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Detailed News On Page-08



Rana Waheed stars as Pak beat Australia

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Cipher case

Imran, Qureshi sentenced to 10 year impressment

Decision was announced by special court judge Abul Hasnat Zulqarnain during hearing at Adiala Jail



STAFF REPORT/DNA

RAWALPINDI: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder Imran Khan and leader Shah Mahmood Qureshi have been sentenced to 10 years, each, in the cipher case. The case pertains to allegations that the former prime minister had made public contents of a secret cable sent by the country's ambassador in Washington to the government in Islamabad. It is the second conviction for the embattled PTI founder in recent months. He was previously sentenced to three years in a corruption case. While his jail term was suspended as he challenged the corruption conviction, it had already ruled him out of the general elections next month. Today's decision was announced verbally by special court judge Abul Hasnat Zulqarnain at the Adiala Jail in Rawalpindi in the presence of both the PTI leaders.

PTI rejects judgement

People should take revenge for every injustice by power of vote: Raof Hasan

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) vehemently rejected the Special Court's unlawful and cruel ruling awarding 10 years' sentence each to PTI Chairman-for-life Imran Khan and Vice Chairman Shah Mahmood Qureshi in the fake, baseless, fraudulent and fabricated cypher case. In his strongly-worded reaction over the kangaroo court's flawed and illegal judgement

in frivolous cypher case, PTI Central Information Secretary Raof Hasan said that the mockery and murder of justice had been committed to target Imran Khan and Qureshi of political revenge. Raof Hasan strongly condemned the hurried conclusion of sham trial conducted by a visibly partisan and prejudiced judge in a stifling and intimidating environment inside the jail by violating all norms and

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The special court has been established under the Official Secrets Act 2023. Judge Zulqarnain has been holding hearings of the case in Adiala Jail since it started last year. Both politicians had pleaded not guilty to their involvement in the offence related to the alleged misuse of diplomatic cable for political purposes. Before announcing the verdict, Judge Zulqarnain, during the hearing, reminded the PTI leaders that their lawyers were not appearing in court and were given state lawyers.

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ISLAMABAD: Caretaker PM Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar chairs meeting of Federal Cabinet. - DNA

PM for joint efforts in oil and gas sector

Cabinet okays FBR restructuring; FBR appreciated SIFC and the Federal Ministry of Energy for fostering an investor-friendly environment

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar on Tuesday, while pointing to the abundant natural resources in the country, underlined the need for concerted efforts to explore onshore and offshore oil and gas reserves. He was addressing the Petroleum Conference 2024 as the chief guest. Chief of the Army Staff General Syed Asim Munir was the guest of honour. The prime minister affirmed the government's readiness to contribute in infrastructure development, logistics,

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Bilawal blames PML-N for woes

PPP's expertise will lead Pak through challenges: Zardari

Premiership hopeful Bilawal blasts PML-N over narrative of Nawaz's fourth term

KHAYAM ABBASI

KAHUTA: Former president and co-chairman of the Pakistan People's Party Parliamentarians (PPPP), Asif Ali Zardari, assured the public that despite the challenges faced by Pakistan, the party possesses the expertise to navigate these difficulties and lead the country toward prosperity. In a fervent address at a rally in Kahuta, he asserted the party's commitment to addressing national issues and expressed confidence in bringing about positive change. He emphasized, "We will change Pakistan again, and once in power, everything will align with the wishes of the people."



Imran put national security in danger

DNA

HAROONABAD: Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz supreme Mian Nawaz Sharif said on Tuesday the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf founder did not shy from going against the interest of country while seeing his government in a precarious situation.

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Briefs

Omar urges people to remain calm

Announces to moves HC against special court's decision

ADIL SHAHEEN

ISLAMABAD: PTI Secretary General Omar Ayub Khan strongly rejected the kangaroo court's decision awarding 10-year imprisonment to Imran Khan and Shah Mahmood Qureshi, calling upon all PTI members and Pakistanis to remain calm and vote Imran Khan's nominated candidates to bring PTI back to the assemblies with a thumping majority. Reacting to the special court's ruling in cypher case, PTI SG urged all the people to stay calm and peaceful following the decision by this kangaroo court against Imran Khan and Shah Mahmood Qureshi and did not indulge in any activity that undermined their traditional stance of a peaceful struggle.

Money laundering Monis Elahi declared absconder

ABBAS HASHMI

LAHORE: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leader Moonis Elahi has been declared absconder in another case of money laundering for his continued absence from proceedings at a local court in Lahore. The former federal minister, who fled the country in December 2022, is facing multiple cases of corruption and money laundering registered against him by the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA), the Anti-Corruption Establishment (ACE) and the National Accountability Bureau (NAB). Lahore's Central Special Court judge Tanveer Ahmed Sheikh also issued a permanent arrest warrant for Moonis, while making the declaration.

Anti-judiciary campaign

No action against journalists till polls, SC assured

AGP tells the top court that the notices will be issued again after the elections

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: Attorney General for Pakistan (AGP) Mansoor Usman Awan on Tuesday assured the Supreme Court that no action would be taken against journalists, who were issued notices over their alleged involvement in smear smearing, till the general elections slated for February 8. The development came during the hearing of a suo motu case which was taken up along with an old case heard in 2021 pertaining to the harassment of journalists. A three-member bench headed by Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Qazi Faez Isa and comprising Justice Muhammad Ali Mazhar and Justice Mussarat Hilali conducted the hearing of the case. On January 17, the caretaker government formed a five-member Joint Investigation Team (JIT) to ascertain the facts behind a

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IHC rejects Imran's pleas against jail trials

Chief Justice Aamir Farooq and Justice Tariq Mehmood Jahangiri announced verdict

COURT REPORTER

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Tuesday dismissed Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder Imran Khan's petition seeking the suspension of jail trial in the corruption references pertaining to Toshakhana gift and £190 million embezzlement. A division bench of

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From 140 to 133 Pak ranking on global corruption index improved

Pakistan ranked 133 out of 180 countries while its overall score jumped to 29 out of 100 on CPI

NEWS DESK

LONDON: Pakistan's ranking on the Transparency International Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) improved during the Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM)-led government in 2023. The improvement in ranking reflects that the menace

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Four killed, five injured in bomb blast in PTI rally in Sibi

Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf strongly condemned the bomb blast and expressed great grief and sorrow over the martyrdom of workers

STAFF REPORT

SIBBI: At least four people were killed while five were wounded in a bomb blast at a PTI rally in Balochistan's Sibi on Tuesday, police and health officials said. The explosion occurred at a PTI election rally organised by party-backed candidate Saddam Tareen, who is contesting the upcoming polls from the NA-253 (Ziarat) constituency. The medical superintendent of the District Headquarters Hospital in Sibi, Dr Babar, and District Health Officer Dr Imran Baloch confirmed the injuries and casualties. Those who died were identified as Hamad Khan s/o Sarwar Khan, Abdul Wasay s/o Abdul Basit, Muhammad Rafiq s/o Hussain Bakhsh and one unidentified person. Those who got injured include Sohrab Khan s/o Akbar Khan, Ronaq Kumar s/o Nareh Kumar, Nader Hussain s/o Muhammad Waris, Mir Muhammad s/o Noor Muhammad and Abdul Haseeb s/o Muhammad Khan. The injured persons were shifted to Civil Hospital Sibi by Saiban Ambulance service, where some of them are in critical condition. The security forces cordoned off the area and launched an investigation into the incident. Bomb disposal experts were also called to the scene to

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Security forces repulse BLA attack in Mach

Rockets fired by terrorists fell onto Mach Jail Colony, Levies police station

DNA

MACH: Security forces repulsed a "fire raid" attempt by Baloch Liberation Army (BLA) terrorists in Balochistan's Mach area late Monday, reported Geo News citing sources. Mach city echoed with explosions and plunged into darkness after terrorists fired several rockets from mountains, followed by heavy gunfire, on Monday night. People were trapped in their homes due to explosions and firing, while firing also started in Kolpur and Gokhart Bibi Nani areas. According to security sources, unidentified persons fired 15 rockets from the mountains at 9:30pm in the Mach area of Kuchi Bolan. Two rockets fell onto Mach Jail Colony,

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Alvi emphasizes vital role of inclusive education

Dr. Arif Alvi underscored the significance of imparting awareness about special needs of person with different abilities

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: President Dr. Arif Alvi, Tuesday, underscored the significance of imparting awareness about special needs of person with different abilities and equipping them with education and living skills for their meaningful integration in the society. The president was speaking during visit of Society for Children in Need Of Special Assistance (SCINOSA) Day Home- an institute for individuals with Down syndrome and other mental challenges - along with the First Lady Samina Arif Alvi. The president emphasized that children with different abilities were part of the society and equipping them with living skills could enable them to live their life and perform daily chores by their own. He also stressed on the need of creating special employment opportunities for differently able persons in accordance with their capabilities and teaching them the specific skills required for those jobs. Approach towards children with different abilities has been changing across the globe with emphasis on their enrollment in routine schools and

we in Pakistan as well need to step forward and work together for breaking the taboos and social stigma attached with mental and physical challenges, he noted. Federal and Sindh governments has made a laudable progress in the regard by reserving special quota for differently able persons in public sector jobs while banking sector was also inducting special persons, Dr. Alvi observed adding that Governor SBP and heads of different banks also assured of further steps in the regard in a recent meeting on inclusion and empowerment of special persons and women. The president said that mass awareness play a key role in changing social perceptions and behaviors and that was witnessed during special campaign on breast cancer. He added that awareness initiatives including text and voice messages on symptoms and prevention reached millions of people across the country led to saving hundreds of precious lives. Dr. Arif Alvi specially mentioned efforts of the First Lady Samina Arif Alvi for raising mass awareness regarding breast cancer and differently able children and said that now she

was working on mental health issues. The president also appreciated SCINOSA for providing special care and training to differently able children and teaching them the basic life skills. Honorary secretary SCINOSA Zulfikar Ali Ramzi speaking at the occasion said that realizing the fact that with special care and awareness children with different abilities can live their lives SCINOSA Day Home was imparting all necessary skills to them. Principal SDH, Rizwana Khanum briefed that major objective of the society was to establish a platform for teaching and training of children with different types of difficulties, to help them become self-sufficient and value-adding members of the society. Earlier, President Dr. Arif Alvi, visited different parts of the institute to inspect facilities for education and training of differently able children and interacted with the special students who were busy at work either in learning classes, vocational activities or sports. President Dr. Arif Alvi, also planted a sapling at SCINOSA Day Home at the occasion.



LAHORE : Punjab Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi inspecting the reception counters after inaugurating the pending Dr. Fatima Jinnah Institute of Dental Sciences for 17 years.—DNA

Former MNA Zain Ellahi urges support for PTI

Qamar Abbas Jaffri

ATTOCK : ATTOCK 30th Jan Former member national assembly Zain Ellahi has urged the supporters and voters of Major (ret) Tahir Sadiq group to vote for "fridge" in upcoming general elections as Pakistan Tehreek Insaf candidate for provincial assembly seat PP-3, Attock-III is Ijaz Boukhari advocate. Mr Ellahi- son of former member national assembly from Attock has said that the symbols which were allotted to 'PTI candidates' through a 'conspiracy' to confuse the party voters, have become irrelevant as the name of Imran Khan has turned into a "brand" and an election symbol for masses. Mr Zain said that the PTI ticket holder was allotted the election symbol of "fridge" and this election symbol is strong enough to defeat the political arch rivals who are contesting election with their symbols especially lion, arrow and crane. He alleged that institutions were facilitating pre-poll rigging. But results of the February 8 elections would be the same "as are evident" and that's why efforts were under way to rig the poll. He claimed that PTI's mandate was being stolen because it was going to win in the Feb 8 elections. He was of the view that masses would prove on Feb 8 that election results would be in favour of PTI regardless of all gimmicks and maneuverings.

