



Islamabad POST

Monday, January 29, 2024

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As polls inch closer

Electioneering picks steam

Zardari told the rally that the PPP never picked up arms despite the challenges it had faced. "Instead, we protested on the streets in the form of rallies and are still fighting for democracy



RAWALPINIDI: PPP chairman Bilawal Bhutto waves to supporters during a rally. – APP

FAISAL SHEIKH / DNA

ISLAMABAD: With less than two weeks to go until the February 8 general elections, electioneering picked up steam in the country on Sunday as major political parties staged rallies to try and woo voters. While the PML-N and the PPP held large gatherings in the country, the PTI's rallies were thwarted by police. PML-N supremo Nawaz Sharif emphasised the need to question those responsible for "injustices" against the people. Speaking at a rally in Sialkot, Nawaz expressed regret over the current state of Pakistan, noting that the country he had left behind in 2017 no longer existed, and the employment promised for the youth had not materialised. He pledged to support the country's youth,

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We legislate, only we will interpret: Fazl

NAZIR SIYAL

LARKANA: JUI-F chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman on Sunday advised against blaming the politicians for everything by shifting all the responsibility to them in democracy and said February 8 was the day for the people to perform their duty. The days leading to February 8 were the time when the people had to fulfil their responsibility, Fazl said, as he described the elections as a process which depended upon the masses. "People would be responsible for the good or the bad [result on February 8]," the JUI-F chief told his supporters in Larkana as he is aiming at a strong showing in upper Sindh where has been able to garner a large support base due to a number of economic, social and political factors. In his address, the seasoned politician also talked about the supremacy of parliament. "We have made the law. Only we will interpret it," he said, asking the institutions to respect the politicians, and made it clear that Pakistan could not be run without following the law and the constitution.

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Solangi denies witch-hunt against journalists

Information Minister says Article 19 of Constitution does not allow indefinite freedom of speech

DNA

ISLAMABAD: After the Supreme Court took notice of complaints regarding alleged harassment of journalists, caretaker Federal Minister for Information Murtaza Solangi addressed media queries about the suspected 'witch-hunt' against the media persons by the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA). Solangi, in a press conference along with the FIA Director-General Ahmad Ishaq Jahangir and other members of the Joint Investigation Team (JIT) on Sunday, rejected media reports blaming the state authorities for "harassing" media persons via sending legal notices in the name of probing into a smear campaign against the judges and judiciary. Solangi's media talk came after the Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Qazi Faez Isa took notice of the FIA compiling a list of journalists and YouTubers for allegedly running a smear campaign on

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SIALKOT: PML N leader Nawaz Sharif addresses a public rally. – DNA

Gaza crisis persists

US sees signs of progress on temporary pause

Israel and Hamas would then aim to work out details during the first 30 days of the pause for a second phase in which Israeli soldiers and civilian men would be released

NEWS DESK

WASHINGTON: US negotiators are making progress on a potential agreement under which Israel would pause military operations against Hamas in Gaza for two months in exchange for the release of more than 100 hostages who were captured in the Oct. 7 attack on Israel, according to two senior administration officials. The officials, who requested anonymity to discuss the sensitive negotiations, said Saturday that emerging terms of the yet-to-be sealed deal would play out over two phases. In the first phase, fighting would stop to allow for the remaining women, elderly and wounded hostages to be released by Hamas. Israel and Hamas would then aim to work out details during the first 30 days of the pause for a second phase in which Israeli soldiers and civilian men would be released. The emerging deal also calls for Israel to allow more humanitarian aid into Gaza. While the proposed deal would not end the war, US officials are hopeful that such an agreement could lay the groundwork for a durable resolution to the conflict. The New York Times first reported on Saturday that progress has been made toward an agreement for a

Continued on Page 06

Defunding UNRWA 'collective punishment' for Gazans: Chief

FOREIGN DESK

NEW YORK: The head of the Palestinian refugee agency UNRWA has said that certain Western countries' decision to defund the UN body is a "collective punishment" that will cut the "lifeline" 2 million people in Gaza depend on. UNRWA lifesaving assistance is about to end, Philippe Lazzarini wrote in a post on X, formerly Twitter on Sunday. "Our humanitarian operation, on which 2 million people depend as a lifeline in Gaza, is collapsing. I am shocked such decisions are taken based on alleged behavior of a few individuals and as the war continues, needs are deepening and famine looms," he wrote. "Palestinians in Gaza did not need this additional collective punishment. This stains all of us," he added.

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Briefs

ANP demands apology from Nawaz Sharif

Nawaz had declared KP people 'fool'

SHAMIM SHAHID

PESHAWAR: The Awami National Party (ANP) demanded an apology on Sunday from PML-N supremo Nawaz Sharif over his remark of referring to the people of Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa as 'fools'. "Some of our people are easily fooled. And the easiest to fool are some people from Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa. This disease has originated from there [K-P]. Nawaz said a day earlier while releasing his party's manifesto in Lahore. ANP spokesperson Samar Haroon Bilour in a post on X said such language does not suit the leader of PML-N and a person who attained premiership thrice to refer to people of a province as fools.

Mian Azhar arrested, claims Hamaad

Ex. Punjab governor wanted to lead a PTI rally

ABBAS HASHMI

LAHORE: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leader Hamaad Azhar claimed on Sunday that his father has been taken into custody by police for attempting to take out an election rally in Lahore ahead of the February 8 elections. Mian Azhar, the 82-year-old former Punjab governor, wanted to lead a rally as per his democratic and constitutional right, Azhar wrote on his X handle. "Pakistan has today been reduced to a total fascist state with zero human rights or rule of law. One Nawaz Sharif & his daughter calling the shots and ruining the country," he alleged.

'One nation, one law'

PTI unveils manifesto for Feb 8 elections

The party's motto for the 2024 elections is, "Great Pakistan, great future, and freedom from bad past," the ex-chairman said

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: As political parties gear up for the February 8 polls, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Sunday introduced its summarised election manifesto on Sunday, promising to do away with "bad past" if it's voted into power next month. Addressing a press conference in Islamabad, PTI leader Barrister Gohar Ali Khan, flanked by Information Secretary Raouf Hasan, presented a brief summary of the party's election manifesto envisioning the country's prosperous future as opposed to the bleak past. The party's motto for the 2024 elections is, "Great Pakistan, great future, and freedom from bad past," the ex-chairman said. The former ruling party move comes a day after its rivals Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) and Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) also introduced their much-awaited election manifesto to woo more than 128 million voters who will be electing their representatives in

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ECP introduces WhatsApp helpline

ADIL SHAHEEN

ISLAMABAD: With general elections less than two weeks away, the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has introduced a WhatsApp helpline to provide citizens with a platform to register their poll-related complaints. Over 128 million voters will exercise their right to franchise across the country on February 8 and a historic number of candidates have filed their nomination papers for contesting the polls. The ECP's initiative to roll out a helpline on the social platform aims to enhance accessibility and responsiveness in addressing concerns leading up to the upcoming general elections.

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Iran launches probe into killing of Pakistanis

Iran foreign minister due in Islamabad today

DNA

TEHRAN: Iran has strongly condemned an armed attack by unidentified gunmen on Saturday morning in the suburbs of Saravan, a border town of the southeastern province of Sistan and Baluchestan, reported Iran's state news agency on Sunday. The Iranian foreign minister has arrived in Islamabad. Both sides are holding talks at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Monday morning. In a statement, Iran's foreign ministry spokesman Naser Kanani said that country's judicial and intelligence authorities have launched an investigation into the attack, which according to initial reports resulted in the death of nine Pakistani citizens and wounding of three others. While extending condolences to the

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Stephanie lauds humanitarian efforts of Rotary Pakistan in various areas

There is a place for you in Rotary if you have the heart and the hands for service, says Rotary Int'l President 2024-2025 Stephanie Urchick

ANSAR M BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: Rotary International President Elect Stephanie Urchick has lauded Rotary Pakistan's humanitarian projects, particularly Smart Villages, and how it encompasses all 7 areas of humanitarian focus of Rotary International. She expressed particular admiration for the efforts of frontline polio workers in Pakistan. "Polio will be gone in Pakistan because of the commitment of polio workers," she commented. She expressed these views while talking to a group of senior journalists. The press talk was facilitated by Imran Ghaznavi. Stephanie Urchick further said that the aim of the Rotary was to empower people and give them a hope. She said she was amazed to see resilience and steadfastness of the people living in the smart villages established by the Rotary. "I was deeply moved when a little girl gifted me a piece of handicraft espe-



ISLAMABAD: Rotary International President Elect Stephanie Urchick talking to a group of senior journalists. Faiz Kidwai, Imran Ghaznavi and others are also seen in the picture. – DNA

cially prepared for me", she added. heart and hands for service. Mr. Tom Gump similarly spoke about his admiration for service efforts by

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'PTI to win the upcoming elections'

STAFF REPORT

Attock: Former Nazam UC 3 Malik Ghazanfar Javed Noomi Khan nominated Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf candidate National Assembly Constituency NA 49 Major Tahir Sadiq and candidate Provincial Assembly Constituency PP 3 Syed Ijaz Hussain Bukhari, announced the full support of NA 49 and PP3.

The chances of PTI's position to win more stable is uncertain, according to the details, a corner meeting was organised for the release of Kamran Khan Kami, in which Syed Ijaz Bukhari spoke and said that till date I have not criticized any of my political opponents. He said the purpose of politics is only to serve the poor people and solve their problems. We have always used politics for the welfare of the people, once again participated in the elections to support the people in this hour of difficulty and I am sure that the people will give me victory in the elections.

Today, everyone in Pakistan is in the debt of the IMF. It is surprising that the government of Muslim League (N) and Pakistan is far away from the people. They belong to the People's Party and the accusations are being made against the Tehreek Insaaf that they sank the country's economy while the PTI ruled for almost three years, the people have made their decision, the PTI has always supported the poor and Imran Khan is still carrying out the promises of imprisonment for the people of Pakistan.

KU VC Professor distributes laptops among students

KARACHI: The Vice Chancellor of the University of Karachi, Professor Dr Khalid Mahmood Iraqi, said that we need to get out of fiction and myths and adopt the reality of science and technology so that we can also compete with the rest of the world. He mentioned that one of the major reasons we are still backwards is that we did not adopt changes around the world on time, and similarly, Muslims were too late to take advantage of science and research in the modern days. He informed the audience that when the printing press was introduced, the West had started printing books, and distribution of those books was easily increased, but Muslims took 300 years to realize how important it would be for them as well. —APP

Mujahid becomes Global Goodwill Ambassador for Niaz Support

"I am thrilled to join hands with Niaz Support in their noble mission of empowering and supporting persons with special needs says Mujahid Anwar Khan

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Niaz Support, an award-winning social enterprise dedicated to mobilize persons with disabilities in Pakistan, is thrilled to announce the appointment of Air Chief Marshal (R) Mujahid Anwar Khan as its Global Goodwill Ambassador. The former Chief of Air Staff brings with him a wealth of experience, disguised service, and a deep commitment to humanitarian causes. Air Chief Marshal (R) Mujahid Anwar Khan, a highly decorated officer, served as the Chief of Air Staff in the Pakistan Air Force. His outstanding leadership and strategic acumen significantly contributed to the country's defense capabilities. Beyond his military achievements, ACM (R) Mujahid Anwar Khan has consistently demonstrated a passion for making a positive impact on society, particularly for persons with special needs. "I am thrilled to join hands with Niaz Support in their noble mis-



sion of empowering and supporting persons with special needs. It is a cause close to my heart, and I am committed to contributing my efforts towards creating a more inclusive and compassionate world," remarked Air Chief Marshal (R) Mujahid Anwar Khan.

Niaz Support Founder, Hussain Odhwani, expressed enthusiasm about the collaboration, stating, "Having ACM (R) Mujahid Anwar Khan as our Global Goodwill Ambassador is a momentous occasion for Niaz Support. His exemplary leadership and dedication to humanitarian causes align perfectly with our organization's vision.

Together, we aim to create awareness, foster inclusivity, and provide meaningful support to those who need it the most." In his role as Global Goodwill Ambassador, Air Chief Marshal (R) Mujahid Anwar Khan will actively engage in advocacy and awareness campaigns to further Niaz Support's mission of enhancing the lives of persons with special needs.

CM Baqar chooses SPSC for sub-registrar recruitment

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: The Caretaker Sindh Chief Minister Justice (R) Maqbool Baqir has decided that the recruitment process of Sub-Registrar will now be conducted by the Sindh Public Service Commission (SPSC). According to a CM's spokesman on Sunday, the post of Sub-Registrar was of Grade 15 and was a very important post. The recruitment of sub-registrars through the commission will improve the performance of the department. The Chief Minister had said that sub-registrar was a person, who registered the ownership papers. He said that the eradication of corruption in sub-registrar offices was possible only when recruitment was based on merit. Baqar said that the Sindh government had digitized the Revenue Department for the convenience of the people. He said that reforms are being introduced in the Revenue Department which will eliminate corruption.

