



# Islamabad POST

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**Jordan's relations with Pakistan historic, strong**

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**Justice Naqvi pens letter to CJP, other judges**

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**Ethiopia seeks financial sector coop with Pak**

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**25 personnel also embrace shahadat**

## Forces kill 27 militants

About deadly violent encounter or terror act at Draban Dera Ismael Khan, ISPR states, "in early hours of 12 December 2023, a group of six terrorists attacked a security forces' post in general area Daraban. The attempt to enter the post was effectively thwarted

SHAMIM SHAHID

PESHAWAR: At least 25 personnel of security forces were killed during clashes with alleged militants in different places of Southern district Dera Ismael Khan. Official also claimed killing of at least 27 militants in three different locations. The deadly encounter/clash or attack occurred in Draban town in early hours of Tuesday whereas a group of militants attacked a camp of security forces with explosive laden vehicle and suicide bombers. According to ISPR, on Night 11 / 12 December 2023, witnessed heightened activities in Dera Ismael Khan District, wherein total of twenty seven terrorists were sent to hell during various operations. An intelligence based operation was conducted in general area Darazinda on reported presence of terrorists. During the conduct of operation, terrorists' hideout was busted and seventeen terrorists were sent to hell. ISPR in its statement further states that in another intelligence-based operation in general area Kulachi, own troops effectively engaged terrorists' location as a result of which four terrorists were sent to hell. However, after intense exchange of fire, two brave sons of soil,

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## Pakistan delivers strong demarche to Afghan govt

ABID RAZA

ISLAMABAD: Foreign Secretary called-in the Chargé d'Affaires (Cd'A) of Afghan Interim Government (AIG) to deliver Pakistan's strong demarche in the context of today's deadly terrorist attack on Pakistan's security forces' post in Daraban, Dera Ismael Khan. The attack, whose responsibility has been claimed by Tehreek-e-Jihad Pakistan, a terrorist group affiliated with the Tehreek-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), resulted in multiple casualties,

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## PM to join AJK LA's special session

PM Kakar said Pakistan rejected the decision of India's top court to uphold the Indian government's illegal occupation of Jammu and Kashmir (J&K)

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar will attend the special session of the Azad Jammu and Kashmir's (AJK) legislative assembly to discuss the situation after the verdict of the Indian Supreme Court on Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK). This was decided in PM Kakar's meeting with the prime minister of AJK Chaudhry Anwar-ul-Haq held here at the PM House. PM Kakar said Pakistan rejected the decision of India's top court to uphold the Indian government's illegal occupation of Jammu and Kashmir (J&K). He said the J&K dispute, which was pending for the last seven decades, could only be settled in accordance with the resolutions of the United Nations and the wishes of the Kashmiri people. He said India had no right to

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## Confrontation with PA Palestine rebuffs Netanyahu's statements

Gaza Strip is an integral part of the land of the State of Palestine

NEWS DESK

RAMALLAH: The official spokesman for the Palestinian Presidency, Nabil Abu Rudeineh, said that the statements made by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in which he said that the occupation army is preparing for a possible confrontation with the Palestinian Authority's

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ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister of Azad Jammu and Kashmir Ch. Anwaar-ul-Haq calls on the Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar. - DNA

**Acquitted in Al-Azizia case**

## Nawaz clears another hurdle in way of 'PM'

NAB fails to prove Nawaz had assets beyond means; PML-N supremo's disqualification hurdle remains



COURT REPORTER

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad High Court (IHC) Tuesday overturned the conviction of Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) supremo Nawaz Sharif in the Al-Azizia reference, in a major boost for the senior politician's bid to become the next prime minister of the country. The veteran politician who arrived back home from four years of self-imposed exile in London in October, is eyeing to become the prime minister for a fourth time, according to his party. To qualify to stand in elections scheduled for February 8, 2024, he needs a lifelong ban on holding any public office to be removed. Sharif was convicted in 2018 on corruption charges in the case for failure to justify the source of the funds provided to set up Al-Azizia Steel Mills and Hill Metal Establishment (HME) in Saudi Arabia.

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PTI intra-party polls 'invalid' in our eyes: CEC

ADIL SHAHEEN

ISLAMABAD: Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Sikandar Sultan Raja said on Tuesday that the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf's (PTI) intra-party elections were 'invalid' in the opinion of the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP). A hearing pertaining to petitions challenging the PTI's intra-party elections took place at the ECP office, where PTI founding member and petitioner Akbar S Babar was also present. During the proceedings, PTI lawyer Barrister Ali Zafar contended that, despite objections to the ECP's directive for intra-party elections, Pakistan's "largest political party" must not be excluded from the elections. He emphasised that the party's elections within a week. As seven days have elapsed today, the election commission is obligated to issue the certificate promptly, he said. Zafar argued that the election commission cannot treat the matter like a court case, arguing that the ECP's identity as an electoral watchdog was at risk here.

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## Briefs

**Bilawal pushes for exposure of Zia's allies**

DNA

ISLAMABAD: PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari on Tuesday said the Supreme Court had an opportunity to get rid of the stain caused by wrongfully convicting former prime minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and stressed that everyone should be exposed before people for being a part of the Zia dictatorship. No one could get justice until justice was served to Quaid-e-Awam [the term used for Bhutto], he remarked and added that the aim was to expose all those involved in the crime by correcting the history. Expressing his confidence to get justice after a decades-long wait after attending the hearing of the Bhutto reference, Bilawal said they had full confidence in Chief Justice Qazi Faez Isa.

**Indian SC murders justice**

FAISAL SHEIKH

RAWALPINDI: Former interior minister and Awami Muslim League (AML) chief Sheikh Rashid said on Tuesday that justice was murdered by the Indian Supreme Court with the people of Kashmir. Taking to X, formerly Twitter, the senior politician said the entire Pakistani nation rejected the verdict of Indian Supreme Court regarding the special status of Occupied Kashmir. "The court decision doesn't have any significance as the matter is pending in the United Nations," said the AML chief. He added that the restrictions on innocent people of Kashmir had been tightened by the Indian forces right after the verdict. He said the verdict of the Indian Supreme Court was in violation of the United Nation's resolutions and Article 370 or 35-A didn't have any legal status.

## HC meets PTI Chairman Australian envoy calls for inclusive polls in Pakistan

they discussed the ongoing spree of worst human rights violations in the country

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: "The Australian High Commissioner, Neil Hawkins, met with the new chairman of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf, Gohar Ali Khan. Responding to media queries about the meeting, he said: "The Australian High Commissioner regularly meets with major political parties across Pakistan. In the lead up to elections, we are keen to learn about their proposed approaches and policies. As a friend of Pakistan, we reiterate Australia's support for a free, fair and inclusive election process, in line with Pakistan's constitution. We also discussed the economic situation, human rights including media freedom, and the shared challenges both our countries face from climate change." PTI parliamentary leader in the Upper House, Barrister Ali Zafar and PTI Central Information Secretary Raof Hassan also participated in the meeting. Senior



ISLAMABAD: Australian High Commissioner Neil Hawkins in a meeting with PTI Chairman Gohar Ali Khan. PTI spokesman Raof Hassan is also present. - DNA

Australian diplomat Mairi Robertson was present on the occasion as well. During the meeting, they held a detailed discussion on the overall prevailing political and economic situation of the country, bilateral issues and matters of mutual interest. Moreover, they also discussed the current

Continued on Page 06

## Jordan's relations with Pakistan historic, strong

**Dr. Maen KHREASAT Ambassador of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan to Pakistan gave an exclusive interview to Daily Islamabad POST. This is first-ever interview to any Pakistani media outlet ever since assumption of charge as Ambassador. Here is the text of the interview.**

**Exclusive**

ANSAR MAHMOOD BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: Dr. Maen KHREASAT Ambassador of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan to Pakistan has said relations between Jordan and Pakistan are historic and strong. He expressed these views while giving an exclusive interview to Daily Islamabad POST, Centreline magazine and DNA News agency. Dr. Maen further said, it was both a pleasure and an honor to serve my country in a very dear brotherly and friendly country, Jordan's relationship with Pakistan is historic and strong. I am a career diplomat where I served in many capitals before including Ottawa, Tokyo, Brussel, Tunis and last in Islamabad. As this is my first Ambassadorial mission abroad, I feel privileged to be here again. From day one, I was welcomed and extended all the courtesies and high attention by the esteemed Government of Pakistan to make my mission a successful one. On a personal level, the warmth and hospitality of the Pakistani people is quite amazing and beyond description. Pakistan is a beautiful, rich and important country in South Asia and the Muslim world. It has undoubtedly played, and still playing, a pivotal role in the world affairs and has always been a voice for peace and stability. My previous experience in Islamabad, both official and personal, enabled me to advance my career and enjoy what this brotherly country has to offer, and it is a great honor for me to be back as the Ambassador of Jordan in Islamabad. In God's well, I intended to carry out my duties to enhance the economic and trade bilateral ex-



change up to a higher level to match the highly stressed political and military cooperation.

**Bilateral relations:**

I will work with my Embassy team on two levels. The first is to present higher visibility of Jordan in Pakistan by taking part in conferences, exchange with think tanks, public cultural events, and reinforce the ties between cultural bodies and Universities. Secondly, by building a cultural human bridge throughout higher education exchange and encouraging Jordanian students to study in Pakistani Universities and visa versa. I am a strong believer of People-to-People relationship which further strengthens the official and business bilateral ties. On the trade and investment front, I find that we need to do more to bring together our business community and Chambers of Commerce & Industry. Both economies provide for genuine business opportunities. For example, Jordan is a leading world exporter of Phosphate fertilizers and Potash. We can add to this the unique Dead Sea products in cosmetics. Jordan also is a leading Middle East manufacturer and exporter of pharmaceuticals. I encourage Pakistani business com-



munity to visit Jordan and experience the suitable business climate, especially that Jordan has Free Trade Agreements with leading economies in the world to enable Jordanian exports to penetrate smoothly into these huge markets. I estimate that the exchange of business delegations will tremendously help to explore the opportunities and form closer ties between the business community on both sides. For Pakistan, there is an enormous potential in agriculture and food industries, cattle and livestock, leather and leather manufactured products, military hardware, and IT sector. Tourism also is a main attraction to visit Jordan and explore the ancient history of the country and visiting the wonders of Jordan in Petra the red-rope city, the Dead Sea unique environment, Prophets and Maqamat Essahabah the Companions of the Prophet Mohammad (PBUH). In addition, Health Tourism is considered yet another attraction to visit the country and benefit from the state-of-the-art medical services provided for by the private sector. **Political consultations:** We have an established mechanism for political consultations between our Foreign Ministries,



where we conducted the first meeting on the level of Foreign Secretaries in Islamabad in 2016. We are looking forward for the 2nd meeting to take place in Amman during 2024. On a higher level, our communications and discussion continue regularly between our Leadership on important matter, and on the level of Foreign Ministers, Jordan and Pakistan coordinate bilaterally and in multi-lateral forums especially in the United Nations. Another important mechanism and milestone is anticipated in 2024, namely, the 10th Joint Ministerial Commission JMC in Islamabad. The convening of this important meeting with serve as a platform to review our trade and bilateral relations and serves as a catalyst to strengthen this cooperation including signing new agreements and MoUs to enhance the already important and cordial bilateral relations. On the Military cooperation field, this is considered to be the Gwul of our partnership. The Joint military committee convenes annually to review and advance this important cooperation and set up for future collaboration.

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### Educational crisis sparks urgent community call-to-action

HAFSA ALI

Assalamoalikum, I am writing to express my deep concern about the state of education in our community. Education plays a crucial role in shaping the future of our society, and it is disheartening to see the challenges our educational system is facing. I believe that adequate funding for school should be a top priority. Our schools are struggling to provide quality education due to limited resources of and outdated facilities. It is essential we should invest in our schools to ensure that every student has access to a safe and conducive learning environment. Teachers are the backbone of education many schools are facing due to shortage of education. We must find way to attract and retain talented teachers by buffering competitive salaries, professional development opportunities and supportive working conditions. Thank you for your time and consideration I hope you will give voice to this important issue by publishing my letter.

