



# Islamabad POST

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**US Vice President, Kamala Harris calls for restraint in Gaza**

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**Pak-Uzbekistan enjoys excellent ties: Jamal Shah**

Detailed News On Page-04



**Mbappe could win Ballon d'Or with PSG: Ronaldinho**

Detailed News On Page-06



## 58th day of genocide

# Over 700 killed in 24 hours in Gaza

Pope Francis deplores end of Israeli-Hamas truce, calls for new ceasefire

DNA

GAZA CITY: At least 700 Palestinians, most of them women and children, have been killed in the latest round of Israeli attacks on the besieged Gaza Strip over the past 24 hours. The relentless Israeli bombardment has destroyed numerous homes, buildings, residential apartments, and both public and private properties. The Israeli military bombarded the Jabalya refugee camp in northern Gaza with missile shells, killing over 100 Palestinians. The Palestinian Health Ministry in Gaza announced on Sunday that at least 400 people were killed in attacks on Shujaiya neighborhood and Jabalya refugee camp. Several civilians were killed and others injured when an Israeli airstrike targeted a residential building in the al-Daraj neighborhood in Gaza City.

Many people also lost their lives when a house was targeted by Israeli warplanes in Deir al-Balah in central Gaza. Israel has also been continuing its attacks on the eastern areas of Khan Yunis in southern Gaza. The latest Israeli attacks targeted a house in the al-Junainah area in Rafah, in southern Gaza, leaving several dead. The Israeli military further bombed a house in the Nadim area of the Al-Zeitoun neighborhood, east of Gaza City. Airstrikes were also reported in the vicinity of the Kamal Adwan Hospital in northern Gaza. Many civilians are reportedly trapped under the rubble. Continuous explosions are also heard in northern areas of Gaza as well. The death toll in the besieged territory since October 7 is now around 16,000. Most of the victims are women and children. The Gaza Health Ministry says Israeli forces have deliberately targeted 130 health facilities and put 20 hospitals out of service. As the total siege imposed by Israel on the already blockaded territory continues, food is running out, and bread is becoming more difficult to get with each passing day.

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## Israel seeking to 'separate' WB and Gaza

Israel occupied the West Bank in the 1967 Six-Day War

WEB DESK

RAMALLAH: The Palestinian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates has warned that Israel is planning to "solidify the separation" between the occupied West Bank and the besieged Gaza Strip in an attempt to undermine the prospects of a future Palestinian state. The ministry made the remarks in a statement posted on X, formerly known as Twitter, on Sunday, saying that Israel seeks to carry out the plan amid its ongoing deadly bombing campaign against Gaza. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has time and again said he plans to annex "all" settlements in the occupied West Bank. Israel occupied the West Bank in the 1967 Six-Day War, in a move never recognized by the international community. The Palestinian foreign ministry further condemned the killing of a 38-year-old Palestinian man, who was shot by Israeli settlers on Saturday.

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DUBAI: Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar meets the Pakistani students who won the award in one of the categories of Zayed Sustainability Awards 2023. - DNA

## In December Key US officials to visit Pak

Pak-US continue to hold consultations on a range of issues

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan and the United States are holding consultations over several issues including the situation in Afghanistan, said the Foreign Office in a statement issued on Sunday. FO spokesperson Mumtaz Zahra Baloch said that the two countries are also exchanging visits in a bid to speed up the consultation process, adding that important US officials are visiting Pakistan over the coming days. Islamabad has continuously blamed Kabul for rising terrorist attacks and usage of

Continued on Page 06

# Adapting Indus Basin key to tackle climate change in Pakistan

Pakistan's school for orphans 'KORT' wins prestigious Zayed Sustainability Prize

NEWS DESK

DUBAI: Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar on Sunday said adapting Pakistan to climate change was vital to adapt the Indus Basin to the impacts of climate as majority of the population was linked with the river. He said Pakistan's climate challenge was primarily a water challenge which needed immediate actions to be addressed. Addressing an event on "Living Indus Initiative" held here at the Pakistan Pavilion at the venue of United Nations' 28th Conference of Parties (COP 28), the prime minister said Pakistan was the 8th most vulnerable country in the world to the impacts of climate change. He said Living Indus was as an umbrella initiative aimed at restoring the ecological health of the Indus within the boundaries of Pakistan, which was most vulnerable to climate change. He maintained that the government of Pakistan was clear on its priorities with Living Indus. "This umbrella initiative emerge from extensive

Continued on Page 06

## MQM-P pushes for reform agenda

DNA

KARACHI: Muttahida Qaumi Movement-Pakistan (MQM-P) said it pledges support towards any federal government or prime minister that ensures pushing for the party's proposed constitutional amendments. The party's Senior Deputy Convener, Syed Mustafa Kamal, said the MQM-P has adopted a singular focus of committing their endorsement towards such a government and premier. Earlier this week, the party organised a conference to facilitate "comprehensive" constitutional amendments to decentralise power. MQM-P leaders insisted that the Constitution, in its present form, could neither protect itself nor common

Continued on Page 06

## Briefs

### Qaiser sent on judicial remand

SAID ALAM KHAN

PESHAWAR: A judicial magistrate on Sunday sent former speaker of National Assembly PTI leader Asad Qaiser to jail on judicial remand in the May 9 vandalism case. Police sought physical remand of Asad Qaiser, when he was produced before magistrate Atta-ur-Rehman. But the magistrate rejected police request and ordered to send Asad Qaiser to jail on judicial remand. The ex-speaker was re-arrested, after securing bail from a district and sessions court in Mardan on Saturday. It's worth mentioning here that Charsadda police arrested him on November 24th in May 9 vandalism case.

## Khattak claims lack of democracy in PTI

Says there should be democracy in the party, not fraudulent elections

SHAMIM SHAHID

PESHAWAR: Parvez Khattak, chief of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf Parliamentarian, has exposed PTI's history of conducting fake intra-party polls, revealing how the party has held such polls four to five times previously. The senior politician shared that the elections within PTI are merely done for paperwork. Speaking with media in Peshawar, Khattak said: "There should be democracy in the party, not fraudulent elections." The politico's comments come a day after the PTI elected Barrister Gohar Khan as its new chairman of the party after his nomination was made by none by ex-chief Imran Khan himself, who currently remains behind bars in multiple cases and stands disqualified following his trial in Toshakhana case. The party's intra-party polls, however, remain contentious as several party members, particularly those who joined Khan at the time of PTI's inception, oppose the election of Barrister Gohar as the new head of

Continued on Page 06

## PPP voices objections on ECP's delimitations

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: After the Election Commission of Pakistan's (ECP) issued a final list of delimitations, Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) leader Sharjeel Memon Sunday said that the party will utilise "constitutional" means to convey its reservations over the redrawing of the national and provincial assemblies constituencies. Earlier this week, the electoral watchdog, amid rumours of delay in general polls, notified the final list of delimitation of constituencies of the national and four provincial assemblies. The development would pave the way for the announcement of the election schedule, which is

Continued on Page 06

## Pak inches closer to FTA with GCC

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan and Saudi Arabia have reached a consensus on the investment modalities, paving a path for the ratification of a much-awaited free trade agreement (FTA) with the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) - a development that has been pending for the past 19 years, confirmed Information Minister Murtaza Solangi on Sunday. Talking to X - formerly known as Twitter - the minister said:

Continued on Page 06

## Won't accept any 'selection'

ABBAS HASHMI

LAHORE: Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) Emir Sirajul Haq said on Sunday that his party will not allow any "selection" in the upcoming elections. Addressing a press conference in Lahore, Haq said: "The country's youth will continue their efforts from December 10 to February 8 for the elections. We are hopeful that the elections will be held in the country. The country will have to face severe hardships if the democracy is derailed." He made it clear that the JI would opt for alliance with the masses only. Speaking about the situation in Gaza, Haq said, "The JI is standing by the people of Gaza. We want to ask the govt to take some practical steps in connection with Gaza."

# Punjab to launch one window operation for Italian investors

Italian envoy Andreas Ferrarese meets CM Punjab Mohsin Naqvi

ABID RAZA

LAHORE: The Ambassador of Italy Mr. Andreas Ferrarese met with the Chief Minister Punjab Mohsin Naqvi in which matters pertaining to the enhancement of culture, tourism and mutual trade sectors were discussed. CM Mohsin Naqvi underscored that time has come to transform mutual relations between Pakistan and Italy into a beneficial economic partnership. The relationship will receive

a new dimension with the exchange of mutual trade and cultural delegations. We are commencing One Window Operation for the investors in Punjab. All NOCs will be available under a single roof through the One Window Operation. There are ample investment opportunities available in Punjab for the Italian investors. CM Mohsin Naqvi thanked the Italian Ambassador for the support extended by Italy for GSP Plus Status. The Italian Ambassador underlined the ongoing cooperation with the Punjab government in various sectors will further be promoted.



LAHORE: Ambassador of Italy Andreas Ferrarese in a meeting with Punjab Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi, in Lahore on Sunday. - DNA

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# WB vice President visits Tarbela 5th extension

World Bank is providing financial support for construction of these projects

SAID ALAM KHAN

PESHAWAR: The World Bank Vice President Martin Raiser along with a 4-member delegation, visited Tarbela 5th Extension and Dasu Hydropower Project, being constructed on Tunnel No. 5 of Tarbela Dam. He witnessed construction activities on main components. The project management apprised him about progress on the power house, tail race culvert, canal and switch

yard. Tarbela 5th Extension has an installed power generation capacity of 1530 MW. On its completion, power generation capacity at Tarbela Dam will increase from 4888 MW to 6418 MW. Tarbela 5th Extension Project will start electricity generation in 2025. Later, the World Bank Vice President also visited 1410 MW-Tarbela 4th Extension Hydel Power Station, completed in 2018 with financial assistance of the World Bank. He was informed during the visit that Tarbela 4th Extension, since its completion, has provided 22.56 billion units to the National Grid. In the second leg, the World Bank Vice President flew to under-construction Dasu Hydropower Project at River Indus upstream of Dasu town in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. He visited the power house, transformers cavern and the project colony to review construction activities. Dasu project team, in a briefing, informed him about progress on main works of the project. It was briefed that the river diversion system has been functioning satisfactorily since its completion early this year. Flushing tunnel is also complete, while excavation of right bank bypass tunnel has recently been completed. Excavation of right and left abutment of the main dam, intake, power house, tailrace tunnel, surge chamber and transformers cavern is in progress. The 4320 MW-Dasu Hydropower Project will be completed in two stages. At present, WAPDA is constructing Stage-I, with installed generation capacity of 2160 MW and annual energy generation of 12 billion units. Stage-I of the Project is likely to be commissioned in 2026.

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## CM Naqvi directs up gradation of Holy Family hospital

LAHORE: Chief Minister Punjab Mohsin Naqvi paid a detailed visit to the Holy Family Hospital Rawalpindi early morning and assigned a deadline to complete the upgradation project by 31st January. CM Mohsin Naqvi reviewed progress being made on the hospital upgradation work for two hours. CM expressed his indignation over seeing the quality of tiles being fixed on the floor and ordered to fix same quality of tiles. CM directed to ensure the quality in the upgradation work at any cost. Mohsin Naqvi asserted that no compromise will be made on the quality work. CM inspected ongoing construction activities in the old building, OPD and various wards. Mohsin Naqvi went to the basement, ground floor, first floor and directed to speed up construction activities. CM underlined that we would complete the project before the stipulated timeframe adding that work on the upgradation is ongoing for 24 hours. We are completing the work in the old and new block of the hospital before the stipulated time. 33 percent work of the old block has been completed and 26 percent work was to be completed till 1st December. The access roads up to the Holy Family Hospital are also being widened. Day and night hard work is being done for the improvement of Health Department in Punjab. Upgradation work of more than 100 hospitals is ongoing which will soon be completed. It is our utmost strive to improve the condition of hospitals before the expiry of our tenure. CM Mohsin Naqvi presided over a meeting to review upgradation work of the hospital. CM was given a briefing about progress being made on the upgradation work. Mohsin Naqvi issued directions to the concerned officials for early completion of the upgradation work. Provincial Minister for Primary and Secondary Health Dr. Jamal Nasir, Chief Secretary Zahid Akhtar Zaman, Secretary Health, Secretary C&W, Commissioner Rawalpindi.—DNA

## FGEHA to complete Green Enclave-II in 2025

ISLAMABAD: The Federal Government Employees Housing Authority (FGEHA) would complete the development work of Green Enclave-II residential project of the government employees by 2025. "The work of the first part of the project Green Enclave-II (Commoners Sky Garden) is going on vigorously. The Housing Authority Green Enclave II-Project is a joint venture of FGEHA, a subsidiary of the Ministry of Housing and Construction, with Sky Garden to provide low-cost plots/flats to government employees," an official told APP. He said, "Work on the first part of Green Enclave-II was progressing towards completion, which

consisted of about 11,000 kanals of land, and the development work on about 2403 kanals of the first part consisting of (A, B, C, D & E) blocks of Phase-I to be completed by the end of 2025 while 20 percent work is completed in Block D." The road work and other facilities would also be completed soon as per promises made by the Housing Authority within the stipulated time period, he added. To a question, the official replied, "FGEHA is planning to start new residential projects in eight major cities of the country to provide housing to government employees and general public." "The authority has already re-

ceived several applications from land owners, companies and firms interested in the mega projects," he added. He said the applications were invited from land owners, developers, firms and eligible individuals for the supply of land for housing schemes (plots, houses and apartments) projects in major cities of the country. The procedure for applications and selection was being followed as per Joint Venture Regulations 2020, he added. He said the authority was planning to launch new residential projects in eight major cities of the country, including the twin cities Rawalpindi and Islamabad. Other cities include Lahore, Peshawar, Quetta, Multan, Faisalabad and Karachi.

