

# Islamabad POST

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**A photo exhibition by Ferrante Ferranti 'From Troy to Lahore'**

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**Work underway for Gaza truce, says FM Fidan**

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**Clarke gears up for commentary stint in PSL 9**

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## Vows to steer country out of crisis

# Shehbaz Sharif back on the driving seat

Becomes 24th prime minister of Pakistan; secures 201 votes; Omar Ayub gets 92 votes

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The National Assembly on Sunday elected Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz's (PML-N) Shehbaz Sharif as the 24th elected prime minister of the country in a session hit by the ruckus created by the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI)-backed Sunni Ittehad Council (SIC) members. "Mian Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif has been elected prime minister with 201 votes. [While] Omar Ayub obtained 92 votes," announced Speaker Ayaz Sadiq. The speaker then invited Shehbaz, the only politician to be elected as the PM for the second consecutive time, to sit in the prime minister's seat and asked him to address the house. As soon as the result was announced, the SIC lawmakers started causing a commotion and chanted slogans to disrupt the Shehbaz's speech. Shehbaz's victory was expected as he enjoyed the support of seven other parties apart from the PML-N. The PM-elect has the support of the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP), Muttahida Qaumi Movement-Pakistan (MQMP), Pakistan Muslim League-Quaid (PML-Q), Balochistan Awami Party (BAP), Pakistan Muslim League-Zia (PML-Z), Istehkam-e-Pakistan Party (IPP) and National Party (NP). Making his maiden speech as the country's 24th prime minister, Shehbaz – surrounded by party lawmakers – thanked PML-N supreme Nawaz Sharif for nominating him for the coveted post, and expressed gratitude to his allies including PPP and the MQMP and others for supporting him. Taking the opportunity to highlight the country's history of political turmoil, the prime minister-elect lamented the "judicial murder" of PPP

## Joint session of Parliament called on March 9

Asif Ali Zardari to face off against Mahmood Khan Achakzai in contest for president's office

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: A joint session of the Parliament to elect the next president of Pakistan has been summoned on March 9 by newly-elected National Assembly Speaker Ayaz Sadiq. In a notification issued on Sunday, the speaker summoned the session at 10am, Saturday. The political stage is all set for a head-to-head showdown between former president Asif Ali Zardari and Pashtunkhwa Milli Awami Party chief Mahmood Khan Achakzai as both leaders move to secure allies and numerical support on Saturday ahead of the contest. The nomination papers for both candidates were filed in IHC on Saturday. Farooq H Naik and Saleem Mandviwala filed Zardari's papers while PTI leaders Sardar Latif Khosa and Omar Ayub Khan filed the papers for Achakzai before IHC Chief Justice Aamer Farooq - the presiding officer for the presidential polls. Achakzai, backed by the recently forged alliance with the Sunni Ittehad Council (SIC), flexed his political muscles, seeking the support of JUI-F chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman in a meeting at the latter's residence. However, Fazl later decided not to participate in the voting for the president. Incumbent President Dr Arif Alvi is already on an extended tenure after completing his five-year term on Sept 9 last year. Article 44(1) of the Constitution says that the president will hold office for a term of five years from the day he assumes charge, but he continues to hold the office until a successor is chosen. "This is the difference between the [two] leaderships. The House is witness that the [PML-N] has never even thought of indulging in politics of vengeance," said PM-elect Shehbaz. Elaborating on his government's plans to steer the country out of the prevailing crises,

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ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister-elect Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif addressing his maiden speech in the National Assembly as the country's 24th Prime Minister. – DNA

## Presidential election

# Fazlur Rehman 'to vote for Achakzai'

Says masses will not remain silent in the face of such blatant disregard for their rights

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (JUI-F) Emir Maulana Fazlur Rehman has said that he wants to vote for Mahmood Achakzai – the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI)-backed Sunni Ittehad Council's (SIC) candidate for the presidential election – but his party's decision demands otherwise. He, however, ruled out the possibility of joining hands with the allied parties, saying that the environment for a grand alliance is not yet there. "We will be where the opposition benches are. We will go to parliament and protest," he added while speaking to a gathering at Jamia Anwarul Uloom in Karachi on Sunday. Achakzai, the chief of Pashtun-khwa Milli Awami Party (PkMAP), has been nominated as the presidential candidate against Pakistan Peoples Party Co-chairman Asif Ali Zardari, who is a joint candidate of the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) and other political parties part of the coalition set to form a government at the Centre. The National Assembly today elected PML-N President Shehbaz Sharif as the 24th prime minister of Pakistan in a ruckus-hit session. This will be followed by the election of the country's president on March 9, with Zardari as the strongest candidate, having the support of several parties in the parliament. In a veiled jibe,

## Gohar, Omar elected unopposed PTI Chairman, SG

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: Barrister Gohar Ali Khan and Omar Ayub Khan have been elected as Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman and Secretary General unopposed respectively in the intra-party elections. The results of the party's top slots were formally declared by PTI Federal Election Commissioner Raof Hassan during a press conference here on Sunday. He further stated that PTI's Sindh, Punjab, and KP elections commissioners would formally announce the results of the provincial presidents, while elections for the slot of Balochistan President was underway. Raof Hassan said the PTI intra-party elections were held for the third time as per the guidelines set by the Supreme Court. Ashraf Jabbar and Muhammad Aslam, who voluntarily withdrew their nomination papers as candidates for the slot of PTI Chairman, as well as Returning Officers for conducting

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## Briefs

### 12 candidates contesting for 3 Senate seats

Voting for the three vacant Senate seats will take place on March 14

DNA

QUETTA: As many as 12 candidates have submitted their nomination papers for the three vacant Senate seats from Balochistan. According to the announcement of the Election Commission of Pakistan on Sunday, the submission of nomination papers to the Returning Officer for the three vacant seats of the Senate from Balochistan has been completed. The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has declared that the voting for the three vacant Senate seats from Balochistan will take place on March 14, 2024, within the premises of the Balochistan Assembly.

### Maryam approves reforms in health system

Forms body to ensure transparency

BUREAU REPORT

LAHORE: Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz has approved phase-wise reforms in health system. Chairing a meeting, the CM directed the authorities concerned to ensure that there should be no hospital in the province where doctors, paramedical staff, medicines and required medical equipment were not available. She directed for forming a health advisory council to ensure transparency. The health advisory council will include government officials, professionals and public representatives. The chief minister also called for a plan to upgrade, construct and rehabilitate BHU and RHC.

## Chant anti-govt slogans

# Pandemonium in NA as opposition resorts to protest

Imran Khan-led PTI dubs Prime Minister-elect Shehbaz Sharif 'product' of Form 47

KHAAYM ABBASI



ISLAMABAD: Members of Sunni Ittehad (PTI) protesting in front of PM-elect Shehbaz Sharif. – DNA

ISLAMABAD: Lambasting the eight-party ruling coalition in the National Assembly, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leader and Sunni Ittehad Council (SIC) lawmaker Omar Ayub Khan dubbed newly elected Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif a "product" of Form 47 – a document which provides insight into unconfirmed results of a constituency, including the number of votes cast and cancelled. The PTI claimed its mandate was stolen in the February 8 general elections and results were changed in Form 47s. The Imran Khan-founded party also claimed they won 180 NA seats as per the statistics of Form 45s. It is pertinent to mention here that Form 45, also known as the Presiding Officer's Results of

Continued on Page 06

## Xi congratulates newly-elected PM Shehbaz

Iran's ambassador to Pakistan in a message on his X social account congratulated the election of "Shahbaz Sharif" as the new PM



DNA

BEIJING: Chinese President Xi Jinping has congratulated Mian Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on his election as the Prime Minister of Pakistan for the second time. The Chinese President said that under the leadership of Shehbaz Sharif, Pakistan will set new heights of development and it will continue its traditional friendly relations. The Chinese President added that it is hoped that Pakistan will be able to achieve more achievements, strengthen

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# The political dynamics of Pak: past, present, future

Many are predicting an easy victory for Zardari, given his political stature and experience. However, the emergence of Achakzai as a presidential candidate has raised eyebrows, especially considering his association with PTI and the historical context of political alliances in Pakistan

SHAMIM SHAHID

THE upcoming presidential election in Pakistan has stirred significant interest and speculation among political circles and analysts. With Asif Ali Zardari, former president and co-chairman of the Pakistan People's Party, facing off against Mahmood Khan Achakzai, the nominated candidate of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) aligned Sunni Tehreek, the stage is set for a compelling political showdown. Many are predicting an easy victory for Zardari, given his political stature and experience. However, the emergence of Achakzai as a presidential candidate has raised eyebrows, especially considering his association with PTI and the

historical context of political alliances in Pakistan. Achakzai's candidacy, although unexpected by some, is not entirely surprising given the complex web of political relationships in the country. In the past, Achakzai and Imran Khan were part of a three-party alliance, along with Jamaat-e-Islami, indicating a history of cooperation between their respective parties. However, it is essential to scrutinize the motives behind such alliances. The political landscape in Pakistan is often shaped by various factors, including internal party dynamics, ideological considerations, and external influences. The reference to "unseen forces" and historical instances of electoral boycotts underscores the intricate interplay between different actors vying for power and influence.

The mention of the historic eighteenth constitutional amendment of April 2010 adds another layer to the ongoing political saga. This amendment, aimed at decentralizing power and strengthening democracy, has faced resistance from certain quarters within the political establishment. The perceived threat posed by progressive and democratic forces, including Zardari and his associates, further complicates the narrative. Moreover, the involvement of figures like Maulana Fazlur Rehman highlights the broader challenges facing Pakistan's political landscape. Rehman's role as a potential obstacle to electoral alliances against PTI underscores the inherent tensions and

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## Saqib Rafiq launches month-long clean-up drive

RAWALPINDI: President Chamber of Commerce and Industry Rawalpindi and Chairman Rawalpindi Waste Management Company (RWMC) Saqib Rafiq has said that on the directions of Chief Minister Punjab Maryam Nawaz Sharif a comprehensive cleaning operation plan has been launched. Month long clean Rawalpindi drive has been kicked off under Suthra Punjab vision. Saqib Rafiq further added that he personally reviewed the cleanliness drive at Committee Chowk, Waris Khan and Gwalmandi Bridge in different areas of the city. It is appreciable that RWMC workers were engaged in the cleaning drive despite the rain. The daily target is to make Rawalpindi completely zero waste. Saqib Rafiq said that RWMC has started the cleaning campaign from March 1 as per the instructions of Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif which will continue till March 31. Mechanical sweeping, road washing, street cleaning of the important roads of the city including vegetable market, bus terminals and graveyards are being given top priority. He said to establish more transfer stations in the city and widening the scope of RWMC the recommendations and suggestions have been passed to the Commissioner's Office and the Government of Punjab. "Our mission is to make Rawalpindi clean and a model city under the Suthra Punjab vision."—APP

## Commissioner emphasizes permanent solution for NallahLeh

RAWALPINDI: Commissioner Rawalpindi AmirKhattak has said that a comprehensive plan should be made to eliminate the encroachments around the NallahLeh on a permanent basis and for the long-term cleaning of the Nallah, the teams of the Public Health Department and WASA should jointly conduct a detailed review and make a feasible and that the proposal to construct a road on both sides of NallahLeh should also be reviewed. He said this while presiding over a meeting held in the commissioner's office regarding development projects. Officers of all relevant departments were present in the meeting. Commissioner Amir Khattak said that all possible resources should be used to complete the ring road project by December and the road construction work on the ring road should be completed by November 30 and all departments should work in full coordination in this regard. He said that the feasibility of signal free corridor from PirWadhai to Kuchehari has been completed and further progress will be made on this project. He said that this project is of fundamental importance for the flow of traffic in Rawalpindi. He said that Adyala Road is also being made dual carriageway and progress has been made on the summary of this project and the work on this project will be completed at the fast pace.—APP

