



# Islamabad POST

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**Malaysia demands full UN membership for Palestinian state**

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**US Amb. Blome promotes trade, economic ties**

Detailed News On Page-0



**Khawar takes over as interim PCB chairman**

Detailed News On Page-06



## Armed Forces fully prepared: COAS PM Kakar asks youth to guard against vicious propaganda

Caretaker Prime Minister said, "we as a Nation, have fought the menace of terrorism most valiantly, offering unparalleled sacrifices." He appreciated the role of Armed Forces in the fight against the menace of terrorism with full commitment and professional excellence

KHAYYAM ABBASI / DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan National Youth Convention 2024 was held at the Jinnah Convention Centre, Islamabad. Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar graced the occasion as chief guest. General Syed Asim Munir, NI (M), Chief of Army Staff (COAS) was Guest of Honour at the occasion. While addressing the conference, the Caretaker Prime Minister said, "we as a Nation, have fought the menace of terrorism most valiantly, offering unparalleled sacrifices." He appreciated the role of Armed Forces in the fight against the menace of terrorism with full commitment and professional excellence. "Pakistan's successes in war against terrorism would not have been possible without the participation and support of the youth which makes 65% of our population," PM Kakar added. The Prime Minister affirmed that as responsible citizens of Pakistan, we must all reject and collectively fight the vicious propaganda onslaught that the enemies of Pakistan have unleashed against Pakistan in the recent past. Youth can play a constructive role in dealing with this emerging national security challenge provided they remain focused, and fact checked all details through authentic information from the state institutions rather than falling prey to propaganda. While addressing the conference, COAS underscored that the youth was Pakistan's biggest asset, and all optimism of a brighter future was associated with them. Conveying the message of hope, the COAS asked the youth to shun dependency. He referred to the historic role played by the youth in creation and development of Pakistan and exhorted them to partake in building the nation through discipline, honest toil and a genuine quest for knowledge. COAS highlighted the power potential of Pakistan, the demographic dividend, immense mineral wealth, a creative corpus of IT literate workforce, and great prospects in agriculture.

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## Murtaza Solangi for improving fact check mechanism

ABID RAZA

LAHORE: Caretaker Federal Minister for Information, Broadcasting and Parliamentary Affairs Murtaza Solangi Wednesday said that the mechanism for fact-checking will have to be improved in the arena of digital media to counter fake news and misinformation. Delivering his speech at the 2nd International Media and Communication Conference here, he said that the year 2024 was the year of elections in different countries including Pakistan, India, Indonesia, United States of America. He urged the media industry to play a responsible role as its responsibility was to protect the public interest. "Journalism is primarily about defending the public's right to know," Murtaza Solangi maintained. The minister said the challenges of the digital age were also great as artificial intelligence, deep fake, voice cloning and misinformation factories have made it difficult to sift fact from fiction. He said that besides the benefits of modern technology in media, there were many risks also involved. He said that many tasks are being done by using artificial intelligence and voice cloning. The fundamental principle of journalism was

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ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar addresses Pakistan National Youth Convention 2024. - DNA

## No Internet outage till elections: SHC

Users experienced internet outages multiple times lately

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: The Sindh High Court (SHC) has directed the authorities concerned to ensure uninterrupted access to the internet to all citizens till February 8 general elections. In its order on Wednesday, the high court restrained the authorities from suspending internet services and directed the respondents to submit their response on January 29. Advocate and human rights activist Jibran Nasir had filed the petition in the SHC against frequent suspension of internet services in the country. As the political canvassing picks up pace ahead of the next month's elections, users have experienced internet outages

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## 'Won't take U-turns' Nawaz promises to deliver if voted to power

Nawaz stated that his heart would be at peace only if the people of Pakistan found relief from the prevailing crises of inflation, unemployment, energy shortfall and terrorism

DNA

NANKANA SAHIB: Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) supremo Nawaz Sharif on Wednesday asserted that Pakistan plunged into crises after he was unjustly removed as the prime minister on false charges. Addressing a massive public gathering in Nankana Sahib, the former prime minister questioned why he was ousted on false charges when he had no enmity with anyone. "I was not an imported prime minister," Nawaz further questioned why a prime minister, who played a key role in making Pakistan a nuclear power, found himself handcuffed, jailed and convicted. He deplored that five judges had deposed him from the PM's Office for not taking a salary from his son. The former premier wondered why the people of Pakistan faced distress after his removal, expressing his deep concern for their plight. Nawaz stated that his heart would be at peace only if the people of Pakistan found relief from the prevailing crises of inflation, unemployment, energy shortfall and terrorism. The venue of the PML-N rally reverberated with the chants of "Mian Saab,

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## Nawaz 'relying on something other than people'

Bilawal says PPP to form govt in provinces and the Center

STAFF REPORT

LARKANA: Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Chairman and former foreign minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari has said that Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) supremo Nawaz Sharif is apparently attempting to become the country's prime minister for the fourth time via a backdoor. "He's certainly giving the impression that he is relying on something other than the people of Pakistan to become prime minister for the fourth time," Bilawal said in an interview with international media

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## Briefs

**British envoy urges inclusive education for all**

Jane Marriott stresses that both girls and boys must have an equal right to education to fulfil their dreams

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: British High Commissioner to Pakistan, Jane Marriott CMG OBE, said on Wednesday that inclusive, quality education is crucial for peace, development, and breaking the cycle of poverty. In a video message on the occasion of the International Day of Education, she said that both girls and boys have an equal right to education to fulfil their dreams. Marriott highlighted the concerning fact that approximately 26 million children in Pakistan are out of school, and even those enrolled are not receiving an adequate education.

**Gohar given charge of interior minister**

Sarfraz Bugti, former caretaker interior minister, resigned on Dec 15, 2023

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Minister for Commerce, Industries and Production Gohar Ejaz has been given additional charge of interior ministry after Sarfraz Bugti stepped down from the post last month. In accordance with rule 3(4) of the Rules of Business, 1973, the prime minister has assigned the interior ministry portfolio to Gohar Ejaz with immediate effect, as stated in a notification issued by the Cabinet Division.

After New Hampshire win

## Trump closes in on Biden rematch

Trump's address was loaded with his trademark ominous warnings about immigration as he continued to lie about winning the 2020 election

CENTRELINE REPORT

WASHINGTON: Donald Trump won the key New Hampshire primary on Tuesday, moving him ever closer to locking in the Republican presidential nomination and securing an extraordinary White House rematch with US President Joe Biden. With around 80 per cent of votes counted, Trump's winning margin hovered at about 11 percentage points, but his sole remaining challenger Nikki Haley vowed to fight on. Trump, 77, attacked Haley in a rambling victory speech and said that when the primary contest reaches her home state of South Carolina, "we're going to win easily." Trump's address was loaded with his trademark ominous warnings about immigration as he continued to lie about winning the 2020 election. In her speech, Haley insisted the race was "far from over" and told supporters that Democrats actually want to run against her former boss, due to

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## 65 Ukrainian PoWs killed in downed plane

AGENCIES

MOSCOW: A military transport plane that Russia said was carrying 74 people, including 65 Ukrainian prisoners of war to be swapped, crashed Wednesday in a border region near Ukraine. All aboard were killed, according to the governor. It wasn't immediately clear what caused the crash in the Belgorod region. Gov. Vyacheslav Gladkov didn't specify who was on the plane. The Associated Press could not confirm who was on board, and Ukrainian officials

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## Sidhu for resolving issues on table

SPORTS DESK



SHAKARGARH: Indian cricketer turned politician Navjot Singh Sidhu has said issues should be resolved on table through negotiations as war is no solution to any problem. During his visit to Kartarpur on Wednesday, he said innocent Palestinians' genocide at the hand of Israeli force should immediately be stopped. Responding to a question, he said the Pakistanis' hospitality could not be described in words as the Sikh community always enjoyed utmost respect and homage. The Indian cricketer stated the objectives of the Kartarpur Corridor were yet to be achieved,

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## SA expecting ICJ emergency measures ruling on Friday

South Africa has been one of the outspoken critics of Israel's ongoing onslaught against Palestinians and has led some initiatives to hold Israel accountable for its actions in Gaza

DNA

JOHANNESBURG: South Africa expects the International Court of Justice (ICJ) to rule this Friday on whether it will grant emergency measures to stop the Israeli genocidal campaign in the besieged Gaza Strip, a report says. News website News24, citing two sources close to the matter, reported on Wednesday that a South African government delegation had touched down in The Hague in anticipation of the judgment. South Africa's justice ministry spokesperson Chrispin Phiri, however, in a social media post on X said: "We do not have an official communication from the court as to when the judgment will be delivered." South Africa filed the lawsuit against Israel at the end of December, after nearly three months of Israeli aggression against Palestinians in Gaza. The lawsuit said Israel's actions are "genocidal in character because they are intended to bring about the destruction of a substantial part of the Palestinian national, racial and ethnic group." The application also said Israeli attacks breach the UN's Genocide Convention, and urged

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## Israel's war crimes continue amid 'Mass casualties'

9 killed in Israeli attack on Khan Younis training center designated as shelter

NEWS DESK

GAZA: As the US-backed Israeli genocidal war on the Gaza Strip entered day 110 on Wednesday, massive aerial and artillery strikes continued to pound neighborhoods, homes and shelter centers and massacre more civilians, mostly children and women. A reporter for the Palestinian Information Center (PIC) said that the Israeli occupation army continued to

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## CDA ensuring best facilities for citizens

DNA

ISLAMABAD : The administration of the Capital Development Authority (CDA) is taking several steps to provide the best facilities to the citizens. In this regard, the CDA administration is fast-tracking the installation of pedestrian bridges at three different places in view of the facilities for pedestrians crossing the Srinagar highway, which is in the final stages so that road accidents can be reduced. According to the details, due to the installation of one of these three pedestrian bridge on 26 January 2024 at 10PM to 28 January 2024 at 10PM Sector G-7/4 Opposite Chairman Office CDA, Metro Bus Station, Srinagar Highway will be completely closed for all types of traffic. Moreover, the Capital Development Authority has also appealed to the Islamabad Traffic Police to arrange timely alternative routes in view of the facilities of the public so that the citizens do not face any kind of difficulties. Likewise, the CDA administration has also appealed to the public to fully cooperate with the Islamabad Traffic Police to avoid any kind of accident.

## DC for beautification of Bahawalpur

BAHAWALPUR : Deputy Commissioner Bahawalpur Zaeer Anwar Jappa has instructed to make Bahawalpur green, and clean. In this regard, the officers of the relevant departments should take proper measures. He was addressing a meeting held in the committee room of his office. Assistant Commissioner Bahawalpur City Adeel Khan, Director General Parks and Horticulture Authority Rubina Abbasi, Chief Executive Officer Bahawalpur Waste Management Company Naem Akhtar, Municipal Officer Muhammad Waqar, Inspector Traffic Shazia Ramzan and SDO Highways Muhammad Javed were present in the meeting. He said that evergreen plants should be planted and special attention should be paid to the maintenance of plants. He said that the encroachments in the inner city, railway station, and other places should be removed. In this regard, the staff of the municipal corporation and the traffic police should work effectively. It was informed in the meeting that beautiful monuments will be installed at prominent places in the city.—APP

## DG Industries visits BFC Rwp

RAWALPINDI : The Director General (DG) Industries, Prices, Weights & Measures (IPWM), Asif Ali Farrukh here on Wednesday visited the Business Facilitation Center (BFC), established in Rawalpindi Development Authority (RDA). On this occasion, the Manager BFC, Shabana Nazir, Assistant Commissioner HR Rawalpindi and other officers concerned were present. According to RDA spokesman, Chief Engineer RDA, Muhammad Anwar Baran briefed the DG Industries regarding BFC. The DG also reviewed the working of the BFC in detail and monitored the operations of the center.—APP

# Serena Hotel celebrates education day with underprivileged children

ADIL SHAHEEN

ISLAMABAD : Islamabad Serena Hotel is honored to announce its celebration of the International Day of Education with the students at Master Ayub School, aimed at supporting education and providing essential resources to the underprivileged children. In line with this year's theme of "Learning for lasting peace", six senior executives from the hotel dedicated their expertise to conduct 15-minute sessions covering diverse subjects such as Pakistan studies, fitness, personal hygiene, and more. Also, through this donation drive, Islamabad Serena Hotel seeks to underscore the significance of education in transforming lives

and building a better future for the young learners. The General Manager of Islamabad Serena Hotel, Mr. Otto Kurzendorfer shared his views on the importance of education in shaping a brighter tomorrow, "This initiative not only aligns with our corporate social responsibility goals but also provides a platform for our executives to directly contribute to the development of the next generation. We are excited about the positive impact this program will have on the lives of these young individuals." During the visit, the management of the Islamabad Serena Hotel also distributed educational material and food boxes among the children of

Master Ayub School. This initiative aimed at easing the students' educational journey and ensuring they have access to the necessary resources to pursue their studies effectively. Islamabad Serena Hotel is committed to create opportunities for children who face socio-economic challenges.