Snowfall delights tourists in KP

PESHAWAR: The first snowfall of the winter season in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) has transformed the region into a picturesque wonderland, captivating tourists and locals alike. Popular destinations including Kalam, Chitral, Malam Jabba, Naran Kaghan, and Galyat are now blanketed in snow, creating a breathtaking scene. Muhammad Saad, Spokesman for the Tourism Authority, on Sunday announced the onset of winter tourism in these upper regions. "In preparation for the influx of tourists, Tourism Police have appointed young personnel to ensure the provision of excellent facilities," Muhammad Saad, said. The Tourism Authority emphasized the importance of travelers taking precautionary measures before heading to snow-covered areas, encouraging responsible tourism. To stay informed about the current conditions at tourist destinations, travelers can contact the Tourism Help Line at 1422 to provide assistance and information to travelers, ensuring a safe and enjoyable experience. The Authority advised tourists to use vehicles equipped for snowy conditions when traveling to snowfall-prone areas. Cautioning drivers in mountainous terrains, stressed the importance of safe driving practices during the snowy season. —APP

CDA launches new website

Moreover, the feedback option of the citizen facilities has also been kept in order to improve the performance of the institution

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Capital Development Authority (CDA) has launched its new website to facilitate the general public. In this regard, a ceremony was held at the CDA headquarters which was attended by the CDA chairman, members of the CDA Board, representatives of Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industries and officers of concerned formations. On this occasion, the CDA chairman said that the use of technology in the authority will improve service delivery. He said that the launch of the new and updated website is an important step towards digitalization. He further said that Land and Estate records are also being digitalized. CDA is introducing secure paper for issuing allotment and transfer letters to reduce the risk of forgery and tampering of records, he said. CDA chairman further added that this will help reduce complaints of corruption, and fraudulent transactions and eradication of complaints like alteration in records. A tree management system has also been introduced as part of the technology-based initiatives being taken in the authority. This system will be based on state-of-the-art Digital Trees Inventory software. Similarly, for the first time, all tree and plant data will also be digitized with the help of field force and satellite imagery. Under this barren land can be identified along with trees and plant data so that the land of Islamabad can be kept free from illegal

constructions and encroachment and plantation can be done there as per need. The launch of the new website will further boost the confidence of overseas Pakistanis as a new online property verification system has also been introduced to facilitate citizens in property transactions from the comfort of their own homes and they will be able to verify the property through the CDA website. Moreover, in the new website, all CDA services will be provided online so that citizens do not have to visit CDA offices. Similarly, the tendering process has also been made online. E-tendering will not only improve rate and efficiency but also bring innovation and transparency to the online system. Apart from this, due to the new website, citizens will be able to pay their water bills or other arrears including property tax at home. Similarly, in view of the convenience of the citizens, the data of the arrears of the last twenty years has also been updated in this website.

On the new website, all the rules and regulations of CDA will be available to every citizen in just a single click. Similarly, various CDA forms and documents will now be available online. Similarly, after the launch of the new website, the booking of various places in Islamabad has been made online, which includes the booking of events, photo shoots and Simly Dam rest house. Moreover, the feedback option of the citizen facilities has also been kept in order to improve the performance of the institution

WCCIS to hold "We-exhibit 2024" in march

DNA

SIALKOT: Sialkot Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI) President Abdul Ghafoor Malik has said that "We Exhibit 2024" will be held on March 2-3 at Living Dreams Marquee, Sialkot Cantt. In a statement, Abdul Ghafoor Malik said that after the success of the first "We-Exhibit" organized by the Women Chamber of Commerce and Industry Sialkot (WCCIS), the second exhibition was being organized in which women entrepreneurs from all across Pakistan including Sialkot would showcase their products for sale and for exhibition. He said, "It which will be an excellent opportunity for women entrepreneurs to showcase and highlight their products and bring up their businesses to the next level." Malik said that the WCCI had been serving women entrepreneurs with the mission of assisting them in the commercial sector and creating a conducive environment for all working women at all levels. He request all women entrepreneurs across Pakistan to avail the opportunity to book their stalls in time to showcase their products and invite people as visitors to join the exhibition.

Governor KP acknowledges tribal sacrifices

The governor appreciated the efforts and sacrifices of the tribal people for peace and stability in the country

PESHAWAR: Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Haji Ghulam Ali Sunday said that the sacrifices of the tribal people for the country and the nation are not hidden from anyone. The safety of the nation is our responsibility, everyone has to play a joint role in the development and prosperity of the country, the federal and provincial governments are taking comprehensive measures to end the deprivations of the merged districts and very soon the tribal areas will be brought on par with other developed areas of the province. He expressed these views during a meeting with a 60-member delegation of Baizai Hassan Khel's elders, elders and youth under the leadership of Amanullah Mohmand from Mohmand District. On this occasion, Mayor Peshawar Haji Zubair Ali was also present, the public delegation included Malik Muhammad Hasan, Abdul Wadud Mohmand, Muhammad Nabi, Sheikh Fazl Hameed, Malik Mir Salam, Qari Muhammad Ishaq and others. Informing the governor about other regional issues including the issuance of identity cards, he said that the people of the region were forced to go through a painful process in the issuance of identity cards by the NADRA office. The problem will be raised and it will be ensured that the people of the area get rid of the difficulties in obtaining identity cards. While talking to the delegation, the governor said that the development and prosperity of the merged districts is the priority, steps will be taken to ensure the provision of basic facilities to the tribal people are being taken up, the promises made to the people of the merged districts will be fulfilled and their deprivations will be ended. Peace is indispensable for the development and prosperity of any society, we all have to play our role to protect the country and establish peace and order, the governor said. The governor appreciated the efforts and sacrifices of the tribal people for peace and stability in the country. He emphasized that the state and state institutions must be supported and we all must play our role to maintain peace and law and order, and especially the leaders have the responsibility that they should play their role in the best way for the elimination of hatreds and the promotion of love and brotherhood. On this occasion, the tribal delegation thanked the governor for listening to the problems and ensuring their solution and asked the governor to follow the tribal traditions. —APP

PEDO's officials visit China for acceptance test

According to PEDO's official statement, "To conduct the factory acceptance test for solar equipment designated for installation across 5000 Masjids in Settled Districts and 2000 sites in merged Districts

PESHAWAR: A delegation from the Pakhtunkhwa Energy Development Organisation (PEDO) has concluded a successful visit to China, Gwadar Pro reported on Sunday. The purpose of the visit was to conduct the factory acceptance test for solar equipment intended for installation in 7000 mosques and other facilities across the province. According to PEDO's official statement, "To conduct the factory acceptance test for solar equipment designated for installation across 5000 Masjids in Settled Districts and 2000 sites in merged Districts". During the visit, the officials visited the manufacturing facilities of companies producing Solar PV Panels, Off-grid hybrid Inverters, and Lithium-ion batteries. "The primary objective of these visits was to meticulously inspect the production batches, ensuring that the equipment adheres to the specified standards before deployment for installation," it reads. During the visit, the officials were briefed about solar energy equipment at SRNE Solar Co., Ltd, headquartered in Shenzhen. SRNE is a world-class provider of photovoltaic off-grid products and solutions, a national high-tech enterprise integrating R&D, production, sales, and service. Additionally, the team aimed to provide valuable recommendations to the Research and Development (R&D) teams for further improvements, fostering ongoing enhancement in the quality and efficiency of the solar technology being employed. PEDO's "Solarization Schools & Health Facilities" aimed at the provision of Solar Systems to Schools and health Facilities in all districts of KP enabling them to lessen their dependence on utility companies. The main objective of the project management unit of solar-based projects is to develop economic power and to provide reliable and consistent power to schools and health facilities, especially those that are deprived of electricity. —DNA

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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
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ISLAMABAD: Guests taking interest in various items displayed on the occasion of the Republic day of India.—DNA

SESAME can transform entire landscape of ME, OIC region

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Coordinator General of COMSTech, Prof Dr M Iqbal Choudhary, said on Friday that SESAME has the potential to transform the entire scientific landscape of the Middle East and OIC region for good. Inaugurating the OIC SESAME Users two-day meeting, Prof Choudhary said that the SESAME (Synchrotron Light for Experimental Science in the Middle East) is the most important and expensive scientific facility available in the entire developing region. He said that SESAME is an elaborate, expensive, and impactful facility in the OIC region. He expressed his thanks to the government of Jordan for hosting this facility. Prof Choudhary said that by using this huge infrastructure, researchers can perform experiments not only in a much better, more precise, and more efficient manner, but they can also conduct scientific studies that are not possible without such a facility. He said that OIC-COMSTech is pleased to work with SESAME and its users to facilitate its use in the least developed member states. Prof Choudhary mentioned that we are discussing the possibility of holding three SESAME user meetings in Nigeria for Anglophone Africa, Senegal for Francophone Africa, and Kazakhstan for Central Asia. Prof Choudhary mentioned that COMSTech offered 25 travel grants annually to SESAME users from LDC and OIC countries. The Ambassador of Jordan, Dr Maen Khreasat, as chief guest of the inaugural session, said that our collective focus is on the future

and advancing our understanding of the scientific and technical marvels within the domain of synchrotron beamlines and their diverse applications. He said that SESAME stands as a beacon for collaboration, bringing together minds from across the OIC member states to push the boundaries of knowledge and innovation. Dr Khreasat said that Jordan, as the host country for SESAME, has

played a pivotal role in fostering an environment that encourages scientific inquiry and cross-cultural collaboration. He said that Jordan has committed itself to providing the necessary resources and support to ensure the success of SESAME. Dr Khreasat said that the partnership between COMSTech and SESAME serves as a shining example of diplomacy through science. This

collaboration is a testament to the belief that, by working together, we can overcome obstacles and build a brighter future for all. He said that the collaboration between COMSTech and SESAME holds immense promise for the Middle East. Dr Khreasat said that as we celebrate the achievements of SESAME, it is crucial to highlight the bilateral relations between Jordan and Pakistan. The ties between the two nations are deeply rooted in history, culture, and shared values. He said Jordan and Pakistan can explore opportunities for joint research initiatives, academic exchanges, and technology transfer. He said, Let us continue to build bridges, both scientific and diplomatic, and work towards a future where the pursuit of knowledge knows no borders. The Director General of Science and Technology of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation Saudi Arabia, Dr Abdur Noor Sekendi, was the guest of honor. He appreciated the organization of the SESAME Users Meeting by COMSTech. He said SESAME is a beacon of collaboration. He said that through such collaborative efforts, we can help overcome challenges.



India has no right to call itself a republic: Mushaal

ISLAMABAD: Special Assistant to Prime Minister for Human Rights and Women Empowerment Mushaal Hussein Mullick said that the apartheid and supremacist Indian state had no right to celebrate its Republic Day in the bleeding Kashmir. Mushaal criticised the RSS-led Indian government for celebrating the abrogation of the constitution, targeting minorities, and undermining the so-called democratic values, said a press release issued here. SAPM said that the RSS-inspired fascist government has unleashed a wave of state terrorism and brutalities to suppress the dissenting voices. Mushaal said that they could not dampen the courage of the brave Kashmiri people, who, she said, would continue their freedom struggle until getting the birthright to self-determination. It is pertinent to mention here that Kashmiris on both sides of the Line of Control and across the world observed Indian Republic Day, as Black Day in protest against India's continued denial of Kashmiris' right to self-determination. The SAPM went on to say that it was shameful for India to call itself a republic despite the illegal occupation of Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK), which was converted into a world largest tortured cell. Mushaal said that the notorious Indian authorities usurped fundamental rights of the Kashmiris, as top Kashmiri leadership including Yasin Malik were put in jails in fake and fabricated cases just to silence their voices. SAPM lamented that India was committing the worst atrocities and usurped all legal and constitutional rights of Kashmiris but the international community, UN bodies and human rights organization still called it the largest democracy, which was disgusting. She said that India was not a largest democracy but a world's most fascist and apartheid state, where living a life not only for Kashmiris muslims but for all other minority communities was a nightmare, who were subjected to inhuman and barbaric acts. Mushaal vowed that despite the atrocities of the Indian troops, the Kashmiri people would not give up their struggle and would continue it till taking the freedom struggle to its logical end. She said the current situation of IIOJK was a big challenge for the international community and urged the world powers to help settle the lingering Kashmir dispute according to the UN resolutions and aspirations of the Kashmiri people to avoid the world's worst looming humanitarian.—DNA

Election fervor grows as political parties rally support

ISLAMABAD: With the general elections just around the corner on the 8th of next month, political activities are reaching a fever pitch as parties intensify their efforts to secure the support of voters. Public gatherings have become a common sight as political parties strategically organize rallies to connect with the electorate. The atmosphere is charged with enthusiasm as candidates articulate their visions and agendas to sway public opinion. In addition to large-scale gatherings, candidates are actively engaging with voters through corner meetings, providing an opportunity for more intimate discussions on local issues and concerns.—APP

ECP's active WhatsApp helpline ensures complaint resolution

ISLAMABAD: The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has taken a proactive step by introducing an active WhatsApp helpline, providing citizens with a platform to register and resolve their election-related complaints swiftly. This initiative aims to enhance accessibility and responsiveness in addressing concerns leading up to the upcoming general elections in 2024. Using this WhatsApp number, 0327 5050610 individuals, particularly those who are speech and hearing impaired, can submit their complaints via video. The ECP has established the Election Monitoring and Complaint Centre (EMCC) to facilitate and address the voters' grievances pertaining to the upcoming general elections 2024. According to official sources, apart from WhatsApp, the complaints can be submitted through email at complaints@ecp.gov.pk, or the dedicated helpline 111-327-000. The election watchdog has set up control rooms at its secretariat, as well as provincial, divisional, and district-level offices to handle the registration and resolution of complaints. At this center, the public will have the opportunity to contact and register their election-related grievances. Trained staff has been appointed at the center to ensure prompt resolution of these issues. The ECP urged people to promptly share footage of any code of conduct violations in their areas for swift response and resolution.—DNA

