



# Islamabad POST

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**Gaza war may lead to arms race, geostrategic fractures in region**

Detailed News On Page-07

**US weapons to Kiev 'investment' in NATO protection**

Detailed News On Page-07



**BBL: Finch announces retirement**

Detailed News On Page-06



## PM advocates progressive, foreign policy

Pakistan's foreign policy should continue to aim for peace and mutually beneficial relations across globe

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar today participated in the ongoing Envoys' Conference being held at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on 4-6 January 2024. Pakistan's Envoys from important capitals are participating in the Conference and are deliberating on various facets of Pakistan's foreign policy. Welcoming the Prime Minister, Foreign Minister Jilil Abbas Jilani outlined the framework of discussions at the Envoys' Conference and its importance as a deliberative forum on diplomatic challenges and opportunities for Pakistan in view of the global and regional developments. He underscored the need for strengthening the anchoring role of the Foreign Office in foreign policy formulation and implementation. In his key-note address, the Prime Minister shared his perspective about the pressing demands on the conduct of Pakistan's foreign policy to align it with present-day imperatives. He said that Pakistan's foreign policy should be guided by a vision of Pakistan as a progressive, economically ascendant state that prioritizes the socio-economic well-being of its people. Pakistan's foreign policy should continue to aim for peace and mutually beneficial relations across the globe. The Prime Minister said that Pakistan will continue to stand for international law and purposes and principles of the UN Charter, mainstreaming economic diplomacy and support to the Palestinian cause. He underlined that Pakistan would always champion the Jammu and Kashmir cause and the resolution of the Jammu and Kashmir dispute as per the UNSC resolutions and the wishes of its people. Prime Minister Kakar termed the Conference as timely and relevant against the backdrop of profound transformations taking place in the region and around the globe.

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**PPP doesn't make false promises unlike PML-N, PTI: Bilawal**

Bilawal to hold over 30 election rallies across Pakistan till Feb 6

ABID RAZA

WASHINGTON: Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz and Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) for making "false promises" to the people, Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Chairman Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari said that only his party had the solution to problems of Pakistan. Speaking at a workers' convention in Raiwind, Bilawal accused the PML-N leadership of "fleeing to London" when faced with adversity. "When they have heart problems, they escape to London. I had said even at that time that they didn't need to go that far. Come to Karachi; we have constructed NICVD," he added. Read more: Bilawal cautions against 'elite hurdle' He said that forming a people's government was beyond the capabilities of the PML-N, asserting that only a party of martyrs was capable of doing it. He emphasised the PPP's commitment to steering clear of hate, mudslinging, and divisive politics. "Ask the people if they can pay their electricity bills."

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ISLAMABAD: Caretaker PM Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar addresses the Envoys' Conference. - DNA

**New Jersey imam shot dead outside mosque**

Investigation is underway to ascertain the motive behind the shooting of the imam who was identified as Hassan Sharif

DNA

NEW JERSEY: Authorities in Newark said Wednesday that an imam of a mosque was shot and killed at South Orange Avenue who was taken to hospital in a critical condition. As the authorities arrived at the scene, Sharif was found lying in the parking, 10 feet from the mosque entrance. Investigation is underway to ascertain the motive behind the shooting of the imam who was identified as Hassan Sharif. According to the local media reports, New Jersey's spokesperson also confirmed the fatal

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**FBR decides to tax retailers of 5 big cities**

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: The Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) has decided to impose a tax on retailers in five big cities of the country including Karachi, Islamabad, Lahore, Peshawar, and Quetta, Geo News reported, citing sources on Thursday. The sources said Rs100 billion in revenue would be generated through imposing a tax on 3.5 million retailers in those cities and for that purpose, the board had prepared a scheme. "In the first phase, retailers will be taxed in the four provincial capitals and the federal capital," they said. They said the taxation would be

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**SC seeks clarity Lifetime disqualification against Islam: CJP Isa**

Top court adjourns hearing of lifetime disqualification case; SC seeks "clarity" on matter

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

ISLAMABAD: Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Qazi Faez Isa Thursday remarked that disqualifying anyone for life from parliament is "against Islam", as the Supreme Court conducted the hearing of a case pertaining to lifetime disqualification of lawmakers under Article 62(1)(F) of the Constitution. The apex court had taken notice of contradictions regarding the duration of disqualification in the Election Act, 2017, and an apex court verdict during a past hearing on a petition filed by former PML-N provincial lawmaker Sardar Meer Badshah Khan Qaisrani last month. Qaisrani had challenged his lifetime disqualification over a fake degree in 2007. "This is a constitutional issue, which we are going to settle once and for all, and we will try to conclude it quickly in order to prevent confusion for the returning officers (ROs) while receiving nomination papers for the upcoming elections," CJP Isa had remarked during the previous hearing of the case.

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**IHC restores 10-year disqualification for NAB convicts**

"According to NAB law, the disqualification will be for 10 years," prosecutor tells court

COURT REPORTER

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad High Court Thursday restored the 10-year disqualification period for graft convicts sentenced by the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) under its accountability laws. The injunction was made by the court's division bench consisting of Justice Mohsin Akhtar Kayani and Justice Saman Rafat Imtiaz, suspending the verdict issued by its single bench. According to the single

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**MQM-P unveils election manifesto**

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: As the election heat is on, the Muttahida Qaumi Movement-Pakistan (MQM-P) has kicked off its electioneering ahead of the general elections and announced its manifesto with 'three constitutional amendments' as key components. The party's top leaders held a press conference in Karachi to announce the manifesto as the Karachi-based party pulled up socks for contesting the February 8 general polls. Dr Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui, the party convener, expressed his views that the nation had not received constitutional protection for the past 50 years. It is inevitable to make some amendments to the Constitution to strengthen the country through empowering the common man, he added. Emphasising necessary amendments to the existing laws, Dr Siddiqui announced that his

political party proposed three constitutional amendments to give legal cover to municipal, city and district-level governments. The politico sought full legal protection for all local governments by mentioning those institutions under its power in the Constitution. The MQM-P, he further said, won't accept a powerless democracy in the country anymore. He went on to say that his party presented its political and electoral manifesto, suggesting a solution to all political and economic crises by strengthening true democracy in the country. Dr Farooq Sattar, another senior deputy convener who headed one of the MQM factions before their recent merger, announced that a draft bill had been proposed for all state institutions. He stressed that a just taxation system must be introduced in the country in which the rich and the poor pay equal taxes.

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### Briefs

**Solangi condemns Kerman terrorist attacks**

ADIL SHAHEEN

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Information, Broadcasting and Parliamentary Affairs Murtaza Solangi while condemning the terrorist attacks in Kerman city in Iran, expressed deep grief over the loss of lives. In a message, the minister expressed solidarity with the government and the people of Iran on behalf of the government and the people of Pakistan. This cowardly act of terrorism was highly condemnable, Murtaza Solangi said.

**Mengal's nomination papers accepted**

DNA

QUETTA: An election tribunal granted permission to BNP chief Sardar Akhtar Jan Mengal to contest election. Akhtar Mengal had filed appeal in the appellate tribunal challenging the Returning Officer's rejection of his nomination papers for National Assembly constituency NA-264 (Quetta-D). Justice Hashim Kakar presiding over the tribunal heard the case. The RO had rejected nomination papers of Akhtar Mengal over his Aqama (work permit) of Dubai. The Balochistan election tribunal also granted permission to several other candidates to contest the upcoming general elections, whose nomination papers were initially rejected by returning officers.

**Faizabad commission Gen Faiz Hamid rejects allegations of 'conspiracy'**

"Held negotiations with Tehreek-e-Labbaik on directions of govt," Hamid tells commission

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: Former director general of Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) Faiz Hamid has recorded his statement before the Faizabad sit-in commission, denying allegations of conspiring against the government. The former spymaster was summoned by the panel - investigating the 2017 sit-in staged by the Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan (TLP) - thrice but he failed to appear before it. He was then sent a questionnaire by the commission to which he responded and stated that he held negotiations with the TLP on the directions of the government. According to the sources, the commission had summoned the former army officer on January 2 (Tuesday) but he didn't appear before the panel.

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**PTI moves SC to reclaim 'bat' symbol**

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Thursday moved the Supreme Court in its last-ditch effort to reclaim its iconic 'bat' electoral symbol ahead of the February 8 polls. The electoral symbol is crucial to any political party as voters are aware of which candidate to vote for on the polling day;

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**Gaza holocaust continues as death toll reaches 22,438**

Qassam Brigades say that they have targeted two Merkava tanks with Al-Yassin 105 shells

NEWS DESK

GAZA: The Israeli occupation forces continue to carry out the Gaza Holocaust for the 90th consecutive day Thursday, through dozens of airstrikes, artillery shelling, and fire belts, committing bloody massacres against civilians and carrying out horrific crimes in the infiltration areas, amid a catastrophic humanitarian situation resulting from the siege and the displacement of over 90% of the population. Over the past 90 days, a total of 22,438 Palestinians have been killed in Israeli attacks on the Gaza Strip, Gaza health ministry spokesman Ashraf al-Qudra said. At least 57,614 others have been wounded, the majority of them women and children. Some 125 Palestinians were killed and 318 wounded in the past 24 hours, the ministry added. About 7,000 others are missing and are presumed dead under the rubble of their homes. The Qassam Brigades say that they have

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**Acts of terror will never undercut Iran's cohesion**

FOREIGN DESK

TEHRAN: Iranian President Ebrahim Raeisi says acts of terror and crime will fail to undermine the nation's cohesion, security and strategy. "The Iranian nation's enemies think that they can achieve their illegitimate goals via acts of terror, but the Iranian nation has proven that such crimes cannot disrupt its cohesion, security and strategy," Raeisi said in a phone call with his Turkish counterpart Recep Tayyip Erdogan on Wednesday. Two terrorist blasts took place near the burial site of Iran's late anti-terror commander Lieutenant General Qassem

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# IGP Islamabad assures to facilitate business community

Dr. Akbar Nasir Khan said that with the efforts of the Islamabad Police, no disturbance in business activities was observed for the last 2 years in Islamabad

ADIL SHAHEN

ISLAMABAD : Dr. Akbar Nasir Khan, Inspector General, Islamabad Police said that the business community is the backbone of the economy and Islamabad Police would act proactively to provide them with a safe and secure environment for business development. He said this while addressing the business community after inaugurating the new building of DPO Industrial Area Office in I-8 Markaz, Islamabad. Dr. Akbar Nasir Khan said that with the efforts of the Islamabad Police, no disturbance in business activities was observed for the last 2 years in Islamabad as the police ensured that all the roads and markets were kept open. He said that closing roads and markets on the pretext of

protests is not a wise approach as it hurts the economy and keeps many daily wagers unemployed. He assured that the Islamabad Police would take all possible measures to ensure that the business activities are not disturbed by any elements. Speaking on the occasion, Zafar Bakhtawari, former President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry and Secretary General UBG Pakistan welcomed the opening of a new SP Office in I-8 Markaz and said that it would provide a better sense of security to the traders of the area. He said that the business community is satisfied with the performance of the Islamabad Police and would provide all possible cooperation to it for a peaceful environment in Islamabad, which would help promote business and investment activities. He lauded the

role of Islamabad Police for keeping all business centers and roads open in Islamabad as the traders of the federal capital had suffered great losses in the past due to the closure of markets and roads by the protesters. Raja Fayyaz Gul President and Zahid Qureshi Secretary General, Traders Welfare Association, I-8 Markaz lauded the IGP Islamabad for inaugurating an SP Office in their commercial center that would help traders in the prompt resolution of police-related issues. SSP Malik Jamil Zafar, DPO I-9 Circle Khan Zeb, DSP I-9 Syed Sajjad Hussain Bukhari, ASP Sabzi Mandi Asad Iqbal, SHOs of I-9, Sabzi Mandi, Shams Colony and Noon, Sheikh Abdul Razak, Shehbaz Majeed, Khalid Chaudhry, Tahir Ayub, Tehmas Butt, Ch. Muhammad Waseem and many other leaders of traders were also present on the occasion.

