



Islamabad POST

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Moldovan Prime Minister resigns, govt collapses

Detailed News On Page-08

Increasing support to Ukraine is vital

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Japan provides \$ 0.37 mn for Taxila Museum

Detailed News On Page-08



PTI welcomes verdict LHC orders ECP to ensure polls in Punjab in 90 days

Lahore High Court says after dissolution of assembly the Election Commission is bound to hold elections in 90 days

BUREAU REPORT / DNA

LAHORE: The Lahore High Court (LHC) on Friday ordered the Election Commission of Pakistan to immediately announce the date for elections in Punjab. Pronouncing its much-anticipated verdict reserving it earlier in the day, the LHC ruled that the ECP was bound to carry out elections within 90 days of the assembly's dissolution and that it should issue the election schedule. The PTI had on Jan 27 approached the LHC seeking orders for the Punjab governor to immediately announce a date for an election in the province since the assembly had been dissolved on Jan 12. The ECP had recommended the elections be held between April 9 and 17. The petition, filed through PTI General Secretary Asad Umar, stated at the time that more than 10 days had passed since the dissolution of the Punjab Assembly but Governor Rehman had failed to fulfil his constitutional duty of announcing an election date. In the hearing today, Justice Jawad Hassan asked about the chief secretary and inspector general of the Punjab police, saying they were also

ECP dismisses PTI's request for by-polls on March 19

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) dismissed on Friday a request of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) of hold by-elections on March 19. As per the ECP sources, the by-elections will be held on March 16 and in this regard there will be a local holiday in the concerned constituencies. The electoral watchdog will pen a letter to the concerned provinces to declare the local holiday on March 16. According to sources privy to the development, the ECP had to hold elections within 60 days, and by holding elections on March 19,

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summoned. The two officials arrived at the courtroom as the proceedings were under way. The IG told the court that he was not aware of the case background. "We will implement whatever decision the ECP takes in this regard," the senior cop told the judge. The court said it was looking forward to such an assurance from the police chief. The chief secretary also reiterated the stance adopted by the IG, saying he was also bound to implement the ECP and court orders. The commission's counsel raised objections to the admissibility of the petition, saying the plea pertained to an announcement of the election date, which he said was not the domain of the ECP. He argued that the commission could not be made a respondent in the plea. The counsel said the LHC had itself stated that it would not issue an order whose implementation was complex. He contended that neither the president nor the federal government had been made respondents in the petition. "The police, judiciary, and other institutions have refused to sanction staff for poll duties.

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LAHORE: Prime Minister Muhannad Shehbaz Sharif talking to media on the occasion of seeing off a plane carrying relief goods for the earthquake victims of Turkiye; Federal Minister for Economic Affairs Sardar Ayaz Sadiq, Chief Minister of the Punjab Syed Mohsin Naqvi and Turkish Consul General Emir Ozbay are also present at the occasion. – DNA

Gen Bajwa concedes he was behind 'regime change': Imran Khan



DNA

ISLAMABAD: Former prime minister and Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan Friday said that former army chief General (retd) Qamar Javed Bajwa had accepted that he was behind the "regime change" move that led to his government's removal. Khan had earlier blamed the United States for overthrowing his PTI administration, later he turned the guns towards the ex-army chief, and then he also claimed that Punjab caretaker Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi was also involved in the "regime change" operation. In an interview with Voice of America (Urdu), the ex-premier said: "General Bajwa told the journalist with much pride how he had our government ousted due to economic policies and other matters." He added, "People were already aware of who was behind overthrowing the PTI regime. However, General Bajwa has accepted and

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Local Court summons Khan on March 29

ISLAMABAD: A lower court on Friday summoned Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI)'s chief Imran Khan in personal capacity on March 29 in a case regarding vandalizing the public property during long march. Civil Judge Hassan Chishti heard the case with regarding to first information report (FIR) registered by the Sehla Police Station. Prosecutor Ayesha Akbar and case investigation officer appeared before the court. The police submitted the case record against Imran Khan, after which the court issued summon notice to PTI's chief. – APP

Brotherly gesture

Pakistan allocates Rs 10 bn for the quake-hit Turkiye

Shehbaz Sharif says Pakistan to extend every possible support to Turkiye

ABID RAZA

LAHORE: Prime Minister Shabbaz Sharif said on Friday that Pakistan would provide all possible assistance to Turkiye in the wake of the devastating earthquake that left thousands killed and injured and urged people to donate to the Prime Minister's Relief Fund. Talking to the media here at Lahore airport, the prime minister handed over 100 tonnes of relief goods including food, medicines, and winterized tents for the people of Turkiye. Shehbaz Sharif said the people of Pakistan stand in solidarity with their brethren in distress and would do everything to help them rebuild their lives. He recalled how Turkiye had established an air bridge with Pakistan after the horrific 2005 earthquake that killed around 80,000 people in Azad Kashmir. The prime minister was earlier briefed about the collection and dispatch of the relief goods from Pakistan to Turkiye and Syria. He was informed that the NDMA was coordinating and rushing relief goods from various cities of Pakistan to the quake-affected areas. "We would leave no stone unturned to help the Turkish brethren ... we have never seen

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Rescues efforts ongoing as toll tops 21,000

NEWS DESK

ANKARA: The rescue of several survivors from the rubble in Turkey lifted the spirits of weary search crews on Friday, four days after a major earthquake struck the country and neighbouring Syria, killing more than 21,000 people. Cold, hunger and despair gripped hundreds of thousands of people left homeless in the middle of winter by the region's deadliest earthquake in decades. Several people were pulled from the rubble of buildings during the night, including a 10-year-old boy saved with his mother after 90 hours in the Samandag district of Hatay province in Turkey's south. Also in Hatay, a seven-year-old girl named AsyaDonmez was rescued after 95 hours and taken to hospital, the state-owned Anadolu news agency reported. In Diyarbakir to the east,

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Briefs

Fawad for 'reducing bitterness' in politics

BUREAU REPORT

LAHORE: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leader Fawad Chaudhry on Friday stressed the need to "reduce bitterness" in the country's politics amid the crumbling economy and security situation. Talking to media persons in Lahore, the PTI stalwart commented on renowned anchor-person Javed Chaudhry's column in the newspaper on meeting with former army chief Gen (retd) QamarJavedBajwa said that ex-COAS confessed in the column that he played a key role in "regime-change operation" against the PTI government, adding that Imran Khan ousted to appease foreign powers.

