



# Islamabad POST

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**Artificial rain project a huge success, says UAE Ambassador**

Detailed News On Page-08

**UK pledge support for Ukraine**

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**Gladiators could sack Sarfaraz as captain**

Detailed News On Page-06



## COAS meets Centcom chief Pakistan-US to enhance coop on security matters

Bilateral interests, global and regional security issues, and ongoing conflicts were discussed during meetings



WASHINGTON: Chief of the Army Staff, General Asim Munir photographed with CENTCOM Chief during his ongoing US visit. – DNA

NEWS DESK / DNA

WASHINGTON: Chief of Army Staff (COAS) Asim Munir called on Gen Michael Erik Kurilla, the commander of the US Central Command (Centcom), and discussed cooperation in regional security matters, the military's media affairs wing said on Tuesday. According to the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR), the army chief met the Centcom chief during a visit to Headquarters Central Command at Tampa Bay, Florida. "During the meeting, matters of shared interests, particularly cooperation in regional security matters

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## US warns citizens against travelling to Afghanistan

CENTRELINE REPORT

WASHINGTON: The US Department of State has issued an advisory, urging its citizens to avoid traveling to Afghanistan, citing severe concerns related to terrorism, the risk of wrongful detention, kidnapping, and crime. The advisory emphasises that, regardless of the reason, US citizens should refrain from visiting the country. "US citizens should not travel to Afghanistan for any reason," the advisory emphasises. In 2021, the Taliban assumed control of Afghanistan, establishing an "interim government" in Kabul. As a result, the US Embassy in Kabul suspended operations, rendering the US government unable to provide emergency consular services to American citizens in Afghanistan. The advisory highlights the presence of multiple active terrorist groups in the country, posing a threat to US citizens of kidnapping and wrongful detentions and specifically mentioned the Taliban, saying "the Department has assessed that there is a risk of wrongful detention of US citizens by the Taliban." It also added that the activities of foreigners may be viewed with

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QUETTA: Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar launches the Electronic Public Procurement System of Balochistan. – DNA

## Earthquake in China kills at least 127

Gansu province was hit severely with at least 113 fatalities and over 155,000 buildings damaged

NEWS DESK

BEIJING: Rescuers in remote villages of northwest China are tirelessly sifting through the wreckage of collapsed homes in freezing conditions after a devastating earthquake hit northwest China, killing over 127 people, Reuters reported. More than 700 have been reported injured, in the quake that struck just before midnight. The shocks rattled impoverished Gansu province, causing at least 113

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## PM stresses effective strategy to produce skilled human resource Pakistan's cultural diversity a source of its strength as federation: PM

BUREAU REPORT

QUETTA: Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar on Tuesday termed skilled human resource the most important asset for a nation said effective training strategy was crucial to meet the needs of the contemporary world. Addressing here at the launch of PM's Youth Skill Development Programme, he said in the era of technology and artificial-intelligence, there was a need to equip the youth with necessary up-to-date knowledge. PM Kakar said imparting skills to one person did not restrict to him but the families associated with him and also the coming generations benefit from it. He said the country was in dire need of such initiatives of social development which resulted in the overall uplift of the people. Chief Minister Balochistan Mir Ali Mardan Domki said the provincial government was committed to providing every possible opportunity to the people of Balochistan. He said the provincial government had decided to set up the

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## Imran moves IHC against indictment in cipher case

PTI founder pleads with court to declare December 12 order of special court null and void

COURT REPORTER

ISLAMABAD: Incarcerated Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder Imran Khan on Tuesday challenged his indictment in cipher case and the entire proceedings by the special court – established under the Official Secrets Act – in the Islamabad High Court (IHC). On December 12, the special court indicted the former prime minister

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## Briefs

### ECP orders removal of Cheema

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: The ECP Tuesday ordered the removal of Adviser to the Prime Minister on Establishment Ahmad Cheema from office in a bid to ensure that free and fair polls take place. Cheema is part of the caretaker government which is appointed to oversee the country's affairs – with limited powers – till the elections, which are set to take place on February 8, 2024. In line with the Constitution, the polling body can hire or fire any cabinet member of the interim government to ensure that free and fair elections take place.

### PPP restored constitution, says Gilani

BURAU REPORT

MULTAN: PPP senior leader Yousuf Raza Gilani asserted that the PPP played a pivotal role in steering the country out of crises. He highlighted Shaheed Bhutto's role in making the nation a nuclear power and credited Shaheed Benazir Bhutto for providing missile technology. Former PM Gilani stressed the PPP's commitment to democracy, stating that Asif Zardari empowered Parliament through the Charter of Democracy, restoring Pakistan's constitution. He surrendered presidential powers voluntarily. He portrayed the PPP as a champion for farmers and minority communities, expressing readiness for the upcoming elections on February 8 and urging transparent conduct by the Election Commission.

## 'Judges were the killers' Judiciary's accountability a must, says Bilawal Bhutto Bilawal emphasised that Bhutto was a victim of conspiracy and vowed to rectify historical inaccuracies regarding his death

ABID RAZA

LAHORE: PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari on Tuesday said that any mistreatment akin to what Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto faced would not be tolerated in the future, regardless of the political party or the prime minister involved, even if it is the PTI. Speaking at the Golden Jubilee of the Constitution of Pakistan at Lahore High Court (LHC), he strongly criticised the judicial system. Bilawal lambasted the judges of both the LHC and the Supreme Court, accusing them of being involved in the alleged judicial murder of Bhutto. Referring to those judges as "killers" responsible for Bhutto's hanging, Bilawal remarked that instead of being a place for justice, LHC has been perceived as a crime scene to this day. He expressed his optimism in the apex court, where Bhutto's

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## Country paid enough price for 'engineering'

BUREAU REPORT

LAHORE: Former prime minister Nawaz Sharif said on Tuesday the 'selected' was made the prime minister in the 2018 elections by doing 'electoral engineering'. The former PM said the people of the country had paid enough price due to the selection of an underserving individual for the prime ministerial post. The PML-N supremo, while addressing the parliamentary board meeting in Lahore, stressed that

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## Interior Ministry dismisses passport delay rumors

DNA

ISLAMABAD: In a recent statement, the Ministry of Interior on Tuesday has vehemently refuted claims of delays in the issuance of passports, dismissing rumors circulating on social media and other platforms. The ministry clarified that the Directorate General Immigration and Passports (DGI&P) is adhering to its established routine for passport issuance. Addressing concerns over a speculated shortage of lamination papers causing delays, the ministry spokesperson labeled such reports as

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## President Arif Alvi for enhanced cooperation with the outer world

Envoys of Egypt, Oman, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Sri Lanka and Republic of Cyprus present their credentials

ANSAR M BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi has underscored the need for increasing cooperation with Egypt, Oman, Bosnia, Sri Lanka and Cyprus in the fields of trade, economy, and culture. He expressed these views while talking to the ambassadors-designate/

High Commissioner of the Arab Republic of Egypt, Sultanate of Oman, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Republic of Cyprus and the Democratic Socialist of Sri Lanka, today. The envoys presented their diplomatic credentials to the President and separately called on him, at Aiwan-e-Sadr. Welcoming the ambassador-designate of Egypt to Pakistan, Dr. Ihab Mohamed Ab-

delhamid Hassan, the President highlighted the importance Pakistan attached to its bilateral relations with Egypt reflected by shared bonds of common faith, cultural affinities and values between the people of the two brotherly countries. He emphasized the need for increasing the trade,

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ISLAMABAD: Envoys of Egypt, Oman, Bosnia, Sri Lanka and Cyprus presenting their credentials to the President of Pakistan Dr. Arif Alvi. – DNA

## Asian WOK

WE WELCME YGU AT  
ASIAN WOK, MURREE

30 Minutes Drive From  
Islamabad - Murree Toll Plaza

**TIMINGS:**  
12:30 PM - 12:00 AM

Park Ridge Apartments, Lower Topa, Murree Expressway, Murree  
0300 8403004 | 0300 8503004

# Karachi workshop raises awareness on drug use, HIV

Mr. Shahzad Durrani Ministry of Narcotics Control, in his opening remarks emphasized on the need of collective and coordinated efforts to deal with the menace of HIV among PWIDs

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: The Ministry of National Health Services, Regulations and Coordination, Islamabad in collaboration with Ministry of Narcotics Control (MONC), UNODC, UNDP, UNAIDS and WHO organized an 'Awareness Workshop on Drug Use and HIV' on 19 December 2023 in Karachi. Purpose of this workshop was to create awareness among health journalists on drug abuse, HIV/AIDS, HIV prevention among people who inject drugs (PWID), harm reduction and OAMT. The one-day workshop was attended by representatives of key media houses and prominent health journalists. Dr. Farrukh Mahmood, UNODC welcomed all the participants and said that the workshop is being organized to create awareness on drug use and drug use related HIV, the various interventions/approaches for drug dependence treatment and prevention of HIV and blood borne infections transmission among PWID. Mr. Shahzad Durrani, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Narcotics Control, in his opening remarks emphasized on the need of collective and coordinated efforts to deal with the menace of HIV among PWIDs. He mentioned that drug problem is emerging as a threat to health of the people. There is social and economic impact of drug use on families, society and country. The financial situation of the families of the drug users has an impact on family nutrition and education. The family of the drug user is socially isolated because of the stigma attached to drug use. Children become vulnerable to drug use due to presence of drugs in the household. Drug use increases the burden on health services, not only related to drug treatment but also other health problems including Hepatitis B, C and HIV. Drugs and HIV problem requires a comprehensive multisectoral

response from various departments/sectors. He urged all sectors to play their role in drug use prevention and assured the support of the Ministry of Narcotics Control in all efforts for prevention of drug use and for prevention of HIV among PWIDs. Speaking on the occasion, Dr. Sikandar Memon, Additional Director CDC-HIV, Sindh province said that the Provincial Health Department is taking all possible steps to prevent the spread of HIV among key populations and for care of support of those who are living with HIV. Dr. Umair Malik, National AIDS Control Programme presented a brief background of HIV and AIDS epidemic in the country and shared other dynamics of this deadly and silent disease. He said Government of Pakistan is committed to halt the disease and putting all resources with the support of provincial AIDS Control Programs as well as UN partners and Global Fund for fight AIDS TB and Malaria. He shared that over the last decade, the disease is concentrated in certain key populations like injecting drug users, Male sex worker and Transgender. He added that the epidemic in drug users in Pakistan is alarmingly high. He said that OAMT is being implemented in many countries for prevention of HIV spread among PWID and the results show that HIV transmission has reduced in many countries due to harm reduction interventions including OAMT. The participants were briefed that drugs use has social and economic impact of drug use on families, society and country and the financial situation of the families of the drug users has an impact on family nutrition and education. The family of the drug user is socially isolated because of the stigma attached to drug use. Increased crime is also associated with drug use. There is high vulnerability of children to drug use due to presence of drug use in the family. Drug use increases the burden on health services,

not only related to their drug treatment but also other health problems including Hepatitis B and C and HIV. As drug problem requires a comprehensive multisectoral response from various departments/sectors. Additional Information There is low level of awareness about harms associated with drug use and a serious need to raise awareness on drugs prevention including harms associated with drug use. Drug treatment services need to be strengthened both in terms of quality of drug treatment and coverage of treatment services. MONHSR&C, MONC and UNODC have developed 'Drug treatment protocols' and 'Drug treatment guidelines' for Pakistan. Several trainings based on the treatment guidelines were arranged for the treatment centres staff from the Government as well as private/NGO run drug treatment facilities. Risk behaviors (including sharing syringes and sexual risk behaviors) of drug users increase their vulnerability to HIV. High HIV prevalence in people who inject drugs (PWID) shows that a lot needs to be done which includes increasing coverage of services for PWID. World Health Organization and UNODC, consider drug dependence a chronically relapsing health disorder which often co-occurs with other mental and physical conditions. Drug dependence is not a failure of will or strength of character but a medical condition that could affect anyone. Just like any other chronic health condition, such as hypertension or diabetes, the treatment of drug dependence requires a health-oriented response. Among pharmacological approaches, WHO and UNODC recommend countries to introduce and expand access to opioid agonist maintenance treatment (OAMT) for people with opioid dependence. OAMT involves use of a safe prescribed medicine, such as buprenorphine under medical supervision.



PESHAWAR: Ambassador of Azerbaijan Khazar Farhadov met with Syed Arshad Hussain Shah, Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province of Pakistan. Further deepening of the fraternal relations, especially the establishment of the sister city relations was the topic of discussion. – DNA

## DC for timely completion of arrangements for general elections

DNA

PESHAWAR : Deputy Commissioner Peshawar Afaq Wazir has directed the officials concerned for in time completion of all the arrangements for the polls. Chairing an important meeting regarding the conduct of the general election 2024, the DC directed chalking out of a comprehensive plan to ensure all the arrangements especially the training of polling staff, deployment of staff, provision of required facilities at polling stations, transport and security for the elections, said a hand out issued here Tuesday. He directed all the Returning Officers to ensure implementation of the code of conduct issued by the Election Commission of Pakistan in letter and spirit. The meeting was attended by the Returning Officers of Peshawar including District Election Commissioner Peshawar Hayatullah Jan.

## IRADA launches for defense-industry collaboration

DNA

ISLAMABAD: In a groundbreaking move, the Ministry of Science and Technology has launched the Research and Development Agency (IRADA) at the National University of Sciences and Technology (NUST). Caretaker Minister for Science and Technology, Dr Umar Saif marked the inauguration of IRADA, emphasizing its pivotal role in fostering innovation. Highlighting the objective of IRADA, he emphasized its role in fostering collaboration between the Defense sector, academia, and industry in Pakistan for technological advancement.

