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Israeli plan for Gaza not working, peace talks needed

Detailed News On Page-08

Shehbaz vows to change destiny of Pakistan

Detailed News On Page-08



Mohsin Naqvi appointed as chairman PCB

Detailed News On Page-08



Ambassadors to take charge

Pak-Iran ties become normal

Iranian Foreign Minister to visit Pakistan on January 29 on the invitation of his Pakistani counterpart

ANSAR M BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: Relations between Pakistan and Iran have become normal as both sides have agreed to restore the ambassador level contacts. Consequently, the Ambassadors of Iran and Pakistan will take charge of their duties in Tehran and Islamabad respectively with immediate effect. Following the telephone conversation between the Foreign Ministers of Pakistan and the Islamic Republic of Iran, it was mutually agreed that ambassadors of both countries may return to their respective posts by 26 January 2024. At the invitation of Foreign Minister Jalil Abbas Jilani, Foreign Minister of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Hossein Amir Abdollahian, will undertake a visit to Pakistan on 29 January 2024. Relations between the two countries became tense when Iran violated Pakistani air space to target 'wanted' criminals inside Pakistan territory. As a result, two innocent children were killed. Pakistan, the very next day, launched air strikes on terrorists' hideouts inside Iran. As many as nine people were killed in the strikes. It is not yet clear whether the Pakistani missiles hit the terrorists as well or not. After the Iran attack, Pakistan had expelled the Iranian ambassador and recalled its ambassador from Tehran. However, after hectic diplomacy, both sides have decided to mend fences and restore diplomatic relations fully.

Quadrilateral talks on Afghanistan may take place late Jan

The dates and venue will be announced later

FOREIGN DESK

MOSCOW: Russia, China, Iran and Pakistan are preparing for a meeting on Afghanistan, which may take place by the end of January, Russia's presidential envoy for Afghanistan, Zamir Kabulov, has told media, according to Russian state news agency. "The meeting is being prepared. It will take place," he said. The dates and venue will be announced later. However, Kabulov remarked, "there is hope" that the event might take place before the end of January. He stressed that the exchange of strikes between Iran and Pakistan would not affect the preparations. "No, there are no such concerns," Kabulov replied to a relevant question. The Russian presidential special envoy said that on the agenda of the meeting will be "interaction with the current Afghan authorities in the interests of creating an inclusive government, the fight against terrorism and drug crime."

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ISLAMABAD: Vice Foreign Minister of the People's Republic of China Sun Weidong calls on President Dr Arif Alvi, at Aiwan-e-Sadr. - DNA

Sun Weidong meets Alvi

Pak-China for enhanced coop in IT, agriculture

The president stated that Pakistan was fully committed to the high-quality development of CPEC, adding that Chinese support in the next phase of CPEC would be crucial

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan and China on Monday reiterated their desire for enhanced cooperation in the areas of economy, information technology, agriculture, and human resource development for the mutual benefit of the two friendly countries. This was discussed in a meeting between the visiting Vice Foreign Minister of the People's Republic of China Sun Weidong, who along with his delegation called on President Dr Arif Alvi, at Aiwan-e-Sadr.

WEIDONG MEETS COAS, NEWS ON BACK PAGE

Chinese Ambassador to Pakistan Jiang Zaidong, was also present during the meeting, a President House press release said. Welcoming the delegation, the president said that China was a very dear friend that had always supported Pakistan during

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Half a million Afghans return from Pakistan

500,200 Afghans left Pak between September 15, 2023 and January 13, 2024

KHAYYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: More than 500,000 Afghans have fled Pakistan in the four months since Islamabad ordered undocumented migrants to leave or face arrest, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) said Monday. According to the latest figures

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Pak condemns consecration of 'Temple'

Centuries-old Babri Mosque was demolished on 6 Dec 1992

MAHNOOR ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan condemns the construction and consecration of the 'Ram Temple' on the site of the demolished Babri Mosque in the Indian city of Ayodhya. The centuries-old mosque was demolished on 6 December 1992 by a mob of extremists. Deplorably, India's superior judiciary not only acquitted the criminals responsible for this despicable act but also allowed the construction of a temple on the site of the demolished mosque. The developments of the last 31 years, leading to today's consecration ceremony, are indicative of growing majoritarianism in India. These constitute an important facet of the ongoing efforts for social, economic and

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7 terrorists gunned down in Zhob IBO

STAFF REPORT

RAWALPINDI: On 22 January 2024, a fire exchange took place during an intelligence based operation in Sambaza Sector, Zhob District, near the Pakistan Afghan border. Own troops effectively surrounded and engaged the fleeing terrorists. Resultantly, seven terrorists were sent to hell who remained actively involved in terrorists activities against security forces as well as killing of innocent civilians. Arms, ammunition and

Continued on Page 06

Briefs

Security in Islamabad under control

IGP says The security was already beefed up in the capital due to the upcoming elections

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad police on Monday said the law and order situation in the federal capital was "under control", clarifying that no notification had been issued regarding the closure of universities. The statement came after TV channels and media reports claimed educational institutions in Islamabad had been shut down for an indefinite period of time due to security threats. The security was already beefed up in the capital due to the upcoming elections and ongoing sit-in by Baloch protesters at the press club. In a video statement released on social media platform X, Islamabad police chief Dr Akbar Nasir said: "There are some reports circulating regarding schools and colleges in Islamabad.

PTI says it will sweep Feb 8 polls

Says people to resist attempt by the state planners to impose Nawaz Sharif

ADIL SHAHEEN

ISLAMABAD: PTI Spokesperson came down hard on the certified criminal Nawaz Sharif for his outbursts and vowed that the nation was all-set to cleanse the country from this fugitive-like pickpockets and bane on February 8 general elections. In a strongly-worded reaction to the speech of the absconder Nawaz, PTI Spokesperson said that this certified criminal's returning to the country under state patronage was a source of shame for politics and politicians. PTI Spokesperson went on to say that if this shameless person, devoid of even a sense of self-respect, had an iota of modesty, then he would have preferred to drown instead of doing politics under the shadow of deals and compromises.

Drive against judiciary

Solangi hints at tough measures

Advices people to verify every bit of information before sharing it on social media platforms

MEHTAB PIRZADA / DNA

ISLAMABAD, Caretaker Federal Minister for Information, Broadcasting and Parliamentary Affairs Murtaza Solangi on Monday said that elements involved in the malicious campaign against the superior judiciary would be taken to task but no group or person would be victimised. He was addressing a press conference flanked by Director General Pakistan Telecommunication Authority Ahmed Shamim Pirzada and Director General Operations Federal Investigation Agency Waqar uddin. The minister said that judicial decisions were in the public domain and as per the Constitution and the masses could comment on them.

RELATED NEWS ON PAGE 4

Condemning the malicious campaign against the superior judiciary and judges on social media, he said that character assassination of someone was a serious violation of the law and the Constitution. He underlined the need to discourage the culture of deceit and intolerance from society. He said a joint investigation team had been formed to probe the anti-judiciary campaign and the relevant institutions including FIA and PTA were investigating the ongoing propaganda. He said that Article 19 of the Constitution defines freedom of expression with certain restrictions. The minister said that the caretaker government was set up under a constitutional process and it was written in the

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SC bans v-logs and interviews on court premises

4-point instructions outline strict conditions for beat reporters

COURT REPORTER

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court of Pakistan imposed on Monday a ban on the recording of V-logs, interviews, and other multimedia content within the court building, introducing new guidelines for media reporters. The four-point directive, issued by the Public Relations Officer of the Supreme Court, outlines strict conditions for beat reporters covering proceedings within the esteemed institution. Reporters are now required to present their original media cards issued by their respective media houses for entry into the Supreme Court building. This, the directive states, is to ensure the authenticity and credibility of media representatives gaining access to the premises. Under the new guidelines, reporters will only be

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Nawaz seeks heavy mandate, as Bilawal needs only one term

"Nawaz Sharif is here with you after 10 years. The previous rulers of this province literally destroyed it," he said

DNA

MANSEHRA: Former three-time prime minister and PML-N supremo Nawaz Sharif sought heavy mandate from the people of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa as his daughter Maryam Nawaz said that the province isn't a laboratory. He was addressing a public rally in KP on Monday as the country is heading towards general elections scheduled for Feb 8. Addressing a mammoth crowd at Mansehra's Thakra Stadium, the PML-N supremo said that those who ruled KP during last 10 years have destroyed the province. It merits mention here that former prime minister is also the candidate from the constituency of NA-15 Mansehra. "I am not here to become prime minister. I am contesting the election from here. Will you vote for me," Sharif asked the massive crowd. "Nawaz Sharif is here with you after 10 years. The previous rulers of this province literally destroyed it," he said. "Did they make a new KP or new Pakistan," he asked the crowd amid huge roar. With the election fever



Siraj stresses inclusive grand national dialogue

Says after election he will bring all parties together

SHAMIM SHAHID

DIR: Amir Jamaat-e-Islami Siraj-ul-Haq has said that Grand National Dialogue is needed to end toxic polarization in the country. He said Jamaat-e-Islami will successfully bring all the political parties to the table after February 8 so that the foundations of a stable Pakistan can be laid by ending hatred. Addressing an election rally in his constituency NA-6 in Lowe Der, he said that differences among individuals lead to the diversity and development of society.

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PM Kakar urges FC for Islamabad master plan

The caretaker prime minister chaired an important meeting on different matters of CDA

ADIL SHAHEEN

ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar on Monday stressed upon constitution of a Federal Commission to review Islamabad Master Plan and said that review of this plan was among the top priorities of the federal government. The prime minister also termed the bicycle lanes project as 'an environmental friendly' and asked for its completion in the earlier. The caretaker prime minister chaired an

important meeting on different matters of Capital Development Authority (CDA). The meeting was attended by Secretary Ministry of Interior Aftab Akbar Durrani, Chairman CDA Capt (ret'd) Anwar-ul-Haq and other senior officials, PM Office Media Wing said in a press release. He was given a briefing over the bicycle lanes project in Islamabad and federal capital master plan. Under the bicycle lanes project, a total of 374km lanes and 150 parking stations would be constructed, it was told. The prime minister also

emphasized upon the need of vertical construction in the new residential projects in Islamabad, and directed the relevant authorities to formulate an effective strategy to woo investors for the business purposes with construction of high-rise buildings. He also directed the authorities to resolve the water issue of the capital city immediately by ensuring its smooth supply, besides construction of specific buildings (parking plazas) to overcome parking problem. He also asked for an effective mechanism to reduce traffic pressure in the city.



ISLAMABAD : Minister for Finance, Revenue and Economic Affairs, Dr. Shamshad Akhtar was called on by Maen Khreasat, Ambassador of the Kingdom of Jordan.—WDNA



Minister emphasizes health security as right of citizens

ABID RAZA

LAHORE : Caretaker Punjab Health Minister Professor Dr. Javed Akram highlighted the significance of health security as a fundamental right for every Pakistani citizen and commended the coordination between the federal government and Punjab for improved health facilities. Addressing the National Action Plan for Health Security Provincial Operational Planning Workshop on Monday, he acknowledged the economic impact of the 2019 pandemic and emphasized the need to fill gaps in the health sector. He urged the promotion of evidence-based studies and improvements in the reporting system. He aligned with Punjab Chief Minister Syed Mohsin Naqvi's vision for revamping over a hundred government hospitals. Punjab Minister for Primary and Secondary Healthcare Dr. Jamal Nasir affirmed the commitment of the entire Punjab Cabinet to enhance public convenience. Caretaker Federal Health Minister Dr. Nadeem Jan expressed satisfaction in participating in the workshop, which he also chaired. The event saw the presence of DG Health Dr. Ilyas Gondal and representatives from the UK Health Security Agency, National Institute of Health, UK International Development.—DNA

CM visits Safari zoo, inspects upgradation

LAHORE : Punjab Caretaker Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi has announced an acceleration of the Safari Zoo's upgrade, introducing sharks, new animals, and birds. During a comprehensive visit to the Safari Zoo here on Monday, the chief minister personally inspected ongoing upgrade work throughout the park. Inspecting the construction of the information center and designated areas for tigers, birds, and other animals, the CM directed the swift completion of the waterfall and associated tasks. He also examined the in-progress salt range and emphasized making the

Safari Zoo Park entrance attractive and world-class. The chief minister revealed plans to launch a Night Safari at the park, ensuring international security standards. Addressing the media post-visit, Mohsin Naqvi expressed dedication to overcoming challenges through relentless day-and-night efforts. He stressed the importance of on-site visits for prompt decision-making, work acceleration, and worker motivation. "I kept visiting so that the project could be completed in 3 months instead of a year, otherwise I have no interest in making 10, 10 visits to each project", he said. He clarified that his frequent visits aimed to expedite the project, transforming a year-long time

line into just three months. Discussing project progress, Naqvi indicated that many projects are nearing completion, with some at 80 percent or 90 percent. He aimed to conclude most projects by the end of January to early February. Commemorating the government's one-year mark, he attributed success to an exceptional team, emphasizing his dedication and wholehearted effort. Secretary Communication and Works and Secretary Forests briefed on project advancements during the visit. Secretary Livestock, Commissioner Lahore, CCPO Lahore, Chairman Punjab Institute of Cardiology Dr. Farqad Alamgir, and relevant officials were also present.