### Police unveil plan to combat street crimes

PESHAWAR: Superintendent Police (SP) Osama Amin Cheema of Fakirabad division on Tuesday conducted a crime meeting with police officers to ensure the protection of citizens' lives and property. — APP

### Court Notice

بجالات جناب چوہدری طارق علی  
سول انجمنی جج راولپنڈی وقاص ڈاکر عباسی  
بنام مسماۃ ماہ نورہ نسیم کو نمیت دہلی حقوق زن  
آشنی ہر گاہ مقدمہ عنوان بالا میں مدعا علیہا  
مسماۃ ماہ نورہ نسیم زوجہ وقاص ڈاکر عباسی دختر  
وسم اجر عباسی ساکن مکان نمبر B-769  
SA-وسم کالونی صادق آباد راولپنڈی کی  
قبضہ بذریعہ عام طریقہ ممکن نہ ہے  
لہذا مدعا علیہا کو ہدایت کی جاتی ہے کہ وہ  
آئندہ بتقریب مورخہ 14-12-2022  
بوقت 9 بجے صبح حاضر عدالت آویں  
بصورت دیگر حسب ضابطہ کاروائی عمل میں  
لائی جائیگی۔ محکمہ عدالت دہلی ضابطہ عدالت



ISLAMABAD: Deserving people gathers outside Benazir Income Support Programme at Sector G-7 as such people are suffering due to lack of any kind of shelter or sitting facility, which is the insult of humanity, needs the attention of concern authority. —ONLINE

## Slaughter of useful female animals banned across PUNJAB

The meeting chaired by CM Naqvi, decided to impose an emergency to increase livestock production

ABID RAZA

LAHORE: Chief Minister Punjab Mohsin Naqvi has directed the livestock department to impose a ban on slaughtering beneficial female animals across all districts. The meeting chaired by CM Naqvi, decided to impose an emergency to increase livestock production and further decided to constitute a committee comprising the live-

stock minister, ACS, secretary livestock, finance secretary, president All Pakistan Meat Exporters Association, and commissioners of DG Khan and Bahawalpur divisions. This committee will devise a plan for increasing livestock production, exports and fixing/non-fixing rates. Mr Naqvi emphasized the need for a concise and comprehensive plan for immediate implementation, rather than lengthy presentations. Animals' disease-free compart-

ments will be established; he said and sought a plan, within four-day, to increase livestock production and exports. There is significant potential for livestock exports to Gulf countries; he noted and urged swift action without wasting time. Livestock Minister Ibrahim Hassan Murad participated via video link from Beijing. ACS, secretaries of P&D, livestock, local government, finance & forests depts., VC University of Veterinary and Animal Sciences Lahore, DG

(Production) livestock, chairman Livestock Breeding Services Authority, president & general secretary of All Pakistan Meat Exporters and Processors Association were present while commissioners of DG Khan & Bahawalpur joined the meeting via video link. Meanwhile: Chief Minister Punjab Mohsin Naqvi conducted a visit to service center in Liberty and the service center linked to Mayo Hospital Emergency today. During the visit,

a multitude of grievances surfaced, primarily concerning the malfunctioning of the learner's license mobile app and the prolonged waiting times. Expressing concern, Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi promptly sought an immediate resolution to the app download issues. He made a phone call to the Inspector General (IG) and Chairman of the Punjab Information Technology Board (PITB), instructing them to release a video outlining the app's downloading procedure.

### PCMEA, CTI to create awareness among students

DNA

LAHORE: Pakistan Carpet Manufacturers and Exporters Association (PCMEA) and Carpet Training Institute (CTI) have started a comprehensive program to create awareness among the students of schools, colleges and universities about hand-woven carpet industry and its export to different countries under which students of government and private educational institutions will be given a visit to PCMEA and CTI.

In this regard, the students of LEO's Workshop visited with their teachers yesterday. Former Chairman of Carpet Association Major (Rtd) Akhtar Nazir, Senior Member of Carpet Training Institute Saeed Khan, Executive Member Faisal Saeed Khan and Asif Nazir Khan were also present on this occasion.

Major (Rtd) Akhtar Nazir welcomed the students and informed them about the history of Pakistan's handmade carpets industry. On this occasion, students were shown videos of different stages of making carpets by hand. During a question and answer session, Asif Nazir Khan informed the students in detail about the industry of handmade carpets and answered the questions asked by the teachers and students. Later, the students were also shown the different stages of making carpets at the CTI, in which they expressed special interest. Souvenirs were also presented to students on this occasion.

## BISP expands bank partnerships for transparent payments

ISLAMABAD: Chairperson Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP), Dr. Muhammad Amjad Saqib has emphasized the need for a transparent payment system and announced plans to include the services of more than 15 banks to ensure efficient and transparent payments to the registered beneficiaries. In a significant visit to Karachi, Chairperson BISP conducted a thorough assessment of the payment disbursement center and the BISP regional headquarters in the city, said a news release. The visit

included a high-level meeting attended by BISP board members, including Dr. Kaiser Bengali, Mr. Haris Gazdar, Barrister Ayesha Tammy Haq (via zoom), DG NSER Naveed Akbar, DG Sindh Riaz Soomro, and DG MCO Zulfiqar Sheikh, among other officers. Dr. Amjad Saqib proposed the initiation of training programs for staff and officers to enhance their individual performance and contribute to the program's overall efficiency. Several proposals were considered during the meeting, aligning with the future vision of BISP.

"BISP is the largest social safety net program of Pakistan, and we are committed to ensure that the benefits reach the deserving recipients with transparency", he added. DG NSER Naveed Akbar revealed insights into the Kafaalat and Nashonuma programs, emphasizing the Dynamic Registry procedure. He said that around 6 million people across the country have been surveyed through dynamic registration centers. He further highlighted the expansion of the stipend disbursement procedure to include additional banks

and ensure financial support for over 2.3 million registered deserving women in Sindh. Director General Sindh Riaz Soomro briefed the board on the Kafaalat program benefiting more than 2.3 million women in the province. He also noted that quarterly stipends are being provided to approximately one lac 74 thousand deserving individuals in Karachi alone. During his visit to the payment disbursement center of BISP partner banks, Dr. Amjad Saqib interacted with needy women receiving Kafaalat stipends. — DNA

## EPA targets air pollution, cracks down on vehicles

PESHAWAR: Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has identified smoke emitting and unregistered vehicles as major cause of air pollution while divisional administration has decided the impounding of smoke emitting and unregistered vehicles. Furthermore, it also decided the closure of brick-kiln and crush plants for a period of two months and completion of cleanliness before sunrise to bring improvement in the situation and washing of important spots and streets. The decision was taken in a meeting held on the special

directives of the Caretaker Chief Minister Justice (Retd) Syed Arshad Husain Shah with Divisional Commissioner, Peshawar, Muhammad Zubair in the chair here on Tuesday. Besides, Deputy Commissioner (DC) Peshawar, Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Traffic, representatives of EPA, local government, Water Supply & Sanitation Programme (WSSP) and administrative officers of the local bodies also attended the meeting. During the meeting, the environment department gave detailed information to the participants about

the factors that cause air pollution, according to which the main cause of air pollution is 58% of smoke-emitting and unregistered vehicles, in addition to garbage lying on the side of the roads. Factories, brick kilns, marble factories, open fires were also declared as the main cause of air pollution, in the context of which decisions were taken to impound smoke emitting and unregistered vehicles. In this connection, the Deputy Commissioner Peshawar was directed to issue a dispatch immediately. — DNA

## Huawei, COMSTech forms strategic partnership in Cybersecurity

ADIL SHAHEEN

ISLAMABAD: The Ministerial Committee for Scientific and Technological Cooperation of the OIC (Organization of Islamic Cooperation) and Huawei Technologies Pakistan signed a Memorandum of Understanding to raise awareness of national cybersecurity and build the capabilities of OIC member states in cybersecurity. Prof. Dr. M. Iqbal Choudhary, Coordinator General of COMSTech, signed the MoU on behalf of the Ministerial Committee for Scientific and Technological Cooperation of the OIC. OIC can extend its support to Huawei to reach out to universities not just in Pakistan but in all OIC member countries, by using the OIC platform Huawei can be introduced to all the OIC member countries including African countries where there is a fast pace of technological advancements with great potential. As the ink dries on the signed MoU, the journey toward a future defined by robust cybersecurity, cutting-edge AI applications, and the seamless integration of 5G technologies takes a significant step forward. This collaboration stands as a testament to the power of partnerships in shaping the trajectory of technological progress and ensuring a brighter, digitally empowered future for all. Huawei and COMSTech will cooperate on ICT talent. Young people in OIC member countries can get new ICT technology training and enhance their skills for the future. With the rapid transformation of industries and sectors into online or digital solutions providers, cybersecurity is integral to the continuity, stability, and growth of the economy. Cybersecurity expertise is needed across all industries, most urgently in government, financial services, and health care said a news release. COMSTech and Huawei would concentrate on the enhancement of OIC's cybersecurity professional capability, such as security management, security incident response, vulnerability management, and insight into external new security technologies and oversight security requirements; Huawei is a leader in digital transformation, networking, and communication technologies in Pakistan and across the world. The digital economy globally is the engine of economic growth and a driver for sustainable development. As more and more essential services make use of digital transformation, science and technology will determine the economic future of countries.

نگران حکومت پنجاب کی جانب سے دیہی علاقوں میں سینیٹیشن منصوبہ

# اب گاؤں چمکیں گے

## پروگرام

کے پہلے مرحلے کے کامیاب نتائج کے بعد

# دوسرے مرحلے کا شاندار آغاز

پہلے مرحلے میں کامیابی سے حاصل کردہ اہداف

صوبہ بھر کے تمام اضلاع کی 3,225 یونین کونسلز اور 21,519 دیہاتوں میں صفائی مہم کی تکمیل

صاف دیہات... چمکے پنجاب

7,691,327 صفائی مہم کی کارروائیاں مکمل

9,675 بیڑیوں کی دھوئی گئیں

3,225 لوڈرز کو شوق فرمائی

دیہی یونین کونسلوں میں صفائی مہم کی کارروائی مکمل

21,519 دیہاتوں میں صفائی مہم کی کارروائی مکمل

لوکل گورنمنٹ اینڈ کمیونٹی ڈویلپمنٹ ڈیپارٹمنٹ، حکومت پنجاب

دیہی یونین کونسل کی سطح پر برتر، ذہین، میرج اور طلاق کے اندراج کا نظام مزید موثر

## 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  
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Emergency Ambulance.1122 & Rescue Services.4451122  
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Motorway Police.9270601-20  
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Rawalpindi.....9270601-20



## Enquiry

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Railway Exchange 9270831-5  
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## Hospitals

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Cantt Hospital.....9270907-11  
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  
RDA.....5555864  
TMA.....5770886  
Cantonment Board 9270151-3

## Water Tank

Islamabad.....0321-5744480

# ICCI calls for slaughterhouse, separate market in Capital

He assured that the ICCI would cooperate with the Meat Welfare Association to address the key issues of the business community of their sector

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari, President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry said that a new slaughterhouse is a longstanding demand of the business community of the meat sector and stressed that the CDA in consultation with the stakeholders should establish a state-of-the-art slaughterhouse in the vicinity of the federal capital to promote trade and exports of meat products. He further said that CDA should consider establishing a separate market for the poultry sector to boost its business activities. He said this while addressing a delegation of the All-Pakistan Jamiat Ul Quresh Meat Welfare Association that visited ICCI led by its President Khurshid Ahmed Qureshi. Javed Qureshi Senior Vice President, Sardar Zaheer Ahmed Secretary General, and others were in the delegation. Ahsan Bakhtawari said that Pakistan has good potential to export Halal meat products to the Gulf region and many other countries and stressed that the business community should focus on the value-addition of products to improve exports. He assured that the ICCI would cooperate



with the Meat Welfare Association to address the key issues of the business community of their sector. Speaking on the occasion, Khurshid Ahmed Qureshi, President, All-Pakistan Jamiat Ul Quresh Meat Welfare Association briefed the President ICCI about the key issues being faced by the business community of the meat

sector and hoped that ICCI would take up them with relevant authorities for redress. He stressed the need for a new slaughterhouse for the federal capital and urged that the government should focus on resolving the issues of the poultry sector. He said that the livestock sector plays an important role in the economy as it contributes

over 60 percent to agriculture, and over 11 percent to GDP, as well as provides livelihood to rural families as they derive 35-40 percent of their income from this source. He stressed that the government should cooperate in the value addition of the livestock sector that would help boost its exports and contribute more ef-

fectively to reviving the economy. Ajmal Baloch, President, All-Pakistan Anjuman-e-Tajir, and others also spoke on the occasion and emphasized that the government should focus on resolving the issues of livestock and poultry sectors to facilitate better growth of their business activities and exports.

# CDA's eco-friendly 'cycle Track Project' to hit Capital roads by next year

DNA

ISLAMABAD: An eco-friendly biggest ever 'Cycle Track Project' will hit Capital city roads by next year (2024) in January where in the first phase of the project various protected cycling tracks for citizens would be laid down alongside the Metro bus stations and Margalla Avenues. Member of Capital Development Authority for Technology & Digitalization Nauman Khalid talking to a private news channel said that practical steps have been taken to make Islamabad more environment-friendly and CDA will soon implement a cycling track project in capital roads to promote healthy activity and cater to the increasing number of cyclists.

"We want to promote a culture of healthy activities and lessen the traffic bur-



den on the roads to make this city more environment friendly and beautiful by providing safe cycling tracks for women, children and elders", he mentioned. Around 150-kilometre cycling track with an estimated Rs 1.265 billion would

be constructed along with major Avenues of the city roads, he said, adding, that the authority with the collaboration of the IT sector also has plans to introduce electric and pedalling cycles in the final phase. CDA has prepared a PC-I

in this regard, and the CDA board will deliberate on the matter in its meeting scheduled for next week, adding, that the PC-I highlighted the frequent use of public transport by the residents of Islamabad, and the benefits of the project.