## Cold weather, rain, snow likely at hilly areas in KP

PESHAWAR: Cold weather, rain, and snow at the hilly areas are likely in most districts of the province, an official of the Meteorological Department said here Sunday. Giving details about the unforeseen weather, the official said that snowfall on the mountains while there is a possibility of hailstorms in some districts as well and warned of landslides and road closures may occur in Chitral, Dir, Swat, Shangla, Kohistan, Mansehra and Abbottabad due to rain and snowfall. During the last 24 hours, the highest rainfall has been recorded in Timaragarh with 138 mm while in Dir it has recorded 131 mm, according to the Meteorological Department official.—APP

# APNS office-bearers: Nazafreen President, Sarmad Secy General

Imtinan Shahid as Senior Vice President, Muhammad Aslam Kazi as Vice President, Sarmad Ali as Secretary General, Syed Muhammad Munir Jilani as Joint Secretary and Shahab Zuberi as Finance Secretary of the Society; Monthly CENTRELINE again elected Member of the Executive Committee

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: The Annual Meeting of the APNS General Council

held on March 02, 2024 at APNS House, Karachi unanimously elected Nazafreen Saigol Lakhani as President, Imtinan Shahid as Senior Vice President, Muhammad Aslam Kazias Vice President, Sarmad Ali as Secretary General, Syed Muhammad Munir Jilani as Joint Secretary and Shahab Zuberi as Finance Secretary of the Society. The AGM was held under the chairmanship of Mrs. Nazafreen Saigol Lakhani, President of the Society. The Council unanimously approved the report of the Executive Committee for the year 2023-2024 as well as the Annual

Committee of the APNS for the next tenure: Daily Times, Daily Duniya, Daily Jang, Daily Khabrain, Daily Pakistan (Lahore), Daily Tjarat, Daily Ausaf,

and Weekly Nikhar elected on periodical seats. There being 07 candidates on 06 Karachi daily Seats, the Election Commission conducted the election.

AGM in a resolution, expressed its profound concern on the state of print media due to the present economic situation which has caused severe financial crisis for

outstanding dues of newspaper industry, increase the quantum of advertisements and allocate a separate share of print media in the advertising budget so that



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## PM Shahbaz, Maryam, Bilawal felicitate APNS office-bearers

Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz also congratulated the new officer bearers and hoped that they will continue their efforts for the well being of the media fraternity. She extended her all out support to the APNS

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Mian Muhammad Shahbaz Sharif has extended heartfelt congratulations to the newly elected office-bearers of the All Pakistan Newspapers Society (APNS), following the successful conclusion of their Annual Meeting at the APNS House, Karachi. He has felicitated newly-elected APNS President Nazafreen Saigol Lakhani, Secretary General Sarmad Ali, Senior Vice President Imtinan Shahid, Vice President Muhammad Aslam Kazi, Joint Secretary Syed Muhammad Munir Jilani and Finance Secretary Shahab Zuberi. Mian Muhammad Shahbaz Sharif, recognizing the importance of a vibrant and independent press,

extended his warmest wishes to the newly elected leadership. He acknowledges the crucial role that the APNS plays in upholding journalistic integrity and promoting the freedom of the press in Pakistan. "I extend my congratulations to the newly elected leadership. I hope the APNS leadership will remain committed to upholding the values of a independent and responsible. I recognize the indispensable role that the APNS plays in shaping public discourse and holding those in power to account. The press is the cornerstone of democracy, and it is imperative that we support and protect its freedom." Mian Shahbaz Sharif said in a statement. He said that under the capable leadership of President Nazafreen Saigol Lakhani and her team, the

APNS will continue to serve as a beacon of journalistic excellence and a voice for the people. Together, we will navigate the challenges ahead and strive to create an environment where the media can thrive. "My government will stand shoulder to shoulder with the APNS and the wider media fraternity, advocating for fair treatment, transparent policies, and increased support to ensure the sustainability of the print media industry." Mian Shahbaz Sharif maintained that in these times of rapid change and technological advancement, it was crucial that we adapted while staying true to our core values. The APNS had a vital role to play in shaping the future of journalism in Pakistan.

According to the press release issued by the Media Cell of Bilawal House, the PPP Chairman congratulated the newly elected President of the APNS, Nazafreen Saigol Lakhani, Secretary General Sarmad Ali, Senior Vice President Imtinan Shahid, Vice President Muhammad Aslam Kazi, Joint Secretary Syed Muhammad Munir Jilani, and Finance Secretary Shahab Zuberi. Chairman PPP also extended his congratulations to the newly elected members of the Executive Committee on their victory. Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz also congratulated the new officer bearers and hoped that they will continue their efforts for the well being of the media fraternity. She extended her all out support to the APNS.

## Mini-Budget on horizon as FBR misses back-to-back revenue targets

ISLAMABAD: In a concerning trend, the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) has not met its revenue collection goals for the second consecutive month, leading to speculation about the government's potential recourse to emergency fiscal strategies. This persistent underperformance necessitates the generation of an additional Rs 18 billion monthly throughout the fiscal year 2023-24 to mitigate the shortfall. The situation is dire enough that a deviation exceeding 1% from the target could trigger the activation of a supplementary budget, as stipulated by an agreement with the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Official reports reveal that the FBR's revenue collection fell short by 1.3% and 4.6% in January and February 2024, respectively. Insider sources have disclosed that February's collections amounted to Rs 681 billion, significantly below the targeted Rs 714 billion, resulting in a Rs 33 billion deficit. January witnessed a shortfall of Rs 9 billion, cumulatively amounting to a Rs 42 billion loss over two months. This financial discrepancy has been attributed to FBR's resistance against the Finance Minister's proposed reforms aimed at enhancing the efficiency of the tax apparatus. Allegedly, this resistance has escalated to the point of calls for a strike by senior management of the FBR, undermining the institution's operational integrity. There is speculation within the FBR that revenue metrics will improve with the appointment of a new Finance Minister, suggesting that the current downturn is a strategic maneuver to assert dominance and negotiate favorable conditions with the upcoming fiscal leadership to avoid reforms at FBR. — DNA



ISLAMABAD: PML N leaders Zeeshan Naqvi and others distributing sweets to celebrate election of Shehbaz Sharif as the prime minister. —Photo Mudassar Raja

## CM initiates polio eradication campaign in KP

SHAMIM SHAHID

PESHAWAR: Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Ali Amin Gandapur on Sunday launched polio eradication campaign in the province. In a brief ceremony at the Chief Minister's House, he administered polio drops to children, marking the commencement of the second phase of the initiative. During this phase, the polio eradication campaign will continue from March 3 to March 7 in the province. The goal is

to administer polio drops to 740,000 children, emphasizing preventive measures against the disease. For the successful execution of the polio vaccination plan, 35,000 teams have been formed. 55,000 security personnel have been appointed to ensure the safety of the polio eradication teams. Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur expressed gratitude to the security personnel and polio workers who have sacrificed their lives during previous campaigns. Gandapur affirmed the commitment to make






Khyber Pakhtunkhwa polio-free, stating, "Clearing Khyber Pakhtunkhwa of polio is our determination and priority." He appealed to the parents to ensure their children receive the polio drops and urged against boycotting the campaign due to lack of facilities. Highlighting the importance of the initiative for the safe future of children, the Chief Minister emphasized that compromises should not be made on this critical issue. He held the government responsible for providing facilities. The newly elect-

ed provincial government is determined to continue the fight against this infectious disease, he said. The Chief Minister appealed to parents, teachers, religious scholars, elected representatives and the media to collaborate with government efforts in this crucial endeavor. Earlier on, the second phase of five-day anti-polio campaign begins in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa today where polio workers visiting door to door to administer anti-polio drops to the children below the age of five.

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## National Days and Armed Forces Days

### MARCH

- March 01/Bosnia  
National Day
- March 03/Bulgaria  
National Day
- March 06/ Ghana  
Independence Day
- March 12 /Mauritius  
National Day
- March 17/Ireland  
St. Patrick's Day
- March 20/Tunisia  
Independence Day
- March 21/Namibia  
National Day
- March 25/Greece  
National Day
- March 26/Bangladesh  
National Day
- March 27/Myanmar  
Armed Forces Day

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Marriott.....051- 2826121  
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Turkish Airlines.....8494949



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Bomb Disposal.....15  
Fire Services Rawalpindi/ Islamabad.....1122 & 16  
Emergency Ambulance.1122  
& Rescue Services.4451122  
Motorway Police...9266044  
Motorway Police.9270601-20  
Women Police Stations Islamabad.....9222596  
Rawalpindi.....9270601-20



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PIA Flight Info.....114  
PIA Cargo.....9280979  
Railway Inquiry.....117  
Railway Exchange 9270831-5  
WASA Rawalpindi...5555489  
CAA.....9281092



### Hospitals

- CMH.....5611111  
MH.....5611116  
Cantt Hospital...9270907-11  
DHQ.....5556311-4  
RGH.....9290301-7  
Holy Family.....9290322-7  
PIMS.....9261170-79  
Polyclinic.....9218300-09  
Shifa International 4603666



### Departments

- CDA.....9221334-43  
CDA.....9208301-04  
Met Office.....9250360-6  
RDA.....5555864  
TMA.....5770886  
Cantonment Board 9270151-3

### Water Tank

- Islamabad.....0321-5744480

## Authorities directed to control prices during month of Ramadan

Malta Punjabi 280, Malta Swat 450 while Kino Rs 330 dozen are being sold, besides Guava Rs 280, Pomegranate Rs 400, and Bananas Rs 110 to Rs 180 per dozen. The live chicken is being sold at Rs 480 per kg

RAWALPINDI: Commissioner Rawalpindi Division Engr. Amir Khattak has directed the concerned authorities to take all possible steps to control the prices of fruits and vegetables, particularly during Ramadan ul Mubarak. According to a spokesperson, the Commissioner during a visit to Rawat Vegetable market reviewed the facilities besides inspecting prices of fruits and vegetables. The Commissioner reviewed the administrative affairs of the vegetable and fruit market in detail and talked to the people. He directed the concerned authorities that the vegetable market should further be improved in the light of the public suggestions. The supply of vegetables and fruits should be increased in the market, he ordered. Special discounts should be given

to the local farmers, he said adding, the administration should take solid steps to provide relief to the citizens, particularly during Ramadan ul Mubarak. Engr. Aamir Khattak said that a special van route from the city to the vegetable market had been started to facilitate the citizens. The administration was trying to provide relief to the three million population of Rawalpindi through the Rawat vegetable and fruit market, he said adding, the market was also promoting business activities at the regional level. The administration worked hard to set up the Rawat vegetable and fruit market, Deputy Commissioner Rawalpindi Hassan Waqar Cheema said. He informed that the administrative officers had been directed to remain present during the bidding process in the market.

