



Taliban's Hydropower Dam Sparks Concerns in Pakistan

KABUL (Agencies): The Afghan Taliban's recent announcement of plans to construct a hydroelectric dam on the Kunar River in eastern Afghanistan has raised apprehensions in neighboring Pakistan. According to a spokesperson for the Taliban's Water and Energy Ministry, Matiullah Abid, the project's survey and design have been completed, and construction will commence when funds become available. Reacting to the unilateral decision, a provincial minister in Pakistan, Jan Achakzai, deemed it a hostile act and warned of potential severe consequences, including escalating tensions and conflict. The Kunar River, originating in the Hindu Kush mountains, merges with the Kabul River before flowing into Pakistan, serving



as a crucial source of fresh water for the country. The absence of a bilateral water-sharing agreement between Afghanistan and Pakistan has historically led to disputes over dam construction projects that could impact water flow. Despite concerns raised by Pakistani officials, experts argue that the Taliban may lack the technical expertise and finances for such a project. Af-

ghan water-management expert Najib Aqa Fahim stated, "Constructing dams requires technical know-how, a robust supply chain, and a lot of money." Another expert, Najibullah Sadid, downplayed the potential impact, noting that the dam is relatively small and intended for electricity generation rather than significantly altering water flows to Pakistan. The Taliban's hydropower ambitions could further strain relations between the group and Pakistan, already experiencing tensions due to the Taliban's alleged sheltering of the Tehrik-e Taliban Pakistan (TTP). This discord has resulted in pressure tactics from Pakistan, including the expulsion of Afghan refugees, border closures, and blockades of Afghan transit goods in recent months.

Turkey initiates visa-free travel for citizens from six countries

ANKARA (Agencies): Turkey has implemented a visa-free entry policy for citizens from six countries, including the UAE and Saudi Arabia, to boost tourism and strengthen international relations. President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's decree, effective immediately, allows passport holders from the UAE, Saudi Arabia, United States, Canada, Bahrain, and Oman to explore Turkey without a prior visa for a maximum of 90 days. The initiative aims to encourage tourism, facilitate cul-



tural exchanges, and forge stronger connections between Turkey and the designated nations. By inviting travelers to delve into Turkey's rich

history, diverse landscapes, and vibrant heritage, the country seeks to foster mutual understanding. The visa-free facility is anticipated to not only boost diplomatic relations but also significantly contribute to the regional tourism industry. Turkey's decision reflects a strategic effort to enhance tourism, stimulate cultural interactions, and reinforce diplomatic ties with key nations, promising positive impacts on both the tourism sector and overall international relations in the region.

War in Gaza to drag on for 'many more months' - IDF

Israel's military chief has warned of a long process to thoroughly dismantle Hamas. Israel's top military commander has warned that the war in Gaza will likely drag on for "many more months" because a long and determined fight will be required to completely destroy the Palestinian militant group Hamas and prevent it from quickly becoming a threat again. "There are no magic solutions," Israel Defense Forces (IDF) Chief of Staff Herzl Halevi told reporters on Tuesday. He added, "There are no shortcuts when it comes to thoroughly dismantling a terrorist organization, except being stubborn and determined in the fighting." Halevi's comments came after Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said on Monday that the war with Hamas was "not close to being over." Netanyahu reiterated that Hamas must be destroyed before the fighting can stop, adding that Gaza must be "demilitarized" and Palestinian society "deradicalized" to create conditions for a lasting peace. Nearly 21,000 people have been killed in Gaza since the war began on October 7, according to local health officials. Hamas triggered the conflict by launching surprise attacks on southern Israel, killing more than 1,100 people including almost 700 Israeli civilians and 71 foreigners, as well as taking hundreds of hostages. Halevi said the IDF is expanding its operations in central and southern Gaza after dismantling most of the Hamas battalions in the northern part of the Palestinian enclave. "We eliminated many terrorists and commanders," he said. "Some of them surrendered to our forces, and we took hundreds of prisoners. We destroyed many underground infrastructures and weapons." The IDF chief acknowledged that given that the area is dense and urban, there are probably more Hamas fighters hidden in northern Gaza. He vowed that the Israeli military would not allow security conditions to slide back to pre-October 7 levels, putting citizens at risk of a repeat of the Hamas attacks.

Japan to Finalize Relocation of US Base in Okinawa on Thursday - Reports

TOKYO (Agencies): Japanese Land Minister Saito Tetsuo will give his formal approval on December 28 to start ground works for the relocation of a US military base in Okinawa prefecture, despite opposition from local authorities, Japanese broadcaster NHK reported on Tuesday. The Japanese Defense Ministry is reportedly already making arrangements and signing contracts with construction companies to start building embankments in Oura Bay in mid-January, once materials and equipment are delivered. This will be the first time that Japan's central government overrules a decision by local authorities in one of the prefectures, the broadcaster said. The Japanese government has long sought to relocate the Futenma military base from near a densely populated area in Okinawa to an offshore site within the same prefecture. This would require landfill works, which the local govern-



ment has refused to allow. The cause was taken to Japan's Supreme Court, which ruled in 2018 to start the ground works for the relocation. In 2020, after soft ground was discovered on the construction site, a design change was requested. Incumbent Okinawa Governor Denny Tamaki, who took office in 2018, declined the request. In October, the land minister went to the Fukuoka High Court, which gave its green light for the construction works required for the base's relocation. Tamaki vowed to appeal with the Supreme Court and in the meantime is reportedly trying to negotiate with the government in Tokyo.

First Ukrainian pilots complete F-16 training - UK



- The airmen moved to Denmark after doing the initial course in the UK, according to the British MoD. LONDON (Agencies): Six experienced Ukrainian fighter jet pilots have completed their F-16 training course in the UK, the British Defense Ministry has said. The first group of Kiev's airmen began receiving flying and English language lessons from the Royal Air Force (RAF) in August, as part of London's contribution to the international coalition aimed at providing Ukraine with fourth generation US-made aircraft, the ministry said in a statement on Tuesday. Those pilots are already in Denmark, where they'll continue to learn to operate the F-16s, it added. During their stay in Britain, Ukrainian forces only took to the skies in a Grob

Tutor aircraft, as the RAF has no F-16s in service, the statement read. The British instructors worked with the pilots on general handling procedures, navigation, instrument and formation flying in line with NATO. Ten more Ukrainian aviators will continue their training in the UK, along with dozens of technicians from the country, the ministry said. UK Defense Secretary Grant Shapps said that he was "proud of the support the Royal Air Force is providing to the next generation of Ukraine's combat air pilots and ground crew, who will be the first line of defense in protecting Ukraine's skies." The use of the F-16s by Kiev, "combined with training from the world-leading RAF ... is a significant step forward from Ukraine's current Soviet-era capabilities," he claimed. The statement also cited Ukrainian Defense Minister Rustem Umerov, who described the training provided by Britain as "a rapid and effective programme to equip Ukrainian pilots with the skills they need in the war against Russia."

'Explosions' alert after Houthi drones, missiles hit Red Sea ships

AL-MUKALLA (Agencies): At least two commercial ships are believed to have been hit by drones and missiles launched by the Iran-backed Houthis in Yemen on Tuesday as the militia's leaders pledged to confront a US-led international naval task force in the Red Sea. The UK's Maritime Trade Operations authority received information from a ship on Tuesday afternoon saying an explosion had been heard and missiles spotted 60 nautical miles from

Yemen's Red Sea port of Hodeida. An alert was also issued three hours earlier by UKMTO saying that a vessel had reported two explosions 15 minutes after seeing drones roughly 50 nautical miles west of Hodeidah. The Houthis have not yet claimed responsibility for the attacks as of late Tuesday. The Yemen militia has launched ballistic missiles and drones against commercial and naval ships in the Red Sea in a bid to force Israel to end its assault on Gaza.

No embassy staff hurt in blast near Israeli mission in Delhi



NEW DELHI (Agencies): An explosion near the Israeli Embassy in New Delhi on Tuesday did not kill or wound any staff members, authorities said, adding that investigations into its cause were ongoing. Officials were still inspecting the area but it had been reopened to the general public. There was no information suggesting anyone on the street had been hurt. Israeli missions around the world have been on alert amid a rise in antisemitic attacks since Israel launched its counteroffensive against Hamas fighters in the Gaza Strip. "We can confirm that around 5:20 pm there

was a blast at close proximity to the embassy," Israeli Embassy spokesperson Guy Nir told Reuters, adding that local police and security teams were investigating. Nothing had been found in the search operation three hours after the blast, an official involved in the investigation told Reuters. Teju Chitri, a security guard working at a nearby government languages training institute, told the Press Trust of India news agency that he heard the explosion, which took place in a tightly controlled neighbourhood home to government buildings and diplomatic missions. "I heard a blast... I came outside and saw smoke coming out from near a tree," Chitri said. In January 2021, a small bomb went off near the Israeli embassy in New Delhi without harming anyone. An Israeli official said at the time that Israel was treating the blast as a terrorist incident.

FBI Says Closely Monitoring Threats to US Public This Holiday Season Due to Gaza Conflict



WASHINGTON (Agencies): The Federal Bureau of Investigation is closely monitoring threats to US public safety stemming from unrest over the Israel-Hamas conflict, an FBI spokesperson told Sputnik. "The FBI is closely monitoring threats to public safety during the holiday season which may be amplified by the ongoing Israel-HAMAS conflict," the spokesperson said on Tuesday. The FBI is actively communicating and sharing information with US law enforcement partners, faith com-

munities, and others, according to the spokesperson. Hundreds of pro-Palestine protests marched in New York City on Monday, which led to several violent clashes between demonstrators and police officers that resulted in several arrests, media reported. Pro-Palestine protesters also held demonstrations on Monday outside the homes of US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin and White House National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan to demand an end to the Gaza conflict. More demonstrations are expected on December 31 after the anti-war coalition ANSWER urged protesters to take to the streets on New Year's Eve to demand a ceasefire and an end to the occupation of Palestinian lands. The aim is to increase pressure on the US government with marches, walk-outs, sit-ins, and other forms of protest.

German car industry could be sold to China - Putin aide

Mercedes, BMW, and other European carmakers will likely "fade into history" within the next decade, Maksim Oreshkin has warned. MOSCOW (Agencies): China is rapidly gaining market capitalization in the global automobile sector, while European carmakers are losing competitiveness, Maksim Oreshkin, Russian President Vladimir Putin's top economic adviser, told Expert magazine in an interview published on Tuesday. Oreshkin noted that China has already become the number one exporter of cars in the world, which does not bode well for European car brands. "I wouldn't be surprised if companies like Mercedes and BMW fade into history in ten years. As brands they will probably remain, but will follow the fate of Volvo, which was sold to China. In other words, they will actually cease to be



European cars," the presidential aide predicted. "European manufacturers now have neither the market nor the technological advantage that they had five to ten years ago," according to Oreshkin. The broader EU, and Germany, its industrial powerhouse, in particular, have been in the grip of an economic crisis for the past year and a half, ever since Brussels launched its sanctions war on Russia in response to the Ukraine conflict. As a result, the bloc lost access to cheap energy from Russia, which used to power much of its industry.

About Khyber Mail The Khyber mail was first published in Peshawar, Pakistan in 1932. A newspaper in English by the eminent journalist Sheikh Sana Ullah. From 1932 to 1989 it has survived as leading English newspaper in the region by the sons of Sana Ullah i.e. Sheikh Zaka Ullah, Sheikh Inayat Ullah and Sheikh Saleem Ullah. The publication was shut down in 1989 due to various reasons. The current owner Rizwan Inayat son of Sheikh Inayat Ullah and grandson of Sheikh Sana Ullah, has restarted the family heritage but meeting with the requirement of the century, by giving the readers current happenings around the world with one touch anywhere any time and updating the reader to pace up with the world.