## Diversification lures domestic and foreign investors : Saqib Rafiq

Saqib Rafiq has said that diversification in Pakistan's capital market can help the expansion and broadening of investment options beyond traditional avenues



RAWALPINDI: The Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (RCCI) President Saqib Rafiq has said that diversification in Pakistan's capital market can help the expansion and broadening of investment options beyond traditional avenues. Pakistan's capital market has primarily revolved around equities and government securities, but efforts have been made to diversify and develop other investment instruments to attract both domestic and foreign investors. He made these remarks at the inaugural ceremony of Invest Expo 2023 organized by Pakistan Mercantile Exchange (PMEX) with the support of Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan (SECP) and other capital market entities at Islamabad. SECP Chairman Akif Saeed, Former RCCI Presidents Major (R) Amanullah Khan, Main Humayun Parvez, Zahid Latif Khan, ICCI President Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari, representatives from ICAP, Distinguished RCCI members, among others, were also present on the occasion. Saqib Rafiq also lauded SECP's role in maintaining a fair and transparent marketplace, ensuring investor rights and interests which are protected through regulatory safeguards. The expo showcased the financial sector from stock brokers, commodities brokers, mutual funds, insurance, and microfinance companies, aiming to promote safe investment alternatives. The expo celebrated the empowerment of investors, emphasizing the critical importance of investor awareness for a robust financial ecosystem.—DNA

## Serena Hotels and ConnectHear unite for walk on disabilities day

Together, we strive to make a meaningful impact and contribute to positive change

ISLAMABAD: Serena Hotels, in a heartfelt partnership with ConnectHear under the Public Diplomacy initiative, has organized a walk of awareness on the International Day of Persons with Disabilities which started off at MOFA and culminated at Serena Business Complex in Islamabad. This day is a global celebration of the rights and achievements of people with disabilities. The United Nations in 1992, officially declared a day dedicated to persons with disabilities, emphasizing the theme of "Full Participation and Equality" within society and developmental contexts. It highlights the crucial need for the inclusive involvement of individuals with disabilities across all facets of society and development, emphasizing the essential role this plays in creating a more equitable and compassionate world.

The event was attended by a significant number of participants including students, distinguished dignitaries, representatives from the corporate sector

and media professionals and the effort to promote awareness through diverse activities was positively embraced by all the attendees. Azeema Dhanjee, the co-

founder of ConnectHear in her speech said, "our mission is to give the Deaf individuals of Pakistan the tools they need to make communication accessible to them,

allowing them to be truly independent". She also highlighted that Islamabad Serena Hotel has become the pioneer in the industry by implementing a sign language interpretation service to make their hotel accessible. She expressed gratitude towards Serena Hotels for both organizing the accessibility walk in Islamabad and for demonstrating a sincere commitment to this initiative. Serena Hotels has consistently endeavoured to play its role in raising awareness through various initiatives under the umbrella of Public Diplomacy and take pride in providing platform and in collaborating with organizations such as ConnectHear, who are dedicated to tirelessly ensuring people's right to access essential services. Together, we strive to make a meaningful impact and contribute to positive change.



ISLAMABAD: Participants flash victory sign during a walk titled "International Day of Persons with Disabilities in front of Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Federal Capital.— ONLINE



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of UAE Hamad Alzaabi posing for a picture with the embassy staff on the occasion of the National Day of UAE.—DNA

## Pak-China Friendship Hospital completed, inauguration on Monday

ISLAMABAD: Pak-China Friendship Hospital Gwadar, a milestone project of China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) has been completed and is ready to provide the state of the art medical and health facilities to thousands of local residents of Gwadar. Completed at the cost of \$100 million with the financing of the Chinese government, the Pak-China Friendship Hospital is all set to be inaugurated on December 04. Talking to Gwadar Pro, Pak-China Friendship Hospital official said that spanning over 68 acres of land, the 300-bed hospital has been equipped with modern medical facilities. He added that it has been constructed under the Gwadar Development Authority (GDA) Business Plan. He said that Pak-China Friendship Hospital has six blocks that include medical block, residential block, nursing block, paramedical institute block, medical college block, central laboratory block with incorporation of other allied facilities, medical equipment and machinery.—APP

## Asghar Mall College hosts Punjab's first documentary contest

ADIL SHAHEEN

ISLAMABAD: The Government Graduate College Asghar Mall Rawalpindi Prof Dr Abdul Kabir Mohsin and Vice Principal Moeen Qureshi. Head of Department of Urdu, Prof Baqir Waseem rendered the duties of stage secretary at the Competition. He said Asghar Mall College is the first institution in the Punjab province to hold such a competition on compiling its history which will be guiding step for the students to explore media, arts, data archiving and information handling in the digital age through this activity. The competition jury included the Chief Judge Naveed Anjum, Director and Producer Aur TV, Sajjad Haider, journalist from Capital TV and Ali Jabir Malik journalist from media. The documentaries showcased "Basera" titled on Hostel by the Department of Mathematics, Our College by the Department of Statistics, Library by Intermediate team, History of Government College Asghar Mall Rawalpindi by the Department of English, Brief history of Zoological Science by Department of Zoology, History of Geography Department by the Department of Geography, Department of Chemistry team created its documentary on the department's history, and the Department of Mathematics team's documentary was titled 'Riazi Daan' (mathematician). Speaking on the occasion, Principal of the College Prof Dr Abdul Kabir Mohsin appreciated the departments' faculty for amicably organizing the competition. He said the teachers have successfully accomplished the task of compiling and showcasing the documentaries. "It will trigger a new passion among the students to explore new venues of digital age and social media for creating content as a source of information and entertainment," he added. The documentaries, he said is not only an activity of imparting skills but rather, a practice to challenge in the intelligence quest and creativity among the male.

Mathematics and Intermediate. The competition was supervised by the Principal Government Graduate College Asghar Mall Rawalpindi Prof Dr Abdul Kabir Mohsin and Vice Principal Moeen Qureshi. Head of Department of Urdu, Prof Baqir Waseem rendered the duties of stage secretary at the Competition. He said Asghar Mall College is the first institution in the Punjab province to hold such a competition on compiling its history which will be guiding step for the students to explore media, arts, data archiving and information handling in the digital age through this activity. The competition jury included the Chief Judge Naveed Anjum, Director and Producer Aur TV, Sajjad Haider, journalist from Capital TV and Ali Jabir Malik journalist from media. The documentaries showcased "Basera" titled on Hostel by the Department of Mathematics, Our College by the Department of Statistics, Library by Intermediate team, History of Government College Asghar Mall Rawalpindi by the Department of English, Brief history of Zoological Science by Department of Zoology, History of Geography Department by the Department of Geography, Department of Chemistry team created its documentary on the department's history, and the Department of Mathematics team's documentary was titled 'Riazi Daan' (mathematician). Speaking on the occasion, Principal of the College Prof Dr Abdul Kabir Mohsin appreciated the departments' faculty for amicably organizing the competition. He said the teachers have successfully accomplished the task of compiling and showcasing the documentaries. "It will trigger a new passion among the students to explore new venues of digital age and social media for creating content as a source of information and entertainment," he added. The documentaries, he said is not only an activity of imparting skills but rather, a practice to challenge in the intelligence quest and creativity among the male.

## Dr. Nadeem meets UAE Health Minister

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Federal Minister for Health Dr. Nadeem Jan had a special meeting with the Minister for Health of the United Arab Emirates, Abdul Rahman bin Muhammad Al Awais, in Dubai on the sidelines of the COP 28 UN Climate change summit. During the meeting, Dr Nadeem invited him to attend Global Health Summit in Islamabad. He congratulated his counterpart on the successful conduct of COP 28. Dr. Nadeem Jan also briefed his counterpart on the on-

going reform agenda in the health sector of Pakistan. The minister informed his counterpart about the Global Health Security Summit to be held in January 2024. The minister informed that initially the Global Health Security Summit was scheduled to be held in December 2023. However, we decided to shift GHSS dates in January in view of COP 28 conference being hosted by UAE in December, he added. The purpose of this summit is to bring the nations together and provide an opportunity to prepare a coordinated strategy to deal with any

future global epidemic. The minister said, "We are establishing Pharma Park in Pakistan to give a boost to investment in local manufacture of medicines and vaccines." The UAE Minister of Health praised the Global Health Security Agenda. Global Health Security Summit is the need of the hour, he added. The UAE Health Minister said the leadership of the UAE is interested in projects that serve the people of Pakistan. "We look forward to further strengthening our relationship and will also explore partnership in the health sector," he affirmed.

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- Dec 02/Laos Republic National Day
- Dec 05/Thailand National Day
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- Dec 07/India Armed Forces Flag Day
- Dec 09/Tanzania National Day
- Dec 11/Oman Armed Forces Day
- Dec 12/Kenya Independence Day
- Dec 12/Turkmenistan Neutrality Day
- Dec 16/Bahrain National Day
- Dec 16/Kazakhstan Independence Day
- Dec 18/Qatar National Day
- Dec 18/Niger National Day
- Dec 23/Philippines Armed Forces Day
- Dec 23/Japan National Day

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Marriott.....051- 2826121  
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### Emergency

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Bomb Disposal.....15  
Fire Services Rawalpindi/ Islamabad.....1122 & 16  
Emergency Ambulance.1122 & Rescue Services.4451122  
Motorway Police.....9266044  
Motorway Police.9270601-20  
Women Police Stations Islamabad.....9222596  
Rawalpindi.....9270601-20



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PIA Flight Info.....114  
PIA Cargo.....9280979  
Railway Inquiry.....117  
Railway Exchange 9270831-5  
WASA Rawalpindi..5555489  
CAA.....9281092



### Hospitals

CMH.....5611111  
MH.....5611116  
Cantt Hospital..9270907-11  
DHQ.....5556311-4  
RGH.....9290301-7  
Holy Family.....9290322-7  
PIMS.....9261170-79  
Polyclinic.....9218300-09  
Shifa International 4603666



### Departments

CDA.....9221334-43  
CDA.....9208301-04  
Met Office.....9250360-6  
RDA.....5555864  
TMA.....5770886  
Cantonment Board 9270151-3

### Water Tank

Islamabad.....0321-5744480

## Thai envoy calls for boosting bilateral trade, investments

Ambassador of Thailand to Pakistan Chakkrad Krachaiwong says Thailand has worked closely with our ASEAN family in Islamabad to enhance cooperation with Pakistan

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Thailand to Pakistan Chakkrad Krachaiwong has said although Thailand and Pakistan have enjoyed diplomatic relations for 72 years, our bonds have been established for more than two thousand years/ through Gandhara route.

And what we should be excited the most is the historical visit of Phra Anil Sakya because Phra Anil was born in Sakaya family which is the same family of the Lord Buddha himself and he was here in Pakistan! The Ambassador made these remarks on the occasion of the National Day of Thailand. Dr. Umar Saif, Minister for Information Technology and Telecommunication was the chief guest on the occasion. The Thai artists presented traditional cultural performance and received huge applause from the audience.

Thai ambassador further said following the election in Thailand, the new government assumed its duty in September. This is a great opportunity to further deepen our cooperation.

'Our total trade has reached 1.65 billion USD in 2022 but there is much more we can do to increase trade under Pakistan National Single Window and I hope to see measures to lower trade barriers and increase investment facilitation. I trust that Pakistan-Thailand FTA will be an extremely important vehicle in boosting our trade. Thailand strongly supports the conclusion of our FTA at the earliest opportunity'. He said the 5th of December is an auspicious occasion as we commemorate National Day of the Kingdom of Thailand, the Birthday Anniversary of the late King Bhumibol and Thailand's Father's Day. The 5th of December is also recognized by the UN as "World Soil



Day" to acknowledge the late King's contributions / in soil science for the improvement of livelihood of people. He said, the year 2023 is an exciting year for Thailand - Pakistan relations. Many historical moments have happened that reflect our strong ties/ and promising future. He said, while Thailand is always proud to host visitors from Pakistan for tourism purpose, he wished Pakistanis to consider Thailand's world-class health care and wellness services and internationally recognized educational institutions.

'We can also benefit from skillful IT experts from Pakistan /and Thailand's advance IT

infrastructures/ to create a powerful global IT powerhouse supporting world businesses. 'I am excited to meet a team of Thai cyclists who biked from Islamabad to Gilgit for 2 months. They came back with unforgettable memories of the locals/ they met along the way. With the shared values we have in living in peace and harmony, is the reason why we feel very connected/ and are able to create bonds with the Pakistanis in no time. He added, another historical event that happened this year is that, for the first time, Thailand, a country with no history in Cricket has set foot in Pakistan when Thailand Emerging Women Cricket Team came here to compete in T20/ with West Indies

and Pakistan. Having the opportunity to compete in this tournament / not only help them gain more experiences but also help create bond and friendship among the players. As an active member of ASEAN, Thailand has worked closely with our ASEAN family in Islamabad to enhance cooperation with Pakistan in 3 pillars of ASEAN which are Political-Security, Economic, and Socio-Cultural. Pakistan has a lot to offer. Gandhara civilization is not only about Buddhism but also covers wide range of knowledge. Taxila is home to wisdom, philosophy, medical, and technologies. This is the treasure that belong to Pakistan, he added.

## Pak, China bright prospects to enhance partnerships in automobile sector

DNA

SHANGHAI: Pakistan and China have bright prospects to enhance their partnerships in automobile sector, said Fahad Iqbal Butt, director of New Genuine Auto Parts, who visited the Automechanika Shanghai 2023 held this week.

Pakistani companies are looking forward establishing new partnerships in the automobile sector. "Over the past few decades, China has transformed itself to a global leader in advanced automotive technologies. Pakistan can benefit from these trends by collaborating with Chinese companies and staying updated on the latest technologies and trends in the industry," Fahad Butt said, accord-



ing to Gwadar Pro. With the goal of strengthening the presence of Pakistani companies in China and establishing new partnerships, he is confident that the expo will provide him with the platform to connect with potential suppliers, manufacturers and distributors. He added that "I am very impressed

tural or auto parts such as filters and bushings. He also met with several Chinese auto companies to discuss potential collaboration, focusing on areas such as parts supply and technology transfer. As an influential global service platform for the automotive industry showcasing automotive parts, repair, testing and diagnostic equipment and service supplies, this year's Automechanika Shanghai focuses on seven product segments covering 13 showrooms, with a comprehensive focus on innovative technologies and cutting-edge solutions for the entire automotive industry chain.

