



# Islamabad POST

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**Afghan PM: Kabul has no intention of causing harm to Pak**

Detailed News On Page-08

**Indonesian FM slams West's 'double standards'**

Detailed News On Page-08



**M. Rizwan appointed as vice-captain**

Detailed News On Page-06



## Big relief to Nawaz and Tareen

# SC ends lifetime disqualification

Top court issues ruling with 6-1 majority; Justice Yahya Afridi disagreeing with his fellow judges; PML-N, PPP, IPP welcome SC's landmark judgment on lifetime disqualification

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

ISLAMABAD: After much deliberation, the Supreme Court of Pakistan Monday ended the lifetime disqualification of lawmakers, recalling its earlier order of disbarring politicians from running for office ever, boosting hopes for political bigwigs who are eyeing to contest polls on February 8. The Supreme Court declared that no person can be barred for a lifetime from running in elections if they are disqualified under Article 62 (1) (f), setting aside its landmark judgment in the Samiullah Baloch case. A seven-member larger bench — headed by CJP Qazi Faez Isa and comprising Justice Syed Mansoor Ali Shah, Justice Yahya Afridi, Justice Aminuddin Khan, Justice Jamal Khan Mandokhail, Justice Muhammad Ali Mazhar, and Justice Musarrat Hilali — conducted the hearings of the case, which were broadcast live on the apex court's website. The bench announced the verdict with a 6-1 majority as Justice Yahya Afridi disagreed with his fellow judges, backing the apex court's previous judgment. The legal conundrum arose after the parliament passed the amendments in

**Level playing field**  
**CJP: We are not running anyone's political campaign**  
 CJP-led bench directs PTI counsel to submit response to ECP report

COURT REPORTER

ISLAMABAD: Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Qazi Faez Isa observed on Monday that the Supreme Court is not running anyone's campaign. The CJP's remarks during a hearing of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) plea seeking contempt of proceedings against the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) for allegedly failing to ensure level-playing field to the party ahead of February 8 elections. "We are the Supreme Court, not the government, we are not running anyone's campaign," the CJP said after PTI counsel Latif Khosa complained that the party members were being subjected to political victimisation ahead of February 8 elections. A three-member bench led by CJP Isa and comprising Justice Muhammad Ali Mazhar and Justice Musarrat Hilali heard the matter. The proceedings of the case were broadcast live on SC's website and

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the Elections Act 2017, restricting the disqualification period of a politician to five years, instead of a lifetime, contrary to the SC's order, which deemed disqualification under Article 62(1)(f) as "permanent". The latest judgment finally allows Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) supremo Nawaz Sharif and Istehkam-e-Pakistan Party (IPP) chief Jahangir Tareen to run for office as they were disqualified for life. While announcing the reserved verdict, the chief justice noted that since the election schedule was issued, it was "necessary" to release the order at the earliest. In the previous hearing, the chief justice remarked that disqualifying anyone from life from parliament was "against Islam" as he quoted a verse from Surah Sajdah which explains that human beings are not bad but their deeds are. While talking to Geo News, senior anchorperson Shahzeb Khanzada and Pakistan Institute of Legislative Development and Transparency (PILDAT) President Ahmed Bilal Mehbub said that the order "came at the right time". In the written order, the SC noted that Article 62(1)(f) of the Constitution is not a

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ISLAMABAD: US ambassador to Pakistan, Donald Bloome calls on Former Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari. — DNA

**Bilawal meets US ambassador**

## Come what may, election to take place on Feb 8

What Imran Khan did in Pakistani politics is getting back to him, says Bilawal

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: Chairman Pakistan Peoples Party, Bilawal Bhutto Zardari talking to the media after attending a hearing of the Shaheed Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto reference in the Supreme Court accompanied by his aunt, Sanam Bhutto and sister Aseefa Bhutto Zardari said that he hopes that the PPP will get justice. We think that it is an opportunity to correct history. Its legal precedent was never mentioned in any case. The way this verdict was reached on the behest of a dictator is being repeated again and again. We also have the opportunity to correct our future course and ensure that such doors are closed forever. We hope that that we will get justice and Justice Qazi Faez Isa and his brother judges will give a decision according to the law.

Responding to questions by the journalists, Chairman Bilawal said that we desired that the case should have been heard regularly instead of being adjourned till after the elections. We hope that the case will be decided after the elections. The elections are being held on 8 February even if the United Nations passes a contradicting resolution as I have said earlier. The PPP has recently won the local bodies elections in Karachi and Hyderabad. When the PTI was in power, the PPP defeated Imran Khan and the PTI from Multan and Karachi in the by-elections. We also defeated PML-N in the by-election in Karachi. This will be the very first time when the PPP will head not only the local government in Karachi but also the provincial government along the federal government. Hence, we will be able to perform more efficiently in Karachi. We are contesting against every party and are the only party which has presented a 10-point economic agenda which can

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**British envoy meets Nawaz**

Jane Marriott said that holding inclusive elections is vital for Pakistan's future

ABID RAZA

LAHORE: Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) supremo, Nawaz Sharif met with British High Commissioner to Pakistan Jane Marriott on Monday. The meeting focused on strengthening relations between the two countries, including trade. PML-N president Shehbaz Sharif, and senior vice-president and chief organiser Maryam Nawaz Sharif were also present in the meeting. The British diplomat and the former prime minister discussed matters of mutual interest and good relations with each other. Nawaz Sharif said that overseas Pakistanis living in Britain can play a pivotal role in strengthening relations between the two countries. He stressed that solidifying friendly relations is 'the need of the hour'. Good relations is in mutual interest of both the nations, the PML-N supremo remarked. During the meeting, particular focus was given to trade and investment opportunities between Pakistan and Britain. The British High Commissioner has met with various political parties in Islamabad, Lahore and Karachi to talk about upcoming elections in Pakistan. Jane Marriott said that holding inclusive elections is vital for Pakistan's future.

Continued on Page 06

### Briefs

**Parvez out of election race**

MEHTAB PIRZADA

RAWALPINDI: An election tribunal has rejected former Punjab chief minister and PML-N President Chaudhry Parvez Elahi and his wife Qaisara Elahi's appeals against the rejection of their nomination papers from two constituencies. Justice Chaudhry Abdul Aziz conducted the hearing on Elahi and his wife's appeals, challenging the decision of the returning officer (RO) to reject their nomination papers from NA-59 and PP-23, declaring them "disqualified" for contesting general elections. The election commission's Law Officer Falak Sher and Assistant Director Law Zulqarnain Haider appeared in the hearing.

**Nisar's 'injustice' discarded**

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) has lauded the Supreme Court's decision to nullify lifetime disqualification of lawmakers, considering it a pivotal step towards restoring constitutional sanctity. According to Marriyum Aurangzeb, PML-N Central Secretary Information and former federal Minister of Information and Broadcasting, this ruling vindicates party supremo Nawaz Sharif and reinstates his honour. Aurangzeb condemned the short-lived vengeful actions of former chief justice Saqib Nisar, stating they have been dishonourably discarded.

**5 cops martyred in blast near police van in KP's Mamund**

A police truck transporting around 25 policemen for anti-polio campaign duties was targeted by an IED (improvised explosive device)

SHAMIM SHAHID

PESHAWAR: Five police officials were martyred and 27 people were injured on Monday in a blast near a police van in the Mamund tehsil of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Bajaur district, officials said. District Police Officer (DPO) Kashif Zulfiqar confirmed the casualties to Dawn.com. "A police truck transporting around 25 policemen for anti-polio campaign duties was targeted by an IED (improvised explosive device)," Anwarul Haq, a senior government official in Bajaur district, told media. Dr Wazir Khan Safi, the medical superintendent at Khar District Headquarters Hospital (DHQ), said that 12 of the wounded were being treated at the hospital while 10 others seriously injured had been referred to a Peshawar medical facility.

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**Pak condemns terrorist attack in Kabul**

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan strongly condemns the terrorist attack that took place in Dasht-e-Barchi area of Kabul on 6 January 2024 and resulted in loss of several precious lives and multiple injuries. The Government and the people of Pakistan extend their heartfelt condolences to the Afghan Interim Government (AIG) and the people of Afghanistan over the loss of innocent lives and pray for the early recovery of the injured. Pakistan reiterates its strong condemnation of terrorism in all its forms and manifestations and stands in solidarity with the people of Afghanistan in this hour of grief. — DNA

**Pak rubbishes US 'biased' religious freedom designation**

FO says Pakistan adopted wide-ranging measures to promote religious freedom

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan has rebuked the US State Department for designating it as "a Country of Particular Concern", calling it a "biased and arbitrary assessment". The Foreign Office (FO) spokesperson Mumtaz Zahra Baloch said, "We categorically reject Pakistan's designation as 'a Country of Particular Concern' by the US State Department. We are deeply dismayed that the designation is based on biased and arbitrary assessment,

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**COAS Munir discusses military, security cooperation with Bahrain leadership**

King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa Monday conferred Military Medal Order of Bahrain First Class on Chief of Army Staff General Syed Asim Munir

STAFF REPORT

MANAMA: General Syed Asim Munir, NI (M), Chief of the Army Staff (COAS) is on a two days official visit to Kingdom of Bahrain. He called upon H.M The King, Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa, King of Bahrain, Crown Prince, H.R.H Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, H.E. Field Marshal Khalifa bin Ahmed Al Khalifa, Commander of Bahrain Defence Forces and H.H General Shaikh Mohammad bin Isa Al Khalifa, Commander of Bahrain National Guard. During the meetings, matters of mutual interest including bilateral military and security cooperation were discussed. The dignitaries lauded Pakistan Army's achievements in fight against terrorism and continued efforts for regional peace and stability. COAS was also Chief Guest at the 27th Raising Day of Bahrain National Guard where he was warmly welcomed and given Guard of Honour and witnessed a demonstration related to counter-terrorism training exercise. Commander Bahrain National Guard extended his gratitude and appreciation to the Pakistan Army for providing highly professional training to the Bahrain National Guard in military and counter terrorism domains. King of Bahrain also conferred Military Medal \*Order of Bahrain First Class\* on COAS in recognition of his significant efforts and contributions to the enhancement of bilateral ties between the two brotherly countries.



### Job Opportunity

Applications are invited from suitable Pakistani professionals having Master's degree or equivalent in Commerce, Accounting and Finance with upper age limit of 30 years and having proficiency in Microsoft Word, Microsoft Excel and Microsoft PowerPoint, Accountancy, Record Keeping, Preparing Journals, Ledgers and Financial Statements & Maintaining accounts and preparing Financial Reports. Interested candidates can send their one-page CV through courier on address: CEO, Pakistan Broadcasting Foundation, HPT Complex, H-9 Islamabad. Last date of submission of application is 20.01.2024



# PM Kakar directs expediting efforts to control smuggling

The meeting was also informed about the performance of Pakistan Customs, FC, district administrations and NLC in the border areas

ADIL SHAHEEN

ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Prime Minister Anwar-ul-Haq Kakar on Monday directed the relevant law enforcement agencies, including the Frontier Corps, Pakistan Customs and district administrations to expedite their efforts to completely curb smuggling. He observed that with abhorrent practice of smuggling, few influential people were benefited and stressed that with the establishment of special economic zones and industries in the border areas of the country, provision of alternate livelihood opportunities to the inhabitants should be ensured. The caretaker prime minister chaired a review meeting regarding the Afghan Transit Trade and anti-smuggling operations which was attended by Caretaker Finance Minister Dr Shamsah Akhtar, chief secretaries of Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa provinces, inspectors general of Frontier Corps (FC), federal secretaries and other relevant senior officials, the PM Office Media Wing said in a press release. A report over the Afghan Transit Trade and curbing of smuggling was presented in the meeting. The meeting was also informed about the performance of

Pakistan Customs, FC, district administrations and National Logistic Corporation (NLC) in the border areas. All these agencies had been working to curb smuggling at the border areas which led to saving of national exchequer from the huge damage caused by the millions of tonnes smuggling of illegal goods.

The caretaker prime minister directed for formulation of a comprehensive mechanism for provision of employment opportunities to the local people through social safety and imparting of skill sets. He also directed the Ministry of Trade to ensure strict monitoring of the transit trade and apprise the relevant authorities about the trends over export of goods. He also expressed the resolve to end smuggling which was causing huge losses to the nation, and reiterated that the government would not allow those local elements who had been claiming in a grotesque manner of providing job opportunities to the people through smuggling. The prime minister further said that the caretaker government would continue taking steps to end smuggling till the completion of its tenure and directed the NLC to complete its scanning and checking project at the Chaman border on priority basis. Pa-

kistan Customs should strengthen its capacity at the border areas so that the people arrested in the smuggling cases should be awarded exemplary punishment in accordance with law, he stressed. The caretaker prime minister said that besides ending the illegal practice of smuggling, there was a need to control demand and supply of those goods in urban areas, adding that officers of good repute should be deputed in the border districts, particularly in the sensitive areas, along with enforcing a transparent system over postings and transfers.

Prime Minister Kakar further said that in the border areas, legal trade should be promoted and complete documentation in that regard should be ensured, adding that for the cargo monitoring, the Federal Board Revenue's track and trace system should be made functional.

He said that the progress report on anti-smuggling measures should be submitted in the upcoming meeting by accelerating efforts. The prime minister directed that the Ministries of Trade and Industries should formulate a comprehensive strategy for the establishment of special investment zones and industries in the border areas.



ISLAMABAD: Speaker National Assembly Raja Pervez Ashraf called on caretaker Prime Minister Anwar-ul-Haq Kakar.—DNA

## CS orders for effective axle load management system

LAHORE: Chief Secretary Punjab Zahid Akhtar Zaman on Monday directed the transport department to make the axle load management system more effective in the province. He gave this directive while presiding over a meeting at the Civil Secretariat. The meeting decided that the toll tax on all roads would be collected online to ensure transparency. The chief secretary said that axle load management was being successfully implemented on 1700 kilometers of highways in the province and permanent weigh stations had been established at nine places in the province for checking freight vehicles. He said that as per law, an action was being taken against vehicles for overloading. The chief secretary said that roads built at a cost of billions of rupees were damaged due to non-implementation of axle load laws, adding that accidents and damage to roads could be avoided through axle load management. He lauded Secretary Transport Dr Ahmed Javed Qazi and Chairman PITB Faisal Yusuf for their efforts in the successful implementation of axle load management system. The chief secretary said that instead of constructing new roads, priority was given to the repair and reconstruction of 133 inter-district roads and work on 104 roads of these roads would be completed soon.—APP

## Punjab launches 2024 anti-polio campaign for children

DNA

RAWALPINDI: Provincial Minister for Primary and Secondary Healthcare and Population Welfare of Punjab, Dr. Jamal Nasir has said that we should all fight together against polio and ensure a healthy future for our children. He said that the fight against this dangerous disease can be achieved only through joint efforts and the current campaign will continue for one week in Rawalpindi, Lahore and Faisalabad while it will continue for five days in other districts of Punjab. He expressed these views while speaking on the occasion of the inauguration of the first anti-polio campaign of 2024. Dr. Jamal Nasir inaugurated the campaign by administering polio vaccine drops to children at Awqaf Plaza Rawalpindi.