IGP expresses police resolve to eradicate terrorism

PESHAWAR (APP): In a resolute stance against terrorism, Inspector General of Police (IGP) Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Akhtar Hayat Gandapur, announced the launch of a robust campaign to eradicate terrorism from the region. During the inauguration of a new police station in Khyber Bara, he underscored the police force's unwavering commitment to protecting the lives and property of the citizens. Besides tribal elders, CCPO Peshawar, Aijaz Khan, DPO Khyber, Saleem Abbas Kolachi and other officials were present. IG Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Akhtar

Hayat Gandapur also held meetings with tribal elders, emphasizing complete cooperation and mutual collaboration to combat criminals, drug traffickers, and social issues. He praised the tribal elders, stating that the community and police must work together as one entity for the region's security, addressing issues like lawlessness, drugs, and other serious crimes. While acknowledging the sacrifices of the people of Khyber district in collaboration with national institutions, he highlighted the importance of collective efforts to control crimes, including

the menace of drugs. He urged the police force and the public to unite in eliminating these crimes and ensuring the region's peace and security. Tribal elders expressed gratitude for the government's concern for the well-being of the people. The IGP provided instructions to police officers and youth, emphasizing alertness, avoiding mobile phone use during duty, and using helmets and jackets for personal safety. He also instructed the police to maintain a respectful attitude towards the public and prioritize solving their issues on a preferential basis.

PHC fixes PTI petition against ECP decision for hearing

PESHAWAR (APP): Peshawar High Court (PHC) on Tuesday fixed Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) petition for hearing against the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) declaration of its intra-party elections as void and the subsequent withdrawal of its election symbol, the bat. The

PHC Judge Justice Kamran Hayat will hear the case today. Led by Barrister Gohar and Ali Zafar, PTI's legal team including Barrister Gohar and Sher Afzal Marwat filed the plea in the Peshawar High Court (PHC) today, seeking the suspension of the ECP decision.

Cold and dry weather to prevail in KP

PESHAWAR (APP): The Provincial Meteorological Center Peshawar on Tuesday predicted that mainly cold and dry weather is expected in most districts of the province, while very cold in upper districts and hilly areas. It said that foggy conditions are expected over Charsadda, Nowshera, Mardan, Peshawar, Swabi and D.I. Khan districts as well as over Motorway (M1) / Highways at night and early in the morning. During the last 24 hours cold and dry weather prevailed over most districts of the province. Rainfall recorded (in mm) during the last 24

hours at different stations of KPK was nil. The maximum and minimum temperatures recorded in centigrade at different stations of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa were Peshawar 26/05, Chitral 18/-01, Timergara 22/02, Dir 22/-01, Mirkhani 21/01, Kalam 18/-05, Drosh 17/04, Saidu Sharif 22/01, Pattan 24/15, Malam Jabba 12/02, Takht Bhai 23/04, Kakul 20/03, Balakot 23/04, Parachinar 17/01, Bannu 25/08, Cherat 16/05, DI Khan City 28/09. The lowest temperature recorded in the province was -05°C in Kalam and Tirah valley of Khyber district.

Election 2024: Candidates blow horns to attract voters after submitting nomination papers in KP

PESHAWAR (APP): The candidates of all mainstream politico-religious parties and independents have expedited election campaigns and corner meetings to inform the masses about their election manifestos after submitting nomination papers for different constituencies for general election 2024. The scrutiny of nomination papers continued in the respective offices of returning officers in all 37 districts of KP where the process would be completed by December 30, 2023. Eying on national and provincial assemblies, the stalwarts of Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP), Pakistan Muslim League-N (PML-N), Awami National Party (ANP), Jamiatul Ulema Islam-F (JUI-F), Jummat e Islami Pakistan and Pakistan Tehrik e Insaf (PTI) have mostly fielded political heavyweights to clinch maximum seats from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and form government for

next five years. On NA-28 Peshawar-I, a total of 33 candidates filed papers including former member national assembly, Noor Alam Khan of JUI-F, former minister KP Taimur Salim Jhagra of PTI and ex-speaker KP assembly, Kirmatulla Khan Chagarmatti of PPP. Similarly, on NA-29 Peshawar-II, as many as 22 candidates submitted their nomination papers including former MNA Amir Ayub Khan, former MPA Sobia Shahid and Tahir Nadeem while 27 candidates would try their luck on NA-30 Peshawar-III including former MNA Shah G Gul Afridi of PML-N, ex MNA Nasir Khan Musazai of JUI-F and ex MPA Khalid Waqar Chamkani. On NA 31-Peshawar-IV, a total of 30 candidates filed nomination papers including former MNA Arbab Sher Ali, Arbab Zarak Khan, Arbab Alamigr Khan. Tough electoral battle is expected on NA-32

Peshawar's constituency mostly comprised on city areas among ANP's leader and former federal minister, Ghulam Ahmed Bilour, PTI's Sher Afzal Marwat and Shah Jee Gul Afridi of PML-N. "The literacy rate in Peshawar was high compare to other districts where most people were associated with trade and business and the role of young voters would play a crucial role in deciding fate of the candidates," said Muhammad Rauf Khan, Chairman Political Science Department, University of Peshawar while talking to APP. "The literacy rate in Peshawar was high compare to other districts where most people were associated with trade and business and the role of young voters would play a crucial role in deciding fate of the candidates," said Muhammad Rauf Khan, Chairman Political Science Department, University of Peshawar while talking to APP.

DC for successful implementation of Khushal KP programme

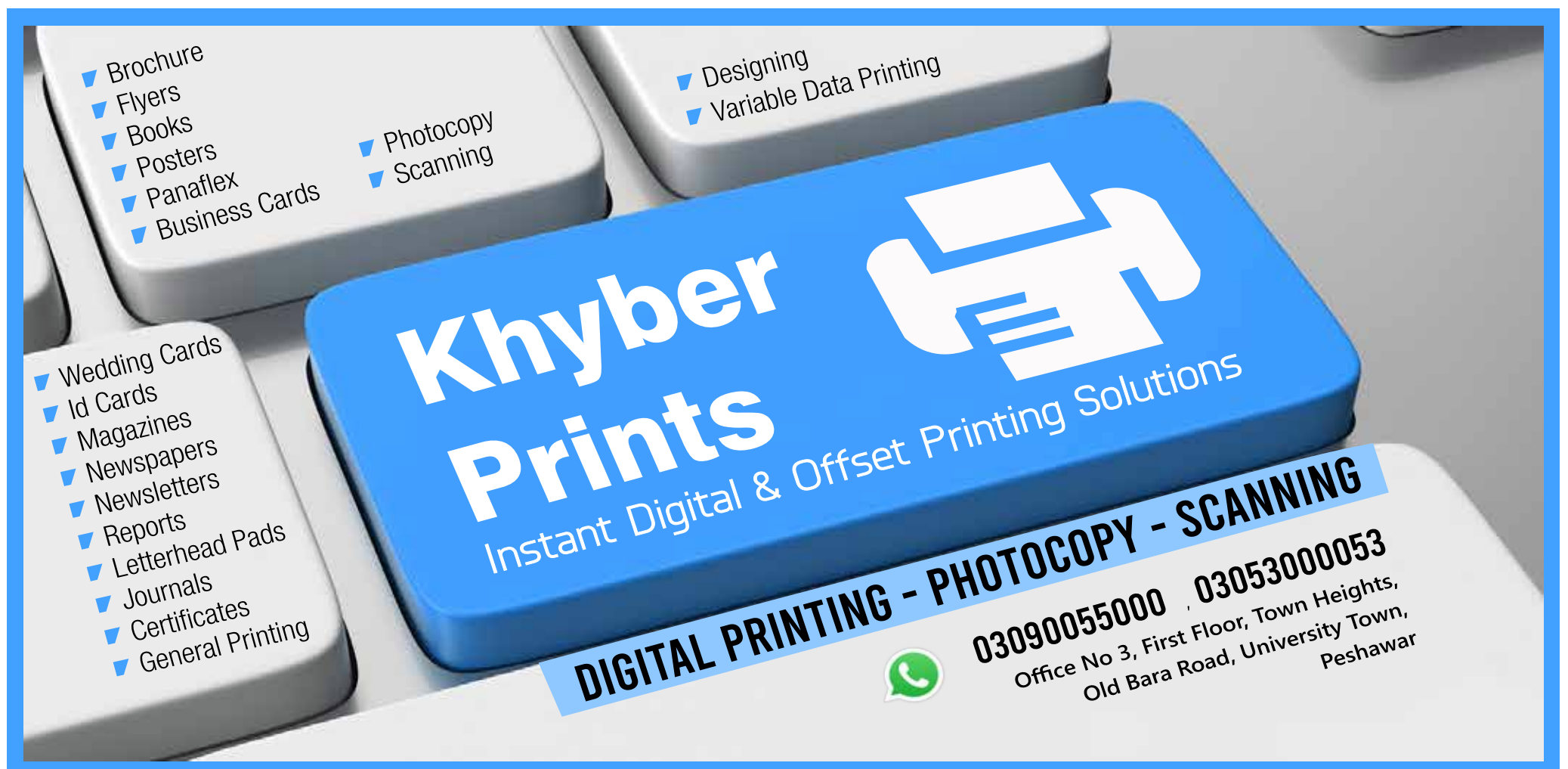
KOHAT (APP): Deputy Commissioner Azmatullah on Tuesday directed all the concerned departments to use all means to successfully implement the Khushal Khyber Pakhtunkhwa program launched by the Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Presiding over a meeting on effective implementation of Khushal Khyber

Pakhtunkhwa programme, here, he assigned the responsibilities to the concerned officers. The Deputy Commissioner clarified that no shortcoming would be tolerated in the implementation of the program. All the district administrative officers and police force officials and heads of relevant departments attended the meeting.



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Heightened Polio Threat Demands Urgent Interventions in Pakistan and Afghanistan

The recent alert issued by the Emergency Committee on the international-spread of the poliovirus serves as a stark reminder of the looming danger to the strides made against polio in Pakistan and Afghanistan. The significant progress achieved in the last 18 months is at considerable risk due to the re-infection of crucial areas and historical reservoirs, including Karachi and Quetta in Pakistan, and Kandahar in Afghanistan. The identification of these risks underscores the pressing need for targeted interventions. The specific threat of international spread is exacerbated by the presence of high-risk mobile populations in Pakistan and a large number of returnees to Afghanistan. The risk remains imminent as the Type-1 Wild Poliovirus (WPV1) lineages, primarily detected in Afghanistan in 2022, are now identified in Pakistan in 2023. Mitigating this risk requires sustained efforts, focusing on enhancing vaccination quality and fostering close coordination. The substantial pool of unvaccinated 'zero dose' children in southern Afghanistan poses a significant risk, necessitating proactive measures. Additionally, areas in Afghanistan that only allow site-to-site or mosque-to-mosque immunization responses prove to be less effective compared to the house-to-house modality. Addressing these challenges is crucial to safeguard the progress made against polio and prevent its resurgence in the region.

Education's Vitality — By Muhammad Adnan Shad

The first verse of the Quran is "Iqra" which means "Read". This verse is Allah's first command to the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). Almighty Allah emphasizes the significance of education in the Holy Quran. Our Holy Prophet has continually highlighted the key role of education. It commemorates the beginning of the Almighty's guidance delivered to humanity through the Quran. It implies that education is a fundamental aspect of life. Education is a systematic process for improving a person's skills and demeanor. Our advancement in life is strongly contingent on education. That's why acquiring knowledge is essential for every individual. Education is an acquainted and deliberate effort to make an act of instruction and the learning cycle. Learners are effectively developing their potential to have the enormous strength of meticulous, conscious, personal, awareness and intellectual capacity required of themselves and in a community. An individual can obtain knowledge and understanding of higher explicit concepts through education which may be referred to as a learning cycle. Nobody denies the value of education at any level. In its broadest sense, education is a human right and a public good. Education is always a key to success and guarantees the basis for equity in the community. As education is the foundation for quality education it is not limited to any specific institution. It commences in the mother's lap and departs in the burial place. Throughout life, a person learns knowledge through either direct or indirect means.

The following are definitions of education by various authors; According to Albert Einstein "Education is what remains after one has forgotten what one has learned in school."

According to B.F. Skinner "Education is what survives when what has been learned has been forgotten."

According to John Dewey "Education is not preparation for life; education is life itself."

According to Nelson Mandela "Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world."

According to Karl Marx "Education is a weapon, whose effect depends on who holds it in his hands and at whom it is aimed."