## IIU Rector directs for best medical facilities to students

ISLAMABAD : Professor Dr. Samina Malik, Rector, International Islamic University (IIU) has directed that high priority based medical facilities must be provided to the university students. Along with the Acting President Prof. Dr. Abdul Raheman, Rector IIU visited the newly built medical centre of the university where its operationalization, utilization of the new facilities and overall performance was reviewed. The new medical centre building is part of the infrastructural reforms of the President IIU, Dr. Hathal Homoud Alotaibi initiated in the light of the new strategic plan of the university. The Rector IIU was briefed by Dr. Wakeel Ahmed, In-Charge Medical Centre, about the services in the new building, availability of the facilities including labs, available beds and per day visits of the patients. On the occasion, other relevant officers were also present. Dr. Wakeel while briefing about the facilities apprised that there are 16 beds in the medical centre, while 4 of those have been dedicated for the emergency. He also briefed that the demand for the X-ray machines, ECG equipment and other radiology related gadgets has already been submitted and the centre will be furnished with these facilities in the near future. She said that high priority facilitation of the students must be the core objective. She directed that a complaint box to address the issues of students must be installed today on an urgent basis and that box shall be monitored by her office. She said a separate well equipped medical facility for the female campus is also part of the future plan of the university. The IIU Rector also took interest in the psychological counselling centre, she examined the availability of the medicines and reviewed the charges and services of the laboratory. She desired that cleanliness must be ensured within the vicinity and a hygienic environment must prevail within the medical centre.—APP

## Commissioner orders inspection of petrol pumps to check measurement frauds

MULTAN : Commissioner Multan division Engr Amir Khattak Thursday directed the deputy commissioners to begin inspection of all petrol pumps in their respective districts and penalize those using flawed or willfully tampered measurement equipment to fleece the people. Chairing a performance review meeting, the Commissioner said that petrol pumps involved in

giving lesser quantity of petrol to motorcyclists and four wheelers would be penalized as per law. He also ordered indiscriminate action against violators of one-dish law at marriage halls and those involved in hoarding essential commodities to increase demand and price artificially. He asked the price control magistrates to improve their performance and ordered to resolve all

complaints received on Qeemat App. The deputy commissioners of Multan, Khanawal, Vehari and Lodhran informed him that 136 price control magistrates conducted 7899 inspections throughout the division in a day and got 26 violators were arrested, registered five FIRs and imposed fine of Rs 613,500 on violators against 220 complaints of the people.—APP

## EC receives 329 appeals of nomination papers

A total of 102 applications have been filed against rejection of nomination papers among which 53 are filed in Peshawar Bench

PESHAWAR : As many as 329 appeals have been filed in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa against approval and rejection of nominations papers for the general elections. According to the Provincial Election Commissioner (EC) Office, 14 applications have been filed against approval of nomination papers on National Assembly seats in appellate court among which 6 were filed in Peshawar Bench, 6 in Abbottabad Bench and 2 in DI Khan Bench. A total of 102 applications have been filed against rejection of nomination papers among which 53 are filed in Peshawar Bench, 2 in Abbottabad Bench, 34 in Mingora Bench, 4 in DI Khan Bench and 9 in Bannu Bench. The figure of applications filed against approval of nomination papers for Provincial Assembly seats is 14 among which 5 are filed in Peshawar Bench, 7 in Abbottabad Bench and two are filed in DI Khan Bench. A total of 199 applications were filed against rejection of nomination papers for Provincial Assembly seats among which 107 are filed in Peshawar Bench, 10 in Abbottabad Bench, 52 in Mingora Bench, 6 in DI Khan Bench and 24 are filed in Bannu Bench. Cumulatively 329 applications were received among which 116 applications are against approval of nomination papers for Provincial Assembly seats while 213 applications are received against rejection of nomination papers for National Assembly seats.—APP

## DAP reinforces sesame seed export with robust strategy

QUETTA : The Trade Development Authority of Pakistan (TDAP) in collaboration with the Ministry of Commerce, has launched a robust strategy to further bolster Pakistan's position in the global sesame seed export market. The strategy's core component involves conducting targeted awareness sessions on international market trends in key sesame-growing clusters across the country, with Punjab, Sindh, and Balochistan identified as primary contributors to sesame seed production. To inaugurate this strategic initiative, TDAP organized the inaugural seminar on Thursday, in Lasbela, in collaboration with Lasbela University of Agriculture Water and Marine Sciences, Uthal, said a news release received here. The event drew the participation of growers, farmers, agriculture extension officers from Balochistan, and other stakeholders. The seminar's overarching objective was to enlighten growers and farmers about international market dynamics, effective value-addition strategies, and pre and post-harvest procedures to optimize sesame seed yields. Pakistan has witnessed an extraordinary 278 percent increase in sesame seed exports during the first half of the current fiscal year. From July to December 2023, exports surged to an impressive US\$364 million, showcasing a significant leap compared to the same period in 2022. Director-General of Agro and Food, Athar Hussain Khokhar highlighted the government's efforts to promote sesame seed exports. He assured growers that TDAP and the Ministry of Commerce have developed a special business plan for enhancing sesame export, as the product has the potential to reach \$1 Billion in next few years. Distinguished speakers, including the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Lasbela and the Dean of the Faculty of Agriculture, addressed the seminar. The latter part of the seminar featured insights from the Consul General of Pakistan in Shanghai and the Trade and Investment Counselor in Beijing, offering valuable information on export requirements and potential opportunities for sesame seed exports to China. In the seminar, representatives from local farmers/growers discussed their challenges, while a leading exporter from Karachi outlined their sesame seed export requirements.—APP

## The Compound Effect by Darren Hardy

GHAZALA ANBREEN

The book under review "The Compound Effect" and its writer is Darren Hardy. This book is about how making right choices can change our life. How small efforts bring big changes. It makes us learn the principle of getting success in life. It teaches us to build a momentum and establish a discipline in life. It makes us learn to go steadily and gradually. It teaches us to make and shape the future for ourselves and the fact that if we see some success story then there is a complete story at its back. It is about developing positive habits and the consistency. Every decision we take in our life shapes our life. Step by step it takes us towards success. Success is the compound effect of our work out. It is the principle which unfolds how small steps lead to massive results. Whether it is in finance or relationships. The results are very subtle. The writer tells us to make our own decisions. How things make big difference by getting compounded every passing day is the basic subject of this book.

This book is divided in six different parts and the writer Darren Hardy used simple methods in it. Every part is connected with each other. Compound effect is basically a process in which we are able to get good results by small measures. It teaches us if we take small steps daily they eventually lead to big results and create big differences. Making understand compound effect will help us alleviate unrealistic expectations about life. It talks about the fact that our life is the result of our choices. Small decisions help us make successful in life. Darren Hardy enables us to opt for good choices in life as they shape our behaviors. He says we all are lucky. And if we have food and shelter then we indeed are very lucky. Privilege, attitude, consistency and right action design our luck. Looking at the situation and circumstances with a positive attitude is very important. First of all, we must be aware and know about the choices which make us go away from our destination. Habits The habits as they get old they are difficult to change. Aristotle said we are what we do. Darren Hardy suggests how we may change old habits. For this first identify the triggers.

Become cognizant of which stimuli drive us to do some bad act. He asks to take out our notebook and write all those triggers. Swapping is seeing how we may change our habits. Chips by carrots example is given by him to make understand this concept. In it he illustrates how a young lady was in habit of swallowing big packets of chips while watching television. Then she replaced chips by carrots and it was just a fine healthy choice. Easing means to remove the bad habits step by step. Step in When we want to leave the habit we feel difficulty early but then we become habitual. Momentum It is not easy to build momentum but once it is made then life becomes easy. Influence The people we spend time are called our reference group. This determines our success. We must stay away from negative minded people to avoid failures in life as their shadow will crawl on us. Dissociation Make hard choice to stay away from negative people Limited association The writer says it is time to be clear who are the people with whom we may spend three minutes but not three hours. Expanded association Find the people who have positive qualities. Mentors The

writer says to identify our mentors as we learn from them. Acceleration Here Darren gives example when he used to ride bicycle and then one day he stopped on getting tired. But then he started in a new way. In like manner some moments are defining moments in our life. The writer asks to make a healthy behaviour a consistent part of our routine. He also urges us to make a list of bad habits. He advises to exclude those people who belittle us and degrade us. He preaches to include those people who add value to our life. He motivates us to establish the natural consistent rhythm and tells us when we make the list of selected negative people then slowly try to make them kick off from our life. And not to interact with those people who are not aligned with our vision. Instead align with the people who uplift and elevate us. Darren Hardy is preaching disgust for hastiness. He is preaching perseverance. The writer describes about the knowledge. He corroborates how the knowledge also has the compound effect. It is there in every field of life. It canvasses every spectrum of life.



ISLAMABAD : Caretaker Federal Minister for IT and Telecommunication Dr. Umar Saif chairing 47th meeting of USF Policy Committee.—DNA

## Ashrafi urges parents to ensure polio vaccination

DNA

LAHORE : In a bid to eradicate polio from Pakistan, Prime Minister's Special Representative and Pakistan Ulema Council Chairman Hafiz Tahir Mehmood Ashrafi emphasised the importance of administering polio drops to children here at the Director General Health office on Thursday. During the inaugural ceremony of the polio vaccination drive, he addressed concerns surrounding vaccine's safety, referencing an international 'Ulema and Muftian' conference in Egypt, which declared polio drops as Halal and not harmful to children's health. Dismissing unfounded claims linking vaccine to reproductive system issues, he reassured the public about its safety. Expressing gratitude to the Punjab Health Department for successfully eliminating polio in the province, Ashrafi asserted the government's commitment to eradicating the polio virus nationwide by 2024. He acknowledged the sacrifices made by individuals, including army, police, and health workers, who lost their lives in the mission of polio eradication. Ashrafi appealed to the public to show respect to health workers administering vaccines and warned of accountability before Allah for parents if their child suffers disability due to the failure of vaccine administration. Open to a debate to address any reservations, he underscored the urgency of collective efforts in achieving a polio-free Pakistan.

## CM inaugurates new extended emergency of PIC

CM P said that emergency block of PIC has become completely new in a record period of 6 weeks

ABID RAZA

LAHORE : The Emergency Block of Punjab Institute of Cardiology has become completely new in a record period of 6 weeks and 50 beds have been added. Chief Minister Punjab Mohsin Naqvi visited PIC and inaugurated state-of-the-art new emergency. The record of patients will be preserved forever through the latest computerized system namely Hospital Information Management System. CM paid a detailed visit to the newly upgraded emergency and inquired about provision of facilities for the cardiac patients. Mohsin Naqvi inspected ICU, Echo Room and other facilities. He checked the quality of new beds and directed to improve facilities in the

wash room for the abled persons. CM monitored the newly formulated system till the arrival of patients at the reception up to their treatment. He directed to put plants at the adjacent place to the corridor. He directed to ensure the provision of cardiac monitoring system at every bed. Mohsin Naqvi while lauding the provision of latest facilities at the emergency commended the performance of Secretary Health, Secretary C&W, Commissioner / DG LDA, hospital administration and the whole team. CM after inaugurating the upgrade of the PIC emergency and while talking with the media said that not only Lahore but the whole Punjab will be benefited with the upgrade of the PIC emergency. Doctors, officials of C&W, LDA Health

Department and other teams used to visit PIC day and night and undertook monitoring of its upgrade. By the Grace of Allah Almighty, the emergency of PIC has been upgraded in six weeks and all the teams worked day and night. The Ministers, Secretaries undertook monitoring of the upgrade till 3.00 a.m. night. Mohsin Naqvi stated that he wants to apprise with pride that no imported items has been used in the upgrade project. All the gadgets and equipments which have been used during the upgrade are made in Pakistan. All the tiles being installed at the floor cost half the price. There are many precedents of austerity in the upgrade projects. Every project costs half the price then the stipulated price.

## Minister urges zero mine worker accidents

LAHORE : Provincial Minister for Mines and Minerals Ibrahim Hassan Murad said on Thursday that an advisory board of all departments related to mining should be formed and the accident rate should be brought to zero, while ensuring safety of mine workers. Presiding over a review meeting on welfare of mine workers and other measures at his camp office on Thursday, he said the demand for Pakistani labour was very high worldwide, and education and skills should be imparted to them. The meeting also discussed establishment of joint helpline for the Mines Labour Welfare Commissioner (MLWC) and

Chief Inspectorate of Mines (CIM), steps and strategies to get real-time images of underground mines on monthly basis, amendments to the Mines Act, 1923 to introduce e-challan, list of pending challans, mines rescue stations online monitoring, increasing student seats in mining as well as survey diplomas, calls received with location at mines rescue stations during last five years, trend of mining accidents for last 10 years, target of senior research officer for the next two months, a detailed review of target of collection of samples by officers, establishment of Mining School/Institute in district

Khushab, recruitment to key posts, strict action against lease holders for repeated violations, online inspection portal and other issues reviewed in details. During the briefing, the provincial minister was informed that establishment of joint helpline, action plan with the Punjab Information and Technology Board (PITB) has entered the final stages for formal launch of a helpline 1325 on January 11. Minister Ibrahim Murad said it would be much better to go to the field itself than to rely on pictures for monitoring of mines. He said that all mine owners should be registered.—APP



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## National Days and Armed Forces Days

### JANUARY

Jan 01 / CUBA	Revolution Day
Jan 01 / Palestine	Palestine Revolution Day
Jan 01 / Sudan	National Day
Jan 04 / Myanmar	Independence Day
Jan 06 / Iraq	Armed Forces Day
Jan 12 / Tanzania	Armed Forces Day
Jan 14 / Uzbekistan	Armed Forces Day
Jan 15 / Nigeria	Armed Forces Day
Jan 20 / Mali	Armed Forces Day
Jan 20 / Laos	Armed Forces Day
Jan 25 / Thailand	Armed Forces Day
Jan 26 / Australia	National Day
Jan 26 / India	Republic 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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Railway Inquiry.....117  
Railway Exchange9270831-5  
WASA Rawalpindi..5555489  
CAA.....9281092



### Hospitals

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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



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

### Water Tank

Islamabad.....0321-5744480

# Envoy HC invites businessmen to explore avenues in Malaysia

Ambassador Azhar also shared Malaysian SMEs' experience during the COVID-19 pandemic in surviving their businesses. Malaysia has encouraged SMEs to transform into digital marketing or online businesses to reduce unnecessary costs. Pakistan has the potential for trade and investment to be expanded and should explore digital marketing concepts

## DNA

ISLAMABAD: Ambassador Azhar paid a visit to the Islamabad Chamber of Small Traders and Small Industries (ICSTSI), Islamabad. He was accompanied by Mr. Mohd Syafik, Counsellor of the High Commission. On his arrival, he was received by Mr. Sajjad Sarwar, President of ICSTSI, and his executive members. The aim of the visit was to enhance bilateral engagement between the High Commission and ICSTSI. The meeting commenced with a recitation of the Holy Quran followed by brief introduction about ICSTSI by Mr. Sajjad. Thereafter, Ms. Syeda Wajida, Chairperson of Diplomatic Affairs of ICSTSI briefed on the development of small traders and industries in Pakistan. Present were Office Bearers, Executive Members, and members of the ICSTSI. In his remarks, Ambassador Azhar gave an overview of the state of relations between Malaysia and Pakistan. He mentioned that formal relations were established in 1957. Since then, Malaysia and Pakistan had been enjoying close bilateral relations. Both countries enhanced trade relationships following the signing of the Malaysia-Pakistan Closer Economic Partnership Agreement (MPCEPA) in November 2007. The bilateral relations were elevated to a strategic partnership on 23 March 2019. Currently, there are 1.2 million small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in Malaysia comprising more than 97% of the nation's businesses and delivering 38.4% of the gross domestic product (GDP). In Malaysia, SME Corporation is entrusted to assist SMEs and entrepreneurs in expanding their businesses. Thus, he emphasized that Malaysia and Pakistan need to expand the potential of small and medium trades into bigger opportunities for mutual benefits. Am-



bassador Azhar also shared Malaysian SMEs' experience during the COVID-19 pandemic in surviving their businesses. Malaysia has encouraged SMEs to transform into digital marketing or online businesses to reduce unnecessary costs. Pakistan has the potential for trade and investment to be expanded and should explore digital marketing

concepts. The Ambassador welcomed and placed a high hope for stronger cooperation in the field of trade and investment between the two countries. The meeting ended with a question-and-answer session. Ambassador Azhar was later accompanied to the exhibition corner. The visit was held and ended in a cordial and warm atmosphere. At

the end of the event, the President of ICSTSI presented the shield to the Ambassador. Ambassador Azhar also invited members of ICSTSI to look at Malaysia and the Association of South-east Asian Nations (ASEAN) region as their business gateway considering the huge market of the combined 680 million population. Bilateral re-

lations between Malaysia and Pakistan have been close. Pakistan is Malaysia's 35th largest trading partner, 28th largest export destination, and 40th largest import source. Among South Asian countries, Pakistan was Malaysia's 3rd largest trading partner with total bilateral trade amounting to RM7.84 billion (USD1.78 billion) in 2022.