It attracted 5,652 exhibitors from 41 countries and regions and visitors from 28 countries and regions.

## 32nd Int'l Day of Persons with Disabilities celebrated

ISLAMABAD: The 32nd International Day of Persons with Disabilities is being celebrated in the country as well as across the globe on Sunday (today). This day aims to promote the rights and well-being of people with disabilities in all spheres of society and development. The theme for this year is "United in action to rescue and achieve the SDGs for, with, and by persons with disabilities." According to the United Nations, there are an estimated one billion people living with disabilities worldwide, facing many barriers to inclusion in many key aspects of society. International Day of Persons with Disabilities (IDPD) is a UN day that is celebrated every year on December 3. The day is about to raise awareness of the situation of persons with disabilities in all aspects of political, social, economic, and cultural life. WHO joins the UN in observing this day each year, reinforcing the importance of securing the rights of people with disabilities so they can participate fully, equally, and effectively in society with others and face no barriers in all aspects of their lives. At its headquarters in Geneva, WHO organizes an annual IDPD event to educate the public, raise awareness, advocate for political will and resources, and celebrate WHO's achievements. In 2022, the WHO launched the Global Report on Health Equity for Persons with Disabilities. This report sets forth the approaches and actions that countries can take to address the health inequities that people with disabilities experience.—APP

## Dadocha dam project to be completed in two years

RAWALPINDI: The construction work on Dadocha Dam, which has been stalled for 13 years, has finally started, and the project will be completed in two years. According to a Commissioner office spokesman, Rawalpindi city was facing a severe water shortage as the shortfall reached up to 60 MGD in the summer. Emergency work on the special directives of caretaker Chief Minister Punjab Mohsin Naqvi had been started on Dadocha Dam to meet the water shortage, he said. The Dadocha dam project, which would be completed at a cost of \$14 billion, would help meet the water shortage issue, he added. After its completion, the dam would provide 35 million gallons of clean drinking water per day to Rawalpindi city. The construction of Dadocha Dam would address the long-standing water problem being faced by the citizens, he said. Frontier Works Organization (FWO), which is also working on the Ring Road Rawalpindi project, would complete the dam swiftly. The dam project had been pending for a long time, he informed. Work on the dam site was progressing rapidly, with 26% financial progress and 12% physical progress.—APP

## PFC to explore new markets at Gulf Expo Dubai

ISLAMABAD: Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Pakistan Furniture Council (PFC) Mian Kashif Ashfaq announced that PFC delegation was set to participate in 5-days Gulf Expo Dubai starting from February 19 to explore new market and promotion of bilateral trade. Chairing board of directors meeting, he said, "The primary purpose of this visit is to explore and enhance the possibilities of expanding trade relations, fostering joint collaboration, and identifying potential investment avenues between two countries," said a news release issued here on Sunday.

He said, "During the visit, the delegation aims to engage in meaningful discussions with key stakeholders, government officials, and business leaders in United Arab Emirates (UAE).

Mian Kashif Ashfaq said, "We are enthusiastic about the prospect of building lasting partnerships that will not only boost the furniture industry but also contribute to the overall economic development of both countries."

He said, "PFC is fully committed to promoting economic ties and strengthening partnerships."—APP

## Meher Kashif highlights Kuwait's investment

ISLAMABAD: Coordinator to Minister of State and Federal Tax Ombudsman Meher Kashif Younis on Sunday said that Kuwait's \$10 billion investment in Pakistan will boost economic activities besides cementing bilateral relations between the two Muslim brotherly countries. Talking to a delegation of industrialists and traders led by Ch Faran Shahid Arain, he said this substantial financial commitment not only marks a milestone in the economic landscape of Pakistan but also stands as a testament to the enduring bonds, said a news release here. Meher Kashif said this investment into Pakistan's economy is poised to act as a catalyst for robust economic activities. It is anticipated that this infusion of capital will spur growth across various sectors, creating job opportunities, fostering innovation, and contributing to the overall development of the nation, he added. He said as we navigate the challenges of a rapidly changing global economy, such investments become instrumental in ensuring sustained prosperity. Meher Kashif Younis said that beyond the economic implications, this investment holds the potential to deepen the mutual understanding and collaboration between Kuwait.—APP

## IMF's smooth review boosted sentiments

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: FPCCI's presidential candidate, Atif Ikram Sheikh, said on Sunday that the Pakistan stock market is performing very well, which indicates improved confidence in the economy of the business community. The stock market is outperforming the stock markets of many countries due to the confidence reposed by the IMF in Pakistan's economy, which has been handled well in the past few months, he said. Atif Ikram Sheikh, who has also served as VP FPCCI, Chairman PVMA, and President ICCI, said in a statement issued here today that the crucial IMF package, commitment and action for fiscal discipline, and high corporate profits helped investors earn far higher returns than from investing in regional exchanges. He added that investors who put their money in the Pakistan Stock Exchange just five months ago would have seen investments grow on average by percent, compared with a 3 to 5 percent growth in regional stock markets. The business leader said that the performance of the KSE-100 over the last few months has been remarkable, and it closely coincides with several significant developments, including a deal with the IMF, foreign exchange-related agreements with Saudi Arabia and the UAE, and a corporate rebound. The data also shows that the stock market rally in Pakistan is driven by companies operating in the manufacturing and industrial sectors and those catering to the consumption economy, such as carmakers, he informed. Atif Ikram Sheikh said that this optimism in the stock market was buoyed by reports saying that Saudi Arabia and the UAE were releasing \$2 billion and \$1 billion, respectively, so Islamabad could shore up foreign exchange reserves. Mitchell's Fruit Farms saw its stock price rise 142 percent over the year ending 29 November 2023. Similarly, the stock price of apparel seller Image Pakistan jumped 60 percent over the same period. Three auto companies, Honda Atlas Cars, Gandhara Industries, and Hinopak Motors, were also among the top gainers during the last year. On the manufacturing and industrial side, companies like Baluchistan Wheels, Leiner Pak Gelatine, National Silk & Rayon Mills, Kohinoor Power, and Macpac Films were among the top gainers.

## Cleaner Energy only way out

DNA

ISLAMABAD: In view of mounting smog pressure and climatic changes, the country is facing enormous challenges, especially in the energy sector, as its long-term sustainability could only be achieved by explor-

ing cost-effective and alternate energy resources. The experts firmly believe that Pakistan will have to review its energy policy by exploring all available options to ensure cost-effective and environment-friendly alternate sources like solar, wind, and the optimal usage of hydel. Such a costly fuel

being provided to domestic and commercial consumers in a country bestowed by nature with abundant resources can only be described as the failure or negligence of successive regimes. Cost-effective energy is also essential for the economic survival of the country by promoting

industries and exports to bridge the current account and trade deficits. Cleaner energy would also be supportive of mitigating the effects of climate change if we addressed these issues as a priority and decarbonized our country by overcoming our dependency on fossil fuels.



ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Murtaza Solangi cutting the ribbon to inaugurate Women celebrating Sindhi Culture Day 2023, at Pakistan National Council of the Arts in the Federal Capital. —ONLINE

## Briefs

Young hikers  
cleanup  
Margalla  
Hills Trail-5

DNA

ISLAMABAD: More than one hundred university students and nature lovers participated in the hiking and cleanup drive at Margalla Hills Trail-5 after an interactive session on wildlife and biological diversity of the Margalla Hills on Saturday. It was the 13th Pakistan Mountain Festival's daylong kickoff event, organized by the Development Communications network (Devcom-Pakistan), DTN and Islamabad Wildlife Management Board (IWMB) in collaboration with the Comsats University Islamabad Campus Computer Science Adventure Society (CSAS). Pakistan Mountain Festival (PMF) is an annual flagship event of Devcom-Pakistan to commemorate the UN's International Mountain Day (IMD) that falls on December 11. Speaking on the occasion, Devcom-Pakistan Executive Director and founder Pakistan Mountain festival said the Margalla Hills National Park increasingly becoming a focus of visitors and illegal constructions. Solid waste management and littering have increased manifold despite many interventions by the IWMB and civil society organizations. The environmentally unfriendly practices have damaged the natural resources in all three parts of the National Park including hills, Rawal Lake and Sharkarparian despite many initiatives. Mountain Resources are the lifeline of the over 80 percent of the people living downstream who are responsible for heavy carbon emissions, and devastation of the mountain ecosystems. Ahmed said we shall encourage youth for environmentally friendly outdoor pursuits. It is good for their mental and physical health besides making them a responsible visitor to nature. Several youth engagements are in pipeline for the 13th Pakistan Mountain Festival including 9th Pakistan Mountain Youth Forum and cultural shows, and a conference. We need to work out a joint action plan for the promotion of mountains and its communities, culture, art, and heritage instead of individual and scattered efforts. The IWMB Deputy Director Sakawat Ali briefed the participants about the rich biodiversity of the Margalla Hills National Park that was established in 1980. It is the third-largest national park in the world with an area of 17,386 hectares (42,960 acres) under the foothills of Himalaya. In the recent decade, its importance was realized after seeing the impact of unwanted haphazard constructions and movement of vehicles more than its carrying capacity. Many initiatives have been taken so far to protect the wildlife and biological diversity including awareness raising among the communities living in the habitats. He urged the youth to respect diversity of species, and help manage wildlife and human beings live together. The park is rich in biodiversity, especially rich in Sino-Himalayan fauna, most notably gray goral, barking deer and the Leopard. Combined MHP is home to around 600 plant species, 402 bird varieties, 38 mammals and 27 species of reptiles. IWMB Deputy Director said under the new management recently the IWMB has taken many steps for the protection of the Park and visitors.

## Pakistan, Uzbekistan enjoy excellent relations: Minister

Uzbek envoy acknowledges the pivotal role of the protocol signed in Ashkhabad, Turkmenistan, on May 10, 1992, commemorating the establishment of diplomatic relations, showcasing a copy of the historical document at the exhibition

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Uzbekistan Arif Usmanov has said relations between Uzbekistan and Pakistan are growing at a fast speed adding these relations shall further be cemented even in the days to come. He was speaking on the occasion of inauguration of photo exhibition commemorating the 31st anniversary of the diplomatic ties between Pakistan and Uzbekistan. Uzbek envoy Oybek Usmanov delivered an eloquent speech during the opening ceremony, expressing gratitude to all attendees and highlighting the historical significance of the diplomatic ties. He acknowledged the pivotal role of the protocol signed in Ashkhabad, Turkmenistan, on May 10, 1992, commemorating the establishment of diplomatic relations, showcasing a copy of the historical document at the exhibition. During his address, the envoy extended heartfelt appreciation to Syed Jamal Shah, for his unwavering support and guidance in organising this remarkable event. He also commended Ayoub Jamali and his team for their indispensable contributions and excellent cooperation in arranging the exhibition. Moreover, he warmly greeted two distinguished Pakistani ambassadors, Irfan Yusuf Shami and Riaz Ahmad Bukhari while also acknowledging their tireless efforts in promoting bilateral relations. On the other hand, Syed Jamal Shah, in his remarks, emphasized the exhibition's role in portraying the beauty, diversity, and historical resonance embedded within the joint cultural heritage of Uzbekistan and Pakistan. Jamal Shah said that both Pakistan and Uzbekistan enjoy excellent relations. He hoped that these relations would grow further even in the days to come.



## China gifted 25 lightning detectors to Pakistan

DNA

ISLAMABAD: China has supplied Pakistan with 25 weather detectors valued at \$1 million to establish a very low frequency (VLF/VF) lightning network. The primary aim is to enhance the lightning warning capabilities of the Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD) and mitigate the impact of

lightning-related disasters on both lives and properties. Zahid Rafi, Director of the Seismology Division at PMD told Gwadar Pro that these detectors are deployable across various regions in Pakistan where lightning poses a threat to life and property. "This contribution from China is a valuable gift that Pakistan will be utilizing for the first time. The collaboration underscores the

importance of Sino-Pak partnership in bolstering preparedness and response capabilities," he added. Regarding the detectors, an MoU was signed between PMD and the Institute of Electrical Engineering of the Chinese Academy of Sciences (IEECAS) in September 2023 in Beijing. Sahibzad Khan, Director General PMD while leading a four-member delegation

held a detailed discussion with Dr. Yaohua LI, Director, IEECAS-led delegation to initiate and promote the establishment of a VLF/LF lightning detection network in Pakistan to improve the lightning warning capability of PMD and to reduce the casualties and property losses caused by lightning disasters. "This is the first phase of the implementation of the MoU," said Zahid Rafi.

## ISSI to hold its annual flagship event

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: The Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI) is holding its annual flagship event, "Islamabad Conclave", coming week. The thematic focus of this year's Conclave would be on "Pakistan in a Changing World." The Islamabad Conclave embodies a 1.5-track initiative designed to converge the highest tiers of foreign and Pakistani leadership, policymakers, and academia onto a singular platform. The event serves as a forum to evaluate the intricate political, security and economic issues as well as traditional and non-tradi-

tional threats affecting Pakistan and the region and to suggest responses and innovative solutions. The Conclave's third iteration is scheduled for December 6-7, 2023. Comprising a sequence of high-level interactions in the Plenary and 5 Working Sessions, the Conclave focuses on five distinct sub-themes. The first working session, titled "Evolving Geopolitical Dynamics, Emerging Technologies, and Shifts in Strategic Thought," is being organized by the Arms Control and Disarmament Centre (ACDC) at ISSI. It will delve into the transformative changes at the international level, marked by major power rivalries,

military modernization, and the surge in emerging technologies, accompanied by a decline in arms control and disarmament norms. The second working session, "Changing Regional Landscape: From Afghanistan to Middle East," is being organized by the Centre for Afghanistan, Middle East and Africa (CAMEA) at ISSI. It will concentrate on the evolving relationships between Pakistan and key neighboring countries, especially Afghanistan and in the Middle East. It aims to analyze shifting non-traditional security dynamics, challenges, and the imperative to fortify economic and regional connectivity for sustainable growth.

