that graduates would embark upon their professional careers and remain focused on the golden rules of ethics, and nation. He expected that graduates would embark upon their professional careers and remain focused on the golden rules of ethics. Earlier Prof. Dr. Mohammed Hasnain Sakrani, Principal AIDM, gave his welcome address in which he expressed his immense pleasure and satisfaction that in a short span, AIDM has grown into one of the most prestigious institutes in the country. He also appreciated the initiation of Postgraduate FCPS programs in Dental Sciences.—APP

VC emphasizes tech innovation at university digital seminar

DNA

CHAKWAL: Vice Chancellor University of Chakwal Dr. Muhammad Bilal Khan has said that this is the century of computer technology and science. In the race for technology, only those nations will be able to progress internationally that will align themselves with innovation and expertise in this field. He expressed these views while addressing a digital seminar held at the University of Chakwal. The seminar was also addressed by the university's syndicate member and president of Chakwal Chamber of Commerce Waqar Zafar Bakhtawari, and syndicate member of Warwick University UK Dr. Fareha Azmat. The Vice Chancellor of the University of Chakwal's focus is on promoting technology and digitalization. Currently,

five thousand students are studying at the University of Chakwal. The entire monitoring of the university is being done through internet and CCTV cameras. The University of Chakwal has a unique position in terms of discipline not only in Punjab but also in Pakistan. With each passing day, the University of Chakwal is being linked with international universities. Addressing the seminar, Syndicate Member University and President Chakwal Chamber of Commerce and Industry Waqar Zafar Bakhtawari said that the IT sector is of utmost importance. The whole world is moving towards digitalization. There is a need for educational institutions in Pakistan to make technology and digitalization the focus of their activities. He said that the University of Chakwal has become the identity of not only Chakwal but also the region. Together we will

introduce the university to the world. The literacy rate in Chakwal has always been better. Chakwal University is playing its role in the field of education. As a syndicate member, I will play my full role for the betterment of the university and for bringing more departments into the educational system. We will ensure access to world-class educational institutions for the students of Chakwal University. He said that the antiquities and tourism of Chakwal district will be brought forward. In both these sectors, Chakwal has a history of millions of years and such places that are of interest to outsiders. Addressing the seminar, Dr. Fareha Azmat, a member of the syndicate of Warwick University UK, said that the world is moving forward very rapidly in science, technology and computers, so our young generation will have to face this big challenge. She said that I am sure that the children of Pakistan.

KP governor backs ban on e-cigarettes, vaping

PESHAWAR : Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Governor, Haji Ghulam Ali Thursday extended support to Civil Society's call for banning e-cigarettes and vaping while keeping in view its harms to public health and increasing use of modern tobacco products among youth. He expressed these views while talking with a delegation that called on him under the chairmanship of Qamar Naseem, Programme Manager Blue Veins, a non-governmental organization. Other members of the delegation included Ajmal Shah, Coordinator Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Tobacco Control Cell, Dr. Ihtisham, Chest Specialist LRH, Dr. Qazi Shahbaz, Chairman Provincial Doctors Association, Mohammad Rizwan, Provincial Coordinator National Commission for Human Rights (NCHR) and Sana Ahmad, Program Coordinator Blue Veins. Speaking during the meeting, Qamar Naseem apprised Governor Haji Ghulam Ali that new tobacco products are emerging in the whole world at a very fast speed. In our country, he continued, these products are available very easily in markets and due to deceiving slogans of harm reduction or 'Quit smoking and start vaping' is attracting a large number of people towards consumption of smokeless tobacco. Qamar said due to lack of latest legislation in the country, the existing laws on tobacco control cannot be enforced on the use or sale of modern smokeless tobacco products which use is increasing due to easy availability in markets and advertisement in media. The delegation members requested the Governor for measures to impose a ban on vapes and all forms of e-cigarettes. In this regard, they also suggested legislation in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Responding to the points, Governor KP Haji Ghulam Ali while expressing his agreement to the call extended support for imposition of ban on these products with the purpose of protecting public health, especially youth. The governor also requested the Chief Secretary to take a review of the demand made by civil society members and issue directives for drafting of legislation to cover these new products of tobacco use. He said increasing use of tobacco among people is a serious issue and its the responsibility of the government to take notice and action for protection of masses from its detrimental impacts.—APP

CM grants Rs133.5 million to 28 Bar Associations

CM welcomed the elected representatives of the high court and district bar associations and appreciated the role of lawyers in the supremacy of law and constitution

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI : Caretaker Sindh Chief Minister Justice (Retd) Maqbool Baqar in a meeting held here on Thursday with leaders of 28 Bar Associations, issued a grant of Rs. 133.5 million after listening to their issues. The meeting was attended by Caretaker Law Minister Omar Soomro, Information Minister Ahmad Shah, Special Assistant to CM Advocate Moiz Baig, Secretary Law Ali Ahmad Baloch and elected representatives of various high court

and district bar associations. At the outset, the CM welcomed the elected representatives of the high court and district bar associations and appreciated the role of lawyers in the supremacy of law and constitution. Speaking on the occasion, he said that main function and purpose of the Caretaker government were to ensure free, fair and transparent elections and for this, we have made all necessary arrangements to achieve the objectives. The CM said that being lawyers we must have good interactions and liaisons with other

segment of the society, especially legislators. He added that lawyers must keep a close eye on society and extend their full support to the marginalised segment of society. The CM handed over cheques of Rs.10 million each to High Court Bar Associations of Hyderabad, Sukkur and Larkano, Rs. 20 million to Karachi Bar Association, Rs. 10 million each to District Bar Association Hyderabad and Sukkur, Rs.7.5 million to Malir, Rs. 5 million each to Nawabshah and Khairpur, Rs. 4 million Shikarpur, Rs. 2 million each to Badin, Dadu, Jamshoro,

Ghotki, Mithi, Sanghar, Umerkot, Jacobabad, Kashmore, Shahdadkot, Sujawal and Naushahro Feroze, Rs. 3 million to Thatta and One million rupee each to Tando Mohammad Khan, Matiari, and Tando Allahyar district bars. The CM also gave an amount of Rs 2 million cheque to Taluka Bar Association Bhriya of District Naushahro Feroze. On the occasion, the office bearers of the associations thanked to the chief minister for his support and cooperation with the lawyers community and for taking his interest in resolving their issues.



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A calligraphic journey

Talent of young calligraphers truly inspiring: Jamal Shah

The Federal Secretary, Ms. Humaira Ahmed also provided remarks, commending the participants for their dedication

MAHNOOR ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Guided by Mr. Nasir Khan Seemab, the two-week workshop provided a unique platform for Madrassa students to delve into the rich world of calligraphy, exploring various styles and historical contexts. The exhibition featured the culmination of their artistic endeavors, highlighting the skills and creativity cultivated during this intensive learning experience. Federal Minister Mr. Jamal Shah, under whose esteemed patronage this workshop flourished, graced the event with his presence along with M. Ayoub Jamali, Director General, PNCA. His unwavering support for artistic endeavors and cultural development was instrumental in the success of "A Calligraphic Journey." The Federal Minister expressed his satisfaction with the outcomes of the workshop, stating, "Witnessing the dedication and talent of these young calligraphers has been truly inspiring. This initiative reflects our commitment to nurturing artistic expression and preserving our cultural heritage. I am proud to have been part of this endeavor." The Federal Secretary, Ms. Humaira Ahmed also provided remarks, commending the participants for their dedication. "The



art of calligraphy holds a significant place in our cultural heritage. This workshop not only honed the skills of these students but also contributed to the promotion and preservation of our rich cultural traditions."

The media, esteemed guests, and the public witnessed the talent and dedication of these budding calligraphers as they showcased their masterpieces. The ceremony included the distribution of certificates

to the participating students, acknowledging their commitment to the art of calligraphy. This event served as a testament to the PNCA's commitment to nurturing artistic talent and providing plat-

forms for cultural enrichment. The organization extends its sincere gratitude to Mr. Jamal Shah and Mr. Nasir Khan Seemab for their invaluable contributions to the success of this workshop.

ICCI calls for industrial tariff on cold storage industry

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: A delegation of cold storage owners led by Anjuman-e-Wholesale Fruit Commission Agents President Babu Muhammad Aleem and General Secretary Tahar Ayub visited Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) and highlighted the issues being faced by the cold storage industry. Addressing the delegation, Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari, President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry said that the cold storage industry was paying electricity bills under the industrial tariff, but the government has imposed a commercial tariff on this industry due to which the amount of their electricity bills has increased manifold giving rise to their cost of doing business. Due to this situation, this industry is facing great problems. He demanded that the government should restore the industrial power tariff for

the cold storage industry to save it from further trouble. ICCI President said that due to the increase in the business cost of the cold storage industry, there is an unnecessary increase in the prices of vegetables and fruits, so the government should restore the industrial tariff for this sector to save the people from high inflation. He assured the delegation that ICCI would cooperate with them in efforts to solve their problems. Speaking on the occasion, Babu Muhammad Aleem, President and General Secretary Tahar Ayub of Anjuman Wholesale Fruit Commission Agents said that the

wholesale vegetable and fruit market of Islamabad is meeting the needs of this region as well as supplying fruits and vegetables to Kashmir and North areas besides promoting exports. They emphasized that CDA should take steps to solve the issues faced by their market to facilitate better growth of its business activities. Amir Hamza, Arsalan Javed, Chaudhry Siddique, Ziaur Rehman, Haji Bashir, Chaudhry Sohail and others were in the delegation. President ICCI Ahsan Bakhtawari, appointed Arslan Javed as the convener of the Cold Storage Committee and issued him a formal letter to this effect.



Eminent poet, humorist 'Ibne Insha' remembered

ISLAMABAD: Eminent Urdu poet humorist and travelogue writer Ibne Insha was remembered on his 46th death anniversary Thursday where fans from all walks of life from media platforms have paid him rich tributes for his contribution in the entertainment industry. Ibne Insha's real name was Sher Muhammad Khan and he was born in Jalandhar district of Indian Punjab in 1927. He later migrated to Pakistan. He was given the Pride of Performance Award in 1978, the PTV news channel reported. His poetry was simple but had depth. The real cause of his popularity was his humorous poetry and columns. His masterpieces are still remembered by his admirers and his most famous ghazal 'Insha Ji Uttho' is a modern-day classic. Along with his poetry, he was regarded as one of the best humorists of Urdu. Ibne-Insha's poetic works are Chand Nagar and Dil-e-Wehshi while travelogues are "Awaraz Gard Ki Diary", "Dunya Gol Hey", "Ibne-Batoota Kay Taqub Main", "Chaltay Ho To Cheen KO Chalaye" and "Nagri Nagri Phira Musafiri".

