



Islamabad POST

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Portuguese writer José Luis Peixoto coming to Pakistan

Detailed News On Page-08

Yulia vows to continue Navalny's fight

Detailed News On Page-07



Mbappe signs contract with Madrid till 2029

Detailed News On Page-06



People's mandate should be respected

Capable people kicked out of politics: Alvi

President says if their confidence in the system was shaken, it would not be in the country's interest, and called for respecting the mandate of the people

FAISAL SHEIKH / DNA

ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi has said that political inclusion is imperative for financial inclusion to put the country on the path of progress and prosperity. He hailed millions of young voters who had expressed their confidence in the democratic system. He added that if their confidence in the system was shaken, it would not be in the country's interest, and called for respecting the mandate of the people. He maintained that the blockage of social media websites in Pakistan was due to the lack of intellectual capacity to handle criticism. He also lamented that capable people were being kicked out of politics. The President gave these remarks while addressing the third edition of Hosting Business Net 2024, a platform to promote financial inclusion and digital transformation and recognize the contributions of companies working in this sector. The ceremony was attended by members of the business and diplomatic community. Speaking on the occasion, the President called for enhancing the inclusion of deprived sections of society, especially women and persons with disabilities, in the mainstream of the economy through the digital transformation of the financial sector for socio-economic development. He said that financial inclusion was not possible without political inclusion of the people as excluding them from the development process could have repercussions for the country. Expressing concern over the slow decision-making and lack of leadership in the country, the President said that Pakistan needed good leadership and timely decision-making to put it on

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Kakar vows punishment to violent trolls

PM Kakar says some elements blackmailing and pressuring civil servants to switch their loyalties

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaarul Haq Kakar said on Monday that the state of Pakistan shall defend the civil servants in discharging their constitutional duties, act against the "violent trolls" and ensure "exemplary punishment" to them. The statement came days after the Rawalpindi Commissioner, confessed to his "involvement in rigging election results in the city", and resigned from his post demanding to be "hanged for doing injustice" to the Rawalpindi Division. Chattha, in a press conference at the Rawalpindi Cricket Stadium, claimed that 13 candidates from Pindi were forcefully declared winners, adding that

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At ICJ Palestinian accuses Israel of 'apartheid'

FM Maliki calls for ending double standards on Palestine

NEWS DESK

THE HAGUE: Palestinians are suffering "colonialism and apartheid" under the Israelis, foreign minister Riyad Al-Maliki told the UN's top court Monday, urging judges to order an immediate and unconditional end to Israel's occupation. "The Palestinians have endured colonialism and apartheid... There are those who are enraged by these words. They should be enraged by the reality we are suffering," Al-Maliki told the International Court of Justice (ICJ). The ICJ is holding hearings all week on the legal implications of Israel's occupation since 1967, with an unprecedented 52 countries, including the United States and Russia, expected to give evidence. Israel will not participate in the hearings but submitted a written contribution dated July 24, 2023, in which it urged the court to dismiss the request for an opinion. Speaking in the Peace Palace in The Hague, where the ICJ sits, the minister appealed to the judges to declare the occupation illegal and order it to

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ISLAMABAD: PTI Chairman Ali Gohar Khan and Secretary General Omar Ayub along with chiefs of MWM and Sunni Ittehad addressing a press conference. - Photo Mudassar Raja

To grab reserved seats

PTI-backed winners to join Sunni Council

PM's candidate Omar Ayub asserts PTI will form govt in Centre; ensure release of party founder

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leader Barrister Gohar Khan Monday announced that independent candidates backed by the party will officially join the Sunni Ittehad Council (SIC) in the National Assembly (NA) as well as in provinces including Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP). The development comes a day after PTI's senior leaders, Barrister Gohar, Omar Ayub, along with SIC head Sahibzada Hamid Raza, visited the Majlis Wahdat-e-Muslimeen (MWM) Central Secretariat in Islamabad and held discussions on prospects of closer cooperation in parliament and at the provincial level. MWM Chairman Allama Raja Nasir Abbas Jafri, Vice Chairman Allama Ahmed Iqbal Rizvi, and others were also present. The meeting discussed the country's political situation and important issues in the wake of recently held elections and their outcome. The party, which could not directly take part in elections due to the non-allotment of electoral symbol, wants its share of reserved seats for women and

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Solangi urges patience as probe continues

Information Minister says Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) investigating the allegations of rigging

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Minister for Information, Broadcasting and Parliamentary Affairs Murtaza Solangi on Monday said a high-level investigation committee was constituted to investigate the allegations leveled by former Commissioner Rawalpindi Liaquat Ali Chattha regarding rigging in the general election. Talking to media persons after attending the meeting of Senate Standing Committee on Information and Broadcasting, he urged

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Briefs

Faisal Javed appears in PHC, gets relief

PHC Chief Justice approves transit bail petition of PTI leader

SHAMIM SHAHID

PESHAWAR: PTI Senator Faisal Javed came out from hiding on Monday and secured transit bail from the PHC. PHC Chief Justice Mohammad Ibrahim Khan approved the transit bail petition of the PTI leader, who had not been seen in public for a few months now. The court granted relief to Javed against bail bonds worth Rs100,000 and ordered the PTI senator to appear before court concerned. Talking to journalists outside the court, he expressed joy over being granted bail.

Australian HC meets CM Naqvi

ABID RAZA

LAHOREL: Australian High Commissioner Neil Hawkins, upon the invitation of Punjab Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi, watched the PSL match at Gaddafi Stadium. Mohsin Naqvi warmly welcomed the Australian High Commissioner, who congratulated him on his election as PCB Chairman. Expressing his admiration for the successful conduct of PSL 9, the Australian High Commissioner stated, "The enjoyment of the match is doubled in the great atmosphere at the Gaddafi Stadium." Mohsin Naqvi thanked the Australian High Commissioner for attending the match and expressed a desire for stronger cricketing ties, saying, "The people of both Pakistan and Australia love cricket. Cricket is a game of peace. I want the Australian cricket team to come to Pakistan and play a series."

PTI candidates get relief

All three Capital seats notifications suspended

The intra-court appeal was filed and challenged single-member IHC CJ Justice Aamir Farooq verdict dismissing the plea to suspend the victory notification of NA 47, NA-47 and NA-48 constituencies



Ali Amin Gandapur promises economic revival of KP

"Fake FIRs were lodged against us all over the country," Gandapur says

BUREAU REPORT

ISLAMABAD, FEB 19: The Islamabad High Court (IHC) Monday division bench Justice Mian Gul Hasan Auzneeb and Justice Arbab Muhammad Tahir suspended the ECP victory notification PMLN's victory notifications of Islamabad's NA-46, 47, 48 seats. The IHC suspended notification of Tariq Fazl Chaudhry from NA-47 against an intra-court appeals. The intra-court appeal was filed and

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Senate throws out bill seeking rapists' public hanging

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Senate rejected a bill seeking to publicly execute those convicted of rape with a majority vote on Monday, with parliamentarians strongly opposing the idea as a "counter-effective measure in deterring sexual crimes". The upper house of parliament rejected the move to amend the Pakistan Penal Code, 1860, and Code of Criminal Procedure, 1898, through the Criminal Laws (Amendment) Bill 2023 with a 24:14 vote. The bill presented by Jamaat-e-Islami's (JI) Senator Mushtaq Ahmed was supported by Senators Mehr Taj Roghani, Kamran Murtaza, Maulana Faiz Muhammad, Hafiz Abdul Kareem, Kamal Ali Agha, Abdul Qadir, and others.

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China congratulates Pakistan on smooth conduct of elections

In response to a question about the delay in forming a government, the spox said that the Pakistan election was generally steady and smooth and China respected the choice of Pakistani people



DNA

BEIJING: A Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson on Monday congratulated Pakistan for holding general elections of the national and provincial assemblies in a steady and smooth manner and hoped that the political parties in Pakistan could work together to form a new government after the polls. "We noted that general elections in Pakistan were held in a generally steady and smooth manner, and we offer our congratulations," Mao Ning said during her regular briefing in Beijing which resumed after a 10-day pause in the wake of the Chinese New Year and Spring Festival holidays. "As a close and friendly neighbour, China fully respects the choices of Pakistani people and sincerely hopes that relevant parties of Pakistan will work together to uphold the political solidarity and social stability

Continued on Page 06

Fitch highlights default risks as uncertainty grips Pak

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Fitch Ratings, a global rating agency, on Monday said the close outcome of Pakistan's election and resulting near-term political uncertainty "may complicate" the country's efforts to secure a new financing agreement with the International Monetary Fund (IMF). The ongoing \$3-billion Stand-By Arrangement (SBA) is scheduled to expire in March 2024. "A new deal is key to the country's credit profile, and we assume one will be achieved within a few months, but an extended negotiation or failure to secure it would increase external liquidity stress and raise the probability of default," said Fitch Ratings.

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Rainy weather grilled fish, chappli kabab attract foodies

Peshawar is a unique ancient city, which is an attraction for tourists and food lovers to relish its delectable traditional food varieties including the mouth-watering chapli kabab, Peshawari rice-pulao and fish varieties mostly brought from Malakand, Hazara divisions, Punjab and Karachi as special winter offer

PESHAWAR: The grilled fish and chapli kabab outlets have started attracting foodies in a bid to keep themselves warm after torrential rains continued lashing Khyber Pakhtunkhwa since last night, which has turned the weather extremely cold and chilly. In the wake of increased chill and rainy weather conditions since last night, the people thronged to the outlets of mouth-watering chapli kabab and grilled fried fish at historic Qissa Khwani and Namak Mandi where the delectable varieties are being served with traditional qehwa (green tea) and spicy sauces. Food lovers are also getting food takeaways for their loved ones at home to beat the cold rainy weather. Peshawar is a unique ancient city, which is an attraction for tourists and food lovers to relish its delectable traditional food varieties including the mouth-watering chapli kabab, Peshawari rice-pulao and fish varieties mostly brought from Malakand, Hazara divisions, Punjab and Karachi as special winter offer. The visitors, while travelling on historic Qissa Khwani and Namak Mandi bazaars in the bustling city of Peshawar, can't resist the aroma of grilled fish and chapli kabab being served with traditional qehwa and spicy sauces till late at night. "The tantalising aroma of trout and carp fish, chapli kabab and chicken corn soup with traditional gajar halwa and chicken yakhini always attracted me to enjoy in winter at Qissa Khawani bazaar having about 3,000 years old history, said Sundas Amin, a lecturer of Statistics and resident of Bannu district while talking to APP on Monday. She said that it was her fifth visit to Qissa Khawani during the ongoing winter season with

family. She said that visit to Peshawar remains incomplete without enjoying the mouth-watering chapli kabab and grilled fish with green qehwa at Qissa Khwani which is internationally known for storytellers. She underlined that the tourists while travelling to the subcontinent or Central Asia for trade had often stayed here at night and swapped tales of culture, civilizations, and traditions besides day to day happening while enjoying Chapli Kabab with traditional qehwa. The visitors of Peshawar go around to the historic Balahisar Fort, Ghanta Ghar, Mohalla Sethian with rare architecture and woodwork of its buildings in a day-long trip and return to Qissa Khwani for a night stay before starting their journey to their destination for trade. Ghanta Ghar, a famous fish trade hub in Peshawar also drew a substantial number of seafood lovers on Monday where the trade of fish including mushka, rahu, simon, pomfret, mahsher, and lobsters have significantly increased after the cold wave caused by heavy torrential rain has gripped Peshawar valley since last night.

A fish outlet owner at Ghanta Ghar, Barkat Ullah said trout stock has been brought from Swat and Mansehra districts as a special winter offer to fulfil Peshawarties' pressing demands for marriages and other parties. While eating fish at Ring Road Peshawar along with friends, Zeeshan Qaiser a resident of Wapda Town Peshawar said trout was his favourite seafood as its meat was full of proteins and vitamins besides easily digestible. "When I was young, I visited Swat with my father during winter to enjoy the freshwater brown trout due to its aromatic taste and spiciness amid snow-

fall. This winter, I did not go to Swat due to the availability of the grilled and baked trout fish at Peshawar", he said. Dr Ziaullah Chamkani, senior medical specialist at Government Lady Reading Hospital Peshawar said there was an additional burden on the heart, brains, joints, and lungs of weak people and children due to persistent cough, nausea, and frosts in winter, adding consumption of fish was the best available choice to help reduce risks of these diseases. Besides being the best source of proteins, vitamins, omega-3 fatty acids, phosphorus, iron, and iodine, he said that consumption of seafood helps improve digestion, protects skin from dryness, and relieves joints' pains. Usman Ali, General Secretary of the Swat Trout Fish Farming Association said that the business of trout farmers shined in winter following an increase in demands of consumers and hotel industry from across the country. He said about 150 trout farms existed in Swat that engaged extra laborers to meet the placed orders. He said about 2,500 people were directly associated with trout farming in Swat where one kilogram of trout was being sold at Rs 2000 to Rs 2500 per kilogram in the open market. "Trout farming is a highly profitable business and any farmer having 35 marla land minimum and proper water inflow and outflow system can produce 2,250 kg trout by earning about two million rupees profit after 15 months raring". Officials in the Fisheries Department told APP that under the Trout Village Project (TVP), around 93 small and large trout fish farms were established in Malakand and Hazara divisions under a 50:50 cost-sharing formula basis.—APP



KARACHI: First Lady Begum Samina Alvi, distributing mementos at the award distribution ceremony organized by the Floral Arts Society, Gardenia Chapter.—DNA

Rain-wind thunderstorm, snowfall, hailstorm predicted

DNA

PESHAWAR: Pakistan Meteorological Department on Monday predicted more rain-wind thunderstorms, and snowfall over the hills with isolated heavy rain hailstorms in most parts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Rain is predicted in Chitral, Lower and Upper Dir, Malakand, Buner, Swat, Shangla, Kohistan, Battagram, Torghar, Mansehra, Abbottabad, Haripur, Swabi, Mardan, Nowshera, Peshawar, Charsadda, Bajaur, Mohmand, Khyber, Kurram, Orakzai, Hangu, Kohat, Karak, Bannu, Lakki Marwat, North and South Waziristan, Tank and DI Khan districts. Heavy rain snowfall may disrupt and cause closure of roads and may cause landslides in Chitral, Swat, Dir, Shangla, Kohistan, Battagram, Torghar, Mansehra and Abbottabad. Tourists are advised to be cautious. Rain Recorded in (mm): Pashat-Bajaur 57, Saidu Sharif and Pattan 55 (each), Kalam 52, Dir 49, Peshawar (Airport 46, City 43), Balakot and Malamjaba 44 (each), Takht Bai and Ghalani 41 (each), Mirkhani 40, Cherat 32, Drosh 30, Landikotal 29, Risalpur and Parachinar 25 (each), Chitral 21, Kakul 17, Kohat 15, Bannu 14, Timgara 08 and DI Khan Trace. Snow recorded (in inches): Kalam 24, Malamjaba 18 and Chitral 01.

