



# Islamabad POST

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Pakistan's Credible Daily Newspaper

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**Use profits from frozen Russian assets to arm Ukraine, says EU Chief**

Detailed News On Page-07

**Haniyeh urges Palestinians to break Aqsa siege**

Detailed News On Page-08

**Zverev crashes out of Mexico Open 2024**

Detailed News On Page-06



## After Commissioner leaks... Leaked audios an attempt to put pressure on MQM

The MQM is reportedly seeking control over six crucial ministries at the federal level, including the governorship of Sindh. However, negotiations with the PML N have hit a roadblock, as the latter is willing to allocate only three ministries to the MQM

ANSAR MAHMOOD BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad is currently grappling with the fallout from a series of leaked audios that have significantly intensified the already charged political atmosphere. The MQM finds itself in a precarious position, acknowledging the authenticity of the audios on one hand, while vehemently denouncing them as a conspiracy against the party on the other. At first glance, the leaked audios seem to be a calculated effort aimed at exerting pressure on the MQM. The objective appears to coerce the party into acquiescing to a specific share in the federal cabinet. This revelation has injected a new level of complexity into the political dynamics, as stakeholders weigh the implications and motivations behind the leaked materials. The political landscape, already marked by heightened tensions and fragmentation, now faces the challenge of navigating through the aftermath of these revelations. The MQM's response, oscillating between acknowledgment and dismissal, further adds to the intrigue surrounding the incident. As the public and political circles grapple with the implications, a thorough investigation into the origin and context of the leaked audios is imperative to ascertain the veracity of the claims and the potential impact on the political landscape in Islamabad. The MQM is reportedly seeking control over six crucial ministries at the federal level, including the governorship of Sindh. However, negotiations with the PML N have hit a roadblock, as the latter is willing to allocate only three ministries to the MQM. The negotiations became even more challenging, leading to heightened pressure on the MQM, when audio and video leaks surfaced during the talks. These leaks have added an additional layer of complexity to the discussions, making it more challenging for the MQM to navigate

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**Speaker summons NA session**  
PM grants approval for session under Article 91(2) of Constitution, says NA secretariat notification

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: The National Assembly Secretariat has convened the inaugural session of the lower house of Parliament at 10am on Thursday (today). In a notification issued by NA Secretary Tahir Husain, it was disclosed that Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaarul Haq Kakar has granted approval for the session under Article 91(2) of the Constitution. The decision follows consultations with the Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs and the Ministry of Law. On Monday President Dr Arif Alvi returned a caretaker government's summary for convening the inaugural session of the National Assembly, prompting Speaker Raja Pervaiz Ashraf to call the maiden sitting of the lower house of parliament on February 29. Alvi, whose presidency is coming to a conclusion within a few weeks, emphasised that he would only approve the summary if the issue of reserved seats for women and minorities was resolved and distributed among the parties, as per law.

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## Army Chief lauds heroics of ASP Shehrbano

DNA

RAWALPINDI: Assistant Superintendent of Police Syeda Shehrbano Naqvi called on General Syed Asim Munir, NI (M), Chief of Army Staff (COAS) at General Headquarters, today. COAS lauded ASP Shehrbano for her selfless devotion to duty and professionalism in diffusing a volatile situation. The fearless officer extricated a woman from the difficult milieu of Ichra Bazaar in Lahore on 26 February 2024. COAS acknowledged the vital role Pakistani women are playing in all walks of life. Since independence, Pakistani women have distinguished themselves at home and abroad, by virtue of their talent, tenacity and commitment. COAS highlighted that the women are an invaluable part of Pakistan's society and their respect is enshrined in our religion as well as our social ethos. COAS also underscored the importance of social harmony and the need for nationwide consensus on curbing intolerance. He emphasized upon the rule of law and advised against taking the law in one's hands

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**ECP dismisses Nawaz's plea**  
Nawaz Sharif's lawyer termed the election "unconstitutional, illegal"

SAID ALAM KHAN

MANSEHRA: The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) on Wednesday rejected Nawaz Sharif's plea challenging the election victory of PTI-backed candidate from NA-15 Manshehra. A two-member bench of the ECP, headed by Sindh member Nisar Durrani, conducted the hearing. "The petitioner may approach the Election Tribunal," the verdict read. The ECP also ordered the Returning Officer RO to complete the results in three days. Nawaz Sharif's lawyer termed the election "unconstitutional, illegal, and against election rules". During previous hearing, Javed Jadoon counsel of Nawaz Sharif maintained that they have not received Form 45s from 123 voting stations, despite having received a copy of the returning officer's (RO) response on Monday evening. The counsel of Nawaz Sharif added that the ballot boxes were not sealed, adding that the poll in the constituency was 'rigged'.

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RAWALPINDI: Assistant Superintendent of Police Syeda Shehrbano Naqvi called on General Syed Asim Munir, NI (M), Chief of Army Staff (COAS) at General Headquarters. - DNA

## Imran writes letter IMF asked to focus 'political stability'

"We, therefore, call upon the IMF to give effect to the guidelines adopted by it with respect to good governance, read the letter

KHAYYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: the PTI released a letter addressed to IMF Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva. In the letter, PTI spokesperson Raof Hasan said February 8 general elections were subjected to "widespread intervention and fraud in the counting of votes and compilation of results". "In view of the policies and principles the IMF stands for, there should be no doubt that the abuse of power by a small number of holders of public office to impose their likes and dislikes on Pakistan's populace as aforesaid, and thus to ensure their continuing personal gain, would not be promoted or upheld by the IMF," Imran-led party alleged. Moreover, it said not just the PTI, but several other political parties in Pakistan, along with several western governments, Commonwealth observers, local civil society organisations, and international print and electronic media, have called for an independent probe into claims of intervention and electoral fraud. "We, therefore, call upon the IMF to give effect to

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## ECP reserves verdict on SIC's plea

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) reserved on Wednesday the verdict on the petitions filed by the Sunni Ittihad Council (SIC) seeking the allocation of women and minority seats. A five-member bench, chaired by Chief Election Commissioner Sikandar Sultan Raja, conducted the hearing today. The electoral body took up the plea after President Alvi refused to sign a Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs summary seeking the convening of a National Assembly session. President Alvi maintained that the remaining reserved seats should be allocated before summoning the

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## Briefs

### China 'rolls over' \$2 bln loan to Pak

Pakistan has borrowed \$2 billion from China on 7.1% interest rate

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: In a major development, China has rolled over a \$2 billion debt to Pakistan, citing Ministry of Finance sources reported a private news channel. Pakistan has borrowed \$2 billion from China on a 7.1% interest rate, the sources said, adding that the loan was maturing in the week of March. The sources said Pakistan paid Rs26.6 billion in the last fiscal year to China, Saudi Arabia, and UAE on the \$9 billion deposits that these three nations placed with the State Bank of Pakistan. The rollover will support SBP depleting foreign reserves which stand at \$8 billion.

### LHC rejects Salman Raja's contempt plea

Salman Akram Raja had alleged that RO Kamran Afzal was involved in rigging

ABBAS HASHMI

LAHORE: The Lahore High Court on Wednesday rejected a contempt of court petition filed by an PTI-backed candidate Salman Akram Raja against the NA-128 returning officer. LHC's Justice Ali Baqir Najfi announced the judgment which was reserved earlier. In his petition, Salman Akram Raja had alleged that RO Kamran Afzal was involved in rigging in NA-128 during general elections 2024. It is pertinent to mention here that according to ECP results, IPP candidate Awn Chaudhry with the support of PML-N secured victory in NA-128 Lahore with 172,576 votes, against PTI backed independent candidate.

## Pak-Afghan detente

### Afghan soil poses no threat to any country Taliban deputy Prime Minister meets Pakistani religious leaders

NEWS DESK

KABUL: Taliban Deputy Prime Minister for Political Affairs Maulvi Abdul Kabir has said that the Afghan soil will not pose a threat to any country, it emerged on Wednesday. He passed these remarks during a meeting with Maulana Hamidul Haq - the chief of Jamiat Ulema-i-Islam-Sami (JUIS) - in Kabul, according to Maulvi Kabir's office. The JUIS leader led a delegation of Pakistani religious scholars on a five-day visit to Afghanistan. Haq, son of Maulana Sami-ul-Haq, is the deputy head of Darul Uloom Haqqania in Akora Khattak, where several Afghan Taliban leaders have studied. JUIS leader Israr Madni, who was a member of the delegation and heads the International Research Council for Religious Affairs, said the visit to the neighbouring country concluded today. He added that the visit was part of "religious diplomacy" which was welcomed by the Afghan side. During the meeting with the Pakistani delegation, Maulvi Kabir termed the role of

scholars in improving relations between the two countries as "very important", a statement issued by his office said. "Complete peace has been established in Afghanistan and no one is permitted to carry out subversive activities," it quoted the Afghan deputy prime minister as telling the Pakistani delegation. "Islamic Emirate wants good relations with all neighbours and does not allow anyone to pose a threat to any country from Afghan soil," he added. Separately, JUIS chief Hamidul Haq told a Pakistani news channel that visits by religious scholars to Afghanistan helped remove the mistrust between the neighbouring countries. "We told Afghan leaders that these visits will resolve difficulties in bilateral relations," the JUIS leader said, adding that his delegation invited Afghan officials and scholars to visit Pakistan. Meanwhile, the Afghan government's statement quoted Haq as saying that he was happy at the establishment of the Islamic system in Kabul. "Pakistani religious

Continued on Page 06

## Nawaz says next '1.5 to 2 years will be difficult'

PML-N supremo officially declares Shehbaz as PM candidate; Sadiq to run for speaker election

ABID RAZA

LAHORE: Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PML-N) supremo Nawaz Sharif has expressed hope that Pakistan will come out of difficulties in the next two years by taking difficult decisions as his party is all set to form a coalition government in the Centre. "I believe the next 1.5 or 2 years will be difficult but we have to stay united [during the difficult times] and face our opponents," he said while addressing the parliamentary party meeting on Wednesday. "Pakistan will come out of the difficulties in the next 1.5 to 2 years," he added. The three-time former premier said Pakistan is "badly injured" and the difficult decisions were the need of the hour to resolve the country's woes. He said the upcoming government will have to provide relief to the masses by bringing down inflation and food prices and stabilising local currency value against the US dollar.

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## Bajwa, Faiz behind FATF legislation: Asif

ADIL SHAHEEN

ISLAMABAD: Former defence minister and PML-N leader Khawaja Asif on Wednesday alleged that former army chief Qamar Javed Bajwa and ex-spy-master Faiz Hameed used to get legislation done from them. Speaking to journalists at Parliament House, the PML-N MNA-elect emphasised the importance of maintaining harmony with institutions and stressed the need for constructive dialogue to address the country's challenges. Khawaja Asif pointed out that all stakeholders, not only politician, must work together for political stability. He urged the power structure to collaboratively address issues,

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Tribal elders praise Pakistan Army anti-terror efforts

Corps Commander Peshawar reiterates army's steadfast commitment to welfare of tribal communities

SHAMIM SHAIHD

PESHAWAR: Utmanzai tribal elders from North Waziristan convened a meeting with Corps Commander Peshawar, Lieutenant General Sardar Hassan Azhar Hayat, expressing profound appreciation for the unwavering dedication of the Pakistan Army in combating terrorism.

the significant value the tribal populace places on these sacrifices, underscoring the pivotal role of the military in ensuring regional security. Lt Gen Hayat reiterated the Pakistan Army's steadfast commitment to the welfare of tribal communities.

ement. Concrete measures are being taken to facilitate increased representation of youth in various sectors, particularly in mineral exploitation and education provision, he added. Expressing gratitude for the unwavering support of the tribal populace, Lt Gen Hayat commended their resilience and solidarity in standing alongside the Pakistan Army throughout the anti-terrorism campaign.



ISLAMABAD: Speaker National Assembly Raja Pervez Ashraf inauguration of Yadgar-e-Dastoor monument on a green belt along Constitution Avenue in the Federal Capital. —ONLINE

NO political activities holy sites: Fatwa

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Ulema Council (PUC) and Dar-ul-Ifta Pakistan on Wednesday jointly issued a religious decree (Fatwa) strictly prohibiting political activism, sloganeering, and hoisting of banners or flags, in any form, at the holy sites of Makkah and Madina.

CDA taking steps to make Islamabad more green

ADIL SHAHEEN

ISLAMABAD: Capital Development Authority (CDA), Environment Wing took several steps to eliminate environmental pollution to make the city more beautiful and green.

Capital Development Authority (CDA), Environment Wing took several steps to eliminate environmental pollution to make the city more beautiful and green.

work on several projects to meet the water shortage in the city of Islamabad. So that the citizens can be provided with uninterrupted water and they do not have to face any kind of difficulties.

Court Notice

In the Court of Medium Rabia Tareef Civil Judge Gujrat Title: Tanveer Ahmad Late etc. Verdict: Razia Begum Late etc. Notice to: 2B-Tajamal Hussain S/o. Ghulam Hussain R/o. Mohallah Qasim Pura Gujrat, 17-Saeed Ghani S/o. Muhammad Sadeeq Butt Late through, 18-Muhammad Saleem Butt S/o. Muhammad Sadeeq Butt Late through, 18A-Naila Saleem widow, 18B-Kaninat Saleem Daughter, 18C-Abdullah Saleem Butt, 18D-Imran Saleem Butt, 18E-Muhammad Saleem Butt Sons Muhammad Saleem Butt Late, 19-Muhammad Shehzad Butt S/o. Muhammad Sadeeq Butt R/o. Mohallah Qasim Pura Tehsil & District Gujrat. Suit for Separation of Land

BISE to arrange special chairs for left handed candidates

MULTAN: The Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education (BISE) in Multan will provide special chairs for left-handed candidates and improve seating arrangements overall for students taking the Secondary School Certificate (SSC) examination.

Jamal Shah visits USB, reviews literary activities

ABID RAZA

LAHORE: Caretaker Federal Minister for National Heritage and Culture Syed Jamal Shah paid a visit to the Urdu Science Board (USB) here on Wednesday.

formance, literary activities and future plans. Zia Ullah Khan Toru said under the guidance of the federal minister, secretary and director general National Language Promotion Department took steps to enhance the institution's position and address challenges.

of furthering the publication of quality books. He expressed the need to encourage the younger generation to contribute to literature in their native languages.

