



# Islamabad POST

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**Palestinian ambassador commends Pakistan's support amid Gaza war**

Detailed News On Page-06

**Netanyahu is starving the Gaza children**

Detailed News On Page-08



**Sammy backs Zalmi to qualify for PSL playoffs**

Detailed News On Page-06



## Post-election chaos

# Imran wants IMF aid halted over 'rigged' polls

"No institution give loan to a nation that does not hold free and fair elections," says PTI leader Zafar

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

RAWALPINDI: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder Imran Khan will write a letter to the International Monetary Fund (IMF), demanding it to stop their support for Pakistan due to "rigged elections," party leader Ali Zafar announced on Thursday. "Imran Khan will issue a letter to IMF today. The charter of IMF, EU, and other organisations stipulates that they can function or provide loan to a country only if there's good governance," Zafar told journalists after meeting Khan at Rawalpindi's Adiala Jail. Zafar claimed that the "most important section" of their charter is that a country should be democratic. "If there's no democracy, then neither can these institutions function in those countries, nor should they." "The basic pillar of a democracy is a free and fair election. However, the entire world saw how the nation's mandate was stolen. Let's leave pre-poll rigging aside, in post-poll rigging, victory was snatched from PTT's winning candidates." Senator Zafar said the people's vote was stolen in the darkness of the night. He said going to the IMF for a bailout package would be detrimental to the country without conducting the audit of the election results. He also lamented that permission has not been granted to meet Khan's wife Bushra Bibi, who is incarcerated at the Bani Gala residence declared as sub-jail. This isn't the first time that the opposition party PTI will try to affect the IMF deal as in 2022, its ex-leader Shaukat Tarin had told PTT's then-finance ministers of KP and Punjab that they should "tell the IMF that the commitment made to them cannot be fulfilled" and to cite the recent devastation caused by floods in the country as the reason behind it. Pakistan secured a short-term \$3 billion programme from the IMF last year which helped to avert a sovereign debt default. It will run out next month and securing a new and much bigger

Continued on Page 06

*'Establishment has broken all records of interference'*

JUI F chief says after the 2018 election, we hoped for fairness and transparency in 2024, but once again our aspirations have been undermined

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Maulana Fazlur Rehman, chief of the Jamiat Ulema Islam-Fazl (JUI-F), issued a stark warning following the announcement of a coalition government between the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) and the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP), asserting that both parties would blackmail each other while being manipulated by "hidden forces" behind the scenes. Speaking at a meeting regarding his party's protest against alleged rigging in the recent general elections, Fazl lamented the erosion of democratic principles.

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## BIRTHDAY OF JAPANESE EMPEROR

His Majesty the Emperor's 64th Birthday



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Culture Jamal Shah, Ambassador of Japan WADA Mitsuhiro, and others cutting cake to celebrate 64th Birthday of His Majesty the Emperor Naruhito, at Islamabad Serena Hotel. — DNA

## Strict action against those inciting violence

Solangi says under Article 19, derogatory remarks against judiciary, armed forces and brotherly countries were not allowed

DNA



ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Federal Minister for Information, Broadcasting and Parliamentary Affairs Murtaza Solangi said on Thursday that some elements were using social media platforms to incite violence, which was an illegal activity. Addressing a press conference along with Prime Minister's

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## Ambassador hosts reception

# Japan-Pakistan ties from cordial to excellent: envoy

Jamal Shah says Pakistan and Japan relations are excellent adding these relations will further be strengthened even in days to come

ANSAR M BHATTI / DNA

ISLAMABAD: To celebrate the 64th Birthday of His Majesty the Emperor Naruhito, the Ambassador of Japan WADA Mitsuhiro hosted a reception at a local hotel in Islamabad. Jamal Shah, the Caretaker Federal Minister for National Heritage and Culture, was the chief guest on the occasion. The reception was attended by Ministers, Parliamentarians, senior government officials, members of the diplomatic community and other dignitaries from the public and private sector. Ambassador WADA together with the distinguished guests cut a cake to mark the His Majesty the

Emperor's Birthday, which is on February 23rd. Since his accession to the throne on 1st May 2019 as the 126th Emperor of Japan, His Majesty the Emperor Naruhito stands as the symbol of Japan and the unity of the people. His Majesty and the Imperial Family also facilitate the good relations with foreign countries including Pakistan. While welcoming the guests on the occasion, Ambassador WADA conveyed his gratitude to the Government and the people of Pakistan for sending their best wishes on the 64th birthday celebration of His Majesty the Emperor. Expressing his appreciation for the long-standing friendly

Continued on Page 06

## SHC directs PTA to fully restore X

The disruptions were reported in Rawalpindi, Karachi among other cities

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: The Sindh High Court (SHC) on Thursday directed the Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) to fully restore the services of social media platform X (formerly Twitter) across the country. X remains disrupted in many areas of Pakistan for the sixth consecutive day. According to monitoring website Downdetector,

Continued on Page 06

## Briefs

### Ali Zafar is PTI's new chairman nominee

Omar Ayub is secretary-general's candidate; elections on March 3

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: PTI next chairman nominee is Barrister Ali Zafar, PTI leader Barrister Gohar Ali Khan announced Thursday, as the former ruling party's top post remains vacant for more than a month. "This time, our candidate for party chairman will be Barrister Ali Zafar and Omar Ayub secretary general," Gohar told journalists outside Rawalpindi's Adiala Jail after meeting party founder Imran Khan. ECP batted PTI party from keeping its electoral symbol, citing irregularities in their internal polls that did not comply with party's own constitution and election laws — also leaving it without top posts.

### 'Resignation rebellion against system'

Justice (ret'd) Shahid advises other judges to 'not give in to fear'

ABBAS HASHMI

LAHORE: Recently retired judge of the Lahore High Court (LHC) Shahid Jameel Khan said on Thursday that his resignation was a "rebellion against this system, that some people have now made hostage for their vested interests". In his first public appearance, at a lawyer's convention, after he handed in his resignation earlier this month, Justice Shahid said, "Some people have captured the system and wish to run it as per their whims."

## 'Proscribed literature' case

# SC deplors criticism over CJP's verdict

Chief Justice of Pakistan Qazi Faez Isa strove to ensure that the court's interpretation of the law aligned with Islamic sources of law as well as the country's Constitution

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court on Thursday deplored "unfortunate" criticism aimed at it over a judgement ordering the release of a person accused of distributing supposedly proscribed religious literature. Religious parties, social media users and the banned militant Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan group recently took exception to the SC decision, with the reaction coming almost two weeks after the apex court's order on an appeal against a verdict of the Lahore High Court. In a press release issued today, the apex court said misreporting of its verdict was creating "many misunderstandings" with the impression being created that the court had denied the Second Amendment (September 1974), designed to declare Ahmadis as non-Muslims, or called for the elimination of relevant sections for crimes against religion in the country's legal codes. "This impression is completely wrong," the SC stated.

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## US urges Pak to 'respect freedom of expression'

NEWS DESK

WASHINGTON: The United States has once again called for a transparent investigation into alleged irregularities in Pakistan's general elections. At Wednesday's news briefing here, US State Department spokesperson Matthew Miller said that the US does not want to comment on Pakistan's internal affairs "before a government is formed." Formation of coalition government in any country is its own decision, he added. He, however, reiterated the stance that there should be

Continued on Page 06

# Chatha retracts 'rigging' accusations against CEC

Ex-Pindi commissioner says PTI offered 'lucrative position' for making rigging allegations

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: Withdrawing all his allegations related to rigging in the elections, former Rawalpindi commissioner Liaqat Ali Chatha said he was "extremely ashamed, embarrassed", and claimed that he made the move in coordination with a Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leader. "I take full responsibility for my actions and surrender myself before the authorities for any kind of legal action," Chatha said in a statement to the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP). In a dramatic development last Saturday, Chatha had tendered his resignation, which he said was out of "guilty conscience" for abetting large-scale electoral rigging in the garrison city, further raising the political mercury in the country. The commissioner, in the rare press conference, took responsibility for the "rigging" that he claimed took place in Rawalpindi Division. "We converted the losers into winners with 50,000 votes margin," he stated. In response to his allegations, the PTI, Jamaat-e-Islami (JI), and other political parties — most of whom had already

Continued on Page 06

## Punjab Assembly

# MPAs-elect to take oath today

The session is slated to take place at 10am

ABID RAZA

LAHORE: The newly elected members of the 18th Punjab Assembly will take oath today in the inaugural session of the provincial legislature. Out of five assemblies that went to the polls on Feb 8, the Punjab Assembly is the first house convening its opening session, slated to take place at 10am on Friday.

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# PIPD moot explores cultural threads for global connections

This pivotal event served as a platform for distinguished diplomats, scholars, and a diverse group of students from across the nation to delve into the significance of cultural diplomacy and public diplomacy in fostering robust international relationships

ADIL SHAHEEN

ISLAMABAD : Policy Institute of Peace and Development Hosts Conference on "Exploring Cultural Threads: Strengthening People-to-People Connections Across Nations" Islamabad, Pakistan - The Policy Institute of Peace and Development (PIPD) orchestrated a thought-provoking conference on February 21st at Riphah University, Islamabad, Pakistan, F-5 campus, titled "Exploring Cultural Threads: Strengthening People-to-People Connections Across Nations."

The conference welcomed esteemed guest speakers, including H.E. Eduard Preda, Ambassador of Romania to Pakistan; H.E. Admiral Ravindra Wijegunaratne; H.E. Hamid Asghar Khan; and Mr. Shamooin Hashmi, Special Secretary of the National Assembly of Pakistan, among others. Notable figures such as Mr. Vaclav Jilek, Deputy Ambassador of the Czech Republic; Dr. Aftab Rana, MD of PTDC; Arsalan Khattak Member BOG PIPD, Asif Khan CEO Shaheed Bhutto Foundation, Mr. Ayub Jamali, DG of PNCA; Dr. Uzair Hashmi, HOD of Public Policy at NUST; Dr. Tayyab Nadeem, HOD of Social Sciences at FAST; Dr. Waseema Shehzad, Dean of the Department of Social Sciences at Air University; Mr. Ammar Jaffery former Director FIA and founder digital Pakistan Vision 2025; Faculty members of Quaid e Azam, Islamic university, Tahir Malik and Miss Beenish from NUML university, and large numbers of public policy experts and members various Think Tanks also contributed to the enriching dialogue.

President of PIPD, extended a warm welcome to all participants, providing an overview of PIPD's mission and objectives. She underscored the importance of cultural diplomacy in fostering mutual respect and understanding among nations. President PIPD Ms. Wadana Gul, expressed appreciation for the cooperation of Dr. Rashid Aftab, Campus Director of Riphah Institute of Public Policy. Their collaboration contributed significantly to the success of the conference. Secretary of the National Assembly of Pakistan, Mr. Shamooin Hashmi, delivered a compelling address, emphasizing the commonalities that unite nations and the pivotal role of collaboration in nation-building endeavors. His Excellency Hamid Asghar Khan, Pakistan's Ambassador to Morocco, shared insights into the significance of public diplomacy in fostering international relations, highlighting the shared cultural heritage between nations as a cornerstone of diplomatic engagement.



LAHORE : US Consul General Kirstin K. Hawkins (HawkinsK.Ms. Kirstin) presents a gift of cricket ball on the occasion of meeting with Punjab Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi.—DNA

## Raising cigarette taxes: a vital step for public health

## KMC Council to discuss street crimes with IGP Sindh

NAZIR SIYAL

ISLAMABAD: Health advocates stress the critical need for raising tobacco taxes, specifically targeting cigarettes, in order to curb smoking, finance vital public services such as healthcare and strengthen the economy. Malik Imran Ahmed, the Country Head of the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids (CTFK), said that the policymakers can effectively curtail tobacco consumption by annual increments in cigarette taxes and making them less affordable over time. He emphasized the pivotal role of high cigarette taxes to deter smoking, particularly among the youth and individuals with lower incomes. Ahmed also shed light on the staggering economic toll of smoking in Pakistan, which amounts to Rs 615.07 billion (US\$3.85 billion), equivalent to 1.6% of the country's GDP. The economic cost of smoking surpasses the revenues generated by the tobacco industry, he added. He referred to data from an international survey revealing that the aggregate annual economic costs attributable to smoking-related diseases and deaths, along with those associated with the three primary non-communicable diseases, collectively amount to 1.6% and 1.15% of Pakistan's GDP, respectively. This concerning pattern highlights the immediate requirement to implement yearly increments in cigarette taxes. This step is crucial to alleviate the pressure on Pakistan's GDP, demanding swift action from the government.—APP

KARACHI: Mayor Karachi Barrister Murtaza Wahab on Thursday agreed to a proposal to form a committee consisting of members of the House will be formed today which will meet with IGP Sindh. He said every political party will be represented in the committee to inform the law enforcement agencies about the crime situation in Karachi and to urge immediate steps in this regard. He said that the proceedings of today's meeting of the city were held in a good manner and hoped this would continue in future sessions of the council so that the members of this council could provide relief to the citizens of Karachi from various problems.

