



Islamabad POST

Tuesday, February 27, 2024

Pakistan's Credible Daily Newspaper

Price Rs. 30

Int'l law 'under threat in light of killing Gazans

Detailed News On Page-08

Saudi FM warns against Israel's Rafah attack

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Sultans name Ihsanullah's replacement

Detailed News On Page-06



After President's refusal

Speaker 'convenes' new NA session on February 29

Meanwhile, Senator Raza Rabbani stated that the delay in convening a session by the president was an open violation of the constitution

ANSAR M BHATTI / DNA

ISLAMABAD: A new constitutional crisis is looming over the country as the National Assembly's outgoing Speaker Raja Pervaiz Ashraf has "decided" to convene the inaugural session of the new lower house of parliament on February 29, well-placed sources confirmed Monday. The development came moments after President Arif Alvi rejected a summary to summon the NA session, sources said, in which MNAs-elect will take oath. Alvi believed that the NA was incomplete sans the allocation of all the reserved seats to the political parties. While the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has allocated reserved seats to political parties, it has not awarded reserved quota to the Sunni Ittehad Council (SIC) after the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI)-backed independent candidates joined their ranks. The ECP, however, said that the matter of SIC reserved seats is "pending before the commission".

The PML-N-led alliance, who claimed winning the majority in the February 8 general elections, was of the view that the NA session must be called within 21 days after the elections, what their leadership said as per the Constitution. The sources said that the decision was made during an emergency meeting headed by NA speaker and attended by the officials of the NA Secretariat and constitutional experts. The NA speaker decided to call the session under Article 91 (2), the sources added. There was no constitutional hurdle in summoning the NA session despite the president's denial, constitutional experts briefed the speaker. The president was bound by the law to convene the NA session within 21 days after the elections, they added. The inaugural session had to be held after 21 days, the Constitution deadline, under any circumstances, the legal experts added. The NA Secretariat also consulted with the ministries of Law and

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PTI terms speaker's move 'unconstitutional'

Yousafzai asserted that pressuring President to hold a joint session of Parliament goes against the principles of law and constitution

ADIL SHAHEEN

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leader Barrister Syed Ali Zafar termed the expected move of the National Assembly (NA) speaker to summon the first session of the lower house "unconstitutional". "President is bound to summon the NA session under the Constitution. The session cannot be summoned when several reserved seats are vacant," Zafar opined while talking to journalists outside the parliament. He was of the view that the speaker did not have any constitutional power to summon the NA session and any such move would be illegal. Meanwhile, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leader Shaukat Yousafzai asserted that pressuring President Arif Alvi to hold a joint session of Parliament goes against the principles of law and constitution.

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LAHORE: Maryam Nawaz Sharif along with his father Nawaz Sharif listening to national anthem on the occasion of her oath taking as the first female chief minister of Punjab. - DNA

Palestinian PM Shtayeh resigns

Urges national unity talks, and the urgent need for an inter-Palestinian consensus



NEWS DESK

RAMALLAH: Palestinian Prime Minister Mohammad Shtayeh said on Monday he was resigning to allow for the formation of a broad consensus among Palestinians about political arrangements following Israel's war against the Islamist group Hamas in Gaza. The move comes amid growing US pressure on President Mahmoud Abbas to

SC seeks help from religious institutions

Court issues notice to Council of Islamic Ideology and other religious institutes

COURT REPORTER

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court on Monday decided to seek assistance from religious institutions in the Mubarak Ahmad Sani case, and issued a notice to the Council of Islamic Ideology (CII). The court also issued notices to Jamia Naima, Darul Uloom Karachi, Jamiat Al-Hadith, Quran Academy and Jamita-ul-Natzaar Lahore and sought opinions and reports on the matter within three weeks.

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Promises no revenge, vengeance

Maryam Nawaz becomes Punjab's first female CM

Punjab Governor Baligh Ur Rehman administers oath to Maryam; Sharif family members including Nawaz, Shehbaz attend ceremony

ABID RAZA

LAHORE: Newly-elected Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz took the oath of office Monday shortly after being elected as the first woman chief executive of the province. Over 1,000 guests including diplomats, celebrities, political leaders, journalists, and Sharif family members Nawaz Sharif, Shehbaz Sharif among others attended the swearing-in ceremony that took place at Punjab Governor House. Governor Baligh Ur Rehman administered the oath to the newly-elected chief minister soon after her election as the provincial chief executive amid a boycott by the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI)-Sunni Ittehad Council (SIC) members. Maryam, who has become the first-ever female chief minister in Pakistan's history, won the elections after obtaining 220 votes in the provincial assembly.

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Murad elected as Sindh CM

'Expect PTI to play positive role,' says CM Murad

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: Newly elected Sindh Chief Minister Murad Ali Shah on Monday sought help from both sides of the aisle, the government benches and opposition benches, after being chosen as the provincial chief executive for a record third time. The Sindh Assembly earlier the day elected Pakistan Peoples Party's (PPP) candidate, Murad, as the chief minister of Sindh, a post that he will serve for the third time in a row.

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Briefs

SIC will play role of robust opposition

BUREAU REPORT

LAHORE: The leaders of Sunni Ittehad Council (SIC) said that Punjab will be run on the basis of opposition's performance. SIC's nominee for the slot of chief minister Rana Aftab Ahmad was speaking to media along with party's MNA Dr Nisar Jutt outside the Punjab Assembly on Monday. "How the process will proceed further as the house isn't completed yet," questioned Rana Aftab. He added that the SIC will also move the court over the incompletion of the house. MNA-elect Dr Nisar Jutt said that he reached Punjab Assembly with the party's nominee for the slot of chief minister but the security staff stopped both of them at Mall Road.

Fawad's bail plea rejected

The former federal minister has been facing corruption charges

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: The Accountability Court (AC) on Monday turned down the bail plea of former federal minister Fawad Chaudhry in a corruption case. Judge Nasir Javed heard the case and rejected Chaudhry's bail plea. The former federal minister has been facing charges in a case related to misappropriation in construction projects in Jhelum. Chaudhry's lawyer Faisal Chaudhry had filed the bail plea for the former federal minister. Chaudhry's lawyer said the NAB had no authority to arrest anyone at the inquiry stage and the suspect was arrested to settle political score.

Reserved seats case

ECP to hear PTI-SIC plea in open court

Decision comes amid looming constitutional crisis as President Alvi refuses to convene NA session

MEHTAB PRIZADA

ISLAMABAD: After much deliberation, the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has decided to hold an open hearing on the Sunni Ittehad Council (SIC) application seeking allotment of reserved seats after Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI)-backed lawmakers joined their ranks. The decision comes amid expectations that the electoral watchdog would decide on the matter of awarding leftover reserved seats today. However, the ECP announced that a five-member bench of the electoral body will hold the open hearing tomorrow.

The development comes shortly after it emerged that President Alvi reportedly refused to sign a Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs summary seeking the convening of a National Assembly session. President Alvi has maintained that the remaining reserved seats should be allocated before summoning the NA session which is supposed to be held within 21 days of the elections under the Constitution. Following his refusal,

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Cipher, Toshakhana cases

IHC issues notice to NAB, FIA

High court also seeks spy agency's reply over ex-FM Qureshi's plea against 10-year sentence in cipher case

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad High Court (IHC) has issued notices to the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA), and the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) to seek their replies by Thursday (February 29) over incarcerated Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder Imran Khan, his wife Bushra Bibi, and former foreign minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi's

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ICJ hearing: 2-state solution imperative to regional peace: OIC

African Union representative, Hajer Gueldich, told the ICJ that the "unspeakable suffering and horror inflicted on the population of Gaza" is the essence of the Palestinian tragedy for over a century

NEWS DESK

THE HAGUE: Representatives of Turkiye, the Arab League, Organization of Islamic Cooperation, and the African Union will present arguments on Monday, on the final day of proceedings at the UN's highest court, on the legality of Israel's occupation of the Palestinian territories. The judges of the International Court of Justice, also known as the World Court, heard arguments from more than 50 states and three international organizations following a request by the UN General Assembly in 2022 for the court to issue a non-binding opinion on the legal consequences of the Israeli occupation. African Union representative, Hajer Gueldich, told the ICJ that the "unspeakable suffering and horror inflicted on the population of Gaza" is the essence of the Palestinian tragedy for over a century. She called Israel's ongoing war on Gaza as "nothing but a shameful attempt to create another Nakba, a further catastrophe destined to erasing the Palestinian presence in Palestine." "The history of Palestine is a history of dispossession, displacement, and dehumanization. It's a history of injustice." She said the ongoing Israeli aggression against

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Israeli war crimes continue in Gaza

According to local media sources, 12 martyrs were evacuated to the European Gaza Hospital

AGENCIES

GAZA CITY: As the US-backed Israeli genocidal war on the Gaza Strip entered day 143 on Monday, massive aerial and artillery strikes continued to pound neighborhoods, homes and shelter centers and massacre more civilians, mostly children and women. A reporter for the Palestinian Information Center (PIC) said that the Israeli occupation army continued to attack different areas of Gaza, killing and injuring dozens of citizens. According to local media sources,

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PRCS organizes blood donation camp at the U.S. embassy

Chairman Pakistan Red Crescent Society, Sardar Shahid Ahmed Laghari reiterated the significance of this noble act in saving lives, stressing the indispensable role that regular blood donations play in alleviating the suffering of patients in dire need of transfusions

DNA

ISLAMABAD : The Pakistan Red Crescent Society (PRCS) successfully organized a blood donation camp at the United States Embassy. The camp was efficiently managed by the Regional Blood Donors Center of the PRCS, where 116 individuals selflessly participated, extending their arms to donate blood, with a notable presence of the medical unit from the US Embassy. It is worth

mentioning that the PRCS conducts blood donation camps at the US Embassy twice a year. On this occasion, Chairman of the Pakistan Red Crescent Society, Sardar Shahid Ahmed Laghari, shed light on the low rate of blood donations in the country and commended the cooperation extended by the US Embassy. The awareness campaign regarding blood donations continues throughout the year under the auspices of the Pakistan Red Crescent Society. Chairman Laghari emphasized that

the campaign to raise awareness about the critical need for blood donations persists throughout the year under the auspices of PRCS. He reiterated the significance of this noble act in saving lives, stressing the indispensable role that regular blood donations play in alleviating the suffering of patients in dire need of transfusions. His call resonated particularly with the youth and members of intellectual circles, urging them to embrace their responsibility in this regard.

Easypaisa, Bank Alfalah partner for Int'l remittances

DNA

ISLAMABAD : Bank Alfalah and easypaisa announced a partnership on Monday to facilitate their customers nationwide in conveniently collecting international remittances into their mobile wallets. The users will now be able to seamlessly collect international remittances in their mobile wallets and also utilize their funds in a

wide range of financial services, including inter-bank fund transfer, savings, mobile top-ups and various other use cases available on the easypaisa App. his innovative solution will also enable customers, who send remittances through Bank Alfalah's sending partners, to receive funds directly into their easypaisa accounts, 24/7, said a press release. Commenting on the partnership, Kashif Ahmed, Acting CEO, Tel-

enor Microfinance Bank & easypaisa said that this partnership would enhance international remittance services, adding that the collaboration was aligned with the commitment to providing millions of Pakistanis with convenient and accessible digital financial solutions. By enabling customers to collect international remittances in their easypaisa wallets, we aimed to empower them with greater control over their

funds and revolutionize their overall banking experience, he added. Farooq A Khan, Group Head Corporate, Investment and International Business Group, Bank Alfalah, said that this strategic partnership aimed to provide innovative solutions that cater to the evolving needs of the customers. By leveraging the extensive reach of the easypaisa platform's user base, we aimed to make international remittances more accessible.

AIOU aims to digitize examination process

DNA

ISLAMABAD : Vice Chancellor, Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU), Prof. Dr. Nasir Mahmood, has launched a new initiative to improve the examination system of the university. According to the AIOU, the aim of this initiative is to digitize the process of creating question papers. This will help to prevent duplication, eliminate unfair means and save time. To implement the new system, a training workshop was organized for faculty members from the Faculty of Education, Faculty of Social Sciences and Faculty of Arabic and Islamic Sciences. During the workshop, the faculty members were trained on the creation of an "item bank" of question papers. Items (question papers) for BS (ODL) programs will be created in the first phase, followed by the development of an item bank for Matriculation, FA, Associate Degree, Post Graduate Diploma Programs, Teachers Training Programs, MPhil and PhD programs in the second phase. Each course will have an item bank with 300 MCQs, 100 short questions and 50 long questions. The examination department will be able to prepare the paper for any course in no time with the help of course coordinators, faculty members and experts. It is pertinent to mention here that the old pattern of papers did not have MCQs, Vice Chancellor, Prof. Dr. Nasir Mahmood instructed the examination department to include MCQs for the convenience and better understanding of the students.