Deception, manipulation cost Rs 567 billion loss, says Report

The IBC said that lack of a clear strategy on tobacco taxation and the undue influence of the cigarette industry have been identified as key contributors to this economic setback



DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan needs a clear strategy for

employing tobacco taxation as a tool to protect public health and boost revenue and absence of a clear strategy results in a loss of Rs 567 billion in past seven years.

public health over industry interests, recognizing the health and economic burden of tobacco consumption, the policy paper recommended.

WaterAid unveils key health study on WASH

WaterAid's latest Health Study marking a significant step towards addressing critical public health challenges

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan - WaterAid's latest Health Study, "Determining the Health Cost of Inadequate Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene in Pakistan," was unveiled in Islamabad today, marking a significant step towards addressing critical public health challenges.

households bearing the brunt of the burden. Esteemed guests, including Professor Dr. Meher Taj Roghani, Member of Senate Standing Committee on National Health Services, Regulations, Pakistan emphasised the urgency of addressing the nexus between health and WASH.

panel discussion featured experts such as Dr. Masood Jozgezi, Technical Consultant, Ministry of National Health Services Regulations and Coordination; Itsuro Takahashi, WASH Manager, UNICEF; Dr. Shahzeb Mirza, Assistant Director, M&E, Health Department, Govt of Sindh; and Dr. Abid Qaiyum Suleri,

Executive Director, SDPI. Muhammad Fazal, Head of Program Strategy and Policy at WaterAid, emphasised that recent research studies have highlighted that poor WASH is one of the major causes of morbidity and mortalities in Pakistan that requires all of us to take collective actions to ensure access to safe WASH for better health and nutrition of people of Pakistan.



Led by Dr. Abid Aman Burki from Lahore University of Management Sciences (LUMS), the study sheds light on the economic burden of illnesses such as malaria, diarrhea, and typhoid due to inadequate access to Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH) facilities. Key findings underscore a staggering household cost of PKR 116.13 billion, with lower-income

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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 &amp; Restaurants



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



Turkish Airlines.....8494949
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## Emergency

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Bomb Disposal.....15
Fire Services Rawalpindi/ Islamabad.....1122 & 16
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Motorway Police.....9266044
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## Hospitals

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RGH.....9290301-7
Holy Family.....9290322-7
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Shifa International 4603666



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Met Office.....9250360-6
RDA.....5555864
TMA.....5770886
Cantonment Board 9270151-3

## Water Tank

Islamabad.....0321-5744480
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## ICCI demands ease of doing business for retail sector

Abdul Rahim, President, Swat Traders Federation said that the opening of D.Watson Superstore in Swat is a positive development and assured that the traders of Swat would fully cooperate with its management

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: Saqib Raza Aslam, Commissioner Malakand lauded the D. Watson Group for opening its new superstore in Swat and hoped that it would provide a good shopping experience to the consumers, create jobs in the area, and make a useful contribution to the local economy. He said this while addressing as Chief Guest the grand opening ceremony of D. Watson Superstore in Swat. Commissioner Malakand said that Swat is a very friendly trading center and the people of the area warmly welcome the tourists. He said that the opening of D.Watson Super Store will not only be beneficial to the consumers of the area, but it would also provide a good shopping experience to the tourists. He said that the Malakand administration has always supported investors and it would also fully cooperate with D.Watson Group in promoting business activities in the area.

Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari, President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) said that the retail sector is the third largest sector of the economy after agriculture and manufacturing, contributing 20 percent to the GDP and the second highest employer of the labor force, but is facing many challenges. He stressed that the government should promote ease of doing business for the retail sector to facilitate its better growth and revive the economy. He said that infrastructure limitations, regulatory issues, economic fluctuations, and unstable environment



were the major challenges for the retail sector and emphasized that the incoming government should address these challenges on a priority basis to create a conducive environment for the retail sector.

Zafar Bakhtawari, former President ICCI and Chairman, D.Watson Group said that D. Watson is already running its chain of stores in Islamabad and Punjab and the opening of its superstore in Swat is another great step towards its journey of growth and expansion. He said that D. Watson

is providing quality products to its customers and hoped that its opening in Swat would start a new trend of quality shopping experience for the consumers of the area. Waqar Bakhtawari, President, Chakwal Chamber of Commerce and host of D.Watson Superstore Swat said that providing great shopping experiences to customers is a priority of his business and added that the opening of D.Watson branch in Swat would prove to be a great gift to the people of the area.

Abdul Rahim, President, Swat Traders Federation said that the opening of D.Watson Superstore

in Swat is a positive development and assured that the traders of Swat would fully cooperate with its management.

Faaz Waheed Senior Vice President ICCI, Khalid Iqbal Malik Group Leader ICCI, Ahmed Khan Group Leader Swat Chamber of Commerce, Abdul Raheem President Swat Traders Federation, Zahid Khan President Swat Hotels Association, Zahid Maqbool former President ICCI, Khawaja Arif and others also spoke on the occasion and congratulated D.Watson Group for opening its store in Swat. Rahat Ali Khan President

Swat Chamber of Commerce, former Presidents Swat Chamber of Commerce Ahmed Khan, Adnan Ali, Yousaf Ali, FPCCI Coordinator for KP Akbar Khan, Bakhti Karam, Khalid Khan, Ali Muhammad, Ali Sher Mian, M. Usman, Raja Muhammad Imtiaz, Ameer Hamza, Khalid Chaudhry, Asad Aziz, Mehboob Ahmad Khan, Irfan Choudhry, Raja Fiyaz Gull, Zahid Qurashi, Nasir Choudhry, Saif ur Rehman Khan, Baber Choudhry, Yousaf Rajput, Zareef Ahmed Khan, Nadeem Malik and others were present on the occasion.

## Plans to promote renewable energy must: Experts

DNA

ISLAMABAD (28 February 2024): Pakistan's ambitious renewable energy plans need to be coupled with close attention on addressing system's constraints to reduce the volume of unserved energy on the one hand, and accommodate the intermittency of renewable energy on the other. This was the consensus evolved at a webinar titled, 'Emerging trends in Pakistan's renewable energy sector: charting the agenda for 2030 and beyond', was organized by Sustainable Development Policy Institute here.

Highlighting the current challenges being faced by the power sector and the milestones which need to be crossed to achieve a stable and sustainable energy ecosystem, speakers said that the addition of renewable energy is non-negotiable in today's climate but this should be coupled with modernization of the grid. Sadia Dada, Chief Marketing and Communications Officer at K-Electric,

shared an overview of KE's Investment Plan which had already been submitted with the regulator and outlines the company's plans to expand the utility's transmission and distribution capacity readying it to take on approximately 1200 MW of renewable energy by FY 2030 as envisaged under the utility's Power Acquisition Programme (PAP). She maintained that these programmes are being made in alignment with national targets under the Indicative Generation Capacity Expansion Plan (IGCEP) and entail a long-term, optimal cost strategy plan for the expansion of power generation within a set of prevailing policies and technical and socio-economic considerations. "In the next seven years, we aim to reduce our reliance on imported fuels to 51% while increasing our dependence on green sources to 49%. We must look at our approach in a holistic manner because our priority is to maintain energy security for our customers. We've seen that climate change is impacting countries which were previously relying heavily on renewable

energy, making it difficult to maintain grid stability." She said cities like Karachi also present a unique case study, where we see power demands peaking twice in a 24-hour period, which requires a case-specific approach". Dr Irfan Ahmed, Energy Consultant, was of the view that renewable energy projects are front-loaded and require upfront heavy investments. He said that to deal with this issue Pakistan needed to be 'self-reliant' and would have to eventually go for local manufacturing as the country has foreign exchange constraints. He maintained that Pakistan's electrical network is 'bumpy' and this leads to frequent damages to electrical plants and revenue loss, therefore, it is of paramount importance that we can repair the non-operational plants locally and produce spare parts for their sustainable operations otherwise we would continue to face these problems. Dr Khalid Waleed, SDPI Research Fellow said that the country's transition to renewable energy should be gradual and orderly so that it would not

create more problems for the energy ecosystem. He further emphasized the need for creating a conducive environment and explore distribution generation models so that the balance between load and generation centers might be bridged effectively. This requires national dialogues to shore up investor confidence on transmission and distribution projects, he added. Fozan Waheed, Renewable Energy Expert, spoke about how sudden curtailments in wind power projects jeopardize the grid and make it prone to blackouts. Citing international examples, he mentioned that China invests up to USD 75 billion in their grid to ensure long-term energy security as well. He further said the sustainability and success of Pakistan's energy sector rests in its ability to learn from the best practices of leaders in the energy space, introspect on the available resources and knowledge pool, and prepare a forward-looking strategy that incorporates these elements to address the country's specific needs.

## AIOU hold Int'l moot on research and practices in education

ISLAMABAD: A two-day 7th International Conference on Research and Practices in Education with the theme "Transforming Education: Empowering Learning for Life" started yesterday at Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU). Chairman, of Akhuwat Foundation, Dr. Amjad Saqib was the chief guest at the opening session while Dr. Kiichi Oyasu, from Tokyo Healthcare University, Japan, and Dr. Fatima Rehan Dar from Karachi were the keynote speakers of the inaugural session. A large number of scholars from different universities of Pakistan were present at the session while foreign scholars joined the session online. Dr. Amjad Saqib said that the beauty of the universe is hidden in knowledge and that knowledge is useless which does not help us to explore hidden things around us. He emphasized the need to expand the canvas of thinking. Dr. Amjad Saqib explained in detail the factors and attributes of knowledge, practice, sincerity, and intangibility for research. Dr. Saqib said that making the universe beautiful should be the focus of our research. He stressed the need for collaboration in research and education. Dr. Amjad said that our attention has been drawn towards these sustainable development goals by the Holy Quran and Hadiths. Vice Chancellor, of AIOU, Prof. Dr. Nasir Mahmood said that our goal is to create an educated and skilled society. He said that 2030 is near and we have not yet achieved the sustainable development goals. To achieve these goals, we must highlight the spirit of creativity, critical thinking, collaboration, and inclusive approach in our students. Talking about climate change, Dr. Nasir said that these are big challenges that need to be addressed. He added that in these two days of the conference, scholars should discuss such topics which are useful for us and future generations to inform each other about the developments in the field of education and research. He said that this conference will pave new ways for cooperation between domestic and international universities in the field of education. Vice Chancellor announced that with the support of the Akhuwat Foundation, AIOU will provide free education to the out-of-school children in the surroundings of the Akhuwat food bank. —DNA

## SDPI, Hailey College ink MoU on research, training initiatives

ISLAMABAD: Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI) and Hailey College of Commerce, University of the Punjab have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to collaborate on joint research, knowledge sharing, and training initiatives revolving around sustainable development goals (SDGs). The MoU was signed by the Executive Director, SDPI, Dr. Abid Qaiyum Suleri and Principal of Hailey College of Commerce, Lahore Prof. Dr. Hafiz Zafar Ahmed here on Wednesday.

Speaking on the occasion, Dr. Abid Qaiyum Suleri said that SDPI and Hailey College's collaboration's tangible output could be introducing some sort of degree that can help produce professionals managing finances of social sector. Both the institutions could collaborate on joint training, certifications, conferences, workshops, and other endeavours, he said, adding that since 1996 SDPI has 30 years history of training and learning from its in house school of learning and training, he said. Prof. Dr. Hafiz Zafar Ahmed said that the College is going to initiate four MS programmes in the same subject with new inclusion of Agribusiness degree that is the first ever to be introduced in the Commerce College. The Punjab University has 120 departments and Hailey College is the largest department in terms of number of students and funding.—APP

## FJWU Chakri campus commences classes for six departments

RAWALPINDI: Fatima Jinnah Women's University (FJWU) Chakri campus has commenced classes for six departments including Biotechnology, Bioinformatics, Physics, Electronic Engineering, Law, and Commerce. According to a FJWU spokesperson, FJWU had achieved a historic milestone with the inauguration of its first women's public sector campus in the Chakri area. The campus, which had commenced classes for six departments, marks a significant leap forward in women's education and opens doors to a brighter future for the local community. She informed that Prof. Dr. Uzaira Rafique, Vice Chancellor of FJWU had expressed deep gratitude to the dedicated efforts of the faculty and staff involved in achieving the successful establishment and commencement of the classes at the new campus. Highlighting the importance of this milestone, Dr. Uzaira Rafique also emphasized the pivotal role of the Chakri Campus in shaping the future of women's education. Chakri campus would start a new era of educational opportunities for the local community.—DNA

## Unlocking 5G potential: Huawei's Li Peng highlights commercialization of 5.5G

ISLAMABAD: At the 5G beyond Growth Summit hosted by Huawei at MWC Barcelona 2024, Li Peng, Huawei's Corporate Senior Vice President and President of ICT Sales & Service, discussed the path to business success in 5G and the potential of 5.5G commercialization. The advent of 5G networks has emerged as a powerful catalyst for innovation in the global mobile industry. "5G is on the right path to business success," said Li. 5G began commercialization in 2019, and over the past five years, it has already gained 1.5 billion 5G users around the world. It took nine years for 4G to make this happen said a news release received here on Wednesday. Currently, 20% of global mobile subscribers are using 5G. These users generate 30% of all mobile traffic and contribute to 40% of mobile service revenue. Li explained, "5.5G is entering commercial use in 2024, and as 5.5G, AI, and cloud converge, carriers can unlock the potential of new applications and capabilities." He went on to say that carriers around the world should focus on high-quality networking, multi-dimensional monetization, emerging services, and generative AI to grasp these opportunities. Mobile users have proven willing to purchase experience upgrades for their mobile packages if their networks are high enough quality. The traffic generated by these users is, therefore, expected to significantly increase, allowing carriers to maximize the value of traffic. This has led to more and more carriers proposing strategic goals that include the construction of high-quality 5G networks. Operators can provide tailored solutions with new differentiated services leveraging 5G and edge to diverse industries and enterprises. Tailoring solutions to meet the specific needs of diverse industries and enterprises will help align costs with revenues. Some carriers in the Middle East, for example, have already deployed Massive MIMO networks, and the optimal experience delivered by these networks has made the 5G FWA rollout a success.—APP

FEBRUARY 2024

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## Briefs

## ANF seizes over 31 kg drugs in nine operations

RAWALPINDI: Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) while conducting nine operations across the country managed to recover over 31 kg drugs and arrested 12 accused, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman here on Wednesday. He informed 900 grams Ice was recovered from a passenger going to Doha at Peshawar Airport. He said, 580 grams Ice was recovered from two passengers going to Qatar at Lahore Airport.