## Four gamblers arrested red handed

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Capital Police Aabpara police station team have arrested four gamblers and recovered cash and gambling tools from their possession, a public relation officer said. He said that, following the special directions of Islamabad Capital City Police officer (ICCP) Dr. Akbar Nasir Khan, the Islamabad Capital Police has intensified crackdown against the criminal elements in order to eliminate the crime from the city and protect the lives and property of citizens. Following these directions, the Aabpara police team conducted a raid at gambling den and arrested four gamblers red handed and recovered cash and gambling tools.—APP

## COMSTech International Workshop on Biosafety Kicks Off

ISLAMABAD: An International Workshop on Biosafety and Biosecurity, titled "Bridging the Gap: Enhancing Biosafety and Biosecurity Regimes for a Secure Future", jointly organized by the Government of Kazakhstan and COMSTech, was inaugurated at the COMSTech Secretariat on 3rd December. COMSTech is the OIC Standing Committee for Scientific and Technological Cooperation and is hosted by Pakistan. The workshop brings together a large number of experts from Egypt, Georgia, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Malaysia, Nigeria, Pakistan, Uganda and Uzbekistan to discuss the challenges to human security emanating from developments in the biological sciences and from naturally occurring global events such as the COVID-19 pandemic. The experts will also deliberate on the existing policy instruments and protocols for ensuring biosecurity such as the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) and the BTWC, and their limitations and hurdles for full implementation. In particular, the workshop will examine a proposal initiated by the President of Kazakhstan at the United Nations in 2020 for the establishment of an International Agency for Biological Safety (IABS) and suggest ways and means for its practical implementation under the existing agreements.—DNA

## French scholar speaks at ISSI Roundtable

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: The India Study Centre (ISC) at the Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI) hosted renowned French scholar Christophe Jaffrelot, for a roundtable discussion on "The Plight of Indian Minorities under Modi's India." The event was attended by academics, practitioners, diplomats, students and representatives of the media. Dr. Khurram Abbas, Director ISC, in his introductory remarks said that the BJP's attempt to unite all Hindu fragments together into a single Hindu party will fail as sub-castes galore had begun to create small parties of their own in every state. Hindus alone had 1,600 jatis, with multiple caste-like divisions and holding them together for a long time was highly challenging. According to the Election Commission of India, 38 new parties registered after 2014, the year when Mr. Modi was sworn in as Prime Minister. To keep these parties united, the BJP required 'enemy' within and outside of India. DG ISSI Ambassador Sohail Mahmood welcomed the distinguished participants and emphasized the significance of the subject. He underlined that contemporary India was drifting towards deeper polarization, more religious intolerance, and increased violence. Rise in hate speech, mushrooming of vigilante groups, frequent mob lynchings, demolition of churches and mosques, schemes like 'Love Jihad' and 'Ghar Wapsi', and legislative measures like the National Register of Citizens and Citizens Amendment Act (CAA) were manifestations of the 'Hindutva' ideology, which had a deep impact on the minorities, especially Muslims. He further pointed out the disturbing demographic change being effected in the Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IOJK) by turning the local Muslim majority into a minority in its own land through the colonial settler project. India under the BJP was also witnessing unprecedented rise in Islamophobia. The DG ISSI pointed out that Prof. Dr. Jaffrelot, a leading international scholar on South Asia and India, had meticulously mapped India's transformation and shown how Muslims faced increased social marginalization, institutional exclusion and judicial obliteration. In his presentation, Professor Jaffrelot affirmed that it was necessary to mention vigilantism and hate speeches; and that there was a lot more to cover when Muslims' marginalization in today's India was contemplated. In this context.

## Threat to Biodiversity as important as climate Change

Scientists have been warning us about this issue for years, but it seems that the message has not been fully received. The combination of habitat loss, invasive species, and pollution has created a perfect storm for biodiversity loss

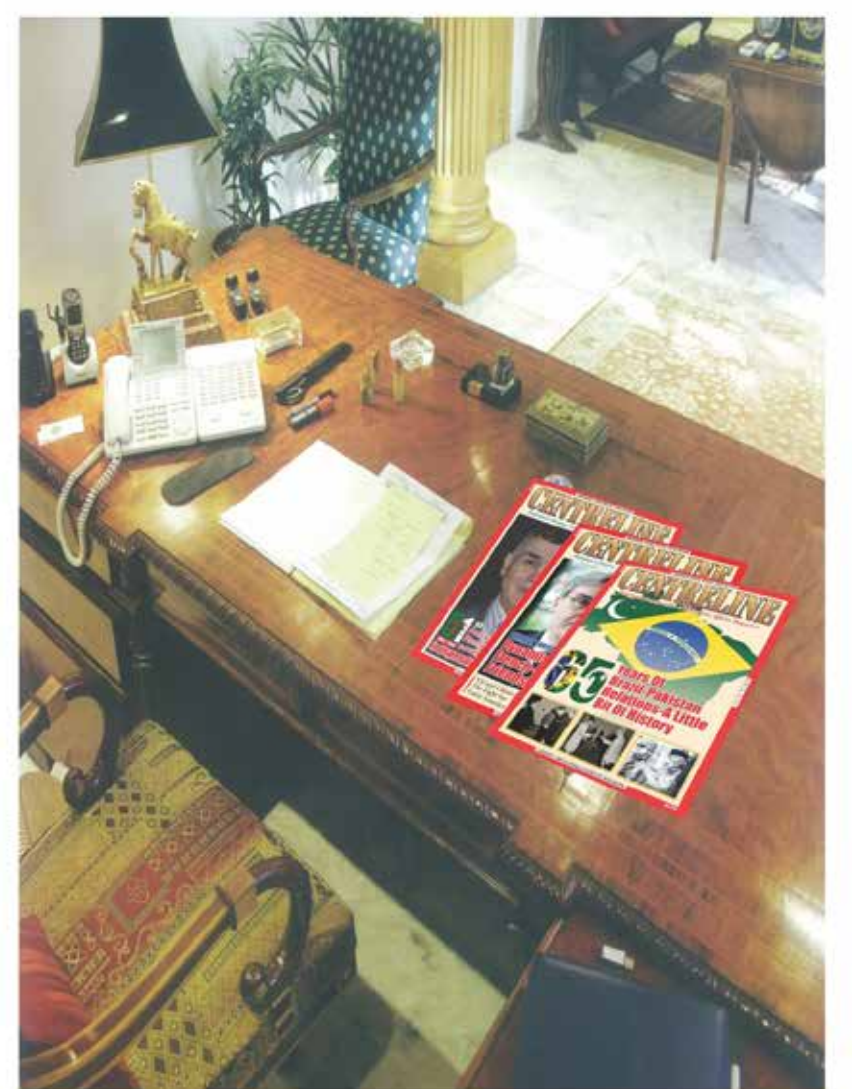
FAIZ ULLAH KAKAR

The world we live in is changing rapidly. Climate change has brought about a multitude of problems, including biodiversity threats. As our planet continues to warm at an alarming rate, the world's ecosystems are struggling to adapt. The implications of this phenomenon are far-reaching, with the potential to cause devastating effects on our planet's biodiversity. A growing body of research is now showing the interconnectivity between climate change and biodiversity, climate change is emerging as a top threat to wildlife around the globe highlighting how climate change is putting many species, habitats, and ecosystems at risk. The threats posed by climate

change to biodiversity are diverse and multifaceted, and they require urgent attention from policymakers, conservationists, and the public at large. Scientists have been warning us about this issue for years, but it seems that the message has not been fully received. The combination of habitat loss, invasive species, and pollution has created a perfect storm for biodiversity loss. Here are six ways in which climate change is putting biodiversity at risk: rising temperatures, changing rainfall patterns, sea level rise, ocean acidification, extreme weather events, and the spread of invasive species. These factors can have a cascading effect on ecological systems, leading to the loss of species, habitat destruction, and the destabilization of entire ecosystems.

Being a botanist Plant has been greatly influenced by climate variability by several means. Environmental extremes and climate variability enhance the chances of numerous stressors on vegetation. Climate change affects crop production that leads to food security all over the world and socio-economic effect in socio-economic effect food demand, farmer response, costs, policy, trade and unequal distribution of resources. Due to climate change, water deficit and temperature extremes influence the growth pattern of vegetation. Similarly, if the temperature increase of about 30°C during fleret development it can cause sterility in cereals. In 2022, Pakistan agriculture products is

badly affected by heavy rain and flooding. In all over the world maize, rice and wheat production suffered from the 35-75% reduction in grain set due to water deficit and climate change. The harvest index is reduced to 60% and decreases the grain set due to drought. The cocoa yield has been significantly reduced by the major drought spells in West Africa during the 1980s. It has been estimated that agricultural production could reduce to 25.7% by 2080 due to climate change and maize will be the most affected crop in Mexico. Climate change can lead to massive destruction on our planet so it is time for us to take action and address the impacts of climate change on biodiversity before it is too late.



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Phone: 051-2266165 / 051-2261960

Off: Awan Plaza, Block 18-A, G-8 Markaz Islamabad

## Ukraine aid self-serving investment by Washington

THE tremendous amounts of military aid the United States has been providing to Ukraine to support its conflict with Russia has long been proclaimed by the Joe Biden administration as the necessary cost to defend "the free world". However, the first breakdown of which US states have benefited from the billions of dollars spent on arming Ukraine the Biden administration has been circulating on Capitol Hill since last week exposes a less noble picture. The aid is an investment for the benefit of the US, both economically and strategically, as President Biden hinted in an address in October. The circulated spending breakdown is a move to persuade more Republican lawmakers to support Biden's new aid proposal for Kyiv, worth \$60 billion, which is contained in the \$106 billion emergency supplemental released in October for Israel and the "Indo-Pacific" strategy as well. But it also reveals an important reason why the Biden administration is so keen to replenish the Ukraine aid the moment it nears depletion. As Biden said in the speech in October when he unveiled the supplemental spending bill. "Let me be clear about something," Biden said. "We send Ukraine equipment sitting in our stockpiles. And when we use the money allocated by Congress, we use it to replenish our own stores, our own stockpiles with new equipment." As The Washington Post said in its report on the "best-kept secret about US military aid to Ukraine", the "funds that lawmakers approve to arm Ukraine are not going directly to Ukraine but are being used stateside to build new weapons or to replace weapons sent to Kyiv from US stockpiles". Of the \$68 billion in military and related assistance Congress has approved since the conflict broke out in February last year almost 90 percent is going directly to upgrade the US' military capabilities. There is another meaningful revelation in the circular. The state-by-state breakdown for the latest \$27 billion worth of investments allocated by Congress, and the spending on "munitions and tactical vehicle procurements", clearly demonstrates that companies in four states – Arizona, Pennsylvania, Arkansas and Wisconsin – collectively received contracts totaling more than \$1 billion for their products that aid Ukraine. Another \$18 billion in contracts is spread around manufacturing facilities located in more than two dozen other states. Although Biden claims "just as in World War II, today patriotic American workers are building the arsenal of democracy and serving the cause of freedom", he should not have pretended to not know that both Pennsylvania and Arizona are the pivotal swing states in the presidential election next year. As major beneficiaries of his administration's generous aid project, Biden wants to see these key states to vote in his favor in the upcoming presidential election. To the Ukrainians, who have long woken up to the fact that the conflict is becoming a proxy war to defend US hegemony in Europe and beyond, it is not "patriotic American workers" that are building an "arsenal of democracy" and "serving the cause of freedom", but greedy US military-industry complexes running full steam to make money from Ukrainian lives, serving the political cause of the Democrats.



## China leads global green transition at COP28

THIS year has been the hottest on record. The latest in a sweltering series of record-breaking years in which too many climate-related disasters have been witnessed. UN Climate Change Executive Secretary Simon Stiell was not crying wolf when he lamented in Dubai at COP28 that the world is "taking baby steps" and making progress "far too slowly" to curb the cataclysm-heralding rise in the global temperature. "We are paying with people's lives and livelihoods," he warned. Stiell urged those attending the United Nations Climate Change Conference taking place in the United Arab Emirates from Nov 30 until Dec 12 to rise to the challenge and he called on governments to "teach climate action to run". That requires ramped-up nationally determined contributions and the willingness to ensure that they are more than just lip service to meaningful action, as well as the honoring of financing pledges and greater resolve to shrink the climate action funding gap. China's efforts in this regard have been widely recognized and it is regarded as a crucial agent and catalyst of the change required to realize the essential green transition. This is because the country has moved decidedly and effectively with the green transition in mind. By 2022, the carbon dioxide released in China had dropped over 51 percent from the level in 2005. Besides, the Chinese government has also arranged 20 billion yuan (\$3.1 billion) in special funds to support South-South climate cooperation. Climate response is increasingly taking over from the past pursuit of fast growth as the shaper of China's modernization path, and it is a key area for cooperation between China and the developed countries as well. In his speech at the COP28, Vice-Premier Ding Xuexiang highlighted three steps that are of critical significance to effectively addressing climate change: Practice multilateral cooperation, accelerate the green transition, and take actions to honor commitments that have already been made. Proceeding from common but differentiated responsibilities, Beijing has been consistent in urging developed countries to help developing nations with their climate change responses. At the same time, despite being a developing country itself, China is shouldering its responsibility as the world's second-largest economy and offering climate assistance. The COPs are the world's only multilateral decision-making forum on climate change. This year's COP, with almost the complete participation of every country, has set a record itself, witnessing the biggest participation in any COP while highlighting the sense of urgency that prevails and the widening consensus that no country can stay out of the picture as the impacts of climate change leave no country unscathed.

