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Sisi: Egypt will not allow any threat to Somalia or its security

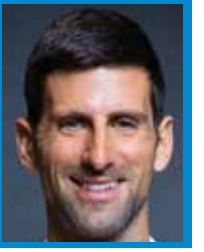
Detailed News On Page-08

Non-state actors threat to regional, national security

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Djokovic sweeps into AO quarters

Detailed News On Page-06



CPEC Joint Working Group meeting Interested parties invited to benefit from CPEC project

Foreign Secretary Muhammad Syrus Sajjad Qazi and Vice Minister for Foreign Affairs of China, Sun Weidong lead the negotiations

ANSAR M BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: The interested third parties have been invited to explore avenues available under the landmark CPEC project, was a unanimous resolve at the Pakistan-China working group meeting held in Islamabad. The 4th meeting of CPEC Joint Working Group on International Cooperation and Coordination (JWG-ICC) was held today in Islamabad. The meeting, which was co-chaired by Foreign Secretary Muhammad Syrus Sajjad Qazi and Vice Minister for Foreign Affairs of China, Sun Weidong, exemplifies the commitment of both countries to foster international cooperation and coordination including on CPEC. The two sides reviewed with satisfaction the progress made since the third meeting of the Joint Working Group held virtually on 21 July 2022. The meeting underscored CPEC's pioneering role in strengthening international and regional connectivity while appreciating the open and inclusive nature of this flagship project. Noting that Pakistan and China were All-Weather Strategic Cooperative Partners and iron brothers, the

Chinese Vice PM meets with US delegation

DNA

BEIJING: He Lifeng, Chinese vice premier and Chinese lead person for China-U.S. economic and trade affairs, met with the U.S. delegation of the China-U.S. financial working group in Beijing. He pointed out that China is willing to work with the U.S. side to implement the important consensus reached at the San Francisco meeting between the two heads of state and promote the development of bilateral relations in a healthy, stable and sustainable direction. He called on the two sides to continue to make good use of the financial working group mechanism, accumulate results and consolidate the momentum of cooperation in the financial field. The China-U.S. financial working group is a financial exchange mechanism established by the two countries under the guidance of lead persons for China-U.S. economic and trade affairs from both sides to implement the important consensus reached by the two heads of state in their meeting in Bali. sides agreed to enhance focus on high quality advancements in industry, agriculture, information technology, and science and technology, and ensuring tangible socio-economic benefits for the people.

Foreign Secretary reaffirmed the importance of CPEC in promoting win-win cooperation and sustainable development. He also emphasized on welcoming interested third parties to explore mutually beneficial avenues of cooperation. Recognising the evolution of CPEC, the two

Continued on Page 06

Pak-Saudi join military exercise starts

Garrison commander pinstraining badges

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Army and the Royal Saudi Land Forces kicked off a joint military training exercise at the eastern city of Okara on Sunday, a statement from the army's media wing said. Pakistan and Saudi Arabia enjoy strong defense ties and bilateral security cooperation. The two nations regularly engage in joint air, ground, and sea military exercises. Several cadets from the kingdom, along with counterparts from other Middle Eastern nations, visit Pakistan to undergo specialized army training annually. A joint Pakistan-Saudi Arabia defense forum met earlier this month in Islamabad to discuss enhancing bilateral cooperation and increasing collaborations in all domains. Sunday's training was organized by the Multan Corps and took place at the Okara Garrison, the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) said, adding that both Pakistani and Saudi contingents presented an impressive drill. "Through the joint training program, the armed forces' contingents of both countries will undergo classroom sessions and have the opportunity to hone their collective combat skills," the ISPR said. Officers and soldiers who took part in the training were presented badges at the end of the

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MULTAN: The Chief Guest pinning training badges on the soldiers of the Saudi land forces on the occasion of the commencement of joint exercise between Pakistan Army and the Saudi Land Forces, at the Multan Garrison. - DNA

Eyes PM slot

Ready to confront country's myriad challenges: Bilawal

Bilawal wants PTI supporters to vote for PPP in 'lion-arrow' election battle

ABBAS HASHMI

LAHORE: Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Chairman Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari Sunday called on the supporters of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) to vote for his party as the February 8 elections would see a battle between two parties - "the lion and the arrow". While the PTI has lost its electoral 'bat' symbol, the PPP has retained its 'arrow' symbol, and the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) has also secured its decades-old 'lion' electoral sign. "I am speaking to the PTI supporters: We kept on telling Khan sahib to do politics; abusing rivals and putting them and their sisters in jail is not politics," Bilawal said while addressing a party power show in Lahore. Bilawal said he understands the pain that PTI workers are going through and blamed Nawaz Sharif's PML-N for the former ruling party's setbacks. "I respect political workers [...] I've been through this and I do not want anyone to go through such testing times." Hundreds of PTI workers -

Continued on Page 06

PML-N not to field candidates on 51 NA seats

Party unfurls its NA candidates all over Pakistan

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: As political parties ramp up their electioneering activities ahead of the February 8 polls, which are less than a month away, Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) Sunday announced its list of candidates for National Assembly seats across the countries. The party kicked off its election campaign earlier this week, which also saw PML-N supreme Nawaz Sharif taking to the stage for the first time since

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Briefs

CM Punjab to grant plots to journalists

Senior media persons to be given priority

DNA

LAHORE: Caretaker Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi has announced to grant plots to journalists. Addressing a ceremony here on Sunday, he said the Punjab government under the RUDA (Ravi Urban Development Authority) project has planned to allot plots to journalists across Punjab.

PICTURE ON PAGE 2

Professional journalist, including cameraman, reporters, and photographers, from any media group; print or broadcast, are eligible. Under the scheme 2,300 plots of seven marlas and 1,000 plots of three marlas have been earmarked for the purpose.

Pakistan fails to qualify for hockey Olympics

DNA

MUSCAT: Pakistan failed to qualify for France Olympics when New Zealand beat Pakistan by 3 goals to 2. After this win over Pakistan New Zealand has qualified for the Olympic games. This is for the third time that Pakistan, a former Olympic champion, could not qualify for the Olympics. England and Germany are the two other teams which have qualified. The hockey lovers have expressed shock over the dismal performance of the team and have demanded of the Prime Minister of Pakistan, who happens to be the chief patron of the team, to take a stern action against the team management. Politics in hockey is yet another bane that has destroyed the very fabric of the national game.

Murtaza Solangi says

No country gives media access to serious criminals

To a query, he said all political parties were being treated equally as the state had no favorites. The state media was giving due coverage to all the political parties

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Minister for Information, Broadcasting and Parliamentary Affairs Murtaza Solangi on Saturday said no country in the world gave media access to those people who were involved in serious crimes. Speaking to international media, the minister said the former chairman of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) had been convicted and his conviction was not set aside. "He remains convicted and charged with serious crimes," he added. "As we speak, the PTI remains registered political parties and if people bring them in the federal and provincial assemblies the caretaker government has no problem. It's the people of Pakistan who have to make this decision,"

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100,000 prisoners to be deprived of right to vote

BUREAU REPORT

LAHORE: Although the Constitution of Pakistan ensure right to franchise to incarcerated, more than 100,00 inmates of 116 prisons across the country will be deprived of their fundamental right in the general election on February 8. Section 93 (d) of the Elections Act, 2017, provides that a person detained or in prison can vote by postal ballot. Moreover, Section 26 of the Act also

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Tensions lower

Pak-Iran flights resume

ADIL SHAHEEN

ISLAMABAD: Commercial flights between Pakistan and Iran have been resumed. According to aviation sources, Iran's Mahan Airlines landed at the Allama Iqbal International Airport, Lahore from Tehran. It should be noted that flight operations were suspended between the countries due to the Iranian Air Force aimed targets inside Pakistani territory. Iran violated Pakistan's airspace and launched a missile attack on a small village in Pangjur area, Balochistan in which two innocent girls were martyred and three injured. The next morning, Pakistan responded and

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Donald Trump's lead over Haley widens in New Hampshire

Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis, who led the race in UNH's polling in early 2023 but has recently pulled back his efforts in the state, stands at just 6% in the poll

WEB DESK

WASHINGTON: The race for the New Hampshire Republican presidential primary appears to be former President Donald Trump's to lose, according to a new US Channel poll conducted by the University of New Hampshire following Trump's 30-point win in Iowa's caucuses last week. Trump holds 50% support among likely Republican primary voters in the Granite State, while his closest competitor, former South Carolina Gov. Nikki Haley, stands at 39%. Both have gained supporters since the last poll in early January - when Trump held 39% to Haley's 32% - as the field of major contenders has shrunk from six candidates to three. Both Trump and Haley now hold their highest level of support in UNH polling on the race since 2021. But Haley's sharp gains since late last summer have not been enough to catch Trump, as the gap between them has once again widened to double digits.



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Baghdad 'determined' to end presence of US-led coalition forces

FOREIGN DESK

BAGHDAD: The spokesman for Iraq's Joint Operations Command (JOC), Brigadier General Yahya Rasool, says the Baghdad government is determined to end the presence of foreign troops from the US-led military coalition purportedly formed to fight the Takfiri Daesh terrorist group. "The Iraqi government is resolute to put an end to the deployment of foreign forces in the country. It has devised a vision plan for the next stage, which includes joint technical activities intended for the US-led coalition's departure and subsequent security and military cooperation," Rasool said. The high-ranking Iraqi security

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Noor, Sajid battle for NA 28 Peshawar-1

Noor Alam Khan and 2013 election Sajid Nawaz accelerated campaign at NA 28 to get maximum public support ahead of the D-Day

SHAMIM SHAHID

PESHAWAR: Former Members National Assembly, Noor Alam Khan and Sajid Nawaz are at loggerhead on the politically fertile NA-28 Peshawar-1 constituency where election campaign has picked up momentum despite cold foggy weather. As only 17 days left in February 8, 2024 general election in the country including Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the political parties and independent candidates including the winner of 2018 and 2008 election, Noor Alam Khan and 2013 election Sajid Nawaz accelerated campaign at NA 28 to get maximum public support ahead of the D-Day. Political observers said that although about a dozen of candidates are flexing muscle in this constituency, which was created from NA 29 and NA 30 constituencies during past delimitation, but one on one contest is expected between Noor Alam Khan and Sajid Nawaz Khan due to their parties votes bank. In a public meeting at Laram and Khazana villages, Noor Alam Khan who is contesting election 2024 on JUIF ticket said that creating of employment opportunities for youth through promotion of industrialization, poverty alleviation and promoting education besides provision of better healthcare services would be his top priority if elected to power. He said that eradication of price hike and improving local economy would be his top priority areas if elected. Noor Alam said that he believed in power of the masses and would work for well

being of the poorest of the poor and farmers after coming into power. Sajid Nawaz, who is contesting election 2024 as an independent candidate and was backed by Pakistan Tahrir e In'saf in public address at Darmang and Shah Alam villages, vowed to promote agriculture and improve sanitation services if elected. He said technical education would be promoted and the problems of load shedding would be addressed besides improving roads infrastructure for better access from agriculture fields to market. Noor Alam Khan had won the constituency in 2008 election on ticket of Pakistan Peoples Party after securing 27,038 votes and 2018 election on PTI ticket with 71, 158 votes while Sajid Nawaz clinched it in 2013 election on PTI ticket after securing 66,528 votes respectively. Former MNA Qari Fayazur Rehman on MMA ticket was elected from NA 28 after he begged 33,567 votes in 2002 election. The constituency comprises on rural and urban areas of Peshawar including Haryana, Darmang, Laram, Khazana, Hasangari, Peshawar City and Haryana where literacy ratio is high besides most of its voters are associated with agriculture and government jobs. "Poor sanitation, inadequate roads, unemployment and poverty would be major challenges for the new MNA elect to tackle after February 8, 2024 election," said Ali Khan, a voter belonged to Shah Alam village of the constituency. "I will vote candidates for national and provincial assemblies sests on the basis of their past service record and election manifesto of their parties," he said.

"In my opinion, the manifestos of political parties and past service records of candidates besides young voters would play a crucial role in 2024 election outcomes," said Professor Dr A.H Hilali, former Chairman Political Science Department, University of Peshawar while talking to APP. Except PPP, he said the election manifestos of other political parties are still awaited and further delay in this regard would be counter productive for these parties. Dr Hilali said that the success of political parties in general election 2024 would largely depend on the political behaviour and psychological-economic factors, past service record and manifestos of political parties rather launching of personal attacks, blame games, characters assassination of political leadership and dragging state institutions into politics in public meetings or issuing statements on social media platforms. Dr Hilali said that young voters were educated that would play an important role in deciding fate of electoral candidates. ECP statistics revealed that about 127 million registered voters would exercise their right of franchise in 2024 general election out of whom about 72.31 million (56.9pc) were registered in Punjab, 26.65 million in Sindh (21pc), 21.69 million voters (17.1pc) in KP while 5.28 million (4.2pc) in Balochistan. Dr Hilali said nearly 50 percent of the population are comprised of female voters and their role are equally significant in election process. He said around 57.1 million youth aged below of 35 years, making up 45pc of them who are eligible to vote.