The administration of the Rawalpindi vegetable and fruit market helped to ensure the supply of affordable and quality essential items at affordable rates, he added. The citizens have urged the government to enforce stringent measures against vendors who are not selling essential commodities at the prices listed by the authorities. Talking to APP here on Sunday, a consumer Mrs. Farhat said that shopkeepers are not selling food items according to the government rates and there should be a constant check of district administration. She demanded strict action against the trespassers which are making the livelihood of the public difficult. According to details, the prices of various food items increased

with every passing day including Onion Rs 200 per kg, tomato Rs 140, white potato Rs 80, and red potato Rs 110 per kg. The prices of Peas Rs 170, okra Rs 240, garlic Rs 580 ginger Rs 600 per kg, Lemon 120, cauliflower 90, capsicum 220, and eggplant 120 per kg are being sold per kilogram in the market. As far as the rates of the fruits are concerned the price of fruits including Kabuli apple 380, golden apple 280, and Iranian apple 310 rupees per kg are being sold without following the official rate issued by the district administration. Malta Punjabi 280, Malta Swat 450 while Kino Rs 330 dozen are being sold, besides Guava Rs 280, Pomegranate Rs 400, and Bananas Rs 110 to Rs 180 per dozen. The live chicken is being sold at Rs 480 per kg. —Agencies

## IFA cracks down on unhygienic food points

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad Food Authority (IFA) recently conducted inspections at various food points across the city, including Shaheen Market, Rawat Bus Stand, and Defence Housing Authority to ensure the public health and safety. Talking to APP, Director Operations of Food Authority, Dr Tahira Siddique, said that during the inspections, one food point was sealed due to unhygienic conditions, while heavy fines of Rs 110,000 were imposed on three other outlets. Additionally, notices were also served to eight food points for various violations. In a significant move, authorities confiscated 360 packets of gutka, a heavy quantity of adulterated spices, expired drinks, fruits, and vegetables. The Director of Operations of the Food Authority issued a stern warning, emphasizing that strict action would be continued against the violators. She said that these crackdowns underscored the commitment of the Islamabad Food Authority to ensure the safety and hygiene of food establishments across the city. By taking decisive action against unhygienic practices and violations, the authority aimed to protect the health and well-being of consumers. —APP

## Country slowly moving towards political stability

ISLAMABAD: Former President of the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (CCI), Dr. Shahid Rasheed Butt, said on Sunday that the nation is gradually approaching political stability. He said that the rupee's value has been stable for several months, exports are increasing, and inflation is declining, which is encouraging. He demanded that the incoming government should immediately sign a five-year deal with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to improve the overall economic situation. Shahid Rasheed Butt said in a statement issued here today that the general situation is improving, which has given some hope to the masses and the business community. —DNA

## Pakistan's hosiery export to China up 45% in 2023

The surge in hosiery exports to China is poised to have a positive impact on Pakistan's economy

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's hosiery export to China witnessed a substantial surge, marking a remarkable 45% increase in the year 2023. This significant uptick underscores the strengthening trade ties between the two nations and highlights Pakistan's growing prominence in the global textile market. Gwadar Pro reported quoting Muhammad Irfan, Trade and Investment Counselor at the Consulate General of Pakistan in Guangzhou. Several factors contributed to this notable expansion in hosiery exports. Pakistan's competitive advantage lies in its robust textile industry, which is known for its quality products and cost-effectiveness. "Overall pantyhose, tights, stockings, socks and other hosiery export from Pakistan to China in the year 2023 crossed \$14.32 million whereas in 2022 it was \$9.81 million, an increase of 45%. Hosiery & footwear made of cotton, commodity code (61159500), crossed \$11.55 million in 2023 while in 2022 it was \$ 7.61 million, up to 51%," he mentioned. "The largest Chinese delegation participated in TEXPO, one of the largest textile exhibitions in Pakistan held last year, helped increase Pakistan's export to China. This year the exhibition will also be held and I'm hoping a big increase in bilateral trade in 2024", Mohammad Irfan stated. He further said that with the momentum gained from this surge, Pakistan is well positioned to capitalize on the evolving dynamics of international trade and further enhance its economic standing on the global stage. The surge in hosiery exports to China is poised to have a positive impact on Pakistan's economy. Increased export earnings will contribute to increasing foreign exchange reserves, creating employment opportunities, and stimulating growth in the domestic textile sector, which is a vital engine of Pakistan's economy.



Managing Director Pakistan Bait-ul-Mal Syed Tariq Mahmood-UI-Hassan was called upon H.E Hamid Abbas Lafta Ambassador Republic of Iraq in Pakistan on 2nd march 2023.

ISLAMABAD: Managing Director Pakistan Bait-ul-Mal Syed Tariq Mahmood-UI-Hassan was called upon Hamid Abbas Lafta Ambassador Republic of Iraq in Pakistan. —DNA

## TiE Islamabad join hands with U.S Embassy

ISLAMABAD: TiE Islamabad and the U.S. Embassy celebrate the 10-year milestone of the Pakistan Start-up Cup, Pakistan's biggest startup competition with a capstone event. The event marked a decade of U.S. and Pakistan partnership fostering innovation, growth, and success in the entrepreneurial landscape of Pakistan. The first ever all-inclusive event for persons with disabilities, served as a pivotal moment, bringing together representatives from the government, corporate sector, investors, Entrepreneur Support Organizations (ESOs), startups and winners of the Pakistan Start-up Cup, and diverse stakeholders in the entrepreneurial ecosystem. The event was attended by [Mr. Naeem Zamindar,

Former Minister of State & Chairman Board of Investments as the Chief Guest along with Deputy Counselor for Public Affairs Valerie O'Brien of U.S. Embassy, President TiE Islamabad Mr. Saqib Ahmed, along with key figures in the entrepreneurial community. "We are thrilled to mark this significant milestone with the capstone event, bringing together the brightest minds and key players in Pakistan's startup ecosystem," said Naeem Zamindar. "This event is not just a celebration but a reflection of the incredible journey, impact, and success stories that have emerged over the past 10 years." The capstone event featured a diverse range of activities, including an Invest-

mentor's Roundtable, success stories by top startups, interactive discussions, and networking opportunities. The day also included the screening of a short documentary capturing the essence of the Pakistan Start-up Cup's 10-year journey. Valerie O'Brien said "The U.S. Mission in Pakistan is proud of our role supporting a vibrant ecosystem of entrepreneurship in Pakistan. We are committed to empowering young people to dream big, take risks, and become the job creators and change-makers that Pakistan needs." The event hosted a distinguished lineup of speakers, including international experts and industry leaders, making it a must-attend for anyone passionate about entrepreneurship and innovation in Pakistan.

With an emphasis on international collaboration, the capstone event aimed to strengthen cross-border partnerships, showcase global startup networks, and highlight the achievements of Pakistani startups on the global stage. —APP

## Cops directed to take strict action against kite flying ban violators

RAWALPINDI: City Police Officer (CPO) Rawalpindi Syed Khalid Hamdani has directed the police officers to take strict action in accordance with the law against kite flying ban violators. According to a police spokesman, kite flying ban violators were being dealt with an iron hand and no one would be allowed to violate the ban. He informed that Rawalpindi district Police had arrested more than 950 kite sellers and flyers and recovered over 77,000 kites and 1300 strings from their possession during this season. During the raids conducted in different city and cantonment areas, Police also recovered 04 rifles, 23 pistols and 06 loudspeakers. He informed that Rawalpindi District Police had also urged the citizens to ensure that their children do not violate the ban on kite flying imposed by the provincial government otherwise strict action would be taken against the violators. The CPO had requested the parents to stop their children from getting involved in such activities as a crackdown against kite flyers had already been accelerated in the city, he added. Special squads had been formed to net the violators while deputy superintendents of police and station house officers were also taking part in the operation. He said that the officers concerned had been directed to utilise all available resources to control the kite flying and to net the ban violators and the kite sellers. The ban violators were being dealt with an iron hand and no one would be allowed to violate the law and indulge in kite flying and selling, he added. The use of metal string for kite flying results in the loss of human lives therefore, all-out efforts are made to stop kite flying, he said adding, a special awareness campaign is also being run to control the ban violation. He said that the Inspector General of Police, had issued orders to speed up crackdown against kite flying and aerial firing. He said Rawalpindi district police had adopted a zero-tolerance policy against kite sellers, flyers, aerial firing and strict action was being taken against the violators. The people had also been requested to report on 15 against kite flying and aerial firing so that such notorious elements could be immediately rounded up, he added. The parents, teachers, scholars and civil society were also taken into confidence to play their role in preventing the celebration of Basant. —APP

## Economic recovery should be priority for new govt: BMP

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: "The Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry's Businessmen Panel (BMP) has asked the upcoming government to give priority to the economic recovery, emphasizing the necessity of joint efforts to tackle Pakistan's economic difficulties. Addressing a meeting held here today, the Businessmen Panel (BMP) Chairman and the FPCCI former president Mian Anjum Nisar expressed confidence in the country's ability to overcome these challenges and highlighted the new government should fulfill the commitment to eradicating poverty and unemployment. The upcoming government should remain steadfast in its commitment to guide Pakistan through its current economic and political challenges, with a focus on unity, effective governance, and public welfare. The country has had trouble raising enough money to cover its expenses. Due to the low tax-to-GDP ratio, borrowing and outside help are heavily relied upon to close the fiscal imbalance.

**"SAY NO TO CORRUPTION"**

GOVERNMENT OF PAKISTAN  
MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS

**NATIONAL HIGHWAY AUTHORITY**  
(FINANCE WING-REVENUE SECTION)

**INVITATION FOR BIDS**

**PROCUREMENT OF SERVICES ON PERCENTAGE (%) SHARING BASIS FOR OPERATIONS, MANAGEMENT & MAINTENANCE (OM&M) CONTRACTS OF 14x ETTM TOLL PLAZAS OF CENTRAL ZONE REGION ON NATIONAL HIGHWAYS ON MINIMUM NET GUARANTEED MONTHLY REVENUE BASIS FOR A PERIOD ENDING TILL 30.06.2025.**

1. National Highway Authority (NHA) invites Bids from the prospective bidders having:

- Registered with Income Tax and Sales Tax & also on Active Taxpayer List of the Federal Board of Revenue.
- Must be registered with Pakistan Engineering Council having valid certificate of Category **0-5 or above** for FY 2023-24.
- The Bidder already working with NHA must not be defaulter of NHA. Further bidders have to produce "No Shortfall (Installment & Tax) Certificate" during last 05x years (including current financial year) till bid submission date from concerned NHA Office i.e Revenue Receipt Section NHA HQ. In case of non-production of No Shortfall Certificate (Installment + Tax) bids will not be accepted for submission.
- However, under consideration arbitration claims on Covid & Flood will not be considered as shortfall.
- The bidder is required to submit **Bid Security @ 2% of their quoted bid price** alongwith the bid documents to NHA.

2. Detail of Toll Plazas are as under:

S#.	REGION	ZONE	MANUAL TOLL PLAZAS	NOs
1.	PUNJAB NORTH	CENTRAL ZONE	a) Chenab (NBC) (N-5) KM 1368+100	12
			b) Chenab (SBC) (N-5) KM 1369+300	
			c) Gujranwala (N-5) KM 1311+000	
			d) Harro (N-5) KM 1600+000	
			e) IMDCW (N-75) KM 17+800	
			f) Iqbal Shaheed (N-5) KM 1628+000	
			g) Jhelum (N-5) (NBC KM 1429+900 SBC KM 1430+950)	
			h) Okara (N-5) KM 1117+500	
			i) Mandra (N-5) KM 1505+000	
			j) Qutbal (N-80) KM 18+000	
k) Sangjani (N-5) KM 1560+000				
l) Terraki (N-5) KM 1470+500				
2.	PUNJAB SOUTH		a) Harrappa (N-5) KM 1079+800	02
			b) Khanbela (N-5) KM 731+174	
<b>Total: 14</b>				

3. Bidding documents, containing detailed terms and conditions, method of procurement (Single Stage - Two Envelopes Procedure), Submission of Bids, Bid Security, Bid Validity, Opening of Bid, Evaluation Criteria etc. can be downloaded free of cost from the website mentioned below from **March 05, 2024**. All Prospective Bidders are also advised to follow the said website ([www.nha.gov.pk](http://www.nha.gov.pk)) for updates of schedule and addendum(s), if any.

