

Islamabad POST

Friday, March 01, 2024

Pakistan's Credible Daily Newspaper

Price Rs. 30

Vladimir Putin warns West of risk of nuclear war

Detailed News On Page-08

Philippines won't cede maritime territory

Detailed News On Page-07

Klopp: Young players must be protected

Detailed News On Page-06



In ruckus-hit session

Newly-elected MNAs sworn in

Speaking on the point of order, PTI's Barrister Gohar claimed that his party had won 186 NA seats in the February 8 polls

SAIFULLAH ANSAR / DNA

ISLAMABAD: The 16th National Assembly came into effect on Thursday with the oath-taking of the lawmakers elected on February 8 amid allegations of "rigging" with the high-light being the return of former premier Nawaz Sharif to the Parliament after more than six years. Outgoing Speaker Raja Pervaiz Ashraf administered the oath to the 302 members present in the House. PML-N President Shehbaz Sharif, ex-president Asif Zardari, PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari and JUI-F chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman were among the top politicians who took the oath amid protests by the members affiliated with Imran Khan's party.

The session started with a ruckus as soon as the national anthem ended with the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI)-backed lawmakers, who have joined the Sunni Ittehad Council (SIC), surrounding the speaker's dias. The party had already announced it would protest in today's session against the alleged rigging. It was after an appeal by the speaker that the lawmakers settled down and the oath was taken by all the members. However, as soon as the oath was administered, the SIC lawmakers asked the speaker that they be allowed to speak on a point of order.

But their request was turned down, as the speaker informed them that they could raise the point of order after they had signed the role of member register. Amid the signing, the SIC lawmakers started chanting "qaidi number 804" the number given to PTI founder Imran Khan in the Adiala jail where he remains incarcerated since August 2023. In response, the PML-N lawmakers started shouting "ghari chor" (watch thief) in the House. After all the 302 members had signed the role of member register, Speaker Raja Pervaiz Ashraf gave the floor to the SIC to express their views. Speaking on the point of order, PTI's Barrister Gohar claimed that his party had won 186 NA seats in the February 8 polls.

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JUI-F to sit on opp benches, announces Fazl PM is 'selected' even before elections, says JI chief

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Raising serious reservations over the 2024 election results, Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam-Fazl (JUI-F) Emir Maulana Fazlur Rehman has announced that his party would not participate in forthcoming elections for the top political slots — president, prime minister, and the National Assembly (NA) speaker. The cleric, speaking to journalists in Islamabad on Thursday, said his politico-religious party would sit in the opposition and its lawmakers would abstain their votes during the upcoming electoral events in the assemblies concerned. In response to a question regarding JUI-F's strategy for a protest movement, he said: "Wait for it. We will represent the nation soon." "I haven't met Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz quaid Nawaz Sharif so far. A delegation arrived yesterday which comprises representatives of the PML-N, the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP), the Balochistan Awami Party (BAP), and the Istehkam-e-Pakistan Party (IPP)." "We had a pleasant conversation as we were

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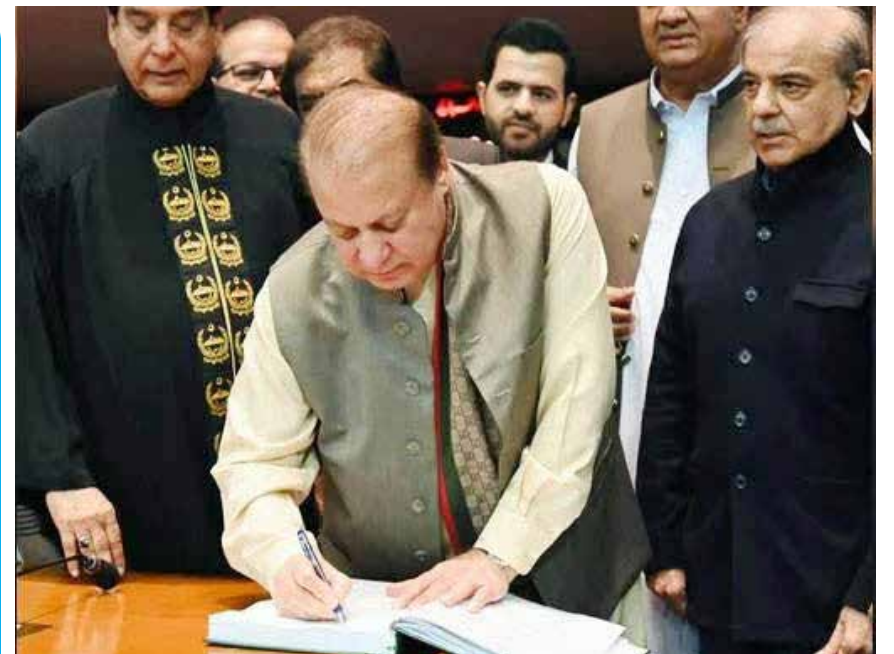
Inflation may ease in March

Ease is expected due to a decrease in the prices of perishable items

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: The Ministry of Finance has anticipated that inflation will experience a gradual decline from this month primarily due to a decrease in the prices of perishable items. Inflation is projected to hover around 24.5-25.5 per cent in February, with expectations of a further easing to 23.5-24.5pc in March, the ministry said in its Monthly Economic Update and Outlook for February. "Despite the upward adjustment in transportation expenses and gas prices, the inflation outlook for the upcoming month may have a downward trend, primarily due to a decrease in the prices of perishable items on the back of better crops and ease in supplies," it said. The report further noted that the high base effect would contribute to keeping the inflationary pressure on the lower side. It added that the Food and Agriculture Organisation's food price index,

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ISLAMABAD: Former Prime Minister of Pakistan, Mian Muhammad Nawaz Sharif is signing the role of member register, while Raja Pervaiz Ashraf and Shehbaz Sharif look on. — DNA

Criticises ECP

PTI to move SC against election rigging

Party will not become part of cabinet until demands are met

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf leader Shoaib Shaheen has said he will move the Supreme Court (SC) with solid evidences of rigging in the general election 2024. Talking outside the Adiala Jail, he said in a meeting with the PTI founder post-election situation was discussed and it was a consensus that the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) in connivance with the Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PML-N) managed to rig the elections. He said Fafan had also demanded the election commissioner to resign for wide-ranging rigging in the elections. The PTI leader said contestants were cheated through the Form 47 and the international rating agency, Moody's also said rigging would not bring stability in Pakistan.

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MQM-P did not ask for any cabinet positions

Party's focus is on delivering benefits of democracy

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Muttahida Qaumi Movement-Pakistan (MQM-P) leader Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui clarified on Thursday that decisions regarding cabinet positions had been finalised, but the party had not sought any specific roles. Addressing the media ahead of the National Assembly session,

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Briefs

Nawaz Sharif terms Imran letter anti-state

He said no political party could do so

ADIL SHAHEEN

ISLAMABAD: Commenting on a letter written by the PTI to the International Monetary Fund (IMF), three-time former prime minister Nawaz Sharif on Thursday said no political party could do so and it was up to the people to deduce the result. He was responding to the questions asked by reporters after his arrival at the Parliament House to attend the inaugural session of newly-elected National Assembly. "They can write such letters. It is their tradition," Nawaz said — a reference to the PTI's practices and actions in the past, including the sit-in staged in 2014 and the May 9 violence.

People's reps to run country's affairs: Solangi

Says new PM will take oath on March 4

MAHNOOR ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Minister for Information, Broadcasting and Parliamentary Affairs Murtaza Solangi on Thursday said the elected representatives of the people would eventually run the affairs of country after general elections. Speaking in a talk-show of the Pakistan Television, he said the caretaker government had fulfilled its constitutional responsibility of holding elections in free, fair and peaceful manner by fully facilitating the Election Commission of Pakistan. To a query, he said the newly elected Prime Minister would take oath on March 4 while Speaker and Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly would be elected on Friday.

Army chief lauds drills

PATS Exercise concludes at Kharian Garrison

General Syed Asim Munir, NI (M), Chief of Army Staff (COAS) graced the occasion as the Chief Guest

STAFF REPORT

KHARIAN: The 60 hours rigorous "Patrolling Exercise" aimed at enhancing combat skills through sharing of innovative ideas and experiences by the participants of the forum. Seven teams from Pakistan Army and fifteen teams from friendly countries including Bahrain, Jordan, Kazakh-



stan, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Maldives, Morocco, Qatar, United States of America, Uzbekistan, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Turki-ye participated in the exercise. Azerbaijan, China, Germany, Indonesia, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and Myanmar witnessed the exercise as observers. The exercise was conducted from 25-27 Feb 2024 in

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Ayaz, Dogar to contest for slot of NA Speaker

For Deputy Speaker slot, Ghulam Mustafa from PPP and Junaid Akbar from SIC submitted their paper



FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: The Secretariat of the National Assembly on Thursday accepted the nomination papers from candidates contesting for the slots of National Assembly Speaker and Deputy Speaker. Sardar Ayaz Sadiq from the Pakistan Muslim League-N submitted his nomination papers for the Speaker of the National Assembly slot, while the Sunni Ittehad Council (SIC) nominated Amir Dogar for the same position. For the Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly slot, Ghulam Mustafa Shah from the Pakistan Peoples' Party (PPP) and Junaid Akbar Khan from the Sunni Ittehad Council (SIC) submitted

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'Cold-blooded massacre'

Over 104 killed in Israeli attack

More than 30,000 Palestinians have now been killed in Gaza since 7 October, the Gaza health ministry says

NEWS DESK

GAZA CITY: As the US-backed Israeli genocidal war on the Gaza Strip entered day 146 on Thursday, massive aerial and artillery strikes continued to pound neighborhoods, homes and shelter centers and massacre more civilians, mostly children and women. Palestinian Information Center (PIC) said that the Israeli occupation army continued to attack different areas of Gaza, killing and injuring hundreds of citizens. According to media sources, more than 100 were killed and 700 others were injured, many seriously, when Israeli tanks bombed and opened fire at thousands of civilians as they gathered on al-Rasheed road in the southwest of Gaza waiting for aid trucks. Last night, the director of the Kamal Adwan Hospital in northern Gaza announced the death of seven children due to dehydration and malnutrition. The Israeli army also massacred at least 25 civilians, mostly children and women, during attacks on homes in the refugee camps of Nuseirat and Bureij in central Gaza. Many others remain buried under crumbling concrete and twisted metal. The European Gaza Hospital in Khan Yunis received five martyrs following Israeli airstrikes, according to medical sources at the facility. Other casualties were reported in different areas of Gaza following

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Abbas discusses Israeli aggression with UN envoy

FOREIGN DESK

RAMALLAH: President Mahmoud Abbas welcomed today the United Nations Senior Humanitarian and Reconstruction Coordinator for Gaza, Sigrid Kaag, at the presidential headquarters in Ramallah. During the meeting, President Abbas briefed the guest on the latest developments regarding the ongoing Israeli aggression against the Palestinian people, especially in the Gaza Strip, as well as the efforts made to immediately halt the Israeli war of genocide. The President further stressed the importance of expediting the entry of essential humanitarian, relief, and medical aid into the Gaza Strip in order to enable shelters and hospitals to alleviate the suffering of Palestinians

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Pak-Russia virtual trade conference bolsters economic ties

President RCCI Saqib Rafiq lauded St. Petersburg Chamber for the cooperation and assistance for the virtual trade conference. He gave a short briefing on Pakistan and Russia trade relations, imports and exports, key sectors and future prospects of trade relations

DNA

RAWALPINDI : RCCI in collaboration with Saint Petersburg Chamber of Commerce & Industry (Russia) organized the "Pakistan-Russia Virtual Trade Conference" at Chamber House. In his welcome address President RCCI Saqib Rafiq lauded St. Petersburg Chamber for the cooperation and assistance for the virtual trade conference. He gave a short briefing on Pakistan and Russia trade relations, imports and exports, key sectors and future prospects of trade relations. Trade between Pakistan and Russia has been growing steadily, although it remains below its potential. Both countries have expressed the desire to enhance trade and economic cooperation, he added. The total bilateral trade amounted to \$920 million in 2022-23. Pakistan's exports to Rus-

sia totalled \$74 million, while imports reached \$846m. The trade between Pakistan and Russia primarily includes goods such as wheat, textiles, surgical instruments, rice, fruits, chickpeas and leather products from Pakistan, while Russia exports machinery, steel products, fertilizers, and energy resources to Pakistan, he added. Ms. Ekaterina Lebedeva, Vice President of the St. Petersburg Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Arbi Abubakarov, Deputy Chairman of the Committee for External Relations of St. Petersburg, Pavel Burlakov, Acting Trade Representative of the Russian Federation, Ms. Maria Qazi Joint Secretary MOFA, and RCCI office bearers and members attended the conference. The moderator and host, Ms. Ekaterina Lebedeva, Vice President of the St. Petersburg Chamber, in her remarks, appreciated RCCI role for

connectivity, networking and organizing this important conference. Joint Secretary, MOFA, Ms. Maria Qazi, shared key trade data on import and exports between Pakistan and Russia. Mr. Shahid Saleem, Former President and Chairman International Affairs Committee highlighted the scope of trade opportunities for JVs and investment in various sectors including IT, Gem Stone, Agriculture and Renewable energy. During Q/A session, participants shared key recommendations and highlighted the challenges mainly, financial settlements, banking channels, direct flights and barter trade etc. In the end SVP Hamza Sarosh in his closing remarks said that we look forward to witness the positive outcomes that will undoubtedly emerge from the "Pakistan-Russia Virtual Trade Conference."



ISLAMABAD : Higher Education Commission (HEC), Pakistan has entered into a significant partnership with the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) through an MoU signed on Wednesday at the HEC Secretariat. This collaboration falls under HEC's scholarship programme "Empower Future Female Afghan Leaders - EFFAL Pakistan track initiative."—DNA

HEC chairman inaugurates new Faculty at UAF

FAISALABAD : Chairman Higher Education Commission (HEC) Dr Mukhtar Ahmad Khan on Thursday inaugurated the new Faculty of Arts and Humanities at the University of Agriculture Faisalabad (UAF) in order to strengthen arts and literary works.

A UAF spokesman said here on Thursday that the newly established faculty comprised of the Department of Islamic Studies, Department of English and Linguistics, Waris Shah Chair, Faiz Chair, Pakistan Studies/History/Anthropology/Psychology and degrees of Fine Arts and Art and Design. The proposed building of the Faculty of Arts and Humanities would be completed within 10 months at a cost of Rs.469.64 million. It would include exhibition halls, multipurpose halls, classrooms, waiting rooms, offices, common rooms and others, he added. Moreover, Dr Mukhtar Ahmad also inaugurated the amphitheater in D-Ground UAF, meant to promote co-curricular activities and to sharpen the God-given qualities of the students. Chairman HEC also visited girls' hostels and handball stadium. Dr. Mukhtar Ahmad Khan said that the UAF had the honor of being the first agricultural university of the subcontinent and it was playing an active role in agricultural education and research and solving the problems of farming community. He said that the new faculty would strengthen education and research in the field of arts and humanities.—APP

DPO presides Crime Control meeting

FAISAL MUNIR / DNA

ATTOCK : The District Police Officer Sardar Ghis Gul Khan on Thursday while presiding over the Crime Control Committee meeting has reiterated all the field officers of district Police to accelerate the crackdown against the gangsters of heinous crimes include target killers, robbers, decoits, drugs pushing, car, motorbike lifters, specially murder cases under investigation and arresting the criminals of category A without further loss of time. Among the crime control meeting was also attended by all police circle officers, SHO's of police stations and investigation officers of the Police Department. On this occasion, a detailed briefing on crime ratio was also made to the DPO who reviewed the over all progress of

the Attock Police with particular reference to bring the proclaimed offenders of category-A, car lifters, killers, bandits and other street criminals to book. He directed to ensure protection of life and properties of the people being their first prime responsibility besides launching effective patrolling duties in their jurisdictions. He also advised all the office officers to eradicate the theft dacoities, theft cases minimizing the sense of insecurity among the people. Strict action is being taken against those involved in drug peddling, gambling, running prostitution dens, possessing illegal arms and violating traffic rules, he added. The District Police Officer further said that police will never allow any evil elements to disturb the peace and law and order and strict legal action will be taken against such elements. He directed all

the officers to ensure zero tolerance for protection of lives, properties and honors of the citizens being their priority to avoid any untoward incidence within the sensitive inter provincial bordering territory of the district. According to the vision of IG Punjab, the success of all the projects started in terms of modern policing and smart working is subject to courteous treatment and prompt response to the people. On the directions of IG Police Punjab and RPO Rawalpindi, efforts are being made to root out crime and no lenient view is being taken in this context. Therefore all police officers should future improve service delivery by ensuring uniform enforcement of the law. He has said that police are utilising all available resources for maintenance of law and order across the district and ensuring security of people, he added.