Rescue-1122 working hard to protect lives of citizens

RAWALPINDI : Rescue-1122 is working hard to protect the lives and the properties of the citizens, providing timely and effective emergency services by the trained staff said District Emergency Officer (DEO) Rawalpindi, Eng Sibghat Ullah. He urged the citizens to call 1122 in case of any emergency as only timely calls can ensure a timely response. He informed that a total of 472,186 calls were received on the Rescue 1122 Rawalpindi helpline in 2023. Out of the calls, 61,454 were related to accidents and emergencies which included road traffic accidents, fire incidents, crimes, drowning, building collapses, explosions, medical emergencies and miscellaneous incidents. 16,429 road traffic accidents, 1330 fire incidents, and 1808 crime incidents were reported to Rescue Rawalpindi in District Rawalpindi in 2023, he said adding, 30 drownings, 22 building collapses, 34 gas/cylinder explosions and 6786 miscellaneous incidents were reported during last year. 35,015 patients of medical emergencies were shifted to nearby hospitals while providing timely first aid, he informed. Rescue Rawalpindi provided timely rescue services to 57,893 persons in 61,454 accidents and emergencies. Rescue 1122 is always available on one call to serve the people, he added. He informed that Rawalpindi Rescue 1122 saved the lives of the victims in thousands of emergency operations conducted during last year and the emergency service maintained an average response time of less than 7 minutes.—APP

Operation against professional beggars launched

PESHAWAR ; In a determined effort to curb the prevalence of professional begging, the district administration and the social welfare department in Peshawar have initiated a targeted operation in line with directives from the Peshawar High Court and apprehended 12 beggars. Under the vigilant leadership of Deputy Commissioner Afaq Wazir, Additional Assistant Commissioner Samira Saba, Department of Child Protection Officer Hafeez, and Manager Darlakfala Madam Hina spearheaded a coordinated crackdown, resulting in the apprehension of 12 individuals engaged in professional begging from various locations along the University Road. These individuals, identified as professional beggars, were

promptly transferred to rehabilitation centres overseen by the Department of Social Welfare. These centres, equipped to address the unique challenges faced by those caught in the cycle of professional begging, aim to provide a comprehensive approach to rehabilitation. At the core of this initiative is the commitment to offering meaningful alternatives to begging. The rehabilitation program encompasses vocational training, educational support, and counseling, aiming to empower individuals with the skills and resources needed for sustainable livelihoods. By addressing the root causes that drive individuals to resort to begging, authorities seek to break the cycle and reintegrate them into mainstream

society. Upon successful completion of the rehabilitation program, the detained individuals will be granted release, provided they commit to refraining from professional begging. This approach not only enforces the law but also aims to address the underlying societal issues contributing to the perpetuation of begging. Deputy Commissioner Afaq Wazir reiterated the continuation of such operations, emphasizing the commitment to eradicating professional begging from the city. "Our goal is not only to enforce the law but also to extend support and opportunities to those in need, ensuring they have the means to lead dignified lives," said Commissioner Afaq Wazir.—APP



LAHORE: Chief Minister Punjab Mohsin Naqvi is being briefed by Inspector General of Police Dr. Usman Anwar about the progress on the construction of residences for police in Qurban Lines.—DNA

Rwp Ring Road project to be completed by July 31

DNA

RAWALPINDI : Commissioner Rawalpindi Division Liaquat Ali Chatta has said that Rawalpindi Ring Road project would be completed by July 31. He informed that the work had been started at the bridges of river Swan and Sil. Thaliam Interchange is also being remodelled while the modeling of traffic network of Ring Road and Motorway is also in progress, he said. He said that Parks and Horticulture Authority (PHA) would give a plan for plantation on both sides of the Ring Road. Over 18 percent physical work of the Ring Road project had been completed, Liaquat Ali Chatta informed. He said that the Ring Road project would be completed by July 31 and the project would be inaugurated on August 14. There will be no compromise on the quality of the construction work, he added. Five interchanges, 11 overpasses and bridges on two rivers, six canals and a railway bridge would be constructed on the Ring Road besides 15 subways. The design of the rest area on the Ring Road would also be prepared soon, the Commissioner said. Liaquat Ali Chatta said that the completion of the ring road project would greatly help improve the traffic system of Rawalpindi city, adding that this project would provide employment opportunities to local residents.

Biosafety rule amendment aligns with int'l standards

ISLAMABAD :The Ministry of Nation Food Security and Research on Sunday said that the proposed amendments in Pakistan's National Biosafety Rules (2005) aimed to align with international standards and enhance regulation. In a press statement, the spokesman of the ministry said that proposed amendments in regulations also aimed at adopting a dual approval approach for planting and processing respectively as enshrined in "Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety" concerning GMO imports and focusing on cultivation and food, feed and processing (FFPs). The other objectives of ongoing processes are to ensure the safe and benefi-

cial integration of GMOs into the country's agricultural landscape, besides fostering collaboration between stakeholders and authorities. He said that scientific evidence supports the safety of GMOs, with reputable organizations endorsing their consumption, and rigorous testing before approving GMO crops ensures minimal harm to biodiversity and environmental sustainability. He said Pakistan stands at a pivotal juncture regarding GMO integration into its agricultural landscape, adding that the amendments in Pakistan Biosafety Rules-2005 and Pakistan Biosafety Guidelines-2005 were initiated in August 2020. All the relevant

stakeholders were involved in this 04 years process, he said adding that the ministry is very well aware of its task to ensure the well-being of our people, animals, and environment Earlier the same ministry put a block of any work on GM Basmati rice in the late 1990s and recently on GM corn import in 2018, he remarked. However, science is dynamic and evolutionary and now knowledge and information necessitate the change accordingly, he added. Fostering informed dialogue, scientific scrutiny and regulatory diligence will shape a future where GMOs could bolster agricultural productivity while ensuring safety.—APP

Motorists asked to drive carefully during fog to avoid accidents

DNA

RAWALPINDI: City Traffic Police (CTP) Rawalpindi have urged motorists to use fog lights while driving at night due to smog/fog and to drive carefully. According to a CTP spokesman, City Police Officer, Rawalpindi Taimoor Khan had requested the citizens to drive carefully and refrain from crossing the permitted speed limits while travelling on highways and motorways, and in open areas which were engulfed by thick smog/fog. While giving road safety tips to motorists, he informed that road users should try to travel in daylight and avoid travelling at night. He assured that all available resources were being utilised to provide safe and sound

passage to road users in foggy/smoggy weather. The road users, especially motorcyclists, were suffering from eye infections and other health complications due to the smog, he said and underlined the need for the citizens to adopt precautionary measures and follow the traffic rules. He further informed that CTP Rawalpindi on the directives of Additional Inspector General of Traffic (AIGT) Punjab had geared up their ongoing operation against public service vehicles travelling without fitness certificates and without route permits. CTP Spokesman said that the CTO had also visited different areas and reviewed the ongoing crackdown under the supervision of circle officers and gave strict instructions to all

the officers and field staff to take action against unfit vehicles. The spokesman informed that CTP Rawalpindi had issued 3033 challan slips to unfit and without route permit public service vehicles during current month, while fines were also imposed on the rules violators. In view of the safety of the motorcyclists, 2116 challan tickets were also issued to those not wearing safety helmets. A large number of citizens were briefed about the importance of helmets, he added. 389 smoke-emitting vehicles were also issued challan tickets during January and 17 vehicles were impounded in the respective police stations and their fitness certificates were also sent to the authorities concerned for suspension, he added.



ISLAMABAD: A vendor is making bubbles to attract the children at Rose and Jasmine garden in the Federal Capital.— ONLINE

President takes action against bank fraudsters, orders refunds

The President issued these directions while rejecting two separate representations filed by the United Bank Ltd (UBL) and Bank Alfalah Ltd (BAL) directing the banks to pay Rs 1.9 million

ADIL SHAHEEN

ISLAMABAD : President Dr Arif Alvi has asked the Banking Mohtasib to take up the matter of banking frauds with the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) to get essential SOPs issued so that proven fraudulent personnel's CNICs could be black-listed, placed at Central negative list, and no Banking/financial facility could be extended to them by the Banking industry. The President issued these directions while rejecting two separate representations filed by the United Bank Ltd (UBL) and Bank Alfalah Ltd (BAL) directing the banks to pay Rs 1.9 million and Rs 0.744 million respectively to their customers who fell victim to online banking

fraud at the hands of fraudsters. As per details, Mr Qaiser Mehmood who was holding an account with UBL received a call from a number resembling the Bank's helpline and the caller advised him to activate his disabled digital banking app. He activated his app, after which Rs 2 million were transferred from his account through multiple transactions. Similarly, Brigadier (r) Muhammad Arif Shaikh received a call from fraudsters asking him for his banking credentials to remove some technical flaws from his account. Later, an amount of Rs 994,000 were transferred from his account through 19 transactions. They asked their respective banks to refund their money, but to no avail. Feeling aggrieved, they separately approached the Banking Om-

budsman to get relief. The Ombudsman directed the banks to refund the lost amounts to the customers. The banks, then, separately filed representations against the Ombudsman's decisions with the President. The President held personal hearing of the cases, and having listened to the parties and going through the available record, decided the cases in the complainants' favour. The President observed that the banks were found non-compliant with the SBP's directives regarding the implementation of monitoring systems to detect fraudulent transactions. He added that multiple consecutive transactions were conducted but it did not raise alerts and allowed the money to pass through the sys-

tem. He noted that the banks also failed to establish the legitimacy of transactions in terms of Section 41 of the Payment System and Electronic Fund Transfers Act, 2007. He said that the banks failed to submit any proof of compliance with the directions of SBP despite being given ample opportunity. He concluded that malpractice and maladministration stood established on part of the banks and they were liable to make good the financial loss of the complainants. The President, therefore, rejected the representations of UBL and BAL and directed them to pay Rs 1,998,500 and Rs 744,000 to Mr Qaiser Mehmood and Brig (r) Muhammad Arif Shaikh respectively.



ANYONE WHO'S SOMEONE...

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National Days and Armed Forces Days

JANUARY

| | |
|---------------------|--------------------------|
| Jan 01 / CUBA | Revolution Day |
| Jan 01 / Palestine | Palestine Revolution Day |
| Jan 01 / Sudan | National Day |
| Jan 04 / Myanmar | Independence Day |
| Jan 06 / Iraq | Armed Forces Day |
| Jan 12 / Tanzania | Armed Forces Day |
| Jan 14 / Uzbekistan | Armed Forces Day |
| Jan 15 / Nigeria | Armed Forces Day |
| Jan 20 / Mali | Armed Forces Day |
| Jan 20 / Laos | Armed Forces Day |
| Jan 25 / Thailand | Armed Forces Day |
| Jan 26 / Australia | National Day |
| Jan 26 / India | Republic Day |

Hotels & Restaurants



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



Turkish Airlines.....8494949



Emergency

Rescue (Police).....15
Bomb Disposal.....15
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RDA.....5555864
TMA.....5770886
Cantonment Board 9270151-3

Water Tank

Islamabad.....0321-5744480

Foreign investors should not be forced to leave Pak

Increase in power, gas tariffs proved fruitless

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: President of Pakistan Economy Watch, Dr. Murtaza Mughal, said on Sunday that driving away foreign investors from the country should be stopped as it is hurting the masses and investment climate. Over two dozen pharmaceutical companies have left Pakistan over the last few years. With the closure of the remaining companies, many medicines, including life-saving medicines, will become scarce, he said. Scarcity of medicine always leads to smuggling, and patients end up paying double or triple the price for drugs in the black market, he added. Dr. Murtaza Mughal said in a statement issued here today that it is an open fact that the product quality of the local pharma industry is not what it should be. Their exports are also limited to a few African countries,

while they are kept from entering the European and American markets. Therefore, foreign companies selling quality products in the local market should not be discouraged so that the people can be saved from trouble and they can get quality medicines. He said that local companies should be given a deadline to improve their quality, and foreign companies should be allowed to do business in Pakistan until the quality of locally manufactured medicine is improved. Dr. Murtaza Mughal said that Pakistan is the third-most diabetic country in the world, with almost 26% of adult patients having the condition. However, one American insulin manufacturer is so irritated with Pakistan that it is closing its operations. He warned that a public health crisis is already in the making, while the departure of the US-based multinational company may result in a catastrophic crisis.

In such a situation, the authorities have remained unconcerned, which is surprising, he said, adding that the unbridled bureaucracy has forced twenty-six multinational companies to leave the country in a few years, which merits an investigation. If the remaining four multinational companies leave Pakistan the masses will be at the mercy of those local producers who will happily exploit the consumers. Meanwhile, Former President of the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI), Dr. Shahid Rasheed Butt, said on Sunday that the policy of continued increases in the tariffs of electricity and gas and endless price hikes in the price of fuel has proved to be unproductive. The experience failed to reduce circular debt and help resolve other problems but compromised the quality of life of most people, he said. Because of uncontrolled inflation, most people

are struggling to bring food to the table while ignoring important matters like health and education, he said. Shahid Rasheed Butt said in a statement issued here today that it has become difficult for the majority to fulfil the need for food as inflation continues to increase, breaking all previous records. He warned that if the situation remains the same, there will be no middle class in the country. The business leader said that monthly income has become insufficient for many people who are looking for other sources of income to deal with inflation, but only some are fortunate enough. He said that people all over the country have long been annoyed by paying for the mismanagement, incompetence, and corruption in the electricity, gas, and oil sectors. Electricity, gas, and oil are constantly being stolen across the country, but effective action has never been initiated against the

thieves, which causes the institutions and the masses to suffer, he observed. The government allows institutions to raise the price to deal with the problem of theft and losses, which increases the pressure on the people and the business community, he observed. He said that not only is electricity and gas being stolen across the country but also smuggled oil is openly available everywhere, and there is no one to stop this illegal trade, which is causing a huge loss to the economy. He observed that the crisis of inflated electricity bills has led to protests nationwide as people are struggling to pay astronomical bills. One of the major reasons behind the disturbance is electricity theft because of corrupt elements in the various departments involved in the power distribution system. According to Power Division data, electricity theft has caused the national exchequer to lose Rs 500 billion, he informed.