Furthermore, education enhances communication abilities such as the ability to read, write, speak, and listen. Education also imparts knowledge on how to navigate social interactions, distinguish between right

and wrong, and resolve disputes and other associated issues. Making decisions, solving problems, improving mental as well as physical abilities, developing morals, thinking critically, and being motivated are all impacted by education. Education teaches about social justice which is all about having equal access to opportunities and economic, political and social rights. Personal growth and self-actualization tend to be stimulated by education. It can help to accumulate a better awareness of your abilities and shortcomings while also discovering interests and values. Education teaches us how to manage time effectively, think critically, act responsibly, methodically address problems, and build and retain confidence. Moreover, education is important in promoting social structure while promoting democratic principles. It informs people about their rights and duties. As a citizen, the citizen encourages inclusion and promotes respect, tolerance, and equality. Education empowers an individual with an opportunity for social progression that enables them to elevate economic and social status. Better health outcomes and general well-being are also associated with education. People who are better educated are more likely to make informed health decisions and lead healthier lifestyles. It promotes awareness of health behavior, disease prevention, and access to health care information. Additionally, economic development and education are indistinguishably connected. A well-educated team is more adaptive, creative, and productive, and enables growth in the economy. Education is often seen as a pathway to economic opportunity. It provides individuals with the obligatory skills and certifications to pursue careers and find jobs. Higher education is associated with increased earning potential and better career prospects that can help eliminate poverty. The key component is career counseling which has a substantial impact on educational diversity. It includes vocational education, technical education, commerce & business education, medical, engineering, and agriculture fields. In general, education can play a substantial part in advancements and job progression. Individuals with a higher degree of education have more earning potential and can use education to work in global marketplaces to explore international career prospects. Educational institutions provide prospects for networking and professional development.

Two Elections that Will Impact Energy and Geopolitics in 2024

— By Charles Kennedy

The New Year will bring not only new leadership to key energy venues around the world, but it will also bring impactful developments in the run-up, as incumbents act to secure their destinies at all costs. From Russia to Venezuela and the United States, with a stage-setting surprise already unveiled in Argentina, this is one of the most important election years in decades.

Russia: March 15-17, 2024

Russian President Vladimir Putin is pulling out all the stops for his presidential bid in March next year. To that end, leading Kremlin critic and the country's most influential opposition figure and anti-corruption campaigner, Alexei Navalny, has been sequestered (at best) in a secret location for the past two weeks. No one knows where the imprisoned opposition leader is now. Navalny, who has been serving a prison term in the IK-6 prison outside of Moscow has not appeared at any scheduled court hearings for December, according to The Moscow Times, and his lawyers haven't seen him since December 5. In August, Navalny was sentenced to 19 years in prison on "extremism" charges in a brazen attempt to keep him out of politics. In the meantime, it's the high season for treason in Russia as Putin seeks to quash any detractors. According to The Moscow Times, a record number of 63 cases of high treason have been sent to the courts this year, with an additional seven cases for "confidential cooperation with a foreign state or organization." It smacks of Stalin's days.

On December 22, Putin seized the country's biggest car dealership (Rolf) and put it under state management, claiming it was for commercial reasons but the reality is that the owner is Sergei Petrov, a Kremlin critic. Rolf, which is based in Cyprus, has been around since the fall of the Soviet Union. The Kremlin has accused Rolf of illegally moving money abroad at a time when Russia's wartime economy can't allow for it. Petrov's take on this is that Putin is paving the way for his cronies to redistribute assets amongst themselves. On the war in Ukraine, it remains unclear as to whether Putin has succeeded in conveying to the public that this is a victory in any way, or what it has meant for the Russian

economy or Russia's influence in the former Soviet arena. Russia in 2024 will undoubtedly usher in another victory for Putin, but his cronies and loyalists have been shifting, and that means a redistribution of assets and a largely uninvestable country. His victory will not, of course, shock the market or have much impact on oil and gas prices, which have long ago calculated any Putin premium there is to be had. A defeat for Putin, however, would roil markets because of the massive amount of uncertainty this would bring. Can anyone challenge Putin at this point? Not really. The only challenger hopeful is former journalist Yekaterina Duntsova, who is being accused of being backed by Yukos Oil boss Mikhail Khodorkovsky (both deny this), who is classified in Russia as a "foreign agent". He's a fugitive oligarch running an opposition movement from outside of Russia. A second candidate appeared in December, 60-year-old Boris Nadezhdin, a former politician and commentator who has accused Putin of undermining the country's democratic institutions with his authoritarianism. He's also called Putin's invasion of Ukraine a "fatal mistake"—a statement that could land him in prison for treason. 71-year-old Putin does not appear to have been weakened significantly by the failed Wagner mutiny earlier this year; Ukraine's counteroffensive has showed signs of stalling; and while the economy may not be rock solid due to the war effort, the propaganda machine is working at full force to get across a different narrative, and it seems to be working. Most analysts are preparing for a show election that will see Putin—already in power since 1999—remain in power thanks to Constitutional amendments that he made sure went through to allow him to stay in power for more than a decade longer. For oil, it will mean more of the current status quo of war in Ukraine and Western sanctions and price caps, which will simply become the norm. Venezuela – 2024 (TBD) Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro cut a deal with Washington for a temporary easing of sanctions on Venezuelan oil. The deal was for free and fair elections, and that he would

not attempt to thwart the opposition's participation. His first move was to issue arrest warrants for a handful of opposition figures, including former National Assembly leader Juan Guaido and staffers of the opposition presidential candidate Maria Corina Machado. This coincided with the holding of a referendum on the annexation of Essequibo, the oil-rich area of Guyana, which makes up some two-thirds of the country's territory. While Guyana and Venezuela have held talks since and vowed to refrain from a military confrontation over the matter, Maduro is desperate, and from a domestic standpoint, this is a play designed to circumvent elections by escalating things to a level that would allow him to declare a state of emergency. As noted by Andrew Oppenheimer writing for the Miami Herald in late December, to achieve his goals, Maduro could send a stealth force to claim Essequibo without firing a single bullet. By establishing this presence and officially declaring Essequibo under Venezuelan control, Maduro creates an international incident that the West will find necessary to address. Under the continually escalating pressure of an "international incident", Maduro will find the legitimacy he needs to declare a state of emergency and cancel 2024 elections, or at least postpone them indefinitely.

A state of emergency would allow him to cancel elections. The West would act slowly because China and Russia would back Venezuela's claim and the West would seek to avoid any actual confrontation. This is a potential Pandora's Box of geopolitical consequences, too, because Maduro is also being used as a puppet for Chinese and Iranian ends. As historian Gregory Copley noted for Oilprice.com earlier in December, China and Iran have been working with Maduro to escalate the Guyana crisis as a way to force Washington to withdraw forces from the Indo-Pacific military build-up and redirect them. The Russia-Ukraine war has likewise benefitted China as it has caused Western forces to get bogged down in the Euro-Atlantic. Copley sees the prospect of U.S. and UK military support for Guyana as "real". Courtesy: RT

2023 to go down as 'one of the most difficult' years for children worldwide:

UNICEF — By Anadolu Agency

As dozens of conflicts have ruthlessly robbed tens of thousands of children of their future, 2023 will be remembered as "one of the most difficult" years to be a child in, according to the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). Another factor that made the year "one of the most difficult" was insufficient funds for humanitarian actors, harming children in need of life-saving assistance, especially in ongoing conflict zones, as "you cannot do more with less," said the UNICEF deputy executive director. "I think 2023 has been one of the most difficult years for children worldwide. And I think the things that have struck me the most is, firstly, the horrendous, unprecedented violence that we've seen in Gaza," Ted Chaiban told Anadolu in an interview. In Gaza, the proportion of children killed as a percentage of the total death toll is "over 40%," Chaiban said, adding that this is "twice what we've seen in over 40 conflicts where we have this aggregated data. "It's something that's unprecedented we've seen, an indiscriminate level of violence in Gaza," he said. "And that's just absolutely horrendous." Israel has pounded the Gaza Strip since a cross-border attack by the Palestinian group Hamas on Oct. 7, killing at least 20,424 Palestinians, mostly women and children, and injuring 54,036 others, according to health authorities in the enclave. This has caused an unprecedented humanitarian catastrophe and immense damage to infrastructure, according to Palestinian and international sources.

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ing to the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). Another factor that made the year "one of the most difficult" was insufficient funds for humanitarian actors, harming children in need of life-saving assistance, especially in ongoing conflict zones, as "you cannot do more with less," said the UNICEF deputy executive director. "I think 2023 has been one of the most difficult years for children worldwide. And I think the things that have struck me the most is, firstly, the horrendous, unprecedented violence that we've seen in Gaza," Ted Chaiban told Anadolu in an interview. In Gaza, the proportion of children killed as a percentage of the total death toll is "over 40%," Chaiban said, adding that this is "twice what we've seen in over 40 conflicts where we have this aggregated data. "It's something that's unprecedented we've seen, an indiscriminate level of violence in Gaza," he said. "And that's just absolutely horrendous." Israel has pounded the Gaza Strip since a cross-border attack by the Palestinian group Hamas on Oct. 7, killing at least 20,424 Palestinians, mostly women and children, and injuring 54,036 others, according to health authorities in the enclave. This has caused an unprecedented humanitarian catastrophe and immense damage to infrastructure, according to Palestinian and international sources.

2023 appeal for children 'roughly 50% funded' Although "every dollar counts," Chaiban said, UNICEF's 2023 appeal for children was "roughly 50% funded, leading to a reduction in 2024's appeal by 16%." "Every one of those dollars made a difference," he said. "And we're going to

do everything possible to raise the resources so that we can respond to children." In 2023, UNICEF appealed for \$10.3 billion in emergency funding to reach more than 110 million children – including 54 million girls and 10 million children with disabilities – with humanitarian assistance across 155 countries and territories. The appeal was focused on major crises including in Haiti, the Sahel, the Democratic Republic of Congo, the Horn of Africa, Pakistan, Ukraine, Sudan, Uganda, Ethiopia, Afghanistan and Myanmar. With the decreased appeal, Chaiban said UNICEF aims to be "more efficient" in the way it works with some of its sister agencies like the World Food Programme (WFP) next year. "We focus together on the treatment of severe acute malnutrition and we've come up with a simplified protocol which focuses only on those that are most at risk," he said, adding they will target their supplies to those that are most in need. "So through those kinds of steps, we hope to be able to reach those that are most at risk," he said but argued that "you cannot do more with less." "We continue to appeal to the world's donors and not to turn their attention away from children." "We're in a world where the generosity of governments, individuals or foundations makes a difference," he said. "It gives hope in the midst of tragic events. So let's keep giving hope." Getting into 2024 with 'very difficult situations' Stressing that another distressing year is approaching as not the only world is entering the year but also many ongoing conflicts, Chaiban expressed hope in the work that UNICEF does.

Courtesy: Middleeastmonitor

Punjab health minister stresses citizens to take ‘seasonal influenza vaccine’ amid rising cases

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Punjab Health Minister Dr Javed Akram Tuesday urged extra caution from the public, as Punjab is being affected by air pollution due to heavy smog and cases of the illness causing flu-like symptoms among people, especially among elderly citizens are increasing. Talking to a private news channel, the minister of Punjab hinted that the new virus could be “COVID”, adding, that currently, various types of viruses are affecting the health of citizens, and children and elderly people



are more affected by this virus. He also asked citizens and residents to immediately take the seasonal influenza vaccine. An alarming increase in the cases of respiratory infections including influenza A, B

and others were being reported in hospitals, he added. He advised citizens to use face masks, avoid close contact, and wash their hands to avoid the influenza virus as it is easily transmissible from an infected person to others. He also advised to adopt a healthy lifestyle as it played the main role in fighting against ailments. The minister urged the authorities to take necessary measures to spread awareness about the flu while apprising the participants about the symptoms and precautions of influenza A and B.

Senator unanimously approves first parliamentary caucus on water resources

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Upper House of the Parliament on Tuesday unanimously approved the first ever Parliamentary Caucus on water resources after Senator, Saadia Abbasi of Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) moved the motion before the House. The Senate House met here at his 334th meeting convened under the leadership of Chairman Senate, Sadiq Sanjrani. While presenting her motion, the Senator maintained that under Rule 204 of the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in the Senate, 2012 the House may authorize the Chairman Senate to appoint a Parliamentary Caucus on Water Resources in the country, comprising the members of the Senate of Pakistan and the Min-

ister for Water Resources as ex-officio member. Senator Abbasi said since there was no National Assembly and the Parliament only comprised of the Senate; so, she mentioned taking nominations for the Caucus from the Senate. “The Honourable Chairman Senate may also be authorized to make nominations from the Senate to the Caucus and make changes in its composition as and when required. The Senate Secretariat shall provide Secretarial support to the caucus,” she read out her motion before the House. Consequent to her proclamation, the Chairman Senate held the poll in favour and against her motion which succeeded in achieving the consensus of the House.

