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Kashmir Solidarity Day

Pakistan closely observing Indian terrorism acts: PM

The prime minister said that Pakistan had consistently maintained that a lasting solution of the Jammu and Kashmir dispute was possible only in accordance with the relevant UN Security Council Resolutions and wishes of the Kashmiri people

BUREAU REPORT / DNA

MUZAFFARABAD: Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar Monday said India was the only terrorist in the occupied Valley and Pakistan was closely watching its state terrorism against the Kashmiris. Addressing the Azad Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Assembly on Kashmir Solidarity Day, the prime minister said for last many years, India was presenting fake narrative and trying to weaken the struggle of Kashmiris. He said there was a clear difference of terrorism and the people's struggle for independence. He said the Indian leadership was also claiming Gilgit Baltistan and Azad Jammu and Kashmir. "On this day, I want to make it clear that we believe in peace in the region and we are showing maximum patience and tolerance and peace," he said. The prime minister said Pakistan did not want any conflict in the region, however he made it clear that the country was fully capable of strongly retaliating any attack from the neighboring country. He said India had for many times checked our capacity. "If it (India) has any desire to check Pakistan's capacity again, then we are ready to show our strength." He said if India was a true democracy, it should give the people of Kashmir their just demand of right to self determination while it should also fully restore the basic human rights in IIOJK. PM Kakar said India must also stop the gross violations of human rights in the region besides releasing all the political prisoners. He said it should also abrogate all the strict emergency laws while it should also recall its heavy military

presence from the villages and towns of Kashmir. It should allow the people to hold peaceful gatherings in Kashmir and it should also allow the people of Kashmir to exercise their right to self-determination. The prime minister said India must allow unrestricted access to the UN and OIC observers, international media and human rights organizations to IIOJK to obtain first-hand information about the situation there; and investigate and report human rights violations. Prime Minister HaqKakar said that India's illegal and unilateral actions of 5 August 2019 in IIOJK were a blatant violation of international law including the UN Charter, 4th Geneva Convention and the relevant UN Security Council resolutions.

He said India had since been engaged in efforts to further entrench these illegal measures through a series of steps aimed at altering the demographic structure and political landscape of IIOJK. He said that the 'Kashmir Solidarity Day' was annually observed on the 5th February to express Pakistan's unwavering support to the Kashmiri people's just struggle for realization of their right to self-determination. It was also an occasion to pay rich tribute to the sacrifices made by their Kashmiri brothers and sisters during the last seventy-six years, he added. The prime minister said that Pakistan had consistently maintained that a lasting solution of the Jammu and Kashmir dispute was possible only in accordance with the relevant UN Security Council Resolutions and wishes of the Kashmiri people. He said Pakistan will continue to extend its unstinting moral, diplomatic and political support for this just cause.

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MUZAFFARABAD: Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar laid a floral wreath at the Martyrs Monument on Kashmir Solidarity Day in Muzaffarabad on 5th of February, 2024. - DNA

PTI slams DI Khan terror attack

PTI Spokesperson lamented that the entire state machinery was fully engaged in shameful efforts of worst political engineering

KHAYYAM ABBASSI

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Spokesperson strongly condemned the terrorist attack on the police station in Dera Ismail Khan and urged the caretaker governments and state institutions to focus on eradicating terrorists instead of working on the project to eliminate the PTI. PTI Spokesperson expressed deep grief and sorrow over the martyrdom of 10 police personnel in the terrorist attack and condoled with the bereaved families. He said that such tragic terrorist incidents few days before the general elections were a cause of great concerns and put a question mark on the performance of the federal and provincial interim governments.

PTI Spokesperson lamented that the entire state machinery was fully engaged in shameful efforts of worst political engineering against former Prime Minister and the most popular leader of the country. He said that unfortunately, the sole priority of the state institutions, responsible for the safety and security of citizens and maintaining law and order in the country, was to disrupt the peaceful political activities and detain innocent citizens in fake, fabricated and politically motivated cases.

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Rumors mongers warned

No plans to shut down internet on election day: Solangi

He said there was no doubt that an extraordinary situation required extraordinary measures, however, so far no such a situation had been reported in any area

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Federal Minister for Information, Broadcasting and Parliamentary Affairs Murtaza Solangi on Monday said that the government had not issued any guideline to shut down internet and mobile signals on the day of general election. Speaking in a private news channel programme, the minister said that the local administrations had the authority to decide about shutting down internet in a specific area if it faced any law and order issue. He said there was no doubt that an extraordinary situation required extraordinary measures, however, so far no such a situation had been reported in any area.



Bilawal alleges

Nawaz pressurising 'administration' to influence results

PML-N supremo Nawaz Sharif is dreaming of becoming "Amirul Momineen", says PPP chairman

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: As the battle lines were drawn between the Pakistan Peoples Party Parliamentarians (PPP-P) and Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) for the February 8

Continued on Page 06

Briefs

Blinken meets Saudi Arabia's MBS amid Middle East tensions

Biden administration neither seeks war with Iran nor wants the conflict to spread further

NEWS DESK

RIYADH: US Secretary of State Antony Blinken arrived in Saudi Arabia on Monday, his first stop in a Middle East tour as Washington tries to advance negotiations on a normalisation deal between the kingdom and Israel, and make progress on talks for postwar Gaza governance. In Riyadh, Blinken met with the kingdom's de-facto ruler, Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, and his Saudi counterpart, foreign minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan Al Saud, a US official said.

Mayram asks Murree voters to vote for PML-N

DNA

MURREE: With only two days left before the upcoming elections and political parties trying their best to woo the masses, PML-N senior vice-president Maryam Nawaz has promised the "highest development" if the party is voted into power. "[We] promise the highest development in Murree if the city chooses lion," Maryam said while addressing a political gathering in Murree on Monday. Her remarks come as most of the major political parties, including the PML-N, have promised their election campaigns on socio-economic uplift amid the prevailing dire economic indicators driven by a weakening local currency.

Terror grips KP

10 cops martyred in DI Khan terrorist attack

Six policemen were also injured when terrorists targeted the police station in Tehsil Daraban, say police

SHAMIM SHAHID

DI KHAN: At least 10 policemen were martyred and six others injured in a late-night attack on a police station in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Dera Ismail Khan district, police said on Monday. Police said terrorists attacked the police station with heavy weapons at 3am in Tehsil Daraban of the district. The injured have been shifted to DHQ Hospital, they added. The terrorists attacked the police station from all sides with grenades and heavy gunfire. The police also retaliated, but the terrorists escaped in the darkness of the night, the law enforcement agency added. The forces have cordoned off the area and launched a search operation to hunt down the fleeing militants, while the quick response force has reached with additional force, according to the police. Funeral prayers of martyred police personnel will be offered in the police line, they added. Last month, three cops and two soldiers

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Kakar, Zardari, Shehbaz condemn terrorist attack

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: The political leadership of the country has strongly condemned the terrorist attack on a police station in Dera Ismail Khan. At least 10 policemen embraced martyrdom and nine others suffered injuries when terrorists attacked the police station in the wee hours of Monday. The armed men attacked the police station by hurling hand grenades and resorting to intense firing. Caretaker Prime Minister AnwarulHaqKakar, former president Asif Ali Zardari, former prime minister Shehbaz Sharif and other political leaders condemned the terror incident in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

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COAS slams India over security crises in occupied Kashmir

The leadership acknowledged that the fortitude, resilience and unwavering faith of Kashmiris in the face of unabated brutality of Indian occupation forces in IIOJK had been exemplary

DNA



RAWALPINDI: Prime Minister of Pakistan, Prime Minister of Azad Jammu and Kashmir and General Syed AsimMunir, NI (M), Chief of Army Staff (COAS) visited Muzaffarabad. COAS later visited troops deployed on the front lines along Line of Control (LOC) in Sarian Sector. Upon arrival at Jammu and Kashmir Monument Muzaffarabad, PM of Pakistan, PM of AJ&K and COAS laid floral wreath at Martyrs' Monument and paid rich tribute to the supreme sacrifices of Shuhada. The leadership acknowledged that the fortitude, resilience and unwavering faith of Kashmiris in the face of unabated brutality of Indian occupation forces in IIOJK had been

exemplary. The brewing humanitarian and security crises in the IIOJK seriously threatens regional peace and stability. Pakistan would always stand with Kashmiris in their just struggle for the inalienable right to self determination in light of UNSC resolutions. "India is attempting to change the demography of IIOJK through illegal administrative and unilaterally imposed draconian laws and security clampdowns. Such machinations cannot suppress the will and the yearning of the Kashmiri people to attain their legitimate objectives." COAS was briefed about the latest situation along the LOC and appreciated the operational readiness, high morale and effective response of troops to Indian CFVs.

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KP stands strong with Kashmiris' freedom struggle

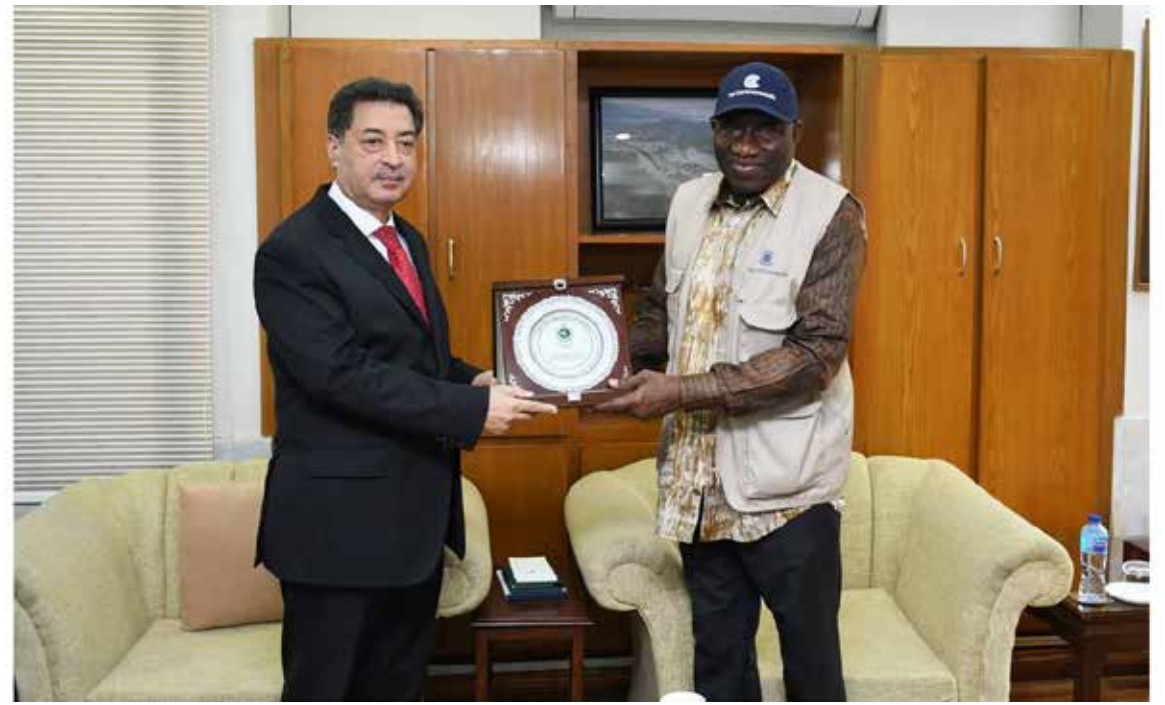
CM calls for global action against Indian atrocities in occupied Kashmir

SHAMMIM SHAHID

PESHAWAR : On the solemn occasion of Kashmir Solidarity Day, Justice (ret'd) Syed Arshad Hussain Shah, the Caretaker Chief Minister of Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa, expressed profound solidarity with the people of Kashmir, underscoring the unwavering commitment of both the province and its government to stand by their Kashmiri brethren in their struggle for justice and self-determination. In a resolute statement, he reiterated that the right to self-determination is an inalienable and fundamental right of the Kashmiri people, one that cannot be suppressed through coercive measures or oppression by the Indian government. Chief Minister Shah called upon the international community and human rights organizations to take decisive action and intervene in the dire situation prevailing in occupied Kashmir. He urged them to recognize and address the grave human rights violations perpetrated by the Indian authorities and to work towards the implementation of United

Nations resolutions that guarantee the Kashmiri people's right to self-determination. He emphasized that the decades-long struggle of the Kashmiri people for freedom and justice is unparalleled and deserves the earnest attention and support of the global community. The chief minister vehemently condemned the unilateral decision of the Indian government to revoke the special status of occupied Kashmir and the subsequent imposition of a stringent lockdown by Indian forces. He emphasized that such actions only serve to exacerbate tensions and perpetuate suffering among the Kashmiri populace. He stressed the urgent need for a peaceful and equitable resolution to the Kashmir issue in accordance with the aspirations of the Kashmiri people, emphasizing that sustainable peace in the region hinges upon addressing this longstanding conflict. Meanwhile, the Arts Council organized a poignant event to commemorate Kashmir Solidarity Day, featuring a series of activities aimed at raising awareness and expressing

solidarity with the Kashmiri people. The event commenced with a solemn flag hoisting ceremony, where the flags of Pakistan and Azad Kashmir were raised in unison as a symbol of solidarity and resilience. A minute of silence was observed to honor the countless Kashmiris enduring oppression and hardship in occupied territory, underscoring the gravity of the situation and the urgent need for international intervention. The exhibition showcased a variety of artistic expressions, including thought-provoking tableaux, impassioned speeches, and soul-stirring Kashmiri song competitions, all aimed at highlighting the plight of the Kashmiri people and amplifying their voices on the global stage. Representatives from the All Party Hurriyat Conference Azad Kashmir Pakistan Chapter, including Sheikh Abdul Mateen and Information Secretary Intiaz Wani, reiterated the urgency of addressing the Kashmir issue and reaffirmed the Kashmiri people's steadfast demand for self-determination as a prerequisite for lasting peace and stability in the region.



ISLAMABAD: Honourable Chief Election Commissioner, Sikandar Sultan Raja, met Chair Goodluck Ebele Jonathan, Head of Common Wealth Observer Group at ECP secretariat.—DNA

India sets records for atrocities in IIOJK: KP Governor

DNA

PESHAWAR : Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Governor, Haji Ghulam Ali here Monday said that India has broken all records of oppression and brutalities after illegally invaded the Occupied Kashmir and demanded international community take notice of it. He also demanded dignity and respect for the people of the held valley. Addressing the Kashmir Solidarity Day rally, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Governor said that hundreds of thousands of Kashmiris were martyred, children orphaned and women were sexually abused at IIOJK. He said that India's involvement in state terrorism and human rights abuses were serious threats to the world and regional peace. Paying rich tributes to sacrifices, bravery and courage of the oppressed Kashmiris of IIOJK for right of self-determination, the Governor said that Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Government and its people were standing with oppressed Kashmiris and will always stand with them. The political, diplomatic and moral support of oppressed Kashmiris would continue, he said. He said the day was not far away when the people of IIOJK would get succeed in their legitimate struggle for self-determination. He urged international bodies including UNO to address the long standing Kashmir dispute and international human rights bodies to take notice of endless brutalities at IIOJK.