In a raid at a courier office in Rawalpindi, 58 grams weed and 70 MDMA were recovered from three different parcels sent from the Netherlands and UK.

6 kg hashish and 4 kg Ice were recovered from the possession of two accused rounded up near Sher Shah Toll Plaza Multan.

The spokesman said that 4 kg opium, 3.7 kg hashish and 1 kg Ice were recovered from an accused arrested in Bahria Town, Lahore.—APP

## Cardiac diseases in youth increasing like epidemic

ISLAMABAD: Health expert Wednesday stressed public awareness for early detection and for adopting a healthy lifestyle to control cardiac diseases as reduced physical inactivity, sitting jobs, poor sleep patterns and unhealthy food habits are mostly responsible for the increasing heart diseases among youngsters.

Talking to a private news channel, a cardiologist, Dr. Gulzar Ali said that heart diseases can be eliminated by simple lifestyle modifications, adding that early screening is very important in stopping the disease from progressing and with early detection we can easily beat heart diseases. He further said chewing tobacco, and cigarettes (Paan and Gutkha) are the main factors of heart disease in younger age in Pakistan.—APP

## Solangi visits NA Secretariat

ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Federal Minister for Information, Broadcasting and Parliamentary Affairs Murtaza Solangi here on Wednesday visited the National Assembly Secretariat and the National Assembly Hall to review arrangements for the inaugural session of the newly elected National Assembly. The officials of National Assembly Secretariat briefed the minister about the arrangements for the opening session of the National Assembly. The Director General Media informed the minister that special arrangements had been made by the National Assembly Secretariat for the convenience of the newly elected members. He also informed about the registration of the members of the assembly, the preparation of necessary documents for them and the necessary rules and regulations of the National Assembly. The DG media said that special arrangements had been made for seats in the assembly hall for the newly elected members.—APP

## Every year 7 mn preterm babies risk eye disorders

Al-Shifa Trust annually saves 1500 premature babies from blindness

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The majority of premature newborns born weighing less than 1.5 kg are at a higher risk of developing retinal blood vessel disorganisation, which can result in visual issues, including lifelong blindness. The development of the baby's eyes is one of the numerous challenges faced in those first few vulnerable weeks by prematurely born babies that are born before 266 days, according to Dr. Wajid Ali Khan, chief of medical services at Al-Shifa Trust Eye Hospital. He told media representatives that the issue can be fixed with screening and surgery to help prevent major vision issues in children in the future.

He explained that an infant's eye development may be affected if delivered prematurely. The retina's blood vessels start to expand three months after conception and finish at the time of a normal birth.

The smallest and sickest are most at risk of developing Retinopathy of Prematurity (ROP), which is the primary cause of paediatric retinal blindness, he said. This is because using extra oxygen to treat premature newborns in hospitals promotes aberrant vascular growth in the eyes, and research indicates that the rate of advanced retinopathy can be lowered by maintaining a lower oxygen saturation level. He stressed that to ensure that their premature infant receives the ongoing



care of an ophthalmologist due to their increased risk of developing amblyopia, eye misalignment, and the need for glasses to develop normal vision, parents should incorporate a vision screening into their schedule between the ages

of six and twelve months. According to him, every year in Pakistan, over 900,000 kids are delivered prematurely, and 80 percent of them have vision issues.

Over 40 highly skilled eye surgeons, including some of the most experienced eye specialists in the paediatric department, work at Al-Shifa Trust Eye Hospital in Rawalpindi. With the hospital's current expansion, the paediatric department can now care for more than 500 OPD newborns per day, he informed. According to Dr. Wajid Ali Khan, we have MoUs with the administrations of the Benazir Bhutto, Combined Military, and Fuji Foundation hospitals. Under these agreements, we will provide all medical services, including screening and sur-

gery, for newborns born at these hospitals and transportation. He said that Al-Shifa is one of the few hospitals in the world and the only one in the SAARC region with the most up-to-date equipment and trained medical professionals to treat newborns with ROP. Since March 2013, Al-Shifa has screened and treated newborns, focusing on those under seven months old. In the past ten years, the trust has successfully treated almost 15,000 babies. He asserted that as awareness rises, the number will inevitably rise, and he said that with the use of teleophthalmology, we are offering free consultation to all state-owned and private health facilities, including those located abroad.

## Fertilizer production grew by 10.07 per cent in 2 quarters

ISLAMABAD: Fertilizer production in the country during the first half of the current financial year grew by 10.07 per cent as compared to the output of the corresponding period of the last year. During the period from July-December, 2023, the output of phosphate fertilizers grew by 1.12 per cent as about 382,585 metric tons of phosphate fertilizers were produced locally as compared to the output of 378,343 metric tons of the same period of last year. Meanwhile, local production of nitrogen fertilizer grew by 11.48 per cent as compared to the production of the same period of the last year, according to the data of the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics. During the period under review over 1.778 million metric tons of the nitrogen fertilizer manufactured in the country as compared to the output of 1.594 metric tons of the same period of last year. On month on month basis, the overall fertilizers output grew by 4.65 per cent in December 2023 as compared to the output of the same month of last year. During December 2023, local production of phosphate fertilizer grew by 67.89 per cent as 67,754 metric tons of the above-mentioned commodity were locally manufactured as compared to the production of 40,335 metric tons of the same month of the last year. During the period under review, tractor assembling in the country during the first two quarters of the current financial year increased by 67.21 per cent as to the output of the corresponding period of the last year. During the period from July-December, 2023 about 23,695 tractors were locally assembled as compared to the assembling of 14,171 tractors in the same period of last year. As compared to the corresponding month of the last year, tractor production in December 2023 grew by 141.43 per cent as 2,675 tractors were locally assembled as compared to the production of 1,108 tractors in the same month of the last year.—APP

## COMSTECH, Al-Shifa Trust Eye to arrange free eye camp

ISLAMABAD: COMSTECH and Al-Shifa Trust Eye Hospital Pakistan in collaboration with Al-Nur Foundation Somalia, and Benadir University Somalia, are organizing a free cataract eye surgery camp in Mogadishu, Somalia, from March 01-10. The goal of this initiative is to eliminate avoidable blindness by providing free cataract surgeries to those in need. The camp will be held at Dalmat Specialized and Teaching Hospital in Mogadishu, Somalia. According to COMSTECH, the free cataract eye surgery camp embodies its vision to prioritize healthcare accessibility and community welfare. This initiative is poised to make a significant impact on the lives of individuals in need. By offering free medical consultations, medications, eyeglasses, and surgeries to address cataract-related issues, the camp aims to alleviate the burden of visual impairment and improve the overall quality of life for participants. This initiative underscores the collective effort of COMSTECH, Al-Shifa Trust Eye Hospital Pakistan and other partners to fulfill their commitment to serving communities, particularly those underserved or marginalized, by providing essential healthcare services that empower individuals to lead healthier and more productive lives. Through such collaborative endeavours, COMSTECH continues to demonstrate its dedication to advancing healthcare accessibility and making a tangible difference in the lives of people across Pakistan. COMSTECH the Ministerial Standing Committee on Scientific and Technological Cooperation of the OIC (Organization of Islamic Cooperation) was established by the Third Islamic Summit of OIC held at Makkah, Saudi Arabia in January 1981. The core mandate of COMSTECH is to strengthen cooperation among OIC Member States in science and technology, and enhance their capabilities through training in emerging areas, undertake follow-up actions and implementation of the resolutions of the OIC, and to draw up programs and submit proposals designed to increase the capability of the Muslim countries in science and technology. The ultimate aim is to build and nourish a scientific culture in addition to using Science and Technology as a major contributor to socio-economic development and rapid industrialization.—DNA



ISLAMABAD: Hamad Obaid Alzaabi the Ambassador of UAE in Islamabad, meets Neil Hawkins, the High Commissioner of Australia, and discusses the general situation at the regional and international levels and joint work between the two brotherly countries.—DNA

## Mars BPO Pakistan's highest export remittance list

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Mars BPO, a trailblazer in the BPO landscape founded by Shoaib Akram, celebrates this significant milestone with the Annual Dinner and Award Ceremony, held graciously in Islamabad. The spectacular event recognizes the excellence of Mars BPO's top leadership, employees, and remarkable growth. Gathering momentum and prestige with each passing year since its establishment in 2013, Mars BPO has become a leading name in the country, known for exceptional achievements, world-class offices, and notable

standing. Mars BPO has a team of over 2000 dedicated professionals who have been instrumental in the company's success over the past decade. The Annual Dinner and Award Ceremony 2024 resonated with its success, further solidifying Mars BPO's reputation as a driving force behind the celebration of noteworthy accomplishments. The event was a grand success, with 600+ delegates and honored with 90+ Awardees. The event also appreciated the distinguished contributions of Mars BPO's leadership and its founding members whose invaluable contributions, hard work, and dedication made the

organization successful. This annual dinner of Mars BPO was organized to express its gratitude and appreciation for the hard work and dedication demonstrated by its employees throughout the year. As part of its commitment to employee development, Mars BPO has established a well-defined promotion track and a long-term career path, ensuring that its team members have the opportunity to grow both personally and professionally. Along with Awards and appreciation Certificates, the top performers were also awarded Car and Bikes through a fulfilled lucky draw.

## PPP forms committee

ISLAMABAD: Chairman Pakistan People's Party (PPP) Bilawal Bhutto Zardari has formed a four-member committee for persuading different political parties to vote for the party's presidential candidate, Asif Ali Zardari.

According to the notification issued here by the Chairman's Secretariat by his Political Secretary Jameel Soomro, the committee is comprised of senior leaders including Syed Yousuf Raza Gilani, Raja Parvez Sharaf, Syed Khurshid Shah, and Syed Naveed Qamar. It is pertinent to mention here that earlier during the last week, the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) and the PPP had announced Asif Ali Zardari as a joint candidate for the presidential elections. Addressing a joint press conference at Zardari House in Islamabad, PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari said that PML-N President Shehbaz Sharif will once again be the country's prime minister. Bilawal Bhutto also said that the PML-N would support his father Asif Ali Zardari for the president's slot. "Asif Zardari would be our joint candidate for president," he said, adding that they all want to work according to the hopes of the people.—APP

## Estate Office allots 46 govt accommodations in two year

ISLAMABAD: The Estate Office, Ministry of Housing and Works has allotted as many as 46 government accommodations to the federal government employees in category-II from the general waiting list under Rule-7 of AAR-2002 during the last two years. "The Estate Office has made all the allotments on merit by keeping view of the seniority of the government employees who are working in different ministries and divisions," an official in the Ministry told APP. He said that the Ministry of Housing and Works also intends to modify government accommodation allocation rules to facilitate federal government employees. The official said a proposed amendment to modify the Allocation Rules, 2002 is under consideration and will be implemented as soon as possible. He said the ministry plans to eliminate Rule 20 of Government House Allotment. This rule currently allows a government house allocated to a retired federal employee to be assigned to their employed son or daughter, he added. The official said the employees on the waiting list are of the view that the rule is based on injustice to transfer the government house from father to child on retirement as it deprives the right of senior employees who have been waiting for a long time. He said the officers and employees get their son or daughter recruited before retirement and the house is allotted to them, adding that the affected employees are demanding that the allotment of houses should be done only on the principle of seniority.—APP

## Torrential rainfall may generate flash floods


ISLAMABAD: Torrential rainfall and heavy snowfall, expected in most parts of the country from February 29 to March 2 and might generate flash floods and disrupt daily life in the vulnerable areas, Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD) said on Wednesday. Torrential rainfall and heavy snowfall with windstorm, thunderstorms and isolated hailstorm was expected in most parts of the country during the period, said a press release issued here. The torrential rain and heavy snowfall may cause landslides in upper Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Murree, Galiyat, Kashmir and Gilgit Baltistan and affect

the vulnerable points in the area. Wind-thunderstorm and hailstorm may damage loose structures like electric poles, vehicles and solar panels etc. The PMD has advised the tourists not to travel unnecessarily and farmers to remain cautious about their crops during the period. While all concerned authorities have been advised to remain alert and take necessary measures to avoid any untoward situation during the forecast period. A strong westerly wave was likely to approach western parts on February 29 and may grip most parts of the country on March 1 and persist till March 2. Under the influence of this weather

