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Pakistan-EU agree to deepen ties under engagement plan

Detailed News On Page-08

N. Korea's Kim calls for 'war preparations'

Detailed News On Page-08



Jaiswal's ton steers India to 336-6 in Test

Detailed News On Page-06



SIFC Apex Committee

Kakar wants continuity of fiscal policies

The Apex Committee expressed satisfaction over these projects and policy measures and appreciated the positive role of whole of the government

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

ISLAMABAD: The ninth meeting of the Apex Committee of the Special Investment Facilitation Council was held in Islamabad Friday under the chairmanship of Caretaker Prime Minister Anwarul Haq Kakar. Chief of Army Staff (COAS) General Syed Asim Munir, members of the supervisory federal cabinet, provincial chief ministers and relevant senior officials participated in the meeting. In the meeting, various ministries informed about the ongoing projects, policy measures and measures taken for the promotion of investment in the country. The Apex Committee expressed satisfaction over these projects and policy measures and appreciated the positive role of whole of the government approach in achieving the set goals. The committee reviewed the overall measures taken for the improvement of the country's economy and hailed their success. In order to promote investment in the country and fully utilize its potential, the committee has taken measures in various fields, development of manpower, improvement of communication infrastructure and effective mechanisms to resolve local disputes to create a sustainable system. The committee reviewed the progress on the economic relations with the friendly countries and also appreciated the steps taken by them to fully benefit from the investment. The committee approved Strategic Canals Vision 2030 and FBR reforms in the meeting. The Army Chief expressed the commitment of the Pakistan Army to fully support the government's initiatives for the economic stability of

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Ahead of election

Pak seals detailed plan to sell PIA

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Ahead of elections next week, Pakistan's caretaker administration is making binding plans for a new government to sell loss-making Pakistan International Airlines (PIA), according to the minister in charge of the process and other officials. In the past, elected governments have shied away from undertaking unpopular reforms, including the sale of the flag carrier. But Pakistan, in deep economic crisis, agreed in June to overhaul loss-making state-owned enterprises under a deal with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) for a \$3-billion bailout. The government decided to privatise PIA just weeks after signing the IMF agreement. The caretaker administration, which took office in August to oversee the February 8 election, was empowered by the outgoing parliament to take any steps needed to meet the budgetary targets agreed with the IMF. "Our job is 98% done," Privatisation Minister Fawad Hasan Fawad told international news agency

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ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Prime Minister Anwarul Haq Kakar chairs the ninth meeting of the Apex Committee of the Special Investment Facilitation Council. - DNA

Eyes thumping victory

Nawaz blasts Khan as Bilawal chants 'Nawaz na Khappay'

Will address problems if masses give majority to PPP: Bilawal Bhutto

BUREAU REPORT

FAISALABAD: Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) supreme Nawaz Sharif said on Friday that the "real youth stands with his party, not "mummy daddy." Addressing the public gathering in Faisalabad, the three-time prime minister said: "The country would not have faced unemployment if our government was not toppled." "We will bring back those times when the prices of the basic necessities of life like sugar and other food items were cheap," Nawaz said. He took an indirect swipe at the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), saying, "They used to make promises to provide 10 million jobs. Was anybody given the job opportunity?" "They were staging protests, but we were constructing the motorways and ending the power outages," said the PML-N chief. PTI founder must be held accountable for his actions, says Nawaz Sharif on Thursday, PML-N supreme Nawaz

Imran Khan calls supporters to use 'weapon of vote'

Ex-premier denounces cases and convictions as 'frivolous, baseless, and politically motivated'

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: Incarcerated former premier Imran Khan denounced his back-to-back convictions as 'frivolous' on Friday and urged his party supporters to 'wield their votes as their weapons' on February 8. Imran expressed his frustration over the ongoing legal battles, including the Toshakhana,

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Briefs

PTI's intra party polls postponed

PTI had scheduled intra-party polls for February 5

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: The intra-party polls of PTI, scheduled for February 5 (Monday), have been postponed. According to the party's Chairman Barrister Gohar Khan, the decision was announced on the directives of the PTI founder Imran Khan. "Intra-party elections can divert the attention of candidates and voters from the general elections," the PTI chief said. With just days left for the February 8 general elections, the party seems stuck in limbo, particularly after it was not issued its traditional electoral symbol "bat" following months of legal skirmishes with ECP.

JUI-F to continue its struggle: Fazl

Claims party shall win majority in KP, Baluchistan

SHAMIM SHAHID

PESHAWAR: Jamiat Ulama-e-Islam-Fazl (JUI-F) chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman has stated that his party will continue to work to make Pakistan an Islamic state after winning the Feb 8 general elections. Addressing a party election rally in Tank on Friday, Fazl expressed his determination to continue struggle for the protection of Islamic values in society.

Holiday Notice

The offices of daily Islamabad POST shall remain closed on Saturday on account of weekly off therefore there will be no newspaper on Sunday. - Editor

24 terrorists killed in Mach, Kolpur during operations

During operation which lasted for 3 days, 4 LEA personnel and 2 civilians embraced martyrdom

STAFF REPORT

RAWALPINDI: At least 24 terrorists were killed by law enforcement agencies during the "firefights and sanitisation/clearance operations" which lasted for three days in Mach and Kolpur in Balochistan, the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) said in a statement on Friday. The key terrorists - killed after they attacked the Mach and Kolpur Complexes in Balochistan on the night of January 29 and 30 - include Shehzad Baloch, Attaullah, Salah Uddin, Abdul Wadood and Zeeshan, said the military's media wing. "The identification process of remaining terrorists is in process, the military's media wing stated," the statement read. During an intense exchange of fire with terrorists, at least four brave law enforcement agencies

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Before CIA operation Condoleezza Rice informed Pakistan about OBL presence

Gilani says it was an intelligence failure of the whole world that Osama reached Pakistan

DNA

MULTAN: Veteran Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) leader from south Punjab and former prime minister Yusuf Raza Gilani has said former US secretary of state Condoleezza Rice had informed Pakistan about the presence of Osama bin Laden in Pakistan way before the CIA operation in Abbottabad. In an interview with the a private news channel, Gilani said during her visit to

Continued on Page 06

Justice Shahid steps down as LHC judge

After SC Justices Ijazul Ahsan and Mazahir Naqvi he becomes the third judge to resign

ABID RAZA

LAHORE: Justice Shahid Jamil Khan has stepped down as a judge of Lahore High Court (LHC) citing personal reasons, it emerged on Friday. The LHC judge has sent his resignation to President Arif Alvi. He was to retire in 2029 and was in line to become the chief justice in the future. "I, Justice Shahid Jamil Khan, after

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'It was a mistake to forge alliance with Rashid'

Raouf Hasan says Sh Rahid damaged the party unity

ADIL SHAHEEN

ISLAMABAD: Following a spat over ticket distribution, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf Information Secretary Raouf Hasan on Friday asserted that PTI committed a 'political mistake' by forging an alliance with Awami Muslim League (AML) chief Sheikh Rasheed. Talking to journalists in Islamabad, the PTI spokesperson noted that the former interior minister has sighted his

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Death toll rises as Hamas sticks to permanent ceasefire demand

The Palestine Red Crescent Society (PRCS) has confirmed the killing of a female employee in Israeli gunfire on the organisation's building in Khan Younis

DNA

GAZA CITY: As the US-backed Israeli genocidal war on the Gaza Strip entered day 119 on Friday, massive aerial and artillery strikes continued to pound neighborhoods, homes, and shelter centers 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 Friday morning, killing and injuring dozens of citizens. Israeli warplanes launched massive airstrikes east of Rafah, to the south of the Gaza Strip. A displaced person and a girl were injured in an airstrike on a house located near the Gaza European Hospital, east of Khan Younis. The Israeli artillery also fired flare bombs simultaneously with artillery shelling on Khan Younis. Meanwhile, 12 martyrs from the Sharab family were found dead in their home several weeks after being targeted in an Israeli airstrike in the Al-Sikka area in central Khan Younis. Meanwhile, the Health Ministry in the war-torn enclave announced on Friday that at least 27,131 Palestinians in Gaza have been killed by Israeli attacks since

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17,000 children have become orphaned or separated from families

NEWS DESK

GAZA: The United Nations Children's Fund, UNICEF, has revealed that around 17,000 children in Gaza Strip have become orphaned or separated from their families during the ongoing Israeli aggression since October 7th of 2023. The organization added that almost all children in the Strip - more than a million children - are in need of support in the field of mental health. Jonathan Crick, the Communications Officer at UNICEF in the occupied Palestinian territories, said on Friday that the children show symptoms such as extremely high levels of continuous anxiety, loss of appetite, inability to sleep, or experiencing emotional outbursts or

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Azerbaijan welcomes Pakistani tourists with e-visas

Pakistani citizens can now secure their visit visas in just three simple steps: apply, pay, and download e-vis

ADIL SHAHEEN

ISLAMABAD : In a strategic move to boost tourism and cultural exchange, Azerbaijan has revamped its visa application process, providing Pakistani tourists with a hassle-free and efficient e-visit visa system. The initiative aims to encourage travelers to delve into Azerbaijan's rich cultural tapestry and breathtaking landscapes. Azerbaijan now offers two distinct categories – Standard and Urgent – catering to the diverse needs of applicants. The Standard category, priced at \$20, allows travelers to obtain a single-entry 30-day electronic

visit visa within a reasonable 3 to 5 days. Meanwhile, the Urgent category, at \$50, provides an expedited solution with a swift processing time of three to five hours. With the introduction of the user-friendly "ASAN Visa" system, Pakistani citizens can now secure their visit visas in just three simple steps: apply, pay, and download the e-visa. This streamlined process ensures a convenient and efficient experience for travelers, reflecting Azerbaijan's commitment to facilitating seamless entry for tourists. Azerbaijan, situated between the Caspian Sea and the Caucasus Mountains, boasts a captivat-

ing blend of history and modernity. Baku, the capital city, is home to medieval treasures like the Palace of the Shirvanshahs and the iconic Maiden Tower. Pakistani tourists are now encouraged to explore these historic wonders and experience the unique charm of Azerbaijan. The introduction of this enhanced visa process signifies the commitment of both Azerbaijan and Pakistan to fostering cultural exchange and strengthening people-to-people connections. As doors open wider for Pakistani tourists, the initiative is poised to deepen the bond between the two nations and create lasting memories for travelers.



ISLAMABAD: Deputy Head of Mission, France Guillaume Dabouis, take keen interest in a painting during an exhibition title "Burgeoning Icons" at gallery 6 in the Federal Capital.— ONLINE

Minister takes notice of outdated custom of 'Ghag'

SCCI urges govt to withdraw hike in fuel prices

SHAMMIM SHAHID

PESHAWAR : Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Caretaker Minister for Newly Merged District Affairs, Industries, Commerce Technical Education Dr. Aamir Abdullah Friday took notice of the complaints about the outdated custom of 'Ghag' in some tribal areas and directed the concerned authorities to take concrete steps for eradicating the heinous crime. In a dispatch issued by the office of the caretaker minister to the respective Divisional Commissioners, Regional Police Officers (RPOs), Deputy Commissioners (DCs) and District Police Officers of the merged districts and former Frontier Regions (FRs) here, it has been stated that under 'Ghag Act' it has been declared a non-bailable and cognizable offense which under Section 4 of the Act, imprisonment for a term of 3 to 7 years with a fine of Rs 500,000 or both. The minister directed that such matter should be dealt with only in accordance with the relevant legal provisions contained in the Ghag Act and that such persons who are guilty of violating the said Act shall be prosecuted under this Act. The cases should be registered immediately. The minister further directed that such cases should be diligently followed up so that the violators could be brought to justice as soon as possible while appropriate measures should be taken to protect the victims.—APP

PESHAWAR : Sarhad Chamber of Commerce and Industry president Fuad Ishaq ha urged the government to withdraw the recent hike in petrol price by Rs. 13.55 per litre, terming it detrimental to the country's economy. In a statement issued here on Friday, the SCCI chief said the government made an increase in petrol Rs13.55 per litre, which would affect business, trade and industrial progress in the country. The chamber president said fuel, electricity and gas were used as raw material for industries and with frequent increase in these would increase the cost of

industrial production, consequently, all segments of the society would be hit hard and impact negatively on the country's economy. Fuad Ishaq went on to say that business and trade activities have already slowed down owing to inconsistent and impermanent policies. He added that the current increase in fuel, electricity and gas prices will bring the businesses to a standstill situations. The SCCI chief said the policy to increase fuel prices after a fortnight along with a hike in electricity and gas tariffs would further add to the miseries of the business community and poor people. On the occasion, Fuad Ishaq expressed concern over supply of gas at low pres-

sure to industrial, commercial and domestic consumers, stating that Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is surplus in gas production despite that the gas was unavailable to consumers in the province. He went on to say that KP has the first right to fully take benefits from its indigenous natural resources as per Article 158 of the constitution of the country. Therefore, the SCCI chief urged the government, in the greater interest of the country's progress, prosperity and economic stability, to take back the decision of the recent whopping hike in fuel prices and ensure uninterrupted electricity and gas supply to industries.