CM inaugurates Fatima Jinnah dental institute after 17-year delay

ABID RAZA

LAHORE : After a 17-year delay, the long-pending public project has been swiftly completed and operational within a year. Punjab Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi officially inaugurated the Dr. Fatima Jinnah Institute of Dental Sciences in Jubilee Town. During the inauguration, Chief Minister Naqvi unveiled a portrait of Dr. Fatima Jinnah in the reception corridor and toured the institute, inspecting the on-line digital system, radiation control room, waiting area, dental implant facilities, sterilized rooms, and other areas. Expressing satisfaction with the state-of-the-art treatment facilities, Chief Minister Naqvi announced that 435 doctors will be on duty in different shifts, providing services across 120 beds and 90 units. The insti-

tute aims to deliver top-tier treatment for dental-related diseases. Addressing the inauguration ceremony, Chief Minister Punjab recounted the project's history, initially budgeted at Rs 80 crore but completed at Rs 4.5 billion. He commended the Department of Communication and Works for working tirelessly to bring the Dental Institute to fruition. Chief Minister Naqvi emphasized the collaborative effort of doctors and officials, ensuring the institute's functionality. Out of the 120 beds, 90 are allocated for OPD patients, while the remainder will cater to inpatients. Additionally, a hostel has been constructed within the institute. Naqvi declared the Fatima Jinnah Institute of Dental Sciences as the leading institution in Punjab, equipped with the best machinery in Pakistan. He highlighted the substantial improvements compared

to previous hospital visits. Responding to inquiries, Mohsin Naqvi assured the completion of hospital upgrades within the next 5 to 6 days, including the imminent inauguration of Manawan Cancer Hospital and Mayo Hospital. He anticipated the completion of the Imamiya Colony project in the first week of February, ongoing efforts for the Band Road project, and the expected opening of the Band Road project for traffic in 5-6 days. Naqvi reassured that all matters related to the upcoming election are under control, with continuous communication maintained with the Election Commissioner Punjab. Provincial Minister Specialized Healthcare and Medical Education Dr. Javed Akram, Chief Secretary, Secretary Health, Secretary Communication and Works, Secretary Information, Commissioner Lahore Division.

Mayor Wahab, Bashir inaugurate IoBM Career Fair

KARACHI: The Institute of Business Management (IoBM) organized a Career Fair on its campus on Tuesday, January 30, 2024. Mayor Karachi, Mr. Murtaza Wahab was the Chief Guest. He admired the efforts undertaken to bring top companies under one roof and was confident that it would prove beneficial to both the exhibitors and the students. Present at the inauguration ceremony were Mr. Bashir Janmohammad, Chancellor IoBM, Mr. Murtaza Wahab and Mr. Talib Karim, President IoBM, along

with IoBM's head of departments, faculty, and management. The event was organized by IoBM's Internship, Placement and International Office. Students attending IoBM's Career Fair 2024 expressed their excitement about the opportunity to interact with representatives from diverse industries. The event featured over 90 organizations representing the corporate and banking sectors of Pakistan. The Fair provided students a direct engagement with the HR personnel of the participating companies.

Moreover, the representatives guided students on the country's job market, advised them on choosing the best career paths, and offered tips on resume-making and interview preparation. The students discovered a range of career possibilities that helped them refine their goals based on their interests and fields of study. The Career Fair 2024 was a testament to IoBM's commitment to offer holistic education ensuring that students are well-equipped to succeed in the competitive job market.—APP



Legislation is required to levy toll tax. Khalid

ISLAMABAD : Ajmal Baloch President All Pakistan Anjuman Tajran and Traders Action Committee Islamabad, Secretary and President of Class Three Shopping Centers, Khalid Chaudhry, Asad Aziz President Jinnah Super market, Ikhlaq Abbasi President of G-10, Syed Altaf Shah, President Sitara Market, Akhter Abbasi, General Secretary Abpara, has said that the General election is on February 8, but the CDA is in a hurry to impose and increase taxes across the city. During the reign of Mian Muhammad Nawaz Sharif, the toll plazas were abolished with the approval of the cabinet. Imposing a tax on the movement of citizens of Islamabad would be a cruel measure. A law must be passed by the National Assembly to impose a new tax, while the CDA has nothing to do with the imposition of new taxes in the presence of the MCI, nor is it authorized. The role of MCI has been effectively abolished, which is in violation of the Local Government Act. The citizens of Islamabad will have to pay taxes to move around in their own city. They asked Prime Minister Anwar-ul-Haq Kakar and Federal Interior Minister Ijaz Gohar to stop CDA from taking illegal measures and prevent Islamabad from becoming the most expensive city.—APP

KP registers alarming spike 300 percent in Malaria cases

PESHAWAR : Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has registered an alarming spike of around 300 percent in malaria cases during the preceding year 2023, according to a report issued here on Tuesday by the Health Department. More than 500,000 people will be infected with malaria in 2023, exhibiting an

increase of around 350,000 cases, compared to 150,000 reported in 2022. The report reveals that the maximum number of malaria cases are reported in Shangla district, totaling around 1,08,000, followed by D.I. Khan, where 70,000 cases were reported. In Lakki Marwat, 44,000 cases were reported, 24,000

in Karak, 40,000 in Tank, 24,000 in Khyber, 17,000 in South Waziristan, 44,000 in Buner, 34,000 in Bannu, and 17,000 in Nowshera. In Mohmand district, 8,000 cases were reported, 10,000 in Bajaur, and 13,900 in Mardan, according to the report by the KP Health Department.—APP

Sindh culture minister opens modern scientific lab

KARACHI : Caretaker Minister for Culture, Archives and Antiquities Sindh Dr. Syed Junaid Ali Shah here on Tuesday inaugurated a state-of-the-art Scientific Laboratory aimed at preserving archives and artifacts. The Laboratory was named "Exploration and Excavation Branch Scientific Laboratory and Data Center," established in Karachi to facilitate research on archives and artifacts and ensure their preservation in modern ways. Situated near the historic site of Romi graveyard, the Laboratory was poised to become a hub for preserving cultural heritage. The inauguration ceremony was attended by dignitaries including Khalid Chachar, Secretary of Culture and

Antiquities Sindh; Abdul Aleem Lashari, former Secretary of Culture; Mansoor Ahmed Kanasro, Director General of Antiquities; Ijaz Sheikh, Director General of Libraries Sindh; Dr. Kaleemullah Lashari; Resident Director Roshan Ali Kanasro, Deputy Director Atif Hussain Vighio and others. The minister emphasized that the preservation of archives and artifacts was a national responsibility. This state-of-the-art scientific laboratory marks the first of its kind at the national level in Sindh, aiming to ensure the preservation of treasures beyond those displayed in museums, like those found after the excavation of Mohenjo-Daro, now housed in the Treasure House Museum, he said and added that

our antiquities were a part of our national identity and it was our responsibility to preserve them for future generations. He further stated that technical constraints had hindered the display of many artifacts for over sixty years. The treatment like desalination processes of artifacts precedes their display and previously, artifacts were sent abroad for treatment. With the establishment of facilities for artifact treatment in Sindh, local preservation becomes feasible, making artifacts more accessible to the public and researchers, he expressed. Dr. Shah highlighted plans to increase the number of museums in Sindh, making it mandatory to have a museum at every heritage site,

facilitating researchers. He emphasized the importance of understanding the significance of our possessions and maintaining awareness about them. He further mentioned that carbon dating was utilized to accurately estimate the age of artifacts. Radio carbon dating, based on the presence of carbon atoms in natural substances, provides an estimate of the time elapsed since the material decomposed or dispersed into its elements. It is hoped that we can also avail this facility in Sindh. Sindh's Secretary of Culture and Antiquities Department Khalid Chachar stated that serious measures were being taken by the department to preserve Sindh's artifacts and archaeology.—APP

Women hold full rights to cast vote in elections

Supporting the joint statement issued following the meeting, Ashrafi emphasized the collective responsibility of all nations in combating terrorism, labelling it as a global menace that requires a unified approach

ADIL SHAHEEN

ISLAMABAD : Prime Minister's Special Representative on Religious Affairs and Pakistan Diaspora in Middle East and Muslim Countries, Hafiz Muhammad Tahir Mahmood Ashrafi, on Tuesday said that women have full rights to cast vote in elections. Addressing a press conference, he emphasized the importance of voting as Pakistan is gearing up for general elections being held on February 8. He highlighted the ongoing preparations being observed across the country for the next polls. About recent discussions on social media regarding the Shariah status of voting, Ashrafi who is also the Chairman of Pakistan Ul-

ema Council (PUC), underscored that voting was not only a civic duty but also a testimony, asserting, "If the testimony is known, it is a crime not to give it." He extended this principle to include women's voting rights, and emphasizing that women could not be deprived of their right to vote. He said Pakistan Ulema Council had already issued a 'Fatwa' (religious decree) affirming the legality of voting, with specific arrangements in place for women to exercise their voting rights. He clarified that Pakistan had a separate polling stations and polling staff will facilitate women voters, ensuring their participation in the democratic process. As the election day approaches on February 8, he urged all citizens to actively

engage in the electoral process. He also emphasized the importance of assessing candidates based on their abilities, love, and loyalty to the country while casting votes. He reiterated that voting was a fundamental duty of every citizen, emphasizing the significance of democracy and urging all eligible voters to fulfill their civic responsibility on the election day. Ashrafi mentioned that in a significant diplomatic development, Iran's foreign minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian had held talks with Pakistan's political and military leadership. He said the talks concluded with a commitment to continue dialogue and cooperation on regional matters besides reaffirming commitment to promoting peace and stability

in the region. Supporting the joint statement issued following the meeting, Ashrafi emphasized the collective responsibility of all nations in combating terrorism, labelling it as a global menace that requires a unified approach. Regarding the escalating situation in Palestine, he raised concerns over it and reiterated the importance of Muslim unity in addressing such issues. Highlighting the domestic front, Ashrafi called for political leadership to come forward for resolving internal challenges through dialogue. Regarding the legal developments, he stressed the importance of allowing the courts to carry out their duties independently and supremacy of law.



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Briefs

PHC extends interim bail of PTI candidates

DNA

ISLAMABAD: A single-member bench of Peshawar High Court (PHC) on Tuesday extended the interim bail of eight candidates of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), including the former provincial law minister, Imtiaz Shahid Qureshi till February 12, 2024.

During the hearing conducted by Justice Sahibzada Asadullah, the defendants' lawyer Sikandar Hayat Shah

told the court that former Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Law Minister, Imtiaz Shahid Qureshi, Aftab Alam Advocate, Daud Shah, Naseem Afridi, Abdur Rehman, Shafi Jan, Khurram Zeeshan Advocate and Salman Shinwari were nominated in eight different cases.

He further told the court that cases were registered against these PTI candidates in different police stations of Kohat district, but the applicants had no involvement in these cases. He said that the applicants were contesting elections on the PTI ticket and extension in their interim bail was required. Justice Sahibzada Asadullah after hearing the arguments, allowed extension in interim bail of the applicants till February 12, 2024.

