



Islamabad POST

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Maldives tells India to withdraw troops by March as row deepens

Detailed News On Page-08

China calls for 'independent, state of Palestine

Detailed News On Page-07



Rizwan achieves major milestone in T20I

Detailed News On Page-06



100 days of Genocide Death, destruction continue in Gaza

Israel's relentless bombardment and ground assault of Gaza has killed nearly 24,000 Palestinians – roughly one percent of the besieged strip's population of 2.3 million

NEWS DESK

GAZA: Dozens of Palestinian civilians were killed and dozens of others were injured, while a number of missing persons were reported, in a series of raids launched by Israeli occupation aircraft, artillery, and gunboats on various areas in the Gaza Strip. On the 100th day of the ongoing Israeli aggression on the Gaza Strip, medical sources at Shifa complex in Gaza City said that four people were killed, including three from the Sheikh Ajlin neighborhood. At least one citizen was killed and several others were injured as a result of an Israeli bombing that targeted a civilian car in the Nuseirat camp in the central Gaza Strip. Two citizens were killed and others were injured in an Israeli occupation aircraft bombing two citizens while they were repairing a sewage line in the town of Abasan, east of Khan Yunis, south of the Gaza Strip. From murdering children to bombing hospitals and schools to spawning the worst humanitarian crisis to rendering people homeless, the Israeli regime has done everything since October 7 to crush the resolve of Gazans, but to no avail. We review the 100 days of the Israeli genocidal war on Gaza and the horrors it has brought upon Palestinians in the besieged coastal territory. Around 100,000 Palestinians in the Gaza Strip have been killed, reported missing, or wounded since the beginning of "Israel's" genocidal war on the Gaza Strip, the Euro-Med Human Rights Monitor reported. According to the report, as of January 13, 2024, at least 31,497 Palestinians in Gaza have been killed, out of whom 92% are civilians (28,951 people).

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Rallies held worldwide in solidarity with Gaza

FOREIGN DESK

LONDON: Pro-Palestinian protesters took to the streets around the world on the "day of action," calling for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza as the Israeli aggression reached the 100-day mark. Tens of thousands of pro-Palestine demonstrators rallied in Pakistan's commercial capital Karachi to demand an end to Israel's hostilities in the battered Gaza Strip, which reached on Sunday a grim 100-day mark. Protesters marched on different roads, waving tri-color Palestinian flags and wearing keffiyeh scarves, before congregating on Shar-e-Faisal, the city's busiest road. The rally was organized by Jamaat-e-Islami (JI), the country's mainstream religious-political party, and was attended by a large number of women and children, including many of them wearing headbands engraved with pro-Palestine slogans. Local Christian and Hindu leaders were also among the attendees. Local security officials and observers estimated that 20,000 to 25,000 people attended the rally. "Stop genocide in Gaza," a huge banner emblazoned with images of Israeli bombing victims read.

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KARACHI: Tens of thousands of pro-Palestine demonstrators rallied in Karachi to demand an end to Israel's genocidal war. – DNA

PM arrives in Zurich

Kakar would deliver keynote address on theme "Trade Tech's Trillion Dollar Promise" during visit

DNA

ZURICH: Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaarul Haq Kakar arrived in Zurich on Sunday to participate in the 54th Annual Meeting of the World Economic Forum (WEF) in Davos to be held from January 15 to 19. Pakistan's Permanent Representative to Geneva Bilal Ahmed, Pakistan's Ambassador to Switzerland

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PTI kicks off campaign with rally in Karachi

PTI central leader Sher Afzal Marwat leads public gathering at most-popular public place in port city

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: A day after failure in all-out efforts to retain its iconic electoral symbol 'bat', the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) on Sunday kicked off its campaign for the upcoming national-level polls with a rally led by its central leader Sher Afzal Marwat at Karachi's Sea View beach. The Imran Khan-founded party lost the legal battle on Saturday when the Supreme Court announced its verdict in the Election Commission of Pakistan's (ECP) favour, depriving the former ruling party of its electoral symbol, which represented the party supremo's life as a cricketer, just days

Continued on Page 06

New resolution seeking polls postponement lands in Senate

Independent Senator Hilal-ur-Rehman submits a resolution to Senate Secretariat

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: Another resolution has been submitted to the Senate Secretariat on Sunday seeking a delay in the general elections slated for February 8 citing harsh weather conditions and

Continued on Page 06

Pakistan suffer defeat in 2nd T20I against NZ

Visitors struggled in target chase from start as they lost both of their openers within first overs for just 10 runs

SPORTS DESK

HAMILTON: New Zealand inched closer to winning the series after defeating Pakistan in the second T20I match by 21 runs at Seddon Park, Hamilton, on Sunday.

Continued on Page 06

Briefs

Maryam to launch election drive from today

ABID RAZA

LAHORE: As the electioneering has failed to gain the traditional momentum with the political parties delaying campaign for the reasons not explained, Maryam Nawaz is scheduled to address a rally in Okara (Monday) – a move that will certainly boost the voters' mood. In a post shared on X, the social media platform which was previously known as Twitter, PML-N Spokesperson Marriyum Aurangzeb said Maryam – who is the party's chief organiser and widely believed as the political scion of three-time prime minister Nawaz Sharif – would share the important points of the manifesto to the crowd at Iqbal Stadium, Okara.

Rashid kick-starts election campaign

ADIL SHAHEEN

RAWALPINDI: Awami Muslim League chief and former federal minister Sheikh Rashid Ahmed on Sunday started his election campaign from National Assembly constituency NA-56. When Rashid came out of Lal Haveli along with his nephew Raashid Shafiq, a large number of workers greeted him and showered rose petals on him. In his message to the people of Rawalpindi, he said he did not desert anyone in his difficult times. "I am the only politician of Pakistan who did not hold any press conference, have not and will not use un-parliamentary and foul language against anyone," he added. Rashid said he helped set up 60 educational institutions and four universities in the country.

After bat's exit

Contest only between PPP, PML-N: Bilawal

You have to decide if you want to give the country's fate in the hands of a person who served as prime minister thrice but failed to do anything for the country," Bilawal said

STAFF REPORT

DERA MURAD JAMALI: PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari said on Sunday that only two political parties – his own and the PML-N – remained in the electoral arena, urging the nation to vote for the 'arrow' in the upcoming general election. The comments came a day after the PTI lost the battle for its iconic 'bat' electoral symbol, forcing its candidates to contest the polls as independents. "Only two parties are left now," Bilawal said while addressing a rally in Balochistan's Dera Murad Jamali. "You have to decide between the PPP and the PML-N," he said. The former foreign minister said that the people had to use their vote to determine if they wanted the



same politics to continue or "new thinking" to prevail. "You have to decide if you want to give the country's fate in the hands of a person who served as prime minister thrice but failed to do anything for the country," Bilawal said, taking aim at PML-N

Continued on Page 06

Another 'judicial casualty': victim is a political party this time

COMMENT

ANSAR M BHATTI

THE historical significance of January 13, 2024, will forever be etched in the political and judicial archives of Pakistan as a somber day, marking the unsettling exclusion of the prominent political entity, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), from the impending elections set for February 8, 2024. This unsettling development unfolded on the grounds of what can only be described as purely technical reasons, casting a shadow reminiscent of the dark chapters in Pakistan's past. The Supreme Court, led by Chief Justice Qazi Faez Isa, and comprising Justice Mohammad Ali Mazhar and Justice Musarrat Hilali, delivered a 'stringent' verdict against the PTI, citing apparent violations of intra-party election procedures outlined in both the party's constitution and the guidelines established by the Election Commission of Pakistan. Critics argue that these grounds seem somewhat trivial, given the pervasive challenges faced by political parties across Pakistan in conducting flawless intra-party elections. The selective enforcement of these technicalities, singling out the PTI, raises questions about the consistency and impartiality of such legal actions. This episode joins the ranks of infamous judicial events, including the tragic judicial fate of PPP leader Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and the ousting of PML leader Nawaz Sharif in the Panama case. Strikingly, the common thread connecting these three political dismissals is their confrontation with the Establishment. In each instance, those who dared to challenge the status quo found themselves on the wrong side of the political spectrum, meeting a fate reminiscent of the proverbial judicial murder. The echoes of history resound in the parallel narra-



tives of these political leaders, all of whom became casualties in their endeavor to contest the dominance of the Establishment. As the nation grapples with the aftermath of this latest setback, the events of January 13, 2024, serve as a stark reminder of the complex interplay between politics and power in Pakistan, where challenging the established order comes with profound consequences. The recent developments in Pakistan raise concerns about the potential weakening of the political and democratic order in the country. Unfortunately, the decisions made seem to cast a shadow over the future of democracy in Pakistan. The responsibility for this situation falls not only on the decision-makers but also on the political parties, who share equal blame for the current state of affairs. It is disheartening to observe that political parties, in pursuit of short-term gains, often align themselves with the forces maintaining the status quo. However, when they themselves become targets of such decisions later on, they lament their earlier choices. This opportunistic approach by political parties ultimately harms the democratic fabric of the nation. Drawing lessons from recent history, it becomes apparent that in 2018, the PTI ascended to power with the support of the Establishment. However, as the party flexed its muscles, it eventually fell out of favor and was sidelined. Presently, the PML N seems to enjoy the favor of the Establishment, positioning itself as the chosen one. With the backing of influential circles, the PML N is determined to seize power. The party's leader, Nawaz Sharif, emerges as the top contender for the coveted position of prime minister. Following the PTI's exit from the political arena, the PML N stands poised to secure the necessary majority to establish a government at the federal level. All said and done, the real question that boggles everybody's minds is whether the upcoming elections will have any credibility when one of the leading political parties shall not be taking part in this drill as a party because after the apex court verdict, the PTI candidates have been rendered independents, which means every candi-

date will have a separate election symbol. Let me borrow following few lines from my previous article titled 'PML-N-Establishment nexus' published in this newspaper on December 5, 2023. "In a bid to curtail the PTI's chances, there is speculation that the party might face the removal of its distinctive election symbol – the 'bat.' This strategic move aims to disrupt the party's connection with voters, particularly in rural areas where illiteracy prevails. The risk lies in the potential confusion among voters, accustomed to identifying the PTI by the 'bat' symbol. Altering this familiar emblem could create a hurdle for the party as voters may struggle to navigate the ballot". The recent developments in Pakistan underscore a disconcerting reality – a seeming lack of commitment to ensuring a free, fair, and inclusive national election. Instead of prioritizing the democratic principles that underpin the electoral process, there's a conspicuous emphasis on securing victory for preferred parties. This raises legitimate concerns about the integrity of the electoral system. The responsibility for the current situation lies not only with the PTI lawyers but also with the incumbent leadership. Firstly, they should have prioritized conducting intra-party elections with the utmost transparency. Recognizing the potential for opponents to exploit any perceived shortcomings, the party should have pursued a meticulous and fair electoral process. Moreover, to strengthen their legal position, the PTI leadership ought to have engaged reputable lawyers beyond those affiliated with the party. By bringing in legal experts with a broader perspective, the party could have presented a more compelling and comprehensive case before the apex court. It is disheartening to observe a preordained nature to these events, with outcomes seemingly predetermined well in advance of the actual election. The question that looms large is what international election observers will have to report, given the apparent lack of genuine competition and the perception

that everything has been orchestrated well before the electorate has had a chance to cast their votes. In the pursuit of a truly democratic society, it is crucial that elections are conducted transparently, allowing for a diverse range of voices to be heard. The current trajectory, however, paints a picture of a process where the notion of a level playing field is compromised, and the democratic spirit is overshadowed by partisan interests. This scenario not only undermines the credibility of the electoral process but also raises doubts about the legitimacy of the outcomes. International election observers, tasked with evaluating the fairness of elections, will likely face a challenging task in reconciling the observed realities with the principles of democratic governance. For Pakistan to build a robust and trustworthy democratic system, there must be a collective commitment to fostering an environment where electoral processes are not only free and fair but are also perceived as such by the citizens and the international community. The current state of affairs, as witnessed in recent events, demands a reevaluation of priorities to safeguard the democratic principles that form the bedrock of a truly representative government. At the same time, it is crucial for political stakeholders to prioritize the long-term well-being of democracy over immediate gains. Collaborative efforts should be directed towards building a resilient and inclusive political system, free from the influence of vested interests. In conclusion, it is imperative for justice that Chief Justice of Pakistan, Qazi Faez Isa, should have recused himself from the bench due to concerns raised by analysts about a 'potential bias' against the PTI. This speculation stems from the fact that he faced a Presidential reference during the party's tenure in power, leading to an impression that he might be seeking to settle scores now. Interestingly, the PTI's legal representatives did not raise objections to the bench's composition. If the party leaders are contemplating such objections in the future, it may be too late, as the damage caused cannot be undone now.

Veterinary Pharma joins PIAF after registration

Fahimur Rehman Saigol congratulates core committee of PVPA

ADIL SHAHEEN

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Veterinary Pharma Association (PVPA) has announced to join Pakistan Industrial and Traders Associations Front (PIAF) after its formal registration here at a ceremony held today. The PIAF Chairman Fahimur Rehman Saigol, while congratulating the core committee of PVPA on the occasion of joining the Front, observed that the regularization of the new Association is a welcome step, as it would facilitate conveyance of relevant sector issues to the power corridor through the platform of the PIAF.