— Photos by Mudassar Raja

## Interdisciplinary discourse crucial for promoting AI's role

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI : Caretaker Sindh Chief Minister Justice (Retd) Maqbool Baqar has said that technological advancement, energy conservation, alternate energy resources and the pivotal role of artificial intelligence (AI) in everyday life have made it essential to carry out such interdisciplinary discourse for promotion of unconventional thinking, breaking the silos and challenging the norms which are gradually becoming obsolete. He said this while speaking at a Two-day international conference on "Blurring the Barriers: Interdisciplinary of Architecture, organized by Dawood University of Engineering and Technology here Wednesday. The event was attended by Secretary U&B Noor Samoo, Vice Chancellor Engr Prof. Dr Samreen Hussain, Chair-

man Sindh Higher Education Commission Dr. Tariq Rafi, Pro-Vice Chancellor, Prof Abdul Waheed Bhutto and others. The CM said that the University was the first institution in Pakistan to introduce Degree programs in disciplines like Electronic Engineering and Industrial Engineering and Management, almost 63 years ago. "The University has produced great Alumni who contributed to the establishment of PTV, Radio Pakistan, SUPARCO, PTCL and such other organizations. "On a global front, they established their worth in the field of Architecture and remained part of team-built Dubai and other landmark infrastructures across the world," he said. Justice Baqar said that somehow, this institution lost its way and got off the path of glory it deserved. "Vision, integrity, commitment and delivery can turn every situation around, he said and added

that he was satisfied to see the rebuilding of Dawood University and emerging as a quality-conscious institution. Justice Baqar said that he was moved by the title of the conference "Blurring the Barriers, but I delved further to know more and was happily shocked to see some real out-of-the-box thinking. The titles of plenary sessions of the conference presenting 180-degree contrast disciplines yet are important to be clubbed together for better design considerations, the CM said and added the Technological advancement, energy conservation, alternate energy resources, and the pivotal role of artificial intelligence (AI) in everyday routine life has made it essential to carry out such interdisciplinary discourse. "Promote unconventional thinking, breaking the silos and challenging the norms which are gradually becoming obsolete," he said.

The CM's had high expectations of the outcome of this conference. "I eagerly look forward to receiving recommendations from learned speakers and panelists travelling from various parts of the country and abroad," he said. He also thanked the international keynote speakers physically or online for sharing their knowledge with our students and faculty. CM said that mutual respect and an urge for learning was the only way forward for every nation. "These Symposiums and conferences are just to open up the doors for future prospects," he said and urged all the participants to build upon this opportunity and extract the maximum possible benefit during the two days of the conference and beyond. Earlier, the Chairman HEC, Sindh Prof Tariq Rafi and VC Dawood University Dr Samreen also spoke about the conference.

## AKF announces 'award for journalists'

PESHAWAR : Al-Khidmat Foundation Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Wednesday announced 'Award for Journalists' to honor their efforts in highlighting welfare-oriented activities for reducing difficulties faced by people. This announcement was made by President Al-Khidmat Foundation KP, Khalid Waqas while addressing a press conference here at Peshawar Press Club. President PPC, Arshad Aziz Malik, Senior Journalist, Muhammad Riaz and representatives of Al-Khidmat Foundation were present on the occasion. Al-Khidmat Foundation and Peshawar Press Club also signed a MoU for the provision of health, medical and financial facilities for journalists of Peshawar. Khalid Waqas said the award would be given to ten journalists for their distinguished work in the field of welfare activities in the province. Journalists from print, electronic and social media can submit their work by February 20, 2024. The terms and conditions of the Award will be shared by PPC will all the members, he added. Regarding the MoU, he said journalists can avail up to 30 percent discount on examination, treatment and medicine fees at Al-Khidmat Hospital. He said the families of late journalists will be provided monthly financial support besides free education for the orphans. Any journalist whose child is a thalassemia patient will get free treatment from Al-Khidmat Foundation. Similarly, in the mass marriage programme of Al-Khidmat, around two packages of dowry will be reserved for the wedding of deserving journalists' daughters. Speaking on the occasion, President PPC, Arshad Aziz Malik thanked the Al-Khidmat Foundation for extending generous support and cooperation to the journalist community. He also announced free holding of Al-Khidmat activities at the premises of Peshawar Press Club. Later, Arshad Aziz Malik and Khalid Waqas signed the MoU in the presence of a large number of media men.—DNA

## 6 kids die of pneumonia across South Punjab

MULTAN : A total of 66 kids died of pneumonia in public hospitals across South Punjab in the current month while 2,847 patients reported to health facilities. Health Department South Punjab Spokesperson Asad Ullah Shahzad told APP on Wednesday that 41 deaths were reported from Children Complex Multan, nine from Bahawal Victoria Hospital Bahawalpur, 14 from Allama Iqbal Teaching Hospital D G Khan, and one each from Sheikh Zayed Hospital Rahim Yar Khan and Sir Sadiq Abbasi Hospital Bahawalpur while no death was reported from Nishtar Hospital Multan by January 23. He stated that as many as 556 pneumonia patients visited out patient departments and 2,291 admitted to Accident & Emergency wards, with 2,207 of them recovered.—APP

## Trade Officers visited SCCI to meet business community

SIALKOT : Trade and Investment Officers, appointed by the Ministry of Commerce to missions abroad, visited the Sialkot Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI) on Wednesday for an interactive session with the business community of the region. SCCI President Abdul Ghafoor Malik, Senior Vice President Wahab Jahangir and Vice President Amer Majeed Sheikh welcomed the guests. Speaking at the event, the SCCI president said, "I believe the occasion would provide an invaluable platform for officers to engage with the business community to promote trade. Today's meeting would undoubtedly enable a better understanding of Sialkot's export-based industry." He said the business community of Sialkot has expectations of these officials to help increase exports from Pakistan. He said officers visit to Sialkot would serve as an essential component of their training to familiarise themselves with the city and its industrial setup. He hoped these officials would

function as facilitators, aid producers and exporters in gathering market intelligence, identify areas for market expansion, and provide necessary support for international trade fairs and exhibitions. Malik said in the current economic landscape, marked by challenges and uncertainties, it was imperative to take substantial steps to transform the economic order to overcome the prevailing crisis. He said the export sector of Sialkot, to maintain its international market share, required comprehensive support from all segments of the government, particularly bureaucracy in trade-related ministries and all relevant departments of Pakistan. The SCCI president said "I propose the establishment of a robust working relationship between the Sialkot Chamber and Trade Officers to create synergy and achieve common objectives in both conventional and non-conventional markets. "The Sialkot chamber plans to send trade delegations to key markets, including the

USA, Australia, Brazil, Japan, and Canada this year. We trust that appointed officers in these regions will play a pivotal role in the success of these visits by arranging B2B meetings and generating significant business through their support." Moreover, he added, a delegation to the UK was being sent in third week of February and hoped that the existing trade setup at the Pakistani Mission would play an instrumental role in its success. Director General Trade Development Authority of Pakistan (TDAP) Punjab-I Shahzad Ahmed said that it was a group of 39 officers who were going to be post at different parts of the world. Officers had been selected from different occupational groups. Director General Trade Development Authority of Pakistan (TDAP) Punjab-I said that Sialkot was a city of leaning. "Every time you visit Sialkot, you learn a new thing." He said Sialkot was a city of innovation, SMEs and export hub of Pakistan.—APP

## Governor ensures compliance of 2% quota for minorities

PESHAWAR : Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Haji Ghulam Ali has said that compliance over two percent minority quota for minorities in public sector universities of the province will be ensured. He expressed these views during a meeting recently held at Governor House with a delegation of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) representatives under the chairmanship of Qamar Naseem, Programme Manager of Blue Veins organization. Other members of the delegation included Muhammad Rizwan, Provincial Coordinator National Commission for Human Rights (NCHR) and Sana Ahmad, Programme Coordinator, Blue Veins. During the meeting, Governor Haji Ghulam Ali was informed that in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa there are 27 public sector universities whose administration is bound to abide by the decision taken by the government of providing two percent quota to minorities in admission for different courses and degrees.—APP

## CS visits fire affected plaza in Saddar

SHAMIM SHAHID

PESHAWAR : Chief Secretary Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Nadeem Aslam Chaudhary visited the commercial plaza in Peshawar Sadar Bazar here on Wednesday which was affected by fire. He met with traders and shopkeepers during

his visit, accompanied by Commissioner Peshawar Muhammad Zubair and Deputy Commissioner Afaq Wazir. Expressing deep sorrow over the fire incident, the Chief Secretary, while addressing the media said that this incident was unfortunate. However, he highlighted the extensive damage to numerous shops

and stalls, emphasizing the significant impact on traders and shopkeepers. The Chief Secretary mentioned ongoing efforts to assess damages, awaiting a comprehensive report on the incident. He noted satisfaction that nearby buildings were safeguarded from the fire, avoiding additional harm.

## Pakistan, Russia sign MoU on sports cooperation

The MoU was signed in Moscow by Pakistan's Ambassador to Russia Muhammad Khalid Jamali and Russian Minister for Sports Mr. Oleg Matytsin

DNA

ISLAMABAD : Today Pakistan and Russia signed the Memorandum of Understanding between the Ministry of Inter-Provincial Coordination of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan and the Ministry of Sports of the Russian Federation on Cooperation in the Field of Physical Culture and Sports. The MoU was signed in Moscow by Pakistan's Ambassador to Russia Muhammad Khalid Jamali and Russian Minister for Sports Mr. Oleg Matytsin. The MoU envisions bilateral cooperation in a wide range of sporting endeavours including elite and mass sports, sports for disabled persons, sports science and education, sports technology and infrastructure. The MoU includes cooperation through trainings, seminars and exchange of sports delegations and sports development programs.



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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
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### Emergency

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

### Enquiry

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

### Hospitals

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

### Departments

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

### Water Tank

Islamabad.....0321-5744480
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ISLAMABAD: Lt. Gen Muhammad Aqeel Inspector General Telecommunication Pakistan Army witnessing traditional Thai flowers on the occasion of the Armed Forces Day of Thailand. – DNA

## Speakers call for enhanced cooperation in pharma sector

### COMSTECH Organizes Seminar on Pharmaceutical Manufacturing

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: COMSTECH organized an International Seminar on Pharmaceutical Manufacturing in OIC Member States: Status and Future on Wednesday. Prof. Dr. M. Iqbal Choudhary, Coordinator General COMSTECH welcomed the participants of the seminar. He pointed out that Pakistan is producing very high quality medicines but unfortunately it exports are very low, that needs to be enhanced. Prof. Choudhary said that Pakistan needs hydrocracking facility, biomass fermentation base, medicinal plant and salt and mineral based pharmaceutical

manufacturing. Prof. Choudhary assured that COMSTECH can bring expertise in pharmaceutical manufacturing from different OIC member states which are doing excellently well in this area, like Iran, Indonesia, Bangladesh, and Turkey. He said that the most important factor is to implement the recommendations of this seminar to excel. Dr. Waqar Masood Khan, Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Finance & Revenue, graced the occasion as the chief guest. He said that the pharmaceutical manufacturing is a key indicator of economic development of any country. He said the most important goal of any nation

is to achieve good health, and good health cannot be possible without quality medicine. He informed that pharmaceutical sector is the next up and coming sector to contribute in exports. He suggested to find the ways to reduce the imports in this sector which is too high at the moment. Dr. Waqar hoped that this seminar will lead to real manufacturing of pharmaceutical products. He suggested to prepare a database of OIC countries and strive for intra-OIC trade in this sector. He indicated that Islamic Development Bank can provide cheap trading financing to help boost intra-OIC trade. Prof. Dr. Mohammad Wasay, from the

section of neurology, the Agha Khan University said that pharmaceutical manufacturing is very good in Pakistan and we are also exporting pharmaceutical produce, but are importing raw material extensively. He said we need to draw a framework to manufacture pharmaceuticals at wide level to export. Prof. Wasay said that this is a seminar that brought all stakeholders under one roof to discuss, how to produce, export, and be innovative in this industry. Mr. Asim Rauf, CEO, Drug Regulatory Authority Pakistan, said that this Pakistan is struggling in terms of pharmaceutical manufacturing and export. Eight

manufacturing units of Pakistan have international recognition. He informed that USD 1 billion export of pharmaceuticals is this year's target. Mr. Rauf said that despite the challenges we are doing in our capacity to achieve this goal. He also informed that DRAP has been made fully automated, and by one click all imports and exports are tracked. He suggested that we can have joint ventures with OIC states, like conducting clinical trials, signing MoUs and devising joint programs under COMSTECH. The seminar was also addressed by industry experts and practitioners. More than 60 people participated in the seminar in-person, and online from various OIC member states.