Painting and Computer Poster Competition

ISLAMABAD: The International Governance and Sustainability Institute (IG-SI) in collaboration with Federal Directorate of Education organized a Painting and Computer Poster Competition at Islamabad College for Girls F-6/2 on Tuesday. The event, titled "Empower Women - Empower Pakistan," aimed to promote the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the United Nations, with a special focus on Gender Equality and women's empowerment. The event witnessed the active participation of 34 students from 17 colleges across Islamabad. The competition not only celebrated the rich history of painting but also recognized the modern trend of computer-based poster making, showcasing the diverse ways in which art can be expressed. Painting, being an ancient form of artistic expression, has evolved over millennia. From the early paintings by Neanderthals to the sophisticated works of contemporary artists, the power of colors to evoke emotions remains a constant. In the current digital age, young artists harness the capabilities of computers to create visually stunning and impactful posters, blending traditional art with modern techniques. Founding Director and CEO of IG-SI, Dr. Sultan Azam Temuri addressed the gathering, emphasizing the underutilization of nearly half of the population in Pakistan. —APP

AC arrests 15 accused over price hike

ISLAMABAD: Following the directives of Deputy Commissioner Islamabad, Assistant Commissioner (AC) Potohar Sub Division on Tuesday raided various areas of the Division to ensure price lists of edible commodities. During the raid at a vegetable market, police arrested 15 accused over the violations of price hikes. The accused were involved in overpricing and for not showing price lists of edibles. He also served notices and warnings to rule violators. On the occasion, AC warned that strict compliance with the government price of edibles would be ensured and no one would be allowed to violate the rules. It is pertinent to mention here that the crackdown against encroachers and price hikes is being continued daily. —APP

Kakar underlines need for effective criminal justice system

To a question about terrorist groups in Balochistan province, the prime minister said that non-state actors had no right to unleash violence and the State had the responsibility to counter such terrorist acts

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Prime Minister Anwar-ul-Haq Kakar on Tuesday said that under the constitution, only parliament was mandated to legislate and stressed further reforms in the criminal justice system. Expressing his views on a private TV morning show, he opined that the conviction rate under the contemporary criminal justice system was very low, reflecting deficiencies and efforts to be made to plug the loopholes through effective legislation. To a question about terrorist groups in Balochistan province, the prime minister said that non-state actors had no right to unleash violence and the State had the responsibility to counter

such terrorist acts. About 90,000 people in the country had lost their lives in waves of terrorism, he said, adding whether it was not the onus of political parties and the parliamentarians to improve upon the criminal justice system to expedite the conviction rate! The prime minister maintained that he was speaking about the whole justice system, especially its lower tiers. "Whose responsibility was to improve it? Carrying out legislative business under the constitution is the onus of parliament," he reiterated. Elaborating his viewpoint, he said that Baloch, Pashtuns and different settlers had been living in Balochistan for decades. There was no political uniform group while one minority armed group was carrying out violent activities, he said, adding

that the US State Department, the UK, EU, and all other democratic countries had declared these groups as terrorists, he added. The prime minister said that he did not differentiate between banned TTP and Ahrar and BLA and BLF, as these terrorist outfits had been using violence as a tool to create terror and kill innocent people. In their terrorist attacks, about 1038 people had been martyred since 2018 in the province, he said, and cited incidents of Coastal Highway and an attack on Turbat police station in which innocent people had been killed and burnt alive. On the other hand, he said the political protests and approach were acknowledged by the world, intelligentsia, and media. The world has declared ISIS a terrorist organization. To

a query, Prime Minister Kakar said that the Middle East was a complex challenge. Pakistan had conveyed to different world fora and the international community that the continuation of the situation in Gaza was unacceptable, he added. They had stressed upon opening of humanitarian assistance corridors with immediate ceasefire. Along with the Muslim countries, Pakistan had reaffirmed a joint stance, he said. The prime minister said that the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), Arab League and the entire world was speaking about the two-state solution with an independent Palestine based upon pre-June 1967 borders, with Al Quds al Shareef as its capital, adding that it was the unanimous stance of the Muslim

world. He regretted that certain elements were criticizing him unjustly for referring to that solution and reiterated that Pakistan had not budged from its principled stance on Palestine. He maintained that his remarks about Quaid-e-Azam's views over Palestine were distorted in the past. Responding to questions about his childhood and youth, the prime minister said that from a young age, he had been fascinated with politics and the political leaders. He informed that he was greatly influenced by Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah's oratory and eloquence who was the most inspiring figure for him. Similarly, former British premier Winston Churchill's wits and linguistic skills also influenced him.

Death anniversary of renowned film actress

ISLAMABAD: Renowned actress of the film industry Neelu Begum was remembered on her third anniversary on Tuesday. Neelu Begum started her professional career in 1956 and gained popularity from the song "Aaye Mosam Rangleley Sohane" from the super hit film "Saat Laakh". She received Nigar Award for her outstanding performance in the super hit film Zarqa. Neelu Begum was awarded Sitara-i-Imtiaz in 2022.—APP

BISP amount increased up to Rs 10,500

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) has increased the amount of the quarterly stipends of Benazir Kafalat programme up to Rs 10,500 for this year, in order to provide financial relief to the beneficiaries. "The first quarterly payment of this year will be Rs 10,500 which will be issued during the current month (February). For any information and query, the beneficiaries can contact the BISP offices and toll free number 0800264777", Secretary BISP, Amir Ali Ahmad said. The quarterly Benazir Education Stipends will be issued from the month of March including Rs 2500 (Primary), Rs. 3500 (Secondary) and Rs 4500 (higher secondary) for the girl students. While for the boy students, Rs. 2000 (Primary), Rs. 3000 (Secondary) and Rs. 4000 (Higher Secondary) will be issued during the period. The special bonus of Rs 3000 will be given to the girls at the completion of primary education. Under the Benazir Nasonuma scheme, the quarterly stipend of Rs 2500 will be issued to per Pregnant and Lactating Mother (PLW) and boy child while Rs 3,000 will be given to the girl child. However, in the flood affected areas, Rs 3500 will be issued to PLW and boy child each while Rs 4,000 will be given to the girl child. The Nasonuma programme aims to address stunting among PLW and their children of less than two years of age through the provision of these stipends. In return, mothers must commit to attend regular antenatal health check-ups and awareness sessions during pregnancy, consume specialized nutritious food (SNF), and take their children for immunization and regular health checkups.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Interior and Commerce, Dr. Gohar Ejaz meeting with Saudi Ambassador H.E. Nawaf bin Saeed Al Malkiy—DNA.

Pak earns \$382.925m by exporting transport services

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan earned US \$382.925 million by providing different transport services in various countries during the first five months of the current fiscal year (2023-24) as compared to the corresponding period of last year. This shows an increase of 7.28 percent as compared to \$356.949 million earned through the provision of services during the corresponding months of the fiscal year (2022-23), the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) reported. During the months under review, the exports of sea transport services witnessed an increase of 38.19 percent, going up from \$74.970 million last year to \$103.600 million during the months under review. Among the sea transport services, the exports of freight services dipped by 62.22 percent from \$60.960 million last year to \$23.030 million whereas the exports of other sea transport services however increased by 475.09 percent from \$14.010 million to \$80.570 million current year, the PBS data revealed. The exports of air

transport witnessed a nominal decline of 2.15 percent going down from \$273.019 million last year to \$267.145 million during July-November 2023. Among the air transport services, the exports of passenger services decreased by 5.19 percent, from \$180.080 million to \$170.730 million, whereas the exports of freight services surged by 7.05 percent, from \$13.760 million to \$14.730 million, in addition, the export of other air transport services also rose by 3.16 percent from \$79.179 million to \$81.685 million. Meanwhile, the exports of road transport services during the months under review witnessed a growth of 75 percent going up from \$5.520 million to \$9.660 million during this year, it added. Among the road transport services, the exports of freight services witnessed a decrease of 13.47 percent from \$1.930 million to \$1.670 million, while the export of postal and courier services also dipped by 26.74 percent, from \$3.440 million to \$2.520 million, the data revealed.—APP

'PPP public welfare manifesto attracts opponent voters'

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) co-Chairman Asif Ali Zardari said that his party's election campaign was attracting voters of political opponents due to public welfare manifesto. PPP chairman Bilawal has started a vigorous election campaign in Punjab and the results in the province would be surprising, Zardari told a private news channel. The former president emphasized the need on constructive criticism during election campaigns

instead of blaming their rivals. He expressed his views on various political matters, including the performance of key political figures and the challenges facing the nation. Zardari expressed his concern for Balochistan's future within Pakistan, emphasizing the need to care for the Baloch people and address their issues with affection. The PPP co-Chairman noted that political turmoil is expected to decrease after the elections, suggesting that

negotiations and discussions can pave the way for a more stable political environment. Asif Zardari hinted at talks with various political parties, highlighting his commitment to dialogue and collaboration for the greater good. He advised all the political parties to reach out to people across the country, from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to Balochistan to win their confidence in upcoming elections. Describing Bilawal Bhutto as a reflection of PPP's ideology, he stressed his party's commitment to pushing forward its agenda. Zardari expressed confidence that the PPP will achieve favorable results in the general elections without relying on independent candidates.—APP

China-Pak companies reach agreement

DNA

ISLAMABAD: China-Pak companies reach agreement on cultural and agri digitalization, Gwadar Pro reported on Tuesday. According to the report, Mohammad Amjad, president of China-Pakistan Business Development Council led a delegation from Zaryans Business Group to visit Wenjie Technology in Shenzhen. The Council is committed to promoting economic and trade development between China and Pakistan. Taking on the responsibility of enterprise development, talent and project incubation, and brand promotion, the organization strives to actively expand



cooperation channels and business models between Chinese and Pakistani enterprises. Under the framework of China-Pakistan Business Development Council, Zaryans and Wenjie Tech conducted in-depth discussions on the development of "digital + culture," "digital + agriculture," and "digital + film and television" industries, and reached relevant strategic

cooperation. Founded in 1986, Zaryans Business Group comprises 15 companies involved in poultry and animal husbandry, construction manufacturing, and the development of dynamic digital media platforms. Wenjie Technology is a comprehensive digital service platform for cultural tourism industry and finance. Leveraging advanced digital technology

Youth-Led Political Initiatives

SYEDA SOPHIA BUKHARI

I write to highlight the commendable rise in young voter registration about 56.86 million, as per recent data released by the Election Commission of Pakistan. Despite this surge, the historical turnout of young voters in past elections has been lackluster, necessitating urgent measures to engage and mobilize this crucial demographic. It is pivotal for media houses to launch awareness programs that resonate with the youth, addressing the factors contributing to low voter participation. Understanding these reasons, such as political apathy, lack of awareness, and cynicism, is crucial in formulating effective strategies to boost young voter turnout. I applaud the initiative taken by the Press Network of Pakistan with the PNP Young Voters Election Quiz Contest. Such endeavors align with the National Media Code of Conduct issued by the Election Commission of Pakistan, illustrating a proactive approach to fostering political awareness among university students. The upcoming elections present an opportunity for young voters to play a significant role in shaping the nation's future. Their perspectives and aspirations deserve representation in the democratic process.

'Citizens to get civic facilities at Fatima Jinnah Park'

ISLAMABAD: Deputy Commissioner (DC) Islamabad, Irfan Nawaz Memon on Tuesday initiated the provision of convenient basic services to simplify the tedious process of vehicle registration and acquiring essential documents. The citizens hailing from nearby areas of Fatima Jinnah Park Bolan Gate F-9 can get civic facilities through a dedicated van from 03:00 to 05:00 pm today, offering a hassle-free experience for residents seeking to register, transfer, or pay token tax for their vehicles, ICT spokesman Dr Abdullah Tabasum said. On the directive of DC, the excise staff will be stationed at the park's parking lot, streamlining the procedures related to vehicles. This initiative aligned with the commitment to make essential services more accessible to the public. He said that adding to the convenience, the 'Facilitation Center Doorstep ICT Vehicle' will also be available on-site. This doorstep service encompasses a variety of essential documents, making it a one-stop solution for residents, including domicile certificates and birth certificates to power of attorney and international driving permits, the ICT Doorstep Service aimed to cater for the diverse needs efficiently, he added. He further said that whether you need a fuel permit for domestic or commercial use, or looking to register your motor vehicle seamlessly, the on-ground service will ensure a swift and straightforward process. He said that the chosen location, Fatima Jinnah Park, not only provides a central and accessible venue but also encourages community engagement.—APP

Murree snowfall forecast; all departments on high alert

RAWALPINDI: Murree district administration after snowfall forecast by the Meteorological Department for the 'The Queen of the Hills', Murree on Tuesday put all the departments concerned on high alert. According to a Murree district administration spokesman, the MET office had forecasted rain and snowfall for Murree on Tuesday night and Wednesday. In addition to moderate to heavy rain and snowfall during this period, the weather would remain cold and partly cloudy in Murree, Galiyat and surrounding areas. The minimum temperature is likely to be 00 to 02 degrees Celsius and maximum 07 to 09 degrees Celsius. In view of the possibility of snowfall, the district administration put all the departments concerned on high alert and issued an advisory for the tourists. The tourists were advised to adopt all possible precautionary measures. The tourists were urged to get weather updates before visiting Murree, he said adding, tire chains must be used in snowy areas. The tourists were also asked to follow the traffic rules to ensure smooth flow of traffic on the roads. He informed that 13 tourist facilitation centers had been established at various places to help and guide the tourists.—APP