Experts share knowledge at kidney symposium

PESHAWAR : The MMC General Hospital, Peshawar, hosted a Kidney Transplant Symposium where senior professionals shared knowledge and expertise in the field. A communication said that Prof Dr Ataur Reman, a senior urologist and director of transplant services, and Associate Prof Dr Mufti Baleegh, a transplant nephrologist at the MMC, were the patrons for the event arranged at the tertiary care hospital set up in year 2016. Among the participants were Dr. Asif Malik, Dr. Shahid Ahmed Khan, Dr. Arshad Mehmood, Dr. Sarwar Alvi, Dr. Nabeel Ismail

and Dr. Naveed Sarwar, Dr. Nasir Orakzai, Dr. Mazhar Khan and Dr. Muhammad Shahzad. The symposium brought together the leading specialists and professionals to talk on the developments and the associated challenges in the field. The organiser, Dr. Shah Jehan said the symposium offered a platform to the transplant surgeons and transplant neurologists to share the knowledge and expertise. There were presentations, discussions and hand-on information with a view to improve the transplant methodology and the patient care. The

junior health practitioners had an opportunity to learn more from the seniors about the transplant techniques and the relevant developments. Prof Dr. Ataur Rehman said the symposium was aimed at promoting knowledge-sharing among the experts which was expected to improve the quality of the transplant in the ultimate analysis. He thanked the senior kidney transplant surgeons, transplant neurologists and other participants for attending the symposium, hoping the interactions would lead to a better treatment and patient care.—APP

Male dominance in Faisalabad election 2024

FAISALABAD : The male voters are dominating in Faisalabad for General Election 2024 as they are 53.63 % of the electoral roll in the district whereas female voters contributed it up to 46.37 percent. According to a spokesman of the Election Commission of Pakistan, there are total 5297,899 registered voters in Faisalabad district including 2841,085 males and 2456,814 females who would exercise their vote power to elect their favorite candidates for 10 national assembly and 21 provincial assembly seats here on Thursday (February 08, 2024). Giving some details about age wise voters, he said that the registered voters from the age of 18 years to 25 years were 898,974 including 531,891 males and 367,083 females. He said that the registered voters from the age of 26 years to 35 years are 1,360,249 including 732,532 males and 627,717 females.—DNA

LPC vows to voice for IIOJK people at every forum

LAHORE : On the occasion of Kashmir Solidarity Day, the Lahore Press Club (LPC) office-bearers and governing body member here Monday expressed their commitment to stand firm with Kashmiri brothers and sisters on their principled stand of right to self-determination as envisioned in the UNO (United Nations Organization) resolutions. They demand of India, the claimant of the so-called biggest democracy, to implement the UN resolutions and let the people of Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK) to decide about their future.—APP

CM Punjab inaugurates upgraded BVH, safe city

He said that the double road from Uch Sharif to Ahmedpur East in Bahawalpur has been completed

BAHAWALPUR : Caretaker Chief Minister of Punjab Mohsin Naqvi arrived in Bahawalpur on Sunday for the inauguration of the OPD, Surgical Ward Upgradation Project at Victoria Hospital. He also inaugurated the Safe City project in Bahawalpur. He inaugurated the upgraded building of the Civil Lines Police Station. Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi also virtually inaugurated other model police stations of Bahawalpur. He visited the wards of Bahawal Victoria Hospital. He also inspected the Medical Emergency, Plastic Surgery, and ENT wards. He talked to the patients, doctors, and paramedical staff. Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi said, "This is your hospital, take care of this lovely building." Talking to the media he said that Bahawal Victoria Hospital was built in 1906, and renovating the old building was a difficult task. The team of

the Department of Buildings and Communications is credited with upgrading the historical building of Bahawal Victoria Hospital beautifully. If a new hospital is built, it will not be as upgraded as Bahawal Victoria Hospital. The old building of the hospital has been completely renovated. The upgradation Project cost Rs 2.10 billion and the upgrade was completed in 2 months and 5 days. Later, the Chief Minister distributed land allotment documents to the people of Cholistan. He said that in the next few days, 26,000 people will receive their land documents. He said that the double road from Uch Sharif to Ahmedpur East in Bahawalpur has been completed. The road from Mari Qasim Shah to Dera Bakha has also been completed. The road from Mandi Yazman to Chandni Chowk has been completed. The projects of Green Pa-

kistan and Cholistan Rivers will also be implemented. Starting the Safe City project in Bahawalpur is a big deal. The local police have been very effective in the Kache Operation. The local police have been given 3 APCs and old APCs are being repaired. "I did as much work as I could in a short time. It was my duty, not a favor. There is no use in announcing empty projects; the benefit is when the projects are completed", Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi added. The Inspector General of Police Dr Usman Anwar, Additional Chief Secretary of South Punjab Capt (ret'd) Saqib Zafar, Chairman of Planning and Development Iftikhar Ali Sahoo, Secretary of Buildings and Communications Ehsaan Bhutta, Commissioner Bahawalpur Division Dr Ehtesham Anwar, Deputy Commissioner Bahawalpur Zaheer Anwar Jappa, and other officials were also present.



LAHORE : Punjab Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi prays after inaugurating Gujranwala Expressway connecting Lahore Sialkot Motorway.—DNA

PPP, MQM, JI, PML-N, GDA gear up election campaign as polling day nears

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI : All major political, religious parties, alliances and the independent candidates have geared up their election campaign across Sindh as polling day is to be held this week on February 08. Pakistan People's Party chairman Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari, MQM Pakistan's Convenor Dr Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui, PML-N provincial president Bashir Memon, Jamaat-e-Islami leader Hafiz Naeem ur Rehman and Grand Democratic Alliances leadership were holding election rallies in Karachi, Hyderabad, Sukkur and other districts and towns of the province and asking the voters for casting votes in their favour. Bilawal Bhutto Zardari after completing his election campaigns in Punjab, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan, expedite his electioneering in Sindh where his parties continuously

rues since 15 years. Bhutto-Zardari and his younger sister Aseefa Bhutto was leading election rallies in several cities and towns of Sindh to convince their electorate. PPP Chairman has addressed public meeting in Mirpurkhas on Saturday night where despite rains, the party workers participated in the campaign. MQM Pakistan's Convenor Dr Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui along with central leadership including former Mayor Karachi Syed Mustafa Kamal and Dr Farooq Sattar addressed many election rallies and public gatherings in Karachi, Hyderabad and Sindh's other urban area where their electorates are in sufficient number. They presented their manifesto for the uplift of urban areas which according to them had been neglected during the last 15 years. Jamaat-e-Islami, an organized political and religious party, is in the run in Karachi and other areas of Sindh, also held public gatherings addressed by the Central Emir Sirajul Haq and Hafiz

Naeem ur Rehman. Sirajul Haq addressed public meetings in Karachi, Hyderabad, and Tando Adam and asked their voters to elect their party candidates. Pakistan Muslim League (N) provincial president, a former Police officer Bashir Memon along with party's leaders also organized public meetings in district Matiari where he is participating in National Assembly seat against PPP's Makhdoom Jamil uz Zaman. While addressing the rally he claimed that PML-N will win several seats from Sindh while allied parties JUI-F, GDA and MQM Pakistan candidates will defeat opponent candidates. Grand Democrat Alliance led by Sayed Sibgatullah Shah, Pir Pagara is in tough contest with Pakistan People's party candidates in different districts of Sindh. GDA and PPP candidates in district Sanghar and Khairpur Mirs are in tough completion. In Khairpur, Syed Sadaruddin Shah Rashid is contesting election on NA 203 against Sayed Fazul Shah Jilani of PPP who was elected an

MNA from the same constituency in 2018 election while GDA's Moezam Abbasi is in the contest with Sayed Javed Ali Shah Jilani of PPP on NA 203 Khairpur Mirs. Former Chief Minister Sindh Sayed Ghous Ali Shah is in contest with former MNA Dr Nafisa Shah who is the daughter of Ex CM Sayed Qaim Ali Shah on NA-202 Khairpur. In Sanghar district, GDA candidate Muhammad Khan Junejo is contesting election on NA-209 against PPP candidates and the former Federal Minister and Chairperson BISP Shazia Atta Marri while Saira Bano Wassan of GDA is in tough contest against PPP candidate Sallahuddin Junejo on NA-210. In Shaheed Benazirabad (Navabshah), former president Asif Ali Zardari is in contest on NA-207 and his position is strong. GDA candidate Sayed Zain Shah is fighting election against PPP's Sayed Ghulam Mustafa Shah. In Naushero Feroz district, GDA candidate Ghulam Murtaza Jatoti is on the run at NA-206.



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Feb 06/N. Zealand
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Feb 06/Uganda
Army Day
Feb 11//Iran
Revolution day
Feb 16/DPR Korea
National Day
Feb 16/Lithuania
National Day
Feb 18/Gambia
National Day
Feb 19/Nepal
Democracy Day
Feb 23/Uzbekistan
National Day
Feb 23/Brunei
National Day
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Motorway Police..9270601-20
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Peaceful Kashmir resolution essential for global peace

Mushaal calls on UN and International community to fulfill their promises made to the people of Jammu and Kashmir

ADIL SHAHEEN

ISLAMABAD : Special Assistant to the Prime Minister for Human Rights and Women Empowerment, Mushaal Hussein Mullick, has urged global community to break their silence and take proactive measures to prevent the ongoing genocide by Modi led Indian government in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK). She was addressing a poster exhibition organized by National College of Arts (NCA) on Kashmir Solidarity Day. SAPM was accompanied by focal person to SAPM, Sabien Hussein Mullick. The exhibition organized by NCA served as a powerful platform to raise awareness about the Kashmir issue. The Special Assistant to the Prime Minister highlighted the profound influence of art in evoking empathy, understanding, and generating awareness about the just struggle of the people of IIOJK. She noted that the poster exhibition showcased the remarkable artistic talent within the National College of Arts. Mushaal expressed deep concern over the Indian Judiciary aligning itself with the RSS ideology and the fascist policies of the Modi government. She strongly criticized the recent verdict by the Indian Supreme Court regarding the revocation of Kashmir's special status and described the biased and unfair judicial proceedings against Kashmiri



political leadership as judicial terrorism. She said that Modi's entire government machinery was conspiring to impose death sentence to Yasin Malik under false and fabricated charge to gain electoral advantage. The Special Assistant to the Prime Minister lamented the information and communication blockade imposed by India in the illegally Occupied Jammu

and Kashmir, highlighting the difficulty in obtaining accurate and unbiased information about the ground realities in the region. Mushaal raised serious concerns about India's manipulation of the demographic landscape of Kashmir. She emphasized that the issuance of 5 million Kashmiri domiciles to non-Kashmiris by India was aimed to influence any future

plebiscite in IIOJK, as outlined in the UN resolutions. Mushaal highlighted the expansion of Indian terror network across continents, terming it a threat to global peace. She highlighted the involvement of RSS terrorists in targeted killings in several countries, including the United States, Canada, and Australia. The Special Assistant to

the Prime Minister commended the National College of Arts for its role in organizing the poster exhibition on Kashmir Solidarity Day. She said that the initiative served as a powerful platform to shed light on the widespread atrocities and human rights violations perpetrated by the Indian occupation forces in the Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK).

Self-determination a cardinal principle: President

DNA

ISLAMABAD : President Dr Arif Alvi has said that the right to self-determination is a cardinal principle of international law but regrettably, the Kashmiri people have not been able to exercise this inalienable right. "The UN General Assembly annually adopts a resolution expressing unequivocal support for the realization of the right to self-determination for people under foreign occupation," the president said in a message on the occasion of Kashmir Solidarity Day being observed on February 5. He said the people of the Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK) had been struggling

to realise their right to self-determination for the last seventy-six years. "Today, IIOJK is one of the most militarized zones in the world. Kashmiris are living in an environment of fear and intimidation," President Secretariat Press Wing, in a press release, quoted the president as saying. The president reiterated that on the Kashmir Solidarity Day, the government and people of Pakistan renewed their unflinching support for their just and legitimate struggle. The Indian occupation forces were engaged in indiscriminate use of force against civilians, he said, adding political activists and human rights defenders faced arbitrary detention and confiscation of properties. The political parties, he said,

representing the genuine aspirations of the Kashmiri people, were being banned. These oppressive measures were aimed at crushing dissent in IIOJK. The president noted that India was also taking steps to consolidate its occupation of IIOJK. Following its illegal and unilateral actions of 5 August 2019, India's efforts have been aimed at engineering demographic and political changes so that the Kashmiris were transformed into a disempowered community in their own land, he added. The president said the Indian Supreme Court's judgment of 11 December 2023 was yet another manifestation of India's desire to undermine the right to self-determination of the Kashmiri people. The president

demanded that India must end its gross human rights violations in IIOJK; reverse its unilateral and illegal actions of 5 August 2019; repeal draconian laws; allow UN-mandated investigations into cases of human rights violations, and implement the relevant UN Security Council resolutions on Jammu and Kashmir. "I wish to reiterate that seeking a just resolution of the Jammu and Kashmir dispute will remain a key pillar of our foreign policy," he added. The president further reaffirmed that Pakistan would continue to lend unstinting moral, diplomatic and political support to the Kashmiri people till the realization of their right to self-determination, as enshrined in the relevant UN Security Council resolutions.

