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Vol 11, No 316 - Tuesday 30 January 2024 Rajab 18, 1445 A.H.

Editor: Omer Rizwan

Iran to impose \$18bln fine on Pakistan over gas pipeline construction delay



TEHRAN/ISLAMABAD (Agencies): Iran has warned Pakistan that it may have to pay an \$18 billion penalty if it fails to make progress on the Iran-Pakistan gas pipeline project within the deadline, which has been extended by 180 days to September 2024. If Pakistan fails to fulfill its obligations, Iran plans to appeal to the International Court of Arbitration in Paris to collect the money. The Iran-Pakistan

gas pipeline project has been facing delays since 2014. In late 2022, Iran asked Pakistan to build part of the pipeline on its territory by February-March 2024 or be ready to pay a fine of \$18 billion. Prior to this, in February 2019, Tehran sent a notice to Islamabad about the failure to lay its part of the pipeline on time and threatened to go to the arbitration court in Paris and apply penalties in

the gas purchase agreement, which was signed in 2009 for a period of 25 years. Pakistan claims that it cannot implement the project on its territory due to US sanctions imposed on Iran. The gas purchase agreement between Iran and Pakistan was signed in accordance with French law, and the International Court of Arbitration in Paris reportedly does not recognize US sanctions.

Niger, Mali, Burkina Faso announce withdrawal from ECOWAS



NIAMEY (Agencies): Three military-led West African nations have announced their immediate withdrawal from regional bloc ECOWAS, accusing the body of becoming a threat to its members. Niger, Mali and Burkina Faso "decide in complete sovereignty on the immediate withdrawal" from the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), read a joint statement published on Sunday. ECOWAS "under the influence of foreign powers, betraying its founding principles, has become a threat to its member states and its population", read the statement. The three countries accused the regional body of failing to support their fight against "terrorism and insecurity", while imposing "illegal, illegitimate, inhumane and irresponsible sanctions".

Chinese companies buy largest share of Iraqi oil

Baghdad (IraqiNews.com) - The State Organization for Marketing of Oil (SOMO) announced on Monday that many Chinese oil companies bought Iraqi oil in December 2023. SOMO's statistics revealed that 44 oil companies—12 of which were Chinese—purchased oil from Iraq in December 2023. The data showed that seven Indian oil corporations purchased Iraqi crude oil in December, making them the second-largest group of importers from one country after China. According to the statistics, four South Korean oil companies imported oil from Iraq in the same month, making South Korea the third largest buyer of Iraqi crude oil, followed by Turkey, where three oil companies purchased Iraqi oil. Two oil companies in each of the United States, Italy, Japan, the UAE, and Greece, as well as one oil company in each of Spain, the Netherlands, Britain, Jordan, Kuwait, Russia, Malaysia, Azerbaijan, and France, imported Iraqi oil last December. Iraq's oil marketing company indicated that the most prominent oil companies that bought Iraqi oil include Nayara Energy, Exxon Mobil, Shell, and Eni.

Houthi official 'concerned' over Texas-US gov't standoff, urges respect of human rights



SANAA (Agencies): The Deputy Foreign Minister in Yemen's de-facto, Houthi-led government, Hussein Al-Ezzi, has taken to X yesterday to express his concern over the ongoing standoff between the US state of Texas and the federal government over access to Eagle Pass, and called on the parties to adhere to international human rights. The flashpoint city is

situated along the US-Mexico border and is at the heart of a dispute over the country's migrant crisis and who has jurisdiction over the border crossing. "I am concerned about the developments in Texas and that the parties to the conflict must respect international human rights law," stated Al-Ezzi. "The United States and other countries are undoubtedly facing horrific and stormy events. This is something that falls within what I mentioned in my pinned tweet two years ago." His pinned post in question, noted that "Yemen has faced great injustice and widespread global disappointment, and therefore we expect a great divine punishment that will affect the region and the world."

Iran launches 3 satellites simultaneously into orbit amid tensions with West

TEHRAN (Agencies): Iran says it has successfully launched three indigenous satellites into orbit using the Simorgh carrier rocket, marking the first time the country has simultaneously sent three satellites into space, reports Anadolu Agency. The satellites launched early on Sunday include Mahda, weighing 32 kg, and two nano-satellites, Keyhan 2 and Hatef 1, of less than 10 kg, sent to a minimum orbit of 450 kilometers (279 miles) and a maximum of 1,100 km (683.5 mi), state media reported, citing the public relations wing of the Defense Ministry. The Simorgh satellite carrier that carried the three satellites to space has been developed by Iran's Defense Ministry, the ministry statement noted. Mahda satellite has been described as a research satellite whose design, construction, assembly and testing stages were carried out at Iran's Space Research Institute. It aims to test the accuracy of the Simorgh



carrier in delivering multiple cargoes in low earth orbit and to evaluate the performance of new designs and the reliability of indigenous space technologies. Keyhan 2 and Hatef 1 nano-satellites have been developed by Iran Electronics Industries, a state-owned subsidiary of the Defense Ministry, both meant to test the country's space technology. The first-of-its-kind launch came a day after Iran dismissed the criticism of the European troika on the launch of another satellite last week, saying that scientific progress is "an inalienable and legitimate" right of the country.

Pakistani peacekeeper killed in line of duty in Sudan: UN



UNITED NATIONS (Agencies): A Pakistani peacekeeper serving the U.N. Interim Security Force for Abyei, an area disputed by South Sudan and the Sudan, was killed Sunday in line of duty to protect civilians amid inter-communal violence there, the UN announced Monday, warning all parties that attacks on 'Blue Helmets' constitutes war crimes. On Saturday, a Ghanaian peacekeeper was also killed in the continuing violence in Abyei administrative area, the announcement said. "The Secretary-General is deeply concerned by the violence that occurred over the weekend in the Abyei Administra-

Palestine slams decisions by some countries to suspend funding for UN relief agency

NEW YORK (Agencies): The US, UK, Italy, Australia, Canada, Finland and the Netherlands decided to suspend funding to UNRWA on Friday amid terrorism allegations against some staff by Israel. This development follows an International Court of Justice order for Israel to promptly deliver aid to Gaza and prevent a potential genocide in the besieged Strip. Norway welcomed investigations of some staffers but said it would continue to support Palestinians via UNRWA. Ireland also announced it would not suspend funding to the UN agency. The Israeli offensive has left 85% of Gaza's population internally displaced amid acute shortages of

food, clean water, and medicine, while 60% of the enclave's infrastructure was damaged or destroyed, according to the UN. Palestine denounced on Sunday once again the decisions made by some countries to suspend funding for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA), calling it a "collective punishment" meted out to the Palestinian people, reports Anadolu Agency. In a statement, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs said that "suspending UNRWA funding and continuing support for Israel in the genocide of our people are collective punishments and miserable double standards."

Israeli Knesset member says 'traitors from within' might be behind Hamas attack

TEL AVIV (Agencies): A member of the Knesset (Israel's parliament) said Sunday that "traitors from within" might be behind the 7 October attack by Palestinian group Hamas, reports Anadolu Agency. "Something stinks, I don't know what we will find. That there were traitors within or a bunch of unprofessional people," Tzvi Foghel, head of the National Security Committee, told Maariv newspaper. Foghel said the Israeli intelligence couldn't be totally unaware of what was going to happen on 7 October. "We got into the car of a nuclear scientist in Iran and killed him, yet we do not know what was happening in the Gaza Strip?" he said. The Israeli lawmaker said that an investigation must be launched into the 7 October events. "When the head of the Shin Bet (security agency) says that an investigation committee must be formed, there are many parties that worry about themselves instead



of the future of the country," Foghel added. He said in case the conspiracy theory was wrong, "we would have to replace entire units in the army and generations of leaders." "They were not wrong in their views, they were simply irresponsible and unprofessional, and they did wrong to the State of Israel," he said. "I prefer to think that someone betrayed us from within." "I cannot rule out that there is a conspiracy here. We cannot be so irresponsible, but I hope I am wrong," Foghel continued.

