



# Islamabad POST

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## Briefs

### MQM doubts 'fairness' of polls

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: MQM-Pakistan chief Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui on Monday raised doubt about "fairness and transparency" of general elections on Feb 8. Addressing a press conference with Mustafa Kamal, Aminul Haq and other leaders at Pakistan House, Siddiqui said everyone knew how the results of the 2018 general elections were compiled. He claimed that Karachi had been deprived of its real representation. "Those who represented the city, did not belong to it," he added. The MQM (Muttahida Qaumi Movement) leader said the city needed elections at the earliest as "the caretaker government in Sindh is a continuation of 15-year [PPP] govt." Siddiqui said elections should be held in such a way that the whole process looked transparent. "At this time, it seems, the elections will not be fair and transparent," he continued. He warned the caretaker government of protest if the mandate was not to its liking. "We will come to the streets to get [real] mandate."

### No-trust motion against PPP's mayor

DNA

KARACHI: Moments after the City Council approved a resolution allowing the K-Electric to collect Karachi Metropolitan Corporation (KMC) charges from the citizens through their monthly power bills, Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) Karachi Amir Hafiz Naeemur Rehman Monday announced tabling a no-confidence motion against Mayor Barrister Murtaza Wahab. Expressing his disappointment over the attitude of the first PPP mayor of the port city, Rehman blasted the ruling party over the acute water crisis in the city, grabbing the mayor slot vial alleged rigging and not tabling the budget in the house. Addressing the council's session, the JI leader said that the elected representatives were helpless to address the water-related issues of the public.

### PTI says nation would foil polls sabotaging bids

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: PTI Core Committee held a detailed discussion on the electoral and political strategy of the party pertaining to the forthcoming general elections in the light of vision of the PTI founding chairman Imran Khan. During the meeting, they agreed to carry forward the party election campaign in benifitting manner in order to prepare the people for the polls while remaining completely peaceful and within the purview of the law and constitution despite the worst state oppression and fascism. The participants of the meeting recalled that PTI had an unparalleled history of peaceful and disciplined political struggle.

## Kakar rules out negotiations PM: terrorists must surrender unconditionally

"State will not show leniency towards terrorists who killed innocent citizens," says Kakar

ANSAR M BHATTI/DNA

ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar Monday warned terrorist groups in Pakistan to make an "unconditional surrender", noting the state would not negotiate with them. "The state will not show any leniency towards terrorists who committed violence and killed innocent citizens," he said during an interaction with the families of martyrs at the interior ministry. PM Kakar categorically said that no person would be allowed to take the law into his hands, adding that only the state had the legitimate right to use armed power through its security forces. "No one should have any doubt about the stance of the state against terrorists," he said. "All organs of the state have the clarity to remain persistent against militancy." He said any damage incurred in the past by giving a lenient space to militants would be mitigated. The prime minister said if someone wanted to denounce terrorism, they must seek forgiveness from the families of the martyrs, who paid the ultimate price of terrorism. "We cannot compensate those who lost their loved ones, but can make a gesture to acknowledge and honour their invaluable sacrifices," he said. Kakar said the reward for the martyrs' souls rests with Allah, however, it was the responsibility of the society to honour them with a distinguished status. "I pay tribute to all the martyrs with an unending list of heroes from all sections of society including police, politicians,

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## Punjab CTD arrests 9 suspected terrorists

ABBAS HASHMI

LAHORE: The Punjab Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) on Monday said it had arrested nine suspects associated with defunct organisations during various intelligence-based operations (IBOs). According to an official statement by the CTD, officials conducted 70 IBOs in various parts of the province. During these operations, the CTD interrogated 69 suspects, resulting in the arrest of nine. The statement disclosed that two of the arrested suspects were associated with the banned Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan and were detained in Lahore. The CTD also said that a suspected Daesh terrorist was arrested in Faisalabad whereas three suspects associated with Lashkare-Jhangvi (LeJ) were detained in Bahawalnagar and Hafizabad. The CTD also apprehended two terrorists linked to the extremist group Sipah-e-Sahaba (SSP) in Bahawalpur and Sialkot

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## Protests against Tel Aviv continue Israeli attacks claim more innocent lives

The ministry says that 18,205 people have been killed and 49,645 injured in Gaza since October 7

NEWS DESK

GAZA: As the US-backed Israeli genocidal war on the Gaza Strip entered day 66 on Monday, massive aerial and artillery strikes continued to pound and level whole blocks and homes and massacre more civilians, mostly children and women. According to local sources, the Israeli occupation army carried out hundreds of aerial and artillery attacks last night and in the morning on different areas of Gaza. One displaced civilian was reportedly injured by Israeli sniper fire during his presence inside a school in Abasan town, east of Khan Yunis, while several others were wounded during an Israeli attack on a street near al-Awda factory in Deir al-Balah in central Gaza. Meanwhile, six martyrs were evacuated to the Nasser Hospital after their bodies were either pulled from the rubble of buildings or found on roads in Khan Yunis. One citizen was also killed and others were injured when an Israeli drone

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## Israel using same carnage tactics in south as in north

FOREIGN DESK

BRUSSELS: European Union foreign policy chief Josep Borrell has warned that the southern part of the besieged Gaza Strip faces a "dark prospect" as Israel's relentless bombing campaign has left growing civilian fatalities and displaced many people in the south. Borrell made the remarks on Monday in the Belgian capital Brussels, where EU foreign ministers will meet to consider possible next steps in response to the crisis gripping West Asia. He said that Israel's tactics in southern Gaza "are the same or even worse" than those the regime used in the

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## Justice Ijaz questions formation of SC benches Supreme Court to take up lifetime disqualification issue in Jan 2024



DNA

ISLAMABAD: Justice Ijazul Ahsan has written a letter to the Registrar Supreme Court and expressed his reservations about the formation of benches in the Supreme Court. Justice Ejaz Al-Ahsan said in the letter that it was decided in the Judges Committee that 7 judges will hear the appeal of the Military Courts decision. According to the text of the letter, a 3-member committee meeting was held in the chamber of the Chief Justice on December 7, the committee meeting was at 4 o'clock and the agenda of the meeting

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## IHC reserves verdict on Khan's plea

COURT REPORTER

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad High Court (IHC) Monday reserved a verdict on former Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) former chairman Imran Khan's petition seeking suspension of the trial verdict in the Toshakhana case. A two-member bench, comprising IHC Chief Justice Aamer Farooq and Justice Tariq Mehmood Jahangiri, conducted the hearing today. The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) disqualified the PTI supremo for five years from holding any public office. A trial court in Islamabad had then found the PTI founder guilty of "corrupt practices" for concealing details of state gifts that he received as prime minister and sentenced him to three years in prison.

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ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Prime Minister, Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar while inaugurating the Martyr's wall in the ministry of interior, placing a portrait of Shaheed AIG Safway Ghayur. - DNA

## 'Major' cut in petrol price likely

Government can drop petrol price in next fortnightly review after dip in global oil prices

ADIL SHAHEEN

ISLAMABAD: Pakistanis are expected to get a "major relief" as the caretaker government could possibly reduce the price of petroleum products from December 16, citing sources reported a private news channel. The people revealed that since there has been a drop in the price of petroleum products in the global market, the government could pass on the benefit to the nation in the fortnightly review on December 15. The price of petrol, according to a

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## Bilawal demands probe into holding talks with terrorists

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Peoples Party Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari called for an investigation into those responsible for the decision to engage in talks with terrorists. Speaking to the media in Islamabad alongside caretaker Interior Minister Sarfaraz Bugti, Bilawal emphasised Pakistan's sacrifices in the war against terrorism, expressing concern over negotiations held without addressing the terrorist threats. Bilawal attributed the spread of terrorism to the past decision of the PTI's founding chairman to

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## Orders polls in Jammu Indian SC upholds end of special status for IIOJK

In August 2019, India's ruling Bharatiya Janata Party had revoked occupied Kashmir's special status

AGENCIES

NEW DELHI: India's Supreme Court on Monday ruled in a unanimous verdict that the special status of held Kashmir was a temporary provision and upheld the order abrogating Article 370 in the constitution, Indian Media reported. It also directed the election commission to hold elections in held Kashmir by September 30, 2024. In August 2019, India's ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) had revoked occupied Kashmir's special status by repealing Article 370 of the constitution. The law had limited the power of the Indian parliament to impose laws in the state, apart from matters of defence, foreign affairs and communications. The move allowed people from the rest of the country to have the right to acquire property in held Kashmir and settle there permanently. Kashmiris, international organisations and critics of India's Hindu nationalist-led government had termed

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## 'Travesty of justice' Pakistan rejects Indian SC verdict

Jammu and Kashmir is an internationally-recognised dispute: FM

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Foreign Minister Jilil Abbas Jillani has slammed the Indian Supreme Court's verdict that validated the Narendra Modi-led government's unilateral move to scrap Article 370 - the constitutional provision that granted semi-autonomous status to the Muslim-majority region. Addressing the media to share

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## Nation wants to know what really transpired in 2018

PML-N supremo claims country was progressing well before his ouster in 2017

BUREAU REPORT

LAHORE: Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) supremo Nawaz Sharif on Monday reiterated his disappointment over the ousting of his government in 2017, suggesting that the 2018 elections may have been manipulated to bring the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) into power. "Nation wants to know what really transpired during the 2018 elections," he remarked while addressing the party's potential candidates for the upcoming general elections after leading the parliamentary board panel

in Lahore. Nawaz stressed the importance of rectifying "mistakes" for the nation's benefit. During the session, the former prime minister underscored the significance of ethical conduct, asserting that true honour comes from serving the people and prioritising the country's improvement over personal interests.

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# Naval Chief assesses operational readiness across Karachi

CNS Naveed Ashraf visited Creeks and Coastal Areas and PN Ships to review operational preparedness and combat readiness of the units

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI : Chief of the Naval Staff Admiral Naveed Ashraf visited Creeks and Coastal Areas and PN Ships to review operational preparedness and combat readiness of the units.

Upon arrival at Creeks Brigade Su-jawal, a comprehensive operational brief was presented to CNS on prevailing threat environment and defences of Creeks Area. During the visit at forward posts, CNS interacted with officers and men and appreciated

their readiness to respond any mis-adventure by the adversary. On the second leg of his visit, Chief of the Naval Staff arrived at PNS AKRAM at Gwadar and interacted with the troops deployed for the security of Gwadar Port. He also visited Jinnah Naval Base, Pakistan Navy Hospital Dar Maanjah and Cadet College at Ormara. Later on, Chief of the Naval Staff Admiral Naveed Ashraf arrived on PN Ships at PN Dockyard Karachi to review the operational preparedness and combat readiness of PN surface ships. During interactions with troops at Creeks and Coastal Areas

and onboard ships, Chief of the Naval Staff expressed satisfaction on operational readiness of deployed elements. He also appreciated the professional prowess and dedication of officers and men in ensuring impregnable defence of the motherland in challenging harsh environment of Creeks and Coastal Areas and amidst prevailing regional challenges in maritime domain. Chief of the Naval Staff appreciated the morale of troops and directed the field units to ensure optimal utilization of latest weapons and equipment with motivation and alacrity in order to ensure defence of the motherland.



LAHORE : Punjab Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi is formally launching the online learning driving license app for the convenience of citizens.—DNA

## CM establishes body to evaluate Karachi safe city project rates

DNA

KARACHI : Caretaker Sindh Chief Minister Justice (Retd) Maqbool Baqar presided over a decisive meeting on the Karachi Safe City Project here at CM house on Monday and in principle, approved the project subject to the rationalization of the rates of different equipment and software and the payment of taxes. "I want to start work on the much delayed and needed project, but as the custodian of public funds, it is my responsibility to ensure transparent utilization. Therefore, the NRTC must satisfy me and my team regarding the estimates," he said and constituted a technical committee under Secretary Home Iqbal Memon to evaluate equipment prices and compare them with the market price. The committee would select its technical members from universities, and they would be empowered to delete duplications and insert missing items. However, the Chairman of P&D, Shakil Mangnejo, would continue his sessions with the NRTC team on different components of the project and their prices. The chief minister discussed every item and its cost with the NRTC representatives, and they agreed to reduce the cost of the equipment and software and delete the items included in duplication.

## CM launches online learning driving license app

Citizens will now be able to get a driving licence while staying at home, says CM Naqvi

ABID RAZA

LAHORE : In order to facilitate citizens, caretaker Punjab Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi on Monday launched an application to issue online learning driving licences to people in Lahore. Addressing the inaugural ceremony, the caretaker chief minister said that citizens will now be able to get learning driving licence while staying at home, under the Driving License Management System. The government, he added, is also providing facilities for getting learning driving licences made at patrol posts, service centres, and police stations. "The facili-

ty [acquiring] learner licence has also been started at the front desk of the police stations," he said. This effort by the Punjab government will ensure ease for citizens who won't need to worry about stepping out of the house or waiting to get their licences made, he said. Provincial Information Minister Aamir Mir and Inspector General of Police Dr Usman Anwar were also present at the inauguration ceremony held at the CM house, while Chairman Punjab Information Technology Board Faisal Yousaf and other relevant officials also attended the event. Last week, the Punjab caretaker government approved a multi-fold hike

in the learner driving licence fee, which will come into effect from January 1, 2024. The approval came during the 33rd meeting of the provincial cabinet, chaired by CM Naqvi in Lahore. After the cabinet's approval, the fee for the learner's driving licence has been increased from Rs60 to Rs1000. However, United States citizens and Pakistani citizens living in the US, Canada, and any other country can get a driving licence by paying \$100 online, the provincial cabinet's communicate stated. Moreover, the provincial cabinet has also hiked the fees for light and heavy vehicle driving licence and the Public Service Vehicle (PSV) driving licence.

