



Islamabad POST

Wednesday, February 07, 2024

Pakistan's Credible Daily Newspaper

Price Rs. 30

EU must defend Ukraine even if US reduces support

Detailed News On Page-08

Bektenov becomes new Kazakh PM

Detailed News On Page-07

Naqvi elected unopposed PCB chairman

Detailed News On Page-06

Electioneering ends

Parties make last-ditch efforts to woo voters

Nawaz Sharif vows to make Pakistan 'Asian Tiger'

ABID RAZA

LAHORE: February 6 (Tuesday) was the last day of the electioneering for the Feb 8 general elections as provided in the constitution. Candidates tried to woo the voters until 12 midnight. Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) chief Nawaz Sharif says he will make the country an 'Asian Tiger' as the youth is supporting the former ruling party. Addressing a rally on the last day of the election campaign in Khudian, the former prime minister said, "If our government were in power, every person here would have a job." "We have to come out of this era; we have to make the country an 'Asian Tiger'. Shehbaz Sharif should utilise this passion for Pakistan and change the country's destiny," said Nawaz. The PML-N leader said that their government would build roads in Khudian better than those in Paris; there should be universities for the youth here, and they should have laptops and computers in their hands. Nawaz Sharif said that their government would provide jobs to the youth of Khudian. The former prime minister also promised to build stadium in Khudian. He said that he would bring Shehbaz Sharif to inaugurate it, and they would play the opening match in this stadium." He said, "Those who used to say that the youth will get 10 million jobs, where are those jobs and where have the houses gone?" Nawaz Sharif said, "Vegetables were available at Rs10 per kg during my tenure as PM, roti was available for Rs4." He further said, "We are holding the last rally in Khudian and hoped that the youth present here will join us on Feb 8. The enthusiasm of the youth is exemplary." On the other hand, the Election Commission of Pakistan

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Bilawal lashes at 'ego, stubbornness' of old politicians

NAZIR SIYAL

LARKANA: Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Chairman Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari has castigated "old politicians" and blamed their "ego and stubbornness" for the economic woes affecting the country. Addressing the public gathering in Larkana, Bhutto-Zardari said: "We will have to stage politics that will pave the way for the country's unity. "If my votes are snatched, I will chase them in such a way that we will even forget the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder," maintained Bhutto-Zardari. The former foreign minister took a jibe at the political opponents, saying, "Only the PPP can bring prosperity to the country." "They [political opponents] are trying to befool the people, but the masses are politically enlightened," Bhutto-Zardari said. He said: "Because of their personal enmity they have hurt Pakistan's economy, the federation and democracy." He said they were not worried about how democracy or the economy were being affected due to their stubbornness.

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ISLAMABAD: Chairperson of the Common Wealth Observer Group for General Election Dr Goodluck Ebele Jonathan along with the delegation called on Caretaker Prime Minister, Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar. - DNA

PM meets delegation of COG

Meeting was part of the COG's interaction with various stakeholders

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: A delegation of the Commonwealth Observer Group (COG), led by former President of Nigeria, Mr. Goodluck Ebele Jonathan, called on Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar earlier today. The meeting was part of the COG's interaction with various stakeholders ahead of the upcoming general elections on 8 February, 2024. The Caretaker Prime Minister welcomed the COG delegation and said that Pakistan was

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2 terrorists killed in N. Waziristan IBO

Ring leader Ayubullah, alongside another, was gunned down

STAFF REPORT

RAWALPINDI: The security forces have killed two terrorists including a ring leader in Khyber Pakhunkhwa's North Waziristan district on the night of February 5 and 6, the military's media wing said on Tuesday. According to the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR), the ring leader Ayubullah,

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Law and order situation

Government hints at suspending internet services on Feb 8

"So far, there has been no decision made regarding suspension of internet services at any place," says Gohar Ejaz

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Interior Minister Dr Gohar Ejaz on Tuesday said that the government would consider suspending the internet services on February 8 only if it gets a request from a district or province in view of the security situation. "So far, there has been no decision made regarding the suspension of internet services at any place," said the minister during a presser in Islamabad alongside caretaker Information Minister Murtaza Solangi. A day earlier, Solangi turned down the possibility of an internet shutdown on February 8, saying that local administrations have the authority to decide on an internet shutdown in

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UN rights body condemns 'harassment'

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights expressed concern on Tuesday ahead of Pakistan's parliamentary election scheduled for Thursday, urging authorities to condemn all acts of violence against political parties and candidates while emphasising the need to

Continued on Page 06

6 wounded during Turkish court house attack

Pak condemns terrorist attack

FOREIGN DESK

ISTANBUL: Two people were shot dead while trying to attack a courthouse in Istanbul on Tuesday, Turkish Interior Minister Ali Yerlikaya said. The man and woman were killed during an "attempt to attack" a security checkpoint at the Caglayan courthouse at 11.46 a.m. local time (0846GMT). Yerlikaya posted on social media. Six people were injured in the incident, including three police officers. "I congratulate our heroic police officers. I wish a speedy recovery to our injured," the minister added. Caglayan, which is also known as the Istanbul Justice Palace, is a huge court complex in

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ISLAMABAD: Pakistan strongly condemns the terrorist attack targeting the Courthouse complex in Istanbul. We extend our heartfelt condolences to the brotherly people and government of Turkiye and pray for the swift and complete recovery of those injured in this heinous attack. Our thoughts and prayers are with the bereaved families. Pakistan reaffirms its resolute solidarity with Turkiye in its fight against scourge of terrorism. - DNA

Briefs

'Surveys show PML-N in lead'

PTI workers should bury politics of hatred

DNA

KASUR: Pakistan Muslim League-N's chief organiser Maryam Nawaz Sharif said on Tuesday her party had left behind all competitors in popularity. The PML-N senior vice-president said every survey exposed the opponents. Addressing a public rally in Khudian Khas, Maryam said the love of the people of Kasur had turned the game upside down. He said Nawaz Sharif decided to address the last rally of the election campaign in Kasur. She said the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf workers should bury the politics of hatred forever. "I was born in an era where there was no respect for mothers, sisters and daughters," she said. She said she wanted young people to have laptops, not sticks.

Imran was unaware of Pak situation

It was me who rolled out the health card

SHAMIM SHAHID

PESHAWAR: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Parliamentarians Chairman Pervez Khattak assailed the PTI founder on Tuesday, saying the latter was unaware of the country's situation. Expressing his thoughts in Nowshera, the former KP chief minister said: "When we demanded the funds, he used to say that he used to cite the example of Europe. The PTI founder said the people do not seek funds in Europe." "We said that develop this country like Europe and then he would not seek funds," Khattak said. He asserted, "It was me who rolled out the health card. It was my authority on the health card." Khattak urged the people of Nowshera to vote for his party in the upcoming elections, slated to happen on February 8.

PTI fights back

PTI files review petition to reclaim 'bat' symbol

Party requests SC to restore Peshawar High Court's decision

COURT REPORTER

ISLAMABAD: With just two days left for Pakistan's 10th general elections, the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) is yet again trying to reclaim its electoral symbol 'bat', as it has filed a plea with the Supreme Court to review the verdict ordering its withdrawal. The party has also moved the apex court on Tuesday seeking a review of the decision about PTI's intra-party polls. PTI - whose founder Imran Khan remains behind bars in multiple cases - has requested the apex court to review its January 13 decision wherein the top court upheld the Election Commission of Pakistan's verdict declaring PTI's intra-party polls "unconstitutional," depriving the party of its iconic electoral symbol. The plea by PTI requested the SC to review its verdict and restore the decision of the Peshawar High Court, which termed the ECP's decision "invalid" on January 10. The PHC decision was announced following

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PPP, PML-N withdraw complaints in NA-127

Move signals potential reconciliation between two major political rivals

BUREAU REPORT

LAHORE: In a surprising turn of events, the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) and Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) have decided to withdraw their complaints against each

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Azerbaijanis all set to vote in Presidential election today

A survey conducted by this newspaper on Tuesday unveiled a palpable enthusiasm among the youth, who are eagerly poised to cast their votes in the Wednesday election. Similar to Pakistan, Azerbaijan also boasts a burgeoning youth population ready to actively contribute to the country's development

ANSAR M BHATTI
In Azerbaijan

BAKU: Azerbaijan is all set to elect a new President in Wednesday's presidential election as people are fully geared up to exercise their right through a free, fair and transparent ballot. The Election Commission of Azerbaijan has made elaborate arrangements to ensure an inclusive and transparent election. The voting shall start at 8 am in the morning till 7 pm. Every citizen of Azerbaijan who has active election right and has reached 18 years on the day of the elections is eligible to participate in the elections and cast his or her vote. The observer, including that of from Pakistan, have been allocated special badges who may conduct election observation in the whole territory of Azerbaijan. The Central Election Commission has made elaborate arrangement for the international observers in order to provide them with an ample opportunity of performing their duties without any hindrance. Supreme Commander-in-Chief, President Ilham Aliyev was celebrated as a national hero after Azerbaijani Army liberated the occupied territories ending one of the most bitter standoffs of the post-Soviet era. President Ilham Aliyev's tenure has been marked by monumental progress across all facets of Azerbaijani society, showcasing his adept leadership and profound impact on the country's destiny.



Fazil Mustafa



Ilham Aliyev



Zahid Oruj

In order to ensure transparency in the Presidential elections, the Commission has installed webcams in 1000 polling stations on 119 election constituencies within the framework of technical and other conditions necessary to ensure effective and consistent broadcasting opportunities with the aim of continuous monitoring of the processes in polling stations from the beginning to the end on the voting day. The head of the observer mission from the SCO held a meeting with the Central Election Commissioner and expressed his hope the elections

would bring further prosperity to Azerbaijan. 'Presidential elections are a very significant event. We believe that the results of the presidential election in Azerbaijan will be successful for the future development of this country,' Zhang Ming, head of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) delegation and Secretary General of the organization, said at a meeting with Chairman of the Central Election Commission (CEC) of Azerbaijan Mazahir Panahov. He further said that they had so far, monitored 69 election processes. 'We believe that the elections will be

held in a fair and transparent manner. According to the statute, the purpose of our mission is to promote general principles, non-interference in the internal affairs of the country, identification of shortcomings, and other issues', he added. A survey conducted by this newspaper on Tuesday unveiled a palpable enthusiasm among the youth, who are eagerly poised to cast their votes in the Wednesday election. Similar to Pakistan, Azerbaijan also boasts a burgeoning youth population ready to actively contribute to the country's development. Pakistan and Azerbaijan enjoy fraternal relations. These relations are established on our past historical traditions. It is no coincidence that Pakistan is one of the first states to recognize the independence of Azerbaijan after Azerbaijan declared its independence. Pakistan wholeheartedly supported Azerbaijan in its Patriotic War against Armenia, in which the valiant Azerbaijani forces inflicted sheer defeat upon the Armenia forces and liberated its territories occupied by Armenia. In a demonstration of unwavering solidarity, Azerbaijan wholeheartedly stands by Pakistan in the Kashmir issue. Strengthening the bond between the two nations, Azerbaijan has initiated direct flights from Pakistan to Azerbaijan, marking yet another milestone in their flourishing bilateral relations. This move not only fosters greater connectivity but also underscores the mutual commitment to deepening diplomatic and people to people ties and fostering cooperation between the two countries.

CM reviews police deployment at sensitive polling

During the Apex committee meeting, the chief minister reviewed the arrangements for the upcoming election

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI : Caretaker Chief Minister Sindh Justice (ret'd) Maqbool Baqar chaired 30th Provincial Apex Committee meeting at CM House to review election arrangements and national action plan tasks. The meeting was attended by provincial ministers, Brig. (ret'd) Haris Nawaz, Omar Soomro, Ahmad Shah, Corps Commander Lt. Gen. Babar Iftikhar, Chief Secretary Dr. Fakhre Alam, DG Rangers Major Gen. Azhar Waqas, IG Police Riffat Mukhtar, Advocate General Hassan Akbar, Chairman P&D Shakil Mangnejo, Home Secretary Iqbal Memon, PG Fayaz Shah. During the Apex committee meeting, the chief minister reviewed the arrangements for the upcoming election. The committee was informed that there would be a total of 19,008 polling stations, including 5,657 normal, 6,550 sensitive, and 6,801 highly sensitive ones. IG Police Riffat Mukhtar shared the police deployment criteria, stating that four police personnel would be deployed at a normal polling station, five at a sensitive one, and seven at a highly sensitive polling station. A total of 143,156 police personnel would be deployed at the polling stations, including 95,400 at the normal polling stations, 10,648 in the QRF Police, and 37,108 in the Auxiliary Force. Additionally, the Rangers and Army would be deployed for QRF duties at selected highly sensitive polling sta-

tions, in addition to the police force. Corps Commander Karachi Lt. Gen. Babar Iftikhar informed the CM that army troops had been dispatched all over the province to serve as the third tier during the general elections. The chief minister expressed his satisfaction with the election arrangements and mentioned that he had personally visited the divisional headquarters of the province to review the arrangements. The regional election commissioners present at the meeting also expressed their satisfaction with all the arrangements, including security ones. The CM pointed out that in November 2023 the situation of street crime was disturbed, on average 265 per day street crimes were reported, 15 Madadgar responses were slow, Police Vehicles were in dismal condition, and organized crime was unchecked. At this the IG said that a dedicated motorcycle squad of 386 Motorcycles known as Shaheed Force has been established for spotting peak hours and hot spots. He added that Madadgar-15 has been revamped with the deployment of an additional 300 vehicles and 120 Motorbikes. Efforts are in hand with Google and Apple through the European Emergency Number Association - EENA112 for exact locations for the provision of AML (Advance Mobile Location), Riffat Mukhtar disclosed. He added that a dedicated application would be launched by Feb 10 for dialling through Android and IOS App for exact locations. 30 New computer terminals and eight large screens have been added in the call

centre for the visibility of force. The Call agents are trained twice by the University of Karachi on Empathy. Talking about Madadgar-15's achievements, the meeting was told that the Call Answering & Response Ratio increased from 92 to 98 per cent. Mobiles average response time reduced from 10 minutes to 6 minutes with the use of vehicles' exact locations systems and deployment of additional vehicles and bikes. Engagement with street criminals has been increased, the IG Police claimed and added that from Sep-23 to Jan-24 581 Encounters were made in which 71 criminals were killed, 615 criminals injured, 1,037 arrested red-handed. As a result, Street Crime has decreased by 4.19 per cent during 2023. IG Police said that per day average street crimes have decreased to 213 which means 19 per cent [decreased]. The meeting was told that overall law & order has improved in Katcha areas, especially on the left bank of the River Indus. The crimes under major heads as kidnapping for ransom (KFR), dacoity and robbery are under control. Patrolling and picketing have been enhanced, IG Police said that the district Kashmir was disturbed due to ongoing action against dacoits. The dacoits challenge the law enforcement agencies with more attacks and KFRs to exert pressure to retreat. DG Rangers Major Gen. Azhar Waqas told the meeting that the Rangers also conducted 47 Intelligence Based Operations in the Katcha areas and arrested 145 dacoits/ criminals.