Addifs reaffirms Pakistan's commitment to NAM

ISLAMABAD: Additional Foreign Secretary United Nations, Ambassador Syed Haider Shah on Sunday outlined Pakistan's firm commitment to the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) and its founding principles. In a national statement delivered at the 19th NAM Summit in Kampala, Uganda, he also reaffirmed Pakistan's continued support to the Movement's efforts towards peace, equality, cooperation and well-being for all. Ambassador Haider Shah is leading the Pakistan delegation to the NAM Summit after Caretaker Foreign Minister Jilil Abbas Jilani had to cut short his official visit in view of recent developments, the Foreign Office spokesperson said in a press release. Ambassador Haider Shah underlined that the current multi-dimensional global challenges could only be overcome through effective international collaboration. He called for urgent action to reform the systems of finance, trade and technology to ensure balanced and sustained socio-economic growth, particularly in the developing countries. The additional foreign secretary also called for an early resolution of the Jammu and Kashmir dispute in accordance with the resolutions of the United Nations Security Council and aspirations of the Kashmiri people.—APP

PIDE will unveil reform manifesto today

ISLAMABAD: In a momentous stride towards national transformation, the Pakistan Institute of Development Economics (PIDE) is set to unveil its groundbreaking 'PIDE Reform Manifesto: Transforming Economy & Society' on Monday, January 22nd, 2024 (Today), at the Marriott Hotel in Islamabad. Following extensive consultations with key stakeholders in Lahore, Karachi, Quetta, Gwadar, and Peshawar, this comprehensive manifesto aims to chart a visionary course for Pakistan's economic and societal evolution. According to the Press Release issued from the PIDE the event promises to be a gathering of influential voices, bringing together policymakers, practitioners, professionals.—APP

Malicious campaign against the SSGC condemned

DNA

ISLAMABAD: This is with reference to recent news items circulating in electronic, print and social media concerning Sui Southern Gas Company (SSGC) and its Board. Petroleum Division condemns the malicious campaign against the SSGC, its Chairperson and its Board of directors. Dr. Shamshad Akhter along with the Board members has successfully led the organization since her initial appointment in 2019. Under her visionary leadership, SSGC has achieved significant milestones in crucial areas such as upgradation in the technology, improvement of business

operations, Human Resources, policy formulation, discipline, Risk Management and significant reduction of Unaccounted-for Gas (UFG). The Chairperson and Board members work as a team and decisions are taken based on collective wisdom and consensus of the Board. The Board has contributed significantly to Budgetary systems, Audit, Finances, UFG strategies etc. It is noted with satisfaction that the UFG in Sindh province has been decreased from 15% to 7%, which is a testament to the effective approach of the management and the SSGC Board, especially the Chairperson of the Board. The Board has strictly been involved in the Policy & strategic decision making and

delegates the implementation to Management team. Since its formation, the Board has been steadfast in pursuing an agenda of HR and institutional reforms, recognizing their critical role in the transformation of SSGC. The institutionalization of high quality performance assessment and results-based accountability is underway to meet the expectations of stakeholders. The New Employment Handbook has been developed under the oversight of the Board, approved and is under implementation. In recognition of her professional dedication and unwavering efforts, the Government had nominated Dr. Shamshad Akhter for another tenure as Chairperson of

the Board of Directors for which elections will be held. The Petroleum Division fully supports and reposed its trust in SSGC, its board and Dr. Shamshad Akhter, Chairperson of the Board in all legal, governance and financial matters. As a public sector listed company, negative reporting impacts the confidence of private shareholders and the dedicated employees of SSGC. It is kindly requested that the media reports on such matters with a positive perspective, considering the substantial achievements under Dr. Shamshad Akhter's leadership and the collective efforts to contribute to the growth of the energy sector in Pakistan.

Salma Mumtaz remembered

ISLAMABAD: Veteran film actress Salma Mumtaz was remembered on her 12th death anniversary on Sunday. Born in 1926 in Jalandhar, she moved to Pakistan after partition and settled in Lahore. Salma Mumtaz made her film debut as an actress in the 1960 Urdu language film, Neelofar. She performed in more than three hundred predominantly Punjabi language films during her career. Salma also became known for portraying roles of mothers and motherly figures opposite well known actors, including Waheed Murad, Mohammad Ali, and Shahid. Some of her best known films included Dil Mera Dharakan Teri, Puttar Dai Piyar, Heer Ranjha and Sheran Di Jori. Salma Mumtaz also worked behind the camera as a film director and producer. Her brother, Pervaiz Nasir, was a film producer. Her younger sister was the late actress, Shammie. Television actress Nida Mumtaz is her daughter. Salma Mumtaz died in Lahore on January 21, 2012, from complications of a long battle with diabetes at the age of 85.—APP

Power suspension schedule

ISLAMABAD: According to Islamabad Electric Supply Company (IESCO)'s spokesman, System Maintenance/Development Work is in process. Therefore power supply of below mentioned feeders/areas will be temporary suspended as per given schedule: On 22nd January 2024, From 09:00 AM to 02:00 PM, Islamabad Circle, Imran Khan, Bani Gala, Melody, Supermarket, Marvi, Wahidabad, Burma, Khanna Dak, Tamir, Park Enclave, F-10/2, G-10/2, PTN, New PTN, I-10/1, G-13/2-1, Shahulaha Dutta, PHA-1, Rahara, CM Pak Zong, Kurry, Isolation Hospital, Sunny Bank, Cesail, Kohala, Pearl Cantonment, Patriata, Upper Topa, Peer Suhawah, Azad Shaheed, Lahtrar Road, Tramli, ISI, New Wahidabad, Chhata Bakhtawar, Mahfoz Shaheed, Sharifabad Feeders, Rawalpindi City Circle, 4th Road, Commercial Centre, Faizabad, Malikabad, Affendi Colony, Muzmal Town, Khanna-II, Service Road, Gulzar Quaid, Tamasa-maabad, Liaquat Bagh, Gulshanabad, Sarafa Bazar, Jinnah Road, Subhanuddin, Mohammadi Chowk, Bani Azizabad, Dhok Chowdhury, Capt. Amir Shaheed, Nust

Road, I-14/3, Mohanpura, Al Noor Colony, Kamalabad Feeders, Rawalpindi Cantt Circle, Car Chowk, Hyder Road, Sir Syed Road, Rahimabad, Jhanda, Pindi Board, Humayun Road, Rose Line, Murt, U.C Lakhani, Chongi No. 22, Chahan, SPF, Rawat, Saggi, Kahota City-I, Kaler Syedan, Faisal Ahmed, New Chawah, Panjar, Hamid Jhangi, Jhata Hatial, Bengali, Nishan Haider, CB Khan-II, Morgah, RBISE, Kohala, Old Rawat, New Rawat, CWO, AOWHS.—APP

No benefit of lowering CAD without industrial growth

DNA

ISLAMABAD: As the country has surprisingly reported a lowering current account deficit (CAD), the Pakistan Industrial and Traders Associations Front (PIAF) has warned the authorities that the balance of accounts should not be at the cost of industrial growth, which is constantly declining. PIAF Chairman Faheemur Rehman Saigol, in a statement, observed the reduction in CAD was due to lower imports, as there were no significant increases in exports or inflows. However, the government still struggles to meet the decreasing CAD due to low foreign exchange reserves, as Pakistan's current account posted a deficit of \$74 million in previous month of 2023 while on a yearly basis, it was significantly lower, i.e. over 91%, than the \$849 million recorded in the same month last year. During the

first eight months of FY23, Pakistan's current account deficit decreased by 68% to \$3.8 billion from \$12 billion in the same period last year. As per the central bank data, the country's exports increased to \$3.418 billion in Oct 2023 against \$2.902 billion in Oct 2022, reflecting a jump of 18%. On the other hand, total imports lowered by 3% to \$5.17 billion in October 2023 against \$5.35 billion in the same period last year. According to the SBP, Pakistan posted a current account deficit of \$1.06 billion in July-October of FY24 as compared to a deficit of \$3.1 billion during the same month of last fiscal year (FY23), depicting a massive decline of over \$2 billion. The central bank in its last Monetary Policy Committee meeting noted a substantial improvement in the current account balance, as the deficit narrowed over 58% YoY to \$947 million in Jul-Sep FY24, while almost

leveling out in Sept 2023. The current account is a key figure for cash-strapped Pakistan that relies heavily on imports to run its economy. A widening deficit puts pressure on the exchange rate and drains official foreign exchange reserves that stood at a little over \$7.6 billion, according to the latest data. PIAF Chairman Faheemur Rehman Saigol stated that the government's strict policies along with high cost of doing business owing to multiple increases in fuel cost and energy tariffs have almost halted the industrial production. He complained that the significant drop in imports through administrative controls in the past to manage the low foreign exchange reserves had badly impacted economic activities, he pointed out. The move led to massive unemployment as companies were unable to import the raw material necessary to keep their manufacturing wheel

running. While expressing deep concern over the severe gas crisis, he stated that the emerging situation has terribly affected industrial activities as well as exports, which would have a devastating impact on the already ailing economy and the lives of millions of poor people due to massive layoffs. How long an industrialist can bear the burden of paying salaries and wages to most of the idle employees if he is unable to produce at full capacity due to the unavailability of raw material amid persistent gas shortage. He said that the reserves have depleted to a four-year low of \$6.7 billion, raising the specter of default on international payments and foreign debt repayments. He said that the current account deficit declined and the primary reason was a 32% decline in imports compared to the same month of last year. However, exports and remittances decreased by 13% and 14% respectively.

The unsettling reality of employee exploitation



ZAHRA ALI

Employee exploitation, characterized by low salaries and excessive work demands continues to be a pervasive issue that undermines the principles of fair labor practices and human dignity where employees are being subject to meager wages and arduous workloads that compromise their well-being and contribute to a cycle of economic inequality. One of the primary manifestations of employee exploitation

is the prevalence of low salaries. Despite the essential role employees play in driving the success of workplaces, many find themselves earning wages that fall far below what is considered a living wage. This inadequacy often forces employees into precarious financial situations, struggling to meet basic needs such as housing, healthcare, and education for themselves and their families. Companies engaging in exploitative practices justify low salaries by citing market forces, budget constraints, or the need for competitiveness. However, this argument disregards the ethical responsibility of workplaces to ensure that their employees can lead dignified lives. The consequences of low salaries extend beyond individual hardship, contributing to societal issues such as increased poverty rates and income inequality. In addition to low salaries, many employees face the burden of excessive work demands, akin to

being made to overwork. Long working hours, unrealistic expectations, and limited breaks contribute to a toxic work environment that can have severe physical and mental health repercussions. The demand for heightened productivity often results in burnout, stress-related illnesses, and an overall decline in the well-being of employees. Companies may rationalize these conditions as necessary for meeting workplace goals or industry standards. However, the exploitation of employees in this manner disregards the importance of a healthy work-life balance and undermines the long-term sustainability of both individuals and the organization. The toll on employee morale and motivation can lead to reduced productivity, high turnover rates, and a negative impact on the company's reputation. Several factors contribute to the perpetuation of employee exploitation, including lax labor laws, lack of collective

bargaining power, and a culture that prioritizes profit over the well-being of workers. The consequences of this exploitation are far-reaching and impact not only the individuals directly affected but also society at large. Income inequality widens, perpetuating a cycle of poverty, and social cohesion weakens as trust in employers and institutions erodes. Addressing the issue of employee exploitation requires a concerted effort from governments, businesses, and society as a whole. Implementing and enforcing fair labor laws, promoting ethical business practices, and fostering a culture that prioritizes the well-being of employees are crucial steps in breaking the cycle of exploitation. By acknowledging the dignity of work and the rights of employees, a more just and equitable society can be created where individuals are not treated like "donkeys" but are valued contributors to the success of their workplaces and communities.

PAKISTAN NAVY
TENDER NOTICE
E-8 SECTOR NAVAL COMPLEX ISLAMABAD

INVITATION TENDER - UTILIZATION OF OFC RING (GPO) FOR
OAS CONNECTIVITY AT WALTON EXCHANGE LAHORE

- Sealed quotations are invited for subject works.
- Quotations from registered firms/Importers with Pakistan Navy will be accepted. However, Firm/Importers can also apply who are in process of registration with PN. Firms/ importer may authorize/ appoint their institutional distributor for execution of said works to Telecom Centre North.
- Detail of terms & conditions can be obtained from Commander Telecom North as per format (Tender Documents) on hard copies.
- Firms/Importers must be prequalified registered with Government of Pakistan for Sales/NTN & Professional Taxes. Firms/Importers that are black listed will not be entertained.
- Firms/Importers must be registered in Pakistan Navy.
- Tender in sealed envelopes marked on top "UTILIZATION OF OFC RING (GPO) FOR OAS CONNECTIVITY AT WALTON EXCHANGE LAHORE" along with complete documents (including registration certificate copy in Pakistan Navy) should reach the undersigned by 05 February 2024 at 10:30.
- Tender will be opened on 05 February 2024 at 11:00 hrs. Presence of the authorized representative of the firms/Importers is requested.
- Commander Telecom Centre North shall upon request, communicate to any supplier/ contractor who submitted a bid or proposal, the grounds for its rejection of all bids or proposals, but will not be required to justify those grounds.
- For detail please contact focal person during working hours daily (Except Saturday, Sunday and on gazette holidays).

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System Engineer
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042-6696707
051-20663705

(P) 1437212

Briefs

A judge who is affected by social media, violates his oath: Athar Minallah

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Supreme Court Justice Athar Minallah on Saturday said social media should not influence judges, adding that if a judge is affected by it then they are violating their oath. Addressing the second law bridge workshop on superior court reporting at a private hotel in Islamabad, Justice Minallah said if even critics trusted the court then it was a test of the judiciary. Everyone should criticise, but also trust the judiciary, he maintained. Referring to the lack of freedom of speech in the country, the top court judge said the endless process of censor kicked off after the state's censoring Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah's August 11, 1947 speech. Reminiscing his first case as a judge, he said it was a bail plea and a 16-year-old suspect was before the court for putting up a banner against an apex court judge. The subordinate court rejected the plea saying he had committed a crime against the entire judiciary, he said adding that nobody tried to find out who got the banners made. The SC judge said Pakistan would not have been split into two, if the oath was not transgressed. He said the states could not control the expression of opinion in the technological era. However, he said the reporters doing vlogging have an economic interest too therefore they should maintain balance in their comments.

ECP issues postal ballots for Feb 8 polls

DNA

LAHORE: The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has begun the process of providing postal ballot papers ahead of the upcoming general elections. The development was announced by the electoral body today. According to the ECP, all eligible individuals will complete the process of casting their votes by January 22 through the postal ballot paper. They can download an application form for the postal ballot from the electoral authority's website. Upon receiving the postal ballot, the voter shall then send his vote to the District Returning Officer (DRO) as per the prescribed time. General elections in Pakistan are set to take place on February 8 for which the ECP's preparations are in full swing with the electoral body looking to ensure foolproof arrangements across the country. To ensure strict security measures in place ahead of the polls, the ECP issued its "Code of Conduct for Security Personnel", warning them against bias while being on election duty. The ECP's protocol, which excludes the Armed Forces and Civil Armed Forces, directs the law enforcement agencies (LEAs) to perform their duties in accordance with the law and within the confines of the mandate assigned to the police.

IU offers Sunday classes for Arabic language

ISLAMABAD: The International Islamic University, Islamabad (IIU), invited applications from students interested in enrolling in short Sunday courses to learn the Arabic language. According to the University official, a 24 week Arabic learning course, taking place only on Sundays, is set to begin on February 18, 2024. Admissions are open in three phases: certificate for individuals without prior knowledge of Arabic, diploma for those who complete the certificate course, and advanced diploma for those who finish the diploma course either at the Islamic university or elsewhere. The fee for each of the three courses is Rs 15,000. Classes for males and females are held separately from 10 am to 2 pm, exclusively on Sundays.