HEC seeks innovative ideas from University Students

ISLAMABAD: On a national scale, Pakistan grapples with significant climate change challenges, including power generation, power distribution, renewable energy, waste dumping points, waste collection points, water treatment, segregation of waste, and the pressing demands of a growing population. The consequences of these issues are profound, stressing the urgency of a united effort to secure energy, water, eco-tourism, agriculture & forestry, and liquid & solid waste management resources as well as ensure sustainability for present and future generations. In response to these challenges, the Higher Education Commission (HEC) has established Green Youth Movement (GYM) clubs in 137 public sector universities. These clubs are actively involved in different awareness and climate action research related activities. In this regard, HEC in collaboration with the Prime Minister's Youth Programme, under its GYM project has planned a series of conferences on Renewable Energy, Liquid and Solid Waste Management, Water Conservation, Eco-tourism and Agriculture and Forestry. The first conference on Renewable Energy is scheduled to take place in Lahore and the second conference on Liquid and Solid Waste Management is set for Karachi by the end of January 2024. The call for innovative, creative and workable ideas has been announced for both conferences. The university students or graduates of any Pakistani university between the ages of 18 and 29 can apply for the conference. The last date to submit the ideas is January 14, 2024. "Pakistani youth has immense potential to combat climate change by working on innovative projects. The GYM project is providing a great opportunity for young people to pitch their innovative ideas in the field of Renewable Energy and Liquid and solid Waste Management. —DNA

Police arrest nine gamblers; recover Rs 40,000 stake money

RAWALPINDI: Rawalpindi district police arrested nine gamblers and recovered Rs 40,000 stake money, nine mobile phones, and other items from their possession, said a police spokesman here on Thursday. He informed that Civil Lines police conducted a raid and arrested nine gamblers namely Usman, Waseem, Sheram, Numan, Junaid, Hassan, Adnan, Umar and Suleman, who were allegedly involved in betting while playing cards. Police recovered Rs 40,000, nine mobile phones, and other items from their possession. A case has been registered against the accused while further investigation is under process. —APP

Government constitutionally bound to meet ECP requirements

ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Federal Minister for Information, Broadcasting and Parliamentary Affairs Murtaza Solangi said on Thursday that the caretaker government was constitutionally bound to meet the financial, administrative and security requirements of the Election Commission of Pakistan. Talking to the media outside the ECP, he said that God willing, the elections will be held in the country on Thursday, February 8, 2024. He said under the constitution, the ECP had the responsibility to hold free, fair and transparent elections in the country. —APP

Shahera lauds PID for initiating debate on national issues

ISLAMABAD: Secretary Information and Broadcasting Shahera Shahid on Thursday appreciated the Press Information Department for holding a series of seminars in the run up to coming general elections to generate debate on national issues. Addressing the opening session of a seminar on "Pakistan Election 2024: The Economic Reforms Agenda of Political Parties" here, she said that through this series of seminars, the government wanted to initiate debate on issues being faced by Pakistan and their solutions in the backdrop of upcoming general elections. —APP

Empowering women can ensure sustained economic growth

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Coordinator to Minister of State and Federal Tax Ombudsman Meher Kashif Younis on Thursday said that empowering women at grassroots level in Pakistan had great significance for fostering sustainable economic growth. Addressing a round-table conference on "Impact of Empowering Women in Economic Growth" here, he added that women had a pivotal role to play in the economic and overall development so prioritising their empowerment became paramount. Kashif Meher was of the view that investing in women's education, healthcare and economic opportunities not only enhanced their well-being but also propelled the nation towards prosperity. He said economic empowerment involved creating opportunities for women to enter and thrive in various sectors. Micro-finance initiatives, vocational training programmes, and support for women entrepreneurs could boost economic growth by tapping the potential of women in the workforce, he suggested.

JANUARY 2024

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Briefs

1143 graduates conferred degrees at 21st convocation of FJWU

RAWALPINDI: The 21st convocation of Fatima Jinnah Women's University (FJWU) was held here on Thursday to commemorate the outstanding academic accomplishments of 1143 graduates of 2023. Governor Punjab and Chancellor FJWU Engr. Mohammad Baligh Ur Rehman was the chief guest at the convocation. Addressing the participants, Engr. Mohammad Baligh Ur Rehman expressed immense pride and gratitude, recognizing the hard work, determination, and transformative experiences that defined their academic journey. He lauded the 1143 graduates for their outstanding achievements, underscoring the crucial role of education in shaping responsible citizens for Pakistan's future. Emphasizing the challenges posed by technological advancements, particularly Artificial Intelligence, the Chancellor urged the students to be prepared and informed, acknowledging the significant role of higher education in cultivating well-informed and cultured citizens. Furthermore, the Chancellor highlighted the significance of collaboration, resilience, and empathy, which the graduates imbued during their tenure at FJWU. He underscored the importance of these qualities in navigating future challenges and opportunities and emphasized that education is a lifelong journey, and graduates are equipped with the necessary skills for continual adaptation in a rapidly evolving world. —DNA

Safe city issues 222,195 e-challans in 2023

ISLAMABAD: The Safe City Islamabad effectively addressed traffic violations by issuing a total of 222,195 e-challans during the year 2023. The Safe City Command and Control Center played a pivotal role in implementing traffic rules, targeting various violations, such as driving without seat belts, improper use of fancy number plates, zebra crossing violations, disregarding red signals, over-speeding, and using mobile phones while driving. The breakdown of these e-challans includes 4,495 for seat belt violations, 206,747 for over-speeding, 431 for mobile phone usage during driving, 2,008 for zigzag crossing, 3,896 for fancy number plates—APP

Court Notice

بجاءت چاب چو ہدی ماراں مل صاحب سول
چنارولپنڈی
ماہنامہ شہزادہ شاہ
درخواست زبردست 25 گارڈین اینڈ مارڈ اینک
- بگاڑ مقدمہ نموان بالا میں معائنہ
ظاہر ہو کہ دراصل حسین سائن مکان نمبر
C/19,765/29 کو بیڑہ دارنقیم
صدر اولپنڈی کینٹ کی زمین بڑیہ ماسٹر پلان
مکمل نہ ہے لہذا عدالت کی اجازت کی باقی ہے کہ
دو آئندہ نمبر 30 جنوری 2024
وقت 9 بجے تک حاضر عدالت آویں بصورت
ایک حسب ضابطہ کاروائی مکمل لائی جائے گی۔

Sri Lanka HC meets General Sahir Shamshad

Whilst welcoming the High Commissioner to Pakistan, the Chairman Joint Chief of Staff Committee stressed and lauded the Sri Lanka for unwavering support extended to Pakistan in hour of need

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Admiral Ravindra C Wijegunaratne High Commissioner of Sri Lanka to Pakistan called on General Sahir Shamshad Mirza, the Chairman Joint Chief of Staff Committee (CJSC) High Commissioner of Sri Lanka to Pakistan Admiral Ravindra C Wijegunaratne calls on General Sahir Shamshad Mirza, the Chairman Joint Chief of Staff Committee (CJSC) at Joint Staffs Headquarters in Rawalpindi. On the arrival at JSHQ, High Commissioner was warmly welcomed and received by the General Sahir Shamshad Mirza, the Chairman Joint Chief of Staff Committee along with his principal staff officers. Later, they had a cordial and lengthy discussion on brotherly and friendly diplomatic relations between two nations over decades. Whilst welcoming the High Commissioner to Pakistan, the Chairman Joint Chief of Staff Committee stressed and lauded the Sri Lanka for unwavering support extended to Pakistan in hour of need. Moreover, he emphasized the fact that corner stone of diplomatic relation between two nations based on the long standing defence relationship among two nations. Further, he pledged the continues support to Sri Lanka and praised His Excellency Ranil Wickremesinghe, the President of Sri Lanka



for his strong leadership. Also he extended his greetings to National Security Advisor, Secretary Defence, Chief of Defense Staff and three service Commanders of Sri Lanka. Admiral Ravindra C Wijegunaratne making his re-

marks expressed gratitude for Pakistan's unstinted support in the past to eradicate the menace of terrorism from Sri Lanka and thanked for the extensive training opportunities and facilities provided by Pakistan for the Sri

Lankan military officers as well as support extended to the defence sector. He too assured the continues support for Pakistan in all possible ways and appraised the political and military leadership of Pakistan. Brigadier Kaminda Sil-

va, Minister Counsellor Defence accompanied the High Commissioner, whilst Lieutenant General Ahsen Gulrez HI(M), Director General Joint Staff and few other Staff Officers at office of CJSC attended the discussion.

HEC to hold conferences to seek ideas for tackling climate change challenges

ISLAMABAD: The Higher Education Commission (HEC) has decided to hold a series of conferences across the country to seek innovative ideas from Pakistani university graduates to tackle climate change challenges. According to HEC, on a national scale, Pakistan grapples with significant climate change challenges, including power generation, power distribution, renewable energy, waste dumping points, waste collection points, water treatment, segregation of waste, and the pressing demands of a growing population. The consequences of these issues are profound, stressing the urgency of a united effort to secure en-

ergy, water, eco-tourism, agriculture & forestry and liquid & solid waste management resources and ensure sustainability for present and future generations. In response to these challenges, the Higher Education Commission has also established Green Youth Movement (GYM) clubs in 137 public sector universities. These clubs are actively involved in different awareness and climate action research-related activities. In this regard, HEC in collaboration with the Prime Minister's Youth Programme, under its project "Green Youth Movement" has planned a series of conferences on Renewable Energy, Liquid and Solid Waste Manage-

ment, Water Conversation, Eco-tourism and Agriculture and Forestry. The first conference on Renewable Energy is scheduled to take place in Lahore and the second conference on liquid and solid waste management is set for Karachi by the end of January 2024. The call for innovative, creative and workable ideas has been announced for both conferences. The students of the university or graduates of any Pakistani university from the age bracket 18-29 can apply for the conference. The last date to submit the ideas is 14th January 2024. The director of the Green Youth Movement Project, Irfan Ullah told APP that Pakistani youth

had immense potential to combat climate change by working on innovative projects. HEC, Green Youth Movement is providing a great opportunity for young people to pitch their innovative ideas in the field of Renewable Energy and Liquid and solid Waste Management. He further said, "It's a valuable platform to showcase and celebrate innovative solutions in renewable energy and liquid & waste management." He said that to ensure the long-term sustainability of these GYM clubs, we were establishing a partnership with the development sector to secure both financial and technical support.

China's Northwest A&F University, SAU sign collaboration agreement

ISLAMABAD: Sindh Agriculture University (SAU), Tandojam and China's Northwest A&F University signed an agreement online for exchange and cooperation in academic and research fields. The agreement was signed in presence of the SAU Vice Chancellor Dr. Fateh Marri, and Northwest A&F University's Vice President Prof. Jun Luo, among others. According to the agreement, experts from both varieties will start research on new wheat and vegetable varieties, and both sides will exchange and focus research in fields of horticulture, soil science, plant breeding and genetics, agricultural economics, and animal stem cells. Masters and PhD students of SAU, including agronomy, horticulture, soil sciences, and animal sciences, will be selected for fully-funded scholarships at the Northwest A&F University. Research through high production technology for improved wheat varieties will be done at the selected fields of the farmers, who grow vegetables, peppers, cabbage, broccoli, radish and onion. In this context, a delegation from the Northwest A&F University will visit the cell and tissue culture labs to analyse strengths and weaknesses of vegetables and implement bio-health technology for plants. Besides, the agreement includes training courses on basic technologies for production of bio-health agricultural products between China and Pakistan. It will also pave way implementing doctoral scholarships and post-doc visiting scholar programs, and establishment of Sino-Pak Research Centre for Agro-biological Resources and Joint Laboratory of Animal and Plant Stem Cell Project, the SAU said, according to a report published by Gwadar Pro on Thursday.