## BISP call centers to be operational soon: DG says

ISLAMABAD: Director General (DG) of National Socio-Economic Registry in Benazir Income Support Program (BISP) Naveed Akbar Wednesday disclosed that BISP will soon launch a hassle free project 'Mobile Registration Vehicles' for remote districts of Sindh and Balochistan for their financial assistance. Talking to PTV news channel, he said that many remote areas were still lack established registration centers where BISP will eligible families to enroll in the BISP through mobile vans, adding, the registration process would further streamlined through these mobile vehicles which will ensure that every deserving family can participate easily. These mobile vans with routine scheduled to visit every district of provinces, he said, adding, first these vehicles will announced and give awareness about the registration for BISP programs. Latest call centers would also be operational soon at every district level which would resolve the complaints of the citizens under BISP program in orders for immediate redressal, he added. "The call center will provide customers with information and also address the cut in payment while transferring BISP cash," he added. Replying a question, he said, "BISP Union council surveys are also being conducted at every district level," he said. –APP

## Al-Balsam team performs 26 operations

ISLAMABAD: "Al-Balsam" Society for Training and Health Development team has performed 26 operations to treat brain and nerve patients during the first two days of its medical campaign in the Republic of Chad, which began on January 20 and continues till January 28, under the supervision of King Salman Humanitarian Aid and Relief Center. During the first day, the medical team of "Al-Balsam" Association was able to examine 180 patients and performed 8 interventional pain operations, which varied between brain tumours, cases of hydrocephalus, and congenital malformations of the brain and spinal cord, as well as cases of tuberculosis of the vertebrae, and many cases of disc herniations and degenerative diseases of the cervical vertebrae, said a press release on Wednesday. –APP

## All housing projects of industrial Workers to be completed on time

ISLAMABAD: All housing projects for registered workers in the industrial sector would be completed in stipulated time periods across the country with all required facilities. An official source told APP here on Wednesday that a mega project of 2056 residential flats in Peshawar for industrial workers had been completed and handed over to the workers since last year. The sources said that the price of each flat was Rs 2.6 million, out of which a Rs 300,000 subsidy would be provided by the government and

the remaining amount would be paid by the beneficiaries through easy installments. A three percent quota has been allocated for widows and two percent for persons with disabilities. Those working in industries for three years are eligible for flats to be awarded on an ownership basis through a lucky draw in a transparent manner. It is the mega housing project of the KP Government, completed in line with the vision of the federal government to provide affordable and low-cost housing facilities for people. The

Labor Complex, having these residential flats, is equipped with all facilities, including drinking water, roads, mosques, schools, parks, grounds, electricity, and gas. Four large tube wells and overhead tanks have been constructed for uninterrupted water supply to its inhabitants. The project has the facility of a school with 30 classrooms, constructed to provide quality education to the children of industrial workers and other segments of society at their doorsteps. The Labor Complex's Phase-I project was launched in 2011 and its Phase-II in 2013. However, the project was delayed due to a shortage of funding due to the lackluster approach of the past regimes at the center. WWB had planned to construct similar residential flats at Hattar, Mardan, Nowshera,

and Peshawar for laborers and industrial workers under the Naya Pakistan Housing Programme. The KP Government has expedited work on the Jalozi Housing Project, on about 10,000 kanals, where construction work is underway on 1,320 residential flats and low-cost housing units for poor people and laborers. Similarly, allotment letters for Hangu Housing Township, with an area of about 8300 kanals, were issued to people, persons with disabilities, widows, and government employees by the Provincial Housing Authority, Government of KP, under the Naya Pakistan Housing Project. These mega projects would help thousands of poor people become owners of their houses and save their hard-earned money from being paid as rent. – DNA

## Minister stresses for quality education

ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Minister for Federal Education and Professional Training, Mr. Madad Ali Sindhi on 'World Education Day' stressed the pivotal role of quality skilled-based education in shaping the bright future of the country and encouraged youth to prepare themselves to confront future challenges. Talking to a private news channel, he said that bringing children outside of schools into the educational system is need of hour to address poverty, health, social, and societal issues. He said that Pakistan is moving at a fast pace to develop the education infrastructure and policies at every level, adding, that BISP-like programs should introduce more to enrol more students in schools. He said that there is also a need for more trained and skilled teachers and the caretaker government was taking steps practically, adding, that skill-based education will only meet market requirements. "We must transform our education system following the modern trends," said the minister. "A human resource equipped with skills is prerequisite to deal with the needs and requirements of the modern age driven by unprecedented technological advancements", the minister mentioned. – DNA

## سر وائیکل کینسر سے حفاظت

### صحت مند زندگی کی ضمانت

عالمی ادارہ صحت کے مطابق

خواتین میں پایا جانے والا چوتھا سب سے عام کینسر وائیکل کینسر (بچہ دانی کے مزہ کا کینسر) ہے

دنیا بھر میں سالانہ لاکھوں خواتین اس مرض کا شکار ہوتی ہیں، لہذا اپنی صحت کا خاص خیال رکھیں

**احتیاطی تدابیر**

- متوازن غذا
- ورزش کا معمول
- تمباکو نوشی سے پرہیز
- محموظ جنسی تعلقات
- سکریننگ اور ویکسینیشن

**علامات**

- ماہواری میں زیادہ خون آنا
- ماہواری میں بےقاعدگی
- سرویکس میں درد کا احساس
- پیشاب کی بار بار حاجت
- ماہواری تاخیر جاری رہنا

**وجوہات**

- چھوٹی عمر میں شادی
- بچوں کی زیادہ تعداد
- تمباکو نوشی
- بدبودار لیکواریا
- جنسی تعلقات میں بے احتیاطی

بروقت تشخیص اور علاج کیلئے صوبہ بھر کے تحصیل و ضلعی ہیڈ کوارٹر ہسپتالوں میں قائم

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مزید معلومات کے لیے

# 1033

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## Briefs

## Hong Kong exam body approves Urdu

ISLAMABAD: The Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority (HKEAA) and the Federal Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education (FBISE) of Pakistan have reached an agreement for the inclusion of Urdu as a Category C subject for the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education Examination (HKDSE) from 2026 onwards. Under the agreement, the Federal Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education would administer the Urdu examinations in Hong Kong including framing question papers, assisting in the registration process, grading, marking, and dissemination of results to HKEAA, said a press release from Pakistan's Consulate General of Pakistan in Hong Kong on Wednesday. The results will then be recognized by the HKEAA for the assessment of the HKDSE category C Urdu subject. The agreement marks a significant development that led to the inclusion of Urdu as a Category C subject in the HKDSE. With the agreement in place, Urdu language proficiency will be formally recognized contributing to the comprehensive evaluation of candidates' language skills in the HKDSE. This will also help students with a background in Urdu, enhance their opportunities for higher education and future pathways. The Consulate General of Pakistan in Hong Kong played a key role in facilitating communication and cooperation between the FBISE and HKEAA, acting as a bridge that helped streamline the negotiations and ensured smooth collaboration between the two organisations. As the implementation of the agreement is set to begin from 2026, both HKEAA and FBISE can now work towards executing the necessary procedures effectively, ensuring a seamless integration of Urdu as a Category C subject within the HKDSE framework.—APP

## Journalist Haqqani remembered on his death anniversary

ISLAMABAD: The 14th death anniversary of renowned journalist and reputed columnist Irshad Ahmed Haqqani observed here Wednesday. Irshad Ahmed Haqqani was born on September 6, 1928 in Kasur. After getting education, he joined Jamaat-e-Islami and started working for its journal Tasnim. Later, he started his professional career as Lecturer in Government College Kasur. In 1981, Irshad Haqqani joined Daily Jang as a Senior Editor and later he started writing articles under the title of "Harf-e-Tamana". He also served as Caretaker Minister for Information and Broadcasting in the caretaker government in 1993.—APP

## UN, Japan celebrate success of women's economic resilience

Mr. Hattori Masaru, Consul General Japan in Karachi expressed, "The Government of Japan remains committed to ensuring women's human rights and fighting against all forms of gender-based violence"

## DNA

ISLAMABAD: UN Women, in collaboration with the Government of Japan, hosted a showcase event in Karachi to highlight the success of Women's Economic Resilience Project. The initiative aimed to provide essential relief and protection services to women and girls in flood-affected areas, fostering their resilience and adaptability to emergencies and disasters. This USD 1.85 million project was made possible through the generous support of the Government of Japan, that provided humanitarian assistance to regions affected by floods in 2022. The aid was directed towards women-focused humanitarian services in the nine districts of Balochistan, Sindh, and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa of Pakistan. While addressing the audience, Muhammad Asghar Memon, Secretary Planning and Development Department, of the Government of Sindh, remarked, "The support from the Government of Japan came at a critical time for the women and girls in the flood-affected areas. This contribution significantly helped provide essential relief and protection services, enabling them to assume leadership roles within their communities. Japan's generosity serves as



a testament to the strong bonds of friendship and cooperation between our two nations." Speaking on the occasion, Mr. Hattori Masaru, Consul General Japan in Karachi expressed, "The Government of Japan remains committed to ensuring women's human rights and fighting against all forms of gender-based violence. In partnership with UNWOMEN, we have promoted safety and protection, and nurtured the leadership and resilience of the flood-

affected women and girls. Japan and UNWOMEN have a long-standing partnership globally, with various collaborations for upholding gender equality, women's empowerment, and disability inclusion. I would like to take this opportunity to express my sincere thanks to UNWOMEN's tireless effort and dedication to strengthening women's leadership and inclusive development in this country." Sharmela Rasool, UN Women Representative in Pakistan,

expressed deep gratitude: "We thank the Government of Japan for their generous financial support to the flood-affected women and girls located in the most vulnerable districts of Pakistan in 2022. This partnership exemplifies the commitment to ensuring the well-being and empowerment of women and girls in the face of adversity. This support is pivotal in our on-ground efforts towards gender equality and women's empowerment within the human-

itarian-peace-development nexus." The funds provided by the Japanese Government supports delivery of essential humanitarian services. These services include psychosocial support, raising awareness of gender-based violence, assistance for survivors of violence, help with application for civic documentation, and entrepreneurship development. The relief goods provided to women include mother kits, baby kits, and inclusion kits.

## Fog disrupts flights across Pak, leading to diversions, delays

ISLAMABAD: The dense fog wreaked havoc on international and domestic flight operations in Pakistan on Wednesday, causing widespread disruptions and delays at various airports across the country. The Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) has reported that a series of diversions, cancellations and delays occurred, impacting both inbound and outbound flights. A spokesman of CAA said that among the affected flights, the SIF-743 from Dammam to Lahore was diverted to Karachi, while several others faced delays and cancellations due to the challenging weather conditions. The dense fog, described by the CAA spokesman, led to significant disruptions at airports, affecting the travel plans of numerous passengers. The Sharjah Lahore found itself diverted to Karachi, reflecting the severity of the weather conditions. The fog, creating visibility

challenges, prompted a cascade of delays, with flights experiencing extended wait times. At Lahore Allama Iqbal International Airport, the visibility plummeted to a mere 100 meters, causing significant operational challenges. However, there is a glimmer of hope as the forecast suggests an anticipated increase in visibility to 350 meters for a two-hour period. Similarly, the international flights were also not spared from the disruptions, with Gulf Air 784 from Bahrain to Peshawar faced delays, alongside Qatar Airways QR600 from Doha to Peshawar. Air Arabia's flights from Sharjah, Dubai, and Ras Al Khaimah to Peshawar, as well as Fly Jinnah's route from Karachi to Peshawar, were all subjected to delays due to the adverse weather conditions. In Peshawar, a domino effect of delays impacted various flights, including those from

Gulf Air, Qatar Airways, Emirates, and Air Arabia, connecting destinations such as Bahrain, Doha, Dubai, and Ras Al Khaimah. The Fly Jinnah's route from Peshawar to Karachi also experienced delays. The situation escalated with several other flights were facing cancellations. PK 222/231 from Dubai to Multan and Karachi, along with PK 330/221 from Karachi to Multan and Dubai, had to be canceled, leaving passengers stranded and rearranging their travel plans. The ripple effect continued with Air Arabia's flight G 9-558/559 from Sharjah to Multan and back, experiencing delays. Additionally, Air Arabia Abu Dhabi's 3L-335/336 route from Abu Dhabi to Multan. As dense fog continues to grip various airports across Pakistan, travelers are grappling with the aftermath of disrupted flight schedules.—DNA

## In 41 years Wafaqi Mohtasib successfully addressed grievances

ISLAMABAD: Since its establishment during past 41 years, the Wafaqi Mohtasib has successfully addressed grievances from almost 2.1 million households, with 193,028 complaints resolved in 2023 alone. January 24 holds special significance in the history of the Wafaqi Mohtasib, as it came into existence on this day 41 years ago in 1983. To commemorate the 41st year of the Wafaqi Mohtasib's existence, simple yet impressive ceremonies will be held in all regional offices to observe this momentous occasion, said a news release issued here Wednesday. In a message on the occasion, Wafaqi Mohtasib Ejaz Ahmed Qureshi said that the increasing number of complaints reflects the trust and confidence the general public has in the institution, which is strengthening day by day. He expressed confidence in achieving the core values of Ombudsmanship, including the elimination of maladministration and the promotion of good governance to pave the way for the rule of law and the protection of human rights. He said that January 24 holds special significance in the history of the Wafaqi Mohtasib, as it came into existence on this day 41 years ago in 1983. The institution, he mentioned, has followed a positive trajectory and provided speedy and free administrative justice to millions of households, particularly the disadvantaged and marginalized segments of society. The increasing number of complaints received by the offices, he said, is a clear indication of the people's trust in the institution's capacity to address issues of maladministration, inefficiency, neglect, and discrimination. Looking ahead to the New Year, he said that enhancing the institution's outreach and accessibility will continue to receive special attention.—DMA