Deadly pneumonia outbreak claims lives of 18 more children in Punjab

ISLAMABAD: The deadly pneumonia continued to claiming lives as 18 more children have succumbed to the disease in Punjab during past 24 hours. A total of 869 pneumonia cases were reported across Punjab the other day, with Lahore alone witnessing 177 new cases, said a private news channel. Punjab so far recorded 258 deaths and 14,530 cases due to pneumonia, while the provincial capital, Lahore, reported 53 deaths and 2,490 cases during the same period. The current surge in pneumonia-related deaths indicates a troubling trend, with over 60 children losing their lives in the past four days—14 on January 24, 12 on January 25, 13 on January 26, and 7 on January 27. Today, on January 28, an additional 18 children have reportedly died from pneumonia.—APP

Famous poet, Naat Khawan Muzaffar Warsi remembered

ISLAMABAD: Prominent Urdu poet, critic, essayist, lyricist, and scholar Muzaffar Warsi was remembered here on his death anniversary on Sunday. Born on December 23, 1933, in Meerut his name was Mohammad Muzaffaruddin Siddiqui and he used the pen name 'Warsi'. Muzaffar Warsi started his poetry by writing lyrics for songs of Pakistani movies but gradually changed direction and his style of poetry became more oriented towards writing Hamd and Naats. He was one of the few distinguished voices and one of the most prominent poets of Pakistan. Warsi experimented with every genre of poetry including ghazal, nazam, naat, and hamd. Unique style and diversity of themes made Warsi prominent among the poets of his era.—APP

'Traffic management plan to avoid gridlock'

RAWALPINDI: Deputy Commissioner (DC) Murree, Agha Zaheer Abbas Shirazi has said that implementation of traffic management plan finalized to facilitate the tourists was being ensured to avoid gridlock on the city roads. He said that 13 tourist facilitation centers were established at different places in Murree while a control room had also been made fully functional. The DC said that the district administration had made excellent arrangements to promote tourism in the region besides helping and assisting the tourists. A large number of tourists visit, 'Queen of Hills', Murree to enjoy the snowfall in winter, he said adding, solid steps were taken by the district administration to provide assistance and guidance to the tourists. He informed that on the directives of the Commissioner Rawalpindi Division Liaquat Ali Chatta, the administration was ensuring strict implementation of Murree Contingency Plan to facilitate the tourists.—APP

2000 participated in Islamabad marathon



ISLAMABAD: A woman participants in the Adam's Islamabad Marathon 2024, at Margalla road in the Federal Capital. —ONLINE

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Nearly 2,000 participants, includ-

ing both local and international runners, took part in the Islamabad Marathon that began on Sunday. The marathon featured four categories, including full and half marathons, along with 5 and 10-kilometer races, said a private news channel. It also included a special Kids Marathon, catering to the younger participants. The organizers emphasized their commitment to promoting a healthy lifestyle and encouraging physical activity among children. These marathons not only provide a platform for professional athletes but also promote fitness and well-being in the community, fostering a culture of health consciousness and sportsmanship.

JANUARY 2024

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Briefs

Political Parties Should Consult FPCCI

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Mr. Saquib Fayyaz Magoon, Acting President FPCCI, has appreciated that the Ameer of Jamaat-e-Islami (JI), Senator Siraj Ul Haq, has visited the head office of the apex body to present their economic manifesto; business and infrastructure development plan to the business, industry and trade community. He added that the political parties should consult FPCCI before formulating their economic policies for their manifestos as the business community can provide them with the right grass-root level information. Mr. Saquib Fayyaz Magoon, Acting President FPCCI, has requested all political parties to present their economic manifestos to the apex body based on practical, detailed and duly planned manner as the business community is only looking to listen to solutions not the rhetoric. We need to understand how the political parties are planning to reduce the cost of doing business; how the obstacles in ease of doing business will be eliminated; how skills development gaps will be bridged; how much will be budgeted for health & education; how SOEs losses will be minimized; how the tax gap of 4,000 billion will be bridged & tax base broadened and how the platform of SIFC will be fully utilized by the upcoming government. Mr. Saquib Fayyaz Magoon acknowledged that revising the contracts with independent power producers (IPPs) – as mentioned in JI's manifesto – is the need of the hour; however, he emphasized that it should be done through a consultative process to avoid any litigation at national or international forum. The circular debt of the energy sector now stands at an unprecedented and alarming PKR. 5.731 trillion, he added.

ICP launches grand operation against encroachments

ISLAMABAD: In a decisive move to enhance traffic flow and curb illegal encroachments, Islamabad Capital Police (ICP), under the guidance of ICCPO Dr Akbar Nasir Khan on Sunday launched a comprehensive crackdown in Tarnol and Khanna Pull areas. According to details, following the special directions of the Islamabad Capital City Police Officer (ICCPO) Dr Akbar Nasir Khan, the Islamabad Capital Police has launched a comprehensive crackdown on illegal encroachments across various locations in the federal capital. The operations were conducted in the area of Tarnol and Khanna Pull. Under the supervision of the DPO Sadder, police teams have carried out operations in Tarnol area against illegal roadblocks and also removed unauthorized structures and possessions. The accused involved in collecting extortion from roadside vendors, cart pullers, fruit shop owners, and hotels were also arrested. Cases have been registered against him at Tarnol police station.—APP

ICCI shares input with DG (E) ISI to improve economy

Zafar Bakhtawari, former President ICCI, and Secretary General UBG Pakistan said that Pakistan should realign its foreign policy to promote regional trade blocs on the pattern of EU and ASIAN

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari, President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) held a meeting with Major General Muhammad Hassan Khattak, Director General (E), ISI, and shared the input of the business community with him to improve the economy. Speaking on the occasion, Major General Muhammad Hassan Khattak, Director General (E), ISI discussed in detail the upcoming trial of the first gold extraction machine designed for extraction of gold found in the Indus River. He also briefed him about the plan of transportation of goods through sea and rivers to meet the needs of the agriculture sector. He informed him about an emergency plan being considered for the drilling of oil and gas to address the shortage of these natural resources in the country. He shared the proposal for mineral extraction to support industrial manufacturing by the establishment of cutting and polishing units to produce value-added gemstone products. He welcomed the input of the business community for expedited measures to fix the railway system. He said that the private sector should focus on chip designing and manufacturing in Pakistan to improve exports. He said that the proposals of the business community for agricultural research and



support systems and increasing the production of olive oil, mustard, and sesame need implementation to make tangible progress

in these areas. He assured that he would convey the input of the business community to the relevant quarters for consideration

and implementation. Speaking on the occasion, Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari, President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and In-

dustry said that the railway is the cheapest mode of goods transportation, but currently around 94% of goods are moved by road, which is more costly. He stressed that Pakistan Railways should be revamped to increase its share of goods transportation to facilitate the business community. He said that Pakistan has great potential to produce and export olive oil and stressed that the government should encourage the farmers to increase its cultivation. He said that better incentives should be provided to the industry to increase industrial activities and exports. He said that Pakistan can earn billions of dollars from IT exports and the government should give priority attention to its better growth. He said that all the loss-making state-owned enterprises should be privatized as the government has to spend billions of rupees on their bail-out. He said that last year the government spent a huge amount of Rs.1400 billion to run these SOEs. He said that the government should announce a 10-year tax policy to broaden the tax base and attract investment. He said that Pakistan needs a Charter of Economy to achieve sustainable economic growth and all political parties should work on it. Zafar Bakhtawari, former President ICCI, and Secretary General UBG Pakistan said that Pakistan should realign its foreign policy to promote regional trade blocs on the pattern of EU and ASIAN.

FRIA stresses need for reforms with focus on value-addition

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Ferozpur Road Industrial Association (FRIA) has stressed the need for reforms, with a keen focus on value-addition for a sustainable economic growth, recommending the government to raise exports to double digit of the GDP, as Pakistan's exports have inched up after witnessing decline. He said that consistent borrowing by developing economies to shore up its reserves in desperate times is only to lead towards a debt trap. In a statement, the FRIA senior vice chairman and PIAF leader Shahbaz Aslam observed that borrowing from friendly countries should only be seen as a short-term solution to prevent reserves depletion and consequent further depreciation of the currency. PIAF EC member stressed that focus should be on promoting exports and restricting imports alongside making domestic industry more competitive and subsequently expand its export market. He said that exports of goods and services are an injection into the circular flow of income leading to a rise in aggregate demand and an expansion of output, helping raise per capita incomes.—APP

HEC invites applications for DAAD Master's scholarship

ISLAMABAD: Higher Education Commission (HEC) of Pakistan has invited applications for the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) fully funded Master's scholarships for the academic year 2024 from the female Afghan refugees to pursue two years Master's study in HEC recognized universities in Pakistan. According to the HEC, this scholarship programme is open for all disciplines and is funded by the DAAD, with funds from the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development, Germany. The award of scholarships

will be subject to the provision of funds. About the eligibility criteria, the HEC said that female Afghan refugees residing in Pakistan, with valid Proof of Registration (POR) Card from Ministry of States and Frontier Regions (SAFRON). The candidates must have completed a HEC recognized undergraduate degree (16 years of education) with at least 2.5 CGPA. The result awaiting students cannot apply. The candidates must have successfully completed undergraduate degree (16 years of education) and HEC Pakistan will facilitate in admission or the candidate must be currently en-

rolled in first semester in HEC recognized university, pursuing two-year Master's degree. The candidate must not be receiving any other academic scholarship or support while availing this scholarship programme. About the selection process, the HEC conveyed that the selection will be merit-based and factor-in academic credentials and selection interview. To apply for this opportunity, the required documents are copy of valid Proof of Registration (POR) from Ministry of States and Frontier Regions (SAFRON), copy of Matriculation and Intermediate certificates with

DMCs, copy of undergraduate degree and final transcript, two letters of recommendation from teachers, Letter of Motivation/Personal Statement and Proof of enrollment in institute like Admission letter (In case of enrollment in institute). The applicants are advised to check their email and HEC website <https://www.hec.gov.pk/english/HECAnnouncements/Pages/Announcements.aspx> regularly for updates and apply well before the closing date to get assistance in case of any inconvenience. The closing date for submitting application is February 05.—APP

No trust on new election management system, good turnout

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: The participants of a webinar on fair and free elections have shown their doubts on a reasonable turnout for the February 8 polling. About 10 million eligible youth and women will remain unregistered for casting their vote because they have not been issued CNICs. Meanwhile, the rumours about the threats of terrorist attacks on the polling stations are being spread. One of the main political parties has already been pushed out of the race. So, we shall not expect a good turnout even in the forthcoming elections. The result of the fresh polls will enhance the political fiasco. Such a situation would cause further embarrassment to a country's national repute. But, the state institutions seem unbothered. The we-

binar was organized by the Devcom-Pakistan Centre for Geopolitical Studies on Saturday. The guest speakers included former Senator Farhatullah Babar, Kinnaired College Associate Professor of Political Science Dr. Khushboo Ejaz, Bahria University Associate Professor Dr. Hassan Daud Butt, and Devcom-Pakistan Executive Director Munir Ahmed. Former Senator Farhatullah Babar has shown his "no trust" on the new Election Management System (EMS) that the Election Commission of Pakistan introduced the other day. He termed the political parties were not briefed about the new system for the transmission of election results. It has added to fears and doubts on the merit of forthcoming elections. One of the main political parties has already been pushed out. We repeatedly listen about the level playing field but actual-

ly it is missing the most now. We shall not be surprised if the EMS fails at the moment of election results submission. He said some powers are consistently maneuvering the parliament, judiciary and media. A resolution in the senate against the general elections, action against the protesting Baloachi families in front of the National Press Club and media maneuvering are the recent ones. We need to keep raising our voices against the maneuvers. He feared the new general elections will increase the political instability if rightful measures are not taken to get away from the maneuvering. Speaking on the occasion, Devcom-Pakistan Executive Director Munir Ahmed said the people still have serious doubts on the merit of the February 8 elections. That is why the election campaigns are yet to take the conventional hype.

Worsening circular debt haunts economy along with volatile oil rates

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The All Pakistan Business Forum (APBF) President Syed Maaz Mahmood has warned the government of worsening circular debt in the power sector, which would continue to haunt it along with the challenge of dealing with the volatile crude oil prices in the global market. Syed Maaz Mahmood said that the power sector circular debt issue should be resolved holistically without escalating electricity cost, as its size has more than doubled during the three and a half years in spite of raising the power tariff multiple times in the past. At present, oil and gas sectors are reeling from Rs1.7 trillion worth of circular debt whereas the power sector has a circular debt close to Rs2.5 trillion. The rising gas demand forced the previous government to divert expensive LNG to the residential consumers in winter. However, there was no mechanism in place to recover dues from the domestic sector. APBF Chairman Ibrahim Qureshi said that LNG has now become a major contributor to the circular debt, leading to deterioration in the financial health of Pakistan State Oil and Sui Northern Gas Pipelines Limited. PSO has to receive over Rs360 billion

from SNGPL on account of LNG supplies whereas SNGPL has to recover around Rs120 billion from the domestic sector, industry players say. Ibrahim Qureshi said that the Petroleum Division was set to seek approval of the new government for the provision of Rs36 billion, out of a total of Rs53 billion, to SNGPL to cover the subsidy on LNG supplies to the export-oriented sectors. He said that apart from the circular debt woes, price differential claims of billions of rupees are emerging because of the freeze on oil price revision while in the international market crude oil has risen to multi-year highs. Already, the consumers in Pakistan are paying record high prices of petroleum products. We have to resolve the circular debt issue by revamping the entire power sector, including tariff setting, efficiencies of power generating units, supply chain network and payment recoveries. If this is not done, the future of energy sector would remain at stake, he warned. The APBF President said that the power sector problem is a multifaceted problem and the government must avoid increasing the cost further, especially for the industry. Syed Maaz Mahmood said that the government claimed that it has been making efforts to improve efficiency.