ICCI, NUST discuss collaboration to improve competitiveness of industry

Zafar Bakhtawari, former President ICCI and Secretary General UBG Pakistan said that students prefer government jobs or migrate to foreign countries. However, universities should focus on fostering entrepreneurship in students that offers them prosperous careers

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari, President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) leading a delegation, visited the NUST University and held a meeting with Lt. Gen. Javed Mahmood Bukhari Rector to discuss collaboration for improving the competitiveness of the local industry through strong academia-industry linkages. Speaking on the occasion, Lt. Gen. Javed Mahmood Bukhari, Rector NUST briefed the ICCI delegation about the role of NUST in promoting future leaders and job creators for a positive impact on society and the economy. He said that NUST has created an ecosystem to promote research, innovation, and productivity. He said that academia has cutting-edge research while industry faces practical challenges and problems, therefore, close cooperation between NUST and ICCI would help resolve issues of industry and produce innovative products for exports. He said that NUST and ICCI should join hands in students' mentorship programs to give them practical skills and experience that would improve their employability. Speaking on the occasion, Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari, President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce



and Industry stressed for close academia-industry linkages to address industrial problems and improve the competitiveness of industry that would help enhance

industrial activities and exports. He said that universities are producing a lot of research, which is not benefiting the industry. Therefore, close collaboration

between academia-industry would help tailor such research to meet the needs of industry. He said that Indian IT graduates have reached the top positions in

some big companies like Google, Microsoft, and IBM and stressed that Pakistani universities should produce IT professionals to lead the top-ranking companies of the world. He said that with better focus, Pakistan can increase its IT exports from currently around US\$ 3 billion to US\$ at least 50 billion in a few years. Faad Waheed, Senior Vice President ICCI said that academia-industry linkages can lead to the commercialization of academic research, promote innovations, and improve the economic growth of the country. Engr. Azhar ul Islam Zafar, Vice President ICCI said that ICCI and NUST should join hands to develop curricula and training programs that align with the needs of the industry. Zafar Bakhtawari, former President ICCI and Secretary General UBG Pakistan said that students prefer government jobs or migrate to foreign countries. However, universities should focus on fostering entrepreneurship in students that offers them prosperous careers. He said that in the West, students idealize business role models like Bill Gates, Mark Zuckerberg, and Elon Musk and stressed that the universities in Pakistan should invite business leaders to address students that would motivate them to idealize the business role models and explore career growth in the business field to create new jobs and contribute to the economic development of the country.

Pakistan's economy: what to expect for 2024

DNA

ISLAMABAD: In 2023, Pakistan returned from the verge of debt default. Amid the turbulence of surging inflation and budget deficit, we see that due to some corrective measures such as government fiscal reforms and cost cut, economy started getting back to stability. What can we expect for 2024? To answer this question, China Economic Net (CEN) had an interview with Dr. Abid Qaiyum Suleri, executive director of Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI), Pakistan and member of the Pakistan Climate Change Council for some insights. "I'm optimistic that Pakistan's economic situation will start to improve in calendar year 2024. The elections will bring the much needed certainty.



The resolve from all mainstream political parties that they will go to the IMF for the next program if they get a chance to form a government will ensure much-needed fiscal discipline and policy consistency. It will also help in shoring up Pakistan's foreign exchange reserves. This in turn will improve Pakistan's creditworthiness, too", he said. In its latest report "Global Economic Prospects - January 2024", the World Bank projected Pakistan's economic growth at 1.7 percent for the ongoing fiscal year 2023-24 and

2.4 percent in FY2024-25, an inspiring recovery from -0.2 percent in the previous fiscal year. According to Dr. Suleri, two external factors can affect Pakistan's economic performance in 2024. One is global energy prices, which are dependent on the geopolitical tensions. "If the Ukraine-Russia tension remains, or if the situation in the Middle East gets worse, that would have an impact on the prices, which would have impact on our economic outlook", he said. The second important factor is climate change. A bad monsoon or El Nino may weigh against the agriculture sector. "If the two external factors remain favourable, then I am quite optimistic that securing a modest GDP growth will not be difficult", he said. In 2023, a major improvement for Pakistan is a significant drop of trade deficit by 34.29 percent

during the first half of the current fiscal year starting from July 2023 compared to the corresponding period of the last fiscal year. In particular, Pakistan's exports to China during July-December, 2023 hiked by 66.4%, reaching US\$1.5458 billion. "This trend is expected to continue in 2024", he said, explaining that the re-opening of China's border after Covid-19 restrictions, the resilience of China's economy as proven by the way it handles the real estate risks, and the substantial demand in the second largest market globally will continue to benefit Pakistan as with many other countries that are economically inter-related with China. "To have a clearer picture of Pakistan's economic outlook for 2024, we need to go back to 2023.

Court sentences man to 3 years in jail over marital rape

ISLAMABAD: A man was sentenced to three years in jail after he was found guilty of having non-consensual sex with his wife which is a punishable act under Section 377 (unnatural offences) of the Pakistan Penal Code. Additional Sessions Judge (South) Ashraf Khowaja announced the reserved judgment after recording evidence and final arguments from both the defence and prosecution sides. He sentenced the convict named Javed to three-year rigorous imprisonment and ordered him to pay a Rs30,000 fine. If he fails to pay the fine, he would have to undergo an additional one month of simple imprisonment. "From a perusal of evidence brought at the trial by the prosecution, it appears that the victim has fully established a commission of sodomy with her by the accused being her husband," the judge observed. "Though the victim/complainant contradicted some facts relating to the period of her stay with the accused, putting her signature on the memo of site inspection at PS, suffering from disease of piles and her age which are immaterial facts which would not be fatal to the prosecution case," he added. The judge noted the medical evidence supported the ocular version. On the other hand, he said the accused failed to establish "enmity" that her wife loved somebody else and therefore she implicated him falsely. The convict's sisters who appeared as defence witnesses failed even to disclose the name of the alleged paramour of the victim, he added. The victim testified that her husband would commit sodomy with her despite her attempts to stop him. About two months after their marriage, she informed her mother-in-law, who didn't say anything to him, she said, adding that then she disclosed her ordeal to her sister and brother.

WEF provides a window to PV industry

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The World Economic Forum, WEF 2024 held in Davos provided a window to PV industry, not only for Pakistan but the entire world, said Zhong Baoshen President of global leading renewable energy company LONGI. In an interview to China Economic Net (CEN), he

emphasized "It is necessary for us to make our voice heard on this global platform, WEF - to let the world know that the innovation of Chinese companies can promote the global energy transformation process and help the decarbonization transformation." "Affordable and Clean Energy (SDG7) is key to achieve all United Nations Sustainable Development Goals for a more

sustainable future. The decrease of solar power costs is the very foundation for energy equity at the global scale, especially to the underdeveloped regions," Dennis She, Vice President of LONGI, pointed out during the Davos Summit. Not long ago, LONGI promised to provide photovoltaic systems and solutions to Pakistan starting from 2024, providing safe, reliable and clean energy for public facilities of refugees and host communities, so that these places can study, work and operate businesses and other activities. It is reported that over 780 million people, about 10% of world's population, live in off-grid regions, most in the Sub-Saharan Desert areas.

At the same time, since China surpassed Germany for the first time in 2013 to become the world's largest photovoltaic application market, China's photovoltaic industry has maintained a momentum of continuous growth. According to the International Energy Agency (IEA), the world's installed renewable energy capacity will grow rapidly in 2023, soaring to more than 440GW, a year-on-year increase of 107GW, becoming the largest increase in history. In December, 2023, LONGI's Jiaxing Production Base in China's East Zhejiang Province has been recognized by the World Economic Forum (WEF) as a Global Lighthouse Factory.

Pak-Iran to show restraint, resolve bilateral strategic concerns

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: The experts speaking at a webinar on Pakistan-Iran recent crisis urged both the governments and their state institutions to restrain and improve their bilateral ties through vigorous diplomacy. They urged the need for a larger framework for an efficient joint border management to resolve their bilateral strategic concerns including illegal trade, smuggling and the hideouts of the militants on both sides of the border. The experts also called for people-to-people contacts to improve cultural understanding, formal trade and to soften the visa policies. They said both countries have a

history of bilateral cooperation, trade and common cultural values, and they should not be compromised in the stretching scenario of a new Cold War in the region. They also appreciated the role of China between Pakistan-Iran for de-escalation. The webinar was organized by the Devcom-Pakistan Centre for Geopolitical Studies and DTN here on Saturday. The keynote speakers included Lt General retired Talat Masood, Ambassador retired Naela Chohan and Senator retired Farhatullah Babar. Other guest speakers were the Devcom-Pakistan Centre for Geopolitical Studies Executive Director Munir Ahmed, Lahore Garrison University chairperson International Relations Dr. Zainab

Ahmed, Kinnaird College for Women Associate Professor Dr. Khushboo Ejaz, NUST Institute of Policy Studies Assistant Director Sobia Khurshed, and some others. Lt General (ret) Talat Masood said Pakistan-Iran both have to work on their border management frameworks including strict security measures. Both sides of the border are unpopulated, remain underdeveloped, and have meagre security and protection against the militants which are being supported by the vested-interest groups and external powers. India could have been another alarming element in supporting the radicals on both sides. He suggested enhancing diplomatic efforts after such a strong response to normal

ize the situation, revive the bilateral cultural and trade ties for mutual economic recovery. Ambassador (ret) Naela Chohan said the British rule deliberately left lacunas in the border division. Though they were settled down then, still many don't believe in the settled-down borderlines. It is for their own vested interests or to serve their external lords, and to create instability within the borders. The Pakistan government and the state institutions have been dealing with the insurgents in rightful manners. But, they have to take more stringent action in the future. The recent Pakistan-Iran crisis has been dealt with intelligently. She termed it as Pakistan's "successful diplomacy".

FBISE to host Int'l education speech contest on Jan 23

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Federal Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education (FBISE) has announced to hold the sixth annual 'International Day of Education English Speech Contest' on January 23. This year's International Day of Education theme, "Learning for Lasting Peace," seeks to illuminate the path to global harmony through the voices of our youth. An official of FBISE told APP that the Board had called upon the Secondary School Certificate and Higher Secondary School Certificate students to share their perspectives on fostering peace, tolerance, inter-faith harmony and gender equality through participation in the contest. Through this opportunity, the students having extraordinary oratorical skills can show their eloquence and originality and ignite discussions on critical global issues while representing their institution at a national level, he told. International Day of Education will be celebrated on January 24 through a number of activities including seminars, discussion programmes, competitions, conferences and rallies. According to the UNESCO, the world is seeing a surge of violent conflicts paralleled by an alarming rise of discrimination, racism and hate speech. The impact of this violence transcends any boundary based on geography, gender, race, religion, politics, offline and online. An active commitment to peace is more urgent today than ever: Education is central to this endeavor, as underlined by the UNESCO's recommendation on education for peace, human rights and sustainable development. Learning for peace must be transformative and help empower learners with the necessary knowledge, values, attitudes and skills and behaviours to become agents of peace in their communities. UNESCO is dedicating this year's International Day of Education to the crucial role education and teachers play in countering hate speech, a phenomenon which has snowballed in recent years with the use of social media, damaging the fabric of our societies.

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Urgent plea for parties to deescalate ME tensions

THE worsening of the situation in the Middle East is a worrying tendency that could threaten the very fabric of world peace and security. Since Jan 12, the Red Sea tensions have abruptly escalated after the United States and the United Kingdom launched rounds of air strikes against Houthi military targets in Yemen in retaliation for Houthi attacks on commercial ships in the international waterway. Then, as if a Pandora's box had been opened, different stakeholders in the region have one after another begun to act willfully and carried out attacks on their long-time bete noires. On Jan 15, Iran launched ballistic missiles at what it said was a spy base for Israel's intelligence agency Mossad in northern Iraq and "anti-Iran terror groups" in Syria. Earlier, Turkiye carried out air strikes targeting Kurdish militants in Iraq and Syria. In the past few days, tensions between Iran and Pakistan also flared up after the two neighbors traded attacks on "terrorist" hideouts on each other's territory near their border. Also last week, Jordan reportedly carried out air strikes on drug-traffickers in Syria. These actions were emboldened by the US-led coalition's actions against Houthi militia. While a good example can influence people in good ways, the deteriorating situation in the region shows the toxic effect of a bad example should not be underestimated. The latest US unilateral move, with no authorization from the United Nations Security Council, sent the wrong, misleading message that a country can attack others at will in total disregard of either international law or others' territorial integrity and sovereignty. From Iraq to Syria, Libya, and now Yemen, the US has formed belligerent cliques to pursue its own strategic gains and to maintain its hegemony. Its reckless moves have once again inflicted endless turmoil, violence, and suffering on the Middle East. Despite US Secretary of State Antony Blinken's multiple trips to the Middle East in the past three months to "put out the fires", conflict and chaos have only become more widespread and uncontrollable. Not only does Israel's military operation in Gaza show no sign of abating, its spillover effects are dragging more actors to be party to what has rightly been described as the eschatological death cult agenda of a cabal in Washington, casting an ever darker shadow on regional and world peace and stability. All parties should reflect on how quickly the situation has flared up to its present state and exercise restraint. They should stop adding fuel to the fires as this only makes them agents of the evangelical "cleansers of the world" in Washington. It is imperative that reason prevails and concerted efforts are made to end the Israel-Palestine conflict, respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of countries in the region and safeguard the security of the sea lanes, so as to pave the way for a lasting resolution to the Palestinian issue.



The view on the measles outbreak

BRITAIN is facing a measles outbreak that could soon spread through the nation after a surge in cases was uncovered in the West Midlands last week. More than 300 confirmed and probable cases have been reported there in the past few months and the prospect of further outbreaks looks worrying. Measles predominantly affects children and can cause severe disease, complications and occasionally death. It is also one of the most highly contagious ailments known to medicine. A single infected person can pass on the disease to nine out of 10 of their unvaccinated close contacts. On its own, such infectivity would not be a problem – in a properly vaccinated population. Sadly, this description no longer fits the citizenry of the UK. Measles vaccinations have slumped in Britain in recent years. Those who have been given double doses of the MMR vaccine – which provides powerful, safe protection against the virus – have dropped to well below 85% of individuals in many areas, including the West Midlands. To achieve herd immunity against measles, about 95% of the population needs to have had the vaccine, doctors have warned. In London, up to 20% of children are now entering school having never been vaccinated. In the West Midlands an isolated problem area. In London, up to 20% of children are now entering school having never been vaccinated, Prof Dame Jenny Harries – head of the UK Health Security Agency – revealed last week. As she put it: "Vaccination coverage is clearly not where we want to be." Harries's analysis is an understatement, to say the least. The nation is facing the return of a very serious, occasionally lethal ailment. Yet only eight years ago it was announced that the disease had been eliminated in the UK. Its return raises urgent questions. How did this slump in vaccinations occur? And what needs to be done to restore the nation's past resilience to the disease? It might be tempting to pin the blame on anti-vaxxers, those misguided zealots who believe that vaccines pose a risk to health and who promote their cause vociferously on social media. Such an argument would be lazy and dangerous, however. Very few people accept the arguments of anti-vaxxers, and research has made it clear that the majority of men and women in the UK believe vaccines are safe and effective. However, many families lead complex – often chaotic – lives and sometimes fail to ensure their children are vaccinated. They need reassurances about the importance and safety of immunisation and the actions that are needed if they have let vaccine appointments slip. In fact, it is never too late to be vaccinated, but that information is not always clear. Asking questions about vaccination is to be encouraged, but trained staff are required to provide this information, and the NHS and GPs are already under pressure and facing cuts both in funding and in staff. It is at this level that the nation has faltered. In England, the NHS recently published a strategy to improve its vaccination services, including proposals to provide more flexible and convenient facilities where they can be administered. It was a welcome development.