The representatives of the Association including Dr. Saleh, Malik Abid Sarwar, Dr. Sujeel Das, Dr. Usman, Dr. Majid Ijaz and others thanked the PIAF leaders for giving them a wonderful welcome and providing all

kinds of support. On this occasion, Fahimur Rahman Saigol said that the problems of the business community will be brought to the relevant authorities in consultation with the relevant sectors as usual. He said that traders pay taxes and are the backbone of the economy, so, their problems should be solved on priority bases. Fahimur Rahman said that PVPA's joining in PIAF will make PIAF more powerful and strong in the country to highlight the business community issues. On this occasion Patron-in-Chief Mian Anjum Nisar, former presidents including Muhammad Ali Mian, Senior Vice Chairman Nasrullah Mughal, Vice Chairman Tahir Manzoor Chaudhary, Senior Vice President Lahore Chamber Zafar Mahmood also congratulated the veterinary and pharma doctors and their representatives for joining the PIAF. On this occasion, Mian Anjum Nisar and Muhammad Ali Mian said in

their address that PIAF is the strength of businessmen and business class and it is their voice which has been strongly advocating for the rights of the business community and solving their problems in every forum. The representatives of the association were asked to present their problems by making import and export documents so that it would be easy to convey them to the relevant authorities. PIAF has been advocating for the business community from the platform of the Federation of Pakistan Chambers not only in Lahore but also at the Pakistan level for the past 26 years. On this occasion, Dr. Saleh and others thanked the PIAF leadership for the honor and said that they will leave no stone unturned in joint service with the PIAF family. Apart from PIAF Senator leadership, Coordinator Rana Nadeem Abbas, Umar Sarfraz Sheikh and others were also present in the ceremony.



ISLAMABAD : Rawalpindi Islamabad photojournalist association professional elections group photo of newly elected President Sajjad Haider Jazal Secretary Mudassar Raja Finance Secretary Muhammad Asim.—DNA

PIMS denies reports regarding closure of its OT

ISLAMABAD : Pakistan Institute of Medical Sciences (PIMS) has contradicted the news item appearing in a section of press on closure of its Operation Theatre (OT). In a statement on Sunday, Dr Mubashar Mushtaq Dahi, spokesperson to Executive Director PIMS said that such news about the federal capital's largest government hospital were baseless. According to the records, supplies are being received in PIMS for emergency operations, he added. He said that supply was being provided according to the demand of the procedure. The list displayed outside the OT is baseless and the PIMS administration has nothing to do with it. Who put the list outside the OT and under what purpose, investigations are being done, he said. "PIMS has sent a request for release of funds to the concerned department while the OT was not closed and still working."

Only one dengue case reported in Punjab

LAHORE : Dengue has almost been eliminated from Punjab as only one case was reported in the whole of province on Sunday. The latest Health Department data reveals that so far 16 confirmed dengue cases were recorded across 36 districts in Punjab during the year 2024 as 10 cases were reported in Lahore, two each in Rawalpindi and Faisalabad and one each in Gujrat and Vehari.—APP

SCCI concerned over rising environmental pollution

DNA

PESHAWAR : President Sarhad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI) Fuad Ishaq has expressed grave concern over increasing environmental pollution in wake of using alternative sources of fuel by people owing to low gas pressure issue. He urged the caretaker Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Justice (R) Syed Arshad Hussain Shah, Governor Haji Ghulam Ali, provincial Chief Secretary and district administration to make contact on emergent grounds with centre and resolve these issues once for all. In a meeting with Additional Deputy Commissioner (ADC) Peshawar Sania Safi in her office, Fuad Ishaq apprised him that the SCCI has taken up issue gas with federal government, relevant ministry and high ups in an efficient way because unjust was being carried out with

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. During the meeting, presidents of city bazaar, traders' leaders and members of the business community were present in a large number, said a press release issued here Sunday. The SCCI chief said the people in Peshawar along with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa have been compelled to use the traditional way as an alternative source of fuel for fulfillment of requirements of routine life. The traditional methods, like use of timber, coal and other sources are causing an increase of environment pollution, and there is fear of spread of lungs and respiratory diseases, Fuad added. The SCCI chief told the senior official that the total gas production of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is 550 MMCFDs whereas gas consumption in the province is 200MMCFDs and rest of 350MMCFDs were given in national grid if the 200MMCFDs were fully supplied to KP so

the gas issues would be resolved. Besides, he said that resolution of the gas issue would remove tension of people along with the wheel of business and industries would continue to run and people would also avail employment opportunities in the province. Fuad Ishaq said Article 158 of the Constitution of the country has guaranteed the first right of natural gas and other resources of the province where the natural gas is being produced. The SCCI further said KP was put into the basket of RLNG, contrary to it, subsidy has been given to Punjab. In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, 3900 MMBTU gas for commercial consumers and 2700 MMBTU gas for industrial consumers while fertilizer sector was provided gas at low cost in Punjab, Fuad added. He said that the weightage average cost of gas (WACOG) policy of gas should be determined at provincial level.

IG distributes plot documents to martyrs' families

FAISALABAD : Inspector General (IG) Police Punjab Dr Usman Anwar distributed documents of plots among the families of police martyrs. During his visit to Faisalabad, the IG presided over a ceremony and said that the services of police martyrs would be remembered forever as their sacrifices brought laurels to the department.

He said that it was the first and foremost duty of the police to provide safety and security to the lives and properties of the masses and in this connection, loyal police

officials sacrificed their lives while performing duties to control crime and provide a safe and secured atmosphere. The police department would remember sacrifices of its employees and take welfare steps of their families also, he added. Regional Police Officer (RPO) Dr Muhammad Abid, City Police Officer (CPO) Captain (Retired) Muhammad Ali Zia and other police officers were also present on the occasion.—APP

Global collaboration key for AI advantages

MULTAN :The two-day Artificial Intelligence and Information Technology Conference was concluded at Women's University here Sunday with a call for increased global collaboration to address the challenges posed by the rapid development of Information Technology. Highlighting the positive impact of artificial intelligence (AI) on human consciousness and task efficiency, Vice Chancellor Professor Dr. Kulsoom Paracha stated that it would help manage difficult task with ease and effectiveness. She also acknowledged the need for international cooperation, particularly in cybersecurity, as the growing development of Artificial Intelligence introduces new security concerns especially cybercrimes.

Dr. Paracha stressed the transformative potential of AI in accelerating the development of underdeveloped countries but also warned of job displacement like it was observed during industrial revolutions. Anticipating significant job shifts due to AI, she raised concerns about potential competition for resources and the misuse of AI. As per experts view, nearly 300 million people will lose their jobs, she alarmed. Through Artificial intelligence, machines will replace men. Some other speakers advocated for the establishment of new laws and robust ethical frameworks to regulate and limit AI. Artificial Intelligence is a modern concept. We will have to move forward along with the world, she added. The AI will revolutionize the world. Pakistan will

have to contribute its share in this revolution, Kalsoom suggested. Dr. Khadija Kanwal, the focal person of the conference, announced that the presented papers, of international quality, would be published in HEC approved journals, contributing valuable insights to the field. The Women's University is set to include this conference permanently in its calendar, recognizing the importance of ongoing discussions around AI and technology. The event showcased 50 research papers, attracting participation from both faculty and students, promising far-reaching results and contributing to the global discourse on the responsible advancement of artificial intelligence. Participants also received certificates on this occasion.—APP



RAWALPINDI : Punjab Colleges organized inter-schools elocution competition winners along with Chief Guest Rana Abdul Baqi, Director Chaudhry Akram and Deputy Director Colleges Amjad Iqbal.—DNA

IMF funding limited amidst growth instability

Mian Anjum Nisar says Pakistan needs sound economic management

DNA

ISLAMABAD: As the Executive Board of the International Monetary Fund has completed the 1st review Stand By Arrangement, allowing for disbursement of \$ 700 million, bringing the total disbursements to \$ 1.9 billion for Pakistan, the Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry's Businessmen Panel (BMP) has warned that a bailout from the IMF alone was unlikely to speed up economic growth, as the political instability and lack of reforms would further deteriorate the financial situation in the country. FPCCI former

president and BMP Chairman Mian Anjum Nisar observed that amidst continuous of hike in cost of production in the country, what the Pakistan's economy really needs is persistent and sound economic management. He asked the authorities for undertaking economic reforms and improving the regulatory environment to boost foreign investment so that financial stability can be achieved in the long-run. The Businessmen Panel (BMP) chief stressed the need for reducing cost of doing business, besides evolving a new price control mechanism, as huge taxation, rising oil prices and constant jump in elec-

tricity and gas tariffs have lifted the inflation to decades high level in 2023. Mian Anjum Nisar warned the authorities that inflation above 6 percent can hurt economic growth and a careful policy is required to keep it in control. He said that the pace of inflation is skyrocketing at a time when the economic activity is slowing down. As the oil prices have been increased and power tariff has gone up further the BMP chairman stated that the government has dropped a fuel bomb on the businessmen after it suffered an electric shock to meet the conditions of IMF for the revival of the stalled loan program—a rec-

ipe to shake the trade and industry. The FPCCI former president said that the decision would prove detrimental to the industries due to high cost of doing business and will also open the floodgates of inflation. In addition to making the electricity bills costlier and unaffordable for the consumers, the hike in base tariff would escalate prices of all household goods being widely used in every household, he added. He termed the increase in tariff unlawful and a violation of NEPRA's own rules and regulations, as any increase in tariff has to be determined and implemented only after holding public

hearings but unfortunately they have solely decided to raise the tariff without holding public hearings, he argued. He condemned the National Electric Power Regulatory Authority's decision to increase electricity tariffs, stating that the burden of power theft, mismanagement, and inefficiencies cannot be shifted to consumers on the pretext of fuel adjustment. Mian Anjum Nisar said that Pakistan's industry had been harmed by the high cost of doing business, which discouraged investment in capacity and capability and called for easing the burden of heavy taxes on the power sector.



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National Days and Armed Forces Days

JANUARY

Jan 01 / CUBA
Revolution Day

Jan 01 / Palestine
Palestine Revolution Day

Jan 01 / Sudan
National Day

Jan 04 / Myanmar
Independence Day

Jan 06 / Iraq
Armed Forces Day

Jan 12 / Tanzania
Armed Forces Day

Jan 14 / Uzbekistan
Armed Forces Day

Jan 15 / Nigeria
Armed Forces Day

Jan 20 / Mali
Armed Forces Day


Jan 20 / Laos
Armed Forces Day

Jan 25 / Thailand
Armed Forces Day

Jan 26 / Australia
National Day

Jan 26 / India
Republic Day


Hotels & Restaurants



Serena Hotel.....111 133 133

Marriott.....051- 2826121

Monal.....0334-5421812



Turkish Airlines.....8494949

Emergency

Rescue (Police).....15

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DHQ.....5556311-4

RGH.....9290301-7

Holy Family.....9290322-7

PIMS.....9261170-79

Polyclinic.....9218300-09

Shifa International 4603666

Departments

CDA.....9221334-43

CDA.....9208301-04

Met Office.....9250360-6

RDA.....5555864

TMA.....5770886

Cantonment Board 9270151-3

Water Tank

Islamabad.....0321-5744480

PIDE launches debate on reform on key sectors

Each political party that aspires to be sworn into power must address each of the publication's sections, which have rarely – if ever – been discussed at a structural level

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Institute of Development Economics (PIDE) launched its latest issue of Discourse Magazine this week, an extensive publication that seeks to initiate a nationwide debate on the reform of key sectors, domains, and institutions. According to its Chief Editor, Abbas Moosvi, Pakistan has failed to overhaul its colonial-era state configurations – top-down, extractive, and bureaucratic – which is the primary reason for its current socioeconomic and political woes. In light of the upcoming election cycle, which seems to be arriving at a critical juncture, the issue emphasizes that the time is optimal for taking a radical departure from current institutional arrangements to foster a Pakistan that works for the

many – not just the privileged few. Fifteen unique areas are covered in 'Discourse – Reconfiguring Pakistan: State, Society, and Economy,' which include Reconceptualizing Development, Constitutional Reform, Political Contestation, Parliament and Civil Service, Economic Policy, Foreign Aid, Energy, Trade and Industry, Land and Agriculture, Labour Relations, Education, Public Welfare, Cities and Local Governance, Climate, and Society and Culture. According to the Press Release issued by the Pakistan Institute of Development Economics (PIDE), the publication features a substantial number of high-profile names from the academic domain, political sphere, legal fraternity, media sector, government bureaucracy, diplomatic circle, business community, development network, and more, to offer a framework

within which a productive policy agenda may be formulated. According to the Editor, each political party that aspires to be sworn into power must address each of the publication's sections, which have rarely – if ever – been discussed at a structural level. Colonial-era governance arrangements based on extraction have unfortunately continued to persist, with the White man simply being replaced by the 'Brown sahib'. Without the elimination of these oppressive modalities, Pakistan will most likely continue to sink into further indebtedness, economic precarity, and socio-political instability; glimpses of which have been observed across the country in recent months. He further went on to claim that whilst incompetent individuals in the corridors of power are a primary reason for all this, an

equally important point of consideration is the political economy that is responsible for their entry and overdue stay. Technical innovations into electoral processes are naturally going to be part of this, but a broader bird's eye view is pertinent to identify the various mechanisms – sometimes referred to as 'feeders' – that form the system of political contestation. These include unions, associations, empowered local governments, freedom of speech/assembly, unimpeded arts/culture, respect for human rights, and an overall dynamic, robust civil society that can check entrenched power structures. It is largely acknowledged in academic circles that prosperity is ultimately downstream of good governance, but what this means in our specific context remains ambiguous. Policy formulation

in Pakistan is predominantly outsourced to international financial institutions and multilateral donor agencies, which are known to adopt a one-size-fits-all approach to their proposals – reproducing them in a wide array of countries across the Global South with little to no attention paid to the situation on the ground. The reason for this, of course, is that governing elites have approached their roles with the objective of rent-seeking: extracting resources from the global economy (mostly in the form of credit agreements) that are ultimately paid for by the already vulnerable working class population via indirect taxation on goods and services. These concerns bleed into all others – resulting in the situation today, in which Pakistan finds itself on the brink of sovereign default and at the mercy of the predatory International Monetary Fund.