4. The Bids, prepared in accordance with the instructions in the Bidding documents, must reach at the address mentioned below, on or before **March 19, 2024 till 1100 Hours**. Technical Bids (hard & soft copies) will be opened on the same day at **1130 Hours** by the Tender opening Committee in presence of the representatives of the bidder.

5. This Advertisement is also available on PPRA website at [www.ppra.org.pk](http://www.ppra.org.pk).

**MEMBER (CENTRAL-ZONE)**  
National Highway Authority  
NHA Complex, Shahpur Interchange, Thokar Niaz Baig, Multan Road, Lahore  
Tel: 042-99232696, Email: [member-c-z@nha.gov.pk](mailto:member-c-z@nha.gov.pk)  
Website: [www.ebidding.nha.gov.pk](http://www.ebidding.nha.gov.pk) PID(I)5245/23



## Briefs

## New govt to ensure prudent utilization of public money

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: The Ferozpur Road Industrial Association Lahore (FRIA) has said that in a bid to ensure prudent utilization of public money, the upcoming government should introduce an austerity plan that included ban on purchase of all vehicles and ban on purchase of machinery and equipment.

Fria senior vice chairman Shahbaz Aslam said that there shall be a complete ban on purchase of all vehicles except ambulances, buses for educational institutions, solid waste vehicles, tractors, fire fighting vehicles, motor bikes; and there shall be ban on creation of new posts under PSDP/current budget during Financial Year 2023-24. The government's austerity measure needed at the time when the country's budget deficit was increasing. The consolidated fiscal deficit has been recorded at 2.3 percent of GDP (Rs2407.8 billion) in first six months (July-December) of the current fiscal year FY2024 against 2.0 percent of GDP (Rs.1683.5 billion) last year. While a primary surplus witnessed a continuous improvement due to contained growth in non-mark-up spending relative to markup payments. Primary surplus improved to Rs.1812.2 billion (1.7 percent of GDP) during Jul-Dec FY2024 from the surplus of Rs.889.6 billion (1.1 percent of GDP) last year. Total expenditures grew by 45 percent to Rs.9261.8 billion during Jul-Dec FY2024 against Rs.6382.4 billion last year. Within total, current spending increased by 41 percent mainly due to a 64 percent rise in markup payments during the first six months of the current fiscal year, according to the latest data of the ministry of finance.

Shahbaz Aslam called for keeping check on government expenditure and high cost of debt servicing, as the federal government debt has surged to a staggering Rs64 trillion, reflecting an alarming increase of over 29 percent in just one year. He said that this unsettling trend has raised concerns about fiscal sustainability and the adverse impacts of steep currency devaluation come at a time when the World Bank has cautioned Pakistan about the growing risks of its macro-economic framework.

## Ahsan advises PTI to stop mudslinging, serve Pakistan

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) leader Ahsan Iqbal Sunday advised the Pakistan Tehreek e-Insaf (PTI) leaders to stop its mudslinging campaign and focus its attention and energies on serving people as the country needed national unity at this time. "PTI has a track record of instigating chaos and blaming others for involvement in electoral rigging", he said while talking to a Private news channel outside the National Assembly. He said that the PTI founder will not receive the National Reconciliation Ordinance (NRO), adding, "he must demonstrate his innocence in court." He also emphasized political stability, which, he states, is vital for achieving economic stability in the country. —APP

## Most serious challenge for new govt to tackle inflation

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: The Disposable Food Packaging Association (DFPA) Ahsan Shahid has said that the most serious challenge to the economy for the new government in the current fiscal year would be inflation, because it is already hitting economy due to continuous rise in oil prices and depreciation of local currency. Ahsan Shahid

## Alvi for more coop between Pak, Azerbaijan audit institutions

The President also felicitated President Ilham Aliyev of Azerbaijan on his re-election in the Presidential elections held on 7th February 2024 and hoped that the bilateral relations between Pakistan and Azerbaijan would be further strengthened during his tenure

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi has called for increasing cooperation between the supreme audit institutions of Pakistan and Azerbaijan for sharing best auditing practices to enhance transparency and financial accountability. He said that public sector accounting was a critical component of financial management within government organizations that helped ensure transparency and accountability in government spending. The President expressed these views while talking to the visiting Chairman of the Chamber of Accounts of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Mr Vugar Gulmammadov, who along with his delegation, called on him, at Aiwan-e-Sadr, today. The Auditor General of Pakistan (AGP), Mr Muhammad Ajmal Gondal, and officials of AGP also attended the meeting.

Chairman of the Chamber of Accounts of Azerbaijan (CAA), Mr Vugar Gulmammadov, briefed the President about the Memorandum



of Understanding (MOU) signed between the Supreme Audit Institution of Azerbaijan, CAA, and the Supreme Audit Institution of

Pakistan, AGP, for peer reviews of public accounts. He said that the MOU would help deepen friendly relations between the

two countries. The President lauded the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding between AGP and CAA,

saying that it would increase cooperation between two countries in the field of Public Sector Auditing. He added that coop-

eration between CAA and AGP would be mutually beneficial for both the countries. He also appreciated AGP's role in carrying out peer reviews of the Supreme Audit Institution (SAI) of Azerbaijan. Talking to the delegation, the President said that Pakistan accorded special importance to its relations with Azerbaijan, which were based on common faith, shared history, and people-to-people contacts. He stated that promoting cultural exchanges and strengthening cooperation in the cultural and economic fields was vital for fostering understanding and mutually beneficial development between the two brotherly nations. He termed the cooperation between Pakistan and Azerbaijan "pivotal for promoting peace, stability, development in the region". The President also felicitated President Ilham Aliyev of Azerbaijan on his re-election in the Presidential elections held on 7th February 2024 and hoped that the bilateral relations between Pakistan and Azerbaijan would be further strengthened during his tenure.

## Comprehensive relief initiative for Gwadar

In this time of adversity, the Pakistan Red Crescent Society stands as a beacon of hope, determined to alleviate the suffering of those affected by the wrath of nature, Chairman Leghari added

DNA

ISLAMABAD: A comprehensive relief initiative is underway for Gwadar, the focal point of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), and its neighboring areas following heavy rainfall that caused significant damage in Balochistan. This was stated by Chairman Sardar Shahid Ahmed Leghari of the Pakistan Red Crescent Society (PRCS), according to Gwadar Pro. The aim of this initiative is to swiftly address the urgent needs of the communities affected by the natural disaster. In an Emergency Response meeting attended by the Secretary General and key department heads, Chairman Leghari issued clear directives

to immediately start rescue and relief operations. "We have activated the operations room at PRCS National headquarters to closely monitor the evolving situation," Chairman Leghari stated, highlighting the organization's proactive approach in crisis management. In collaboration with program leaders and the provincial branch in Balochistan, PRCS has developed a detailed action plan focused on providing timely assistance to those affected by the severe weather. Assessment teams have been deployed at district and provincial levels to evaluate the extent of the damage and carry out essential rescue and relief efforts. Chairman Leghari emphasized the importance of quickly mobilizing relief supplies from warehouse

reserves to meet the immediate needs of the affected population. The action plan prioritizes providing essential household non-food items, deploying healthcare units, establishing public health infrastructure, promoting personal hygiene practices, and ensuring access to clean drinking water for those affected. "Maintaining transparent communication, PRCS is in constant contact with the Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA) and local district administrations to coordinate efforts and optimize resource utilization," Chairman Leghari affirmed. Highlighting the urgency of coordinated efforts, Chairman Leghari reiterated the organization's commitment to swiftly assisting those affected in Gwadar

and surrounding districts of Balochistan. Despite the challenging circumstances caused by the relentless rainfall, PRCS remains dedicated to providing assistance in every possible way. The recent heavy rainfall has caused extensive damage in Gwadar, the Kech district, and other parts of Balochistan, disrupting daily life and traffic along the Coastal Highway. wadar has been declared a disaster zone by the Balochistan provincial government in response to the alarming aftermath of the torrential rains. In this time of adversity, the Pakistan Red Crescent Society stands as a beacon of hope, determined to alleviate the suffering of those affected by the wrath of nature, Chairman Leghari added.

## Mouthwatering Chappli Kababs attract customers

ISLAMABAD: Chappli Kababs, a delectable food of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa here Sunday attracted food lovers in droves following heavy torrential rain lashing the province since past Thursday night. Chappli Kababs' outlets at Firdus, Warsak Road, Ring Road, Qissa Khwani, Fawara Chowk in cantonment, board bazaar and Namak Mandi in Peshawar are flooded with foodies on Sunday, enjoying the mouthwatering spicy cuisine of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa with different sauces, salad, yogurt and Qehwa (green tea) amid cold breeze that turned weather chilly in the province. So many customers are seen taking its parcels to keep their loved ones warm at homes during rainy weather. "In a rains and snowfalls weather, Chappli Kabab is my favourite food as it keep me warm and healthy," said Riazul Haq, a former PST teacher while talking to APP at Qissa Khwani bazaar where he was enjoying the delectable cuisine with traditional Qehwa along with friends. In spite of significant increase in its prices in Peshawar, great rush of buyers are being witnessed on shops of Chappli Kabab at Qissa Khwani where its sale continued till late night. Against fixation of Rs550 per kilogram official rate, the commodity is being sold on Rs800 to Rs900 per KG that needed to be checked by the district administration, he added. Chappli Kabab's history dated back to Mughals era as they had great influence on culture, art, architecture and foods in subcontinent. Derived its Chapli name from Pashto word Chaprikh means 'flat', this key dish of Peshawar-origin had gradually expanded to other provinces of Pakistan even beyond borders. This traditional food item figures high on hotels and restaurants' menus in south Asian countries including Pakistan. The hotels and restaurants' business dealing with food services of Chappli Kabab, grilled fish, Peshawari Polao, Chikens Achar, Haleem, Nehari, Panchari, Baryani and others shined in Peshawar where people are being seen in front of these shops in substantial numbers to enjoy these delicious traditional food with their loved ones at homes.

