



# Islamabad POST

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Detailed News On Page-07

**Erdogan slams US, UK over Yemen attack**

Detailed News On Page-08

**Southee achieves major milestone in T20I cricket**

Detailed News On Page-06



## PHC's order on PTI 'bat' symbol flawed: CJP Isa

"PHC did not issue declaration that PTI's intra-party polls were in line with law," says top judge

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

ISLAMABAD: Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Qazi Faez Isa said Friday that the Peshawar High Court's (PHC) order to restore the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf's (PTI) iconic electoral symbol 'bat' was prima facie, flawed. Heading a three-member bench comprising Justice Muhammad Ali Mazhar and Justice Musarat Hilali, the top judge passed these remarks during a hearing of the Election Commission of Pakistan's (ECP) petition against the PHC verdict restoring the PTI's electoral symbol. The election commission had on December 22 barred the PTI party from keeping its 'bat' symbol for the upcoming February elections, citing irregularities in their internal polls that did not comply with the party's own constitution and election laws. Following the ECP's decision to revoke their symbol, the PTI challenged it in the PHC. A single-member judge granted temporary relief, reinstated the bat symbol, and referred the case to a larger bench for a hearing on January 9. Then, on December 30, the polling body challenged the PHC's jurisdiction over the matter. However, in a dramatic turn of events, the PHC reversed its earlier decision and upheld the ECP's order. Facing the prospect of losing its iconic cricket bat symbol for the upcoming elections, the PTI took its fight to the highest court in the land – the Supreme Court. However, in a strategic move, they later withdrew their appeal, hoping for a favourable outcome from the PHC. And the PTI did get what it wanted. The PHC Wednesday declared the commission's order "illegal, without any lawful authority and of no legal effect". But the commission, dissatisfied with the high court's order on Thursday, challenged the decision in the apex court, seeking its revocation. Subsequently, the PTI also filed a plea in the

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## Another resolution on delaying polls submitted to Senate

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Days after a resolution seeking to delay election in the country was passed by the upper house of parliament, another similar resolution was submitted to the Senate on Friday. The resolution moved by independent Senator Hidayat Ullah called for postponing February 8 general elections in view of the "security challenges". It said the upper house "call upon the Election Commission of Pakistan and the Supreme Court" to consider holding peaceful elections and postpone the polls for three months in view of the "security challenges". The resolution also expressed concerns over "rising incidents" of targeting of the candidates contesting the upcoming elections. The development comes a day after the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) and the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) sought a Senate session to ensure timely general elections in the country. It was learnt that PTI Senator Ali Zafar took signatures from other members on a requisition demanding a discussion on the issue of general elections. Besides, PPP and Jamaat-e-Islami senators have also supported the move.

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ISLAMABAD: The Ambassador of Italy to Pakistan, Andreas Ferrarese, paid a farewell call on Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar. – DNA

## Italian envoy pays farewell call on PM

PM appreciated the Ambassador's contributions to strengthening bilateral relations

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Ambassador of Italy to Pakistan, H.E. Andreas Ferrarese, paid a farewell call on Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar earlier today. During the meeting, the Prime Minister appreciated the Ambassador's contributions to strengthening bilateral relations, noting his efforts to foster economic ties and facilitate cooperation in various fields. While acknowledging Pakistan's longstanding friendly relations with Italy, the Prime Minister emphasized the need to boost trade, investment and cooperation in diverse areas including migration

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## PML-Q scraps seat adjustment plans with PML-N

"The party leadership has decided that we will not become a target of double standards," PML-Q leader says

BUREAU REPORT

LAHORE: After the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) fielded its candidates in Punjab's Gujrat district, an upset Pakistan Muslim League-Quaid (PML-Q) said it has scrapped the seat adjustment plans with the party weeks before the country is set to witness a much awaited general elections on February 8. The party, in a statement on Friday, alleged that the PML-N resorted to double standards by fielding its candidates in Gujrat, a district considered PML-Q's stronghold in Punjab. The PML-Q's decision came after its meeting chaired by PML-Q President Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain. The party's Senior Vice President and Shujaat's son, Chaudhry Salik Hussain, told media that the Shehbaz Sharif-led party has fielded its candidates in their desired constituencies.

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## CTD arrests 2 'Daesh suicide bombers' in KP

Arrested terrorists are planning to target Maulana Fazlur Rehman and Aimal Wali Khan

SHAMIM SHAHID

PESHAWAR: The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) on Friday claimed it had arrested two suicide bombers, allegedly involved in planning an attack on JUI-F Chief Fazlur Rehman and Awami National Party's Aimal Wali Khan. In an official statement, the CTD said

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## Briefs

### PTI has 'faith' in judiciary

ADIL SHAHEEN

ISLAMABAD: PTI Chairman Barrister Gohar Ali Khan said on Friday his party was having the "faith" in the judiciary. Speaking to the media in Islamabad, Khan said, "We will not let the democracy derail. The world would not accept democracy." "The resolution passed in the Senate is not the voice of the senators' conscience," he added. He said, "The matter related to the bat symbol is the matter of 250 million people". "We have issued tickets to 835 candidates out of 850," Khan said. Earlier, it was reported that the PTI had unveiled its lineup of candidates from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, showcasing a diverse and dynamic selection of individuals.

### Alvi accepts Justice Ijaz's resignation

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi on Friday accepted the resignation of Justice Ijaz Ul Ahsan, the third senior-most judge of the Supreme Court who stepped down abruptly a day earlier, on Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar's advice. Justice Ahsan resigned under Articles 179 and 206 (1) of the Constitution. Article 179 allows an SC judge to resign sooner than his retirement age.

## Culprits of Model Town case should be brought to justice

Pakistan Awami Tehreek announces to support PPP in NA-127

ABID RAZA

LAHORE: The Pakistan Awami Tehreek has decided to support Chairman Pakistan Peoples Party, Bilawal Bhutto Zardari in NA-127. This was announced by the Secretary General of PAT, Khurram Nawaz Gandapur today. Khurram Nawaz Gandapur announcing this decision, said that the PAT will hold a public rally in Lahore and announce its support publicly. He said that the PAT has supported the PPP in the by-elections. Gandapur thanked Chairman PPP for supporting the PAT's stance on the Model Town incident. The PPP has always taken a principled stand on the Model Town incident and today, Chairman Bilawal reiterated that support. Gandapur said that we have to bury the politics of revenge for Pakistan and the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz believes in the politics of revenge. This is the reason it is not possible for us to stand with the PML-N. We will support the PPP in NA-127 and will try our best to succeed. We have to finalize the modalities but it is decided that we are supporting the PPP in this

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## PTI reveals strategic NA candidates

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) has thrown its hat in the ring for the upcoming general election, announcing candidates for several National Assembly seats around the country. The central list of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) has unveiled key contenders for various National Assembly constituencies. PTI Chairman, Barrister Gohar, is set to contest from NA-10. Sher Afzal Marwat has been nominated for NA-41 Lucky Marwat, while Ayaz Amir secures a ticket for NA-58 Chakwal. In Attock, Tahir Sadiq has been nominated for one National Assembly constituency (NA-49),

Continued on Page 06

## ICJ: Palestine welcomes SA's legal presentation

NEWS DESK

RAMALLAH: The State of Palestine welcomes and appreciates the compelling legal presentation made by the Republic of South Africa today at the International Court of Justice on Israel's egregious and massive violations of the Genocide Convention. South Africa delivered unequivocal evidence that Israel is deliberately and systematically violating its obligations under the Genocide Convention. Israel is committing genocide in the Gaza Strip,

Continued on Page 06

## COAS Gen Asim Munir inaugurates second chapter of NASTP in Karachi

Meanwhile, COAS witnessed firing of different Air Defence weapon systems during Exercise Al-Bayza-III



NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: General Syed Asim Munir, NI (M), Chief of Army Staff, (COAS) attended inauguration ceremony of the second chapter of National Aerospace Science and Technology Park (NASTP) Silicon, held at Karachi. COAS was Chief Guest at the occasion. COAS termed NASTP a project of national and strategic significance that would yield manifold benefits for the country since it would spur technological progress and foster self-reliance by offering a platform for the nation's youth and future generations.

COAS praised the efforts of PAF, its leadership and its skilled personnel in the achievement of yet another milestone of NASTP Silicon. Chief of Air Staff shared the vision for NASTP to become one of the best Aerospace, Cyber & IT Clusters and transform national landscape with design, R&D and innovation centers for emerging and disruptive technologies to accrue maximum social, economic, security and scientific dividends for the country. On his arrival at the venue, COAS was received by Air Chief Marshal, Zaheer Ahmed Baber Sidhu, Chief of the Air Staff.

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## Holiday Notice

The offices of daily Islamabad POST shall remain closed on Saturday on account of weekly off therefore there will be no newspaper on Sunday. – Editor

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## KP Govt prepared for transparent elections: CM

PESHAWAR : Caretaker Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Syed Arshad Hussain Shah here on Friday said that transparent conduct of elections was the primary responsibility of the caretaker government and the government was ready in this regard. Addressing a ceremony, he said that the Supreme Court and the Election Commission had been informed in connection with the free elections, adding that there was a shortage of 56,000 officials to perform the election duty. The chief minister is also taking steps for the betterment of the province and the people. He said that the provincial government was actively working for peace, order, better governance and provision of facilities to the people and taking pragmatic steps in this regard.—APP

## Professional tourist guides to be appointed

KARACHI :The Sindh government has announced the appointment of professional tour guides for all tourist destinations in a strategic move to enhance tourism in the province. The Sindh Minister for Tourism, Environment, Climate Change, and Coastal Development Arshad Wali Muhammad emphasized the importance of trained tour guides for creating memorable experiences for tourists visiting historical and cultural sites in Sindh. While highlighting the rich historical and tourist sites in Sindh, the Minister said that the presence of professional tour guides was crucial for making the experience of tourists unforgettable. He said that trained tour guides possessed the knowledge to provide comprehensive information about these historical sites to enhance the global tourists' experience.—APP

## Education Dept instructed to provide textbooks

KARACHI : The Caretaker Sindh Chief Minister Justice (ret'd) Maqbool Baqar has directed the Sindh Education Department to ensure that both hard and soft copies of textbooks are provided to students for online studying. We are in a digital age where children prefer digital content over hard copies and carrying them around, he added. This he said while speaking at the launching ceremony of the website of the Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education, Mirpurkhas at CM House here Friday. Secretary U&B Noor Ahmad Samoo, Chairman Mirpurkhas Board Zulfiqar Ali Shah, Secretary Board Anisuddin, Controller of Examination Anwar Aleem and others were also present.—APP

## CM displeased with poor cleanliness in PIC

CM questioned why the cleanliness conditions were so subpar. He summoned the commissioner and directed immediate improvements in cleanliness arrangements

ABID RAZA

LAHORE : Chief Minister Punjab Mohsin Naqvi expressed displeasure over poor cleanliness arrangements, marks of dust and stains on tiles and counters during his inspection of the newly constructed emergency of the Punjab Institute of Cardiology (PIC). He summoned the contractor, officials from the C&W department and the medical superintendent for an immediate explanation. He pointed out signs of neglect in cleanliness arrangements and dust on tiles, expressing dismay over the situation. While inspecting the emergency, CM questioned why the cleanliness conditions were so subpar. He summoned the commissioner and directed immediate improvements in cleanliness arrangements. He emphasized that cleanliness standards in the new emergency were unacceptable and expressed his concern over the lack of cleanliness. The CM insisted on swift improvements and declared the current state of cleanliness in the new emer-

gency unacceptable. He also enquired about the well-being of a patient in a wheelchair, lifting a fallen file from the floor and placing it back on the wheelchair. The patient expressed gratitude to CM for his gesture. He also addressed the complaint of a patient from Gujrat

about delayed scheduling for angiography. Ordering immediate action, he instructed the MS to expedite the angiography procedure. The health secretary and others were also present. Meanwhile, CM reviews up gradation work at Mayo hospital. Chief Minister

Punjab Mohsin Naqvi has directed to install the appropriate-sized signboards for the convenience of patients and their attendants at Mayo Hospital, during an inspection of the upgradation of the hospital's emergency block, which is in its final stage. He fur-

ther directed that the finishing touches should be completed expeditiously with high standards. The CM also emphasized the need for the timely completion of all tasks while maintaining the quality of work. Principal KEMU was also present.



LAHORE : Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi inspects the well-being of a wheelchair-bound patient during a visit to the new Emergency hospital of the Punjab Institute of Cardiology.—DNA



ISLAMABAD: IPP leader Aleem Khan appointed Rauf Chaoudry as President of Istehkam Party Islamabad.—Photo Mudassar Raja

# Belgium seeks to enhance trade with Pakistan

Belgium has excellent relations with Pakistan and added that Belgium is the 5th largest trading partner of Pakistan: Belgium Ambassador

DNA

RAWALPINDI: Ambassador of Belgium, H.E Charles Delogne inaugurated the Belgian Business Contact Day and Catalogue Exhibition at the Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (RCCI). Books, magazines and trade directories were part of the catalogue exhibition providing an opportunity for visitors to get information about

key sectors including tourism, education, services, agro-food processing, chemicals, surgical instruments, paper and paperboard, dairy and renewable energy. On this occasion, Charles Delogne, Ambassador of Belgium, said that current Generalised System of Preferences (GSP) for another four years, until 2027 and it's a great opportunity for Pakistan to implement GSP Plus conventions,

especially labor rights, human rights and environmental protection which would help Pakistan to further improve its trade with EU countries. Belgium has excellent relations with Pakistan and added that Belgium is the 5th largest trading partner of Pakistan in the EU and it is interested to further enhance cooperation with Pakistan in various sectors including trade, scientific research, renewable

energy, and education sectors. Earlier, President RCCI Saqib Rafiq in his welcome remarks gave a short summary of RCCI current activities and upcoming programs. He briefed the Belgium Ambassador about the potential opportunities for joint ventures and investment opportunities in Pakistan. He said that Belgium was one of Pakistan's important trading partners within the European Union. He

assured that RCCI will work closely with the Belgium Embassy to further strengthen connectivity between private sectors of both countries. Senior Vice President Muhammad Hamza Sarosh, Vice President Faisal Shahzad and Executive Committee Members, Trade Commissioner Abid Husain, Commercial officer Shaukat Niazi and members of the RCCI were also present on the occasion.