Shumila, DHO Dr. Ehsan Ghani, DDHO Dr. Hasnain Tirmizi, DDHO Dr. Naveed, District Khatib Hafiz Muhammad Iqbal Rizvi along with other officers were also present.

Provincial Minister Dr. Jamal Nasir said that the first anti-polio campaign of the year has started in all the districts of Punjab

said that parents must give polio vaccine to every child under five years of age.

Dr. Jamal Nasir said that no case of polio has been reported in Punjab after 2020, thanks to continuous efforts, polio has been eradicated from the whole world except for two countries, and in the two countries polio still exists today and



and during the campaign 2 crore 2.5 lakh children will be administered polio drops in Punjab. He said that 1 million 50 thousand children will be given polio vaccine in Rawalpindi. He

these countries are Pakistan and Afghanistan. He said that polio workers are our valuable asset and despite severe cold, polio workers are rendering services in remote areas.

## Pakistan navy holds expert talks in Saudi Arabia

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Vice Chief of the Naval Staff Vice Admiral Ovais Ahmed Bilgrami along with 6 members delegation visited Kingdom of Saudi Arabia for Expert Level Staff Talks between Pakistan Navy and Royal Saudi Naval Forces. During the visit, Vice Chief also called on Commander of the Royal Saudi Naval Forces HE Vice Admiral Fahad Bin Abdullah Al Ghofaily. Matters of mutual interest and avenues to further enhance bilateral cooperation were discussed during the meetings. Pakistan Navy and Royal Saudi Naval Forces enjoy extremely close relations and cooperate in number of operational and training matters prominently the regular conduct of major maritime exercise Naseem Al Bahr.

## S. Punjab hospital upgrade progresses rapidly

MULTAN: Additional Chief Secretary (South Punjab) Capt. (Retd) Saqib Zafar said on Monday a comprehensive upgradation of all major hospitals across the province was going on at a rapid pace. During an inspection at Bahawal Victoria Hospital, Bahawalpur, Capt. Saqib Zafar outlined the ambitious project, detailing the construction of new floors, doors, windows, and ceilings. He said the initiative involves a complete overhaul of electrical and plumbing systems to enhance facilities. The plan is being extended to all major hospitals in South Punjab, he added. Capt. (Retd) Saqib Zafar said a substantial sum of 1.107 billion rupees have been allocated for upgrading Bahawalpur Victoria Hospital.

## Aga Khan, Sarmayacar unite for NASTP summit

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: Accelerate Prosperity, an initiative of the Aga Khan Development Network, and Sarmayacar, a leading venture capital firm, successfully joined forces to organize the Startup Summit at NASTP, Karachi this weekend. The summit served as a pivotal gathering, bringing together investors, entrepreneurs, and ecosystem enablers to foster collaboration and innovation within Pakistan's startup landscape. Startup Summit aimed to address key aspects of the startup ecosystem, emphasizing the significance of climate initiatives and highlighting investment opportunities for new and ground-breaking innovations. Both AP and Sarmayacar, strongly believe in expanding entrepreneurship beyond main cities, and showcasing investment

opportunities for new startups. While addressing the audience, Rohma Labeeb, Country Director at Accelerate Prosperity Pakistan said "This event allows us to set a vision and focus for 2024. We look forward to collaborating with all the key stakeholders that can help us build and exemplify and robust ecosystem of entrepreneurship that contributes significantly to the national development process. Following this, Amir Paracha, CEO of Unilever Pakistan delivered the Keynote Speech. He shared practical insights on leadership essentials, drawing on Unilever's leadership philosophy. He explored the relevance of these principles to emerging entrepreneurs, highlighting fundamental qualities crucial for startups striving for positive impact. Using real-life examples, Amir illuminated the audience on his leadership

journey, emphasizing the importance of ethical practices and long-term sustainability. Following the keynote, participants engaged in a panel discussion on "Riding the Green Wave: Seizing Opportunities in Climate Finance." The panel, featuring industry experts including Aman Nasir (Partner, Sarmayacar), Nadia Rehman (Member, Planning Commission of Pakistan), Ahmed Ammar Yasser (Chief of Party, PFAN), and Sarah Qureshi (CEO, Aero Engine Craft), explored challenges hindering finance flow to climate ventures and discussed steps for investors to balance financial returns with long-term environmental benefits. The event continued with a pivotal segment, the Startup Pitch Battle, where five startups competed to pitch their ideas to both the audience and the judging panel.

## Commissioner urges DCS for effective election plan

DNA

HYDERABAD: The Commissioner Hyderabad Syed Khalid Hyder Shah has directed all Deputy Commissioners to prepare an effective plan regarding the provision of missing facilities at polling stations, required staff and sensitive polling stations in upcoming general elections. He issued such directives while presiding over a meeting regarding arrangements for holding General Elections 2024 in his office on Monday. DIG Police Hyderabad Tariq Razaq Dharejo, Regional Election Commissioner Hyderabad Azhar Hussain Tanweri, DC

Hyderabad Tariq Qureshi, SSP Hyderabad Amjad Shaikh, Chief Engineer Education Works Ahmed Ali Shah, DC Matari Lal Dino Mangi and all the officers of the concerned departments attended the meeting while Deputy Commissioners and SSPs of the division participated in the meeting through video link. Commissioner Hyderabad informed that new furniture had been provided to all the educational institutions during the last two years and now there should not be a shortage of furniture at the polling stations. He underlined the need to provide missing facilities at the polling stations without delay. Commissioner

Hyderabad also asked to identify sensitive polling stations in their respective districts so that CCTV cameras could be installed there. Chief Engineer Education Works Ahmed Ali Shah briefing the meeting informed that 4654 polling stations in the division were being visited to ensure provision of required facilities in polling stations. This process will be completed soon in this month. DIG Hyderabad Tariq Razaq Dharejo while briefing the meeting said that to ensure the holding of elections peacefully, police and rangers would be deployed. He said that the police had been given the responsibility to ensure

the security of every voter to exercise their right to vote without fear while all polling stations would be monitored through geo-tracking. He further informed that in addition to his office, control rooms would be set up in the offices of all the SSPs of the division where the complaints of the people regarding the elections would be registered and steps would be taken for their timely redressal. Deputy Commissioners of the division gave detailed briefings about the polling stations, sensitive polling stations, staff and required facilities in polling stations of their respective districts.

## A glance at JI's daring election manifesto

Bold manifesto promises free electricity, parliamentary debate on defence spending and revisiting contracts with IPPs

KHYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: In a bid to chart a new course for the nation, Jamat-e-Islami (JI) has laid out an audacious and comprehensive agenda in its 52-page manifesto. Despite never having tasted power, the party's blueprint post-election reflects a deep understanding of the country's challenges and an ambitious resolve to address them head-on. The manifesto not only outlines bold initiatives but also demonstrates a keen awareness of pressing issues. From wresting control of the country's economy from global lenders to abolishing VIP culture, the JI's manifesto also includes

pledges to make the state bank's governor accountable by amending the central bank's law, revoking privileges like free fuel and utilities, and revisit contracts signed with Independent Power Producers (IPPs). Central to the JI manifesto are promises such as crafting a charter of the economy and envisioning a future through Vision 2050. The party aims for an interest-free banking system, endeavours to achieve price stability by dismantling cartels and profiteering, and proposes a plan to collect Zakat from 100 million people to pay Rs250,000 annually to 10 million individuals if the party attains power. The party emphasises the enactment of a law

that compels voting participation, aiming to eradicate the blackmailing of electables and eliminate political coercion and horse-trading. Moreover, the party aims to extend voting rights and representation in parliament to overseas Pakistanis while proposing the formation of an impartial commission responsible for evaluating election candidates in accordance with Articles 62 and 63 of the Constitution. In addition, the party plans to auction off state gifts received through the Toshakhana. 'Friday off, free electricity' Surprisingly, in its manifesto, the party vows to reinstate Friday as the weekly off and intends to introduce a constitutional amend-

ment making Urdu the official language and medium of instruction in education. JI, which has earned the reputation of being among the first ones to help fellow Pakistanis if a calamity hits the countrymen over the years, says that up to 300-unit free electricity will be provided to poor families. Official, business and all other private events, including weddings, would preferably be held during daylight, it says, adding literacy rate will be increased to 100 per cent; Quran and Sunna's education will be made mandatory for all institutions; 50 new universities and technical colleges will be established and co-education will be discontinued. Defence budget Furthermore, the po-

litico-religious party's foreign policy, defence, and national security manifesto is uniquely ambitious as it not only carries the routine promise of pursuing independent foreign policy but touches the areas that other parties hardly even come close to. For instance, the JI says that it will increase the defence budget as per requirement but there will be a debate on it in the parliament, it wishes to end discretionary powers to use defence spending. The manifesto states that the appointment of service chiefs would be made on merit with the approval of Parliament and announces that military training will be made mandatory for every Pakistani from 18 to 35 years of age.



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## ICCI shows concerns over Rs.1.4 trillion losses of SOEs

Ahsan Bakhtawari said that PIA alone has reportedly accumulated losses of over Rs.600 billion, growing at an average rate of Rs.150 billion per annum

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) has shown great concerns over the massive losses of around Rs.1.4 trillion incurred by Pakistan's state-owned entities (SOEs) over the fiscal years 2021 and 2022 as per the latest consolidated report of the Ministry of Finance, which is twice the size of the Public Sector Development Program. Ahsan Bakhtawari, President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry stressed that the government should work on a war footing basis for a comprehensive strategy to save the nation from the unnecessary financial burden of these loss-making SOEs. He said that commercial SOEs should be a source of revenue generation for the government, but instead of contributing to the national exchequer, these SOEs have become a big drain on public finance. He said this while talking to a delegation of the business community at ICCI. ICCI President said that all the major commercial SOEs of Pakistan are running in losses including PIA, Pakistan Steel Mills, NHA, Pakistan Railways, and DISCOs, which should be a cause of concern for the policymakers. He said that with this huge amount



of Rs.1.4 trillion, the government can establish many hospitals, schools, colleges, and universities and spend on public welfare projects. But, unfortunately, the government has to spend this huge

amount to bail out the loss-making SOEs and this situation is depriving millions of people of better health and education facilities. Ahsan Bakhtawari said that PIA alone has reportedly accumulated

losses of over Rs.600 billion, growing at an average rate of Rs.150 billion per annum. He said that PIA's outstanding debt and liabilities have exceeded Rs.350 billion, even after getting several

bailout packages from the government. He stressed that the government should privatize all the loss-making SOEs without wasting further time to save the nation from further troubles.

## ECP determined to conduct elections within specified time

ISLAMABAD: Former secretary Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) Kanwar Dilshad said on Monday that Minister for Information and Broadcasting Murtaza Solangi as a focal person of the federal government had rightly stated that the general public should not give any attention to rumors. As far as elections were concerned ECP was determined to conduct elections within a specified time, he said while taking part in a Radio Pakistan programme. He said although, a Senate resolution for the delay in elections was passed the elections seem to be conducted on February 8 as per the timeline given by the Supreme Court of Pakistan. He said that maintaining the law and order situation in the country during the elections was the responsibility of caretaker governments in federal and provinces. He said special arrangements will be made at the more sensitive polling stations.—APP

## Pakistan Saudi Arabia sign annual Hajj agreement

ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Minister for Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony Aneeq Ahmed, along with Saudi Minister of Hajj and Umrah Dr. Tawfiq bin Fawzan Al-Rabiah, signed the annual Hajj agreement between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia. According to the spokesman of the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony, Minister for Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony Aneeq Ahmed had unveiled the Hajj policy for 2024 in November 2023. Meanwhile, the International Hajj Expo 2024 commenced in the Saudi city of Jeddah on Monday. During the Expo, additional agreements will be signed to enhance the experience for Hajj pilgrims. A Pakistani delegation will also explore stalls from various companies.—APP

## 700 cops deployed to protect polio teams

DNA

RAWALPINDI: As many as 1,700 police personnel have been deployed to provide security to 870 polio teams during the seven-day anti-polio campaign kicked off here on Monday. A police spokesman said senior police officers have also been deployed with the teams. To ensure the security of the teams, the police personnel were also patrolling in their respective areas, he added. Senior Superintendent of Police, Operations Rawalpindi said that fool-proof security arrangements were finalized for the security of the anti-polio teams.