Sherry challenges proposed public executions

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Senator Sherry Rehman, Vice President of the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP), on Monday strongly opposed the proposal by Jamat-e-Islami's Senator Mushtaq Ahmed to introduce public executions for rapists through amendments to the Pakistan Penal Code (PPC) and Criminal Procedure Code, calling it a counter effective measure in deterring sexual crimes and urged improved prosecutions and investigations to address the matter. Speaking during a session of the Senate, she said: "The Peoples Party has always had a principled stance against the death penalty, whether public or private. While the PPP staunchly condemns rape as a heinous and grave crime, calling for the death

penalty or public executions, as seen in various countries, have not proven to be effective in deterring sexual crimes. We must prioritize enhancing prosecutions and investigations rather than resorting to barbarism and violence within society." She added that there have been historical attempts at public executions during Ziaul Haq's era which failed to reduce crime. "If public hanging is advocated for one crime, it will be demanded for other offenses as well. The PPP focuses on the importance of addressing the prevailing anger towards violence and sexual crimes through comprehensive measures, including improved funding for the police, enhanced criminal investigations, and better training for officers handling rape cases." Further stressing the

PPP's commitment to human rights principles, Senator Rehman advocated for comprehensive solutions and the reallocation of resources to better support survivors. "We reject the notion that public hangings serve as an effective solution and call for careful consideration of crimes, fair trials, and increased conviction rates as more practical deterrents," she said, adding that Pakistan already has life-sentence punishment for rape. "There is a need for a nuanced and well-thought-out approach to address crimes against women, focusing on comprehensive legal reforms and cultural changes rather than resorting to public executions. In contemporary 21st-century society, we cannot revert to medieval practices, as public executions to eliminate crimes; instead, they will have other detrimental effects on society."

Kalam receives 24 inches of snowfall

PESHAWAR: The weather in Kalam valley of Swat became extremely cold on Monday after 24 inches of snowfall and 55mm rain was recorded in this scenic resort of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. According to the Met Office, 55-millimeter rain each was recorded in Said Sharif and Kalam in Swat while 24 inches of snowfall was recorded during the last 24 hours in Kalam. The Met Office further informed that Malam Jabba received 18 inches of snowfall while Drosh received 2 inches and Chitral and Dir Upper received 0.8 inches of snowfall.—APP

Senate passes IIU bill 2023

ISLAMABAD: The Senate on Monday passed a bill of the International Islamic University, (Amendment) bill-2023, with a majority vote after a clause-by-clause reading of the bill. The bill moved by Senator Mushtaq Ahmed, was aimed at ensuring faculty representation in the decision-making process of the university. The amendment was needed as unlike other universities, the IIU Islamabad currently lacked this fundamental requirement.—APP

POL import bill shrinks by 12.06% in 7 months

ISLAMABAD: The imports of the overall petroleum group contracted by 12.06 percent during the first seven months of the current fiscal year (2023-24) as compared to the corresponding period of the last year, the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) reported. The total imports of the petroleum group during July-January (2023-24) stood at \$ 9,332.322 million against the imports of \$ 10,611.727 million during the same

period of last year. Among petroleum commodities, the import of petroleum products declined by 25.94 percent, from \$ 4,889,799 million last year to \$ 3,621.420 million during the period under review year whereas petroleum crude dipped by 3.96 percent from \$ 3,100.481 million to \$ 2,977.671 million. However, the imports of Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) increased by 4.82 percent from \$ 2,192.489 million last year

to \$ 2,298.144 million while the import of Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) went up by 1.47 per cent in the first seven months and stood at \$434.991 million as compared to \$428.687 in the corresponding period in 2022-23. Meanwhile, on a year-on-year basis, the petroleum group imports witnessed an increase of 0.03 percent during the month of January 2024 as compared to the same month of last year.—APP

Cyber threats in Pakistan increased by 17%

ISLAMABAD: Kaspersky experts discussed the evolution of the cyberthreat landscape in the region during its 9th annual Cyber Security Weekend - META 2024. The focal point of the discussions was the security of emerging technology trends such as AI, that are influencing the scale of modern threats. In parallel, threats targeting industrial control systems within critical infrastructure, in the Middle East, Africa, and Asia were also discussed. Kaspersky's Cyber Immunity approach took center stage as a way to create solutions that are virtually impossible to compromise and that minimize the number of potential

vulnerabilities. When looking at the threat landscape in Pakistan, Kaspersky's telemetry showed the number of overall cyberthreats in the country increased by 17% in 2023 as compared to 2022. Kaspersky blocked 16 million cyber attacks in Pakistan in 2023. As per the latest research by Kaspersky, a global cybersecurity and digital privacy company, 24.4% of users in Pakistan affected by online threats in Pakistan. Dissecting the threat landscape in Pakistan further, Kaspersky experts saw attacks using banking malware rose by 59%, such attacks designed to collect online banking credentials and other sensitive informa-

tion from infected machines. Researchers also reported an increase of 35% in trojan attacks that disguise themselves as legitimate computer programs but are used to run malicious code by cybercriminals. In addition, ransomware attacks designed to encrypt a victim's data, files, or system, making them accessible in exchange for a payment, increased by 24% in Pakistan. Also, the researchers reported attacks using spyware rose by 36%, such attacks are malicious software that enters a user's computer, gathers data from the device and user, and sends it to third parties without their consent. "Being an emerging country

and accepting digital transformation at good pace, Pakistan has very important role to play in Asia. As the cybersecurity landscape evolves, cyber threats continue to become diverse and sophisticated. This trend is particularly evident due to the emergence of advanced technologies like AI and the escalating geopolitical and economic turbulence within the META region. These factors collectively contribute to the surge in cybercrime and the heightened complexity of cyberattacks.", comments Amin Hasbini, Director of META Research Center Global Research and Analysis Team (GREAT)—DNA

Conference on interfaith harmony begins at IUB

BAHAWALPUR: The first two-day international conference on interfaith harmony has started at the Islamia University of Bahawalpur. In his presidential address in the opening session, Senior Dean Faculty of Chemical and Biological Sciences Prof. Dr. Shazia Anjum said that the main theme of this year is the role of religious harmony in global sustainability. At this conference, from many countries including Pakistan, Brunei Darussalam, USA, Uganda, Belgium and Malaysia eminent scholars like Prof. Dr. Muhammad Akram, Prof. Dr. The Wickman, Prof. Dr. Charles Cohen, Prof. Dr. Muhammad Mumtaz Ali, Prof. Dr. Herman, Prof. Dr. Christopher Miller, Prof. Dr. Kulsom Pracha, Pandit Marari Lal Badhanal, Reverend Munawar Shahzad Umar, Prof. Dr. Mustafa Muhammad Rizq, Prof. Dr. Ghulam Shamsur Rahman, Prof. Dr. Arshad Munir Laghari, Prof. Dr. Altaf Husain Langriyal, Chairman Depart-

ment of Islamic Studies, Bahauddin Zakaria University Multan, Prof. Dr. Abdul Qadoos Suhaib, Chairman Islamic Research Center, Bahauddin Zakaria University Multan, Prof. Dr. Zia ur Rahman, Prof. Dr. Abdul Ghaffar, Dr. Abu-ul-Hasan Shabbir Ahmed, Dr. Muhammad Imran, Dr. Ayesha Qurarat-ul-Ain and Dr. Riaz Ahmed Saeed, Prof. Dr. Saeed Ahmed participated. She said that the purpose of establishing educational institutions is not only to equip students with education but to solve social problems is also an important manifesto of educational institutions. In this way, the creation of modern knowledge becomes possible or the ways are developed for it. Being a history-making institution, the Islamia University of Bahawalpur is the guardian of such binding traditions. Along with the training of students, successful efforts have been made to solve social problems. On this occasion, along with students and

teachers, along with the most reliable Muslim, Christian, Hindu, and Sikh scholars and professors of universities and colleges of Pakistan. The participation of influential people in the area is also expected. The conference aims to review the role of religion in peace-building, interfaith harmony, and sustainable development. In this way, solutions to the problems faced by the minorities and majorities in Pakistan, the promotion of peace, and the study of religions will be paved. The conference is going to provide a platform for researchers and students from all over the world to present their research on interfaith harmony and tolerance to experts. Since efforts for inter-faith harmony and peace have not been made in such a systematic manner in the history of Bahawalpur, it is said that this conference will be a historic one for South Punjab. In the inaugural session, Registrar Muhammad Shaji ur Rahman, Prof. Dr. Shahzad

Rana, Chairman of the Department of Media and Communication Studies, Shahzad Ahmed Khalid, Director of Public Relations, senior faculty members, employees, and students were present. Prof. Dr. Sheikh Shafiq ur Rahman, Dean Faculty of Islamic and Arabic Studies, while appreciating the efforts of the Department of Religious Studies, gave a message that undoubtedly, the Islamia University of Bahawalpur has always done more than its share for the promotion of social values and peace. The participation of scholars, the gathering of people of different religions, and the participation of international scholars in this conference show their confidence in the university, while this process speaks of their sincere efforts to establish peace in society. The guest of honor, Dr. Tanveer Qasim, Director of Coordination, at the Punjab Higher Education Commission, said that Islam means peace.—APP

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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

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Motorway Police.9270601-20
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WASA Rawalpindi.5555489
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RDA.....5555864
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Islamabad.....0321-5744480

Foreign diplomats laud tourism potential of Chakwal

The delegation members thanked the Islamabad and Chakwal Chambers of Commerce for organizing such a wonderful tour of Chakwal and said that it would always be a memorable tour for them as they have fully enjoyed it

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad and Chakwal Chambers of Commerce and Industry organized a cultural caravan of foreign diplomats to show them the tourism potential of the area. Diplomats from Azerbaijan, Egypt, Kyrgyzstan, Kenya, Iran, Norway, Nepal, the Philippines, and Uzbekistan were in the cultural caravan. Zafar Bakhtawari, former President ICCL, and Secretary General, UBG Pakistan also accompanied the caravan. The caravan visited the University of Chakwal where Prof. Dr. Muhammad Bilal Khan, Vice Chancellor, and Dr. Samia Anwar of the Department of Archeology warmly welcomed them. They briefed the foreign diplomats about the historical and archeological sites of Chakwal that attract tourists worldwide.



The caravan also visited the Katas Raj Temples, which hold immense historical and religious significance. Prof. Dr. Muhammad Bilal Khan, Vice Chancellor, and Dr. Samia Anwar, Department of Archeology, University of Chakwal briefed the caravan about the history of the Katas Raj Temples, which are dedicated to Lord Shiva, surrounded by a

beautiful pond and date back to the 6th century. The caravan was informed that these temples are one of the most important Hindu pilgrimage sites in Pakistan and members of the Hindu community from Pakistan and abroad visit this place every year as a part of their spiritual journey. Qazi Muhammad Akbar, Group Leader of the Chakwal Cham-

ber of Commerce and Industry organized a reception in honor of the cultural caravan at Kalar Kahar, which is another amazing tourist site in the area. Mian Khawar Saleem, a member of the Chakwal Chamber of Commerce hosted the lunch in honor of the cultural caravan. Speaking on the occasion, Ahsan Bakhtawari, President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce said

that ICCI had already taken a delegation of foreign diplomats to Skardu last year, and this cultural caravan in collaboration with Chakwal Chamber of Commerce is a part of showing the foreign diplomats the wonderful tourist places of Chakwal to promote tourism in the area. He hoped that the foreign diplomats would encourage the people of their respective countries to visit Paki-

stan to see its real beauty and invest in its tourism infrastructure, which offers great investment opportunities to foreign investors. Waqar Bakhtawari, President, Chakwal Chamber of Commerce said that the incidents of terrorism in Pakistan had affected the tourism industry. He said that with the efforts of armed forces and security agencies, Pakistan has now established peace and foreign tourists should visit Pakistan to take benefit of its tourism potential. Prof. Dr. Muhammad Bilal Khan, Vice Chancellor, University of Chakwal said that his university organizes various programs to promote tourism in Chakwal and resolved that he would continue to promote this noble cause in the future. The delegation members thanked the Islamabad and Chakwal Chambers of Commerce for organizing such a wonderful tour of Chakwal and said that it would always be a memorable tour for them as they have fully enjoyed it.