Mushaal condemns custodial rape in IIOJK

She said Indian fascist forces could cross all limits of brutalities and inhuman acts but they could not dampen the courage of Kashmiri freedom fighters

ISLAMABAD : Special Assistant to the Prime Minister (SAPM) for Human Rights and Women Empowerment Mushaal Hussein Mullick urged the international community and human rights organizations to take notice of the rising tendency of custodial rape and using rape as a weapon of war by inhuman and brutal Indian forces. Mushaal, who is also the wife of unlawfully incarcerated senior Hurriyat leader Yasin Malik, said that the brutal occupation forces had been using sexual abuse of women in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK) as a weapon of war for over last seven decades but the international community and world powers observed criminal silence in this regard. She said that the notorious Indian law enforcers involved in the heinous crimes, were given a license to carry out all inhuman, immoral and unlawful acts to silence the dissenting voices in the occupied valley. Mushaal pointed out that the dirty and ugly face of India was exposed by the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), which revealed that India had recorded 275 cases of custodial rape between 2017 and 2022, adding that these incidents, documented across various states, involve perpetrators from law enforcement, armed forces and other custodial facilities, reflecting a misuse of power under the guise of state protection. The SAPM for Human Rights and Women Empowerment recalled that incidents such as the gang rape in Kunan Poshpora in 1991, the double murder and rape in Shopian and the gang rape of young Asifa

Bano are among the most harrowing examples of the nightmare faced by women in Kashmir. She stated the NCRB showed that even Indian women were not saved from these mentally sick Indian forces, which clearly indicated that they were not human beings rather they were beasts, who did not even know anything about humanity and women's rights. Mushaal highlighted that the gravity of the situation could be judged from the fact that over 11,000 cases of sexual violence have been reported since 1989 in IIOJK, leaving nearly 23,000 women widowed and over 107,805 children orphaned. She said Indian fascist forces could cross all limits of brutalities and inhuman acts but they could not dampen the courage of Kashmiri freedom fighters.—DNA

Anti-polio drive begins in 5 districts

LARKANA : A seven-day polio immunisation campaign started on Monday throughout Larkana, Kamber-Shahdadkot, Shikarpur, Jacobabad and Kandhkot-Kashmore districts of Larkana division. The teams visiting door-to-door in rain/flood-affected areas, remote and far-flung areas of the five districts to administer Oral Polio Vaccine (OPV) to the 1,178,980 children up to the age of five years. The district health departments Larkana, Kamber-Shahdadkot, Shikarpur, Jacobabad and Kandhkot-Kashmore districts have deputed more than 3400 mobile and fixed teams which will visit every house in the five districts of the Larkana region and administered OPV to the children up to five years age. Mobile anti-polio teams visited schools, bus stands and railway stations and also went door-to-door to give anti-polio drops to the children, in rain/flood-affected areas, remote areas, and rural and urban areas of five districts to accomplish the task. The officials of the health department have appealed to the people of Larkana, Kamber-Shahdadkot, Shikarpur, Jacobabad and Kandhkot-Kashmore districts that they should come forward and cooperate with mobile teams of the health department who will visit door-to-door for administering anti-polio drops to their children. Meanwhile, commissioner Larkana division Abdul Waheed Shaikh appealed to parents of children up to the age of five years to get their children vaccinated in this anti-polio campaign which will continue up to March 3 and prevent them from lifelong disability.—APP

IG Punjab allocates funds for police healthcare

IG Punjab Dr. Usman Anwar has released another 13 lakh 72 thousand rupees for the medical expenses of 06 police employees

ABID RAZA

LAHORE : On the direction of Inspector General Police Punjab Dr. Usman Anwar, regular measures are continued for the health welfare of police employees and their families, in continuation of which IG Punjab Dr. Usman Anwar has released another 13 lakh 72 thousand rupees for the medical expenses of 06 police employees belonging to different districts including Lahore. According to the details, Constable Jhang Police's Constable Aftab Ahmed was given 06 lakh rupees for the treatment of his son Mo-hsin Aftab's knees. Investigation Punjab's constable Ajmal Khan was given 02 lakh 97 thousand rupees for the treatment of his son's hearing disorder. Driver Constable Mubasher of Counter-Terrorism Force was given Rs 02 lakh for the treatment of his disabled son. One and a half lakh rupees was released

to driver constable Javed Ahmed of Lahore Police for the treatment of daughter Maryam's kidneys. Punjab Highway Patrol Langri Syed Azhar Abbas was given Rs. 01 lakh for the treatment of his son's liver disease, While Head Constable Muhammad Safal was given 25 thousand rupees for the treatment of his sick son. The cases were approved by the Medical Financial Assistance Committee chaired by Additional IG Welfare Riaz Nazir Gara. IG Punjab Dr. Usman Anwar said that department will not leave any officer who is suffering from the disease alone and all possible measures will remain continuing for the health welfare of the force. Earlier on, 6 arrested for firing on police party Police have arrested six accused who showed resistance and opened fire on the police party during a kite-flying crackdown here on Sunday. According to a police spokesman, Sadiqabad police have also recovered 02 rifles 222 bore and a pistol 30 bore from their possession.

The arrested accused were identified as Shakeel, Sunny Sheikh, Tawheed, Toseef, Jawad Hussain and Gul Sher. During the crackdown against aerial firing, they fired directly at the police party. However, police personnel have remained safe. Investigating is being done, and the arrested accused will be charged with concrete evidence and will be punished, City Police Officer CPO Syed Khalid Mehmood Hamdani said that kite flying is a dangerous game. The crackdown will be continued against such criminals, he added. Meanwhile, GIRL in Arabic print shirt saved from mob by Lahore police Timely action by police saved a teenage girl wearing a dress with Arabic calligraphy printed on it from attack by a charged mob, alleging she committed blasphemy, in the crowded Ichra Bazaar here on Sunday. The situation turned ugly after someone alleged that the girl's dress was bearing Quranic verses. However, some shopkeepers defended the girl and sheltered her in a shop,

telling the mob it was just an Arabic calligraphy print. As per eyewitnesses, most of the charged people in the mob were either customers, visitors or passersby and the garment traders who rescued the girl were aware of the clothing with Arabic calligraphy print available in the market. A video clip taking rounds on social media shows the girl hiding in a shop shivering with fear of being attacked by the mob on blasphemy charge, an allegation that resulted in public lynching in many incidents in the past across the country. The footage showed the girl denying the allegations of insulting religion, saying she has done nothing intentionally as the clothing with Arabic calligraphy was commonly worn in Gulf states, including Saudi Arabia. The shopkeepers also endorsed her views saying the industry has encouraged clothes carrying Islamic/Arabic calligraphy and the alphabets and words on her shirt had nothing to do with the holy verses.



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Azerbaijan to Pakistan Khazar Farhadove addressing during a seminar on Commemorating 32rd Anniversary of Khojaly Genocide, at National Library, in the Federal Capital, Senator Mushahid Hussain Syed, Ambassador of Turkey to Pakistan Dr Mehmet Pacaci and present on the occasion.—ONLINE

Ban imposes on mobile use in KP schools

DNA

PESHAWAR : The Elementary and Secondary Education Department in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has decided to impose a ban on mobile use in public sector schools to save the precious time of students. According to a notification issued here on Monday the students and staff will submit their mobiles to the school's staff. The school heads will contact the parents by landline phone during any emergency. School staff will only be able to use mobile during recess or free periods. Permission will be necessary from relevant school heads to make photography or videos. All the District Education Officers of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa have been issued the notification.

SNGPL cuts off another 169 meters on gas theft

DNA

LAHORE : The Sui Northern Gas Pipelines Limited (SNGPL), during its ongoing crackdown against gas pilferers, disconnected another 169 connections besides imposing Rs 2.8 million fine in Punjab, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Islamabad. According to a spokesman of the SNGPL, in Lahore, the regional team disconnected 17 connections on illegal use of gas while another 06 on use of compressor while in Rawalpindi, the team disconnected 7 connections on illegal use of gas while another 4 on use of compressor and amount of Rs 0.31 million against gas theft cases. In Multan 17 connections were disconnected, in Peshawar and Karak 74 meters were disabled and an amount of Rs 2.34 million against gas theft cases. The team also lodged 3 FIRs against gas pilfers. In Sahiwal five connections were disconnected, Sheikhupura 29, Bahawalpur 08, and the regional team of Faisalabad disconnected 2 connections on illegal use of gas and imposed fine of Rs 0.13 million against gas theft cases.

CDA board approves capital parking digitization plan

ADIL SHAHEEN

ISLAMABAD : The Capital Development Authority (CDA) administration is taking concrete and effective measures for car parking in the city of Islamabad, especially in the business centers in order to ensure the elimination of problems like traffic jams in the city of Islamabad along with the promotion of the economy. In this regard, Capital Development Authority (CDA) on Monday signed an agreement with M/S AJCL to digitize parking facilities in Islamabad on

revenue sharing basis. An important milestone has been crossed while implementing and this decision has also been ratified in the 9th meeting of the CDA Board on October 5, 2023. According to the details, under this agreement, the installation of the latest parking equipment and the latest parking management system will be introduced in all car parking lots of Islamabad city. Similarly in this project, the implementation of automatic and smart parking system at all parking sites of Islamabad is also included. It should be noted that in the bidding

process, eight firms submitted technical and financial proposals till the last date of November 30, 2023 and the financial bids were opened in a transparent manner on January 9, 2024. In which M/S AJCL was declared as the successful bidder with 75% revenue share. That is 25% of the revenue received for parking will be given to M/S AJCL while 75% of the revenue will be given to CDA. With the modern and smart parking system, not only the residents of Islamabad will get rid of problems like traffic jams, but there are also strong possibilities of boosting the economy with this good initiative.

SMIU prepares for 2nd global research congress-2024

KARACHI : Sindh Madrasahatul Islam University, in a briefing session on Monday, finalized all arrangements for the two-day 2nd SMIU Global Research Congress-2024 (2nd SMIU GRC), which will be held on the theme of "Re-envisioning with Nature Inspired Smart Communities" on February 28 & 29 at SMIU. The inauguration session will be held on Wednesday at 9:30 am at the Sir Shah Nawaz Bhutto Auditorium. The Vice Chancellor Dr Mujeeb Sahrai while addressing the session said that SMIU is going to organise a unique global research congress along with six international conferences on different subjects from Wednesday. He said there would be a good presentation of distinguished scholars from home and abroad, hence the 2nd GRC will be more successful

than last year's GRC. Dr Sahrai said SMIU has set great standards by organising the Global Research Congress, which will ultimately promote the research work in the country. "Since 2020, when he took charge of the vice chancellorship of SMIU, he gave priority to the research work and preferred to utilise the resources of the university. Thus, we discovered the magic of the historic buildings of SMIU and carried out all activities over here smoothly. The GRC is also being held within the premises of SMIU," he added. Giving details of the 2nd SMIU GRC, Dr. Zahid Ali Channar, the Convener of the 2nd SMIU GRC, said the six prominent research scholars from abroad and six from country's provinces are attending the congress, among them are Prof. Dr. Keith Barton, a Professor at the Indiana University, USA, Ms.

Shajara Ul-Durar, an Associate Professor at the University of Sunderland, United Kingdom, Dr Solnyshkina Marina Ivanovna, a Professor at the Kazan Federal University, Russia, Dr. Ridwan Adetunji Raji of Zayed University, Abu Dhabi, UAE, Dr. Norsiah Abdul Hamid, Associate Professor at University Utara Malaysia (UUM), Dr. Mohd. Sobhi Ishak, an Associate Professor at the University Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM), Prof. Dr. Jürgen Heschler, a renowned German physician and researcher, Dr. Shuo Yu, Associate Professor at Dalian University of Technology, Prof. Dr. Nadeem Ul Haque, Vice Chancellor of the Pakistan Institute of Development Economics, Islamabad, Dr. Jawad Syed, of Lahore University of Management Sciences (LUMS), Prof. Dr. Wasima Shehzad, Acting Dean and Professor at the Air University.—APP



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National Days and Armed Forces Days

FEBRUARY

Feb 04/Sri Lanka	National Day
Feb 06/N. Zealand	National Day
Feb 06/Uganda	Army Day
Feb 11//Iran	Revolution day
Feb 16/DPR Korea	National Day
Feb 16/Lithuania	National Day
Feb 18/Gambia	National Day
Feb 19/Nepal	Democracy Day
Feb 23/Uzbekistan	National Day
Feb 23/Brunei	National Day
Feb 23/Guyana	National Day
Feb 23/Russia	National Army Day
Feb 23/Tajikistan	Armed Forces Day
Feb 25/Kuwait	National Day

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

Pakistan, Bulgaria need to explore opportunities: Envoy

We need to make some concerted efforts to boost the bilateral trade to at least One billion dollars in the near future

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Bulgaria Irena Gancheva has said that Pakistan and Bulgaria need to explore opportunities for collaboration as the potential between both countries is not being utilized. Bulgaria offers collaboration and business opportunities in various sectors including food processing, agriculture, IT and new technologies. She was speaking to the business community here at Lahore Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LCCI) on Monday. LCCI President Kashif Anwar, Senior Vice President Zafar Mahmood Chaudhry also spoke on the occasion. Executive Committee Members Raja Hassan Akhter, Mian Attiq ur Rehman, Ahmed Elahi and Mohammad Tauqeer Malik were also present. The Ambassador said that the bilateral figures of trade between Pakistan and Bulgaria need to be improved. She said that new trends are also being observed in trade between both countries as Bulgaria is exporting wheat and importing mainly textile items from Pakistan as this is the case of whole of the European Union. She also

gave in depth information about Bulgaria which has been an EU member since 2007. She said that Bulgaria offers a favorable taxation system for the investors and with strong traditions, it provides access to all EU markets with 1.3 billion customers. The Ambassador said that Bulgaria is very good in Information Technology, automotive, mechanical engineering, electronics, mechatronics and robotics and also provides very low operational costs. Bulgaria is also very strong in manufacturing, plastic and rubber products. She said that Bulgaria has top ten fastest internet mobile with world class artificial research. She emphasized on exploring more opportunities to diversify trade and partnerships. She said that as a member of the EU, Bulgaria is also part of GSP Plus arrangements. She said that she will also share the information with the Lahore Chamber regarding international exhibitions in Bulgaria during this year. LCCI President Kashif Anwar said that Pakistan and Bulgaria enjoy cordial diplomatic, political and economic relations. Bulgaria has been giving continued support to Pakistan for the GSP Plus status which played a very important



role in enhancing Pakistan's exports to the European Union (EU). He said that Bulgaria is an important economy. Its strategic location serves as a gateway for Pakistani products to enter the European Union (EU) market. He said that strengthening trade ties with Bulgaria opens up avenues for Pakistani exporters to expand their reach into the EU

market. The LCCI President said it is important to recognize the immense opportunities that lie ahead in enhancing trade and economic relations between our two countries. We need to make some concerted efforts to boost the bilateral trade to at least One billion dollars in the near future. Kashif Anwar said that the volume of Bulgaria's total global trade is around 108 billion dollars whereas Pakistan's share in it is merely 80 million dollars. He said that it does not reflect the actual potential of bilateral trade. Pakistan exports bed-linen, woven fabrics, cotton yarn, tobacco, medical appliances and rice etc., to Bulgaria and our imports consist of wheat, worn clothing, tobacco and parts of tractors etc. He said that there is a considerable scope for Bulgaria to enhance its imports of citrus fruits, mangoes, value added textiles, sports goods, leather products, furniture and marble etc. from Pakistan. He said that the potential areas where Pakistan and Bulgaria can enhance economic cooperation through Joint Ventures (JVs) are Information Technology, Food Processing, Automotive sector, Tourism and Agriculture

Technology. There is also tremendous potential of cooperation in education sector by developing collaborations between Pakistani and Bulgarian universities and arranging exchanges of faculty and students. The LCCI President informed the Ambassador about the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC) established by the government of Pakistan to primarily focus on expediting new investments in five areas including defence, agriculture, minerals, information technology, telecommunication and energy. He hoped that the Ambassador would apprise the investors from Bulgaria about these investment opportunities in Pakistan under SIFC. The government of Punjab is making an all-out effort to improve business climate in the province by facilitating international and national investors through one window operations in the Business Facilitation Centres. Kashif Anwar said that there is a great need to connect the private sectors of both countries for exploiting the potential opportunities. It can be done through exchange of export-oriented delegations and participation in trade fairs and exhibitions.