## Chinese foreign policy towards India and Pakistan

Dr. Muhammad Akram Zaheer



Washington was increasing pressure on Islamabad to get Pakistani support for the war on terror in Afghanistan after 9/11. On the other hand, China had concerns of the expanding Delhi-Washington strategic cooperation. India and the USA were considering China as a common rival of both and were thinking to limit the rise of China. Washington made efforts to diffuse the crisis between Pakistan and India by a balancing posture during this period. China also maintained a balanced position towards Pakistan and India post 9/11

SINCE the late 20th century, China has shifted her policy from isolation and separation from the international community and now is on the way to becoming the major economic power of the world. The Chinese leadership has formulated more attractive, pragmatic and flexible policies for global affairs and issues. With economic growth, China is widening and deepening its quest for energy resources and expanding its investment, market and political influence. It is also projecting her soft power vigorously and peacefully by promoting culture, sports, education, tourism and other exchanges. The Chinese believe in the emergence of a peaceful great power as once. Professor of international relations Yan Xuetong said, China is the second most powerful state in the world.

A rapid change in the domestic situations of countries and in the international system has been followed by the change of their, perceptions, priorities, foreign policies and interests. That's why the modern dynamics of foreign policies are extending their activities into many spheres of the international system to increase influence. The quest for the achievement of national interests allows countries to continue work effectively on their potential, inherent to make useful policy. In the past, Chinese diplomacy was often employed to pursue goals of unbalanced interests. Now the world has dramatically changed since after the Cold war and China is in the position to play a constructive role in the international system. China was allied to the USSR and viewed the USA as its principal enemy during the 1950s. On the other hand, Washington sought an anti-communist alliance with Pakistan as well as close relations with India. After the 1965 Indo-Pak war, US and Indian relations became weaker due to Washington's limited sale of weapons to India. In 1970s, India moved closer to the USSR while China grew closer to Islamabad because India's of complicated strategic position. Then China inclined towards the USA in quest of its export market and as a counterbalance to the USSR.

After the USSR's collapse, a peaceful environment favored China and a shift came in her policy towards south Asia. Now, Beijing was seeking political and economic bilateral ties with the regional countries, particularly positive developments in the process of Sino-India rapprochement. This shift did not favor Pakistan and posed negative consequences on the traditional Pak-China relationship. The impact of the foreign policy shift gave this impression during the Pak-India crisis over Kashmir in 1989-90 when Beijing did not support a resolution on Kashmir in the United Nations. It remained neutral and calm, emphasizing on both parties to solve the issue by dialogue. Contrarily, the Cold-war Chinese policy towards Pakistan was supportive against India. During the 1990s, China has been advising both Pakistan and India to solve their problems through dialogue. In 1996, President

Jiang Zemin visited Pakistan and in his speech to the Senate, he urged Pakistan to develop cooperative relations with India and put thorny issues aside. Pakistan should make trade and economic relations to lessen the hostility. During the Kargil crisis China-India rapprochement had entered the mature phase. This time again, China adopted a neutral policy and emphasized holding talks and solving the issue through negotiations. Pakistan was seeking active support on the issues of Kashmir and Kargil, but the Chinese position was unchanged. During the visit of the Pakistani Foreign Minister to China in 1999, Chinese Foreign Minister Tang Jiaxuan said the international community has great concerns about the South Asian situation and Pakistan should remain cool and exercise self-control. It was a warning to Pakistan that China would not support it militarily, and Pakistan should get out from Kargil and settle the crisis by dialogue.

After the cold war, India abandoned the Soviet model and looked for economic reforms. Therefore, India remained no longer allied so closely to Moscow and became less of a danger to China. Now the need of Islamabad for Beijing was narrowed to counterbalance Delhi and Moscow, but was concerned at the Delhi-Washington closeness. China wants to prevent India joining the USA to counter her and the USA looks to India to counterbalance China. This situation is very difficult for China to sustain and maintain the balance and demonstrate her ability in the region of nuclear powers. The incident of 9/11 brought regional and international developments and new adjustments in foreign policy for China. This led to a diplomatic standoff between Pakistan and India. Almost for a year, the military forces of both sides stood eyeball to eyeball. The terrorist attack on Indian Parliament and the Srinagar incident inflamed insecurity and instability in the region. Beijing has concerns about Pak-India tension and it played a proactive role at the diplomatic level to diffuse tension. China also activated SCO and other forums to dissipate tension between Islamabad and New Delhi. Soon after 9/11, the USA declared a global war against terrorism and China was discomforted and had many internal and external concerns. It warned the USA that counter-terrorism should not be used to practise hegemony. Although the war was against the Taliban regime in Afghanistan, China also managed the worsened situation of her troubled province of Xinjiang, and was unsettled by the presence of US forces near her border. China believed that Washington would create instability in the region and might have new political designs. The region, particularly Central Asia, was more attractive to China due to its energy resources and Washington's political and military involvement in the region worried China.

Washington was increasing pressure on Islamabad to get Pakistani support for the war on terror in Afghanistan after 9/11. On the other hand, China had concerns

of the expanding Delhi-Washington strategic cooperation. India and the USA were considering China as a common rival of both and were thinking to limit the rise of China. Washington made efforts to diffuse the crisis between Pakistan and India by a balancing posture during this period. China also maintained a balanced position towards Pakistan and India post 9/11. Another worry for China was the Indian move towards Japan and Vietnam, with whom Chinese relations remained tense. The past cooperation in political, economics, security and diplomatic issues and bilateral ties produced Chinese \$62 billion investment in Pakistan through CPEC. China has provided support to Pakistan in the UNSC regularly. China has assisted Pakistan to improve security and defence capability by the joint venture of the JF-17 Thunder in 2003. The deteriorating relationship of Islamabad and Washington provide China motivation and impetus to improve relations. On the other hand, China and India are two natural strategic rivals with large populations in the region. A sense of competition between the two is very high. China has engaged Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh, and Maldives, which was considered in the area of Indian influence. China tried to build a road in Bhutan in the Doklam area, which is a source of tension for India. It seemed that China was occupying the strategic territory, which was very necessary for Indian security. In addition, India thinks that Pakistan is serving Chinese interests by forcing her to fight wars, reducing the Indian ability to counter the Chinese rise.

However, the leadership of both China and India has recognized the need of peace and cooperation to ease the tension. They met in the Wuhan summit in April 2018 and agreed to expand economic relations. China seems a major beneficiary of China-India economic relations. The importance of this partnership may not be worsening China-Pakistan relations. The example of the China and Pakistan cooperation is seen when Beijing put its weight behind Islamabad and forced a discussion in the UNSC on India's latest reconfiguration of Kashmir. As its economic power grows, China has its own paradigm of development and new ways of interaction with regional and global powers on a win-win basis. Being the neighbour of China, Pakistan has the privilege to achieve investment and trade. The frequent exchange visits by the leadership of both have reinforced mutual trust and cooperation. On the other hand, China and India have agreed to expand their cooperation on multiple levels to ensure peace on their borders. However, India and Pakistan are challenging each other on the issue of Kashmir and both the countries had fought four wars in the past. On the issue of Kashmir, Chinese policy will have significant implications for the China-India-Pakistan relationship and will test China's foreign policy towards Pakistan and India.

## What are the chances of a permanent ceasefire?

Yossi Mekelberg

The pause in fighting in the past week yielded political benefits for both sides. In Israel, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his government had been under immense pressure, justifiably so, to prioritize the release of hostages. The joyful sight of dozens of them returning home from captivity eased some of that pressure. At the same time, it handed Hamas the prize status of being seen as the power within Palestinian society capable of bringing about the release of Palestinian prisoners so that they could be reunited with their families

AFTER nearly seven weeks of bloodshed, terror, and horrors in the war between Israel and Hamas, the four-day pause in the fighting, which was subsequently extended by several days, was urgently needed. To the relief of everyone, the bombardments, the rocket launches and the shootings ceased – if only for a week. The temporary truce agreement allowed for some of the Israeli hostages held by Hamas and Palestinian prisoners held by Israel to be released, and for desperately needed humanitarian aid to enter the Gaza Strip.

These few days of calm were the first rays of hope after one of the darkest periods in the long-running conflict between Israelis and Palestinians. But now that hostilities have resumed in their full intensity, what does this mean for the likely trajectory of the war in the days and weeks ahead? There was no guarantee that the pause in fighting would lead to a permanent ceasefire, or even to further humanitarian truces, in the near future. However, it did signal that even though this initially seemed to be a war in which Israel would not call even a temporary halt to its military operations until it had achieved its declared objective of destroying Hamas – whatever that means – it was prepared to alter its priorities to secure the release of as many hostages as possible, even if this meant giving Hamas a chance to regroup. There is no reason to believe that, through third-party negotiations, this pattern will not repeat itself. Moreover, the truce also indicated that despite the distorted judgment of the leaders of the Palestinian Islamist organization, which manifested itself in its most extreme form in the Oct. 7 attacks, the realization filtered through to them that it was in their own best interest to release their hostages, especially the most vulnerable among them. The pause in fighting in the past week yielded political benefits for both sides. In Israel, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his government had been under immense pressure, justifiably so, to prioritize the release of hostages. The joyful sight of dozens of them returning home from captivity eased some of that pressure. At the same time, it handed Hamas the prize status of being seen as the power within Palestinian society capable of bringing about the release of Palestinian prisoners so that they could be reunited with their families. This, at least temporarily, strength-

ens its position in relation to the Palestinian Authority, and enhances its narrative that the only way to free Palestinians from Israeli jails is by holding Israeli citizens hostage. While the truce agreement, mediated and facilitated by Qatar, Egypt, and the US, could prove to be a watershed moment in this tragic war, the final chapter is far from being written and it remains to be seen whether it will be repeated any time soon. Understandably, much of the focus over the past week has been on the release of Israeli hostages and Palestinian prisoners. Nevertheless, also of great importance was the fact that the pause in hostilities gave the people of Gaza a brief respite from the horrors of war, and allowed humanitarian aid to reach them: food, water, emergency medical supplies, and winter clothing. This is aid that is literally lifesaving for hundreds of thousands of people whose homes have been destroyed or who were forcibly displaced from northern Gaza to the south. This mechanism for humanitarian aid must remain in place and functional even though fighting has resumed; that aid is essential for the survival of civilians of all ages. The pause in hostilities gave the people of Gaza a brief respite from the horrors of war. Negotiations for the release of the remaining Israeli hostages will only be more complex, however. Hamas has its sights set on the release of other high-value prisoners in Israeli jails, and knows they will not be freed as long as it continues to hold the most vulnerable among the remaining Israeli hostages, including children and the elderly, some of whom reportedly have serious health conditions. The militant group is most interested in bringing about the release of Palestinians sentenced to long terms, including those Israel classifies as having "blood on their hands" and so is more reluctant to release.

It was reported that during meetings last week between Qatari Prime Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al-Thani, CIA Director William Burns, Mossad chief David Barnea, and Egypt's head of the General Intelligence Service, Abbas Kamel, negotiators outlined five categories of Israeli hostages for future release: men too old for military reserve duty, female soldiers, male reservists, active-duty male soldiers, and the bodies of those who died before or during captivity. This suggests future negotiations could be prolonged and much more difficult and complex than the

talks that led to the phased release of hostages and prisoners in the past week, especially now that Israeli military operations have resumed in full force. Each side has objectives that clash with those of the other. They are likely to complicate the negotiations and, to a large extent, are behind the resumption of hostilities. The Israeli leadership argues that military pressure persuaded Hamas to agree to release hostages. As true as this might be, declaring the elimination of Hamas to be Israel's main objective does not exactly motivate the group to give up the main asset it is left with – hostages – unless a permanent ceasefire is agreed. Meanwhile, any deal that results in Israel agreeing to free more Palestinian prisoners on a large scale could improve the political standing of Hamas among Palestinians, not only in Gaza but also in the West Bank and the wider diaspora. Israeli officials could have done themselves a favor, at the very least for the sake of improving the chances of reaching a comprehensive exchange of hostages and prisoners, had they toned down the rhetoric about eliminating the Hamas leadership – or in threatening Qatar, as one senior Israeli Foreign Ministry official did in a comment about settling scores after the war because of Doha's supposed support for Hamas, a statement that defies logic at this point. Now that the war is raging again, it remains to be seen whether the international community can convince Israel that military operations cannot continue to be conducted without regard for the massive loss of life among Palestinians and the complete destruction of Gaza, and cannot go on for much longer. There are real fears for what might happen in southern Gaza, where many of those displaced from the north of the territory have sought refuge. It might be the case – and I hope this is not simply wishful thinking – that Israel was reassessing the methods for achieving its war objectives and might take a longer-term view. It might realize that military force is not the only way to tackle Hamas and that achieving its objectives will primarily require political and diplomatic efforts that can guarantee a better future in which everyone involved in this conflict, and future generations, enjoys equality in terms of security, rights, and prosperity. Even if this feels like a remote possibility right now, it is not one that is impossible to achieve.

– Sourced by Arab news.

## Briefs

Over 700  
killed in 24  
hours in Gaza

FROM PAGE 01  
Since October 7, bakeries across the Gaza Strip have been one of the targets of Israeli attacks. Dozens of bakeries have been either bombed or have gone out of service due to lack of fuel. A senior member of the Palestinian Hamas resistance movement has held the Tel Aviv regime fully responsible for the failure to extend the week-old truce which collapsed on Friday. "Claims that Hamas violated the terms of the truce deal are intended to justify the resumption of the genocidal war against civilians in the Gaza Strip," Ezzat al-Resheq, a member of Hamas's political bureau, said on Saturday.

Israel  
seeking to  
'separate'...

FROM PAGE 01  
calling it "a deliberate attempt to escalate the situation in the West Bank." Israeli settlers fired live ammunition at Ahmed Mustafa Assi, father of six children, after raiding the town of Qarawat Bani Hassan in northwestern West Bank under the protection of the regime's forces. Assi was then left bleeding on the ground while Israeli forces accompanying settlers did not allow medical teams or local Palestinians to reach him. Israel has ramped up its aggression against Palestinians across the West Bank since October 7, when it launched a genocidal war against the Gaza Strip.

Adapting  
Indus Basin  
key to...

FROM PAGE 01  
consultation with stakeholders, resulting in a set of 25 living interventions that emphasize nature based solutions and ecosystem based adaptation approaches." The prime minister said more important was that the Living Indus initiative sought to mobilize a moment that prepared and restored a healthy Indus for today and tomorrow. "And we are here to collaborate and give voice to our rivers. The Indus river needs a voice and we are here to give that voice. The Indus feeds us and if we do not take care of it, it will not be there to take care of us," he remarked.