Not seeing Maryam as PM: Safdar

DNA

LAHORE: Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz leader Captain (retired) Safdar on Friday said he is not seeing Maryam Nawaz as prime minister in near future, media reported. "Not seeing Maryam Nawaz as PM in near future," Captain (retired) Safdar Awan said in his exclusive interview with a news channel.

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



COLOMBO: Pakistan's Chairman Joint Chief of Staff Committee (JCSC) General Sahir Shamshad Mirza arrives in Sri Lanka for an official visit on the invitation of his counterpart General Shavindra Silva. – DNA

Poet Amjad Islam Amjad passes away

LAHORE: Renowned poet/drama writer Amjad Islam Amjad passes away in Lahore. The news of his death was confirmed by his family. According to them, the 78-year old poet died to a heart attack. Amjad was born on August 4, 1944 in Lahore. He did his Masters in Urdu from University of Punjab in 1967. In 1968, he was appointed as an Urdu professor in the MAO College Lahore. He continued to be a professor there until 1975. Same year in August, he became the deputy director in Punjab's Arts Council. He has been a vital part of the literary world. Some of his famous dramas include: Varis, Din, Fishar and many more. In 1975, his famous

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Palestinian envoy grieved

ISLAMABAD: The Ambassador of Palestine Ahmed Rabe'i has expressed sorrow and grief over the sad demise of great Pakistani writer Amjad Islam Amjad, a great friend of Palestine and defender of humanity and justice, who wrote and translated Palestinian poems and wrote about injustice and occupation of Palestine. We extend our heartfelt condolences to

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IMF staff-level talks conclude positively, says Ishaq Dar

Virtual discussion from Monday; Rs170bn in taxes to be imposed through mini-budget prior to IMF deal

SHUJAAT HAMZA

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Senator Ishaq Dar said on Friday that after positive conclusion of staff-level talks on the Extended Fund Facility (EFF), Pakistan and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) would start virtual discussion on the Memorandum of Economic and Financial Policies (MEFP) from Monday. "Good news is [that] as per their commitment, the team has gone according to their plan. As per their commitment, we have received MEFP. The draft is with us, we will study it and from Monday we will engage in virtual discussion with the fund," Dar said while addressing a press conference on

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ISLAMABAD: Finance Minister Ishaq Dar addressing a press conference. – Online

Major, Captain embrace martyrdom

DNA

RAWALPINDI: Based on credible intelligence, a sanitisation Operation was initiated on 10 Feb 23 in Kohlu area of Balochistan to deny Terrorists any Liberty of action. During the ensuing sanitisation of the area, an IED exploded close to the leading party. Resultantly, 2 x officers (Major Jawad and Captain Sagheer) embraced Shahadat and laid their lives in defence of the motherland against an externally perpetrated threat. The sanitization Operation continues in the area to apprehend perpetrators and enemies of peace. Such cowardly acts



Captain Sagheer

Major Jawad

by inimical elements cannot sabotage the hard earned peace and prosperity in Balochistan. Security Forces are determined to neutralise their nefarious designs even at the cost of blood and lives.

Considerable progress made on EFF agreement, says IMF

ISLAMABAD: Under the ninth review of Extended Fund Facility (EFF) agreement, Pakistan and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) have made considerable progress on policy measures to address domestic and external imbalances. "Considerable progress was made during the mission on policy measures to address domestic and external imbalances," the fund said in a statement at the conclusion of its staff level negotiations with Pakistan that concluded on Thursday. It said, virtual discussions would

continue in the coming days to finalize the implementation details of these policies. The statement said, IMF mission led by Nathan Porter visited Islamabad during January 31 – February 9 to hold discussions under the ninth review of the authorities' program supported by the IMF Extended Fund Facility (EFF) arrangement. "The IMF team welcomes the Prime Minister's commitment to implement policies needed to safeguard macroeconomic

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Briefs

Court extends Imran Khan's bail till Feb 27

ISLAMABAD: A local court on Friday extended the pre-arrest bail of Pakistan Tehreek e Insaaf (PTI) head Imran Khan till February 27 and sought a written statement in an FIR regarding the protest after the decision of ECP in tashkhami case and attack on PML-N's leader Mohsin Shah Nawaz Ranjha.

Additional District and Sessions Judge Zafar Iqbal heard the case against Imran Khan. Dr. Baber Awan submitted the medical report of Imran Khan and requested the judge to grant him a one-day exemption from attendance.

The court noted that the applicant had stated that still he would take 20 to 25 days to recover from injuries. He said that Imran Khan was not allowed by the doctors to travel. Mohsin Shah Nawaz Ranjha said that PTI's leader used to talk about justice but on the other hand, he was not willing to appear before the police. If this was the situation then the court should form a medical board of PIMS. He was not sure if the plaster would be opened in the next six months, he said. He said that this plaster was only for the court as the other jobs were being done openly. He said that the doctors of PIMS hospital could examine the health of the PTI chief at his home. The court also witnessed heated remarks between Dr. Baber Awan and Mr. Ranjha.

Mohsin Ranjha said that Imran Khan should have presented himself for arrest in line with his announced drive to court arrest but he was requesting an extension in bail. —APP

Marriyum expresses grief over demise of Amjad Islam Amjad

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Information and Broadcasting Marriyum Aurangzeb on Friday expressed deep grief and sorrow over the demise of famous poet, writer and dramatist Amjad Islam Amjad. "A great person who represented the rights and sentiments of the people has left the world today," she said in a condolence message, praying to Allah Almighty for eternal peace of the departed soul and grant of courage to members of the bereaved family to bear this loss with dignity. She said that Amjad gave his life's 50 years to Urdu literature and left the "precious asset" (contribution to Urdu literature) for the nation, recalling a famous stanza from his poem "Woh Teray Naseeb Ki Barasheen Kissi Aur Chhatt Par Baras Gaein", remembered by a generation. Marriyum Aurangzeb also recalled one of his famous dramas "Waris" terming it a "masterpiece". The minister said the meritorious services rendered by Amjad Islam Amjad in the "literary world" would long be remembered. —APP