# Tractor assembling grew 60.68% in five months

ISLAMABAD: Domestic farm tractor production during the first five months of the current financial year grew by 60.68 per cent as compared to the production of the corresponding period of the last year. During the period from July-November, 2023 about 20,937 tractors were locally assembled as compared to the assembling of 13,030 tractors of the corresponding period

of last year. Meanwhile, the sales of locally assembled tractors during the period under review grew by 98.19 per cent as compared to the sales of the same period of last year, according to the data of Pakistan Automobile Manufacturers Association (PAMA). During the period under review, Massey Ferguson produced 13,085 tractors as compared to the production of 6,417 tractors,

which was higher by 103.91 per cent when compared with the assembling of the same period of the last year. Meanwhile, the sales of the company also remained on an encouraging growth trajectory as it grew by 124.13 per cent and sold about 13,000 tractors as compared to the sale of 5,800 tractors in the same period of last year. In the first five months of the current

financial year, Fiat assembled 7,852 tractors as compared to the production of 6,613 as the output of the company grew by 14.01 per cent. 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.—APP

# Best mountain development practitioners get PAPMA

ISLAMABAD: The 13th edition of Pakistan Mountain Festival concluded with awarding 28 best mountain development practitioners and conservationists with 4th Pakistan Mountains Pride Awards (PAMPA) Monday late evening. The International Mountain Day flagship events are annually organized by Devcom-Pakistan in collaboration with different partners. The closing ceremony was partnered by Pakistan Tourism Development Corporation (PTDC), National Rural Support Programme (NRSP), Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund (PPAF), and Pakistan National Council of the Arts (PNCA) The guests of honour on the occasion included the ambassador of Poland Maciej Pisarski, EvK2CNR cofounder Maurizio Gallo, EvK-2CR scientific advisor Ashiq Ahmad Khan, well-known mountaineering icon Nazir Sabir, artist Raja Changez Sultan, and MD Pakistan Tourism Development Corporation Aftab ur Rehman Rana. Italian ambassador Andrea Ferrarese was the chief guest of the photo exhibition "The Colours of the Ice" that was jointly organized by the Italian embassy, Italian Agency for Development Cooperation (AICS), UNDP, EvK2CNR, IUCN and Devcom-Pakistan. The country representative Snow Leopard Foundation Dr. Jaffar Uddin won the Agostino Da Polenza Mountain Conservation award for his dedicated efforts to the conservation of snow leopard and some other mountain biodiversity. Husool Begum from upper Chitral, Saira Bano from Nagar, and Maryam Batool Ainee from Skardu received Shoaib Sultan Khan Mountain Community Development Award. The young energetic mountaineer Sajid Ali Sadpara won the Nazir Sabir Mountaineering Award.—DNA

# Pakistan Business Forum announces support to Atif

ISLAMABAD: The leadership of Pakistan Business Forum has announced its support to Atif Ikram Sheikh for the presidential elections of the Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce. According to the statement issued by PBF House on Tuesday, President Mian Muhammad Usman, Central Vice President's Jahan Ara Wattoo, Chaudhry Ahmed Jawad, Provincial Chairmen Muhammad Naseer Malik, Daroo Khan Achakzai, Muhammad Ashfaq Paracha, Shabnum Zafar, Khawaja Mahboob ul Rehman, Regional President Multan Saleha Hassan and other central executive committee members Zubaida Jalal and Arif Ehsan Malik in a majority votes decided that Atif Ikram who is also the Chairman (Capital Area).—DNA

# Ethiopia seeks financial sector collaboration with Pakistan

She lauded the impressive reforms carried out by the FDR Ethiopia in the recent past and reiterated commitment of the government of Pakistan for strengthening bilateral relations with Ethiopia

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE) on Tuesday sought collaboration with the Islamic Republic of Pakistan in the Financial Sector for attracting investment from Pakistani investors in its flourishing economy. H.E. Jemal Beker Abdula, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the FDR Ethiopia to Pakistan, expressed the desire for the collaboration in a meeting with Federal Minister for Finance, Revenue, and Economic Affairs H.E. Dr. Shamshad Akhtar. During the meeting, both sides discussed matters of mutual interests including different initiatives to deepening the already flourishing bilateral ties between the two countries. H.E. Ambassador Jemal Beker briefed the minister about the home grown eco-



conomic reforms carried out by H.E. Dr. Abiy Ahmed, Prime Minister

of Ethiopia, in five major sectors including agriculture, agro-processing, manufacturing, mining, technology and tourism. He also highlighted the initiatives taken by the Embassy of the FDR Ethiopia in Islamabad during its first year for strengthening the bilateral relations between the two countries through strong bilateral, regional and multilateral cooperation. "Opening of Ethiopian Embassy in Pakistan is a game changer for Ethiopia-Pakistan bilateral relations," the ambassador said, adding the arrival of Ethiopian Airlines in Karachi is another breakthrough in the two countries' ties. Exchange of multiple official and trade delegations between the two countries also took place during the maiden year of the Ethiopian Embassy in Islamabad, he said while highlighting the strong appetite on both sides for advancing partnership between Ethiopia

and Pakistan. The ambassador said he believed that the trade and investment relations would drive the bilateral ties between the two countries that shared so much in common. Finance Minister H.E. Dr. Shamshad Akhtar congratulated the ambassador on opening the Embassy in the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, and arrival of Ethiopian Airlines in Pakistan. She lauded the impressive reforms carried out by the FDR Ethiopia in the recent past and reiterated commitment of the government of Pakistan for strengthening bilateral relations with Ethiopia. "We are glad to collaborate with Ethiopia for further strengthening its financial system," the minister said while assuring all-out support to the ambassador for deepening economic cooperation between the two countries.

# Agri Tech cooperation in Gansu Province

DNA

ISLAMABAD: A delegation of government officials and agricultural experts from Gilgit-Baltistan Province visited Lanzhou, China. They conducted visits to local enterprises and held exchange meetings to explore cooperation potentials. During their visit to Jinfeng Company, a subsidiary of the Gansu Academy of Mechanical Science, the Pakistani delegation toured the production base and gained comprehensive knowledge about the company's flagship products and their wide applications in agricultural production. The company also demonstrated the complete operational model of silage harvesting equipment that they plan to showcase and promote in Pakistan, which sparked great interest among the delegation members. Subsequently, detailed discussions were held on future cooperation models and specific plans, resulting in a series of agreements. According to Gwadar Pro, the delegation expressed their anticipation for substantial cooperation with Jinfeng Company in agricultural equipment, aiming to drive the modernization of agriculture in Pakistan.

# ChildLife wins 'Best Research Award'

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Emirates Society of Emergency Medicine conference has evolved into a premier international platform over the years acknowledging emergency physicians with contributions towards Research in Emergency Medicine. ChildLife Foundation's recognition reflects its outstanding contributions to emergency medicine research and its dedication to improving children's health in Pakistan.

This year's award not only acknowledges ChildLife's commitment to advancing emergency care but also highlights its significant impact on over 200 government hospitals of Pakistan in partnership with the government. Managing 750 Emergency Room (ER) beds in pediatric Emergency Departments (EDs) and offering 24/7 telemedicine support in secondary care hospitals, ChildLife's impact to date can be gauged by the fact that 7.5 million children have been treated free of cost in EDs with 4 times increase in the survival rate of critically ill children. The ESEM Awards were launched at the celebration of 10 years' journey of ESEM to recognize excellence of physicians and their outstanding contributions towards Research in the field of Emergency Medicine. ChildLife Foundation, a consistent contributor, has been awarded for the highest research and abstract submissions since the conference's inception in 2014, held in Abu Dhabi from 6-9 December 2023.—APP

# Sufficient urea stocks available

ISLAMABAD: Secretary Ministry of Industries and Production Asad Rehman Gilani on Tuesday said the federal government had sufficient urea stocks to fulfill needs of the farming community across the country. "In November, the government provided 700,000 additional urea bags to Punjab against its demand; 425,000 bags to Sindh and 18000 MT to Balochistan," he said while addressing a news conference along with Minister for Information and Broadcasting Murtaza Solangi, Minister for Interior Sarfraz Ahmed Bugti and Minister for Petroleum Muhammad Ali. Elaborating, he said the government provided 414,000 Metric Ton (MT) urea to Punjab against its demand of 380,000 metric ton; 164,000 MT to Sindh against 142,000 MT demand and 30,500 MT to Balochistan against 21,000 MT.—APP

## Briefs

## Sharmila asks parties to avoid point-scoring

DNA

ISLAMABAD: People's Party (PPP) Leader Sharmila Farooqi Tuesday said that her party was ready to play on every kind of pitch and asked all other political parties to avoid political point-scoring ahead of elections. Talking to a private news channel, she stressed that all political parties should jointly work for the elimination of ditching political loyalties to ensure political stability and a clean political system. Sharmila said that free, fair and transparent elections were always in the interest of the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP). We only demand level playing field for all the parties in the elections. She said that the PPP was a democratic party and it would go to people's court. —APP

## Mushaal Malik urges world forums to stop India

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Human Rights and Women's Empowerment Mashaal Hussain Malik on Tuesday urged the international community, including the United Nations, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) and human rights organizations, to address new "demographic changes" in the IIOJK.

Indian government must be stopped from any further illegal activity in the occupied territory, she appealed while talking to a private news channel. India was changing the population ratio in the IIOJK and Kashmiris were being robbed of their land to make them financially weak, she added. Mushaal said to occupy the lands of Kashmiris India was issuing millions of domiciles to Indian in Kashmir valley. Mushaal said India was going to commit the biggest robbery of the century in Kashmir by displacing Kashmiris from their own homes and throwing into the streets. Indian hegemonic policies are posing serious threats to South Asia, she said, adding, that India is repeatedly using negative tactics to gain political mileage because elections are due in India next year, she added.

The international community should stop appeasing India and should contain India's fundamentalism and extremism because it will affect the peace and stability of the entire world, she urged. Pakistan is continuing to expose India at international forums to refrain India from state-sponsored terrorism, particularly in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir, he added.

## IRSA releases 84,700 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD, Dec 12 (APP): Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Tuesday released 84,700 cusecs of water from various rim stations with inflow of 38,600 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, the water level in the River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1484.97 feet and was 84.97 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 20,100 cusecs and 45,000 cusecs respectively. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1165.90 feet, which was 115.90 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded at 4,800 cusecs and 26,000 cusecs respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded as 60,800, 39,800, 37,600 and 7,200 cusecs respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 6,800 cusecs of water were released at Nowshera and 2,000 cusecs were released from River Chenab at Marala.—APP

## Australia supports workshops on gender-sensitive reporting

Speaking about the workshop today, Australia's High Commissioner to Pakistan His Excellency Neil Hawkins, said that girls and women are increasingly vulnerable to violence, particularly during economic downturns, pandemics, climate change and natural disasters. Promoting women and girls' rights by ensuring victims of violence are portrayed in the media in a compassionate and dignified manner, is morally important and consistent with Pakistan's values

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Australian High Commission, in partnership with the Center for Excellence in Journalism, organised a workshop to raise awareness of violence against women. The event was linked to the 16 Days of Activism to End Violence Against Women and aimed to encourage gender-sensitive reporting among media professionals.

Speaking about the workshop today, Australia's High Commissioner to Pakistan His Excellency Neil Hawkins, said that girls and women are increasingly vulnerable to violence, particularly during economic downturns, pandemics, climate change and natural disasters. Promoting women and girls' rights by ensuring victims of violence are portrayed in the media in a compassionate and dignified manner, is morally important and consistent with Pakistan's values.

"Australia is also sharing our expertise with Pakistani farmers by improving water management and agriculture, with a particular focus on women. We are working with communities to ensure water, sanitation, and health services are climate-resilient and inclusive of women and girls," he added. By supporting this workshop, Australia aims to raise awareness about the vulnerability of women and girls



to violence, and challenge social and cultural norms that perpetuate violence against women. During the workshop, renowned Pakistani Australian journalist Kamal Siddiqi and other experienced Pakistani journalists shared insights on the trans-

formative role media can play in preventing violence against women and girls. Journalists reporting on women's rights, including news editors from various mainstream media outlets, attended the event. Trainer Kamal Siddiqi emphasised the urgency of ad-

ressing gender-based violence in Pakistan. "The country ranks sixth in the world for danger to women, with discrimination stemming from cultural, religious, and traditional practices. To combat this issue, the media must raise awareness and play a crucial role

in educating the public." "Such training can not only help journalists understand how to better report on gender-based violence but also develop an alliance where media persons can support each other as well as exchange ideas and information," he added.

## Pakistan seeks stronger ties with China: Ambassador Hashmi

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's desire for stronger ties with China reflects the mutual benefits and shared interests that exist between the two nations. This strategic partnership encompasses various areas such as economic cooperation, infrastructure development, renewable energy, and cultural exchanges, said Pakistani Ambassador to China Khalil Hashmi.