Renowned playwright, poet Asghar Nadeem Syed turns 74

ISLAMABAD: Renowned playwright, poet, and intellectual Asghar Nadeem Syed turned 74 on Sunday. Born on January 14, 1950, in Multan to a Syed family, he received his master's degree in Urdu language from the University of Punjab, Lahore, and completed his PhD at Bahauddin Zakariya University in Multan. Asghar Nadeem Syed has written many famous dramas for television. His dramas depict the social injustices in society. He has written plays depicting the feudal culture in rural areas, the exploitation of women, the oligarchic structure in Pakistan, comprising politicians, feudals, media moguls, and the bureaucracy. Some of his famous television plays written by Asghar Nadeem Syed included Chand Grehan, Nijaa, Hawai, Pyas, Maigh Malhar, Ghulam Gardish, Riyasat, Bol Meri Machli, Khuda Zameen Se Gaya Nahin, Tum Ho Ke Chup, and Jaan'nisar. In 2013, he served on the Board of Governors of the Pakistan Academy of Letters, and in 2020, he was appointed as one of the directors of Pakistan Television. He has written three books, including Aadhe Chand Ki Raat, Tarz-e-Ehsas, and Adhoori Kulliyat. —APP

China-Pakistan cargo route launched to facilitate air transport

ISLAMABAD: A new air cargo route was launched linking Ezhou Huahu Airport in central China's Hubei Province with Lahore, said SF Airlines, China's largest air cargo carrier in fleet size. The Ezhou-Lahore cargo route is the first international air cargo route launched by SF Airlines in this year departing from Ezhou Huahu Airport, China's first cargo-focused airport, Gwadar Pro reported on Sunday. The Ezhou-Lahore route is planned to operate three times a week, providing over 300 tons of air transport capacity from Ezhou to Lahore every week. The transported goods mainly include textiles, 3C electronic products, electronic equipment, etc. The opening of this international cargo route is an important measure for Huahu Airport to further increase routes to South Asia. It will provide an efficient and stable air logistics channel for economic and trade exchanges between China and Pakistan, and provide more logistics convenience for Chinese brands to explore the Pakistani market. Previously, SF Airlines has opened two direct cargo routes from Ezhou to South Asia, Ezhou-Delhi and Ezhou-Chennai. The opening of the new Pakistani route will further strengthen Ezhou's South Asian air transport network. SF Airlines, the aviation branch of China's leading courier enterprise SF Express, to date has launched a total of 11 international cargo routes from Ezhou to global destinations. —APP

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's ambassador of UAE Faisal Tirmizi called on Director General Anti Narcotic Forces at his office. —DNA

The first batch of Pakistani dried chili arrives in China

The aromatic and spicy nature of Pakistani chilies makes them an essential ingredient in many Chinese dishes, adding a distinct flavor and enhancing the overall culinary experience

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The first batch of Pakistan's high-quality dried chilies, weighing 182 tonnes, has finally made its way to the Neijiang city of Sichuan Province, China, China Economic Net (CEN) reported on Sunday. This significant shipment marks a new chapter in the trade relations between the two nations and is expected to pave the way for increased economic cooperation, said Khalil Hashmi, Pakistan's ambassador to China. Addressing the ceremony for the arrival and warehousing of

the dried chili under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor Agricultural Co-operation Project, Ambassador Khalil Hashmi said that Pakistan, known for its flavorful and aromatic spices, has long been recognized as a major exporter of dried chilies. The country's unique climatic conditions and fertile soil provide the perfect environment for cultivating these fiery red peppers, which are renowned for their exceptional taste and quality. He further said that the arrival of the first batch of dried chilies in Neijiang City is a significant milestone in the long-standing friendship

between Pakistan and China. It not only strengthens economic ties but also fosters cultural exchange, allowing Chinese consumers to experience the rich flavors of Pakistani cuisine. The representative of the company said that the imported dried chilies have generated a buzz among local traders and spice enthusiasts. The shipment arrived in excellent condition, showcasing the efficiency of the logistics and supply chain systems involved in the operation. He further noted that Chinese importers and spice traders had eagerly awaited the arrival of these dried chilies.

Pakistan Railways should be sold

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Former President of the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI), Dr. Shahid Rasheed Butt, said on Friday that there is no future for railways in Pakistan, therefore it should be sold without any delay. All the efforts to rehabilitate railways have failed; therefore, this sick enterprise should be sold instead of new experiments, which will waste time and money. Shahid Rasheed Butt said in a statement issued here today that once railways were the most popular and cheapest means of transporting passengers and goods, but now it is a failed enterprise with no hope of revival. He said that railways could not function in a country where transporters and contractors make important decisions in assemblies. In such a country, trucks will continue to replace the railways; billions will be wasted on constructing unnecessary roads.

Election symbols assigned to 119 candidates across three federal capital constituencies

ISLAMABAD: The District Returning Office (DRO) in Islamabad has allotted election symbols to a total of 119 candidates across the three constituencies of the federal capital. According to the list issued by the DRO, a total of 44 candidates will be vying for seats in NA-46, while 29 contenders from NA-46 have opted to run as independents in the elections. Sixteen candidates from various political parties will be testing their luck in NA-46. Mustafain Kazmi, an independent candidate competing in NA-46, has been designated the election symbol of a parachute, while Shoaib Shaheen's symbol will be shoes. NA-47 will witness the participation of 37 candidates, with 25 running independently and 12 representing different political parties. Notably, Chaudhry Ilyas Mehrban, an independent candidate, has been granted the symbol of a battery. Mustafa Nawaz Khokhar will step into the electoral arena with the clock as his election symbol, while Nayab Ali, a transgender candidate, will be represented by the green pepper symbol. In NA-48, a total of 38 candidates will vie for seats, with 27 opting for independent candidacy. Additionally, 11 candidates from diverse political parties will enter the competition. Notably, independent candidate Raja Khurram Nawaz will run under the pomegranate symbol, while Ali Bukhari will participate as an independent candidate with the parachute symbol. —APP

RDA gears up operation against illegal housing schemes

RAWALPINDI, Jan 14 (APP): Rawalpindi Development Authority (RDA), on the directives of the Director General (DG), Muhammad Saif Anwar Jappa, has geared up its ongoing operation against illegal housing schemes, said RDA spokesman Hafiz Irfan. Talking to APP, he informed me that the RDA had issued notices to three illegal housing schemes, namely Shah-e-Khrasan at Mouza Chakra on Chakri Road, Imperial City at Mouza Sahang on Mandra-Chakwal Road, and Ring Road Town at Mouza Harka, Basali, near Chak Beli Khan Road, Rawalpindi. The notices were issued to Saeed Rizvi, Masood Azmat, and Umar Awan, the owners of three illegal private housing schemes. He informed that the Metropolitan Planning and Traffic Engineering (MP&TE) Directorate of RDA had also lodged FIRs against four illegal housing schemes: Kashmir View Residencia, Phase-I and II in Mouza Sanghori Satto, GB Valley in Mouza Singhori Satto, Natha Dola, Sain Singhori in Mouza Singhori, and Pak Kashmir Housing Project in Mouza Pothi Binjyal at Mandra-Chakwal Road in Tehsil Gujar Khan. Cases were registered against the owners of four illegal housing schemes, namely Malik Tariq, Qazi Naveed, Sharif Khan, Sajid Chaudhry, Sajid Munir, Sardar Maqsood Khan, Sardar Awais, Chaudhry Seemab, and Yaob, in Mandra police station, Tehsil Gujar Khan. The Metropolitan Planning and Traffic Engineering (MP&TE) Directorate RDA had also issued notices, he said, adding that the DG had directed the Director MP&TE to take action in accordance with the law against illegal advertisements and marketing. FIRs should also be lodged against the owners of illegal housing schemes. —DNA

JANUARY 2024

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MINISTRY OF ENERGY POWER DIVISION

CORRIGENDUM

Reference Advertisement No. PID (I)4107/23, published in "THE NEWS" and "Daily DUNYA" Islamabad on January 07, 2024 titled Request for Expression of Interest (REOI) regarding "Engagement of Consultancy firm for Market Reforms with Reference No:PK-MOB-349844-CS-CQS", Amendment: The last date for EOI submission shall be read as February 19, 2024 instead of February 15, 2024." Other terms and conditions will remain the same.
Procurement & Contract Specialist
PIU-Electricity Distribution Efficiency Improvement Project (EDEIP), Office No.112-First Floor, Evacuee Trust Complex, Agha Khan Road, F-5/1, Islamabad
PID I NO 4223/23

Briefs

Ban on construction in Murree

RAWALPINDI: The relevant authorities have been directed to ensure strict implementation of the ban on construction in Murree. According to a Murree district administration spokesman, the Murree administration, on the directives of Deputy Commissioner Murree, Agha Zaheer Abbas Shirazi, was taking strict action in accordance with the law against the rule violators. He informed us that Additional Deputy Commissioner Revenue (ADCR) Capt. (retd) Qasim Ijaz, during a visit to different areas of Murree, checked the ongoing operation against the ban violators. On the special directives of the Punjab Government and Deputy Commissioner, ADCR Murree visited different areas of Murree, including Jhika Gali, Masiyari, Express Highway, Shawala, and Fourth View Road, and reviewed in detail the operation against illegal construction. The Murree administration had launched a grand operation against illegal construction, he said, and informed that no illegal construction would be allowed. Strict legal action was being taken against the violators. There is a complete ban on construction and bringing construction materials into Murree, he added.—APP

Rwp Safe City Project to be inaugurated on Jan 30

RAWALPINDI: Commissioner Rawalpindi Division, Liaquat Ali Chatta has directed the authorities to swiftly complete Rawalpindi Safe City Project which would be inaugurated on January 30. According to a Commissioner office spokesman, the commissioner during a visit to the safe city project site reviewed the construction work of the project. "January 30 is the deadline for making the Safe City Project Rawalpindi functional in the light of the directives of the Chief Minister of Punjab," the spokesman informed. All-out efforts were being made to complete the work within stipulated time frame, he said. In the first phase of the project, cameras would be installed at various sites, major intersections, main mosques, churches, commercial points, Muharram procession routes, petrol pumps and other places, he added. The spokesman informed that the Safe City Project would help improve law and order in the city and enhance the sense of security among the citizens. The project would not only help control crime and maintain law and order situation but also to regulate traffic on city roads.—APP

ISSI holds event marking global day of action for Gaza

Ambassador Sohail Mahmood, in his remarks, emphasised Pakistan's abiding support for the legitimate cause of the Palestinian people and a just solution through the establishment of an independent, viable, sovereign and contiguous Palestinian State along the pre-June 1967 borders with Al-Quds-Al-Sharif as its capital

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Centre for Afghanistan Middle East and Africa (CAMEA) at the Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI) organized an event to express solidarity with the people of Palestine on the 'Global Day of Action for Gaza.' Mr. Nader al Turk, Deputy Head of the Palestine Mission in Pakistan, joined on the occasion. Ambassador Sohail Mahmood, Director General ISSI; Ambassador Khalid Mahmood, Chairman BoG ISSI; Director CAMEA, Ms. Amina Khan; and members of team CAMEA were present. Ambassador Sohail Mahmood, in his remarks, emphasised Pakistan's abiding support for the legitimate cause of the Palestinian people and a just solution through the establishment of an independent, viable, sovereign and contiguous Palestinian State along the pre-June 1967 borders with Al-Quds-Al-Sharif as its capital. He reiterated the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' stance regarding Pakistan's support for South Africa's application before the International Court of Justice (ICJ) concerning Israel's violation of its obligations under the 1951 Genocide Convention in relation to the Palestinian people in Gaza.



He asserted that the relentless military operations by Israel against the Palestinians could not be deemed justifiable under the pretext of self-defence. Expressing solidarity with the Palestinian people over the enormous human losses incurred due to Israeli onslaught, he also underscored Pakistan's stance for an immediate and unconditional ceasefire. Ms. Amina Khan, while expressing her views,

stated that Pakistan will continue to stand firmly with the people of Palestine until the legitimate rights of the people are achieved. She strongly condemned Israel's systematic and brutal occupation, tantamount to genocide, and called for the lifting of the inhumane siege and urgent need for a ceasefire. Mr. Nader al Turk highlighted the dire conditions faced by Palestinian civilians, especially children

and women, in the Gaza Strip. He referred to the ongoing situation as genocide and also said that Palestinians are resilient and determined to uphold their rights until justice is served. Speaking about the solidarity and support from Pakistan, he expressed gratitude for the continuous historic support extended by the government and people of Pakistan. Mr. Turk commended the visionary stance of Pakistan's found-

er, Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, regarding Palestine. He also termed the relationship between Pakistan and Palestine as deep and expressed his belief that it will continue to grow stronger. Ambassador Khalid Mahmood reiterated Pakistan's support for Palestine, and stressed the urgent need for a ceasefire, which he said was the responsibility of the international community.

Private sector can play role in promoting Azerbaijan-Pak ties



The aromatic and spicy nature of Pakistani chilies makes them an essential ingredient in many Chinese dishes, adding a distinct flavor and enhancing the overall culinary experience.

ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Azerbaijan, Khazar Farhadov has said that the role of the private sector, including the government of Pakistan, in promoting cooperation between Pakistan and Azerbaijan in the fields of tourism is commendable. The CEO of Pakistan is young entrepreneur Mohammad Rauf Appreciating the efforts and assured him of our all possible support - MD Pakistan Tourism Development Corporation Aftab Rahman Rana while speaking said that the projects of several new tourist destinations in Pakistan organized by the Government of Pakistan and Provincial Governments have been completed rapidly. After Covid pandemic welcoming the arrival of a large number of tourists in Pakistan is much appreciable, he expressed his determination that maximum facilities will be provided for domestic and foreign tourists during this year also through a panel discussion on this occasion Experts expressing views to investing in tourism and hospitality sector in Pakistan and emphasized the increase and said that it will bring economic stability to Pakistan and the development of tourism sector will increase business activities in Pakistan - CEO Brain Designer Rauf Raja said that the promotion of tourism and investment events will continue and our next event will be in the held in UK month of April.—DNA

ICCI for focusing on entrepreneurship to transform economy

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan needs more entrepreneurs to create new jobs, introduce innovations and new technologies, increase productivity, enhance exports, and put the economy into fast gear to transform Pakistan into a rising country. Therefore, the students should focus on entrepreneurship that offers them a prosperous career. This was said by Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari, President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) while addressing the Pakistan National Finals of the Global Student Entrepreneur Awards (GSEA) organized by Entrepreneurs Organization Islamabad in collaboration with ICCI at Chamber House. Ahsan Bakhtawari called upon the government to make more conducive policies for promoting entrepreneurship in youth that will enhance their self-employment and pave the way for sustainable economic growth of the country. He stressed that commercial banks should also come up with low-cost business loan schemes for youth to facilitate them in launching business start-ups. He said that the population of Pakistan is increasing rapidly and the government can't provide jobs to all youngsters. However, fostering entrepreneurship in youth is the best option to enable them to achieve a prosperous career, create jobs for others, and play an effective role in the economic development of the country. ICCI President lauded the role of the Entrepreneurs Organization Islamabad for promoting student entrepreneurs, providing them with mentorship and networking opportunities, and unlocking their entrepreneurship potential for the country. Taimur Adil, President, of Entrepreneur Organization Islamabad Chapter said that the EO is committed to supporting and nurturing the entrepreneurial spirit, and the GSEA competition is a testament to our dedication to fostering the next generation of business leaders. Ahmed Jalal, GSEA Chair said that the GSEA Pakistan National Finals showcase the incredible talent and innovation of our young entrepreneurs. He said that he was thrilled to witness the impact of their ideas on our entrepreneurial ecosystem.—DNA

BISP cautions citizens about fraudulent messages

ISLAMABAD: The Bena-zir Income Support Programme (BISP) has cautioned the citizens about the fraudulent messages being circulated through different mediums including social media and cell numbers about its programmes. "All the BISP messages are sent from 8171 only and those received from other numbers are fake," the Programme said on Sunday. The official social media accounts and website of the BISP can be accessed by the users to get authentic information about its programmes. The BISP said, "The fake messages claim that the stipends of the beneficiaries have been approved, seek contact details for transferring amount or promise inclusion in the BISP programme and issuance of the stipends. While the real messages from the BISP do not promise provision of any financial assistance without verification and documentation." For registration it was necessary for intending beneficiaries to visit the council office of BISP with their Computerized National Identity Cards (CNICs) and B-Form for dynamic survey, which was free of charge, it added.—DNA

RDA, PITB sign agreement for E-filing system

RAWALPINDI: Rawalpindi Development Authority (RDA) and Punjab Information Technology Board (PITB) on the direction of the Punjab government have signed an agreement for E-Filing and Office Automation System. Commissioner Rawalpindi Division, Liaquat Ali Chatta, Director General (DG) RDA, Muhammad Saif Anwar Jappa, representative of PITB, Dr Shaikat Ali and Deputy Director (IT) RDA, Dawood Khalid and others participated in the meeting. The spokesman said that the purpose of this agreement was to maintain paperless files of the notes, approvals and proposals so that the records could be easily accessible. Sometimes important documents of the offices are damaged during any untoward incident like flood or fire. For example, RDA documents were lost in 2004 due to the flood, he told.—DNA

Children, our future builders

GHAZALA ANBREEN

We were all children once. And we all share the desire for the well-being of our children, which has always been and will continue to be the most universally desired wish of humankind". (An extract of the report submitted to UN) Children are the tangible assets for any nation. They demand an extra attention to ensure a bright future for all of us. They are the real investment for any family and any nation. For the protection of children rights and safeguarding their future in 1954 some concrete steps were adopted in a UN conference. Earlier children day was observed in different countries on different days. But UN fixed November 20 to be celebrated as Children Day all over the world afterwards. This practice has been continuing since then. This day is celebrated with full gusto and enthusiasm. Various activities for children and parents are arranged on that day. Different schools organize functions. Some charity organizations also play their vital role for this purpose. The purpose of celebrating this day is to make our children realize that they are the real builders of society. They are supposed to be given a special importance. If their rights are safeguarded, and a suitable environment is given to them, their talent is enhanced and their potential is exploited to a full extent. Celebrating Children day demands the revival of promise to take extra care of our kids and they must be given the entertainment opportunities. Children are our future. Their good training and making them acquainted with the current trends is an incumbent duty of parents

and teachers specially. One matter which needs our attention is that there is a need to develop the literature for children which has shown a considerable decline in the recent scenario. Many kids spend much of their time in front of screens. The unbecoming fact which is witnessed is that some mothers themselves allow their young ones to be watching cartoons and kids movies for many hours in order to perform their household chores or other activities. This habit must be curtailed as they pass through a transition period and have impressionable and vulnerable proclivities. The parents and elder siblings must try to spend much of their times with the little kids. They must give them quality time and do their counseling wherever and whenever needed. Simple provision of good food and sending them to good schools is not sufficient. That does not make parents exempt from overall character grooming of their child. All of us should realize that the experiences earned in such a tender age are more likely to leave indelible marks on their tender minds for a very long period; rather in some cases they leave permanent traces thus marring the personality of a child and making him suffer psychologically. Such kids may resort to violent behaviours when they grow up. I would reiterate the views of a philosopher who equated the mind of a child to that of a (tabula rasa) blank slate. Hence extreme care should be taken that whatever is imprinted on their raw minds is quality controlled and enriched with sound moral values. Another purpose of celebrating this day is to promote fraternity among children belonging to various parts of the world

and make them aware of their prominence and importance. The parents must try to become a perfect role model for their kids. They should first themselves get rid of all ills pertaining to scrupulosity thereby acting on the behest of uncontrolled, untamed and wayward instincts and impulses and double standards in dealings with others so that their progeny also develops the refined manners and a cultured taste coupled with positive mindedness. The focus remains mainly on keeping them under a strict watch and not letting them go on their own. This is obligatory as their discriminatory abilities are not so seasoned and passing through a metamorphosis stage. If a child is school going, then parents must try to visit the school regularly to have interaction with the teacher to know about the latest progress of their kids. This practice would also make the teacher pay full attention to that child. In our country the worrisome fact is the less ratio of school enrolment of young kids, especially in the remote areas. The authorities should pay a special emphasis on getting the obstacles removed. Similarly the child labour concerns should also be catered to effectively and strict punishments must be awarded to the culprits. Same goes true for child abuses. A very bitter reality remains that more often the child is molested or subjected to sexual abuse by his own kith and kin. And the parents remain unaware. However the emotional and psychological malediction they are impinged with and the excruciating agony they face throughout their lives is beyond expression. The trauma never leaves them. Parents must

not take lightly any abrupt change in the behavior of their kids. Always there is a cause and that cause must be addressed timely in order to avert any bigger mishap. They must be friendly towards them and encourage them to share everything with their parents. All of us need to take great care of our children. They must be provided with ample facilities. Physical punishments and harsh treatment must at best be avoided. Instead, great attention and company must be given to them. If our kids are healthy, we can ensure a healthy society. I would strongly recommend that our children must be honoured well in society. Their basic rights to education, food and clothing must be taken well care of. The welfare of the children must be ensured to the optimum best. As a messenger of Islam our beloved Holy Prophet (PBUH) showed compassion to kids. He used to say salam to them and also used to encourage their righteous companions: "I give my salam to children and respect them, and Muslims should follow my behavior and always be warm and loving with children" About children he spoke like that, "O Muslims, O father and mother, O my followers, be kind and compassionate towards children, for someone who is not kind to children has no place amongst the Muslims" Hence we can say that fair treatment towards kids is not only our moral duty but our religion also asks us to be kind to them. Let us develop a benign and caring attitude towards all kids. So that they develop confidence, nurture a sound moral outlook and outshine themselves on the horizon of success.

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Airstrikes in Yemen: sparks unwinnable conflict concerns

There are, broadly, three ways of looking at last week's US and British military strikes on Houthi bases in Yemen: necessary, futile, dangerous. Yet, however the world views this action, taken in response to repeated, unprovoked attacks on international shipping in the Red Sea, the possible consequences are all the more alarming because they are unknowable and unpredictable. Joe Biden, the US president, and Rishi Sunak have started something they may find difficult to finish. The US-British bombardment of dozens of targets, succeeded by a limited "follow-on" attack a day later, was necessary in the sense that the Houthi leaders had rejected numerous pleas, public and private, to end their Red Sea mayhem. Ships and crews were at risk. There was real fear that anti-ship missiles could hit an oil tanker, causing an environmental disaster. The global economy faced supply disruption and spiking oil prices. The Houthis say they are acting in solidarity with the besieged Palestinians of Gaza and will desist if Israel withdraws. Yet they are effectively holding a gun to the head of the international community – not a sensible or legal way to achieve their aims. "It's clear that type of behaviour cannot carry on," Sunak said after the event. Pleading self-defence, he said the strikes were "necessary, proportionate and targeted action against military targets to degrade and disrupt Houthi capability". On the face of it, it seems a reasonable argument. To do nothing, and allow the Houthi attacks to continue or intensify, with all the attendant risks, was not a realistic option. The basic problem, however, of which the US and British governments are doubtless aware, is that the military action taken so far may not prove wholly effective. The Houthis are used to being bombed. During Yemen's civil war, they suffered relentless Saudi attacks. This implies that the US and Britain, backed in non-combat capacities by the Netherlands, Australia, Canada and Bahrain but otherwise worryingly isolated internationally, are getting themselves into an open-ended shooting war they cannot win – and that their action is thus essentially futile. The Houthis' pro-Palestine stance, though self-serving to a degree, is popular among Yemenis and the region, where Arab governments are criticised for not doing enough to halt the Gaza carnage. Critically, the Houthis can count on unstinting support including, potentially, replacement weapons and missile supplies, from their main ally, Iran. And this, among many other reasons, is why this fast-moving crisis looks so very dangerous. So far, at least, Iran has avoided direct involvement in the rising violence on the Israel-Lebanon border, in Iraq and in Syria that followed the 7 October Hamas atrocities and Israel's invasion of Gaza. This could change in a moment, by accident or design. Tehran's authoritarian theocratic regime, repressive and misogynistic at home, ambitious and aggressive abroad, believes itself on a roll. It is doing everything it can, short of war, to exploit Israel's huge strategic, moral and PR blunders in Gaza. It co-ordinates ever more closely with China and Russia, not least over Ukraine. Its economy is reviving and its weapons-related nuclear enrichment programme is accelerating. Over-confidence could lead to over-reaching. Iran is a bigger menace than ever. Uncontrolled escalation, sparking a wider conflict, has been a constant fear since the Israel-Hamas war began. In the region, Turkey, Qatar and Oman have joined Iran in condemning the US-British action as inflammatory while others, such as the Saudis and Kuwait, wring their hands.

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Escalating Red Sea tensions and citizen boycotts trap US in Catch-22

James M. Dorsey

The obligation constituted the basis for South Africa's case against Israel before the ICJ. The Houthis, who control much of Yemen, including the capital, Sanaa, base their justification on Yemen being a party to the convention, even if their government has not been internationally recognised. Britain challenged the Houthis' legal reasoning in a policy paper, insisting that the decision to strike the Houthis, together with the United States, was "lawfully taken." The paper argued that Britain was "permitted under international law to use force in such circumstances

Increasingly, the United States is caught in a Catch-22 with tension mounting in the Red Sea, Israel maintaining unabated its assault on the Gaza Strip, and the International Court of Justice (ICJ) possibly ruling that Israel may be committing genocide. A court ruling against Israel would bolster Yemen's Houthi rebels who assert that attacks on Israel-related shipping are justified under the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide. The convention obligates signatories to pursue the enforcement of the genocide prohibition. A Houthi military helicopter flies over the Galaxy Leader cargo ship in the Red Sea in this photo released Monday. Photo: Houthi Military Media via Reuters

