



# Islamabad POST

Saturday, February 04, 2023

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**Over 40 states could boycott Paris Olympics, claims Polish Minister**

Detailed News On Page-06

**Turkish Envoy stresses need of connectivity**

Detailed News On Page-07



**City's Haaland eyes 95 year old record**

Detailed News On Page-06



## Briefs

**Nawaz took nation forward**

ABID RAZA

LAHORE: Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) Senior Vice-President Maryam Nawaz Sharif said on Friday, party supremo Nawaz Sharif always served the nation, as he stabilized the country when it was on the verge of chaos. While addressing the former members of the Punjab Assembly she said "during the last four years of dark dictatorship, brother was made fight against brother. Imran Khan made the homes, friends and families fight each other. The decency and civility to speak was taken away," she lambasted. She said that the nation is sensible and well-informed and will definitely reject such a leader in the future. The party has given her the responsibility which, alongside the nation, she will use to make the country prosper.

**Will contest elections on PML-N ticket**

ONLINE

ISLAMABAD: Former Prime Minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi on Friday clarified he will contest future elections on his party PML-N's ticket, local media reported. Responding to the news of his differences with party leadership, the PML-N's former central vice president said he would always remain a worker of the ruling PML-N party, despite resigning from the party office. Khaqan has recently resigned as PML-N's senior vice president, citing his reason of "maximizing working room for newly appointed Central Vice President - Maryam Nawaz Sharif". Media however has constantly been reporting that Khaqan resigned because of his differences with party leadership.

## Holiday Notice

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

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US turns up the heat on Middle East allies - Page 08

## Peshawar tragedy

# PM calls upon nation to shun differences

**Shehbaz slams PTI govt for squandering funds allocated for security; vows to eliminate terror outfits, facilitators**

SHAMIM SHAHID

PESHAWAR: Following the horrific suicide bombing at a mosque in Peshawar, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif called on the nation to shun its differences and fight the scourge of terrorism. The PM made the appeal while chairing an apex committee meeting at the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Governor House in Peshawar. The meeting was being attended by the chief of army staff, chief ministers of all provinces and other senior officials. Addressing the meeting, PM Shehbaz said that the meeting was called to deliberate on terrorism and find solutions to the scourge of terrorism. "On Monday, a ghastly suicide attack martyred over 100 people and we are here to show solidarity with the families of those affected by the attack," said the premier. He added that the attack was "very unfortunate" but also noted that the attacker reached the mosque after passing through the check post in Police Lines. "After APS, this was the most distraught incident that has taken place in the city. The nation is asking that after the elimination of terrorism a few years ago how come did the incident take place in Peshawar?" said PM Shehbaz. The premier noted that there has been a rise in terror incidents since the last several months in the province and condemned the social media claims on the attack.

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## Rupee plunges to a historic low

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: The rupee on Friday plunged to a historic low against the dollar after Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's said that the International Monetary Fund (IMF) is giving Pakistan "a tough time" - as the lender wants the government to do more on the economic front. "As we speak, an IMF delegation is in Islamabad [holding parleys on loan programme] and giving a very tough time to the finance minister and his team," the prime minister said while speaking at the Apex committee meeting in Peshawar, and termed the economic challenges "unimaginable". Following the PM's comments, the local currency depreciated further against the greenback in the interbank market. During intra-day trade, the rupee was changing hands at 279 against the dollar at 12:48pm, according to the Exchange Companies Association of Pakistan (ECAP), up from Rs271.35 a day earlier. Analysts have

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# COAS visits Peshawar Police lines; lauds bravery

**"We as a nation together will root out this menace of terrorism till enduring peace and Insha Allah we shall achieve this," COAS concluded**



DNA

RAWALPINDI: Chief of Army Staff (COAS) General Syed Asim Munir visited the Peshawar Police Lines blast site, ISPR said on Friday. COAS General Syed Asim Munir met with police officers and men. The army chief appreciated the bravery and contribution of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) police and law enforcement agencies (LEAs) in the war against terrorism.

General Munir said that the KP police is one of the bravest and has fought as a front-line force against terrorism. COAS also appreciated the high morale of KP police and LEAs and paid rich tribute to the martyrs of police who have laid down their lives for the defence of the motherland, Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) said in a statement. "We as a nation together will root out this menace of terrorism till enduring peace and Insha Allah we shall achieve this," COAS concluded.



PESHAWAR: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif chairs a meeting of the Apex Committee. Army Chief is also seen in the picture. - DNA

## Hina Khar arrives in Colombo



DNA

ISLAMABAD: Minister of state for Foreign Affairs, Ms. Hina Rabbani Khar has arrived in Colombo on a two days official visit. The MoS was received by Sri Lankan State Minister for Tourism, Ms. Diana Gamage, Pakistan's High Commissioner to Sri Lanka, Maj. Gen. (R) Umar Farooq Burki and officials of the High Commission. The MoS is visiting Sri Lanka to attend 75th Independence Day of Sri Lanka as a Guest of Honour. In addition to attending the Independence Day events, she will call on the Sri Lankan leadership and hold a meeting with the Foreign Minister of Sri Lanka.

## Security forces kill two terrorists

DNA

RAWALPINDI: Two terrorists were gunned down by the security forces in an exchange fire in the general area Esham of North Waziristan District, said the military's media wing on Friday. In a statement, the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) said that weapons and ammunition were also recovered from the killed terrorists. It added that the militants were actively involved in terrorist activities against security forces. "The incident re-vindicates Pakistan Army's resolve to have zero tolerance for terrorism in Pakistan and reaffirms its determination to take on any and all entities that resort to violence," said the ISPR.

Continued on Page 06

## PTI chairman says

# Govt responsible for country's woes

**Imran Khan decides will not contest by-polls on vacant 33 NA seats**

SHUJAAT HAMZA

ISLAMABAD: Dressing down the imported Prime Minister, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) and he would not recognise this imported government installed through conspiracy and horse-trading, destroying the economy and democracy with brazen fascism. In a statement on Friday, PTI Chairman criticized Shehbaz Sharif for ruining economy and resurging terrorism in the country during the last ten months. He said: "I don't recognise this Imported government installed through conspiracy and horse trading." "How can Shehbaz Sharif be so shameless given his government's destruction in 10 months of our economy and democracy with brazen fascism, end of fundamental rights and rule of law; and allowing terrorism to spread under his watch?" he asked. Imran Khan raised question as how the PTI, its allies and journalists have suffered during the incumbent government's tenure, as journalist Arshad Sharif was murdered, an assassination attempt was made on Imran himself, besides detaining and torturing Shahbaz Gill, Azam Swati, Fawad Chaudhry, Dr. Shireen Mazari and Imran Riaz Khan among others.

## Imran rejects APC invite: Asad

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Secretary General Asad Umar shared on Friday that his party chief Imran Khan will skip the federal government's all-parties conference (APC) scheduled for February 7. The statement of the PTI leader came as Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif confirmed the invitation he had extended to the PTI chief at an apex committee meeting in Peshawar. During the apex committee meeting in Peshawar, PM Shehbaz without naming the PTI chief, said: "I have also invited the person who does not want to even shake hands with me," adding, "all parties are invited to APC and Apex committee meetings and I hope that it will not be rejected". "We need to fight the menace of terrorism by setting our differences aside

Continued on Page 06

# EU vows Ukraine support but not quick accession

**In a show of support, top EU leaders met Zelensky in Kyiv**

DNA

KYIV: The EU on Friday pledged to support Ukraine "every step of the way" in its quest for bloc membership as top officials gathered in Kyiv for a summit to discuss the extension of military and humanitarian assistance, as well as an eventual post-war reconstruction programme. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky, host of the Kyiv summit, is pressing the EU for speedy membership, as Ukraine battles to defeat the Russian invasion. The bloc granted candidate status to Ukraine last June, but the path to full membership is normally long and arduous. EU chief Charles Michel announced his arrival in the Ukrainian capital as air raid sirens sounded, vowing that there will be "no

let up in our resolve. "We will also support you every step of the way on your journey to the EU," Michel tweeted. The trading bloc's chief Ursula von der Leyen and the EU's most senior diplomat, Josep Borrell, are also in Kyiv for the summit. Zelensky said following talks with von der Leyen on Thursday that Ukraine "deserves to start negotiations on EU membership this year. "Only together can a strong Ukraine and a strong European Union protect the life we value." Von der Leyen said the EU intended to finalise new sanctions against Russia by 24 February, the first anniversary of the invasion. Russian leader Vladimir Putin insists Russia is weathering the storm of sanctions imposed by Ukraine's Western allies. He said his forces will continue to fight regardless of the penalties. But von der Leyen said that sanctions

were already "eroding" Russia's economy. She estimated that an oil price cap introduced in December was costing Moscow around 160 million euros every day. An EU ban on Russian oil products like diesel, gasoline and jet fuel, is set to come into effect on Sunday alongside a G7 price cap on these products. But the Kremlin warned Friday that the measures will destabilise global markets. "This will lead to a further imbalance of international energy markets, but we are taking measures to protect our interests against the risks associated," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters. Corruption is a key European concern. Ukraine has recently widened efforts to tackle graft with officials warning of an ongoing fight against an "internal enemy".

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## Nation united against terrorism

PESHAWAR: Minister of State for Poverty Alleviation and Social Safety Faisal Karim Kundli on Friday said the entire nation was united to defeat the menace of terrorism. Talking to media after inquiring about the health of the Police Lines blast victims at Lady Reading Hospital (LRH), Peshawar, he said the sacrifices of police martyrs and injured ones would not go waste. Faisal Kundli said that Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has announced Rs 2 million for the families of each martyr and Rs 0.5 million for each injured in the blast. He said Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah has also visited LRH and inquired after the health of the injured. He went around different wards and met with injured policemen. He directed the hospital administration to provide the best medical facilities to all victims. —APP

## CM urged to retrieve occupied Press Club building

ATTOCK: The journalistic fraternity of Attock urged upon the Caretaker Chief Minister Punjab Mohsin Naqvi being their fellow journalist to retrieve the occupied building of Attock Press Club and equipment worth rupees millions from the clutches of the district management Attock enabling them to express their solidarity with their Kashmiri brothers on Sunday February 05, 2023 as the journalist community have tried their best from pillar to post for want of their own officially allocated building. The senior journalist and patron in chief of the Attock Press Club (Reg) Syed Raza Naqvi in his appeal preferred to the Chief Minister Punjab and others has disclosed the ordeal of lethargic attitude of the district management Attock before the media here on Friday. He said that journalist community of Attock have also planned to join hands with their Kashmiri journalists on Kashmir Day to highlight their voice before the international forums through the Attock Press Club for the peaceful settlement of their right of self-determination. Unfortunately, the district administration has kept mum for their obvious reasons. —DNA

# Aseefa inaugurates 12th SRSO Sartyoon Sang Crafts exhibition

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: Bibi Aseefa Bhutto Zardari on Friday inaugurated the three day 12th SRSO Sartyoon Sang Crafts' exhibition at Ocean Mall Clifton, here today. On the occasion Sindh Minister for Health, Dr. Azra Fazal Pechuho, Minister for Local Government, Syed Nasir Hussain Shah, owner of ocean Mall, Mr. Tariq Rafi, Chief Executive Officer (CEO) SRSO, Muhammad Dittal Kalhoro, Provincial Secretary, Minority Affairs Muhammad Abbas Bolach, Member BoD Aazar Ayaz, Member BoD Ghulam Sarwar Khero, Rural Women Artisans and others were present. The three-day exhibition is organized by the Sindh Rural Support Organization (SRSO) with collaboration of Sindh government and its partners displaying work of around thousands of women artisans of Sindh with an aim to provide market linkages to rural women and artisans, especially after the flood-disaster. Bibi Aseefa Bhutto Zardari appreciated the endeavours of Sindh Rural Support Organizations for poor and



destitute communities and voiced her expectation of the continuation of such support for rural communities of Sindh. She met and purchased wares from artisan women who came from flood-disaster areas and appreciated their work and craftsmanship despite dealing with the calamitous situation. The first day of the exhibition received an overwhelming response

from local and international visitors. Appreciating the exhibition, Bibi Aseefa Bhutto Zardari said arranging such an activity to promote artisans, handicrafts and Sindh's culture was a great effort being made by the SRSO. The Craft Exhibition is being organized by SRSO for the last eleven years with the motive to support ethical fashion and to promote crafts of some of the

most marginalised women in the province. The event also attracted large numbers of women residents of Clifton and nearby areas. The exhibition showcases a wide array of Sindh's handicrafts made by rural women including home textiles, basketry, jewelry, dresses, dupattas and shawls, embellished with traditional embroidery and cutwork. These events are

aimed at boosting local and traditional crafts and processes, and have created a foundation and process for connecting Business Development Groups (BDGs) and artisans to the high end market of Karachi. This is purely an effort to develop market opportunities for rural women especially those from extremely remote villages of northern Sindh with the profit being earned

from these exhibitions transferred to the artisans. Chief Executive Officer (CEO), SRSO, Muhammad Dittal Kalhoro told that the event's objective was to facilitate better incomes for flood affected women artisans of rural Sindh. "In this connection, SRSO trained more than 10,000 women from the most under developed regions including Jacobabad, Kandhkot-Kashmore, Shikarpur, Ghotki, Kambar-Shahdadkot, Khairpur, Sukkur and other districts that to help these women gain maximum monetary benefit from their skills, they have incorporated urban trends into their work." SRSO has organized the 12th Sartyoon Sang exhibition with the support of Sindh Government to showcase the work of rural artisans from flood-affected areas, with 95 Business Development Groups representing 1572 artisans of 12 districts, displaying and marketing their hand-made crafts including Plazo, Shalwar, Garara, Trouser, Shawl, Dupatta, Stoles, Wascot, date Leaf, Wheat Straw, Khussa, Moora, Straw and Rillisi, bed sheets and cushions.