He noted that while linkages between these sectors have existed, IRADA aims to formalize and institutionalize these connections. During the event, Dr. Saif Umar expressed his vision for IRADA, envisioning a collaborative effort involving NUST, universities, industry, and the Defense sector. He emphasized the potential for joint projects and products that can be commercialized to contribute significantly to the country's economic development. Drawing a historical parallel, the minister referred to the launch of Sputnik by Russia in 1957 and the subsequent creation of DARPA by the USA. He highlighted the success

of connecting the defense sector, academia, and industry, resulting in the invention and commercialization of transformative technologies such as the Internet, GPS, and cryptography. The minister informed that NUST has graciously agreed to host IRADA and provide the necessary ecosystem for its success. The Ministry of Science and Technology will fund and support IRADA as an independent entity, he added. The minister said this initiative will bring together the top minds in academia, defense, and industry, furthering Pakistan's technological advancements and economic growth.

## 10 students get laptops under PM scheme

MULTAN : As many as 110 students of Emerson University Multan (EUM) received under the Prime Minister Laptop Scheme here Tuesday. During a ceremony held in this regard, a total of 220 laptops were disbursed under the scheme and Punjab Governor Baligh Ur Rehman had distributed 100 laptops among the varsity students last month. Addressing the ceremony, Vice Chancellor EUM Dr. Muhammad Ramzan highlighted the significance of the laptops in enabling students to earn a "Halal livelihood" through freelancing and online programmes, empowering them to contribute to their families. He advised the students to adapt to emerging trends and prepare for future opportunities. Guest of honour, Secretary Agriculture South Punjab, Saqib Ali Ateel congratulated the students, emphasizing that their hard work would instill ambition and determination to overcome life's challenges. The University's focal person, Dr. Adnan Tahir shared that 220 students received laptops through the Prime Minister of Pakistan Laptop Scheme and informed that Punjab Governor Baleegh Ur Rahman distributed 100 laptops and the remaining 110 were dispensed in today's ceremony. A good number of students and faculty members attended the ceremony. –APP

## NAQVI drives Punjab's high-protein fodder export to KUWAIT

ABID RAZA

LAHORE : Chief Minister Punjab Mohsin Naqvi chaired a special meeting where a pivotal decision was made to export high-protein fodder from Punjab to the Kuwait. The meeting approved measures to enhance the cultivation of high-protein "alfalfa" fodder for livestock development, emphasizing the scientific drying and preservation of this nutrient-rich feed. Plans to provide seeds to farmers for cultivating "alfalfa" fodder and

exploring various proposals for "Breed Insemination" to boost dairy development were also discussed. Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi directed the full functionality of the Food Research Center in Sardogha to augment the production of high-protein fodder, aiming to capitalize on the potential for increased beef and mutton exports. He highlighted discussions during his visit to the Kuwait, where the export of high-protein fodder and the demand for dry fodder from Kuwait were key points of consideration. During the meet-

ing briefing, positive outcomes of establishing a disease-free compartment in Punjab were reported. Emphasizing the necessity of modern technology and local expertise for livestock development, Chief Minister Naqvi stressed the importance of attracting local farms to adopt model farming techniques. The meeting was attended by Provincial Minister Ibrahim Hasan Murad, Chairman Planning and Development, Secretary Agriculture, Secretary Wildlife, Secretary Livestock, Secretary Transport.

## KP Caretaker Cabinet initiates skill development program

SAID ALAM KHAN

PESHAWAR: The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Caretaker Cabinet today authorized different Provincial departments to transfer their buildings in spare times for launching classes of skill development among the youth under the Khushala Pakhtunkhwa Program. These departments include Elementary and Secondary Education, Technical Education, Industries and Labour, Health and other line departments. The special meeting of the Provincial Cabinet was held under the chairmanship of Caretaker Chief Minister Justice (Rtd.) Syed Arshad Hussain Shah which was also attended by Provincial Ministers, Chief

Secretary and Administrative secretaries. It was revealed at the meeting that recently South Korea had demanded over one hundred thousand skilled workers in response to which Pakistan could only provide 16000 skilled workers from all over the Country because the country had no skilled labour force to be employes in the outside world. It was also revealed at the meeting that more than 500 thousand youth from all over the province will be important different trainings in information technology, computer, para medics, nursing, trade etc. so that they could earn livelihood for their families both inside and outside the country. Addressing the meeting the Chief Minister said that though the prime

duty of the caretaker government was to facilitate fair and impartial elections but in view of the increasing unemployment and poverty in the province, the youth cannot be left to desperation to become nurseries for the terrorists. He said that the government cannot wait and has to contribute to the welfare of the people at large. "All Mighty Allah might have provided us an opportunity to serve the people this way at this point of time therefore we must come forward to play our role" he said. The Chief Minister had already formed a task force comprising different Ministers, secretaries and heads of different organizations which is meeting on daily basis to make the said program a success.

## Traffic Jam problem

HAFSA ALI

Assalmoalikum, Today I am writing this letter to tell you about something very important that how traffic congestion affects our daily life, like wasting valuable time and causing stress, yesterday I was going to my collage the road was too busy and every vehicle was trying to overtake in a mean time I heard a havoc sound when I saw on the road, a motorcycle was pressed under the truck, the men on the motorcycle was dead on the spot, we face this kind of accident every day due to which traffic on road was always jam on the road. So I am writing this letter to suggest you some solutions, such as promoting alternative modes of transportation like cycling or walking, improving public transportation, and implementing smart traffic management systems. I hope you will publish it I will be very thank full to you for this act of kindness.

## ICCI holds ceremony to honors promoted Police Officers

ICCI President said that the police have an important role in the development of business and investment in any society

ADIL SHAHEEN

ISLAMABAD : The Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) organized a ceremony in honor of police officers who have been promoted to the rank of SP. Shams Gill, a retired Police Officer was also given a shield and his services were lauded. Speaking on the occasion, Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari, President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce said that the police have an important role in the development of business and investment in any society because when the police provide a peaceful and safe environment to the business community and investors, the business activities flourish and the society moves towards


prosperity. He said that the performance of Islamabad police is much better than other cities of the country which is commendable. He congratulated the promoted police officers and urged them to use modern technology to control crime to make Islamabad a role model city for law-and-order situation. Fasad Waheed, Senior Vice President of ICCI, said that the close relationship between ICCI and the Islamabad Police is very helpful for the better protection of the interests of the business community and the development of the city. He said that the relationship of trust between the police and citizens is very important in controlling crime in Islamabad, so the police should make more progress in



this regard. Engr. Azhar ul Islam Zafar, Vice President ICCI, said that the police are maintaining law and order in the city with better efforts and their services in this regard are commendable. He said that there is a need to improve the image of the police in society and assured that ICCI will play its role in promoting the positive

image of the police in society. He stressed that the police business community and the police should work together to thwart the efforts of those who disturb the peace of the city. Khalid Iqbal Malik, Group Leader ICCI, said that compared to cities like London and New York, the law-and-order situation in Islamabad is better, for which

the services of the police are laudable. He said that the police have an important role in making the people abide by the law and hoped that the Islamabad police would fulfill this role well. He said that despite the scarcity of resources, Islamabad Police is trying to provide better service to the public, for which it deserves praise.



### NATIONAL ELECTRIC POWER REGULATORY AUTHORITY (NEPRA)

POWER WITH SAFETY

بش میں اگر آپ بھیکے ہوئے ہیں یا گھر کی گھنٹی (ڈور بیل) گیلی ہے تو اسے نہ بجا لیں۔

بھیکے حفاظت کے ساتھ

#### HEARING REGARDING FUEL CHARGES

ADJUSTMENT FOR THE MONTH OF NOVEMBER 2023 FOR EX-WAPDA DISTRIBUTION COMPANIES

- Pursuant to Section 31(7) of the NEPRA Act (XL of 1997) and the mechanism for monthly fuel price adjustment prescribed by the Authority in the tariff determinations of Ex-WAPDA Distribution Companies, the Authority may on monthly basis make adjustments in the approved tariff on account of any variations in the fuel charges and policy guidelines as the Federal Government may issue and notify the tariff so adjusted in the official Gazette.
- Based on the information provided by the Central Power Purchasing Agency Guarantee Limited (CPA-G), the actual fuel charges for the Ex-WAPDA Distribution Companies for the month of **November 2023** requested by CPA-G are as under:-

Generation Source	GWh	%	Mlns. Rs.	Rs./kWh
Hydel	2,755	36.50%	-	-
Coal - Local	987	13.08%	15,078	15.2698
Coal - Imported	486	6.44%	7,057	14.5305
HSD	-	0.00%	-	-
RFO	0.3	0.00%	13	46.7125
Gas	695	9.21%	10,157	14.6197
RLNG	798	10.57%	18,926	23.7171
Nuclear	1,572	20.83%	1,897	1.2071
Import Iran	30	0.39%	824	27.7281
Wind	148	1.96%	-	-
Baggasse	27	0.35%	160	5.9822
Solar	50	0.66%	-	-
<b>Energy Generated</b>	<b>7,547</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>54,113</b>	<b>7.1704</b>
Previous Adjustment	-	0.00%	15,982	2.1177
Sale to IPPs	(31)	-0.41%	(1,260)	41.1793
Transmission Losses	(228)	-3.02%	-	0.2866
<b>Net Delivered to DISCOs</b>	<b>7,288</b>	<b>96.57%</b>	<b>68,834</b>	<b>9.4448</b>

- On the basis of the above data, an increase of Rs. 4.6617/kWh over the reference fuel charges as per the notified Annex-IV of the decision of the Authority for XWDISCOs i.e. Rs. 4.7831/kWh, has been requested by CPA-G for the month of **November 2023**. In this regard, a hearing to consider the proposed adjustment is scheduled as under:

**Date:** December 27, 2023  
**Time:** 01:30 pm  
**Venue:** NEPRA Tower and Online

- Following link may be used for participation in the hearing through Zoom;  
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89042314524>
- All the interested/affected parties are invited to raise written/oral objections as permissible under the law at the public hearing. Copies of the Act, Rules, Regulation, Codes, determinations of the Authority and the request filed by CPA-G are available at NEPRA website: [www.nepra.org.pk](http://www.nepra.org.pk)

PID (I) No. 3746/23 Registrar NEPRA  
 NEPRA Tower, Attaturk Avenue (East), G-5/1, Islamabad  
 Phone: 051-2013200 Fax: 051-2600021, E.mail: [registrar@nepra.org.pk](mailto:registrar@nepra.org.pk)

## Empowering abilities

# DGSE hosts program on Int'l Day of persons with disabilities

DNA

ISLAMABAD: On the auspicious occasion of the International Day of Persons with Disabilities, the Directorate General of Special Education (DGSE) hosted a heartwarming program featuring Caretaker Federal Minister for Human Rights, Mr. Khalil George, as the esteemed Chief Guest. The program was a testament to the extraordinary talents of special children from DGSE's special education centers who took center stage with stirring performances on national songs and captivating tableau presentations. Their inspiring showcase left an indelible mark on the audience, highlighting the power of inclusivity and the unique abilities of every individual. Addressing the gathering, Mr. Khalil George commended the exceptional talents and performances of the special students, emphasizing the importance of recognizing and nurturing the potential within every person, regardless of abilities. His encouraging words resonated with the spirit of the International Day of Persons with Disabilities. The Director General of Special Education, Sheikh Azhar Sajjad delivered a warm welcome address, shedding light on the essential functions of DGSE in providing quality education and fostering an inclusive environment for individuals with diverse abilities. In a significant gesture towards empowerment, tool kits including mobile repairing kits, beautician kits, sewing machines and wheelchairs for self-employment and self-reliance were distributed among trainees with disabilities by the Chief Guest, Mr. Khalil George, the Director General, and the Country Director of CBM. This initiative aimed to equip individuals with the necessary tools to enhance their skills and pursue self-employment opportunities. The event was graced by the



presence of directors, deputy directors, dedicated teachers, proud parents of students, and representatives from NGOs

and INGOs. Their collective presence underscored the collaborative effort needed to create a more inclu-

sive and supportive society. The Directorate General of Special Education remains committed to its mission of

empowering individuals with disabilities, and this celebration on the International Day of Persons with Disabilities

stands as a testament to the agency's dedication to creating a world where everyone has the opportunity to thrive.

## National Days and Armed Forces Days

### DECEMBER

- Dec 01/Romania National Day
- Dec 02/United Arab Emirates National Day
- Dec 02/Laos Republic National Day
- Dec 05/Thailand National Day
- Dec 06/Finland Independence Day
- Dec 07/India Armed Forces Flag Day
- Dec 09/Tanzania National Day
- Dec 11/Oman Armed Forces Day
- Dec 12/Kenya Independence Day
- Dec 12/Turkmenistan Neutrality Day
- Dec 16/Bahrain National Day
- Dec 16/Kazakhstan Independence Day
- Dec 18/Qatar National Day
- Dec 18/Niger National Day
- Dec 23/Philippines Armed Forces Day
- Dec 23/Japan National Day

## Hotels & Restaurants



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



Turkish Airlines.....8494949



## Emergency

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



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



## Hospitals

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



## Departments

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

## Water Tank

Islamabad.....0321-5744480

# Empowering women thru digital inclusion priority

This LOI is dedicated to contributing to the UN Sustainable Development Goals, particularly SDG 5 (Gender Equality) and SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure). The Action Coalition invites collaboration from takeholders, NGOs, and businesses to join this initiative and contribute to the cause of women's digital inclusion in Pakistan

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Chairperson Ms. Nilofar Bakhtiar signed the LOI on behalf of NCSW. At this occasion, she underscored the importance of bridging the digital gender gap and also highlighted the efforts of NCSW for this cause. She also introduced the report titled as "Digitalization and Women in Pakistan" prepared and published by NCSW. National Commission on the Status of Women (NCSW), Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA), and the GSM Association (GSMA) announced today establishment of the 'Action Coalition on Women's Digital Inclusion.'