## SCCI express concern over water shortage in Peshawar

SAID ALAM KHAN

PESHAWAR: Sarhad Chamber of Commerce and Industry president Fuad Ishaq has expressed concern over the low water level in Peshawar and asked the government and World Wide Fund (WWF) Pakistan to take joint measures to control the increasing wastage of water and preserve it on an emergency basis. He made these remarks during a meeting with a delegation of World Wide Fund (WWF) Pakistan led by its Program Manager ILES Muhammad Rashid held here at the chamber house on Friday. Other members of the delegation include WWF Pakistan Head Khyber Pakhtunkhwa region Muhammad Waseem, Conservation Officer Peshawar Aimal Khan Barki, Senior SP ILES Hamza Latif, Project Officer Maham Zahna, and Liaison Officer Anwar. The SCCI senior vice president Sanullah Khan, secretary general

Sajjad Aziz and others were present during the meeting. Representatives briefed the president SCCI Fuad Ishaq regarding the WWF Pakistan intervention and projects in various sectors including agriculture, forest, wildlife, climate change and oceans and the key role of the organization. Members of the WWF delegation asked the SCCI to launch joint ventures for conservation and preservation of water on which president Fuad Ishaq agreed and he identified the various sectors for which both institutions can be collaborated in future. Fuad Ishaq said he had given proposals of government and relevant departments/authorities that if the chamber suggestions would be implemented with true spirit then it can help to control the waste of water, besides to prevent increasing ha-treds and damages from the environmental challenges. In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, especially in ice factories, cold storage and other im-

portant sectors wherein we can collaborate and conserve the water, Fuad Ishaq said. On the occasion, the SCCI chief gave suggestions to WWF Pakistan for collaboration in various sectors under a joint venture and program, upon which the delegation fully agreed and expressed willingness to jointly work on water conservation and preservation. In this regard, an agreement was reached between both institutions that a formal memorandum of understanding (MoU) will be signed shortly. Earlier, the SCCI president Fuad Ishaq participated in stakeholders' workshop/seminar on increasing water challenges in KP, organized by WWF Pakistan in a local hotel in Peshawar. Fuad Ishaq gave various proposals to organizers and participants of the stakeholders' workshop with regard to conservation and preservation of water and control of the increasing waste in the province.

## SBP launches official WhatsApp channel

KARACHI :The State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) Friday formally launched its 'WhatsApp channel' for ensuring prompt dissemination of reliable information to its stakeholders. The channel will serve as a tool of communication where followers will directly receive information from SBP on its policies, initiatives, notifications and awareness campaign, said a statement issued here. WhatsApp users can follow the verified SBP WhatsApp channel through the link - <https://whatsapp.com/channel/0029VaCSf6cEKyZMX-FJbUc1i> - or via QR code. Before launch of the WhatsApp channel, SBP already has its presence on other social media platforms those are X (formerly Twitter) @StateBankPak; Facebook @StateBankPakistan; and YouTube: @StateBankofPakistanOfficial. The central bank termed it as "another step in line with SBP's continuous efforts to provide reliable information to its stakeholders in a seamless and timely manner."—APP

## BISP Chairman stresses digital literacy for needy women

ISLAMABAD : Chairman of Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP), Dr. Amjad Saqib Friday underscored the importance of opening bank accounts for needy women, emphasizing digital literacy and financial inclusion. He was presiding over a high level meeting to review the progress on the BISP's key initiatives, including enrollment of widows, inclusion of adolescents in Nashonuma, Hybrid Social Protection Scheme and Benazir Social Protection Accounts. During the meeting, Dr. Amjad Saqib emphasized the BISP's commitment to serving the impoverished. Secretary BISP, Amer Ali Ahmad provided a detailed overview of the agenda items during the meeting. The Director Generals (DGs) of various wings also updated the Chairman BISP on the discussed topics. DG NSE/CCT, Naveed Akbar informed the meeting that the target for opening accounts under the Benazir Social Protection Accounts had been successfully achieved, with a total of 9,800 accounts opened. Furthermore, 6,700 applications were received under the BISP Saving Scheme. Data of 8,900 widows have been identified. The Financial Literacy program, spanning 13 districts and benefiting 4,000 needy women, has been successfully completed. Dr. Amjad Saqib urged that field offices receive training to educate underprivileged women about Social Protection Accounts, identifying those who already possess bank accounts as a priority.



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## Govt has introduced AI in hospitals: Dr Javed

LAHORE :Caretaker Punjab Health Minister Prof Dr. Javed Akram said that the government had introduced a historic artificial intelligence systems in government hospitals across the province. Speaking at a book launch event, he emphasized the need for innovation in daily life and highlighted the pivotal role of technology in the development of powerful economies worldwide. During his address, Dr. Akram stressed the importance of evidence-based policies in addressing Pakistan's challenges and advocated for local technology development instead of relying on imports. He lamented the absence of biotechnology plants in Pakistan and urged a collective effort, suggesting an all-party conference to enhance the system.—APP

## Govt fails to meet cigarette tax targets for 7 years

ISLAMABAD: A Pakistani think tank's recent study unveiled that government failed to meet any tax collection targets from the cigarette industry over the past seven years. According to the study conducted by Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI), the FBR missed the targets since 2017 after introduction of third-tier. The decision to introduce the third tier was taken by the then government under influence of multinational cigarette companies. The country lost Rs 567 billion potential revenue in last seven years due to loopholes in policies. Talking to media, country head Compaign for Tobacco Free Kids (CTFK) Malik Imran said PML-N last government introduced third tier due to the pressure of two big cigarette companies including Philip Morris and British American Tobacco. He demanded the government to initiate inquiry on the basis of the report and take immediate action against these companies. Researchers and analysts have demanded urgent attention and comprehensive reforms to navigate through these challenges and counter the influence of these powerful cigarette industry giants. The SDPI study has also shed light on the dynamics of the cigarette industry and its strong influence. The study also highlighted how high and middle-income countries successfully imposed high taxes on cigarette products to decrease consumption.—APP



## 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

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



Turkish Airlines.....8494949



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



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Railway Exchange 9270831-5  
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CAA.....9281092



## Hospitals

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MH.....5611116  
Cantt Hospital...9270907-11  
DHQ.....5556311-4  
RGH.....9290301-7  
Holy Family.....9290322-7  
PIMS.....9261170-79  
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Met Office.....9250360-6  
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TMA.....5770886  
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Islamabad.....0321-5744480

# ICCI urges political parties to unveil their manifesto

Ahsan Bakhtawari said that the economy of Pakistan is facing many big challenges as the external debt has exceeded US\$ 124 billion by June 2023, the power sector circular debt has crossed Rs.2.3 trillion, the inflation rate surged to over 39 percent in 2023, which has drastically reduced the purchasing power of the common man and reduced the growth of business activities

FAISAL SHEKH

ISLAMABAD: Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari, President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) said that less than one month period is left in the next general elections, but most of the political parties have not announced the economic agenda of their election manifesto as yet, which is very important to guide the voters in electing the next government. He urged that all political parties should unveil the economic agenda of their election manifesto for the revival of the economy that would provide a direction to the business community and the investors and help them finalize their short and long-term business and investment plans for the country. He said this while talking to a delegation of traders and industrialists during their visit to ICCI. Khalid Iqbal Malik Group Leader ICCI, Khalid Javed, Zafar Bakhtawari & Nasir Khan former Presidents ICCI, Rafat Farid and others were in the delegation. Ahsan Bakhtawari said that the economy of Pakistan is facing many big challenges as the external debt has exceeded US\$ 124 billion by June 2023, the power sector



circular debt has crossed Rs.2.3 trillion, the inflation rate surged to over 39 percent in 2023, which has drastically reduced the purchasing power of the common man and reduced the growth of business activities. He said that the high energy tariff in Pakistan has made the exporters uncompetitive in the international market due to which Pakistan's exports during 11 months of FY 2022-23

remained around USD 30 billion while the exports of Bangladesh in FY 2022-23 exceeded US\$ 64 billion. ICCI President said that the UN's World Economic Situation and Prospects Report for 2024 has also projected that the economy of Pakistan is confronted with many challenges, including inflationary pressures, currency depreciation, and high levels of sovereign debt. Ahsan

Bakhtawari said that all political parties should announce the economic agenda of their election manifesto to address these challenges and revive the economy, which will help the voters including the business community to see which party offers them the best solutions to address the economic issues and put Pakistan on the path of sustainable economic growth.

ISLAMABAD: Vice Chancellor, Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU), Prof. Dr. Nasir Mahmood, has issued guidelines to assist students with the upcoming admissions for the spring semester of 2024. The vice chancellor has instructed regional heads to spread awareness about free matriculation education for students from Balochistan, Gilgit Baltistan, and merged districts (previously known as FATA) to encourage the enrollment of maximum out-of-school children in the matriculation program. He has directed regional heads to ensure that admission awareness reaches every interested individual so that they can take advantage of this opportunity to continue their education. Dr. Nasir has approved the establishment of prospectus sale points at the Union Council level across the country to ensure the availability of matriculation and FA programs prospectus and admission forms at the nearest places to the students. As per the instructions of VC, Prof. Dr. Nasir Mahmood, the regional offices have set up the facility centers on the campuses and alerted the SWIFT centers established across the country to support and guide the students. It is pertinent to mention here that the admissions of Matric, FA, BS (face-to-face programs), MS, MPhil and PhD programs of AIOU for the spring semester 2024 (first phase) are commencing across the country from March 15. The second phase admissions will start from March 1 which will include Teacher Training Programs, Associate Degree Programs, Post Graduate Diploma Programs and BS (ODL Programs). The admission forms and prospectus of the first phase programs will be available from 15th January on the University website www.aiou.edu.pk.—DNA



ISLAMABAD: Finance Minister Shamshad Akhtar presenting a shield to the British High Commissioner Jane Marriott during a function in Islamabad. —DNA

## Tractor assembling grew 67.51% in six months

ISLAMABAD: Domestic farm tractor production during the first six months of the current financial year grew by 67.51 per cent as compared to the production of the corresponding period of the last year. During the period from July-December, 2023 about 23,610 tractors were locally assembled as compared to the assembling of 14,094 tractors of the corresponding period of last year. Meanwhile, the sales of locally assembled tractors during the period under review grew by 103.34 per cent as compared to the sales of the same period of last year, according to the data of Pakistan Automobile Manufacturers Association (PAMA). During the period under review, Massey Ferguson produced 15,258 tractors as compared to the production of 7,430 tractors, which was higher by 105.35 per cent when compared with the assembling of the same period of the last year. Meanwhile, the sales of the above mentioned company also remained on an encouraging growth trajectory as it grew by 139.62 per cent and sold about 15,099 tractors as compared to the sale of 6,301 tractors in the same period of last year. In the first six months of the current financial year, Fiat assembled 8,325 tractors as compared to the production of 6,664 as the output of the company grew by 25.33 per cent.—APP

## Government taking steps to boost FDI: President Alvi

ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi on Friday said the government was taking steps to promote Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in Pakistan. Talking to a German delegation of international food wholesaler, METRO Group, led by its CEO Dr Steffen Greubel here at Aiwan-e-Sadr, the president said Pakistan was an attractive destination for the foreign investment and business. The president also appreciated the METRO Group for their investment in Pakistan. The delegation briefed the president about business and investment of the METRO Group in Pakistan.—APP

## Save on your holiday or stopover to Dubai

ISLAMABAD: Emirates has today announced an exciting new offer for travellers planning to visit Dubai this winter. Starting from 12th January, people who have bought flights to Dubai or add a stopover in Dubai of 8 hours or more can enjoy free tickets to two of Dubai's biggest attractions – the Museum of the Future and Atlantis Aquaventure. The Museum of the Future is the newest jewel in the Dubai skyline where you'll be transported into the world 50 years from now. Furthermore, you can cool off on the slides and rides at Atlantis Aquaventure, the world's largest waterpark. This special offer is valid on tickets bought between 12th January to 1st February 2024, for travel between 15th January and 31st March 2024.—APP

## PTA conducts raids against illegal issuance of SIMs

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) Zonal Offices in Lahore and Sukkur, in collaboration with the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) Cyber Crime Circles, successfully conducted raids against franchises of two mobile phone companies in Sharapur Sharif and Kandhkot. The aim was to curb the illegal issuance of SIMs, which is often associated with criminal activities such as fraud, identity theft, and other illicit operations said a news release issued here on Friday. During the raids, 13 active SIMs were confiscated, and 08 Biometric Verification System (BVS) devices.—APP