## 54 arrested in crackdown against profiteers

PESHAWAR: The district administration on Friday arrested 54 shopkeepers from various localities during a crackdown against profiteers. On the directives of Deputy Commissioner (DC) Peshawar, Shafiqullah Khan, the officers of district administration conducted raids in Shuaba Bazaar, Gulbahar, Nishtarabad, Kohat Road, Hayatabad, University Road and other localities, and arrested 54 shopkeepers over profiteering, non-display of official price list and selling under-weight roti. The arrested shopkeepers include fruit & vegetable vendors, bakers, butchers, milkmen, grocers and others. The DC has directed all relevant officers of the district administration to conduct consecutive surprise visits of markets, to ensure the implementation of the official price list. —APP

## LHC gives opportunity to governor for filing reply to PTI plea

LAHORE: The Lahore High Court (LHC) on Friday gave an opportunity to the Punjab governor for filing a reply within five days to a petition seeking directions for announcement of a date for holding elections in the province. Justice Jawad Hassan heard the petition filed by Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) through its General Secretary Asad Umar. As the proceedings started, the court addressed the Election Commission of Pakistan's (ECP) counsel and questioned when the elections would be held. The counsel replied that the ECP was ready for elections, adding that a development also took place in this regard, a day earlier, and the governor had replied to the letter of the commission. He submitted that the governor had written that the ECP should consult all stakeholders. The court observed "it had been written in the constitution that elections would be held within 90 days", adding that there were a number of judgments of superior courts on the issue as well. To which, a federal law officer submitted that there was still plenty of time in completion of the 90 days period, adding that no one was saying that the elections would not be held. But, the court observed that the ECP should have given a date for holding the elections, adding that it was written in the constitution. To a court query, the PTI opposed the suggestion of formation of a full bench for hearing the matter. —APP

## Ashrafi appeals all stakeholders to make APC a success story

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister's Special Representative for Interfaith Harmony and Middle East Hafiz Muhammad Tahir Mehmood Ashrafi Friday appealed all stakeholders to make All Parties Conference (APC) a success story keeping in view the current circumstance after the Peshawar tragedy in the country. He, in a video message, said all political and religious leadership should grab this opportunity offered by the Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif to cope with the current challenges including the scourge of terrorism being faced by the country. Ashrafi who is also

the chairman of Pakistan Ulema Council urged Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan to join this unique platform in larger interest of the country on behalf of his organization and the Ulema and Mashaykh of other schools of thought. He emphasized the need to be united like the Army Public Schools (APS) barbaric incident and devise a collective strategy in a bid to make National Action Plan more vibrant and result-oriented across the country. He expressed the hope that the political and religious leadership would play their constructive role with a unanimous stance of

eliminating terrorism and uplifting the economic condition of the country. Ashrafi went to say that we must stand by Pakistan Army, national security institutions and law enforcement agencies to strengthen their hands and dismantle the nefarious designs of enemies intending to create division and destabilize the country. Terming APC a great initiative of the prime minister, he said it was need of the hour and prayed for the unity among all political and religious leadership so that they could get the country out of prevailing crisis and recent wave of terrorism. —APP

## IIOJK women delegation calls on AJK PM

MUZAFFARABAD: Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) Prime Minister Sardar Tanvir Ilyas Khan has said that the day was not far when people of Kashmir would achieve their cherished goal of freedom from India's illegal and forcible occupation. He said this while talking to a Kashmiri delegation at his residence on Friday. Pertinently, the delegation comprised of elderly women from Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu & Kashmir (IIOJK) visited the PM's residence on the latter's invitation. The visiting delegates on the occasion presented Kashmiri Shawl, Pheran (Kashmiri cloak) and Kangri (Fire-pot) as a gift to the prime minister. Sardar Tanvir on the occasion praised Kashmiris' resilience in times of repression and said, "We are proud of our brethren in IIOJK who stand like a rock against India despite facing multiple challenges".

## NA passes Pakistan Maritime Zone Bill 2021

The amendments were moved by Minister for Parliamentary Affairs Murtaza Javed Abbasi in the House

ISLAMABAD: The National Assembly on Friday passed the Pakistan Maritime Zones Bill, 2021 as reported by the Standing Committee. Parliamentary Secretary for Defence Ali Zahid on behalf of Minister for Defence Khawaja Muhammad Asif moved the bill in the House. The Statement of Objects and Reasons of the bill says, Territorial Water Maritime Zone (TWMZ) Act, 1976, as amended in 1997, is currently in force. However, a process of its complete revision was initiated soon after the ratification of the United Nations Convention on Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) by Pakistan in February, 1997. Revision to the TWMZ Act, 1976 has been made keeping in mind the provision of national/international maritime and customary laws warranting elaboration of internal waters, rights of innocent passage, safety zones, offshore installations, pollution, dumping, jurisdiction on foreign ships, foreign warships, visit and search, piracy, armed robbery against ships, arrest, trial and punishment etc. The bill will enable Pakistan to deal with said matters in accordance with the national/international laws and asserts its rights, jurisdiction and sovereignty in sync with internationally accepted provisions. Meanwhile, two bills including the National Skills University Islamabad (Amendment) Bill, 2023, and the Quaid-i-Azam Foundation Bill, 2023 were introduced in the National Assembly. Bills were moved by Ministers Naveed Qamar and Murtaza Javed Abbasi respectively in the House. Moreover, the House also adopted amendments in the rules of procedure and conduct of business in the National Assembly 2007. —DNA

## UNEP head lauds Sherry's role in ecosystem restoration

KARACHI: Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations and Executive Director of United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), Inger Andersen on Friday led a delegation to meet Federal Minister for Climate Change, Senator Sherry Rehman and appreciated her role in ecosystem restoration. The federal minister and the UNEP Executive Director discussed climate change, rehabilitation and reconstruction of flood victims and other issues, a news release said. Senator Sherry Rehman thanked the UN delegation for visiting the flood-affected areas. The Minister also informed the UN delegation about the flood victims, the recovery and reconstruction process and the challenges faced by the government. On the occasion, Senator Sherry Rehman emphasised turn-



ing the Living Indus project into a practical reality. She also welcomed the announcement of the establishment of a permanent

office of the UNEP in Pakistan as a propitious step. She said, "Timely and proper transfer of grants is essential in the rehabilitation

process. Cooperation and partnership between the United Nations and the Government of Pakistan is indispensable to deal

with climate change." The UNEP Executive Director said that working with the government of Pakistan was her first priority. —APP

## Lingering Kashmir issue warrants global role

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The international community may hopefully be instrumental in resolving the Kashmir issue in near future, the Pakistani nation has been steadfastly supporting the Kashmiris for decades particularly after the illegal and unilateral revocation of the special status of Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu & Kashmir (IIOJK) in August 2019 by New Delhi. The unequivocal support for the Kashmiris at the critical juncture will definitely have an imprint for the ultimate resolution of the issue as the people of the held have undergone an unprecedented reign of terror and suppression in the wake of annexation of the held state which is aimed at altering the demography and turn-

ing the majority Muslim community into a minority. The Kashmir Solidarity Day, February 5, reminds the international community of a solemn pledge by the United Nations through its resolutions to give the right to self-determination to the Kashmiris through a plebiscite under the auspices of the world body. The Day's observance was a recognition of the everlasting ideological, geographical, cultural and social ties the people of Pakistan have with their Kashmiri brethren, who had been fighting for decades to liberate themselves from the tyrannical Indian rule. All Party Hurriyat Conference (APHC) General Secretary Sheikh Abdul Mateen said while talking to media on Friday. He said the lingering issue warranted the international community's

proactive role for its early resolution and the observance of Solidarity Day resonated that message and at the same time gave further momentum to the Kashmiris' freedom movement. The APHC leader said since the Indian forces had closed down the entire occupied valley, gagged the media and imprisoned the political leadership, the commemoration of such days exposed the Indian brutalities before the world. He said the Solidarity Day was not only observed within Pakistan but also across the world where its foreign missions held events and invited dignitaries to sensitize them about the plight of Kashmiris. The observance of the Day also helped highlight the message of Kashmiris in print and electronic media, he added. The APHC general secretary said the

Kashmiris had been braving the Indian suppression for the last seven decades and offering sacrifices, and the Pakistani nation by remembering the Day reminded the international community of the gravity of Kashmir issue. He said no peace would prevail in the region until the Kashmiris get their right of self-determination. The Kashmir issue was a flashpoint as Pakistan and India had already clashed on it. Being nuclear powers another war would be disastrous for the whole world, he added. APHC Press Secretary Intiaz Wani said despite the heinous crimes and oppressions committed by the Indian occupation forces in the IIOJK, Kashmiris would continue to show their love for Pakistan. "Pakistan and Kashmir are conjoined as

their history and religion are similar. The love of Kashmiris for Pakistan can be traced back to the partition as they stood against the Dogra Raj and made the liberated area part of their beloved country," he said. The Kashmiris took pride to bury their martyrs wrapped in the National Flag Pakistan, Wani added. He said the Indian media kept mum on the atrocities of the occupation forces in the IIOJK and at the same time carrying out a propaganda against Pakistan. "India will not succeed in subjugating the valiant Kashmiris, who will continue their struggle till their freedom." He, however, stressed that the anti-Pakistan propaganda in the wake of Kashmir issue must be countered through an effective media campaign.

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Feb 06 / New Zealand National Day

Feb 06 / Uganda Defece Forces Day

Feb 11 / DPR Korea National Day

Feb 16 / Lithuania National Day

Feb 18 / Gambia National Day

Feb 19 / Nepal National Democracy Day

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Feb 23 / Russian Federation National Army Day

Feb 23 / Tajikistan Armed Forces Day

Feb 25 / Kuwait National Day

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## Imprisonment of Kashmiri leadership

# Mushaal Mullick urges Pakistan to approach ICJ

MAHNOOR ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Mushaal Hussain Mullick, wife of Kashmiri Hurriyat leader Muhammad Yasin Malik incarcerated in Tihar jail in India on Friday urged the government of Pakistan to approach International Court of Justice for release of Kashmiri leaders imprisoned in various Indian jails and gross human rights abuses being committed by Indian occupation forces in Indian illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir. She was speaking at the opening ceremony of a one-day digital photographic and painting exhibition organized by the Directorate of Electronic Media and Publications (DEMP), a subsidiary of the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, marking Kashmir Solidarity Day at the Information Services Academy.

She said that in view of August 5, 2019 unilateral annexation of IIOJK and wilfully changing the demography of the occupied territory, the UN Security Council should adopt a new resolution and appoint a special envoy on Kashmir. Executive Director General Directorate of Electronic Media and Publications Dr Tariq Mehmood, APHC leader Abdul Hameed Lone, Director Films DEMP Asifur Rehman, Deputy Director Farina Mughal and other officials of the Ministry of Information and Broadcast-



ing attended the ceremony. Mushaal Mullick said that today's exhibition had highlighted the freedom movement in the best way as the picture makes the world aware of the reality. She said that India had turned IIOJK into an inferno where genocide of armless Kashmiri people was being committed by the occupational forces. She said the new generation should be apprised that India has been illegally occupying Kashmir and suppressing Kashmiris for 75 years. "There is a complete blackout in Occupied Kashmir and no one can stop India's terrorism

in the occupied territory", she remarked. She said that UN had taken notice of major conflicts in the world, it was but no action had been taken against India's state terrorism in IIOJK. Mushaal Hussain Mullick said that almost all top Hurriyat leadership in IIOJK was behind the bars. She said that great Hurriyat leader Ali Geelani was martyred and his mortal remains were desecrated, Arshaf Serahi was poisoned inside the jail. She said Asia Andrabi and Shabir Shah were facing hardships in jails despite being ill. About her consort Yasin Malik, she said

he has been kept in a death cell for the last four years. She said that Yasin Malik was given boiling water for ablution which burnt his arm. The Kashmiri leader said that the manner in which India has changed the demography of Occupied Kashmir, if attention was not paid, it will become mini-India in one year. She said that the most serious violations of human rights were taking place in IIOJK at the hands of Indian occupation forces. Moreover, she said the international community has observed terrorist activities of RSS which had made lives of

minorities miserable in India. Mashaal Hussain Malik said that minorities are being victimised in India and a recent BBC report about Gujarat has exposed Modi. About the media gag in IIOJK, she said that there were restrictions on journalists, cameramen, researchers, human rights activists and media houses but the international community was silent because of economic considerations. She said that the voice of 220 million Pakistanis including all segments of society was with the Kashmiris and "we should not get tired, we should fulfill

this duty honestly." APHC leader Abdul Hameed Lone said that he was grateful to the government of Pakistan and the Ministry of Information, which has been exposing the ugly face of India. He said Pakistanis and Kashmiris were one nation and February 5 Solidarity Day was its manifestation. He said that Kashmir Solidarity Day has been celebrated with the same enthusiasm for several decades. He said that the people of Occupied Kashmir are suffering today, India had been trying to change its demography.