Spring festival signaling positive outlook for Chinese economy

China's tourism market dazzled during the recently concluded eight-day Spring Festival holiday, culminating on Feb 17, underscoring the nation's economic vitality. Surpassing expectations, both domestic travel and spending soared to record heights, showcasing a remarkable rebound in consumption post-COVID-19

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Spring Festival celebrated across China, signaling positive outlook for Chinese economy in 2024, according to a report carried by Gwadar Pro on Monday. China's tourism market dazzled during the recently concluded eight-day Spring Festival holiday, culminating on Feb 17, underscoring the nation's economic vitality. Surpassing expectations, both domestic travel and spending soared to record heights, showcasing a remarkable rebound in consumption post-COVID-19. The surge in travel and spending underscores renewed optimism among Chinese consumers, illuminating the resilience and potential of China's consumption market, a pivotal driver of economic growth. Analysts are now fairly bullish on China's economic recovery for 2024 and beyond, citing robust policy support and a host of favorable indi-

cators. Amidst uncertainties, China's buoyant holiday season has offered a beacon of hope, signaling a brighter future for the world's second-largest economy. According to data from the Ministry of Culture and Tourism released on Sunday, a staggering 474 million domestic trips were made, marking a remarkable 34.3 percent year-on-year increase. Equally impressive was the surge in total domestic tourism spending, soaring by 47.3 percent to approximately 632.69 billion yuan (\$87.95 billion). Of particular note is the remarkable growth compared to pre-pandemic levels, with the number of trips and total spending surpassing those of the same period in 2019 by 19 percent and 7.7 percent, respectively. The Ministry of Culture and Tourism attributes this surge to various favorable factors, including heightened willingness among urban and rural residents to travel and supporting government policies. The extended Lunar New

Year holiday in China this year, stretching beyond the usual seven days, has further sparked a surge in tourism-focused trips across the country. With an additional day to explore, travelers have gravitated towards destinations offering diverse experiences, from the warm vistas of Kunming and Sanya to the wintry charm of Harbin's Ice-Snow World. Southern locales boasting tropical climates have emerged as top picks, with Kunming in Yunnan province and Sanya in Hainan province drawing significant interest. The Ministry of Culture and Tourism reported a notable surge in both inbound and outbound travel, with over 3.6 million overseas trips and 3.23 million visits from international travelers to the Chinese mainland. This surge translated into a staggering 13.52 million inbound and outbound trips, marking a threefold increase from the previous year. The impressive performance of the tourism

market underscores China's growing importance as a global travel destination and highlights the enduring appeal of its rich cultural heritage and diverse landscapes to visitors from around the world. The Ministry of Culture and Tourism spearheaded "Happy Chinese New Year" themed events, setting the stage for a vibrant cultural and tourism landscape. Local governments complemented these initiatives by offering consumption incentives, including tourism coupons, amplifying economic activity during the festive period. The results speak volumes: the Ministry of Commerce reported a substantial uptick in sales of festive goods, with key retail sectors like organic food and jewelry experiencing double-digit growth. Notably, 2023 witnessed record-breaking retail sales, with consumption emerging as the primary driver of economic expansion, contributing a remarkable 82.5 percent to overall growth.

'Judiciary last hope of country'

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Country has been facing with very serious issues and in this situation judiciary is the last hope for the country, said Aafia Siddiqui leader and noted neurophysician of the country Dr Fowzia Siddiqui, here Sunday. She said we came here to attend hearing of Dr Aafia Siddiqui case, but

it was cancelled as the honorable judge of Islamabad High Court (IHC) Justice Sardar Ejaz Ishaque Khan was ill. She prayed for his early recovery. She said the court has played a due role in this case which is about the human rights of Dr Aafia Siddiqui. She said the holy month of Ramadan is about to come and she would appeal the whole nation to pray for the country, as well as, Dr

Aafia Siddiqui. Jamaat-Islami (JI) Senator Mushtaq Ahmed Khan on the occasion said that the role of the honorable court in this case is very positive. He said new parliament is about to be formed and he would appeal it to take meaningful steps for an early release of Dr Aafia Siddiqui. He also welcomed the lawyer of Aafia Siddiqui Clive Stafford Smith and said that his role in this case is very helpful and crucial. He said he is taking good efforts on this case. He appealed to the nation to support the noble cause of Dr Aafia Siddiqui.

Record turnout showed public trust in democracy

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Chairman of National Business Group Pakistan, President Pakistan Businessmen and Intellectuals Forum, and All Karachi Industrial Alliance, and former provincial minister Mian Zahid Hussain, said on Monday that the record turnout during the recent elections proved the trust of the masses in the democratic process. Despite record inflation, poverty, unemployment, and instability, more than six million people exercised their right to vote, which shows that they are not disappointed with democracy and they want a continuation of democracy, he said. Talking to the business community, Mian Zahid Hussain said that incompetence, mismanagement, and corruption have led to the fall of the country's economy which needs efforts for revival. The debt burden has increased a lot; the power, gas, and other sectors are in trouble; and circular debt has touched Rs 6,000 billion. The business leader said that failing government companies are wasting trillions of rupees every year, the economy is suffering from wrong priorities, and Pakistan's GDP is expected to remain at only two percent.

COMSTTECH organizes international workshop

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: COMSTTECH, ICESCO and Songhai Center, in Benin jointly organized 5-day international training workshop on innovative practices for the development of a sustainable agri-business for the future at Songhai Center in Porto-Novo the capital city of Benin. H.E. Mr. Gaston Cossi Dossouhoui, Minister of Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries, H.E. Mr. José Didier Tonato Minister of Living Environment and Sustainable Development, H.E. Mayor Oumar Ba, President AMS/CCT-UMOA, Dr. M. Sharif, Advisor, Science and Technology, ICESCO, Dr. Salimane Karimou, President, National Commission in Benin, and H. E. Prof. Dr. Godfrey Nzamujo, Director General Songhai Center addressed the inaugural session held on Monday. Prof. Dr. M. Iqbal Choudhary, Coordinator General COMSTTECH said that the idea of organizing this field based, hands on training course was discussed in Niamey Niger where he had the honor of hosting legendary Prof. Dr. Godfrey. He readily agreed, and now we are pleased that we have plan to take "Songhai Phenomena" to other OIC member states. He said that we consider Songhai a miracle, an unparalleled story of human perseverance, dedication, and intellect. Prof. Choudhary informed that this training workshop has participation from over 10 OIC member states with physical participants from Benin, Togo, Niger, Mali, Burkina Faso, Senegal, and Chad, and we also have virtual participants from Azerbaijan, Indonesia, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Nigeria, Ivory Coast, Burkina Faso, Turkey, Togo, Mali, Cameroon, and Chad. He said that this training will address the challenges in achieving food security through sharing of knowledge and experiences, application of science, technology and climate smart agricultural technologies. He said that this innovative workshop is planned to build broad-based and sustainable solutions to the challenges of our present food and agricultural systems and make participants discover a holistic vision of the world that is foundational to the SDGs.

PARC and GAIN collaborate

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Agricultural Research Council (PARC) in collaboration with the Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN) is hosting the Pakistan Food System Dashboard (FSD) initiative. With a shared commitment to evidence generation, PARC and GAIN are spearheading efforts to support the formulation of food-related policies in Pakistan. The cornerstone of this collaboration is the scaling up of data collection on diet quality through the utilization of Diet Quality Questionnaires (DQQ), developed by the esteemed Global Diet Quality Project (GDQP), a collaborative effort between GAIN, Gallup, and Harvard University. This questionnaire serves as an invaluable tool for assessing and monitoring dietary habits within populations. The GDQP, operating on a global scale, aims to gather comprehensive dietary quality data from adult population worldwide. To date, it has successfully released country adapted DQQs for over 104 countries—DNA

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Briefs

CDNS attains Rs 1030 bn targets in fresh bond

ISLAMABAD: The Central Directorate of National Savings (CDNS) has attained a target of Rs 1030 billion in fresh bonds in the current fiscal year, from July 1 to February, 19. 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. He 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 added. 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. Replying to a question, he said the CDNS had collected an investment of Rs 55 billion by January 9, 2023-24, through Islamic investment bonds. The official added that the directorate had set a target of Rs 75 billion for the new financial year 2023-24 for Islamic finance bonds. Replying to a question, he said the CDNS aimed to introduce new dimensions in the Islamic finance sector.—APP

WASA on high alert: MD

RAWALPINDI: Water and Sanitation Agency (WASA) Rawalpindi was put on high alert to cope with urban flooding following heavy rain on Sunday night while a rain emergency was also declared directing the residents settled along Nullah Lai and in low-lying areas to remain on high alert and move to safer places, said Managing Director (MD), WASA Muhammad Saleem Ashraf. He informed that two cities, Rawalpindi and Islamabad received heavy rain on Sunday night and all the arrangements were finalized by the agency to deal with flash flood. He said that according to rainfall gauging stations, 27 mm rain was recorded at Saidpur Village, 23 mm at Golra, 17 mm at Bokra, 32 mm at Shamsabad, 26 mm at Chaklala, while water level sensor data showed 7 feet at Kattarian and 3.4 feet at Gawalmandi. WASA personnel were deployed in different city areas along with heavy machinery, the MD said adding, WASA staff was present particularly at low-lying areas including Raja Bazar, Bohar Bazar, Jamia Masjid Road, Murree Road, Nadeem Colony, Javed Colony, Sadiqabad, Satellite Town and other areas. Water level in Nallah Lai was being monitored regularly, he said. The MD informed that the operation to remove stagnant rain water was in progress in different areas.—DNA

Wani seeks probe into mass rape incidents

ISLAMABAD: Prominent Hurriyat leader and Vice Chairman Jammu Kashmir National Front (JKNF) has demanded an independent and international probe into mass-rape incidents committed by the Indian occupation forces in the Indian-held territory of Jammu Kashmir. In a statement issued here on Monday, Wani said that the occupation forces deployed in the restive region have been involved in heinous crimes. Use and abuse of power, harassment and humiliation and sexual abuse, he said, were among the dirtiest war tactics the Indian army has been using to suppress Kashmiris' legitimate struggle for the right to self-determination. He said that being a vulnerable segment of society, the Kashmiri women have been the worst victims of Indian belligerence.—APP



ISLAMABAD: Families taking part in a quiz on the occasion of Euro Village festivities.—DNA

Pakistan, Malaysia discuss bilateral ties

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's Ambassador in Azerbaijan Bilal Hayee on Monday met with Malaysia's newly appointed Ambassador to Baku Ahmad Kamrizamil and discussed with him bilateral relations and the regional situation. During the meeting, they happily recalled common friends from the respective diplomatic fraternities, Azerbaijan's embassy in Pakistan posted on X. Meanwhile, Pakistan's High Commissioner in Australia Zahid Hafeez Chaudhri met with Chief Executive Officer of Tasmanian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (TCCI) Michael Bailey and Trade Adviser Sally Chandler. The two sides agreed to enhance bilateral trade cooperation.—APP

Excise deptt provides civic facilities at Fatima Jinnah Park

ISLAMABAD: Under ICT doorstep initiative, the Excise department is providing civic facilities to residents of federal capital to get their vehicle registration as well as access of various essential services at Fatima Jinnah Park (Bolan Gate) on Monday. 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, and the citizens hailing from nearby areas of Fatima Jinnah Park Bolan Gate F-9 can get civic facilities through a dedicated van, ICT Spokesman Dr Abdullah Tabassum said. He said that whether you need a fuel permit for domestic or commercial use, or looking to register your motor vehicle seamlessly, the on-ground service will ensure a swift and straightforward process. This initiative aims to streamline processes and provide ease to the public regarding vehicle registration, transfer, and token tax procedures, he added.—APP

New govt urged to work for poverty reduction

The country has become too weak and can no longer afford the waste of funds; currently, inflation is close to 30%, the budget deficit has reached 7% of GDP, and poverty is increasing due to the continuous increase in the cost of electricity, gas, and petrol

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: Dr. Muhammad Hanif Mughal, Chairman of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Shadbad, said on Monday that the incoming government should prioritise economic development and poverty reduction. The country cannot afford any more lavish spending; therefore, he said that wastage should be curtailed while state-run companies causing losses to the tune of trillions of rupees should be sold immediately. He added that the NFC award is weakening the federation; the share of the provinces should be

reduced so that the federation can service loans in a better way. Dr. Hanif Mughal said in a statement issued here today that the country is currently in the grip of severe crises, so the new government should keep economic development and poverty reduction as its top priorities. He said that inflation and lavish expenses should be reduced, and the service of the public should be made a priority so that the situation could be improved. The country has become too weak and can no longer afford the waste of funds; currently, inflation is close to 30%, the budget deficit has reached 7% of GDP,

and poverty is increasing due to the continuous increase in the cost of electricity, gas, and petrol. The high cost of energy is hitting production and exports; the income of the masses is decreasing, stoking poverty, while it has become impossible for the government to pay the interest on the loans. Dr. Hanif Mughal said that yearly, over eight million people are born for whom there is a severe shortage of health, education, and other facilities. He said that even in these situations, the rulers are unwilling to cut costs and disregard merit. Failing public sector companies are losing trillions

of rupees, but no government wants to sell them, and the entire burden has to be borne by the poor. If government intervention in public-sector companies is not reduced, it will not be profitable. He said that under the 7th NFC Award, 63 percent of the total federal income is distributed among the provinces, including Azad Jammu and Kashmir, Gilgit-Baltistan, and the former FATA. Politicians and bureaucracy embezzle a large part of these funds. Despite such funds, there is no special development work in provinces, and the federal government does not even have money to pay the in-

terest on the loans. When provinces are unwilling to collect tax money, why are they adamant about spending it? he asked. He said there is a need to reduce the provinces' share and increase the federation's share in the NFC award. The financial condition of the federation remains very weak, so all the political parties are ready to govern in the provinces, but no one seems ready to govern in the federation. If the country's condition is to improve, instead of making loud claims, it is necessary to bring reforms to all sectors, including business laws; otherwise, the country will have no future.