Senate meeting on Industries held

ISLAMABAD: A Meeting of Senate Standing Committee on Industries and Production was held at Parliament House on Thursday with Senator Khalida Ateeb in Chair. The Senate Committee deliberated on the role, functions, and achievements of the Small and Medium Development Authority (SMEDA), officials stated that there are approximately 5.2 million SMEs in the country, contributing an estimated 40% to GDP and 30% to exports. The economic value of Rs. 9.85 rupees has been created for each rupee spent on SMEDA. Officials mentioned that entities worth around 80 million Rupees fall under the SME category, and 64% of such entities are located in the Punjab Province. A total of 36 Common Facility Centers were established across the country through PSDP funding; however, many of these centers have been halted due to a lack of funds. The Committee recommended the ministry to initiate public-private partnerships for the utilization of these established Common Facility Centers. While discussing the implementation status of Committee recommendations, officials mentioned that PSM has approved the Temporary Relief Allowance for PSM employees at the rate of 25%. However, officials couldn't provide details of stolen items in the last 10 years and their market value. The Committee directed PSM officials to provide details of stolen items with their market value in the next meeting. Officials added that a loss of Rs. 30 billion occurs annually, with a break-off cost of Rs. 1 billion to maintain the common batteries. The Committee urged the ministry to decide the fate of Pakistan Steel Mills to avert these losses. Furthermore, the committee deliberated on the role and functions of the State Engineering Corporation (SEC). Officials mentioned that SEC, established in 1973, comprises 12 units and was once a leading organization in the public sector. However, out of the 12 companies originally owned by SEC, 11 have been privatized, leaving SEC with only Pakistan Engineering Company in Lahore. Importantly, the present role of SEC is limited to being a liaison officer between the Ministry of Industries and Production, Privatization Commission, and other government entities.—DNA

Mehbooba Mufti escapes unhurt in road accident

ISLAMABAD: Peoples Democratic Party President Mehbooba Mufti on Thursday met with a road accident while she was on her way to Islamabad district of Indian illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir. According to Kashmir Media Service, Mehbooba Mufti escaped unhurt. However, her driver sustained injuries. The accident took place in the Sangam area of the district in South Kashmir. As per party officials, the driver of the car has received injuries in his leg. Mufti was on her way to Khanabal to meet victims of a recent fire incident. —DNA

Aslam Kamal's Intellectual cosmos

GHAZALA ANBREEN

Aslam Kamal was an eminent painter, calligrapher, illustrator and designer. He was classified as a painter who had the honour of painting Iqbal and Faiz. He Painted Faiz's "Nushkha Ha Ay Wafa" in 1983 when the great Poet and thinker was still alive. He studied his poetry in-depth, and developed a relationship with his vocabulary to paint and illustrate with greater understanding. He then painted his philosophy and thought with love and compassion. He is described as a genius of the contemporary art scenario of Pakistan who was a trendsetter. His figurative paintings, poetic illustrations, calligraphic works, intellectual sketches and book dust covers are a constantly inspiring source for people of all ages, groups and professions. His fame as a Painter and Calligrapher of the poetry of Allama Iqbal had spread far beyond the boundaries of Pakistan. He exhibited his paintings, calligraphic works and poetic illustrations all over the globe. In revolutionizing process of calligraphy art in Pakistan, the name we hear after Sadequain is Aslam Kamal. Along with calligraphic Art, Aslam Kamal was also a good novelist, poet and travel book writer. He designed more than 20,000 book

covers for which his name has also been recommended for inclusion in the Guinness Book of World Records. He introduced Khate-Kamal, his own style of calligraphy, a popular font for Urdu composers. Dr Saifur Rahman Dar said that Aslam Kamal was a great designer of book dust-covers in the history of Pakistan. His genius was highly acknowledged as a magnificent interpreter of the Poetry of Allama Iqbal through his paintings. In his calligraphic paintings, the pictorial islands ascend from earth towards heaven like blissful prayers and descend from heaven towards earth in the form of revelations. Though the contemporary art of painting draws its vitality through constant renewal and experimentation with technique, content and form, and calligraphy, the great art of Muslims has been stagnating in conventional modes and needs re-interpretation and a bold approach for its survival. Aslam Kamal's calligraphy was not less than an art of meditation and his contribution had become popular. It was only the proof of beauty and elegance of the cubistic character of his alphabet. He harked back to the Kufic tradition in calligraphy and the great Islamic architectural tradition in devising his letters. Working from geometric and architectural principles he had given

a geometric and cubistic shape to majesty and flexibility. His choice of colours always used to be in harmony with the import of the words. Usually, his colours were bright and attractive, imparting the right kind of feeling. Professor Dr Annemarie Schimmel of Harvard University paid tribute to him in the following words, "I remember how delighted I was when I saw one of his pictures for the first time in the Pakistan Embassy in Bonn. The combination of the letters with geometrical forms, the very delicate colouring and the whole construction of the painting fascinated me and throughout the years has never ceased fascinating me. For, he can combine the simple but powerful geometric shape of the Arabic letters with subtle constructions and it enhances the beauty of the design that everywhere the heritage of Mughal India contains. I would rank him very high as he displays a unique combination of form, meaning and sense of colour". At the age of 85, this immensely talented artist left for his heavenly abode on 2 January 2024. In recognition of his meritorious services, he was decorated with the President's Award for Pride of Performance in 1993. Other awards included a lifetime

achievement award by Iqbal Academy Pakistan, Agriculture University Faisalabad, Lahore College for Women University and many other distinguished institutions. In a sitting with him in 2016 he reminisced about his life in the following words: I was born in Sialkot. This resemblance I bear with Iqbal and Faiz that they too were born in the same region. My elder brother witnessed the movement for Pakistan and also saw the results of that struggle. He used to read aloud the verses of Iqbal at home. In a way, Iqbal is the first person who gave the Muslims the idea of Pakistan. He hints at a pertinent fact that if a movement starts then it does not stop. I did not have to pass through the steps which some other artists are supposed to. A new artist who wishes to paint Iqbal's verses is more likely to mark his poems first and tries to learn about the message. Then he will look for the meanings and different shades of his poetry. Chances are there that he may get exhausted during all this. I have aroused a kind of hatred against slavery in our heart. Then he goes to enthrone a love for freedom. He also invokes heavenly help for this task. He says: khirad ko ghulamii say azad kar, Jawanon ko peeron ka ustad kar. In his

view, the old people excel in experience and skill but it is the youth who will carry forward this movement. He prays for a new zeal in the heart of the young people. I used to recall the poetry of Allama Iqbal and it became my habit afterwards. The school I studied in for six years had the verses of Iqbal on its walls and the charts. The centennial celebration of Allama Iqbal was held in 1977. It gave me an opportunity to make my mark and establish my visibility and I was noticed by Faiz Ahmad Faiz as well. Though I was the youngest artist who took part in that exhibition but I was able to prove myself. In the journey spanning more than forty years I studied, worked hard and got scholarships also. According to the Cultural Institute of Pakistan on Iqbal's paintings, the maximum work is done by me and I take it as a pride. After the centennial of Iqbal I painted Faiz Ahmad Faiz Nushkha Haay Wafa and after Faiz' death I made that more elaborate. My paintings were displayed in the Lister Museum in Bradford and there the exhibition continued for seven months. 2011 was declared as Faiz year. I was, in fact, the only painter who painted Faiz and Iqbal through brush and colour. They are the two poets

of our national stream. The first exhibition was held in Lahore, Second in PNCA and the third in PILAC. I entered in this field through dust over design in 1961. Similarly, Hanif Ramay also entered through same dust cover design art. By 2000 I had prepared over twenty thousand dust covers of different books. Academy of Letters and Urdu Science Board have recommended my name for inclusion in the Guinness Book of World Records for this. And I personally feel that getting recommended itself is an honour for me. Mr Shahnawaz Zaidi, who used to be the Head of College of Art and Design even recommended that one of my books must be translated in English as it is of immense importance. Picasso's art has been used from twenty to twenty five thousand times for designing different books by different people whereas over twenty thousand people commissioned me for the dust cover designing of their books and I take it as an honour indeed. I made almost 60 to 70 caricatures of famous personalities on the request of Kishwar Naheed for Mah e Nau. The art of painting is not always deliberate. Sometimes even a wrong stroke of brush makes a painting classic. It is a sad fact

that normally it is considered that the prominent Muslim calligraphists were born in Yemen, Iraq and Iran and no credit is given to calligraphists from the Sub Continent. I introduced a new script which is now recognized as Khate e Kamal. It is written in one line. I finished the curves except noon and seen. It can be written from top to bottom, bottom to top, and right to left, from left to right. I decorated the whole main hall of Academy of Letters' Head Office in Islamabad showing more than five hundred poets of Pakistan of all languages, the intellectual cosmos of Pakistan. It was painted in a span of two years. It shows the national integration of Pakistan. I have three travelogues and ten books on my credit. I remained an employee in Secretariat as an artist in 1965. Then I worked in Punjab Agricultural Corporation. It is unfortunate that the Pakistani artists like Sadequain and Chughtai make no mention in any art dictionary of the world. We remained hockey champions, Cricket champions, and Squash champions. Practically no team of the world could confront us. However, if we try to get rid of the minor differences and stand on one platform, we can regain the lost glory.

ANF seizes 250 kg drugs in five operations

RAWALPINDI: Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) while conducting five operations across the country managed to recover 250 kg of drugs and arrested four accused, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman here on Thursday. He informed that 637 grams of weed was recovered from a parcel sent from Thailand at the courier office in Rawalpindi while three accused were arrested. In an operation, 128.5 kg hashish and 53.5 kg opium were recovered near Swabi Interchange. 36 kg hashish was recovered from an accused rounded up from Ring Road Peshawar. In the fourth operation, 26.4 kg of hashish was recovered near Sher Shah Toll Plaza Multan and an accused was arrested. In the fifth operation, five kg of hashish was recovered from the Zakhkhal area of Khyber. Cases under the Anti-Narcotics Act have been registered against the arrested accused and further investigations are under process.—APP

Minister advise citizens to maintain a healthy diet

ISLAMABAD: Provincial Minister for Primary and Secondary Health and Population Welfare Dr Jamal Nasir Thursday urged people to remain vigilant while maintaining a healthy diet and using face masks as 'pneumonia cases' were continuously rising due to smog weather. Talking to a private news channel he pointed out that people with weak immunity due to chronic cardiac, kidney and liver diseases or diabetes could easily contract the respiratory disease in cold weather. Health experts warned of an acute rise in pneumonia cases among elderly people and children, adding, citizens asked to use plenty of rest, warm beverages, steam baths or the use of humidifiers in houses for air moisture and timely consultations with doctors. He said that the major cause of increased cases was undiagnosed influenza and pneumonia cases, adding, citizens to immediately consult doctors and receive treatment after having respiratory issues. He confirmed that the number of pneumonia cases was higher than the previous year, adding, a precautionary measure to protect young children from the harsh cold weather conditions prevailing in the province.

Replying to a question, he said that the Punjab government was cracking down on vehicles emitting smoke, adding, that action would be taken against all factories causing environmental pollution with district administrations closely monitoring all industries and brick kilns. In addition to the school mask mandate, the public has been urged to use masks as well. Citizens are encouraged to take precautions to safeguard their health in the face of the ongoing smog crisis, he added.—APP

The view on Ecuador's gang violence

ALL I know is that it's time to leave this country, and go very far away." Those words, from a staff member at the TV station attacked by masked gunmen live on air on Tuesday, encapsulate the shock and despair that many in Ecuador now feel. The assault on TC Televisión in Guayaquil, Ecuador's most dangerous city, was one of multiple spectacular and coordinated attacks by gangs, in which at least 10 people were killed. Murderous crime has soared over recent years. But this was not just about gangs running rampant and battling each other with a sense of impunity, while brutalising anyone who got in their way. The invasion of a university and hospitals, the kidnapping and killing of police and prison guards, the torching of cars in residential areas, attacks in the Amazon region and looting in the capital, Quito – all these showed gangs operating well outside their usual fiefdoms, banding together, and turning on national institutions and civilians to try to force political leaders to back off. This strategic brutality, which has been described as "violent lobbying", has been used elsewhere in Latin America, but is new to Ecuador. For many, it feels as if the fate of the country itself is at stake. The explosion of violence was precipitated by the new and inexperienced president Daniel Noboa's crackdown on organised crime, the escape from prison of the feared gang boss Adolfo Macías, known as Fito, and Mr Noboa's declaration of a national state of emergency and curfew. The president said Ecuador was in "internal armed conflict", designated 20 gangs as terrorist groups and said the military should "neutralise" them, albeit "within the bounds of international humanitarian law". His campaign came in response to surging violence in a country once regarded as largely safe and stable. The homicide rate rose more than six-fold between 2018 and 2023, to 40 murders per 100,000. The assassination last August of a presidential candidate, Fernando Villavicencio, who had campaigned on a platform of tackling violence, crime and corruption, rocked the nation. This week marks a new nadir. Ecuador's gangs have been transformed by their dealings with cartels and other transnational crime groups. The country sits between two cocaine-producing neighbours and has a long, porous coastline. The dollarised economy makes it easier to move and launder illicit earnings. Counter-drugs operations in other countries, and the disbanding of armed groups in Colombia, encouraged traffickers to look farther afield. Slashing spending on security in the past, due to IMF budget demands, didn't help. And the insatiable appetite of consumers for cocaine – particularly in Europe, the most lucrative market – has fuelled the trade. Mr Noboa, who faces an election next year, so far has the public on his side. But Tuesday's events show just how hard a struggle he faces in trying to rein in the gangs. There are also profound questions about his approach. He has announced that he has commissioned new maximum security and supermax prisons modelled on those used in El Salvador by its president, Nayib Bukele. Mr Bukele's "iron fist" campaign against gangs has been wildly popular but tramples over rights, and is highly unlikely to prove sustainable.