No shortage of petrol in ICT: DC

ISLAMABAD: Deputy commissioner Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) administration Irfan Nawaz Memon on Friday said that there was no shortage of fuel and people should avoid creating panic. Talking to APP here on Friday, Irfan Nawaz Memon said, "The adequate reserves of petrol and diesel are available in all petrol pumps under the jurisdiction of ICT administration." "The administration has received no complaint of petrol shortage in any area," he added. He highlighted that some pumps have less stock of petrol including Hascol (Lethrah road), ZIC (Tramti Chowk), Shell pumps at F-7, Embassy Road, I-8 and Jhanghi Syedan. He informed that ICT administration also sealed three fuel stations and arrested three violators. The teams also sealed seven illegal LPG filling stations on corrupt practices, he said. —APP



ISLAMABAD: People offer absentia funeral prayer for Turkey and Syria earthquake victims at Faisal Mosque in Federal Capital. The 7.8-magnitude quake struck early February 6 near the Turkish-Syrian border, and by Friday morning the death toll in both countries topped 21,000. —Online

Ahsan for release of funds under Knowledge Corridor

The meeting was attended by officials of HEC, Finance Division and other stakeholders

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Ahsan Iqbal has directed the Finance Division to immediately release funds under the US-Pakistan Knowledge Corridor project to solve the problems of Pakistani students living in the United States so that they can complete their education at American universities.

The US-Pakistan Knowledge Corridor Scholarship Program was launched in 2015 by Federal Minister for Planning Ahsan Iqbal to promote cooperation in the field of education between the two countries under Vision 2025. Under the plan, 10,000 Pakistani

scholars will enroll in American universities over the next ten years as the government of Pakistan seeks to train its teaching resources in identified subject areas. The key objectives of this initiative were to increase the number and standard of faculty in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), enhance the research and academic capacity of Pakistan's higher education institutions by providing trained manpower to improve the quality of teaching. The federal minister while reviewing the progress of the project yesterday directed the finance division to immediately ensure the



release of the funds given under the scholarship to these students so that there is no disruption in the studies of these students. The meeting was attended by officials of HEC, Finance Division and other

stakeholders. On this occasion, the Federal Minister said that these students are asset of the country and despite financial difficulties, the government will continue to patronize them fully even though the country is going through an economic crisis.

He said that this US-Pakistan Knowledge Corridor was organized in 2015 so that Pakistani students can get access to the best education at the top universities of America and they can apply this knowledge in their country.

During the meeting, while giving a detailed briefing about the project, Executive Director HEC told

that so far 410 students have been awarded scholarships in various categories including Arts and Humanities, Design and Media, Social Sciences, Engineering, Basic Sciences, Medical and Allied Health Sciences, Agriculture, Veterinary Sciences, Computer Sciences, Emerging Technologies, Water Resources and Energy. ED HEC further informed the meeting that about 2,800 applications have been received for GRE-General training in 2023 and 35 GRE-General training sessions have been conducted including 10 virtual sessions and a total of 1,536 participants have benefited from the training.

Senate passes CDA (Amendment) Bill

ISLAMABAD: The Senate on Friday passed the Capital Development Authority (Amendment) Bill, 2022 to further amend the civic body's ordinance, 1960 as passed by the National Assembly. Minister of State for Law and Justice Shahadat Awan presented the bill on behalf of the Minister for Interior Rana Sana Ullah Khan on the floor of upper house of parliament. According to the statement of objects and reasons, the brief facts leading to amendment in CDA Ordinance, 1960 are that the Islamabad High Court (IHC) in its judgment dated December 29, 2017 in writ petition number 348/2016 set aside the notification for appointment of Metropolitan Corporation Islamabad Mayor Sheikh Anser Aziz, as Member of CDA Board with additional functions of CDA chairman. The IHC further directed the federal government to initiate the process for selection of an eligible person to be appointed as Member of the Board of the civic authority for the fixed term which has been specified under Section 6(3) of the Ordinance of 1960 and appoint a chairman for a fixed period of five years from amongst the members within 45 days from the date of announcement of the judgment. In order to elaborate the procedure for appointment of CDA chairman/members, it was decided to amend the relevant sections of the CDA Ordinance, 1960 accordingly. The president promulgated CDA (Amendment) Ordinance, 2018 on January 10, 2018 for a period of 120 days which was further extended for another period of 120 days with effect from May 10, 2018 till September 06, 2018. —APP



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Adviser Qamar Zaman Kairan signs the condolence book at Turkiye embassy to condole deaths of earthquake victims. —DNA

Translating threat into opportunity

FAIZA HUSSAINI

Due to the limitations and sanctions inflicted on the Iranian nation at the different intervals and in the various areas by the imperialists, the nation learnt how to make its way through the crisis by experience and endeavor. The role of the concepts has been of significant benefit, one of them being the epic of translating threat into opportunity. The mindset has contributed to amazing achievements and progresses during the past decades in Iran. The necessity to develop and stick to such mindset emerged initially when during the Iran-Iraq war, most of the countries of the

world decided to boycott Iran and to avoid providing any help and assistance to the newly independent nation of Iran raised by Iraq, while at the same time supporting and financing the imposing regime of the dictator Saddam Hossain. This epic, along with the concept of self-reliance, helped Iran to become the economy of resilience, has contributed to lots of scientific, industrial and sport achievements in Iran. During the Iran-Iraq war, the defense industries initiated in Iran, engaged to manufacture whatever needed at the front and in the back, varying from logistics to weaponry and maintenance. The threat of the imposed war and the concern of being left unsupported, added up in a pioneer

and progressive scientific and industrial dynamism. The same is true about the inalienable right of Iran to cherish the peaceful outcome of science and industry. While sanctions were meant not only to halt the scientific progress engine of the country in the nuclear energy, but also to hold back the whole train of the prosperity of the nation. However, the more sanctions were imposed, the more progress was made and the less dependent the country was becoming. Moreover, just about two years ago when the world was struggling with COVID-19, tens of thousands of valuable lives were dolorously claimed in Iran, just because of the inaccessibility and unavailability of the medical facilities

and the lack of aids such as vaccine. The main reason was due to the inhumane sanctions. On that time, Iran was even deprived of receiving the simplest medical aids from all over the world under the pretext of the sanctions and pressures imposed by the USA. However, enjoying remarkable determination in the youth, owing to adequate scientific efficacy and having faith in the mercy of the God Almighty, the Iranian scientists and industrialists managed to produce whatever needed as a medical facility for the country. Iran managed not only to produce, but also to export and donate the equipments to the other countries. Meanwhile, the indigenous Iranian vaccine called Covran