In an exclusive interview with China Economic Net, Hashmi elaborated on the flourishing China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) and Belt & Road Initiative (BRI), emphasizing the need for enhanced industrial cooperation, trade, and investment between the two nations. The Ambassador identified the key areas of focus, including agriculture, information technol-

ogy, livelihood, and green development, aligning with the priorities outlined during Chinese Vice Premier He Lifeng's recent visit to Pakistan from July 30 to August 1, 2023. "We need to quickly improve our productive capacity because the Phase-1 of CPEC was primarily to develop infrastructure and energy. In terms of the next phase of CPEC, it is the establishment of five corridors, the corridor of growth, innovation, green development, livelihoods, and inclusiveness. These are all areas which are in alignment with our priorities", he stated. Talking with CEN Khalil Hashmi said that the recent trade protocols signed between China and Pakistan opened up around \$30 billion market for Pakistan, covering items such as heated beef, dried chili, Pakistani dairy products, and animal skins. The

Ambassador commended China's efforts for creating & enabling conditions for trade, including regulatory adjustments and the provision of dedicated officers in the Chinese embassy to assist Pakistani exporters. "We spent a lot of effort organizing a very successful agriculture exhibition in Pakistan, in which many Chinese and Pakistani companies and individuals participated. B2B exchanges are another tool to promote bilateral trade," Hashmi mentioned. Addressing Pakistan's commitment to green and sustainable development, the Ambassador outlined the nation's efforts in the renewable energy sector. He highlighted projects such as hydroelectric power generation and collaborations with China to expand solar energy capacity. The Ambassador stressed the importance

of international support and financing to achieve these ambitious goals. As for RMB settlement in China-Pakistan trade and how to strengthen cooperation in banking and financial industries between the two countries, he said the currency swap that Pakistan has with China is very positive for trade settlement. "We are looking to enhancing trade cooperation in RMB in the future. Other than that, in terms of enhancing financial banking relationships, the key is to have more cooperation. Our banks are present in China and Chinese banks are present in Pakistan. We are working on digital banking payments and also other online means to promote financial cooperation between our two countries, allowing companies and individuals to do their transactions online securely and productively", he added.

## HEC announces LAW-GAT 2024, for LLB Graduates

ISLAMABAD: The Higher Education Commission (HEC) has announced the schedule of the Law Graduate Assessment Test (LAW-GAT), which will be held on January 07, 2024. According to official sources, the Law Graduate Assessment Test is compulsory for all LLB graduates who wish to seek Bar Council Registration. Applications for LAW-GAT 2023 can be submitted online at the HEC portal latest by December 25, 2023. The candidates who have passed a Bachelor's degree in Law or equivalent from a university recognized by HEC/PBC can register themselves online through <http://etc.hec.gov.pk>. Applications can be submitted online at the HEC website. The test is compulsory for all LLB graduates before entering the legal profession for practicing law. The test will consist of Multiple Choice Questions (MCQs). Applicants who have registered through the HEC online registration process will download their Roll Number Slip through <http://etc.hec.gov.pk> a week before the test date. Email/SMS will be sent to registered applicants regarding the test date, time, and venue. Candidates are required to provide a valid email/mobile number while filling out the online application form. A print of the Roll Number Slip and original CNIC will be required to enter the Test Centre. As per eligibility criteria for HEC Law GAT 2024, the persons having passed a Bachelor's degree in Law from a university recognized by HEC and PBC are eligible to apply. Meanwhile, according to the details of HEC-Law GAT Test Centers, it will be conducted in Islamabad, Lahore, Karachi, Sukkur, Abbottabad, Quetta, Multan, Hyderabad, Turbat, Bahawalpur, Peshawar, Muzaffarabad, Faisalabad and Gilgit.—DNA

## SAPM urges CWAs to boost overseas employment opportunities

ISLAMABAD: The Special Assistant to the Prime Minister (SAPM) on Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development (OP&HRD), Jawad Sohrab Malik held a pivotal meeting with the Community Welfare Attaches (CWAs) stationed abroad to strategically enhance job opportunities for Pakistanis on the international stage.

Currently, there are 21 CWAs posted abroad by the Government of Pakistan, according to a press release issued here. The primary focus of the meeting was to evaluate and improve the progress of CWAs in identifying and exploring targeted demand for employment prospects for Pakistani nationals through engagements with foreign

employers. This involved the formulation, signing and execution of Letters of Intent (LOIs) and agreements with foreign companies, critical in amplifying the export of Pakistani manpower. The SAPM emphasized the crucial need for close collaboration between CWAs and the Ministry of Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource De-

velopment, particularly in sharing information related to employment demands abroad and the necessary skills required for those jobs. This step will facilitate the design of training programs specifically tailored to the skills demanded by foreign companies, ensuring that Pakistani workers are well-equipped and aligned with global standards. Jawad Sohrab Malik, while underscoring the significance of this initiative, highlighted its dual impact, not only in enhancing employment opportunities for Pakistanis abroad but also in contributing to the economic growth of the nation.—APP



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Azerbaijan to Pakistan H.E. Mr. Khazar Farhadov met with H.E. Mr. Muhammad Ali, Federal Minister for Energy, Power and Petroleum of Pakistan.—DNA

## ANF seizes over 320 kg drugs in three operations

RAWALPINDI: Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) while conducting three operations across the country managed to recover 320 kg of drugs and arrested three accused, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman here on Tuesday. He informed that in an operation conducted in Gali Jalal Khak of the Qila Abdullah area and recovered over 271 kg of hashish hidden in a house was recovered. 48 kg hashish was recovered from a vehicle intercepted near Motorway Toll Plaza Charsadda while two accused were arrested during the operation. 1.2 kg hashish was recovered from a vehicle near Chungi No. 26, Islamabad and an accused was arrested. Cases under the Anti-Narcotics Act were registered against the arrested accused while further investigations are under process.—APP

## Progress on Diamer Basha, Mohmand Dams reviewed

ISLAMABAD: The Implementation Committee on Diamer Basha and Mohmand Dams (ICDBMD), constituted by the Supreme Court of Pakistan reviewed progress on both projects in its meeting held here Tuesday at ICDBMD Secretariat. The meeting which met with Water and Power Development Authority (WAPDA) ICDBMD Chairman Engr Lt Gen Sajjad Ghani (Retd) in the Chair, was also attended by Chief Secretary Gilgit-Balistan, Additional Secretary (Budget) Finance Division and Secretary/ Senior Member Board of Revenue Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) via Zoom, said a press release. Additional Chief Secretary (Development) KP, Joint Secretary PM Office, ICDBMD Secretary/ Joint Secretary Ministry of Water Resources, Representative of Chief (Water) Planning, Development and Reforms Division and other senior officers were present on the occasion. The Chairman WAPDA while addressing the meeting, expressed satisfaction over the progress made by the ICDBMD and its Sub Committees for early implementation of Diamer Basha and Mohmand Dam Projects. The Chairman said that the Dams Committee has been contributing towards the implementation of both vital projects. He thanked the participants and expressed that the ICDBMD forum can play a pivotal and effective role in overseeing and resolving the issues being faced during the execution of both projects.—APP

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## Chance for change of approach on Ukraine

The Ukraine conflict has been raging for almost two years and there is growing evidence that Western support for Ukraine is waning. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky kicked off a quick visit to Washington on Monday at the invitation of US President Joe Biden, his third visit to Washington since the conflict in Ukraine began, in the hope of breaking the deadlock in the US Congress over emergency aid to Ukraine. But Biden and the Ukrainian leader may not get what they want due to the partisan struggle between the Democrats and Republicans and attention switching to the ongoing conflict in Gaza. Last week, to press their demands for more border controls, Senate Republicans blocked a bill that would provide \$110.5 billion in funding for Ukraine, Israel, and other security needs. According to reports, a deal tying immigration and border policy changes to the emergency aid package is unlikely to be reached before lawmakers leave town for the Christmas and New Year holidays. The Biden administration also has to contend with public sentiment, with the Ukraine crisis likely to be a factor in the 2024 US presidential election, as the number of Americans who say that the US is giving too much support to Ukraine has grown steadily over the course of the war. A Pew poll conducted from Nov 27 to Dec 3 found that 31 percent of Americans polled believe "the US is providing too much assistance to Ukraine", while 29 percent say "the US is providing the right amount of support" and only 18 percent say the US is not providing enough. Meanwhile, President Biden has tied US support for Ukraine and Israel together, describing both nations as democracies fighting enemies determined to "completely annihilate" them. But the Biden administration is finding it increasingly difficult to justify its unconditional support for Israel as Israeli forces commit what have been condemned as "ongoing injustices against the Palestinian people". In Europe too, Kyiv is facing difficulties getting the desired assistance. European countries are delaying the delivery of their promised military assistance and Ukraine's EU membership talks also appear to hang in the balance. As such, the West's Ukraine policy is at a crossroad. Despite much fanfare, Ukraine's counteroffensive this year has failed. The longer the conflict is prolonged, the more the repercussions are being felt by other countries and the less public support there is to fan the flames of the fighting. It is high time the US-led West joined the other members of the world community to urge Kyiv to come to the negotiating table.

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## China, Vietnam: key ties for Asian unity

The warm welcome President Xi Jinping received in Hanoi when he arrived for a two-day state visit to Vietnam starting on Tuesday shows the friendly "camaraderie plus brotherhood" that defines the relationship between the two countries. The comprehensive strategic partnership between the two neighbors has great potential to tap, as indicated by the in-depth discussions between Xi and his hosts. The Chinese leader's visit to Vietnam also provides an opportunity for an exchange of views on overarching and strategic issues that bear on the direction of the relationship between the two countries as well as international and regional issues of mutual concern. As Xi said in his signed article published in a Vietnamese newspaper on Tuesday, it is China's sincere hope that the two peoples will always hold the traditional friendship close to their hearts so as to reinforce the consensus on building a China-Vietnam community with a shared future. Xi urged the two sides to maintain strategic communication, make good use of the two countries' complementary strengths, step up friendly exchanges, and properly manage their differences. The building of a China-Vietnam community with a shared future will be a timely response to some external forces' divisive efforts to sow discord between the two neighbors. It can serve as a model for other Asian countries, and thus be a key element in the building of an Asian community with a shared future. As Xi said in his article, that will lend more positive energy to regional countries' efforts to strengthen the good-neighborliness in Asia that has so effectively served the region's development. People in Asia have, as Xi pointed out, increasingly come to realize that peace, development and progress are dependent on the principles of amity, sincerity, mutual benefit and inclusiveness and the Asian values of peace, cooperation, inclusiveness and integration. They know that building a peaceful, tranquil, prosperous, beautiful, amicable and harmonious home in Asia can only be achieved by vigorously working together and making one country's development part of the common development of all countries in the region. Asia's future should be in the hands of no one but Asians. The building of a China-Vietnam community with a shared future will, as Xi said, lend more positive energy to the region's concerted efforts to promote long-term development and consolidate the good-neighborliness that has been a defining feature of Asia's dynamic transformation in recent decades.



## Israel kills Gaza's storytellers but cannot kill the story

Ramzy Baroud

Not even the legendary tenacity of the characters in Leo Tolstoy's "War and Peace" can be compared to the heroism of Gazans, living in a tiny stretch of land while subsisting on the precipice of calamity, even long before today's Israeli genocide. But if Gaza was effectively declared uninhabitable by the UN Conference on Trade and Development as early as 2020, how has it been able to cope with everything that has taken place since then, particularly the grueling and unprecedented Israeli war that started on Oct. 7? "I have ordered a complete siege on the Gaza Strip. There will be no electricity, no food, no fuel, everything is closed," said Israeli

What is taking place in Gaza is meant for the history books: an epic tale of a small nation under a long, brutal siege for many years, facing one of the greatest military powers in the world. And yet it refuses to be defeated.

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crimes in Gaza, Israel has systematically targeted the Strip's storytellers — its journalists and their families, the bloggers, the intellectuals and even the social media influencers. While Palestinians insist that their collective pain — and resistance — must be televised, Israel is doing everything in its power to eliminate the storytellers. The Palestinian Journalists' Syndicate said in a statement last week that at least 75 Palestinian journalists and media workers had been killed by Israel since the beginning of the war. This does not include the many citizen journalists or writers who do not necessarily operate in an official capacity. It also does not include family members, such as the family of journalist Wael Dahdouh or that of Moamen Al-Sharafi. Aware that their intellectuals are targets for Israel, Gazans have, for years, attempted to produce more and more storytellers. In 2015, a group of young journalists and students formed We Are Not Numbers. This group aims to "tell the stories behind the numbers of Palestinians in the news" and advocate for their human rights. A co-founder of We Are Not Numbers, Prof. Refaat Alareer, was a beloved Palestinian educator from Gaza. A young intellectual whose brilliance was only matched by his kindness, Alareer believed that the story of Palestine, and Gaza in particular, should be told by the Palestinians themselves — those whose relationship to the Palestinian discourse cannot be marginal. "As Gaza keeps gasping for life, we struggle for it to pass, we have no choice but to fight back and tell her stories. For Palestine," Alareer wrote in his contribution to the volume "Light in Gaza: Writing Born of Fire." He edited several books, including "Gaza Writes Back" and "Gaza Unsilenced," which also allowed him to take the message of other Palestinian intellectuals in Gaza to the rest of the world. "Sometimes a homeland becomes a tale. We love the story because it is about our homeland and we love our homeland even more because of the story," he wrote in "Gaza Writes Back." Alareer

reportedly refused to leave northern Gaza, even after Israel had managed to isolate it from the rest of the Strip, subjecting it to countless massacres. As if aware of the fate awaiting him, Alareer tweeted this line, along with a poem he had penned: "If I must die, let it be a tale." On Dec. 7, We Are Not Numbers declared that its beloved co-founder had been killed in an Israeli airstrike. Alareer is not the only member of the writers' collective to have been killed by Israel. Yousef Dawas was killed in October and Mohammed Zaher Hamo in November, along with members of their families, in Israeli strikes on various parts of the Gaza Strip. In one of the workshops I did with the group prior to the war, Dawas stood out. Not only because of his unusually long hair, but because of his clever and pointed questions. He wanted to tell the stories of ordinary Gazans, so that other ordinary people around the world could appreciate the everyday struggle of the Palestinian people, their righteous quest for justice and their hope for a better future. These storytellers were all killed by Israel, which hoped that the stories would die with them. But Israel will fail because the collective story is bigger than all of us. A nation that has produced the likes of Ghassan Kanafani, Basil Al-Araj and Alareer will always produce great intellectuals who will serve the historic role of telling the story of Palestine and her liberation. This is the last poem shared by Alareer: "If I must die, you must live, to tell my story, to sell my things, to buy a piece of cloth, and some strings (make it white with a long tail), so that a child, somewhere in Gaza, while looking heaven in the eye, awaiting his dad who left in a blaze — and bid no one farewell, not even to his flesh, not even to himself — sees the kite, my kite you made, flying up, above, and thinks for a moment an angel is there, bringing back love. If I must die, let it bring hope, let it be a tale.