Operation Marg Bar Sarmachar: future of Pak-Iran relations

Waheed Hussain



The time when the Iranian were attacking Pakistan on 16 Jan, 2024, a-day early, the Indian highest diplomat, External Affairs Minister, Jaishankar was in Iran. Was he on a honey-moon trip? Whatever was the purpose but Iranian action indicated that India might had some kind of poisonous role in the aggression against Pakistan. Indian Naval Commander Kulbhushan Jadhav arrested from Baluchistan in 2016

IT takes years to turn an enemy into a friend, but a single wrong act takes seconds to make close friend a foe. This is what the Iran has done against a neighbour-Muslim country Pakistan. How Iran could conceive an idea of attacking Pakistan? From where the advice came? Why Iranian leadership failed to analyze and judge the worst consequences of that illegal action? Why Indian Foreign Minister Subrahmanya Jaishankar was in Tehran, just a day before the attack? What was the objective of that immature and heinous crime? Iran has failed to achieve anything except attracting the international media and audience for wrong reasons. Terrorism! Well, Pakistan has paid a huge price due to terrorism for decades and still paying every second day. Beside innocent citizens young officers and soldiers of law enforcement agencies embrace martyrdom in various violence acts being launched by the Baluchistan Liberation Army, Baluchistan Liberation Front and other banned organizations in Baluchistan province. The sacrifices rendered by people and security forces of Pakistan are incomparable to any other nation including Iran. It's better that the Iranian leadership has immediately realized the severity of their ill-calculated action and accepted Pakistan's offer to address such complicated issues through a peaceful-comprehensive dialogue. The willingness was expressed by the Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir Abdollahian, during a telephonic conversation with his Pakistani counterpart the care taker Foreign Minister Jalil Abbas Jilani on 19 Jan, 2024. The two sides also agreed to restore the diplomatic relations and send back their Ambassadors to Tehran and Islamabad. Apparently, Iran is seemed to be frustrated due to its inability to respond to Israeli aggression in Middle East. The American-British along with other allied forces air strikes against Houthis in Yemen in response to their (Houthis) attack on the cargo ships in red sea also disturbed Iranian government. Attacking on Pakistan, Syria and Iraq shows the Iran's political, diplomatic and security limitations in countering Israel and western antagonists. The time when I was writing these lines the international media broke a story of attack on senior officers of Iran Revolutionary Guards Crop

(IRGC) in Damascus, Syria on Saturday 20th of January 2024. Internal conflict among the Muslim countries in the Middle East is the main reason of Israeli aggression and ongoing violence against the innocent Palestinians. Historically, Pakistan and Iran always enjoyed great friendly and brotherly relations. They always stood with each other in the difficult times. So, keeping in mind the close brotherly relations between the two Muslim nations, Pakistan and its people could not even think that Iran would cross international border with hostile intentions killing the innocent citizens. Unfortunately, after Iranian aggression against Pakistan the perception has changed. It may take some time to restore the confidence of the masses. The time when the Iranian were attacking Pakistan on 16 Jan, 2024, a-day early, the Indian highest diplomat, External Affairs Minister, Jaishankar was in Iran. Was he on a honey-moon trip? Whatever was the purpose but Iranian action indicated that India might had some kind of poisonous role in the aggression against Pakistan. Indian Naval Commander Kulbhushan Jadhav arrested from Baluchistan in 2016, was carrying Iran's passport and entered into Pakistan from Iran. So, Pakistan concerns about Indian rough activities in Baluchistan are genuine and of serious nature. Indian involvement in terrorism in Baluchistan is well established. It has been hosting the Baloch terrorists and providing training, financial and logistic support for years to destabilize Pakistan. Pakistan had submitted evidence of Indian involvement in Baluchistan through a dossier to the UN in November, 2020. The Iran soil has been used by India and its terrorists' associate against Pakistan. But Pakistan has never contemplated of attacking Iran, the way it did! As Pakistan is a responsible nation of the international community and wants to address such tricky issues through peaceful dialogue. Just for a reference to terrorism issue, India used Afghanistan during Hamid Karzai and Dr Ashraf Ghani's governments. Even today, Pakistan is bleeding due to TTP and other violent groups operating from Afghanistan. But Pakistan always demonstrated patience and asked the Afghan interim government (Afghan Taliban) to address the issue of TTP. Iran and Pakistan have great economic and trade poten-

tial. The two countries have been working to enhance the bilateral economic cooperation. They are part of ECO and other regional and international forums. However, they can only benefit when the two states enjoy complete trust and confidence on each other. Aggressive postures will harm the future cooperation. During Pakistan-Iran standoff, some anti-Pakistan individuals launched a negative propaganda against the armed forces of Pakistan. They were posting scandalous image of the security forces, army leadership, particularly the Chief of Army Staff General Asim Munir. In such a situation enemy of Pakistan like India do take advantage. Try to malign Pakistan Army, to create wedge between the armed forces and masses. The best way to counter propaganda, is to be pro-active on all media platforms and other forums presenting and promoting the true picture of the issue. Meanwhile some trends on the 'X' former 'tweeter' platform were launched by the political workers and Vloggers supporting a particular party in the country. Most of those so-called media Aristotle and Socrates regularly post fake stories to mislead the masses just to please few sick-minded individuals. In politics, no problem if someone disagree with a political ideology or opinion. However, when the matter is of national security, sovereignty and defense of the country, the nation needs to be united-standing behind the armed forces of Pakistan instead of spreading rumors. Pakistan armed forces bravely responded to the Iranian aggression and send a load and clear message to everyone including Iran, that, Pakistan is a peace-loving state, it wants a friendly relation with all countries including its neighbors. Yet, it will not compromise on its security and sovereignty, which in fact is a red line. Iran attacked three countries, Syria, Iraq and Pakistan. It was only Pakistan which demonstrated the courage and bravery to respond back in stronger manner. The India crossed the LoC dropped weapons in Balakot KPK province in February 2019, Pakistan Air Force responded with courage, captured IAF pilot Abhinandan. All it was because of our strong defense. If someone try to weaken security forces – its tantamount to weaken Pakistan. Politics and defense should be treated separately.

CPEC and SIFC leading to economic renaissance

Qamar Bashir



Political instability and governance issues have led to policy inconsistencies, adversely affecting the continuity of CPEC projects. Bureaucratic inefficiencies and red tape have resulted in delays and escalated costs, while security concerns in certain regions pose additional...

LIKE many other Pakistanis, I have also been pondering why did CPEC touted as game changer, harbinger of development and prosperity has almost completed its first phase and has launched its second phase but inversely, the country is in deep financial and economic difficulties, country is faced with worst form of inflation, the investment is almost negligible and GDP growth is even negative hopes for growth and development in coming years is minimal. This situation can be interpreted in two ways. One, that Pakistan could have been in even worse financial and economic situation than we are facing currently as current dire financial and economic outlook has to do with our own lack of purpose, absence of clear direction, lack of competence and efficiency, and second interpretation is that the CPEC project was not well conceived. It lacked effectiveness and therefore was not helpful in improving the financial and economic standing of the country. This is a known and documented fact that

despite its potential, CPEC has encountered several significant hurdles in Pakistan that have hindered its swift, efficient, and result-oriented implementation, subsequently impacting its anticipated contribution to GDP growth. Political instability and governance issues have led to policy inconsistencies, adversely affecting the continuity of CPEC projects. Bureaucratic inefficiencies and red tape have resulted in delays and escalated costs, while security concerns in certain regions pose additional risks to project timelines. Financial constraints due to high debt levels and balance of payment crises have limited the government's ability to finance these projects, increasing reliance on external borrowing. Furthermore, the lack of a skilled workforce has impeded progress in specialized areas. Environmental and social challenges, including land acquisition and displacement concerns, have added layers of complexity. Additionally, differing priorities across provinces have led to challenges in coordination and resource allocation, affecting uniform development. Global and regional geopolitical dynamics, especially involving key players like China, the US, and India, have also influenced investment flows and strategic prioritization. While the initial phase of CPEC focused on establishing essential energy and infrastructure foundations, the broader economic impacts are expected to materialize more significantly in Phase II, provided these multifaceted challenges are effectively addressed. Let us now build an argument around the second premise that CPEC was and is an effective project and helped in contributing to GDP growth while keeping the governance factor as constant. In such a scenario where Pakistan exhibits responsible governance, efficient government functioning, a fair judiciary, a motivated parliament, and a favorable business and investment climate could significantly impact its GDP growth. With a total investment of over \$ 62 billion in CPEC-I, a number of high value projects were initiated in all critical areas including development of coal, hydro, wind, and solar power plants such as the Sahiwal Coal Power Plant, the Port Qasim Coal-fired Power Plant, the Suki Kinari Hydropower Station, and several wind farms in Sindh province. These projects collectively added thousands of megawatts to Pakistan's national grid. Substantial investment was made in transport infrastructure to improve connectivity and facilitate trade including Karachi-Lahore Motorway (M-9), Upgradation of the Karakoram Highway (KKH) Phase-II (Havelian-Thakot section), Multan-Sukkur Motorway (M-5) and Orange Line Metro Train in Lahore. This phase developed Gwadar Port and related infrastructure, including the Gwadar International Airport, Eastbay Expressway, and the development of a Free Zone to enhance trade activities. It laid fiber optic cable from Rawalpindi to Khunjerab, which enhanced telecommunications in the northern areas of Pakistan.

Metro lines, green lines, and a 2000 km fast train to improve urban and inter-city mobility, making cities more business-friendly and enhancing trade efficiencies making Pakistan into a regional trade hub, further boosting logistics, manufacturing, and service sectors. The completion of Phase II is expected to foster industrialization and socio-economic development. This includes the growth of Special Economic Zones (SEZs) to attract foreign direct investment and boost exports. Focusing on mining, industry, green and low-carbon development, health, space cooperation, digital economy, and development cooperation. Transition towards clean and renewable energy sources anticipated to reduce Pakistan's dependence on imported fossil fuels, thereby helping to decrease the depletion of foreign exchange reserves. There has been an increase in academic and cultural cooperation between Pakistan and China, with many Pakistani students studying in China. This interaction is expected to strengthen the bond between the two nations and contribute to Pakistan's educational growth. Emphasizes on agricultural cooperation, including crop breeding, pest control, and the expansion of crop cultivation and plans to increase sesame cultivation and exports to China, aiming to bolster the agricultural sector. Green and low-carbon development, health, space cooperation, digital economy, and development cooperation and export of agricultural products to China. Both CPEC-I and 2.0 will only achieve their full potential only if Pakistan removes all hurdles hampering their speed and effectiveness. This was perhaps the realization at the apex policy making institutes of Pakistan which resulted in the constitution of the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC). Having been established with high ambitions to transform the country's economy by attracting significant Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), SIFC, involving key figures from both the government and the armed forces, focuses on sectors like defense production, agriculture, mines and minerals, energy, and IT. Its primary goal is to draw \$100 billion in FDI and achieve a nominal GDP of \$1 trillion by 2035. This initiative is seen as a potential game-changer for the economy, particularly by addressing bureaucratic hurdles and providing a streamlined process for investors and business groups. Moreover, the SIFC's strategy includes addressing issues like political instability, inconsistent economic policies, and bureaucratic hurdles, which have previously deterred foreign investment in Pakistan. It aims to foster an investment-friendly environment, enhance investor confidence, and improve the ease of doing business. The council's multifaceted approach also emphasizes the importance of export-oriented investments, policy reforms, investor protection, public-private partnerships, and skilled workforce development. The Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC) can be instrumental in harnessing the full

potential of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) through several strategic initiatives. Firstly, SIFC's role in streamlining investment processes is crucial. By simplifying and expediting the investment procedures, SIFC can significantly attract both domestic and foreign investments into CPEC projects. This involves reducing bureaucratic hurdles, offering a one-window operation for all clearances and approvals, and ensuring that the investment process is smooth and investor-friendly. Moreover, SIFC's ability to enhance coordination among various government departments, provincial governments, and CPEC stakeholders ensures better alignment of projects with national and regional development goals, leading to more efficient and effective project implementation. Secondly, SIFC's potential to drive policy reforms and address security concerns is pivotal for CPEC's success. By advocating and facilitating necessary policy reforms, SIFC can create an enabling environment for CPEC projects, encompassing areas such as land acquisition, labor laws, tax incentives, and regulations for special economic zones. Additionally, collaborating with security agencies to ensure the safety of CPEC projects is critical, as it instills confidence among investors and contractors. Furthermore, promoting transparency and accountability in the execution of CPEC projects will build trust among all stakeholders, including local communities and international investors, thus ensuring the smooth execution and completion of projects. Lastly, SIFC can contribute significantly to inclusive economic growth and sustainable development through CPEC. This involves ensuring that the benefits of CPEC are evenly distributed across different regions of Pakistan, addressing regional disparities, and fostering inclusive growth. Encouraging private sector participation is also essential, as it can lead to more innovation, efficiency, and public-private partnerships, which are vital for the corridor's success. Additionally, aligning CPEC projects with workforce development, skill enhancement, and job creation will ensure the long-term sustainability of these projects. By leveraging Pakistan's diplomatic relations to attract international investors and partners, SIFC can broaden the scope and impact of CPEC, turning it into a catalyst for Pakistan's economic transformation. In essence, SIFC's comprehensive approach encompassing streamlined investment processes, policy advocacy, security enhancement, transparency, equitable development, private sector engagement, and international collaboration is key to unlocking the full potential of CPEC. This multifaceted strategy is crucial for transforming CPEC into a driving force for Pakistan's economic growth and development.

– Press Secretary to the President (Rtd)
Former Press Minister at Embassy
of Pakistan to France
Former MD, SRBC

Briefs

Interested parties invited to...