Barekat, was invented by the Iranian scientists and researchers in order to reverse the effects of the sanctions and to translate the policy of self-sufficiency and the epic of benefiting from the threats into practice. This makes it the first locally and regionally developed COVID-19 vaccine to be approved in the Middle East and being the single first one Islamic vaccine in the world. The examples of the epic of "Translating the Threats into Opportunity" are galore in the last four decades of the history of the Islamic Revolution of Iran. Now, Iran regards any restriction and sanctions as a way out from the dependency. Resilience Costs. But It Pays Joyously One Day.

US needs to explain Nord Stream blowup

What would happen if someone attacks a major civilian infrastructure? That depends. If one attacks a US pipeline, he will be hunted to every corner of the Earth. If anyone else destroys Nord Stream supplying natural gas to the US' allies he will be called a terrorist. But now that the Seymour Hersh report points to the US as the suspect of Nord Stream pipeline blow, they simply deny it. While it takes only a piece of A4 paper for the White House to deny the Hersh report, the whole world must remember how the same White House had denied intelligence failure in Vietnam, Guantanamo Bay torture, and even taken a box of white powder as "evidence" for its invasion of Iraq. Their former secretary of state Mike Pompeo even had a famous quote "We lied, we cheated, we stole", which adds to the world's lack of trust to the power center of the world's only superpower. It wouldn't surprise anybody if Hersh's report is true. In order to drag its European allies deeper into the Russia-Ukrainian military conflict, the US had already emptied its taxpayers' pockets, sending M1 Abrams to Ukraine and taking all measures possible in its toolbox. US mainstream media outlets have always been fond of digging secrets with much more resources than Hersh, but have remained silent on the issue this time. Which fact makes one further doubt that Washington has mobilized all its power to keep some secret. If the White House wants the global audiences to believe in its denial of the detailed Hersh report, better show some sincerity by explaining the whole thing at least in equal details. Don't forget that to attack a major civilian infrastructure as a natural gas pipeline amounts to suspicion of state terrorism. The Pentagon has also issued a statement saying that "The United States was not involved in the Nord Stream explosion". But Biden declared on Feb 7 last year that there would no longer be a Nord Stream 2 if Russian troops or tanks crossed the border into Ukraine — "We will bring an end to it." And, as was noted at the time, it was only the US that had anything to really gain from blowing up the pipelines, despite some Western officials trying to point the finger of blame at Russia. Not surprisingly, Russia, which has "repeatedly expressed" its belief that the US and NATO were responsible for the explosions, has called for an international investigation. While cautioning about treating the article as the primary source, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said it was "unfair" to ignore an article that was "remarkable for the depth of analysis" and the world must find out the truth about the act of sabotage as it set a "very dangerous precedent: if someone did it once, they can do it again anywhere in the world". If the US wants the world to believe its denial that it was the culprit, it should offer full assistance to a transparent and independent international probe into the incident.



ECP bans postings, transfers

ISLAMABAD: The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) on Friday banned postings, transfers of all government officials, and announcement of development schemes, 23 constituencies where bye-elections were scheduled to be held on March 16. The ECP notification directed the government and authorities not to post or transfer any officer in the districts, where the schedule for bye-elections has been issued on January 27, 2023, till the publication of names of nominated candidates.

The election watchdog also banned announcing development schemes by government functionaries or elected representatives including a local government functionary for the constituency where the schedule of elections has been announced. The aforementioned 23 constituencies where ban is imposed include: NA-04 Swat, NA-17 Haripur, NA-18 Swabi, NA-25 and NA-26 Nowshera, NA-32 Kohat, NA-38 Dera Ismail Khan, NA-43 Khyber, NA-52, 53, and NA-54 Islamabad, NA-57, 59, 60, 62 and NA-63 Rawalpindi, NA-67 Jhelum, NA-97 Bhakkar, NA-126 and NA-130 Lahore, NA-155 and NA-156 Multan, NA-191 Dera Ghazi Khan, NA-241, 242, 243, 244, 247, 250, 252, 254, and NA-256 Karachi and NA-265 Quetta. —APP

Losses in military terms have been colossal for the Russians, as well as for the Ukrainians, who have also suffered substantial civilian losses and infrastructure damage, which, given Kyiv's defensive posture, is likely to continue as the conflict risks becoming frozen. A year on, it is obvious that Russia has lost out and, in comparison, Ukraine has survived, with its military successes emboldening its leadership. The West has also outperformed all expectations and remained united in the pursuit of its goal of supporting Ukraine with enough "defensive" weapons to frustrate Moscow's advances. At the same time, the West is denying the Ukrainians the assault capabilities to turn the table on the Russians in the hope of keeping a ramp open for the Kremlin to walk down in the future. Meanwhile, global players like China and India have reaped some short-term benefits through their access to cheaper Russian energy, but they have stayed on the fence, refraining from actively pushing for peace, even though a protracted war would likely negatively impact their economic growth. Russia's invasion has descended into a zero-sum game and a guessing game to counter the fluid strategy of the opponent. It is clear that the West has crossed a new threshold in its assessment of the war, scaling up its weapons deliveries to Kyiv in terms of numbers and strategic quality, which modern theaters of war, have not seen used before. This demonstrates the stakes at play in the game of denying Russia a victory that could further encroach on democracy, liberty and Western freedoms and way of life. Russia's illegal annexation of four partially occupied regions of Ukraine last October, along with the constant posturing and

US foreign policy reduced to an afterthought

Marwan Bishara

But that has proven easier said than done, as Washington has channelled billions of dollars to Ukraine to fight a war that may last years amid warnings from populist Republicans about high inflation, the high cost of living, and high national debt. Hence the president, who seems keen on pursuing a second term, dialled down the costly global bravado in his speech and instead focused on "made in America" growth and prosperity. His call on Congress to tax billionaires and big