Health facilities provided by govt reviewed

BAHAWALPUR : Deputy Commissioner Zaheer Anwar Jappa presided over a meeting held on Monday in the committee room of his office to review the health indicators highlighted by the government and the health facilities provided to the people. CEO Health Dr Syed Tanveer Shah, DHO Dr Zeeshan Rauf, DHO Dr Osama Munir Pansuta, DHO and Coordinator Dr Khalid Chanar, Coordinator National Program Dr Khalid Mehmood Arain, Deputy District Health Officers of the district, and others were present. The DC directed that no negligence should be tolerated in providing medical facilities to the people. He said that mother and child health programs including anti-polio and anti-dengue campaigns should be successfully implemented. He said that children in rural areas should also be provided better health facilities and their vaccinations must be ensured. Doctors and paramedical staff should perform their duties well. The medical facilities available in Tehsil Headquarters Hospitals, Rural Health Centers, and Rural Health Dispensaries including Primary Health Centers were reviewed at the meeting. The DC said that payments under the Universal Health Insurance Program should also be ensured. He said that improvements should be made in the sanitation arrangements in hospitals.—APP

Women's progress ensures country's success

PESHAWAR : Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Governor, Haji Ghulam Ali here Monday said that the share of women in Pakistan was about 52 percent in the country's population and their socio-economic development was guaranteed for speedy progress and prosperity of the nation. Addressing a function organized by the National Commission on Status of Women held at a local hotel here as a chief guest, the Governor said the increase of girls students compared to boys students in educational institutions of KP was a solid proof of women's education development. The Governor said the sta-

tus of women in Islam was very high, adding our religion has given the right of property to them and nobody could change it. Haji Ghulam Ali said that women were given highest respect by our society being a mother, sister, wife and daughter and it was the responsibility of the government to ensure provision of all rights to them. He said close liaison with politicians for enactment of legislation for protection of rights of women was imperative for safeguarding their rights legally and constitutionally. The governor assured full support to the national commission on status of women

for progress, autonomy and development of women besides other organizations in this regard. The function was also addressed by Nilofar Bakhtiar, Chairperson, National Commission on Status of Women. Nilofar Bakhtiar said women of Pakistan were playing key roles in the development of their country and underscored the need for protection of their rights as guaranteed in the constitution. The Chairperson said women should be given their due share in property and stressed on creation of awareness among the women about their property, constitutional and legal rights.—DNA

IGP pledges support for special children's sports

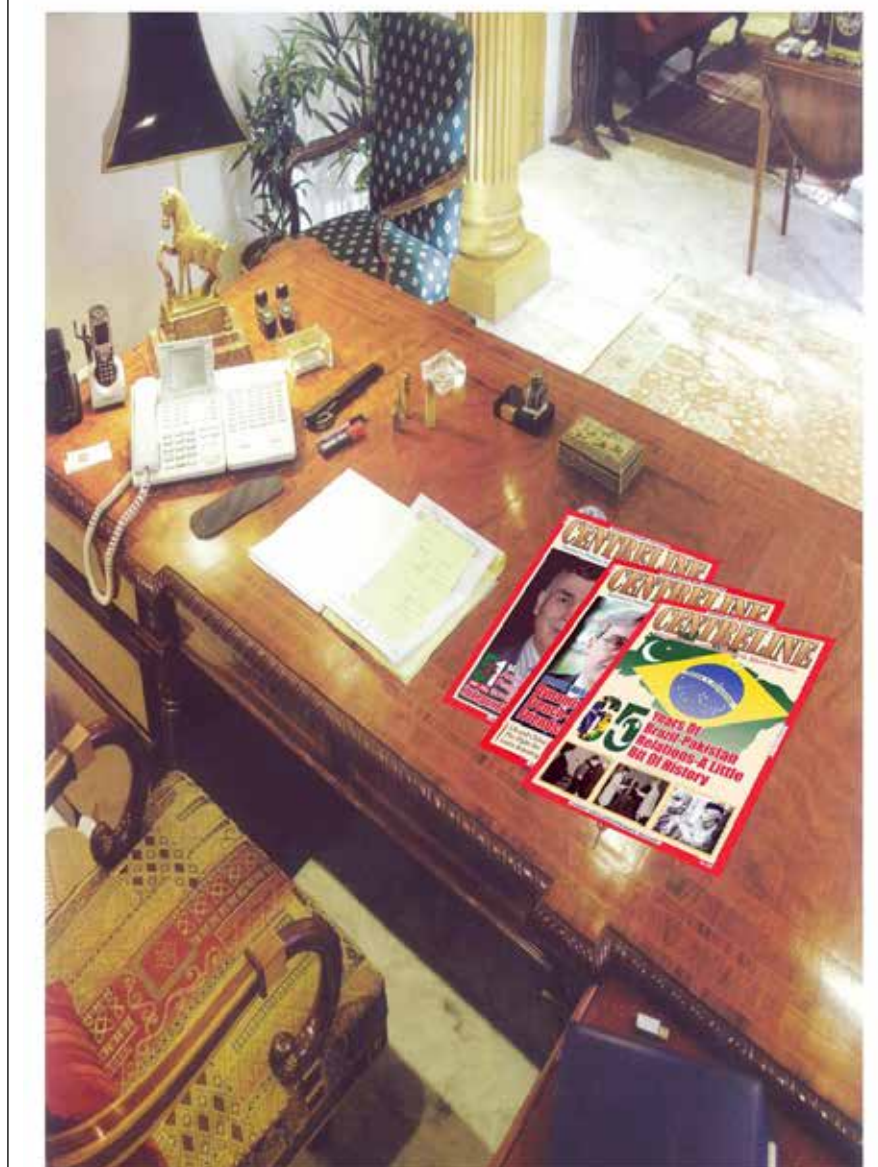
NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI : A four-member delegation, led by Pakistan Blind Sports Association President Waqas and Punjab Blind Sports Association President Usman Saeed, met with IGP Sindh Riffat Mukhtar Raja at the Central Police Office (CPO) Karachi. The meeting extensively discussed the engagement of special children in sports activities and the importance of fostering their participation, said a news release on Monday. The delegation conveyed to IGP Sindh their association's plan to conduct sports events for special children in Karachi in the near fu-

ture, seeking support and encouragement. In response to the delegation's request, IGP Sindh pledged his full support and the Sindh Police's assistance in organizing sports activities for special children. He commended the association for their dedicated efforts and empathetic approach towards the well-being of special children. Meanwhile, IGP launches Traffic Ticket Management System Inspector General of Police (IGP) Sindh Riffat Mukhtar Raja on Monday inaugurated the Traffic Ticketing Management System (TMS), Traffic Monitoring Cell (TMS) and Traffic Police Cafeteria at the DIGP Traffic Office in Garden, Karachi. According

to a spokesman for Sindh Police, the event featured the disposal of 10,000 pressure horns and non-standard number plates confiscated during a recent traffic campaign. Accompanied by Additional IGP - Karachi, the IGP Sindh inspected the newly implemented systems and received a detailed briefing on their functionalities from DIGP Traffic. A guard of honour welcomed IGP Sindh upon his arrival, followed by a visit to the traffic police memorial for prayers and Fa-tiha. In a farewell ceremony for SP Traffic Traffic Central, IGP Sindh acknowledged and commended the retiring officer's dedicated service to the Sindh Police. Addressing the media, IGP

Sindh underscored the importance of an efficient traffic management and regulatory system, prioritizing measures that benefit the public. He emphasized the features of the Safe City project, indicating its initiation and the government's commitment to tackling traffic-related challenges. The IGP stated that the project aims not only to issue tickets and deliver them to homes but also to impound vehicles persistently violating traffic rules. Highlighting the significance of immediate vehicle ownership transfer during purchases, he called for coordination between the traffic police and relevant departments.



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Pakistan-Iran bilateral ties crucial for regional stability

Ashrafi also said that Pakistan stands in solidarity with Gaza: COAS assures support, dispatches aid

ISLAMABAD : Special Representative of the Prime Minister for Religious Harmony and the Pakistani Diaspora in the Middle East and Muslim Countries, Hafiz Muhammad Tahir Mahmood Ashrafi, on Monday shed light on a diverse array of issues spanning from geopolitical relations to religious significance. Addressing concerns about border violations by Iran during the discourse of a press conference, he highlighted that the proactive measures taken by the Pakistani government and military leadership for peace and stability in the region had gained significant recognition at the global stage. Ashrafi clarified that that Pakistan's intelligence-based operations specifically targeted terrorists engaged in domestic activities, not Iranian nationals. He lauded the unity

of the entire Pakistani nation, emphasizing collective strength and resilience in the face of challenges. He underscored Pakistan's commitment to its defense capabilities, reinforcing the nation's preparedness. Underlining Pakistan's extensive global ties, he reiterated that the nation consistently engaged with the entire Islamic world, emphasizing Pakistan's unwavering condemnation of terrorism and reaffirming its dedication to fostering peace and security. He affirmed an unwavering commitment to Pakistan's security, asserting that the entire nation unequivocally supported its armed forces. Accentuating the strong Islamic brotherhood, Ashrafi depicted the relations between Pakistan and Iran as deep-rooted, characterized by a profound

connection between both nations. He emphasized that enhancing bilateral relations between Pakistan and Iran was crucial for fostering regional stability and mitigating terrorist activities. He said strengthened cooperation in intelligence sharing, border management, and joint counter-terrorism efforts could create a more formidable front against common security threats. He said by building trust and collaboration, both nations could effectively address and neutralize the challenges posed by terrorism, promoting a secure environment for the entire region. Ashrafi praised Iran's endeavors against terrorists associated with the Balochistan Liberation Army, particularly those implicated in acts of terrorism within Pakistan. On the prevail-

ing weather conditions in Pakistan, he articulated the imperative for precipitation, underscoring the pivotal role of weather patterns in the nation's well-being. In response to the Prime Minister's impassioned plea, Ashrafi, concurrently serving as the Chairman of the Pakistan Ulema Council, made a noteworthy proclamation that a nationwide prayer for rain, recognized as 'Namaz-e-Istisqa' had been meticulously scheduled for observance across the country on Friday, aligning with the collective endeavor to invoke divine intervention for the much-needed rainfall. In expressing solidarity with the ongoing Gaza issue, he conveyed that both the government and the nation were united in offering steadfast support for the Palestinian cause.

He noted that Pakistan's Chief of Army Staff, General Syed Asim Munir, held a meeting with the Palestinian ambassador, assuring cooperation and support. He mentioned that two vessels from the Pakistani Navy had been dispatched to deliver aid, showcasing Pakistan's proactive engagement and genuine concern for the situation in Palestine. Ashrafi raised questions about the motives of certain groups staging protest demonstration in the federal capital and the targeting of innocent individuals by terrorists within Pakistan, highlighting the imperative for accountability. He concluded with a global acknowledgment of Pakistan's responsible and peace-loving image, underscoring the nation's unwavering commitment to stability.—APP

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

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Water Tank

Islamabad.....0321-5744480



ISLAMABAD: Mr.Murtaza Solangi Caretaker Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting addressing a press conference along with PTA&FIA Authorities.

Engineers playing key role in country's development

He said the PEC was now playing its professional role as a mentor and reviewer to countries like Saudi Arabia, Nigeria, Kenya, Myanmar and Central Asian Republics to join these professional forums

DNA

ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi on Monday stressing the significance of engineering expertise in every sector of life, underscored the need for continued support and recognition of the engineering community to propel the nation towards sustainable growth and prosperity. Addressing an event titled "PEC Engineers' Excellence Award 2022" held at Aiwan-e-Sadr, the president said the Pakistani engineers had, in the past, played key role in the development of the gulf countries. He said Pakistan needed more engineers in various sectors to ensure sustainable development. He said Pakistan produced only 25000 engineers annually which was not enough for the country's need. Out of these, a sizable portion seek immigration and go abroad after graduation.

In comparison, the president said that India produced over 1.5 million engineer per year. President Alvi said the human resource had been a big challenge for the country as in other sectors like health, the country needed more human resource. "There are only 150,000 working nurses against the total demand of 0.9 million nurses in the country." Similarly, he regretted that an alarming number of around 26 million children were currently out of school in the country who would become a big burden in future for the society. He said despite challenges, the Information Technology sector of the country was showing good performance which was evident from the fact that over 2.2 million free lancers were earning their bread and butter along with foreign exchange for the country. He said to increase the number of engineers and to educate the out of school children the gov-

ernment needed huge resources. The resources, he said could be managed by bringing reforms in the taxation system. However he said decades had passed since various financial institution including the International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Bank and others had been recommending Pakistan to tax the wealthy people. Despite making policies we could not force the elite of the country to pay their due taxes." The president said "Only words do not make sense, we need implementation not words". He pointed out that the country's tax to GDP was too low at around 9% which needed to be enhanced. President Alvi said the world was moving towards abundance of food and resources while we were still stuck up in scarcity of resources. "We need champions in every sector to achieve the goals of sustainable development," he said adding amnesty schemes never worked as the government introduced am-

nesties every year which yielded no results. Referring to the atrocities being made on the Palestinians in Gaza, the president called for adopting ethics and morality across the societies to maintain peace in the world. He said wars would further complicate the world challenges. Due to such complexities, rich were becoming the richest while the poor were becoming the poorest. Earlier, President Alvi conferred awards to Pakistan's engineer in different categories to acknowledge their contribution towards the country's development. Chairman Pakistan Engineering Council (PEC) Muhammad Najeem Haroon said every year, the Council awards the outperforming engineers to acknowledge their efforts and contribution in the country's development. He said the engineers had made outstanding contribution in a range of areas including

defence production, nuclear technology, water and power, railways, road, communications, agriculture, telecommunication, manufacturing, chemical and petrochemical industry.