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Houthis are widely perceived as serving Israel's interests and threatening to turn the Gaza war into a regional conflagration. A court ruling against Israel would reinforce that perception. Public perceptions and the threat of a regional conflagration persuaded Middle Eastern states, with the exception of Bahrain, home to the US Fifth Fleet, to distance themselves from the US efforts to deter the Houthis. Middle Eastern states doubt the US and UK strikes will deter the Houthis. Instead, Without exception, Middle Eastern states believe that only an end to hostilities in Gaza can prevent the war from escalating regionally. They are concerned that deterring the Houthis would involve a full-fledged attack that could lead to another forever war and draw Iran into the conflagration militarily. In addition, some countries like Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates fear that they could be targeted if they join the US. In addition, Saudi Arabia is concerned that an escalation of tensions in the Red Sea could jeopardise efforts to conclude an agreement with the Houthis that would extricate the kingdom from its nine-year military intervention in Yemen. The Houthis' attacks on shipping resonate with protesters against the Gaza war across the globe and supporters of the Boycott, Diversification and Sanctions (BDS) movement that targets Israel. Thousands of BDS supporters took to the streets in Malaysia and Indonesia this weekend. Protesters shout slogans outside the US embassy in Jakarta, Indonesia [Dita Alangkara/Reuters] Unlike Indonesia, Malaysia is one of the few countries that allows Hamas to operate and raise funds in the country. It is also the only country, alongside the Houthis, to target Israel-related shipping. Last month, Malaysia banned all Israeli-flagged cargo ships and vessels scheduled to sail to Israel from docking at its ports in a response to the war in Gaza. Even so, in October, authorities suspended a non-governmental group that funneled donations to Hamas and froze \$15 million in assets on suspicion of misuse of funds and money laundering. Malaysians, like others in several countries, have boycott Western fast-food brands in protest against the Gaza war. In response, Saudi-owned Gerbang Alaf Restaurants Sdn Bhd (GAR), which operates the McDonald's fran-

chise in Malaysia has sued BDS for US\$1.31 million dollars in damages, asserting that the movement had made "false and defamatory statements" that link the brand to Israel's "genocidal war against Palestinians in Gaza." BDS has denied the assertion. GAR asserted that the boycott had led to profit loss and job cuts due to closures and shortened operating hours of its outlets. McDonald's global CEO Chris Kempczinski conceded last week that the Gaza war was having a "meaningful business impact" on the company. McDonald's CEO Chris Kempczinski at McDonald's headquarters on Wednesday, May 5, 2021 in the West Loop of Chicago. Jean Marc-Giboux

Mr. Kempczinski did not quantify the impact, but McDonald's is expected to report earnings later this month. McDonald's was targeted after its Israeli affiliate said in October that it had given thousands of free meals to Israel Defense Forces personnel and was donating meals "to all those who are involved in the defence of the state, hospitals, and surrounding areas." Some McDonald's franchises in Indonesia and Pakistan said they had made donations to aid organizations in Gaza. "McDonald's and Starbucks outside the major cities are empty. You have people not wanting to buy Nestlé products. BDS people here say that it's all frictional employment. It's not. People are going to be out of jobs for a long time," said a Malaysian analyst. He added that "local brands are not going to be able to offer the same terms of employment. Nor would they be able to expand quickly enough to take up any slack left. Few are investing in this economy." The boycott of US brands adds to the United States' bind. A majority of US states have passed bills and executive orders designed to discourage boycotts of Israel. Many of them have been passed with broad bipartisan support. The orders have been challenged in the courts as violations of freedom of speech. The Supreme Court last year opted not to review a law that penalises boycotting Israel in Arkansas. Even so, calls for boycotts of Israel and US brands are likely to be fuelled not only by the continuation of the Gaza war but also by a potential International Court of Justice ruling against Israel, and escalating hostilities in the Red Sea.

TTP and BLA two headed monstre

Qamar Bashir



My own Kashmiri family resides in Quetta, fostering strong bonds with Pashtoon, Baloch, and Hazara friends. Over the years, intermarriages, once considered impossible, are now common and flourishing. Both the Pathan and Baloch ethnicities are deeply rooted in tribal societies, often regarded as some of the most beautiful communities in the world. These societies value honesty, trustworthiness, truthfulness, friendliness, and hospitality. The people prioritize honor and dignity above all else and guard it against any

I take pride in hailing from my beautiful hometown, Quetta, and my beloved province, Balochistan. It's a unique province with vast barren land but abundant mineral wealth. Despite the absence of permanent rivers, our water needs are met through rain and snow, replenishing aquifers to sustain the entire human and animal population. The province also stands out for its demographic diversity. It's neatly divided into two major ethnicities, with Balochs in the south and Pathans in the north. Quetta, on the other hand, is a melting pot, hosting settlers from various ethnic backgrounds like Punjabi, Kashmiri, Sindhi, Hazara, and more. My own Kashmiri family resides in Quetta, fostering strong bonds with Pashtoon, Baloch, and Hazara friends. Over the years, intermarriages, once considered impossible, are now common and flourishing. Both the Pathan and Baloch ethnicities are deeply rooted in tribal societies, often regarded as some of the most beautiful communities in the world. These societies value honesty, trustworthiness, truthfulness, friendliness, and hospitality. The people prioritize honor and dignity above all else and guard it against any threat. It's important to note that this commitment to honor doesn't imply a hostile posture unless they face denigration, insult, deception, or a trampling of their honor and dignity. Once these communities declare someone as an enemy, however, they become formidable foes. They are known to pursue their enemies relentlessly for generations if necessary. This fierce loyalty and determination are integral aspects of their cultural values. Now, the significant question arises: why did groups like the Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and the Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA) emerge from these culturally rich societies? How did they transform into formidable and lethal entities? Before delving deeper, it's essential to distinguish the Pathan and Baloch communities within the religious context. The Pathan community is predominantly religious, actively practicing Islam through rituals such as offering prayers, observing fasting, and performing Hajj. However, in societal conduct, their primary adherence is to the Pashtunwali code of life. They can readily align with movements that claim to uphold Islamic values, as perceived by them, and may fiercely engage in struggles aligned with these principles. On the contrary, the Baloch community is not as inherently inclined toward religious practices. While maintaining the distinct identity of each Baloch tribe, they follow a tribal code of conduct rooted in traditions and customs. This code is adhered to not only by the general populace but also by figures of authority such as Nawabs and Sardars. The lethal, violent, and inhuman activities perpetrated by both the Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and the Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA) are in no way aligned with either the Pashtunwali code of the Pathan community or the tribal code followed by the Baloch. These acts of violence, insurgency, terrorism, and extremism are foreign to the inherent values and conduct of both societies. Such streaks of violence starkly contrast with the overall cultural

and traditional norms observed by the Pathan and Baloch communities. The seeds of these violent tendencies were planted during a time when both the USA and USSR were actively seeking allies worldwide, making friends of their enemies' enemies. My first hand experience in college in Quetta during (1978-82) reflects this, where the propaganda arms of both superpowers were actively engaging Pathan and Baloch students. Through offers of free books, cash incentives, scholarships, and all-expenses-paid trips to their respective countries, they sought to sway student leaders to their side. In addition to these inducements, they provided financial support and furnished lethal arms and ammunition. Once student leaders were effectively brought on board, they were strategically pitted against governments they opposed, serving as vocal proponents of either capitalist or socialist ideologies. The USA found common ground with Pathans, utilizing religion as a catalyst and supporting them with weapons and financial aid. They manipulated them into denouncing the USSR as Kafir (infidel) during the Cold War, but eventually left them without clear support. India, seizing an opportunity, stepped in and employed a similar strategy—using religion as a foundation, providing financial support and weapons. They redirected their focus toward a new enemy, the state of Pakistan, and encouraged politico-religious parties, assuming their religious nature would align with the Taliban's resistance against the government. Recent attacks on the JUI (Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam) are likely driven by the same motive. Shifting focus to the Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA), the USA attempted a similar strategy by aligning Baloch interests against the USSR. However, this approach proved less effective with the Balochs. Unlike the Pathans, the Baloch people prioritize their tribal code over other considerations, including religion. Recognizing this distinction, the USSR strategically leveraged nationalism, combined with financial support and weapons. This potent combination resonated well with the Baloch, who passionately began demanding complete control over provincial resources, including minerals, gas, oil, and land. The Baloch, largely advocating communism and socialism on the political stage, considered the Punjabi army as their primary adversary. They viewed settlers as exploiters of Baloch resources and occupiers of government roles, leading to armed resistance against them fueled by foreign money and weapons. With the collapse of the USSR, these armed factions were left without support. India seized the opportunity and stepped in, replacing the USSR by promoting nationalistic ideologies and providing financial aid and weapons to the Baloch groups and poised them against the state of Pakistan. Now, we are better positioned to comprehend the narratives of the Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and the Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA), understanding their persistent efficacy even after being abandoned by the USA and USSR, respectively. The TTP aims

to establish its interpretation of Islamic law in Pakistan, rejecting the democratic system, accusing the government of corruption and subservience to the West. Advocating for an Islamic state, they oppose Western influence and view the military as collaborators with perceived enemies of Islam. Justifying armed resistance, including suicide bombings, as a form of jihad, they target military and government entities in their pursuit of what they perceive as liberation from oppressive forces. In contrast to the TTP's religious narrative, the BLA pursues a secular philosophy, functioning as a militant separatist group. It seeks autonomy for the Baloch people in the Balochistan region through armed insurgency, targeting military installations, personnel, and officials to weaken state control and create insecurity. The BLA employs tactics like bombings, sabotage, and assassinations to disrupt the economy and instill fear. Kidnappings are used to pressure the government and gain publicity. Propaganda articulates their grievances, seeking both local and international support by accusing Pakistan of human rights abuses through lobbying, media engagement, and participation in international forums. The lifblood of both the TTP and BLA lies in financial resources and weaponry. To effectively curb their strength, the Pakistani government must cut off their access to these crucial elements. This involves sealing borders to prevent illegal movement of goods and services, as the existing policy allowing smuggling is a significant source of income for the local population and inadvertently supports TTP and BLA activities. Implementing stringent financial controls, minimizing cash transactions, and adhering strictly to the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) regulations will significantly hamper the effectiveness of these militant groups. By addressing the sources of their funding and limiting their access to weapons through border control measures, the state can weaken their operational capabilities. The ultimate solution to these challenges lies in addressing their root causes. This involves comprehensive development initiatives for their respective regions, focusing on providing high-quality education from the grassroots level universally. An essential step is mainstreaming Madrassas, which often serve as recruitment grounds, especially for groups like TTP. Developing a skilled human resource, generating employment opportunities, and integrating remote areas of both Pathan and Baloch communities into national road and highway networks are critical components. Moreover, legislating the responsible utilization of proceeds from mineral wealth, oil, and gas for the upliftment of their native areas is vital. Raising awareness among the populations about their rights and responsibilities is crucial, ensuring that progress and prosperity reach them parallel to the more developed regions of the country and the world. Achieving a permanent solution requires a sustained commitment to these long-term development strategies, acknowledging that there are no shortcuts to lasting progress and stability.

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

Briefs

Death, destruction continue...

FROM PAGE 01

Among those Palestinians were 12,345 children, 6,471 women, 295 health personnel, 41 civil defense personnel, and 113 journalists. Additionally, 61,079 individuals have been injured, many critically. Euro-Med accused "Israel" of violating international humanitarian law, emphasizing that property damage and destruction for preventive or deterrent purposes, even for military goals, is forbidden under international law. The monitor included missing persons and those presumed dead due to prolonged entrapment under debris in its figures. Moreover, the report underscored that approximately 1.955 million Palestinians, making up about 85% of Gaza's population, have been displaced since the beginning of the genocidal war on the Strip. The al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades, a Palestinian Resistance group, announced, on Sunday, that they have successfully managed to repel the extensive and large-scale incursion carried out by Israeli occupation forces (IOF) in Far'a refugee camp in Tubas, northeast of West Bank. In detail, the group's statement mentioned that the al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades bravely and skillfully confronted this extensive and large-scale aggression by detonating a large number of explosive devices targeting occupation vehicles on various fronts, in addition to engaging in close-range confrontations.

Rallies held worldwide...

FROM PAGE 01

"Hats off South Africa," read another banner carried by protesters in an apparent reference to the country's filing of a case against Tel Aviv in the International Court of Justice (ICJ), describing Israeli actions in Gaza as "genocide." Protesters chanted slogans such as "Labbaik ya Gaza (Gaza we are here)," "Labbaik ya Aqsa (Aqsa we are here)," and "We Stand with Hamas." Addressing the rally, Jamaat-e-Islami Karachi chief Hafiz Naeem-ur-Rehman condemned the US and Europe for "supporting Palestinians' genocide" being committed by Israeli forces. "This is the message for the US and Israel that we will not surrender. The only choice for you is to concede," Rehman said, adding that Pakistanis will continue to stand alongside Palestinians. Hailing South Africa for taking the Palestinians' case to the ICJ, he said the case is a test for the international community, which has failed to stop the ongoing "genocide" in Gaza. He underscored that South Africa's actions have left both America and Israel in a state of bewilderment. Rehman also expressed regret, lamenting that Pakistan did not take the initiative in bringing Israel to the international court over the Gaza offensive.

Contest only between...

FROM PAGE 01

supremo Nawaz Sharif. "Or do you want to give an opportunity to a party that takes everyone onboard as the country moves forward?" he asked. He highlighted that the PPP practiced politics and contested elections "for the poor" while the PML-N supremo was taking part in the polls so he could be saved from going to jail. "I'm only contesting the polls so that I save you, the public, and the future of Pakistan from those people," Bilawal said. Taking another swipe at Nawaz, the PPP chief said the former premier was a coward as he vowed to defeat the PML-N in their home ground of Lahore.

Fire erupts at private...

FROM PAGE 01

2 water browsers reached the spot and started the operations to extinguish the fire. According to the rescue officials, during the rescue operation, 3 patients trapped in the building were taken out and brought them to the upper floor. The search for more persons and the process of extinguishing the fire is underway.

DNA



ISLAMABAD: Players of Rising Stars Hockey Club and Gujjar Khan club posing for a pictures with Ambassadors of Brunei and Romania during a match played at the Naseer Bundha Hockey Stadium Islamabad. – DNA

Rizwan achieves major milestone in T20I cricket

Rizwan now leads the list for most sixes by Pakistani batters in T20I cricket, followed by Hafeez and legendary Shahid Afridi (73)

OUR CORRESPONDENTS

HAMILTON: Pakistan's wicketkeeper batter Mohammad Rizwan created the record for the most sixes by a Pakistani batter in T20I cricket during the second T20I against New Zealand at Seddon Park on Sunday. Rizwan hit Tim Southee for his 77th six during the first over of Pakistan's chase of a 195-run target, surpassing Mohammad Hafeez's 76 sixes.