US President Joe Biden's State of the Union address on Tuesday night was quite upbeat. It was long on domestic affairs and short on foreign policy. It skimmed through the challenges posed by Russia and China and skipped the rest of the world altogether. It is a first for a US president to reduce the United States' global role to an afterthought, no less a president who considers himself an authority on foreign policy, or for a commander-in-chief, who has spent so much time, effort and political capital confronting Russia in Ukraine and containing China in Asia. This, therefore, begs the question: Why has Biden chosen to ignore entire continents and countless hot spots where America is directly involved? According to one theory, Americans are not terribly interested in the rest of the world and foreign policy is an unaffordable luxury at a time of economic hardships and culture wars. Even the elites with greater overseas interests realise that costly investment in foreign policy is becoming a hard sell for the public in the absence of direct national security threats. Biden understands that, which is why when he first took office, he vowed to end the "forever wars" and promised a "foreign policy for the middle class" — one that serves Americans at large. But that has proven easier said than done, as Washington has channelled billions of dollars to Ukraine to fight a war that may last years amid warnings from populist Republicans about high inflation, the high cost of living, and high national debt. Hence the president, who seems keen on pursuing a second term, dialled down the costly global bravado in his speech

and instead focused on "made in America" growth and prosperity. His call on Congress to tax billionaires and big corporations and lower the costs of drugs — aligning him with the "progressive left" led by Senator Bernie Sanders — may prove more popular among working and middle-class families than, say, restoring Ukraine's territorial integrity. According to another theory, however, there is not much to celebrate in US foreign policy, which is why the president decided to skip the subject altogether. The two theories are not mutually exclusive. Biden may have embraced Senator Sanders' prescriptions on the economic malaise, but do not expect him to take his approach on foreign policy, no less in the Middle East, where the US has failed miserably. And disgracefully. The president rejects Sanders' stance on the Israeli occupation and the racism of its prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu. Worse, he embraces the populist right-wing premier as his best friend, and continues to support his government of fascists and fanatics. But Israel is only one of several failures. There has not been a single foreign policy accomplishment anywhere in the greater Middle East, unless one considers the humiliating and disastrous withdrawal from Afghanistan in favour of the Taliban a success, after 20 years of horrific war. Truth be told, the Biden administration has helped reach ceasefires or maintain stalemates and status quos from Sudan to Syria, through Iraq, Libya, Palestine and Yemen. But that's hardly a good thing; in fact, it's a terrible normalisation of a dreadful situation. Biden, who promised to put human rights at

the centre of his foreign policy, has ignored US clients' human rights violations and has been supporting strongmen who rule with an iron fist, while the region teeters under violent sectarian and authoritarian regimes. Washington cannot in good conscience claim to confront Russia and China in the name of democracy, human rights and the preservation of sovereignty, while appeasing colonialism and dictatorship in the Middle East or elsewhere. It is hypocritical and it is counterproductive. Half a century after young Senator Biden first visited the Middle East in 1973, the older President Biden seems to view the region through the same prism he did back then: Israel, oil, and the Cold War with Moscow. But as one exhausted 19th-century saying goes: history repeats itself, the first time as tragedy, the second time as farce. It is indeed laughable that despite 50 years of costly strategic, diplomatic and military interventions, the US is back to square one, appeasing misbehaving regional clients in the name of global democratic crusade and setting rejected and humiliated in the process. Biden began and ended his State of the Union speech with the lofty idea that America is the land of possibilities. It is a nice and catchy slogan, one that allowed the country to dream big and to reach the moon, literally. America is indeed a mighty nation, but it is not almighty. It must stop its evangelical approach to world affairs as if it is ordained to shape it, police it, and lead it. It is not.

—Courtesy: Al Jazeera

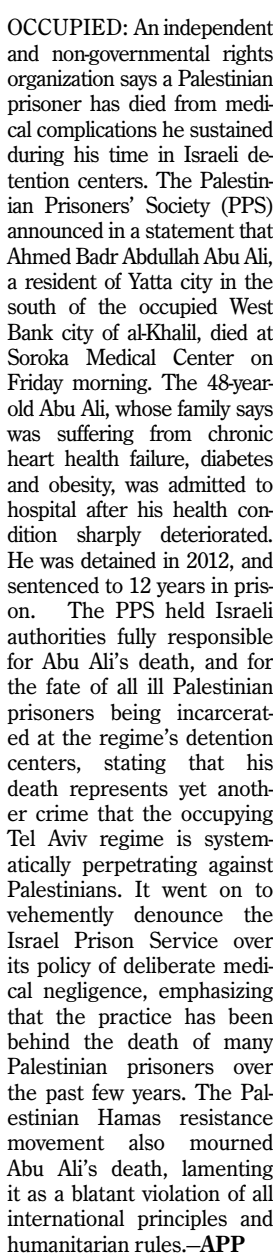
Arms for Ukraine: a battlefield race against time