## Opposition leader on knees after derogatory remarks

ISLAMABAD: Leader of the Opposition in Senate, Senator Shahzad Waseem on Friday was censured by the members of the treasury benches for passing derogatory remarks for the female members and others calling them to be ashamed for defending the government's alleged political victimization of opposition parties. The Leader of the Opposition while taking to the Upper House of the Parliament criticised the government for finding faults with the narrative and language of the opposition members under the garb of contempt and disrespect of institutions. Addressing the forum, Senator Shehzad Waseem alleged that the coalition government of the Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) was dragging the country's system towards a new decline. "Chaudhry Fawad's two daughters went to meet their father behind the bars instead of going to school that was really despicable for democracy. The daughters of Saifullah Khan Nyazee and Azam Swati should be queried for the humiliation they faced when police teams raided their bedrooms. In the very next moment, he accused that those senators and members of the upper house who defend this conduct of the government should be ashamed to support it as just. Soon afterwards the treasury benches raised ruckus on the opposition leader's harsh words for the government side.—DNA

# Prevailing challenges offer opportunity

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The experts at a seminar on Friday said the current challenges offered a chance to seriously re-examine Pakistan's economy for a concrete way forward to overcome the daunting challenges rising in the prevailing situation. This key message was delivered by eminent speakers at the seminar on 'Challenges for Pakistan's Economy and the Way Forward' organised by the Centre for Aerospace & Security Studies (CASS), a release received here said.

The speakers including former Chairman of Federal Board of Revenue Syed Mohammad Shabbar Zaidi, Pakistan Institute of Development Economics Vice Chancellor Dr Nadeem ul Haque; former Minister of State and Chairman Board of Investment Haroon Sharif, Director Economic Affairs and National Development, CASS Dr Usman W Chohan. The seminar was concluded by President CASS Air Marshal (R) Farhat Hussain Khan and moderated by Zahra Niazi, Research Assistant at CASS. Former Air Chief Marshal Mujahid Anwar Khan attended the seminar as the guest of honour. Discussing



the structural roots of the economic crisis in Pakistan, and why the country had not been able to address them, Syed Mohammad Shabbar Zaidi pointed out that the biggest issue was the high import bill and weak export base. He argued that labour was not only expensive and inefficient, absence of women in the labour force was also a major challenge. Given that the current rate of inflation was touching 25%, Zaidi warned that inflation could become uncontrollable if emergency measures, such as curtailing import bill, reducing energy bill by closing all businesses and shops by 6:30 pm, and cutting the administrative costs of the government, etc, were not

undertaken. Dr Nadeem ul Haque lamented that while the International Monetary Fund (IMF) was supposed to be a 'ladder of the last resort', for Pakistan, it had become its 'go-to first option' due to which it had availed 23 IMF programmes in the last 75 years. He urged that the government's strong footprint on the economy needed to be minimised since this had led to its over politicisation, and there was the need to agree on a sacrosanct 10-15 year national 'Charter of Economy' to ensure policy consistency. While sharing IMF's latest global economic outlook, Haroon Sharif informed that while Pakistan was not the only country feeling the pain of rising inflation and eco-

nommic slowdown, the question was how other countries were handling their economic crises. He added that states like Dubai and Qatar had international financial centres where local laws were not implemented rather, they had a separate set of laws. "Countries create corporate spaces with no government involvement which gives confidence to the private sector. We need to reduce the size of government, build trust with businesses and signal that we are serious about economic revival and moving on a path of progressive growth," he stressed. Highlighting the polycrisis engulfing emerging economies, Dr Usman W Chohan was of the view that even countries that did well during the Pandemic were struggling in the post-COVID era.

## 'Country needs all parties' help to ensure economic stability'

ISLAMABAD: In the wake of deep economic crisis being faced by the country, Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Ahsan Iqbal on Friday called upon all the politicians, irrespective of the party affiliation, to work as a team to come out of the crises. "Pakistan is passing through the worst economic crisis so, it is not the time to fight with each other but to work in collaboration to elevate the country among the world's top economies", he said while speaking as chief guest at the launching ceremony of British Council's report here. The minister also urged all stakeholders including the establishment, judiciary, and the politicians to put heads together to ensure sustainable socio-economic development of the country. Ahsan Iqbal said Pakistan has a huge proportion of young people who should be given the best socio-political-economic environment to ensure a strong and stable Pakistan in next decade or so. He said Pakistan is celebrating its 75th years of formulation, but still its economy is so weak that it seems helpless in front of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to get few billions of dollars of loans. "Corruption isn't the major reason behind our failure because we are as honest as is the rest of the world is and as corrupt as others are," he said adding that the main reason is disruption in the democratic system and policies. He said whatever the government system the state adopts, it must be ensured that there must be continuity of policies. Ahsan Iqbal said that in order to empower youth, the government has launched an internship programme for youth under which 60,000 young graduates from across the country would get paid internships.—APP

## Photography exhibition at the National Art Gallery

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan National Council of the Arts hosted a very important exhibition of paintings and photographs to commemorate the Kashmir Day on 3rd February till 5th February 2023 at the National Art Gallery from PNCA's permanent collection by legendary senior artists including Mansoor Rahi, Salima Hashmi, Qudus Mirza, Hajra Mansur, Jehanzeb Malik, Aftab Zafar, Abdul Rahim Abbasi, M. Arif Minhas, Ghulam Abbas Khaskheli, Ghulam Rasul, Sardar Muhammad, Afshar Malik etc. This particular exhibition is an amalgamation of portrayal of solitude and brotherhood by Pakistani artists for their fellow men. This exhibition consists of works entirely inspired by the freedom struggle of the people of Kashmir and the courage and dignity with which they have carried on their fight for their rights in face of a ruthless organized force unleashed on them.—DNA

# ISSI seminar highlights plight of Kashmiris

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The India Study Center of the Institute of Strategic Studies International (ISSI) on Friday organised a seminar to mark Kashmir Solidarity Day, where experts and participants demanded a solution to the Kashmir dispute in accordance with the resolutions of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC).

Special Assistant to the Prime Minister, Nawabzada Iftikhar Ahmed Khan Babar spoke on the occasion and stated that regardless of political affiliations, all political leaders in Pakistan have contributed to the Kashmir cause. He emphasised that Pakistan's efforts for the people of Kashmir were "not limited to a single day and have a history of seven centuries". Director of the India Study Center at ISSI, Dr Arshad Ali spoke about the long-standing issue of Kashmir on the Unit-

ed Nations' agenda and how the policies of Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi had resulted in Kashmiri Muslims becoming second-grade citizens. Director General of ISSI, Sohail Mahmood pointed out that the Kashmir issue is a scar on the conscience of the international community, as the right of self-determination for the people of Kashmir has been denied for 75 years. He expressed concern over the ban on internet in

the region and the repressive measures taken by Indian forces. Spokesperson of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Mumtaz Zahra Baluch reaffirmed Pakistan's support for the people of Kashmir and linked the issue with peace in South Asia. She stated that Pakistan has stood with the people of Kashmir for generations. Chairman of the World Forum for Peace and Justice, Ghulam Nabi Fai stated that according to inter-

national media, Kashmir has become a living nightmare for the people of Kashmir. He warned that Kashmir was on the "brink of genocide". Chairman of the Board of Governors, Ambassador Khalid Mahmood highlighted the severe violations of human rights being faced by the Kashmiris. He stressed that the Kashmir dispute must be resolved in accordance with the UNSC resolutions for the sake of peace in the region.



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## Briefs

## IRSA releases 63,700 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD: Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Friday released 63,700 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 50,300 cusecs.

According to the data released by IRSA, water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1491.96 feet and was 93.96 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 15,300 cusecs while outflow as 32,000 cusecs.

The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1130.80 feet, which was 80.80 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded 13,300 cusecs and 10,000 cusecs respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Gudu and Sukkur was recorded 28,700, 40,200, 29,800 and 9,600 cusecs respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 11,900 cusecs of water released at Nowshera and 400 cusecs released from River Chenab at Marala.—APP

## Police arrest 19 kite sellers, flyers; recover 2700 kites

RAWALPINDI: The Rawalpindi District Police conducted raids against kite sellers and flyers and managed to net 19 on recovery of 2,700 kites and 27 kite flying string rolls, said a police spokesman here on Friday. He informed police on the directives of City Police Officer, Rawalpindi Syed Shehzad Nadeem Bukhari continued the special crackdown against kite sellers and flyers and arrested 19. The Rawal Division police held 13 namely Asif, Zaman, Suleman, Haris, Abdullah, Moiz, Hamad, Tanveer, Faisal and others, and recovered 1,300 kites and 13 kites flying string rolls.

Meanwhile, Potohar Division police in their operations against kite flying ban violators arrested two, Sheraz and Tanveer, and recovered 200 kites and eight kite flying string rolls.

Saddar Division Police rounded up four violators identified as Shehraz, Yawar, Sheraz and Hamza with 1,200 kites and six string rolls. Divisional Superintendents of Police directed the police teams to accelerate operations against kite sellers and flyers.

Senior Superintendent of Police, Operations Rawalpindi said that strict action in accordance with the law was being taken against the kite flying ban violators and they were being sent behind the bars.—APP

## Weekly inflation up by 2.82 percent

ISLAMABAD: The weekly inflation, measured by Sensitive Price Indicator (SPI), witnessed an increase of 2.82 percent for the combined consumption group during the week ended on February 02, the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) reported on Friday.

The SPI for the week under review in the above-mentioned group was recorded at 227.79 points as compared to 221.54 points during the past week, according to PBS data. As compared to the corresponding week of last year, the SPI for the combined consumption group in the week under review witnessed an increase of 34.49 percent. The weekly SPI with the base year 2015-16 =100 is covering 17 urban centres and 51 essential items for all expenditure groups. The SPI for the lowest consumption group up to Rs 17,732 witnessed a 1.71 percent increase and went up to 233.76 points from last week's 229.83 points. Meanwhile, the SPI for the consumption group of Rs 17,732-22,888; Rs 22,889-29,517; Rs 29,518-44,175; and above Rs 44,175 witnessed an increase of 1.99 percent, 2.17 percent, 2.47 percent and 3.30 percent respectively. During the week, out of 51 items, prices of 32 (62.75%) items increased, 01 (1.96%) items decreased and 18 (35.29%) —APP



ISLAMABAD: Commuters drive past banners displayed at the D Chowk ahead of the Kashmir Solidarity Day.—Online

## Youth Parliament delegation briefed about foreign policy

In the last Chairman BoG Ambassador Khalid Mahmood delivered his concluding remarks which were followed by a presentation of memento to the visiting delegation of Youth Parliament

DNA

ISLAMABAD: China-Pakistan Study Centre (CPCS) at the Institute of Strategic Studies, Islamabad hosted a delegation of Youth Parliament to discuss, 'Global and Regional Dynamics of Pakistan's Foreign Policy'. The interactive session was addressed by Ambassador Sohail Mahmood, Director General, ISSI. The delegation of the Youth Parliament was led by Mr. Rizwan Jaffar. Dr. Talat Shabir, Director CPCS in his introductory remarks welcomed the guests and briefed the guests about ISSI. Extending a warm welcome to the Youth Parliament members, Ambassador Sohail Mahmood highlighted the global and regional dynamics of Pakistan's foreign policy amidst a rapidly changing global environment. He noted that the hallmark of the current



international environment was its complete flux and fluidity. States, driven by their own interests, had the challenge to constantly evaluate the environment and adjust accordingly. He highlighted some key determinants of states' foreign policy - including geography, identity, history, resource endowment, leadership, economic imperatives, over-arching strategic concepts, and role of national

institutions. He also stressed the vital linkage between states' internal strength and their external influence. Ambassador Mahmood stressed that Pakistan's foreign policy was driven by the strategic concept of a 'peaceful neighborhood', the commitment to have good relations with all major powers, and cooperative multi-lateralism. The most recent shift in the country's approach was from

geostrategic to geoeconomics. Ambassador Mahmood highlighted Pakistan's relations with the US, China, Russia, Muslim World, EU, Japan, ASEAN and Africa. In the regional context, the dynamics of bilateral relations with Afghanistan and India were emphasized. It was underscored that a just resolution of the Jammu & Kashmir dispute held the key to durable peace in South Asia.

Amb. Sohail Mahmood also highlighted Pakistan's role on cross-cutting global issues such as COVID-19, climate change, Islamophobia, and UN Security Council reforms. Mr. Rizwan Jaffar also presented how Youth Parliament has evolved into a national-level organization that has global outreach. He highlighted that the organization aims to empower youth which is the most valuable asset of this country. Their growth will lead them towards effective participation in policy-making and representing Pakistan in a better way.

Towards the end of the event a Q&A session was held in which participants asked very pertinent questions. In the last Chairman BoG Ambassador Khalid Mahmood delivered his concluding remarks which were followed by a presentation of memento to the visiting delegation of Youth Parliament.

## VCs call to safeguard HEC's autonomy

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Vice Chancellors of all public sector universities of Pakistan have urged the Government to revive the Higher Education Commission (HEC) Ordinance 2002 in its original form and strengthen HEC. During the 48th Vice Chancellors Committee meeting chaired by Dr. Iqbal Ahmad Khan online, the university heads emphasised that the development of higher education sector made in the past two decades can be consolidated only by strengthening HEC. The forum unanimously opposed the proposed amendments to HEC Ordinance and demanded the Government to ensure HEC's autonomy if it wants the higher education sector to continue playing its part in economic stability and growth. The amendments, if materialised, will cause a severe dent to the higher education sector and

will be tantamount to undoing the progress made so far, they underlined. The university heads also discussed, in detail, the financial, governance and administrative issues of the higher education institutions. They demanded of the provincial governments to share the burden of the federal government and contribute to the universities funding.