This tri-party collaboration will be committed to bridging the digital gender gap in Pakistan and empowering women through increased access to mobile connectivity. NCSW collaborated with key stakeholders and conducted nationwide consultations in December 2022 to delve into the subject of digitalization. Subsequently, the commission meticulously compiled the insights and findings from these consultations, presenting them in the form of a comprehensive national report titled "Digitalization and Women in Pakistan." This pivotal report was globally unveiled during the 67th Session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) in New York.

The international launch garnered significant acclaim from all participants, reflecting a widespread recognition of its depth, relevance, and impact. NCSW has its prior commitment to advancing the discourse on the intersection of digitalization and women's experiences. Key Objectives of the Action Coalition are to attain gender equality in digital access. This would aim to reduce the gender gap in mobile internet usage and smartphone ownership in Pakistan, fostering an environment of equal opportunities for women in the digital realm. It also aims to run a large-scale awareness campaign that will be launched to inform women about the benefits of mobile

connectivity, addressing barriers related to awareness and understanding of digital opportunities. In addition to this, the Action Coalition will provide comprehensive digital skills training to women, empowering them with the knowledge to use mobile internet and smartphones effectively. This LOI is dedicated to contributing to the UN Sustainable Development Goals, particularly SDG 5 (Gender Equality) and SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure). The Action Coalition invites collaboration from stakeholders, NGOs, and businesses to join this initiative and contribute to the cause of women's digital inclusion in Pakistan.

# US, China, UK remain top destinations for Pakistani exports

ISLAMABAD: The United States (US) remained the top export destination of Pakistani products during the first five months of the current financial year 2023-24, followed by China and the United Kingdom (UK). Total exports to the US during July-November 2023 were recorded at US \$ 2296.424 million against the exports of US \$ 2606.612 million during July-November 2022, showing a decline of 11.90 percent, according to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP). This was followed by China, wherein Pakistan exported goods worth US \$1223.532 million against the exports of US \$877.444 million last year, showing an increase of 39.44 percent. UK was the third top export destination, where Pakistan exported products worth US \$862.397 million during the months under review against the exports of US \$874.066 million, SBP data revealed. Among other countries, Pakistani exports to UAE stood at US \$817.993 million against US \$614.902 million last year, showing an increase of 33.02 percent while the exports to Germany were recorded at US \$612.276 million against US \$746.055 million last year, data said. During July-November, the exports to Holland were recorded at \$559.819 million against \$630.973 million whereas the exports to Italy stood at \$501.985 million against \$491.734 million. Pakistan's exports to Spain were recorded at \$638.783 million against the exports of US \$569.936 million while the exports to Afghanistan were recorded at \$232.697 million against \$213.282 million last year. The exports to Bangladesh stood at US \$248.457 million against US \$364.930 million. Similarly, the exports to France during the months under review were recorded at US \$207.024 million against US \$252.691 million while the exports to Belgium stood at US \$235.611 million against US \$322.509 million. Pakistan's exports to Saudi Arabia were recorded at US \$275.655 million during the current year compared to US \$183.736 million last year whereas the exports to Turkey stood at US \$158.683 million against US \$139.825 million.—APP

# ANF seizes 56 kg drugs in five operations

DNA

RAWALPINDI: Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) while conducting five operations across the country managed to recover 56 kg drugs and arrested four accused including a woman. According to an ANF Headquarters spokesman, 126 heroin-filled capsules were recovered from a passenger's stomach at Bacha Khan International Airport. The accused was leaving for Dubai by flight number PK-183. 27.5 kg hashish was recovered from Zakhakhel area of Khyber while 25 kg hashish was recovered from Dalbandin area. In fourth operation, 2 kg heroin and 500 grams Ice drug were recovered from two suspects in a passenger bus near Islamabad Motorway. In fifth operation, 700 grams Ice was recovered from an accused near the bus stand in Mianwali. Cases under Anti-Narcotics Act have been registered against the arrested accused and further investigations are under process.

# FGEHA all set to initiate new residential projects

ISLAMABAD: The Federal Government Employees Housing Authority (FGEHA) is all set to initiate new residential projects in eight major cities of the country to provide housing to government employees and the general public. "The authority has already received several applications from land owners, companies and firms interested in the mega projects," sources in the FGEHA told APP. They said the applications were invited from land owners, developers, firms and eligible individuals for the supply of land for housing schemes (plots, houses and apartments) projects in major cities of the country. The procedure for applications and selection was being followed as per Joint Venture Regulations 2020, they added. They said the authority was planning to launch new residential projects in eight major cities of the country, including the twin cities Rawalpindi and Islamabad. Other cities are Lahore, Peshawar, Quetta, Multan, Faisalabad and Karachi. "The new housing projects will be started for federal government employees and the general public on the basis of a joint venture," they added. To a question, they said that the FGEHA would complete the development work of Green Enclave-II residential project of the government employees by 2025. "The work of the first part of the project Green Enclave-II (Commoners Sky Garden) is going on vigorously. The Housing Authority Green Enclave II-Project is a joint venture of FGEHA, a subsidiary of the Ministry of Housing and Construction, with Sky Garden to provide low-cost plots/flats to government employees," they added. They said the work on the first part of Green Enclave-II was progressing towards completion, which consisted of about 11,000 kanals of land, and the development work on about 2403 kanals of the first part consisting of (A, B, C, D & E) blocks of Phase-I to be completed by the end of 2025 while 20 per cent work is completed in Block D. The road work and other facilities would also be completed soon as per promises made by the Housing Authority would be fulfilled within the stipulated time period, they added.—APP

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## Briefs

## PTV Bolan fulfills Hazara community's demand

ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Federal Minister for Information, Broadcasting and Parliamentary Affairs Murtaza Solangi said on Tuesday that long standing demand of Hazara community had been fulfilled by start of Hazargi language programmes at Pakistan Television Bolan from today. Delivering his speech at the opening ceremony of "Hazargi language" programme on PTV Bolan, he said the PTV Bolan was already broadcasting programs in Balochi, Pashto and Brahvi languages. PTV Bolan broadcasts were available on cable and satellite, Murtaza Solangi said adding it could also be accessed through terrestrial antennas that would help people in remote areas too. "We are grateful to Prime Minister Anwaarul Haq Kakar for encouraging us to take this initiative," Murtaza Solangi remarked. The minister said that PTV Multan telecast's duration had been extended to 24 hours earlier this month. With the addition of Kan Maitarzi Rebroadcast Center, the number of transmitters of rebroadcast centers has increased from 22 to 23. "Our aim is to ensure equal representation of regional languages on PTV Bolan," Murtaza Solangi maintained.—DNA

## Islamabad police arrest 3,484 accused during last month

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad police arrested 3,484 accused during the last month for their alleged involvement in crime cases and recovered weapons, narcotics and other looted items worth Rs. 164.4 million from their possession. According to a police spokesperson, Islamabad Police demonstrated their commitment to public safety by arresting 3,484 individuals in the past month. The arrests encompass a range of offenses, including cases related to weapons, narcotics, property crimes, burglaries and auto theft. The law enforcement agency's efforts led to the recovery of stolen property worth a staggering Rs. 164.4 million, revealing the extent of criminal involvement in various illegal activities. Among the apprehended individuals are hardened criminals engaged in dacoity, armed robbery, stabbing incidents, theft, and the theft of cars and motorcycles. Islamabad Police, in November alone, successfully seized 45 cars and 82 motorcycles, dismantling criminal operations and enhancing public safety. The crackdown extended to dismantling criminal gangs, as 114 individuals from 45 such groups were brought to justice during the same period. Notably, November also saw Islamabad Police making significant strides in curbing drug-related offenses. A total of 232 drug dealers were apprehended, resulting in the confiscation of 60 kilograms of hashish, 77 kilograms of heroin, 1,460 grams of ice, and 1,054 bottles of alcohol.—APP

## PML-N to take country out of crisis: Daniyal

ISLAMABAD: A senior leader of Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) Barrister Daniyal Chaudhry Tuesday urged all political parties to play a proactive role in strengthening the economy, uplifting the country and underscoring the party's focus on providing relief to the public. Talking to a private news channel, he said PML-N leadership is committed to "a comprehensive, practical, and dedicated election manifesto aimed at addressing issues faced by the nation", adding that the PML-N supreme believes that his party is competent enough to take Pakistan out of the crisis after winning upcoming elections.—APP

## COP28: A commitment to phasing down fossil fuels

The UAE Consensus, a deal struck at COP28, sets ambitious goals for transitioning away from fossil fuels. The agreement includes a commitment to triple renewables and double energy efficiency by 2030, a crucial step towards achieving the Paris Agreement's target of limiting global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius

## DNA

ISLAMABAD: The recently concluded COP28 has made strides with the UAE Consensus, signaling a collective commitment to phasing down fossil fuels. However, the financial challenges and disparities between developed and developing nations persist, requiring urgent attention and collaboration to ensure a just and effective transition towards a sustainable, low-carbon future. The COP28 witnessed a landmark deal, the UAE Consensus, aimed at phasing down fossil fuels and accelerating the transition to a net-zero carbon future by 2050. While hailed as the "beginning of the end" of the fossil fuel era, the agreement faces challenges, notably in financing the just and equitable transition for developing economies. The UAE Consensus, a deal struck at COP28, sets ambitious goals for transitioning away from fossil fuels. The agreement includes a commitment to triple renewables and double energy efficiency by 2030, a crucial step towards achieving the Paris Agreement's target of limiting global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius.

However, the optimism surrounding these commitments is tempered by the sobering findings of the 2023 UN Emissions Gap report. This report serves as a stark reminder that, despite the laudable goals outlined in the UAE Consensus, there exists a significant disparity between the current trajectories of emissions and the necessary reductions needed to meet global climate targets. The gap highlighted in the report raises valid concerns about the effectiveness of current commitments and underscores the urgency for nations to not only meet but exceed their stated objectives. While the UAE Consensus charts a path forward, the issue of financing the transition remains a point of contention. Developing countries, still reliant on fossil fuels for energy, income, and jobs, express uncertainty about their ability to transition without robust financial guarantees. The divide between developed and developing nations persists, with middle-income countries highlighting the economic implications of a fossil fuel phase-out. This was particularly evident in climate negotiations, where concerns were raised about credit downgrades and increased costs

for transitioning to greener energy. One of the central debates at COP28 revolved around the responsibility of historically high-emitting nations to financially support developing countries in their transition away from fossil fuels. Developing nations emphasized the need for concrete commitments, citing the broader objectives of eradicating poverty and sustainable development. The absence of substantial financial support raised concerns about passing the burden to poorer countries while allowing wealthier economies to maintain less ambitious targets. The duplicity of wealthier nations, particularly the United States, was a recurrent theme at the summit. Despite advocating for a fossil fuel phase-out, the United States, along with Australia, Canada, Norway, and the United Kingdom, has been identified as major contributors to oil and gas exploration. This dissonance underscores the challenges of holding developed nations accountable for their emissions. While some financial commitments were made during COP28, they fall significantly short of the estimated requirements. Pledges totaling over

\$57 billion were announced, covering areas such as the loss and damages fund, green climate finance, health, nature-based solutions, renewable energy, relief recovery, peace, methane emissions reduction, clean energy manufacturing, and urban climate action. However, these commitments are inadequate, with developing nations requiring trillions to address climate change impacts. The commitment made by the UAE banking sector to deploy \$270 billion in green finance lending by 2030 stands as a commendable and positive stride toward fostering sustainable development. This financial initiative not only signals the banking sector's recognition of the urgency to address environmental challenges but also underscores its role in facilitating the transition to a low-carbon economy. By earmarking such a substantial amount for green finance, the UAE banking sector is poised to play a pivotal role in financing projects and initiatives that contribute to environmental sustainability and climate resilience. In tandem with this, the Arab Coordination Group's pledge of \$10 billion to support energy transition

represents a collaborative effort among Arab nations to address the critical challenges posed by the transition to cleaner energy sources. This commitment is a testament to regional cooperation in mitigating climate change and fostering the adoption of renewable energy technologies. The financial injection into energy transition projects can catalyze innovation, create employment opportunities, and contribute to the development of a robust green economy. However, the laudable goals set by these financial commitments are accompanied by a sobering reality. The financial needs for the pre-2030 period, crucial for implementing impactful climate initiatives, are substantial. While loans and investments are integral components of financing such initiatives, the reliance on these mechanisms, as opposed to grants, presents challenges for developing countries. Loans often come with repayment obligations, potentially burdening countries with limited financial resources and impeding their ability to invest in sustainable development without compromising other essential sectors, the report added.