## Neighborhood ties vital for poverty eradication

KARACHI : Chairman of National Business Group Pakistan, President Pakistan Businessmen and Intellectuals Forum, and All Karachi Industrial Alliance, and former provincial minister Mian Zahid Hussain said on Monday that friendly relations between all the neighbouring countries are necessary to lift the people of the region out of poverty. Improved relations with neighbouring countries are necessary to resolving disputes so that the country can develop, he said. Mian Zahid Hussain said that prolonged tensions between neighbours are not in anyone's interest as differences are an obstacle to peace and progress. Talking to the business community, the veteran business leader said that Pakistan should improve its relations with India, Iran and Afghanistan and increase cooperation with China so that the country's image can be improved globally, tourism can be developed and foreign investors can be attracted. Presently it is difficult to be able to do business in the risky Pakistani market which is barring national development, he said, adding that economic and financial performance cannot improve until local and international political affairs improve.—APP

## Rs100m released to upgrade police stations

LAHORE: The provincial capital police department has released funds to the tune of Rs100 million to the contractor out of total 190 million allocated for the establishment of the Special Initiative Police Stations (SIPs) in Lahore region. The department has also established division-wise committees under the supervision of the respective SPOs of operations wing, making the sub-divisional police officers (SDPOs), station house officers (SHOs) and the muharrars their respective members.

The step has been initiated to ensure transparency in the utilisation of the funds released by the Punjab government for the upgrade of all 84 Lahore police stations. The project was launched by Punjab police chief Dr Usman Anwar to convert all the 735 police stations of the province, including 84 of Lahore, into the Special Initiative Police Stations. SIPs to eliminate 'thana culture' The prime objective of the project is to introduce modern technology and smart idea-based model police stations to

provide citizens quick relief in order to get rid of decades-old 'thana culture' and strengthen the trust level between public and police. For the purpose, caretaker Punjab chief minister Mohsin Naqvi allocated Rs1.9 billion, including Rs190 million (19 crore) for Lahore SIPs. The sources say some SHOs of Lahore generated a controversy surrounding the inordinate delay in the release of funds for the establishment of the SIPs. They also engaged some social media influencers to raise their voice.—APP

## Sarus Crane and Mazharul Islam: Two sides of the same picture

STAFF REPORTER

ISLAMABAD: The readers of the novel "Saras Crane Apne Khawabon Mein Se Ur Kar Ja Chuke Hain" by eminent fiction writer of Pakistan Mazharul Islam embark on an astonishing storytelling journey where they feel as though they were in a time machine, soaring like a bird through the layers of centuries gone by. This was said by Ashfaq Azar, the well-known writer and journalist, while discussing Mazharul Islam's latest novel to a gathering of book lovers here on Monday. Mazharul

Islam, he said has penned down an innovative novel, rejecting the conventional frameworks of fiction writing and one feels convinced to agree with him because never before such an experiment in fiction was performed, he said. When Mazharul Islam wrote "Muhabbat Murda Phoolon Ki Symphony," he upheld principles of aesthetics thought and art. That was written to breathe fresh life into the sentiments of love and to make us perceive love in a new light. 'Saras Crane' is also a work of nostalgia, exploring what the modern age has inherited from bygone eras. Ashfaq Azar said in his latest novel, Mazhar



blends reality, fantasy, time travel, and surrealism, creating an enchanting tapestry of mysticism. As a result, this novel weaves a spellbinding magical realism into its very fabric. The story emphasizes that every person has a bird within him. This tale of



love centers around a Sarus Crane. The Sarus Crane embarks on a backward journey i.e. from the 21st century to the 18th, where countless Sarus Cranes from his tribe eagerly await his return in a place called "Ashiana-e-Wafa."

## Mushaal urges global action on Kashmir, Palestine

Mushaal Hussein Mullick said that Modi government is committing genocide in Kashmir and the world should play a role in stopping it

DNA

ISLAMABAD : SAPM on Human Rights Mushaal Hussein Mullick called on the world leaders and champions of human rights to take notice of the blatant violation of human rights in Occupied Kashmir and Palestine. She said that the Indian Supreme Court has unanimously upheld the abrogation of Article 370 to end the special status of Occupied Kashmir, which is the darkest act in the history of human rights. She said that for the last 76 years, the Indian army has been violating human rights in Occupied Kashmir, on which the world, including the international champions of human rights, are silent. She was addressing as Chief Guest a ceremony held at ICCI to observe the International Human Rights Day. Mushaal Hussein Mullick said that Modi government is committing genocide in Kashmir and the world should play a role in stopping it. The genocide of Pal-



estinians has been going on in Gaza for two months. Pakistan should raise a united voice on the issues of Occupied Kashmir and Palestine. Faad Waheed, Senior Vice President ICCI strongly condemned the biased decision of the Indian Supreme Court on Article 370. He said that all citizens should enjoy equal rights. The people of Occupied Kashmir are still deprived of their rights. Everyone should raise voice against genocide in Kashmir and Palestine. The silence of the world on the Israeli aggression in Pto protect human rights better Palestine and the genocide of Palestinians is shameful. ICCI and the business community are ready to support the government from every forum in efforts to better protect human rights. President Islamabad High Court

Bar Association Naveed Hayat Malik said that the human rights situation around the world is bad. All Islamic countries, including Pakistan, should raise a voice on the violation of human rights in Occupied Kashmir and Palestine. OIC should raise a strong voice on the violation of human rights in Occupied Kashmir and Palestine. The initiative of ICCI to observe International Human Rights Day is commendable. President National Press Club Islamabad Anwar Raza said that the Indian Supreme Court's decision regarding Occupied Kashmir is a dark chapter in history. The people of the world are on the streets on the issue of Palestine, but the rulers are silent. The rulers of Islamic countries will have to break their silence on the situation in Gaza. Former President ICCI and Secretary General UBG Pakistan Zafar Bakhtawari said that Mushaal Hussein Mullick has been raising her voice for the rights of Kashmiris all his life.

### گیس بل میں بچت کا بے سادہ سا فارمولا

حکومت پاکستان کے توانائی بلان کے مطابق  
اگر لے گیز میں گیس سیور کون کی تنصیب لازمی قرار دے دی

گیس بل میں بچت کے لیے سیور کون استعمال کریں

PID(U)1855-D



## National Days and Armed Forces Days

### DECEMBER

- Dec 01/Romania National Day
- Dec 02/United Arab Emirates National Day
- Dec 02/Laos Republic National Day
- Dec 05/Thailand National Day
- Dec 06/Finland Independence Day
- 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

### Hotels & Restaurants



Serena Hotel.....111 133 133  
Marriott.....051- 2826121  
Monal.....0334-5421812



Turkish Airlines.....8494949



### Emergency

Rescue (Police).....15  
Bomb Disposal.....15  
Fire Services Rawalpindi/ Islamabad.....1122 & 16  
Emergency Ambulance.1122 & Rescue Services.4451122  
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DHQ.....5556311-4  
RGH.....9290301-7  
Holy Family.....9290322-7  
PIMS.....9261170-79  
Polyclinic.....9218300-09  
Shifa International 4603666



### Departments

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CDA.....9208301-04  
Met Office.....9250360-6  
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### Water Tank

Islamabad.....0321-5744480

# UN Women believes in justice, equality: Sharmeela

Islamabad Wraps Up #KoiJawazNahi 16 Days Campaign, Marking 50th Constitution Anniversary & Trade Fair Success

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The capital city of Islamabad has successfully concluded the #KoiJawazNahi 16 Days Campaign, a collaborative initiative by UN Women, generously funded by the Government of Japan. This landmark campaign not only addressed the critical issue of violence against women and children but also marked the celebration of the 50th Anniversary of the Constitution of Pakistan, reinforcing the commitment to fundamental rights and equality. Nilofar Bakhtiar, Chairperson of National Commission on the Status of Women in her welcome speech said, "As we conclude these 16 Days of activism, let's intertwine the principles of our Constitution with the dynamic spirit of the Trade Fair. Through collective effort and economic exchange, let's pave the way for a Pakistan where equality flourishes, violence dissipates, and prosperity blossoms for every citizen of Pakistan". The 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence is an international civil society-led annual campaign. It commences from 25 November, the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, and ends on 10 December, Human Rights Day, indicating that violence against women is the most pervasive breach of human rights worldwide. While addressing the audiences, Sharmeela Rassool the Country Representative of UN Women Pakistan, stated "Our #KoiJawazNahi campaign stands shoulder to shoulder with Pakistan's Constitution, commemorating 50 years of justice and equality.



ISLAMABAD: Sharmeela Rassool the Country Representative of UN Women Pakistan giving bouquet to Minorities Minister Khalil George. Culture Minister Jamal Shah and Secretary NCSW Khwaja Imran Raza also present on the occasion.—Photo Mudassar Raja

Embracing 'No Excuse' and strategic investments in women and girls, we illuminate the constitutional framework safeguarding every citizen's rights. Together, we sculpt a nation where excuses vanish, and economic empowerment interconnects seamlessly with equal rights for all." In the keynote speech Khalil George, Federal Minister for Human Rights said, "No Excuse is more

than a rule—it's our guiding principle. Our vision extends beyond policies; it's about weaving human rights into our daily fabric. By collectively safeguarding the dignity and rights of every citizen, we emphasize the significance of the ongoing 16 Days theme that is to invest in the women and girls." The #KoiJawazNahi campaign was launched at Mohenjo-Daro followed by Quetta, Peshawar and

now culminating in Islamabad. The primary concept behind this initiative involves illuminating historical structures in these cities with orange, accompanied by street theatre performance. Concurrently, the campaign actively promotes and advocates for this year's theme, "Invest to Prevent Violence Against Women & Girls," aiming to reach the masses. The campaign coincided with the 50th Anniversary

of the Constitution of Pakistan, a milestone that underlines the nation's commitment to upholding the principles of justice, equality, and human dignity. By integrating this celebration into the campaign, organizers sought to emphasize the constitutional framework that supports the rights of every citizen, regardless of gender or age. In addition, the campaign collaborated

with a Trade Fair, creating a platform where businesses, organizations, and the public could come together to exchange ideas, showcase products, and strengthen networks. This intersection of the campaign with the Trade Fair allowed for a dynamic exchange of perspectives and solutions, fostering a sense of community engagement and shared responsibility.

## PIDE Macro Poiley Lab suggests reconsidering the current stance of MP

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) of the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) has chosen to keep the policy rate steady at 22%. In the last meeting of MPC's decision of keeping policy rate at 22% was influenced by the increase in headline inflation in September 2023, the volatility in global oil prices and the scheduled increase in gas tariffs starting November 2023. The MPC is scheduled to convene on December 12, 2023, to discuss and decide about the policy rate; whether the SBP should continue with the same policy rate or change it based on various economic indicators of Pakistan presented at the meeting. Sector wise analysis and Progress: The indicators that play a crucial role in guiding the conduct of monetary policy span across different sectors, providing a comprehensive view of the economic landscape. In the real sector, the quarterly indicators serve as crucial benchmarks for assessing the performance of key sectors such as agriculture, industry, and services. For the first quarter of the current fiscal year, Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) revealed growth rates of 2.48%, 5.06%, and 0.82% for agriculture, industry, and ser-

vices sectors, respectively. The overall first-quarter growth on a year-on-year basis is reported at 2.13%, signaling a positive trend for the economy. External Sector Progress: While examining the external sector, MPC focuses on the current account balance, which encompasses both exports and remittances, as well as the stability of foreign exchange (FX) reserves. The MPC meeting held on October 30 highlighted a significant improvement in Pakistan's current account balance. The current account deficit (CAD) witnessed a 58% year-on-year reduction to \$947 million for the period Jul-Sep FY24 after which for the month of September it was almost zero (balanced Current A/c). However, the data from October 2023 reveals a further reduction in the current account deficit to just \$74 million, marking a noteworthy 91% decrease compared to the same month in the previous year. Nevertheless, it's important to note a 61% increase in the deficit compared to the preceding month, attributed to debt servicing payment. Although the reserves have been building but by November 2023, the SBP reserves declined by \$217 million, reaching \$7.180 billion. Money Supply Dynamics: Money and credit aspects are vital components, incorporating measurements such as

M2 growth, interbank and open market exchange rates, currency in circulation, and the Net Foreign Assets (NFA) and Net Domestic Assets (NDA). Moving on to money and credit situation in the economy, the average money growth in October and November stands at approximately 13.5%, surpassing the previous two-month average. The exchange rate has experienced fluctuations, ranging from 280 to 285 in October and November, in contrast to the range of 290 to 300 observed in August and September for the interbank rates. Inflation: Additionally, an assessment of the inflation outlook involves monitoring headline inflation, global oil prices, and gas tariffs, while also taking into account inflation expectations and overall confidence in the economy. Addressing the inflation outlook, a positive shift in the consumer confidence index (from 26.2 in September to 32.78 in October) and a decrease in inflation expectations (from 78.08 in September to 73.30 in October) indicate growing optimism among consumers in Pakistan regarding the economic outlook and anticipated lower inflation levels. Such low inflation expectations provide the central bank with some flexibility. If inflation expectations remain well-anchored and below the central bank's target, it may have room to relax monetary policies to further stimulate economic activity. Additionally, the volatility in global oil prices, ranging from \$68 per barrel to \$91 per barrel during the current fiscal year, plays a crucial role in influencing domestic prices in oil importing countries. The recent dip in oil prices to around \$70 per barrel adds to the complexity of the economic landscape.