ISLAMABAD : Newly appointed DG FIA Ahmed Ishaq Jahangir called on caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar.—DNA

CS, IGP inspect polling arrangements in Haripur

PESHAWAR : To ensure the peaceful conduct of general election, Chief Secretary Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Nadeem Aslam Chaudhry and IGP, Akhtar Hayat Gandapur on Monday paid a visit to Haripur district. On the occasion DPO Haripur, Muhammad Umar Khan, DC Haripur, Khan Muhammad, SP Investigation Haripur, Anjad Hussain and district officers were present on the occasion, said an official press release. DPO Haripur Muhammad Umar Khan gave a detailed briefing to the CS and IGP on the security arrangements for the general election. The Chief Secretary and IGP paid a visit to the polling station established at Post Graduate College Haripur and inspected the security arrangements. The Chief Secretary directed the district administration to ensure a peaceful atmosphere and conduct of free, fair and transparent polling on the election day. He also issued directives for provision of drinking water, washrooms and other needed facilities to the people on the polling day. The Inspector General of Police KP directed the police officers to ensure implementation of code of conduct issued by the Election Commission in letter and spirit. He said no unauthorized person should be allowed to enter polling stations while discipline among voters.—APP

SMEDA, PSIC introduce Pakistan's SMEs in 'Showcase Ireland-2024'

LAHORE: In a historic move, a joint delegation of the Small and Medium Enterprises Development Authority (SMEDA) and Punjab Small Industries Corporation (PSIC) have made the first-ever visit of Ireland to exhibit Pakistani SMEs at the world's famous trade fair "Showcase Ireland 2024". The delegation, comprising innovative and dynamic small and medium-sized businesses, explored opportunities and fostered collaborations in the international market. It is notable that the said historical initiative was planned as well as materialised by Farhan Aziz Khawaja, while working as CEO SMEDA a few months back, and cur-

rently, he is posted as DG Civil Services Academy, but still instrumental to conclude the SME development initiatives launched by him during his posting at SMEDA, according to SMEDA spokesman here Tuesday. The marketing experts have observed that developed countries for being transferred on the technology, were facing a dearth of handicrafts in their markets that had created an adequate space for Pakistan's Handicrafts. They have proposed to promote Pakistan's Handicrafts in the developed world through the international market. The SMEDA Head (External Relations Department) Sheharyar Tahir, who represented SMEDA in the

delegation, has marked the visit as a great source of marketing opportunities for Pakistani handicrafts. He said that Showcase - Ireland's Creative Expo, being one of the Ireland's largest international trade shows, had opened Pakistan's SMEs to over 3,350 buyers from across the world including Ireland, the UK, the USA, Europe and the Far East. Showcase Ireland 2024, a premier trade event in Dublin, brings together a diverse range of exhibitors and industry professionals from around the world. The Pakistani delegation showcased the unique products and capabilities of the country's small and medium enterprises on this global platform. —APP

Dr Jamal inaugurates renovation work of BBH nursing college

DNA

RAWALPINDI : Caretaker Provincial Minister for Primary and Secondary Health, Punjab Dr. Jamal Nasir on Tuesday said that Rs 65 million would be spent on the renovation of the Nursing Hostel while revamping the College of Nursing would be completed at the cost of Rs 40 mln. He expressed these views while inaugurating the renovation of the Nursing Hostel and College of Nursing at Benazir Bhutto Hospital (BBH). Dr. Jamal said that the College of Nursing would be completed in a month while the renovation work of Nursing Hostel would be completed in April. Later, the provincial minister visited Holy Family Hospital (HFH) along with Commissioner Rawalpindi Liaqat Ali Chatha. He said that after the completion of the revamping and renovation work of the hospital, immediate steps were being taken to activate the PEADS and Gynecology wards of the HFH at the earliest. The minister informed that as many as 100 hospitals had been renovated across the Punjab province. He said that steps were also being taken to provide quality health facilities to the people as well as for the welfare of the medical staff.

Zong 4G sets strategic roadmap in conference

ISLAMABAD : During the Annual Business Conference, focused on the theme "Elevate Core Capabilities, Strive for Excellence," Zong 4G celebrated its notable accomplishments in 2023 and revealed its strategic roadmap for 2024. The Chairman and CEO, Huo Junli praised the employees for their exceptional efforts that resulted in the company's positive growth, creating over 47 million satisfied and happy customers. Huo Junli reaffirmed that Zong 4G's industry success is attributed to the unwavering commitment and resilience of its employees, propelling the company to greater heights. Even in challenging times, Zong's dedication to placing

its employees at the forefront of its operations was strengthened, accompanied by various initiatives for their well-being. Furthermore, he said that in 2024, the company must sustain the momentum of digital and intelligent transformation to achieve the vision of a Digital Pakistan. The commitment extends to actively contributing to the high-quality joint development of the 'Belt and Road' and the 'China-Pakistan Economic Corridor'. He also emphasized Zong 4G's crucial role in providing top-notch network services, dedicated to ensuring an exceptional customer experience nationwide. Moreover, while sharing Zong's sustainability contributions, he stressed that the

company remains committed to reducing the digital divide and improving the livelihood of people in Pakistan. Highlighting the company's vision for 2024, Huo shared, "Our primary focus persists on introducing advanced and cutting-edge technologies that elevate the quality of life for individuals and businesses across Pakistan. We are committed to fortifying partnerships with local businesses and communities, concurrently broadening our product portfolio to adeptly address the requirements of enterprises and SMEs. Our objective is to empower them to realize their ambitions by improving operational efficiencies and propelling business growth.—APP

Ignite partners with Hashoo group to manage incubation center

ISLAMABAD : In a significant development for the thriving Pakistan's technology and startup ecosystem, Ignite National Technology Fund, Company incorporated under Ministry of IT & Telecom signed an agreement with Pakistan Services Limited (PSL) - Hashoo Group, led consortium that includes Fauji Foundation, Telenor Pakistan, Change Mechanics, CyberVision International and Founder Institute to manage the National Incubation Center Islamabad for the next 5 years. This initiative underscores a collective commitment through public private partnership to further bolster the startup ecosystem in Pakistan, with a special focus on nurturing technology startups that promise to elevate the country's economic GDP and generate employment opportunities for its youth. In his welcome address, Adeel Aijaz Shaikh, CEO Ignite apprised the audience about the overall impact of Ignite's nationwide network of National Incubation Centers that has incubated more than 1480 startups which have created more than 188,000 direct and indirect jobs while attracting committed investment of Rs. 23 Billion and generated revenue of Rs. 16 Billion so far. Dilating upon the particular success of NIC Islamabad Mr. Adeel said, since its inception it incubated 295 startups including 136 female founders that have created 23,597 direct and indirect jobs, generated revenue of 7.05 billion rupees with a committed investment of 7.88 billion rupees. NIC Islamabad is poised to build upon the success of its predecessor by offering an enhanced array of services designed to empower startups. These services encompass state-of-the-art workspaces, access to venture capital, mentorship from industry leaders, UI/UX design labs, makers spaces, and a focus on pivotal technological sectors such as Artificial Intelligence, Internet of Things, Robotics, Health, and Augmented/Virtual Reality. Special emphasis is provided on creating investment opportunities for startups and the consortium and its supporting partners include leading incubators, accelerators and venture capitalists such as Founder Institute, Mass Challenge, International Accelerator, Loyal VC, Zayn Capital, Sarmayacar, 47 Ventures, FCD Capital and Pak Launch. NIC Islamabad will also have extensive focus in building health-tech startups, Aga Khan University and Hospital along with Rehman Medical Institute Peshawar are core Health Track Partners along with 10+ other renowned health institutions as supporting partners. Red Buffer will be mentoring and providing support to Deep-tech startups as a specialized vertical. The supporting partners also include leading Academic Institutions which ensures quality mentorship and access to University labs and specialist faculty to advise the startups on technical issues. These institutes include GIKI University, Institute of Space Technologies, Foundation University, NUST Business School, Bahria Innovation Center and others. With the new management, NIC Islamabad represents a crucial advancement in enhancing Pakistan's digital landscape. DNA

The plight of Islamabad zoo: A call for change and responsibility

HAYAH BAHRONI

The closure of the zoo in Islamabad, once a beacon of wonder and joy for many, marks a heartbreaking chapter in the city's history. What was once a place of fascination and education has descended into a state of neglect and tragedy, with animals suffering due to poor care and inadequate conditions. As someone who treasured this facility in my youth, the recent events surrounding the zoo's mismanagement and exploitation by self-proclaimed saviors of animal rights are deeply troubling. Growing up, the zoo held a special place in my heart. It was a sanctuary of discovery, where I could marvel at creatures from around the world and learn about the importance of wildlife conservation. However, recent reports of animals being poorly fed, neglected and even meeting

tragic fates like the burning of a lion have shattered the image of this once-vibrant institution. The transition from a well-maintained facility to a haven of neglect and exploitation was a result of the zoo falling into the hands of individuals who had little to no experience of handling the affairs but instead prioritize personal gain over the well-being of the creatures they are meant to protect. On the other hand, the so-called animal rights mafia had turned a blind eye to the suffering of the animals, perpetuating a cycle of cruelty and disregard for life. And now after the closure of this facility they have used the situation to suit their own vested interests and are now looking to expand the influence even on the hiking trails. Unfortunately these people are only concerned for their own fringe benefits and have no pain or empathy for the poor animals. It is imperative that sanity prevails and responsible authorities step in to rectify the dire situation encircling


the fiasco that led to the closure of the zoo. The Capital Development Authority must reclaim control of the zoo's administration and institute sweeping reforms to ensure that the facility upholds the highest standards of animal welfare, hygiene and care. It is not only a matter of justice for the voiceless inhabitants of the zoo but also a moral obligation to provide them with the dignity and respect they deserve. By restoring the zoo to its former glory, the Capital Development Authority can create a space that not only serves as a source of entertainment and education for the public but also as a testament to our commitment to the well-being of all living beings. A properly managed zoo can become a symbol of hope and conservation, inspiring future generations to appreciate and protect the diverse species that share our planet. Reimagin-

ing the zoo as a modern, ethical institution will not only benefit the animals but also enrich the lives of visitors who seek to connect with nature in a meaningful way. It is a chance to bridge the gap between the digital world, where animals are often reduced to mere images on screens and the tangible reality of witnessing these majestic creatures up close. The closure of the zoo in Islamabad due to the appalling conditions in which the animals were kept is a wake-up call for us all. It is a reminder of our responsibility to safeguard the welfare of all creatures and to ensure that places like zoos serve as centers of conservation and education. Let us hope that the Capital Development Authority heeds this call for change, turning the fate of the zoo around and creating a legacy that we can be proud to pass on to the next generation.