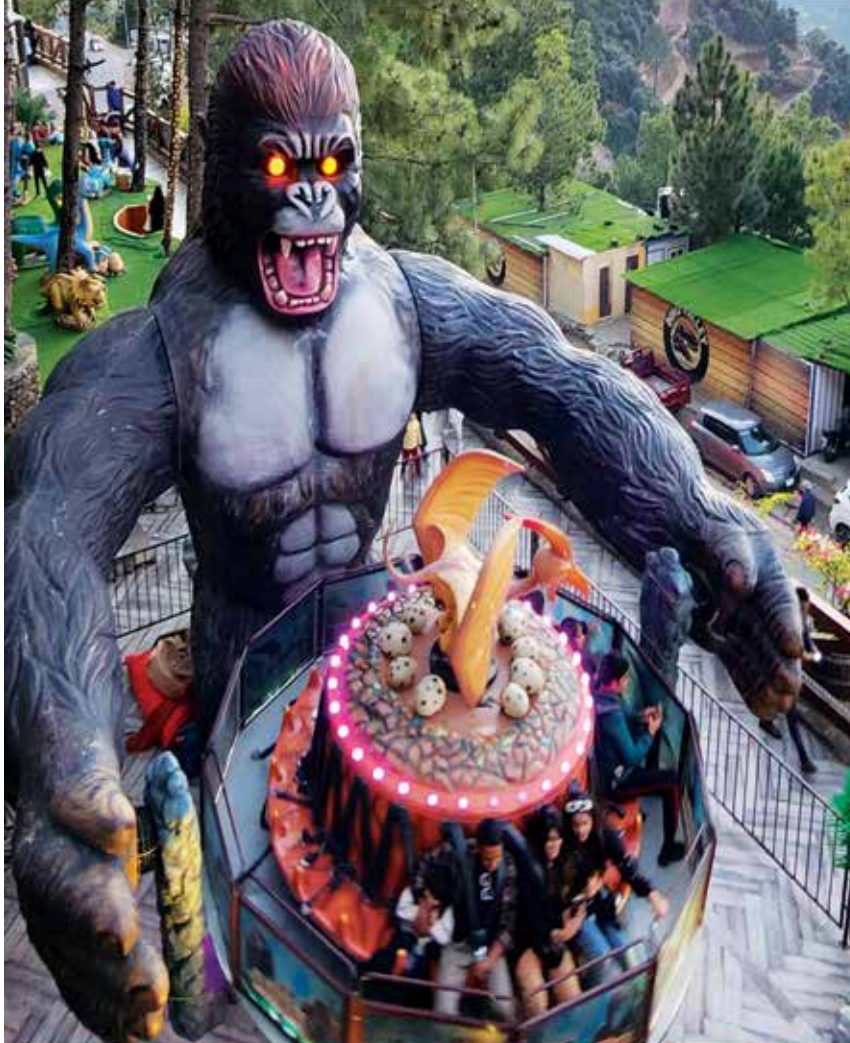
system, widespread heavy rain with windstorm and thunderstorm (snowfall over the hills) is expected in Balochistan including Nokkundi, Dalbandin, Chagi, Kalat, Khuzdar, Lasbela, Awaran, Turbat, Keach, Gwadar, Jiwani, Pasni, Ormara, Panjgur, Kharan, Noushki, Washuk, Mastung, Sibbi, Naseerabad, Zhob, Shehri, Barkhan, Musakhel, Kohlu, Jhal Magsi, Loralai, Ziarat, Quetta, Chaman, Pishin, Qila Abdullah and Qila Saifullah from February 29 to March 1. Isolated hailstorm is also likely during the period. In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, heavy to extremely heavy widespread rain with windstorm and

thunderstorm with heavy snowfall over the hills is expected in Chitral, Dir, Swat, Abbottabad, Mansehra, Haripur, Kohistan, Shangla, Buner, Bajaur, Karak, Khyber, Peshawar, Charsadda, Nowshera, Swabi, Mardan, Kurram, Waziristan, Kohat, Lakki Marwat, Bannu and Dera Ismail Khan from February 29 to March 03. Isolated hailstorm is also likely during the period. In Gilgit-Baltistan/Kashmir, heavy to extremely heavy widespread rain with windstorm, thunderstorm and snowfall is expected in Diamir, Astore, Ghizer, Skardu, Hunza, Gilgit, Ghanche, Shigar, Neelum valley, Muzaffarabad, Rawalakot,

Poonch, Hattian, Bagh, Haveli, Sudhanoti, Kotli, Bhimber, Mirpur from February 29 to March 03. Isolated hailstorm is also likely during the period. In Punjab and Islamabad, widespread heavy rain with windstorm and thunderstorm is expected in Murree, Galiyat, Islamabad, Rawalpindi, Attock, Chakwal, Jhelum, Mandi Bahauddin, Gujrat, Gujranwala, Hafizabad, Sialkot, Narowal, Lahore, Kasur, Okara, Faisalabad, Toba Tek Singh, Jhang, Khushab, Sargodha, Mianwali and Bhakkar on March 1 and 2. Heavy snowfall is also expected in Murree, Galiyat and surrounding areas during the period.—DNA



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## From Corrie to Bushnell

I think it is a good idea for us all to drop everything and devote our lives to making this stop. I don't think it's an extremist thing to do anymore." (Rachel Corrie, 2003). "Compared to what people have been experiencing in Palestine at the hands of their colonizers, [this] is not extreme at all." (Aaron Bushnell, 2024). There is almost a two-decade time difference between these two sentences. However, both sentences originate from American witnesses of Israeli crimes in occupied Palestine. Rachel Corrie and Aaron Bushnell bravely sacrificed their lives in support of the Palestinian cause, denouncing their country's role in the 75-year Israeli occupation. Yet, the striking question remains: How many more activists must tragically die before the United States truly listens to its citizens? On March 16, 2003, Rachel Corrie, an American peace activist, was tragically crushed to death and killed by an Israeli armored bulldozer while peacefully protesting the demolition of Palestinian homes in Gaza. Corrie's death shook the world, surprising mainstream media, which seldom covered the Palestinian deaths and Israeli massacres. Her death was especially jarring as it involved a young American killed by the US' staunch ally, "Israel". In March 2003, US Representative Brian Baird presented a resolution in Congress urging the government to conduct a thorough and prompt investigation into Corrie's death. However, the House of Representatives did not proceed with the resolution. While the United States expressed condolences to Corrie's family, which is the bare minimum, Washington faced criticism for not taking a stronger stance, or pressing "Israel" more forcefully for accountability. Some critics argue that the US could have done more to advocate for justice on behalf of Corrie and to address human rights violations in occupied Palestine. The United States, often touted as a champion of human rights and democracy, has consistently failed to hold "Israel" accountable for its crimes. Despite mounting evidence of war crimes and human rights abuses committed by Israeli forces, the US continues to provide unwavering political and military support to the Israeli genocide. This is particularly evident today in light of the ongoing Israeli aggression on the Gaza Strip, where nearly 30,000 Palestinians have been murdered by the Israeli regime. As always, "Israel" persisted in manipulating events according to its own agenda and interests, and continues to do so to this very day. Protests, tributes, and social media posts are flooding in to commemorate Aaron Bushnell, a 25-year-old active-duty member of the United States Air Force, who set himself on fire outside the Israeli embassy in Washington, D.C., to protest the Israeli genocide in Gaza bankrolled by the US. However, President Joe Biden remained silent. The President seemed vocal to talk about how "Brave Ukrainian soldiers and civilians are dying," yet not a word was mentioned for Bushnell. This silence sparked criticism of the Biden administration's double standards, especially after Hamas, who the US designated as a "terrorist organization", blamed Biden's policies for Bushnell's death for its support and aid for the Israeli crimes in Gaza. As the so-called international community watches silently while Gaza endures a live-streamed genocide, global protests, and disruptions continue to amplify the Palestinian cause, dissent with the policies of Western governments is growing, interrupting speeches and shouting "Free Palestine" in defiance of oppression.



## New multipolar world system

Current diagnoses assert that the international system is going through a period of epoch-making changes. The tectonic plates on which the world geopolitical chessboard rests have shifted, unleashing profound modifications in the structure of the system and in the nature of its main players. This is true, but only if it is recognized that this journey has already reached a point of no return and that the trends that have been operating in recent years have matured to the point of producing an irreversible result: the configuration of a global geopolitical chessboard marked by the emergence of multiple actors endowed with different power capacities that put an end to five centuries of Western supremacy over all nations. Multipolarism has arrived and it is here to stay. This means, in practical terms, the irreparable disarray of the hegemonic order instituted since the end of World War II, and which established a sort of Pax Americana that completely failed in its voided attempts to create a more secure and stable international order. What characterized this final phase of Western dominance was an event of enormous historical significance: the beginning of the unstoppable decline of the relative power of the United States in the international system and, in parallel, the extraordinary rise of China as a world-class economic power and the resurrection of the critical role of Russia in the international scene. Carrying out this self-imposed mission requires a socially solid and politically unified domestic front that will enable the hegemonic ambition to translate into the construction of a stable hegemonic order. The United States already lacks these attributes: it is a country deeply divided politically and increasingly unequal and unjust economically. Today, none of the major players on the international scene meet these conditions. For world peace and the prosperity of our peoples, it is essential to stop this offensive against Russia and the plague of Russophobia that is spreading especially in Europe. A bled and torn apart Russia, as the collective West wants, would be a tragedy, because the crucial contribution to the stability and balance of the international system that Moscow provides would be lost. Furthermore, it would open the door to a frontal attack against China, endangering world peace, and to a brutal restoration offensive (primarily military in nature) against countries close to the United States, especially Latin America and the Caribbean. Moscow has reacted with extraordinary prudence to these provocations. Referring to the coup d'état promoted by the Obama administration in Ukraine in 2014, University of Chicago professor John Mearsheimer observed that if an analogous situation had occurred on the southern border of the United States, i.e., a coup d'état that overthrew a pro-US government in Mexico and replaced it with one decidedly adverse to the United States, US troops would have invaded Mexico within hours of such an incident. Economist Jeffrey Sachs made the same remarks a few months ago. Fortunately, Russia acted differently and went through all diplomatic channels before ordering the "special military operation" in Ukraine, but these attempts were systematically sabotaged by the United States and its European allies.

## Israel, ICJ and movement for a just world order Erin McCandless

Al Jazeera

The increasing number of state and non-state actors voicing their support for this case, and Palestinian liberation in general, is signalling the emergence of a movement for a more principled, fair and just international order. Indeed, states, regional bodies, international institutions and civil society organisations across the world are taking a stand against Israel's war on Gaza, and its Western allies' seemingly unconditional support for it. Demands are focussed on an immediate ceasefire in Gaza and a permanent and just resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict – a solution that considers the context of Israel's decades-long occupation

South Africa's genocide case against Israel at the International Court of Justice (ICJ) is shaking the foundations of the rules-based international order. The increasing number of state and non-state actors voicing their support for this case, and Palestinian liberation in general, is signalling the emergence of a movement for a more principled, fair and just international order. Indeed, states, regional bodies, international institutions and civil society organisations across the world are taking a stand against Israel's war on Gaza, and its Western allies' seemingly unconditional support for it. Demands are focussed on an immediate ceasefire in Gaza and a permanent and just resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict – a solution that considers the context of Israel's decades-long occupation of Palestinian territory and the Palestinian people's right to self-determination. In the process, the moral, institutional and legal foundations for a more just and principled rules-based order are being built – one where acts of aggression are not overlooked, and international humanitarian law applies equally to everyone. The fragility of the current rules-based order was apparent long before the attack on Gaza. With powerful permanent members routinely vetoing United Nations Security Council (UNSC) resolutions according to their national interests and preferences, the international community has been struggling to take collective action to uphold humanitarian law, protect vulnerable communities and punish rogue actors. In a system built on asymmetrical and unjust colonial foundations, where financial, political and legal institutions have inherent shortcomings, selective adherence to international law has long caused dispute among nations. The UN itself cited the double standards in the application of certain rights as a threat to global security in its New Agenda for Peace, in July 2023 – months before the beginning of the latest attack on Gaza. Israel's war on Gaza, and the world's response to it, however, have highlighted these existing shortcomings and sped up the system breakdown that was already under way. The global community's radically different response to Russia's international humanitarian law violations in Ukraine and those of Israel in Gaza made it apparent that under the current rules-based order, all human life is not valued equally. Several Western countries' swift defunding of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) on the basis of unsubstantiated Israeli claims that a handful of agency staff participated in Hamas's October 7 attack added weight to the growing criticism of the system. South Africa's case at the ICJ, which condemns Israel's war on Gaza as illegal and immoral, and suggests it amounts to genocide, has emerged as a powerful articulation of the Global South's ever-growing revolt against the hypocrisy and lack of consistency of the current rules-based order. Meanwhile, steps are also being taken at the intergovernmental level to expose the current inconsistencies in the application of international law, and achieve a new, more

just and principled rules-based order. While the US vetoes on UNSC resolutions calling for a ceasefire in Gaza are making collective action at this level impossible, the ICJ is currently considering a UN General Assembly initiative on the legal consequences of Israel's continuing occupation of Palestinian territory, requested with a majority vote in December 2022. After proceedings began earlier this month, a record 51 countries presented arguments on controversial Israeli policies in the West Bank, the Gaza Strip and occupied East Jerusalem – with only two of these (the US and Hungary) defending the legality of the occupation. It's the largest number of parties to participate in any single ICJ case since the UN's top court was established in 1945. The court's opinion, which is expected to be delivered before the end of the year, will not be binding on the Security Council or Israel. However, it could apply pressure on Israel and its staunch ally, the United States, to conform to international law. Key regional blocs have also strongly condemned current and past Israeli actions and policies as violations of international humanitarian law and are demanding justice and equality for all peoples in the international arena. The 120-member Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) has called out Israel's altering of the physical and demographic landscape of Palestine through settlement expansion and reinstated its commitment to defending its "longstanding, common and principled positions" on Palestine to end colonialism and occupation. The G77 (representing some 80 percent of the world's population) has stressed the need "to bring an end to the Israeli occupation that began in June 1967 and to address and resolve the root causes of this ongoing injustice, in accordance with international law and the relevant United Nations resolutions". The BRICS countries have also condemned Israel's actions in Gaza and called for a ceasefire. Meanwhile, the Arab League and the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) voiced their support for South Africa's genocide case against Israel at the ICJ and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) has strongly condemned Israeli aggression in Gaza, affirming its solidarity with the Palestinian people. Civil society across the world has also been making demands and voicing aspirations for a more just and principled rules-based order through protests, boycotts, legal challenges and other nonviolent actions since the beginning of Israel's war on Gaza. In the first three weeks following Hamas's October 7 attack on Israel and the consequent Israeli assault on Gaza, some 3,700 pro-Palestinian protests took place around the world – in contrast, there were just over 520 pro-Israel protests in the same period. The pro-Palestine protests have continued with increasing force since, with most participants demanding an immediate ceasefire, an end to Israeli occupation and accountability for many Western governments' unconditional support for Israel's war on Gaza. National courts have also become a venue for civil society to expose their government's complicity in Israel's war on Gaza, and the double standards

that have come to define the global order. In the US state of California, for example, Palestinian Americans launched a federal case against the Biden administration accusing it of being complicit in the Gaza genocide and demanding that it stop supporting the Israeli military. The court eventually dismissed the case as being outside its jurisdiction but still ruled that Israel's military campaign in Gaza "plausibly" amounts to genocide, and called on the leaders of the US to examine "the results of their unflagging support of the military siege against the Palestinians in Gaza". In the Netherlands, a group of NGOs including Oxfam challenged at a national court the Dutch government's decision to continue providing military aid to Israel amidst its war on Gaza, and won. The court ordered the government to stop supplying F-35 fighter jet parts to Israel, citing a "clear risk of serious violations of international law". These court cases and others like them are serving as a warning to national governments that their disregard for international law can have consequences at home. They also demonstrate civil society's determination to bring humanitarian values and principles to the forefront of international relations. In the meantime, the impact of the Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions (BDS) movement has also been growing as a form of civil resistance to Israeli occupation. Across the Arab world, and globally, academic associations, unions, churches, local city councils and private investors have begun divesting from and cut ties with Israel in support of the BDS movement's goals. The cultural boycott of Israel is also growing, with many global celebrities cancelling scheduled performances in Israel. There is also a push to keep Israel out of international cultural events, such as Eurovision. As the war on the Palestinian people, described by international law professor Richard Falk as "the most transparent genocide in all of human history", is televised, a global movement for change is being mobilised – a movement for justice and equal treatment of all peoples under international law. Tragically for Palestinians, and all of humanity, there is still significant resistance to the clear demands being made by this movement. Against the ICJ's preliminary orders to prevent genocidal acts, Israel is still conducting airstrikes and blocking the entry of humanitarian aid into Gaza. Ignoring the mounting global support for a ceasefire in Gaza, including from a majority of US voters, the Biden administration is still blocking UNSC resolutions calling for an end to hostilities. Despite the ICJ's preliminary ruling that Israel is plausibly committing genocide in Gaza, the US and a number of Western states continue to provide military, political and diplomatic support to their ally. These immense challenges do not mean that the movement for a new, more just and principled rules-based order is not going to succeed. The movement has far-reaching roots and converging long-term goals. Achieving them will likely come through a non-linear but transformative process of social change.