## GWM's Pakistan KD factory rolls out 3000th Haval H6 HEV

DNA

ISLAMABAD: In a recent development, the Great Wall Motors (GWM) Pakistan KD factory marked the production of its 3000th unit of the Haval H6 HEV, a significant achievement just one year after the commencement of operations. This milestone signifies GWM's position as the leader in the local new energy vehicle market within a remarkably short timeframe, according to Gwadar Pro. Launched in November 2022, the GWM Pakistan KD factory stands as a crucial overseas KD facility for GWM, following others in Ecuador, Malaysia, Tunisia, among other locations. With a planned annual production capacity of 20,000 units, the factory has successfully entered its first phase, assembling two SUV models, the Haval H6/H6 HEV, and the Haval JOLION. The Haval H6 HEV, being the first locally assembled new energy vehicle in Pakistan, has quickly become a benchmark product in the local automotive market. It has played a pivotal role in boosting the penetration rate of new energy vehicles in the Pakistani passenger car market, rising from 0% last year to the current 2.3%. According to data from the Pakistan Automotive Manufacturers Association (PAMA), it is anticipated that the total annual sales in the Pakistani passenger car market will be less than 100,000 units this year, reaching the lowest level in the past two decades.

## Active role of women in electoral process crucial: Solangi

ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Murtaza Solangi said on Monday that active role of women in the electoral process was very important. "Women constitute half of the population of Pakistan and their empowerment is a sacred task", he said while addressing a policy forum organised by South Asia Partnership Pakistan titled "Women's participation in elections". Referring to Benazir Bhutto, Murtaza Solangi said that the first woman prime minister in the Muslim world was from Pakistan. Solangi said that ending gender discrimination should start from home and daughters should have equal rights to sons in every home. He opined that it was not possible to eliminate gender discrimination only by enacting new laws. "We have to change our thinking to give equal rights to women," Murtaza Solangi remarked.

## Wheat sowing completed over 92% areas, crop sown over 20.62 mln acres

ISLAMABAD: The wheat crop has been sown across more than 20.62 million acres of land in various crop-growing regions during the current Rabi season in order to meet staple food requirements as well as to maintain strategic reserves throughout the year. The crop sowing targets for the current season (2023-24) were fixed at 22.23 million acres as the cultivation targets achieved by 92.77 per cent, said Food Security Commissioner Imtiaz Ali Gopang. Talking to APP here on Monday, he said that the crop sowing was in full swing across the wheat-producing areas in the country as Punjab Province has surpassed its wheat sowing targets and completed cultivation of over 101 per cent areas against the set targets. The Punjab, which is the largest wheat-producing province of the country has completed crop sowing over 16.16 million acres as compared to the fixed targets of 16.00 million acres during the current season, he said adding that more areas to come under crop cultivation during the days to come. Meanwhile, Sindh Province has achieved 87.54 per cent of its targets as wheat cultivation in different divisions of the province was completed over 2.60 million acres as against the set targets of 2.97 million acres, he added. So far the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has achieved wheat sowing over 96.87 per cent of its set targets and crop cultivation was completed over 1.86 million acres as compared to the set targets of 1.93 million acres during the current sowing season, he added. He informed the wheat cultivation data from the Balochistan Province was still awaited, adding that the province was assigned a task to grow wheat over 1.33 million acres during the current season. The Food Security Commissioner further informed that approximately 729,000 metric tons of high-quality certified wheat seeds would be available to the local farming communities during the current season which comprises over 46 per cent of the total local demand. In addition to seeds, the government was implementing various strategies to guarantee an ample supply of essential agricultural inputs, such as fertilizers.—APP



ISLAMABAD: A girl is taking keen interest in different kinds of stuff on Christmas stall at Koshar Market in Federal Capital. —ONLINE

## How pollution is affecting our lives

HAFSA ALI

Today I am writing this letter to discuss important topic which is pollution. It is serious topic that affects our environment and health. In my letter I am going to discuss about different types of pollution, such as air pollution, water pollution and land pollution. There are many causes of pollution like industrial emissions, vehicles exhaust, and improper waste disposal. Effects of pollution are such as respiratory problems, ecosystem damage, and climate change. And here are some solution in my view like reducing emissions, promoting renewable energy, and practicing proper waste management. Thank you for your time and consideration. I hope that you will solve this important issue by publishing my letter on newspaper I will be very thank full to you.



## Briefs

## Friendly relations with neighboring countries essential

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Chairman of National Business Group Pakistan, President Pakistan Businessmen and Intellectuals Forum, and All Karachi Industrial Alliance, and former provincial minister Mian Zahid Hussain said on Monday that friendly relations between all the neighbouring countries are necessary to lift the people of the region out of poverty. Improved relations with neighbouring countries are necessary to resolving disputes so that the country can develop, he said. Mian Zahid Hussain said that prolonged tensions between neighbours are not in anyone's interest as differences are an obstacle to peace and progress. Talking to the business community, the veteran business leader said that Pakistan should improve its relations with India, Iran and Afghanistan and increase cooperation with China so that the country's image can be improved globally, tourism can be developed and foreign investors can be attracted. Presently it is difficult to be able to do business in the risky Pakistani market which is barring national development, he said, adding that economic and financial performance cannot improve until local and international political affairs improve. The business leader said that if the relations with the neighbouring countries improve, terrorism can end in Pakistan, which will allow the development projects to move on a faster pace, while the costs will also decrease. Mian Zahid Hussain said that the new government has to defeat poverty, unemployment, illiteracy and backwardness, while the tax system has to be balanced and the cost of energy has to be reduced; the country's exports and local production will suffer and we will have to import everything.

## Shabbir Shah urges world to take notice of IIOJK situation

ISLAMABAD: Incarcerated senior leader of All Parties Hurriyat Conference, Shabbir Ahmed Shah, has urged the international community to take cognizance of the fast-deteriorating human rights situation in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK). According to Kashmir Media Service, Shabbir Ahmed Shah in his message from New Delhi's infamous Tihar jail voiced concern over the global community's deafening silence on the abysmal situation in Kashmir and said that political, social, cultural and religious rights of the Kashmiri people remain critically suppressed. Shah, while stressing the need for early and amicable settlement of the lingering Kashmir dispute, urged the international community to play its much-needed role to help resolve the dispute peacefully in accordance with the universally accepted principle of right to self-determination. He maintained that India's continuous denial to grant the Kashmiris their birth right had prevented the people of occupied territory from enjoying the fruits of liberty, experience of dignity and full benefits of freedom as enshrined in the UN charter, the Geneva Convention and other core international human rights treaties. APHC leader said that instead of reflecting a genuine desire to grant the Kashmiri people their promised right, the Indian rulers over the past 76 years tried to crush their legitimate struggle for the right to self-determination by using its military might. For that matter, India has deployed massive troops in the disputed territory. These trigger-happy troops operating under the protection of draconian laws are resorting to extra-judicial killings, detentions, massacres, targeted killings, sieges, torture, enforced disappearances, rape and molestation, he deplored.—APP

## Business fraternity emphasizes need for economic charter

The participants voiced collective grievances, pointing to the intricate and unwieldy Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) system, which requires filing approximately 73 returns annually. This burdensome procedure tests the patience of traders

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD The speakers, in a well-attended seminar, comprising influential business community leaders in Punjab provincial capital, emphasized the critical need for an economic charter in the current business climate. Expressing dissatisfaction with government measures, they criticized what they perceived as an undue burden on traders despite purported relief initiatives. The participants of the seminar, held in collaboration with the Chain Store Association of Pakistan (CAP), addressed the chal-

lenges and discussed the prospect of a Charter of Economy. The various trade bodies, including Markazi Anjuman-e-Tajran Central Punjab, Super Store Association, Qomi Tajir Ittehad, All Pakistan Anjuman-e-Tajran (Nacem Mir Group), Anjuman-E-Tajran Lahore, President Hall Road Market, President Liberty Market, and President MM Alam Road Market, attended the seminar. The seminar not only shed light on the multifaceted challenges faced by businesses in Pakistan but also marked a pivotal moment in discussions about a Charter of Economy, emphasizing the necessity for a collaborative approach, inclusive poli-

cy-making, and responsive governance to alleviate the burdens on the business community. A focal point of the gathering was the call for an economic charter, with discussions centered on its potential role in navigating the challenging business environment. Business leaders underscored the importance of such a charter in providing a cohesive and clear framework for economic policies, offering stability and guidance to businesses facing uncertainties. The participants voiced collective grievances, pointing to the intricate and unwieldy Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) system, which requires filing approximately 73 returns annually. This bur-

densome procedure tests the patience of traders. The Chain Store Association of Pakistan (CAP) chairman Rana Tariq Mahboob highlighted businesses' formidable challenges post-COVID-19 during his keynote address. He mentioned closures resulting from political rallies, electricity crises, smog, and security concerns. Notably, Rana Mehboob drew attention to a tax rate exceeding 110% on commercial meters, characterizing it as an additional business hurdle. Rana Tariq stressed the unity among stakeholders, especially in formulating an economic charter that could serve as a comprehensive guide. Answer

Zahoor Butt, President of the Grand Trade Alliance, conveyed to the audience that government policies were being formulated without due consideration for input from relevant stakeholders within the community. This echoed a sentiment calling for a more inclusive and collaborative approach to policy-making. Traders from the retail market underscored their vital role in the economy and expressed a commitment to continuing this role. However, they called upon the government to attentively listen to their issues and earnestly work towards resolving them.



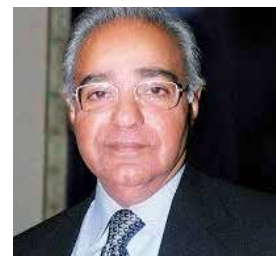
ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Czech Republic called on Minister of Finance, Revenue & Economic Affairs Dr. Shamshad Akhtar. They had a fruitful discussion and agreed to hold the first meeting of the Joint Commission on Economic Cooperation in the first half of 2024 in Pakistan.—DNA

## Pak EAC members strive to expand exports to China

DNA

ISLAMABAD: "The recently established two Export Advisory Councils (EACs) are anticipated to boost Pakistan's exports, particularly to China, its largest trade partner." This was stated by Khalil Sattar, former Chairman of the Pakistan Poultry Association (PPA) and CEO of K&N's Foods (Pvt) Ltd, the representative of the poultry industry in the EAC, in an interview with Gwadar Pro. The EACs consist of major representatives from various industrial sectors to advise the Ministry of Commerce on pertinent issues. The Ministry has included representatives from almost all sectors of the economy, including textiles, agriculture, marble, cement, etc. Mr. Sattar termed this as a crucial initiative by the Ministry of Commerce, as the private sector engaged in business is aware of the issues hindering the realization of export potential and is appraising the government about these hurdles.

Recent data released by the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) indicates that the country's trade deficit has increased by a significant 33.59%, with a notable 17.3% decrease in imports as the country strives to improve economic indicators amid a depreciating local



currency and depleting foreign exchange reserves. Pakistan's exports to China also increased by 41% from July 2022 to Oct 2023, totaling USD 1.23 billion, compared to USD 876.8 million in the same period last year. However, under the agreement with the IMF, the Pakistani government is required to increase revenue collection. To meet the targets, the government has had to impose import duties and

sales taxes on various raw materials imported for the production of exportable items. There has also been a lack of foreign currency, affecting imports of raw materials otherwise used in the production of exportable goods. Current challenges for Pakistan in expanding exports also include export competitiveness, production costs of potential export projects, meeting sanitary and phytosanitary control requirements of importing countries for livestock and horticultural products, and insufficient value addition for abundant horticultural products. To overcome the above challenges and expand exports to China, Mr. Sattar mentioned that the Council has been recently formed, and initial efforts are underway to export cooked bovine meat to China, with two bovine meat export companies already starting production of cooked meat. The Foot & Mouth Disease (FMD) issue is also being addressed by making FMD-free zones through compartmentalization and free vaccination against FMD

by provincial governments. China has become the most important export market for Pakistani seafood. At present, many Pakistani companies are seeking to deepen cooperation with China and increase their exports of aquatic products. Mr. Khalil Sattar noted that in the field of the export of fisheries and fishery products, the Ministry of Commerce has advised the Ministry of Maritime Affairs to improve and modernize the fish harbor, for which the Minister of Commerce has assured them of providing funds from the Export Development Funds. To further expand the country's exports, the CEO recommended that the Ministry of Commerce and the Ministry of Finance work out sales tax and duty drawbacks for all exportable items. "There is also a need to encourage incentives for establishing horticulture value addition plants in FATA and Gilgit Baltistan, which produce tremendous volumes of dry fruits, apricots, plums, peaches, cherries, apples, etc.," he added.

