



# Islamabad POST

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### Billionaire Sultan Ibrahim sworn in as Malaysia's 17th king

Detailed News On Page-07

### Iran warns US, No threat will go unanswered

Detailed News On Page-07



### Babar 'not satisfied' with current form

Detailed News On Page-06



#### Given 14- year in Toshakhana case

## Yet another 'hasty' sentence to Imran

### Bushra Bibi also given 14-year sentence; PTI founder disqualified for 10 year; Party to file an appeal in the IHC; a fine of Rs1.573 billion – 787 million each – to the couple

COURT REPORT

ISLAMABAD: The legal woes of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder Imran Khan continue to multiply as an accountability court on Wednesday sentenced the former prime minister and his spouse Bushra Bibi to 14 years in prison with rigorous punishment in the Toshakhana reference. Accountability court's Judge Muhammad Bashir announced the verdict, also disqualifying the former prime minister for 10 years while handing over a fine of Rs1.573 billion – 787 million each – to the couple. During the previous hearing, which was also held at Adiala jail, the court recorded Bushra Bibi's statement under Section 342. Khan told the court that his wife had nothing to do with the case and was being humiliated by being forcibly dragged into it. At the outset of the hearing today, Judge Bashir asked Khan if he recorded his statement. To this, the former premier said that he would submit his statement once his lawyers came. "I have been deceived as I was only called to mark my attendance for the hearing," said the PTI founder. On the other hand, the Islamabad High Court (IHC) termed the notification of Khan's jail trial in Toshakhana and the £190 million settlement cases as correct. The court also dismissed the PTI founder's petitions against the jail trial in the cases filed by the National Accountability Bureau (NAB).



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### PTI candidate Rehan Zeb shot dead in KP's Bajaur

#### Poll postponed in NA-8, PK-22 after independent candidate shot dead

SAID ALAM KHAN

PESHAWAR: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI)-backed candidate Rehan Zeb Khan was shot dead on Wednesday in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa's Bajaur district, police said. The PTI-backed candidate was contesting elections from NA-8 and PK-22 seats. Rehan was present in Sadiqabad Phatak Bazar area of the tribal district in connection with the election campaign when unidentified assailants fired upon him, leaving him dead on the spot. The attack comes in the backdrop of increased terrorist attacks that have plagued particularly Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) provinces in recent months. With more than 128 million voters, various circles have raised concerns over the deteriorating security situation in the country, especially in the aforementioned provinces, with some lawmakers even



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ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of the People's Republic of China, Jiang Zaidong, calls on Air Chief Marshal Zaheer Ahmed Baber Sidhu, Chief of the Air Staff, Pakistan Air Force. – DNA

#### Calls on Air Chief Marshal Zaheer Ahmed

### Chinese ambassador lauds Pakistan's role for regional peace

Both the dignitaries emphasized the need for enhanced Air Force to Air Force collaboration, with a particular emphasis on cutting-edge niche technologies in Cyber, Space and Electronic Warfare domains

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of the People's Republic of China, H.E. Mr Jiang Zaidong, called on Air Chief Marshal Zaheer Ahmed Baber Sidhu, Chief of the Air Staff, Pakistan Air Force in his office. During the meeting matters pertaining to evolving geo-strategic environment and regional developments were discussed. The dignitaries underscored the necessity of revitalizing the framework for operational training across all domains, emphasizing the paramount importance of preparedness and seamless coordination in the face of evolving security challenges. Chief of the Air Staff shared broad contours of PAF's modernization drive in order to transform Pakistan Air Force into a Next Generation Air Force through induction of niche technologies with a special focus on indigenization and revamping of training. Highlighting the significance of the longstanding strategic partnership between the two countries, the Air Chief emphasized that PAF leadership wishes to further deepen the existing

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### Ki receives Afghan envoy as Taliban seek recognition

Ki welcomed Bilal Karimi, the Taliban-appointed Afghan ambassador, in a formal ceremony at the Great Hall of the People, along with ambassadors from Cuba, Pak, Iran and 38 other countries.

NEWS DESK

BEIJING: Chinese President Xi Jinping on Tuesday received the credentials of ambassadors from several countries, including neighboring Afghanistan, in what amounts to the first official recognition of the interim Taliban government by a major nation. Xi welcomed Bilal Karimi, the Taliban-appointed Afghan ambassador, in a formal ceremony at the Great Hall of

Continued on Page 06

### Israeli war crimes continue as death toll nears 27,000

NEWS DESK

GAZA CITY: The Ministry of Health in Gaza released the latest death toll in the Gaza Strip, on Wednesday, January 31, 2023. The Ministry confirmed that the Israeli occupation has killed 26,900 Palestinians, and injured 65,949 others since it launched its aggression on the Gaza Strip. Moreover, it added the Israeli occupation committed 16 massacres against Palestinian families in the Gaza Strip in only 24 hours, killing 150 and injuring 313. Meanwhile, The Hamas government media office has called on human rights organisations "to document this horrific crime". It said on Telegram that Israel was continuing to "exterminate" the Palestinian people without regard to

the decisions of the International Court of Justice, "which demanded that they stop the crime of genocide and ethnic cleansing". Meanwhile, The Palestinian Ministry of Foreign Affairs has called for the formation of an international investigation team to look into accusations that Israeli forces executed prisoners. "According to testimonies of Palestinian citizens, more than 30 decomposing bodies of Palestinian martyrs were discovered buried in the northern Gaza Strip," the ministry said in a statement. "They were killed while blindfolded and with their hands tied, as clear evidence that they were executed... in the most horrific forms." "The Ministry believes that the discovery of this mass grave in

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### Briefs

#### Government declared Bani Gala as a sub-jail

Bushra transferred from Adiala Jail to Bani Gala

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The government has declared Bani Gala as a sub-jail. According to sources, Bushra Bibi, the wife of the former Prime Minister Imran Khan, convicted in the Tusha Khana case, has been transferred from Adiala Jail to Bani Gala under tight security. Bushra Bibi will be imprisoned there. Bani Gala house is the residence of Imran Khan in the federal capital Islamabad. It should be noted that the Accountability Court had sentenced former Prime Minister Imran Khan and his wife to 14 years of imprisonment with hard labor in the Tusha Khana case. After which Bushra Bibi herself reached Adiala Jail to arrest her.

#### Power tariff jacked up by Rs5.62/unit

Consumers will pay an additional amount in next month's bills

ADIL SHAHEEN

ISLAMABAD: The National Electric Power Regulatory Authority (NEPRA) Wednesday increased the electricity tariff by Rs5.63 per unit on account of monthly fuel adjustment (MFA). The decision was announced after the NEPRA completed a hearing on the Central Power Purchasing Agency (CPPA) petition seeking a hike in electricity tariff by Rs5.63 per unit under fuel monthly adjustment for December 2023. The approval will put an additional burden of Rs49 billion on the power consumers. The consumers will pay an additional amount in next month's electricity bills. The recent power hike will not affect K-Electric and Lifeline consumers.

#### COAS chairs CCC

### Zero tolerance for violence during political activity

#### Conference reiterates unequivocal support for Palestine and people of IIOJK

STAFF REPORT

RAWALPINDI: General Syed Asim Munir, NI (M), Chief of Army Staff (COAS) presided over the 262nd Corps Commanders' Conference (CCC) held at GHQ, today. Forum paid rich tribute to the supreme sacrifices of Shuhadas including officers and men of the Armed Forces, Law Enforcement Agencies and the citizens who have laid their lives for ensuring peace and stability in the country. Forum resolved that terrorists, their facilitators and abettors, working on behalf of hostile forces to destabilise Pakistan, will be dealt with full might of the state. COAS stated that Pakistan's sovereignty and territorial integrity are sacrosanct and inviolable. Pakistan believes in peaceful co-existence with all states, however, there would never be any compromise over country's sovereignty, national honour and aspirations of Pakistani people. The forum was briefed on the callous Indian campaign of extra-territorial and extra-judicial killings,

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#### ECP summons emergency meeting

#### The Interior Minister and Interior Secretary will attend the meeting

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: Due to the deteriorating law and order situation in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan, the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has called a meeting at 3 o'clock today. The Interior Minister and Interior Secretary will attend the meeting. Apart from the Chief Secretaries of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan, IGS will also participate. The channel reported that the representatives of other intelligence agencies have also

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### PTI, experts say verdict not to stand in IHC, SC