BRI's global symphony amplified by CPEC's strategic significance

ISLAMABAD: In the grand narrative of global collaboration and economic connectivity, the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) stands as an orchestrator, weaving together nations in a harmonious symphony of progress. As the Initiative goes beyond the conventional realms of infrastructure development of highways, railways and energy projects, it is also a catalyst for economic growth and prosperity having transformative dimensions into economic, cultural and geopolitical domains. By creating a network of interconnected projects, BRI unveiled in 2013, facilitates seamless flow of goods, services and investments across participating nations that stimulates local economies creating conducive environment for innovation and collaboration.—APP

Mushahid elected VP IPU human rights body

Senator Mushahid Hussain is also Convenor of the Pakistan Parliamentary Forum on PKR (Palestine, Kashmir & Rohingya) and he also serves on the Executive Board of the Istanbul-based 'Al Quds Parliament', supporting the Palestine Cause



DNA

ISLAMABAD: Mushahid Hussain elected Vice President of IPU Human Rights body (Geneva, 28 January); Senator Mushahid Hussain Sayed, who represents Asia in the Committee of Human Rights for Parliamentarians (CHRP) of the Inter Parliamentary Union (IPU), was unanimously elected as Vice President of the Committee at its meeting in Geneva. Ms Millie Odhiambo of Kenya was elected as President. Senator Mushahid Hussain is the first parliamentarian from Pakistan to be elected to a high level office of a key body of IPU, which is a global organisation representing the world's parliaments. Two years ago at the IPU General Assembly in Rwanda, Senator Mushahid Hussain was elected as

Member of the CHRP, the only Asian in this important 10-member Committee. Senator Mushahid Hussain, who is member of the Senate Human Rights Committee, served as Leader of the Pakistan Delegation to the United Nations Human Rights Commission in Geneva. In the year 2000, Mushahid Hussain was honoured by being declared as 'Prisoner of Conscience' by the prestigious London-based organisation, 'Amnesty International' due to his illegal detention without charges for 440 days, the only Pakistani political prisoner to be so honoured then. Senator Mushahid Hussain is also Convenor of the Pakistan Parliamentary Forum on PKR (Palestine, Kashmir & Rohingya) and he also serves on the Executive Board of the Istanbul-based 'Al Quds Parliament', supporting the Palestine Cause.

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Vol: 05 Issue: 104

Email: dailyisbpost@gmail.com

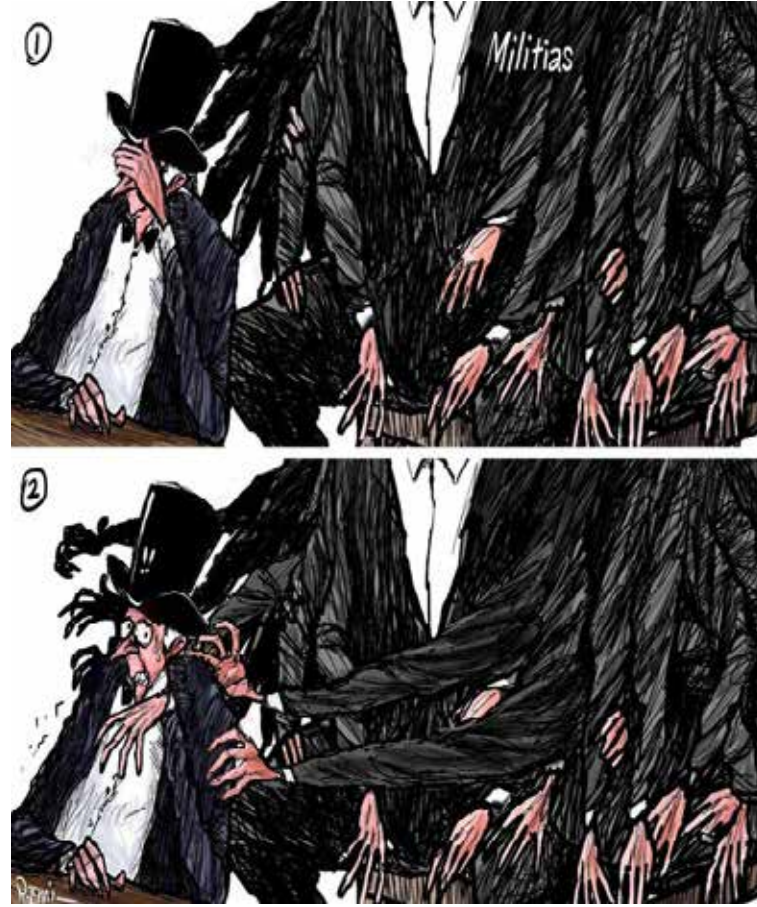
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ICJ effectively orders Israel to cease and desist

A 17-judge panel of the International Court of Justice declared on Friday that Palestinians had a right to be protected from acts of genocide. They called on Israel to "take all measures within its power" to prevent acts which could fall foul of the 1948 Genocide Convention, and to allow the entry of desperately needed humanitarian aid into the Palestinian enclave. There was no explicit call for an immediate halt to Israel's full-scale military operation in the Gaza Strip in the provisional ruling on the case brought against Israel by South Africa. But the court said it was deeply concerned about the continuing loss of life and human suffering in Gaza, and "acutely aware of the extent of the human tragedy unfolding in the region". When innocent Palestinian people have been displaced from their homes, do not have provisions for maintaining subsistence, and are even placed at risk of being killed at any time, the ICJ's orders should function as a call for the international community to show enough concern for what has been happening to Palestinian people in Gaza. The ICJ also ordered Israel to "prevent and punish the direct and public incitement to commit genocide", and Hamas to release all the remaining hostages it is holding. Israel was also ordered to preserve evidence related to allegations of genocide and report back to the court on its compliance with these measures in a month. UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres underscored in a statement that despite being a provisional judgment the "decisions of the Court are binding" and all parties should duly comply with the order from the Court.

As far as the security of Israel is concerned, the attacks on innocent Israelis and young people from other countries participating in a music gala in early October last year should definitely be condemned. But while Israel has the right to defend itself and bring the perpetrators to justice, it does not have the right to punish the Palestinian people as a whole for that. The court pointed out that its provisional measures are necessary as there is "a real and imminent risk that irreparable prejudice will be caused to the rights" of Palestinians before the court issues its final decision, which is expected to take at least a year. The ICJ's decisions cannot be appealed, but it has no way of enforcing them. In addition, it did not order Israel to end its military action in Gaza. Israel will certainly continue its military operation. Yet, the ICJ's orders serve as a reminder to Israel that the world is watching what it is doing. The orders should also prompt some major countries to stop turning a blind eye to what Israel is doing in Gaza. They should stand with the rest of the international community and do whatever they can to mediate a cease-fire.



The view on the film awards season

THE sums of money involved in making and selling films are so colossal that it's often hard to see beyond them to the value of the movies themselves. It was no surprise to find the odd couple of last summer making the headlines for both the Bafta and Oscar shortlists – Christopher Nolan's *Oppenheimer* for meeting expectations with multiple nominations and Gretha Gerwig's *Barbie* for disappointing them, even though it is ahead at the box office. Few who witnessed the excitable swirls of pink outside cinemas, or have dwelt on the fortuitous weirdness of a movie about a Mattel doll being fused into a double header with a biopic of a nuclear physicist, could grudge their success at a time when cinemas all over the country were on their knees in the aftermath of the pandemic. Opinions may differ about their merits, but they have brought people out and been widely discussed. Every awards season unleashes a flood of releases, as movies scramble for eligibility. Release dates vary on different sides of the Atlantic, but in the last few weeks UK cinemas have been packed with evidence that the big beasts have not sucked all the oxygen out of the ecosphere. It has been heartening to see the return of film to the heart of the water-cooler culture, a space increasingly dominated by streamed TV hits such as *Succession*. Emerald Fennell's posh Marmite offering *Saltburn* managed to have its sandwich and eat it by opening in cinemas and quickly turning itself over to streaming, where it has capitalised, whether by luck or judgment, on an unusually fizzy social media presence. More interesting are a scattering of highly original arthouse films, led in the running by Yorgos Lanthimos's *Poor Things*. This steampunk fantasy, based on a 1992 novel by Alasdair Gray, bagged 11 Oscar nominations and this week reached third place in the UK charts. It has so far made more than \$34m around the world at the box office. Mr Lanthimos has provoked criticism for erasing Glasgow from a novel by a revered Scottish author, and has also inspired a furious debate as to whether he is passing a male sex fantasy off as a feminist update of the Frankenstein story. Good for him: provocation is a legitimate part of any work of art. It is far better to annoy people than to bore them. What is indisputable is that he has drawn a dazzling performance from Emma Stone, while finding a truly filmic eccentricity (customised pets and cut-off gowns) to match the glorious waywardness of Mr Gray's hybrid fiction. Prizes, as Julian Barnes said, in a literary context, are "posh bingo". Shortlists are where their value lies in casting beams of light on a crowded field. With *Anatomy of a Fall*, the French director Justine Triet has achieved a particular coup in becoming the only woman in competition for best director in either the Baftas or the Oscars – with an uncompromisingly cerebral take on the thriller genre. Meanwhile, a brave decision by Jonathan Glazer to make a German-language adaptation of Martin Amis's Holocaust novel, *The Zone of Interest*, has put it in the unusual position of competing for a British film Bafta and a foreign language Oscar. In both cases, thoughtful and principled film-making has paid off. The glut may only be temporary, but we should enjoy it while it lasts.

'Pakistan ko Nawaz do'

Qamar Bashir



In reference to his affection, concern and love for the populace and Imran Khan's insensitivity toward the common people, he stated that he visited Aabpara market immediately after assuming power in 2013 and conducted personal interviews with vendors, shopkeepers, and customers to ascertain and inquire about the costs of essential commodities and their wellbeing. Conversely, he asserted that in Quetta, a terrorist attack claimed the lives of over hundred Hazaras, whose families refused to bury their loved ones until the prime minister personally addressed them and...

DURING a live broadcast address to a gathering of prominent media figures, Nawaz Sharif opted to speak candidly as opposed to reading from the prepared manifesto. His impassioned discourse delved into the challenges and disruptions encountered throughout his three-term tenure as prime minister. He conveyed a deep sense of regret on premature termination of his previous three tenures, his subsequent imprisonment and exiles and the potential course of progress and affluence that Pakistan failed to attain. His honest remarks emphasized the profound disparity between the anticipated progress and the present hardships faced by average individuals in their efforts to afford even the fundamental necessities. The manifesto which was launched earlier by all PML(N) stalwarts, led by Nawaz Sharif, through the collective pressing of a button accompanied by a poignant debut song, focuses on realistic and achievable goals, avoiding the presentation of unattainable promises. The manifesto, penned by Nawaz's close associate Mr. Irfan Siddique, assisted by Mariam Orangezbe, was launched under the slogan 'Vote to Azzat Do', 'Pakistan Ko Nawaz Do', emphasizing the party's commitment to practicality and accountability in governance. The manifesto addresses the differentiation between the realities of governance and the perceptions often portrayed on social media, particularly in contrast to campaigns by other political parties like the PTI. The approach taken by PML(N) in this manifesto suggests a focus on transparency, realistic planning, and the execution of policies that are within the party's capability to deliver upon assuming power. Nawaz Sharif articulated a vision for a healed nation, promising unity and direction if PML(N) wins the upcoming elections. He spoke of alleviating despair with actionable plans, aiming to erase the deep-seated discontent. In contrast, if PML(N) does not secure victory, Sharif committed to a non-confrontational stance, respecting the tenure of the elected government, emphasizing a departure from the politics of vengeance. Sharif critiqued the cyclical disruption of democratically elected governments in Pakistan, highlighting the extensive and costly electoral process that culminates in new government formation, only to be derailed by undemocratic forces. He lamented this pattern of political instability, which often leads to the unjust ousting of leaders, economic mismanagement, soaring inflation, and increased poverty. Sharif emphasized the irony of ousted leaders being called upon to salvage the nation from crises instigated by the very forces that undermined them. He stated in his emotionally charged yet melancholic address that he had never pursued confrontational politics and had always upheld the democratic charter in his capacities as a political worker, prime minister, and opposition leader. He provided numerous instances in which, despite having the ability to destabilize and remove the governments of the PPP and PTI, he declined to do so in adherence to the charter of democracy. While such an action could have greatly benefited the PML(N), he abstained from pursuing it out of a strong conviction that it would ultimately undermine the democratic process in the country. He recounted numerous instances in which he advocated for democratic principles at the expense of significant party gains. During the narration of one such piece of evi-