Speakers stress importance of promoting human fraternity

ISLAMABAD : Speakers in a seminar have discussed efforts to promote the values and principles of human fraternity, aiming to achieve peaceful coexistence, acceptance of others, and diversity through dialogue and mutual understanding. The seminar was arranged by the Pakistan branch of the Muslim Council of Elders titled "Human Fraternity: Messages of Hope and Peace in the World". The International Day of Human Fraternity was observed annually in recognition of the signing of the document on Human Fraternity between Dr. Ahmed Al-Tayeb, the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar and Chairman of the Muslim Council of Elders alongside Pope Francis, Pontiff of the Catholic Church, in Abu Dhabi in 2019. The seminar witnessed diverse participation from prominent figures in Islamabad, the capital of Pakistan. Among them were Dr. Muhammad Zia-ul-Haq, the Director-General of the Islamic Research Institute and Shariah Professor at the International Islamic University; Dr. Sardar Tahir Tabassum, the founder and president of the Institute of Peace and Development, and Chairman of the Global Harmony Council; Reverend Samuel Robert Azaira, the Director of the Christian Studies Center in Rawalpindi; Sardar Ranjeet Singh, a former member of the local parliament; Dr. Sanaullah Al-Azhari, an associate professor at the Maritime University's College of Islamic Studies; and Allama Liaqat Ali, the director of the Jafari Jurisprudence School in Attock. Participants expressed appreciation for the efforts of the Muslim Council of Elders, led by Dr. Ahmed Al-Tayeb, the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar, particularly through its branches in various countries which serve as effective platforms for communication and disseminating the council's message aimed at promoting peace in both Muslim and non-Muslim communities. The speakers underscored the pivotal role of the Document on Human Fraternity as a global message for peace, embodying the spirit of coexistence and tolerance among religions. The document's signing by the Grand Imam and Pope Francis symbolized their sincere commitment to enhancing dialogue, peaceful coexistence, and acceptance of others. Dr. Muhammad Zia-ul-Haq highlighted the central role of the Document on Human Fraternity as a global message for peace and an embodiment of the spirit of coexistence and tolerance among religions which brought together the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar and the Pope of the Catholic Church to affirm their earnest commitment to promoting dialogue and peaceful coexistence. For his part, Dr. Sardar Tahir Tabassum highlighted the urgent need to activate constructive dialogue between religions to address religious conflicts and enhance the values.—DNA

PTA chairman vows safe online environment for youth

ISLAMABAD : Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) Chairman, Major General (R) Hafeez ur Rehman, has said that the PTA is committed to ensuring a safe online environment, particularly for the country's youth and children. In a message on the occasion of "Safer Internet Day", to be celebrated on February 6, he said, "PTA recognizes the critical role that the internet plays in our lives. We are steadfast in our commitment to ensuring a safe online environment, particularly for our youth and children." The chairman asserted that it is the collective responsibility of all to create a secure and protective digital space, allowing Pakistani users to continue their online activities in a safer environment. He further mentioned that PTA has collaborated with Meta, United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), TikTok, and other organizations to pursue the cause of promoting a safer online environment in Pakistan. "Our efforts for the cause have been recognized, and PTA received the SAMENA Council international LEAD award under the category of "Enabling Child & Youth Safety Online," the chairman said. He said that online safety is a global issue, and only through collaboration and coordinated efforts can the government create a digital world that prioritizes the safety of every individual.—APP

Pneumonia outbreak: 2 more children lost

ISLAMABAD : Pneumonia claimed two more lives of children during the past 24 hours in Punjab on the other day. According to the Punjab Health Department, a total of 605 new cases of pneumonia were reported during the last 24 hours. The health authorities said Lahore logged 177 fresh cases of pneumonia during the last 24 hours, a private news channel reported. The largest province in the country so far this year recorded 318 pneumonia-related deaths, while over 20,872 cases have been reported in the province whereas Lahore only reported 58 deaths and 4,050 cases. Health experts attribute the rapid increase in cases and deaths in Punjab to the environmental pollution caused by smog during the winter season. Pneumonia is an infection in the lungs, often caused by viruses. It can manifest after symptoms of a cold or flu and can range from mild to severe. Typically, pneumonia is more common in children aged five or younger.—APP

Pakistan, China enhance collaboration in pharmaceutical sector

ISLAMABAD : Pakistan and China have further enhanced collaboration in pharmaceutical sector, by launching Basagine Pen, a pre-filled insulin. The insulin was co-developed by Pakistan Getz Pharma and China Gan&Lee Pharmaceuticals. This marks a further development in the pharmaceutical collaboration between China and Pakistan, Gwadar Pro reported. The milestone launching-event was attended by Khalid Mahmood, CEO and Managing Director of Getz Pharma, and Du Kai, CEO of Gan&Lee Pharmaceuticals. "Getz Pharma has been a trusted overseas partner of our company for over a decade, with previous collaborations involving raw materials of second-generation and third-generation insulin. The launch of the Basagine Pen will further enhance our product portfolio in diabetes treatment, leveraging the strengths of both companies." Du Kai highlighted the long-standing partnership between the two companies.—DNA

PAC organized rally and Photographic exhibition

DNA

RAWALPINDI : Punjab Arts Council organized rally and photographic exhibition on the occasion of Kashmir Solidarity Day. The rally was led by Director of Arts Council Waqar Ahmed, on this occasion Deputy Director Muhammad Shakur and Assistant Director Muhammad Suleman also

accompanied him. Addressing the rally, director Waqar Ahmed said that the purpose of celebrating the day is to express support for the struggle of the Kashmiri people to achieve their right to self-determination under the UN resolutions. We strongly condemn the human rights violations and atrocities committed by India in illegally occupied Kashmir

and salute the struggle and determination of the Kashmiri people to achieve their right to self-determination. Even after the passage of 76 years, the series of cruel and inhuman acts against the oppressed Kashmiris of India continues. Every year thousands of innocent Kashmiris are martyred by Indian brutality. Despite the military massacre, India has not been able to

lower the strong ambitions and morale of Kashmiris till date. Deputy Director Muhammad Shakoore said that since the 1990s, India has martyred 96,285 Kashmiris for demanding freedom during the last 33 years. Around 170,000 Kashmiri citizens were imprisoned in various jails in India, while properties worth billions of rupees were seized and more than 100,000 businesses centers and houses were burnt. On August 5, 2019, India violated the UN resolutions and terminated the special status of Occupied Jammu and Kashmir. A large number of showbiz artists from the root cities participated in the rally.

Islamabad Christians community supports Dr. Tariq Fazal

Dr. Chaudhry said that he is aware of the problems faced by the Christian community in Islamabad and that he will work to solve them if elected

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD : Christian community leaders in Islamabad have announced their support for Dr. Tariq Fazal Chaudhry, the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) candidate for National Assembly constituency NA-47. The announcement was made at a ceremony held at the residence of Zafer Bakhtwari, Secretary General of the United Business Group. Dr. Chaudhry said that he is aware of the problems faced by the Christian community in Islamabad and that he will work to solve them if elected. He also said that he will work to ensure that the Christian community is given a 10% quota in government jobs in Islamabad. Zafer Bakhtwari said that the Christian community has been supporting the Bakhtwari family for the past 35 years and that this support will continue. He also said that the Christian community in Islamabad has a number of problems that need to be solved, including land rights for informal settlements, education, health, and employment. The cere-



mony was attended by a number of prominent Christian community leaders, including Perwaiz Jazbi, Chaudhry Gulzar, Patras Joseph, Chaudhry Ishaq, Ashraf Farzand, Arshad Sindhu, Dawood Boota, Bishop Amjad, and Manzoor Masih. In his address, speaking at the ceremony, ICCI President Ahsan Bakhtwari said that it has been 76 years since the creation of Pakistan, but our basic problems

have not been solved. The main reason for this is the lack of stability in policies and political instability. In the upcoming elections, the nation has the opportunity to elect people who have vast experience in improving the economy, infrastructure, and employment. The previous PML-N government performed well and I hope that the people will pave the way for the establishment of a strong govern-

ment that can solve the country's problems. He said that the Christian community of Islamabad should use their right to vote for Dr. Tariq Fazal Chaudhry, and the Bakhtwari family will stand guard to solve their problems. In his address, Secretary General UBG Zafer Bakhtwari said that the Christian population in Islamabad is 6%, which has a significant impact on the election results. We have been serving the Christian community for the past 35 years and this will continue. The Christian community associated with the Bakhtwari family will vote in favor of the PML-N and Dr. Tariq Fazal Chaudhry on February 8. We have served the Christian community of Islamabad in the past and will continue to work with the incoming government. He said that the Christian community of Islamabad has many problems that have been waiting for a long time to be solved. These include land rights for informal settlements, education, health, and employment. There is a need for measures to make Christian youth skilled so that they can better support their families.

Briefs

Pak-China vocational institute faculty to train in China

DINA

ISLAMABAD : Pakistan China Vocational and Technical Institute (PCV&TI) has announced to send its faculty members (lecturers and instructors) to China for a 6-month training program in March this year. Shandong Institute of Commerce and Technology, which is among the four stakeholders of the Institute will host the visiting faculty, according to a report published by Gwadar Pro on Monday. Last month the Institute had hired the services of 16 teachers in fields of Maritime Business and Port Management, Software/ Information Technology, E-commerce, Tourism and Hotel Management, Electrical Engineering, Mechanical engineering, English, Mathematics, Statistics and Chinese language. The first executive body meeting of PCV&TI held last month had approved the operational roadmap of the institute. Moreover, the federal government has also released a budget of Rs 240 million for the fiscal year 2023-24 to facilitate the operation of the institute.

Transgender Nayab Ali praised for contesting elections

ISLAMABAD: Civil society praised Nayab Ali for running for a Parliamentary seat in the upcoming general election. According to them, contesting transgender elections would definitely empower the transgender community, as their due rights would be protected. Zarinia Imtiaz, a social activist, said that contesting in elections for transgender people was a ray of hope for trans people, as they were the most neglected segment of society. She said that transgender people number at least half a million people in the country, so their rights must be protected, and contesting elections would create unique opportunities for them. Nayab Ali, the only transgender candidate for the 2024 general election, has said, "The few initiatives by the past government's have boosted the morals of the transgender community." She said, "Give me a chance, not for power but for the empowerment of my neglected segment of society." She further said, "I am an educated trans woman in Pakistan. I must be given a chance, though it is my first time, but I will prove myself." She said, "After coming into power, she will work for the education of the transgender community, as this is their basic right."—APP

Pakistan is leading global voice for Kashmir cause: Aizaz

ISLAMABAD : The Pakistani nation has remained the strongest voice in the world for the Kashmiris' right to self-determination, and its government is committed to keeping this issue effectively raised at every global forum, including the United Nations, former Foreign Secretary Aizaz Ahmad Chaudhry said on Monday. On the occasion of February 5, while talking to a private news channel, he reassured Kashmiri brothers and sisters that the Pakistani nation and government were still committed to continuing to stand with them in their just struggle for self-determination. He said, "Pakistan's ultimate objective is a peaceful resolution of the Jammu and Kashmir dispute as per relevant UNSC resolutions in accordance with the wishes of the Kashmiri people." He said, "Every year Pakistani and Kashmiris observe this day to draw the attention of the international community towards the relevant UN Security Council Resolutions, which provide that the final disposition of the Jammu and Kashmir dispute will be made in accordance with the will of the people."—APP



ISLAMABAD : Artist presents cultural show in solidarity with Kashmir Day at Lok Virsa Heritage Museum on Monday—Photo by Mudassar Raja.

Kashmir solidarity rally warns against Indian actions

Federal capital to mark Kashmir Solidarity Day and warned the international community of expedited Indian efforts of altering the demography and genocide of Kashmiris in the Indian

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD : The nation led by members of the federal cabinet along with foreign delegates, civil society, and students held a solidarity march on Monday in the federal capital to mark Kashmir Solidarity Day and warned the international community of expedited Indian efforts of altering the demography and genocide of Kashmiris in the Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK). The Kashmir Solidarity Day 2024 rally was led by Minister for National Heritage and Culture that started from the Foreign Office flanked by Foreign Secretary, Muhammad Syrus Sajjad Qazi, staff and officials of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA), Minister for Religious Affairs Aneeq Ahmed, Minister for Information and Broadcasting, Murtaza Solangi and Minister for Privatization, Fawad Hassan Fawad, students of Pakistan Sweet Homes and large number of members of the civil so-

ciety participated the rally. The participants of the rally held placards and banners with slogans reading Freedom for Kashmir, Kashmir is Pakistan, Kashmir—the Largest Jail on Earth, Indian Apartheid of Kashmiris Unacceptable, whereas the students of Pakistan Sweet Homes hoisted flags of Pakistan and Kashmir to express solidarity with the Kashmiri people. The rally culminated at D-Chowk near Parliament House where the government representatives also attended the rally a one-minute silence was observed and sirens were blown on the occasion. Addressing the rally, Convener, All Parties Hurriyet Conference (APHC) Mahmood Ahmad Sagar thanked the government and entire Pakistani nation, its all political parties, non-governmental organizations and children of Pakistan Sweet Home for supporting Kashmiris on February 5. Sagar said the IIOJK was facing 76-year long oppression that resulted in the martyrdom of 3.5 lac valiant Kashmiris struggling

for freedom, whereas 2.5 lac people were massacred in 1947 in Jammu, and in the last 30 years over one lac deaths were caused in violence by Indian Occupant forces that left millions orphaned and widowed alongwith massive infrastructure and property losses. The occupied valley for years have been facing internet disruption which was the biggest tool of the current era, he said, adding, "The Pakistani nation is supporting Kashmiris and all the diaspora world over for Kashmir cause." He added that the IIOJK issue was pending as an unresolved agenda in the UN and its observers had their offices both in Srinagar and Muzaffarabad. The IIOJK was the world's largest jail that has stationed around a million soldiers of Indian occupant forces, Sagar said. The entire IIOJK's hurriyet leadership was facing detention including Shabbir Ahmed Shah, Yaseen Malik, Mussarat Alam Bhatt, Asiya Andurabi along with her 33 sisters in Tihar Jail, he mentioned. The APHC Con-

vener underlined that despite all this, Kashmiris have not lost heart and would continue fighting till their last breath. Meanwhile, Special Assistant to Prime Minister on Human Rights and Women Empowerment Mushaal Hussein Mullick in her video message on the occasion, thanked the entire Pakistani nation, people of Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) and people all over the world for expressing solidarity with the oppressed people of IIOJK who were running their legitimate, political and peaceful indigenous and just struggle for right to self determination and liberation as per the UN resolution for the past many decades. "Today people are talking about apartheid in Gaza because their footage is going viral but it should be remembered that there has been a more serious escalation in human rights abuses in IIOJK against innocent Kashmiris. Hundreds of thousands of people have rendered their lives for the cause of freedom," she added. Mullick said the Indian occupant forces were us-

ing pellet guns, white phosphorous, rape as war weapon against women, TARA, POTA, UPA, Armed Forces Special Act type laws were imposed in IIOJK that gave immunity to the Indian RSS forces. She urged the world that they were running out of time as India had scaled up its settling of non-Kashmiri residents in the occupied valley to the demography of the Kashmir and had issued five million domiciles to non-state residents so far. "India has planned to achieve this Muslim Kashmiri majority transformation into a minority within a year. India is doing the genocide of Kashmiris to make them extinct in the valley. I request all who are joining the protests to highlight all the Indian atrocities across the globe," she said. "The world is with Palestine and they should also make their voices in unison with Kashmiris to further strengthen forces against occupant like Zionist Israel and Hindutva India that are occupying the freedom of innocent masses.