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Self-revolution essential for CPC's vitality

FOR anyone curious about the governance philosophy of the Communist Party of China, the communique of the third plenum of the 20th CPC Central Commission for Discipline Inspection is a must read for a better understanding of the ruling party's approach to self-governance. Running throughout the document is the requirement that concrete actions be taken to advance the purity of the Party and preserve its vitality. The self-revolution of the Party means that the blade is turned inward, scraping the bone to remove the poison. To this end investigation and accountability are to be rigorously pursued, for despite the success of the anti-graft campaign, there is still "the neglect of duty, willful use of power to act in a disorderly manner, alienation of power, distortion of performance, and deviation of undertakings". This necessitates Party discipline be strengthened. The insistence on self-cleansing derives from and reflects a profound concern about the corrosive impact of corruption on the Party. Over the years, the Party has been warned against what are known as the "four major tests" and "four dangers" it faces. The tests are those the Party faces in governance, reform and opening-up, the market economy and the external environment. The dangers are a lack of drive, incompetence, disengagement from the people, and inaction and corruption. For the Party to overcome these tests and dangers and preserve its ruling status in the long run, the CPC leadership has come up with a slew of countermeasures, which are detailed in the latest edition of the "Regulations of the Communist Party of China on Disciplinary Actions" published in December 2023. Navigating the document jargon of the Party may be challenging for the uninitiated, but doing so offers rewarding insights into its motivations for self-revolution, which culminates in the communique's assertion that it is only by having the courage to turn inward and purify itself that the Party can retain the support of the people, realize the goal of comprehensively building a modern socialist country, and achieve the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation. To this end, the fundamental principle is ensuring that members of the Party dare not, cannot and do not want to be corrupt. With the emphasis on "do not want". To grasp this fundamental principle, the communique stresses that a clean Party culture must be fostered so that there is no "soil and conditions for the emergence of corruption". Thus the Party is strengthening its anti-corruption toolbox with the application of big data and other means of analysis and comparison on the understanding of the Chinese nation. To this end, the fundamental principle is ensuring that "if a bribe is not investigated, the bribe is not stopped" and that new types of corruption and hidden corruption must have no place to take root. In the end, the internal supervision of the Party is an important guarantee that the decisions made by the CPC Central Committee in pursuit of "the happiness for the Chinese people, the rejuvenation for the Chinese nation, and the common cause of the world" are smoothly implemented.

Nawaz qualified to contest elections

Waheed Hussain



The judiciary under former Chief Justice Saqib Nisar brought a bad name to the institution as well. Because of Panama Papers case, removal of Nawaz from the government and awarding lifelong disqualification, the PML (N) has launched a lethal attack on the functioning of that time superior court. From Panama Papers' case to the conviction of former PM Nawaz, his daughter and son-in-law clearly indicated that it was a pre-written plan to keep Nawaz out of power. Nawaz Sharif, his family and party have been accusing former CJP Saqib Nisar and other judges for victimizing and targeting Nawaz, to accommodate PTI head Imran Khan

LEGAL hurdles for the former prime minister and head of PML (N), Muhammad Nawaz Sharif for holding a public office is over. The Supreme Court of Pakistan has revoked the lifelong disqualification under article 62 (1) (f) of the constitution of Pakistan. Well, many believe it was expected, when Nawaz finally decided to return Pakistan from London to lead the party in the long-awaited next month general elections. Will he be the next prime minister? let us wait and see, there is many a slip between the cup and the lip, however, the stage is already set for him. Decision for quashing the lifelong disqualification punishment by a seven-member supreme court bench, headed by the Chief Justice of Pakistan, Justice Qazi faez Isa has raised serious questions, regarding functioning of the superior judiciary, the judicial system and merit and process of issuing judgements on cases particularly pertaining to high profile political personalities and constitutional matters. Pakistan judicial history is full of controversial judgements, since the time of Justice Muhammad Munir. In 1954, the then Chief Justice of Pakistan, Justice Munir validated the extra-constitutional use of emergency powers by Governor General, Ghulam Muhammad, who had dissolved the Constituent Assembly. The Chief Justice coined the phrase 'the Doctrine of Necessity.' In his judgement the Chief Justice cited Bracton's maxim "that which is otherwise not lawful is made lawful by necessity." The doctrine of necessity became a permanent guideline for high profile constitutional and political cases in the country. Another controversial judgement in the judicial history of Pakistan was announced on 24 March 1979, when the Chief Justice of Pakistan, Justice Sheikh Anwar ul Haq rejected the appeal of the former Prime Minister of Pakistan and Chairman Pakistan Peoples' Party, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's death sentence, and subsequently, he was hanged. (Interestingly at the moment nine-member supreme court bench headed by Chief Justice of Pakistan, Justice Qazi faez Isa is hearing the case filed by the PPP leadership requesting the court to revisit the late ZAB case, as Bhutto family claims that the death sentence punishment awarded was a judicial murder.) Higher Judiciary during former military ruler Pervez Musharraf's government faced bitter

criticism. Chief Justice Iftikhar Muhammad Choudhry refused to president Musharraf to resign in 2007. Along with many other high courts and supreme court judges he was removed from the position of CJP. Iftikhar Choudhry returned to the court, as CJP through a lawyers' movement. However, his judicial activism misuse of Suo Moto power under "article 184 (3)" of the constitution had also created many controversies in the country. He was accused of interfering in the functioning of executive (elected government and bureaucracy). The judiciary under former Chief Justice Saqib Nisar brought a bad name to the institution as well. Because of Panama Papers case, removal of Nawaz from the government and awarding lifelong disqualification, the PML (N) has launched a lethal attack on the functioning of that time superior court. From Panama Papers' case to the conviction of former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, his daughter and son-in-law clearly indicated that it was a pre-written plan to keep Nawaz out of power. Nawaz Sharif, his family and party have been accusing former CJP Saqib Nisar and other judges for victimizing and targeting Nawaz, to accommodate PTI head Imran Khan. Many analysts were of the opinion that by using the judiciary Nawaz was replaced by Imran through a legal-cum-political-strategy. That's why since 2018 the time when Nawaz was disqualified and prevented to take part in any electoral process, he and his party has blamed certain judges for conspiring Nawaz. Nawaz Sharif and Istehkam-e-Pakistan Party head Jahangir Tareen has benefited from the new law enacted by the Pakistan Democratic Movement government. Through the amendment, the disqualification term for the parliamentarians has been fixed for five-year. Shahbaz Sharif coalition government did not touch the article 62 (1) (f) and brought the changes in the Election Act 2017 on June 26, 2023. Under the new law, disqualification of a person "to be elected, chosen or to remain as a member of the Parliament or provincial assembly under paragraph (f) of clause (1) of Article 62 of the Constitution shall be for a period not exceeding five years from the declaration of the court of law in that regard and such declaration shall be subject to due process of law." In the Nawaz Sharif case former national accountability judge late Arshad Malik's video

confession and ultimate removal from the service was a big question mark on the functioning and independence of judiciary. How a judge was forced to punish a former prime minister without sufficient and credible evidence? Like judiciary the role of NAB was also dubious. Nawaz was punished for being criminal in 2017-18, both by national accountability bureau and courts. While today, the same NAB and judiciary have issued a clean chit to the former premier in all those cases. Seven years back he was declared dishonest, corrupt and Sicilian Mafia misfit to hold any public office, interesting, today, he has been stamped as 'Sadiq and Amin.' So, whatever happened to him was a political victimization? Nawaz and his family went through media trail, defamed worldwide being most corrupt and suffered mental torture. We saw that in last one-year all investigating agencies particularly the NAB including all lower and superior courts reversed their own previous investigations and judgements/decisions in favor of Nawaz and his family. It means his punishment was against the actual spirit of the law and justice system. There should be accountability of all those top people in NAB and Judiciary who violated the law of the land for the political and personal reasons in the past. Until there is fair lawful accountability this pattern will continue while will harm the national and public interest. Today, if a court punishes a political leader without a lawful process and tomorrow the same is being reversed. What does it mean? Those who take wrong decisions and victimize people must be dealt according to the law. Only constitution and law should be the supreme not the individuals, who so ever they might be? Some law experts and analysts are of the opinion that SCP decision regarding Nawaz Sharif will also benefit Imran Khan in the future. If everything remains in his favor, after five years, he will be able to contest the elections. Actual issue is of the system. If we want to bring a permanent political and economic stability in Pakistan. If we want to establish a fair justice system in the country, the rule of law is must. All state institutions have to operate according to their designated duties and positions. Undue interference coupled with overstepping in the others' matters have damaged vital state institutions like judiciary.

Why Europe must double down on its support for Ukraine

Andrew Hammond

Freshly committed Western aid to Ukraine in 2023 dropped nearly 90 percent from a year earlier. So, it is time for Europe to step up to the plate in what may be a very difficult year ahead. Much of the first two years of the war has seen Kyiv, unexpectedly, on the counteroffensive. Moreover, Ukraine recaptured about half of its previously occupied territory in the period up to autumn last year. With both sides digging in for the cold winter months, making breakthroughs may become increasingly difficult...

LATE 2023 and early 2024 have seen growing European concern that Russia could yet prevail in the most serious conflict on the continent since the Second World War. Far from being the time to take its foot off the gas pedal, Europe must instead double down on its efforts to help Ukraine. The stakes in play are massive and growing. Europe and the wider West still have a significant strategic interest in ensuring the best possible outcome for Kyiv. A potential Russian victory would only embolden Moscow and its allies across the world. Only last month, for instance, German Defense Minister Boris Pistorius warned of the possibility of further Russian aggression in Europe this decade, including against Georgia, Moldova and/or the Baltic states. And it is not just security-related stakeholders making such comments. Also last month, International Monetary Fund Deputy Managing Director Gita Gopinath warned that the world is heading toward "cold war two" as a result of its geopolitical and geoeconomic fragmentation into two blocs: one in the West and a Russia and China-led grouping in the East. One measure of the consequences of a Russian victory is that Moscow would move closer to controlling a quarter of global wheat exports. Freshly committed Western aid to Ukraine in 2023 dropped nearly 90 percent from a year earlier. So, it is time for Europe to step up to the plate in what may be a very difficult year ahead. Much of the first two years of the war has seen Kyiv, unexpectedly, on the counteroffensive. Moreover, Ukraine recaptured about half of its previously occupied territory in the period up to autumn last year. With both sides digging in for the cold winter months, making breakthroughs may become increasingly difficult – and it is Moscow that has reportedly made some recent territorial gains. This will do little to ease the "fatigue" that Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni said, in an unguarded moment late last

year, is being experienced by some European leaders. She added: "We (are) near the moment in which everybody understands that we need a way out." Another factor that will do little to ease this fatigue is that sanctions may be doing as much damage to the West as they are to Russia. In 2023, the Russian economy is expected to have expanded by 2.8 percent, while some Western nations flatlined. It is perhaps unsurprising, in that context, that freshly committed Western aid to Ukraine dropped nearly 90 percent from a year earlier, according to the Kiel Institute for the World Economy. This is even before last month, when the US and EU were unable to approve significant new funds for Kyiv because of Republican opposition in the US Congress and Hungary's disagreements with Brussels. Yet another challenge is the possible splintering of the political consensus behind President Volodymyr Zelensky's leadership. While his approval rating remains high by international standards, trust in him fell to 76 percent in October from 91 percent in May, according to the Kyiv International Institute of Sociology. This comes in a context in which Moscow continues to put huge resources into its war effort. This includes massive military manpower. A total of 617,000 Russian troops are currently fighting, with some 244,000 of them being soldiers called up to fight alongside professional military troops. Much more thinking is needed about how the EU and its allies can best contribute to the resilience of Ukraine. All in all, this has given rise to Western speculation that Kyiv will not achieve all of its strategic war objectives. Take the example of Lord Ricketts, a former UK national security adviser. He believes there is a growing possibility of a Korea-style scenario, with Russia keeping control of about a fifth of prewar Ukraine and the remainder moving in a pro-Western direction in the years to come. This is why it is now so important that Europe re-