—Sourced By Arab news.

## Iran again faces disastrous consequences of financial corruption

Dr. Mohammed Al-Sulami

Indeed, the tea imports graft case is just one in a long list of corrupt financial transactions worth billions of dollars to have been conducted over the decades of the Islamic Republic's tenure. For example, there were graft cases reported during the reign of the former hard-line, populist President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad involving commissions worth billions of dollars that went to businessman Babak Zanjani. This is in addition to the Padideh Shandiz real estate corruption case and the growing Islamic

A new \$2 billion graft case has surfaced in Iran related to tea imports. The current Iranian government introduces itself as the one that exposed this case — rather than being the cause of it — perhaps hinting that the former reformist government is the one to blame. Indeed, the tea imports graft case is just one in a long list of corrupt financial transactions worth billions of dollars to have been conducted over the decades of the Islamic Republic's tenure. For example, there were graft cases reported during the reign of the former hard-line, populist President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad involving commissions worth billions of dollars that went to businessman Babak Zanjani. This is in addition to the Padideh Shandiz real estate corruption case and the growing Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps involvement in customs and trade duty evasion, to the point that Ahmadinejad described them as "smuggler brothers" amid their control over sensitive ports and airports in the country. And then there was the astronomical salaries case reported during the reign of Hassan Rouhani, among many other cases. All these cases have negatively impacted the private business environment and investments in Iran, thus leading the country to incur massive economic losses. As regards the recent tea imports graft case, the Debs Tea company imports tea from abroad, hence involving itself in the \$2 billion fraud. The company was involved in currency misuse, receiving foreign currency from the government at prices lower than the black market. Instead of allocating these subsidized dollars for the import of Indian tea — scarce on the local market — the company sold a big portion of them on the black market, thereby reaping huge benefits, while importing low-quality Kenyan tea with the rest of the money. The company has reportedly been involved in these transactions since 2018. The total currency the company obtained between 2019 and 2022 was \$2.37 billion. In addition to monopolizing this important product — which is one of the most popular items, along with coffee, that

is responsible for boosting the mood of the Iranian people — the company has obtained nearly 80 percent of the subsidized currency allocated for tea imports in Iran. According to Iranian newspaper reports, the company's allocations over the past two years are equivalent to those allocated to the imports of medicine and baby formula. This has raised questions about the identity of the backers and beneficiaries. Officials close to the government of former President Rouhani have raised questions as to why 80 percent of imported tea subsidies have been allocated to this company in particular, preferring it over dozens of others working in the same field. Pedram Soltani, a former member of the Iranian Chamber of Commerce, told Radio Farda: "Such a huge sum of money cannot be allocated without widespread coordination and collaboration, special permits, approval from high-ranking officials, a large complicit network for facilitating the sale of the currencies on the free market." These remarks are indicative of the fact that the case is bigger than merely importing tea from abroad. Corruption has had massive costs for the economy and for the living conditions of the Iranian people. It is clear that financial corruption has had massive costs for the economy and for the living conditions of the Iranian people over the past few decades. These costs include the flight of foreign investment, local investment and capital, a lack of free competition, an inclination to liquidate productive assets and a preference for swift profits and speculation over investment and production. Over recent years, there has been a surge in capital flight from the Iranian market, with investments being redirected to neighboring states and the real estate sector in Turkey. It is no surprise that foreign direct investment in Iran fell to \$1.5 billion in 2022 compared to \$5 billion in 2017, according to the UN Conference on Trade and Development. Even the 2017 figure — which came after the signing of the 2015 nuclear deal — was remarkably low, accounting

for only 0.5 percent of the overall foreign investment flows between countries. It is also worth noting that a single sector such as oil needs investments of \$2 billion, let alone the other sectors damaged due to the sanctions imposed on Iran since 2018, such as the automobile, civil aviation and agriculture sectors. Financial corruption deprives the state treasury and development allocations in Iran of massive funds, whether in customs, taxes or subsidy allocations. This is in addition to concentrating wealth in the hands of a small clique of people who are privileged and close to the circles of power. The majority of the people, meanwhile, are compelled to pay bribes to have their very basic interests and needs met. Mehdi Nasiri, the former editor-in-chief of Kayhan newspaper, pointed the finger of blame at "supreme entities" in relation to the recent tea imports corruption case. On his Telegram channel, he said: "The recent massive corruption case related to the tea imports wouldn't have occurred without the huge intervention, pressure and influence, be it direct or indirect, by the intelligence and judicial institutions — either appointed by or affiliated with the supreme leadership, which possesses all the powers in this institution." What makes this perception likely is the report released by Transparency International earlier this year. In it, Iran occupied a low ranking on the Corruption Perceptions Index, placing 147th out of 180, just ahead of Afghanistan but lower than Uganda. Two decades ago, the country's ranking was much better, with it occupying 78th place. It is worth noting that moving ahead with the majority of investments and major projects hinges on the IRGC and its massive economic conglomerates, which operate in sectors such as oil, gas, petrochemicals, automobiles, contracting, foreign trade and mining. This places a genuine impediment on the development of the private sector in Iran and the free operation of foreign investors in case sanctions are lifted in the future.

—Sourced by Arab News.

## Briefs

## Forces kill 27 militants

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having fought gallantly, embraced shahadat (martyred). It added that the killed terrorists were actively involved in numerous terrorist activities against security forces as well as killing of innocent civilians. Weapons, ammunition and explosives were also recovered during the operations. About deadly violent encounter or terror act at Draban Dera Ismael Khan, ISPR states, "in early hours of 12 December 2023, a group of six terrorists attacked a security forces' post in general area Daraban. The attempt to enter the post was effectively thwarted which forced the terrorists to ram an explosive laden vehicle into the post, followed by a suicide bombing attack."

## Pakistan delivers...

FROM PAGE 01  
including shahadat of twenty-three security personnel. The Cd'A of AIG was asked to immediately convey to the Afghan Interim Government to: o Fully investigate and take stern action against perpetrators of the recent attack; o Publicly condemn the terrorist incident at the highest level; o Take immediate verifiable actions against all terrorist groups (including their leadership) and their sanctuaries; o Apprehend and handover the perpetrators of the attack and the TTP leadership in Afghanistan to the Govt of Pakistan.

## Australian envoy...

FROM PAGE 01  
environment for the general elections in Pakistan, opportunities for political parties to take part in elections and the overall impacts of the polls on the progress and prosperity of the country. They shed light on the constitutional role of the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) regarding holding free, fair and transparent elections, and the ground situation. During the meeting, the ongoing hearing against the PTI's intra-party elections in the ECP and the inordinate delay in issuance of electoral symbol of "bat" also came under discussion.

## Palestine rebuffs...

FROM PAGE 01  
security services in the West Bank clearly express his premeditated intentions and an Israeli decision to flare up the West Bank as part of the overall war waged by the Israeli occupation authorities against the Palestinian people, their land, and their sanctities in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, including Jerusalem. Abu Rudeineh said Netanyahu's statements, in which he referred to the establishment of a civil administration affiliated with the occupation in the Gaza Strip, are condemned and rejected, and constitute a challenge to the international community as a whole, and to the stated positions of the US administration, which declared its refusal to the reoccupation of Gaza or cutting off any part of it. He stressed the position of President Mahmoud Abbas in which he affirmed that the Gaza Strip is an integral part of the land of the State of Palestine and that the Palestine Liberation Organization is the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people.

## PM to join AJK LA's...

FROM PAGE 01  
go against international laws and take one-sided actions in the garb of the court decisions. He pointed out that India on August 5, 2019, illegally revoked the special status of Jammu and Kashmir aimed at changing the demographics of the valley. The prime minister vowed to continue extending political, diplomatic, and moral support to the people of Kashmir in line with their inalienable right to self-determination.

## 9th International Mountain Film Festival inaugurated

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Serena Hotels under its Adventure Diplomacy initiative kicked off the 9th edition of the International Mountain Film Festival in celebration of International Mountain Day. The event witnessed a significant presence of distinguished dignitaries, diplomats, Ambassadors of Jordan, Nepal, High Commissioner of Kenya, Officials representatives from the corporate sector, members of the business community, and media professionals.

Mr. Wajahat Malik, founder of PIMFF while addressing the audience said, "This festival is not just about films; it is a platform for encouragement connections, promoting sustainable practices, and inspiring a collective commitment to preserving these natural wonders for generations to come. PIMFF screens short films, documentaries, features, and animations related to mountain adventure sports, nature, environment, climate change, mountain tourism, mountain cultures and communities". He also appreciated the efforts of Serena Hotels for promoting different sports activities under their Sports and Adventure Diplomacy initiatives which has helped the youth to achieve their goals.



Wajahat Malik addressing the audience said, This festival is not just about films; it is a platform for encouragement connections, promoting sustainable practices, and inspiring a collective commitment

In this International Mountain Film Festival PIMFF is going to show case 21 films, Pannel talks on cinematic journey that transcends

borders and elevates the human experience in PNCA on 16th & 17th December 2023 which promises to be a celebration of nature,

adventure, and the indomitable spirit of those who find solace and inspiration in the world's most magnificent peaks. Serena Ho-

tels has been supporting the country and provide a supportive environment for the nation's talented sportspersons to flourish. The only need of the time is to

provide proper awareness, guidance, and trainings to the youth about mountaineering and make Pakistan proud all over the world.

## Pak thrash Afghanistan to reach U19 AC semi-finals



DNA

DUBAI: Pakistan U19 crushed Afghanistan by 83 runs in a one-sided encounter of the Asian Cricket Council (ACC) Under-19s Asia Cup at the ICC Academy Ground in Dubai on Tuesday. Ubaid Shah was Pakistan's MVP with the ball as the 17-year-old picked up three important wickets and helped his side get on a dominating seat. Afghanistan were never in the game, they were met with early blows, losing four wickets for just 60 runs in 13 overs. Numan Shah top-scored for the struggling Afghan side with 54 runs but he too became the victim of Ubaid's magic. Afghanistan got the much-needed contribution at the lower order as skipper Naseer Khan Maroofkhalil and Faridoon Dawoodzai scored 26 and - runs respectively but their contributions

were not enough to win the game. Afghanistan were all out for 220 runs in 48.4 overs. Batting first, Pakistan posted a colossal 303-run total on the scoreboard as three players - Shamyul Hussain, Shahzaib Khan, and Riaz Ullah - delivered with the bat greatly. Shamyul and Shahzaib came as openers and provided Pakistan with a dream start as both batters combined for 115 runs before the former lost his wicket in the 17th over. Shamyul played an electrifying knock of 75 runs off just 54 balls with seven fours and five sixes at an astounding 138.88 strike rate. The 19-year-old's rapid innings helped Shahzaib on the other as he took his time to settle on the pitch. Shahzaib took charge of Pakistan's batting after Shamyul's dismissal and played a responsible knock of 79 runs with 10 boundaries. He lost his wicket to Faridoon Dawoodzai in the 34th over.

Pakistan's batting struggled as only four batters managed to score in double figures. The way wickets kept falling, it looked like the Boys in Green would have to settle for somewhere under 250 runs but Riaz stayed on the pitch and played a crucial innings of 73 runs. Aazan Awais, the hero of the match against India, could only score 20 runs. **Playing XI:** Pakistan: Saad Baig (c & wk), Shahzaib Khan, Aazan Awais, Mohammad Zeeshan, Mohammad Riazullah, Tayyab Arif, Arafat Minhas, Shamyul Hussain, Amir Hassan, Ubaid Shah, Khubaib Khalil. Afghanistan: Numan Shah (wk), Khalid Taniwal, Sohail Khan Zurmatai, Wafullah Tarakhil, Naseer Khan Maroofkhalil (c), Jamshid Zardran, Rahimullah Zurmati, Bashir Ahmad, Faridoon Dawoodzai, Khaleel Ahmad, Allah Ghazanfar.