China Evergrande ordered to liquidate in landmark moment for crisis-hit sector

HONG KONG (Agencies): A Hong Kong court on Monday ordered the liquidation of property giant China Evergrande Group, dealing a fresh blow to confidence in the country's fragile property market as policymakers step up efforts to contain a deepening crisis. Justice Linda Chan decided to liquidate the world's most indebted developer, with more than \$300 billion of total liabilities, after noting Evergrande had been unable to offer a concrete restructuring plan more than two years after defaulting

on its offshore debt and following several court hearings. "It is time for the court to say enough is enough," Chan said in court on Monday. The decision sets the stage for what is expected to be a drawn-out and complicated process with potential political considerations as investors watch whether the Chinese courts will recognise Hong Kong's ruling, given the many authorities involved. Offshore investors will be focused on how Chinese authorities treat foreign creditors when a company fails.

Indian Army approves advanced rockets for Pinaka Multi-Barrel Rocket Launchers

NEW DELHI (Agencies): Indian Army has given the green light to the development of advanced rockets for its Pinaka Multi Barrel Rocket Launchers (MBRLs). The Defence Research and Development Organisation's (DRDO's) subsidiary Armament Research and Development Establishment (ARDE) has been

granted official permission to develop two advanced rockets for the Pinaka MBRL with maximum strike ranges of 120 km and 300 km respectively. Once developed, Munitions India Limited (MIL) will be responsible for the production of these advanced rockets under a transfer of technology (ToT) agreement with the DRDO.

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.

KP Governor formally inaugurates Governor's Secretariat website

PESHAWAR (APP): Governor of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) Haji Ghulam Ali formally inaugurated the website of the Governor's Secretariat here Monday. The website was inaugurated during a ceremony held here in the Governor's House. Besides, Caretaker KP Minister for Education, Dr. Qasim Jan; Secretary IT Board, Mohammad Ali Shah; Vice Chancellors of the University of Peshawar, Khyber Medical University, and Agricultural University Peshawar; Director of

IMSciences, Dr. Usman Ghani; and officers of the Governor's Secretariat and IT Board were also present on the occasion. With the launch of the website <http://governorkp.gov.pk>, the people will have easy access to the Governor's Office and the day-to-day affairs of the Governor's Secretariat. All affairs of the Governor's Secretariat will now be available online. Through the website, the employees of the universities could file applications against the administrative deci-

sions of their respective universities, and any order on their online appeal would also be available on it. Addressing the inaugural ceremony, Haji Ghulam Ali said, "Today is the era of information technology, so the public should also be provided information on the basis of the requirements of the modern era." "The website is created for the access of the people to the affairs of the Governor's Secretariat and is the beginning of a journey towards the modern era," he said.

PPP chairman to address public in Dera on Jan 30: Kundi

PESHAWAR (APP): Pakistan People's Party (PPP) chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari would unveil the party's future roadmap before the public on January 30 in Haq Nawaz

Park in district DI Khan, said PPP secretary information Faisal Karim Kundi. In a media statement issued here, Kundi said that Bilawal would inform the people about the future

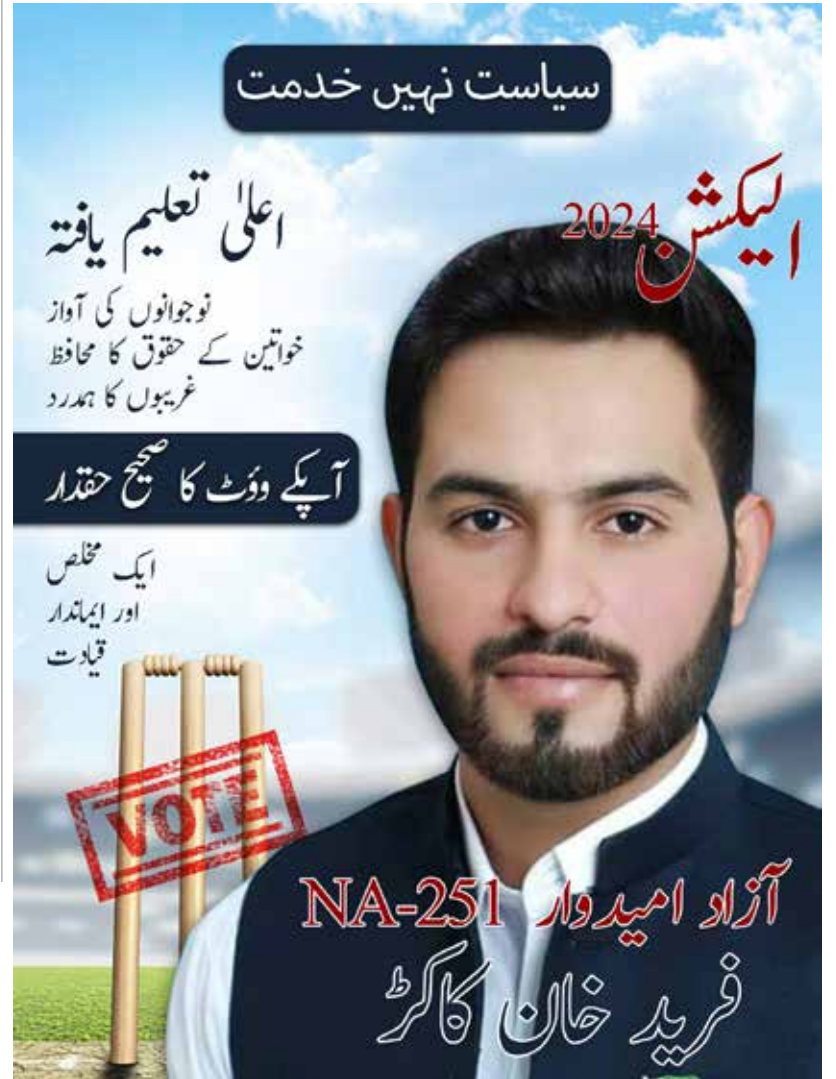
strategy, development and prosperity plan for the country after coming to power. He hoped for an overwhelming welcome to the PPP chairman by the people of DI Khan.

1122 prepares plans for safety of tourists visiting snowfall areas: DG

PESHAWAR (APP): The Emergency Service Rescue-1122 has prepared an emergency preparation plan for safety of tourists visiting snowfall areas. Director General Dr Khateer Ahmed said here on Monday that

safety measures have been completed for the tourists to enjoy the snowfall, adding that the operational vehicles and staff have been deployed at specific points established at prominent tourist's places. He

said that rescue stations equipped with additional resources including ambulances, equipment and manpower have also been established at tourist spots to timely respond to any emergency.





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PM says, no solid reason yet to justify polls delay; assures fairness

ISLAMABAD (Agencies): Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar on Monday said that no solid reason had yet come to the fore to justify a delay in the general elections, assuring that the government was committed to holding polls as freely and fairly as possible. The prime minister, in an interview with a newly launched television channel (Aik News) said the candidates were canvassing and all the

rumours would fall to rest by the evening of February 8 – the date for general elections in the country. Regarding the usual complaints of rigging before or after the elections, he said that learning lessons from the past, the parliament needed to address all the flaws regarding the laws, administration, or the Election Commission. He said the observers would monitor and local and international media would re-

port on the activity, assuring that as per the standards in the region, the elections would by and large be free and fair. He observed that the political parties were also involved in the poll rigging by making fake ID cards and casting the votes of deceased persons. He said voting time would be from 9 am to 5 pm on February 8 and everyone should use his constitutional right to vote to ensure a good turnout.