doubles its commitment, especially amid election uncertainty in the US that may see Donald Trump win out in November. The ex-president's apparent disdain for Ukraine may leave a critical gap that only Europe and its Western allies, including Japan and Canada, can try to fill – at least partially. What the EU has already done is to start to move forward with about half the previously promised aid of €50 billion (\$54 billion) over the next four years. This is to give Kyiv more predictability for its strained budget. However, much more thinking is needed about how the 27-member bloc and non-EU allies like the UK can best contribute to the resilience of Ukraine in the medium to long term. This includes military assistance, security guarantees and wider economic support, such as access to the EU's massive single market. A starting point for this future commitment, beyond the unprecedented support that Europe has provided so far, is Brussels moving forward with accession talks to allow Ukraine to potentially join the EU. Beyond that, the West can also put Kyiv onto a pathway to possible NATO membership. Moreover, important commitments can be made on reconstruction. The rebuilding of Ukraine may approximate that of Western Europe after the Second World War, Eastern Europe after the Cold War and the Western Balkans after the breakup of Yugoslavia. It will cost many hundreds of billions of euros and will be the most ambitious postwar reconstruction effort in the 21st century. This year is therefore the moment for Europe to double down on its commitment to Ukraine. The EU and other European powers such as the UK have huge incentives to support Kyiv in a difficult 2024, which may see yet more troubling news for Zelensky's leadership.

– Sourced by Arab News

Briefs

World must take note of genocide...

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decision in favor of involving the International Court of Justice (ICJ). Ambassador of Palestine said, this collaborative effort between South Africa and Palestine exemplifies a shared commitment to upholding international law and advocating for the rights and well-being of the Palestinian people. As discussions progress at the ICJ, it is anticipated that this legal recourse will contribute to fostering a just resolution and bringing global attention to the pressing issues affecting Gaza. He expressed gratitude on behalf of the people and government of Palestine, emphasizing the profound debt owed to the unwavering support received from the people and government of South Africa. This steadfast commitment has significantly fortified our stance on the issue, contributing to our increased strength and resilience. Ambassador Rabaei commended the articulate speech delivered by the South African high commissioner and extended heartfelt thanks for the warm welcome received at their mission.

Fighting terrorism: nation...

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the assets of the KP Police. Recalling the barbarism by the terrorists in APS incidents in Peshawar some years back, the prime minister said the cruelty of the terrorists who targeted innocent children would never be forgotten. He said death was the ultimate reality which might occur to anyone, any time, so there was no need to be afraid. "Every attack from the terrorists will be responded with more power and in a ferocious manner." Strongly condemning the miscreants, the prime minister asserted that he would continue to raise his voice against them till the last moment of his life. "They are cowardice and shameless, they have no courage to fight from the front and always fight from behind the doors," he added.

IHC voids Imran's in-camera...

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all actions taken after December 14 in the Cipher case are deemed illegal. On Dec 14, the special court formed under the Official Secrets Act issued an order prohibiting print, electronic and social media from publishing and broadcasting the proceedings related to the Cipher case. The Cipher case revolves around a diplomatic cable that the CIA alleges was never returned by the PTI founder. The PTI has long maintained that the document contained a threat from the US to oust the former PTI chief as the prime minister of Pakistan. Salman Akram Raja, who represented the PTI founder, told the media after the proceedings that he would also file a plea against Special Court judge Abul Hasanat Zulqarnain for repeatedly making mistakes. He said that the high court had to set aside the proceedings multiple times. "The trial would be open but would take place in jail. We will also file a petition on this. Everyone should be allowed to attend the trial, and the judge should be changed," Raja added.

Upheaval in top...

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he resigned as per Article 206(1) of the Constitution with immediate effect. The letter did not mention a reason for the resignation. President Dr Arif Alvi earlier today accepted Justice Naqvi's resignation after the judge, who is facing complaints of misconduct, tendered his re-signation as a judge of the Supreme Court a day ago. Naqvi was facing a Supreme Judicial Council (SJC) inquiry over allegations of misconduct, a show-cause notice for which was issued in October last year. On Tuesday, the apex court had rejected his request to stay the proceedings.

Shaheen supports Babar, reveals plans for NZ T20I

This will be the left-arm pacer's first assignment as captain of the shorter format

OUR CORRESPONDENTS

AUCKLAND: Pakistan's T20I captain Shaheen Afridi opened up ahead of the five-match T20I series against New Zealand which will begin on January 12 in Auckland. Shaheen was named captain of the T20I team after former skipper Babar Azam stepped down and this will be the left-arm pacer's first assignment as a skipper in tough New Zealand conditions. The 23-year-old emphasised that before the 2024 World Cup begins, the management will try players at different positions to make sure we go with full strength at the mega event "There are 17 T20I matches before the World Cup, and different combinations will be tried to determine the best playing positions," Shaheen said in a press conference. "When facing England in the series, everyone will know what needs to be done. Before the World Cup, it's essential to determine who will play at which number and position. I don't want any injuries before the World Cup." The 23-year-old opened up on the three-match Test series against Australia which



Pakistan lost, saying that he bowled a lot in the first two matches, which is why he opted for rest in the last Test. "I am fully fit, I bowled a lot in the first two Tests against Australia and both the management and I did not want to risk any injury. If there was an opportunity to win the series, I would have definitely played. I

prefer playing Test cricket as this format is more appealing to me," he added. Shaheen then showed gratitude for having the opportunity to lead the team where he also shed light on the past T20 tournament where Pakistan managed to reach semi-finals and final but failed to win. "It is a proud moment to lead the Pakistan

team, we are performing well in T20 cricket. The competitiveness in big T20 events has been good. Unfortunately, we did not get the desired results in those events," he said. "Playing semi-finals and finals of the World Cup is not easy, we made minor mistakes, but we will make efforts to not repeat them," the 23-year-old said. "Some players in the New Zealand series squad are new and some made comebacks, we will do our best to make sure that everyone gets a chance." "I don't think Babar's form is declining, one or two innings don't make a difference. He is our best batter. He has scored so many runs that I can't count them," Shaheen said when asked about Babar's current form. He also addressed the concerns regarding his pace saying now every ball can be bowled at 140kph, but he will try to increase the pace. "When I was bowling, and the board was displaying a low speed, it was surprising to all of us that I was bowling with all my strength, the speed was only showing 130," the left-arm said. "Not every ball can be bowled at a speed of 140, I will make efforts to improve my fitness. I am the captain and will lead from the front."

M Haris break silence on exclusion from T20I squad

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's emerging batter Mohammad Haris is still unaware of the reasons behind his exclusion from the T20I squad for the upcoming five-match series against New Zealand, starting on January 12 in Auckland. Despite the lack of clarity regarding his omission, Haris demonstrated resilience and optimism during a media event. "Even I don't know when and where I performed badly [in T20Is]. There are ups and downs. Sometimes, players in the backup perform better than you, so they deserve a chance. It is healthy competition and I hope to perform well in PSL and grab the opportunity," Haris said. Optimistic Haris regarded the situation as a wholesome competition, stating his resolve to display his skills and stage a robust

comeback. "I am not sad about being dropped as this is part of the game. These things make you stronger. I have gotten time to analyse my mistakes and improve my skillset," Haris added. Remember, chief selector Wahab Riaz emphasised that Haris has been strategically rested for this series, affirming his importance in the team's future plans. "We have rested Mohammad Haris for this series. We know his capability and he is part of our plans going forward. There were some domestic performers in First Class cricket who we wanted to give a chance and increase our pool of players, so we rested Haris from this tour," Wahab had said. Full squad: Shaheen Shah Afridi (captain), Mohammad Rizwan (vice-captain and wicket-keeper) Aamir Jamal, Abbas Afridi, Azam Khan (wicket-keeper), Babar Azam, Fakhar Zaman, Haris Rauf, Haseebullah (wicket-keeper), Iftikhar Ahmed, Mohammad Nawaz, Mohammad Wasim Jr, Sahibzada Farhan, Saim Ayub, Usama Mir and Zaman Khan.

Full schedule:
1st T20 - 12 January 2024 at Eden Park, Auckland
2nd T20 - 14 January 2024 at Seddon Park, Hamilton
3rd T20 - 17 January 2024 at University Oval, Dunedin
4th T20 - 19 January 2024 at Hagley Oval, Christchurch
5th T20 - 21 January 2024 at Hagley Oval, Christchurch.

Morocco seek end to 48-year African trophy drought

ABIDJAN: Morocco coach Walid Regragui was just five months and 20 days old when the country won the Africa Cup of Nations for the only time in 1976. In the second and last tournament decided by a mini-league, Morocco snatched a late 1-1 draw with Guinea to finish first in Ethiopia. As Moroccans celebrated conquering Africa then, few could have imagined that 48 years later the Atlas Lions would still be seeking a second title, given the country is a continental football powerhouse. The closest they have come to a second triumph was in 2004 when Regragui was the right-back in a team beaten 2-1 by hosts Tunisia in the final. But while the Cup of Nations has been an endless tale of disappointments, Morocco soared to dizzy heights at the 2022 World Cup in Qatar, becoming the first African and Arab semi-finalists. Given little chance of surviving a group including Belgium and Croatia, they not only did so but eliminated Spain and Portugal before falling to France in the semi-finals. "What we did at the World Cup was unbelievable. We put Africa on the world map," said the 48-year-old born in a southern Paris suburb. After the stunning World Cup showing, the pressure on Morocco to achieve further glory has intensified with some pundits labelling them "red-hot favourites" to win the 2024 Cup of Nations. They will face two former champions, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Zambia, and outsiders Tanzania in Group F in the Ivory Coast, where the tournament kicks off on Saturday. "Curse of African Cup": Assuming they qualify for the knockout stage, four more hurdles must be cleared if Morocco are to end what Regragui calls "the curse of the African Cup". In their last seven Cup of Nations appearances, the Atlas Lions have never got past the quarter-finals, and suffered a stunning last-16 loss to minnows Benin in 2019. - Agencies

SJC gives ex-judge Naqvi another...

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Naqvi stepped down from his post due to "circumstances which are a matter of public knowledge and to some extent public record". The SJC served an intimation notice on Naqvi, whose resignation was accepted by President Arif Alvi earlier today, asking him to appear before the body tomorrow if he wants to give his viewpoint against the complaints lodged against him. During the course of proceedings, SJC Chairman Justice Qazi Faez Isa remarked there could be two reasons behind the judge's resignation: the complaint against the judge was false and he stepped down under pressure or the allegations were true and he did not want to face them. "The question of judge's dismissal is now irrelevant," he stated, adding that the council had just sent a report to the president. "If allegations had been proven, then the council would have requested the president for the judge's dismissal."

ECP challenges...

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decision on its election symbol and intra-party polls. In its petition, the PTI has contended that despite the PHC orders issued a day earlier the ECP failed to upload the certificate on the PTI's intra-party elections on its website. It added that failure to do so falls under contempt of court. The party has named Chief Election Commissioner Sikander Sultan Raja, ECP members and secretary as the respondents in the case. Earlier today, PTI's chief election commissioner Niazullah Niazi had submitted a certified copy of the PHC decision to the ECP in person. A day earlier, a two-member bench of the PHC comprising Justice Ejaz Anwar and Justice Syed Arshad Ali announced a short order on a petition jointly filed by PTI Chairman Gohar Ali Khan and six other party leaders, requesting the court to declare the ECP order as illegal and without jurisdiction.