Businessmen welcome Maryam as Punjab CM

DNA

ISLAMABAD: President Disposable Food Packaging Association (DFPA) Ahsan Shahid on Monday hailed the election of Maryam Nawaz as Chief Minister of Punjab and expressed hopes that she would stabilize the crumbling economy and law and order in the province, besides resolving provincial taxation issues. Ahsan Shahid congratulated Maryam Nawaz for her success and pinned hopes on her for delivering on the economic front. In separate statements, he pointed out the problems hurting the economy, and expressed hope that the new chief minister would take the economy in the right direction. He also assured of their full support in these matters. The DFPA President said the DFPA would add-on to the government efforts

aimed at improving the economic well-being of the country. He said her election was encouraging for the business community of Pakistan. "The business community is optimistic that she would live up to the expectations of the people of Pakistan in achieving national goals and under her leadership our beloved country will record tremendous achievements in its economy, democracy and foreign relations," he said. Ahsan Shahid hoped that Pakistan would emerge as a global leader in innovation, security, poverty alleviation and infrastructure development. He said that the new Chief Minister would have to evolve a strategy to remove all the impediments to economic growth. The DFPA hoped that its recently released proposals would become a part of the budget document. Provincial tax-

ation issues, miseries of the agriculture sector, below the mark growth of large scale manufacturing sector, high energy cost, bureaucratic hurdles and below the mark exports were the biggest barriers to economic growth. The number of taxes and frequency of paying taxes should be reduced. Moreover, taxes should be paid quarterly instead of every month. For that matter, all para tariffs must be merged in the main tariffs. Similarly, there should be electronic communication between taxpayers and tax departments. These proposals can make noticeable difference and win the confidence of taxpayers," he added. He said the entire business community hopes that the widening trade deficit would be narrowed, and suggested that the only way to address this core issue was to offer another excellent pack-

age of incentives to boost the exports manifolds and improve ease of doing business for sustainable economic growth. He hoped she with her diverse experience would contribute towards economic development and do away with red-tape and de-regulations. He hoped that he would focus on tax reforms and promotion of tax culture in every sphere of life. He said all stakeholders should be taken on board to make viable and prudent economic policies to accelerate growth and speed up industrialization across the country. He said soon well-conceived balanced export-oriented charter of economy would be presented to him, which, if implemented, would usher an era of prosperity, progress and development besides improving the socioeconomic condition of the downtrodden.

US, China, UK remain top destinations for Pakistani exports during Jul-Jan

ISLAMABAD: The United States (US) remained the top export destination of Pakistani products during the first seven months of the current financial year 2023-24, followed by China and the United Kingdom (UK). Total exports to the US during July-January 2023-24 were recorded at US \$3210.644 million against the exports of US \$ 3569.533 million during July-January 2022-23, showing a decline of 10.05 percent, according to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP). This was followed by China, wherein Pakistan exported goods worth US \$1726.679 million against the exports of US \$1194.639 million last year, showing an increase of 44.53 percent. UK was the third top export destination, where Pakistan exported products worth US \$1187.012 million during the months under review against the exports of US \$1163.894 million, SBP data revealed. Among other countries, Pakistani exports to UAE stood at US \$1169.304 million against US \$821.621 million last year, showing an increase of 37.86 percent while the exports to Germany were recorded at US \$854.167 million against US \$1010.491 million last year, data said. During July-January, the exports to Holland were recorded at \$781.983 million against \$862.886 million whereas the exports to Italy stood at \$661.932 million against \$649.433 million. Pakistan's exports to Spain were recorded at \$856.423 million against the exports of US \$810.461 million while the exports to Afghanistan were recorded at \$284.927 million against \$285.177 million last year. The exports to Bangladesh stood at US \$367.776 million against US \$479.757 million. Similarly, the exports to France during the months under review were recorded at US \$299.633 million against US \$346.694 million while the exports to Belgium stood at US \$317.056 million against US \$424.231 million. Pakistan's exports to Saudi Arabia were recorded at US \$386.209 million during the current year compared to US \$256.965 million last year whereas the exports to Turkiye stood at US \$204.7020 million against US \$186.047 million.—DNA

Pakistani garments gaining popularity in China

ISLAMABAD: Pakistani garments are making a significant mark in the Chinese fashion market, with a notable surge in popularity across various apparel segments, particularly in the men's and women's garments. This was stated by Ghulam Qadir, Commercial Counsellor at the Pakistan Embassy in Beijing, in an interview with Gwadar Pro. "In 2023, the top five Pakistani textile products to China crossed \$92.61 million. Exports of home textiles, jerseys and pullovers, and T-shirts to China amounted to \$5.89 million, \$33.47 million, and over \$14.11 million respectively. Pakistani men's garment exports to China reached \$28.66 million, while women's garment exports hit \$10.46 million, up from \$9.44 million in the same period last year, a rise of 11%. Overall, exports for men's and women's garments exceeded \$39.12 million, marking a 3% increase in 2023," Ghulam Qadir added. He told Gwadar Pro that the emerging market dynamics in China present opportunities.—DNA

PML-N decision to contact all parties welcomed

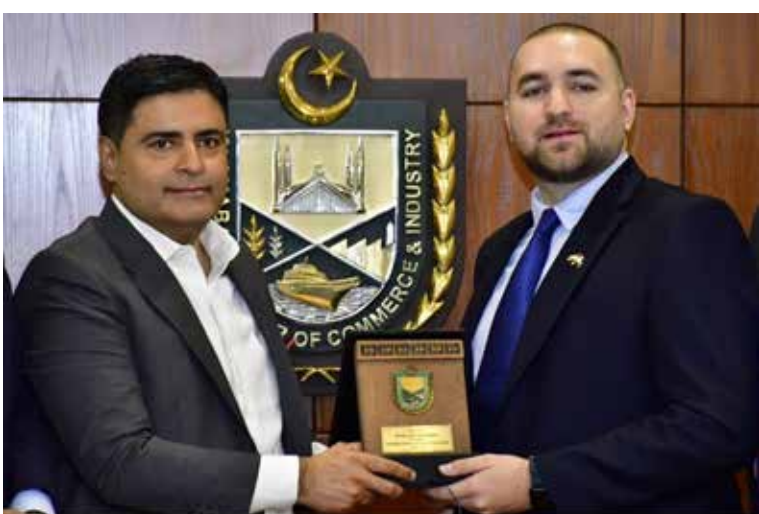
DNA

ISLAMABAD: Chairman of National Business Group Pakistan, President Pakistan Businessmen and Intellectuals Forum, and All Karachi Industrial Alliance, and former provincial minister Mian Zahid Hussain, said on Monday that the decision of PML-N to contact all parties in the national interest and bury revenge politics forever is highly beneficial for the country. This is the first important step towards political stability in the country, which will result in economic stability and save the country from bankruptcy, he

said. Talking to the business community, the veteran business leader said that former Speaker of the National Assembly and newly elected member of the National Assembly, Ayaz Sadiq, has said that he and Saad Rafiq will contact the leaders of all parties and persuade them to hold a grand dialogue in the interest of the country. In this regard, he promised, the support of the Speaker of the National Assembly will also be obtained, while no politician will be put in jail. He has said that all political parties must come together, as the country cannot afford more political instability. Mian Zahid Hussain said that this decision

has been taken at a time when many international organisations and journals are raising questions about the future of Pakistan, and the people are also disappointed. The economies of all the neighbouring countries are performing better than Pakistan, and the market capitalization of a company in neighbouring India, the Tata Group, operating since 1870, has reached \$365 billion. This is more than the total GDP of Pakistan, which is currently \$341 billion. The market capitalization of Tata Consultancy, a subsidiary of the same group, is equal to half of Pakistan's GDP, and this country always prefers to stay away from Pakistan and remain in a cold war situation, which is a momentary concern for us. He said that our wrong economic policies have bankrupted the country and starved the people. Mian Zahid Hussain further said that along with political stability in the country, relations with all neighbouring countries should also be improved, and addition to borrowing should be removed.

ICCI invites German SMEs to explore Pakistan for JVs and investment




FAISAL SHEIKH

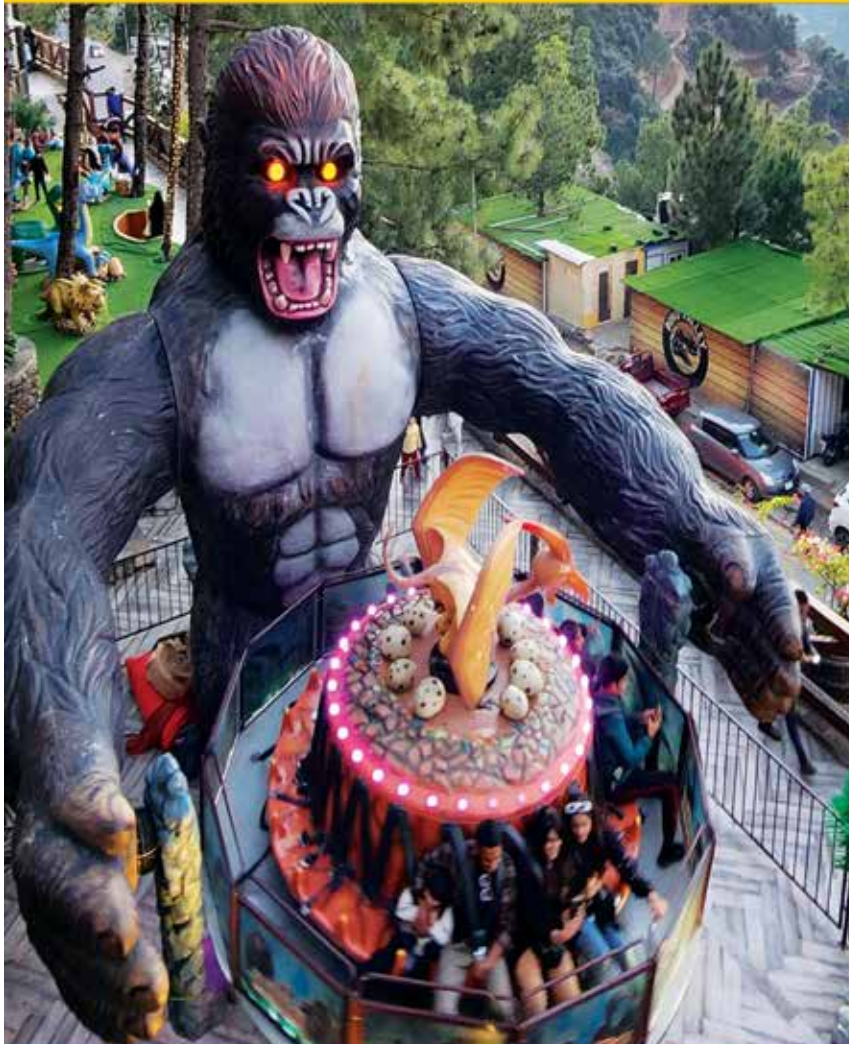
ISLAMABAD: A German delegation led by Matthew De Shaw, Country Head Pakistan of the German Association of Small and Medium Size Businesses (BVMW) visited the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) to dis-

cuss collaboration between the SMEs of Germany and Pakistan to achieve win-win results for both countries. Pervez Akhter, President, German-Pakistan Chamber of Commerce also accompanied the delegation. Addressing the delegation, Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari, President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry said that Pakistan

offers good opportunities to foreign investors and German SMEs should explore Pakistan for JVs and investment. He said that Germany is a very important country for Pakistan and we want to further strengthen business and investment relations between the two countries. He said that Pakistan and Germany should focus on improving bilateral trade as the current trade volume between them is not up to the desired level. He said that ICCI would like to work with BVMW to promote direct connectivity between the SMEs of both countries. He said that Pakistan's population is young while the population of Europe and Germany is aging. Germany needs skilled manpower to continue its economic journey. He said that Pakistan can export nurses and other trained manpower to Europe and Germany. He said that Pakistan is producing thousands of IT graduates every year. German IT companies should open their offices in Pakistan and take advantage of this huge human capital. He said that German companies should use the ICCI platform to improve B2B relations with local SMEs.



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Briefs

ANF recovers
109 kg
drugs in 11
operations

DNA

RAWALPINDI: Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) while conducting 11 operations across the country managed to recover 109 kg drugs and arrested 12 accused, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman here on Monday. He informed that 1 kg Ice was recovered from a passenger going to Qatar at Islamabad Airport. 663 grams and 352 grams Ice were recovered from the possession of two passengers traveling to Qatar on two different flights from Lahore Airport. 592 grams heroin was recovered from the possession of a Doha-bound passenger while 84 kg opium was recovered near M-2 Motorway Lahore. 15 kg heroin was recovered near Swabi Interchange. 1.7 kg heroin and 130 grams Ice were recovered from an accused arrested in Orangi Town Karachi. 2 kg hashish was recovered from an accused netted in Tando Thoro area in Hyderabad while 1 kg Ice and 952 grams opium were recovered from two suspects rounded up on Sukkur Road.