## 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



## Enquiry

Edhi Ambulance.....115  
PIA Flight Info.....114  
PIA Cargo.....9280979  
Railway Inquiry.....117  
Railway Exchange 9270831-5  
WASA Rawalpindi.5555489  
CAA.....9281092



## Hospitals

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



## Departments

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

## Water Tank

Islamabad.....0321-5744480

## Pakistan earns \$2.98 billion from export of services

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan earned \$2,986.26 million by exporting various services from July to November of the current fiscal year, Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) reported. The export of services during the same period of last year was recorded at \$3,089.23 million, showing a decline of 3.33 percent during the first five months of the current fiscal year. The services' imports into the country increased by 20.67 percent by going up from \$3,406.86 million last year to \$4,110.33 million during the first five months of current fiscal

year. Based on the figures, the services' trade deficit widened by 254.51 percent during the period under review by going up from \$317.07 million last year to \$1,124.06 million this year. Meanwhile, on year on year (YoY) basis, the services' exports from the country decreased by 15.85 percent by going down from \$750.95 million in November 2022 to \$631.93 million during November 2023. The imports also went up by 22.74 percent by growing from \$677.08 million to \$831.07 million, according to PBS data n month (MoM)

basis, the services exports increased by 6.38 percent in November 2023 when compared to exports of \$594.01 million in October 2023. However, imports on MoM basis declined by 1.53 percent during the month under review when compared to imports of \$843.95 million in October 2023. It is pertinent to mention that the country's merchandise trade deficit contracted by 34.29 per cent during the first half of the current fiscal year compared to the corresponding period of last year, the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) reported. The Trade deficit

from July-December (2023-24) was recorded at \$11,148 billion as against the deficit of \$16.965 billion in July-December (2022-23), showing negative growth of 34.29 per cent. During the period under review, the exports increased by 5.17 per cent to \$14.981 billion compared to the exports of \$14.244 billion during the corresponding period of last year, according to the latest PBS data. On the other hand, the imports narrowed by 16.28 per cent and were recorded at \$26.129 billion compared to \$31.209 billion last year.—APP

## Call to end deadlock in Pak-Afghan transit trade

The deadlock between the two countries, primarily attributed to the cost of doing business and the lack of ease of doing business, is resulting in significant losses for both countries and stakeholders involved

ISLAMABAD: President of the Pakistan Afghanistan Joint Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PAJCCI), Mr. Junaid Makda, expressed deep concern over the prevailing deadlock in Pak-Afghan transit and bilateral trade. In a series of meetings with key officials and ministries about the situation following the issuance of SRO, which imposed a 10% processing fee on routine items, banned certain items for transit, and replaced revolving insurance guarantee with a bank guarantee. The deadlock between the two countries, primarily attributed to the cost of doing business and the lack of ease of doing business, is resulting in significant losses for both countries and stakeholders involved. Mr. Makda highlighted the urgent need for the government to address this issue promptly to ensure the seamless continuation of transit and bilateral trade. President Makda specifically pointed out the severe consequences on Pakistan's exports to Afghanistan and CIS countries citing exorbitant tariff rate increases from Afghanistan (like Pakistan Citrus Fruits). The resulting deadlock has led to the distressing situation of perishable items being stranded at borders due to the prohibitive tariff hikes. Adding to the complexity, ongoing protests on the borders are exacerbating the challenges faced by businesses engaged in cross-border trade. Mr. Makda urged the relevant authorities to reconsider the current impasse and take immediate steps to remove the obstacles hindering the flow of goods and services between Pakistan and Afghanistan. He emphasized that the current situation is detrimental to the economic interests for both countries and poses a threat to the livelihoods of stakeholders involved in cross-border trade. President PAJCCI has previously submitted a request to the Commerce Ministry, and while efforts are underway, there is also a formal request for the S.I.F.C to intervene and convene an urgent meeting to discuss the prevailing matters. He highlighted the importance of collaborative efforts in finding mutually beneficial solutions that promote trade, economic growth, and regional stability. PAJCCI remains committed to fostering positive and constructive dialogue between Pakistan and Afghanistan and is optimistic that with joint efforts, the current challenges in transit and bilateral trade can be overcome, paving the way for a more prosperous and mutually beneficial relationship between the two countries.—DNA

## Training workshop on Science to start from Jan 22

ISLAMABAD: A two-day training workshop on "Science Communication and Diplomacy in Agriculture" will be organized under the auspices of COMSTech and Sindh Agriculture University Tandojam from January 22. This two-day joint training workshop, to be held at Sindh Agriculture University, Tandojam, aims to equip participants with the necessary skills and knowledge to effectively communicate scientific concepts in agriculture and apply science diplomacy principles for international collaboration in the field. According to an official of COMSTech, the schedule

incorporates a mix of theoretical sessions, practical exercises, and interactive activities to enhance participant engagement and learning. Scientists and students conducting research in agriculture as well as journalists, media (electronic, print and social), and public relations experts working at universities, NGOs, NPOs and are interested in knowing more about how to communicate decision makers and the public about the technology to encourage science-based policies may attend the workshop. Coordinator General of OIC COMSTech, Prof.

Dr. Iqbal Choudhry will be the Patron In Chief of the workshop while VC Sindh Agriculture University, Dr. Fatah Marri will be the Patron. Consultant Science Communication and Diplomacy OIC COMSTech, Dr Syed Javaid Khurshid and Director University Advancement, Sindh Agriculture University, Tandojam, Dr Ismail Kumbhar will be the focal persons. Science communication plays a pivotal role in fostering public understanding, engagement, and collaboration in the realm of science and technology. In the OIC Member States, nations are aspiring to establish themselves as

knowledge-based economies and regional leaders in science, technology, and innovation, Science Communication is an evolving field with immense potential. Various institutions and organizations are actively contributing to the development of science communication in the country, yet challenges such as low public awareness, scientific literacy, and critical thinking persist. About the outcomes of the workshop, the official informed that the participants and students will comprehend how scientific knowledge is organized, used and disseminated about historical science communication practices.—APP

## Ashrafi strongly condemns terror attack

ISLAMABAD: Hafiz Muhammad Tahir Mahmood Ashrafi, Chairman of the Pakistan Ulema Council and Special Representative of the Prime Minister for Religious Harmony and Pakistan Diaspora in the Middle East and Islamic Countries, has vehemently denounced the terrorist assault targeting police officials safeguarding polio workers in the Bajaur district of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. In a message of condolence, Hafiz Tahir Ashrafi extended his prayers for the forgiveness of the martyred policemen. He emphasized that antagonistic forces within Pakistan are obstructing the country's efforts to eliminate polio. Ashrafi expressed hope that these adversaries will not achieve their malicious goals, and he believes that the sacrifices made by security personnel will eventually yield positive outcomes. Ashrafi emphasized the need for a robust nationwide awareness campaign on polio, highlighting the government's unwavering commitment to the success of this initiative. He expressed confidence that due to the concrete measures implemented by the government, polio will soon be eradicated from Pakistan. Tahir Ashrafi commended the bravery and dedication of polio workers operating in remote regions, along with the security personnel collaborating with them.—DNA

## JANUARY 2024

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## Briefs

## E&amp;T Dept to provide one stop solution

ISLAMABAD: In a move to simplify the often tedious process of vehicle registration and acquiring essential documents, Deputy Commissioner Islamabad, Irfan Nawaz Memon on Monday initiated a convenient service in the city. The surroundings of Fatima Jinnah Park Bolan Gate F9 are set to host the excise staff from 3 to 5 pm today, offering a hassle-free experience for residents seeking to register, transfer, or pay token tax for their vehicles, ICT spokesman Dr Abdullah Tabasum said. Under the directive of Deputy Commissioner Memon, the excise staff will be stationed at the park's parking lot, streamlining the procedures related to vehicles. This initiative aligns with the commitment to make essential services more accessible to the public. He said that adding to the convenience, the Facilitation Center Doorstep ICT Vehicle will also be available on-site. This doorstep service encompasses a variety of essential documents, making it a one-stop solution for residents. From Domicile Certificates and Birth Certificates to Power of Attorney and International Driving Permits, the ICT Doorstep Service aims to cater to diverse needs efficiently. Whether you need a Fuel Permit for domestic or commercial use, or you're looking to register your motor vehicle seamlessly, the on-ground service ensures a swift and straightforward process. The residents can now address multiple document-related requirements without the hassle of visiting different offices.—APP

## Islamabad police ensure robust security measures

ISLAMABAD: In compliance with the explicit directives of Islamabad Capital City Police Officer (ICCP) Dr. Akbar Nasir Khan, the Islamabad Capital Police is actively involved in implementing comprehensive security measures during the hearings of significant cases in the high-security zone. The teams of Islamabad Capital Police deployed in the high-security zone are diligently carrying out their responsibilities to ensure effective security arrangements during the hearings of crucial cases in the superior courts, police spokesperson said. Senior police officers have specifically instructed the on-duty personnel to safeguard important government offices, superior courts, and embassies situated in the high-security zone. All officers and personnel have been unequivocally directed to execute their duties with utmost dedication, maintaining peace and security without any room for negligence or complacency during duty hours.—APP

## Islamabad police enhance services for driving license applicants

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Capital Police have implemented measures to improve convenience for driving license applicants, aiming to facilitate prompt issuance of licenses to eligible individuals. A special meeting convened at the traffic headquarters in Faizabad, chaired by Chief Traffic Officer (CTO) Islamabad, Muhammad Sarfraz Virk, focused on evaluating the steps taken to augment citizen convenience during the licensing process. The primary objective is to ensure that all applicants receive comprehensive facilities and equitable treatment. Acknowledging the exceptional performance of police officials, the meeting included the issuance of special instructions to further elevate the quality of services. Islamabad police is dedicated to providing professional expertise and prioritizing the welfare of the public. The meeting emphasized the national recognition of the Islamabad Capital Police as a model force.—APP

## FPCCI's Karim invites Chinese investors to invest in Pakistan

Karim Aziz Malik further said that Pakistan provides attractive incentives and liberal policies for investment in all sectors of the economy for foreign and local investors

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: It is the right time for Chinese investors to earn lucrative returns on their investments in Pakistan and FPCCI assures to connect the Chinese investors with right partners in Pakistan for joint ventures, this was stated by Mr. Karim Aziz Malik Chairman FPCCI Capital Office while meeting Chinese delegation who visited FPCCI Capital Office under the leadership of Mr. Zhang Yang, Director Chongjiang Federation of Investment and Commerce & Chairman of Chang Jiang Management Company. On this occasion Ashfaq Ahmed, Vice President and Chairman of Co-ordination Capital Office Malik Sohail Hussain, Tariq Sadiq, and others were also present. Addressing the delegation, Mr. Karim Aziz Malik further said that Pakistan provides attractive incentives and liberal policies for investment in all sectors of the economy for foreign and local investors. These incentives are available in special schemes and in traditional as well as non-traditional sectors of the economy which offer great opportunities to the business community to invest in the country and to have maximum profit on their investments. Mr. Karim Aziz Malik briefed the delegation that Pakistan's top exportable items include textile made-up, cotton, knitted and non-knitted apparel, Rice, Pink Salt, Plastic Articles, Leather Articles, Automobiles, Mining, Gems Stones, Among many others. He further said that most of



Pakistan's textile products are exported to Europe and America, but the textile industry is hoping to boost exports to China. Chairman Capital Office said that Pakistan is the world's 10th Largest Producer of rice. Pakistan's exports make up more than 8% of the world's total rice trade. Pakistan's export of broken rice to China has increased substantially. He further said that Pakistan is the world's sole producer of pink salt. The global market for pink salt is approximately \$12 billion. He invited Chinese investors to the emerging and fast-growing sector of Pink Salt for investment and joint venture. He informed

That the season of Cherry has going to start in our Gilgit Baltistan and many Chinese delegations has visited the orchards of Cherries and they had shown their keen interest in importing Cherries from Pakistan. Mr. Ashfaq Ahmed Vice President FPCCI stressed on the importance of interaction between business people, expansion of trade and creation of joint ventures investment between both nations. He further said that in future, Pak China collaboration would largely be dependent on the active participation of their private sector enterprises. Both side governments should play the role of facilitators to private

sector collaboration to enhanced their role for promoting bilateral trade and investment. Malik Sohail Hussain, Chairman Coordination FPCCI Capital Office briefed the participants about business opportunities and investment potential in various sectors of Pakistan's economy. He said that Pakistan and China have great prospects to promote cooperation in multiple areas. He said it was encouraging that many Chinese companies were investing in Pakistan and making useful contribution in the economic development of our country. He stressed for frequent exchange of trade delegations to bring private

sectors of both countries closer, exchange views, share experiences and explore possibilities of setting up joint ventures in potential areas of cooperation. Speaking at the occasion, Mr. Zhang Yang, Director CFIC and Chairman of Chang Jiang Management said that Pakistan has made attractive policies, which provide numerous investment opportunities for Chinese investors. Various Chinese companies are working in various fields in Pakistan. The two countries are committed to further improving trade relations and we hope that in the future there will be substantial growth in bilateral trade between the two countries.

## Pak-Africa trade development moot to be held from Jan 9-11

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan-Africa Trade Development Conference and single country exhibition will commence from January 9 to 11 in Cairo, Egypt, a press release received from Pakistan Embassy in Cairo said on Monday. A high level business delegation led by Federal Minister for Commerce and Industries Pakistan Dr. Gohar Ijaz will showcase business products and explore the forging of commercial ties with the Middle East & North African (MENA) region during the much-awaited conference and the exhibition. The delegation comprises government

officials and leading businessmen from Pakistan. The official component of the delegation comprises Secretary for Commerce, Chief Executive of Trade Development Authority of Pakistan (TDAP), Secretary Board of Investment (BOI) and other senior officers from Ministry of Commerce, BoI and TDAP. The event will kick start with an exclusive official segment of a conference on January 9, followed by an inclusive single-country exhibition on January 10 and 11. More than 200 businessmen from Pakistan are coming to Cairo to conclude pro-

spective business deals. These businessmen will be representing more than 20 different business sectors including textile, engineering goods, food & agriculture and services. In addition, more than 150 leading businessmen and chamber representatives from the countries of Middle East & North African (MENA) region are also coming to Cairo to strengthen commercial ties with businessmen from Pakistan. The exhibition offers opportunities for trade enhancement and signing joint venture deals between local and Pakistani businessmen in

multiple sectors of mutual interest. It also offers an opportunity to foster trade and investment ties between Pakistan and MENA region countries. The government of Pakistan under the "Look Africa" Policy has successfully conducted similar events in Johannesburg, Lagos and Nairobi in the year 2022, 2021 and 2020, respectively, yielding greater commercial benefits. Under this policy, the Government of Pakistan aims to find alternate markets for its goods and enhance government-to-government and business-to-business ties with countries in the African region.—APP

## Shrinking global GDP will compound Pakistan's problems

ISLAMABAD: Chairman of National Business Group Pakistan, President Pakistan Businessmen and Intellectuals Forum, and All Karachi Industrial Alliance, and former provincial minister Mian Zahid Hussain said on Monday that some economic sectors will be hit as the world GDP declines. Policymakers should take action to tackle the situation, with a special focus on rising debt, inflation, and the value of the rupee, he said. The economy should be headed in the right direction, and development barriers should be taken down to improve the situation, he added. Talking to the business community, the veteran business leader said that the global GDP will shrink this year, while there will be a slight improvement in Pakistan's GDP. Inflation, the rupee, and rising debt need to be given special attention this year, while the growth rate is likely to improve further if energy prices and political tensions ease. Mian Zahid Hussain said that many international organisations believe that Pakistan's growth rate will be 2 percent this year, while India's GDP is likely to be 6.2 percent. Pakistan's GDP may increase from 2% to 2.4% in 2025. In the opinion of international organisations, the food security situation in Pakistan may be more disturbed this year, which should be taken seriously, he underlined. The business leader said that global GDP will fall to 2.4 percent this year from last year's 2.7 percent. Reasons for a decline in global GDP include high interest rates, political conflicts, reduced trade, and the possibility of natural disasters. A decrease in global GDP will also create problems for Pakistan as it will reduce the demand for our products.—DNA

## Pakistan's cotton export to China crosses \$617 million

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Experts in Pakistani cotton expressed optimism about the growth of the country's cotton sector and yarn exports to China and other countries, which are rising annually despite floods and other challenges. According to the Ministry of Commerce, sources said that as per the General Administration of Customs of the People's Republic of China (GACC), China imported more than \$617.62 million worth of cotton yarn from Pakistan in the first eleven months of 2023. Uncombed single cotton yarn containing 85% or above, (commodity code 52051200) crossed \$ 414.70 million from January - November of 2023. Data further showed that cotton yarn (commodity code 52051100) crossed \$195.097 million in the first eleven months of 2023, while last year in the same period it was \$106.76



million. Uncombed cabled cotton yarn (commodity code 52053200) crossed \$5.27 million from January to November 2023. In the first eleven months of 2023, more than 237964.907 tons of cotton yarn in the top three items were imported from Pakistan. Sajjad Mazahir, General Manager of China Operations Keywin Trading Ltd, told China Economic Net that Cotton yarn exports from Pakistan to China are one of the very organized export sectors. Suppliers have built their

brands and reputation over cotton, pricing, and above all strong connections over the year. He further said that Pakistan's local textile industry has been blessed with tremendous opportunities post flood with many sectors showing strong exports, denim, towels, home textiles, and made-ups. That situation has changed Pakistan's surplus exports to local consumption and the price quantities being exported to China is sliding gradually, Gwadar Pro reported on Monday.