## AIOU aims to enroll maximum students

ISLAMABAD: Vice Chancellor, Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU), Prof. Dr. Nasir Mahmood, has issued guidelines to assist students with the upcoming admissions for the spring semester of 2024. The vice chancellor has instructed regional heads to spread awareness about free matriculation education for students from Balochistan, Gilgit Baltistan, and merged districts (previously known as FATA) to encourage the enrollment of maximum out-of-school children in the matriculation program. He has directed regional heads to ensure that admission awareness reaches every interested individual so that they can take advantage of this opportunity to continue their education. Dr. Nasir has approved the establishment of prospectus sale points at the Union Council level across the country to ensure the availability of matriculation and FA programs prospectus and admission forms at the nearest places to the students. As per the instructions of VC, Prof. Dr. Nasir Mahmood, the regional offices have set up the facility centers on the campuses and alerted the SWIFT centers established across the country to support and guide the students. It is pertinent to mention here that the admissions of Matric, FA, BS (face-to-face programs), MS, MPhil and PhD programs of AIOU for the spring semester 2024 (first phase) are commencing across the country from March 15. The second phase admissions will start from March 1 which will include Teacher Training Programs, Associate Degree Programs, Post Graduate Diploma Programs and BS (ODL Programs). The admission forms and prospectus of the first phase programs will be available from 15th January on the University website www.aiou.edu.pk.—DNA

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## Briefs

## Government taking steps to boost FDI

ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi on Friday said the government was taking steps to promote Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in Pakistan. Talking to a German delegation of international food wholesaler, METRO Group, led by its CEO Dr Steffen Greubel here at Aiwan-e-Sadr, the president said Pakistan was an attractive destination for the foreign investment and business. The president also appreciated the METRO Group for their investment in Pakistan. The delegation briefed the president about business and investment of the METRO Group in Pakistan. The delegation told that keeping in view the conducive environment for the foreign investment in Pakistan, the METRO Company desired to further expand the business activities in the country. Besides, the delegation was of the view that Pakistan was an attractive destination for business, investment and tourism.—APP

## Ministry of IT to launch "Smartphone for All": Minister

ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Federal Minister for Information Technology and Telecommunication, Dr Umar Saif, on Friday said that the Ministry of IT is set to launch the "Smartphone for All" project, allowing individuals to acquire smartphones through easy instalments. In a statement on his official social media account, he said that the ministry is concurrently establishing a research and development fund to support mobile phone manufacturing companies and facilitate the growth of the mobile phone manufacturing sector. Regarding the "Smartphone for All" project, he explained that in the event of failure to pay instalments, the Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) would block the handset following the pattern of the Device Identification, Registration, and Blocking System (DIRBS). The minister said that the objective is to encourage responsible financial behaviour and ensure the continued expansion of smartphone accessibility. Under this policy, he said that telecom companies will have the opportunity to directly offer smartphones to customers through instalment plans, thereby extending the advantages of mobile broadband, particularly among the low-income segments in Pakistan. Dr Umar Saif said that Pakistan ranks as the seventh major mobile phone market globally, with 190 million mobile phones in use. He expressed the government's goal to reduce mobile phone imports by promoting the manufacturing of affordable and high-quality mobile phones within Pakistan.—APP

## ANF recovers 57 kg drugs in six operations

RAWALPINDI: Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) while conducting six operations across the country managed to recover 57 kg of drugs and arrested 10 accused, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman here on Friday. He informed that a 2.3 kg Ice drug was recovered from a Bahrain-bound passenger going by Flight No. EK-613 at Islamabad Airport. 1.40 kg of Ice was recovered from a passenger travelling to Doha on Flight No. QR-601 at Bacha Khan Airport. 91 heroin-filled capsules were recovered from a passenger's stomach at Islamabad Airport. The accused was leaving for Sharjah by flight number PK-257. 45 kg heroin was recovered near G.T Road Bupi area from the possession of two Afghan nationals arrested during an operation. A 5 kg crystal drug was recovered near Lakpass Toll Plaza Quetta and two accused were rounded up. In the sixth operation, 3 kg of hashish was recovered from three suspects near Hayatabad Peshawar. Cases under the Anti-Narcotics Act have been registered against the arrested accused while further investigations are under process.—APP



ISLAMABAD: Students are visiting Annual Exhibition titled "Encharmed world of Art and creativity" held at FG College of Home Economics & Management Sciences F-11 on Friday.—DNA

## Punjab Minister for cultivating growth of retail professionals

The Punjab Minister shared his invaluable insights on cultivating the growth and development of retail staff and skillful professionals. He lauded the visionary approach in establishing the RBS, highlighting the dedication to fostering professional development within the retail sector

DNA

ISLAMABAD: In view of bridging the gap of retail professionals in the country's market and empowering excellence in retail management the Retail Business School has been launched, with the Punjab Caretaker Minister of Transport, Mines & Minerals, and Livestock & Dairy Development Ibrahim Hasan Murad gracing the groundbreaking ceremony as a chief guest.

The Punjab Minister shared his invaluable insights on cultivating the growth and development of retail staff and skillful professionals.

He lauded the visionary approach in establishing the RBS, highlighting the dedication to fostering professional development within the retail sector. Expounding on emerging trends like the integration of technology and the impact of evolving consumer behaviors, he emphasized their implications for edu-

cational strategies in the retail sector. In today's dynamic and competitive retail environment, professionals grapple with the challenge of acquiring specialized knowledge and skills essential for success in their careers, he added. Other guests of the launching ceremony included Rana Tariq, Chairman of the Chainstore Association of Pakistan and Hassan Pardesi, CEO of Goldcrest Mall. Rana Tariq, Chairman of the Chainstore Association of Paki-

stan, delved into the intricacies of The Future of Retail Education during his keynote address. He aimed to equip industry professionals with valuable insights to navigate and capitalize on the shifting dynamics of retail education in Pakistan. The founder and CEO of RBS, Noman H. Malik, underscored the vision of RBS in establishing a dynamic institution to revolutionize the retail landscape. Recognizing the absence of formal education pathways, Retail Busi-

ness School aims to empower retail professionals through tailored Training Programs, Certifications, and Workshops. Mr. Malik expressed gratitude to the Guest of Honor, Mr. Ibrahim Hasan Murad, Minister of the Government of Punjab, and Mr. Rana Tariq, Chairman of the Chainstore Association, extending his thanks to the Management of Goldcrest Mall, especially Mr. Hassan Pardesi & Jabir Dada, for supporting his vision.

## Croatia's envoy calls on FM Jilani

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Croatia accredited to Pakistan Dr. Drago Stambuk Friday called on Caretaker Foreign Minister Jalil Abbas Jilani and discussed matters of mutual concerns. During the meeting they discussed bilateral cooperation in a range of areas. The foreign minister expressed Pakistan's desire to strengthen relations with Croatia and appreciated inauguration of Croatia's Honorary Consulate in Karachi.

## Pakistani economy has been played like a toy

ISLAMABAD: President of Pakistan Economy Watch, Dr. Murtaza Mughal, said on Friday that the economy is facing dire consequences and masses are suffering greatly due to poor choices by economic managers. He said that the country needs a robust economic recovery programme from political parties, which are busy making tall claims to misguide the masses for their motives. He said that the economy has been played as a toy, which has led the country to bankruptcy while the people are straying. Dr. Murtaza Mughal said in a statement issued here today that the role of criminals and corrupt elements in the economy should be eliminated. Instead of making loud claims, the political parties should present a concrete programme of economic recovery. He claimed that many careless economic managers were more concerned with maintaining their popularity than with strengthening the economy, which could not withstand the damaging effects of their actions. He noted that criminals, corrupt elements, and their patrons are overly involved in the economy and are destroying the country for their interests.—APP



ISLAMABAD: A German delegation of international food wholesaler, METRO Group, led by its CEO Dr Steffen Greubel, called on President Dr Arif Alvi, at Aiwan-e-Sadr. — DNA

## Ambassador Hashmi meets Litong Group

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's Ambassador to China, Khalil Hashmi, visited Litong Food Group in Chengdu, Sichuan Province of China, and invited the group to establish "Litong Food Park" in Pakistan. Ambassador Khalil Hashmi stated that the establishment of the food park aims to promote value-added products in Pakistan, tapping into the country's vast agricultural resources. This initiative is expected to create numerous employment opportunities and contribute significantly to the economy, according to a report published by Gwadar Pro on Friday. "Glad to meet today and exchange views with Mr. Chen Changwei,

Chairman of Puji Group - a subsidiary of which has been growing dry chilies and is now exporting them from Pakistan. We reviewed ongoing cooperation and discussed plans," he stated. He emphasized that this collaboration would strengthen bilateral ties between Pakistan and Asian countries, opening up new avenues for trade and economic growth. The delegation from Litong Group expressed their keen interest in Pakistan's agricultural potential and its strategic location for trade with Asian markets. As part of their investment plan, the group intends to establish a cutting-edge laboratory in Multan City, Pakistan, focusing on the research and development of dry chili, sesame,

brood bean, and sorghum. The Chinese side briefed that the establishment of the laboratory in Multan will not only facilitate research and development but also provide local farmers with access to advanced agricultural techniques. This collaboration between Litong Group and Pakistani farmers is expected to result in increased crop yields, improved quality, and enhanced export prospects. Litong Food Group committed to establishing a state-of-the-art food park in Pakistan, with an investment commitment of \$500 million over the next three years. The Pakistani delegation introduced Pakistan, known for its fertile land and diverse climate, as an ideal location for the cultiva-

tion of various crops. Litong Group's decision to invest in the country is a testament to the immense potential and untapped opportunities that Pakistan offers. The group aims to produce value-added products using locally sourced ingredients, ensuring high-quality standards and competitive pricing. By connecting with Asian markets, Litong Group envisions exporting "Made in Pakistan" products, further enhancing the country's reputation as a reliable supplier of agricultural goods. Litong Food Company is the first to import Pakistani dry chili. This collaboration between Litong Group and Pakistani farmers is expected to result in increased crop yields, improved quality.



## CDA, China for green energy cooperation

DNA

ISLAMABAD: A delegation of Capital Development Authority (CDA) visited this week the Wansheng 20 MW rooftop distributed photovoltaic power generation project in Chongqing China, Gwadar Pro reported on Friday. The project is constructed by PowerChina Chongqing Engineering Cooperation. General Manager of Overseas Business

Division of the company, Tu Yongguo, led the delegation touring the key facilities, including the rooftop photovoltaic array, inverter operations and the prefabricated equipment cabin. This provided them with valuable insights into the practical application, benefits, and the process of sustainable power supply in the rooftop distributed photovoltaic system. Imran Muhammad, head of the delegation, lauded the project and emphasized green energy's signif-

icance in reducing carbon emissions and addressing energy scarcity issues. With an annual electricity generation capacity of 14 million kilowatt-hours, the project is equivalent to save 40 million tons of standard coal and reducing carbon dioxide emissions by 90 million tons. Pakistan, with abundant solar resources, has immense potential for the development of the photovoltaic industry, aligning with the country's goals of sustainable green development.

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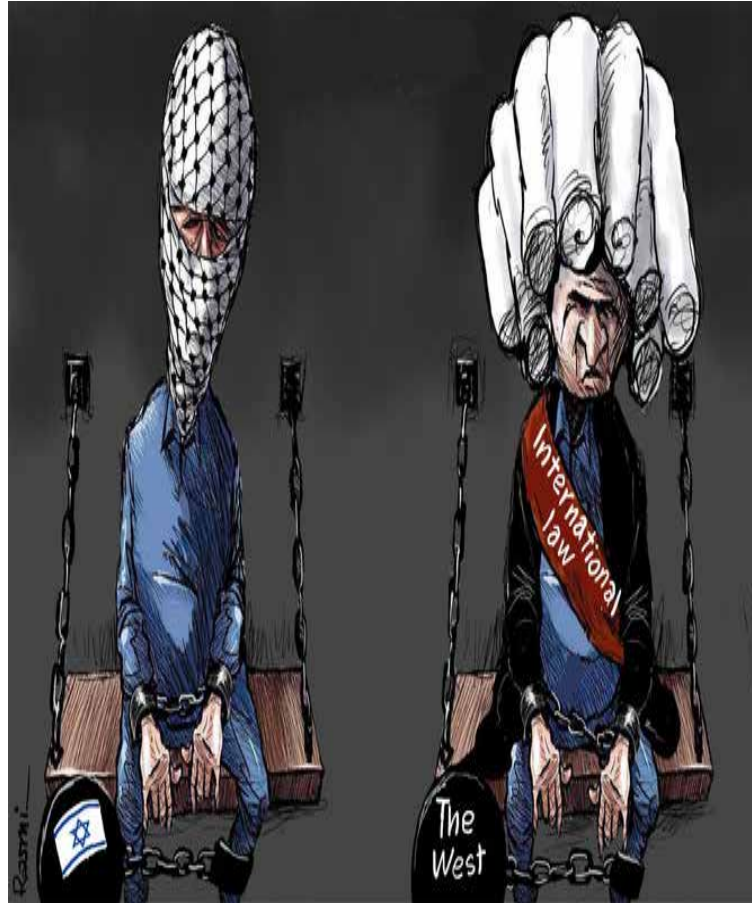
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## Washington must get Tel Aviv to apply the brakes

The United Nations Security Council on passed a resolution condemning "in the strongest terms" the multiple Houthi attacks on commercial shipping that have disrupted global trade and raised fears of further spillover from the war in Gaza. There were 11 votes in favor, none against, and four countries abstained: China, Russia, Algeria and Mozambique. No party would like to see the Red Sea, a major global shipping lane, becoming a no-go area. And direct attacks on any civilian targets should be condemned and opposed by all peace-loving nations as they constitute war crimes. It is absolutely necessary for the resolution to call for the navigational rights and freedoms of merchant and commercial vessels to be respected in line with international law. However, it might not be easy to "address the root causes" of the attacks carried out by Houthi forces based in Yemen, since it is Israel's intensive military offensive in Gaza, which has gone far beyond "self-defense" in response to the Hamas-led attacks on Oct 7, that has prompted the Houthi attacks as a show of support for the Palestinians. As of this week, Israel's military actions in Gaza, which many call ethnic cleansing and genocide, have caused about 23,200 deaths in the Palestinian enclave over the past three months. It is a pity the resolution omits the "causal link" between the Gaza conflict and the Red Sea tensions. As China's Permanent UN Representative Zhang Jun said, the "ambiguities" of the resolution might serve to exacerbate regional tensions. Some countries can take advantage of the ambiguities to justify their actions targeting the pro-Palestine parties in the Red Sea and beyond. Due to the US' unconditional support of Israel, the conflicts in Gaza and the Red Sea have become increasingly ugly, and civilian targets have been put in the crosshair by both sides. Even if Washington thinks Tel Aviv has gone too far, it has never stopped providing military and financial support to Israel to help it sustain its brutal military campaign. If those providing arms to the Houthis are to be condemned, what about those providing arms to Israel? The question is how long will it take to end the tit-for-tat retaliation that comes at such a cost to civilians. The cold shoulders US Secretary of State Antony Blinken has met with on his "pro-peace" tour in the Middle East this week indicates that the ball is in the US' court.