# Death anniversary of classical singer Ustad Fateh Ali Khan

## DNA

ISLAMABAD: Death anniversary of distinguished classical singer and one of the most celebrated vocalists belonging to the Patiala Gharana of classical music, Ustad Fateh Ali Khan was observed on Thursday. Born in Patiala, in 1934 Ustad Fateh Ali Khan was the younger brother of the late classical singer, Ustad Amanat Ali Khan and elder brother of Ustad Hamid Ali Khan. After independence their family moved to Lahore and Fateh Ali and Amanat Ali Khan started performing together attracting the attention of music lovers. In 1945 they appeared for the first time

on the big stage in Lahore at a concert sponsored by an influential music connoisseur, Pandit Jeevanlal Matoo. It was their performance at the All Bengal Music Conference in 1949, when Ustad Amanat was 17 and Fateh Ali was 14, that catapulted them to fame. From then on, the duo never looked back. Ustad Fateh Ali, along with his brother Ustad Amanat Ali, performed all across the world. Their classical and semi-classical singing won them countless admirers. They went from strength to strength and received a host of awards and accolades, including the Pride of Performance Award in 1969. As classical vocalists, the brothers had their specialised roles. Amanat Ali Khan had a gifted voice. He

embellished his singing in broad sweeps by virtue of the lagao and blossoming in the upper register, while Fateh Ali Khan engaged in intricacies of countless behlawa and complex taans, in a much lower and gravelly voice, drawing inspiration from two seniors of the Patiala Gharana - Ustad Barre Gulam Ali Khan and Ustad Ashiq Ali Khan. A Thumri sung by the two brothers, 'Kab aao gay', is considered to be an all-time classic. Amanat Ali Khan composed it. The Thumri signified their invaluable contribution to classical music where they presented it in such a way that it became accessible to all segments of music lovers, including those for whom appreciating classical music was a difficult exercise. Amanat

Ali Khan's death in 1974 shocked Fateh Ali Khan. He suffered depression for two years. Subsequently, he resumed singing and joined his younger brother Hamid Ali Khan and nephew Asad Amanat Ali. They sang thumris, dadras and ghazals and performed all over the world. In 1992, Ustad Fateh Ali Khan collaborated with Norwegian saxophonist Jan Garbarek. They released a CD titled 'Ragas and Sagas' which was very well received. Acknowledging his contributions to field of classical music, the government of Pakistan gave him both the Pride of Performance Award and Tamgha-e-Imtiaz. Ustad Fateh Ali died in Islamabad on January 4, 2017 and he was laid to rest in Lahore's Mominpura graveyard.

# CG COMSTECH efforts to supervise 100 Ph.D. Dissertations

ISLAMABAD: The COMSTECH team has extended congratulations to the Coordinator General COMSTECH, Prof. Dr. M. Iqbal Choudhary for successfully supervising 100 Ph.D. Dissertations in Pakistan. Prof. Choudhary, a globally recognized medicinal chemist and Mustafa (PBUH) Prize laureate, has contributed immensely to the fields of organic and bioorganic chemistry with 1,175 research papers, 76 books, and 40 chapters in prestigious US and European publications. According to the COMSTECH, Prof. Choudhary's groundbreaking work includes securing 40 US patents, earning him widespread recognition. Prof. Choudhary's impact is evident through 41,000 citations of his research globally, showcasing an impressive h-index of 81. His academic journey encompasses D.Sc., Ph.D., and Post-Doctorate Chem, qualifications. The distinguished professor has received accolades from the governments of Pakistan, including Hilale-Imtiaz, Sitara-e-Imtiaz, and Tamgha-e-Imtiaz. Internationally, he has been honored with awards such as Mustafa (peace be upon him) Prize, ECO Award, Khawarizmi Award, Chinese friendship Award, COMSTECH Award, TWAS Award, Prof. Abdus Salam Prize and fellowship of all major academies. Prof. Choudhary's commitment to academic excellence and scientific innovation continues to inspire the next generation of researchers in Pakistan and beyond.—APP

# Commissioner visits Business Facilitation Center being established in RDA

RAWALPINDI: Commissioner Rawalpindi Division, Liaquat Ali Chatta here on Thursday visited the first Business Facilitation Center of the division being established in Rawalpindi Development Authority (RDA). The Commissioner reviewed the ongoing work in the Business Facilitation Center. On the occasion, Director General (DG) RDA, Director Development and other relevant officers were present. Formal inauguration of the Division's first Business Facilitation Center would be on January 15. The Commissioner said that the purpose of establishing the business centre was to provide all the facilities to start new businesses at one window operation. The centre would have the focal persons from all the departments concerned, he added. The one-window operation centre would help save precious time for businessmen and avoid their visits to different departments.—APP

# Maulana Muhammad Ali Jauhar remembered on his death anniversary

ISLAMABAD: The 93rd death anniversary of leader of Pakistan movement, educationist, journalist and a poet, Raees-ul-Ah-rar Maulana Muhammad Ali Jauhar was observed on Thursday. Born on 10th December 1878 in Rampur British India, he obtained education from Ali Gharh and Lincoln College Oxford. Maulana Muhammad Ali Jauhar was a very strong supporter of a separate homeland Pakistan. He also played a leading role in Khilafat Movement. He was imprisoned many times due to his strong resistance against the policies of the British Raj.—APP

# HEC asked to make public suspension of health institutions

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Information Commission (PIC) has directed the Higher Education Commission (HEC) to publicly disclose suspension orders issued to 18 health educational institutions in Islamabad, upholding the right to information and promoting transparency in the education sector. The decision comes in response to an appeal filed by citizen Anwar Ud Din, who sought copies of the suspension orders prohibiting new student admissions in the affected institutions. These institutions include Bashir Institute of Health Sciences, Comware Institute of Science and Information Technology, DAKSON Institute of Health Sciences, Institute of Health and Management Sciences, Islamabad Medical and Dental College, HBS Medical and Dental College, NOVA Institute of Modern Studies, PACE and KEDGE Institute of Health sciences, PHR Institute of Health Science, Rawal Institute of Health Sciences, Yusra Institute of Rehabilitation Sciences, Prime Institute of Health Sciences, NCS Institute of Sciences, Aman Medical Institute, KMU Institute of Health Sciences, Margalla Institute of Health Sciences, Madiks Institute of Health Sciences, and Health Aid College of Nursing and Health Sciences. Initially, the HEC refused to share the information, claiming it would negatively impact their standing and breach the privacy of the institutions. However, during the PIC hearing, the HEC representative, Mr. Hammad Bin Saif, admitted that the suspension orders were issued due to ongoing policy development requiring a temporary halt to admissions. The PIC rejected the HEC's arguments, stating that "the order about suspending the institutions working without NOC is an order of the HEC hence it is not an information of third party as pleaded by HEC." The Commission directed the HEC to provide copies of the suspension orders to the appellant within 10 working days, warning of penalty proceedings for non-compliance. Furthermore, the PIC emphasized the importance of finalizing the new affiliation policy at the earliest to ensure proper governance in the higher education sector.

# World Braille Day marked to honor visually impaired persons

ISLAMABAD: World Braille Day was observed on Thursday in Pakistan like elsewhere in the world to highlight the significance of improving access to knowledge for persons with visual disabilities. The theme of the Day for 2024 is 'Empowering Through Inclusion and Diversity'. In his message on the occasion of World Braille Day, President Dr Arif Alvi has reiterated the commitment to advance the rights of persons with disabilities. President Alvi said Pakistan has endorsed the Marrakesh Treaty for visually impaired persons which would help them access millions of books in Braille. He said Pakistan has initiated advanced training programs benefiting students, educators and parents, to facilitate an inclusive environment in public spaces where persons with visual impairments can smoothly access vital information and education. World Braille Day is observed every year on January 4 to honour the birth anniversary of Louis Braille, the inventor of the Braille writing system for blind.—APP

# APHC leaders demand Kashmir settlement under UN resolutions

ISLAMABAD: In Indian illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir, the All Parties Hurriyat Conference leaders have demanded of the UN to fulfill its obligations regarding settlement of the Kashmir dispute under its resolutions including the one passed on January 05, 1949. According to Kashmir Media Service, they made the demand on the eve of the adoption of January 5, 1949 UN resolution that guaranteed the Kashmiris' Right to Self-Determination. The APHC leaders Syed Bashir Andrabi, Khawaja Firdous and Junaid-ud-Salam in a joint statement in Srinagar said that on January 5, 1949, the United Nations Commission for Pakistan and India (UNCIP) had passed a very important resolution, which granted the Kashmiris the right to decide their future by themselves. They said the Kashmiri people have rendered unparalleled sacrifices for securing their inalienable right and they are determined to continue their struggle till complete success. They said

that despite facing the brutal Indian occupation for the last over seven decades, the Kashmiris remain steadfast in their demand for holding of plebiscite in Jammu and Kashmir. APHC leader, Advocate Divendar Singh Behel, in a statement issued in Jammu deplored that India has been denying the right to self-determination to the people of occupied Kashmir for the last over seven decades. He added that the international community, particularly the UN, bears the responsibility to ensure that the Kashmiri people are allowed to exercise this right. He thanked Pakistan for its unwavering support to Kashmiris' just cause. Illegally detained APHC leader, Noor Muhammad Fayaz, in a message from jail said that the Kashmir dispute remained unresolved due to India's stubbornness. He said the plebiscite under the UN resolutions is the best solution to the dispute. He urged the international community to hold India accountable for violating its interna-

tional obligation on Kashmir and force it to resolve the Kashmir dispute without any further delay. APHC leader, Abdul Samad Inqilabi, in a statement in Srinagar deplored that India is victimizing the people of occupied Jammu and Kashmir for demanding their internationally-recognized right to self-determination. However, he maintained that the Kashmiris will continue their struggle till they were given this right. The Jammu and Kashmir Peoples Freedom League spokesman, Muhammad Umar, in a statement in Srinagar said the denial of right to self-determination to the Kashmiris by India had resulted in their continued sufferings for the last several decades. He urged the UN Secretary General, Antonio Guterres, to take notice of the deteriorating situation in Jammu and Kashmir and invoke the resolutions of 13th August 1948 and 5 January 1949, for holding a free, fair and impartial plebiscite in Jammu and Kashmir, as per the UN resolutions.—APP



## Briefs

## Khidmat centers facilitate 1,92,144 citizens

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad capital police, khidmat centers, have facilitated 1,92,144 citizens during 2023 with different services relating to issuance of character certificate, foreigner's registration, registration of tenants and house servants, general police verification and report of missing items. According to police source, Islamabad capital police are taking all possible measures and initiatives in order to provide maximum facilities to the citizens of Islamabad. Citizens are availing around 28 services including character certificate, general police verification, tenant registration, missing/lost report, volunteer registration, servant registration, copy of FIR, and vehicle verification at any time of the day. Police Mobile facilitation van service has also been working while khidmat markaz in different areas including sectors F-6, G-10, H-11, Bani Gala, Swan Garden, Khanna and at various police stations were also facilitating the citizens. ICCPO Dr. Akbar Nasir Khan said that, well trained staff has been appointed there who are providing best services. Such steps would improve the trust of people in the police, he maintained.—APP

## Telecom Tribunal to handle telecom sector disputes

ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Federal Minister for Information Technology and Telecommunication Dr. Umar Saif has said that telecom sector disputes and cases will now be handled by a specialised Telecom Tribunal, instead of High Courts. Dr. Saif while sharing the information on his official social media account, said that the move was aimed at expediting the resolution of legal issues and facilitating rapid progress in the telecom sector. The Telecom Tribunal, according to the minister, will consist of technical experts who will be responsible for deciding all appeals filed by aggrieved parties comprehensively and swiftly. The establishment of this tribunal is expected to alleviate the burden on High Courts concerning the adjudication of technical matters related to the telecom sector. The minister believes that this specialized approach will lead to faster and more efficient resolution of disputes, contributing to the overall advancement of the telecom industry.—APP

## CPO directs to ensure strict implementation of code of

conduct issued by ECP for elections

RAWALPINDI: City Police Officer (CPO) Rawalpindi, Syed Khalid Hamdani has directed the police officers to ensure strict implementation of the Code of Conduct issued by the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) for the elections. According to a police spokesman, chairing a meeting held here at Police Lines Headquarters regarding the security of the general elections, the CPO said that a comprehensive security plan would be finalized for the safe delivery of election-related materials. The meeting was attended by the Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP), Operations, SSP Investigation, Divisional SPs, SDPOs and SHOs. The CPO was briefed about the security measures and arrangements being made for the general elections. Solid steps would be taken by utilizing all available resources to ensure law and order throughout the city, the CPO said. Patrolling and picketing would be done at important places under the comprehensive security plan, he added. The CPO said that a coordinated security strategy would be adopted for the general elections at the police station, sub-division and division levels.—APP



ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi being briefed about the role and performance of National Book Foundation, at Aiwan-e-Sadr.—DNA