Rice valuing \$2.115 bln exported

ISLAMABAD: Rice exports from the country during the first 07 months of the current financial year grew by 95.26 as compared to the exports of the corresponding period of last year. During the period from July-January 2023-24, over 3.323 million metric tons of rice valued at \$2.115 billion were exported as against the exports of 1.982 million tons worth \$1.083 billion in the same period of last year, according to the latest data released by the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics. During the period under review, the exports of Basmati Rice also grew by 35.59 per cent as 398,764 metric tons of commodity mentioned above worth \$456.950 million were exported as compared to the exports of 320,751 metric tons valued at \$337.008 million in the same period of last year. In the last 07 months, over 2.924 million metric tons of rice other than the Basmati valued at \$1.658

million exported as against the exports of 1.661 million metric tons worth \$746.434 million in the same period of last year. During the period under review, food group exports from the country grew by 57.66 per cent as different food commodities valued at \$4.267 billion were exported as compared to the exports of \$2.706 million in the same period of last year. On the other hand food group imports into the country during the first 07 months of the current financial year decreased by 21.09 per cent as food imports came down from \$5.983 billion in the first 08 months of the last financial year to \$4.721 billion during the same period of the current financial year. The imports of commodities including wheat decreased by 28.81 per cent, soya bean oil by 48.85 per cent, palm oil by 34.13 per cent and sugar by 42.75 per cent respectively. It is worth

mentioning here that the exports from the country witnessed an increase of 7.89 per cent during the first seven months of the current fiscal year (2023-24) compared to the corresponding period of last year. According to the latest PBS data, exports from the country increased up to \$17.782 billion during July-January (2023-24) as against the exports of \$16.481 billion in July-January (2022-23), showing a growth of 7.89 per cent. On the other hand, imports into the country declined by 14.11 per cent to \$30.949 billion this year against the imports of \$36.034 billion last year. Based on the figures, the trade deficit during the first seven months of the current fiscal year was recorded at \$13.167 billion against the deficit of \$19.553 billion last year, showing a sharp decline of 32.66 per cent.—APP

Another spell of heavy rain, snowfall to hit country from 25 Feb: Met official

ISLAMABAD: Chief Meteorologist at Pakistan Meteorological Department Dr Sardar Sarfaraz on Monday said that a fresh spell of rain, hailstorms and snow is expected across the country from Feb 25 where Karachi city and Balochistan province will also witness light showers along with thunderstorms. Talking to a Private news channel, he said that good rains, besides snowfall in the northern areas, are expected in the country from the next week under the influence of westerly waves. The chilly embrace of winter tightened its hold on various parts of the country on Monday, as rain showers blanketed regions including Punjab, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and Kashmir, he added. "We are expecting some good rains from Feb 25, which will continue till March or may even extend to April under the influence of westerly waves", adding that snowfall on hills in the northern areas is also expected during this period, which would end fog and smog in the country," he added. He said under this rain spell started on Sunday many parts of the country would witness partly cloudy skies along with drizzles and snow till Wednesday. The wet spell brought the winter chill back to the region, and the maximum rainfall and snow were recorded in Rawlakot, Kalam, Malam Jabba, Swat, Gilyat and Murree. Swat district also witnessed a drop in temperatures as rain fell in the plains and light snowfall on the mountaintops. He also advised the public to take necessary precautions during the expected weather conditions. Replying to a question, he said Swat and Chitral have been attracting an influx of tourists and during this spell, these spots will witness heavy snowfall.

Railways finalize plan to procure 230 passengers coaches

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Railways is finalizing a plan to procure 230 passenger coaches and 820 High Capacity Wagons under the Public Sector Development Programme (PSDP) aiming help to improve the speed of the trains and ensure adherence to fixed timings. "Out of the total, around 46 Completely-Built-Up (CBU) passenger coaches have been procured up till now while the remaining 184 would be manufactured in the country and the coaches would be able to travel at the speed of 160km/h," said an official in the Ministry of Railways. He said Pakistan Railways is putting maximum efforts to complete rehabilitation and reconstruction work on the railway track along with improving the speed of the locomotives to carry passengers to their respective destinations on time. The infrastructure, including the track and signaling system from Karachi to Peshawar, Main Line-I (ML-I), and doubling of track from Lahore to Peshawar (462.20 Km) was also being revamped, he added. The official noted that the length of the track was 1,726 kilometers and the department has planned to improve speed up to 160 kilometers per hour in the project of up-gradation of ML-I under the China-Pak Economic Corridor (CPEC).—DNA

41,300 Kashmiris booked under BJP's rule

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Over 41,300 people, including APHC leaders, were booked on various charges by the Hindutva BJP regime in Indian illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IOJK) since 2015 until February 2024. The research section of Kashmir Media Service (KMS) released a report revealing that during the BJP's rule in the occupied territory in 2015, over 41,300 people, mostly Hurriyat leaders, leaders of different political parties, activists, Ulema, human rights defenders, journalists and social activists, were arrested by Indian authorities on fake charges. Most of them were booked under black laws such as the Public Safety Act (PSA) and the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (UAPA). The top Hurriyat leaders, including APHC chairman Masarrat Aalam Butt, Mu-

hammad Yasin Malik, Shabir Ahmed Shah, Aasiya Andrabi, Naheeda Nasreen, Fehmeeda Sufi, Nayeem Ahmad Khan, Ayaz Akbar, Pir Saifullah, Merajuddin Kalwal, Shahid-ul-Islam, Farooq Ahmed Dar, Syed Shahid Yousuf Shah, Syed Shakeel Yousuf Shah, Bilal Siddiqi, Molvi Bashir Irfani, Mushtaq-ul-Islam, Ameer Hamza, Dr. Hameed Fayaz, Abdul Ahmad Parra, Noor Muhammad Fayaz, Fahim Ramzan, Hayat Ahmed Butt, Rafiq Ahmed Shah, Advocate Zahid Ali, Zafar Akbar Butt, Muhammad Yousuf Falahi, Rafiq Ahmad Ganai, Umar Adil Dar, Shabir Ahmed Dar, Firdous Ahmed Shah, Jahangir Ghani Butt, Saleem Nanaji, Sajad Hussain Gul, Muhammad Yasin Butt, Shamsuddin Rehmani, Hassan Firdousi, Fayaz Hussain Jaferi, Adil Siraj Zargar, Dawood Zargar, Sarjan Barkati, and human rights defender Khurram,

were among those arrested. Most of them were lodged outside the territory in Indian jails. The report stated that at least 33,150 people were injured due to the Indian forces' use of brute force, bullets, pellets, PAVA, and tear gas shells. Additionally, over a hundred youth had their eyesight fully or partially damaged by the use of pellets and PAVA ammunition on peaceful and defenseless Kashmiris during the period. The report emphasized that laws differ for Kashmiris in the territory, adding that the United Nations should take notice of the injustices in the Indian judiciary, where the laws are completely different for the oppressed people of Jammu and Kashmir. These people have been demanding justice and the right to self-determination for 75 years, as promised to them by the United Nations in its resolutions.

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Heating up world climate

THE news broke earlier this month that last year our planet breached the 1.5C limit recognized by international consensus as representing a catastrophic degree of climate change. On the same day, the British Labour Party announced that it was ditching its flagship green policy, which centred around plans for £28 billion of annual investments in environmental projects. This extraordinarily poorly timed announcement not only demonstrated the political agility of an inebriated elephant, but also reinforced a common perception of the party's leader, Sir Keir Starmer, as a man who takes policy commitments no more seriously than Boris Johnson has ever taken his wedding vows. There's a sense in which this latest Labour faux pas is representative of its core strategic failing: That, in order to avoid causing any controversy that might confound its route to power, it displays a feeble tendency to vacillate which makes it appear increasingly unsuitable for that power. This must be particularly frustrating for the party's traditional supporters – even more so as this particular U-turn came less than 24 hours after Mr. Starmer had become "visibly furious" (as the BBC put it) following an especially crass remark made by Prime Minister Rishi Sunak in the House of Commons. This was, after all, the Keir Starmer that voters really wanted to see, but have rarely seen in recent years – a man of authentic political passion and righteous moral anger. As a former lawyer, the Labour leader knows the value of a certain amount of intellectual pragmatism, but he should also be aware that it's most often an appeal to the heart which wins an argument. That's why, for instance, at 97 years old, the veteran British broadcaster and environmental campaigner, Sir David Attenborough, remains far more popular with the general public than any British politician, even among those who may not naturally tend to share his views on climate change. It may of course be that Sir Keir fears that, if he tries mixing Red and Green, he'll end up simply looking Brown... and that Dr. Gordon Brown, Labour's last Prime Minister, who lost to the Conservatives fourteen years ago – and who now looks surprisingly leftist and environmentalist when compared with Mr. Starmer – may not be the party leader whose style and success he most wants to emulate. Indeed, it's been reported that Sir Keir's flagship policy had been ditched at the insistence of his Shadow Chancellor Rachel Reeves, a woman whose dour financial prudence makes Gordon Brown's own tenure at the Treasury seem exuberantly extravagant. When one journalist pointed out that Labour had just rolled back on its biggest policy pledge just as the country's gearing itself up for a general election, Ms. Reeves responded that this abandoned commitment remained her party's biggest policy. Sadly, that may well be true. All this would seem disastrous for Labour were it not for the fact that their woes are dwarfed by the insane extent of the Conservatives' disarray. In fact, last week, as the country prepared for the latest two by-elections in seats vacated by Conservative MPs (one departing in disgrace, the other quitting in protest at the government's reversal of its own green policies), The Observer newspaper reported that the Tories had "given up the fight". Last week, a cross-party parliamentary committee declared that the British government's plans to deport asylum-seekers to the central African nation of Rwanda were incompatible with the country's obligations to ensure human rights as enshrined in international law.

Law and humanity buried in Gaza

FOUR months into bombing most of Gaza to rubble, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu ordered the Israel Defence Force (IDF) to plan for the evacuation of Rafah, a southern Gaza town bordering Egypt. "Absolute victory" was within reach, and this required Israel to confront the last few fighting units of the Palestinian resistance group Hamas, purportedly sheltering in Rafah. Most of the world saw the new phase of Israel's criminal rampage across Gaza for what it was: ethnic cleansing, or the forcible transfer of people that could potentially go to brutal extremes of extermination. Civilian suffering had never been a reason for Israel's killing force holding back, but Netanyahu was serving a warning of imminent bloodshed on a scale never seen. Since Israel began its siege of Gaza in 2007, Rafah has been the transit point for most humanitarian supplies into the isolated and impoverished strip. It was a town of a hundred thousand prior to the current Israeli assault, and has since then become the final sanctuary for close to a million and a half, housed in tent cities with acute vulnerabilities to disease and deprivation. Just days after Netanyahu's ultimatum, as US audiences remained absorbed in the annual sporting spectacle of the Superbowl, Israel targeted Rafah with some of its most lethal aerial bombardments. Many dozens were killed in a matter of hours, as hospitals, homes and mosques were bombed to rubble. The bombing has since continued with little respite. All this while, US President Joe Biden seemed otherwise occupied. He skipped the presidential custom of a pre-Superbowl TV interview and doubled down to the task of proving his mental acuity. A special counsel appointed by the US Justice Department had found in a report of a few hundred pages, that Biden's retention of classified documents from his two terms as vice-president, was perhaps wilful and his disclosure of their contents as a private citizen, illegal. He had, however, cooperated with the special counsel since, consenting to "the search of multiple locations" and sitting for a "voluntary interview" with investigators. Despite clear intent, Biden's manner indicated that a jury would have a hard time arriving at a guilty verdict. "We have...considered that, at trial, Mr. Biden would likely present himself to a jury, as he did during our interview of him, as a sympathetic, well-meaning, elderly man with a poor memory," the investigators wrote. This verdict of cognitive decline caused serious heartburn in the Biden camp and became a serious talking point in subsequent news cycles. More urgent questions about his moral judgment remained unaddressed, though serious impairment is evident in his conduct since Israel began its barbarities in Gaza. A recent poll found that half of all Biden voters from the last election, believe that Israel is guilty of genocide in the Gaza strip. And yet, as he called a surprise press conference to fiercely assert that his memory was "just fine", Biden's tone was anodyne when the conversation switched to Gaza. "Over the top" was the term of art chosen to describe Israel's conduct, in what must be the most curious under-statement in a long time.

Will the Supreme Court Nullify the Elections 2024?

Qamar Bashir



These realizations may have dawned on the Brigadier later, may be coupled with pressure or intimidation, either personally or from external forces, prompting him to withdraw the petition. Alternatively, he may have reconsidered the implications of pursuing the case further and decided to step back for personal or strategic reasons. However, the Supreme Court's decision to proceed with the hearing indicates that they saw merit in investigating the allegations of rigging...

TODAY, both the Supreme Court and the Islamabad High Court voiced their profound concern over separate yet crucial issues. The Supreme Court took a stern stance regarding a petition filed to declare the 2024 Elections null and void, emphasizing the gravity of such a legal move and expressing dissatisfaction with the subsequent withdrawal of the appeal. Meanwhile, the Islamabad High Court addressed the disappearance of 12 Baloch students from Islamabad, expressing deep frustration and dismay over the violation of their fundamental human rights enshrined in the constitution and the law of the land. Interestingly, both cases are intertwined, albeit in different ways, with the establishment. In the Supreme Court case, a retired Brigadier filed the appeal to declare the 2024 election null and void, implicating the country's electoral process. Conversely, in the High Court case, the nation's esteemed spy agencies were implicated regarding the disappearance of individuals. While the issue of missing persons warrants attention, let's delve into the Supreme Court case concerning the election appeal. Delving into the motives behind the retired Brigadier's petition before the Supreme Court of Pakistan reveals a concern for the fairness and integrity of the electoral process, especially amidst allegations of widespread rigging. However, in filing the application, the retired Brigadier may not have fully grasped the financial implications of the re-elections to the state, political parties and the candidates, and the complex political dynamics at play within Pakistan, potentially underestimating the nuances of the situation. He may have overlooked the broader implications of nullifying the elections, such as the potential impact on investor confidence, trade relations with friendly countries, and the stability of the stock exchange. Additionally, withdrawing support from organizations like the IMF and creditors could exacerbate economic challenges, leading to increased inflation and hardship for the common populace. He might have erred in grasping the dynamics of allegations of rigging by PTI, JUI, GDA, and JI which in fact are emblematic of the broader landscape of partisan politics in Pakistan, where accusations of electoral misconduct are commonplace and often wielded as political leverage. The futility of the petition became evident as major parties like PML(N), PPP, and MQM accepted the election results. PTI, while forming the government in KP and opting for opposition roles elsewhere, is concurrently engaging in legal and political battles to contest