IG Punjab visits offices of DIG Operations, CTO

LAHORE : Inspector General Police Punjab Dr. Usman Anwar is actively monitoring the upgradation and infrastructure development work of all police offices, in continuation of which he visited the offices of DIG Operations and CTO Lahore. Dr. Usman Anwar inspected various departments such as the operations room, Khidmat Markaz and traffic licensing branch. DIG Operations Ali Nasir Rizvi briefed the IG Punjab about official matters, whereas CTO Lahore Amara Athar informed about the working of traffic police office. IG Punjab directed to upgrade the offices according to modern requirements. He said that the DIG Operations and CTO office will be equipped with modern facilities and resources and made into state of the art offices. The IG Punjab said that the provision of modern infrastructure and resources will speed up the process of service delivery to the citizens. He instructed to make the process of driving licensing more easier. He said that the citizens coming to obtain driving license should be provided with all possible facilities according to the merit. DIG Operations Lahore Ali Nasir Rizvi, SSP Operations Ali Raza and CTO Lahore Amara Athar and other officers were present on the spot.—APP

DC urges parents to ensure polio vaccination of children

ABBOTTABAD : Deputy Commissioner Abbottabad Khalid Iqbal on Thursday urged all parents to ensure the administration of polio drops to the children under 5-year old, as well as Vitamin A drops to the children over aged 6 months during the polio eradication campaign scheduled from March 3 to 7, 2024. He expressed these views while chairing a meeting of District Polio Eradication Committee to finalize arrangements for the campaign's formal inauguration. In the meeting, preparations, staff training, security provisions, and actions taken by the Health Department were reviewed. It was disclosed that over 235,697 children under the age of 5 across 54 union councils in the district would administered polio drops, while 212,145 children aged 6 months to 5 years would be provided with Vitamin A drops.—APP

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Suki Kinari HPP commenced

ISLAMABAD : In a groundbreaking achievement, the 884 MW Suki Kinari Hydropower Project (SKHPP) in Mansehra, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), has commenced reservoir filling. SKHPP is one of the major hydropower projects under China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). SKHPP, which is being constructed by China Gezhouba Group Company Ltd (CGGC Ltd) as sponsor, began filling its reservoir on February 28 at 10:00 AM local time, as per an official statement, according to Gwadar Pro. The project is being built at River Kunhar (a tributary of River Jhelum) at Mansehra by CGGC Ltd. SKHPP is an asphalt concrete core rock-fill dam with a crest elevation of 2,239.5 meters. The maximum height of the dam is 54.5 meters with a crest width of 10 meters, a length of 258 meters, and a total capacity of 1.9 million cubic meters. Upon completion, SKHPP will produce 3.2 billion kWh of electricity for Pakistan each year. "Pakistan-Russia Virtual Trade Conference" in collaboration with RCCI and St. Peters-

burg Chamber (Russia) RCCI in collaboration with Saint Petersburg Chamber of Commerce & Industry (Russia) organized the "Pakistan-Russia Virtual Trade Conference" at Chamber House. In his welcome address President RCCI Saqib Rafiq lauded St. Petersburg Chamber for the cooperation and assistance for the virtual trade conference. He gave a short briefing on Pakistan and Russia trade relations, imports and exports, key sectors and future prospects of trade relations. Trade between Pakistan and Russia has been growing steadily, although it remains below its potential. Both countries have expressed the desire to enhance trade and economic cooperation, he added. The total bilateral trade amounted to \$920 million in 2022-23. Pakistan's exports to Russia totalled \$74 million, while imports reached \$846m. The trade between Pakistan and Russia primarily includes goods such as wheat, textiles, surgical instruments, rice, fruits, chickpeas and leather products from Pakistan,

while Russia exports machinery, steel products, fertilizers, and energy resources to Pakistan, he added. Ms. Ekaterina Lebedeva, Vice President of the St. Petersburg Chamber, in her remarks, appreciated RCCI role for connectivity, networking and organizing this important conference. Joint Secretary, MOFA, Ms. Maria Qazi, shared key trade data on import and exports between Pakistan and Russia. Mr. Shahid Saleem, Former President and Chairman International Affairs Committee highlighted the scope of trade opportunities for JVs and investment in various sectors including IT, Gem Stone, Agriculture and Renewable energy.—DNA

PRCS chairman launches relief efforts

ADIL SHAHEEN

ISLAMABAD : In the wake of the recent heavy rainfall and consequential damages in Gwadar and other regions of Balochistan, Chairman Pakistan Red Crescent Society (PRCS), Sardar Shahid Ahmed Laghari announced comprehensive relief efforts aimed at addressing the immediate needs of the affected communities. Chairing an Emergency Response meeting attended by the Secretary General and the relevant departments, he gave

robust directives for urgent rescue and relief operations. He said the PRCS National headquarters has already activated its operations room to monitor the situation closely. Collaborating with program heads and the Balochistan provincial branch, PRCS has devised a detailed action plan focused on providing timely assistance to those impacted by the adverse weather conditions. Rapid assessment teams have been mobilized at both district and provincial levels to evaluate the extent of the damage and execute critical

rescue and relief efforts, he added. Chairman Laghari has instructed the mobilization of relief packages from warehouse stocks to meet the immediate needs of the affected individuals. The action plan prioritizes the provision of essential household non-food items, deployment of health teams, establishment of public health facilities, promotion of personal hygiene, and ensuring access to clean drinking water for those affected. He said maintaining open lines of communication, PRCS is in constant contact with the Provincial

Disaster Management Authority (PDMA) and district administration to coordinate efforts effectively and optimize resources for maximum impact. Chairman Laghari underscored the urgency of coordinated action, stating, "Our priority is to swiftly address the needs of the affected individuals in Gwadar and other affected districts of Balochistan. We are working tirelessly to ensure that relief reaches those who need it most, and our teams are fully committed to providing assistance in every possible way." The heavy rains have wreaked havoc in Gwadar, Kech district, and other parts of Balochistan, disrupting normal life and traffic on the Coastal Highway. Officials reported incessant rainfall for 12 hours, causing urban flooding and significant damage to infrastructure.

ISSI hosts seminar on "Pakistan's space policy"

ISLAMABAD : The Arms Control and Disarmament Centre (ACDC) at the Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI) hosted a seminar entitled "Pakistan's Space Policy: Tapping into the Space Potential" on February 29, 2024. Maj. Gen. (R) Amer Nadeem, former Chairman of Pakistan Space

as well as options available for Pakistan, were discussed. Maj. Gen. (R) Amer Nadeem, in his keynote address, highlighted the importance of international collaboration and emphasized its role in reducing costs and time in space missions. He advocated for strategic partnerships to leverage expertise and resources

He expressed optimism about Pakistan's space program, citing the government's steadfast commitment and determination as key drivers of progress. He highlighted the need to emphasize the regulatory sector and the public-private partnerships. He suggested that joining regional platforms will also help Pakistan devel-



& Upper Atmosphere Research Commission (SUPARCO), delivered the keynote address. Eminent discussants from academia and think-tanks presented their perspectives. The seminar provided valuable insights into Pakistan's National Space Policy (NSP) and its space potential to accelerate socio-economic development. The key challenges,

from other nations, enabling Pakistan to advance its space capabilities more efficiently. Looking ahead, he outlined the National Space Program (NSP) 2047, underscoring its pragmatic approach tailored to Pakistan's current technological landscape. He stressed the necessity for strict prioritization of technologies that align with the country's immediate needs and capabilities.

op its space program. He emphasized that with continued support and ownership, Pakistan is poised to achieve significant milestones in space exploration. In his welcome remarks, DG ISSI Ambassador Sohail Mahmood underscored the salience of Pakistan's first-ever Space Policy, emphasizing that it provided a comprehensive framework for the future.—APP

Gwadar sinking – lack of political will or governance challenges

Nestled along the southwestern coastline of Pakistan, Gwadar emerges as a beacon of potential and promise in the realm of global trade and economic development. Situated at the crossroads of major maritime routes and strategically positioned at the entrance of the Arabian Sea, Gwadar holds a pivotal position in the ambitious vision of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). The last few years have seen an unprecedented focus on Gwadar whereby in year 2023, it has been connected with the national grid, its drinking water issues resolved while the establishment of Gwadar University and Shipyard has been approved. As the linchpin of this monumental initiative, Gwadar stands poised to transform into a bustling hub of commercial activity, offering unprecedented opportunities for trade, investment, and regional cooperation. With its natural deep-sea port and strategic location, Gwadar embodies the aspirations of Pakistan's economic resurgence and serves as a gateway to prosperity, beckoning the world to witness its evolution into a vibrant port city of the future. However, today's Gwadar, post yesterday's floods, paints a picture indicating stagnation or inadequate development that can be attributed to a combination of factors, including both political will and governance challenges. While the region has been designated as a cornerstone of national economic development strat-

egies, the translation of vision into tangible progress has often been impeded by political instability, shifting priorities, and a lack of sustained commitment from successive governments. The governance challenges such as bureaucratic inefficiencies, regulatory hurdles, and institutional weaknesses have further hindered the effective implementation of development plans and initiatives in Gwadar. The absence of a coherent and coordinated approach to governance, coupled with inadequate infrastructure and human resource capacities, has exacerbated the situation, perpetuating a cycle of underdevelopment and missed opportunities in the region. However, this was conceived by policymakers almost a decade ago which resulted in the formulation of the Gwadar Smart Port City Master Plan (GSPCMP). The delayed alignment and implementation of the Gwadar Port and Smart Port City master plans over the next almost five years has resulted in a significant setback to the region's developmental aspirations and even can be termed as root cause of present floods. Despite the recognition of Gwadar's strategic importance and its designation as a key driver of economic growth under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), the lack of synchronized development has hampered progress even today. Astonishingly, not a single inch of the port's physical berthing space has seen expansion since 2005, reflecting the stagnation plaguing the

region's infrastructure development. Even initiatives spearheaded by local Pakistani companies, such as the LPG project, have floundered due to the autocratic governance practices prevalent in the area. Lack of resources is often cited as reason for slow development at Gwadar. However, review of only Federal PSDP indicates that huge funds were earmarked to GPA and Gwadar Development Authority like Rs 25 Billion for uplift of entire Gwadar City, Rs 2.5 Bn for Gwadar Smart Environmental Sanitation System and Landfill Project, Rs 11.5 Bn for Necessary Facilities of fresh Water Treatment, Water Supply and Distribution (including drainage), Rs 3.3 Bn for Rehabilitation of Old Town Gwadar (including Provision of Missing Facilities), Rs 103 Million for Sewerage Treatment Plants etcin addition to other large fundings for Port Development and Dredging by both Federal, Provincial Governments as well as international donors. The recurring issue of flooding in Gwadar, despite substantial investments and planning by the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, Ministry of Planning, Development and Special Initiatives, and Government of Baluchistan, underscores the critical importance of effective governance in addressing the city's challenges. Despite significant allocations of funds from the Federal PSDP and support from provincial governments and interna-

tional donors, the failure to effectively manage and implement comprehensive development plans has led to persistent issues such as flooding. A review of the Federal PSDP indicates that huge funds were earmarked to the GPA and Gwadar Development Authority for various projects, yet the Gwadar Port City still sinks. To address the ongoing challenges facing Gwadar, it is imperative to prioritize the finalization and implementation of the "Gwadar-specific governance model" jointly by the Government of Balochistan and the Ministry of Planning Development and Special Initiatives as outlined in the Gwadar Smart Port City Master Plan. The recommendations from various studies conducted in 2022-23 regarding the governance model should be swiftly implemented, ensuring that the city's development is guided by the expertise of developmental specialists and aligned with the planned objectives. By enhancing governance structures, improving coordination among relevant authorities, and fostering transparency and accountability in decision-making processes, Gwadar can overcome its current challenges and realize its potential as the jewel of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) and a thriving port city as envisioned.

—Muhammad Jawad Akhtar, Ex Advisor/ Senior Specialist CPEC/MoPD&SI Jawad_jd@yahoo.com

National Days and Armed Forces Days

MARCH

March 01/
Bosnia
National Day

March 03/
Bulgaria
National Day

March 06/
Ghana
Independence
Day

March 12 /
Mauritius
National Day

March 17/
Ireland
St. Patricks Day

March 20/
Tunisia
Independence
Day

March 21/
Namibia
National Day

March 25/
Greece
National Day

March 26/
Bangladesh
National Day

March 27/
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Armed
Forces Day

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Motorway Police....9266044
Motorway Police.9270601-20
Women Police Stations
Islamabad.....9222596
Rawalpindi.....9270601-20



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



Hospitals

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



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

Water Tank

Islamabad.....0321-5744480



ISLAMABAD: Visitors taking interest in paintings during an exhibition titled The Wandering Ascetic, in Islamabad. —Photo Mudassar Raja

ICCI delegation visits POF to explore business opportunities

Speaking on the occasion, Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari, President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) lauded the role of POF in making the defense of the country stronger

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: A delegation of the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) led by Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari, President visited the Pakistan Ordnance Factories (POF) and held a meeting with Lt. Gen. Syed Tahir Hameed Shah, Chairman POF to explore business opportunities for the private sector in the defense industry. Lt. Gen. Syed Tahir Hameed Shah, Chairman, POF briefed the ICCI delegation about the role of Pakistan Ordnance Factories, which is the country's premier defense production organization. He said that besides meeting the defense needs of the country, POF exports its products to several countries around the world. He said that POF imports many parts and equipment to produce its finished products and said that POF would welcome local vendors who can supply it with parts and equipment according to the required standards. He said that POF is the largest defense industrial complex comprising 14 ordnance factories and three commercial subsidiaries. He said that the surplus products of POF are sold in the civil market and the standards of POF products are not less than any international company. He said that good care is taken in maintaining the standards of all products



of POF and its subsidiaries. He said that the business community should explore prospects of joint ventures in various projects of defense industries operating under

the umbrella of POF. Speaking on the occasion, Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari, President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) lauded the

role of POF in making the defense of the country stronger. He said that POF is playing a key role in moving towards self-sufficiency and in meeting the growing

demands of our defense sector and civilian security agencies, which is a source of pride for us. He lauded the efforts of POF for capturing foreign markets by improving its efficiency, adopting quality financial management practices, and digitizing its processes to transform itself into a self-sustainable and progressive defense-industrial complex. He assured that the business community is ready to provide all possible support and cooperation to POF in its objectives and goals. He said that the ICCI has established a display center on its premises and is ready to provide space in that facility to POF for displaying its products. He discussed the prospects of private sector collaboration with POF on a public-private partnership basis. Zafar Bakhtawari former President and Secretary General UBG Pakistan said that defense exports are not only an important source of earning foreign exchange, but they also help in improving Pakistan's relations with other countries. He stressed that Pakistan should focus on SAARC, ECO and D-8 countries for promoting defense exports. Maqsood Tabish, Sheikh Muhammad Ejaz, Ch. Muhammad Ali, Faseeh Ullah Khan, Ameer Hamza, Khalid Chaudhry, Saif ur Rehman Khan, Ms. Fatima Hassan, and others were in the delegation.