Russia is preparing for a long war in Ukraine. Recent reports put the number of Russian troops in Ukraine at about 320,000. They are not there to look at cathedrals. They are there to kill Ukrainians and take territory. Vladimir Putin wants to win the war. He is demanding "sweeping advances". At the very least he wants to control the Donbas. There is absolutely no evidence that Russia is interested in any form of settlement to the conflict that will carry what the military expert Prof Lawrence Freedman calls "a whiff of defeat". Volodymyr Zelenskyy's visit to western Europe this week should be understood in that light. The Ukrainian president — who visited London, Paris and Brussels in quick succession — knows that the Russians are not interested in peace negotiations. What is more, he knows that western European and US leaders now know it too. The logic of this recognition is that the western states have no alternative but to arm Ukraine to win some battles. Mr Zelenskyy's trip to the west, like his trip to Washington at the end of last year, is aimed to secure the weaponry which can make that possible. It can be tempting to suppose the trip is exclusively focused on securing fighter planes. That was the message in Mr Zelenskyy's call in London to "give us wings", and in Boris Johnson's intervention in similar terms, which was simply designed to embarrass Rishi Sunak. The Ukrainian president repeated the call in his speech to the European parliament on Thursday. Mr Zelenskyy would certainly welcome more jet fighters. But he knows that the western military powers remain cautious about committing their jets, partly because they do not want to offer an excuse for Russia to trigger nuclear escalation and also because they do not want to become involved in strikes into Russian territory. There are also logistical and support reasons why fighter planes are not going to be sent to the frontline any time soon. Nevertheless, as Mr Sunak said on Wednesday, the issue is now on the table. Although the EU summit on Thursday was not specifically about weapons pledges to Ukraine, the weeks since Ramstein have seen even more commitments and serious momentum. On Tuesday, the German, Danish and Dutch defence ministers announced they would provide Ukraine with at least 100 refurbished Leopard battle tanks. More seem likely to follow, perhaps including Challenger 2 tanks from the UK. Ukrainian soldiers are being trained to use them. In January, Mr Zelenskyy asked for 300 tanks. He is getting closer to securing them. The worry — and it is a real one — is that Russia will be ready to advance, albeit also ready to launch heavy losses, at the month's end, before Ukraine is ready to launch its enhanced battle formations. It is a race against time, which is why Mr Zelenskyy has been at his most persuasive and urgent this week in pressing for the support he demands.

Courtesy: Arab News

FROM PAGE 01
Pakistan, the brotherly
Pakistani people, and the
family of the deceased.
May God have mercy on
the writer, and poet Am-
jad, and may he rest in
peace. We pray for peace
of his great soul. - DNA

ISLAMABAD: Acting Foreign Secretary, Muhammad Syarif Qazi, today briefed the representatives of the Diplomatic Missions in Islamabad on the situation in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (ILOK). The Acting Foreign Secretary highlighted the egregious human rights violations in ILOK and India's illegal attempts to change the territorial integrity of Jammu and Kashmir. He said that the international community that durable peace in South Asia remained contingent upon peaceful resolution of the Jammu and Kashmir dispute. The Acting Foreign Secretary called upon the international community to urge India to stop human rights violations in ILOK; reverse its illegal and unilateral actions of 5 August 2019; and implement the relevant UN Security Council resolutions relating to Jammu and Kashmir. He said that the international community has the right to self-determination. The Acting Foreign Secretary's briefing was part of Pakistan's regular diplomatic outreach to keep the international community apprised of the developments relating to ILOK and the region. - DN



Chairman BoG ISSI Ambassador Khalid Mahmood, and Director Amina Khan also spoke on the occasion.

BUSSELL: The investigation into the corruption scandal engulfing the European Parliament has resulted in a new arrest: Marc Tarabella, the Belgian MEP formerly associated with the socialist group, was taken into police custody on Friday morning. Tarabella is now waiting for a judge to appear on a judicial warrant to arrest him, to charge or charge him as part of the widening probe, the Belgian Federal Prosecutor's Office confirmed to Euronews, without specifying the possible charges he might face. The MEP will have to be heard in a maximum period of 48 hours. Since his name became embroiled in the scandal, Tarabella has consistently defended his innocence. The MEP has also deprived of immunity from arrest, but took place on Friday morning, between 6:00 and 8:00 AM, the prosecutor said. European legislators enjoy immunity from detention and legal proceedings, but Tarabella lost this privilege last week after his colleagues voted to strip him of this special protection. Tarabella himself voted for the lifting of his own immunity. Italian MEP Andrea Cosentino has also deprived of immunity from arrest. Since the start of the investigation in mid-December, over 400 people have been officially charged: Greek MEP Eva Kaili, her domestic partner Francesco Giorgi, former MEP Pier Antonio Panzeri and NGO director Nicolò Figliamala. The four were charged with participation in a criminal organisation, corruption and money laundering. Giorgi, Giorgi and Panzeri remain in prison, without Figliamala. Since the investigation began, there have been several arrests. The investigation is looking into illicit lobbying allegedly carried out by Qatar and Morocco in a bid to influence EU decision-making. Both Qatar and Morocco vigorously deny the claims. The lobbying entailed "large sums" of money and "substantial" gifts, prosecutors said. Over 1.5 million in cash has been seized across dozens of locations in Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Spain and the Arab countries and the hemisphere, has signed a deal with prosecutors in which he admitted his criminal participation in bribery and committed to sharing "revealing" details about the cash-for-vote scheme. —APP

The carramming took place in Ramot, a Jewish settlement in East Jerusalem. Tensions have soared since the Israeli-annexation of eastern half of the city, following a Palestinian shooting spree in the West Bank. The Israeli police shot and killed a Palestinian in the deadliest attack in Jerusalem in over a decade. The Israeli rescue service identified the two killed as a 16-year-old Palestinian and a man in his 20s. It said medics were treating five injured, including a year-old in critical condition undergoing CPR. Others were unconscious and hospitalized. The Israeli police said the 16-year-old was shot and killed the suspected attacker at the scene, there was no immediate word on his identity. The Islamic militant group Palestinian Islamic Jihad and Hamas, which controls the Gaza Strip, praised the attack but did not immediately claim responsibility. Footage from the scene showed police and paramedics swarming a mangled blue Mazda car. The Israeli police said the car was used to transport the two men. Along the way, Israeli claims each of Jerusalem's six universities, captured by Israel in the 1967 Mideast war, as a capital of their future state. Hostilities have escalated in eastern Jerusalem and the West Bank since Israel stepped up operations against Hamas in Gaza, including a series of strikes against Palestinian targets with US aid. (AP)



ISLAMABAD: Speaker National Assembly Raja Pervez Ashraf receiving Ambassador of the Syrian Arab, Ramez Alraee at Parliament House.— APP

Briefs

S. Korea lifts visa curbs on Chinese travelers

SEOUL: South Korea plans to resume issuing short-term visas for travellers from China on Saturday after China improved its COVID-19 situation, Seoul officials said on Friday. South Korea suspended issuing short-term visas to Chinese visitors last month after China abruptly ended its "zero-COVID" policy, leading to a wave of infections. Beijing retaliated by halting short-term visas for South Korean travellers. Kim Sung-ho, South Korea's vice interior minister in charge of disaster and safety management, said the government had decided to restart the visa issuance after the number of infections among Chinese arrivals dropped significantly, and new strains of the virus have not emerged. South Korea's prime minister, Han Duck-soo, last week hinted at lifting restrictions before the end of February if China's COVID situation became "manageable". Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson Mao Ning said the lifting of visa restrictions was "a step in the right direction". "China will actively consider the resumption of short-term visas for South Korean citizens on a reciprocal basis. We hope that the Republic of Korea will work with China to create more convenience for the normal flow of people between the two sides," she said at a regular briefing. - Agencies