Pneumonia claims 7 more lives in Punjab

ISLAMABAD : Seven more children fell victim to pneumonia in Punjab over the past 24 hours, bringing the total tally to this infectious disease to 303 this year,

according to Punjab Health Department on Friday. A total of 764 new pneumonia cases emerged, with Lahore alone registering 178 fresh cases during the said peri-

od, a private news channel reported. The cumulative toll of pneumonia cases in Punjab has now surpassed 18,000. The health experts are attributing the rapid

rise in pneumonia cases and fatalities to environmental pollution exacerbated by winter smog. Pneumonia, an infection primarily caused by viruses, tends to intensify following initial symptoms resembling a common cold or flu. This respiratory ailment, more prevalent in children aged five or younger, can manifest in varying degrees of severity.—APP

Mandatory Hajj ritual training to begin on Feb 12

ISLAMABAD : The first phase of mandatory Hajj ritual training for intending pilgrims of the Government Scheme will commence on February 12 in seven Hajj camps located nationwide. A spokesman of the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony said in a statement that over 69,000 government scheme pilgrims will undergo training in two phases in various districts of the country. The second training phase would be started after the holy month of Ramadan. Details of the training schedule will be communicated to the successful intending pilgrims through mobile messages and the Hajj app. Hajj pilgrims will attend training workshops at their convenient local venues. The spokesman said the chief hajj trainer while addressing the ministry's 90 officers and official's training workshop, said that special attention in training has been given to Hajj rituals as well as discipline and administrative issues. The training curriculum has already been finalized by Ahmed Naadeem Khan, Joint Secretary Administration of the Ministry, along with Director General Syed Mushahed Hussain Khalid and Chief Trainer Nasir Aziz Khan. Hajj training will be conducted across seven Hajj camps situated in various districts. Quoting the trainers, the spokesman said the new extensive training program will cover the 'Pak Hajj' mobile app, guidance for Hajj preparations, understanding rituals, addressing challenges during Hajj, and providing general instructions. The chief trainer mentioned that model tents resembling Mina Valley style have been set up in the training centres.—APP

SU faculty expresses solidarity with Kashmir's people

HYDERABAD : The University of Sindh observed Kashmir solidarity day on Friday to express solidarity with the people of India-held Kashmir against the occupation of their region by the Indian forces in 1947. The Bureau of STAGS University of Sindh held a rally from Arts Faculty Building, which was led by Vice Chancellor Professor (Meritorious) Dr. Muhammad Siddique Kalhoro. The rally was taken out from the entrance of the Arts Faculty Building, which passed through different roads and turned into a gathering in front of the Central Library. The teachers, officials and students participating in the rally raised various slogans like "Kashmir Bani Ga Pakistan" and strongly condemned Indian brutality. Addressing the gathering at the Central Library, Vice-Chancellor Prof. (Meritorious) Dr. Muhammad Siddiq Kalhoro said that Occupied Kashmir is a glob-

al humanitarian problem, which requires the immediate attention of the international community. He said that the international community should play an effective role for a permanent solution to the Kashmir issue so that Indian oppression of innocent Kashmiris can stop. He said that Pakistan will continue its diplomatic and moral support for the freedom struggle of the Kashmiri people. He said that India has done away with the provision of Kashmir in the Indian Constitution by demonstrating its hypocrisy, with which an unsuccessful attempt has been made to eliminate the identity of Kashmiris. The international community should force India to restore the independent status of Kashmir. On this occasion, Prof. Dr. Khalilur Rahman Kumbhati, Pro Vice Chancellor of Laar Campus Badin, said that no country in the world has raised an effective voice for

the freedom of Kashmir except Pakistan. He said that full support for the rights of the people of Kashmir will continue. He said that the right to self-determination is the fundamental right of the Kashmiri people, for which they have been struggling for the past 7 decades. Pakistani people will be with their Kashmiri brothers. Director of IBA of Sindh University Professor Dr. Imamuddin Khoso said that Kashmir is the biggest Indian prison in the world, where the citizens are being locked up by force and being tortured. He said that professors and students of Sindh University will continue to support Kashmir's freedom struggle. Prof. Dr. Azhar Ali Shah, Focal Person of Sindh University Nosharoferoze, said that international organizations should take notice of the situation in Indian-occupied Kashmir and implement their resolutions passed in the past.—APP

KP Governor urges varsities on minority quota

ESHAWAR : Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Governor, Haji Ghulam Ali on Friday issued directives to all the public sector varsities for sharing compliance over two per cent quota for minorities in the province. He issued these directives during a meeting held at the Governor House with a delegation of Civil Society Organization (CSO) representatives led by Qamar Naseem, Programme Manager of Blue Veins organization. Muhammad Rizwan, Provincial Coordinator of the National Commission for Human Rights (NCHR) was also present on the occasion along with CSO representatives including Zartasha, Faizan, Aliza Mehfooz and Uruba. The CSO representatives called on Governor to express their gratitude for the support extended by Haji Ghulam Ali in the enforcement of Section 144 for the imposition of a ban on the sale of e-cigarettes on youngsters below the age of 21 and within the vicinity of educational institutions. During the meeting, Qamar Naseem diverted the attention of Governor KP over the non-implementation of 2 per cent admission quota by public sector universities for the minority community. He informed the Governor that during a survey conducted by Blue Veins in the province, it was found that the majority of universities are not utilizing a two per cent quota for minorities as decided by the government. Taking notice of the information, the Governor forthwith issued directives to all the universities in the province to share implementation of the decision. He said the rights of minorities would be protected and implementation of decisions taken by the government in this regard would be ensured at all cost. He also sought the implementation of a job quota granted by the government to minority communities of the country. Earlier, Qamar Naseem apprised Governor, Haji Ghulam Ali about benefits of enforcing ban on sale of e-cigarettes and vape to youngsters in KP. He said district governments are conducting raids at different commercial markets and taking action over the open sale of newer tobacco products. In some areas, shopkeepers are educated about seeking identity cards of customers purchasing e-cigarettes to ascertain their age. In some cases, district govt officials have nabbed youngsters and even minors over purchasing e-citrates and informed their parents. He said the courageous and dynamic stance taken by Governor KP made the province the first ever in the country to take this bold decision of banning the sale of newer tobacco products being sold on the basis of false claims of harm reduction. Speaking on the occasion, Governor Haji Ghulam Ali said what he did was for the benefit of our youngsters and for ensuring better public health.—DNA

Descon, IFC partner to combat Pakistan's postharvest losses

This strategic alliance aims to address the yearly postharvest losses of essential grains in Pakistan, amounting to around USD 2 billion



MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: In a groundbreaking initiative aimed at addressing the significant postharvest losses of wheat, rice, and maize in Pakistan, Descon (under its Agri Business Line) and the International Finance Corporation (IFC) have officially signed a Memorandum of Under-

standing (MoU). This strategic alliance aims to address the yearly postharvest losses of essential grains in Pakistan, amounting to around USD 2 billion. These losses contribute to food insecurity, affecting 36.8% of the population. The collaboration underscores a commitment to an inclusive approach, leveraging private sector initiatives to positively impact

Pakistan's agricultural sector. By addressing the root causes Descon and IFC aim to create sustainable solutions for long term food security in the country. Descon has embarked on a diversification into the agricultural sector, reflecting the company's visionary approach. With a steadfast commitment to empowering small-scale farmers, Descon aims

to play a pivotal role in transforming the agricultural landscape. The company envisions fostering sustainable practices and enhancing productivity within the agricultural community. Through this diversification, Descon aspires to make meaningful contribution to the betterment of small-scale farmers, promoting economic growth, and ensuring food security in the country. Faisal Dawood Vice Chairman of Descon stated, "We are excited about the potential impact of this collaboration. By modernizing infrastructure and optimizing supply chain processes, we believe we can make a substantial difference in reducing postharvest losses and enhancing the quality of staple grains for the people of Pakistan." Descon, a leading player in the industry, brings its expertise and resources to the table, aligning with IFC's global reputation for fostering impactful initiatives.

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National Days and Armed Forces Days

FEBRUARY

- Feb 04/Sri Lanka
National Day
- Feb 06/N. Zealand
National Day
- Feb 06/Uganda
Army Day
- Feb 11//Iran
Revolution day
- Feb 16/DPR Korea
National Day
- Feb 16/Lithuania
National Day
- Feb 18/Gambia
National Day
- Feb 19/Nepal
Democracy Day
- Feb 23/Uzbekistan
National Day
- Feb 23/Brunei
National Day
- Feb 23/Guyana
National Day
- Feb 23/Russia
National Army Day
- Feb 23/Tajikistan
Armed Forces Day
- Feb 25/Kuwait
National Day

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Marriott.....051- 2826121
Monal.....0334-5421812



Turkish Airlines.....8494949



Emergency

Rescue (Police).....15
Bomb Disposal.....15
Fire Services Rawalpindi/
Islamabad.....1122 & 16
Emergency Ambulance.1122
& Rescue Services.4451122
Motorway Police.....9266044
Motorway Police.9270601-20
Women Police Stations
Islamabad.....9222596
Rawalpindi.....9270601-20



Enquiry

Edhi Ambulance.....115
PIA Flight Info.....114
PIA Cargo.....9280979
Railway Inquiry.....117
Railway Exchange 9270831-5
WASA Rawalpindi. 5555489
CAA.....9281092



Hospitals

CMH.....5611111
MH.....561116
Cantt Hospital...9270907-11
DHQ.....5556311-4
RGH.....9290301-7
Holy Family.....9290322-7
PIMS.....9261170-79
Polyclinic.....9218300-09
Shifa International 4603666



Departments

CDA.....9221334-43
CDA.....9208301-04
Met Office.....9250360-6
RDA.....5555864
TMA.....5770886
Cantonment Board 9270151-3

Water Tank

Islamabad.....0321-5744480



ISLAMABAD: Students pose for group photo in 3rd convocation of FG home economics and management sciences college F11/1. —Photo Mudassar Raja

President for promoting chess at grassroots levels

Talking to the delegation, the President highlighted the need to promote healthy activities, including chess in the country. He stated that chess had mental and educational benefits, and it needed to be included in the education system

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi has called for promoting chess in the country, especially at the grassroots levels, through collaborations with international chess organizations, the private sector, and organizing chess championships in the country. The President expressed these views while talking to a delegation of the International Chess

Federation (FIDE), who called on him, at Aiwan-e-Sadr, today. The delegation included President FIDE and former Deputy Prime Minister of the Russian Federation, Mr Arkady Dvorkovich, President of the Asian Chess Federation and son of the President of UAE, Sheikh Sultan bin Khalifa Al-Nehayan, Managing Director FIDE, Ms Dana Rezniece-Ozola, British Chess Grandmaster, Dr Nigel Short, Secretary General of Asian Chess Federation, Mr

Hisham Al Taher, and members of FIDE, Asian Chess Federation, Chess Federation of Pakistan, FIDE Chess in Education Commission, Islamabad Scrabble Association, and Pakistan Scrabble Association. Talking to the delegation, the President highlighted the need to promote healthy activities, including chess in the country. He stated that chess had mental and educational benefits, and it needed to be included in the education system.

He further said that the game of chess could help relieve stress, besides enhancing intellect as well as boosting mental faculties. The President highlighted the need to encourage chess by organizing chess competitions and tournaments in the country. He also stressed the need for developing collaborations among the public and private sectors to patronize and promote chess in Pakistan. The delegation briefed the President about the

role of the International Chess Federation in promoting chess in the world. The delegation highlighted that there was great potential to expand chess-related activities in Pakistan. It was apprised that a large number of people in Pakistan were fond of the game. The delegation suggested that chess should be promoted at the primary level in schools, adding that chess players could also participate online in World chess tournaments.

German embassy hands over proceeds from Christmas market

Alfred Grannas, along with Embassy Representatives, met with esteemed organizations including the Master Ayub School, Aaghosh Mera Ghar, Haashar Association, Al-Firdous Welfare Association, Rawalpindi Leprosy Hospital, and MOM - Music on Mission to formally present the charitable donations

DNA

ISLAMABAD: This week, the German Embassy in Islamabad proudly handed over the proceeds from last year's highly successful Charity Christmas Market to deserving organizations. With an impressive total of

3 million PKR, the surplus from the market going towards donations could even be doubled compared with 2022. His Excellency Alfred Grannas, along with Embassy Representatives, met with esteemed organizations including the Master Ayub School, Aaghosh Mera Ghar, Haashar Association, Al-Firdous Welfare

Association, Rawalpindi Leprosy Hospital, and MOM - Music on Mission to formally present the charitable donations. During the meetings, the recipient organizations showcased their plans for utilizing the funds for various charitable causes and expressed their heartfelt gratitude to the German

Ambassador for this generous contribution. Ambassador Grannas was impressed by the impactful work carried out by these organizations: "I am delighted to learn that our proceeds are being directed towards exceptional projects that are creating a positive difference in society," he stated.