## Railways increase ROW charges for five years

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Railways has significantly raised the Right of Way (ROW) charges for a single-track crossing to Rs. 3.8 million for five years which would help the department to generate more revenue. Historically, Pakistan Railways charged Rs. 100,000 per track crossing for 10 years when telecom operators installed fiber broadband, sources in the Ministry told APP. In 2007, they said the charges were increased to Rs. 2.7 million for five years, as the use of fiber broadband expanded. However, in 2022, the PT-led government reduced the crossing charges to Rs. 600,000 per crossing for a lifetime to promote fiber broadband. They said that in contrast, cable TV operators continue to pay only Rs. 100 per year. It is pertinent to mention here that Pakistan Railways has offered to lay fibre optics cables along the railway tracks across the country, in a joint venture with private sector investors to generate revenue for the department. Pakistan Railways has around 7,791 kilometers railway network across the country which will not only help the department to improve its financial condition but also attract investors to invest. The matter also came under discussion during a meeting of the Economic Coordination Committee (ECC), in which the Ministry of Railways pointed out that the department.—APP



ISLAMABAD: Senior Member Federal Public Service Commission, Mr. Akbar Hussain Durrani presenting Annual Report- 2022 of FPSC to President Dr Arif Alvi, at Aiwan-e-Sadr, —DNA

## Pak-China Exchange Conference on Investment Opportunity held in Beijing

## DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan-China Exchange Conference on Investment Opportunity was held here at the Pakistani Embassy, aiming to strengthen cooperation in engineering construction, carbon neutrality, new energy, mining and other fields. With the theme of "New Opportunity, New Cooperation, and New Development", the conference is expected to present a higher level of cooperation, China Economic Net (CEN) reported on Tuesday. Khalil ur Rahman Hashmi, Ambassador of Pakistan to China, said in his speech at the conference that he believes that engineering, construction, carbon neutrality, new energy, energy storage, mining development, green and sustainable development and other fields will be the key of future cooperation between

the two countries. "Now we have entered the second phase of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, our focus is more on B2B cooperation, investment and technology transfer between China and Pakistan, which is also in line with the vision of the leaders of the two countries," he stated. He further said that the Pakistani government has stepped up efforts to facilitate investors and joint ventures in Pakistan. To this end, the government has established the Special Investment Facilitation Committee (SIFC) to provide "single window" facilities to foreign investors and businessmen by removing all systemic barriers. The Prime Minister of Pakistan himself chairs the SIFC Supreme Council. Mining and energy, particularly renewable energy, are priority areas for SIFC. Ghulam Qadir, Commercial Counsellor of Pakistan Embassy in Beijing, introduced the policies and incentives to invest in

Pakistan. "We are looking for Chinese investments in different areas, especially industries that are moving from China to Pakistan where we can export value-added products to the world," he said. He invited Chinese entrepreneurs to participate in the 3rd Pakistan Engineering and Healthcare Expo to be held in Lahore from January 18 to 20, 2024. This event will be attended by many Pakistani related companies and exhibitors, and B2B meetings will be held. The expo is also expected to pave the way for more achievements in China-Pakistan cooperation. Lu Chang, Vice Secretary General China Association of International Engineering Consultants, noted that over the past decade, CPEC has achieved fruitful results in providing employment and high-quality sustainable development.

## Tractor assembling grew by 55.58 percent in four months

ISLAMABAD: Tractor assembling in the country during first four months of current financial year increased by 55.58 percent as compared to the assembling of the corresponding period of last year. During the period from July-October, 2023 about 17,259 tractors were locally produced as compared to the production of 11,093 tractors of the same period of last year, according to the data of Large Scale Manufacturing Industries (LSMI) released by the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics. As compared to the corresponding month of last year, tractor production in the country during the month of October, 2023 grew by 80.74 percent as 5,536 tractors were locally assembled as against the assembling of 3,063 tractors of the same month of last year.—APP

## Hashoo group &amp; Dewan motors join forces

## FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: Hashoo Group, in collaboration with Dewan Motors Pvt. Ltd., Pakistan's authorized BMW automobile importer, is launching a pioneering initiative to enhance the electric vehicle (EV) infrastructure in Pakistan. This collaboration focuses on a phased installation of BMW AC chargers for electric vehicles across Hashoo Group's extensive network of hotels and resorts, including the five-star Pearl-Continental, the four-star PC Legacy, and the three-star select-service Hotel One brand.

This initiative aims to foster green mobility nationwide and contribute to a more environmentally friendly Pakistan. These BMW AC chargers are designed to accommodate vehicles adhering to European standards, ensuring broad compatibility for a diverse range of electric vehicles. Hashoo Group is dedicated to ecologically friendly operations and has committed to achieving net-zero emissions by 2050, along with supporting the country in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals 2030 set forth by the United Nations. An agreement

signing ceremony was held recently in Islamabad, with senior management from both organizations in attendance. Haseeb A. Gardezi, Chief Operating Officer, Hospitality and Education Division, Hashoo Group, shared his thoughts on this exciting collaboration. "Hashoo Group integrates its various business verticals towards more environmentally conscious practices. In line with our sustainability agenda, we are thrilled to mark this significant milestone on our road to a greener Pakistan while at the same time

elevating our customer experience by providing a convenient charging facility for their EVs across our properties." Zaeem UI Haque, Director Operations, Dewan Motors Pvt. Ltd., remarked, "On this momentous occasion, we are proud to serve the nation and play a pivotal role in building essential infrastructure that aligns with global environmental goals. I am excited to see the outcome of this collaboration with Hashoo Group in line with our joint commitment to a cleaner, greener, and sustainable Pakistan."

## PNCA launches calligraphy workshop

## MEHTAB PRIZADA

ISLAMABAD: Under the esteemed patronage of the Federal Minister of National Heritage and Culture Division, Mr. Jamal Shah, the Visual Arts Division of the Pakistan National Council of the Arts (PNCA) proudly announces the commencement of a two-week calligraphy workshop at the prestigious National Art Gallery. This workshop is organized in collaboration with the Ministry of National Heritage and Culture Division, and the Directorate General of Religious Education. Earlier today, the workshop was inaugurated by Caretaker Federal Minister for National Heritage and Culture Division Mr. Jamal Shah along with Caretaker Federal Minister for Religious Affairs & Interfaith Harmony Mr. Aneeq Ahmed, Secretary National Heritage and Culture Division Ms. Humaira Ahmed, Director General of the Directorate General of Religious Education Maj General Rtd. Dr. Ghulam Qamar, Director General PNCA M. Ayoub Jamali along with other key officials. During the inauguration, Minister Mr. Jamal Shah expressed his heartfelt commitment to fostering cultural appreciation and artistic growth among the youth, particularly those enrolled in Wafaqul Madaris. He emphasized that this workshop serves as an inclusive platform, breaking barriers and providing an opportunity for Madrasa students to delve into the rich heritage of calligraphy, a revered art form deeply rooted in Pakistan's cultural tapestry. Minister Mr. Jamal Shah highlighted how calligraphy transcends boundaries, emphasizing values of patience, discipline, and aesthetic expression. He mentioned that this training goes beyond the strokes of a pen; it cultivates a sense of appreciation for traditional art forms, nurturing creativity, and offering a means of self-expression that could benefit these

students immensely in their future endeavors. He articulated his belief that mastering calligraphy not only preserves cultural heritage but also instills valuable skills such as focus, attention to detail, and a deep appreciation for the artistry involved. He envisioned that these learned skills would serve as a foundation for these students, aiding their personal and professional growth, fostering a deeper understanding of their cultural roots, and potentially opening doors to various artistic and professional opportunities in the future. Caretaker Federal Minister for Religious Affairs & Interfaith Harmony Mr. Aneeq Ahmed praised Mr. Jamal Shah, Secretary Culture Ms. Humaira Ahmed, and Director General PNCA M. Ayoub Jamali for organizing this workshop in the federal capital. He stressed the importance of expanding such initiatives nationwide, advocating for calligraphy to be integrated into the curriculum of all Madaris in Pakistan.

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Phone: 051-2266165 / 051-2261960

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

## Islamophobia in Sweden

SWEDEN, known for its commitment to human rights and social equality, has not been immune to the global phenomenon of Islamophobia. Despite its reputation for tolerance and multiculturalism, instances of discrimination and bias against Muslims persist in various aspects of Swedish society. In recent years, Sweden has witnessed a concerning rise in anti-Muslim sentiment. This trend is often fueled by misconceptions, stereotypes, and a lack of understanding about Islam and its followers. Muslims in Sweden, constituting a significant minority, have reported incidents of verbal abuse, harassment, and in some cases, physical attacks. Political discourse can significantly influence public opinion. In Sweden, as in other parts of Europe, there have been instances where political rhetoric has targeted Muslims, linking the entire community to issues such as terrorism and cultural incompatibility. Certain policy debates, such as those around religious attire like the hijab, have further polarized public opinion and created an environment where Muslims feel targeted. Media plays a crucial role in shaping public perceptions. Negative portrayals of Muslims in the media contribute to the perpetuation of stereotypes and the reinforcement of Islamophobic attitudes. Muslims are often portrayed in a monolithic manner, with little recognition of the diversity within the community. Sensationalized reporting on issues related to Islam can contribute to the stigmatization of Muslims. Discrimination based on religious identity is an unfortunate reality in the Swedish workplace. Muslim employees may face prejudice, unequal treatment, or stereotyping, hindering their professional advancement. Additionally, there have been instances where Muslim women, who choose to wear the hijab, report facing discrimination or bias during recruitment processes. The rise in Islamophobic sentiment is often accompanied by an increase in hate crimes targeting Muslims. Mosques and Islamic cultural centers have been vandalized, and individuals have been subjected to physical violence. These incidents not only pose a threat to the safety and security of the Muslim community but also undermine the values of tolerance and acceptance that Sweden upholds. Swedish civil society, including NGOs and advocacy groups, has actively worked to counter Islamophobia. Grassroots initiatives aim to promote understanding and bridge cultural divides. The Swedish government has also taken steps to address discrimination, although challenges persist. Initiatives to educate the public about Islam, encourage interfaith dialogue, and enhance diversity training can contribute to dismantling stereotypes and fostering greater social cohesion. While Sweden prides itself on its commitment to human rights and equality, the presence of Islamophobia poses a challenge to these values. Recognizing the existence of Islamophobia is the first step toward addressing it. Efforts to combat discrimination and foster inclusivity must involve collaboration between government bodies, civil society, and the media. By promoting education, interfaith dialogue, and policies that protect religious freedom, Sweden can work toward creating a society where all individuals, regardless of their religious background, feel valued and included.



## High-standard opening-up opportunity for all

HERE have been claims in some quarters that the relationship between China and the world is changing. With signs of stress appearing in its economic and trade ties with other countries, they claim that China too is turning inward and starting to shut its door on other countries. Such speculation has gained traction amid China's transitioning to a new development paradigm that eschews the former reliance on investment and exports to drive growth in favor of domestic consumption and innovation. Some observers have tried to present this necessary transition as a signal the country is turning its back on the world and turning inward. Yet rather than closing its doors on the world, the country is actually opening them wider. A closer inspection of the stress that has appeared in China's economic and trade relations with the outside world shows that the stress fracture that has appeared is primarily in China's relations with the United States, as a result of the jaundiced view of ties that prevail among policymakers in Washington. Not content with applying damaging blows to Sino-US relations, these faultfinders have been trying to chip away at China's trade and economic relations with other countries, with the aim of reshaping the global production and supply chains so they exclude China. In an attempt to fend off any blame for their injurious actions, they allege that China being at risk of losing its dominant position in the global industry and supply chains is responsible for the damage by closing its doors to the world. China's leadership has on multiple occasions throughout the year elaborated on the need for the country to deepen reform and open up to a high standard, and the steps it has to take to turn the blueprint into reality. These include giving full play to the strengths of China's enormous domestic market, reducing the negative list for foreign investors and protecting their rights and interests in accordance with the law, among other things. At the third Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation in October, Beijing made its position clear that China can only do well when the world is doing well, and when China does well, the world will get even better. Elon Musk, cofounder and CEO of Tesla, for one, has predicted that the Chinese economy will do extremely well over the next decade. He expects China will in the near future become the US electric carmaker's largest market. Showing that he is not alone in having a bullish view of the Chinese economy, in the first half of this year, around 24,000 new foreign-invested companies were established in China, marking a 35.7 percent increase year-on-year, according to the Ministry of Commerce. In striving to accelerate the creation of the new development paradigm and advance high-quality development, the country will intensify its efforts to advance reform and explore new ground and steadfastly expand opening-up. This will continuously generate fresh dynamism and vitality for the Chinese economy and new opportunities in which the world can share. While other countries are looking inward, China continues to look outward.

## Catching flack: Qatar's Gaza mediation is a balancing act

James Dorsey

Long suspected by right-wing Israelis and Americans, Qatar stands out among countries that support Hamas as a target of conservative ire, because of its long-standing relationships with Islamists and past support for the Muslim Brotherhood. To be sure, Turkey has resisted US pressure to cut its ties with Hamas, described by President Recep Tayyip Erdogan as a "liberation group." Pressured by the United States, Malaysia this month cracked down on a local NGO that served...