## Govt. awards 8 new blocks to step up E&amp;P activities

ISLAMABAD: The government on Wednesday awarded eight new Exploration and Production (E&P) blocks to accelerate oil and gas exploration activities in potential areas and meet the ever-growing needs of the country. With the award of exploration licenses to local and international companies, there would be over \$33.3 million in investment over three years. According to

a news release the Ministry of Petroleum executed Petroleum Concession Agreements (PCAs) and Exploration Licenses (ELs) over block no. Kotra East (2867-8), Murradi (2767-7), Sehwan (2667-19) and Zindan-II (3271-9) with Oil & Gas Development Company Limited (OGDCL), Multanai (3168-3) with Pakistan Oilfields Limited (POL), Sawan South (2668-26) with

United Energy Pakistan Limited (UEP) - a Chinese Exploration & Production Company, Gambat-II (2668-25) with Joint Venture of Pakistan Petroleum Limited (Operator) and OGDCL and Saruna West (2666-1) with Joint Venture of POL (Operator), PPL and OGDCL. The award-signing ceremony was attended by Muhammad Ali, Minister for Power and Petroleum, Dr. Muhammad Jahanzaib Khan, Special Assistant to Prime Minister (Governance Effectiveness), DG SIFC, Major General Tabassum Habib National Coordinator SIFC, Lieutenant General (R) Muhammad Saeed.—APP

## Business community urged to invest in backward areas



## FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari, President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) leading a delegation visited the National Defense University (NDU) and congratulated Lt. Gen. Asif Ghafoor on his appointment as the President of the University. Faad Waheed, Senior Vice President ICCI, Khalid Iqbal Malik Group Leader, Zafar Bakhtawari former President ICCI and Secretary General UBG Pakistan and Ajmal Baloch, President All Pakistan Anjuman Tajaran were in the delegation. Talking to the delegation, Lieutenant General Asif Ghafoor, President, National Defense University Islamabad lauded the important role of the business community in the economic de-

velopment of the country. He said that the business community of Pakistan should invest in the backward areas of the country including Balochistan, which will improve the local infrastructure, create new jobs, reduce poverty, and bring prosperity to the people. He said that the business community should fully cooperate with the incoming government and give suggestions to create a favorable business environment so that through public-private sector efforts, Pakistan can be taken out of difficulties and put on the path of sustainable economic development. Expressing his opinion regarding the recent tension between Pakistan and Iran, he said that the two countries are bound in historical friendship and soon their relations will be normalized. He assured that prominent business leaders will be in-

vited to important programs of NDU to share their success stories with the students. Speaking on the occasion, Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari, President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry said that the security and development of Pakistan depend on a strong economy and the business community would work with the government to improve the economy. He said ICCI may be given a permanent seat in the National Security Workshop and ICCI members may be invited to the important programs of NDU to share their success stories for the motivation of the students. He said that ICCI in collaboration with NDU will try to organize a seminar for the benefit of the students. Faad Waheed, Senior Vice President ICCI, appreciated the efforts of NDU in the field of education and research to produce future leaders in the public and private sectors and assured of the support of the business community to promote NDU's mission and objectives. Khalid Iqbal Malik Group Leader ICCI, Zafar Bakhtawari former President and Secretary General UBG Pakistan, and Ajmal Baloch President All Pakistan Anjuman Tajaran also spoke on the occasion and assured that the business community would always support all endeavors of the government to make Pakistan a strong economy in the region.

## Actor Rizwan Wasti death anniversary observed

ISLAMABAD: The famous Pakistani drama artist, broadcaster and English newscaster Rizwan Wasti Wednesday remembered on his 13th death anniversary. Rizwan Wasti was born in 1937 in Lahore. He started his career from the Radio Pakistan as English Newscaster in 60s, later he started working in PTV dramas. Rizwan Wasti, along with his wife actress Tahira Wasti, performed in many memorable drama serials. His famous dramas include Shama, Aagahi, Arosa, Unkahi, Uncle Urfi, Tanhaaiyan and Aabgeenay. His daughter Laila Wasti is also part of the showbiz world.—DNA

## ANF seizes over metric ton chemicals

RAWALPINDI: Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) while conducting an intelligence-based operation managed to recover 7500 intoxicated tablets, over one metric ton chemicals, 300 grams methamphetamine and arrested two accused, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman here on Wednesday. He informed that a drug dealer carrying intoxicated tablets was arrested from Peshawar's Changanon Chowk. On pointation of the arrested accused, a sting operation was conducted against a drug dealer group. The group was involved in the processing and branding of the drugs made from methamphetamine. Another drug supplier was arrested as a result of the sting operation and 7500 intoxicated tablets (PSP) were seized from the possession of the arrested accused. During the operation, 300 grams methamphetamine and more than one metric ton liquid and powder chemicals were also recovered. The arrested suspects were engaged in marketing of the new types of intoxicated tablets in important cities across the country. They were especially targeting the youth in the educational institutions.—APP

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## US focus: collaboration with Africa's progress

UNITED States Secretary of State Antony Blinken's visit to four African countries this week is being viewed by many as part of the Joe Biden administration's geopolitical strategy to contend with Beijing for influence in Africa. As Blinken started his visit to Cape Verde, Cote d'Ivoire, Nigeria and Angola on Monday, US Ambassador to the United Nations Linda Thomas-Greenfield is touring three other west African nations – Guinea-Bissau, Sierra Leone and Liberia. The visits by the senior US officials at almost the same time speak volumes about the importance the Biden administration attaches to the US' relations with African countries. It also suggests how concerned Washington is about the increasingly important presence of China in Africa, although Molly Phee, assistant secretary of state for African affairs, dismissed the idea that the US is trying to compete with Beijing in Africa, claiming it is the media "who frame this as a US-China soccer match".

The irony is that Blinken watched a soccer match between Cote d'Ivoire and Equatorial Guinea in the African Cup of Nations at the 60,000-seat Olympic Stadium built with support from China. Yet, this very fact points to a phenomenon that wherever one goes in any African country, one can hardly ignore what China has done for African people, be it helping construct a hospital, a stadium, a government building or a school, let alone important infrastructure facilities such as railway lines, airports, highways, bridges and ports.

Phee said, "If China didn't exist, we would be fully engaged in Africa. Africa is important for its own sake and it's important for American interests." What she didn't say is that China's increasing presence in Africa has made Washington increasingly uneasy and it is because of this that the US is increasing its engagement with African countries as a matter of urgency.

But the question the Biden administration should be answering is not how can it reduce the influence of China in Africa, but what can the US do to assist the development of African countries. China has been providing aid of various kinds within its means to African countries, not in pursuit of global hegemony or even a geopolitical sphere of influence. It has been doing all it can because of its long friendships with African countries and as part of its efforts to promote common prosperity. China is not keeping a tally of how much the US is doing for African countries so it can engage in one-upmanship. Instead, China welcomes the US' engagement with African countries as the continent's development will benefit the world. China hopes that the US and other developed countries do whatever they can to help developing countries in need.

China is not interested in geopolitical rivalry. It only hopes that major countries give up their superpower mentality, their sense of superiority and ambition for dominance of the world. It is willing to work with the US, and the other developed countries, to support the development of the developing countries.



## 'De-risking' stems from zero-sum mindset

IN a sign of Germany's growing interest in Vietnam, a business delegation comprising representatives of top German companies such as tunnel boring machine maker Herrenknecht and wind farm developer PNE AG is joining German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier on a state visit to the Southeast Asian manufacturing hub, which started on. German companies have already invested more than \$3 billion in Vietnam, as cooperative engagements flourish at all levels and in numerous policy fields, especially after the two countries established a "strategic partnership" in 2011. Germany is now Vietnam's most important trading partner in the European Union, while Vietnam is Germany's top trading partner among the members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations.

The mutually beneficial cooperation has not been achieved at the expense of any third party. Yet unfortunately, some have tried to depict the closer German-Vietnam economic ties as part of a "de-risking" from China strategy of Germany. The ongoing visit "underlines Germany's interest in looking beyond China and diversifying its economic relations", said Florian Feyerabend, the representative in Vietnam for Germany's Konrad Adenauer Foundation, a think tank. The remarks reflect a zero-sum mindset as harbored by some people, who tend to oversimplify normal trade relations between countries, for example, by seeing Vietnam's gain from a closer partnership with Germany as China's loss. Yet they are glassy-eyed about the fact that trade between China and Germany reached a record level of \$320 billion in 2022, as China remained Germany's most important trading partner for the seventh year in a row. The volume was about 18 times that between Germany and Vietnam. Indeed, there have been calls in Europe in recent years to follow the US' efforts to reduce economic dependence on China, or to "de-risk" from China, amid rising geopolitical tensions. Some European companies, under pressure from Washington, have even cut business links with China to the detriment of their own interests. The Dutch government, for example, has revoked ASML's export license to supply some advanced chip-making machines to China after the US applied great pressure, costing the company a lot of business opportunities.

Yet the Washington-initiated strategy of "de-risking" from China has nothing to do with ensuring Europe's economic or technology security. "If you look at what the United States is doing, it's all about curtailing the ability of China to make industrial progress", as ASML's EU Government Affairs Lead Wouter Baljon observed. He thus advised the EU to not join "the American exercise", but instead make its own assessment of what it considers a meaningful way forward.

European leaders should understand that it is impossible to isolate China economically. Europe needs to hold on to its strategic autonomy and expand its practical cooperation with China for its economy to thrive and grow.

## Elections 2024-lofty promises hollow economy...

Qamar Bashir



Pakistan's economic landscape is dominated by a daunting external debt burden of \$77.5 billion, due over 2023-2036, creating a precarious financial situation. In the immediate term, the country faces hefty repayments, including \$1.4 billion to Chinese institutions and Saudi Arabia, alongside \$15 billion in short-term and \$7 billion in long-term debt. The first quarter of FY24 alone sees obligations totaling hundreds of millions to various creditors. Compounding these challenges is the staggering circular debt, with PKR 2.5 trillion in the power secto...

THE elections-2024 are unfolding in a landscape marked by intense competition and heightened political rhetoric. Major parties are engaging in a familiar cycle of blame games and lofty promises, often overlooking the complex economic and financial situation of the country. The Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) has adopted a strategy that focuses on criticizing its main rival, the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), branding it as responsible for the May-9 incident. Interestingly, PML-N appears to be distancing itself from its recent governance period from April 2022 to August 2023, instead choosing to spotlight the successes of its previous three tenures. The party argues that had its past governments not been disrupted, Pakistan might have achieved greater economic and financial stability and vow that a return to power would enable the party to reconnect with its past accomplishments and transform Pakistan's future.

The PML-N's manifesto for the February 2024 elections, set to be officially released on January 27th, is expected to address a range of critical issues across various sectors including combating inflation, stabilizing Pakistani rupee, attracting foreign investment, and enhancing export capabilities. It promises to build roads, railways, power projects, and water management, improving seed quality, enhancing irrigation systems, and increasing access to agricultural loans. It promises to provide relief to underprivileged communities, through targeted subsidies and social safety net programs, improving healthcare and education, empowering youth and women, including programs to boost employment and workforce participation. On the national security front, the PML-N is expected to reaffirm its commitment to combating terrorism and extremism and outline steps to improve diplomatic relations with neighboring countries, including India. Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) is strategically positioning itself against its key political rival, the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N). PPP's campaign focuses heavily on countering Nawaz Sharif, in his bid for a fourth term as Prime Minister. PPP's chairman asserts a significant role in the ouster of the PTI government and targets PML(N) for alleged injustices against women, promising to rectify these upon coming to power.

The PPP manifesto articulates a 10-point welfare agenda aimed at addressing social welfare, poverty, unemployment, and inflation. This includes promises to double the real income of wage earners, provide free solar energy to the poor, ensure education and healthcare for all, build housing for flood affectees and the impoverished, expand welfare schemes, and support farmers and laborers. The manifesto also highlights youth empowerment and the 'Book Mitao Programme'. The political landscape for PTI, now led by Barrister Gohar Mohammad Khan, is notably challenging. With its founder Imran Khan incarcerated for over six months, the party faces significant internal strife, manifesting in splits like the Istehkam Pakistan Party (IPP) and PTI Patriots. The situation is compounded by the legal troubles of many of its leaders, with some in jail, others in

hiding, or having abandoned politics altogether. Lately it lost its iconic "BAT" election symbol is a symbolic setback. Despite these challenges, PTI is envisioning a prosperous Pakistan where justice, self-esteem, and mutual respect prevail. The party aspires to build a just society, emphasizing Pakistan's untapped potential due to past leadership failures. PTI's dream is for Pakistan to be self-reliant, respected globally, and for its justice system to be fair and impartial, serving all citizens equally. Its manifesto reflects a commitment to governance reforms, including enhancing government accountability, empowering local governance, depoliticizing the police force, reforming the criminal justice system, and introducing E-Governance and legislative reforms. These initiatives aim to improve public service delivery and ensure press freedom, highlighting PTI's focus on structural changes over immediate financial gains.