## First standardized quality test for 75,000 IT graduates

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Information Technology, Dr Umar Saif, has said that the first standardized quality test for the 75,000 information technology graduates will be conducted on January 15. In an interview with a private TV channel, Dr Saif highlighted significant decisions made to revamp IT education in collaboration with various entities, including HEC, the National Computing Accreditation Council, the Examination Testing Council, the Pakistan Software Export Board, and the Pakistan Software Houses Association. Dr. Saif said students who successfully pass the test will be offered job opportunities through the Industry Placement Program. He added that funds will be allocated to support special industry courses in universities, aiming to prepare students for current industry trends and needs.—APP

## 'Govt is committed to provide all fundamental rights to trans community'

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Special Assistant to Prime Minister for Human Rights and Women Empowerment, Mushaal Hussain Mullick here on Sunday said that the government was committed to provide all fundamental rights to the transgender community across the country at gross root level. She was addressing at the concluding ceremony at a workshop on wellness and communication development for non-binary and transgender persons,

organized by Aq Khan Foundation. She said that over 0.3 million transgenders were registered with concerned government department and the government was planning to a mass campaign with the name of "Dukhtar" rest of the country for the protection, jobs and skilled programs for transgender community. Transgender persons are guaranteed all fundamental rights enshrined in the Constitution of Pakistan. In addition, the Act recognises transgender persons' right to property inheritance, voting,

education, employment, healthcare, assembly, access to public places and to hold public office, she said. Mushaal underlined that trans community was playing its vital role for the development of the country and they were contributing at every level with their sincere efforts and hard working. She said that the government would constitute committees at district level for collecting the proper data of transgenders, to provide the education, health care, jobs, social security, social media train-

ings, vocational trainings and other opportunities to make them a productive and economically independent citizens. "We all are human beings and have the rights to do every positive act for the development and promotion of the society and state", she added. The SAPM also appreciated the best efforts of Dareecha organization for the development of trans community. Ms Jameela, Sheela, Usman and Aksh were also address and highlighted the problems of trans community.

## ANF recovers 75 kg drugs in six operations

RAWALPINDI: Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) while conducting six operations across the country managed to recover 75 kg of drugs in six operations and arrested four accused, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman here on Monday. He informed that 700 grams of Ice drug was recovered from a passenger's trolley bag at Bacha Khan International Airport. The accused was leaving for Doha by flight number QR-601. 60 kg hashish and 2.5 kg Ice were recovered from the Shahdara Lahore area and an accused was arrested during the operation. A total of 10 kg of hashish was recovered in two separate operations near the Khar border in the Bajaur area. 2.4 kg hashish was recovered from the possession of a motorcycle rider in Peshawar and an accused was arrested. 500 ecstasy tablets were recovered from an accused in Peshawar Mor Rawalpindi. Cases under the Anti-Narcotics Act have been registered against the arrested accused and further investigations are under process.—APP

## Expert on 'Cervical Cancer awareness month'

ISLAMABAD: Health experts on 'Cervical Cancer Awareness Month' emphasized public for the importance of early diagnosis, annual screening and encouraged parents to vaccinate their daughters against cervical cancer if they are between the ages of 15 to 26 years as if treated early curable rate is more than 92 percent. Talking to the PTV news channel, an expert on Women's diseases Dr Irum Yasir said that Cervical Cancer Awareness Month is an important opportunity to share evidence-based information, and promote vaccination against human papillomavirus (HPV) and screening. January is cervical cancer awareness month, and Pakistan is doing its part to provide high-end oncology care services and raise awareness through media platforms, she added. Cervical cancer is a preventable condition that, if caught early, can be treated with improved therapy, she said. Dr also advised the media to create awareness about cervical cancer and stressed the importance of educating the public about the risk of transmitted diseases. Replying to a query, she said if cervical cancer is detected early, it is often highly treatable, adding, that treatment options may include surgery, radiation therapy, and chemotherapy.—APP

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## US making miscalculation by not reining in Israel

As long as the United States does not adjust its stance and continues to give one-sided support to Israel in the Gaza Strip conflict, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken will likely be greeted with cold shoulders during his ongoing seven-day visit to the Middle East. As of Monday, the conflict in Gaza had dragged into its fourth month, having claimed more than 22,000 lives and creating a grave humanitarian crisis in the Palestinian enclave. The rising death toll and worsening sufferings of people in Gaza are primarily attributable to Washington's unconditional support for Tel Aviv's continuing military operations that have gone far beyond "self-defense". Were it not for the timely and sustained military and financial assistance provided by the US, much of which the Joe Biden administration has provided bypassing congressional approval, Israel would not have been able to carry out its campaigns on the scale and with the intensity it has for so long. Had the US not vetoed or obstructed relevant proposals of the international community, the United Nations Security Council would have been able to pass a resolution calling for a cease-fire, and gained the authority to oversee the delivery of humanitarian aid to Gaza. If the US had not sent at least two aircraft carrier strike groups to the Middle East soon after the conflict broke out in a move to protect Israel, not from Hamas, but its angry neighbors, Tel Aviv would not have been able to carry out its military campaign in the Gaza Strip, which some have described as genocide and ethnic cleansing, in defiance of other countries' strong opposition. That around 140 UN work staff have been killed in the conflict in Gaza over the past more than three months exposes how helpless Palestinian civilians are in the face of the ruthless offensive by Israel. Were it not for the US' acquiescent indulgence of Tel Aviv, some Israeli politicians would not have had the audacity to suggest that the Palestinians in Gaza and even beyond should be relocated somewhere else, and Tel Aviv would not have opened new fronts in Lebanon, Syria, Judea and Samaria (the West Bank), Iraq, Yemen and Iran, as its defense chief admitted shortly before Israel pulled some of its troops out of northern Gaza. Blinken has visited the Middle East three times before over the past three months. It is a pity that he is still not there to try and broker a cease-fire. As a matter of fact, what the Biden administration is concerned with most is by no means the civilians in Gaza or even the Israeli hostages taken by Hamas, but the expansion of Gaza conflict into one that is uncontrollable while the conflict between Ukraine and Russia that it has orchestrated shows no sign of a quick victory of its proxy. With Israel taking advantage of that and the unwavering support it is being given by the Biden administration, there are signs indicating the conflict in Gaza is swiftly spilling over across the whole of the Middle East after Hamas' senior leaders were killed by drone strikes in Lebanon, deadly explosions were set off in Iran, and US targets came under intensive attacks in Iraq, Syria and the Red Sea. The worsening situation in the Middle East is another bloody mess of the US' making.



## Order on China-Myanmar border shared concern

Strengthening border security and maintaining the stability of the border have always been a top priority in the cooperation between China and Myanmar, as it has a huge bearing on the well-being of the people of both countries. Thus, it came as no surprise that during the meetings between Vice-Foreign Minister Sun Weidong and Myanmar leader Min Aung Hlaing and other senior officials, during Sun's three-day visit to the country that ended on Saturday, the two sides pledged that they will jointly maintain peace and stability across the border, continue to build the China-Myanmar economic corridor to promote mutual economic and social development, and cooperate to combat cross-border crimes such as telecom fraud, and jointly promote regional peace, tranquility, development and prosperity. A similar message was conveyed when State Councilor and Minister of Public Security Wang Xiaohong made a video call with Myanmar Union Minister for Home Affairs Yar Pyae on the weekend, during which they vowed to deepen law enforcement to safeguard security and stability in the border areas, particularly by cracking down on telecom and online fraud cases. The stepped-up contacts follow a series of disruptive events including armed conflict near the China-Myanmar border that have posed a threat to people's safety. In the latest development, five people were injured last week by artillery shells fired during fighting between government and rebel forces that fell on a small town on the Chinese side of the border, prompting the Foreign Ministry to lodge a protest with "the relevant parties", while urging them to "stop fighting and take measures to prevent the recurrence of such vicious incidents". Such remarks should not fall on deaf ears, because the determination of the Chinese government to safeguard the lives and property of the Chinese people should not be underestimated. This has been evidenced in the joint operations China and Myanmar have conducted in recent months to crack down on the illegal activities along the border where tens of thousands of Chinese people have been trapped and forced by criminal gangs to carry out scams targeting Chinese people via the internet. More than 31,000 suspected fraudsters had been extradited to China by the end of November, including three group leaders who were on the most-wanted-list of the Chinese public security organs, with the Chinese police issuing a new batch of arrest warrants last month for 10 alleged "ringleaders" of online scam syndicates. It will likely not be long before order is restored in the border areas as China and Myanmar join hands to combat cross-border crimes and internet scams in their pursuit of a China-Myanmar community with a shared future.

## 5-strategic communications to derail elections...

Qamar Bashir



This intricate approach, executed subtly, revolves around five pivotal narratives: prioritizing financial and economic stability over electoral processes, justifying the interim government's continuity citing security concerns, leveraging adverse weather conditions to advocate for postponement, associating the pursuit of justice for the 9th May incident with election timing, and crucially, emphasizing that aggrieved parties won't accept election outcomes, potentially plunging the country into chaos. This narrative underscores the rationale for postponing

The interim government has orchestrated a coordinated effort to obstruct or delay the impending elections through a multifaceted strategic communication strategy. This intricate approach, executed subtly, revolves around five pivotal narratives: prioritizing financial and economic stability over electoral processes, justifying the interim government's continuity citing security concerns, leveraging adverse weather conditions to advocate for postponement, associating the pursuit of justice for the 9th May incident with election timing, and crucially, emphasizing that aggrieved parties won't accept election outcomes, potentially plunging the country into chaos. This narrative underscores the rationale for postponing elections until all parties consent to accept the election results, portraying it as a crucial step towards averting potential unrest and chaos. From a Public Relations perspective, each narrative serves as a strategic tool to shift focus away from the electoral process, weaving a complex web of reasoning to legitimize the government's intent to circumvent or postpone the elections in favor of its continuation. Communication Strategy 1 begins by addressing the severity of the financial and economic situation in Pakistan. Emphasize the challenges, such as debt burden, inflation, and economic instability, impacting the daily lives of citizens. Stress the crucial need for stability to ensure the well-being and prosperity of the nation. Present a bleak picture of what might happen without immediate corrective measures. Illustrate the interim government's proactive steps and policies taken to stabilize the economy. Highlight achievements and ongoing efforts to mitigate the crisis, emphasizing that they are promising but need time to yield positive results. Frame it as a sacrifice for a stable and prosperous future. Emphasizing the need for unity and cooperation, suggesting that delaying elections is a collective decision for the greater benefit of Pakistan. Leveraging Communication Channels by utilizing television, radio, newspapers, and social media to disseminate the message widely and consistently. Arrange speeches by influential figures to reinforce the narrative of financial emergency and the necessity of stability. Using Slogan: "Ensuring Stability, Securing Tomorrow: Let Our Economy Flourish First!" Visual Imagery: Infographics, charts showing economic indicators improving, visuals depicting stability leading to prosperity. The SC campaign-2 begins by prioritizing citizens' safety above electoral processes, emphasizing the broader regional implications of Pakistan's security situation. The postponement of elections is positioned as a measure to safeguard citizens' lives, reinforcing that public safety remains paramount. Continuous engagement through regular updates and open dialogues with stakeholders, including security forces and international partners to ensure transparency, address concerns, and gather support for this crucial strategy. Various media platforms are used extensively—television, radio, newspapers, and social media—to disseminate a consistent message about the critical need for stability. Key influential figures are engaged to deliver speeches reinforcing the narrative. Visual aids, including infographics showcasing pressing security challenges. It vividly depicts Pakistan's volatile security landscape, emphasizing the gravity of significant domestic, regional, and international security threats with the slogan