The Mayor Karachi said that according to the tradition of the city council, the meeting of the council is postponed after the death of a member, so today's meeting is also postponed, the next meeting will be held on March 8, 2024. Deputy Mayor Karachi Salman Abdullah Murad also participated in the meeting. During the meeting, prayers were offered for Shaheed UC Chairman Sabir Ali Magsoof of Pakistan Peoples Party from Malir District UC 9 Bakhtawar Goth who was reportedly killed in the incident in Gulistan-e-Johar and Parveen Murad Baloch member of City Council.

with the increasing street crimes in Karachi, to which Barrister Murtaza Wahab termed it as timely and said that a committee consisting of members of the House will be formed today which will meet with IGP Sindh. He said every political party will be represented in the committee to inform the law enforcement agencies about the crime situation in Karachi and to urge immediate steps in this regard. He said that the proceedings of today's meeting of the city were held in a good manner and hoped this would continue in future sessions of the council so that the members of this council could provide relief to the citizens of Karachi from various problems.

## Alvi urges community action to combat thalassemia

LAHORE : President Dr. Arif Alvi on Thursday emphasised the necessity of community efforts in preventing thalassemia among children, advocating for mandatory testing before marriage. He was addressing a prize distribution ceremony of Sundas Foundation, as a chief guest, held here at Governor's House. Director Sundas Foundation Khalid Abbas Dar, President Yaseen Khan, renowned journalists Sohail Warraich, Mubeenur-Rehman Shami and Salman Ghani also attended the event. In his address, President Alvi quoted the example of England regarding success in thalassemia control due to proper awareness, while Pakistan had to face shortage of blood donations for thalassemia children, adding that even with extensive

campaigns, this shortage could not be overcome. Alvi further said that Pakistan has 26.2 million children out of schools, while our neighbouring countries India, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh have accomplished almost 100 per cent enrollment rate. He said that Pakistan built 50,000 schools in Punjab since its inception, while the state needed equal number of more schools to educate such a large number of children. He said that Pakistan has more than 2.5 lakh mosques, and proposed that those could be used as educational centres to address the issue. He said: "Holy Prophet Hazrat Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him) gave status of community centres to mosques and Islam gave us golden principles for societies; we all should get inspired from Quran and Sunnah". China made progress and achieved prosperity by focusing on education and health of its population. He said Pakistan has the fifth biggest population in the world, which has immense potential for growth. The president stressed the best utilisation of this workforce. Thanking the people working for thalassemia elimination and serving humanity, he said that they are our heroes and they would stand honoured before Almighty Allah; they should be given respect, and recognition of their services. Dr. Arif Alvi lauded the philanthropic individuals and organisations for their generous financial support towards the treatment of these otherwise expensive medical conditions.—APP

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## CS chairs provincial polio eradication meeting

KARACHI : The Chief Secretary Sindh on Thursday chaired a meeting of the Provincial Task Force on Polio Eradication and discussed matters related to upcoming weeklong anti-polio drive to be started from February 26, 2024. The meeting was informed that over 10 million children across the province will be immunised, for which 80,000 polio workers will perform their duties to accomplish the task. The CS was informed that thousands of polio workers in the 30 districts will be part

of this vaccination drive. The meeting was attended by Commissioner Karachi Muhammad Saleem Rajput, Secretary Health Syed Mansoor Abbas Rizvi, Additional IG Karachi Khadim Rind, Coordinator Emergency Operations Center Sindh Irshad Ali Sodhar, and other relevant officials, All district commissioners and deputy commissioners also participated in the meeting via video link. The meeting reviewed the overall situation of the polio virus and its containment efforts. Coordinator Emergency Operations Center Sindh, Irshad Ali Sodhar, informed the meeting that the training of workers for the polio campaign has been completed, and in addition to polio drops, children will also receive extra vitamin A supplementation during the campaign. During the meeting, Chief Secretary Sindh, Dr. Muhammad Fakhre Alam, emphasized the need to launch the anti-polio campaign effectively in the current high-risk union councils to achieve desired results.—DNA

## KPHC gives licenses to Category I hospitals

PESHAWAR : Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Healthcare Commission (KPHC) here Thursday organized a ceremony to give licenses to Category I hospitals of the province. The ceremony was held in the Postgraduate Medical Institute Hayatabad Medical Complex. The hospitals that were given licenses include Alfalah Hospital Abbottabad, Bahadur Khan Hospital Batkhela, Jinnah Teaching Hospital Peshawar, Irfan General Hospital Peshawar, Sahab Orthopedic Hospital Peshawar, PIMS Hospital Peshawar, Abaseen General Hospital Peshawar, Kuwait Teaching Hospital Peshawar and Bacha Khan Medical Complex Swabi.—APP

## Sindh CM orders deeper probe into BSEK results issue

KARACHI : The Sindh Caretaker Chief Minister Justice (r) Maqbool Baqar, approving the inquiry committee's report on manipulation in results of SSC-II examinations on Thursday, directed the Anti-corruption Establishment to further probe the entire exam team of Board of Secondary Education Karachi. The three-member inquiry committee, in its report submitted to the CM Sindh, held the entire examination and IT teams of BSEK responsible for glaring mistakes in results and recommended probing their malafide through the anti-corruption establishment along with departmental action against all delinquent officers, said a statement issued here. The inquiry committee pointed out in the report the non-seriousness, non-professional attitude and inefficiency of board employees and alleged that the board Chairman failed to introduce reforms and streamline the old and new streams while failing in maintaining the record as well as imparting training of new systems to teachers involved in the assessment of answer sheets were also observed. The Inquiry Committee- comprising Secretary School Education Dr Shereen Mustafa (Chairperson), Additional Secretary Universities and Boards Afshan Rubab, and Zuzain Katbar Section Officer of U&B dept- was constituted by the Caretaker Sindh CM and tasked to probe into allegation of manipulation in result of annual examination of SSC Part-II 2023 by the Board of Secondary Education (BSE) Karachi. The Inquiry Committee submitted its report and recommendation to Caretaker Sindh Chief Minister Justice (ret) Maqbool Baqar on February 21 which the CM approved and sent to the chairman of the board to implement as recommended by the committee. The committee during its proceedings, observed that none of the employees, called for a hearing and the statement, was serious which is evident from their written statements while it was also unclear what the actual exam results were before they were announced, and how many changes were made during the announcement and publication process. The committee requested the actual result CD/USB for comparison, but it was not provided while the then Acting Controller of Exams Imran provided a written statement which only partially served its purpose, the report stated.—DNA

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عدالت بنا میں زیر سماعت ہے اور تمام  
اناس کو بڑھایا اختیار ہٹا ہٹا گیا  
ہے کہ اگر کسی کو کوئی اعتراض ہو تو وہ اسات  
وکلان مورخہ 2024-02-24 کو پورٹ  
9 بجے صبح حاضر عدالت آویں ورت کاروائی  
حسب ضابطہ عمل میں لائی جائے گی۔ حکم  
عدالت ہجرت عدالت

## D' Educationist hosted a global education Expo'24

The event, held at The Nishat Hotel, Johar Town, Lahore attracted students from across the region eager to explore educational avenues beyond borders

ABID RAZA

LAHORE : In an effort to bring global education closer to Pakistanis, students, D&#39; Educationist, a leading overseas education consultant, successfully hosted the Global Education Interact Expo&#39;24 in Lahore. With a "FREE Entry", the event, held at The Nishat Hotel, Johar Town, Lahore attracted students from across the region eager to explore educational avenues beyond borders. Around 30+ top-ranked international universities & hundreds of students along with their parents participated in the expo. Students with great interest and excitement to enroll for admissions at top-ranked International Universities alongwith the Free IELTS Mock Test. As a trusted education specialist in Pakistan, D&#39; Educationist played a pivotal role in guiding numerous students who attended the expo. The event served as a platform for students to explore academic opportunities in leading international universities and colleges. The expo served as a unique platform for students to engage directly with representatives from leading universities in the UK, USA, Australia, Germany, and Canada. Information about IELTS and Mock test facility was also provided at the expo. D&#39; Educationist&#39;s team of skilled and friendly counselors engaged with students, offering insights into pursuing education in the UK, USA, Australia, Germany, and Canada. The personalized sessions covered everything from academic programs to admission procedures & IELTS Test providing attendees with a comprehensive understanding of their options. Mr. Syed Shehryar Abbas Naqvi, Managing Director at D&#39; Educationist Pvt.Ltd, expressed enthusiasm about the expo&#39;s success, "Our goal is to empower students with the knowledge and resources needed to make informed decisions about their academic futures. The Global Education Expo&#39;24 was a

testament to our commitment to providing quality guidance for those aspiring to pursue education in prestigious universities worldwide. Representatives from esteemed universities expressed their enthusiasm for the event; The Expo provided a wonderful platform for students to interact directly with universities. The enthusiasm and curiosity of the attendees were truly inspiring. We are excited about the prospect of welcoming talented students from Pakistan into our global academic community. said Mr. Saad Hassan, Queen Mary University of London, UK. "It was a pleasure to be part of the expo. The interactive workshops and free IELTS mock tests added a practical dimension to the event. Such initiatives not only empower students but also showcase the commitment of D&#39; Educationist to the success of every aspiring student." said Mr. Ali Nasir, UMSS Boston, USA. Prominent 30+ leading universities participated in the expo are: Queen

Mary University of London (UK), University of Chester (UK), Kaplan Business School (Australia), Coventry University (UK), Deakin College (Australia), University of Essex (UK), Canterbury Christ Church University (UK), Concordia University Chicago (USA), University of Victoria (Canada), Anglia Ruskin University (UK), University of West of England (UK), The University of Law (UK), Brunel University London (UK), Western Sydney University (Australia), San Francisco State University (USA), Arizona State University (USA) & some other study groups also participated e.g. Navitas, Study Group, Inuni etc. With a regional office in Lahore and a growing presence across Pakistan, D&#39; Educationist continues to be a reliable resource for students aspiring to study abroad. The expo&#39;s success further reinforces the company&#39;s position as a facilitator of valuable connections between students and international educational institutions.

with the increasing street crimes in Karachi, to which Barrister Murtaza Wahab termed it as timely and said that a committee consisting of members of the House will be formed today which will meet with IGP Sindh. He said every political party will be represented in the committee to inform the law enforcement agencies about the crime situation in Karachi and to urge immediate steps in this regard. He said that the proceedings of today's meeting of the city were held in a good manner and hoped this would continue in future sessions of the council so that the members of this council could provide relief to the citizens of Karachi from various problems.

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## National Days and Armed Forces Days

### FEBRUARY

Feb 04/Sri Lanka

National Day

Feb 06/N. Zealand

National Day

Feb 06/Uganda

Army Day

Feb 11//Iran

Revolution day

Feb 16/DPR Korea

National Day

Feb 16/Lithuania

National Day

Feb 18/Gambia

National Day

Feb 19/Nepal

Democracy Day

Feb 23/Uzbekistan

National Day

Feb 23/Brunei

National Day

Feb 23/Guyana

National Day

Feb 23/Russia

National Army Day

Feb 23/Tajikistan

Armed Forces Day

Feb 25/Kuwait

National Day

## Hotels & Restaurants



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



Turkish Airlines.....8494949



## Emergency

Rescue (Police).....15

Bomb Disposal.....15

Fire Services Rawalpindi/

Islamabad.....1122 & 16

Emergency Ambulance.1122

& Rescue Services.4451122

Motorway Police...9266044

Motorway Police.9270601-20

Women Police Stations

Islamabad.....9222596

Rawalpindi.....9270601-20



## Enquiry

Edhi Ambulance.....115

PIA Flight Info.....114

PIA Cargo.....9280979

Railway Inquiry.....117

Railway Exchange9270831-5

WASA Rawalpindi..5555489

CAA.....9281092



## Hospitals

CMH.....5611111

MH.....5611116

Cantt Hospital...9270907-11

DHQ.....5556311-4

RGH.....9290301-7

Holy Family.....9290322-7

PIMS.....9261170-79

Polyclinic.....9218300-09

Shifa International 4603666



## Departments

CDA.....9221334-43

CDA.....9208301-04

Met Office.....9250360-6

RDA.....5555864

TMA.....5770886

Cantonment Board 9270151-3

## Water Tank

Islamabad.....0321-5744480

# ICCI invites Saudi importers to import agri products

Ahsan Bakhtawari said that Pakistani wheat, rice, fruits, and vegetable has great potential in the Saudi market and assured that ICCI would fully cooperate in enhancing exports of these products from Pakistan to Saudi Arabia

## DNA

ISLAMABAD: Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari, President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) said that Pakistan produces quality food products and Saudi Arabia is an import-based market receiving supplies from foreign markets. He said that Saudi Arabia should import agricultural products from Pakistan at competitive prices to meet the needs of its consumers. He said this while talking to Fadel Abdallah, General Manager, Al-Shaqaq Trading Est of Saudi Arabia during his visit to ICCI.