He informed that the PEC had also achieved the historical milestones and represented Pakistan as signatory and member at all the relevant international professional forums, enabling the country to stand among the technology advanced and developed nations through Washington Accord and International Professional Engineers Agreement under International Engineering Alliance, FEIIC, FEIAP NABEEA and other prestigious forums.

He said the PEC was now playing its professional role as a mentor and reviewer to countries like Saudi Arabia, Nigeria, Kenya, Myanmar and Central Asian Republics to join these professional forums.

Senate body discusses rules and procedures

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: A Meeting of the Senate Committee on Rules of Procedure and Privileges was held today under the Chairmanship of Senator Muhammad Tahir Bizinjo here at the Parliament House. Senator Bahramand Khan Tangi moved a Privilege Motion against the Secretary of the Ministry of Interior, Government of Pakistan, Islamabad, who refused to issue an arms license to him, contradicting the government's policy to issue arms licenses to parliamentarians. Senator Tangi expressed that the Secretary of the Interior, instead of facilitating him, denied the license, even for personal use, and insisted on the recently imposed ban. He asserted that the Secretary's denial amounted to a

breach of privilege not only for him but for all parliamentarians. In the meeting, the ministry contended that Senator Bahramand Khan Tangi had been granted approval for a 01xPB arms license and was required to approach Nadra for biometric verification. However, he neither approached Nadra nor submitted his demand note against the weapon within the prescribed six-month period. It was communicated that he submitted a request for an extension of the validity period. Still, it was clarified that after the expiry of ninety days but before the lapse of six months, the license could be processed with a penalty payment of one thousand rupees for every month. Failure to comply would result in the withdrawal of approval by the competent authority. The ministry also mentioned that the issuance of PB licenses was banned on December 31, and a revised policy on the prohibited board is underway. Despite this, the committee recommended the swift resolution of the matter and suggested exempting parliamentarians from the ban. Earlier in the meeting, matters related to a privilege motion against the Director-General of the Civil Aviation Authority (DGCAA) and irregularities in the recruitment process in PSQCA, as well as the use of derogatory remarks towards the committee, were deferred due to the absence of the movers. The meeting was attended by Senator Professor Sajid Mir, Irfan Siddiqui, Zarqa Suhawardy Taimur and Senator Bahramand Khan Tangi. Representatives of the attached departments were also in attendance.

Call for public awareness on safe blood donation

ISLAMABAD: Health expert Monday stressed that there was a need to create more awareness, particularly amongst the youth about donating safe blood on a voluntary basis as the availability of blood in a hospital is essential every day, especially when there is a major operation or child birth. Talking to PTV news channel, Consultant Physician Internal Medicines Dr Alia Babar Hameed said that unfortunately in our country mostly people only donate blood when there is an emergency-like situation but with awareness drives media should highlight the importance of blood donation to safe precious human lives. She said that safe donating blood is not only helping the ailing humanity.—APP

PTA takes action against VOIP grey setup

These raids are part of PTA's ongoing efforts to curb the circumvention of the Multi-Finger Biometric Verification System

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) Zonal Office in Lahore, in close collaboration with the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) Cyber Crime Circle, conducted successful raid against VOIP grey setup in Shahdara, Lahore. The VOIP setup was involved in international call termination by using illegally activated SIMs. During the raid, 796 active SIMs, 2 gateway exchanges (32 ports), 11 gateway exchanges (16 ports), 3 routers, and 4 network switches were recovered. The PTA team confiscated active SIMs along with all devices as evidence and apprehended an individual on the premises. PTA had previously filed a complaint with FIA, prompting the collaborative action, based on information about the illegal termination of international traffic bypassing legal gateway exchanges. These raids are part of PTA's ongoing efforts to curb the circumvention of the Multi-Finger Biometric Verification System (MBVS). This resolute underscores the Authority's dedication to eliminating the unlawful issuance of SIMs.—DNA

'Common man's life has become extremely difficult'

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Chairman of National Business Group Pakistan, President Pakistan Businessmen and Intellectuals Forum, President All Karachi Industrial Alliance, and former provincial minister Mian Zahid Hussain said on Monday that continued high inflation has made life very difficult for the people. He claimed that it is incorrect to attribute the inflation to the IMF's requirements because numerous state-run businesses are partly to blame for the current state of affairs. According to Mian Zahid Hussain, we should take responsibility for our own economic shortcomings as they are the cause of the lender's strict requirements. Talking to the business community, the veteran business leader said that electricity, gas, and oil prices have increased tremendously. At the same time, interest rates were also raised to a record level of 22%, which badly affected people and the business community. However, these measures improved the country's financial affairs, which were on the verge, he added. In addition, he said, the government should have taken some steps to relieve the commoner, but this did not happen.

The business leader said indirect taxation is also a problem for the man on the street. The share of these direct taxes in total revenue is still between 75 and 80 percent. Indirect tax is easy to collect but increases inflation and poverty, while collecting direct tax is difficult but does not affect people experiencing poverty. Mian Zahid Hussain said that the ratio of the direct tax rate in the country is very low, and there seems to be a need for more will among authorities to increase it. He noted that efforts to reduce mismanagement, corruption, incompetence, and losses in electricity, oil, and gas have not succeeded for decades. The questionable policy of continuously increasing the price of these items has been adopted, increasing poverty in the country.

Solangi condoles with Radio Pakistan DG over demise of his mother

ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Minister for Information, Broadcasting and Parliamentary Affairs Murtaza Solangi on Monday visited Radio Pakistan to offer condolences with its Director General Saeed Ahmed Sheikh over the demise of his mother. On the occasion, the minister offered prayers for the departed soul and sympathized with Saeed Ahmed Sheikh over the tragedy. He prayed to Allah Almighty to rest the departed soul in eternal peace and grant courage to the bereaved family including Saeed Ahmed to bear the irreparable loss with fortitude. "There is no substitute for mother," the minister said while expressing grief over the death of the mother of the DG Radio. Expressing words for solace of the DG Radio, Solangi said he should be felt satisfied for serving her mother during her last days.—APP

Police arrest outlaws

RAWALPINDI: Mandra police here on Monday arrested two outlaws for abducting a woman. The spokesman said that the police arrested Hamad Khan and Razaq Khan. The police registered a case and started investigation. SP, Saddar, Mummud Nabeel Khokar lauded the performance of the police and directed to take stern actions to protect the lives of the people.—APP

NADRA to open Facilitation Desk at ICCI

Mian Akram Farid, Raja Muhammad Imtiaz, Rizwan Cheena, Sheikh Muhammad Ejaz, Khalid Chaudhry, Ms. Shumaila Siddiqui, and others were also present on the occasion

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Zulfikar Ahmed, Director General, Islamabad, NADRA visited the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) to discuss the feasibility of opening the NADRA Facilitation Desk in ICCI. Zulfikar Ahmed said that the role of the business community is very important in the economic development of the country and NADRA is ready to open its Facilitation Desk in ICCI premises to facilitate businessmen in NADRA-related services. He said that the NADRA Desk in ICCI would also provide e-Sahulat services to facilitate the business community in payment and collection transactions. He said that ICCI should also approach the Passport Office to start its services in the NADRA Facilitation Desk so that the business community can also avail of both services in ICCI. The e-Sahulat is a network of active

franchisees connected with telcos and banks to facilitate in payment and collection transactions. Speaking on the occasion, Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari, President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry thanked Chairman NADRA for taking prompt action on ICCI's proposal for opening a Facilitation Desk and sending

a senior officer to ICCI to study its feasibility. He said that the availability of the NADRA Facilitation Desk in ICCI would be a great positive development for

the benefit of the business community. He said that ICCI would also coordinate with the Passport Office to provide services of both organizations from the NADRA Facilitation Desk. Faad Waheed, Senior Vice President ICCI also welcomed the initiative of NADRA to open its Facilitation Desk in ICCI and said that it would save time of the business community in availing of NADRA services. Zafar Bakhtawari, former President ICCI, and Secretary General UBG Pakistan said that ICCI has already opened Facilitation Desks of some other organizations, and the opening of NADRA Facilitation Desk would be another great achievement to facilitate the business community. Mian Akram Farid, Raja Muhammad Imtiaz, Rizwan Cheena, Sheikh Muhammad Ejaz, Khalid Chaudhry, Ms. Shumaila Siddiqui, and others were also present on the occasion.



Briefs

'Media strong platform for educating public about any unlawful content'

ISLAMABAD: Director General of the Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA), Ahmed Shamim Pirzada on Monday said that media is a strong platform for creating awareness and educating the public about uploading or sharing any unlawful content on internet and social media. Addressing a press conference along with Minister for Information and Broadcasting, Murtaza Solangi and DG FIA, he said, "Media is a strong platform that can help to create public awareness about what kind of content can be shared, and what repercussions shared content may have for the nation." Pirzada said that, sometimes, individuals, including youngsters, inadvertently share content that can be harmful to the country and the public on social media. The DG said that the PTA has taken several steps to educate the general public, including writing articles and running media campaigns for awareness. Additionally, the authority holds regular meetings with social media companies every three to six months to address concerns and collaborate on solutions. In response to a question, Pirzada said that occasional technical glitches may occur in the system due to system upgrades, and such issues may be experienced in the next two to three months. He explained that the PTA operates under Section 37 of the Prevention of Electronic Crime Act (PECA), empowering the authority to remove or block unlawful online content in the interest of defence, glory of Islam, contempt of court, decency and morality, defamation, child pornography, the modesty of natural persons, the dignity of natural persons, public order, hate speech, incitement to an offence, etc. He said that any person can lodge a complaint against objectionable internet content, and these complaints are received via the Complaint Management System (CMS). He said, that the PTA also conducts proactive searches on the direction of courts and promptly addresses received complaints, emphasizing its primary duty to remove and block unlawful content.—APP

Power suspension schedules

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 23rd January 2024, From 09:00 AM to 02:00 PM, Islamabad Circle, Abpara, Orchard Scheme, Jinnah Avenue, G-8, Iqbal Town, Service Road East, Tufail Shaheed, Ghori Garden, GHQ, G-9/1, G-10/2, H-11/4, G-10/1 High Court, G-9/1, AQ Khan, Feeders, Rawalpindi City Circle, 6th Road, Sadiqabad, Shakryal, Fezalia, Farooq Azam, Gangal, Dhok Hekmad, Iqbal Road II, Major Masood, Jami Masjid, Gwalmandi, Peer Wadhai, Sardar Bagh, Ali Market, Kayani Road, Zeeshan Colony, Kamalabad, Jhangi, P&T Wini, I-16, Ratta, Officer Colony Feeders, Rawalpindi Cantt Circle, Bank Road II, Tipu Road, Rahmatabad-I, Dr. Town, Mehboob Shaheed, Gulistan Colony, Park View, Major Riaz, Gulshanabad, Hayal, Gulshan Saeed, RA Bazar, Padiyal, Sahala College, Chowk Pindori, Lahtrar-II, Seep Abbar, Nara Matur, Mandra-II, Pind Jatla, Bahr Kaili, Syed Kasran, Gagan, Zaraj, Zaraj, II, Dhok Awan, IST, Pind Jatla, PAECHS, New Rawat, Old Rawat, Mansoor Shaheed, CWO, Sehala College, SPARCO, RCCI-I, RCCI-II, Army Flats, RA Bazar, Kayani Road, Tench Bhatta Feeders, Attock Circle, Nawaz Shaheed, Ghori, Haru, Behlot, Bin Bola, Shahullah Dutta, Sarai Kharboza, Purmiana, Garhi Afghana, Shafi Chauhan, Hassan Abdal, Maskinabad, Shah Deer, Qaziabad, P Channel Colony, GBC 3, Hattian, Shakurdra, Attock Cantt.—APP