Rizwan now leads the list for most sixes by Pakistani batters in T20I cricket, followed by Hafeez and legendary Shahid Afridi (73).

However, he could not do much in the match as Adam Milne sent him back to the pavilion after scoring seven runs. As of this writing, Pakistan require 86 runs from seven overs, with Babar Azam and Aamir Jamal at the crease. Earlier in the match, New Zealand got off to a flying start after being invited to bat as Allen and Devon Conway raised 59 runs for the first wicket inside the powerplay. Aamir Jamal removed Conway (20) in the sixth over to provide the first breakthrough, bringing skipper Kane Williamson out to bat. Williamson and Allen added brisk 52 runs to the total



before the former pulled his hamstring and retired hurt after scoring 26 off 15 with three boundaries and one six. Allen continued his

onslaught, scoring his third T20I half-century in only 24 balls but was castled by a brilliant googly by Usama Mir. He played an exhilarat-

ing innings of 74 runs from 41 balls, laced with seven boundaries and five sixes. Abbas Afridi then removed Daryl Mitchell (17) and Mark Chapman (4) off consecutive balls spanning over his two overs to pull the scoring rate down. Mitchell Santner hit Aamir Jamal for 14 runs in the 18th over before Haris Rauf bowled a three-wicket over to reduce New Zealand to 187-7. Santner's entertaining cameo ended with a run-out in the final over after scoring 25 runs from 13 balls with the help of three boundaries and two sixes. New Zealand finished their innings at 194-8, with Tim

Southee (5) and Ben Sears (1) remaining unbeaten, setting Pakistan 195 to chase. Haris Rauf returned with bowling figures of 3-38, while Abbas Afridi picked two wickets for Pakistan. **Playing XI's** **Pakistan:** Mohammad Rizwan, Saim Ayub, Babar Azam, Fakhar Zaman, Iftikhar Ahmed, Azam Khan (wk), Aamer Jamal, Usama Mir, Shaheen Afridi (c), Abbas Afridi, Haris Rauf **New Zealand:** Finn Allen, Devon Conway (wk), Kane Williamson (c), Daryl Mitchell, Glenn Phillips, Mark Chapman, Mitchell Santner, Adam Milne, Tim Southee, Ish Sodhi, Ben Sears.

Pakistan suffer defeat in 2nd T20I...

FROM PAGE 01

sixes and three fours. However, as soon as Fakhar departed by becoming victim of Adam Milne, wickets started to fall and the visitors soon found them 125-6 in 14.3 overs. Iftikhar Ahmed (4 off 8), Azam Khan (2 off 3), and Aamer Jamal (9 off 8) failed to stay and help their side put up a fight. Once again, just like the first match, Babar Azam top scored for the Men in Green by scoring 66 runs off 43 runs with nine boundaries but his effort went in vain. Milne bagged four wickets and was followed by Ben Sears and Ish Sodhi, who picked two each. Earlier in the first innings, Finn Allen powered New Zealand to a 194-run total as the right-hander played a rapid innings of 74 runs on just 41 balls, courtesy of seven fours and five sixes. Thanks to Allen's brilliant start, the home side looked all set to score a big total but things started to fall apart as soon as he was removed by Usama Mir's googly in the 13th over. The home side was 137-2 in 13 overs when Allen walked back to the pavilion, but after his departure, they only managed to score 57 runs in the remaining seven overs. Pakistani bowlers made an excellent comeback in the match and managed to restrict the inform Kiwis to 194 runs, a total they can chase down.

PTI kicks off campaign...

FROM PAGE 01

ahead of the general elections. With the apex court verdict, came the expiry of the deadline for allotment of electoral symbols to the political parties and the country's top polls organising body allotted different symbols to the PTI candidates, who will now contest as independent contenders in the February 8 general elections, after being stripped of 'bat'. In Karachi, Marwat led the party's first election rally this evening with a large number of participants in attendance, a private news channel reported. The gathering was announced by PTI leader Raja Azhar, who said that the party would begin its campaign from Sea View, which is a famous picnic point for Karachi's citizens. However, he complained that the police had placed barricades on the ways leading to the venue.

New resolution...

FROM PAGE 01

security situation as reasons for deferring the polls. The third resolution seeking to defer elections in the country has been submitted by an independent senator from erstwhile FATA, Hilal-ur-Rehman, in the Senate, only two days after an identical resolution was moved in the upper house of parliament. In the resolution, Senator Rehman said extreme cold weather and snowfall would create difficulties for the citizens to cast ballots in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. He also highlighted that candidates participating in the polls encountered numerous challenges in running election campaigns. The resolution also mentioned that the candidates are wary of terrorist attacks amid "security concerns" in KP. It said the voters and candidates had a sense of deprivation in the province as the election date in KP is proving to be "infeasible" for the voters in the province.

PM arrives in Zurich

FROM PAGE 01

Amir Shaukat and high-level officials received the prime minister. In the meeting, the prime minister would deliver a keynote address on the theme "Trade Tech's Trillion Dollar Promise", the Foreign Office Spokesperson wrote on her official X account. PM Kakar would attend three key thematic events on 'preventing an era of global conflict; restoring faith in the global system and preventing economic fracture'. On the sidelines of the event, he would also hold meetings with the government and business leaders. During his visit, PM Kakar would lead a special "Invest in Pakistan" event.



ISLAMABAD: Tourists are taking part in archery game at the court of Shah Allah Ditta caves, which are an ancient archaeological site located in the Margalla Hills of the Federal Capital. – Online

Smith reveals motivation behind decision to open

SYDNEY: Steve Smith said on Sunday he felt obligated to step up and replace David Warner as Australia's Test opener, but also admitted it suited him because he got bored waiting to come in at four. The 34-year-old veteran was a surprise pick to do the job ahead of openers Cameron Bancroft, Marcus Harris and Matt Renshaw after Warner bowed out of Test cricket this month. He will pad up in his new role for the first time in the opening Test of a two-match

series against the West Indies in Adelaide, which starts on Wednesday. "They (selectors) were obviously very keen to get Cameron (Green) in the side as well and play our best six batters, and for me, it didn't sit right to have him come in and bat up top," he told reporters. "I've played for a long time and I'm an experienced player, and I think it's something I should have done." The highly rated Green has been sidelined recently by a resurgent Mitchell

Marsh, who has assumed the all-rounder role. Shifting Smith up the order, rather than opting for a specialist opener, allowed selectors to bring Green back primarily as a batsman. Smith revealed he had been mulling the idea as far back as the Ashes in England last year, but the prospect only crystallised during the third Test against Pakistan in Sydney this month. "I'm looking forward to the opportunity of getting in and facing the new ball," he said. – Agencies

Berrettini pulls out of Australian Open

MELBOURNE: Injured former top-10 star Matteo Berrettini pulled out of the Australian Open on eve of a blockbuster first-round clash with Greek star Stefanos Tsitsipas. The Italian, a 2022 semi-finalist, withdrew with a foot problem, tournament organisers said. "Wishing @MattBerrettini a speedy recovery after being forced to withdraw from Melbourne with a right foot injury," ATP Tour said on social media platform X, formerly known as Twitter. – APP

Youngster Brenda triumphs at AO

MELBOURNE: Brenda Fruhvirtova started her Australian Open 2024 journey with a thumping win over Ana Bogdan at Melbourne Park on Sunday. Fruhvirtova, born in 2007, won eight out of nine games and recorded her first win in the first Slam of 2024 without much trouble and became the youngest player to win an Australian Open singles main draw match since Coco Gauff in 2020. The 16-year-old Czech player had to navigate through the qualifiers to secure a spot in the main draw, yet she triumphed over all her opponents without significant challenges, earning a place in the main draw of the 2024 Australian Open alongside several teenage prodigies. In the women's draw, three 16-year-old players are aiming to make their mark in history. Fruhvirtova, following her first-round victory, has already rewritten the record books. The initial stages of the match were tense for the teenager, struggling to trouble her opponent during returns, and encountering difficulties while serving. This resulted in a swift 6-2 first-set win for Bogdan. However, as the match progressed, the young player showcased why she is among the most talented of her generation. – Agencies

Djokovic plays his longest-ever Grand Slam 1st round

The Serb, chasing a record-extending 11th men's title, needed four hours and one minute to beat the 18-year-old Croat 6-2 6-7 (5-7) 6-3 6-4

OUR CORRESPONDENTS

MELBOURNE: Defending Australian Open champion Novak Djokovic won his longest first-round Grand Slam match after being tested by qualifier Dino Prizmic. The Serb, chasing a record-extending 11th men's title, needed four hours and one minute to beat the 18-year-old Croat 6-2 6-7 (5-7) 6-3 6-4. Prizmic, playing in his first Grand Slam match, saved six match points before Djokovic secured victory. "He gave me a run for my

money," Djokovic said in an on-court interview. The 36-year-old, who is aiming for a record 25th Grand Slam singles title, will face Alexei Popyrin or Marc Polmans in the second round. In rallies which echoed those in matches between Djokovic and world number two Carlos Alcaraz, world number 178 Prizmic sprinted and stretched all over the court to excite the Melbourne night-session crowd. The match surpassed Djokovic's previous longest in the first round of a major, which was a three-



hour-57-minute encounter against Gael Monfils at the US Open in 2005. "He deserves all the applause. He is an amazing player, he handled himself incredibly well on the court. This is his moment," Djokovic said. "It could easily have been his match as well. He showed great mentality and resilience. "I certainly want to be in his corner. So hopefully he will invite me, because he will make some big things in his career that's for sure." Fifth seed Andrey Rublev survived a comeback from world number 78

Thiago Seyboth Wild to win a five-set thriller 7-5 6-4 3-6 4-6 7-6 (10-6), while Croatia's 2018 runner-up Marin Cilic lost 6-1 2-6 6-2 7-5 to Hungarian Fabian Marozsan. Former semi-finalist Matteo Berrettini withdrew before his first-round match against Stefanos Tsitsipas because of a foot injury, meaning the Greek seventh seed will instead play Belgian Zizou Bergs. The Australian Open has been extended to 15 days this year in an attempt by organisers to avoid late finishes - with this its first Sunday start.

Briefs

North Korean FM to visit Russia

SEOUL: North Korea's foreign minister will visit Russia this coming week, state media reported Sunday, with Washington leading a chorus of global condemnation over Pyongyang's alleged transfers of weapons to Moscow for use in Ukraine. Traditional allies, Russia and North Korea have recently boosted ties anew, with Pyongyang's leader Kim Jong Un making a rare overseas trip to see President Vladimir Putin in Russia's far east in September. Top Russian officials, including Moscow's defence and foreign ministers, also visited North Korea last year, with the flurry of trips both ways fanning concern among Kyiv's allies over the possibility of a potential arms deal. "Choe Son Hui, minister of Foreign Affairs of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, will pay an official visit to the Russian Federation from January 15 to 17 at the invitation of its Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov," the Korean Central News Agency said, using the North's official name. Earlier this month, the White House accused the North of sending both ballistic missiles and launchers to Russia in what it called a "significant and concerning escalation" of its support for Moscow's war effort. Pyongyang-supplied missiles with ranges of around 900 kilometres (550 miles) were used by Russia in attacks on Ukraine, officials said. Increasing military and economic cooperation between Russia and North Korea has triggered concerns in Washington and Seoul.—APP

Austin in 'good condition' in hospital: Pentagon

WASHINGTON : US Defense Secretary Lloyd J. Austin III, who has faced criticisms for a secretive hospital stay, remains hospitalized and is in a "good condition," the Pentagon. Secretary Austin remains hospitalized at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center and is in good condition," the Defense Department said in a statement. "He's in contact with his senior staff and has full access to required secure communications capabilities and continues to monitor DOD's day-to-day operations worldwide," the statement said. "We do not have a specific date for Secretary Austin's release from the hospital at this time but will continue to provide daily updates until then," it added. The defense secretary was admitted to the hospital on Jan. 1 "for complications following a recent elective medical procedure," the spokesperson Gen. Pat Ryder had previously said.—Agencies

Volcano erupts in southwest Iceland

COPENHAGEN: A volcano in southwest Iceland erupted on Sunday, the country's meteorological office said, making it the fifth eruption on the Reykjanes peninsula since 2021. A coast guard helicopter has been sent to assess the situation and the exact location, the Civil Protection agency said. The eruption began north of the fishing town of Grindavik but it was still not clear exactly where the lava was emerging from or in which direction it was flowing, said broadcaster RUV. The last eruption on the peninsula started in the Svartsengi volcanic system on Dec. 18 following the complete evacuation of the town of Grindavik's 4,000 inhabitants and the closing of the Blue Lagoon geothermal spa, a popular tourist spot. Grindavik was ultimately spared as the lava flowed in a different direction from the town. Lying between the Eurasian and North American tectonic plates, two of the largest on the planet, Iceland is a seismic and volcanic hot spot as the two plates move in opposite directions.—Agencies

BU Karachi celebrates 19th convocation success

Chief of the Naval Staff, Admiral Naveed Ashraf and Rector Bahria University, Vice Admiral (Retd) Asif Khaliq graced the twin sessions of the convocation ceremony as chief guests

DNA

KARACHI: 19th Convocation of Bahria University Karachi and the Institute of Professional Psychology was held at Karachi. Chief of the Naval Staff, Admiral Naveed Ashraf and Rector Bahria University, Vice Admiral (Retd) Asif Khaliq graced the twin sessions of the convocation ceremony as chief guests respectively and awarded Medals and Merit Certificates to the students achieving outstanding performance in academics. A total of 1632 degrees, including 11 PhDs, were awarded to students from various departments, encompassing Management Studies, Business Studies, Humanities & Social Sciences, Computer Sciences, Earth & Environmental Sciences, Electrical Engineering, Software Engineering, Computer Engineering, Media Studies and Professional Psychology. During the first session, Chief of the Naval Staff, Admiral Naveed Ashraf awarded 22 Gold Medals and 18 Silver Medals to students who excelled in their respective degree programs. In his address he highlighted the significance of meeting challenges and reframing them as opportunities.