The Istehkam-e-Pakistan Party (IPP), officially registered in October 2023, presents a distinct political narrative in Pakistan's political arena. The party, emerging in a context marked by allegations of being orchestrated by the government of Shahbaz Sharif and supported by the interim government, has faced controversies regarding the wealth of its top leaders. Despite these challenges, the IPP crafted a comprehensive manifesto emphasizing political and economic reforms aimed at bridging societal divisions. The party, adopting the slogan "Tameer, Taraqqi, Khush-hali" (Development, Progress, Prosperity), aims to embody the principles of Quaid-e-Azam and seeks to reform Pakistan's political landscape. Key manifesto commitments include setting a minimum labor salary of Rs 50,000 with mandatory insurance, providing free electricity up to 300 units, and granting ownership rights in "Kachi Abadis." It promises low-cost housing solutions, integrating madrasa graduates into mainstream society. It promises half-priced petrol for motorcyclists and free air-conditioned transport for seniors, women, and students besides offering interest-free loans for youth and women, and the establishment of new educational and technical institutions.

The election landscape in Pakistan is witnessing a trend where various political parties, including Jamaat-e-Islami, PTIP, MQM, and JUI, are presenting manifestos filled with ambitious and grandiose promises. These manifestos seem to paint an overly optimistic picture of the country's economic and social capabilities. They suggest that upon their election, the complexities and challenges currently facing Pakistan will be swiftly resolved, almost miraculously transforming the nation's fortunes. These promises often give the impression that Pakistan's economy is already functioning at an optimal level, that the human capital of the country has suddenly achieved peak efficiency and productivity, and that business, investment, trade, and other processes have reached the highest levels of proficiency. The underlying assumption in these manifestos is that the mere act of a political party coming to power will lead to an instantaneous resolution of the myriad difficulties faced by the Pakistani people.

This is unfortunate that political parties, well aware of the precarious state of the economy, continue to make grandiose pledges, despite knowing the inherent challenges in realizing these goals. The stringent conditions imposed by the IMF and other international donor agencies further tighten the constraints under which the country operates, leaving an extremely narrow window for actual policy implementation. This reality poses a significant challenge for the incoming government. While the electoral promises aim to address the country's pressing needs and aspirations, their feasibility in the face of fiscal constraints and external obligations remains a major question.

Pakistan's economic landscape is dominated by a daunting external debt burden of \$77.5 billion, due over 2023-2036, creating a precarious financial situation. In the immediate term, the country faces hefty repayments, including \$1.4 billion to Chinese institutions and Saudi Arabia, alongside \$15 billion in short-term and \$7 billion in long-term debt. The first quarter of FY24 alone sees obligations totaling hundreds of millions to various creditors. Compounding these challenges is the staggering circular debt, with PKR 2.5 trillion in the power sector, PKR 570 billion in gas, and state-owned entities hemorrhaging Rs. 750 billion annually. Inflation rates reflect these economic stresses, soaring from 12.37% in 2021 to a staggering 37.97% in May 2023, driven by global commodity prices, currency depreciation, and political instability. While a slight deceleration is predicted, with an average of 23.33% in 2024, easing to 17.30% in 2025, and 10.14% in 2026, these figures remain alarmingly high. The Pakistani Rupee's trajectory mirrors this turmoil, depreciating significantly from 2020 to 2023, with predictions of continued fluctuations between 250 to 300 in the coming years. In today's digitally connected era, the heightened awareness and access to information among the people of Pakistan, fueled by social media and various information sources, have become a critical factor that political parties seemingly overlook in their election strategies. The electorate is increasingly capable of scrutinizing the feasibility of the promises made against the backdrop of Pakistan's challenging financial and economic situation. They understand the constraints any incoming government will face, especially the stringent conditionalities of the IMF program and the looming threat of default if Pakistan opt out of it. This awareness leads to a growing recognition that many of the promises might be more aspirational than achievable. In light of this, it's imperative for political parties to reconsider and rationalize their manifestos, aligning them more closely with the country's real economic capabilities and constraints. This shift towards more grounded and realistic political pledges could be a crucial step in fostering a more informed and pragmatic political discourse in Pakistan.

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

## Israel and Hamas negotiate terms of a ceasefire

James Dorsey

In Beirut, Hamas spokesman Osama Hamdan, standing against a background of Al-Qassem Brigades logos, insisted that Palestinians would "not settle for less than an independent and sovereign state." Mr. Hamdan left open whether his emphasis on independence and sovereignty included Palestine's right to have its own military force. Like Hamas, US President Joe Biden and Mark Regev...

IF anything, judging by their increasingly maximalist statements, Mr. Netanyahu and Hamas are determined to fight to the bitter end irrespective of the carnage in Gaza and the fate of more than 100 people held hostage by the group. Mr. Netanyahu's categorical rejection this weekend of an independent Palestinian state and insistence that Israel would retain control of Gaza and the occupied West Bank appeared designed to counter US pressure, pacify his ultra-nationalist coalition partners, and deprive Hamas of an incentive to compromise. Control of Gaza and the West Bank "is a necessary condition, and it conflicts with the idea of (Palestinian) sovereignty. What to do? I tell this truth to our American friends," Mr. Netanyahu said. In "every area that we evac-

uate, we encounter terrible terror... It happened in South Lebanon, in Gaza, and also in Judea and Samaria (Israel's Biblical reference to the West Bank) ... Therefore, I clarify that in any other arrangement, in the future, the state of Israel has to control the entire territory west of the Jordan River," Mr. Netanyahu added. Speaking barely 24 hours later, exiled Hamas official Khaled Mishaal retorted that "the position of Hamas, as well as the majority of the Palestinian people... (is) Palestine from the river to the sea, from north to the south... We must not give up our right to Palestine... from Rosh Hanikra to Eilat or the Aqaba Bay."

Naseem Zeitoun There may be more to the maneuvering on both sides of the Israeli-Palestinian divide, notwithstanding both sides' seemingly uncompromising position. Increasingly facing internal divisions and a post-war reckoning, Mr. Netanyahu and Hamas leaders see the public adoption of extreme positions as a way to camouflage their tentative search for a face-saving way to end the Gaza war. Ironically, it may be Hamas' refusal to discuss a second round of prisoner swaps without an end to the more than three-month-long Gaza war that could create a pathway to a silencing of the guns. In November, Hamas and Israel exchanged more than 100 hostages for 240 Palestinians held in Israeli prisons during a one-week truce as part of a Qatar-mediated deal. This week, US Middle East envoy Brett McGurk was visiting Egypt and Qatar to discuss a Qatari-Egyptian plan that neither Hamas or Israel are likely to endorse at face value. US National Security Council Coordinator for the Middle East and North Africa Brett McGurk speaks during the IISS Manama Dialogue security conference, in Manama. Even so, both parties have expressed interest in negotiating the terms of proposals that contain elements that Hamas or Israel would find difficult to swallow. The US-backed Qatari-Egyptian plan, first reported by The Wall Street Journal, involves a 90-day phased prisoner swap that would free all remaining hostages in exchange for Palestinians in Israeli prisons, end the war, facilitate the establishment of diplomatic relations between Israel and Saudi Arabia, and create a pathway for the creation of an independent Palestinian state. Responding to the plan without explicitly mentioning it, Mr. Netanyahu insisted that "if we agree to this, then our warriors fell in vain. If we agree to this, we won't be able to ensure the security of our citizens."

News website Axios and Israeli media reported that Israel

put forward a counter-proposal ten days ago to which Hamas has yet to respond. The proposal involves a ceasefire for up to two months but no end to the war during which all hostages would be released in phases in exchange for Palestinians held in Israeli prisons at rates that would be lower for Hamas-held civilians and the bodies of captives who died or were killed in captivity and higher for Israeli military personnel. Hamas is believed to still hold 136 hostages and bodies. In a surprising move, Israel reportedly offered to allow Hamas leaders to leave Gaza as part of the agreement. The offer is likely designed to sweeten a possible deal for hardline Gaza-based leader Yahya Sinwar and Mohammed Deif, the head of the group's military wing, the Izz ad-Din al-Qassam Brigades, who are believed to have masterminded the October 7 attack on Israel that sparked the Gaza war. Yahya Sinwar, head of Hamas in Gaza, greets his supporters during a meeting with leaders of Palestinian factions at his office in Gaza City. Photo: AP Photo/Adel Hana, File Israel has repeatedly warned it will hunt down Hamas leaders wherever they are. Israel killed Saleh al-Arouri, a senior Hamas operative, in Beirut earlier this month. Messrs. Sinwar and Deif, Israel's most wanted men, unlike some of Hamas' exile leaders, including Doha-based Ismail Haniyeh, are believed to refuse Israeli demands for Gaza demilitarisation. It is unlikely that Messrs. Sinwar and Deif would take Israel up on its offer. Moreover, few countries, excluding Iran would be willing to offer them refuge.

Add to that, the two men's departure would compromise Hamas' consistent rejection of Palestinian President Abbas' willingness to engage in endless negotiations with Israel. Instead, Hamas insists that a culture of resistance should be the raison d'etre of Palestinian governance. Hamas appeared to stake out its position with the publication of a 17-page booklet that justified the October 7 attack in the context of what it described as a century-long struggle for Palestinian rights and a response to more than half a century of Israeli occupation and settlement of lands conquered during the 1967 Middle East war. More than 1,100 people, mostly civilians, were brutally killed in the attack. Some 250 were abducted and taken to Gaza. "Israel has destroyed our ability to create a Palestinian state by accelerating the settlement enterprise. Were we supposed to continue waiting and relying on the help- less UN institutions?" the document asked.

The question seemed as much directed at the international community, particularly the United States that supports

Israel, as toward Palestinians in war-ravaged Gaza and the battered West Bank and President Mahmoud Abbas' Palestine Authority that the US would like to see take control of Gaza. The document appeared intended to deflect widespread international condemnation of Hamas' October 7 brutality and to preempt Palestinians ultimately blaming the group for provoking Israel's equally brutal sledgehammer response. If the experience of past Israel-Hamas confrontations is anything to judge by, Palestinians blamed Israel for the devastation caused during wars but within months of the guns falling silent also pointed a finger at the Islamist group that has ruled Gaza since 2007.

Hamas hopes that a massive prisoner release and a pathway to a Palestinian state alongside Israel will give it something to show for the human and physical carnage suffered by Gazans in almost four months of war.

In Beirut, Hamas spokesman Osama Hamdan, standing against a background of Al-Qassem Brigades logos, insisted that Palestinians would "not settle for less than an independent and sovereign state." Mr. Hamdan left open whether his emphasis on independence and sovereignty included Palestine's right to have its own military force. Like Hamas, US President Joe Biden and Mark Regev, a senior Netanyahu advisor, have outlined a US-Israeli position that would allow for a Palestinian state, albeit demilitarised. "The idea is to find a formula where the Palestinians can rule themselves but not be in a position to threaten Israel. I think that's the formula that can help us move forward and find solutions that will be good for Israelis and good for Palestinians too," Mr. Regev said.

Demilitarisation and the release of all hostages would give Mr. Netanyahu, who is fighting corruption charges in court, a victory he needs in an all but certain post-war reckoning. A majority of Israelis hold the prime minister responsible for the intelligence and operational failures that allowed Hamas to launch the most devastating attack on Israel in half a century. An opinion poll suggested this week that Mr. Netanyahu's Likud party would lose half its parliament seats in elections. The prime minister's coalition would gain only 46 of the Knesset's 120 seats compared to 64 seats it currently controls. Even so, Israel scholar Yossi Mekelberg warned that "there are hardly any signs that a (new) government would represent a sea change when it comes to relations with the Palestinians, or be more inclined to work towards peace based on a two-state solution."



## Briefs

## PM Kakar asks youth to guard...

FROM PAGE 01  
COAS emphasized upon the importance of national unity and harmony to overcome multifarious challenges confronted by the country. COAS recounted the sacrifices made by the nation to counter the menace of terrorism and cautioned against machinations of Pakistan's ill wishers contributing towards extreme polarisation within the society. There can be no progress without internal cohesion. COAS quoted the holy Quran, Allama Iqbal and Quaid e Azam extensively, encouraging the youth to realise their true potential and serve the nation to the best of their abilities. COAS reaffirmed the resolve of the armed forces to defend the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Pakistan against all threats with the help and support of the nation.

## Murtaza Solangi for...

FROM PAGE 01  
the gatekeeper system to verify the facts but the new media had ignored "the gatekeeper". In the era of artificial intelligence, deep fake, cyber cloning, he said it had become difficult to bring the truth to people. Murtaza Solangi opined. He said for countering this problem there was a need to build verification laboratories and newsrooms must create fact-check departments. He said it was necessary to check serious threats of the digital age otherwise truth will become the main casualty.

## SA expecting ICJ...

FROM PAGE 01  
the court to "order Israel to cease killing and causing serious mental and bodily harm to Palestinian people in Gaza." South Africa has been one of the outspoken critics of Israel's ongoing onslaught against Palestinians and has led some initiatives to hold Israel accountable for its actions in Gaza. In November, the country referred Israel to the International Criminal Court, which is already investigating the occupied Palestinian territories. In the same month, the country's lawmakers voted in favor of closing down the Israeli embassy in Pretoria and suspending all diplomatic relations until the onslaught stops. More countries have joined South Africa in a case filed against Israel in the International Court of Justice (ICJ) over the regime's genocidal war on the besieged Gaza Strip.