the alleged electoral malpractices. Despite serious reservations about the fairness of the process, parties like GDA, JI, and JUI have refrained from demanding the nullification of the elections. Instead, aggrieved parties are pursuing their grievances through legal avenues, such as Election Tribunals and the Supreme Court of Pakistan, or through political activism. These realizations may have dawned on the Brigadier later, may be coupled with pressure or intimidation, either personally or from external forces, prompting him to withdraw the petition. Alternatively, he may have reconsidered the implications of pursuing the case further and decided to step back for personal or strategic reasons. However, the Supreme Court's decision to proceed with the hearing indicates that they saw merit in investigating the allegations of rigging, regardless of the petitioner's withdrawal. Alternatively, the latest confession of the Commissioner Rawalpindi where he implicated the chief election commissioner and the Chief Justice in the alleged massive and blatant riggings might be the actual reasons which might have prompted to the Supreme Court to take up this petition on its guise discuss the commissioner's confession and allegations in an attempt to clear the chief justice from his alleged involvement in the rigging. As the legal battle would unfold, the Supreme Court would face the arduous task of navigating complex political terrain. Though the petitioner's plea raises fundamental questions about the credibility of the electoral outcome, none of the political parties, the legal fraternity or civil society have ever voiced their intention to declare the elections null and void. All of them have preferred to resort to the legal battle and wage democratic campaigns to seek justice. In this scenario, if the supreme court proceeds with the hearing, it might first determine the competency of the retired Brigadier to file an appeal to nullify the elections. This typically involves demonstrating a personal stake in the outcome of the election, such as being a candidate who lost due to the alleged irregularities. Moreover, the petition must be based on specific and verifiable grounds, such as evidence of widespread irregularities, rigging, or violations of electoral laws. The court may consider mere dissatisfaction with the elections as insufficient reason to petition the supreme court. The Supreme Court may also take into account that major political parties like PPP, PTI, PML(N), or MQM have accepted the election results and may be hesitant to become parties

to the petition. Conversely, smaller parties that were marginalized in the elections, as well as individuals or civil society organizations advocating for electoral transparency and accountability, may step forward to defend the petition. They may argue that the pervasive irregularities have undermined the legitimacy of the results, warranting judicial intervention to nullify the elections. The aggrieved political parties like PTI, JI, GDA and JUI if summoned by the SC may argue that though the election process was replete with irregularities, the overall integrity of the election was not compromised to the extent that would warrant nullifying the results. Additionally, they may stress the importance of addressing the genuine grievances by alternative avenues such as legal challenges or democratic campaigns. The Supreme Court after meticulously weighing the arguments may consider various options while deciding the case. If the evidence fails to substantiate widespread rigging or irregularities that significantly undermine the election's integrity, the supreme court might dismiss the petition. And if credible allegations warrant further investigation, ordering a recount or an inquiry in specific constituencies to rectify concerns without nullifying the entire election. However, in the event of irrefutable evidence of systemic fraud that fundamentally compromises the election's fairness, declaring it null and void may be the necessary course of action, ensuring democratic principles prevail and future electoral integrity is maintained. The Supreme Court's determination to proceed with hearing the petition, even after its withdrawal, underscores the gravity of the situation surrounding the 2024 elections. It reflects an attempt by the Chief Justice to clear his name and may reflect the Court's commitment to address the widespread allegations of rigging that have garnered attention nationally, regionally, and internationally. The direction taken by the Supreme Court in this pivotal case could significantly impact the outcome of the controversial elections. Its findings have the potential to guide the country out of its current political, economic, and financial challenges or further entrench it in political and legal turmoil. Therefore, the Supreme Court's actions carry immense weight and importance in navigating the country's future course.

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

The Cleansocide in Palestine and the American Congress

Makram Khoury-Machool

The one-sided, misleading, and racist text presented to Congress and approved portrays yet again the superficial and supremacist "Us and Them" and "Good and Evil" with a clear finger pointing at Hamas as the "evil perpetrator", while at the point of voting at Congress, a full-scale Cleansocide (Genocide and Ethnic Cleansing) have been perpetrated and is still being carried out by the Israeli occupation in the Gaza strip with crimes including shelling hospitals, the forced displacement of the civilian population, physical destruction of most buildings (public and residential) in the Gaza strip, cutting water supply, fuel, medicine, electricity (power), and internet connectivity...

IT IS AS MUCH as it is heart-breaking for any Palestinian or knowledgeable person to watch the deliberations at the American Congress with regard to Palestine, one needs to sit back and deconstruct not only the spectacle of the deliberation but rather the political context, administrative mechanism, and impact of the results generated by the American political elite as well. Arguing that their political behavior stems from ignorance wouldn't be sufficiently convincing, for one would need also to focus on the work of interest groups, lobbyists, and donations to the party, in general, the (candidates) congresspeople, in particular, and their economic and religious ties with "Israel's" lobby. One most recent example of such resolutions was the vote of Congress 418-0-1, approving the "condemnation of sexual violence committed by Hamas in their war with Israel." Even if we ignored the proposal tabled, the House totally overlooked all evidence provided about the events of 07.10.2023 which proved that the version provided by the Israeli occupation was, to say the least, very economical with the truth and totally ignored the document issued by Hamas' political wing titled "Our Vision". This demonstrates their brutal way of thinking and their arrogant belief that they are entitled to portray the world only according to their vision, to dominate, no matter how false or cruel it is. To ask how deep their knowledge might be of history, in general, and the history of Palestine, in particular, wouldn't be conducive since it is part of their "job" to create structures of disinformation relevant to their political agenda to justify their acts in a way either to manufacture some consensus or at least to serve their interest in their constituency and one that is supposed to be justifying their acts in a way they could try to manufacture some consent. Here, it is crucial to mention the role of American mainstream media, which traditionally played a central role in constructing an ignorant American base. The practice of the American media has come increasingly to the fore in the way in which the ideological media is at the center of the struggle for peoples' minds and views. Within this framework, we notice the supremacist narrative and a process of subjugation and refusal even to hear, let alone accept the narrative of the other – in this case, the oppressed Palestinians. While the Americans inherited the role of the ally of the Zionist oppressor from Imperial Britain, especially after the aggression on the Suez Canal in 1956, they have been taking part in the inhumane discourse about the Palestinian people to ensure that they are not to be treated as an equal group. Not only has the supposedly American-led so-called "Civilized World" been for over 75 years condoning the Israeli "state" terror (against Palestine & Palestinians) by supporting it financially and arming it to the teeth, it also seems to be out of tune with the changing public opinion trends and awareness, including in America itself as evidenced in the streets, as well as

in the new (social) media by the young generation whom they thought they could control and manipulate their patterns of thinking or their set of values with regard to human rights, thus presenting themselves as political idols. Part of the strategy of the American elite has been the maintenance of hegemony without any leverage for the weak and colonized, and above all their self-conviction that the oppressed should remain oppressed eternally and shouldn't be thinking of ways, albeit simple, of equalization, liberation, and independence. Part of the trauma inflicted by this pattern of supremacist thinking became apparent when one or two parties representing the colonized Palestinian people (Hamas and PFLP and perhaps others) decided to adopt a minuscule of the violent methods practiced against them for the last eight decades and violently retaliate or counter (on 07.10.2023) the violence of the colonizer. Regardless of what exactly happened on 07.10 (which should, and I believe will be investigated professionally by the UN/ICJ/ICC), this official "West" has been up in arms against the colonized Palestinians and attempting to oppress them further for daring to use some of the methods they [the West] and their regional agency (Israeli occupation) have been using. It is glaringly obvious that their thoughts have been screaming: "You must remain oppressed silently." How dare you use some of our methods and not accept your misery forever and always? We are the masters of your oppressors, and you should never dare to destabilize the hegemonic power structure we impose. And if you do dare, then we shall become more heavy-handed with you for you are threatening our (economic) interests. The one-sided, misleading, and racist text presented to Congress and approved portrays yet again the superficial and supremacist "Us and Them" and "Good and Evil" with a clear finger pointing at Hamas as the "evil perpetrator", while at the point of voting at Congress, a full-scale Cleansocide (Genocide and Ethnic Cleansing) have been perpetrated and is still being carried out by the Israeli occupation in the Gaza strip with crimes including shelling hospitals, the forced displacement of the civilian population, physical destruction of most buildings (public and residential) in the Gaza strip, cutting water supply, fuel, medicine, electricity (power), and internet connectivity, and over 100,000 Palestinians (30,000) slaughtered with the rest injured and thousands of amputations taking place, most without anesthetic, and other serious injuries. This is the case, in addition to the lack of hygiene, open sewage, the spread of diseases, destruction of schools, and paralysis of the educational process, as well as thousands of bodies dead and some possibly alive left to face slow death (without the minimal chance of being rescued) buried under the rubble or snatched by animals. In addition, men and women have been tortured and paraded in public in the most sadistic and demeaning manner designed to

humiliate human life on global screens with the support of the Biden administration. The proposal, which was tabled and passed, includes disinformation and is part and parcel of a deliberate negative campaign against the Palestinian people, aimed at supporting Cleansocide in the Gaza Strip. The proposal: (1) condemns all rape and forms of sexual violence as weapons of war, including those acts committed by Hamas terrorists on and since October 7th; they do not include acts of rape committed against Palestinian women and children in Israeli jails. (2) calls on all nations to criminalize rape and sexual assault and hold accountable all perpetrators of sexual violence, including state and non-state armed groups; [of course this does not include such crimes committed by the Americans themselves in Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq]. (3) calls on all international bodies to unequivocally condemn the barbaric murder, rape, sexual assault, and kidnapping by Hamas and other terrorists on and since October 7th and hold accountable all perpetrators; (4) reaffirms the United States Government's support for independent, impartial investigations of rape and sexual violence committed by Hamas on and since October 7th; and (5) reaffirms its commitment to supporting survivors of rape and sexual violence, including those brutalized on and since October 7." The text focuses on "rape and sex" and only that of those who are "similar to them" (the Israelis) and is extremely limited in scope, geography, and demography. It couldn't have been more racially motivated. They wouldn't of course even think about the fact the Israeli occupation has been raping the land of Palestine as it features repeatedly in Palestinian literature, oppressing its women, men, and children systematically. Not only did 418 Congress members vote in favor of this proposal, but they also launched an attack on the only Palestinian member of Congress (Rashida Tlaib) for not voting in favor of this denigrating and despicably biased text. Asking Tlaib to approve this text is like asking a raped woman to continue to accept being raped silently forever. The Israeli occupation, supported by the global Zionist movement and American elite, has been perpetrating a Cleansocide for decades in Palestine, in general, and in the then-occupied and besieged Gaza Strip for decades. Members of the American Congress should be aware that the whole world is watching them bring into disrepute all their hypocritical theories of morality and the principles of international humanitarian law. They will also come to realize that all those who have been taking part in crimes of Cleansocide will be brought to justice no matter how long it will take and possibly in the same manner that Jewish Holocaust survivors hunted Nazis. The Palestinians and their allies will hunt the children and grandchildren of Europe's survivors and bring them to justice no matter how long it will take.

- Source: Al Mayadeen English

Briefs

Capable people...

FROM PAGE 01
the path of progress and prosperity. He remarked that Pakistani people were a vibrant nation that had been blessed with abundant natural resources, adding that Pakistan needed to invest in their intellectual development and capacity building. The President highlighted that Pakistan could not progress without the inclusion of 26.2 million out-of-school children in the education system. He stated that educating such a large portion of our population would require thousands of new schools and additional resources. "If left unaddressed, Pakistan would export raw labour without any value-addition", he added. He cited the example of China which had lifted millions of its people out of poverty by investing in their education and health.

Kakar vows punishment to violent...

FROM PAGE 01
"we gave the losing candidates leads of 50,000 votes". "I have done injustice to the Rawalpindi Division," he said. "I tried to commit suicide today after Fajr prayer. But then I thought, why should I die a forbidden death? Why not put everything in front of the people?" he said. "I accept the responsibility of election rigging in Rawalpindi Division and surrender myself to the police," he said. However, Chattha's allegations have been denied by the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) and the newly-appointed Rawalpindi Commissioner. "There should be no doubt about our commitment to these noble civil servants serving the state and the people of Pakistan," the premier said in a statement issued by his office today.

PTI-backed winners...

FROM PAGE 01
minorities by using the platform of other like-minded parties. Addressing a joint press conference in Islamabad today, Barrister Gohar said the PTI-backed independent candidates are required to join any party within three days following the issuance of notification under the law. He said the decision to join SIC has been taken with consensus and demanded the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) to allot the PTI reserved seats in line with the law. The PTI top leader said the PTI will also submit documents to the ECP in this regard today. During the presser, the PTI leader also reiterated the rigging allegation claiming that his party had won 180 NA seats in the February 8 polls. However, as per the result issued by the ECP, the PTI-backed candidates have won as many as 92 seats in the National Assembly.

China congratulates Pakistan...

FROM PAGE 01
after the elections," she added. The spokesperson said that China and Pakistan were all-weather strategic cooperative partners and China hoped to work with Pakistan to build on the traditional friendship, deepen practical cooperation in the various areas and accelerate the building of an even closer China-Pakistan community with a shared future in the new era for the benefit of the peoples of the two countries.

Fitch highlights...

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Pakistan's external position has improved in recent months, with the State Bank of Pakistan reporting net foreign reserves of \$8 billion as of 9 February 2024, up from a low of \$2.9 billion on 3 February 2023. "Nevertheless, this is low relative to projected external funding needs, which we expect will continue to exceed reserves for at least the next few years," said Fitch.

FIFPRO voices concerns over AFC Champions League

"The results indicate that, as anticipated, the merits do not outweigh the drawbacks for most players and clubs, making it an unsustainable system," he said in the report. FIFPRO accused the AFC of adopting "a top-down approach that excludes the voices of players and clubs from decision-making"

RIYADH: The global footballers' union FIFPRO said in a report Monday that the current Asian Champions League is "unsustainable", accusing the regional governing body of not listening to players and clubs. The continent's top club competition has been in the limelight after Saudi teams roped in the likes of Cristiano Ronaldo, Neymar and Karim Benzema. The round of 16 started on Tuesday last week, three days after the final of the Asian Cup, which was clinched by hosts Qatar. The Asian Football Confederation (AFC) is in charge of both competitions, with teams from Australia to the Middle East and Central Asia. The current Champions League is divided into two zones, "West" and "East", until a two-legged final home and away. During the next campaign, there will also be a geographical division at the start of the event, but the quarter-finals, semi-fi-



nals and final will take place in Saudi Arabia. FIFPRO said this changed version, which will see the winner bag \$12 million,

was also unsustainable. Takuya Yamazaki, FIFPRO's chairman for Oceania-Asia, hopes its report will "spark meaningful discussions with governing bodies, leagues, clubs and fans" about the Champions League.