RDA issues notice to owner of illegal housing scheme

RAWALPINDI: Rawalpindi Development Authority (RDA) on the directives of the Director General (DG), Muhammad Saif Anwar Jappa has issued notice to a private illegal housing scheme namely Olive Dale Farm Houses at Mouza Jatti, Mandra-Chakwal Road Rawalpindi. According to RDA spokesman, the Metropolitan Planning and Traffic Engineering (MP&TE) Directorate issued notice to Anas Bilal, the owner of Olive Dale Farm Houses. He said the DG had also directed the Director MP&TE that action should be taken against illegal advertisements and marketing and FIR would also be lodged against the owner of the illegal housing scheme. The sponsors of illegal housing scheme had also been warned to stop the marketing of their unapproved and illegal housing scheme and contact RDA for getting NOC/approval of the scheme as per law, otherwise, strict legal action would be taken against the violators. He said that on the directions of the DG, the public was advised not to invest in illegal and unauthorized housing schemes and check their status on RDA website www.rda.gov.pk.—APP

'Imran Khan's letter to IMF detrimental to national economy'

ISLAMABAD: Member National Assembly (MNA) and Deputy Secretary General, Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) Attaullah Tarar on Thursday said the founder of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) and ex-premier Imran Khan's letter to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) was detrimental to the national economy. The former Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Interior and Law while talking to media outside the Parliament House before taking his oath to the newly elected National Assembly said that in what capacity did the PTI founder wrote letter to the IMF, questioning, "Was he the FBR or an economist?" Tarar said, "Imran Khan must have told the IMF that he was a prisoner.—APP

Stabilization measures contribute to positive economic outlook: Report

ISLAMABAD: The stabilization measures, encouraging business confidence coupled with exchange rate stability, contributed to a positive economic outlook for Pakistan, amidst ongoing challenges, the Finance Ministry said in a recent report. "Last few months measures have restored market confidence and led to a pick-up in economic activity," says monthly Economic Update and Outlook for February 2024, released by the finance ministry on Thursday. According to the report, the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth accelerated to 2.1% in the first quarter (Q1) of Fiscal Year 2024, after two consecutive quarters of negative growth. The growth was broad-based with the

agriculture sector posting 5% growth and manufacturing activity registering 2.5% growth. In particular, the removal of the import ban and other import restrictions have eased supply constraints, leading to the pick-up in economic activity. Data from Quarter 2 FY2024 shows stronger performance of the manufacturing sector, with large scale manufacturing posting 8.2% increase over Q1. The report predicted Q2 FY2024 GDP growth to rise to around 3% on stronger manufacturing output and higher production of crops including cotton, which has increased by 75% to 8.35 million bales. The caretaker government has taken steps to reduce unproductive expenditures and boost

tax and non-tax income. During Jul-Dec FY2024, the government has run a primary surplus of Rs 1.5 trillion (1.4% of GDP) against International Monetary Fund Standby Agreement (SBA) target of 0.5% of GDP. Difficult and unpopular measures including a reduction in the subsidy bill on power and gas through timely implementation of quarterly tariffs helped improve the primary account. No supplementary grants have been issued during this period and PSDP projects that fall under the provincial domain have been transferred to provincial ADPs. At the same time, the release of funds has been increased for 9.3 million most vulnerable households. On the revenue side,

the FBR Tax collection grew by 30% to Rs 5.15 trillion during July-January FY2024 despite a slowdown in imports and 0% GST on petroleum products. Overall growth in the domestic taxes has increased by 40%, with the rebound in economic activity and rise in profitability of companies including Banks, Oil & Gas, and the manufacturing industry. Import taxes posted a growth of 16% due to improvements in the valuation of imports that yielded Rs 151 billion in collections as well as the anti-smuggling drive that witnessed almost 69% growth in FY2024. The improvement in the fiscal position has helped the government to reduce the accumulation of public debt.—APP

Pink salt may be projected as Pakistani product: Alvi

ISLAMABAD: President Dr. Arif Alvi on Thursday underscored the need for projecting pink salt as a Pakistani product in potential global markets after its value addition in line with the international standards. "A significant amount of foreign exchange can be earned by adding value to the local raw salt and making various products," he said during his visit to the Khewra Salt Mine. He also emphasized to utilize the modern technology to minimize the loss of salt during the mining process besides adopting atmosphere-friendly and responsible mining ways. He said Pakistan had huge reserves of high quality rock salt which was low-cost and full of minerals. The president also reviewed the tourist places inside the salt mine. On the occasion, the president was briefed on various ongoing projects of Pakistan Minerals Development Corporation in Khewra. He was informed about quality of the salt found in Khewra and various salt ingredients. —DNA



NAT results on Friday

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Institute of Education (PIE), the apex research institution and think-tank of the Federal Ministry of Education and Professional Training, will announce results of the National Achievement Test (NAT) on March 1. The NAT is a sample-based assessment that is administered to students in grades 4 and 8 in public schools across all provinces and territories of the countries. This year's NAT results are particularly important as they are the first to be conducted since the COVID-19 pandemic, which had a significant impact on education. —APP

BISP to save 2 billion through new payment system

ISLAMABAD: The internationally acclaimed Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) has introduced a new payment system for its beneficiaries through hiring the services of six banks which would help facilitate the beneficiaries and save Rs 2 billion. The agreement, in this regard, was signed by the BISP and six banks recently for the disbursement of funds among its 9.3 million beneficiary households. According to an official source, initially, the program was utilizing the services of only two banks and the contracts of the same had expired some years back. However, this expansion signifies the introduction of wider service provider banks thus leading to greater transparency. The purpose of introducing this new payment system is to reduce the difficulties of the end users and facilitate them to withdraw their quarterly.—APP



National Disaster Risk Management Fund

A company setup under section 42 of the Companies Act, 2017
Making Pakistan Resilient

002/02/Media/Requisitions

INVITATION TO BIDS

Procurement of Advance Items/Equipment for Photography and Videography with Accessories

National Disaster Risk Management Fund (hereinafter shall be termed as "NDRMF" & "Client") is a not-for-profit company incorporated with the Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan, under Section 42 of the Companies Act 2017, invites sealed Bids from the Bidders registered with Income Tax and Sales Tax Departments and who are on Active Taxpayers List of the Federal Board of Revenue and fulfill the eligibility & qualification requirements for providing of "Advance Items/Equipment for Photography and Videography with Accessories" to NDRMF as per terms & conditions mentioned in the Bidding Documents. Procurement Method will be "National Competitive Bidding" – Single Stage - One Envelope as per PPRA Rules, 2004.

2. Bidding document containing detailed terms & conditions for the aforesaid activity may be downloaded at PPRA website (www.ppra.org.pk) and Fund's website i.e. www.ndrmf.pk (free of cost). Further, details can be obtained from the office of the Manager Procurement, EOBI Building, 5th Floor, G-10/4, Islamabad.

3. Sealed Bids, prepared in accordance with the instructions in the Bidding document, must reach at the address below on or before 18th March at 1000 hours. Bids will be publically opened on the same day at 1030 hours in the presence of the participating companies/their authorized representatives, who may choose to be present. This notice is also available on Fund's Website i.e. www.ndrmf.pk and PPRA website at www.ppra.org.pk.

MANAGER (Procurement)

National Disaster Risk Management Fund
EOBI Building, 5th Floor, G-10/4, Islamabad
Telephone No.92(51)9108300-415

Briefs

ANF recovers 81 kg drugs in five operations

RAWALPINDI: Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) while conducting five operations across the country managed to recover 81 kg drugs and arrested three accused, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman here on Thursday. He informed that 35 grams weed was recovered from a parcel sent from UK at GPO Multan. 175 kg crystal heroin was recovered from Sabi Road Quetta area while 3 kg hashish was recovered from an accused rounded up near Hassanabad Attock. In the fourth operation, 2 kg heroin was recovered from the possession of an accused arrested near Eastern Bypass Quetta. 1 kg Ice was recovered from an accused near Lakpas Toll Plaza Mustang. Cases under the Anti-Narcotics Act have been registered against the arrested accused while further investigations are under process.—APP

Ahsan stresses national unity, consensus building

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) senior leader Ahsan Iqbal on Thursday emphasized the responsibility of politicians to foster progress through empathy and reconciliation. Talking to PTV news channel, Ahsan said that rather than dwelling on past grievances, Ahsan advocates for healing and unity, stressing the importance of national interest and consensus-building. Acknowledging the forthcoming government's challenges, he underscores the party's sincere intentions to address the country's issues and prioritize the welfare of future generations. He admitted a gap between the old and new generations' political approaches, and he acknowledged the need to match the younger generation's aspirations. He was determined to steer the party towards alignment with contemporary challenges, ensuring effective leadership and relevance in the changing political landscape.

MNA raises voice over ignored basic rights

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan People's Party newly elected Member National Assembly Sardar Fateh Ullah Khan Miankhel Thursday raised his voice over the ignored basic rights of Dera Ismail Khan's public and assured that all available resources will be utilized to provide clean drinking water and quality health facilities. In an exclusive talk with the PTV news channel, he said that the provision of clean drinking water to the masses of my area of Dera Ismail Khan is the top priority and installation work of water filtration plants in all union councils of flood-affected districts would be completed on war footing. He said that the people in Dera Ismail Khan are contracting various diseases due to the lack of clean drinking water facilities, adding, hopefully, our leadership will focus on these neglected areas. The promotion of modern and quality educational facilities in all government schools is also a top priority of the government, he added. "A balanced approach in all disciplines of primary and higher education would lead the country towards the road to progress", he mentioned. Replying to a question, he said that with National Assembly forum will be utilised for the welfare of common people, adding, that concerted efforts are needed to steer the country out of the prevalent crisis.

Opportunities for Pak, China energy collaboration

Energy companies from China, including JA Solar, YC Solar, and Sineng Electric, actively participated in the event, exploring opportunities for collaboration between China and Pakistan in the field of solar energy

ISLAMABAD: The on-going Solar Pakistan International Solar Exhibition, 2024 will boost opportunities for Pak-China energy collaboration. The exhibition is underway at the Lahore International Expo Center from February 27 to 29. According to Gwadar Pro, the event serves as an exclusive platform for presenting the latest solar innovations and the region's most prominent solar projects, offering opportunities for establishing partnerships with

both government and private sectors. Energy companies from China, including JA Solar, YC Solar, and Sineng Electric, actively participated in the event, exploring opportunities for collaboration between China and Pakistan in the field of solar energy. At the exhibition, numerous Chinese companies signed memorandums of understanding (MOUs) with their Pakistani partners, expressing their preliminary intentions for collaboration. "The collaboration between China and Pakistan in the field of solar energy holds tremendous potential. Currently,

Pakistan heavily relies on coal, oil, gas, nuclear, and hydroelectric power sources, with solar energy contributing less than 1% to the energy mix," stated exhibitor of YC Solar. The company showcased its high-efficiency YCM-N series photovoltaic modules, which achieve higher photovoltaic conversion efficiency and lower costs through innovations in cell structure, material selection, and manufacturing processes. JA Solar presented its flagship product, the DeepBlue 4.0 Pro series, known for its high efficiency, high power output, and excellent ad-

aptability to high-temperature environments. Additionally, these modules offer advantages such as bifacial generation and attenuation characteristics, maximizing Pakistan's abundant solar resources and generating higher electricity yields for photovoltaic projects. "JA Solar has previously supplied high-efficiency modules to several major solar projects in Pakistan, including a 100MW Solar Project in Punjab, the 103MW Zhenfa Solar Project, and the first n-type solar power station project. We will further develop our cooperation with Pakistani partners to providing

efficient and reliable green electricity, supporting local green and sustainable development," said the representative from JA Solar. Pakistan enjoys an average of nine and a half hours of sunlight daily. According to the Integrated Energy Plan for 2047 (IGCEP2047), Pakistan's photovoltaic capacity is projected to reach 12.8GW by 2030 and 26.9GW by 2047. Collaboration between China and Pakistan will contribute to the country's clean energy transition, reducing reliance on traditional energy sources, and achieving sustainable development.

Police arrest 16 lawbreakers

RAWALPINDI: Rawalpindi District police in an action against suspected bootleggers, illegal weapon holders, and other lawbreakers here on Thursday arrested 16 accused besides recovering weapons, liquor and other items from their possession. A police spokesperson said that Waris Khan police held Mudassar Hussain for carrying fireworks items while Cantt police rounded up Faisal and Hashar for running an illegal LPG agency. R.A. Bazar police netted Abbas and Tariq for operating illegal petrol agency. Naseerabad, Civil Line and Morgah police also arrested Shakeel, Sheikhuddin and Yasir and recovered LPG cylinders and petrol from their possession.—APP



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Palestine Ahmed Rabei called on Caretaker Religious Minister Aniq Ahmed on Thursday. Both sides discussed matters of mutual interest. The Ambassador congratulated the minister for successfully completing the tenure as the caretaker minister. The minister also expressed solidarity with the Palestine ambassador and extended whole-hearted support.—DNA

Maryam Nawaz's ambitions are high, laudable

ISLAMABAD: Former President of the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI), Dr. Shahid Rasheed Butt, said on Thursday that CM Punjab Maryam Nawaz's priorities are high and praiseworthy. Masses and companies aspire for CM Punjab; therefore, she should devote all of her time to alleviating people's pain, remain in contact with the people, and ensure merit, he said. Shahid Rasheed Butt said in a statement issued here today that the people have experienced fake change, so now she should strive for a real change. The business leader said that Maryam Nawaz Sharif has become the Chief Minister of Pakistan's most important province, Punjab, whose population is equal to half of the country's population. She is dedicated to service, and the priorities she has announced are welcome. She has promised that she will prioritise merit and transparency in all circumstances, and there will be no political recruitment in any department. She has also claimed that transparency in financial matters will be ensured and no compromise will be made on it. Nepotism will be discouraged, and national interests will be kept above the party's interests. She has admired honest officers, emphasising the importance of integrity in public service. She vowed to uphold merit and prevent any form of nepotism, stating that political appointments would not be tolerated under her administration. She has also directed the concerned officials to prioritise the prevention of diseases like dengue and polio and to ensure the continuation of public utility projects in the health sector. The chief minister also stressed the importance of promptly addressing public grievances, stating that immediate action should be taken to resolve issues.—DNA

COMSTECH and Al-Shifa trust team departs for Mogadishu

ISLAMABAD: Under the special instructions and guidance of Prof. Dr. M. Iqbal Choudhary, Coordinator General COMSTECH, the OIC Ministerial Standing Committee on Scientific & Technological Cooperation (COMSTECH) in collaboration with Al-Shifa Trust Eye Hospital, Rawalpindi, is pleased to announce a free cataract eye surgery camp in Mogadishu, Somalia, from March 1st to 10th, 2024. During the ten days long camp, it is expected that more than

400 cataract surgeries will be performed, restoring vision and improving the lives of hundreds of people in Somalia. Al-NUR Foundation and Benadir University, Mogadishu, will generously provide hospital facilities for the camp. The medical team traveling from Pakistan will consist of eight members, including four ophthalmologists and two OT technicians from Al-Shifa Trust Eye Hospital, as well as a PhD Pharmacist and a coordinator from COMSTECH. Prof. Dr. M. Iqbal Choudhary, Coordinator General, COMSTECH expresses

its deepest gratitude to Major General (Retd.) Rehmat Khan, the Chairman of Al-Shifa Trust, for his invaluable leadership and initiative in organizing this free surgical camp. Al-Shifa Trust's generous financial and technical contributions have made it possible for COMSTECH to extend its services to the people of Mogadishu, providing them with much-needed eye care and surgeries. This collaborative effort between COMSTECH and Al-Shifa Trust is expected to have a significant positive impact on the lives of people in Somalia. By conducting

free eye camps, the organizations aim to not only restore vision but also restore hope and dignity to those who need it most. All necessary medicines, intraocular lenses, and surgical consumables are ready for departure to Somalia. Additionally, a No Objection Certificate (NoC) has been obtained from the Drug Regulatory Authority of Pakistan (DRAP) for the export of these items as donations to the Somali people. The Embassy of Somalia in Pakistan has also provided valuable support in expediting the visa process for the medical team.