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National Days and Armed Forces Days

FEBRUARY

- Feb 04/Sri Lanka
National Day
- Feb 06/N. Zealand
National Day
- 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
- Feb 23/Guyana
National Day
- Feb 23/Russia
National Army Day
- Feb 23/Tajikistan
Armed Forces Day
- Feb 25/Kuwait
National Day

Hotels & Restaurants



Serena Hotel.....111 133 133
Marriott.....051- 2826121
Monal.....0334-5421812



Turkish Airlines.....8494949



Emergency

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



Enquiry

Edhi Ambulance.....115
PIA Flight Info.....114
PIA Cargo.....9280979
Railway Inquiry.....117
Railway Exchange9270831-5
WASA Rawalpindi..5555489
CAA.....9281092



Hospitals

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



Departments

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

Water Tank

Islamabad.....0321-5744480



ISLAMABAD : Chief of the Naval Staff Admiral Naveed Ashraf exchanging views with H.E Mr Ihab Mohamed Abdulhamid Hassan Ambassador of Egypt at Naval Headquarters.—DNA

Mushaal warns: Kashmir dispute may trigger world war

Mushaal said that Kashmir Solidarity Day serves as a reminder that the people of Jammu and Kashmir are not alone in their struggle against the Indian illegal occupation

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD : Special Assistant to Prime Minister for Human Rights and Women Empowerment Mushaal Hussein Mullick said that the non-resolution of the Kashmir issue can trigger a third world war and urged that the international powers should play a role in its early solution. She said this while addressing as Chief Guest a ceremony organized at Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry to observe Kashmir Day. She said that Kashmir Solidarity Day serves as a reminder that the people of Jammu and Kashmir are not alone in their struggle against the Indian illegal occupation. She described the people of Jammu and Kashmir as a barrier against Modi's attempts to create an Akhand Bharat. She characterized the Hindutva regime of India and the Zionist regime of Israel as significant

threats to world peace. She asserted that both Modi and Netanyahu were in a race, with Modi pursuing a brutal genocide in Kashmir and Netanyahu in Palestine. She asserted that India was actively altering the demographics of the Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir by indiscriminately granting Kashmiri domiciles to non-Kashmiris. He expressed concern about the eradication of Muslim heritage under the auspices of the Modi government. She urged the international community to intervene and play a role in the solution of the Kashmir issue in accordance with the UN resolutions. She said that a Kashmir Committee has been formed in PM Secretariat to develop a long term strategic plan on Kashmir for the government. Kashmir Centers are being set up in Universities and Kashmir Cause is being introduced to district level Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari, President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and

Industries (ICCI) has said that Pakistan stands with the people of Occupied Kashmir and will continue to provide them moral and diplomatic support till the time they achieve their right to self-determination. He said that Kashmir Day reminds us to reiterate our full support to the Indian-administered Kashmiri people. He said this day highlights a dark chapter in human history as India's illegal occupation of Occupied Kashmir is an international dispute that should be resolved according to the UN's Security Council resolutions. He said that Indian brutalities against Kashmiri people spanning over seven decades have failed to break the resolve of the Kashmiri people. He urged the UN and the international community to play a role in resolving this dispute, which is a flashpoint between Pakistan and India. Without resolving this dispute, establishing peace in the region is not possible. The South Asian region can move towards development and prosperity

by promoting regional trade, but until the Kashmir issue is resolved, it is impossible to achieve these goals. Engr. Azhar ul Islam Zafar, Vice President ICCI stressed that all the major powers of the world should play a role in the just solution of the Kashmir issue so that this region gets better development and moves out of poverty towards prosperity. Zafar Bakhtawari, former President ICCI and Secretary General UBG Pakistan said that Kashmir and Palestine issues are kept alive to destroy the potential of Pakistan and the Middle East. He lauded the role of Ms. Meshaal Hussein Mullick for the Kashmir cause and hoped that Kashmir would one day get freedom from India. Naveed Malik President Islamabad High Court Bar, Ajmal Baloch, Rana Muhammad Akram, Rana Saeed Doshi, Ms. Nasira Ali, and others also spoke on the occasion and called for the resolution of Kashmir issues as per aspirations of the Kashmiri people.

President orders Rs 5 million payment to heirs policyholder

ADIL SHAHEEN

ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi has directed Postal Life Insurance to pay the death insurance claim of Rs 5 million to the legal heirs of the deceased policyholder within 30 days. The President gave these directions while deciding upon a representation filed by the Postal Life Insurance (PLI) against the decision of

Wafaqi Mohtasib directing it to pay the death insurance claim. As per details, Mr Abdul Aziz's deceased father had obtained an insurance policy from PLI for the sum assured of Rs. 5 million against an annual premium of Rs. 448,600 in 2010. After his father died in 2015, PLI refused to pay the death insurance claim on the pretext that the deceased had concealed material facts about his date of birth and the

pre-insurance ailment of diabetes at the time of obtaining the insurance policy. Feeling aggrieved, the son (complainant) filed a complaint with the Wafaqi Mohtasib to seek relief. Wafaqi Mohtasib held that the deceased had purchased the insurance policy as per his date of birth mentioned on CNIC and that PLI had issued the insurance policy after accepting the requisite information. The Mohtasib held that the denial by the

insurance agency to honour the claim of the complainant amounted to maladministration. Afterwards, PLI filed a representation against this decision with the President. The President, in his decision, observed that as per Section 80 of the Insurance Ordinance, 2000 no policy of life insurance effected after the commencement date shall, after the expiry of two years from the date on which it was affected.

Islamabad reveals comprehensive security for 2024 elections

ISLAMABAD : In a strategic move towards ensuring the safety and integrity of upcoming general elections 2024, Islamabad Capital Police Chief, Dr. Akbar Nasir Khan, led a crucial meeting with key law enforcement officials, which was attended by divisional CPOs, SSPs, DPOs, SPs, SDPOs, SHOs, admin officers, and Muharars, focused on comprehensively planning security protocols. According to the ICP spokesperson, one standout initiative involves the establishment of a central control room in Safe City Islamabad, where Dr. Akbar Nasir Khan will personally oversee all security arrangements. The officers received comprehensive briefings on adherence to regulations set by the Election Commission of Pakistan, with a stern emphasis on zero tolerance for any violations. He further emphasized that strict legal actions await those engaging in the display of arms, engaging in aerial firing, or inciting riots. To facilitate a seamless electoral process, measures will be implemented to ensure smooth traffic flow and efficient parking. The sensitive polling stations will be equipped with surveillance cameras to enhance security, while a dedicated focus will be on assisting journalists, foreign observers, and election coverage teams in carrying out their duties professionally, he added.—DNA

ANF recovers 724 kg drugs in 11 operations

RAWALPINDI : Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) while conducting 11 operations recovered over 724 kg drugs and arrested nine accused, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman here on Tuesday. He informed that 746 grams hashish was recovered from a passenger going to Sharjah from Islamabad Airport. 91 heroin-filled capsules were recovered from a passenger going to Dubai from Islamabad Airport. 159 grams hashish was recovered from two passengers going to China at Karachi Airport. 500 grams Ice was recovered from a parcel at Sial Air Cargo Office, Sialkot. 295 kg opium and 7 kg hashish were recovered from Nokundi Chagai area. 97 kg hashish was recovered from Orakzai area while 120 kg hashish and 8 kg opium were recovered from Basharat Road Peshawar and an accused was arrested during the operation. 65 kg hashish and 8 kg ice recovered from 2 suspects near Lakpas Toll Plaza Quetta. 27 kg hashish and 26 kg prohibited material were recovered near Chakri Toll Plaza, Rawalpindi.—APP

آبادی کے لحاظ سے

پاکستان دنیا کا پانچواں بڑا ملک

موجودہ آبادی 24 کروڑ سے زائد (2023)

آبادی میں اوسط سالانہ اضافہ 2.55%

اگر آبادی کی شرح میں اسی رفتار سے اضافہ ہوتا رہتا تو 2050 تک پاکستان کی موجودہ آبادی دگننا ہو جائے گی۔

2050 میں 40 کروڑ سے زائد

کم عمری میں شادیوں کی روک تھام اور خاندانی منصوبہ بندی کی سوچ اپنانے کے لیے ہمیں سنجیدگی کا مظاہرہ کرنے کی ضرورت ہے

نئی سوچ اپنائیں

متوازن خاندان کی تشکیل سے خوشحالی پائیں

متوازن خاندان

خوشحال پاکستان

بیبلائن 1793

Population Welfare Department Punjab

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خوشحال معاشرے کے قیام کے لیے پرعزم

محکمہ بہبود آبادی حکومت پنجاب

Briefs

ICP holds peace flag march for elections

ISLAMABAD : The Islamabad Capital Police (ICP) and other law enforcement agencies on Tuesday conducted a joint flag march in the city to maintain peace and tranquillity in the city during the general election of 2024. The flag march started from three different areas of the city and culminated at the same point after passing through various areas of the capital city. In line with the special direction of the Islamabad Capital City Police Officer (IC-CPO) Dr. Akbar Nasir Khan, the ICP took comprehensive security arrangements for the election 2024, an official statement from the police said. The ICCPO emphasized that the Islamabad Capital Police are taking all possible steps to maintain peace in the city adding that all forces are all time alert to tackle any untoward incident. He also appealed to the citizens to cooperate with police during checking and inform police about any suspicious activity around them through "Pucar-15" or "ICT-15". According to the statement, security has been enhanced at all entry and exit points while the Dolphin squad will patrol in different areas of the city. Senior police officers have been directed to remain present in their concerned areas and check the duty points according to the security point of view. The crackdown against one-wheelers, tinted glasses, pillion riding, without number plates vehicles and motorcycles is underway, the statement said. —APP

Chinese, Pakistani experts call for Intl' law to address challenges

ISLAMABAD : The leading experts from China and Pakistan joined forces to emphasize the importance of promoting multilateralism and upholding international law as the foundation for global cooperation. The symposium titled "Promoting Multilateralism and International Law through Adherence to the Principles and Purposes of the UN Charter" was held here at the Pakistan Embassy, Gwadar Pro reported on Tuesday. The event aimed to foster a deeper understanding of the shared commitment to a rules-based international order. Keynote speakers highlighted the significance of collaboration between nations in addressing complex global challenges like the Kashmir issue. Chinese scholars underscored the need for increased diplomatic efforts to strengthen multilateral institutions, such as the United Nations, to address issues like climate change, public health crises, and regional conflicts. Dr. Chen Wei, Senior Research Associate, China Institute of International Strategic Studies, emphasized, "In an interconnected world, no single country can tackle the challenges we face alone. —APP

26 outlaws netted, drugs, weapons recovered

ISLAMABAD : Islamabad Capital Police (ICP) apprehended 26 outlaws including twelve professional beggars from different areas of the city during the last 24 hours and recovered drugs and weapons from their possession. According to an ICP spokesperson, following the special directions of Islamabad Capital City Police Officer (IC-CPO) Dr. Akbar Nasir Khan, the Islamabad Capital Police has intensified its crackdown against the criminal elements to eliminate crime from the city. Meanwhile, the Karachi Company police team arrested an accused named Sagar and recovered 50 liquor bottles from his possession. The Golra police team arrested an accused named Nasir Ali and recovered one 30 bore pistol with ammunition from his possession. Likewise, the Sangjani Police team arrested two accused named Wali Muhammad and Muhammad Irfan. —APP



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Azerbaijan Khazar Farhadov visited ISSI & met DG Ambassador Sohail Mahmood. They Exchanged covered myriad aspects of Pakistan, Azerbaijan relations, support on each other's national causes, and deepening of P2P & think-tank links. They also agreed to work closely on climate issues in run-up to CoP29 in Baku.—DNA

The rapid de-escalation of Pak-Iran border lauded

Nadeem Riyaz, President Institute of Regional Studies, and Mr. Fraz Naqvi, in-charge Iran Program at IRS, thanked both the speakers and the audience for participating in the event and stressed upon strengthening the bilateral relations between Pakistan and Iran

MEHTAB PIERZADA

ISLAMABAD: "The swift managing of Pak-Iran border crisis disappointed those states who wanted to spoil the relations between the two neighbours", says Syed Muhammad Ali, an internationally acclaimed foreign and strategic policy expert. He was speaking to an event, hosted by Institute of Regional Studies on the recent border tensions between Pakistan and Iran. Mr. Ali, while delving into the historical and cultural linkages between Pakistan and Iran, commented that the

relations between the two neighbourly states had multiple dimensions including military-to-military high-level contacts. He stated that Pakistan's calculated response to the Iranian strikes inside Baluchistan depicted Pakistan's status as a responsible nuclear power. "Pakistan's retaliatory attack manifested precision, calculation and determination to avoid any collateral damage", Mr. Ali argued. He stated that even Iran admitted and appreciated Pakistan's selection of target in which no Iranian life was lost. Mr. Ali cautioned that any longevity of crisis between Pakistan and Iran would benefit

the spoiler states like India. Therefore, in order to avoid such incidents in the future, economic interdependence, regulation of border markets and people-to-people contacts were utmost important, he further added. Amb. Riffat Masood, former Ambassador of Pakistan to Iran, contributed while mentioning that the issues between the two states were primarily due to the porous border. She said that both Pakistan and Iran had complained with each other because of the presence of militants in each other's territories. She further argued that the sense of deprivation existed in both

Pakistan's Baluchistan and Iran's Sistan province. "This episode brought the realities to both the states regarding regional complexities", Amb. Riffat argued. She concluded by mentioning that if the economic stakes between the two countries were high, the miscreants would find little space to create disturbance in that region. In the end, Amb. Nadeem Riyaz, President Institute of Regional Studies, and Mr. Fraz Naqvi, in-charge Iran Program at IRS, thanked both the speakers and the audience for participating in the event and stressed upon strengthening the bilateral relations between Pakistan and Iran.