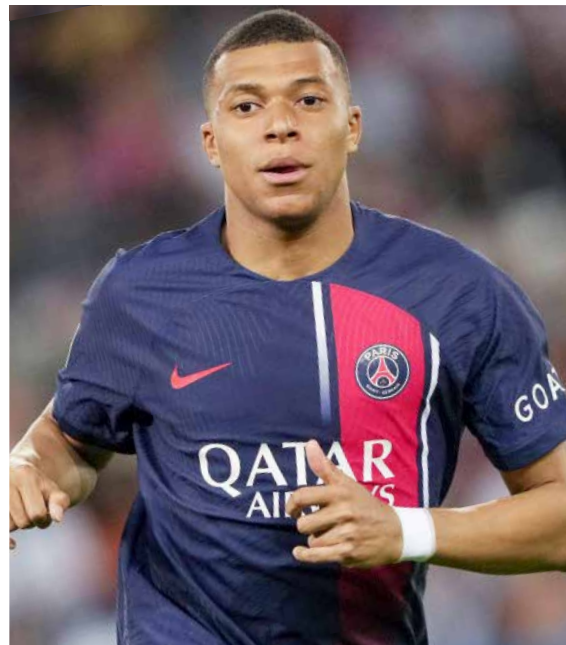
"The results indicate that, as anticipated, the merits do not outweigh the drawbacks for most players and clubs, making it an unsustainable system," he said in the report. FIFPRO accused the AFC of adopting "a top-down approach that excludes the voices of players and clubs from decision-making". It called on the AFC to forge "a genuine partnership with players, clubs and leagues to ensure that the competition delivers for all parties". The report added that the average quality of teams in the Champions League was lower to the top domestic divisions in Japan, South Korea and Saudi Arabia. It said the average quality of the competition was also on a downward trend. FIFPRO also has reservations about the economic cost for teams, bearing in mind long travel sometimes involved, and the effect of travel and match scheduling on players' workload. - Agencies

scouted Red Bull Salzburg's 19-year-old Israel midfielder Oscar Gloukh on Saturday. Bayern Munich manager Thomas Tuchel will not be sacked despite suffering a third defeat in nine days against Bochum on Sunday. Barcelona president Joan Laporta has asked for more scouting reports on Brighton manager Roberto de Zerbi as he considers approaching him to succeed Xavi at the end of the season. Real Madrid manager Carlo Ancelotti has spoken to 38-year-old Croatia midfielder Luka Modric, whose contract runs out in the summer, about his lack of playing time this season. Birmingham City's 33-year-old Republic of Ireland defender Kevin Long is close to completing a move to MLS side Toronto FC.

Mbappe signs contract with Real Madrid till 2029

WEB DESK

PARIS: France striker Kylian Mbappe, 25, has agreed a five-year deal with Real Madrid, having told Paris St-Germain he will leave in the summer. Mbappe held talks with Manchester City the day before announcing he was leaving Paris St-Germain at the end of the season. Chelsea are monitoring Harry Kane's situation at Bayern Munich amid reports the 30-year-old England striker is not completely happy. Liverpool are hoping to lure Bayer Leverkusen manager Xabi Alonso and sporting director Simon Rolfes to replace the outgoing Jurgen Klopp and Jorg Schmadtke this summer. Tottenham are planning a summer move for Everton's 22-year-old



English midfielder James Garner. Oliver Glasner has agreed a two-and-a-

half-year deal to succeed Roy Hodgson as Crystal Palace manager. Arsenal

Crystal Palace manager Hodgson steps down

"I am confident that the season will finish well and I wish the team every success in the weeks, months and seasons to come"

LONDON: Roy Hodgson has stepped down as Crystal Palace boss so the club can "bring forward their plans to appoint a new manager". Hodgson, 76, was "taken ill" during training on Thursday amid reports he was to be sacked. The Eagles have lost 10 of their past 16 Premier League games and are 16th in the table, five points above the relegation zone. "This club is very special and means so much to me," said Hodgson. Palace visit Everton, who are 18th in the Premier League, on Monday night, with Hodgson's assistants Paddy McCarthy and Ray Lewington in charge of the team. Former Eintracht Frankfurt boss Oliver Glasner, 49, is the strong favourite to replace Hodgson on a permanent basis. "I have fully enjoyed my time here across six seasons, as it has given me the chance to work with top-class players and staff doing what I love every day," added Hodgson. "However, I understand, given recent circumstances, it may be prudent at this time for the club to plan ahead, and therefore I have taken the decision to step aside so that the club can bring forward their plans for a new manager, as intended for this summer. "I am confident that the season will finish well and I wish the team every success in the weeks, months and seasons to come." - Agencies

19th 'Cholistan Desert Jeep Rally' 2024 set to commence on Tuesday

ISLAMABAD: The annual 19th Cholistan jeep rally will be held from Feb 20 to 25, 2024 at the renowned historical location, Dravidian Fort, in which vehicles from all over the country will participate. Bahawalpur Deputy Commissioner talking to the PTV news channel said that more than 100 competitors were expected to participate in the jeep rally from all over the country, adding, that a camel race, dances, cultural night, fireworks and exhibition would also be part of the five-day festivities of the jeep rally. The 19th International Cholistan Desert Rally is not just a thrilling sporting event but it is a platform to spotlight the culture, civilization, and historical richness of South Punjab. With the challenging terrain covering 500 km route, the rally features various vehicle categories and drivers eager to take on the desert adventure, he added. Police and other law-enforcement agencies (LEAs) have also been asked to finalize security arrangements for the participants and the visitors, he added. He said the week-long jeep rally celebrations would include several cultural events to be managed by the government departments concerned. He expressed the hope that rallies and cultural programmes would attract visitors from all over the country. This traditional event is expected to not only revive the tourism industry but also create new economic opportunities for the region, he mentioned. Furthermore, a special gathering for the promotion of knowledge and literature will also be organized this year, he added. The event will kick off with participant registration, vehicle tagging, technical examinations, and medical checkups for all drivers, he concluded. - DNA

Bayern Munich suffer third defeat in nine days

LONDON: England captain Harry Kane's late goal at Bochum was not enough as Bayern Munich suffered their third defeat in nine days. Bayern took the lead through Jamal Musiala, before the first of two stoppages following fans' protests. Bochum scored twice, with goals from Takuma Asano and Keven Schlotterbeck. Kevin Stoger's penalty made it 3-1 after Dayot Uпамecano had been sent off and, despite Kane's 25th league goal of the season, it was not enough. Thomas Tuchel's Bayern are now eight points behind Bundesliga leaders Bayer Leverkusen. Tuchel said winning the Bundesliga title "does not look very realistic", but added: "Last season we believed until the end and we were rewarded. So we will keep working at it." Bayern have been German champions in each of the past 11 seasons but now face the possibility of ending the campaign without a trophy. They lost in the German Su-

per Cup in August and then went out of the German Cup in the second round to third-tier Saarbrücken in November. Tuchel's side lost 3-0 at Leverkusen on 10 February and were then beaten 1-0 by Lazio in the first leg of their Champions League last-16 tie in midweek. Referring to the pressure on him following his team's third loss, Tuchel added: "That happens after

every defeat. "The 'how' we played is key. The 'how' was good and that's why this 90 minutes are very different from the second half at Lazio or the game at Leverkusen." This defeat was the first time Bayern have lost three matches in a row since May 2015, when managed by Pep Guardiola. More protests at Bundesliga games midway through the first half, and

again early in the second, play was stopped for just under 10 minutes on each occasion following protests by the fans, in which tennis balls were thrown on to the pitch. Protests are becoming a regular occurrence at Bundesliga matches with supporters unhappy with an investment proposal by the German Football Association. - Agencies



England 'hurting' after Rajkot defeat: McCullum

"We won the first one here when halfway through the Test no-one would have given us a chance, then we lost the next two," said McCullum

SPORTS DESK

NEW DELHI: Coach Brendon McCullum says England are "hurting" after their massive defeat by India, but have "no regrets". England were beaten by 434 runs in the third Test in Rajkot, their largest defeat in terms of runs since 1934, to go 2-1 down in the five-match series. "We'll turn the page and go quids in again trying to put India under pressure," said McCullum. "Hopefully in seven or eight days we'll be talking about how exciting it is to be heading into a decider." The fourth Test in Ranchi begins on Friday. A superb win for England in the first Test in Hyderabad was followed by defeats in Visakhapatnam and Rajkot.

In both the second and third Tests, England wasted solid opportunities to take control. On the third morning in Rajkot, England were 224-2 in reply to the hosts' 445, with India spinner Ravichandran Ashwin absent because of a family emergency. However, England lost eight wickets for 95 runs to surrender the initiative and, little more than a day later, collapsed to 122 all out in their second innings to hand India their biggest win of all time. England have enjoyed great success under McCullum and captain Ben Stokes, with a swashbuckling brand of cricket earning 14 wins from 20 Tests prior to Rajkot. But this defeat has led to criticism that their method is not adaptable enough for the changing

situations and conditions of Test cricket. McCullum told BBC Sport he "absolutely" understands the criticism, but his team will block out "outside noise". "People are entitled to their opinion, good, bad or ugly," said the former New Zealand captain. "It's up to us whether we want to listen to it or not. "The dressing room is a very strong place where confidence is high and guys are backed to go out there and allow their talent to flourish. If we allow the outside noise to seep in, that's our problem." Ben Stokes defends Joe Root's dismissal after heavy third-Test loss to India. McCullum and Stokes took over after England had endured a run of only one win in 17 Tests. This defeat was their sixth in 21 matches since June 2002.

"We've still got some progress to make and some things to improve on, but we're a better team now than we were 18 months ago," said 42-year-old McCullum. "We're obviously not totally screwed down on the method yet. There will be times when we don't quite get it right because it's a hard way to play. It's asking guys to take the game on and sometimes we have to deal with failure. "The upside is hopefully continuing to put bums on seats, make Test cricket more entertaining, we'll win more often and we'll be a team that people really want to follow." England's first-innings collapse in Rajkot was sparked by Joe Root attempting a reverse scoop at the pace of Jasprit

Bumrah, only to be caught at second slip. Debate has centred on whether Root, England's second-highest run-scorer in Test cricket, is being hampered by trying to play too aggressively. Root's average under McCullum of 50.12 is marginally higher than his career mark of 49.32. However, it is down on the 54.36 Root was averaging in the 20 Tests before McCullum took over, when the former captain was in the best form of his career, scoring eight hundreds in that period. "People see a shot like that and go, 'Joe Root is struggling to deal with this new regime'," said McCullum. "His impact on the game is still very, very significant. Imagine if this becomes the norm for Joe

as well, with the talent he possesses and the history he's got. Then what's the ceiling? "Do we want just a normal Joe Root, or do we want an even better Joe Root? How many games are we going to win if that happens." McCullum also backed Jonny Bairstow, who has a highest score of 37 on the tour. McCullum said he would "anticipate" Bairstow will play in the next Test. England are unbeaten in Test series under McCullum. They came from 1-0 down to beat South Africa in 2022, then 2-0 down against Australia to draw the Ashes last summer. "I'm pretty excited about the next two. If we bounce back from this then we'll know this team is starting to get where we want it to get to.

Solangi urges...

FROM PAGE 01
patience as the legal process was currently underway. The people should have trust in institutions and the judicial process, he added. He remarked that the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) was currently investigating the allegations of rigging. The minister stressed the significance of waiting for the results of the ongoing legal proceedings. The caretaker government, he said, had fulfilled its responsibility for conducting elections in free, fair and peaceful manner. Responding to a query, he explained that once the Election Commission released the final list of successful candidates, the Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs would forward a summary to the concerned for convening the new session of the National Assembly.

All three Capital...

FROM PAGE 01
challenged single-member IHC CJ Justice Aamir Farooq verdict dismissing the plea to suspend the victory notification of NA 47, NA-47 and NA-48 constituencies. The IHC judge remarked who was issuing these notifications in the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP). From NA-47 Islamabad National Assembly seat, Tariq Fazl Chaudhry got 102502 votes while PTI-backed Shohaib Shaheen got 87396 votes in the elections held on February 8.

Ali Amin Gandapur...

FROM PAGE 01
supporters being apprehended by law enforcement agencies. The politician, meanwhile, prepares to take over the reins of the provincial government in KP. "Fake FIRs were lodged against us all over the country," the politician said while speaking with journalists in Peshawar and hinting at the active role of police and bureaucracy in the crackdown against his party. The PTI leader, who won PK-113 and NA-44 from his hometown Dera Ismail Khan in the recently held general elections, said that those involved in lawlessness must be punished if traditions are to be changed.

Palestinian accuses...

FROM PAGE 01
stop "immediately, totally and unconditionally." "Justice delayed is justice denied and the Palestinian people have been denied justice for far too long," he said. "It is time to put an end to the double standards that have kept our people captive for far too long." Summing up, Palestinian UN envoy Riyad Mansour struggled to hold back his tears as he called for a "future where Palestinian children are treated as children, not as a demographic threat." In December 2022, the UN General Assembly asked the ICJ for a non-binding "advisory opinion" on the "legal consequences arising from the policies and practices of Israel in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem."

Senate throws out bill seeking...

FROM PAGE 01
The senators who had voted against the bill called for improved prosecutions, investigations for combating sexual crimes, and a better jail environment to ensure that such heinous crimes are averted in the future. Defending his proposal after it had been defeated, JI's Mushtaq said the senators did not talk about the "basic issue" and noted that the lawmakers spoke about "brutality" becoming rife due to public executions, but it's already rife. "I want to halt brutality through public executions. Did the motorway rape case woman and Zainab have no respect? [How] does a rapist have respect?" he wondered, claiming that publicly hanging such criminals would act as a "deterrence". Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam-Fazl's (JUI-F) Faiz Muhammad, backing Mushtaq, said that culprits who commit such heinous crimes should be hanged publicly.