## Israel's war crimes continue...

FROM PAGE 01  
attack different areas of Gaza last night and on Wednesday morning, killing and injuring dozens of citizens. The health ministry said that the Israeli occupation army committed, over the past 24 hours, 24 massacres in the Gaza Strip, which resulted in the martyrdom of at least 210 civilians and the injury of 386 others. According to the health ministry in Gaza, several civilians were martyred and others were injured when the Israeli army carried out an artillery attack on a shelter center at the industry headquarters in the west of Khan Yunis, while ambulance and civil defense crews are unable to reach the besieged area.

## Nawaz promises to deliver if voted to power

FROM PAGE 01  
We love you. Mian Saab. We love you", as the former three-time premier walked up to the stage. Nawaz Sharif appreciated the enthusiasm of the party workers, supporters and constituents, saying that he had never seen such a sight on a very cold day.



ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Federal Minister for Inter-Provincial Coordination Fawad Hasan Fawad was a Chief Guest at NCHR Empower HER futsal tournament at Pakistan Sports Complex in Islamabad. – DNA

## Shah Khawar takes over as interim chairman of PCB

Khawar, who is also election commissioner of PCB, is expected to hold elections for the permanent position next month

## SPORTS DESK

ISLAMABAD: Shah Khawar, Advocate of the Supreme Court of Pakistan and the Election Commissioner of PCB, has assumed the powers of Chairman PCB.

According to the notification dated January 23, 2024, from the Inter-Provincial Coordination (IPC) Ministry and by virtue of Article 7(2) of the PCB Constitution the Election Commissioner is vested with the powers of Chairman PCB. Shah Khawar is the fifth person to lead PCB in the last 14 months. Before him, Ramiz Raja, Najam Sethi, Ahmed

Shehzad Farooq Rana and Zaka Ashraf have also been in charge of the board's affairs. "I would like to thank the Patron of the PCB, Mr Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar, for reposing trust in me. My primary responsibility will be to hold the election of Chairman PCB in a free and transparent manner at the earliest," Khawar said. Earlier, Caretaker Prime Minister Anwar-ul Haq Kakar, the patron of the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB), had officially nominated Mohsin Naqvi as the new representative of the Board of Governors (BoG). The nomination comes as a replacement for Zaka



Ashraf, who recently resigned from the position of Management Committee Chairman. Federal Minister for Inter-Provincial Coordination (IPC) Fawad Hasan Fawad confirmed the news in a conversation with Geo News, stating that the notification of Mohsin Naqvi's

nomination as the patron's representative in the BOG has been issued. This decision has been made in accordance with the PCB constitution, following the acceptance of Ashraf's resignation by the Prime Minister. The Pakistan men's team endured below-par performances during Ashraf's tenure. The team didn't get out of the group stage at the Cricket World Cup in India, and didn't pass the Super Four stage of the Asia Cup in Sri Lanka. Babar Azam quit as the captain in all formats after the World Cup, and Ashraf asked team director Mickey Arthur and coach Grant Bradburn to

report to the National Cricket Academy in Lahore before they both quit as well. Under new test captain Shan Masood, Pakistan was routed by Australia 3-0 and Twenty20 captain Shaheen Shah Afridi lost the five-match series in New Zealand 4-1. The current situation has set the stage for Naqvi to potentially become the Chairman of the PCB. If the election on February 8 proceeds as planned, Naqvi, having retired from the duties of caretaker Chief Minister of Punjab by that date, could assume the chairmanship within a week after the election results are declared.

## Delayed PFF elections harm football growth in Pakistan



## AFZAL JAVED

ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Federal Minister for Inter-Provincial Coordination (IPC) Fawad Hasan Fawad said that football development is suffering in the country due to could not hold the elections of Pakistan Football Federation (PFF) in last four years by Normalization Committee of PFF which appointed football international body "FIFA". He was speaking during the concluding ceremony of women's futsal tournament under the umbrella of National Commission for Human Rights (NCHR) at the Pakistan Sports

Complex Islamabad.Karachi's team won the gold medal in the event by defeating Chitral by 6-0 and Quetta by 1-0. Director General PSB) Shoaib Khoso, High Commissioner for Canada Leslie Scanlon, Chairperson NCHR Rabiya Javeri Agha and a large number of fans also attended the event.

Federal Minister said that there is a lot of sports talent in Pakistan, unfortunately PFF Normalization Committee holding elections, they are doing politics which has given a blow to the football development in Pakistan, adding that we informed FIFA President about the whole situation. Canada Fund for Local Initiatives and the NHCR have joined

hands for a unique four-month initiative "Empower Her," aimed at promoting girls' participation in sports. "Their firm commitment to promoting girls' participation in sports is commendable and effectively breaking down barriers, transforming the landscape of sports in the country," he said.

Giving the example of his daughter, who played football at the international level for Pakistan, the minister exhorted girls not to get discouraged or stop pursuing their dreams only because they were women. "This initiative aims to change things by making sports, especially football, more open, inclusive and accessible," he added. He said: "Empowering women is not just a moral imperative; it is a strategic investment for the betterment of society as a whole. By breaking down barriers and challenging stereotypes, we create a future where every girl can dream without limits, participate without constraints, and contribute meaningfully to the success of our nation." Meanwhile, Karachi finished at the top to secure the gold medal in the tournament. Karachi surged ahead in the first two matches beating Chitral with 6-0 and Hazara by 1-0, respectively. In the run for second and third position, the match between Quetta and Chitral was a tie with one goal from each side. In penalty kicks, Quetta edged Chitral 3-2 in an exciting finish.

## Daniil Medvedev earns semi-final spot with victory over Hurkacz

MELBOURNE: Daniil Medvedev defeated Hubert Hurkacz 7-6 (7/4), 2-6, 6-3, 5-7, 6-4 in the quarter-final of the Australian Open 2024 at the Rod Laver Arena on Wednesday as the Russian made his way to the semi-final. Medvedev, world number three, is the runner-up of the Australian Open 2021 and 2022 where he lost to Novak Djokovic and Rafael Nadal respectively and the Russian is now aiming to clinch his first major in Melbourne. The 27-year-old played his 100th Grand Slam match where he recorded his 75th win, making way to his eighth overall major semis but has only managed to win it once so far, US Open 2021, beating Djokovic in the final in straight sets. Throughout the campaign, Medvedev won a game in straight sets only once when he defeated Canada's Felix Auger Aliassime in the third round, other than that, the 27-year-old played two four and as many five-setters. Playing against Hurkacz wasn't easy for the world number three by means as the Pole is one of the most tough players and one of the best servers in the game and Medvedev wasn't shy to admit that he is "destroyed" after another five-set battle today. "I am so destroyed right now," he said. "I honestly was feeling it physically at the end of the second set already and I said to stay tough. "Fourth set I'm just no more concentration and I have to try my best to do whatever I can.

**The remaining schedule of the Australian Open**  
January 25: Women's singles semi-finals  
SF1: Coco Gauff vs Aryna Sabalenka  
SF2: Dayana Yastremska vs Anna Kalinskaya /Qinwen Zheng  
January 26: Men's singles semi-finals  
SF1: Novak Djokovic vs Jannik Sinner  
SF2: Daniil Medvedev vs Carlos Alcaraz /Alexander Zverev  
January 27: Women's singles final  
January 28: Men's singles final. – DNA

## Embracing Bicycling in the Capital City



## DR. MAZHAR HAYAT

"Embracing Bicycling in the Capital City" extends beyond being a mere title—it's an earnest call to reimagine Islamabad's urban landscape in the face of rising environmental and daily commutation challenges. Picture Constitution Avenue, where the Parliament House and the Pakistan Secretariat resonate not with the hum of engines but with the rhythmic pedal

strokes—a powerful symbol of leadership embracing sustainable living. A short bicycle ride from the Ministers' Enclave and Parliament Lodges to the Parliament House could rewrite the narrative of Constitution Avenue. Within a 10 km radius, bureaucratic residences are scattered like islands, yet cars dominate the streets. Amid discussions, personal choices take center stage. Only 2 km away from Pakistan Secretariat and nearby offices, residents in G-6 and F-6 sectors persist in choosing cars for their daily commute to the office. Not limited to the public sector, businessmen and public at large share a similar inclination for excessive use of private cars in their daily routines. The simplicity of bicycles

challenges norms, setting a compelling example for a greener, healthier capital. This change is not just about transforming streets; it's a cultural shift towards conscious and practical living. Shifting this preference involves not just better infrastructure but a profound mindset shift towards embracing simpler, healthier alternatives. Bicycling isn't merely about commuting; it's about weaving exercise seamlessly into daily routines. It's about making choosing a bicycle a statement—a conscious choice that transcends traditional norms. In South Asia, the car-bicycle choice carries social weight. Shifting societal perception involves dismantling stereotypes and fostering a narrative where bicycling is not a compromise but a positive and conscious choice.

It's a shift towards a society that values health, simplicity, and sustainability. Zooming out, we find inspiration in European countries where bicycling isn't just a mode of transport; it's a lifestyle. The difference isn't just in infrastructure but in how society perceives bicycling—as a norm, unburdened by status symbols. Zooming back into Pakistan, social status intertwines with personal perceptions. Overcoming this involves more than just bike lanes; it requires a cultural shift. Bicycling becomes a symbol of progress, not a compromise. As we navigate the complexities, the call for change resonates louder. Bicycling isn't just an alternative; it's a necessity in the wake of climate change and the urgent need to reduce carbon emissions. It's a transformation towards simplicity and sustainability. Embracing bicycling is not just about addressing challenges. It's also about realizing the co-benefits—substituting standalone workouts with daily commutes. Bicycling becomes a holistic approach to personal well-being and healthy lifestyle. The transformation of Islamabad's streets isn't isolated—it sets an inspiring example for other cities. As the pedal-powered movement gains momentum, it sparks inspiration, encouraging cities countrywide to reconsider transportation choices for a sustainable and thriving future. Previous efforts by Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) administration to promote bicycling faced challenges, with momentum hindered

by frequent road diversions and blockages, and routine civil works for utilities like telephone, gas, and water supplies, impeding the seamless integration of bicycle-friendly infrastructure. In the symphony of Islamabad's streets, "Embracing Bicycling in the Capital City" is not just a call for change; it's a harmonious blend of cultural shift, urban transformation, and personal well-being. It's a call to transform Islamabad into a city where bicycles navigate the streets with the same ease as cars. It's an invitation for leaders to pedal, bureaucrats to embrace simplicity, and residents to choose a healthier and more sustainable commute.

– The writer is a civil servant and climate policy professional based in Islamabad.

## Nawaz 'relying...

FROM PAGE 01  
when asked if he thought the establishment was backing Nawaz. A member of Pakistan's most powerful political dynasty, Bilawal spoke in the interview during a grueling four-week campaign that took him to more than 33 towns, while other parties began canvassing just last week. Youth appeal and ambitious plans to combat climate change form the core of Bilawal's effort to become prime minister of Pakistan, which, if successful, would make him it's youngest premier since his mother Benazir was in office.

## Trump closes in...

FROM PAGE 01  
his record of sowing "chaos." "They know Trump is the only Republican in the country who Joe Biden can defeat," Haley, 52, said. Despite adding New Hampshire to his previous easy victory in Iowa — and looking near unstoppable as he seeks to become the Republican candidate in November — Trump kept to his hard-right messaging, with no hint of reaching out to the more moderate voters who supported Haley. At one point swearing on primetime TV, Trump said the United States was a "failing country" and claimed that undocumented migrants were coming from psychiatric hospitals and prisons and "killing our country."

## 65 Ukrainian PoWs...

FROM PAGE 01  
cautioned against sharing unverified information. Russian state news agency RIA Novosti, citing the ministry, reported that the POWs were being transported to the border region for a prisoner exchange. Footage of the crash posted on social media showed a plane falling from the sky in a snowy, rural area, and a massive ball of fire erupting where it apparently hit the ground.

## No Internet outage till...

FROM PAGE 01  
multiple times in recent days. The outage of social media platforms including Facebook, X, Instagram and YouTube was the second in two weeks on January 20. Following an hours-long disruption last week, the PTA blamed a "technical fault" in its optic fibre network for the nationwide internet outage.

## Sidhu for resolving...

FROM PAGE 01  
keeping in view the trade potential between the two countries. He said if more corridors were set up, the trade volume between the two countries could be enhanced to the tune of \$37 billion which was standing at mere \$2 billion. "There should be peace, love and trade as people of both sides have many things in common including language, food, dress, culture and caste," he concluded.