MQM-P  
pushes for  
reform...

FROM PAGE 01  
citizens and, therefore, made proposals for amendments to the Constitution. The politician's comments came during a meeting organised by the Gulshan Residence Committee in Karachi's Gulshan-e-Iqbal area, where he informed them about MQM-P proposing three constitutional amendments to ensure the resolution of all issues. "After the upcoming elections, we will support any government formed in the Centre based on a single-point agenda, considering all our past experiences. Whoever comes to the MQM-P to become the PM or seek assistance will need to ensure the constitutional amendments proposed by the party," Kamal said.

Khattak  
claims  
lack of...

FROM PAGE 01  
the party. Barrister Gohar, however, has repeatedly said he is holding the post temporarily until the former prime minister returns from jail. Continuing his onslaught, Khattak pointed towards the lack of democracy in the party. "Former chairman PTI did not tolerate anyone before him," he said. The former chief minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa said Khan wanted a presidential system in Pakistan and not elections. He also criticised the former PTI chairman's act of disclosing a state secret by waving the cipher in a public rally last year, a case for which he is currently under trial.

## DNA



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Azerbaijan Khazar Farhadov, Charge d Affaires of Romania Eduard Preda, High Commissioner of Malaysia Azhar Mazlan and the Australian High Commissioner Neil Hawkins joining the Rising Stars Hockey Club for a practice session. – DNA

Australia announce squad for  
first Test against Pakistan

First match of the series will take place on Dec 14 to 18 at the Perth Stadium

## SPORTS DESK

SYDNEY: Australia on Sunday announced the 14-man squad for the first Test match of the three-match home series against Pakistan which will be led by World Cup 2023 winning skipper Pat Cummins. The first match of the series will take place on December 14 to 18 at the Perth Stadium. Australian opener David Warner, who said that he would bring down a curtain on his 12-year career in the longest format, is included in the squad for the first Test alongside Usman Khawaja. Other players included in the team are Scott Boland,

Alex Carey, Cameron Greene, Josh Hazlewood, Travis Head, Marnus Labuschagne, Nathan Lyon and Mitchell Marsh. Lance Morris, Steve Smith and Mitchell Starc were also included in the 14-member squad for the first Test. Australian chief selector George Bailey said there were still opportunities for others to play themselves into contention for the Tests against Pakistan in Melbourne and Sydney, as well as the two-match series against West Indies that follows. "We look forward to seeing the continued strong performances from players who have been performing domesti-

cally, many of whom will get a tremendous opportunity in the Prime Minister's XI fixture against Pakistan later this week," he said in a statement. Pakistan, who have not won a match in Australia in nearly three decades, are currently preparing for the series. Australia squad: David Warner, Usman Khawaja, Marnus Labuschagne, Steve Smith, Travis Head, Mitchell Marsh, Alex Carey, Pat Cummins (captain), Mitchell Starc, Nathan Lyon, Josh Hazlewood, Scott Boland, Cameron Greene, Lance Morris. Pakistan squad: Shan Masood (captain), Aamir Jamal, Abdullah Shafique,

Abrar Ahmed, Babar Azam, Faheem Ashraf, Hasan Ali, Imam-ul-Haq, Khuram Shahzad, Mir Hamza, Mohammad Rizwan (wk), Mohammad Wasim Jr, Noman Ali, Saim Ayub, Salman Ali Agha, Sarfaraz Ahmed (wk), Saud Shakeel and Shaheen Shah Afridi. Australia tour schedule: Four-day match: PM's XI vs Pakistan – December 6-9: Manuka Oval, Canberra. 1st Test – Australia vs Pakistan – December 14-18: Perth Stadium. 2nd Test – Australia vs Pakistan – December 26-30: Melbourne Cricket Ground (MCG). 3rd Test – Australia vs Pakistan – January 3-7: Sydney Cricket Ground (SCG).

PPP voices  
objections  
on ECP's...

FROM PAGE 01  
expected during the first week of December as announced by the ECP. It had earlier stated that the final list of delimitations would be published on December 15 but it was later revised to November 30. In its notification, the ECP said that according to Article 51(3) of the Constitution, the National Assembly consists of 266 general seats, with 60 seats reserved for women and additionally 10 for non-Muslims. The former Sindh information minister, while addressing a press conference in Karachi today, said that the PPP has strong objections against the recent delimitations of constituencies – both provincial and national assemblies – in light of the upcoming elections scheduled to be held on February 8, 2024.

Key US  
officials to  
visit Pak

FROM PAGE 01  
Afghan oil to carry out attacks in its neighbouring country. Recently, Pakistan also asked the Taliban-led government to extradite Hafiz Gul Bahadur after a terrorist affiliated with his group carried out an attack in Bannu. Two civilians were martyred while 10, including three soldiers, sustained injuries when an Afghan suicide bomber attacked a security forces convoy on November 26. Pakistan also continues to deport illegal Afghan citizens from the country citing a rise in terror attacks in the country. Assistant Secretary of State for the Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration Julieta Valls Noyes is scheduled to visit the country from December 4 to 6, said the statement.

Pak inches  
closer to FTA  
with GCC

FROM PAGE 01  
"If approved, this will mark the first trade and investment agreement that the GCC has entered into with any country in the past 15 years." Commerce and Industries Minister Dr Gohar Ejaz-led delegation is in Saudi Arabia where he held talks with the GCC's chief negotiator to finalise the investment-related part of the GCC Free Trade Agreement (FTA). Sharing the details of the meetings in the kingdom on his X handle, the commerce minister said, "Productive discussions in Saudi Arabia as we work towards finalising the investment-related part of the GCC Free Trade Agreement." The minister was confident that this agreement will strengthen economic ties between Pakistan and the GCC, fostering new opportunities for trade and investment. According to a statement issued by the ministry, the technical teams from two sides held extensive discussions on the remaining details of the investment chapter, including investment protection and facilitation.

Djokovic protege  
Medjedovic tops  
for Next Gen crown

JEDDAH: Hamad Medjedovic upset top-seeded Arthur Fils 3-4 (6/8), 4-1, 4-2, 3-4 (9/11), 4-1 to win the Next Gen ATP Finals in Jeddah. At No.110 in the world, Medjedovic became the lowest-ranked champion in the six-year history of the 21-and-under tournament as well as the first Serbian to lift the Next Gen Finals trophy. Having gone unde-

feated through the group stage before storming to the title, Medjedovic has received \$514,000 for winning the event, which is nearly \$100,000 higher than his entire career prize money earnings. His triumph comes just two weeks after his mentor and compatriot Novak Djokovic lifted a record seventh ATP Finals trophy in Turin. "It's a nice thing obviously.

The two of us from Serbia, he's winning the big Masters I would say, the real one, and I'm winning the Next Gen, obviously it's a huge thing and I'm really happy to follow his footsteps in some way," said Medjedovic, who threw himself to the ground in disbelief after converting his third championship point. "It was a very special feeling. I couldn't believe it, I still don't believe it. It's going to give me for sure a lot of confidence for 2024. Obviously Arthur is an amazing player. Rankings-wise he's much better than me, he's top-40 for a reason, he's very good. I'm just really happy." Fils, a leading candidate for the ATP Newcomer of the Year award, has enjoyed a banner 2023, which saw the French teenager rise from 251 in the world at the start of the year to a current career-high of 36. – Agencies

Ronaldinho:  
Mbappe could  
win Ballon  
d'Or with PSG

PARIS: Star French striker Kylian Mbappe can win the Ballon d'Or in "any team", Ronaldinho told AFP Sunday, but the Brazilian would like him to win it with Paris Saint-Germain, "a big club". "A great player like him can have the opportunity to win the Ballon d'Or in any team, but as I love PSG, I would like him to do it with PSG," the 2002 World Champion said. "I hope he will win it. He is a good friend and a very great player. I like his style of play," he said during an interview with AFP in Thailand. The prestigious award still eludes the French captain, who finished this year in third place – his best ranking to date. "Winning the big competitions will help him a lot," said Ronaldinho, who wore No.10 for PSG from 2001 to 2003. "PSG is a great club," the Brazilian said during a visit to Bangkok as an ambassador for Teqball, a novelty sport combining football and table tennis. – Agencies

PBBF to host Olympic  
Solidarity WABC Level-I  
Coaching Course

## AFZAL JAVED

ISLAMABAD: In a significant move to bolster the basketball coaching landscape in Pakistan, the Pakistan Basketball Federation (PBBF) proudly announces the commencement of the Olympic Solidarity WABC Level-I Coaching Course from December 11-16 at Government College University, Lahore. The Secretary General of Pakistan Basketball Federation Khalid Bashir said that the esteemed FIBA Coaching Instructor, Mr. Milan Kotarac from Serbia, has been entrusted to lead the six-day coaching course by FIBA. The program aims to provide in-depth theoretical and practical insights to fifteen coaches, encompassing both male and female participants, during morning and evening sessions. Mr. Kotarac will be assisted by Mr. Ouj E Zahoar (Associate Secretary PBBF), Mr. M Sami (course coordinator) & Mr. Riaz Malik (Head Coach). Khalid Bashir highlighted the paramount importance of staying abreast of the latest rules in basketball, emphasizing the role of the coaching community in contributing to the growth of the sport in Pakistan. The FIBA Instructor is slated to cover the latest rules and update participants' knowledge in alignment with the guidelines issued by the international governing body of basketball. This initiative reflects PBBF's commitment to empowering coaches with cutting-edge skills and techniques, ensuring they play a pivotal role in nurturing the next generation of basketball talent in the country. By providing this learning opportunity, the federation reaffirms its dedication to fostering excellence and innovation within the basketball coaching fraternity.

## Pakistan Women defeat New Zealand by 7 wickets

Fatima Sana restricted the Kiwis from scoring a big score, giving just 3 wickets off 18 runs

## DNA

WELLINGTON: The Girls in Green shined after claiming victory against New Zealand in the first T20I match by seven wickets at the University of Otago Oval, Dunedin. Fatima Sana, with her smooth bowling prowess, alongside other bowlers, restricted the Kiwis from scoring a big score, giving just 3 wickets off 18 runs. Shawal Zulfiqar, meanwhile, led the team towards a win with her batting skills scoring 41 runs off 42 balls as the team pursued a chasable 128-run target. The team played cautiously without losing any wickets in the early overs, knowing well that the target would be easier to chase. Muneeba Ali was the first victim to New Zealand as she lost her wicket after scoring 23 off 24 with four boundaries. After losing the first wicket, Shawal and skipper Nida Dar stayed on the crease and built a 51-run partnership before losing their wickets in quick successions. Pakistan were 93-3 in 13.5 overs when hard-hitter Aliya Riaz and Bismah Maroof came to the crease and their unbeaten 39-



run stand took the team over the line as Riaz finished the game with a maximum. Batting first, the New Zealand batters were consistently troubled by Fatima, who removed both openers in the first eight overs.

The home side looked helpless against the Pakistani bowling attack and with never-ending struggle, could only score 127-6 in the allocated overs. Maddy Green was the host's top-scorer as the right-handed

batter scored 43 off 28 with five boundaries but her valiant effort went in vain. Squads: New Zealand: Sophie Devine (c), Kate Anderson, Suzie Bates, Bernadine Bezuidenhout, Eden Carson (T20I only), Izzy Gaze (ODI & 1st T20I), Maddy Green, Fran Jonas, Melie Kerr, Jess Kerr, Molly Penfold, Georgia Plimmer, Hannah Rowe, Lea Tahuu. Pakistan: Nida Dar (captain), Aliya Riaz, Bismah Maroof, Diana Baig, Fatima Sana, Ghulam Fatima, Muneeba Ali (wk), Najiha Alvi (wk), Nashra Sundhu, Natalia Parvaiz, Omaira Sohail, Sadaf Shamas, Sadia Iqbal, Shawaal Zulfiqar, Sidra Amin, Umm-e-Hani, and Waheeda Akhtar. Schedule of remaining matches: Second T20I: December 5, University of Otago Oval, Dunedin. Third T20I: December 9, Sir John Davies Oval, Queenstown. First ODI: December 12, Sir John Davies Oval, Queenstown. Second ODI: December 15, Hagley Oval, Christchurch. Third ODI: December 18, Hagley Oval, Christchurch.

## Briefs

**Philippines raises alarm over 135 Chinese boats near reef**

DNA

MANILA: The Philippines said Sunday more than 135 Chinese vessels were "swarming" a reef off its coast, describing the boats' growing presence as "alarming". The Chinese boats were "dispersed and scattered" within the boomerang-shaped Whitsun Reef, which the Philippines calls Julian Felipe Reef, around 320 kilometres (200 miles) west of Palawan Island, the coast guard said. Whitsun Reef is more than 1,000 kilometres from the nearest major Chinese landmass of Hainan island. The Philippines said it counted 111 "Chinese maritime militia vessels" (CMM) on November 13. When the coast guard deployed two patrol boats to the area on Saturday the number had increased to "more than 135", the force said. "No response was made to the radio challenges issued by the PCG (Philippine Coast Guard) to the CMM vessels which is now estimated to have grown to more than 135 vessels dispersed and scattered within Julian Felipe Reef," Manila's coast guard said, describing the boats' presence as "alarming" and "illegal". The Chinese embassy in Manila did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

Beijing claims most of the South China Sea, including waters and islands close to the shores of its neighbours, and has ignored an international tribunal decision that its assertion has no legal basis. It deploys vessels to patrol the waters, and has built artificial islands and military installations to reinforce its stance.

**Turkish police capture Interpol-wanted criminal group member**

DNA

ANKARA : Turkish police arrested a manager of an organized crime group operating in Russia in Istanbul, Interior Minister Ali Yerlikaya said Sunday. Shamil Amirov, one of the managers of the "Thieves in Law" organized crime syndicate, was wanted by Interpol with a blue notice of fraud and was caught in Istanbul during Operation Cage-15. Yerlikaya said on the social media platform X, formerly Twitter. He said that the Istanbul Anti-Organized Crime Branch Directorate found Amirov to be residing in the Sariyer district of the city. "Our fight against international and national organized crime centers and poison traffickers will continue increasingly," the minister said. "We are determined to clear our country of international and national organized crime groups. We will catch them one by one and bring them to justice," he added.