China charity
foundation-
funded school
unveiled

DNA

ISLAMABAD: In a milestone of Sino-Pak friendship and cooperation, the renovated Government Girls High School Chatter Kiass was officially inaugurated, Gwadar Pro reported on Monday. The renovation project, funded by the Beijing One Heart Sphere Charity Foundation and the China-Pakistan Youth Exchange Community, marks a new chapter in the education of female students in the region. The school, located in a rural area of Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK), has been transformed from a run-down facility into a modern and vibrant educational hub. The renovation included the reconstruction of classrooms and other facilities, as well as the provision of new furniture, equipment, and educational materials. The renovated school has already accommodated the first batch of over 200 girls from the surrounding communities, providing them with a safe and comfortable environment to receive their education. The school will offer a wide range of basic subjects, including mathematics and humanities, aiming to equip the students with the skills and knowledge necessary to succeed in today's world. With the renovated school now open, it is hoped that more girls in the region will have access to quality education, enabling them to reach their full potential and contribute to the development of AJK. The China-Pakistan charity organization plans to continue its work in the field of education with the aim of improving educational facilities and opportunities for girls across Pakistan and beyond.



ISLAMABAD: A group photo of students from Oxford university UK with ambassador of Belgium Charles Delogne ambassador of Portugal Frederico Silva deputy head of mission USA Mr Andrew schofer DHM Japan Mr Ito Takeshi and other diplomats at dinner reception hosted by Allah Yar Durrani at his residence.—DNA

Rupee and Yuan to join
UAE payment system

The system is already connected to 108 live banks across 14 countries, with an additional 105-plus banks set to onboard the platform

DNA

ISLAMABAD: UAE-based cross-border payment system BUNA, is set to expand to include currencies from Pakistan, India, China, India and several African and European countries by 2024-2025. "We continue to offer innovative services and also launched a number of services such as instant payment. We are working to implement a number of initiatives to link the BUNA platform and other payment methods from other countries including China, India and Pakistan in addition to continental payment systems in Europe and Africa," Fahad Al Turki, chairman of the Arab Regional Payments Clearing and Settlement Organization

(Buna), said on the first day of the World Governments Summit in Dubai, China Economic Net (CEN) reported on Monday. The Minister of State for Financial Affairs, Mohamed bin Hadi Al Hussaini, believes that BUNA's cross-border payment solution will encourage investments among Arab countries and encourage the use of Arab currencies in transactions. He added that this platform has a high level of compliance to combat money laundering and financing of terrorism and monitor such activities. The system is already connected to 108 live banks across 14 countries, with an additional 105-plus banks set to onboard the platform. Currently, six currencies, including four from the Arab region, namely UAE dirham, Saudi riyal, Egyptian

pound, and Jordanian dinar, as well as the US dollar and European single currency euro, are part of the platform, processing real-time funds transfer cost-effectively. "The inclusion of rupee in the payment system will improve the efficiency of cross-border currency transactions in Pakistani banks and help deepen Pakistan's international economic, trade and investment cooperation." Ren Haiping, Deputy Head of Department of Strategic Research, China Center for International Economic Exchanges (CCIEE) told CEN. "The vital significance of financial infrastructure in curbing systemic financial risks and improving financial market stability is self-evident, thus BUNA could help improve Pakistan's financial market infrastructure

and promote local development of cross-border currency business. In addition, this will help attract more foreign companies to make full use of BUNA to deepen cooperation with Pakistan to promote the improvement of Pakistan's economic situation." Last year, Pakistan used RMB to pay for crude oil from Russia for the first time, which could be described as a profound impact on Pakistan's economic development and the global economic pattern. RMB settlement has not only simplified the transaction process, but also reduced transaction costs. "Currently, the dominance of the U.S. dollar in international trade and finance is being questioned increasingly, and many countries have begun to seek diversified currency settlement

and reserve methods to reduce dependence on a single currency. Against this background, Pakistan's decision has certain significance demonstration effect. Joining BUNA this time means another successful exploration of Pakistan in the financial field and indispensable step towards de-dollarization," Ren mentioned. "In a deeper sense, last year, Pakistan Foreign Ministry spokesperson Muntaz Zahra Baloch noted at a press conference that Pakistan has officially applied to join the BRICS, which is an important organization for developing countries. There is no doubt that BUNA will promote the BRICS financial cooperation, providing financing and payment solutions to support the collaborative economic construction of BRICS countries."

Pakistan, UAE
sign MoU for
promotion
of date palm
cultivation

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) on Monday signed a Memorandum of Understanding here aimed at boosting agricultural innovation and research related to the development and promotion of various aspects of date palm cultivation and the allied industry. Ambassador of Pakistan to UAE Faisal Niaz Tirmizi and General Secretary of Khalifa International Award for Date Palm and Agricultural Innovation Dr. Abdoulouh Zaid Prof. signed the document. The signing ceremony was witnessed by Minister of Tolerance and Coexistence of the UAE Sheikh Nahyan Mubarak Al Nahyan, according to Pakistan's embassy in UAE. The MoU will help in promoting cooperation and sharing of expertise between the two sides. It will also provide an opportunity for Pakistani farmers to increase the cultivation of date palm including through innovative ideas. Being one of the pioneers, the UAE will provide technological support to Pakistan to increase date palm cultivation as Pakistan's rich topography presents immense potential in this sector. Under this MoU, the first Pakistan International Date Palm Festival 2024 will also be organized.—APP

Around 2,459
valid OEPs
registered
with BEOE

ISLAMABAD: The Bureau of Emigration and Overseas Employment (BEOE) has registered some 2,459 valid Overseas Employment Promoters (OEPs) to ensure protection of off shore employment seekers from scam and fake organisations minting money from innocent masses through hoax job opportunities. The Bureau has provided employment to over a million emigrants since its inception in 1971 through duly registered OEPs whereas during the year 2015 highest number of Pakistanis 946,571 proceeded abroad for the purpose of job.—APP

Nation congratulated on
new democratic journey

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Former President of the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI), Dr. Shahid Rasheed Butt, on Monday congratulated the nation on its new democratic journey and hoped that the overall situation would improve. The incoming government should try hard to reduce the problems of the people, and politicians from all political parties should show nationalism by initiating efforts to save the economy, he said. Shahid Rasheed Butt said in a statement issued here today that the newly elected members of the Sindh and Punjab Assemblies have taken oaths, and the elected members of other prov-

inces will also take oaths soon. After a few days, the new Prime Minister will also be elected which will defuse political tensions to some extent, he said. Now, all the political parties should decide their grievances related to the elections on the relevant forums instead of on the streets and play their role in political stability. He said all parties should unite to get the country out of its problems. The country needs political and economic stability like never before, without ensuring stability, it is impossible to rebuild the country. Shahid Rashid Butt said that all the politicians will have to keep national interests above personal and party interests and measures should be taken for economic survival, security, and prosperity, for which a long struggle is needed. He demanded that the politics of hatred, provocation, revenge, and division, should be buried and a constructive attitude should be adopted. He said that the debt burden on the country has increased to more than 126 billion dollars, and the people are kept unaware at the time of taking loans and kept in the dark about the usage of these loans. However, the burden of these loans is always shifted to the masses, which is unjustified. Politicians take loans without hesitation despite the knowledge of their negative effects which should be stopped. Due to these loans, electricity, gas, and oil have become very expensive, inflation is increasing and people cannot pay for them.

NEF announces 'merit
award' for children of
FDE teachers

ISLAMABAD: National Education Foundation (NEF), Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Train-

ing has invited the applications for its Merit Award from the children of FDE Teachers. According to the official sources, as per the eligibility criteria, the applicant should be a child of teacher working under Federal Directo-

rate of Education (FDE). The applicants must have secured admission in any degree program at any HEC recognized public sector college or university, Public medical or Public Engineering colleges on merit basis.—APP

COMSTECH organizes
seminar on recent research

DNA

ISLAMABAD: COMSTECH organized seminar on Recent Research and Development in Zoonotic diseases and DNA vaccines on Monday at COMSTECH Secretariat. The opening session was addressed by the Director General of Science and Technology of OIC Mr. Abdunur M. Sekindi, Chargé d'Affaires, Embassy of Indonesia in Pakistan, H.E. Mr. Rahmat Hindiarta, and Education Counselor, Embassy of Turkiye in Pakistan, Mr. Mehmet Toyran. Mr. Sekindi DG S&T OIC said that this is most important event in the area of the development of indigenous vaccines. He appreciated COMSTECH for taking this initiative. He emphasized the importance of indigenous capacity building and self-reliance in the field of vaccine development. He



said that Indonesia underscores the importance of science and technology. He said that in 2017 Indonesia began to establish itself as a base for vaccine manufacturing and to become a hub of halal vaccine production. He offered health sectors of Pakistan and OIC member states more collaboration and cooperation in pharma and health sectors in Indonesia. Mr. Toyran, Education Counselor, Embassy of Turkiye said that

COMSTECH is instrumental in the advancement of science and technology in OIC states. He said that COMSTECH is playing an important role in driving innovation. Two lectures were delivered in the technical session on important zoonotic diseases that threaten human health by Assoc. Prof. Derya Karatas Yeni, Department of Microbiology, Necmettin Erbakan university, Turkiye.

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West's hypocrisy paraded for public consumption

THE touching words some visiting Western leaders offered a group of Ukrainian soldiers in Kyiv on Saturday, in an attempt to show their solidarity and enhance the morale of the Ukrainian military, only served to do the opposite. The frowns and doubtful looks of their listeners indicated they hoped to hear concrete plans to end the fighting rather than promises of new financial and military assistance and training that can allow them to fight "for as long as it takes", as European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen promised. To better explain to Kyiv as well as their own people why their "generous assistance" had not yet materialized into Ukraine's victory, or even progress on the ground, after so many Ukrainian lives have been lost, the G7 leaders have tried to pass the buck to third parties. Apart from the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and Iran, which were as before criticized for their support of Russia in the document issued by the G7 leaders to mark the second anniversary of the outbreak of the conflict, China notably appeared for the first time as a cause for "concern", due to its alleged material support for Russia. "We express our concern about transfers to Russia from businesses in the People's Republic of China of dual-use materials and components for weapons and equipment for military production," the document reads. That charge is testimony to the group's rising guilt at the nightmare of attrition they are prolonging in Ukraine. China has maintained normal, legal and productive trade with the two sides of the conflict from day one of the Ukraine crisis. The G7's accusations have no validity. The G7 leaders would do better explaining why there is no mention of India in the document, whose imports of Russian oil and gas rose markedly after the crisis began, enabling it to become a reliable reseller to the West over the past two years. The West's price capping of Russia's oil exports, aimed at reducing Moscow's energy income, has actually contributed to the tremendous profits India has been making through its buying low and selling high of Russian oil. They are also silent on the fact that many US refineries have actually never stopped processing Russia-sourced crude oil that has been ceaselessly flowing into the US market through Indian agents, and that oil is resold to the European market at a high price in many forms of refined energy products. Kyiv should have seen through the West's hypocrisy a long time ago, as the sanctions it tries to impose on third-party country entities for their alleged support to Moscow, with the United States' sanctions being the representative, are not to help Ukraine as it claims, but serve the West's own narrow ends. The G7 members were well aware, from the very beginning, of the use value of the Ukraine crisis, the porous structure of their self-serving "sanctions", and the inevitability of the protraction of the crisis. But they still demand that the Ukrainians continue to fight.



Labour's GB energy idea: great for planet

SIR Keir Starmer's announcement earlier this month that he will be shrinking his green prosperity plan was disappointing. Last year was the hottest on record and, most likely, in the past 100,000 years. If there were ever a moment to go big on the climate, it is now. However, even in its diminished state, Labour's plan represents progress compared with the government's. That is the message contained in a report by the Common Wealth thinktank, which takes heart from Labour's proposal for a publicly owned company, Great British Energy. Common Wealth says this could be the vehicle to deliver Labour's 2030 clean power goal. It warns that the UK is not on course to deliver on its green generation target through its current approach to decarbonising the power system. The problem is that the status quo relies on private profits and fragmented markets. But the thinktank argues that this is "slower, more expensive, less secure and more carbon intensive" than a transition based on state coordination. Renewable investment financed out of Labour's £8.3bn capitalisation of GB Energy saves up to £208m a year on debt interest payments alone compared with corporate borrowing. Private provision does have its advantages, but these don't figure much in energy. Markets are supposed to be good at discovering what goods and services ought to be provided. But ministers were forced in 2022 to nationalise a key part of the electricity grid to help meet climate goals. Competition should keep prices low by encouraging efficiency. Yet electricity prices alone directly contributed between 3.5 and 5.5 percentage points to inflation between March 2021 and May 2023. GB Energy could provide for a faster, fairer and far cheaper green transition. This ought to be music to the ears of Sir Keir and Rishi Sunak, both of whom flaunt hair-shirt philosophies that artificially constrain fiscal policy. Mr Sunak's U-turn last year over net zero targets politicised the climate crisis but left intact the government's overall strategy, which sees £280bn-£400bn of public and private investment in new generating capacity needed by 2037 to decarbonise the power sector. This represents £21bn-£30bn in spending a year, or 50% to 100% more than the current rate of public and private investment in low-carbon energy sectors. Central to Common Wealth's argument is that the present system, which relies on a liberalised wholesale electricity market, makes it "difficult, if not impossible" to rapidly roll out capital investment. The irony is that public ownership already plays a critical role in clean energy generation in Britain – only, at the moment, it is foreign governments that are innovating, scaling up and commercialising new technologies. Labour's "clean energy superpower" mission should be achieved with a national champion akin to France's EDF. About 40% of off-shore wind generation is held by foreign state-owned firms. Sir Keir wants to quadruple the power from sea-based windfarms by 2030. This would be better achieved by GB Energy, where income could be reinvested to accelerate the shift toward energy independence, not distributed to foreign states or private investors. The UK has the potential to become the Saudi Arabia of wind.