PR putting maximum efforts retrieve 13,972 acres land

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD : Pakistan Railways has accelerated the efforts to retrieve the major portion of around 13,972 acres of land worth billions of rupees found under the illegal occupation of private individuals and different government departments across the country. "Around 5,809 acres were occupied in Punjab, 1,181 acres are under encroachment in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, 5,948 acres in Sindh and 1,034 acres land occupied in Balochistan," an official in the Ministry told media. He said the category of land under illegal occupations included commercial,

residential, agricultural and various persons or departments. Giving details of the land, the official said that around 769 acres were commercial in all the provinces, 3,309 residential, 5,512 acres agricultural and 4382 were under encroachment of various persons or departments. The official said the department had also decided to accelerate its ongoing anti-encroachment operation against land grabbers across the country to recoup its land from different individuals, groups, and even business organizations which were using it for residential, commercial and agriculture purposes for decades. "The joint procedure orders have been issued to all Divisional Su-

perintendents of Pakistan Railways to retrieve the railway land from encroachers," the official added. Accordingly, he said the anti-encroachment operations for retrieval of encroached Railway land all over the Railway network are being initiated by the concerned divisions and notices are issued to encroachers under the Possession Ordinance 1965 for vacation of Railway land/structure within 14 days. The official said that Pakistan Railway Police, District Administration and law enforcement agencies are informed of necessary assistance in anti-encroachment operations. To further control and restrict new encroachments, he said the responsibilities defined

for Railway officers within Railway Station premises, Station Master concerned, within/around the colony premises, inspector of works and Railway Police. "The anti-encroachment schedules, on a three-month basis, are being prepared and sent to all concerned in line with the joint procedure order," he said adding that the operation will be launched with the assistance of Railway Police and district administrations of the relevant provincial governments. The official said PR owned 167,690 acres of land across the country, of which 90,326-acre was in Punjab, 39,428-acre in Sindh, 28,228-acre in Balochistan, and 9,708-acre in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

PTA DG urges public awareness for safer internet

ISLAMABAD : Director General of the Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA), Ahmed Shamim Pirzada Tuesday on 'Safer Internet' Day emphasized to create media awareness among the general public for the responsible and safe use of social media platforms. Talking to the PTV news, he said that while acknowledging the digital impact on children, the PTA is dedicated to ensuring a safer internet that meets their educational needs and promotes positive online interactions, adding that the public urged to refrain from clicking on links from unknown numbers as well as unknown senders. "Keeping the digital safe is a shared responsibility, and all the stakeholders need to come together to keep the dialogue alive on creating a safer space for children," he added. To prevent the propagation of false information via phoney accounts, PTA has strictly instructed social media sites and companies to tighten the account verification procedure, he added. He said that PTA has also asked to open their separate offices to bring these companies under law, adding, PTA also providing comprehensive educational resources and guides to users, emphasizing best practices for securing their accounts, recognizing phishing attempts, and protecting personal information. He said PTA was ensuring strict adherence to regulatory standards and compliance requirements related to data protection, to mitigate the risk of financial crimes and illicit activities. Replying to a question, he said that it is our collective responsibility to create a secure and protective digital space, allowing Pakistani users to continue their online activities in a safer environment.—DNA

Kashmir Solidarity day: A resolute tribute to courage and freedom

SAYYIDAH KAUSAR FATIMA

Kashmir Solidarity Day is a reaffirmation of the indomitable spirit of Kashmiris and unwavering support to our Kashmiri brethren in their just struggle for the inalienable right to self-determination. It serves as an annual reminder of the prolonged conflict in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK), where the struggle for self-determination has left an indelible mark on the lives of its residents. The resilience exhibited by them is awe-inspiring. Indian Illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK), often romanticized for its breathtaking landscapes has been marred by conflicts for decades. This dispute with its roots in the denial of self-determination to Kashmiris since 1947, has witnessed brutal Indian repression, human rights abuses and a complex geo-political landscape. For the Indians, the endgame is consummating the settler-colonial occupation. For the Kashmiris, the goal is to resist and uproot it. It is a resistance of unfortunate people pushed to the wall by a hegemonic power. India's continuing need for social, political, and militaristic machinations in Kashmir since its occupation in 1947 has neither diminished despite its decades of political maneuvering and military repression or even after pouring billions in developmental aid nor has India's economic-inspiring rise to the status of an awe-inspiring superpower made a dent in the resistance narrative. They have been able to subdue the resistance narrative yet have been unable to erase it. Undeniably, Kashmir's histo-

ry is awash with painful memories and tragedies. The annulment of Articles 35(A) and 370 added complexities to the Kashmir dispute, plunging the region into perpetual turmoil. This move not only altered the independent status of Jammu and Kashmir but also exacerbated demographic disparities, particularly impacting the Muslim majority regions under Indian control. Despite numerous discussions and dialogues over the past seventy-six years, the conflict persists due to India's unyielding strategy, an uncompromising approach and a lack of trust between the two neighboring nations. The UN Secretary-General, on 8 August 2019, declared that the United Nations position remained that the Jammu & Kashmir dispute should be resolved on the basis of the UN Charter, UN Resolutions and bilateral agreements. This constituted reaffirmation of the UN's position on Jammu & Kashmir and was a clear rejection of India's unilateral measures of and after 5 August 2019. The Security Council met three times to consider the situation arising from India's unilateral measures. The judgement by the Indian Supreme Court of the BJP-RSS Government's unilateral abrogation of Article 370 has no legal or political impact on the disputed status of Jammu & Kashmir since the Security Council has explicitly declared in Resolutions 91 and 122 that no unilateral steps taken by any of the parties to the dispute would constitute a final disposition of the State of Jammu & Kashmir. Certain-

ly, the Parliament of a State in occupation of a disputed territory does not have the legal jurisdiction or right to adopt decisions to change the status, institutions or governance of the disputed territory. The unilateral endorsement of the Modi Government's illegal measures by the Indian Supreme Court in no way compromises the provisions and prescriptions of the Security Council as contained in its resolutions. Moreover, the unilateral measures taken by the Indian government were ultra vires to its own Constitution, which required the consent of the (now dissolved) Jammu & Kashmir's Legislative Assembly. This is a clear example of the Indian judiciary's surrender of its legal and ethical standards to the demands of the Hindutva extremists ruling India today. Jammu and Kashmir remains the most militarized region in the world and hence, dispute calls for a systematic resolution in line with UN Security Council Resolutions to prevent further escalation. The conflict's protraction emphasizes the urgent need for international intervention to facilitate a comprehensive and lasting solution. The international community must play a pivotal role in urging both India and Pakistan to engage in sincere dialogue, fostering an atmosphere of trust and cooperation. A resolution aligned with UN resolutions is crucial not only for the stability of the South Asian region but also for the well-being and self-determination of the people of Kashmir.

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Intl' workshop on ethical clinical trials begins today

ISLAMABAD : Two-day International workshop on 'Ethical Research in Clinical Trials' will be held under the auspices of COMSTEC and UEARS from February 7-9, to address the challenges of research integrity in clinical trials in low-middle-income countries and propose the best suitable guidelines to improve the quality of research in this domain. The workshop to be held in Cairo, Egypt, is aimed at imparting knowledge and training about research integrity and creating a network of professionals working in the field for continuous learning and exchanges. According to an official of COMSTEC, the meeting and its workshop will help devise solutions for the challenges being faced in clinical trials by low income countries. Students, scientists, researchers, experts, healthcare managers, government officials, think tanks, health NGOs, and policymakers from the domain of multi-centre clinical trials research from across the world and global south countries can register for the workshop for physical or virtual participation. Globally, the pursuit and dissemination of knowledge enjoys a place of distinction, and the public expects to reap considerable benefit from the creative and innovative contributions of scientists. As science becomes increasingly tangled with major social, philosophical, economic, and political issues, scientists become more accountable to the larger society of which they are a part. Therefore, it is more important than ever that those individual scientists and their institutions periodically reassess the values and professional practices that guide their research as well as their efforts to perform their research work with integrity. Behind every medicine and intervention that people have ever taken.—APP

Pakistan's First And Only Diplomatic Daily

Editor-in-Chief: Ansar Mahmood Bhatti
Deputy Editor: Abid Raza

Member APNS / ABC Certified

Vol: 05 Issue: 112

Email: dailyisbpost@gmail.com

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Doubt casts shadow on ultimate Test Cricket

The English are not a very spiritual people," said George Bernard Shaw, "so they invented cricket to give them some idea of eternity." Shaw had Test cricket, rather than modern short-form versions of the game, in mind when he said this. Sport as a religious rite. "Cricket is a process, not a sport; seepage rather than drama; a summer's dawdle akin to a picnic or garden party," wrote the English novelist Paul West, attempting to explain cricket to Americans. He was not being entirely fair. Test cricket can contain high drama, its intensity often magnified by the torpor which precedes it. But he had a point: lunch and tea are key rituals, and a sport that is suspended when light drizzle falls will always have its detractors. Groucho Marx was one. After spending a day at Lord's with two Observer journalists in 1954, the US humorist declared cricket "a wonderful cure for insomnia". England and India are at present engaged in an absorbing five-match Test series. England won the first Test with a remarkable performance by young left-arm spinner Tom Hartley, who took nine wickets on his debut. England's trio of youthful spinners also did well in the second Test, which finished earlier today, but a sublime double-century by India's new batting sensation, Yashasvi Jaiswal, and irresistible bowling by Jasprit Bumrah ensured that the home side levelled the series. It is the perfect advertisement for Test cricket, so often written off as something that might have appealed to sports fans in the early Paleozoic era. But the message is likely to be missed because the games are being shown on TNT Sports, a subscription channel with limited viewership, and radio rights are held by TalkSport. Aficionados can follow online, but then it becomes a largely statistical exercise. Seeing is believing. It would be better if at least one England Test match a year was broadcast on free-to-air channels. There is a paradox. Test cricket is generally recognised as the supreme form of the game, the ultimate "test", yet its future is forever in doubt. South Africa has taken a substandard team to play a Test series in New Zealand because its best players are being deployed in domestic Twenty20 "franchise" cricket. The indications so far – a hopelessly one-sided "contest". Series are now truncated: the five-match India-England epic is a rarity; the recently concluded two-match series between Australia and West Indies, which conjured up a new superstar in fast bowler Shamar Joseph, is more representative of the modern way, preferring short story to novel and eschewing true narrative drive. Sri Lanka and Afghanistan have just played a one-off Test, but apart from the cognoscenti, few would have taken much notice. Test cricket is a luxury in a world preoccupied with brevity, and people (TV executives especially) are suspicious of a game that can last 30 hours and still end in a draw. Americans, who swapped cricket for baseball soon after the civil war, are particularly resistant to the game's allure. Can Tests survive? Traditionalists hope so. "You can't be in England and not know the Test score!" exclaims dyspeptic cricket obsessive Charters incredulously in Hitchcock's 1938 film *The Lady Vanishes*. Poor Charters would be in a permanent state of apoplexy at the indifference and neglect now threatening his beloved game. As for his views on Bazball ...



India should respect Maldives' sovereignty

Whether India will withdraw its troops from the Maldives by March 15 as required by the island country's government may be a matter of dignity for India. But for the Maldives, it is a matter of sovereignty. The Maldives' foreign ministry said in a statement on Saturday that officials from both countries met in New Delhi and agreed that India would begin withdrawing troops from the Maldives on March 10 and complete the process by May 10. So it seems that both sides have reached a deal on the withdrawal of Indian troops from the island country. What is weird is the fact that the Indian side did not mention the withdrawal of its troops, instead its foreign ministry said the two countries "agreed on a set of mutually workable solutions to enable continued operation of Indian aviation platforms" that provide humanitarian services to the Maldives. It is believed that there are at least 75 Indian military personnel in the Maldives and their known activities include transporting patients from remote islands and rescuing people at sea. Mohamed Muizzu became the first president of the Maldives to make China the destination for his first official trip in the region rather than India. Immediately after he concluded his successful China trip last month, he said to the media that the Maldives' smaller size did not give any country the license to bully it, which many believe was a reference to India. In the latest flare-up of frictions between the two countries on the issue, Indian military personnel boarded the Maldives' fishing vessels. The Maldives' defense ministry released a statement on the incident on Feb 2. But it did not explain what the Indian military personnel did on the boats. "On Feb 1, 2024, the foreign ministry of the Maldives has asked (India) officially for the details of the operation that was carried out while Maldivians were fishing in the Maldivian exclusive economic zone, without any coordination with the relevant authorities and against all international laws," the statement said in the native Dhivehi language. There is no justification for India to defy the request of the Maldives, a sovereign country, by maintaining its military presence there. It is quite probable for the sake of saving its face that India does not want to mention the withdrawal of its troops. With an election drawing close, the pullout of Indian troops from the neighboring island country may be considered as a humiliating diplomatic setback for the Narendra Modi administration. India is a big country that has traditional friendly relations with the Maldives. It should respect the sovereignty of its neighbor. Chauvinism and a big brother attitude will only further worsen relations between the two countries, and the stability of the region.