Ahsan Bakhtawari said that Pakistani wheat, rice, fruits, and vegetable has great potential in the Saudi market and assured that ICCI would fully cooperate in enhancing exports of these products from Pakistan to Saudi Arabia. He said that Pakistani meat, poultry products, textiles, IT products, surgical instruments, sports goods, leather products, and construction materials can also find good a market in Saudi Arabia and stressed



that Saudi Arabia should import these products from Pakistan. He said that Pakistan and Saudi Arabia should focus on further improving bilateral trade and investment relations that would create new jobs and bring prosperity to both countries. He assured that ICCI would extend all possible cooperation in developing strong business linkages

between the private sectors of both countries to explore all untapped areas of cooperation. Speaking on the occasion, Fadel Abdallah, General Manager, Al-Shaqaq Trading Est of Saudi Arabia discussed the possibilities of direct import of food products, fruits, vegetables, seafood, and livestock from Pakistan. He stressed pro-

moting direct trade between the two countries to achieve beneficial outcomes for their people and economies. Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari, former President ICCI and Secretary General UBG Pakistan said that Pakistan and Saudi Arabia enjoy exemplary cordial relations and added that both countries can further

strengthen these good relations by further improving bilateral trade and economic relations. Nasir Hussain Raki Group Leader Gilgit Baltistan, Haider Raza Kazmi, Syed Javed Kazmi Group, KPK Chamber of Commerce, Muhammad Naveed Malik, and others were also present on the occasion.

## PTA Strengthens Measures Against Illegal SIM Issuance

### DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) Zonal Office in Lahore, in close collaboration with the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) Cyber Crime Circle, conducted a successful raid against franchisee of a mobile phone company located in Raiwind. This franchisee was found to be involved in the illegal issuance of SIMs.

During the raid, 256 active SIMs were discovered. The FIA team confiscated these active SIMs along with 16 BVS devices as evidence. 01 persons was also apprehended on the premises by the FIA team. FIA is currently investigating the matter further. PTA had filed complaint with FIA earlier based on information regarding illegal issuance of SIMs by the sale channel.

The recent raid is part of PTA's ongoing efforts to prevent the circumvention of the Multi-Finger Biometric Verification System (MBVS). This steadfast dedication underscores the Authority's resolve to combat the illegal issuance of SIMs.



ISLAMABAD: Women taking interest in various Russian delicacies on the occasion of the Russian Defenders Day.— DNA

## Pak inks agreement to export skilled workers to Saudi Arabia

ISLAMABAD: Special Assistant to the Prime Minister, Jawad Sohrab Malik has signed an agreement recently with NESMA & Partners for the export of skilled Pakistani labor to Saudi Arabia. The agreement was signed at the Embassy of Pakistan in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, said a press release received here on Thursday. The agreement marks a pivotal collaboration between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, paving the way for the export of a substantial Pakistani workforce to contribute to Saudi Arabia's ambitious infrastructure and development goals. NESMA & Partners, as the leading construction company in Saudi Arabia, holds responsibility for numerous mega-projects within the kingdom. The agreement would provide Pakistani workers with the opportunity to showcase their expertise and contribute to the success of these critical infrastructure projects. Jawad Sohrab Malik highlighted the exceptional reputation of Pakistani workers for their dedication and hard work. The agreement was signed between the Pakistan Overseas Employment Corporation (POEC) and NESMA & Partners. The POEC is a government agency responsible for the recruitment and deployment of Pakistani workers abroad. NESMA & Partners is a leading Saudi Arabian construction company with a portfolio of mega-projects in the kingdom. The agreement is expected to create significant job opportunities for Pakistani workers in Saudi Arabia. It will also help to strengthen the economic ties between the two countries. The meeting was also attended by the Ambassador of Pakistan to Saudi Arabia, Ahmad Farooq, Director-General of the Bureau of Emigration and Overseas Employment (BEOE), and the Joint Secretary of the Ministry of Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development, along with community welfare attachés.—APP

## Senators laud dedication, commitment of MoCC&EC

ISLAMABAD: The members of the Senate Standing Committee on Climate Change on Thursday at the body's farewell meeting here appreciated the dedication and commitment of the Ministry of Climate Change and Environmental Coordination (MoCC&EC) and its participants for striving towards resolution of environmental conservation challenges. The Chairperson, Senator Seemee Ezdi while opening the forum with the recitation of the verses of Holy Quran extended her warm gratitude to the member Senators for successfully completing their tenure at the Committee with landmark interventions intended to address challenges pertaining to environment and nature conservation. The Committee was con-

vened on a one-point agenda moved by Senator Pawzia Arshad on implementation of the guidelines of the National Climate Change Policy 2021. Senator Ezdi thanked the committee members for supporting the body and making all its field visits a success. The Committee organized eight field visits in total starting from its maiden visit to Pakistan Environmental Protection Agency (Pak-EPA) office and its smog control center, then to the Islamabad Wildlife Management Board (IWMB)'s Trail-6 Leopard Preserve Zone, fire control room at erstwhile Marghar Zoo (Margalla Wildlife Rescue Centre), Pakistan Meteorological Department office, Trail-5 visit followed by visits to Shahdarah, Farash Town,

and Mangroves Forest, Karachi. She mentioned the Committee members gave a tough time to the Met Office officials during their briefing through very pertinent questions. Senator Ezdi appreciated the capability of MoCC&EC officials and their successful representation of the country at COP-28 (28th meeting of the Conference of the Parties, Dubai) and lauded Secretary, Ministry Asif Hyder Shah for his efforts in this regard. Senior Joint Secretary MoCC&EC, Muhammad Farooq while briefing on the agenda item apprised the Committee and the mover that all provincial climate action plans were aligned with the National Climate Change Policy 2021 which was submitted at the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and published at the MoCC&EC website. He added that all multinationals' investment was being done after consulting this policy which was formulated by all stakeholders' consultation and the Ministry strictly abides by this policy guidelines.—APP

## 17 drug peddlers, bootleggers

RAWALPINDI: Rawalpindi police in an action against suspected drug peddlers, bootleggers, illegal weapon holders and other lawbreakers here on Thursday arrested 17 accused besides recovering over five kg charras, 60 bottles liquor, 78 liters liquor, four 30 bore pistols, ammunition and other items from their possession. A police spokesperson said that Taxila police held Shehzor for having 1300 grams charras, Saddar Wah police held Nawab Ali with 1350 grams charras and Rafique for having 1260 grams charras. Wah Cantt police netted Khizer, Waqar and Matullah for having 60 bottles, 10 liters and 30 liters liquor respectively. Saddar Baroni police nabbed an accused, Sohail on recovery of 560 grams charras and Saqib for carrying 30 liters liquor. Kahuta, Airport, Race Course and Sadiqabad police arrested Nisar with 500 grams charras, Annayat for having eight liters liquor, Amjad for possessing five liters liquor, Numan with 10 liters liquor and Eid Muhammad for having 10 liters liquor. Similarly, City, Pirwadhai, Gujar Khan and Rawat police arrested Abdullah, Ayaz, Imran and Umair and recovered four 30 bore pistols and ammunition from their possession. Separate cases have been registered against all the accused while further investigations are underway. City Police Officer, Rawalpindi had directed the police officers to accelerate ongoing operations against drug peddlers, bootleggers and other lawbreakers, he added.—APP



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## Briefs

## Pakistan's exports to South China increases by 16% in 2023

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's exports to South China have witnessed a significant surge of 16% during the year 2023, China Economic Net (CEN) reported on Thursday. This remarkable achievement comes as a result of the strengthened trade ties between the two countries and Pakistan's ongoing efforts to diversify its export market, said Muhammad Irfan, Trade and Investment Counselor Pakistan's Consulate in Guangzhou. Muhammad Irfan told CEN that according to the latest data released by the General Administration of Customs of China (GACC), the total value of exports from Pakistan to South China reached a record high of \$973.21 million from January-December of 2023, compared to \$836.645 million in the previous year. This upward trajectory is a testament to the resilience and competitiveness of Pakistan's export sector. "Guangdong Province imported \$379.011 million worth of goods from Pakistan in 2023, while Fujian Province imported \$367.30 million." On the other hand, imports in the previous year were 248.532 million, up by 48%, followed by the Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region's 86.790 million and \$80.164 million, up by 8%, in 2022. I

## Navigational work in offing at new Gwadar Int'l Airport

DNA

ISLAMABAD: In a significant development, high-tech telecommunication work has completed in connection with ongoing gradual development of New Gwadar International Airport (NGIA). NGIA's state of art telecommunication paraphernalia involves telecom networks and systems that use various technologies and protocols to facilitate the transmission of voice, data, and audio-video signals between devices, including smartphones, computers, and other communication devices. Talking to Gwadar Pro GPA official said that NGIA's telecommunication work deals with telecom networks which are made up of various components, including transmission systems, switching systems, and network management systems. These components work together to ensure that communication signals are transmitted and delivered efficiently and securely, he added.

## Legendary poet Josh Malihabadi remembered on death anniversary

ISLAMABAD: The 42nd death anniversary of famous Urdu poet and prose writer Josh Malihabadi was observed on Thursday. He is remembered as a 'Poet of Revolution'. His real name was Shabbir Hassan Khan. His father Bashir Ahmad Khan Bashir, grandfather Muhammad Ahmad Khan Ahmad, and great grandfather Faqir Muhammad Khan Goya were all well-known poets. Josh Malih Abadi started poetry at an early age. He started his practical life by working in Dar-ul-Tarjuma Usmania (Hyderabad State). He lost both his job and state citizenship due to a poem against the system of Hyderabad. He came to Delhi and published the magazine 'Kaleem'. Josh Malihabadi also remained associated with All India Radio. He was also the editor of 'Aaj Kal', the official magazine of the Indian Government. He received the Padma Bhushan Award in 1954. After moving to Pakistan in 1955, he started to work along with the founder of Anjuman Taraqqi-e-Urdu Maulvi Abdul Haque in the preparation of the Urdu dictionary. He was also Editor of the magazine 'Urdu Nama'.—APP



ISLAMABAD: Murtaza Solangi, Caretaker Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting inaugurated a 'Display Centre' at DEMP.—DNA

## Trade conference 2024

### Ambassador Tirmizi highlights opportunities for Pak companies

The conference, organized in collaboration with Pakistan's Embassy, the Trade Development Authority of Pakistan (TDAP) and Engro-Pakistan, was attended by Pakistani exhibitors participating in Gulfood-2024 and the Emirati business community

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's Ambassador to the United Arab Emirates Faisal Niaz Tirmizi, has highlighted opportunities for Pakistani companies in the Middle East (ME), particularly in the UAE, focusing on sectors such as dairy, meat, fruits, vegetables, and non-food products. He emphasized the country's trade potential at the Pakistan Middle East Trade Development Conference 2024, held at the Pakistan Association Dubai (PAD) auditorium, according to a news release received here from Dubai. The conference, organized in collaboration with Pakistan's Embassy, the Trade Development Authority of Pakistan (TDAP) and Engro-Pakistan, was

attended by Pakistani exhibitors participating in Gulfood-2024 and the Emirati business community. The event aimed to exchange ideas to explore trade relations between Pakistan and the Middle East, providing networking opportunities for Pakistani traders, particularly with UAE buyers. Ambassador Faisal Niaz Tirmizi explained that the UAE market was continuously growing, offering ideal opportunities for dedicated Pakistani companies with sound business plans to maximize their potential. Panel discussions during the conference focused on developing strategies to enhance market penetration and overcome challenges effectively. Sen-

ior Vice Chairman of the Pakistan Dairy Association, Usman Zaheer, underscored the importance of dairy exports to the UAE market from Pakistan, emphasizing the need for value-added dairy products. Ali Tanveer appreciated the support of the Government of Pakistan, which enabled FrieslandCampina's penetration into the UAE market. Moderating the panel discussion, Dr Shehzad Amin proposed the creation of an incubator cell at the Pakistan Association Dubai for new companies and exporters aiming to enter the UAE market. TDAP Chief Executive Muhammad Zubair Motiwala endorsed the idea and pledged support from TDAP

to establish the business incubator center at PAD to promote new export businesses. He also highlighted the Agro Food exhibition to be held in Karachi in August 2024, inviting businessmen from the UAE to participate. The event was attended by Chairman Al Awar Livestock Trading Est., Abdullah Ali Mohammed Al Awar, Vice Chairman Rashif Abdullah Al Awar, Chief Executive Officer of the Pakistan Dairy Association, Dr Shehzad Amin, Director of Business Development & Optimization Ali Tanveer Khan, MEPA, FrieslandCampina, and other leading Pakistani businessmen and exporters.—Agencies