## Balochistan, Henan to strengthen sister province friendship

ISLAMABAD: Balochistan, Henan have decided to strengthen sister province friendship to promote cooperation in agriculture, tourism and industrial fields. A delegation of tribal leaders from Balochistan Province recently visited Luoyang city in central China's Henan Province. The delegation aims to promote sister province friendship between Henan and Balochistan and strengthen practical cooperation in agriculture, tourism, and industrial fields. Bai Shengbin, Deputy Secretary General of Luoyang municipal government, met with the delegation. He mentioned that Luoyang is a renowned tourist city and one of the oldest cities in China. "It is also a treasure trove for investment, with flourishing industries and advanced science and innovation," Bai said as he briefed the visitors about the trade and investment opportunities in Luoyang. Henan and Balochistan have established a sister province relationship in July 2023, according to a report carried by Gwadar Pro on Monday. This partnership will help inject more vitality into the promotion of common prosperity and progress in both provinces. Currently, Henan Province is deeply involved in the construction of Gwadar Free Zone in Pakistan. Under the framework of the Belt and Road Initiative and the construction of China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, Luoyang aims to establish friendly relations with cities in Balochistan that are compatible in terms of their status, complement each other in industry, and learn from each other in culture, Bai said. Mir Maqsood, the leader of the delegation, expressed that during his visit of several days, he was deeply impressed by the rich historical and cultural heritage of Luoyang. He had an immersive experience of Luoyang's unique cultural tourism projects, such as "Hanfu Tour in Luoyang". The delegation also visited key parks and enterprises, such as Luoyang National University Science Park, Luoyang Northern Ek Chor Motorcycle Company, and YTO Group. During their visit, they observed the rapid changes and witnessed the high-quality development of Luoyang. Balochistan is a large agricultural province in Pakistan, known for its abundant land, minerals, agricultural products, and other resources. While Luoyang is renowned for its advanced technology in the agricultural machinery and equipment sector. Mir stated that Balochistan is eager to enhance practical cooperation with Henan and Luoyang in various fields.—DNA

## ANF seizes 1416 kg drugs in 12 operations

RAWALPINDI: Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) while conducting 12 operations across the country managed to recover 1416 kg of drugs and arrested 12 accused, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman here on Monday. He informed that 500 grams of hashish and three kg of opium were recovered from the possession of three suspects arrested from a bus at Chongi number 26, Islamabad. 18 kg hashish was recovered from three suspects coming from Quetta to Karachi on a bus intercepted on RCD Road Hub. A total of 48 kg hashish was recovered from two accused going in a vehicle and a rickshaw, netted from Ring Road Peshawar. Three kg of heroin, 1370 grams Ice and 7 kg of 200 grams of hashish were recovered from a house in Rawat. 950 kg hashish was recovered from a vehicle intercepted near Yaro Chowk Pishin while an accused was also arrested during the operation.—APP

## PPIB extends deadline

ISLAMABAD: Private Power and Infrastructure Board (PPIB) has extended deadline for submission of bids/proposals till January 11, 2024 for development of 600 Megawatt (MW) Solar PV project at Kot Addu (Muzaffargarh) on build, own, operate and transfer (BOOT) basis for term of 25 years. Bidders will be required to submit bid/proposal in accordance with the request for proposal (RFP) approved by the National Power Regulatory Authority (NEPRA). A single stage two-envelope bidding process shall be adopted. The bidder offering the lowest bid tariff shall be declared as successful bidder who will be required to achieve financial closing and commercial operation date in accordance with the terms and condition of RFP and project agreements. It is pertinent to mention here that the government had already approved "Framework Guidelines for Fast Track Solar PV initiatives 2022" that envisions development of large utility scale solar PV projects on fast track basis through private sector investment. The RFP document can be obtained either from PPIB office or through upon payment of \$ 200 as registration fee and \$ 2500 for RFP document, prior to bid submission deadline.—DNA

## NPO to organize workshop on "Climate Smart Technologies"

ISLAMABAD: The National Productivity Organization (NPO) regional office in Faisalabad is going to organize a two-day training program on "Climate Smart Technologies to improve Agriculture Productivity" from December 20, to mitigate its effects and ensure food security. Climate change has significant effects on agriculture production worldwide, these effects are primarily driven by changes in temperature, precipitation patterns, CO2 concentration, and frequency and intensity of extreme weather events, said NPO documents shared here on Monday. Climate change was directly or indirectly related to food security, it added. Pakistan is placed in the top 10 countries severely affected by climate change; therefore, it is a need of time to adopt climate-smart technologies. On the first day, the event highlights climate change, reasons for climate change, impacts of climate change on agriculture production and national climate change policy.—APP

## Food Department deprives people of affordable flour

According to the details, the food department was supplying substandard and unhealthy wheat to 130 flour mills located in Rawalpindi and Islamabad

ISLAMABAD: The negotiations between flour millers and the Punjab Food Department that started on November 13 have ended without any agreement. The flour millers have refused to buy sub-par wheat from the Food Department and have started buying wheat from the open market. Private wheat is of better quality as compared to government-provided wheat, but it is also costly, which results in an additional financial burden on the masses. Due to the use of expensive wheat being purchased from the private sector by millers, flour has become expensive in the market, for which the policies of the food authorities are being blamed. According to the details, the food department was supplying substandard and unhealthy wheat to 130 flour mills located in Rawalpindi and Islamabad. Lately, the ratio of sand, gravel, and dust was almost a kilogram per 100 kg bag, but it has now jumped to eight to ten kilograms, which is not acceptable to millers as it translates into heavy losses. Moreover, the authorities are also forcing flour millers to buy 25% of the required wheat from the warehouses located in the remote districts of South Punjab to sell it in the local market at the control rate. This decision of the food authorities is unacceptable to the flour mill owners because the cost of transportation per sack from Punjab to Rawalpindi and Islamabad is almost five hundred rupees. The pressure on flour mills despite the removal of subsidies is surprising, and it does not make any sense for the people involved in the grinding business. Currently, the price of government wheat is Rs 4700 per maund, while private wheat is available at Rs 5050 per maund. The flour mills are using private wheat; therefore, people have to pay Rs 1430 for a bag of 10 kg of flour instead of Rs 1374, which is an additional burden. Meanwhile, the President of the Flour Mills Association, Rawalpindi Region, Riazullah Khan, and other leaders, including Tariq Sadiq, Kashif Shabbir, Raza Ahmad Shah, Khawaja Imran, Chaudhry Mukhtar, Sanaullah Durrani Tariq Sethi, Abdul Rahman Khan, and Sheikh Shaikat asked the Secretary Food Punjab, Director Food Punjab, Commissioners of Rawalpindi and Islamabad and other authorities to take note of the situation and take necessary steps aimed at providing relief to the masses and the flour milling industry.—DNA

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## Washington true obstacle to cease-fire in Gaza

ONE day after the United States vetoed a United Nations resolution calling for a cease-fire in the Israel-Palestine conflict on Friday, the Joe Biden administration said it had approved the emergency sale to Israel of nearly 14,000 rounds of tank ammunition worth more than \$106 million. It is clearly the US that is the true obstacle to a cease-fire in Gaza. The purchase will bypass the congressional review requirement for foreign arms sales. Although not unprecedented, such determinations in which an administration sees "an urgent need" for weapons to be delivered without waiting for lawmakers' approval are rare. That indicates Tel Aviv cannot afford to wait for a congressional green light to be given to the assistance, which might only take dozens of hours at the fastest given Israel's special bond with the US. That has exposed that even though it commands an indisputable upper hand in the conflict in Gaza, Israel's dominance cannot be sustained without the US' assistance. That should also serve to demonstrate the high cost it will take to implement Tel Aviv's plan of turning Gaza into a buffer zone in the future from where it expects to eliminate Hamas, which will necessarily entail the US' continuous inputs as well. It might not have become a problem to the US 20 years back when Middle East oil was central to the US economy and no other geopolitical challenge was in sight except the Taliban in the rugged mountains in Central Asia. Yet the situation is different now. Even though the US claimed it can handle both the Ukraine crisis and Gaza conflict at the same time shortly after the latter broke out, the increasingly palpable anxiety Kyiv has been expressing over the possibility of the US and its allies reducing or postponing their military and financial aid proves that the US' claim might not be true. The Republican House speaker has made it unequivocally clear that Israel is the US' priority while blocking US President Joe Biden's request last month for a nearly \$106 billion aid package for Ukraine, Israel and other "national security" grounds, which is now languishing in Congress. The US is facing a difficult choice. On the one hand, Washington will have to start weighing its possible loss if Ukraine is weaned off US support. On the other hand, it cannot afford to lose the strategic fulcrum of Israel in the Middle East, not to mention the Jewish people's close connections with US finance and politics. Any setback for Ukraine might deal a heavy blow to the US' post-Cold War European project, and any setback for Israel could markedly accelerate the US' withdrawal from the Middle East, a strategic crossroad of the Eurasian continent, Africa and the "Indo-Pacific" region. Both are undertakings Washington has long painstakingly managed to defend the US' hegemony in the Western Hemisphere. Nobody should doubt the tears being shed in Washington over the loss of life in Gaza are crocodile tears, and US politicians are generally more concerned about the US losing its status as the head of the "civilized world". Before it can reconcile how to handle the two fronts at the same time, the US will continue to shed those hypocritical tears and meanwhile provide weapons to Israel and Ukraine, which will create fresh cause for genuine tears elsewhere.



## The view on Labour and the climate crisis

POLITICIANS know they can't win an argument without making it. Yet unfortunately that is what Sir Keir Starmer seems to believe. In 2021, the party earmarked £28bn a year for a green industrial strategy to rid the economy of its carbon addiction and create a wave of "clean jobs". This summer, however, the spending was postponed to the second half of the next parliament. Then it was reported that it would take a full term to ultimately redeem the pledge. Last week, because of self-imposed fiscal rules, Sir Keir suggested it might not happen. This was unsettling, especially as Labour is miles ahead in the polls. Yet more disappointment is in store. On Tuesday, according to reports, the Labour leader will extol the virtues of small technocratic policies rather than big transformative ones. Sir Keir is mistaken if he thinks he can avoid a fight by not turning up. British governments are unusually free to overhaul the country's economy, but electoral support is the crucial precondition for such changes. Green policies won't happen by themselves. This week, Cop28 will reach a climax, spotlighting the climate emergency. Inaction is not an option: relying on volatile gas prices would cost Britain double that of achieving 2050 net zero targets. Sir Keir knows that Labour spending will be caricatured as a "tax bombshell" by the Tories. Ministers hope to overwhelm facts with emotional force. But Labour should take heart that Rishi Sunak's U-turn on climate targets in September, coupled with a conspiracy-laden assault on the opposition, fell flat with voters. In a cost of living crisis, Sir Keir is right to worry that a majority of Britons think getting to net zero means higher prices. But who pays for green plans can be answered by Labour saying Britain can borrow to invest. Labour has vote-winning policies: strengthening energy security, generating employment and creating new industries. The cost of new technologies, such as heat pumps, will fall as they are more widely adopted. Sir Keir could also sell his green prosperity plan as a way of helping households by promising cheaper energy bills. Properly taxing oil and gas windfall profits would mean less borrowing. The polls show only 9% of people are aware of Labour's plans. The risk is that if Tory scaremongering is all the public hears, then Sir Keir may lose support. However, if voters heard "a confident, united Labour case first, the opposite is true", wrote the pollster Steve Akehurst last week. When he ran focus groups that pitted Tory attacks over fiscal profligacy against Labour's positive messaging, Sir Keir's party gained support. Labour's rebuttal, if grounded in economics, defused Conservative attacks. Mr Akehurst is right that public attitudes to the idea of borrowing to invest are more permissive "in a country that is falling apart at the seams". Reaching net zero will be costly and disruptive. Long-term targets are needed to drive transitions in energy, transport and homes. But voters want to know that Labour has a well-thought-out plan to share the cost equitably between government and private sectors. In cutting energy-efficiency measures in homes and slowing down the transition from carbon-powered cars and boilers, Mr Sunak left voters more exposed to the high costs of imported fossil fuels.

## "Will Nawaz's hopes die down soon?"

Qamar Bashir



The political analysts were assuming that the army as an institution has deep memories. It follows a cyclical process to ensure that armed forces remain adaptable, well-prepared, and continuously evolved to meet the challenges of dynamic and diverse conflict scenarios. The process began with the clear definition of objectives and parameters. Develop scenarios by creating a realistic setting that encompassed geopolitical factors, terrain details, and enemy capabilities. The war game unfolded through real-time decision-making. Data is meticulously collected on decisions, outcomes, and resource utilization during war game

NAWAZ Sharif was an outcast in Pakistan—branded a convict, an absconder, and a proclaimed offender, marred by allegations of deep-seated corruption. He had been disqualified for life and ousted from the country. Sharif's persistent defiance in challenging the establishment had resulted in multiple confrontations, leading to repeated punishments. The prevailing, widely accepted perception was that the establishment, through extensive efforts, state resources, and manipulation of the judicial, administrative, and civil systems, had imprisoned him and orchestrated his exile. It seemed inconceivable that they would, in their right mind, reinstate him to a position of power. Contrary to all expectations, Nawaz Sharif returned in a blaze of glory, defying every perception, estimate, and logic. He, once a convicted figure whose mere mention in the media was deemed a grave offense, transformed overnight into the media's darling—a remarkable shift akin to a magical transformation. Even the Interior Minister, who initially asserted Sharif's imminent arrest upon his return due to his convict status, hastily retracted, showing him with praise, acknowledging his eminence, and granting him VVIP treatment upon arrival. In an astonishing turn of events, the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) swiftly withdrew corruption charges against him, while the courts remarkably absolved him of allegations regarding ill-gotten wealth in London—all seemingly within the blink of an eye. The sudden about-face in treatment and legal proceedings surrounding Sharif's return left an indelible impact, defying previous norms and expectations in a manner that resonated deeply. However, a lingering unease persisted despite these developments. The intelligentsia, thinkers, analysts, and the general public found themselves deeply unsettled by the apparent manipulation of the country's systems, initially against Nawaz Sharif and then abruptly in his favor. Individuals with analytical minds grappled with this abrupt turn of events, finding it deeply disquieting, illogical, and difficult to comprehend. As they pondered various scenarios, ironically, many did not envision Mr. Nawaz Sharif reclaiming the position of Prime Minister for the fourth time. The political analysts were assuming that the army as an institution has deep memories. It follows a cyclical process to ensure that armed forces remain adaptable, well-prepared, and continuously evolved to meet the challenges of dynamic and diverse conflict scenarios. The process began with the clear definition of objectives and parameters. Develop scenarios by creating a realistic setting that encompassed geopolitical factors, terrain details, and enemy capabilities. The war game unfolded through real-time decision-making. Data is meticulously collected on decisions, outcomes, and resource utilization during the war game. Insights gleaned from the war game guided the refinement of strategies, tactics, and operational planning, feeding back into future simulations and real-world military operations. As an analyst with past experiences closely working with both civil and military establishments, I have no doubt that before absolving Nawaz Sharif of all allegations and