## Collapsing empire: 'how US broke Kosovo' Kit Klarenberg

Al Mayadeen English

The relevance of Kosovo's fate to what will inevitably befall whatever territory comprises Ukraine once Russia has completed its Special Military Operation couldn't be starker. Whenever that day comes, Kiev will be wholly reliant on US support to keep its literal lights on, reconstruct whatever isn't irrecoverable, and pay salaries of state employees and government officials. Washington already pumps tens of billions into the country for the latter purpose alone. While there is a growing sense among Ukrainians within and without the country

In an extraordinary testament to the sheer pace and scale of the US Empire's collapse, on February 15th Politico published a remarkable investigation, How the US broke Kosovo and what that means for Ukraine. In unprecedentedly forensic, candid detail, it documents how NATO violently "wrenched" the province from Yugoslavia's grasp, then forged a politically and economically dysfunctional, unsustainable "American protectorate" in Belgrade's place, while US officials and corporations corruptly profited every step of the way. The relevance of Kosovo's fate to what will inevitably befall whatever territory comprises Ukraine once Russia has completed its Special Military Operation couldn't be starker. Whenever that day comes, Kiev will be wholly reliant on US support to keep its literal lights on, reconstruct whatever isn't irrecoverable, and pay salaries of state employees and government officials. Washington already pumps tens of billions into the country for the latter purpose alone. While there is a growing sense among Ukrainians within and without the country, they have been abandoned and betrayed by their American "friends", officials in Kiev continue to talk up their alliance with Washington, while routinely pleading publicly for short- and long-term financial assistance from the Empire. Yet, as Politico observes: "For Ukraine, the task of fixing its shattered infrastructure will represent a daunting, generational challenge. For corporate America, it will be just another business opportunity. And if Kosovo is any guide, the Ukrainians should be careful what they wish for." The "liberation" of Kosovo Albanians, and creation of an "independent" state in the province - long-considered "the cradle of Serb civilisation" and "Serbia's Jerusalem" - began as a deeply personal pet project of Bill and Hillary Clinton, and longtime deep state operatives and notorious warmongers like Madeleine Albright. Their crusade was then adopted by subsequent US administrations. Accordingly, Kosovo today is laden with monuments, avenues and squares dedicated to these individuals, including Wesley Clark, who as US Supreme Allied Commander Europe oversaw NATO's criminal bombing of Yugoslavia. Such is the affinity of Kosovo Albanians for the States, star spangled banners and garish posters proclaiming, "Thank you USA!" can be found in profusion throughout Pristina. As Politico notes too, "at one point, local authorities seriously contemplated naming a lake after Donald Trump" - and "the affection is mutual." Entire generations of US officials "carry Kosovo around with pride," a Washington diplomatic source boasted to the outlet. "But should they?"

Politico bluntly enquires. The answer, unambiguously, is absolutely not. Once Pristina unilaterally declared independence in 2008 - a highly controversial move unrecognized by much of the international community, and Serbia, its constitution still categorising the province as Belgrade's sovereign territory - "American fortune hunters" started moving in en masse, employing "prominent former officials from the Clinton administration who'd had a hand in helping Kosovo liberate itself" to "grease the skids." In other words, secure lucrative contracts via dubious if not outright criminal means, for personal enrichment. An early entrant in this imperial feeding frenzy was US government-tied construction giant Bechtel, "a major player in the reconstruction of Iraq's energy sector" following the illegal 2003 Anglo-American invasion. Its mission in Kosovo - building two highways - was much more modest. Nonetheless, US officials first had to convince authorities in Kosovo, "which had a poverty rate of about 60 percent at the time," the roads were a vital necessity. In order to bolster its sales pitch, Bechtel recruited Mark Tavlirides, a member of Bill Clinton's National Security Council during the Kosovo War, and then-US Ambassador to Pristina Christopher Dell, to assist. Despite "serious reservations about the project's economic viability on the part of both the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF)," authorities greenlit the proposal in 2010, while refusing to publish the full contract, "despite pressure from civil society groups." It was nonetheless revealed the effort's final cost wasn't capped. Initially, the highways were to span just over 100 kilometers, and cost 400 million. By the time of their completion two years later, they had been shrunk to just 77 kilometers, at a cost of 1 billion. Undeterred, in 2014 Pristina handed Bechtel another major highway contract. Completed five years later at a cost of 600 million, multiple Kosovo officials involved in the deal were recently jailed for secretly overpaying the company to the tune of 53 million. Politico's investigation highlights a spectacularly egregious aspect of US "nation building" in Kosovo, largely unacknowledged or outright ignored in the mainstream over the past two-and-a-half decades. Namely, the very same officials intimately involved in Yugoslavia's destruction profited - or, at least, sought to profit - from their actions subsequently. The same is true of every other target of imperial intervention since. Politico dubs Albright "one of the icons of Kosovo's fight for freedom." As US Secretary of State 1997 - 2001, she aggressively thumped for NATO "intervention" in Yugoslavia, and re-

sultant privatisation of the country's industry and resources, which at the time of the bombing was overwhelmingly worker-owned. The 78-day-long aerial onslaught destroyed just 14 Yugoslav tanks, while decimating 372 industrial facilities, leaving hundreds of thousands jobless. The military alliance took direction from US corporations on what sites to target. Subsequently, Albright - via her personal investment firm Albright Capital Management - sought to make a mint from the wreckage. She gradually began buying up Kosovo's newly-privatised telecommunications sector, and in 2013 was on the verge of seizing a 75% stake in the formerly state-owned PTK, the province's postal and telecommunications authority. Major controversy over the deal at home and abroad eventually forced her to back out. Local celebrity not dimmed, six years later a statue of Albright was unveiled in a Pristina square named after her. Politico records how Albright's "family and colleagues remain active" in Kosovo, including her daughter Alice, who as chief executive of US government aid agency Millennium Challenge Corporation, "issues development grants" to Pristina, which then get handed back to US corporations via government contracts. Meanwhile, Wesley Clark has been attempting to profiteer in the would-be country for over a decade. He is reportedly "unapologetic about his efforts to reap financial benefit from his reputation as one of Kosovo's saviors." Despite that "reputation", Clark has been unsuccessful. In 2012, as chair of Canada-based Envidity Energy, he began vying for rights to Kosovo's copious lignite coal reserves, the fifth largest in the world, promising an investment of \$8 billion. The next year, Pristina conveniently tore up laws "designed to prevent foreign investors from exploiting the country's mineral wealth in a way that didn't serve Kosovo's interests," granting Envidity a licence to dig for coal throughout the province, without public tender. A scathing 2016 UN Development Program report put an end to Clark's "Kosovo dream", expressing concern that Envidity's project would've been completely illegal were it not for the scrapped legislation, there was a high risk of bribery and corruption if it went ahead, and Kosovo "would be stripped of its resources with the profits going into the pockets of foreign investors." Negative comparisons were also drawn with Bechtel's grossly exorbitant highway construction. Subsequently, Kosovo's parliament withdrew Envidity's licence. However, Clark was undiscouraged: "The former general is now concentrating on renewable energy projects.

## Briefs

## Leaked audios an attempt...

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the negotiation process. Not long ago, the PML-N found itself at a crossroads, contemplating whether to seize control of Punjab or pursue a federal government position. This strategic decision didn't sit well with the influential power players in Pakistan, who preferred the PML-N to assert authority both in Punjab and at the federal level. The situation took an unexpected turn when Commissioner Rawalpindi captured widespread attention by revealing that all 39 national and provincial assembly seats had been manipulated in favor of the PML-N.

## Speaker summons...

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His legal tactics drew criticism from political parties, including the PML-N and PPP, urging him not to misuse his powers as the head of state. Observers speculate that the president aims to postpone the session until the Election Commission of Pakistan issues a notification regarding the reserved seats of the Sunni Ittehad Council (SIC), a group that most PTI-backed lawmakers have recently joined. On Tuesday, PM Kakar once again advised the president to convene the session, while granting authority to the NA secretariat to call the session after the constitutional deadline. In the summary, Kakar emphasised that calling a sitting within 21 days of the elections was a constitutional obligation.

## Nawaz says next '1.5...

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The PML-N supremo also heaped praise on his younger brother and party president Shehbaz Sharif, saying he dealt with immense challenges during his brief stint in power. Nawaz said that he would not have completed his time in power had he been nominated to lead the Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM)-led government instead of his younger brother. "In the current circumstances, Shehbaz Sharif is the best choice," he said while officially declaring him the candidate for the prime minister's slot.

## Bajwa, Faiz behind...

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mentioning past cooperation in legislation between military figures and political leaders. The PML-N leader noted that Qamar Bajwa and Faiz Hameed were behind the legislation regarding Financial Action Task Force (FATF). "During that period, we used to go to their messes for legislation," he added. "We are suffering from the damages that occurred at that time," he said, underscoring the collective responsibility of all stakeholders to prioritise the nation's interests and find solutions for its betterment. In response to a question regarding President Dr Arif Alvi's reluctance to summon National Assembly (NA) session, Khawaja Asif said that he should be tried under Article 6.

## Afghan soil poses no...

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scholars and people want cordial relations between the two countries," he said and expressed hope that political and economic relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan will be further expanded. The JUIS leader further condemned the freezing of Afghanistan assets and said that such "unilateral and cruel acts harm Afghans". He said JUIS leaders held interactive sessions with Afghan Interior Minister Sirajuddin Haqqani, Minister Religious Affairs Moulana Noor Muhammad Saqib, former higher education minister Moulana Abdul Baqi Haqqani, Pakistan charge d' affaires Ubaidur Rehman Nizamani, and others senior officials of the Afghan foreign ministry. During the five-day visit, the delegation also travelled to Afghanistan's Paktia, Logar, Khost provinces and other areas.

## Haaland's historic five-goal haul stuns Luton Town

City thumped Luton Town 6-2 to reach the quarter-finals of the FA Cup

SPORTS DESK

LONDON: Erling Haaland got back to his frightening best as he scored five goals in Manchester City's 6-2 FA Cup fifth-round win against Luton Town. It was an unforgiving performance from the Norwegian superstar who scored his eighth hat-trick for Manchester City before half-time. The 23-year-old then added two more after the break to send his team into the quarter-finals. It also served as an ominous message to City's rivals this season, with the club still competing on three fronts - the FA Cup, English Premier League and the UEFA Champions League.

In truth, the team hasn't quite clicked like it did during the historic treble-winning season last year, perhaps due to injuries to both Haaland and playmaker Kevin De Bruyne. But the pair have been getting back to full fitness over the last few weeks and looked unstoppable on Tuesday - De Bruyne provided the assist for four of Haaland's goals. "What can I say? Really, really good. Erling is on fire and Kevin - the connection was perfect," City manager Pep Guardiola told reporters after the game. "Kevin needs players like Erling and Erling needs players like Kevin. We are not here without the other guys. A lot of credit for everyone." It took Haaland exactly three



minutes to get on the scoresheet in what can be an intimidating atmosphere inside Luton's Kenilworth Road. But the striker timed his movement to perfection to steer in De Bruyne's cross from close range. He then doubled his tally just after 17 minutes, chasing down De Bruyne's through ball before smashing it between the goalkeeper's

legs. Haaland secured his hat-trick after an almost carbon copy goal, with De Bruyne again sending the striker through who this time opted for a delicate chip over the keeper. Erling Haaland and Manchester City lead nominations for this year's Laureus Awards Luton did respond before the break, though, with Jordan Clark scoring a superb long-

range effort which whistled into the top corner of the net in the 45th minute. Clark then looked to make a game of it after scoring his second shortly after the restart, but it only served to fire City up.

Haaland tapped in his fourth goal just three minutes later, again combining with De Bruyne to re-establish a two-goal lead. He completed his sensational performance with another driven finish before the hour mark. The forward has now scored 79 goals in his 83 appearances for Manchester City since making his debut in July 2022 and looks like he's determined to continue his good form as the season reaches its climax. City currently sits one point off leader Liverpool in the Premier League, but also faces competition from Arsenal which sits one point behind the Citizens in third. With Haaland in this form, though, the reigning champion will take some stopping.

"My fitness is getting there and I'm getting back to my best finally. I'm feeling good and it's an amazing feeling," Man of the Match Haaland told reporters after the win. Mateo Kovacic's goal rounded off another brilliant display for City. The only downside on the night was an apparent injury to Jack Grealish, who has struggled for fitness this season. While it waits to discover its next opponent in the FA Cup, City faces a potentially tricky fixture in the Premier League on Sunday when it hosts local rival Manchester United.