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They rejected the disinformation campaigns and distorted reporting on CPEC and stressed the need to counter fallacious narratives and misinformation. Recalling the deliberations of the Second and the Third Pakistan-China Think Tanks Forum in September 2022 and July 2023, the two sides expressed joint support for media and think tanks cooperation. They also agreed on sharing of best practices and generating an intellectual knowledge pool of CPEC and BRI development through enhanced international communication and cooperation.

Donald Trump's lead over...

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Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis, who led the race in UNH's polling in early 2023 but has recently pulled back his efforts in the state, stands at just 6% in the poll, below the 10% minimum support he would need to win delegates there per the Republican Party's rules. For Trump's opponents, New Hampshire has long appeared to be the place in the early primary calendar that offered the best shot at knocking him off track in his bid for a third straight GOP presidential nomination. It was the only early state where polls consistently found Trump without majority support, and where voters often showed the most openness to his rivals. But this latest survey suggests that Trump's popularity within the GOP base and the commitment of his supporters outweigh the appeal of his challengers.

Baghdad...

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official underscored that with the presence of capable Iraqi forces, the US-led military coalition in Iraq is no longer needed. Iraqi Prime Minister Mohammed Shia' al-Sudani on Thursday repeated his call for the US-led coalition to depart his country, stressing that Baghdad demands the immediate withdrawal of the forces due to their destabilizing activities. "The end of the US-led coalition mission is a necessity for the security and stability of Iraq," he said during a televised event at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland. "It is also a necessity for preserving constructive bilateral relations between Iraq and the coalition countries," the Iraqi prime minister noted.

Ready to...

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allegedly involved in attacking military installations — have been arrested since May 9, 2023, the day when former prime minister Imran Khan was arrested, which triggered country-wide protests. "I appeal to you [PTI supporters], in the battle between 'lion and arrow', support me. I will bury revenge politics," Bilawal vowed, reminding people that when his party's prime ministers took office, they released "political prisoners". Bilawal stressed the need to end the old ways of politics and bring all forces together, which would in return help to steer the country out of politics.

Pak-Saudi...

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ceremony by the Okara Garrison commander, who was the chief guest at the event. Apart from defense and security ties, Pakistan enjoys strong economic and trade relations with the kingdom. Saudi Arabia is home to over 2.7 million Pakistani expatriates, serving as the top destination for remittances for the cash-strapped South Asian country. Along with the UAE, the kingdom has frequently bailed Pakistan out of its economic crisis over the years. Last year, Saudi Arabia lent \$2 billion to Pakistan which proved critical in helping it secure a bailout package from International Monetary Fund (IMF) and avoid a sovereign debt default.



ISLAMABAD: Players of the Rising Stars Hockey Club in a group photo with Ambassadors of Brunei and Kyrgyzstan during a practice match, played at the Naseer Bundha Hockey Stadium on Sunday. — DNA

Pakistan beat NZ by 42 runs to avoid whitewash

NZ won series 4-1 after registering convincing wins in first four matches

OUR CORRESPONDENTS

CHRISTCHURCH: Pakistan defeated New Zealand by 42 runs to avoid whitewash in the T20I series on Sunday in Christchurch. New Zealand won the series 4-1 after registering convincing wins in the first four matches. Chasing a target of 135 runs, New Zealand were bundled out for 92 runs in 17.2 overs. New Zealand were 53-2 at one stage but suffered a major collapse to get bowled out inside 20 overs. Off-spinner Iftikhar Ahmed was the pick of the bowlers for Pakistan with figures of 3-24 in four overs. Captain Shaheen Afridi and all-rounder Mohammad Nawaz bagged two wickets each. Glenn Phillips was the top-scorer for the home side with 26 runs in 22 balls. After winning the toss, Pakistan limped to 134-8, with a regular loss of wickets stymying their efforts to overcome a slow start against another disciplined New Zealand bowling display.



Seamers Tim Southee, Matt Henry and Lockie Ferguson all claimed two scalps, along with spinner Ish Sodhi, leaving the Black Caps poised to complete a 5-0 series

rount. Southee, the highest wicket-taker in T20 cricket, put New Zealand on the front foot by starting the game with a maiden over in which he dismissed debutant Ha-

seebullah Khan. Southee returned in the 13th over to remove the dangerous Fakhar Zaman, who had raced to 33 off 16 balls. Top-scorer Mohammad Rizwan departed soon afterwards for 38 off 38, ultimately consigning Pakistan to the lowest first-innings score by either team in the series. Key batter Babar Azam was out of sorts, dropped twice by Mark Chapman as he battled to just 13 off 24 balls. The tourists made three changes to the team beaten by seven wickets in game four at the same Hagley Oval on Friday. Twenty-year-old Khan opened the batting in place of Saim Ayub, while legspinner Usama Mir and seamer Abbas Afridi were recalled after both played in the first two games. New Zealand made two changes, including the recall of allrounder Rachin Ravindra, who has barely featured since his prolific run-scoring feats at last year's 50-over World Cup in India. Ravindra replaced Daryl Mitchell, who is being rested while legspinner Sodhi took the berth of pace bowler Adam Milne.

Dominant Djokovic sweeps into AO quarters

SPORTS DESK

MELBOURNE: Novak Djokovic's relentless march towards a record 25th Grand Slam title gathered pace on Sunday as he outclassed 20th seed Adrian Panarino to reach the quarter-finals of the Australian Open. The Serbian ran rings around his French opponent on Rod Laver Arena, winning 6-0, 6-0, 6-3 and underlining his status as a red-hot favourite to lift an 11th title at Melbourne Park. "I really wanted to lose that game in the third set because the tension was building up so much in the stadium," he joked, referring to the possibility of winning without los-

ing a game. "I just needed to get that out of the way and re-focus." The world number one is into the last eight of a Grand Slam for the 58th time, equalling Roger Federer's men's record as he maintains an iron grip on the game. He has now won 32 consecutive matches at the Australian Open, not tasting defeat since he lost against South Korea's Chung Hyeon in 2018. The 10-time champion did not compete in 2022 due to his coronavirus vaccination status. Mannarino, whose opening three matches all went to five sets, has enjoyed a late-career resurgence, winning three titles last year, at Newport, Astana and Sofia. But he was made to look ordinary by the top seed, who never took his foot off the pedal. Novak Djokovic shrugged off two break points on his serve in the opening game before breaking himself for a 2-0 lead. He repeated the feat twice more in an utterly dominant performance, which was played under the roof due to a shower, winning 28 points to his opponent's 12. Mannarino could not get on the board in the second set either and was broken three more times as Djokovic threatened to sweep to victory without losing a single game. The Frenchman briefly held up Djokovic's charge, holding serve three times in the third set, but that only delayed the inevitable as the top seed served it out.

Haris to return home from BPL after being denied NOC

DNA

LAHORE: Wicketkeeper-batter Mohammad Haris has left Dhaka without taking part in the 2024 Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) after the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) declined to issue him a no-objection certificate (NOC). Haris had arrived in Dhaka with the intention of representing Chattogram Challengers in the BPL's tenth edition. However, his request for an NOC was

denied by the PCB, due to his participation in two leagues since July 2023 as the reason. He played in Canada's Global T20 League in July and in the Lanka Premier League in August of 2023. The 22-year-old shared a story on Instagram, announcing his return. Haris shared a photograph disclosing his packed bags and the intended travel route back to Peshawar. Earlier, PCB announced that they have granted NOC to feature in the forthcoming franchise-based leagues. As per the

cricket board, the NOCs were issued in line with the provisions of the players' central contracts.

"The decision was made in the best interests of all the stakeholders involved while balancing the importance of game time with workload management," the statement added. Both leagues started on January 19. Babar Azam, Mohammad Rizwan, Mohammad Waseem Jr, Faheem Ashraf, Usman Qadir, and many other Pakistan stars are part of different BPL teams.

Mbappe sends PSG into French Cup last 16

PARIS: Kylian Mbappe grabbed two goals and a pair of assists as Paris Saint-Germain brushed past third-tier Orleans 4-1 to reach the last 16 of the French Cup. Mbappe opened the scoring with a neat low finish before doubling his tally in the second half from the penalty spot following a handball in the area. The France captain, with 28 goals in 26 appearances for PSG this season, set up his team's third by clipping a cross for Goncalo Ramos to head home. Orleans got a consolation through captain Nicolas Saint-Ruf, with 17-year-old Senny Mayulu getting his first PSG goal after being played in by Mbappe. "We're used to it. These are normal performances for Kylian Mbappe," said PSG coach Luis Enrique. "It was match that could have become difficult, against a team that plays in a lower division but plays good football. It could have been tricky if we had eased up." Wissam Ben Yedder scored a hat-trick as Monaco defeated second-tier Rodez 3-1 earlier in the day, while last season's runners-up Nantes lost to lower-league opponents. Ben Yedder struck his first from the penalty spot and then netted twice more in the second half after Stone Mamba had equalised for Ligue 2 side Rodez. Malik Tchokounte's header earned second-division Laval a 1-0 win at Nantes, who won the competition in 2022 but were thrashed in the final by Toulouse last year. Nice held off Bordeaux to advance 3-2 with Morgan Sanson notching a brace for the team second in the top flight. Brest, flying high in third place in Ligue 1, avoided an upset away to fourth-tier Trelissac, coming from behind to win 2-1 with late goals from Kenny Lala and Martin Satriano. Le Puy, who also plays in the fourth division, dumped out a team two levels above them, defeating Dunkerque 2-1. Valenciennes beat Paris FC by the same scoreline. — Agencies

DNA

PML-N not to field candidates..

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his homecoming October power show in Lahore. The list, shared by senior party leader Ishaq Dar, has revealed that the PML-N candidates will contest on 212 NA constituencies across the country on February 8 — leaving as many as 51 NA seats uncontested. PML-N supreme and former premier Nawaz will contest polls in NA-15 (Mansehra) and NA-130 (Lahore) constituencies. PML-N Chief Organiser Maryam Nawaz will contest the election from NA-119 and Hamza Shehbaz will contest from NA-118 Lahore. On the other hand, party President Shehbaz Sharif will participate in the election from NA-123 and NA-132.

No country gives media access to...

FROM PAGE 01
the minister remarked. To a query, he said all political parties were being treated equally as the state had no favorites. The state media was giving due coverage to all the political parties. "So far, only constitutional body entrusted with holding free and fair elections is the Election Commission of Pakistan that stands committed to hold the elections on Thursday February 8, 2024," said Solangi in response to another query. He said the constitutional caretaker government was committed to supporting the ECP in every possible way for elections and "we will support the election commission in administrative, financial and security matters". Every political party was playing role of the victim, he said, adding "if you ask PTI they will say we are not getting level-playing field especially in Punjab and KPK and if you ask Peoples Party they will say we are not getting level-playing field in Punjab."

100,000 prisoners to be...

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ensures that every person, who fulfills certain criteria, is entitled to be registered as a voter and Article 51 of the Constitution constitutionally entitled him to vote. Every civilised society around the world allows its citizens, prisoners and immigrants the right to vote under certain conditions. According to the statistics compiled by Dunya News on the basis of data received from the prisons authorities of the four provinces of Pakistan, there are more than 100,000 prisoners languishing in 116 jails of the country, of which about 1,500 are women. These prisoners include juveniles who have reached the age of 18 years in prison and are entitled to get an identity card.

Pak-Iran flights...

FROM PAGE 01
targeted hideouts of terrorists inside Iranian territory, killing many. Now both Pakistan and Iran have decided to end tension between the two countries and resume diplomatic relations.



ISLAMABAD: Players of the Rising Stars Girls Hockey Academy in a group photo with Ambassadors of Brunei and Kyrgyzstan during a practice match, played at the Naseer Bundha Hockey Stadium on Sunday. — DNA

Briefs

UK bolsters Red Sea defenses amid escalating tensions

LONDON : On Sunday, the Ministry of Defense (MoD) in Britain announced a commitment to invest 405 million pounds (\$514 million) for the enhancement of a missile system currently employed by the Royal Navy. The upgrade aims to bolster the navy's capability to intercept hostile drones over the Red Sea. The Sea Viper Air Defense system will be upgraded with missiles featuring a new warhead and software enabling it to counter ballistic missile threats, the MoD said in a statement. The contracts were awarded to the British division of MBDA, a missile joint venture owned by Airbus, BAE Systems and Leonardo, the MoD said. "As the situation in the Middle East worsens, it is vital that we adapt to keep the UK, our allies and partners safe," Defense Minister Grant Shapps said in the statement. "Sea Viper has been at the forefront of this, being the Navy's weapon of choice in the first shooting down of an aerial threat in more than 30 years." U.S. and British naval forces in the Red Sea have shot down drones and missiles fired by Yemen's Houthi movement this month as the conflict between Israel and Palestine is showing signs of spilling out into the broader region.—APP

Peru president grabbed by protester at public event

LIMA : A protester violently grabbed Peruvian President Dina Boluarte on Saturday during an event in the southern Ayacucho region, where 10 people were killed in mass anti-government demonstrations more than a year ago. TV footage of the assault showed Boluarte in traditional clothing surrounded by a crowd of people as she throws out candy, when a shouting woman approaches and grabs the president. A chaotic scene ensues as police intervene to separate the woman, with Boluarte seemingly uninjured and rejoining the event. The woman said she held Boluarte responsible for the death of her husband during the December 2022 protests in Ayacucho. Boluarte, 61, came to power that month after former leftist president Pedro Castillo tried to dissolve Congress and rule by decree, leading to his quick ouster and arrest. Violent protests demanding Boluarte step down and fresh elections were held followed across the country. The ensuing crackdown by security forces left almost 50 people dead, according to an estimate by Human Rights Watch, which accused the authorities of extrajudicial and arbitrary killings. Multiple legal proceedings accusing Boluarte of responsibility for the deaths were launched after the crackdown.—DNA

German farmers protest subsidy cuts in Berlin

BERLIN : Farmers in Germany seeking sustainable agriculture, demonstrated Saturday with tractors in front of the headquarters of the Social Democratic Party (SPD) in Berlin. The farmers are opposed to the government's plan to remove agricultural diesel subsidies. Hundreds of demonstrators, led by the coalition of SPD with the Greens and the Free Democratic Party, gathered in front of the SPD headquarters, chanting slogans: "We're fed up", "Everyone can do something" and "Good food needs a future." Protesters held banners with messages that read: "The land belongs to the farmers", "Food is political" and "Farmers come before corporate interests." Klaus Böglen expressed frustration with the government's agricultural policies. Böglen told Anadolu: "We believe the government is very inconsistent in protecting the interests of nature and future generations.—APP



LAHORE: Chairman PPP Bilawal Bhutto Zardari is addressing a public gathering at Lahore township cricket ground. —DNA

UN chief criticises lack of African representation in UNSC

'How can we accept that Africa still lacks a single Permanent Member in the Security Council?' says Antonio Guterres

FOREIGN DESK

WASHINGTON : UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has criticized the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) for not having a permanent member from Africa. "How can we accept that Africa still lacks a single Permanent Member in the Security Council?" Guterres wrote on X. "Institutions must reflect today's world, not that of 80 years ago. September's Summit of the Future will be an opportunity to consider global governance reforms & rebuild trust," he said. Guterres also reiterated his demand for an urgent humanitarian ceasefire and the immediate and unconditional release of all hostages in Gaza. "I will not relent in my call for an immediate humanitarian ceasefire and the immediate & unconditional release of all hostages," he said.