HSR provides secretarial training to Pakistani youth

ISLAMABAD : Huaneng Shandong Ruyi (Pakistan) Energy Limited (HSR) has launched a computer secretary training course, involving 25 local young people. The training program mainly includes basic computer skills, document processing, spreadsheet creation, and PowerPoint presentation design, as well as other practical employment skills. Due to the local economic conditions, it is difficult for individuals to afford computers. The trainees stated that by participating in the training, they can master computer operation and establish a solid foundation for their future job search. "I am grateful for this free learning opportunity from Huaneng. My family cannot afford a computer, so I do not know much about computers. This course helps me acquire fundamental knowledge of computer and office skills. I will study hard and continuously improve my skills and abilities in order to create more opportunities for my future career," said Muhammad Usman, one of the 25 trainees. This is the fourth training course held by Sahiwal Coal Power Station after the Covid-19 pandemic. Before that, Huaneng Ruyi Technical Training School had conducted training courses in mechanical, electrical, chemical water treatment, and coal technology. The teaching team consists of experienced and professional engineers. Through a combination of theoretical instruction and hands-on practice, students can deepen their understanding and mastery of theoretical knowledge through practical application. Technical and skilled labor is essential for the economic growth of Pakistan. Established in June 2017, the training school aims to produce skilled youth who will be able to provide skilled labor to the plant locally in the future. The facility spans approximately 3,000 square meters and includes 14 classrooms and 15 operational classrooms. It offers free boarding and lodging for students during training sessions. According to HSR, more than 5,000 local youths have been trained since the school was founded, Gwadar Pro reported on Monday.—APP

IMF will not permit subsidies worth billions to the masses

PTI and PPP are also claiming to build a university in every district. In a country where there are 250 universities, their degrees are not recognised anywhere

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD : Dr. Muhammad Hanif Mughal, Chairman of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Shadbad, said on Monday that all the major political parties are guiding the masses about education in their election campaign. He said that no government can double the education budget with the current income, and the slogan of creating a university in every district of the country is unmanageable. Political parties are also promising billions in subsidies to the masses, which is not possible in the current situation as the IMF will not allow any such move, he added. Dr. Muhammad Hanif Mughal

said in a statement issued here today that political parties are claiming to change the fate of the nation, but any such thing is unlikely. As usual, the politicians are making promises that cannot be fulfilled in the current scenario when a country is dependent on the IMF for its survival. He claimed that economic development is impossible without the advancement of education, but policymakers have always ignored this. Similarly, leaders are trying to lure the masses by telling them about subsidies worth billions of rupees, but the fact is that in the presence of the IMF, subsidies will be impossible. Dr. Hanif Mughal said that currently, about two percent

of the GDP is spent on an important sector like education. How can a country whose tax revenue is 9 to 10 percent of GDP increase its education budget by 100 percent or even more? He said that the claims about increasing the education budget are not new. Political parties have been making such claims for decades, but after coming to power, this promise is forgotten. The quality of education can only be improved when the revenue is increased for which the government will have to tax property, agriculture, wholesalers and retailers etc. which seems impossible, he observed. He said that a major party claims to build a network of schools in the country. The other is talking about giving

laptops and other items. Yet another party is claiming free food and free books for children, while the fourth party is talking about an end to co-education.

In the recent past, the ruling party has resorted to the policy of a uniform education system across the country, but now it seems that it has abandoned that policy. PTI and PPP are also claiming to build a university in every district. In a country where there are 250 universities, their degrees are not recognised anywhere. Where millions of youth are unemployed, instead of establishing new universities, there is a need to improve the quality of existing educational institutions.

Commissioner praises admin for snowfall rescue

RAWALPINDI : Relief Commissioner Punjab, Nabil Javed, on Monday felicitated the timely response of the administration and the operation launched to rescue the families stuck due to snowfall in Khaira Gali and Shangla Gali in Murree. "All the vehicles stuck at 'Khaira Gali and Shangla Gali' have been rescued," said a spokesperson of the Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA). He informed that around 80 families were rescued by the administration, which responded in time. "The snowfall has stopped in Murree and surrounding areas," he said. "Due to the fog, the visibility is very low, and traffic flow is also slow on the roads," he added.—APP

ECP puts brakes on PIA privatization

Intervention comes in response to FBR's plans to proceed with privatization without seeking prior approval from ECP

ADIL SHAHEEN

ISLAMABAD : The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) put on Monday a halt to the caretaker government's attempts to privatize national assets, specifically Pakistan International Airlines (PIA). The ECP, in a stern letter addressed to the Cabinet Secretary, invoked Article 230 of the Constitution, delineating the scope and constraints of the caretaker government's authority. Sources privy to the development said that the Election Commission's intervention came in response to the Fed-

eral Board of Revenue (FBR)'s plans to proceed with the privatization of PIA without seeking prior approval from the ECP. The letter, sent a week before the upcoming general elections, directed the caretaker government to cease all actions related to the privatization process until the Election Commission decides on Section 230 of the Constitution. Cabinet Secretary Kamran Ali Afzal had previously raised concerns over the caretaker government's moves to privatize public institutions, prompting the Election Commission's scrutiny. The ECP's directive explicitly

instructed the caretaker government to submit all relevant documents related to the privatization of PIA, as mandated by the Privatization Commission Ordinance 2000 and Clause 5 (b) of Section 230 of the Constitution. This isn't the first instance of the Election Commission intervening in the caretaker government's decisions. Earlier, the ECP blocked attempts to reform the FBR, stressing in a letter to the interim premier dated January 30, that major reforms should be deferred to the incoming elected government. The Election Commission underscored the consti-

tutional framework, stating that while improving and reforming public institutions is crucial, the caretaker government's role, as defined in Section 230 of the Elections Act, 2017, is limited to day-to-day affairs. With the caretaker government now required to provide documents on the PIA privatization plan, the Election Commission's directive has implications for the Cabinet Division. As the Election Commission remains focused on its primary responsibility of overseeing the upcoming general elections, time and attention for day-to-day government affairs, including reforms, may be limited.

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Restraint required as Middle East powder keg looms

Following days of warnings, on Friday the United States launched a massive barrage of air strikes on dozens of sites in Iraq and Syria allegedly used by Iran-backed militias and Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps. This was in retaliation for the drone attack on the Tower 22 US base in Jordan that killed three US service members and injured dozens more. President Joe Biden said earlier, this was only the start of a "tiered response". And it was only part of the opening salvo. Shortly before the assault, Washington announced a fresh wave of sanctions against Iran's cyber operations as well as ballistic missile and drone procurement programs. A number of entities and individuals were targeted. The US also reportedly conducted "cyber operations" on Friday against Iranian targets. On Saturday, US warships and US and British fighter jets struck dozens of Houthi targets in Yemen. The Friday attacks, in Biden's own words, were meant to "let all those who might seek to do us harm know this: If you harm an American, we will respond". The strikes against targets in Yemen were also seen as a message to Iran that Washington holds the latter responsible for the recent militia attacks against US interests in the region. The message was loud and clear. But so were the counter-messages. Iran "will not start a war, but if a country, if a cruel force, wants to bully us, the Islamic Republic of Iran will give a strong response", said Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi on Friday, prior to the US attacks. A Houthi official was quoted as saying on Saturday that their "military operations against Israel will continue", the "American-British aggression against Yemen will not go unanswered, and we will meet escalation with escalation". The White House doesn't want escalation. At least not now, not in the Middle East. It is obviously already preoccupied with concerns elsewhere. That was why all the strikes, from Iraq to Syria to Yemen, have steered clear of targets in and of Iran. Nor does Iran. Teheran has so far distanced itself from the attacks, insisting those militias are not taking orders from it in carrying out the attacks. The decision-makers in Washington know very well a knock-out blow, as some hard-liners proposed, is unlikely to be viable. But something must be done, Biden's bid for reelection demands it. US voters need to be told he is the one they can count on when it comes to safeguarding US interests. After all the missiles, however, at the end of the day, they should also recall the bloody lessons from the past decades in the Middle East: that force is the least effective answer to the troubles in the region. Further escalation of the situation in the Middle East is in no party's interest. All involved should consider the potential ramifications of a wider conflict in the already volatile region so they realize how imperative it is that they take practical steps to reduce tensions.



Two priority tasks highlight rural work challenges

The No 1 central document for the year that the central government released on focuses on rural development. It provides indicators of the priorities for the rural work. The document outlines six major undertakings for the year aimed at comprehensively promoting rural vitalization. They are ensuring national food security, forestalling any large-scale relapse into poverty, improving the development of rural industries, strengthening rural construction, enhancing rural governance, and strengthening the leadership of the Communist Party of China on rural work. Although most of the six tasks have been stressed over the past few years, the first two carry a greater sense of urgency this year given the widely felt uncertainties and risks associated with the country's external and internal development environment. Apart from the grave impacts of extreme weather events and global warming on the country's food security, China has to take into account the systemic influences of geopolitical tensions, including the Russia-Ukraine conflict and the Middle East crisis. Not to mention the possible impacts of some countries' weaponizing of normal trade in a bid to hinder China importing food from the world market. China's population accounts for 17.9 percent of that of the world, while the arable land in the country accounts for only 7 percent of the world's total. Although it has generally realized self-reliance in basic foods after years of struggle, the balance is precariously delicate. The country has been the world's largest food importer for years in a bid to enhance the nation's nutritional conditions. That's why, apart from diversifying its import sources for food, the country is obliged to further explore the potential of agricultural technology and scientific management to improve the efficiency of its food production. It needs to increase input to promote breakthroughs in agricultural science and technology, optimize the organization of rural production structures and strengthen oversight of farmland protection and reduce food waste. Notably, after extreme poverty was eliminated in its vast countryside in 2020, avoiding a large-scale return to poverty has been singled out as a key task of rural work, second only to ensuring food security. That demonstrates the grave situation in that regard as a result of the downward pressure on the economy. Those that had been lifted out of poverty in the previous few years, particularly those living on incomes from temporary urban jobs, are also those most vulnerable to the vicissitudes of the economy. The number of jobs for migrant workers are in a decline due to both the overall macroeconomic conditions and the automation of manufacturing. So local governments should guide those looking for jobs to earn their living from their agricultural knowhow, the boom in digital economy, and the green transition of rural life. To that end, as the document stressed, more should be done to bridge the urban-rural gap in public services, improve the mechanism for diverse investment in rural vitalization and expand the rural talent pool. In the process, the farmers' rights and interests must be strictly protected.

Elections and political-economic stability!

Waheed Hussain



Democracy means rule of the people through chosen representatives. Therefore, the masses must enjoy the right to elect their members for national and provincial assemblies, without any fear and intimidation from any individual, group, state or the non-state actors. The constitution of Pakistan has dedicated this power to the Election Commission of Pakistan through Election Act 2017 and Election Rules 2017 along with certain amendments in 2023. The care-taker governments at center and provinces are appointed

Around 130 million citizens will be using their right to vote on Thursday to elect new governments both in Islamabad and four provinces. Thousands of candidates are in field against 266 national assembly and 597 provincial assemblies' seats. According to Election Commission of Pakistan 166 political parties along with thousands of independent candidates are contesting in the much debated and awaited general elections.

Democracy means rule of the people through chosen representatives. Therefore, the masses must enjoy the right to elect their members for national and provincial assemblies, without any fear and intimidation from any individual, group, state or the non-state actors. The constitution of Pakistan has dedicated this power to the Election Commission of Pakistan through Election Act 2017 and Election Rules 2017 along with certain amendments in 2023. The care-taker governments at center and provinces are appointed to facilitate the elections' conducting body (ECP) to complete the process in truly free and fair manner. The ECP has to provide conducive environment to all candidates to present their agenda and manifestos to the public. Is that available to all candidates and political parties today? PTI which won the 2018 general elections, is presently out of race on the technical and legal grounds. According to the ECP, PTI has failed to conduct its party elections on the in timeviolating the political party rules/laws, therefore, the party symbol is being cancelled. PTI approached the Peshawar High Court (PHC) challenging ECP decision and got its symbol of 'bat' back. The matter reached to the highest judiciary, the Supreme Court of Pakistan, which after lengthy hearing, finally endorsed the ECP decision regarding cancellation of the party symbol. The two main political parties Pakistan Muslim League (Nawaz) and Pakistan Peoples' Party have been conducting public meetings in various constituencies across Pakistan. Peoples' party which was being tagged as restricted to the Sindh province, has remained successive in gathering good crowd in Punjab, KP and Baluchistan during election campaign. PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari has been very harsh and vocal against PML (N) leadership during his speech

es in Punjab. May be due to two reasons, one to attract the PTI voters, who might have been disappointed and disinterested in the election process as the leadership has been sentenced in various cases, while the party on the technical grounds is out of election race. Criticizing Sharif family means supporting the PTI narrative. Secondly, Bilawal verbosity might be sending a message to the PPP Punjab workers as well as voters that party is still relevant to the province. In the public addresses, he tried to detach himself from the bad economic policies of 16 months' PDM government led by PML (N) president Shahbaz Sharif. Well, even a child knows that PPP was a coalition partner in Shahbaz's government and Bilawal served as the Foreign Minister. But today, he bluntly blamed Shahbaz Sharif for price-hike and inflation in the country. Bilawal is calling Nawaz Sharif as 'Ladla' a blue-eyed and favorite of someone. He implied that Nawaz was being supported by the powerful quarters in the country. Nawaz does not rely on the public votes but wants to gain the power from the backdoor. Without naming the establishment, he was suggesting that Nawaz Sharif in government has the history of confronting with the military establishment and would do the same again this time, if elected as the prime minister. We should not forget that whatever Bilawal was saying, is part of the election campaign. In politics and diplomacy some words are used for the public consumption. And this may be the case with Bilawal verbal attacks on the PML (N) leadership. Otherwise, former President and Co-chairman of PPP Asif Ali Zardari in his recent TV interview has called Bilawal a 'child.' He said, his son has yet to learn the art of politics and this process needs time. Meaning by that don't take Bilawal seriously. Whatever is the father and son's political strategy, Bilawal has reawakened the PPP workers in Punjab. His aggressive election campaign may not bring an immediate success for the PPP, but, this political activism from the young politician will help him to make new routes in the province where his grand-father late Zulfikar Ali Bhutto has launched his party in 1960s. Entry of Asifa Zardari Bhutto has created an impact in the PPP election campaign. The young lady addresses to the rallies brings back the memories of her great

mother 'Benazir Bhutto Shaheed.' If the brother and sister work for the party with the same enthusiasm, they can really attract the youth of Pakistan. But condition is "if" they bring drastic changes in the political approach and thinking of the party. They have to clean the party from the accusations of bad governance, corruption and support to the powerful mafias. Even the kings or dictators don't get consecutive 15 years to rule a country or province, the way PPP did in Sindh since 2008. PPP ten-point election agenda does not tell, how to get rid of IMF? Pakistan Muslim League (Nawaz) has arranged huge public meetings in various districts of Punjab. All the meetings were jam-packed with the PML (N) workers and voters. One has to accept the reality that PML (N) has huge following in Punjab, particularly in the central Punjab districts. During his speeches Nawaz Sharif highlighted projects like motorways, highways, Metro Bus, Orange-line Train, Health and Education schemes like Danish schools and laptop etc. He mentioned the CPEC as his biggest economic achievement. He complained that he was never allowed to complete his term as prime minister. If he had not been removed from the power in 2017, today, the country has not been suffering from economic recession, price hike and worst inflation. The PML (N) election manifesto is comprehensive document prepared by people like professor Ahsan Iqbal, however, it did not tell how the country will get out of the debt trap? How the economic policies of the country will be freed from International Monetary Fund (IMF). How the bleeding state owned institutions like Railways, PIA, Steel Mills and others will be restructured or privatized? How the overall privatization process will be completed. How energy sector circular debts will be paid without burdening the masses? How the reforms will be introduced to the civil bureaucracy? How the political culture of victimization and revenge will be changed? Until there is a political stability in the country, the economic development and progress will remain a dream. PTI is presenting itself as a victim. Its playing a victim card on the social media. Once a new government is formed after February 8, how the PTI will react? Both the winners and the loser have huge responsibility bring calm in the country?