## Jordan's relations with Pak historic, strong: Envoy

FROM PAGE 01

In addition to the training and officers' courses, and joint and multilateral military exercises with friendly countries, we regularly exchange High Level visit between the two Armies and Forces. Having no doubt, since independence Jordan and Pakistan have shown steadfast commitment to each other's security and mutual support and solidarity in critical moments. This is the Pride of our relationship.

## "Oasis of Stability"

## To name a few we can mention:

- The Moderation of the Hashemite Leadership (Al Albayt), where HM King Abdullah Ibn Al Hussein is the 41st decedent of the Prophet Mohammad (PBUH). The leadership exemplifies moderate Islam in its best ways and stands steadfast against fanaticism and radicalization. HM King Abdullah is the Custodian of the Holy sites in Jerusalem (both Muslim and Christian)
- Jordan has always called for a just, permanent and comprehensive settlement of the Palestinian Problem that leads to self-determination for the Palestinian people and the establishment of an independent, viable and contiguous Palestinian State with east Jerusalem as its capital. In addition, Jordan has played a pivotal role in the Middle East Peace Process to achieve the goal of statehood to the Palestinians and is the first host of Palestinian refugees community outside Palestine.
- Tolerance, harmony and peaceful co-existence between the different ethnic and religious components of the Jordanian society has significantly supported the unity of the people.

## Peace in the region:

As discussed earlier, Jordan is playing an important role to stabilize the region and to alleviate the suffering of the Palestinian people and other innocent victims of conflicts.

- On the political level, the steadfastness of the Jordanian leadership towards peace is unequivocal. This commitment stems from the conviction that only a just and lasting peace based on international legitimacy would bring stability and prosperity to all peoples of the region, and Jordan is committed to support a negotiated peace settlement to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.

## PTI intra-party polls...

FROM PAGE 01

He referred to the Peshawar High Court's (PHC) decision from a day earlier, restraining the ECP from issuing an order in the case till the hearing of the application filed with it had concluded. Raja countered that it was within the election commission's jurisdiction to handle this case, urging the PTI lawyer to not hold the ECP accountable for mistakes his party committed. "For five years the PTI could not hold intra-party elections. The elections it eventually did hold are invalid in our opinion," the CEC maintained. "Despite everything, the ECP granted PTI an opportunity to conduct intra-party elections," he added. ECP's DG Law pointed out that the Islamabad High Court, in the MQM intra-party election case, designated intra-party elections as the election commission's jurisdiction. Failure to conduct intra-party action by a political party is subject to action under the Election Act, he said. The election commission adjourned the hearing until December 14, instructing all petitioners to submit their replies at the next hearing.

## Nawaz clears another...

FROM PAGE 01

The high court announced the verdict it reserved after the completion of arguments from both defence and prosecution lawyers. "It is unfortunate that if a former prime minister is facing such sham cases, then [we can't imagine] what is happening to a common man," senior lawyer Irfan Qadir told media, calling upon the judges who convicted Nawaz to apologise to the nation. He mentioned that it was the Supreme Court that had instructed the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) to file references against Nawaz in light of the controversial Panama verdict. It is worth mentioning that despite the case being pending since 2017, the NAB prosecutor failed to provide any evidence against the PML-N supremo for having assets beyond means, noting that the reference was filed based on directions from the JIT - formed on the SC's direction. An accountability court on December 24, 2018, sentenced the former prime minister to seven years in jail and imposed a fine of 2.5 million pounds in the Al-Azizia Steel Mills reference.

## POA shown full support to PBBF for coaching courses

This initiative reflects PBBF's commitment to empowering coaches with cutting-edge skills and techniques, ensuring they play a pivotal role in nurturing the next generation of basketball talent in country

AFZAL JAVED

ISLAMABAD: Olympic Solidarity WABC Level-I Coaching Course in full swing with some incredible opportunities for coaches to enhance their skills, learn new techniques and contribute to the growth of basketball in the country organised by Pakistan Basketball Federation (PBBF). Prof. Dr. Ahmed Adnan Vice Chancellor of Government College University (GCU) was the chief guest and Khalid Mahmood Secretary General of Pakistan Olympic Association (POA) was the guest of honour in the opening session of the course while FIBA Coaching instructor Milan Kotarac, Pakistan Basketball Federation (PBBF) Secretary General Khalid Bashir, PBBF Associate Secretary and Member South Asia Basketball Association Council Ouj E Zahoor, National Basketball Coach Riaz Malik and other dignitaries were also present during the session. Speaking on the occasion POA

secretary General Khalid Mahmood said that Pakistan Basketball Federation under the supervision of Khalid Bashir are taking various steps to promote the game of basketball in the country and Pakistan Olympic Association will provide all possible assistance to Pakistan Basketball Federation to organise coaching

courses in future too. "All stakeholders must play their positive role for the revival of sports culture in the country and PBBF played their positive role and taking many steps to provide the opportunities to youngsters", said Khalid, adding that these coaching courses will help the participants to improve their

coaching skills and in contributing to the growth of the sport in Pakistan. The Olympic Solidarity Coaching Course which is underway at Government College University Lahore will be concluded on December 16th. The FIBA coaching program aims to provide in-depth theoretical and practical insights to fifteen coaches, en-

compassing both male and female participants, during morning and evening sessions. This initiative reflects PBBF's commitment to empowering coaches with cutting-edge skills and techniques, ensuring they play a pivotal role in nurturing the next generation of basketball talent in the country.



## Briefs

## UN appeals world leaders to support displaced people

WASHINGTON : As the number of refugees soars worldwide, the United Nations is appealing for countries to support displaced people at a global summit this week with the aim of showing that "change is possible." The UN is convening the Global Refugee Forum in Geneva with thousands due to participate, including heads of government and state, in a search for concrete responses to record displacements. The number of people displaced worldwide passed 114 million by the end of September, an all-time high. And with conflicts raging in Gaza and elsewhere forcing ever more people to flee their homes, that number has surely soared further. UN refugee chief Filippo Grandi said the devastating Israeli war on Gaza that exploded after Hamas carried out their unprecedented attacks on October 7 would surely be raised during the forum. As a result of the attack by Hamas, around 1,200 people inside Israel were killed and 240 people were taken as hostages — 137 of whom remain in Gaza, Israeli officials say. Following October 7, Israel's relentless bombing campaign and ground offensive have killed more than 18,000 people in Gaza, according to Palestinian authorities. The Israeli war on Gaza has caused 1.9 million of the Palestinian territory's 2.4 million inhabitants to be displaced. —APP

## Northeastern Aust prepares for Jasper

SYDNEY : The northeastern Australian cities of Cairns and Port Douglas readied for the arrival of Tropical Cyclone Jasper, which is expected to bring "destructive" winds and flash flooding. The Category Two storm has been slowly churning across the Coral Sea, with the core of the cyclone expected to hit Australia's eastern coast sometime around 1:00 pm local time on Wednesday (0300 GMT). The tourist cities of Cairns and Port Douglas — both gateways to the Great Barrier Reef — are in the path of the storm. Meteorologists have predicted winds of 140 kilometres (87 miles) per hour, heavy rain and possible storm tides. Miriam Bradbury of Australia's state Bureau of Meteorology said there was a possibility of "destructive" gusts. "Winds of this strength can easily bring down tree limbs, whole trees or power lines," she warned. Authorities are warning of damage to fences, roofs and other property — urging residents to tie down loose items before the storm arrives. —APP

## Zara withdraw ad amid Gaza boycott

MADRID : Spanish fast clothing company Zara pulled an advertising campaign featuring mannequins with missing limbs and statues wrapped in white shrouds depicting corpses of those killed by Israel from the front page of its website and app on Monday amid wide backlash and calls from Palestinian activists to boycott the popular fashion retailer. Earlier in the day, Zara featured images for its "Atelier" campaign on its website that look like they were inspired by the destruction of the Gaza Strip since Oct. 7, in which over 18,000 people have been killed, most of them women and children. Inditex, which owns Zara, said the change was part of its normal procedure of refreshing content. It did not comment on the boycott calls but claimed the "Atelier" collection was conceived in July and the photos were taken in September. The atrocities in Gaza began on Oct. 7. The company's flagship brand is Zara, but it also owns several other brands including Massimo Dutti, Pull&Bear, Bershka, Stradivarius and Zara Home. —DNA

## Heydar Aliyev – architect of modern Azerbaijan

DNA

BAKU : Every year Azerbaijani people on December 12 commemorate the anniversary of the passing of Azerbaijani Great Leader Heydar Aliyev. Today, 20 years have passed since the death of the architect and founder of the modern and independent Azerbaijani state. Heydar Aliyev was the leader who created the modern history of Azerbaijan, becoming a true legend of his time. The history remembers him as a unique leader, powerful head of state, selfless man, and a legendary figure able to take on his shoulders the difficult historical task of state building. Heydar Aliyev's philosophy of Azerbaijanism, after gaining independence, determined the place of Azerbaijan in the modern world, provided a strong basis for the solidarity of the world Azerbaijanis as an ideological ground to the national statehood. The Agreement of the Century, the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline, and other internationally important projects are associated with the name of Heydar Aliyev. As a result of the great leader's wise policy, high-speed socio-economic development was ensured in Azerbaijan, and Azerbaijan became a country with a strong position in international relations. Thanks to him, the independence of Azerbaijan became



eternal. His ideas and wise policies are successfully continued by President Ilham Aliyev. Under President Ilham Aliyev's far-sighted policy, Azerbaijan is rapidly developing in all fields. Under the leadership of Commander-in-Chief, President Ilham Aliyev, Azerbaijan gained victory in the 44-day Patriotic War, and its ancient lands were liberated from

the occupation. President Ilham Aliyev fulfilled the dream of Heydar Aliyev and all the world Azerbaijanis by liberating the lands of Azerbaijan from occupation and now the national flag of Azerbaijan is waving in the liberated lands. It should be noted that Heydar Aliyev is the architect of the development of Azerbaijan-Pakistan relations. He at-

ached great importance to Pakistan. On 9-11 April 1996, Heydar Aliyev paid an official visit to Pakistan. Several documents were signed between Azerbaijan and Pakistan during the visit. That visit played an irreplaceable role in the development of relations between the two countries. He said about two countries: "Pakistan and Azerbaijan have very good and friendly relations. These

*Heydar Aliyev is the architect of the development of Azerbaijan-Pakistan relations. He attached great importance to Pakistan. On 9-11 April 1996, Heydar Aliyev paid an official visit to Pakistan.*

relations are based on our ancient historical traditions. It is no coincidence that Pakistan is one of the first states to recognize the independence of our country after Azerbaijan declared its independence." The people of Azerbaijan are proud of their great son, who devoted all his life to faithfully serving the people and motherland in the most difficult period of history. The bright memory of Heydar Aliyev, the national leader of the Azerbaijani people, a wise leader and genius personality, lives in the hearts of millions.

## Moscow working on 'major new agreement' with Tehran

MOSCOW : Russia's Foreign Ministry says Moscow and Tehran plan to speed up work on a "major new interstate agreement" as the two long-time allies forge closer bilateral relations. The Russian Foreign Ministry broke the news in a short statement on Tuesday and said the two countries' foreign ministers had agreed in a phone call to expedite work on the agreement, which was at "a high stage of readiness." The statement did not detail the scope of the agreement, but it comes amid growing political, trade and military ties between Moscow and Tehran, both

of which are under US sanctions and opposed to Western unilateralism. In 2001, Tehran and Moscow signed a 10-year cooperation deal that was lengthened to 20 years through two five-year extensions. The two countries are planning to ink a document on bilateral long-term strategic cooperation, which may determine their future relations for the next twenty years. Last week, Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi and his Russian counterpart held extensive talks in the Kremlin, with Vladimir Putin lauding Tehran-Moscow ties as "very good."

"We have very good relations with Iran. And we will enhance them in every possible way... That is why we do our utmost in order to develop relations with Iran, and will keep this up in the future," Russia's TASS news agency quoted Putin as saying. Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian and his Russian counterpart Sergei Lavrov also signed an agreement last week to make joint efforts to counter unilateral sanctions imposed on the two countries. Iran and Russia, as two close and strategic allies, have over the past years

deepened their relations in various fields, including military and defense, despite being under heavy Western sanctions. Heading a high-ranking military delegation, Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu traveled to Tehran in September upon an official invitation by Chief of Staff of the Iranian Armed Forces Major General Mohammad Baqeri. Baqeri said at the time that Tehran and Moscow are working to draw up a long-term military cooperation agreement in the near future as the world moves towards an increasingly multipolar order.