## The industrial sector of Pakistan is collapsing

ISLAMABAD: Former President of the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI), Dr. Shahid Rasheed Butt, said on Thursday that the industrial sector of the country is sinking, which should be rescued, or employment, revenue, and exports will be badly affected. The price of raw materials and chemicals used in industries is constantly increasing, the value of the rupee is not increasing, electricity, gas, and oil are becoming more and more expensive, and trade policies are poor, he said. Shahid Rasheed Butt said in a statement issued here that the production of large scale industries fell by ten percent in 2022-23, while SMEs have reached the brink of destruction. Interest rates are at a record twenty-two percent in Pakistan, interest rates are at three percent in Malaysia, six and a half percent in India, and six percent in Bangladesh, he informed. Many countries around the

world faced pandemics and natural disasters, but the leadership of these countries tackled the crisis well to resume the development journey. On the other hand, Pakistan's economy continues to slide at a rapid pace. The business leader quoted the UN's report, which says that the elite of Pakistan are getting benefits of 17 billion dollars annually. Shahid Rasheed Butt said that for this reason, one percent of Pakistan's richest people own nine percent of national wealth, while 1.1 percent of landowners own 22 percent of agricultural land. He lamented that all the policies are made for the one percent rich, and they are provided with all possible facilities while the interests of the masses have been put on the back burner. The country can be pulled out of the current mess if the benefits of elites are reduced and the masses are given

some relief, but those in power would never allow it; rather, the elite will be further facilitated. Pakistan badly needs a new IMG program, even if a financing agreement with the IMF is reached and the nation avoids defaulting, the suffering of common Pakistanis will continue to increase. He said that the IMF will want more austerity measures, which will lead to added inflation and make it nearly impossible for millions of people to feed themselves. Shahid Rasheed Butt said that improving the business environment, giving relief to the people, financial discipline, effective spending, increased investment, attracting foreign exchange, merit in state-run departments and companies, and focusing on direct tax can improve the situation. Similarly, a reduction in debt and fundamental changes in industrial policy are essential to improving the situation, but they are unlikely, as those who have control would never allow them.—DNA

## Solangi calls for promoting trend of research

ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Federal Minister for Information, Broadcasting and Parliamentary Affairs Murtaza Solangi on Thursday called to promote the trend of research among people. Delivering his speech at the launching ceremony of the Display Center of the Directorate of Electronic Media and Publication at Pak-China Friendship Center, he said the tendency of reading books and writing was decreasing in the digital era. He said that the Directorate of Electronic Media and Publications (DEMP) had worked hard to promote the trend of reading and writing among the people. "This organization has done a great job in a short time with hard work", Murtaza Solangi said while appreciating the performance of the DEMP. The minister said that the quality of books and periodicals at the display center was high from both the content and printing point of view.—DNA

## Undeclared martial law imposed in IIOJK

ISLAMABAD: The All Parties Hurriyat Conference (APHC) has condemned the upsurge in cordon and search operations and house raids as well as the snatching of properties and sacking of employees under undeclared martial law imposed by the Modi-led Hindutva government of India in occupied Jammu and Kashmir and said that these repressive measures are designed to suppress the Kashmiris' righteous demand of right to self-determination. According to Kashmir Media Service, the APHC spokesman in a statement issued in Srinagar said, the Indian military and police establishment along with Hindutva-aligned bureaucrats and administration were undemocratically ruling IIOJK and suppressing the Kashmiri people for raising their voice for justice and UN-recognized right to self-determination. Despite the use of brute military and dreaded SOG [Special Operations Group] force against the people, so far, their morale and valour regarding their sacred cause of freedom from Indian illegal occupation remains invincible, the statement added.—DNA

## Police devise plan to net kite flying ban violators

RAWALPINDI: Rawalpindi district police have devised a plan to foil possible plans to celebrate the banned festival of Basant in Rawalpindi city areas on Feb 22 and 23, Thursday night and Friday and control aerial firing. According to a police spokesman, more than 1500 police personnel would be deployed on large rooftops in densely populated areas to check kite flying on Thursday night and Friday. They would be equipped with binoculars as well as other resources to apprehend those violating the law by flying kites. Drone cameras would also be used to track potential aerial firing and incorporation of chemical string in kites, he added. The spokesman informed that police on the directives

of City Police Officer, Syed Khalid Hamdani had finalized a plan to put a stop to expected activities that may take place despite the clear-cut ban on Basant. "Keeping in mind the need to protect the citizens from any untoward incidents, more than 1500 police officials have been deployed to thwart any plans for Basant and drone operators will be monitoring potential kite-flying," he said. Police officials have reiterated time and again that flying kites is a potentially dangerous sport that can lead to the loss of life, and those found disregarding its cost to human lives will be prosecuted according to law. The parents, teachers, scholars and civil society were also taken into confidence to play their role in preventing the celebration

of Basant. The Rawalpindi police had also launched an awareness campaign about the hazards of the risky sport with the help of religious scholars, who were asked to make announcements on their respective mosques' sound systems about the demerits of kite-flying. The police have finalized arrangements for live monitoring of all densely populated areas, while all Station House Officers (SHOs) have been directed to ensure strict surveillance of kite sellers in their areas. The police teams are trying to trace and arrest culprits involved in buying and selling killer strings and kites through social media. Monitoring of courier services and passenger vehicles coming from Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa was also being tightened,

so that any kites and chemical strings being brought to the city for Basant could be seized. It is pertinent to mention here that just like last year, the Rawalpindi Kite Flying Association had announced two separate illegal Basant celebrations in the city and cantonment areas. On last Thursday night and Friday, Basant was celebrated in Cantonment areas. Despite a government ban on Basant celebrations, the Kite Flying Association Rawalpindi had defiantly declared plans to celebrate the festival. The association had also initiated preparations for the event. The association had also urged the kite lovers not to use metallic strings in kite flying, highlighting the inherent risks it poses to human lives.—APP

## Police launches crackdown against unauthorized number plates

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Capital City Police Officer (ICCP) Dr. Akbar Nasir Khan, on Thursday directed to the Islamabad Capital Police (ICP) to utilize all available resources to ensure the peace and tranquility within the federal capital. A public relations officer said that, the police were ensuring data registration, identification documents and effective search of citizens entering the high security zone on a regular basis. Moreover, action has been taken against motorcyclists over traffic rules violations on various checkpoints of high security zone, he added. During the week, the police removed tinted glasses and improper number plates from bikes and issued challan tickets to motorcyclists for violations.—APP

## ICT admin introduces convenient vehicle services at Trail 3

ISLAMABAD: On the directions of Deputy Commissioner (DC) Islamabad Irfan Nawaz Memon, a new initiative has been launched to streamline vehicle-related services for the residents of Islamabad. According to the spokesman of ICT, Dr Abdullah Tabasum, this initiative was aimed to provide easy access to essential services, bringing them closer to the community. The excise staff would be stationed at the parking area of Trail 3 from 3 to 5 pm, facilitating vehicle registration, transfer, and token tax processes, he added. The ICT Doorstep Service initiative offers a variety of documents and permits, including Domicile Certificates, Birth Certificates, Power of Attorney, International Driving Permits, Fuel Permits (Domestic/Commercial), and Motor Vehicle Registrations.—APP



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## 'Israel' has no moral right to exist

THE Israeli regime is unique in its constant need for validation. No other regime is consistently seeking its enemy's recognition, nor attempting to receive a moral approval for its behavior from its peers. Interestingly, as it always advocates for its position, it puts itself out there for review and if any regime could be divorced from a "right to exist" based upon merit, it would be "Israel". What has been committed against the people of Gaza, since last October, is an unprecedented crime in human history. Never before have we seen a people as severely terrorized with modern military equipment as are the people of the Gaza Strip. Whether it be the tonnage of bombs dropped on Gaza, the percentage of the infrastructure destroyed, or even the number of children, women, journalists, medical workers, and other protected groups killed, the Zionist military has broken all records. Today, we objectively see the world's worst humanitarian crisis in Gaza, labeled as such by the United Nations' aid chief Martin Griffiths. The total number of casualties suffered in Gaza has risen well above 100,000, with the number of injured and dead nearly impossible to count as the means to ascertain accurate figures do not exist. While the massive, unprecedented loss of human life in Gaza goes on, the Zionist regime attacks the credibility of everyone commenting and recording this stain on humanity's historical record, attempting to undermine every institution from the Gaza Health Ministry, all the way to every organ of the UN. For those who believe that the idea that "Israel" has no right to exist is too far of a statement to make, consider some of the following pieces of information: The Israeli regime is currently on trial at the International Court of Justice (ICJ) for committing what the World Court's judges unanimously decided were viable various violations of the Genocide Conventions. At the same time, "Israel" has been labeled by all the regional and top international reputable human rights groups as an Apartheid regime, with even its own top human rights organization, B'Tselem, labeling it a "regime of Jewish supremacy from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea". Simultaneously, the Israeli regime has a case that is pending at the International Criminal Court (ICC), over war crimes committed in the occupied territories since 2014. In this current war between Gaza and "Israel", the Zionist army has inflicted a civilian death toll in Gaza that makes Daesh look like a group of humanitarians. In the first two years of the Daesh insurgency in Iraq, the UN stated that some 18,800 civilians were killed by the terrorist organization, while the Zionist military has massacred well over 30,000 Palestinians in around 5 months. In fact, the true death toll in the Gaza Strip, when we account for those reported missing and buried under the rubble, is most likely closer to 40,000. Historically speaking, the Zionist entity is responsible for not only the mass ethnic cleansing of between 750,000 to 850,000 Palestinians during the Nakba (1947-9), but went on to commit mass expulsions of Palestinians from their homes during the 1950's; especially with the assaults on the Gaza Strip during that time period.



## Western neocolonialism: A new stage

THE days of colonial empires are long gone. Since the 20th century, the peoples of dozens of former colonies have gained long-awaited independence. However, Western countries (primarily the USA, Britain, and France) continue neocolonial expansion in different parts of the world - from the Middle East and Africa to the Caribbean and the South Pacific. With the help of demagoguery and manipulation, they try to disguise their colonial ambitions. The goals of these ambitions have remained the same for many centuries: control over resources and expansion of their influence. Against this background, I would like to talk about an event that is an important milestone in the history of the international struggle against neocolonialism. From February 15 to 18, the first Forum of Supporters of the Struggle against modern neocolonialism practice "For the Freedom of Nations!" took place in the capital of Russia, Moscow. Delegations from a large number of countries arrived to participate in the event. Among them were representatives of Laos, Zimbabwe, the South African Republic, Uganda, Nicaragua, China, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Cambodia, Cuba, Myanmar, Serbia, Lebanon, Algeria, Venezuela, Syria, the Central African Republic, and other countries. As Deputy Chairman of the Russian Security Council Dmitry Medvedev said, delegates from more than 50 countries of the world arrived at the forum. What does this mean? That the event is really large-scale. It is of interest to representatives of various parties, public organizations, and movements in the Global South. The peoples of the Middle East, Africa, Asia, and South America are ready to take part in the preparation of a joint strategy to counter neocolonialism. Western countries (especially the USA) actively tried to harm the forum, but their actions had no effect. The fight against neocolonialism can become a unifying idea for millions of people from dozens of countries, and all because modern Western neocolonialism is truly a global problem and a threat of colossal proportions. Its negative effects are noticeable in all parts of the world. Upon in-depth analysis, it becomes clear that the neocolonial expansion of the West in Africa, the Middle East, and the Caribbean is an attempt to take away the right to sovereignty from foreign countries. This is an attempt to deprive their peoples of independence, seize their resources, and subject them to raw material exploitation by American transnational corporations. A striking example is Haiti. In the depths of the republic, there are deposits of gold, bauxite and copper ore. Sugar cane and coffee trees grow in abundance in Haiti. It would seem that there are significant natural resources for successful trade and stable development of the national economy. However, for decades, this country has been subject to neo-colonial expansion by the United States. American interventions and the seizure of Haiti's natural resources by Western corporations led to negative consequences for the Caribbean republic. The country is facing a financial crisis, a surge in crime, serious political problems, poverty, and fuel shortages.