## NDRMF, IRC emerge as strategic partners for shaping resilience

Pakistan faces some of the highest disaster risk levels in the world, ranked 11 out of 193 countries by the 2023 World Risk Report. Pakistan also has high exposure to flooding, including flash, and coastal, as well as exposure to tropical cyclones and drought

MAHNOOR ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: In an attempt to address the challenges of disaster risks and vulnerability faced by Pakistan, the National Disaster Risk Management Fund (NDRMF) and the International Rescue Committee (IRC) have solidified their commitment for enhancing resilience in Pakistan through signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). This initiative marks a significant collaboration between NDRMF Pakistan leading public sector entity and IRC a global humanitarian organization. Pakistan faces some of the highest disaster risk levels in the world, ranked 11 out of

193 countries by the 2023 World Risk Report. Pakistan also has high exposure to flooding, including flash, and coastal, as well as exposure to tropical cyclones and drought. The Disaster risk in Pakistan is further exacerbated by its social vulnerability. Pakistan's vulnerability ranking (37 out of 191) is driven by its high rates of multidimensional poverty. The scope of this collaboration encompasses joint efforts in strengthening Community-Based Disaster Risk Management/Reduction models, the outlook for anticipatory actions. This includes consultations on innovative programmes and policy ideas for strengthening resilience in communities, civil society organizations (CSOs), and relevant institu-

tions. NDRMF and IRC will leverage their partner networks to foster collaboration in areas of mutual interest. The organizations further commit to share technical assistance for developing a repository of best practices on resilience. In the realm of policy advocacy, the organizations will engage in public profiling and awareness programs to address issues exacerbating climate adaptation and resilience markers. This would entail co-creating evidence pieces for informed decision making, programming and potential avenues of technology transfers as well as to disseminate research findings to build a consistent, coherent national to global narrative. In a joint statement, Mr. Bilal Anwar, (CEO NDRMF), and

Ms. Shabnam Baloch, Country Director the (IRC), conveyed their unwavering commitment to the newly formed partnership. They underscored the critical significance of collaborative initiatives, tackling the multifaceted challenges presented by climate change and natural disasters specifically within the context of Pakistan. Mr. Anwar and Ms. Baloch recognized the potential of the Pakistani youth as catalysts for positive change and committed in engaging them in the co-creation of solutions. They highlighted the importance of youth engagement at the grassroots level, ensuring that the perspectives and innovative ideas of the youth are integral to initiatives undertaken by NDRMF and IRC.

## Fire erupts at Thana Sabzi Mandi in Islamabad

ISLAMABAD: A huge fire broke out at Thana Sabzi Mandi (vegetable market) in Sector I-11 on Thursday at 9:00 AM. The fire has reportedly burned down three shops in Sabzi Mandi, including the warehouses in the area, a private news channel reported. The rescue teams and fire brigade arrived at the scene to control the blaze.—APP

## Pakistan's Sesame Seed exports blossom in China

DNA

BEIJING: Pakistan witnessed a remarkable surge in sesame seed shipments to China throughout the year 2023. This unprecedented growth has posi-



tioned Pakistan as a major player in the global sesame seed market, with Chinese consumers increasingly embracing the quality and flavor of Pakistani sesame, said Ghulam Qadir, Commercial Counsellor here at the Pakistan Embassy. Ghulam Qadir stated that Pakistan's export of Sesamum seeds to China was \$250.85 million from January to November 2023, compared to \$117.85 million in the same period last year. This marks an increase of more than 112%. Overall, Pakistan's export of Sesamum seeds to China in 2022 was \$128.44 million, while it was \$120.44 million in 2021. "Pakistan exported 143,527.875 tons of Sesamum seeds to China from January to November 2023.—APP

## FUUAST organizes awareness seminar on drugs &amp; crimes

Dr. Ehtishamul Haq, In-charge Islamabad Campus, Mohammad Aleem Raza Additional Registrar and Dr. Uzma Siraj, President, Department of International Relations welcomed the distinguished guests

ISLAMABAD: A seminar to create awareness among students regarding drugs and crimes was held yesterday at Federal Urdu University of Science and Technology (FUUAST). The seminar was organized by the International Relations Department of Federal Urdu University Islamabad and Capital Police. Muhammad Shoaib Khurram, DIG Safe City and Traffic Police Islamabad along with his team attended the event as chief guest. Dr. Ehtishamul Haq, In-charge Islamabad Campus, Mohammad Aleem Raza Additional Reg-

istrar and Dr. Uzma Siraj, President, Department of International Relations welcomed the distinguished guests. The function was organized in the university auditorium in which a large number of students participated. DIG Muhammad Shoaib Khurram, told the students that special instructions have been issued by the IG Islamabad that the Capital Police in various educational institutions should inform the students about social crimes and drugs and their prevention. During his address, the chief guest gave many important information includ-

ing various types of crimes, police strategies to prevent crimes with the help of modern technology, the use of safe city cameras, and data from previous years. Various questions were asked by the students about the role and performance of Islamabad Police in the current situation, which were answered in detail by DIG. At the end of the ceremony, Dr. Uzma Siraj, President of the Department of International Relations, thanked the honorable guests and other participants for participating in the seminar, while the students also took group photos.

## Sanjrani grieved over loss of life in Iran blasts

ISLAMABAD: Chairman Senate Muhammad Sadiq Sanjrani expressed deep sorrow and grief on Thursday over the loss of precious human lives due to the blasts in the Iranian city of Kerman. In a condolence message he conveyed Pakistan's unwavering solidarity with its brotherly nation during this time of sorrow. The Chairman Senate Sanjrani also extended sincere condolences to the families of the victims, expressing profound sympathy for their loss. Deputy Chairman Senate Mirza Muhammad Afridi, leader of the House in Senate Senator Ishaq Dar, and leader of the opposition in Senate Senator Dr. Shehzad Waseem joined in denouncing the blasts in Kerman. Expressing solidarity, they affirmed that Pakistan and its people stand with Iran during this challenging time. In their individual condolence messages, they extended heartfelt sympathies to the families of the deceased and offered prayers.—APP

## HEC alerts students to confirm accreditation

ISLAMABAD: The Higher Education Commission (HEC) has alerted the students to confirm accreditation of Professional Degree Programme before taking admission. According to the official sources, the professional degree programmes/qualifications cannot be offered or continued without accreditation by the corresponding professional councils. Even so, some universities still offer admission to unaccredited and invalid programmes causing serious threat to the future of students and leading to loss of time and monetary resources, they added. Therefore, students and their parents are advised to confirm, before taking admission, if the sought-after degree programmes are accredited by the concerned Professional Councils. For all non-professional programmes, make sure that the admitting university/ sub-campus/ affiliated institution is recognized by the Higher Education Commission. For convenience, HEC asked the students to visit the HEC web link: [hec.gov.pk/site/HEIs](http://hec.gov.pk/site/HEIs). As per accreditation matters, the students seeking admission are advised to confirm that the degree programmes they choose are accredited by respective Councils. The HEC shared the contact number of the Professional Councils i.e Pakistan Engineering Council (PEC) 051-9219500-9206974, Pakistan Medical & Dental Council (PM&DC) 051-9190000, Pakistan Veterinary Medical Council (PVMC) 051-9108340, Pakistan Nursing Council (PNC) 051-9255813, Pakistan Council for Architects and Town Planners (PCATP) 051-2706668, Pakistan Pharmacy Council (PCP) 051-9204191 Pakistan Bar Council (PBC) 051-9206805, National Council for Homoeopathic (H) 051-5409003 National Council for Tibb (NCT) 051-9204378.—DNA



ISLAMABAD: Special Representative to the Prime Minister on Religious Harmony & Islamic Countries and chairman Pakistan Ulama Council Hafiz Tahir Mahmood Ashrafi meeting with the H.E. Hamad Obaid Ibrahim Salem Al-Zaabi Ambassador of UAE in Pakistan.—DNA

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## Quake questions safety of nuclear power plants

The 7.6-magnitude earthquake that hit Japan's Ishikawa Prefecture and nearby areas has so far left at least 77 people dead and 35 missing, and rendered at least 33,000 people homeless. Japan's response to the earthquake — the deadliest since 2016 — has so far been viewed as a success, mainly due to the experience it has accumulated over the past decades dealing with the many natural disasters that have befallen it. The country's sophisticated earthquake and tsunami warning systems, high-standard quake-resistant building code, and a well-trained public ready to follow established emergency procedures, have all contributed to minimizing the number of human casualties and the damage to infrastructure. But with hundreds of tremors continuing to strike the region, raising fears of landslides and further damage to buildings, Japan is still facing huge challenges carrying out rescue and relief operations. China has expressed its willingness to provide relief assistance to its neighbor, and Premier Li Qiang has sent a message of condolence to Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida, expressing deep condolences for the deceased and offering the Chinese people's sympathies to the bereaved families and the injured. It is hard to imagine that any other country could have responded in a better way to a disaster of the same magnitude. Notwithstanding that, grave concerns have been expressed about the safety of Japan's nuclear power plants after the New Year's Day quake. Which is not without cause. After all, the memory is still fresh of the devastation caused by the 8.9-magnitude earthquake and the resulting tsunami 13 years ago, which struck the northeast coast of Japan and knocked out the cooling systems of three of the reactors at the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant, causing a triple meltdown that spewed radioactive fallout over large swaths of land around it. Tokyo's decision to release the nuclear-contaminated water used to cool the nuclear fuel rods into the Pacific Ocean, starting last summer, remains a thorny issue between Japan and its neighbors. Fortunately, all of Japan's nuclear power plants escaped serious damage this time. But one plant in Ishikawa reportedly saw its electricity system partially disabled following the quake, while water from a spent fuel pool at another nuclear power station in Niigata Prefecture spilled over due to the quake, although no abnormality in operation was detected. Japan relies heavily on nuclear power. Twelve nuclear power plants have been officially restarted since 2011, while another five have received permission to restart. Another 10 reactors are also undergoing inspections for a possible restart. It is imperative that Japan double down on its regulation and supervision efforts to ensure the safety of its nuclear power plants for the good of itself and the rest of the world.

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## US should call time on its tariff review

US business organizations, trade unions and enterprises have never stopped lobbying the US government to review the feasibility of the high tariffs imposed on goods from China. However, the review, which the Joe Biden administration has extended time and again, dragged into its fourth year on Monday. During the process, the Biden administration has neither disclosed anything regarding the progress of the review or its findings, nor has it set a deadline for its conclusion. Americans for Free Trade, a coalition of US businesses, trade organizations and workers united against tariffs, on Tuesday urged the Office of the United States Trade Representative to release the review results "immediately", believing that the review would prove the folly of continuing the high tariffs imposed on one of the largest trading partners of the US. Its call came after the USTR announced last week a further extension, through May 31, 2024, of the reinstated COVID-related exclusions in the China Section 301 Investigation, which were due to expire on Dec 31 last year, without giving any indication of when the review into the tariffs imposed on imports of thousands of types of Chinese goods would be wrapped up. The COVID-related exclusions include medical products such as face masks, examination gloves and hand sanitizing wipes. What the AFT said in its statement reflects the call of the majority of the US business community for the USTR to bring an end to the tariff policy that was initiated by the previous administration with the aim of gaining the upper hand in the second phase of trade negotiations that were due to be held with Beijing. Rather than scrapping the tariffs on taking office, the Biden administration has kept them in place, which, as the AFT said, has led to more dislocation, inefficiencies and job losses. International Monetary Fund Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva warned on Tuesday that the rivalry between the US and China could reduce global economic output by 7 percent — roughly equal to the annual output of France and Germany — by causing economic fragmentation that increases the cost of trade. In that sense, her admonishment "we would all be better off finding ways to reduce frictions, concentrate on security concerns that are real and meaningful" should not fall on deaf ears. As she said, going "willy-nilly in fragmenting the world economy" just means everyone ends up "with a smaller pie". If the US lifted the tariffs, it would not only give a shot in the arm to the world's top two economies steady their ties, but also help inject positive energy and certainty into the global economy, which is in desperate need of a restorative tonic.