A HIGH-flyer at the center of efforts to negotiate temporary pauses and Israeli-Palestinian prisoner swaps, Qatar is catching flack for its relationship with Hamas that has enabled its mediation endeavour. Even so, the flack, for now, has been drowned out by the Gulf state's indispensability, established with the tacit endorsement of the United States and Israel. Last month, Qatar negotiated a seven-day truce in the Gaza war and an exchange of more than 100 Hamas-held hostages for 240 Palestinians in Israeli jails. On Friday, David Barnea, the head of Mossad, Israel's foreign intelligence agency, met in Oslo with Qatari Prime Minister Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim Al Thani to revive prisoner swap talks with Hamas. Messrs. Barnea and Al-Thani were scheduled to meet in Warsaw on Monday with CIA director Bill Burns. Mr. Burns played a key role in negotiations that produced last month's exchange. Mr. Barnea hastily arranged his meeting with the Qatari official after Israeli forces without proper rules of engagement mistakenly killed three kidnapped Israelis that had escaped Hamas. The killing sent shock waves through Israel. It reinforced popular demands that Israel prioritise the release of 128 remaining hostages abducted by Hamas during its October 7 attack on the Jewish state before prosecuting its goal of destroying the group. Rather than welcome Qatar's ability to mediate, far-right figures in Israel and the United States have taken the Gulf state to task for hosting exile Hamas leaders on its soil. Amid calls by members of the US Congress for Hamas' expulsion from Qatar, a senior Israeli foreign ministry official warned that Israel would "settle accounts" with the emirate once the Gaza war was over. As if to reinforce that threat, Israeli airstrikes destroyed a Qatari-funded housing complex in Gaza on 2 December. Qatar funded the complex as well as salaries of Hamas-controlled government employees in Gaza in coordination with Israel, which saw the Gulf state's aid as a way of maintaining a semblance of stability in the Strip. Moreover, with Hamas and the Western-backed Palestine Authority on the West Bank at

loggerheads, Israel exploited Qatari support of Hamas to keep the Palestinian polity divided and incapable of equitably negotiating an end to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Qatari officials insist they decided in 2012 to host Hamas leaders after US President Barack Obama's administration asked the Gulf state to establish an indirect channel through which it could communicate with the Islamist group. "The presence of the Hamas office shouldn't be confused with endorsement," said Meshal bin Hamad Al Thani, Qatar's ambassador to the US. The United States agreed with Qatar in October to revisit the Gulf state's relationship with Hamas once all hostages have been released. Officials of both countries left open whether the review would lead to the expulsion of Hamas representatives or to restrictions on their ability to operate from the Gulf state. What the review will entail is likely to depend on whether and in what state Hamas survives the Gaza war. A Hamas survival could mean that the United States, and for that matter Israel, will have a continued need for a backchannel. Analysts note that Hamas, if it survives and is expelled from Qatar, would likely move to Iran, Syria, Lebanon, or Iraq that would complicate future backchanneling. The opening of Hamas' Qatar office followed informal US and European outreach to draw Hamas into an Israeli-Palestinian peace process. In 2010, the US State Department gave a rare green light to diplomat Rachel I. Schneller to publicly debate Beirut-based Hamas representative Osama Hamdan in a forum in Doha organized by the state-run Qatar Foundation. The debate came on the heels of a meeting between Hamdan and Gaza-based Hamas official Mahmud Zahar and former US and European officials. The officials included Thomas R. Pickering, an Arabic and Hebrew speaking former US Undersecretary of State and ambassador to the United Nations, Israel and Jordan; Robert Malley, then the Brussels-based International Crisis Group's Middle East program director and former Special Assistant to President Bill Clinton for Arab-Israeli Affairs, and ex-British UN ambassador Sir Jeremy Greenstock. The meeting occurred as Israel negotiated the release by

Hamas of Gilad Shalit who had been in Hamas captivity since 2006. Hamas released Mr. Shalit in 2011 in exchange for 1,027 Palestinians in Israeli prisons, including Yahya Sinwar, Hamas' Gaza leader, who now tops Israel's most wanted list. Following a familiar pattern of similar contacts with Yasser Arafat's Palestine Liberation Organisation in the late 1970s and 1980s when the PLO was viewed in terms comparable to perceptions of Hamas today, the initial contacts with the Islamist group failed to produce results. Taking place years before Hamas embarked on a convoluted and contradictory process that could lead to recognition of Israel, the talks foundered on deep-seated distrust on both sides. The Americans and Europeans insisted that Hamas recognise Israel and renounce violence if it wanted to be part of a peace process. In response, Hamas demanded evidence that the United States would pressure Israel to halt its West Bank settlement activity and seriously engage in peace talks. Long suspected by right-wing Israelis and Americans, Qatar stands out among countries that support Hamas as a target of conservative ire, because of its long-standing relationships with Islamists and past support for the Muslim Brotherhood. To be sure, Turkey has resisted US pressure to cut its ties with Hamas, described by President Recep Tayyip Erdogan as a "liberation group." Pressured by the United States, Malaysia this month cracked down on a local NGO that served as a major Hamas fundraiser. Authorities said they were investigating financial irregularities. With the only non-Israeli border with Gaza, a history of governing Gaza until it was conquered by Israel during the 1967 Middle East war, and as an involuntary candidate recipient of Palestinian refugees if Israel acts on calls to ethnically cleanse the territory, Egypt is in a class of its own. Meanwhile, Qatar is emerging as a winner from the Gaza war. Qatar has "consolidated its position as a trusted and capable negotiator between Israel and Hamas... This is no mean accomplishment for Qatar which is now globally recognised as a mediator par excellence," said prominent United Arab Emirates political scientist Abdulkhaleq Abdulla.

## Secret for Chinese miracle: selection and election

Qamar Bashir



The Chinese political system has also developed a foolproof criterion for evaluating and measuring meritocracy, which is based on principles of tangible and measurable progress on five parameters: poverty reduction, job creation, local economic growth, social development, and, increasingly, environmental protection. These five important elements serve as the foundation for selecting administrative and political leaders. The political system is designed to generate leaders that are completely tuned, capable, and committed to motivating, inspiring, and encouraging their...

IN 2012, I had the privilege of participating in a Publication Workshop for Developing Countries in Beijing, which included an illuminating journey through Fujian Province in China. Over three days, we traversed this remarkable province, marveling at its stunning natural beauty, witnessing the speed and efficiency of bullet trains traversing hills, and learning about infrastructure feats, including roads beneath the sea. Fujian's mountains were dotted with tunnels, carving paths for roads, highways, and railways. Each city boasted its industrial zones, showcasing a plethora of products in local exhibitions. Markets teemed with fresh produce, restaurants bustled with customers, and beaches offered modern amenities. Ports hummed with vessels, and tourist spots were impeccably maintained. The province exuded affluence, modernity, and contentment among its populace. It was only later that I discovered Fujian's incredible transformation from poverty to prosperity, a feat attributed to President Xi's governance during his tenure as its governor. Fujian stands today as a testament to China's progress and prosperity under his leadership. This inspired me to conduct some background research on the Chinese system, which produces a significant number of visionary, inspiring and effective and, above all, people-centered leaders. My interest compelled me to delve further into the Chinese political system, which has only one political party, yet inside the party, great Chinese leaders grasped one crucial secret of success: people-centric administration. They knew that their pump and show, their own authority and clout within and beyond the country did not rely on the most powerful army or weapons, but rather on the empowerment of the country's people. This idea prompted Chinese leaders to transform their whole political system from ruling to serving the people. They directed all of the country's resources into developing an ethical, aggressive, educated, trained, high-value, and high-capacity human resource. This discovery was one of the primary reasons for China's extraordinary success and wealth, among many others. The secret of this incredibly powerful political formula is based on selection and elections in which the fulcrum is not oratory skill, sycophancy, relationships with high-ranking officials, like or disliking, but one magic word meritocracy and meritocracy alone. The Chinese political system has also developed a foolproof criterion for evaluating and measuring meritocracy, which is based on principles of tangible and measurable progress on five parameters: poverty reduction, job creation, local economic growth, social development, and, increasingly, environmental protection. These five important elements serve as the foundation for selecting administrative and political leaders. The political system is designed to generate leaders that are completely tuned, capable, and committed to motivating, inspiring, and encouraging their target population to reach their maximum potential regardless of gender, ethnicity, or race. They gave their people with the means to provide high-quality education for their children, to train them in a highly effective vocational training center to impart high-quality skills, to teach them good management abilities, and to practice high ethics in running their enterprises. They provide opportunities for high-achieving students to enhance their critical and

sensitive knowledge skills both at home and abroad. The Chinese government's concentration on nurturing a high-quality populous has resulted in the world's fastest-growing economy and drastically improved living standards for the vast majority of Chinese people. President Xi's rise from the grassroots level to the highest position of the President is due to his ability to bring both qualitative and quantitative changes, beginning with village leadership qualifying to town, then province leadership, and finally as he rose to the highest position of the President. President Xi's political career began in 1974, when he joined the Communist Party of China (CPC) and was appointed Party secretary of Liangjiahe. When asked how they found Xi as a leader in an interview, the villagers all agreed that he was strong at planning and finding solutions, he was well-educated, he was tough in the face of adversity, and he was competent at farm labor. As the Party secretary of Liangjiahe hamlet, Xi oversaw a number of measures that helped the peasants, transforming him into "the man of the people." When he took over as village leader, the inhabitants were destitute and had minimal agriculture due to a lack of water and floods sweeping away standing crops. Xi recognizes that the people will be unable to escape poverty until the water is harnessed. He had a desire to build a dam and worked day and night to fulfill his goal. He carried the stone barefooted and shoveled the ground day and night, leading the people from the front and successfully building the dams that provided the farmer with a regular flow of water and spared the crops from floods. Later, he returned to fire and decided to construct a methane tank to produce gas for the residents' cookers and lighting. He traveled to Sichuan to obtain the technology and successfully dug the first methane tanks using cow dung and manure. The first flame from methane gas not only cheered up the people, but it also boosted Xi's prospects of rising to the heights of glory that only he could fathom. The first biogas lamp was later replicated throughout Shaanxi Province. After the agricultural fast track, his attention was drawn to the people's economic development. He set up the first sewing workshop and educated the women to create clothing for the locals and export them to adjacent markets. He established a consignment shop where members of the community could buy and sell groceries and other items. He created a classroom where the villagers learnt to read and write, as well as a mill with machinery supplied by Xi that anybody could use. When Xi won a motorcycle, he traded it in for a tractor and gave it to farmers, introducing mechanization into farming techniques. According to villagers, Xi's only goal was to deliver prosperity and advancement to his people, which he accomplished better than any other leader of his level. In one of his rare articles, he stated that when he was given the responsibility of Liangjiahe at the age of 15, he was perplexed, but when he left at the age of 22, he had a firm goal of life and was full of confidence to become a faithful servant of the people, a philosophy that remained unchanged even when he became president. The firm foundation he provided to Liangjiahe in 2018 made it one of the first villages in the region to say goodbye to absolute poverty, with per capita income surpassing \$3500 USD. His ascension was inexorable, yet

it was based only on merit. He showed leadership potential while ascending through the ranks in Shaanxi. Notably, as Zhengding county's party secretary, his agricultural reforms became a national example. His presidency in Fujian was defined by transformational measures. He demonstrated his economic acumen and strategic vision by spearheading Xiamen's emergence as a Special Economic Zone and modernizing Fuzhou. He focused regional growth and poverty alleviation in Ningde, demonstrating a dedication to equitable progress. His time as governor helped to cement Fujian's economic power by improving infrastructure and attracting investment. His achievements in Fujian provided the platform for his later climb to higher levels of authority, demonstrating his leadership caliber and political insight. Following his governorship in Fujian, Xi Jinping rose up the ranks to become Party Secretary of Zhejiang and, eventually, Shanghai. He oversaw a shift to a diverse, knowledge-based economy in Zhejiang, supporting innovation and ecological sustainability. During his time in Shanghai, he oversaw the successful holding of the World Expo 2010 as well as financial reforms that ensured stability in the face of global problems. His unrelenting anti-corruption stance raised his profile even further. Xi's strong leadership, economic and social reforms, and unwavering anti-corruption attitude catapulted him to the apex of Chinese government, culminating in his presidency in 2013. According to the World Bank, the World Bank's top ten success under Xi's ongoing erasure: pulling over 800 million people out of extreme poverty is a tremendous feat on a global scale and has considerably improved the lives of millions in China. China's economy has grown steadily, cementing its status as the world's second-largest and boasting living standards for millions. Rapid development in artificial intelligence, renewable energy, space exploration, and other fields has helped it establish itself as a prominent participant in the global IT landscape. The CCP's anti-corruption campaign has targeted both high-ranking and low-level officials. Heavy investment in infrastructure projects such as high-speed railways, highways, and bridges, which connect multiple regions and stimulate economic activity, launching clean air and water initiatives, as well as committing to carbon neutrality. The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), a global infrastructure and investment program with grandiose goals, has the potential to enhance economic growth in partner countries. Assert its position on the international scene, increasing its visibility and influence in international affairs. Traditional Chinese ideals and cultural rejuvenation are emphasized, encouraging national pride and cultural identity. Economic growth and development are aided by relative stability and social order. If we want to achieve growth and prosperity, we must follow the Chinese example of defining targets for each administrative head of federation, province, division, and district on the five performance metrics as set by Chinese leadership, determining meritocracy as the only criterion for moving up the career ladder, developing zero tolerance for corruption, and refocusing all of our resources on developing high-quality human resources, both men and women. Otherwise, we'll be stumbling around in the dark with no light to guide us.

## Briefs

Pakistan-US  
to enhance  
coop on...

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came under discussion," it said. "Both sides discussed avenues of joint training and reiterated the need for enhancing training interactions between Centcom and the Pakistan Army," the ISPR said, adding that the COAS also visited Centcom Joint Operations Center during the visit. The army chief landed in Washington last week on his first official visit to the US. Last week, Gen Munir met key government officials including US Secretary of State Antony Blinken, Secretary of Defence (retired) General Lyod J. Austin, Deputy Secretary of State Victoria Nuland, Deputy National Security Adviser Jonathan Finer and Chairman of Joint Chiefs of Staff General Charles Q. Brown. Bilateral interests, global and regional security issues, and ongoing conflicts were discussed during the meetings.

US warns  
citizens...

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suspicion, and reasons for detention may be unclear. "Even if you are registered with the appropriate authorities to conduct business, the risk of detention is high," the advisory added. "The Taliban do not regularly permit the United States to conduct welfare checks on US citizens in detention, including by phone," the State Department warns. "Detention can be lengthy and while in detention, US citizens have limited or no access to medical attention and may be subject to physical abuse." With the US Embassy in Kabul non-operational, the Department of State acknowledges its limited capacity to provide consular assistance within Afghanistan advising US citizens there to contact any US embassy or consulate located outside of Afghanistan.

President  
Arif Aliv...

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economic and cultural cooperation between the two countries. The President expressed Pakistan's deep concern over the killing of innocent people and the tremendous damage done to the public property in Gaza by the Israeli security forces. Dr. Ihab Mohamed Abdelhamid Hassan informed that Egypt was supporting the humanitarian aid to Gaza. Talking to the Ambassador-designate of Sultanate of Oman, Mr. Fahad Sulaiman Khalaf al Kharusi, the President said that Pakistan and Oman enjoyed excellent relations in various fields.

Judiciary's  
account...