## CTP designate three places for cricket fans

RAWALPINDI: City Traffic Police (CTP) have designated three places for the fans of Pakistan Super League (PSL), to park their vehicles. According to a CTP spokesman, CTP had announced a traffic plan on eve of PSL to facilitate citizens and cricket fans. He informed that the cricket fans would park their vehicles at Civil Aviation Ground, Rawal Road, Shaheen Chowk, Rawal Road or Government Postgraduate College, Satellite. The media persons would park their vehicles at Poultry Institute, Shamsabad with entry from Benazir Bhutto Road, he added. During the arrival and departure of the national and international players, the Benazir Bhutto Road (Murree Road) would remain closed from Faizabad to Stadium Road (Double Road). During the matches, the Stadium Road would be closed for traffic from both sides. According to the plan approved by the City Traffic Officer Taimur Khan, a total of 365 traffic police officers.—APP

## Exports to Europe falls 8pc despite GSP plus status

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Raising grave concern over the continued falling trend of Pakistan exports the Pakistan Industrial and Traders Associations Front (PIAF) said that Pakistan's exports to European countries dipped year-on-year by 7.54 percent in the first seven months of the current fiscal year, mainly due to reduced demand for Pakistani goods in western, southern and northern Europe. PIAF Chairman Faheem-ur-Rehman Saigol, quoting the latest figures, said that this decline in export proceeds indicated the challenges faced by Pakistani exporters in these economically uncertain times despite having preferential access to 27-member EU countries. The export proceeds from these countries fell to \$4.866 billion in July-January FY24, a drop

from the \$5.263bn recorded in the corresponding months of the previous year, according to figures compiled by the State Bank of Pakistan. In FY23, exports to the EU dropped 4.41pc to \$8.188bn from \$8.566bn in the preceding fiscal year. However, the decline in exports was seen despite the Generalised System of Preferences Plus (GSP+) scheme. The PIAF Chairman said that in October 2023, the European Parliament unanimously voted to extend the GSP+ status for another four years until 2027 for developing countries, including Pakistan, to enjoy duty-free or minimum duty on exports to the European market. Western Europe, which includes countries such as Germany, the Netherlands, France, Italy and Belgium, accounts for the largest portion of Pakistan's exports to the EU. However, there has been a significant decrease of 13.85pc in exports to this region. The export val-

ue stood at \$2.393bn in the first seven months of FY24, down from \$2.778bn during the same period last year. While exports to western, southern and northern Europe have seen a decline, there is a silver lining in the form of an uptick in exports to eastern Europe. Exports to southern Europe saw a paltry decline of 0.22pc to \$1.743bn in 7MFY24 from \$1.747bn over the corresponding period of last year. In this region, exports to Spain saw a growth of 5.67pc to \$856.423 m in 7MFY24 from \$810.461m over the last year. Exports to Italy stood at \$649.433m in 7MFY24 against \$661.932m over the last year, indicating a decline of 1.88pc. However, exports to northern Europe have not done well, recording a 7.59pc decline. The export value to this region stood at \$0.365bn this year, down from \$0.395bn over the corresponding months of the previous year.

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## Geocide in Palestine

WE are entering the climax of the sadistic experiment to determine whether millions of Palestinians will be expelled from Palestine, or whether the Palestinians will hold on to their land. What happens will depend on whether Europe and the US secure another overseas colony or whether the Israeli colonial regime will fall in a few years in the face of greater native demography and resistance. Will we have a new North America or Australia, where the natives were eradicated and white-framed states were erected, functional for Western world domination, or will we have another Algeria or South Africa where the natives defeated the European colonial plan? In the status quo prior to the October 7 Gaza uprising, the Israeli regime was inevitably headed for collapse. In the three zones of Palestine (the occupied territories, Gaza, and the West Bank), nearly 8 million native Palestinians are witnessing a higher birth rate and a much younger population, compared to the Jewish Israelis, who number less than 7 or even less than 6 million, alongside increasing abandonment of the territory. To survive, this Western stronghold in Asia had to exterminate or expel millions of Palestinians from Palestine, and so I argued in other articles. "The televised genocide and mass ethnic cleansing of the Palestinians underscore a crucial agenda: the concerted efforts by Europe and the US to reshape Israel's trajectory and secure a permanent foothold in one of the world's key geopolitical arenas. Over the past two centuries, we've witnessed a form of colonialism that involves establishing Western strongholds by eradicating indigenous populations. This model is evident in countries like Canada, the USA, Australia, and New Zealand, reflecting the expectations that Europe and the USA harbor for Palestine. In their eyes, the Palestinians are deemed inconsequential, akin to ants, amidst the allure of significant geopolitical gains." Netanyahu himself, in his speech at the UN, in September, boasted about what could be the ultimate Israeli triumph. He showed a map from which the West Bank and Gaza had disappeared and on which he depicted the planned Ben Gurion Channel with an energetic stroke of a felt-tip pen. By the way, that speech at the UN made by Netanyahu is one of the factors in the Gaza uprising of October 7. The Ben Gurion Channel, a possible replacement for the Suez Channel with a course between "Eilat" and Gaza, is projected to run simultaneously in both directions, more than double the vessel capacity of the Egyptian channel, and would give "Israel" and the West a position of dominance over a large chunk of world trade. The stakes are high to establish dominance at one end of the Red Sea shipping corridor with the Ben Gurion Channel, so it is easy to understand why the other end of the Red Sea conveyor belt, Yemen, today continues to be bombed by the US and the UK as it has been for the past nine years. That is why this experiment of colonial engineering is carried out by a laboratory "technician", Netanyahu, who is neither crazy nor acting irrationally when he exterminates thousands of Palestinians, displaces hundreds of thousands inside the Strip, leads millions to starvation, and destroys all the bases of human survival. There are the masterminds of the experiment behind it, Europe and the USA, with an incessant supply of bombs or at least, with full institutional and economic backing.

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Editor-in-Chief: Ansar Mahmood Bhatti  
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Phone: 051-2266165 / 051-2261960

Off: Awan Plaza, Block 18-A, G-8 Markaz Islamabad



## Growing 'high fence' in US

NATIONAL security" is the most grandiose reason for the US to build a "small yard and high fence" type of trade and industrial protectionism, which has become the "conventional weapon" of the US strategy against China. Now the question is, can the industry inside the high fence be safe and sound to renew the dream of "making America great again"? Today, China's manufacturing can achieve results in the field of electric vehicles (EV), 5G equipment, drones, as well as many others, and produce the world's most inexpensive and market-oriented industrial products. The capability we are talking about here is not only the ability to make technological breakthroughs and the ability to fully support production and manufacture on a large scale, but also the ability of the Chinese people. This ability makes it impossible for the US to completely "decouple" from China, and even more impossible to completely replace Chinese manufacturing. Chinese EVs can be banned, but what about the spare parts, the machines and equipment, and the raw materials to produce them? Imagine, any piece of Chinese manufacturing, including toys, furniture, instruments, electronic equipment - as long as they are remote-control electronic devices or installed with AI accessories, they may become security issues related to the target of the crackdown. If the US government insists on blocking Chinese manufacturing as its main policy direction, we can expect that the next administration to be primarily focused on dealing with Made-in-China products. This singular focus will create a self-made vortex that will require a significant amount of energy and taxpayer money to address. Washington will need to design a new industrial system to protect national security, which will be a costly endeavor. Curbing the entry of Chinese products into the US market has already proven to be expensive for the US government. The replacement of Huawei and ZTE equipment in rural and remote areas, where these products were prevalent, was a significant financial burden. The Federal Communications Commission has established a \$9 billion fund to expand 5G mobile broadband service to rural areas in the country. But to this day, most of that money is still floating in the air, while Huawei and ZTE have long started to work on 6G products. The list of Made-in-China products to be blocked in the US continues to grow, including EVs, drones, Xinjiang cotton, cargo handling equipment. While it is possible for US companies to manufacture these products, they may not be able to do so as cheaply or with the same level of quality as Chinese manufacturers. For example, according to the Association for Uncrewed Vehicle Systems International, Chinese drones dominate more than 90 percent of the US consumer market, 70 percent of the enterprise market and 92 percent of the first responder market. It raises the question of which US company is capable of replacing Chinese drone manufacturers in terms of market dominance and quality. It is accurate to say that Washington, while recognizing China's ability to make high-end breakthroughs, underestimated the ability of the Chinese people, specifically the explosive power of the combination of their ability and market stimulus.

## Putin's message to the United States

Dr. Muhammad Akram Zaheer



Putin's main presentation delved into Russian history, explaining its formation centuries ago and drawing comparisons with the formation of Eastern Europe. He argued that Ukraine had always been a part of Russia, both physically and linguistically. Though unstated, implicit in his argument was the notion that Ukraine is an integral part of Russia and the invasion represents a return to an older reality. Consequently, according to Putin, Russian...

RUSSIAN President Vladimir Putin undertook an unprecedented action last week when a two-hour press conference intended for the American public. It didn't quite fit the conventional definition of a press conference, as Tucker Carlson, a talk show host perceived as sympathetic to Russia, was the sole reporter present. Nor was it strictly an interview, as Putin predominantly spoke without the benefit of questions. In a way, this format enhanced its value, allowing Putin to articulate his views in a manner that might not have been possible with questions framed from an American perspective. What emerged was a distinctly Russian perspective on the war in Ukraine, presenting Putin as a seemingly reasonable and thoughtful individual. While he made some dubious claims, it's acknowledged that leaders often make such assertions, even those who project statesmanship. Putin's conduct conveyed to the American public that his position is not entirely baseless. He emphasized his role as a Russian patriot working in the interest of his country, discouraging any comparison to figures like Stalin. Furthermore, he demonstrated extensive knowledge, surpassing that of most politicians. Though aided by pre-prepared questions, Putin gave the impression of a sophisticated thinker, showcasing Russia as governed by an adept leader. However, due to the interview's length and complexity, there's a possibility that some of the American public might have tuned out early, missing parts of the conversation. The historical context, the intended American audience and the remarkably detailed description of Russia and its history seem to be setting the stage for negotiations. In defense of Russian attack, Putin accused the United States and NATO of dishonesty and duplicity in dealing with Russia, which he argued was simply pursuing its historical imperative. This wasn't an ordinary program, nor

was it a self-indulgent rambling; Putin's emphasis on the failure of negotiations in Turkey at the war's outset makes this clear. Putin's main presentation delved into Russian history, explaining its formation centuries ago and drawing comparisons with the formation of Eastern Europe. He argued that Ukraine had always been a part of Russia, both physically and linguistically. Though unstated, implicit in his argument was the notion that Ukraine is an integral part of Russia and the invasion represents a return to an older reality. Consequently, according to Putin, Russian actions in Ukraine constitute a special military operation rather than an act of war. He also touched on Poland, suggesting that Poland and Lithuania are renegades inseparable from Russia. The discussion on Russian history was lengthy but not merely academic. Putin's argument was that history connects a place to its environment and inhabitants, giving Russia the right, in this case, to make claims on foreign territory. He subtly slipped in claims to the region that could be dismissed or overlooked, laying the foundation for Russian claims in Poland. Some of Putin's statements were confusing. For instance, he claimed that the current Ukrainian government and its predecessors were Nazis and therefore enemies of Russia. He cited collaborators before concluding that Ukraine is a remnant of Nazi Germany and therefore hostile to Russia and other countries that fought against Hitler. This left me puzzled, as every German-occupied country had collaborators, from France to the Netherlands, etc. Some may have been ideologically aligned with Nazis, but all sought to survive or prosper. Putin has proven to be sophisticated, so he must understand what he says and likely depends on the world not taking his claims seriously. Elsewhere, while expressing his willingness to negotiate, Putin mentioned that the United States

was harming itself by using the dollar to force foreign powers to align with its worldview. He then made disconcerting comments, stating that China's economy dwarfs that of the United States and that its economic future is bright. It's as if the reality of China has been overlooked in the two years since Ukraine was attacked. He said this in the context of claiming that a new economic order is emerging and that for that to happen, China must lead it. It's interesting that Putin's deeply analytical remarks, even if some parts are debatable, concluded with obviously erroneous claims, likely due to fatigue. Another point that caught my attention was his comments about Russian intercontinental hypersonic missiles. The speed and maneuverability of hypersonics make defending against an attack very difficult. The United States has not yet deployed a hypersonic missile and there is no evidence that it is developing an intercontinental version. If Russian intercontinental hypersonic missile is as capable as Putin suggested, then that may have been the most significant aspect of his statement. The remainder of Putin's comments comprised complaints about NATO and the United States and his insistence that the uprising in Kyiv in 2014 was the real start of the war. He did not explain how Russia could have ignored such a significant threat for so long. As the president of a modern nation-state, Putin is obligated to elucidate his policies to his people and seek to influence foreign governments and public opinions. The objective is not solely truthfulness, but rather persuasiveness, strategically applying pressure on other governments. It can be observed that Russia has embraced modernity, adeptly balancing the presentation of truth and myths, even allowing Carlson some opportunities for refutation. Putin perceived him as a friendly yet unpredictable figure, leading to a cautious approach with limited engagement.