Qatar's Gaza war mediation may be a double-edged sword

James M. Dorsey

Ron Halber, executive director of the Jewish Community Relations Council of Greater Washington, told the Washington gathering that the demonstrations were meant "to thank the Qataris and at the same time to press them to push Hamas. Those two things are not in conflict: You've done a good job, you really need to do more of a good job." Earlier, Israeli protesters rallied at Qatar's Washington embassy, striking a far more strident tone. Their message was "Qatar is Hamas." The Israeli nationals held the Gulf state responsible for

Qatar mediation in the Gaza war threatens to become a double-edged sword. Demonstrators gathered this week at Qatari diplomatic missions in Washington, New York, and Ottawa to express frustration with the Gulf state's failure to achieve an Israeli-Hamas agreement on a second round of prisoner exchanges.

Ron Halber, executive director of the Jewish Community Relations Council of Greater Washington, told the Washington gathering that the demonstrations were meant "to thank the Qataris and at the same time to press them to push Hamas. Those two things are not in conflict: You've done a good job, you really need to do more of a good job." Earlier, Israeli protesters rallied at Qatar's Washington embassy, striking a far more strident tone. Their message was "Qatar is Hamas." The Israeli nationals held the Gulf state responsible for Hamas' October 7 attack on Israel in which more than 1,100 people, mostly civilians, were killed and some 240 were taken hostage. "We are here today to call out Qatar for what it really is: a terror supporting state seeking to destabilize the Middle East region. We will not allow Qatar to wash its hands (of) its responsibility (for) what happened on October 7," said Nimrod Pantz, a lawyer and protest organizer. Another speaker vowed that the protesters would "hunt (Qatari) diplomats in every place you will be until we see (the hostages) back." In November, Qatar negotiated a week-long truce during which Hamas exchanged more than 100 hostages, kidnapped during the October 7 attack. Hamas still holds 136 hostages and bodies of captives killed in the fighting in Gaza. Qatari Prime Minister Mohammed Abdulrahman al-Thani, together with the intelligence chiefs of the United States, Israel, and Egypt have drafted a plan based on proposals by Hamas and Israel, involving a pro-longed ceasefire and swap of all hostages and bodies for an unspecified number of Palestinians in Israeli prisons. The main obstacle to an agreement is that Hamas insists on a permanent ceasefire that would end the war while Israel maintains that ending the war is non-negotiable. The parties also have yet to agree on the staggered ratio of Palestinians to be released for each Hamas-held hostage and the identity of the Palestinians to be freed. Considering Hamas' main bargaining chip is its hostages, the group might insist on keeping a few hostages to make sure Israel abides by an agreement – a demand Israel is certain to reject. Alternatively, a Hamas official suggested that the group may seek guarantees from the United States, Qatar, and Egypt that the ceasefire amounts to an

end to the war. It's going to take fancy language to bridge the gap. The trick will be a formula that allows both parties to claim they have achieved their irreconcilable goals. One formula may be a lengthy ceasefire, potentially described as transitional rather than permanent. This would allow Israel to maintain that the war will continue while Hamas could claim the contrary. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has not made things easier by adopting a hard-line in recent days. He has not only rejected ending the war, but also the release of "thousands of terrorists" and the withdrawal of Israeli troops from Gaza any time soon. Mr. Netanyahu may sing a different tone this weekend in talks with US Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken, on his sixth visit to Israel since the war began, but any hostage swap agreement will likely entail provisions that could prompt his far-right coalition partners to withdraw from the government. Mr. Netanyahu may hope that Hamas will rescue him by rejecting anything less than an end to the war and the release of thousands of Palestinians in Israeli prison in exchange for the hostages. The State Department and British Foreign Secretary David Cameron, in an apparent attempt to pressure Mr. Netanyahu to soften his rejection of the creation of an independent Palestinian state and approach to the hostage negotiations, are exploring possibilities of recognizing Palestine as a state. So far, the US and Britain have recognised President Mahmoud Abbas' West Bank-based Palestine Authority as the entity governing the West Bank and official Palestinian interlocutor under the 1993 Oslo accords between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO). This week's US sanctioning of four vigilante Israeli West Bank settlers sent a similar message. Even though small in number, the demonstrations in the US and Canada echo Mr. Netanyahu's recent criticism of Qatar. "You don't hear me thanking Qatar... It is essentially no different from the UN or Red Cross, and in a certain sense is even more problematic – I have no illusions about them... They have leverage over (Hamas). Why do they have leverage? Because they finance them," Mr. Netanyahu told hostage families earlier this month, ignoring that Qatari funding of Hamas in Gaza was at his behest. "Qatar hosts the heads of Hamas; it also funds Hamas; it has leverage on Hamas... They placed themselves as mediators – so start proving it and bring back our hostages," Mr. Netanyahu said in a subsequent news conference. This week, the Middle East Media Research Institute (MEMRI), founded by Yigal Carmon, a former advisor

to Israel's West Bank and Gaza occupation authority and Prime Ministers Yitzhak Shamir and Yitzhak Rabin, sought to bolster Mr. Netanyahu's argument. MEMRI reported that Qatar regularly trained Hamas' police force. In response, Qatar's Foreign Ministry accused Mr. Netanyahu of "undermining the mediation process for reasons that appear to serve his political career instead of prioritizing saving the lives of innocents, including Israeli hostages." Echoing Mr. Netanyahu's criticism and American Jewish leaders' frustration, Democrats and Republicans in the US Congress have asked the Biden administration to pressure Qatar. The lawmakers also called for Hamas' expulsion from Qatar. The United States agreed with Qatar in October to revisit the Gulf state's relationship with Hamas once all hostages have been released. Officials of both countries left open whether the review would lead to the expulsion of Hamas representatives or to restrictions on their ability to operate from the Gulf state. What the review will entail is likely to depend on whether and in what state Hamas survives the Gaza war. A Hamas survival could mean that the United States, and for that matter Israel, will have a continued need for a backchannel. Nevertheless, the criticism threatens to put a dent in Qatari relations with the American Jewish community, a pillar of its largely successful soft power strategy in the United States. Hamas has maintained a presence in Qatar since 2012 at the request of the United States and with Israel's acquiescence. Qatar and the administration have pushed back at the criticism. "I've been hearing this a lot about the leverage and the pressure. Qatar needs to be understood clearly in this context. Our role as a mediator is to try to bring the parties to bridge the gaps between them," Mr. Al Thani said in an on-stage interview at the Atlantic Council, a Washington thinktank. "Beyond this leverage, we don't see that Qatar is a superpower that can impose something on this party or another party to bring them to that place. Basically, we're using our good offices to connect, to bridge gaps, to put solutions and come up with some alternatives," he added. Roger Carstens, US President Joe Biden's top hostage envoy, told the Hostages' Families Forum and the American Jewish Committee that Qatar is "doing everything we're asking." Roger Carstens, special presidential envoy for hostage affairs, at the State Department in February. Photo: Eric Kayne for Yahoo News Members of the Forum met last week with Mr. Al-Thani to thank him for his efforts.

Briefs

COAS slams India over...

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Addressing the troops, COAS reiterated that any aggression or violation of territorial sovereignty of Pakistan will be responded with full national resolve and military might. "Pakistan Army is well versed with the full threat spectrum and is perpetually ready to respond effectively". COAS also mentioned the Indian state sponsored terrorism in Pakistan which now extended to heinous targeting of individual Pakistani citizens on our soil. Such callous disregard for international law and norms of international system was becoming a routine occurrence and India was now being called out openly by many countries in the world, exposing her sham credentials, COAS concluded. Pakistan would continue to expose all such attempts and ensure the security of its citizens. Earlier on arrival, COAS was received by Commander Rawalpindi Corps.

No plans to shut down...

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Highlighting the government's measures to curb fake news and propaganda on social media, the minister said the relevant institutions had been issuing clarification to rebut any such news circulating in different media. "Security is a serious issue," he said, while pointing out a steep rise in activities of different terrorist groups in the country, especially after the establishment of an interim government in Kabul. "Last year alone, around 1,500 incidents of terrorism were reported in the country," Murtaza Solangi noted. Police cops were martyred in a terrorist attack on a police station in the Dera Ismail Khan, he said, adding such acts had failed to affect the resolve of law enforcement agencies fighting terrorism in the country. He noted that recently, 24 terrorists were killed in Mach area of Balochistan. The minister ruled out any delay in the elections which were scheduled for February 8. The history of Pakistan suggested that the elections were held in harsh and difficult conditions. To a query, he said the Kashmir dispute was a long-standing issue on the agenda of the United Nations Security Council.

PTI slams DI Khan...

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PTI Spokesperson stated that the precarious security situation and the failure to maintain law and order in the country clearly reflected the ambitions and priorities of the caretaker government. He urged that the caretaker governments and state institutions should shift their focus from the project of eradicating PTI and redefine their priorities and take immediate and tangible steps to deal with the extremist elements. PTI Spokesperson stated that the unabated terrorist attacks on peaceful political gatherings and police personnel, who were responsible for the safety of citizens, were intolerable. He emphasized that the governments and state institutions should ensure a peaceful environment for holding free, fair and transparent general elections so as to give the rein of the country to a government with a public mandate, which could formulate an effective and comprehensive strategy to eradicate the menace of terrorism from the country once and for all. PTI Spokesperson expressed heartfelt sympathy with the bereaved families and prayed to Allah Almighty for high ranks of the martyred police personnel in paradise.

Pakistan closely...

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He further said that the relevant UN Security Council Resolutions provided that the final disposition of Jammu and Kashmir would be made in accordance with the will of the people of Jammu and Kashmir, expressed through the democratic method of a free and impartial plebiscite conducted under the auspices of the United Nations.

Davis Cup: Slovakia shock Serbia to reach group stage

They join last year's winners Italy, 2023 runners-up Australia and wildcards Great Britain and Spain

SPORTS DESK

MELBOURNE: Slovakia provided the biggest shock of the Davis Cup qualifiers as they knocked out 2023 semi-finalists Serbia, France, the Czech Republic, Belgium, Canada, Germany, the Netherlands, USA, Finland, Argentina, Chile and Brazil also booked places in the competition's group stage. They join last year's winners Italy, 2023 runners-up Australia and wildcards Great Britain and Spain. The 16 qualified nations will contest the group stage from 10-15 September.

The competition will conclude in November with the 'Final 8' - quarter-finals, semi-finals and final - in Malaga. Slovakia dumped out a Serbia side missing 24-time Grand Slam champion Novak Djokovic, winning all four matches contested on the indoor clay in Kraljevo to reach the group stage of the new format for the first time. They had lost their previous four qualifiers, but Lukas Klein and Igor Zelenay gave them an unassailable lead with victory in the doubles as Slovakia went on to score a famous 4-0 win against the 2010 winners. Brazil also reached



the group stages for the first time with a 3-1 victory over Sweden, their third win of this year's tournament after beating China and Denmark in World Group I to reach the qualifiers. The United States won through with a 4-0 victory over Ukraine in a tie that was played on neutral ground in Vilnius, Lithuania. Austin Krajicek and Rajeev Ram claimed the decisive point in their doubles match against Ilya Beloborodko and Oleksii Krut'kikh as 32-time winners USA bid for a first Davis Cup title since 2007. Four ties went the distance as Germany beat Hungary 3-2 and the Netherlands overcame Switzerland by the same score. Also winning 3-2 were Argentina

and Chile, who beat Kazakhstan and Peru respectively. The Dutch side won the final two singles contests to come from 2-1 down against Switzerland. Eight of the 11 sets across the match went to tie-breaks, with Botić van de Zandschulp clinching the decisive rubber 5-7 7-6 (7-5) 6-3 against Marc-Andrea Huesler in front of a

partisan home crowd. World number 24 Jan-Lennard Struff sealed Germany's victory in the final singles match in Hungary, winning 6-3 6-2 against Mate Valkusz, who is ranked outside the world's top 200. Argentina eventually won 3-2 against Kazakhstan. Straight-set victories for Timofel Skatov over Tomas Martin Etcheverry and Francisco Cerundolo took the clash to a decider, where a 6-4 3-6 7-6 (8-6) win for Sebastian Baez against Dmitry Popko booked Argentina's spot in the group stage. In Santiago, Chile fought back from 2-1 down against Peru to win their qualifier. Singles wins for Nicolas Jarry and Alejandro Tabilo saw them seal the final place in September's group stage. Earlier, there were 4-0 wins for France in Chinese Taipei and Czech Republic at home to Israel, while Canada overcame South Korea 3-1 in Montreal. Finland made the group stages for the second year running with a 3-1 victory at home to Portugal. Belgium's Zizou Bergs followed up his shock opening victory over Croatia's former world number three Marin Cilic to seal an overall 3-1 victory with a decisive second singles success in Varazdin, beating home hope Duje Ajdukovic 6-1 7-5.