## Briefs

**Zelenskiy establishes business council amid outcry**

KYIV : Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskiy announced the creation of a council to "support entrepreneurship" on aimed at bringing business leaders inside in wartime after many expressed outrage at the arrest of a prominent banker. Zelenskiy issued a decree to enact the formation of the council a day after he met business community leaders in talks he acknowledged had been "difficult". The decree was issued after a sitting of the National Security and Defence Council, which sets defence policy. The Council also pledged to alter provisions of Ukraine's criminal code allowing for the arrest and prosecution of business figures. Zelenskiy said the Council for the Support of Entrepreneurship sought to provide "economic security and economic stability, right now. During martial law." "There are clearly defined steps that will help both Ukrainian entrepreneurs and state institutions to overcome the whole set of problems that have been extensively discussed in recent weeks," he said in his nightly video address.—APP

**Saudi, BD plan Arabic institute in Dhaka**

DHAKA : Saudi Arabia and Bangladesh are working on establishing a new Arabic language institute in Dhaka, officials say, as they want it to follow the Kingdom's teaching curriculum to help professionals also prepare to work in the Middle East. Nearly 3 million Bangladeshis live and work in Saudi Arabia. They are the largest expat group in the Kingdom and also the biggest Bangladeshi community outside Bangladesh. Under the Kingdom's Vision 2030, even more of them are likely to find employment in Saudi Arabia, especially if they are skilled professionals. This week, Riyadh's Ambassador to Dhaka Essa Al-Duhailan discussed the establishment of the language institute catering to the growing need for Arabic training in Bangladesh. "This will be one aspect of the many areas of cooperation between Saudi Arabia and Bangladesh. This morning, I was honored to call on Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and we discussed the issue of the Arabic language institution," the ambassador.—Agencies

**Philippines bars entry of 3,359 foreigners**

MANILA : The Philippines has barred entry into the country of 3,359 foreigners in 2023, the Philippines' Bureau of Immigration (BI) said on Wednesday. BI Commissioner Norman Tansingo said immigration agents at different airports in Metro Manila, in Pampanga province, north of Manila, and Cebu province in the central Philippines stopped the foreigners of different nationalities because they were on the blacklist as "undesirable aliens or not properly documented." Some of the foreigners were registered sex offenders and wanted fugitives in their countries, while others were disrespectful to immigration agents, Tansingo said. He added that some foreigners were refused entry due to minor infractions, such as failing to secure entry visas or provide return tickets. According to Tansingo, the barred foreigners can become "public charge" if allowed to stay in the Philippines, meaning they can burden society. "Only aliens with legitimate purpose of travel are accorded the privilege to visit the country. Illegal aliens and fugitives are not welcome in the Philippines." The BI recorded more than 12.68 million arrivals in 2023, many of whom were Filipinos from the United States and Canada who spent holidays in the country.—APP



ISLAMABAD: Wives of defence attaches of various countries posing for a group picture on the occasion of the Armed Forces Day of Thailand. —DNA

**Malaysia demands full UN membership for Palestine**

In message to UN chief, Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim calls for cease-fire in Gaza

## FOREIGN DESK

KUALA LUMPUR : Malaysia's prime minister on Wednesday said his country delivered its wish to the UN chief to accept Palestine as a full member of the United Nations. In a statement, Premier Anwar Ibrahim said the message was delivered to UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres by his Foreign Minister Mohamad Hasan. "Alhamdulillah, the desire of the people and leadership of Malaysia for Palestine to be accepted as a full member of the United Nations (UN) and the call for a ceasefire was personally delivered by the Minister of Foreign Affairs to the UN Secretary-General in New York on 23 January 2024," said Ibrahim in a statement posted on X. He added that his message was delivered in line with the UN secretary-general's recent statement at the Non-Aligned Movement Summit in

Kampala, Uganda, that the right of the Palestinian people to build an independent state cannot be denied. "Peace and tranquility can only be achieved and maintained if real rights are returned to the rightful," the Malaysian premier said. The Malaysian leader added that his country maintains its principled stance that Palestine has the right to form an independent and sovereign state based on the pre-1967 border lines, with Jerusalem as its capital. "If oppression, violence, deprivation of rights, and apartheid policies are allowed to spread, there will be no safe end in life. Surely one day, now or in the future, those who are oppressed and denied all rights will rise up against such injustice," he said. Last week, Prime Minister Ibrahim and his Cabinet ministers signed special postcards addressed to the UN chief, urging the world body to recognize Palestinian nationhood. Earlier, the unity government led

**Slovenia's FM says killings in Gaza must stop**

## WEB DESK

NEW YORK : Slovenia's foreign minister has called for an end to the humanitarian crisis in Gaza, where Israeli attacks have continued for over 100 days, saying "enough is enough." In an interview with Anadolu in New York, Tanja Fajon highlighted the need for an immediate cease-fire and a political solution to address the ongoing conflict, saying the hostilities must stop "because there is an urgent need for humanitarian assistance." "We see day to day a worsening of the humanitarian situation, a humanitarian crisis. Thousands

of children and women (were) killed and we have to stop it. Enough is enough," said Fajon. She said "we have to be serious about the two-state solution," adding it would be the only guarantee for the safety of Israel and for the safety of Israelis and Palestinians. Fajon noted that the conflict between Israel and Palestine is being discussed among European Union ministers and their Middle East counterparts in Brussels "There are, of course, certain differences among the positions, but where we are united is on the two-state solution, on being against the forced displacement of people in Gaza and (that) the West Bank belongs to Palestinians," she said.

by Anwar also banned port calls or docking by any Israeli-flagged vessel in Malaysia. Israel has pounded Gaza since a cross-border attack by the Palestinian resistance group Hamas

on Oct. 7, killing at least 25,490 Palestinians and injuring 63,354. Nearly 1,200 Israelis are believed to have been killed in the Hamas attack. The Israeli offensive has left 85% of Gaza's population

internally displaced amid acute shortages of food, clean water, and medicine, while 60% of the enclave's infrastructure has been damaged or destroyed, according to the UN.

**India bolsters ties: Macron national day chief guest**

NEW DELHI: French President Emmanuel Macron will attend India's Republic Day celebrations on Friday as the chief guest, as New Delhi and Paris continue to negotiate multi-billion dollar deals to buy French fighter jets and submarines for the Indian military. However, officials in New Delhi and Paris said the visit will be more ceremonial than substantial, and no major outcomes are expected. France is India's second largest arms supplier, and has been one of its oldest and closest partners in Europe for decades. It was the only Western nation that did not impose sanctions on New Delhi after India conducted nuclear tests in 1998. Ahead of Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit for Bastille Day celebrations in July, the Indian government had given an initial approval to buy 26 Rafale jets and jointly produce three Scorpene class submarines worth around 800 billion rupees (\$9.62 billion). But the deals are yet to be finalised. France is also keen to enhance cooperation in space and nuclear sectors. For France, this visit is an opportunity to cement the strategic partnership Paris has forged with New Delhi over the past decades, but no new contract in the defence sector is expected, French presidential advisers told journalists ahead of the visit. India has relied on French fighter jets for four decades now. Ram Temple's construction indicative of growing 'majoritarianism' in India: FO Much before buying Dassault Aviation's Rafale, India bought Mirage jets in the 1980s and those still comprise two squadrons of the air force. This would be the fifth meeting between Modi and Macron since May India had earlier hoped to have US President Joe Biden as well as Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese and Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida to be the ceremony's chief guests. The three nations along with India form part of the Quad group of countries, and New Delhi had planned to hold a Quad summit this week.—APP

**Pakistan attends Belt and Road Food Security Forum**

SANYA : The 2nd Belt and Road Food Security Forum and 2024 International Academic Exchange Conference on Tropical Agricultural Science and Technology Cooperation were inaugurated in Sanya, Hainan. Over 200 experts, officials and industry representatives from China, Pakistan, Malaysia, Nigeria, Bangladesh, etc. gathered to discuss global food safety status quo and share breeding research achievements. China Economic Net (CEN) reported on Tuesday. Hainan, as the southernmost province in South China Sea, has unique climate and landforms with tropical characteristics. Since 1950s, China's agricultural scientists have started to come to Hainan from September to May annually to conduct breeding-related activities to shorten the breeding cycle by half or more.—APP

**Azerbaijan slams EU diplomat for aggressive policies**

BAKU : The European Union's top diplomat is instigating militarization and an aggressive policy toward Azerbaijan, the South Caucasus nation said Tuesday as it rejected remarks by EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell about Azerbaijan's alleged claims on Armenian territories. "The blatant misinterpretation of facts by the EU High Representative is an open disregard of Azerbaijan's legitimate interests, and such threatening rhetoric is a clear example of double standards that further exacerbates Azerbaijan-EU relations," Foreign Ministry spokesperson Aykhan Hajizada said in a statement. "While fully distorting the thoughts of Azerbaijan's President (Ilham Aliyev) about the historical facts related to the territories of Azerbaijan and Armenia, the High Representative is instigating militarization and an aggressive policy toward Azerbaijan," he said. The diplomat stressed that "Azerbaijan has always been committed to negotiations, peace and stability with Armenia." "Azerbaijan's measures ending aggression and separatism pave the way for concluding a peace agreement with Armenia," he stressed, referring at least in part to the Azerbaijani army's anti-terrorism operation last September in its once-occupied territory of Karabakh to establish constitutional order, leading illegal separatist forces in the region to surrender. Hajizada also criticized Borrell for expressing solidarity with France over the expulsion last December of its diplomats from Azerbaijan. "Such a biased statement, while ignoring baseless measures against Azerbaijan's diplomats in France, demonstrates how this institution is negatively affected by certain countries, which openly neglect all the rules and guidelines of diplomatic conduct, and refuse to conduct investigations," he said. "Azerbaijan, besides being committed to its international obligations and international law, will resolutely prevent attempts to legitimize any claims and threatening language against its national interest." On Jan. 22, Borrell said that the EU was "concerned about the claims of Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev on the territory of Armenia." He said, "Any violation of Armenian sovereignty is fraught with serious consequences for relations between Brussels and Baku." Relations between Azerbaijan and Armenia have been tense since 1991, when the Armenian military illegally occupied Karabakh, a territory internationally recognized as part of Azerbaijan, and seven adjacent regions. Most of the territory was liberated by Azerbaijan during a war in the fall of 2020, which ended after a Russian-brokered peace agreement that also opened the door to normalization. Following a counterterrorism operation last September, Azerbaijan established full sovereignty in Karabakh. As Karabakh was liberated from some 30 years of illegal Armenian occupation, France expressed support for Azerbaijan.—DNA

**Astana talks address Syrian crisis solutions**

Participants of meeting plan to address Israeli strikes on Syria amid situation in Gaza Strip

## NEWS DESK

DAMASCUS : The Turkish, Russian and Iranian delegations, as well as the representatives from the Syrian opposition and Bashar Assad's government, came together for a two-day round of the Astana talks in the Kazakh capital to discuss ongoing efforts for a permanent solution to the Syrian crisis. Türkiye is represented by Deputy Foreign Minister Ahmet Yildiz, while Russia is represented by its Special Envoy to Syria Alexander Lavrentiev, Iran by Ali Asghar Khaji, a senior adviser to the Iranian foreign minister on special political affairs, the Syrian opposition by Ahmet Toma and the regime by deputy foreign minister Bassam Sabbagh. Moreover, delegations

from Jordan, Iraq and Lebanon, which have observer status, also attend the talks, which are also attended by the United Nations Deputy Special Representative for Syria Najat Rochdi. The sides will discuss the development of the regional crisis surrounding Syria, efforts for a

comprehensive solution and the humanitarian situation in Syria, as well as mobilizing the efforts of the international community for the reconstruction of Syria within the framework of U.N. Security Council Resolution 2642. The Astana peace process is the ensemble of initiatives and plans

launched in 2017 under the guarantors Türkiye, Russia and Iran to resolve the Syrian civil war, which began in early 2011 when the Bashar Assad regime cracked down on pro-democracy protesters with unexpected ferocity. The war displaced nearly 7 million people and caused the deaths of over 300,000 people in total. The summit is convening upon the request of guarantor nations, the Kazakh ministry noted. Kazakhstan, which has hosted the meetings since the start of the process to varying results, was more reluctant to continue the talks when the nations last assembled in June 2023, with Kazakh Deputy Foreign Minister Kanat Tumyshev unexpectedly calling for the conclusion of the process, saying its goal had been achieved "considering Syria's return into

the Arab League." Arguing that the process "wasn't yet over," the Russian negotiator had responded by suggesting that Russia, Türkiye and Iran could take turns hosting the meetings, although neither Ankara nor Tehran floated such an idea. At the 20th round of talks, a roadmap for the normalization of ties between the Damascus-based regime and Ankara was also on the agenda, besides the release of hostages and missing persons, the humanitarian situation, the rebuilding of Syria and the establishment of conditions for the return of Syrian refugees were also discussed. However, the most prominent topic was counterterrorism efforts in Syria, where terrorist groups, including Daesh, the PKK and the YPG, rose to prominence amid the conflict.

