



# Islamabad POST

Wednesday, February 14, 2024

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**Gaza crisis needs 'right diagnosis and firm treatment'**

Detailed News On Page-07

**Self-defense does not include 'expulsion'**

Detailed News On Page-08

**Osaka beats Garcia in Qatar to avenge AO**

Detailed News On Page-06

## Difficult times for PML-N

# PPP decides not to be part of govt

Bilawal says Asif Zardari the most suitable choice for the President post; PPP also demands NA speaker ship, Senate Chairman slot; PML N prime minister candidate will have PPP vote because PPP does not want instability in country

ANSAR MAHMOOD BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: Despite days-long consultations between the two major parties of the country, the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) has decided to back Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz's (PML-N) candidate for the prime minister's slot but will not be a part of the federal government. PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari made the major announcement during a news conference in Islamabad after the Central Executive Committee's (CEC) session on Tuesday, saying that he was withdrawing from the candidacy for prime minister's post as "the PPP doesn't have the mandate to form the federal government". "It is a fact that the PPP does not have a mandate to form the federal government and due to that I will not be putting myself forward for the candidacy of the prime minister of Pakistan," said the 35-year-old politician, who ran the 2024 general election for the country's top slot. The Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) and PML-N, he said, had more numbers than his party in the National Assembly (NA), but since the former has announced that they would not engage in any dialogue with the PPP, there is no possibility of a PTI or independents-led government in the country. It may be noted that PTI founder Imran Khan brushed off the possibility of forming a coalition government with PPP, PML-N or MuttahidaQaumi Movement-Pakistan (MQM-P).

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## Nawaz Sharif nominates Shehbaz as Prime Minister

PMLN nominates Maryam Nawaz for CM Punjab slot

ABID RAZA

ISLAMABAD: The leader of Pakistan Muslim League (N) Muhammad Nawaz Sharif has nominated Former Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif for the premiership of country, while he also nominated Maryam Nawaz Sharif for the post of Chief Minister of Punjab, PMLN leader Maryam Auranzaiab said on X.

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ISLAMABAD: PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari along with other party leaders talking to media after the Central Executive Committee's (CEC) meeting. - DNA

## Pak expresses sorrow over Philippines' tragedy

The death toll from landslide has climbed to 68

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan is deeply saddened by the devastation caused by a landslide in the southern Philippines, which claimed multiple lives. In a statement, Foreign Office Spokesperson Mumtaz Zahra Baloch expressed heartfelt condolences to the Government and the people of the Philippines, as well as to the families of the deceased. She emphasized that this incident serves as another grim reminder of the ravages caused by climate change and underscores the urgent need for collective action to address it. The death toll from a landslide in the southern Philippines has climbed to 68 as officials say the window for finding more

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## Over Imran's directives PTI to join hands with MWM for govt formation

On Imran directives party to forge coalition with Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) in KP for reserved seats, says Raof Hasan

MEHTAB SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) has claimed that the former ruling party, upon directions of its founder Imran Khan, will join hands with Majlis-e-Wahdat-Muslimeen (MWM) to form its governments in Centre and Punjab. Speaking to the media in Islamabad on Tuesday, PTI spokesperson Raof Hasan said that the former prime minister, while ruling out the prospects of any talks with the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) and MuttahidaQaumi Movement-Pakistan (MQM-P), has directed the party to form a coalition with Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) over reserved seats. "Those who have emerged victorious in the [February 8] polls, should be allowed to form the government as it is their right [do do so], he said while conveying Khan's message. "I have been given the mandate [by Khan]

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## Imran picks Gandapur for KP CM slot

Directs his party to hold talks with other parties

STAFF REPORT

RAWALPINDI: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder Imran Khan on Tuesday nominated former federal minister Ali Amin Gandapur as his party's candidate for Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's chief minister. "KP's chief minister will be Ali Amin Gandapur," said the former prime minister while speaking to journalists in Adiala jail, where he is currently incarcerated in a

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## Briefs

**Chaotic election can't bring about stability**

Mandate of people has been stolen

COURT REPORTER

RAWALPINDI: The mandate of the people of Pakistan has been stolen and political stability is unlikely amid chaotic election. The sentiment has been expressed by Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leader Shah Mahmood Qureshi who spoke to media at Adiala Jail on Tuesday. He said the international media had declared the election rigged one. PTI leader added that elections were not up to the mark as even winning candidates were crying foul. "The mandate of the people of Pakistan has been stolen and the chief justice should take notice of rigging," he said.

**South Africa approaches ICJ over Rafah attacks**

Israel is planning to expand its ground assault

FOREIGN DESK

JOHANNESBURG: South Africa's government said on Tuesday that it had asked the World Court to consider whether Israel's decision to extend its military operations in Rafah required the court to use its power to prevent further breach of Palestinians' rights. The ICJ last month ordered Israel to take all measures within its power to prevent its troops from committing genocide against Palestinians in Gaza, in a case brought by South Africa. Israel is planning to expand its ground assault into the city of Rafah, where over 1 million have sought refuge from offensive that has laid waste to much of the Gaza.

## Jaranwala vandalism

# SC rejects Punjab govt's progress report

"I feel ashamed after seeing the report about the Jaranwala incident," CJP Isa says

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court Tuesday rejected the Punjab government's progress report on the Jaranwala incident, with Chief Justice QaziFaez Isa saying it is "worth throwing in the trash". The chief justice's remarks came during the hearing of a case pertaining to the rights of minorities where the provincial government of Punjab submitted its progress report about the incident. On August 16, a charged crowd vandalised several churches and set scores of houses on fire in Jaranwala town of the industrial district of Faisalabad after clerics made announcements in mosques inciting the mob to attack the Christian community under alleged allegations of blasphemy. Paramilitary troops were called in to handle the violence and bring the situation under control, according to a government order seen by Reuters. Soon after the incident, CJP Isa, who was the chief justice designate at the time, visited the neighbourhood to meet and

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## PM Kakar summoned by IHC next week

Justice Kayani asked the interim PM to appear in court on Monday

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Tuesday summoned Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar to appear before the bench hearing the missing Baloch students' case next week. The orders were issued by Justice Mohsin Akhtar Kayani when he took up the case today and directed the interim PM to appear in court on Monday. When the hearing began, the assistant attorney general

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## PSX takes massive U-turn

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: The Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) took a dramatic U-turn on Tuesday following a vicious two-day shut-off that shoved the benchmark index below 60,000, as frustrated investors, taking the post-vote political mayhem in a stride, binged on the bargains in the second half, dealers said. In the initial 15 minutes post the opening bell, PSX's flagship KSE-100 index plummeted below the crucial 60,000 level, reflecting subdued investor confidence amid ongoing political uncertainty. At its lowest point, the benchmark

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# UN chief urges Pakistan to avoid tensions, resolve election issues

Guterres urges authorities and political leaders to maintain calm atmosphere, says spokesperson

NEWS DESK

ISLAMABAD: Amid growing calls for investigation into poll-related irregularities, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres Monday called on Pakistani authorities and political leaders to resolve the issues related to last week's election through established legal procedures and to avoid any action that raised tensions. The February 8 elections were marred by allegations of rigging and irregularities after the results suffered inordinate delay and mobile services remained suspended on the polling day. Several political parties mainly Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) are holding sporadic protests across the country against alleged rigging in favour of the opponent candidates. Independent candidates belonging to Imran Khan-led PTI are in the lead with 92 seats, followed by PML-N (79) and PPP (53). In a statement, the UN chief also urged Pakistan to maintain a "calm atmosphere" in the country. "The secretary-general is monitoring the situation in Pakistan and calls for the resolving all issues and disputes through the established legal frameworks, and for human rights and the rule of law, to be fully respected in the interest of the people of

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## Shutter down strike against rigging in Balochistan

DNA

QUETTA: A comprehensive shutter-down strike paralyzed Balochistan on Tuesday as a protest against the alleged rigging in the recently held general elections. Several small political parties initiated the strike in response to perceived irregularities during the February 8 elections. The impact of the shutter-down strike was evident with the closure of all business centers, leading to significantly reduced traffic on the roads compared to normal days. Simultaneously, a Chaman experienced a second consecutive day of a complete shutter-down strike, protesting against alleged rigging and result changes in constituency PB-51.

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# IPS launches study group to review new govt legislation

This initiative aims to engage with stakeholders on socio-legal issues in an unbiased, constructive, and result-oriented manner

ADIL SHAHEEN

ISLAMABAD : The next government should make and amend laws that could affect the cohesiveness of the society and family, keeping the country's social fabric, national character, and religious subtleties in view while fulfilling its international commitments. This was observed by speakers at the launch event of 'Study Group on Socio-legal Legislation' - a dynamic forum established by the Institute of Policy Studies (IPS), Islamabad, to generate debate and offer indigenous policy options for viable legislation in the country. The forum, intended to cultivate a pool of researchers for impactful contributions to the policy-making process, comprises law practi-

tioners, academics, religious scholars, and social activists. This initiative aims to engage with stakeholders on socio-legal issues in an unbiased, constructive, and result-oriented manner. The group will convene periodically to deliberate upon various aspects of enactments and bills to form a coherent narrative for the policymakers,

opinion makers, and common citizens, with expected outcomes in the form of policy inputs and legislative reviews. The maiden meeting of the study group was addressed by Khalid Rahman, chairman, IPS, Prof Dr Shahzad Iqbal Sham, constitutionalist and law commentator, Syed Nadeem Farhat, senior researcher, IPS, Dr Shagufta Umar, director, Women Aid Trust, Khalid Naeem, member National Commission on the Rights of Child (NCRC), Asma Mushtaq, advocate Supreme Court, and other participants, including law practitioners, academics, ulema, and social activists. In introductory remarks, Nadeem Farhat said empowering efficient legislation plays a pivotal role in maintaining societal order, with a growing emphasis on family-related laws reflecting evol-

ving societal norms. In a parliamentary democracy, legislative bodies assume a crucial role in addressing societal issues by enacting and amending laws that resonate with the population's changing needs. The significance of legislation, particularly in family matters, underscores the state's commitment to fostering equitable and just social structures. In the context of Pakistan, exploring the evolution of legislative responsiveness becomes paramount as it reflects the nation's commitment to adapting legal frameworks to meet the contemporary needs of its citizens, he said. Overall, legislative initiatives are indispensable tools in shaping the legal landscape, ensuring social harmony, and responding to the dynamic challenges of a changing society. The discussion emphasized the pivotal need to develop an efficient legislative toolkit to ensure efficacy and alignment in law-making. The participants further recognized the importance of citizen awareness, stressed the critical role of aligning legal frameworks with evolving societal changes, cautioned against impulsive law-making, and emphasized the necessity of harmonizing core values with human rights principles. The participants acknowledged the imperative of coordinating with provincial assemblies and engaging with provincial bureaucracies. Furthermore, ensuring public accessibility to information regarding the laws and the purpose of laws was deemed vital to fostering citizens' understanding. The discussion called for a deeper exploration into law-making dynamics for an effective legislative framework. In concluding remarks, Khalid Rahman stressed the imperative of capacity building within society, acknowledging that legislators play a pivotal role in shaping the socio-legal landscape. Additionally, he highlighted the importance of coalition building, recognizing the collaborative efforts required to navigate the complexities of legislative processes and their impact on society.



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## CS GB commits to strengthening police force

Gilgit : Chief Secretary Gilgit-Baltistan Abrar Ahmed Mirza while appreciating the overall performance of GB Police said that all resources will be used to increase the capabilities of the police so that they do not face any obstacle in providing timely justice. During the inaugural session of the newly constructed "Yadgar Shoda" he said under the five-year development plan, the quality of police stations will be improved, adding that steps will be taken to provide more facilities in the service centers. He said that in Gilgit-Baltistan, they are building an institution in the style of PITB where the data of all government departments will be stored. CS GB said steps will be taken to promote IT through various apps. "The automation project of GB Police will also be facilitated at the local level through this institution," he said. The chief secretary also announced immediate training of IT-related personnel of GB Police. He further said that a scheduled meeting of prosecutors and investigators should be arranged for better performance of prosecution. Chief Secretary GB Abrar Ahmad Mirza also ordered Additional Chief Secretary Mushtaq Ahmed to convey all the cases of the police department to the relevant forum.—APP

## KP minister inaugurates child protection unit in Abbottabad

ABBOTTABAD : Provisional Caretaker Minister for Social Welfare, Special Education, and Women Empowerment, Justice retired Arshad Qaiser on Tuesday stated that the government is determined to fulfill its international and national responsibilities for the protection of children. He expressed these views while addressing the inauguration ceremony of the Child Protection Unit in collaboration with UNICEF, under the supervision of the Department of Social Welfare, Special Education, and Women Empowerment Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The minister said that establishing Child Protection Units in every district of Khyber

Pakhtunkhwa and strengthening the Child Protection Help Line 1121 are among the priorities of the government for the welfare of children. Arshad Qaiser said that the inauguration of the Child Protection Unit in Abbottabad is a crucial milestone in strengthening the child protection system in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. He appreciated the comprehensive system for the protection of children established by Secretary of Social Welfare and Special Education, Dr. Anila Mahfooz Darani, Commissioner Hazara Division Syed Zaheer-ul-Islam, and Chief Protection Officer UNICEF Peshawar Ijaz Muhammad Khan, and Child Protection Specialist Suhail

Ahmed for their efforts in ensuring cooperation between stakeholders. Commissioner Hazara Division Syed Zaheer-ul-Islam while addressing the ceremony said that children are the most precious asset of the nation and it is the duty of the government and all members of society to provide them with all kinds of protection. He assured that all line departments will cooperate fully in this regard. Speaking on the occasion, Additional Secretary Social Welfare Farooq, Chief Protection Officer Ijaz Muhammad Khan, UNICEF Field Officer Aridoula Razaq, Sosan, UNICEF Child Protection Specialist Islamabad.—APP