Chief of the Naval Staff emphasized that teamwork and communications are the pivotal elements for success. During the second session, Rector Bahria University,

Vice Admiral (Retd) Asif Khaliq awarded 24 Gold Medals and 19 Silver Medals to students for their outstanding achievements in their respective domains. In his speech,

he emphasized that responsibility is the price of greatness. He further encouraged students to stay focused on their life goals while upholding professional ethics and

maintaining integrity. The convocation ceremony was attended by naval officers, notable civilians, Bahria University officials and parents of graduating students.

UK poised to counter shipping attacks

LONDON: Britain remains ready to act to "defend freedom of navigation", foreign minister David Cameron said on Sunday in the wake of joint US-UK air strikes on Yemen. "We've demonstrated that we're prepared to follow words and warnings with action and that is incredibly important," Cameron told Media reporters. He suggested further strikes could occur if the Houthis, who control much of Yemen, continue to target ships in the Red Sea. "We have to act. Not acting is also a policy and it was a policy that wasn't working," he said. "It's not just the goods that are coming to this country... it

is also grain ships on their way to Ethiopia and Sudan to feed some of the poorest and hungriest people in the world." He accused Iran, which backs the Houthis, of being a "malign actor in the region". Some MPs complained that they were unable to debate Thursday's air strikes before they occurred. Aggression widens: US, Britain carry out strikes against Houthis in Yemen, officials say. Cameron said there would be a statement in parliament on Monday when both houses could raise questions. Opposition leader Keir Starmer, widely tipped to become prime minister later this year, told the BBC he would back further

action "on its merits", although the decision ultimately rests with the government. Cameron's comments echo those of US President Joe Biden, who said he would "not hesitate to direct further measures to protect our people and the free flow of international commerce as necessary". Around 12 percent of global trade normally passes through the Red Sea. But since mid-November, the attacks have prompted many shipping firms to take the longer route around the tip of Africa, disrupting supply chains and putting upward pressure on inflation. The Houthis say

they are acting in solidarity with the Palestinians of Gaza, where the Hamas-run health ministry says nearly 24,000 people, mostly women and children, have been killed by Israeli forces in the past 100 days. Israel began its relentless bombardment and ground offensive in Gaza after Hamas staged attacks in Israel on October 7, although Cameron said the UK government saw the two issues as "completely separate". He took aim at Tehran, saying there was "no doubt that the malign actor in the region who is behind these proxy groups is Iran". "Iran backs Hamas.—APP

Macron calls for fresh talks to free Gaza hostages

PARIS: France's President Emmanuel Macron called for fresh talks for the release of the hostages held by Hamas in the Gaza Strip "The French nation is determined that... all the hostages of the October 7 terrorist attacks are freed," he said in a video posted online and broadcast at a meeting in Tel Aviv in support of the hostages. "France does not abandon its children," he added. "That is why we have to resume negotiations again and again for their release." During its October 7 attack, Hamas seized about 250 hostages, 132 of whom Israel says remain in Gaza, including at least 25 believed to have been killed. Three French citizens remain unaccounted for following the October 7 attack and are thought to be among the hostages held in Gaza. On December 15, the Israeli army announced the death of Franco-Israeli Elya Toledano, who was captured and abducted while attending a desert rave party called the Supernova festival. His friend, fellow French-Israeli Mia Shem, was among those released under a truce agreement at the end of November. Israel says the Hamas attackers killed 1,200 people, mostly civilians, in their unprecedented attack on October 7. Israel retaliated with a relentless bombing campaign and a ground offensive that the Hamas-run authorities in Gaza said Saturday had killed 23,843 people, mainly women and children.—APP

UN begins phased withdrawal from DR Congo

WASHINGTON : The UN Organization Stabilization Mission in Congo (MONUSCO) is to start its gradual withdrawal from the east of Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) in April, the foreign minister announced Saturday. Christophe Lutundula said the mission would ensure "responsible" withdrawal as he spoke at a news conference with MONUSCO head, Bintou Keita, in Kinshasa, the capital of DRC. "The withdrawal will take place in three phases, starting with the departure of peacekeepers from South Kivu by the end of April," he said. "Then it will be the turn of North Kivu and followed by Ituri. By December 31, the gradual responsible and exemplary withdrawal from the mission will be completed." He said the withdrawal has commenced even when it is not yet at the stage of seeing troops boarding planes. Withdrawal plan Keita said government troops would strengthen their presence in South Kivu, particularly in places where internally displaced persons live under the protection of UN peacekeepers. She said the UN agreed with the government to hold an assessment every three months on the state of the implementation of the withdrawal plan.

Comoros Presidential Election: Incumbent expected to secure victory

MORONI : Voting was under way in Comoros on Sunday in an election widely expected to hand a fourth five-year term to President Azali Assoumani, who faces five opponents in a vote some opposition leaders have boycotted. Comoros has experienced around 20 coups or attempted coups since winning independence from France in 1975 and is a major source of irregular migration to the nearby French island of Mayotte. Some opposition leaders have called for a boycott, accusing the election commission of favouring the ruling party. The commission denies this, saying the process will be transparent. "I am delighted with this anchoring of democracy in our country," Assoumani told reporters after voting in his home town of Mitsoudjé, adding that he hoped for victory in the first round. The former army officer first came to power in a coup in 1999. He has since won three elections and has served as the chair of the African Union for the past year. He won the 2019 election with 60% of the vote, breaching the 50% mark required to avoid a run-off. Critics say since then his government has cracked down on dissent, an accusation it denies. Assoumani's opponents include a former interior minister and Salim Issa, a medical doctor and flagbearer for Juwa, former president Ahmed Abdallah Sambi's party.—Agencies

Turkish firms lead \$85 billion African projects

ANKARA v: Companies from Türkiye have undertaken tens of billions of dollars worth of infrastructure and superstructure projects in Africa, cementing their rapid expansion in the continent in a drive that has been creating hundreds of thousands of jobs. The contracting firms completed 1,864 projects across Africa worth \$85.4 billion (TL 2.57 trillion) as of the end of 2023, according to data from the Foreign Economic Relations Board of Türkiye (DEİK). Turkish companies' investments across the continent exceed \$10 billion, and their firms employ more than 100,000 Africans. Türkiye's engagement with the African continent has been gaining pace over the years. Since taking office nearly two decades ago, first serving as prime minister, Erdoğan has been fostering ties with the continent, presenting Türkiye as a fairer player than the continent's former colonial powers. The diplomatic push has seen Türkiye's trade volume with Africa surge to nearly \$41 billion.—APP

Top diplomats meet in Davos on Ukraine 'peace formula'

WEB DESK

DAVOS : Ukraine pushed ahead with its peace formula to end nearly two years of war with Russia with a meeting of national security advisers from around the world in Davos on Sunday. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, who is scheduled to address the World Economic Forum (WEF) in Davos later in the week, was not in the opening morning session, which included 81 participants from countries and international organisations. Zelenskyy was represented by his chief of staff Andriy Yermak at Sunday's talks, which were also attended by the U.S. special representative for Ukraine's Economic Recovery Penny Pritzker, as well as James O'Brien, the U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs. As concerns grow about ongoing U.S. support for the war in Ukraine during an election year, National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan and Secretary of State Antony Blinken are both expected to address the WEF, which officially starts on Monday evening. Switzerland, which hosted the NSA representatives, said the Ukraine peace talks aimed to finalise principles "for a lasting and just peace in Ukraine" at the level of national security advisers. The principles, it said in a statement last week, should form the basis for the next stages of the peace process. The role of the Global South in Ukraine's peace formula talks has come into focus in Davos. Many of the non-aligned countries from Africa, Latin America, the Middle East and Asia that have largely stayed on the sidelines over Ukraine will be represented in the Swiss mountain resort this week.—DNA



BAGHDAD : Ambassador Muhammad Zeeshan Ahmed had a meeting with H.E Stephen Hitchen, British Ambassador to Iraq. Matters of mutual interest as well as overall situation of the region came under discussion.—DNA

Namibia Criticizes Germany's Stance on ICJ Case

"Germany has chosen to defend in the ICJ the genocidal and gruesome acts of the Israeli government against innocent civilians in Gaza and the occupied Palestinian Territories," the president of Namibia

FOREIGN DESK

BERLIN: Namibia has criticised Germany's "shocking decision" to support Israel in the genocide case at the International Court of Justice (ICJ) brought by South Africa, as Israel's war on Gaza entered its 100th day. "Germany has chosen to defend in the ICJ the genocidal and gruesome acts of the Israeli government against innocent civilians in Gaza and the occupied Palestinian Territories," the president of Namibia, Hage Geingob, said in a statement on X. A two-day public hearing in the case at the World Court – the highest legal body of the United Nations – took place on Thursday and Friday during which South Africa and Israel presented their arguments. South Africa told the court on Thursday that Israel's aerial and ground offensive – which has laid waste to much of the enclave and killed almost

24,000 people, according to Gaza health authorities – aimed to bring about "the destruction of the population" of Gaza. Israel accused South Africa of presenting a "distorted" view of the hostilities, denying that its military operation in Gaza is a state-led genocide campaign against Palestinians. The statement by the Namibian presidency added that Berlin was ignoring Israel's killing of more than 23,000 Palestinians in Gaza and various United Nations reports disturbingly highlighting the internal displacement of 85 percent of the besieged enclave's 2.3 million people amid acute shortages of food and essential services. The Namibian president expressed "deep concern" over "the shocking decision" communicated by the government of Germany on Friday, in which "it rejected the morally upright indictment" brought forward by South Africa. "No peace-loving human being can ignore the carnage waged against Palestinians in Gaza," it

said. The statement claimed that Germany committed the first genocide of the 20th century in Namibia between 1904 and 1908, in which tens of thousands of innocent Namibians died in the most inhumane and brutal conditions. "Germany cannot morally express commitment to the United Nations Convention against genocide, including atonement for the genocide in Namibia, whilst supporting the equivalent of a holocaust and genocide in Gaza," the presidency said. "President Geingob appeals to the German government to reconsider its untimely decision to intervene as a third-party in defence and support of the genocidal acts of Israel before the ICJ." German colonial forces carried out atrocities in Namibia against the Indigenous Herero and Nama peoples between 1904 and 1908. The killings were part of a German campaign of collective punishment between 1904 and 1908 that is today recognised as the 20th century's

first genocide. Henning Melber from Nordic Africa Institute in Sweden said that the statement issued by President Geingob was an unexpected turning point in the already fragile German-Namibian relations. "Germany publicly took side in the ICJ case with Israel on January 12, which marks 120 years of the beginning of what many Namibians call the German-Namibian war, which then resulted in the first genocide of the 20th century," he said. While Germany scored a lot of good points internationally in the way it engaged with the mass destruction of the holocaust, it was in denial of the genocide committee [with Namibia] until 2015," Melber said. He added that in the last eight years the German and Namibian governments have been in negotiations on the Namibian genocide since 2015. He said Germany still falls short of recognising the incidents in Namibia as a genocide in legal terms, which

means it refuses the obligations to pay reparations. The ICJ is likely to present a provisional measure in the coming days but a final verdict will take years. South Africa has urged the court to order an immediate halt to Israel's devastating military offensive in Gaza. The 1948 Genocide Convention, enacted in the wake of the mass murder of Jews in the Nazi Holocaust, defines genocide as "acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnic, racial or religious group". South Africa filed the ICJ case on December 19, accusing Israel of genocidal acts in Gaza. Several countries and international organisations have backed South Africa in its case, while Israel has received the backing of the United States, its main weapons supplier and close ally. Several global entities, including Human Rights Watch, have determined that Israel is engaging in war crimes in Gaza.

Briefs

PTI leaders
allotted
electoral
symbols

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: Following SC verdict, PTI members will contest elections as independent candidates. On an electoral map, the leaders of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) appear haphazardly strewn, as the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) allotted separate electoral symbols to them which could confuse their voters as the party was stripped of the iconic 'bat' symbol.

Inran Khan-led PTI suffered a major blow on Saturday after the Supreme Court annulled the Peshawar High Court (PHC) verdict and approved the ECP's plea to declare the PTI's intra-party "unconstitutional," depriving the party of its electoral symbol just weeks ahead of the February 8 polls. A party's electoral symbol on ballot papers is significant for voters to be able to identify its candidates in the nation of 241 million people, where the majority of the constituencies are in rural areas with low literacy.

Chief Justice Qazi Faez Isa announced the ruling in a live late-night telecast of the proceedings on the top court's website. After the court verdict, the PTI members will contest the elections as independent candidates. Some of the main PTI leaders who will contest elections on different symbols from Lahore are Yasmin Rashid from NA-130 with symbol 'laptop', Salman Akram Raja on NA-128 with 'racquet', Latif Khosa has been given English letter 'K' for NA-122 and Mian Azhar given 'wicket' for NA-129, according to media.