**N.Korea launches cruise missiles : South Korea**

SEOUL : South Korea's military says North Korea fired several cruise missiles into waters off its western coast, adding to a provocative run of weapons demonstrations in the face of deepening nuclear tensions with the United States, South Korea and Japan. South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff said Wednesday that the US and South Korean militaries were analyzing the launches. It did not immediately confirm the exact number of missiles fired or their specific flight details. The launches marked North Korea's second known launch event of the year, following a Jan. 14 flight test-firing of the country's first solid-fuel intermediate range ballistic missile, which reflected its efforts to advance its line-up of weapons targeting US military bases in Japan and Guam. Tensions on the Korean Peninsula have increased in recent months as North Korean leader Kim Jong Un continues to accelerate his weapons development and issue provocative threats of nuclear conflict with the United States and its Asian allies. The United States, South Korea and Japan in response have been expanding their combined military exercises, which Kim portrays as invasion rehearsals, and sharpening their deterrence strategies built around nuclear-capable US assets.—APP

**German train drivers begin longest-ever strike**

BERLIN : German train drivers on Wednesday began their longest-ever strike, in a growing dispute with the Deutsche Bahn over pay and working conditions. The German Train Drivers' Union (GDL) said the strike action on passenger trains started at 2 a.m. local time (0100GMT) and will continue until Monday at 6 p.m. (0500GMT). The national railway operator said its long-distance, regional and suburban rail services will be massively affected due to the strike action from Jan. 23 to Jan. 29. It advised passengers to check their connections 24 hours before traveling, postpone their journey if possible and use their ticket at a later date. Deutsche Bahn also called on the union to return to the negotiating table. "It is now time to come together, negotiate, find compromises. We are ready to meet at any time, and any place, for negotiations and discussions," a Deutsche Bahn spokeswoman told public broadcaster ARD. The latest strike is the fourth and the longest industrial action by the union in the ongoing collective bargaining round with the Deutsche Bahn. The union is insisting on a salary increase of 555 (about \$600) per month, and a one-off inflation compensation premium of up to 3,000 (about \$3,250).—APP

**SA to open first alcohol store for diplomats**

RIYADH: Saudi Arabia is preparing to open its first alcohol store in the capital Riyadh which will serve exclusively non-Muslim diplomats, a source familiar with the plans and a document showed on Wednesday. Customers will have to register via a mobile app, get a clearance code from the foreign ministry, and respect monthly quotas with their purchases, the document said. The move is a milestone in the kingdom's efforts, led by Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, to open the ultra-conservative Muslim country for tourism and business as drinking alcohol is forbidden in Islam. It is also part of wider plans known as Vision 2030 to build a post-oil economy. The new store is located in Riyadh's Diplomatic Quarter, a neighbourhood where embassies and diplomats reside and will be "strictly restricted" to non-Muslims, the document said. Saudi Arabia still considering BRICS membership. It was unclear if other non-Muslim expatriates will have access to the store. Millions of expatriates live in Saudi Arabia but most of them are Muslim workers from Asia and Egypt.—APP



## Briefs

### 9 PIA aircraft grounded due to "spares shortage"

DNA

KARACHI: The delay in privatisation of Pakistan International Airline (PIA) has put pressure on the administrative affairs of national carrier as nine aircraft have been grounded. Sources privy to the development said that out of 31 planes in the fleet, nine aircraft have been grounded due to the non-availability of spare parts. The grounded aircraft includes five Airbus-320, three Boeing-777 and one ATR craft. Uncertainty persisted about the future of the national airline as it is mostly relying on the State Bank of Pakistan, sources claimed, adding that leasing companies have termed Pakistan's CCC rating against business policies. The other two airlines also came under operational pressure due to negative ratings and lack of foreign exchange reserves. The PIA still owes more than \$10 million in international payments. Sources added that leasing and spare parts companies were charging a risk exposure premium on payments. Earlier on January 10, Caretaker PM Anwaarul Haq Kakar directed the authorities concerned to expedite the privatization process of PIA, the national flag carrier. In a meeting with his Adviser on Aviation Air Marshal (ret'd) Farhat Hussain, the prime minister emphasized ensuring transparency in the process of privatization. PM Kakar said privatization of state-owned enterprises was on priority for the government to save the national exchequer from further financial losses.

### Quality education for youth is PML-N's top priority

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) President Shehbaz Sharif said on Wednesday that quality education for youth is his party's topmost priority. Speaking to the students of a private university, the former prime minister vowed to uplift the country's youth. He emphasised the need for boosting IT exports. "Whoever comes to power, its motive will be to provide quality education to the youth," he said. Sharing the idea of initiating the project of e-libraries in the country. "There should be e-libraries at every park. The government should come up with a policy that will allow people to seek jobs immediately after pursuing the degree". He acknowledged the talent in sports in Punjab and Sindh. Shehbaz said, "We lagged behind hockey, and the situation is cricket is also in front of everybody. Vowing to constitute the council in terms of talent hunting, he said, "We will look to find talent in sports by constituting councils."



**ISLAMABAD:** Embassy of Indonesia organized a seminar titled; 'Memories from Indonesia: Reflections on the Indonesian model of religious moderation and democracy', held at the National Book Foundation auditorium, Islamabad. Those who attended included Charge d'Affaires of the Indonesian Embassy Yusran Hadromi, Qibla Ayaz Chairman Council of Islamic Ideology, Barrister Zafarullah, Khurshid Nadeem and Managing Director NBF. A group of religious scholars from Pakistan recently visited Indonesia on the invitation of the Indonesia embassy in Islamabad. The seminar was a sequel of the very visit. - DNA

## Indonesian Model of Religious Moderation and Democracy Scholars pin-point religious links between Pak, Indonesia

This Session was expected to make the results of the visit more impactful for broader Pakistani public as well as to bring Pakistan and Indonesia closer as the two brotherly Muslim countries

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Embassy of the Republic of Indonesia in Islamabad, in collaboration with the International Research Council for Religious Affairs (IRCRA), organized a significant experience-sharing session on 23 January 2024, titled "Memories from Indonesia: Reflections on the Indonesian Model of Religious Moderation and Democracy," at the National Book Foundation (NBF) in Islamabad where the Indonesian Corner has been established last November 2023. As speakers of the Session were Pakistani Ulemas, Scholars, Academics, Activists, and Politicians, who have visited Indonesia last December 2023 to interact with their counterparts in Jakarta and Bandung, and to closely witness the practices of religious moderation and democracy in the Country. This Session was expected to make the results of the visit more impactful for broader Pakistani public as well as to bring Pakistan and Indonesia closer as the two brotherly Muslim countries. "In the wake of current global challenge,

es, both Indonesia and Pakistan need concerted efforts to share best practices to promote tolerance, moderation, gender equalities, and to ensure positive contribution of individuals in the political democratic system," said the Indonesian Chargé d'Affaires, H.E. Mr. Yusran Hadromi in his welcoming remarks. During the session, delegates shared their perspectives and comments on current Indonesia, emphasizing the strategic roles in nation building played by the two largest Indonesian Muslim organizations, namely Nahdlatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah, as well as the critical contribution by Indonesian female ulemas in advancing gender equality. In addition, the democracy in Indonesia was also their attention as the Indonesians are currently preparing the general elections next February 2024. "The religion should be a source of goodness, and different opinions of scholars of Fiqh are not meant to create divisions but provides new ways to the people according to the needs and priorities of their societies," explained Mr. Khurshid Nadeem, Chairman of

Rahmatul-Lil-Alameen Wa Khatamun Nabiyin Authority. Pakistani prominent Politician, Barrister Zafarullah Khan also shared his views during his visit to Indonesia, "The inclusion of minorities even Ahmadis in political and social progress is allowed in Indonesia. There is no distinction on gender basis in the Country and their religious ulemas and scholars are well educated and interpret religion as mercy (rahmat) for all mankind with element of universality and gender justice." In line with two previous speakers, Ms. Beenish Irfan Khan, an Activist in gender inclusion and women's rights in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK) province emphasized the Indonesian women's independence and active roles in politics and society, underscoring the acceptance of other faiths as a notable element of Indonesia. While Mr. Malik Habib Orakzai, Chairman of Pakistan International Human Rights Organization (PIHRO) shared his experiences of democracy in Indonesia, highlighting the country's notable tolerance that has allowed democracy to flourish by accommodating all parties. Chief Guest, Chairman of

the Council of Islamic Ideology, Dr. Qibla Ayaz, noted that Indonesia's approach to tolerance has evolved into appreciation, respect, and acceptance of other faiths and cultures. Dr. Ayaz added that Indonesian religious harmony, moderation and role of their two big Muslim organizations could be good learning experience for all. "We can learn from Indonesia's journey", he concluded his keynote speech. Previously, Mr. Muhammad Israr Madani, President of IRCRA, emphasized the significance of religious diplomacy and called for increased interaction between religious academics and ulemas of Indonesia and Pakistan. He highlighted the unique approach and philosophy of Indonesia's mosque and madrasah system, emphasizing their focus on societal betterment rather than politics. Dr. Raja Mazhar Hameed, Managing Director of NBF, appreciated efforts in organizing such inclusive informative event. He said that the Indonesian Corner in NBF was reflection of growing friendly ties and cooperation between the two nations and would create more awareness about Indonesia among Pakistani people.

### Imran Khan brought trouble upon himself

DNA

LAHORE: Maryam Nawaz, Chief Organiser of PML-N, during her address, lashed out at Imran Khan without mentioning his name, saying that Nawaz Sharif did not remove him but rather he brought trouble upon himself. "Nawaz Sharif did not oust you through deceit; there was no conspiracy against you. Instead, you have dug your own pit," Maryam asserted. She emphasized that PML-N's struggle is not against any individual but against inflation. "Our battle is against expensive electricity, gas, sugar, flour, and bread. In every era, Nawaz Sharif provided relief to the people, so on February 8, vote for the PML-N in such numbers that Nawaz Sharif can rescue you from inflation and unemployment," she added. She stated, "Yes, Nawaz Sharif is a ladla (darling), but he is the people's ladla. When Nawaz Sharif was not in the competition, then what popularity are we talking about? You used to say we are very popular after removing Nawaz Sharif from the competition. Now that Nawaz Sharif has returned, we will see who is truly popular."

### 'No security personnel inside booths'

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: After a formal approval for the army deployment for the nationwide poll security next month, caretaker Sindh Home Minister Brigadier (ret'd) Haris Nawaz clarified Wednesday that no security personnel will be deployed inside the polling booths. "No security official will enter the room where polling is going on, however, Rangers personnel can be summoned inside the booth if needed," the caretaker minister detailed while speaking to journalists in Karachi. Haris detailed that the election commission has a core responsibility to hold general elections and the administrations were only assisting. "There is a complete ban in place on the exhibition of arms during polls."

## IHC reserves verdict on pleas against Imran's jail trial

**IHC CJ Aamer Farooq agrees to PTI lawyer's argument that jail trial is held in extraordinary circumstances**

COURT REPORTER

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Wednesday reserved its verdict on the pleas challenging Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder Imran Khan in the infamous £190 million and Toshakhana cases, following the completion of arguments from all parties. The former PTI chairman had moved the high court - which last year declared his trial in jail in the cipher case null and void - to annul the trial in jail in the two corruption cases as well. Imran and several others are facing charges of corruption of billions of rupees in the £190 million case also involving a property tycoon, and

charges of corrupt practices involving the state gift repository in the Toshakhana case. An accountability court on January 9 indicted Imran and his wife Bushra Bibi in the Toshakhana reference filed against them by NAB, while their indictment in the £190 million case was deferred last week after the former premier changed his legal team. Judge Bashir is currently holding the jail trial of PTI founder in both cases with the approval of the federal cabinet, but Khan has challenged the jail trial before an IHC bench comprising Chief Justice Aamer Farooq and Justice Tariq Mehmood Jahangiri. Today, while giving arguments on the petitions seeking annulment of Imran's jail trial in the two cases, his lawyer in the IHC, Advocate Shoaib Shaheen said: "We do not say that the jail trial cannot be conducted but following the parameters [for it] is necessary." He said that the jail trial is held in extraordinary circumstances, which requires a judicial order in which the relevant judge states those extraordinary circumstances.

## Ambassador Blome promotes trade, economic ties during Karachi visit



DNA

KARACHI: U.S. Ambassador to Pakistan Donald Blome underscored the United States' unwavering commitment to Pakistan as a trade and economic partner during his visit to Karachi January 21-23. "We are committed to broadening and deepening

our trade and economic partnership with Pakistan, and to empowering the next generation of Pakistani business leaders," the Ambassador said. In his meeting with the American Business Council (ABC), Ambassador Blome emphasized the benefits of private sector-led, equitable, sustainable economic growth, and the potential for increasing two-way trade and in-

vestment between our countries. He also expressed appreciation for U.S. companies' corporate social responsibility and heard from private industry leaders on the business climate in Pakistan. The Ambassador also met with a group of members of the Young Presidents' Organization, a U.S.-based worldwide leadership community of Chief Executives. The Ambassador welcomed the opportunity to exchange views on Pakistan's investment and business climate and discuss prospects for economic reform. Underscoring the U.S. commitment to promote entrepreneurship, the Ambassador visited the Center for Entrepreneurial Development at the Institute of Business Administration - a driving force behind entrepreneurship, innovation, and economic growth in Pakistan - to hear from university leaders, start-up leaders, and entrepreneurs about how the Center empowers them to pursue their aspirations by fostering an entrepreneurial culture and supporting student-led initiatives.

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