attempting to reinstate him as Prime Minister for the fourth time, the army would have followed specific procedures. They would have developed various scenarios focusing on questions like (a) What if Nawaz Sharif returns as Prime Minister for the fourth time? (b) Why should he not receive support for a comeback, and (c) what if an alternative nominee representing Nawaz Sharif is appointed as Prime Minister? Scenario A: Given the PTI's popularity, there's a need for a prominent leader with public appeal and experience to counter Mr. Khan. Nawaz Sharif, with his extensive experience and stature, could emerge as a unifying figure across various political factions. His ability to initiate dialogue and focus on economic stability and governance reforms makes him a strong counterweight to Mr. Khan. Mr. Sharif's past accomplishments in economic development and public infrastructure can be highlighted through a strategic public relations campaign. He could reach out to disenchanted segments of society, pledging accountability and reforms to address previous concerns. Civil society, recognizing his experience and the call for stability, might lend support. The establishment could opt for a working relationship based on mutual respect and commitment to national interests, reinstalling him as Prime Minister for the fourth time. To maintain control over his ambitions, ensuring he holds a slim majority or no majority in Parliament, he might need to form a coalition government with members favored by the establishment. This would keep his government reliant on their support, keeping his authority in check. Scenario B: Opposition factions and certain elements within the military consistently highlight Nawaz Sharif's past dismissals and allegations of corruption. They argue that his return to power could jeopardize national interests and financial integrity, reigniting past controversies and instability. Nawaz Sharif, during his tenure as Prime Minister of Pakistan, had several notable confrontations with the military establishment. His political career was marked by moments of strained relations and power struggles with the military leadership. These confrontations often stemmed from differing approaches to governance, control over key policy decisions, and the exercise of authority. Sharif's attempts to assert civilian supremacy and consolidate power occasionally clashed with the military's influence and perceived interests, leading to tense standoffs and moments of significant political instability in Pakistan. A substantial portion of the public remains skeptical of Sharif's leadership due to lingering allegations and a perception of political opportunism. His reinstatement as Prime Minister might spark protests and deepen social divisions, leading to increased unrest. Given Imran Khan's popularity, the establishment might need to manipulate elections in favor of Nawaz Sharif, undermining the credibility of the electoral process. Such interference could lead to widespread rejection of the resulting government. If allegations of election rigging gain traction, international financial institutions like the IMF might withhold support, worsening the country's

already fragile economic condition. This could plunge the nation into further instability and turmoil. International partners are expected to express concerns about Sharif's potential return, fearing its impact on diplomatic relations and regional stability. This skepticism complicates efforts to secure international support for his administration. Scenario C: To navigate resistance and controversies surrounding Nawaz Sharif's leadership, the Establishment might orchestrate conditions where Nawaz willingly presents his brother, Shahbaz Sharif, as a compromise candidate for the prime ministerial role. In this scenario, Nawaz Sharif could retain substantial influence behind the scenes, effectively guiding the party and Shahbaz in governance matters allowing him to maintain control while projecting a cooperative image to subdue opposition. Unlike Nawaz, Shahbaz is perceived as less likely to challenge military authority. He has a history of cooperative dealings with the military, avoiding direct confrontations—something favored by the military in civilian leadership. Shahbaz boasts a reputation as a competent administrator with a proven track record in delivering economic projects. He is expected to prioritize economic development, aligning with the military's desire for a stable and prosperous Pakistan. Maintaining a favorable relationship with the military gives Shahbaz more flexibility, a crucial factor for the military to retain a semblance of civilian control. His appointment ensures continuity, minimizing disruptions and safeguarding the military's interests. Seen as a pragmatic politician willing to collaborate with different parties, Shahbaz's approach is valued by the military. They prefer leaders capable of navigating Pakistan's intricate political landscape without unnecessary conflicts. Among the three scenarios, Scenario C emerges as the most promising compromise. By nominating Shahbaz Sharif as Prime Minister while retaining Nawaz Sharif's influence behind the scenes, it offers stability, continuity, and a leader perceived as more cooperative towards the military. This compromise could address concerns raised in other scenarios, providing a pathway to navigate the controversies surrounding Nawaz Sharif's leadership. It presents a strategic balance, potentially satisfying the military's preferences for a less confrontational leader while maintaining a sense of stability within the government. Reflecting on the abrupt ousting and subsequent return to power of both Benazir Bhutto Shaheed and Nawaz Sharif, orchestrated by the establishment, it becomes apparent that history might repeat itself. In a few years, we could find ourselves recalculating and envisioning various scenarios for Khan's potential return to the power equation. The pattern of leaders being removed from office and later reinstated seems to be a recurring theme, hinting at a possible similar trajectory for Khan in the future.

— Former Press Secretary to the President  
Former Press Minister to the Embassy of Pakistan to France  
Former MD, SRBC

## Zelensky's comedy roots and political pursuits

Dr. Muhammad Akram Zaheer



Zelensky was born into a Jewish family. His father, Oleksandr Zelensky, worked as a professor, and his mother, Rymma Zelenska, was an engineer. His family background was not directly involved in politics. Zelensky studied law at the Kyiv National Economic University but chose a different career path after graduating

VOLODYMYR Zelensky the President of Ukraine had born on January 25, 1978, in Kryvyi Rih, Ukrainian SSR (now Ukraine). Zelensky is a former comedian, television producer and actor. Before entering politics, Zelensky gained popularity as the star of the television series "Servant of the People," where he played a teacher who unexpectedly becomes the President of Ukraine after a video of him passionately ranting against corruption goes viral. This role foreshadowed his real-life political career. Zelensky co-founded the production company Kvartal 95, known for its comedy shows and performances. He gained recognition for his wit and humor. He became synonymous with successful television shows and comedy sketches. Zelensky's entertainment career not only showcased his comedic talent but also played a pivotal role in shaping his public image and connecting with voters, marking a unique trajectory from the world of entertainment to the highest echelons of political leadership. Zelensky was born into a Jewish family. His father, Oleksandr Zelensky, worked as a professor, and his mother, Rymma Zelenska, was an engineer. His family background was not directly involved in politics. Zelensky studied law at the Kyiv National Economic University but chose a different career path after graduating. Instead of pursuing a legal profession, he ventured into the entertainment industry. Volodymyr Zelensky gained popularity as a comedian, actor, and producer. He co-founded the entertainment company Kvartal 95, which produced a variety of comedic shows and programs that became well-received in Ukraine. One of the notable shows was "Servant of the People," where Zelensky played the role of a high school teacher who unexpectedly becomes the President of Ukraine after a video of him passionately ranting against corruption goes viral. The success of the television series "Servant of the People" contributed significantly to Zelensky's public image. The show reflected the public's frustration with corruption in Ukrainian politics and resonated with many viewers. Zelensky's foray

into politics was not immediate. However, he gradually became more involved in civic activities and expressed his views on political issues, particularly focusing on anti-corruption measures. In 2019, Zelensky ran for the presidency of Ukraine as an anti-establishment candidate. His campaign focused on fighting corruption and bringing fresh faces into politics. In a surprising turn of events, he won a landslide victory in the election, defeating the incumbent Petro Poroshenko. Zelensky brought a fresh and unconventional approach to governance, leveraging his background in entertainment to connect with a younger generation of voters. His political career began with the establishment of the Servant of the People party, named after the television series in which he played a fictional president. Zelensky's campaign focused on combating corruption, decentralizing power and promoting transparency. In the office, he faced significant challenges including navigating tense relations with Russia and managing domestic expectations. Zelensky's leadership during critical moments, such as the response to the COVID-19 pandemic and ongoing conflicts in the east, has shaped his presidency. Despite facing criticism and political complexities, Zelensky's commitment to reform and his ability to communicate directly with the public have marked him as a distinctive figure in Ukrainian politics. As president, Zelensky faced various challenges, including ongoing conflicts in eastern Ukraine and relations with Russia. He initiated several reforms, aiming to improve the country's governance and address corruption issues. Zelensky has been serving as the President of Ukraine since May 2019. Zelensky, a former comedian and political newcomer has implemented several policies and reforms aimed at addressing corruption, improving governance and fostering economic development. One of his notable initiatives has been the fight against corruption, with the establishment of the High Anti-Corruption

Court to hold accountable those involved in corrupt practices. Zelensky has also advocated for decentralization, aiming to empower local governments and provide citizens with more control over their communities. Additionally, he has worked on judicial reforms and sought to attract foreign investment to stimulate economic growth. However, the success and impact of these policies may have evolved since my last update, so it's advisable to check more recent sources for the latest developments in Zelensky's presidency and the state of Ukraine. Zelensky has been involved in diplomatic efforts to resolve the conflict in eastern Ukraine and has sought international support for his country and brought a fresh perspective to Ukrainian politics. In terms of international relations, Zelensky's presidency has been marked by efforts to strengthen ties with the European Union and NATO while navigating the complex relationship with Russia. Ukraine's geopolitical position, particularly the annexation of Crimea by Russia in 2014 and the ongoing conflict in Eastern Ukraine, has significantly shaped Zelensky's foreign policy agenda. He has sought international support for Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity, engaging with leaders and organizations to address the ongoing challenges in the region. Zelensky's approach to international relations reflects a balancing act between pursuing closer ties with the West and managing the delicate dynamics with Russia. It's important to note that developments in international relations. Volodymyr Zelensky's transition from a comedian and actor to the President of Ukraine is a remarkable aspect of his life, reflecting the intersection of entertainment and politics in Ukrainian society. His transition from entertainment to the presidency reflects a global trend where individuals outside traditional political circles have entered politics and achieved significant success. His presidency has faced numerous challenges, including geopolitical tensions, economic issues, and ongoing efforts to reform the Ukrainian political system.



## Briefs

## PM: terrorists must...

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journalists, soldiers, and even children," he said. Over a year back, terrorism surged across the country after the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) called off its ceasefire and began targeting security forces and civilians. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan have seen a significant rise in terrorism, with some politicians also raising concerns about the security situation during the general elections – scheduled for February 8, 2024. Pakistan saw a notable surge in militant activities in November as the attacks rose by 34% following a two-month decline, data from the Pakistan Institute for Conflict and Security Studies (PICSS) showed.

## Punjab CTD arrests 9...

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while a suspect belonging to the outlawed Al Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent (AQIS) was arrested in Gujranwala. According to the CTD, a total of eight First Information Reports (FIRs) were registered against the arrested suspects in various police stations located in Lahore, Bahawalpur and Gujranwala. During the operation, the law enforcers seized a cache of weapons, including two hand grenades, one improvised explosive device, 508g of explosives, seven banned books, one banned magazine, 12 pamphlets of defunct organisations, 44 stickers of defunct organisations, three receipt books, three mobile phones and a sum of Rs131,830 in cash.

## Justice Ijaz questions...

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was prepared an hour and a half ago. I attended the committee meeting as a member. Earlier, The Supreme Court Monday decided to take up the issue of lifetime disqualification of lawmakers in January 2024 and referred the matter for further consideration to the judges' committee. The apex court took notice of contradictions regarding the duration of disqualification in the Election Act, 2017 and a Supreme Court verdict during the hearing of a petition filed by former Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) provincial lawmaker Sardar Meer Badshah Khan Qaisrani. While issuing notices to the attorney general and provincial law officers, the apex court also ordered the notice of the case to be published in the country's two major English newspapers.

## IHC reserves verdict on...

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In October this year, the former premier challenged the trial verdict in the IHC, however, later he sought withdrawal of the appeal since his petition in the same case was pending before the Lahore High Court (LHC). However, the IHC rejected his withdrawal petition last week. During the hearing today, Imran's lawyer Latif Khosa appeared in court while Advocate Amjad Parvez appeared on behalf of the electoral body. Imran's lawyer, in his arguments, told the court that he was refused to attend the hearing when he went to Adiala jail. He said he has the right to be present on behalf of his client.

## 'Major' cut in petrol...

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private news channel, is expected to drop by Rs13 per litre and diesel Rs15 per litre – as the masses are also hoping for a reduction in the rates amid falling global rates. Oil prices dipped Monday as worries persisted around crude oversupply despite OPEC+ cuts and softer fuel demand growth next year. The price fell on Friday for a seventh straight week, the longest streak of weekly declines since 2018, on lingering oversupply concerns. The caretaker federal government had maintained the petrol price at Rs281.34 per litre till December 15. However, HSD price was slashed by Rs7 per litre while kerosene oil was reduced by Rs3.82 per litre.

## KK appoint Simmons as head coach for HBL PSL 9

Phil Simmons, renowned for his dual role as a star player and as the triumphant coach of the West Indies during the 2016 T20 World Cup, brings a wealth of experience and strategic prowess to the Karachi Kings' camp

## SPORTS DESK

KARACHI: Karachi Kings, Pakistan's biggest city's HBL Pakistan Super League (PSL) franchise, has made a ground-breaking announcement as they named Phil Simmons as their head coach for the upcoming HBL PSL 9. The franchise proudly welcomes the esteemed Phil Simmons as their Head Coach, marking a significant step in their ongoing revitalization and restructuring process. Phil Simmons, renowned for his dual role as a star player and as the triumphant coach of the West Indies during the 2016 T20 World Cup, brings a wealth of experience and strategic prowess to the Karachi Kings' camp. During his cricket career, Phil Simmons has scored 4,677 runs and picked up 87 wickets. He had a reputation for being an expert limited-over format player. Karachi is not an unknown territory to the new head coach of Kings' as he has played a World Cup 1987 match in the



city. Expressing his enthusiasm, Simmons stated, "Returning to Karachi, a city I hold dear from my playing days, feels like a homecoming. I am thrilled to join forces with Haider Azhar and the rest of the team's think tank, drawing from the rich cricketing heritage of this country. "I am thankful to team owner Salman Iqbal, CEO Tariq Wasi, and Karachi Kings management for this opportunity. We are eager to move ahead with our rebuilding and restart process of Karachi Kings and establish this franchise as a match-winning unit." Salman Iqbal, the owner of Karachi Kings, extended a warm welcome to Simmons, emphasizing the coach's invaluable addition to the team. "We are honored to have Phil Simmons join us as the Head Coach. His remarkable track record as a coach and player speaks volumes about his calibre. We are confident his leadership will drive Karachi Kings to greater heights." The Karachi Kings management expresses confidence in this revamped coaching ensemble, aiming to create a formidable team ready to conquer the challenges of the upcoming HBL PSL 9.