Belarus calls closing of crossing point 'catastrophic'

MINSK: Belarus on Friday condemned as "catastrophic" a decision by Poland to close a border checkpoint between the two countries, saying it could lead to a collapse on both sides of the border. Poland said on Thursday, citing security concerns, it would close a key border crossing into Belarus at Bobrowniki, starting at 12 p.m. (1100 GMT) on Friday, driving already hostile relations between the two countries to a new low. Poland has been a key refuge for opponents of Belarus President Alexander Lukashenko and Warsaw has become one of Kyiv's staunchest supporters since Belarus' main ally Russia invaded Ukraine in February 2022. The Belarus government criticised the border decision on Thursday, but went further in a statement on Friday, calling the move irrational and dangerous. "The actions of the Polish authorities could lead to a collapse on both sides of the border," the country's border committee said in a statement shared on social media. After the closure comes into force, only two of six major land crossing points along the two countries' 400-km (250-mile) border will be open, the border force said. - Agencies

Missiles target Ukraine's cities as Russian forces advance

Russia's latest aerial attack saw missiles cross Moldovan airspace. Kyiv's top general said missiles also flew above Romania - a claim denied by Romania

KYIV: Russia launched a wave of attacks on Ukrainian infrastructure in the cities of Kharkiv and Zaporizhzhia on Friday morning as Ukrainian officials said a long-awaited Russian offensive was under way in the east. At least 17 missiles hit the southeastern city of Zaporizhzhia in an hour, acting mayor Anatolii Kuriyev said, and the state grid operator said high-voltage facilities across the country had been hit and electricity supplies shut down. Russia has repeatedly struck civilian infrastructure far from the front lines over the last four months, leaving millions of Ukrainians in major cities without power, heat or water for days at a time in the middle of winter. Air raid sirens blared across the country during the morning rush hour and local officials urged weary civilians to head home and take shelter. Kyiv's city administration said air defences were working as explosions were heard in the capital. Kharkiv regional governor Oleh Synehubov reported about 10 explosions and said power had been cut in some areas. Critical infrastructure was also hit in Khmelnytskyi in the west and the Dnipropetrovsk region in central Ukraine, regional officials said. Air force spokesperson Yuriy Ihnat told

Ukrainian television that Ukrainian air defences had shot down five of seven drones and five out of six Kaliber missiles. However, the air force also said Russia had launched 35 S-300 missiles, which Ukraine's air defences are unable to shoot down, at the Kharkiv and Zaporizhzhia regions. Ukraine has been bracing itself for a new Russian offensive in the belief that, after months of reverses, President Vladimir Putin wants to be able to tout a battlefield success before the anniversary of the invasion he launched on Feb. 24. Russia's main focus has been the town of Bakhmut in the eastern Donetsk province, a region whose capture has been one of Moscow's declared priorities since the start of the war. After months of static artillery battles that have become known to both sides as the "meat grinder", Russian forces, including the Wagner private army which has recruited tens of thousands of convicts with a promise of pardons, have finally begun to encircle the town. Britain's Defence Ministry said Wagner forces appeared to have advanced two to three km around the north of Bakhmut since Tuesday - a remarkably rapid push in a battle where front lines have barely moved for months. - Agencies

IMPORTANCE OF CULTURAL HERITAGE

Japan provides \$ 0.37 mn for Taxila Museum improvement

Japanese ambassador says the ancient Gandhara civilization is very close to the heart of Japanese people and this project would lead to attract more tourists to Pakistan

MAHNOOR ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: The Government of Japan has agreed to provide new grant assistance worth 48.8 million Japanese Yen (equivalent to around 0.37 million USD/ around 101.6 million PKR) for enhancement of the antiquities conservation and exhibition capacity of Taxila Museum. On February 10, 2023, a signing ceremony for the assistance was held at the Ministry of Economic Affairs in Islamabad. H.E. Mr. WADA Mitsuhiro, Ambassador of Japan, Mr. KINOSHITA Yasumitsu, Chief Representative of Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), Dr. Kazim Niaz, Secretary, Ministry of Economic Affairs, and other officials from both countries attended this ceremony. The Taxila Museum is located in the middle of ancient Gandharan Buddhist ruins in Taxila, a UNESCO World Heritage site with Gandharan arts of great historical and cultural value. The museum preserves and exhibits the precious artifacts excavated in this area. As of now, only approximately 30% of the ruins at this site has been excavated, and the excavation is still under progress. However, there are insufficient facilities and equipment to display the increasing number of excavated works in the museum, as well as to prevent these artifacts from deteriorating. This project aims to promote understanding of the history and cultural heritage of Gandharan Buddhism among domestic and overseas visitors and will do so by providing the Taxila Museum with the necessary equipment for improving its capacity for the conservation and exhibition of historical artifacts excavated from the Gandharan ruins. This project also aims to enrich cultural education for youths, and to facilitate cultural conservation, thereby contributing to SDGs (Sustainable Development Goals) Goal 11 (Sustainable cities and communities). In the signing ceremony, H.E. Mr. WADA Mitsuhiro



stated, "The Government of Japan recognizes the importance of cultural heritage and attaches great value to its preservation and supports Pakistan in this area as well. The ancient Gandhara civilization is very close to the heart of Japanese people and this project would lead to attract more tourists to Pakistan in the future." Mr. KINOSHITA while speaking at the

event said "Taxila Museum has its own cultural identity and monumental historical significance. We hope that the upgraded Taxila museum will contribute in keeping the cultural heritage of Pakistan intact and making those accessible to researchers, scholars and students who would like to reconnect with the past and appreciate its monumental significance".