#### Imran moves SC against rejection of his nomination papers

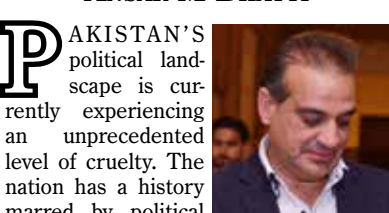
KHAYYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: Following the verdict, PTI and leaders of other political parties as well as legal and political experts shared their views on the accountability court's verdict in light of its timing, which is just days ahead of the country's general elections, slated to be held on February 8. PTI leader and senior lawyer Ali Zafar complained the judgement was issued in haste and that the requirement of justice was not fulfilled. "Yesterday, PTI founder and lawyers said that 17 witnesses should be allowed to cross-examine, but the court told them to go to the high court after which permission will be given for cross-examination," he said, adding that today's verdict was issued before

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COMMENT

ANSAR M BHATTI



PAKISTAN'S political landscape is currently experiencing an unprecedented level of cruelty. The nation has a history marred by political victimization and witch-hunts, particularly during crucial voting periods. Practices such as mud-slinging, horse trading, and bashing have long been ingrained in Pakistani politics. However, the current situation has taken a darker turn. A prominent political party has been effectively removed from the political stage, beginning with the imprisonment of its key leadership and culminating in the confiscation of its election symbol. The story doesn't end there. The party's founding leader, Imran Khan, has been handed a lengthy jail sentence. If relief is not granted by the higher judiciary, he faces spending the remainder of his life behind bars. This situation raises concerns about sheer injustice, as many are convinced that the prosecution and punishment of the PTI leader do not align with legal obligations. The need for a fair and just political environment in Pakistan has never been more pressing. It is deeply distressing to note the unfortunate incident that occurred on

### Are we heading towards a cul de sac?

#### The current situation has arisen due to the active involvement of politicians who, rather than fostering collaboration, have willingly served as instruments of discord against each other

January 31, where the PTI candidate from Bajaur Agency lost life due to an act of violence by unknown assailants. This tragic event highlights a disturbing trend where individuals resort to physical harm when unable to achieve their goals through political means. In the past, similar incidents occurred, but they often went unnoticed due to the lack of a vibrant media landscape in Pakistan. During that era, the sole source of information was PTV, the only television channel in the country. Consequently, these occurrences failed to capture public attention. However, with the evolution of media, especially the rise of mainstream and social media, the situation has undergone a significant transformation. The advent of various television channels, news platforms, and social media channels has enabled people to stay informed about events that may have otherwise been concealed. This heightened visibility has shed light on the experiences of individuals and the actions of political leaders in the past. The accessibility and widespread reach of social media, in particular, have played a pivotal role in amplifying voices

and bringing attention to issues that were once overlooked. As a result, the public is now more aware of the historical challenges and events that have shaped their lives and political landscape. The evolving media landscape has empowered individuals to engage with and scrutinize their leaders, judiciary and other institutions fostering a more informed and vigilant citizenry. One encouraging aspect of the current situation is the assurance that the election is scheduled to proceed on February 8. However, it's essential to acknowledge that a few voices express concerns about unforeseen events potentially disrupting the process before February 8. Despite various challenges and strategic maneuvers, it's noteworthy that the popularity of the PTI remains resilient, indicating a steadfast support base that has not wavered despite all odds. And that is exactly where the shoe actually pinches. The Establishment, it seems, has rarely faced a challenge as formidable as the one posed by the PTI and Imran Khan. Unlike previous instances, where efforts to tame a political party or leader may not have required maximum

exertion, the current situation demands an unprecedented level of diligence to contain the influence and momentum of the PTI and its leadership. Mainly three factors appear to have compelled influential individuals to pursue legal action against Imran Khan and ensure a resolution to the cases. These key elements played a pivotal role in driving the legal proceedings to a conclusive end: Firstly, Imran Khan's recent article in The Economist, where he openly criticized the Establishment and assigned joint responsibility to them and the USA for his removal, likely fueled a sense of urgency among his opponents. This may have prompted them to expedite the closure of his political chapter before he could garner further support. Secondly, the powers-that-be may have sought to conclude legal proceedings against him before the installation of a new political government. Dealing with an elected government might pose a more challenging task compared to a caretaker government, enabling them to exert influence more effectively. Thirdly, a strategic assessment by influential figures may have led to the con-

clusion that imposing a sentence prior to the upcoming elections could dent Imran Khan's popularity. This potential decline in support might discourage his followers, possibly leading them to abstain from participating in the elections on February 8. Whether these gimmicks will prove effective remains to be seen; nonetheless, the incessant events have significantly eroded the credibility of the upcoming elections. Predicting the sustainability of the new government arising from these proceedings is challenging. If it falters, the potential outcomes include another election or an internal change, either of which would further jeopardize the fragile state of democracy and burden the masses. Unfortunately, even after 76 years of existence, Pakistan finds itself in a state of uncertainty. There appears to be no savior on the horizon capable of pulling the country out of its current predicament. In summary, the current situation has arisen due to the active involvement of politicians who, rather than fostering collaboration, have willingly served as instruments of discord against each other. During Imran Khan's tenure, he displayed reluctance to engage with parties such as PML N or PPP, and now, the tables have turned, with him seemingly marginalized by these very parties. This detrimental trend needs to cease if the nation is to progress. It is imperative for politicians to prioritize unity over division, fostering a spirit of cooperation for the greater good of the country's advancement.

# Malaysian envoy for coop with Pakistani hilal meat industry

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Malaysian High Commissioner to Pakistan, Mohammad Azhar Mazlan on Wednesday emphasized the imperative of bolstering collaboration with Pakistan in the Hilal meat industry, highlighting the promising prospects of its potential for the production of Hilal meat, chicken, and dairy products.

He made the remarks during a guest lecture at the Islamabad Policy Research Institute (IPRI) in connection with the 'Distinguished Lecture Series' of IPRI. The lecture, under the theme 'Diplomatic Reflections' was focused on 'Pakistan-Malaysia Relations in the New Era.' The High Commissioner noted that Pakistan was Malaysia's third-largest trading partner export destination and second-largest import source. He said that the imports of palm oil by Pakistan from Malaysia had been increasing since the Malaysian Free Trade Agreement (FTA) came into effect

in 2008. Pakistan imported 9% of its palm oil from Malaysia, while the rest was imported from Indonesia, he added. "As of January 2023, the total number of foreign workers in Malaysia is 1,493,581 whereas the number of registered Pakistani workers is 49,409, which is 3.31 percent of the total number of foreign workers in Malaysia," he remarked. It is estimated that currently Malaysia was home to more than 100,000 Pakistani diaspora, and the official recorded number of Malaysian diaspora stands at 150 people, while there are huge local Malaysian population living in Buner district of Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa. As a way-forward, the envoy pointed out avenues such as elevating the existing Strategic Partnership and covering all areas of economics, technology and defence, enhancing leadership and people-to-people cooperation, addressing concerns in climate change and renewable energy sectors; evolving high-tech industry and benefiting from Pakistan's potential as an agricultural powerhouse, and work

for policy reforms for a shared and inclusive growth. The envoy said that as one of the founding members of ASEAN, Malaysia was highly committed to further strengthening ties between ASEAN and Pakistan. He said that with an aggregate GDP exceeding USD 3 trillion, ASEAN was now ranked as the fifth-largest economy globally, poised to ascend to the fourth spot by 2050. He said that Pakistan was projected to be the 16th largest economy by 2050, and the total trade between ASEAN and Pakistan presently was over USD 11 billion. High Commissioner Azhar Mazlan said that Malaysia would never recognize Israel, until and unless there is a Two-State solution in the Middle East, and an independent State of Palestine is carved out. He remarked that Malaysia was a beneficiary of competent leadership, and through 12 consecutive Sustainable Programs, it has scaled new heights of success in the world.