ICP's Safe City team carries out operations in 2024

ISLAMABAD: In response to the special directives of Islamabad Capital Police Officer (ICCP) Dr. Akbar Nasir Khan, the Islamabad Capital Police (ICP) was actively engaged in ensuring the protection of life and property of the citizens in Islamabad. A public relations officer on Thursday said that, the Safe City technical monitoring team carried out effective monitoring and identified 18 wanted accused including 13 police offenders, 03 court absconders, and 02 highly wanted accused involved in police cases. Moreover, the accused were found residing in private hotels within Islamabad's premises, using bus terminals, residing as tenants, or entering Islamabad through any other means. Upon observing their movements, their profiles were included, and relevant police stations were informed, leading to their immediate arrests. The ICCPO said that the establishment of the Safe City Command and Control Center aims not only to reduce the crime rate in the city but also to provide better facilities to the citizens. The Safe City Command and Control Center, where suspicious activities are monitored, employs useful software such as E-Challan, effective traffic management, data analytics, facial recognition of criminals, automatic number plate readers (ANPR), and Hotel Eye to reduce the crime rate. He further stated that Hotel Eye software keeps an eye on every individual residing in hotels, hostels, and shelter homes in the city. Islamabad Capital Police is continuously engaged in ensuring the protection of life and property of the citizens, he added. "The citizens can report any suspicious individuals or activities to Islamabad Capital Police's helpline "Pucar-15" or through the "ICT-15."—APP

10 outlaws held, narcotics, weapons seized: ICP

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad Capital Police (ICP) apprehended 10 outlaws including two professional beggars from different areas of the city during the last 24 hours and recovered drugs and weapons from their possession. In response to the special directions of Islamabad Capital City Police Officer (ICCP) Dr. Akbar Nasir Khan, the Islamabad Capital Police has intensified its crackdown against the criminal elements to

eliminate crime from the city, said a statement issued by a public relations officer on Thursday. Meanwhile, the Secretariat police team arrested an accused named Muhammad Sarwar, and recovered one 30-bore pistol from his possession. The Kohsar police team arrested three accused named Saeed, Hafeez Ullah, and Aurangzeb. The police recovered two pistols and one dagger from the possession of the accused. Likewise, the

Tarnol police team arrested an accused named Basit involved in illegally selling petrol. The Khanna police team arrested two accused named Ehsan and Noor Ullah and recovered two 30 bore pistols from their possession. Similarly, the Kirpa police team arrested an accused named Waqar involved in illegal petrol selling. Cases have been registered against the nabbed accused and further investigation is underway. During the crackdown against professional beggars, police teams arrested two beggars. The senior police officers directed the police officials to further intensify the crackdown against the criminal elements. "Safety and security of the citizens is our foremost priority.—DNA

14 drug peddlers netted, huge cache of narcotics seized


ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Capital Police (ICP) teams arrested 14 members of drug peddler gangs and recovered 2,095 gram heroin, 3,962 gram hashish, 60 liters liquor and 18 gram Ice from their possession. A public relations officer said that, following the special directions of Islamabad Capital City Police officer (ICCP) Dr. Akbar Nasir Khan, the Islamabad Capital Police has intensified crackdown against the criminal elements in order to eliminate the crime from the city. Meanwhile, the Kohsar, Margalla, Noon, Khanna, Koral, Kirpa, Humak, Phulgran, Nilore, Shahzad Town and Bani Gala police stations team arrested 14 drug peddlers and recovered 2,095 gram heroin, 3,962 gram hashish, 60 liters liquor and 18 gram Ice from their possession. Cases have been registered against the accused and further investigation is underway. Islamabad Capital City Police officer (ICCP) Dr. Akbar Nasir Khan directed all senior officials for effective crackdown against the accused involved in drug peddling activities. He emphasized that Islamabad Capital Police will not leave any stone unturned to curb the menace of drugs. "No one would be allowed to play with the precious lives of our young generation.—APP

Political differences should not be taken to extreme

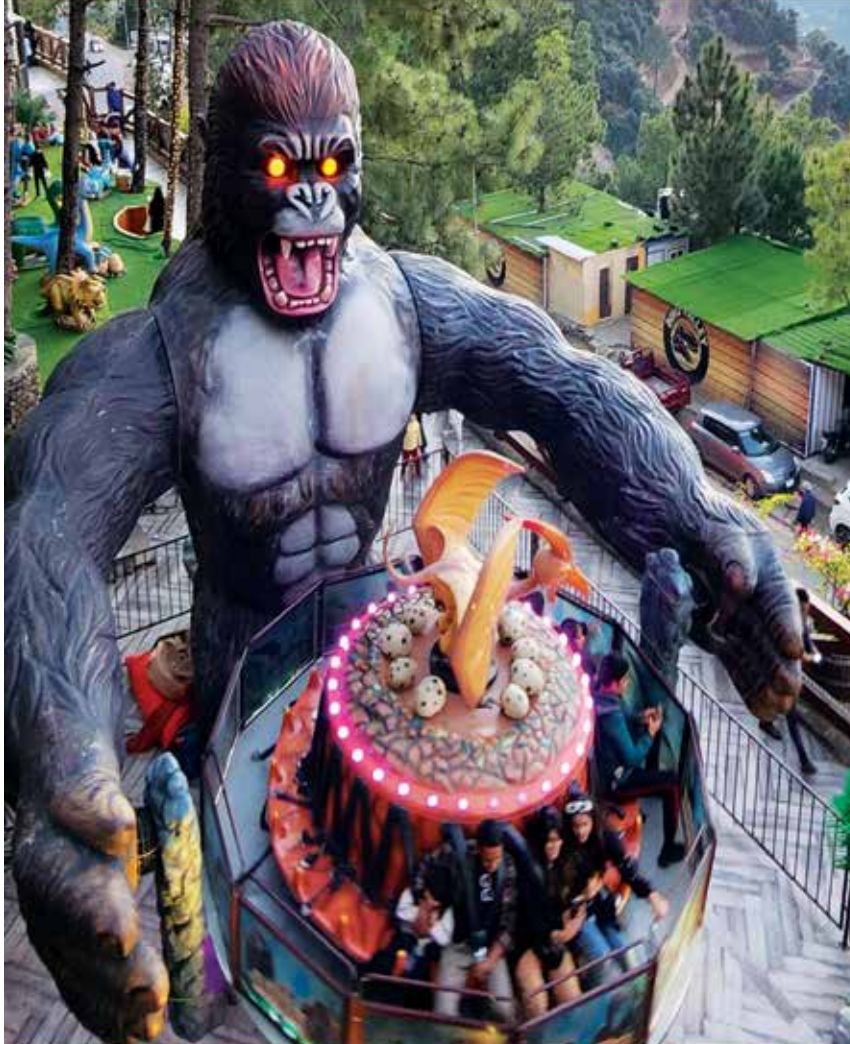
ISLAMABAD: Dr. Muhammad Hanif Mughal, Chairman of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Shadbad, said on Thursday that political disagreements after elections are natural, but they shouldn't grow to unmanageable levels as the country cannot afford further uncertainty. Pakistan's worldwide rating will rise if the opposition becomes responsible, which will help the new government steer the country out of some of the most pressing problems, he said. The new government should prioritise the success of the IMF review after which a new accord with the lender is necessary to save the country, he added. In a statement issued here today, he said that it is astonishing that as the rupee weakens,

the masses get poorer and the privileged get richer. Dr. Hanif Mughal has said that political differences should not escalate to tension because it will further weaken the country's economy and increase the suffering of the people. After the election, the political instability in the country is slowly decreasing, which is good, and if the politicians belonging to the opposition show responsibility, the global ranking of Pakistan can improve, thereby getting more loans to save the country. He noted that as the political tension in the country is reduced, the value of Pakistani bonds in the international market has also started to improve. He said that the new government should keep the success of the last review

of the IMF and start a new programme with the IMF at the top of its priorities so that the journey of economic stability continues. He demanded that after the IMF agreement, relief should be given to the people who have been suffering from instability and inflation for many years. With the agreement with the IMF, while the concerns about Pakistan will die down and local and international investors will see Pakistan favourably, the ongoing inflation in the country can also be reduced. Dr. Hanif Mughal said that we need to improve the economy like the neighbouring countries. Until a few decades ago, the condition of Pakistan was better than all the neighbouring countries.—DNA



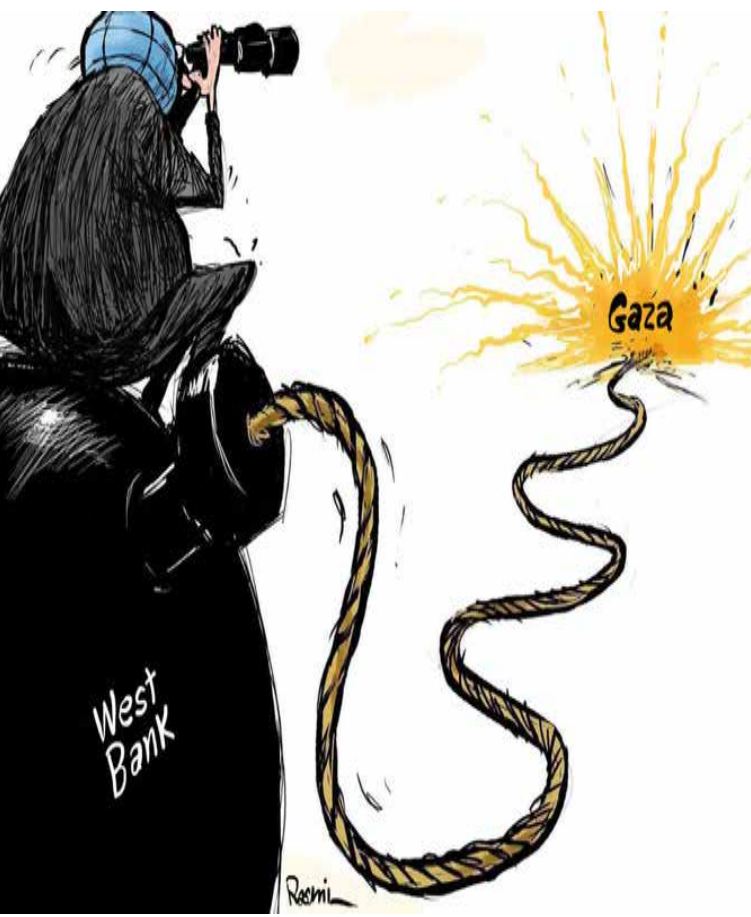
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Tyranny

The major mistake humanity committed in the modern era is its failure to dedicate the necessary time and effort to uncover the injustices committed by the white man in the West against indigenous peoples. It failed to chronicle a true and precise history of the genocide, torture, siege, plunder of wealth, and development of weapons of mass destruction, and genocide perpetrated against the peoples in colonies in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. It also failed to document the destruction of peoples' cultures and the employment of media to distort realities, brainwash minds, and undermine human values, especially through burying indigenous languages and replacing them with the colonial language that still stands as the official language of the inhabitants of former colonies. Some inhabitants of these colonies now even glorify the West, praising the civilization built upon the skulls of their own children and the museums enriched with looted artifacts from these colonies, not to mention the stolen wealth used to construct the colonizers' homelands, while keeping the plundered peoples in abject poverty for centuries. These crimes have been a source of controversy and debate among the inhabitants of the colonies for centuries: some have become mentally and morally servile to the colonizer, initially out of fear and later out of habit. Some people from former colonies defend the colonizers and think they are vital to their very existence, while others rebel against the entire colonial legacy but often without a substantial or valuable action against this legacy, thus failing to form a national and consequently an international stance to be reckoned with. These could be some of the reasons why the true significance of countries has not been decisively settled on the historical, human, and ethical map. Fear, silence, and the fluctuating poverty of oppressed peoples under Western tyranny could be some of the reasons for the failure to reach a definitive resolution on this matter. What has brought the world today to an unprecedented level of tyranny is the support provided by Western countries to terrorist killers engaged in daily genocide for the past five months against innocent civilians in Gaza and Palestine in general. All is happening before the eyes of a world claiming to be civilized. Yet, we have not witnessed a revolution in public opinion or a sincere and resolute action against these horrifying crimes. We do not even witness a statement befitting the horror of what is happening, except for Yemen, which we all take pride in as the origin of Arab identity, proving with merit that it deserves to be the origin, root, and stronghold of the Arabs. After five months of the West waging a genocidal war against the innocent people of the besieged Strip, after the martyrdom of around thirty thousand people, mostly women and children, the displacement of more than a million people, and the perpetration of heinous massacres against doctors and journalists, and after all the inhuman actions of trees uprooting, animals shooting, food targeting, and the attacking of organizations, once called humanitarian, to make the population die of hunger, the genocide continues, falling on the deaf ears of the entire world, completely disregarding what is happening to its fellow human beings. The United States and its Western allies persist in sending billions of various lethal weapons to empower their Zionist tools to continue perpetrating this gruesome genocide.



Biden risks losing crucial support

The Democratic Party in the United States is at a crossroads. As it hemorrhages support from Arab and Muslim Americans and young people over its support of Israel's war on Gaza, many leaders have been downplaying the threat to US President Joe Biden's re-election campaign. The argument goes that Muslims and Arabs comprise too small a portion of the electorate to be concerned about. And that young people tend to vote at much lower levels than other age groups, so why cater to them and risk alienating older Americans who reliably vote at a higher rate? There is, however, one constituency whose eroding support Democrats simply cannot afford to take for granted: Black Americans. The makeup of the Democratic electorate, in general, and Biden's base of support in particular underscores the party's dependency on voters of color. In the 2020 general election, only about 60 percent of Biden voters were white, compared to over 85 percent for Trump. Biden likely would not have even been his party's nominee were it not for Black voters resurrecting his campaign in the South Carolina primary earlier that year. These same voters are not viewing the prospect of a second Biden term in office with renewed enthusiasm. Biden's favorability among non-white voters was already waning long before Oct. 7, in part because the administration was not keeping its campaign promises to meaningfully address issues like police reform, criminal justice reform, and voting rights. But recent polling suggests that Gaza is also playing a meaningful role in Black voters' cooling feelings about Biden. At the end of August 2023, the Public Religion Research Institute found that 77 percent of Black Americans would vote for Biden in a head-to-head matchup with Trump. This was already a 15 percent decline in the support he received from these voters in 2020. By late November, however, GenForward found that only 63 percent of Black Americans planned to vote for Biden. Similarly, an NBC poll fielded around the same period found that only 61 percent of this bloc approved of Biden's job performance. While these polls are merely suggestive, other factors speak directly to the effect that the conflict in Gaza is having on support for Biden within the Black community. Indicators at the elite, civil society and general level all point to growing anger over Biden's enabling of Israel's plausible genocide. The most striking condemnation of Biden's policy comes from the more than 1,000 Black pastors that are pressuring the administration to call for a ceasefire. More recently, leaders of the African Methodist Episcopal Church went even further, calling for the end of US aid to Israel. Activist groups like Black Lives Matter have also made their position clear. In fact, long before the most recent conflagration in Gaza, the Movement for Black Lives overlapped and intersected with the Palestinian liberation movement. As one BLM organizer speaking on this shared struggle put it: "We know occupation, we know colonialism, we know police brutality." But it is not just the most attentive who are voicing their dissent. A major New York Times/Siena poll in December found that Black Americans were more likely than whites and Hispanics to sympathize with Palestinians over Israelis.