**Bear attacks in Japan hit record high**

TOKYO : Bear attacks across Japan have already amounted to a record high since record keeping began in fiscal 2006, marking the worst year for bear attacks in the country. The environment ministry said that there were 193 bear attacks nationwide in the eight months since April, which marks the start of Japan's fiscal year, that left 212 casualties, including six people dead. The overall tally so far already exceeded the previous record of 158 logged in fiscal 2020, the ministry said. Seventy percent of the attacks occurred in northeastern Japan, including 70 in Akita and 45 in Iwate.

Thirty people were attacked by the animal in November, the second highest for the month.

Bears usually go into hibernation from late November to December, but ministry officials warned more attacks are possible.

# Pakistani diaspora urged to revive country's economy

ICC engages with Pakistan-US alumni network to boost bilateral trade. President urges Diaspora to invest in Pakistan, fostering economic growth and technology transfer

ABID RAZA

ISLAMABAD: A delegation of Pakistan-US Alumni Network (PUAN) led by Salman Wahab, Alumni Engagement Coordinator of US Embassy visited the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry (ICCI) and discussed possibilities for further improving bilateral trade and economic relations between Pakistan and the USA. The delegation represented various sectors including academia, engineering, entrepreneurs, and IT professionals. Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari, President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry welcomed the PUAN delegation and urged that the Pakistani diaspora in the US should bring modern technology and invest in Pakistan to contribute to the economic revival of the country. He said that many members of the Pakistani diaspora have achieved good expertise, best business practices, and modern technology by doing business in the US and this is the time that they should explore Pakistan for joint ventures and investment to help the country achieve better growth. He said that the Pakistani diaspora should play a role in connecting the Pakistani youth, who are qualified in engineering, IT,



and other fields, with US entrepreneurs to share knowledge and expertise and explore business partnerships. He said that there is a good potential to promote connectivity between the women entrepreneurs of both countries to create business collaborations. Speaking on the occasion, Salman Wahab, Alumni Engagement Coordinator of the US Embassy said that in 2008, the US Embassy Islamabad had launched the Pakistan-US Alumni Network, which is

committed to making meaningful contributions to Pakistan through community service, conferences, mentoring future generations, and reaching out to inspire and recruit new exchange participants. He informed that for more than 65 years, over 37000 Pakistanis have participated in the US Government-sponsored cultural, professional, and educational exchange programs and intensive domestic educational programs to enhance people-to-people ties between Pa-

kistan and the US. The network has 14 local chapters across Pakistan covering 4 provinces, Gilgit Baltistan and AJK and its members have made significant contributions to Pakistan's government, business, culture, and civil society while they will continue to play a role in the better development of Pakistan. The delegation members reiterated their commitment that they would continue to strive to bring positive changes in Pakistan and

would try to make a difference by contributing for the betterment of Pakistan. Engr. Azhar ul Islam Zafar, Vice President ICCI thanked the PUAN delegation for visiting ICCI and stressed that both organizations should develop close liaison to bring the US investors including the Pakistani diaspora to invest in Pakistan and work for further improving bilateral trade and economic relations between Pakistan and USA.

## Masood praises Pakistani-American entrepreneurs' contribution to Pak economy

WEB DESK

WASHINGTON :Pakistan's Ambassador to the United States, Masood Khan, Saturday met top Pakistani-American entrepreneurs and professionals from Washington metropolitan area, saying he was proud of their successes in running their enterprises in the U.S. "You have been making direct and indirect contributions to Pak-US relations in different roles and you have been contributing directly to Pakistan's economic development," the Ambassador told them, according to a press release from the Pakistani embassy. The diverse group was composed of Pakistani-American

businessmen who have excelled in various fields including tech, finance, banking, and services and sectors. Presidents, CEOs and senior executives of noted companies, including KabaFusion, Delloitte, Organization of Pakistani Entrepreneurs of North America (OPEN), The Citizen Foundation (TCF), Sirhandi Companies, TRG Group, Novacloud, Facebook and others were present on the occasion. "Your success," said the Ambassador, is a common denominator that makes us proud here in the United States and Pakistan." Dr. Sohail Masood, CEO KabaFusion and holder of the Entrepreneur of

"The Year 2023 National Award", and Ms. Ambreen Mirza, President & CEO of OPEN Global, were recognized on the occasion, the press release said. Dr. Masood narrated how KabaFusion became one of the leading healthcare providers of the United States, and said that his firm was in the process of acquiring another company, taking its worth to \$4 billion. He told the gathering that he had provided jobs to 70 people in Pakistan in the past few months and that this number will grow. Ms. Mirza, CEO of OPEN Global, said that her firm, established 25 years ago by a small group of technology entrepreneurs in Boston, has

grown to a network of over 100,000 people across 5 continents with chapters in eight countries. She said that OPEN comprised entrepreneurs and professionals who were undertaking various initiatives in critical sectors such as healthcare, education, climate change and others. "Not only are we getting the attention of the Pakistani government, but we have become a brand among non-Pakistanis," Ms. Mirza told the cheering gathering. Zaina Bankwala, Chairperson of OPEN, Washington DC chapter, also spoke on the occasion and invited Pakistani-American entrepreneurs and professionals to reap the benefits of the organization by becoming part of the OPEN fraternity.

## Turkiye-Finland ties entered new dimension under NATO: Envoy

ANKARA: Relations between Ankara and Helsinki have entered a new and positive dimension under the umbrella of NATO following the latter's accession into the alliance, Türkiye's Ambassador to Finland Deniz Çakar pointed out. "There is a significant revival in our relations as two members of the alliance. Especially in the fields of security and the fight against terrorism, our interior and justice ministries as well as relevant institutions hold regular and alternate meetings both in Finland and in Türkiye," Çakar told Anadolu Agency (AA) on the sidelines of the annual Slush startup conference in the capital Helsinki. He said that more frequent meetings enabled both countries to understand each other better while prompting them to solve problems more constructively. Sweden and Finland requested to join NATO in May of last year in the face of Russia's invasion of Ukraine. But President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan raised objections over the two countries' protection of groups related to terrorism. Türkiye endorsed Finland's membership bid in April but has kept Sweden waiting. On bilateral ties regarding tourism and trade, Çakar mentioned that mutual tourism showed a slowdown due to the recent pandemic but that positive momentum was caught again right now. "We know that around 120,000 Finnish tourists visited our country last year. We aim to increase this number further. Finnish tourists give special importance to the concept of sustainability because the green transition is highly significant for Finland. Therefore, they have a great sensibility toward issues concerning the environment," she said.—DNA

## East African force begins withdrawal from DRC

ASMARA : The East African Community (EAC) regional force began its withdrawal from the Democratic Republic of Congo after Kinshasa deemed it ineffective and refused to renew its mandate. A first group of around 100 Kenyan soldiers from the regional force - which also includes Ugandan, Burundian and South Sudanese soldiers - left from Goma airport bound for Nairobi on Sunday, according to a spokesman for the force on the ground who did not provide more detail on further withdrawals. The regional bloc first deployed troops in the violence-plagued region in November last year after the resurgence of the M23 rebel group. DRC authorities at the time invited the EAC to deploy its forces to free the areas taken by the rebels. But the future of the deployment was thrown into doubt after DR Congo President Félix Tshisekedi accused the force of cohabiting with the rebels rather than forcing them to lay down arms. Following a summit on 25 November, the EAC announced that the DRC "would not renew the mandate of the regional force beyond 8 December 2023". But fighting continues between the M23 group and the DRC army, supported by militia who call themselves "patriots". On 24 October, a Kenyan soldier from the regional force was killed by shrapnel. Numerous armed groups and other armed groups have been active for three decades in the east of the DRC, a legacy of the regional wars that broke out during the 1990s and 2000s.—APP

## Guinea-Bissau president calls violence 'attempted coup'

FOREIGN DESK

CONAKRY : Guinea-Bissau's President Umaro Sissoco Embaló said this week's deadly violence in the capital between the army and members of the National Guard was an "attempted coup". Embaló, who was attending the COP28 climate conference in Dubai, said he had been unable to return immediately "due to the attempted coup d'état. I must tell you this act will have serious consequences", he said after arriving back in Bissau on Saturday. Earlier today, the country's army ordered National Guard forces back to barracks, following unrest that left at least two people dead and brought



condemnation from the regional bloc ECOWAS. Clashes between members of the National Guard and special forces of the presidential guard broke out Thursday night in the capital Bissau, leaving two dead. A military official, speaking anonymously due to the sensitive nature of the situation, said

six soldiers were injured in the fighting and evacuated to neighbouring Senegal. Calm had returned by noon on Friday to the small nation with a history of instability, following the announcement that the army had captured Colonel Victor Tchongo, commander of the National Guard. On Saturday the security presence in Bissau was reduced, but soldiers were still visible around certain strategic buildings such as the presidential palace, the judicial police headquarters and some ministries. Calls for prosecution of the perpetrators Some National Guard officers and soldiers fled into the interior of the country, the army said in a statement Saturday, with-

out specifying numbers. "The General Staff of the armed forces hereby informs them that they must return to their place of assignment," the statement continued. The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), in a statement Saturday, said it "strongly condemns the violence and all attempts to disrupt the constitutional order and rule of law in Guinea-Bissau". "ECOWAS further calls for the arrest and prosecution of the perpetrators of the incident in accordance with the law," the Abuja-based organisation added. The regional bloc also expressed "its full solidarity with the people and constitutional authorities of Guinea-Bissau"

## Bomb attack kills 4 at Catholic mass, Philippines

The blast happened during a morning service at Mindanao State University's gymnasium in Marawi, the country's largest Muslim city

NEWS DESK

MARAWI: At least four people were killed and dozens wounded in a bomb attack on a Catholic mass in the insurgency-plagued southern Philippines on Sunday, with President Ferdinand Marcos blaming "foreign terrorists". The blast happened during a morning service at Mindanao State University's gymnasium in Marawi, the country's largest Muslim city. Police Lieutenant General Emmanuel Peralta said four people were killed and around 50 wounded in the blast that was caused by an improvised explosive device. The death toll had earlier stood at three. Other security officials said the bombing may have been a retaliatory attack for a series of military operations against

Islamist militant groups in recent days. Photos posted on the Lanao del Sur provincial government's Facebook page showed several overturned plastic chairs, shattered glass and debris around a black patch on the floor of the gymnasium. University student Chris Jurado, 21, told AFP from his hospital bed that the explosion happened during the first Bible reading of the morning mass at 7:00 am (2300 GMT Saturday). "It was really sudden and everyone ran," Jurado said. "When I looked behind me people were lying on the floor. We didn't know what happened because everything happened so fast." Rowena Mae Fernandez, 19, said she did not know what the blast was at first - then others started running. "My companion and I also ran, even though we

fell on the ground at one point. That was the only thing I remembered until I got out of the gym and I fell again," she said from hospital. "My friends were crying because they saw my injury." Marcos condemned the attack by "foreign terrorists", describing it as "senseless" and "heinous". Mindanao State University issued a statement condemning "the act of violence", as it suspended classes and deployed more security personnel on the campus. "We stand in solidarity with our Christian community and all those affected by this tragedy," the university said. Marawi city Mayor Majul Gandamra urged members of the Muslim and Christian communities to remain united. "Our city has long been a beacon of peaceful coexistence and harmony, and we will not allow such

acts of violence to overshadow our collective commitment to peace and unity," Gandamra said in a statement condemning the attack. Military chief General Romeo Brawner said the bombing may have been a revenge attack for military operations against three Islamist militant groups - Dawlah Islamiyah-Philippines, Abu Sayyaf and Maute - in western Mindanao in recent days. "That is one angle we are looking into," Brawner told a news conference. "Based on the evidence that we gathered there is a big percentage that points to the Maute-ISIS." Pro-Islamic State Maute and Abu Sayyaf militants - including foreign and local fighters - held Marawi under siege in 2017. The Philippine military wrested back the ruined city after a five-month

battle that claimed more than 1,000 lives. "There are strong indications of a foreign element (in Sunday's attack)," Defense Secretary Gilbert Teodoro told reporters. Lanao del Sur and Maguindanao del Sur are part of the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao. The country's Muslim minority were given self-rule in Bangsamoro under former president Rodrigo Duterte as part of efforts to head off the lure of violent extremism. Bangsamoro Government Chief Minister Ahod Ebrahim said he "condemned the atrocious and cowardly acts" and called for a "thorough investigation". Militant attacks on buses, Catholic churches and public markets have been a feature of decades-long unrest in the region.

## India agrees to withdraw soldiers from Maldives

NEW DELHI: India's government has agreed to withdraw its soldiers from the Maldives, the Indian Ocean archipelago's President Mohamed Muizzu said on Sunday. Muizzu won the presidential election in September, having campaigned to alter the Maldives' "India first" policy and promising removal of a small Indian military presence of some 75 personnel. "In the discussions we had, the Indian government has agreed to remove Indian soldiers," Muizzu told reporters. "We also agreed to set up a high level committee to solve issues related to development projects." Muizzu made the remarks following engagements on the sidelines of the COP28 climate summit with Indian officials.