Workers’ forced dismissals from media houses unacceptable: Solangi

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Federal Minister for Information, Broadcasting and Parliamentary Affairs Murtaza Solangi on Tuesday said that forced dismissals of workers from media houses were not acceptable. It was the government’s responsibility to implement the legal protection provided to media workers and journalists under the law, Murtaza Solangi maintained while talking to journalists who had staged a walkout from the Press Gallery during the Senate session against forced dismissals by their respective media organizations. He

said that he stood with journalists and media workers on this issue. The minister said the issue was discussed with the Chairman Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority and Senate’s Standing Committee on Information and Broadcasting is also scheduled to meet on Friday afternoon where it will also be discussed with the Chairperson of the panel. “We will take whatever steps are possible under the law,” Murtaza Solangi assured the media persons. He said that the sympathies of the government were with media workers.

ANF recovers 1903 kg drugs in eight operations; arrests seven accused

RAWALPINDI (APP): Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) while conducting eight operations across the country managed to recover 1903 kg drugs and arrested seven accused, said an ANF Headquarters here on Tuesday. He informed that over 3 kg Ice was recovered from a passenger traveling to Jeddah by Flight No. PA-470 at Allama Iqbal Airport. 1 kg heroin recovered from two passengers traveling to Bangkok by Flight No. TG-342 at Jinnah Airport. In third operation, 52 Ice drug filled capsules were recovered from the stomach of a passenger at Allama Iqbal Airport Lahore. The accused was leaving for Doha by flight number QR-629. 24 Ice-filled capsules were recovered from the

passenger’s stomach at Bacha Khan International Airport. The accused was leaving for Sharjah by flight number ER-751. 1500 kg hashish and 200 kg heroin were recovered from a house in Pishin while 120 kg hashish and 9.6 kg opium were recovered from an abandoned vehicle near Fairozwala stop Lahore. 33.6 kg hashish and 26 kg opium were recovered from a vehicle near Ravi Motorway Toll Plaza Lahore while two accused were arrested. In the eighth operation, 10 kg hashish was recovered from Zakhakhel area of Khyber. Cases under the Anti-Narcotics Act have been registered against the arrested accused and further investigations are under process.

Senate session adjourned due to lack of quorum

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Senate session on Friday was adjourned due to a lack of quorum and ruckus that forced the chair to wind up the meeting of the House without taking any substantial agenda item. After Senator Saadia Abbasi succeeded in presenting her motion to establish the first Parliamentary Caucus on Water Resources, the Senator requested the chair to talk about it which was turned down by the chair. Chairman Senate, Muhammad Sadiq Sanjrani directed the Caretaker Minister for Information and Broadcasting, Murtaza Solangi to table his bill for amendment titled “The Motion Pictures Ordinance, 1979 [The Motion Pictures (Amendment) Bill, 2023].” As the Minister for Information initiated to present his bill, and started reading the text of the Bill, the Senators from different political parties started commotion, hence hampering his speech. However, Minister Murtaza Solangi continued and noted that the amendment was pertain-

ing to censorship and regulation of the exhibition of films by means of cinematographs. Amid the rising ruckus, the Minister responded to the dissenting Senators saying, “The issuance of any ordinance is the prerogative of the government under Article 89 of the Constitution, and it is important for us to lay these ordinances in the form of bills and it’s the House’s job to make any decision on it.” After an interjection from the members of the House, the Senate Chairman directed to point out the quorum and start of the headcount. However, after falling short of quorum the House was adjourned till December 29, 2023, to meet again at 1030 hours. Speaking on the occasion, Senator Mushtaq Ahmed of Jamaat-e-Islami Pakistan (JIP) said as per the article 230 of the Election Act (Chapter XIV “Caretaker Government”), the caretaker government was only authorized for handling day to day matters and by presenting ordinances, it was violating the Election Act.

Two killed, several others injured in two separate incidents

ISLAMABAD (APP): At least two people were killed and two others sustained serious injuries when a car collided head-on with a van near the Nooriabad area of Karachi on Tuesday morning. Police and rescue teams immediately arrived on the site and shifted the dead bodies and injured to the Trauma center Nooriabad, a private news channel reported. In another incident, a speeding bus was overturned and injured several people, including women near Baldia Town Karachi, rescue officials said. The injured were shifted to Jinnah Hospital Karachi.

15 criminals held

SARGODHA (APP): District police claimed to have arrested 15 alleged criminals including four proclaimed offenders and recovered weapons and narcotics from their possession, here on Tuesday. According to a spokesperson, the police arrested namely- Faisal, Adil, Abid, Kashif, Aziz, Ali, Imtiaz, Dilawar, Hussain, Umair, Hamza, Amir, Aslam, Sultan and Mohsin and recovered 12 pistols, nine guns, 459-litre liquor and 1.08-kg hashish from them. Cases were registered against the accused.

Commissioners, DCs offices’ to become paperless

LAHORE (APP): After the successful implementation of e-Filing and Office Automation System (e-FOAS) in the departments, Chief Secretary Punjab Zahid Akhtar Zaman has issued instructions to make paperless the offices of divisional commissioners and deputy commissioners across the province. He issued these instructions during a meeting held at Civil Secretariat on Tuesday. The Senior Member Board of Revenue, Additional Chief Secretary and administrative secretaries of all departments attended the meeting, while all divisional commissioners and deputy commissioners participated through video link. The Chief Secretary directed the Punjab Information Technology Board (PITB) to complete the scanning of archive files as soon as possible. He said that the departments of the Civil Secretariat have been asked to ensure all departmental correspondence online, while integrating them through e-FOAS. He said that ending the conventional file system would save billions of rupees annually. The Chief Secretary also issued instructions regarding early disposal of departmental inquiries and pension cases. He said that due to pending inquiries, employees were deprived of their right to departmental promotion. He also distributed shields among the Chairman PITB and his team for successful implementation of e-FOAS in departments.

2 killed, two injured in accident

ISLAMABAD (APP): At least two persons were killed while another two got injured when a jeep plunged into a ravine in Mansehra’s area of Ghanool near Balakot on Tuesday morning. According to details, Police sources said the ill-fated vehicle met with the accident near Balakot after the driver lost control of the jeep while negotiating a curve, in a result a counselor and his driver lost their lives on the spot, a private news channel reported. Rescue sources added that they were travelling back home after attending an engagement ceremony.

Mehbooba reveals how Kashmiris paying heavy price of “facade of normalcy”

ISLAMABAD (APP): Peoples Democratic Party President Mehbooba Mufti referring to the normalcy mantra being propagated by Narendra Modi regime in Indian illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir, particularly in the wake of the abrogation of Article 370 in August 2019 has said that “the facade of normalcy exacts a heavy price from the people of Jammu and Kashmir”. Mehbooba Mufti in an article said, Kashmiri youngsters are packed off to jails in and outside Jammu and Kashmir on trivial grounds while the rest pay with their lives and liberty to maintain a sullen silence. “Even religious heads like maulvis and imams are told what to include in their weekly sermons. The masses cannot protest peacefully even about day-to-day issues like grueling power cuts that affect their lives,” she deplored. “The scale of violence and atrocities that I have witnessed during my political career has ensured nothing shocks or rattles me

anymore. But I was left stunned by a gruesome, abominable video that is doing the rounds over social media. The video, a little less than a minute long, shows Army jawans clad in uniforms using abusive language while mercilessly thrashing civilians who appear to be half dead. Not satisfied with lashing them with sticks, they then go on to strip them naked and pour heaps of red chili powder on their gashed and wounded bottoms. A few hours after the video was verified, another disturbing fact came to light. One of those innocent civilians was already dead while this act of violence was carried out,” Mehbooba revealed. She went on to add: “A deeply distressing question came to mind. Who would dare to shoot such a video under those circumstances? Certainly not a civilian. It was one of them. The video was deliberately leaked and disseminated with the diabolical intention of conveying a chilling message.

Diverse candidate pool emerges for Hazara division in upcoming general elections

ABBOTTABAD (APP): A total of 173 male and female candidates have submitted their nomination papers for the seven National assembly constituencies of Hazara division for upcoming general elections in 2024. Additionally, 455 candidates, both male and female, have entered the race for the 18 provincial assembly constituencies in the region. According to the Regional Election Commission office in Abbottabad, 163 male and 10 female candidates have filed papers for the seven National Assembly constituencies in the Hazara division. Notably, women contestants have emerged in four constituencies (NA-15, 16, 17, and 18), while three constituencies will see only male candidates competing. In the 18 provincial assembly constituencies of Hazara division, 419 male and 36 female contestants have submitted their nomination papers. Remarkably, women candidates have participated in 14 out of 18 constituencies, including Kohistan, where women traditional-

ly do not engage in political activities. The four constituencies with no women candidates are PK-32, 34, 35, and 38. Breaking down the total nomination papers, for the two national assembly constituencies of Abbottabad district, 48 male and 5 female contestants have filed papers. From the four provincial assembly constituencies in the district, 114 male and 10 female contenders have submitted nomination papers. In Haripur district, 19 male and 3 female candidates have filed nomination papers for the single national assembly seat, while 43 male and 13 female candidates have submitted papers for three provincial assembly seats. For the two national assembly seats in Mansehra district, 47 male and 2 female candidates have filed nomination papers. No female candidate from the city areas of the district expressed interest in contesting the elections. From the five provincial constituencies in the district, 120 male and 6 female candidates have submitted their papers.

Punjab shift from conventional transport to electric vehicles: Minister

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Provincial Minister for Transport, Livestock, and Mines & Minerals Ibrahim Hassan Murad Tuesday said that the Punjab government was making a big push for electric vehicles to provide a sustainable and eco-friendly mode of transportation to control air pollution. “Punjab wants to become a “global hub of manufacturing of electric vehicles”, he said while talking to a Private news channel. The government is also planning to offer incentives for manufacturing electric vehicles and batteries to boost economic growth and encourage local manufacturing, he said, adding, that other provinces should also focus on shifting their auto industry towards EV systems. The minister stressed that the use of electric rickshaws and bikes in Punjab will substantially decrease both air and noise pollution. With the provision of addition-

al insights, these electric rickshaws boast an impressive range, capable of travelling up to 150 km on a single charge, he said. The adoption of electric vehicles, including cars and bikes, has gained prominence worldwide due to their efficiency, fuel-saving benefits, and zero emissions, contributing to a healthier and more sustainable environment, he explained. Many charging stations have already been established, with commitments to construct even more. It is a clear indication that the industry is committed to enabling widespread EV adoption, he added. Replying to a query, he said that to meet the growing demand, the government of Punjab with the help of the private auto industry are spearheading efforts to add more charging points to EV charging networks. This includes offering software solutions that make daily charging accessible.

35th Convocation ceremony of Pakistan Navy Engineering College held

KARACHI (APP): The 35th Convocation ceremony of Pakistan Navy Engineering College (PNEC) was held at the Baharia Auditorium here on Tuesday. President Dr Arif Alvi graced the occasion as chief guest. Rector NUST Lt General (R) Mehmood and Commander Karachi Rear Admiral Muhammad Saleem were also present. During the convocation, a total of 368 graduates were awarded Bachelors’ and Postgraduate degrees. The president also awarded 39 medals to outstanding students. Addressing the convocation, President Dr. Arif Alvi appreciated efforts put in by PNEC to maintain high standards of education by providing quality engineers to the evolving industry of Pakistan. He emphasized that the responsibility of PNEC has further increased in the present realm of emerging technologies like Artificial Intelligence and Robotics. He also acknowledged that foreign students are a testimony to the

College’s credentials in the engineering sector. He highlighted that NUST PNEC will continue with its legacy of being the premier engineering and technology institution, fulfilling the present-day engineering needs of the country. The President felicitated the graduating students, their parents and advised the graduates to be active members of society in building a stronger and prosperous Pakistan and keep themselves abreast and with fast-changing advancements in technology. Earlier, Commandant PNEC Commodore Tauqeer Ahmad Khawaja apprised that PNEC is making all-out efforts to provide the best engineering education to its students in multiple disciplines. Further, he highlighted the achievements of students in various events held at national and international levels. He highlighted the opportunities provided to the students at different forums to groom and nurture the young engineers.