Chairman HEC Dr. Mukhtar Ahmed also joined the online session and briefed the Vice Chancellors on the recent developments pertaining to the TTS and BPS models. HEC's quality assurance measures, and the repercussions of amendments to the HEC Ordinance. He emphasised the need for strengthening national institutions and underlined different countries are now setting up higher education entities on the HEC model. Referring to financial crisis, the Chairman asserted that

no new universities or campuses should be established unless there is economic stability in the country. He urged the Vice Chancellors to ensure good financial and administrative governance at the higher education institutions. Dr. Mukhtar Ahmed underlined that the universities need to strengthen themselves in such a manner that they are approached by the quarters concerned to play the role of think tanks in policymaking at the state level. "Our youth have a great potential, however we need to work on developing in them the skillset relevant to the national and global market," he emphasised. He took a categorical stance on giving affiliations to colleges, saying that HEC will soon ban affiliations as they compromise quality due to anomalies. He also sought input from the Vice Chancellors on resolving the issues arising out of the TTS

and BPS models. He informed the university heads that HEC is planning to set up 'Seerat Corners' in the libraries of universities to promote the teachings of Holy Prophet (peace be upon him). The Vice Chancellors forum also discussed how the search committees constituted for selection of Vice Chancellors can be made effective. They also shared views on the grant of private charters on private members bills under the University Acts, in addition to detailed deliberations on private affiliations, segregation of universities into three tiers, the concept of Professor of Practice, quality assurance through professional accreditation councils, and revival of student societies. They agreed to frequently hold the forum meetings for discussions and decisions on the issues of higher education sector.

## Energy sector played a major role in sinking economy

ISLAMABAD: Chairman of National Business Group Pakistan, President Pakistan Businessmen and Intellectuals Forum, and All Karachi Industrial Alliance, and former provincial minister Mian Zahid Hussain on Friday said the dysfunctional energy sector has contributed to the devastation of the country's economy. 4000 megawatts of electricity is wasted annually in line losses and non-payment of bills therefore the circular debt is increasing day by day the IMF has asked Pakistan increased the price of electricity by Rs12 per unit, he said. Mian Zahid Hussain said that the power sector has become a major threat to the country's economy, which no previous government has been able to solve on a sustainable basis despite tall claims. Talking to the business community, the veteran business leader said that the power sector is harming the country's economy by billions of dollars, while according to the World Bank, the end of load shedding can benefit the people by four and a half billion dollars and businesses by about eight and a half billion dollars annually. The main goal of the government for economic recovery should be the acquisition of cheap, safe, and sustainable energy, for which 100% of bills should be recovered, load shedding should be eliminated and transmission and distribution losses must be brought under global standards. Mian Zahid Hussain said that dependence on imported oil and gas for power generation is a major obstacle in the development of this sector. Seventy-five percent of coal is also imported for the process of generating electricity. Currently, 2600 megawatts of cheap electricity is being generated from Thar coal. In Pakistan, power generation through nuclear and renewable sources is dismal while production in both these sectors needs to be increased to save valuable foreign exchange and improve the balance of payments, he said.—DNA

## PM stresses steps to reduce risk of road accidents

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Friday directed the authorities to take effective steps for reducing road accidents to prevent fatalities. He stated this while expressing grief over the death of at least 17 persons in a head-on collision between van and truck on Indus Highway near Kohat Tunnel toll plaza on Thursday. The Prime Minister prayed for the departed souls to rest in peace and for the early recovery of the injured. The ill-fated coach was on way to Peshawar from Lakki Marwat and was hit by the truck coming from the opposite direction.—DNA

## Services exports increased 2.77% in 6 months

ISLAMABAD: Services exports from the country during the first six months of the current financial year increased by 2.77 percent, whereas services imports into the country decreased by 30.28 percent as compared to the corresponding period of last year. During the period from July-December, 2022, services exports from the country were recorded at US\$ 3.526 billion as against the exports of US\$ 3.431 billion in the same period last year, according to the data of the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics.

Meanwhile, services imports into the country during the first two quarters of the current financial year came down from US\$ 5.571 billion to US\$ 3.884 billion during the period from July-December 2022, which witnessed about 30.28 percent reduction as compared to the imports of the corresponding period of last year. During the period under review, the services trade deficit reduced by 83.29 percent as compared to the first six months of the last financial year, whereas on a year-on-year basis, the services trade deficit narrowed by 111.21 percent in December 2022 as compared to the same month of last year. During the month of December, 2022, exports of services decreased by 3.16 percent as it was recorded at US\$ 667.17 million in contrast to the exports of US\$ 688.93 million in the same month of last year.

Meanwhile, during the month of December 2022, the services imports reduced by 44.45 percent as it was recorded at \$619.40 million as against the imports of US\$ 1.111 billion in the corresponding month of last year. On a month-on-month basis, the services trade deficit swelled by 37.15 percent in December 2022, as services exports were recorded at \$667.17 million as compared to the exports of US\$ 654.95 million of November 2022, whereas services imports decreased by 0.12 percent and it was recorded at US\$ 619.40 million during the month of December 2022 as against the imports of \$620.11 million of the previous month.—APP

47 booked for aerial firing, violating marriage act

RAWALPINDI: The Rawalpindi District Police raided two wedding ceremonies and arrested 47 accused for violating the marriage act, aerial firing, creating panic and hosting dance parties and recovered cash Rs 73,760, sound systems, weapons and fireworks items from their possession, said a police spokesman here on Friday. He informed that Waris Khan police acting on a tip-off conducted a raid at a wedding ceremony and rounded up 33 accused namely Saad, Irfan, Azan, Tahir, Nabeel, Shehbaz, Musa, Waqas, Farhan, Waqar and others for hosting a dance party and aerial firing. Police recovered Rs 45,000, a sound system, fireworks and other items from their possession. Naseerabad police in their operation managed to net 14 namely Rizwan, Manzoor, Mohsin, Hamza, Junaid, Azeem and others for violating the Marriage and Punjab Sound System Acts.—APP

## 'Thanks Pakistan' posters appear in different parts of IIOJK

ISLAMABAD: In Indian illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir, posters reading "Thanks Pakistan" appeared in different areas of the territory as the people of Pakistan prepare to observe the Kashmir Solidarity Day on February 5 (Sunday). The posters, displayed by Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Alliance, Jammu and Kashmir Sada-e-Mazloom and Jammu and Kashmir Democratic Movement with pictures of All Parties Hurriyat Conference (APHC) leaders, including Masarat Alam Butt, Shabbir Ahmad Shah, Mirwaiz Umar Farooq, Muhammad Yasin Malik, Aasiya Andrabi, Dr Hameed Fayaz and Mushtaq-ul-Islam, appeared in most parts of the valley, including Srinagar, Baramulla and Pulwama districts. The posters thanked the people and government of Pakistan for effectively presenting the case of the Kashmiri people at all international forums. The posters read the whole Jammu and Kashmir is part of Pakistan as per the Two-Nation Theory and aspirations of the people of Kashmir, whereas India has been illegally occupying one of its parts by military occupation since October 1947. The people of Kashmir are struggling for justice and an end to Indian illegal occupation. The posters have been put up in IIOJK ahead of the Kashmir Solidarity Day, which is observed in Pakistan, Azad Jammu and Kashmir and abroad every year on February 5 to express solidarity with the oppressed people of IIOJK facing the worst Indian state terrorism.—APP

## Legal options on Kashmir should be explored

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Institute of Regional Studies organized a roundtable discussion in connection with the Kashmir Solidarity Day today. The event was moderated by Ms. Humaira Iqbal, Research analyst from IRS. Participants included Ambassador Nagma Hashmi, Ambassador Khalid Masood, Ambassador Shah Jamal, Ms. Fauzia Sana, DG Kashmir Cell at MoFA, Dr. Mujeeb Afzal, Asst. Professor at QAU, Dr. Shaheen Akhtar, Professor at NDU, Dr. Saeed Rid, Asst. Professor at QAU, Dr. Hassaan Bokhari from South Asia Times. Arish U. Khan, Editor at IRS, spoke about the importance of the day and

stressed that observing this day every year for the last 32 years not only expresses solidarity with the Kashmiri people but also makes the world aware of their plight. He emphasized that Pakistan needs to amplify its efforts at various levels as India's unilateral action of revocation of the special status of Kashmir has complicated the Kashmir issue. Dr. Mujeeb Afzal, said that 'India's security mind-set has been a major problem for Pakistan as it does not believe in any territorial concessions'. He added that India sees itself as a regional hegemon and Pakistan needs a 'strategic balancer' to balance Indian hegemony in the region. Dr. Shaheen Akhtar was of the view that India has been

working on the integration of J&K since its inception. The removal of the special status of Kashmir was nothing but a part of its greater integration plan, she added. Looking at the existing scenario, there was no scope for restoration of the special status of Kashmir as both Indian Parliament and Supreme Court seemed reluctant to undo the August 2019 illegal actions, she argued. Dr. Saeed Ahmed Rid, expressed the view that since there was no acceptance of revocation of articles 370 and 35-A among all the political parties of the J&K and the secular parties of India, 'Pakistan needs to effectively exploit that space to its advantage. Former Ambassador to China, Nagma Hashmi, emphasized

that Pakistan should focus more on educating the Pakistani diaspora abroad about the Kashmir dispute for a greater impact at the international level. Dr. Hassaan Bokhari, stated that a popular narrative about Kashmir was essential to keep the issue alive and Pakistan needs to increase its outreach at domestic, regional, and international levels for greater support of the international community. Seasoned Diplomat and former Ambassador to China, Masood Khalid while commending Pakistan's efforts in highlighting post-August 2019 actions by the BJP regime, was of the view that specific work by experts needs to be done to explore legal options vis-à-vis Kashmir dispute.



## Increasing American bases

Despite concerns from China and all fellow peace-loving parties in the region, the Philippines agreed to the US to add four military bases in its soil.

By strengthening its already very strong military presence in the Philippines, namely three to four aircraft carriers and two military base groups, the US doubtlessly hurts regional stability and increases regional tensions. Its latest move also threatens to distance the Philippines further from China by reducing their mutual trust. The more US troops that arrive in the Philippines are of course not coming for peace, but as a threat and for deterrence.

The Philippines cannot count on the US military base making them safer. What's worse, it will only bring the country more trouble, given the hard lessons it has already learned, as well as other nations hosting US military bases.

As early as 1993, a WHO report found that "toxic dumping, accidental spills, and environmentally destructive practices had made numerous sites at Clark Airbase and military base at Subic Bay unsafe and detrimental to human health."

Their toxic waste included lead, aviation fuel, underground storage tank leaks, sewerage contamination, unexploded materials and radioactive materials. A similar situation happened in Yokosuka of Japan, where the local government now has plans to probe the US naval base situated there.

In 2020, a local organization in Okinawa even published a pamphlet recording the crimes of US troops there, with rape records ranging from 1949 to 2016. Among the victims, the youngest was a 9-month-old baby that was robbed from her mother's arms and raped to death by a US soldier.

On Jan 31, South Korean police collected evidence from a US military employee, suspected of sexually violating a local woman on July 24, 2022. The woman was witnessed running out of the US military calling for help and frantically describing her experience. Neither in history nor in reality have US military bases brought safety. The time has come for the Philippines to learn that undeniable fact.

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## Strikes: Sunak needs a better plan

To the extent that Rishi Sunak has a plan for dealing with the biggest wave of industrial action in Britain for a generation, it seems to involve waiting for public opinion to turn against the strikes. To hasten that process, ministers cast trade unions as self-serving militants, causing harm to citizens who rely on the services that are being disrupted. The plan isn't working. About 500,000 workers took part in industrial action on Wednesday. That was inconvenient for millions of others, but for the time being it is the government that takes the greater portion of blame. Deservedly so, when ministers have responded to legitimate grievances with high-handed disdain.

The teachers' strike was especially difficult for parents who had to make childcare arrangements or miss work. For many, it stirred stressful memories of home schooling during the pandemic. That doesn't mean teachers were wrong to leave the classroom in protest at inadequate pay, nor that parents all blamed them for a decision that most could see was taken as a last resort. As with striking nurses and ambulance drivers, there is a bedrock of public recognition that people who provide essential services do so from vocation, not to get rich. Mr Sunak has an argument against strikes, which he seems to think is the same as a negotiating position. The government view is that pay rises above inflation are unaffordable and that they would stoke inflation further. That is a highly partisan and tendentious account of the underlying economics. Teachers' pay has been falling in real terms for years, leading up to the present spike in inflation, so their salaries can hardly be the cause. In reality, the government is making a political choice not to pay public sector workers enough money, because the prime minister's fiscal priority is an election war chest of tax cuts for later in the parliament. As a campaigning tactic, that might work, but it relies on voters putting up with prolonged chaos, and on public sector workers losing the will to fight for decent pay. That is not only a political gamble, but also an abdication of responsible government. Mr Sunak is not popular enough, nor does he have the moral authority to stake so much on a confrontation with people whose public service credentials are much better than his own. He needs a new plan.



# Rasmus Paludan protest: Burning the Qur'an is not 'free speech'

Rabbi Marc Schneier

Tensions remain high since last month's desecration of Islam's holiest book at a political demonstration in front of the Turkish Embassy in Stockholm, which occurred amid ongoing deliberations between the two countries related to Sweden's NATO accession bid. The debate is not religious in nature and making it about religion reveals everything about the intentions of the provocateurs here

It is not just Muslims who should be offended. Everyone with an interest in dialogue and coexistence should join in the condemnation of the recent burning of a Qur'an by right-wing activists in Sweden.