## Pak HC-designate to SL calls on President Alvi

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's High Commissioner-designate to Sri Lanka Major General (Retd) Faheem Ul Aziz called on President Dr Arif Alvi on Wednesday. During the meeting, the president said that Pakistan attached great importance to its bilateral relations with Sri Lanka, which spanned over seven decades of the strong bonds, according to a President House news release. President Alvi stressed the need to further promote the people-to-people and cultural contracts between Pakistan and Sri Lanka, besides consolidating the ties in the fields of economy and education. He said that bilateral trade volume with Sri Lanka must be increased to its full potential, adding the goodwill feelings of the two countries towards each other should be converted into strong economic ties. APP

## PTA intensifies crackdown on illegal issuance of SIMs

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) Zonal Office in Lahore, in close collaboration with the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) Cyber Crime Circle, conducted successful raid against BISP Outlet located at Sharqpur. This BISP Outlet was found to be involved in activation of SIMs illegally. During the raid, 28 Active SIMs were discovered. The FIA team confiscated these active SIMs along with 01 HBL Konnect device as evidence. 01 person was also apprehended on the premises by the FIA team. FIA is currently investigating the matter further. PTA had filed complaint with FIA earlier based on information regarding illegal issuance of SIMs by the sale channel. The raids are part of PTA's ongoing efforts to prevent the circumvention of the Multi-Finger Biometric Verification System (MBVS).--APP

## Speakers unite for gender equality to combat poverty

QUETTA: The speakers in the consultation organized by the National Commission on the Status of Women (NCSW) on Wednesday agreed that promoting gender equality to address poverty, requires a multifaceted approach that tackles the root causes and empowers both men and women. The participants raised gender issues and poverty with a focus on the economic empowerment of women and the eradication of poverty. They submitted a set of recommendations that included education and skill development with Equal Employment Opportunities for all and especially women and girls, enforcement of anti-discrimination laws and policies in the workplace. NCSW consulted with provincial stakeholders on the preparation of the National Report on "Need Analysis for Financing and Strengthening Institutions with Gender Perspective for the Empowerment of Women and Girls" to be presented by the Commission in the 68th Session of the UN-Commission on the Status of Women, said a news release. The consultation was attended by the representatives from all consortium partners including Civil Society Organizations, youth, academia, media partners

gender experts, representatives from government departments, civil society organizations, NGOs, and media houses. The theme of the sixty-eighth session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women that will take place from March 11 to 22, 2024 is "achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls by addressing poverty and strengthening institutions and financing with a gender perspective." The subject consultation by NCSW in partnership Consortium members UN-WOMEN, UNICEF, UNDP and UNFPA was the concluding consultation in a series of dialogues conducted in Lahore, Peshawar, Karachi, Gilgit-Baltistan and Azad Jammu, and Kashmir. Chairperson NCSW Nilofar Bakhtiar extended gratitude to the consortium partners for their continued encouragement of the NCSW and Consortium's pre-CSW consultations. As that is the overarching topic of CSW 68. She maintained that we look forward to working toward inclusive and sustainable remedies for gender-related challenges with a particular focus on economic empowerment and the eradication of poverty. She underlined that societies can at the same

time fight to foster gender equality while minimizing poverty by using an all-encompassing and integrated approach. Acknowledging the connections between gender issues and poverty is crucial, as is working together to address them with the help of communities, NGOs, governments, and the commercial sector. The opportunity to evaluate the progression and pinpoint persistent impediments limiting success was offered by this series of consultations organized around Pakistan. Balochistan Caretaker Minister for Home and Tribal Affairs Muhammad Zubair Jamali applauded the accomplishments of NCSW, saying that women in Balochistan are progressive, viable, and performing their roles in every area. With emphasis on women's education, he declared that the government of Balochistan will continue to work to reinforce state institutions for women's empowerment in every aspect of life. "We will investigate the forum's proposals with the help of NCSW and UN partners. Due to how closely related the problems of gender equality and poverty are, we must work collaboratively to forge a more equal and prosperous future. We understand that many of our fellow citizens.--APP



LAHORE: Punjab Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi talking to a cancer patient undergoing treatment at the hospital after inaugurating Cancer Care Hospital Manawan in Punjab's first government-built cancer hospital.--DNA

## SCCI, UNDP collaborate to develop youth skills

PESHAWAR: Sarhad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI) President Fuad Ishaq and National Technical Specialist SDP-UNDP Abdul Haseeb Wednesday agreed on selection of top 10 industries regarding technical and information technology training for young males and females. Fuad Ishaq demanded the provision of immediate soft loans for male and female entrepreneurs through PICIC and IDBP. According to details, the meeting was held at the chamber house, which also attended by the chamber senior vice president Sanaulah Khan, Secretary General Sajjad Aziz and other officials concerned. The meeting discussed the provision of soft loans to youth through PICIC and IDBP, enhancement of their technical skills, equipping them with information technology, modern business techniques and tools and other special training programs. Fuad Ishaq demanded proactive steps to equip young male and female entrepreneurs with information technology, modern techniques with assistance from government and international institutions. The SCCI chief highlighted the importance of handmade embroidery work and its designers and asked UNDP to further enhance such males and females skills which had a lot of revenue generation capacity. He urged to strengthen Industrial Development Bank of Pakistan (IDBP) instead of commercial banks, while giving away loans to both male and female SMEs.--APP

## Plantation drive on Rwp Ring road begins on Feb 15

DNA

RAWALPINDI: Commissioner Rawalpindi Division, Liaquat Ali Chatta here on Wednesday said that the plantation drive on both sides of Rawalpindi Ring Road would be started from February 15. During a visit to the Ring Road Project camp office, the commissioner was given a briefing on the progress of the construction work. The Commissioner said that the ring road project would be completed within the stipulated time frame

as 20 percent physical work of the ring road project had been completed. After the traffic network design to link the ring road with the motorway, work on the Thalian Interchange would be started, he added. Swan Bridge should be completed as soon as possible, he directed the authorities concerned. The rest area being built on the ring road would be developed on the pattern of Bhera rest area, Liaquat Ali Chatta informed. Liaquat Ali further informed that the project would be inaugurated on August 14. The Ring Road

project would prove to be a game changer for the people of Rawalpindi, he added. Once the ring road is completed, the residents would get employment opportunities near their respective areas, he said. Special attention should be given to the quality of the construction work, Liaquat Ali Chatta instructed and warned that no compromise would be made on the quality of the construction work. He said that after the completion of the ring road project, there would be a clear difference in the traffic flow of Rawalpindi city.

## Holy Prophet's Seerah must for Quran's comprehension

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony Aneeq Ahmed on Wednesday stressed for following the Seerah of Holy Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him) in true sense in order to have a full comprehension of the Holy Quran. Addressing the inaugural ceremony of the Seerat Chair at Federal Urdu University, he said that truth is the basic trait of Seerat. Follow the truth, speak the truth and its implementation in every sphere of life were the lessons derived from the Holy Prophet's Seerah, he added. The minister said the establishment of the Seerat Chair at the Urdu University was a commendable initiative for guiding the new generation. The greatness of Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him) would continue to be articulated until the Day of Judgment, and familiarity with his life was

essential for leadership, he added. Those doing the job of preaching Islam should align their conversations and discussion with the Holy Quran and Seerat Tayyiba, as both had been leading the human mindset and would continue to do till the end of time, he added "Today, we must reflect on whether we are disloyal to our Prophet (Peace Be Upon Him). Our religion is complete, containing solutions to all issues. Knowledge and action are both necessary," he said, adding that students must be made aware of challenges such as secularism, artificial intelligence, and contemporary issues. Minister Aneeq said it was imperative to include a Seerat book in the curriculum from primary to master's level. Vice-Chancellor Dr. Rubina Mushtaq, Dr. Mustafaez Ahmad Alvi, Dr. Ahtesham-ul-Haq, and Dr. Hafiz

Abdul Rashid also spoke at the event. Dr. Mustafaez Ahmad Alvi, Head of Department of Islamic Thought and Culture at NUML, highlighted that the descent of the Holy Quran and the prophethood of Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him) transformed the course of the world. He mentioned that the purpose of establishing the Seerat Chair was to help students to follow the Seerat Tayyiba in their practical lives. "Accepting religion and adopting Seerat are one and the same," he added. Dr. Rubina Mushtaq, Vice-Chancellor of Federal Urdu University, remarked that the Western culture was having negative impacts on young generation. She said teaching the Holy Quran and Sunnah was essential for all departments of Urdu University. Shields were presented to the dignitaries at the conclusion of the event.--APP



ISLAMABAD: Minister for Energy visiting stalls at Oil, Gas and Minerals Career Expo in Islamabad.--DNA