Election 2024: Reaffirmation democratic journey

Qamar Bashir



With an anticipated 80% voter turnout, the nation demonstrates a strong commitment to the democratic process reflecting the population's strong commitment to the democratic process and their determination to influence their nation's future. FAFEN in its recent report noted that for the first time, there were more women registered to vote than men between two election periods of 2018-2024, showcasing significant progress in gender inclusivity in the electoral process marked

Amid swirling rumors, concerns, and a charged atmosphere both domestically and internationally, Pakistan is set to conduct its highly contested and controversial 2024 elections amidst significant economic challenges including stagnant growth, acute balance of payment issues, hyperinflation, and high unemployment rates. This election is marked by an unprecedented increase in the active voter base, reaching the milestone of 128 million, over half the country's population. This elevates Pakistan to the status of the world's fifth-largest democracy. With an anticipated 80% voter turnout, the nation demonstrates a strong commitment to the democratic process reflecting the population's strong commitment to the democratic process and their determination to influence their nation's future. FAFEN in its recent report noted that for the first time, there were more women registered to vote than men between two election periods of 2018-2024, showcasing significant progress in gender inclusivity in the electoral process marked by an increase in women's voter registration by 27%, surpassing the growth in men's registration, which was 17% during the same period. This has led to a substantial decrease in the gender gap in voter registration from 11.8% in 2018 to 7.7% in 2024. Recognizing the potential of women voters in the upcoming elections, both PTI and PML(N) have issued a 'record' number of National Assembly tickets to women, which might further encourage female voter participation reflecting a broader movement towards gender inclusivity in Pakistani politics. However, female voter registration and participation in the election process will depend on various factors, including campaign strategies, voter mobilization efforts, and the addressing of socio-cultural barriers that have historically limited women's political participation. As the elections approach, the focus on encouraging and facilitating women's participation in the democratic process remains crucial for a fair and inclusive electoral outcome. The elections 2024 being the fourth elections since the era of martial law under Pervez Musharraf starting with governments of PPP, PML(N), and PTI reflects the evolving political landscape amidst the pre-election phase, where the PTI faced significant challenges and allegations of unfair advantages to the PML(N), highlighting underlying challenges in Pakistan's democratic processes which has been intermittently disrupted by martial laws posing setbacks to the democratic continuum. International media, including the Council on Foreign Relations, Al Jazeera, The Diplomat, and DW, along with the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan and the European Union, have raised concerns about the 2024 elections in Pakistan, highlighting issues such as "election engineering," disinformation, extensive media censorship, and state intervention in media coverage. These reports underscore the restrictive conditions facing political parties, particularly PTI, whose leadership is significantly constrained, impacting their ability

to campaign freely. Allegations of an uneven playing field, exacerbated by the military's significant political influence and the barring of key political figures like former Prime Minister Imran Khan, suggest a contentious electoral environment that may not be free or fair, disadvantageous to certain parties and undermining the democratic process. Amid these apprehensions, the choice of political entities to engage rather than opt for boycotts, delays, or advocate for autocratic solutions underscores a pivotal shift towards deepening democratic norms indicating a resilient commitment to democratic principles amidst adversity. This collective resolve of Pakistan's political factions, intellectual community, and citizens arguably emphasizes the importance of democratic integrity and continuity, effectively curtailing any attempts by undemocratic elements to impose their agenda, thereby safeguarding the democratic process and ensuring its resilience against potential disruptions. PML(N) is running a vigorous campaign, primarily concentrated in central Punjab and Hazara Division allegedly supported by the state machinery while neglecting other key provinces like KP, Sindh, and Balochistan. The PML(N) campaign is well-organized and directed by Nawaz Sharif, with Maryam Nawaz and Shahbaz Sharif providing strong support. Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI)'s ability to run an effective campaign is highly compromised due to the absence of its chairman and key leaders, coupled with the lack of its own election symbol. Moreover its public meetings have completely been blocked on the mainstream media, and as alternative it is struggling to leverage Social media that too is subjected to planned slow down as and when required. Meanwhile, the PPP campaign, led by Bilawal Bhutto Zardari with Asif Zardari making a positive impression, seems to be gaining traction. In this election season, media outlets, both traditional and social, have been exceptionally active, providing extensive coverage of the election campaigns. Renowned anchorpersons took to the streets, engaging with everyday citizens to gauge their electoral preferences. While these interactions were not scientifically structured, they did unveil some regional inclinations. In Central Punjab, there seems to be a tilt towards PML(N), with PTI also receiving notable support. Sindh's rural areas are predominantly leaning towards PPP, while urban centers show a preference for MQM. In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (formerly NWFP), a significant sympathy vote appears to favor PTI, reflecting the party's strong foothold in the region. Meanwhile, Balochistan presents a more diverse picture, with no clear dominance by any national party, indicating a fragmented political landscape. Unfortunately there is also a growing belief that mainstream parties are prioritizing forming provincial governments in the upcoming elections. This stems from the perception that provinces offer larger budgets, greater decision-making freedom with less scrutiny, and fewer financial obligations compared to the federal government. The center,

conversely, faces stricter oversight, smaller budgets, and heavier debts, often relying on foreign loans to function, while spending primarily occurs in the provinces, seemingly without responsibility for loan repayment. Essentially, parties see provincial power as more lucrative and less accountable, raising concerns about national priorities and fiscal responsibility. The crude findings are also supported by According to different surveys, reflecting a close race, showing leading parties PTI and PML-N neck-and-neck. Economic woes and security concerns loom large, while Khan's disqualification adds uncertainty. Other parties like PPP hold regional strongholds. Based on the discussion, survey reports, and media analysis, the PML-N, led by Nawaz Sharif, is likely to have a significant advantage in forming the government at the center due to its established political base and apparent mending of ties with the military, which plays a crucial role in Pakistan's political landscape. The PTI, despite facing significant challenges including legal battles, the disqualification of its leader Imran Khan, and issues surrounding its election symbol, may still manage to retain some influence, particularly in provinces where it has a strong support base. In Punjab, the competition between PML-N and PTI is expected to be fierce, with both parties vying for dominance. The political maneuvering and alliances formed in the run-up to the elections could be key to determining the outcome in this crucial province. PPP, led by Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, may continue to hold sway in its traditional stronghold of Sindh but could face challenges expanding its influence beyond this province due to the current political dynamics and its need to form crucial alliances in Punjab. In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, PTI has historically had strong support, but the party's current challenges might impact its performance in the upcoming elections. Balochistan's political landscape is often more fragmented, with local parties and alliances playing significant roles. The situation in Balochistan may remain fluid, with various parties and independent candidates likely to influence the formation of the provincial government. Amidst challenges, Pakistan's move towards the 2024 elections epitomizes the nation's resolve to sustain its democratic ethos. Despite the pre-election phase's uneven playing field and significant political entities facing hurdles, the unanimous decision against election boycotts or delays reflects a collective dedication to democratic values. This commitment, coupled with a notable surge in voter registration highlighting gender inclusivity, underscores the importance of a transparent, fair electoral process for Pakistan's democratic integrity and future stability. The forthcoming elections are a critical juncture, symbolizing not just a political transition but a reaffirmation of Pakistan's democratic journey in the face of adversity.
The writer is Press Secretary to the President (Rtd) Former Press Minister at Embassy of Pakistan to France Former MD, SRBC

Regional war is upon us if Biden does not halt Gaza carnage

Baria Alamuddin

The US attacks were retaliation for the drone strike that killed three US soldiers in a military base at the strategically crucial intersection between Jordan, Syria and Iraq. US troops there have labored to prevent Daesh from reestablishing transregional networks, while obstructing Tehran-backed paramilitaries from consolidating a corridor of control through to the Mediterranean. So, it is not surprising that these proxies have incessantly attacked this location, seeking to compel the Americans to leave altogether

The recent missile strikes against Iran-backed Al-Hashd Al-Sha'abi militants in Iraq may have been one of America's largest military interventions in years, but they were just one maneuver in a rapidly escalating conflict across many states, encompassing increasingly fierce military exchanges with the Houthis in Yemen. Israel has simultaneously been carrying out a succession of targeted killings of Revolutionary Guard officers in Syria. Tehran invariably fulminates that such assassinations "will not go unanswered" – although, if that is true, we are still awaiting retribution for the US killing of Qassem Soleimani in 2020. The US attacks were retaliation for the drone strike that killed three US soldiers in a military base at the strategically crucial intersection between Jordan, Syria and Iraq. US troops there have labored to prevent Daesh from reestablishing transregional networks, while obstructing Tehran-backed paramilitaries from consolidating a corridor of control through to the Mediterranean. So, it is not surprising that these proxies have incessantly attacked this location, seeking to compel the Americans to leave altogether, with more than 160 attacks on US targets since Oct. 7 alone. An Iraqi spokesman accused the US of turning Iraqi territory into a "battleground for settling scores," perfectly encapsulating how Iraq has been exploited for too many years. Iraqi factions such as Harakat Hezbollah Al-Nujaba and Kata'ib Hezbollah have been dangerously goading each other. The Al-Hashd Al-Sha'abi umbrella coalition of Iran-backed militants was constituted in 2014, supposedly to fight Daesh. But since Daesh's defeat, these forces have doubled in size to about 240,000 personnel, with a commensurate expansion of their budget, generously provided by the Iraqi state. This entity's "axis of resistance" pretensions highlight its aspiration to dominate not just Iraq and Syria, but the entire region. As with the Houthis, many of the Hashd's component factions were established, armed and trained under the tutelage of the Quds Force and Lebanese Hezbollah. While these militias operate at Iran's behest, they are like a sack of wildcats, uncertainly wielded by Quds Force Commander Esmael Ghaani and engaging in fierce

rivalry to dominate their respective mafia fiefdoms. Iraqi factions such as Harakat Hezbollah Al-Nujaba and Kata'ib Hezbollah have been dangerously goading each other into which can most brazenly attack foreign forces. However, at the first sign of a more serious American response, a rapidly backpedaling Kata'ib Hezbollah leader Abu Hussein Al-Hamidawi said the group was halting missile attacks. Even though the group has Quds Force personnel in its leadership council, Al-Hamidawi vigorously denied any Iranian coordination. Meanwhile, Harakat Hezbollah Al-Nujaba mocked its rival's "cowardice" and pledged to continue its attacks. Kata'ib Hezbollah's assertion that it had halted attacks to "prevent embarrassment to the Iraqi government" was risible, given how the group has forged a career out of undermining Iraqi sovereignty. It was also an acknowledgment of tensions among these paramilitary groups that hold seats in government at the same time as staging attacks against a superpower that Iraq is highly dependent on. Ayatollah Khomeini once said that maintaining the Islamic Republic was a duty "above all duties." And, as CIA director William Burns aptly noted, this regime is "ready to fight to its last regional proxy" in the cause of self-preservation, even if it must incinerate its paramilitary armies and the entire region in the process. Lebanon particularly fears being dragged into a regionwide war that would displace and kill hundreds of thousands. Even if the worst-case scenario is avoided, the conflict has already chronically destabilized this bankrupt, crisis-ridden nation, with widespread use of phosphorus bombs further crippling agriculture in southern areas that are still impacted by unexploded cluster ordnance from 2006. The only route out of this inexorable hour-by-hour escalation is to bring the Gaza war to an end. The Gaza conflict has made US President Joe Biden deeply unpopular among young, multiethnic pro-Palestinian demographics in crucial swing constituencies: hence the ludicrous announcement of sanctions on a grand total of four Israeli settlers complicit in the tsunami of violence against West Bank Palestinians. On the subject of strikes on US forces in Iraq and America's response, White

House security spokesman John Kirby said: "The goal here is to get these attacks to stop. We're not looking for a war with Iran." But regionwide attacks will not stop without Tehran being held definitively to account. At the risk of stating the obvious, the only route out of this inexorable hour-by-hour escalation is to bring the Gaza war to an end. Israel has spectacularly failed to eradicate Hamas, so operations there now appear solely designed to retain Benjamin Netanyahu in power at the cost of tens of thousands of Palestinian lives – but they could easily trigger something infinitely worse. By all accounts, the US has been engaged in frantic high-level diplomacy to achieve comprehensive Arab rapprochement with Israel in exchange for Israel's recognition of a two-state solution, along with Hamas releasing its hostages. The success of such a grandiose scheme would indeed be transformative, though it requires Netanyahu to halt the bloodshed and waive his hostility to a Palestinian state. It also relies on Tehran not deploying its proxies in a blocking role. Consequently, as well as taking decisive action to demonstrate to the ayatollahs that warmongering will only bring catastrophe to the gates of Tehran, Biden must bend Israel to his will in a manner America has never done before. It is not as if Washington lacks the levers: Israel is dependent on US military aid, American support at the UN Security Council and the US' ability to mobilize global support. It is also not as if Biden has much to lose from falling out with a politically dead in the water Netanyahu. Conversely, if the conflict was allowed to worsen and Iran's proxy militias, with their hundreds of thousands of soldiers and vast missile arsenals, did decide to embark on war, the US and its allies would be instantly drawn into this morass to prevent Israel being utterly destroyed. If not for the sake of humanity, Biden certainly wishes to avoid this doomsday scenario in an election year. He must therefore jettison the ludicrous half measures that only create the illusion of doing something and use all levers at his disposal to compel Netanyahu to immediately halt this futile, genocidal war. Sourced by Arab news.

Briefs

Parties make last-ditch efforts to woo voters

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(ECP) completed the task of handing over 260 million ballot papers to the district returning officers (DROs) for the polls. According to the spokesperson for the ECP, legal action will be taken if election rules are violated after the time is over. He said in a statement that a valid national identity card was required to cast vote. But ballot can be cast if the card is expired by presenting the "original" card before the election official, he added. The spokesperson attributed the timely completion of the "crucial" responsibility to distribute voting material to the "dedicated efforts and organised planning of the Commission's staff."

Bilawal lashes at 'ego,...

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"We have been pushed into an economic crisis because of their personal enmity. Inflation, unemployment and poverty have reached historic levels yet they don't worry, if they worry then it is only about the chair." Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari said that his party will not allow anybody to stage the politics of "hatred and division." Few days back, Bhutto-Zardari said that the barrage of arrows will hunt the political opponents on February 8.

Files review petition to reclaim...

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The hearing of PTI's petition challenging the ECP's decision declaring the intra-party election as null and void and revoking their electoral symbol "bat". PTI's petition also stated that its intra-party elections held in December were conducted as per the party's constitution. "Election Commission is not empowered to review intra-party elections," PTI pleads in its petition to SC. Last month, a three-member SC bench - headed by Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Qazi Faez Isa and comprising Justice Muhammad Ali Mazhar and Justice Musarrat Hilali - annulled PHC's January 10 order, depriving the former ruling party of its 'iconic' electoral symbol - bat.

PPP, PML-N withdraw complaints...

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other regarding alleged vote-buying in the NA-127 constituency. This move signals a potential reconciliation between the two major political rivals ahead of the upcoming general elections. Reconciliation was reached after a unanimous decision to withdraw the complaint. Both parties have mutually agreed to withdraw their complaints regarding vote-buying accusations in NA-127. Representatives from both sides will formally request the Election Commission of Pakistan to withdraw the complaints and halt proceedings.

Government hints at...

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light of the law and order situation, however, he stressed that no such situation has so far been reported. On Sunday, 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. Ejaz, while talking about the law and order situation today, said that the government was making efforts to hold peaceful elections without any loss of lives. "The election atmosphere in Sindh is full of excitement and it does not seem that any political party has enmity with another," said Ejaz, adding that he did not see any tension between the candidates in Balochistan during his visit.