Pakistan, Iran agree to promote mutual goals of peace, prosperity

ISLAMABAD (Agencies): IPakistan and Iran on Monday agreed to work towards promoting the mutually desired goals of peace and prosperity, based on mutual respect and a collective approach to address the confronted common challenges. The agreement came during a meeting between Caretaker Foreign Minister Jalil Abbas Jilani and Foreign Minister of Iran Hossein Amir-Abdollahian, who arrived here in the wee hours of Monday, according to a Foreign Office statement. The



two sides discussed bilateral cooperation, underlining the importance of robust dialogue and cooperation as the pathway for a positive, forward-oriented and upward trajectory in bilateral relations.

Railways to digitalize its multiple services

ISLAMABAD (Agencies): Pakistan Railways is taking steps to become an E-office soon to digitalize its service and improve internal efficiencies through electronic administration. The e-office platform aims to cater for the need for effectiveness and transparency in Governmental processes and service delivery mechanisms as well as help government departments to go paperless. The idea is being implemented with the help of the National Information Technology Board (NITB) which will be responsible for providing the relevant training to the staff of Pakistan Railways. E-Office is a digital workplace solution that replaces the existing method of manual handling of files and documents with an efficient electronic system. According to an official source, Pakistan Railways will be on e-office soon which will not only facilitate the

users but also make the entire system of the department transparent. Listing other steps taken by the department, the source revealed that Pakistan Railways has developed a software application for journalist concession card management. All the related data for journalist concession cards across the country is managed by the Directorate of Public Relations. The software has been prepared and is linked with the centralized reservation centre as well. About the Networking Monitoring System (NMS), the source said that the software has been deployed on the premises of the Directorate of IT with the help of this system all network deployed all over the railways network is being monitored critically and in case of any disconnections the concerned service provider is taken up and pursued till the fault is removed.

12 criminals nabbed in Sargodha

SARGODHA (APP): District police after launching a massive crackdown against criminals nabbed 12 criminals, here on Monday. Police spokesman said that raiding team raided at different localities and apprehended Muhammad Nouman, Rashid, Rehman, Suleman, Tahir, Shabbir, Kabeer, Saleem and others besides recovering of 2. 1 kg of hashish, 0.2 kg of heroin, 128 liters of liquor, 22 liters of wine, nine pistols, three guns, 109 bullets and valuables worth in millions of rupees from them. Further investigation was underway.

About 10,000 liter substandard cooking oil wasted

MUZAFFARGARH (Agencies): Punjab food Authority claimd to have seized a carriage containing at least 10000 liter cooking oil made up of inedible poultry offal and bones here. According to the spokesman, the action was launched at Bhutta flyover today where the said quantity of contaminated oil was captured. It was bound to supply in factories for preparing snacks. The owner of the production unit of the said cooking oil was booked. The spokesman said that the crackdown will continue against hygienic and substandard supply and preparation of foods in future as well.

SMEDA to organize training on 'HRM for Women Entrepreneurs'

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Small and Medium Enterprises Development Authority (SMEDA) will organize a one-day workshop on 'Human Resource Management for Women Entrepreneurs' for profitable business growth on January 30. The workshop will be held at the Women Resource Centre and Incubation LG-1 Vogue Tower, Lahore, according to a source in the authority. The training program will provide information about introduction to HRM, HRM planning process, recruitment and selection, team development strategies, and integrating HRM into the overall management system. It also highlights capacity building through training and coaching, performance management, and retention strategies and success planning. The session would be attended by emerging and existing women entrepreneurs, small business owners and CEOs of women businesses, and all those desirous of improving knowledge on the subject.

DC imposes ban on display of arms

KOHAT (Agencies): Deputy Commissioner Azmatullah Wazir here Monday imposed section 144 in the district and banned the display of any type of arms. A notification issued here said that the decision has been taken given the current security situation and common threats besides ensuring the safety of the people. The ban would remain intact for 15 days.

Cop injures in shootout

DG KHAN (APP): Constable was injured in shootout with police in limits of Shah Sadar police station. According to the SHO, Irfan Mustafa a motorbike was snatched at Adda Ibrahim. After information, police rushed to the crime scene. As soon as the security officials reached out, the robbers started firing that caused the constable, Ejaz Hussain wounded as suffering the bullet injury.

Solangi visits PEMRA to condole with Salim Baig over his brother's death

ISLAMABAD (Agencies): Caretaker Federal Minister for Information, Broadcasting and Parliamentary Affairs Murtaza Solangi on Monday visited Chairman Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority, Muhammad Salim Baig, to condole with him over the death of his elder brother Zafar Baig. The min-

ister offered Fateha for the soul of the late Zafar Baig and said he was deeply grieved to hear the news of his death and shared the grief of the bereaved family. He prayed to Allah Almighty to rest the departed soul in eternal peace and grant courage to the bereaved family to bear this loss with fortitude.

Drivers urged to be careful in hilly areas amid snowy weather

ISLAMABAD (Agencies): All the tourists visiting the hilly areas to enjoy snowfall have been advised by the concerned authorities to take extra precautionary measures to avoid any untoward situation. Authorities have advised both residents and tourists to refrain from unnecessary travel in order to navigate through the challenging circumstances, said a report aired by a Private news channel. It also urged the tourists to ensure safety measures before packing their bags as extremely low temperatures were being recorded in the Northern Areas of the country. PDMA also directed the local administration to ensure the availability

of machinery needed to clear roads of any land sliding effect, rain, and snowfall. The authority also called for timely updating the tourists so that they could take necessary precautionary measures in this regard, said PDM official. A tourist said that snowfall is the favourite time of her children and they were very excited about playing in the snow and making snowmen. According to PMD, rain-wind and thunderstorm with snow over hills and isolated hailstorm in various parts of the country are expected during these days. "Pakistan is a very beautiful country with diverse weather and locations to explore," a women tourist added.

'Voter can check constituency number, polling station by sending SMS to 8300'; ECP

ISLAMABAD (APP): The people of the country have been provided a unique facility to know about their constituency number, polling station and others relevant details by just sending SMS to 8300. According to Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) spokesman, "The commission has started providing comprehensive voting details to facilitate voters to cast their vote in smooth manner." "A

voter can acquire his voting information by sending his National Identity Card number (without hyphen) via SMS to 8300," it added. The spokesman highlighted, "There is a service fee of Rs 2 per SMS for this facility." Urging all voters to promptly acquire voting details for themselves and their family members, he emphasized the importance of avoiding any inconvenience at the polling station.

First snowfall of winter; DC Murree visits different areas to review arrangements

RAWALPINDI (APP): Deputy Commissioner (DC) Murree, Agha Zabeer Abbas Shirazi on Monday morning visited various areas including Jhika Gali, Kashmir Point, Mall Road, Kuldana and other areas and reviewed the arrangements finalized by the administration to facilitate the tourists. Later, the DC also visited control room. Agha Zabeer Abbas Shirazi said that after first snowfall of winter in Murree, all the staff concerned and machinery were fully operational. Personnel from various departments were

present at all the tourist facilitation centers to guide and assist the tourists, the DC added. He informed that machinery and human resources were being used to remove snow from the roads. The administration had taken solid steps to remove snow from different roads to facilitate the tourists, the DC said. He informed that Murree had received 0.5 inch snow and salt was also being sprinkled on the roads. The personnel of all the departments concerned were in the field and traffic was normal on the roads, he added.