Death anniversary of Benazir Bhutto to be observed in Sargodha

SARGODHA (APP): The Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Sargodha finalized arrangements to observe the death anniversary of former prime minister Benazir Bhutto Shaheed on December 27. Talking to APP on Tuesday, PPP senior leader Tasneem Ahmed Qureshi said former prime ministers Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto and Benazir Bhutto devoted their lives for the people and democracy. They both created awareness among the people about social, civil and political rights

among the masses, he added. He said the central leadership of the PPP, including ticket holders of national and provincial assemblies of the district, would attend a ceremony. Tasneem Qureshi said the People Students Federation, women wing, people lawyers forums, and people’s unity of the PPP would also participate in the event. The speakers would highlight achievements of Shaheed Benazir Bhutto who struggled for democracy and sacrificed her life for the people, he said.

ECP warns government employees against political involvement

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) on Tuesday has issued a pre-general election advisory, instructing government officers and employees to refrain from participating in political activities. The advisory specifies that government officials and employees were prohibited from taking part in election activities. According to the issued circular, the government officials and employees are restricted from engaging in election activities.

Government officials seeking leave must obtain approval from Returning Officers (ROs), while district officers are obligated to seek permission from the District Returning Officers (DRO) for their leaves. According to the ECP advisory, federal government employees up to grade 19 can have their leave sanctioned by DROs. The advisory specifies that officers in Grade-20 and above are required to obtain leave approval directly from the Commission.

Literary icon ‘Parveen Shakir’ remembered on her 29th death anniversary

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 29th death anniversary of eminent and trailblazing poetess, Parveen Shakir, affectionately known as the “Poetess of Fragrance” was observed (Tuesday) where fans from all walks of life through media platforms paid rich tributes to her unforgettable services. Born in Karachi on November 24, 1952, Parveen Shakir became a prominent figure in the literary landscape after successfully clearing the competitive examination for the Civil Service, ptv news channels reported. In 1977, she made her literary debut with the publication of her first poetry collection, ‘Khushbu’ (Fragrance), which garnered exceptional acclaim within literary circles. Her

subsequent collections, including ‘sad Barg’ (One Hundred Leaves), ‘Khlood-Qalami’ (Self-Talk), and ‘Inkaar’ (Denial) further solidified her status as a distinguished urdu poet. The complete works of Parveen Shakir were published under the title ‘Mah-e-Tamam’ (The Full Moon), while her final poetry collection, ‘Kaf-e-Aina’ (The Mirror’s Edge), was posthumously released after her demise. Parveen Shakir contributed a unique and fresh style to Urdu poetry, earning her accolades and recognition. The Government of Pakistan honored her with the prestigious President’s Award for Pride of Performance in acknowledgement of her outstanding contributions.

Letters arrived from the world of soul —A unique featured literary session in Ayaz Melo

HYDERABAD (APP): A unique feature literary session titled ‘aalam-e-Awaah man aayal khat’ (Letters arrived from the world of soul) was held on the last day of Ayaz Melo at Khana Badosh writer’s café on 25th December. Eminent writer Zahida Abro hosted the session while famous writer Zaib Sindhi and Deputy Director Besant Haal Sobia Shaikh were speakers. Author of the book Niaz Panhwer introducing the book said that the book the imaginary combination of my thinking in which I have narrated imaginary feelings of our legend departed souls like Allama I I Qazi,Shaukat Hussain Shoro, Mushtaq Changezi, Abdul Wahid aaresar, Fauzia Soom-

ro , Gobind Malhi and Tariq Alam Abro who proved their mettle in different fields of artistic segments. Niaz Panhwar said that those letters were being sent to me by such artists in which they have expressed their feelings of the time they spent in the world as well after death (in world of spirits) On a query of Moderator to include such imaginary letters in curriculums eminent writer Zaib Sindhi said that such books could be included in curriculums, but for this purpose thinking should be changed as these letters are beyond the reality and reflect the creativity of the writer and narrated various problems of Sindh and their solutions systematically.

Police intensify drive against crimes in Tank district

DERA ISMAIL KHAN (APP): Tank police have tightened a noose around anti-social elements, arresting seven accused during ongoing operations at various parts of the district. According to a spokesman of the district police, the police have launched a crackdown against criminal elements in line with directives of District Police Officer(DPO) Iftikhar Ali Shah to ensure rule of law. As part of efforts, Station House Officer (SHO) Shaheed Murid Police Station, Noor

Aslam-led party arrested an accused and recovered one pistol and five cartridges. The police also arrested two more accused and recovered over 500 grams hashish. In another action, SHO of Gul Imam Rafi Ullah Khan acting on tip off raided a compound and arrested four persons involved in aerial firing. SHO of City police station Rehmat Khan- leading a police party also recovered hashish and registered cases against the accused and started further investigation.

Strict security measures made for celebrations of new year night

SUKKUR (APP): Strict security arrangements have been made for celebrations on new year night besides a traffic management plan has also been finalized on Tuesday to avoid traffic mess on Sukkur city roads. According to the plan, one-wheeling motorbikes would not be allowed at any cost and playing of music on tape or video recorder would also be banned. No person would be allowed to carry weapons during New Year night and stern action would be taken against violators. Under elaborate security arrangements, several police personnel will be deployed. There would be special deployment

for churches and public places. According to police officials, ladies police and the personnel of a special branch will be deployed to make the security arrangements foolproof. Foolproof security arrangements have been ensured to avoid any untoward incident in the district. The security duty at public places, including parks, was being made more effective. Security has been tightened at the entry and exit points of the district and special checking has been ordered for this special occasion. All DSPs and SHOs have been ensured effective patrolling in their respective areas.

Self-sustenance inevitable for success in the world: President

KARACHI (APP): President Dr. Arif Alvi on Tuesday said that self-sustenance is inevitable for the success in the world and expressed the confidence that Pakistan would progress and develop. Addressing as chief guest on the occasion of the 35th Convocation ceremony of Pakistan Navy Engineering College (PNEC) at Baharia Auditorium here, he said that the world needed intellect at the moment and there was no dearth of it in Pakistan. Rector National University of Science and Technology (NUST) Lt General (R) Mehmood and Com-



mander Karachi Rear Admiral Muhammad Saleem were also present. During the convocation, a total of 368 graduates were awarded Bachelors’ and Postgraduate degrees including the foreign students. The President also awarded 39 medals to the stu-

dents on their outstanding performance. Addressing the convocation, President Dr. Arif Alvi appreciated the efforts put in by the PNEC for maintaining high standards of education by providing quality engineers to the evolving industry of Pakistan. He emphasized that responsibility of PNEC has further increased in present realm of emerging technologies like Artificial Intelligence and Robotics. He also acknowledged that foreign students were a testimony to the College’s credentials in the engineering sector.

Seven power pilferers booked

SARGODHA (APP): The Faisalabad Electric Supply Company (Fesco) caught seven power pilferers during an ongoing crackdown here on Tuesday. According to official sources, a task force team raided various areas of the district and caught seven accused involved in electricity theft from main lines. The accused were identified as Imran Haider, Bilal, Liaquat, Safdar and others. Police registered cases against the pilferers.

Former diplomat Riaz Khokhar passes away

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan’s Former Foreign Secretary Riaz Hussain Khokhar passed away here on Tuesday after a brief illness, according to private news channels. Senior leader of Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP), Sherry Rehman expressed her sincere condolences with the family and loved ones of the late ambassador. “The late ambassador was always such a strong advocate of a progressive Pakistan and fiercely independent who served as Pakistan’s foreign secretary among many other diplomatic posts in tough situations. Khokhar was always on the phone or in person to share his intellectual capital”, she shared message on X, formerly knows as Twitter.

Road accident claims one life

MUZAFFARGARH (APP): A man was killed after falling off the roof of a tractor trolley due to overspeeding. Arsalan s/o Haji Muhammad initially got severely hurt and was moved to DHQ hospital where he scummed to head injuries. The family refused to make an autopsy and took the body away to the home. The police of the concerned jurisdiction were informed. It started an investigation after taking the vehicle into custody and registered the case.

Man crushed to death in accident in Muzaffargarh

MUZAFFARGARH (APP): A man lost his life after being hit by a trawler on Muzaffargarh Alipur Road near Ada Loharwala on Tuesday. According to Rescue Resources, The accident occurred near Ada Loharwala when 25-year-old Arsalan was sitting on the roof of the van. Witnesses reported that a trawler came from behind, hitting Arsalan and causing him to fall to the ground, where he died instantly. On receiving the information, the rescue control room in Muzaffargarh dispatched an ambulance to the accident site and informed the police control. The accident occurred due to the mistake of Arsalan placing himself on the roof of the vehicle, Police said.

Five injured in accident due to intense fog

PATTOKI (APP): At least five persons got injured in a collision due to intense fog and slippery road near Phool Nagar on Tuesday. According to rescue sources, a tragic accident occurred on Multan Road near Phoolnagar, as a dozen vehicles collided due to intense fog, resultantly, five people got injured. The injured have been identified as 20-year-old Rizwan, 22-year-old Salim, 25-year-old Jabar, 26-year-old Amir, and 55-year-old Rahmat. Rescue teams reached the site and transferred the injured to a nearby hospital for medical assistance.

PIA’s privatization being carried out under govt’s policy: Senate informed

ISLAMABAD (APP): Adviser to Prime Minister on Aviation Air Marshal (Retd) Farhat Hussain Khan on Tuesday informed the Senate that the privatization of Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) was being carried out under the government’s policy to privatize loss-making entities. Responding to a question during the Question Hour, he said the process of privatization of PIA is being completed transparently through open tender. The Adviser said initially, PIA will be privatized as a flight entity and the decision on its other properties will be made later by the Privatization Commission. Regarding outsourcing of airports in the country, the Advisor mentioned that a Transaction Advisory Services Agreement (TASA) had been signed between the Pakistan Civil Aviation Authority

and the International Finance Corporation (IFC), a subsidiary of the World Bank Group. This agreement, approved by the then Federal Cabinet in line with the Public Private Partnership Authority (P3A) Act and its relevant regulations, aims to outsource the operations of three international airports in Islamabad, Karachi and Lahore, he told. The Advisor highlighted that the IFC would act as a transactional advisor for the outsourcing of airports. Islamabad International Airport has been selected as the first airport to be outsourced. The outsourcing period for Islamabad International Airport is set at 15 years, while the time frames for the remaining two airports will be determined by the Federal Government based on a detailed study prepared by IFC, he added.

Pakistan committed to strengthening ties with China: PM

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar on Tuesday said Pakistan was committed to taking its relationship with China to new heights of cooperation and solidarity. PM Kakar expressed these views as the country’s ambassador to China

Khalil Hashmi called on him here at the PM’s Office. The prime minister expressed confidence that Ambassador Hashmi, who recently assumed his responsibilities in Beijing, would play his role in further strengthening ties between Pakistan and China.

Barrister Veeram Khan, others arranges Quran khawani for soul of BB

SUKKUR (APP): Quran khawani and Fateha were arranged for the soul of former prime minister, Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto in connection with her death anniversary by PPP leader Barrister Veeram Khan Mahar at his residence here on Tuesday. The Quran khawani and Fateha were also arranged at the

residences of PPP leaders Abid Gul Mahar, Tariq Chuhan, Fayyaz Chana and Advocate Rizwana Memon, addressing the gathering, Barrister Veeram Khan said a glowing tribute to Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto. The PPP leaders and workers also reposed full confidence in the party leadership.

Governor KPK highlights women’s educational achievements

ABBOTTABAD (APP): Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Haji Ghulam Ali has emphasized the crucial role of education in global competitiveness. He said that the enrollment of female students in the province now surpassed their male counterparts in both primary and higher education. He not only highlighted the greater number of female students but also their excellence in getting prominent educational positions. Addressing at the first convocation of the Government Women’s College of Commerce and Management Sciences here Tuesday, the Governor urged the female students not to let their education go to waste, emphasizing the transformative impact educated women can have on societal and national development. Expressing

pride in educated women, he recognized them as a source of family pride and contributors to the nation, underscoring their potential to initiate businesses from home using modern technology. In a broader context, Governor Ghulam Ali stressed the importance of equipping all students, regardless of gender, with modern technology to prepare them for future challenges. During the convocation, the Governor personally distributed degrees among 136 students who successfully completed their education in Bachelor of Business Administration, Bachelor of Commerce and Associate Diploma of Commerce. He extended congratulations to the successful students, their parents and dedicated faculty members.