dence, he stated that he called off the long march that advocated for the reinstatement of judges and the judiciary, which had been forcibly removed by the dictatorial regime of Pervez Musharraf shortly after the demand was met by the PPP government. He recollected that numerous media contacts and close associates advised him to persist with the protracted march while introducing a fresh demand: the establishment of Shahbaz Sharif's administration in the Punjab. He stated that he declined the proposal despite its appeal on the grounds that all governments, irrespective of their formation, should be removed exclusively through a legitimate democratic process, and not via blackmail, coercion, or threats of long march and protracted sit-ins. He reflected on the agonizing days of Imran Khan's long march and sit-in, which he claimed was orchestrated with the assistance of Mr. Tahir ul Qadri, who was summoned from abroad and had no investment, interest, or standing in Pakistani politics. A sit-in ensued during which the incumbent prime minister was subjected to a variety of vile threats and vows were made to drag him from the prime minister's residence by tying a rope around his neck. He bemoaned the fact that the sit-in had effectively paralyzed the state and disrupted government operations. He distinctly remembered one of the most anticipated and significant visits of the Chinese President to Pakistan, which was repeatedly delayed on account of protracted demonstrations and sit-ins, but ultimately materialized subsequent to the cancellation of the sit-ins. Pakistan entered an unprecedented era of progress and development with the initiation of the transformative China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) during this visit. Regrettably, the visit could have been initiated considerably sooner under the CPEC, which would have benefited the nation and its citizens considerably sooner, had the sit-in not caused the visit to be delayed. He stated that despite the fact that Imran Khan was determined to overthrow his government, he maintained a policy of dialogue and engagement and requested Imran Khan to the negotiating table on multiple occasions to discuss his demands and evolve potential solutions. He even visited Bani Gala as prime minister to engage him in a political process, and he lamented that he had only requested the construction of a road from Islamabad to Bani Gala rather than pressuring for any demand with a vision or mission. He stated that the road was though constructed rapidly but he is still perplexed as to why he continued to hold the entire nation hostage for a demand that was so trivial and could have been easily satisfied. In reference to his affection, concern and love for the populace and Imran Khan's insensitivity toward the common people, he stated that he visited Aabpara market immediately after assuming power in 2013 and conducted personal interviews with vendors, shopkeepers, and customers to ascertain and inquire about the costs of essential commodities and their wellbeing. Conversely, he asserted that in Quetta, a terrorist attack claimed the lives of over hundred Hazaras, whose families refused to bury their loved ones until the prime minister personally addressed them and guaranteed them justice. According to him, Mr. Iman declined to pay a visit to the bereaved families and

instead compounded the harm by publicly stating that this constituted coercion and he would not yield. He pondered the manner in which an individual with such an insensitive mindset could hold the position of prime minister of the nation. He asserted that his party is the only one that consistently ensures the manifesto is formulated with the knowledge, expertise, and skills of party members, leaders, and subject matter experts incorporated. The PML(N) consistently ensures that the manifesto maintains its sanctity by excluding any unfulfillable pledges or commitments. According to him, the country was on the verge of utter collapse in 2013 when the PML(N) assumed power. A severe electricity shortage persisted with no apparent resolution in site. There was a severe gas shortage that had repercussions for both industries and households. With inflation on the rise, the PKR was rapidly depreciating. FATF was on the verge of blacklisting the nation, which was previously on its graylist. He asserted that in spite of extremely detrimental sit-ins and long marches, his administration, in accordance with its manifesto, added 12,000 MW of electricity, resolved the gas crisis, reduced the inflation rate to between 2% and 5%, and maintained the rupee at Rs.105 throughout his entire term in office and restored the existing highways and motorways constructed additional highways motorways and farm to market road. Automobiles manufactured by Suzuki, Toyota, and Honda, which were purchasable for the middle class during his era for a price range of Rs. 900,000 to Rs. 30,000,000, have now surpassed the financial means of even the wealthiest classes, costing between Rs. 30,00,000 and Rs. 20,000,000. The family, previously owned automobiles, had switched to motorcycles as a result of the exorbitant expenses associated with vehicles and fuel. He claimed that had the PML(N) government persisted in its operations, the entire nation's cities could have been serviced by the orange lines trains and the metro bus services, and automobiles could have been affordable for the average citizen. The plan aims to fortify industries at all levels and foster youth entrepreneurship through accessible banking support. In agriculture, a cornerstone of the economy, initiatives will include superior seeds, subsidized fertilizers, and affordable utilities, alongside a robust R&D framework for continuous agricultural advancement. He stated that, similar to previous administrations, the PML(N) will strive ceaselessly, with commitment, dedication, and a clear sense of purpose, to improve the deteriorating state of the common man and restore all necessities within his reach, without engaging in political victimization, blame-shifting, or the pursuit of confrontational and vengeful politics. He concluded his candid discussion by asserting that those individuals who are viewing this discourse on their television screens and whose prominent journalists positioned on the front lines must be convinced in their deepest selves that Nawaz Sharif is telling the truth. He claimed to have a feeling and intuition that everyone is thinking this way, and that this is the PML's manifesto.

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

Netanyahu represents the bottleneck that is choking Israeli politics

Yossi Mekelberg

Had he only heeded the observation of US President Abraham Lincoln, who said, "You can fool all of the people some of the time and some of the people all of the time. But you can never fool all of the people all of the time," he would have saved himself, and more importantly his country, from the current turbulent times both are currently enduring. One recent example of his trait of being evasive and economical with the truth is his approach to the two-state solution

MOST of the time, I am perplexed not only when I try to understand what Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu believes in anymore or what he stands for, but also whether he himself can figure out this conundrum. It is no secret that his first priority is to cling to power for as long as possible, or at least until he can derail his corruption trial. His second priority is that Netanyahu mainly believes in ... well, Netanyahu. But is there anything else that still motivates him? Probably not much, which means that each additional day he spends in the prime minister's office threatens Israel's ability to assess its strategic interests rationally and logically, and to resolve the country's deepening social divisions, and as a result he has also become detrimental to regional security. Let us be absolutely clear about two things. Firstly, Netanyahu's career is nearing an end – and at a rapid pace. This longest-serving prime minister in Israel's history, nearly 17 years in total, who has survived many failures and scandals along the way and can claim very few notable successes, cannot and should not remain in office following the attacks by Hamas on Oct. 7, which was the most catastrophic single day in the country's history. The manner in which he is handling the war against Hamas has exposed his lack of strategic thinking, and demonstrated that he is guided only by narrow political calculations. Secondly, his removal from office – and it should be clearly emphasized that this must only be through democratic means – will not be a magic wand that resolves all of the challenges Israel currently faces at home and abroad. But it will be a very good place to start. To begin with, Netanyahu has a ... "special" relationship with the truth. To put it bluntly, during his long political career facts have been used – or rather, mostly misused – to serve whatever his political and personal interests happened to be at the time, to the extent that this has even landed him with indictments in three corruption cases. Had he only heeded the observation of US President Abraham Lincoln, who said, "You can fool all of the people some of the time and some of the people all of the time. But you can never fool all of the people all of the time," he would have saved himself, and more importantly his country, from

the current turbulent times both are currently enduring. One recent example of his trait of being evasive and economical with the truth is his approach to the two-state solution. Most recently, in a tweet, he rejected the idea of an independent and viable Palestinian state existing side-by-side with Israel along the lines of the pre-1967 borders, declaring: "I will not compromise on full Israeli security control over all the territory west of Jordan ... and this is contrary to a Palestinian state." However, it was reported that only a day earlier, during a telephone call with US President Joe Biden, he had refused to entirely rule out the establishment of a Palestinian state. This is not a one-off example of Netanyahu's convenient indecisiveness but a typical piece of flip-flopping by someone who has been spinning like a weather vane throughout his political career, and never more so than on the most important issue for Israel's future: its relations with the Palestinians. His first priority is to cling to power for as long as possible, or at least until he can derail his corruption trial. He was propelled to his first term as a prime minister in 1996 on the wave of his venomous attacks on the Oslo Accords. But when he returned to power in 2009 he expressed his support for a Palestinian state, mainly to please Washington during the Obama years, in what has become known as his Bar-Illan speech, named after the university at which it was delivered, only to spend most of his time in office since then derailing this proposal and even toying with annexing parts of the West Bank. During such a long political career, adjustments to and adaptations of policies to reflect changing circumstances are to be expected; in Netanyahu's case, however, the only changes that have ever mattered to him have been those in his political and personal fortunes. Any adjustments he made were usually to placate his coalition partners, who always knew his greed for power would result in his governing with no consistent guiding principles or strategic objectives. It might have been naive to expect that the catastrophe that befell Israel on Oct. 7 might reveal a more thoughtful, reflective and strategically forward-looking Netanyahu. Certainly, nothing changed. Nada, absolutely zilch. After the initial shock, he reverted to his default position

of refusing to take any responsibility, leaving others in the security establishment to do that, while presiding over a war in which the Israeli army is stuck in the Gazan quagmire, losing soldiers every day and already accused of war crimes. Furthermore, the country is losing the near-universal support it received in the immediate aftermath of the Oct. 7 attacks; much of that sympathy has switched to the innocent Palestinian victims of this conflict, who in their many thousands represent the vast majority of those paying the price of this war. At the same time, Netanyahu's promise to destroy Hamas has not only proved to be costly but also illusory. This leaves the war with Hamas and Islamic Jihad militants open-ended, and without an immediate ceasefire there is a real danger that Israel will remain in Gaza for a very long time, repeating the same mistakes it made more than 40 years ago in Lebanon. This time, though, the Israelis are dealing with a much more radicalized population, while also risking confrontations on other fronts, including in the occupied West Bank and with Hezbollah in Lebanon. Not to mention the fact they are being blamed by the international community for the humanitarian disaster in Gaza and the growing regional instability as a result. Netanyahu is the one who got Israel into this mess, as he was instrumental in strengthening Hamas at the expense of the Palestinian Authority in an attempt to prevent a peace agreement based on a two-state solution. He then weakened Israel by forming an ultra-right-wing government and attacking his own nation's democratic system while viciously inciting against those who supported it. To repair the social divisions Netanyahu and his sycophants have created at home, and to rebuild relations with the Palestinians and ease the frictions with the international community caused by the war in Gaza, will require new leadership and fresh discourse, beginning with a national reconciliation that includes the country's minority groups and an agenda for peace with the Palestinians. This cannot happen as long as Netanyahu leads the country. Without bringing down the curtain on his political career, Israel will remain under the spell of his toxic, directionless and dangerous leadership – and it cannot afford that any longer.

– Sourced by Arab News

Briefs

Electioneering picks steam

FROM PAGE 01 asserting that the PML-N would create job opportunities and provide educational tools to them. He also highlighted the drastic increase in petrol prices, saying they had surged from Rs65 per litre to over Rs260 since he left office. Speaking at the same rally, ex-premier Shehbaz Sharif expressed confidence that the public would choose Nawaz based on his past accomplishments. He also highlighted Nawaz's role in making the country a nuclear power. Shehbaz pledged to establish an IT city in Sialkot if the PML-N was voted to power, emphasising the party's commitment to providing skilled education to the youth. He further promised that, if elected, the PML-N under Nawaz's leadership would tirelessly serve the masses day and night. PML-N Senior Vice President Maryam Nawaz assured that every commitment made by Nawaz to the public would be honored.

We legislate, only we will interpret: Fazl

FROM PAGE 01 He promised a comprehensive accountability of those "robbing the mankind" – a reference to the inability to protect people's rights and the practice of denying them the very basic needs to them in the context of Sindh. Earlier on Saturday, Fazl said killings and kidnappings were a norm in Sindh, adding that the people associated with his party were facing pressure and threats in the province. Maulana regretted the fact that Pakistan couldn't march forward and was in a reverse gear at a time when the neighbouring countries had achieved a remarkable economic growth and development. "There is something wrong. Someone isn't discharging the responsibility."

US sees signs of...

FROM PAGE 01 pause in fighting in exchange for the remaining hostages. CIA director Bill Burns is expected to discuss the contours of the emerging agreement when he meets on Sunday in France with David Barnea, the head of Israel's Mossad intelligence agency, Qatari Prime Minister Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani, and Egyptian intelligence chief Abbas Kamel for talks centered on the hostage negotiations, according to three people familiar with the scheduled meeting who were not authorized to comment publicly. President Joe Biden on Friday spoke by phone with Egyptian President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi and Qatar's ruling emir, Sheikh Tamim Bin Hamad AlThani. Calls with both leaders focused on the hostage situation.

Defunding UNRWA...

FROM PAGE 01 UNRWA announced on Friday that it had opened an investigation after Israel alleged that some of its employees were involved in the Hamas Operation Al-Aqsa Storm on October 7. "To protect the Agency's ability to deliver humanitarian assistance, I have taken the decision to immediately terminate the contracts of these staff members and launch an investigation in order to establish the truth without delay," Lazzarini said in a statement on Friday. However, this prompted the US to announce on Friday that it was halting funding to UNRWA because of the Israeli allegations against the agency's 12 employees.

Solangi denies...

FROM PAGE 01 social media against judges and judiciary. He detailed that the caretaker government had constituted the JIT on January 17 which conducted two sessions on January 17 and January 23 to carry out a thorough investigation into the anti-judiciary campaign on social media.