## Mohammad Amir hails Babar on shot development

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Former Pakistani pacer Mohammad Amir, who is representing Quetta Gladiators in the Pakistan Super League (PSL) season nine, appreciated Peshawar Zalmi captain Babar Azam's shot development during a century against Islamabad United in Lahore. Babar played an impressive innings of 111 runs off just 63 deliveries, marked by aggressive stroke play, as he hit 14 boundaries and two sixes, maintaining a striking rate of 176.19. Amir hailed his ability to step out of his comfort zone and improvise, an advice the left-armed had frequently passed on to Babar. "The way he played his last innings and the shots he played; it always used to tell him to play outside his comfort zone. It is a very good sign for Pakistan cricket that he has developed those shots," Amir said while speaking to the media in Karachi.

"I have no personal enmity with Babar. We have played cricket together, and we have a good relationship," Amir added. Meanwhile, Amir reiterated his commitment to articulating his opinions, guided by what he believes is best for the game, and expressed hope for Babar's ongoing success. "I always express my opinion which I feel is right as a cricketer. I hope he continues to play like this for Pakistan as well," he concluded. It must be noted that it was Babar's 11th T20 century and second in PSL. He tops the list with 330 runs as PSL 9's leading run-scorer so far. PSL 9 will now continue in Karachi and Rawalpindi after matches in Lahore and Multan concluded. Multan Cricket Stadium and Lahore's Gaddafi Stadium hosted 14 matches between them from February 17 to 27. The action now moves to Rawalpindi's Pindi Cricket Stadium and Karachi's National Bank Stadium, where 16 matches will be held from February 28 to March 12. The event will then move to Karachi in its entirety for the playoffs.

## SL picks suspended skipper for BD tour

*Hasaranga, a leg-break bowler, was penalised for abusing an umpire during a T20 match Sri Lanka lost to Afghanistan. Bangladesh to host Sri Lanka cricket tour in March*

COLOMBO: Sri Lanka's cricket board Wednesday named a 17-man T20 squad headed by suspended skipper Wanindu Hasaranga for the upcoming tour of Bangladesh. Officials said 26-year-old would not be included for the first two games in the three-match tournament, in line with its International Cricket Council ban last week.

Hasaranga, a leg-break bowler, was penalised for abusing an umpire during a T20 match Sri Lanka lost to Afghanistan. Bangladesh to host Sri Lanka cricket tour in March He remonstrated with on-field umpire Lyndon Hannibal after the match, for his decision not to call a no-ball on a high delivery to Kamindu Mendis in the final over, with Sri Lanka needing 11 from three balls. The first T20 match will be played on March 4. Sri Lanka will also play three one-day internationals and two Tests during their tour of Bangladesh, which will end on April 3. Sri Lanka's T20 squad: Wanindu Hasaranga (capt), Charith Asalanka, Kusal Mendis, Sadeera Samarawickrama, Angelo Mathews, Dasun Shanaka, Maheesh Theekshana, Dhananjaya de Silva, Kusal Perera, Dilshan Madushanka, Nuwan Thushara, Matheesha Pathirana, Akila Dananjaya, Binura Fernando, Kamindu Mendis, Avishka Fernando and Jeffrey Vandersay. - Agencies

## Murray wants to play in Olympic before retirement

PARIS: British tennis icon Andy Murray revealed that he is hoping to play the Olympic Games which are scheduled to take place in Paris this year before calling time on his career. Murray, who clinched gold in the men's singles at both London 2012 and Rio 2016, expressed his desire for another shot at Olympic glory during an interview to media reporters. "Hopefully I can get the chance to compete at another one," Murray said. The three-time Grand Slam champion regards his victory over Roger Federer in the 2012 final as the pinnacle of his career. Although Murray had previously expressed uncertainties about his future in the sport, dating back to 2019, he revitalised his career following hip-resurfacing surgery.

"When the time is right I will probably say something before I play my last match and my last tournament," he said. "Whether I say anything months ahead of the time I don't know." Despite a challenging start to the 2024 season, where he lost his first four matches and described himself as being in a "terrible moment," Murray remains determined not to give up. "There's no right way of finishing your career and everyone is different so what might be the right way for [Roger] Federer might not be the right way for [Rafael] Nadal, might not be the right way for [Novak] Djokovic," he added. The 2024 Paris Olympics are scheduled to commence on 24 July, shortly after the conclusion of Wimbledon, which runs from 1 July to 14

July. Murray is set to face France's fifth seed, Ugo Humbert, in the second round of the Dubai Tennis Championship on Wednesday, following his victory over Canada's Denis Shapovalov, marking his second win of 2024. Earlier on Monday, Murray confirmed that he does not have much time left before bidding farewell to the sport he loves. "People read a lot into what I say on the court sometimes and it's not always rational," he said after beating Denis Shapovalov in Dubai Tennis Championship. "I still love competing, I still love the game. It gets harder and harder the older you get to compete with the young guys. 'It's not easy, I probably don't have too long left, but I'll do the best that I can these last few months.' - Agencies

## Abdul Malik aims to build cancer hospital in Balochistan

KARACHI: Abdul Malik Khan will soon complete his Masters degree in accounting from Cornell University, an Ivy League School, in New York which is why the time has come when he needs to decide what he wants to do with his future but the Quetta-born stands at a crossroads. Should he opt for a stable job or pursue the game he loves the most? Despite knowing the hurdles that stand in his way, Malik has chosen squash. Squash might not be among the most popular sports in the world but it still attracts significant interest in Pakistan because of its rich history. Malik started playing squash at the national level at the age of 10. He won the bronze medal for Pakistan at the Asian Junior Championship and Asian Team Championship in 2017. He was also the World Junior Plate

Gold Medallist in 2017 and was Pakistan's number-one junior player in 2018. "It is easy for me to get a job here [in the United States] but I'm passionate about playing squash," Malik, who got admitted to Cornell University due to his squash and academics achievements, told GeoSuper. Malik currently trains under the watchful eye of David Palmer, who was a former world number one player and winner of four British Open and two World Open titles. "I'm being coached by Palmer who was a very successful player in the past. He is helping me improve my game and become a better player," Malik said. While Malik is eager to emulate the likes of Jahangir Khan, Jansher Khan and Hashim Khan, he

also dreams about opening a cancer hospital in Balochistan. Earlier this month, Cinar hospital, the only facility dedicated to treating cancer patients in Balochistan, in Quetta reported more than 5,000 new cancer patients. Additionally, many cases remain undiagnosed in remote regions. Due to a lack of healthcare facilities, many are forced to travel to other cities, like Karachi and Lahore, for better treatment. However, that proves costly for the poverty-stricken people of the region. "I want to build a cancer hospital in Balochistan where patients will be treated free of cost. I want to help the people of my region since they struggle due to the absence of basic healthcare facilities," Malik added. "I firmly believe that when Allah blesses you and gives you the ability to help others, we should improve our standard of giving instead of living." Turning his dreams into reality won't be an easy task by any stretch of the imagination for Malik but the 24-year-old has vowed that he will leave no stone unturned in achieving his ambitious goals. "I will try to do my best on and off the court and hope that people will support me," he concluded. - DNA

## Azam confident in lower-order batting prowess

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan wicketkeeper-batter Azam Khan has made a compelling case for his inclusion in national T20 squad, citing his unmatched batting statistics as a finisher in the format. However, his plea comes amidst a backdrop of sporadic opportunities and unfulfilled potential at the international level. Since his T20I debut in 2021, Azam has only managed to feature in eight

matches for Pakistan, with his latest stint in the New Zealand series proving to be underwhelming. Despite being dropped five times in his short career, Azam remains resolute in his belief that he deserves an extended run in the team. In a conversation with Cricwick, Azam expressed frustration over being labeled a "scapegoat" and emphasized his commitment to the team's cause. "The team always comes first for me. If it's a team game and only an individ-

ual is made a scapegoat, it makes me a bit angry," Azam said. "I get frustrated sometimes. Yes, I deserve an opportunity. I have made three comebacks into the Pakistan team in the past five years," he further added. Azam further backed his case by presenting statistical evidence of his prowess as a T20 finisher. Claiming to be unrivaled in Pakistan cricket, he pointed to his batting average and strike rate at the crucial No. 5 and No. 6 positions. "There's no one close to

my batting numbers at the No.5 and No.6 positions in Pakistan. In the last four years, only twelve batters have scored runs at an average of more than 25 and a strike-rate in excess of 145 in T20 cricket," Azam said. "The complete list includes Tim David, Glenn Phillips, Glenn Maxwell, Nicholas Pooran, Azam Khan, Kieron Pollard, Andre Russell, Harry Brook, Suryakumar Yadav, Marcus Stoinis, Liam Livingstone and Heinrich Klaasen," he further added.

## Alexander Zverev crashes out of Mexico Open

World number six knocked out 6-3, 3-6, 6-3 in first round by fellow German Altmaier

OUR CORRESPONDENTS

MEXICO: Top seed Alexander Zverev tumbled out of the Mexico Open at the first hurdle, eliminated by German compatriot Daniel Altmaier in three sets. Zverev, winner of the Acapulco tournament in 2021, was sent packing 6-3, 3-6, 6-3 in 2hr 28min by world number 57 Altmaier. After sharing the first two sets, Altmaier took control of the third set with an early

break to take a 2-0 lead before holding for 3-0. Zverev missed opportunities to break back in the fifth and seventh games, unable to convert any of three break points and Altmaier served out to clinch victory and set up a second round meeting with Serbia's Miomir Kecmanovic. In other games on Tuesday, Australia's Jordan Thompson was brought back down to earth after losing his first round match just two days after winning the first ATP title of his career. Thompson, who went on a giant-killing run before

defeating Casper Ruud to win the Los Cabos Open final on Sunday, was ousted in three sets by American qualifier Aleksandar Kovacic, losing 6-3, 5-7, 6-4 in 2hr 42min. Kovacic will play Holger Rune in the second round after the Danish second seed cruised past Michael Mmoh 6-2, 6-3 earlier Tuesday. Greece's Stefanos Tsitsipas, the fifth seed, eased past Russian Roman Safiullin 6-3, 6-4. Tsitsipas will play Italian qualifier Flavio Cobolli in the sec-

ond round. "It's one of those first rounds that you get good opponents and a very good, strong start from the beginning of the tournament," Tsitsipas said in an on-court interview after his win. "I knew that dealing with Roman, he's someone that can play good on these kinds of surfaces. He takes the ball early, pushes you back. "That was the main thing I had to deal with today, which I did pretty well." Meanwhile, Sunday's beaten Los Cabos finalist Ruud, the sixth seed in Acapulco, needed three sets to overpower Christopher Eubanks, eventually winning 6-4, 6-7 (5/7), 6-3. American eighth seed Frances Tiafoe defeated Australia's Max Purcell 4-6, 6-3, 6-0, and now faces Germany's Dominik Koepfer, a 6-4, 4-6, 6-0 winner over France's Terence Atmane.

## IMF asked to focus 'political stability'

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the guidelines adopted by it with respect to good governance as well as conditionalities that must be satisfied prior to the grant of a finance facility that is to burden the people of Pakistan with further debt. An audit of at least thirty percent of the national and provincial assemblies' seats should be ensured, which can be accomplished in merely two weeks," the letter added. There are at least two indigenous organisations in Pakistan namely the Free and Fair Election Network (Fafen) and PAT-TAN-Coalition38 that have proposed comprehensive methodologies to conduct an audit of the elections which, with some modifications, could be implemented locally to the satisfaction of all stakeholders, read the letter. "Such a role by the IMF would be a great service to Pakistan and its people, and could become the harbinger of enduring prosperity, growth, and macroeconomic stability in the country." Pakistan's cash-strapped economy is struggling to stabilise after securing a \$3 billion stand-by arrangement from the IMF last summer, with record inflation, rupee devaluation and shrinking foreign reserves. China has rolled over a \$2 billion loan to Pakistan, according to Ministry of Finance sources. The \$2 billion loan was due in March and has been extended for one year, it said.

## ECP reserves verdict on SIC's plea

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NA session which was supposed to be held within 21 days of the elections under the Constitution. In the previous hearing, CEC Raja consolidated all the petitions filed by SIC, Muttahida Qaumi Movement-Pakistan (MQM-P), Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) and Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz's (PML-N). MQM-P's Advocate Farogh Naseem, SIC's Barrister Ali Zafar, PPP's Advocate Farooq H Naek and PML-N's lawyer Azam Nazeer Tarar appeared before the five-member bench. At the outset of the hearing, Barrister Zafar presented his arguments saying that 86 independents, who won the National Assembly seats, joined the SIC. "A political party has the right to form a government and contest the elections and SIC is a political party which is registered and has an electoral symbol," said Zafar. He said that SIC has the right to form a government if independent candidates join the party. At this, a member of the commission said that SIC did not contest the February 8 polls.

## Army Chief lauds heroics...

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when legal avenues are available for addressing concerns and grievances. Noting that arbitrary actions on the basis of heresy undermine the outlook of the society, COAS underlined Islam's eternal message of kindness and benevolence. COAS appreciated the sacrifices rendered by the law enforcement agencies to ensure the safety and security of the citizens of Pakistan.

## ECP dismisses Nawaz's plea

FROM PAGE 01  
"There was more vote-rigging and tampering in NA-15 than in Daska in the past", he added. Babar Awan who appeared on behalf of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) backed independent candidate, maintained that the case ought to be referred to the election tribunal for an investigation if the bags' seals were broken. "The ECP has already formed election tribunals and the NA-15 matter should be sent to a tribunal," Babar added. It is pertinent to mention here that PTI-backed independent candidate Shahzada Gustasp Khan won the seat with 105,249 votes, while Nawaz Sharif finished runner-up with 80,382 votes.