CPEC: The best bet for the new government...

Qamar Bashir



Activating and fully operationalizing the various Special Economic Zones (SEZs) under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) framework will be pivotal for the new government's success in revitalizing Pakistan's economy. The Gwadar Special Economic Zone, sprawling over 1,000 acres, aims to diversify the industrial base with focuses on processing, manufacturing, home appliances, pharmaceuticals, building materials, automobiles, agriculture, and more. The Allama Iqbal Industrial City, covering 3,217 acres, is set to bolster textiles, engineering, electronics...

MR. Shahbaz Sharif, known as "Shahbaz Speed" for his dynamic leadership, is poised to assume the top executive role in Pakistan, bringing relief to the establishment and coalition partners but concern to the bureaucracy due to his assertive governance style. Taking charge in April 2022 amidst a looming default, he navigated through IMF negotiations after Ishaq Dar's approach failed, securing crucial funding that averted a financial crisis and provided a lifeline for economic stabilization. Subsequently, the establishment implemented key administrative measures, including enhanced border control and anti-smuggling initiatives, which bolstered the stock market, stabilized the currency, and satisfied IMF conditions, maintaining economic stability through the interim government period. As Shahbaz Sharif prepares to lead Pakistan's next government, he faces critical decisions to drive investment, enhance exports, foster trade substitution, improve agricultural productivity, and advance research, innovation, and education. However, financial constraints, significant debt, and investment hesitancy from both domestic and foreign private sectors, compounded by challenges in real estate and manufacturing due to low demand and high taxes, present formidable obstacles. For Pakistan, attracting investment and boosting trade with affluent Western nations like Europe and the USA would be ideal for addressing its economic challenges. However, these countries' private sectors, which drive their economies, view Pakistan with caution due to political instability, security concerns, and economic issues such as inconsistent policies and regulatory barriers. Additionally, transparency, governance, and legal system concerns deter Western investors. Geopolitical factors and strategic interests, particularly Pakistan's close relationship with China, further complicate engagement from the West. With these hurdles and competition from other emerging markets, it's tough for Pakistan to draw significant Western investment. Thus, Pakistan's most viable option is to deepen ties with China, which has shown a consistent willingness to support Pakistan through its economic difficulties in the current geopolitical landscape. Given the constraints, Mr. Shahbaz Sharif's pragmatic approach should be to leverage CPEC-1 and CPEC-2.0 for maximum benefit. In this discussion, we focus on CPEC-1's potential to catalyze economic recovery. To date, projects totaling \$19 billion have been completed, with some estimates suggesting up to \$25 billion; however, we'll consider \$19 billion for our analysis. Currently, 27 projects valued at \$13.7 billion are in progress, slated for completion by 2025. Furthermore, 36 projects, estimated at \$26.3 billion, are planned, aiming for a 2030 finish. In the energy sector specifically, 11 projects totaling \$12 billion have been finalized, and four projects worth \$6 billion are on-

going, with a completion target of 2025. By fully accelerating CPEC-1 efforts, Shahbaz Sharif could secure an investment exceeding \$46 billion in the coming five years, contingent upon eliminating bureaucratic, administrative, and political barriers. His strategy should prioritize the completion of both ongoing and planned projects, with a special focus on capital-intensive initiatives. Key among these are the development of industrial zones through Sino-Pakistani collaboration and the construction of a 2600 km rail track, the largest single CPEC project at nearly \$7 billion, along with the timely completion of infrastructure and energy projects. Activating and fully operationalizing the various Special Economic Zones (SEZs) under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) framework will be pivotal for the new government's success in revitalizing Pakistan's economy. The Gwadar Special Economic Zone, sprawling over 1,000 acres, aims to diversify the industrial base with focuses on processing, manufacturing, home appliances, pharmaceuticals, building materials, automobiles, agriculture, and more. The Allama Iqbal Industrial City, covering 3,217 acres, is set to bolster textiles, engineering, electronics, chemicals, food processing, pharmaceuticals, automobiles, packaging, and building materials industries. The Dhabaji Special Economic Zone, extending over 1,530 acres, plans to enhance light engineering, automotive parts, chemicals, electronics, textiles, steel, and building materials sectors. The Bostan Special Economic Zone, with 1,000 acres, is geared towards fruit processing, agricultural machinery, pharmaceuticals, motorbike assembly, and various other industries. Additionally, pipeline projects like the ICT Model Industrial Zone Islamabad, Industrial Park on Pakistan Steel Mill Land, Mirpur Industrial Zone, Mohmand Marble City, and Moqpondass Special Economic Zone are anticipated to further amplify industrial capabilities. The successful activation of these zones is crucial for stimulating economic growth, attracting investment, and generating employment, thereby playing a central role in the government's economic revival strategy. The new government should also prioritize the diverse range of infrastructure projects under the CPEC to catalyze economic revitalization, enhance trade and investment, generate employment opportunities, and alleviate the challenges faced by the populace. The completion of four road projects at a cost of Rs. 126,385 million, the Orange Line Metro Train costing Rs. 1926 million, the Cross-Border Optical Fiber Cable at \$44 million, and the Digital Terrestrial Multimedia Broadcast at \$4 million, which collectively created 46,000 jobs, sets a solid foundation. With five road projects totaling Rs. 71,733 million and 813 km currently underway, and significant future endeavors like the ML-1 railway upgrade spanning 1733 km at \$6806 million

promising 24,000 jobs, alongside other road developments and digital infrastructure initiatives, the focus on these infrastructure projects is imperative. The government's commitment to these initiatives can significantly boost economic performance, attract investments, and substantially improve the quality of life for the citizens, marking a pivotal step towards sustainable development and prosperity. In the energy sector, 11 projects worth \$12 billion have been concluded including coal-fired power plants, solar parks, wind farms, and hydroelectric projects, contributing significantly to Pakistan's energy sector by enhancing capacity and diversifying energy sources. While four projects valued at \$6 billion are underway, aiming for a 2025 completion. The completion of under construction projects aimed at addressing Pakistan's energy needs, thereby expected to bolster economic growth, reduce energy shortages, and contribute to sustainable development. The CPEC has already created tens of thousands of jobs in Pakistan through its various projects, ranging from infrastructure to energy and industrial zones whereas, CPEC is estimated to create over a million jobs in Pakistan by the end of the project in 2030. These figures include direct employment opportunities in construction, engineering, and project management, as well as indirect jobs through the stimulation of local businesses, manufacturing, and services related to CPEC projects. The direct and indirect employment opportunities generated through CPEC projects would significantly reduce unemployment rates and elevate household incomes, directly impacting living standards. Economic growth and stability brought about by these investments could lead to better control of inflation, contributing to price stability and providing considerable relief to the common people. Improved public services, increased job opportunities, and enhanced infrastructure would directly benefit the common man, elevating their quality of life and overall economic well-being. The key to success of the new government rests with efficiently advancing CPEC-1 by overcoming bureaucratic and administrative hurdles and securing the remaining \$40 billion investment over the next five years significantly propelling Pakistan's economic growth. This strategic move would not only accelerate infrastructure and energy projects but also boost industrialization, leading to a substantial increase in GDP and stabilizing the economy. Moreover, the successful execution of CPEC projects would enhance Pakistan's attractiveness to international investors, potentially leading to increased foreign direct investment in various sectors and improving financial stability.

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

Israel will pay a price for sabotaging its own reputation

Baria Alamuddin

UN experts say they have seen "credible allegations" that Palestinian women and girls have been subjected to sexual assault and rape in Israeli detention. The Wall Street Journal highlighted US intelligence findings that "Israeli bias serves to mischaracterize much of their assessments on UNRWA, which has resulted in distortions." This raises questions about those states that rushed to slash life-saving aid to the UN's Palestinian refugee agency, despite Israel's failure to produce evidence in support of its allegations against a tiny number of staff...

THE latest hearings at the International Court of Justice are nails being hammered into the coffin of Israel's international standing. More than 50 countries are submitting evidence questioning the legality of Israel's "occupation, settlement and annexation" of Palestinian territories. This runs parallel to hearings at the same court considering whether Israel's actions in Gaza constitute genocide. South Africa's representative denounced Israel's "fundamentally illegal" policies as an "extreme form of apartheid." Saudi Arabia criticized Israel's "dehumanization" of Palestinians as "disposable objects." Egypt said: "Israel cannot invoke self-defense to maintain a situation created by its own illegal conduct." Belize condemned Israel's "racist apartheid" and "excessive use of force, arbitrary killing and mass incarceration." Israel unsurprisingly refused to participate, but apparently cajoled Fiji to speak on its behalf – a move angrily denounced by Fijian citizens. Brazil's president accused Israel of genocide and compared its Gaza offensive to the Nazi Holocaust. We are witnessing the situation of Israel and its dwindling number of supporters aligning themselves against almost the entire civilized world. Israel's leaders arrogantly brought this global backlash upon themselves with a brazenly disproportionate military campaign in Gaza in which two thirds of the official 30,000 death toll are women and children, along with hundreds of thousands of others maimed, orphaned, or suffering other life-debilitating losses. An entire displaced population teeters on the brink of starvation. This utter collapse in Israel's international reputation has correspondingly left its biggest international champions seriously exposed – in particular the US. Among other young, cosmopolitan anti-war demographics, America's Arab communities wield influence as never before: notably in Michigan, where anti-war anger risks swinging the presidential election against Joe Biden. This has given rise to a panicked and incoherent hodgepodge of policies. Although the Biden administration last week affirmed that settlement building was illegal, it utterly undermined that welcome U-turn by simultaneously urging the court against a legal mandate for ending the occupation, arguing that control of the West Bank was justified by

Israel's "very real security needs." Britain resorted to the tortuous logic of acknowledging that the occupation was "illegal," while claiming that this was a bilateral dispute and therefore outside the court's jurisdiction. Such rhetorical gymnastics will hardly appease global publics horrified that Israel's genocidal campaign continues to be fueled by US arms, US funding and US diplomatic cover. One Palestinian American activist accused Biden of bankrolling genocide, and said his policies were "like showing up to a five-alarm fire with a cup of water while giving fuel to the arsonist." China's usually tight-lipped UN Security Council envoy categorized the US's ceasefire veto as "giving a green light to the continued slaughter." With European nations besieged by similar pressures, a growing nexus of states have sought to steer the EU in a markedly less pro-Israel direction. Spain and Belgium's prime ministers jointly denounced "indiscriminate killings of innocent civilians." Ireland has sought to build consensus toward recognizing a Palestinian state. Even reflexively pro-Israel governments in Germany and Britain have been compelled to rethink their language and actions, so as not to completely lose touch with millions of citizens outraged by the carnage. Conservative pro-Israeli bastions of the Western media haven't held back from transmitting heart-rending Gaza developments to their audiences. UN experts say they have seen "credible allegations" that Palestinian women and girls have been subjected to sexual assault and rape in Israeli detention. The Wall Street Journal highlighted US intelligence findings that "Israeli bias serves to mischaracterize much of their assessments on UNRWA, which has resulted in distortions." This raises questions about those states that rushed to slash life-saving aid to the UN's Palestinian refugee agency, despite Israel's failure to produce evidence in support of its allegations against a tiny number of staff members. Nothing signals Israel's growing international isolation more strongly than counter-productive attacks on UN institutions and Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, who himself warned that Israel's "clear and repeated rejection of the two-state solution" was unacceptable and would prolong the Gaza conflict. Since day one of this conflict, Benjamin Netanyahu's re-

gime has seized every opportunity to cut off all humanitarian support. The UN's humanitarian office last week described Gaza as "a textbook formula for epidemics and a public health disaster" due to the collapse of its health system. With Nasser hospital in Khan Younis out of action, all of Gaza's major hospitals are now out of service, with many having been subject to bombing and invasion. It is right to investigate rape allegations arising from the Oct. 7 atrocities by Hamas. But UN experts say they have seen "credible allegations" that Palestinian women and girls have been subjected to sexual assault and rape in Israeli detention. The UN's special rapporteur found that "violence and dehumanization of Palestinian women and children and civilians has been normalized." A UN human rights panel highlighted the "extrajudicial killing of Palestinian women and children in places where they sought refuge, or while fleeing ... holding white pieces of cloth when they were killed." The conflict has inspired a flood of fake news from both sides. As Israel sees the tide of global opinion turn relentlessly against it, it has increasingly resorted to transmitting debunked claims. This ranges from incessant allegations that injured and dead Palestinians are "crisis actors," to Israel's president falsely telling a German newspaper that a German dual national had been beheaded on Oct. 7. Both sides exploited old Syria conflict footage to disingenuously support their narratives. Throughout the democratic world, Israel should rightly fear what will happen to its disintegrating international position as political parties around the world struggle to realign themselves with public sentiment to avoid punishment at the ballot box. Equally, Hamas – already widely labeled a terrorist organization – should consider the impact of its own atrocities against civilians on the reputation of the entire Palestinian cause, and consider tangible measures such as freeing hostages. A vengeful Israel has yet to digest the implications of its actions for global legitimacy and its own regional security. Israel is not the exception it believes itself to be: peaceful co-existence with its neighbors comes only through playing by the rules, treating all its citizens as equals, and conscientiously pursuing a just settlement for Palestinian statehood.

— Sourced by Arab News

Briefs

Speaker 'convenes'...

FROM PAGE 01
Parliamentary Affairs. Meanwhile, Senator Raza Rabbani stated on Monday that the delay in convening a session of the newly elected National Assembly by the president was an open violation of the constitution. Criticising President Dr Arif Alvi, the prominent PPP leader, in a statement, remarked that unfortunately, this time the attack on the constitution came from the Presidency. He said that the Presidency was openly violating the Article 91 of the constitution which, according to him, mandated the convening of the session of the National Assembly within a period of 21 days following the conduct of general elections in the country. Rabbani noted that the president had violated the constitution on different occasions.