## New Govt: Leveraging CPEC-2's Agriculture component

Qamar Bashir



The government should clearly communicate to China its focus on immediate relief measures. Negotiations should prioritize projects with a faster turnaround time that directly impact essential food items. This approach will not only address the immediate needs of the population but also lay the foundation for long-term agricultural sustainability. Side by side, the government should leverage CPEC 2.0 to collaborate with China on setting up infrastructure projects for the transportation and storage of agricultural goods

THE immediate challenge facing the upcoming government of Mr. Shahbaz Sharif will be to provide urgent relief to the people bearing the brunt of high petroleum and commodity prices, soaring unemployment rates, and hyperinflation. The economic and financial advisors of the PML(N) and establishment are most likely considering a range of measures to alleviate these hardships. These measures may include stabilizing essential food supplies through targeted agricultural support, streamlined procurement processes, steady flow of food items to the market, providing targeted subsidies, improving distribution channels and enhancing transparency in supply chains. Besides providing direct relief measures such as cash transfers and utility bill assistance. Instead, the government should prioritize leveraging the agricultural components of CPEC-2 to provide self-sustained, permanent relief to the common man. This is crucial, considering that roughly 34.5% of Pakistan's population, or approximately 69.58 million to 81.38 million people, are in need of immediate relief. Addressing agriculture-related challenges through CPEC-2 becomes even more pronounced when considering the scale of the population affected. In Pakistan, the agriculture sector is of paramount importance, as it directly or indirectly employs between 62% and 64% of the population, which translates to roughly 99 million to 103 million people. Contributing approximately 18.5% to 22.35% of Pakistan's GDP, the agricultural sector holds immense potential for growth. Doubling its efficiency and productivity could propel its contribution to a staggering 37% to 44.7%, significantly bolstering the national economy. This remarkable surge would be fueled by increased output, reduced waste, export opportunities, and job creation across various industries underscoring agriculture's crucial role in the nation's economy and the livelihoods of its citizens. The new government, facing significant financial challenges with a debt obligation of over \$25 billion, equivalent to the entire yearly exports of the country, needs to prioritize the agricultural component of CPEC 2.0 as the cornerstone of its economic strategy to directly address the crucial issue of stabilizing essential food prices. China and Pakistan with a view to deepen cooperation in the agriculture sector had established a Joint Working Group (JWG) and signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) in November 2018 aimed at enhancing agricultural productivity, technology adoption, and value addition, leading to food security and economic prosperity. The JWG had held various meetings, focusing on crucial areas such as capacity building, germplasm resources exchange, agriculture product processing modernization, technology extension, fisheries sector boosting, and establishing Foot-and-Mouth Disease-free zones in Pakistan. JWG also prioritized enhancing the skills and knowledge of Pakistani

farmers, improving crop and livestock varieties, reducing post-harvest wastage, facilitating technology transfer, ensuring livestock health, and enhancing access to market information and trade opportunities. In addition, Several protocols were signed to export agricultural commodities from Pakistan to China and involve Chinese businesses in Pakistan's agriculture sector. Chinese enterprises like M/s Royal Group and CMEC had initiated projects for genetic improvements in buffalo and dairy farming, and large-scale farming and processing industry for chili crops, respectively. Additionally, Qingfa seeds has introduced high-quality seed production methods for canola crop and established farmer training centers, focusing on modern farming techniques and advanced oil extraction facilities. While significant milestones have been achieved, they have fallen short of expectations. To achieve the full potential of CPEC-2, a high level of political commitment is required from both the newly elected government and the establishment. Additionally, all stakeholders must agree to expedite implementation. This should be coupled with simplification of procedures, creating a corruption-free environment, streamlining bureaucracy, fostering public-private partnerships, and ensuring transparency and communication. These factors are key to building trust and ensuring the successful implementation of CPEC-2. Foremost, the government should negotiate with China for the swift transfer of technologies related to high-yielding, drought-resistant crops. This can provide immediate relief by boosting domestic production of essential food items in the next planting season. Additionally, prioritizing training programs for farmers on these new technologies will ensure their effective utilization. The government should clearly communicate to China its focus on immediate relief measures. Negotiations should prioritize projects with a faster turnaround time that directly impact essential food items. This approach will not only address the immediate needs of the population but also lay the foundation for long-term agricultural sustainability. Side by side, the government should leverage CPEC 2.0 to collaborate with China on setting up infrastructure projects for the transportation and storage of agricultural goods. Negotiating subsidized tariffs for transporting essential food items from production centers to major consumption areas will reduce costs and ensure wider availability of affordable staples like wheat, sugar, and oil. Additionally, negotiations should focus on the development of cold chain infrastructure within the CPEC 2.0 framework. This will minimize spoilage of fresh vegetables, fruits, and milk and would cover all parts of food production and distribution, from the provision of agriculture input like seeds and fertilizers, to farms and processing, to storage and transportation. It also includes plans for cold-water fish farming in Northern Pakistan areas with an abundant

variety of freshwater fish habitats. To truly revitalize Pakistan's agricultural sector, the new government needs to adopt a broader strategy alongside CPEC 2.0. Firstly, the focus should be on cultivating water-efficient, high-value crops like fruits, vegetables, and nuts. These crops not only cater to the demands of water-scarce Middle Eastern countries but also provide lucrative export opportunities. Creating a business-friendly environment for foreign investment through simplified regulations, tax breaks, and dedicated agricultural investment zones will attract foreign companies to invest in processing facilities, controlled-environment agriculture, and modern irrigation systems. Secondly, encouraging Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) between Pakistani and foreign companies in areas like contract farming, seed development, and knowledge sharing will leverage foreign expertise while benefiting Pakistani farmers with better technology and market access. Promoting cooperative societies among small-scale farmers will enable them to pool resources, negotiate better prices, and adopt modern practices more easily. Thirdly, providing training programs for farmers on efficient irrigation, soil management, and post-harvest handling will empower them to maximize yields and minimize losses, improving overall productivity. Negotiating trade agreements with water-scarce Middle Eastern and Western nations for the exchange of agricultural products and technology will open up new markets and opportunities. Facilitating technology transfer from Western countries in areas like precision agriculture, data-driven farming, and drought-resistant crop varieties will enhance efficiency and long-term sustainability. Developing a strong national brand for Pakistani agricultural products, highlighting quality, freshness, and sustainable production practices, can attract premium prices in international markets. By implementing these comprehensive strategies, Pakistan can open its agricultural sector to the world, attracting investment, expertise, and new markets. This will lead to a revitalized agricultural sector, a boost to the national economy, and ultimately, a more robust and sustainable food system for the nation. This strategic approach, while complemented by other essential measures, offers the most powerful path towards achieving food security and alleviating the burden on the nation. **Transparency and Oversight:** By strategically leveraging CPEC 2.0's agricultural components, the new government can expedite improvements in essential food production, storage, and distribution. This will lead to increased availability and lower prices, providing much-needed relief to the Pakistani people. - The writer is Former Press Secretary to the President



## Briefs

## Shehbaz Sharif back on the driving seat

FROM PAGE 01  
Shehbaz said that people from all walks of life have to come together to change the country's destiny and overcome the challenges. Addressing the economic crunch faced by the country, the PML-N leader highlighted that out of the Rs12,300 billion generated by the country, Rs7,300 billion is given to the provinces under the National Finance Commission award and the government faces a whopping Rs7000 billion deficit due to services charges worth up to Rs8,000 billion. "Where will the money come for development, health and education sectors? From where will the armed forces' government employees' salaries be paid?" "All this is being afforded by loans throughout the years [...]. This is the biggest challenge faced by the country today," he noted. "All of our salaries are being paid via taxes. Does such a situation warrant such hooliganism?" he said while referring to the slogans and chants being raised by the PTI-backed SIC opposition members. On the issue of exorbitant electricity bills, Shehbaz lamented that the circular debt (electricity) stands at Rs23,000 billion as only Rs28,000 worth of recovery is made for Rs38,000 worth of electricity that is provided to the consumers.

## Pandemonium in NA as opposition...

FROM PAGE 01  
The Count, is the form that the presiding officer (PO) is required to sign and provide with his thumb impression and signature to the polling agents. This form records the number of votes cast in a polling station. It also separately mentions how many votes a candidate received from that polling station. While Form 47 is another important form related to polling stations. In this form, the count of votes from all the polling stations of a constituency is recorded by the Returning Officer. This makes a provisional consolidated result of the constituency sans postal ballots. Speaking in the lower house of parliament after losing the election for the slot of PM, Ayub termed the Shehbaz-led government a continuation of the former Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) led regime. Recalling the "discriminations" with the former ruling party, the SIC leader said that they demanded reserved seats during the elections for speaker and deputy speaker's slots but then-NA speaker Raja Pervaiz Ashraf refused to stop the voting. "Our objection on Shehbaz Sharif's nomination papers was dismissed," he added.

## Gohar, Omar elected unopposed...

FROM PAGE 01  
The Chairman and Secretary General elections Ayesha Khalid and Amina Ali were also present on the occasion. During the press conference, he announced that Barrister Gohar Khan had been elected the PTI Chairman unopposed, while Omar Ayub secured the position of PTI General Secretary uncontested. Raouf Hasan said that Gohar Ali Khan was elected PTI chairman unopposed after three other candidates withdrew their nomination, adding that the panel of Gohar Ali Khan and Omar Ayub was nominated by the PTI founder. PTI Election Commissioner said that four candidates filed their nominations papers for the slot of Chairman PTI of which nomination papers of three candidates were accepted and one were rejected. He thanked Ashraf Jabbar and Doctor Muhammad Aslam, who were constants for Chairman panel but they were voluntarily withdrew their nomination papers voluntarily and graciously in favour of Barrister Gohar for the interest of the party's harmony and unity. Raouf Hasan said that Naveed Anjum Khan's nomination papers were rejected because he contested general elections 2024 as an opponent of PTI's supported candidate and therefore his party membership was canceled by District President on February 11, 2024.

## Cummins hails Lyon, Green after victory in first NZ Test

Pat Cummins heaped praise on team-mates Nathan Lyon and Cameron Green on match-winning performances as his side secured a 172-run triumph over New Zealand

## OUR CORRESPONDENTS

WELLINGTON: Australia captain Pat Cummins heaped praise on team-mates Nathan Lyon and Cameron Green on Sunday for match-winning performances as his side secured a 172-run triumph over New Zealand in the first Test. Lyon spun the visitors to victory in the morning session on day four in Wellington, taking six wickets as New Zealand crumbled to 196 all out. New Zealand lost their last seven wickets before lunch for 70 runs, with four falling to off-spinner Lyon, who finished with figures of 6-65 off 27 overs and 10-108 in the match. The 36-year-old capitalised on spin-friendly Basin Reserve conditions and some meek batting from New Zealand, who began the day on 111-3 needing an unlikely 258 more runs to win. Green's career-high unbeaten 174 on day one rescued Australia from 89-4, having been put into bat, to reach 383 and set up a decisive 204-run first-innings lead. It gave Green the nod over Lyon as man of the match and Cummins said that was a fair outcome. "Cam was amazing, he was really the difference in the end," Cummins said.