## Doubts surround Sunak's green commitment

This year has been the hottest in our recorded history and, most likely, over the last 100,000 years. "Heat domes" across the northern hemisphere saw temperatures soar. There were heatwaves during winter in the Andes. Extreme weather saw unprecedented flooding in Asia. The wildfires that swept Canada this summer were the largest in modern history – and produced more carbon emissions than all of the country's other human-related activities combined. After a Mexico-sized chunk of Antarctica failed to refreeze, the UN secretary general, António Guterres, proclaimed that "the era of global boiling has arrived". There can be little comfort taken from the fact that the average global surface temperature in 2023 was 1.48C hotter than that of the pre-industrial period, a fraction below the UN's 1.5C target. Scientists suggest that above this – but below the 2C threshold – the world is more likely to pass key irreversible tipping points: the die-off of low-latitude coral reefs; widespread abrupt permafrost thaw leading to greenhouse gas release; and the collapse of the Greenland and West Antarctic ice sheets. One entrepreneur with an eye for the apocalyptic is already shipping glacier ice to cocktail bars in the UAE. But exploiting the current situation is the problem. The developed world produces and consumes via billions of fossil fuel machines. Its engines and furnaces emit the carbon that cooks the planet. The inequalities are stark: the richest 10% of emitters are responsible for close to 50% of all greenhouse gases, while the bottom 50% produce 12% of the total. Yet we have the technological capacity to do things very differently. But that means financing, manufacturing and marketing new machines to replace old dirty ones. This is not happening fast enough. Electric cars provide a vivid example of how good intentions lag behind reality. Shipments of internal combustion passenger vehicles peaked in 2017 but emissions from road transport won't peak until 2029. The scale of the climate emergency is such that individual choices will make little difference unless certain collective decisions are taken and acted upon. Britain's Rishi Sunak, however, believes that green measures can be left to the individual conscience. That is why he claimed last September that delaying the end of petrol and diesel car sales would let people choose when to make changes rather than facing unnecessary costs. Licensing new oil and gas fields shows, as former Tory cabinet minister Alok Sharma said, that the government is "not serious" about meeting its international climate commitments. Mr Sunak's turn away from science for supposed political gain began last summer when a high-profile campaign against the expansion of London's ultra-low emission zone was seen to help the Tories hold a parliamentary seat. It is a concern that the government doesn't think the environment deserves a practical response and depressing to find that Conservative ministers view climate science through a conspiratorial lens to such a degree that they prioritised driving over walking and cycling. Sensible Tories such as Chris Skidmore are jumping ship. Wealthy societies tend towards complacency. That needs to be combated. Anticipating a dangerous future should not mean we fail to act now.



## Two resigned, others may follow...

Qamar Bashir



This move, a direct challenge to the Supreme Court of Pakistan, which had firmly set the election date for February 8, 2024, serves as a mockery of the highest court's historic decision. The Supreme Court, issued a stern rebuke to the Lahore High Court, asserting in no uncertain terms that the court is complicit with those seeking to delay elections for their vested interests. The PTI's struggle over the BAT symbol has become a legal rollercoaster, marked by conflicting decisions. Despite the Peshawar High Court's back-and-forth on allocating the symbol

In Pakistan, an atmosphere of palpable excitement and tumult prevails, akin to the thick smog in Punjab and Lahore, where visibility is so limited that even one's own hands become unseen. Every passing moment is laden with significant and breaking news, constantly keeping the public on edge. Unfortunately, this pervasive frenzy is not a harbinger of hope but rather a thick cloud of war alarms that hangs over the nation, casting a shadow on aspirations for a better future. In this relentless struggle to outmaneuver rivals, the foundational pillars of the state and its institutions are engaged in a perilous game of pulling each other down. The Senate, pitted against the Judiciary, has taken a bold step by passing a resolution calling for an indefinite delay in the upcoming elections. This move, a direct challenge to the Supreme Court of Pakistan, which had firmly set the election date for February 8, 2024, serves as a mockery of the highest court's historic decision. The Supreme Court, issued a stern rebuke to the Lahore High Court, asserting in no uncertain terms that the court is complicit with those seeking to delay elections for their vested interests. The PTI's struggle over the BAT symbol has become a legal rollercoaster, marked by conflicting decisions. Despite the Peshawar High Court's back-and-forth on allocating the symbol, the Election Commission chose to disregard court orders and withhold the emblem. PTI swiftly responded by filing a contempt petition, slated for tomorrow (12th Jan 2024). The Election Commission is all set to file an appeal before the Supreme Court. The deliberate choice of the Peshawar High Court, over the potentially jurisdictional Islamabad High Court, underscores PTI's resolute belief in the latter's compromise. The two judges of the Supreme Court have already tendered their resignations, with the looming possibility of more following suit. If this trend continues, it could plunge the credibility and impartiality of both the Supreme Court and the Chief Justice into intense scrutiny, potentially rendering the apex court practically dysfunctional. The rift within the Supreme Court was initiated by an audacious move from an unfamiliar lawyer, Mian Dawood, who, in February 2023, filed a complaint against Justice Mazhar Naqvi. The complaint alleges violations of the code of conduct for judges outlined in Clause (8) of Article 209 of the Constitution. The accusations leveled against Justice Naqvi include misconduct, the creation of illegal assets, and the accumulation of wealth through frontmen. Later, this complaint was turned into a formal complaint. The SJC issued two show-cause notices, demanding that Justice Naqvi explain the apparent inconsistencies in his financial records. Justice Naqvi, vehemently denied any wrongdoing and labeled the show-cause notices as politically motivated tools wielded against him. He filed a petition with the Supreme Court seeking a stay order. The Supreme Court's dismissal of Naqvi's petition proved to be a turning point. With the SJC investigation set to move forward, Naqvi opted for a dramatic exit. In a concise resignation letter, he maintained his innocence but acknowledged that continuing under such a cloud of suspicion was untenable. Justice Naqvi's resignation left more questions than answers. Did it signify an admission of guilt, or was it a strategic retreat from a perceived unfair process? Was it a tacit acknowledgement of wrongdoing or a desperate attempt to escape scrutiny? As a former Deputy Commissioner of Income Tax with over a decade of experience, I assert with confidence that the allegations against Muzhar Naqvi, revolving around property transactions at significantly disparate values, resonate across civil and military officers, politicians, judges, and business figures. If such practices were absent, and all individuals adhered strictly to legal obligations, our nation might have charted a different course. The inherent inconsistency in the handling of similar circumstances, particularly the parallel allegations against Qazi Faez Isa, raises questions about the fairness of the entire episode. In a situation where allegations against Isa were dismissed, and accusations of amassing wealth exceeding 12 billion by former Army Chief Qamar Javid Bajwa only led to the incarceration of those disclosing this information, it suggests a nuanced and potentially unjust dimension to the legal proceedings. Recalling the allegations against Qazi Faez Isa, pertaining to the acquisition of three London properties leased in the names of his wife and children between 2011 and 2015, raises parallels with the current situation, emphasizing the need for consistency and fairness in addressing such matters across different individuals and institutions. Let us persevere, the Supreme Judicial Council decision point wise. The reference to be of no legal effect, non maintainable whatsoever and stands quashed. Reference was filed with malafide intention, prematurity and lack of evidence". Government agencies including the FIA secretly obtained information about the petitioner and his family in clear transgression of Articles 4 and 14 of the Constitution. Similar observations can be extended to the case involving Justice Mazhar Naqvi. The petitioner, in this instance, is a lawyer who doesn't bear any direct impact from the alleged property transactions with Justice Naqvi. There is no record of the petitioner engaging in property transactions with the judge, neither as a buyer nor a seller, and therefore, lacks a legitimate basis to possess detailed information about Justice Naqvi's properties or their transactional intricacies. It becomes apparent that the origin of such detailed information is likely rooted in the historical practices of influential and powerful sectors, known for exerting pressure, offering bribes,

and cultivating relationships with judges. It's a recurring pattern that references or complaints are often filed against judges and officials who resist yielding to illegal demands made through proxies. This underscores the challenges and pressures faced by those within the judiciary who choose to uphold their integrity and independence in the face of external influence. Having reviewed the income tax and wealth tax returns of numerous politicians, bureaucrats, and military officials during my tenure, the reality is that the allegations leveled against Justice Mazhar are likely applicable to the tax returns of many individuals. The narrative takes a disconcerting turn when defending vested interests led to the sweeping abolition of laws and the abrupt halt of critical surveys. During an economic survey in 2001 that documented previously undeclared immovable properties of numerous army officers, not only was the wealth tax abolished, but the entire survey was abruptly terminated. In light of this context, a pertinent question emerges: why was the applicant who filed the reference not summoned for an inquiry into the sources of information within the FBR? Why did the FBR, exclusively vested with jurisdiction over tax matters, escape admonishment for leaking sensitive information against an honorable judge? Why did the SJC encroach upon the exclusive jurisdiction of the FBR? The inconsistency in arguments, notably the acceptance of similar arguments in the case of Qazi Faez Isa but their rejection in the case of Justice Mazhar Naqvi, raises eyebrows. These apparent contradictions and discrepancies in the arguments and proceedings of the SJC likely contributed to Justice Ijaz Ul Ahsan dissent and subsequent resignation. In his dissenting note, he unequivocally called for the withdrawal of the show cause notice issued to Justice Mazhar Naqvi. Expressing concern over the council's actions, he criticized the hasty and unconventional proceedings, deeming them contrary to established traditions and legal requirements. The looming possibility of other judges with similar reservations following suit in resigning could render the Supreme Court dysfunctional for a considerable period. A political dimension becomes apparent in what is perceived as part of the London plan, as articulated by spokesperson Marrayum Aurangzeb. In response to the resignations of Justice Ijaz Ul Ahsan and Mazhar Ali Akbar Naqvi, she declared that the alleged conspiracy bench against former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif had reached its conclusion. This political interpretation adds a layer of complexity to the resignations, suggesting a connection to broader political agendas and machinations.