## Hafeez expresses disappointment over slow wicket in Canberra

## DNA

PERTH: Pakistan Men's Team director Mohammad Hafeez on Monday expressed his disappointment over the slow wicket in Canberra for Pakistan's four-day practice match against the Australian Prime Minister's XI. The four-day match was played at Manuka Oval last week and ended in a draw after the last day was called off due to bad weather. Addressing the media after Pakistan's first practice session in Perth, Hafeez said, "I was surprised and disappointed at the four-day match surface offered at Canberra. It was a slow wicket that might be part of Australia's strategy, but we are still fully ready for the series." Hafeez also

stated that the Pakistan team is ready for the Test series challenge against Australia and vowed that they are not here to compete but to beat Australia. Hafeez stated, "This Pakistan Test team is well settled and they have done

well for the country in the past. It is heartening to see that these guys are excited to take on challenges and doing well in Australia will be a top priority." On the excitement to face Australia, Hafeez expressed confidence in beating the

home team and said that Pakistan have enough talent to do that. "We have ticked most of the boxes in our training. Everyone on the team is excited to showcase their ability and eager to win. Unfortunately, Abrar Ahmed is unfit but everyone else is fit and ready to take on Australia." Hafeez also talked about Nathan Lyon's return to Australia's Test team. "Lyon is a great bowler. He has won Test matches for his team but we generally play off-spin well and we have scored a lot of runs against him in the last few series. I hope our batters will do well against him in this series as well." The first Test match between Pakistan and Australia will start at Perth Stadium on 14 December.



## Man Utd fight for Champions League survival

MANCHESTER: Manchester United's future in this season's Champions League hangs by a thread ahead of Bayern Munich's visit to Old Trafford, with an early exit in Europe sure to put more scrutiny on manager Erik ten Hag. The Dutchman tried to argue after victory over Chelsea last week that United's season has not reached crisis-mode. But Ten Hag's hopes that a turning point had been reached were short-lived as a 3-0 defeat at home to Bournemouth on Saturday saw a troubled campaign reach a new low. The Red Devils sit sixth in the Premier League after seven defeats in their opening 16 games. Yet, while there may be time to recover a place in the top four domestically, their need in the Champions League is urgent. Only victory against the German champions on Tuesday will give United any chance of progress to the last 16 and even then, they need FC Copenhagen and Galatasaray to draw in their final Group A match. United are fortunate to even have a shot at the knockout stages after a return of just four points from their opening five matches. No English side has ever conceded as many as the 14 goals that Ten Hag's men have in five Champions League group games. A series of high-scoring shootouts in Europe contrasts sharply with United's troubles to score goals in the Premier League. – Agencies

Shahram wins Texas Open Snooker Championship 2023  
Shahram Changezi has been an active member of the domestic snooker circuit and has represented Pakistan in many international events

HOUSTON: Shahram Changezi, Pakistan's accomplished snooker and pool player has once again brought glory to the nation with his triumphant victory in the Texas Open Snooker Championship 2023. The event took place in Q Billiards Hall in Houston; top players from the USA and other countries participated. Shahram defeated Raed Shahib from Iraq in the quarter-final, Joey USA's Torres in the semi-final and India's Ahmed Mustafa in the final by 3-1 to wrap up the Texas Open Snooker Championship 2023 title. Besides his monumental victory, Shahram Changezi made the highest break of the event by scoring 89 points and clinched the highest break trophy as well. Changezi also participated in the American 9 Ball Pool League in which 128 players participated. He demonstrated skills in the 9 Ball Pool as well and stood third. Shahram Changezi has been an active member of the domestic snooker circuit and has represented Pakistan in many international events. Due to his inclination towards pool as well, shahram opted to join American Pool league in 2018. He first appeared in the Chinese 8 Ball Pool Championship held in LA, USA where he reached quarter finals. There onwards, he participated in international pool events every year and is now among top Fargo Rated players. After clinching the Texas Open Snooker Championship 2023 title, Shahram urged the Pakistan Billiards and Snooker Association (PBSA) to promote pool in the country, highlighting the sports world wide popularity. "I think PBSA should also start organising pool events and promote pool in country. Pool is widely played and is more entertaining than snooker. Pakistan is full of talent and I am sure by putting in little efforts in pool we can bring laurels to the nation," said Changezi. – Agencies

## ICC unveils schedule for U19 Men's Cricket WC

DUBAI: The International Cricket Council (ICC) on Monday, unveiled the schedule for the upcoming U19 Men's Cricket World Cup, scheduled to commence on January 19 in South Africa. "Five-time champions India will commence their 2024 ICC U19 Men's Cricket World Cup campaign against 2020 winners Bangladesh in Bloemfontein, while hosts South Africa take on the West Indies in the tournament opener on January 19," said ICC in a release. Five venues across South Africa will host a total of 41 ICC U19 Men's Cricket World Cup matches from January 19 till early February 11. The 15th edition of the showpiece event will feature 16 teams, divided

into four groups. Group A features defending champions India alongside Bangladesh, Ireland and the United States of America (USA), while Group B consists of England, South Africa, West Indies, and Scotland. Two-time champions Pakistan are placed in Group D alongside Afghanistan, New Zealand and Nepal while Australia, Sri Lanka, Namibia and Zimbabwe were placed in Group C. The top three sides from each group progress to the Super Six phase of the event. The top four teams at the conclusion of the Super Six stage will then advance to the semi-finals, scheduled on February 6 and 8. Meanwhile, the final of the ICC U19 Men's Cricket World Cup will take place on February 11 in Benoni. South Africa will host the U19 World Cup for the third time, having previously hosted the 1998 and 2020 editions. Notably, the International Cricket Council (ICC) awarded the hosting rights of the mega event to South Africa as a consequence of the apex cricket body's provisional ban on Sri Lanka Cricket (SLC). For the unversed, the ICC suspended SLC's membership after the latter had failed to ensure there was no government interference in its affairs. – DNA



ISLAMABAD: Newly elected office bearers of students council of IMCG i8/3 pose for group photo in Oath taking ceremony held on Monday. – DNA

## PSL 9 draft: Gold category foreign players confirmed

## OUR CORRESPONDENTS

LAHORE: Pakistan cricket fans are buzzing as the Pakistan Super League (PSL) season nine's draft is just a few days away. Meanwhile, PCB has confirmed a list of foreign players enlisted in the Gold category where renowned names are included. Stars like Joe Denly, Paul Stirling, Lewis Gregory, Niroshan Dickwella, Dhananjaya De Silva, and Ben Cutting, are part of the list. Remember, the draft of PSL season nine will take place at the National Cricket Academy (NCA) in Lahore on Wednesday, December 13, 2023. Earlier, as reported by media reporters, the PSL schedule will be confirmed on the date of the draft. PCB is in favour of hosting these matches across four venues - Karachi, Lahore, Multan and Rawalpindi. The teams will start gathering on February 12 where they take part in practice sessions and matches across four days. The event will start from February 17 in Lahore with defending champions Lahore Qalandars facing Islamabad United in the opening match. Multan Sultans and Karachi Kings will play in Multan on February 18. Meanwhile, the first game in Karachi is recommended between Karachi Kings and Islamabad United on February 28. Matches in Rawalpindi will start on March 1 with United playing Quetta Gladiators. Six double-headers will also be played during the event. 11 matches will take place in Karachi, nine each in Lahore and Rawalpindi

and five in Multan. Three playoff matches and the final will take place in Karachi, with the final scheduled on March 17. Last week, The cricket body released the list of all the retained players by all six franchises on Thursday where many big and important names were not kept by their franchises.

**Full retentions:**  
**Lahore Qalandars (8):** Shaheen Shah Afridi (Platinum), Haris Rauf (Brand Ambassador) and David Wiese (both Diamond), Sikandar Raza, Abdullah Shafique and Zaman Khan (all Gold), Mirza Tahir Baig (Successful relegation request) and Rashid Khan (both Silver).  
**Islamabad United (8):** Shadab Khan and Naseem Shah (both Platinum), Imad Wasim (Mentor) and Azam Khan (both

Diamond), Faheem Ashraf (Brand Ambassador), Alex Hales and Colin Munro (all Gold), Rumman Raees (Successful relegation request in Silver), Multan Sultans (7): Mohammad Rizwan and Iftikhar Ahmed (both Platinum), Khushdil Shah and Usama Mir (both Diamond), Abbas Afridi (Gold), Ihsanullah (Brand Ambassador, Silver), Faisal Akram (Emerging).  
**Karachi Kings (8):** James Vince and Hasan Ali (Diamond), Shan Masood (Brand Ambassador), Shoaib Malik (Mentor) and Tabaiz Shamsi (all Gold), Mir Hamza (Successful relegation request) and Muhammad Akhlaq (both Silver), Muhammad Irfan Khan (Emerging).  
**Quetta Gladiators (8):** Rilee Rossouw (Platinum), Mohammad Wasim Jnr, Ja-

son Roy and Wanindu Hasaranga (all Diamond), Sarfaraz Ahmed (Brand Ambassador) Abrar Ahmed and Mohammad Hasnain (all Gold), Will Smeed (Silver). Some of the star foreign players registered in the top two categories:

**Platinum:** Daniel Sams, Ashton Agar (both Australia), Fazalhaq Farooqi, Mujeeb Ur Rahman, Noor Ahmad, Rahmanullah Gurbaz (all Afghanistan), Ben Duckett, Chris Jordan, David Willey, Dawid Malan, Luke Wood, Reece Topley, Tom Curran, Tymal Mills (all England), Sandeep Lamichhane (Nepal), James Neesham (New Zealand), Rassie van der Dussen, Imran Tahir (both South Africa), Maheesh Theekshana, Bhanuka Rajapaksa, Dasun Shanaka (all Sri Lanka), Kieron Pollard, Romario Shephard, Brandon King, Sherfane Rutherford and Kyle Mayers (all West Indies)

**Diamond:** Azmatullah Omarzai, Mohammad Nabi (both Afghanistan), Ben McDermott (Australia), Litton Das, Mehidy Hasan Miraz, Mahmudullah (all Bangladesh), Dan Lawrence, Gus Atkinson, Jordan Cox, Liam Dawson, Matthew Potts, Ollie Pope, Richard Gleeson, Sam Hain (all England), Tim Seifert, Martin Gupthill, Chad Bowles (all New Zealand), George Linde, Lungi Ngidi, Reeza Hendricks, Wayne Parnell, Sisanda Magala (all South Africa), Dilshan Madushanka, Charith Asalanka, Dushmantha Chameera, Sadeera Samarawickrama (all Sri Lanka), Fabian Allen, Johnson Charles, Rahkeem Cornwall, Roston Chase, Shai Hope, Hayden Walsh (all West Indies).

## Israeli attacks claim...

## FROM PAGE 01

opened fire at citizens near the University College of Science and Technology in Khan Yunis. The Israeli army also massacred at least 50 civilians and injured others after it bombed a house belonging to the family of Suleiman Salem in Gaza City in the morning. The military wing of the Palestinian resistance movement Hamas says it has targeted southern Tel Aviv with missiles in response to the Israeli regime's fierce bombardment of besiege Gaza Strip.

## Israel using same...

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north despite calls from the EU not to do so. "The bombings continue with extraordinary intensity," he added. "The prospect is really dark." Borrell also denounced the increasing civilian casualties in Gaza and the forced displacement of people in the Palestinian territory who are forced to flee to Egypt. There are no more shelters or safe places in Gaza, he noted.

## Indian SC upholds...

## FROM PAGE 01

the move an attempt to dilute the demographics of Muslim-majority Kashmir with Hindu settlers. A five-member bench headed by Chief Justice of India (CJI) D.Y. Chandrachud had begun hearing the set of petitions challenging the reading down of Article 370 of the Indian constitution on July 11 and reserved its verdict on September 5. The move was challenged by the region's pro-India political parties, the local Bar Association and individual litigants. The pleas, including those filed by the National Conference and the People's Democratic Party, had also challenged India-held Kashmir's bifurcation into two union territories.

## Pakistan rejects...

## FROM PAGE 01

Pakistan's response to the Indian Supreme Court's verdict in Islamabad on Monday, the interim foreign minister read out Islamabad's official response to the verdict saying Pakistan categorically rejects the judgment on the status of IIOJK. "Jammu and Kashmir is an internationally-recognised dispute, which remains on the agenda of the UN Security Council for over seven decades. The final disposition of Jammu and Kashmir is to be made in accordance with the relevant United Nations Security Council Resolutions and as per the aspirations of the Kashmiri people. India has no right to make unilateral decisions on the status of this disputed territory against the will of the Kashmiri people and Pakistan," he added.

## Nation wants to know...

## FROM PAGE 01

Nawaz claimed that in 2017, the country was on a positive trajectory, and there were expectations of PML-N's success in the 2018 elections. He suggested that their strong performance posed a threat to other parties' prospects in the polls. Expressing deep concern about the current state of the country, Nawaz remarked on its diminished global standing, saying, "We should regret that we are one of the worst-performing countries in the world at the moment."