## Briefs

## Russian FM to attend Antalya diplomacy forum

ISTANBUL : Russia on Wednesday said Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov will undertake a two-day visit to Türkiye to attend this week's Antalya Diplomacy Forum. "Lavrov will visit Türkiye on March 1-2 to attend the Antalya Diplomatic Forum upon the invitation of the Turkish foreign minister [Hakan Fidan]. Lavrov is also planned to meet his Turkish counterpart," Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova told a press briefing in Moscow. Zakharova said both diplomats will discuss international issues, including the situation in Ukraine, Palestine and the South Caucasus, as well as Syria and Libya. She said cooperation between Türkiye and Russia in the fields of energy, security, banking and tourism will also be on the agenda. The Antalya Diplomacy Forum will take place in the southern coastal city on March 1-3.—DNA

## Chad to hold presidential polls on May 6

KIGALI : Chad will hold presidential elections on May 6, the National Election Management Agency announced Tuesday, marking a transition to civilian rule. Presidential "electoral campaigns will be carried out from April 14 to May 4, while the proclamation of the provisional results will be done on May 21," Ahmed Bartchiret, the election agency's chairman, told reporters in the capital N'Djamena. Mahamat Idriss Deby took over the leadership of Chad in 2021 after his father, Idriss Deby Itno, died on the frontlines of a war against rebels after ruling for 30 years. The younger Deby had pledged to hand over power to an elected government after 18 months — a deadline that was not achieved, before postponing elections to this year. The end of the transition period was rescheduled to Oct.10 this year. Bartchiret warned that "beyond that date, Chad will fall into a legal void, synonymous with predictable chaos." It is therefore imperative to hold the elections before Oct.10, he said. In January, the ruling Patriotic Salvation Movement (MPS) party designated Deby as its candidate for the presidential election after a new constitution adopted following a December referendum allowed him to seek election.—APP

## Prince Harry loses case against UK govt over security

LONDON: Prince Harry lost a court challenge against the UK government on Wednesday over a decision to change the level of his personal security when he visits the country. The youngest son of King Charles III launched legal action against the government after being told in February 2020 that he would no longer be given the "same degree" of publicly-funded protection when in Britain. "The 'bespoke' process devised for the claimant in the decision of 28 February 2020 was, and is, legally sound," High Court judge Peter Lane said in his 52-page judgment. Harry sensationally left Britain in 2020 with his wife Meghan, eventually settling in California in the United States. The prince told a hearing at London's High Court in December that security concerns were preventing visits back to the United Kingdom. "The UK is my home. The UK is central to the heritage of my children," he told court in a written statement read out by his lawyers. "That cannot happen if it's not possible to keep them safe. I cannot put my wife in danger like that and, given my experiences in life, I am reluctant to unnecessarily put myself in harm's way too," he added. Harry's mother Princess Diana was killed in a high-speed car crash in Paris in 1997 as she tried to escape paparazzi photographers.—Agencies

At the initiative of Uzbekistan

## 2027 to be declared Int'l year of sustainable tourism

The main goal of the document is entirely based on the thesis put forward by the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev at the Samarkand session of the UNWTO General Assembly in October 2023 on the sustainability and flexibility of the tourism sector to new problems and challenges of our time

## DNA

TASHKENT: On February 26, 2024, at the UN Headquarters in New York City, the General Assembly of the Organization unanimously approved the Resolution "2027 – the International Year of Sustainable and Resilient Tourism". Over 80 member countries of the Organization are co-authors of the resolution initiated by the Republic of Uzbekistan.

Experts from leading countries such as Russia, China, the United States, Türkiye, Germany, the United Kingdom, the EU delegation, Japan, the Republic of Korea, Egypt, Brazil, and Argentina actively participated in the consultations to agree on the document's text. Representatives of UN member states noted the



timeliness and relevance of the presentation of this resolution. The main goal of the document is entirely based on the thesis put forward by the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev at the Samarkand session of the UNWTO General

Assembly in October 2023 on the sustainability and flexibility of the tourism sector to new problems and challenges of our time. The resolution enshrines the principles voiced by the President of Uzbekistan on the vital role of tourism in preserving the rich

cultural heritage of various civilizations, strengthening peace and tolerance, and respecting people's values.

Particular attention is paid to developing green tourism to preserve the environment and biodiversity and reduce air pollution. The document resolves to announce 2027 as the International Year of Sustainable and Resilient Tourism and calls on UNWTO and governments, UN agencies, and regional organizations to take comprehensive measures for its successful implementation. The resolution highlights the importance of developing sustainable tourism, including ecotourism, which can contribute to achieving the SDGs, economic growth, full employment, rural development, and improving the livelihoods of rural people.

The resolution encourages all stakeholders to actively promote sustainable and resilient tourism as an essential tool for poverty eradication, promoting the participation of women, youth, older persons, and persons with disabilities, expanding economic opportunities, and creating decent jobs and income sources.

The document resolves that UNWTO will inform the UN General Assembly at its 83rd session (2028) on the implementation of this resolution, with particular attention to the assessment of the implementation of the International Year.

According to experts, the resolution put forward by Uzbekistan will mark the beginning of a new stage in the development of the tourism industry at the global level.

## Use Russian asset profits to arm Ukraine: EU chief

"It is time to start a conversation about using the windfall profits of frozen Russian assets to jointly purchase military equipment for Ukraine," von der Leyen

## WEB DESK

STRASBOURG: European Commission chief Ursula von der Leyen called on Wednesday for profits from Russian assets frozen in the West to be used to fund military equipment for Ukraine. Calls have been mounting to find ways to support Kyiv's war effort by tapping the bank accounts, investments and other assets frozen after Russia invaded its neighbour in 2022. Simply confiscating the funds is not seen as an option but the EU is working on ways to use the profits they generate, which alone could represent billions of euros a year. Moscow bans more EU officials and politicians from Russia in response to sanctions "It is time to start a conversation about using the windfall profits of frozen Russian assets to jointly purchase military equip-



ment for Ukraine," von der Leyen said in a speech to the European Parliament. Kyiv says it desperately needs more military and financial assistance, with a fresh \$60 billion US package stalled in Congress. "With or without the support of our partners, we cannot let Russia win,"

von der Leyen told lawmakers. "And the cost of insecurity – the cost of a Russian victory – is far greater than any saving we could make now." The EU has frozen more than 200 billion euros (\$220 billion) of Russian central bank assets, with about 90 percent held by an international deposit organisation in Belgium. "Ultimately this is about Europe taking responsibility for its own security," said von der Leyen, whose speech addressed the broader question of European sovereignty and defence as Russia's war on Ukraine enters its third year. "The threat of war may not be imminent, but it is not impossible," she said. "The risks of war should not be overblown, but they should be prepared for." The commission chief separately congratulated Sweden on clearing the final hurdle to joining NATO, calling it a "historic step for this country and for our common security."

## New Tuvalu govt reaffirms ties with Taiwan

FUNAFUTI : Tuvalu's new government on Wednesday vowed to keep up its "special" relationship with Taiwan, ending speculation that the Pacific island nation was poised to switch diplomatic recognition to Beijing. "The new government wishes to reaffirm its commitment to the long-term and lasting special relationship between Tuvalu and the Republic of China, Taiwan," Prime Minister Feleti Teo's government said in a statement of priorities. Tuvalu, with a population of 11,000, is one of just 12 states that still have formal diplomatic relations with Taipei rather than Beijing. During the election campaign, senior lawmaker Seve Paeniu floated the idea that Tuvalu's new government could review its Taiwan ties. That set off frenzied speculation about a looming shift in policy, causing the election to be closely watched from the United States to China. Andrew Lin, Taiwan's ambassador to Tuvalu, tried to end that speculation on Monday, telling AFP he had received assurances from the new government "that the relationship between Taiwan and Tuvalu is firm, rock solid, durable and everlasting". The new government said that it wanted to "reassess options" to "strengthen and lift" relations with Taiwan to establish a "more durable, lasting, and mutually beneficial relationship". Taiwan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs has said that Deputy Minister Tien Chung-kwang will lead a delegation to Tuvalu "soon". —DNA

## UN peacekeepers withdraw from eastern DR Congo

KAMANYOLA : The United Nations kicked off Wednesday the withdrawal of MONUSCO peacekeeping forces from the Democratic Republic of Congo by handing over a first UN base to national police. During an official ceremony at the Kamanyola base, close to the Rwandan and Burundian borders, the flags of the United Nations and Pakistan, the countries of origin of the peacekeepers in charge, were replaced by those of the DRC. The DR Congo demanded the withdrawal despite UN concerns about rampant violence in the east of the country. Kinshasa considers the UN force to be ineffective in protecting civilians from the armed groups and militias that have plagued the east of the vast country for three decades. The UN Security Council voted in December to accede to Kinshasa's demand for a gradual pullout by the MONUSCO mission, which arrived in 1999. The UN force currently fields around 13,500 soldiers and 2,000 police across the three eastern provinces of Ituri, South Kivu and North Kivu. The "disengagement plan" is due to take place in three phases with completion depending on regular assessments.—APP

## China's Premier Li urges stronger ties with US

BEIJING : China and the United States should strengthen economic and trade ties and Washington should avoid decoupling from China, Chinese Premier Li Qiang said on Wednesday, during a meeting with a visiting U.S. delegation, Chinese state radio reported. "Strengthening economic and trade cooperation is a win-win situation for both countries," Li told the delegation led by Chamber of Commerce chief Suzanne Clark. "Seeking decoupling and building 'small yards with high walls' do not align with the fundamental interests of both sides," he added. Li said U.S. companies were welcome to continue investing in China and that barriers were not in the fundamental interests of both sides. Clark is leading a delegation of former U.S. government officials to Beijing this week, the group has said. The visit comes as the United States and China gradually resume engagements after the two economic superpowers' most tense relations in years, at loggerheads over the future of democratically ruled Taiwan, territorial claims in the South China Sea and trade policies. Ties are still recovering after the United States downed an alleged Chinese spy balloon a year ago.—APP

## French Senate votes on abortion rights

PARIS : France's Senate is to vote on Wednesday on a bill meant to enshrine a woman's right to an abortion in the constitution, a measure promised by President Emmanuel Macron following a rollback on rulings in the United States. Wednesday's vote comes after the lower house, the National Assembly, overwhelmingly approved the proposal in January. A majority of senators appear to be in favor of the constitutional change, but some conservatives have criticized its wording, casting doubt over the outcome of the vote. Macron's government wants Article 34 of the constitution amended to specify that "the law determines the conditions by which is exercised the freedom of women to have recourse to an abortion, which is guaranteed." If the Senate adopts the same version of the bill as the National Assembly, the constitutional change will require definitive approval by a three-fifths majority of a joint session of parliament, traditionally held at the Palace of Versailles. If the Senate amends the proposal or rejects it, the bill must return to the National Assembly for further debate. The government argued in its introduction to the bill that the right to abortion is threatened in the United States, where the Supreme Court in 2022 overturned a 50-year-old ruling that used to guarantee it.—APP



ISLAMABAD: Ambassadors of Oman, Egypt, Jordan, Editor Daily Islamabad POST Ansar M Bhatti and others posing for a picture during an exhibition hosted by the Jordan embassy. — DNA

## Zelenskiy seeks Balkan support at summit in Albania

The summit in the Albanian capital Tirana comes as Kyiv is trying to improve its defensive capabilities to beat back Russian forces at a time of faltering US support more than two years into Russia's full-scale invasion

## FOREIGN DESK

TIRANA: Ukraine's President, Volodymyr Zelenskiy, called on Balkan countries to "co-produce" when it comes to the defence industry and to attend a special Ukraine-Balkans Defence Industry Forum in Kyiv or one of the Balkan capitals. Zelenskiy met Balkan leaders at the "Ukraine-Southeast Europe" Summit in Tirana on Wednesday where he thanked them for their political and humanitarian support but stressed that, although "there are about 500 defence companies operating in Ukraine", it is "not enough to win over [Vladimir] Putin". "We see problems with the supply of ammunition, which are affecting the situation on the battlefield," Zelenskiy wrote on X (Twitter).

"We are interested in co-production with you and all our partners. Our governmental team will present the details. We propose to hold a special Ukraine-Balkans Defence Industry Forum in Kyiv or in one of your capitals," he added. Zelenskiy is visiting Albania for the first time since Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine started in February 2022. At a joint press conference between Albanian Prime Minister Edi Rama and Zelenskiy, Rama said Ukraine deserves to be helped in the war against Russia. "They pretend that stopping giving weapons to Ukraine will bring peace. This is not only cynical, but absurd. You don't stop the war by disarming the victim," Rama said. Since the start of the war, Balkan countries have been mainly supportive towards Ukraine. Most have imposed

sanctions on Russia, called for investigations of war crimes, are helping in the defence sector and are hosting Ukrainian migrants. Serbia, due to its traditional ties to Russia, is the only Balkan country that did not impose sanctions on Russia. Since the invasion started, however, Serbian weapons have reportedly ended up in Ukraine, likely sent first to NATO countries allied to Ukraine. On two occasions in 2023 it was reported that rockets produced in Serbia appeared in Ukrainian war zones. In April 2023, Reuters reported that, according to a leaked classified Pentagon document, Serbia had agreed to supply arms to Kyiv or has sent them already. Serbia denied the report. However, President Aleksandar Vucic told the Financial Times in June 2023 that he was aware that some

Serbian-manufactured arms "might end up in Ukraine". "Is it possible that it's happening? I have no doubts that it might happen. What is the alternative for us? Not to produce it? Not to sell it?" Vucic asked. Vucic met Zelenskiy for the first time at the European Political Community meeting in Moldova in June 2023. As BIRN previously reported, Croatia does not produce the armaments Ukraine needs most, which are artillery shells, ammunition, large-calibre weapons, armour, drones and planes. There is little information about what Croatia's military aid to Ukraine has included. Ukraine has bought demining machines from Croatia. In October last year, an International Donor Conference for the Humanitarian Demining of Ukraine

was held in Zagreb, and Croatia immediately donated 5 million euros for demining. In April 2022, Montenegro confirmed it would join EU sanctions on Russia. Moscow subsequently added Montenegro to its list of "enemy states". In July 2022, the Montenegrin parliament passed a resolution condemning the invasion and promising that the country's foreign policy would be aligned with its Western partners. Last May, the Montenegrin Defence Ministry sent 400,000 euros' worth of medicine and military donations to Ukraine. North Macedonia has sent ten batches of military aid to Kyiv, with more probably on the way. It is considered one of the top contributors of equipment among Ukraine's allies, considering its size and population of just under 2 million.