Elections to take place on Feb 8 come what may

PIDE unveils groundbreaking reform manifesto in Capital

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Institute of Development Economics (PIDE) has unveiled a game-changing report named the "PIDE Reform Manifesto". Based on the research done by the Institute in the last four years, and the various conferences, seminars and consultative meetings, this manifesto is not just a document; it is a visionary roadmap poised to revolutionize both the economic landscape and societal fabric of Pakistan. Delving into the core imperative of implementing substantial reforms, the manifesto is a compelling call to action for a brighter future, shaping a narrative of progress and transformation in the heart of Islamabad. PIDE's commitment to driving positive change is vividly reflected in this pioneering initiative, offering a strategic guide for policymakers and stakeholders to navigate the complexities and usher in a new era of prosperity for Pakistan. As the chief guest of the ceremony, Caretaker Federal Minister of Information, Murtaza Solangi, announced that the upcoming elections would take place on Thursday, February 8, 2024. Minister Solangi reassured the public that all assumptions and rumors surrounding the elections had been addressed, creating an environment of transparency and credibility in the electoral process. Emphasizing the significance of the election manifesto, Minister Solangi highlighted crucial issues



particularly on the economy, foreign policy, education, and health. He stressed the importance of open discourse on fundamental issues and urged an increased collective consciousness among the people. Addressing challenges like population growth, he underscored the necessity of controlling the demographic surge. Minister Solangi also called for democratic attitudes within political parties, asserting that fostering such values is pivotal for the country's progress. With a hopeful tone, he expressed confidence that these collective efforts would lead to solutions for the real problems facing the nation. In his opening remarks Dr. Nadeem ul Haque, Vice Chancellor Pakistan Institute of Development Economics (PIDE), said that the economic challenges facing Pakistan persist despite 24 IMF programs, leaving the nation on the brink of default and trapped in a cycle of current account and fiscal deficits. Excessive government regulation,

particularly on the economy, foreign policy, education, and health. He stressed the importance of open discourse on fundamental issues and urged an increased collective consciousness among the people. Addressing challenges like population growth, he underscored the necessity of controlling the demographic surge. Minister Solangi also called for democratic attitudes within political parties, asserting that fostering such values is pivotal for the country's progress. With a hopeful tone, he expressed confidence that these collective efforts would lead to solutions for the real problems facing the nation. In his opening remarks Dr. Nadeem ul Haque, Vice Chancellor Pakistan Institute of Development Economics (PIDE), said that the economic challenges facing Pakistan persist despite 24 IMF programs, leaving the nation on the brink of default and trapped in a cycle of current account and fiscal deficits. Excessive government regulation,

talent to be nurtured, and the country to evolve with the times. However, resistance from entrenched colonial structures and a lack of policy and reform capacity perpetuate the crisis narrative. The call to action implores political parties, media, and civil society to engage in discussions surrounding these reforms, recognizing that a continuous process of learning and evolution is essential for Pakistan to break free from its inherited colonial system and navigate towards sustained growth. Dr. Durre Nayab, Pro Vice Chancellor PIDE, highlighted the critical challenges facing Pakistan, emphasizing that addressing the changing demography and managing the escalating debt burden requires sustained and elevated economic growth. According to PIDE estimates, the demographic bulge is projected to persist until 2056, necessitating the addition of over two million new jobs annually for the next thirty years. Dr. Nayab stressed that achieving and maintaining an economic growth rate well above 7% annually is imperative to meet

this demand. Drawing attention to India's successful track record of consistent growth over the past two decades, she underscored the feasibility of such ambitious goals. PIDE's research indicates that a comprehensive strategy of deep reforms is essential for fostering the necessary growth. Dr. Nayab also expressed concern over declining productivity, particularly in export and subsidy-seeking sectors, urging concerted efforts to reverse this trend for sustained economic prosperity. In a candid statement, Dr. Ahmed Waqar Qasim, Senior Research Economist PIDE, highlighted the significant challenges posed by Pakistan's civil bureaucracy, operating within a system devised during colonial times. Emphasizing the outdated nature of bureaucratic structures and policy processes, he expressed concern over their incapacity to effectively address the complexities of the modern world. Dr. Qasim further highlighted the bureaucratic hurdles impeding growth, innovation.

China to magnify literary exchange with South Asia

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Center for China-South Asia Literary Exchanges of China Writers Association (Chengdu) was launched in Chengdu lately to enhance literary exchanges between China and South Asian countries through forums, seminars, training, mutual translation of literary works from both sides, etc. According to Hou Zhiming, Secretary of the Party Leadership Group and Executive Vice Chairman, Sichuan Writers Association, the Center will be built into an international platform of writer exchange, literary work mutual translation and publication, literary exhibition, regional literary research, literary copyright trade and protection between China and South Asian countries. Additionally, an international book fair for South Asian literary works, China-South Asia Literature Forum and China-South Asia Literature Training Seminar for Youth will be held in the near future, Gwadar Pro reported on Monday.

ECP to penalise absent piling staff from training

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has strongly reacted to the absenteeism of polling staff during ongoing training and is set to take punitive action against them. According to a statement from an ECP Spokesperson, Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Sikandar Sultan Raja has directed all chief secretaries and Provincial Election Commissioners to ensure the mandatory attendance of polling staff during the training. Polling staff also directed to must attend training sessions, stay in touch with the returning officer and district election commissioner, and any negligence in this matter will not be tolerated. Polling staff has been asked to ensure their presence during training sessions and maintain close contact with relevant returning officer and district election commissioner and no laxity in this regard will be tolerated.

3 Pakistani students graduate from China

DNA

ISLAMABAD: China Three Gorges Corporation recently held its CTG-Pakistan relocation scholarship stage acceptance symposium at Jiangxi University of Science and Technology (JUST). The CTG-Pakistan Program, established by CTG, aims to support the

Belt and Road initiative and the development of China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, in which CTG is an active participant. The scholarship was established to assist Pakistani students in completing their studies and achieving their dreams, while also contributing to the development and implementation of clean energy. So far, the company

has sponsored two groups of 33 Pakistani students to complete their studies, and 13 of the graduates are currently employed at Karot Hydropower Plant. The program is the first full scholarship program in Pakistan funded by Chinese enterprises with long-term planning. CTG will contribute at least USD 1 million to fund up to 100 students with full

scholarships. The program began in 2017 and will enroll five groups of students in total. The scholarship program adopts a '2+2' collaborative education model, in which the first two years of the program will be completed at University of Punjab, and the latter two years will be completed at JUST, Gwadar Pro reported on Monday.

ANF recovers 169 kg drugs in eight operations

Cases under the Anti-Narcotics Act have been registered against the accused and further investigations are under process

RAWALPINDI: Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) while conducting eight operations across the country managed to recover over 168 kg drugs and arrested nine accused, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman here on Monday. He said that 1 kg of Ice was recovered from a passenger going to Bahrain at Allama Iqbal International Airport. In another operation, 100 kg of hashish was recovered from the Lasbela area. In two operations conducted in the Teera Khyber area, 21 kg hashish was recovered while 10 kg hashish, 7 kg opium, 3 kg Ice, 2 kg heroin and one 30-bore pistol were recovered near Kala Shah Kaku Toll Plaza, GT Road and two accused were arrested. 5 kg hashish, 6 kg opium, and 2 kg Ice were recovered near GT Road Lahore and an accused was arrested. In the 7th operation, 10 kg hashish was recovered from two suspects arrested near 'Tablighi' Center Islamabad. In the eighth operation, 2 kg of hashish was recovered from two suspects netted near University Chowk Kohat. The spokesman said, ANF while conducting the 9th operation, 1 kg hashish was recovered from the possession of an accused nabbed near M-1 Motorway Islamabad. Cases under the Anti-Narcotics Act have been registered against the accused and further investigations are under process.—DNA

LOCA, PHKTIF ink MoU to develop business in Pakistan

DNA

ISLAMABAD: In a move that promises to bolster economic ties and foster business development in Pakistan, the Lahore Overseas Chinese Association (LOCA) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Pakistan Hong Kong Trade and Investment Forum (PHKTIF). Under the terms of the MoU, the two organizations will collaborate to promote trade and investment opportunities between Pakistan and Hong Kong, focusing on enhancing business-to-business (B2B) relationships and facilitating market access for Pakistani products in Hong Kong and vice versa. LOCA and PHKTIF have agreed

to explore local markets in Pakistan, Hong Kong SAR, and Macao SAR and provide assistance in developing businesses and increasing investment in Pakistan. According to Gwadar Pro, the signing of the MoU is expected to pave the way for a series of joint initiatives, including business matchmaking events, trade missions, and workshops aimed at enhancing the capacity of Pakistani businesses to engage in international trade. The Chinese community in Pakistan has played a significant role in promoting economic development and cultural exchanges. The partnership with PHKTIF will further strengthen these ties and open up new avenues for business

growth. Through this collaboration, both sides aim to create more business opportunities for their members and contribute to the economic prosperity of Pakistan. The MoU was signed by Ms. He Yubing, Vice President of LOCA, and Mr. Ali Awan, Trade Development Officer at the Consulate General of Pakistan in Hong Kong SAR on behalf of PHKTIF, in the presence of Mr. Shahzad Ahmed Khan Rajput, Consul General of Pakistan in Hong Kong SAR. Industry experts have hailed the partnership as a win-win situation for both Pakistan and Hong Kong, with the potential to boost bilateral trade and investment, create jobs, and drive economic growth in both regions.

Poliovirus found in environmental samples

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Ministry of Health has confirmed the presence of poliovirus in environmental samples from nine districts of the country. According to the spokesperson of the Ministry of Health, the virus was found in one sample each from Quetta, Mastung, Multan, Peshawar, Nowshera, and Hab. The Poliovirus was also found in samples from Karachi Malir, Karachi South and D.I.Khan. of age.

ECP quashes RO's orders to postpone elections in Sargodha

As a result, the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) revoked the notifications issued by the ROs postponing the elections in NA-83 and NA-85

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) revoked the notification issued by Returning Officers (RO) to defer the elections in NA 83 Sargodha-II and 85 Sargodha-IV. The postponement was initially announced due to the unfortunate demise of the contesting candidate, Sadiq Ali. A panel of the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP), headed by Chief Election Commissioner Sikandar Sultan Raja, heard the case regarding the postponement of elections in NA-83 and NA-85 Sargodha. The District Returning Officer

(DRO) and Returning Officer (RO) of Sargodha attended the proceedings. The candidate from the Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PML-N) informed the bench that he received a notice from the Returning Officer (RO) stating that a candidate had passed away, and a death certificate dated January 15 was provided. Upon investigation, it was revealed that the mentioned candidate had died on January 2, and the funeral prayer had taken place on January 3. A conspiracy was devised to delay the elections in these two constituencies. The Deputy Commissioner of Sargodha conducted an inquiry into the matter. PML-N candidate urged

the bench not to postpone the elections. The District Returning Officer (DRO) informed the bench that he, too, conducted an inquiry. Consequently, it was established that the candidate Sadiq Ali had passed away on January 2. The inquiry committee gathered statements from Sadiq Ali's mother, daughter, and the prayer leader who led the funeral prayers of the deceased. The Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) questioned why the Returning Officer (RO) did not conduct an inquiry before deciding to postpone the elections. The RO of NA-85 informed the bench

that a fake death certificate had been presented, and it was established that the candidate had indeed passed away on January 2. The secretary of the union council stated that the death certificate was issued based on the request of the deceased candidate's son and the verification of the relevant Numberdar. The Numberdar revealed that his signature on the certificate was forged. The CEC reprimanded the secretary of the union council. As a result, the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) revoked the notifications issued by the ROs postponing the elections in NA-83 and NA-85.

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Australia's unease because of wrong perspective

THE Solomon Islands and Kiribati switched diplomatic recognition from Taipei to Beijing in 2019. Immediately following Taiwan's latest elections, Nauru said it was cutting diplomatic ties with the island and switching back to Beijing. This was not only a diplomatic setback to the authorities in Taiwan, but apparently raised eyebrows in neighboring Australia. After all, following the recent clamor about the Solomon Islands' security and policing pacts with China, quite a few in Australia and other Western countries are concerned about the growing Chinese influence in the region. Speaking of Nauru's diplomatic turnaround, Chinese Ambassador to Australia Xiao Qian told the media it was Nauru's "own choice" and it would not affect its relations with Australia. China's cooperation with the Solomon Islands "is not a strategy for military security", he said. "It's a strategy to help policing" to help maintain social stability and basic public order. Therefore, there is "no need for any so-called anxiety on the part of Australia". China's engagement with the Pacific island countries is for the development of bilateral trade relations for which social stability is necessary. Although many in Australia see the Chinese presence as a potentially threatening development regarding the region as Australia's backyard, Beijing believes it should adopt a more open perspective. "Pacific island countries are an area where China and Australia can cooperate and can contribute together instead of asking them to choose between the two," Xiao said. Much of what China is doing actually aligns with what Australia and its Western allies claim they are committed to. In this sense, there indeed is plenty of room for cooperation, rather than strategic rivalry. This is both possible and necessary as China and Australia are working to repair their relations. Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese's November visit to Beijing, the first in seven years by an Australian leader, was a turning point for bilateral ties. Xiao expressed China's desire "to continue the good momentum" in further improving the relationship. He even indicated bilateral collaboration should extend to security. "The defense relationship between our two countries is an area really we need to put more inputs and work harder on," Xiao said. "This is an area that is so important to the mutual trust and confidence between our two countries and two peoples. If you can have trust between two militaries, you have real trust." Defense cooperation may be hard to come by given the influence that the US exerts on Australia in this area. But if Australia stopped clinging to its Anglo-Saxon identity and found the courage to stop playing the role of a military outpost of the US, it would be better able to embrace the congruence of being an Asia-Pacific country and build trust with China.



The view on global medicine shortages

FOR anyone who relies on medication to treat a health condition, a shortage will be unwelcome. In some cases, for example cough and cold remedies, this will be a worrying inconvenience. But in others, such as HRT, diabetes drugs, antibiotics and antipsychotics, there are serious implications for health and wellbeing. In extreme circumstances the lack of a drug could pose a threat to life. Most recently the alarm has been raised in relation to riluzole, a medicine used by sufferers from motor neurone disease to delay ventilator dependence and prolong life. Worryingly, the Motor Neurone Disease Association claims that concerns raised with the health secretary, Victoria Atkins, and her department, have not been properly dealt with. Riluzole's manufacturer, Glenmark, has pointed to competing demands for limited stock of its active ingredient. That sufferers of such serious illnesses are facing these problems is obviously concerning. With around 100 medicines on a shortages list, the government appears under-prepared and slow to act. The UK is not alone in facing drug supply-chain challenges. This is a global issue, which has been rising up the agenda of EU states and the US as well. Rich western countries, along with much of the rest of the world, are heavily reliant on the pharmaceuticals manufacturing capacity of India and China for sufficient quantities of generic, off-patent drugs. During the pandemic the risks of this model became obvious when countries were forced to compete for vaccines, and India placed export restrictions on many items, including paracetamol. Both the EU and US have responded with significant moves towards reshoring. France is building a paracetamol factory large enough to meet half of all European demand. Belgium has made the issue a theme of its EU presidency. Rules about state aid look set to be altered, and pharmaceuticals recategorised as a strategic industry like semiconductors. While European manufacturing will make supplies more secure, it is also expected to make drugs more expensive and reduce carbon emissions and other environmental damage associated with them. Teams in the Department of Health and NHS England, and equivalent bodies in the devolved administrations, play a crucial role in overseeing the UK's medicine supply. Thanks to stockpiling and other measures, departure from the single market did not lead to chaos. But Brexit has increased pressures. The fall in the value of the pound has made the UK a less attractive market. There is a balance to be struck between putting downward pressure on prices - which the NHS has historically been good at as a big purchaser - and incentivising suppliers. Current shortages suggest that the current system isn't working well. As well as day-to-day management, the UK needs a strategy. This should involve working with, rather than against, the EU on reshoring production in Europe. It should include plans for spikes in demand such as that seen for HRT, following a campaign around menopause symptoms and a shift in prescribing patterns. Shortages such as that affecting the type 2 diabetes drug Ozempic after it began to be prescribed for weight loss, should be anticipated even if they cannot be avoided. Poll after poll shows how much the public cares about healthcare. Workforce shortages and lack of investment are the biggest issues, but access to medicines is vital, too.