Sinner beats Medvedev to win maiden AO title

Sinner stormed back from two sets down to beat Daniil Medvedev in a gruelling five-set Australian Open final

SPORTS DESK

MELBOURNE: Jannik Sinner stormed back from two sets down to beat Daniil Medvedev in a gruelling five-set Australian Open final on Sunday, winning his first Grand Slam. The Italian fourth seed was blown off course in the first two sets but recovered to win 3-6, 3-6, 6-4, 6-4, 6-3 in three hours and 44 minutes. The result is a bitter blow for the Russian third seed, who has now lost a second Australian Open final after being two sets up, following his defeat by Rafael Nadal in 2022. Medvedev came into the match boasting a 6-3 winning record against the 22-year-old but had lost the past three matches. The Russian had played three gruelling five-setters at Melbourne Park and spent nearly six hours longer on the court than Sinner before the final. But, looking fresh, he was quickly into his stride, unsettling the usually calm Sinner, who was unable to find any sort of rhythm. The Italian, playing in his first Grand Slam final, was broken just twice in the entire tournament in the run-up to Sunday's ti-



tle decider but Medvedev doubled that tally in the first set. World number four Sinner was again in deep trouble at the start of the second set, fending off multiple break points against a hungry Medvedev and pleading for backing from the crowd on Rod Laver Arena. He survived that onslaught but was broken for a third time in the match in the fourth game when a poor drop shot allowed the Russian to set up a winner. Medvedev raced through his service game to love, giving Sinner no time to gather his thoughts. He hit a fierce forehand to set up two more break points in the sixth game and Sinner went wide with a forehand to slip 5-1 down. The Italian broke back immediately and had another break point in the ninth game to put the set back on serve but Medvedev snuffed out the mini-revival. The third set was tighter and went with serve until the decisive 10th game. Sinner put a forehand passing shot wide at the end of a 31-shot rally, missing out on the chance to earn two set points, but his chance came again and this time he took it to seal the set. The momentum was now with Sinner and Medvedev, who required strapping for his foot, had to fight hard to hold early in the fourth set. Sinner fired three aces to edge 4-3 ahead and broke in the 10th game when Medvedev fired long to take the match into a fifth set. With the tension mounting, both players stayed solid on serve until the sixth game, when Medvedev dumped a backhand into the net to give Sinner three break points. A forehand crosscourt winner gave the Italian the crucial break and he went on to take his first championship point.

Joseph leads WI to historic win in 2nd Australia Test

BRISBANE: Shamar Joseph wasn't scheduled to be at the Gabba on Sunday morning, but he delivered an exceptional seven-wicket performance, securing a significant victory for West Indies in the second Test against Australia. The team hadn't defeated the mighty Aussies on their home ground since 1997, a period predating Joseph's birth by two years. Despite being in just his second Test and dealing with a toe injury, the 24-year-old defied nearly three decades of history to etch his name into the cricketing record books. Joseph had suffered a toe injury from a Mitchell Starc yorker on Saturday evening, forcing him to retire hurt. Despite visible signs of limping between overs during the run-chase, he showcased remarkable resilience. "I wasn't even coming to the ground this morning," he said afterwards. "I have to give a shoutout to the doctor. He's an amazing doctor to me – he told me to come to the ground for a reason, even if it's just to support the guys. But I came and he did something to my toe, and it worked." As Australia came into Sunday's play with two wickets down, Joseph went on to take seven of the eight wickets to fall. The young West Indies team, without key players like Jason Holder and Kyle Mayers, caused a monumental upset as Australia experienced their

first-ever defeat in a day-night match. Joseph's remarkable spell included bowling Cameron Green through the gate, yorking Travis Head for a king pair, having Mitchell Marsh edged to slip, casting Alex Carey, inducing a top-edge from Mitchell Starc on a pull shot, witnessing Joshua de Silva's brilliant catch to dismiss Pat Cummins, and concluding with Josh Hazlewood having his off-stump knocked back. The celebrations that followed were exuberant, reaching as far as the boundary rope. "This is just unbelievable," said Brian Lara, who was on commentary for the conclusion. "So proud of everyone on that team."

Joseph, who was a net-bowler in the Caribbean Premier League a few months ago and only made his first-class debut last February, stated that the win feels like they won the series. "I feel like we win the series, even though it's 1-1. It's really amazing for my teammates; I must give another shoutout to them, they're really encouraging. I'm glad I made them proud," Joseph said. "Tears could have got to my eyes just now, but I already cried when I got my five-wicket haul. It's just happiness. I'm just happy that we win the Test – when we last beat Australia, I can't even remember. But today is a big day for us, and I just want to say enjoy it, celebrate it and be happy."

Karachi hosts Pakistan's first Int'l certified marathon

KARACHI: Pakistan successfully hosted its first-ever World Athletics-certified Marathon in Karachi on Sunday where hundreds of national and international athletes participated. The highly anticipated event promised a unique experience without disrupting the vibrant pulse of the city and was done following the international standards with proper routes, and benchmarks comparable to renowned marathons in cities like London and Paris. Amir Sohail secured victory in the 42.2-kilometre full marathon, completing the distance in two hours, 36 minutes, and nine seconds. In the full marathon, Israr Khatak finished second and Aamer Abbas secured the third position. Male winners of full Marathon.

Meanwhile, in the women's full marathon, Mahnoor led the race. The 21.1-kilometre half marathon was clinched by Hafeezul Barkat, as she completed the distance in one hour, 17 minutes, and 12 seconds. In the half marathon, Akram finished second, and Zaher Shah secured the third position. Muhammad Junaid, a News anchor, also participated in the marathon and he ran a 21.21km distance in one hour, 47 minutes and 51 seconds time period at a 5:05 km/per hour pace. While talking to News reporters, CEO of Sports in Pakistan Shoaib Nizam said that over the past eight to 10 years, there has been a noticeable surge in the popularity of marathon running among Pakistanis. – DNA

Xavi confirms he will leave Barcelona in June

LONDON: FC Barcelona head coach Xavi Hernandez confirmed that he will leave the club after a thumping 5-3 loss against Villarreal at the Estadi Olimpic Lluis Companys. Xavi was under hot waters ever since the Blaugrana suffered a humiliating 4-1 loss against arch-rivals Real Madrid in the Spanish Super Cup. The team was knocked out of Copa del Rey (CDR) after losing to Athletic Bilbao 4-2 and the loss against the Yellow Submarines turned out to be the final straw for the former midfielder. "From June 30, I will not continue as Barca coach. As a Barca fan, I believe the club needs a change of dynamic," Xavi said in a post-match press conference. "I've been a man of the club. I've prioritised it above even myself. I've given everything I have." "And I will continue to do so to make the fans feel proud." He added: "For the good of the players, I believe that they will free themselves. We play with a lot of tension. "For the good of the board of directors, it is best that I leave. I will give my best. I think all of that will help the dynamic change. This is the message I would like to give. I think I am doing the right thing." Xavi stated that the job is very demanding and there is always pressure from the media, which makes it difficult for the manager to focus at times. "In Barcelona, you always feel like you're not valued, you're mistreated – that's how the club works," he said. "From a mental-health level, it's tough too. I am a positive guy, but the battery levels keep running out – and at some point, you realise there's no point in staying." He then confirmed that even if Barcelona won the Champions League, his decision would not change. I wouldn't change my decision even if I won the Champions League. – Agencies

Pakistan beat Nigeria 11-5 in Hockey5s WC

ISLAMABAD : Pakistan launched their campaign in the FIH Hockey5s World Cup Oman 2024 on a winning note, thrashing Nigeria 11-5 in their first match in Muscat on Sunday. Pakistan's captain Rana Abdul Waheed Ashraf scored five goals, including a hat-trick, while Abdul Hanan Shahid chipped in with four goals. He also scored a hat-trick. Arshad Liaquat and Zakaria Hayat scored one goal apiece, according to information made available here by Pakistan Hockey Federation. Pakistan will now next take on Netherlands in their second fixture later this day. The tournament is the first-ever Hockey5s World Championship, organized by International Hockey Federation and played with a different format of five players on each side.

Hartley stars as England stun India in opening Test

HYDERABAD: Debutant spinner Tom Hartley took seven wickets as England pulled off a dramatic 28-run upset win over India marked by a stellar batting performance by Ollie Pope in the opening Test on Sunday. "Since I've taken the captaincy on... it's 100 percent our greatest victory," England skipper Ben Stokes said. Chasing 231 for victory, India were bowled out for 202 in the final over of an extended third session of play on the fourth day in Hyderabad, as Hartley got Mohammed Siraj stumped with his left-arm spin to trigger celebrations from the England camp. England 246 all out in opening Test against India Pope stood out with his 196 to bring England bouncing back from being 190 behind at the start of their second innings to lead the five-match series 1-0. Hartley, who got his five-wicket haul after he bowled wicketkeeper-batsman K.S. Bharat, kept coming back to return figures of 7-62 and a match tally of nine wickets. "It's unbelievable," Hartley said after the match, adding that the win was "not going to sink in" for some time. "I'm over the moon," he added. India came into the high-profile encounter as favourites on home soil, with an unbeaten Test series record since 2012 when Alastair Cook's England beat them 2-1. Indian skipper Rohit Sharma said it was

"hard to pinpoint where it went wrong", and congratulated England for "exceptional" batting. "You've got to take your hat off, and say 'well played' to Pope," he said. India started well in their chase, before Hartley struck twice in one over to send back Yashvir Jaiswal (15) and Shubman Gill (0) in the space of three deliveries. Rohit looked good in his knock of 39, but got rapped on the pads by Hartley's darting ball into the right-hander and walked back after his failed review on the lbw. The left-handed Axar Patel (17) was promoted up the order and began attacking the bowling but was dismissed after the tea break and India soon slipped to 119-7. Premier spinner Jack Leach took the field with an injured knee, after he banded it on day one and two, and bowled 10 overs for the wicket of Shreyas Iyer, for 13. Bharat and Ravichandran Ashwin attempted to pull things back in their partnership of 57 but Hartley got them out to end India's hopes. Rohit's team posted 436 in their first innings in response to 246 by England and had the tourists in trouble at 163-5 on day three, when Pope played an innings for the ages and struck his fifth Test ton. Pope, who blunted the spinners with sweeps and reverse sweeps, resumed the day on 148. – Agencies

Stephanie lauds...

FROM PAGE 01 Rotary Pakistan, especially regarding sanitation, water treatment plants, and mobile libraries. Rotary Pakistan leaders also emphasized the importance of youth in Pakistan and how Rotary Pakistan is working to generating leadership and nation-building among youth in Pakistan. The distinguished dignitaries included Rotary International President Elect 2024-25 Ms. Stephanie Urchick and her Aide Mr. Thomas Gump. They were accompanied by senior Rotary Pakistan leaders, Mr. Faiz Kidwai (Rotary International Director), Mr. Masur Scheich (District Governor of Rotary District 3272) and Mr. Imran Ghaznavi (ARPIC). Faiz Kidwai spoke about the humanitarian aims of Rotary International, and how the groundbreaking Rotary Pakistan Smart Villages project is engaged at the grassroots level in Pakistan to transform the poorest of communities, bring development to small towns and villages, and empower their residents. The Rotary Pakistan Smart Villages project is not only providing essentials such as homes and shelters, but has long-term and far-reaching goals, such as infrastructure, education and health. Water treatment plants, kitchen gardens, and solar-generated electricity has already been brought to these villages. Trainings to provide vocational and financial management skills are also provided at the Smart Villages in order to foster entrepreneurship and move towards de-urbanization in Pakistan. 20 of these Rotary Pakistan Smart Villages are to be completed by June 2024, after which this project will be expanded all over Pakistan based on the needs of the most deserving communities.

PTI unveils manifesto...

FROM PAGE 01 less than two weeks. The party has been facing multiple legal and political challenges after its "bat" symbol was revoked, owing to irregularities in intra-party polls, leaving it unable to contest in the upcoming general elections with a unified symbol – as its candidates are contesting the polls independently with distinct electoral symbols. Furthermore, the PTI has been stuck in somewhat of a political quagmire owing to its senior leadership including founder Imran Khan and former vice chairman Shah Mahmood Qureshi behind bars – a situation further exacerbated by an exodus of senior leaders who parted ways with the party following May 9 riots and those who are in hiding.

ECP introduces...

FROM PAGE 01 Using the WhatsApp number 0327 5050610, individuals, particularly those who are speech and hearing impaired, can submit their complaints via video. The ECP has established the Election Monitoring and Complaint Centre (EMCC) to facilitate and address the voters' grievances pertaining to the upcoming general elections. According to official sources, apart from WhatsApp, the complaints can be submitted through email at complaints@ecp.gov.pk, or the dedicated helpline 111-327-000.

Iran launches probe into...

FROM PAGE 01 Government of Pakistan and the families of the victims, the Iranian spokesman underlined that Tehran and Islamabad will not allow their enemies to harm the fraternal relations between the two countries. Earlier, the deputy security and law enforcement officer of Sistan and Baluchestan Province informed that police team was immediately arrived at the scene of the attack. Ali Reza Marhamati said that those who survived the attack told the police that three armed assailants shot at these foreigners, killing nine people and injuring three of them before fleeing the scene. He expressed sympathy with the victims' families and pledged a thorough investigation to ascertain the reason and culprits behind the deadly attack.