PPP prioritises...

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support of the people, acknowledging the historic support the PPP had received from them for Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and Benazir Bhutto, adding that no force in the world could stop their path. Bilawal pledged to change the fate of the people of Pakistan, promising to address the prevailing issues of inflation, unemployment, poverty and economic crisis. He expressed confidence that only the PPP could accomplish these goals.

Pakistan not supporting Fazl's...

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Afghanistan in a private capacity. However, she added, that the FO will seek a briefing from him about it. The spokesperson added that Pakistan is not interested in dialogue with the banned Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP). "The outlawed TTP carried out several terrorist attacks inside Pakistan. We demand that the Afghan interim government take action against the terrorists." The FO spokesperson said that Pakistan believes in dialogue and diplomacy while commenting on the visit by Afghan Commerce Minister Nooruddin Azizi.

Strong quake rattles Afghanistan, Pakistan

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the capital Kabul, about 300 kilometres from Jurm. Afghanistan is frequently hit by earthquakes, especially in the Hindu Kush mountain range, near the junction of the Eurasian and Indian tectonic plates. In October last year, around 1,000 people were killed when a series of quakes with magnitudes measuring between 4.2 and 6.3 jolted western Afghanistan.

UFC legend hints at Brock Lesnar's return to MMA

LONDON: The main event for UFC 300 remains undisclosed, but Michael Bisping, a retired MMA legend, offered an intriguing forecast. If proven true, it would witness the return of Brock Lesnar to the octagon, squaring off against UFC heavyweight champion Tom Aspinall. Nearly eight years have passed since Lesnar's last bout—a no-contest bout against Mark Hunt at UFC 200 in 2016. The 46-year-old former heavyweight champion may find the temptation to make a comeback. Considering his previous appearances at UFC 100 and UFC 200, the WWE legend could potentially return for the forthcoming milestone event. Despite a tainted legacy in the Octagon due to a failed drug test following the Mark Hunt fight, Lesnar still commands a substantial following from his wrestling days. His imposing power made him a captivating figure in the UFC realm. And a return at this juncture could be a significant attraction for UFC, capitalizing on the allure of a comeback tale. Michael Bisping, in a recent video on his YouTube channel, suggested that the 30-year-old Aspinall could be an ideal adversary if Lesnar decides to resurrect his UFC career. Bisping playfully teased the concept of a 'mental' clash between the WWE icon and Aspinall, setting the stage for an intriguing potential showdown. "UFC 300, will we see Brock Lesnar on there again? It sounds stupid because Brock Lesnar is no spring chicken. He's 46 years old, but remember Randy Couture fought on to the ripe old age of about 47? Fighters have gone on longer. Guess what? When there are millions of dollars on the line, people will come and fight," Bisping said. "And people would love to see Brock Lesnar stepping in there once again. Who would really push the needle in a massive way? Brock Lesnar. He's only 46, he's still a draw, people love him. - Agencies

Warner to land in helicopter at SCG for BBL match

SYDNEY: Australia's top-order batter David Warner is set to land at the outfield of Sydney Cricket Ground (SCG) from a helicopter to feature in the Sydney Thunder's game against Sydney Sixers in the Big Bash League (BBL) on 12 January. David Warner will reach the stadium on a helicopter after attending his brother's wedding in the Hunter Valley. He will take an early leave from the wedding ceremony and reach Cessnock Airport, from where he will take a 45-minute helicopter ride to land at the venue for the Sydney derby. The 37-year-old will play his first competitive match after playing his farewell Test at the same ground against Pakistan last week. Warner was originally planned to land at nearby Allianz Stadium, however, it was ruled out, resulting in the plan to land at SCG. Sean Abbott, who will play against Warner in the match, jokingly called this stunt 'a bit Hollywood.' - Agencies

Real Madrid edge Atletico 5-3 to reach Super Cup final

RIYADH: Real Madrid defeated Atletico Madrid 5-3 after extra-time in a pulsating battle in Saudi Arabia to reach the Spanish Super Cup final. Mario Hermoso and Antonio Rudiger exchanged early headed goals before Ferland Mendy sent Madrid ahead at the Al-Awwal Park stadium in Riyadh. Antoine Griezmann levelled with a milestone goal for Atletico to become their all-time leading scorer and Kepa Arrizabalaga's own goal sent the Rojibancos ahead, but Dani Carvajal smashed Madrid level and forced extra-time. With the game heading towards penalties, Stefan Savic's own goal under pressure from Joselu nudged Madrid ahead and substitute Ibrahim Diaz wrapped up the win on the counter-attack with Atletico goalkeeper Jan Oblak stranded out of position. In Sunday's final Madrid will face either Barcelona or Osasuna, who meet Thursday in the other semi-final. "Atletico played very well and so did we, it was a spectacular game," Madrid coach Carlo Ancelotti told Movistar. "We won because we had more energy in the final stages... (the substitutes) all delivered." Diego Simeone's Atletico are the only team to beat Madrid this season, in September, and they started strongly with Samuel Lino testing Arrizabalaga shortly before they took the lead. Hermoso headed in the opener after six minutes from Griezmann's corner as Rodrygo failed to challenge him in the air. Rudiger levelled for Madrid in similar fashion as he escaped Savic and nodded Luka Modric's corner home. Madrid, unbeaten in 20 matches, were in the ascendancy and full-back Mendy capitalised with a deft flicked finish from Carvajal's low cross. Milestone man: Griezmann headed into Arrizabalaga's hands before pulling Atletico level in a gripping first half, turning away from Modric before driving home from the edge of the box. The goal took him ahead of the late Luis Aragones as Atletico's all-time top scorer on 174 goals. Rodrygo almost put Madrid ahead again before the break after leading Atletico's defence on a merry dance but Oblak parried his effort and grabbed the loose ball before it could spin over the line. Saudi spectators, despite mainly supporting Real Madrid, jeered Los Blancos midfielder Toni Kroos, on as a second half substitute, after he criticised players moving to the country from European football last summer in search of riches. Oblak made a fine save to thwart Carvajal before Atletico took the lead with 12 minutes remaining. Arrizabalaga collided with Alvaro Morata as he tried to catch a cross and the ball bounced into Madrid's goal off the on-loan Chelsea stopper. Madrid protested, pleading for a possible foul by Morata but the officials saw no infringement. However Carvajal struck with five minutes to go, rattling a rebound into the top corner after Jude Bellingham's effort was cleared off the line. The game tightened in extra-time, no longer as end-to-end, neither team able to carve out clear chances with the abandon they managed during the opening 90 minutes. - Agencies

Djokovic plays qualifier, Swiatek faces Kenin at AO

Serbian star required treatment for a wrist problem during his United Cup defeat by Alex de Minaur

SPORTS DESK

MELBOURNE: Novak Djokovic will begin his quest for a record-extending 11th Australian Open title and 25th Grand Slam crown overall against a qualifier, while top-ranked Iga Swiatek faces a tricky test against 2020 champion Sofia Kenin, after the draw on Thursday. Djokovic required treatment for a wrist problem during his United Cup defeat by Alex de Minaur last week - his first loss in Australia for six years - and can put that disappointment behind him with a fast start at his most successful major. The 36-year-old Serb could play Greek seventh seed Stefanos Tsitsipas in the quarter-finals in what would be a mouthwatering rematch of last year's title clash. Defending women's champion Aryna Sabalenka also takes on a qualifier first while 2023 runner-up Elena Rybakina, who downed the world number two in the final of the tune-up tournament in Brisbane, faces former world number one Karolina Pliskova.

Wimbledon champion Carlos Alcaraz heads to Melbourne Park for the year's opening Grand Slam starting on Sunday without any competitive matches under his belt this season, and the Spaniard meets French veteran Richard Gasquet. The 20-year-old second seed is on course

for a quarter-final clash with the rejuvenated Alexander Zverev, who goes up against fellow German Dominik Koepfer. Tsitsipas squares off with Matteo Bertinetti in another tantalising opener, while twice-finalist Daniil Medvedev will start against a qualifier. Italian young-

ster Jannik Sinner, who is tipped to go deep at Melbourne Park, will face Botić van de Zandschulp. US Open champion Coco Gauff will take on Anna Karolina Schmiedlova, while four-times major winner Naomi Osaka returns to Grand Slam tennis for the first time since 2022 and plays Frenchwoman Caroline Garcia in a tricky opener. Jelena Ostapenko marches into Adelaide semi-finals Osaka, who won the title in 2019 and 2021, only returned to action at Brisbane having spent 15 months on the sidelines and giving birth to her first child in July. Angelique Kerber, who also made her comeback to the tour following a lengthy maternity break, will play 2022 runner-up Danielle Collins in her opener and could take on top seed Swiatek in the next round. Wild card Caroline Wozniacki, another former champion and returning mother, will play 20th seed Magda Linette. Australia's Alex de Minaur, who stunned Djokovic last week before beating Alcaraz in a charity match, will spearhead local hopes and begins his campaign against Canadian former world number three Milos Raonic.



Briefs

German FM
condemns
China's South
China sea
actions

MANILA : Germany's foreign minister criticised the Chinese coastguard's activities in the South China Sea, including its use of lasers and water cannon, during a visit on Thursday to the Philippines, saying the actions were causing concern in Europe too. Tension has flared in recent months between China and the Philippines as they have traded accusations over several run-ins in the waterway, including charges that China rammed a ship last month carrying the Philippine armed forces chief of staff. "Such risky manoeuvres violate the rights and economic development opportunities of your country and other neighbouring countries," Annalena Baerbock told a joint news conference with Philippine Foreign Affairs Secretary Enrique Manalo. "For countries around the world, they call into question the freedom of the sea routes guaranteed under international law in an area through which a third of global maritime trade flows," she said. China claims sovereignty over nearly the entire South China Sea, pointing to a line on its maps that cuts into the exclusive economic zones (EEZ) of Vietnam, the Philippines, Malaysia, Brunei and Indonesia. In 2016, the Permanent Court of Arbitration in the Hague said China's claims had no legal basis. China has rejected that ruling.—APP

London
mayor urges
closer UK
ties with EU

LONDON : London's mayor on Thursday called for closer ties with Europe and a better debate about immigration as he branded Brexit a "key contributor" to Britain's cost-of-living crisis. Sadiq Khan, of the main opposition Labour party, said the UK should forge a "new settlement" with the European Union because Britain's 2020 departure from the bloc "isn't working". His intervention comes in a general election year when the major political parties, in particular the ruling Conservatives, appear reluctant to talk about the repercussions of the 2016 EU referendum. "We've got to be frank, Brexit is simply not a peripheral concern that we can leave in the past," Khan was to say in a keynote speech, according to excerpts released by his office. "It's a key contributor to the cost-of-living crisis right now and it's resulting in lost opportunities, lost business and lost income." He added Britain urgently needs "a closer relationship with the EU", arguing a "new settlement would not only turbocharge our economy and help to raise living standards, but help to unlock the growth and prosperity we need".—Agencies

Comoros
President
seeks 4th
term in Polls

MORONI: Voters in the Comoros choose a new president on Sunday with incumbent Azali Assoumani, who has already extended his time in office through constitutional change, voicing confidence of winning a third consecutive term against a divided opposition. Nearly 340,000 people are eligible to vote in the predominantly Muslim Indian Ocean archipelago, whose population is under a million but nearly half live below the poverty line, according to the World Bank. Known for vanilla and fragrant flowers used in luxury perfume, Comoros proclaimed independence in 1975 from France, which is home to a large diaspora. Several opposition figures have urged voters to boycott the ballot, in which five candidates are standing against 65-year-old Assoumani for the top job. Security will be beefed up for voting day and the army is on standby in case of disturbances but displays of political protest are rare. A demonstration organised by the pro-boycott camp for Tuesday was called off.—APP

Kazakhstan envoy inaugurates
photo exhibition at PNCA

The exhibition emphasizes the importance of revisiting their narratives, fostering connections among peers