PTI terms speaker's...

FROM PAGE 01
Another party leader Sharam Turki pointed out that PTI holds the true mandate and lambasted Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) for providing inaccurate numbers. It's "unfair" that party members are not allocated specific seats, he said, asking, "Then what's the point of convening a session?" Yousufzai stated the alliance between PML-N, Muttahida Qaumi Movement-Pakistan (MQM-P), and Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) is driven by personal and political motives rather than the nation's best interests. He highlighted the selective memory of PML-N, accusing them of conveniently disregarding past constitutional violations during the caretaker government and transforming into a "family party".

Maryam Nawaz...

FROM PAGE 01
Her opponent, SIC candidate Rana Aftab Ahmad, did not get any votes as the party boycotted the elections after they were stopped from speaking. "The votes have been counted according to which Maryam has obtained 220 votes and SIC candidate Rana Aftab Ahmad secured zero votes," said Speaker Malik Ahmad Khan while presiding the session. After announcing the result, the speaker invited CM-elect Maryam Nawaz to come to the seat of the leader of the House. She started her speech by congratulating the newly-elected speaker and deputy speaker.

Murad elected...

FROM PAGE 01
The third time lucky, has served twice as Sindh's chief minister from 2016 to 2018 and then from 2018 to 2023, and this will be his third consecutive term. Taking the floor after his election, CM Murad thanked PPP and its top leadership for choosing him for the post. "I have been chosen for the third time for leading the province and I have been elected as the member of this House for the fifth time," he said. Recalling his early days in politics, Murad said that his father had told him and his brother that one of them should contest in the 2002 polls as he couldn't at that time. He said that PPP leader Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto, who was in exile at that time, encouraged him to take part in the polls.

Israeli war...

FROM PAGE 01
12 martyrs were evacuated to the European Gaza Hospital following Israeli attacks on Khan Yunis, south of Gaza. Two fishermen were also martyred when an Israeli gunboat opened fire at them off the shore of Khan Yunis. Casualties, including four martyrs, were also reported following an Israeli attack on a car and a group of citizens in the east of Deir al-Balah in central Gaza, while a citizen was shot dead by an Israeli sniper in al-Baydar area in the southwest of Gaza City. Meanwhile, an Israeli warplane bombed a house belonging to the family of Abdeen in al-Biyouk area, north of Rafah in southern Gaza.



ISLAMABAD: Players of Rising Stars Hockey Club presenting a souvenir to the Ambassador of Kyrgyzstan Ulanbek Totuaiev. Ambassadors of Australia, Brunei and Romania are also seen in the picture. - DNA

President lauds blind cricket team, hails DAPs' abilities

President Dr Arif Alvi said that through their participation in tournaments, the team also inspired other blind cricketers

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The members of the Pakistan Blind Cricket team on Monday called on President Dr Arif Alvi here wherein he lauded them for bringing laurels to Pakistan besides highlighting globally the capabilities of differently-abled persons. In the meeting held at the Awan-e-Sadr, the president said that through their participation in tournaments, the team also inspired other blind cricketers. He said that during the recent years, blind cricket got special attention and recognition in Pakistan. The active role of the Pakistan Blind Cricket Board in promoting and holding contests is welcoming, he added. Calling for the encouragement of the blind cricket team, the president also called for acknowledgement of



the cricketers' impressive role to highlight the team's efforts and achievements. The team management briefed the president about the team's performance. The team members thanked President Alvi for their encouragement.

Ronaldo under scrutiny following obscene gesture

RIYADH: Cristiano Ronaldo is under scrutiny for his actions after Al Nassr's 3-2 win over Al Shabab in the Saudi Pro League (SPL), with allegations of him making an offensive gesture towards fans. Ronaldo opened the scoring in the away game on Sunday, setting his club on the path to victory. Anderson Talisca struck twice, including an 86th-minute winner, after Yannick Carrasco and Carlos had scored for the hosts. However, Ronaldo grabbed attention once again as he appeared to cup his ear towards Al Shabab fans after the match, followed by repeatedly thrusting his hand

forward near his pelvis. Chants of "Messi" were audible, referring to Ronaldo's longstanding Ballon d'Or rival and former competitor during their time at Barcelona and Real Madrid respectively.

It's possible that these chants provoked Ronaldo, leading to his gesture as a response to the fans. The 39-year-old Portuguese could face consequences for his actions, with reports indicating that the Saudi Arabian Football Federation (SAFF) has launched an investigation. "The disciplinary committee is facing the biggest test. We will wait and see," Waleed Al

Farraj, a prominent Saudi writer and television host, said on social media platform X. "Everything has its limits, no matter how famous you are. This is how the major leagues are." Al Nassr has not yet issued a statement regarding the incident. Ronaldo's club is currently second in the Saudi Pro League, trailing Al Hilal by four points, having missed out on the title in his first season after joining from Manchester United. They remain in contention for the Asian Champions League, a tournament they've never won, and are set to face Al-Ain of the United Arab Emirates

in the quarter-finals next month. Ronaldo leads the scoring charts in the Saudi Pro League this season, with 22 goals in 20 appearances. This isn't the first time Ronaldo has faced criticism for his conduct. Last April, he appeared to make a similar gesture while heading to the dugout after a league game against Al Hilal, which Al Nassr lost 2-0. Earlier this month, he grabbed an Al Hilal scarf thrown at him from the stands, briefly placing it in his shorts before discarding it as he walked towards the tunnel following Al Nassr's 2-0 defeat in the Riyadh Season Cup final.

Karachi gears up to host PSL matches from February 28

KARACHI: The National Bank Stadium (NBS) is getting everything ready to host 11 matches of the ongoing HBL Pakistan Super League (PSL) 9 from February 28. The home ground stadium will host 11 matches including the finale scheduled to be held on March 18. The 15th match of the HBL PSL 9 will be played between Karachi Kings and Islamabad United on February 28 while the 16th match will be played between Karachi Kings and Quetta Gladiators on February 29. Islamabad United and Peshawar Zalmi will face off in the same ground on March 03. Karachi Kings and Lahore Qalandars will confront on March 09. Quetta Gladiators will compete against Lahore Qalandars on March 10, Karachi Kings over Peshawar Zalmi on March 11 and Quetta Gladiators will face Multan Sultans on March 12. Moreover, Qualifier will be held on March 14 and Eliminator 1 on March 15. The finale of the ninth edition of HBL PSL will be played to decide about the champions of 2024 on March 18. - Agencies

Japan's Premier League winner Okazaki to retire

TOKYO: Former Japan international Shinji Okazaki, who won the Premier League with Leicester City in 2016, announced Monday that he will retire at the end of the season. The hard-working forward played a key role as the Foxes upset the odds to win their first league title under Claudio Ranieri, making 36 Premier League appearances and scoring five goals in the 2015-16 season. The 37-year-old also finished as Japan's all-time third-highest scorer with 50 goals in 119 appearances. "I have decided to retire at the end of the season," Okazaki posted on Instagram. "I have given everything as a football player but I have realised that my body is worn out and I am reaching my physical limit." Okazaki began his career with J-League club Shimizu S-Pulse and played in Germany with Stuttgart and Mainz before joining Leicester in 2015. He scored a spectacular overhead goal against Newcastle in their title-winning campaign to put Ranieri's side five points clear at the top of the table with eight games remaining. - Agencies

Multan Sultans name Ihsanullah's replacement

ISLAMABAD: Multan Sultans named a replacement for their premium pacer Ihsanullah for the remainder of the Pakistan Super League (PSL) season 9 matches as the league enters its decisive phase. Ali Majid Shah will replace Ihsanullah, who is recovering from an elbow injury after undergoing surgery in September 2023. Remember, the 21-year-old has been bowling in nets but he has not been declared match fit by the team's medical staff and thus, will not be available for the remainder of PSL 9.

Ihsanullah was the second highest-wicket taker of PSL 8 where the

Multan speedster bagged 22 wickets in 13 matches. Multan Sultans currently occupy the top position in the PSL 9 points table with eight points from five matches and a 0.78 net run rate (NRR). They are followed closely by Quetta Gladiators who are second with six points from four matches and 0.34 NRR. Earlier, the Sultans ended Quetta's three-match win streak by handing them a 13-run defeat in the 11th match of PSL 9. Mohammad Rizwan's men successfully defended the 181-run target courtesy of their accuracy with the ball as the Gladiators' batters failed to hurt

their opponents. Chasing the target, the Gladiators started slowly as they could only score 8 runs in the first two overs against Mohammad Ali and David Willey. Jason Roy became Ali's victim in the third over, Saud Shakeel followed him soon enough after losing his wicket to Willey in the sixth over, leaving his side 42-2. After losing two wickets, skipper Rilee Rossouw and youngster Khawaja Nafay held their nerves and formed a 60-run partnership. Gladiators had the command of the chase but Rossouw's unexpected dismissal turned the tide in Sultans' favour. The wickets kept falling and the visiting side could only score 167 runs in the allocated overs. Batting first, the Sultans started with a blast as opener Usman Khan hit three boundaries to Akeal Hosein to end the first over with 14/0. - DNA

India beat England by 5 wickets to clinch series

Shubman Gill scored an unbeaten fifty, while chasing a target of 192 runs, to lead India to victory

SPORTS DESK

NEW DELHI: India defeated England by five wickets in the fourth Test of the series after a close finish at the JSCA International Stadium Complex in Ranchi on Monday. The victory meant that the home side also took an unassailable 3-1 lead in the five-match series. Shubman Gill scored an unbeaten fifty, while chasing a target of 192 runs, to lead India to victory. India reached the target in the second session on day four of the contest. Having started today's play at 40 for 0, India quickly went from 84 for 0 to 120 for 5. However, Gill (52) and Dhruv Jurel (39) scored 72 in an unbeaten stand for the sixth wicket to help India get over the finishing line. "We were put under pressure by them [England] but we got a good start by our openers. However, losing couple of wickets put pressure. But Jurel came out and took the pressure off. You have to see the situation and play

accordingly - they were bowling well and protecting the boundaries. Our mindset was to not give maidens and keep picking

the singles," Gill said after the match. "I just told him [Jurel] you batted beautifully in the first innings and to have the same



mindset. The way he came down and played was beautiful. "The first innings the ball was not turning much and hence I didn't use my feet, but second innings I decided to take the LBW out of the equation by using my feet. "It means the world to us, coming here and having to play the series with not much batting experience, having lost KL Rahul after the first Test. But Rohit bhai backed us and gave us the confidence to go out and play with freedom." Off-spinner Shaoh Bashir bagged figures of 3-79, to go with his five first innings wickets, but could not keep England alive in the series. England scored 353 all out in their first innings and led by 46 after India's 307. But spinners Ravichandran Ashwin and Kuldeep Yadav took nine wickets on Sunday as England collapsed from 47-0 to 145 all out in their second innings. This is England's first series loss since Ben Stokes and Brendon McCullum came together as captain and coach. The fifth and final Test is scheduled in Dharamsala from March 7.

ICJ hearing: 2-state solution...

FROM PAGE 01

Gaza demonstrates the tragedy of the Palestinians who have been "systematically subjugated and oppressed by the Israeli colonial project" for over seven decades. The advisory proceeding, she noted, presents an opportunity to hold Israel accountable for attacks, put an immediate end to Israel's "impunity" and uphold international humanitarian law. Hussein Ibrahim Taha, Secretary General of the OIC, said "a just, lasting and comprehensive peace based on a two-state solution in Palestine is only way to ensure security and stability of all people in the region and protect them from the cycle of violence."

ECP to hear PTI-SIC plea in open court

FROM PAGE 01

National Assembly's outgoing Speaker Raja Pervaiz Ashraf "decided" to convene the inaugural session of the new lower house of parliament on February 29, well-placed sources confirmed Monday. The PTI-affiliated independent members joined the SIC in a bid to retain reserved seats since the Constitution entitles parliamentary parties present in the different houses to have a quota of reserved seats for women and minorities. These PTI-affiliated independents joined the SIC in the National and Punjab assemblies last week. The idea behind this alliance was for the PTI independents to become a parliamentary group in the houses so they could avail the reserved seats.

IHC issues notice to NAB, FIA

FROM PAGE 01

pleas challenging their sentences in cipher and Toshakhana cases. The IHC's two-member division bench comprising Chief Justice Aamer Farooq and Justice Mian Gul Hassan Aurangzeb conducted the hearing on Khan, and co-convict Qureshi's pleas seeking the overturning of their 10-year sentences pronounced by the trial courts in the cipher case. The IHC office also removed objections to an appeal submitted by the disqualified prime minister. Additionally, notices have been issued to the anti-corruption watchdog for Thursday over Khan and Bushra's pleas against their 14-year, each, imprisonment in the Toshakhana case.

Palestinian PM Shtayyeh resigns

FROM PAGE 01

shake up the Palestinian Authority as international efforts have intensified to stop the fighting in Gaza and begin work on a political structure to govern the enclave after the war. His resignation must still be accepted by Abbas, who may ask him to stay on as caretaker until a permanent replacement is appointed. In a statement to cabinet, Shtayyeh, an academic economist who took office in 2019, said the next stage would need to take account of the emerging reality in Gaza, which has been laid waste by nearly five months of heavy fighting. He said the next stage would "require new governmental and political arrangements that take into account the emerging reality in the Gaza Strip, the national unity talks, and the urgent need for an inter-Palestinian consensus."

SC seeks help from religious institutions

FROM PAGE 01

A three-member bench headed by Chief Justice Qazi Faiz Isa heard the case. During the hearing, Jamaat-e-Islami lawyer Shaikat Aziz Siddiqui said that they have also filed a review petition in the case, to which the CJP replied "Your petition has been received but has not been read yet". Siddiqui added that they believe the court did not provide proper assistance in the case, and that the petitioner never requested to delete the provisions.