Climate challenges in the gulf Arab states

Dr. Muhammad Akram Zaheer



Currently, most climate projects are funded on a case-by-case basis. For example, Saudi Arabia announced a huge investment in cleaner energy and the UAE committed a significant amount of money to achieve its clean energy target. Most of these funds come from selling oil and gas. Except for the UAE, none of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states have established a specific...

THE world is getting hotter because of human activities and it is causing problems like heat waves, floods and droughts. The United Nations says we need to cut the pollution that causes this by half in the next 10 years and completely stop it by around 2050. Many countries, including five in the Gulf Arab region, have promised to do this, but there is still a big gap between what needs to be done and what's happening now. To reach these goals, we need to use more clean energy, like solar and wind power, and produce things like hydrogen in a cleaner way. It will cost a lot of money about \$2.4 trillion each year for the next decade to make these changes. The Gulf Arab countries, even though they produce a lot of oil and gas, can help by using their resources for clean energy. Different organizations have made plans to reach these goals, like using more clean energy and reducing the use of fossil fuels. Even though we need to use less oil, gas and coal, these sources will still be part of our energy use but in smaller amounts. The world needs to act quickly and it depends on factors like political support, available resources and technical abilities. The Gulf Arab states have the potential to make a big difference if they overcome challenges and work towards cleaner energy. The Gulf Arab states currently have a lot of oil and gas that can last for 20 to 100 years. Even though we expect to keep using these fuels, we want to reduce the pollution they create. We can do this by using technologies like carbon capture, turning fuels into hydrogen or ammonia which don't produce harmful emissions. The Gulf States are trying to invest in cleaner energy, but there is still a big gap between what they're doing now and what they want to achieve in a pollution-free future. Right now, they have a few facilities that capture carbon dioxide (CO2) but it's not enough. By 2030, they plan to capture more CO2, produce hydrogen and ammonia and generate cleaner energy. However, they need a lot more renewable energy

about 60 times what they have now to reach these goals. The Gulf States have started to work on reducing the impact of climate change by launching various initiatives and programs even before committing to a pollution-free future. Only Oman and the UAE have made plans for their entire economy to reach net-zero emissions. These plans set goals for each part of their economy to reduce carbon emissions by the middle of the century. However, these plans lack detailed information on how to achieve this in terms of finances, technology and institutions. Other Gulf countries are expected to announce similar plans soon. These plans need to be in line with their economic development and budgets so that economic growth and net-zero goals are not treated as separate issues. This alignment will also help avoid unintended social and economic problems that might come from different climate policies, like carbon pricing. Currently, most climate projects are funded on a case-by-case basis. For example, Saudi Arabia announced a huge investment in cleaner energy and the UAE committed a significant amount of money to achieve its clean energy target. Most of these funds come from selling oil and gas. Except for the UAE, none of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states have established a specific framework for climate finance. In 2015, the UAE created the Green Finance and Investment Support Scheme and in 2021, it released the Sustainable Finance Framework (2021-2031) to encourage private sector involvement in sustainable finance. Financial institutions in the UAE are increasingly supporting sustainable and climate-friendly projects. Oman and the UAE's national banks have initiated green finance projects, including supporting solar panel installations. Sovereign wealth funds in the region like Saudi Arabia's Public Investment Fund (PIF) are also actively involved. In 2022, the PIF issued green bonds to raise money for climate and environmental projects. This is part of Saudi Arabia's efforts to achieve its green goals. As the Gulf countries look towards a future with less reliance

on oil, they should start developing and diversifying climate finance instruments to address climate goals. Nature-based solutions (NBS) are ways of protecting, restoring or managing natural areas like ecosystems, forests and urban spaces. These methods can help with issues such as food and water security, climate change, disasters and human health. It is believed that by 2050, these NBS could contribute around 30% of the efforts needed to meet the goals of the Paris Agreement and limit global warming. In the Gulf region, efforts are being made to pursue NBS such as conserving mangrove ecosystems and planting trees. Saudi Arabia for example, introduced two initiatives in March 2021 the Saudi Arabia Green Initiative and the Middle East Green Initiative. These aim to plant a large number of trees in Saudi Arabia and across the Middle East, with the goal of significantly increasing tree-covered areas and reducing carbon emissions. However, because the Gulf region faces water scarcity issues, planting trees might not be the best solution to offset carbon. The suggestion is to explore other options that align better with the natural environment. One such option is carbon capture and mineralization, a process that permanently stores carbon dioxide in specific rock formations called peridotite. This method is cost-effective and suits the arid environment of the Gulf region, which has abundant peridotite rock formations. Five Gulf Arab states - Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE have committed to achieving net-zero emissions by mid-century. Despite their efforts, this paper suggests that reaching these goals could be challenging without timely and innovative interventions. Without consistent efforts to bridge the gap between current efforts and what is needed for a net-zero future, the region might struggle to realize its ambitions. Implementing climate policies that support net-zero goals will be crucial for economic diversification and to deal with the potential impacts of global climate policies on the region's oil wealth.

MBS and Saudi-Iran détente

Afnan Wasif



US-China Rivalry: US-China rivalry has both external (int'l) and internal (domestic for both states) aspects contributing to the peace deal. Internationally, China and US are engaged in an ongoing struggle to influence world politics. It has been demonstrated that US is incapable of mediating a settlement that would offer Gulf region stability, harmony, and peace. In process of mediating the Iran-Saudi Arabia deal, China has filled the void and established itself as a global peacemaker. Both Iran and Saudi Arabia are benefiting from US-China rivalry in their own ways

SINCE the Iranian Revolution of 1979, Iran and Saudi Arabia have been at odds. Following the Saudi authorities' execution of a Shia cleric and the Iranian protests in which demonstrators set fire to the Saudi Embassy in Tehran, tensions between Tehran and Riyadh increased even further in 2016. Both nations subsequently discontinued missions and severed diplomatic ties. A détente agreement between Iran and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia was mediated by China on March 10, 2023. Within two months, both states committed to resuming diplomatic ties and reopening their embassies. However, prior to that agreement, in 2021, diplomats from Iraq and Oman had been discreetly working behind the scenes to mediate a diplomatic settlement between Saudi Arabia and Iran, longtime rivals. Ultimately, though, there was no indication of an impending breakthrough. However, China has emerged as an international mediator increasing its area of influence in the Middle Eastern Region. The leadership of Crown Prince Muhammad Bin Salman Crown Prince Muhammad Bin Salman's leadership is significantly changing the Middle East's dynamics. Over the past ten years, Riyadh has used coercion to deal with its rivals. Riyadh's engagement in the Syrian crisis in 2013, airstrikes against the Houthis in Yemen in 2015, the suspension of diplomatic ties with Iran in 2016, the blockade of Qatar in 2017, and other incidents illustrated the confronting stance of Saudi foreign policy. However, in 2021, the embargo on Qatar was lifted as a new decade began. Iran and Riyadh restore diplomatic ties in March 2023, with China serving as a mediator. After twelve years, Bashar Al-Assad received an invitation to the Arab League summit in Riyadh in May 2023. These incidents serve as an indication to the international community that Saudi Arabia, led by Muhammad Bin Salman, is reevaluating its foreign policy, particularly about Iran. Furthermore, he is involved in transforming the socio-economic and religious fabric of Saudi society. He is playing an important role both on the domestic and international front in modernizing Saudi Arabia and emerging as a reformer. He is picking allies and establishing alliances based on the national interest of Riyadh when it comes to systemic stimuli and altering the dynamics of Saudi society domestically to strengthen its regime have implications on the foreign policy of Saudi Arabia. **Vision 2030:** Prioritizing economic concerns for states is domestically driven. Domestically, Saudi Arabia is facing economic challenges and trying to diversify its economy to reduce its dependence on oil revenues. For that matter, Saudi Arabia is promoting Vision 2030, which Crown Prince Muhammad Bin Salman presented in 2016. It aims to open multiple different avenues to generate economic activity which in turn will reduce their reliance on oil income. Saudi Arabia is heavily investing in projects like NEOM - a multi-billion-dollar project. To ensure a conducive environment for foreign investment and secure the infrastructure Riyadh was compelled to normalize its re-

lations with Iran averting any unwanted incidents such as in 2019, two oil facilities of Aramco in Saudi Arabia were targeted by the Houthi rebels. The success of Vision 2030 lies in the stability and peace in the Kingdom as well as in the entire Middle East. That is why, Vision 2030 - a domestic endeavor - has implications for the Saudi foreign policy and it eventually ended up in Tehran-Riyadh détente hoping to end the hostile situation in the entire Middle East. **Nature of Regime:** A theocratic monarchy is ruling Saudi Arabia. The Saudi monarchy draws its legitimacy from Wahabism - a strict interpretation of Islam. For centuries, the House of Sauds has made deals with ultra-conservatives as a mean of survival. But today for Muhammad Bin Salman, to strengthen the regime, it is necessary to diversify its economy and move toward moderate Islam in order to avoid any Arab Spring situation or economic turmoil in the future. Interestingly, in the Arab Spring, a mostly young population of states overthrew the unelected rulers. Coincidentally, about 63 percent of the Saudi population is under 30 years old. Oil being a limited natural resource would be unable to meet the requirements of the Saudi nation in the near future. To address this issue, he launched an ambitious package of socio-economic reform - Vision 2030. To change the perception of Islamic ideology followed by Riyadh and socio-economic reforms for Saudi society is essential to deepen the roots of the regime further and it comes only with stability and peace in the Kingdom as well as in the region. A domestic factor - the strengthening of the regime - is reflected in the foreign policy response of Saudi Arabia when Iran and Saudi Arabi restored their relations. **US-China Rivalry:** US-China rivalry has both external (international) and internal (domestic for both states) aspects contributing to the peace deal. Internationally, China and the US are engaged in an ongoing struggle to influence world politics. It has been demonstrated that the US is incapable of mediating a settlement that would offer the Gulf region stability, harmony, and peace. In the process of mediating the Iran-Saudi Arabia deal, China has filled the void and established itself as a global peacemaker. Both Iran and Saudi Arabia are benefiting from US-China rivalry in their own ways. Iran and Saudi Arabia are both experiencing economic difficulties at home. Because of the US sanctions, the former's economy is severely damaged, while the latter is diversifying. Despite US sanctions on both countries, Iran and China signed a 25-year strategic partnership agreement in March 2021. Along with military cooperation, it includes Chinese investments in important Iranian sectors like energy, telecommunications, infrastructure, and information technology. Following its unilateral exit from the 2015 nuclear agreement, the Trump administration imposed harsh sanctions that blacklisted Iran's entire financial system. China is now among the main importers of Iranian oil, even in spite of the sanctions. While Saudi Arabia is addressing its economic challenges by unveiling Vision 2030.

However, Riyadh is also broadening the range of its allies it has in terms of trade and security. Because Joe Biden criticized the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia during his presidential election campaign, Joe Biden's strong stance against Riyadh was primarily motivated by the brutal killing of Jamal Khashoggi and other human rights violations in the Kingdom. There was no warming of relations between the US and Saudi Arabia after Biden took the oath of President Office. Joe Biden visited Saudi Arabia, but he received a muted reception. As a result, the Saudi leadership wants to diversify its security partners, including China, and has voiced resentment over their bilateral ties. It might be seen in the UN vote against US policy regarding the Russia-Ukraine crisis. Furthermore, China is pursuing the Belt and Road Initiative, while Saudi Arabia is promoting Vision 2030, which Crown Prince Muhammad Bin Salman unveiled in 2016. Tourism is one of the main tenets of Vision 2030. By the end of this decade, Riyadh hopes to bring in \$46 billion in tourism revenue. Given that Chinese consumers spent \$250 billion on tourism outside of their country in 2019, China may be able to make a contribution in this area. In addition, the Kingdom was China's main oil supplier in 2022. They will both share in a better future that brings prosperity and development if China and Saudi Arabia cooperate and make real efforts to advance the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and Vision 2030, replace the monopoly held by the United States, and foster harmony and peace in the region. **Conclusion:** The normalization of diplomatic relations between Saudi Arabia and Iran has been finalized after secret meetings held in China's good offices. This historic agreement has the potential to change the Middle East. Both parties would benefit from direct communication and political dialogue to resolve disagreements peacefully. Domestic factors including leaders' perspectives, economic challenges and the nature of the regime are the driving forces behind the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to reach a peace deal with its rival - Iran. The US-China rivalry has two aspects international and domestic for both Tehran and Riyadh. China emerged to grasp the status of peacemaker and mediator between long-time rivals as it comes with prestige, an important characteristic of a great power. China being the emerging power competes with the US to influence international political affairs and it is successful in doing so in the Middle Eastern region. Saudi Arabia would rely less on the US and other Western nations to ensure its security as a result of the peace accord. As it was struggling to diversify its security and trade partners. For Iran, China has proven to be the economic lifeline after the sanctions imposed by the Trump administration in 2018 hurting its economy badly. Concludingly, the foreign policy response or shift of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to the Iran-Saudi Rapprochement is more domestically driven counting on the leadership of Muhammad Bin Salman, economic challenges and the nature of the regime in Riyadh with the interplay of external factors such as US-China rivalry.