## The Houthi-Iran connection and regional dynamics

Dr. Muhammad Akram Zaheer



The Houthis are a group that has a big impact on the politics of different places. They can disrupt shipping and energy markets, making it more expensive and causing problems. The world needs to be careful and pay attention to what they say and do. The Houthis can influence people's opinions by portraying themselves as victims and being defiant, so it's important to respond carefully. In the Middle East, Arab nations are trying to be careful in their dealings with the Houthis, who are supported by Iran

ON Jan. 18, the leader of Yemen's Houthi movement, Abdul-Malek al-Houthi, spoke on TV about the US-UK airstrikes on Houthi targets and the Biden administration labeling them as a terrorist organization. Al-Houthi criticized the designation, linking it to protecting Israel and accused the US of supporting Israeli actions. He focused on the Houthi alliance with Iran and their stance on regional issues, particularly the Palestinian cause. The Houthis are trying to gain support by emphasizing their opposition to Israel and the US, deflecting from their local conflicts. Al-Houthi's speeches often use emotional language to connect with the audience, portraying the Houthis as fighters against oppression. They strategically use broader Arab and global themes to garner sympathy and support beyond Yemen's borders, even though their main goal is advancing their own interests within Yemen. In Middle Eastern conflicts, leaders often use bigger regional problems to get people on their side. For example, Saddam Hussein, the former leader of Iraq, talked a lot about the Palestinian struggle to make he look like a defender of their rights. During the Gulf War in 1990-91, he attacked Israel to get support from Arab countries by connecting his government with a cause that mattered to people in the Arab world. Similarly, Osama bin Laden, the founder of al-Qaeda, used the Israeli-Palestinian conflict to explain and get support for his actions. He criticized the United States for supporting Israel and talked about the suffering of Palestinians as a reason for his call to fight. His focus wasn't really on supporting the Palestinian cause, but more on using a deeply emotional issue to gather support for al-Qaeda's bigger goals. Now, the leader of the Houthi movement is also using the Arab-Israeli conflict and the US-Israel alliance to gain support. By connecting these issues, it makes the Houthi actions seem more acceptable to those who care about the Palestinian cause. This strategy helps shift attention away from the immediate problems in Yemen and the issues with Houthi leadership. It might also at-

tract support from people outside Yemen. The Houthi slogan expresses their beliefs and readiness for conflict with Western powers. They are taking advantage of current tensions to increase their efforts. This slogan not only motivates their followers but also declares their intentions, connecting them to a broader anti-Western sentiment beyond Yemen's borders. They frame their struggle as resistance against external control. In their messages, the Houthis establish credibility by presenting themselves as defenders of Yemeni values and marginalized people. They use historical and religious references to align their cause with respected figures and events, asserting authority and appealing to a sense of justice. The Houthi leader urges supporters in the US and Europe to intensify social media campaigns against airstrikes on Houthi military targets, portraying it as a humanitarian cause to hide their true war-driven agenda. The impact of their rhetoric on the Yemeni population is complex. It can foster loyalty among those feeling marginalized, creating a sense of unity. However, it can also instill fear by emphasizing external threats, justifying the Houthis' actions. Their emotionally charged speeches play a role in recruitment, particularly in regions like Ho-deidah. The Houthis criticize Yemen's government and the PLC, questioning their legitimacy in engaging with international actors. They claim it reflects subservience to foreign interests, notably Israel and the United States. This forms part of their propaganda to position themselves as defenders of Yemeni sovereignty and the Palestinian cause, aiming to erode the legitimacy of the Yemeni government among its people. In simpler terms, the Houthi movement and Iran share a strong alliance in supporting Palestine and opposing Israel. Iran has a history of backing Palestinian causes and resisting Israeli influence, and this aligns with the Houthi movement's stance. The relationship benefits the Houthis strategically, but it primarily serves Iran's broader goals in the region. Iranian leaders, including Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, emphasize the importance of supporting Palestine and

criticize Arab governments normalizing relations with Israel. They also express support for resistance groups like Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad, forming what they call the Axis of Resistance. While this alliance provides advantages for the Houthis, it may lead them into conflicts beyond Yemen, diverting attention and resources from their main objectives. The growing international scrutiny and isolation of the Houthis complicate their position. In response to pressure, the Houthis are likely to use a strategy of buying time while making demands, a tactic they have employed in the past. In essence, the Houthi-Iran alignment serves Iran's regional ambitions, and the Houthis may face challenges in the long run due to their association. Despite outward appearances, the Houthis are likely navigating a complex interplay of geopolitical realities to safeguard their interests and maintain control. The Houthis are a group that has a big impact on the politics of different places. They can disrupt shipping and energy markets, making it more expensive and causing problems. The world needs to be careful and pay attention to what they say and do. The Houthis can influence people's opinions by portraying themselves as victims and being defiant, so it's important to respond carefully. In the Middle East, Arab nations are trying to be careful in their dealings with the Houthis, who are supported by Iran. The Houthis see themselves as the main force against Israel and believe it's part of their resistance. The relationship between the Houthis and Iran is strong, and understanding this is crucial for creating realistic strategies for peace. It's important to have a balanced approach to the Houthis, recognizing their involvement in Yemen's conflict and the wider implications. The focus should be on peace, supporting local efforts for dialogue, and strengthening local governance. By addressing the issues that make people support the Houthis, like economic problems and lack of services, and by combining security measures with political empowerment, there can be a way to reduce the influence of the Houthis and work towards stability in Yemen and the region.

## Economic cost of internet, social media shutdown

Qamar Bashir



Such actions not only impose direct economic losses on an already strained economy but also lead to broader socio-economic instability. They not only infringe upon basic human rights guaranteed by the Constitution of Pakistan and international human rights standards but also erode the country's democratic fabric by undermining the freedom of information and press. The irony is stark as these actions, meant to secure political gains or regulate the political narrative...

PAKISTAN, like any nation, faces challenges in balancing the interests of its people, businesses, and the state. Decisions made by authorities, including interim governments, can sometimes prioritize immediate or specific objectives over broader economic and social impacts. The act of slowing down or terminating internet services, including access to social media platforms, is a significant decision that can have far-reaching consequences. Such actions, while intended to serve particular goals, can inadvertently hinder the country's economic vitality by affecting business operations, trade, investment, and exports. They also pose risks to employment rates and GDP growth, potentially exacerbating poverty levels across the nation. The internet and social media are modern-day lifelines for commerce, communication, and information exchange. Restricting access to these services can be likened to constricting the arteries of the nation's economy, impeding the flow of business and innovation. While security and regulatory concerns are valid, solutions should be sought that balance these needs with the preservation of open and free internet access to support the nation's socio-economic development. According to international internet and social media watchdogs, during the 2024 elections in Pakistan, there were widespread disruptions to internet and mobile services on the orders of the Interior Ministry on the lame and excuse of "maintain law and order." Ironically, despite the assurance of the government and the Pakistan Telecommunication Authority multiple regions experienced internet blackouts and mobile network disruptions on the very election day. Independent watchdogs like NetBlocks confirmed these outages, indicating a significant impact on connectivity. Furthermore, the Open Observatory of Network Interference (OONI) reported that specific websites, including those of the PTI political party and investigative news platforms, were blocked prior to the elections. Cloudflare Radar observed significant drops in internet traffic for several local ISPs on the day of the elections, indicating widespread service disruptions. The direct losses incurred to the nations can easily be calculated by inserting vital information in simple formulas. For example, Given Pakistan's GDP of \$1.24 trillion in February 2023 and forecasted merchandise trade of \$95.96 billion in 2024, the daily GDP for 2024 is approximately \$15.85 billion. With per day merchandise roughly at \$12.3 billion and assuming a 50% impact on merchandise trade due to closures, the daily loss from shutting down the internet is about \$615 million.

For Twitter, the daily loss stands at approximately \$14.25 million. The indirect costs of internet shutdowns on businesses, trade, and investment are significant and multifaceted. Internet shutdowns disrupt economic activities, leading to losses in e-commerce, delays in time-sensitive transactions, increased unemployment, and interruptions in business-customer communications. These disruptions result in financial and reputational risks for companies, affecting both local businesses and international trade and investment. For instance, in specific cases like Algeria, internet restrictions impacted various sectors, including the tourism industry, where businesses faced material losses due to hindered communications with customers and missed reservation deadlines. In India, the economic impact of internet shutdowns was quantified at \$1.9 billion for the first half of 2023 alone, highlighting the substantial direct economic losses incurred due to such disruptions. These shutdowns not only affect the immediate economic output but also have long-term consequences on investor confidence and the country's digital infrastructure. Such actions not only impose direct economic losses on an already strained economy but also lead to broader socio-economic instability. They not only infringe upon basic human rights guaranteed by the Constitution of Pakistan and international human rights standards but also erode the country's democratic fabric by undermining the freedom of information and press. The irony is stark as these actions, meant to secure political gains or regulate the political narrative, result in billions of dollars in losses to the national economy, contributing to its vulnerability. This situation leaves political parties wary of assuming power in the aftermath of the 2024 elections, given the looming economic challenges compounded by such disruptive practices. When a country's actions to block social media platforms, slow down the internet, and disrupt internet services lead to widespread condemnation by international bodies like the United Nations, Amnesty International, and Transparency International, as well as foreign leaders and institutions, the resulting costs can be multifaceted and significant. These costs extend beyond direct and indirect economic impacts to include the erosion of the country's soft image, which can lead to further financial, business, tourism, and soft capital losses. The erosion of a country's soft image can be even more detrimental in the long term. Condemnation by international bodies and foreign leaders can lead to a decline in investor confidence, reduced foreign direct investment, and a negative impact on the country's diplomatic relations and inter-

national standing. This can further result in decreased tourism revenues, as potential visitors may choose to avoid a country perceived as politically unstable or repressive in terms of digital rights. Moreover, the disruption of internet services can hinder innovation and the digital economy's growth, essential components of modern economic development. It can also affect the country's attractiveness as a destination for international events, conferences, and cultural exchanges, further impacting its soft capital and potential revenue streams. Overall, the indirect costs of such actions, compounded by international condemnation, can significantly hinder a country's economic growth, international reputation, and ability to engage in global commerce and diplomacy effectively. To safeguard the right to internet and social media access, ensuring economic, business, trade, and innovation opportunities remain unhampered, a comprehensive and collaborative approach is essential. Governments, alongside legislative bodies, must enact and enforce laws that protect internet access as a fundamental right, with a clear emphasis on transparency, accountability, and adherence to international human rights standards. This legal framework should be designed to prevent unwarranted internet shutdowns, maintain neutrality, and ensure open access, with independent regulatory bodies established to oversee compliance and enforce regulations. Additionally, policies should mandate transparency in actions by both government and ISPs, especially concerning decisions that may affect internet access, ensuring any restrictions are justified, transparent, and subject to public scrutiny. Moreover, civil society, the judiciary, and political entities must play active roles in advocating for and protecting internet freedom. This involves promoting digital literacy to empower citizens to demand their digital rights, strengthening data protection to build trust in digital services, and supporting the pivotal role of independent media and civil society in holding power to account. International cooperation is also vital, as global collaboration fosters a supportive environment for internet freedom, sharing best practices and advocating for digital rights on the world stage. Inclusive policy making, involving a broad spectrum of stakeholders, ensures diverse interests are represented and the public good is protected, fostering an environment conducive to growth, innovation, and the free exchange of ideas.

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



## Briefs

## Imran wants IMF aid halted over 'rigged'...

FROM PAGE 01  
one is widely seen as the priority for the new administration. With the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP), and their allies striking a deal to form a coalition government, the PTI and some other political parties have altogether rejected the elections and announced country-wide protests. The PTI has demanded election results be issued based on Form 45 – the results of a single polling station instead of Form 47 – the consolidated results of a constituency – as the party says the latter was tampered with and its independent candidates won a simple majority in the National Assembly.

## 'Establishment has...

FROM PAGE 01  
"After the 2018 election, we hoped for fairness and transparency in 2024, but once again our aspirations and constitutional supremacy have been undermined," he maintained. Rehman raised concerns about the legitimacy of the Parliament if elections continue to be disputed. He criticised direct interference by the military establishment in the "selection" of representatives, warning that such actions would compromise the democratic process. "In this election, our establishment has shattered corruption records spanning 75 years," he declared, emphasising the importance of upholding democratic values. "We are the torchbearers of democracy, and it is our responsibility to protect the Constitution," he added.

## Chatha retracts...

FROM PAGE 01  
rejected the election results – demanded an investigation into the matter. In the same presser, Chatha had also accused Chief Justice of Pakistan Qazi Faez Isa of facilitating the rigging. Responding to his allegations, CJP Isa demanded the former commissioner to show evidence to back his allegations against him. However, retracting his allegations, Chatha revealed that all of this was done in coordination with the Imran Khan-founded PTI, who had also given him "lucrative positions for me in future". In his statement, Chatha, who has been a civil servant for 32 years, said that after the 2018 elections, when the PTI formed government in Punjab, he remained posted to senior provincial posts, including provincial secretary to the Government of Punjab.

## MPAs-elect to take...

FROM PAGE 01  
Punjab Governor Baligh Ur Rehman has issued a notification in this regard. Speaker Sibtain Khan will administer the oath to the newly elected members. The announcement about the assembly's session comes a day after a parliamentary meeting of PML-N elected members took place at Jati Umra in Lahore. Party sources claimed a total of 218 members participated in the meeting, which included independent members and PMLN MPs, while the members nominated for specific seats were also included. Sources said 137 successful candidates of PMLN, 58 women nominated for specific seats and more than 22 independent members, who joined the PMLN after the elections, were present.

## SHC directs PTA to...

FROM PAGE 01  
the disruptions were reported in Rawalpindi, Karachi, Gujranwala and Lahore among other cities. During a hearing today, SHC Chief Justice Aqeel Ahmed Abbasi instructed the PTA that the services of X should remain restored "without any interruption or disruption". The directive was issued on a petition filed by senior journalists through Advocate Abdul Moiz Jafferii. It contended that restricting or blocking access to X was "unlawful, arbitrary and violation of the letter and spirit of Article 19 and 19-A of the Constitution".