DNA

ISLAMABAD: PNCA hosted a remarkable photography exhibition, 'Fly on the Wall' curated by the esteemed Aasim Akhtar, at the prestigious Pakistan National Council of the Arts under the banner of the Visual Arts Division. This groundbreaking showcase features the works of both national and international photographers, offering a profound exploration of their diverse perspectives and compelling narratives. The group show includes Ali Mehdi Zaidi, Arif Mehmood, Ayesha Vellani, Aysha Bilal, Hamid Moinuddin, Lukas Werth, Malcom Hutcheson, Shehzad Noorani, Stephan Andrew, William Dalrymple and Zaheer Chaudry. The exhibition was inaugurated by Mr. Y. Kistafin, the Ambassador of Kazakhstan, in a grand ceremony along with the Director-General of PNCA, Mr. Ayub Jamali. The opening ceremony witnessed the presence of renowned photographers Ayesha Bilal, Zaheer Chaudry, and Arif Mehmood, whose outstanding contributions to the field were highly appreciated by the enthusiastic audience. Under the theme of "Retelling the Story of Pakistani Photographers' Journey," Aasim Akhtar's curation aims to provide a fresh perspective on the profound and often overlooked work of Pakistani photographers. The exhibition emphasizes the importance of revisiting their narratives, fostering connections among peers, and encouraging a collective reflection on their shared responsibility as wit-



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Kazakhstan Erjan Kistafin witnessing a photo exhibition at the Pakistan National Art Gallery.—DNA

nesses to history. This exhibition defies conventional expectations, rejecting hierarchy and showcasing a diverse array of works that coalesce to form a captivating narrative. Aasim Akhtar's selection process focused on initiating a dialogue among the photographers, allowing them to communicate with each other through their images and share their unique

visions with the public. The exhibition emphasizes the deep mutual respect within the photography community, highlighting that no photographer or genre is deemed greater or nobler than another. As Aasim Akhtar aptly puts it, "I have eschewed hierarchy because, in photography, it does not exist. What does exist is a deep mutual respect. No pho-

tographer is greater than another, no genre nobler than the next." This captivating exhibition showcases the convergence of diverse views, turning the photographers' gaze on the world, scrutinizing it fragment by fragment. Each photograph, regardless of style or subject, serves as a testament to the photographers' compulsive urge to bear witness to the hu-

man experience. The exhibition is open to the public at PNCA till 13 February 2024, offering an immersive journey through the lens of these talented photographers. Don't miss the opportunity to witness the collective power of their perspectives, as they invite us to contemplate our fragility, the ephemeral nature of life, and the traces we leave behind.

Greek PM lauds progress in
normalization with Turkiye

Recalling that he met Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan three times last year, Kyriakos Mitsotakis notes that he is much more optimistic over prospects for Greek-Turkish relations

WEB DESK

ATHENS : Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis has said that his country has achieved a significant normalisation in its relations with Türkiye. In an interview with public broadcaster, Mitsotakis noted that the normalisation is reflected in concrete developments such as a visa facilitation scheme announced during Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's visit to Athens in December, fighting irregular migration and negotiations to improve

bilateral economic and commercial ties. Recalling that he and Erdogan met three times last year, Mitsotakis noted that he is much more optimistic about prospects for Greek-Turkish relations. He noted that there are numerous disputes between the two countries which Athens intends to approach in a good mood to resolve. He added, however, that Greece and Türkiye should be able to learn to co-exist in a region tested by various challenges even if their differences remain unresolved. Asserting that relations with the U.S. have been el-

evated to a very high level, as affirmed by U.S. Secretary State Antony Blinken, whom he met last Saturday, Mitsotakis said this brings economic, military and diplomatic benefits to the country. More specifically, on the country's long-awaited request for F-35 fighter jets from Washington, he said: "The Greek government has submitted a substantiated request to acquire F-35 jet fighters and I believe this request is mature and will be approved by the American authorities... relatively soon, in my opinion." Also speaking on the much-contested

issue of same-sex marriage, Mitsotakis reiterated that the government remains committed to legalizing it. Nonetheless, he noted that the government's bill would not include approval for the use of a surrogate mother by same-sex couples. Erdogan's visit to Athens last month, Türkiye and Greece announced the "Athens Declaration on Friendly Relations and Good-Neighbourliness" during Erdogan's official visit to the Greek capital. "There is no issue between Türkiye and Greece that cannot be resolved," Erdogan said during the trip.

Brunei's polo-playing prince
marries commoner

BANDAR SERI BEGAWAN : Brunei's polo-playing Prince Abdul Mateen, one of Asia's most eligible bachelors, married his commoner fiancée on Thursday as part of a lavish 10-day celebration in the oil-rich sultanate. An Islamic marriage ceremony for the 32-year-old prince and Yang Mulia Anisha Rosnah, 29, was held inside a gold-domed mosque in the capital Bandar Seri Begawa. Mateen is the 10th child of Sultan Hassanal Bolkiah – the world's longest reigning monarch and once the richest man on the planet – and is well down the succession pecking order. His bride – the granddaughter of one of his father's key advisers – reportedly has a fashion brand and co-owns a tourism business. Mateen, wearing a traditional white outfit decorated with diamond-shaped motifs and a matching headpiece, was driven to the mosque in a luxury saloo. He sat on an elevated yellow cushion in front of an imam who presided over the male-only ceremony attended by the sultan and other relatives and guests. Afterwards, Mateen approached his father and kissed his hand. Celebrations for the royal wedding reach their climax on Sunday with a glittering ceremony in the 1,788-room palace and an elaborate procession. The guest list is expected to include international royalty and political leaders. "It's like a fairytale," university student Syahida Wafa Mohamed Shah, 22, told AFP on Wednesday, near the Omar Ali Saifuddin Mosque, where the marriage was solemnised.—APP

Generational floods
claim hundreds
in Congo basin

KINSHASA: The Congo River has risen to its highest level in more than 60 years, causing flooding throughout the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Congo Republic that has killed more than 300 people over the past months, according to authorities. Poor urban planning and weak infrastructure have made some African countries vulnerable to flash floods after intense rains, which have become more frequent due to climate change. Ferry Mowa, a hydrology specialist at the DRC riverways authority, part of the transport ministry, said his office had flagged the high water level in late December, warning that almost the entire flood plain of the capital Kinshasa, which sits on the banks of the river, could be affected. On Wednesday, the river reached 6.20 meters (20.34 feet) above sea level, just shy of the 1961 record of 6.26 meters, he told media reporters, adding that the flooding had followed exceptionally high rains inland. "It is imperative that people who live around the river move", Mowa said. Several neighbourhoods in DRC's densely populated Kinshasa have flooded, as well as communities in more than a dozen provinces, the social affairs ministry said. Nearly 300 people have died and 300,000 households have been affected, with tens of thousands of houses destroyed, it said in a statement last week. In neighbouring Congo Republic, whose capital Brazzaville also sits on the banks across the river, at least 17 people have died in floods across eight departments including the capital, with more than 60,000 households affected.—APP



TOKYO : Ambassador Raza Bashir Tarar met with the Mr Kentaro Morita Deputy Director General Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry at the Embassy. Issues of mutual interest were discussed.—DNA

Iran intelligence arrests 35 suspects in Kerman bombings

The ministry said that its forces are proceeding with a process to identify the perpetrators and masterminds of the twin suicide bombings as well as the people related to Takfiri terrorists

FOREIGN DESK

TEHRAN : Iran's Intelligence Ministry says 35 individuals have been arrested over involvement in the recent terrorist bombings in the southeastern city of Kerman. The ministry, in its second statement on the incident on Thursday, said its forces are proceeding with a process to identify the perpetrators and masterminds of the twin suicide bombings as well as the people related to Takfiri terrorists inside and outside the country. "So far, 35 people have been detained in the provinces of Kerman, Sistan and Baluchestan, Khorasan Razavi, Esfahan, Tehran and West Azarbaijan," it explained. It added that a number of the criminals in-

involved in the tragedy have been also identified abroad and serious efforts are underway to pursue them. The terrorist bombings, which were claimed by the Daesh (ISIS) terrorist group, occurred on January 3 near the burial site of Iran's iconic anti-terror commander Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani during a ceremony marking the fourth anniversary of his martyrdom. The blasts left at least 94 people dead. It is the ministry's duty and it reserves the right to prosecute and bring to justice the criminals and all the agents outside the country who played a role in the massacring of dozens of innocent people in the terrorist blasts, said the statement. It also emphasized that the minis-

try would not rest until the full realization of its goals. Iran says the culprits behind the deadly terrorist bomb attacks in the city of Kerman use terrorism as a tool to achieve their own objectives. According to the results obtained so far, the mastermind and main supporter of the criminal operation in question was a Tajik person, under the alias Abdullah Tajiki, the statement read. He illegally entered the country through southeastern borders, along with a woman and a child, on December 19 and was transferred to Kerman, it said. It also noted that in addition to directing the operation, Tajiki was an expert in making handmade bombs. After combining various explo-

sive and electric detonators and producing the bombs, he left the country two days before the tragic incident. Iran's Intelligence Ministry identified the second Kerman terrorist suspect as a 24-year-old Israeli with Tajik citizenship, named Bazirov, and said he joined Daesh after becoming acquainted with the terrorist group via Telegram social platform. The ministry added that important clues have been found about the identity of the second suspect which would be revealed after completion of information. The statement gave further details about the day of the attack, saying at 13:03 and 13:14 local time, the suspects went separately to the place where the

ceremony was scheduled to be held. It emphasized that the main goal of the terrorists was to detonate General Soleimani's tomb but they changed their plan after witnessing strong and multi-layered security measures and the deployment of police forces and equipment. They then decided to implement their evil plan in relatively distant places, it noted. According to the ministry, the first terrorist detonated his explosive vest at 14:55 local time around 700 meters away from General Soleimani's tomb and the second terrorist detonated his vest at 15:15 around 1,000 meters away. Iran has pledged a fitting, harsh response to the perpetrators of the attack, vowing the deadly crime will not go unpunished.

Ecuador
declares
state of war
amid cartel
terror

QUITO : With city streets largely deserted apart from a massive military deployment, Ecuador found itself in a "state of war" Wednesday as drug cartels waged a brutal campaign of kidnappings and attacks in response to a government crackdown. Hundreds of soldiers patrolled the capital Quito, where residents were gripped by fear over a surge of violence that has also prompted alarm abroad. The small South American country has been plunged into crisis after years of growing control by transnational cartels that use its ports to ship cocaine to the United States and Europe. The latest outburst of violence was sparked by the discovery Sunday of the prison escape of one of the country's most powerful narco bosses, Jose Adolfo Macias, known by the alias "Fitó." On Monday, President Daniel Noboa imposed a state of emergency and nighttime curfew, but the gangs hit back with a declaration of "war" – threatening to execute civilians and security forces. They have also instigated numerous prison riots, set off explosions in public places and waged attacks in which at least 14 people have been killed. More than 100 prison guards and administrative staff have been taken hostage, the SNAI prisons authority said.—APP

Finland
extends

Russia border
closure until
feb 11

HELSINKI : Finland will extend the closure of its border with Russia by four weeks, until February 11. The interior ministry announced the extension on Thursday. The border was set to reopen on January 15. Finland's 1,340km (832-mile) border with Russia serves as the European Union's external border and is part of NATO's northeastern flank. It shuttered all eight frontier posts with Russia late last year after accusing Moscow of encouraging asylum seekers and undocumented migrants to cross over. Russia has denied the claims. "Based on the information gathered by the authorities, the threat of the phenomenon restarting and expanding as previously experienced is likely," the interior ministry said in a statement. Finland joined NATO in April after decades of military non-alignment and pragmatic friendly ties with Moscow. It says that Russia has been allowing the movement of migrants in an attempt to destabilise the country and also in retaliation for its decision to increase defence cooperation with the United States.—APP

IMF releases
\$4.7bn to
Argentina
amid crisis

BUENOS AIRES : Argentina and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) have finalised an agreement to release \$4.7bn as part of a debt restructuring plan for the troubled South American nation. Latin America's third-biggest economy is facing dire economic challenges after decades of debt and financial mismanagement, with inflation surpassing 160 percent year-on-year and 40 percent of Argentinians living in poverty. "Understandings were reached on a strengthened set of policies to restore macroeconomic stability and bring the current program back on track," the IMF said in a statement on Wednesday. With this deal, Argentina's new President Javier Milei, who took power in December and inherited a deep social, economic and financial crisis, puts back on track a \$44bn bailout package with the IMF that dates back to 2018. "The new administration is already implementing an ambitious stabilization plan, anchored on a large upfront fiscal consolidation, along with actions to rebuild reserves, correct relative price misalignments, strengthen the central bank's balance sheet, and create a simpler, rules-based, and market-oriented economy," the IMF said. The agreement is to be approved by the global lender's executive board "in the coming weeks", it said.—APP

Briefs

PTI leader shot dead in Swabi ahead of elections

BUREAU REPORT

SWABI: A local Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leader, Shah Khalid, was shot dead in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Swabi on Thursday as political actors become targets ahead of the February 8 general elections.