"Terrorism and Instability." The campaign advocates for a "Security First Approach," stressing that conducting elections amid such turmoil risks citizen safety and democratic integrity. It aims to showcase the interim government's unwavering commitment to national security, highlighting ongoing efforts to combat terrorism and restore stability. Strategic Communication-3. The Campaign Title: "Prioritizing Public Safety: Postponement Due to Severe Weather Conditions". The Key Message: "Postponing Elections for Public Safety Amid Harsh Winter Weather". Illustrating the severity of the ongoing winter weather across the country, emphasizing its adverse impact on public safety and accessibility to polling stations. Emphasize that the extreme weather conditions will deprive a significant portion of the population from exercising their fundamental right to vote. Frame the decision to postpone elections as a necessary step to prioritize the safety and well-being of citizens. Highlight the dangers posed by severe weather, such as transportation hazards, potential accidents, and health risks, making it unsafe for citizens to travel to polling stations. Emphasize the government's duty to ensure citizens' safety and well-being above all else. Position the postponement as a temporary delay, ensuring that citizens will have the opportunity to exercise their voting rights when weather conditions improve. To achieve the results, utilize television, radio, newspapers, and social media to ensure a consistent and clear message about the weather-related challenges and the decision's necessity for public safety. Keep the public informed about weather improvements and any developments regarding rescheduling elections. Sample Slogan: "Safety First: Weathering the Storm for a Fair Election Tomorrow!". Visual Imagery: Visuals portraying harsh winter weather conditions, safety precautions, and images illustrating citizens' difficulties in reaching polling stations. Strategic Communication-4 begins with the campaign to delay elections until the culprits of the 9th May incident are brought to justice. Campaign Title: "Justice Before Democracy: Holding Accountable the Culprits of 9th May". Key Message: "Postponing Elections for Justice: Prioritizing Accountability and National Reconciliation". Communication Strategy: Shedding light on the significance of addressing the unresolved 9th May incident, emphasizing its impact on national reconciliation and stability. Appeal to the public sentiment for accountability, stressing that bringing culprits to justice is crucial for healing and moving forward as a nation. Frame the resolution of the 9th May incident as a precondition for holding fair and transparent elections. Highlight that accountability fosters national unity and reconciliation, laying the groundwork for a stronger democratic future. Utilize various media platforms, arrange speeches by influential figures, keep the public informed about progress made in addressing the 9th May incident, showcasing steps taken towards accountability. Sample Slogan: "Justice Prevails: Ensuring Accountability for a Stronger Democracy". Visual Imagery: Visuals depicting the pursuit of justice, accountability processes, and images illustrating national unity and reconciliation. Communication Strategy-5 Title: "Ensuring Fairness: Postponing Elections for Inclusive Resolution". Key Message: "Postponing Elections to Address Fairness Concerns: Prioritizing National Unity and Trust in

the Democratic Process". It begins with acknowledging concerns raised by political parties, particularly PTI, regarding fairness and transparency in the election process. Emphasize the necessity of creating an environment where all parties accept the election results to prevent post-election chaos. Position postponement as a means to ensure a more stable and consensus-driven electoral outcome. Leveraging Communication Channels: Television, radio, newspapers, and social media—to communicate the rationale behind postponement and the commitment to fairness. Arrange discussions and forums for direct engagement with political parties to address concerns and seek collaborative solutions. Ensuring that decisions regarding the electoral process are made in the best interest of the nation. Sample Slogan: "Fairness Unites: Postponing for an Inclusive Electoral Process. Visual Imagery: Graphics symbolizing fairness, inclusivity, and unity among political parties, aiming for a harmonious electoral process. These five strategies, while aimed at achieving certain objectives, raise concerns about their alignment with constitutional principles. It's evident that our nation, already fragile, cannot endure another unconstitutional disruption, as any illegal actions to achieve these goals could result in dire consequences. Despite our history marked by martial laws and setbacks, there's a recurring pattern where powerful forces often achieve their objectives by disregarding, manipulating, or violating the constitution without facing consequences. The constitution provides for holding provincial assembly elections within 90 days of dissolution, yet despite court orders in September 2023, elections in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Punjab provinces were delayed with total impunity. The absence of fresh elections since the National Assembly's dissolution in April 2023 raises questions about adherence to reasonable timeframes implied by constitutional provisions. Legal experts have raised concerns about the interim government's decisions, suggesting they might overstep constitutional limitations. Issues surrounding the independence of the judiciary and media under the interim setup add complexity to the situation. The Supreme Court and the interim government are going to face off once again on the question of holding elections on 8th February. The nation is keeping its fingers crossed. It's critical to emphasize the importance of upholding the rule of law and respecting the decisions made by the Supreme Court. In any democratic society, institutions must function independently within their prescribed roles. If there's a disagreement or concern about a decision, the appropriate and lawful approach is to address it through legal channels, such as filing appeals or presenting arguments in court that adhere to the legal framework and the constitution. Attempting to circumvent or undermine the decisions of the Supreme Court through illegal or unconstitutional means can have severe consequences, not just for the democratic process but also for the stability and credibility of the country's institutions.

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

## U.S. foreign policy and its impact on the World

Rai Ayesha Liaquat

The way the U.S. handles its relations with other nations is known as foreign policy. This includes decisions and actions taken by the United States to interact with other countries and international groups. Over time, the U.S. foreign policy has evolved. In the 1930s, the U.S. focused on staying out of European affairs (isolationism). As the U.S. became more powerful, it started playing a bigger role globally

The world of international relations is influenced a lot by how big countries like the United States deal with other countries. The United States has a strong impact on global stability and this is important to understand. The way the U.S. handles its relations with other nations is known as foreign policy. This includes decisions and actions taken by the United States to interact with other countries and international groups. Over time, the U.S. foreign policy has evolved. In the 1930s, the U.S. focused on staying out of European affairs (isolationism). As the U.S. became more powerful, it started playing a bigger role globally. In the 20th century, the U.S. became a superpower, affecting global events significantly. The U.S. foreign policy has several goals, such as protecting national security, maintaining military strength and dealing with global issues like terrorism. The U.S. has formed alliances, engaged in diplomacy and used military strength to achieve these goals. In recent times, the U.S. has been particularly focused on competition with China and Russia, as well as addressing issues like terrorism and cyber threats. To tackle these challenges, the U.S. has taken a more assertive foreign policy stance. This includes strengthening ties with traditional allies and forming new partnerships with emerging powers. The U.S. has increased its military presence in key regions and adopted a more confrontational approach towards countries like China and Russia. The U.S. has also changed its trade policy, imposing tariffs on some countries and using economic tools to pressure others. Some specific strategies and events highlight these changes, such as the Indo-Pacific Strategy to counter Chinese influence, the Abraham Accords normalizing relations in the Middle East, the withdrawal of U.S. troops from Afghanistan after 20 years and the reimposition of sanctions on Iran. The U.S. also maintains global

alliances and partnerships, participates in arms control and non-proliferation efforts and focuses on cyber security and information warfare as the world becomes more digitalized. The way the United States deals with other countries affects the world in different ways. It's not simple and involves many aspects like politics, economy, safety and helping people in need. Firstly, the US influences political stability in other countries, sometimes in a good way and sometimes in a bad way. Their foreign policy also gets involved in security matters, like using the military or trying to stop terrorism. This is tricky because they need to protect their own country but also need to be careful about how they use force. Unfortunately, some actions, like military interventions, can lead to problems like people having to leave their homes (refugee crises). This creates ethical issues about the consequences of getting involved in other countries issues. It's not just about immediate help but also about finding long-term solutions to the root causes of conflicts. The US has been criticized for supporting governments that don't respect human rights, using torture, and being part of killings without legal processes. This raises questions about whether the US is staying true to its values of democracy and human dignity. The US, being a big player globally, has a big impact on efforts to tackle climate change and protect nature. It could set an example by supporting sustainable practices and climate resilience. It is not just about their development but it sets a pattern for other countries to follow. However, the US foreign policy faces a lot of challenges and criticisms. Inside the country, different political groups and the public can disagree on how foreign policy is carried out. Internationally, some think the US gets too involved in other countries' business, while others say it should be more active. Balancing these different opinions is tough and requires a good understanding

of the world situation. For example, when it comes to using military force, there is an ongoing debate about what is ethical and justifiable. Critics say the US sometimes acts against these principles, creating moral dilemmas. It's not just about immediate safety but also considering things like civilian casualties and the long-term effects of military actions. US foreign policy often faces ethical challenges. This includes balancing national security with human rights, supporting democracy while dealing with non-democratic governments, and promoting economic growth without harming the environment. It is a complex job that requires finding a balance between the immediate needs of the US and the bigger values of human rights, democracy, and a healthy environment. In a world where everything is connected, solving these ethical challenges is crucial for a stable and peaceful global order. In today's digital age, keeping our online information safe is very important. Cybersecurity is all about protecting ourselves from online threats. These threats can harm our country, economy and personal privacy. In the United States, we face various cyber threats, like spying, data breaches and attacks on important systems like power grids and financial networks. As technology becomes more complicated, it also becomes more vulnerable to attacks. It is crucial to make sure our essential systems, like transportation and finance are secure from these cyber threats. The history of U.S. foreign policy describes how it has changed over time and what the current priorities are. The impact of US foreign policy on things like politics, economics, security and conflicts around the world are wide-ranging. Its foreign policy also considers challenges and criticisms and thinking about both local and global perspectives. The US decision makers should look ahead for possible changes in the foreign policy and encourage discussions about the complex issue of the world and global stability.

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## Briefs

**Come what may, election to take...**

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deal with the poverty, inflation and unemployment. Replying to another question, Chairman Bilawal said that the "cricket bat" was never an election symbol and it was conjured to facilitate Imran Khan and give him undue favour in the elections. It was given to the PTI because the Pakistani people take interest in cricket. It is a fact that our symbol "sword" was snatched and since then we are contesting on the "arrow" as our election symbol. Meanwhile US Ambassador to Pakistan Donald Blome and Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Chairman Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari Monday discussed the general elections during a meeting in Islamabad. In a statement, Acting US Mission Spokesperson Thomas Montgomery said that the meeting was part of the ambassador's engagements with a broad range of Pakistani political stakeholders. "US Ambassador Donald Blome met today with Pakistan Peoples Party Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari to discuss current political issues, including the importance of free, fair, and inclusive elections," the statement mentioned. They also discussed the strength of the US-Pakistan trade and investment relationship and the development of the US-Pakistan 'Green Alliance' framework, the statement mentioned. In a separate statement, the PPP said the discussion between Bilawal and the US envoy was regarding the promotion of bilateral relations took place. "They also discussed the promotion of trade relations between Pakistan and the United States," the statement added. The general elections are set to take place on February 8 after much ado and political parties are gearing up by forging alliances, holding rallies, and bringing in politicians with vote banks into their folds.

**5 cops martyred in blast...**

FROM PAGE 01  
Malakand Division Commissioner Saqib Raza said the polio campaign in the area had been suspended due to the blast. According to a Rescue 1122 statement, rescue teams in Mohmand and Lower Dir districts were also put on "alert". The outlawed Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) claimed responsibility for the attack. Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaarul Haq Kakar strongly condemned the attack and expressed the resolve to continue the anti-polio campaign with "full force till the complete elimination of the poliovirus from the country", state-run Radio Pakistan reported. The premier prayed for the martyred policemen and consoled with their families. He also directed authorities to provide all the possible medical assistance to the injured persons. PM Kakar further stated that the entire nation salutes polio workers and security personnel, adding that terrorists would never succeed in their nefarious designs. In a statement, caretaker KP Chief Minister Justice (ret'd) Arshad Hussain Shah condemned the blast and expressed his grief on the "martyrdom of police officials". Praying for the speedy recovery of the wounded, CM Shah directed the district administration to ensure the provision of timely aid to them. "The police morale would not be defeated by such cowardly incidents," the chief minister asserted. Highlighting that the KP police have given "eternal sacrifices" to protect the public's lives and properties, CM Shah said the nation saluted them. He vowed to provide "every possible support" to the bereaved families. National Assembly Speaker Raja Pervaiz Ashraf also conveyed his condolences on the loss of precious lives. In a post on social media platform X, the NA's account quoted him as saying that the public was standing with the police. Former climate change minister Sherry Rehman expressed her "heartfelt" sympathies to the families of the deceased.

# PCB appoints Rizwan as vice-captain of T20 team

Muhammad Rizwan will replace Shadab Khan in T20 format and take reigns as deputy to captain Shaheen Shah Afridi

OUR CORRESPONDENTS

ISLAMABAD: Wicketkeeper-batter Mohammad Rizwan was appointed vice-captain of the national T20I team, the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) confirmed on Monday. In his first assignment, Rizwan will be Shaheen Afridi's deputy during the upcoming five-match T20I series against New Zealand. The series will be played from 12 to 21 January in Auckland, Hamilton, Dunedin and Christchurch. Earlier today, Pakistan team reached Auckland from Sydney ahead of the series against New Zealand. The Men in Green will begin training for the series from tomorrow. It must be noted that Pakistan recently suffered a 3-0 whitewash at the hands of Australia in a Test series down under. Meanwhile, all-rounder Shadab Khan, who was former Pakistan captain Babar Azam's deputy in white-ball cricket, has vowed his support to Rizwan. "Congratulations Rizwan on being named the vice-captain of the T20I team. I know you will be a brilliant deputy to Shaheen Afridi," Shadab wrote on X (formerly Twitter) while wishing the keeper all the best.

"I urge all the fans to get behind them and support the team vs NZ," he added. It must be noted that Shadab is recovering from an ankle injury and it is not part of the squad for series against New Zealand. Earlier today, the Pakistan team reached Auckland from Sydney ahead of the series against New Zealand. The Men in Green will begin training for the series from tomorrow. It must be noted that Pakistan recently suffered a 3-0 whitewash at the hands of Australia in a Test series down under. Pakistan squad for New Zealand T20Is: Shaheen Shah Afridi (captain), Aamir Jamal, Abbas Afridi, Azam Khan (wk), Babar Azam, Fakhar Zaman, Haris Rauf, Haseebullah (wk), Iftikhar Ahmed, Mohammad Nawaz, Mohammad Rizwan (vc/wk), Mohammad Wasim Jnr, Sahibzada Farhan, Saim Ayub, Usama Mir and Zaman Khan  
Schedule of Pakistan vs New Zealand T20I series  
1st T20 - 12 January 2024 at Eden Park, Auckland  
2nd T20 - 14 January 2024 at Seddon Park, Hamilton  
3rd T20 - 17 January 2024 at University Oval, Dunedin  
4th T20 - 19 January 2024 at Hagley Oval, Christchurch  
5th T20 - 21 January 2024 at Hagley Oval, Christchurch.