Daniyal makes
attempt to get
PTI ticket

DNA

SHAKARGARH: Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) senior leader and former federal minister Ahsan Iqbal accused his party colleague Daniyal Aziz of trying to get the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) ticket. He said that Daniyal Aziz wanted to get the PTI ticket and later he applied for the PML-N ticket.

Ahsan Iqbal, while speaking at the inauguration of the election hall in constituency NA-75, said PML-N leadership was not in favour of giving ticket to Daniyal Aziz in 2013 while claiming he convinced the party to award Aziz the ticket.

Iqbal said Aziz held him responsible for the prevalent inflation in the country while knowing well that it was due to PTI's IMF programme. The former federal minister claimed that Daniyal Aziz held a press conference against the PML-N to please the PTI leadership.

ECP
concludes
reserved
seats scrutiny

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Returning Officers of the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) have completed the scrutiny of nomination papers for seats reserved for women and minorities in the national and four provincial assemblies.

According to the schedule issued by the ECP here Sunday, appeals for the acceptance or rejection of nomination papers by Returning Officers can be submitted until January 16 and the Appellate Tribunal will hear them until January 19. The revised list of candidates will be released on January 20, withdrawal of nomination papers can be done until January 22, and the final list of candidates will be unveiled on January 23. Earlier today, the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) stressed upon all political parties to ensure five per cent women quota in awarding tickets for general seats for the General Elections 2024, in accordance the Elections Act, 2017

Taiwan tells China to 'face reality' after election

The Taiwan Strait is one of the world's most important maritime trade arteries and the island itself is a major tech manufacturer, particularly of vital semiconductors – the tiny chips used in everything from smartphones to missile systems

NEWS DESK

TAIPEI: Taiwan told China on Sunday to "face reality" and respect its election result, after voters defied Beijing's warnings and chose pro-sovereignty candidate Lai Ching-te as president. Voters spurned Beijing's repeated calls not to vote for Lai, delivering a comfortable victory for a man China's ruling Communist Party sees as a dangerous separatist. Beijing, which claims Taiwan as its territory and has never renounced force to bring it under its control, responded to Lai's victory by saying it would not change the "inevitable trend of China's reunification".

Lai, of the ruling Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), had vowed to defend the island from China's "intimidation" and on Sunday the island's foreign ministry told Beijing to accept the result. "The Ministry of Foreign Affairs calls on the Beijing authorities to respect the election results, face reality and give up suppressing Taiwan in order for positive cross-strait interactions to return to the right track," it said in a statement. An unofficial US delegation sent by President Joe Biden's administration will arrive in Taipei on Sunday, a move sure to anger Beijing.

The delegation, including a former US national security adviser and a former deputy secretary of state will meet "a range of leading political figures" on Monday, the island's de facto US embassy said in a statement. The statement did not say how long the visit would last. After a campaign marked by diplomatic pressure from Beijing and near-daily incursions by Chinese fighter jets, Lai beat his nearest rival Hou Yu-ih of the Kuomintang (KMT) on Saturday by more than 900,000 votes.

In his victory speech, the 64-year-old Lai congratulated voters for refusing to be swayed by "external forces" trying to influence the election. He said he wanted to co-operate with China – Taiwan's biggest trade partner – and maintain peace and stability, but pledged not to be cowed by Chinese belligerence. "We are determined to safeguard Taiwan from continuing threats and intimidation from China," he told supporters.

Four Chinese naval vessels were seen in waters around the island on polling day, according to Taiwan's defence ministry, and one high-altitude balloon passed over. China warned Taiwan's voters in the days leading up to the election to make the "correct choice", and that Lai would take the island closer to war. Lai will take power on

May 20 alongside his vice-presidential pick Hsiao Bi-khim, Taiwan's former representative to the United States.

Both were the targets of disinformation efforts during the campaign that experts linked to China. Turnout of 72 percent showed an enthusiastic electorate and voter Tsai Jin-hui said on Sunday Beijing should mind its own business. "What China thinks is a matter for China. We are electing the president of our own country," the 62-year-old taxi driver told AFP. "I believe one day the world will recognise Taiwan as an independent sovereign state." The United States and Britain congratulated Lai on his win, while the EU welcomed the successful holding of the election.

World powers are keen to see as much stability as possible between China and Taiwan, not least because of the vital role the island plays in the global economy.

The Taiwan Strait is one of the world's most important maritime trade arteries and the island itself is a major tech manufacturer, particularly of vital semiconductors – the tiny chips used in everything from smartphones to missile systems.

Lai and the DPP have toned down past calls for independence, saying there is no need for a formal declaration since Taiwan is

effectively independent already, defending the island's sovereignty.

But China still sees them as skirting too close to the "I-word" – a red line for the communist giant. Beijing cut off official contact with current President Tsai Ing-wen of the DPP in 2016 and is not expected to budge with Lai, setting the stage for four more years of frosty cross-strait relations.

"The ruling party's unprecedented third consecutive presidential victory will disappoint China, but it is unlikely to spur any near-term change in Beijing's reunification strategy," Bonnie Glaser, a Taiwan-China affairs expert at the German Marshall Fund of the United States, wrote in an analysis piece. But the question in the coming days will be whether China decides on merely a diplomatic and rhetorical response to the election – or steps up with a big show of force.

A visit to Taiwan by then-US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi in 2022 sent Beijing into a fury, triggering China's biggest-ever military exercises around the island, involving warships, missiles and fighter jets.

Further ahead, Lai's presidency could be affected by the US election in November, with the possible return of Donald Trump to the White House offering a very different prospect than Biden.

Islamabad
police
suspend
five officers

MEHTAB PRIZADA

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad police said on Sunday that five officers including Margalla Police Station SHO were suspended a day after a "mistaken" raid at Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leader Barrister Gohar Ali Khan's residence in Islamabad. A special force of the Islamabad police on Saturday conducted a raid at the house of the Barrister in Islamabad's F/7-2 area to arrest the absconders involved in the May 9 violence and other anti-state activities.

The police manhandled the family of Barrister Gohar, damaged property, and took away valuable documents, mobile phone sets and laptop, Barrister Gohar's relatives told the media.

Barrister Gohar was pleading PTI's electoral symbol at the time police raided his house. Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Qazi Faez Isa had also expressed concern over the incident and directed the additional attorney general (AGP) to look into the matter. In the statement today, the capital police said on the afternoon of January 13 (Saturday) at 2:00pm, the local police reached F-7/2 to apprehend a proclaimed offender on the tip of an informer. When the police party came to know that the said house was the residence of Barrister Gohar, the raiding police party came back immediately, the statement added.

Chaudhry
Nisar
hopeful
to win

DNA

TAXILA: Former federal minister Chaudhry Nisar Ali Khan on Sunday expressed hope that he would win by the support of the people.

The former federal minister that he has always believed on the politics of principles and never compromised on his values.

He said he could not forget those who supported his cause during the difficult time while adding his services were before the common people.

He added had he wanted to remain in power, he would not have left important ministries but it would have led to a few compromise on his political principles.

Mohsin Nqvi is the 2nd
Suri of Punjab: Solangi

ABID RAZA

LAHORE: Federal Minister for Information Murtaza Solangi while distributing the special grant cheques among the Presidents and General Secretaries of the Press Clubs across Punjab in a ceremony being held at CM Office paid glowing tributes to the exemplary public service performance of Chief Minister Punjab Mohsin Nqvi in glorious words. Federal Minister for Information Murtaza Solangi stated that he labels Mohsin Nqvi as the second Sher Shah Suri of Punjab. It is heartening to know that a handsome amount worth rupees 9 crore

45 lakhs has been distributed among the press clubs across Punjab without any discrimination. Mohsin Nqvi not only cared about roads and hospitals but journalists as well. Mohsin Nqvi works diligently day in and day out so as to provide maximum relief to the people of the province. "When I watch TV in the morning then I see Mohsin Nqvi on the screen busy in visiting some project". The Presidents and General Secretaries of the Press Clubs across Punjab declared CM Mohsin Nqvi as a 'Benefactor of Journalism'. They acknowledged that for the first time in the history, issuance of a grant for the small press clubs speaks volumes of CM's journalism friendly steps. They remarked that CM Mohsin Nqvi has won their hearts.

World disillusioned
with Israel by
virtue of martyrs

FOREIGN DESK

TEHRAN: Iran's President Ebrahim Raeisi says the world has been disillusioned with Israel thanks to the pure blood of thousands of Palestinians who were killed in the regime's US-backed genocidal war on the Gaza Strip. He made the remarks in an address to the International Conference of Al-Aqsa Storm and Awakening of Human Conscience in Tehran on Sunday. "What has disillusioned the world today is the pure blood of Palestinian martyrs and thousands of martyred children," Raeisi said. "The world has awakened... Palestine has become the [number one] issue of the entire world. Palestine is not solely the concern of the Muslim Ummah (community) anymore and has turned into a global issue." He also noted that despite efforts aimed at portraying those defending their homeland as evil, it has become clear to the world that "the center of all mischief is the United States and some Western governments that are supporting the Israeli regime." The Iranian chief executive reiterated

"The world has awakened... Palestine has become the [number one] issue of the entire world. Palestine is not solely the concern of the Muslim Ummah (community) anymore and has turned into a global issue"

that Palestine is the foremost issue of the Muslim world, saying the liberation of the Al-Aqsa Mosque in al-Quds is a priority of the Muslim world. He further emphasized that the issue of Palestine is 75 years of usurpation and occupation and that its solution is resistance and resilience. "Today, the winner of the Al-Aqsa battle is Palestine and the loser in the field is the Zionist regime and its supporters," Raeisi said. He also reiterated that defending Palestine and resistance groups is on the agenda of the Islamic Republic. The occupation will not bring legitimacy to Israel, he asserted. The Tel Aviv regime should end its occupation of Palestine and be punished for it. Raeisi further warned that Israel's normalization of ties with some Arab countries will neither bring about security for the Zionist regime nor for regional states. Israel waged the brutal war on besieged Gaza on October 7 after the Palestinian Hamas resistance carried out an unprecedented operation against the usurping entity in retaliation for its intensified atrocities against the Palestinian people. So far, Tel Aviv regime has killed at least 23,843 Palestinians, mostly women and children, and injured 60,317 others.

Maldives tells India to withdraw
troops by March as row deepens

AGENCIES

MALE: The Maldivian president on Sunday told India to withdraw its nearly 100 troops by March 15, a day after returning from China where he signed a raft of deals. New Delhi considers the Indian Ocean archipelago to be within its sphere of influence but the country has shifted to China's orbit, the Maldives's largest external creditor. The March deadline was set during talks with Indian officials in the Maldives on Sunday, a top aide to President Mohamed Muizzu said, honouring the leader's long-standing election pledge. "The president put forth this request at the meeting of the high-level committee between the two nations... the proposal is currently under consideration," Muizzu's Public Policy Secretary Abdulla Nazim Ibrahim told reporters. India has a deployment of about 89 personnel, including medical staff, to operate three aircraft to patrol the archipelago's vast maritime territory.

Muizzu came to power in September after pledging to evict Indian forces. On Saturday, after arriving in the capital Male, the president said that while the Maldives may be small, the country will not be bullied. "We are not a country that is in the backyard of another country. We are an independent nation," Muizzu said. "This territorial integrity policy is one that China respects", he said in the nation's

Dhivehi language, the Mihaaru newspaper reported. With Beijing and New Delhi tussling for influence, Muizzu was elected in September after pledging to cultivate "strong ties" with China. "We may be small, but that doesn't give you the license to bully us," Muizzu said, in a final comment in English. He has denied seeking to redraw the regional balance by bringing in Chinese forces to replace Indian troops. Muizzu's trip to China this week was his first state visit since becoming president.

China's state broadcaster CCTV said deals included "infrastructure construction, medical care and health care, improvement of people's livelihoods, new energy sources, agriculture and marine environmental protection" agreements. Tensions with New Delhi flared after three of Muizzu's junior ministers reportedly called Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi a "clown" and a "terrorist" in since-deleted social media posts earlier this month. Bollywood actors and some of India's cricket greats responded with calls for compatriots to boycott their southern neighbour and instead book their next holidays closer to home. Tourism accounts for nearly a third of the Maldives's economy, with Indians making up the largest share of foreign arrivals. Muizzu said the Maldives will also slash reliance on India for healthcare and medicine, adding more countries where citizens needing government-paid health treatment abroad can go.

Political parties asked
to ensure 'mandatory'
women representation

Electoral watchdog orders political parties to submit male, female candidates' lists within five days

ADIL SHAHEEN

ISLAMABAD: Ahead of the sought-after February 8 elections, political parties have been directed to ensure "mandatory" 5 per cent representation of women candidates on general seats. In an order issued on Sunday, the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) asked all political parties concerned to comply with Section 206 of the Elections Act, 2017, to ensure mandatory 5% representation of women candidates on general seats after the allocation of election symbols. The electoral watchdog also ordered the political parties to submit the list of male and female candidates for general seats within five days. The top electoral body had a hectic day yesterday to conclude the crucial phase of allotment of electoral symbols to the registered political parties. The institution was forced to extend its deadline for symbols' allocation multiple times due to the pending verdict of the Supreme Court hearing embattled Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) desperately seeking to get back its iconic 'bat' sign. A three-member bench – headed by CJP Qazi Faez Isa and comprising Justice Muhammad Ali Mazhar and Justice Musarrat Hilali – announced its unanimous verdict after a day-long hearing. The top court declared the Peshawar High Court's (PHC) January 10 order "null and void", depriving the former ruling party of its 'iconic' electoral symbol – bat – just days ahead of the general elections. The electoral symbol is crucial to any political party as voters are aware of which candidate to vote for on polling day; however, since the PTI does not have a unified symbol now, it might lose votes due to confusion among the people.