Briefs

2,651 new companies incorporated in January

ISLAMABAD: The Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan (SECP) has registered 2,651 new companies in January 2024, showing an increase of 10 percent compared to the corresponding period last year. The total number of registered companies now stands at 212,108. Total capitalization (paid-up capital) with regard to newly incorporated companies is Rs5.2 billion, said a news release. In January, around 58 percent of companies were registered as private limited companies, 38 percent as single member companies, and 4 percent as public unlisted companies, not-for-profit associations, trade organizations, limited liability partnerships, and foreign companies. Five foreign companies also registered their place of business in Pakistan. Around 138 foreign applicants were registered from overseas through eServices. Almost 99.85 percent of companies were registered online. The information technology sector took the lead with regards to incorporation with 356 companies, trading with 319, real estate development and construction, and services with 277 each, tourism with 145, education with 116, food and beverages with 94, corporate agricultural farming with 93, e-commerce with 72, engineering with 65, chemical with 61, power generation with 58, marketing & advertisement, and textile with 55 each. Furthermore, pharmaceutical, mining & quarrying with 53 each, healthcare with 48, fuel and energy with 45, transport with 44, cosmetics & toiletries with 33, communication with 28, broadcasting & telecasting with 27, lodging, and auto and allied with 22 each, cables & electrical goods with 19, paper & board with 18, and 196 companies were registered in other sectors. —DNA

NBP exchange rates

KARACHI, Feb 19 (APP): Treasury Management Division of National Bank of Pakistan (NBP) on Monday the following exchange rates.

CURRENCY SYMBOL TT Selling TT Buying US DOLLAR USD 279.80 279.30 EURO EUR 302.16 301.63 JAPANESE YEN JPY 1.8660 1.8627 BRF: SRI LANKA LKR 352.00 351.50 SWISS FRANC CHF 317.54 316.97 CANADIAN DOLLAR CAD 207.60 207.23 AUSTRALIAN DOLLAR AUD 183.01 182.68 SWEDISH KRONA SEK 26.93 26.88 NORWEGIAN KRONA NOK 26.64 26.60 DANISH KRONA DKK 40.46 40.38 NEW ZEALAND DOLLAR NZD 171.74 171.44 SINGAPORE DOLLAR SGD 208.11 207.74 HONGKONG DOLLAR HKD 35.91 35.80 KOREAN WON KRW 6,209.7 6,209.4 CHINESE YUAN CNY 39.02 38.95 MALAYSIAN RINGGIT MYR 58.51 58.44 THAI BAHT THB 7.78 7.77 U.A.E DIRHAM AED 76.19 76.05 SAUDI RIYAL SAR 74.92 74.89 QATAR RIYAL QAR 38.75 38.62 KUWAITI DINAR KWD 908.62 907.00.—APP

Europe is nervous about Trump possible win

MONITORING DESK

HONG KONG: China's top diplomat Wang Yi had a message for his European counterparts over the weekend: no matter how the world changes, China will be "consistent and stable" — a "force for stability." The claim, which Wang delivered during remarks at the Munich Security Conference on Saturday, comes as European leaders are warily watching the upcoming United States elections — concerned that the potential return of former President Donald Trump could upend their partnership with Washington. Those concerns flared in the past week after Trump said he would not defend NATO allies that failed to spend enough on defense — a stunning threat for many in Europe as Russia's invasion grinds on in Ukraine. The timing of Trump's comments couldn't have been better for Wang, who is visiting Europe as Beijing struggles to repair deteriorating relations with the bloc — an effort made more urgent by its domestic economic struggles and ongoing frictions with the US. "No matter how the world changes, China, as a responsible major country, will keep its major principles and policies consistent and stable and serve as a staunch force for stability in a turbulent world," Wang said during remarks in Munich, while calling for China and Europe to "stay clear of geopolitical .



ISLAMABAD: A view of massive traffic jam at Islamabad Expressway during rain that experienced in the Federal Capital. —APP

'EU must send 'message of support' to Russian opposition'

Yulia Navalnaya was to join ministers of the 27-nation European Union in Brussels, as they weigh their — limited — options for inflicting new costs on Russian President Vladimir Putin

BRUSSELS: EU foreign ministers were meeting the widow of Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny Monday to send a "message of support" to Kremlin opponents after his death in jail, the bloc's top diplomat said. "We have to send a message of support to the Russian opposition," EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell told journalists. Yulia Navalnaya was to join ministers of the 27-nation European Union in Brussels, as they weigh their — limited — options for inflicting new costs on Russian President Vladimir Putin. Navalny's death in an Arctic prison last week has shocked the country's exiled opposition which — along with the West — pointed the finger at the Kremlin. The EU has already imposed unprecedented sanctions on Moscow — including on Putin — over its invasion of Ukraine and officials concede it will be difficult to impose further major pain after Navalny's death. But Borrell said

he expected EU member states to propose fresh sanctions on those directly responsible for Navalny's treatment, including in Russia's prison system. "The great responsible is Putin himself," Borrell said. He said that Brussels would look to rename its global human rights sanctions blacklist after Navalny in a symbolic move. German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock said ministers would "initiate further sanctions measures" over Navalny's death. "The Russian brutal war of aggression... is not just a war against Ukraine, but against freedom itself," she said. Other ministers said the death of Putin's greatest domestic foe should serve to bolster backing for Kyiv as its outgunned forces struggle to hold back Russia. "Putin is a murderer. Putin has murdered one person who fought for freedom for democracy, and this is exactly why we have to keep going," said Estonian Foreign Minister

Navalny's widow to meet EU ministers

BRUSSELS: Alexei Navalny's widow will meet European foreign ministers in Brussels on Monday, EU officials announced, as Russian courts jailed dozens of people detained at events commemorating the Kremlin critic. The 47-year-old opposition leader died in an Arctic prison on Friday after spending more than three years behind bars, prompting outrage and condemnation from Western leaders and his supporters. EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell said he would welcome Yulia Navalnaya to the bloc's Foreign Affairs Council on Monday. "EU Ministers will send a strong message of support to freedom fighters in Russia" and "honour" Navalny's memory, he added on X, formerly Twitter, on Sunday. Navalny was Russia's most prominent opposition leader and garnered a huge following as he campaigned against corruption under President Vladimir Putin. In the hours following the announcement that her husband had died, Navalnaya, who had not seen him in two years, said she held Putin personally responsible. She called on the international community to "unite and defeat this evil, terrifying regime". Italy's Foreign Minister Antonio Tajani said Navalnaya's words "will make us feel the threat that weighs on Russian citizens and on every region of our Europe", where "violence, brutality, and war have been shamefully and irresponsibly returned".—Agencies

Margus Tsahkna. "The most clear response would be if we finally do our job. We have to support Ukraine." That was echoed by Belgian minister Hadja Lahbib

who warned that the death of Navalny served to underline the threat the Kremlin poses as it presses its offensive of Ukraine. "We must be aware of what is at

stake today," she said. "If Russia manages to expand, it is a dictatorship that will expand and move a little closer to the European Union."

Von der Leyen to seek second EU term as far right strength grows

BERLIN: Ursula von der Leyen is poised to announce Monday her bid for a second term as chief of the European Commission, at a time when the bloc's unity faces strong headwinds from the far-right. At the helm since 2019, the 65-year-old had led the bloc's executive body as the EU traversed an extraordinary period of disruptions — from Brexit to the coronavirus pandemic to Russia's invasion of its pro-EU neighbour Ukraine. Hendrik Wuest, a key figure in von der Leyen's Christian Democratic Union (CDU) party in Germany, said her new bid would be a much needed constant at a time of uncertainties. "A second term would be a sign of stability, that is all the more needed at a time when our European values are being attacked from all sides," he told news site Politico. Von der Leyen's candidacy is expected to be announced at around midday at a press conference at the CDU's headquarters in Berlin. The broader alliance of conservatives across the bloc — the European People's Party group to which the CDU belongs — would then name her as its lead candidate for the post in Bucharest on March 6-7, EPP leader Manfred Weber has said. Von der Leyen, a protégé of former German chancellor Angela Merkel who has served as minister on all four of her cabinets, is the first woman to lead the commission. A second von der Leyen commission would likely find itself with a changed political landscape. Voter surveys suggest extreme-right, anti-immigrant parties across Europe will grab more seats in European Parliament elections on June 6-9, pushing the legislature to the right. That could slow progress towards European Union green transition that von der Leyen had made a cornerstone of her first term. It could also grow the cohort of European lawmakers sympathetic to Donald Trump should he regain the White House. —DNA

OGDCL announces gas and condensate discovery

ISLAMABAD: The Oil and Gas Development Company Limited (OGDCL) has announced a significant breakthrough in its exploration efforts with the discovery of gas and condensate at the Kharo-1, a well drilled in the Khewari exploration license area, located in Khairpur district of Sindh province. Following rigorous drilling and testing operations conducted with OGDCL's proprietary expertise, the Kharo-1 well reached an impressive depth of 3,762 meters. Subsequent testing procedures registered promising results, showcasing a flow rate of 14.3 million standard cubic feet per day (MMSCFD) of gas, complemented by 93 barrels per day (bbls/d) of condensate. These exceptional results were obtained at a 32/64-inch choke size, with a wellhead flowing pressure (WHFP) of 2,737 pounds per square inch (psi), originating from Massive sand strata of the Lower Goru Formation.—APP

Gaza doctors: 'We leave patients to scream for hours and hours'

" Hamas continues to put Gaza's most vulnerable citizens in serious danger by cynically using hospitals for terror," it earlier told the BBC

NEWS DESK

LONDON: "Because of the shortage of painkillers we leave patients to scream for hours and hours," one told the BBC. The World Health Organization (WHO) has described the state of healthcare in Gaza as being "beyond words". It said 23 hospitals in Gaza were not functioning at all as of Sunday - 12 were partially functioning and one minimally. The health agency said air strikes and a lack of supplies had "depleted an already under-resourced system". WHO says Nasser hospital, raided by IDF, not functional. The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) says Hamas "systematically uses hospitals and

medical centres for its terrorist activities". In a statement to the BBC, it said the IDF "did not 'attack' hospitals, but rather entered specific areas... [to] neutralise Hamas' infrastructure and equipment, and apprehend Hamas terrorists, while acting with great caution". It said it was allowing humanitarian aid into Gaza, including medical supplies. Aid organisations, including the WHO, say there have been "repeated access restrictions and denials". Warning: This article contains details some readers may find upsetting. Hospitals stretched. Many of Gaza's hospitals are overcrowded and have limited equipment, health-care workers say. There

are reports that some hospitals in southern Gaza are operating at over 300% of their bed capacity. Four field hospitals have been set up in Gaza, with 305 beds combined, according to the WHO. On Sunday, it said the Nasser hospital in southern Gaza was the latest facility to become non-operational, following a raid by Israeli forces. The IDF said on Sunday night it had found weapons at the hospital, as well as medicines with the names and photos of hostages on them, and had apprehended "hundreds of terrorists" hiding there. "Hamas continues to put Gaza's most vulnerable citizens in serious danger by cynically using hospitals for terror," it earlier told the BBC.

Afghan ex-commandos blocked from UK relocation

The former commandos were eligible to apply for relocation under the Afghan Relocation and Assistance Policy, but dozens have since been attacked or killed by the Taliban after being rejected

DNA

LONDON: Elite Afghan soldiers who served alongside coalition forces against the Taliban were rejected from relocating to the UK by British special forces personnel, the BBC reported on Monday. Documents leaked to the national broadcaster reveal that despite compelling evidence of involvement in the anti-Taliban campaign — a prerequisite of the British relocation scheme — many Afghan commando applications were axed by UK special forces reviewers. The former commandos were eligible to apply for relocation under the Afghan Relocation and Assistance Policy, but dozens have since been attacked

or killed by the Taliban after being rejected. The CF 333 and ATF 444 units, dubbed the "Triples," fought alongside British special forces in some of the most dangerous campaigns of the war. Their relocation applications appear to have been sent to their former colleagues in Britain for approval or rejection as part of a new standard operating procedure. But the designated chain of command has been criticized over an apparent conflict of interest, with special forces units in the UK, including the SAS, long facing controversy over war crimes allegations. The Afghan soldiers applying for relocation may have been able to add crucial eyewitness accounts of war crimes, threatening the reopening of an official investiga-

tion that was shut down in 2019. One British former special forces officer said: "It's a clear conflict of interest. At a time when certain actions by UK special forces are under investigation by a public inquiry, their headquarters also had the power to prevent former Afghan special forces colleagues and potential witnesses to these actions from getting safely to the UK." Armed Forces Minister James Heappey recently pledged to review about 2,000 Triples applications after discovering that the reasoning behind some rejections was "not robust." Internal emails from the UK's Ministry of Defence demonstrate the power of special forces reviewers to make or break relocation applications. In some cases, civil servants tried to challenge re-

jections made by the special forces but were rebuffed. Former Triples members told the BBC from Afghanistan that they now face significant danger and are unable to stay with their families or work. One was beaten and interrogated by Taliban authorities before going on the run. He said: "I'm living in a very bad situation. I am in hiding and mostly my family can't live together and we cannot go out and we cannot work. "I was sure that my British colleagues and friends, who we worked for several years alongside, would help me to evacuate to safety." Now I feel that the sacrifices I made have been forgotten. I feel I have been left alone in the midst of hell." In another case, a former Triples member, at the time of the group's

joint operations with the SAS, complained to British military authorities over alleged war crimes perpetrated by his Western colleagues. Pending an investigation, he forbade his men from taking part in supporting operations for SAS missions, alleging that extrajudicial killings of Afghan civilians were taking place. An MoD spokesperson said: "We are conducting an independent, case-by-case review of all applications from former members of Afghan specialist units, which includes applications from the Triples. "This review will consider all available evidence, including that provided by third parties. The review is being carried out by independent staff who have not previously worked on these applications."