## NRSP chairman addresses poverty alleviation forum

ISLAMABAD : The Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI) hosted its latest 'Thought Leaders Forum' (TLF) under the title, "Poverty Alleviation and the Role of Rural Support Program." Mr. Shoab Sultan Khan, Chairman National Rural Support Program (NRSP), Pakistan was the Distinguished Speaker. In her welcome remarks, Dr. Neelum Nigar, Director of the Centre for Strategic Perspectives (CSP), mentioned that under the TLF, ISSI acknowledges and pays tribute to individuals esteemed as authoritative voices in specific fields. These individuals have played a crucial role in shaping perspectives, influencing decisions, and driving innovation within their respective domains in Pakistan. She added that Mr. Shoab Sultan Khan stands as a testament to this spirit of thought leadership, and ISSI is privileged to have him share his insights on this platform. DG ISSI Ambassador Sohail Mahmood, in his welcome remarks, paid rich tributes to Mr. Shoab Sultan Khan's vision, transformational leadership, and outstanding contribution to efforts for poverty reduction in Pakistan and the region, including in India, through community participation. He added that Mr. Shoab Sultan Khan's life-long work had made a difference in the lives of millions and was duly recognised in Pakistan and internationally. Ambassador Sohail Mahmood noted that Pakistan has made significant strides in reducing absolute poverty, with rates dropping from 61.6% in 1998-99 to 21.5% in 2021-22. However, multidimensional poverty remains high at 39%, highlighting deprivation in health, education, and standard of living. Recent events, including the COVID-19 pandemic and floods, have exacerbated these challenges, particularly affecting rural communities where necessities are scarce. Shoab Sultan Khan has been instrumental in addressing challenges and uplifting rural communities, particularly through his leadership in the Rural Support Program. Since 1982, he has played a transformative role in various impactful programs across Pakistan, India, and South Asia, positively impacting millions of lives. Mr. Shoab Sultan Khan, while shedding light on poverty alleviation and the role of rural support programs, emphasized that Pakistan's rural support programs are among the oldest in the region. These programs are widely acknowledged for their success and have served as a model and inspiration for similar initiatives in South Asia, including India.—DNA

## SE&LD \$154 millions World Bank project faces corruption: Letter to CS Sindh

Hameed Alwani wrote a letter to the Secretary School Education and Literacy asking for conducting a transparent inquiry against the Project Coordinator Erum Ismail Rind who is marked by corruption and nepotism in the SELECT Project

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: According to the reliable sources, a corruption scandal has come up in Sindh Early Learning Enhancement through Classroom Transformation (SELECT) Project, a project run by the Sindh Education & Literacy Department funded by the World Bank, which worth US \$154 millions are running. Among them, massive corruption is taking place in various forms. In this regard, SELECT Project Manager/Director (HR/Admin) Hameed Alwani wrote a letter to the Secretary School Education & Literacy asking for conducting a transparent inquiry against the Project Coordinator Erum Ismail Rind who is marked by corruption and nepotism in the SELECT Project. In the letter, he said that

Project Coordinator Erum Ismail Rind by nepotism has given jobs to her relatives, including own family members. It is further narrated that a million rupees of contract 1 for the material/services, the documents of VTT Globe Firm were returned/rejected for late submission on August 18, 2023 but despite this the contract is given to it which is a total violation of SPPRA rules and an ample example of massive corruption and kickbacks. While the corruption of 46 lakhs has been done by Junaid Hameed Samo, the Chief Program Manager/ Project Director RSU-SELECT and Erum Ismail Rind, the Project Coordinator, SELECT Project in the purchase of two servers, which is not shown in the stock register, whereas their RAMs have been installed refurbished, which indicates huge corruption. As per letter during the

year 2022-23, Mr. Junaid Hameed Samo, the Project Director, procured/purchased 12 laptops, out of which 2 laptops are missing, which is also inquired by the Audit Party 2023. Letter further stated that the Project Coordinator Erum Rind is Headmistress Cader lady and she is holding an important post of Project Coordinator, which is also a violation & contempt of the orders of the Honorable Sindh High Court. While looting in the project, Chief Program Manager RSU has lost two vehicles bought/purchased for the project, one Honda City, and one Alto Suzuki, respectively, from the showroom. Though he has already retained three other government vehicles. Some of the important posts of the project have been sidelined and kept vacant so that they can do more corruption. It is mentioned in the letter that Junaid Samo is a 19 grade officer but

he is Chief Program Manager/PD of about seven to eight (7 to 8) projects including RSU, ASPIRE, DEEP, SELECT etc which shows nepotism & giant corruption on his part. In addition to this, it is highlighted in the letter that an irrelevant/ outsider person, Mr. Liaquat Solangi, who is an expert in jugglery of figures & corruption, is taking the budget finance job so that maximum corruption can be done in the project. Instead of conducting a transparent inquiry, the Education Secretary has replaced/ transferred the manager/director HR Admin who wrote the letter for the inquiry, which seems that the Secretary Education is providing protection to the corrupt team. Besides, it is learnt that Junaid Samo is already facing many other inquiries of corruption in different courts of laws in lieu of irregularities and corruption.



RAWALPINDI: Women along with children busy in making flower bouquet for selling while sitting at roadside. — APP

## Rs 2.2b collected through e-Abiana System

LAHORE : E-Abiana System, developed by Punjab Information Technology Board (PITB) for the Punjab Irrigation Department, has collected more than Rs. 2.2 billion against 7.8 million bills issued to the farmers. This emerged during a progress review meeting presided over by PITB Chairman Faisal Yousaf held at Arfa Software Technology Park (ASTP) on Tuesday. PITB Additional Director General (ADG) Khurram Mushtaq and other senior officials were also present in the meeting. During the meeting, PITB Chairman Faisal Yousaf highlighted that the e-Abiana System not only provides comprehensive data to farmers and landowners across Punjab but also aids in preventing water theft and promoting efficient water usage. "Through the e-Abiana System, farmers can conveniently pay their bills online through e-Pay Punjab, enhancing accessibility and ease of use. The digital mechanism, operational across Punjab, is overturning the decades old traditional process of manual billing," he added. The meeting also discussed the ongoing success of the e-Abiana initiative and its positive impact on the agricultural community. Chairman Faisal Yousaf expressed satisfaction with the results and emphasized the broader benefits of the system in water management and conservation. The e-Abiana System continues to contribute to the modernization and efficiency of the irrigation sector in Punjab, ensuring transparency and facilitating farmers in managing their water bills seamlessly.—APP

## KP Governor launches online campus system

SHAMIM SHAIHD

PESHAWAR : Governor of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Haji Ghulam Ali is set to introduce a groundbreaking 'Online Campus Management System' through the Governor's official portal. This initiative has been designed to enhance transparency and accountability in the education sector which will provide comprehensive compliance details, including adherence to the 2% minority quota in education and the 5% employment quota. This announcement was made by Governor KP, Haji Ghulam Ali in recent meeting with Program Manager Qamar Naseem here on Tuesday. The governor reiterated the government's commitment

to safeguarding the rights and entitlements of all communities, particularly vulnerable groups. He underscored the importance of this campus information management system in realizing the said objectives. The online system will offer a wide array of information, such as the number of teachers, students, and persons with disabilities, gender-segregated data, and financial details including revenue, budget, grants, and expenses. This system marks a significant step forward in streamlining campus management and ensuring that educational institutions comply with government quotas and regulations. Furthermore, Governor Haji Ghulam Ali also announced the imminent

launch of an online complaint redressal mechanism. This platform also aims to offer swift responses to aggrieved students regarding quota issues within ten days and ensuring that grievances are addressed promptly and efficiently. "Our commitment to protecting the rights of minorities and other vulnerable groups is unwavering. This new system will ensure that educational institutions in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa are transparent, accountable, and inclusive, reflecting our dedication to upholding the values of equality and fairness," he stated. Principal Secretary to the Governor Mazhar Irshad said that the Governor Secretariat is fully committed to ensuring transparency.

## Umar Saif distributes Rs 825m to IT companies

ABID RAZA

LAHORE : Caretaker Federal Minister for Information Technology and Telecommunications (MoITT) Dr. Umar Saif distributed Rs825 million as cash prizes to companies playing a significant role in IT and IT services exports during the "IT and ITES Export Award" organized by the Pakistan Software Export Board (PSEB), an organization of the Ministry of IT and Telecommunication, here at a local hotel on Tuesday. Dr Umar Saif said that the IT industry was playing a pivotal role in the country's economy and it deserved maximum incentives, facilities and rewards. "These companies are strengthening the country's economy





by earning huge foreign exchange in return for the services of digital talent of Pakistan worldwide. If the performance of the IT sector continues like this, it is hoped that the target of 10 billion dollars for IT exports will be achieved soon," he added. The federal minister said that the IT Ministry had decided to encourage companies with a positive growth in IT exports, for which the government had allocated Rs1 billion in the annual budget. He said that due to timely decisions of the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC) on the recommendations of the Ministry of IT, the overall IT exports in the country have increased by a record 32 percent in the last 60 days. In the first and second quarters of the current

financial year, the performance of many companies in IT exports also showed a positive trend. In such a situation, it was decided to give cash prizes from the allocated fund of one billion rupees to encourage the companies and accelerate growth. Dr. Umar Saif said that out of the Rs1bn fund, Rs825 million had been distributed to 550 companies with positive growth. "For this purpose, six categories have been made; the first top 100 companies awarded Rs 2.5 million, the second 100 companies Rs 2 million, the third 100 companies Rs 1.5 million, the fourth 100 companies Rs 1.25 million, the fifth 100 companies Rs 750,000 and the sixth and last category 50 companies have been awarded Rs 500,000 each.

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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



RAWALPINDI: A vendor displaying walnut to attract the customers on his roadside setup at Faizabad. —APP

# Govt releases Rs 507 bn funds in seven months

According to the disbursement mechanism of the Planning Division, the development funds allocated in the federal budget are released at the rate of 20% in the first quarter (July-September), followed by 30% each in the second and third quarters, and the remaining 20% in the last quarter (April-June) of a fiscal year

## FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: The federal government has authorized the utilization of development funds amounting to Rs 507.979 billion, out of a total allocation of Rs 940 billion, for various ongoing and new social sector uplift projects of the federal ministries and divisions during the first seven months (July-January) of fiscal year 2023-24 under its Public Sector Development Programme (PSDP). Out of the total authorized/distributed amount, the total amount spent so far on the development projects during the corresponding period stood at Rs 190.443 billion, according to the latest

data released by the Ministry of Planning, Development and Special Initiatives. According to the disbursement mechanism of the Planning Division, the development funds allocated in the federal budget are released at the rate of 20% in the first quarter (July-September), followed by 30% each in the second and third quarters, and the remaining 20% in the last quarter (April-June) of a fiscal year. The detail showed that Rs 127.066 billion out of a total allocated amount of Rs 211.777 billion had been disbursed to corporations including National Highway Authority (NHA), National Transmission and Despatch Company (NTDC) and Pakistan Electric Power Company (PEPCO). For

the Aviation Division, funds amounting to Rs 3.270 billion have been disbursed and Rs 668.86 million for the Board of Investment. Similarly, the government authorized Rs 61.312 billion to the Cabinet Division, Rs 2.430 billion to the Ministry of Climate Change, Rs 660 million to the Commerce Division, Rs 126 million to the Ministry of Communications (other than NHA), Rs 1.920 billion to the Defence Division, Rs 960 million to the Defence Production Division, Rs 504 million for the Establishment Division, Rs 5.100 billion to the Federal Education & Professional Training Division, Rs 1.932 billion to the Finance Division, Rs 86.347 billion to Provinces and Special

Areas, Rs 35.820 billion to the Higher Education Commission, Rs 21.730 billion to the Housing and Works Division, Rs 488.40 million to the Human Rights Division, Rs 1.800 billion to the Industries and Production Division, Rs 1.200 billion to the Information and Broadcasting Division, Rs 3.600 billion to the Information Technology and Telecom Division, Rs 1.140 billion to Inter Provincial Coordination Division, Rs 5.970 billion to the Interior Division, Rs 480 million to the Law and Justice Division, Rs 1.705 million to the Maritime Affairs Division, Rs 90 million to the Narcotics Division, Rs 5.310 billion to the National Food Security and Research Division, Rs 6.452 billion to the National

Health Services, Regulations and Coordination Division, Rs 324 million to the National Heritage and Culture Division, Rs 90 million to the Pakistan Nuclear Regulatory Authority, Rs 900 million to Petroleum Division, Rs 7.345 billion to the Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Division, Rs 300 million to the Poverty Alleviation and Social Safety Division, Rs 19.812 billion to the Railway Division, Rs 480 million to the Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony Division, Rs 1.920 billion to the Revenue Division, Rs 4.800 billion to the Science & Technological Research, Rs 578.53 to the States and Frontier Regions Division and Rs 66.037 billion to the Water Resources Division.

## ICCI and IPO discuss joining hands in sensitizing business community

### MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: Farukh Amil, Chairman, Intellectual Property Organization of Pakistan (IPO-Pakistan) visited the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry and discussed collaboration with ICCI to sensitize the business community about the importance of intellectual property rights for businesses to avoid counterfeiting and piracy of their products and achieve better growth.

Farukh Amil briefed the business community about the role of IPO-Pakistan in promoting an

enabling IP environment to promote businesses, creativity, and innovation. He said that the lack of an IP culture and weak IP enforcement are major challenges and IPO-Pakistan is working for awareness and enforcement of IPRs to place Pakistan on the global IP map as a compliant and responsible country. He said adherence to IPRs will enhance Pakistan's reputation as a business and investment-friendly country. He said that SMEs should benefit from the services of IPO-Pakistan for better protection of their patents, copyrights, and trademarks. Speaking on the occasion,

Engr. Azhar ul Islam Zafar, Acting President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry said that SMEs are the backbone of the economy and IPO-Pakistan should further simplify the IP registration processes and procedures and introduce mobile apps to facilitate SMEs in the online registration of their products and services for copyrights and trademarks. He said that in the global competitive business environment, the role of IPO-Pakistan is important in promoting innovations and startups through strict enforcement of IPRs. He said that Pakistan

needs to lay a strong foundation for a vibrant IP system to encourage innovations, business growth, and investment and hoped that IPO-Pakistan would contribute to making Pakistan a competitive economy. He assured that ICCI would work with IPO-Pakistan to create better awareness in the business community about the importance of IPRs for better growth of their businesses. Muhammad Ashfaq Chatha, Izzat Bukhs, Muhammad Naveed Malik, Faizan Shehzad, Ch. Muhammad Waseem and others were also present on the occasion.