ANF seizes 592 kg drugs in eight operations; arrests seven accused

RAWALPINDI (Agencies): Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) while conducting eight operations across the country managed to recover over 592 kg drugs and arrested seven accused, said an ANF headquarters spokesman here on Monday. He informed that 2 kg of Ice was recovered from the possession of a Bahrain-bound passenger going from Sialkot Airport. 64 Ice-filled capsules were recovered from the stomach of a Jeddah-bound passenger netted at Lahore Airport. 284 kg hashish was recovered from

the possession of an accused rounded up near Gahi Chowk Quetta. 150 kg opium and 150 kg morphine were recovered from an empty house in Kuchlak Pishin while four kg hashish was recovered from an accused arrested near Iqbal Shaheed Toll Plaza, Attock. The spokesman informed that 1 kg hashish was recovered from the possession of an accused nabbed near GT Road, Attock. In the seventh operation, 1 kg of hashish was recovered from an accused near Bano Bypass Kohat.

Bilal Siddiqi urges to resolve Kashmir issue through dialogue

ISLAMABAD (APP): Jailed APHC leader Bilal Siddiqi has urged international community to fulfill its responsibilities to resolve the Kashmir dispute and stop India from changing the demography of the territory in the larger interest of peace and security in the region. According to Kashmir Media Service, he in a message from Srinagar Central Jail said that in Kashmir issue

should be resolved through a sustained dialogue process. Kashmir is a disputed territory under UN resolutions and every state subject irrespective of cast, creed, color and gender has equal right to participate in the right to self-determination and it is therefore the duty of every Kashmiri to protect and defend the demographic composition of the disputed territory, he added.

Int'l workshop on 'Ethical Research in Clinical Trials' to be held from February 07-09

ISLAMABAD (Agencies): Two-day International workshop on 'Ethical Research in Clinical Trials' will be held under the auspices of COMSTECH and UEARS from February 07-09 to address the challenges of research integrity in clinical trials in low-middle-income countries and propose the best suitable guidelines to improve the quality of research in this domain. The workshop, to be held in Cairo, Egypt, is aimed at imparting knowledge and training about research integrity and creating a network of professionals working in the field for continuous learning and exchanges. According to an official of COMSTECH, the meeting and its workshop will help devise solutions for the challenges faced in clinical trials by low-middle-income countries. Students, scientists, researchers, experts, healthcare managers, government officials, think

tanks, health NGO's, and policymakers from the domain of multi-center clinical trials research from across the world and global south countries can register for the workshop for physical or virtual participation. Globally the pursuit and dissemination of knowledge enjoys a place of distinction, and the public expects to reap considerable benefit from the creative and innovative contributions of scientists. As science becomes increasingly tangled with major social, philosophical, economic, and political issues, scientists become more accountable to the larger society of which they are a part. Therefore, it is more important than ever that those individual scientists and their institutions periodically reassess the values, and professional practices that guide their research as well as their efforts to perform their research work with integrity.

India's so-called census rejected as intrusive interference in personal affairs

ISLAMABAD (Agencies): The All Parties Hurriyat Conference (APHC) leaders have rejected India's self-styled census of 2024, characterizing it as an unwarranted intrusion into the personal affairs of Kashmiri people in the Indian illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir. According to Kashmir Media Service, APHC leaders Ghulam Muhammad Khan Sopori, Syed Bashir Andrabi, Yasin Attai, Khawaja Firdous, Yasmeen Raja, Hafza Bano, Mohammad Yusuf Naqash, Advocate Arshad Iqbal, Imtiyaz Reshi and Maulana Musaib Nadvi in their separate statements issued in Srinagar firmly asserted that the census constitutes a blatant violation of international laws, emphasizing the inherent right of the Kashmiri people to resist India's unjust occu-

pation of their territory. Highlighting the historical context, the leaders contended that India's actions in Kashmir since 1947, particularly its coercive and unlawful occupation, are unacceptable. Despite enduring decades of oppression, including arrests, fake encounters, and property confiscation, the APHC leaders emphasized the unwavering commitment of the Kashmiri people to their ultimate goal of complete freedom from India. Furthermore, the statements shed light on the perceived manipulation of population figures in the census, with APHC leaders viewing this as a deliberate attempt to alter the demographic composition of the territory, potentially diminishing the Kashmiri majority and affecting their political representation.

NCGSA,IST to hold First National CanSat Competition

ISLAMABAD (Agencies): National Center of GIS and Space Applications (NCGSA), Institute of Space Technology (IST) Islamabad, Pakistan is organizing the First National CanSat Competition to design, develop and launch the student satellite (CanSat) model. An official of IST informed that high school, college and university students will participate in the competition that would be held between February-April. The competition is a part of the efforts towards Space Technology Education and Popularization (STEP) through STEM education. The competition will be held in multiple phases (online/on-site), while the final phase will be held at IST, Islamabad by the end of

April. The competition has been designed for teams from Abecedarian (Grade 9 – 12 / O / A levels) and Virtuoso (Undergraduate BS) groups. Each team may consist of 2-4 students along with one Team Lead as a faculty member, the official informed. The STEM investment is PKR 5000 per team. The winners will be awarded cash awards of PKR 100,000 and PKR 50,000 for each group (Abecedarian and Virtuoso) along with winning and participation certificates. The interested teams may register online (// bit.ly/NCC2024) through their Team Leads (Focal Person/Faculty Member) by Feb 23, 2024. Further details can be accessed through <https://ncg-sa.org.pk/ncc/>.

Ryanair quarterly profit dives 93% on higher fuel cost

LONDON (Agencies): Irish no-frills airline Ryanair on Monday said net profit dived 93% in its third quarter as higher fuel costs offset rising revenues, resulting in a lower full-year earnings forecast. The carrier, which flies mostly throughout Europe, said net profit slumped to €14.8 million (US\$16 million) in the final three months of 2023 compared with one year earlier. Chief executive Michael O'Leary said Ryanair was narrowing its forecast for annual net profit to a range of €1.85 billion and



€1.95 billion. It previously estimated between €1.85 billion and €2.05 billion. "This guidance and the full year result remains heavily dependent upon avoiding unforeseen adverse events" in the group's current

fourth quarter, O'Leary added in the earnings statement. He identified risks as being "the Ukraine war, the Israel-Hamas conflict and further Boeing delivery delays". In the third quarter, Ryanair's fuel costs surged 35%, while revenue jumped 17%. Passenger traffic grew 7% to 41.4 million, despite higher average fares which helped to offset other rising costs such as higher salaries. Its fourth quarter, or January-March period, is traditionally the airline's weakest.

China's growth model pushes Beijing into more trade conflicts

FRANKFURT (Agencies): Swiss solar panel maker Meyer Burger is facing the brunt of competition from China and is warning it may have to close its loss-making production plant in Germany unless the government steps in with financial support. "Chinese manufacturers are deliberately selling goods in Europe far below their own production costs," chief executive Gunter Erfurt told Reuters. "They can do this because the solar industry in China has been strategically subsidised with



hundreds of billions of dollars for years." Growing alarm over Chinese industrial overcapacity flooding the European Union with cheap products is opening a new front in the

West's trade war with Beijing, which kicked off with Washington's import tariffs in 2018. Brussels' trade policy is now also turning increasingly protective against the global ramifications of China's production-focused, debt-driven development model. Throughout last year, China's policymakers flagged their intention to make domestic demand a more prominent growth driver to wean the world's second-largest economy off its decades-long reliance on infrastructure and the property sector.

US wants cloud firms to reveal foreign clients in China AI race

WASHINGTON (Agencies): The US wants cloud services providers such as Amazon.com Inc and Microsoft Corp to actively investigate and call out foreign clients developing artificial intelligence applications on their platforms, escalating a tech conflict between Washington and Beijing. The Biden administration proposal, scheduled for release Monday, requires such firms to reveal foreign customers' names and IP addresses. Amazon and its peers, which include Alphabet Inc's Google, would



have to devise a budget for collecting those details and report any suspicious activity, according to draft rule published Sunday. If implemented, Washington could use those require-

ments to choke off a major avenue through which Chinese firms access the data centres and servers crucial to training and hosting AI. They also place the onus of collecting, storing and analysing customer data on the cloud services, a burden not unlike strict "know-your-customer" rules that govern the financial industry. US cloud providers have worried that restrictions on their activities with overseas users without comparable measures by allied countries risks disadvantaging American firms.