**DHAKA: High Commissioner of Pakistan to Bangladesh, Syed Ahmed Maroof paying a courtesy call on the Prime Minister of Bangladesh, H.E. Sheikh Hasina to congratulate her on Elections' victory. - DNA**

## SC ends lifetime disqualification

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self-executory provision as it does not by itself specify any period for disqualification. "There is no law that provides for the procedure, process, and the identification of the court of law for making the declaration mentioned in Article 62(1)(f) of the Constitution and the duration of such a declaration, for the purpose of disqualification thereunder, to meet the requirements of the Fundamental Right to a fair trial and due process guaranteed by Article 10A of the Constitution." The interpretation of Article 62(1)(f) of the Constitution in imposing a lifetime disqualification upon a person through an implied declaration of a court of civil jurisdiction while adjudicating upon some civil rights and obligations of the parties is beyond the scope of the said Article and amounts to reading into the Constitution, the order noted. Such reading into the Constitution, the order mentioned, is also against the principle of harmonious interpretation of the provisions of the Constitution as it abridges the fundamental right of citizens to contest elections and vote for a candidate of

their choice enshrined in the Constitution, in the absence of reasonable restrictions imposed by law. "Until a law is enacted to make its provisions executory, Article 62(1)(f) of the Constitution stands on a similar footing as Article 62(1)(d), (e), (g), and serves as a guideline for the voters in exercising their right to vote," the order read. "The view taken in Samiullah Baloch case, treating the declaration made by a court of civil jurisdiction regarding breach of certain civil rights and obligations as a declaration mentioned in Article 62(1)(f) of the Constitution and making such declaration to have a lifelong disqualifying effect amounts to reading into the Constitution and is therefore overruled." The order added that since Section 232(2) added in the Elections Act, 2017, on June 26, 2023, prescribes a period of five years for the disqualification incurred by any judgment, order, or decree in terms of Article 62(1)(f) of the Constitution, there "remains no need to examine its validity and scope in the present case". However, Justice Afridi said he disagrees with his colleagues as the extent of a lack of qualification of a member of the

parliament, as envisaged under Article 62(1)(f) is neither lifelong nor permanent, and the same shall remain effective only during the period the declaration so made by a court of law remains in force. "Therefore, the conclusion so drawn by this Court in Sami Ullah Baloch Versus Abdul Karim Nousherwani (PLD 2018 SC 405) is legally valid, hence affirmed," the Supreme Court's judge added. The Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PML-N), the Pakistan People's Party (PPP), and the Istehkam-e-Pakistan Party (IPP) welcomed the Supreme Court's (SC) landmark judgment, ending politicians' lifetime disqualification under Article 62(1)(f) of the Constitution. After much deliberation, the Supreme Court of Pakistan ended the lifetime disqualification of lawmakers and declared that no person can be barred for a lifetime from running in elections if they are disqualified under Article 62 (1)(f). Setting aside its verdict in the Samiullah Baloch case, the apex court recalled its earlier order of disbarring politicians from running for office ever, boosting hopes for political bigwigs who are eyeing to contest polls on February 8.

## CJP: We are not running anyone's political campaign

FROM PAGE 01  
YouTube channel. PTI lawyer Latif Khosa presented arguments on behalf of Advocate Shoaib Shaheen, who filed the appeal in the court. At the last hearing, the SC issued notices to the Punjab inspector general of police (IGP), chief secretary, and advocate general, seeking their response on the PTI's allegations regarding alleged harassment of their candidates and party leaders. On December 22, the top court directed the ECP to address PTI's concern regarding the level-playing field on the former ruling party's petition. In line with the court's order, the ECP representatives met the PTI delegation and assured them of addressing its grievances in the lead up to the February 8 national vote. However, the party filed another petition on December 26, seeking contempt of court proceedings against the ECP over the electoral body's alleged failure to ensure a level-playing field. A day earlier, the ECP submitted its response to the top court on the PTI's level-playing field allegations. During the hearing, PTI counsel Khosa told the bench that adverse actions were being taken against the PTI members through Section 144 and Maintenance of Public Order (MPO). At which, the CJP said section 144 and MPO will be for everyone and not just for PTI. "Neither Section 144 nor MPO has been challenged before us," the CJP added. The CJP also reminded the PTI counsel that the Supreme Court is not a political forum, asking him to use other forums for political purposes. "Stop whining here. If you don't have trust in any Pakistan's institution then what should be done," the CJP said after Khosa complained that nomination papers of their top leaders were rejected by returning officers. Responding to Khosa's assertion, Justice Mazhar pointed out that according to the report of the Election Commission nomination papers of more than 76% of PTI candidates were approved. "Does PTI want elections?" CJP Isa asked Khosa. To which, Khosa replied: "100%, we want elections." The CJP said the Election Commission's mandate is to conduct elections in the country. "[...] these are the institutions established by you [parliament]... respect these institutions," the top judge

remarked. Referring to the ECP report submitted to the top court, the CJP asked Khosa to deny the facts if they believed they were wrongly stated in the report. Khosa complained that PTI has not been granted permission to hold political gatherings and nomination papers of senior leader Shah Mahmood Qureshi were rejected by the RO. At which, the CJP responded that the Supreme Court cannot direct any RO not to reject anyone's nomination papers. The CJP inquired from the PTI counsel if he had read the report submitted by the ECP in response to the PTI's petition. CJP Isa said the PTI would have to come up with something in writing if it was rejecting the ECP's report. After hearing the arguments, the SC ordered PTI to submit its response to the ECP's plea and adjourned the hearing till next Monday (January 15). ECP Special Secretary Dr Syed Asif Hussain on Sunday rejected the PTI's allegations that it was not being provided a level playing field for the February 8 elections and asked the Supreme Court to "dismiss the contempt petition with a penalty". The ECP official said this in reply to the PTI petition, demanding the SC to begin contempt of court proceedings against the ECP secretary, inspectors general of police (IGPs), chief secretaries of the four provinces and interior secretary over non-compliance of the apex court order passed on December 22, 2023. The ECP special secretary said that on the SC order, the commission held a meeting with the PTI delegation and heard their grievances. He said their complaints were addressed and they were assured that a level playing field would be provided to all the parties and candidates without any discrimination. Hussain said the electoral body had issued instructions pertaining to the complaints to the Islamabad chief commissioner, all the four chief secretaries, provincial election commissioners and IGPs. He added that the orders were also issued to the district returning officers and returning officers. The special secretary said that until December 26, 2023, a total of 33 complaints were made by the PTI and actions were taken on all of them. The IGP, chief secretary and ROs also submitted reports regarding action on the PTI complaints, he added.



**ISLAMABAD: A lady health worker administers Polio drops to a child during Polio eradication campaign in Federal Capital. - Online**

## Australia women trumps India by 6 wickets

Perry, 33, smashed a slog-sweep over midwicket to finish unbeaten on 34 from just 24 balls and seal victory with an over to spare

SPORTS DESK

MUMBAI: With a slog-sweep over midwicket for six, Ellyse Perry levelled Australia's Twenty20 series with India, underscoring her enduring and evolving class, and commemorated her 300th game in green and gold. The 33-year-old top-scored in Australia's six-wicket win as the tourists chased down India's eight for 130 with an over to spare. That levelled the T20 series with a match to come on Tuesday after India won by nine wickets in the opener. Perry hit 32 not out off 21 balls with two sixes and three fours, her fifth-wicket stand with Phoebe Litchfield (18 off 12) bringing Australia home after an impressive display in the field had done the groundwork. With an eye on dew affecting bowlers in the second innings at the Dr DY Patil ground in Navi Mumbai on Sunday, Alyssa Healy had put India in to bat after winning the toss. The hosts were restricted to eight for 130 off their 20 overs with only Deepti Sharma, run out off the last ball for 30, scoring more than 23 for an India side that were kept in check by regularly losing wickets. Georgia Wareham and Annabel Sutherland

were the pick of the tourists' bowlers, taking two wickets apiece for 18 and 17 runs respectively off their four overs. "It's lovely to get the win," said Perry, "a nice comeback for us. We got a bit of a what for the other night. It was a superb bowling effort in the first innings. Kim [Garth] was sensational up front. Wickets are crucial in that power play. It was a difficult chase but a nice finish." Australia recalled Garth for Darcie Brown, whose wayward start in the



first match had put Australia on the back foot, and the Ireland-born bowler immediately justified the decision. Shafali Verma made an unbeaten 64 on Friday, but missed a straight one to be leg before for one from the 10th ball of the innings. Garth (two for 27) followed up by dismissing the dangerous Jemimah Rodrigues for 13 to leave India two for 20 after four overs. Garth was launched for six in her third over by Smriti Mandhana but the opener

was caught at deep midwicket by Perry off Sutherland for 23 trying to repeat the feat. Privacy Notice: Newsletters may contain info about charities, online ads, and content funded by outside parties. For more information see our Privacy Policy. We use Google reCaptcha to protect our website and the Google Privacy Policy and Terms of Service apply. Australia continued to take key wickets at good times. Two DRS reviews by Healy brought lbw decisions for Wareham while Sutherland's slower ball forced Amanjot Kaur. The only blot on the performance was Garth dropping Shreyanka Patil in the last over, denying Megan Schutt (nought for 29) a record 131st T20 international wicket. She remains level with Pakistan's Nida Dar. In reply Australia made a confident start cruising to nought for 51 off seven overs and it was a surprise when Healy holed out to deep mid-on for a 21-ball 26. Her opening partner, Beth Mooney, fell two overs later, also to Sharma, stumped for 20 off 29 balls. Tahlia McGrath perished for 19 off 21 balls gloving a catch behind and when Gardner edged for seven India began to hope with Australia four for 99 with 34 needed of 26 balls. Perry extinguished that hope.

## Pak rubbishes US 'biased' religious...

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detached from ground realities." Pakistan, she added, is a pluralistic country, with a rich tradition of interfaith harmony. "In line with its Constitution, Pakistan has undertaken wide-ranging measures to promote religious freedom and protect minority rights." Raising objections to the list, Baloch said: "We note with deep concern that India, the biggest and serial violator of religious freedom, has once again been excluded from the US State Department's designation list." The Foreign Office spokesperson further said, "This is despite a clear recommendation by the US Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) as well as public concerns raised by international human rights constituencies about India's maltreatment of religious minorities. This conspicuous omission raises serious questions about the credibility, transparency and objectivity of the entire process." Such discriminatory, unilateral and subjective exercises were counterproductive and undermined Pakistan's shared objective to advance religious freedom globally, she added. Islamabad has urged that the contemporary challenge of religious intolerance, xenophobia and Islamophobia can be best countered through constructive engagement and collective efforts based on mutual understanding and respect. "With a similar spirit, Pakistan has bilaterally engaged the United States. She concluded that Pakistan's concerns about the designation are being conveyed to the US side." Baloch also said that Pakistan strongly believes that the contemporary challenge of religious intolerance, xenophobia and Islamophobia can be best countered through constructive engagement and collective efforts based on mutual understanding and respect. "With a similar spirit, Pakistan has bilaterally engaged the US."

## British envoy meets Nawaz

FROM PAGE 01  
The British High Commissioner congratulated the three times former prime minister leader on his exoneration from various court cases. Nawaz Sharif was disqualified from holding public office for life over corruption allegations by the Supreme Court of Pakistan in 2017.

## Ten Hag urges players to believe in their capabilities

LONDON: Manchester United manager Erik ten Hag said players must have confidence in their capabilities to play at the Premier League club, given the extraordinary expectations that come with joining the record 20-time top-flight champions. According to media reports in Britain, England winger Jadon Sancho is set to rejoin Borussia Dortmund on loan, adding to the list of big-money signings that have struggled to make an impact at Old Trafford. The 23-year-old moved to United from the Bundesliga side for 85 million euros (\$93 million) in August 2021, signing a five-year deal, but could not hold down a regular spot and later became embroiled in a disciplinary row with Ten Hag. Ten Hag's Dutch compatriot Donny van de Beek, 26, also made a loan switch to the German league by joining Eintracht Frankfurt earlier in January. When asked whether Van de Beek's struggles would put off players, Ten Hag told reporters: "That is always on those players and how much confidence you have in your capabilities." "But I can tell you one thing - the Premier League is tough, Manchester United, that is tough to play there because it is easier to play in almost any other team than Manchester United because the pressure is that high always. "You have to deal with that. But if you have confidence in yourself, this is the best challenge and this is definitely the best club you want to be at as a player. "It depends on player to player, and it depends especially on the character of the player, their personality." United, eighth in the league, face League One club Wigan Athletic in the third round of the FA Cup later on Monday. - Agencies



## Briefs

## UAE President, Blinken discuss Gaza in state visit

ABU DHABI: US Secretary of State Antony Blinken met President of the UAE Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan in Abu Dhabi on Monday as part of his regional tour. The two discussed bilateral relations and regional issues which included the events in Gaza. Al Nahyan emphasized the need for a ceasefire in the Gaza Strip to protect civilian lives and ensure safe channels for delivery of humanitarian relief. US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said that 'I met with Emirati President Mohamed Bin Zayed in Abu Dhabi today to discuss efforts to prevent the conflict in the region from widening and address humanitarian needs in Gaza. I underscored our continued commitment to the establishment of an independent Palestinian state.'