Bumrah stars as India beat England in 2nd Test



NEW DELHI: Jasprit Bumrah guided India to a 106-run victory against England in the second Test at the ACA-VDC Cricket Stadium, Visakhapatnam, on Monday. Bumrah took nine wickets across two innings to bring India back in the series after losing the first Test following a close contest. England were chasing the target of 399 runs to win the Test but the visiting side didn't get off to a great start and kept on losing wickets. Ben Duckett departed after scoring 28 runs, Rehan Ahmed, who came in as a night watchman, followed him after posting 23 runs, leaving his side 95/2 in 22 overs. The wickets kept falling but the right-handed opener Zak Crawley stayed on the crease and continued his charge against the

home side's bowlers. However, in the 42nd over, Crawley was dismissed with a controversial decision, which changed the course of the game. Ben Foakes and Tom Hartley contributed 36 runs each down the order but they weren't enough in front of the big target with not many wickets left.

The whole English team was dismissed for 292 runs. Bumrah and Ravichandran Ashwin took three wickets each while Mukesh Yadav, Kuldeep Yadav and Axar Patel bagged each one. Earlier in India's second innings, Shubman Gill started with the bat, scoring 104 runs to guide his side to a competitive total. Axar Patel was India's second-highest top-scorer after the right-handed batter scored 45 runs. Meanwhile, Yashasvi Jaiswal saved India from a certain collapse on day one and became the lone warrior by scoring his maiden Test double-hundred and steering the home side to a competitive total. India were dismissed for 396 in the first innings and Jaiswal scored 209 runs in total. **Scores in brief:** India first innings: 396 all out, Yashasvi Jaiswal top scorer with 209 runs, England first innings: 253 all out, Zak Crawley top scorer with 76 runs, India second innings: 255 all out, Shubman Gill top scorer with 104 runs, England second innings: 292 all out, Zak Crawley top scorer with 73 runs. Schedule for remaining India vs England matches, 3rd Test: February 15-19 (Thursday-Monday) - Saurashtra Cricket Association Stadium, Rajkot 4th Test: February 23-27 (Friday-Tuesday) - JSCA International Stadium Complex, Ranchi, 5th Test: March 7-11 (Thursday-Monday) - Himachal Pradesh Cricket Association Stadium, Dharamsala.

ICC reveals nominees for Player of the Month

DUBAI: ICC have revealed the nominees for the ICC Men's Player of the Month for January 2024. Shamar Joseph, the West Indies fast bowler who made a stylish entrance onto the international cricket stage, is among the contenders. Also in the running for the ICC Men's Player of the Month Award for January 2024 are Ollie Pope, England's vice-captain, and Josh Hazlewood from Australia. Shamar Joseph (West Indies) The right-arm bowler left a lasting impression during his debut in Test cricket, securing the prized wicket of Australian batter Steve Smith with his very first delivery. Joseph went on to claim another four wickets against Australia, achieving remarkable figures of 5-94 in his debut match in Adelaide. In addition to his bowling prowess, he contributed decent scores of 36 and 15 while batting at No.11 for his team. Joseph's outstanding performance continued in the second Test in Brisbane, where he played a crucial role in the West Indies' unexpected victory over Australia. He delivered a spell for the ages, collecting remarkable figures of 7-68. This remarkable achievement marked the Caribbean side's first Test triumph in Australia since 1997. After two Tests, Joseph has accumulated 57 runs at a respectable batting average of 28.50. Furthermore, he has taken 13 wickets with an impressive bowling average of 17.30.

Ollie Pope (England): The right-handed batter delivered an exceptional performance, scoring a splendid 196 for England in the second innings of their surprising triumph over India in the Hyderabad Test last week. Pope only scored one run in the first innings, as India dominated the initial phases of the match. Even when the England No.3 came to the crease just before lunch on the third day of the captivating contest, the hosts were still in control. - DNA

Nawaz pressurising...

FROM PAGE 01

general elections, the former accused the latter of using illegal means to return to power for the fourth time. In an interview with foreign media, Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Chairman Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari, who is also PPP-P's candidate for the prime minister slot, alleged that PML-N supremo Nawaz Sharif wanted to pressurise "administration" to influence the election results. The PPP chairman has been repeatedly accusing Nawaz of attempting to return to power for the fourth time via a backdoor. Last month, the former foreign minister had said that Nawaz was "relying on something other than people" to become PM. Ending his four-year self-imposed exile in London, Nawaz - three-time former prime minister - returned to Pakistan in October last year to take a fourth shot at power. During the interview, the PPP chairman said that the caretaker government and the administration were also "biased" in favour of Nawaz. Responding to a question, Bilawal said: "PPP's alliance with PML-N is difficult." "This PML-N is no longer the party who had signed the charter of democracy. It is not the party whose slogan was 'respect the vote' but a PML-N [with a mentality] of IslamiJamhoor-ilttehad (IJL). [Nawaz] dreams of becoming AmirulMomineen."

10 cops martyred...

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were martyred in two different terror incidents in Kohat, Miranshah and Lakkimarwat on Wednesday, while an independent candidate for the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly and his two other colleagues were killed by unidentified assailants during the election campaign in Waziristan. Pakistani districts along the border with Afghanistan have seen a dramatic spike in attacks since the Taliban returned to power there in 2021. Islamabad claims Kabul is sheltering allied militants such as the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) allowing them to strike on its soil with impunity. According to the statistics issued by the Department of Interior and Tribal Affairs KP, the areas most affected by terrorism include Peshawar, Khyber, Bajaur, and Tank while Dera Ismail Khan and North Waziristan and South Waziristan are included in the terror-affected areas. The documents of the Home and Tribal areas revealed that a total of 1,050 incidents of terrorism took place in KP last year while 419 incidents of terrorism took place in the arranged districts, and 631 incidents in the merged districts.

Kakar, Zardari...

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"The whole nation is standing firmly with the police and our security forces. We salute our martyrs and pray for those who embraced martyrdom in the terror incident," Kakar said. Former President Asif Ali Zardari said that there is a need to implement the National Action Plan (NAP) in its true letter and spirit to defeat the terrorism. "The peace can be achieved by destroying the sanctuaries and nurseries of terrorists," Zardari said. Former Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif said that the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa police have always fought the menace of terrorism with great bravery and courage. Caretaker Interior Minister Gohar Ijaz also lauded the sacrifices of KP police and security forces in the war against terrorism. Meanwhile, Chairman PPP Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, Sindh Governor Kamran Tesori and Caretaker Chief Minister Punjab Mohsin Naqvi also condemned the attack on police station in DI Khan.

FIFA unveils schedule for World Cup 2026

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Federation Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) announced the schedule of the 2026 Men's Football World Cup during a live broadcast at the Telemundo Center in Miami. The 2026 World Cup final will be held at MetLife Stadium in New York/New Jersey, organisers FIFA announced on Sunday. The New York bid held off a strong challenge from Dallas to secure the July 19 game, the culmination of the expanded 48-team tournament being co-hosted by the USA, Canada and Mexico. The competition will kick off with the opening game at Mexico City's iconic Azteca Stadium on June 11. "The most inclusive and impactful FIFA World Cup ever is no longer a dream but a reality that will take shape in the form of 104 matches in 16 state-of-the-art stadiums across

Canada, Mexico and the USA," said FIFA president Gianni Infantino. "From the opening match at the iconic Estadio Azteca to the spectacular final in New York New Jersey, players and fans have been at the core of our extensive planning for this game-changing tournament... that will not only set new records but also leave an indelible legacy." Atlanta and Dallas will host the semi-finals while the third-place game will be played in Miami. The quarter-final games will take place in Los Angeles, Kansas City, Miami and Boston. A total of 16 cities across the three countries will host games with the bulk of the matches being held in the USA. The 1994 World Cup was also held in the United States and the final took place at the Rose Bowl in Pasadena, near Los Angeles. New York hosted games at that tournament at the old Giants Stadium,

which was later demolished to make way for MetLife, which opened in 2010. The decisions were announced on a live television broadcast in North America that featured Infantino alongside comedian and actor Kevin Hart, rapper Drake and celebrity Kim Kardashian. The 82,500-seat MetLife Stadium, across the Hudson River from New York in East Rutherford, New Jersey, is the home of the NFL's New York Giants and New York Jets but has held a number of international football games, including the final of the 2016 Copa America tournament. The New York bid had lobbied hard on the city's experience at hosting major international events and its position as a global city with easy transportation connections for fans. Dallas had hoped that AT&T Stadium, in Arlington, Texas, home to the NFL's Dallas Cowboys, would benefit from having a roof to protect the game from the elements.

Sri Lanka beat Afghanistan in one-off Test

Sri Lanka's opening batters chased down an easy target of 56 in Colombo with a day to spare

COLOMBO: Sri Lanka bagged victory in the one-off Test match against Afghanistan by 10 wickets on Monday. Sri Lanka's opening batters chased down an easy target of 56 in Colombo with a day to spare. Afghanistan were dismissed for 296 in their second innings, setting Sri Lanka a modest target, with Dimuth Karunaratne (32 not out) and Nishan Madushka (22 not out) getting over the line within 7.2 overs. Afghanistan were always behind in the game after conceding 241 runs in the first innings, but Ibrahim Zadran helped his side fight back in the second innings with a maiden Test hundred. Rahmat Shah provided support to the opening batter with a half-century but once the pair were dismissed, Afghanistan innings ended quickly. They joined hands to add 108 runs for the second wick-

et, and Afghanistan were looking good to stretch the game to the final day when they resumed the

innings on day four at 199 for one. However, six wickets went down in the morning session for just

52 runs as the second new ball hurt the Afghans. Jayasuriya clinched five for 107, while

seamers Asitha Fernando and Kasun Rajitha shared five wickets between them. Jayasuriya, the player of the match, ended the game with eight wickets, having bagged three wickets in the first innings. Despite the loss, Afghanistan's fast bowlers were impressive, with Naveed Zadran picking up four wickets in Sri Lanka's first innings on his debut. Hundreds by former captains Angelo Mathews and Dinesh Chandimal helped Sri Lanka to their 1st innings total of 439. The pair were involved in a record 232-run stand for the fourth wicket, the highest partnership at Colombo's Sinhalese Sports Club for that wicket. The Test match is not part of the World Test Championship. The teams will now move to Kandy for a three-match ODI series, followed by three T20 Internationals in Dambulla.



Briefs

Kazakh president signs decree accepting resignation of govt

ASTANA : Kassym-Jomart Tokayev temporarily assigns duties of prime minister to First Deputy Prime Minister Roman Sklyar. Kazakh President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev on Monday signed a decree accepting the resignation of his country's government. The decree published by the Kazakh presidency said Tokayev accepted the resignation of the government in accordance with Article 70 of the country's constitution. It further said the president temporarily assigned the duties of prime minister to First Deputy Prime Minister Roman Sklyar. "Members of the Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan continue to perform their duties until the approval of the new composition of the Government," the decree also said. The decree comes into force from the date of its signing, it added.—APP

California declares state of emergency after storm

LOS ANGELES: Swaths of the US state of California were flooded on Monday and hundreds of thousands of people were without power after a dangerous storm brought heavy rains and prompted a state of emergency. "This is a serious storm with dangerous and potentially life-threatening impacts," said Governor Gavin Newsom as he declared the state of emergency for eight counties in Southern California. Affected areas include Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino, San Diego and Santa Barbara. Nearly 700,000 customers were without power early Monday morning, according to the electricity supply tracker PowerOutage.us. Storm Isha batters Britain, cutting power and diverting flights. Dozens of flights in and out of Los Angeles airport were delayed or canceled, according to flightaware.com. The National Weather Service had earlier issued a warning that a "strong Pacific storm system would bring impactful and dangerous flooding rains, heavy snow, strong winds, coastal flooding, and high surf to California". "Heavy rainfall will bring the threat for life-threatening flash, urban, and river flooding as well as debris flows and mudslides," said NWS. The storm, packing gusts of 60 miles per hour or greater, is part of a "Pineapple Express", a weather phenomenon that grows in Hawaii from near where the tropical moisture is coming.—DNA

Border clashes claim lives in Sudan-South Sudan dispute

KHARTOUM : Nineteen people, one of them a humanitarian worker, were killed in ethnic clashes over the weekend in the Abyei region straddling the border between Sudan and South Sudan and claimed by both, local authorities have said. Violence is common in the oil-rich territory, with 54 people killed last week alone, including two UN peacekeepers. Another 64 people were injured in fighting last week between two tribes of the main ethnic Dinka - the Abyei-based Ngok and their Twic rivals from the neighbouring state of Warrap in South Sudan. Both sides have sought to press their own claims since South Sudan gained independence in 2011, whereupon the disputed Abyei area was placed under UN protection. "The attacks on civilians culminated in the loss of life, setting the market ablaze, property looting and raiding livestock," the Abyei Administrative Authority (AAA) said. The AAA said the fighting at the weekend "contravenes the presidential order that calls for a peaceful settlement of the communal conflict between Ngok Dinka and Twic of the Warrap State".—Agencies

Zelensky declares need for 'reset' in Ukraine's leadership

'I have something serious in mind, which is not about a single person but about direction of country's leadership,' Ukrainian president says

NEWS DESK

KYIV: Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky has declared the need for a "reset" in the country's leadership, thus increasing speculation over the sacking of Commander-in-Chief Valerii Zaluzhnyi. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky has declared the need for a "reset" in the country's leadership, thus increasing speculation over the sacking of Commander-in-Chief Valerii Zaluzhnyi. "If we want to win we all have to push in the same direction, convinced of victory, we cannot be discouraged, and drop our arms, we have to have the right positive energy that's why I'm talking about reset, about replacement," Zelensky told Italian state broadcaster RAI in an interview aired on Sunday. While saying "reset," he refers to a "turnover" of a number of state officials and is not focused on a single entity such as the military. "I have something serious in mind, which is not about a single person, but about the direction of the leadership of the country," he added. France to summon Russian ambassador following death of humanitarian workers in Ukraine. France will summon Russia's ambassador on Monday, a French diplomatic source said,



after the death of two French humanitarian workers following a Russian strike in Ukraine last week, and what Paris said was an upsurge in Russian disinformation targeting France. Two French volunteer aid workers were killed and another three wounded in a Russian drone attack in the southern Ukrainian region of Kherson on February 1 in what Foreign Minister Stephane Sejourne described as an act of "barbarity." Biden urges swift passage of Ukraine aid deal. President Joe Biden has said he "strongly" supports the bipartisan deal which would provide billions of dollars in new aid to Ukraine and Israel while bolstering US border security and tightening asylum laws. "We've reached an agreement on a bipartisan national security deal that in-

cludes the toughest and fairest set of border reforms in decades. I strongly support it," said Biden in a statement. He urged Congress to "swiftly pass" the deal and "get it to my desk so I can sign it into law immediately." US Senate releases text of border security, Ukraine aid bill. US senators have released the language of a bipartisan border security package that would unlock vital aid for Ukraine with an initial vote expected by midweek, although its prospects for becoming law are unclear. Senators have been negotiating for months on a deal to combat illegal immigration, with Republicans insisting on bolstered border security in return for approving a White House request for more than \$60 billion for Kiev. Zelensky considering replacing several officials. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky, in an interview broadcast on Sunday, is considering replacing several senior officials, and not just in the military, to determine who is to lead the country. Speculation has gripped Ukraine over suggestions that the president is about to dismiss the commander of Ukraine's military, Valery Zaluzhnyi. The two have been at odds over the conduct of the nearly two-year-old Russian military offensive. "It is a question of the people who are to lead Ukraine," Zelensky told Ital-