Kazakhstan invited to benefit from SIFC

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's ambassador to Kazakhstan Nauman Bashir Bhatti on Friday said Kazakhstan had been invited to benefit from the favorable investment opportunities being offered by Pakistan under the framework of the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC). "I must highlight that Pakistan has established a SIFC and has opened priority sectors for

investments. We have invited Kazakhstan to benefit from the favorable investment opportunities offered under the SIFC framework," he said in response to a question in an interview with 'Kazinform,' an international news agency. Highlighting Pakistan's strategic location, the envoy mentioned that his country also provided the shortest route for Kazakhstan's ac-

cess to the Arabian Sea. "Pakistan remains keen to strengthen its connectivity with Kazakhstan in multiple ways and through multiple channels. The two sides are already working towards this end." In response to another question, he agreed that the shortest and cheapest route for connectivity and transportation of goods between Pakistan and

Kazakhstan was through China and Kyrgyzstan using the Karakoram Highway. "It is also known as the Quadrilateral Traffic in Transit Agreement between Pakistan, China, Kazakhstan, and Kyrgyzstan or the QTTA Route. Goods can be transported through this route on trucks and containers directly from Karachi, Pakistan, to Almaty, Kazakhstan, and back, without the need to change trucks." Ambassador Nauman mentioned it was the safest, most reliable, and economical route.—APP

Fruits, vegetables prices raise by 25 to 30 percent

ISLAMABAD: In the twin cities of Rawalpindi and Islamabad, the prices of fruits and vegetables have increased by 25 to 30 per cent in the last two months. According to the market survey conducted by APP here on Friday, the prices of vegetables and fruits, especially onions and tomatoes, peas, cabbage, apple gourd, garlic, ginger, beans, cucumber, carrots, and fruits including apples, pomegranates, bananas, citrus, and oranges, have increased by 25 to 30 per cent from the last two months. Since last week, various varieties of fruits, including apples, have been sold at Rs 250 to Rs 300, pomegranates at Rs 300 to Rs 350, bananas at Rs 120 to Rs 150, citrus at Rs 200 to Rs 250, and oranges at Rs 250 to Rs 300 per kilo/ dozen. Similarly, among vegetables, peas cost Rs 200 to 250, cucumbers Rs 120 to 140, apple gourds Rs 150 to 160, onions Rs 170 to 180, and garlic and ginger cost Rs 540 to 580 rupees per kg. According to the survey, the price of poultry chicken reached Rs 460 to 470 per kg, and the price of poultry eggs reached Rs 420 to 430 per dozen in the open market in the twin cities of Islamabad and Rawalpindi. The meat of the poultry chicken has reached Rs 800 to 810 per kg in the open market. The prices of poultry items have increased by 20 per cent in the twin cities of Islamabad and Rawalpindi during the last month, which has created huge volatility in the market. During the last three months in the twin cities, a 25 per cent increase was witnessed in the price of poultry chicken, while there was a 35 per cent increase in the price of poultry eggs in the same period. Meanwhile, talking to APP, the Pakistan Poultry Association (PPA) has also called for a further increase in the prices of chicken, and there was an increase observed in the prices of poultry items in the twin cities of Islamabad and Rawalpindi. On this occasion, poultry feed industrialists and the ex-president of the Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Dr Sarosh, said that soybeans are included in the basic ingredients of poultry feed. Meanwhile, the buyers expressed their concern over the huge increase in the prices of food items and poultry.—APP

44 candidates contesting general elections for NA-52

RAWALPINDI: As many as 44 candidates including 28 independents are contesting general elections scheduled for February 8 while a total of 666,216 registered voters including 341,743 males and 324,473 females will use their right to franchise. According to details, all arrangements had been finalized by the administration for the general elections and the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) had also announced a polling scheme for the constituency, NA-52. Rawalpindi district administration on the directives of Commissioner, Rawalpindi Division, Liaquat Ali Chhatta had finalized administrative measures including security arrangements to maintain law and order. As many as 541 polling stations including 169 each will be set up for male and female voters while 203 will be combined. There will be a total of 1336 polling booths in Rawalpindi-I, NA-52 constituency. Under the polling scheme of NA-52, there are 541 presiding officers with 2672 assistant presiding officers, and 1877 polling officers and assistants.—APP

Jl candidate for uplift projects in PP-15

RAWALPINDI: Jamat e Islami candidate for PP-15 constituency, Haji Rizwan Ahmad here on Friday said that he would make every possible effort to deliver the best services to the residents of the constituency after winning the elections. He further said that he was receiving marvellous support from the voters of his constituency during the ongoing election campaign. In a brief interaction with APP, Rizwan said that he would convert the PP-15 area to a model constituency of the country by bringing basic facilities for the residents. "Our constituency needs more hospitals, a university and other uplift projects" he said adding that the water shortage problem, one of the main issues would also be addressed accordingly. To a question, he said the current political and economic situation demands a vibrant leadership who could create an enabling environment for economic stability in the country. "Only Jamat e Islami can provide true leadership in Pakistan to overcome the prevailing challenges being faced by the people" he claimed. He said Jl had been engaged with people during difficulties and natural calamities, initiating welfare projects and resolving social issues. We are present to serve the people and we will deliver according to their hope, he added.—APP

21 candidates contesting from PP-9

RAWALPINDI: As many as 21 candidates including 14 independents are preparing to contest general elections being held on February 8, while a total of 327,174 registered voters including 168,246 male and 158,928 female voters would use their right to vote in PP-9 Rawalpindi III constituency. According to the details, all arrangements had been finalized by the district administration to hold peaceful general elections in a peaceful environment.

Gujar Khan district administration had also finalized administrative measures including security to maintain law and order situation during the polling.

A total of 272 polling stations including 80 each will be set up for male and female voters while 112 would be combined. There will be a total of 695 booths in the constituency. Under the polling scheme of PP-9, there are 272 presiding officers, 695 assistant presiding officers and 967 allied polling staff. On the directives of Deputy Commissioner Rawalpindi Hassan Waqar Chima, strict monitoring of ECP's code of conduct is being ensured by the district administration.—APP

Scam alert: Beware of digital fraud



SABAHAT ALI

IN the dynamic realm of digital marketing, businesses and consumers face an escalating threat - digital marketing fraud. This deceptive practice spans various fraudulent activities aimed at exploiting vulnerabilities in online advertising and promotional campaigns. With technological advancements, scammers continually adapt their tactics, emphasizing the importance of vigilance and staying informed. Digital marketing fraud

manifests in forms such as click fraud, impression fraud, and affiliate fraud. Click fraud involves artificially inflating ad clicks, leading to businesses paying for non-genuine user engagement. Impression fraud manipulates metrics by falsely boosting ad visibility without authentic user interaction. Affiliate fraud involves fake referrals or manipulated transactions in affiliate marketing programs, draining budgets and compromising performance metrics. Combating digital marketing fraud is challenging due to its evolving nature. Scammers leverage machine learning and artificial intelligence for more sophisticated fraudulent activities, making detection and prevention increasingly difficult. Businesses must invest in advanced fraud detection tools and stay updated on industry standards to safeguard their online advertising investments. Consumers are not immune to the impact of digital marketing fraud. Misleading ads,

fake promotions, and deceptive practices can lead individuals to fall victim to scams or make uninformed purchasing decisions. To shield themselves, consumers should exercise caution, verify promotions' legitimacy, and report suspicious activities to relevant authorities. As the digital marketing landscape expands, education and awareness become crucial tools in the fight against fraud. Businesses should educate teams on the latest fraud prevention techniques, collaborate with reputable advertising platforms, and stay informed about industry best practices. Similarly, consumers need to understand digital marketing tactics, recognize red flags, and report fraudulent activities. The prevalence of digital marketing fraud necessitates heightened awareness and proactive measures. Vigilance, education, and collaboration are crucial to mitigating risks associated with deceptive online practices, fostering a safer environment for legiti-

mate businesses and consumers. Common Mobile Phone Scams: Mobile phone scams have evolved into sophisticated schemes, targeting unsuspecting individuals through deceptive tactics. Here are examples of common mobile phone scams: Lottery or Prize Scams: Scammers claim individuals have won a lottery or prize, requesting a small fee or personal information to claim winnings. In reality, there is no prize, and scammers aim to extract money or sensitive data. Real Estate and Land Scams: Scammers pose as real estate agents or property owners, offering incredible deals on non-existent houses or land. They may request upfront payments or personal information, leaving victims without a property and out of pocket. Kidnapping or Mob Threats: Scammers claim to have kidnapped a family member or threaten harm, aiming to create panic and coerce victims into sending money quick-

ly. Digital Orders and Package Scams: Scammers pretend to be a delivery service or a legitimate company, claiming issues with a digital order or package. They request payment or personal information, ultimately stealing funds or identity details. Job Offer Scams: Fraudulent job offers promise lucrative opportunities, requesting payment for training materials or background checks. Victims may find themselves out of money with no job in sight. Blackmail and Extortion: Scammers threaten individuals with releasing compromising information unless payment is made, leveraging fear to coerce victims into transferring money. It's crucial to be cautious with unsolicited calls, especially those demanding personal information or immediate payments. Awareness of these common mobile phone scams empowers individuals to recognize red flags and protect themselves from falling victim to these deceptive tactics.

Briefs

Westridge Police seize huge cache of arms

RAWALPINDI: Rawalpindi police have foiled a bid to smuggle a huge quantity of weapons and arrested two culprits during an operation here on Friday. According to a police spokesman, Westridge police managed to recover a huge cache of arms being smuggled in a private vehicle by the smugglers. The CPO Khalid Hamdani said the Westridge police party set up a special picket and stopped a suspected vehicle. He said that the two suspects identified as Bahadur Khan and Rashid Shah were apprehended whereas more than 35 pistols and thousands of bullets were recovered from the possession of the arms smuggler. A case has been registered against the suspects while further investigation is underway.—APP

Pak, Ethiopia agree for twinning of cities, promote tourist exchange

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan and Ethiopia have agreed to pursue the twinning of their cities and promote tourist exchange besides underscoring enhanced cooperation in the field of medicine and agricultural education. The bilateral cooperation was discussed as Pakistan's Ambassador to Ethiopia and African Union Atif Sharif visited the historic Ethiopian city of Aksum in Tigray where he also met City Mayor Abebe. A seat of Aksum empire (300BC-400 AD), Aksum was the city to receive the first Islamic Hijra by ennobled companions of Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him). The ambassador and mayor agreed to pursue the twinning of Aksum with a Pakistani city and to promote tourist exchange. The envoy visited the rich heritage sites, 1400 year-old memorial of Aksum kings, church and museum. The ambassador wrote on X that due to recent civil conflict and ongoing drought, Tigray and Aksum were also suffering from food scarcity and internally displaced persons (IDPs). The ambassador, who visited the IDPs living in a school, also held an interaction with the President of Aksum University Professor Gebreyesus Brhane. The professor showed keen interest in collaborating with Pakistani universities in STEM, medicine, and agricultural education.—APP

Efforts afoot to ensure fair, peaceful elections on February 8

ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Interior Minister Dr. Gohar Ejaz Friday reiterated his government's commitment for fulfilling duty of conducting free, fair and transparent elections, saying the caretaker setup would remain fully impartial in the entire electoral process. "Equal opportunities are being provided to all political parties, there will be no discrimination against anyone," he said while talking to a Private news channel. "All available resources will be provided to all provincial governments for holding transparent and peaceful elections", he added. The Minister urged the public to vote for their future and to maintain the democratic process in the country. He emphasized, "The implementation of the Election Commission's code of conduct, and measures will be taken to ensure compliance." He assured, "Law enforcement, including the police and other security agencies will also play a pivotal role in upholding the rule of law during the electoral process." Political parties should also cooperate with law enforcement agencies for holding any public meeting or corner meeting for election campaign, he added. Replying a query, he said security institutions were taking all possible steps to defeat terrorism in a "befitting manner".

Alvi urges equal opportunities for businesswomen

President Dr. Arif Alvi lauded the efforts of the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce for organizing an award ceremony to recognize the role of businesswomen and young entrepreneurs and said that other chambers of commerce should also work for the economic empowerment of women and youngsters

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: Dr. Arif Alvi, President of Pakistan urged that businesswomen should be provided equal opportunities to grow in the business field that would pave the way for better development of the economy and bring prosperity to the country. He said that enhanced participation of women in business and other fields is so important to reduce poverty and ensure sustainable development of the country. He stressed that the government should create better opportunities for the economic empowerment of women and focus on providing them with a safe and conducive workplace environ-

ment. He said this while addressing the award ceremony for businesswomen and young entrepreneurs organized by the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry at Aiwan-e-Sadr, Islamabad. President Dr. Arif Alvi lauded the efforts of the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce for organizing an award ceremony to recognize the role of businesswomen and young entrepreneurs and said that other chambers of commerce should also work for the economic empowerment of women and youngsters. He urged the Chambers of Commerce to support businesswomen in getting cheap loans from banks. He said that 20 to 40 percent of employees in SBP and private commercial

banks are women, so chambers of commerce should also encourage their member companies to provide jobs to more women and special persons in their business institutions. He said that over 20 million children are out of school in Pakistan, and more than 50,000 schools are needed for their enrollment. However, as an alternative, mosques can be used to educate out-of-school children. Similarly, mosques can also be used as primary health centers. Speaking on the occasion, Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari, President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industries said that to ensure the development and prosperity of the country, it is important to empower women in every sphere

of life. ICCI is working hard to empower women and youth. He said that women are 50% of our population, but their participation in business is meager. Our women are very talented and the government should provide them with cheap loans to start their businesses. He said that IT should be given the status of industry to boost the IT sector and its exports, which are important for the country's development and prosperity. He said that a certain quota for women entrepreneurs should be reserved in the seats of the Parliament. The government should allocate a plot to the Islamabad Women's Chamber of Commerce to construct its building and play an effective role in

promoting the interests of women entrepreneurs. He said that ICCI will continue to provide all possible guidance to women to start the business. Khalid Iqbal Malik, Group Leader of ICCI, said that the government should take steps to increase the literacy rate, open more vocational training institutes for skill development, and privatize the loss-making government commercial enterprises. Female entrepreneur Zubia Zubair said women should be brought into the national mainstream by providing ample opportunities. She said that women should be given adequate representation in all sectors. Women should also get an education and learn modern skills. Awards were given to 18 young entrepreneurs.