Briefs

Saudi FM warns against Israel's Rafah attack

RIYADH: Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan on Monday warned against the 'catastrophic consequences' of any Israeli attack on Rafah, south of Gaza, during his speech at the 55th session of the UN Human Rights Council. "In this light, we warn against the disastrous repercussions of an attack on Rafah, as the last refuge for civilians, who are there due to the displacement by the Israeli army." Bin Farhan denounced the double standards adopted by some countries toward the crisis in the war-ravaged Gaza Strip. He also reiterated calls for an immediate ceasefire. "We call on the international community to bear its responsibility to put an end to escalation and war, protect civilians, in order to pave the way for a clear and legitimate peace process that includes all parties." Meanwhile, Riyadh has repeatedly called for a ceasefire while criticising Israeli "aggression" in Gaza. While US President Joe Biden's administration has voiced optimism that Saudi-Israeli normalisation can be revived, Saudi Arabia said this week it had told Washington it would not establish ties with Israel until an independent Palestinian state is "recognised" and Israeli forces leave Gaza. Gaza's Hamas rulers warned on Saturday that Israeli operations in Rafah could cause "tens of thousands" of casualties in the city. —DNA

Riyadh to host first sandstorm conference

RIYADH: Saudi Arabia's National Center for Meteorology will host the first International Conference on Sand and Dust Storms from March 4-6 in Riyadh. The forum, organized by the World Meteorological Organization's Sand and Dust Storm Warning Regional Center, is expected to draw wide international participation and aims to address the growing global challenge posed by dust and sand storms. Over 200 researchers, experts, and specialists from around the world, including WMO representatives, will gather to share the latest advancements in dust and sand storm research, said the center. The conference is slated to discuss a wide range of critical topics, including sources of dust aerosol formation, dust-climate interactions, health impacts and mitigation strategies, monitoring and predictive modeling, and economic, infrastructural, and environmental consequences of dust storms on various sectors. The conference will underscore the urgent need to combat dust and sandstorms, in view of their significant impacts on the environment, public health, and economies. —Agencies

Raiders kill 15 at Burkina church

OUAGADOUGOU: At least 15 civilians were killed and two others injured during a "terrorist" attack on a Catholic church during mass in northern Burkina Faso, a senior church official said. "We bring to your attention a terrorist attack which the Catholic community of Essakane village was the victim of today, February 25, while they were gathered for Sunday prayer," the vicar of the Dori diocese, Jean-Pierre Sawadogo, said in a statement. The provisional toll was 15 killed and two wounded, he added. Calling for peace and security in Burkina Faso, Sawadogo denounced "those who continue to wreak death and desolation in our country." Essakane village, where the attack took place, is in what is known as the "three borders" zone in the northeast of the country, near the common borders of Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger. This is just the latest in a series of atrocities blamed on jihadist groups active in the region, some of which have targeted Christian churches while others have involved the abduction of clergy. —APP

Chevening, commonwealth scholars welcomed by HC

British High Commissioner to Pakistan, Jane Marriott, has welcomed returning Chevening and Commonwealth scholars

DNA

ISLAMABAD: After completing postgraduate studies in the UK, the 2022-2023 cohort consisting of 47 Chevening and 46 Commonwealth scholars had the opportunity to reconnect and foster relationships which will stay with them for life. The 2022-23 cohorts came from across Pakistan, with all provinces represented. The scholars all benefited from fully-funded scholarships to study a range of subjects, including development, public health, climate change and business, at leading Universities like the University of Oxford and the London School of Economics. They will now join a cohort of high-profile alumni from diverse fields. This includes the first female judge of the Gilgit-Baltistan High Court, Amna Zamir Shah, prominent disability activist Abia Akram, and the first woman lawyer from the Hazara minority, Jalila Haider. British High Commissioner to Pakistan, Jane Marriott CMG OBE, said: "Our Chevening and Commonwealth scholar-



ships are up there at the top of the UK's education offer to Pakistani. These returning scholars have not only received an education at some of the world's best universities, that have also expanded their professional networks and experienced life in the UK. They take this with them as return to their respective ca-

reers and fields." Aurangzeb Kasi, a scholar from Baluchistan, said: "Chevening was a transformative experience, enriching me both academically and culturally. I can't wait to use the global perspective I've gained to pioneer positive change in my community." Applications for Commonwealth Scholarships will next open

in September 2024. To find out more information, visit the CSC website. Applications for Chevening scholarships will open in August 2024. Interested candidates can register for alerts by visiting www.chevening.org. Commonwealth Scholarships are highly competitive scholarships provided by the UK govern-

ment to provide financial assistance to talented international students from across the Commonwealth nations who wish to pursue a postgraduate degree in the UK. In Pakistan, there are over 1,500 Commonwealth alumni to date. The scholarships have been available to Pakistani students since 1960.

Chevening Scholarships are the UK government's global scholarships programme. Established in 1983, these scholarships support study at UK universities - mostly one-year Masters' degrees - for students with demonstrable potential to become future leaders, decision-makers and opinion formers.

Zelensky: Ukraine needs western aid for victory

Zelensky said 31,000 Ukrainian soldiers had been killed in the war and that plans for last summer's failed counteroffensive had been leaked to Russia

FOREIGN DESK

KYIV: Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said that his country's victory "depends" on support from the West and expressed hope the United States would approve a critical package of military aid. In a rare acknowledgement of setbacks, Zelensky said 31,000 Ukrainian soldiers had been killed in the war and that plans for last summer's failed counteroffensive had been leaked to Russia. He appealed to the West to boost Ukraine's

war chances, at a forum marking the second anniversary of Russia's invasion. "Whether Ukraine will lose, whether it will be very difficult for us, and whether there will be a large number of casualties depends on you, on our partners, on the Western world," Zelensky said. Ukraine has in recent weeks been weakened by an ammunition shortage, with a vital \$60-billion US aid package blocked by political wrangling in the US Congress. The Ukrainian president said that "there is hope for Congress, and I am sure that it is going to be positive."

Ukraine has for months said that Western aid is too slow coming and that the hold-ups have real consequences as the war against Russia enters its third year. Zelensky for the first time suggested that Russia had prior information on the country's much-anticipated but unsuccessful counteroffensive last summer. "Action plans were on the Kremlin's table before the counteroffensive actions began," said the president, who this month sacked the army's commander-in-chief Valery Zaluzhny. Zelensky said that Ukraine's war losses were nevertheless

much lower than Russia has claimed. He said: "31,000 Ukrainian soldiers have died in this war. Not 300,000 or 150,000, or whatever Putin and his lying circle are saying." In December, Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu said 383,000 Ukrainian soldiers had been killed or injured. The second anniversary of the war was marked around the world with moving tributes. During a Sunday service in the Vatican, Pope Francis called for intensified efforts to find a "just and lasting peace" to the conflict.

Once a 'nobody', Jokowi's son set to become Indonesia's VP

JAKARTA: By his own admission, Gibran Rakabuming Raka was a "nobody" a few months before Indonesia's elections. Now, the eldest son of President Joko Widodo looks set to become the country's youngest-ever vice president. Gibran's meteoric rise to running mate of president-in-waiting Prabowo Subianto, who declared victory last week, was fuelled by his father's wild popularity. "Three months ago I was a nobody. I thank Sir Prabowo who has given room for young people like me," Gibran, 36, told a packed arena in the capital Jakarta after polls closed on February 14. "I believe these high figures were because of the young people." Official results show Defence Minister Prabowo's ticket winning a majority with more than two-thirds of votes counted. The final result is due next month. Gibran's success in the polls has raised questions over the influence of Jokowi, as the president is popularly known, with critics accusing him of seeking to install a political dynasty before he leaves office. Growing up Gibran was set to follow in his father's furniture salesman footsteps after studying in Singapore and Australia, but he moved into catering and created a business selling traditional Indonesian dishes. He first stepped into politics while his father was serving as president in 2021, winning the mayorship of Central Java's Surakarta city - Jokowi's old job. —DNA

Hungary to ratify Sweden's NATO accession

BUDAPEST: Hungary is expected to ratify Sweden's NATO accession on Monday, clearing the last hurdle before the historic step by the Nordic country whose neutrality lasted through two world wars and the simmering conflict of the Cold War. The Hungarian parliament's vote, which is expected to pass smoothly after a visit by Swedish Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson last Friday during which the two countries signed an arms deal, will end months of delays to complete Sweden's security policy shift. Stockholm abandoned its non-alignment policy for greater safety within the North Atlantic Treaty Organization in the wake of Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022. With Sweden following Finland into NATO, becoming its 32nd member, President Vladimir Putin has effectively achieved the very thing he sought to avert when he launched his war in Ukraine - an expansion of the alliance - Western leaders have said. —APP

Japan Moon lander revives after lunar night

TOKYO: Japan's Moon lander has produced another surprise by waking up after the two-week lunar night, the country's space agency said Monday. The unmanned Smart Lander for Investigating Moon (SLIM) touched down last month at a wacky angle that left its solar panels facing the wrong way. As the sun's angle shifted, it came back to life for two days and carried out scientific observations of a crater with a high-spec camera, the Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency (JAXA) said. It went to sleep again as darkness returned and, since it was "not designed for the harsh lunar nights", JAXA had been uncertain whether it would reawaken. "Yesterday we sent a command, to which SLIM responded," JAXA said on X, formerly Twitter, on Monday. "SLIM succeeded in surviving a night on the Moon's surface while maintaining its communication function!" It said communications were "terminated after a short time, as it was still lunar midday and the temperature of the communication equipment was very high." But it added: "Preparations are being made to resume operations when instrument temperatures have sufficiently cooled." SLIM, dubbed the "Moon Sniper" for its precision landing technology, touched down within its target landing zone on January 20. The feat was a win for Japan's space programme after a string of recent failures. —APP

S.Korea gives final warning to protesting medics

SEOUL: South Korea on Monday said it will suspend the licenses of protesting medics if they do not return to work by the end of this month. President Yoon Suk-yeol stressed it was the state's constitutional responsibility to provide timely medical treatment to people. "Starting in March, the suspension of doctors' licenses for a minimum of three months will become unavoidable for those who fail to return under the law and principle, along with judicial measures, such as investigations and prosecutions," said Vice Health Minister Park Min-soo. According to Seoul-based Yonhap News, 9,006 trainee doctors have walked off their jobs while 10,034 trainee doctors have submitted resignations. Doctors are protesting the government's plans to increase the number of medical seats to address a shortage of doctors, particularly in rural areas and essential medical fields, particularly high-risk surgeries, pediatrics, obstetrics, and emergency medicine. Doctors, however, demand that the government rather focus on improving compensation to induce more physicians to practice in such unpopular areas. The protest by doctors have put strain on healthcare across the country with South Korean military opening their hospitals for civilian patients. South Korea has some 13,000 trainee doctors. The government wants to add 2,000 more seats to 3,058 students enrolled annually. "It should be noted that a license suspension creates a record that may impact future career paths, including opportunities for employment abroad," said the minister in a warning to unrelenting medics. However, he added, the government will continue talking to the medical community. —Agencies

A single voting day held in Belarus

DNA

MINSK: Deputies of the House of Representatives of the National Assembly of the eighth convocation and local Councils of Deputies of the twenty-ninth convocation were elected. The registration of candidates for deputies ended on January 30. The campaign period was held from January 31 to February 24. On February 25 - the main election day. Early voting took place from 20 to 24 February. A total of 5,411 polling stations were open from 8:00 till 20:00 on 25 February. Apart from that, some voters could cast their ballots at home. As many as 45,505 national observers kept an eye on the proceedings. As many as 294 international observers were accredited as well. Missions had been sent to monitor the elections on the single voting day by the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), the



Parliamentary Assembly of the Collective Security Treaty Organization, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Union State of Belarus and Russia in addition to heads and representatives of election authorities of other countries as well as experts from European countries and other ones (Italy, Germany, Lithuania, Poland, France, Sweden, Switzerland, Serbia, Bulgaria). On the single voting day Belarusians

had to elect 110 members of the eighth-convocation House of Representatives of the National Assembly and 12,514 members of the 29th convocation of various municipal councils of deputies. The deputies were elected by citizens directly and will stay in office for five years. The Chairman of the Central Election Commission, Igor Karpenko, said that the data on turnout had been clarified - it amounted to 73.09% in the

republic. More than 6.9 million people were included in the voter lists. The largest turnout was registered in the Mogilev region - 77.03%. In the Grodno region, it amounted to 76.90%, in Gomel - 75.85%, in Brest - 75.82%, in Vitebsk - 75.63%, in Minsk - 74.20%, in Minsk - 61.54%. Belarusian President Aleksandr Lukashenko cast his vote in the elections of deputies to the House of Representatives of the National Assembly.

Turkiye urges ICJ to declare Israel's acts illegal

'It is alarming to see reports regarding plans by Israeli government to limit prayers of Muslims at Haram al Sharif during Ramadan,' says Türkiye at International Court of Justice

NEWS DESK

ANKARA: Türkiye on Monday called on the International Court of Justice (ICJ) to declare the policies and practices of Israel in occupied Palestine "illegal" under international law. On the final day of public hearings in a case examining the legal consequences of Israel's occupation of the Palestinian territories, Deputy Foreign Minister Ahmet Yildiz also addressed the Oct. 7 attacks by Hamas in Israel, which killed 1,200 people, and Israel's military response that has since killed over 29,000 Palestinians. Israeli bombardment has also injured over 70,000, devastated 60% of the enclave's infrastructure and caused a worsening humanitarian crisis. It has pushed 85% of the territory's population into internal displacement amid acute shortages of food, clean water and medicine. "The unfolding

situation after Oct. 7 proves once again that, without addressing the root cause of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, there can be no peace in the region," Yildiz said on the sixth day of hearings. "The real obstacle to peace is obvious. The deepening occupation by Israel of the Palestinian territories, including East Jerusalem, and failure to implement the two-state vision," he added. "Rule-based international system has come to the brink of collapse with ongoing Israeli attacks on Gaza," Yildiz argued, slamming a "lack of political will" by the international community which he said only "increased the injustice felt by Palestinians." Israel's acts have turned into collective punishment, Yildiz said, pointing to the ever-increasing death toll in Israeli bombardments, as well as illegal settler terrorism against native Palestinians in the West Bank. Tensions have been running high across the West Bank since Oct. 7, with

at least 400 Palestinians killed and more than 7,200 others detained by Israeli forces. Yildiz also expressed alarm over reports that the Israeli government plans to limit prayers of Muslims at Haram al Sharif during Ramadan, as well as "worrying provocative rhetoric" by certain Israeli ministers. Israeli forces and settlers often storm holy sites in East Jerusalem, like Al-Aqsa Mosque, the world's third-holiest site for Muslims, including the holy mosque of Ramadan. Palestinians, who already have restricted access to the compound, accuse Israel of systematically working to Judaize East Jerusalem and obliterate its Arab and Islamic identity. Israel occupied East Jerusalem during the 1967 Arab-Israeli War. It annexed the entire city in 1980, in a move never recognized by the international community. Known for its unbreakable solidarity with Palestinians, Türkiye has been voicing support for the Palestinian cause in the international realm for decades.