Briefs

Quadrilateral talks on Afghanistan...

FROM PAGE 01
On January 16, Iran's armed forces struck two headquarters of the terrorist group Jaish al-Zulm on Pakistani territory. Drones and missiles were used in the operation. Pakistan's Foreign Ministry condemned the strike, calling it a violation of the country's air borders that could entail serious consequences. On January 18, the Pakistani Foreign Ministry said the country's Armed Forces had carried out an anti-terrorist operation in which extremist hideouts in Iran's Sistan and Baluchistan provinces were hit.

Nawaz seeks heavy mandate...

FROM PAGE 01
reaching its zenith, Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Chairman Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari said Monday he did not need four but only a one-time government to change the fate of the crisis-hit country. Meanwhile, The PPP chairman — an aspirant for the prime minister's slot — took the veiled dig at Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) supreme Nawaz Sharif, who is taking a fourth shot at power after being granted relief from the judiciary, during a power show in Sahiwal.

Siraj stresses inclusive...

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"Insults and violence cause the current chaos and division, which has taken a terrible shape in the last few years." He said the ruling parties played a key role in widening the political and social divide and the end of it. Provincial Assembly candidate Sahibzada Yaqub Khan was also present on this occasion. Siraj stressed the need for a 40-year economic plan given the growing population. He said that while the government has given a five-year revolutionary plan in the election manifesto, it has also explained all the basic points that the country needs for the long term. "If we are elected, we will ensure the implementation of the manifesto."

Pak-China for enhanced coop in IT...

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difficult times. He highlighted that CPEC projects had contributed to the economic development of Pakistan, besides helping meet its energy needs. The president stated that Pakistan was fully committed to the high-quality development of CPEC, adding that the Chinese support in the next phase of CPEC would be crucial for Pakistan's industrial development. He remarked that economic cooperation between the two friendly countries would further cement bilateral ties. He appreciated the Chinese support in stabilising Pakistan's economy. The president said that Pakistan wanted to learn from the Chinese experience in IT, education, health, agriculture, and poverty alleviation for its socio-economic development.

Half a million...

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reported by the UN migration agency, 500,200 Afghans left Pakistan between September 15, 2023 and January 13, 2024. Most rushed to the border in the days leading up to a November 1 exit deadline Islamabad set for the 1.7 million Afghans it said were living illegally in Pakistan, and as police opened dozens of holding centres. "Since the initial peak around November 1, the number of individuals crossing these official border points have consistently decreased but remains higher than pre-September 15th," an IOM statement said. Pakistan defended the crackdown by pointing to security concerns in its regions bordering Afghanistan and pressure on its struggling economy.

IPC urges FIFA action on delayed PFF elections

Fawad urged FIFA that process of elections should be completed before deadline

SPORTS DESK

ISLAMABAD: The Ministry of Inter Provincial Coordination wrote a letter to FIFA, dated January 11, regarding the delay in the elections of the Pakistan Football Federation. In the letter, Federal Minister Fawad Hasan Fawad lamented the fact that the elections "have not been completed even after more than four years of existence of PFF Normalisation Committee". The letter added that the PFF NC has been doing everything it can to "prolong its existence at the cost of game".

"You will appreciate that in no case FIFA wanted the Normalisation Committee to assume the role of the Federation itself for an unlimited time," it added.



Fawad also urged FIFA that the process of elections should be completed well before the last extended deadline of March 15, 2024, without any further extensions. The Ministry also called

for a meeting between the all relevant stakeholders. "I would therefore, suggest that a meeting for reviewing the work done so far by the Normalisation Committee may be immediately

held in Pakistan or at any other location of your choice in presence of representatives of Government of Pakistan to set a clear roadmap for completing the electoral process of Paki-

stan Football Federation," the letter concluded.

Las month, the meeting between the Pakistani government, FIFA, Asian Football Confederation (AFC) and PFF NC was surprisingly postponed.

The PFF NC has conveyed the message of postponement to the Pakistan Sports Board (PSB) and the IPC Ministry.

Earlier, FIFA had proposed a meeting with the Pakistan's government officials in Dubai from September 11-13 through a letter it wrote in July but due to busy schedule of officials of various parties it could not be held.

After that some more options were weighed and eventually it was decided that the meeting among the various parties will be held on December 12 in Dubai but that could also not take place.

Maxwell under investigation following shabby night out

SYDNEY: Australian all-rounder Glenn Maxwell is under investigation after a shabby night out which ended up in being hospitalised following an alcohol-related incident, Cricket Australia (CA) confirmed on Monday. Media reported that Maxwell was out to watch Six and Out, a musical band which includes former Australian pacer Brett Lee, when the incident happened. It is not revealed what exactly happened and how the 35-year-old ended up in a hospital, it is understood that an ambulance was called.

Maxwell's stay in the hospital was short as he was discharged the same night and returned to training the next morning but CA decided to rest him for the ODI series against West Indies which begins on February 2.

"Cricket Australia is aware of an incident involving Glenn Maxwell in Adelaide at the weekend and is seeking further information," a statement said. "It is not related to him being replaced in the ODI squad, a decision that was made following the BBL and based on his individual management plan. Maxwell is expected to return for the T20 series. No further comment will be made at this time." Earlier, Australia's wicketkeeper batter Travis Head tested positive for COVID-19. Head, who won the Player of the Match award in the first Test at Adelaide, fell ill after the first match and was eventually found to have COVID.

While Australia suffered a setback as Head is likely to sit on the sidelines for the better of the Adelaide Test, they met with positive news that opener Usman Khawaja is declared fit to play after clearing all regular fitness tests following a delayed concussion following a heavy blow to the helmet grille and jaw. — Agencies

Inzamam blames Zaka Ashraf for turmoil in Pak cricket

DNA

LAHORE: Former Pakistan chief selector Inzamam-ul-Haq has criticized ex-PCB chief Zaka Ashraf, attributing the dismal performance of national team in the 2023 World Cup to Ashraf's alleged interference. In a recent interview with a local news channel, Inzamam expressed his discontent with the comments made by Ashraf regarding the team selection process. The former chairman claimed that the squad for the World Cup was not chosen by the board but by captain and chief selector alone.

"In an important event like the World Cup in India, hearing that the PCB chairman is saying the team selected was not done by the board but by the captain and chief selector only creates a negative mindset among the players," Inzamam said as quoted by PTI. The 2023 World Cup witnessed Pakistan finishing in fifth place on the points table, securing only four victories and ended up losing five games throughout the tournament.

It is worth noting that the former PCB chief selector tendered his resignation to the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) on October 23rd 2023.

Concerns were recently raised about Inzamam's alleged shareholding in a



company owned by Talha Rehmani, who serves as the agent for Inzamam and other players like Babar Azam, Mohammad Rizwan and Shaheen Afridi. The issue of potential conflicts of interest was highlighted, and clarification from Inzamam was expected to be sought regarding this matter by PCB. The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) had announced a five-member fact finding committee to investigate

allegations in respect of conflict of interest reported in the media pertaining to the team selection process. The former cricketer said that he's been waiting for the report from the committee that the PCB assigned to investigate him. Zaka Ashraf recently resigned as the PCB chairman management committee, and there have been many changes in the board since the 2023 World Cup.



ISLAMABAD: Players hold trophy as posing for a group photograph along with Chairman Netball Federation Cap (Rtd) Zafar Iqbal Awan after the prize distributing ceremony during National Junior Girls Netball Championship 2024 at Liaquat Gymnasium in the Federal Capital. — Online

Red-hot Alcaraz races into AO quarters, Medvedev wins

MELBOURNE: Carlos Alcaraz demolished unseeded Serbian Miomir Kecmanovic to storm into the Australian Open quarter-finals on Monday as Daniil Medvedev stayed on track for a third final in four years. The Spanish second seed, who will next face sixth seed Alexander Zverev, is locked in a fierce battle with Novak Djokovic for the world number one spot and is also after his

Melbourne crown. The two-time Grand Slam winner produced some scintillating baseline hitting at Rod Laver Arena to sweep Kecmanovic aside 6-4, 6-4, 6-0 in one hour 49 minutes. Hurkacz powers past French wildcard into Australian Open last eight. The 20-year-old, who missed last year's Australian Open with an injury, has dropped just one set so far in Melbourne, where he had previously never been past the third round.

"I pushed him to the limit in every ball, every point," said Alcaraz. "He has played a lot of tough matches before this one, so probably physically he wasn't 100 percent. "I could take my chances in every set and it was a pretty good match for myself. "I'm feeling better and better every day. Every match I play here on Rod Laver (Arena) I feel more comfortable. Pleasure to play here, amazing court." Zverev overcame a fierce challenge from British 19th seed Cameron Norrie to pull through 7-5, 3-6, 6-3, 4-6, 7-6 (10/3) in a punishing match lasting more than four hours. — Agencies

No Pakistani named in ICC Men's T20I Team of Year for 2023

DUBAI: The International Cricket Council (ICC) has revealed the T20I Team of the Year 2023, naming India's Suryakumar Yadav as the captain. The ICC Team of the Year acknowledges 11 outstanding individuals who have impressed throughout 2023, whether with the bat, the ball, or their all-round exploits across the calendar year. Meanwhile, no cricketer from Pakistan was included with Indians dominating the XI. In addition to Suryakumar, fellow Indians Yashviji Jaiswal and bowlers Ravi Bishnoi and Arshdeep Singh also secured spots in the men's team. Jaiswal was selected as the opener alongside England's Phil Salt. Jaiswal made his debut for India last year, playing against West Indies in August and scoring 430 runs in 14 innings in 2023 at a strike rate of 159. On the other hand, Salt scored 331 runs in the five-match T20I series, 170 runs more than the next top-scoring batter in the series.

West Indies wicket-keeper batter Nicholas Pooran claimed the No. 3 spot. Suryakumar achieved two centuries in the shortest format of the game and led the Indian cricket team in the absence of Rohit Sharma, who took a break after the ODI World Cup. New Zealand's Mark Chapman secured the No. 5 position in the team. Zimbabwe all-rounder Sikandar Raza occupied the No. 6 spot. Uganda's Alpesh Ramjani and Ireland's Mark Adair were placed at 7 and 8. Ramjani topped the charts for T20I wickets in the year (55 at an economy of just 4.77) in 30 matches, while Ireland's bowling all-rounder Adair took 26 wickets at an economy of 7.42, claiming a wicket every 13 deliveries. India spinner Ravi Bishnoi partnered with Zimbabwe's Richard Ngarava and fellow Indian Arshdeep Singh to complete the bowling attack. Arshdeep took 26 wickets in 21 appearances for India last year, while Bishnoi claimed 18 wickets in just 44 overs across the year. The leg-spinner also ascended to No.1 on the ICC T20 Bowling Rankings due to his performances. — Agencies

Midfield triumphs over Media Town academy

Media Football Academy director Toseef Abbasi, the kids both boys and girls, participated in the under-10 exhibition match, which was played to promote football among children

AFZAL JAVED

ISLAMABAD: Midfield Academy stunned Media Town Football Academy by 3-2 goals in a close contest of under-10 friendly football match played at sports ground of media town Islamabad. According to the Media Football Academy director Toseef Abbasi, the kids both boys and girls, participated in the under-10 exhibition match, which was played to promote football among children, while the parents of the children encouraged them during the match. Both the teams got opportunities to score goals, but no team availed this opportunity to take the lead in the allotted time. The match was decided on penalty kicks with Midfield defeating Media town Academy by 3-2. Hasan Waqas, Sara Ali, Kamil Munir scored from the midfield side while Mohammad Rohan and Ibrahim Taqi scored from Media Town.



Solangi hints at tough...

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preamble of the Constitution that the country will be run by representatives of the people. He said that elections will be held across the country on February 8 and there should be no doubt about it. The minister said that strict measures will be taken against those involved in illegal activities. Lashing out at those churning out lies and malicious propaganda to mislead the nation for their vested interests, he urged the general public to beware of misleading and fake news. He advised people to verify every bit of information before sharing it on social media platforms. Referring to the involvement of internal and external elements in the anti-judiciary campaign, he said that anyone who violated the law would be dealt with according to the law without any discrimination. He said that the objective of this press conference was to warn such elements against running the malicious campaign. He said that both FIA and PTA were investigating the matter and hundreds of social media accounts were monitored and action would be taken against the culprits under the law of the land.

SC bans v-logs and interviews...

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permitted entry after thorough checks and searches. The apex court stressed the importance of cooperation with security personnel during these procedures to maintain a secure environment within the court building. In a move that signals a departure from previous practices, the Supreme Court directive explicitly prohibits media persons from recording video clips, interviews, and YouTube programs inside the court building. Furthermore, beat reporters are now restricted from carrying mobile phones into the courtroom, marking a shift in the digital landscape within the hallowed halls of justice. The court has also addressed the issue of overcrowding during hearings of important cases. To manage the situation, the directive allows only one reporter from each media house to enter the courtroom during crucial proceedings. Other journalists will be accommodated in an alternate room, providing them the opportunity to witness the proceedings remotely. Legal experts and media analysts are already weighing in on the implications of these new guidelines. While some argue that these measures enhance the decorum and solemnity of court proceedings, others express concerns about potential limitations on the freedom of the press.