ISLAMABAD: Pakistani-American businessman Shahid Ahmed called on Ambassador of Saudi Arabia to Pakistan Nawaf Saeed Al Malikiy.—DNA

Pakistan's exports to China continue to grow with sesame the highlight

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's export of goods and services to China witnessed an increase of 39.44% during the first five months of the current fiscal year (2023-24) as compared with the exports of the corresponding period of last year. While commenting on the cause of this enormous increase, Omer Malik, chairman of King's Bridge Investments, told China Economic Net (CEN) that there were a number of reasons, but one of them was that there had been a lot of marketing and trade activities between the two countries after the lockdown eased. "For example, the five-day China International Fair for Trade in Services (CITFIS) has provided a stage for Pakistani companies to showcase their products and services along with Pakistan's top leaders. After that, within Pakistan,

the 2023 International Textile Exhibition (TEXPO) was followed by the Food and Agri Expo and most recently there was a healthcare and engineering conference held in Lahore, etc. At those events, we were given the opportunity to showcase our productivity, quality and resources. So I think that this was a combination, in which Pakistan highlighted its potential." Omer Malik explained. CEN found from Chinese Customs statistics that the top import item from Pakistan in terms of quantity and value was sesame seeds. More than 134 million kilograms of sesame seeds worth 235.36 million US dollars were exported to China from July to November 2023, an increase of 480 percent compared with exports in the corresponding period last year. Undoubtedly, this will be one of the major highlights since the start of the second phase of CPEC. Dr. Amjad Magsi, Professor, University of Punjab believes that both Pakistan and China understand each other's potential and know each other's strengths. "Pakistan is the fifth largest producer of sesame seeds, and then when China gave methods and approached it, we achieved very good statistics. Pakistan has a very good capacity in the field of agriculture and in producing seeds" he added. Omer Malik noticed that Chinese companies have brought technologies and seeds that were genetically engineered to Pakistan. "They continue to adapt their techniques to our native land, and we have seen the successful production of sesame seeds. They are not only producing it, we are also seeing high yields," he said. He believes that if Chinese technology is used in the right way, the advantages of sesame seeds will increase, just like other products using Chinese technology.

39th MCMC officers visit IPO-Pakistan

ISLAMABAD: A delegation of the National Institute of Management (NIM) consisting of 15 officers of the Mid-Career Management Course (MCMC) visited the Intellectual Property Organization (IPO) headquarters in Islamabad. The Chair of IPO-Pakistan, Ambassador (R) Farukh Amil, provided a detailed briefing to the delegation about the working of the organization, including intellectual property rights, administrative structure, legal framework, progress, major issues, and challenges, said a press release issued here on Friday. The delegation also received information about innovation, business, IP rights, trademarks, copyrights, patent inventions, PCT, technological innovation, and Geographical Indications. The visit was aimed at enlightening the officers about the various aspects of intellectual property and the functioning of IPO-Pakistan. The visit was part of the officers' training and exposure to different organizations and institutions.—APP

Masarrat expresses concern over political injustice

ISLAMABAD: The illegally detained All Parties Hurriyat Conference Chairman Masarrat Aalam Butt has expressed deep concern over the political injustice and gross human rights violations by Indian troops in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK). In a message from Tihar jail, he said the Modi regime had unleashed a reign of terror against the Kashmiris who were continuously besieged by over one million personnel of Indian army, paramilitary forces and agencies. He urged the international human rights bodies to take notice of the worsening situation in occupied Kashmir and hold the Indian government accountable for the same, KMS reported.—APP

International Child Art Challenge & Exhibition

DNA

ISLAMABAD: More than 350 art enthusiasts including students, parents, and school administrators were invited and visited the 10th Art for Change - International Child Art Exhibition curated by Ms. Sidra Ali (Artist, Art Educationist and Co-founder of Discovering New Artists) on the first day of its commencement at Pakistan National Council of Arts, Islamabad. Discovering New Artists in support with HBL, the Queen's Commonwealth Trust (QCT), Bluebird Arts, and in collaboration with Pakistan National Council of Arts launched the 10th Art for Change - International Child Art Exhibition at Gallery # 5 of PNCA Islamabad on Friday 2nd February 2024. The exhibition featured over 170+ breathtaking artworks under the theme of Biodiversity by school children aged 4-15 from over 8+ countries across the world. Prizes, certificates, and medals were handed out to the winners and participants in a jam-packed inauguration ceremony by the honorable Guest of Honors Ms. Zaira Zaka (Senior Artist and Art Educationist) and Mr. Irfan Qureshi (Head Transaction & Employee Banking at HBL). The exhibition was attended by the participants, their families and art enthusiasts from Islamabad and its surrounding cities. Speaking at the occasion, DNA Founder and Director Mr. Mujtaba Zaidi said, "Discovering New Artists (DNA) through its flagship project Art for Change and The Art for Change Atelier provides equal access to arts education for all. These projects enable these young learners of 4-18 years of age from all economic backgrounds to develop creativity, open-mindedness, and confidence to present solutions to SDGs and global issues through their arts".

Renowned Urdu writer Intizar Hussain remembered

ISLAMABAD: Eighth death anniversary of renowned Urdu writer Intizar Hussain was observed on Friday. Born in India in 1925, Intizar Hussain gained wide recognition through his novels, short stories, poetry and nonfiction. He received several national and international awards including Sitara-e-Imtiaz from the government of Pakistan.—APP

Political campaigns gaining momentum

The voters and supporters of various candidates also started displaying e posters in front of election offices of the candidates and on rear windscreens of motor vehicles to support for the candidates, said a political leader.

ISLAMABAD: As final countdown begins for forthcoming general polls to held on February 8, preparations have gained momentum across country where most of the National and provincial assembly candidates have intensified their campaigns. In various cities corner meetings, political camps and rallies have become a routine matter, said a report aired by PTV news. Portraits and stickers of different political leaders including Nawaz Sharif, Shahbaz Sharif, Benazir Bhutto, Imran Khan, Sheikh Rashid,

Hanif Abbasi and others could easily be noticed on rickshaws, wagons, Suzuki pickups, cars, walls and private buses, said a citizen of Rawalpindi. The enthusiasm of candidates and their supporters has reached the peak, said another citizen. While negotiations for seat to seat adjustments between various political parties are going on, it is widely believed that in fact the contest would be between the allies of the government and the opposition parties, said a politician. The election campaign is getting momentum with every passing

day as banners and posters of political parties could be seen everywhere, besides on traffic signboards on the roads, said a motorist. The printing and selling of election-related items, has also picked up, with wholesalers and vendors concerned over high demand of sales. "Many candidates are also turning to the social media to run their election campaign which also cuts demand for the offset printing material," said a social media user. Meanwhile, business activities relating to printing of election material have witnessed a boom

ahead of Pakistan's general elections, claimed a printing press worker. The printing press owners said that they have already got a lot of orders from the supporters of election candidates and workers of various political parties. The voters and supporters of various candidates also started displaying e posters in front of election offices of the candidates and on rear windscreens of motor vehicles to support for the candidates, said a political leader. Similarly, the demand for flags also increased in the city, he added.

MOST EXPERIENCED
MANUFACTURERS &
EXPORTERS OF
MARTIAL ARTS UNIFORMS
IN
PAKISTAN

WHERE EACH STITCH IS WATCHED

JUDO
KARATE
KUNG-FU
JU-JITSU
TAEKWONDO

JUDO
KARATE
KUNG-FU
JU-JITSU
TAEKWONDO
UNIFORMS AND
COLOURED BELTS

BOXING
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Gaza's devastation: suffering beyond end of war

War deaths are not only caused by direct violence, and they don't stop when the fighting does. Civilians as well as combatants may succumb to earlier injuries, or to hunger and disease in the aftermath of conflict. In the longer run, disruption of food production, damage to infrastructure and suspension of medical services such as routine vaccinations can all result in peacetime deaths which are ultimately attributable to the war. Women and children are disproportionately affected. More than 27,000 people have now been killed in Gaza, according to Palestinian authorities. Tens of thousands of people are injured, in many cases with life-changing injuries. What will become of those now known by the chilling abbreviation WCNSF - "Wounded child, no surviving family"? The suffering and need is almost beyond imagination. Conditions continue to deteriorate and supplies run short. Hospitals have been destroyed or damaged, while health needs grow, with an increasing number of patients injured in airstrikes or falling sick from their living conditions. In one harrowing account this week, a paediatrician described a surgeon warning her that he had more urgent cases than the infant bomb victim she was treating: "I tried to imagine what was more pressing than a one-year-old with no hand and no legs who was choking on his own blood," she added. There is now growing chatter about the push by the US for an extended pause in fighting in exchange for the release of hostages, with the hope that this might ultimately be expanded into a permanent ceasefire. Intensive diplomacy is welcome and necessary, but will not easily deliver results. Benjamin Netanyahu, the Israeli prime minister, has said he would not agree to any deal requiring the release of thousands of Palestinian prisoners or the departure of Israeli troops from Gaza. When the war eventually ends, the survivors will be left amid the rubble. Communicable diseases will spread more easily in densely packed settlements without proper sanitation. An estimated 50 to 62% of buildings in Gaza have likely been damaged or destroyed, and an even higher proportion of its homes. Balakrishnan Rajagopal, the UN special rapporteur on the right to adequate housing, called this week for the offence of domicile - the mass razing of neighbourhoods - to be included in international humanitarian and criminal law. There is only so much that relief work can do to ameliorate such a catastrophe. But the mass suspension of funding to the UN agency UNRWA - over allegations, described by the US as credible, that some employees participated in Hamas's 7 October atrocities - is a terrible blow. It will exacerbate the suffering in a place where, says commissioner Philippe Lazzarini, more than 2 million people depend on its aid for "sheer survival". Israeli media reports that ministers have also proposed limiting the inflow of aid to Gaza to weaken Hamas and increase pressure for the release of hostages. Palestinian children in Gaza will die, in the thousands, even if the barriers to aid are lifted today. But every day that funding is suspended, that aid is impeded, and that bombs fall, will make it worse. Not only Israel, but those who continue to supply it with weapons while cutting off UNRWA funding, must be answerable.



BD sends medics to work in Saudi Arabia

Bangladesh is for the first time sending its doctors and nurses to work in Saudi Arabia, following the Kingdom's recent decision to approve their recruitment and qualifications. According to Bangladesh Medical Association data, there are only a few dozen clinicians among nearly 3 million Bangladeshi expatriate workers residing in the Kingdom. It was only in 2022 that an agreement on the recruitment of medics was signed by both countries and the first Bangladeshi health workers departed for the Kingdom in November 2023. The initial group consisted of some 60 clinicians, it was just the beginning. "This number, insha'Allah, will jump in the near future ... It's just to tickle the market and to see how it's going," Al-Duhailan said in an interview last week. "A team from the Ministry of Health in Saudi Arabia already visited Bangladesh twice last year. And they will continue to visit Bangladesh to recruit more." The next group expected to depart for Saudi Arabia will consist of nurses. "Kingdom authorities asked us to send over 150 trained nurses. Our ministry is now scrutinizing the demands, like where the Bangladeshi nurses will be employed, whether they will be employed by government-run hospitals or private health facilities, etc.," said Khairul Alam, additional secretary at the Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment. "We welcome this latest move from Saudi Arabia to appoint Bangladeshi health sector workers in the Kingdom, a country that is a key destination for our migrants. There are scopes to increase this opportunity further," Alam said. "A detailed recruitment policy will be prepared for this." Bangladesh's more than 100 medical colleges produce large numbers of certified doctors, nurses and medics. Working in the Kingdom with top-quality equipment also offers them learning opportunities. "The more medical staffers we can send and the more we can upgrade them in terms of quality, the more it will create a win-win situation for both countries," said Shariful Hasan, associate director of the migration program of BRAC, the largest development organization based in Bangladesh. "Secondly, it will be helpful for our migrants ... Our doctors, nurses, and medical staffers can also offer treatment to our migrants in the Kingdom." Currently, only 2 percent of Bangladeshi workers in the Kingdom are skilled professionals. "As a result, we are exporting the highest number of migrants but receiving a lesser amount of remittance in comparison with the number of migrants. In this context, if we can send more skilled workforces, it will increase our remittance," Hasan said. "It will enhance our image as a source country of skilled workforce."