## History repeats itself with the assassination of a Hamas official

James Dorsey

It took the PLO 16 years to unambiguously accept Israel's existence and end armed resistance against Israel in 1988. The violence ebbed and flowed. It involved targeted assassinations of Israeli and Palestinian representatives and leaders in third countries. The 1982 shooting in London of the Israeli ambassador to Britain, Shlomo Argov, sparked the Israeli invasion of Lebanon and forced Yasser Arafat's Palestine Liberation Organisation to decamp from Lebanon to Tunisia. Crime Scene Attempted Assassination of Shlomo Argov, the Israeli ambassador to the United Kingdom, Thursday 3rd June 1982. Photo: Bunny Atkins/Mirropix/Getty

The violence put the Palestinian issue on the world agenda. The violence erupted, and at times, was driven by fierce debate among Palestinian guerilla leaders on whether to drop maximalist demands for replacing the State of Israel with a (Palestinian-dominated) "secular democratic state" and strive for a Palestinian state alongside Israel. It took the PLO 16 years to unambiguously accept Israel's existence and end armed resistance against Israel in 1988. The violence ebbed and flowed. It involved targeted assassinations of Israeli and Palestinian representatives and leaders in third countries. The 1982 shooting in London of the Israeli ambassador to Britain, Shlomo Argov, sparked the Israeli invasion of Lebanon and forced Yasser Arafat's Palestine Liberation Organisation to decamp from Lebanon to Tunisia. Crime Scene Attempted Assassination of Shlomo Argov, the Israeli ambassador to the United Kingdom, Thursday 3rd June 1982. Photo: Bunny Atkins/Mirropix/Getty Images For much of the 1960s, 70s, and 80s, Israel refused to engage with the PLO, employing the same language it uses today about Hamas. To be sure, Hamas' October 7 attack on Israel upped the ante in scale and brutality. It has, again fitting a historic pattern, empowered the most extreme ultra-nationalist, ultra-religious elements on Israel's political spectrum, and sparked a war, involving indiscriminate bombing and punishment of a civilian population that Israel and Hamas will find difficult to live down. While the jury is out, the war has not halted a torturous process within Hamas, much like the equally torturous evolution within the PLO. Hamas' internal debate became evident with the adoption of its 2017 amended charter and has continued despite the war. There is no guarantee that Hamas will follow in the footsteps of the PLO. This week's presumably Israeli killing in Beirut of senior Hamas official Saleh al-Arouri, a 57-year-old co-founder of the group's military wing, the Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades, and deputy head of its political bureau, raises the spectre of renewed tit-for-tat Palestinian and Israeli killings in third countries with one difference. Hamas deputy political chief Saleh al-Arouri, after signing a reconciliation deal with senior Fatah official Azzam al-Ahmad, during a short ceremony at the Egyptian intelligence complex in Cairo, Egypt. Photo: AP/Nariman El-Mofty Mr. Al-Arouri, was widely viewed as a hardliner within Hamas, responsible for the group's military infrastructure in Lebanon and operations on the West Bank, where its popularity is on the rise because of the Gaza war and its contri-

but to a potentially burgeoning armed insurgency. Protests erupted on the West Bank, in response to calls by Hamas for "acts of resistance," to protest the killing of Mr. Al-Arouri, a West Bank native, and several other Hamas operatives in the Beirut drone strike. A general strike closed down businesses. In August, Mr. Al-Arouri telegraphed Hamas's intentions long before the October 7 attack. "A total war has become inevitable. We all consider it necessary... The resistance axis, the Palestinian people, and our nation, we want this total war. It is not (just) something we say in the media. We talk about it behind closed doors.... We are discussing together the different scenarios and possibilities," Mr. Al-Arouri told Al-Maydeen TV. Last century's tit-for-tat killings of Palestinians targeted primarily PLO moderates, not hardliners, and were perpetrated not only by Israel but also by Palestinian hardliners, like Abu Nidal, a renegade PLO operative. Israel has repeatedly warned that it will hunt down Hamas operatives wherever they are. In 2015, the US State Department offered up to \$5 million for "information leading to the identification or location" of Mr. Al-Arouri. Even so, Israel failed to notify the Biden administration of its plans to take out Mr. Al-Arouri, a sign it feared the US would oppose the operation because it risked expanding the war beyond carefully calibrated hostilities on the Lebanese-Israeli border and in the Red Sea as well as Israeli-Palestinian clashes in the West Bank. Complicating the fallout of Mr. Al-Arouri's death is the fact that Israel and Hamas are not the only players. Hezbollah has vowed to retaliate for the killing in Lebanon of any representative of the Iranian-backed Axis of Resistance that includes Hamas, the Yemeni Houthis, and Iraqi militias alongside the Lebanese Shiite militia and the Islamic Republic. Members of Lebanon's Hezbollah take part in Ashura commemorations in a southern Beirut suburb. Anwar Amro/AFP/Getty Images Hezbollah has been waging a war against Israel since October 7 to tie Israeli forces down on the Jewish state's northern border so that they cannot be deployed in Gaza without provoking an all-out conflict that could prove disastrous for Hezbollah and Lebanon. Mr. Arouri's killing puts Hezbollah between a rock and a hard place. It needs to find a way to be seen as living up to its vow while ensuring the hostilities do not spin out of control. Many in Lebanon fear Hamas could drag the bankrupt country into a war they do not want. Last month, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu threatened on a visit to troops on the Lebanese border that Israel would "single-handedly turn Beirut and South Lebanon, not

far from here, into Gaza and Khan Yunis" if Hezbollah started an all-out war.

In a 90-minute speech to commemorate the fourth anniversary of the US assassination of Iranian Revolutionary Guard Qassem Soleimani scheduled before Mr. Al-Arouri's killing, Hezbollah leader Hasan Nasrallah referred only summarily to the Hamas leader's death. Hezbollah supporters in Beirut raise their fists and cheer, as they listen to a speech by leader Hassan Nasrallah. Pic: AP Much of his speech was an ode to Mr. Soleimani and Iran's role in supporting militias in Gaza, Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, and Yemen by funding, training, and arming them, enabling them to manufacture weaponry, and creating the Axis of Resistance. Even so, Mr. Nasrallah insisted that Axis members independently took their own decisions and did not take orders from Iran. Clad in a black cloak and turban, Mr. Nasrallah praised Hamas' October 7 attack with no mention of the group's targeting of civilians. He described the carnage rained on Gaza by Israel in response as "worth the sacrifice." The Hezbollah leader produced a laundry list of why Hamas was winning the war, including its success in putting the Palestinian plight back on the international agenda. The war succeeded in "reviving the Palestinian cause, forcing nations across the world to look for solutions," Mr. Nasrallah said, noting that Arab countries had been willing to establish formal relations with Israel without a resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Yet, the Hezbollah leader seemed to buy time, by saying he would address the issue of Lebanon and Mr. Al-Arouri's killing in greater detail in another speech on Friday during a ceremony for a Hezbollah operative who died recently. At the same time, Mr. Nasrallah appeared to suggest that Hezbollah would retaliate for Mr. Al-Arouri's killing on the group's timeline, considering widespread Lebanese opposition to a war with Israel. Mr. Nasrallah warned, referring to Mr. Al-Arouri's killing in the Hezbollah stronghold in southern Beirut, that "yesterday's crime is blatant, it is serious. This crime will not go unanswered. The battlefield is there, the nights are there." Yet, he also noted that "we are taking the situation in Lebanon into account." Tellingly, Mr. Nasrallah seemed to back hardliners in Hamas' internal debate. Arguing that Jewish attachment to the land was fabricated and that Israelis were fleeing the country because Israel was proven incapable of providing security, Mr. Nasrallah addressed Israelis directly, saying, "Here you don't have a future. The land of Palestine is for the Palestinians."

## Pakistan's economic odyssey: Navigating autonomy, liberation, and empowerment

Fazzal Abbas

The prevailing global economic conditions wield a profound impact on the growth, prosperity, and standard of living of a nation's citizens. This symbiotic relationship between national economies and the global stage not only dictates financial well-being but also influences the socio-political footprint a country leaves on the international scene. Pakistan, with its multifaceted economy, traverses a distinctive path by embracing the Islamic economic system, avoiding strict adherence to either

In the intricate dance of global politics and economics, the economic standing of every nation emerges as a cornerstone. The prevailing global economic conditions wield a profound impact on the growth, prosperity, and standard of living of a nation's citizens. This symbiotic relationship between national economies and the global stage not only dictates financial well-being but also influences the socio-political footprint a country leaves on the international scene. Pakistan, with its multifaceted economy, traverses a distinctive path by embracing the Islamic economic system, avoiding strict adherence to either capitalism or communism. Despite gaining political independence in 1947, the specter of the Bretton Woods system, constructed by the Western world, continues to cast a shadow over Pakistan's economic landscape. The amalgamation of diverse economic ideologies has proven insufficient to shield Pakistan from the pressing financial challenges of the contemporary world. Historian William Dalrymple, in his seminal work "The Anarchy: The East India Company, Corporate Violence, and the Pillage of an Empire," unfolds a compelling narrative. Dalrymple posits that the East India Company ruthlessly exploited the natural resources of the Indian subcontinent upon landing, catalyzing the expansion of the United Kingdom. There was a time when this kingdom ruled as an enormous empire, its influence spanning the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, leaving an indelible mark on history. Post-World War II, Great Britain's imperial influence began to wane. This geopolitical shift prompted Britain to grant political autonomy to its colonies, leading to the emergence of Pakistan on the world

map. Despite the veneer of political freedom, Pakistan remains economically and psychologically ensnared by the Bretton Woods system. The International Financial Institutions (IFIs) now brandish a new economic policy, akin to a sword hovering over Pakistan every morning. Failure to adhere to their prescribed plan of action threatens to halt financial assistance. In his book "International Law," Malcolm Sha underscores the paradox within the UN Charter. While the Charter mandates member states to respect sovereignty, territorial integrity, and political independence, global financial organizations impose limitations on Pakistan's economic policy. The apparent lack of control over tariffs, taxes, and customs charges raises questions about the decision-making process, revealing a disconcerting belief that economic policies are set by individuals with little influence over the policy formulation process. The stark reality of economic imperialism persists despite political liberation from colonialism, as highlighted by a tweet from Pakistan's former finance minister Ishaq Dar on July 13, 2023. Expressing gratitude for an International Monetary Fund (IMF) disbursement, the tweet exposes the enduring influence of the Bretton Woods system on Pakistan's economic decisions. The conundrum of lost sovereignty echoes throughout Pakistan's internal and foreign affairs, challenging the United Nations' concept of sovereignty. Why does Pakistan find itself compelled to accept demands for policies from international organizations, even if seemingly unwise? This dilemma places the onus on individuals to navigate autonomous choices, triggering nationwide protests in response to

perceived foreign political conspiracies. The paradox deepens when examining reactions to foreign presences. While the entire country rallies against the perceived threat of US military tanks, the entry of an American Bank is met with gratitude from even the Prime Minister. This juxtaposition reveals a nation caught in the complex interplay of defending sovereignty while grappling with the economic necessities tied to international aid. To break free from the chains of international financial institutions, the people of Pakistan must take decisive actions. Firstly, the government must enhance transparency in economic policies to instill public confidence in fund allocation. Legislative actions should be implemented to manage congestion, curb unnecessary spending, and address economic disruptions. Strengthening the nation's economic system requires initiatives promoting development across various business sectors, accompanied by a revolutionary economic policy aimed at job creation and economic growth. Crucially, efforts should be directed towards improving well-being and economic knowledge, ensuring access to basic services and expertise for all. Lastly, the government's leadership must acknowledge and respect the perspectives of the people, aligning economic decisions with the well-being of the nation. Pakistan stands at a crossroads, navigating the delicate balance between economic sovereignty, political autonomy, and the imperatives of global finance. The path to empowerment requires a collective effort to reshape economic policies, strengthen the nation, and empower its citizens, ultimately breaking free from the chains of International Monetary Fund debt.



## Briefs

## PM advocates progressive, foreign policy

FROM PAGE 01

He reaffirmed his trust in Pakistan's diplomacy and diplomats in their capability to fully deliver despite pressing odds and expressed the hope that the deliberations of this year's Conference would lead to practical suggestions to navigate Pakistan's foreign policy through present day challenges. The Prime Minister extended his best wishes to the Foreign Office and Pakistani diplomats in safeguarding Pakistan's interests and advancing Pakistan's global stature.

## PPP doesn't make false...

FROM PAGE 01

The answer will be no," he added. Bilawal said that his party does not make false promises, unlike PML-N and PTI. "Our ten-point agenda is people-centric, unlike what the PML-N and PTI have to offer." The PPP chairman assured the provision of free and standardised healthcare in all districts of Punjab, asserting, "We will ensure free and quality medical facilities in every district of Punjab. Have they [PML-N] provided standardised healthcare facilities in Punjab?" Expressing confidence in his party's candidates nationwide to win the upcoming general elections, Bilawal declared, "The PPP will give up to 300 units of electricity free and provide quality education across the country," he further said.

## Gaza holocaust...

FROM PAGE 01

targeted two Merkava tanks with Al-Yassin 105 shells at the Mahatta and Katiba areas in Khan Younis in the southern Gaza Strip. The group also said it detonated an anti-personnel device directed at an Israeli force inside a building in al-Mughraha in the central Gaza Strip. In Nuseirat, the Qassam Brigades said its fighters detonated a "highly explosive" device against an Israeli foot force in a house, "killing and wounding" them. In Bureij refugee camp, fighters also targeted a gathering of Israeli vehicles and soldiers with heavy-calibre mortar shells.

## Acts of terror...

FROM PAGE 01

Soleimani in the southeastern city of Kerman on Wednesday during a ceremony marking his fourth martyrdom anniversary. Speaking to reporters on Thursday, Iranian Interior Minister Ahmad Vahidi said 84 people were killed in the bloody attacks. He added that the incident also left 284 wounded, some in critical condition. Medical services said the death toll is expected to rise. The initial death toll was higher, but it has since been revised down. According to Mohammad Saberi, the head of Keran emergency services, the number was adjusted as some of the bodies were severely disfigured, making the count challenging.

## New Jersey imam shot...

FROM PAGE 01

shooting of the imam of the Masjid Muhammad-Newark. The imam was taken to the hospital in critical condition where he was declared deceased later on. The state's Attorney General Matthew Plotkin said bias did not appear to be a motive for the shooting. "This investigation is ongoing, but at this time we do not have any information suggesting the crime was motivated by bias," Plotkin said in a statement. The AG also noted: "Every possible angle will, of course, be explored and every lead will be fully investigated to bring the perpetrator or perpetrators to justice." Governor Phil Murphy urged people to come forward and share any information regarding the shooter.

## Australia lose openers on rain-truncated 2nd day of Test

Bad light stopped play midway through the second session before a huge rainstorm swept down across the city

OUR CORRESPONDENTS

SYDNEY: David Warner made 34 in what is likely to be his penultimate innings in the long form of cricket as Australia reached 116 for two on the rain-disrupted second day of the third test against Pakistan on Thursday. Bad light stopped play midway through the second session before a huge rainstorm swept down across the city, leaving the home batsmen kicking their heels for the remainder of the day still 197 runs behind Pakistan's first innings score of 313. Marnus Labuschagne, who was 23 not out, and Steve Smith, unbeaten on six, will resume on day three on Friday when no rain is forecast.