Illegality of convening NA's maiden session

Qamar Bashir



Even amidst a hostile environment following the ousting of Iran Khan's government in April 2022, President Alvi's tenure has been marked by resilience and astuteness. Joining the President's House as Media Advisor and Press Secretary in May 2022, I witnessed firsthand his adept navigation through the complexities of the presidency. With a blend of sagacity, patience, and tolerance, he steered the ship of state through challenging waters, making critical decisions

President Arif Alvi has gracefully surpassed his tenure, exceeding by nearly five months without facing any imminent threats to his presidency. Even amidst a hostile environment following the ousting of Iran Khan's government in April 2022, President Alvi's tenure has been marked by resilience and astuteness. Joining the President's House as Media Advisor and Press Secretary in May 2022, I witnessed firsthand his adept navigation through the complexities of the presidency. With a blend of sagacity, patience, and tolerance, he steered the ship of state through challenging waters, making critical decisions with finesse and minimal disruption. Now, President Alvi's sagacity faces another test as he endeavors to assist the PTI in reclaiming its lost reserve seats for women and minorities in both the provincial and national assemblies. His leadership and strategic acumen has undoubtedly played a pivotal role in this endeavor. Amidst the overwhelming force of the state machinery aligned against it, the PTI finds itself in dire need of assistance. Despite reluctantly joining the Sunni Ittehad, a move that diluted its distinctiveness and eroded its brand power, the party remains embroiled in a losing battle to secure reserve seats for women and minorities. Even with its integration into the Sunni Ittehad, the prospects of obtaining these reserved seats are exceedingly dim. President Alvi's calculated strategy held promise for the PTI in its quest to secure reserved seats. However, it is undeniably a high-stakes gamble fraught with uncertainties and potential repercussions. Yet, in the face of formidable odds, President Alvi's decisive action offered a glimmer of hope for the PTI's aspirations. President Alvi's argument is most likely based on Article 91(2) of the Constitution of Pakistan, which states that the first session of the National Assembly should be held within 21 days following a general election, "unless sooner summoned by the President". The ambiguity arises from the interpretation of "unless sooner summoned". Which if read with the general scheme of the constitution means that the president can call the national assembly session either within 21 days or sooner but in no case later than 21 days, but the meter is downed only when national assembly is complete including the reserved seats of women and minorities. This interpretation provided the President with the argument that the National Assembly should be considered fully constituted until all seats, including reserved seats, are allocated. This interpretation could imply that it's his discretionary power to delay the session until the assembly is "complete". The ECP, the government and other major political parties like PML(N) and PPP vehemently opposed President Alvi's stance, arguing that he was overstepping his constitutional role contending that the allocation of reserved seats was an

administrative matter separate from the summoning of the National Assembly. The ECP other stakeholder aligned to ECP's stand emphasized the 21-day constitutional mandate for convening the National Assembly session after general elections and stressed that it was the President's duty to uphold this mandate regardless of delays in allocation of reserved seats. In Pakistan, allegedly, the foundational principles of the constitution and the rule of law have been sidelined, as the establishment has assumed the control of the Election Commission, parliament, government, and the judiciary. Their apparent singular objective appears to be diminishing the size, influence, and significance of the PTI in the upcoming assemblies to the point of insignificance. Following the surprising electoral mandate handed to the PTI by voters, it seemed that the establishment had effectively waged a campaign to undermine the party. The initial gains made by the PTI in electoral processes were swiftly reversed through tactics such as the deliberate slowing down of internet and mobile services after 10 pm on election day. This maneuver resulted in a reversal of fortunes for PTI candidates who were initially leading, transforming them into unexpected losers. Moreover, successful PTI candidates found themselves besieged with a barrage of court cases and relentless harassment, compelling many to either retreat into hiding, adopt a dormant stance, or defect to other political parties under the guise of independence. These tactics earlier not only deprived the PTI of its election symbol but also stripped it of reserved seats for women and minorities, exacerbating the challenges faced by the party in asserting its political presence. The astute move by the President, seemingly aligned with constitutional principles, was met with a countermove that appears to be unconstitutional. The Speaker of the National Assembly has called for the assembly's maiden session on 29th February, purportedly bypassing the President and accepting the requisition of the session signed by the Prime Minister. This action disregards the fact that as an interim prime minister, he is not a member of the assembly. While the Prime Minister heads the executive branch, equivalent to the National Speaker, the President holds the authority over the National Assembly. Without the President's explicit consent and directives, convening the national assembly's maiden session is procedurally inappropriate. The unilateral convening of a National Assembly session without the President's consent not only raises the specter of legal disputes but also amplifies the risk of political instability. Amidst this turmoil, the President's intervention could potentially aid the PTI in its quest to secure reserved seats for women and minorities. Success in this endeavor would bolster the PTI's political prowess, enhancing its capacity to advance its legislative

agenda. The expeditious allocation of reserved seats would not only demonstrate the PTI's commitment to inclusive governance but also serve as a reassurance to its voters and supporters. Furthermore, it would furnish the PTI with valuable leverage in political negotiations with other stakeholders. Conversely, failure in the legal battle would deal a significant blow to the PTI on multiple fronts. Already having relinquished its identity by aligning with the Sunni Ittehad, the party would further diminish its stature within the National Assembly. Consequently, its bargaining power would dwindle, severely hampering its ability to assert influence in political affairs. Moreover, this diminished status would impede the PTI's efforts to secure the release of its incarcerated leaders, including the chairman, thereby compounding the challenges facing the party. As we confront the aftermath of the session called without presidential summoning, it becomes imperative to scrutinize its legality and the resulting credibility of the convened assembly. Article 91(2) of the constitution unequivocally mandates that the first session of the National Assembly must be summoned by the President, a constitutional requirement not to be overlooked. The ramifications of sidestepping this crucial provision raise questions about the legitimacy of the assembly and the decisions it may undertake. The potential for a protracted legal battle looms large, as conflicting interpretations of constitutional provisions sow seeds of discord between institutions. This clash of institutions threatens to further destabilize an already fragile political landscape, exacerbating tensions and eroding public trust in the democratic process. In response to this breach of constitutional protocol, voices of dissent are likely to grow louder, with the PTI and other political parties refusing to recognize the outcome of the election results. A groundswell of public movement, fueled by a sense of injustice and disenfranchisement, may emerge as a potent force for change, demanding accountability and adherence to constitutional norms. In navigating these turbulent waters, it is imperative for all stakeholders to prioritize the rule of law, respect constitutional mandates, and uphold the principles of democracy. Failure to do so risks plunging Pakistan into deeper political turmoil, undermining the very foundations upon which its democratic institutions are built. Now more than ever, unity, dialogue, and a steadfast commitment to constitutional principles are essential to chart a path towards a more stable and inclusive future for all citizens.

—Former Press Secretary to the President
Former Press Minister to the Embassy of Pakistan
to France
Former MD, SRBC

The reason why Rafah invasion is so dangerous

Robert Inlakesh

The US government has, however, approved the attack with the caveat that the Israelis must have a plan for civilians. The UK, which shamefully abstained again on the latest United Nations Security Council draft resolution calling for a ceasefire, has threatened to limit arms exports to their Zionist allies in the event they invade Rafah. On the other hand, the second most steadfast backer of the Zionist entity's genocide in Gaza, the United States government, has expressed what could only be described as reservations about the Israeli intent to invade the southern-most city in the Gaza Strip. While there have been quite

For weeks the Israeli regime has been threatening an invasion of Rafah, where some 1.4 million displaced Palestinians are cornered next to the Egyptian border. This has caused the United Nations to ring the alarm, over fears of mass expulsion of Gaza's residents into the Sinai desert and a high casualty series of events. The US government has, however, approved the attack with the caveat that the Israelis must have a plan for civilians. The UK, which shamefully abstained again on the latest United Nations Security Council draft resolution calling for a ceasefire, has threatened to limit arms exports to their Zionist allies in the event they invade Rafah. On the other hand, the second most steadfast backer of the Zionist entity's genocide in Gaza, the United States government, has expressed what could only be described as reservations about the Israeli intent to invade the southern-most city in the Gaza Strip. While there have been quite forthcoming condemnations of the Israeli threats made against Rafah, from representatives belonging to the European Union and United Nations, it is important to focus on the reason why the staunchest allies of the Zionists are alarmed over a Rafah invasion. This state of alarm is for good reason, as there are great implications of such an assault. To begin with, the Israelis have presented countless "plans", "proposals" and "strategies" to the public in the past 5 months, this has included the idea of re-occupying all of Gaza, seizing the north of the Strip as a buffer zone, in addition to the idea of creating a buffer zone along the entire perimeter of Gaza. The Israeli Foreign Ministry even presented a document, which was revealed to be in existence back in December, which detailed its three-step plan to dismantle the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) in a post-war Gaza. The Zionist regime's media spread rumors that their bunker busting munitions would destroy the Palestinian resistance's tunnel infrastructure from the air, when the bombs were dropped and that then failed we heard that they were preparing to flood the tunnels and even gas them. The idea of pumping sea water and poison gas into the tunnels was tried and failed. As the Zionist military pushed further into Gaza, during what could be labeled the first phase of their ground assault, they fixated on seizing the hospitals in the north of the Gaza Strip, specifically focusing their propaganda efforts on the Shifa Hospital in Gaza City. Once Israeli militants reached the hospital, which they received the backing of the US government in claiming had a "Hamas HQ" rooted underneath it, they failed to convince even the most biased American media outlets that any such military presence existed there. The Israeli military, after having pushed its way into a large portion of the built-up areas of northern Gaza, focused their effort then on areas like al-Maghazi, Nuseirat, and Deir al-Balah, while claiming

that the real "Hamas HQ" was actually based in Khan Younis to the South. Eventually, after focusing their military efforts on central and southern Gaza, the Israeli army began to withdraw from areas in the north, where it has repeatedly claimed to have dismantled the Palestinian resistance's command and control, asserting that the Israeli regime had secured "full operational control" in the likes of Gaza City, Beit Hanoun, Shujayeh, Beit Lahia, Jabalia and elsewhere. Demonstrating the extent to which they enjoyed such "operational control", they were frequently struck by resistance fighter ambushes and fell into well-prepared booby-traps, as the resistance managed to continue to fire rockets right next to where Israeli troops operated. From observing the daily resistance videos and communiques, which inform us of the details of the battles taking place throughout Gaza, it is clear that Israeli soldiers are continuing to make basic mistakes, such as remaining in open windows and frequently falling into prepared traps. While the resistance is developing in its methods of fighting the enemy, the Israelis continue to behave in the same manner they did on day one of the ground invasion: Israeli soldiers push into an area at great speed and rarely ever leave the cover of their military vehicles, they do not clear areas they enclose into and set up safe zones for their soldiers to guard them temporarily, before moving on into another area. The Israeli army has not demonstrated the enactment of a systematic plan that has led to any key military goals. In fact, there is still a great debate as to what the actual goals of the military assault are, beyond the complete and utter devastation of every structure and living being inside the Gaza Strip. Applying Occam's Razor, or in other words accepting the most evident answer to the question in front of us, it can be concluded that there is no real plan in Gaza beyond mass murder and destruction. From countless genocidal, racist and bloodthirsty statements made on a daily basis by Israelis - from regular civilians to the highest authorities in power - it is obvious that the extermination of as many Palestinians as possible is a clearly agreed upon goal and one which we actually see evidence for on-the-ground. As for the ideas of buffer zones, re-occupation, annexation of territory, destruction of tunnels using various methods, the assassination of military leaders in Gaza, the recapturing of Israeli prisoners and the complete defeat of Hamas, there is no clear indication that the Zionist military is even capable of achieving any of these. At least, if any successes are made towards achieving such goals, they appear random and infrequent, but certainly not the result of any structured plan. The Israelis have no idea how many resistance fighters have been killed, only bothering to throw out random numbers of allegedly killed Qassam Brigades fighters, but no statistics for any of the some dozen other groups. The Zionist entity and its Western allies don't even appear to demonstrate

any knowledge on how many Palestinian resistance fighters even exist in Gaza, or know an accurate mileage estimate for the size of the underground tunnel infrastructure. This then brings us to Rafah, which Israeli Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, has declared is crucial to the war effort and even stated that without invading the area his military cannot win the war. The Hebrew media, as it did when the regime was threatening to invade Gaza City and Khan Younis, has set out its delusional analysis to make arguments as to why all of the Israeli prisoners are being kept in Rafah and that the real Hamas headquarters is there too. But, as was the case with every other area they fixated on, they have no idea what they are talking about. While the entire world watches on in horror, using their common sense to predict the potential massacre that is awaiting in Rafah and an attempt to ethnically cleanse over a million people, the Israeli domestic conversation is rooted in a delusional idea of military victory. It doesn't take a rocket scientist to figure out that an Israeli military invasion of an area where 1.4 million refugees are packed into tents and other kinds of crude shelters, will be a disaster. Many analysts and members of the general public are now speculating that there is an Israeli plan to ethnically cleanse the population of Rafah into the Egyptian Sinai, which could well be a goal of such an invasion. However, I would argue that despite there being an alleged "plan", it will not be carried out in any orderly way and even if an attempt to purge the population of Rafah is made, it will be done sloppily. What we have to understand about the Israeli military is that it is not really a professional army. Sure, the Israelis have modern military weapons and the backing of their Western allies, they even have well trained individuals when it comes to operating weapons systems, but they do not have an army. The Israeli soldiers are ill-disciplined, poorly trained, ill-prepared for confronting urban warfare settings of the nature they are now fighting in and they do not follow orders. For years the Israeli military has been suffering from issues in its ability to properly control the actions of its militants and we see that even in the case of high-ranking soldiers, they commit basic mistakes that low-ranking soldiers in most modern armies wouldn't. It is this combination of a military force that has no ground capacity, armed with the most sophisticated and expensive weaponry that money can buy, that makes them so incredibly dangerous in a location of Rafah. What is to happen if an Israeli unit gets scared, makes a mistake and opens fire in the wrong direction, killing or injuring Egyptian forces for instance? Although the situation may be somewhat of a low possibility, it could happen. If it does occur, who is to say that there isn't a response from the Egyptian side in the heat of the moment, which leads to a diplomatic catastrophe.

Briefs

Newly-elected MNAs sworn in

FROM PAGE 01
"Mr speaker [the members] sitting on your left are strangers [and do not belong here]," Gohar said while stressing that no one is allowed in the assembly by any other means other than those who come via the people's mandate. "The speaker is elected when the assembly is complete," he added while referring to the issue of allocation of reserved seats. After the PTI leader, the floor was then given to PML-N leader Khawaja Asif at which point the SIC members started chanting slogans and recorded their strong protest. Responding to the PTI's complaint regarding reserved seats, Asif highlighted that the SIC, which the PTI-backed independent candidates have joined, has not submitted any list regarding the allocation of reserved seats.

JUI-F to sit on opp benches...

FROM PAGE 01
already very frank with them," the senior politician answered another question regarding dialogues with major parties that formed a strong coalition to rule the country. However, he clarified, again, that the JUI-F would not take part in any affair of such a parliament that was not controlled by true representatives of the nation. He added that his party don't consider the current parliament a true representative of the nation after the February 8 nationwide polls. The Fazl-ed party had played a vital role in running a political movement against the former ruling party - Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) - and its supreme headed the multi-party alliance of the Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) for the successful ouster of the ex-premier Imran Khan in 2022 via parliamentary vote.

PATS Exercise concludes...

FROM PAGE 01
the semi mountainous terrain of Punjab. Over the years, the exercise has gained much prominence as a very competitive professional military activity for the friendly countries. While addressing the ceremony, COAS appreciated the participating teams for their professionalism, physical & mental endurance and high morale displayed during various stages of the exercise. COAS reiterated mutual learning during such exercises and highlighted that PATS is the right forum, which appropriately combines professional military skills and tactical acumen of all participating soldiers fostering much needed team spirit in the face of evolving character of war. To this effect, Pakistan Army upholds rich soldierly attributes of "character, courage and competence which have amply been displayed by our men in the face of fight against terrorism".

Over 104 killed in Israeli attack

FROM PAGE 01
Israeli aerial, artillery and shooting attacks last night and today. Meanwhile, Palestinian Resistance factions, the Palestinian Follow-up Committee for National and Islamic Forces, and the Palestinian Presidency put out statements condemning a "heinous" Israeli-committed massacre of Palestinian civilians waiting for aid to the west of Gaza City. The deliberate act of genocide targeted more than a thousand Palestinian civilians waiting since Wednesday night at an aid distribution location, hoping to receive basic necessities, such as food and water. However, during the early hours of Thursday morning, nearby occupation forces opened fire on the crowd, whether through tank shells or snipers, killing at least 104 people and injuring more than 750, according to the Ministry of Health in Gaza.

Green century steers Aust to 279-9 in first NZ Test

The 24-year-old brought up three figures with his 16th four in the final over to end day one on 103 with Josh Hazlewood yet to score

SPORTS DESK

WELLINGTON: Cameron Green slammed only his second Test century Thursday to steer Australia to 279-9 at stumps on the opening day of the first Test in Wellington. The visitors were tottering on 89-4 after being put into bat at the Basin Reserve before Green dug in for a rescue mission with the help of Mitchell Marsh, who made 40. The 24-year-old brought up three figures with his 16th four in the final over to end day one on 103 with Josh Hazlewood yet to score. "Obviously it feels really good, mainly with where we were as a team," Green said. "It was a pretty tough wicket out there someone just needed to bat through so glad it was me. Was nice to stick it out there, and hopefully put a semi-competitive total on the board." Green, batting at number four, fought back after New Zealand seamer Matt Henry took the key wickets of Steve Smith, Usman Khawaja and Marsh to end with 4-43 on a green pitch. Henry dismissed Smith for 31 before lunch, bowled Khawaja for 33 after the break then snaggled Marsh and Nathan Lyon, for five. Scott Kuggeleijn, restored to the side, also grabbed two wickets, removing out-of-form Marnus Labuschagne for one and Alex Carey for 10. Black Caps rising star Will O'Rourke, who took nine wickets on his debut this month, bagged two more in the shape of Travis Head (1) and Mitchell Starc (9). Green said the wicket would still offer plenty for the Australian quick bowlers on Friday. "It's pretty close, I reckon they are just on top," he said.