## 4,199 Polio teams to administer drops

RAWALPINDI: A week-long anti-polio drive will commence in the Rawalpindi district on February 26. Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of District Health Authority Dr Ejaz Ahmad told APP that as many as 4,199 polio teams would go door-to-door and administer polio drops to 10,15,262 children of less than five years of age in all tehsils and union councils of the district during the campaign. The CEO said 243 Union Council Medical Officers and 858 area incharges would also participate in the drive. In addition, "361 fix centers will up set up to administer the drops". Ejaz added that anti-polio drops would also be administered at 182 transit points while teams would also be deputed at toll plazas so that no child could miss immunization. He said that the second campaign of the year was being started after the detection of positive sample of Polio virus circulating in the area. The CEO added that the objective of regularly conducting anti-polio campaigns was to keep children through protective drops and increase their immunity. He urged the citizens, particularly the parents, to come forward and play their role in eliminating the crippling disease from the society. The parents should cooperate with special to achieve the set target, he added. Meanwhile, Deputy Commissioner Hasan Waqar Cheema warned the officials that strict action would be taken against those responsible for fake entries. He further directed to cover the missing and refusal cases by convincing the parents with the help of local community leaders and achieve the target set for the drive. —APP

## AIOU's Academic Council approves new diploma, certificate programs

While introducing the new members, he assured to make all possible efforts for better and quality education. The Supreme Body of the University (Executive Council) will approve these decisions in the next meeting

### DNA

ISLAMABAD: Academic Council of Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) on Tuesday approved the launch of new diploma and certificate programmes. A joint meeting of the 50th Academic Planning and Development/Research and Educational Technology Committee (APD/RET) and the 66th Academic Council of AIOU was held on Monday. Vice Chancellor, AIOU, Prof. Dr. Nasir Mahmood chaired the meeting, and Registrar, Raja Umar Younis organized the meeting. The department heads, principal officers, and external members attended the meeting.

The minutes of the previous meeting were unanimously approved during the council meeting. The council also approved new courses, as well as changes in the title and content of several BS, MS/MPhil, and PhD courses. The meeting also approved to launch of various courses, including PhD in Agricultural Technology, M.Phil in Gender and Women Studies, PGD in Counter Violent Extremism and Terrorism, International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRSs), Medical Microbiology, Molecular Diagnostics, Climate Change and Sustainability, Public Health & Nutrition, Sustainable Environmental Design, Certificate courses in Arabic, Tajweed

Ul Quran, and Criminology. Additionally, the council also approved skill-based courses in Chemistry and 3-month short courses. Vice Chancellor AIOU, Prof. Dr. Nasir Mahmood directed the faculty members and deans to keep in mind the policy of the University and Higher Education Commission in designing the courses and preparing the teaching materials. While introducing the new members, he assured to make all possible efforts for better and quality education. The Supreme Body of the University (Executive Council) will approve these decisions in the next meeting.

## Senate communications committee holds meeting

### DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Senate Standing Committee on Communications unanimously recommended renaming the Mini Interchange "Rehmani Khel" at the CPEC road to "Shah ESA" interchange, responding to the demands of the general public and Tehsil Local Government Paharpur, District D.I. Khan. Chaired by Senator Kamil Ali Agha at the Parliament House on Tuesday, the Senate Communications Committee discussed the resolution passed on 30-08-2024 during the Tehsil Paharpur Session. The committee approved the proposal, emphasizing the sentiments of the general public attached to renowned saint Shah Esa (R.A.) in the area, with no disputes among the community. They directed the Ministry to take appropriate measures. In an earlier part of

the meeting, the committee addressed the urgent appeal to transfer the project from the B & A Department to NHA Pakistan. The public petition, presented by Malak Abdul Qayum Mosa Khail, highlighted corruption in the mega project involving the construction and expansion of Digri Shabozai to Taunsa Sharif (N-70 to N 55 - length 175 km - Balochistan and 65 km - Punjab). Ministry officials explained to the committee that NHA lacked the financial resources for the federalization of any new road, even for operation and maintenance of its existing road network. The committee debated that if NHA desires to take up the project, it would only be possible on a Deposit Work basis, requiring consent from the Provincial Governments of Balochistan and Punjab, along with the transfer of requisite funds and conditional NOCs from con-

cerned provincial departments. Consequently, the committee deferred the matter, instructing the summoning of concerned provincial departments to brief on the project works as per the NHA code. The committee also received a briefing on the NHA Hyderabad-Sukkar Motorway Project, a crucial stretch for the completion of the Peshawar-Karachi Motorway (PKM). Officials stated that the project, spanning 306 KM with a 6-lane fenced motorway, 15 interchanges, and 5 service stations on each side, is a top priority for the Government and National Highway Authority (NHA). Anticipating acceleration with the formation of the new government, the committee was briefed on the revised project cost of PKR 308.194 billion. The matter was deferred for further deliberation and report.

## Palestinian genocide

Ummeha had innocently fought hopeless wars, Not even she'd felt safe' behind close doors. Her hair couldn't be covered' with some scarf, 'N shredded clothes left opened her scars. Had she lost relations of blood with blood itself; Had she seen 'em burnt' in flames worse than hell'. Ummeha had her feet swollen; rinsing blood from wounds. But she kept runnin' to disappear in dunes. Though ground overburdened by martyrs was wide, Ummeha could never search\_a safe place to hide! Then, sun fastly struck over her face; To me, it felt like an end to human-race! While her ashes were being covered in tomb, I too had lost hope for life in her womb...

— Written by Feroza Islam

## Solangi reads news bulletin

### DNA

ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Federal Minister for Information, Broadcasting and Parliamentary Affairs Mur-taza Solangi on Tuesday created new history by reading English news bulletin on Radio Pakistan on World Radio Day. The minister read 1.00 pm news bulletin on Radio Pakistan and gave an important message that the government considered radio as an important medium of communication. This move by the caretaker information minister also indicated that the government was committed to promoting radio broadcasting in the country. Radio Pakistan is the oldest and largest broadcasting organization in the country with a wide audience in different languages. This initiative of the minister would strengthen Radio Pakistan as a national broadcaster and help promote digital radio broadcasting in Pakistan. Solangi also participated in Radio Pakistan's podcast program and expressed his views on various issues. The minister said that the government was committed to strengthen Radio Pakistan and make it a more effective and dynamic medium of communication. The government was also working to promote digital radio broadcasting in Pakistan, he maintained. "Radio Pakistan is a national broadcasting organization with a long and rich history," Solangi added. —APP

## RWMC ensures cleanliness of Tehsil Gujjar Khan

RAWALPINDI: The Rawalpindi Waste Management Company (RWMC) was ensuring the cleanliness of all tehsils of the district including Tehsil Gujjar Khan. According to a RWMC spokesman, the company had deployed additional workers in evening shift in Gujjar Khan to ensure the sanitation of the rural areas. He informed that camps were being organized across the district to create awareness about the importance of cleanliness. He said that cleanliness was necessary to eliminate smog and dengue and urged the residents not to burn waste or any chemical in the open as it was a leading source of various diseases and smog. In case of any complaint, citizens were asked to register. —APP

## 2265 kites confiscated, 13 kite sellers held

RAWALPINDI: Police have arrested 13 kite sellers and confiscated 2265 kites and 63 strings from their possession here on Tuesday. According to police spokesman, Taxila police seized 1430 kites with 10 strings from 04 kite sellers Saqib, Adil, Yaqoob and Abid. Similarly, Race Course police held 170 kites from 04 kite sellers Tariq, Dawood, Abdul Rifaf and Hamith ur Rahman. While, Civil Lines police nabbed Ahmed Ali and recovered 400 kites with 42 strings from his possession. —APP



## Briefs

## CDNS achieves Rs 1020 billion targets in fresh bond

ISLAMABAD: The Central Directorate of National Savings (CDNS) has achieved a target of Rs 1020 billion in fresh bonds in the current fiscal year, from July 1 to February 09th, 2023-24. The CDNS surpassed the annual target and achieved the target of Rs 1.6 trillion in fresh bonds in the current fiscal year, the senior official of CDNS told APP here on Tuesday. The senior official said this was a Rs 200 billion additional annual target than the target of Rs 1300 billion for the previous financial year 2021-22. "The CDNS has set a reviewed saving target of Rs 1.4 trillion for the current financial year (2021-22) which will promote savings culture in the country," he said. Given the current market trend in the country, the ambitious target had been set to improve the savings culture further, he said. The official said that work was being done on institutional reforms in CDNS and new reforms and innovations were being introduced. "At this time Automated Teller Machine (ATM) has also been introduced in CDNS which will provide enough facilities to the users," he added. —APP

## Pak, Somalia discuss increased coordination at OIC

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan and Somalia have discussed ways and means for increased coordination at the platform of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) besides other issues of mutual interest including regional and international developments. The discussion came during a meeting between Pakistan's Ambassador and Permanent Representative to OIC Syed M Fawad Sher and Somalia's Permanent Representative to OIC Abdul Rahim Osman, the envoy posted on X. During the meeting, the two sides vowed to continue cooperation in diverse fields. —APP

## Pneumonia claims six more lives in Punjab

ISLAMABAD: Six more children fell victim to pneumonia in Punjab during the past 24 hours, bringing the total tally to the infectious disease to 347 this year. A private news channel reported, a total of 475 new cases of pneumonia were reported during the last 24 hours including 175 in Lahore. Furthermore, the cumulative toll of pneumonia cases in Punjab had now surpassed 25,000, including 5334 in Lahore. The health authorities said six children lost their lives during the last 24 hours in Punjab, taking the overall number of deaths to 347. The health experts are attributing the rapid rise in pneumonia cases and fatalities to environmental pollution exacerbated by winter smog. Pneumonia, an infection primarily caused by viruses, tends to intensify following initial symptoms resembling a common cold or flu.

## Pakistani restaurant business shines in China

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistani restaurants in China are experiencing a surge in customers, as locals and tourists alike flock to these establishments to celebrate the Chinese Spring Festival. The Chinese Spring Festival, also known as the Lunar New Year or the Chinese New Year, is one of the most important traditional festivals in China. It is a time when families come together to celebrate, exchange gifts, and enjoy special meals. Many people also take the opportunity to dine out and try different cuisines.



ISLAMABAD: Children singing national anthems of Pakistan and Iran on the occasion of the National Day of Iran.— NDA

## Political parties have started horse trading

SIFC only hope to revive economy amid political chaos

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Brigadier (ret'd) Aslam Khan, Chairman of Pakistan Economy Watch (PEW), said on Tuesday that the SIFC has emerged as the only hope for economic recovery amid increasing political uncertainty. The elections left the country in a polarised and unstable state, as they did not deliver political stability but instead created uncertainty and legitimacy issues. Aslam Khan said that all three major parties declared victory soon after the elections and claimed they were the largest party in the National Assembly. But soon, it appeared that neither won a simple majority, leaving no party in

a position to form a government independently. Therefore, he added that a split mandate will soon result in a weak coalition government that cannot deliver, which will fan the masses' frustration. Aslam Khan said that the new government will face several daunting challenges. The most important is dealing with an economy still in the ICU and soaring inflation that has fuelled a cost-of-living crisis. It is believed that the new government will be unable to maintain the economic stability achieved by the caretaker government through unpopular decisions. He said that the new government would be unable to implement tax reforms, revive or sell lost state-run enterprises, and would not like to see further

energy price hikes as decided by the IMF. The split mandate will hinder political and economic stability. It will also be challenging to sign another agreement with the IMF, which is necessary to save the country from bankruptcy. Politicians would focus on horse trading, keeping allies happy, and dealing with the opposition as they were handled, while economic stability would be outside their list of priorities. He said that in this grim scenario, the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC) could play a crucial role in implementing necessary but unpopular decisions despite opposition from some quarters. The SIFC should be further strengthened to help steer the country out of problems, as expecting

politicians to deliver is self-deception. He observed that the SIFC must be the driving force behind structural reforms regardless of the interests of political and business elites. Aslam Khan said that inflation, rising energy prices, and costly imports have taken a toll on the masses and increased business costs. The ever-growing circular debt cripples power and gas companies, hindering infrastructure investment and service delivery and pushing masses to the wall. He said frequent price changes create uncertainty for consumers and businesses, hampering long-term planning and investment decisions. Extensive cross-subsidies and distorted pricing burden the government and fail to reach the most deserving.

Dependence on imported gas exposes the sector to volatile global energy markets. Then, on top of this, there is leakage and theft that are costing Pakistan billions annually and impacting supply. He said that SIFC should investigate the energy sector, as power and gas companies suffer from outdated infrastructure, poor governance, operational inefficiencies, and massive corruption, which lead to high costs and service disruptions. He added that the lack of competition stifles competitiveness and discourages efficient management practices, damaging the economy. Handling imported gas is often criticized as it only adds to the financial burden, but local exploration is still not a priority.

## Kashmiris living hellish life: APHC

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The All Parties Hurriyat Conference (APHC) has expressed its concern over the beleaguered situation prevailing in Indian illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir, regarding the deprivation of fundamental rights at the hands of Indian forces. According to Kashmir Media Service, the APHC spokesman in a statement issued in Srinagar said the people of the territory are living a hellish life under the shadow of a war. He deplored the strangulation of the freedom of expression,

arbitrary arrests house raid by Indian troops, paramilitary, NIA and SIA and denial of civil liberty at the hands of Indian forces and said that the territory had been swarmed by over one million Indian troops, converting it into a big hellish prison. The spokesman, referring to the resistance potential of the people, said the brave people of Kashmir, facing the wrath of the biggest military presence in the contemporary world, have thwarted and repelled all overt and covert conspiracies, including so-called 'Catch and Kill' and 'Operation All Out' launched as

a part of genocide of the people of Kashmir. Praising the valour and fortitude of the freedom-loving people of Kashmir, he said the systematic atrocities inflicted on the people has yielded nothing to India but has strengthened the resistance movement against Indian illegal occupation. The legitimate demand for right to self-determination has become the voice of the people of Kashmir now, affirmed the spokesman. He urged the United Nations to take serious cognizance of the Indian state terrorism and take appropriate measures

to stop genocide and human rights abuses in the territory which has been converted into a battleground by India. The spokesman added that it had become highly imperative to resolve the Kashmir dispute, which has been termed as a nuclear flash point, a grave threat to world peace and prosperity. The people of Kashmir have rendered innumerable sacrifices for the sacred cause of freedom and the World Body must take serious action to settle the Kashmir dispute in accordance with the United Nations resolutions.