MOST EXPERIENCED MANUFACTURERS & EXPORTERS OF MARTIAL ARTS UNIFORMS IN PAKISTAN

WHERE EACH STITCH IS WATCHED

JUDO
KARATE
KUNG-FU
JU-JITSU
TAEKWONDO
BOXING
MORPONG
TAEKWONDO

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

JUDO
KARATE
KUNG-FU
JU-JITSU
TAEKWONDO
BOXING
MORPONG
TAEKWONDO

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Biden govt should hold true to its word

THE solemn representation Beijing made to Washington on Tuesday over the latter's unfair and irrational treatment of Chinese students arriving to study in the United States is fully justified. Since August, dozens of Chinese nationals holding valid visas have been denied entry when returning to school from overseas travel or from visiting relatives in China. Some of them have even been groundlessly interrogated for hours, had their electronic devices checked and in some cases been forcibly deported from the country. As Chinese ambassador to the US Xie Feng said, the US government's treatment of the Chinese students is "absolutely unacceptable", for not only the nature of relevant behaviors of the US side but also the US' continuous wrongdoings even after Washington and Beijing reached common understanding during the meeting of the leaders of the two countries in San Francisco in November last year on the necessity and importance of boosting student and other exchanges to shore up the two countries' relations. Nearly 290,000 Chinese students study in the US now, accounting for about one-third of the foreign students in the country. They not only make tremendous contributions to the US' revenue from education but also help deepen people-to-people exchanges and cultural and educational communication between the two countries.

More than 1.3 million Chinese students study abroad now, and they are welcomed by the host countries and act as bridges promoting mutual understandings of different cultures and civilizations. The Chinese students have represented a major source of professional immigrants to the US since the first batch of Chinese students arrived in the US in the early 1870s. They have been playing an important role in many fields of the US society until now. It is a handful of China-bashing politicians in the US who are blind to these facts that have tirelessly sought to incite the current wave of anti-Chinese moves that date back to the previous Donald Trump administration as a part of its China containment strategy, citing baseless spying charges and "national security" concerns. The US' approach is typical, selective, discriminatory and political law enforcement, as the Chinese embassy in the US said in a statement. That's why China urges the US to implement its statement of welcoming Chinese students, stop using national security as an excuse to suppress and restrict Chinese students, and effectively protect the safety and legitimate rights and interests of Chinese scholars and students in the US. The vitality of ideas comes from mutual learning, and the development of science is inseparable from exchanges. Politicizing and instrumentalizing educational exchanges and cooperation will block the path of study for international students and change their life plans. It will also lead to the loss of top talents for the US and harm the scientific research environment and innovation vitality of the US.



The view on online child protection

WHEN the history of social media is written, there must be a chapter for the whistleblowers who have played a vital role in enabling public scrutiny. In 2021 Frances Haugen, who had worked at Facebook (now Meta), released research revealing Instagram's harmful effects on children. Last year another former employee, Arturo Béjar, gave evidence to Congress about the sexual harassment his daughter faced on the platform. The engineer's work features in a lawsuit against the company launched by the attorney general of New Mexico, Raúl Torrez. This follows last year's investigation by the Guardian into online sex trafficking. It found that Meta is failing to report or even detect the extent of the online pimping of children. The company's own documents show that about 100,000 children, mainly girls, are sexually harassed each day on Facebook and Instagram. Experts warn that job cuts at Meta and other businesses, particularly in moderation and safety teams, will make these problems even harder to manage. Last week Mr Béjar told the Guardian that Meta has refused to learn from the death of the British teenager Molly Russell, whose decision to take her own life in 2017 was influenced by suicide and self-harm content she had viewed.

Mr Torrez accuses Meta of enabling adults to message and groom children. Other evidence recently made public includes complaints from advertisers about potentially illegal content. Meta denies the lawsuit's claim that it is a marketplace for child predators. But given the volume of evidence of online harms of various sorts — harms which coexist with the technology's benefits — it is hard to deny that the regulatory framework over the past two decades has been disastrously lax. Key examples include the decision in 1996 that online platforms should be free of the obligations of publishers — something that President Joe Biden has suggested should change — and the choice of 13 as the default age for holding accounts. A separate issue in the US is that the law prevents AI-generated tips about abusive content from being investigated by police until they have been reviewed by the companies. As Beeban Kidron, the British campaigner for online safety, has often pointed out, this is an artificial environment that has not been engineered safely. AI-powered deepfakes are creating new risks. Thanks in part to a civil society lobby including the 5Rights Foundation, the NSPCC and Ian Russell, Molly's father, the UK will have some of the strongest regulation in the world when the online harms bill comes into force. But that hasn't happened yet, and Labour believes the law needs tightening further. Meanwhile, the all-party parliamentary group on commercial sexual exploitation has called for tougher age verification and the creation of a new offence of supplying pornography online to children — an area in which the Spanish government is also considering legislating. As in many areas of human activity (such as roads and the use of drugs), there are trade-offs between freedom and safety. But as whistleblowers and other critics point out, the extent to which children's wellbeing has been neglected by internet businesses is unacceptable — particularly as evidence grows of the links between online and offline sexual abuse.

UNRWA pronounced guilty until proven innocent. Palestinians pay the price

James M. Dorsey

Israeli PM Binyamin Netanyahu's foreign policy advisor, Ophir Falk, asserted that there was "abundant evidence... It seems that this is just the tip of the iceberg... An in-depth investigation is underway." Mr. Falk said the evidence was on camera and based on information revealed by captured Hamas operatives. The US-led response to the allegations bolsters a long-standing Israeli campaign against UNRWA that is as much an integral part of a broader policy to undermine Palestinians' refugee status as it may be based on legitimate concerns. Israel hopes to undermine Palestinians' insistence on the right to self-determination and an independent state by depriving many of them of their refugee status that dates to Israel's creation and the 1948 and 1967 Middle East wars.

THE timing of US and Israeli allegations that United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) staff participated in Hamas' October 7 attack on the Jewish state was hardly coincidental. The allegations, that have yet to be substantiated, and the halt in UNRWA funding by ten Western countries, including the United States, Britain, Germany, Italy, Canada, and Australia, raise questions that go far beyond UNRWA's potential culpability. The nine countries' move freezes US\$667 million pledged to UNRWA. UNRWA workers pack the medical aid and prepare it for distribution to hospitals at a warehouse in Deir Al-Balah, Gaza. Photo: Majdi Fathi/NurPhoto via Getty Images Gaza's third largest employer, UNRWA is the leading UN aid agency in the Strip. UNRWA, the only UN arm focused exclusively on one group of refugees, has a staff of 13,000, including 3,000, who have reported to work during the Gaza war. More than 130 UNRWA staffers have been killed in the war. The US and Israel's allegations came barely 24 hours after the International Court of Justice (ICJ) warned that Israel's conduct in the Gaza war risked acts of genocide. The court ordered Israel to "take immediate and effective measures to enable the provision of urgently needed basic services and humanitarian assistance to address the adverse conditions of life faced by Palestinians in the Gaza Strip." The Western funding freeze threatens to aggravate an already dire human apocalypse in Gaza. It violates the principles of due process that would give UNRWA an opportunity to defend itself and address legitimate complaints. Due process would have also allowed the US and others to adopt positions less at odds with the court ruling and more independent of Israeli policy. Not all Western countries followed the US lead. Norway and Ireland have opted for a more balanced approach. "We need to distinguish between what individuals may have done, and what UNRWA stands for. The organisation's tens of thousands of employees in Gaza, the West Bank and the region are playing a crucial role in distributing aid, saving lives, and safeguarding basic needs and rights," said Norway's representative to President Mahmoud Abbas' West Bank-based, internationally recognised Palestine Authority. "Don't punish the children of Gaza. This is totally reckless. None of us can guarantee that staff are not doing something that is criminal. We have to punish the sinners and not collectively the population of Gaza," added Jan Ege-land, secretary general of the Norwegian Refugee Council. With UNRWA's future in doubt, the organisation's former spokesman, Christopher Guinness, warned that wealthy Gulf states' failure to step in would come to haunt them. Countries like Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates are seemingly hesitant to fund an organisation accused of links to Hamas. The two countries would like to see Hamas defeated because of its links to the Muslim Brotherhood and violence, even if they condemn Israel's devastating military tactics. "Where is the Arab world?... This is a Middle Eastern problem. The Palestinian refugee problem is in the neighbourhood, in the backyard. These Arab states got billions and billions in oil money. Why can't they step up to

the plate and give UNRWA the funds it needs to deal with that which is effectively a problem which is destabilizing their region... What these Arab donors need to realise is that their attitude towards UNRWA in this specific moment will have wider regional implications," Mr. Guinness said. Former UNRWA official Lex Takkenberg suggested that the organization may only feel the financial pinch several months down the road. He said UNRWA will likely have received "large advances" on pledged funds that will keep it afloat for some time. "Hopefully, by that time an investigation will have demonstrated results," Mr. Takkenberg said, adding that in past cases, Israel often failed to provide evidence, forcing UNRWA to close an investigation. To be sure, UNRWA defines as refugees not only those Palestinians who fled the wars, but also their descendants, now in their fourth generation. In doing so, the agency has a vested interest in maintaining their status, which is not to diminish Palestinian rights. "Israel has been building a case against UNRWA for a long time... Regardless of the veracity of the charge, the decision to go with this news... seems like an attempt to distract from the ICJ ruling on genocide in Gaza," said International Crisis Group Israel analyst Mairav Zeinsohn. By not following due process, Western countries have fuelled an Israeli campaign that could add to the suffering in Gaza and complicate efforts to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. UNRWA has not denied allegations that 12 staff members participated in the October 7 attack in which 1,100 people, mostly civilians, were killed. In response to the allegations, UNRWA said it had fired the employees identified by the US and Israel. "Any UNRWA employee who was involved in acts of terror will be held accountable, including through criminal prosecution," UNRWA said. The UN organisation noted that it "shares the list of all its staff with host countries every year, including Israel. The Agency never received any concerns on specific staff members." UNRWA has asked for an independent investigation, while warning that Gazans depended on it for humanitarian aid. The investigation could substantiate allegations that support for Hamas among UNRWA staff is broader than the organisation has admitted. UN Watch, a pro-Israel group focused on the United Nations, asserted that 3,000 UNRWA teachers were members of a Telegram chat group that "celebrated the October 7th Hamas massacre." A November 2023 report by the Institute for Monitoring Peace and Cultural Tolerance in School Education (IMPACT-SE), an Israeli group that engages in textbook analysis, asserted that materials in UNRWA schools were "openly anti-Semitic and continue to encourage violence, jihad, and martyrdom while peace is not taught as preferable or even possible. Extreme nationalism and Islamist ideologies proliferate throughout the curriculum, including in science and math textbooks." The report cited, among others, an exercise for 9th graders that celebrated a Palestinian fire-bombing attack on a Jewish bus as a "barbecue party" and a female fighter who in 1978 allegedly murdered Gail Rubin, the niece of US Senator Abraham A. Ribicoff, and hijacked a bus, killing 38 Israelis, including 13 children.