RISJA honours special awards to senior journalists

President RISJA said that the pioneer of RISJA in the region Mohi Shah has always tried to acknowledge services of seniors and has encouraged new comers in learning the art of journalism

AFZAL JAVED

ISLAMABAD: Rawalpindi-Islamabad Sports Journalists Association (RISJA-R) has kept its tradition alive by honouring senior journalists who have devoted decades of services to the profession. Two of the leading sports journalists Shaharyar Khan and Gabriel de Souza were honoured on the completion of thirty years in sports journalism. Paying tributes to the two, Abdul Mohi Shah stressed on the youngsters to work hard in order to make a name for themselves in this Nobel profession like the two have done during their illustrious career. Faheem Anwar Khan also praised the two for dedication and sincerity they have shown for the profession. President RISJA Afzal Javed said that the pioneer of RISJA in the region Mohi Shah has always tried to acknowledge services of seniors and has encouraged new comers in learning the art of journalism. "I appreciate Mohi Shah and Faheem Anwar for guiding

the sports fraternity in the region in getting the required sports journalism knowledge. They also stay at the forefront in acknowledging the services of seniors like the way they have done today." Afzal Javed announced holding a workshop for young sports jour-

nalists where they will be given lectures on sports coverage and on drafting stories. Shaharyar Khan thanked the house on acknowledgement of services he and Gabriel rendered in the field. "We are thankful to RISJA members for showing support and

honoring us on completion of 30 years in service. Thirty years back when we started our career we were guided and supported by Faheem Anwar and Mohi Shah. We are ready to help youngster in any capacity that could help them to have a better knowledge

about active journalism." RISJA Secretary Nasir Naqvi earlier expressed deep sorrow on the sad demise of senior journalist Perwaiz Shaukhat and Khawar Hyat (Senior Executive Vice President Pakistan Federation) and offered Fatiah for departed souls.



Briefs

DFPA seeks industry status for food packaging sector

LAHORE: While seeking the industry status the Disposable Food Packaging Association (DFPA) has said the disposable food packaging is one of the major and very important sectors of the country and the government should grant industry status to it in order to reap maximum benefits and employment generation. Talking to media here at a function, the DFPA President Ahsan Shahid stressed that the disposable food packaging sector has been holding significant importance in all industries. Elaborating, he said that the widespread popularity of online businesses and e-commerce had increased the importance and value of this sector further. The disposable food packaging is the first choice for many product and service businesses due to their efficiency, durability and dependability, he remarked. Ahsan Shahid observed that the small and medium enterprise (SME) sector was the backbone of the economy and it contributed immensely to uplifting the industries and creating employment opportunities. The SME sector only requires exposure to export its products and once it is achieved, Pakistan's balance of trade will improve, he added.—DNA

N. Korea fired multiple cruise missiles off east coast

SEOUL: North Korea fired multiple cruise missiles off its east coast on Sunday, its second such launch in less than a week, South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) said. The missiles were launched at around 8 a.m. (2300 GMT on Saturday) and were being analyzed by South Korean and US intelligence authorities, the JCS said, without specifying how many missiles were fired. "While strengthening surveillance and vigilance, our military is cooperating closely with the United States and monitoring additional signs and activities from North Korea," it said in a statement. The latest launches came days after North Korea fired what it called a new strategic cruise missile called "Pul-wasa-3-31," suggesting it is nuclear capable. North Korea is stepping up confrontation with the United States and its allies, but officials in Washington and Seoul say they have spotted no signs Pyongyang intends to take imminent military action. Kim Jong Un's government is likely to continue or even increase provocative steps, officials and analysts say, after it made strides in ballistic missile development.—APP

Ukraine uncovers \$40 million defence embezzlement scheme

KYIV: Ukrainian defence officials and corporate leaders sought to steal about \$40 million through a fraudulent arms procurement scheme, the country's main intelligence and security agency said Saturday. The corruption allegations were confirmed by Ukraine's defence ministry, which has served implicated officials with notices of suspicion. They come as Republicans in the United States resist President Joe Biden's efforts to send more aid to Ukraine, and as former president Donald Trump, who has spoken out against US military support for Kyiv, appears to be on a glide path to the Republican nomination. Ukraine's SBU security service said that current and former senior officials of the defence ministry and heads of affiliated companies "attempted to steal almost UAH 1.5 billion (\$40 million) from the budget by purchasing 100,000 mortar rounds for the Armed Forces."—Agencies



ISLAMABAD: Rotary International President Elect Stephanie Urchick briefed a group of senior journalists about the Rotary projects in Pakistan. Seen in the picture are senior journalists and officials of the Rotary Club Pakistan. (Another picture on the front page)—DNA

6th Pakistan-UK business opportunities conference held

The main purpose of the trade conference was to increase bilateral cooperation in various sectors, especially IT services, food, poultry, garments, textiles and machinery

DNA

RAWALPINDI: The Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (RCCI) organized 6th Pak-UK Business Opportunities Conference (BOC) at Queens Land hotel Leeds, UK. Mayor of Yorkshire Ms. Tracy Brabin was the chief guest on the occasion. The main purpose of the trade conference was to increase bilateral cooperation in various sectors, especially IT services, food, poultry, garments, textiles and machinery. In his welcome address Saqib Rafiq highlighted the aim of organizing BOC in Leeds and added that Britain is a major trading partner of Pakistan. Saqib Rafiq also highlighted SIFC role and establishment of Business facilitation in 6 major cities in Punjab including Rawalpindi and



further added that such initiatives will build more confidence and attract more Foreign Direct Investments (FDIs) in Pakistan. A Memorandum of Understanding (MoUs) was also signed between RCCI and West & North Yorkshire Chamber of Commerce, WNYCC to increase collaboration and networking. RCCI President Saqib Rafiq, Vice President Faisal Shahzad, James Mason President/CEO West & North Yorkshire Chamber of Commerce, Zahid Jatoi Consul General of Pakistan, Amjad Bashir Chair of British Friends of Pakistan and Muhammad Akhtar Trade and Investment Attache at Consulate General of Pakistan, Manchester, distinguished RCCI members, Khurshid Barlas, Fahad Barlas and representatives from the companies based in UK were also present on the occasion.

Fidan kicks off 4-day Albania, Bulgaria, Romania tour

The initiative, which will have a rotating command structure, will likely start operating by May, according to the Bulgarian Defense Ministry

ANKARA: Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan is kicking off a four-day official tour of Albania, Bulgaria and Romania, Turkish diplomatic sources said Sunday. The Turkish top diplomat will meet with his counterparts to discuss "bilateral relations as well as current regional and global developments," the sources added. During his visit, Fidan will also meet with Turkish businesspeople and representatives of Turkish communities in these countries. The Balkans, in general, are a priority for Turkey not only from the political, economic and geographical perspectives but also due to its historical, cultural and human ties with the region. In recent years, the Balkans region has become an attractive market for Turkish investors with its qualified workforce, business-friendly investment environment and tax and financial incentives. Türkiye, Bulgaria and Romania are also working together to clear the Black Sea of floating mines. The trio set up a task group earlier this month to reduce shipping risks as the Russia-Ukraine conflict continues to endanger their territorial waters. The Russian navy mined Ukraine's Black Sea coastline in the early stages of the conflict nearly two years ago. Some of the mines have since drifted into the waters of the three countries, endangering shipping and complicating Ukraine's efforts to break through a Russian naval blockade. The initiative, which will have a rotating command structure, will likely start operating by May, according to the Bulgarian Defense Ministry.—DNA

French PM to visit farm amid Paris 'siege'

WEB DESK

PARIS: French Prime Minister Gabriel Attal will visit a cattle farm on Sunday, his office said, as agricultural unions prepare to mount a "siege" on the French capital to pressure the government into meeting their demands on pay, tax and regulations. The leaders of two of France's largest farming unions said Saturday that members from the regions around Paris "will begin an indefinite siege of the capital." "All the major roads leading to the capital will be occupied by farmers," they added. Farmers from the Lot-et-Garonne region, one of the hotspots of the protest movement in southern France, had already announced their intention to "go to Paris" on Monday. They intend to blockade the massive Rungis wholesale food market

south of the capital. French farmers are furious at what they say is a squeeze on purchase prices for produce by supermarket and industrial buyers, as well as complex environmental regulations. But the last straw for many was the phasing-out of a tax break on diesel for farm equipment. Attal's visit to a cattle farm in the western region of Indre-et-Loire comes two days after he announced a number of concessions following blockades by farmers of major routes into Paris and in the south of the country. "You wanted to send a message, and I've received it loud and clear," said Attal, who is facing his first major crisis as prime minister. "Ready to explode" Attal said the government would "put an end" to the rising cost of diesel fuel used for farming machinery, a consequence of tax breaks on the fuel having been phased out. There would

also be an emergency fund to help cattle farmers battle illnesses among their livestock. Early on Saturday, some roadblocks were being lifted and traffic began running normally on motorways. France's Macron to name new PM as he launches political reset But the latest announcement by the FNSEA farmers' union and the Jeunes Agriculteurs ("Young Farmers"), which together represent most farmers in France, puts the pressure back on Attal. His concessions have "not calmed the anger, we need to go further," said FNSEA President Arnaud Rousseau. "We have a government that doesn't care about its farmers," said Lucie Delbarre, general secretary of the Pas-de-Calais FDSEA branch. "As you can see, it's a pressure cooker ready to explode." "Set a course" The demonstrators have also attacked

China leads renewable energy index, Pakistan targets 30%

ISLAMABAD: The United Nations (UN) celebrated the first International Day of Clean Energy, and China was recognized for achieving the highest growth in renewable energy among all countries. Gwadar Pro quoting a recent report by the International Energy Agency (IEA), stated that the amount of renewable energy capacity added to energy systems around the world grew by 50% in 2023, reaching almost 510 gigawatts (GW), with solar PV accounting for three-quarters of additions worldwide. The largest growth took place in China, which commissioned as much solar PV in 2023 as the entire world did in 2022, while China's wind power additions rose by 66% year-on-year. The increases in renewable energy capacity in Europe, the United States, and Brazil also hit all-time highs. Another report by the Centre for Research on Energy and Clean Air (CRECA) indicates that clean energy was the largest driver of China's economic growth in 2023, accounting for all of the growth in investment and a larger share of economic growth than any other sector. Clean energy contributed a record 11.4tn (\$1.6tn) to China's economy in 2023, which is almost as large as total global investments in fossil fuel supply in 2023. China's contribution to global renewable energy capacity growth was over 50% in 2023, indicating that it played a vital role in the world's development of clean energy, the report says.—DNA

Yunus vows to help poor despite legal woes

DHAKA: Bangladeshi Nobel laureate Muhammad Yunus vowed Sunday to overcome scores of court cases that his supporters say are politically motivated to achieve his environmental and economic policies. "Our dream is to create a new world," 83-year-old Yunus told reporters outside court, after he was formally granted bail in his appeal against a six-month prison sentence in a case widely criticised by human rights groups. Yunus is credited with lifting millions out of poverty with his pioneering microfinance bank but has incurred the wrath of Bangladesh's long-time Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, who has accused him of "sucking blood" from the poor. Hasina, who was sworn in for a fifth term this month after a landslide victory in an election boycotted by the opposition, has made several scathing verbal attacks against the internationally respected 2006 Nobel Peace Prize winner. His conviction on January 1 related to labour law violations, but lawyers said Yunus faces at least 170 other cases, including major corruption charges that could see him jailed for years if found guilty. He denies all wrongdoing.

Yunus, in an emotionally charged speech, said he had dedicated his life to supporting those most in need and was "committed" to continuing his work.—APP

Bahrain hosts global assembly for digital growth

RIYADH: Global cooperation will be in focus as Bahrain hosts top officials from the member states of the Digital Cooperation Organization, addressing challenges in the sector for sustainable growth. The 3rd General Assembly of the global multilateral body will serve as a platform to discuss DCO initiatives, focusing on promoting digital prosperity. The forum, scheduled for Jan. 31, will be chaired by Bahrain's Minister of Transportation and Telecommunications Mohammed bin Thamer Al-Kaabi, who is also the organization's chairperson, as detailed in a joint statement by the ministry and DCO. The gathering will include ministers and officials from the 15 DCO member states, with Deemah Al-Yahya, the body's secretary-general, and high-level delegations from partners and observers.—Agencies

UN chief urges US, UK to maintain Gaza funding

'I strongly appeal to the governments that have suspended their contributions to, at least, guarantee the continuity of UNRWA's operations,' says Guterres

NEWS DESK

ANKARA: UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres urged the US, UK, and several other countries on Sunday not to suspend funding for the UN Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA), saying the desperate needs of the populations it serves must be met. "While I understand their concerns - I was myself horrified by these accusations - I strongly appeal to the governments that have suspended their contributions to, at least, guarantee the continuity of UNRWA's operations," Guterres said in a statement released by his office. "Meanwhile, 2 million civilians in Gaza depend on critical aid from UNRWA for daily survival but UNRWA's current funding will not allow it to meet all requirements to support them in February," he said. "The abhorrent alleged acts of these staff

members must have consequences. But the tens of thousands of men and women who work for UNRWA, many in some of the most dangerous situations for humanitarian workers, should not be penalized," he said. UNRWA said it terminated contracts with several employees for alleged involvement in the Oct. 7 attack on Israelis. The US, UK, Italy, Australia, Canada, Finland, and the Netherlands decided to suspend funding to UNRWA following claims by Israel on Friday. Norway welcomed investigations of some staffers but said it would continue to support Palestinians via UNRWA. Ireland also announced it would not suspend funding to the UN agency. The organization "is taking swift action following the extremely serious allegations" against several UNRWA staff members, Guterres said. "An investigation by the UN's Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) was immediately activated," he stressed. "Of the 12



people implicated, nine were immediately identified and terminated by the Commissioner-General of UNRWA, Philippe Lazzarini; one is confirmed dead, and the identity of the two others is being clarified," he said. Any UN employee involved in acts of terror will be held accountable, including through criminal prosecution, the statement said. "The Secretariat is ready to cooperate with a competent authority able to prosecute the individuals in line with the Secretariat's normal

procedures for such cooperation," he underlined. Earlier on Jan. 7, the UN agency announced "a full, independent review of the organization." Despite a provisional ruling Friday by the ICJ that ordered Tel Aviv to prevent acts of genocide in Gaza, Israel continued its onslaught against the coastal enclave where at least 26,422 Palestinians have been killed, mostly women and children, and 65,087 injured since Oct. 7, according to Palestinian health authorities. 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 was damaged or destroyed, according to the UN. Earlier on, United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres vowed on Sunday to hold to account "any UN employee involved in acts of terror" after allegations that some refugee agency staffers were involved in the Oct.