## ISSI to collaborate with ICIMOD

During the interactive session, Ambassador Sohail Mahmood proposed forming an institutional relationship between ISSI and ICIMOD to strengthen cooperation on the range of mutual interest. He suggested developing a roadmap for collaborative events in 2024, fostering a closer working relationship between the two organisations. It was agreed that the designated focal persons on both sides would steer the collaborative process

ADIL SHAHEEN

ISLAMABAD: The Centre for Strategic Perspectives (CSP) at the Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI), hosted a fruitful in-house session with Dr. Pema Gyamtsho, Director General of the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD), Nepal. The meeting brought together key representatives from both organizations, including Director General ISSI Ambassador Sohail Mahmood; Director CSP Dr. Neelam Nigar and CSP Research team; Mr. Shekhar Gimire, Director Operations, ICIMOD; and Dr. Faisal Mueen, Intervention Manager, ICIMOD. Ms. Aisha Khan, Executive Director, Civil Society Coa-

lition for Climate Change (CSCCC), also attended the meeting. In her introductory remarks, Dr. Neelam Nigar extended a warm welcome to the ICIMOD delegation, expressing hope for beneficial collaboration between the two organizations. For his part, Ambassador Sohail Mahmood highlighted ISSI's efforts in organizing various international and national conferences on climate change and its effects, multistakeholder consultations in the pre- and post-COP28 phases, and ISSI's commitment to deepen its collaboration with civil society on cross-cutting issues. He stressed that ISSI and ICIMOD should collaborate to promote shared objectives relating to raising awareness about the challenges posed by the effects climate change on moun-

tains and glaciers and building climate resilience, including for mountain communities. Dr. Gyamtsho, in his remarks, emphasized ICIMOD's interest in working closely with ISSI on issues of mutual interests particularly focusing on the need for regional cooperation on climate change. He stressed the impact of climate change across South Asia, particularly in the Hindu Kush Himalayan region, advocating for international attention to the Third Pole. Dr. Gyamtsho underscored the need for enhanced transboundary cooperation in areas like water, air pollution, wetlands, ecosystems, and glaciology, citing the potential for South Asian countries to learn from Alpine and Arctic coalitions. Ms. Aisha Khan emphasized the

importance of training for media persons regarding climate change reporting. She also highlighted ICIMOD's role as a valuable data source for ISSI researchers and expressed optimism about increased exchanges between the two organizations, including for capacity building. During the interactive session, Ambassador Sohail Mahmood proposed forming an institutional relationship between ISSI and ICIMOD to strengthen cooperation on the range of mutual interest. He suggested developing a roadmap for collaborative events in 2024, fostering a closer working relationship between the two organisations. It was agreed that the designated focal persons on both sides would steer the collaborative process.



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## Briefs

Mach attack  
martyrs  
funeral  
prayers held:  
ISPR

RAWALPINDI: The funeral prayers of the Mach attack martyrs were held at Headquarters FC Balochistan (North), Quetta who embraced martyrdom while fighting the terrorists in Mach, Bolan on the night of January 29 and 30. The funeral prayers of martyred soldiers identified as Lance Naik Rehmat Ullah, age 30 years, resident of district Dera Ghazi Khan and Sepoy Muhammad Zaman, age 28 years, resident of district Tank were offered in Headquarters FC Balochistan (North), an Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR) news release said on Wednesday. The senior serving military officers, soldiers, and a large number of locals of the area attended the funerals. Later Bodies of the Shuhada were later dispatched to their hometowns, where they would be laid to rest with full military honour.—APP

ANF recovers  
24 kg drugs  
in nine  
operations

RAWALPINDI: Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) while conducting nine operations across the country managed to recover 24 kg drugs and arrested 10 accused, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman here on Wednesday. He said that 2 kg Ice drug was recovered from a Bahrain-bound passenger going from Islamabad Airport while 774 grams heroin was recovered from another Bahrain-bound passenger going from Bacha Khan Airport. In the third operation, 700 grams Ice was recovered from a passenger going to Qatar from Multan Airport. 684 grams hashish was recovered from a passenger going to Sharjah from Islamabad Airport while 460 grams weed was recovered from a parcel sent from the UK at a courier office in Rawalpindi and an accused was also arrested. 10 kg hashish was recovered from a passenger of Sohrah Goth Karachi and 5 kg hashish was recovered from an accused netted near Chamkani, Peshawar. 4 kg hashish was recovered from an accused arrested near Peshawar. In ninth operation, 1 kg opium and 526 grams hashish were recovered from three suspects netted in Lahore. Cases under the Anti-Narcotics Act have been registered against the arrested accused and further investigations are under process.—APP

47 women  
to contest  
polls on  
general seats  
in Khyber  
Pakhtunkhwa

ISLAMABAD: For the first time in the history of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province as many as 47 women candidates from different political parties will contest on general seats of National Assembly and Provincial Assembly in upcoming elections. According to data available with APP, the record increase was witnessed in women aspirants of contesting on general seats after imposition of condition on political parties that at least 5 percent women should be awarded party tickets on general seats. Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) has fielded candidates on the general seats of the National Assembly in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa included, Sobia Shahid to contest polls from NA-29 and NA-31 from Peshawar while Farah Khan is participating in polls from NA-24. Similarly, on the general seats of the provincial assembly, Sobia Khan from PML-N will contest elections from PK-76, Shaista Khan from PK-46. Likewise, Basirat Khan will participate in elections from PK-94, Orkazai and Janzeeba Azam to contest from PK-108, Tank. About the participants of Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) on the National Assembly seats, it filed Meher Sultana from NA-38 and Farzana Shireen from NA-39 on general seats.—APP

Aggrieved journalists to challenge  
Bara Kahu plot allotment in court

The journalists have keenly noted a concerning trend where numerous seasoned journalists are being overlooked, purportedly due to their transition into ownership roles. Despite this narrative, it is noteworthy that several proprietors have been beneficiaries of plots in the Bara Kahu scheme

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Hundreds of journalists affected by the plots gathered in the National Press Club Islamabad to discuss the release of a controversial list against the allottees in the housing scheme by the Federal Ministry of Information and the Federal Housing Authority. A meeting was held in which, after coming up with different proposals, it was agreed that the case will be fought against the illegal

allotments of government housing schemes Behara Kahu and Sector F 14 and 15 in all forums including the high courts. Rules have been violated in them, the age, experience and seniority of the applicant have not been taken into consideration. It has been said in the resolution that senior journalists have been ignored in previous schemes including this scheme, incomplete lists have come to light, so complete lists should be provided. The journalists have keenly noted a concerning trend where

numerous seasoned journalists are being overlooked, purportedly due to their transition into ownership roles. Despite this narrative, it is noteworthy that several proprietors have been beneficiaries of plots in the Bara Kahu scheme. This observation raises questions about the fairness of sidelining senior journalists solely based on their newfound ownership status. The injustice lies in the failure to recognize the extensive contributions of these individuals, who dedi-

cated their entire careers to the profession. It is crucial to acknowledge that even after assuming roles as publishers of newspapers or periodicals, these journalists continue to actively practice their craft. Excluding them from considerations neglects their invaluable experience, knowledge, and commitment to journalism. The criteria for recognition and benefits should be inclusive, considering the enduring dedication these individuals have displayed to

the field, rather than disproportionately focusing on their transition to ownership roles. The participants of the meeting expressed no confidence in the Scrutiny Committee of Journalists and demanded the establishment of a new Scrutiny Committee in which the committee of affected journalists is also asked to be represented. In the resolution, the government agencies have been demanded to inspect the documents submitted by the applicants in both phases of

Bihara Kahu and other proposed schemes, to investigate the submitted affidavits and service records, to check the submission of fake documents. The registration of those should be cancelled. Already beneficiaries of government schemes. In addition to the members of the coordination committee, the former president of National Press Club Shakil Qarrar expressed solidarity with all the affected journalists and announced to support them in every forum for the establishment of merit and rights.



ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Information Minister Murtaza Solangi speaking during a condolence refence held for senior journalist Pervez Shaukat how passed away a few days ago.—Photo Mudassar Raja

ECP grants  
first-class  
magistrate  
powers to  
Presiding  
Officers

ISLAMABAD: The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has delegated first-class magistrate powers to the Presiding Officers to ensure the seamless execution of the general elections in 2024. "All the Presiding Officers will have the powers of magistrate from February 7 to 9 in the upcoming general elections on February 8," the spokesman of the ECP told APP. The spokesman said that the Presiding Officers will be able to conduct trials on the spot besides the powers to be able them to proceed under Sections 169, 171 and 174 of the Election Act. He said the ECP had already granted the powers of a first-class magistrate to the District Returning Officers (DROs) and Returning Officers (ROs) to ensure smooth electoral process. "The magisterial powers were conferred upon District Returning Officers (DROs) and ROs in accordance with Section 193 of the Election Act 2017.—APP

Education can help change  
country's fate: President

ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi on Wednesday said through the combination of education, intellect and morality, the youth could change the fate of the country. He said Pakistan needed leadership and proper use of intellect more than the solutions, which he believed the youth of the country was fully capable of playing this role. Addressing the convocation of Alama Iqbal Open University (AIU), the president said the Chinese development was made on the basis of education and health, and Pakistan also needed to follow the Chinese model to achieve the goals of rapid development.

Citing an example of Vietnam that was destroyed during the war in 1973, the president said that in 1999, the fisheries' export of both Vietnam and Pakistan was US\$300 million that had now been increased to around \$11 billion a year

in 2022 against Pakistan's export of only \$500 million. "Resources do not develop the countries, education does", he added. Calling the successful graduates of the university as elite of the country, the president said they were elite because they had the privilege to secure a graduate degree in a country where 44% or more than 26 million children were still out of school. While comparing with the region, he said all the regional countries had 98% ratio of school going children. "Some 55000 schools had been built in the country so far, while to accommodate all out of school children, the government will have to build 50,000 more schools which is not an easy task keeping in view the resource availability in the country," he added. He pointed out that around 300,000 mosques in the country could be utilized to educate the out

of school children. President Alvi regretted that the developed world that was claiming to be the champion of democracy and humanity had lost the sense of sympathies with the humankind. He said the world was now running on vested interests, as zero sympathies were being shown by the West amid the atrocities being done on innocent people of Gaza. He said Pakistan was hoping to get the Kashmir issue resolved by using the United Nations platform but despite passing of over 70 years, the issue was still unresolved. "If the exploitation of wealth ends in the world and every person gets its due right, the killing of the people will automatically be stopped," the president remarked. He advised the successful graduates of the university to continue their struggle for seeking knowledge in their practical life. He also asked the women graduates not to

spoil their education while sitting at home after getting marriage. He said in today's era of technology, women could easily manage their jobs and family works. The president said due to timely and prudent strategies of the government, Pakistan was declared as the world's 5th best performance country during COVID-19. Recognizing the leadership's decision of establishing the AIU in 1970s, the president said the university was playing key role in imparting education to the people especially in remote areas of the country. Earlier, the president also conferred degrees and medals to the successful students. Vice Chancellor, AIU, Dr Nasir Mehmood said until now, some 5 million students had been graduated from the university. He said the university was providing free education to the transgressors, jail inmates, and children of the martyrs.—APP

Continuous decline in  
remittances is worrying

ISLAMABAD: Former President of the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI), Dr. Shahid Rasheed Butt, on Wednesday expressed concern over the continued fall in home remittances. He said the country's economic lifeline must be saved from the Hundi mafia and that the money received should be circulated, which has long been frozen in the unproductive property sector. Shahid Rasheed Butt said in a statement issued here today that the government must find ways to encourage Pakistanis working overseas so that the volume of remittances could be increased. Up to \$30 billion a year is sent by Pakistanis living abroad. However, the banks withhold the dollars and pay the recipient families in local currency. This is where the government's interest ends. The money received is used to keep many families afloat, and a sizable portion of this capital is invested in real estate. The capital is stuck in property sector for years as investors wait for prices to increase, he informed. The business leader said the property mafia plunders some hard-earned money. In contrast, the remaining money is frozen for many years in the property sector which could be used for national development. He said that if this huge capital is directed to active sectors, it will play an essential role in developing industry and agriculture, but this has never been considered seriously.—APP

Snowfall in Murree; CTP issue  
traffic advisory for tourists

He requested the tourists to follow the advisory to avoid any kind of inconvenience or incident to have safe tourism

RAWALPINDI: City Traffic Police (CTP) Rawalpindi on Wednesday issued an advisory for the visitors heading towards the hill station, Murree to enjoy snowfall. According to a CTP spokesman, the police on the directives of City Traffic Officer (CTO) Rawalpindi, Taimoor Khan had devised a comprehensive plan to facilitate the tourists heading towards the 'Queen of Hills Murree' for spending recreational time with their families and friends in the chilly weather. He said, the CTP had deployed senior traffic officers to monitor traffic arrangements in the hill station to ensure smooth and safe traffic flow during the snowfall. A special traffic control room with landline number 051-9269200 had also been set up where the citizens could call around the clock for any kind of help, he added. He further said the control room would organize all

possible facilities for the tourists and make arrangements for handling any emergency. The spokesman informed that they had increased number of traffic wardens, junior traffic wardens — under the supervision of inspectors — who were deployed at all key points of the hill station. Moreover, they have designated several points for car parking. A number of main roads including Kashmir Point, Mall Road, Guldara Road and other roads had been closed for two-way traffic to ease traffic flow. He said though the snow blanket made the "Queen of Mountains" even more beautiful, which attracted a large number of tourists, but the motorists could face traffic congestion due to slippery roads and traffic congestion. The snowfall attracts thousands of tourists to these scenic sites which resulted in extra traffic load on the roads choking

almost every artery linking Rawalpindi-Islamabad to these hilly spots. Due to the huge influx of tourists towards Murree, the administration and CTP have issued an advisory here which appealed to the citizens to use their own line and avoid using the dual line as preventive measures. According to the advisory, the tourists are requested to use petrol-based vehicles and strictly prohibited to use CNG-based vehicles which may cause problems in cars due to extreme cold in the snow. In the advisory, the families with infants and asthma patients are also advised to avoid travelling to Murree. It also asked the tourists to strictly follow one way and don't violate it for the smooth run of traffic. He requested the tourists to follow the advisory to avoid any kind of inconvenience or incident to have safe tourism.

Seminar to  
promote to  
promote  
Testing  
Laboratory

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Council of Renewable Energy Technologies (PCRET) organized a joint Pak-Korea Seminar on Wednesday to discuss and promote the "Establishment of PAK-KOREA Testing Laboratory for PV Modules and Allied Equipment". The seminar was arranged in collaboration with Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA) supported by Korea Conformity Laboratories (KCL). The project is supported by KOICA through grant-aid of USD 9.5 Million and local share of Rs. 185.8 Million is funded through the Public Sector Development Programme. The Pak-Korea Seminar was attended by a five-member delegation from KCL and Korea Energy Agency (KEA) along with representatives of KOICA Pakistan office, Senior officials of PCRET and the Ministry of Science of Technology (MoST)—APP

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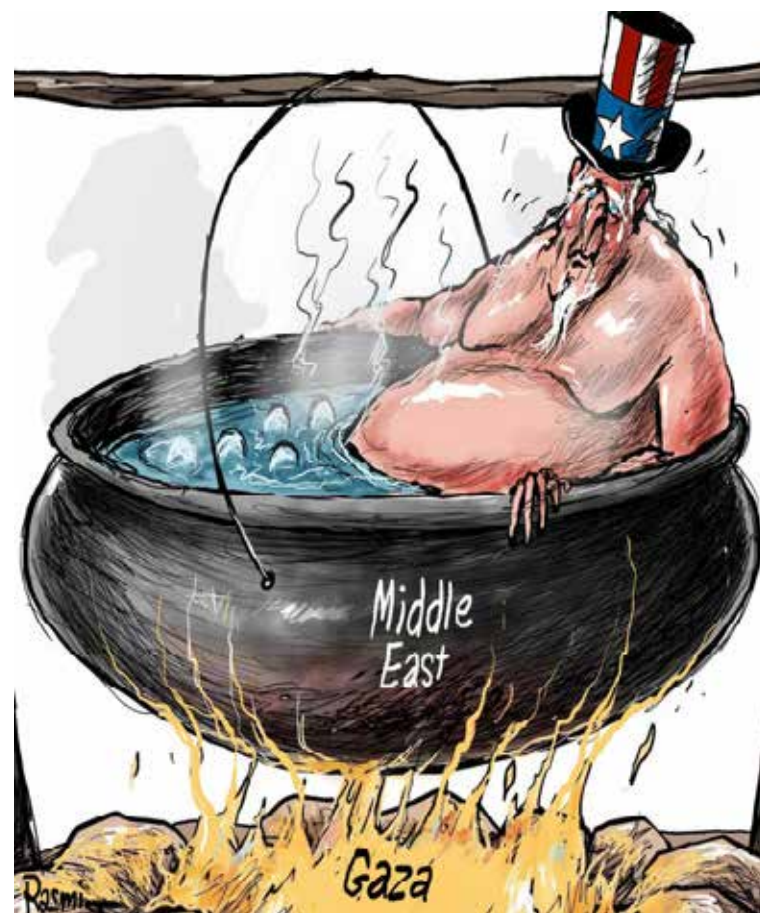
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## Stoltenberg still hawking his outdated wares

NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg is taking full advantage of his visit to Washington this week to assist efforts to push lawmakers in the United States and the European Union to approve respectively a \$6 billion additional assistance package and a 50 billion (\$54.5 billion) four-year budget to support Ukraine in its conflict with Russia. The warm response the NATO chief has received from the Joe Biden administration on the issue was expected, because not only has the Ukraine crisis been orchestrated and continuously exploited by the Biden administration, but also Stoltenberg's extension of his fourth term as NATO chief from July last year to October this year was at Washington's insistence. That he will become the second-longest serving head of the military alliance by then speaks volumes of how much Washington needs a puppet such as him at the head of the organization to help ensure it is always ready to do the US' bidding. With Europe having started to show the desire to stand on its own feet, the US has sought to tighten its grip on the security alliance.

As predicted, instead of providing US lawmakers with any insightful, latest observations from the European front or on how to end the conflict that has proved costly for the whole world, Stoltenberg only acted as a clumsy mouthpiece of the Biden administration. Speaking at a news conference in Washington on Tuesday, Stoltenberg warned: "It will be a tragedy for Ukrainians if President Putin wins but it will also make the world more dangerous and all of us more insecure ... It will embolden other authoritarian leaders – not only President Putin, but also North Korea, Iran and China to use force." With many US lawmakers focused on opposing China, Stoltenberg went further in alleging: "Today it's Ukraine; tomorrow it could be Taiwan." Although the world knows it clearly that the Taiwan question is fundamentally different from the Ukraine crisis, Stoltenberg has never ceased trying to link the two on the international stage. But even the Biden administration is learning to speak with prudence when it comes to China-related issues, not least the Taiwan question, after reaching mutual understanding with Beijing in November on the need to repair bilateral ties and responsibly manage risks. Notably, Stoltenberg chose to avoid his usual preaching on human rights conditions in Ukraine this time. That largely stems from his awareness that US lawmakers are divided on the Biden administration's moves in the Middle East that have not only enabled the grave humanitarian crisis to unfold in Gaza but also cost US lives lately. Not surprisingly, Republican lawmakers who are pushing the Biden administration for tougher immigration and border control policies in exchange for approving more money for Ukraine did not lend an ear to his words. During Stoltenberg's decade-long tenure as its chief, NATO has expanded three times. Although he claimed each time that the expansion would boost Europe's security and make the world a safer place, the opposite has been true. It is to be hoped his successor bears that in mind.



## Historic deal fuels Northern Ireland govt functioning

Before the elections to Northern Ireland's assembly in 2022, Sir Jeffrey Donaldson repeatedly refused to say that he would accept a Sinn Féin first minister. What a difference a deal makes. Although Sir Jeffrey says that he didn't get all he wanted from the British government over changes to post-Brexit trade arrangements, it was enough to satisfy him. In return, he won't stand in the way of Stormont getting its first Irish republican leader, Michelle O'Neill. Sinn Féin is opposed to Northern Ireland's existence. By this weekend, Ms O'Neill could be in charge of it. This would be a seismic event in Northern Ireland. Two years ago, Sinn Féin became the first nationalist party to win a Northern Ireland assembly election. There are urgent reasons for Stormont to sit again, not least to spend the £3bn financial package on tackling hospital waiting lists and settling public sector pay claims. More's the pity that Stormont's power-sharing executive will not be revived in time to prevent Northern Ireland's transport workers going out on strike this Thursday. While the assembly was suspended, infighting within unionism has taken off. Many of the movement's leading lights look adrift from broader concerns. The death of Queen Elizabeth and the 2022 census result, showing more Catholics than Protestants in the north, are signs that the movement risks being left behind. As recently as 2017, unionists held a majority in the assembly, as they had done in every parliament or assembly since Northern Ireland was first established in 1920. Yet the last elections suggested an inbuilt unionist majority had gone. While Sinn Féin's success in the last assembly election was a dramatic result, the most substantive shift was the surge in support for the centrist, border-neutral Alliance party. With its roots – and increasingly its support – in moderate unionism, the party could be seen as a rebirth of Protestant liberalism. Alliance politicians have worked with Sinn Féin to oppose Brexit. Both parties accepted the Northern Ireland protocol, which keeps the region aligned with EU rules to avoid the border infrastructure that had proved divisive before the 1998 Good Friday agreement. The parties have also worked together on controversial issues such as abortion rights and equal marriage. This augurs well for the new assembly, which must vote by December to keep the protocol, rebranded by Rishi Sunak as the Windsor framework. Without details of the DUP's deal with the British government being released, there seem to be little but cosmetic changes made to the framework. The deal's timing is relevant as mainland checks on imports from the continent begin this week. The more the UK diverges from EU standards, the greater the potential cost of bureaucracy involved in exporting to and importing from Europe. Northern Ireland must be able to move on from the smoke and mirrors of Brexit, which has often been used to encourage the traditional insecurities of unionists. The devolved government in Belfast is in charge of most public services, including schools, hospitals, roads and the justice system. For it to function effectively requires the region's politicians to work together and not fuel new divisions. Closer ties with the EU would help by smoothing trade across the Irish Sea. Sir Keir Starmer, who is likely to be in power within a year and favours a better relationship with Brussels, could very well be the right man at the right time.

## Henry Kissinger and American diplomacy

Dr. Muhammad Akram Zaheer



During World War II, Kissinger became a citizen of the United States and worked in the U.S. Army as someone who translated German. After the war, he went to Harvard University and got a bachelor's degree in 1950 and a Ph.D. in 1954. He continued working at Harvard, and in 1957

Henry Alfred Kissinger became the Secretary of State on September 21, chosen by President Richard M. Nixon. He held this position from September 23, 1973, to January 20, 1977. This was a big deal because he was the first person to be both Secretary of State and National Security Adviser. He had been the National Security Adviser since President Nixon started in 1969. But things changed on November 3, 1975, when President Gerald R. Ford removed him from the National Security Adviser role, although he still remained the Secretary of State. Kissinger was born in Germany as Heinz Alfred Kissinger. Life became hard for his Jewish family when the Nazis took over, so they moved to the United States in 1938 and settled in New York. That's when Henry's name was changed to Henry.

During World War II, Kissinger became a citizen of the United States and worked in the U.S. Army as someone who translated German. After the war, he went to Harvard University and got a bachelor's degree in 1950 and a Ph.D. in 1954. He continued working at Harvard, and in 1957, he became the As-

sociate Director of Harvard's Department of Government and Center for International Affairs. In the 1950s and 1960s, Kissinger gave advice to different government groups, like the National Security Council's Operations Coordinating Board, the Department of State, the Operations Research Office, and the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency. In 1968, when Richard Nixon became the President, he picked Kissinger to be his National Security Adviser. After they worked closely together during Nixon's first term as President, Nixon did something unusual by appointing Kissinger as both the new Secretary of State and keeping him as the National Security Adviser. Kissinger started working for the government just two weeks before Egypt and Syria surprised Israel with an attack in 1973. This event, known as the October War, had a big impact on Kissinger's time as the Secretary of State. First, he made sure that the U.S. sent military supplies to Israel by air, helping Israel in the war and causing OPEC countries to stop sending oil to the U.S. Later, when a ceasefire was agreed upon through the United Nations, Kissinger traveled between Middle Eastern countries

to make agreements for them to stop fighting. This led to agreements between Egypt and Israel in January 1974 and between Syria and Israel in May 1974. Kissinger's efforts also played a part in OPEC deciding to end the oil embargo. When President Nixon resigned due to the Watergate scandal in August 1974, Kissinger stayed in his roles under the new President Ford. He helped Ford get used to dealing with other countries and continued the policies started by Nixon and himself, like improving relations with the Soviet Union, establishing relations with China, and working on Middle East peace. Kissinger was also a key figure in the negotiations for the Helsinki Accord in August 1975, a deal signed by 35 countries to improve relations between the East and West. In September 1975, he helped with another agreement between Egypt and Israel, bringing them closer to peace. During his time as Secretary, Kissinger faced controversy for influencing U.S. policies toward countries like Chile and Angola. He also dealt with new international issues like the law of the sea, which became important for U.S. foreign policy in the following decades.