Responding to an earlier March 2023 report co-authored by Impact-Se and UN Watch, UNRWA said its staff "receive regular in-person training sessions and mandatory online courses on humanitarian principles, social media use, and ethics. In addition, UNRWA undertakes regular and meticulous reviews of all textbooks and learning materials." In response to a 2022 report, UNRWA asserted it had "in reviewing the material referenced in the report..., discovered the existence of a private, commercial website that illegally utilizes the Agency's logo and the names of UNRWA educators. The Agency is seeking additional information on these sites for follow-up action, including possible legal referral." UNRWA noted that Germany's Leibniz Institute for Educational Media or Georg Eckert Institute had concluded in a 2021 study that Impact-se reports were "marked by generalising and exaggerated conclusions based on methodological shortcomings" that require "further investigation based on an overarching and comprehensive examination of the textbooks, contextualising the specific passages mentioned." In a letter to US Senate Majority Leader Charles E. Schumer in November 2023, UNRWA's Washington representative, William Deere, asserted that "UNRWA has a stringent staff conduct framework in place to ensure that staff members do not affiliate themselves, and by extension, UNRWA, with any other groups. All UNRWA staff, Palestine refugees, and contractors, vendors, and non-state donors are screened against the Consolidated United Nations Security Council Sanctions List." UNRWA's Washington representative, William Deere. Photo: wilsoncenter.org To be sure, a majority of Gazan Hamas affiliates are unlikely to have been added to the sanctions list. Even so, backing for Hamas among mostly Gazan UNRWA staff suggests broader popular support for Hamas that ebbs and flows, particularly in times of war. Moreover, the anti-UNRWA campaign speaks to the achievability of Israel's goal of destroying Hamas. It suggests that Hamas has a popular base that will ensure it is a Palestinian force to reckon with irrespective of when the guns in Gaza fall silent. As a result, the solution is not penalising UNRWA at a time of Gazans' greatest need. The immediate solution is due process leading to reform of the organisation and, ultimately, a resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict that meets the aspirations and security needs of Israelis and Palestinians. For Israel, this is true strategically and tactically. Already on the defensive in an information war in which images of carnage speak louder than words, Israel would benefit more from being seen as complying with the international court's emphasis on humanitarian aid and encouraging UNRWA to tackle its problematic issues. "Israel can just go and say whatever it wants... but basically, if you are explaining, you are losing. Online, what speaks powerfully is images," said Max Boot, a military historian and foreign policy analyst. "We're used to a reality where history is written by the victor. It's not the case anymore," conceded Masha Michelson, an Israeli military social media warrior.

Genocide ruling a vindication for international justice

Baria Alamuddin

Israel may hate having the G-word used against it, but genocide and ethnic cleansing are inscribed within the ethos of the brutal Gaza campaign. It is difficult not to see this as yet another strand of Israel's efforts to starve and extinguish Gaza's population, while simultaneously seeking to discredit the UN. As Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said: "The tens of thousands of men and women who work for UNRWA, many in some of the most dangerous situations for humanitarian workers, should not be..."

LAST week's ruling by the International Court of Justice that Israel has a case to answer on accusations of genocide against the Palestinian people was cause for celebration as a reaffirmed vindication of the primacy of international law and the UN-centered global system, after decades of neglect and deliberate sabotage had allowed crimes against humanity to become the new worldwide normal. No less a figure than US President Joe Biden hailed the court last November as "one of humanity's most critical institutions to advance peace around the world." Though Biden may now be regretting this praise, the court is indeed one of the few precarious bulwarks we have against savage laws of the jungle, and genocidal campaigns against Uighurs in China, Rohingya in Myanmar, Syrians, Ukrainians, India's minorities, and Darfur communities. The calm and precise manner in which presiding judge Joan Donoghue — the American lawyer and legal scholar — delivered her judgment was particularly impressive. "An entire generation of children in Gaza is traumatized. Their future is in jeopardy," she warned. Although the ruling stopped short of explicitly demanding a ceasefire, the court specifically ordered Israel to take "all measures within its power" to prevent the genocide of Palestinians and to allow more humanitarian aid into Gaza. A defiant Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said he would not be constrained by the ruling, and retorted: "We will act as needed for our security." Nevertheless, a chastized Israel must submit a report in one month confirming how it is implementing the court's orders. The judgment also rightly called out Hamas for its bloody Oct. 7 attack and ordered it to liberate the 130 or so Israeli hostages it still holds. With judgments nominated by countries such as the US, France, Germany, Australia and Japan, it cannot be claimed that the court is stacked against Israel — although British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak fumed that the decision was "totally unjustified." Member states such as Russia, India and China — with problematic human rights records — can hardly be accused of nominating activists. Even the Israeli judge Aharon Barak voted for two of the court's six orders.

The rulings have blown a large and irreparable hole in the aura of impunity that Israel has forever enjoyed, evidenced by Netanyahu's furious reaction that they were a "disgrace that will not be erased for generations." Never have truer words been spoken regarding the Gaza carnage. Israel's international donors and champions will be understandably reluctant to find themselves accused of abetting genocide, particularly as the court will take several years to reach a final judgment. The EU demanded "full and immediate" implementation of the ruling. Countries must consider their legal exposure if selling arms to Israel, and there are implications for Israel losing voting and membership rights in international bodies if it refuses to comply. The ruling also provides rocket fuel for worldwide initiatives toboycott Israel. With 30,000 staff members, UNRWA is the UN's largest agency and one of its longest-running operations. Around 152 UN staff have already been killed in Gaza. Whatever the substance of the latest allegations against a small number of staff members, for numerous states to suspend donations at this crucial moment is cruel and ill considered, every bit as much an act of collective punishment as Israel's post-Oct. 7 retaliation. Israel may hate having the G-word used against it, but genocide and ethnic cleansing are inscribed within the ethos of the brutal Gaza campaign. It is difficult not to see this as yet another strand of Israel's efforts to starve and extinguish Gaza's population, while simultaneously seeking to discredit the UN. As Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said: "The tens of thousands of men and women who work for UNRWA, many in some of the most dangerous situations for humanitarian workers, should not be penalized." Israel may hate having the G-word used against it, but genocide and ethnic cleansing are inscribed within the ethos of the brutal Gaza campaign. As Washington Post journalist Karen Attiah argued, Netanyahu's emphatic rejection of Palestinian sovereignty necessitates either dominating or eliminating the Palestinian people: "Either apartheid or ethnic cleansing. How can these words be understood any other way?" Numerous Israeli officials have been cat-

egorical about never allowing Gaza's civilians to return to their homes, or eradicating them altogether. Netanyahu has given credence to such calls with his reluctance to publicly clarify his vision for the Gaza endgame, and with his own quoting of Biblical injunctions that command: "Do not spare them; put to death men and women, children and infants." Such manifestly genocidal statements persuaded the court to refer specifically to "incitement" in its interim judgement. Cheerleaders for Israel have angrily retorted that the court ruling is especially offensive wielded against Israel, a country that was forged in the ashes of the worst genocide in human history. The latter point is not in dispute. But actual historical genocide against Jews in no way permits Israel's leaders to embark on their own genocidal acts. Neither can such historical facts be used as a blunt instrument with which to bludgeon those holding Israel to account. The Nazi Holocaust is a compelling reason why the world has such robust — albeit weakly enforced — human rights and war crimes laws. In the aftermath of Hamas's atrocities, Israel's campaign of vengeance and annihilation has been so brutal that more than 30,000 Palestinians, mostly civilians, are already almost certainly dead, including those lost under the rubble. In its rush to exact collective vengeance against Palestinians, Israel has brought itself full circle to the point where it is almost universally viewed as, like Hamas, the criminal and not the victim. As one analyst put it: "It is not the Palestinians alone who must be saved from Israel. Israel needs to be saved from itself." The urgency with which the US has revived behind-the-scenes negotiations toward hostage release and a longer-term ceasefire demonstrates how fundamentally the court ruling has reconfigured the Gaza status quo. This court ruling should be a first step toward wholesale rehabilitation of grievously abused international justice and conflict resolution mechanisms: a blueprint for how, when international justice speaks, the world is compelled to decisively respond.

— Sourced by Arab News

Briefs

Imran, Qureshi sentenced...

FROM PAGE 01
the PTI leaders, as the defence lawyers again failed to appear before the court. According to the court decision, Malik Abdul Rehman and Hazrat Younus were asked to represent the PTI founding chairman and Qureshi, respectively as the state defence counsel and cross-examine the prosecution witnesses. In November of last year, after Khan and Qureshi challenged their indictment in the case, the Islamabad High Court (IHC) declared their trial "null and void" while allowing their intra-court appeals in the case.

PTI rejects judgement

FROM PAGE 01
principles relating to conducting a fair trial as enshrined in the statute book to punish the innocent leaders of the people. "We will pursue all constitutional and legal means to secure justice for PTI Founding Chairman and Vice Chairman," he vowed. He said that PTI would move the High Court against the biased and flawed verdict without any loss of time. He made it clear that like the arrests made in the aftermath of the attack on the IHC on May 9 and the verdict of Judge Humayun Dilawar, the judgement of Special Court Judge Ahsanul Hasnat Zulfarnain was also devoid of the very principles of law and justice, thus it will not stand in any court of justice.

Four killed, five injured...

FROM PAGE 01
collect evidence and determine the nature of the blast. Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf strongly condemned the bomb blast and expressed great grief and sorrow over the martyrdom of the workers. In a statement posted on social media platform X, the party said the attack on the peaceful election rally was a criminal failure of the provincial and federal governments. The party alleged that the state machinery is busy getting the PTI leaders and workers, including founder chairman Imran Khan and vice-chairman Shah Mehmood Qureshi, punished in fake and false cases.

Security forces...

FROM PAGE 01
one landed in the Levies police station, four rained into the FC headquarters and eight rockets landed in the city and surrounding areas. As the rockets exploded with strong bangs and heavy firing started, the city plunged into darkness, and soon the market closed. The explosions were so loud that the windowpanes of many houses were broken. According to sources, the administration blocked all kinds of traffic in Dharar and Kolpur. The sound of explosions and firing continued to be heard till late night in Gokhart Bibi Nani and Kolpur.

PPP's expertise...

FROM PAGE 01
Pakistan People's Party and Pakistan Muslim League-N, are actively engaging with the electorate. Meanwhile, With the political temperature increasing with every passing day ahead of the February 8 election, Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Chairman Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari Tuesday fired a fresh salvo against Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) censuring the latter for creating a narrative suggesting its supreme Nawaz Sharif's return to the Prime Minister's House for the fourth time. Addressing a political gathering in Dera Ismail Khan, Bilawal stressed that the contest in the upcoming elections is between arrow and lion – the election symbols of the PPP and the PML-N, respectively. "The PML-N is giving the impression that Nawaz is [going] to become the country's prime minister for the fourth time.



ISLAMABAD: A view of the Capital after Tuesday's much expected rain. – Photo Mudassar Raja

Pakistan beat Australia in FIH Hockey5s WC

Pakistan defeated Australia by 11-3 goals in a one-sided encounter in FIH Hockey5s World Cup

OUR CORRESPONDENTS

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan defeated Australia by 11-3 goals in a one-sided encounter in the FIH Hockey5s World Cup at Muscat, Oman. According to the details, for Pakistan Captain Rana Abdul Waheed Ashraf scored five goals including a hat-trick while Ghazanfar Ali and Zakaria Hayat scored two goals each. Murtaza Yaqub and Arshad Liaquat scored one goal each. Pakistan Hockey Team Management includes Head Coach Olympian Shakeel Abbasi, Manager Dilawar Hussain while Waqas Mahmood as Physiotherapist and Junaid Akhtar as Video Operator. Pakistan team would play the 9th and 10th position match of the event on Wednesday against the winner from teams of Switzerland and New Zealand. Pakistan were knocked out of the race for the quarter-finals of the Hockey5s World Cup on Monday after losing 8-7 to Poland. Pakistan just needed a draw against Poland in Pool A to make it through to the quarter-finals but the Green Shirts failed to grab the opportunity. Earlier on , Pakistan beat Jamaica by 15-2 in FIH Hockey5s WC Pakistan downed Jamaica by 15-2 in the



FIH Hockey5s World Cup's Challenger Trophy at Muscat, Oman. According to the details, after being out of the race for the quarterfinals, Pakistan defeated Jamaica by

while Rana Waheed scored five goals including a hat-trick. Arshad Liaquat, Ghazanfar Ali, and Zakaria Hayat scored one goal each. Pakistan Five Side Hockey Team Management includes Head Coach Olympian Shakeel Abbasi, Manager Olympian Dilawar Hussain, Physiotherapist Waqas Mahmood, and Video Operator Junaid Akhtar were also present with the team. Pakistan team would play a match against the winner of the USA vs Australia match to determine the 9th to 12th position in the event. The Netherlands will face Oman, meanwhile Malaysia will lock horns with Poland, in the semi-finals later today. According to the official FIH website, as its name suggests, Hockey5s is played with 5 athletes per team. It is particularly known for its non-stop end-to-end action, since the ball is in play for about 90% of a match, thanks to rebound-boards placed against the outside of the side-lines and back-lines. There are usually more goals with Hockey5s than with the more traditional 11-a-side format of hockey, since players can score from anywhere after the attacking line. Furthermore, Hockey5s is played on a smaller pitch, which enables to bring hockey to new venues, even at the heart of the cities.