Over the past few days, Blinken visited Jordan and Qatar as part of a Middle East tour that started on Jan. 4 with a mission to prevent the Israeli-Hamas war from spreading.—APP

## 1000 of German farmers block roads to protest subsidy cuts

BERLIN: Thousands of farmers in Germany began nationwide protests on Monday against the government's plans to cut agricultural subsidies. In the capital Berlin, hundreds of farmers parked tractors in front of the city's landmark Brandenburg Gate, and blocked traffic for hours in the government district. "I would rather die than be a slave," one farmer wrote on his tractor. German Farmers' Association said the protests will continue throughout the week, in order to make it clear to the government that they will not accept cuts in agricultural subsidies. "This is the only way to ensure the supply of high-quality, local food," the association's President Joachim Rukwied told local media. Protests were also organized in other major cities, including Hamburg, Cologne, Munich, and Stuttgart. Chancellor Olaf Scholz's left-liberal coalition had announced last month that it is planning to cut agricultural fuel and vehicle subsidies, as part of new austerity measures to meet budget rules. Last week, the government revised its planned spending cuts, but the farmers' association said these changes were far from sufficient to address their problems.—APP

## Gambian ex-minister to go on trial for murder

BELLINZONA: A Gambian former interior minister is set to go on trial in Switzerland, charged with crimes against humanity. Ousman Sonko fled there in 2016, shortly before Gambian President Yahya Jammeh, accused of heading a repressive regime, lost power. Mr Sonko, 54, was arrested after non-governmental organisations presented evidence of his alleged involvement in killings, rape and torture. But his lawyer said that he was not responsible for what happened. Philippe Currat is quoted by the AFP news agency as saying that The Gambia's National Intelligence Agency, which was "never... under [his] authority" was behind the alleged crimes. Switzerland is trying the case under the principle of universal jurisdiction, which allows countries to prosecute people on their territory, even though the events may have taken place elsewhere. Mr Sonko is the highest-ranking government official ever to be prosecuted under this principle in Europe. Human rights groups believe the trial, taking place in the southern Swiss city of Bellinzona, could be a warning to repressive governments everywhere that the arm of the law can be very long indeed.—APP

## India SC cancels release of Gujarat gang rape convicts

The anti-Muslim riots in the western state of Gujarat are widely viewed as some of the worst instances of religious unrest in the predominantly Hindu country

## NEWS DESK

NEW DELHI: India's apex court quashed on Monday the remission given to 11 Hindu men who were jailed for raping a Muslim mother and killing seven members of her family during religious riots in 2002. The anti-Muslim riots in the western state of Gujarat are widely viewed as some of the worst instances of religious unrest in the predominantly Hindu country. Prime Minister Narendra Modi was the state's chief minister during the violence that killed more than 1,000 people, most of them Muslims. The 11 men were sentenced to life terms in 2008 after being convicted of rape and murder in the case of Bilkis Bano, who was 19 and preg-

nant with her second child when she was brutally gang raped. The assailants had also killed her seven family members, including her three-year-old daughter. But in 2022, the Gujarat government ordered an early release after they served 14 years in jail, sparking widespread condemnation across the country and several petitions to the Supreme Court. Reading from the judgment on Monday, the two-judge Supreme Court bench headed by Justice B.V. Nagarathna said that the state of Gujarat was not competent to pass the remission order in the case, as the men were tried and convicted in a court in the state of Maharashtra. "The exercise of power by the state of Gujarat is an instance of usurpation of power and abuse of power.

This is a classic case where the order of this court was used to violate the rule of law by granting remission. On that ground also, the remission orders deserve to be quashed," Nagarathna said. "A woman deserves respect however high or low she may otherwise be considered in society or to whatever faith she may follow or whatever creed she may belong to. Can heinous crimes against women permit remission? These are the issues which arise," she said. "Justice can be done only by sending them back to prison." Bano has been living in hiding since her attackers were released as she feared for her safety, according to reports from the Indian media. Her legal representative said that the top court's ruling has restored Indi-

ans' faith in the justice system. "It is a very good judgment which has upheld the rule of law and the faith of the people of this country, particularly the women, in the legal system, the courts, and that there is an assurance for justice," Vrinda Grover, one of the lawyers representing Bano, told reporters after the verdict. For many women in the country, the ruling comes as a relief. "It's a huge relief for the women of the country," Annie Raja, general secretary of the National Federation of Indian Women. Raja, whose organization filed a petition in Bilkis Bano's case, highlighted how the Gujarat government had violated the law by ordering the remission in 2022. "The court said the responsibility lies with the state of Maharashtra, where the trial took place, to take a decision on

remission," Raja said. "Prime Minister Modi and the Home Minister Amit Shah were silent on the violation of the law and their silence was considered as support to the violation... The court's order gives lots of hope and relief for us." Poonam Kaushik, a women's rights activist based in New Delhi, said that the ruling would establish a precedent in India. "By upholding rule of law and its supremacy, the judgment would set a precedent for all," she said. Maimoona Mollah, from the All India Democratic Women's Association, is hoping that unlawful remission in Bano's case will be the last. "We hope this kind of thing is not repeated," Mollah told News reporters. "We hope that the criminals will go back to jail, and Bilkis Bano has some relief."

## Petro decries killing of Palestinian journalists in Gaza

BOGOTÁ: Colombian President Gustavo Petro decried the killing of journalists by Israeli bombings in the Gaza Strip. "108 journalists have been murdered in the Gaza Strip by bombing in their homes," Petro wrote on X, following the killing of two more journalists, Hamza Wael Al-Dahdoh and Mustafa Thuraya, in Israeli attacks. The two journalists were killed on Sunday as Israeli aircraft hit a vehicle carrying press members on duty in Khan Younis. The press office of the government in Gaza said that the number of journalists killed in Gaza since the beginning of the Israeli attacks reached 109. In a statement condemning the Israeli army's attacks on journalists, media units and human rights organizations were called on to condemn the attack and to put pressure on Israel to stop its attacks on the Palestinian people.—APP

## US lawmakers approve \$1.6T federal budget

WASHINGTON: US lawmakers announced a bipartisan agreement on fiscal year 2024 funding totals that marks a step towards averting a looming government shutdown in a presidential election year. It was swiftly applauded by President Joe Biden, who said in a statement that the deal "moves us one step closer to preventing a needless government shutdown and protecting important national priorities." But time is short for the rival parties in Congress to agree on the spending particulars and pass legislation before a January 19 deadline, when parts of the federal government would run out of funding. The deal, built on an agreement crafted last year by then House speaker Kevin McCarthy and the White House, reportedly includes an increase in Pentagon spending to some \$886.3 billion, well over \$100 billion beyond the non-military spending outlined by Democrats.—Agencies

## Indonesian FM slams West's 'double standards' on Palestine

The Indonesian government has consistently condemned Israeli violence, while also rallying international support since Tel Aviv's bombardment of Gaza escalated in early October

## WEB DESK

JAKARTA: Indonesian Foreign Minister Retno Marsudi denounced on Monday the West's "double standards" on Gaza, as she pledged continued support for Palestine. Indonesia has long been a staunch supporter of Palestine, with its people and government seeing Palestinian statehood as mandated by their own constitution, which calls for the abolition of colonialism. The Indonesian government has consistently condemned Israeli violence, while also rallying international support since Tel Aviv's bombardment of Gaza escalated in early October. Israel's relentless military campaign has since killed more than 22,000 Palestinians and destroyed or damaged most homes in the besieged strip. "The case of Palestine showed double standards from a number of countries in the world, especially those in the Global



North," Marsudi said during her annual press statement. "Global North countries are suddenly quiet as they watch humanitarian violations. Where's all the lectures they often give about human rights? Doesn't Palestine have the same rights as the rest of us? Why does it seem like the nation of Palestine is below us?" Indonesia was part of a ministerial committee assigned by the extraordinary joint Arab-Islamic Summit in November, which pushed for an end to Israel's ongoing deadly onslaught on Gaza. Members

of the committee, chaired by Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan, met officials representing each of the five permanent members of the UN Security Council to increase pressure on the West to reject Israel's justification of its bombardment of Gaza as self-defense. Marsudi noted that she would be representing Indonesia at the International Court of Justice on Feb. 19, where she is scheduled to speak at a public hearing to urge the ICJ to give an advisory opinion that strengthens Palestine's legal standing. The hearing at The Hague is a follow-up to a December 2022 resolution passed by the UN General Assembly calling on the ICJ to give an advisory opinion on the legal consequences of Israel's illegal occupation of Palestinian territories. "The point is that the UN cannot forget the struggle of the nation of Palestine," Marsudi added.

She also highlighted how the UN Security Council was unable "to stop the ongoing genocide in Gaza," referring to its failure to adopt a resolution calling for a ceasefire last month after it was vetoed by the US. Speaking from the Merdeka Building in Bandung, West Java, Marsudi pointed out that the venue was a reminder of Indonesia's "debt" to Palestine. The building is a museum commemorating the 1955 Asian-African Conference, which had aimed to oppose colonialism and eventually led to the Non-Aligned Movement. Of more than two dozen countries which participated then, Palestine is the only one that has yet to gain its independence. "This building is a reminder of a debt that we have yet to pay, and that is the independence of Palestine," she said. "Indonesia will always fight for Palestine."

## Germany urges two-state solution for Israel-Palestine peace

LONDON: German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock underscored the critical need for a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in a statement, asserting that Israelis and Palestinians can only live side by side in peace "if one's security equals the other's." "This can only be achieved when everyone is willing to acknowledge the others' suffering. We must spare no effort on the path towards a two-state solution," she said on X. "For this to happen, there must be no more threat from Gaza to Israel's existence. Hamas must lay down its weapons and Hezbollah and the Houthis must cease their dangerous provocations. Palestinians direly need the chance for a life in safety, dignity and self-determination," she added. Israel has launched air and ground attacks on Gaza following a cross-border incursion by the Palestinian resistance group Hamas on Oct. 7 last year, killing at least 22,800 Palestinians and injuring more than 58,400 others. Nearly 1,200 Israelis are believed to have been killed in the Hamas attack. The Israeli onslaught has left Gaza in ruins, with 60% of the enclave's infrastructure damaged or destroyed, and nearly 2 million residents displaced amid acute shortages of food, clean water and medicines. Tensions have flared along the border between Lebanon and Israel amid exchanges of fire between Israeli forces and the Lebanese Hezbollah group in the deadliest clashes since the two sides fought a full-scale war in 2006. Yemen's Houthi rebel group has significantly stepped up its involvement in the conflict in the Gaza Strip by targeting what they say are Israel-bound vessels in the southern Red Sea. It said the attacks aim to support Palestinians under Israel's "aggression and siege" in Gaza. Earlier on, German FM Calls on Israel to Ease its Military Campaign in Gaza German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock urged Israel to ease its military campaign in Gaza and do more to protect civilians in the besieged Palestinian territory. Germany has been one of Israel's most steadfast supporters since the start of the conflict with Hamas, but Baerbock warned that Israel's security also depended on limiting civilian deaths.—DNA

## UN rapporteurs slam ICC over Gaza war crimes

WASHINGTON: The UN special rapporteur on Palestine, Francesca Albanese, and UN special rapporteur on the right to adequate housing Balakrishnan Rajagopal criticized the International Criminal Court (ICC) on Sunday for being slow in prosecuting those responsible for war crimes committed by Israel in Gaza. Albanese quoted a post on X from a Save The Children official saying "more than 10 children per day, on average, have lost one or both of their legs in Gaza since (the) conflict erupted three months ago." "Trials will also be needed. Criminals who have planned, ordered and executed such crimes must be brought to justice," she said. "National courts with jurisdiction over war crimes, CAH (crimes against humanity) & genocide must be activated, as the ICC is proving slow and ineffective on the situation of Palestine," she added. Rajagopal also shared a post on X to support Albanese's call, saying: "Yes we need action now. Today, ICC is proving to be too slow." UN rapporteurs and human rights organizations have called Israel's recent attacks targeting civilians in Gaza and acts of collective punishment "genocide." The failure of ICC Prosecutor Karim Khan to take preventive measures such as issuing arrest warrants against those responsible, including Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, has been widely criticized by officials.—Agencies



ISLAMABAD: Muhammad Syrus Qazi Honorable Foreign Secretary of I.R. Pakistan Ministry of Foreign Affairs pens down on the condolence book for the martyrs of Kerman terrorist attack opened in the Embassy of I.R. Iran to Pakistan.—DNA

## Turkiye and Saudi Arabia renew Hajj protocol

## FOREIGN DESK

ANKARA: Turkish and Saudi officials signed a new protocol for the annual Muslim pilgrimage Hajj for 2024. Ali Erbas, head of the Presidency of Religious Affairs (Diyanet), signed the protocol that allows Turkish citizens to travel to Saudi Arabia for the pilgrimage with the Saudi Minister of Hajj and Umrah Tawfig al-Rabiah on Sunday in Jeddah. The two officials assessed the work to facilitate the faithful's access to Hajj sites in 2023, while Erbas requested Saudi Arabia to increase the quota of Turkish pilgrims allowed every year. For his part, al-Rabiah said they were working, to that extent, to increase the number of pilgrims both for Hajj and for Umrah, a lesser pilgrimage that can be performed at any time of the year. Under the current protocol, Saudi Arabia will allow 83,430 pilgrims from Türkiye in this year's Hajj. Due to the overwhelming number of pilgrims visiting the country every year, Saudi Arabia imposes quotas for every country. The signing of the protocol comes amid claims of a dispute between Türkiye and Saudi Arabia, which

recently normalized their relations. The Presidency's Directorate of Communications denied the claims last week that the Saudi crown prince will prohibit Turkish citizens from doing their Hajj. In a weekly bulletin, the directorate's Center for Combating Disinformation debunked claims linked to a postponed Turkish football match, originally scheduled to be played in Riyadh, the Saudi capital, in the last week of December. "The Turkish Football Federation (TFF) proposed and prepared an offer to provide additional income to the Fenerbahçe and Galatasaray clubs for the Super Cup final. The presidents of the two

clubs granted verbal authorization to the TFF for the cup final in August 2023," said the bulletin. "The decision to play the 2023 Turkcell Super Cup match in Saudi Arabia, which made the best bid, was entirely determined and organized by the clubs and the TFF through a joint decision. Before the event, an agreement was reached between the TFF and Saudi officials on Oct. 20, 2023, regarding the protocols to be followed on the field and in the stands." The bulletin said that after the joint decision, the match was set to be played on Dec. 29, and the contract explicitly mentioned that the rules of FIFA, AFC, UEFA

and other international football regulatory and governing bodies would apply. "Despite the match not being a national game, the TFF and Saudi officials agreed to play the Turkish National Anthem and use Turkish flags for the 100th anniversary of the Republic of Türkiye. The clubs requested the addition of the agreement between the TFF and Saudi officials, stating that, just before the match, teams would warm up on the field wearing Mustafa Kemal Atatürk T-shirts and carrying banners with the words of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk," it said, referring to the founding father of the Turkish republic. According to the report, the Saudi officials did not agree to add these pre-match requests to the existing protocol, citing international regulations and arrangements based on the previous agreement with the TFF. "As a result of these developments, the issue gained attention in the Turkish public on social media and disinformation was spread on this matter," it added. On the false claims of "Turkish citizens being banned from the Hajj," the directorate said: "There is no official statement or decision from either country that could

prevent Turkish citizens from going to Saudi Arabia to fulfill their Hajj rituals." The annual Hajj pilgrimage to Saudi Arabia is a religious obligation for Muslims, who must make the journey at least once in their life if financially and physically feasible. Considered the fifth pillar of Islam, the Hajj is intended to demonstrate the solidarity of Muslims and their submission to Allah. While the Hajj is generally associated with Islam's final prophet, Muhammad, who lived in the seventh century, Muslims believe that the pilgrimage to Mecca dates back thousands of years to pre-Islamic times. The pilgrimage takes place every year from the eighth to the 12th day of Dhul al-Hijjah, the 12th and final month of the Islamic calendar. On these five days, pilgrims converge on Mecca, where they circumambulate the Kaaba seven times, run between the hills of Al-Safa and Al-Marwah, drink water from the sacred well of Zamzam, stand vigil on the plains of Mount Arafat and pelt the "devil" with stones at Jamarat. Pilgrims then cut their hair and sacrifice an animal (meat from which is traditionally distributed to the poor) before celebrating Eid al-Adha, or the Festival of Sacrifice.