## CPI-2023 and elections

Qamar Bashir



This progress, the best since 2021, signifies an improved public perception of corruption reduction in the country, offering hope for future governance and development efforts. (For reference with a score of 1, Denmark is at position 1) Marium Aurangzeb, the PML(N) spokesperson and former Information Minister, swiftly criticized the jailed ex-Prime Minister and PTI founder for failing to combat corruption, a major pledge of his administration.

Concurrently, she lauded Shahbaz Sharif for Pakistan's CPI score improvement during his term since April 2022, highlighting a significant

Pakistan's improvement in the Transparency International Corruption Perceptions Index 2023, with its score increasing from 27 to 29 and its ranking rising from 140 to 133, marks a significant achievement since 2021. This advancement reflects a positive change in the nation's fight against corruption, potentially boosting its attractiveness for foreign investments and economic growth. This progress, the best since 2021, signifies an improved public perception of corruption reduction in the country, offering hope for future governance and development efforts. (For reference with a score of 1, Denmark is at position 1) Marium Aurangzeb, the PML(N) spokesperson and former Information Minister, swiftly criticized the jailed ex-Prime Minister and PTI founder for failing to combat corruption, a major pledge of his administration. Concurrently, she lauded Shahbaz Sharif for Pakistan's CPI score improvement during his term since April 2022, highlighting a significant governance milestone. This strategic narrative amplifies PML(N)'s governance credentials ahead of elections, contrasting their achievements with PTI's shortcomings. Historically, PML(N) have shown relatively lower corruption perceptions. Notably, during Nawaz Sharif's tenure in 1999, Pakistan ranked significantly higher at 87th. This ranking suffered in 2008, dropping to 133rd, but saw improvement in 2013 to 127th. The 2021 ranking fell again to 140th, yet, in a notable recovery, 2023 witnessed a climb to 133rd with a score of 29, marking a commendable progress in Pakistan's anti-corruption efforts. Following Bloomberg's positive economic review, Transparency International's CPI 2023 further boosts PML(N)'s pre-election momentum, showcasing their governance and anti-corruption strides. These accolades form a compelling narrative for PML(N), reinforcing their image as a transparent and effective party committed to reform, aiming to sway voters with a record of tangible achievements. Pakistan's CPI 2023 score of 29, while an improvement, underscores the need for introspection rather than celebration. This rating places it below even some non-democratic regimes, highlighting the gap between Pakistan and nations with robust democracies and strong legal frameworks, which consistently outperform in anti-corruption efforts. This situation calls for a strategic reassessment and enhanced reforms to elevate Pakistan's standing and

governance. Pakistan's CPI score of 29 and ranking at 133rd, contrasted with India's higher score of 39 and 93rd rank, underscores a significant concern. This gap highlights the urgent need for Pakistan to enhance its governance and anti-corruption measures to improve its standing and perception internationally, especially in comparison to its regional counterparts like India, which is recognized as a flawed democracy yet scores better. According to the report, the countries with strong rule of law, well-functioning democratic institutions, and effective governance, transparency, and accountability mechanisms sit on the top of the table like Denmark (score 90), Finland (87), New Zealand (85), and Norway (84). Conversely, the countries, characterized by conflict, restricted freedoms, weak democratic institutions, inadequate justice systems, broader governance and societal challenges and inequality and injustice sit at the bottom of the table such as Somalia (score 11), Venezuela, Syria, and South Sudan (each scoring 13). Given Pakistan's economic challenges and the urgent need to revitalize its financial stability and investor confidence, a robust anti-corruption drive is imperative. Eradicating corruption is not just about enhancing governance; it's crucial for leveling the economic playing field, fostering fair trade, attracting investments, and revitalizing tourism. It's a foundational step toward ensuring equitable access to services and bolstering public welfare, essential for Pakistan's rapid progress and global standing. For sustainable development and better international relations, this fight against corruption must be prioritized. Pakistan can engage with top-performing countries on the CPI index through diplomatic channels and international cooperation forums. By initiating dialogues, exchanging best practices, and seeking technical assistance or joint anti-corruption initiatives, Pakistan can learn from their successful strategies to improve governance, transparency, and accountability within its own systems. Collaborating on reform projects and participating in anti-corruption training programs can also be effective. Pakistan can also draw inspiration from Armenia, Ukraine, and Uzbekistan, which have significantly improved their CPI rankings through robust anti-corruption measures and reforms, particularly Armenia's post-2018 Velvet Revolution efforts. Adopting such proven strategies could be key for Pakistan to strengthen its corruption control mechanisms. For more insights, refer to Transparency International's report. Enhancing access to justice is fundamen-

tal in the fight against corruption, as it underpins accountability and deters impunity. By streamlining legal processes, broadening the definition of corruption victims, and empowering civil society to champion corruption cases, Pakistan can build a more inclusive and effective justice system. This holistic approach, learning from global best practices, can pave the way for substantial anti-corruption progress. While Pakistan's recent anti-corruption progress is encouraging, tackling grand corruption demands bolder measures. We must utilize international cooperation, leveraging the strengths of foreign justice systems with robust rule of law. This can involve collaborative investigations, asset recovery, and high-profile prosecutions that send a powerful message of accountability. Domestically, enhancing transparency is key. Publicly accessible data on legal proceedings, clear procedures, and an independent media foster public trust and deter manipulation. These combined efforts, local and international, will pave the way for a more robust, effective anti-corruption framework in Pakistan, ultimately building a fairer future for its citizens. A truly effective anti-corruption framework requires empowering its guardians – the justice system. This means shielding judges and prosecutors with security and dedicated reporting channels, fostering integrity through mandatory asset declarations and competitive salaries, and harnessing the power of community-based justice. Integrating informal systems through mediation and dispute resolution mechanisms can leverage local knowledge, improve access to justice, and build trust. By empowering both formal and informal systems, we create a more robust and impactful shield against corruption, ultimately safeguarding the future of Pakistan. Pakistan's improvement in the CPI-2023 underscores the potential for positive change with committed governance. This progress, while modest, marks a crucial step towards enhancing the nation's image and fostering an environment conducive to business, investment, and overall societal well-being. It's a reminder that, although the journey to eradicate corruption is arduous, it's attainable with persistent efforts, learning from global best practices, and reinforcing the rule of law and transparency. This momentum must be maintained and amplified to unlock Pakistan's full potential on the global stage.

—The writer is Press Secretary to the President (Rtd) Former Press Minister at Embassy of Pakistan to France Former MD, SRBC





## Briefs

### After 13 years UAE sends ambassador to Syria

#### AGENCIES

**DAMASCUS:** The United Arab Emirates has dispatched the country's first ambassador to Syria after 13 years, following the resumption of diplomatic relations between the two Arab countries. The incoming Emirati envoy officially presented his credentials to Syrian Foreign Minister Faisal al-Mikdad at the Arab country's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates in the capital Damascus on Tuesday. According to Syria's official SANA news agency, Hassan al-Shehi conveyed to the Syrian side his commitment to enhancing bilateral relations between the two countries during his meeting with Mikdad. He also pledged to work to strengthen cooperation and achieve mutual progress between two Arab countries. For his part, Mekdad expressed Syria's deep appreciation for the UAE's solidarity with and support for Syria during challenging times. Shehi arrived in Syria on Monday to become the first envoy of his country to Syria since 2011. He had served as the ambassador of the United Arab Emirates in Iraq since 2015, and before that, had been the ambassador to Sudan.