## PR earns over Rs 6.84 mln in four years through saloons

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Railways has generated revenue worth over Rs 6.84 million through utilizing its 23 saloons and inspection coaches for commercial purposes, during the last four years. "At present, Pakistan Railways has only 23 saloons and inspection coaches with different dignitaries of the country who are entitled to use these saloons when needed," an official in the Ministry of Railways told APP. Giving the details, he said, "Two highly luxurious coaches have been allocated for the Prime Minister's Secretariat while four coaches have been allocated for the Minister for Railways, Secretary/Chairman of Railways, and another senior official in the ministry." The official said, "Only one saloon has been allocated to the federal government while one each has been allocated to the Governors of Sindh, Balochistan, Punjab, and the provincial governments." In addition, eight saloons had been allocated for the Railway Headquarters Lahore, in which one each would be marked to Chief Executive Officer/General Manager (BS-22), Additional General Manager BS-21, Inspector General Railway Police, Federal Government Inspector, and four saloons were allocated for Principal Officers, he added. The official said six saloons had been allocated for Divisional Superintendents of Peshawar, Rawalpindi, Quetta, Sukkur, Lahore, and Karachi. He said that the Principal Officers of Pakistan Railways were entitled to travel at these saloons or inspection coaches only when they were on duty. Above all, they said luxury saloons were also available for private travel on a rental basis. The official said the saloons were very luxurious and had two rooms, a bath, a dining area, and a kitchen like a tiny house on wheels with the availability of every facility. He said some of these saloons were inspection coaches and their back wall was made of glass from where officers could view the track and surrounding area. "Pakistan Railways officers are not entitled to use this facility other than duty and all these saloons are mostly 40-50 years old," he added. To a question, he said Pakistan Railways has launched an awareness campaign to educate the public about the risks associated with trespassing, crossing railway tracks, and carrying prohibited items such as gas cylinders, weapons without a license, cartridges, drugs, and daggers. "The campaign is launched on the directives of Minister for Railways Shahid Ashraf Tarar and Secretary Syed Mazhar Ali Shah which will not help the department to control accidents but also win the confidence of the passengers of the rail" he said. The official said, "Pakistan Railways will use all the social media platforms including print, electronic media, Twitter, Facebook, poster and pamphlets to create an awareness among the citizens about a safe train journey." He said the department has also asked all the divisional superintendents to ensure checking of luggage of passengers at entry points with scanners, metal detectors and walkthrough gates. The official said Pakistan Railways had always given importance to the safety of citizens and its passengers. "It has been directed to discourage and stop those passengers who are carrying prohibited products. It is suggested to install emergency doors and auto-lock doors in coaches in case of any emergency," he added. —APP

## BISP launches Whatsapp channel

ISLAMABAD: As a part of its efforts to provide authentic information about various pro-poor schemes, the international acclaimed Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) has launched a Whatsapp channel for facilitating masses through providing them details of all its initiatives and counter fake messages. According to an official source, the existing and intending beneficiaries had been urged to follow the official Whatsapp channel of BISP to get all the information about the programmes. The citizens can follow the BISP Whatsapp channel through this web link: <https://www.whatsapp.com/channel/0029VaL06D-J9Bb602I388U2I> Earlier the BISP, under the supervision of Chairperson BISP, Dr. Amjad Saqib has launched a modern call center in collaboration with the National Telecommunication Corporation for providing authentic information related to the programme and promptly addressing grievances. The individuals can contact the call center at 080026477 to register complaints or seek information about the program. —APP

## President writes to Swiss President

DNA

ISLAMABAD: In a letter to the President of the Swiss Confederation, President Dr Arif Alvi has sought his assistance in providing copies of archival documents about the life of Mr Ahmad Ali Jinnah (the brother of Quaid-i-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah) to Pakistan. The documents are currently in

possession of Zurich's City Archives and are a compilation of photographs, history and details of the life of Mr Ahmad Ali Jinnah and are related to the late Fatima Goepfert Jinnah, niece of the Founder of Pakistan. The President stated that given the status and importance of Quaid-i-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah, having access to these documents was a matter of national

value and interest for the Pakistani people. The President conveyed that First Lady, Mrs Samina Alvi, had visited Zurich Archives in January 2024, and after reading most of the documents, had taken a personal interest in the matter. The President has requested Switzerland to gift this historical document collection to the National Archives of Pakistan.

## Secy Infolauds Radio Pakistan's vital role

ISLAMABAD: Secretary Information and Broadcasting Shahera Shahid on Tuesday commended the vital role of Radio Pakistan in disseminating information and providing entertainment to people across the country, particularly those in remote areas. In her message on World Radio Day, the secretary of information recalled that the announcement of independence of Pakistan was made from Radio Pakistan. She emphasized the importance of appreciating the utility of Radio Pakistan. —APP

## Excise dept provides civic facilities

ISLAMABAD: Under ICT doorstep initiative, the Excise department on Tuesday is providing civic facilities to residents of federal capital to get their vehicle registration as well as access of various essential services at Kathnar Park. On the directives of Deputy Commissioner Islamabad, Irfan Nawaz Memon, the excise staff would be stationed at the park's parking lot from 3.00 to 5.00 pm, ICT Spokesman Dr Abdullah Tabassum said.

## 665 centers for Kanzul-Madaris Board exams

ISLAMABAD: A total of 665 examination centers have been established nationwide for the annual exams conducted by the Kanzul-Madaris Board, with 112,000 male and female students participating. According to the spokesman, 3,635 teachers are currently supervising at the examination centers. The annual examinations for 2024, organized by the education board of Dawate-Islami, began on Monday, February 12th. Students are participating in exams for Nazra Holy Quran, Tahfeez Al Quran, and Tajweed recitation. —APP

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## The view on Sunak's transgender jibe

Rishi Sunak needs to say sorry. Using transgender people as a political punchline in the Commons last week while the mother of murdered teenager Brianna Ghey was in parliament was grossly offensive. He should apologise rather than continue with self-exculpatory dodges. By failing to acknowledge his error – and make amends – Mr Sunak emphasises a lack of a connection with, curiosity about and compassion for others. Brianna's father was right when he called the prime minister's words degrading and dehumanising. He has asked for an apology. But it's hard to communicate with people if you haven't listened to them. These are grieving parents of a young person who was murdered, in part, because of her transgender identity. Expressing regret for his crass jibe is the least Mr Sunak can do. But, sadly, grubby electoral calculations appear more important to him than basic human decency. The prime minister has chosen to prevail in the court of public opinion he cares about most – the opinion of reactionary voters. Mr Sunak thinks he must win these over if he has any chance in the Wellingborough byelection, one of two on the same day this week. Hence his attempt on Monday to reach out to voters on GB News, a TV channel that trades in "anger-tainment". It's a desperate ploy. Wellingborough's Tory MP was forced to leave parliament after a recall was triggered, having been found to have bullied a staff member as well as indecently exposed himself to them in a hotel room. Backed by a Brexit-supporting multi-millionaire, GB News, like its prime-time star Nigel Farage, is remaking the Conservatives. A recent survey of Tory members by the ConservativeHome website found more than half now tune into GB News. The channel provides a home for divisive cultural issues. Nastiness is what it has primed viewers to crave. James Kanagasooriam from the pollster Focaldata last week wrote about how social attitudes explained today's tribal politics. His work suggests supporters of Mr Farage's Reform party are overwhelmingly anti-immigration and anti-net-zero. Seven out of eight believe white people are the forgotten victims of racism and that gender at birth cannot be changed. With Reform polling higher than the Lib Dems, Mr Sunak thinks dignity can take a back seat. He's wrong, as even some cabinet ministers publicly acknowledge. Such is the state of the Conservative party that it experiments with government by conspiracy theory, with "15-minute cities" influencing transport policy. Paranoia might animate GB News viewers, but it won't translate to the rest of the country. Polling suggests they want better public services and higher taxes for the rich. Paying a tax rate of just 23% on £2.2m of his "earnings and gains" last year surely lies behind why Mr Sunak can't connect with hard-up voters. Since Brianna's death, local Tory politicians have refrained from using wider transgender issues, which can be of legitimate public interest, for "culture war" attacks. Tragedy had awakened them from a partisan nightmare. Mr Sunak could have used this moment to appeal to what Abraham Lincoln called "the better angels of our nature". Instead he leaned into grievance stoking.



## Digital pound gains momentum amid risk concerns

Two years ago, the House of Lords looked into whether the Bank of England should issue digital pounds to be held in electronic wallets. Peers were unconvinced, asking if this wasn't "a solution in search of a problem". Last December, MPs on the Treasury select committee said the same thing. The government's response, however, was to tell the public to prepare for a "Bitcoin" to be in use by the end of the decade. Physical money has been around for thousands of years for good reason. Cash is convenient, reliable and anonymous. It seems unlikely that these advantages could be replicated online. State-backed e-cash might look inevitable to officials who say money is already digital, pointing to cryptocurrencies and smartphone payments. But central bank digital currencies (CBDCs) are different. A Bitcoin would shift the management burden from commercial banks to Threadneedle Street. Paul Tucker, a former deputy Bank governor, argued in his book *Global Discord* that the west is responding to China's digital renminbi, which potentially gives the state social control through direct access to banking transactions. Yet the UK government can already spy on commercial bank accounts. It doesn't do so without good reason. Brett Scott, a former broker and the author of *Cloudmoney*, accepts that there is a geopolitical rivalry. The difference, he says, is that private corporations can push their agendas harder in the west than in Beijing. During the pandemic, finance and technology firms accelerated moves towards a cashless society, which saw hitherto unimaginable levels of surveillance and data extraction. A world without notes and coins would hurt those least able to afford it. Poor and elderly people often prefer to budget with cash. A million UK adults don't have a bank account. The Royal Society of Arts calculated that going cash-free risked 10 million Britons losing control of their finances. The prospect of a cashless society also unnerved central banks. They worried about being dominated by commercial banks. Their answer: central banks should have their own digital currencies. However, if central banks pushed CBDCs, they risked destabilising the financial institutions they oversaw. Central banks can't go bankrupt. People would vote with their feet if they could effectively open accounts at the Bank of England. According to a 2019 survey of 23 central banks, 82% of respondents worried that digital currencies could cause runs on banks. To address concerns, caps on CBDC holdings have been suggested. But limits may put off many from using digital pounds. Mr Scott rightly compares the digitalisation of money to Uberisation – a process where convenience is traded for societal threats that older behaviours kept in check. That's why we need a debate rather than passively accepting state-backed digital money. Facebook's global cryptocurrency, Diem, was killed off by money-laundering concerns. But pervasive monitoring of spending could change society's psychology for the worse. Rightwing conspiracy theories have been launched by excitable talk about the potential to place conditions on who can use digital money, for what, and with whom. Technically feasible? Eventually. Politically realisable? Gradually. Desirable? Well, that depends on your perspective. Maybe in developing countries, a digital central bank currency could be used – as was attempted briefly in Ecuador – to stymie an overly powerful.

## Flying under the radar: China tightens grip on Uighurs

James M. Dorsey

However, they particularly affect Muslims who account for at least 50 per cent of Xinjiang's 26 million people. Activists charge the updates legalise various aspects of Chinese repression. A 2022 UN report concluded China was committing "serious human rights violations" in Xinjiang that may amount to crimes against humanity. "This law is the legalization of all those previous actions," said BekzatMaksutkhan, a Kazakhstan-based activist focused on ethnic Kazakhs in Xinjiang. The timing of the updated regulations and the paper is fortuitous, if not deliberate. Determined not to be sucked into escalating Middle Eastern tensions, China is betting

China's northwestern province of Xinjiang has taken advantage of the international community's focus on Gaza and US support for Israel, to tighten control of the region's Turkic Muslim Uighur population, reshape Islam, and engage in social engineering. As the international community grapples with the Gaza carnage, Xinjiang's authorities updated regulations designed to further isolate religious communities from their counterparts abroad, align their religious doctrine with Chinese Communist Party principles, and weaken separate ethnic identities. Intended to bring Xinjiang's regulatory framework in line with national Chinese laws and regulations adopted since 2014, the revised rules came into force this week, days after China published a white paper outlining the legal framework for its counterterrorism efforts. The regulations affect all religious groups, including Christians, Taoists, and Buddhists. However, they particularly affect Muslims who account for at least 50 per cent of Xinjiang's 26 million people. Activists charge the updates legalise various aspects of Chinese repression. A 2022 UN report concluded China was committing "serious human rights violations" in Xinjiang that may amount to crimes against humanity. "This law is the legalization of all those previous actions," said BekzatMaksutkhan, a Kazakhstan-based activist focused on ethnic Kazakhs in Xinjiang. The timing of the updated regulations and the paper is fortuitous, if not deliberate. Determined not to be sucked into escalating Middle Eastern tensions, China is betting that Arab and Muslim states will look the other way as it seeks to re-define Islam. In lockstep with Chinese efforts to reshape Islam, China's tightly controlled Internet has been flooded with virulent anti-Semitic comments since the outbreak of the Gaza war in October. China appears to see anti-Jewish hate speech as a means of fuelling anti-US and anti-Western sentiment in the Middle East and placating public opinion in the Middle East enraged by Western support for Israel. Anti-Jewish comments include frequent comparisons of Jews to Nazis and conspiracy theories that American Jews control power and wealth in the United States. In late January, Chinese social media influencer Zhou Zheng posted on his Haokan Video account a video titled "Never Believe What the Jews Say." Mr. Zhou asserted that "homeless" and "filthy rich Jews" prior to the Holocaust had betrayed Germany by seizing control of the German economy prior to the Holocaust. Mr. Zhou claimed that Jews had collaborated with Japan against China in World War II and in the mid-1800s incited Britain to invade China. China has reason to believe that its anti-Muslim and anti-Jewish campaigns are safe bets. Arab and Muslim nations remained silent, and in some cases even endorsed past repression of the Uighurs, including the incarceration of an estimated one million in reeducation prisons. The bet assumes that Arab and Muslim states, already disinclined to rock economic ties with China, will not want to