## EU allocates \$8.6m aid for Sudanese refugees

KHARTOUM : The European Union announced €8 million (\$8.61 million) in funding to support the integration and well-being of thousands of people who have fled ongoing fighting in Sudan and found safety in neighboring South Sudan. The funding is part of €17 million channeled through the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) to the countries bordering Sudan, including Chad and Ethiopia. Timo Olkkonen, the EU ambassador to South Sudan, said the war in Sudan is taking its toll on South Sudan and neighbouring countries. He said this new funding reaffirms the EU's willingness to provide tangible support to host countries. "The programme aims at including refugees and returnees in service delivery systems, while improving their livelihoods and ensuring peaceful coexistence with host communities, in synergy with other EU funded initiatives on forced displacement. "It will improve living conditions of those forced to flee, and at the same time contribute to security and stability in the region," Olkkonen told journalists in the capital Juba during a ceremony marking the handover of the funding with the UN Refugee Agency and the IOM. —Agencies

## Myanmar stands as largest source of opium

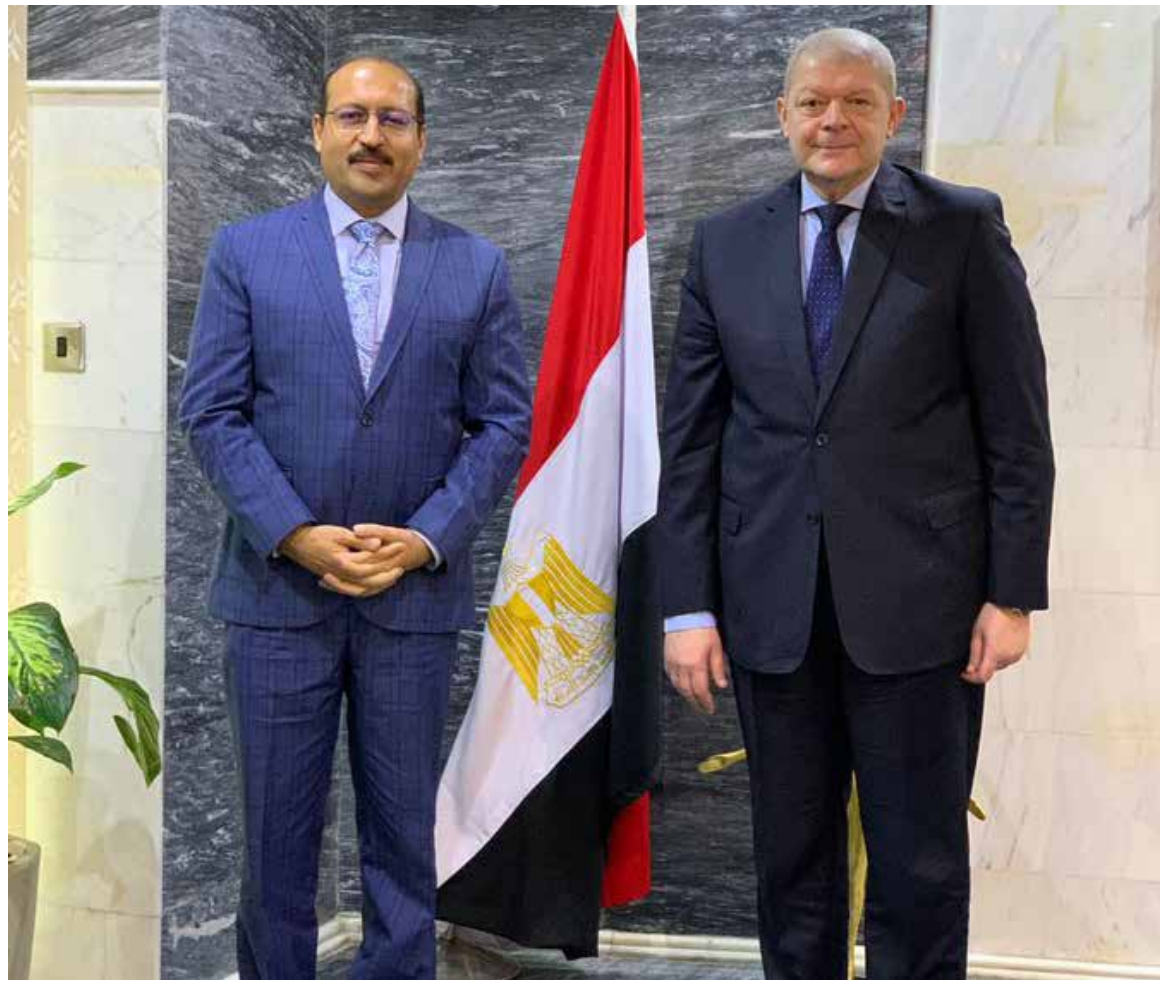
ISTANBUL : The UN on Tuesday declared junta-ruled Myanmar as the world's largest source of opium. According to UN Office on Drugs and Crime, opium cultivation in the Golden Triangle in Southeast Asia "continued to expand over the past year, with a significant increase in Myanmar." In its latest report titled Southeast Asia Opium Survey 2023: Cultivation, Production and Implications, the UN Regional Office for Southeast Asia and the Pacific revealed that since the 2021 military takeover in Myanmar, opium cultivation grew by 18% from 40,100 to 47,100 hectares (99,000 to 116,000 acres). "At 1,080 metric tons today, the potential yield is at its highest since 2001... Myanmar now stands as the world's largest source of opium," it said. "The economic, security and governance disruptions that followed the military takeover of February 2021 continue to drive farmers in remote areas towards opium to make a living." UN regional representative Jeremy Douglas said. "The intensification of conflict in Shan (state) and other border areas is expected to accelerate this trend." —DNA

## COP28 plan to triple renewable achievable

DUBAI : More than 100 countries at the COP28 climate summit in Dubai consented to triple their renewable energy capacity by 2030, in a pledge seen among the least controversial brought up during the conference. "It is realistic, but there are elements that need to be solved: permitting, leases, grid connections," Anders Opedal, chief executive of Norway's Equinor, a major renewable energy developer, told Media Reporters. Renewable energy is key to meeting the 2015 Paris climate agreement to limit global warming. And while renewables are already expanding fast, this latest goal would require solar and wind power deployments to speed up a lot. The tripling target would bring global renewable energy capacity to at least 11,000 gigawatts (GW) in just six years — more than 20% higher than current projections from BloombergNEF of around 9,000 GW by that time. That would mean pumping up investment in renewables, which the International Energy Agency (IEA) says hit \$600 billion globally last year, at a time when some investors are retreating due to higher borrowing costs. But the problems extend far beyond that. Across the renewables industry, there are signs of strain. Supplies are short of everything from wind turbines to transformers. There is a labor shortage. —APP

## UK Labour party says would repeal Rwanda policy

LONDON : Lawmakers are set to vote on British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak's divisive plan to send asylum seekers to live in Rwanda as the leader faces the biggest parliamentary test of his premiership. The UK Supreme Court ruled last month that Rwanda was an unsafe place to send those arriving in small boats on England's southern coast, and that the policy would breach British and international law. In response, Sunak has agreed to a new treaty with Rwanda and brought forward emergency legislation to override domestic and international human rights law. The move has deeply divided his party, alienating both moderates, who are worried about Britain breaching its human rights obligations, and right-wing politicians, who contend it does not go far enough. British opposition leader Keir Starmer has said if the government's Rwanda policy becomes law, he would repeal it if his Labour Party wins power at an election expected next year. Asked on BBC Radio on Tuesday if he would repeal the law, if it is passed by parliament, Starmer said: "Yes." Starmer has described the Rwanda policy as an "expensive gimmick" that has prevented the government from focusing on more practical measures. Britain has already paid \$300 million (240 million pounds) to Rwanda even though no one has yet been sent there. Even if the programme gets off the ground, Rwanda would have the capacity to settle only hundreds of refugees from Britain at a time. Fractured along multiple lines. In power for 13 years and trailing the opposition Labour Party by around 20 points ahead of an election expected next year, Sunak's Conservatives have fractured along multiple lines and lost much of their discipline. Lawmakers on the right, who have not said whether they will abstain or vote against the bill, want to ban asylum seekers from having any legal means to appeal against deportation. —Agencies



BAGHDAD : Muhammad Zeeshan Ahmed, Ambassador of Pakistan had a meeting with Ahmed Sameer Helmy, Ambassador of Arab Republic of Egypt to Iraq, today. They discussions were held on matters of mutual interest and the overall situation in the region. —DNA

## Turkiye unveils 20 new dams in water conversation effort

Pointing out that the country does not have a single drop of water to waste and polluting our water resources is tantamount to treason, President Erdogan said Turkiye must use water efficiently and manage resources correctly

## FOREIGN DESK

ANKARA : President Recep Tayyip Erdogan officially inaugurated 369 State Hydraulic Works (DSI) facilities across 66 provinces, representing a collective investment of TL 53 billion (\$18.25 billion) Monday. These encompass various projects such as dams, drinking water initiatives, irrigation systems, consolidation efforts, wastewater treatment and flood protection projects. During a mass inauguration ceremony organized by the state water and sewerage body in Ankara on Dec. 11, Erdogan dispelled the notion of water as an infinite resource, emphasizing that Turkiye cannot afford to waste a single drop. The facilities built consist of 20 dams, 52 ponds, 16 underground

dams, 71 irrigation, nine drinking water reservoirs, 18 land consolidation and in-field development services projects, 183 flood protection and other purpose facilities. The main dams are as follows: Mersin Pamukluk Dam, Malatya Yoncalik Dam, Mersin-Aks fat Dam, Çankır Kızılayolu Dam, Kastamonu Vehicle Dam, Erzincan Turnaçayır Dam, Finike Kap çay Dam and Karamürsel İhsaniye Dam. Implementing these facilities has resulted in significant achievements, including a total water storage capacity increase of over 1 billion cubic meters, facilitating irrigation for 620,590 decares of agricultural land. Annually, they have provided 66 million cubic meters of drinking and utility water, with a daily treatment capacity reaching 71,560 cubic meters of drinking

water. Moreover, the initiative has successfully safeguarded 252 residential areas and protected 113,300 decares of land from floods. A comprehensive consolidation effort spanned an area of 2,246,420 decares. "Water is not only a limited but also a diminishing resource. In addition, the pressures on the water are increasing day by day with climate change, drought and industrialization and we should add to this the increasing population," the president said. Erdogan, contrary to popular belief, said Turkiye is not a water-rich country, receiving an average annual rainfall of 574 millimeters, below the world average. "Turkiye does not have a single drop of water to waste. Furthermore, polluting our water resources is tantamount to

treason. We must use our water efficiently and manage our resources correctly," he warned. In a call to action, Erdogan urged all citizens to support a nationwide water mobilization effort, adopting the motto "Be a drop of water." He emphasized the global significance of the water crisis, with only 1% of the total freshwater potential of the earth being utilized. "The main factor that makes the water issue one of the most strategic and valuable resources is this: In many parts of the world, including our own country, water is seen as an unlimited resource. I want to say here that this is a wrong statement," he said. Announcing the inauguration of 369 facilities, Erdogan highlighted their contribution of TL 5 billion (\$172.46 million) to the econo-

my annually. "We will neither waste nor squander nor watch our riches slip away from us," he asserted. "Everyone should know that what is a right for other countries is not a luxury for Turkiye. We need to bring our underground and above-ground riches into the economy with a responsible understanding." Ensuring the food security of our nation hinges on the efficient, effective and prudent utilization of our water resources. "For us, this responsibility transcends choice — it's a compelling obligation. Contrary to widespread belief, Turkiye is not abundant in water resources; instead, it falls within the category of countries grappling with water stress, with an annual usable water quantity of only 1.3 cubic meters per capita," said Erdogan.

## Briefs

### President Xi Jinping in Vietnam

DNA

HANOI: When Chinese leader Xi Jinping meets his Vietnamese counterpart, Nguyen Phu Trong on Tuesday, on a state visit to Vietnam, expect a fountain of flowery compliments exalting the historic friendship between these two communist-run neighbours. Mr Trong visited Beijing a year ago and was given China's top medal for foreign dignitaries, with Mr Xi describing their relationship as one between "comrades and brothers", the two countries "connected by mountains and rivers, as close as lips and teeth". Vietnam is expected to announce it will join Mr Xi's "Community of Common Destiny", a Sino-centric, largely symbolic conception which is widely viewed as a challenge to the prevailing, US-led global order. That would neatly nudge China one step ahead of the US in their competition for Vietnam's allegiance, after the US, in a surprise move, had its status elevated to that of "Comprehensive Strategic Partner" during President Joe Biden's visit to Hanoi in September. This put Washington on the same level as Beijing in Vietnam's carefully calibrated hierarchy of international partners. During this week's visit, China will also be offering its advanced railway technology to help Vietnam upgrade its transport infrastructure. This includes a rail link from southern China to the Vietnamese port of Haiphong, which passes through a region that has some of Vietnam's richest rare earth deposits - China is the world's biggest exporter and refiner of the minerals which are essential to produce electric vehicles and renewable energy.