Gwadar University delegation visits Pakistan-China Institute

ISLAMABAD (APP): An eleven-member delegation of students of the University of Gwadar has visited the Pakistan-China Institute (CPI) under the Balochistan Youth Engagement Programme. “This multifaceted endeavour, strategically crafted to deepen bilateral relations between Pakistan and China, unveiled a comprehensive agenda, aimed at enriching the understanding and collaboration between Pakistan and China,” a news release said on Tuesday. The initiative’s primary focus is to empower the vibrant youth of the Balochistan region, recognizing their pivotal role in shaping the future landscape of both nations. At the core of this enlightening experience was the 8th CPEC Media Forum, providing an immersive platform for the

delegation to gain profound insights into the far-reaching impact of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) on Balochistan. Beyond a conventional information-sharing session, this forum facilitated dynamic and thought-provoking discussions, fostering a nuanced and deeper comprehension of this transformative strategic initiative. The students had an exclusive session with Mustafa Hyder Sayed, Executive Director of the Pakistan-China Institute, which provided a unique space for a rich exchange of ideas and perspectives, amplifying the depth of understanding for both the delegation and the hosting institute. The delegation further enriched their experience with a guided visit to the Parliament House and Senate of Pakistan.

Saudi Arabia ranks 2nd among G20 countries in ICT Development Index

RIYADH (Agencies): Saudi Arabia has secured the second rank among G20 nations in the International Telecommunication Union's 2023 index to monitor information and communication technology worldwide. According to ITU's Information and Communication Technology Development Index, the Kingdom scored 94.9 points, advancing 10 spots over last year and reigning higher than the glob-



al average of 72.8. The US topped the ICT Development Index among G20 nations with 96.6 points. Other G20 peers, which include the UK and Japan, were also placed below

Saudi Arabia, as they secured 92.8 and 92 points, respectively. The ICT Development Index monitors the economies of 169 nations to measure their progress in ICT services through two main pillars: "universal connectivity" and "meaningful connectivity." In its report, ITU also evaluated factors such as providing a high-quality infrastructure and maintaining secure internet for everyone.

Thailand raises minimum wage from January, plans new hike in March

BANGKOK (Agencies): Thailand will increase its minimum wage in January, prime minister Srettha Thavisin said on Tuesday confirming a previous deal, while the government plans to further raise it in March. A wage committee, comprised of government, employers and employee representatives, had previously agreed to increase the daily minimum wage by 2.37%, effective in January, but Srettha



deemed the hike too low. Srettha's ruling Pheu Thai party campaigned on populist platform with a key plank of raising the daily minimum wage to 400 baht. "Another investi-

gation covering local wage rates and professional groups will conclude in March ... (to determine) areas and groups that can increase wages," Labour Minister Phipat Ratchakitprakarn told reporters. The current minimum wage is 328-354 baht (US\$9.49 - US\$10.24) varying between different parts of the country with the committee agreeing to raise the pay threshold range to 330 baht to 370 baht.

Samsung delays production at new US chip factory to 2025

SEOUL (Agencies): Samsung Electronics Co has delayed mass production plans at its new chip plant in Taylor, Texas, the Seoul Economic Daily said, potentially dealing another blow to the Biden administration's ambition to increase domestic semiconductor supplies. Mass production at the upcoming US\$17 billion fab would begin in 2025, the newspaper reported, citing a speech by President Choi Si-young of Samsung's foundry business at an industry event in San Francisco. Samsung previously said the factory



would start production in the second half of 2024 when it announced the investment in 2021. A spokesperson said the company cannot confirm the mass production schedule right now. The report followed an earlier decision by Samsung's bigger rival

Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Co to postpone production at its new Arizona fab to 2025 from next year due to a shortage of experienced construction workers and machine installation technicians. Any delay at the US sites operated by the world's two leading contract chipmakers would be a setback to US president Joe Biden's grand plan to boost chip production on American soil to avoid future supply disruptions like the 2021 shortage that cost companies hundreds of billions in revenue.

Dollar struggles to gain footing in thin trade, yen steady

SINGAPORE (Agencies): The dollar was trying to find a floor on Tuesday in holiday-thinned trade, pressured by signs that inflation in the world's largest economy is cooling that will likely give the Federal Reserve room to ease interest rates next year. The yen meanwhile steadied near its recent five-month peak on the prospect that the Bank of Japan (BOJ) could soon mark an end to its ultra-easy policy. For most of 2022 and 2023, the policy has kept the Japanese currency under pressure as other major



central banks globally embarked on aggressive rate-hike cycles. Zealand and Hong Kong still out for the Boxing Day public holiday. Against the greenback, the euro slipped 0.06% to US\$1.1019, but was not too far from a more than four-month top

of US\$1.1040 hit last week. Sterling was little changed at US\$1.2701, while the Australian and New Zealand dollars were huddled near their recent five-month peaks. The dollar index languished near a five-month low of 101.42 hit last week, and was last at 101.65. Data released on Friday showed US prices fell in November for the first in more than 3-1/2 years, pushing the annual increase in inflation further below 3% and boosting market expectations of an interest rate cut from the Fed next March.

After gloomy 2023, UK's economy faces another tough year ahead

LONDON (Agencies): At risk of recession, the UK has witnessed a year of poor economic performance in 2023, and next year does not look promising either. Inflation in the country has been running high for more than two years, making the cost-of-living crisis a heated topic across the nation. The consumer price index (CPI) rose by 3.9% in the 12 months to November 2023, mainly due to a drop in fuel prices and slower growth in food prices. This was the lowest rate since September 2021, down from a 41-



year high of 11.1% in October 2022. The drop in inflation was welcomed by households and businesses in the country. But lower inflation does not necessarily mean lower prices, only that they are rising less quickly. "The sheer scale and duration of the cost-

of-living crisis means that any declarations of victory in the battle to tame inflation are premature. Households are still feeling the pinch," Lalitha Try, an economist from the think tank Resolution Foundation, said, according to Xinhua. According to the think tank, food prices in November 2023 were 29% higher than they were in September 2021, and energy prices were 66% higher. In a recent Resolution Foundation survey, twice as many families said that their finances had gotten worse through the autumn.

Chipmaker Nvidia raises US\$15mil for Israeli non-profits

JERUSALEM (Agencies): US chipmaker Nvidia and its employees have donated US\$15 million to Israeli non-profit organisations that are supporting civilians affected by Israel's war with Palestinian group Hamas. Thousands of employees from more than 30 countries donated a total of US\$5 million, which the company matched and doubled to US\$10 million under a special programme introduced to help those affected by the war, Nvidia said today. It noted that the donation was the largest humanitarian fundraiser in the company's 30-year-old history. "We are proud to see such broad



support from Nvidia families in Israel and around the world, and are grateful for their prayers and hope for the return of our colleague Avinatan Or, and the other hostages from Hamas captivity," said Gideon Rosenberg, Nvidia's deputy general counsel. "We are truly inspired by the genuine care of our employees

around the world." Or, 30, has been an engineer at Nvidia since April 2022, according to his LinkedIn page. He was captured by Hamas at the Nova music festival on Oct 7 along with his girlfriend Noa Argamani and around 240 others, some of whom have since been released. Nvidia said employees had chosen to donate to organisations in the region including Asor Fund (JGive), American Friends of Magen David Adom, Doctors Without Borders, Friends of United Hatzalah, IsraAID (US) Global Humanitarian Assistance, Jewish Agency for Israel, World Central Kitchen and Zaka.

Oil Updates — crude little changed as investors eye Middle East tensions, US rate cut

SINGAPORE (Agencies): Oil prices were little changed on Tuesday as investors focused on geopolitical tensions in the Middle East and optimism the US Federal Reserve would soon start cutting interest rates, lifting global economic growth and fuel demand. Brent crude futures fell 26 cents, or 0.3 percent, to \$79.13 a barrel by 04:15 a.m. Saudi time while US West Texas Intermediate crude was at \$73.59 a barrel, up 3 cents. Trade is thin as some markets are



still closed for the Boxing Day public holiday. Both benchmarks notched gains of about 3 percent last week after Houthi attacks on ships disrupted global shipping and trade, adding to tensions in the Middle East as the

Israel-Gaza conflict waged on. Denmark's Maersk said on Sunday it was preparing to resume shipping operations in the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden, citing the deployment of a US-led military operation designed to ensure the safety of commerce in the area. Shipping firms had suspended the passage of vessels through the Red Sea that connects with the Suez Canal, which handles about 12 percent of world trade, and imposed surcharges for re-routing ships.

Singapore November core inflation signals subdued demand

SINGAPORE (Agencies): Singapore's core inflation edged lower in November, giving the central bank room to extend its monetary-policy pause next month to support the economy. Official data showed core inflation quickened 3.2% from a year ago, in a sign of subdued consumer demand. That matched the median estimate in a Bloomberg survey of economists and compared with the 3.3% pace in October. "This was driven by lower inflation for retail and other goods, food, as well as electricity and gas," according to a joint statement from the Monetary



Authority of Singapore and the ministry of trade and industry. The core measure, which excludes private road transport and accommodation, is the print monitored by MAS to determine policy settings. The central bank's next monetary decision is due in late January.

Goldman's 2023 China setback spurs emerging markets rethink

BEIJING (Agencies): Goldman Sachs Group Inc's head of global currency, rates and emerging-markets strategy says he's learned two main lessons from one of the biggest — and most-common — bad calls of 2023: the bet on post-pandemic China's reopening boom. At the beginning of the year, Goldman was among the chorus of Wall Street banks pinning their hopes for a bright 2023 in part on recovery in China, with strategists including Kinger Lau predicting a 15% rally in the Chinese stock market. The expectation was that a bounce in the world's second-largest economy would be the wave that lifted all boats, helping emerging markets globally to a ban-



ner year. Instead, Chinese stocks fell more than 15%, while many emerging markets did just fine. "The first lesson is that you want to treat EM and EM ex-China differently," Goldman's Kamakshya Trivedi said in an interview. "Chinese assets have been pretty uncorrelated with a lot of other EM assets for some time: that has been true on the equity side and also the fixed-income side."

Daihatsu to suspend operations in January, compensate partners

TOKYO (Agencies): Daihatsu Motor Co will halt shipments and suspend operations through January, as the Toyota Motor Corp subsidiary seeks to contain the fallout of an investigation that revealed most of its vehicles weren't properly tested for collision safety. The maker of popular kei cars promised to compensate all 423 of the companies it directly supplies, a Daihatsu spokesperson told reporters Monday. Japan's transport ministry raided Daihatsu's headquarters in Osaka last week following revelations that the carmaker manipulated the results of safety tests dating as far back as 1989. A third-party investigation requested by Daihatsu in April — when suspected wrongdoings first emerged



— found that 174 issues have been identified across 64 models, including in some sold under the Toyota brand. The move to suspend Daihatsu's shipments will affect vehicles produced in Japan and overseas, and not only at Toyota factories but possibly also at Mazda Motor Corp and Subaru Corp, given that Daihatsu provides parts and manufacturing services to a range of other automakers.

Maersk prepares to return to Red Sea under US-led protection

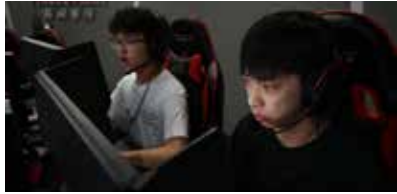
COPENHAGEN (Agencies): Moller-Maersk, the world's second-largest container line, said it is preparing to resume shipping through the Red Sea, thanks to a new multi-national maritime task force to protect vessels from attacks by Houthi rebels from Yemen. "We are currently working on plans for the first vessels to make the transit and for this to happen as soon as operationally possible," the company said Sunday in an advisory. "While doing so, ensuring the safety of our employees is of the utmost importance and our number one priority in handling the challenging situation in the Red Sea/Gulf of Aden area." The announcement came just two days after the Copenhagen-based company said it envi-



sions chaos in the Red Sea — caused by drone attacks from Houthis over the Israel-Hamas war — to continue for months. In its Sunday statement, Maersk said that the creation of Operation Prosperity Guardian, a maritime task force set up by the US and its allies, is "most welcome news for the entire industry." The US and its allies say they are considering possible military action against the Houthis, which are backed by Iran.