Climate migration challenge needs to be urgently tackled

SARA AL-MULLA

Although the majority of climate displacement occurs within national borders and displaced individuals may have the opportunity to return to their homes following a disaster, the unpredictable and escalating impacts of climate change are rendering certain regions uninhabitable. Analysis of recent climate-induced disasters demonstrates how the people of the Middle East and North Africa region are grappling with climate migration. For instance, Storm Daniel, which occurred in September 2023, stands as the most fatal Mediterranean tropical-like cyclone in recorded history. It led to the displacement

Despite global efforts to quell the ravages of climate change, natural disasters have, in recent years, been triggering a serious discourse on the best ways to support those who are forcibly displaced as a result of climate-induced events. Climate migration occurs when natural disasters and ecological transformations render specific regions uninhabitable, leading to the internal or external displacement of local communities in pursuit of safer and more sustainable living environments. Although the majority of climate displacement occurs within national borders and displaced individuals may have the opportunity to return to their homes following a disaster, the unpredictable and escalating impacts of climate change are rendering certain regions uninhabitable. Analysis of recent climate-induced disasters demonstrates how the people of the Middle East and North Africa region are grappling with climate migration. For instance, Storm Daniel, which occurred in September 2023, stands as the most fatal Mediterranean tropical-like cyclone in recorded history. It led to the displacement of about 45,000 individuals. Meanwhile, Mediterranean countries such as Morocco and Algeria were harshly impacted during a severe heat wave in July and August 2022, with the ensuing wildfires prompting 9,500 displacements from rural areas in northern Morocco alone. The Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, an international nongovernmental organization dedicated to monitoring data concerning the world's internally displaced persons, last year released statistics that highlight the calamity of climate migration. Since 2008, a staggering 376 million people globally have been forcibly displaced due to a number of climate-induced events and disasters, such as floods, windstorms, wildfires, earthquakes, tsunamis or droughts. As climate change remains the primary catalyst for natural disasters, the number of climate refugees is expected to keep increasing. A worrying upward trend has been observed since 2020, with the data revealing that, between the end of 2021 and the end of 2022, the number of individuals internally displaced by disasters surged by 45 percent, or 32.6 million. In 2022, the MENA region recorded an astonishing 305,000 displacements due to drought, wildfires and floods, which is nearly 25

percent more than in the previous year. As climate change remains the primary catalyst for natural disasters, the number of climate refugees is expected to keep increasing. The Institute for Economics and Peace estimates that, in the direst circumstances, up to 1.2 billion individuals could face displacement by 2050 due to natural disasters. The challenges climate refugees face play out in different ways as they navigate perilous journeys of migration. Climate refugees encounter various infringements on their basic human rights, including limited access to food, water, sanitation, housing, healthcare and education. Due to the sudden need for relocation, climate refugees also suffer from losses to their livelihoods and an inability to secure sustainable employment options, which consequently has a damaging impact on their mental and physical well-being. The severance of social connections and community ties also leads to isolation, anxiety and depression. Additionally, loopholes mean that legislation often does not provide full protection for climate refugees, making them prone to abuse, discrimination, exploitation, forced labor or trafficking. Addressing the challenges of climate migration necessitates a significant course correction to overcome obstacles and achieve objectives. This can be strengthened by the cooperation of international players and local community organizations in safeguarding the rights and dignity of climate migrants. To grasp what lies ahead requires an understanding of the root causes of climate migration within each community. Then there is a need to work diligently to mitigate those triggers. Long-term climate action strategies should envision a sustainable and resilient future, with particular focus on adaptation plans and environmental conservation. Programs should also include investments in agricultural technologies that boost productivity and, in turn, reduce food insecurity risks. Similarly, sustainable water resource management guidance will ensure water conservation in already water-stressed areas and improve access to clean water, while mitigating the impacts of droughts and floods. To grasp what lies ahead requires an understanding of the root causes of climate migration within each community. In the short run, governments should establish data centers that are

responsible for monitoring climate events and issuing early warnings to alert communities about impending climate-related disasters, while also coordinating responses that ensure timely evacuation and preparedness. Social protection programs are the cornerstone for aiding vulnerable populations, while community awareness programs can inform local communities about climate risks and promote sustainable practices. Beyond this, it is vital to roll out skills development programs to equip individuals with the capacity to adapt and rebuild their livelihoods and local communities following a disaster. Critically, discussions should be held on the national and international levels on the legal frameworks that protect the rights and needs of climate migrants. Currently, the 1951 Refugee Convention pertains solely to individuals who are persecuted due to race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group or political opinion. It has yet to recognize climate-related risks as grounds for refugee status. International stakeholders should lay out clear plans for migration management to facilitate safe, orderly and dignified migration. Planned relocation initiatives may be coordinated by governments, humanitarian agencies and communities to transfer populations from areas severely impacted by climate change to more secure and resilient locations. Assisting in the reconstruction of devastated communities affected by the impacts of climate change presents a viable option to reduce the need for external displacement. Enhancing access to sufficient financial resources will ensure the development of improved climate-proof infrastructure in susceptible areas across the MENA region, as well as fund the rebuilding of areas that have been devastated by natural disasters. In all, concerted efforts among government agencies, civil society, academia and the private sector will be fundamental in delivering these important programs. As climate threats continue to grow, the development of effective climate migration policies will be critical in ensuring the protection, rights and sustainable resettlement of individuals and communities displaced due to environmental changes.

-Sourced by Arab news

Von der Leyen seeks era-defining legacy

Andrew Hammond

The growing momentum behind Von der Leyen comes despite her multiple missteps in the top job. This includes when she was criticized last autumn for her unremittingly pro-Israel stance during her trip to the country. However, given the slim prospects of European Council President Charles Michel getting a second term this year, the argument is building among the bloc's 27 presidents and prime ministers that some institutional continuity is needed at the top of the Brussels bureaucracy. This is partly why Von der Leyen's star is so high. On the sidelines of the big meetings, right-of-center

EU presidents and prime ministers have a huge, diazied agenda in their upcoming meetings, ranging from enhancing Europe's economic competitiveness to the Ukraine war. However, on the sidelines of these sessions lurks another big issue for the bloc's future: the growing momentum behind a second term for European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen. Von der Leyen, who took office in 2019, is becoming the most powerful person in Brussels since Jacques Delors in the 1980s and 1990s. A key conundrum in the coming months will be if she can now develop an era-defining agenda like the one that put Delors, who was behind economic projects such as the single market and single currency, in the history books. The growing momentum behind Von der Leyen comes despite her multiple missteps in the top job. This includes when she was criticized last autumn for her unremittingly pro-Israel stance during her trip to the country. However, given the slim prospects of European Council President Charles Michel getting a second term this year, the argument is building among the bloc's 27 presidents and prime ministers that some institutional continuity is needed at the top of the Brussels bureaucracy. This is partly why Von der Leyen's star is so high. On the sidelines of the big meetings, right-of-center politicians in the ruling European People's Party are actively discussing her candidacy for a second term. While Von der Leyen has not yet publicly announced, there is a growing expectation that she will declare her intentions soon, possibly at a key German Christian Democrats event in Berlin in mid-February. Yet, while momentum is clearly behind Von der Leyen, one criticism made of her is that she needs a bolder vision. At last month's World Economic Forum Annual Meeting in Davos, she remarked that "the next years will require us to think in the same way," citing the big calls she has made

over the Green New Deal, support for Ukraine and the bloc's initially stumbling response to the pandemic that nearly forced her resignation due to the bungled early EU rollout of vaccines in 2021. Von der Leyen appears to share the view that it is critical to be ambitious and seize the initiative with an audacious agenda. While some of these achievements will leave a significant political footprint in Brussels, they may not be the era-defining legacy that she appears to want to leave. Delors was the last European Commission president to leave such a landmark, as his major initiatives kickstarted a new age of European integration. From the mid-1980s to the mid-1990s, Delors served a record three terms of office, driving a federalist vision that was often anathema to powerful then-UK Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher. During this time, the European Community became today's EU, growing from 10 members to 15, with Spain, Portugal, Sweden, Austria and Finland all joining. This year marks the 25th anniversary of the launch of one of the biggest legacies of Delors' time in office: the euro single currency. In January 1999, 11 EU countries fixed their exchange rates, agreed to a single monetary policy driven by the European Central Bank and launched the new common currency. Today, the euro is the official currency of 20 EU countries, which have a combined population of about 350 million, and is one of the most important currencies in the world. This is despite the significant challenges the eurozone has experienced, including the 2010-13 debt crisis, which Delors acknowledged as reflecting the lack of economic underpinning of the single currency area. One key difference between Von der Leyen's reign so far and that of Delors is that her period as European Commission chief has been shaped by multiple crises of the first order. To be sure, Delors was also in office in a challenging period, when Europe was

widely perceived to have lost its way, but these problems were perhaps of a lesser magnitude overall. This, supporters of Von der Leyen assert, makes it harder for her to shape the type of era-defining legacy Delors had. However, for all the challenges the pandemic and Ukraine war have brought, this crisis-type environment is one the EU has sometimes found congenial to big breakthroughs. One example was the key role Von der Leyen played in 2021 in persuading EU leaders to agree to give the bloc debt-raising powers for the first time in its history. This was to finance a 750 billion (\$810 billion) post-coronavirus recovery plan to counteract the EU's worst economic shock for decades. This may be looked back on as a key moment for Brussels. At the time, there was even discussion of a "Hamiltonian moment," in reference to Alexander Hamilton, the treasury secretary of the newly created US who in 1790 convinced Congress of the benefits of common debt. Von der Leyen appears to share the view that it is critical to be ambitious and seize the initiative with an audacious agenda. The alternative, in her view, is a new era of the kind of political drift that has characterized EU affairs for so long. As well as potential opportunities on the horizon, such as the green transition, there are also risks. These include a huge number of domestic and external challenges that may be without precedent in the postwar era, including rising euroskepticism. So, a potential Von der Leyen second term would have a huge role in defining the EU's longer-term political and economic character. There may still be a historic window of opportunity for the continent to forge a stronger, more sustainable path into the future, but the key question is whether or not this will be seized.

-Sourced by Arab News

Briefs

Kakar wants continuity of fiscal...

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the country and the economic and social improvement of the people. At the end of the meeting, Caretaker Prime Minister Anwarul Haq Kakar praised the role of the Special Investment Facilitation Council, all ministries, institutions and all relevant stakeholders in supporting the Caretaker Government in achieving its economic goals and setting a good example for the future. He emphasized that the future elected government should continue the economic policies in the wider interest of the country and benefit from the speed of the economic initiatives established by the Special Investment Facilitation Council.

Pak seals detailed plan to...

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when asked about the plan to sell the airline. "The remaining 2% is just to bring it on an excel sheet after the cabinet approves it." Fawad said the plan, drawn up by transaction adviser Ernst & Young, will be presented to the cabinet for approval before the tenure of the administration ends following the election. The cabinet will also decide whether to sell the stake by tender or through a government-to-government deal, Fawad said.

Death toll rises as Hamas...

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October 7, while another 66,287 have been wounded. It added that 112 Palestinians have been killed and 148 injured during the past 24 hours. About 1.9 million displaced Palestinians fear a new Israeli military onslaught after the Israeli occupation defense minister pledged to attack an area once described as a "safe zone". Meanwhile, Hamas officials have said that the group is studying a proposed ceasefire deal that would include prolonged pauses in fighting in Gaza and swaps of Israeli hostages for Palestinian prisoners, but at the same time appeared to rule out some of its key components.

17,000 Children have...

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panic every time they hear the sound of shelling. For her part, Catherine Russell, the Executive Director of UNICEF, warned against abandoning the children of Gaza, saying that their situation is growing darker day by day. A statement by the Joint Permanent Committee of United Nations agencies, dated January 31st, warned that the countries that suspended their financial support to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees, UNRWA, would lead to a catastrophe for the people of Gaza.

Nawaz blasts...

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Sharif said that the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder must be held accountable for his actions. Addressing the public gathering in Swat, the three-time prime minister lambasted the PTI founder, saying, "Those who have been tested should not be voted into the power again. Why that person [PTI founder] was given the permission to harm the country?"

'It was a mistake...

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defeat while disassociating the party from arrest of Sheikh Rasheed. "Alliance with Sheikh Rasheed has harmed PTI," Raoof Hasan said, adding that the party has its own candidates in former's constituency. Responding to a question, the PTI leader said Usman Dar - who recently condemned the May 9 riots - hasn't left the party. "Dar's mother had contacted the party following her son's press conference," he added.

Indian Davis Cup team members touched by Pakistani hospitality

The Indian team coach also expressed satisfaction over the security arrangements

AFZAL JAVED

ISLAMABAD: The Indian team, which has arrived in Pakistan, was greatly touched by the hospitality extended to them by the Pakistani authorities. Addressing a press conference at the Islamabad Serena Hotel the coach of the team Zeeshan said that they were thankful to Pakistani authorities for extending support and hospitality. The Indian team coach also expressed satisfaction over the security arrangements.

The Davis Cup International Tennis Tournament 2024 going to be held among Pakistan and India teams starting from Saturday 3rd to Sunday 4th February 2024. The Indian tennis team has arrived in Pakistan after a gap of 60 years. The team including Ramkumar Ramanathan, Sriram Balaji, Yuki Bhambhani, and Saketh Myneni will play against the Pakistani players including Aisam Ul Haq, Aqeel Khan, Muzammil Murtaza, and Barkatullah in a Davis Cup World Group I play-off, with the matches scheduled to commence at Aisam ul Haq Tennis Pavilion Pakistan Sports Complex Islamabad. Throughout the years, Serena Hotel's Sports Diplomacy has evolved into a vital component of Serena's commitment to forging stronger ties with communities. It actively promotes the involvement of diverse groups in sports, aiming to enhance leadership, teamwork, and advocating for a healthier lifestyle.