According to the police, unidentified assailants riding a motorcycle fired shots at Khalid's car at Swabi Adda, as a result of which he lost his life on the spot.

The law enforcers added that the suspects who fired at the vehicle escaped unchallenged. However, the police have launched a search operation for them. The officials have yet to ascertain the motive behind the murder. The unfortunate incident comes hours after an election hopeful and two other people were shot dead in North Waziristan when unknown assailants opened fire on them, as per local police officials. The independent candidate, identified as Kaleemullah Khan, was eyeing to contest polls for Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly's PK-104. In a separate incident on the same day, Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz's (PML-N) candidate for NA-258 Aslam Buledi sustained injuries during a firing incident in Turbat City, officials said.

Iran seizes US oil tanker with court order

FOREIGN DESK

TEHRAN: The Navy of the Islamic Republic of Iran has announced the seizure of an American oil tanker with a court order in the Sea of Oman. The United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations (UKMTO) identified the tanker Marshall Islands-flagged St Nikolas, saying it was boarded at about 7:30 am (0330 GMT) off Sohar in Oman and changed course towards Bandar-e-Jask in Iran. Ambery, a British maritime risk company, said the recently renamed tanker was previously prosecuted and fined for carrying Iranian oil, which was confiscated by US authorities. "Iran has previously taken action against those it has accused of cooperating with the US," it added. The vessel had been loaded with 145,000 tonnes of crude oil in Basra, Iraq and was destined for Aliaga in Turkey via the Suez Canal, the tanker's Greece-based management company Empire Navigation said.

Last August, the US Navy unloaded a tanker of stolen Iranian oil worth around \$56 million off the Texas port, despite warnings from Iran and after American oil firms had resisted the temptation of touching the 800,000-barrel tanker for fear of Iranian retaliation in the Persian Gulf waters.

PPP unveils ticket holders for KP Assembly

SHAMIM SHAHID

PESHAWAR: Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) unveils the list of tick holders for Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly. The party ticket for Bajur PK-20 was allotted to Akhundzada Chatan. Malakand PK-23 ticket was given to former provincial president Humayun Khan, and provincial president Muhammad Ali Shah Bacha was also given Malakand PK-24 ticket. Afsarul Mulk got the ticket for Shangla PK-28. The party tickets for Peshawar PK-72, PK-74 were allotted to Razaullah, and Malik Tahmish respectively. Provincial secretary Information Amjad Afridi was awarded the party ticket for Kohat PK-90. Peshawar PK-80 ticket was allotted to Zarak Khan, son of Asma Alamgir while the ticket for PK-82 was given to Ziaullah Afridi. Zahir Ali Shah, brother of Robina Khalid will contest election from Peshawar PK-83 on the party ticket of PPP.



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Palestine Ahmad Rabaei and his staff visited the South African High Commission to thank the South African government for taking Israel to the ICJ over Gaza genocide. Another picture on Front Page. – DNA

Solangi calls for political parties economic vision

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Federal Minister for Information, Broadcasting and Parliamentary Affairs Murtaza Solangi said on Thursday that major political parties would have to give vision for the economic future of the country. Delivering his speech at the seminar on "Pakistan Elections 2024: Economic Reforms Agenda of Political Parties", hosted by Press Information Department here, he said, "Political parties should give a vision for the betterment of the country." The minister said emphatically that improvement of the economy and economics was the need of the hour. Stressing the need to discuss the country's issues openly, he said that everyone should agree on the economic direction of the country. There was no ban on politics, but there should be no politics on the future of the country, Murtaza Solangi maintained. The minister opined that politics was the concentration of economy and economic interests. "Our main issues are education, health, gender equality," Murtaza Solangi remarked.

PML-N leaves 11 PA, 7 NA seats for seat adjustment

DNA

LAHORE: The Pakistan Muslim League (PML-N) has left 11 provincial and 7 National Assembly (NA) seats vacant for seat adjustment with the Istekham-e-Pakistan Party (IPP) in the upcoming general elections which are slated to be held on Feb 8. There is a possibility that IPP leader Aleem Khan will contest on NA-117 Shahdara Lahore, Aun Chaudhry from NA-128 Lahore, Jahangir Khan Tareen from NA-149 Multan, Nauman Langrial from NA-143 Chichawatani. Similarly, there is a possibility of seat adjustment with Aamir Kayani from NA-47 Islamabad, Ghulam Sarwar Khan from NA-54 Taxila, and Engineer Gul Asghar from NA-88 Khushab. Ammar Siddique Khan from PP-12 Rawalpindi, Raja Yawar Kamal from PP-24 Jehlum are likely to be adjusted.

Israeli occupation forces continue massacres in Gaza

"The Nazi occupation's leaders persist in making racist remarks calling for the ethnic cleansing of our Palestinian people with no regard for the international community or legal accountability," Hamas said

NEWS DESK

GAZA: As the US-backed Israeli genocidal war on the Gaza Strip entered day 97 on Thursday, massive aerial and artillery strikes continued to pound neighborhoods and homes and massacre more civilians, mostly children and women. At least 23,469 Palestinians have been killed and 59,604 injured in Israeli strikes on Gaza since October 7, Gaza's Ministry of Health says. In the most recent 24-hour reporting period, Israeli forces carried out 10 mass killings in the territory, causing 112 deaths and 194 injuries, the ministry added. About 7,000 people remain missing under the rubble and are presumed dead. Palestinian Information Center (PIC) said that the Israeli occupation army continued to attack different areas of Gaza last night and on Thursday morning, killing and injuring a number of citizens. According to local sources, seven civilians were killed and 25 others were injured, including children, when the Israeli army bombed a house belonging to the family of Abu Namous in Khan Yunis refugee camp. The Israeli army also killed five civilians and injured others when they bombed a gathering of displaced families in Oreiba area in the north of Rafah. Other casualties were reported in different

areas of Gaza following Israeli aerial and artillery attacks. The Hamas Movement has called on the international community to condemn the Israeli leaders who call for the ethnic cleansing of the Palestinian people. "The Nazi occupation's leaders persist in making racist remarks calling for the ethnic cleansing of our Palestinian people with no regard for the international community or legal accountability," Hamas said in a statement on Thursday. Hamas pointed out that the latest of such remarks were made by Israeli communications minister Shlomo Karhi, who stressed the need to encourage immigration from Gaza through continuing to make conditions hard for the population. Hamas called on the international community and the UN to live up to their responsibilities through condemning such Israeli incitement and aggressive remarks and holding Israeli leaders accountable for their ongoing war crimes and genocide in Gaza. It also called on the International Court of Justice to take such Israeli remarks seriously because they clearly call for the ethnic cleansing of the Palestinian people. Meanwhile, Oxfam says that the daily death toll of Palestinians in Israel's war on Gaza surpasses that of any other major conflict in the 21st century. "Israel's military is killing Palestinians at an average rate of 250 people a day, which

massively exceeds the daily death toll of any other major conflict of recent years," Oxfam said in a statement. The international aid organization provided a list of the average daily death tolls in various conflicts since the turn of the century: 96.5 in Syria, 51.6 in Sudan, 50.8 in Iraq, 43.9 in Ukraine, 23.8 in Afghanistan, and 15.8 in Yemen. It said the lives of Palestinians in Gaza are at risk due to hunger, diseases and cold, as well as Israeli bombardments, and reiterated that only 10 percent of the needed food can enter the enclave. Meanwhile, Palestinian political factions say their unified national position is that there will be no agreement or captives exchange deals with Israel until there is "a comprehensive cessation of aggression against our Palestinian people". The factions declared in a statement their "full support for the efforts made to relieve our people and alleviate their suffering". "We express our readiness to cooperate and partner with the competent government agencies and institutions within the framework of strengthening the steadfastness of our people and protecting the home front from the malicious plans of the Zionist occupation," the statement added. "Israel's military is killing Palestinians at an average rate of 250 people a day, which

raeli infantry force stationed inside a house with an anti-personnel device, killing and wounding soldiers east of the city of Khan Yunis in the southern Gaza Strip. The Qassam Brigades also announced that three military vehicles were targeted with al-Yassin 105 shells in the vicinity of the Bani Suheila area, east of Khan Yunis. Working with the Islamic Jihad's armed wing al-Quds Brigades, the Qassam Brigades said it was also able to target an Israeli command room east of Khan Yunis with heavy-calibre mortar shells. Meanwhile, The poll, conducted by the Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies, surveyed 8,000 people from 16 Arab countries on their views on the Gaza war. It showed that Arabs throughout the Middle East and North Africa are deeply engaged with the conflict with 80 percent saying they regularly follow news of the war closely and 97 percent saying they have experienced "psychological stress" from it. Ninety-one percent of respondents expressed solidarity with Palestinians, and 92 percent said their plight should be of concern to all Arabs. Many respondents also said they had lost respect for the US government due to its staunch military backing of Israel during the war. Ninety-four percent expressed a negative view of the US policy while 76 percent said their view of the US had diminished.



ISLAMABAD: The Ambassador of Switzerland to Pakistan, Georg Steiner, called on President Dr Arif Alvi, at Aiwan-e-Sadr. – DNA

Asif demands 'open hearing' of Faizabad dharna commission

Former defence minister says he recorded 'incomplete' testimony which would be completed soon

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) central leader Khawaja Asif has demanded an "open hearing" of the commission probing the infamous 2017 Faizabad sit-in. Asif, the former defence minister, in a post on X, confirmed that he appeared before the Faizabad sit-in probe commission on Thursday (today) where he recorded his "incomplete" testimony which would be completed soon. He opined that open hearings should be conducted by the commission besides allowing their media coverage to let the nation know the real elements behind the country's downfall for 75 years. The senior politician complained that no decisive outcome was ever seen after the constitution of several commissions probing high-profile events in history. Asif also urged all stakeholders to show courage to face the consequences now and redeem their mistakes of the past. The high-powered commission had been constituted by the caretaker government last year to ascertain the "role

and directions" of all "concerned" officials in the management and handling of the Faizabad sit-in in 2017 staged by the Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan against the then-Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) government. In another key development, Defence Secretary Lt Gen (retd) Hamooduz-Zaman Khan, in line with the Supreme Court's directives, wrote letters to the three services chiefs to review the role of their officers in the 2017 Faizabad sit-in staged by Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan (TLP). In the letters to army, air and naval chiefs, the defence secretary directed the services chiefs to take action against the officers involved in the 2017 protest sit-in and send their written statements to the Faizabad inquiry commission. The News reported citing the sources. Zaman wrote the letters to fix the responsibility of those officers providing facilities to TLP and the role of different institutions in staging the sit-in, according to the sources. Last week, former Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) chief Lt Gen (retd) Faiz Hameed recorded his statement before the Faizabad sit-in commission, denying allegations of conspiring against the government, sources told Geo News. The former spymaster was summoned by the panel – investigating the 2017 sit-in staged by the Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan (TLP) – thrice but he failed to appear before it.

WINTER 2024

World Class

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