China may revise gaming rules after tech stocks tumble

SHANGHAI (Agencies): Chinese authorities may revise newly drafted online gaming rules, state media reported today, a day after the announcement of the planned curbs triggered a sell-off in major tech stocks. The draft restrictions published by Beijing's media regulator yesterday sent shares in tech giants tumbling and wiped tens of billions of dollars off their value, with industry leader Tencent tanking more than 12% in Hong Kong by the close. "With regard to the concerns and opinions raised by all parties ... the state press and publication administration will study them carefully and will further revise and improve them," state broadcaster CCTV reported today. Regulators may change the wording of sections of the draft rules that limit games' ability to encourage daily logins and wallet top-ups, CCTV said. Beijing first moved



against the gaming sector in 2021 as part of a sprawling crackdown on Big Tech, including a strict cap on the amount of time children could spend playing online. An end to a freeze in gaming licences had raised hopes that the focus on the industry had subsided. But, in their current form, the draft regulations announced yesterday are aimed at limiting in-game purchases and preventing obsessive gaming behaviour. They also reiterate a ban on "forbidden online game content ... that endangers national unity" and "endangers national security or harms national reputation and interests".

Sydney-Hobart race fleet sets sail, storms forecast

SYDNEY (Agencies): More than 100 yachts set off on the Sydney-Hobart race Tuesday, with thunderstorms and hail threatening to lash sailors in one of the world’s most grueling ocean events. Thunder and rain lifted just minutes before the start at a slightly misty Sydney Harbor as spectators lined the waterfront or crowded onto boats to get a better view of the dramatic starting moments. At the sound of the starting gun, 103 yachts tacked in light winds in search of the best line out of the harbor and an early lead in the punishing, 628-nautical-mile (1,200-kilometer) crossing to the Tasmanian



capital. The favorite for line honors is last year’s winner, 100-foot super-maxi Andoo Comanche, holder of the 2017 race record of one day, 9 hours, 15min and 24sec. “We back our boat in any conditions to win the race,” Andoo Comanche skipper John Winning told a news conference ahead

of the race. While preferring weather for the quickest possible race, Winning insisted at the weekend that his yacht was “fast in all conditions.” Weather is pivotal in the blue water classic, first held in 1945. This year marks the 25th anniversary of a fatal storm that tore into the 1998 race, whipping up mountainous seas and wild winds in which six men died, five boats sank and 55 sailors were rescued. For the 2023 edition, weather forecasters are predicting storms, lightning, hail and strong winds as the boats sail southwards down the New South Wales coast on their way to the Tasmanian capital.

Celtics feast on Lakers home court in classic NBA Christmas clash

LOS ANGELES (Agencies): The Boston Celtics used a hot start and a strong finish to put away the Los Angeles Lakers 126-115 on Monday in a Christmas clash of storied NBA franchises. Kristaps Porzingis scored 28 points and pulled down 11 rebounds and Jayson Tatum added 25 points for the Celtics, who withstood a 40-point effort from Lakers star Anthony Davis. The game between the teams that share the record for most NBA titles with 17 apiece was one of five on the Christmas Day slate that started with the New York Knicks’ 129-122 victory over the Milwaukee Bucks at Madison Square Garden. The reign-



ing champion Denver Nuggets beat Golden State 120-114 in a clash of the last two title winners that left Warriors coach Steve Kerr fuming at the officiating. Lakers star LeBron James, coming off a 40-point performance in a win over the Thunder in Oklahoma City on Saturday, scored just 16 points on five-of-14 shooting.

‘Do not get used to suffering’ in Gaza, Liverpool’s Salah says in Christmas message

CAIRO (Agencies): Liverpool forward Mohamed Salah said on Monday that families grieving for their loved ones in Gaza should not be forgotten, as he issued an emotional Christmas message marking only his second comment on the war in the enclave. Salah posted a black-and-white picture of a Christmas tree on his social media pages, saying he was approaching Christmas with a heavy heart amid the fighting in Gaza, which has been under intense bombardment by Israel since Hamas militants launched an attack on Oct. 7. Israel says Hamas militants killed 1,200 people and took around 240 people hostage in their



attack. Israel’s ensuing bombardment of Gaza has killed more than 20,400 people and wounded at least 50,000, according to authorities in the Hamas-ruled strip. “With the brutal war going on in the Middle East, especially the death and destruction in Gaza, this year we get to Christmas with very heavy hearts

and we share the pain of those families who are grieving the loss of their loved ones,” Salah said. “Please do not forget them and do not get used to their suffering. Merry Christmas,” Salah wrote to his more than 63 million followers on Instagram and almost 19 million on X. Egyptian Red Crescent officials said in October that Salah had made a “significant donation” to help the people of Gaza. In his first comments on the conflict in October, less than two weeks after the war started, Salah called for an end to what he described as “massacres,” appealing for humanitarian aid to be allowed into Gaza.

UAE Pro League: Al-Wasl overcome champions Shabab Al-Ahli to lead table into new year break

DUBAI (Agencies): The ADNOC Pro League goes into the winter break and new year with the table leaders having vanquished the reigning champions, and Hernan Crespo gaining further breathing space at Al-Ain. Caio “Super-sub” Canedo left it late to slot home the decisive goal for Al-Wasl in a determined 2-1, come-from-behind victory at stunned Shabab Al-Ahli Dubai Club. The strike earned a five-point advantage and catalyzed dreams for a first top-flight crown since 2007 for this storied but success-starved club. Moroccan winger Soufiane Rahimi, meanwhile, served up two sec-



ond-half assists when second-placed Al-Ain defeated Al-Bataeh 3-1. Error-strewn Al-Wahda presented a trio of festive gifts to hat-trick hero Lourenco in grateful Khor Fakkan’s 3-2 win, and fourth-placed Sharjah drew 1-1 with dogged Ajman. Saturday’s matches contained a pair of

last-gasp clinchers. French striker Youssoufou Niakate knocked in a 94th-minute rebound when eighth-placed Baniyas beat inconsistent Itihad Kalba 2-1, while former Italy center-forward Manolo Gabbiadini netted a 96th-minute penalty kick to earn resurgent Al-Nasr’s 2-1 triumph against managerless basement boys Emirates Club. UAE icon Ali Mabkhout warmed up for the impending AFC Asian Cup with a goal and assist when fifth-placed Al-Jazira maintained their 100 percent record since Frank de Boer’s exit, courtesy of a 3-1 victory versus second-from-bottom Hatta.

Sailing milestone: A half-century of starts for a competitor in the Sydney to Hobart yacht race

SYDNEY (Agencies): Lindsay May will notch a first in the 78-year history of the Sydney to Hobart yacht race when he becomes the only sailor to start it 50 times — all of them consecutively — when it begins Tuesday in Sydney harbor. May, with three overall titles and one line-honors win, will navigate “Antipodes” in the expected 103-boat fleet in the annual race that will head down the New South Wales south coast and across often treacherous Bass Strait to the island state of Tasmania. The finish line of the 628-nautical mile (720-mile, 1,170-kilometer) race is at Constitution Dock in the state capital of Hobart. May’s sailing career began in 1973,



when the-then 24-year-old stepped off his surf board and on to a yacht. “I never thought I would get to 50 and I had no idea what I was in for,” May said. “I had done very little racing. Then I went sailing here on the harbor with a mate of mine who was in the navy and I was just hooked.” In 2006, May and

his crew won handicap honors as the skipper and navigator of the 33-year-old wooden vessel Love & War. But he counts his most memorable race as the one he didn’t finish. In 1993, when only 38 out of 104 starters finished due to poor weather conditions, May plucked fellow competitor John Quinn out of the Tasman Sea. Quinn had been washed overboard and spent nearly six hours in the water. Last year’s fast conditions appeared to put the line honors record of one day, nine hours, 15 minutes, 24 seconds, under threat. That record was set by 100-foot super maxi Andoo Comanche in 2017, and Comanche also won last year’s race.

FIFA threatens to suspend Brazil over confederation president’s removal by court

RIO DE JANEIRO (Agencies): FIFA warned Brazil on Sunday it could suspend its national teams and clubs from international competitions if an intervention by its soccer body leads to the election of a new president in January. FIFA said in a letter to a Brazilian soccer executive that the country’s soccer body CBF could face suspension if it does not heed its call to wait and instead holds a swift election to replace Ednaldo Rodrigues as president regardless. The document was obtained by The Associated Press.



A Rio de Janeiro court removed Rodrigues and all his appointees at CBF from office on Dec. 7 due to irregularities in his election last year. Brazil’s two highest courts upheld that

ruling last week. Soccer’s governing body FIFA historically rejects government and third-party interference in its member associations, which ultimately could leave five-time World Cup winners Brazil out of major competitions until the crisis is solved. The Rio court ruling also named José Perdig, the head of Brazil’s top sports court, as an intervener to organize new elections for the presidency within 30 working days. FIFA said in previous letters to CBF it considers the intervention to be undue.

Saudi driver Dania Akeel says she is all set for Dakar Rally 2024

JEDDAH (Agencies): As the countdown to the biggest rally event of the year continues, Saudi driver Dania Akeel feels excited and eager to take on the challenge of the Dakar Rally 2024 for the third time in her racing career. The 45th edition of the Dakar Rally will be held Jan. 5-19 in Saudi Arabia. Akeel told Arab News she had gone to Austria to prepare for the Dakar Rally, while Red Bull and the Athlete Performance Center, a hub dedicated to pushing athletes to their limits



and beyond, had also helped. She affirmed her full fitness and said she feels more motivated than ever to secure a positive result at the legendary

event. “The whole reason for being (in Austria) is to find my weak points and receive a plan and a report to develop and to strengthen not only my body but mind as well,” Akeel said. “And it’s really nice to be around a bunch of people who really enjoy what they do.” After driving a T3 car, Akeel switched to a new car for this year’s edition. “I’ve recently changed cars. I was using a T3 car as well but it was a Can-Am. So, it was a great car to learn on and I enjoyed it a lot,” she explained.

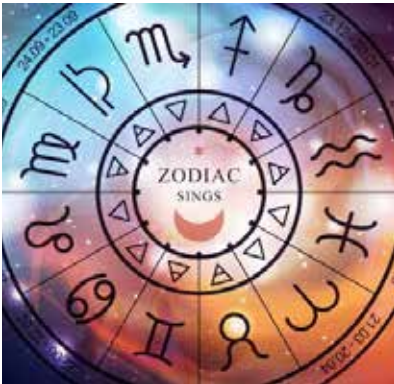
Billionaire Ratcliffe wants struggling Man United back at the top of English and European soccer

MANCHESTER (Agencies): British billionaire Jim Ratcliffe has finally got his hands on Manchester United after securing a stake of up to 25 percent in the Premier League club. Ratcliffe’s interest in sports — and soccer in particular — is long-standing. The 71-year-old owner of petrochemicals giant INEOS has been a United fan since childhood, and supporters will like his stated ambitions. “We all want to see Manchester United back where we belong, at the very top of English, European and world football,” Ratcliffe said Sunday after a deal, subject to Premier League approval, was confirmed following lengthy negotiations with the Glazer family, United’s American owners. The announcement comes after moves elsewhere in European soccer that



could have seen Ratcliffe take control of one of United’s main Premier League rivals as recently as last year. Ratcliffe, one of the richest people in Britain, had initially looked to buy the Glazers’ controlling stake of around 69 percent, but eventually agreed to become a minority shareholder. He had to see off competition from Qatari banker Sheikh Jassim bin Hamad Al Thani, who withdrew in October from the bidding process after failing to agree a deal for a complete takeover.