ISLAMABAD: Players of OHC Bully Hockey Club, the Netherlands posing for a picture with the players and officials of the Rising Stars Hockey Club, at Nasseer Bundha Hockey Ground. The Dutch team will play a match against HEC Hockey team today at 230 pm at Nasseer Bundha ground. – DNA

# Badar leads Pak in first T20 to win against India

Badar Munir said that he is happy and has been able to perform better for the team's victory against India. I will try to do my best in the rest of the series matches, he added

AFZAL JAVED

DUBAI: An unbeaten sparkling century by Badar Munir guided Pakistan Blind Cricket Team to a five-wicket win against arch-rival India in the first contest of the three-match Blinds T-20 bilateral cricket series at International Cricket Council (ICC) Cricket Academy Dubai, United Arab Emirates (UAE) on Thursday. The first T20 match was tossed by the President of Pakistan Arif Alvi's daughter Naema Alvi Bawany while President World Blind Cricket Council (WBCC) Syed Sultan Shah, WBCC Vice President Rajnish Henry and other dignitaries were also present during the occasion. Captain Nisar Ali won the toss and opted to put India in to bat first. Pakistan's bowler Badar Munir made an early breakthrough by dismissing the dangerous Sunil Ramesh in the third over. Despite this,



India managed a competitive total of 213 runs for the loss of 5 wickets in their allotted 20 overs. Indian captain Dargah Aqil contributed with 61 runs off 42 balls, while Venkatesh Rao scored 49 runs off 37 balls. Pakistan's bowlers

Badar Munir and Kamran Akhter claimed 2 wickets each for 36 and 16 runs while Mati Ullah took one wicket for Pakistan. In response, Pakistan faced early setbacks, losing a couple of wickets, including Captain Nisar

Ali, who scored 18 runs off 11 balls. However, Badar Munir took the charge with an exceptional innings, and guided Pakistan to chase down the target of 214 runs in the 19.2 overs with 5 wickets in hand. Badar Munir's

unbeaten knock of 129 runs off 63 balls, including 5 sixes and 18 fours, proved decisive and also declared man of the match. Indian bowlers Durga Rao Parsaad and Nakula Badanayak managed to take one wicket each for 55 and 22 runs. We are really happy with wonderful victory against India specially Badar Munir performance at the crucial time when top batters were went out", said Syed Sultan Shah Chairman Pakistan Blind Cricket Council (PBCC), who is also president of World Blind Cricket Council. Speaking to the media Badar Munir said that he is happy and has been able to perform better for the team's victory against India. I will try to do my best in the rest of the series matches, he added. With this win, Pakistan takes a 1-0 lead in the three-match T-20 bilateral series. The green shirts will face India again on February 23rd in the second T20 match while the third match of the series will be held on February 25th.

## Sammy backs Zalmi to qualify for playoffs

LAHORE: Peshawar Zalmi head coach Daren Sammy was not happy with the way his batsmen batted against Karachi Kings and stressed they will need to be more responsible as a batting group. "We did not bat well today," Sammy told a post-match news conference. "It's good Babar continues to do what he has been doing. Congratulations to Babar for achieving the fastest 10,000 T20 runs milestone. We just have to be more responsible as a batting group," said Sammy, a former West Indies skipper. Peshawar Zalmi lost their second successive match of the PSL 9 when they were downed by Karachi Kings by a convincing seven wickets margin here at the Gaddafi Stadium on Wednesday. Peshawar Zalmi posted 154 thanks to Babar Azam's fine knock of 72. Karachi Kings chased the target with 19 balls to spare after losing three wickets in the process. "Normally on good pitches you need better bowling. During the last two years PSL has been a high-scoring league in terms of runs. So it says that the pitches here are normally good for batsmen. If you get six specialist batters and then all-rounder coming in and that is really what we want," said Sammy when asked about his team's batting depth. Sammy said that 175 to 180 would have been par score on this track. "You know if you lose three wickets in the powerplay you lose 60 percent. At half way stage they had 80 when a partnership was built between Babar and Rovman Powell and we got ourselves to a very good position on that surface," he said. "Having said that over the last two games watching our batting, overs number 11 to 15, on both time, we got 38 runs while the opposition scored 56 in that period," Sammy pointed out. "Such little moments of the game could affect the entire situation," he said. "I have been in this franchise for the last nine years. It's not how you start but it's how you finish. People say we have been the most consistent team. We need to win five or six games to get to the playoffs," Sammy said. He hoped that his charges will stage a fightback. "I have full confidence in the guys in the dressing room. We have to play eight matches. On coming 17 hopefully you will be talking to me after the match," he said. Asked if he thought Zalmi's middle order needed to be reshuffled, Sammy said: "Look, you got experienced Babar, Saim and I think in the last PSL they were the best openers. Again in the first game they started very well. – Agencies

## Dani Alves sentenced to 4.5 years in jail for assault

BRAZIL: A Spanish court on Thursday sentenced former Brazil international Dani Alves to four and a half years in prison after finding him guilty of raping a young woman at a Barcelona nightclub in December 2022. It also ordered the three-time Champions League winner to five years' probation after he serves his jail term, and demanded he pay 150,000 euros (\$162,000) in compensation to the victim. "The victim did not consent and there is evidence that, beyond the complainant's testimony, permits the rape to be considered proven," the Barcelona court wrote in a statement. "The court considers as proven the fact that the defendant abruptly grabbed the complainant, threw her to the ground and penetrated her vaginally, preventing her from moving, while complainant said no and wanted to leave." – Agencies

## Azhar Ali says Shaheen has been 'exposed'

LAHORE: Former Pakistan captain Azhar Ali has highlighted what's going wrong with defending champions Lahore Qalandars during the ongoing Pakistan Super League (PSL) season nine. Lahore have lost three matches in a row and are currently at fifth place on the points table. While speaking on a local sports channel, Azhar said that Lahore is suffering due to the absence of leg-spinner Rashid Khan and poor captaincy of Shaheen Afridi. "I think Shaheen Afridi's captaincy and Lahore's bowling has been exposed. The absence of Rashid Khan is clearly hurting Lahore since they no longer have the comfort he provided to the other bowlers in the middle overs," said Azhar. "When new batter Iftikhar came out to bat, they bowled leg-side to him even when fine leg was up. On the other hand, when they bowled on off-stump, the third man was up in the circle. This shows that there was no coordination between the bowler and captain. "Shaheen and Harris have not been bowling well. I think, gradually, Lahore will realise how difficult things are when you have limited resources." Multan Sultans edged Lahore Qalandars in the seventh match of the PSL season nine at the Multan Cricket Stadium on Wednesday. Iftikhar Ahmed smacked 24 runs in the 19th over to finish the chase of 167 in 19 overs. The 33-year-old remained not out at 34 off 11 balls. The chase led by Mohammad Rizwan showcased a mix of brilliance and challenges. Rizwan played an anchoring innings, scoring 82 runs off 59 balls. – Agencies

## Ronaldo scores as Al Nassr ease into League quarters

Portuguese star headed home from close range to mark his second successive game for club

SPORTS DESK

RIYADH: Cristiano Ronaldo guided Al Nassr into the quarter-finals of the Asian Champions League as the Saudi Arabian side defeated domestic rivals Al Fayha 2-0 to progress 3-0 on aggregate. Nassr, who won last week's first leg 1-0 thanks to a Ronaldo goal nine minutes from time, were the better side at Al Awwal Park and took the lead on 17 minutes through Portuguese winger Otavio. The former Porto star, who joined Nassr last summer, headed home from close range to score in his second successive game for the club. His compatriot, Ronaldo, looked set to endure a frustrating night personally, with the Portugal captain having a number of penalty appeals turned down and,

not long into the second half, a goal disallowed for offside. Ronaldo, 39 earlier this month, was also booked in first-half stoppage time for a late challenge, with Nassr manager Luis Castro then given a yellow card for protesting the decision too vehemently. However, the Nassr skipper would have the final say, when four minutes from time, he latched onto yet another Marcelo Brozovic through ball. Fayha goalkeeper Vladimir Stojkovic really should have dealt with the situation but could only kick his attempted clearance off the onrushing Ronaldo. The ball fell invitingly for Ronaldo to tap into the empty net. It marked the former Manchester United, Real Madrid and Juventus forward's 10th goal in his past nine matches for Nassr. Ronaldo, a five-time winner of the

UEFA Champions League, is competing for the first time in its Asian equivalent. In the night's other West Asian tie, 2003 champions Al Ain came from a goal behind at home to Nasaf Qarshi to win 2-1 in stoppage time and seal their spot in the quarter-finals. The UAE side, the only Emirati club to lift the trophy, were a goal down five minutes into the second

half at the Hazza bin Zayed Stadium, when they failed to deal with an inswinging corner, leaving Nasaf forward Bobur Abdikholikov to prod the ball across the six-yard box. Teammate Akmal Mozgovoy finished at the far post. With last week's first leg in Qarshi ending goalless, the Uzbekistan side had stolen a march on reaching the last eight. Yet Al Ain needed only four minutes to draw level. Togolese striker Kodjo Laba kept his eye on a looping loose ball in the Nasaf penalty area to acrobatically volley home. The drama, though, was saved for the second minute of injury time. Nasaf goalkeeper Abduvohid Nematov somehow contrived to punch a cross from the left to Sofiane Rahimi. The Al Ain playmaker took one touch before drilling

home his effort to take the home team through 2-1 on aggregate. Al Ain and Nassr, the latter semi-finalists in their past two Champions League campaigns, will meet next month, across two legs, for a spot in the last four. Former Australia star Harry Kewell led Japan's Yokohama F-Marininos into the quarter-finals after beating Bangkok United 1-0 in his first home game in charge for a 3-2 aggregate win. Brazilian Anderson Lopes converted a penalty in added time at the end of extra time to send Yokohama through to face China's Shandong Taishan in the last eight. "It was difficult but it makes it worth it when you do create something special for the club by progressing into the final eight," said Kewell. "We're looking forward to the challenge."

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## Japan-Pakistan ties from...

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relations between Japan and Pakistan, the Ambassador lauded the contributions of all the people who have helped to further strengthen our mutual ties in individual, business or official capacity. Jamal Shah in his speech thanked the ambassador for inviting him as the chief guest. The minister further said that Pakistan and Japan relations are excellent adding these relations will further be strengthened even in the days to come. He also dilated upon various cultural linkages between Pakistan and Japan and hoped to have intense cooperation in the cultural field as well.

## SC deplores criticism over CJP's...

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The apex court's press release said that even if the accusations in the first information report for the case were believed, they did not merit the application of the sections charged but rather Section 5 of the Criminal Law Amendment Act, 1932, related to dissemination of contents of prescribed documents. The press release further stated that as per the abovementioned section, a maximum sentence of six months imprisonment could be given, of which the petitioner had already served a year, and thus, he was released on bail considering Islamic rulings, constitutional sections and principles of law and justice.

## US urges Pak to 'respect'...

FROM PAGE 01  
transparent investigation into claims of rigging in general elections. Miller rejected claims of interference in the formation of a government in Pakistan, dismissing calls from US lawmakers and others to withhold recognition of the Feb 8 election results. He stated this while replying to a question whether the prospective coalition set-up in Pakistan would be deemed representative. "I don't want to comment on the government before it is formed," he said. "Ultimately, as is the case wherever you see coalition politics taking place in any given country, it's a decision for that country itself. It's not something we would weigh in on."

## Strict action against...

FROM PAGE 01  
Special Representative on Interfaith Harmony Hafiz Tahir Mahmood Ashrafi, he said the government would take strict action against such illegal activities under the law. He said that freedom of expression under Article 19 of the Constitution was not unlimited, rather it was subject to law of the land. Under Article 19, derogatory remarks against judiciary, armed forces and brotherly countries were not allowed, Solangi remarked.



## Briefs

## Italy to soon finalize security agreement with Ukraine

ROME : Italy will soon finalize a bilateral security agreement with Ukraine, the country's foreign minister said Thursday. Speaking at the Italian parliament's Joint Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee, Foreign Minister and Deputy Prime Minister Antonio Tajani said: "I am here to inform you about the willingness to continue negotiations for a cooperation, security and defense agreement with Ukraine, which the prime minister (Giorgia Meloni) will finalize in the next few days." "The agreement we are discussing reaffirms the territorial independence of Ukraine and condemns Russian aggression and gives a more structured form of our commitment to Kyiv," he added, according to the state-run ANSA news agency. According to Tajani, the agreement is political and symbolic to send a clear message in favor of the defense of international law. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said Wednesday that his country is preparing for new security agreements with its partners, as the conflict with Russia is about to enter its third year. Since the start of the year, Ukraine has signed 10-year security agreements with the UK, France, and Germany to deepen defense cooperation and support for the country.—DNA

## Bushfire forces evacuation of thousands in Aust

SYDNEY : More than two thousand people have been ordered to evacuate from towns in the west of Australia's Victoria state due to a bushfire burning out of control on Thursday. The state emergency service urged residents in the towns of Raglan and Beaufort, home to around two thousand people, and those in surrounding areas to leave while it was still safe and head east to the nearby regional hub of Ballarat, 95 km (59 miles) west of Melbourne. Roughly 50 square km (12,355 acres) is ablaze northwest of Ballarat. A similar area is also burning out of control further to the west. State Premier Jacinta Allan said more than 1,000 firefighters were on the ground, supported by 24 aircraft and more than 100 vehicles. More are set to join the fight soon. "Leaving immediately is the safest option for those communities," she said at a news conference. "If you are located in these areas, please heed this advice, please act now to save your own life."—APP