strain relations at a time of uncertainty over the US commitment to Middle East security. It also assumes that anti-Semitism will land on receptive ears because of the Gaza war, even if Arab media limit anti-Jewish as opposed to anti-Israeli speech. China further assumes that Arab autocrats, like Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman and United Arab Emirates President Mohammed bin Zayed, share with China an interest in controlling Islam and combatting political Islam. China's risk is that Arab autocrats' calculations could change in the wake of the Gaza war. Relations with China are likely to figure in recently revived US-Saudi defence cooperation talks. The talks were put on hold because of the war. Saudi Arabia hopes to ultimately walk away from the talks with a legally binding US commitment to the kingdom and the region's security, support for its ambitious civilian nuclear program, and a credible pathway to a resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in exchange for the establishment of diplomatic relations with Israel. No one expects Saudi Arabia to weaken its economic ties with China, its largest oil customer. Nor is the kingdom expected to publicly criticise the People's Republic. Even so, the United States will seek to ring-fence Saudi Arabia's relationship with China by limiting technology cooperation between the two countries and extracting a pledge that the kingdom will not host or endorse Chinese bases in the Gulf. The limitations would involve Chinese surveillance technology prevalent across China that has been deployed in Xinjiang to keep Uighurs in check. In 2022, Saudi Arabia inked a deal during a visit by Chinese President Xi Jinping with Huawei Technologies Co., the communications giant the US sees as a stalking horse for Chinese Communist Party influence. The deal involves cloud computing and the building of high-tech complexes in Saudi cities and a data center. In the past, Saudi Arabia has moved beyond looking the other way to endorse Uighur repression. China's state-owned CCTV quoted Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman as saying in 2019, "China has the right to take anti-terrorism and de-extremism measures to safeguard national security. Saudi Arabia respects and supports it and is willing to strengthen cooperation with China." The Chinese white paper asserts that China confronted a serious terrorism problem in the 2010s, but insists its crackdown on the Uighurs was in line with the rule of law and respect for human rights. Arguing that "religious extremism is not religion," the paper said that China "while striking hard at unlawful and criminal terrorist activities...attaches greater importance to the education and rehabilitation of victims of extremist teachings who have committed only minor offenses." The paper frames the revised regulations that govern religions, and the responsibilities of indigenous religious organizations and professionals. Home to 47 ethnic groups, Xinjiang's Ili Kazakh autonomous prefecture one of China's most ethnically diverse regions bordering on Ka-

zakhstan, has taken the regulations a step further with the adoption of measures to encourage ethnic groups to mingle, as part of Mr. Xi's goal to forge one national identity. The measures promote mixed housing, a principle applied in Singapore, and the creation of cultural parks and public areas that "promote...a social structure and community environment that embeds all ethnic groups" and showcase the region as part of the "Chinese nation." Uighurs have long complained that China has sought to dilute their presence in Xinjiang, their historic homeland, through labour transfer programs, by importing Han Chinese, and forcing birth control despite a 2021 official report that asserted a 1.67 per cent Uighur compounded annual growth rate in the past two decades. The updated regulations do not single out Muslims, but they are the prime target. They leave little room for doubt about their purpose. They aim to create a Chinese Islam and Muslim culture that is defined by the party rather than religious tradition and practice and scholarly debate. "Religious venues are to be, effectively, training grounds that promote the values of the Chinese Communist Party to the people" Human Rights Watch charged in a statement. Religious communities, professionals, and activities must "practice Core Socialist Values" and "adhere to our nation's orientation towards the Sincification of religion," the regulations stipulate. They specify that religion should not interfere with "clothing, weddings, funerals, and other ethnic customs." The regulations oblige religious groups to ensure that "interpretations of religious teachings and rules (are) in line with contemporary China's requirements for development and improvement, and in line with the outstanding traditional Chinese culture." The updates expand the 2014 rules that defined as "extremist" traditional Muslim attire, including men's beards and women's headscarves, and penalised possession of digital recordings of Qur'an recitations. The updates require religious schools to "operate...with Chinese characteristics" defined as "cultivating patriotic religious talents" and "correctly interpreting religious doctrine." Legitimising a massive mosque remodelling campaign in recent years, the updates demand that "religious activity sites that are newly built or renovated, expanded, or rebuilt...reflect Chinese characteristics and style in areas such as their architecture, sculptures, paintings, and decorations." A 2020 Australian Strategic Policy Institute study concluded that two-thirds of Xinjiang's had already been altered, often removing domes and minarets. Human Rights Watch reported last year that Sincising mosques had expanded beyond Xinjiang into other Chinese provinces. China's efforts to Sincise Islam have so far stopped short of altering doctrine. Also, China has not detailed what a "correct interpretation" would be beyond a reference to patriotism. Tackling the doctrine may be a red line for Arab and Muslim nations that China does not want to cross.

## Ethnic cleansing now the most likely outcome in Gaza

Chris Doyle

This Israeli threat escalated at the tail end of yet another fruitless Antony Blinken mission to the region. The chief American diplomat has made five trips to the Middle East since Oct. 7 but has come away empty-handed every time. If he feels embarrassed at the way Benjamin Netanyahu manhandles him, he has been trying hard not to show it. After yet another bruising encounter with the Israeli prime minister, Blinken was both late and tired when he appeared for his press conference. While Blinken said that

Will an Israeli assault on Rafah be the final bloody slaughter to cap the destruction of Gaza? More than 1.3 million Palestinians, including 610,000 children, have been forcibly corralled into the ever-shrinking, unsanitary hellhole of this small city on the Gaza border with Egypt. They now await their fate. Most have been displaced as many as five or six times in what is now comfortably the largest forced displacement in Palestinian history. Many are eating grass or animal feed and drinking foul water. Rafah is the last place of semi-refugee in Gaza, but also the primary gateway for the lifesaving aid that permits this ghostly Palestinian existence to continue – for now. This Israeli threat escalated at the tail end of yet another fruitless Antony Blinken mission to the region. The chief American diplomat has made five trips to the Middle East since Oct. 7 but has come away empty-handed every time. If he feels embarrassed at the way Benjamin Netanyahu manhandles him, he has been trying hard not to show it. After yet another bruising encounter with the Israeli prime minister, Blinken was both late and tired when he appeared for his press conference. While Blinken said that Hamas' response to a US-Egyptian-Qatari proposal left possibilities for a deal, Netanyahu crushed all hope once again by stating this was "delusional." Instead of a deal on the release of hostages and a ceasefire, Palestinians were left contemplating the prospect of yet more mass carnage. The dominant question for all of them is: where to next? Israeli spokespeople just cannot or will not answer that simple and obvious question. Netanyahu has instructed the Israeli military to provide him with options on this. Where can the Palestinian civilians in Rafah go? Do they get given some corridor to travel north, to the center of Gaza? But where is safe? The roads are bombed and cratered. The Gaza Strip is littered with unexploded ordnance and buildings on the brink of collapse. Humanitarian agencies have no means of preparing safe shelters in these areas. Any major attack on Rafah would be hammering yet another nail into the already well-nailed coffins of the hostages left in Gaza. Most Israelis have come to the conclusion that Netanyahu cares not a jot for their welfare. When might this happen? This is not clear. No doubt Israel will further torture those in Rafah by keeping them guessing. Based on previous experience, the Israeli army will give them

a two-hour warning. Israeli forces are bombing Rafah as it is, so it is not safe even now. Egypt has reportedly warned Hamas that Israel is giving it two weeks to give up the remaining hostages before starting operations in Rafah. If there is to be an evacuation of hundreds of thousands from this area, even two weeks may not be enough time. Remember, thousands more are now injured and sick than when many were forced to evacuate the north last year. Egypt has feared this moment, not just since October, but for years. Egyptian leaders know full well that Israel has dreamed of dumping Gaza or the Palestinians of Gaza on Egypt. The desire to wash Israel's bloodied hands of its responsibility for their fate is clear. Egypt has threatened to suspend its peace agreement with Tel Aviv if this goes ahead. The dominant question for Palestinians in Rafah is: where to next? The Israelis cannot or will not answer that simple question. A few mild expressions of concern from American and European leaders have made their way into the public domain. The EU's foreign policy chief, Josep Borrell, stated that an Israeli military offensive on Rafah "would lead to an unspeakable humanitarian catastrophe and grave tensions with Egypt." German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock said: "The people in Gaza cannot disappear into thin air." British Foreign Secretary David Cameron said he is "deeply concerned about the prospect of a military offensive in Rafah." It hardly adds up to serious pressure on Israel. But what about US President Joe Biden? He has just stated that Israel has gone "over the top." Pressure is growing, including from within his own administration, to go much further and read the riot act. Netanyahu is treating him with contempt and needs to be shown that he cannot get away with it. The US has a myriad of options at its disposal to display serious displeasure if Biden has the courage. Statements will not be enough. They never have been. International leaders need to rid themselves of the delusion that Netanyahu has ever wanted any form of deal with Hamas. He has always pushed for what he deems to be "total victory." Absent a massive amount of coordinated American and European pressure, which has never looked like materializing, Netanyahu has zero political or personal interest in harnessing himself to an agreement that sees the survival of Hamas, an entity he has sworn to destroy.

The general Israeli public would not trust a deal with Hamas, let alone Bibi's base. Total victory is the only scenario where Netanyahu might conceivably survive politically. Only if this consummate, if highly slippery, political operator can turn to his critics and proclaim that he has delivered the end of Hamas as a threat does he have a chance. So far, he has had few trophies, with hardly any senior Hamas leaders taken out, and with 134 hostages still unaccounted for. But world leaders should not be surprised at how Israel is conducting its destruction of Gaza. If they had listened to the Israeli leaders, including Netanyahu, they would see that they are delivering on their promises in terms of the scale of the onslaught. Many have explicitly said that they want to smash Hamas everywhere in Gaza, so therefore they cannot leave four Hamas battalions in Rafah. Many have sworn to depopulate Gaza or at least thin out the population. Israeli Agriculture Minister Avi Dichter said that the military campaign in Gaza was explicitly designed to force the mass displacement of Palestinians. In a television interview last November, he proclaimed: "We are now rolling out the Gaza Nakba." Remarkably, many of the same Israeli politicians promising a new Nakba remain in denial about the first one in 1948. One reason Rafah is even an option is because major global powers have shamefully ignored the rulings of the International Court of Justice. Israel has to return to the court by Feb. 23 to report on its progress in adhering to those rulings. Let us be clear. A major assault on Rafah alone would almost certainly breach one, if not two or even three, of those rulings: the first to avoid genocide, the second to facilitate humanitarian aid and the third to preserve and not destroy evidence of genocide. But alongside genocide, what Palestinians also fear is the ethnic cleansing of Gaza. How long will it be before Israel creates a breach in the Egyptian border wall and drives thousands into the Sinai? It would be a dream fulfilled to expel hundreds of thousands. For some, this may have seemed far-fetched when many observers, including myself, pitched this as a plausible scenario back in October. Frankly, it is fast becoming the most likely outcome.

—Sourced by Arab news.



## Briefs

## PPP decides not to be part of govt

FROM PAGE 01

The young politician said that only the PML-N had invited the PPP to form a coalition government. As the PPP is not in a position to form the government in the Centre, Bilawal said, it would not be interested in taking federal ministries in the setup. "PPP won't be a part of a government like PDM II. We don't want to see chaos in the country or perpetual crisis in the country," he said while setting aside the perception of re-election. Instead of inclusion in the PML-N's government, Bilawal said his party will seek key posts like Senate chairman and NA speaker, as it has the right to seek positions on the constitutional posts. Revealing the reason behind backing the rival party's candidate for the coveted post, Bilawal said that the PPP decided to support the PML-N's candidate for the premiership to ensure political instability in the country.

## Nawaz Sharif nominates...

FROM PAGE 01

Meanwhile, PPP co-chairperson Asif Ali Zardari has said that he and other political leaders gathered with him have decided to form the government together. "We will take Pakistan out of difficulty," he said, adding that reconciliation was also needed and PTI was included in that process. "This is not that we want that PTI does not enter reconciliation. It should and every other political force should, come and talk with us. Our economic and defence agenda should be common. We should move forward with our commonalities and then make the house of Sharif and others successful so we can make Pakistan successful."

## UN chief urges Pakistan...

FROM PAGE 01

Pakistan," his spokesperson, Stephane Dujarric, said in response to a question at the regular noon briefing in New York. "The secretary general urges the authorities and political leaders to maintain a calm atmosphere, and to reject and refrain from all forms of violence and avoid any actions that could increase or inflame tensions." Other countries including US, UK and EU have also demanded Pakistan to probe the claims regarding election fraud.

## Shutter down strike against...

From Page 01  
Pashunkhwa Milli Awami Party's protest demonstration and sit-in persisted in front of the District Election Commission office, resulting in the closure of surrounding roads and suspending the train service. The closure of entrances and exits to Chaman city further exacerbated the situation. Abbasin Khan Achakzai, the nominated candidate for Pashunkhwa Milli Awami Party, alleged that their victory had been manipulated into defeat through the use of fraudulent tactics. The strike and protests highlight the deep concerns over the fairness and transparency of the electoral process in Balochistan.

## PTI to join hands with MWM...

FROM PAGE 01

to approach all political parties to continue the party's political struggle for democratic values with the exception of the PML-N, MQM-P and the PPP," Hasan added. Other decisions ratified by the party founder include the nomination of Ali Amin Gandapur as the chief minister for KP, the holding of intra-party elections and the appointment of Amir Dogar as the party's chief whip in the National Assembly, Hasan added.

## PCB chairman Naqvi unveils PSL 9 trophy

PSL 9 will commence from February 17 at Gaddafi Stadium in Lahore

## SPORTS DESK

Lahore: Chairman of the Pakistan Cricket Board Mohsin Naqvi revealed the trophy for the 9th edition of the Pakistan Super League (PSL) today. The trophy unveiling ceremony took place at the Polo Ground, Jilani Park. Mohsin Naqvi received a warm welcome upon his arrival at the ceremony, where he interacted with franchise owners and team captains. The event commenced with the rendition of the National Anthem, followed by the Polo Stars parading onto the ground with the national flag, the PSL flag, and the flags representing all participating teams. Mohsin Naqvi, accompanied by franchise owners and captains, unveiled the trophy for the 9th edition of PSL. Provincial Advisor Wahab Riaz, Commissioner Lahore, Chief Operating Officer of PCB Salman Naseer, former cricketers, and a large gathering of cricket enthusiasts graced the occasion. Speaking to the media, Mohsin Naqvi expressed optimism for an exciting tournament ahead. He stated



that preparations were underway, with teams beginning to arrive in Lahore for the tournament starting on February 17. "We are fully prepared for the inaugural match, and we anticipate a thrilling tournament for the people of Pakistan," remarked Chairman PCB. He emphasized the board's commitment to ensuring PSL 9's success, with daily briefings and comprehensive efforts to enhance all aspects of the event.