India's ministry of foreign affairs did not immediately respond to a request for comment on Sunday. India and China have been vying for influence in the region, with the coalition that supports Muizzu considered to have a leaning more towards China. Most of the Indian military personnel were in the Maldives to operate and manage two helicopters and a Dornier aircraft given to the Maldives by India.—APP

## Ukraine repels barrage of Russian drone

MOSCOW : Russia launched 12 drones and a cruise missile at Ukraine overnight, with Ukraine's air defence systems destroying 10 drones before they reached their targets, Ukraine's air force said. The cruise missile was not destroyed but did not reach its target, the Air Force said on Sunday, without giving further details. It did not say what happened to the two drones that were not destroyed. "10 out of 12 is a perfect score. These are good results that we see every day," Air Force spokesperson Yuriy Ilnat told national television. They could not independently verify the Air Force's report. There was no immediate comment from Russia. The Iranian-made Shahed drones were headed towards Ukraine's northwest, the air force said. Most were downed in the Mykolaiv region in Ukraine's south. Regional officials confirmed the attack but said they had no information on casualties or damage. Russia's Commissioner for Human Rights Tatiana Moskalkova and Ukrainian human rights ombudsman Dmytro Lubynets plan to conduct several mutual visits to prisoners of war, Russia's RIA news agency reported. "Russian military personnel will be visited on the Ukrainian side. Ukrainian military personnel will be visited on the Russian side.—DNA

## Saudi launches first flight from Jeddah to Brussels

RIYADH: Saudi Arabia's budget airline flynas announced on Sunday the inauguration of its first direct flight connecting Jeddah with Brussels. This move marks a major milestone in flynas' European expansion, establishing it as the first Saudi national airline to provide direct connectivity between the Kingdom and the heart of the EU, according to a report by the Saudi Press Agency. The new route, part of flynas' growing portfolio of international destinations, is a strategic component of the Saudi Air Connectivity Program. This program is a key initiative in line with the National Tourism Strategy, aiming to increase the Kingdom's global connectivity. The strategy aims to draw 150 million tourists and expand Saudi Arabia's international flight destinations to over 250 by 2030. The launch, signifying the strengthening of Saudi-Belgian relations, was attended by key dignitaries, including Pascal Gregoire, the Belgian ambassador to Saudi Arabia. The celebratory event at the Brussels Airport was graced by the deputy ambassador of Saudi Arabia in Brussels, Mohammed Moanes, along with representatives from flynas and prominent figures from the travel and tourism sector.—APP

## Briefs

### Dr. Umar Saif unveils Pakistan's IT potential

ISLAMABAD: In a groundbreaking initiative, the Pakistan-Qatar IT Conference commenced at the JW Marriott Marquis City Center in Doha, Qatar, drawing active participation from prominent Pakistani IT firms and local Qatari businesses.

The inauguration ceremony was led by the Caretaker Federal Minister for IT and Telecommunication, Dr Umar Saif. During his address at the conference, Dr Umar Saif introduced the technological prowess of Pakistan to a diverse audience, comprising both business leaders and government executives in Qatar, according to a news release received here on Sunday.

This event marks the maiden voyage of an IT delegation from Pakistan to Qatar, aiming to tap into the considerable unexplored opportunities in the region and bolster Pakistan's IT exports. The historic visit of the Pakistani delegation, spearheaded by Dr Umar Saif, began with a noteworthy event at the Pakistan embassy. Attended by the Pakistani diaspora in Qatar and representatives from 30 leading IT companies in Pakistan, the gathering set the tone for fostering stronger bilateral relations.

Jointly organized by the Pakistani Embassy, the Pakistan Software Houses Association (PSHA), and the Pakistan Business Council of Qatar, the event underscored the collaborative efforts to explore and harness the vast untapped potential in Qatar for the mutual benefit of both nations. — APP

### Fazl pledges people-centric governance

DNA

MULTAN: Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam Fazl (JUI-F) chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman has emphasised the responsibility of those in power to protect the right of every citizen. Speaking at an event welcoming Malik Sajjad into the Jamiat, Rehman highlighted the inclusive origin of JUI, stating it was founded by scholars from various sects. "We have maintained religious attitude without any room for sectarianism," asserted the JUI-F chief, underlining the party's commitment to politics that bridge differences and promotes social harmony. He urged for moderation of differences rather than their intensification, emphasising the importance of fostering a society based on mutual respect and dignity. He stressed the power of gentle persuasion, stating, "The promotion of truth can also be done with polite lips and tone". Rehman reminded the audience of their duty to fight against any temptation that may arise against Islam, posing JUI as a political force dedicated to upholding Islamic values.

### Marwat booked for violating section 144

DNA

MARDAN: Senior Vice President of PTI Sher Afzal Marwat was booked along with other 104 party workers for violating the section 144 in Mardan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. As many as 104 PTI workers including Marwat were nominated by the Mardan police in the FIR for violating the section 144. SHO of Police Station Jabbar became the complainant in the FIR. The sections related to the road closure and halting the polio campaign was included in the FIR. Meanwhile, Sher Afzal Marwat was also booked along with other 21 party workers for holding workers' convention in Swabi. According to Swabi police, the case was registered for violating the section 144.

## Italian embassy hosts grand fashion show

Ambassador of Italy Andreas Ferrarese says trade volume between Italy and Pakistan has improved significantly



ANSAR M BHATTI / DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Italian embassy in Islamabad recently organized a grand Fashion Show within the premises of its under-construction new embassy. This event was notable not only for its celebration of fashion but also for the unique setting of being hosted at a location still undergoing construction. The new embassy is expected to be completed in April 2024, showcasing a modern

and elegant facility that will serve as Italy's diplomatic hub in Pakistan. However, the current Ambassador of Italy Andreas Ferrarese announced during the event that he would not be present for the formal inauguration of the new embassy. His departure from Pakistan is scheduled for January 15, 2024. The decision to hold a Fashion Show at an embassy construction site could be seen as a creative and unconventional choice, blending the worlds of diplomacy and fashion. Such events often serve as cultural exchanges, promoting

cross-cultural understanding and collaboration between nations. It's possible that the embassy aimed to create a memorable and distinctive experience for attendees, highlighting the fusion of Italian style and Pakistani hospitality. The event drew an impressive crowd, with seemingly the entire city of Islamabad converging on the venue to partake in the spectacle of exquisite dresses meticulously crafted by renowned Pakistani designers. The ambassador said that the trade volume between Italy and Pakistan has

touched two billion euros mark first time in the history of bilateral relations and hoped this figure shall further be improved in the days to come. There is a significant Pakistani community residing in Italy, estimated to be around 200,000 individuals. This emphasizes the community's active participation in contributing to the development of Italy. This involvement implies that members of the Pakistani community are engaged in various aspects of Italian society, such as the workforce, economy, and potentially other spheres like culture and education.

## Chilas: 6 arrested after bus comes under attack

CHILAS: The Diamer police arrested six individuals following an assault on an Islamabad-bound bus in Chilas, Gilgit-Baltistan, where nine individuals, including two soldiers, lost their lives and 21 were injured due to an attack by unidentified gunmen. The bus driver's acceleration, prompted by the firing, caused a collision with a goods truck. The interior minister of GB labelled this attack as an act of terrorism, yet no group has claimed responsibility. The Diamer commissioner's PR officer mentioned that a case was filed against unidentified troublemakers by Diamer SHO Azmat Shah. Six suspects were apprehended at different police stations. Security measures were escalated with closures at GB entry and exit points, along-

side search operations in Diamer, leading to the suspension of traffic on the Karakoram Highway for the day. The Deputy Commissioner of Diamer, Captain Arif Ahmad, and Chilas Assistant Commissioner Sadaqat Ali confirmed these actions. The funeral rites for the deceased, attended by GB Chief Minister Haji Gulbar Khan and senior army officials, were conducted, and bodies were later sent to their respective hometowns via Rescue 1122. GB Interior Minister Shams Lone visited the injured at the Chilas hospital, instructing medical staff to ensure top-notch care. Meanwhile, numerous passengers were stranded in various areas due to the highway's closure, with some locals, like Muhammad Dardar, offering free accommodation. —Agencies

## Iran's support for Palestine based on its constitution

TEHRAN: President Ebrahim Raisi says Iran's support for Gaza and Palestine is based on the Constitution of the Islamic Republic, adding that advocating for the Palestinians was the number-one priority since the 1979 Islamic Republic. Speaking at a conference in Tehran on Sunday, Raisi emphasized that the tendencies of some regional countries do not compromise the constitutional principle behind the support for Palestine. "Our support for Gaza and Palestine is based on the Constitution. Backing the oppressed is among the foundations of the Constitution. Thus, supporting Palestine has been the foremost issue of the [Islamic] Revolution since its onset," he said. "We cannot stop adhering to the principles. The inclinations of

some parties in the region will not compromise this principle of the Constitution." The Iranian chief executive also described the Iranian Constitution as the most progressive among all countries. He further cited an African jurist as saying that the Constitution of the Islamic Republic is a combination of democracy and ideals. Meanwhile, Raisi referred to the brutal Israeli aggression against the Gaza Strip that has so far killed more than 15,200 Palestinians and left vast swathes of the besieged territory in ruins. He said that huge gatherings are being held across the world as the Zionist regime's racial discrimination, murder, injustice and oppression against the Palestinian people have been exposed. "We do not doubt that the divine revenge will emerge from the blood of 6,000 children, who were martyred oppressively, and that it will end the cruel and fake Zionist regime." Israel waged the war on Gaza on October 7 after the Palestinian Hamas resistance group conducted Operation Al-Aqsa Storm against the usurping entity in retaliation for its intensified atrocities against the Palestinian people. Iran hailed the historic Palestinian operation that shattered the Tel Aviv regime's so-called myth of invincibility. —Agencies

## UK to start Gaza surveillance flights

LONDON: The UK's military will conduct surveillance flights over Gaza to help locate hostages held by Hamas since its October 7 attack on Israel, Britain's defense ministry confirmed at the weekend. Hamas fighters seized around 240 Israelis and foreign hostages, according to Israeli authorities. Around 110 have since been freed, mainly during a recent week-long truce. Israel's military said on Friday it had resumed fighting in the besieged Palestinian territory, blaming Hamas. The resumption of combat has frustrated hopes for the swift release of the more than 130 captives the Israeli army has said are still being held in Gaza. The UK has said at least 12 British nationals were killed in the October 7 attacks — in which Israeli officials say about 1,200 people died, mostly civilians — and that a further five are still missing. But it has not confirmed how many are being held by Hamas. Israel responded to the

October 7 attack by vowing to eliminate the militant group and its subsequent relentless air and ground campaign has killed more than 15,000 people, also mostly civilians, according to the Hamas authorities who run Gaza. London did not reveal when its military surveillance flights over the territory would start but stressed they would be unarmed and focused only on hostage recovery efforts. "In support of the ongoing hostage rescue activity, the UK Ministry of Defense will conduct surveillance flights over the Eastern Mediterranean, including operating in air space over Israel and Gaza," it said in a statement. "Surveillance aircraft will be unarmed, do not have a combat role, and will be tasked solely to locate hostages," the ministry added. "Only information relating to hostage rescue will be passed to the relevant authorities responsible for hostage rescue." —Agencies

## US Vice President Kamala Harris calls for restraint in Gaza

GAZA: US Vice President Kamala Harris said too many innocent Palestinians had been killed in Gaza as Israeli war planes and artillery bombarded the enclave on Saturday following the collapse of a truce with Hamas militants. Speaking in Dubai, Harris said Israel had a right to defend itself, but international and humanitarian law must be respected and "too many innocent Palestinians have been killed." "Frankly, the scale of civilian suffering, and the images and videos coming from Gaza, are devastating," Harris told reporters. On the sidelines of COP28, Jordan's King Abdullah II and the US Vice President met in Dubai, reported the Jordan News Agency. King Abdullah stressed the need for the US to play a leading role in pushing for a political horizon for the Palestinian issue to reach peace on the basis of the two-state solution, during his meeting with Harris. The King called for an immediate cease-fire in Gaza and protecting civilians, warning of the repercussions of the continued war on international peace and security, including further violence and conflict that could plunge the entire region into a catastrophe. The two sides reaffirmed their rejection of any attempts of forced displacement of the Palestinians internally or outside Gaza, or attempts

to re-occupy any parts of the Strip, reported Petra. King Abdullah also stressed the importance of maintaining the uninterrupted delivery of sufficient aid, including food, water, fuel, and electricity, without any impediments, warning against the targeting of hospitals and hindering the delivery of medical supplies. Meanwhile, Harris thanked King Abdullah for his continued leadership in addressing the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and for Jordan's leadership in providing vital humanitarian assistance to Gaza, including its three airdrops of medical supplies to the field hospital that it has established in Gaza. She discussed the importance of the recent pause in the fighting between Israel and Hamas, and the Biden-Harris administration's commitment to supporting efforts to reach a new deal. She also discussed the US ideas for post-conflict planning in Gaza, including efforts for reconstruction, security, and governance. The US vice president emphasized that these efforts can only succeed if they are pursued in the context of a clear political horizon for the Palestinian people, toward a state of their own led by a revitalized Palestinian Authority and backed by significant support from the international community and the countries of the region. —Agencies

## UK-owned ship hit by rocket in Red Sea

LONDON: A UK-owned ship passing through the Red Sea has reportedly been hit by rocket fire, a UK-based maritime security group said Sunday, with another agency reporting possible drone activity in the area. The unnamed Bahamas-flagged vessel was "struck by a rocket" while sailing south around 35 nautical miles off Yemen's western coast, maritime security firm Ambrey said, citing reports. "The affected vessel was issuing distress calls relating to piracy/missile attack," the UK-based company added. It noted reports that "an international naval asset in the vicinity of the incident" was likely proceeding to the ship's location. —Agencies

## Key wins boost Narendra Modi's re-election bid

FOREIGN DESK

NEW DELHI: Narendra Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) is poised to win three of the four key state elections in India ahead of the crucial general elections next year. The BJP has a commanding lead in the states of Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh. The Congress is comfortably ahead in the southern state of Telangana. More than 160 million people or a sixth of India's electorate were eligible to vote in the polls held in November. Counting of votes for a fifth state, Mizoram, is due on Monday. Did these elections serve a litmus test for Mr Modi's prospects in securing a historic third term in the upcoming general elections next year? In simpler terms, would a stronger performance by the Congress have indicated a potential setback for the BJP? Not quite. In 2018, the Congress won three key state elections - Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh. Three months later BJP swept the general elections nationally and in all the three states. State elections in India are fought over state or region specific concerns, while general elections revolve around more national-level issues. Despite this dynamic, Sunday's results come as a significant boost for Mr Modi, who is already setting his sights on a record third term next year.

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