## Czech, Slovak farmers block borders in protest

HOLIC : Farmers from the Czech Republic, Slovakia and other central European countries protested along Czech borders on Thursday, blocking some crossings as they demanded less bureaucracy and changes to EU policy. Farmers across Europe have been stepping up protests this year, including in Poland, France, Germany, Spain and Italy, complaining of low prices and high costs, cheap imports and constraints from the EU's Green Deal climate change initiative. Farmers blocked the Hodonin-Holic crossing on the Czech-Slovak border as hundreds of tractors, many draped with Czech or Slovak flags, filled the highway. Hungarian farmers were also seen among the crowds gathered. Czech and Polish farmers also partially blocked a crossing in the northeast corner of the Czech Republic, where dozens of tractors were parked along the road, Czech news agency CTK reported. Other Czech border points, including into Germany, were set to see protests. The Czech Agrarian Chamber said 3,000 tractors were taking part in protests just in the Czech Republic. "The fact that today farmers are protesting throughout the European Union is clear evidence."—APP

## Gaza death toll nears 30k as ICJ hearings continue

European diplomats warn of dire humanitarian consequences of Rafah assault

## NEWS DESK

GAZA CITY: The Ministry of Health in the Gaza Strip said on Thursday that 97 Palestinians were killed while 132 others were injured in the Israeli bombardment of the enclave over the past 24 hours. It added that the Israeli occupation army committed 9 massacres against civilians in the beleaguered enclave in the past 24 hours. The ministry said that a number of victims are still under the rubble of destroyed buildings and in the streets and could not be recovered due to the Israeli army shooting of any ambulance or civil defense vehicle trying to approach them. It said that the number of martyrs has thus risen to 29,410 while 69,465 others were injured in the Israeli bloody aggression on the besieged Strip that started on October 7 last year. Meanwhile, in a joint statement co-signed by the foreign ministers of 26 European countries, officials expressed concern that an Israeli assault on Rafah, where more than one million displaced

Palestinians are hemmed in with nowhere to go, would "worsen an already catastrophic humanitarian situation and prevent the urgently needed provision of basic services and humanitarian assistance". "This requires an immediate humanitarian pause that would lead to a sustainable cease-fire, the unconditional release of all hostages and the provision of humanitarian assistance," says the statement, released by Sweden. Meanwhile, Abdel Sattar Issa, Lebanon's representative, has said his country urges the ICJ "to help in giving justice to the Palestinian people so we can have peace in the Middle East". He also said: It was wrong of some countries to ask the ICJ not to hand out its advisory opinion to the UN General Assembly "with a perverse argument" that it would get in the way of a bilateral negotiations between the Israelis and Palestinians. "The law is the framework which prevents the political slippage be it public or private level." "Were Israel to seize its occupation of the Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, and accept the right of

the Palestinian people to self-determination, all the other violations would disappear." "Since 1967, Israel has been committing a crime of aggression, illegally occupying territories before annexing them." "Some may question the application of the norm prohibiting the use of force [to acquire territory] on the basis that it is an inter-state norm. That would imply that the OPT is not part of a state ... Lebanon and more than 140 members of the UN have recognised the State of Palestine and East Jerusalem as its capital." "Israel must dismantle its settlements in the occupied Palestinian Territories and withdraw therefrom ... It must also cease all violations of Palestinian peoples' right to self-determination ... It must also issue reparations." Meanwhile, The Palestinian group has said it "values" Beijing's assertion that Palestinians have a right to pursue self-determination by "all available means". "We also value the stances of countries participating in the proceedings that underscored the widespread violations against international

law by the occupation against the Palestinian people - including the massacres and genocide in Gaza, the abuses and killings and settlement expansion in the West Bank and Jerusalem and the effort to impose demographic changes on Palestinian land," Hamas said in a statement. Meanwhile, Leader of the Islamic Revolution of Iran Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei slams Muslim heads of state for failing to cut their relations with the Israeli occupation regime. During a meeting with the participants at the 40th International Qur'an Competition in Tehran on Thursday, the Leader called on Muslim countries to openly express their opposition to Israel, sever ties with the regime and cut off support for it. The Leader emphasized that the resistance forces in Gaza are acting in accordance with the Holy Qur'an and are standing against the enemy, but wondered whether Muslim countries and their leaders were implementing the Qur'anic teachings regarding the Gaza situation. "Are the heads of state and officials of Muslim countries following the

Qur'an commandments that say 'Do not establish contact with the enemies of God and enemies of Muslims?'" The Leader said. "And why don't the leaders of Muslim countries take action to openly cut off their relationship with the murderous Zionist regime and stop helping this regime?," Ayatollah Khamenei asked, calling on people in Muslim countries to press their governments to take stronger action on Gaza. Meanwhile, UN rapporteurs have called for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza Strip to evade further loss of life in lines of civilians in the enclave. They said in a statement on Wednesday that Israel must immediately cease fire in Gaza and embark on concrete humanitarian measures that prioritize the needs of Palestinian women and girls in accordance with the International Court of Justice's ruling of 26 January 2024. "At this stage of the conflict, there is an urgent and growing need to address the near total disruption of schooling, massive destruction of housing, lack of access to reproductive health care and supplies.

## Turkiye-US ties took positive turn: Senator

ANKARA : Relations between Türkiye and the United States are currently on a positive trajectory, U.S. Senator Jeanne Shaheen said Wednesday, calling Ankara a "very important ally" after meeting with President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan in the Turkish capital earlier this week alongside her colleague, Senator Chris Murphy. In an interview with Anadolu Agency (AA), Shaheen said the meeting with the Turkish president addressed "the importance of the ratification of Sweden into NATO" and the F-16 sale to Türkiye, approved recently by the U.S. Congress. "We talked also about the importance of NATO to our relationship and the fact that this is an opportunity for us to think about how we can better partner in the future on a number of issues," she said. Turkish-U.S. partnership in Africa On her assessment of Turkish-American relations, she said: "I think it's positive." The two sides now have "an opportunity to look at how we can work together, and during our meeting (with President Erdoğan), one of the things we talked about is the ability to partner in Africa," said the Democrat lawmaker. Acknowledging that Türkiye "has relationships that we don't have" in Africa, Shaheen said: "We can work together in areas that will be important, not just for those countries, but I think for world stability."—DNA

## Azerbaijan condemns President of France's baseless allegations

It is unacceptable to blame Azerbaijan for taking a disproportionate response, while refraining from criticizing Armenia, who took unprovoked actions disrupting the stable situation that lasted for almost 5 months



## MONITORING DESK

BAKU: Azerbaijan MFA has strongly condemned the baseless anti-Azerbaijan allegations, unilaterally defending Armenia, by the President of France. "We strongly condemn the baseless anti-Azerbaijan allegations, unilaterally defending Armenia, by the President of France, Emmanuel Macron, during a joint press conference with the Prime Minister

of Armenia in Paris on 21 February 2024". The statement further said that as a country, which has never mentioned the rights of Azerbaijanis violated for nearly 30 years, displaced from their territories, and subjected to mass massacres, French side's statement about the rights and security of Armenians left the territories of Azerbaijan at their own will and without any violence, is completely inappropriate. Moreover, it would be more ap-

propriate for France that touched upon the importance of territorial integrity within the framework of Alma-Ata declaration and certain maps, to clarify why, contrary to such agreements, they have not stood against the Armenian aggression and the occupation of Azerbaijani territories for almost 30 years, as well as the continuing occupation of 8 villages of Azerbaijan by Armenia. It is unacceptable to blame Azerbaijan for taking a disproportionate response, while refraining from criticizing Armenia, who took unprovoked actions disrupting the stable situation that lasted for almost 5 months. Such biased approaches should be stopped. We once again declare that France's insidious policy of creating new tension in the region, and hindering peace and stability will not yield any results.

## France trims \$11B budget amid sluggish growth

PARIS : The French government on Thursday announced budget cuts of 10 billion euros (\$11 billion) as it seeks to rein in its budget deficit after growth failed to meet expectations. The controversial cuts include 2 billion euros that were to be spent on environmental and energy transition programs. Other cuts are being made to previously budgeted spending on education, justice, defense and regional development. The decree was published in France's official journal and signed by Prime Minister Gabriel Attal, who was recently named by French President Emmanuel Macron in a Cabinet reshuffle. The government had warned of the cuts Sunday to hold its 2024 deficit to 4.4% of the gross domestic product (GDP) after revising downward its growth forecast to 1% amid international tensions and slowing economies in major trading partners such as China and Germany. The government has indicated it is concerned about French debt being downgraded by international rating agencies.—Agencies

## UK targets Russian military with further sanctions

LONDON : The UK has announced more than 50 further sanctions against Russia ahead of the second anniversary of the invasion of Ukraine. The sanctions target individuals and businesses sustaining Russian President Vladimir Putin's war effort. Foreign Secretary Lord David Cameron said the UK would continue to back Kyiv "for as long as it takes". It follows the sanctions imposed on six Russian prison bosses after the death of opposition leader Alexei Navalny. The Foreign Office said the latest sanctions would crack down on those supplying Russia's military with munitions such as rocket launch systems, missiles and explosives. The sanctions also target key sources of Russian revenue, clamping down on metals, diamonds and the energy trade, in a move designed to cut off funding for President Putin's war efforts from every angle, officials said. Announcing the new measures, Lord Cameron said: "Our international economic pressure means Russia cannot afford this illegal invasion. "Our sanctions are starving Putin of the resources he desperately needs to fund his struggling war. "Together, we will not let up in the face of tyranny. We will continue to support Ukraine as it fights for democracy - for as long as it takes." The conflict is largely at a stalemate, though Moscow appears to have made recent advances. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has publicly urged western allies to provide more weapons or risk emboldening Russia's forces. The British sanctions come a day after the Foreign Office announced it had frozen the assets and implemented a travel ban on Russian prison bosses in charge of the penal colony where Navalny died. The US has also pledged fresh sanctions on Russia following his death, expected to come later this week. Navalny, who was the Russian opposition's most significant leader for the last decade, had been serving a 19-year sentence on charges many viewed as politically motivated. The Russian prison service said he died at the IK-3 Arctic penal colony, nicknamed "Polar Wolf", on Friday of last week after taking a walk.—DNA

## Kenya drops unpopular entry fee for 7 countries

NAIROBI : Kenya has exempted passport holders from South Africa and six other countries from paying an unpopular entry fee introduced last month. The government scrapped visa requirements for all foreign passport holders last month. The move was seen as an attempt to promote Kenya as a tourist destination and to attract business travellers. But a \$30 (€23) entry fee as introduced, including for some visitors who previously did not require visas. The decision caused a huge backlash, with critics saying that it could lead to countries with which Kenya has visa-waiver agreements introducing a similar fee, making travel more costly and bureaucratic. Only travellers from the East African Community (EAC) regional bloc were exempt from paying the money. In addition to South Africa, the exemption has been extended to passport holders from five other African states - Ethiopia, Eritrea, Congo-Brazzaville, Comoros and Mozambique.—APP

## Cyber-attack hits Malawi's immigration service

LILONGWE : Malawi's government has suspended the issuing of passports following a cyber-attack on the immigration service's computer network. President Lazarus Chakwera told media reporters that the targeting of the department amounted to a "serious national security breach". He revealed that the hackers were asking for a ransom. But the president said the government would not give in to their demands and was working to resolve the problem. "We are not in the business of appeasing criminals with public money, nor are we in the business of negotiating with those who attack our country," he said on Wednesday. Demand for passports is high in Malawi with many young people looking to migrate in search of job opportunities. Mr Chakwera said he had given the immigration department three weeks within which it should provide a temporary solution and resume the issuing of passports, while waiting to regain control of the system. He said a long-term solution with additional security safeguards would be developed. For the past two weeks, Malawi has not been issuing passports for what officials said was "a technical glitch". Mr Chakwera only revealed for the first time on Wednesday that the immigration system had been "hacked" without mentioning.—Agencies

## Syrian migrants forced back at Serbian border

LONDON: Footage of Syrian migrants in Serbia being stripped and forced back into North Macedonia has emerged, in what human rights groups warn is evidence of growing violence targeting migrants on the edges of Europe. Legis, an NGO in North Macedonia, sent two video clips to The Guardian newspaper showing a line of semi-naked men on a road near Lojane, close to the border with Serbia. The videos are dated Feb. 10 and show the second instance of "abusive and degrading" migrant pushbacks that day, Legis said. In total, more than 50 migrants who crossed the border were stripped and pushed back by Serbian authorities, the NGO added. Legis President Jasmin Redjepi said the pushback followed an EU-Serbian cooperation summit that aimed to bolster the Serbian border against people-smuggling operations. He added: "These incidents occur when the EU prepares restrictions for migrants on the route, and in this case just days after an EU-Serbia border cooperation summit. We then see the direct impact and consequences." Though the stripping of migrants has taken place across Europe, the Legis footage is the first instance of the practice taking place on the Serbia-North Macedonia border.—APP



ISLAMABAD : Caretaker Federal Minister for IT and Telecommunication, Dr. Umar Saif chairing 6th Board of Directors meeting of National Information Technology Board (NITB).—DNA

## Uzbekistan President joins future games opening ceremony

The President of Uzbekistan wished the participants success and proposed holding the Games of the Future in 2026 in Uzbekistan

## NEWS DESK

TASHKENT : The President of the Republic of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev attended the opening ceremony of the First International multi-sports tournament - Games of the Future, in Kazan city. The event, held at the Kazan Expo International Exhibition Center, was attended by the President of the Russian Federation Vladimir Putin, the President of Belarus Alexander Lukashenko, the President of Kazakhstan Kassym-Jomart Tokayev, the President of Kyrgyzstan Sadyr Zhaparov, President of Tajikistan Emomali Rahmon and other foreign guests. Participants were shown a video showing the disciplines of the Games of the Future

and a theatrical performance. The President of Uzbekistan wished the participants success and proposed holding the Games of the Future in 2026 in Uzbekistan. After the ceremony, the distin-

guished guests toured the thematic exhibition. Information was presented about the concept of

physical sports, which combines competitions in virtual space and classical sports. The leaders watched e-sports competitions, the process of training in physical football, and got acquainted with several art objects and stands telling about the current development and prospects of a new direction in sports.