Naqvi elected unopposed as new PCB chairman

"Mohsin Naqvi was elected unopposed as the Chairman of PCB, he will serve as the chairman for three years starting from today," said Khawar

OUR CORRESPONDENTS

LAHORE: Mohsin Naqvi was elected unopposed as the new chairman of the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) for a three-year term on Tuesday. Addressing the BoG following his election, Mr Syed Mohsin Raza Naqvi said: "I am deeply honoured and humbled to have been unanimously elected as the Chairman of the Pakistan Cricket Board. I am thankful for the trust and confidence reposed in me." "I am fully committed to upgrading the standard of the game in the country and bringing professionalism in the administration of cricket in Pakistan." Shah Khawar had summoned a special meeting of the Board of Governors (BoG) today at the National Cricket Academy (NCA) in Lahore. Shah Khawar announced Mohsin Naqvi's victory in the elections during the media talk at the National Cricket Academy (NCA). "Mohsin Naqvi was elected unopposed



as the Chairman of PCB, he will serve as the chairman for three years starting from today," said Khawar. "I am deeply honoured and humbled to have been un-

animously elected as the Chairman of the Pakistan Cricket Board. I am thankful for the trust and confidence reposed in me," Naqvi said. "I am fully com-

mitted to upgrading the standard of the game in the country and bringing professionalism in the administration of cricket in Pakistan." Naqvi, who is currently

serving as caretaker chief minister of Punjab, has also taken charge of the PCB since the constitution allows him to keep both roles. The 45-year-old is the 37th chairman of the PCB.

Earlier, PCB had announced the composition of Board of Governors (BoG) ahead of the elections. The BoG had been formed in accordance with Paragraph 10 of the PCB Constitution 2014.

After the Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar's nomination, Naqvi replaced former chairman of the PCB Management Committee Zaka Ashraf, who resigned recently, in the BoG. Ashraf became part of BoG on July 6, he assumed his role as the Chairman by replacing Najam Sethi on the same day.

"I was working for the betterment of cricket but it is not possible for us to work in this way," he said as per the people present at an ongoing committee meeting. "Now it is up to Prime Minister [Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar], whomever he nominates [will take my place]," he added.

Marotta reveals why he didn't want to sign Ronaldo

"I must recognise that I spent 10 wonderful years at Juventus, but when the owners want to adopt a different strategy, then a manager must take a step back," he told DAZN

LONDON: Former Juventus Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Giuseppe Marotta revealed why he was not on the same page with the club when they decided to sign Cristiano Ronaldo on a €100m deal. Ronaldo left Real Madrid in 2018 after winning the UEFA Champions League for the third consecutive year and becoming the club's top scorer, netting 450 goals in 438 matches over nine years. Marotta, who left the club just months after Ronaldo completed his move to Juventus, admitted that he didn't want to sign the Portuguese because of the massive money. "I must recognise that I spent 10 wonderful years at Juventus, but when the owners want to adopt a different strategy, then a manager must take a step back," he told DAZN. "It was fair to respect the club's desire. I partially didn't agree with signing Ronaldo. The player can't be questioned, but the deal was demanding in financial terms. It was not the element that brought the splitting; the cycle was over, and we had to change." Marotta had earlier expressed that while there were no doubts about Ronaldo's quality as a player, he was "challenging" to work with because of his charisma. "He was a very good player, he still is and above all, he is a great champion. The champion is that person who manages to convey beliefs to his teammates. He was a bit of a leader of the team, he was the most famous and he dragged the others into the game. So, it was challenging, but he didn't make me angry," he told Cronache di Spogliato. Remember, Ronaldo played 134 matches for Juventus across three years and netted 101 goals while providing 22 assists. He also won the Serie A title twice but failed to win the Champions League with The Old Lady. - Agencies

Williamson's 2nd century keeps New Zealand dominant against South Africa

Daryl Mitchell was at the crease on 11 and Tom Blundell on five, with the Black Caps looking to declare early on Wednesday with South Africa facing a mammoth target on a deteriorating Bay Oval pitch. The depleted Proteas were dismissed for 162 soon before tea in response to New Zealand's first innings 511

MOUNT MAUNGANUI: Kane Williamson crafted his second century of the match Tuesday as New Zealand took complete command of the first Test on day three against understrength South Africa here on Tuesday. Run machine Williamson was out for a rapid 109 as the home side reached 179-4 in their second innings, extending their overall lead to 528 runs by stumps. Daryl Mitchell was at the crease on 11 and Tom Blundell on five, with the Black Caps looking to declare early on Wednesday with South Africa facing a mammoth target on a deteriorating Bay Oval pitch. The depleted Proteas were dismissed for 162 soon be-

fore tea in response to New Zealand's first innings 511. The follow-on wasn't enforced, allowing the world's top-ranked batsman Williamson to craft another big score to follow his 118 in the first innings. It was the former skipper's 31st Test century but he reached three figures twice in the same match. The 34-year-old played with aggression from the outset, striking 12 fours and a six in a 132-ball stay that signalled New Zealand's intent before he was stumped off the bowling of Proteas captain Neil Brand. As was the case in the first innings, Williamson survived a dropped catch in

the outfield, with Edward Moore again the culprit when he was on 61. Moore responded in the following over by catching Devon Conway for 29 off captain Neil Brand's bowling, ending a partnership of 92 with Williamson after opener Tom Latham fell cheaply. First innings double-century Rachin Ravindra departed soon afterwards for 12, caught off the spin bowling of Brand, who took six wickets in the first innings. The second-string nature of South Africa's side was exposed when they lost their last six wickets for 82 runs on Tuesday. The top score was 45 from Keegan Petersen who,

in his 13th Test, is the most experienced batsman in the squad after most first-choice players remained behind to compete in a domestic Twenty20 competition. Petersen lost his overnight partner David Bedingham for 32 when trying to hook seamer Matt Henry before Ruan de Swardt followed for a second-ball duck in the same over. Wicket-keeper Clyde Fortuin, one of six Proteas debutants, departed for nine just before the tourists went to lunch at 129.7. The tail was wrapped up quickly, with Henry taking 3-31 and Mitchell Santner capitalising on spin-friendly conditions to finish with 3-34. - Agencies

Azam Khan wants clarity over his Pakistan future

"In the last 4 years, I have made a comeback three times and I have never played a full series, so it hurts me a little that either you give me the full series or leave me out altogether, or don't hang me in the middle, so I regret this thing," he said

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan wicketkeeper-batter Azam Khan has shared his feelings about his selection and opportunities within the national team. In a recent video conversation with Desert Vipers alongside veteran cricketer Shoaib Malik, Azam conveyed his frustrations and emphasised the inconsistency in his inclusion and the lack of faith shown towards his abilities.

"I have always understood that when I play league cricket, I get a complete opportunity because they know I can win them games, so they are calling me here. That means either you are putting doubts in my mind that I am

not good at this level, then it's okay, then I will find my own way," Azam Khan said. The wicket-keeper batter also raised the issue of not being afforded sufficient opportunities to demonstrate his capabilities.

"In the last 4 years, I have made a comeback three times and I have never played a full series, so it hurts me a little that either you give me the full series or leave me out altogether, or don't hang me in the middle, so I regret this thing," he said. The 25-year-old has stressed that he approaches every game with a complete mindset but feels demoralised when doubts are cast upon his abili-

ties within the national setup. He also shed light on his experiences with foreign coaches to those within the Pakistan team, observing a disparity in treatment.

"It is obvious that I play all my cricket with a full mindset, and when someone comes and puts doubts in it, then I get a little frustrated, because when I play with foreign coaches, they never make me feel like I am lacking something, but yes, when I play for the Pakistan team, I feel like I am lacking something because when I watch my batting, my innings, then I say that I am not less than any player," he concluded.

Last week, Azam Khan scored the fastest half-century in the ILT20 history as the 25-year-old led Desert Vipers to a thumping win against Gulf Giants on Saturday. Azam broke West Indies' great Kieron Pollard's record of the fastest fifty (19 balls) as the right-handed batter did it on just 18 balls to steer the Vipers to a crucial win. - DNA

UFC fighter challenges McGregor at Santiago Bernabeu

LONDON: UFC fighter Ilija Topuria called out Conor McGregor to a blockbuster fight at Real Madrid's stadium, Santiago Bernabeu, in what would be the biggest fight in UFC history. McGregor is assured to take on Michael Chandler at UFC 300 to mark his much-awaited comeback to the Octagon after almost three years as the last time the Notorious fought at UFC was against Dustin Poirier where he broke his leg. In 2023, McGregor confirmed that he is ready to return to the octagon after which multiple fighters offered to take on the former double-champion. He was supposed to fight Chandler at UFC 296 but that didn't happen as the Notorious hadn't completed UFC's drug testing program. Ilija Topuria will face Alexander Volkanovski at UFC 298 for featherweight championship but the Spaniard is extremely confident of beating his opponent to fight McGregor next. "Conor McGregor, that's the fight I'm looking for," he said on the MMA Hour. "He has a great fight with Mike Chandler. If he doesn't get his ass whooped, he will be a pleasure to share the Octagon with me. Maybe in UFC Spain. We're both from Europe, and he will be able to go back home and tell his wife, 'Baby, take out the red panties. Topuria kept us rich.'" UFC is heading to Spain in 2024 and Topuria hoped that it would happen at Santiago Bernabeu, Spanish club Real Madrid's stadium which they have renovated and are aiming to host events as big as the NFL and concerts. "Of course, it's going to happen in 2024... When? I don't know, at the end of the year, maybe. And where? I hope it's going to happen in Madrid [at] the Santiago Bernabeu Stadium. - Agencies

UN rights body condemns 'harassment'

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uphold fundamental freedoms for a democratic process. "In the lead-up to the vote, there have been no less than 24 reported instances in which armed groups have staged attacks against members of political parties," Liz Throssell, the spokesperson for the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, said in a statement. She acknowledged the challenges Pakistan has faced over the past 15 years in maintaining democratic gains amidst security and economic hurdles. Throsselle emphasised the significance of elections as a moment to reaffirm the country's commitment to human rights and democracy, ensuring the right to participation for all citizens, including women and minorities.

6 wounded during Turkish...

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the Kagithane district on the city's European side. Yerlikaya later identified the attackers as members of the Revolutionary People's Liberation Party/Front, or DHKP/C, a far-left group that is considered a terrorist organization in Turkey, the United States and the European Union. The attack took place on the day when Türkiye was commemorating the anniversary of an earthquake in the country's south that killed thousands of people. The DHKP/C has been largely inactive in recent years. In March 2015, the group took a prosecutor hostage at the same courthouse, demanding details about the police killing of a teenager during anti-government protests the previous year.

PM meets delegation of COG

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proud to honor its commitment as a Commonwealth member state by inviting independent international observers to witness the general elections. He said despite numerous challenges, the best possible arrangements had been made to ensure peaceful and seamless conduct of elections on polling day, across the country. The Caretaker Prime Minister highlighted that the Caretaker Government had fulfilled its responsibilities to run the day-to-day affairs of the state and create a conducive environment ahead of the elections. Now it was the turn of the people of Pakistan to exercise their democratic right to vote. Mr. Goodluck Ebele Jonathan thanked the caretaker Prime Minister and conveyed best wishes of the Secretary General of the Commonwealth, Ms. Patricia Scotland. He said the COG delegation would be visiting various polling sites throughout the country to observe the election process.

2 terrorists killed in N. Waziristan IBO

FROM PAGE 01
also known as Mansoor, alongside another, was gunned down, as the forces conducted an intelligence-based operation on the reported presence of terrorists. "During the conduct of operation, intense fire exchange took place between our troops and terrorists as a result of which two terrorists were sent to hell including Terrorist ring leader Ayubullah @Mansoor," the statement read. The ISPR stated that it also recovered weapons, ammunition and explosives from the killed terrorists who remained actively involved in numerous terrorist activities including target killing as well as extortion and abduction of innocent civilians. "A sanitisation operation is being conducted to eliminate any other terrorists found in the area," the media wing of the armed forces said. The military added that their services for the security and protection of the district including the IBO were appreciated by the locals, who expressed their full support to eliminate the menace of terrorism.

Djokovic, Nadal to play 'Kings Slam' in Saudi Arabia

The event will include other top players like Carlos Alcaraz and Daniil Medvedev as well

SPORTS DESK

RIYADH: Saudi Arabia is set to host a prestigious new tennis exhibition featuring top players such as Novak Djokovic and Rafael Nadal, alongside three other Grand Slam winners, in October. The Six Kings Slam event will be a part of Riyadh Season, Saudi Arabia's cultural and entertainment festival. It will feature major champions Carlos Alcaraz, Daniil Medvedev, and Jannik Sinner, as well as Holger Rune. Scheduled during the ATP season, the event coincides with a month already packed with ATP tournaments. Typically, exhibition events occur during breaks or after the ATP season, but in October, players are committed to Masters 1000 tournaments in Shanghai and Paris. Nadal, who recently became the ambassador for the Saudi Arabian Tennis Federation, expressed his anticipation for the event, stating, "After some other tennis players have done so, I am very excited to play for the first time in Riyadh." Saudi Arabia has already established itself

as a host for the Next Gen ATP Finals, showcasing the top men's under-21 players in Jeddah. Discussions have also revolved around the country potentially hosting the women's WTA Finals. However, prominent figures in tennis, including Chris Evert and

Martina Navratilova, have voiced opposition to staging the women's season-ending event in Saudi Arabia. Critics accuse the oil-rich kingdom of utilizing its wealth to enhance its image through sports, a practice often referred to as 'sportswashing'.