In itself, what happened was a terrible and provocative act, designed only to inflict pain on observant Muslims. Arguing that it is a form of worthy "free speech" is a cop-out that compounds the insult. Such affronts to human dignity can have consequences. There is no justification for violence in response, but it is hardly a surprise that extremists anywhere might try to use this event to further their aims. The US

State Department's warning this week of the potential for a terrorist attack on synagogues, churches and diplomatic missions in Istanbul serves as such a reminder. Tensions remain high since last month's desecration of Islam's holiest book at a political demonstration in front of the Turkish Embassy in Stockholm, which occurred amid ongoing deliberations between the two countries related to Sweden's NATO accession bid. The debate is not religious in nature and making it about religion reveals everything about the intentions of the provocateurs here. Rasmus Paludan, who burned the Qur'an, is the leader of the Danish far-right political party Hard Line. He has engaged in similar acts before, designed primarily to spark outrage and garner attention. Muslim groups, as well as Christian, Jewish and other organizations in the West, have all unambiguously decried his behavior. Among Jewish communities, those in Sweden and Denmark condemned Paludan, as well as several US-based organizations such as the Anti-Defamation League and B'nai B'rith International. But others have been more conspicuous in their criticism. Sweden's head of government did not cover himself in glory. His statement seemed to prioritize that "freedom of expression is a fundamental part of democracy." Yes, but burning the Qur'an for the sole design of attacking the religious identity of Muslims in Sweden and elsewhere should not be seen as freedom of expression. It is strange that, in Sweden, it is illegal to burn flags but not sacred religious texts. Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson noted that burning holy books is a "deeply disrespectful act" and sympathized with offended Muslims. But this downplays the severity of the incident. Burning a Qur'an, like a Bible or a Torah, is more akin to an act of violence. And his sympathies should be with all people who cherish the respect for and embrace of everyone in their society, and globally. Lamely, such acts have only multiplied in the days since. In the Netherlands, another far-right



politician tore and desecrated a Qur'an. Meanwhile, Paludan has burned Qur'ans in front of a mosque and the Turkish Embassy in Copenhagen, vowing to do so again until Sweden is admitted into NATO. These actions have been entirely counterproductive to Sweden's NATO entry, which requires the unanimous support of the alliance's existing members. Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has said he will oppose Sweden's accession because of what has happened. The ultimate fallout may be worse. Beyond diplomatic tensions, these escalating attacks against the religion of Islam and its adherents can threaten regional stability at a time when NATO should be united in the face of Russia's aggression in Ukraine. Non-Muslims in Europe and elsewhere must step up. They should think deeply about how we treat the burning of

a book that means so much to the 1.8 billion Muslims in the world. And they should see that the acceptance of their beliefs is just as much at stake. "Disrespectful" does not capture the pain and the damage caused by such actions. It is not for me to determine the criminal status of such behavior in different countries, but we certainly need a different mindset and approach. I applaud the Finnish authorities for saying they will not allow any Qur'an burning on their territory. Condemnation is a start. Education goes a step further, demonstrating that this does not fall under the scope of rightful protest. But perhaps best would be a more comprehensive approach toward protecting whole groups of people from hateful insults.

Courtesy: Arab News

# India: A global hub of cyber crimes

Noureen Akhtar



Ideas can be weaponized within a few minutes, triggering a broader humanitarian crisis in a communally charged environment. No doubt, Indian cybercrime hubs (call centres) are cancerous for the global economy but these other dimensions of Indian misuse of cyberspace must not be ignored either.

India has been proudly trumpeting its success in the IT industry, especially its dominance in call center businesses across the globe. This is generating a whopping amount of \$28 billion annually. The reality, however, is quite different. Like many other statecrafts, the Indian IT boom is highly exaggerated in the context of its contribution towards the expansion of IT knowledge and serving humanity through IT services. India is yet to find solutions to many of its social problems where IT can help, but for various reasons, this is not happening.

In December 2022, Indian media exposed the extent of Indian-origin cybercrime against international citizens, particularly elderly Americans. According to FBI data, published by Times of India, \$3bn were stolen from elderly Americans during the last 2 years alone by romance-related frauds and 'tech support' pop-ups, originating largely from illegal call centres and phishing gangs in India. FBI has also exposed the pace at which Indian-origin cybercrimes are increasing. According to a Times of India report, FBI has also disclosed, "all call center related frauds in the last 11 months having been estimated at \$10.2bn, an increase of 47% against last year's \$6.9bn". Recently a fake call scam has been unearthed revealing shocking details regarding Indian involvement in fake scamming of numerous customers including US citizens across the globe. This is defrauding millions of dollars from them. Mumbai police booked or arrested three suspects in relation to the case. Indian cybercriminals have an extensive network that enables them to commit such crimes with impunity at such an exponential magnitude every year. This was exposed when US authorities indicted 6 India-based call centers and their directors for allegedly forwarding scam calls to

US citizens. The call centers and their directors were charged with conspiring with the previously indicted Voice over Internet Protocol provider e-Sampark and its director Gaurav Gupta, for forwarding "tens of millions of scam calls to American customers". The modus operandi of a criminal trio that allegedly ran a call center, posed as representatives of a reputed pharmaceutical company. They would call US citizens via Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) and offer medicines. Those who would fall prey would share their credit card details, make the payment and never receive any medicines. Through this scam, the trio has cheated many US citizens. They manipulate their targets into transferring money, either through threats or false sales. The crisis is so severe that FBI had to put a permanent representative at US embassy in New Delhi to keep tabs on such activities originating from India. This representative will work along with the teams of CBI, Interpol and Delhi Police to hunt down phishing gangs. The teams will also be able to freeze money transferred through wire and cryptocurrencies to these crime syndicates running fake call centers from India. The US will be able to protect its citizens, but what about the rest of the world? It's impossible to assume that these cybercriminals are only targeting US citizens. The rest of the world is also a target of these Indian-based cyber criminals. This is not the first time India-based call centers have been rounded up for scamming Americans. In 2020, Hitesh Hinglaj of Ahmedabad was sentenced on charges of wire fraud conspiracy. The charges included general conspiracy to commit identification fraud, access device fraud, money laundering, and impersonation of a federal officer or employee. He was sentenced to 20 years in prison, followed by three years of supervised re-

lease in the southern district of Texas. This was for his role in operating and funding India-based call centers that defrauded US victims out of millions of dollars between 2013 and 2016.

In 2016, the US justice department officials filed charges against 61 people and gave India-based call centers as the scheme had defrauded at least 15000 American victims out of more than \$250 million. All these cases of digital fraud by Indian cybercriminals have put the fifth-largest economy at risk of being branded as a net exporter of internet and call center related swindles.

This disturbing trend of fake call center businesses and cybercrime being committed through them is not limited to financial fraud. These call centers have also become propaganda tools for the RSS/BJP regime. RSS/BJP government has made things increasingly difficult, as now hundreds of millions of Indians are exposed to communal propaganda through the internet. So, instead of aiding development, Indian IT cyberspace has become a harbinger of communal unrest & violence against minorities. This business of misuse of cyberspace is not limited to Indian internal politics. It has external dynamics as well. The Indian state launched a 15-year-long anti-Pakistan campaign, with an integral part covering the setup of hundreds of anti-Pakistan websites across the world. Indian cybercrimes must not be ignored by the global community in the information age. Ideas can be weaponized within a few minutes, triggering a broader humanitarian crisis in a communally charged environment. No doubt, Indian cybercrime hubs (call centres) are cancerous for the global economy but these other dimensions of Indian misuse of cyberspace must not be ignored either.

—The author is PhD scholar from QAU



## Briefs

## PM calls upon nation to shun differences

FROM PAGE 01

"The baseless allegations levelled after the attack on social media and other platforms is condemnable. The investigation will take place into the security lapse but to say that it was a drone attack or something else is very inappropriate," said the premier. PM Shehbaz said that the nation is now thinking about how to move forward and curb the menace of terrorism.

"It is imperative that the Centre and provinces, political leadership, and Ulama must take ownership of this drive, shunning their differences and fighting this jointly," said the PM and vowed to utilise all the country's resources to eradicate terrorism. The premier also called for unnecessary criticism should be avoided.

"Speak the truth and hold the responsible accountable for the security lapse. If, God forbid, this was a part of a conspiracy, then what about those incidents that took place in the recent past or in previous years?" asked the PM. The premier shared that he was confident that it was a terrorist attack.

The premier also dismissed the allegations that the centre was not providing assistance when incidents took place in Bannu, Nowshera, Mardan, Peshawar or in other cities of KP.

"In the last cabinet meeting, I, with no fiction but facts, shared the details about the funds given to the KP government," said PM Shehbaz. The PM reminded that in 2010, everyone willingly decided in a meeting that was held in Lahore that 1% of the NFC will go to KP before any deduction as the province was the frontline state in the war against terrorism. The meeting also agreed to abolish all the sources assisting the terrorists in the country and directed effective screening, a statement from the PM's Office said. Adopting a zero-tolerance approach against all kinds of terrorism would be the national motto, while implementation of the decisions would be ensured by national consensus, the huddle decided, according to the statement.

The meeting reviewed in detail the incidents of terrorism, particularly the attack on Police Lines and the situation that followed during which representatives of intelligence agencies briefed the committee on the overall security situation and operations against terrorists in the country. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Inspector-General of Police Muazzam Jah Ansari also updated participants of the meeting regarding the investigation of the Police Lines blast and the progress made so far. Ansari informed attendees about the way and routes of the attacker's arrival in the area, which the police has identified through videos. The meeting also hailed the prime minister for convening the All Parties Conference (APC) after the rise in terrorism, hoping that the political leadership would sit together at the table to end terrorism and would decide on steps through national consensus. The body also appealed to religious scholars to play their role in eradicating terrorism. Ulama were urged to create awareness among the masses against such attacks which are "haram" [prohibited in Islam] and against the teachings of the Holy Quran and Sunnah.

## Security forces kill two terrorists

FROM PAGE 01

Last week, a terrorist was gunned down during an intelligence-based operation (IBO) in the same district of North Waziristan. The operation was conducted in the Mir Ali area, according to ISPR. When the security forces approached the terrorists, they retaliated. In response, an intense fire exchange took place between the troops and terrorists. After killing the terrorist, the forces also recovered weapons and ammunition. "The killed terrorists remained actively involved in terrorist activities against security forces and [the] killing of innocent citizens," the military's media wing added.



LAHORE: Semifinal Polo Match playing between Remington Pharma and Master Paints Newage cables at Jinnah Polo fields in 3rd Allama Iqbal Polo Cup. - APP

## 40 countries could boycott Olympics: Polish minister

Bortniczuk said he believed it would be possible to build a coalition of 40 countries, including Great Britain, the United States and Canada, to support a block on the IOC's plans before a meeting on 10 February

## SPORTS DESK

WARSAW: Up to 40 countries could boycott the next Olympic Games, making the whole event pointless, said Poland's sport and tourism minister Kamil Bortniczuk. His comments came after Poland, Lithuania, Estonia and Latvia jointly rejected an International Olympic Committee (IOC) plan to allow Russians and Belarusians to compete in 2024. Ukraine has threatened to boycott the Paris Olympics if that occurs. But the IOC said on Thursday that any boycott would only "punish athletes". Bortniczuk said he believed it would be possible to build a coalition of 40 countries, including Great Britain, the United States and Canada, to support a block on the IOC's

plans before a meeting on 10 February. He added: "Considering this I don't think we will face tough decisions before the Olympics and, if we were to boycott the Games, the coalition we will be a part of will be broad enough to make holding the Games pointless." The IOC announced last week that it would "explore a pathway" to allow Russian and Belarusian athletes to compete in Paris under a neutral flag, adding that "no athlete should be prevented from competing just because of their passport". The move prompted condemnation, with the UK Government saying the plan was a "world away from the reality of war". Ukraine sports minister Vadym Guttsait said the country's sporting bodies needed to "strengthen communication" with international

federations to keep a ban in place on Russian and Belarusian athletes, which was imposed by the IOC's executive committee immediately after Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022. However, IOC president Thomas Bach has since said that was only intended as a "protective" measure towards those athletes, and now insists they should not be discriminated against. On Thursday, sports ministers from Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia and Poland said "any effort by the International Olympic Committee to bring back Russian and Belarusian athletes to compete, even under a neutral flag, should be rejected". They added: "Efforts to return Russian and Belarusian athletes to international sports competitions under the veil of

neutrality legitimize political decisions and widespread propaganda of these countries." And they called on "all international sports organisations and federations" to remove Russian and Belarusian athletes from international competitions until the war ends. The United States government said it supports suspending Russian and Belarusian sport governing bodies from international sports organisations and is also encouraging organisations to stop broadcasting events into both countries. White House press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre added that, if athletes are permitted to participate in events such as the Olympics, it should be as neutral athletes and "it should be absolutely clear that they are not representing the Russian or Belarusian states".

The IOC reiterated that no discussions on the return of Russian and Belarusian athletes to competition had yet taken place and warned Ukraine and other nations about the implications of threatening a boycott. "Threatening a boycott of the Olympic Games, which the NOC of Ukraine is currently considering, goes against the fundamentals of the Olympic movement and the principles it stands for," the IOC wrote in a question-and-answer document published on Thursday. "A boycott is a violation of the Olympic charter, which obliges all NOCs to 'participate in the Games of the Olympiad by sending athletes'. As history has shown, previous boycotts did not achieve their political ends and served only to punish the athletes of the boycotting NOCs."