The Games of the Future is a high-tech sports show that includes hybrid sports competitions in classic sports and their digital analogs. The Games will be held from February 21 to March 3, 2024. Almost 300 teams from over 100 countries, including Uzbekistan, are participating in the tournament. Our compatriots will perform in sports like physical hockey, virtual bicycle racing, and sports programming.





## Briefs

### Interim bails of Imran's sisters extended

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: An anti-terrorism court on Thursday extended the interim bails of the sisters of the PTI founder in May 9 vandalism cases. Aleema Khan and Uzma Khan appeared before anti-terrorism court Judge Arshad Javed who extended their bails till March 16. Meanwhile, former PTI leader Musrat Jamsheed Cheema met with the sisters in the courtroom who expressed their anger. Ms Cheema informed them of the cases filed against her and the hardships she faced while in hiding. But the sisters were outraged. Aleema Khan told her that when her brother needed her help, she was hiding. She said you were close to the PTI founder but you left her in time of trial. Ms Cheema remained silent and did not retaliate.

### Avalanche in IIOJK kills one foreign skier

DNA

SRINAGAR: At least one skier of a foreign nationality was killed and several other skiers were trapped by an avalanche that hit Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir's (IIOJK) popular ski destination of Gulmarg on Thursday, officials said. Gulmarg has recorded about 5 feet (1.5 metre) of snowfall this week, following which authorities had issued an avalanche warning for the area. "So far one skier has died and five have been rescued," Manzoor Ahmad, head of the rescue team, told reporters, adding that the nationality of the deceased was yet to be determined. Most of the trapped skiers are foreigners, officials said. Waseem Raja, CEO of the Gulmarg Development Authority, said a "massive rescue operation" had been launched to save those who were trapped.

### Pak foreign reserves stand at US\$13,097.8m

KARACHI: The foreign exchange reserves held by the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) have dropped to US\$8,012.8 million after a decrease of US\$44 million. In a statement issued yesterday, the spokesman of the central bank said the country's total liquid foreign reserves stood at US\$13,097.8m in the week ended on 16th February 2023 as compared to US\$13,149.1 million during the week ended on 9th February. The SBP said its reserves decreased by US\$44 million to US\$8,012.8 million due to debt repayments during the. - Agencies

## PPP to soon announce names for Balochistan CM, key constitutional posts

Party to finalise names for Senate chairman and Punjab governor posts before newly elected legislators take oath

NEWS DESK

ISLAMABAD: Following its agreement with the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) over the formation of the future government, the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) is expected to announce its nominees for the posts of Balochistan chief minister, Senate chairman and provincial governors soon. The development comes after the PPP struck an agreement with the PML-N to support the latter in forming the future government by voting for its prime ministerial candidate Shehbaz Sharif in exchange for key constitutional posts along with a coalition government in Balochistan. The party emerged as "King's party" with its 54 National Assembly (NA) after neither the PML-N (79 NA seats) nor the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf backed independents (92 NA seats) managed to secure a simple majority to form their government in the

Centre - allowing the PPP to bargain for the slot of president's office among other key constitutional posts. Sources say the party has mulled over three names for the Balochistan chief minister's post, including Sadiq Imrani, Sanaullah Zehri and Sarfraz Bugti, and will announce the nominee for the province's chief executive within the next 36 hours, reported a local newspaper. For the post of Senate chairman, the top constitutional post after the president, the PPP is considering the names of the party's Vice Chairman Yousuf Raza Gillani, Salim Mandviwalla, Farooq Naik and Sherry Rehman. However, Gillani is likely to be the party's first choice for the post of Senate chairman, sources added. If nominated by the party, the former prime minister - elected as senator from Islamabad in 2021 as a joint candidate of the opposition - will have to vacate Multan's NA-148 seat that he won during the February 8 polls. His younger son is then likely to contest the seat in the subsequent by-election. Furthermore, PPP Co-Chairman Asif Ali Zardari, who is poised to become the country's president for the second time, will announce the party's nominee for Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) governor either today or tomorrow (Friday) as per the party's KP Deputy General Secretary Abrar Saad.

## ISSI organizes students' art competition

# Palestinian envoy commends Pak support amid Gaza war

Ambassador Rabaei stated that he felt at home, as the people in Pakistan spoke about Palestine through their hearts which showed that Palestinians were not alone in facing the challenges while they pursued their struggle for inalienable rights

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: The Centre for Afghanistan, Middle East & Africa (CAMEA) at Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI) organized an art competition for children aged 8-12 years, titled, "Expressing Solidarity with the Children of Gaza," which aimed to pay homage to the courage and resilience of the people of Gaza, particularly its children, who have borne the brunt of the conflict. The Chief Guest on the occasion was H.E. Ahmed Rabaei, Ambassador of the State of Palestine to Pakistan. Mr. Brian Witbooi, Counsellor at the South African High Commission in Islamabad; Ambassador Sohail Mahmood, Director General ISSI; and Ms. Amina Khan, Director CAMEA, ISSI also spoke. In his remarks, Ambassador Ahmed Rabaei expressed his deep gratitude on behalf of the State of Palestine to the people of Pakistan for their profound support and solidarity in such testing times. He expressed pleasure on seeing the participating students, who shared their heartfelt sentiments and contributed efforts in support of the Palestinian people in the wake of ongoing conflict. He reiterated the concerns of UN Secretary General, Antonio Guterres, 'who feared that there may be no life in Gaza'. He added that seventy percent of the victims in Gaza were children and women, which meant more than 21,000 human lives. Further, he said, more than 20,000 buildings in Gaza had been demolished by Israel's occupation forces. People in the south of Gaza - more than 1.4 million -



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Palestine to Pakistan Ahmed Jawad A.A Rabaei, giving a winning trophy to a student during Art work exhibition by Young Pakistani Students ceremony titled "Expressing Solidarity with the Children of Gaza" at Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI) in the Federal Capital. - Online

were waiting in the small congested area for hope. However, Israel was attacking Gaza continuously. Speaking about Pakistan, Ambassador Rabaei stated that he felt at home, as the people in Pakistan spoke about Palestine through their hearts which showed that Palestinians were not alone in facing the challenges while they pursued their struggle for inalienable rights. DG ISSI Ambassador Sohail Mahmood, in his remarks on the occasion, highlighted the human suffering in Gaza as a result of

relentless Israeli military operations, and especially the devastating impact on Gaza's children. He noted that over 12,600 children had been killed, while those who survived were psychologically traumatized, displaced, homeless, and short of food and safe drinking water. Thousands had lost body limbs and would be forced to live the lives of disability and dependence. This was the worst part of the 'collective punishment' being imposed on the civilian population. He particularly lauded the courage and resilience of

the people of Gaza, who remained steadfast in the face of unspeakable atrocities and continued to fight for their freedom from illegal occupation. The ISSI was overwhelmed with the response, when it approached young Pakistani students to raise awareness about the plight of Gaza's children and to express solidarity with them. They had composed powerful poetry and drawings and paintings - affirming their support and extending a message of hope. Ambassador Sohail Mahmood lamented that the latest Security Council attempt to effect a ceasefire had been stymied by another veto. Noting South Africa's approach to the International Court of Justice (ICJ) for proceedings against Israel for violation of its obligations under the 1948 Genocide Convention, he lauded the ICJ's landmark preliminary ruling that called upon Israel to take all measures in its power to prevent genocidal acts against Palestinians. Ambassador Sohail Mahmood concluded by stressing that everyone should know that there can be no peace in the Middle East without justice for the Palestinians. Ms. Amina Khan, in her remarks stated that the recent events in Gaza and the West Bank have witnessed an unprecedented level of brutality from the Israeli occupation forces, which have been highlighted by UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres, describing them as, "We are witnessing a killing of civilians that is unparalleled and unprecedented in any conflict - in modern history." She further said that the ongoing conflict and humanitarian crisis has robbed the children of Palestine of their childhood and denied them basic rights that every child deserves.

### Admin refuses to transfer Bushra from Bani Gala

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Adiala jail administration on Thursday refused to transfer Bushra Bibi, wife of PTI founder, from Bani Gala to the jail. Justice Mian Gul Hasan Aurangzeb of the Islamabad High Court heard the Bushra Bibi's plea seeking transfer from Bani Gala to Adiala Jail. During the hearing, the Superintendent of Adiala Jail refused to transfer Bushra Bibi to jail. According to the report, the jail administration said there is less space in the jail as 250 women are already imprisoned there. On the other hand, the chief commissioner of Islamabad has not yet submitted his response.

### Making Zardari president will be 'insult' to country

ADIL SHAHEEN

RAWALPINDI: PTI leader Sher Afzal Marwat said on Thursday that making Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) co-chairman Asif Ali Zardari the president would be an insult to the country. Speaking to the media in Rawalpindi, Marwat asserted: "The Election Commission of Pakistan is going to snatch our reserved seats. Our lists will be rejected on the technical grounds."



ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Chief Minister of the Punjab Syed Mohsin Raza Naqvi calls on Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar in Islamabad. - DNA

## 'Caretaker govt significantly improved country's economy'

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaarul HaqKakar on Thursday stated that the caretaker government had significantly improved the country's economy since its inception in August last year. Kakar, while presiding over a cabinet meeting at the PM's Office, commended his cabinet members for their outstanding performance during this brief period. The caretaker PM emphasised that the caretaker government would leave behind an action plan for the incoming elected government which would undoubtedly benefit the nation and its interests. Kakar underscored that prioritising the country's interests

had always been the cornerstone of the caretaker government's decisions and policy-making processes. The PM emphasised the need for working together to make Pakistan a stable, prosperous and developed nation. Kakar said he considered himself a lucky person to have served as the caretaker prime minister. "I have romance for Pakistan, I love the soul of the country... For me, Pakistan is the first and last and for me, Pakistan stands as an emblem of my faith. It is home to me and let us make this home stable, prosperous and developed." Kakar expressed gratitude for the support and encouragement received from the officers and staff at the PM's Office, particularly acknowledging the contributions of the military secretary, principal secretary, and cabinet secretary despite administrative challenges.

## Netanyahu is starving the children of Gaza

Today, hundreds of thousands of children are starving and lack clean drinking water

FOREIGN DESK

WASHINGTON: The US cannot be complicit in Israel's "horrific" war in the Gaza Strip against the Palestinian people, independent Sen. Bernie Sanders said on Wednesday. "The whole world is watching. (Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin) Netanyahu is starving the children of Gaza. We cannot be complicit in this atrocity," Sanders said in a video message on his X social account. "I cannot find words to describe how hor-

rific the situation is and could become," he added. As a result of Israeli bombing and restrictions on aid entering Gaza, Sanders said only a tiny fraction of the food, water, medicine, and fuel that are "desperately" needed can get into Gaza. "Today, hundreds of thousands of children are starving and lack clean drinking water. The United Nations says the entire population of Gaza is at imminent risk of famine and some 378,000 people are starving right now," he added. Stressing that many facilities have been damaged in airstrikes and a large number of health care workers trying to keep children alive have been killed, Sanders said the facilities that are operational today lack the basic medical supplies that "heroic" doctors and nurses need in order to save lives and treat their patients.

## PHC orders removal of Qaiser's name from ECL

Court deems inclusion of former NA speaker's name on ECL unconstitutional, illegal

SHAMIM SHAHID

PESHAWAR: The Peshawar High Court (PHC) ordered on Thursday the removal of former National Assembly speaker AsadQaiser's name from the Exit Control List (ECL), terming the addition of his name as unconstitutional and against the law. The last hearing of the petition, filed by Qaiser, along with former members Amjad Ali, Gul Zafar, IftikharMashwani, Mi-anSharifat Ali, Abdul Salam, Zaher Shah, Fazal Hakim, and others.

barred from leaving for Umrah by officials. The lawyer added that Qaiser was recently again elected to the National Assembly and is a senior politician. Earlier in January, the PHC barred the inclusion of former lawmakers from PTI in the fourth schedule. An individual is placed in the fourth schedule under the Anti-Terrorism Act, 1997 when there is credible intelligence information against him of being linked to a proscribed organisation. The person is then subjected to restrictions on travel, speech and business. The list of individuals who were recommended for inclusion in the fourth schedule included former Speaker AsadQaiser, along with former members Amjad Ali, Gul Zafar, IftikharMashwani, Mi-anSharifat Ali, Abdul Salam, Zaher Shah, Fazal Hakim, and others.

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