PCB gears up for chairman election

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The election for the chairman of the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) is scheduled to take place on February 6, 2024 as per media reports. Election Commissioner Shah Khawar has summoned a special meeting of the Board of Governors (BoG) for this purpose, which will be held at the NCA. In accordance with the PCB Constitution of 2014, all members of the BoG are required to attend the meeting in person. "The notice of the meeting is issued as per the provisions of the constitution of the Pakistan Cricket Board 2014. It is mandatory for all the members of the BoG to attend the meeting in person," PCB stated. The current composition of the Board of Governors includes representatives from various regional cricket associations as well as nominees from different organizations. Following the resignation of former Chairman Zaka Ashraf, Caretaker Chief Minister Punjab Mohsin Naqvi has been nominated for role of Chairman of the PCB Management Committee.

ISLAMABAD: Lahore and Karachi have qualified for the final of the National Women's T20 Tournament 2023-24, after securing the top two spots on the points table following ten rounds of matches. Rawalpindi missed out on the qualification based on net run rate (NRR) as they fell short of Karachi's NRR despite having the same number of wins. The final is scheduled to be played on 31 January at Pindi Cricket Stadium. The first ball is likely to be bowled at 1100 PKT, with the toss expected to take place at 1030 PKT. The last round of the National Women's T20 Tournament 2023-24 saw Lahore, Rawalpindi

Karachi, Lahore qualify for National Women's T20 final

and Karachi emerge on top after all six teams participated in games played across three venues in Islamabad and Rawalpindi. In a rain-impacted game at Ayub Park Ground, Karachi scored 100-5 in 15 overs in reply to Multan's 114-5 in 20 overs, winning the game by 20 runs as per the DLS. Multan scored 114-5 in 20 overs after being put to bat first by Karachi. Aiman Anwar provided the first

breakthrough for Karachi, as Samina Aftab was caught on just four off 21. Multan captain Gull Feroza and Saika Riaz stitched up a 74-run second-wicket partnership, countering the earlier setback. Gull Feroza hit her fifth half-century of the tournament, producing 67 from 57 on the back of 10 boundaries before she fell to the opposing captain Fatima Sana in the 18th over. Huraina Sajjad ran out Sai

qa as she departed for 26 off 28, with one boundary. Warda Yousaf and Noor-ul-Iman could only contribute a run each before they had to walk back to the pavilion. Fatima, Aimen and Rameen Shammim accounted for a wicket each. Ayesha Bilal found success early on as Muneeba Ali was caught for just four runs. Javeria Khan and Oaima Sohail recuperated with a 49-run second-wicket stand until

the latter fell to Rehmat Noreen for 24 on 22, with three boundaries. Javeria added 40 from 41, with two fours, before she ran out. Yusra Amir (20 not out, 18b, 1x4) was the other contributor with the bat. The Fatima Sana-led side was awarded the game by 20 runs, as per DLS calculations after rain interrupted the game soon after Karachi got to 100-5 in 15 overs. – Agencies



KABUL: Represented Pakistan in Regional Countries conference on Afghanistan in Kabul. Reiterated our commitment to a peaceful and prosperous Afghanistan. Region must work together to harness mutually beneficial connectivity potential and address shared concerns. – DNA

Messi, Suarez on target but Miami beaten in Saudi friendly Malcom settled an entertaining friendly at the Kingdom Arena

SPORTS DESK

RIYADH: Luis Suarez bagged his maiden goal for Inter Miami and Lionel Messi scored a penalty but it was not enough to stop the Major League Soccer side falling to a 4-3 defeat against Saudi Pro League side Al Hilal in Riyadh. An 88th-minute header from Brazilian forward Malcom settled an entertaining friendly at the Kingdom Arena after Miami fought back to 3-3 from 3-1 down early in the second half. The game was the latest leg of Miami's globe-trotting pre-season tour ahead of the

start of the Major League Soccer season on February 21. Former Fulham striker and Serbian international Aleksandar Mitrovic fired Al Hilal head in the 10th minute, coolly side-footing his finish beyond Miami goalkeeper Drake Callender after a well-worked move that split the defence wide open. Saudi international forward Abdullah Al-Hamdan made it 2-0 after 13 minutes, punishing a botched clearance from Miami defender Noah Allen. Sergio Busquets should have pulled a goal back for Miami in the 26th minute but volleyed over from close range with just Al Hilal goalkeeper Hbib Alwotayan to beat. On 34 minutes

though Miami's pressure got its reward. A lofted pass from Jordi Alba over the top caught the Al Hilal defence square, and Julian Gressel latched onto the ball before sliding into the path of Suarez who finished into an empty goal at the far post. The goal was initially disallowed for offside but a VAR check overturned the offside call and the goal stood. Al Hilal restored their two-goal advantage a minute before half-time however when Al-Hamdan crossed into the area for Brazilian forward Michael to nod home after Callender rushed off his line. Miami responded strongly after the break, and drew level with two goals in two minutes

soon after the restart. Messi made it 3-2 from the penalty spot in the 54th minute after Mohammed Jahfali was harshly adjudged to have brought down David Ruiz in the area. Al Hilal were still regrouping from the penalty when Miami levelled. Messi swept a long pass into the path of Ruiz, and the winger cut in from the left and uncorked a ferocious strike that made it 3-3. The game seemed destined to end in a draw but Malcom headed home two minutes from time to seal the win. Miami face Cristiano Ronaldo's Al-Nassr in their second friendly in Saudi Arabia on Thursday before heading to Asia for games in Hong Kong and Japan.

Imran put national...

FROM PAGE 01
The PML-N leader made these remarks while an election rally in Haroonabad. He said he came here for the first time in 1992 while adding the people of this area have always supported his vision. While praising a lot of people who gathered at the rally, he said all the records of the previous rallies have been broken while adding this crowd has been showing the map of the happiness of Pakistan. While counting his past achievements, he said when he was the PM, basic commodities like sugar and flour were available at low-cost to the people.

No action against...

FROM PAGE 01
malicious social media campaign against the Supreme Court judges after the apex court gave a verdict on election symbol of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI). The JIT constituted under the Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act 2016 consists of officials from police, FIA and intelligence agencies. The FIA's list titled "JITSM campaign against CJP and State Institutions" which has names of 47 media persons and YouTubers went viral on social media.

IHC rejects Imran's...

FROM PAGE 01
the IHC including Chief Justice Aamir Farooq and Justice Tariq Mehmood Jahangiri announced the verdict, reserved on January 24. "Detailed reasons will be issued in a written order," the two-member bench said. PTI founder Imran Khan had challenged his jail trial in the corruption references pertaining to Toshakhana gift and £190 million embezzlement.

PM for joint efforts in...

FROM PAGE 01
and security to bolster exploration and production efforts. He further stated that the conference reflected a collective commitment to fully utilise the immense mineral potential so as to ensure energy self-sufficiency and transform Pakistan into a regional exporter of energy. He appreciated the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC) and the Federal Ministry of Energy for fostering an investor-friendly environment by streamlining regulations and procedures.

Pak ranking on global...

FROM PAGE 01
of corruption subsided during the brief stint of Shehbaz Sharif-led government compared to his rival Imran Khan's 2018-2022 tenure. As per the analysis of the TI's previous reports, corruption in Pakistan has been on the rise since 2018. The TI's 2022 CPI report on global corruption also found Pakistan under Shehbaz-Imran's shared rule as more corrupt than before.

Briefs

Antonio to address refugee agency accusations

UNITED NATIONS: United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres will meet Tuesday with key donors to the UN agency for Palestinian refugees after 12 of its staff were accused by Israel of involvement in the October 7 attacks, his spokesman said. Several countries, including the United States, France, Britain, Germany and Japan, have announced the suspension of further funding to the agency. UN to punish staffers involved in 'terror,' urges UNRWA funding; Guterres

"The secretary-general is personally horrified by the accusations against employees of UNRWA," Guterres's spokesman Stephane Dujarric said Monday. "But his message to donors – especially those who have suspended their contributions – is to at least guarantee the continuity of UNRWA's operations, as we have tens of thousands of dedicated staff working throughout the region." Guterres already met with Washington's representative to the UN Linda Thomas-Greenfield on Monday, and "he will be hosting a meeting here in New York with the major donors for UNRWA (Tuesday) afternoon here," Dujarric said. "The secretary-general has also been engaging with the UNRWA leadership and donors to UNRWA, as well as regional leaders, such as King Abdullah of Jordan, whom he spoke to a short while ago, and President (Abdel Fattah) al-Sisi of Egypt."—APP

UN confirms Europe hit record high temperature in 2021

GENEVA: The World Meteorological Organisation confirmed on Tuesday that continental Europe recorded in 2021 its highest ever temperature of 48.8 degrees Celsius (119.8 Fahrenheit), and warned that new extremes were expected. "An international panel of atmospheric scientists verified the temperature recorded by an automated weather station in Syracuse on the Italian island of Sicily (Sicily)," the United Nations' weather agency said. The searing heat on August 11, 2021, was nearly one degree Celsius higher than the previous record peak of 48C registered on July 10, 1977 in the Greek cities of Athens and Elefsina, it said. "Heatwave-like weather" likely to prevail "It is possible, indeed likely, that greater extremes will occur across Europe in the future," said Professor Randall Cerveny, rapporteur on climate and weather extremes for the WMO. "This investigation demonstrates the alarming tendency for continuing high temperature records to be set in specific regions of the world."—APP

EU-Mercosur talks continue despite obstacles

BRUSSELS: A massive and long-negotiated EU-South America trade deal is "not quite there yet" but talks continue, the European Commission said Tuesday against a backdrop of farmer protests in Europe. "The EU is continuing its objective of trying to reach an agreement which complies with our objectives when it comes to sustainability and which also takes into account our concerns when it comes to the agricultural sector," commission spokesman Eric Mamer told journalists. Farmers in several EU countries – including in agricultural powerhouse France and in Belgium – have been causing roadblocks on key highways to demand better revenues and conditions. While the farmers are angry over a list of issues, many have singled out the Mercosur deal, fearing it would further depress their produce prices and increase competition from South American agricultural exporters. The contours of a deal with the four founding Mercosur countries – Brazil, Argentina, Paraguay and Uruguay – were agreed in 2019 after almost two decades of talks, but a final version still needs to be ratified.—APP

US declares NATO 'most powerful, successful' alliance

'Over the nearly two years since Putin's unprovoked invasion of Ukraine, NATO has grown stronger and more united than ever,' US Defense Secretary Austin tells NATO chief Stoltenberg

NEWS DESK

WASHINGTON: Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin underlined the US' commitment to ensuring NATO's enduring strength during a meeting with Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg. "You've kept NATO united and resolute through the most serious threat to transatlantic security since the end of the Cold War. Over the nearly two years since (Russian President Vladimir) Putin's unprovoked invasion of Ukraine, NATO has grown stronger and more united than ever," Austin told Stoltenberg during a meeting at the Pentagon.