**Briefs**

**Gwadar under water after relentless downpour**

**BUREAU REPORT**

**GWADAR:** Gwadar and surrounding areas were inundated after heavy rain hit south-western parts of Balochistan as a western disturbance has been affecting the province for over two days. The relentless downpour, which continued for over 10 hours, lashed Gwadar as the absence of drainage system meant rainwater not only accumulated on the roads and streets but also submerged the residential and commercial properties. Moreover, flooding is being reported in the streams and small rivers of affected area after soil could not absorb the massive quantity of water produced by the intense rains. As a result, many locals have been forced to leave their homes and shift to safer places on a self-help basis. There are reports of several houses and buildings having collapsed along with suspension of electricity supply and internet services. Pakistan is now witnessing more and more extreme weather events under the worsening climate change crisis as global warming means the westerly is carrying more water when compared with the past due to the higher evaporation rate produced by rising temperatures. Moreover, weather pattern has been badly affected as rains are getting irregular and intense at the same time, which means more sunshine and long dry periods. The Met Office says Gwadar received 125mm of rain during the past 24 hours [till 8am on Wednesday] which is addition to 57.80mm recorded a day earlier.

**Imran, others acquitted in vandalism case**

**DNA**

**ISLAMABAD:** The district and sessions court of Islamabad has acquitted the PTI founder and other leaders including AsadUmer and Faisal Javed in a case related to protest and vandalism. Judicial magistrate Muhammad Shabbir issued the release verdict by accepting the bail appeals of the accused. Lawyers Amina Ali, SardarMasroof Khan and MohsinGhaffar appeared before the court during the hearing. The court judgement said the accused had filed separate acquittal pleas under section 249A of the constitution. "The accused can't be indicted in the case and additional trial is mere waste of time," said the verdict. It said the acquittal petitions of the PTI founder, AsadUmer and Raja KhurramShehzad Nawaz had been accepted. The bail pleas filed by Faisal Javed, Abid Hussain and Zaheer Khan also had been accepted. The court ordered that AsadUmer, Ali Nawaz Awan and Faisal Javed could get back the surety bonds. The case of vandalism was registered against the suspects in the Tarnol police station.

**Hamas open for talks, yet prepared for fight: Haniyeh**

Al-Maliki said the time now is "not for the government where Hamas would be part of it because, in this case, then it will be boycotted by a number of countries as it happened before."

**NEWS DESK**

**DOHA:** Hamas chief Ismail Haniyeh said the Palestinian group was showing flexibility in negotiations with Israel over the Gaza war but at the same time was ready to continue fighting. The head of Hamas' Political Bureau, Ismail Haniyeh, urged Palestinians to break the Israeli-enforced blockade on one of Islam's holiest sites, al-Aqsa Mosque, on the first day of Ramadan, which will commence next month. Addressing the annual report of "The Situation of al-Quds 2023," Haniyeh stressed that the Israeli occupation and its partner, the United States, will not be able "to obtain through [political means] what they did not obtain through combat." The leader of the Islamic Resistance Movement made the remark in response to ongoing Israeli-US political mobilization to force the Palestinian Resistance into an unfavorable deal. "Any flexibility we show in negotiations out of concern for the blood of our people is matched by [our] willingness to defend our people," Haniyeh underlined. He urged the world, especially friendly Arab states, to restrain "Israel" and prevent it from invading the southernmost city of the Gaza Strip, Rafah. Haniyeh reiterated the fact that ending Israeli violations against al-Aqsa Mosque and its worshippers was the main driver behind Operation al-Aqsa Flood. He explained that the occupation is "delusional" if it believes that increasing restrictions against worshippers would dilute the effects of the operation. In this context, he called on the Palestinians "to break the siege of al-Aqsa (Mosque)

**Death toll surges to 29,954 martyrs**

**FOREIGN DESK**

**GAZA CITY:** The health ministry in Gaza said on Wednesday that the Israeli occupation army committed eight massacres in different areas of the Gaza Strip during the past 24 hours, killing at least 76 civilians and injuring over 110 others, while a large number of victims are still under the rubble of bombed buildings or lying on roads. In a statement, the health ministry added that the death toll from the ongoing Israeli bombardments, which started on October 7, climbed to 29,954 martyrs and the number of the wounded surged to 70,325 people. Every day, the Israeli army escalates its air and ground attacks on the Gaza Strip, which has been under relentless bombardment since a cross-border operation was launched by Hamas's armed wing, al-Qassam Brigades, on October 7. Besides the large number of casualties and the huge displacement of people, basic food, fuel, water and medical supplies have run out for the 2.3 million residents in Gaza due to the tight Israeli blockade and the massive destruction of infrastructure and facilities. Meanwhile, Ehud Olmert has warned that Israel will face dire consequences if it sends troops into the besieged city of Rafah, in southern Gaza, where more than one million displaced people are sheltering. "The patience of the international community has reached a point from where I don't think they'll be able to absorb it," the former Israeli prime minister was quoted by Bloomberg as saying in an interview. Olmert added that Israel's current leader, Benjamin Netanyahu, should stop the war and focus on a plan that will enable the Israeli army to leave Gaza and international forces to go in as peacekeepers. The former prime minister, who led Israel between 2006 and 2009, also expressed concern that a ground attack on Rafah "may shatter the peace agreement between Israel and Egypt". Meanwhile, The director of the medical facility in northern Gaza says the hospital is out of service after running out of fuel. Ahmed al-Kahlout also said halting all medical activities will deprive thousands of patients of the right to medical care. During the past few days, at least four children died in the hospital due to malnutrition and dehydration. Several patients died as a result of the lack of medicine, food and fuel, al-Kahlout added.

on the first day of the blessed month of Ramadan." He explained that the movement would only accept the affairs in al-Aqsa Mosque to correspond to international resolution, saying such a situation would be the "bare minimum" of the movement's expectations. Currently, the occupation has blocked all the entrances to the complex, allowing only a few dozen worshippers in. Concurrently, extremist settlers have been allowed into the complex, under the protection of occupation forces, deliberately violating the sanctity of the site. It is worth noting that during the Holy month of Ramadan, tens to hundreds of thousands of Muslim worshippers head to the complex to pray. The current status quo in al-Quds has been warned against by members of the Israeli intelligence services who believe that restricting worshippers' movements will have dire consequences for the Israeli regime's security. To conclude, Haniyeh called on all Resistance forces supporting Gaza, urging them to intensify their operations against the Israeli occupation, adding that al-Aqsa Mosque is "the compass for [the Axis of Resistance]". Meanwhile, A new government in Palestine should take "full responsibility and action" both in West Bank and the Gaza Strip, Palestinian Foreign Minister Riyad al-Maliki said on Wednesday. "Maybe the current government which resigned was not seen or heard for such responsibility," Riyad al-Maliki told a press conference organized by the UN correspondents' association in Geneva. Al-Maliki said the time now is "not for the government where Hamas would be part of it because, in this case, then it will be boycotted by a number of countries as it happened before."

**CM Murad directs IG to fill 25,000 vacant positions**

**NAZIR SIYAL**

**KARACHI:** Sindh Chief Minister Murad Ali Shah on Wednesday directed the provincial Inspector General (IG) Riffat Mukhtar to fill 25,000 vacant positions in the police department. He issued the directives in a meeting related to law and order which was attended by Director General (DG) Rangers Sindh Major General AzharWaqas, IG Mukhtar, commissioner and others. Directing the IG to fill the vacant positions, the three-time CM said that the recruitment in the police departments will only be merit-based. Approving Rs2 billion for the construction of 708 police stations, CM Shah ordered a similar construction of the stations, saying that these funds should be properly spent. Speaking about the law and order situation in the province, the chief minister said that the first responsibility is to protect the people and their property. He added that the situation was bad in the riverine (kutchha) areas for some time. Expressing disappointment over the situation of street crime, CM Shah said he wants improvement by paying special attention to law and order.

**6 terrorists killed in N. Waziristan IBO: ISPR**

**DNA**

**PESHAWAR:** On 28 February 2024, security forces conducted an intelligence based operation in North Waziristan District, on reported presence of terrorists. During the conduct of operation, intense fire exchange took place between own troops and the terrorists, as a result of which six terrorists were sent to hell, while one soldier also got injured. Weapons, ammunition and explosives were also recovered from the killed terrorists, who remained actively involved in numerous terrorist activities including target killing as well as extortion & abduction of innocent civilians. Sanitization operation is being conducted to eliminate any other terrorist found in the area. Locals of the area appreciated the operation and expressed their full support to eliminate the menace of terrorism.

**PTI spokesperson demands release of all prisoners**

**MEHTAB PIRZADA**

**ISLAMABAD:** Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) stressed the need for restoring the constitution in its true sense and upholding rule of law by putting a halt on the ongoing series of reign of terror and releasing all unlawful incarcerated PTI's workers and leaders including its Founding Chairman Imran Khan forthwith. PTI Spokesperson expressed its alarm over the unabated state coercive measures and open violation of the constitution and law in the country. He demanded that the public mandate must be respected and the political party having clear majority in the center should be allowed to rule the country instead of re-imposing the people rejected PDM-2 in sheer violation of the constitution and the law. PTI Spokesperson warned that the country would be plunged deep into the mire if the clique of certified criminals were imposed on the nation once again. He said that the unstoppable series of massacres of the constitution and democracy in the country started from the regime change conspiracy to mandate theft completely exposed the already rotten system of the country. PTI Spokesperson recalled that all kinds of unconstitutional, immoral and undemocratic tactics had been used during the past two years to deprive the people of their right to freedom of expression and right to vote.



**JAKARTA:** Amb. Ameer Khurram Rathore paid a courtesy call on H.E Mr. Budi Gunadi Sadikin, Minister of Health of Indonesia. Formal discussions aimed at fostering closer ties and enhancing bilateral cooperation in the health sector between Pakistan and Indonesia. - DNA

**We are facing an armed struggle in Balochistan, PM tells IHC**

Allegations levelled against state should stop, says Kakar during IHC hearing on Baloch missing persons

**KHAYAM ABBASI**

**ISLAMABAD:** Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-HaqKakar on Wednesday told the Islamabad High Court (IHC) that the government is facing an armed struggle in Balochistan, asserting that the armed individuals are fighting to "create a new state". The premier said that the government is working according to the Constitution and law on the issue of enforced disappearances. PM Kakar said the government and ordinary citizens did not take up arms, but it is the responsibility of the state to protect the people. "The state must deal differently with armed people," he asserted. Responding to the premier's statement, Justice Kayani said: "No court is asking to protect non-state actors." He added that there is undoubtedly a war, which our army and institutions are fighting. The prime minister's statement came during his appearance before the high court in the missing Baloch students case. This was PM Kakar's first appearance at the court that summoned him for the third time after he skipped the summons twice.

During the hearing, PM Kakar said that the violations of non-state actors are also recorded, recalling the killing of a former Balochistan chief justice who was heading an inquiry committee pertaining to a relevant issue. PM Kakar added that the country's paramilitary forces and counter-terrorism agencies are blamed for the issue. However, he added, no one remembered the violation of human rights when people were burnt alive in a bus on the coastal highway and a Chaudhary or Gujjar are killed after identification by the outlaws. The premier, when talking about the issue, said: "They don't want to resolve the issue and that it is not right to consider the entire state criminal because of them." It should be noted that the court, during the previous hearing of the case, had formed an inquiry committee comprising the director generals of the Inter-Services Intelligence and Military Intelligence for recovery of the missing persons. However, the order to form the committee has been challenged in the Supreme Court.

**MPAs-elect from KP and Balochistan take oath**

**SHAMIM SHAHID**

**PESHAWAR/QUETTA:** Newly elected members of the Khyber Pakh-tunkhwa and Balochistan assemblies were sworn in on Wednesday. In KP, around 115 newly elected representatives took oath in a session marred by ruckus. The meeting of the provincial legislature was summoned by KP Governor Ghulam Ali last week following advice from the caretaker Chief Minister Syed Arshad Hussain Shah. It should be mentioned that the previous assembly was dissolved in January 2023 and KP had been functioning in the absence of the provincial legislature for more than 13 months. Today's session was scheduled to begin at 11am but was delayed by over an hour due to protests and riots by PTI workers present in the gallery and party-backed lawmakers — now members of the Sunni Ittehad Council (SIC) — who slogans of "Qaidi #804 [prisoner number 804]" and "Long Live Imran Khan". The session finally began a little after 1pm with outgoing KP Assembly Speaker Mushtaq Ghani in the chair. At the outset, he prayed for the high ranks of martyrs who had sacrificed their lives

to defend the country. Subsequently, he administered the oath to the MPAs-elect in Urdu and congratulated them. The members who were sworn in included 87 PTI-backed SIC lawmakers, nine members from JUI-F, eight from PML-N, five from PPP, two from PTI-Parliamentarians and four independents. PTI's nominee for KP chief minister, Ali Amin Gandapur, was among the several MPAs who were sworn in during the session. He entered the assembly with a PTI flag draped across his shoulders and carried a framed photo of imprisoned PTI founder Imran Khan. In an announcement following the oath, Ghani said voting for the election of the speaker and deputy speaker would be held at 10am tomorrow (February 29). He added that nomination papers could be submitted by 5pm today and the papers could be withdrawn by 11pm. After the announcements, the newly elected MPAs signed the register roll in alphabetical order as the house reverberated with slogans chanted by PTI supporters. During the session, PML-N MPA Sobia Shahid raised a watch in the house — an apparent reference to the Toshakhana reference in which Imran is convicted. As she waved the watch, a water bottle and a

lota were thrown at her. Some of the PTI-backed lawmakers also made their way in front of the speaker's dais and waved placards with pro-Imran slogans inscribed on them. They also held framed photos of the former prime minister. Separately, PTI's Omer Ayub Khan said that Imran had nominated Babar Salim Swati as the party's candidate for KP Assembly speaker. Swati is the PTI's divisional president in Hazara and is the MPA from PK-37. In a media talk outside the KP Assembly, PTI Senator Faisal Javed thanked the public for voting for Imran in huge numbers and for giving him a "hat-trick" in the province. Javed also promised that the PTI would immediately restore the health card in the province after assuming power. Balochistan Assembly: The session of the Balochistan Assembly, summoned by Governor Malik Abdul Wali Khan Kakar, commenced at 3pm. Ahead of the meeting, special security arrangements in and around the assembly building were made. The session was chaired by a senior member of the assembly, Zamrak Khan Piralizi, after outgoing speaker Mir Jan Muhammad Khan Jamali excused himself over health concerns and other engagements.

**WHERE EACH STITCH IS WATCHED**

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