Pak condemns consecration of 'Temple'

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political marginalization of the Indian Muslims. A temple built on the site of a demolished mosque will remain a blot on the face of India's democracy for the times to come. Notably, there is a growing list of mosques, including the Gyanvapi Mosque in Varanasi and the Shahi Eidgah Mosque in Mathura, facing a similar threat of desecration and destruction. The rising tide of 'Hindutva' ideology in India poses a serious threat to religious harmony and regional peace. The Chief Ministers of two major Indian states, Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh, are on record as citing the Babri Mosque's demolition or inauguration of the 'Ram Temple' as the first step towards reclaiming parts of Pakistan.

7 terrorists gunned down in Zhub IBO

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explosives were also recovered from the killed terrorists. Sanitization operation is being carried out to eliminate any other terrorists present in the area. Security Forces of Pakistan are determined to eliminate the menace of terrorism.

Briefs

Germany urges humanitarian pauses in Gaza

BERLIN : Germany on Monday called for "urgent humanitarian pauses" in the Gaza Strip to allow unhindered humanitarian access for the Palestinian people. Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock reiterated her government's strong support for Israel's war against Hamas but also said they expect measures to be taken to minimize the suffering of Palestinian civilians. "We urgently need humanitarian pauses to alleviate the situation in Gaza, to alleviate the incredible suffering, especially for children. We also need humanitarian pauses in Gaza to finally free the hostages still held by Hamas," she told reporters in Brussels, ahead of a meeting of EU foreign ministers. In Monday's meeting, Baerbock said EU foreign ministers will mainly discuss ways to increase humanitarian aid for Gaza, diplomatic efforts to achieve a humanitarian pause, and free captives held by Palestinian group Hamas. —APP

China landslide kills 8, dozens missing

BEIJING : A landslide in China's Yunnan province killed eight people on Monday and dozens were missing as rescue operations continued in snowy, freezing temperatures. At least 47 people from 18 households were missing, state-owned China Central Television (CCTV) reported. Eight of the missing people had been found dead on Monday afternoon, according to Zhaotong Daily, a local state-owned media outlet. Another two people were hospitalized for injuries to the head and body, the national health commission said. The landslide hit two villages in the southwestern city of Zhaotong at about 5:51 a.m. (2151 GMT), covering houses in brown mountain soil at the foot of a hill, state-owned China Central Television (CCTV) reported. "The mountain just collapsed, dozens were buried," a man surnamed Gu, who witnessed the landslide, told the state-owned TV station for the neighbouring province of Guizhou. Gu said four of his relatives were buried under the rubble. —APP

More than 13,000 people killed in Sudan

KHARTOUM : More than 13,000 people have been killed and 26,000 others injured in the ongoing conflict in Sudan since last year, the United Nations humanitarian office said. Sudan has been mired by fighting between the army, led by Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, head of the country's ruling Sovereign Council, and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) paramilitary group since April 2023. "About 7.6 million people have been displaced inside and outside Sudan since fighting broke out," the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs said in a statement on Sunday. According to the UN office, more than 9,700 suspected cholera cases, including 269 associated deaths. —Agencies

Modi inaugurates temple on demolished mosque site

The fraught history is still an open wound for many Muslims, who see the construction of the temple as a testament to Modi's Hindu-first politics

NEW DELHI : India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi has inaugurated a large Hindu temple on the site of a 16th-century mosque that was demolished by Hindu hardliners in 1992. A grand temple to Hindu god Lord Ram opens on Monday on a site in India millions believe is his birthplace, in a religious spectacle led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi months before he seeks a rare third term in elections. The construction of the temple is a 35-year-old, central promise of Modi's Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and a contentious political issue that helped catapult the party to prominence and power. Hindu groups are portraying the inauguration ceremony in the northern city of Ayodhya as the peak of Hindu awakening after centuries of subjugation by Muslim and colonial powers. It is also being seen as the virtual launch of the deeply religious strongman Modi's re-election campaign for general elections due by May. The temple site was bitter-

ly contested for decades with both Hindus and Muslims laying claim to it and was a flashpoint for violence after a Hindu mob in 1992 destroyed a 16th-century mosque which stood there. India's majority Hindus say the site is the birthplace of Lord Ram, and was holy to them long before Muslim Mughals razed a temple at the spot and built the Babri Masjid or mosque there in 1528. In 2019, the Supreme Court handed over the land to Hindus and ordered allotment of a separate plot to Muslims. On Monday, Modi will take part in the culmination of rituals to inaugurate the temple, for which thousands of members of BJP and its affiliates, religious leaders and devotees from across the country are expected to gather in Ayodhya. Celebs at Ayodhya: Amitabh Bachchan, and Vicky-Katrina attending Ram Temple event. Film stars and Bollywood celebrities have arrived at the newly-constructed Ram Temple in Ayodhya for

the consecration ceremony on the site of the Babri mosque, even though no historical evidence was recovered from the site of the temple about any centuries-old temple. Actors' including Amitabh Bachchan, Abhishek Bachchan, Vicky Kaushal-Katrina Kaif, Ranbir Kapoor-Alia Bhatt, Ayushmann Khurrana along with filmmaker Rohit Shetty reached the temple on Monday morning, ahead of the consecration event. Religious flashpoint. Analysts and critics see Monday's ceremony as the start of the election campaign for Modi, an avowed Hindu nationalist and one of India's most consequential leaders who has sought to transform the country from a secular democracy into a distinctly Hindu state in his nearly 10 years in power. The temple, located at one of India's most vexed religious sites, is expected to embolden Modi's chances of clinching a record third successive term by drawing on the religious sentiments

of Hindus, who make up 80 percent of India's population of 1.4 billion. Ayodhya, once crowded with tightly packed houses and rundown stalls, has undergone an elaborate makeover in the lead-up to the temple's inauguration. Built at an estimated cost of \$217 million and spread over nearly 3 hectares (7.4 acres), the temple lies atop the debris of the 16th-century Babri Mosque, which was razed to the ground in 1992 by Hindu mobs who believed it was built on temple ruins marking the birthplace of Lord Ram. The site has long been a religious flashpoint for the two communities, with the demolition of the mosque triggering bloody riots across India that killed 2,000 people, mostly Muslims. The dispute ended in 2019 when, in a controversial decision, India's Supreme Court called the mosque's destruction "an egregious violation" of the law but granted the site to Hindus while giving Muslims a different plot of land. The fraught

history is still an open wound for many Muslims, who see the construction of the temple as a testament to Modi's Hindu-first politics. This is the temple of India's vision, India's philosophy, India's direction. This is the temple of national consciousness in the form of Ram," Modi said in a speech. "The construction of this temple of Lord Ram is also a symbol of peace, patience, mutual harmony, and coordination of Indian society. We are seeing that this construction is not giving birth to any fire, but to energy." Though the temple is still under construction, Monday's ceremony was widely seen as Modi delivering on a crucial Hindu nationalist pledge and was expected to increase his chances of clinching a record third successive term by drawing on the religious sentiment of Hindus, who make up 80 percent of India's 1.4 billion population, as the nation heads to elections between April and May this year. —Agencies

German train drivers' union calls 6-day strike

FRANKFURT : German train drivers will hold a six-day strike this week, the GDL union said, the longest walkout yet in an escalating row with Deutsche Bahn over pay and working hours. The strike is due to start at 2:00 am (0100 GMT) on Wednesday and last until 1700 GMT on Monday. For freight services, the stoppage is due to begin at 1700 GMT on Tuesday, GDL said in a statement in the early hours of Monday. Rail operator Deutsche Bahn accused the union of "acting absolutely irresponsibly". It will be the fourth strike by GDL in recent months to push its demands for higher salaries to compensate for inflation, as well as for a reduced working week from 38 to 35 hours with no loss in wages. A three-day walkout earlier this month already caused travel chaos for thousands of passengers, with 80 percent of long-distance trains not running. GDL said it had decided to call a fresh strike because Deutsche Bahn had shown "no sign of a willingness to reach an agreement" with its "third and allegedly improved offer". —APP

Turkey's potential role in Libya's renewable energy shift

TRIPOLI : Türkiye may play a role in Libya's efforts to diversify its energy mix by adding more clean energy resources at a time when the country seeks to expand renewable energy resources and its economy is beginning to recover from the wounds of yearslong political unrest. In a significant shift in the North African country's energy sector, traditionally dominated by hydrocarbons, the focus is now placed on including renewable energy, driven by increasing energy security concerns and rising demand. As the country grapples with rapid population growth and the expansion of heavy industry, electricity demand has grown. Currently, crude oil generates nearly 80% of this electricity. However, plans are underway to diversify energy sources. The generation of gas and hydrogen is expected to account for a greater share of the energy mix in the future, with contributions from renewable sources. —APP

UN seeks \$7.9 billion for migrant support

WASHINGTON : The United Nations migration agency aims to raise \$7.9 billion this year through a new funding push to bolster efforts to protect migrants, reduce displacement and expand avenues to migrate legally, it said on Monday. The Geneva-based International Organization for Migration (IOM) is seeking funds from governments, private sector companies and individual donors, according to the announcement. "The evidence is overwhelming that migration, when well-managed, is a major contributor to global prosperity and progress," IOM Director General Amy Pope said in a written statement. —DNA

Roberto opposes Ukraine's NATO membership bid

Slovakian Prime Minister has reiterated his opposition to Ukraine's bid for NATO membership ahead of his visit to Kyiv next week

NEWS DESK

ATHENS : Slovakian Prime Minister Roberto Fico has reiterated his opposition to Ukraine's bid for NATO membership ahead of his visit to Kyiv next week, saying he will veto the move and describing Ukraine as one of the "most corrupt countries" in the world, with total "influence and control of the US." Fico told public broadcaster RTVS on Saturday that "Ukraine is under the total influence and control of the United States." He said he would visit Kyiv on Wednesday and meet with his Ukrainian counterpart Denys Shmyhal. "I will tell him that I am against the membership of Ukraine in NATO and that I will

veto," he said categorically. Fico believed that "it would merely be a basis for World War 3, nothing else." Ukraine officially submitted its application for fast-track NATO membership in Sept. 2022, following Russia's annexation of four Ukrainian provinces. However, NATO allies appear divided on the issue, with some arguing that adding a new member in the middle of a war is not a priority. Moreover, the Slovakian premier maintained that there is no military solution to the war in Ukraine, which began in Feb. 2022. "There has to be some kind of compromise, which will be very painful for both sides," he added. Fico also accused Ukraine of being "one of the world's most corrupt countries."

Ukrainian President proposes multiple citizenships law

KYIV : Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy announced on Monday that he will submit a draft bill to parliament, or the Verkhovna Rada, allowing people to hold multiple citizenships at the same time. "Today I am submitting to the Verkhovna Rada a key draft law that will allow the adoption of comprehensive legislative amendments and the introduction of multiple citizenship," Zelenskyy said in a video address on the occasion of the country's Day of Unity. Once approved, Zelenskyy said the law would allow all ethnic Ukrainians and their descendants living abroad to obtain citizenship, except those who already have Russian nationality. The president said foreign volunteers fighting alongside the military against Russian forces in the ongoing war will also be able to obtain Ukrainian citizenship under the proposed law. "For everyone who can feel that 'being in Ukraine' means 'being at home.' Not as tourists, but as citizens. Citizens of a great, united, single Ukraine," he added. Zelenskyy said he signed a decree "on the territories of the Russian Federation historically inhabited by Ukrainians." In the decree issued by the Ukrainian presidency on Monday, Zelenskyy asked his Cabinet to "develop and submit an action plan for preserving the national identity of Ukrainians in Russia, including on the lands historically inhabited by them, to the National Security and Defense Council" with the involvement of international experts, representatives of the Ukrainian World Congress, scientists, and the general public. He included people who live on land within the borders of Russia's Krasnodar, Belgorod, Bryansk, Voronezh, Kursk, and Rostov regions, claiming that Ukrainians have historically lived there. —Agencies

WHO chief concerned over missed pandemic accord deadline

GENEVA : Countries risk missing a May deadline for agreeing a legally binding treaty on fighting pandemics and this would be a big blow for future generations, the head of the World Health Organization (WHO) said on Monday. The new pact and a series of updates to existing rules on dealing with pandemics are intended to shore up the world's defences against new pathogens after the COVID-19 pandemic killed more than 7 million people, according to WHO data. "I must say I'm concerned that member states may not meet that commitment and there are several outstanding issues that remain to be resolved," said Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus in an address to the global health agency's Executive Board meeting in Geneva this week. "In my view, a failure to deliver the pandemic agreement and the IHR (International Health Regulations) amendments will be a missed opportunity for which future generations may not forgive us," he said, urging countries to seize the opportunity to shape the future of the WHO and global health. Only once before in the organisation's 75-year history has the WHO managed to agree such an accord, and that was a Tobacco Control treaty in 2003. In the same address, Tedros was upbeat about prospects for battling AIDS, which is one in a series of so-called Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) fixed by the global body to fight some of the world's most pressing problems by 2030. "We are now beginning to see a pathway for the SDG target of ending the HIV pandemic," Tedros said. —DNA



ISLAMABAD : Chairman Senate, Muhammad Sadiq Sanjrani inaugurating the wall of federation at parliament house. —DNA

Erdogan commends Türkiye's maiden space mission success

FOREIGN DESK

ANKARA : President Recep Tayyip Erdogan on Monday highlighted the significance of Türkiye's inaugural space mission as a scientific endeavor, telling Alper Gezeravc he was the nation's first astronaut but "won't be the last." Erdogan's remarks came during the first contact with Gezeravc, a member of a four-man crew that arrived at the International Space Station (ISS) early Saturday for a two-week stay. The rendezvous came about 37 hours after the Axiom Mission 3 quartet's Thursday evening lift-off in a rocketship from NASA's Kennedy Space Center in Cape Canaveral, Florida. Plans call for the Ax-3 crew to spend roughly 14 days in microgravity conducting more than 30 experiments, many of them focused on the effects of spaceflight on human health and disease, advancing industrial processes and more. A former fighter pilot and captain for Turkish



Airlines, Gezeravc has already started to conduct the first of 13 scientific experiments he will be performing on behalf of universities and scientific centers in Türkiye, the Turkish Space Agency (TUA) announced Monday. These range from experiments on microalgae life support units for space missions to the effects of microgravity on the human respiratory system. Erdogan has displayed a keen interest in the mission, which he had called "historic." "Our first manned space mission being scientific is highly valuable. Turkish scientists will contribute to significant studies that will enrich

the scientific literature," said the president during a videoconference with Gezeravc. "I hope for the successful completion of the experiments you will carry out in various fields there." The call marked the first out of seven planned communications with Türkiye throughout Gezeravc's mission at the ISS. The astronaut told Erdogan he had completed his initial task by transferring the experiment apparatus from the Dragon capsule to the pre-experiment storage positions. "I have commenced our experiments according to the planned schedule. Throughout my mission here, I will document and bring back the results of all these experiments to our country," Gezeravc said. "I have quickly adapted to the environment at the ISS and continue my work as planned." The journey is part of Türkiye's ambitious 10-year space road map, unveiled in early 2021, including missions to the moon and developing internationally viable satellite systems.