Similarly on Monday, Yildiz said Türkiye is "deeply concerned" with unilateral policies and practices of Israel, which "violates the status quo in Haram al Sharif." Al-Aqsa Mosque is also known as Haram al Sharif or Temple Mount. "Türkiye believes all unilateral acts by Israel aiming at occupation constitute breach of international law and must be unconditionally rescinded," Yildiz stressed. "Türkiye cannot remain indifferent to attempts to erase Palestinian identity under Israeli occupation," he added. "Israel must be held accountable for measures to alter status of Jerusalem, as well as violations of human rights on occupied territories." Since Feb. 19, the U.N.'s top court, also known as the World Court, has been hearing arguments by 52 countries on the legal consequences of Israel's occupation of the West Bank, east Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip after a request by the U.N. General Assembly in 2022 to issue a nonbinding opinion on the legal

consequences of Israeli occupation from 1967 to present day. The case is separate from another ICJ case by South Africa accusing Israel of committing genocide in Gaza. An interim ruling in January ordered Tel Aviv to stop genocidal acts and take measures to guarantee that humanitarian assistance is provided to civilians in Gaza. In addition to Türkiye, Zambia, the Arab League, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), African Union, as well as Spain, Fiji and the Maldives delivered their statements to the World Court on Monday. The Arab League's secretary general Ahmed Aboul Gheit described the occupation "an affront to international justice" in a statement read out by a representative. It called upon the ICJ to "confirm the illegality of this occupation and unambiguously rule on the legal consequences for all parties, especially those who turn a blind eye, facilitate, assist, or participate in any way in perpetuating this illegal situation".

Briefs

Human smuggler awarded 20-year jail term

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: A court in Gujranwala on Monday awarded 20-year imprisonment to the suspect named Shahzad Elahi in a case related to Libyan boat incident that had claimed lives of over 300 Pakistani nationals. Special Judge Central-I Gujranwala Mohammad Naem Shaikh announced the verdict and impose a fine of Rs1.4 million. Accused Shahzad Elahi had received Rs2.3 million for sending the nephew of the complainant to Italy, however the victim named Ahsan Iqbal died in a Libyan boat accident. In the heartbreaking incident, more than 300 Pakistanis died. Over 100 victims were belonged to Gujranwala alone. The Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) in Gujranwala taking action against human traffickers, had arrested 814 people, including 93 of those who were suspects in the tragedy. The human traffickers first used the border routes of Afghanistan, Iran and Turkey for their illicit trade. From those countries, they made their victims to get to Turkey and onwards to Greece. Youths aspiring to migrate to Europe were enticed by traffickers who collected between Rs2.5 to Rs 3 million per person. The traffickers told the youths that they would take them first to Libya by air from where they would travel to Italy by boat. The youths were made to embark on their journey to Italy in a boat that had been filled with a number of people twice its capacity. The human traffickers had taken hundreds of millions of rupees from the youth. The tragic accident happened on June 14, and except for 12 people, all the Pakistanis who had been in the lower part of the boat went missing.

Int'l law 'under threat in Gaza': UN Chief

GENEVA: United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres said that nothing justifies collective punishment of the Palestinian people, and the comprehensive Israeli attack on the city of Rafah will put the final nail in the coffin of aid programs. In his speech during the launch of the 55th session of the United Nations Human Rights Council held today in Geneva, Guterres added that international humanitarian law is under threat in light of the killing of tens of thousands of civilians in Gaza. He called for an immediate ceasefire, explaining that the presence of UNRWA is essential there in order to distribute urgent humanitarian relief aid. The Secretary-General of the United Nations added that "the Security Council's lack of unity regarding Gaza and Ukraine has undermined its authority," pointing out that the world is moving toward multipolarity, "but without institutions, which is causing chaos." - Agencies

'Touch of Love' art exhibition
Amb. Khreasat heralds new era of Pak-Jordan cultural exchange

Suzan's artistic journey began in childhood, where she was drawn to the transformative power of art. Over the years, she has experimented with a wide range of colors and techniques, continuously pushing the boundaries of her creativity

STAFF REPORT / DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan National Council of the Arts, National Heritage and Culture Division, and The Embassy of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan inaugurated the exhibition of Suzan Alsaid's latest collection titled "Touch of Love" The exhibition was inaugurated by the Ambassador of Jordan Dr. Maen Khreasat, The Embassy of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan at the Pakistan National Council of the Arts, National Art Gallery, Gallery # 6 in Islamabad, Pakistan on 26th February, 2024. Dr. Maen Khreasat, Ambassador of Jordan, hailed the historic moment as he addressed attendees at the unveiling of a painting exhibition featuring the remarkable works of Jordanian artist Mrs. Suzan Alsaid Alosaily in Pakistan. Expressing gratitude to the Pakistan National Council of Arts (PNCA) for their invaluable support, Dr. Khreasat emphasized the significance of such collaborations in strengthening the bond between nations. He highlighted the exhibition as a testament to the enduring cultural ties between Jordan and Pakistan, transcending mere diplomatic relations. The ambassador conveyed optimism for future collaborations, envisioning the exhibition as a precursor to deeper cultural exchanges between the two countries. He encouraged attendees to immerse themselves in the vibrant display, finding inspiration and fostering a sense of unity through art. With the inauguration marking a pivotal moment in cultural diplomacy, Dr. Khreasat expressed eagerness for further initiatives that would continue to bridge the gap between Jordan and Pakistan, fostering mutual understanding and appreciation. Suzan, a prolific visual artist from Jordan, is set to captivate audiences with her diverse collection of paintings at the PNCA, Art Gallery. The exhibition, titled "Touch of Love" will be a celebration of Suzan's lifelong dedication to art and her unique ability to fuse abstract drawing, portraits, and Islamic patterns into a harmonious expression of creativity. Suzan's artistic journey began in childhood, where she was drawn to the transformative power of art. Over the years, she has experimented with a wide range of colors and techniques, continuously pushing the boundaries of her creativity. Her work is a testament to her deep appreciation for art's ability to convey emotions and ideas that words often fail to express. "I believe in the power of art to inspire, provoke thought, and bring people together," says Suzan. "Through my work, I strive to make a positive contribution to society." Suzan's commitment to using art as a tool for social good is evident in her volunteer work with children and adults. She has dedicated herself to sharing her knowledge and passion for visual arts, conducting



workshops and training sessions to encourage others to explore their creative potential. Her solo exhibition at National Art Gallery is a culmination of years of dedication and hard work. The 33 paintings on display showcase different art forms, each telling a unique story and inviting viewers to embark on a journey of self-discovery and reflection. "We are thrilled to host Suzan's exhibition at the National Art Gallery, Islamabad," says Mariam Ahmed, Director Visual Arts Division, PNCA. "Her art is a testament to the power of creativity and the universal language of emotions." Suzan's "Touch of Love" exhibition will run from 26th February at the PNCA, National Art Gallery, Islamabad. The gallery is closed on Saturday. Open daily from 10 am till 4 pm, and the public are invited to experience the beauty and creativity of Suzan's work.

Pak Navy demonstrated combat readiness

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: Pakistan Navy (PN) Monday carried out Live Weapon Firing (LWF) in the Arabian Sea to demonstrate its combat readiness and warfighting capabilities, the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) said in a press release. During the firepower demonstration, attended by Commander Pakistan Fleet, Vice Admiral Muhammad Faisal Abbasi, the navy's FM-90B Surface to Air Missile successfully destroyed the aerial drone target reaffirming PN's combat potential, the military's media wing added.



"The exercise was conducted to validate PN's operational plans and assess war preparedness," the ISPR noted. Commending the PN officers for their professionalism on the occasion of the weapon's firing, conducted on the culmination of the sea phase of PN's maritime exercise SEA SPARK-2024, Chief Guest Vice Admiral Abbasi reiterated PN's resolve to ensure the seaward defence of Pakistan and safeguard national maritime interests at all costs. The navy's exercise comes as all three branches of the country's armed forces, including the Pakistan Army and Pakistan Air Force (PAF), regularly carry out various training exercises to ensure combat preparedness to safeguard the country's sovereignty. A day earlier, the opening ceremony of the 7th International Pakistan Army Team Spirit (PATS) Exercise-2024 was held at the National Counter-Terrorism Centre (NCTC) in Pabbi, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP). The Pakistan Army Team Spirit is a mission-specific and task-oriented professional military exercise organised annually in Pakistan. The exercise calls for the highest standard of physical fitness, mental agility/robustness, and professional military expertise for quick decision-making in varied situations during the conduct of challenging missions in a near real environment. A total of 20 friendly countries including military observers are participating in the event. Major participants include Pakistan, Bahrain, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Maldives, Morocco, Qatar, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Turkiye, United States of America and Uzbekistan while Azerbaijan, Belarus, China, Myanmar, Germany, Indonesia, Japan and Oman will witness the exercise as military observers.

Form 45 proof of party's success: Haleem Adil

PTI Sindh president thanks Sunni Ittehad Council for supporting party in difficult times

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: PTI Sindh President Haleem Adil Sheikh said on Monday that the people voted for the PTI, and the party-backed candidates were the real winners of the February 8 elections as per Form-45s. Addressing a large crowd at the Karachi Press Club, Sheikh flanked by Khurram Sher Zaman and other PTI leaders, said "the voters of Karachi elected us!" He added that "our Form-45s were an undeniable proof of it" as he blamed the returning officers (ROs) for changing them illegally. Referring to the Supreme Court's order that upheld the ECP's decision to strip the party of its electoral symbol, the PTI leader said that our symbol 'the cricket bat' was snatched from us. "The party's candidates were then allotted strange symbols, and cellular and internet services were also shut down on the polling day, but even then the people came out in huge numbers and voted for the PTI," he added. "The nation gave its verdict in the PTI's favour," said Haleem Adil. The PTI leader claimed that the party won 183 seats from across the country, including 20 from Karachi and two from Hyderabad, with a complete record of Form-45s. Similarly, he added, "We won 38 Sindh Assembly seats. We will approach the courts and take back our snatched mandate." "We knocked on the high court's doors, and they sent our petitions to the ECP, which later rejected our pleas and referred them to the tribunals. Maybe not today, but tomorrow the Captain - party's founding chairman and former premier Imran Khan - will return," he believed. The PTI leader, who was recently released from jail after months of incarceration, complained of being imprisoned "in a death cell". "The current poll rigging is the worst ever in the last 75 years of the country," the political leader decried. Haleem announced starting a drive soon in Karachi to thank the party's voters and predicted the new government to hardly last five months. "The prime minister's chair is a hot seat, and it would burn whoever sits on it," he said. Haleem concluded by thanking the Sunni Ittehad Council (SIC) for supporting the PTI and allowing the party's successful candidates to join its ranks to be able to function as a party in parliament. "We want progress and prosperity for the country," he said, adding that, "We have always welcomed the IMF, and the lending firm can play a major role in rectifying the election process."

US airman dies after setting himself on fire outside the Israeli embassy

The unnamed man had filmed himself shouting "Free Palestine" as he lit himself on fire, according to footage shared on social Centreline Report

WASHINGTON: A US airman has died after setting himself on fire outside the Israeli embassy in Washington at the weekend in protest over the assault in Gaza, the Air Force said on Monday. The shocking act was an escalation of recent protests across the United States against Israel's actions in Gaza. Emergency responders on Sunday had rushed to the scene in response to a "call for person on fire outside the Israeli Embassy," the capital city's fire department. The unnamed man had filmed himself shouting "Free Palestine" as he lit himself on fire, according to footage shared on social media. He was transported to hospital with "critical life-threatening injuries," the fire department said, and an Air Force spokeswoman said Monday morning he had died on Sunday night. A spokesperson for the Israeli embassy said no staff were injured. In the video, the man wearing military fatigues and declaring he will "not be complicit in genocide" before dousing himself in liquid, lighting himself on fire and yelling "Free Palestine!" until he collapses. The video was reportedly first shared in a livestream on the social platform Twitch.

Domestic and international pressure: With the death toll in Gaza nearing 30,000, according to the health ministry in the Palestinian enclave, international pressure has been increasing on the United States to rein in ally Israel and call for a ceasefire. The conflict broke out after Hamas launched the October 7 attack which killed 1,160 people in Israel, mostly civilians, according to an AFP tally of official figures. Hamas also took about 250 hostages, 130 of whom remain in Gaza, including 31 presumed dead, according to Israel. Washington last week blocked a UN Security Council resolution calling for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza, its third such use of its veto on the matter. Some voters in Joe Biden's Democratic Party are attempting to press the president on the issue, with groups of Arab American voters in Michigan pledging to vote "uncommitted" or write in "Free Palestine" on their ballots in the state's primary on Tuesday. The White House has tried to assuage Arab and Muslim voters' concerns in part by portraying the president as frustrated with Benjamin Netanyahu's government. But US weapons have flowed to Israel since October 7, while Washington's efforts to broker a second pause in fighting have so far failed. In an update on ongoing multinational talks on Sunday, the United States said an "understanding" had emerged on a possible deal for Hamas to release hostages and for a new ceasefire in the Gaza conflict.

FEBRUARY 2024

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