UK govt to ban disposable vapes to prevent use by children

LONDON (Agencies): British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak will announce plans on Monday to ban the sale of disposable vapes to prevent their use by children, and reiterate the government's intention to introduce a law preventing younger generations from buying tobacco. Under the new powers, there would be restrictions on vape flavours, a requirement for plain packaging, and changes to how vapes, or e-cigarettes, are displayed to make them less attractive to children. "Alongside our commitment to stop children who turn 15 this year or younger from ever



legally being sold cigarettes, these changes will leave a lasting legacy by protecting our children's health for the long term," Sunak said in a statement. Smoking is Britain's biggest preventable killer, causing one

out of four cancer-related deaths, or some 80,000 a year, the government says. In October, Sunak announced plans to pass a law which would mean that anyone born on or after Jan 1, 2009, would be unable to buy tobacco in their lifetime. While vapes are seen as key to helping people quit smoking, there has been concern they could be driving nicotine addiction among young people, with 9% of 11- to 15-year-olds now using them, the government said. The World Health Organization (WHO) said in December all vape flavours should be banned.

Pilots' union reaches deal with Taiwan's Eva Air, averting strike

TAIPEI (Agencies): A pilots' union late on Sunday reached a deal with Taiwan's Eva Airways to avert a strike that had been threatened over the crucial Lunar New Year holiday in a dispute over salaries and working conditions. Taoyuan Union of Pilots said last week its members had voted to authorise a strike after accusing Eva of not raising salaries enough and employing too many foreign pilots. The union, which represents mostly long-haul pilots, had raised the prospect of striking over the week-long Lunar New Year



holiday starting next month. After talks facilitated by the government, the union said it had reached a four point agreement with the airline, with Eva agreeing to raise salaries

and only hire foreign pilots if there is a "special need". Eva, in a statement to the Taiwan stock exchange, said it had reached a "consensus" with the union and confirmed it had signed the agreement. Vice-premier Cheng Wen-tsan witnessed the signing of the agreement, Taiwan's transport ministry said. Eva, best known internationally for the Hello Kitty livery on some of its jets, operates flights to many destinations around Asia as well as to North America, Europe and Australia. It is Taiwan's second-largest carrier after China Airlines.

Toyota suspending shipments of 10 models due to testing issues

TOKYO (Agencies): Toyota Motor Corp will temporarily suspend shipments of 10 vehicle models after supplier Toyota Industries Corp disclosed certification issues concerning some diesel engines. An investigative committee found irregularities during horsepower output testing, which took measurements based on computer modules running software that differed from that used for mass production, resulting in values with less variation, the carmak-



er said in a statement Monday. The certification issue the latest to beset Toyota, following an announcement by subsidiary Daihatsu Motor Co last month that most of its vehicles

weren't properly tested for collision safety and that the carmaker manipulated the results of tests dating as far back as 1989. As a result, Daihatsu is halting shipments and suspending operations through January. "Going forward, we will be involved in all companywide activities to help rebuild Toyota Industries and review the situation to thoroughly ensure that safety and quality are the top priorities," Toyota said of the latest disclosures.

RSG leads Saudi Arabia's green transition with full fleet shift to low-carbon biofuel

RIYADH (Agencies): Saudi Arabia's sustainability drive gains momentum as multi-project developer Red Sea Global has become the first to use low-carbon biofuel in all delivery trucks. RSG's entire fleet of land vehicles is now powered either by electricity or biofuel, making it the first company in the Kingdom to operate such an eco-conscious supply chain, according to a press statement. This shift

from regular diesel usage to sustainable fuels is expected to reduce carbon emissions and extend vehicle engine life. The biofuel is produced from used cooking oil sourced within Saudi Arabia. The type of fuel RSG has adopted emits only 0.17 kilograms of carbon dioxide equivalent per liter, compared with 2.7kg CO2e per liter from regular diesel usage. RSG currently operates a fleet of six 8-tonne refrigerated

trucks and three 3.5-tonne refrigerated trucks, all running on biofuel. The press statement added that each of these vehicles is equipped with a chip measuring the amount of biofuel used daily. This data will enable the fleet's managers to analyze and optimize fuel consumption, thus enhancing the sustainability of RSG's operations and strengthening its commitment to the environment.

Samsung to integrate Baidu's Ernie AI in latest Galaxy phones

SEOUL (Agencies): Samsung Electronics Co will feature Baidu Inc's Ernie Bot as a key attraction of its new Galaxy S24 smartphone series in China. The South Korean maker has pitched its latest handset family as the first of a wave of AI smartphones, and Baidu's artificial intelligence tools will help with text summarisation, organisation and translation, Baidu said in a statement. It will also provide the backend support for Samsung's "circle to search" feature, which is handled by Alphabet Inc's Google in other markets. Google's Android software provides the backbone for the majority of smartphones in China, but



the company's add-on mobile services and app store are not available, leaving it to local companies to fill gaps with alternatives like Tencent Holdings Ltd's WeChat. For Baidu, the Samsung deal marks a major adopter of its Ernie AI, one of the earliest and best efforts to create a Chinese challenger to OpenAI's ChatGPT.

Oil rises on fresh Middle East fears after attack on US base

HONG KONG (Agencies): Oil rose Monday on fresh Middle East fears as Joe Biden pledged to retaliate after blaming Iran-backed rebels for the killing of three US service members in a drone attack on a base in Jordan. The attack — which came two days after Yemen's Houthi rebels struck a vessel in the Red Sea — ramped up tensions in the region and stoked worries about supplies through the key trade waterway. Both main crude contracts rose more than one percent in early trade — hitting levels not seen since November — before paring the gains slightly. "The news of three US troops being killed by a drone attack, and President Biden saying 'we shall respond', will likely dial up



the market's focus on the region," Andrew Ticehurst, at Nomura, said. The news comes as Israel presses on with its war against Hamas, adding to investor concerns about a wider conflagration that brings in Iran and the US. Still, the reports did little to dent equity markets in Asia, with traders awaiting a crucial policy decision by the US Federal Reserve this week and the release of more corporate earnings.

Dollar steady in data-packed week with Fed in focus

SINGAPORE (Agencies): The dollar started the week on a steady footing as investors took stock of US economic data ahead of the Federal Reserve policy meeting this week, while escalating geopolitical tensions in the Middle East kept risk sentiment in check. The dollar index, which measures the US currency against six rivals, inched 0.01% higher to 103.55 on Monday, set for a 2% gain in January as traders temper expectations of early and deep US interest rate cuts. The Fed in December surprised markets by taking a dovish tone and projecting 75 basis points of rate cuts in 2024, resulting in markets pricing in early and steep easing, with a cut expected as early as March. But since then, strong economic data and pushback



from central bankers have prompted traders to adjust expectations. Markets are currently pricing in a 48% chance of a rate cut in March, the CME FedWatch tool showed, compared with an 86% chance at the end of December. "The markets recognise that tightening cycle is over. However, they swung hard, pricing in aggressive easing by most of the G10 central banks," said Marc Chandler, chief market strategist, at Bannockburn Forex.