Putin to visit Turkey for Black Sea grain export talks

ISTANBUL: Russian President Vladimir Putin will visit Turkey soon, the Turkish foreign minister said late Sunday. It would be Putin's first trip to a NATO country since Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine two years ago. Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan told the A Haber private TV channel that Putin's meeting with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan will focus on a new way to allow Ukrainian grain exports through the Black Sea. He did not mention a date for the visit, but Turkish media has reported that Putin will come on Feb. 12. The International Criminal Court last year issued an arrest warrant against Putin over the alleged deportation of Ukrainian children to Russia, greatly limiting his opportunity to travel abroad. Turkey, like Russia, is not a party to the court, allowing Putin to visit without fear of arrest. Turkey has sought to maintain good ties with both Russia and Ukraine, its Black Sea neighbors. While declining to join Western sanctions on Moscow, it has also backed Ukraine's territorial integrity and provided arms to Kyiv. "The previous grain deal worked within a certain mechanism. Now it has been seen that there is a possibility of going with a different mechanism," Fidan said, referring to the previous deal that lasted a year before Russia withdrew in July. At the time, Russia said the deal would be suspended until demands to get Russian food and fertilizer to the world are met. Turkey helped the United Nations broker that accord to provide safe passage from Ukrainian ports. Fidan said Erdogan would also discuss with Putin security in Syria and energy cooperation.—Agencies

that there is currently no imminent military threat from Russia towards a NATO member, highlighting the alliance's strengthened defence capabilities.

PM Sunak says he has failed on key healthcare pledge

LONDON: British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak said his government had not done enough to cut the high number of people waiting for hospital treatment in the health service, admitting failure on one of his signature pledges in the run-up to an election. Sunak set out five major policy pledges at the start of 2023, including one to cut waiting lists in the strained, state-run National Health Service (NHS), a top concern for a majority of voters. The shadow health secretary, Wes Streeting, said: "Rishi Sunak has finally admitted what has been blatantly obvious to everyone else for years - the Conservatives have failed on the NHS. "Where Sunak has

failed, Labour will succeed in getting the NHS back on its feet. We did it before and we will do it again. We will cut waiting lists with 2 million more evening and weekend appointments, paid for by abolishing the non-dom tax status." In October, it emerged that the number of people waiting longer than 18 months for NHS treatment in England was growing. Data analysed by PA Media last month suggested that, despite recent decreases in the waiting list in England, it was still higher than when Sunak's pledge was made. The list stood at 7.21m outstanding treatments in January 2023. In November, NHS England figures showed 7.61m treatments were yet to be

carried out. NHS workers, many of whom have seen substantial pay cuts in real terms under Conservative governments, have been exercising their right to take industrial action to secure better terms. Unions have consistently said ministers could avoid strikes by offering better pay deals. And government ministers have acknowledged privately they would end up needing to do so despite having spent months publicly insisting they would take no such step. Health leaders warned Sunak in December that allowing the industrial dispute to grind on would make delivering his pledge all but impossible. Nevertheless, Sunak sought to blame striking workers for his failure. Asked

on Monday by TalkTV about the increased waiting lists in England, Sunak replied: "Yes, and we all know the reasons for that. And what I would say to people is: look, we have invested record amounts in the NHS: more doctors, more nurses, more scanners. All these things mean that the NHS is doing more today than it ever has been. But industrial action has had an impact." Morgan also told Sunak about his 79-year-old mother's experience with NHS care three months ago after she had a heart attack. The broadcaster said that, despite being driven to the hospital in an ambulance, his mother waited on a trolley in an A&E corridor for nearly seven hours before being seen.—APP

Zimbabwe ruling party dominates by-elections

HARARE: Zimbabwe's ruling ZANU-PF now commands a two-thirds majority in parliament and could amend the constitution and prolong President Emmerson Mnangagwa's control, after by-election results released. On Sunday, Zimbabwe Electoral Commission chairman Rodney Kiwa said: "Elections went well. ZANU-PF has won in all the six constituencies. I do confirm that position." The party won a clean sweep in six constituency elections held on Saturday after a peculiar political manoeuvre that was denounced as a fraud by the opposition saw six opposition MPs sacked. This was the second time Zimbabwe has held parliamentary by-elections since the start of a political crisis that has hobbled the opposition and may now cement 81-year-old Mnangagwa's control. Analysts and opposition activists warn that ZANU-PF could now wield their supermajority - of 190 seats out of the 280 total, and with two vacant - to remove a two-term limit on the presidency and allow Mnangagwa to stand again. One-party state claims. The seats became open after a self-proclaimed interim secretary general of the opposition Citizens Coalition for Change (CCC), Sengezo Tshabangu, orchestrated the recall of six of the party's MPs. Opposition supporters attacked the move, insisting that Tshabangu was a ZANU-PF stooge, imposed on the party merely to disrupt it and build a ruling party majority to secure Mnangagwa's rule.—Agencies

US Envoy pressures Orban on Sweden's NATO entry

BUDAPEST: The U.S. envoy to Budapest along with ambassadors from some other NATO allies including Denmark and Poland attended the Hungarian parliament on Monday in a surprise show of pressure on Budapest to approve Sweden's bid to join the alliance. The extraordinary meeting of parliament was called by the opposition to vote on ratification on Monday, but lawmakers from his ruling Fidesz party went ahead with their boycott of the session and now ratification will be further delayed. Hungary is the only NATO country not to ratify Stockholm's membership application, a process that requires the backing of all members, souring relations with the United States and raising concerns among its allies. "It's extremely unpleasant that up to today, they (Fidesz) have been blocking Sweden's NATO accession," Mate Kanasz-Nagy, lawmaker of the opposition LMP party told parliament, his words echoing in the half-empty room as the envoys sat in the public gallery. "He (Orban) wants to favour (Russian President) Putin, thus breaking the unity of NATO," Agnes Vadai, lawmaker of the opposition Democratic Coalition said. The ambassadors did not make any remarks before entering parliament but are expected to comment after the session. Sweden's NATO bid could be ratified when Hungary's parliament reconvenes for a normal session, the Fidesz party's parliamentary group said earlier on Monday, adding that first it expects a visit by the Swedish prime minister to Budapest. Parliament will reconvene after the winter break in late February. "If this is an important issue for the Swedes, then obviously the Swedish prime minister will come to Budapest," Fidesz said in an emailed reply to questions. The office of Swedish Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson and his foreign minister did not immediately reply to requests.—APP



JEDDAH: The OIC Secretary General, H.E. Hissein Brahim Taha graced the Kashmir Solidarity Day event as a 'Chief Guest', organized by the Permanent Mission of Pakistan to OIC at the OIC Secretariat in Jeddah.—DNA

EU's Borrell warns against cutting UNRWA funds

WEB DESK

BRUSSELS: The European Union's top diplomat said cutting funds to UNRWA would put hundreds of thousands of lives at risk, amid allegations some of the UN Palestinian refugee agency's staff were involved in the Oct. 7 Hamas attacks on Israel. A string of countries, including the United States, Britain and Italy, have paused funding to the aid agency, which has opened an investigation into several of its thousands of employees and severed ties with those people. UNRWA on Thursday said its entire operations in the Middle East, not only in Gaza, will likely be forced to shut down by the end of February if its funding remains suspended. "Defunding UNRWA would be both disproportionate and dangerous," EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell wrote in a blog post. The wrongdoing of individuals should never lead to the collective punishment of an entire popula-

tion," he said. Borrell said neither the European Commission, nor the EU's two biggest economies, Germany or France, had decided to end their contributions. Funds paused by other donors amount to more than \$440 million, nearly half of the agency's expected income this year, he said. In 2022, the EU was the third biggest donor to UNRWA, after the United States and Germany. "The lives of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians, not only in Gaza, are at stake," Borrell said. UNRWA was established in 1949 following the war surrounding the founding of Israel, when 700,000 Palestinians fled or were driven from their homes. It employs 30,000 Palestinians to serve the civic and humanitarian needs of 5.9 million descendants of those refugees - in the Gaza Strip, in the West Bank and in vast camps in neighboring Arab countries. "I am confident that the UN will take all the necessary measures following the Israeli allegations, and that UNRWA will continue to be a vital

lifeline for millions of Palestinian people," Borrell added. Senior Hamas member says mediators working to achieve ceasefire deal in Gaza. A top representative of Hamas in Lebanon said mediator countries are working on a deal to achieve a ceasefire in Gaza. The mediators are working to achieve the agreement, which "must guarantee all what we are asking for," Osama Hamdan, a member of the Palestinian group's politburo, told Anadolu news agency. "We insist reaching a complete ceasefire, call for a complete withdrawal of the Israeli army from Gaza, and



the lifting the siege on Gaza." "However, the Israeli army wants to continue its military attacks in Gaza, and continue its siege," he added. Meanwhile, OECD ups world growth forecast but sees Middle East 'risk'. The OECD raised its 2024 world economic growth forecast but warned that the Middle East conflict posed a risk, with disruptions in Red Sea shipping threatening to increase consumer prices. The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development highlighted the threats from the Israeli war on Gaza and the attacks on ships in the Red Sea by Yemen's Houthi who say they were targeting Israel-linked ships in solidarity with the Palestinians. "High geopolitical tensions are a significant near-term risk to activity and inflation, particularly if the conflict in the Middle East were to disrupt energy markets," the report said. Israel continues West Bank raids, detains 20 more Palestinians. The Israeli army has raided several cities, towns and refugee camps in the occupied West Bank, detaining

at least 20 Palestinians. Witnesses told Anadolu news agency that Israeli forces stormed Tubas city and arrested two people, inciting clashes with dozens of Palestinians. The army also raided Tulikarem and rounded up five people amid armed clashes with Palestinian gunmen in several areas of the city, witnesses said. Local sources told Anadolu that the army surrounded a house in the Al Ain refugee camp west of Nabulus and arrested two more people, amid clashes with dozens of Palestinians. Other witnesses said the Israeli army arrested eight people in the town of Arraba, near Jenin city, after storming dozens of homes. Three more Palestinians were detained in the town of Halhul near Hebron, witnesses said. So far, there has been no official confirmation of any casualties during the clashes. Italy will become a target should it join attacks against Yemen, Houthi leader says. Italy will become a target if it takes part in attacks against Yemen, a senior official from Yemen's Iran-aligned Houthi said in an interview.

Thai former PM hopeful hit with more legal trouble

BANGKOK: A Thai court on Monday handed suspended sentences to former prime minister hopeful Pita Limjaroenrat and seven other political figures for holding an unlawful rally in 2019. The cases add to the legal trouble facing the opposition Move Forward Party after the country's Constitutional Court ruled that the party has undermined the monarchy and national security amid its campaign to amend a law protecting the monarchy from criticism. The Pathumwan district court in Bangkok gave a four-month prison sentence, suspended for 2 years, and a fine of 11,200 baht (\$313.81) to six leading figures of the now-defunct Future Forward Party, the Move Forward's party predecessor, and two other activists their lawyer Kris-adang Nutcharut said. The charges related to a protest they led that was joined by thousands of supporters in December 2019 in the Thai capital. The eight people sentenced, including business executive Thanathorn Juangroongruangkit and member of parliament Pi-yabutr Saengkanokkul, all plan to appeal the verdict, their lawyer said. Pita could be disqualified from parliament if his appeal fails and courts uphold the verdict. Thai law does not allow people convicted of serious crimes to hold parliamentary seats. The party now faces potential dissolution and its executives banned from politics after lawyers and opponents launched more legal challenges in the wake of the constitutional court ruling.—APP

Chile mourns as wildfire death toll hits 112

VINA DEL MAR: Chile began an official two-day mourning period on Monday for the 112 so far killed in the South American country's deadliest wildfires in recent history, while authorities continued to battle blazes fanned by high temperatures and strong winds. Fires that broke out in central Chile late last week gathered momentum throughout the weekend, ravaging the coastal cities of Vina del Mar and Valparaiso. Hundreds of people remain missing and some 14,000 homes have been damaged. Drone footage filmed by in the Vina del Mar area showed whole neighborhoods scorched, with residents rummaging through husks of burnt-out houses where corrugated iron roofs have collapsed. On the streets, singed cars littered the roads. "From one moment to the next, the fire reached the botanical park. In ten minutes the fire was already on us," Vina del Mar resident Jessica Barrios, who lost her home in the fires, told over the weekend.—DNA

US public debt 'unsustainable' in long run

WASHINGTON: The United States is on an "unsustainable" path concerning its national debt and it is time to address the issue, according to Federal Reserve (Fed) Chair Jerome Powell, who evaluated the fiscal path and inflation forecast in an interview aired. The U.S. national debt currently stands at more than \$34 trillion, according to the U.S. Treasury. "In the long run, the U.S. is on an unsustainable fiscal path. The U.S. federal government is on an unsustainable fiscal path. And that just means that the debt is growing faster than the economy," Powell told CBS' "60 Minutes" news program. "It's probably time, or past time, to get back to an adult conversation about elected officials among getting the federal government back on a sustainable fiscal path," he said in the interview, which was recorded on Thursday. "I do think it's pretty widely understood that it's time for us to get back to putting a priority on fiscal sustainability. And sooner's better than later." Last week, the Fed voted to leave interest rates unchanged for the fourth straight meeting, and while it said at the time that "risks to achieving its employment and inflation goals are moving into better balance," it also hinted that rate cuts were not imminent.—APP

Briefs

Yemen: Our support for Gaza 'unwavering'

SANA'A: Spokesman for Yemen's Ansarullah group Mohamed Abdul-Salam has affirmed that the ongoing US-British aggression against his country "will not achieve any goals, but rather it will increase the aggressors' predicaments and problems at the regional level." "Yemen's decision to support Gaza is an unwavering and principled position and will not get affected by any attack or aggression," spokesman Abdul-Salam said in remarks on his X page on Sunday. "With regard to Yemen's military capabilities, we'd like to stress that they are not easy to destroy, and they were rebuilt following years of ferocious war," the spokesman added. "Instead of escalating the situation and igniting a new front in the region, America and Britain should submit to the international public opinion, which calls for an immediate halt to the Israeli aggression, lifting the siege on Gaza and refraining from providing Israel with protection at the expense of Palestinian people," he underlined. - Agencies

N. Ireland political deadlock celebrated

LONDON: Prime Minister Rishi Sunak and Irish Taoiseach Leo Varadkar visited Stormont on Monday to mark the return of power-sharing in Northern Ireland. The leaders of the UK and Ireland went to Belfast Monday to meet Northern Ireland's newly revived government and bask in a good-news moment after two years of political crisis. British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak and Irish counterpart Leo Varadkar were visiting the new administration at Belfast's Stormont Castle as its ministers met for the first time. The ministers wasted no time before pressing London for more money to patch up Northern Ireland's creaking public services. The visits came two days after members of the Northern Ireland Assembly appointed a power-sharing government following a two-year hiatus that was sparked when the main British unionist party walked out in February 2022. The Democratic Unionist Party boycotted the administration to protest post-Brexit trading arrangements that it said undermined Northern Ireland's place in the United Kingdom. The party was coaxed into returning last week after the UK promised to eliminate most checks on goods moving to Northern Ireland from the rest of the UK. Under power-sharing rules established as part of Northern Ireland's peace process, the administration in Belfast must include both British unionists and Irish nationalists. The UK and the Republic of Ireland both have roles as guarantors of the peace. The new administration is led by First Minister Michelle O'Neill of Sinn Fein, the party allied with the Irish Republican Army during Northern Ireland's decades of violence known as "The Troubles."