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

## The U.S. and the quest for global order

Dr. MuahammadAkramZaheer



The way countries work together involves more than just trading goods. It includes agreements, ways of doing things, and shared ideas about how the world should be fair. The United States has been better at talking about these ideas than actually following them. For example, the war

Trade Organization has said that rich countries are being very hypocritical. They used to tell developing countries to open up their economies and not be protectionist, but now the rich countries are not following their own advice. They got rich and powerful by following certain rules, but now they want to change the rules in their favor. Okonjo-Iweala also thinks they no longer want fair competition and prefer a system based on power instead of rules. The U.S. officials often talk about the importance of following international rules. These rules were established after World War II to promote open trade and prevent countries from being too nationalistic and protective. The leaders back then wanted to avoid the problems caused by nationalism and protectionism. They successfully created a peaceful and prosperous world through a system of free trade. This system helped poor countries become rich and strong, making it less tempting for countries to go to war or try to conquer new lands. The way countries work together involves more than just trading goods. It includes agreements, ways of doing things, and shared ideas about how the world should be fair. The United States has been better at talking about these ideas than actually following them. For example, the war in Iraq went against the principles of the United Nations, which say you shouldn't attack another country without a good reason. The U.S. also picks and chooses which international rules it follows and criticizes other countries for doing the same. When the U.S. pulled out of a deal with Iran, even though Iran was keeping its promises, it made it harder for the world to work together on important issues. The U.S. also uses its power to control the use of the dollar to force other countries to do what it wants. In the past,

the U.S. was seen as a good country because it wasn't an empire like the United Kingdom or France. It was once a colony itself and didn't try to take over other countries. But lately, the U.S. is acting more like a bully, and even its friends are looking for ways to deal with it. The U.S. used to help make the world a better place for everyone, not just itself. That used to be its greatest strength. People might like the money and help they get from China, but they think China is mostly interested in making itself powerful. The U.S., on the other hand, used to show it cared about everyone's interests, not just its own. If the United States gives up on its big, open, and generous view of the world because of fear and pessimism, it will lose a lot of its natural advantages. For a long time, the U.S. has justified actions that go against its stated principles as exceptions needed to protect itself and support the overall order. It sometimes breaks the rules to get quick results, but you can't save a system by destroying its rules. Other countries are already watching and learning from this. They are in a race to protect their own economies by giving special benefits and creating barriers. Some countries break international rules and point to the U.S.'s hypocrisy as an excuse. This behavior even extends to the former president not respecting democratic norms. The biggest threat to the international order with rules doesn't come from China, Russia, or Iran. It comes from the United States. If the U.S., driven by exaggerated fears of decline, steps back from its leading role in world affairs, it will leave empty spaces of power

worldwide. This will encourage various powers and players to try to take advantage of the chaos. We've seen what happens in the Middle East without strong American involvement. Imagine something similar in Europe and Asia, but with major powers causing disruption and significant global consequences. It's concerning to see parts of the Republican Party returning to isolationism, similar to the 1930s when it opposed U.S. intervention even as Europe and Asia faced crises. Since 1945, the U.S. has debated how to engage with the world but not whether it should be engaged at all. If the U.S. truly turns inward, it would be a setback for order and progress. However, the U.S. still has the ability to lead, build alliances, solve global problems, and prevent aggression with fewer resources than during the Cold War. The cost would be much higher if the order collapsed, rogue powers rose, and the open global economy fractured. The United States has played a crucial role in creating a new kind of international relations since 1945, benefiting most countries, including itself. While facing new challenges, many powerful countries also gain from peace, prosperity, and a world of rules and norms. Those challenging the current system don't have an alternative vision that could unite the world; they just want narrow advantages for themselves. Despite its internal issues, the United States is uniquely capable and positioned to maintain the central role in sustaining this international system. As long as America stays committed to its project, the current international order can thrive for many years.



## Briefs

## PHC's order on PTI 'bat'...

FROM PAGE 01  
PHC against Election Commissioner Sikandar Sultan Raja and other ECP members for not following up on the PHC's order. But during today's hearing, CJP Isa raised a pertinent question did the high court declare PTI's intra-party polls in line with the law? "The issue of bat electoral symbol's allotment comes later. First, we will have to review the party's intra-party elections." Peshawar High Court did not issue a declaration that PTI's intra-party polls were in line with the law. It just ordered that PTI should be given its election symbol back. The Peshawar High Court's decision is flawed and prima facie. At the outset of the hearing, PTI lawyer Hamid Khan and ECP lawyer Makhdoom Ali Khan appeared before the court, while PTI lawyer Ali Zafar attended the hearing via video link from the top court's Lahore registry.

## Another resolution...

FROM PAGE 01  
The requisition contends that Pakistan cannot afford political uncertainty; therefore, to strengthen the democratic process and under Article 224 (2) of the Constitution, the general elections should have been held within 90 days. To the surprise and disbelief of many, on January 5, the Senate unanimously passed a resolution to postpone the February 8 general elections in the country. Majority of the lawmakers present in the legislature had approved the resolution — seeking polls delay in the light of extreme weather in hilly areas and the deteriorating security situation — moved by independent lawmaker Senator Dilawar Khan.

## COAS Gen Asim Munir...

FROM PAGE 01  
Later, COAS also visited Corps Headquarters Karachi. Corps Commander Karachi welcomed the COAS and briefed him about operational preparedness, training matters and administrative measures being taken for the welfare of the troops and Shuhada families. Meanwhile, General Syed Asim Munir, NI (M), Chief of Army Staff, (COAS), witnessed firing of different Air Defence weapon systems during Exercise Al-Bayza-III, 2024 at Sonmiani. COAS viewed integrated fire and battle maneuvers of Army Air Defence systems which includes High to Medium Air Defence Weapons System (HIMADS), Low to Medium Air Defence System (LOMAD), Short Range Air Defence system (SHORADS) and Extended Short Range Air Defence system (ESHORADS).

## PML-Q scraps...

FROM PAGE 01  
"The party leadership has decided that we will not become a target of double standards," he added. The PML-N has fielded nine candidates in Gujranwala division's Gujrat district which includes three candidates for the National Assembly seats and five for the provincial legislature. The candidates for the NA constituencies include Chaudhry Abid Raza (NA-62), Nawabzada Ghazanfar Ali Gul (NA-63) and Chaudhry Naseer Ahmed Abbas Siddhu (65). Meanwhile, those fielded in the provincial constituencies include Muhammad Hanif Malik (PP-27), Shabbir Ahmed (PP-28), Nawabzada Haider Mehdi (PP-29), Major (ret'd) Moin Nawaz Warraich (PP-30), Mohammad Ali (PP-33) and Mian Tariq Mehmood (PP-34).

## Italian envoy pays...

FROM PAGE 01  
and mobility, agricultural technology, education as well as tourism. The Italian Ambassador thanked the PM for receiving him and expressed gratitude for the excellent cooperation he received throughout his stay in Pakistan. He also briefed the PM on key developments during his tenure. The Ambassador praised the valuable contributions of the vibrant Pakistani diaspora to Italy's economic development.

## New Zealand trump Pakistan by 46 runs in first T20I

Babar Azam's 57 goes in vain as Green Shirts fail to chase the 227-run target

## OUR CORRESPONDENTS

AUKLAND: New Zealand handed Pakistan a 46-run defeat marking Shaheen Shah Afridi's start as the T20I captain with a loss in the first T20I at Eden Park, Auckland, on Friday. Despite a brilliant start provided by Saim Ayub's remarkable knock as the left-handed batter scored 27 off just 8, the Green Shirts crumbled in their chase and couldn't convert that into a win. The Green Shirts were 130-4 in 12.4 overs, still in position to chase the target but Azam Khan's disappointing display with the bat doubled the visitors' troubles. Fakhar Zaman (15 off 10), Iftikhar Ahmed (24 off 17) and Azam Khan (10 off 9) were the Men in Green's underperformers with the bat. Meanwhile, former skipper Babar Azam top-scored for the losing side by scoring 57 runs off 35 balls but his efforts were not enough in front of the mammoth target set by the Black Caps. Tim Southee, who completed 150th T20I wickets, picked three wick-



ets while Adam Milne and Ben Sears got two each. Earlier in the first innings, Daryl Mitchell and Kane Williamson were New Zealand's best performers with the bat as the two scored 57 and

61 runs respectively. Williamson was given a life at 11 as he was dropped by Babar Azam, the Kiwi skipper took full advantage of the chance and ended up scoring a fantastic half-century.

Although the 33-year-old didn't play with a remarkable strike rate (135.71), he did manage to provide room for other players like Finn Allen (35 off 15) and Mitchell (61 off 27) who breathe

fire with their bat and scored runs with the strike rates of 233 and 255 respectively. Down the order, Mark Chapman did his job and scored another quick 26 off just 11 deliveries with two fours and as many sixes. All of Pakistan's bowlers were taken to the cleaners, with just Abbas Afridi and Haris Rauf bowling with a decent economy of 8.50 each. Afridi, who provided an excellent start with a wicket in the first over, failed to capitalise on that and ended up conceding 46 runs while taking three wickets. Aamer Jamal conceded 56 while Usama Mir was bashed for 51 runs in four overs.

## Playing XI:

**Pakistan:** Mohammad Rizwan, Saim Ayub, Babar Azam, Fakhar Zaman, Iftikhar Ahmed, Azam Khan (wk), Aamir Jamal, Usama Mir (Debut), Shaheen Afridi (c), Abbas Afridi (Debut), Haris Rauf  
**New Zealand:** Finn Allen, Devon Conway (wk), Kane Williamson (c), Daryl Mitchell, Glenn Phillips, Mark Chapman, Adam Milne, Matthew Henry, Tim Southee, Ish Sodhi, Ben Sears.

## Jack beats Alexander to reach Adelaide International final

The 24-year-old, bidding to reach the main draw of a major for first time, fell to a 6-4 6-4 defeat by Czech Vit Kopriwa



## DNA

MELBOURNE: Britain's Jack Draper is into the final of the Adelaide International after beating eighth seed Alexander Bublik. The 22-year-old continued his promising Australian Open build-up with a 7-6 (7-2) 6-4 win over the Kazakh. Draper will face Czech Jiri Lehecka in his second successive ATP final, having ended 2023 as runner-up to Adrian Mannarino at the Sofia Open. Also on Friday, Brit-

ain's Oliver Crawford was beaten in the final round of qualifying for the Australian Open. The 24-year-old, bidding to reach the main draw of a major for the first time, fell to a 6-4 6-4 defeat by Czech Vit Kopriwa. Crawford, who was born in South Carolina to two parents from Birmingham, switched his nationality from the United States last week. He was the only Briton to reach the final round of qualifying and his defeat means there will be seven British singles players at the first Grand

## Santner tests positive for Covid-19 ahead of first T20I

AUKLAND: Left-arm New Zealand bowling all-rounder Mitchell Santner has tested positive for COVID-19 ahead of the T20I series against Pakistan beginning on Friday (today) in Auckland, New Zealand. The New Zealand Cricket announced in a tweet that Santner would not travel to Eden Park Stadium for the first T20I against the tourists Friday evening. The NZ cricket body said the cricketer would be monitored for a few days. "Mitch Santner won't travel to Eden Park this evening for the opening KFC T20I against Pakistan after testing positive for COVID earlier today. He will continue to be monitored over the coming days and will travel solo home to Hamilton. #NZvPAK," the NZC wrote on X. Meanwhile, the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) has announced the playing XI to take on Kiwis in a five-match T20I series. Today's match will mark left-arm pacer Shaheen Shah Afridi's first assignment as a captain, having taken over the reins from Babar Azam. Rizwan and Saim will open the match with Babar Azam featuring in the middle order. Fakhar Zaman, Iftikhar Ahmed, and Azam Khan will show up at the crease on the fourth, fifth and sixth positions, respectively. Aamir Jamal and Usama Mir will bat on seventh and eighth number. Fourth-ranked Pakistan last played T20Is back in April 2023, when they faced New Zealand at home for a five-match series played in Lahore and Rawalpindi. — Agencies

## Tim Southee achieves major milestone in T20I cricket

Tim Southee is followed by Bangladesh's all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan (140) and Afghanistan's spin wizard Rashid Khan (130) in the list of highest wicket-takers in T20I cricket

AUKLAND: New Zealand pacer Tim Southee became the first player in T20I cricket to pick 150 wickets during his side's 46-run victory over Pakistan in the first T20I at Eden Park on Friday. Southee returned with bowling figures of 4-25 to help New Zealand bundle Pakistan for 180 runs while chasing 227. The 35-year bowler's impressive figures pushed him past the coveted 150-wicket milestone in T20I cricket, which he tops with 151 wickets. Tim Southee is followed by Bangladesh's all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan (140)



and Afghanistan's spin wizard Rashid Khan (130) in the list of highest wicket-takers in T20I cricket. Meanwhile, Southee led the bowling charts for New Zealand during the first T20I against Pakistan with four wickets after their batters posted a mammoth 226 runs. While chasing 227, Pakistan's young opening batter Saim Ayub gave his side a flying start with a blistering 27-run knock from eight balls before getting run out in the third over. Tim Southee picked his first wicket of the match as he got Mohammad Rizwan out, who scored 25 off 14. Babar Azam and Ahmed knitted a promising 40-run partnership but Southee picked another wicket to send the latter back and reduce Pakistan to 130-4. Babar Azam was the top-scorer for Pakistan with a solid innings of 57 runs from 35 balls, laced with six boundaries and two sixes. Southee wrapped Pakistan's innings at 180 with the wickets of Abbas Afridi and Haris Rauf in the 18th over. — DNA

## CTD arrests 2 'Daesh'...

FROM PAGE 01  
Peshawar was "saved from a major catastrophe" with the arrest of the two Afghanistan-trained militants. According to CTD Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) (Operations) Najamul Hasnain Liaquat, the suspects were nabbed during an intelligence-based operation in Peshawar. Two suicide vests, three hand grenades and a pistol were recovered from them, he said. SSP Liaquat said the suspects were members of the militant Islamic State Khorasan and received their training in Afghanistan's Paktia province. He added that one was arrested from Peshawar's Matni area and the other from the Achini area. "[The] arrested terrorists confessed to targeting Maulana Fazlur Rahman and Aimal Wali in suicide attacks," the official said, adding that the two also scopped out Mufti Mahmood Markazi, the JUI-F's provincial headquarters.

## Culprits of Model...

FROM PAGE 01  
constituency. Gandapur said. Earlier Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari paid a visit to the memorial of martyrs at the Minhaj-ul-Quran Secretariat in Lahore and laid a flower wreath. Chairman PPP also filled the membership form of Minhaj-ul-Quran. Chairman Bilawal met with the Secretary General, Pakistan Awami Tehreek, Khuram Nawaz Gandapur, Senior Vice President Raja Zahid Mehmood, Vice President Mian Zahid-ul-Islam, Secretary Information Noorullah Siddiqui, Secretary Coordination Arif Chaudhry and Deputy Secretary Coordination Sardar Umar Daraz Khan, Naib Nazim-e-Aala administration Jawad Ahmed, President Awami Lawyers' Forum Naemuddin Chaudhry, President PAT Central Punjab Rehan Maqbool and General Secretary Kashif Mehmood at the Minhaj-ul-Quran Secretariat. Secretary General PPP Parliamentarians Syed Nayyer Hussain Bokhari, General Secretary PPP Central Punjab Hasan Murtaza and campaign in-charge of NA-127, Ali Badar and Qasim Gilani accompanied the Chairman PPP.