"NATO is the most powerful and successful alliance in history," Austin said, adding: "And we're going to keep it that way." Stoltenberg, for his part, said the situation on the battlefield is difficult but NATO Allies are providing "unprecedented support" to Ukraine. "It is important that we continue to do so. Our support to Ukraine is not charity... it is an investment in our own security because the world will become more dangerous if President Putin wins in Ukraine," he added. Austin noted that when Finland joined NATO last year, it made the military alliance even stronger. "I'm very pleased that the Turkish parliament voted



ed last week for Sweden to join NATO, as well. We're looking forward to welcoming Sweden to NATO soon," he said. Both Austin and Stoltenberg condemned the drone attack in Jordan near the Syria border over the weekend that resulted in

the deaths of three US service members and wounded dozens more. "The president and I will not tolerate attack on US forces and we will take all necessary actions to defend the US and our troops," Austin said. Stoltenberg extended his condolences to those killed and wounded in the attack. "This demonstrates once again, the risk that servicemen are exposed to when they stand up for our values and take part in missions and operations where we protect freedom and the values we all believe in," he said. He alleged that "Iran continues to destabilize the region." Separately, US National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan met with Stoltenberg.

They discussed Türkiye's recent approval of Sweden's NATO membership, NATO's support for Ukraine, and planning for the July 2024 NATO Summit in Washington, according to a statement issued by the White House. "They exchanged views on Allied progress in ramping up defense production and expressed concern over the DPRK's (Democratic People's Republic of Korea), export and Russia's procurement of DPRK military equipment, as well as Russia's use of this equipment against Ukraine. They also underscored Allies' shared commitment to military readiness and to defending every inch of NATO territory," the statement read.



BAKU: Pakistan ambassador to Azerbaijan Bilal Hayee met with the Head of FP Affairs of Presidential Administration Hikmet Hajiyev and discussed bilateral agenda and issues of mutual interest. Pakistan, Azerbaijan friendship has deepened over the years & 2024 will infuse new vigor to our bilateral ties.—DNA

Japan PM vows to boost household income

FOREIGN DESK

TOKYO: Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida said on Tuesday his government would do "everything possible" to achieve real income growth to put a decisive end to deflation. "The biggest mission for my administration is to revive the economy," Kishida told the lower house plenary in a policy speech marking the start of the regular parliament sessions. "The economy, particularly wage hikes, is an urgent issue." While he did not announce any new policies, the premier stressed the need to regain public trust in politics amid a funding scandal that has sent support for his ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) to its lowest in more than a decade. Achieving sustainable wage growth and stable inflation is a focus of this year's spring wage talks between employers and workers and could pave the way for the Bank of Japan to depart from its unconventional monetary stimulus. Last year, Japan's blue chip firms offered a 3.6% wage hike, the highest in three decades, and economists now expect 2024 wage hikes could beat that at nearly 3.9%, reflecting a labour crunch and corporate cash pile of 343 trillion yen (\$2.33 trillion). However, small firms, which employ seven out of 10 workers, lag their larger peers in offering generous wage hikes. Analysts are watching to see if there is any correlation between the end of deflation and the timing of the BOJ's policy change. While Japan's economy is no longer in deflation, risks that price declines return have prevented authorities from declaring a decisive end to deflation. Kishida said his administration has lifted minimum wages and sought to raise pay for public-sector workers in medical and welfare services as well as truck drivers, and the class of non-regular workers including part-timers and contract workers. Japan PM Kishida pledges all-out support for quake victims. The premier said on top of wage hikes, temporary cuts in income and resident taxes of 40,000 yen (\$269.96) per individual would be available from June, boosting disposable income. "By achieving rises in wages and disposable income through public and private-sector coordination, we will build a positive mindset in society that it's natural for wages to rise," he added.—DNA

Widodo's shadow looms over Indonesia election

WEB DESK

JAKARTA: Joko Widodo has led Indonesia for a nearly a decade pledging to do things differently, but he stands accused of manoeuvring to build his own political dynasty in next month's presidential vote in a country long known for its nepotistic politics. The incumbent president is barred from a third term but remains hugely popular, with observers saying he is using his influence to install his sons into prominent political positions. His eldest son was named Indonesia's youngest-ever vice presidential candidate last year to run with frontrunner and Defence Minister Prabowo Subianto. Gibran Rakabuming Raka, the 36-year-old mayor of Surakarta city, became Prabowo's running mate after Widodo's brother-in-law and chief justice Anwar Usman issued a controversial ruling in October lowering the minimum age for candidates. Widodo's youngest son has also risen to chairman of a political party despite no prior experience. They have

been helped by the approval ratings of Widodo, who rose from humble beginnings to the top political office, with more than three-quarters of Indonesians approving of his rule, according to recent polls. It has afforded him an outsized sway on the February 14 vote despite criticism he is chipping away at democratic reforms since Southeast Asia's biggest economy emerged from autocracy in the late 1990s. That sheen has boosted the campaign of Prabowo with a Widodo junior by his side. The 72-year-old defence chief – who has lost to Widodo twice – polled at 45.8 percent in a recent Indikator Politik Indonesia poll, more than 20 points ahead of his nearest rival, former Jakarta governor Anies Baswedan. More galling for Widodo's Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (PDI-P) is that he has not backed its pick – former Central Java governor Ganjar Pranowo, currently third in the polls. Yet Widodo has claimed he will remain impartial, supporting all candidates, even though his son is on the

cusps of being Indonesia's youngest-ever vice president. "Just leave it to the people," he said in October. "The signs of heavy interventions are very visible. Jokowi has an interest. If they (Prabowo-Gibran) lose, it will be the end of Jokowi," said Supriatma. "The only option is to win." Prabowo himself is the former son-in-law of Suharto, and Megawati Sukarnoputri, the leader of the PDI-P party, is the daughter of Indonesia's first president Sukarno. After the second presidential debate on January 7 in which Anies attacked Prabowo, accusing him of owning a swathe of land in Borneo near the planned new Indonesian capital Nusantara, due to open next year, Widodo defended his defence minister. "Attacking a personal matter that has nothing to do with the context of last night's debate, which was international relations, geopolitics, defence," he told reporters. "I believe it's not very educative for the public and audience." On Monday, the pair were pictured eating meatball soup together, in a scene

described in some Indonesian media reports as a "political manoeuvre". Claims Widodo is looking to establish a dynasty have done little to dent his popularity, but his former ambassador to Tunisia, Ikrar Nusa Bhakti, says he should have been more patient in working to install his offspring into the race. "It's such a shame. (Gibran) could be a governor first. If that was the case, I am confident not only Jokowi's legacy would be politically intact but it would not cause political turmoil," he said. "It's very unfair that certain candidates received the red carpet treatment while the rest must walk on a very difficult path," he added, referring to alleged acts of sabotage against rival campaigns. Former vice president Jusuf Kalla sarcastically told a talk show in October that this would be "a child-loving" election because of Widodo's son. "Others might as well do it too. We businessmen also want our children to prosper," he said. "Unfortunately, there's only one president, so it's difficult. Everybody is competing."

Türkiye says commitment to Montreux Convention 'unwavering'

The Black Sea region's security is now more critical than ever, Foreign Minister Fidan told a news conference with his Bulgarian counterpart in Sofia as the NATO allies discuss clearing shared waters of Russian mines

FOREIGN DESK

ANKARA: Türkiye remains unwaveringly committed to the provisions of the 1936 Montreux Convention that regulates the passage of ships through the Turkish Straits, its top diplomat said Tuesday. Speaking at a joint news conference with his Bulgarian counterpart Mariya Gabriel in Sofia, Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan said: "We will continue to implement the Montreux Convention to the letter," adding that discussing this issue is out of the question. "Preserving calm in the Black Sea and preventing initiatives that could endanger it is among our fundamental priorities as the implementer of the Montreux Convention," Fidan added. Expressing satisfaction with the agreement between Türkiye, Bulgaria and Romania to establish a Mine

Countermeasures Naval Group in the Black Sea (MCM Black Sea), Fidan highlighted this as an example of regional security cooperation. He underscored that Türkiye views this initiative not only as a demonstration of regional ownership but also as a step in line with the spirit of alliance. The task group formed by Türkiye, Bulgaria and Romania, which will have a rotating command structure, will likely start operating by May, according to the Bulgarian Defense Ministry earlier this month. The Russian navy mined Ukraine's Black Sea coastline in the early stages of the conflict nearly two years ago. Some of the mines have since drifted into the waters of the three countries, endangering shipping and complicating Ukraine's efforts to break through a Russian naval blockade. "As NATO allies that have shores to the Black Sea, regional

and Muslim population as "another important dimension of bilateral relations and thanked the Bulgarian government for their work on this issue." On trade ties, Fidan said Türkiye was "very satisfied with the positive course of economic cooperation." "Our bilateral trade volume exceeded \$7 billion (TL 212.5 billion). We aim to reach the \$10 billion target as soon as possible," he noted. Many Turkish companies invest in Bulgaria and route their land exports through the country. The sides are working to facilitate truck border crossings, Fidan informed. The Turkish-Bulgarian border is a hot spot for droves of irregular migrants that look to cross into Europe every year. The neighbors have tightened border control to combat illegal crossings with additional checks. Speaking at a joint press con-

ference with his Bulgarian counterpart Mariya Gabriel in Sofia, Hakan Fidan said: "We will continue to implement the Montreux Convention to the letter," adding that discussing this issue is out of the question. "Preserving calm in the Black Sea and preventing initiatives that could endanger it are among our fundamental priorities as the implementer of the Montreux Convention," Fidan added. Expressing satisfaction with the agreement between Türkiye, Bulgaria, and Romania to establish a Mine Countermeasures Naval Group in the Black Sea (MCM Black Sea), Fidan highlighted this as an example of regional security cooperation. He underscored that Türkiye views this initiative not only as a demonstration of regional ownership but also as a step in line with the spirit of alliance.

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Türkiye neutralizes over 900 terrorists in 2023

ANKARA: Turkish security forces "neutralized" more than 900 terrorists belonging to various groups last year, Interior Minister Ali Yerlikaya reported Tuesday. Turkish authorities use the term "neutralize" to imply that the terrorists in question surrendered or were killed or captured. Turkish police, gendarmerie and coast guard forces eliminated a total of 923 terrorists in some 23,593 operations, including 3,911 in urban and 19,682 in rural areas, against groups like Daesh, the PKK, Gülenist Terror Group (FETÖ) and leftist organizations between Jan. 1 and Dec. 31, 2023, Yerlikaya said. Authorities also detained 7,716 suspects in these operations, 1,555 of whom were arrested and 1,683 were released under judicial control. In some 6,775 operations against FETÖ, 1,689 suspects were arrested, while 1,500 operations against Daesh saw 738 arrested. In 358 operations targeting leftist terrorist groups, 11 terrorists were eliminated, 737 suspects were detained and 97 were arrested. Of the terrorists killed, 64 were so-called high-ranking members, including eight wanted in the red category. Turkish security forces also prevented a total of 163 terrorist acts, including 124 bomb attacks, Yerlikaya noted.—DNA

Tokyo's Nikkei index ends slightly higher

TOKYO: Tokyo's Nikkei index closed modestly higher on Tuesday, supported following another record day on Wall Street rallies, with traders' focus shifting to corporate earnings. The benchmark Nikkei 225 index added 0.11 percent, or 38.92 points, to 36,065.86, while the broader Topix index ended down 0.10 percent, or 2.55 points, at 2,526.93. Japanese shares started with gains "led by high techs" following rallies in New York, Iwai Cosmo Securities said. The Dow and S&P 500 closed at all-time highs Monday. Strengthening of the yen against the dollar weighed on some carmakers, Iwai added. The dollar fetched 147.38 yen in Asia, compared with 147.48 yen in New York and 147.92 yen in Tokyo on Monday. "A wait-and-see attitude is growing ahead of (the) corporate earnings season that will start later this week," Daiwa Securities said. Investors were also eyeing the two-day Federal Reserve meeting that kicks off on Tuesday. Among major shares, market heavyweight and Uniql operator Fast Retailing added 0.82 percent to 39,420.1 yen, chip-making equipment maker Advantest rose 1.69 percent to 5,850 yen and Shin-Etsu Chemical climbed 3.03 percent to 5,822 yen. Nintendo advanced 2.22 percent to 8,271 yen, while Sony closed up 0.87 percent at 14,480 yen. Toyota ended down 0.80 percent at 2,959.5 yen after it said it was suspending shipments of 10 models that use engines linked with testing irregularities at an affiliate company.—APP