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presidential reference is under review, stating that the judges there would cleanse the stigma that tarnished the judiciary's image. Highlighting Bhutto's contributions to making Pakistan a significant power in the Muslim world, Bilawal emphasised that Bhutto was a victim of conspiracy and vowed to rectify historical inaccuracies regarding his death.

Country  
paid...

FROM PAGE 01  
the promises and the actions of the PTI chief during his stint in power were as different as day and night. Talking about this previous run in government, he said the country was running well in 2017 as development projects were pursued. Talking about the projects, he said the foundation of the first motorway was laid in the same period while highlighting that the development projects were being executed at a rapid pace to provide relief to the masses. The PML-N leader claimed that had the same era continued, the country would have reached its destination today. As he said this, he lamented that those countries which were far behind Pakistan had gone ahead today.



ISLAMABAD: Resident playing football in the G 8 Park, which is designated as the Ladies Park. Due to male presence ladies of the area find it difficult to take their children to the Park. – Photo Mudassar Raja

Pakistan unites for actions  
amid climate challenges

This two-day event aspires to unite diverse stakeholders in a collaborative effort to craft a comprehensive roadmap for anticipatory action in Pakistan

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan, grappling with an array of climate-induced and geo-meteorological challenges, is taking a substantial stride toward proactive disaster management. The Pakistan Red Crescent Society, German Red Cross, and The National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA), in collaboration with esteemed partners, including the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), Food & Agriculture Organization (FAO), World Food Programme (WFP), Welthungerhilfe (WHH), Concern Worldwide (CWW), and UN OCHA, organized the Inaugural National Dialogue Platform on Anticipatory Actions in Pakistan here on Tuesday. The nation has been besieged by floods, heatwaves, Glacial Lake Outburst Floods (GLOF), droughts, cyclones, extreme cold and heat, forest fires, and earthquakes—each posing a severe threat to lives, displacing communities, and wreaking havoc on infrastructure. In response, this two-day event aspires to unite diverse stakeholders in a collaborative effort to craft a comprehensive roadmap for anticipatory action in Pakistan. The event convened humanitarian actors,



meteorologists, climate scientists, national governments, academia, community leaders, and decision-makers. Discussions revolved around constructing, reinforcing, and amplifying anticipatory action and forecast-based financing to mitigate the impact of anticipated disasters. Participants delved into strategies for integrating anticipatory action concepts

into existing projects and advancing the utilization of weather and climate data for enhanced disaster preparedness. In his opening remarks on the first day, Chairman PRCS Sardar Shahid Ahmed Laghari underscored the need for collaboration, stating, "In this era, our focus must center on climate-led initiatives linked with timely early

actions to diminish the impact of disasters on vulnerable communities. COP28 discussions align with Anticipatory Actions as well. The National Dialogue Platform is a pivotal step towards building resilience, and the Red Crescent Society is committed to collaborating with all partners for effective anticipatory actions." He mentioned that PRCS would develop Early Action Protocols on the Indus River basin in highly vulnerable districts of Sindh, Punjab & KP. To achieve this target, PRCS looks forward to NDMA and other stakeholders at the provincial level for their support. Lt. General Inam Haider Malik, Chairman NDMA, shared his perspective on the significance of the event, stating, "The challenges posed by climate-induced disasters necessitate a collective and anticipatory response. This platform offers an opportunity for all stakeholders to converge, share knowledge, and formulate strategies for proactive disaster management." He emphasized that this landmark event signifies Pakistan's commitment to fostering resilience and collaboration in the face of climate-related challenges. By harnessing the collective expertise of diverse stakeholders, the National Dialogue Platform aims to chart the course for a more anticipatory and effective disaster management approach in Pakistan.



PESHAWAR: Ambassador of Czech Republic attended a Tennis match in Peshawar. He thanked the Peshawar Tennis Federation for inviting him to the final game. – DNA

QG could sack  
Sarfaraz as captain

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Super League (PSL) franchise Quetta Gladiators brought important changes in their coaching staff with the inclusion of Shane Watson as head coach and Shaun Tait as bowling coach, and another big change in the team is on the horizon. After serving the team for eight years as its skipper, Sarfaraz Ahmed could be sacked as owner Nadeem Omer is scheduled to meet with Watson in a few days, reported by agency on Tuesday. As of now, there is no strong candidate to replace Sarfaraz but as per the report, Rilee Russouw, who returned from Multan Sultans in a trade deal, and Saud Shakeel are the frontrunners to assume the captaincy. Saud's leadership skills are rated highly in domestic cricket and this could be one of the reasons why he is in contention. Nadeem Omer appeared in a local podcast recently where he stated he is "double-minded" on whether Sarfaraz should be removed as a skipper or not. "It is the elephant in the room," Omar said. "Wherever I go, people ask me this. But our franchise is a bit different from the others in the sense that we have a very intimate relationship with these players. I understand cricketers have a shelf life, but I think over Pakistan history, we tend to dump players unceremoniously." Omar then confirmed that he is meeting with Watson in the coming days and if a decision is made on Sarfaraz's captaincy, then he will get the well-deserved honour from the franchise. "Sarfaraz has been off the boil over the last couple of years. There are a lot of reasons for that - the way he was unceremoniously ousted by the PCB didn't help, especially when he had a few more years. We won't dump him unceremoniously. "We haven't decided yet but we'll give him full honours. Sarfaraz told me he would be happy to step aside if Quetta wants to make a change. We have a call with Shane Watson in a couple of days and then we'll decide," Omar added. It must be noted that Quetta confirmed during the PSL 9 Draft that Sarfaraz will remain as the team's captain. – Agencies

PM stresses  
effective...

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Balochistan Skilled Development Fund under the supervision of the Planning and Development Department. Meanwhile, Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar said that the government had taken multiple initiatives to bring about reforms in bureaucracy in order to improve overall governance structure of Balochistan province. Addressing a press conference, he said the province had some chronic and complex issues which ought to be resolved by deputing a blend of upright and hard-working bureaucrats from civil service as well as from the provincial structure. "Our issues are linked with the bad governance, that had been badly affecting the performance of the province for the last few decades," he said. On the request of the Balochistan government, he deputed a competent bureaucrat Shakeel Qadir Khan along with a team, to ensure meritocracy and to streamline the overall structure of bureaucracy.

Imran  
moves...

FROM PAGE 01  
— who was removed from power via a no-confidence vote last year — in the diplomatic cable case. In his fresh petition, the PTI supreme said: "The learned trial court, while deciding the matter discussed in the petition, did not look into the true perspective of the facts and law which makes the impugned order and proceedings since 23/11/23 illegitimate/not-maintainable in the eye of law and liable to be set aside for the proper dispensation of justice." He pleaded with the court to declare the December 12 order of the special court null and void. "[...] It is graciously prayed that the petition in hand may very kindly be accepted while setting aside/declaring illegal, the order dated 12.12.23 by the learned trial court illegally/unauthorisedly while disobeying the law and legislature and preferred the wishes and whims of prosecution respectively in the interest of justice."

Earthquake  
in China...

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fatalities and leaving over 155,000 buildings damaged. State-run newspaper the People's Daily reported an additional 14 deaths and 198 injuries in Haidong, neighbouring Qinghai province. The devastation prompted residents to flee into the freezing streets for safety as emergency vehicles filled the roads. The quake's impact is evident in crumbling structures, including a mosque with a collapsed top and a building reduced to rubble. The quake, measuring 5.9 in magnitude according to the US Geological Survey, is the deadliest in China since 2014. The western hinterland, prone to seismic activity, faced a quake in Sichuan province in 2008, which claimed more than 87,000 lives. Chinese President Xi Jinping called for "all-out efforts" in search and rescue operations, acknowledging the challenging high-altitude conditions.

Interior  
Ministry...

FROM PAGE 01  
"false and baseless." According to the official statement, the DGI&P has successfully procured a substantial quantity of lamination paper required for passport production, ensuring the smooth and timely processing of applications. Contrary to the alleged delays, the spokesperson affirmed that passports in the fast-track category are being printed within a remarkable three days, while urgent passport applications are processed and completed within a five-day timeframe. Even for normal passports, the issuance is guaranteed within a month, assuring applicants awaiting their travel documents. The spokesperson further highlighted the efforts made by passport authorities to arrange an ample supply of lamination papers, attributing the normalization of passport issuance to this strategic move. The statement emphasised the Ministry's commitment to efficient service delivery and urged the public to disregard any misinformation circulating on the delay in printing passports.

Pak announce T20I squad for series against NZ  
The T20I series against New Zealand is slated to kick off on January 12

SPORTS DESK

LAHORE: Pakistan men's chief selector, Wahab Riaz, has announced a 17-member squad for the five-match T20I series against New Zealand, starting from January 12 in Auckland. While speaking in press conference in Lahore, Riaz disclosed that Mohammad Harris has been rested for the series, emphasizing the management's awareness of his capabilities and inclusion in future plans. "We have rested Mohammad Harris for this series. We know his capability and he is part of our plans going forward. There were some domestic performers in First Class cricket who we wanted to give a chance and increase our pool of players, so we rested Harris from this tour," Wahab said. Regarding Shadab Khan, Riaz highlighted the spinner's significance in Pakistan's T20 cricket. Unfortunately, Khan sustained an ankle injury during the Na-

tional T20, requiring an additional two weeks of rehabilitation. "Shadab Khan is a very important member of Pakistan T20 cricket. Unfortunately, he suffered an ankle injury during the National T20 and requires two further weeks of rehab. After that, he'll be available to bowl," Wahab said. Addressing the selection process for the middle order, Wahab pointed out the need to develop players for positions four to seven. He highlighted the performances of Haseebullah in the PSL and white-ball cricket, noting his impactful innings. "Haseebullah played some impactful innings in the PSL in the middle order and has performed a lot in white ball cricket. He opens in domestic cricket but for team adjustment, we need to develop players for numbers four to seven. Khushdil Shah, Asif Ali, Haider Ali, Shoaib Malik, Faheem Ashraf were given chances but they couldn't create that type of impact, so now we're in a

building phase to see which players can fit into these positions," he added. Pakistan squad: Shaheen Afridi (c), Babar Azam, Mohammad Rizwan, Fakhar Zaman, Saim Ayub, Sahibzada Farhan, Haseebullah Khan, Iftikhar Ahmed, Azam Khan, Aamer Jamal, Abbas Afridi, Mohammad Wasim Jr, Mohammad Nawaz, Abrar Ahmed, Usama Mir, Haris Rauf, Zaman Khan. The training camp is scheduled to commence at the National Cricket Academy in Lahore on December 28 and will conclude on January 3rd. **Pakistan tour of New Zealand:** **January 12:** New Zealand vs Pakistan – First T20I in Auckland **January 14:** New Zealand vs Pakistan – Second T20I in Hamilton **January 17:** New Zealand vs Pakistan – Third T20I in Dunedin **January 19:** New Zealand vs Pakistan – Fourth T20I in Christchurch **January 21:** New Zealand vs Pakistan – Fifth T20I in Christchurch.



## Briefs

## BD train blaze kills 4 as opposition calls strike

DHAKA : Protesters set a train ablaze in Bangladesh, killing at least four people amid a countrywide strike called by the opposition to press its demand for the government to resign ahead of an election next month.

The incident on Tuesday was the latest strife sparked by anti-government protests in which dozens of buses and vehicles have been set on fire, with at least six people killed since October 28, when an opposition rally turned violent. "Strike supporters set fire to three compartments of an express train," said fire service official Shahja Han Shikder. "Four bodies have been retrieved from a compartment." There was no immediate comment from the government. With its top leaders either jailed or in exile, the opposition Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) wants Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina to step down and make way for a neutral government to oversee January 7 polls that it has boycotted. Hasina, who is seeking her fourth consecutive term of five, has repeatedly rebuffed the opposition calls to resign, blaming the BNP for the recent deadly street protests in support of their demand.—APP

## Myanmar stands on humanitarian 'precipice,' UN warns

WASHINGTON : One-third of the population of Myanmar, or more than 18 million people, now require humanitarian aid, the United Nations warned Monday, seeking a billion dollars in donations next year to combat the need. The humanitarian situation in the Southeast Asian country has worsened since the coup there nearly three years ago, the global body said. "Myanmar stands at the precipice in 2024 with a deepening humanitarian crisis that has spiraled since the military takeover in February 2021 with the civilian population that is now living in fear," said a report by the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) published Monday. The 18.6 million people who are currently in need of humanitarian assistance is one million more than a year ago and 19 times as many as in 2020, before the coup. "Children are bearing the brunt of the crisis with 6 million children in need as a result of displacement, interrupted health care and education, food insecurity and malnutrition, and protection risks including forced recruitment and mental distress," warned Marceluigi Corsi, the UN's interim humanitarian coordinator for Myanmar.—APP

## Russia says downed Ukraine drone over Moscow

MOSCOW : Russia said Tuesday that Ukrainian forces had attempted to attack Moscow with a drone, but said defenses destroyed the unmanned aerial vehicle with debris falling outside the center of the capital.

The nearly two-year conflict between Moscow and Kyiv has seen both sides launch drones at each other's towns and cities, with Ukraine announcing daily that it destroyed Iranian-designed drones in overnight attacks. Moscow mayor Sergei Sobyanin initially announced the drone attack over the Russian capital without claiming whether Kyiv was responsible or saying where the drone had been launched from. The defense ministry later blamed Kyiv and said air defense systems had downed the drone it said was targeting "facilities" in Moscow, with elaborating, "The Ukrainian unmanned aerial vehicle was destroyed by the air defense forces on duty over the territory of the Odintsovo district of the Moscow region," the defense ministry said.