WORLD GROUP-1 PLAY OFFS				
3rd Feb 2024	Singles -1	Aisam Ul Haq Qureshi	VS	Ramkumar Ramanathan
3rd Feb 2024	Singles -2	Aqeel Khan	VS	Sriram Balaji
3rd Feb 2024	Singles -1	Aqeel Khan	VS	Ramkumar Ramanathan
3rd Feb 2024	Singles -1	Aisam Ul Haq	VS	Sriram Balaji
4th Feb 2024	Doubles	Muzammil Murtaza	VS	Yuki Bhambhani
4th Feb 2024	Doubles	Barkatullah	VS	Saketh Myneni



ISLAMABAD: Tennis teams of Pakistan and India posing for a picture after a joint press conference, held at Islamabad Serena Hotel. Both teams shall participate in the David Cup match starting from today. - DNA

Through the unwavering support for tennis initiatives, Serena Hotels seeks to be an influence for the growth of the sport in Pakistan. Serena envisions a

future where the courts are filled with aspiring athletes, their dreams fueled by the same passion to bring the glory of tennis to Pakistan.

Davis Cup World Group-I Tie Pakistan VS India Schedule: Mr. Javier Moreno Perez, the referee of International Tennis Federation took

the draws of the matches pairings. Venue: Aisam Ul Haq Qureshi Tennis Complex Pakistan Sports Complex, Islamabad.

Smith, Green power Aust to win over WI in first ODI

Opener Josh Inglis set up platform for victory with a brisk 65 off 43 balls

SPORTS DESK

MELBOURNE: Captain Steve Smith and Cameron Green helped Australia register a comprehensive eight-wicket win against the West Indies with a dominant 149-run partnership in the first one-day international in Melbourne on Friday. Smith remained unbeaten on run-a-ball 79 and Green, batting at number three, was 77 not out from 104 balls as Australia chased down 232 with 11.3 overs to spare. Opener Josh Inglis set up the platform for victory with a brisk 65 off 43 balls, including 10 fours and a maximum. It was Australia's 10th consecutive ODI win, including their World Cup victory in India last year.



Travis Head, who scored four off five balls, was the only disappointment for Australia today. Debutant speedster Xavier Bartlett bagged the player of the match award with 4-17 off nine overs. Green scored fifty off 62 balls, with Smith's 50 coming in 58 balls. Inglis's fifty was powered

off just 28 balls after plundering three boundaries off Matthew Forde's fourth over and swatting a huge six off Oshane Thomas over deep square leg. But Inglis was out attempting to reverse-sweep Gudakesh Motie only to lob a catch to slip. When he departed Australia were 83

for two and in the box seat in the 12th over. Earlier, Keacy Carty was denied a century in the West Indies innings in a run out mix-up. He looked primed for his maiden ODI century before he was badly burnt by his batting partner Hayden Walsh and was run out for 88 off 108 balls. Bartlett, playing in his first ODI along with fellow pacer Lance Morris (0-59), had a dream start, taking the top of Justin Greaves's off-stump with a big inswing for one and picked up Alick Athanaze in his following over, caught behind for five. Bartlett had the ball swinging appreciably and claimed the big wicket of skipper Shai Hope, caught at first slip by Matthew Short for 12, leaving him with 3-8 in five overs.

Jaiswal's century guides India to 336-6 in test

NEW DELHI: Left-handed opener Yashasvi Jaiswal became India's saviour on day one of the second England Test which is being played at the ACA-VDCA Cricket Stadium, Visakhapatnam, on Friday. Jaiswal, featuring in his sixth Test match, saved India from a certain day-one collapse as despite losing wickets from the other end, he continued the charge against the English bowlers.

The 22-year-old came as an opener alongside his skipper Rohit Sharma at the start of the play and by the time of stumps, he was still on the crease with Ravichandran Ashwin. The left-handed batter was praised for his iconic batting display and from former cricketers to fans, no one could refrain from lauding the 22-year-old's remarkable effort. By the time of stumps, Jaiswal was batting on 179* alongside Ashwin (5*) as India concluded the day at 336/6. He was supported greatly by Shreyas Iyer (27), Rajat Patidar (32) and Axar Patel's (27) cameos during his innings. Shoaib Bashir and Rehman Ahmed took two wickets each for the visitors while James Anderson and the hero of the first Test, Tom Hartley, picked one each.

Playing XI: India: Yashasvi Jaiswal, Rohit Sharma (c), Shubman Gill, Shreyas Iyer, Rajat Patidar, Srikrishna Bharat (wk), Ravichandran Ashwin, Axar Patel, Kuldeep Yadav, Jasprit Bumrah, Mukesh Kumar
England: Zak Crawley, Ben Duckett, Ollie Pope, Joe Root, Jonny Bairstow, Ben Stokes (c), Ben Foakes (wk), Rehan Ahmed, Tom Hartley, Shoaib Bashir, James Anderson. - Agencies

Imran Khan calls...

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Cypher, and Iddat cases, describing them as "frivolous, baseless, and politically motivated." Imran emphasised that these cases aimed to undermine his credibility and demoralize voters. He pointed out the serious nature of the cypher case, warning about foreign interference in Pakistan's internal matters. In a post on X, the ex-premier said, "When the cypher case emerged, I warned that unless we dealt with it decisively, no Prime Minister in the future would be able to withstand such blatant foreign interference in Pakistan's internal matters." He claims that the manipulation of the legal process, denying him the right to cross-examine witnesses, was a tactic orchestrated to conceal a political betrayal comparable to that of Mir Jaffer of Bengal.

24 terrorists killed in...

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personnel and two civilians embraced martyrdom. The martyred LEAs personnel fought gallantly against the terrorists. "Law enforcement agencies deputed on security offered stiff resistance and forced the attackers to repulse," the ISPR said in its statement. The statement further read that these terrorists were then hunted down in the ensuing sanitisation and clearance operations which have now been concluded after clearing and securing the area.

Condoleezza Rice...

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Pakistan Rice shared the apprehension that Osama was in Pakistan. To which, the then PM had negated saying that it was disinformation. Rice visited Pakistan four times as a US secretary. During her surprise visit to Islamabad after the Mumbai attacks, she met the PPP leader in the first week of December 2008. Gilani served as the PM from 2008 to 2012.

Justice Shahid...

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having served as a Judge of Lahore High Court, Lahore for about ten years, hereby exercise the option to resign under Article 206(1) of the Constitution of Islamic Republic of Pakistan, 1973 with immediate effect," he wrote in the resignation letter. "It was absolute honor to hold the office, but for personal circumstances I have decided to turn the page and start a new chapter," he added. The outgoing judge also cited proverb in the resignation letter: "An ounce of discretion is worth a pound of wit". Last month, two judges of the Supreme Court - Justice Ijaz Ul Ahsan and Justice Mazhar Ali Akbar Naqvi - stepped down from the post.

USA grab control of Ukraine tie in Davis Cup

PARIS: Sebastian Korda and Davis Cup debutant Chris Eubanks won singles matches as the United States moved 2-0 up against Ukraine in their qualifier in Lithuania. World number 33 Korda overcame the challenge of Oleksii Krutykh, a player ranked 309 places beneath the American, to earn a battling 6-3, 6-7 (3/7), 6-4 victory in the opening rubber. Eubanks stepped in for the injured Taylor Fritz and beat 498th-ranked Viacheslav Bielinskyi 6-3, 6-2 to leave the record 32-time winners in sight of the September finals featuring 16 teams. "All day since I found out I was playing I was really nervous," said Eubanks. "Representing your country means a lot more than just playing for yourself. I had a lot of guys I didn't want to let down. Nerves were pretty strong at the beginning but once I got on court I settled down nicely and played pretty well." Austin Krajicek and Rajeev Ram can seal the tie in Saturday's doubles, which takes place before the reverse singles. The US have not won the title since 2007. Defending champions Italy and last year's runners-up Australia, as well as Britain and Spain have advanced automatically to the finals. - DNA

Sanjay calls Wasim 'god of cricket'

DUBAI: Showering rich praise on the "Sultan of Swing", Wasim Akram, Bollywood superstar Sanjay Dutt called the Pakistani legendary former pacer the "god of cricket". Dutt made the remarks while addressing an event as he met Akram after a long time. Speaking at the launch of a digital currency event, the Bollywood hero said that Akram is a brother he had known for many years before he went on to declare him "god of cricket". "I am honoured to be here with Wasim bhai. He is a brother I have known for many years and one of the greatest cricketers I have seen in my entire life," Dutt added. "Wasim Bhai, god of cricket, thank you. And his reverse swing, my God! Everyone would be afraid of him." Akram expressed his pleasure of meeting Dutt as the 57-year-old took to his X, formerly Twitter, account to post a picture with his buddy. "Great to see my buddy Sanjay Dutt almost after a decade, humble as always...#kahnayak," Akram posted on X. In his 20-year-long career, the Sultan of Swing took 916 wickets in 460 international matches in ODI and Test cricket. He is also the second-fastest bowler to reach 500 international wickets in just 354 matches, only behind Sri Lanka's mystery spinner Muttiah Muralitharan who reached the feat in 20 fewer matches. Considered one



of the greatest fast bowlers of all time, Akram was one of the keys to Pakistan's 1992 Cricket World Cup triumph in Australia. He did not only take three important wickets - sending two English batters back to the pavilion for a duck - but also played a crucial knock scoring 33 off 18 deliveries with four boundaries at the strike rate of 183 in the final against England at Melbourne Cricket Ground (MCG). He was also named the Player of the Match for his heroics. He was also the highest wicket-taker of the tournament with 18 wickets to his name. - Agencies

Mind games vital for youth's growth: Prime Minister

Acknowledging the contribution of the federal minister for inter-provincial cooperation, Fawad Hassan Fawad, PM Kakar said that due to his personal efforts, the launch of this initiative became possible

ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Prime Minister Anwar-ul-Haq Kakar said on Friday, emphasizing the importance of sports, particularly mind games, in fostering both the physical and mental development of the youth, that the chess game helps to instill discipline in individuals' thought processes. Addressing the launch of the Prime Minister's National Mind Sports Initiative, the prime minister highlighted the positive impact of such mind games on mental well-being and said the youth engaged in such healthy activities would become successful professionals in the future. He said these games promote cognitive activity and critical thinking among the players. The prime minister said he was happy that he made a commitment to this special cause, and he will also continue to support and promote this cause in the future. He said every school in the country should have access to this game.

Acknowledging the contribution of the federal minister for inter-provincial cooperation, Fawad Hassan Fawad, PM Kakar said that due to his personal efforts, the launch of this initiative became possible. Fawad Hassan Fawad, on the occasion,

informed us that, under the initiative, the facility of mind games would be given in 10,000 public schools across the country. "We are going to take it across all the public schools in Pakistan, and we are also

engaging the corporate sector and inviting the private schools to have this in every single school in the country," he added. The minister said that in the first month, some 100 schools in Islamabad would be

given the facility. The minister also recalled the tremendous performance of the late Mir Sultan Khan, a native chess player from Sargodha, who won the British Chess Championship in 1929, 1931, and 1932. To acknowledge the performance of Mir Sultan Khan, President Arkady Dvorkovich presented an award to Prime Minister Anwar-ul-Haq Kakar, who received the award on behalf of Mir Sultan Khan. The President of the International Chess Federation, speaking on the occasion, said that besides being a mind game, chess was a lot of fun too. He said this game was very important for a country like Pakistan, where millions of young people were growing up. He said, "Some 600,000 kids in 10,000 schools in Pakistan will have the chance to get access to this game. He said the federation will support and train the teachers, who will then train kids." The Managing Director (MD) of the International Chess Federation, Dana Reznicec-Ozola, President of the Asian Chess Federation, Sheikh Sultan bin Khaleefa Alnahyan, and President of the Pakistan Chess Federation, Muhammad Hanif Qureshi, were also present on the occasion.