Moldovan PM resigns, government collapses

CHISINAU: Moldova's pro-Western government resigned on Friday after a turbulent 18 months in power marked by economic turmoil and the spillover effects of Russia's war in neighbouring Ukraine. In the latest tensions with Moscow over the war, the government said shortly before Prime Minister Natalia Gavriluta announced her resignation that a Russian missile had violated Moldovan airspace, and summoned Russia's ambassador to protest. President Maia Sandu accepted Gavriluta's decision and said she would consult with parliamentary groups on nominating a new prime minister. She gave no sign of abandoning her pro-Western policies that include seeking European Union accession. "Thank you so much for your enormous sacrifice and efforts to lead the country in a time of so many crises," Sandu wrote on Facebook. "In spite of unprecedented challenges, the country was governed responsibly, with a lot of attention and dedicated work. We have stability, peace and development - where others wanted war and bankruptcy." The former Soviet republic of 2.5 million has suffered from soaring inflation and was strained last year by an influx of Ukrainian refugees. It has also suffered power cuts following Russian air attacks on Ukrainian energy infrastructure, and has struggled to break its dependence on Russian gas. The steep price increases, particularly for Russian gas, led to street protests last year in which demonstrators called for the government and Sandu to resign. The protests, organised by the party of exiled opposition politician Ilan Shor, marked the most serious political challenge to Sandu since her landslide election win in 2020 on a pro-European and anti-corruption platform. - Agencies



KARACHI: Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari along with Chief of the Naval Staff, Admiral Muhammad Amjad Khan Niazi, Federal Minister for Maritime Affairs Senator Syed Faisal Ali Subzwari, CM Sindh Syed Murad Ali Shah, inaugurates Pakistan International Maritime Expo & Conference PIMEC -2023at Expo Centre. - APP

Indian SC rejects plea to ban BBC coverage

WEB DESK

NEW DELHI: The Supreme Court of India has dismissed a petition filed by the Hindu Sena president requesting a ban on British Broadcasting Corporation's (BBC) coverage in the country and an investigation into the broadcaster's "anti-India" rhetoric in reporting and films, Indian media outlets reported on Friday. The BBC documentary revolves around Modi who was the chief minister of the western state of Gujarat when it was gripped by riots that left more than 1,000 people dead - most of them Muslims. The violence erupted after a train carrying Hindu pilgrims caught fire, killing 59. Accused of failing to stop the rioting, Modi had denied the accusations and was exonerated in 2012 following an inquiry by India's top court. Another petition questioning his exoneration was dismissed last year. According to The Hindu, a two-judge bench comprising Justice Sanjiv Khanna and MM Sundresh rejected today the petition filed by Vishnu Gupta, terming it as "absolutely misconceived" and bearing "no merit".

NAB law tweaks: SC raises questions on Imran's conduct

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court on Friday raised important questions on the conduct of Imran Khan and his party during the hearing of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) chairman's petition against the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) amendments. During the hearing in the apex court, Justice Mansoor Ali Shah inquired whether the former premier and his party avoided voting on the NAB Amendment Bill, asking "Does a abstainer have a claim in court?" Further expressing displeasure, Justice Shah stated that "can a member of the assembly leave the parliament empty?" Justice Shah added that when the resignations of PTI's members of

the National Assembly (NA) were not accepted, it meant that membership of the lawmakers was intact. He further noted that the "member of the assembly is the representative of the people of the constituency and the trustee of their trust", and then asked if it "right for the trustee of public trust to boycott the parliament?" The apex court justice further asked "how will it be determined that the NAB amendments are a case of public interest and importance?" Justice Shah also noted that it has not been identified which fundamental rights the NAB amendments conflict with. Makhdoom Ali Khan, the lawyer of the federal government, then

made his remarks during the hearing and said that the PTI chief could have defeated the NAB amendments in the assembly if he wanted. Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Umar Ata Bandial then remarked that the court will get an answer from the former prime minister on this point. The CJP also asked if the court should not hear a public interest case only on the basis that the petitioner's conduct was not correct. He also noted that "every leader takes recourse to the Constitution to justify his actions", adding that "boycotting the Parliament was a political strategy of PTI and that there is no legal justification for the political strategy". - DNA

Xinjiang resumes passenger flights to Pakistan

BEIJING: Northwest China's Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region has resumed direct regular passenger flights to Pakistan for the first time since the COVID-19 pandemic started. China Southern Airlines resumed its regular passenger flights between Urumqi, the capital of Xinjiang, and Islamabad in Pakistan on Wednesday after three years of suspension due to COVID-19, CEN reported. More than 160 passengers, mostly overseas students and business people, took the flights to and from Islamabad on Wednesday, according to the Xinjiang subsidiary of China Southern Airlines. One passenger surnamed Xiang, who engages in trade and regularly travels between China and Pakistan, said that the resumption of the direct service could greatly shorten travel time and help him grasp market opportunities more quickly. The airline is scheduled to operate one-round trip per week. - APP

Chinese spy balloon not a major security breach: Biden

WEB DESK

WASHINGTON: President Joe Biden, under fire from some lawmakers, said on Thursday he did not view a Chinese spy balloon that transited the United States before it was shot down in the Atlantic Ocean to have been a major security breach. Biden, who has sought to maintain communications with China and not allow tensions with Beijing to get out of control, said in a Noticias Telemundo interview that he did not regret shooting down the balloon sooner. "It's not a major breach," Biden said. "I mean, look, it's totally ... it's a violation of international law. It's our airspace. And once it comes into our space, we can do what we want with it." He said U.S. military officials were worried that by shooting it down over land, the balloon and its parts could drop into a populated area. "This thing was gigantic. What happened if it came down and hit a school in a rural area? What happened if it came down? So I told them as soon as they could shoot it down, shoot it down. They made a wise decision. They shot it down over water, they're recovering most of the parts, and they're good," he said. Biden on Feb. 2 ordered the balloon shot down once it crossed into the northwestern United States, but acquiesced to the U.S. military's request to not act until it was over water. The 200-foot-tall (61-meter) balloon, along with its undercarriage of electronic gadgetry, was shot down by a U.S. fighter jet off the coast of South Carolina on Feb. 4. The U.S. military has been recovering as many parts as possible.

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11# Block 18-A, Awan Plaza,
G-8 Markez, Islamabad-Pakistan
Ph: 051-2261960, 051-2266165