DAILY HOROSCOPE: DECEMBER 27, 2023



– It’s a general reading which may differ from person to person because of time date and year.
– **ARIES:** Children are a bigger part of your life today. If you don’t have any of your own, you may find that one or more pops up from out of nowhere -- maybe a visitor, maybe the boss’s little darlings.
– **TAURUS:** You and your friends and allies are working in perfect harmony today and any project you work on jointly should work out really well, especially if you’re leading the way and keeping everyone informed.
– **GEMINI:** Beware of sarcasm or teasing today -- other people are far too likely to take you seriously. It’s easy to back-pedal, but it’s easier still to avoid situations in which you’ve got to do so.
– **CANCER:** You don’t have to justify yourself to anyone -- you know that you deserve what’s coming today, even if other folks think they’ve earned part of it, too. It’s not selfish, it’s not common sense!
– **LEO:** You’ve got more heart than most and on a day like today, you can make the most of it. Things are

going well between you and your family, so it may be a good time to build up those relations.
– **VIRGO:** It’s a great day for making plans -- and for sticking to them! Deviation can make life much more difficult on days like today, so try your best to keep on track and keep your people from straying too far.
– **LIBRA:** Your creative side is out in force today, so make the most of it! Add some flair to your work projects, brighten up your living space or find a new way to tell that special someone how much you care.
– **SCORPIO:** Your family has got your back, but now is no the time to expect special favors from anyone else. Do your best to lie low and let things happen for the time being and get the help you need later on.
– **SAGITTARIUS:** Enjoy the fiery personal energy you’ve got coming today -- it should keep you happy even if you’re stuck behind a desk or anywhere else you’d rather not be. It’s easy to amuse yourself!
– **CAPRICORN:** Your family is pulling you away from something you’d rather be doing and you’re getting a little sick of all the demands. It’s time to sit them down and let them know that they need to ease up.
– **ACQUARIUS:** Everything changes in a flash today -- some things for the better, some for the worse, but you are enthralled by the wonder of it all. In the long run, you are glad it all went down this way.
– **PISCES:** Work is a problem today, even if you’re not scheduled -- or even if you’re not employed! Somehow, you need to resolve some issues with important players before you can get back to business as usual.

International Course on Outbreak Investigation and Control of Infectious Diseases Inaugurated at COMSTech

Islamabad (Adnan Hameed): The Secretariat of the OIC Standing Committee on Science and Technology (COMSTech) proudly commenced a three-day international course on “Outbreak Investigation and Control of Infectious Diseases.” Facilitated by five distinguished experts in virology and infectious diseases from the Pasteur Institute of Iran, along with two from the International Center for Chemical and Biological Sciences (ICCBS), University of Karachi, the course has attracted over 100 participants from Pakistan, Afghanistan, Russia, Iran, Yemen, Nigeria, Uganda, Indonesia, Malaysia, Kazakh-



stan, Azerbaijan, Jordan, and Bangladesh, engaging both virtual and physical attendance. The collaborative effort, jointly organized by COMSTech, Pasteur Institute of Iran, and ICCBS, University of Karachi, was inaugurated in the presence of Chief Guest H.E. Dr. Reza Amiri Moghaddam, Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Pakistan. Dr. Moghaddam commended

COMSTech for hosting this invaluable capacity-building event and pledged full support for continued collaborations, emphasizing the enduring cooperation between COMSTech and Iran. In his address, Ambassador Moghaddam highlighted Iran's impressive scientific achievements, citing the publication of over 78,000 scientific articles in 2022, ranking Iran 15th worldwide.

US rejects Israeli request for Apache attack helicopters amid Gaza war

TEL AVIV (Agencies): The United States has rejected an Israeli request to acquire new Apache attack helicopters, according to Israeli media on Tuesday, Anadolu Agency reports. Tel Aviv made the request in recent weeks and raised it again during a visit by US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin to Israel last week, Yedioth Ahronoth reported. “The IDF (Israeli army) has requested Apache attack helicopters from the United States but has been denied so far,” the newspaper said, citing security sources. The Israeli army has two helicopter flight squadrons. “The helicopters are required to enhance (the military's) aerial operations,” the newspaper said. Israel has pounded the Gaza Strip since a cross-border attack by the Palestinian group Hamas on 7 October, killing at least 20,674 Pales-



tinians, mostly women and children, and injuring 54,536 others, according to local health authorities. The Israeli army has also staged military raids on Palestinian towns in the occupied West Bank and exchanged cross-border fire with Lebanese group Hezbollah since the outbreak of the Gaza conflict. According to Israeli media, Washington has sent 230 cargo planes and 20 ships loaded with weapons and military equipment to Israel since the outbreak of the Gaza war.

Russia confirms Ukraine destroyed its warship in Crimea attack

One person reported killed in attack that targeted the Novocherkassk, which Ukraine said was being used to transport Russian drones. Russia has acknowledged a Ukrainian attack has damaged a warship in the occupied Crimean port of Feodosia in what Ukraine and its Western allies called a major setback for the Russian navy. Ukraine's air force said earlier that it had “destroyed” the Novocherkassk landing ship, with President Volodymyr Zelenskyy joking on social media that the vessel had now joined “the Russian underwater Black Sea fleet”. Russian Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu informed President Vladimir Putin “about the damage to our large landing ship” in what a “very detailed report”, the president's spokesman Dmitry Peskov told journalists. The Novocherkassk is a large landing ship that can be used for transporting soldiers as well as tanks and armoured vehicles, and Ukraine said it attacked the vessel at a base in the southern coast of Russian-occupied Crimea. Kyiv said it suspected the ship was transporting Iranian-made explosive drones that Russia has used regularly to attack Ukraine since it began its full scale invasion in February 2022. One person was killed and four were injured in the attack, the Moscow-installed governor of Crimea, Sergey Aksyonov, said, adding that six buildings had been damaged and their residents evacuated. Aksyonov said the strike triggered a fire that had been brought under control. Russia annexed Crimea from Ukraine in 2014



in a move Ukraine and the West condemned as illegal, and has not been internationally recognised. Feodosia, which has a population of about 69,000 people. Ukrainian officials celebrated the attack, which comes amid fierce fighting on the front line in the country's east. Ukrainian commander Mykola Oleshchuk shared a video of an explosion at the Feodosia naval base and wrote: “The fleet in Russia is getting smaller and smaller! Thanks to the Air Force pilots and everyone involved for the filigree work!” plenishment of the Russian underwater Black Sea fleet with another vessel. The occupiers will not have a single peaceful place in Ukraine.” The Black Sea, which Ukraine needs to export its grain, has been a key battleground in the continuing war. Russia's Black Sea Fleet is based in the port of Sevastopol and Moscow has used the fleet to fire missiles at Ukrainian cities and to blockade Ukraine's coastline. Ukraine has stepped up attacks on Crimea, helping it win back limited control of the Black Sea and, at times, push Russian warships further east. Yuriy Ihnat, Ukrainian Air Force spokesperson, said he thought it would be hard for the Novocherkassk to re-enter service.

Netanyahu pushes for ‘voluntary migration’ for Palestinians in Gaza: Israeli media

TEL AVIV (Agencies): Israeli media on Monday said Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is pushing for plans to implement “voluntary migration” of the Palestinians in Gaza to other countries, Anadolu Agency reports. According to the Israel Hayom daily, Netanyahu made the comment during a closed-door parliamentary session for his ruling Likud Party lawmakers. “Our problem is the countries that are willing to absorb (them), and we are working on it,” he reportedly said. Danny Danon of the Likud Party said during the session that there are countries that actually raised this issue, including Canadian Immigration Minister Marc Miller and former US Ambassador to the UN Nikki Haley, who is seeking the US

Republican Party nomination for the 2024 presidential elections. He added that Israel must form a committee to follow up the issue to ensure that anyone who wants to move to a third country can do that. On several occasions, the US, Arab and European countries have voiced firm opposition to imposing any form of “forced migration” on Palestinians in Gaza. The Palestinian side, including the Palestinian Authority and Hamas group, has yet to comment on the reported Israeli statement. Israel has pounded the Gaza Strip since a cross-border attack by the Palestinian group Hamas on 7 October, killing at least 20,700 Palestinians, mostly women and children, and injuring 54,536 others, according to local health authorities.

Madinah Municipality launches 70-kilometer dedicated bicycle lanes

MADINAH (Agencies): The Madinah Municipality announced it has completed implementing bicycle paths along the main roads and inside residential neighborhoods covering 70 kilometers, the Saudi Press Agency reported on Tuesday. The paths, which have been laid out throughout the year, are part of the municipality's goals to improve the quality of life and prepare public sites to encourage the practice of various sports within the “Humanization of the City” program and the urban development system that the city is witnessing. The new paths contribute to enhancing the skills of beginners and professionals and developing health and sports awareness among residents, in addition to enabling bicycles to be used as a light means of transportation, providing a safe alternative within the public transportation system. There are more than 165 bicycle and scooter stations in Madinah through the Careem Bike service, covering most neighborhoods and vital locations and providing innovative solu-

tions as an environmentally friendly means of transportation that facilitates the process for residents and visitors. The bicycle lanes were designed according to security and safety standards to serve all segments and ages, whether they are professionals, enthusiasts, or people with special needs, and the paths are separated from traffic. The municipality aims to achieve comprehensive accessibility by extending the safe network of bicycle paths over a space of 220 linear kilometers by the end of 2025 to include 33 vital sites in Madinah. This comes within the framework of supporting the goals of enriching the visitors' experience, enabling them to explore new destinations and enjoy unique experiences in light of the availability of “Careem Bike” rental stations in historical sites and attractions. The service will also be available in the central area surrounding the Prophet's Mosque and residential neighborhoods to provide safe bicycle paths to achieve sustainable transportation.

China adds two more satellites to mega BeiDou constellation

BEIJING (Agencies): The BeiDou Satellite Navigation System, also known as the BDS - China's largest spaceborne infrastructure to date that provides quality services to worldwide users - added two more satellites to its mega constellation on Tuesday. Carrying the 57th and the 58th satellites of the BDS system, a Long March-3B carrier rocket and the Yuanzheng-1 upper stage attached to the carrier rocket thundered into the sky from the Xichang Satellite Launch Center in Southwest China's Sichuan Province at 11:26 am on Tuesday. After entering orbit and completing testing, the satellites will join in the BDS, according to the mission organizers. According to the official press release the mission organizers provided to the Global Times on Tuesday, compared to the previous MEO satellites of the BDS constellation, this new group of satellites has further upgraded its functional performance in global short message communication capacity, satellite-borne atomic clock technology and payload intelligence, among others. After being integrated into the BDS constellation, it will fur-

ther enhance the reliability and service performance of the system. This is of great importance in supporting the stable operation and large-scale applications of the system, laying the foundation for the design of the next generation of Beidou satellites, read the press release. The Tuesday launch marked the first mission of sending two MEO satellites in one go to the BDS-3 since the system was completed and officially commissioned in 2020, and also the finale of the Xichang Satellite Launch Center for the year 2023, the BDS Deputy Chief Architect Xie Jun told the Global Times on Tuesday. Yin Xiangyuan, the top commander of the Tuesday mission from the Xichang center, told the Global Times that this year, they had successfully completed a total of 19 space launch missions, achieving a perfect record. “In recent years, our country's space industry has experienced rapid development, with a continuous increase in launch demand. Next year, the center will face even higher-density missions, presenting unprecedented challenges. However, this is also our mission and responsibility.

Iraq reopens its embassy in Libya after decade of closure

Baghdad (Agencies): The Iraqi Ministry of Foreign Affairs announced on Monday the reopening of the Iraqi embassy in Libya after a decade of closure. The spokesperson of the Iraqi Foreign Ministry, Ahmed Al-Sahaf, said in a statement that the step comes following directions from Foreign Minister Fuad Hussein to provide services to the Iraqi community in Libya, according to the Iraqi News Agency (INA). The Iraqi Foreign Ministry confirmed that it will work to develop bilateral relations and arrange visits by senior diplomats between Baghdad and Tripoli in the coming period. Al-Sahaf stressed Iraq's support for international efforts to restore security and stability in Libya and its eagerness to adopt policies that meet the aspirations of the Libyan people. The reopen-



ing of the Iraqi embassy in Libya will help Iraq activate its political and diplomatic role to serve the interests of the two countries and will enable the Iraqi government to provide consular services to the Iraqi community in Libya. The Iraqi embassy in Tripoli has been closed for a decade because of the security developments in Libya. Several countries, including Iraq, closed their embassies in Tripoli with the escalation of military tensions between the Libyan parties in 2014.

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