Briefs

Syria says
downed
Israeli
missiles over
Damascus

DAMASCUS : Syria says its air defenses have confronted an Israeli missile attack over the capital Damascus, in the latest act of aggression by Tel Aviv against the Arab country. Syria's state news agency SANA quoted a Syrian military source as saying that the country's military had intercepted a number of Israeli missiles targeting southern Damascus. The military source said the attack was launched at 04:20 am local time on the occupied Golan Heights. "Our air defenses confronted the hostile missiles and downed some of them," the source said, noting that only material damage was caused. On Monday, Syrian media said the Israeli regime had launched a missile attack on an area near the Sayeda Zeinab shrine in a southern suburb of Damascus. That attacks come as Israel continues its brutal ground and air aggression against Palestinians in the besieged Gaza Strip. The Israeli regime has launched a deadly missile attack on the outskirts of the Syrian capital of Damascus, killing two civilians. Iranian military advisors have been assassinated in the Sayeda Zeinab neighborhood by Israeli airstrikes in recent weeks.—APP

150+
countries
mark 12th
World Hijab
Day

LONDON: People in more than 150 countries celebrated World Hijab Day on Thursday with events designed to counter hijabophobia through raised awareness and improved education about the traditional Muslim head covering. The headline event hosted by the World Hijab Day organization, which is based in New York, was its annual online conference, which featured speakers from 12 countries — Egypt, the US, the UK, Syria, Sri Lanka, Palestine, Afghanistan, Somalia, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Canada and Mexico — who presented their diverse perspectives on the issue. "The topics vary, reflecting the evolving discussions aligned with the changing world. Additionally, we're enhancing transparency by teaming up with Launchgood (a crowdfunding platform with a particular focus on the global Muslim community) to raise funds, ensuring organizational growth for more impactful initiatives and events compared to previous years. "This year's edition of World Hijab Day aims to empower and inspire individuals through the theme #VeiledStrength. By fostering a sense of resilience and confidence, we aim to challenge stereotypes and promote a deeper understanding of the strength inherent in those who choose to wear the hijab." World Hijab Day, which is celebrated on Feb. 1 each year, was founded in New York by Bangladeshi American Nazma Khan in 2013 with the aim of recognizing the millions of Muslim women who choose to wear a hijab and live a life of modesty.—DNA

Several dead,
300 injured
in Kenya gas
plant fire

NAIROBI : A massive explosion has occurred at a gas plant in Nairobi, killing at least two people and injuring at least 300 others. Kenyan Red Cross and other officials said, fearing casualties could rise. "The concerted actions of various response units have resulted in the successful evacuation of 271 individuals to different health facilities in Nairobi," the Kenya Red Cross said on Friday on Twitter, adding that an additional 27 people were treated on site. Footage filmed at the scene in the Embakasi region showed firefighters attempting to extinguish the blaze. A government spokesperson stated that gas cylinders were being refilled when the fire broke out just before midnight on Thursday. Witnesses told local media they felt tremors immediately after the blast.—APP

Govt prioritizes boosting
US investments in Pakistan

Pakistan's Ambassador to the US, Masood Khan said that the newly established Special Investment Facilitation Council is taking practical steps to remove hurdles in the way of foreign investors

DNA

WASHINGTON : Pakistan's Ambassador to the US, Masood Khan, told Pakistani-American businessmen that the present government was facilitating and offering attractive incentives to financiers to invest in all areas of the country's economy. "Promoting Pak-US bilateral trade and enhancing US investment in Pakistan is the foremost priority," he said in the course of a virtual meeting with the leadership of California-based Pakistan American Chamber of Commerce (PACC), which is headed by its Chairman Waqar Ali Khan. Other members of the Chamber — Dr

Sana Khan, Fawad Ismail, Zubair Rao, Maqsood Chaudhry, Dr Salahuddin and Mr Farrukh — also took part in the meeting. In addition, Pakistan's Consul General in Los Angeles, Asim Ali Khan, and Trade and Investment Counselor Quratulain Fatima were present. In his remarks, Masood Khan said, "The newly established Special Investment Facilitation Council is taking practical steps to remove hurdles in the way of foreign investors undertaking profitable business ventures in Pakistan." Masood Khan said. Appreciating the role of PACC in promoting trade activities and connecting business communities of the two countries, the Ambassador underscored the need for greater



collaboration between various chambers and trade organizations working across the United States to boost Pak-US trade and investment ties. "By investing their resources back home, Pak-Amer-

ican investors would not only be reaping huge dividends but would also be contributing towards the socio-economic progress of their motherland," the Ambassador said. PACC Chairman Waqar Ali Khan briefed the Ambassador about various activities of the chamber, especially the successes achieved in promoting trade activities in the health, food and textile sectors. He said that PACC was working closely with the Pakistani Consulate in Los Angeles to organize a single-country expo in Los Angeles in the near future. Waqar Khan also suggested a sister-city partnership between Karachi and Los Angeles which, he said, would not only boost trade activities but facilitate the transfer of technology. Dr. Sana Khan

said that Pakistani radiologists and technicians were being trained to remotely operate and provide radiology services to the Middle East, Europe and the United States. Consul General Asim Ali Khan said that a detailed presentation had been made to the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce on the Special Investment Facilitation Council and how the Council was facilitating businesses with innovative and business-friendly approach. The LA Chamber has over 1800 business entities attached to it. Counselor Quratulain Fatima apprised the meeting about efforts to promote trade linkages and organise trade activities in collaboration with relevant trade bodies and organizations.

WHO warns of high
risk of famine in Gaza

Israeli forces have also detained dozens of Palestinian journalists in both Gaza and in the West Bank "where harassment, intimidation and attacks on journalists have increased" since the start of the Israeli genocidal war

WEB DESK

WASHINGTON: The head of the World Health Organization (WHO) has warned of a "high" risk of famine in the besieged Gaza Strip amid a brutal Israeli aggression, reiterating his call for a ceasefire. "The risk of famine is high and increasing each day," Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said in a post on social media platform X, formerly known as Twitter. "We continue to call for safe access for humanitarian personnel and supplies...We continue to call for a ceasefire," he said also noted that "Over 100,000 Gazans are either dead, injured, or missing and presumed dead." Israel launched the war on Gaza on October 7 after the Palestinian resistance movement Hamas carried out the surprise Operation Al-Aqsa Storm in response to Tel Aviv's decades-long campaign of bloodletting

and devastation against Palestinians. The Tel Aviv regime has killed at least 27,019 Palestinians and injured 66,139 others since the start of the invasion, the health ministry in Gaza said. Thousands more are also missing and presumed dead under the rubble in Gaza, which is under "complete siege" by Israel. UN experts have described Israel's war on Gaza as the deadliest, most dangerous conflict for journalists in recent history. "We are alarmed at the extraordinarily high numbers of journalists and media workers who have been killed, attacked, injured and detained in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, particularly in Gaza, in recent months blatantly disregarding international law," they said on Thursday. "We condemn all killings, threats and attacks on journalists and call on all parties to the conflict to protect them," they

said. Referring to Israeli attacks on journalists who were "clearly identifiable in jackets and helmets marked 'press' or traveling in well-marked press vehicles", the UN experts said the reports "would seem to indicate that the killings, injury, and detention are a deliberate strategy by Israeli forces to obstruct the media and silence critical reporting." They stressed that the attacks on journalists are war crimes. "Journalists are entitled to protection as civilians under international humanitarian law. Targeted attacks and killings of journalists are war crimes," the experts warned. They also slammed Israel for refusing to let media from outside Gaza to enter and report. "The attacks on media in Gaza and restrictions on other journalists from accessing Gaza, combined with severe disruptions of the Internet, are major impediments to the

right of information of the people of Gaza as well as the outside world." The experts also urged the International Court of Justice and the International Criminal Court to "give particular attention to the dangerous pattern of attacks and impunity for crimes against journalists, which has intensified since October 7." "Targeting and killing of journalists in the Occupied Palestinian Territory must stop," they stressed.

According to UN reports, over 122 journalists and media workers have been killed and many have been injured in Gaza since October 7. Israeli forces have also detained dozens of Palestinian journalists in both Gaza and in the West Bank "where harassment, intimidation and attacks on journalists have increased" since the start of the Israeli genocidal war.

Azerbaijani embassy
in China sets up
polling station

BAKU : Regarding the extraordinary presidential election set for February 7 in Azerbaijan, a polling station has been established at the country's embassy in the People's Republic of China, in compliance with the Electoral Code. Trend reports, referring to the "Election 2024" Independent Media Center. Members, secretaries, and a chairman of the precinct election commission have been chosen. Azerbaijani citizens living or staying on an extended business trip in China will have the opportunity to cast their votes on February 7, between 8:00 AM and 7:00 AM local time, at the designated polling station established at the embassy. Those aged 18 and above, possessing active voting rights, can participate in the voting process by presenting a valid passport or ID card of Azerbaijan. The precinct election commission is fully ready to conduct the presidential election in strict adherence to legal requirements. In China, all essential measures have been taken to inform Azerbaijani citizens about consular registration in connection with the upcoming presidential election. As a result, individuals from Azerbaijan on consular registration have been informed about their eligibility to participate in the voting process. Furthermore, the relevant announcement has been published on the official website of the embassy, across social media accounts, and in WeChat messenger groups. At the polling station set up at the Azerbaijani Embassy in China, not only Azerbaijani citizens residing in China but also eligible voters who find themselves in Beijing on election day for various reasons will have the opportunity to cast their votes. To safeguard the voting rights of Azerbaijani citizens residing abroad or on extended foreign business trips during the extraordinary presidential election, a total of 49 polling stations have been established across 37 countries. On December 7, 2023, President of the Republic of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev signed a decree on holding an extraordinary presidential election in the country on February 7, 2024. The Central Election Commission of Azerbaijan (CEC) on December 19 approved the candidacy of Ilham Aliyev, nominated by the ruling New Azerbaijan Party (YAP), for participation in the extraordinary presidential election. Azerbaijan has registered 7 candidates to run in the extraordinary presidential election.—DNA

Yemen strikes
British ship in
support
of Gaza

SANA'A : Yemen's Armed Forces say they have targeted a British merchant vessel heading towards the occupied territories in continued support for Palestinians in the Gaza Strip, who are enduring a genocidal Israeli war. "The naval forces in the Yemeni Armed Forces targeted a British commercial ship in the Red Sea that was headed to the ports of occupied Palestine with appropriate naval missiles," the forces announced on Thursday. The forces have been conducting many such operations against Israeli vessels or those heading towards the occupied Palestinian territories' ports. The operations have been described as a response to an October 7, 2023-present war and siege that the Israeli regime has been waging against Gaza following an operation carried out by the Palestinian territory's resistance movements. Nearly 27,000 Palestinians, mostly women, children, and adolescents, have died in the war so far. The United States and the UK have also conducted several missile attacks against Yemeni targets in response to the Yemeni operations. US, UK launch new strikes on Yemen amid frustration with anti-Israel campaign US, UK launch new strikes on Yemen amid frustration with anti-Israel campaign.—APP

Malaysia
halves jail
sentence
of ex-prime
minister
Najib

KUALA LUMPUR: Malaysia halved the jail sentence on Friday of former premier Najib Razak, who was convicted of graft and money laundering related to the multibillion-dollar 1MDB scandal, a move expected to raise further questions about Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim's commitment to fighting graft. Anwar campaigned on an anti-corruption platform, but joined hands with Najib's graft-tainted party, the United National Malays Organisation (UMNO), to form a government in November 2022, after an election that ended in a hung parliament. The reduction in Najib's sentence comes amid accusations that the Anwar administration is backsliding on reforms, after a string of graft cases linked to Najib and other UMNO leaders were dropped last year. Najib, who began serving a 12-year jail term in August 2022, will be released in 2028 and fines imposed on him reduced to 50 million ringgit (\$10.59 million) from 210 million ringgit, according to a statement from the secretariat of Malaysia's Pardons Board on Friday.—Agencies

38 Killed in
south Sudan
clashes

JUBA : Residents of a swampy area in central South Sudan battled with cattle herders who moved in looking for water and pasture during the dry season, and at least 38 people were killed and 52 suffered gunshot wounds, officials said Thursday. The fighting started Wednesday and tensions remained high Thursday night, with officials reporting "minor clashes" and apprehension over revenge attacks in the remote area. The information minister of Warrap state, William Wol Mayom, said fighting took place in the Alor area, which is in Lakes state and borders both Warrap and Unity states. Mayom said security forces had been sent to calm the situation and to move the cattle herders away from the disputed wet lands. "The violence has been de-escalated, but minor clashes are still being reported in inaccessible swampy areas and casualties cannot be fully verified," Mayom said. A police spokesperson for Lakes state, Maj. Elijah Mabor Makuach, said 19 of the dead and 17 of the wounded were civilians from Warrap state and 19 of the dead and 35 wounded were from Lakes state. Makuach said young herders from Warrap migrated to the Alor area with their cattle two weeks ago and began burning brush and the temporary shelters of residents.—DNA

Iran intelligence
exposes Mossad
spies in 28 nations

TEHRAN : Iran's Intelligence Ministry says its forces have identified a significant number of spies linked to the Israeli Mossad spy agency in 28 countries across the world. In a statement on Friday, the ministry announced what it described as the "largest combined intelligence and counter-intelligence operation" against the Israeli regime's espionage and security organizations. The statement underlined that the "venturesome" operation was conducted in the form of a series of intelligence-counterintelligence, offensive-defensive actions, and through the use of various methods of intelligence gathering, which led to obtaining a "unique" and "unprecedented" collection of information. "In addition to intelligence and security findings, obtaining special information related to some of the most important secret military facilities, weapons factories, and strategic civilian industries of the usurping Zionist regime is also among the achievements of the ministry's large and multi-stage operation," the statement added. Iran's Intelligence Ministry stressed that the combined project resulted in spotting "tens of spies and terrorist elements" affiliated with the Israeli regime in 28 countries across the world and in three continents of Asia, Africa and Europe. Stopping short of naming the countries involved in the operation, the statement said, "A number of spies in Tehran and several provinces of the country" were identified and dealt with legally or kept under security surveillance. "Also, several Iranian spies residing abroad were identified." Iran's Intelligence Ministry said the particulars of foreign spies active in countries with which the Islamic Republic maintains relations will be provided to their respective intelligence bodies for due measures, including punitive and intelligence. Iranian security forces arrest all ten members of an espionage and terrorist network affiliated with the Israeli spy agency Mossad. Pointing to the background and records of the identified spies, the statement said some of them "voluntarily" cooperated with the Mossad and committed treason against their countries, adding that the Israeli agency "forced" them to carry out various treacherous operations against the interests of their respective countries.—APP



Geneva : Ambassador Bilal Ahmad met Carlos Maria Correa Executive Director of South Centre. Appreciated the Centre's important policy advisory & capacity building role for Global South delegations in Geneva.—DNA

Indonesian diplomat urges EU for Gaza consistency

Retno Marsudi appeals EU to 'listen to your heart and do the right thing' about Palestine

FOREIGN DESK

JAKARTA : Indonesian Foreign Minister Retno Marsudi on Friday called for "consistency" with respect to international law when it comes to the besieged Palestinian enclave of Gaza. "The respect that should also be applied to Palestine, to Gaza," Marsudi said, addressing a joint EU-Indo-Pacific forum in Brussels. Noting that Palestine has been encountering continuing injustice for the past seven decades, Marsudi asked: "Will we continue to be silent? ... We will not." "It is also very important that we should continue the work" for the UN agency for Palestinian refugees or

UNRWA for the people of Palestine, said Marsudi. The US, the UK, and many EU nations have cut funds to the agency after allegations leveled by Tel Aviv amid Israel's war on Gaza which has resulted in the killing of more than 27,000 Palestinians since Oct. 7. Appealing the EU leaders, Marsudi said: "Listen to your heart and do the right thing, to stop atrocities in Gaza, in Palestine." "The EU, and all of us, as firm supporters of upholding international law, will also have a consistent position when it comes to Gaza." Underlining the importance of respecting international in a "consistent" manner, Marsudi said: "Without respect for international law, the

mighty will continue to take all. No state is above the law. ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) and EU should be at the frontline in respecting values and principles of international law." The Indonesian foreign minister also noted: "Consistency between values and action reflect the sincerity of our moral ground (as) it shows who we actually are." Meanwhile, the EU's foreign policy chief Josep Borrell thanked Marsudi for reminding the forum of the "open conflict" which is "call to the humanity." Calling the ongoing conflict in Gaza as "very tragic events," Borrell said: "More can be done" with respect to the support to the Palestinian people.