7 Hamas attacks on Israel. "Any UN employee involved in acts of terror will be held accountable, including through criminal prosecution," the UN chief said in a statement. "The Secretariat is ready to cooperate with a competent authority able to prosecute the individuals in line with the Secretariat's normal procedures for such cooperation." At the same time, he said, "The tens of thousands of men and women who work for UNRWA, many in some of the most dangerous situations for humanitarian workers, should not be penalized. The dire needs of the desperate populations they serve must be met." In his first direct comments on the issue, the UN chief gave details about the UNRWA staffers implicated in the "abhorrent alleged acts." Of the 12 implicated, he said, nine had been terminated, one was confirmed dead and the identities of the other two were being clarified.

Briefs

KSA, Egypt call for Gaza ceasefire

FOREIGN DESK

RIYADH: Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan and his Egyptian counterpart Sameh Shoukry underscored on Sunday the urgent priority of halting the conflict in Gaza and facilitating the delivery of humanitarian aid. Prince Faisal arrived in Cairo early on Sunday for the sixth meeting of the Political Consultation Committee between Saudi Arabia and Egypt. During the session, Prince Faisal expressed Saudi Arabia's eagerness for collaborative coordination with Egypt on regional issues. Shoukry reiterated Egypt's call for an immediate and comprehensive ceasefire in Gaza, emphasizing the necessity for the United Nations to facilitate the entry of essential equipment to aid residents of the enclave. The Egyptian foreign minister criticized the suspension of funding for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees, and said it was a collective punishment for the Palestinians. He cautioned that allowing Israel to violate international laws could escalate the conflict, emphasizing that the ongoing developments in the Red Sea pose a threat to security with far-reaching consequences for the region.

18 more children die of pneumonia

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The deadly pneumonia outbreak has claimed the lives of 18 more children in the Punjab province. According to details, in the past 24 hours alone, a total of 869 pneumonia cases were reported across Punjab, with Lahore recording 177 new cases. Since the onset of the disease, Punjab has documented 14,530 pneumonia cases, resulting in 258 deaths. In Lahore, approximately 2,490 pneumonia cases have been reported, leading to 53 deaths. The recent surge in pneumonia-related deaths highlights a troubling trend, with over 60 children losing their lives in the past four days: 14 on Jan 24, 12 on Jan 25, 13 on Jan 26, and seven on Jan 27. Health experts attribute the rise in pneumonia cases in Punjab to the prevailing winter season and the associated air pollution, particularly smog. Smog, a consequence of air pollution, has been identified as a significant factor contributing to the spike in pneumonia cases. Pneumonia, characterised by an infection in the lungs, is predominantly caused by viral infections, and its symptoms can manifest after experiencing cold or flu. The severity of pneumonia can vary, with young children, especially those under five years old, being more susceptible to the disease.

Nawaz will form next govt: Ahsan

DNA

ZAFARWAL: Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) senior leader Ahsan Iqbal said on Sunday that PML-N supreme Nawaz Sharif will form the next government. Addressing the party workers in Zafarwal, the former planning minister said, "With your [masses] vote, good representatives will be elected, which will pave the way for the country's uplift." Iqbal said, "Zafarwal remained behind Narawal. We brought revolution in Narawal through education, which changed the people's fate." "Even the opponents agree that the Nawaz Sharif-led PML-N will form the next government," he said. He asserted: "If you [masses] vote for the independent candidates, this will mean that you are voting for Asif Ali Zardari. Asif Zardari is purchasing the independent candidates." Recalling the events that transpired on May 9, Iqbal said: "One party that had embraced anarchy attacked the Jinnah House and military installations."

REPUBLIC DAY OF INDIA CELEBRATED



ISLAMABAD: Charge d'Affaires of India Geetika Srivastava along with Ambassadors and High Commissioners of the SAARC countries cut the cake to celebrate the Republic Day of India. A large number of guests hailing from various walks of life attended the reception. – DNA

Pakistan wants best ties with all Islamic countries

Hafiz Muhammad Tahir Mahmood Ashrafi said that Pakistan wants the best relations with all Islamic countries, including Iran, adding that with patience and tolerance of Pakistan's political and military leadership, Pakistan stayed away from a terrible situation in region

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Raising voice against Israeli atrocities is the responsibility of every human being, said Hafiz Muhammad Tahir Mahmood Ashrafi, Chairman Pakistan Ulema Council, Special Representative to Prime Minister on Inter-Religious Harmony and Middle East. Taking International Media here on Sunday, Hafiz Muhammad Tahir Mahmood Ashrafi said that it is a pity that the whole world could not stop the Israeli atrocities on the oppressed Palestinians. Hafiz Muhammad Tahir Mahmood Ashrafi said that Pakistan wants the best relations with all Islamic countries, including Iran, adding that with the patience and tolerance of Pakistan's political and military leadership, Pakistan stayed away from a terrible situation in the region. Hafiz Muhammad Tahir Mahmood Ashrafi said that terrorists are enemies of both Pakistan and Iran, and following the resumption of Pakistan-Iran relations, killing of the Pakistani workers invites both the countries to get unite against terrorism. Commenting on elections, Hafiz Muhammad Tahir Mahmood Ashrafi said that there is no ban on women's vote, adding that Pakistan Ulema Council will hold an important press conference regarding the elections on Tuesday in Islamabad. Chairman of Pakistan Ulema Council and



Special Representative of Prime Minister of Pakistan Hafiz Muhammad Tahir Mahmood Ashrafi also stated that Pakistan wants good relations with all Islamic countries including Iran, Iran is also Pakistan's neighbor and Islamic brother country, what happened two weeks ago, it was regrettable but now there will be more improvement in the restoration of relations between Pakistan and Iran. It is a pity that the way Pakistanis were slaughtered yesterday is also a matter of

concern for Pakistan and Iran and stresses the need to get unite to eliminate terrorism. In response to a question, Hafiz Muhammad Tahir Mahmood Ashrafi said that the people of Pakistan are Muslims and Pakistanis and their religious schools of thought are their identity after Pakistan. Hafiz Muhammad Tahir Mahmood Ashrafi also said that prevailing issues in Pakistan demands solidarity from all the sections of the country and with unity and tolerance, Pakistan can overcome all the challenges and difficulties. In response to another question, Hafiz Muhammad Tahir Mahmood Ashrafi said that Pakistan's military and political leadership and security institutions have brought the region out of a terrible situation and crisis. Pakistan does not want any confrontation with Iran, and wants to resolve all the misunderstandings through mutual cooperation and we hope that what happened last week will not happen again, said Hafiz Muhammad Tahir Mahmood Ashrafi. Talking about the elections in Pakistan, Hafiz Muhammad Tahir Mahmood Ashrafi said that the elections in Pakistan will be peaceful and the orders of Shariat Islamia regarding women's vote in the elections are clear. In this regard, on Tuesday, the Ulemas and Mashaykhs of all the religious schools of thought of Pakistan will issue a joint Fatwa and code of conduct for the public at the call of the Pakistan Ulema Council, said Hafiz Muhammad Tahir Mahmood Ashrafi. Hafiz Muhammad Tahir Mahmood Ashrafi also pointed out that Pakistan and Kingdom of Saudi Arabia have unanimous position on Palestine issue and there is no possibility of Pakistan's relations with Israel, till establishment of an Independent Palestinian state with Al-Quds as its capital. Hafiz Muhammad Tahir Mahmood Ashrafi also said that Pakistan is an important member of Organisation of Islamic Cooperation and doesn't want to see instability in OIC.

Is Bilawal scared of contesting from Karachi: Hafiz Naeem

DNA

KARACHI: Ameer of Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) Karachi, Hafiz Naeem ur Rehman, took a swipe at Pakistan Peoples' Party (PPP) Chairman Bilawal Bhutto, questioning why Bilawal would be hesitant to contest elections from Liyari if his party truly held a mandate in Karachi. Rehman criticized Bilawal and the PPP, alleging that the PPP secured its position in the Karachi mayorship through illegitimate practices. He further asserted that no party, including the PPP, seemed prepared to address the crises plaguing Karachi. Highlighting JI pre-polls victory ahead of the February 8 elections, Rehman proudly claimed that JI is the largest political party in Karachi, emphasizing their contribution of providing free IT education to 25,000 young individuals. He went on to state that JI aims to uplift the youth, brighten their future, and empower women financially. He promised to provide health cards to the residents of Karachi. Rehman asserted that under JI's leadership, industry growth and development in Karachi would be inevitable if party secures victory in Feb 8 polls.

North Korea fires cruise missiles off east coast

SEOUL: North Korea has fired several cruise missiles in waters off its east coast, South Korea's military says. In recent months the nuclear-armed communist state has tested missiles repeatedly, raising regional tension. Sunday's launch took place near the port of Sinpo. Neither the number nor type of missiles is clear yet. On Wednesday North Korea test fired a new strategic cruise missile called Pulhwasal-331, South Korea's Yonhap news agency says. Reporting the new launch, which took place at 08:00 (23:00 GMT Saturday), South Korea's JCS said "our military has been closely coordinating with the United States to monitor additional signs of North Korea's provocations". North Korean leader Kim Jong Un has been increasingly aggressive in his policy direction and rhetoric in recent months, ending several agreements aimed at peace-keeping, ramping up military action. – Agencies

Dozens arrested as PTI holds rallies in various cities

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: With the political temperature rising in the country as parties ramp up their electioneering efforts, workers of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Sunday clashed with the police in Karachi's Teen Talwar area. The development comes as PTI workers, in response to the party founder Imran Khan's call, are holding rallies across the country with electioneering activities being held in various cities including Lahore, Peshawar, Faisalabad, Quetta, and Rawalpindi. Speaking to media on the incident, police officials said that no permission was sought by the party to hold its rally as required by the Election Commission of Pakistan's (ECP) code of conduct. The clashes occurred as the police resorted to baton charges, aerial firing, and the use of tear gas to disperse the party workers, including women, who had gathered at the busy interchange. As many as 20 people have been taken into custody by the authorities, with several media personnel, including a Geo News cameraman and an SHO of the police, suffering injuries due to the clashes between party work-

ers and the police. As per the initial details, the PTI rally's route was changed last night to Sea View via Teen Talwar, from the previous Shakra-e-Quaideen to Mazar-e-Quaid. Commenting on the incident, PTI's arch-rival PML-N termed the former as a "terrorist" entity with the party's Senior Vice President Maryam Nawaz Sharif calling for the authorities to deal with the PTI workers with "iron hands". Meanwhile, the PTI lamented that it is being subjected to a crackdown with the authorities not even sparing women and children who were part of the said rally. Separately, as many as 17 PTI workers were also arrested in Peshawar for interfering with government affairs. Earlier, Mian Azhar, former Punjab governor and father of PTI leader Hammad Azhar, was arrested and taken into custody by police for attempting to take out an election rally in Lahore. His arrest came after the caretaker provincial government imposed Section 144 of the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC) across the province in the wake of security risks ahead of the polls. The move entails a complete ban on the exhibition of arms and aerial firing in the province. The measure which, for now, is set to remain in place till February 12, is aimed at ensuring adherence to the ECP's code of conduct, the notification from the provincial home department read.

NATO will not come to rescue if US attacked, says Trump

NEWS DESK

WASHINGTON: Republican presidential candidate former President Donald Trump has said that he does not believe NATO would come to the United States' rescue if it came under attack, once again voicing his disdain for the military bloc. "We're paying for NATO, and we don't get so much out of it," Trump said on Saturday, speaking to a crowd of supporters at a presidential campaign event in Las Vegas, Nevada. "And you know - I hate to tell you this about NATO - if we ever needed their help, let's say we were attacked, I don't believe they'd be there. I know the people," he added. Trump once again cast doubt on Article 5 of the NATO Charter, which says an armed attack against one member state must be considered an attack against all of them. The recent statement follows a long history of complaints leveled by Trump at the US-led bloc during and after his presidency. In 2017, he aroused controversy in Brussels by saying that NATO is "obsolete." During his time in office, he repeatedly criticized Germany and other US allies for not spending enough on their military.



Similarly, Trump criticized US President Joe Biden for providing military aid to Ukraine during its conflict with Russia. "We don't have ammunition for ourselves, we give away a lot," he said last year. Trump also promised, if re-elected, he would end the conflict between Moscow and Kiev within 24 hours and restore peace in the region. However, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky dismissed Trump's claim as unrealistic. Asked by NBC News in November if he believed Trump would continue to support Ukraine, Zelensky said: "I really don't know." He believes that members of the NATO military alliance should spend two percent of their gross domestic income on their military budget and the United States is not committed to providing the lion's share of the alliance military spending. In some of his speeches during his presence at the White House, he repeatedly threatened to withdraw US from NATO alliance.

General Practice

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