"We are dedicated to leaving no stone unturned in making PSL 9 a grand success," he added. Mohsin Naqvi acknowledged ongoing changes within the PCB, noting that significant decisions had been made recently. "We are striving to elevate PSL into a premier tournament," he affirmed. While addressing past challenges and weaknesses, he assured transparency in addressing them. "Insha'Allah, the results will be evident, and nothing

will be concealed," he concluded. The trophy was named "The Orion Trophy" and will be a source of motivation for all the teams participating in the tournament, the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) said in a press release. "Orion, in various mythologies and cultures, is often associated with a prominent constellation located in the celestial equator. The constellation is easily recognisable by three bright stars forming

Orion's Belt and is visible from both hemispheres, making it one of the most well-known and easily identifiable star patterns in the night sky," the PCB added. "Made from pure silver and coated in white gold, the elegant trophy exudes prestige. Each detail is plated with white gold, adding grace that signifies the excellence of the Pakistan Super League. With the investment of 900+ hours of non-stop work and hand placement of 18,000 stones, this marvel stands tall and proud." PSL 9 will be held in four cities - Karachi, Lahore, Multan and Rawalpindi - with the final of the event taking place at the National Bank Stadium in Karachi on March 18. Like the previous edition, the PSL 9 will take place in two legs with Multan Cricket Stadium and Lahore's Gaddafi Stadium hosting 14 matches between them from February 17 to 27. The action then moves to Rawalpindi's Pindi Cricket Stadium and Karachi's National Bank Stadium, where 16 matches will be held from February 28 to March 12. The event will then move to Karachi in its entirety for the playoffs.

## Imran picks Gandapur for KP CM slot

FROM PAGE 01

number of cases. Khan, whose party secured 84 seats in the KP Assembly, is in a pole position to form the government. In the National Assembly, PTI-backed candidates emerged as the largest group with over 90 seats followed by the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), which won 75 seats. The PTI founder also brushed off the possibility of forming a coalition government with PML-N, Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) and MutahidaQaumi Movement-Pakistan (MQM-P). However, Khan said that he had directed his party leaders to hold talks with other parties except these three. "Those who have been brought [to rule] are the biggest money launderers," he alleged.

## SC rejects Punjab govt's...

FROM PAGE 01

express solidarity with the Christian community. The interim Punjab government had also ordered a high-level inquiry to probe the burning and demolition of properties belonging to the local Christian community in the neighbourhood. "I feel ashamed after seeing the report about the Jaranwala incident," CJP Isa said. Questioning the additional advocate general for Punjab, the chief justice asked when the Jaranwala incident took place and how many people were caught so far. In his response, he said: "Jaranwala incident took place on August 16, 2023, 22 cases were registered, 304 people were arrested. [At least] 18 out of the 22 FIR challans have been cleared."

## PM Kakar summoned..

FROM PAGE 01

asked the court to adjourn the hearing as the attorney general was unavailable. However, the request was rejected. Justice Kayani further remarked that the death penalty should be awarded to those involved in enforced disappearances. "People involved [enforced disappearance] should be given the death penalty twice," remarked Justice Kayani. He then asked the caretaker PM to appear in person on Monday at 10am to explain why a case should not be registered against him. However, the advocate general pleaded to the court that they required more time in the case. But Justice Kayani refused to entertain the government's plea.

## Pakistan expresses...

FROM PAGE 01

survivors is closing. Hundreds of rescuers have used their bare hands, shovels and heavy earth-moving equipment for nearly a week looking for those buried since Tuesday's landslide hit the mountainous Masara village on Mindanao island. More than a dozen bodies were pulled from the mud on Monday with 51 people still missing, including mine workers and villagers, according to official figures released by the municipal government. "It is almost a week after the incident, and ... we are assuming that no one is alive there," Edward Macapili, spokesman for the Davao de Oro provincial disaster office, told the media. "There is already a foul smell in the area now, so there's a need to fast-track the retrieval."

## PSX takes massive...

FROM PAGE 01

KSE-100 Shares Index hit 59,613.31, experiencing a decline of 1,391 points or 2.28% in intraday trading compared to the previous day's close of 61,065 points. The session started shaky, with OGDC and PPL plunging on IMF tariff concerns, dragging the index down over 2%. Uncertainty surrounding government formation added to the selling pressure. As soon as the script flipped, investors jumped on the battered stocks at discounted prices. The index clawed its way back, surging over 1,600 points from its intraday low and closing marginally higher.

## Osaka beats Garcia in Qatar to avenge AO loss

The omens did not look great for Osaka on Monday as Garcia won her first 11 service points but she knuckled down and finally broke her opponent when she was serving for the set to level at 5-5. She then fended off two break points before wrapping up the set with a love break

DOHA: Naomi Osaka put last week's first round defeat in Abu Dhabi behind her with a straight sets defeat of 15th seed Caroline Garcia at the Qatar Open. This was former world number one Osaka's second win from the five matches she has played since returning last month after a 15-month time out on maternity leave from the tour. The Japanese four-time Grand Slam winner was exacting a small measure of revenge on Garcia with this 7-5, 6-4

success in Doha as it was the French star Garcia who knocked her out in the first round of last month's Australian Open. And she reckons she is beginning to find her stride again after becoming a mum. "I feel like I'm a much better player now. In Australia, my returns weren't as good and I don't feel like I was as focused as I am now," said the match winner. On coming back physically after pregnancy she added: "It's been a really tough journey. I felt like I was chasing myself in the past and it honestly wasn't really healthy to do. "After giving birth, I feel I trained really quickly, I'm a very big perfectionist and it's tough when you don't see results as quickly. I felt like I was driving a car that wasn't mine. So my body didn't feel like the body that I was used to." It was in that journey I felt like I learned how to love myself as I am now. I got to wake up every day and see my daughter and know that I was strong enough for her to come into this world." Osaka's next assignment on her comeback trail is a second round date with Petra Martic of Croatia. This is the second time the pair have crossed swords but it comes a decade after their first encounter. A 16-year-old Osaka prevailed on that occasion, a final qualifying round match at Stanford in 2014.

The omens did not look great for Osaka on Monday as Garcia won her first 11 service points but she knuckled down and finally broke her opponent when she was serving for the set to level at 5-5. She then fended off two break points before wrapping up the set with a love break. A further break of serve in the last game of the match earned her the pick-me-up win she needed after her early knockout a week ago. "Every time I had a break point opportunity, I was very accurate on my shot," said Garcia. "And I was able to take this opportunity in Australia and today I was not." "The same as Australia, it was played on very few points alone. Those points she was a better player today." Two-time defending champion Iga Swiatek began her quest for a third straight title in emphatic fashion with a 6-1, 6-1 second round win over Romania's Sorana Cirstea. "I feel like it was a really solid match. I kind of felt like I was able to keep my focus from the beginning to the end and then after every game I was more confident and I could even relax a little bit more at the end" the world number one said. Also through was sixth seed Marketa Vondrousova after her 6-2, 0-6, 6-4 defeat of Belgian Greet Minnen. - Agencies

## Joseph receives prestigious ICC player of the month

DUBAI: West Indies pacer Shamar Joseph was voted the ICC Men's Player of the Month for January 2024 on Tuesday. Joseph beat England batter Ollie Pope and Australia seamer Josh Hazlewood to claim the first men's monthly award for the new calendar year. "Not many players have made a more impressive start to their international career than Shamar Joseph, with the West Indies quick rising from relative obscurity to the cusp of stardom after just two matches," the ICC said in a press release. "It didn't take long for Joseph to make his mark on debut in the first Test against Australia as the 24-year-old revived memories of West Indies quicks of yesteryear when he claimed the prized wicket of the world's No.2 ranked batter Steve Smith with his very first delivery. "Joseph picked up another four Australian scalps on his way to sensational figures of 5-94 in his first Test appearance in Adelaide and backed up this effort with decent scores of 36 and 15 coming into bat for his side at No.11. "Somehow, Joseph produced an even better performance during the West Indies' upset victory over Australia in the second Test in Brisbane. He produced a spell for the ages to collect figures of 7-68 that helped the Caribbean side to their first Test triumph in Australia since 1997." Over two Tests, Joseph scored 57 runs at a decent average of 28.50, having also bagging 13 wickets at an impressive average of 17.30. - Agencies

## Young tennis player Zainab Ali dies during tournament

DNA

ISLAMABAD: With deep sorrow and profound grief, the Pakistan Tennis Federation conveys that Miss Zainab Ali Naqvi - a young tennis player who had come to Islamabad from Karachi to participate in the ITF Juniors Tournaments, passed away last night on 12th February 2024 in Islamabad. Mr. Aisam-ul-Haq Qureshi President-PTF, Senator Salim Saifullah Khan, Ex-President-PTF, PTF Council members and the tennis fraternity at large offer their heartfelt condolences to the bereaved family. May Allah bless the departed soul with eternal peace in Jannah-ul-Firdaus, Aameen.

## SA fightback after Ravindra impresses in Hamilton

CAPE TOWN: All-rounder Rachin Ravindra bagged figures of three for 33 as South Africa slipped to 220 for six on the first day of the second Test at Seddon Park on Tuesday. The Proteas won the toss and decided to bat on a bright, sunny day in Hamilton. Ruan de Swardt, who was 55 not out, and Shaun von Berg, unbeaten on 34, will resume on day two after notching up 70 for the seventh wicket as the visitors look to avoid becoming the first South Africa team to suffer a Test series loss to New Zealand. De Swardt, featuring in his second Test, scored his maiden half century with a four through the covers in the final hour of play and he and von Berg, making his debut at the age of 37, negotiated the second new ball to make

it to stumps. The Black Caps had made three changes to their team to introduce a four-pronged seam attack and two of them had an early impact. After Matt Henry had removed Clyde Forstner for a golden duck in the second over of the day, debutant quick Will O'Rourke made Neil Brand his first Test victim when he trapped the South Africa skipper in front for 25. At 37, Neil Wagner is at the other end of the experience spectrum and he struck next, a trademark short ball sending Raynard van Tonder back for 32 after a diving catch in the gully from Tom Latham. Ravindra, the ICC's Emerging Player of the Year and scorer of a double century in the first Test, took over to tear the heart out of the middle order

with his left-arm spin. Zubayr Hamza had made 20 when a wild slog sent the ball looping up to backward point where Mitchell Santner, dropped from the team but on the field as a substitute, took the catch. Keegan Peterson followed cheaply two overs later when he edged a Ravindra delivery to Tim Southee in the slips, and David Bedingham (39) was unfortunate to exit when the ball came off his toe, onto his bat and straight to the short-leg fielder. O'Rourke's inclusion did little to reduce the gap in experience between the two sides after the South Africa Cricket decided to send a weakened team to New Zealand and prioritise their financially lucrative Twenty20 competition. -Agencies

## Record-setting West Indies beat Australia in 3rd T20

Andre Russell's rapid 71 in record stand guides tourists to victory in final T20

## OUR CORRESPONDENTS

PERTH: Andre Russell and Sherfane Rutherford put on the biggest sixth-wicket partnership in a Twenty20 international to steer the West Indies past Australia by 37 runs in their third and final clash on Tuesday. Both men crunched quick-fire half-centuries to propel the visitors to 220-6 in Perth with Australia managing just 183-5 in reply. David Warner top-scoring on 81 in his last appearance for Australia at home. Chase, one of the two changes West Indies made for the final game, derailed Australia's pursuit with the wickets of Warner and Josh Inglis in one over to end up

with 2-19. "It's a very good feeling to come here and get a win," West Indies captain Rowman Powell said after losing the series 2-1. "The boys showed some heart and courage. We had good plans through the three games but execution let us down." Australia fast bowler Xavier Bartlett, who impressed in his ODI debut against the West Indies, continued to prosper in white-ball cricket by getting openers Johnson Charles and Kyle Mayers in his debut T20 after Josh Hazlewood was rested for the final game. Charles edged Bartlett's fifth delivery to wicketkeeper Inglis and Mayers played a short ball back onto his stumps in the pacer's second over. Zam-

pa had Chase (37) clean bowled soon after the batting powerplay and when Powell edged Aaron Hardie behind the wickets, the West Indies were stuttering at 79-5 in the ninth over. Russell and Rutherford

didn't get bogged down against the pace and revived things with a strong partnership, raising the best-ever sixth-wicket stand in a T20 international by contributing an aggressive 139 runs off just 67 balls.

Zampa's penultimate over went for 28 with Russell clubbing four sixes and a four and the leg-spinner finished with 1-65 - the most expensive figures by an Australia in a T20. Russell, who hit seven sixes and four boundaries, finally holed out at mid-off in the last over of fast bowler Spencer Johnson (1-49). Warner, possibly playing his last home international as he plans to retire from all forms of cricket after the T20 World Cup in June, gave Australia a fast start by completing his half century off 25 balls. The introduction of spinners Akeal Hosen and Chase halted Australia's pursuit, with captain Mitchell Marsh hol-

ing out to Hosen after making 16 and Warner thumped Chase straight to Russell at deep mid-wicket. Glenn Maxwell, who made a brisk unbeaten century in the second T20, was clean bowled by Romario Shephard with a superb leg stump yorker for 12, before Tim David made a rapid unbeaten 41 off 19 balls and reduced the margin of defeat. Glenn Maxwell made a record-equalling fifth T20 century for Australia earlier in the series. "Thought we were in a great position, went for the kill to try and get a few more wickets," Marsh said. "We were on the wrong end of it, fair play to West Indies."