Highlighting the humanitarian crisis in Gaza which has been under an onslaught of Israeli attacks, he said: "People in Gaza are dying not only from bombs and bullets, but from lack of food & clean water, and hospitals without power & medicine."

Mean while, The right of the Palestinian people to build their own state "must be recognized by all," UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres told the Non-Aligned Movement summit in Uganda on Saturday. The refusal to accept a two-state solution for Israelis and Palestinians, and the denial of the right to statehood for the Palestinian people, are unacceptable," the UN leader insisted in the Ugandan capital Kampala. "Such a stance "would indefinitely prolong a conflict that has become a major threat to global peace and security; exacerbate polarization;



and embolden extremists everywhere," Guterres warned. The World Health Organization has deplored the 'inhuman living conditions' in the small coastal territory of 2.4 million inhabitants. "The right of the Palestinian people to build their own state must be recognized by all." The ongoing bloodshed in the Palestinian Gaza

territory was prompted by the October 7 attack on Israel by Hamas fighters. That attack resulted in the deaths of about 1,140 people, most of them Israeli civilians, according to an media persons tally based on official Israeli figures. Israel's relentless bombardment and ground offensive since then have killed at least 24,927 people in Gaza, mostly women and children, according to the Hamas government's health ministry.

In its final summit communique, the Non-Aligned Movement on Saturday "strongly condemned the illegal Israeli military aggression against the Gaza Strip," and called for "a lasting humanitarian ceasefire." The assembled leaders in Kampala also called for "the independence and sovereignty of the State of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital, in order to achieve a two-state solution."

The Non-Aligned Movement is a forum of 120 countries that aren't formally aligned to any major power bloc. Its members include India, Iran, Iraq and South Africa. The World Health Organization (WHO) has deplored the "inhuman living conditions" in the small coastal territory of 2.4 million inhabitants, many of whom have been displaced by the Israeli action. On Monday, Guterres appealed for an immediate humanitarian ceasefire in Gaza.

The United States, Israel's main ally and key supporter in its war against Hamas, has also recently reiterated its support for the creation of a Palestinian state. In recent days, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has reaffirmed his opposition to the creation of a viable Palestinian state, drawing criticism from his American ally.

Polish president criticizes EU's executive for blocking funds

WARSAW : Polish President Andrzej Duda on Sunday criticized the European Commission for blocking EU funds in what he said was "an attempt to force Poland to change" its government, adding he was open to negotiations over changes in the justice system. Poland's last government led by the nationalist Law and Justice (PiS) party was embroiled in a dispute with the European Union over Warsaw's court reforms and the rule of law, resulting in billions of EU funds for Poland being frozen. The new pro-EU government has pledged to regain access to the money by restoring the rule of law, but it faces resistance from supporters and allies of the former ruling party, including Duda and some high-profile judges. "I have no doubts what the point was of blocking the money from the National Recovery Plan by the European Commission. It was a purely political action against the previous Polish authorities," Duda said during a press conference in Vilnius. "An attempt to force Poland to change its authorities, and that's how I perceived it, that's how I perceive it, and the current events only confirm it," he added. The European Commission was not immediately available to comment. Duda also said he was open to negotiations and proposals for various changes in the Polish justice system, but he would not allow any verification of judges who were appointed during his term. The Oct. 15 election ended eight years of PiS rule and a new government led by former European Council president Donald Tusk has vowed to regain access to the EU funds. In December, the European Commission said it would transfer 5 billion euros (\$5.45 billion) to Warsaw from Poland's 60 billion-euro share of the bloc's COVID-19 recovery stimulus. On Saturday, Polish Funds and Regional Policy Minister Katarzyna Pelczynska-Nalecz told private television that Poland has met conditions to submit documents crucial for getting access to the EU's Structural Funds.—Agencies

North Korea FM says 'ready to greet' Putin

WEB DESK

EOUL: North Korea's top diplomat said her country is "ready to greet" Russian President Vladimir Putin, state media reported Sunday, in the latest sign of deepening ties between the two authoritarian states. Traditional allies Russia and North Korea have recently boosted ties, with Pyongyang's leader Kim Jong Un making a rare overseas trip to meet Putin in Russia's Far East last September. The West has accused Moscow and Pyongyang of working together to support Russia's invasion of Ukraine, with North Korea believed to have sent hundreds of thousands of artillery shells and weapons to its ally. North Korean foreign minister Choe Son Hui was in Moscow last week for meetings with Putin and her Russian counterpart Sergei Lavrov. The North Korean "government warmly welcomes President Putin to visit Pyongyang and is ready to greet the Korean people's

closest friend with the greatest sincerity," Choe told Putin, according to a statement from the foreign minister's assistant office, carried by the Korean Central News Agency. Putin expressed "his willingness to visit the



DPRK at an early date", the statement said, referring to the North's official name, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. The statement added that Russia had expressed "deep thanks... for extending full support and solidarity to the stand of the Russian government and people on the special military operation in Ukraine." Increasing military and economic cooperation between

Russia and North Korea has triggered concerns in Washington and Seoul. Putin to meet North Korea's foreign minister, Kremlin says Top Russian officials, including Moscow's defence and foreign ministers, visited North Korea last year, fanning concern among Kyiv's allies over a potential arms deal. This month, the White House accused Pyongyang of sending ballistic missiles and launchers to Russia in what it called a "significant and concerning escalation" of support for Moscow's war effort. South Korea has accused Pyongyang of having provided more than one million artillery rounds to Moscow in exchange for advice on military satellite technology. North Korea succeeded in putting a spy satellite into orbit last year, with Seoul saying it received Russian help. Russia expressed "deep thanks" to North Korea for its "full support" over its war on Ukraine, the North Korean ministry said. It said Choe and the Russian officials expressed "serious concern" over the United

States' expanding military cooperation with its Asian allies that they blamed for worsening tensions in the region and threatening North Korea's sovereignty and security interests. Tensions on the Korean Peninsula are at their highest point in years, after Kim in recent months used Russia's invasion of Ukraine as a distraction to ramp up his weapons tests and military demonstrations. The United States, South Korea and Japan have responded by strengthening their combined military exercises, which Kim portrays as invasion rehearsals, and sharpening their deterrence plans built around nuclear-capable U.S. assets. In the latest tit-for-tat, North Korea on Friday said it conducted a test of a purported nuclear-capable underwater attack drone in response to a combined naval exercise by the United States, South Korea and Japan last week, as it continued to blame its rivals for tensions in the region.

Turkey neutralizes 17 terrorists in Iraq, Syria

ISTANBUL : Turkish security forces "neutralized" 17 terrorists in northern Iraq and northern Syria, the country's National Defense Ministry announced on Sunday. In the Operation Claw-Lock area in northern Iraq, 10 PKK terrorists were neutralized in an air operation, the ministry said in a statement on X. "Our heroic Turkish Armed Forces continue to demolish terrorist hideouts with their steel claws," it added. In a separate statement, the ministry said that Turkish security forces "neutralized" 7 PKK/YPG terrorists in northern Syria. "Our heroic Turkish Armed Forces neutralized 7 PKK/YPG terrorists targeted in the Operation Euphrates Shield zone, Operation Peace Spring zone, and Bafdik regions in northern Syria before they could achieve their treacherous goals," said the ministry on X. The ministry also expressed Türkiye's determination to eliminate terrorists. Turkish authorities use the term "neutralize" to imply the terrorists in question surrendered or were killed or captured. Türkiye launched Operation Claw-Lock in April 2022 to target the PKK terror organization's hideouts in Iraq's northern Metina, Zap, and Avasin-Basyan regions near the Turkish border. It was preceded by Operations Claw-Tiger and Claw-Eagle launched in 2020 to root out terrorists hiding out in northern Iraq and plotting cross-border attacks in Türkiye. In its more than 35-year terror campaign against Türkiye, the PKK — listed as a terrorist organization by Türkiye, the US, UK, and EU — has been responsible for the deaths of more than 40,000 people, including women, children, and infants. The YPG is PKK's Syrian branch.—DNA

Two die in Johannesburg building fire

JOHANNESBURG : Two people were killed and four were injured when fire engulfed a residential building in Johannesburg early on Sunday, city officials said, adding search and rescue operations were still underway. "The fire operation continues at the two-storey building that was engulfed with flames earlier this morning," the City of Johannesburg Emergency Management Services said in a statement. A spokesperson for the city's emergency management services told television channel eNCA it was unclear how many people were still trapped inside the building. An investigation into the cause of the fire will be undertaken once firefighting operations have been completed, officials said. More than 70 people died last August after a fire raged through a run-down, five-storey Johannesburg apartment block, in one of the worst such disasters in a city where poverty, household fires and homelessness are widespread. An inquiry to determine responsibility for that blaze is ongoing.—Agencies

NASA regains contact with mini-helicopter on Mars

WASHINGTON : NASA has re-established contact with its tiny helicopter on Mars, the US space agency said Saturday, after an unexpected outage prompted fears that the hard-working craft had finally met its end. Ingenuity, a drone about 1.6 feet (0.5 meters) tall, arrived on Mars in 2021 aboard the rover Perseverance and became the first motorized craft to fly autonomously on another planet. Data from the helicopter are transmitted via Perseverance back to Earth, but communications were suddenly lost during a test flight on Thursday, Ingenuity's 72nd lift-off on Mars. "Good news today," NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory (JPL) wrote on X, formerly Twitter, late Saturday. The agency said that contact had finally been made with the helicopter by commanding Perseverance to "perform long-duration listening sessions for Ingenuity's signal." — Agencies

Alkhidmat Women's trust organises Gaza bazar in Lahore

A remarkable Gaza Bazar was organised in Lahore, demonstrating solidarity with the victims of Gaza and raising funds to support them

DNA

LAHORE : Alkhidmat Women Wing Trust organised the Gaza Bazaar in Lahore for solidarity and fundraising. A remarkable Gaza Bazar was organised in Lahore, demonstrating solidarity with the victims of Gaza and raising funds to support them. The event is designed to spotlight Pakistani products and draw comparisons with international counterparts. It witnessed an enthusiastic turnout, drawing in numerous personalities and women from diverse walks of life. The Gaza Bazar, organised by Alkhidmat, featured stalls where proceeds were dedicated to the victims of Gaza. Key figures, including Dr. Hafeez Ur Rehman (President, Alkhidmat Foundation Pakistan), Syed Waqas Jafari (Secretary General), Navida Anis (Chairperson, Alkhidmat Women Wing Trust), Dr.



Humira Tariq (Patron, Alkhidmat Women Wing Trust), Kulsom Fatima Ranjha (President, Alkhidmat Women Wing Pakistan), and Uzma Imran, people from all walks of life actively participated. Dr Hafeez Ur Rehman underscored the Alkhid-

mat Foundation's unwavering commitment to ongoing relief efforts for Gaza victims, initiated promptly after the recent conflict erupted. Collaborative rescue and relief operations with international partners and NGOs are still in full swing. No-

tably, the Alkhidmat Foundation dispatched 150 tonnes of relief goods, including rations, tents, blankets, and other essentials, from Pakistan to Gaza. An earlier substantial contribution of 57 tons of relief goods was facilitated with the support

of NDMA and the Air Force from Nur Khan Air Base. Highlighting the critical medical predicament in Gaza, where the relief system has suffered significant damage, Dr. Hafeez Ur Rehman revealed the organisation's plan to dispatch 20 modern ambulances, with three already prepared for immediate deployment. Navida Anis, Chairperson of the Alkhidmat Women Wing Trust, expressed gratitude for the success of the Gaza Bazar and emphasised its dual purpose: aiding victims and raising awareness about the dire situation in Gaza. The Gaza Bazar, conceived as a charity initiative, also featured poignant presentations by girls on the Gaza issue. Dr Hafeez Ur Rehman congratulated the Alkhidmat Women's Wing Trust for orchestrating the successful event and urged participants to continue supporting the cause by shopping conscientiously at Alkhidmat Gaza Bazar.

Briefs

JI announces manifesto for Karachi

NAZIR SYAL

KARACHI: Jamaat Islami Pakistan (JIP) Karachi head Hafiz Naem ur Rehman announced the election manifesto to solve the problems of the city on Sunday. He addressed a press conference on Sunday and announced that this manifesto is not of Karachi but the manifesto of Pakistan. For the upcoming elections, he said Jamaat-e-Islami has fielded an excellent team of doctors and engineers, who have a better understanding of parliamentary politics. He said when they came to power, JIP would correct the census of Karachi city and every government school would be made a model school. He said they will promote IT education in city universities and a scholarship program will also be launched in the city on a large scale. He added the youth will be given government jobs. He said the constitution said that the province from where the gas comes out should be given priority and JIP will implement this provision of the constitution. To end water scarcity, he said sea water will be made drinkable while the monopoly of K-Electric will be abolished and more than one supply company will be licensed. He also announced that health cards will be issued to the people of Karachi and maternal and child health care centers will be established at the UC and town levels.

PTI candidate withdraws in favour of Maryam

DNA

LAHORE: In a "breakthrough" for the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz ahead of the nationwide polls, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) candidate Mehr Muhammad Waseem announced withdrawing in favour of Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) Senior Vice President Maryam Nawaz from Lahore's NA-119 on Sunday. The election campaigns of all political parties equipped with mollifying manifestos and promises are in full swing across the country ahead of the February 8 vote. PML-N and PPP are eyeing the premier's office and desperately swaying voters to elect them to power. The PTI ticket holder met Maryam and announced to withdraw in her favour besides announcing to join PML-N along with his supporters. The meeting was also attended by PML-N central leaders including Senator Perwaiz Rasheed, Marriyum Aurangzeb, Ali Pervaiz Malik, Khawaja Imran Nazir, and others. Mehr will formally announce his association with the Nawaz-led party in an election rally - scheduled for January 25 - led by Maryam. The PML-N chief organiser welcomed Mehr and his aides over joining her party.