Saudi Arabia's significant investments in various sports, including golf, Formula 1, football, and boxing, have drawn attention. Nevertheless, advocacy groups continue to highlight concerns regarding the kingdom's human rights and equality record.

Earlier, it was confirmed that Djokovic will participate in the Indian Wells, where his old rival Nadal will also appear. If everything goes according to the plan and both players play in the tournament, the old rivals will likely cross one another's part and the tennis enthusiast will get to witness the legendary rivalry one more time. Nadal and Djokovic have been competing at the highest level since their first encounter at Roland Garros in 2006 where the Spaniard emerged victorious. That was the start of a legendary rivalry that would share 59 matches - a record in men's tennis - between them with some of the greatest encounters including the 2012 Australian Open final, which was the longest major final match by duration that lasted 5 hours, 53 minutes with the Serbian beating the Spaniard.



Briefs

Bektenov approved as Kazakhstan's new PM

NEWS DESK

MOSCOW: Kazakhstan's parliament on Tuesday approved the nomination of Olzhas Bektenov, former head of the presidential administration, for the position of prime minister. Kazakh President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev sealed the appointment in a decree posted on his website: "Appoint Bektenov Olzhas Abayevich as Prime Minister of the Republic of Kazakhstan, relieving him of his previous post." On Monday, Tokayev accepted the resignation of the government headed by Alikhan Smailov, with no reasons given for this decision. Bektenov, 43, was nominated for the post by Kazakhstan's largest party, Amanat (Covenant of Ancestors), and previously served as the head of the presidential administration.

Norway's FM for maintaining dialogue with China

DNA

Oslo: Norwegian Foreign Minister Espen Barth Eide said Monday that it is important to maintain dialogue and cooperation with China on current international affairs and the global economy. Barth Eide made the comments as he held talks with his Chinese counterpart Wang Yi and Liu Jianchao, Minister of the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) International Liaison Department, in Beijing. He is on a three-day official visit to China. "We have discussed the wars in the Middle East and Ukraine, the situation in the Red Sea, and the need for cooperation on climate issues and how to strengthen the international institutions," said Barth Eide, according to an official statement by Norway. He emphasized Norway's commitment to the one-China principle, promoting mutual respect and constructive dialogue. "Human rights are an important part of Norway's relationship with China. I encouraged Chinese authorities to adhere to their international obligations and I raised the human rights situation in China, including in Xinjiang, Tibet and Hong Kong," he added. Beijing has pushed back on such calls, terming it interference in China's "internal affairs." Wang said he appreciates Norway seeing China's development in an "objective, rational and friendly way," China Daily reported. He called for mutual respect for core interests, enhanced practical cooperation and strengthened multilateral coordination to foster bilateral relations. Both sides agreed at the meeting that it was necessary to end the hostilities in Gaza "immediately" and to allow more humanitarian assistance.

Kenyan cult leader charged with murdering 191 children

MALINDI, Kenya: A Kenyan court on Tuesday charged the leader of a starvation cult and dozens of suspected accomplices with murder over the deaths of nearly 200 people in a forest near the Indian Ocean. Self-proclaimed pastor Paul Nthenge Mackenzie, who has already been charged with terrorism, manslaughter as well as child torture and cruelty, is alleged to have incited hundreds of his acolytes to starve to death in order to "meet Jesus." On Tuesday, Mackenzie and 29 other suspects pleaded not guilty to 191 counts of murder, according to court documents seen by AFP. A 31st suspect was deemed to lack the mental fitness to stand trial and ordered to return to the Malindi High Court in a month's time. The cult leader has pleaded not guilty to all the charges against him. He was arrested in April last year after bodies were found in the Shakahola forest, with the grisly discoveries provoking horror across the world.—APP

US actions stoking new turmoil in West Asia: China

He further emphasized that the fundamental reason for the current situation is the failure to implement a ceasefire in the Gaza Strip amid a genocidal Israeli aggression

DNA

BEIJING: China's ambassador to the UN has blasted the United States for sparking a "new turmoil" in West Asia with its recent illegal strikes in the already volatile region. Jun Zhang made the remarks at a UN Security Council meeting on threats to international peace and security on Monday, two days after the US military conducted aerial assaults on Iraq and Syria. Nearly 40 people were killed in the air raids that came in response to a drone attack on a US occu-

pation base on Jordan's border with Syria. The Chinese envoy said the US airstrikes "constitute a grave violation of the sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity of Syria and Iraq." "The US purports that it does not seek to create conflicts in the Middle East or anywhere else, but in reality, it does precisely the opposite," he added. "The US military actions are undoubtedly stoking new turmoil in this region and further intensifying tensions." Zhang also warned that the regional conditions are "on the verge of extreme peril" and that the

US actions will "exacerbate the vicious cycle of tit-for-tat violence." He further emphasized that the fundamental reason for the current situation is the failure to implement a ceasefire in the Gaza Strip amid a genocidal Israeli aggression. "History has shown that using military means would not provide any solutions to the problems roiling the Middle East," he asserted. The Chinese envoy called on all countries concerned to stop acting out of self-interest, saying, "We are standing at a critical crossroads." Israel waged its brutal war on besieged Gaza on

October 7 after the Palestinian Hamas resistance group carried out an unprecedented operation against the occupying entity in retaliation for its intensified atrocities against the Palestinian people. So far, the Tel Aviv regime has killed at least 27,585 Palestinians, mostly women and children, and injured 67,000 others. Similarly, Russia's Ambassador Vassily Nebenzia said the US attacks on Iraq and Syria once again demonstrated the aggressive nature of US policy in West Asia and Washington's complete disregard for international law. The US acts of aggres-

sion against sovereign nations have increased the level of instability in an already "burning" region, he noted. Nebenzia further said that the actions of the United States in the region are just the latest in a litany of unlawful and irresponsible attacks, against the backdrop of an unprecedented escalation of violence. He further urged the international community to unconditionally condemn the reckless actions of Washington and its allies in West Asia. Both Iraq and Syria condemned the US strikes as infringements on their sovereignty that risk escalating regional tensions.

Azerbaijan, Pakistan discuss agricultural export

DNA

BAKU: Agriculture Minister Majnun Mammadov met with Bilal Haye, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Pakistan to Azerbaijan. Welcoming the guests, the minister gave detailed information to the meeting participants about the state support for the agricultural sector in Azerbaijan. It was stated that the cooperation between the two countries in all fields

is developing dynamically. The parties emphasised that they are interested in expanding cooperation in the agricultural sector. During the meeting, cooperation between Azerbaijan and Pakistan in the field of agriculture and strengthening of the legal-contract base, an increase in the trade turnover of agricultural products, the transfer of the most modern technologies in the field of agriculture, the strengthening of cooperation in the fields of cotton growing, rice

farming, animal husbandry, and the implementation of experimental programs in the fields of scientific research and education in the agricultural sector were discussed. During the meeting, the main topic of discussion was the export of agricultural products from Azerbaijan to Pakistan and various support mechanisms for this. Minister Majnun Mammadov touched on the importance of the "Caspian Agro" exhibition organised annually in our country and called on

Pakistani businessmen to actively participate in this exhibition, as well as to explore the possibilities of investing in the agricultural sector of Azerbaijan, taking into account the reliable and favourable business environment. During the meeting, the activities of the Azerbaijan-Pakistan Working Group in the field of agriculture and food security were discussed, and a wide range of opinions were exchanged on issues of mutual interest.



Bulgarian diplomat praises Black Sea energy project

BAKU: "Bulgaria is interested in cooperating on the Black Sea Energy submarine electric cable project, which envisages the transmission of 'green energy' from the Caspian Sea to Europe, Bulgarian Ambassador to Georgia Vesselin Valkanov. "We have expressed our interest in participating in the project and are satisfied with the positive response we have received from the four parties [Azerbaijan, Georgia, Romania, and Hungary]. Bulgaria can significantly add value to the project due to its power grid, high capacity connections with neighbouring countries, a well-developed electricity market, the opportunity to invest in renewable projects, and the growing demand for green energy," he said. The ambassador noted that an important factor contributing to these endeavours is the friendly relations that Bulgaria has with all the countries of the South Caucasus, especially Azerbaijan. "Bulgaria is interested in further development of infrastructural links between Europe and Asia, between the eastern and western shores of the Black Sea. Especially through projects of common interest in the fields of energy, transportation, and communications," Valkanov added. According to the diplomat, the undersea cable is just one of many opportunities to influence efforts to achieve climate goals and make development truly sustainable. "Everyone should be more involved in projects like this and be more cooperative. The potential is there, and I am sure that a proactive and positive approach will pay off in the not-so-distant future in terms of improving the environment, increasing energy security, and improving the lives of our citizens," he emphasised.—DNA

Senegal hit by civil unrest after presidential polls delayed

DAKAR: Senegal, often seen as the bastion of stability in Africa, has been hit by civil unrest after lawmakers voted late Monday to delay this month's presidential election until December. The bill was passed near unanimously, with 105 votes in favor and one against, after opposition deputies were forcibly removed from the chamber. It paves the way for President Macky Sall to remain in office until his successor is installed, despite growing concern about the erosion of democracy. "The situation is completely catastrophic, Senegal's image is ruined, and I don't think we'll be recovering from this democratic bankruptcy, this tsunami in the rule of law, any time soon," opposition deputy Ayib Daffe said after the vote. Earlier, security forces outside used tear gas to disperse small groups of opposition protesters, with demonstrators chanting "Macky Sall dictator." The

atmosphere in Senegal has been tense since Saturday when Sall announced a delay to the Feb. 25 vote, just hours before campaigning was officially set to begin. "Let's not be an assembly of shame. Let's make sure that when we leave here we can look at our children with pride and say that we were the last wall, the last bulwark," said opposition MP Abass Fall during the debate over the postponement. Adopted a day earlier by a preparatory committee, the proposal for the election delay was supported by MPs from Sall's party, which has been unable to fully coalesce around the president's favored successor. "President Macky Sall said he would serve two terms. He has kept his word," said MP Moussa Diakhate, chairman of the pro-government law committee. Violence has previously broken out in Senegal over fears Sall would try to extend his tenure beyond the end of his second term,

and he has previously insisted he would not. The sporadic clashes outside parliament were a rare sight in the normally calm area of downtown Dakar, where police and security forces backed up by heavy vehicles, were mobilised to protect parliament. Demonstrator Malick Diouf, 37, said he had no preferred candidate and did not even have a voting card, but felt it crucial to come and protest. "The main thing for me is to say 'no' to this political agenda, this coup de force to try to stay in power," he told AFP. Opposition leaders had denounced the proposed delay as a "constitutional coup" and an assault on democracy. Violent street protests rocked the capital Dakar on Sunday, and two opposition candidates, including former prime minister Aminata Toure, were arrested and later released. The government early on Monday suspended mobile internet access, citing the dissemination of

"hateful and subversive messages" on social media. It was a repeat of a move last June, which saw mobile data restricted amid high tensions in the country. The measure has become a common response to curb mobilization and communication via social networks. Senegal has never experienced a coup since gaining independence from France in 1960, making it a rare outlier in coup-hit West Africa. The proposed delay had sparked international concern, with the United States, European Union and France all appealing for the election to be rescheduled as soon as possible. The chairman of the African Union Commission, Moussa Faki Mahamat also urged Senegal to resolve its "political dispute through consultation, understanding and dialogue." Human Rights Watch warned that Senegal risked losing its democratic credentials. Senegal has long been considered a beacon of democracy in the region.—Agencies

Kashmir solidarity day commemorated in Ankara

Ambassador Junaid thanked the people and government of Turkiye for their principled stance on Kashmir, especially H.E President Recep Tayyip Erdogan for highlighting the Kashmir

NEWS DESK

ANKARA: An event was organized at Pakistan Embassy Ankara to observe Kashmir Solidarity Day. Every year, February 5th is commemorated as Kashmir Solidarity Day to reaffirm support to the legitimate Kashmiri struggle for realization of their right to self-determination. Chairperson Human Rights Investigation Commission of Turkish Parliament MP Ms. Derya Yanik, Deputy Governor Ankara, Bekir Yilmaz, President Institute of Strategic Thinking Gen. (R) Guray Alpar and representatives of media, think tanks and civil society attended the event. While reiterating Turkish support for Kashmiri legitimate cause of self-determination, Chairperson Human Rights Investigation Commission of Turkish Par-

liament, MP Derya Yanik stated that Turkiye has always supported peaceful resolution of Kashmir dispute as per the desire of the Kashmiri people and will continue to do so. While expressing concerns over

worst human rights situation in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK), she stated it is sad that Kashmir remains as one of the oldest unresolved conflicts in the world. The international system has

the ability to resolve any conflict, but unfortunately there is a lack of will and intention when it comes to Kashmir and Palestine. She reiterated that international community needs to play its due role

in putting an end to human rights atrocities in IIOJK and implementation of UN resolutions to ensure peace and stability in the region. In his speech, President Institute of Strategic Thinking (SDE), Gen. (R) Guray Alpar stated that the indifference of international community to Kashmir and Palestine is surprising; Kashmiris deserve the basic human right of self-determination, as promised to them by the United Nations. Speaking on the occasion, Ambassador Dr. Yousaf Junaid underscored that Palestine and Kashmir represent unending situations of foreign occupation in the modern world, where brutal military occupations have not only denied the people of their fundamental right of self-determination but also unleashed a reign of terror on innocent civilians.