"I thought the way he went about it, with that intent, really put the pressure back on the bowlers on day one. "There was as much bounce as I've seen in any wicket for a long time but thankfully it spun which, with Nathan on our side, is always a pretty good thing." New Zealand pace bowler Will O'Rourke is a doubt for the second and final Test starting in Christchurch on Friday after leaving the field with a tight ham-

string on day three. Captain Tim Southee said he wouldn't rule out a shock recall for veteran pace bowler Neil Wagner, who retired last week. The 37-year-old had been named in New Zealand's squad, but tearfully announced his retirement after being left out of the first Test side, ending a 64-Test, 260-wicket career. Southee ruled out calling up Trent Boult because he has only been playing white ball cricket

of late, but was less adamant when asked about Wagner. "Obviously the Test match has only just finished so we'll see how Will scrubs up and we'll go from there," Southee said. Cummins said Australia would be prepared if Wagner returned. "It'd be the world's shortest retirement," he said of the short-ball specialist. "It'd be good to see his high energy." Southee hailed Glenn Phillips after the all-rounder top

scored with 71 in the first innings and claimed career-best figures of 5-45 with his part-time off-spin as Australia were dismissed for 164 in the second. Cameron Green century steers Australia to 279-9 in first New Zealand Test. "Glenn's still new to Test cricket and new to bowling, and he's doing a great job," Southee said of the 27-year-old. Southee and batsman Kane Williamson will both play their 100th Test at Hagley Oval in Christchurch. The final morning's capitulation began in the seventh over when Lyon claimed the key wicket of Rachin Ravindra for 59. Ravindra had only added three to his overnight score when he failed to keep a cut shot down and was caught by Cameron Green at point. Tom Blundell was caught close in by Travis Head without scoring in the same over and Glenn Phillips was trapped leg before by Lyon for one soon afterwards, to expose the tail. Scott Kugeleijn struck 26 off 28 balls before he failed to control a short ball from Green to be caught by wicketkeeper Alex Carey and Matt Henry fell for 14, caught at slip by Steve Smith off Josh Hazlewood. Southee became Lyon's sixth victim before Daryl Mitchell was the last wicket to fall, for 38, caught and bowled by Hazlewood.

## Xi congratulates newly-elected PM Shehbaz

FROM PAGE 01  
exchanges and cooperation in all fields and jointly build an upgraded version of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor. The Chinese PM also sent a congratulatory message to his Pakistani counterpart Shehbaz Sharif. Meanwhile, Iran's ambassador to Pakistan Amiri Moghaddam in a message on his X social account congratulated the election of "Shahbaz Sharif" as the new prime minister of Pakistan with the majority of the votes of the National Assembly members. He said "I would like to express my warmest congrats on the election of Shahbaz Sharif as the 24th Pakistan PM following a successful election". He added that Iran declares its readiness to expand all-out relations and bilateral cooperation with Pakistan. "I wish peace, security & stability for the years to come for our brotherly country of Pakistan," he further wrote

## The political dynamics of Pak: past...

FROM PAGE 01  
rivalries within the opposition camp. In this context, Bilawal Bhutto Zardari's remarks on Achakzai's candidacy reflect the underlying tensions and divergent visions within the opposition. While acknowledging Achakzai's democratic right to participate in the electoral process, Bhutto Zardari's comments also hint at broader ideological differences and political calculations. Looking ahead, the formation of potential opposition alliances, including the speculated four-party coalition, underscores the fluidity and complexity of Pakistan's political dynamics. The shifting alliances and power struggles reflect the ongoing quest for political dominance and influence within the country. In conclusion, the upcoming presidential election in Pakistan is not merely a contest between individuals but a reflection of broader political currents and dynamics shaping the nation's future. As the country navigates through these turbulent waters, the role of democracy, progressive forces, and the quest for a better future remain paramount

## Fazlur Rehman 'to vote for Achakzai'

FROM PAGE 01  
Fazl said that those who knew he would be the presidential candidate against them offered money. He said that the politicians should stand by their commitments, therefore, he still has the same stance regarding the Imran Khan-founded party - the PTI. "We want to have an environment where differences could be removed," he added. Continuing his criticism of the alleged rigged polls, Fazl said that the "establishment has divided itself in the elections" and "adjusted some in one place and some in another". Pakistan staged the biggest election of its history last month, which was extraordinary in various aspects. However, the outcome of the polls did not turn out to be as expected by the political actors as none of them got a simple majority. Subsequently, many parties including the PTI, JUI-F and others rejected the general elections. Fazl said that his party has rejected the election results and the facts emerging with time are confirming the party's stance. "We believe that 2024 elections broke rigging records of the 2018 polls," Fazl said, adding that the current parliament was an outcome of rigging. He said that some people would call themselves the rulers but wouldn't rule the hearts of the nation. "Democracy is losing its case, parliament is losing its importance," Fazl further stated that the JUI-F doesn't have personal issues with anyone but "these rulers have taken rule as power". "They think that they will buy assemblies with money," he added.

## LeBron becomes first NBA player to reach 40,000 points

WASHINGTON: Los Angeles Lakers superstar LeBron James has achieved a significant milestone by becoming the first player in NBA history to reach 40,000 career points. This accomplishment took place on Saturday during the team's 124-114 defeat at home against the Denver Nuggets. The all-time leading scorer in the NBA made the historic basket with a left-handed layup, drawing loud cheers from the spectators at Crypto.com Arena, with 10:41 remaining in the second quarter. Play continued for both teams after this milestone, until the Lakers called a timeout just over a minute later. This resulted in a standing ovation from the crowd for James, accompanied by high-fives from teammates as he headed to the bench. During the timeout, the Lakers paid tribute to James with a video, honoring his achievement. Having surpassed Kareem Abdul-Jabbar's record of 38,387 points last

season to become the NBA's all-time leading scorer, the 39-year-old James has been in unprecedented territory. On the night of this milestone, the four-time NBA champion was just nine points away from reaching the 40,000 mark. "No one has ever done it. And for me to be in this position at this point in time in my career, I think it's pretty cool," James said on Thursday after the team's victory against the Washington Wizards. "Does it sit like one of the top of my things I've done in my career? No. Does it mean something? Of course, absolutely. Why wouldn't it? "Obviously, I'm never thinking about a milestone when I'm out there battling, but when it happens obviously we acknowledge it," James said on reaching the milestone. "Being the first player to do something is pretty cool in this league, because you just know the history, you know the greats that have come through the league

and then you see some of the greats on the floor tonight. It was just great to compete. "But for me the main thing is always the main thing and that's to win and I hate that, that had to happen in a defeat, especially versus a team that plays extremely well basketball and we played some good basketball tonight but weren't able to close it out. Bittersweet, but I enjoyed every moment tonight on the floor." James finished the game with 26 points, for a career total of 40,017 points, and nine assists, while also extending his NBA-record double-digit scoring streak to 1,205 games, dating back to January 2007. The Lakers sport a 33-29 record on the season and sit in 10th place in the Western Conference standings. Playing in his 21st season, James is averaging 25.3 points, 7.9 assists and 7.1 rebounds per game this season, becoming the first player in league history to be named to 20 NBA All-Star teams. - Agencies

## Paris 2024 Hockey matches begin on march 6

ISLAMABAD: The International Hockey Federation (FIH) has announced the match schedules of the Paris 2024 hockey Olympic tournaments - women and men to be unveiled on March 6 at the Olympic House in Lausanne. It would be revealed by IOC President Thomas Bach and FIH President Tayyab Ikram, said a press release issued here on Sunday. The hockey tournaments of the XXXIII Olympiad would be played in the historical venue of the Yves-du-Manoir Stadium - an Olympic Games arena in 1924! - in Colombes, near Paris. As many as 12 men's and as many women's national teams would compete to clinch the highly coveted Olympic medals. FIH President Tayyab Ikram said, "On behalf of FIH and in my personal name, I'd like to express my sincerest gratitude to President Bach for his attendance at this really important event in the build-up to Paris 2024. As an Olympic sport since 1908 and an active member of the Olympic movement, we're honoured and proud that the IOC President will be giving us some of his precious time. These Olympic Games are taking place during our Centennial year, which makes it even more special for the global hockey community. We're looking forward to a fantastic event in Paris in a few months' time!" With an FIH Hockey Pro League workshop taking place in Lausanne on March 6 and 7, most of the Hockey National Associations participating in the Paris 2024 Olympics would attend the unveiling ceremony. - Agencies

## Michael Clarke gears up for commentary stint in PSL 9

SYDNEY: Former Australia captain Michael Clarke is all set to travel to Pakistan to brace the ongoing Pakistan Super League (PSL) 9 with his commentary skills. Clarke is all set to make his PSL debut behind the mic as he joins a star-studded commentary panel. The 42-year-old Clarke has been an active broadcaster after hanging up his boots as a player. Besides Michael Clarke, PSL 9 commentary panel features foreign commentators like the dynamic Ian Bishop, known for his insightful and gripping commentary, along with Danny Morrison, Simon Doull, Pommie Mbangwa, Mark Butcher, Dominic Cork and Mike Haysman. The Pakistani commentators also make up an exciting lineup with Ramiz Raja, Waqar Younis, Bazid Khan, and Aamir Sohail joining Urooj Mumtaz, Sana Mir and Marina Iqbal. Tariq Saeed and Ali Younis will call the action in Urdu. Erin Holland and Zainab Abbas will be the presenters during the course of PSL 9. For the unversed, the ongoing ninth edition of the PSL has entered the second leg with Rawalpindi and Karachi, set to host the remaining matches. - Agencies

## Kipruto, Kebede win Tokyo Marathon in course record times

TOKYO: Kenyan Benson Kipruto won the men's Tokyo Marathon in two hours, two minutes and 16 seconds on Sunday, breaking former world record holder Eliud Kipchoge's course mark in perfect racing conditions on the streets of the Japanese capital. Ethiopia's Suturem Asefa Kebede won the women's race ahead of Kenya's defending champion Rosemary Wanjiru in 2:15:55, also bettering the best previous women's time over the course from Shinjuku to the Imperial Palace. Kipruto pulled clear of Timothy Kiplagat over the last few kilometres and finished 39 seconds ahead of his compatriot to add the Tokyo title to those he won in Boston in 2021 and Chicago in 2022. The 32-year-old's time was almost two

minutes better than his previous personal best and made him the fifth-fastest marathon runner of all time in events approved by World Athletics. Kiplagat had to be convinced not to pull out of the race by his coach after the death of his training partner, marathon world record holder Kelvin Kiptum, in a road accident last month. Vincent Kipkemoi Ngetich finished third in 2:04:18 to give Kenya a podium sweep, with Ethiopians Hailemariam Kiros and Tsegaye Getachew in fourth and fifth places. Kipchoge was struggling at halfway with the pace under the course record time of 2:02:40 he had set in 2022, and the double Olympic champion had slipped two minutes behind the leaders by the 30-km mark. He finished 10th. Kebede and Wan-

jiru had been in the leading group throughout the women's race, and it was only on the latter stages that the Ethiopian was able to pull clear of her rival to claim her first major marathon title by 19 seconds. Her time bettered Brigid Kosgei's 2022 women's course record of 2:16:02 and took more than two minutes off her previous personal best time of 2:18:12. Kebede's compatriot Amane Beriso was third in 2:16:58, more than a minute clear of Dutch Olympic long distance track champion Sifan Hassan in fourth place. Ichitaka Yamashita was the fastest Japanese man in a time of 2:06:31 to finish ninth, while Hitomi Niiya took the local honours in the women's race with a sixth-placed finish in 2:21:50. - Agencies