Hamas insists on ceasefire in Gaza

BEIRUT: Senior Hamas official Osama Hamdan has affirmed that his Movement insists on a comprehensive ceasefire, the withdrawal of the occupation army from the entire Gaza Strip and the lifting of the siege. In press remarks on Monday, Hamdan accused the Israeli occupation government of obstructing any agreement with the Palestinian factions that could lead to a comprehensive ceasefire. "The Israelis want to continue their military attacks against the Gaza Strip and to retain the siege on it. They also do not want to achieve a ceasefire," the Hamas official said. "The mediators are working on achieving some kind of agreement, which should, from our point of view, fulfill what we have asked for," he added. - Agencies

Israeli settler violence 'must stop': French FM

"The future of the Gaza Strip is inseparable from the future of the West Bank, we must prepare for this future by supporting Palestinian Authority," Sejourne said

DNA

JERUSALEM: French Foreign Minister Stephane Sejourne said Monday that Israeli "settler violence must stop" against Palestinians in the occupied West Bank, following a meeting with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. "Under no circumstances can there be forced displacement of Palestinians, neither out of Gaza nor out of the West Bank," Sejourne said during a Middle East tour aimed at securing a truce between Israel and militant group Hamas in Gaza. The French minister denounced anti-Palestinian rhetoric and "even calls to commit war crimes" by Israeli officials, after some Netanyahu allies have appeared to endorse Jewish re-settlement of the Gaza Strip after the war. Sejourne called for supporting the West Bank-based Palestinian Authority of president Mahmoud Abbas. "The future of the Gaza Strip is inseparable from the future of the West Bank, we must prepare for this future by supporting the Palestinian Authority," Sejourne said. "It must renew itself and re-deploy as soon as possible in the Gaza Strip," where Hamas seized power in 2007, he added.

UAE president, Jordanian king meet in Amman

LONDON: UAE President Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al-Nahyan met with Jordan's King Abdullah in Amman on Monday to discuss the longstanding ties between their two countries, Emirates News Agency reported on Monday. The two parties discussed new opportunities for collaboration to support both countries' development goals, particularly with regard to the economy, investment, food security, renewable energy, and sustainability. The leaders also reviewed a number of regional and international issues of mutual interest, including the most recent developments in the Gaza Strip. They emphasized the need to intensify efforts to achieve a ceasefire in Gaza and provide full protection for Palestinian civilians in accordance with international law. They also discussed the importance of supporting the work of humanitarian organizations in Gaza. Sheikh Mohammed and King Abdullah highlighted the importance of establishing a clear political path toward a two-state solution to ensure stability and security for all. They also underscored the significant role of diplomacy and dialogue in preventing conflict from spreading throughout the region. The two leaders reaffirmed their ongoing commitment to bolstering Arab collective efforts toward regional stability, which is based on both countries' long-standing policy of promoting peaceful coexistence and cooperation in order to achieve prosperity for everyone. King Abdullah hosted a lunch in honor of Sheikh Mohammed's visit before accompanying the UAE delegation to the airport for their departure from Jordan. - Agencies

ed. "I repeat: Gaza is Palestinian land," the top French diplomat said on his first tour of the region since taking office in January. The Palestinian militant group Hamas in 2007 ousted Gaza forces loyal to the Palestinian Authority, which exercises limited autonomy in parts of the West Bank. Israel in 2005 withdrew troops and settlers from Gaza, but in the West Bank there are around 490,000 Israelis living among approximately three million Palestinians in settlements that are considered illegal under international law. Since the October 7 attack triggered war between Israel and Hamas, at least 381 Palestinians have been killed by Israeli troops and settlers in the West Bank, according to the Palestinian health ministry in Ramallah. Israeli rights group Yesh Din dubbed 2023 the "most violent" year on record for settler attacks. Sejourne called for "a comprehensive political solution, with two states living in peace side by side," urging the resumption of the peace process "without delay." Israel and the Palestinians have not held substantive peace talks in more than a decade. "Without a political solution, there will be no just and lasting peace in the Middle East," Sejourne said.

Putin will visit Turkiye soon

DNA

ISTANBUL: Russian President Vladimir Putin will visit Turkiye soon, the Turkish foreign minister said late Sunday. It would be Putin's first trip to a NATO country since Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine two years ago. Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan told the A Haber private TV channel that Putin's meeting with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan will focus on a new way to allow Ukrainian grain exports through the Black Sea. He did not mention a date for the visit, but Turkish media has reported that Putin will come on Feb. 12. The International Criminal Court last year issued an arrest warrant against Putin over the alleged deportation of Ukrainian children to Russia, greatly limiting his opportunity to travel abroad. Turkiye, like Russia, is not a party to the court, allowing Putin to visit without fear of arrest. Turkiye has sought to maintain good ties with both Russia and Ukraine, its Black Sea neighbors. While declining to join Western sanctions on Moscow, it has also backed Ukraine's territorial integrity and provided arms to Kyiv. "The previous grain deal worked within a certain mechanism. Now it has been seen that there is a possibility of going with a different mechanism," Fidan said.

Aseefa promises millions of houses

DNA

LARKANA: With elections just around the corner, political parties are promising to provide a better future to masses. In this regard, Pakistan Peoples Party's Aseefa Bhutto Zardari has vowed that the party would construct millions of homes to provide shelter to people if the party is voted to power. She made these remarks while addressing a convention of the party. She asked the people to choose carefully their representatives while highlighting that the PPP had provided free treatment to the inhabitants of all areas of Sindh while claiming that no other province had prioritised it. Aseefa said a well-functioning hospital was developed in a small city like Gambit while mentioning the party has stood with people as it has always received their support.



ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Federal Minister for Information & Broadcasting, Murtaza Solangi, speaks to participants during protest rally to mark the Kashmir Solidarity Day at Constitution Avenue in the Federal Capital. - DNA

Internet to remain 'restricted' in sensitive polling booths

Quetta: Caretaker Balochistan Information Minister Jan Achakzai announced that the internet service will remain temporarily restricted in the sensitive polling booths in the province on election day. As Balochistan remains the target of militants ahead of the February 8 polls, the caretaker government took the decision to limit internet services suspended in the light of possible terrorist activities during polling. Taking to X, the minister said that there was a risk that the terrorists might use the social media platforms as a means of communication for their nefarious plans. "Ensuring the safety and security of ordinary citizens is of utmost importance, as there is a concern that terrorists may exploit social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and other similar channels for communication purposes," he wrote in an X post. He said that internet access will be restricted in the lead-up to the elections in regions including Turbat, Mach, and Chaman, the areas latest to witness a terrorist attack in the province. The decision comes amid a perilous situation in Balochistan in the wake of a recent spike in terrorist attacks, especially on political parties and their election rallies ahead of elections. However, independent candidates with scant resources who rely on social media to spread their message have also been hit hard due to intermittent network outages. Lawyer Jibran Nasir, who is running in the port city of Karachi, has taken the government to court over the social media shutdowns, saying it sets a "dangerous precedent" for the future and violates people's constitutional rights. "It is a direct attack on the freedom of expression of all Pakistanis regardless of what part of the political spectrum they belong to," he told AFP. "I primarily rely on social media because, given the inflation, it is virtually impossible to run a fully-fledged campaign within the budget limits." With less than a week left in the February 8 polls, security across the country has been heightened with the deployment of law enforcers to ensure the law and order situation for the national-level polls. - Agencies

Pak diplomatic missions observe Kashmir Solidarity Day

ISLAMABAD: The diplomatic missions of Pakistan across the world on Monday observed the Kashmir Solidarity Day to express support the struggle of the people of Indian Illegally Occupied Kashmir (IIOJK) for their right to self-determination. The Friends of Kashmir in Dallas, United States, organized a seminar to show solidarity with the people of Kashmir that was attended by the Kashmiri diaspora, local dignitaries and Sikh community. Speakers at the seminar highlighted gross human rights violations in the IIOJK and called upon international community to play its role in granting the right of self-determination to Kashmiris. The Pakistan Consulate General in New York also arranged an event to mark the Kashmir Solidarity Day. A large number of people including members of Kashmiri and Pakistani community in New York, opinion leaders, scholars, students and journalists attended the event. Inspiring speeches were made by Consulate General Aamer Ahmed Atozai, Dr. Asif Rehman, Carin J. Fischer, Dr. Sima Karetnaya, Zameer Ahmad, Taj Khan, Sardar Sawar and Saghir Khan. The Consulate General said that Pakistan stood committed to the acquisition of the right of self-determination for Kashmiri brethren in accordance with the UNSC resolutions. Likewise, Pakistan's Embassy in China also observed the Kashmir Solidarity Day by hosting a ceremony to underscore the country's unwavering commitment to the Kashmir cause, including the right to self-determination of the Kashmiri people. On the occasion, the embassy also organized a panel discussion on the continued non-implementation of the United Nations Charter and international laws for the maintenance of world peace and security. The panelists stressed the centrality of multilateralism, with the UN at its core, for the resolution of disputes and prevention of conflicts. The event was attended by diplomats, scholars, academics and media. - DNA

Pakistan reaffirms solidarity with the Kashmiri people

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Government and people of Pakistan are observing the 'Kashmir Solidarity Day' to express solidarity with the people of Jammu and Kashmir in their struggle for realization of their right to self-determination. The President, the Prime Minister and the Foreign Minister, in their special messages on the occasion, have renewed Pakistan's unstinting moral, diplomatic and political support to the Kashmir Cause. The Foreign Minister has addressed letters to the Presidents of the UN Security Council and General Assembly, the UN Secretary General, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and the OIC Secretary General to update them on the latest developments in the Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK). In these letters, the Foreign Minister has emphasized the need to implement the relevant Security Council resolutions so that the people of Jammu and Kashmir could determine their future through a fair and impartial plebiscite under the UN aus-

pic. He has also urged the UN and OIC leadership to play their role in improving the human rights situation in IIOJK and for release of Kashmiri political prisoners and dissenters. In the run up to the Kashmir Solidarity Day, a briefing was organized for Islamabad-based diplomats to apprise them of the situation in IIOJK. A 'Solidarity Day Walk' was held on the Constitution Avenue, earlier today, from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs up to the Parliament Building. The walk was led by the Ministers for Information, Privatization, Culture, and Religious Affairs. The officers and staff members of the Ministry participated in the walk, alongside school children and people from different walks of life. A wide range of other activities, including seminars, webinars, panel discussions and photo exhibitions are being organized throughout the country, and at Pakistan's diplomatic missions around the world. These activities are aimed at expressing solidarity with the Kashmiri people, highlighting the ongoing human rights violations in IIOJK, and underscoring the grave implications of India's efforts to turn Kashmiris into a disempowered community in their own land.

Nawaz asks constituents to vote wisely

KHAYAM ABBASI

MURREE: PML-N supremo Nawaz Sharif and party chief organiser Maryam Nawaz on Monday pledged to redevelop the country after coming to power. During the power show in Murree just days before the general elections, Nawaz reiterated that the cost of essentials was much less when he was the prime minister than the present prices. He said he rid the people of the menace of loadshedding. During his last stint in power, Nawaz claimed that the economy was flourishing and businesses were thriving. He urged the people to vote responsibly as "vote can change the destiny of their generations." He asked the constituents to stamp on the 'tiger' (electoral symbol of PML-N) on Feb 8 and become part of development and progress. He criticised the judges who disqualified him. He said the country was devastated after his removal from office and today they (a reference to judges) were tendering resignations. He hit out at the PTI founder by reminding the people of empty promises of five million houses, billion-tree projects and other such initiatives. Nawaz promised to launch a train service from Rawalpindi to Kashmir via Murree. He said Murree, being a tourist spot, deserved development. He reminded the gathering the first metalled road that was built by him was between Rawalpindi and Murree. He recalled the dark day of Murree incident when the PTI founder, as prime minister, couldn't come to help the people trapped in snow. "Murree is my second home after Lahore and the picturesque hilly area and its people are close to my heart," he said. He said his party stood by the Kashmiris as he paid tribute to the sacrifices of martyrs. Meanwhile With only two days left before the upcoming elections and political parties trying their best to woo the masses, PML-N senior vice-president Maryam Nawaz has promised the "highest development" if the party is voted into power.



General Practice

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 Gynecology & Women's Health	 Cardiology	 Urology	 Psychology & Mental Health	 Nursing Services
 Dermatology & Aesthetics	 Psychiatry	 Pulmonology	 Ophthalmology	 Diagnostic Radiology
 Nutrition, Dietetics & Lifestyle	 Dental & Maxillofacial Surgery	 Gastroenterology & Hepatology	 Nephrology	 Pre-employment Health Screening





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