Axiom-3 mission's return postponed

WASHINGTON: The return of the Axiom-3 Mission crew from the International Space Station (ISS) was postponed due to "unfavorable recovery conditions," SpaceX has announced. "Due to ongoing unfavorable weather off the coast of Florida, Dragon is standing down from Tuesday's undocking from the @Space_Station," the private space company said Monday on X about the return of the crew, including Türkiye's first space traveler Alper Gezeravci, on its Dragon capsule. "The spacecraft and Ax-3 crew remain healthy, and teams will continue to monitor weather conditions for the next available undocking opportunity," it added. The four-person mission was launched from NASA's Kennedy Space Center, Florida on Jan. 19 on a SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket. The Ax-3 space mission crew docked at the ISS on Jan. 20. Gezeravci and his three crewmates from Spain, Italy, and Sweden were responsible for carrying out over 30 scientific experiments.—APP

Poland building new fortifications in border zone

WARSAW: Poland is building new fortifications and shelters in the border zone with Belarus and Russia, according to a report published Monday in a Polish economic and legal newspaper. The Ministry of Defense did not disclose detailed information, but a ministry source told the Rzeczpospolita daily that the move was "part of the overall national defense plan." The ministry said in a briefing that "work is underway on the further expansion of engineering fortifications, including a shelter system and their improvement in the border zone." "The situation is dire; more and more countries feel it." Defense Minister Wladyslaw Kosiniak-Kamysz told the daily Super Express, adding he was preparing for a scenario in which Ukraine loses the war with Russia and Russian President Vladimir Putin decides to attack NATO countries, including Poland. "I assume every scenario and take the worst ones most seriously. This is the role of the minister of defense in the situation we find ourselves in today. These are not words thrown into the wind. I try to weigh them very carefully," he said. "You have to be prepared for every scenario; that's why we are conducting an audit, drawing conclusions and filling in the gaps, in the case of weapons, for example. Large purchases are very important. But for me, the individual equipment of soldiers is equally important. Since taking power, we have concluded contracts for purchasing equipment worth PLN19 billion (over \$4 billion) - most of it in Polish arms plants," he said. The Polish Air Navigation Services Agency consulted with the Air Navigation Operational Command on Feb. 4 and issued a navigation warning for airspace users.—APP

Tokyo stocks open lower after US falls

TOKYO: Tokyo stocks opened lower on Tuesday following falls on Wall Street, as investors awaited an earnings report from Toyota due later in the day. The benchmark Nikkei 225 index lost 0.22 percent, or 80.03 points, to 36,274.13 in early trade, while the broader Topix index slipped 0.37 percent, or 9.36 points, to 2,547.35. US shares dropped, with investors now believing the Federal Reserve may not cut rates as swiftly as previously hoped. It came after Fed chair Jerome Powell said in an interview that the central bank wants to see more data before starting to cut interest rates. The dollar stood at 148.61 yen, nearly flat from 148.68 yen in New York. "The Tokyo market is expected to start softer following falls in US shares," brokerage house Monex said. "The market is focused on Toyota's earnings," to be issued at 1:25 pm (0425 GMT), it added.—APP

Briefs

PTI being subjected to state operation to impose criminals

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Central Information Secretary Raof Hasan said that the reign of terror had been unleashed on the PTI for the past 22 months under an infamous London Plan to dismantle PTI and remove its Chairman-for-life Imran Khan from political scene in order to impose the certified gang of criminals on the nation once again.

However, he added that the people of the country would take revenge for every injustice being meted out with them through power of their vote on February 8, 2024. Addressing a press conference flanked by PTI Senator Walid Iqbal, Chairman Senate Standing Committee for Human Rights, Brigadier (R) Musaddiq Abbasi, former Advisor to Prime Minister of Pakistan on Accountability and Interior, Ahmad Awais, former Advocate General Punjab, PTI CIS said that PTI, its leaders and workers were subjected to worst state terrorism and barbarism after the regime change conspiracy of April 9, 2022 to clear path for criminals to take the reins of the country.

Raof Hasan pointed out that as soon as the clique of the thieves consisting of Sharifs and Zardaris were imposed on the nation through regime change conspiracy, they ended a whopping Rs. 1100 billion of their corruption cases instantly by exploiting the state institutions such as NAB and FIA cases.

Bilawal faces hurdle just ahead of polls

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Peoples Party chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari is facing a major challenge in contesting the National Assembly seat as his electoral eligibility has been challenged in the Supreme Court of Pakistan. Complainant Shah Muhammad Zaman said in the appeal filed in the Supreme Court, "Bilawal Bhutto is the chairman of the PPP whose election symbol is 'sword'. Meanwhile, he is contesting the election on the ticket of Peoples Party Parliamentarians with symbol arrow." "Under the election act, a person cannot be a member of two parties at the same time," he added. In the filed appeal, it was held that the Sindh High Court did not review the law properly. So, the apex court should prevent Bilawal Bhutto from contesting the election on the arrow sign.

LHC reserves decision against '144' in Punjab

DNA

LAHORE: The Lahore High Court (LHC) has reserved its decision on a petition about implementation of section 144 in Punjab. LHC's Justice Shahid Bilal Hasan heard the petition of citizen Shabbir Ismail who challenged the implementation of Section 144 in Punjab. The court issued notices to the government of Punjab and the ECP. The petitioner said elections were going to be held and there should be no imposition of Section 144. He said the section should not be implemented to control arms movement because it was a separate offence. The ECP should itself declare the imposition of the Section 144 null and void, he argued. Responding to the argument, the public prosecutor referenced a decision of the Supreme Court of India to clarify the position of the government and said arms movement could not be allowed and the section 144 was implemented to empower the government functionaries.

INDEPENDENCE DAY OF SRI LANKA



ISLAMABAD: Chief Guest Federal Health Minister Nadeem Jan, Admiral Ravindra Wijegunaratne, and others cutting cake to celebrate 76th Anniversary of Independence of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka. – DNA

EU must defend Ukraine even if US reduces support

French president says future security architecture of Europe could no longer be settled by US and Russia

DNA

STOCKHOLM: The European Union has to make bold decisions to defend Ukraine, pre-empting any US decision to withhold or reduce its military support, Emmanuel Macron has said. In a speech in Sweden, which hopes to be the next country to join Nato, the French president also said the future security architecture of Europe, including arms control agreements covering European territory, could no longer be settled simply by the US and Russia, and Europe had to have a right to determine its own future. His remarks were designed as a warning to Europe that it needs to ramp up its whole defence effort and prepare for the possibility that either Joe Biden will be unable to push his military assistance budget for Ukraine through Congress, or that later in the year he is defeated in a presidential election by an isolationist Donald Trump. But Macron also argued that if Europe did step up, and helped to prevent a Russian victory, the US through Nato could no longer have a monopoly in determining future relations with Moscow. Speaking at the Swedish defence academy alongside Sweden's prime minister, Ulf Kristersson, Macron said: "This is a decisive and testing moment for Europe. We must be ready to act to defend and support Ukraine whatever it takes and whatever America decides." He added: "Europe had been lucky to have America as a partner but we have to be lucid. Ukraine is part of the European continent and whatever America decides we have to take the right and bold decisions to support Ukraine and the Ukrainian people." Insisting that Europe must do whatever it takes for years to come, and at whatever cost, he said it must be made impossible for Russia to win, since if it did then Europe would be without a functioning security architecture



with consequences in Nato's eastern flank, the Caucasus and central Asia. Macron said: "The real cost to us of a Russian victory in the short and long run is too high for all of us." He said it would require Europe scaling up its own defence production effort so that Ukraine can be in a position to negotiate a sustainable peace. The French president praised the way the EU had responded to Russian aggression for two years, including by putting the European defence industry on a war footing, increasing spending and developing more common capacities. But he said: "Even though we can be proud of recent decisions, we have to do much more." If the EU compared spending on defence with the way Vladimir Putin had readapted his entire defence budget, the EU had not done enough, he said. Macron said: "Russia

managed to completely readapt that system, so we have to react and even overreact to be alongside with Ukrainians." Calling for a strengthening of production, he said Europe had to be ready to take national and European decisions that pre-empted any US decision to minimise vulnerability. He insisted his call for greater European defence interoperability need not be seen as undermining Nato. He also called for greater European cooperation and autonomy on energy. "For years and years we thought trading and exchanging energy with Russia was the best way to prevent a war," he said. "This was a mistake. It was the best way to suffer from a war and suffer from a unilateral decision." Macron said that in future European energy needed a greater diversity of suppliers. He said the invasion in Russia occurred in part because Europe had been a geopolitical minority with strategic defence negotiations conducted solely by the US and Russia, leaving the EU largely excluded. The arms controls and security treaties "affecting our territory were decided by the big guys, and not by the Europeans", he said. "In the future when it is about the intermediate nuclear range forces treaty, when it is about deployments, when it is about arms control for today and tomorrow, when it is about designing an architecture of security, we have to be the one to decide. "Our involvement with Ukraine is not just to prevent a Russian victory but for us to decide our own future and to be around the table because Ukraine is part of our continent." Macron added: "There is no future for ourselves and our children if we are not in a situation to build the new architecture of security of arms control in our neighbourhood. We have to be the one who decides for ourselves and not delegate it to others, even if they are very good allies, because they live on the other side of the ocean."

Bushra Bibi petitions IHC to move her to Adiala jail

ADIL SHAHEEN

ISLAMABAD: Bushra Bibi, the wife of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder Imran Khan, has challenged the authorities' move to imprison her at Bani Gala residence to serve a 14-year sentence in the Toshakhana case. Last month, Bushra Bibi was imprisoned at her Islamabad residence after accountability sentenced the couple to 14 years in jail in the Toshakhana case. Authorities had declared the Bani Gala residence a "sub-jail" to confine the former first lady at the request of Adiala jail superintendent. Bushra and Khan were awarded a 14-year jail term, each, when accountability court's Judge Muhammad Bashir announced the verdict in the case related to the illegal sale of state gifts. The court also disqualified the former prime minister for 10 years from holding public office besides imposing a fine of Rs1.57 billion – 787 million each – on the couple. In the petition today, Bushra Bibi said just like other political workers of the party, she is ready and willing to serve her sentence in the "Ordinary Jail Premises at Adiala Jail, Adiala rather than the declared sub-jail at her residence".

People faced consequences of removing Nawaz, says Marriyum

ABID RAZA

LAHORE: PML-N spokesperson Marriyum Aurangzeb on Tuesday said the large rallies held by the party were a proof that the people knew that Nawaz Sharif – the party supremo who is seeking another mandate for a record fourth term in office – always fulfilled the promises he made. The people experienced the consequences of the elder Sharif's removal in 2017, she said, adding that hate and abuse was spread in the society after the move, which damaged the country. Addressing a press conference at the PML-N headquarters at Model Town, Marriyum said the latest Transparency International report was negated the very people who raised the slogans of "thieves" and "dacoits".

CJCSC Gen Sahir meets Saudi defence minister

STAFF REPORT



RIYADH: Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee (Chairman JCSC) General Sahir Shamsad Mirza, while on official visit to KSA, in connection with 2nd World Defence Show called on His Royal Highness Prince Khalid Bin Salman Bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud, Minister of Defence, KSA and discussed strategic / security issues and opportunities to enhance defence cooperation between the two brotherly countries. The Chairman JCSC also visited stalls of different organizations from Pakistan and inaugurated Al-Fatah-II Missile stall at World Defence Show. The Chairman also held meetings with His Excellency General Fayyadh bin Hamed Al-Ruwali, Chief of General Staff KSA and Lieutenant General Fahad bin Abdullah AL-Muter, Chief of Royal Saudi Land Forces, KSA.

Antony Blinken meets Egyptian mediators for Gaza cease-fire

NEWS DESK

CAIRO: The United States continued to push for a cease-fire in Gaza Tuesday as Secretary of State Antony Blinken met Egyptian leaders in Cairo. Blinken's visit also comes amid growing concerns in Egypt about Israel's stated intentions to expand the combat in Gaza to areas on the Egyptian border that are crammed with displaced Palestinians. Israel's Defense Minister has said Israel's offensive will eventually reach the town of Rafah, on the Egyptian border, where more than half of Gaza's 2.3 million people have sought refuge and are now living in increasingly miserable conditions. U.N. humanitarian monitors said Tuesday that Israeli evacuation orders now cover two-thirds of Gaza's territory, driving thousands more people every day toward the border areas. Egypt has warned that an Israeli deployment along the border would threaten the peace treaty the two countries signed over four decades ago. Egypt fears an expansion of combat to the Rafah area could push terrified Palestinian civilians across the border, a scenario Egypt has said it is determined to prevent. Blinken, who met Tuesday with Egyptian President Ab-

del-Fattah el-Sissi, has said repeatedly that Palestinians must not be forced out of Gaza. During his latest trip, Blinken is seeking progress on a cease-fire deal, on potential normalization of relations between Israel and Saudi Arabia, and on preventing an escalation of regional fighting. On all three fronts, Blinken faces major challenges. Hamas and Israel are publicly at odds over key elements of a potential truce. Israel has dismissed the United States' calls for a path to a Palestinian state, and Iran's militant allies in the region have shown little sign of being deterred by U.S. strikes. Egypt – along with Qatar, where Blinken will be later Tuesday – have been trying to mediate an agreement between Israel and Hamas that would lead to the release of more hostages in return for a several-weeklong pause in Israeli military operations. The outlines of such a deal were worked out by intelligence chiefs from the U.S., Egypt, Qatar and Israel late last month and have been presented to Hamas, which has not yet formally responded. U.S. officials said Blinken is hoping to get an update on the Hamas response to the proposal in both Cairo and Doha. Blinken will then travel to Israel to brief Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his War Cabinet on Wednesday about what he heard from the Arab leaders.

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