## PTI reveals strategic...

FROM PAGE 01  
and his daughter Eman Tahir holds the ticket for NA-50. Simabia Tahir is PTI's candidate for NA-57 in Rawalpindi. Interestingly, NA-65 in Gujrat remains vacant, and several constituencies, including Mandi Bahauddin, Sialkot, Gujranwala, Chiniot, and Faisalabad, are pending nominations. Riaz Fatiana and Sheikh Waqas Akram have secured PTI tickets for Jhang, while Toba Tek Singh awaits further announcements. These strategic nominations indicate PTI's preparedness for the upcoming electoral challenges. The party's decision to back Shahryar Riaz against veteran politician Sheikh Rasheed in NA-56 garnered immediate attention. Meanwhile, Samabia Tahir received the nod from PTI for NA-57, further adding diversity to the party's line-up.

## ICJ: Palestine...

FROM PAGE 01  
failing to prevent genocide, and adopting genocidal policies and permitting hateful rhetoric and incitement that enables and excuses genocide against the Palestinian people. These abominable atrocities and crimes must be stopped, the Palestinian human must be protected, human life must be preserved. This is a critical moment for Palestine and a pivotal moment for the international system. It is a moment of truth and historic on many levels, not least for humanity and for the rule of law, which are under assault in Gaza. South Africa took the bold and principled step of assuming its responsibilities and obligations under the Genocide Convention because it understands that they are binding, not optional.

## Schedule for HBL PSL 9 unveiled



## DNA

LAHORE: The upcoming HBL Pakistan Super League (PSL) 9 will run from February 17 to March 18 with two-time champions and defending champions Lahore Qalandars taking on winners of the 2016 and 2018 editions Islamabad United in the curtain-raiser. The marquee event will be played in four cities — Karachi, Lahore, Multan and Rawalpindi — with the final of the six-team tournament taking place at the National Bank Stadium in Karachi on 18 March. Over the course of the 34-match T20 tournament, Karachi will host 11 matches, including the Qualifier, two Eliminator and the final. Lahore's Gaddafi Stadium and Rawalpindi's Pindi Cricket Stadium will each host nine matches, while fans in Multan, the city of saints, will witness five matches. The much-anticipated contest between Lahore Qalandars and Karachi Kings will be played on 24 February and 9 March.

Gaddafi Stadium will stage the 24 February contest, while National Bank Stadium will see Qalandars and Kings locking horns on 9 March. Kings, Qalandars, Sultans and United will play five matches at their home ground, while Peshawar Zalmi will play four matches at the Pindi Cricket Stadium. Quetta Gladiators will play three matches each in Karachi, Lahore and Rawalpindi, while they will play one match at the Multan Cricket Stadium against the home side Sultans on 25 February. Like the previous edition, the forthcoming HBL PSL 9 will take place in two legs with Multan Cricket Stadium and Lahore's Gaddafi Stadium hosting 14 matches between them from 17 to 27 February. The cricketing action will then move to Rawalpindi's Pindi Cricket Stadium and Karachi's National Bank Stadium, where 16 matches will be played from 28 February to 12 March. The tournament will then move to Karachi in its entirety for the playoffs. Chair of PCB Management Committee, Mr Zaka Ashraf: "We are thrilled to announce that the HBL Pakistan Super League's ninth edition is set to kick off on February 17, showcasing the best of T20 cricket in four cities across Pakistan. "The decision to host the marquee event across these cities is a testament to our commitment to bring top-notch cricket to fans across the country. "We believe that hosting matches in these venues not only adds to the excitement for fans but also promotes cricket at the grassroots level. "As we gear up for

this spectacular event, we look forward to witnessing thrilling action and creating unforgettable moments for cricket enthusiasts worldwide."

## Schedule of PSL 9 Matches

February 17, 2024 Lahore Qalandars v Islamabad United, Gaddafi Stadium Lahore  
February 18, 2024 Quetta Gladiators v Peshawar Zalmi, Gaddafi Stadium Lahore; Multan Sultans v Karachi Kings, Multan Cricket Stadium  
February 19, 2024 Lahore Qalandars v Quetta Gladiators, Gaddafi Stadium Lahore  
February 20, 2024 Multan Sultans v Islamabad United, Multan Cricket Stadium  
February 21, 2024 Peshawar Zalmi v Karachi Kings, Gaddafi Stadium Lahore; Multan Sultans v Lahore Qalandars, Multan Cricket Stadium  
February 22, 2024 Quetta Gladiators v Islamabad United, Gaddafi Stadium Lahore  
February 23, 2024 Multan Sultans v Peshawar Zalmi, Multan Cricket Stadium  
February 24, 2024 Lahore Qalandars v Karachi Kings, Gaddafi Stadium Lahore  
February 25, 2024 Multan Sultans v Quetta Gladiators, Multan Cricket Stadium; Lahore Qalandars v Peshawar Zalmi, Gaddafi Stadium Lahore  
February 26, 2024 Peshawar Zalmi v Islamabad United, Gaddafi Stadium Lahore  
February 27, 2024 Lahore Qalandars v Multan Sultans, Gaddafi Stadium Lahore  
February 28, 2024 Karachi Kings v Islamabad United, National Bank Stadium  
February 29, 2024 Karachi Kings v Quetta

Gladiators, National Bank Stadium  
March 2, 2024 Peshawar Zalmi v Lahore Qalandars, Pindi Cricket Stadium; Islamabad United v Quetta Gladiators, Pindi Cricket Stadium  
March 3, 2024 Karachi Kings v Multan Sultans, National Bank Stadium  
March 4, 2024 Islamabad United v Peshawar Zalmi, Pindi Cricket Stadium  
March 5, 2024 Peshawar Zalmi v Multan Sultans, Pindi Cricket Stadium  
March 6, 2024 Quetta Gladiators v Karachi Kings, Pindi Cricket Stadium; Islamabad United v Lahore Qalandars, Pindi Cricket Stadium  
March 7, 2024 Islamabad United v Karachi Kings, Pindi Cricket Stadium  
March 8, 2024 Peshawar Zalmi v Quetta Gladiators, Pindi Cricket Stadium  
March 9, 2024 Karachi Kings v Lahore Qalandars, National Bank Stadium  
March 10, 2024 Islamabad United v Multan Sultans, Pindi Cricket Stadium; Quetta Gladiators v Lahore Qalandars, National Bank Stadium  
March 11, 2024 Karachi Kings v Peshawar Zalmi, National Bank Stadium  
March 12, 2024 Quetta Gladiators v Multan Sultans, National Bank Stadium  
March 14, 2024 Qualifier (1 v 2), National Bank Stadium  
March 15, 2024 Eliminator 1 (3 v 4), National Bank Stadium  
March 16, 2024 Eliminator 2 (Eliminator Winner v Qualifier Runner-up), National Bank Stadium  
March 18, 2024 Final, National Bank Stadium.



## Briefs

## Bombardment in Sudan kill dozens of civilians

KHARTOUM : Bombardments in the Sudanese capital have killed at least 33 civilians, most of them in air strikes, pro-democracy lawyers group said. The group had announced earlier on Thursday that artillery fire killed 10 civilians in a residential area of Khartoum, where the army and paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) have been at war since April. Sudan's army chief General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan rejected an agreement signed between the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces and political groups, and vowed to continue fighting a nine-month war, in a speech to troops last week. Sudan's paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) was open to an immediate, unconditional ceasefire through talks with the Sudanese army as it signed a declaration with the Taqadum civilian coalition and invited the army to do the same. A nine-month war in Sudan, which now faces the world's largest displacement crisis, has devastated the country's infrastructure and prompted warnings of famine. Attempts to end the conflict through negotiations, led by the United States and Saudi Arabia, have so far come to nothing and previous agreements to protect civilians have gone unheeded.—APP

## Indian teachers face job loss amid funding cut

NEW DELHI: India's most populous state has stopped paying some 21,000 teachers of subjects including mathematics and science in Muslim religious schools, or madrasas, an official said on Thursday, and they could lose their jobs altogether. The teachers work at madrasas in Uttar Pradesh, ruled by Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Hindu nationalist party, and the move comes ahead of Modi seeking his third straight term in a general election due by May. "Over 21,000 teachers are set to lose their jobs," Ifthak Ahmed Javed, chief of Uttar Pradesh's madrasa education board. "Muslim students and teachers will go back by 30 years." Muslims are a minority in mainly Hindu India, accounting for about 14 percent of a population of 1.42 billion, and they make up nearly a fifth of the population of Uttar Pradesh. Rights groups such as Human Rights Watch say nationalist groups have threatened and harassed Muslim and other religious minorities with impunity under Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), accusations the party denies.—APP

## Ethiopian parties back sea access deal with Somaliland

MOGADISHU : Ethiopia's political parties on Thursday unanimously supported the country's maritime access deal with Somalia's breakaway province of Somaliland. The Ethiopian Political Parties Joint Council (EPPJC), in a statement late Wednesday, said it unanimously supports the memorandum of understanding between Ethiopia and Somaliland, following a review during its general assembly in Addis Ababa. The council said it has discussed the framework of the agreement, detailed content, and the opportunities and threats associated with the agreement, and "we confirmed our unanimous support for the agreement." The council called on the government, political parties, and the general public in the Horn of Africa country to play a positive role in implementing the agreement with Somaliland. Ethiopia has been working to strengthen its relationship with the Horn of Africa countries to ensure that over 120 million citizens have access to the sea. Somalia has rejected Ethiopia's Red Sea port deal with Somaliland, calling it "illegitimate," a threat to good neighborliness, and a violation of its sovereignty. It also recalled its ambassador to Ethiopia after the deal was signed on Jan. 1.—APP

## UK PM boosts military support for Ukraine

The 2.5 billion pounds (\$3.2 billion) in military funding for Ukraine over the next financial year will cover long-range missiles, thousands of drones, air defense, artillery ammunition and maritime security

## FOREIGN DESK

KYIV, Ukraine: UK Prime Minister Rishi Sunak traveled to Kyiv on Friday to unveil a new support package for Ukraine, including an increase in military funding for its war with Russia that after 22 months shows no sign of ending. The 2.5 billion pounds (\$3.2 billion) in military funding for Ukraine over the next financial year will cover long-range missiles, thousands of drones, air defense, artillery ammunition and maritime security, according to a statement from Sunak's office. Those are some of the items that Kyiv officials have been urging Ukraine's Western allies to send more of, as the grinding war of attrition brings little change along the front line and both sides turn to long-range strikes. Ukraine and Russia are seeking to replenish their arsenals

this year, military analysts say, in anticipation of possible major ground offensives in 2025.

"I am here today with one message: the UK will also not falter," Sunak said. "We will stand with Ukraine, in their darkest hours and in the better times to come."

Sunak first visited Ukraine in November 2022, soon after he became prime minister. Britain has been one of Ukraine's most vocal backers. Britain is the second-biggest donor of military aid to Ukraine after the US, giving a total of 4.6 billion pounds (\$3.3 billion) in 2022 and 2023. Sunak's visit came hours after the British and US militaries bombed Yemen, hitting more than a dozen sites used by the Iranian-backed Houthis. Thursday's strikes were a reminder of another war, which has raged for years in the Arab world's poorest nation. The attack also risked triggering a wider regional con-



flict over Israel's war on Hamas in the Gaza Strip. Those concerns have drawn attention away from Ukraine's struggle — a shift that Zelensky is trying to counter through diplomacy. Both Ukraine and Russia are scrambling to restock their armories. The roughly 1,500-kilometer (930-mile) front line has been largely static during winter, and both Ukraine and Russia require artillery shells, missiles and drones that enable long-range strikes. Ukraine

says Moscow is receiving artillery shells and missiles from North Korea and drones from Iran. On Jan. 4, the White House cited US intelligence officials as saying that Russia acquired ballistic missiles from North Korea and is seeking them from Iran. Ukraine's leader, Volodymyr Zelensky, is pushing Kyiv's Western allies to provide Ukraine with more support on top of the billions of dollars in military aid the country has already received. This week he visited three small Baltic countries — Lithuania, Estonia and Latvia — in search of new pledges. The eastern European countries, which are also among Kyiv's staunchest supporters, promised more missiles, drones, howitzers and artillery shells. Zelensky has warned that Ukraine particularly needs air defense systems to fend off Russian aerial barrages. Recent massive Russian barrages — more than 500

drones and missiles were fired between Dec. 29 and Jan. 2, according to officials in Kyiv — are using up Ukraine's air defense resources and leaving it vulnerable. Sunak said that the UK recognizes that Ukrainian security "is our security," as Kyiv's forces stand up to Russian President Vladimir Putin's full-scale invasion. "Today we are going further — increasing our military aid, delivering thousands of cutting-edge drones, and signing a historic new Security Agreement to provide Ukraine with the assurances it needs for the long term," he said. Support for Ukraine's war effort is sputtering. A plan by the administration of US President Joe Biden to send \$60 billion in new funding to Kyiv is being held up in Congress. rope's pledge in March to provide 1 million artillery shells within 12 months has also fallen short, with only about 300,000 delivered by the end of last year.