UK Post Office chief sacked as firm reels from IT scandal

LONDON (Agencies): UK business minister Kemi Badenoch today said she had sacked the chairman of the Post Office amid tensions over the scandal of hundreds of subpostmasters wrongly convicted of theft due to faulty accounting software. A television drama in early January that told the story of the subpostmasters' ordeal and their ongoing battle to clear their names and secure compensation shocked the nation. The strong public reaction prompted Prime Minister Rishi Sunak to announce in parliament that his government would legislate to ensure the victims of what has been called Britain's biggest miscarriage of justice were "swiftly exonerated and compensated". "We had a con-



versation and it was agreed that it was better that the Post Office had new leadership going forward," Badenoch told Sky News, confirming that she had removed Post Office chief Henry Staunton. There has been intense criticism of previous Post Office chief Paula Vennells and others who are accused of allowing the prosecutions to continue even after problems with the software were known about.

United CEO kickstarts Airbus talks amid Boeing delays

CHICAGO (Agencies): United Airlines has approached Airbus about buying more A321neo jets to fill a potential void left by the delayed Boeing 737 MAX 10, in a trade-off likely to ease deadlock over a long-delayed separate order for larger jets, industry sources said. United CEO Scott Kirby flew to Toulouse recently to sound out the planemaker on a potential quid-quo-pro deal after a mid-air emergency on an Alaska Airlines 737 MAX 9 raised new doubts over certification of the already delayed MAX 10, they said. "United Airlines has been in talks with Airbus about possible alternatives to the MAX 10 order. To my knowledge no agreement has been reached," a person familiar with the



discussions said. Talks are at an early stage and there is no guarantee of a deal, the sources said. Airbus and United Airlines declined to comment. Kirby's previously unreported trip to Toulouse is the latest twist in a widening crisis engulfing Boeing as the planemaker seeks to reassure the public and regulators about production quality and safety while preventing key orders unravelling.

Girona reclaim 1st place in Spain with 1-0 win at Celta Vigo. Atletico Madrid beat Valencia

MADRID (Agencies): There's no easing off for Girona in the Spanish league. The Catalan club rebounded from a setback in the Copa del Rey by beating Celta Vigo 1-0 in the league on Sunday to extend their impressive run and return to the top of the standings. Cristian Portugues scored a first-half winner to move Girona a point ahead of Real Madrid, who won 2-1 at Las Palmas on Saturday. Madrid have played one game less than Girona. "This is a long-distance race," Girona coach Michel Sanchez said. "We are



in a very nice position and we want to continue this run." Girona were coming off a 3-2 loss at Mallorca in the Copa del Rey, a result that kept them from reaching the tournament's semi-

finals for the first time and ended their 17-match unbeaten run in all competitions. The team's only other loss this season came against Madrid at home in the league in September. Girona have 17 wins in 22 league matches, and the competition's best attack with 52 goals. No other team has scored more than 45. Michel's team have won six of its last eight league games, but they have a tough stretch ahead with matches against sixth-place Real Sociedad, second-place Madrid and fifth-place Athletic Bilbao.

Egypt knocked out of AFCON by DR Congo after penalty shootout

SAN-PÉDRO (Agencies): Record seven-time champions Egypt, lacking injured talisman Mohamed Salah, were knocked out of the Africa Cup of Nations on Sunday after losing a penalty shootout 8-7 against DR Congo. Goalkeeper Lionel Mipasi converted the winning spot-kick in San-Pedro after fellow shot-stopper Mohamed Abou Gabal had seen his kick strike the bar and fly over. A tense last-16 clash finished 1-1 after extra time with Meschack Elia scoring on 37 minutes for DR Congo and Mostafa Mohamed equalising in first-half added time from a penalty. Liv-



erpool star Salah was injured in a group match against Ghana and returned to his club, who said he would probably only be able to return to the tournament if Egypt reached the final. DR Congo will face Guinea, last-gasp 1-0 winners over Equatorial Guinea earlier on Sun-

day, next Friday in Abidjan for a place in the semifinals. Egypt and DR Congo may between them have won nine of the previous 33 Cup of Nations tournaments, but neither country managed even one victory in the group stage in the Ivory Coast this month. They finished runners-up to Cape Verde and Morocco respectively in mini-leagues with identical records of three draws and three points. Where they differed was in the number of goals scored with Egypt netting six times, including three from France-based Mohamed, and DR Congo only twice.

Promising young cricketer Wasim Akram Junior meets Pakistan legend and namesake at ILT20

LONDON (Agencies): Wasim Akram Junior, a promising young cricketer living in the UAE, got to meet his namesake and idol this weekend: Pakistan bowling legend Wasim Akram. Akram Junior, who plays for the International League T20 Thunderbolts in the league's development tournament, recently bowled his way to figures of 6 for 21 and lapped up the opportunity to take advice from one of the game's greatest ever pace bowlers. "This is the first time I have met him. It was so great to meet the legend. I have been following him and his bowling for many years



so that I can learn and become a good bowler, by God's grace. I have met him now, and I will try my best to emulate him in whatever way I can," he said. "This opportunity has come to me now, here in the UAE, and I will grab it with

both hands. I will try to learn as much as I can from him. "Even 10 minutes spent with him is equivalent to a decade for me because I can learn a lot in that small amount of time and further work on it, and that will eventually be very beneficial for me as cricketer." The 28-year-old was named after the Pakistani cricketing icon by his father: "My father is a very big fan of Wasim Akram, and when I was born he named me after him. And as I grew up, I also started to look up to him and took after him, bowling left-arm pace and batting as a left-hander too," Akram Junior said.

Ten Hag says Rashford's absence an internal matter

LONDON (Agencies): Manchester United manager Erik ten Hag said Marcus Rashford's absence for their FA Cup fourth round fixture against Newport County was an "internal matter" after the Premier League club said the forward "was not well enough" to be in the squad. United said in a statement before their 4-2



win that the 26-year-old England international had "stayed at Car-

lington to train as he recovers". "He reported ill and the rest is an internal matter," ten Hag said yesterday. "It is an internal matter. As I said, we will deal with it. I will deal with it." Rashford, United's Player of the Year in the last campaign, has four goals and six assists in all competitions this season.

Ex-NHL player charged over alleged 2018 gang rape

MONTREAL (Agencies): Canadian authorities investigating a claim that eight athletes committed sexual assault as a group in 2018 have filed charges against former National Hockey League (NHL) player Alex Formenton, his lawyers said yesterday. The new charges are the latest in a major scandal related to the claim, first revealed in 2022, which has since seen resignations of the Canadian hockey federation's leadership and a temporary suspension of its public funds. Police in London, Ontario, "have charged several players, including Alex Formenton, in connection with an ac-

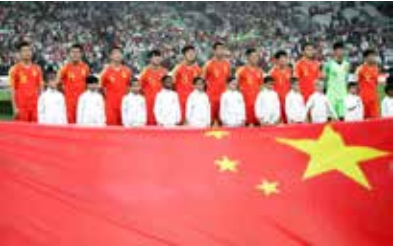


cusation made in 2018", his lawyers said in a statement carried by several Canadian media. It did not divulge the others named in the suit. Formenton, who currently plays professional hockey in Switzerland, was previously with

the NHL's Ottawa Senators. The police department refused to comment when contacted by AFP yesterday, but have scheduled a press conference on the case for Feb 5. In May 2022, Hockey Canada was rocked by press revelations accusing it of trying to cover up an alleged gang rape case involving eight players on the 2018 national junior team. A young woman, who remained anonymous in court documents, claimed to have been sexually assaulted at a London hotel in southwestern Ontario after a Hockey Canada gala in June 2018.

Former Chinese football head to stand trial for bribery

BEIJING (Agencies): The former head of China's top sporting body Chen Xuyuan is to stand trial for bribery on Monday, Beijing's state media said, as an anti-corruption drive sweeps up once-major players in the sport. Chen - who as president of the China Football Association (CFA) once promised to turn a page on the corruption scandals that have plagued the sport - was placed under investigation last February for "serious violations of discipline



and the law". Chen was indicted in September for corruption, confessing in the TV documentary to having ac-

cepted large sums from those wishing to get in his good graces. This month he appeared in a televised documentary in which former Chinese national football team coach Li Tie said he paid Chen two million yuan (US\$278,600) in bribes to secure the top job. "Fans can accept the fact that the state of Chinese football is bad," Chen said. "But they cannot forgive corruption," he said. "I would like to deeply apologise to all Chinese fans."