## Bilawal demands...

## FROM PAGE 01

allow terrorists to reside in tribal areas. He highlighted the ongoing challenges faced by Pakistan due to this, urging a continued effort to confront the terrorist risks. In response to a political question from a journalist, Bilawal declined to answer, stressing gratefulness to the chief justice for overseeing the judgment on Shaheed Bhutto's case. Regarding the Kashmir issue, he asserted that international laws must prevail, emphasising the need for a resolution in accordance with UN resolutions.





## Briefs

## Australia plans to halve tighten student visa rules

SYDNEY : Australia on Monday said it would tighten visa rules for international students and low-skilled workers that could halve its migrant intake over the next two years as the government looks to overhaul what it said was a "broken" migration system. Under the new policies, international students would need to secure higher ratings on English tests and there would be more scrutiny on a student's second visa application that would prolong their stay. "Our strategy will bring migration numbers back to normal," Home Affairs Minister Clare O'Neil said during a media briefing. "But it's not just about numbers. It's not just about this moment and the experience of migration our country is having at this time. This is about Australia's future." Prime Minister Anthony Albanese over the weekend said Australia's migration numbers needed to be wound back to a "sustainable level," adding that "the system is broken." O'Neil said the government's targeted reforms were already putting downward pressure on net overseas migration and will further contribute to an expected decline in migrant numbers.—APP

## Turkey criticizes Germany over fighter jet request

ANKARA : Türkiye Monday harshly criticized Germany for not approving Ankara's request to acquire Eurofighter Typhoon jets that the country seeks to refresh its air force amid a prolonged process over the purchase of F-16 warplanes from the U.S. Türkiye announced last month it was in talks with Britain and Spain to buy 40 Eurofighter jets, though Germany has objected to the idea. The warplanes are produced by a consortium involving Germany, Spain, Italy and the United Kingdom. "We are a NATO member, yet another member opposes us buying these aircraft, Defense Minister Yaşar Güler said. "There cannot be an explanation for an ally saying, 'I won't give you the aircraft,'" Güler told an interview with private broadcaster NTV. He said Eurofighter was a good alternative for Türkiye and expressed optimism that other allies could convince Germany to back down its objections. Still, President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan has said Ankara's interest in military jets was not limited to Eurofighter. "We have already given our answer clearly. If they give us these planes, they give them. If not, do we lack doors to knock on? No, we have many," Erdoğan said after his trip to Berlin last month. Türkiye began discussing buying Eurofighters amid its longstanding request for F-16 jets from the U.S.—Agencies

## Global trade expected to shrink by 5%

WASHINGTON : The United Nations trade body announced on Monday that global trade is set to contract by 5% in 2023 compared to last year, with a generally bleak outlook for 2024. In its Global Trade Update, the U.N. Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) projected that commerce this year would amount to approximately \$30.7 trillion. Trade in goods is expected to contract by nearly \$2 trillion in 2023, or 8%, but services trade should increase by about \$500 billion, or 7%, according to the U.N. body. UNCTAD attributed this contraction in global trade partly to an underperformance of exports from developing countries. "Global trade has experienced a decline throughout 2023, primarily influenced by diminished demand in developed nations, underperformance in East Asia economies and a decrease in commodity prices," UNCTAD said.—APP



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Kazakhstan Erjan Kistafin speaking on the occasion of a seminar on CICA. Senator Mushahid Hussain Syed delivered a key note address and highlighted the importance of CICA and its role in regional integration.—DNA

## Ukraine urges EU action to avoid consequences

Ukraine's foreign minister says he came to Brussels with 'clear message of Ukraine's commitment to do its homework to open accession talks'

## NEWS DESK

KYIV : Ukraine on Monday said that the EU's failure to start membership talks with Kyiv during the upcoming European Council meeting later this week will have "devastating consequences." "I cannot imagine, I don't even want to talk about the devastating consequences that will occur should the Council fail to make this decision, not only with regards to Ukraine but in the broader sense on the issue of enlargement as a whole," Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba told reporters ahead of a EU Foreign Affairs Council meeting in Brussels. Recalling certain legislation adopted by the Ukrainian parliament over the past week,

taking into account assessments made by the Council of Europe and its bodies, Kuleba said that he came to Brussels with "a clear message of Ukraine's commitment to do its homework to open accession talks and move towards membership in the EU." "We also expect the European Union to make a decision that will appreciate the efforts made by Ukraine and grant to my country the opening of the accession talks," he said. Kuleba also announced that he will hold his first in-person meeting with his Hungarian counterpart Peter Szijarto since the start of the Russia-Ukraine war, saying that talks are being held between their countries. "Ukraine changed its legislation on education and the use of the



language of national minorities in the way Hungary wanted it to be changed. And this fact must be respected," Kuleba added. Earlier this month, Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán said that the European Commission wants to force Ukraine's EU accession "down our throats" without assessing the consequences it

will have on the bloc. The European Council will consider opening accession talks with Ukraine in a meeting in Brussels on Dec. 14-15, a month after the European Commission recommended the Council to open membership talks with Ukraine and Moldova. UK sends Ukraine two minehunters to counter Russia's sea mines. Britain has said it would transfer two Royal Navy minehunter ships to the Ukrainian Navy, as it sets up a new maritime defence coalition alongside Norway to help strengthen Ukraine's sea operations. Britain said the two Sandown Class mine countermeasures vessels will enable Ukraine to better counter the threat from Russian sea mines, aiming to

restore Ukraine's export routes via the Black Sea. The transfer of the vessels was announced alongside the launch of the Maritime Capability Coalition set up by Britain and Norway to improve Ukraine's navy to make it more compatible with western allies and increase security in the Black Sea. Air force shoots down eight Kiev-bound missiles: Ukraine. Ukrainian forces have shot down eight Russian missiles headed for the capital Kiev on Monday morning, the air force said. "The Russian invaders launched a missile attack on Kiev region" at local time Ukraine's air force said, adding that "air defence destroyed eight air targets that were flying in the direction of the capital."

## Argentina prepares for Milei to start shock therapy

LONDON : Argentina's financial markets on Monday were waiting for new President Javier Milei to launch into his promised economic shock therapy with a huge devaluation of the peso. The radical economist took office on Sunday with a warning in his inaugural speech that he had no alternative to a sharp, painful fiscal shock to fix the country's "titanic" challenges. The 53-year-old's speech on Sunday was light on detail, but he reiterated there would be a fiscal adjustment equivalent to 5% of GDP through cuts that would fall on "the state and not the private sector". Investors are now waiting for the plan to be fleshed out and to see how quickly he moves. A government spokesman said key measures would be laid out on Tuesday by new Economy Minister Luis Caputo. Argentina's international dollar-denominated bonds, which have surged some 25% since Milei won the presidency last month, looked to be drifting lower but focus was largely on the peso and when and how large its widely-expected devaluation will be. The maiden speech "yesterday was for show but now he (Milei) needs to get down to the hard graft of governing", BlueBay Asset Management's Graham Stock said. "There will almost certainly be a new official exchange rate," he said, adding it was expected to move to around 650 to the dollar from around 360 now. One way locals and internationals were able to trade the peso over the weekend was in the 24-hour cryptocurrency markets, albeit in tiny volumes compared to the traditional FX ones. The peso was last at 42,025 per bitcoin, according to crypto exchange Binance's website, although that was off a low of 44,862 seen on Sunday. Tether - another cryptocurrency pegged to the U.S. dollar - was trading at 1,019.7 pesos compared to around 980 after Milei's election win three weeks ago. In his speech, Milei had highlighted the need to address his country's ticking "debt bomb". Serial defaulter Argentina owes over \$4 billion to the International Monetary Fund and to private sector creditors by the end of January and \$90 billion and \$25 billion in local and foreign currency debt payments respectively for 2024 as a whole, JPMorgan calculates.—Agencies

## UN warns of funding shortfall amid global crises

## WEB DESK

GENEVE: The United Nations said Monday that it needed \$46.4 billion next year to bring life-saving help to around 180 million people in desperate circumstances around the world. The UN said the global humanitarian outlook for 2024 was "bleak," with conflicts, climate emergencies and collapsing economies "wreaking havoc" on the most vulnerable. While global attention focuses on the conflict raging in the Gaza Strip, the UN said the wider Middle East, Sudan and Afghanistan were among the hotspots that also needed major international aid operations. But the size of the annual appeal and the number of people it aims to reach were scaled back compared to 2023, following a decrease in donations. "Humanitarians are saving lives, fighting hunger, protecting children, pushing back epidemics, and providing shelter and sanitation in many of the world's most inhumane contexts.

## UN mission in Mali ends after 10 years

Moscow and Bamako continue to insist that the Russian fighters are merely trainers helping local soldiers combat rebel groups

BAMAKO: The United Nations mission in Mali has officially ended a 10-year deployment in the country, its spokesperson said, in a pullout ordered by Mali's military government. The mission, known as the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), lowered the UN flag in its headquarters in the capital Bamako, its spokesperson Fatoumata Kaba told the AFP news agency on Monday. A "liquidation phase" will take place after January 1, involving activities such as handing over any remaining equipment to the authorities. In June, Mali's military government, which seized power in 2020, demanded the departure of the mission, deployed since 2013, despite being in the grip of attacks by armed groups in the Sahel region. The withdrawal of MINUSMA troops has ignited fears that fighting will intensify between Malian forces and armed groups for territorial control. The mission had maintained about 15,000 soldiers and police in Mali for the past decade. About 180 members have been killed in hostile acts. As of Friday, more than 10,500 uniformed and civilian MINUSMA personnel had left Mali, out of a total of about 13,800 staff at the start of the withdrawal, the UN mission said on X, the platform formerly known as Twitter. Since being told to leave, MINUSMA has left 13 positions in Mali and has yet to close sites in Gao and Timbuktu in the north. Last week, the UN mission handed over the Mopti camp in central Mali, one of the hotbeds of violence that has plagued Sahel for years. The Mopti camp most recently housed peacekeepers from Bangladesh and Togo, and in the past, hosted Egyptian, Pakistani, and Senegalese contingents. The pullout went smoothly, unlike recent withdrawals in Mali's volatile north which took place under fears of a military escalation between the army and rebel groups, Kaba told AFP. The UN troops were initially welcomed by Malians who hoped that the foreign soldiers would be able to help the Malian military drive back the rebels who had captured large swaths of land in the north. Ten years on, however, the peacekeepers are leaving unceremoniously with the instability far from resolved. Thousands of people have been killed, and hundreds of thousands have been displaced by the violence. After seizing power in August 2020 citing mounting insecurity, Mali's government ditched the alliance with former colonial power France, preferring rapprochement with Moscow and the private army Wagner Group. Another military takeover happened in May 2021. The presence of the mercenaries has drawn strong condemnation from Western countries, who argued that the presence of the Wagner threatens Mali's stability. Moscow and Bamako continue to insist that the Russian fighters are merely trainers helping local soldiers combat rebel groups.—DNA

## COP28 mobilizes over \$83bn for climate efforts

## DNA

RIYADH: The ongoing UN Climate Change Conference has pledged over \$83 billion for environmental-related efforts, including \$792 million for a loss and damage fund to help developing countries suffering from the most extreme effects of global warming. The overall total also includes a dedicated \$568 million for the use of technology to ensure sustainability, while \$129.3 million has been allocated toward the Least Developed Countries Fund. COP28 has also allocated \$134 million for an Adaptation Fund, while another \$31 million has been assigned to a Special Climate Change Fund. The loss and damage fund was first announced during last year's COP27 in Sharm el-Sheikh, but it was only a few weeks before the 2023 gathering in Dubai that affluent and developing nations managed agree on key points of the fund. During this year's COP28, 11 pledges and declarations were launched, including the first ever declarations on food systems transformation and health, plus statements on renewable energy and efficiency, as well as initiatives to decarbonize heavy emitting industries. A press release from the event described the funding efforts as "setting the pace for a new era in climate action."

## African mediators report progress in Sudan Peace

KHARTOUM : An African regional body involved in efforts to mediate over the war in Sudan at the weekend said it has secured a commitment from warring parties to implement a ceasefire and hold a political dialogue aimed at resolving the conflict. At talks on Saturday in Djibouti, the current chair of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), Sudan's army chief Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, agreed to a one-on-one meeting with the head of the Rapid Support Forces (RSF), Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo, widely known as Hemedti, an IGAD statement said. Hemedti and al-Burhan "accepted the principle of meeting within 15 days in order to pave the way for a series of confidence-building measures between the two parties that lead to the launch of a political process", said Alexis Mohammed, adviser to Djibouti's president. The statement gave no further details, including when and where the two generals would meet. Neither the Sudanese army nor the paramilitary RSF has commented on the development. Both sides have been locked in a conflict since mid-April that has devastated the capital, Khartoum, and triggered waves of ethnic killings in Darfur despite several diplomatic efforts to halt the fighting.—APP

## TIKA establishes agricultural garden in Niger

ANKARA : The Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TIKA) has launched a significant venture in Niger, establishing a vast vegetable and Moringa production garden spanning two hectares, expected to offer employment opportunities for nearly a thousand individuals. TIKA's project, situated in the M'Bama village of Balleyara city within the Tillaberi region, aims to foster economic growth by cultivating a range of produce including onions, potatoes, tomatoes, cabbage, beans, carrots, eggplants and the highly sought-after Moringa leaves. The primary focus of this initiative is to swiftly generate income, leveraging the rapid growth cycle of the Moringa plant and its high demand in Niger. This garden holds the potential to become a crucial income source for the local community. This ambitious venture is designed not only to bolster Niger's vegetable and Moringa production but also to bolster the region's supply chain.—DNA

## Japan PM cautious amid political fund scandal

Fumio Kishida says he will 'appropriately respond' to how ruling Liberal Democratic Party has managed funds

## FOREIGN DESK

TOKYO : Japan's Prime Minister Fumio Kishida said on Monday he would take steps to restore trust in his government amid a fundraising scandal, but declined to confirm a media report that he was set to replace four ministers in his cabinet. Allegations over unreported funds have posed the biggest political challenge to the ruling Liberal Democratic Party, or LDP, since it took back power in 2012, rattling the foundation of the current administration. Speaking to reporters on Monday morning, Kishida said he is aware of the seriousness of the situation. "We'll consider ap-

propriate measures at the right time to restore public trust and prevent delays in national politics," Kishida said. The Asahi newspaper reported late on Sunday that Kishida has decided to replace four ministers and 11 other ministerial positions in his cabinet as a scandal over alleged undisclosed funding has fueled public disapproval. Chief Cabinet Secretary Hirokazu Matsuno, Trade Minister Yasutoshi Nishimura, Internal Affairs Minister Junji Suzuki and Agriculture Minister Ichiro Miyashita are among those to be replaced, which also included deputies and parliamentary secretaries, Asahi reported. During a briefing on

Monday, Matsuno, who is the top government spokesperson, also did not elaborate on the media report, largely repeat-



ing his previous remarks that an investigation was underway and he would take appropriate actions. "I intend to fulfill the responsibilities of duties I have been given," Matsuno told reporters. Nishimura on Sunday said he would stay in the post and review his fundraising proceeds after media reports of an imminent cabinet reshuffle over allegations about unreported funds. The 15 officials to be sacked belong to the LDP's biggest "Abe faction," which prosecutors have investigated for allegedly hiding hundreds of millions of yen of political funds over five years. The LDP - which has held power for nearly all of Japan's post-

war era - is due to hold leadership elections in September with a general election due by October 2025 at the latest. The scandal could stir up a power struggle inside the party that could influence the outcome of the leadership contest and the party's management. Kishida is set to hold a press conference on Wednesday at the end of the current parliamentary session to explain his administration's responses, Asahi said. Kishida's cabinet approval ratings were hovering below 30% even before the fundraising scandal, a record low in his premiership since October 2021, reflecting voter worries over rising living costs and looming tax hikes.