## China, Canada to maintain contact over 'difficult' relations

## WEB DESK

BEIJING : China and Canada want to maintain contacts to bolster what Beijing called the "current difficult situation" in bilateral relations, the two governments said after talks between their foreign ministers. Relations were strained for most of 2023, underscored by accusations from Canada that China was meddling in its elections, a claim China repeatedly denied. "The fundamental reason why China-Canada relations have fallen into a low point in recent years is that there has been a serious deviation in Canada's perception of China," Wang Yi told Melanie Joly in a phone call, China's foreign ministry said in a statement. "China is open to contacts and talks," Wang said. "The two sides should respect each other, engage in dia-

logue on an equal footing, enhance trust and dispel doubts." Joly offered priorities for collaboration, including fighting climate change and deepening economic and people-to-people ties, Ottawa's Global Affairs Canada department said in a statement. It said Joly and Wang highlighted that despite recent "challenges" in bilateral ties, it was important to keep communication lines open. Beijing expelled a Canadian diplomat in May after Ottawa told a Toronto-based Chinese diplomat to leave, escalating tensions. China lodged a complaint in October, saying a Canadian military plane had violated China's sovereignty and national security. Wang told Joly that China hopes Canada "will interpret China's domestic and foreign policies objectively, rationally and correctly." Canada said both sides shared views on a

range of global and regional issues, including the Israel-Hamas conflict, Russia's invasion of Ukraine and ongoing "challenges and opportunities" in the Indo-Pacific region. Secondly, mutual respect. The differences in social systems and ideologies between China and Canada stem from their respective histories, cultures, national conditions and people's choices. The two sides should respect each other, engage in dialogue on an equal footing, increase trust, dispel misgivings and strengthen communication responsibly and constructively, so as not to let differences dominate bilateral relations, Wang said. He also urged the Canadian side to earnestly implement its commitment to the one-China policy, preserve the political foundation of China-Canada relations, and not send any wrong signal to the "Taiwan inde-

pendence" separatist forces. Thirdly, win-win cooperation. China will continue to expand high-level opening-up, and Chinese-style modernization will surely bring important development opportunities to Canada and other countries in the world, Wang said. As promoters and beneficiaries of free trade, China and Canada should jointly oppose the politicization and pan-security of economic issues and create a fair, just and non-discriminatory environment for business development, he added.

Joly, for her part, said that healthy and stable Canada-China relations serve the fundamental interests of the two countries and two peoples. Despite the difficulties in bilateral relations, Canada is willing to bring bilateral relations back to the right track with a more open, practical and constructive attitude.—DNA

## US imposes sanctions on N.Korea-Russia missile transfer

WASHINGTON: The US State Department on imposed sanctions on three Russian entities and one individual involved in the transfer and testing of North Korea's ballistic missiles for Russia's use against Ukraine, Secretary of State Antony Blinken said. "We will not hesitate to take further actions," Blinken said in a statement. North Korea's "transfer of ballistic missiles to Russia supports Russia's war of aggression, increases the suffering of the Ukrainian people, and undermines the global nonproliferation regime," Blinken added. The step comes two days after a joint statement by the United States and its partners condemned arms transfers between North Korea and Russia, including what it termed as Russia's procurement of North Korean ballistic missiles and Moscow's use of those against Ukraine on Dec. 30 and Jan. 2. Both Moscow and Pyongyang have drawn closer since the beginning of the Ukraine conflict, though they deny making any arms deals. North Korean leader Kim Jong Un met President Vladimir Putin in Russia's Far East region last September and senior Russian officials have made several visits to Pyongyang. Last week the White House said Russia had used short-range ballistic missiles (SRBMs) sourced from North Korea to conduct multiple strikes against Ukraine, citing newly declassified intelligence. A senior Ukrainian official later corroborated the assertion. Russia attacked Kharkiv with several missiles last week, killing two people and injuring over 60 in one of its biggest missile and drone strikes since the start of the large-scale war in February 2022. North Korea has been under a United Nations arms embargo since it first tested a nuclear bomb in 2006. UN Security Council resolutions, approved with Russian support, ban countries from trading weapons or other military equipment with North Korea.—APP

## Myanmar ethnic forces junta agree on ceasefire

NAYPYIDAW : An alliance of ethnic minority armies in northern Myanmar has agreed to a ceasefire with the ruling military junta, a leader of one of the groups, the TNLA, said, adding that the talks involved an envoy from neighboring China. The junta, which overthrew an elected government in 2021, has been battling rebels fighting to end its control of their regions since late October, with intense violence along the northern border with China. The joint offensive has posed the biggest battlefield challenge to the military since the coup and caused concern in China about the prospect of border trade disruption and a refugee influx. In talks facilitated by a Chinese envoy Deng Xi Jin, the Three Brotherhood Alliance agreed to a "ceasefire without advancing further," the TNLA leader, who declined to be named due to the sensitivity of the talks, said. "From the (alliance) side, the agreement is to refrain from offensive attacks on enemy camps or towns. From the military side, the agreement is not to engage in attacks through air strikes, bombardment, or heavy weapons."—APP

## Sri Lankan soldiers aid hospitals amid strike

COLOMBO: Sri Lanka sent hundreds of soldiers to key hospitals to help look after patients on Thursday, as hospital orderlies and administrative staff launched a one-day strike nationwide over allowances. Sri Lanka is in the midst of its worst financial crisis in over seven decades which has sent the cost of living soaring and forced the government to increase taxes and limit public employees' perks. "Following a request from hospital directors, 615 soldiers and 19 officers have been deployed at 25 hospitals," military spokesman Major General Rasika Kumara. The soldiers are engaged in non-medical support including offloading ambulances, moving patients and record keeping, he added. Sri Lanka's once vibrant public health care system is struggling as health care workers migrate, public health care expenditure is trimmed and costs increase. Sri Lanka's Cabinet approved a monthly transport allowance of 70,000 rupees (\$214) for doctors this week, sparking protests from other health care workers who responded with the strike. "Healthcare workers deserve to be treated the same," Ravi Kumudesh, convener of the Health Services Trade Union Alliance, told reporters.—APP

## Global warming escalates ocean temperatures

PARIS: In 2023, the world's oceans took up an enormous amount of excess heat, enough to "boil away billions of Olympic-sized swimming pools," according to an annual report published Thursday. Oceans cover 70 percent of the planet and have kept the Earth's surface livable by absorbing 90 percent of the excess heat produced by the carbon pollution from human activity since the dawn of the industrial age. In 2023, the oceans soaked up around 9 to 15 zettajoules more than in 2022, according to the respective estimates from the US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and the Chinese Institute of Atmospheric Physics (IAP). One zettajoule of energy is roughly equivalent to ten times the electricity generated worldwide in a year. "Annually the entire globe consumes around half a zettajoule of energy to fuel our economies," according to statement. "Another way to think about this is 15 zettajoules is enough energy to boil away 2.3 billion Olympic-sized swimming pools." In 2023, sea surface temperature and the energy stored in the upper 2000 meters of the ocean both reached record highs, according to the study published in the journal Advances in Atmospheric Sciences. The amount of energy stored in the oceans is a key indicator of global warming because it is less affected by natural climate variability than sea surface temperature.—APP

## Burundi closes border with Rwanda

KIGALI: The small African nation of Burundi on Thursday said it has severed relations and closed its border with neighboring Rwanda following accusations that Kigali supports Burundian rebels based in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Interior Minister Martin Niteretse announced the move, saying it was a response to Rwanda's alleged support for Burundi's Red Tabara rebels, blamed for last December's attack in which 20 people were killed along Burundi's western border with Congo, their much larger neighbor to the west. "All the borders are closed," he said while meeting security officials in the Kayanza province near the Rwandan border. Niteretse described Rwandan President Paul Kagame as a "bad neighbor harboring criminals who are destabilizing Burundi." Niteretse said Burundi had also decided to expel Rwandan citizens from its soil. In a statement, Rwanda said it regretted Burundi's "unilateral decision," which it said violates the principles of the East African Community bloc to which both countries belong. "This unfortunate decision will restrict the free movement of people and goods between the two countries and violate the principles of regional cooperation and integration of the East African Community," it said. The closure came about two weeks after Burundi's President Evariste Ndayishimiye accused Rwanda of backing the Red-Tabara rebel group, an accusation Rwanda has previously denied. The rebel group waged a war against Burundi's government in 2015. In 2015, Burundi closed its border with Rwanda amid a political crisis, accusing it of supporting protesters against the reelection of then-President Pierre Nkurunziza. It reopened the border some seven years later, in 2022.—DNA



CAIRO : Additional Foreign Secretary for the Middle East, Ambassador Rizwan Saeed Sheikh met with Egyptian Assistant Foreign Minister for Asia, Ambassador Ahmed Shaheen in Egyptian Foreign Ministry. They discussed the broad range of areas of cooperation between Pakistan and Egypt.—DNA

## Ramaphosa lauds legal team's Israel genocide defense

"I have never felt as proud as I felt today when our legal team was arguing our case in The Hague," said Cyril Ramaphosa

## NEWS DESK

JOHANNESBURG :South Africa's president said that he was pleased with how his country's legal team argued its case at the International Court of Justice (ICJ) against Israel for allegedly committing genocide in Gaza. "I have never felt as proud as I felt today when our legal team was arguing our case in The Hague," said Cyril Ramaphosa, addressing the Women's League of his ruling African National Congress (ANC) party. Ramaphosa said his country had put together a strong team of lawyers to represent South Africa's case at the top UN court in The Hague, the Netherlands. South Africa filed its case at the ICJ in December, arguing that Israel violated the 1948 Genocide Convention. It filed an 84-page document with the court detailing acts

it says amount to genocide in Gaza. The court heard South Africa's arguments on and will hear Israel's response on Friday. Many legal experts across the world said that South Africa's legal team presented a strong case backed with evidence.

South Africa's Justice Minister Ronald Lamola, who is leading the South African delegation to The Hague, told reporters: "We believe the court has heard our sight. They understand the urgency, and they will deliver the verdict within rea-

sonable time." South Africa's application wants the ICJ to compel Israel to stop its military action in Gaza, which has killed more than 23,000 Palestinians and reduced the coastal territory to ruins. "The commitment to justice and bringing an end to the humanitarian atrocities in Palestine resonate deeply with the collective consciousness of the global community," Lamola said, as he warned that "the scale of these actions is reminiscent of the Rwandan genocide 10 years ago." Iqbal Jassat, an executive member of the Johannesburg-based advocacy group Media Review Network, told Anadolu that South Africa's legal arguments were presented with great skill and professionalism by the country's high-powered team of renowned specialists in international law. He said this makes it unlikely for the ICJ to not grant the order requested by South Africa.

"We at Media Review Network are confident that the court will make a finding in favor of South Africa, by ruling that the threshold of plausibility has been met to impose provisional measures," he said. He said a victory for South Africa will be a huge setback for the government of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, for it will mean that none of his military goals, which to date have not been met, will be sunk in humiliation. Palestinian ambassador to South Africa Hanan Jarrar said she was grateful to South Africa for standing with Palestine and looks forward to seeing Israel brought to account by the UN court. She described the case as a beacon of hope for her country. "Injustice will not last forever. The apartheid regime will not last forever. Atrocities and colonization will not last forever," she said.





## Briefs

### PML-N awards NA-121 ticket to Rohail

DNA

LAHORE: As the February 8 general elections come close, the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) has decided to field veteran politician Sheikh Rohail Asghar for the contentious NA-121 constituency in Lahore, the party announced on Friday. Ayaz Sadiq – who was also jostling for the NA-121 – will contest the election from NA-120 on the party's ticket. With hopes for another big contest in Lahore, the PML-N has fielded former minister Attaulah Tarar against Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Chairman Bilawal-Bhutto Zardari in NA-127, Geo News reported. Other major leaders who have been handed out NA tickets in Lahore include party's supremo Nawaz Sharif (NA-130), President Shehbaz Sharif (NA-123), Hamza Shehbaz Sharif (NA-118), Maryam Nawaz Sharif (NA-119, NA-159) and Khawaja Saad Rafique (NA-122), among others. Party leader Senator Ishaq Dar posted about the development on his official X handle. For the provincial assembly seats, Shehbaz will also contest polls from PP-164 and PP-158, while Hamza and Maryam will fight for a seat in the PP-147 and PP-159 constituencies, respectively.

### RAW involved in terror acts in Balochistan

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Balochistan Information Minister Jan Achakzai has said Indian intelligence agency RAW is involved in terror acts in Balochistan. Talking to the media persons in Islamabad on Friday, Jan Achakzai said the enemy will not be allowed to succeed in its nefarious designs. The minister paid tributes to the security personnel rendering lives for the peace and security of Pakistan. Referring to the report submitted to the SC, the minister said that out of total 10,078 registered cases, 7,781 have been resolved and only 2,297 remained unresolved, of which 1,477 cases are related to kidnapping, ransom, runaways and family disputes. "As of now, only 820 people are missing," he claimed, adding that terrorist organisations registered their recruits as missing persons, who were later found dead in police encounters and suicide bombings.