## PCB ensures high-quality production for exhibition match

## SPORTS DESK

QUETTA: The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB), under the leadership of Najam Sethi, is all set to create history by hosting a star-studded contest in Balochistan's capital. Preparations are in full swing at Quetta's Bugti Stadium which is set to host Pakistan Super League (PSL) season eight exhibition match between Quetta Gladiators and Peshawar Zalmi on February 5. As many as 16 HD cameras, including drone, will be installed to produce live cricket entertainment. PCB, in partnership with Trans Group, will produce the match which will be broadcasted on PTV Sports. On the other hand, a special pitch has been prepared for the exhibition match. Side nets have also been fixed for training sessions. Temporary seats have also been installed in the stands to facilitate fans. It must be noted here that tickets for the match were sold out within two days. Quetta Gladiators' Umar Akmal and Usman Qadir of Peshawar Zalmi have reached the city today for participating in the match. Meanwhile, players including Sarfaraz Ahmed, Babar Azam, Naseem Shah, and Shahid Afridi, who are also part of this exhibition match, attended Shaheen Afridi's Nikah ceremony in Karachi today. These cricketers will come to Quetta alongside other players tomorrow. The two participating teams are also scheduled to have a practice session tomorrow at the venue.

## UK man guilty in foiled 2021 crossbow attack on queen

LONDON: A man told a UK court on Friday that he wanted to "injure" Queen Elizabeth II after sneaking into Windsor Castle armed with a loaded crossbow on Christmas Day in 2021. Jaswant Singh Chail, 21, who was detained on the grounds of the royal residence while the late queen was there, pleaded guilty to three charges during a criminal court hearing. They include a section of the 180-year-old Treason Act, admitting an "intent... to injure the person of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, or to alarm Her Majesty". He had also been charged with making a threat to kill the Queen and having a loaded crossbow, an offensive weapon, in a public place. Chail, from southern England, allegedly told a protection officer when he was apprehended that he was "here to kill Queen". - APP

## Haaland eyes 95-year-old record - can he 'walk on water'?

## MONITORING DESK

MANCHESTER: 'Phenomenon'. 'One-off'. 'Freak of nature'. You name it and Erling Haaland has probably been called it as his prolific debut season in English football continues to destroy Premier League goalscoring records. Any questions about how the Norway striker would fit in Manchester City's system this season were soon answered when he netted 14 goals in his first eight Premier League games, including back-to-back hat-tricks against Crystal Palace and Nottingham Forest.

With 25 goals in his first 19 league games, it seems a matter of when, not if, Haaland will break Andy Cole and Alan Shearer's Premier League record of 34 goals in one season. But what about pre-Premier League records? William Ralph Dean led Everton to the league title in 1927-28. Known as Dixie, Dean scored a barely believable 60 league goals, even though he missed three of the 42 matches that season. Many years after his famous season, Dean spoke about his record. "People ask me if that 60-goal record will ever be beaten," he said. "I think it will. But there's only one man who'll do it.

That's that fella who walks on the water. I think he's about the only one." So can Haaland walk on water? Blackburn Rovers' Ted Harper scored a record 43 goals during the 1925-26 top-flight campaign, but his impressive mark stood for just two years before Dean blew it out of the water. Former Liverpool manager Bill Shankly recalled Dean as well as anyone, having played against him for Preston North End in the mid-1930s. "Dixie was the greatest centre-forward there will ever be," he said. "His record of goalscoring is the most amazing thing under the sun. He belongs in the company of the supremely great like Beethoven, Shakespeare and Rembrandt." So how good was Dean? It is difficult to compare across eras, however it is easier to compare Dean with his peers. Looking at the three years before and three years after Dean's record-breaking season, the First Division's leading scorer averaged 40 goals.

## EU vows Ukraine support but not quick accession

FROM PAGE 01

The latest measures have seen highly publicised raids by the security services targeting residences of an oligarch with deep political connections and a former interior minister. Von der Leyen tweeted that Ukraine was "taking notable steps forward to meet our recommendations, while at the same time fighting an invasion. We have never been closer," she said, noting that the EU was "working on extending tariff-free access to our market". Kyiv has secured promises from the West for deliveries of modern battle tanks to fight Russian forces and is now asking for long-range missiles and fighter jets.

## Imran rejects APC invite, says Asad

FROM PAGE 01

and move forward," said the PM. Recalling his time as opposition leader in the National Assembly, the premier said: "Whenever he [Imran Khan] wrote a letter to me, he never wrote my name on it, however, I always responded with my name and my signature on the letter." "How can we sit with them? On the other hand, PTI leader Umar, while speaking to the press outside Lahore High Court, said: "How can we sit with them [PDM-led government] while cases are being registered against us?" "The Constitution is being violated by registering cases of treason against the opponents and all the government resources are devoted to arrests and detentions," he told the media. While mentioning the by-elections he said: "Governors are not ready to provide the dates for the elections," adding that 220 million people of Pakistan will not allow anyone to seize their rights. The prime minister seeks to bring heads of all political parties to the table so they can join heads and figure out ways to address "important national challenges". The invitation was a major development as the PDM government and the PTI have always been at loggerheads over almost all national issues, before Khan's ouster from the PM Office.

## Rupee plunges to a historic low

FROM PAGE 01

stressed that the country needs the Washington-based lender's bailout programme to avoid default - a threat that has been looming over Islamabad for some months now.

## Ford to return to Formula One in 2026

MIAMI: American car manufacturer Ford will return to Formula One in 2026 with a link-up with world champions Red Bull reported to be on the cards. Formula One issued a statement on Friday confirming Ford's intentions, just hours before Red Bull are due to unveil their new car for the 2023 season. No details of any partnership were given in the statement. "The news today that Ford is coming to Formula 1 from 2026 is great for the sport and we are excited to see them join the incredible automotive partners already in Formula One," said Stefano Domenicali, President and CEO of F1. While multiple media reports in Europe had indicated the link-up, through an engine partnership, was to be with Red Bull, the statement did not give any details about their plans. Ford last featured in F1 in 2004 when they were partnered with Jordan and their return is a further sign of the growth of the sport in the United States. Ford have played a part in 10 constructors' championships and 13 drivers' championships - making them the third most successful engine manufacturer in F1 history with their most recent success coming via Michael Schumacher's win with Benetton in 1994. - APP

## Young stars to watch out for in HBL PSL 8

All six future stars with the exception of Arafat, selected in supplementary round, have been picked in emerging category for their respective franchise. This young lot will be eager to establish their credentials as tournament commences in Multan on Feb 13 with the opening match between Multan Sultans and Lahore Qalandars

LAHORE: The HBL Pakistan Super League has served as a launching pad for several talented youngsters over the years as the exposure to quality cricket in the presence of national and international stars helps them to enhance their skillset. Some of the newcomers excited to showcase their skills in HBL PSL 2023 include Multan Sultans' Arafat Minhas, Karachi Kings' Muhammad Irfan Khan, Peshawar Zalmi's Haseebullah, Lahore Qalandars' Shawaiz Irfan, Quetta Gladiators' Aimal Khan and Islamabad United's Hassan Nawaz. All six future stars with the exception of Arafat, selected in the supplementary round, have been picked in the emerging category for their respective franchise. This

young lot will be eager to establish their credentials as the tournament commences in Multan on 13 February with the opening match between Multan Sultans and Lahore Qalandars. **Arafat Minhas - Multan Sultans** Arafat has enjoyed a successful run in the series between Pakistan U19 and Bangladesh U19 in November 2022, where he bagged the player of the series award at the end of the three one-days having scored 171 runs with two half-centuries. He also managed to take three wickets. His impressive performances in the Pakistan Cup saw him being attached to Pakistan Test squad for the first Test against New Zealand in December with the objective of providing international expo-

sure and experience. Belonging to Multan, Arafat is looking forward to representing the city of his birth. "It is an unbelievable feeling and a great opportunity to express myself. I want to prove that I can compete on big stage. To be honest I am not giving myself and specific targets and goals, I just want to go out and express myself and learn from the biggest stars of the game." **Muhammad Irfan Khan - Karachi Kings** A product of the PCB's age-group programme, middle-order batter Muhammad Irfan Khan has represented Pakistan in two ICC U19 Men's Cricket World Cups in 2020 and 2022. The 20-year-old made 141 runs in nine innings in the National T20 2022-23

at a strike-rate of 153.26 with a 31-ball 57 against Balochistan being the highlight of his campaign. "Getting selected for the first time in the HBL PSL is certainly a satisfying feeling. I want to perform well in this tournament as the HBL PSL stage propels you to the limelight and you can boost your case for selection in the national team." **Haseebullah - Peshawar Zalmi** Talented prospect from Pishin, Haseebullah Khan has been a prolific performer in the domestic circuit ever since he made his List A debut in March 2022. He was the leading run-getter in his team's Pakistan Cup 2021-22 winning campaign and was second-highest run-scorer in the subse-

quent season of the 50-over tournament. His tally of 551 runs and 10 dismissals saw him take home the best wicketkeeper of the tournament award. Harboursing aspirations of becoming the first Test cricketer from Balochistan, Haseebullah wants to make the most of his maiden HBL PSL season. **Shawaiz Irfan - Lahore Qalandars** Shawaiz Irfan built a reputation of being a fierce striker of the cricket ball in the Pakistan Junior League. He was part of the champion side Bahawalpur Royals and blasted a 32-ball 79 studded with six sixes in the final of the competition. His rollicking show allowed him a chance in the Pakistan U19 team for the home series against Bangladesh

U19. "I am thankful for being picked in Lahore Qalandars and I am definitely excited to play in the HBL PSL for the first time. It will be an exciting occasion to play in front of the passionate fans." **Aimal Khan - Quetta Gladiators** Right-arm pacer Aimal Khan made waves in the opening match of the Pakistan Junior League when he bowled a match-winning spell of 3-15 in four overs for Mardan Warriors. Aimal's ability to generate steep pace and sharp swing makes him a potent option with the new ball. "The HBL PSL is a big brand and its importance is known in the cricket world. I feel honored to play in this league and be associated with Quetta Gladiators." - APP



## Briefs

## West has no right to claim moral leadership — Lavrov

MOSCOW: Western elites are forever barred from claiming any moral leadership as their colonialist instincts have gone nowhere, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said.

"The crimes of the colonizers have no time limit and forever deprive Western elites of the right to claim any moral leadership. Especially since the colonial instincts have not disappeared," Lavrov told a meeting of the United Russia Party commission on international cooperation and support of compatriots abroad. According to the top diplomat, the West, which "achieved its prosperity largely through centuries of robbery and exploitation of developing countries," is trying to maintain its global dominance, hoping, as before, to solve problems of its own development and maintain their economies at the expense of others.

"To this end, the West continues to hinder the process of democratization of international relations and aggressively imposes on the world majority a neocolonial American-centric order, which, as they say, must be based on rules that they themselves invent and apply according to the 'I do what want' principle," he added.

Lavrov also noted that the US and "the rest of the West, which is fully subordinate to them," had taken a complete course toward dividing the world into a small group of "the exceptional and the so-called subordinates". —Agencies

## 'Pak, Afghan should resolve differences amicably'

ISLAMABAD: Jamiat Ulama-e-Islam-Fazl, Maulana Salahuddin Ayubi on Friday said Pakistan and Afghanistan should resolve their differences amicably, including the core issue of terrorism, which was imperative for the peace and prosperity of both countries.

Condemning the Peshawar tragic incident in the strongest terms in the National Assembly, he said both the brotherly countries should develop understanding and resolve the core issues, including terrorism, with dialogues. Ayubi was of the view that peace could not be maintained if indulged in blame game. Taking part in the debate, Pakistan Peoples Party's Naz Baloch proposed to sit together and find the best solution to terrorism on a permanent basis. Criticizing Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chief for promoting chaos, anarchy, polarization and the trend of abusive language, particularly in youth, she said Imran Khan had severely dented Pakistan's economy during his regime which needed years to come back on track. Naz said due to PTI's bad policies, the large-scale industries were badly damaged and stopped the wheel of economic activities.

## US alleges Chinese spy balloon flew over sensitive military sites

WASHINGTON: The Pentagon says it is tracking a suspected Chinese surveillance balloon spotted over United States' airspace, reviving tensions between the two powers just days before the top US diplomat's visit to Beijing. "The United States government has detected and is tracking a high-altitude surveillance balloon that is over the continental United States right now," Pentagon spokesperson Brigadier General Patrick Ryder told reporters on Friday. "The balloon is currently travelling at an altitude well above commercial air traffic and does not present a military or physical threat to people on the ground." US officials claimed the balloon was flying over sensitive sites to collect information. There are reports military leaders decided against shooting it down over the state of Montana because of the risk of falling debris. —APP

## ICCI for promoting Pak-Syria trade and economic relations

Dr. Ramez Alraee, Ambassador of Syria said that his country is eager to promote trade and economic cooperation with Pakistan

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Faad Waheed, Acting President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) said that Pakistan and Syria are two brotherly Islamic countries and they can complement each other's economy in many fields, therefore, they should focus on promoting trade and economic ties to achieve mutually beneficial outcomes. He said that the bilateral trade between Pakistan and Syria is quite negligible, and that it can be improved by promoting business linkages between the private sectors of both countries. He expressed these views while talking to H.E. Dr. Ramez Alraee, Ambassador of Syria during his visit to Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry. Faad Waheed briefed the Syrian Ambassador about the key industries and major exportable products of Pakistan that can be very beneficial to the Syrian consumers. He highlighted the



importance of frequent exchange of trade delegations to explore untapped areas of mutual cooperation between the two countries and

reiterated the commitment of ICCI to work with the Syrian Embassy to improve business and investment relations between Pakistan

and Syria. Speaking at the occasion, H.E. Dr. Ramez Alraee, Ambassador of Syria said that his country is

eager to promote trade and economic cooperation with Pakistan, which is very important to reduce unemployment and improve living

standards of people. He said that Syria and Pakistan enjoy good political relations that should be transformed into growing business relations to achieve mutual economic benefits. He said that Pakistan can cooperate with Syria in many sectors including energy, infrastructure development, IT and many other fields. He stressed that a delegation of ICCI should visit Syria to see the potential for business and investment opportunities and assured that his Embassy would provide them all possible support and cooperation. He also thanked Pakistan for providing support to Syria at international forums and reaffirmed that he would work to further strengthen trade and economic bonds between the two countries. Engr. Muhammad Azhar ul Islam Zafar, Vice President ICCI said that Pakistan considers Syria an important country for trade and said that he would lead a delegation of ICCI to Syria to explore business collaboration with Syrian counterparts.