EU-Ukraine deal stalls despite Hungary's efforts

BRUSSELS: Talks between European Union countries aimed at agreeing on more aid for Ukraine later this week remain "difficult," a senior EU official said on Tuesday, despite Hungary having signalled its readiness for a compromise. EU leaders meet on Thursday to try to agree on extending 50 billion euros (\$54 billion) in aid to Ukraine through 2027, as well as replenishing a military fund to arm Kyiv as it fights Russia's almost two-year-old full-scale invasion. Hungary is among the EU's most Russia-friendly countries. It has already once blocked the aid package and has also voiced opposition – along with EU paymaster Germany – to topping up the military fund. "We are not there yet," the EU official said under condition of anonymity, referring to preparations for the Thursday summit in Brussels of the leaders of the bloc's 27 member states.—APP

Briefs

PTI issues show cause notice to Khurram

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) on Tuesday issued a show cause notice to Khurram Sher Zaman, contesting the general election 2024 as PTI candidate for the constituency NA-241. The PTI has issued a show cause notice to Khurram Sher Zaman after he convened PTI candidates on January 28 for a rally in constituency NA-241 near Teen Talwar, Clifton but failed to appear at the location himself. The notice accused him of misusing the name of the PTI founder to take out a rally in Clifton, which led to an FIR against 4500 workers of PTI. In the show cause notice the political party announced to initiate an inquiry against Khurram Sher Zaman for sabotaging the election campaign in Karachi. It is pertinent to mention here that dozens of PTI workers who took out rallies and processions were arrested after a clash with police on Sunday in Karachi's Teen Talwar area. Over 20 PTI workers were arrested after clashing with police at the Teen Talwar monument. In a statement, the police officials stated that no permission was sought by the party to hold its rally as required by the ECP's code of conduct.

Israeli forces kill 3 Palestinians inside Jenin hospital

JENIN: Israeli undercover soldiers assassinated at dawn Tuesday three Palestinian young men, including two brothers, inside the Ibn Sina Hospital in Jenin City. The martyrs were identified as Mohamed Jalameh (from al-Qassam Brigades of Hamas), and the brothers, Mohamed and Basel al-Gazzawi. All of them were resistance fighters. One of the martyrs was reportedly wounded, who had been receiving treatment for months at the hospital. The two others were caregivers. Local and media sources said that Israeli soldiers disguised as civilians (doctors, women and men) stormed the hospital and shot dead the three young men with silencer-fitted guns inside a room on the third floor. Sounds of heavy gunfire were heard around the hospital following the assassination operation. Hamas said the Israeli execution of the three young men, one of them was receiving treatment from a previous serious injury inflicted by the Israeli occupation forces, inside Ibn Sina Hospital is a war crime added to the Israeli ongoing crimes against the Palestinian people whether in Gaza or in Jenin. - Agencies

14 more children succumb to pneumonia

DNA

LAHORE: Pneumonia claimed 14 more lives of children during the past 24 hours in Punjab. According to the Punjab Health Department, a total of 872 new cases of pneumonia cases were reported during the last 24 hours as compared to yesterday's 801. Over the current month, Punjab has reported 275 pneumonia-related deaths, while over 15,000 cases have been reported in the province. Health experts attribute the rapid increase in cases and deaths in Punjab to the environmental pollution caused by smog during winter season. Pneumonia is an infection in lungs, often caused by viruses. It can manifest after symptoms of a cold or flu and can range from mild to severe. Typically, pneumonia is more common in children aged five or younger. The health authorities in Punjab are working to address the surge in pneumonia cases, emphasizing the need for public awareness and preventive measures to curb the spread of infection.

'LIFE AND SOME OTHER BEAUTIFUL THINGS'



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Czech Republic to Pakistan Mr. Ladislav Steinhubel and others witnessing an exhibition "Life and some other beautiful things" by IRFAN CHEEMA at Tanzara Art Gallery. The guests discovered the beauty the artist captured in every brushstroke in his skillfully rendered paintings. - Photo Mudassar Raja

US-Pak sign agreement to protect cultural heritage

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: United States and Pakistan on Tuesday signed an agreement to protect Pakistan's cultural heritage. US Ambassador to Pakistan Donald Blome and Pakistan Secretary of National Heritage and Culture Humaira Ahmed signed the agreement, said a news release issued by the embassy. The agreement establishes import restrictions on certain types of archaeological and ethnological materials originating from Pakistan and entering the United States. The agreement facilitates the return of these cultural objects to the people of Pakistan. The cultural property agreement demonstrates the strong US and Pakistani commitment to restrict the theft and trafficking of cultural objects and our shared goal of protecting Pakistan's rich and diverse cultural heritage. This agreement commits both parties to work together to counter looting and trafficking of objects, promote a clean market for Pakistani art and antiquities in the United States, and increase opportunities for the US museums and the American public to learn about and experience Pakistan's history and culture.

Vietnam, Philippines seal deals on South China Sea security

AGENCIES

HANOI: Vietnam and the Philippines agreed on Tuesday to boost cooperation among their coast guards and to prevent untoward incidents in the South China Sea, in an announcement during a state visit to Hanoi by President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. The two Southeast Asian countries have competing claims over some parts of the South China Sea, a conduit for \$3 trillion of annual ship-borne trade that China claims almost in its entirety. The two memoranda of understanding on security covered "incident prevention in the South China Sea" and "maritime cooperation" among coast guards, according to a Vietnamese official who announced the deals during a formal ceremony in the country's presidential palace.

Hamas studying truce plan as Israeli hardliners threaten PM

Hamas's political chief says any agreement must end violence and see Israel withdraw from Gaza

NEWS DESK

DOHA: Hamas has confirmed that it is studying a proposal for a truce in Gaza, while hardline members of the Israeli government have threatened to collapse the coalition if any deal is not to their liking. The Palestinian group's political leader Ismail Haniyeh confirmed on Tuesday that he is studying the proposal, thrashed out in Paris over the weekend, to halt the war and enable the exchange of Israeli and Palestinian prisoners. Haniyeh said in a statement that the group is "open to discussing any serious and practical initiatives or ideas, provided that they lead to a comprehensive cessation of aggression". Hamas also said that the plan must ensure the "complete withdrawal of the occupation forces from the Gaza Strip". The group's leadership, he said, had received an invitation to Cairo to reach an "integrated vision" on the framework agreement. He also expressed appreciation for the role played by Qatar and Egypt in mediating the deal. Qatar's prime minister, Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim Al Thani, said on Monday that "good progress" was made on a possible deal during meetings between intelligence officials from Egypt, Israel and the United States over the weekend.

Gaza death toll rises to 26,751

FOREIGN DESK

GAZA: The Ministry of Health in Gaza reported that the Israeli occupation committed 13 massacres during the past hours, killing 114 Palestinians and injuring 249 others, leaving the current death toll at 26,751 since October 7. 65,636 Palestinians are also reportedly injured. Local media in Gaza reported that the occupation forces targeted the tents barely serving as a shelter for the displaced Palestinians in al-Mawasi southwest of the Gaza Strip. "The occupation forces continue to besiege and bomb the Nasser and Al-Amal hospitals in Khan Yunis, south of the Gaza Strip," he added. In statements to media, the spokesperson for the Ministry of Health in Gaza, Ashraf al-Qudra, said, "The Nasser Medical Complex is currently in a very critical situation due to repeated Israeli attacks." He added, "It lacks medical and surgical supplies, and medical teams cannot remove critical cases from it," stressing that "we are two days away from Nasser Medical Complex becoming out of service." "The health system in Gaza is in a state of continuous collapse," he said, emphasizing that 800 wounded Palestinians left through the Rafah crossing to receive treatment, while there are still about 7,000 others in need of treatment outside of Gaza. "About 2 million displaced Palestinians are living in inhumane and unhealthy conditions exposing them to diseases and epidemics, and we are expecting the spread of cholera," he added. Commenting on the act of suspending funds sent to UNRWA, al-Qudra stressed that this "directly affects the health sector in Gaza, especially since the organization supervises about 70% of it."

The sides discussed a proposal that would include a phased truce. The release of women and children would follow, with humanitarian aid entering the besieged Gaza Strip. The Qatari prime minister noted that Hamas has previously demanded a permanent ceasefire as a precondition to enter negotiations. However, he suggested that there is hope its stance may have shifted. "I believe we moved from that place to a

place that potentially might lead to a ceasefire permanently in the future," he said. The proposals were circulated to Hamas as fighting intensified in Gaza. Heavy Israeli strikes and urban combat across the besieged enclave killed 128 more people overnight, according to the Ministry of Health in Gaza. An Israeli 'hit squad' also killed three men that it labelled as "terrorists" in an undercover operation at a hospital in the occupied West Bank. "The world must put pressure on the occupation to stop these massacres and war crimes, including the policy of torture to which our people are exposed in the areas of the West Bank, executions and arrests," said Haniyeh. Amidst the uptick in fighting, Israel has charged that around a dozen staff of the United Nations agency for Palestinian refugees (UNRWA) took part in the October 7 attack, leading key donor countries including the United States and Germany to suspend funding. Haniyeh said that the decision of countries to suspend contributions was a "clear violation" of last week's International Court of Justice interim ruling, which called for increasing humanitarian aid to Gaza. Countries cutting aid support Israel's "occupation through starvation and siege", the Hamas chief asserted.

ECP stops caretakers from restructuring of FBR

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) on Tuesday barred the caretakers from restructuring the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR), moments after the interim federal cabinet decided to overhaul and digitize the tax agency. The ECP took notice of the cabinet's decision to approve the FBR restructuring plan, saying that "it is the Constitutional duty of the ECP to monitor the actions of the caretaker government beyond its prescribed responsibilities. As per media reports, the ECP sent a letter to interim Prime Minister's Secretary Khurram Agha and said that the jurisdiction of the caretaker government was clearly stated in the Constitution and the Election Act. "The restructuring of the FBR and reforms are big policy decisions," it said, advising the caretaker prime minister to leave such important policy matters for the upcoming government. The ECP said that the interim government can perform the day-to-day affairs under Section 230 of the Election Act. Earlier, the Interim Federal Cabinet, in a meeting chaired by the Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar, approved restructuring and digitisation of the FBR on the recommendations of the Revenue Division. Under these

reforms, a Federal Tax Policy Board would be constituted in the Revenue Division that would be tasked to formulate tax policy, fixation of revenue targets and work for coordination among the stakeholders. The federal minister for finance would head the board. Customs and Inland Revenue departments would be separated and work under specific director generals in the relevant cadres who would also enjoy complete authority over the administrative, financial and operational matters. Both the officials would ensure digitisation of their relevant departments and implementation of globally recognised practices for transparency and addressing complaints. These departments would have separate oversight boards with the federal secretaries of ministries from finance, revenue, trade, chairman NADRA and relevant experts as its members whereas, minister for finance would head them. The meeting was also apprised of the recommendations of an inter-ministerial committee that held its meeting on January 23 under the caretaker finance minister. During its previous meeting, effective amendments were made in the summary after a comprehensive debate which was submitted in the cabinet's meeting today. The prime minister directed that conflict of interest should be avoided during the appointment of experts from the private sector.



ISLAMABAD: Vice Chief of the Naval Staff Vice Admiral Ovais Bilgrami exchanging views with Secretary General of the Iraqi Ministry of Defence, Lieutenant General Ahmed Dawood during his visit to Naval Headquarters. - DNA

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