Pak-China Institute hosts dialogue on "outlook on South Asia Security"

Iran crisis resolution 'model of crisis management', Non-state actors are threat to regional security, national security now linked to regional geopolitics, says Mushahid

MAHNOOR ANSAR / DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan-China Institute, under Friends of Silk Road (FOSR) Initiative? organized a dialogue on "Outlook of Security Situation in South Asia in 2024." The event took place simultaneously at two venues: Islamabad, and a second venue at Quetta Press Club. The dialogue featured speeches by Senator Mushahid Hussain Sayed, Chairman, Senate Defense Committee Defense & Pakistan-China Institute; Senator Mohammad Abdul Qadir; Lt. General (r) Muhammad Afzal, Former Chairman NDMA & DG FWO; Amir Rana, Director, Pak Institute for Peace Studies (PIPS); Ambassador Sohail Mahmood, Director General of Institute of Strategic Studies, Islamabad (ISSI); Ambassador (r) Masood Khalid, Former Ambassador to China; Sultan M Hali, Security Analyst; Shahzad Zulfikar, former President, PFUJ, and Mustafa Hyder Sayed, Executive Director, Pakistan China Institute. The dialogue was chaired by Former Pakistan Ambassador to China, Moin ul Haque.

In his opening speech, Senator Mushahid Hussain Sayed highlighted the significance of the current scenario, dominated by turbulence and transformation. In this context, he analysed China's Global Security Initiative (GSI) as a new framework for peaceful resolution of security issues, since GSI focuses on security as being indivisible, based on respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity of states. It seeks also to promote a security governance framework, including A.I., cyber security and related security threats



ISLAMABAD: Chairman Senate Defence Committee Mushahid Hussain Sayed speaking during a seminar titled Outlook of Security Situation in South Asia. - Photo Mudassar Raja

based on accepted international norms of behaviour enshrined in the UN Charter and international law. He strongly condemned the ongoing Genocide and Crimes against Humanity in Palestine by Israel. Delving into security issues, he discussed three new realities: the shattering of the Middle East status quo after October 7, serious challenges posed by Non-State Actors, and the complex security situation between Iran, Pakistan, and Afghanistan which is now inextricably intertwined with regional geopolitics, necessitating dialogue and diplomacy. Senator Mushahid Hussain termed the swift

and smooth resolution of the Iran crisis as 'model of crisis management and crisis resolution' adding that the two crises, Pulwama 2019 (with India) & Panjgur 2024 (with Iran) had helped Pakistan in establishing certain 'regional rules of behaviour based on our red lines in our troubled neighbourhood'. He said 'Iran is not India, but a brotherly Muslim neighbour with which Pakistan has no fundamental conflict of interest'. In this regard, Senator Mushahid Hussain especially praised the Pakistani leadership for their deft handling of the Iran crisis, maintaining a mature and measured, cool and calm ap-

proach, while avoiding jingoism. Regarding relations with China, he said 'we stand with China because China supports Pakistan without reservations at all times on all our core interests, and Pakistan too supports China on all its core interests, actually, our position on China is historically correct and consistent as Pakistan is on the right side of history'. Senator Mushahid Hussain also quoted verses from Allama Iqbal, 90 years ago, predicting the resurgence of Asia and rise of China.

In his speech, Senator Mohammad Abdul Qadir emphasized the urgent need to address the economic challenges facing Balochistan. Highlighting the province's high poverty rate, unemployment, and wealth disparity despite rich resources, Senator Qadir stressed the importance of responsible resource management and equitable development. He underscored the transformative potential of Gwadar Port, citing Chinese investments in infrastructure that have already fueled economic growth, job creation, and increased trade. He cited tourism as a factor in development and growth.

Lt. General (r) Muhammad Afzal, Former Chairman NDMA & DG FWO, delivered a PowerPoint presentation on "Western Route-CPEC opportunities for development and stability." The presentation explored the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) and areas of interest for both nations. The analysis highlighted achievements in road infrastructure and power generation under CPEC but emphasised the need for prioritising rail, addressing immediate concerns in water storage and IT infrastructure, and role of privates sector.

Egypt will not allow any threat to Somalia: El-Sisi

DNA

CAIRO: Egypt will not allow any threat to Somalia or its security, President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi said on Sunday, according to a statement from the presidency, after Ethiopia said it would consider recognizing an independence claim by Somaliland. Trying to "jump on a piece of land" to try to control it is something that no-one will agree to, El-Sisi said in a news conference with Somalia's President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud in Cairo. In a memorandum of understanding signed on Jan. 1, Ethiopia said it would consider recognizing Somaliland's independence in return for gaining access to the Red Sea. Somaliland declared independence from Somalia in 1991 but it has not won recognition from any country.

Indian aircraft crashes in Afghanistan

DNA

KABUL: A Russian-registered private plane carrying six people is believed to have crashed in a remote area of Afghanistan, the Ministry of Transport and Civil Aviation said on Sunday. The crash took place on Saturday night in a mountainous area near Zebak district in the north-eastern Badakhshan province, which borders China, Tajikistan, and Pakistan. "According to initial information, a Falcon 10 Russian private jet plane carrying six crew and passengers was heading to Tashkent (the capital of Uzbekistan) from India yesterday at 7 p.m. "Due to some technical problem, the plane lost its signal. Possibly when it was over the outskirts of Zebak and Kuran wa Munjan districts of north-eastern Badakhshan province, it got lost and crashed," Imamuddin Ahmadi, civil aviation ministry spokesman, told Arab News. Ahmadi said the ministry had dispatched a team to investigate the incident and that more details would follow. The mighty Hindu Kush mountain range cuts through the rural Afghan province, which is home to the nation's highest mountain, Mount Nushaq, at 7,492 meters high. Russian aviation authorities said in a statement that the plane was a charter ambulance flight traveling from the Indian city of Gaya, via Uzbekistan, to Moscow on a French-made Dassault Aviation Falcon 10 manufactured in 1978.

"On the evening of Saturday, Jan. 20, while in the airspace of Afghanistan (near the border of Tajikistan), the Falcon 10 aircraft, registered in the state register of civil aircraft of the Russian Federation, stopped communicating and disappeared from radar screens," the statement added. "There were six people on board the plane - four crew members and two passengers." Russian authorities also said they were in contact with their Afghan and Tajikistan counterparts. "The search for the aircraft is underway."

Terrorists killed in Pak strike on Iran

QUETTA: Caretaker Balochistan Information Minister Jan Achakzai has claimed that those who were being labelled by Baloch protesters as "missing persons" were in fact "terrorists" and killed in Pakistan's recent strike inside Iran. Pakistan on Thursday launched strikes on terrorists' hideouts inside Iran, in a retaliatory attack two days after Tehran violated the country's sovereignty by launching a strike in Balochistan that left two children dead and injured three girls. In a statement, the Pakistan Army had said the hideouts used by terrorist militant organisations, namely Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA) and Balochistan Liberation Front (BLF), were successfully struck in an intelligence-based operation, code named - "Marg Bar Sarmachar".

Addressing a press conference in Quetta today, Achakzai rebuked the demonstrators holding a sit-in protest against enforced disappearances in Islamabad. "Those

who were being labelled as missing persons were terrorists [and] killed in Iran," he claimed while referring to Pakistan's strikes inside Iran. He alleged that Mahrang Baloch, who is leading the protest, has been staging "drama" and defaming Pakistan under the guise of missing persons issue. The provincial information minister said Baloch protesters were staging the sit-in in Islamabad for ulterior motives. "They could disturb the law and order situation. In such a situation, it becomes impossible to stop a terror incident. Those wearing masks in the sit-in can be terrorists of banned outfits," he added. He said the hostile intelligence agencies could target the protesters' camp to blame Pakistan. It is not a judicial matter, the ongoing protest camp in Islamabad should be dealt with by the city administration, he said. Citing the Iranian claim that it targeted Jaish ul Adl in Pakistan, Achakzai said no such organisation existed in Pakistan.

Pak grapples with out-of-school children crisis

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan has witnessed an alarming rise in out-of-school children as the figure soared to over 26 million, Pakistan Education Statistics Report 2021-22 stated. The Pakistan Institute of Education (PIE) released a comprehensive analysis report that made staggering revelations regarding the number of out-of-school children (OOSC). It stated that the latest findings were a preliminary teaser, highlighting the critical state of education accessibility in the country. As of 2021-22, there are a concerning 26.2 million out-of-school children across Pakistan, it added. Disturbingly, 39% of children in the school-going age group are currently out of school, indicating a persistent challenge in ensuring universal education. Balochistan stands out with the highest percentage, where a staggering 65% of children are out of school, while ICT reports the lowest percentage. In comparison among the major provinces, KP fares better with a

30% out-of-school rate. Despite a decrease in the percentage of out-of-school children from 44% in 2016-17 to 39% in 2021-22, the absolute number has surged from 22.02 million to 26.21 million during the same period. This increase is primarily attributed to the population growth rate outpacing the decrease in out-of-school children. At the higher secondary level, a disconcerting 60% of children are out of school in 2021-22. Further analysis reveals 44%, 30%, and 36% out-of-school rates at high, middle, and primary levels respectively. A substantial portion of the out-of-school children, totaling 10.77 million, is at the primary level, emphasising the urgent need for targeted interventions. Economic disparities play a significant role in educational access, with children from the poorest quintile facing the highest disadvantages, evident across all education levels. Detailed insights into economic disparities and additional statistics will be unveiled during a comprehensive release scheduled for Monday in PIE Islamabad.

7,832 polling stations declared highly sensitive

DNA

LAHORE: The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) on Sunday declared 7,832 polling stations in Punjab as highly sensitive while 15,155 as sensitive and 27,475 as normal. The Election Commission officials said that at least six police officers will be posted outside each highly sensitive polling station, 46, 992 for sensitive polling stations and 75, 775 for sensitive polling stations. Sources said that a total of 232,667 personnel will be deployed for election duty, 200 personnel of the Quick Response Force in one constituency, and more than 28,000 personnel will be needed for the Quick Response Force. Sources further said that in case of deployment of Army or Rangers, 31,328 personnel will be required for highly sensitive polling stations, 45,465 for sensitive polling stations.

Humanitarian crisis deepens Gaza deaths top 25,000 as Israel pushes offensive

Hamas says its October 7 attack on Israel was a "necessary step" against Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territories

NEWS DESK

GAZA STRIP: The health ministry in Gaza on Sunday said the death toll in the war-torn Palestinian territory breached 25,000 as Israel pushed its southward offensive and renewed bombardment in the north. Witnesses told AFP Israeli boats were bombarding Gaza City and other areas in the north early Sunday. Hamas has also reported heavy combat in the north. "Dozens are still under the rubble," the Hamas government's media office said, adding that the dead and injured "could not be transferred to hospitals due to the continued artillery shelling on... Khan Yunis and the Tal Al-Hawa area in Gaza City and the north." The Israeli army said it "eliminated a number of terrorists" in the main southern city of Khan

Haniyeh, Turkish FM discuss Gaza ceasefire

FOREIGN DESK

ANKARA: Hamas's Qatar-based chief Ismail Haniyeh has held a meeting with the Turkish foreign minister, diplomatic sources said Sunday, in the first official contact between the two for more than three months. The conflict naturally was on the agenda of their meeting. Sources said Fidan and Haniyeh discussed the release of the remaining captives Hamas held and the possibility of an immediate cease-fire. The sources said that during the meeting, the two sides also discussed "increasing humanitarian aid... a two-state solution for a permanent peace.

Yunis and killed 15 militants in northern Gaza over the past day. Thick plumes of smoke billowed above Khan Yunis on Sunday morning, AFP journalists saw. The October 7 attacks by Hamas resulted in the deaths of about 1,140 people, mostly civilians, according to an AFP tally based on official Israeli figures. Israel's relentless bombardment and ground offensive have killed at least 25,105 people in Gaza, mostly women and children, according to the Hamas-run health ministry. Meanwhile, The Hamas resistance group said Sunday its October 7 attack on Israel was a "necessary step" against Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territories. But the group admitted in a 16-page report on the attacks that "some faults happened... due to the rapid collapse of the Israeli security and military system, and the chaos caused along the border areas with Gaza".

Deadly blast hits market in Russia-held Ukraine city

NEWS DESK

KIEV: At least 25 people were killed in a shelling attack in the Russian-held city of Donetsk, the Moscow-installed leader of the region said. Denis Pushilin said a Ukrainian strike, which also injured 20 people, hit a busy market. He said emergency services were working at the scene, and that information on the number of dead and wounded was still being collected. There has so far been no comment from Ukraine on the incident. Photographs published by Reuters news agency appeared to show destroyed shop fronts, as well as bodies lying in the street. Russia's foreign ministry denounced the strike as a "barbaric terrorist attack" against civilians. Mr Pushilin said the "horrendous" strike took place when the market was at its busiest. According to AFP,

a local resident named Tatiana told local media she heard an incoming projectile overhead, and hid under her market stall. "I saw smoke, people screamed, a woman was crying," she was quoted as saying. Donetsk city and parts of the wider region in eastern Ukraine were first seized by Russian-backed forces in 2014, and the area has been partially controlled by Moscow ever since. The city is around 20km (12 miles) from the frontline. Areas near Donetsk city - including Mariinka and Avdiivka - have seen some of the fiercest fighting of late. Meanwhile, The blast caused a large fire at the Ust-Luga terminal, but no injuries, Russian officials said. An official source in Kyiv said the "special operation" of the SBU security service masterminded the attack, with drones that worked "on target". Both Russia and Ukraine have used drones in the current conflict.

Russia launched its full-scale invasion of Ukraine nearly two years ago, but has made little progress in recent months. Regarding the explosion near St Petersburg, regional governor Alexander Drozdenko said a "high alert regime" was in place after the incident at the terminal of gas producer Novatek, in Ust-Luga on the Gulf of Finland. He shared a video of what appeared to be a large fire. Novatek later announced that work at the terminal had been suspended, and said the fire was the result of "external influence" - without providing further details. The Ukrainians say fuel processed at the plant was being used to supply Russian troops in their war against Ukraine and that this strike "significantly complicates" logistics for the military. They also describe the attack as an economic blow to Russia, which exports fuel from the terminal.

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