"I think we're starting to get used to it here in Sydney each year but yeah, it's frustrating to lose a bit of time to light and then now a bit of rain settling in," Australia captain Pat Cummins said. The last three New Year's tests at Sydney Cricket Ground have been impacted by the weather and all ended



in draws. Australia hold an unsailable lead in the three-match series against Pakistan after victories in the tests in Perth and Melbourne but will be desperate to send Warner into retirement a

winner on his home ground. The 37-year-old had come through a single over with six runs to his name at the end of play on Wednesday and resumed with childhood friend Usman Khawaja

under cloudy skies on Thursday. He should have departed for 20 when Pakistan debutant Saim Ayub dropped a sitter in the slips, and was fortunate on 27 that his edge went between the slips and gully

and ran to the boundary for four. A bowling change for Pakistan did the trick with off-spinner Agha Salman coming on to remove Warner with his third ball, the Australian bamboozled by the spin and bounce and edging the delivery to Babar Azam in the cordon. The crowd was initially silent but quickly roused into yet another ovation for Warner, whose runs took his career tally to 8,729 in 112 tests at an average of 44.53. "It was pretty good ball he got there," Cummins added. "He always finds a way to get himself up and he looked like a man on a mission when he walked out to bat. I'm sure he'll get a second innings out there to score a few more runs." Khawaja followed for 47 before the weather disruption, ruled to have been caught behind after a DRS appeal off the bowling of Amir Jamal, Pakistan's find of the series. "Really happy with where it stands," said Cummins. "It's a really good wicket, it feels like there's plenty runs to be scored. "So if we can get a first innings lead that would be good. A decent lead would be better and hopefully it'll start spinning."

## Initial schedule for ICC T20 WC 2024 finalised

*Pak is slated to play its first match against the USA on June 6, followed by the much-anticipated clash between the arch-rivals Pakistan and India in New York on June 9*

KARACHI: The initial schedule for this year's ICC T20 World Cup has been finalised with Pakistan and India being in the same group. The tournament is set to take place in the United States and the West Indies from June 4 to June 30, featuring a total of 20 teams. For the first round, the 20 teams are divided into four groups. According to sources, Pakistan and India share their group with Ireland, Canada, and the host nation, the United States. Subsequently, a majority of the matches in the first round involving Pakistan's group are set to be played in the United States. Pakistan is slated to play its first match against the USA on June 6, followed by the much-anticipated clash between the arch-rivals Pakistan and India in New York on June 9. The match between Pakistan and Canada is scheduled for June 11 in New York, while the first round match with Ireland will take place in Florida on June 16.

Following the first round, the top two teams from each of the four groups will qualify for the Super Eight round, where they will be divided into two groups. According to the sources, the ICC has sent the schedule to the cricket boards and the broadcasters for feedback and approval, with the final schedule set to be released soon. Sources suggest that the timing of the Pakistan-India match and the time zone differences between USA and sub-continent could lead to the option of scheduling the match a day earlier. It is worth noting that New York is ten hours behind Pakistan's time, and the match scheduled to start in the afternoon there would be played in the late night in Pakistan. There is a possibility that the match could be rescheduled to June 8 to avoid affecting its viewership. - Agencies

## Nadal crushes Kubler to reach Brisbane quarter-finals

DNA

BRISBANE: Rafa Nadal continued his impressive return from a long injury layoff with a 6-1 6-2 demolition of wildcard Jason Kubler to reach the quarter-finals at the Brisbane International on Thursday ahead of this month's Australian Open. Out for nearly a year with a hip problem that required surgery, the 22-time Grand Slam champion overpowered Kubler in 83 minutes to book his place in the last eight.

Nadal had an impressive start as he cruised to a 5-0 lead before Kubler could even settle inside the Pat Rafter Arena. The Australian held his serve in the sixth game and threatened to break the Spaniard in the next but Nadal came back from 40-0 down to seal the opener. With Kubler hampered by a right elbow issue, Nadal broke in the opening game of the second set and again in the seventh before serving out the match. "I think I started the match very well," Nadal, whose stunning shots included a spectacular backhand smash, said in an on-court interview and will now face Australian Jordan Thompson. "I saw videos of



Jason before the match and I saw him playing very solidly from the baseline, so I came on court and tried to be aggressive with my shots from the baseline." "Two victories after a long time being out of the professional tour is something that makes me feel good," added the Spaniard, referring to Tuesday's win against Austria's former world number three Dominic Thiem. Former French Open champion Jelena Ostapenko beat Karolina Pliskova 6-2 4-6 6-3 to reach the quarters in the women's section of the tune-up event for the Melbourne Park

Grand Slam, which runs from Jan. 14-28. Third-seeded Latvian Ostapenko, who will meet former world number one Victoria Azarenka for a place in the last four, raced through the first set but looked frustrated as Czech Pliskova fought back to claim the second.

## Babar will soon score a big hundred

SYDNEY: Pakistan all-rounder Agha Salman backed star batter Babar Azam to regain his form sooner rather than later. Azam has struggled for runs in the recent past and was not able to score even a single fifty in Test cricket last year. "A bad patch can come upon any cricketer. After how much Babar Azam has performed for Pakistan, this little bad patch makes no difference. We're not concerned about his form, and he himself is aware of how to get out of these situations. The way that he's working on his batting, I think it's just a matter of time. Very soon you'll see a big hundred from him," Salman said during a press conference on Thursday after the close of play during the ongoing Sydney Test against Australia. He also opened up about Pakistan's slip catching after debutant Saim Ayub dropped a sitter of Warner earlier during the day. "Saim has been practicing slip-catching. I think there's a problem with the 1st slip position (laughs). When I was briefly off the field, Babar thought he'd move to 2nd slip (with Saim at 1st). People who follow cricket know that more catches go toward 2nd slip," he said. "Dropped catches are a part of the game. Australia also dropped catches, and it happens to anyone. There are no easy catches in the slips because you

have very little time to react. We've also taken so many catches in the slips but no one talks about them (laughs)," he added. Rain played spoilsport on the second day of the third Test between Pakistan and Australia in Sydney on Thursday. Due to the persistent rain and bad light, the entire third session of the day was washed out. According to the Australian Government's Bureau of Meteorology, chances of rain are 70 percent for the rest of the day. There is also a possibility of a severe thunderstorm in the west. Additionally, there is also 50 percent chances of rain, which is most likely in the morning and early afternoon, on Friday. However, the possibility of showers is only between 20-30 percent on Saturday and Sunday. Earlier, Pakistan claimed the key wickets of openers David Warner and Usman Khawaja to restrict Australia to 116-2 at tea today. Marnus Labuschagne was on 23 and Steve Smith six when bad light stopped play, even with the ground lights switched on, about 45 minutes before scheduled tea. With storms moving in and the hosts trailing by 197 runs, the umpires decided to take an early tea. Warner was dismissed for 34 and looked annoyed as he left the Sydney Cricket Ground to a standing ovation from his home crowd after missing out on his chance of a cherished century in his 112th and final Test match. - DNA

## Finch announces retirement from BBL

MELBOURNE: Former World Cup-winning Australia captain Aaron Finch announced his retirement from the Big Bash League (BBL), following an injury-riddled season with the Melbourne Renegades. Speaking to the local Australian media outlet ahead of the Renegades' BBL 13 clash against Hobart Hurricanes, Finch stated that it was time for him to say goodbye to cricket in Australia. "I'm just getting old! When you look around the competition and our side in particular, there are some great young players coming through," he said. "I think now is the right time." "I think there's always a little part of that (injury) as you get a little bit older ... but it's something I've been thinking about for a little bit as well. "I wanted to give it as good a crack as I could this year. It's all good, I'm happy." Meanwhile, Aaron Finch is hopeful to be fit enough to play his farewell BBL game in the home derby against the Melbourne Stars next Saturday. He scored 3311 runs for the Renegades, the second-highest in the history of BBL, only behind Chris Lynn. Last year in February, Aaron Finch also bid adieu to international cricket, ending his 12-year career as one of the most prolific run scorers in limited-overs formats. He was part of the Australia's squad that won the ICC Men's Cricket World Cup in 2015 and six years later led his side to their maiden T20 World Cup title. - Agencies

## India crush SA in 'shortest Test' to level series

Set to chase a mere 79, India took just 12 overs to register an important victory in the second session of Day 2

SPORTS DESK

CAPE TOWN: Pacers-led India romped to a convincing seven-wicket victory in the second Test despite a valiant century by South Africa's Aiden Markam to level the two-match series 1-1 at Queensland on Thursday. Set to chase a mere 79, India took just 12 overs to register an important victory in the second session of Day 2, making it the shortest Test in history, in terms of balls bowled. In pursuit of a modest total on a challenging surface, Yashvir Jaiswal attacked from the first delivery and made 28 from 23 deliveries before being caught at the boundary off Nandre Burger. Shubman Gill (10) and Virat Kohli (12) fell to Kagiso Rabada and Marco Jansen respectively before Shreyas Iyer hit the winning boundary, his only scoring stroke. Captain Rohit Sharma, on the other hand, stayed unbeaten on 16. Earlier, Aiden Markam scored a gutsy century for South Africa but India bundled out the hosts on a modest

176. Markram top scored for South Africa with 106 off 103 balls before South Africa were bowled out for 176 shortly before Lunch. The home side could add 94 runs



for the loss of their remaining seven wickets in the first session on Day 2. Jasprit Bumrah led the bowling attack for India in the second innings of the ongoing

Test as he returned with a six-fer. Mukesh Kumar supported the fellow pacer with two scalps while Mohammed Siraj and Prashidh Krishna took one wicket apiece.

The opening day of the second Test saw 23 wickets fall as both sides went hard at each other. India lost their last six wickets for no run in 11 deliveries and were bundled out on a modest 153 in response to South Africa's 55. India, who had a flying start to the final match of the series when they skittled South Africa for a paltry 55, coped with a collapse of the ages to bundle out on 153 and could only acquire a 98-run lead. The visitors, at one stage, were looking in a commanding position but the Proteas ran through their middle and lower order to force a comeback. India's top batters Virat Kohli (46), Rohit Sharma (39) and Shubman Gill (36) remained the notable contributors to their total while the rest seemed hapless against the determined Proteas bowling attack and seven of them fell for a duck.

## Gen Faiz Hamid rejects...

FROM PAGE 01

This was the third time that the former ISI chief remained absent from the hearing being conducted by the inquiry commission, which earlier summoned him in the second week of December last year and then on December 29, sources said. However, the first notice couldn't be delivered. In November last year, the caretaker federal government constituted the inquiry commission for the implementation of the Supreme Court's 2019 Faizabad verdict.

## PTI moves SC to...

FROM PAGE 01

however, if PTI does not have a unified symbol, it might lose votes due to confusion among the people. If the top court does not restore the PTI's electoral symbol, it will have to play the election innings without the bat, with its leaders calling it a "major setback" to the party as it has been contested on the sign in several polls. The PTI decided to move the apex court a day after the Peshawar High Court (PHC) revoked the stay order granted by its single-member bench, restoring the Election Commission of Pakistan's (ECP) decision to declare PTI intra-party polls null and void and stripping it of its election symbol.

## Lifetime disqualification against...

FROM PAGE 01

Today, a seven-member bench - headed by CJP Isa and comprising Justice Syed Mansoor Ali Shah, Justice Yahya Afridi, Justice Aminuddin Khan, Justice Jamal Khan Mandokhel, Justice Muhammad Ali Mazhar, and Justice Musarrat Hilali - presided over the hearing. AGP Mansoor Usman Awan and lawyers Reema Omar, Azir Bhandari and Faisal Siddiqui, who have been appointed as amici curiae also appeared before the court. Proceedings were broadcast live on SC's website and YouTube channel.

## IHC restores...

FROM PAGE 01

bench verdict, the disqualification period spanned five years instead of 10. Today's decision came during the hearing of a plea filed by NAB against the reduction of the 10-year disqualification of its convict to five years. Senior Special Prosecutor NAB Muhammad Rafi appeared in the IHC, informing it about PML-N politician Faiz Ali Jamali's sentence being upheld by the Supreme Court. Following the IHC's injunction, Jamali's 10-year disqualification has been restored.

## MQM-P unveils...

FROM PAGE 01

He also vowed to launch a new project for eliminating the scarcity of water in Karachi which would be completed in four years. Senior deputy convener Mustafa Kamal said that the MQM-P's manifesto was not just a bunch of documents highlighting country's core issues but giving a practical solution.

## FBR decides to tax...

FROM PAGE 01

based on the size of the shop and the volume of its annual income and it would be collected every month. The sources said the scheme was completely ready and they would launch it upon getting the green light from the government. At least 10% advance tax would be charged on retailers' annual income, they said adding that under the scheme the tax would be imposed on businesspersons associated with any sector. The News reported last month that after IMF rejection of introducing any fixed scheme for retailers, the caretaker government had finalised the 'Tax Asaan Application' for collecting tax from small shopkeepers based on the valuation of each shop determined by the FBR.