## World expects US to stop Israel: Erdogan

President Erdogan on Tuesday reminded the United States of its 'historic' responsibility as he appealed to Washington again to stop Israel's atrocities targeting Palestinian

## NEWS DESK

ANKARA : Speaking to journalists as he was returning from Hungary, President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said he reminded the United States its "historic" responsibility in the Palestine-Israel conflict. "The world expects them to take a stand (to stop Israeli aggression)," Erdogan was quoted in an interview published on Tuesday. Erdogan has been critical of the U.S., a major ally of both Türkiye and Israel, for its blatant support of the Netanyahu administration, which the Turkish leader earlier accused of committing war crimes in Gaza. He earlier said "a fairer world," his oft-repeated motto for a change in world order, especially the composition of decision-making mechanisms of the United Nations, was "possible but not with the United States." The president, however, keeps all communication channels open with Washington D.C. despite souring ties over support to Tel Aviv. He recently held a phone call with President Joe Biden. In



his remarks to journalists, Erdogan reiterated how he told Biden in the call that the U.S. had a historic responsibility on the issue. "I believe it. They have the responsibility of persuading Israel to give up the cruelty and end the massacre in Gaza. So far, they almost encouraged Israel, let alone stop it. Encouraged by the United States, Israel ignored international law and human rights. We are talking about an Israel relying on

the United States, which they believe would protect them under any circumstances," Erdo said. "I told Biden this responsibility. I call on them to adopt the stand the whole world expects from them. How many times can the world highlight the necessity of stopping Israel? For weeks now, either at the United Nations or on streets of cities across the world, humanity says enough is enough. The United States should stop

ignoring that call," he said. The president noted that those who remained quiet in the face of Israel's savagery would be held accountable in the annals of history. Türkiye advocates for a trial of Netanyahu and his lieutenants by the International Criminal Court (ICC) for genocide in Gaza. Turkish lawyers mobilized to achieve it and took Türkiye's case to the court recently. "But justice will not prevail, unfortunately, just when Gaza is back to its former calm. The world has still its problems. For instance, we had a grain corridor mechanism, a step taken for a fairer world," Erdo said. He stated that he would soon hold talks with Russian President Vladimir Putin for a revival of the grain corridor amid the Ukraine-Russia conflict. Grain deal. The U.N. and Türkiye-brokered pact allowed Ukraine to export grain and other commodities from three Black Sea ports despite the 18-month war. The deal was vital for global food supplies, especially in Africa, the Middle East and Asia. Ukraine and Russia are major suppliers of wheat, barley, sunflower

oil and other goods that developing nations rely on. "We need to revive the grain corridor. We need to help the African countries. We had a three-party solidarity mechanism as Türkiye, Russia and Qatar. Qatar would provide financial means and we would process the grain in our factories to produce flour and ship them to African countries. We are following it up. I will soon hold talks with President Putin and tell him about the need to make the grain corridor run again. By God's will, we will have a positive answer," he said. The pact collapsed after Russia pulled out in mid-July, complaining that a parallel agreement promising to remove obstacles to Russian exports of food and fertilizer hadn't been honored and that insufficient Ukrainian grain was going to countries in need. Türkiye has positioned itself to facilitate any peace talks between the warring sides. It has opposed the Russian invasion but also the Western sanctions on Moscow. Erdo has maintained good relations with Putin and helped broker prisoner exchanges between the warring sides.

## Philippine president concerned: diplomacy with China deteriorating

President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. said a "paradigm shift" was needed in how his country approaches the South China Sea issue, as diplomatic efforts with Beijing were headed "in a poor direction"

## FOREIGN DESK

MANILA: Philippines President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. said a "paradigm shift" was needed in how his country approaches the South China Sea issue, as diplomatic efforts with Beijing were headed "in a poor direction." Marcos, in an interview with Mainichi Shimbun on Dec. 16, parts of which were shared with Philippine media on Monday, said China was disregarding traditional diplomatic efforts, according to a presidential palace release. "To this point, we have resorted to the traditional methods of diplomacy ... but we have been doing this for many years now, with



very little progress," said Marcos, who was in Japan for Tokyo's commemorative summit with the Association of Southeast Asian nations (ASEAN). "It's time that the countries that feel that they have an involvement in this situation, we have to come up with a paradigm shift," Marcos said, while reiterating the Philippines wants

to avoid violent conflict. He added his government will continue talking to its partners and come up with a joint position stating their responsibilities as far as the West Philippines Sea is concerned. The Philippines refers to the part of South China Sea within its exclusive economic zone as the West Philippines Sea. Last week, Manila and Beijing traded accusations over a ship collision near a disputed shoal in the South China Sea as tensions over claims in the vital waterway escalate. China's foreign ministry said that the recent incidents were "entirely caused" by the Philippines but that maritime disputes do not depict the "whole story" of both nation's relations. Ministry spokesperson

Wang Wenbin told a regular news briefing on Tuesday that China is willing to properly manage differences through dialogue and consultation. "We will not close the door to dialogue and contact with the Philippines," he said when asked about Marcos' comments. In addition to the Philippines, ASEAN members Vietnam, Malaysia and Brunei have overlapping claims with China in parts of the South China Sea, a conduit for more than \$3 trillion of annual ship-borne commerce. The Permanent Court of Arbitration in 2016 said China's claims had no legal basis, a ruling the United States supports but Beijing rejects.

## Pak classic translation book gains popularity in China

BEIJING : Pakistani Literature (Year 1994, Vol.2-3), one of five books in a project focused on mutual translation and publication of classic books between China and Pakistan, has gained popularity in China and is listed good book of Tencent in 2023. Gwadar Pro reported on Tuesday. The book contains over 30 short stories chosen by the Pakistan Academy of Letters and translated and published by Yilin Publishing House. It is the most comprehensive representation of contemporary Pakistani literature. As the initial set of results from the China-Pakistan Classic Translation and Publication Project led by the Import and Export Administration of Publicity Department of the CPC Central Committee, the publication of this book helps promote exchanges between China and Pakistan and satisfies the desire of Chinese readers to understand Pakistani literature. The thirty or so original novels cover ten local languages, including Urdu, Punjabi, Sindhi, and Pashto. The selection offers a diverse range of styles and rich themes, providing insights into Pakistan's history, economy, art and cultural traditions. It gives readers a glimpse of a cross-section of modern Pakistani society and its future. Most of the works focus on the daily lives of ordinary Pakistanis. The novels feature various protagonists, including a bride who brings good luck to her family, a gypsy girl who awaits the blossoming of flowers under a fig tree, an artist who breathes life into puppets but becomes one himself, and a painter consumed by an obsession with nature. The book is written in a subtle and witty style, expressing the observations and thoughts of contemporary Pakistani writers.—Agencies

## Rescue teams evacuate flood-ravaged Australian town

CAIRNS : Rescue teams on Tuesday evacuated a flood-ravaged town in north-eastern Australia, racing to airlift hundreds of people to safety before they run out of food and water. Surging floodwaters have cut off the town of Wujal Wujal in Queensland state, engulfing houses, washing away roads and forcing some trapped residents to shelter on roofs. The largely Aboriginal settlement, in one of Australia's most disadvantaged regions, has borne the brunt of a major flooding disaster that unfolded in the wake of a tropical cyclone. Queensland police disaster coordinator Shane Chelepy said rescue helicopters were preparing to evacuate the town of between 250 and 300 people. "We know that we've only got about another day's worth of water in that town," he told national broadcaster ABC on Tuesday. "We've had impacts to food, power, overall water, and that's why we're doing that evacuation today." Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese said Tuesday that four military helicopters - including two heavy-lifting Chinooks - had been deployed to help the evacuation. An earlier rescue attempt was abandoned on Monday afternoon because it was "too dangerous to get the choppers through", the Wujal Wujal Aboriginal Shire Council said.—APP

## S Africa platinum mine protest continues second day

CAPE TOWN : More than 2,000 workers were occupying a South African platinum mine for a second day as the owners upped the pressure to end one of the country's biggest mine protests in years. Impala Platinum Holdings, also known as Implats, said that 63 of the 2,205 miners who started the protest Monday had come to the surface during the night. The company called the action an "illegal underground protest" and warned it will "address those employees who engage in illegal conduct and criminal acts in a decisive way". All operations at the mine, northwest of Johannesburg, have been halted while talks are held with the workers and unions. National Union of Mine-workers (NUM) officials "managed to engage workers last night and started the process to address their concerns with management," a company spokesman told AFP news agency. "Hopefully we can respond today through the NUM and agree a process to return all workers to the surface and resolve issues in a normal constructive engagement," he added.—APP

## Iceland volcano erupts following weeks of quakes

OSLO: The Reykjanes volcano in southwest Iceland erupted, spewing lava and smoke into the air, after weeks of intense earthquake activity, the country's Meteorological Office said. Fearing a significant outbreak on the Reykjanes peninsula, authorities last month evacuated the nearly 4,000 inhabitants of the fishing town of Grindavik and closed the nearby Blue Lagoon geothermal spa. "Warning: Eruption has started north of Grindavik by Hagafell," the Met Office said on its website.

Images and a livestream broadcast by Reuters showed molten rock spewing like fountains from fissures in the ground, their bright-yellow and orange colors set in sharp contrast against the dark night sky. Icelandic police said they had raised their alert level as a result of the outbreak and the country's civil defense warned the public not to approach the area while emergency personnel assessed the situation. A coast guard helicopter was going to be in the air shortly to confirm the exact location and size of the eruption, the Met Office said. Reykjanes' international airport, which is located nearby, remained open. "At the moment, there are no disruptions to arrivals or departures at Keflavik Airport," it said on its website. The Reykjanes peninsula in recent years saw several eruptions in unpopulated areas, but the latest outbreak could pose a risk to the Grindavik town.—APP

## EU extends suspension of tariffs in US steel

BRUSSELS: The European Union said Tuesday it would prolong its suspension of retaliatory tariffs on US goods after reaching an agreement in a steel and aluminium dispute triggered by Donald Trump when he was president. The European Commission said in a statement it would suspend its EU "balancing" tariffs until March 31, 2025 after Washington said it would offer further tariff exclusions to EU exporters. EU trade commissioner Valdis Dombrovskis said the "important extension" on Brussels' side was "the outcome of intensive engagement with the US". EU budget chief sees deal on 50bn euros for Ukraine, has plan B He said the suspension gave Brussels "the necessary space" to seek the full removal of 232 tariffs that Washington slapped on EU exports under a 2018 order issued by then-president Trump. In a protectionist move largely targeting cheaper Chinese imports, Trump had slapped high tariffs on steel and aluminium coming from many countries, sweeping up EU exports in the process. Trump's successor, Joe Biden, who also seeks to protect US industry, kept the tariffs in place but granted suspensions for EU exporters. The United States faces elections next year, and some of its states with high steel output are swing states that could help decide the outcome. Trump is the Republicans' favourite to seek election. The EU also faces bloc-wide elections next year that will usher in a new European Commission. Dombrovskis said Brussels is "committed to ensuring that transatlantic trade in steel and aluminium is undistorted.—APP



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador Sohail Mehmood, Director General Institute of Strategic Studies, Islamabad visited Palestine embassy, and expressed deepest solidarity with Palestinian brothers and sisters in the wake of the unacceptable and most condemnable Israeli Military onslaught in Gaza. Ambassador Ahmed Rabei briefed him about the latest situation in Gaza.—DNA

## France, UK pledge enduring support for Ukraine :Cameron

Cameron also said that it was "essential" that President Vladimir Putin was defeated

## WEB DESK

PARIS: France and the UK will support Ukraine in its fight against the Russian invasion "for as long as it takes", British Foreign Secretary David Cameron said Tuesday, adding it was "essential" that President Vladimir Putin was defeated. His comments came as concern grows in Kyiv that Western patience and unity could be cracking in the fight against Russia, almost two years after the invasion began in February 2022. "Britain and France have been staunch supporters of Ukraine and we will continue to be for as long as it takes," Cameron said after talks in Paris with French counterpart Catherine Colonna, adding: "I have no doubt that we can make sure Putin loses and it is essential he does lose." "We must be absolutely staunch in how we back Ukraine," he said.

The White House warned Monday that the United States has only enough authorised funding for one more aid package to Ukraine this year, with headline Republicans in Congress blocking additional aid. Insisting that the West must stay the course, Cameron compared the fight against the Russian invasion to a play in different acts. "The first act was the stunning failure of Russia to achieve its objectives" in the initial phase of the invasion, said Cameron.

"The second act was the brilliance the Ukrainians showed in driving back the Russians... and of course the third act has been more difficult on land," he said in apparent reference to the failure of the Ukrainian counteroffensive this summer to achieve a breakthrough. Cameron, the former prime minister who was unexpectedly appointed Britain's top diplomat last month, added: "But the fourth act is yet to be written

and we must be sure we write it in the correct way." Both Cameron and Colonna were eager to emphasise that Britain and France were on the same page over the major international issues, including Ukraine and the Middle East, even after Brexit. "Our two countries, shoulder-to-shoulder since the beginning, have worked together to ensure that Russian aggression cannot be rewarded, that it is a failure and that Ukraine can



recover its freedom, its sovereignty, its territorial integrity," said Colonna. Meanwhile, US plans one more aid package for Ukraine, then up to Congress President Joe Biden is planning one more military aid package in December for Ukraine in its conflict against Russia, the White House said, then further assistance to Kiev will require an agreement in Congress where prospects for a deal were uncertain. "When that one's done ... we will have no more replenishment authority available to us, and we're going to need Congress to act without delay," White House national security spokesperson John Kirby said. Talks continued on Monday in the Senate, where Democrats have a slim majority, on a deal that would include aid for Ukraine and Israel as well as new measures to improve security at the US-Mexico border. Republicans have insisted that improved border

security be part of any deal on Ukraine aid, although it was unclear whether senators had enough time to clinch an agreement in the days remaining before leaving for a holiday break. "Over the past week, Democrats and Republicans have made important progress towards an agreement on the national security supplemental," top Senate Democrat Chuck Schumer said on Monday. "While the job is not finished, I am confident we're headed in the right direction." However, Schumer's Republican counterpart, Mitch McConnell - whose support would be needed to pass such a bill - said it would "require some time" to reach a deal. Another top Senate Republican, John Thune, sounded a similar note, telling reporters, "Obviously, we are not going to get this done this week. We all know that now."