"They have a quality batting line-up and we have to bowl well tomorrow." Marsh and Green offered the resistance with a 67-run partnership off 77 balls. Injured New Zealand batsman Conway out of first Austral-

ia Test But Marsh succumbed to Henry, caught behind by Tom Blundell, before Carey meekly slapped a Kuggeleijn delivery to Kane Williamson at cover. With stumps beckoning, New Zealand attacked Australia's tail with Starc, Pat Cummins and Lyon dismissed in the space of 57 runs. After winning the toss, Tim Southee and New Zealand's pace bowlers were frustrated by Smith and Khawaja as they put on 61 before Henry got the breakthrough. Diving catch: Smith, promoted to open for the second Test in a row after the retirement of David Warner, lasted 71 deliveries, crunching four boundaries. Henry induced him to play back to a delivery that nipped and took the edge, with Blundell collecting a sharp diving catch in front of first slip. Labuschagne departed after a defensive knock, getting a thick outside edge to Daryl Mitchell at slip off Kuggeleijn, with Khawaja and Head following in quick succession. Henry's inswinger took out the stump of Khawaja before Head went after O'Rourke's but clipped the ball to Blundell. Marsh crashed six fours and a six before Henry struck again straight after tea, with Australia's Twenty20 skipper attempting a pull shot that landed in Blundell's gloves. Carey departed for 10 to leave Australia on 176-6 before O'Rourke had Starc caught at second slip. Cummins was trapped lbw by spinner Rachin Ravindra with Henry taking his fourth when Lyon was also caught behind. New Zealand are looking for a first Test victory over Australia since 2011 and came into the two-match series on the back of a 2-0 sweep against South Africa this month.

Liverpool's young players must be protected : Klopp

LIVERPOOL'S fans and the media must avoid sensationalising the Premier League club's young players and afford them the time they need to grow and learn, manager Jurgen Klopp said. Liverpool have a lengthy injury list and Klopp was forced to field a young team in their 3-0 win over Championship side Southampton on Wednesday, with 18-year-olds Jayden Danns and Lewis Koumas scoring their first goals for the senior team. Klopp compared the attention the teenagers were getting to Luke Littler, who made headlines last month as the youngest player to reach the final of the World Darts Championship. Klopp to leave Liverpool at end of the season: "It's a little bit like with the new darts sensation," Klopp told reporters. "It's fine for tonight, but from tomorrow on leave the boys in the corner please and don't ask 'where are they now, where are they now, where are they now'. They have a lot to improve, a lot to learn," Klopp said. "We said a couple of times that the future doesn't look that bad. Don't forget it when the transfer window opens that there are a couple of pretty promising players already here. Don't close the door on them with 12 signings." Meanwhile, Liverpool made

a pre-tax loss of £9 million (\$11.4 million) last season as increased commercial income failed to offset a drop in media and matchday revenues, the club's latest accounts revealed on Thursday. Overall revenue to the end of May 2023 remained static at £594 million after a disappointing campaign in which Jurgen Klopp's men finished fifth in the Premier League and made early exits from the Champions League and both domestic cups. The wage bill for the current Premier League leaders rose £7 million to £373 million and administrative costs climbed by £17 million to £562 million. The previous 12 months had produced a small profit of £7.5 million. Liverpool's biggest income stream in 2022/23 was the £272 million, up £25 million, generated from off-field income, but a last-16 Champions League exit a year after reaching the final meant media revenue dropped by £19 million to £242 million. Liverpool's young players must be protected, says Klopp: Matchday revenue also fell due to fewer games being played last season after the previous campaign, when the club played in every fixture - a total of 63 - they were eligible for, winning both domestic cups and reaching the Champions

League final. "Despite the significant growing costs of football, the success of our commercial operations demonstrates the strength of our underlying financial position so we can continue to operate sustainably while competing at the highest levels of football," said managing director Andy Hughes. "While these financial results are a moment in time on our journey, what remains constant is the growing global appeal of the club." Matchday revenue will increase after the new Anfield Road stand was fully opened earlier in February, meaning Anfield's capacity will reach 61,000. During the reporting period Liverpool signed Darwin Nunez, Cody Gakpo, Calvin Ramsay and youth team goalkeeper Korneel Miskir for a combined initial fee of £105 million but offloaded Sadio Mane, Divock Origi, Takumi Minamino and Neco Williams. There were also significant contract renewals, including one for top-scorer Mohamed Salah, who became the highest earner in the club's history on a reported deal of £300,000 per week. Liverpool, on Sunday crowned League Cup champions in manager Klopp's final season at Anfield, are top of the Premier League and still involved in the FA Cup and the Europa League.

Ronaldo handed one match ban, fine after obscene gesture

The Saudi Arabian Football Federation's Ethics and Discipline Committee also ordered the Portuguese star to pay an additional SR20,000 to Al-Shabab, as compensation for the Riyadh club's complaint filing fees

RIYADH: Al-Nassr striker Cristiano Ronaldo has been suspended for one match and fined SR10,000 (\$2,666) after making an offensive gesture following his team's victory over Al-Shabab in the Saudi Pro League on Sunday. The Saudi Arabian Football Federation's Ethics and Discipline Committee also ordered the Portuguese star to pay an additional SR20,000 to Al-Shabab, as compensation for the Riyadh club's complaint filing fees. Following the game on Sunday, videos posted on social media showed Ronaldo cupping his ear and repeatedly thrusting his hand forward near his pelvis, seemingly aimed at rival Al-Shabab supporters. In the background, chants of "Messi" could be heard, referring to Ronaldo's longstanding football rival from Argentina. The committee called in the five-time Ballon d'Or winner to hear his response to the complaint filed by Al-Shabab, and asked the official broadcaster to provide footage of the incident in question. The committee said in a statement that the decision is non-appealable. This is not the first time that the Portuguese legend has been at the heart of fan controversy. Earlier this month, the star was seen putting a scarf down his shorts before throwing it back at Al-Hilal fans after Al-Nassr lost in the Riyadh Season Cup. In the same game, the striker reacted angrily to Al-Hilal fans chanting the name of Lionel Messi. Last year, the 39-year-old attacker grabbed his crotch after Al-Hilal fans taunted him by again invoking the name of the Argentine World Cup winner. - Agencies

Bumrah included in squad for final England Test

The BCCI also shared an update about the injured pacer Mohammed Shami who missed the Test series owing to a heel injury and underwent surgery recently

NEW DELHI : India's pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah will return to the team for the last Test against England in Dharamsala, confirmed by the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) on Thursday. Bumrah was rested from the fourth Test, which India won by five wickets and clinched the series with an unassailable 3-1 lead in the five-match series. Meanwhile, top-order batter KL Rahul remained unavailable for selection due to a quadriceps tendon injury and is currently in London to consult with doctors. "The BCCI medical team is closely monitoring him and coordinating with specialists in London for further management of his issue," Board of Control for Cricket in India secretary Jay Shah said in a statement. The BCCI also shared an update about the injured pacer Mohammed Shami who missed the Test series owing to a heel injury and underwent surgery recently. "He is recovering well and will soon head to the National Cricket Academy (NCA) in Bengaluru to commence his rehabilitation process," Shah said of Shami. India's squad for the final Test. Rohit Sharma (c), Jasprit Bumrah (vc), Yashasvi Jaiswal, Shubman Gill, Rajat Patidar, Sarfaraz Khan, Dhruv Jurel (wk), KS Bharat (wk), Devdutt Padikkal, R Ashwin, Ravindra Jadeja, Axar Patel, Kuldeep Yadav, Mohammed Siraj, Mukesh Kumar, Akash Deep. - Agencies

Baseball superstar Ohtani ties the knot

TOKYO: Shohei Ohtani, Japanese baseball superstar, confirmed on Thursday that he has tied the knot but kept the identity of his wife a mystery. The Los Angeles Dodgers player added that he is not only starting a new chapter in his career with the Dodgers but has also begun a new life with someone from his native country who is very special. "I am excited for what is (to) come and thank you for your support," the 29-year-old said in an Instagram post that racked up almost 1.5 million likes in just one hour. Ohtani, who clinched his second American League Most Valuable Player award in six seasons with the Los Angeles Angels in 2023, added a picture of his dog at the bottom of the post. - Agencies

The Hundred: Usama Mir, Haris Rauf retained ahead of draft

"Teams do not have to use all of their retention slots, allowing them more picks in The Hundred Draft. "For both competitions, players can agree a different salary band to the one they were on previously - either higher or lower

LONDON : Manchester Originals have retained spinner Usama Mir, while Welsh Fire have retained pacer Haris Rauf for this year's The Hundred tournament. Usama is currently playing for the Multan Sultans in the ongoing Pakistan Super League (PSL) season nine. Meanwhile, Haris was ruled out of the event after dislocating his shoulder during the match between Karachi Kings and Lahore Qalandars. The right-artermer will need four to six weeks to recover before being back in action. The fourth year of The Hundred will begin on Tuesday, July 23 when defending men's champions Oval Invincibles host Birmingham Phoenix. A day later, reigning women's champions Southern Brave will start their campaign when they welcome London Spirit. Teams had until today to retain players from their 2023 squads. "Women's teams may keep a maximum of eight players. Men's teams can keep up to 10 players, plus one Centrally Contracted England star. If teams do not retain a Central Contract player, there will be a draft to ensure all teams have one," the tournament organisers confirmed. "Teams do not have to use all of their retention slots, allowing them more picks in The Hundred Draft. "For both competitions, players can agree a different salary band to the one they were on previously - either higher or lower. "Teams will then have the chance to fill in the gaps in their squad. This will happen during The Hundred Draft. "Every player who enters the Draft will have a reserve price. This is the lowest amount of money that they can be signed for. But they can receive more money if a team wants to offer it! "Both competitions will have their own Draft. Teams will take turns to select players. Draft orders will be the reverse of the final standings from 2023." - Agencies

Boulter shocks Maia, advances to first WTA 500 QFs

Katie Boulter came from a set down to upset 2nd-seeded Beatriz Haddad Maia and claim a slot in the Last 8 at the WTA 500 Cymbiotika San Diego Open

OUR CORRESPONDENTS

LONDON: Britain's Katie Boulter came from a set down to upset 2nd-seeded Beatriz Haddad Maia and claim a slot in the Last 8 at the WTA 500 Cymbiotika San Diego Open, while top seed Jessica Pegula and Marta Kostyuk, the 6th seed, also advanced with straight set wins on Wednesday. The British No 1 lost 11 points in a row as the Brazilian took the first set, but then managed to recover to win the 2nd-round match, 3-6 6-3 6-4. The 27-year old, who is ranked 49, held 3 break points midway through the first set, only for the World No 13 to fight back and grasp her only break point chance of the opener. The roles, though, were reversed in the second set, as Boulter claimed the only break before racing into a 5-1 lead in the decider. Although Haddad Maia, a tricky left-hander, broke back and cut

the deficit down to a single game, Boulter made no mistake serving for the match for a second time to seal her well-earned quarter-final spot. The Brit beat Ukrainian Lesia Tsurenko, 6-3 6-1, in her opening match on Monday, clinching 6 of the 8 break point opportunities she carved out at Barnes Stadium. Boulter also reached the Last 16 of her previous tournament in Linz earlier this month, including a straight-sets win over Italy's Jasmine Paolini, the newly-minted Dubai champion. This latest result is Boulter's second Top 20 win of the season, having defeated Pegula at the United Cup in January. Boulter next will play either Croatia's Donna Vekic, the runner-up in 2022, or Canada's Marina Stakusic in the Last 8 on Friday. Later,

Boulter addressed the current speculation over former World No 1 Andy Murray's retirement, who has said that he has no plans of playing past this summer. "I mean, I'm likely not going to play past this summer," Murray

said after his 2nd-round exit at the Dubai Duty Free Tennis Championships on Wednesday. "Yeah, I mean Andy Murray is Andy Murray, isn't he? He's the biggest fighter, the biggest lover of tennis, you know his attributes," Boulter told the media. "I could go on for a very long time. "He's inspired a lot of players, especially in our country, definitely myself. I just love seeing him out there." Boulter added that Murray should keep going as long as he is enjoying being out there, and retirement should come on the 36-year old's own terms. "Even the fact that he's out there now and he's still going, I think, as long as he's enjoying himself and getting what he wants out of the sport, that's the most important thing," Boulter

said. "When he retires, I think that's on his terms, and what he really wants to do, but I can speak for a lot of people when they say they've loved watching him play... I certainly have." Meanwhile, Pegula, the American World No 5, made a winning return to competition by easing past German qualifier Jule Niemeier, 6-0 6-4, in the Round of 16 after receiving a 1st-round bye. Pegula will face either Russia's Anna Blinkova or Dayana Yastremska from Ukraine for a place in her first semi-final of the season. Playing her first match since an early 2nd-round exit at the Australian Open in January, Pegula lost just 9 points in the first set, and built a 6-0, 5-1 lead, before Niemeier began to find her range. The German, ranked 126, powered through the next 3 games to close the gap, but the top seed finally scored the win after 64 minutes, finishing it in some style with an outstanding backhand pass.

Abbas discusses Israeli...

FROM PAGE 01
during these challenging times. President Abbas reiterated the State of Palestine's unequivocal rejection of the displacement of any Palestinian citizen, whether in the Gaza Strip or the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. He affirmed that Gaza is an integral part of the State of Palestine, and that any plan by Israel, the occupying power, to separate it from the rest of Palestinian land or annex any part of it is utterly rejected. The President underscored the imperative to halt the Israeli occupation's continuous attacks against the Palestinian people in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, the crimes of terrorist colonists, and the withholding of Palestinian clearance funds.

PTI to move SC against election...

FROM PAGE 01
He said the PTI supported the IMF programme conditionally and the political stability was a must to bring economic stability. "The electricity has increased to Rs70 per unit and the gas prices are also skyrocketing. In such circumstance, the gas and electricity bills will shoot upto Rs100,000," he said. He stated the Pakistan Democratic Alliance (PDM) had played havoc with the country and if the reins of the country were not handed over to the legitimate heirs, more destruction would be waiting ahead. Shaheen hopped Chief Justice Qazi Faez Isa would not be a part of the five members' bench in cases against the PTI founder to avoid partiality.

MQM-P did not ask for any cabinet...

FROM PAGE 01
Siddiqui emphasised that the MQM-P's focus was not on governorship or ministries, but on delivering the benefits of democracy to the people. The return of the MQM signifies a genuine mandate, and despite expecting more seats, the party is prepared to voice its concerns about electoral irregularities on appropriate platforms, he added. Furthermore, Siddiqui underscored the persistent nature of the issues, stating that the circumstances today mirror those of 75 years ago. He highlighted the significance of a democracy that truly benefitted the public, highlighting the imperative to grant rights to Pakistan's 230 million citizens.

Inflation may ease in March

FROM PAGE 01
which tracks the most globally traded food commodities, averaged 118.0 points in January 2024 down by 1.0pc from the December level. The report comes a day before the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) is set to release the inflation data for this month, and while Pakistan undertakes reforms linked to a \$3 billion Standby Arrangement with the International Monetary Fund (IMF). It must be noted that the yearly Consumer Price Index for January clocked in at 28.3pc, the last monthly CPI data before general elections held on Feb 8.

Ayaz, Dogar to contest...