## Briefs

## Myanmar junta frees over 9,600 prisoners under amnesty

NAYPYIDAW : The traditional event comes as the army, which took power in a military coup in 2021, faces growing resistance from allied groups in the country's north. A coalition of ethnic armed groups has said it has captured military positions and border hubs vital for trade with China, posing a serious threat to the junta, according to analysts. Independence Day in Myanmar has previously been marked by a parade in the capital Naypyidaw, followed by an address from junta chief Min Aung Hlaing. But the junta leader was absent this year, leaving a subordinate to read prepared remarks in his stead. In a statement Thursday, the State Administration Council, as the junta calls itself, said it had "granted amnesty to 9,652 prisoners from respective prisons and jails as a gesture for the 76th Independence Day and to respect the peace in peoples' hearts and minds". There was no immediate indication that political detainees were among those to be released. In a separate statement, the junta said that 114 foreign prisoners were among those granted amnesty and would be deported "on bilateral relations and humanitarian grounds". In the commercial capital Yangon, friends and family members of prisoners gathered outside Insein prison, where detainees were to be released. Myanmar declared independence from British colonial rule on January 4, 1948, after a long fight championed by General Aung San, ousted civilian leader Aung San Suu Kyi's father. —APP

## US extends military aid to Japan post-earthquakes

WASHINGTON : The US will extend military support to Japan as the country is grappling with the aftermath of a devastating earthquake which left at least 84 people dead and 79 others missing. "When Japan is in a time of need, we're here to support them, both civilian with resources, military with logistics," said Rahm Emanuel. Washington's top diplomat in Tokyo. Initially, the US aid was worth around \$100,000 but that would be a "down-payment," Emanuel added, according to Tokyo-based Kyodo News. Central Japan has been hit by many earthquakes since Monday afternoon with magnitudes as strong as 7.6, causing widespread devastations, as many areas are yet disconnected. —Agencies

## US education official resigns over Biden's Israel-Gaza policy

WASHINGTON: A senior official in the US Education Department stepped down on Wednesday, citing President Joe Biden's handling of the conflict in Gaza, the latest sign of dissent in the administration as deaths continue to grow in the war. Also on Wednesday, 17 Biden re-election campaign staffers issued a warning in an anonymous letter that Biden could lose voters over the issue. Tariq Habash, special assistant in the Education Department's Office of Planning, Evaluation and Policy Development, in a letter to Education Secretary Miguel Cardona, said: "I cannot stay silent as this administration turns a blind eye to the atrocities committed against innocent Palestinian lives, in what leading human rights experts have called a genocidal campaign by the Israeli government." Habash, a Palestinian-American and an expert on student debt, was appointed early in Biden's presidency as part of a build-out of the Education Department's student loan expertise. The 17 anonymous Biden re-election campaign staffers, in their letter, published on Medium, urged Biden to call for a cease-fire in Gaza. —APP



ISLAMABAD: UNHCR representative giving away certificates on the occasion of a ceremony organized by NAVTTC and women welfare association.— Photo Mudassar Raja

## Putin extends condolences with Iran over terrorist attack

'We strongly condemn terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, reaffirm our commitment to an uncompromising fight against this evil,' says Russian president

## NEWS DESK

MOSCOW: Russian President Vladimir Putin extended his condolences over twin explosions in Iran near the grave of the killed General Qasem Soleimani. In a letter to Iran's president Ebrahim Raisi and Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, President Putin said that the killing of peaceful people visiting the mausoleum is shocking in its cynicism and cruelty. Earlier, at least 103 people were killed, and more than 170 others injured in two consecutive bomb explosions during a gathering commemorating the fourth anniversary of the assassination of General Qasem Soleimani in

Iran's southern city of Kerman. The explosions took place near the Saheb al-Zaman Mosque in Kerman, Soleimani's hometown, where he is buried. Iran's official media referred to the bombings as a "terrorist attack," escalating regional tensions. The explosions occurred amid heightened regional instability, with Tuesday's killing of Hamas number two Saleh al-Aruri in a Beirut drone strike, which Lebanese officials linked to Israel. Putin Extends Condolences with Iran over Terrorist Attack The bombings, targeting civilian population who had gathered to honor Soleimani, resulted in around 170 people being injured, according to state media. Kerman's deputy governor declared



the incident as a "terrorist attack." Earlier, Pakistan strongly condemned the dastardly terrorist attack that occurred earlier on Wednesday in the Martyrs Cemetery of the provincial capital of

Kerman, Iran, resulting in large number of deaths and injuries. In a statement, Pakistan's Foreign Office spokesperson said, "Pakistan stands in complete solidarity with the Government and brotherly people of Iran in this hour of tragedy and grief". It added that Pakistan extended heartfelt condolences to the families of the victims and pray for the speedy recovery of the injured people. The statement further said that Pakistan believed that terrorism is a menace and threat to regional and international peace and security. "It needs to be confronted through bilateral and regional cooperation" the statement added. Earlier on, UN chief Guterres also condemns blast Unit-

ed Nations chief Antonio Guterres has issued condolences for those killed in the attack and called for the perpetrators to be held accountable. "The Secretary-General strongly condemns the attack today on a memorial ceremony in Kerman city in the Islamic Republic of Iran, which reportedly killed more than 100 people and injured many more," a statement from his spokesperson reads. "The Secretary-General calls for those responsible to be held accountable. The Secretary-General expresses his deep condolences to the bereaved families and the people and the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran. He wishes the injured a speedy recovery."

## Gaza war risks geostrategic fractures in region

ANKARA : As Israel's relentless attacks on Gaza continue to claim civilian lives by the day, the world and especially societies in the Middle East are losing hope in universal values and a global justice system championed by the West so far. Months have passed, and more than 20,000 people have lost their lives in Gaza, mostly children. However, despite the mounting number of civilian deaths and war crimes committed by Israel, neither the U.S. nor the EU have raised their voice enough to stop and condemn the attacks. Hamas' attack on Israel can be condemned while Israel's attack on Gaza is not deemed worthy of condemnation by the international community. The silence of the West is increasingly leading regional societies and their governments to question the current global system and their security, warned Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan in his meeting with media representatives in Ankara. Countries in the region have seen that once interests are the top priority, the West will back down from its rhetoric of humanitarian values and follow a policy of turning a blind eye to crimes committed. The message drawn by many from this months-long deadly conflict is "everyone is on their own" in the face of threats. — Agencies

## Exiled leader condemns 'sham' BD election

LONDON: Bangladesh's election on Sunday will be a "sham" designed to cement Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's rule, exiled opposition leader Tarique Rahman has told AFP in an exclusive interview defending his party's boycott. Rahman is heir to one of the country's two main political dynasties — the other led by Hasina — and has helmed its largest opposition party since the 2018 jailing of his mother, two-time premier Khaleda Zia. Six years ago he was convicted in absentia of masterminding a deadly grenade attack on a campaign rally for Hasina — a charge he insists is fabricated — and sentenced to life imprisonment. His party staged a months-long protest campaign last year demanding the prime minister's resignation that saw at least 11 people killed and thousands of its supporters arrested. In his first interview with a major international media outlet for several years, Rahman, 56, said it would be inappropriate to have his party participate in a vote with a "predetermined" outcome. "Bangladesh is approaching another sham election," he told AFP by email from London, where he has lived since 2008. "Participating in an election under Hasina, against the aspirations of the Bangladeshi people, would undermine the sacrifices of those who fought, shed blood and gave their lives for democracy." Rahman said the odds against his Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) and dozens of other parties which joined the boycott had been overwhelmingly stacked against them by the ruling Awami League. He accused it of fielding "dummy" opposition candidates aligned with the ruling party to give the election a patina of legitimacy. This would create "an impression of competition even though all results are predetermined," he said. —DNA

## Netanyahu giving false image of Hamas leader's assassination

As Israel's war on Gaza enters fourth month, Benjamin Netanyahu wants to prolong it for as long as possible to avoid jail, Mustafa Barghouti

## WE DESK

GAZA : As its war on the Gaza Strip enters a fourth deadly month, Israel is trying to compensate for its failures with tactics that are raising the risk of a "complete regional explosion," according to senior Palestinian politician Mustafa Barghouti. Barghouti was commenting on the assassination of Saleh al-Arouri, the deputy chief of Hamas killed in an attack in Lebanon, marking a serious escalation that many fear could trigger a wider regional conflict. Al-Arouri, considered one of the founders of the Al-Qassam Brigades during the early 1990s, is the most senior Hamas leader killed since Oct. 7. He was targeted in an Israeli drone strike in the capital Beirut along with two other commanders of the Al-Qassam Bri-

gades, with Hezbollah chief Hassan Nasrallah warning that the assassination on Lebanese soil "will not go unpunished." Israel has not officially confirmed nor denied responsibility for the attack, but Mark Regev, a senior adviser to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, hailed it as a "surgical strike against the Hamas leadership." In Barghouti's view, the strike on al-Arouri reflects the reality that Israel's campaign in Gaza failed drastically in achieving any of its main goals. "What they've done in the assassinating Saleh al-Arouri was a way of trying to compensate for this failure," Barghouti, general secretary of the Palestinian National Initiative. "Of all the Israeli goals, they couldn't conduct fully the ethnic cleansing, they couldn't destroy the Palestinian resistance, and they couldn't impose their occu-

patation." Netanyahu believes that with this assassination "he can provide to the Israeli public an image of victory, which is not true," Barghouti added. "In reality, he is risking a total explosion of the region. But Netanyahu doesn't care, not only about Palestinian lives, he doesn't care even about Israeli lives. All he wants is the extension of this war for as long as possible to save himself from losing the position of the prime minister and going to jail eventually." he said. For this, Netanyahu is "even hoping to expand over into the north and into the West Bank, and he is encouraged by the fascist ministers in his government, like (Bezalet) Smotrich and (Itamar) Ben-Gvir," he said. These people view this war as one "of ideology and religious ideological action, because their goal

is to annex not only the Gaza Strip but all of the West Bank," he added. Barghouti emphasized that this assassination "will not break the Palestinian people or the Palestinian resistance." "So many leaders before have been assassinated. Al-Arouri himself had said many times that he is expecting to be killed or becoming a martyr at any time, but he will not stop his struggle," he said. According to Barghouti, Netanyahu "will not succeed because there is a lot of growing opposition to his position thanks to the Palestinian resilience and steadfastness." "Eventually they have to stop. Israel cannot continue this war because it is affected seriously and by a very huge and deep economic crisis. They are also very sensitive to the big number of human losses they are encountering in the field," he said.

## Bosnia's Serb entity eyes separate elections

SARAJEVO : Bosnia's Serb entity is on course to organise its own elections under its own rules, the region's controversial leader Milorad Dodik has said, in his latest blow against Bosnia and Herzegovina's (BiH) central government. The leader of the Republika Srpska (RS) has been pushing for greater autonomy from the Balkan country's central institutions, amid ethnic fault lines that endure nearly three decades after the 1992-1995 war. The RS parliament in June passed a law suspending recognition of rulings made by BiH's constitutional court. The law was annulled by Bosnia's international peace envoy, Christian Schmidt, who oversees civilian aspects of the peace deal that ended Bosnia's 1992-1995 war, and has the power to sack elected officials and impose laws. But Dodik went on to enact the law anyway and was subsequently indicted for rejecting the envoy's authority. "We are determined to create a new law (...) the electoral law of Republika Srpska," Dodik told journalists at the end of a meeting with the leaders of the ruling coalition parties in Banja Luka, capital of the Bosnian Serb entity. The new legislation will entrust an RS electoral commission with organising elections for the Bosnian Serb entity's president, as well as its members of parliament and municipal councils. —APP

## NATO, Ukraine to discuss air defence after Russian strikes

Moscow has over the New Year unleashed some of its biggest missile and drone attacks on Ukraine

## FOREIGN DESK

KYIV : Ambassadors from NATO and Ukraine will hold a special meeting next week as Kiev urges faster deliveries of air defences after mounting Russian strikes, the alliance has said. Moscow has over the New Year unleashed some of its biggest missile and drone attacks on Ukraine since the early days of the invasion in February 2022. "NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg will convene a meeting of the NATO-Ukraine Council next Wednesday," NATO spokesman Dylan White said. "The meeting will be held at ambassadorial level and is convened at Ukraine's request following recent Russian missile and drone attacks on Ukrainian civilians, cities and towns." White added that "NATO allies have already delivered a vast array of air defence systems to Ukraine and they are committed to further

bolstering Ukraine's defences." UAE mediates major Russia-Ukraine prisoner exchange: Foreign Ministry The United Arab Emirates (UAE) announced that one of the largest prisoner exchanges since the beginning of the war between Russia and Ukraine has taken place under its mediation. The UAE Foreign Ministry said in a statement that mediation talks have been successful. The statement did not specify the number of prisoners involved in the exchange but expressed appreciation for the cooperation of the Russian and Ukrainian governments in the mediation efforts. Ukraine's mobile air defences have ammo for 'few more attacks': commander Kiev's mobile air defences have enough ammunition to withstand a few more powerful attacks but then will need more Western aid, a senior military commander said. Late last year, Russia launched its largest missile and drone

attacks since the early days of the invasion and again on Tuesday bombarded the capital and the second-largest city of Kharkiv, killing five and injuring dozens. "The current situation with man-portable air defence systems for mobile air defence groups is that there is enough ammunition to withstand the next few powerful attacks," Sergey Nayev, commander of the joint forces of the armed forces of Ukraine, told AFP while meeting troops outside Kiev. Ukraine calls US weapons to Kiev 'investment' in NATO protection Ukraine is considering no alternative to securing stalled US military assistance for its war against Russia and is confident the US Congress will give its approval to release the aid, Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba has said. "We don't have a plan B. We are confident in plan A," Kuleba told CNN in an interview. "Ukraine will always fight with the resources given to it. And...

what is given to Ukraine is not charity. It's an investment in the protection of NATO and in the protection of the prosperity of the American people," he said. Ukraine hangs in balance as US Republicans demand harsher border policies US House Speaker Mike Johnson led about 60 fellow Republicans in Congress on a visit to the Mexican border to demand hardline immigration policies in exchange for backing President Joe Biden's emergency wartime funding request for Ukraine. He expressed serious doubts about whether he would support a bipartisan compromise. The trip to Eagle Pass, Texas, came as the Senate engages in delicate negotiations in hopes of striking a deal on border policies that could unlock Senate GOP support for Biden's \$110 billion package for Ukraine, Israel and other US security priorities. US official shifts question to

Ukraine over weapons sent to Kiev The US administration is not ready to inform, what portion of US weapons transferred to Ukraine was damaged in combat actions, White House national security spokesperson John Kirby said at the regular briefing, according to Russian TASS news agency. Asked what portion of US weapons transferred to Ukraine was damaged in ongoing war, Kirby said: "That's a better question put to the Ukrainian defence forces, not the United States." "We are working very, very hard to make sure that for every system that is provided to Ukraine, there's a measure of accountability for it, that we can assure the Congress and the American people that the material is being used appropriately on the field of battle. And we've seen no indication that it hasn't been, that there's been some wide-scale corruption or misuse by the Ukrainian military," the official said.



## Briefs

### Election tribunal accepts Sheikh's nomination papers

DNA

RAWALPINDI: Awami Muslim League chief Sheikh Rashid Ahmad's nomination papers have been accepted by the election tribunal. The former interior minister's nomination papers from NA-56 and 57 have been approved. Rashid had filed an appeal in the election tribunal against the rejection of the papers by the ROs. Justice Mirza Waqas Rauf, the judge of the election tribunal, conducted the hearing. ROs of NA-56 and 57 appeared before the tribunal. Rashid's counsel Sardar Abdul Raziq and Sardar Shahbaz also were present in court. The court accepted the papers of Sheikh Rashid after hearing the arguments. Rashid thanked his people. "I am grateful to my mothers, sisters, scholars, and elders of Rawalpindi." He said a conspiracy was hatched to disqualify him in the two constituencies. He argued that "it has been proven that I am innocent. I have never made a statement against anyone or conspired. I have never played with anyone's honour." Rashid appealed to the people of Rawalpindi to come out on polling day and stamp on the symbol 'pen and paper' on the ballot paper.