**Briefs**

**UNGA meets today to discuss Gaza**

DNA

NEW YORK: The UN General Assembly will meet on Tuesday to discuss the humanitarian crisis in Gaza, officials and diplomats said Sunday, after the United States last week vetoed a Security Council resolution for a ceasefire. A special meeting of the General Assembly has been called for Tuesday afternoon by the representatives for Egypt and Mauritania "in their respective capacities as Chair of the Arab Group and Chair of the Organization for Islamic Cooperation," a spokesperson for the Assembly president said.

According to diplomatic sources, the General Assembly, whose resolutions are nonbinding, could vote on a text for a ceasefire resolution at the meeting.

A draft of the text seen by AFP closely follows the language of Friday's vetoed Security Council resolution, "expressing grave concern over the catastrophic humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip." It calls for "an immediate humanitarian ceasefire" as well as the "immediate and unconditional release of all hostages." On Friday the United States blocked the ceasefire resolution which came after UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres called an emergency meeting of the Security Council, deploying the rarely-used Article 99 of the UN Charter to bring to the council's attention "any matter which in his opinion may threaten the maintenance of international peace and security." The body's "authority and credibility" have been "severely undermined" by its delayed response to the war, Guterres said afterward. At the end of October, in another of its resolutions, the General Assembly called for an "immediate, durable and sustained humanitarian truce leading to a cessation of hostilities" between Israel and Hamas.

**Bilawal files plea for live telecast of ZAB reference**

DNA

ISLAMABAD: PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari on Monday requested the Supreme Court to live telecast the hearing of a presidential reference revisiting the Zulfikar Ali Bhutto murder case. A nine-member bench led by CJP Qazi Faez Isa will take up the matter tomorrow (Tuesday). "The applicant wants the hearing of this case to be live or on air," said the application filed by Bilawal. According to Supreme Court Registrar Jazeela Aslam, the members of the bench included Justice Sardar Tariq Masood, Justice Mansoor Ali Shah, Justice Yahya Afridi, Justice Aminud Din Khan, Justice Jamal Khan Mandokhail, Justice Muhammad Ali Mazhar, Justice Syed Hasan Azhar Rizvi and Justice Musarrat Hilali. On April 2, 2011, then-president Asif Ali Zardari approached the apex court through a presidential reference under Article 186 of the Constitution of Pakistan to seek its opinion on revisiting the trial of PPP founder.

**Italian ambassador opens Mountain Festival**

**"Colours of the ICE" reflects the artistic value of glaciers**

The Italian government has always been out to support initiatives regarding research, science, conservation and development: Andreas Ferrarese



ABID RAZA / DNA

ISLAMABAD: An three-day exhibition of photos and paintings entitled "The Colours of the ICE" kicked off at the Pakistan National Council of the Arts (PNCA) on Monday in connection with the 13th edition of Pakistan Mountain Festival, the annual flagship event of Devcom-Pakistan to mark the International Mountain Day that falls on December 11. The exhibition included 21 large-size photos reflecting the colours and textures of the glaciers in the north of Pakistan, 40 photos of the Bolorto cleanup, 12 paintings of Himalayan Odyssey series by Raja Changez Sultan, and some paintings by the students. Italian Ambassador Andreas Ferrarese was the chief guest on the occasion. Speaking on the occasion, he said the mountains play a key role in life on the planet. The Italian government has always been out to support initiatives regarding research, science, conservation and development. He appreciated the role of the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation, EvK2CNR, UNDP and IUCN for their relentless efforts to empower mountain stakeholders to conserve the local resources. The Ambassador said mountains are host to about half of the world's biodiversity hotspots. They are water towers of the world, and supply freshwater to an estimated half of humanity. Mountains are home to an extraordinary range of plants and animals, and to many culturally diverse communities with different languages and traditions. From climate regulation and water provisioning services, to soil maintenance and conservation, mountains are key to our lives and livelihoods. Samuel Rizk, the country representative of UNDP Pakistan, said mountains and its natives have become more vulnerable in the changing climate. Mountain regions are complex in their geomorphology and therefore more vulnerable to variations in temperatures and changes in patterns of hydrology. Both have a direct impact on mountain communities, adding fragility to lives already clinging tenuously to eco-systems for sustenance. Gigit-Batistan Secretary Finance Aziz Ahmad Jamil while appreciating the contribution of the development partners said Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) covers over 72,000 square kilometers, also housing the world's highest mountain range. It has a large potential of hydro and biodiversity too, but resource starved GB region always looks for development partners' support to harness the potential of its resources. Much wonderful work is done by the partners for the communities and much has to be done.

Maurizo Gallo said glaciers are alive, they move, change, and evolve. They have sounds and colours. The artistic project reveals to us the "Colors of Ice" as seen through the eyes of nature, science, and art.



In addition to the satellite photographs documenting the glacier, AI-generated images are used to reproduce scientific data, introducing new colors to the ice that display its boundaries, temperature, melting and future scenarios. The exhibition "The Colors of the

Ice" is ultimate interpretation of an artist's sensitivity in the photographs taken inside the glacier. AICS representative, Jacopo Branchesi mentioned their project activities in Pakistan in the sector of mountain conservation, livelihood and tourism.

**After UK 'betrayal' Elite Afghan troops face return to Taliban**

NEWS DESK

KABUL: About 200 members of Afghan special forces, trained and funded by the UK, face imminent deportation to their Taliban-controlled homeland, British media reported. The figures - gathered by a network of Afghan veterans - reveal the scale of what one former UK general calls a "betrayal" and a "disgrace". The soldiers fled to Pakistan, which now says it will expel Afghan refugees. The UK says it has brought thousands of Afghans to safety. Gen Sir Richard Barrons, who served the British Army in Afghanistan over 12 years, told British media Newsnight that the failure of the UK to relocate these soldiers "is a disgrace, because it reflects that either we're duplicitous as a nation or incompetent". "Neither are acceptable," he said. "It is a betrayal, and the cost of that betrayal will be people who served with us will die or spend their lives in prison." In 2021, Prime Minister Boris Johnson had told Parliament that the service of these Afghan special forces had been "incredibly important", adding the UK would do "whatever we can" to get "safe passage" for them. The fears for the Afghan commandos come as it was revealed the government also rejected calls from senior British diplomatic and military figures to offer asylum to key Afghan civilian leaders whose lives were in danger. The British media has obtained a private letter sent in March 2022 to the Foreign Office, which called for urgent help to be given to a group of 32 former governors, prosecutors and officials who worked with the UK and US in Helmand Province during operations between 2006 and 2014. Like most of the 200 special forces soldiers, these 32 officials had applied to come to the UK through the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Programme (ARAP), intended for those employed by the UK government, or who "worked in Afghanistan alongside a UK government department, in partnership with or closely supporting it".

**Khadija Shah handed over to Quetta police**

DNA

LAHORE: An anti-terrorism court (ATC) in Lahore on Monday granted Quetta police two-day transitory remand of fashion designer and PTI supporter Khadija Shah in a case pertaining to violent protests in the country on May 9. Shah - currently incarcerated in Kot Lakhpat Jail - was arrested in cases of attacks on Lahore corps commander house, Askari Tower and torching police vehicles near Rahat bakery in cantonment. So far, all the cases registered against her were being heard in Lahore. On Nov 15, an anti-terrorism court had granted Shah bail in the fourth and last case of May 9 protests against her. However, she was re-arrested on Nov 17 under the Maintenance of Public Order (MPO) ordinance for 30 days. Shah had subsequently challenged the detention in the Lahore High Court as "unlawful and unconstitutional". Today, the Punjab government submitted a notification in the LHC, stating that it had withdrawn Shah's detention orders "with immediate effect". However, before Shah could be released, the Quetta police filed a request in the ATC of Judge Abhar Gul seeking her transit remand. The court accepted the request and granted the investigating officer Shah's custody for two days. It also directed the Quetta police to present Shah in court on Dec 13. Meanwhile, during the hearing of Shah's petition against her detention under 3-MPO today, Barrister Sameer Khosa told LHC's Justice Ali Baqar Najafi about the ATC decision to remand the PTI supporter in Quetta police custody. The judge subsequently directed the police to present Shah in court by 2:30pm, warning that he would otherwise summon the Punjab police chief Usman Anwar over the matter. When the hearing resumed, IG Anwar appeared in court and said Shah was taken into custody by a Quetta police team at 10:30am today. Here, the judge asked the Punjab police chief to provide in writing when was Shah handed over. At one point, Shah's lawyer Khosa said his client had challenged the transitory remand to which Justice Najafi asked if the petition was fixed for hearing. "Which car was Khadija Shah taken in?" the judge further asked. In response, IG Anwar said he was unaware about this. "Is Khadija Shah still within the limits of Punjab?" Justice Najafi inquired. "I don't know anything, you called me and I am here," the police officer replied.

**Cabinet okays ordinance to ease privatisation**

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: In a major development, the federal caretaker government has decided to issue a presidential ordinance to stop constitutionally-established high courts from entertaining any case related to privatisation of Pakistan's assets. The caretaker govt, whose extended tenure is set to end in February next year, has taken the drastic step a month after LHC admitted a petition challenging the proposed pri-

vatization of PIA, national flag carrier. The caretaker federal cabinet has approved the draft of Privatisation Commission (Amendment) Ordinance, 2023 that would be promulgated anytime by President Dr Arif Alvi, according to the sources in the Ministry of Privatisation. But the radical step by the interim govt raises many questions about its authority to limit the powers of the high courts that have been established under the Constitution, particularly when no privatisation transaction is at the moment linked with any international agreement.

**ADB approves over \$155m loan for Pakistan to support women's financial access**

Financing aims at enhancing women's access to finance and providing credit to women-led micro

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: The Asian Development Bank (ADB) has approved \$155.5 million in financing for Pakistan to support policy reforms aimed at enhancing women's access to finance and providing credit to women-led micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises. The development comes days after the ADB approved \$658.8 million in financing to support Pakistan's sustainable growth and help it recover from last year's cost-of-living crisis. In a statement on Monday, the Manila-based lender said the latest financing comprises a \$100 million policy-based loan that supports legal and regulatory reforms that will help women to better access finance; a \$50 million financial intermediation loan that will enable participating financial institutions to lend to women entrepreneurs; and a \$5.5 million grant that will finance related activities. "Inclusive, resilient and sustainable development cannot be achieved if women do not have

equal economic opportunities and benefits," said ADB Director General for Central and West Asia Yevgeniy Zhukov. "ADB's new program will help transform Pakistan's current financing ecosystem to help women to access much-needed finance and empower them to boost their livelihoods while contributing significantly to the economy." In the statement, the ADB said female labour force participation in Pakistan currently stands at about 23% and the country also has among the lowest rates of women's entrepreneurship in the world at 4% of female working age adults. While Pakistan's financial inclusion has been improving, women are increasingly left behind with a large gender finance gap which currently stands at 34%, it added. "There are many women entrepreneurs in Pakistan, but they remain unrecognised, being small and informal in nature and lacking the incentives to register their businesses formally or to grow," said ADB Senior Financial Sector Economist Andrew McCartney. "Policies must recognise the importance of women entrepreneurship and create

an enabling environment that increases women's participation in the formal economy and gives them more opportunities to grow their businesses." The policy-based loan supports reforms that incorporate women's needs into national policies, such as the State Bank of Pakistan's Banking on Equality Policy that, among a range of measures, requires banks to establish departments dedicated to providing services to women. It supports measures enabling women's access to credit and credit alternatives through digital channels, providing financial training and advisory services to women, and improving the working conditions of women within the finance sector. The financial intermediation loan, meanwhile, is expected to benefit around two million women entrepreneurs, including about 510,000 who previously had no access to finance, through lending via participating financial institutions. The grant from the Asian Development Fund (ADF) will finance activities such as the development of financial literacy programs and a digital platform that links women to financial services.

Winter Escape

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