## Briefs

## Russia warns of 'tough response' if West seizes assets

MOSCOW : Russia warned the West on Tuesday that Moscow would be very tough if the United States and European Union seized hundreds of billions of dollars worth of Russian assets. After President Vladimir Putin sent troops into Ukraine in 2022, the United States and its allies prohibited transactions with Russia's central bank and finance ministry, blocking around \$300 billion of sovereign Russian assets in the West. The EU on Monday adopted a law to set aside windfall profits made on frozen Russian central bank assets, it said on Monday, in a first concrete step towards the bloc's aim of using the money to finance the reconstruction of Ukraine. "This is theft. It's the appropriation of something that doesn't belong to you," Russian Foreign Ministry Spokeswoman Maria Zakharova told Sputnik radio, news media reported. Zakharova said the response from Moscow would be "extremely tough" as Russia felt it was essentially dealing with thieves. "Considering that our country has qualified this as theft, the attitude will be towards thieves," Zakharova said. "Not as political manipulators, not as overplayed technologists, but as thieves." —DNA

## Ethiopian forces accused of civilian massacre

ADDIS ABABA : Ethiopia's government security forces killed at least 45 civilians in a massacre in Amhara state in late January, the independent state-affiliated Ethiopian Human Rights Commission (EHRC) said Tuesday. A statement said the EHRC had confirmed "the identity of at least 45 civilians who were extrajudicially killed by government security forces for allegedly 'supporting Fano'," an ethnic Amhara militia. "However, it can be assumed that the number of victims is even higher," it underscored. The killings in the town of Merawi follow months of clashes last year between Ethiopia's military and Fano, a "self-defence" militia. The fighting prompted the federal government to impose a state of emergency in August that was extended by four months by lawmakers this month. The United States last week said it was deeply concerned by reports of "targeted civilian killings" in Merawi and called for an independent investigation. The Amhara violence reignited concerns about the stability of Ethiopia months after a peace agreement was signed in November 2022 to end a two-year conflict in the neighbouring region of Tigray.—APP

## UN alarmed by escalating violence in DR Congo

UNITED NATIONS : The UN Security Council said it was concerned by "escalating violence" in the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo on Monday, condemning in a statement the offensive launched earlier this month by M23 rebels near the city of Goma. Clashes have intensified recently between the M23 — among the strongest of dozens of armed groups roaming the country's troubled east — and the Congolese army. The DRC, the UN and Western countries say Rwanda is supporting the rebels in a bid to control vast mineral resources, an allegation Kigali denies. Council members, who met Monday to discuss the issue, "reiterated their condemnation of all armed groups operating in the country. They expressed concern about the escalation of violence and a sustained tension in the region," according to a statement read by Guyana ambassador Carolyn Rodrigues-Birkett.—DNA

## Erdogan calls on conscientious countries to support UNRWA

Recep Tayyip Erdogan stresses need for Israel to recognize independent Palestinian state based on 1967 borders, urges support for refugees

## NEWS DESK

ANKARA : Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan on Tuesday urged all "conscientious" countries to protect the UN agency for Palestinian refugees or UNRWA, which he said provided a "lifeline for 6 million refugees in Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, and Palestine." Speaking at the World Governments Summit in Dubai, the United Arab Emirates, Erdogan said, "I would like to express our regret for the growing character assassinations on the United Nations Agency for Palestinian Refugees," as about a dozen of its staffers have been accused of involvement in the Oct. 7 Hamas attack on Gaza. The agency has already ordered an investigation of the allegations, but numerous countries have cut off its funding, risking a humanitarian crisis. Looking at the deep causes of the Gaza conflict, Er-

dogan said: "Every step taken will remain incomplete unless an independent, sovereign, and geographically integrated Palestinian state is established within the 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital." "If Israel wants lasting peace, it must stop pursuing its expansionist ambitions and accept the existence of an independent Palestinian state," said Erdogan. He said that Israel, viewing itself as outside international law, has maintained its policies of "occupation, usurpation, destruction, and massacre for decades." "We will never leave our Palestinian brothers abandoned, helpless, or alone," he added. Erdogan arrived in the United Arab Emirates early Tuesday as part of a two-day visit to attend the summit. He will address the three-day summit, with this year's theme "Shaping Future Governments," which is bringing together state and government officials and representatives of

international organizations, the private sector, academia, civil society, think tanks, the media and businesspeople from various countries. Since a cross-border incursion by the Palestinian group Hamas on Oct. 7, killing some 1,200 people, the Israeli offensive into Gaza has killed more than 28,000 people and caused mass destruction and shortages of necessities. The Israeli war on Gaza has pushed 85% of the territory's population into internal displacement amid acute shortages of food, clean water and medicine, while 60% of the enclave's infrastructure has been damaged or destroyed, according to the UN. Israel stands accused of genocide at the International Court of Justice, which in an interim ruling in January ordered Tel Aviv to stop genocidal acts and take measures to guarantee that humanitarian assistance is provided to civilians in Gaza.

## Canada says Israeli assault on Rafah would be devastating

OTTAWA : Canada on Monday joined those urging Israel not to mount a ground invasion against Gaza's southern Rafah neighborhood, saying such an attack would be devastating for Palestinians. Israel says it plans to assault Rafah, the last relatively safe place in the enclave, to which more than 1 million displaced people have fled. The office of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu wants the military to evacuate Rafah and destroy four Hamas battalions it says are deployed there. A woman carries the body of a Palestinian baby, killed in Israeli strikes, amid the ongoing conflict between Israel and the Palestinian Islamist group Hamas, at Abu Youssef Al-Najjar hospital, in Rafah, in the southern Gaza Strip. "I'm very concerned about what's going on in Gaza, in particular in Rafah. The operation would be devastating and is devastating to Palestinians and all those seeking refuge," Foreign Minister Melanie Joly told reporters. "What the Netanyahu government is asking them to do, which is to leave again, is unacceptable. Because they have nowhere to go and so that's why we need right now for the violence to stop," she said, reiterating Canadian calls for a sustainable ceasefire and the release of hostages. Joly said she would be holding talks with US Secretary of State Antony Blinken in Washington on Tuesday. Prime Minister Justin Trudeau says Israel has the right to defend itself after the Hamas assault on Oct. 7, but has gradually hardened his tone as the civilian death toll in Gaza has mounted.—Agencies

## SIFC facilitates incoming foreign investors: Masood

## WEB DESK

WASHINGTON DC : "The economy of Pakistan is expanding and growing. Scale up your investments and reap huge dividends of a growing economy with investment friendly regime in the country," said Pakistan's Ambassador to the United States. "We have established Special Investment Facilitation Council to fast track approvals, eliminate red-tapism and provide all possible facilitation to potential investors," he said. "We have prioritized IT, agriculture, energy and extractive industry as preferred areas for investments but that does not limit foreign investors to explore other sectors of economy and enjoy same privileges and incentive package which is available in our priority areas," he continued. Ambassador

Masood Khan made these remarks during his virtual meeting with the leadership of Pakistan American Association of Greater Houston, the Pakistan American Association of Texas, and Pakistan American Community of Atlanta. Highlighting comparative advantage available to US investors, Masood Khan pointed out presence of around one million expatriates in the US who were the real bridge-builders between the two countries; the existing profitable business ventures of around 80 US companies in Pakistan—mostly Fortune 500 companies; the existing investment portfolios of Pak-US citizens and the excess capacity which was available to be invested back in Pakistan for undertaking profitable business ventures. The Ambassador emphasized that Special Investment Facilitation Council was effectively addressing is-

suces which were faced by the investors in past. He urged the participants to create awareness about SIFC among Pak-US business community enabling them to take advantage of the facility. "Pakistani American investors have proven success stories in various areas including hospitality, healthcare, diagnostics, and pharmaceuticals. We encourage you to scale up your investments in Pakistan," said the ambassador. Masood Khan said that the Embassy of Pakistan and the four Consulates were creating synergies and connecting Pak-US business community for greater economic activity. "We are trying to connect all chambers of commerce under one umbrella to augment their efforts for the promotion of trade and investment in the country," he said. The Ambassador also said that a virtual summit of all chambers of com-

merce and business organizations would be held soon to be followed by an in-person investment seminar. He underscored the importance of an up-to-date database of Pak-US business community to be shared with SIFC for better outreach and facilitation. Discussing sister-state arrangements with various US states and metropolises, Masood Khan observed that better university linkages would also be instrumental in promoting bilateral cooperation in agriculture sector. The participants briefed the Ambassador about their respective organizations and presented various suggestions to streamline and strengthen business activities and investment. Ambassador Masood Khan appreciated the contributions being made by the participants towards enhancing economic activities between Pakistan and the United States.

## Kremlin, Musk deny Russian army using Starlink

KYIV, Ukraine: The Kremlin on Monday rejected Ukraine's claims that Russian troops fighting on the frontline were using Starlink Internet terminals. Kyiv's GUR military intelligence agency said it had evidence that the terminals were being used on a "systematic" basis by Russian troops, accusing Moscow of "smuggling" them into the country. Starlink, owned by Elon Musk's SpaceX, is a network of satellites in low Earth orbit that can provide Internet to remote locations, or areas that have had normal communications infrastructure disabled. "My companies have probably done more to undermine Russia than anything," Musk said during a streamed session on X, formerly known as Twitter, criticizing US funding to Ukraine. Musk maintained that SpaceX had taken away two thirds of Russian space launch business and that "Starlink has overwhelmingly helped Ukraine." "It cannot be officially supplied here and is not officially supplied here," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters on Monday. "Accordingly, it cannot be officially used here in any way," he added. The system is not active in Russia, meaning even a device inside Russia could not connect. But Kyiv has accused Russian troops of using the device across the frontlines in Ukraine. "Starlink is freely available in Russia. Compared to last year, now the use of Starlink in the Russian army on the front line has become more systematic," GUR spokesman Andriy Yusov said Monday on state television. He said it would not "reveal all the details" of its claims. Ukraine itself has widely used Starlink to ensure communications and connectivity for its troops during the two-year war. Musk called reports SpaceX had sold Starlink terminals to Russia "categorically false" in a post on his X social media platform. "To the best of our knowledge, no Starlinks have been sold directly or indirectly to Russia," he added.—Agencies

## Thai ex-PM Thaksin to be released: Justice minister

BANGKOK : Jailed former Thai prime minister Thaksin Shinawatra is to be freed, the kingdom's justice minister said Tuesday, possibly as soon as the weekend — just six months after returning from 15 years of self-imposed exile. The controversial billionaire, twice elected premier and ousted in a 2006 military coup, was jailed for eight years on graft and abuse of power charges in August, but within days had his sentence cut to one year by King Maha Vajiralongkorn. Justice Minister Taweewee Sodong said Tuesday that the former Manchester City owner, 74, would be among 930 prisoners granted early release. "He is in the group where they are in a critical condition or aged over 70. He will be released after six months automatically," Taweewee Sodong told reporters. Thaksin was jailed on August 22 last year, and Thai media reported that his release could come any day from Saturday. The exact details of his release are not clear, but he may be subject to monitoring — possibly with an ankle tag — and restrictions on his right to travel. His homecoming coincided with his Pheu Thai party returning to government in alliance with pro-military parties, leading many to conclude that an agreement had been struck to cut his jail time. The rumours grew stronger when he was transferred to a police hospital within hours of being sentenced because of his poor health, and it is not clear that he has spent any time in a prison cell. Local media reported Thaksin had been suffering from chest tightness and high blood pressure when he was admitted to hospital, and in the following months, his family said he had undergone two operations.—APP

## Italy's Crosetto hospitalised with suspected pericarditis

ROME : Italian Defence Minister Guido Crosetto was hospitalised with suspected pericarditis in Rome overnight, his ministry said on Tuesday. Crosetto, 60, was "in very good shape and could be discharged later in the day, but health checks are still ongoing", a ministry source added. He suffered severe chest pains and walked on his own to the emergency room of the San Carlo di Nancy hospital in Rome, the ministry said. He was monitored and underwent a heart coronography, the statement added. In a post on X, Italian Foreign Minister Antonio Tajani wished Crosetto a speedy recovery. "We look forward to seeing you soon," he wrote on the platform formerly known as Twitter. Pericarditis is inflammation of the lining around the heart that causes chest pain, but is not usually serious.—Agencies

## Protests may resume if demands ignored

PARIS : The head of France's biggest farming union - the FNSEA - said on Tuesday that protests that hit the sector last month could resume if the government does not do more to meet their demands for better pay and working conditions. MORE: Places the U.S. Government Warns Not to Travel Right Now the government is in talks with farmers over getting them higher selling prices to supermarkets and over loosening regulation and bureaucracy which farmers have said was a burden on their businesses. However, FNSEA head Arnaud Rousseau said that, with 10 days to go until the start of the annual national farming convention, the government was not doing enough. "We are not moving at the right pace," Rousseau told French TV station TF1. Asked if farmers could restart the roadblocks that hit many motorways in January, Rousseau replied: "Very probably." Farmers across Europe - in countries such as Poland, Spain, Germany, Belgium and the Netherlands - have demonstrated over the last month for more money and better working conditions.—APP

## Serbian President vows to expedite EU accession

BELGRADE : Serbia is determined to speed up its path to European Union membership, President Aleksandar Vucic said in an interview. Vucic said Serbia expects "clear signals" from the EU on this issue, speaking at a joint press conference with Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis in the capital Belgrade. He said relations between Serbia and Greece are "friendly and brotherly," with Greece supporting Serbia's EU membership. "Serbia and Greece have always mutually supported each other's territorial integrity, and I believe that this will be the case in the future," he said. He added that his meeting with Mitsotakis focused on renewable energy resources and infrastructure. Mitsotakis said there has been "visible progress" in relations between the two countries. "Serbia and the Western Balkans have a European future. For us, there is no future without the Western Balkans and Serbia. The participation of the entire Western Balkans is our strategic goal, and by accelerating the reforms you will carry out in your country, you will get closer to the EU in a shorter time," he said. He added that Greece's stance on Kosovo's independence will not change. "We believe that European mediation and dialogue are the only way to normalize relations between the two parties (Serbia and Kosovo) and will significantly contribute to stability in the region, which is the goal of all of us," said Mitsotakis. Kosovo declared independence from Serbia in 2008 and was recognized by many countries, including Türkiye. But Belgrade has never recognized Kosovo and claims it is still part of neighboring Serbia. During his working visit to Belgrade, Mitsotakis attended the Greek-Serbian Business Forum.—DNA



JEDDAH : Ambassador Fawad Sher received PR of Somalia to OIC, H.E. Abdul Rahim Osman. Discussed Pakistan-Somalia coordination at the OIC and other issues of mutual interest including regional and international developments.—DNA

## COP hosts UAE, Azerbaijan, Brazil announce climate 'troika'

The UAE hosted last year's COP28 conference in Dubai, while Azerbaijan will host this year's summit followed by Brazil in 2025

## FOREIGN DESK

PARIS : Past and future UN climate talk hosts the United Arab Emirates, Azerbaijan and Brazil said Tuesday they are forming a "troika" to push for an international agreement to limit global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius. The UAE hosted last year's COP28 conference in Dubai, while Azerbaijan will host this year's summit followed by Brazil in 2025. The three countries were mandated by 198 signatories to the Dubai agreement to work together on a roadmap to limit global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius, a key climate goal that has been seriously threat-

ened by global greenhouse gas emissions. "The Troika helps ensure we have the collaboration and continuity required to keep the North Star of 1.5°C in sight — from Baku to Belem and beyond," COP28 president Sultan Al Jaber said in a statement. Taking into account current climate pledges, the world is still on track to warm between 2.5 and 2.9 degrees Celsius over this century, according to UN estimates. The 1.5-degree Celsius limit will probably be reached between 2030 and 2035, according to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). According to the final agreement reached at COP28, the troika partnership

should "significantly enhance international cooperation and



the international enabling environment to stimulate ambition in the next round of nationally determined contributions". This

is "with a view to scaling up action and implementation during this critical decade and keeping the 1.5°C limit within reach", according to the agreement. At COP28, the world agreed to "transition away" from fossil fuels, but there was no progress on unblocking financial flows to developing countries, a major sticking point in negotiations. This issue is set to be a central theme of COP29 in Baku, where a new target is expected to be set for the financial support provided by developed countries for climate change. According to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, rich countries are about two years late in meeting their initial

pledge of \$100 billion in annual climate funding by 2022. The UN's high-level expert group on climate finance said in 2022 that developing nations (excluding China) need to spend some \$2.4 trillion a year on clean energy and climate resilience by 2030 — four times current levels. "We are committed to leveraging our strength as a bridge builder between the developed and developing world as host of COP29, to accelerate efforts to keep 1.5 in reach," said COP29 president-designate Mukhtar Babayev. "Key to that will be establishing a new climate finance goal that reflects the scale and urgency of the climate challenge."