FROM PAGE 01
their nomination papers. The proposers for Sardar Ayaz Sadiq included Chaudhry Salik Hussain, Abdul Aleem Khan, Syed Naveed Qamar, and Sardar Awais Ahmad Khan Leghari. Malik Muhammad Amir Dogar's nomination was proposed by Sahibzada Sibghatullah, Ali Muhammad, and Dr. Amjad Ali Khan. Ghulam Mustafa Shah's nomination for Deputy Speaker was proposed by Muhammad Raza Hayat Hiraj and Aijaz Hussain Jakhrami. Junaid Akbar's nomination was proposed by Muhammad Sanaulah Khan Masti Khel, Muhammad Riaz Khan Fatiyana, and Mehr Ghulam Muhammad Lali.

Briefs

UK gov't
boosts
security
funding for
Jews

LONDON: British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak on Wednesday announced 54 million pounds (\$68 million) of new funding to protect Jewish communities against antisemitism over the next four years. Earlier this month Jewish advisory body the Community Security Trust (CST) said Britain recorded thousands of antisemitic incidents after the outbreak of war between Israel and Hamas in October, making 2023 the worst year for UK antisemitism since its records began in 1984. "It is shocking, and wrong, the prejudice, the racism we have seen in recent months," Sunak said in a speech to the CST's annual dinner, according to extracts released by his office. "It is hatred, pure and simple. An assault on the Jewish people. We will fight this antisemitism with everything we've got." The government had already given the CST, which advises Britain's estimated 280,000 Jews on security matters, 18 million pounds for 2024-25, taking the total funding up to 2028 to 70 million pounds.—APP

Navalny
funeral
planned in
Moscow on
Friday

WARSAW : Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny's funeral service will be held at a church in southern Moscow on Friday, allies of the politician said. Authorities finally handed Navalny's body to his mother on Saturday, more than a week after he died in an Arctic prison, in what his allies said was an attempt to stall a public burial. "Alexei's funeral will be held at the 'Mother of God Quench My Sorrows' church in Maryino on 1 March at 14:00 (11:00 GMT). Come in advance," they said in a social media post on Wednesday. His burial will take place at the nearby Borisov cemetery, they said. His team said it was difficult to find a church willing to host the service. "We started to look for a church and a hall for the 1st of March. Everywhere they refused to give us anything. In some places we were told it was forbidden," said exiled ally Ivan Zhdanov. "We don't care about the message. Alexei needs to be buried ... To have a chance to say goodbye, it is better to come in advance," he added. Navalny, President Vladimir Putin's most vocal critic, died on February 16 in one of Russia's toughest prisons in northern Siberia, where he was serving a 19-year sentence on charges widely seen as political retribution for his opposition.—APP

Foreign
investors
withdraw
from Japanese
stocks

TOKYO : Japanese stocks experienced a slight outflow of foreign capital last week, following a series of robust purchases in previous weeks. According to exchange data, in the holiday-shortened week ended Feb. 22, foreigners withdrew a net 2.83 billion yen (about \$19 million) out of Japanese stocks, marking their first weekly sale in three weeks. In cash equities, they ended a seven-week buying streak with withdrawals of about 78.65 billion yen on a net basis. On the contrary, they still purchased about 75.82 billion yen of derivatives contracts. The Nikkei share average hit a record high of 39,426.29 on Tuesday, surpassing the 1989 bubble-era peak, driven by a tech rally, corporate governance reforms, and a weaker yen. Both the Nikkei and the broader Topix index continued their upward trend for the fourth consecutive week. The Nikkei jumped 1.6% last week while the broader Topix index added 1.37%. Meanwhile, data from the Ministry of Finance indicated that overseas investors remained net sellers in the Japanese debt market for the second successive week.—Agencies

Philippines won't cede maritime territory: Marcos

"The challenges that we face may be formidable, but equally formidable is our resolve. We will not yield," Marcos tells Australia's Parliament

FOREIGN DESK

CANBERRA: Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos told Australia's parliament his country was on the "frontline" of a battle for regional peace Thursday — pledging resolve as he sought support in maritime disputes with China. With Beijing's warships detected in waters off his country's coast, Marcos told Australian lawmakers that "the Philippines now finds itself on the frontline against actions that undermine regional peace, erode regional stability, and threaten regional success." He vowed to remain firm in defending his country's sovereignty. "I will not allow any attempt by any foreign power to take even one square inch of our sovereign territory," Marcos said to loud applause. "The challenges that we face may be formidable, but equally formidable is our resolve. We will not yield." Philippines authorities this week said they detected Chinese navy vessels around the Scarborough Shoal — an area seized by Beijing in 2012.

China has claimed the shoal and swathes of the South China Sea as its own, ignoring regional objections and an international tribunal ruling that the claims have no legal basis. It has long deployed coast guard and other vessels around the Scarborough Shoal to prevent Philippine access. But Marcos has called the deployment of warships a new and "worrisome" development. The South China Sea is strategically vital for several countries, providing a key route for the import and export of essential fuel, food and other goods. The Philippines and other countries — backed by the United States — have argued the waterway should be free and open. China has rapidly grown its naval forces in recent years, and snatched vast tracts of maritime territory, hoping to project its military and political power well beyond the country's shores. "The protection of the South China Sea as a critical global artery is crucial to the preservation of regional peace. And I dare say of global peace" Marcos said. Meanwhile, Marcos Jr



also told a news conference that he had reminded China's ambassador that escalating aggression and incursions into Philippine waters by Beijing's coastguard, navy and maritime militia forces violated an agreement he struck with Chinese President

Xi Jinping last month. The laser-pointing incident was, he said, insufficient provocation to invoke a mutual defence treaty with the United States, which is a longstanding military ally of Manila. "If we activated that, what we are doing is escalating, intensifying the tensions in the area and I think that would be counterproductive," the president told reporters. Beijing's embassy in Manila did not respond to a request for comment on Saturday. China claims large swathes of the South China Sea as its official maritime territory, a region where about \$3 trillion in ship-borne trade passes annually. An international court ruling in 2016 found that China had no legal basis for its claims in the South China Sea. China's foreign ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin this week accused the Philippines and the US of engaging in "pure political drama" in taking the South China Sea case to the international court of arbitration. The spokesperson also said that China would not be intimidated by the US.

Erdogan boasts democracy, development despite obstacles

WEB DESK

ANKARA: President Recep Tayyip Erdogan was in the western city of Aydin on Thursday. Addressing thousands of supporters in the hometown of Adnan Menderes, the prime minister hanged by a military junta, Erdogan highlighted their efforts to strengthen democracy and advance development in the country. As he sought support for the Justice and Development Party (AK Party) for the March 31 municipal elections, Erdogan reiterated his commitment to the "policy of improving infrastructure and superstructures" while recalling how the country suffered a blow from the coups, thwarting its progress. "Adnan Menderes paid the price of serving his nation

and the country at the gallows. Türkiye's steps for democracy, unfortunately, were disrupted by turmoil. One of the important links in the chain of coups was the 'postmodern' Feb. 28 coup. It is a shameful chapter in the history of our democracy," Erdogan said. "The mindset that sent Menderes to the gallows was more sinister in the Feb. 28 coup. We remember how they violated women's right to education and work because of their clothes, how businesses were discriminated against, how some media outlets acted as mouthpieces of (putschists), how freedoms were trampled upon in those dark days." The memorandum, seemingly an ordinary one but essentially a culmination of a witch hunt targeting conservative Muslims across the country, trig-

gered a series of events, starting with the resignation of then-Prime Minister Necmettin Erbakan and eventually came to be known as one of the most significant turning points in Türkiye's political history. The coup was a non-violent takeover wherein the military employed pressure tactics like issuing ultimatums and memorandums. Still, the consequences proved aggressive for Turkish conservatives in media, military, judiciary and bureaucracy, who were suddenly the target of a crackdown. In addition, Muslims, devout or not, pro-government or not, increasingly faced the wrath of secular forces everywhere; even performing prayers was enough for anyone in the public sector to be blacklisted. Women wearing headscarves were fired from their jobs, while

headscarf-wearing women were not allowed to attend universities. Companies owned and operated by conservative businesspeople faced threats, prosecution and intimidation. The president said he himself faced the threat of a coup in his political career, such as a controversial verdict that led to his imprisonment and a political ban while he was mayor of Istanbul. He said that the AK Party governments also faced the Gezi Park riots in 2013 and, later, a 2016 coup attempt by the Gülenist Terrorist Group (FETÖ). "We know the plots of imperialist forces trying to rule the country; we know who their puppets are. We fought them in Cudi and Gabar and buried them in their caves," he said, referring to former terrorism hot spots in the eastern Türkiye.

More than 20 dead in migrant shipwreck off Senegal

DAKAR : Rescuers pulled more than 20 bodies from the sea off northern Senegal on Wednesday after a Europe-bound boat loaded with migrants sank, a regional governor told AFP, with fears rising for the missing. "A little more than 20 bodies" had been found, Saint-Louis regional governor Alioune Badara Samb said by telephone, adding that another 20 people had been saved. "Since the afternoon, we have been witnessing lifeless bodies wash up," he said, with local rescuers and the navy searching for survivors after nightfall. Badara Samb did not say how many passengers were aboard the vessel but survivors told AFP that the number could have been in the hundreds. Mamady Dianfo, a survivor from Casamance in the far south of the country, said there were about 300 passengers when the boat left Senegal a week ago. Another survivor, Alpha Balde, spoke of 200 passengers. Dianfo said the vessel reached Morocco, where the captain said he was lost and could no longer continue the journey. "We asked him to take us back to Senegal," he added, saying the accident happened in the notoriously dangerous waters off Saint-Louis. Senegal's coasts are an increasingly common departure point for African migrants heading to the Spanish Canary Islands, their port of entry into Europe. According to EU border agency Frontex, Senegal and Morocco are the most common nationalities of migrants arriving on the Atlantic archipelago.—DNA

Poland signs \$2.5B air defence deal with US

WARSAW: Poland signed an agreement worth more than \$2.5 billion with the United States for the delivery of an integrated anti-aircraft and anti-missile defence command system, the defence ministry said on Thursday. NATO-member Poland is spending around 4% of gross domestic product (GDP) on defence this year, as Russia's invasion of Ukraine makes strengthening the armed forces a top priority. "It is the brain of the air defence that will change the face of the Polish military," Defence Minister Wladyslaw Kosiniak-Kamysz told a press conference. The contract concerns the purchase of an integrated anti-aircraft and anti-missile defence command system, including the necessary command and communication equipment which will be used with Wisla medium-range and Narzew short-range air defence systems, the defence ministry said. Poland willing to 'co-finance' Ukraine grain exports to world: PM—APP

South Korea seeks talks as medics strike

SEOUL: South Korea said Thursday it was seeking its first talks with striking junior doctors, warning them to return to hospitals ahead of a looming deadline or risk legal action over work stoppages that have plunged hospitals into chaos. Nearly 10,000 junior doctors — about 80 percent of the trainee workforce — handed in their notice and walked off the job last week to protest government plans to sharply increase medical school admissions to cope with shortages and an aging society. Doctors say the plan would hurt the quality of service, and the Korean Medical Association (KMA) has slammed the government's "intimidation tactics." Under South Korean law, doctors are prohibited from striking, and the government has threatened to arrest and suspend the medical licenses of medics who do not return to work by Thursday. Second Vice Health Minister Park Min-soo said he had contacted doctors involved in the strike seeking talks and hoped to meet them later Thursday, adding he was unsure "how many people will attend." Doctors had begun trickling back to work in hospitals, Park said. "We have confirmed a downgrade in the walkouts for two days in a row," he told a press briefing. But Health Minister Cho Kyoo-hong told local media on Thursday that "a full-scale return has not yet materialized." "As today is the last day (to) return, I implore them to do so for the patients," he said, adding medics who returned to work before the deadline expired would not be punished.—DNA

Guinea unions announce suspension of strike

CONAKRY : Guinean trade unions on said they were suspending a general strike that has paralysed the military-run country for three days after a prominent media activist was released. Sekou Jamal Pendessa, secretary general of the Union of Press Professionals of Guinea, was detained last month for calling a demonstration against censorship. His release on Wednesday was one of the strikers' main demands in a country where protests are rare under junta leader Mamady Doumbouya. The movement "informs the public, private and informal authorities of its willingness to resume negotiations from tomorrow, Thursday", it said in a statement. Abdoulaye Sow, a spokesman for the union movement, earlier said Pendessa's release meant "we can return to the negotiating table with the government to support the other claims." Lower food prices, an end to media censorship and improved living conditions for civil servants are the protester demands to be tackled at the upcoming talks. Already detained for more than a month, Pendessa had been sentenced on Friday to six months in prison, of which three were suspended.—APP

Urgent call for UN action in Sudan's war

UNITED NATIONS: The United States on Wednesday pushed for the United Nations Security Council to take action to help end a nearly year-long conflict in Sudan between the Sudanese army and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF). The United States says the warring parties have committed war crimes and the RSF and allied militias have also committed crimes against humanity and ethnic cleansing. The UN says that nearly 25 million people — half Sudan's population — need aid and some 8 million have fled their homes and hunger is rising. "It is clear that this is an urgent matter of peace and security that demands greater attention from the Security Council," US Ambassador to the UN Linda Thomas-Greenfield told in a statement. "The council must act urgently to alleviate human suffering, hold perpetrators to account, and bring the conflict in Sudan to an end. Time is running out," she said, without specifying what action the 15-member council should take. Since war erupted on April 15, 2023, the council has only issued three press statements condemning and expressing concern about the war. It echoed that language in a resolution in December that shut down a UN political mission — following a request from Sudan's acting foreign minister. Between 10,000 and 15,000 people were killed in one city alone in Sudan's West Darfur region last year in ethnic violence by the RSF and allied Arab militia, according to a UN sanctions monitors report, seen by last month. "I am deeply disappointed that the allegations detailed in this report have received such little attention, both inside the UN Security Council and outside the United Nations," said Thomas-Greenfield, who visited a refugee camp in Chad near the border with Sudan's Darfur in September. The Sudanese government recently prohibited aid deliveries through Chad, effectively shutting down a crucial route for supplies to the vast Darfur region, which is controlled by the rival RSF. Thomas-Greenfield described the move as "unacceptable" for threatening a "critical lifeline." last year chronicled the ethnically targeted violence committed in West Darfur. In hundreds of interviews with survivors described horrific scenes of bloodletting in El Geneina and on the 30-km (18-mile) route from the city to the border with Chad as people fled.—Agencies



Rabat: Pakistan Ambassador Muhammad Sami met with H.E. Mohamed Methqal, Director General AMCI, in his office today. Discussed close avenues of cooperation and educational exchanges on both sides.—DNA

Norwegian NGO official describes Gaza's desolation

LONDON: An official of the Norwegian Refugee Council has described the worsening situation and suffering in the Gaza Strip following his visit to the besieged enclave this week. "What I have wit-

nessed in Gaza this week is a civilian population engulfed by destruction, desperation and despair. Famine is a growing threat here, as millions of trapped people face a nightmare of violence and

starvation," Jan Egeland, secretary general of the humanitarian organization, said in a statement on Thursday. "The children of Gaza are visibly malnourished, reduced to searching the streets for food and assistance. It is unimaginable that an entire population is left to starve while vast amounts of supplies sit waiting just a few miles away across the border." Israel has pounded the Gaza Strip since the Oct. 7 Hamas cross-border incursion, which Tel Aviv says

killed nearly 1,200 people and took around 240 people as hostages. More than 30,000 Palestinians have since been killed and over 70,000 others injured amid mass destruction and shortages of necessities. Israel stands accused of genocide at the International Court of Justice, which in an interim January ruling ordered Tel Aviv to stop genocidal acts and take measures to guarantee that humanitarian assistance is provided to civilians in Gaza.—DNA

Zuckerberg, South Korea's Yoon discuss AI cooperation

Yoon and Zuckerberg discussed cooperation between South Korean companies and Meta "as well as the vision to create an AI digital ecosystem", Sung Tae-yeon

NEWS DESK

SEOUL: Meta chief Mark Zuckerberg met South Korea's President Yoon Suk Yeol in Seoul Thursday and discussed cooperation on AI and ways to prevent fake news circulation ahead of key elections, Yoon's office said. Zuckerberg is on a mini-tour of Asia that has included a stop in Japan, plus a three-day visit to Seoul where he met business leaders from electronics giants Samsung and LG. He heads to India next. Yoon and Zuckerberg discussed cooperation between South Korean companies and Meta "as well as the vision to create an AI digital ecosystem",