## Armed gangs kill 17 in northwestern Nigeria villages

ABUJA: Armed gang members have killed at least 17 people in attacks in northwestern Nigeria's Kaduna state. The gang members carried out attacks on three villages in Kauru district, reports said Sunday. At least 17 people lost their lives and 58 people were kidnapped. Nigeria has recently been facing attacks by armed gangs in different parts of the country as well as by the terrorist organisations Boko Haram and ISWAP, the West African branch of Daesh. In Nigeria, kidnappings for ransom are also common, even though the punishment for the crime of kidnapping is death. The gunmen usually target villages, schools and travellers in the north of the country, demanding high amounts in ransom.—APP

## 5 killed in bus, truck crash in Brazil

BRASÍLIA: At least 25 people have been killed after a tourist bus collided with a truck in Bahia state in northeastern Brazil, state firefighters said Monday. "Military firefighters responded to an incident that left 25 dead" near the municipality of Gavaio, about 155 miles (250 kilometers) from the capital of Bahia state, Salvador. Five people were also injured in the accident Sunday night, according to Brazilian press reports, which also published images of the twisted fuselage of the truck. The cause of the accident is still unknown. The bodies of the victims have been handed over to police for identification, the firefighters said. The mayor's office of Jacobina, a city close to the accident, declared three days of official mourning on Monday.—Agencies



## Briefs

### Soldier embraces Shahadat

STAFF REPORT

RAWALPINDI: On 08 January 2024, fire exchange took place between security forces and terrorists in North Waziristan District. Own troops effectively engaged terrorists' location and apprehended one terrorist in injured condition. However, during intense exchange of fire, Havildar Muhammad Zahir (age: 41 years, resident of District Mardan), having fought gallantly, embraced Shahadat. Sanitization operation is being carried out to eliminate any terrorists found in the area. Security Forces of Pakistan are determined to eliminate the menace of terrorism and such sacrifices of our brave soldiers further strengthen our resolve.

'Bill on never went missing, was returned to NA'

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: The Senate Secretariat on Monday said the bill pertaining to enforced disappearances never went "missing" and was "returned to the National Assembly" after being passed by the upper house of Parliament. The Criminal Law (Amendment) Bill 2021 was passed by the NA on November 8, 2021, and aimed at making amendments to the Pakistan Penal Code (PPC) and Code of Criminal Procedure. In 2022, former human rights minister Shireen Mazari had alleged that the bill had gone "missing" after it was sent to the Senate, having been passed by the relevant standing committee and the NA. Later, Mazari had also claimed that she was asked to appear at the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) headquarters over the bill. She had added that after the bill was tabled in the NA, it was referred to the interior committee where "invisible shadows" tried to change the clauses. She had regretted that the bill "disappeared" on the way to the Senate. The issue of the "missing" bill cropped up in the Supreme Court on January 2 during the hearing of a case on enforced disappearances. CJP Qazi Faez Isa had expressed surprise over the disappearance of the bill from the Senate, particularly as it had occurred during the PTI's time in power.

WHO cancels delivery of medical supplies to north Gaza

DNA

GENEVA: The World Health Organization (WHO) said it had been compelled to cancel a mission to bring medical supplies to northern Gaza on Sunday after failing to receive security guarantees. It was the fourth time WHO had had to call off a planned mission to bring urgently needed medical supplies to Al-Awda Hospital and the central drug store in northern Gaza since Dec. 26, it said. "It has now been 12 days since we were last able to reach northern Gaza," the WHO office in the occupied Palestinian territories wrote on the X social media platform. "Heavy bombardment, movement restrictions, and interrupted communications are making it nearly impossible to deliver medical supplies regularly and safely across Gaza, particularly in the north." The delivery planned on Sunday, WHO said, had been designed to sustain the operations of five hospitals in the northern part of the enclave. WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said he was "shocked by the scale of health needs and devastation in northern Gaza."



ISLAMABAD: Charge d Affaires of Romania Eduard Preda and others posing for a picture on the occasion of a conference titled 'Allama Iqbal and Mihaii Eminescu – Cultural Linkages between Pakistan and Romania, held at the Bahria University. – DNA

# Kabul has no intention of causing harm to Pakistan

Islamabad has stated that the TTP and other groups use Afghan soil against Pakistan. While the Afghan Taliban have denied the charge, authorities remain unconvinced and have demanded action against the TTP, its sanctuaries, and the handover of its leaders

DNA

KABUL: Afghanistan Prime Minister Mullah Hasan Akhund on Monday told Jamiat Ulema-i-Islam Fazl (JUI-F) chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman that Kabul "did not intend to harm" Pakistan or any other country. The Afghan premier passed these remarks during a meeting with an 11-member delegation led by Fazl, who arrived in Kabul a day earlier on the Afghan interim government's invitation. The trip is the JUI-F's first visit to the neighbouring country since the Taliban takeover in 2021. A statement issued by the Afghan government spokesperson Zabihullah Mujahid today quoted Mullah Hasan as

saying that the "Islamic Emirate will not allow anyone to pose a threat to any country". The Afghan PM described the role of religious scholars as very important to resolve problems and remove misunderstandings between Islamabad and Kabul, it said. The Taliban leader also called for a halt to what he called Pakistan authorities' "brutal" policy against Afghan refugees. "Such kind of behaviour does not solve the problems but leads to mistrust," the statement quoted Mullah Hasan as saying. Meanwhile, Afghan acting Foreign Minister Amir Khan Muttaqi – who also attended the meeting – mentioned "the problems of Afghan traders" and the issues created by Pakistani officials in transit trade and exports.

Muttaqi was quoted as saying that "trade and bilateral economic issues should not be sacrificed for political purposes". The statement said Fazl described the "victory of the Islamic Emirate against the invasion as a major success and congratulated the people of Afghanistan". The JUI-F chief also hoped that the Islamic system in Afghanistan would be further strengthened, which would have a positive impact on the Islamic world. "The purpose of my visit is to remove misunderstandings between the two countries," Fazl was quoted as saying. Further, both sides called for joint efforts to find solutions to the persisting problems in Afghanistan and Pakistan. Separately, a statement issued by the JUI-F media cell after the meeting said Fazl stressed on finding ways of cooperation between the two countries in politics, economy, trade and mutual development. He also maintained that the JUI-F had raised its voice in protest against the deportation of Afghan nationals. "We consider this kind of behaviour wrong and a cause of problems between the two countries," the statement quoted Fazl as saying. The meeting between the JUI-F chief and Afghan leaders comes at a time when relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan have suffered due to a spike in terrorist attacks, mostly claimed by the outlawed Tehreek-i-Taliban. Earlier today, five cops were martyred and 27 people were injured in a blast near a police van in the Mamund tehsil of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Bajaur district. The attack was claimed by the TTP. Islamabad has stated that the TTP and other groups use Afghan soil against Pakistan. While the Afghan Taliban have

denied the charge, authorities remain unconvinced and have demanded action against the TTP, its sanctuaries, and the handover of its leaders. The ties between the two neighbours took a further hit when Pakistan started deporting illegal Afghans. Nearly half a million undocumented Afghans have so far left Pakistan since November 1, last year. On Sunday, Afghanistan Deputy Prime Minister Maulvi Abdul Kabir welcomed the visiting delegation, headed by Fazl, and hoped that the visit would help decrease misunderstandings between the two countries. A statement issued by the office of the Afghan deputy PM thanked Pakistan for hosting Afghan refugees and supporting Afghans during the fight against the erstwhile Soviet Union. "The Islamic Emirate desires good relations with all neighbouring countries especially Pakistan, based on mutual respect," the statement quoted Maulvi Kabir as saying. He assured the delegation that there would be no threat to anyone from the Afghan soil. "There should be discussions on realities instead of claims and propaganda in the media," the Taliban leader said. He also demanded an end to the mistreatment and forced deportation of Afghan refugees. Maulvi Kabir further hoped that Fazl would convey Afghanistan's message to Pakistan that the former desired peace and stability in the region and would not allow anyone to use Afghan soil against anyone. Separately, the statement quoted the JUI-F chief as saying that differences should be resolved through dialogue. "We should cooperate with each other and both countries must take advantage of commonalities," Fazl added.



# PTI to 'announce' candidates in 24 hours, says Ali Zafar

The PTI leader also shared that a large number of lawyers have been given tickets to contest elections

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Senator Ali Zafar revealed on Monday that the party would announce its candidates in the next 24 hours. In conversation with Geo News, the senator shared that the party had issued the confirmation to 98%-99% of aspirants vying to contest elections on a PTI ticket. He added that a decision needed to be taken on hardly 2% of seats. "The approval has been given on who will contest elections on which seat. The candidates will be announced today or tomorrow," said Senator Zafar. He added that the decision will be announced after the Peshawar High Court (PHC) verdict. The PTI leader also shared that a large number of lawyers

have been given tickets to contest the elections. However, he clarified that there is no ratio of how many tickets were awarded to lawyers and workers of the party. Elections in the country are just a month away but the political parties, except a few, haven't finalised their list of candidates. Meanwhile, Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) is facing a difficult situation as it has been under pressure to accommodate PTI dissidents, Istehkam Pakistan Party (IPP) of Jahangir Tareen and Pakistan Muslim League-Quaid (PML-Q) in the Punjab. On the other hand, the PTI has been demanding a level playing field and alleges that it is being targeted. The party also faces a struggle with regards to its election symbol – the "bat". It has also approached the Supreme Court with a petition challenging the January 3 order of the Peshawar High Court (PHC) which stripped the party of its iconic election symbol. On January 3, 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. The PTI, however, challenged the verdict in the top court.

# Gaza death toll from Israeli genocide exceeds 23,000

NEWS DESK

GAZA: As the US-backed Israeli genocidal war on the Gaza Strip entered day 94 on Monday, massive aerial and artillery strikes continued to pound and level whole blocks and homes and massacre more civilians, mostly children and women. A reporter for the Palestinian Information Center (PIC) said that the Israeli occupation army continued to attack different areas of Gaza last night and on Monday morning, killing and injuring dozens of citizens. The Palestinian Health Ministry affirmed that 73 martyrs and 99 injured people reached Shuhada Al-Aqsa Hospital over the past 24 hours. At least one child was killed after an Israeli airstrike targeted a residential flat near the Old Balad Mosque in Deir al-Balah. 18 civilians were also killed in a series of Israeli airstrikes in Deir al-Balah during the past few hours. Several casualties were also reported in the Israeli bombing of the "Ayyash" family house, west of Deir al-Balah in the central Gaza Strip. Meanwhile, Israeli artillery violently shelled Khan Yunis, south of the Gaza Strip. Israeli warplanes also launched a series of violent raids on Al-Maghazi camp in the central Gaza Strip and bombed a

house in the Nuseirat camp in the central Gaza Strip. An Israeli drone also opened fire on the European Hospital in Khan Yunis, south of the Gaza Strip, while no casualties were reported. Media sources reported that the Israeli forces expanded their ground incursion into Qaizan al-Najjar and Jort al-Lut, south of Khan Yunis, amid fierce clashes with resistance forces. Meanwhile, Lebanon's Hezbollah resistance group said on Monday that Wissam Tawil, one of its top field commanders, was assassinated in an Israeli airstrike in the south of Lebanon. In a statement, Hezbollah mourned commander Tawil, from the town of Khirbet Selm in southern Lebanon, saying he was "martyred on the path to Jerusalem." Tawil was killed in an Israeli aerial attack on his car in the southern village of Khirbet Selm, which lies around 15 kilometers away from the border. He had a leading role in managing Hezbollah's operations in the south. Earlier on Monday, Hezbollah said it bombed the Israeli army posts of Ruwaisat el-Alam and Hadb al-Bustan in the north of the occupied Palestinian territories in response to Israeli attacks on different border areas in southern Lebanon. At least 23,084 Palestinians have been killed and 58,926 others injured in ongoing Israeli attacks in the Gaza Strip since Oct. 7, the Health Ministry in the besieged enclave said Monday.

# PTI spokesperson condemns blackout of internet

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Spokesperson strongly condemned the unconstitutional and illegal caretaker government for its illegally act of total blackout of social media across the country to stymie PTI to raise funds through a telethon, demanding that Supreme Court (SC) should take immediate notice of illegal and unjustified shutdown of internet and punish the responsible for this reprehensible act. Strongly reacting to the shutting down of internet across the country during PTI Fund Raising Telethon, PTI Spokesperson said that the unconstitutional and illegal caretaker government was busy in usurping the basic constitutional rights of over 240 million citizens of the country. He made it clear that this kind of reprehensible tampering with the Internet would have a very negative impact on the already fragile economy otherwise such strategy neither had been successful before nor would work in the future to deprive PTI to communicate its message to the masses.

# India-Maldives row escalates

FOREIGN DESK

COLOMBO: One of India's largest travel platforms suspended flight bookings to the tourism-dependent Maldives on Monday after disparaging social media posts against Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi embittered relations between the South Asian neighbours. India and Russia send the largest number of visitors to the Maldives, a chain of sun-kissed islands in the Indian Ocean that is home to many luxury resorts. Tourism accounts for almost one-third of its economy, according to the World Bank. EaseMyTrip (EASM.NS) co-founder and Executive Director Prashant Pitti said bookings to the Maldives were suspended "indefinitely". Even though New Delhi and Male have traditionally had close ties, relations have been tense since President Mohamed Muizzu came to power in November winning the election on an 'India Out' campaign.