India vs England: KL Rahul and Ravindra Jadeja to miss second Test

India all-rounder Ravindra Jadeja and batter KL Rahul have been ruled out of the second Test against England, adding to the hosts' problems. Jadeja suffered a hamstring injury and Rahul a quadriceps issue during England's 28-run win in the first Test. India are already without star batter Virat Kohli, pace bowler Mohammed Shami and wicketkeeper Rishabh Pant. Sarfaraz Khan, Sourabh Kumar and Washington Sundar have been added to the squad for Friday's second Test. Uncapped

Sarfaraz, 26, is a middle-order batter with a first-class batting average of 69.85, the fourth-highest of all-time. Spin-bowling all-rounder Sundar, 24, has played four Tests, including three on England's last tour here, a 3-1 defeat in 2021. He made his debut in India's famous win against Australia in Brisbane earlier that year. Kumar is a 30-year-old left-arm spinner, with almost 300 wickets in first-class cricket. Former captain Kohli withdrew from the first two Tests in Hyderabad and Visakhapatnam for personal reasons.

Pant is a long-term absentee following a road accident, while Shami has a heel injury. India already had much to ponder after letting England overturn a 190-run first-innings deficit to pull off one of their greatest ever overseas wins. Left-arm wrist-spinner Kuldeep Yadav now seems set to play in Visakhapatnam, while uncapped batter Rajat Patidar, who scored two centuries in two matches against England Lions earlier this month, was already in the squad and could come in for Rahul.

Nelly Korda rallies to win hometown event for 9th LPGA Tour title, beating Lydia Ko in playoff

FLORIDA (Agencies): Nelly Korda rallied to win her hometown LPGA Drive On Championship and delay Lydia Ko's LPGA Hall of Fame entry, outlasting the New Zealander on the second hole of a playoff Sunday after overcoming a three-stroke deficit with an eagle-birdie finish. In calmer conditions after wind gusts to 30 mph at Bradenton Country Club, Korda won with a 3-foot par putt on the par-4 18th after Ko's 4-footer caught the lip and spun out. "I seem to always make it very dramatic and interesting," Korda said. "So, there is no better feeling than to do it in front of a home crowd. What a day!" Ko won the



season-opening Tournament of Champions last week at home in Orlando for her 20th tour victory to move within a point of qualifying for the Hall of Fame. "It's kind of like, 'What can you do?'" Ko said. "We played our hearts out until the very end and we put ourselves into the playoff. I tried my best out there."

Kansas City Chiefs stun top-seeded Baltimore Ravens to reach Super Bowl



LOS ANGELES (Agencies): The reigning champion Kansas City Chiefs upset the top-seeded Baltimore Ravens 17-10 to reach the Super Bowl for the fourth time in five years on Sunday. A superb defensive performance from the Chiefs stifled Ravens quarterback Lamar Jackson as Baltimore's hopes of returning to

next month's NFL showpiece ended in disappointment. Chiefs quarterback Patrick Mahomes meanwhile marshalled a clinical offensive performance, throwing for one touchdown and 241 yards with no interceptions to leave Kansas City within sight of a third Super Bowl title since 2020. "It's been a heck of a year, we've been underdogs for the last few games but we never feel like underdogs," Mahomes said after the AFC Championship victory. "We've got a lot of guys on this team that know how to win when playoffs come around. I knew we were gonna make it happen and now we're in the Super Bowl."

Ilia Malinin lands quad axel while winning second straight US figure skating title

LOS ANGELES (Agencies): Ilia Malinin established such a big lead after his peerless short program at the US Figure Skating Championships that the phenom's free skate Sunday was less a competition and more a coronation. Even though kings sometimes fall down. After starting his program with a textbook quad axel - a jump only Malinin has landed in competition - he doubled a planned quad loop, fell on a quad lutz and doubled another planned quad. But even with those miscues, the 19-year-old was still nearly 30 points better than the rest of the competition, cruising to his second consecutive national championship. "Even though it wasn't what I wished for," he said, "it was a fun experience. I enjoyed having the crowd with me every step." Malinin finished with 294.35 points, well below the world-leading score of 314.66 points he had at the Grand Prix Final in December. But it was well ahead of Jason Brown in sec-



ond with 264.50 points, while Camden Pulkinen soared from fifth after his short program into the bronze-medal position with 262.33 points. Malinin had been bothered coming into nationals by a boot problem, and he resorted to wearing an old pair that he used at the Grand Prix Final. And with that issue still in the back of his mind, he wasn't sure whether he would try the quad axel. He did. And he landed it in spectacular fashion. The opening pass to his free skate, set to music from the HBO hit series "Succession," had a base value of 12.5 points, but it was so well done that he scored more than 16 points on that element alone.

DAILY HOROSCOPE: JANUARY 30, 2023



simple shift in point of view. Take the time to get all the info you need before making decisions.

- **VIRGO**: Your intellect is all riled up today, and you might find that you're much better able to absorb new info and concepts. Education is a snap for you, but so is research and investigation.

- **LIBRA**: Work and financial issues are all on the table right now and you need to deal with them even if you're exhausted. Your business acumen is actually starting to peak, so get ready to go for it!

- **SCORPIO**: Life is unusually intense today, even for you. Emotions run hot, never cold, and that could mean big romance or a big fight. The good news is that you end up just where you need to be.

- **SAGITTARIUS**: You need to let your dreams sort out your problems. Even if you don't remember them, you can feel confident that you're working it all out when you see things start to improve in a few days.

- **CAPRICORN**: You should be able to wrangle your friends into some much more interesting configuration today. Most of them are more willing to follow orders, and your ideas are as good as they come.

- **ACQUARIUS**: Work and career issues pop up, but you can deal with them. If you're looking for something new or supplemental, you're in the right place at the right time. Step up and make your desires known.

- **PISCES**: Let others have their way today. It's not so bad, and you should rack up a few favors you can call in later. You can see that their desires are kind of petty, but you don't need to say anything.

Don't penalize humanitarian workers – UN secretary-general to West

NEW YORK (Agencies): UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has called on Western nations not to penalize relief workers after the US and several other major donors suspended funding for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). The official also promised to hold accountable any employee shown to be involved in terrorist activities. Earlier this month, Israel provided its Western allies with what it described as evidence proving that at least 12 UNRWA staff had taken part in the deadly October 7 Hamas incursion into Israeli territory. The news site Axios quoted an anonymous senior Israeli official as saying that "this was strong and corroborated

intelligence," which included captured Palestinian militants' confessions. In a statement released on Sunday, Guterres wrote that despite the seriousness of the allegations, "the tens of thousands of men and women who work for UNRWA... should not be penalized." He noted that 2 million civilians in Gaza depend on the aid provided by the agency to survive. He urged the donor nations "that have suspended their contributions to, at least, guarantee the continuity of UNRWA's operations." Guterres pointed out that the UN's Office of Internal Oversight Services had launched an investigation into the claims. He added that "any UN employee involved in acts of terror will be held accountable, including through

criminal prosecution." According to the statement, UNRWA's commissioner-general, Philippe Lazzarini, had immediately terminated nine staff members suspected of terrorist activity, while another one had died. The UN secretary-general said that the identities of the two other staff members are still being clarified. On Friday, the US Department of State announced that it had "temporarily paused additional funding for UNRWA while we review these allegations." Several other nations, including the UK, Canada, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Switzerland, Finland, and Australia, followed suit soon after. According to UNRWA's website, Washington was its biggest contributor in 2022.