## Chinese company preserves breed of 'super' Pakistani buffalo

DNA

ISLAMABAD: A Chinese company has successfully preserved the breed of a superior but aged Pakistani buffalo through OPU-IVF-ET technology by obtaining pregnancy from her embryo.

"We obtained eggs from a 'Nili Ravi' buffalo, the grandmother of a young buffalo which yielded a world record of 28.3 kilograms of milk during a competition held at the University of Agriculture, Faisalabad," Dr Qaisar Shahzad, technical manager of Buffalo Embryo Production at Royal Cell Biotechnology (Pakistan) told Gwadar Pro. He said that



the buffalo had not given birth to an offspring in the last four years due to ageing (20 years). Four eggs were collected from this buffalo using ultrasound-guided OPU and two embryos were produced as a result. One embryo was transferred to a younger buffalo at Ibrahim Dairy Farm, Faisalabad and pregnancy was obtained. At this farm, a total of six pregnancies were achieved after transferring the embryos in eight buffaloes, while results from other farms are awaited, Dr Qaisar said. Commenting on the significance of the results, Dr Qaisar said that they had preserved the

breed of a 'super' buffalo. "It will enable us to produce scores of buffaloes with similar super qualities as the donor. Also, a healthy buffalo can give birth to 4-5 offspring in her lifetime. However, through the OPU-IVF-ET, we are able to reproduce around 15 calves a year. This will increase the population of animals of superior breeds and help in increased milk production," he said.

The OPU-IVF-ET (Ovum Pick-Up, In-Vitro Fertilisation, Embryo Transfer) technique involves obtaining egg cells from a buffalo (or other animals) of superior breed and transferring the embryo into other buffaloes.

## Anti Muslim extremist Paludan involved in child abuse

STOCKHOLM: Audio recordings from the racist politician's online conversations reveal he spoke to minors about disturbing and graphic sexual scenarios, such as a teacher sexually abusing a boy in front of his class. Swedish-Danish politician Rasmus Paludan had sexually explicit conversations with minors on the internet despite being aware that they were underage. The racist convict, notorious for anti-Muslim extremism and conducting "Quran burning tours", engaged in inappropriate and sexually explicit chats with underage boys on the social media platform Discord. Audio recordings taken from the bigoted and racist politician's online conversations reveal he spoke to underage boys about disturbing and graphic sexual scenarios, such as a teacher sexually abusing a boy in front of his classmate. While the age of consent in Sweden is 15, Paludan knowingly and continuously had sexually explicit conversations with 14 and 13-year-olds. Another example of a conversation that demonstrates his shocking behaviour, took place on August 11, 2021, between him and other Discord users, including a minor (let's call him User #1 to maintain his anonymity). Paludan again engages in a perverted conversation, explaining to the users that User #1 engaged in sexual activity with "a boy" behind a Netto grocery store. —Online

## Govt taking steps to generate low-cost electricity

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Power Khurram Dastgir Khan says government is providing electricity to five export-oriented sectors at 19.99 rupees per unit to enhance exports of the country.

Responding to a question during the Question Hour in the Senate on Friday, he said the government is also taking substantial measures to generate low-cost electricity in the country. The Minister said the government has abolished Sales Tax on solar panels. He said the government is introducing solar projects to alternate fossil fuels in energy production. Khurram Dastgir Khan said the federal government buildings are being solarized and micro solar grids for rural areas are also being introduced for provision of low-cost electricity. To another question, the Power Minister said payments issues of Karachi Electric have been resolved. He said the federal government provides one thousand to eleven hundred megawatt electricity to the citizens of Karachi.

Responding to a question regarding import of oil from Russia, Minister of State for Petroleum Musadik Malik said commercial terms will be finalized by the end of next month and it is expected that Pakistan will start receiving oil from Russia in the month of April.

## PSX loses 262 points

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The 100-index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) witnessed bearish trend on Friday, losing 262.35 points, a negative change of 0.64 percent, closing at 40,471.16 against 40,733.51 points the previous day. A total of 105,053,350 shares were traded during the day as compared to 124,087,701 shares the previous day, whereas the price of shares stood at Rs 4.181 billion against Rs 6.120 billion on the last trading day. As many as 320 companies transacted their shares in the stock market; 116 of them recorded gains and 182 sustained losses, whereas the share price of 22 companies remained unchanged. The three top-trading companies were Hub Power Company with 7,912,174 shares at Rs.67.03 per share, Cnergyco Pk with 7,490,206 shares at Rs 3.72 per share, and Dewan Motors with 5,698,000 shares at Rs.14.45 per share. Nestle Pakistan witnessed a maximum increase of Rs64.00 per share price, closing at Rs.5,364.00 whereas the runner-up was Bata (Pak) with a Rs.47.00 rise in its per share price to Rs1,795.00. Pak Services witnessed a maximum decrease of Rs.145.35 per share closing at Rs 1,792.65 followed by Sapphire Textile with Rs 80.00 decline to close at Rs.1,020.00.

## Find My Doctor and Sina Health join hands

KARACHI: Find My Doctor, a premier online healthtech platform, has partnered with ISO 9001-certified medical laboratory Sina Health to bring comprehensive digital healthcare services to the residents of Karachi. The collaboration aims to provide high-quality and accessible healthcare, especially in these challenging times. In addition to the free video consultations, booking a doctor appointment in 5min through WhatsApp, and home sample collection services already offered through the Find My Doctor platform, the partnership is now expanding to include specialized care in the fields of gynecology, pediatrics, and mental health. Find My Doctor has partnered with highly qualified and experienced gynaecologists, pediatricians, and mental health consultants to bring their services online and make it easily accessible to the residents of Karachi via our digital hospital - Sarfaraz Rafiquee Shaheed Hospital. This partnership with Sina Health will enable Find My Doctor to provide comprehensive care for women's health, child health, and mental health, ensuring that the residents of Karachi receive the best possible care for their well-being. The mental health counseling services provided by Find My Doctor, in partnership with Sina Health, will play a vital role in supporting the residents of Karachi in managing their physical and mental well-being more effectively, providing them with much-needed respite during these trying times. —DNA



TOKYO: Ambassador-designate Mr. Raza Bashir Tarar met Mr. Seishiro Eto, Member of the House of Representatives of Japan and Chairman, Japan-Pakistan Parliamentary Friendship League (JP-PFL), today. Bilateral relations and Parliamentary ties were discussed.—DNA

## China-Pak blockchain co-op high on agenda



DNA

BEIJING: "China is far more advanced than other countries [in the blockchain industry], and Pakistan has a high level of passion to move forward, so we are collaborating on these bases to share knowledge and human resources to develop our own products." This was stated by Ahmad Manzoor, founder & CEO of Pakistan Blockchain Institute (PBI) in an interview to China Economic Net (CEN). To boost cooperation with China in blockchain, PBI signed an agreement in Janu-

ary with the China Academy of Information and Communications Technology (CAICT), a research arm of the Chinese ministry of industry and information technology, to hold online training sessions for Pakistani students and practitioners. According to Manzoor, the deal is aimed at providing training with Chinese blockchain experts in the blockchain industry, technologies and policies, and building capacity for future blockchain projects. He noted, the two sides will launch the first basic-level course to help Pakistani youth and professionals understand and

adapt to the technology. It is learned a training certificate will be awarded to trainees after the course, certified and stored digitally on the Blockchain Infrastructure and Facility (BIF), a blockchain & identifiers infrastructure built by CAICT. To further advance the industry, Manzoor told CEN that PBI will publish a roadmap to deploy blockchain technology in Pakistan. "We want to convert our nation from a project management nation to a product management nation, and both countries will work together on future upcoming technologies."

## Turkish ambassador stresses on connectivity

ABID RAZA

LAHORE: Ambassador of Turkey Dr Mehmet Pacaci has said that both the countries will have to increase relations in every sphere as we have a target to increase the bilateral trade to 5 billion USD which was set by the respective leaders of both the countries.

He was speaking at the Lahore Chamber of Commerce and Industry here on Friday. LCCI President Kashif Anwar, Senior Vice President Zafar Mahmood Chaudhry, Turkish Consul General Emir Ozbey and LCCI Executive Committee Members also spoke on the occasion. The ambassador said that the relations between Turkey and Pakistan were unique. Our relations go back to centuries and were more than trade or economy but heart to heart relations. People of both the countries love each other and find many things in common. He said that our commercial relations unfortunately were low as the President of the Lahore Chamber pointed out and

summarized the situation of economic relations. The ambassador said that in this regard connectivity between Pakistan and Turkey played a pivotal role. He said "we have alternatives for connectivity. For example roads, railways, sea and air and those connectivity mediums have their positive aspects and negative aspects also. But all these depends on our abilities and capacities to resolve the issues of connectivity". The Ambassador said that we have to introduce our businessmen to each other to know better each other's abilities. In this regards, the main obstacle was to get to know the sectors in which we can cooperate, and to identify those sectors, we have to work harder. LCCI President Kashif Anwar said that Turkey and Pakistan were key members of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), and are bonded together by old historical links and enjoyed cordial relations based on commonality of religion. The relations between two countries were growing in different domains including economic, political, defence, culture and education. He

said it was very encouraging that both the countries achieved a significant milestone in bilateral relations by signing a Preferential Trade Agreement (PTA) last year. He hoped that PTA would open up new opportunities to expand mutual trade ties across various sectors. The LCCI President said that according to the State Bank of Pakistan's data, Pakistan's exports to Turkey were around 268 million dollars in 2020-21 which increased to 355 million dollars in 2021-22. Similarly, Pakistan's imports from Turkey were 867 million dollars in 2020-21 that increased to over 944 million dollars in 2021-22. He said that Pakistan's exports to Turkey were heavily dominated by textiles whereas our imports mainly comprise machinery, iron & steel, and plastic items, among others. He said that we need to make efforts to bridge Pakistan's trade deficit and to enhance the trade volume to at least 5 billion dollars utilizing the market access on nearly 261 tariff lines provided by Turkey in the existing Preferential Trade Agreement.



## Briefs

### ECP restores membership of 3 more lawmakers

ISLAMABAD: The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) on Friday restored the membership of three more parliamentarians after submitting of assets' details. Earlier, the ECP suspended the membership of as many as 271 lawmakers over their failure to submit details of their assets and liabilities. The parliamentarians restored by the ECP include one member of the National Assembly and two members of the Sindh Assembly. The restored members included MNA Ghulam Bibi, NA 115, Jhang-II and Provincial Assembly Sindh members Jamal Uddin Siddiqui, PS-106 Karachi East-VIII; Naseem, a member of provincial assembly (MPA) on reserve seat for women, said a notification issued by ECP. - APP

### Imran Riaz Khan freed in treason case

DNA

LAHORE: A court of the judicial magistrate Lahore on Friday freed anchorperson Imran Riaz Khan, a vocal critic of the current government, in a treason case. Imran Riaz Khan was arrested at Lahore airport on Thursday on charges of "hate speech" and making a "violence-inducing statement", the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) said. The court while announcing its reserved verdict in the case on the 14-day remand request of the FIA, discharged Imran Riaz from the case and ordered to release him. Earlier, Imran Riaz was presented before the court of judicial magistrate Lahore. Riaz's counsel Mian Ali Ashfaq in his arguments before the court opposed FIA's demand for 14-day physical remand and said a treason case cannot be registered on expressing views against the government. The FIA counsel said Imran Riaz was found involved in publicly making a hate speech at a conference which falls under the territorial jurisdiction of FIA cyber crime cell. The complaint went on to say that the speech was further publicly shared on social media platforms nationally and internationally. The court after hearing arguments from both sides had reserved its verdict in the case. Imran Riaz was stopped and arrested by the FIA Cybercrime Wing at the Lahore Airport when he was trying to travel to UAE.

### Center, caretaker govts 'running away' from polls: Elahi

DNA

LAHORE: Former Chief Minister Punjab and PTT's close ally Chaudhry Parvez Elahi on Friday said the PDM government and provincial caretaker setups were reluctant to hold elections, adding the Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif was 'harming national unity'. In a meeting with former Inspector General Police (IG) Punjab Aftab Cheema, the former Punjab CM said people were protesting against the policies of current government. Elahi alleged Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif of 'betraying political forces'. He said the current PML-N led government has ruined economy. Chaudhry said current government was responsible for resurgence of terrorism in country. Country is heading towards chaos and the government was busy arresting and politically vandalizing its opponents, he held. Earlier this week, PML-Q leader Pervaiz Elahi and his son Moonis Elahi claimed that their family home in Gujrat was raided during the wee hours, alleging that the Punjab caretaker setup and federal government were behind the act. The former chief minister said the police raided his house in Gujrat, the Zahoor Elahi Palace at 4:30am, claiming that they harassed the employees, including women, and then fled when a number of people gathered.