## Briefs

### Police 'raided' Dar's mother house

DNA

SIALKOT: The mother of former Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leader Usman Dar made serious allegations on Tuesday, claiming that Punjab Police, acting on the orders of Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) leader Khawaja Asif, tortured and manhandled her at her residence in Sialkot. In a video message, Dar's mother asserted, "They [police] raided my house on Khawaja Asif's orders. They tore my clothes, manhandled me, all to prevent me from participating in the elections." She described facing severe ill-treatment, including a torn collar and physical abuse. Despite the ordeal, she remained resolute in her determination to contest the elections, citing it as a decision from her heart and in accordance with the guidance from the Holy Qur'an and Sunnah. "I will participate in the elections no matter what. It's a decision from my heart and as per the guidance from the Holy Qur'an and Sunnah," she declared, expressing her readiness to confront Khawaja Asif even if her house is razed to the ground or she is sent to jail. She appealed to Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Qazi Faiz Isa, seeking justice. Usman Dar's brother, Umer Dar, also condemned the mistreatment meted out to their mother by the police.

### ECP bared from issuing orders in PTI's intra party polls

DNA

PESHAWAR: A two-member bench of Peshawar High Court (PHC) on Tuesday barred ECP from giving its decision in PTI's intra-party election and election symbol case till December 21. Justice SM Atiq Shah and Justice Sahibzada Asadullah conducted the hearing on the writ petition of PTI against the election commission's notice regarding the intra-party election and election symbol. The ECP's lawyer Advocate Mohsin Kamran told the court that he had just submitted a reply. PTI's Barrister Gohar Ali Khan demanded the provision of a copy of the reply. Justice SM Atiq Shah said that it was a legal right of the petitioner and assured them that a copy of the ECP reply would be provided to them. Barrister Gohar Ali Khan requested an extension in interim relief against the Election Commission's notices. The court granted the relief till December 21. Meanwhile, ECP will begin receiving nomination papers from prospective National and Provincial Assembly candidates on Wednesday, (December 20), as the country gears up for a crucial general election on February 8, 2024.

# Artificial rain project a huge success, says UAE envoy

## Ambassador Al Zaabi stressed that the UAE's support for the artificial rain project initiative is extremely important, as only water was used which does not pose any harm to health

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Ambassador of the United Arab Emirates in Islamabad His Excellency Hamad Obaid Al Zaabi said that the fruits of the first artificial rain project of the UAE to mitigate the dangerous effects of the smog affecting Lahore have achieved successes and positive results so far and will continue in the coming weeks. Ambassador Al Zaabi said that the artificial rain project in Pakistan specifically in the Lahore city came under the direct patronage and supervision of His Highness Sheikh Mansour bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Vice President of the UAE, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of presidential court, and through this project unprecedented scientific successes were achieved. The UAE ambassador spoke about the artificial rain project in Pakistan and said that it comes in a step to combat high levels of air pollution, as the residents of Lahore city witnessed the first artificial rain on 16 December, and will continue in coming week, the initiative which was conducted by the government of the United Arab Emirates in cooperation with the Federal government of Pakistan and the government of Punjab province aims to mitigate the dangerous effects of smog affecting the city and its population of more than 22 million people, at the same time artificial rain was implemented which covered 10-15 kilometers area in Lahore. The Ambassador of the United Arab Emirates in Islamabad announced the success of the

artificial rain experiment and said: "This plan was implemented precisely in specific areas of Lahore, and light rain fell in 10 targeted areas." The cloud seeding process included the deployment of 48 flames to stimulate rain, Ambassador Al Zaabi stressed that the UAE's support for the artificial rain project initiative is extremely important, as only water was used which does not pose any harm to health, he gave the example of Dubai and some American states that conducted rain seeding operations. Ambassador Hamad Al Zaabi spoke about the UAE Research Program for Rain Enhancement Science and said that it is an international research initiative launched by His Highness Sheikh Mansour bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Vice President of the UAE, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of presidential court in 2015 to develop rain enhancement research in the UAE and support research proposals and innovative technologies that contribute to addressing water scarcity issues in arid and semi-arid regions by providing a financial grant to selected teams of researchers and scientists.

He pointed out that the Emirates Research Program for Rain Enhancement Science selects every two years two of the most distinguished research projects in the field of rain enhancement from all over the world, and provides a financial grant of up to 1.5 million US dollars for each research project distributed over 3 years at a rate of 550 thousand dollars per year, Ambassador Hamad Al Zaabi said that the program has so far provided financial grants worth more than \$18 million to implement 11 innovative research projects in the field of rain enhancement, these projects work to develop new sciences and technologies to support rain enhancement operations in the United Arab Emirates and also contribute for deepening global knowledge of rain enhancement science and technology. The Ambassador spoke about artificial cloud seeding and said that it is a process of deliberate change in the weather, whereby clouds are stimulated to drop their hidden water or frozen snow over specific geographical areas through specific chemical or biological factors that are dropped into the cloud mass

to increase the density of cloud and water vapor that later falls in the form of rain and snow, and the artificial cloud seeding is used for the following goals: 1- increasing rainfall in areas that do not witness much rainfall, 2- cleaning or cooling the air, 3- preventing storms and reducing hurricanes as a result of early rainfall, 4- reducing the heat of the sun by increasing the mass of clouds. At the conclusion of his talk about the co-operation project between the UAE and Pakistan, Ambassador Al Zaabi said that the process of artificial rain seeding is carried out by planting clouds for condensation or catalysts for rainfall, as these catalysts are planted by aircraft or ground cannons using various materials such as dry ice, solid carbon dioxide, silver iodide, calcium chloride, sodium chloride, and water mist, and the process in which silver iodide is used to control the acceleration of the rainfall process is considered the most famous process used for artificial cloud seeding, as it works to increase the density of clouds above their normal rate which makes the ice crystals inside the clouds freeze and then fall due to their weight to the ground before the rising heat returns them near the surface to its liquid state again, and to enhance the guarantee of the success of the artificial cloud seeding process, several natural factors must be present that help in cloud seeding such as the presence of cumulus clouds, the presence of rising air, determining the appropriate time for cloud seeding, and knowing the appropriate amount of stimulating materials that must be injected into the clouds.



### NAB files reference against Imran Khan, Bushra Bibi

DNA

ISLAMABAD: In a significant development on Tuesday, the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) filed a reference with the accountability court against former prime minister and Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder Imran Khan and his wife, Bushra Bibi, in connection to the Toshakhana case. The registrar office of the accountability court is set to take further action after scrutinising the case. The NAB Rawalpindi, acting on allegations of graft, has named only two accused in the reference - Imran Khan and Bushra Bibi. The NAB prosecutor, Sohail Arif, along with Investigation Officer Mohsin Haroon, submitted the reference to the registrar office for further legal proceedings. This development comes after the accountability court on Saturday rejected NAB's request for an extended physical remand of Khan in the Toshakhana case. The court, dismissing the bureau's plea, declared a 21-day judicial remand for the former PTI chairman. The hearing was adjourned until January 6.

### 'Dump and run' at PSX as KSE-100 nosedives over 2,500 points

KARACHI: Investors adopted a dump-and-run approach as the benchmark KSE-100 Index plunged over 2,300 points, falling below the record-breaking 65,000 level with a lack of positive triggers doing enough to push stocks deep in the red ahead of the closing of calendar year 2023. Pakistan Stock Exchange's (PSX) benchmark KSE-100 index underwent selling pressure from the word go, dipping to a low of 62,360.78 points. However, it recovered to close at 62,833.03 after losing 2371.64 points or 3.64%, compared to yesterday's close of 65,204.67 points. Market talk suggested year-end profit-taking and lack of positive positive macros were the major reasons behind investors' dump-and-run approach at the bourse. Pakistan-Kuwait Head of Research, Samiullah Tariq, said that the bears dominated trading at the bourse as the market undergoes year-end correction. - DNA

## Top lawyers bodies express distrust in CEC

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: Top lawyers' bodies of the country - Pakistan Bar Council (PBC) and Supreme Court Bar Association (SCBA) - have expressed distrust in Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Sikander Sultan Raja for holding free and transparent elections slated for February 8 next year. In a statement on Tuesday, PBC Vice-Chairman Haroon-ur-Rashid and Chairman Executive Committee Hassan Raza Pasha asserted the crucial need for the general elections to proceed as planned on February 8, 2024. They emphasise the necessity of all political parties and independent candidates to be provided a level playing field and equal opportunities, ensuring transparency and fairness in the electoral process. While expressing their serious concerns over the conduct of the CEC, regard-

ing election procedures, delimitations, and seat allocations, they "highlighted the growing perception that in the presence of the incumbent CEC, elections cannot be conducted freely and transparently". The PBC cited a "glaring example" of the allocation of two National Assembly seats to the CEC's own native district Jhelum, with a population of 1,382,000 approximately while district Hafizabad, with a population of around 320,000 is allocated only one seat. "A similar imbalance is observed in the allocation of seats for District Rawalpindi. Despite its lower population compared to Gujranwala Division, an additional seat has been allocated, raising questions about the transparency of the electoral process," it added. The PBC said it is evident that the conduct of CEC Raja raises serious doubts about the integrity of the general elections, "presenting an environment that appears to lack transparency entirely".

## Ambassador of Jordan meets Fawad Hasan

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: Dr Maen Khreasat, Ambassador of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan in Pakistan on Tuesday called on Caretaker Minister for Privatisation, Fawad Hasan Fawad, to

discuss issues of mutual interest and cooperation that came under discussion at length. The ambassador elaborated upon Jordan's experience with privatization and the resulting benefits that have accrued to the Jordanian economy, said a press release issued by the Ministry of Privatization. He explained the supportive policies adopted by Jordan have opened up the country for international investment from across the world. The minister while citing similarities between the two brotherly countries appreciated the privatisation program of Jordan as a replicable model for Pakistan. The minister apprised the ambassador on progress in the privatization process in Pakistan. The potential areas for trade and investment between the two countries were also discussed. The minister also expressed his gratitude to King Abdullah II Bin Al Hussein for his longstanding and continuous support for Pakistan.



# Israel faces ceasefire calls amid its genocidal attacks in Gaza

NEWS DESK

GAZA CITY: Israel faced another round of global pressure on Tuesday for a ceasefire in Gaza with a new UN vote and fresh Western diplomatic efforts, although the United States vowed to continue arming its ally. The UN Security Council was set to convene Tuesday to weigh a call for a ceasefire in the besieged Palestinian territory after a previous bid was vetoed by the United States. As the US-backed Israeli genocidal war on the Gaza Strip entered day 74 on Tuesday, massive aerial and artillery strikes continued to pound and level whole blocks and homes and massacre more civilians, mostly children and women. At least 19,667 people have been killed in Israeli attacks on Gaza since the start of the war, according to the latest figures from the Health Ministry. The number of people wounded also rose to 52,586, the ministry said. The Hamas Movement has said that the ongoing and escalating Israeli massacres against civilians in the Gaza Strip, the latest of which happened on Tuesday morning in Jabalia refugee camp, reflect "the criminal policy pursued by the terrorist occupation government." "The occupation is trying to carry out a punitive and displacement plan [in Gaza], under the pressure of bombing and massacres and with complete support from

the US administration, which is fully complicit in these crimes," Hamas said in a statement on Tuesday. The Movement stressed that the Zio-American crimes in Gaza would not succeed in breaking the will and steadfastness of the Palestinian people and their resistance and their adherence to their land and holy sites. In a related context, Palestinian journalist Anasah-Sharif reported that an Israeli attack on a street in Block 2 of Jabalia camp killed and injured dozens of civilians, adding two journalists were wounded in the strike. According to reports on Tuesday, at least 29 people lost their lives in the Israeli aerial assaults that targeted three houses in the city of Rafah in southern Gaza. Many more are also feared trapped under the rubble. Palestinian journalist Adel Zourab was among the victims of the deadly attack. Another Israeli airstrike killed at least 10 Palestinians and injured many others at the Jabalia refugee camp in northern Gaza, a spokesperson for the Gaza Health Ministry said. More fatalities were also reported from Israeli attacks in the city of Deir el-Balah, as well as Maghazi and Bureij refugee camps in central Gaza. Israeli President Isaac Herzog has said his country "is ready for another humanitarian pause and additional humanitarian aid in order to enable the release of hostages". Herzog, whose public role is largely ceremonial, made the remarks at

a gathering of ambassadors, according to his office. "And the responsibility lies fully with [Hamas leader Yahya] Sinwar and [other] Hamas leadership," he said. The UN agency that caters to the needs of Palestinian refugees says that more than 60 percent of the infrastructure in Gaza has been destroyed or damaged. UNRWA also said that more than 90 percent of the population in Gaza have been displaced. "This is a staggering and unprecedented level of destruction and forced displacement, taking place in front of our eyes," it added. The Israeli army's raid on the Ahli Arab Hospital has halted operations at one of the last functioning health facilities in the northern Gaza Strip, according to the hospital's director. Fadel Naim told the AFP news agency that Israeli forces arrested medical personnel and patients and caused damage to the facility, putting the hospital "out of action". "We can't receive any patients or injured," he said, adding that at least four people at Ahli, wounded by Israeli forces on Monday, died from their injuries. Hospitals in Gaza have been repeatedly hit by Israeli air raids and shelling since the start of the war on October 7. As the war on Gaza approaches the 12th week, an Israeli poll has shed light on several significant sentiments among Israelis, many of which indicate a growing frustration with the entity's performance regarding the war on Gaza and a decline in support of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

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