Colombia's president
backs students displaying
Palestinian flag

BOGOTA : Colombian President Gustavo Petro on Friday criticized the removal of a group of students from the university's conference hall for raising the Palestinian flag. Sharing footage of the moment when students raised the Palestinian flag on social media platform X, he stressed "freedom." "We have diplomatic relations with the State of Palestine, and like the flag of any state with which we establish diplomatic relations, respect must be shown for its flag. "Colombia is a country of freedoms and rights. There is no place for censorship in a state university. Culture and freedom are synonymous," Petro said. The footage shows a group of students raising a large Palestinian flag during a concert by a symphony orchestra in the conference hall of the National University of Colombia. Security personnel then intervene as students shout slogans in support of Palestine. Petro announced on Oct. 20 last year that Colombia would open an embassy in the West Bank city of Ramallah.—Agencies

Briefs

88 candidates die days before elections

DNA

ISLAMABAD: As many as 88 candidates in the race for national and provincial assemblies' seats have died before the general elections. According to the Election Commission of Pakistan, nine candidates contesting for the National Assembly and 79 for the provincial assemblies have passed away due to various reasons. Rehman Zeb Khan, an independent candidate for the National Assembly and KP provincial assembly seats, was gunned down during his election campaign. Sources say elections have been postponed due to the murder of independent candidate Rehman Zeb from NA-8 Bajaur and KP Assembly constituency 22. Moreover, Ismatullah, a candidate in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly constituency 91 Kohat, died on Jan 30.

Nadra voices concerns over 'abduction' of its officer

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The National Database Regulatory Authority (Nadra) Friday expressed concerns over reports of its officer's alleged disappearance in Islamabad. The brother of Nadra Deputy Assistant Director Najeebullah feared that his sibling had been abducted in the federal capital. Responding to the media reports in a statement, a spokesperson of the Nadra said that the administration was in contact with the staffer's family. The spokesperson said that the police were investigating the matter and hoped that the staffer would be traced soon. It is pertinent to mention here that a case has already been registered at Ramna Police Station at the Nadra officer's brother's request, who works at the Prime Minister's Office.

Cruelty faced by Imran not hidden from anyone

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf senior leader Hamid Khan said on Friday the unprecedented cruelty faced by PTI founder was clearly visible to everyone. While giving a press conference in Islamabad, he said the founder of PTI has been under arrest for many months and the judiciary has not been doing its role. "What has been happening has never happened in the history of country," he stressed. He said the PTI founder and its former foreign minister were not allowed to hire lawyers of their choices with injustice prevailing over the rule of law.



ISLAMABAD: Ahead of the Kashmir Solidarity Day, Additional Foreign Secretary (Asia & Pacific), Ambassador Imran Ahmed Siddiqui, briefed the Islamabad-based diplomats on the developments in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir. He underscored the legal, security and human rights dimensions of the situation in IIOJK. - DNA

Pakistan-EU agree to deepen ties under engagement plan

Foreign Minister Jalil Abbas Jilani speaking at the 3rd Indo-Pacific Ministerial Forum urged close cooperation and multidisciplinary international partnerships to deal with global challenges

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan and the European Union on Friday agreed to further deepen their relations in line with the Strategic Engagement Plan (2019). The agreement was reached in a meeting between Caretaker Foreign Minister Jalil Abbas Jilani and the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Josep Borrell Fontelles. The meeting took place on the sidelines of the 3rd Indo-Pacific Ministerial Forum in Brussels, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs posted on X. During the meeting, the two sides discussed global and regional issues, emphasizing the vitality of diplomacy in resolving disputes. They also highlighted the need to develop partnerships to tackle global challenges. Meanwhile, Caretaker Foreign Minister Jalil Abbas Jilani on Friday met with Belgian counterpart Hadja Lahbib wherein they discussed cooperation in trade, education and people-to-people contacts.



Foreign Minister Jilani is currently on an official visit to Brussels to attend the 3rd EU Indo-Pacific Ministerial Forum. In the meeting, the two foreign ministers reviewed Pakistan-Belgium bilateral relations

and expressed satisfaction on their positive trajectory. Both sides agreed on the importance of continued engagement and collaboration to strengthen bilateral relations. They also explored new avenues of cooperation for mutual prosperity. Meanwhile, Foreign Minister Jalil Abbas Jilani Friday urged close cooperation and multidisciplinary international partnerships to deal with global challenges. He was speaking at the 3rd Indo-Pacific Ministerial Forum, in Belgium at the invitation of High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Josep Borrell. The foreign minister also joined the Roundtable on 'Shared Prosperity, Economic Resilience, and Investments'. In his remarks, he outlined the future trajectory of global partnerships. He underlined the need for shared responsibility to move away from divisive bloc politics and notions of great power contestation. He proposed a three-tier approach involving development of international digital cooperation hubs, mechanisms for combating climate change and South-South Triangular Cooperation.

Upcoming polls don't effect interaction with SCO: Pakistan

Experts are working on the drafts of SCO development bank: Pakistani official

NEWS DESK

ISLAMABAD: The upcoming elections in Pakistan do not affect its interaction with the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) or other international organizations. The SCO works with states, regardless of the government in power, said Pakistan's Director General SCO at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Altamash Wazir Khan. Khan told during interview with Chinese media that Pakistan's relationship with Iran was not a topic of discussion during the SCO meetings this time round, as there was a full agenda of about 30 issues to cover. But he highlighted the de-escalation of tensions between Pakistan and Iran, underscored by the Iranian Foreign Minister's recent visit to Pakistan. Iran's Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian recently visited Pakistan, when both sides announced the establishment of a high-level consultative mechanism to oversee the progress in various areas of cooperation between the two countries, including counter-terrorism, Xinhua reported. Khan made the above remarks during a recent meeting between coordinators of the SCO member

countries and media representatives in Beijing. The Election Commission of Pakistan had previously announced that February 8 would be the official date for the general elections in the country, read a Xinhua report. The Pakistani coordinator emphasized that the election results will not influence Pakistan's relations with the SCO and other international organizations. He emphasized that Pakistan's main focus in the SCO is on mutual benefit and economic development, as well as humanitarian cooperation. Security is also a priority, but bilateral discussions on sensitive issues are avoided. Regarding the SCO development bank, Khan said that experts are currently working on the drafts, and while it may take some time, progress is being made. He said that the idea is not just about constructing a building, but about creating an entire financial system which takes time for it to be realized. When asked about Pakistan's priorities at the SCO, Khan mentioned that Pakistan's focus is on economic cooperation, financial cooperation, humanitarian cooperation, and connectivity. Connectivity not only includes physical infrastructure like roads and railways but also connectivity among people through digital platforms. Talking about the role that the SCO can play in the Afghan issue, he mentioned that official contact with Afghanistan is currently not possible. The SCO operates on the basis of consensus, and official contact cannot be established until all member states recognize the Taliban government.

North Korea's Kim calls for 'war preparations'

FOREIGN DESK

Pyeongyang: North Korean ruler Kim Jong Un reiterated his goal that the military step up "war preparations" on Friday, state media said. The comment came as he toured a shipyard in Nampho bolstering his country's navy and as his military conducted weapons

tests by firing cruise missiles into the sea. Kim has ramped up his country's industrial efforts in recent months with the goal of building a nuclear-armed navy to counter what he perceives as threats from South Korea, the U.S. and Japan. The navy "presents itself as the most important issue in reliably defending the maritime sovereignty of the country and stepping up the war preparations," Kim said during an inspection of the naval facility, according to North Korea's official Korean Central News Agency. According to the Korean news agency, the warships being constructed in Nampho are related to a five-year military development plan set during a ruling party congress in early 2021.

Haley attacks Trump as she looks to stave off home state loss



WASHINGTON: Nikki Haley now says Donald Trump is too old, too confused, too chaotic, and too tantrum-prone to be president — and in a job likely to especially infuriate her rival, warns he even lacks the money to mount a proper White House run. The former South Carolina governor — the former president's last opponent standing in the GOP nominating race — is turning up the heat as she battles to prevent a career-besmirching shellacking in her home state primary. Haley laid out a stinging character study of the former president in an interview on Thursday. Grouping Trump with President Joe Biden, she said it was "absurd" that the country would be stuck with two 80-year-old candidates. (Biden is 81 and Trump is 77.) She warned that Trump has had some "confused moments" in recent days, and she rebuked the ex-president for a "temper tantrum" on the night of his New Hampshire primary win when he tried to push her out of the race. In recent campaign events, Haley has also questioned Trump's morality and capacity to tell right from wrong. Her harsh turn against the boss she once served as US ambassador to the United Nations begs the question of why, after months of dancing around Trump's character issues, legal quagmire and assault on democracy, she's finally getting tough. Has Haley found her voice, located a sweet spot where she can target the

former president or decided to commit to a new headline strategy that she thinks might bring down the overwhelming favorite for his third straight nomination? Or is Haley simply joining the long and inglorious tradition of Republican candidates who lash out at Trump only when they've already been effectively crushed by him, including the unhappy Florida trio of former Gov. Jeb Bush and Sen. Marco Rubio in 2016 and current Gov. Ron DeSantis at the end of his misfiring 2024 race? DeSantis struggled with how to deal with Trump for his entire campaign and he only let loose with searing attacks against his former mentor when his cause already seemed hopeless ahead of his second place finish in Iowa last month. DeSantis criticized Trump for not showing up to debates and claimed that the conservative media acted as a "Praetorian guard" to protect him. "You can be the most worthless Republican in America, but if you kiss the ring, he'll say you are wonderful," DeSantis said. Ironically, the comments by DeSantis directly predicted how the ex-president behaved toward him when DeSantis pulled out and promptly endorsed a man who had subjected him to the cruelest of character attacks for months. Haley is insisting that her campaign is, unlike that of DeSantis, built for a prolonged delegate fight against Trump and is pledging to stay in the race long after her home state's Republican primary on February 24. "Why is the political elite pushing us to name a nominee when only two states have voted? There are 48 states and more territories that haven't voted. In the delegate count you need 1,215 delegates. Donald Trump has 32. I have 17. Why would we stop now?" Haley asked a crowd in Hilton Head on Thursday. Haley, while noticeably sharpening her tone, has not adopted the full-on, point of no return attacks on Trump over his perceived unfitness for office or his assault on democracy like those fired off by her former Republican primary rival Chris Christie or from ex-Wyoming Rep. Liz Cheney. Such rhetoric offers a fast one-way ticket out of Republican politics and there's no sign yet Haley wants to risk any future presidential prospects, assuming that she doesn't pull off a massive upset this year. But taking on Trump directly is risky. Few Republicans emerge unscathed from a direct confrontation with the former president given his extraordinary hold over the party's base voters and acidic tongue. - Agencies

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FIA orders inquiry against Aleema Khan

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The FIA on Friday ordered an inquiry against Aleema Khan, sister of former prime minister Imran Khan for inciting violence. As per details, the FIA has issued an inquiry notice to Aleema Khan for committing cyber crime; inciting violence and hate speech. The sister of PTI founder was summoned to the cybercrime reporting center on February 3 to present her stance and clarify her statements.

In case, Aleema Khan doesn't appear before the FIA, the investigation authority will consider that she has nothing to state in her defense. It is important to mention here that her brother and PTI founder Imran Khan and Bushra Bibi, were handed a 14-year jail sentence by an accountability court on Wednesday in Toshakhana case.

US approves \$4bn sale of armed drones to India

WASHINGTON: The US State Department has approved the potential sale of 31 armed drones, missiles and other equipment to India for nearly \$4bn (£3.14bn). The MQ-9B Predator drones deal had been announced during PM Narendra Modi's visit to US in June 2023. In December, it was put on hold by a Senate committee pending investigation into an alleged Indian assassination plot on US soil. The deal will now be confirmed after approval from the US Congress. It includes the sale of 31 armed MQ-9B SkyGuardian drones, 170 AGM-114R Hellfire missiles and 310 laser small diameter bombs, communications and surveillance equipment and a precision glide bomb, the Pentagon said. General Atomics Aeronautical Systems will be the principal contractor for the deal. - Agencies