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Briefs

China: 8 dead, dozens missing in landslide

DNA

BEIJING: At least eight people have died and dozens are still missing after a landslide struck China's southwestern province of Yunnan. The landslide in Zhaotong city happened at 05:51 local time (21:51 GMT) on Monday, trapping 47 people. President Xi Jinping has ordered an "all-out" rescue in the area which is experiencing sub-zero temperatures. The cause of the landslide remains unclear, but the remote, mountainous region is prone to them. More than 500 people were evacuated from their homes and nearly 1,000 rescue workers were dispatched to the site. Chinese vice-premier Zhang Guoqing reportedly led a group to the site to guide rescue operations. One of the villagers told local media that most of the residents were either elderly or children. Another resident told local news outlet Jimu News that the landslide happened while many people were still asleep on Monday morning. "It was very loud, and there was also a shake, it felt like a big earthquake," she said. Video clips shared on social media showed rescuers walking on piles of rubble against a backdrop of snow-covered mountains. Personal belongings are seen scattered among the collapsed masonry. In January 2013, at least 18 people were killed in a landslide in the same county.

Fawad announces 'boycott' of polls

FAISAL SHEIKH

RAWALPINDI: Former information minister Fawad Chaudhry on Monday announced that he and his "group" would "completely boycott" the upcoming general elections, terming the electoral process "fake". The imprisoned politician made the remarks in a handwritten letter addressed to the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP). His official account on X also reposted a copy of the letter his brother Faisal shared on the social media platform. In the letter, Fawad stated that "under these circumstances, my group and I announce a complete boycott of these elections". It was not immediately clear which group he was referring to. Fawad was one of many PTI leaders who had left the party following violence in the country on May 9, when former prime minister Imran Khan was arrested from the Islamabad High Court premises. Although Fawad had said at the time that he was "taking a break from politics", he was seen at the launch ceremony of the Jahangir Khan Tarren-led Istehkam-i-Pakistan Party (IPP) in June.

Faiz rejects allegation of influencing the judiciary

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: General (ret'd) Faiz Hameed rejected the allegation of influencing the judiciary. According to a private news channel, former DGISI Faiz Hameed has submitted his reply in the Supreme Court in the former judge Shaukat Aziz dismissal case. Faiz Hameed rejected the allegation of influencing the judiciary and said that Shaukat Aziz did not mention his speech and meeting before the Judicial Council, he himself admitted that the request made in the alleged meeting was rejected. In reply, he said that he never contacted Shaukat Aziz Siddiqui, nor met him, nor did he say that our two years of hard work will be wasted. Faiz Hameed has said that all the allegations of Shaukat Aziz Siddiqui are baseless and fabricated, his allegations are like afterthoughts.

ASEAN to be made more visible: Amb Maria Malaysia hands over ACI chairmanship to the Philippines

It was honour for Malaysia to serve as the Chair of the ASEAN Islamabad Committee, says Ambassador Mazlan

ANSAR M BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: The High Commissioner of Malaysia to Pakistan, Ambassador Mohammad Azhar-Mazlan officially handed over the Chairmanship of the ASEAN Committee in Islamabad (ACI) to the Ambassador of the Philippines to Pakistan, Ambassador Maria Agnes M. Cervantes during a ceremony held at the High Commission of Malaysia in Islamabad on 22 January 2024. The ceremony, attended by all ASEAN Heads of Mission in Islamabad, marked a significant transition in leadership within the ASEAN Committee. The outgoing Chair, Malaysia, expressed his gratitude for the opportunity accorded to him to lead the committee and extended congratulations and heartfelt wishes to the incoming Chair, the Philippines, for a successful tenure. During the event, High Commissioner Azhar-Mazlan stated, "It has been an honour and privilege for Malaysia to serve as the Chair of the ASEAN Committee in Islamabad. As a group, the committee has put its collective efforts and worked towards culminating the bonds between ASEAN member states and Pakistan. In this regard, I would like to express my utmost gratitude to all ASEAN Heads of Mission for their support, and I am confident that under the leadership of Her Excellency the Ambassador of the Philippines, she will continue these efforts with dedication in carrying the ASEAN's flag and make ASEAN more visible in Pakistan". The incoming Chair, Ambassador of the Philippines, expressed her appreciation for the warm welcome and pledged to build upon the achievements of Malaysia's leadership. "I am deeply honored to accept the responsibility of chairing the ASEAN Committee in Islamabad. I look forward to working closely with my fellow ASEAN Heads of Mission to further enhance collaboration and promote the interests of our Member States in Pakistan. Malaysia conveyed its best wishes and steadfast support to the Philippines for a successful and fruitful term as Chair and expressed optimism for a more vibrant and dynamic ASEAN Committee in Islamabad in 2024. Apart from successfully organising the ASEAN Day celebration in August 2023 and several important engagements with the stakeholders in Pakistan, the Committee in collaboration with the Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI) also established the permanent installation of the ASEAN Book Corner at the ISSI library in October 2023. This establishment aims to provide avenue for intellectual discourse and exchange of views to advance further the interest of both sides in the context of regional cooperation. It also symbolises the deep understanding and connection between ASEAN and Pakistan diplomatic relations, moving forward.



'Cipher copy not returned to Ministry till my retirement'

MEHTAB PIRZADA

RAWALPINDI: The statements of four witnesses, including former foreign secretary Sohail Mahmood, were recorded on Monday in the cipher case. Mahmood told the court that the copy of the cipher was not returned to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs until his retirement. The statement was recorded during the hearing of the cipher case against former prime minister Imran Khan and former foreign minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi in Adiala Jail, Rawalpindi, by Judge Abul Hasnat Zulfarnain of the Special Official Secrets Act Court. Former foreign secretary Mahmood, former interior secretary Yousuf-NaseemKhoskar, and Islamabad Assistant Commissioner AwaidIshad recorded their statements on Monday. Mahmood said that he had retired in September 2022, and until then, the copy of the cipher had not been returned to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Shah Mahmood Qureshi objected to the intervention of the prosecutor during the recording of the statement. He said the written statement was before them, and the witness knew what to say. The prosecution has no right to interfere during the recording of the witness's statement, he added. Prosecutor RizwanAbbasi asked if he asked any misleading questions to the witness. Qureshi replied that if the prosecution was balanced, would the high court have annulled the proceedings twice? At this, Judge Abul Hasnat Zulfarnain instructed Qureshi against saying such things, as it was inappropriate. He added that if the proceedings were going well, then let it happen. On Shah Mahmood's objection, the court stopped the prosecutor from speaking during the statement.

Israeli occupation pounds Gaza's Khan Younis city

According to the health ministry in Gaza, the Israeli army committed horrific massacres in the west of Khan Younis after it bombed five shelter centers housing displaced families

NEWS DESK

KHAN YOUNIS: As the US-backed Israeli genocidal war on the Gaza Strip entered day 108 on Monday, massive aerial and artillery strikes continued to pound neighborhoods and homes and massacre more civilians, mostly children and women. Palestinian Information Center (PIC) said that the Israeli occupation army continued to attack different areas of Gaza last night and on Monday morning, killing and injuring dozens of citizens. According to the health ministry in Gaza, the Israeli army committed horrific massacres in the west of Khan

Yunis after it bombed five shelter centers housing displaced families. According to medical sources, 40 martyrs were evacuated from the bombed places to Nasser Hospital in Khan Younis, but there are still scores of casualties who need evacuation from there. Meanwhile, Israeli army bulldozers embarked on destroying graves in the west of Khan Younis. Since last night, the Israeli army has been attacking universities and schools used as shelter centers and the hospitals of Nasser and Al-Khair in Khan Younis. The Red Crescent, for its part, said it lost contact with its ambulance crews in Khan Younis after Israeli tanks stormed the areas around Al-Amal Hospital.

EU presses Israel on two-state solution

FOREIGN DESK

BRUSSELS: The EU's foreign policy chief on Monday insisted on an eventual two-state solution as he told Israel it couldn't build peace "only by military means" ahead of talks with Israeli and Palestinian top diplomats. Josep Borrell repeated the condemnation from the United Nations of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's "unacceptable" rejection of calls for a Palestinian state after the war in Gaza. "What we want to do is to build a two-state solution. So let's talk about it," Borrell said.

Shehbaz vows to change destiny of Pakistan

DNA

LAHORE: Former Prime Minister and PML-N President Shehbaz Sharif addressed a large gathering of supporters at the Gujunta reception camp in NA-123 on Monday. He urged the people to vote for Nawaz Sharif on February 8 and make Pakistan progress again. He said that Nawaz Sharif had built the metro bus in Lahore, which was opposed by some as a "jangla bus". He said that the metro bus was running successfully and would be extended to Kasur. He also said that Nawaz Sharif had given laptops, scholarships, free medicines and hospitals to the people of Punjab, while Shehbaz Sharif had tried to ruin the province. He said that if Nawaz Sharif was re-elected as the prime minister, he would continue to provide these facilities to the people under his leadership.

Javed Hashmi withdraws in favour of PTI candidate

DNA

MULTAN: Senior politician Javed Hashmi Monday announced stepping out of the election race and withdrawing in favour of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI)-backed Aamir Dogar, who will contest the February 8 polls from NA-149 constituency. "I am throwing my political weight behind the Tehreek-e-Insaf and Imran Khan and withdrawing from the elections," Hashmi, who has been a part of the PTI and its arch-rival Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), said in a post on X, formerly Twitter. The seasoned politician was set to contest the polls from Multan's constituency as an independent candidate, and his withdrawal might help PTI, whose candidates are also contesting on different symbols after their iconic 'bat' symbol was stripped off.

Mohsin Naqvi named chairman of PCB management committee

SPORTS DESK

LAHORE: Punjab Chief Minister Syed Mohsin Raza Naqvi has been appointed as Chairman of the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) Management Committee. After showcasing exemplary performance as the Chief Minister of Punjab, Mohsin Naqvi is poised to take on another significant role, with Prime Minister's approval for his nomination as a member of the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) announced. The Ministry of Inter Provincial Coordination is set to issue a notification in connection with this development, formalizing Mohsin Naqvi's

nomination as a potential Chairman of PCB. However, for him to assume this position, approval from the Federal Cabinet's management committee is mandatory. Post the Election Commission's endorsement, subsequent elections will be conducted for other members of the PCB, ensuring a comprehensive representation. The electoral process will be overseen by PCB Election Commissioner Shah Khawar, who is scheduled to conduct the elections before February 3. Naqvi – a media channel owner, who has been serving as the interim chief minister for a year – also confirmed his appointment while speaking to reporters in Lahore soon after the news broke out. "I will try to fix the



issues affecting Pakistan cricket. Reforms in cricket are the need of the hour," Naqvi said. Earlier, Zaka Ashraf, the Chairman of the Pakistan Cricket Board's Interim Management Committee (IMC), has tendered his resignation from the position just two weeks before the scheduled expiry of the IMC's tenure. Announcement came during the fourth meeting of the PCB's IMC at Lahore's National Cricket Academy.

Chinese vice FM commends Pakistan's peace efforts

STAFF REPORT



RAWALPINDI: Mr Sun Weidong, Vice Foreign Minister of the People's Republic of China called on General Syed AsimMunir, NI (M), Chief of Army Staff (COAS), at GHQ today. During the meeting matters of mutual interest and measures to further enhance bilateral defence cooperation were discussed. Chinese Vice Foreign Minister said that Pakistan and China are all weather strategic partners. He acknowledged Pakistan's efforts towards regional peace and stability and also conveyed China's satisfaction on security arrangements for CPEC projects. COAS thanked the visiting dignitary for his warm remarks and said that relations between Pakistan and China are founded on a common understanding of regional peace, stability and prosperity for the people of both countries