## Briefs

### PPP constitutes six-member committee

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) on Tuesday constituted the six-member committee to hold talks with the political parties. The approval for the establishment of the committee was given by PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari. Prominent among those who were included in the committee were Qamar Zaman Kaira, Murad Ali Shah, Sanaulah Zehri, Shuja Khan, Saeed Ghani, and Nadeem Afzal Chan. Separately, Bhutto-Zardari said today that the PPP did not have enough mandate to become the prime ministerial candidate. Addressing the press conference in Islamabad, the former foreign minister said: "The PPP is determined to steer the country into the doldrums." Speaking about any possibility of alliance with the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), Bhutto-Zardari said: "The PTI had made an announcement of not negotiating with the PPP." Bhutto-Zardari said: "The PPP has no interest in joining the federal cabinet."

### 'Nawaz should not be candidate for PM'

NAZIR SYAL

KARACHI: Senior leader of Pakistan People's Party (PPP) Syed Khurshid Ahmad Shah has said Nawaz Sharif should not be a candidate for the post of Prime Minister morally. In statement on Tuesday, the PPP leader said that there are many question marks on his election from Lahore and there is a general impression that he has been defeated. As a political worker, I am of the opinion that we should not touch anyone's mandate, he said. Khurshid Shah said that People's Party will not include the elected member of any other party with it and PTI supported members assembly should go with their party. The real mandate is not with these members but in the hands of the people, he added. He said PML-N should also not run behind numbers, he advised. He said that PML-N should follow its narrative 'give respect to vote'. Shehbaz Sharif or Ayaz Sadiq can also be alternative candidates for the post of Prime Minister, Khurshid Shah said. He said that it is against the spirit of democracy that we divide the tenure of the Prime Minister among ourselves. PPP leader said that for democracy and the stability of the state, it is important that the mandate of the people should not be tampered. Playing with one's mandate is like playing with people's sentiments, he said. Khurshid Shah said that it is the duty of the Supreme Court to compel the Election Commission to take decisions within 15 days as per Form 45.

# Gaza ceasefire talks resume as Rafah under Israeli fire

Officials from the US, Egypt, Israel and Qatar are holding a meeting in Cairo to attempt to seal a truce in Gaza

NEWS DESK

CAIRO: Officials from the United States, Egypt, Israel and Qatar were meeting in Cairo on Tuesday to try to agree a truce in Gaza as international calls grew for Israel to hold back on its planned assault on the Palestinian enclave's southern city of Rafah. More than one million displaced civilians are crammed into Rafah, many living in camps and makeshift shelters, having fled to there from Israeli bombardments in other areas of Gaza during more than four months of warfare. Israel says it wants to flush out Hamas militants from hideouts in Rafah and free Israeli hostages being held there, and is making plans to evacuate trapped Palestinian civilians. But no plan has been forthcoming and aid agencies say the displaced have nowhere else to go in the shattered territory. Israeli tanks shelled the eastern sector of Rafah overnight, causing waves of panic, residents said. Rafah neighbors Egypt but Cairo has made clear it will not allow a refugee exodus over the border. Gaza health officials announced 133 new Palestinian deaths in the past 24 hours, bringing the total to 28,473 killed and 68,146 wounded since Oct. 7. Many other people are believed to be buried under rubble of destroyed buildings across the densely populated enclave, much of which is in ruins. Supplies of food, water and other essentials are running out and diseases are spreading. Around half of Gaza's 2.3 million people are now packed into Rafah, many of

## Self-defense does not include 'expulsion of Palestinians'

FOREIGN DESK

BERLIN: Israel's right to self-defense does not include the expulsion of Palestinians from Gaza, Germany's foreign minister said Tuesday on the eve of a visit to Tel Aviv. "I would like to emphasize again that the right to self-defense applies, and that every country, like Israel, has the right to defend itself against terrorism, but it does not include expulsion," Annalena Baerbock told a joint press conference with Palestinian Authority Foreign Minister Riyad al-Maliki. She reiterated the need for Israel's army to create "safe corridors" in Gaza and for the southern Gaza city of Rafah - home to some 1.4 million people, and the target of an expected Israeli army offensive - calling

establishing such protective zones in the enclave "one of the most important tasks." Various Israeli officials have spoken of forcing Palestinians out of Gaza, and some observers have theorized that an attack on Rafah, near the Egyptian border, is meant to force civilians sheltering in Rafah to flee into Egypt, as there are no more choices in Gaza. Baerbock also said there is an "urgent need for a humanitarian pause" in Gaza to order get much-needed humanitarian aid into the enclave. On the situation in the West Bank, she said every day "life is becoming more difficult" in the Israeli-occupied territories. Israel settlement construction in the West Bank is "illegal" and poses a "massive obstacle to a two-state solution," Baerbock said. "This conflict can only be resolved through a two-state solution."

started on Tuesday involving US, Qatari, Egyptian and Israeli officials. "The sides are looking for a formula that will be acceptable to Hamas, who says it is only possible to sign a deal once it is based on an Israeli commitment to ending its war and pulling out its forces from the Gaza Strip," a Palestinian official told Reuters. The official said Hamas had told the participants it does not trust Israel not to renew the war if the Israeli hostages being held by

Palestinian militants are released. The hostages were seized in the Oct. 7 raid on southern Israel by Hamas fighters which killed 1,200 people and triggered Israel's military onslaught. Securing their return is a priority for Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's government as well as wiping out Hamas, which governs Gaza.

A senior Hamas official, Sami Abu Zuhri, blamed Israel for the lack of progress in peace efforts so far. There has been one truce to date, lasting a week at the end of November. "The occupation (Israel) is still stalling and is undermining any effort to reach an agreement. It is playing the game of wasting time to pursue its war of genocide against our people in Gaza," Abu Zuhri told Reuters. There was no comment from Israel on the status of the talks but it says it tries to minimize civilian deaths and says Hamas fighters hide among civilians, something the group denies.

"We are keen to attack Hamas targets without Hamas terrorists using civilians as human shields," Israeli government spokesman Eylon Levy said on Tuesday.

In Berlin, German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock, who will visit Israel on Wednesday, voiced concern about the looming Israeli offensive on Rafah. She said Israel had the right to defend itself against terrorism, but this did not mean the expulsion of the population. South Africa on Tuesday asked the World Court to consider whether Israel's plan to extend its offensive into Rafah required additional emergency measures to protect Palestinians' rights.

## PTI demands Imran Khan's release

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) demanded the public mandate must be respected because it was pre-requisite for survival and strength of the state and PTI Chairman-for-life Imran Khan should be released instantly since he was the only leader who could pull the country out of the prevailing quagmire of problems.

PTI Spokesperson made it clear that the elements who were hell-bent on desecration and snatching the mandate of the people to impose the criminals were enemies of the country because such attempts would further wide fissure between the state and the people, which would further weaken the state.

He hinted that there was possibility of talks with everyone to bring political and economic stability in the country provided the stolen mandate was returned to the real representatives and rightful people of the country.

PTI Spokesperson stated that the people, especially the young generation, under the leadership of PTI Founding Chairman, gave PTI the right of their representations in unequivocal manner, ignoring it would be tantamount to the enmity with the county.



ISLAMABAD: Embassy of Qatar to Pakistan celebrates the National Sports Day of Qatar. Ambassador, diplomats, members of military attache' and the local staff participated in different activities. - DNA

# Swearing-in of MNAs elect likely on Feb 29

ISLAMABAD: The swearing-in ceremony for the newly elected members of the National Assembly is expected to take place in the last week of the current month, as the National Assembly's inaugural session is likely to be convened on Feb 29. The inaugural session will be presided over by Speaker of the National Assembly, Raja Pervaiz Ashraf, who will also administer the oath to the newly elected MNAs, (Members of National Assembly). According to regulations, newly elected members must submit details of their election expenditures within ten days of their victory; failure to do so will result in the withholding of their success notification. The success notification will be issued within 14 days of their victory. Following this, the allocation of 60 women and 10 non-Muslim seats will take place.

Following the announcement of the official results, independent MNAs will have a three-day window to join any party in parliament of their choice. According to Article 21 of the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, the National Assembly session must be called within 21 days of elections, though it can also be summoned earlier. As per Section 91(2) of the Constitution, the president is required to summon the session of the National Assembly within 21 days following the official announcement of election results or the issuance of its notification. Following the election of the Speaker and Deputy Speaker, the selection of the new Prime Minister will take place via secret ballot. The newly elected Prime Minister is expected to assume their responsibilities in the first week of March. To elect the Prime Minister, the assembly

will be divided into two sections, with members tallied accordingly based on this division. According to Section 91(4), the prime minister "shall be elected by the votes of the majority of the total membership of the National Assembly, provided that, if no member secures such a majority in the first poll, a second poll shall be held between the members who secure the two highest numbers of votes in the first poll and the member who secures a majority of votes of the members present and voting shall be declared to have been elected as prime minister, [and] provided further that, if the number of votes secured by two or more members securing the highest number of votes is equal, further poll shall be held between them until one of them secures a majority of votes of the members present and voting. - DNA

## US Senate passes \$95bn package for allies

WASHINGTON: The US Senate has approved a long-awaited \$95bn (£75.2bn) aid package for Ukraine, Israel and Taiwan after months of political wrangling. While Democrats were in favour of passing the bill, Republicans were divided and previously voted it down. The package includes \$60bn for Kyiv, \$14bn for Israel's war against Hamas and \$10bn for humanitarian aid in conflict zones, including in Gaza. The bill will now go to the House, where its fate remains uncertain. The package, which also includes more than \$4bn in funds for Indo-Pacific allies, passed the Senate despite criticism from Republican House Speaker Mike Johnson and former President Donald Trump. Lawmakers voted 70 to 29 to approve the package. In the end, 22 Republicans joined most of Democrats to vote for the legislation, including Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell. "History settles every account," Mr McConnell said in a statement following the vote. "And today, on the value of American leadership and strength, history will record that the Senate did not blink." Ukraine's president also said he was "grateful" to senators for passing it. "For us in Ukraine, continued US assistance helps to save human lives from Russian terror. It means that life will continue in our cities and will triumph over war," Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky wrote in a post on X, formerly known as Twitter. The vote came after an all-night Senate session during which several Republicans made speeches criticising the measure. Consideration of the bill dragged on for days, as a group of right-wing Republicans led by Senator Rand Paul of Kentucky vowed to slow down the process. "Shouldn't we try to fix our own country first?" he said on the floor on Monday as he began filibustering the bill. - Agencies

## Govt can't function without Imran: Khosa

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: Senior Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leader Sardar Latif Khosa says neither government nor democracy can function without the PTI founder. Speaking to media outside ECP on Tuesday, Khosa said, "you cannot minus the largest political party of the country this way". "Our polling agents were forcibly ousted from the polling stations during the counting process," he said. He added that the PTI wasn't given even the playing field but people took revenge through ballot on the polling day. According to Khosa, it is illegal and unconstitutional to call their winning candidates as 'independent'. "We are not independent. We clearly mentioned PTI as our party on the nomination papers but we were deprived of the election symbol," Khosa said. It was the only election in the history of country in which voters were searching for their candidates, he deplored. Latif Khosa demanded immediate release of the PTI founder from jail and added that all the sentences handed down to him must be quashed. "We are ahead with 170 seats in the National Assembly as per the initial Form-45. We demand election results based on the Form-45," said Khosa who defeated PML-N stalwart Khawaja Saad Rafique on Feb 8 polls from Lahore's constituency.

## Tear gas fired as farmers march on New Delhi

NEW DELHI: Police in northern India have fired tear gas to prevent thousands of protesting farmers demanding minimum crop prices from marching on Delhi. The capital is ringed by razor wire, cement blocks and fencing on three sides to keep protests at bay. The government fears a repeat of 2020 - dozens died in a year-long protest that ended only after ministers agreed to repeal controversial agriculture laws. But just over two years later, farmers say their demands have not been met. India's farmers form an influential voting bloc and analysts say the government of Prime Minister Narendra Modi will be keen not to alienate them. His Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) is seeking a third consecutive term in power in general elections this year. Pictures on Tuesday showed thick clouds of tear gas being used to disperse protesters near the city of Ambala, about 200km (125 miles) north of the capital. Police also fired tear gas, as they did on Monday, at the Shambhu border between Haryana and Punjab states. Drones flew continuously over the crowd and dropped tear gas on people below. "It literally rained tear gas shells through the day," said a BBC Punjab reporter who was present. There were a few injuries in the crowd - mainly people hit by plastic bullets fired by police. In response, some demonstrators pelted police with stones. Farmers used wet sacks and clothes to protect themselves from the tear

gas shells. Protesters used wet clothing and sacks to try to protect themselves from tear gas. Farmers, most of whom are from Punjab, say they want to peacefully cross Haryana to reach Delhi, but they have not been allowed to do so. Scuffles between police and protesters have also been reported at the Shambhu border and the situation remains tense. In 2020, protesting farmers hunkered down for months, blocking national highways that connect the capital to its neighbouring states. The movement was seen as one of the biggest challenges to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government. Traffic jams and disruptions were reported across Delhi on Tuesday as authorities blocked roads and diverted traffic. Police have also prohibited large gatherings in the city, including at border points between the capital and neighbouring Uttar Pradesh and Haryana states, through which the farmers are expected to reach the capital. In Haryana, the BJP-led state government has suspended internet services in seven districts until Tuesday. Two rounds of talks between farm union leaders and federal ministers have so far failed to break the deadlock. Farmers are asking for guaranteed floor prices - also known as minimum support price or MSP - which allows them to sell most of their produce at government-controlled wholesale markets, or mandis. They are also demanding that the government fulfil its promise of doubling farmers' income. - Agencies

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