Sung Tae-yeon, Yoon's chief of staff for policy, told reporters. "Yoon emphasised South Korean companies' top place in the memory market for AI systems and asked Zuckerberg to forge close cooperations with them," the official said. Yoon stressed that South Korea "with its diverse portfolio of smart electronics, wearable devices and smart cars, can become an outstanding platform" to apply Facebook parent Meta's artificial intelligence, Sung said. Yoon told the Meta founder that Seoul would assist in any way "if necessary", Sung added, pointing to close supply chain cooperation mechanisms established between South Korea and the United States. Mark Zuckerberg

to attend Ambani wedding during Asia tour In light of major elections globally this year — including a South Korean parliamentary vote in April and the US presidential election in November — Yoon asked the Meta chief to "pay special attention" to monitoring and preventing fake news on his platform. On Wednesday, Zuckerberg met the CEO of consumer tech giant LG Electronics to discuss extended reality (XR) projects, South Korea's Yonhap news agency reported. Meta is collaborating with LG to develop a premium headset that will compete with Apple's Vision Pro, the Korea Economic Daily reported. The Meta boss also met Lee Jaeyoung, the head of Samsung Elec-

tronics — one of the world's biggest producers of smartphones and computer chips — to explore potential collaborations in AI memory chips and XR businesses. Yonhap reported. Samsung is among the few companies worldwide that manufacture premium high-bandwidth memory (HBM) chips tailored for AI processors. Yonhap said Zuckerberg also met representatives from at least five AI and XR startups at Meta's Seoul office. Spearheaded by OpenAI's ChatGPT, generative artificial intelligence is a technology that can conjure up text, images and audio from simple prompts in just seconds. Its rapid development has been heralded as potentially revolutionary for

everything from video games to politics — but is not without risks. Meta was one of 20 major tech firms, including OpenAI, to sign a pledge this month to crack down on AI content intended to deceive voters ahead of elections around the world this year. Yonhap reported that Zuckerberg will leave Seoul on Thursday for India. He will attend the lavish March 1-3 pre-wedding celebrations of the son of Mukesh Ambani, chairman of Indian oil-to-telecoms giant Reliance, reports said. Meta, Google and others have invested billions of dollars in Reliance's digital unit Jio Platforms as it seeks to take on Amazon and Walmart in India's vast e-commerce market.

Briefs

Asad Toor on hunger strike

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Outspoken vlogger Asad Toor has been on hunger strike since his detention by FIA over charges of stoking a social media drive against the judiciary and other institutions, his lawyer Hadi Ali Chatta shared on Thursday. "Toor has not eaten anything in the last 36 hours," said his counsel updating the media about Toor's health and his meeting with his mother today who was allowed to see him on court's orders at the FIA office. "The FIA also called rescue personnel after Asad Toor fell sick last night." Hadi said that during custody, the FIA didn't interrogate Toor about the anti-judiciary campaign, adding he is being asked about vlogs he did about other people.

ANP announces boycott of election process

SHAMIM SHAHID

PESHAWAR: After JUI-F, the Awami National Party (ANP) also announced to boycott election process for constitutional positions in Senate and provincial assemblies. As per details, ANP chief Asfandiyar Wali Khan in a statement said that his party would neither vote for any other party nor field its candidates in elections for the posts of Senate Chairman and Deputy Chairman. "The ANP would also boycott the elections of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan chief ministers," he added. Asfandiyar Wali Khan said that ANP wants civilian supremacy and strengthened democracy and the parliament. He said that the major parties have also offered the ANP of main positions in return for votes in the Senate and provincial assemblies.

Balochistan Assembly elects speaker unopposed
PPP MPA Ghazala Gola also elected deputy speaker unopposed

DNA

QUETTA: PML-N candidate MPA Abdul Khaliq Achakzai has been elected unopposed as the Balochistan Assembly speaker. Whereas, the secretary said, Pakistan Peoples Party MPA Ghazala Gola has been elected unopposed as the provincial assembly's deputy speaker. Balochistan Assembly Secretary Tahir Shah Kakar announced this after no opponent came forward against the two MPAs. Achakzai and Gola have taken oath Thursday (today) afternoon, he added. They were nominated for the posts of speaker and deputy speaker by their respective parties. The newly sworn-in assembly was scheduled to vote for the election of the house's speaker and deputy speaker today but they were able to secure the post without taking a vote since no other candidate submitted their papers against them by the 12pm deadline set for submission of papers.

Russia's Putin warns West of risk of nuclear war

Russia will not allow anyone to interfere in its internal affairs, Putin says in his annual address to parliament

FOREIGN DESK

MOSCOW: Russian President Vladimir Putin has warned Western countries against sending troops to Ukraine. The consequences of such a decision would be "tragic", he said. In his annual state of the nation address, President Putin accused the West of trying to drag Russia into an arms race. At the same time, he said that Russia needed to strengthen its defences on its western border now that Sweden and Finland were joining Nato. President Putin said the West "provoked" the conflict in Ukraine and "continues to lie, without any embarrassment, saying that Russia allegedly intends to attack Europe". Probably referring to comments by French President Emmanuel Macron earlier this week that sending Nato ground troops to

Ukraine "could not be excluded", President Putin said: "The consequences for possible interventionists will be... tragic." "We also have weapons that can hit targets on their territory," he added. "All this really threatens a conflict with the use of nuclear weapons and the destruction of civilisation. Don't they get that?" Several Nato countries, including the US, Germany and the UK, ruled out deploying ground troops to Ukraine. President Putin also boasted about Russia's sophisticated weapons - like hypersonic aircraft and unmanned underwater vehicles - and said that Russia's strategic nuclear forces are in a "state of full readiness". Notably, President Putin explicitly referred to the two years of fighting in Ukraine as a "war", despite his repeated insistence that Russia's invasion should be described as a "special military operation". He said that

an "absolute majority" of Russians supported his decision to invade Ukraine, and that the Russian people were now united against what he called Western attempts to weaken the country. He also hit out at accusations from the US that Russia is developing nuclear weapons for use against satellites in space. The speech came just over two weeks before Russia's presidential election, in which President Putin is widely expected to win a fifth term in office. Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said the address could "to a large degree be seen as [Putin's] election programme". Indeed, much of the address focused on domestic issues ranging from the modernisation of the tax system to pensions and incentives aimed at boosting Russia's dwindling birth rate. He also talked about the need to improve the health of the nation, announcing a series of measures aimed at boosting

Russia's life expectancy, which at 70 is currently one of the lowest in Europe. Urging people to focus on physical activity and cut down alcohol consumption, he joked: "Stop drinking and start skiing!" The speech lasted a record two hours and was attended by all senior politicians, the CEOs of oil and gas firms Rosneft and Gazprom, as well as religious leaders of all denominations. It was broadcast on giant screens across Moscow, and several cinemas in Russian cities reportedly screened it free of charge. As expected, there was no mention of the death of Alexei Navalny, the opposition leader who died in a Siberian penal colony two weeks ago and who many saw as President Putin's greatest opponent. Navalny, who will be buried in Moscow on Friday, died under circumstances yet to be fully established on 16 February. His widow Yulia has insisted that President Putin was responsible.

President should uphold constitution: Tessori

KARACHI: Sindh Governor Kamran Tessori said on Thursday that President Dr Arif Alvi should uphold the constitution. Speaking to media in Sehwan Sharif, Tessori said: "The president should leave the presidency in a good way." Tessori emphasised unity, saying, "Everyone should join hands in terms of stabilising the country. There is a dire need to stage the politics with a positive mindset." "There is an urgent need to work for the sake of the masses' uplift, considering the current situation," he added. Separately, MQM-P leader Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui stressed the need for upholding democracy in the country. Expressing his thoughts, Siddiqui said: "The democracy cannot be strengthened unless the participation of the masses in the process is ensured." - DNA

USAID conference makes strides for gender-inclusive solutions



STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Pakistani and international participants concluded a four-day conference dedicated to driving gender-inclusive solutions to the world's most pressing challenges, including climate resilience, entrepreneurship, and sustainable water management. This groundbreaking event, organized by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) in partnership with the National Rural Support Program (NRSP), was a beacon of innovation and inclusivity in alignment with this year's International Women's Day campaign theme, 'Inspire Inclusion.' Under the banner of USAID, the conference - hosted by NRSP, led by the All Pakistan Women Universities Consortium (APWUC), and composed of 18 women's universities from Pakistan - brought together approximately 250 participants. This diverse assembly included representatives from U.S. Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs), high-level Pakistani government officials, international donors, private sector entities, and civic

organizations. The conference aimed to resolve local development challenges by applying localized research and approaches, aligning with the "Green Alliance" framework. At the closing ceremony, U.S. Embassy Deputy Chief of Mission Andrew Schofer said, "May our shared commitment to 'Inspire Inclusion' propel us toward a future where the contributions of each individual, community, and partner are duly recognized and celebrated." Throughout the event, a series of keynote speeches, interactive workshops, and networking opportunities allowed participants to share insights, forge partnerships, and contribute to a collective effort aimed at creating a more sustainable and inclusive future. As the world faces complex challenges, this event is a testament to the power of partnership and inclusivity, paving the way for transformative solutions. This conference marks a pivotal moment in the global commitment to fostering international collaborations and promoting diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility (DEIA). Through initiatives like this conference, USAID continues to lead in creating a more inclusive and sustainable future.

ECP names POs for presidential Elections

ISLAMABAD: The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has appointed presiding officers (POs) for the upcoming presidential election, the schedule for which will be announced today, March 1. According to a notification issued by the polls oversight authority on Wednesday, the chief justice of the Islamabad High Court (IHC), Aamer Farooq, will act as the PO at the Senate and the National Assembly, the upper and lower houses of parliament, respectively. At the Punjab Assembly, the ECP's provincial member, Nisar Durrani, will perform the duty as the presiding officer. The chief justices of the Sindh High Court (SHC), the Peshawar High Court (PHC), and the Balochistan High Court (BHC) will act as the POs at the Sindh Assembly, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (K-P) Assembly, and Balochistan Assembly, respectively. The presiding officers will collect nomination papers of presidential candidates and oversee the polling process in the relevant assemblies during the presidential elec-

tion, the notification added. On Tuesday, the ECP commenced issuing nomination papers to candidates for the presidential election. According to an ECP spokesperson, candidates could submit their nomination papers at the ECP Secretariat in Islamabad, as well as the offices of provincial election commissioners in Punjab, Sindh, Balochistan, and K-P until 12 noon on March 2. The spokesperson stated that the schedule and public notice for the presidential elections would be issued on March 1. Quoting Article 41(4) of the Constitution, she emphasized that the presidential election must be conducted within 30 days of the general elections. She added that according to Articles 91 and 130 of the Constitution, the first session of all assemblies was mandatory within 21 days of the general elections. "By February 29, all assemblies will begin working to complete the electoral collegiality needed for the presidential election," the spokesperson added. Meanwhile, the PML-N and the PPP - the two largest parties in the potential ruling coalition - have formed a committee to campaign for the election of the NA speaker, prime minister, and president of the country, sources said. The committee includes PML-N's Ayaz Sadiq and Rana Tanveer Hussain and PPP's Khurshid Shah and Naveed Qamar. "The committee will meet tonight with the leaders of the PML-Q, IPP, and the JUI-F and seek votes for their joint candidates. The committee will also contact other parties after the oath-taking of lawmakers," a source said. - DNA

Maryam orders timely completion of Rawalpindi Ring Road

MEHTAB PIRZADA

RAWALPINDI: Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif on Thursday visited Rawalpindi Ring Road and ordered to complete the project by December 2024. Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif personally inspected the Rawalpindi Ring Road project at Tarahia. Nespak, Project Management Unit (PMU) and Frontier Works Organization (FWO) authorities briefed Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz on the progress of Rawalpindi Ring Road project. It was briefed that Rawalpindi Ring Road project started in September 2023 and all construction will be completed by February 2025. The structures

on the way have been removed for the construction of the 38.3 kilometer long Rawalpindi Ring Road. Removal of incoming utility services in the right of way is underway. About 24 percent work on project has been completed. Five interchanges, 11 overpasses, 2 rivers, 6 canals and 1 railway bridges, while 15 subways and 53 bridges will be constructed on the Rawalpindi Ring Road. A rest area will also be constructed on the Rawalpindi Ring Road. Ring road project is indispensable for ease of transportation of Rawalpindi people, said Maryam Nawaz. She said the industrial zones to be built on the Rawalpindi Ring Road project will be a game changer for Rawalpindi and will provide employment to the local people.

Global freedom drops sharply in 2023

MONITORING DESK

LONDON: Democracy faced sharp, widespread setbacks worldwide in 2023 with violence and manipulation marring a series of elections, Freedom House said Thursday. In its annual report, the US-funded pro-democracy advocacy and research group switched classifications for two countries, downgrading Ecuador from free to partly free and upgrading Thailand from not free to partly free. Overall, political rights and civil liberties declined in 52 countries and only 21 countries saw improvements, the 18th straight year that global freedom has

declined and a much more lopsided trend than a year earlier. "Even if you look at it region by region, usually we are able to say that one is an outlier, but every single region registered a decline," said report co-author Yana Gorokhovskaia. "The deterioration is pretty widespread," she said. The report spoke of efforts by incumbents "to control electoral competition, hinder their political opponents or prevent them from taking power" in Cambodia, Turkey and Zimbabwe and - unsuccessfully - in Guatemala and Poland. Ecuador was downgraded due to election disruption by violent criminal gangs, including the assassination of anti-corruption presidential candidate Fernando Villavicencio following a campaign speech. Thailand was upgraded due to competitive elections even though establishment forces prevented young progressive Pita Limjaroenrat, whose Move Forward Party won the most seats, from becoming prime minister.

Govt declares rain emergency in Sindh

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: The Sindh government has declared rain emergency in the province and decided that offices in Karachi would be open for half day on Friday (tomorrow), viewing the forecast of rains in the megalopolis. In a post on X, Karachi Mayor Murtaza Wahab Siddiqui Thursday said the decision for the half-day was taken as an "abundant precaution". He also requested citizens to avoid travelling unnecessarily to stave off any inconvenience. "Though preparations have been made, as a matter of abundant precaution, it has been decided in meeting presided by CM that tomorrow will be a half day for offices in Karachi division from 2pm. Citizens are requested to also avoid unnecessary movement to avoid any inconvenience," he tweeted. The Pakistan Meteorological Department had on Wednesday forecast rain, and windstorm with likelihood of isolated hailstorm in Sindh between February 29 and March 2. Earlier, the mayor said the Sindh chief minister had convened a meeting to overview rain preparations early Thursday morning. The Karachi Metropolitan Corporation (KMC) had declared rain emergency, cancelled staff members' leaves and deployed heavy machinery for clearing nullahs, he said. "Climate change is a reality. February or March were not known for rainfall in Karachi. KMC has already declared rain emergency & machinery is being deployed for clearing different choking points," he wrote. Addressing the meeting regarding rain predictions, Sindh Chief Minister Murad Ali Shah declared a rain emergency in the province. The chief minister's spokesperson said the CM has put the local bodies, administrations and hospitals on high alert.

Gwadar declared calamity-hit area

STAFF REPORT

GWADAR: The port city of Gwadar has been declared a calamity-hit area following heavy torrential rains that persisted for over two days in the southwestern parts of the Balochistan province, Dunya News has reported. Balochistan's caretaker Information Minister, Jan Achakzai, announced on Thursday that Gwadar had been declared a disaster-stricken area due to the distressing situation following recent torrential rains. The Chief Minister's Office has endorsed the decision to declare Gwadar a calamity-hit city. Achakzai stated that caretaker Chief Minister Ali Mardan Domki had been actively monitoring relief activities for Gwadar and other surrounding rain-hit areas. The torrential rains battered Gwadar as the absence of a drainage system resulted in rainwater accumulating not only on roads and streets but also seeping into residential and commercial properties. Moreover, flooding is being reported in streams and small rivers in the affected area as the soil could not absorb the massive quantity of water produced by the intense rains.

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