Debt could destroy US economy – JP Morgan boss



NEW YORK (Agencies): The US economy is heading towards disaster as the vast national debt continues to mount, JPMorgan CEO Jamie Dimon said in an interview with Fox News earlier this week. According to the chief executive of the nation's largest bank, the situation urgently needs to be tackled by the government before it causes a major economic crisis. "It is a cliff, we see the cliff," Dimon said. "It's about 10 years out, we're going 60 miles an hour [toward it]." The top executive agreed with the view of former House Speaker Paul Ryan, who has called the snowballing debt "the most predictable crisis we've ever had." The warnings were issued by Ryan and Dimon during a panel discussion at the Bipartisan Policy Center on Friday. US government federal debt topped \$34 trillion for the first time in history at the end of December. It now amounts to about \$102,000 for an average American family of three. In 2023 alone, it grew by more than \$4 trillion. US total public debt is roughly equivalent to the economies of China, Germany, Japan, India, and the UK combined, as pointed out by the Peter G. Peterson Foundation, a nonpartisan fiscal policy group in New York. Earlier this week, US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen said that the absolute level of US public debt looks like "a scary number."

Ukraine wants retired British warships – navy chief

KYIV (Agencies): Kiev would be happy to receive two British Navy warships that London is reportedly about to decommission, Ukrainian Vice Admiral Aleksey Neizhpapa has told Sky News. Earlier this month, The Telegraph claimed that the HMS Westminster and HMS Argyll would be retired later this year, amid struggles to recruit enough sailors to operate the vessels. In mid-December, the UK's Ministry of Defence announced plans to provide Kiev with two mine-clearing ships as part of a new maritime coalition, which also involves Norway. However, the vessels have yet to reach Ukrainian shores, after Türkiye refused to let them pass through the Bosphorus and Dardanelles straits, which connect the Black Sea with the Mediterranean. When asked whether Ukraine would be interested in London's two Type 23 frigates during an



Sky interview on Saturday, Neizhpapa said: "Of course, the [Ukrainian] Navy needs warships... if such a decision is taken concerning the possibility of handing over two frigates to the Navy, we will be very happy." Earlier this month, The Telegraph quoted an anonymous defense source as explaining the need to retire HMS Westminster and HMS Argyll as follows: "We will have to take manpower from one area of the Navy in order to put [it] into a new area of the force."

Royal Navy 'scandal' sees UK ships unable to strike Houthis in Yemen

LONDON (Agencies): UK Royal Navy vessels are unable to attack Houthi positions in Yemen because they lack the necessary missiles, it has been revealed, in what one former defense chief called a "scandal." Britain has joined America in conducting operations against the Houthis in a bid to halt attacks on commercial shipping in the Red Sea, but the US Navy has had to carry out the majority of strikes on the Yemeni mainland, the Daily Telegraph reported. A UK defense source told the newspaper that HMS Diamond, the Royal Navy destroyer stationed in the Red Sea, lacks "the capability to fire to land targets," meaning the UK's sole source of offensive capability comes from Royal Air Force jets stationed at RAF Akrotiri in Cyprus, around 1,500 miles away. HMS Diamond, the source said, has instead been involved

in downing "Houthi drones targeting shipping in the Red Sea," with the only functioning weapons systems on UK destroyers being fixed artillery guns. US Navy destroyers, meanwhile, have the capacity to fire Tomahawk guided missiles, with a range of 1,500 miles. A former senior defense chief told the Daily Telegraph: "It's clearly a scandal and completely unsatisfactory. This is what happens when the Royal Navy is forced to make crucial decisions which can affect capability. "The UK is now having to fly RAF jets thousands of miles to do the job of what a surface-to-surface missile can do." Admiral Sir Tony Radakin, head of the UK Armed Forces, warned the government of the need to "speed up our acquisition processes" for "land attack missile systems" on British vessels five years ago when he was head of the Royal Navy.

Nuclear power generation to hit all-time high – IEA

GENEVA (Agencies): Global nuclear power generation is set to reach an all-time high in 2025 as more and more countries turn to the technology as part of plans to reduce emissions, according to the latest forecast from the International Energy Agency (IEA). Nuclear generation is in the midst of a resurgence and is expected to rise by nearly 3% annually on average through 2026, the IEA forecasts. The growth will be driven primarily by new plants in China and India, although South Korea and Europe are also set to see new nuclear facilities come online, according to the agency. France is expected to increase its nuclear power output after maintenance of its



facilities is completed, while Japan is on course to restart some of its nuclear power plants. The UK, Sweden, and Switzerland are also among the countries that are on track to ramp up domestic nuclear power generation by extending the operating lives of existing plants and building new ones in a bid to boost energy security as electricity demand soars.

US could delay arms deliveries to Israel – NBC



WASHINGTON (Agencies): The White House is considering whether to delay shipments of offensive weapons to Israel, in order to compel the Jewish state to scale back its military operation in Gaza, NBC News reported on Sunday. According to the report, Israel has asked the US to send additional aid, including powerful aerial bombs and air defenses. NBC News cited three current and one former US

official as saying the US is "considering slowing or pausing the deliveries in the hope that doing so will prod the Israelis to take action, such as opening humanitarian corridors to provide more aid to Palestinian civilians." The deliveries of 155 mm artillery rounds and equipment that converts 'dumb bombs' into precision-guided munitions is reportedly under review by the Pentagon. Officials were quoted as saying that "no decisions have been made" on the matter, and that the US "is likely to continue to provide other conversion kits that make Israeli munitions more precise." The officials added that the White House is "not likely to slow the delivery of air defenses," but "could possibly withhold or delay" offensive weapons.

Biden May Order Direct Strike on Iranian Officials After Drone Attack Against US' Jordan Base



WASHINGTON (Agencies): A deadly drone strike on a US base near the Jordanian-Syrian border could lead to a stronger response from Washington than it has so far since the October 7 Hamas attack on Israel, Bloomberg quoted unnamed sources as saying. "Regardless of the outcome, the [potential] attack presents [President Joe] Biden with a decision that will be one of the most consequential of his presidency", something that "could put the US into direct confrontation with the leadership in Tehran," Bloomberg reported. This comes after Biden pledged that "we [the US] shall respond" to Monday's drone attack on Tower 22, an American military outpost in northeastern Jordan, which killed three US soldiers and wounded 30 others. "Have no doubt — we will hold all those responsible to account at a time and in a manner our choosing," the US president added as Iranian militia group known as the Islamic Resistance in Iraq claimed responsibility for the attack.

Indian conglomerate to manufacture helicopters with Airbus



NEW DELHI (Agencies): Tata Group, one of India's largest conglomerates, will join forces with France's Airbus to produce civilian helicopters, New Delhi's top diplomat stated on Friday during French President Emmanuel Macron's visit. Foreign Secretary Vinay Kwatra told reporters that the two companies had signed a deal for the production of H125 helicopters with "a significant indigenous and localisation component." The firms are already cooperating on building C-295 transport aircraft in Gujarat, Prime Minister Narendra Modi's home state. Airbus, also in a statement on Friday, noted that Tata Group will establish a Final Assembly Line (FAL) for H125 helicopters in India, which will take two years to set up. Deliveries will start in 2026. The company added that the aircraft could be exported to other countries near India. The manufacturing location has yet to be decided by the two sides. As well as being a major civil aviation exporter to India, France is also the country's second-largest arms supplier after Russia, with New Delhi's Air Force depending on French fighter jets for several decades.

This Newspaper has been digitally printed at



Khyber Prints

- Instant Digital Printing Solutions -
First Floor, Town Heights, Old Bara Road,
University Town - Peshawar
Cell/Whatsapp: 0309-0055000
E-mail: khyberprints@gmail.com