### Jemima rebuffs Zardari's allegations

LONDON: British filmmaker Jemima Goldsmith has rejected the allegations made by former president Asif Ali Zardari regarding funding bloggers to bolster the support for the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf and its chairman. Earlier, PPP co-chairman Asif Ali Zardari made the assertions while giving interview to a private news channel. The British producer replied to a post on X, (formerly Twitter), by saying, "This is obviously not true." "Peace & prosperity in Pakistan" is all she can ever wish for," she continued. While responding to a question about the PTI returning to the parliament with a two-thirds majority, former president Zardari said: "Please fear God! This is what vloggers settled abroad are saying. Jemima is giving money to these bloggers." Zardari went on to say that the former PTI chairman preferred presidential democracy above parliamentary democracy. "He was leading a cult democracy," stated the co-chairman of the PPP. The former president went on to discuss a documentary that details how the British producer's family benefited financially from wars, mentioning Jemima's mother, Lady Annabel Goldsmith. - Agencies

# SC judge raises questions over ZA Bhutto reference

## CJP Isa dispels speculations over bench formation saying "one senior member did not want to be a part of bench"

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

ISLAMABAD: Justice Mansoor Ali Shah of the Supreme Court on Tuesday raised questions over a 12-year-old presidential reference seeking to review the death sentence awarded to Pakistan People Party (PPP) founder and former prime minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. During a hearing of the reference by a larger bench led by Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Qazi Faez Isa, the SC judge sought assistance in determining the questions of law, observing that the court had already dismissed the appeal against its verdict which had also achieved the finality. "The Supreme Court can't hear another appeal on the matter. How can we rehear the matter that had been closed?" The nine-member larger apex court bench also includes Justice Sardar Tariq Masood, Justice Yahya Afridi, Justice Aminud Din Khan, Justice Jamal Khan Mandokhail, Justice Muhammad Ali Mazhar, Justice Syed Hasan Azhar Rizvi, and Justice Musarrat Hilali. Former president Asif Ali Zardari, on April 2, 2011, approached the apex court through a presidential reference under Article 186 of the Constitution to seek its opinion on revisiting the trial of the PPP founder. Previously, an 11-member larger bench of the apex court, headed by former chief justice Iftikhar Muhammad Chaudhry, had conducted five hearings on the presidential reference - whose last hearing was held on November 11, 2012. Attorney General for Pakistan (AGP) Mansoor Usman Awan represented the feder-

## Justice Naqvi regrets 'disgraceful' treatment by SJC, its chairman

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: Justice Sayyed Mazhar Ali Akbar Naqvi, who is facing complaints of misconduct, on Tuesday regretted the 'disgraceful' treatment offered to him by Supreme Judicial Council (SJC) Chairman and its members. SJC is a constitutional body that probes allegations of misconduct against the judges of Supreme and high courts. It comprises the chief justice, two senior-most SC judges and two senior-most high courts' chief justices. Currently, Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Qazi Faez Isa; Supreme Court justices Sardar Tariq Masood and Ijazul Ahsan; and top judges of Lahore and Balochistan High Courts Mohammad Ameer Bhatti and Naem Akhtar Afghan, respectively, are SJC members. He made the remarks in an open letter to CJP Qazi Faez Isa and other Supreme Court (SC) judges over the "misinformation surrounding the matter of my case before the Supreme Judicial Council (SJC)". In the letter, Justice Naqvi pointed out that the judicial council on Oct 28 issued a 'show cause notice' - which according to him was "afflicted with grievous legal, constitutional and jurisdictional defects". According to the SC judge, he had communicated the defects in a 'Preliminary Response' to the SJC. "The Council, instead of meeting the demands of honour and propriety, decided to convene a series of meetings [Nov 20th, 21st, 22nd] with an unmistakable objective of removing the defects and issued a revised show-cause", he added. "As a consequence, the SJC inadvertently admitted that the initial notice was defective, that the proceedings were initiated without any investigation or probe into the veracity of the complaints against me, that the members of the SJC are unfit to oversee the relevant proceedings on account of their decided bias and partiality," the judge said in the letter. He regretted that the treatment offered to him by the SJC Chairman and its members "is nothing short of disgraceful".

al government in the reference, while Farooq H Naek appeared on behalf of the PPP chief who has applied to become a party in the matter. Advocate Ahmed Raza Kasuri, the man who had lodged the first information report (FIR) against the former prime minister, also appeared before the bench and requested the CJP to hear his arguments in the case as well. "Every legal heir has the right to be heard," the CJP responded to his request. The court proceedings of the reference were broadcast live on the official website and the YouTube channel of the Supreme Court. The decision to fix the instant case was made under Section 2(1) of the Supreme Court (Practice and Procedure) Act, 2023, by a three-member committee comprising CJP Isa, Justice Masood and Justice Ijaz Ul Ahsan. Following the initial hearing of the case, the top court also appointed nine more amici curiae (friends of court) - Justice (ret'd) Manzoor Malik, Advocate Khawaja Haris, PPP Senator Raza Rabbani, Advocate Khalid Javed, Barrister Salahuddin Ahmed, Advocate Faisal Siddiqui, Zahid Ibrahim and Yasir Qureshi and Barrister Salman Safdar - to assist it in criminal and constitutional aspects of the case. As the hearing commenced, PPP counsel Farooq H. Naek submitted a request in court on behalf of Bilawal, saying that the latter wanted to become a party in the reference. The CJP said the SC could hear Bilawal as a family member and even as a political party. Referring to Bilawal's plea seeking a live broadcast of the hearing, which was filed a day earlier, Justice Isa said the court had decided the same before the submission of the application.

## SBP maintains key rate at 22%

DNA

KARACHI: In line with market expectations, the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) maintained the key interest rate at 22% for the fourth straight Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) meeting as it awaits for the impact of previous hikes to filter through the economy and further tame high retail inflation. The bank's monetary policy committee said that an increase in gas prices last month could affect the inflation outlook. "The decision does take into account the impact of the recent hike in gas prices... the Committee viewed that this may have implications for the inflation outlook, albeit in the presence of some offsetting developments," the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) said in the statement. The rate was raised to 22% in an off-cycle meeting in June as a last-gasp attempt to secure a \$3 billion bailout from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) as part of a reforms programme aimed at bringing stability to the troubled \$350 billion economy. Pakistan's economy has been beset by high price pressures, with monthly consumer price index-based inflation remaining above 20% since June 2022, and hitting a record high of 38% in May 2023.



LAHORE: Caretaker Punjab Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi is reviewing the construction works of Abdullahpur Jhamra Road Flyover Project. - DNA

## Court extends interim bails of Imran Khan, Bushra in 7 cases

ISLAMABAD: The district and sessions court of Islamabad on Tuesday extended interim bails of former Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf chairman and her wife Bushra Bibi in seven cases until Dec 19 and Jan 2, respectively. Additional District and Sessions Judge Tahir Abbas Sipra conducted hearing of six cases against the PTI founder and one case against Bushra Bibi. Bushra Bibi appeared in sessions court with her legal team. Former PTI chairman's counsel Khalid Yousaf Chaudhry said an anti-terrorism court had already granted the PTI founder bails in three cases. Chaudhry said his client was not present on the incident scene and the court had issued a production order to attend hearing. The court inquired about the production order and asked why the prosecutor was not present in the courtroom. Chaudhry, responding to the court's inquiry, said police did not want to produce the ex-PTI chairman in court. The judge, reacting to Chaudhry's allegation, said the PTI had started the tradition of calling court to their homes. PTI's counsel said the ex-chairman had always been attending courts. He said in application for pre-arrest bail it was necessary for the petitioner to attend court. Judge Sipra said he was going to seek a report for production of former PTI chairman in court. He further said till next hearing the court would determine where the cases would be heard. The court then asked about the status of Bushra Bibi's petition filed in the Islamabad High Court. The lawyer said a report on Bushra Bibi's audio leaks was pending with the Islamabad High Court. Later, the court extended interim bails of the PTI founder till Dec 19 and Bushra Bibi until January 2, 2024. - DNA

## United Nations calls Gaza 'hell on earth' as hunger looms

### Qassam Brigades that their forces engaged in clashes with the invading Israeli military in several areas in the Gaza Strip and killed 11 of the enemy's soldiers

DNA

GAZA CITY: As the US-backed Israeli genocidal war on the Gaza Strip entered day 67 on Tuesday, massive aerial and artillery strikes continued to pound and level whole blocks and homes and massacre more civilians, mostly children and women. According to the latest figures from the Health Ministry, at least 18,412 people have been killed and 50,100 wounded in Israeli attacks on Gaza since October 7. The armed wing of Hamas, the Qassam Brigades, says it targeted seven military vehicles with shells and anti-aircraft devices in the Shujayea neighbourhood of Gaza City. The group said its fighters were engaged in fighting with Israeli soldiers in several areas

and confirmed the killing of 11 of them. It targeted a troops carrier and killed three crew members. There was a clash with the rescue team soldiers who tried to recover a tank crew, which resulted in the deaths of a "number of them". An Israeli sniper was targeted with an RPG. The United Nations says only 13 out of 36 hospitals in the Gaza Strip are partially functional as Israeli occupation forces are targeting medical centers and staff amid heavily bombardment of the besieged territory. The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) said in a report on Tuesday that the services provided to patients in operational hospitals are "limited" as they have run out of bed capacity. "The two major hospitals in southern Gaza are operating at three times above

their bed capacity while facing critical shortages of basic supplies and fuel," the report said. "Only one of these hospitals is in the north." "[Bed] occupancy rates are now reaching 206 percent in inpatient departments and 250 percent in intensive care units. Additionally, these hospitals are providing shelter to thousands of displaced people," it added citing data from the Gaza Ministry of Health. The report also said that the maternity department at Kamal Adwan Hospital in Beit Lahiyah, north of Gaza, was hit on Monday, resulting in the death of several mothers. The hospital remains surrounded by Israeli troops and tanks, and fighting has been reported in its vicinity for three consecutive days, the OCHA report added.

## Indonesia pledges to triple UNRWA contributions

JAKARTA: Indonesia has pledged to triple its contributions to the UN relief agency for Palestine and strengthen global solidarity with the Palestinians, the foreign ministry said on Tuesday. The Southeast Asian nation has been a staunch supporter of Palestine for decades, with its people and government seeing Palestinian statehood as mandated by its own constitution, which calls for the abolition of colonialism. Foreign Minister Retno Marsudi reiterated that support at an event marking 75 years of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in Geneva on Tuesday, the foreign ministry said in a statement. "Indonesia reaffirms its support to strengthen political solidarity and humanitarian support for Palestine, including by increasing (our) contribution to UNRWA threefold," Marsudi said. Marsudi will also speak on the issue of Palestine at a UN high-level event on human rights on Tuesday, the foreign ministry said. Indonesia was among the 102 countries that co-sponsored a UN Security Council resolution calling for an immediate humanitarian ceasefire in Gaza. The resolution was vetoed by the US at a meeting in New York City last week. "The global community cannot continue to be at the mercy of a few countries and watch helplessly the atrocities and killings of women and children in Gaza," Marsudi said in a statement issued after the UN vote. More than 18,000 Palestinians, including over 7,700 children, have been killed since Israel began its deadly onslaught on Gaza in retaliation for an Oct. 7 attack by the militant group Hamas based in the enclave. - DNA

## Zelensky makes plea for US aid as Russia claims advances

NEWS DESK

WASHINGTON: Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky will press Tuesday for more US military aid to battle Russia, which said any funding would be a "fiasco" and claimed its forces were advancing on the front. Zelensky, who is in Washington to plead for continued support, will meet with President Joe Biden at the White House and also with congressional leaders from both parties. For much of the nearly two years that Ukraine has resisted President Vladimir Putin's onslaught, the United States has led a Western coalition sending billions of dollars in weaponry and ammunition. But Republicans are ever-more openly rejecting the need to fund Ukraine, saying that Biden needs to devote more attention to domestic security, particularly to stopping illegal migration over the US-Mexican border. The Republicans are also questioning

whether Ukraine should keep fighting at all. Biden is a key supporter, framing the Ukrainian war effort as part of a global struggle between democracies and aggressive autocracies. But on Capitol Hill, Zelensky will face his real test when he addresses Republican and Democratic senators, and meets the new Republican speaker of the House, Mike Johnson. In a speech on Monday at the National Defense University in Washington, Zelensky said that politics should not "betray" Ukraine's soldiers and he echoed Biden in saying that the struggle had global implications. "When the free world hesitates, that's when dictators rise and their most dangerous ambitions ripen," he said. "They see their dreams come true when they see delays." "Putin must lose," he said. The Kremlin played down the consequences of any further US funding on Tuesday, saying it would be doomed to a "fiasco." "It is important for everyone to understand: the tens of billions of dol-

lars pumped into Ukraine did not help it gain success on the battlefield," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said. "The tens of billions of dollars that Ukraine wants to be pumped with are also headed for the same fiasco." In an interview with Russian state television on Sunday, Putin said that Ukraine was "running out" of arms because its defense industry was not able to produce enough. "They have no base of their own. When there is no base of their own, no ideology of their own, no industry of their own, no money of their own, nothing of their own, then there is no future. And we have one." Russia further upped the pressure on Tuesday, saying its forces had "advanced significantly" in southern Ukraine. "Our units have advanced significantly forward northeast of Novopokrovka," the Moscow-installed head of the Russian-occupied Zaporizhzhia region, Yevgeny Balitsky, said on Telegram.

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