## Bid to stop Russia's war machine

# US turns up the heat on Middle East allies

"What we're seeing now is a bit more about messaging to the region and indicating the seriousness of these sanctions," said Justine Walker, global head of sanctions, compliance and risk at the Association of Certified Anti-Money Laundering Specialists (ACAMS)

NEWS DESK

ABU DHABI: As the Ukraine war approaches the one-year mark, the United States is ramping up efforts to choke off Russia's economy and it has set its sight on the Middle East. A top US Treasury official arrived in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) on Monday to warn the regional business hub that helping Moscow evade sanctions wouldn't be without consequences. Under Secretary of the Treasury for Terrorism and Financial Intelligence, Brian E. Nelson, met with senior government officials from several UAE ministries, where he discussed "rooting out evasion of US sanctions, particularly on Russia and Iran," as well as the US' "commitment to take additional actions against those evading or facilitating the evasion of sanctions," according to a statement. The US Treasury earlier warned that "individuals and institutions operating in permissive jurisdictions," including in the UAE and Turkey, risk losing access to G7

markets for doing business with sanctioned entities or not conducting appropriate due diligence against illicit finance. G7 countries include Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the UK and the US. The Gulf state has walked a tightrope between Washington and Moscow since the start of the Ukraine war last February, opting to remain neutral as it sees the world order moving toward multi polarity. The US has repeatedly called on its Middle Eastern allies to support its efforts in slowing the Russian war machine, but a public threat of consequences against a close ally like the UAE is rare. "What we're seeing now is a bit more about messaging to the region and indicating the seriousness of these sanctions," said Justine Walker, global head of sanctions, compliance and risk at the Association of Certified Anti-Money Laundering Specialists (ACAMS). The US is trying to say, "If you are going to do business with Russia, then you do business with Russia but you don't do business with us," she told CNN. Since the war, the UAE has become the top

Arab destination for Russian investors, with the Gulf state's real estate market surging as Russians flock into Dubai and Abu Dhabi. The US has previously sanctioned entities and individuals in the UAE for sanctions evasion. More recently, it sanctioned two UAE-based air transportation firms for collaborating with a sanctioned Iranian firm to transport Iranian UAVs (unmanned aerial vehicles), personnel, and related equipment from Iran to Russia. Russia is already under a barrage of sanctions from the US, along with the UK and the European Union. But most of those are primary sanctions, which only apply within the territory of the sanctioning country. For instance, if a Russian bank is under primary US sanctions, it cannot operate in a US market. The bank can still, however, work with a UAE or Turkish bank. Sanctioned countries often stay afloat by finding loopholes to conduct business outside the US. Washington plugs that loophole by imposing secondary sanctions, which punish parties con-

ducting commercial activities with the sanctioned entities - even when the activity takes place outside US territory. Such sanctions force countries and entities to choose between the sanctioned nation or the US, but not both. A senior US official told CNN that the US "will continue to use our authorities and all tools at our disposal to crack down on sanctions evasion that supports Putin's war machine." Asked if the US is effectively imposing secondary sanctions on Russia by asking the UAE to crack down on business with the country, the official said "no." The US sees Russia circumventing sanctions by moving trade through the Middle East, as well as trading directly with the region, said Walker. As the US dominates the global economy, secondary sanctions have often been effective in causing economic damage to the sanctioned country. But Walker sees their imposition in this case as unlikely, noting that it would be "serious diplomatic escalation in tensions" between the UAE and the US.

## NA continues discussion on incidents of terrorism

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The National Assembly on Friday continued discussion on the recent incidents of terrorism particularly in Peshawar. The house resumed its session at the Parliament House in Islamabad on Friday with Speaker Raja Pervaiz Ashraf in the chair. Participating in the debate, Naz Baloch voiced concerns over the recent surge in acts of terrorism. She said the entire nation shares the grief of the victim families. She called for a unified approach to steer the country towards peace and stability. Salahuddin Ayubi said the recent act of terrorism at a mosque in Peshawar aggrieved the whole nation. He said we can bring peace in the country only through cohesion and harmony. He said we should establish good relations with all the regional countries. The House passed Pakistan Maritime Zones Bill, 2021. It also adopted some amendments in the rules of procedure and conduct of business of the House. These were moved by Minister for Parliamentary Affairs Murtaza Javed Abbasi. Two bills were laid before the National Assembly. These included National Skills University Bill and Qaid-e-Azam Foundation Bill, 2023. Later, the House was adjourned to meet again on Monday at five thirty pm.

## Army rescuers recover last missing student's body

DNA

RAWALPINDI: On the orders of Chief of Army Staff, Pakistan army SSG and Corps of Engineers troops found out the body of last missing student, said a statement issued by Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR). The operation continued for 48 hours till the time Army divers found the last missing body. All deceased 52 drowned students and staff has been found. The army diving teams of SSG, army engineers and Rescue 1122 also rescued 5 students alive from Tanda Dam. Forty-nine children were among the 52 who died when their overloaded boat capsized after divers spent many days dragging bodies from freezing waters. The boys aged between seven and 14 were all students of a madrasa and had been taken for a day trip to the scenic Tanda Dam lake on last Sunday.

## Sheikh booked for 'immoral' remarks against FM

DNA

KARACHI: PTI ally and Awami Muslim League (AML) chief Sheikh Rashid Ahmed, who was arrested on Thursday in connection with remarks he made against former president Asif Ali Zardari, has now been booked for "immoral" remarks against Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, it emerged on Friday. Rashid was arrested by the Islamabad police in the wee hours of Thursday in connection with remarks he made against Zardari. The first information report (FIR) - a copy of which is available with Dawn.com - was registered at Islamabad's Aabpara Police Station under sections 120-B (criminal conspiracy), 153A (promoting enmity between different groups, etc) and 505 (statements conducing to public mischief) of the Pakistan Penal Code (PPC). Rashid was arrested on a complaint filed by Raja Inayatullah Rehman, the vice president of PPP Rawalpindi Division, wherein he said that the AML chief, in a television interview on Jan 27, alleged that Zardari got the assistance of some terrorists to plan former prime minister Imran Khan's murder.

## US envoy, Commerce Minister discuss ties

ISLAMABAD: American Ambassador to Pakistan, Donald Blome here on Friday called on Federal Minister for Commerce Syed Naveed Qamar. According to press statement issued by commerce ministry, they discussed matters of mutual interests, including economic cooperation, trade initiatives, and investment opportunities. Ambassador Jones praised the strong bond between the United States and Pakistan, and stated that the two countries were committed to further strengthen their ties. The ambassador also appreciated the Pakistan's efforts to enhance economic ties with the United States. Syed Naveed Qamar expressed his satisfaction over the current level of economic and trade cooperation between the two countries. He said, "Pakistan is committed to increasing bilateral trade and investment opportunities." - APP



ISLAMABAD: CEO Serena Hotels South and East Asia Aziz Boolani and Asma Rashid Khan Director Satrang Art Gallery witnessing an exhibition at SAG, Islamabad Serena Hotel. - DNA

## Norway to buy 54 new generation Leopard tanks

OSLO: Norway said Friday it will buy 54 new generation Leopard 2 tanks to replace older versions, adding it faced "one of the most difficult security situations since World War II". Planned for several years, the order will enable Oslo to renew its fleet of 36 ageing Leopard 2A4 tanks, some of which are to be donated to Ukraine. The Leopard 2A7 order with German defence manufacturer Krauss-Maffei Wegmann is part of a 19.7 billion kroner (\$1.96 billion) defence allocation already adopted by parliament. The exact cost of the tanks was not specified. There is an option for 18 more new Leopard 2A7s. "We find ourselves ... in one of the most difficult security situations since World War II", Prime Minister Jonas Gahr Store told reporters at the Rena military base. "We have a serious situation due to the Russian invasion (of Ukraine). I call this a new 'Iron Curtain'", he said. Norway had been hesitating between the latest generation Leopard tank and the South Korean K2 Black Panther. The choice of Leopards will enable the Scandinavian country to align itself with its Nordic neighbours - including Sweden and Finland which are vying to join Norway in NATO - and Germany, the government said. The first deliveries are expected as of 2026 and will run until 2031. Only 36 of the 52 Leopards Norway bought from the Netherlands in 2001 are still in service. Oslo announced in late January that it would donate some of those tanks to Ukraine but did not specify exactly how many nor when they would be delivered. The head of Norway's armed forces, Eirik Kristoffersen, has previously expressed his opposition to the purchase of new tanks, saying he would prefer to spend the money on the acquisition of other weapons such as missiles and long-range shells. - APP

## Government announces 60,000 internships, 100,000 laptops

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Ahsan Iqbal announced on Friday the government has launched an internship programme under which 60,000 young graduates from across the country would get paid internships. In a statement, the federal minister government was also offering scholarships to those who manage to secure admis-

sions in the top 25 universities in the world. Likewise, the minister added that 100,000 university students would be provided laptops to make them digitally empowered. "In our previous tenure, we provided one million laptops that resulted in the promotion of free-lancing culture among the youth", he added. Last month, Iqbal announced providing 20,000 scholarships to unemployed graduates of the country. He made the announcement while addressing an International summit on higher edu-

cation and workforce development in Islamabad. Ahsan Iqbal further announced that scholarships will also be awarded to the students of far-flung areas of the country under Youth Development Initiatives (YDI), recently launched by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif. Earlier in December 2022, SAPM on Youth Affairs Shaza Fatima Khawaja announced that the federal government has decided to restore Prime Minister Laptop Scheme and other various schemes under Prime Minister's Youth Program (PMYP).

## Blinken postpones China trip over 'spy' balloon violation

WASHINGTON: US Secretary of State Antony Blinken postponed a visit to China that had been expected to start on Friday after a Chinese spy balloon was tracked flying across the United States in what U.S. officials called a "clear violation" of U.S. sovereignty. "After consultations with our interagency partners as well as with Congress, we have concluded that the conditions are not right at this moment for Secretary Blinken to travel to China," a senior State Department official told reporters. "We have noted the PRC (People's Republic of China) statement of regret, but the presence of this balloon in our airspace is a clear violation of our sovereignty as well as international law, and it is unacceptable that this has occurred," the official said. "The secretary conveyed to the director of the Central Foreign Affairs Office Wang Yi earlier this morning, that the trip would need to be postponed. But the secretary indicated that he would plan to travel to the PRC at the earliest opportunity when conditions allow." ABC News earlier cited an U.S. official as saying Blinken did not want to blow the situation out of proportion by canceling his visit, but also did not want the balloon incident to dominate his meetings with Chinese officials. China expressed regret that a "civilian" airship had strayed into U.S. territory after being blown off course, an incident that sparked a political furor in the United States. Earlier, China voiced regret Friday for an "unintentional" breach of US airspace by what it said was a civilian airship - but the Pentagon called a spy balloon - with a long-planned Beijing visit by Secretary of State Antony Blinken hanging in the balance. The Pentagon said Thursday it was tracking the balloon which flew far above the western state of Montana and decided for safety reasons not to shoot it down. After initially hesitating to say that the object was Chinese, Beijing in a late-night statement admitted ownership, saying it was an airship that veered off course due to the winds. - Agencies

## ECP to hold meeting with political parties

ISLAMABAD: Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) will hold a consultative meeting with country's political parties in federal capital on February 9 to discuss, peaceful elections of provincial assemblies, code of ethics and other constitutional and legal issues with them and get their feed back for ensuring immaculate elections. According to ECP spokesperson, the meeting chaired by Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Sikandar Sultan Raja also deliberated the dates of holding elections of Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa assemblies. ECP Secretary Omer Hamid Khan briefed the forum about arrangements of the elections of provincial assemblies of Punjab, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and bye elections in 86 National Assembly constituencies. ECP members, Secretary and other senior officers attended the meeting. - APP

## FBR notifies asset declaration for public servants

Banks will access the asset data of federal employees in the first phase at the time of opening bank accounts. The conditionality is expected to extend to provincial employees as well in the next phase. "Bureaucrats' assets will be checked prior to the opening of a bank account"

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) on Friday notified "Sharing of Declaration of Assets of Civil Servants Rules, 2023" for federal government servants of BPS17 to 22 to declare asset details. The move comes in the wake of stringent pre-conditions set by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to lend money to the country as the government had assured the lender to fulfil all conditions. The notification obligates public office holders to declare

details of assets owned by them and members of their families inside and outside the country to the FBR. The authority has also obligated the banks to provide these details twice a year, on Jan 31 and July 31. Banks will access the asset data of federal employees in the first phase at the time of opening bank accounts. The conditionality is expected to extend to provincial employees as well in the next phase. "Bureaucrats' assets will be checked prior to the opening of a bank account," sources said. "Banks will get information from the FBR for the opening of accounts of bureaucrats", added

sources. The international lender had, earlier, demanded Pakistan to amend laws for asset declaration of public servants. Sources told that the IMF had stressed on public declaration of assets inside and outside the country owned by public servants. For this purpose, the lender had also demanded to set up an authority and Electronic Assets Declaration System to ensure transparency of the process. The government finally acceded to the demand earlier by allowing banks access to asset declaration of civil servants as a prior condition for the opening of bank accounts.

A delegation of the global lender was on a visit to Pakistan to hold talks with the government officials as the cash-strapped country was trying to strike a staff-level agreement with the IMF on the ninth review under the \$7 billion Extended Fund Facility (EFF). The ninth review has been pending since last September. The implementation of these measures had been postponed for political reasons, as they were believed to contribute to the already elevated inflation rates. However, the government later agreed to comply with IMF conditions after the lender refused to make any concessions.