### Punjab CM inaugurates PALMS portal

#### ABID RAZA

**LAHORE:** Punjab Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi has formally inaugurated "The Punjab Arms License Management System" (PALMS) portal under which arms licences can be applied online across the province. "The Punjab Arms License Management System" was signed between Home Department Punjab and NADRA on Wednesday. Under the "Punjab Arms License Management System" Arms Licenses can be renewed and amended across Punjab. Under "Punjab Arms License Management System" transfer of arms license to heirs will also be done online. Under "Punjab Arms License Management System" the arms license will be delivered to the home of the applicant. In this regard, Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi said that with the implementation of "Punjab Arms License Management System" it will be possible to completely eliminate corruption in the issuance of licenses. Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi appreciated the services of Home Secretary Mian Shakeel Ahmed and Additional Secretary Home (Judicial) Department Farwa Amir for launching "The Punjab Arms License Management System".

#### Stopping Genocide

### Israel not listening to world

#### DNA

**RAMALLAH:** Despite the decision of the International Court of Justice, and before it, UN Security Council Resolution No. 2720, the resolution of UNGA, and hundreds of international and international demands, appeals, and warnings issued successively by many international officials and world leaders regarding the necessity of stopping the humanitarian catastrophe and targeting civilians in the Gaza Strip and securing their basic humanitarian needs, nothing changes on the ground because of the unwillingness of the rulers of Tel Aviv to listen or respect what the world says and expresses concern about, and what actually changes daily is the occupation leaders' insistence on deepening genocide of our people and expanding humanitarian catastrophe to include the entire population of Gaza Strip, including Palestinian civilians, as well as Escalating crimes against them and targeting them wherever they are.



**ISLAMABAD:** Pakistan National Council of the Arts and the Embassy of Kazakhstan hosted a movie screening titled "Kazakh Khanate Diamond Sword" at the PNCA Auditorium in Islamabad. Caretaker Culture Minister Jamal Shah, Information Minister Muratza Solangi and Ambassador of Kazakhstan and others attended the event. In the picture guests are taking interest in paintings displayed on the occasion. – DNA

## No celebration over Imran's jail sentence: Bilawal

PPP chairman accuses Nawaz Sharif of resorting to revenge politics

#### SHAMIM SHAHID

**MALAKAND:** Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari disapproved on Wednesday the celebration over former premier Imran Khan's jail sentence in cipher and Toshakhana cases. Addressing a gathering in Malakand, Bilawal Bhutto expressed his disapproval of celebrating the punishment of former Prime Minister Imran Khan, highlighting the importance of democratic values over personal vendettas. During the address, Bilawal Bhutto drew attention to the irony of political opponents celebrating the absence of a former prime minister from electoral contests. He warned against engaging in revenge politics, citing concerns that if Imran Khan were to secure a fourth term, similar tactics might be employed. Bilawal Bhutto accused Nawaz Sharif of resorting to revenge politics, alleging that the former prime minister fabricated cases against Bhutto's daughter. He cautioned against the potential continuation of such practices and urged the public to consider the consequences of electing leaders who prioritize personal vendettas. The PPP chairman expressed disappointment over what he called Imran Khan's shift from being a beacon of hope for the youth to engaging in what he termed "U-turn politics." Bilawal Bhutto took a swipe at Khan's actions, particularly regarding the incarceration of political opponents and their family members. Bilawal Bhutto appealed to the electorate to vote thoughtfully in the upcoming elections on February 8. He urged voters to consider the track record of political parties and emphasized the need for a responsible and constructive political landscape. The former foreign minister asserted that the PPP is the only party capable of halting the political aspirations of Mian Sahib, presumably referring to Nawaz Sharif. Bhutto accused the founder of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) of making decisions that contributed to the rise of terrorism in the country. In a bid to distinguish the PPP's approach, Bilawal Bhutto pledged that on the first day of coming to power, he would release political prisoners. He vowed to address the grievances of the people by reducing the number of ministries and focusing on providing relief to the masses. Bilawal Bhutto concluded his address with an appeal to the people of Pakistan to embrace a new way of thinking. He urged ideological workers of other political parties, particularly the PML-G, to reconsider their allegiances, alleging that the party was not honoring the vote but disrespecting it.

## People to decide their future, says Shehbaz Sharif

#### STAFF REPORT

**LAHORE:** The people of Pakistan would decide about their future on Feb 8, said PML-N president on Wednesday, adding that their voting trend was going to show their priorities, with the country facing challenges on political, economic, social and foreign fronts. He told the digital media representatives at his party's Model Town headquarters that Pakistan was left in the race towards economic development. "The February 8 elections are the most important in the country's history," the former prime minister said and added that one had to understand why other nations marched forward. Pakistan's history poses some very serious questions and one needs to analyse the history to find the answers, Shehbaz stressed, adding that the lesson learned would help in the future. The PML-N president said they won the 2018 elections, but the party's polling agents were removed and ballot papers stamped as the polling closed amid the shutdown of RTS (result transmission system) under an organised plan – a move that delayed the announcement of results. Replying to various questions, Shehbaz listed the achievements of the PML-N governments in the past and rejected the impression of being close to the establishment. He spent in prison and faced excesses which wouldn't have happened if he was shared the establishment's thinking, Shehbaz explained. Answering a question about the level-playing field and alleged victimisation of the former ruling party, he remarked that holding intraparty polls was PTI's responsibility, "not us". Nawaz Sharif went through different phases during his 40-year long political career, Shehbaz said about elder Sharif who is eyeing a fourth term in office amid the claims that his politics has come to an end, and noted that the whole family faced all kinds of pressure and injustices, but remained steadfast and didn't surrender.

## PTI decides to hold intra-party polls 'within 15 days'

PTI leader Raof Hasan unanimously appointed party's chief election commissioner

#### KHAYAM ABBASI

**ISLAMABAD:** Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) is set to stage intra-party polls afresh within the next 15 days, sources said on Wednesday, after a Supreme Court ruling discarded the party's previous internal polls. The decision to hold the intra-party polls again was made during PTI's general body meeting, with several senior leaders including former PTI chairman Barrister Gohar Ali Khan and information Secretary General Umar Ayub and information secretary Rauf Hassan in attendance. The meeting took place virtually due to the blockade of roads leading to the PTI secretariat in Islamabad. Sources said that a resolution on the party's internal polls has to be presented in the meeting, which was attended by leaders and members from Quetta, Peshawar, Islamabad and other leaders. Another major decision taken during the meeting was the appointment of Hassan as the chief election commissioner of the party. Earlier, Geo News reported that the ways leading to the central media secretariat of PTI was blocked by the federal capital police. The police were reportedly present on all routes leading to the party's media secretariat ahead of PTI's general body meeting. The increased police presence near the secretariat came in the wake of the party's founder, Imran Khan and his wife Bushra Bibi's conviction in the Toshakhana reference filed by the National Accountability Bureau (NAB). The two were sentenced to 14 years with rigorous punishment by an accountability court in Islamabad earlier in the day. Earlier this month, the apex court deprived PTI of its election symbol – 'bat' – by upholding ECP order barring the party from keeping its iconic symbol for the upcoming February 8 elections.

## US F-16 fighter crashes off South Korea

#### DNA

**SEOUL:** A United States Air Force F-16 fighter jet crashed after suffering an in-flight emergency off the coast of South Korea Wednesday, in the third crash of one of the US military's Korea-based warplanes in less than a year. The incident occurred during a training mission over the waters west of the Korean Peninsula around 8:41 a.m. local time, according to a statement from Kunsan Air Base, about 110 miles (180 kilometers) south of the capital Seoul. The pilot, assigned to the 8th Fighter Wing, ejected safely and was recovered about 50 minutes after the crash, the Air Force statement said. The pilot was conscious and taken to a medical facility for assessment, the base said. "We are very thankful to the Republic of Korea rescue forces and all of our teammates who made the swift recovery of our pilot possible," said Col. Matthew Gaetke, 8th Fighter Wing commander, in a statement. "Now we will shift our focus to search and recovery of the aircraft." The cause of the in-flight emergency is under investigation, base said.

## LHC orders equal media coverage to PTI

#### DNA

**LAHORE:** The Lahore High Court (LHC) on Wednesday ordered the Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority (Pemra) to give equal coverage to the PTI founder and all other candidates. Justice Shams Mehmood Mirza issued a 10-page verdict on PTI founder's petition. The court, in its written order, said Article 17 of the Constitution gives equal rights including freedom of speech and expression to all citizens. The LHC further ruled that election campaign and propagation of manifesto was a basic right of every party. The LHC ruled that freedom of speech and expression through a free media was a requisite of transparent and fair polls. Without freedom of expression no election could be called fair and transparent, court said.

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