### ECP delists 13 political parties

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has delisted thirteen political parties for not conducting intra-party polls. The election commission announced its verdict on the reserved judgment regarding intra-party polls of various political parties. The ECP revoked the registration of 13 parties while permitting two, namely JUP and Pakistan Muslim League Jinnah, to participate in the upcoming elections. In the verdict, the ECP expressed disappointment over the lack of seriousness exhibited by political parties regarding the conduct of intra-party elections. Delisted political parties encompassed All Pakistan Minority Alliance, All Pakistan Tehreek, Awami Party Pakistan, Bahawalpur National Awami Party, Sab Ka Pakistan, National Peace Council Party, Pakistan National Muslim League, Pakistan Aman Party, Pakistan Brabri Party, Masihi Awami Party, Pakistan Quomi Yek-jehi Party, Sunni Tehreek, and Nizam-e-Mustafa Party. Meanwhile, ECP has extended the time for candidates to withdraw their nominations for the upcoming general elections, scheduled for Feb. 8. The ECP had set 5pm on Jan. 12 as the deadline for candidates to withdraw their nominations, however, it extended the time period by a few hours.

# Houthis vow retaliation after US and UK strikes

Bin Amer noted that explosions were reported in several cities across Yemen, including the capital Sana'a and the western port city of Hudaydah

SANA'A: The Yemeni Ansarullah resistance movement strongly condemned the United States and United Kingdom after they launched full-scale strikes against targets in Yemen, warning their military bases across the region will come under attack if they opt to increase aggression. Strikes on Yemen came after Yemeni forces targeted several Israeli-owned and -bound shipping in the Red Sea in support of Palestinians in war-torn Gaza, where more than 23,000 Palestinians have been killed in Israeli onslaught since October 7. "Washington and London must acknowledge responsibility for aggravating the situation at the Red Sea, and the militarization of the body of water. They must be ready to embrace a heavy price, and bear all the deleterious consequences of this open aggression," Deputy Director of Ansarullah's Moral Guidance Department, Brigadier General Abdullah bin Amer, told the Qatari Arabic-language al-Jazeera television news network early on Friday. He added, "We (Yemeni Armed Forces) will target their bases across the region in case the United States and the United Kingdom increase their attacks [against Yemen]." Bin Amer noted that explosions were reported in several cities across Yemen, including the capital Sana'a and the western port city of Hudaydah, emphasizing that Yemeni forces will forcefully respond to the acts of aggression. "We will continue our operations in the Red Sea until the [Israeli] aggression against Gaza stops," the senior Ansarullah official stated. Early on

## Erdogan slams US, UK for turning Red Sea into sea of blood

FOREIGN DESK

Ankara: Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan condemned Friday the U.S. and British airstrikes on Yemen's Houthi rebels, saying the attack was would turn Red Sea into a "bloodbath." "First of all, they are not proportional. All of these constitute disproportionate use of force," Erdogan told journalists after Friday prayers in Istanbul. "It is as if they aspire to turn the Red Sea into a bloodbath." The U.S. and British strikes came in response to Houthi attacks on what they deemed to be Israeli-linked ships traveling in the Red Sea. Erdogan said his government had received news from various channels that the Houthis were conducting "successful defense and gave successful answers both to the U.S. and Britain." Speaking about South Africa's genocide case against Israel at International Court of Justice (ICJ), he said they had confidence in the Court and added that Türkiye contributed to documenting Israel's crimes. "All the documents we have given are seriously working in The Hague and we will continue to provide these documents ... I believe Israel will be found guilty," he said. "Netanyahu no longer has a hole to run to, no means to defend," added Erdogan.

Sea. Erdogan said his government had received news from various channels that the Houthis were conducting "successful defense and gave successful answers both to the U.S. and Britain." Speaking about South Africa's genocide case against Israel at International Court of Justice (ICJ), he said they had confidence in the Court and added that Türkiye contributed to documenting Israel's crimes. "All the documents we have given are seriously working in The Hague and we will continue to provide these documents ... I believe Israel will be found guilty," he said. "Netanyahu no longer has a hole to run to, no means to defend," added Erdogan. and Britain, with support from Australia, Bahrain, Canada, and the Netherlands. Biden said he would "not hesitate" to direct further measures against Yemeni targets. Meanwhile, the deputy foreign minister in Yemen's National Salvation Government warned that the US and UK strikes against targets in Yemen will come at a price. "Washington and London must prepare to pay a heavy price. Our country came under

sneak and massive air, ship and submarine strikes. Doubtless, the attacks will cost them dearly," Hussein al-Ezzi said. Yemenis have declared their open support for Palestine's struggle against the Israeli occupation since the regime launched a devastating war on Gaza on October 7 after the territory's Palestinian resistance movements carried out a surprise retaliatory attack, dubbed Operation Al-Aqsa Storm, against the occupying entity. The relentless Israeli military campaign against Gaza has killed at least 23,357 people, most of them women and children. Another 59,410 individuals have been wounded. Reports revealed that Israeli shipping companies have already decided to reroute their vessels in fear of attacks by Yemeni forces. Yemeni forces have also launched missile and drone attacks on targets in the Israeli-occupied territories after the regime's aggression on Gaza. Hamas and the Islamic Jihad movements have condemned the US and UK attacks against Yemen. "While we highly value the position of Yemen and its heroic people in standing with our Palestinian people in the battle of Al-Aqsa Flood, we affirm that the brutal aggression against Yemen is an uncalculated act of terrorism, carried out under the influence of the Zionist occupation and its extremist Nazi leadership, and will only increase tensions in the region," Hamas said in a statement. The Islamic Jihad group said the attacks "confirm that the US administration is the one conducting the genocidal war against the Palestinian people in Gaza". – Agencies

### Ata Tarar to face Bilawal from Lahore

ABID RAZA

LAHORE: The Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) has released the list of its candidates for the National Assembly and Punjab Assembly from Lahore District for the Feb 8 general elections. According to the list issued on X (formerly Twitter), the PML-N fielded veteran politician Sheikh Rohail Asghar for the NA-121 constituency in Lahore. Meanwhile, Ayaz Sadiq – who was also eye to contest from the same constituency – will contest the election from NA-120 on the party's ticket. The country would witness another big contest in Lahore as the PML-N fielded former minister Attaulah Tarar against Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Chairman Bilawal-Bhutto Zardari in NA-127. Among other leaders, PML-N supremo to contest from NA-130, President Shehbaz Sharif from NA-123, Hamza Shehbaz from NA-118, Maryam Nawaz from NA-119 and NA-159 and Khawaja Saad Rafique from NA-122. For the provincial assembly seats, Shehbaz Sharif will also contest polls from PP-164 and PP-158, while Hamza and Maryam from PP-147 and PP-159 constituencies, respectively. Earlier, it was reported that differences among the PML-N ranks emerged as the party could not decide on its ticket holder from NA 143.

### Achakzai withdraws papers in favour of Fazl

STAFF REPORT

QUETTA: Pashtoonkhwa Milli Awami Party (PkMAP) Chairman Mahmood Khan Achakzai has withdrawn his nomination papers from the National Assembly constituency of Pishin on Friday. According to the statement issued by the PkMAP, Achakzai has withdrawn his nomination papers from NA-265 Pishin in favour of another stalwart Maulana Fazlur Rehman of Jamiat Ulema-Islam (JUI-F). The chairman of PkMAP has directed the party to withdraw his nomination papers in favour of JUI-F chief. According to the reports, JUI-F chief is contesting from Pishin, Balochistan for the very first time. The withdrawal of Achakzai's papers will give great boost to JUI-F chief for Feb 8 elections.



ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Foreign Minister Jalil Abbas Jilani received Ambassador Dr. Drago Stambuk of Croatia accredited to Pakistan and discussed bilateral cooperation in a range of areas. – DNA

## PML-N, MQM-P fail to make seat adjustment on Karachi's NA-242

PML-N withdraws nomination papers of its president Shehbaz Sharif from NA-242 at 11th hour and fields Khawaja Shoab

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: In an unexpected development ahead of the February 8 general elections, the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) and the Muttahida Quami Movement-Pakistan (MQM-P) have failed to agree on seat adjustment in National Assembly constituency NA-242 (District Keamari). According to the latest move, the PML-N – former ruling party – withdrew the nomination papers of its president Shehbaz Sharif from NA-242 at the 11th hour and fielded Khawaja Shoab in the constituency, where he would face MQM-P Senior Deputy Convener Syed Mustafa Kamal – the former Karachi mayor. Earlier, reports were circulating on mainstream and social media that the MQM-P is likely to withdraw Kamal from the NA-242 in favour of the PML-N. Talking to journalists outside the office of the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP), PML-N leader Rana Mashhood Ahmad Khan confirmed that the former prime minister would not contest form NA-242, saying: "No can-

didate can contest for more than two seats." He further added, "I have come to withdraw the nomination papers of Shehbaz Sharif." On the other hand, the MQM-P gave its go-ahead to Ali Khurshidi to contest the upcoming elections from PS-119 (Karachi-West). It is pertinent to mention here that Shehbaz on December 29 had announced filing his nomination papers for the polls from Karachi's NA-242 constituency. He had contested from the NA-249 constituency – as per the previous delimitation – of Karachi in the 2018 general elections which he lost to Faisal Wawda, the then-Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leader, by a slight margin. A few days back it was reported that the MQM-P had entered seat adjustment with the PML-N for three NA constituencies. A private news channel reported that apart from Shehbaz, the PML-N would field its candidates on five NA seats – including NA-229, 230, and 239 – as well as 11 provincial assembly seats within these constituencies. Meanwhile, the MQM-P candidates would contest polls for the national and provincial assembly seats from Malir's NA-231 constituency, they said.

## Israeli occupation Forces step up attacks in Gaza Strip

At least 23,708 Palestinians have been killed and 60,005 wounded in Israeli attacks in the Gaza Strip since the start of the war

NEWS DESK

GAZA: Israeli occupation forces continue to commit the crime of genocide in the Gaza Strip for the 98th consecutive day Friday. They have carried out dozens of airstrikes, artillery shelling, and firebombing, resulting in bloody massacres against civilians. They have also committed horrific crimes in incursion axes, amidst a catastrophic humanitarian situation caused by the siege and the displacement of over 90% of the population. At least 23,708 Palestinians have been killed and 60,005 wounded in Israeli attacks in the Gaza Strip since the start of the war, the Palestinian Health Ministry said. Some 151 Palestinians had been killed and 248 injured in the past 24 hours, the ministry added. About 7,000 others are missing under the rubble and presumed dead, but are not counted as part of the official death toll. Local media reported that the Israeli aircraft and artillery continued their intense bombardment of various areas of the Gaza Strip over the past 24 hours, targeting homes, gatherings, facilities, and streets, resulting in hundreds of martyrs and casualties. At least 5 martyrs were killed as a result of the Israeli shelling of a house in the Al-Mashaala neighborhood west of Deir al-Balah in the central Gaza Strip. The Israeli occupation forces shelled

the southern and western neighborhoods of Khan Younis with artillery fire. Israeli artillery shelling continues on the Al-Bureij and Al-Maghazi refugee camps and the town of Al-Zawaida amidst fierce clashes. The municipality of Gaza warned of the danger of flooding the rainwater reservoir in Sheikh Radwan in northern Gaza due to continued rainfall and the water level reaching a critical point. International institutions were called upon to urgently intervene and provide the necessary fuel to operate water pumps. The heavy rains and cold weather have exacerbated the suffering of hundreds of thousands of displaced people and caused their tents to be flooded. The displaced people living in shelters in northern Gaza are facing catastrophic conditions due to the ongoing Israeli siege and the prevention of fuel supplies to municipalities, leading to disrupting their services. Last night, medical sources reported that 30 martyrs arrived at Khan Younis hospitals in the past 24 hours as a result of continuous Israeli shelling in various parts of the province. The Israeli warplanes carried out intense airstrikes in central Khan Younis and targeted ambulance and rescue crews while they were working on transporting the wounded and retrieving the martyrs. Last night, 9 civilians were martyred and others were injured in an Israeli shelling that targeted a house in the Al-Shawka area, east of Rafah city in southern Gaza. The Palestinian Red Crescent Society reported that its crews transferred 9 martyrs following the Israeli targeting of the Abu Seneima family's house on the Airport Street in Rafah. Meanwhile, For the 14th consecutive week, Israeli authorities imposed tight restrictions on Palestinians, banning them from entering Aqsa Mosque in Occupied Jerusalem for Friday prayers, leaving the mosque all but empty.

## PTI announces election candidates from Peshawar

SHAMIM SHAHID

PESHAWAR: The Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) has announced the names of its candidates for national and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa assemblies' seats from Peshawar for the February 8 general elections. The PTI has fielded Shandana Gulzar from the NA-30 constituency, Sajid Nawaz, Arbab Amir, Arbab Sher Ali and Asif Khan will be PTI candidates from different constituencies in Peshawar. The PTI said it will not issue a ticket to Sher Afzal Marwat in Peshawar. On December 27, 2023, PTI leader from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Taimur Khan Jhagra raised objections over Marwat's contesting polls from Peshawar after the latter had submitted his nomination papers for the NA-32 constituency in Peshawar. "It would be better if a leader from Peshawar contested from that constituency," Jhagra had said. Meanwhile, speaking to media, Marwat had said that he had no interest in contesting the polls. "The PTI founder has directed me to contest elections from Peshawar," he had added. On the flip side, Mehmood Jan, Taimur Jhagra, Kamran Bangash, Arbab Jehandad, Fazal Elahi, Hamidul Haq, Asim Khan, Mina Khan, Ali Zaman, Malik Shahab, Samiullah, Sher Ali Afridi and Noreen Arif will get PTI tickets for provincial seats in Peshawar, the party said. On January 10, the Peshawar High Court (PHC) restored the PTT's electoral symbol 'bat' paving the way for the party to head to polls with its iconic symbol in February 8 polls.

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