53 dead in Papua New Guinea tribal violence

PORT MORESBY: Fifty-three people have been killed in tribal violence in Papua New Guinea's highlands, police said, the latest in a string of mass deaths linked to long-running feuds in the region. Police Commissioner David Manning said on Sunday that officers and soldiers had retrieved the bodies of 53 men. They are believed to have been killed near the town of Wabag, 600 kilometres north-west of the capital Port Moresby. The exact circumstances of the deaths were not immediately clear, but police said there had been reports of heavy gunfire in the area. The incident is thought to be linked to a conflict between Sikin and Kaekin tribesmen. Police received graphic videos and photos purporting to be from the scene. They showed stripped and bloodied bodies lying by the side of the road and piled up on the back of a flatbed truck. Highland clans have fought each other in Papua New Guinea for centuries, but an influx of automatic weapons has made clashes more deadly and escalated the cycle of violence. Papua New Guinea's government has tried suppression, mediation, amnesties and a range of other strategies to control the violence, with little success.—DNA

Six killed, 30 trapped in Afghanistan avalanche: provincial official

KABUL: An avalanche has killed at least six people and trapped 30 more in the eastern Afghan province of Nuristan, a provincial official said on Monday, after swaths of the country saw heavy snowfall. "It is still snowing. Rescue efforts are under way and the number of dead may increase," provincial head of information and culture Jamiullah Hashimi told AFP. The avalanche swept through the village of Nakre in the Tatin valley of Nuristan overnight on Sunday, blanketing homes in snow and rubble. Around 20 houses were destroyed or heavily damaged, Hashimi added. "Due to clouds and rain, the helicopter cannot land in Nuristan," said Maulvi Mohammad Nabi Adel, the head of public works in the province, adding that snow had blocked one of the main roads into the province, making "the rescue operation difficult". Nuristan province, which borders Pakistan, is mostly covered by mountainous forests and hugs the southern end of the Hindu Kush mountain range. This year, the arrival of snow was delayed across much of Afghanistan, which is accustomed to harsh winters. The exceptionally low level of rain in a country that relies heavily on agriculture has forced many farmers to delay planting.—APP

Indian airlines ordered to stop baggage delay chaos

DNA

LONDON: Some of India's top airlines have been ordered to start sending out passengers' bags within 10 minutes of the plane's engine shutting down. The civil aviation ministry has said that passengers' luggage should be delivered to them within 10 to 30 minutes after landing. The airlines have until 26 February to comply with the order. Late baggage delivery has been a persistent problem across airports. The Bureau of Civil Aviation Security (BCAS) directed seven airlines, including carriers like Air India, Vistara and IndiGo, to implement necessary measures to ensure timely delivery of baggage. The directive comes after the aviation ministry monitored the time it took for luggage to be delivered to passengers at six major airports in India. The operations of seven airlines were scrutinized across 3,600 flights. A statement by the ministry said that the review exercise began in January and was still ongoing. It also said that though the performance of all airlines with regards to baggage delivery had improved.—APP

Briefs

Spain to impose sanctions on violent Israeli settlers

DNA

MADRID: Spain will impose sanctions on violent Israeli settlers in the West Bank unilaterally if its European Union partners fail to reach an agreement on the issue, Foreign Minister Jose Manuel Albares said on Monday. He said Spain, which has also been critical of Israel's military offensive in Gaza, will push for the approval of such sanctions during a meeting of EU's foreign ministers held in Brussels on Monday. "If there's no agreement, Spain will proceed individually with these sanctions against the violent settlers," Albares told reporters before the meeting. Irish Foreign Minister Michael Martin said earlier on Monday he hoped the EU countries would unanimously approve these sanctions. Last week, French authorities banned 28 Israeli settlers from entering the country, accusing them of attacking Palestinians in the occupied West Bank. UN figures show that daily settler attacks have more than doubled since Hamas' surprise attack on Israel on Oct. 7 and the ensuing assault on the Palestinian enclave of Gaza. While international attention has focused on that cross-border assault and Israel's subsequent war there, European officials have also expressed concern about rising violence against Palestinians in the West Bank.

NA-241 winner Baig dismisses PTI's claim

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) leader Dr Mirza Ikhtiar Baig on Monday dismissed media reports about his dual nationality saying that he had renounced his Canadian citizenship long before elections. Baig termed the claim of PTI affiliated independent candidate of NA-241, Khurram Sher Zaman, about his dual nationality as misleading. In a tweet, Zaman said Baig was allowed by the Election Appellate Tribunal to run as a candidate in NA-241 constituency despite being a dual citizen of Canada and Pakistan. "But the time is now to provide documentary proof of renunciation of Canadian citizenship or be disqualified under the constitution's Article 63(1)," he added. The PPP leader, who won the election on the NA-241 seat as an opponent of Zaman, said the documents about his renunciation of Canadian citizenship along with an affidavit were submitted to the Election Appellate Tribunal of SHC.

SC rejects withdrawal of plea seeking annulment of polls

"Court cannot be subjected to such mockery," says top judge while questioning if plea was filed by petitioner himself

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

ISLAMABAD: Expressing dismay over the withdrawal of the plea seeking annulment of the February 8 elections, Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Qazi Faez Isa on Monday ordered the authorities to find the complainant and present him before the Supreme Court at the next hearing. Stressing that the top court cannot be subjected to such mockery, CJP Isa directed the authorities to "find and present the complainant before the court" stressing that the SC will hear this case. The top judge's remarks come as a three-member bench of the Supreme Court (SC) led by the chief justice and comprising Justice Musarrat Hilali and Justice Muhammad Ali Mazhar, conducted the hearing on Brig (ret'd) Ali Khan's petition seeking re-elections over the issue of alleged rigging in the polls. The development comes in the backdrop of concerns raised by several political parties including Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP), Jamaat-e-Islami and Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam-Fazl (JUI-F) who have expressed dissatisfaction over the transparency of the general elections. Doubts over the polls were further exacerbated by the revelations made by now-former Rawalpindi commissioner Liaqat Chatha, who on Saturday, tendered his resignation out of "guilty conscience"

IHC summons PM for 3rd time in missing Baloch students case

COURT REPORTER

ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar has been summoned for the third time by the Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Monday in the case pertaining to the missing Baloch students. The court orders came before its bench adjourned today's hearing till February 28. "Caretaker prime minister should not consider coming to court as an insult," Justice Mohsin Akhtar Kayani, who is heading the bench, remarked during the hearing. The caretaker prime minister should not go to Karachi for the next hearing, but appear before the court, the IHC judge added. "No one is above the law here," the judge said, stating that the premier was summoned because he was "accountable". The judge was upset over the absence of PM Kakar, reminding the Attorney General for Pakistan Mansoor Usman Awan about the second time he has skipped appearing before the court. Justice Kayani also inquired about other caretaker ministers as well as the defence and interior secretary. However, Interior Secretary Aftab Durrani appeared before the court later. A day earlier, IHC's Justice Kayani issued a four-page written order summoning PM Kakar, defence and interior ministers along with the secretaries of the ministries concerned. They were directed to ensure their physical appearance in today's hearing at 10am. Along with the caretaker premier, the caretaker ministers of interior and defence have also been summoned. At the onset of the hearing, IHC's Justice Mohsin Akhtar Kayani said it took two years to recover the people of our country, but not all children have been recovered yet.

for abetting large-scale electoral rigging in the garrison city further raising the political mercury in the country. The Rawalpindi Division comprises 13 National Assembly seats, on which 11 Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) candidates were successful, while the rest were secured by an independent candidate and Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP). The division also has 27 provincial seats – on which PML-N was successful on 15 and 11 independents. During today's hearing, CJP Isa questioned whether the petition was filed for mere publicity. "The complainant [had] released the petition to the media as soon it was filed," the top judge said while directing the authorities to establish contact with the petitioner via telephone. The top judge further directed the additional attorney general to coordinate with the relevant station house officer (SHO) and present the complainant before the court. "Who knows if the complainant himself filed the petition or not? [...] What if he says that he hasn't withdrawn the petition," the chief justice questioned. The apex court, during the hearing, was told that the petitioner could neither be reached via his stated telephone number nor his address despite having a notification issued by the Defence Ministry as well. The court then adjourned the hearing till February 21.

X restored in Pakistan

DNA

KARACHI: Social media platform X has been restored in Pakistan on Monday after an over 36-hour blockade since February 17 (Saturday). Net-blocks – a global internet monitor – had reported on Saturday the "national-scale disruption to X amid escalating unrest and protests over allegations of election fraud, following a high-level resignation and public admission of vote manipulation" by Rawalpindi Commissioner Liaqat Ali Chatha, who admitted to rigging under his watch, triggering a fresh wave of controversy over poll results. In an update on Sunday, the watchdog had noted the continuous restriction of the platform which it said was "the latest and longest in a series of nation-scale internet censorship measures imposed by authorities." It is, however, important to note that X was restored for half an hour yesterday but was blocked again while the PTA is not responding to queries.

MoIB halts allotment of plots to journalists

DNA

ISLAMABAD: In a recent development, on the recommendation of Grievance Redressal Committee, a body formed by the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting to address grievances within the journalism community the MoIB put a temporary halt to the allotment process of plots to journalists. Committee has recommended that the process be suspended until the Grievance Redressal Committee finalizes its recommendations. Furthermore, the Committee recommended the Ministry that revised lists of allotment for residential plot under the quota in the Federal Government Employees Housing Scheme, Bharakahu Green Enclave-I and Phase-II (F-14/15) will be made available subsequent to the completion of the Grievance Redressal Committee's deliberations and the submission of its report.

Yasmin urges courts to protect people's mandate

ABID RAZA

LAHORE: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leader and former provincial minister Dr Yasmin Rashid has said the court should protect people's mandate. She expressed these views while talking to media while appearing in the Anti-Terrorism Court in connection with the May 9 cases on Monday. Answering a question about becoming opposition leader in the Punjab Assembly, she replied she would act according to the party's direction. Yasmin stated she had no hope attached with the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP). "The nation is looking at the judiciary for justice. The people of Pakistan came out of their homes to vote to the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf despite apprehensions and fears but their trust has been breached," the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf leader said. "People have pinned high hopes with the judiciary and it should take action to set the things right," she concluded.



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Jordan to Pakistan Dr. Maen Khreasat met with Dr. Akbar Nassir Khan, IG Islamabad Police and visited the Safe City control room, a top of the line in advanced surveillance technology. – DNA

Portuguese writer José Luis Peixoto coming to Pakistan



ISLAMABAD: José Luis Peixoto, from Portugal, acclaimed author and poet is coming to Pakistan, this February 2024. With initiative of the Embassy of Portugal in Islamabad, and the support of the Portuguese Institute Camões, José Luis Peixoto will participate in the Literary Festival of Lahore 2024, taking place this month on Friday 23rd till Sunday 25th.

In Islamabad, the author will be participating in University events with students and professors, and interacting with Pakistanis' writers, journalists and culture related figures. José Luis Peixoto (born in 1974 in Alentejo, south of Portugal) is one of Portugal's most renowned contemporary authors, winner of the José Saramago Literary Award, amongst others, and his prose and poetry books have been translated into more than 30 languages. At the Lahore Literary Festival 2024, the author will engage in several thematic discussion panels and will showcase his views on literature, life, his literary career, and literature in the Portuguese language speaking countries (9 countries in 4 continents). – DNA

Gaza death toll tops 29,000 as hunger soars

Houthi group's military forces in Yemen said on Monday that they had fired missiles at a British ship in the Gulf of Aden, causing significant damage to it

NEWS DESK

GAZA CITY: As the US-backed Israeli genocidal war on the Gaza Strip entered day 136 on Monday, massive aerial and artillery strikes continued to pound neighborhoods, homes and shelter centers and massacre more civilians, mostly children and women. Palestinian Information Center (PIC) said that the Israeli occupation army continued to attack different areas of Gaza, killing and injuring dozens of citizens.

According to local media sources, one civilian was martyred and others were injured when the Israeli army targeted a number of citizens on Road 5 in western Khan Yunis, while five other martyrs were evacuated to the European Gaza Hospital following other Israeli attacks on Khan Yunis. Casualties were also reported following an Israeli attack on a house in the east of Deir al-Balah in central Gaza. Meanwhile, bodies of four martyrs were retrieved today from the rubble of Rotana Hall in Miraj area, south of Khan Yunis, which had been bombed on Sunday. Other casualties were reported in different areas of Gaza following Israeli aerial, artillery and shooting attacks last night and Monday. Meanwhile, The Ansarullah (Houthi) group's military forces in Yemen said on Monday that they had fired missiles at a British ship in the Gulf of Aden, causing significant damage to it. "Our naval forces have attacked the British ship, Rubymar, in the Gulf of Aden with a number of missiles," military spokesman for the group Yehya Sarea said in a televised statement aired by al-Masirah satellite channel. "As a result of the extensive damage the ship sustained, it is now at risk of potential sinking in the Gulf of Aden. During the operation, we made sure that the ship's crew left it safely," Sarea added. "Our attacks in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden will not stop unless the (Israeli) aggression against Gaza stops," the spokesman said.

Japan hosts Ukraine reconstruction conference

Support for Ukraine's reconstruction is about "investing in the future," Kishida said. "The war in Ukraine is still going on at this very moment and the situation is not easy. The promotion of economic reconstruction

FOREIGN DESK

TOKYO: Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida on Monday pledged his country's long-term engagement in Ukraine's reconstruction, calling it a future investment, as Japan stressed its commitment to supporting the war-torn country ahead of the two-year anniversary of Russia's invasion. In his keynote speech at a conference Japan co-organized with the Ukrainian government and business organizations, Kishida said Japanese public and private cooperation will be a long-term partnership based on inclusivity, humanitarianism as well as technology and knowledge. More than 50 cooperation deals were signed by Japanese and Ukrainian government agencies and companies. Kishida stressed the importance of investment across industries for the future of that country's development and ensuring that support caters to Ukraine's needs. The support for Ukraine's reconstruction is about "investing in the future," Kishida said. "The war in Ukraine is still going on at this very moment and the situation is not easy. The promotion of economic

reconstruction, however, is not only an investment for the future of Ukraine but also investing in Japan and the whole globe." Ukraine's Prime Minister Denys Shmyhal, who heads headed his country's delegation of more than 100 people, expressed thanks for the encouragement and said that "today is the new start of cooperation between the two countries." He said "Ukraine is not just rebuilding, we are generating new rules of the game, new approaches," he said. All eyes are on Ukraine, and "dictators and potential invaders" are also turning their eyes to see how Russia's violation of the international law is seen and how the world will react to it. About 300 people and 80 companies are to attend from the two countries, Japanese officials have said. The Japan-Ukraine Conference for Promotion of Economic Growth and Reconstruction is co-organized by the Japanese and Ukrainian governments, Japan's powerful business organization Keidanren, and Japan External Trade Organization, or JETRO. The two sides issued a joint communique, stating Japan's long-term support in helping Ukraine achieve economic stability.

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