### Naqvi appeals election candidature rejection

NAZIR SIVAL

KARACHI: The Sindh High Court's (SHC) election appellate tribunal on Thursday accepted PTI Central Vice President Firdous Shamim Naqvi's appeal against the rejection of his nomination papers from Karachi's NA-236 constituency for the Feb 8 polls. Naqvi was among several PTI leaders whose nomination papers were rejected. On Monday, he had approached the election tribunal against the decisions regarding his papers. The former lawmaker, who is currently confined at his house in connection with a case related to the violent incidents of May 9, had filed the appeal through his lawyer and human rights activist Jibran Nasir. According to Nasir, his client had filed three identical nomination papers from the same constituency as a precautionary measure after incidents of harassment and abduction of seconders and proposers were reported, especially from Punjab. However, the lawyer had maintained that all such papers were rejected by the RO on the ground that the appellant's party had lost the electoral symbol.

### Indian arms in Ukraine video threatens Russia ties

DNA

NEW DELHI: India's carefully constructed position of neutrality in the Ukraine war faces a fresh challenge after a video circulating online showed Ukrainian forces using Indian-made weapons. This revelation casts doubt on India's stated stance and sparks worries about potential diplomatic fallout with Russia. The video has prompted critical scrutiny of India's double-sided approach towards the conflict. Critics point to India's recent attempts to maintain cordial relations with both Russia and Ukraine, despite the latter's ongoing struggle against Russian aggression. This latest development exposes potential inconsistencies in India's policies. While India officially abstained from condemning Russia at the UN and voiced concerns about the war's impact, the alleged presence of Indian weaponry in Ukraine paints a different picture.

# Pak-Afghan agrees to expedite border crossover of vehicles

Zia said NLC had claimed completion of construction work in June 2023 but still the project is not completed. He also demanded a revival of the issuance of a permit (Rahadari) of Rs. 5000 by a Political Agent for all the Afghanistan-bound trucks

SHAMIM SHAHID

PESHAWAR: A meeting of Pak-Afghan border management committee at Custom Station Torkhem agreed to expedite the crossover of vehicles from both sides to 900 trucks daily to clear the long queues of goods-laden vehicles waiting for clearance. The meeting was held under the chairmanship of Additional Collector Customs (Appraisal), Muhammad Rizwan. Other officials present in the meeting were Deputy Collector Enforcement, Saqqa Abbas, Assistant Director FIA, Yasir Arafat, Assistant Director Anti Narcotics, Salman, Maj Murad from Frontier Corps, DC Appraisal Customs, Hamad, Assistant Collector, Farya Abbas Naqvi, Deputy Collector, Fahad Ahmad, Transit Superintendent, Saddiq Akbar. Those who represented the business community included the Coordinator Pak-Afghan Joint Chamber of Commerce and

Industry, Zia-ul-Haq Sarhadi, Vice Chairman of All Pakistan Customs Agents Association, Vice President of PAJCCI, Shujah Muhammad, Farooq Ahmad, President of Torkhem Custom Agents Association, Haji Aimal Khan, Ex. President Custom Agents Association, Nasir Shinwari and others. The meeting held a threadbare discussion on the slow clearance process of trucks, causing delays in the transportation of consignments besides the return of empty containers, ensuing in financial losses to the business community of both countries. Participants of the meeting decided to convey a message to Afghan side for reducing break period for clearance starting from 2:00 a.m. to 10:00 a.m. causing lining up of trucks on both sides. Custom Clearing Agents were also asked to start GD (Goods Document) filing from early morning to ensure timely clearance of trucks. Additional Collector Customs, Muhammad Rizwan assured businessmen that a new scanner will be arranged till March of 2024

which will also help in early clearance of trucks. Speaking on the occasion, Coordinator PAJCCI, Zia-ul-Haq Sarhadi appreciated the efforts of Custom Collectorate in arranging meetings of stakeholders of Pak-Afghan trade with the objective to streamlining of commerce and trade in the region. He lamented the delay by NLC in the completion of a new terminal at Torkhem as a result of which delays are faced in the clearance of trucks. Zia said NLC had claimed completion of construction work in June 2023 but still the project is not completed. He also demanded a revival of the issuance of a permit (Rahadari) of Rs. 5000 by a Political Agent for all the Afghanistan-bound trucks. After the extension of the district administration system to FATA, different departments have started collecting taxes under different pretexts from export and transit-bound trucks to Afghanistan, inflicting a financial burden on the business community, Zia complained. Vice Chairman

All Pakistan Customs Agents Association, Farooq Ahmad laid stress on the provision of reasonable time for implementation of the decision regarding the ban on the import of items from Afghanistan mentioned in the negative list. Soon after deciding on the creation of a negative list, clearance of containers was stopped, affecting the business community whose goods had reached Karachi port or were in the pipeline. Farooq insisted on increasing vigilance and monitoring at borders to curb smuggling instead of imposing a ban on the import of different items. Speaking on the occasion, Additional Collector Customs, Muhammad Rizwan said the purpose of holding such meetings is to get input from stakeholders for the improvement of trade between the two countries. The points raised in the meeting are noted for presentation to high-ups for making decisions for resolution of issues. He also asked businessmen to keep on approaching officials regarding any complaints for timely redressal of different problems.



ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Foreign Minister, Jalil Abbas Jilani addressing a three-day envoys conference held in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. - DNA

# LHC dismisses PTI's petition seeking restoration of 'bat'

Justice Jawad Hassan declares PTI leader's petition inadmissible

ABID RAZA

LAHORE: The Lahore High Court (LHC) on Thursday dismissed the plea challenging the Election Commission of Pakistan's (ECP) order declaring Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf's (PTI) intra-party polls as "unconstitutional" - the decision that also revoked the party's iconic bat electoral symbol. LHC Justice Jawad Hassan announced the reserved verdict and declared PTI leader Umar Aftab Dhillon's petition inadmissible. The PTI leader seeking to regain his party electoral symbol in Punjab, pleaded with the court on Wednesday to rescind the commission's order and direct it to publish the PTI's certificate for the intra-party election on its website. The petitioner claimed that the symbol was illegally withdrawn as the matter of intra-party polls did not fall within the jurisdiction of the electoral body. He said the ECP was not a court of law and it could not question the validity of

appointments within a party or intra-party election. The complainant's lawyer said different tactics were being adopted to create hurdles for the PTI candidates as first they were being stopped from filing nomination papers and then they were not being allowed to use the 'bat' symbol. During the arguments, the PTI lawyer said the Peshawar High Court (PHC) had reinstated the party's electoral symbol. Upon which, Justice Jawad had said the PHC verdict on an appeal against the order was still pending. The government's lawyer rendered the plea non-maintainable saying the PTI leader was not directly affected. A day earlier, the PHC restored the Election Commission's Dec 22 order declaring PTI's intra-party elections as unconstitutional. The decision deprives the PTI of its head and the electoral symbol. A single bench of the high court - headed by Justice Ijaz Khan - vacated the single bench's Dec 26 stay order, which had suspended the ECP's decision till January 9 and allowed the PTI to use 'bat' as its symbol.

# Pak resumes Covid testing of inbound passengers

National Institute of Health issues advisory for prevention, control of JN.1 sub-variant in Pakistan

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: Amid growing concerns over new COVID-19 variant spread, the National Command and Operation Centre (NCOC) has decided to resume mandatory testing of 2% of inbound passengers. The testing will help detect and prevent JN.1 sub-variant of COVID-19. However, reports regarding the unavailability of testing kits and Personal Protection Equipment (PPE) later emerged, as major airports, including Islamabad and Karachi, lacked the facilities, officials told the publication. "On the directives of caretaker federal Health Minister Dr Nadeem Jan, surveillance at the country's points of entry, including airports, has been increased and 2 percent mandatory testing for COVID-19 has been resumed to detect JN.1 variant of SARS-CoV-2 or coronavirus," the NCOC official told The News on Wednesday. Ironically, neither the COVID-19 testing kits nor the PPE were available at the many points of entry for the health-care workers associated with Border Health Services (BHS). Officials said neither the kits nor the PPE were procured after the World Health Organisation (WHO) declared in June this year that COVID-19 was no longer a public health emergency of international concern. Although the COVID-19 positivity remained extremely low in the country and no case of its JN.1 variant had been detected till Wednesday, the National Institute of Health (NIH) issued an advisory for the prevention and control of JN.1 sub-variant. Quoting the World Health Organization (WHO), the NIH advisory said that JN.1 sub-variant has been classi-

fied as a Variant of Interest (VOI) and is fundamentally an offshoot of BA.2.86 sub-variant of the omicron variant of COVID-19. It was first reported in August 2023 by US-CDC. In recent weeks, JN.1 has been reported in many countries, and its prevalence is rapidly increasing globally, the National Institutes of Health's (NIH) advisory said, adding that this rapid growth is being observed across the three WHO regions with consistent sharing of SARS-CoV-2 sequences, i.e. the region of the Americas, the Western Pacific and the European regions, with the largest increase seen in Western Pacific from 1.1% in epidemiological week 44 to 65.6% in epidemiological week 48. "The objective of this advisory is to alert and facilitate the health authorities and other stakeholders for ensuring timely preventive and control measures encompassing preparedness to deal with increased workload expected in the outpatient and in-patient departments during the next few weeks," the NIH stated. The National Institute of Health further stated that although JN.1 is rapidly replacing other sub-variants and its transmissibility is expected to be high, it is unlikely that it can produce a situation like the earlier phase of the pandemic, hence its morbidity and mortality are low as of current statistics. "Clinical presentation of JN.1 infection is similar to other sub-variants including cough, sore throat, congestion, runny nose, sneezing, fatigue, headache, muscle aches and altered sense of smell. However, symptom presentation depends on an individual's immunity from vaccination and previous infection. It's important to know that existing vaccines, tests and treatments still work well against JN.1," the advisory stated.

## Toll in Russian strike on Kyiv rises to 32

DNA

KYIV: A December 29 missile strike killed 32 people in Kyiv, authorities said Thursday, raising the toll of the deadliest attack on the Ukrainian capital since the war began. Russia has in recent days intensified aerial attacks against Ukraine, which says it has enough munition to withstand a few powerful assaults but would soon need more aid. "The total number of dead as a result of the enemy missile attack on December 29 is 32 people," said the head of the Kyiv military administration Sergiy Popko. Thirty people were wounded, he added. All the 32 killed were in a warehouse, Ukrainian authorities said. Russia says it only targets military infrastructure. Kyiv mayor Vitali Klitschko had said on Saturday that the December 29 strike was "the largest in terms of civilian casualties." Russia had on that day launched 158 missiles and drones over Ukraine, the air force said, in an attempt to overwhelm air defenses. The attack killed at least 55 people and wounded 170. Ukraine has retaliated and the Russian border region of Belgorod faced a wave of attacks over the weekend, with 25 people killed - an unprecedented toll since the beginning of the offensive almost two years ago.

## ATC issues arrest warrants of Imran, others

DNA

FAISALABAD: An anti-terrorism court has issued arrest warrants for the PTI founder and other party leaders in the May 9 incidents. PTI founder and other leaders were summoned by court on Thursday. A case of attack and vandalism at the office of a sensitive institution was registered in the Civil Lines police station. The PTI founder, Fawad Chaudhry, Zartaj Gul, Shehbaz Gul and other leaders were named in the case. Earlier on Wednesday, the Peshawar High Court granted protective bail to PTI leader and former state minister Zartaj Gul. Gul faces alleged corruption charges and was booked in August last year. Chief Justice Muhammad Ibrahim Khan, taking up Gul's petition for protective bail, prohibited police from arresting her.

## No ban on Imran's speeches: PEMRA

LAHORE: The Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority (PEMRA) on Thursday informed the Lahore High Court (LHC) that there was no ban on the broadcast of former prime minister Imran Khan's speeches. Pemra's counsel Haroon Duggal said this during the hearing of a petition filed by the founder of PTI last year against Pemra's decision to bar all TV channels from airing Imran's speeches and press conferences. The hearing was presided over by Justice Shams Mehmood Mirza. After the hearing, Justice Mirza directed the media regulatory body to not pressurise TV channels over barring the broadcast of Imran's speeches. On March 5, 2023, the regulatory body imposed a blanket ban on broadcasting live or recorded speeches of the former premier on all satellite TV channels. "It has been observed that Mr Imran Khan, Chairman Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf, in his speeches/statements is continuously...levelling baseless allegations and spreading hate speech through his provocative statements against state institutions and officers which is prejudicial to the maintenance of law and order and is likely to disturb public peace and tranquillity," the order issued by the media regulatory authority read. The next day the former chairman of PTI filed a petition in the LHC challenging the Pemra's prohibition order. The petition, filed through barrister Muhammad Ahmed Pansota, had contended that in the judgment reported as "Imran Ahmad Khan Niazi Vs PEMRA", then Chief Justice of IHC Athar Minallah had declared a similar PEMRA prohibition order as "ultra vires the Ordinance" (overstretching itself beyond the powers conferred upon it) on similar grounds. Imran's counsel had stated in the petition that PEMRA had issued the impugned order beyond their jurisdiction and without having regard to the constitutional rights guaranteed under Articles 19 and 19-A of the Constitution. On March 9, 2023, Justice Mirza, presiding over the hearing, suspended the ban imposed by the media regulatory authority. It should be noted that the Pemra had also imposed a prohibition order against airing Imran's live or recorded speeches on August 21, 2022, after the PTI chief had warned Islamabad's inspector general police (IG) and deputy inspector general police (DIG) in which he had said that he would not spare them and would register a case against them for "torturing" party leader Shahbaz Gill during his physical remand. - DNA

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