Brazil thrash Argentina to reach Women's Cup semis  
Zaneratto scored twice as Brazil thrashed Argentina 5-1 on to move into the semi-finals of the CONCACAF Women's Gold Cup

## SPORTS DESK

LOS ANGELES: Bia Zaneratto scored twice as Brazil thrashed Argentina 5-1 on to move into the semi-finals of the CONCACAF Women's Gold Cup while Olympic champions Canada scraped past Costa Rica with a 1-0 win after extra-time. Argentina had the first opening when Brazil keeper Luciana was caught off her line but Dalila Ippoli's attempted chip from distance fell harmlessly wide. The Brazilians got ahead in the 19th minute when Yaya rose to angle in a superb header from a Zaneratto cross from the left. Yasmim Ribiero then doubled the lead in the 36th minute when a clearance fell to her on the edge of the box and her low drive took a slight deflection as it whistled into the corner. There was no change to the flow of the game after the break - the Argentine defence was at sea and Brazil took full advantage with Zaneratto poking home

from the center of the box. A header from Gabi Nunes on a Gabi Portilho cross from the right made it 4-0 and put the outcome beyond any doubt. US to host Brazil for friendly ahead of Copa America Argentina pulled a goal back in the 82nd when

a ball over the top found Celeste Dos Santos who chipped the advancing Luciana. But there was still time for Brazil to add one more when the outstanding Zaneratto fired home a left foot diagonal shot to complete the rout. Brazil captain Ra-

faella praised the way the team approached the game. "I think we started the game on the right foot and then we just went on from there," she said. "It's always hard to play against Argentina. We have a lot of history but I think in all of these games, we have been

winning and we have been proving that we're the best team in South America." The free-scoring Brazilians have had nine different players find the target so far in the competition, which Rafaella said was a sign of their strength in depth.

"I think everybody's pushing hard and it doesn't matter who is playing at the top," she said. "Everybody understands and we really embrace the way we're going to play and we're lucky we have a lot of good players." Canada will face the winner of Sunday's quarter-final match between the United States and Colombia after fighting their way past stubborn Costa Rica. Costa Rica finished third in their group and won a draw of lots to make it into the last eight, but they proved to be a tough opponent for Bev Priestman's team. The deciding goal came from substitute Evelyn Vienes, who glanced home a header from a Jesse Fleming free kick. Canada, which created numerous chances but lacked the clinical touch in front of goal, had goalkeeper Kaileen Sheridan to thank for an excellent save deep into stoppage time in regulation. Sheridan's outstretched right foot denied Alexa Herrera's firmly struck effort from close range.





## Briefs

**'170 people killed' in attacks on Burkina villages**

BURKINA : Around 170 people were "killed" in attacks on three villages in northern Burkina Faso a week ago, a regional prosecutor said on Sunday as jihadist violence flares in the junta-ruled country. On that same day, February 25, separate attacks on a mosque in eastern Burkina and a Catholic church in the north left dozens more dead. Aly Benjamin Coulibaly said he had received reports of the attacks on the villages of Komsilga, Nodin and Soroe in Yatenga province on February 25, with a provisional toll of "around 170 people killed". He said his office ordered an investigation and appealed to the public for information. Survivors of the attacks told AFP that dozens of women and young children were among the victims. Local security sources said the attacks were separate from deadly incidents that happened on the same day at a mosque in the rural community of Natiaboani and a church in the village of Essakane.—APP

**Google's removal of apps in India 'cannot be permitted'**

WASHINGTON : The decision of tech giant Google to remove some apps from its app store in India "cannot be permitted," Indian Information Technology Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw said in a statement, amid an ongoing dispute over service fee payments to the U.S. firm. Google on Friday removed from its Play Store many Indian apps, including Matrimony.com's popular Bharat Matrimony and job search app Naukri, saying the companies were not abiding by its in-app payment guidelines. Vaishnaw said he has held talks with Google and will meet the startups, which need protection in India. "This cannot be permitted. This kind of delisting cannot be permitted," he said in a statement. Google declined to comment. The removal has sparked criticism from many startups who have for years protested and legally challenged many of the U.S. giant's practices, including its in-app fee. Google says the fees help develop and promote the Android and Play Store ecosystem.—DNA

**Bangkok lab pioneers halal science**

BANGKOK: For the last two decades, Dr. Winai Dahlan has helmed the development of halal research initiatives in Buddhist-majority Thailand to ensure food safety standards that conform with Islamic laws. The country's start in halal science began as an answer to increasing calls by Thai Muslims for scientific testing in halal food development in the late 1990s after the discovery of beef sausage products for Muslim consumers that were tainted with pork caused an uproar. The demands of Muslim consumers in the country, which make up about 5 percent of Thailand's 66 million population, along with increased awareness of halal standards, led to the establishment of a halal research center at the Chulalongkorn University in Bangkok. — Agencies

# Work underway for Gaza peace before Ramadan: FM

Speaking at the closure of the ADF, Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan underlined that significant efforts were extended at the event toward achieving a cease-fire in Gaza before the start of Ramadan

## NEWS DESK

ANKARA : Addressing the closing ceremony of the Antalya Diplomacy Forum (ADF) on Sunday, Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan said there was talk at the forum of unilateral steps for the delivery of humanitarian aid to Palestinian territories as the international community cannot wait for "some countries' authorization." Fidan also told reporters that there was dialogue and serious efforts underway to achieve peace in Gaza before the beginning of Islam's holy month of Ramadan in March. The three-day forum in Antalya brought together heads of state, top diplomats and other prominent figures from around the world. The Palestine-Israel conflict and the ordeal of millions of Palestinians under a barrage of Israeli attacks dominated the topics discussed at the event. Fidan said 4,700 people from 148 countries attended the annual event this year, noting that President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan held talks with 11 heads of state while he himself held talks with 32 of his counterparts. He said they exchanged views on critical issues

at bilateral meetings. "High-level participation in the ADF is a testament to the power of Turkish diplomacy. We discussed common issues that humanity is facing," he said. "An end to the oppression in Gaza was the main topic at the center of the forum, and we utilized all diplomatic means on this matter," Fidan said at the news conference. "We discussed steps that need to be taken, the challenges blocking the solution and progress in (talks for peace). We see a serious desire and effort for accomplishing a cease-fire before Ramadan," he said, referring to Islam's holy month due to start on March 11. Last week, U.S. President Joe Biden claimed that Israel would halt its activities in Gaza during Ramadan as part of a deal being negotiated. Hamas officials, however, said the U.S. president's remarks were premature as it studies a truce offer.

"Ramadan is coming up, and there's been an agreement by the Israelis that they would not engage in activities during Ramadan, as well, in order to give us time to get all the hostages out," Biden said on NBC's "Late Night with Seth Meyers." Fidan said the forum also hosted panels in which



participants exposed the double standards of "certain international actors on different issues and their related approach that ignored international laws." Türkiye has been critical of the Western stance on the Palestine-Israel conflict. While most Western countries threw unconditional support behind Israel's actions in Gaza, Ankara has repeatedly pointed out that Tel Aviv's actions amount to "war crimes." Turkish officials, from President Erdoğan to Fidan, have slammed countries for turning a blind eye to the plight of Palestinians despite the rights of life and freedom of millions being violated by Israel's ceaseless attacks since last October. The minister said hunger was haunting the people of Gaza, who

are in immediate need of humanitarian aid. "Waiting for authorization from some people to deliver aid to 2 million people in Gaza means playing a role in the slow and silent death of people. The international community believes in the need to take different, unilateral steps," he said as he reflected upon his meetings at the event. Answering a question at the news conference, Fidan said Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas will be in Türkiye this week upon invitation of President Erdoğan and that they would discuss the course of the conflict. "Türkiye will have an opportunity to convey its recommendations at this meeting," he stressed. U.S.-Türkiye ties were strained on the different stances of the two countries on the Palestine-Israel conflict but Ankara and Washington otherwise enjoy close ties as two major NATO allies. Last week, the U.S. paved the way for final approval of the sale of F-16 fighter jets to Türkiye, an issue that dealt a blow to relations in the past. Blinken last visited Türkiye after the start of a new round of Palestine-Israel conflict. Due to Türkiye's criticism of U.S. support for Israel's attacks on innocent Palestinians, the visit was low-key compared to previous visits by high-ranking U.S. officials, while President Erdoğan did not receive the visiting top diplomat, breaking the diplomatic tradition. Russia-Ukraine conflict he ADF in 2022 hosted the foreign ministers of Russia and Ukraine, a first during the ongoing Russia-Ukraine conflict. Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov was the only participant in the forum between warring sides this time. Answering questions on the conflict, Fidan expressed hope for talks for a cease-fire in Ukraine soon. "A dialogue for a cease-fire (in Ukraine) should start.

## Sudanese humanitarian crisis overshadowed by Gaza conflict

Sudan's Deputy Foreign Minister Ali Al-Sadiq Ali speaks to media at Antalya Diplomacy Forum

## WEB DESK

ANKARA : A high-ranking Sudanese diplomat said the conflict in the Gaza Strip has put the humanitarian crisis in his country into second place, lamenting that Sudan is trying to cope with the little means it possesses. The conflict between the Sudanese army and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces since last April has led to thousands of killings, displacement and shortage of food and other essentials. Several cease-fire agreements brokered by Saudi Arabia and US mediators have failed to end the violence. Speaking at the Antalya Diplomacy Forum, Deputy Foreign Minister Ali Al-Sadiq Ali addressed several critical issues affecting the North African country, shedding light on the

ongoing civil conflict, humanitarian crisis and diplomatic relations.

"It is true that this need has been eclipsed by the war in Gaza in the right word, and also in Ukraine," he said. He stressed the displacement of millions of people due to the conflict. "Many individuals have been forced to flee their homes, leaving behind their belongings and requiring urgent humanitarian assistance. Despite efforts to provide aid with limited resources, the international community's response has been insufficient," the minister said. "Seven million people left Khartoum, to the surrounding states, they left everything behind because the houses were looted, their properties were stolen, and they need humanitarian assistance." Regarding the civil conflict, Ali empha-

sized the presence of multiple armed militias, and the refusal of some groups to integrate into the national army. The refusal has contributed to the perpetuation of the conflict, leading to widespread atrocities and destruction of infrastructure, including attacks on diplomatic missions and UN offices, he said. On diplomatic relations, the foreign minister touched on Sudan's decision to resume relations with Iran, arguing that it was made in the best interest of both countries and does not pose a threat to regional security. He condemned Israel's actions against the Palestinians, calling for global action to address ongoing atrocities and ending the occupation. The interview also addressed the status of peace negotiations between rival factions in Sudan, with Ali expressing disappointment over the lack of progress.

## Artificial glaciers stave off drought in Kyrgyzstan

SYNTASH : In the Tian-Shan mountains of Kyrgyzstan, villagers have made an artificial glacier to provide water for their drought-hit farms. Standing on the ice hillock, farmer Erkinbek Kaldanov said he was optimistic about harnessing nature to counteract climate change. "We won't have any more problems with water," said the farmer, who was worried for his sheep last year after some unusual temperature spikes. "When the glacier melts, there will be enough water for the livestock and to water the land in Syn-Tash," the surrounding district, he said. The glacier currently measures five metres (16 feet) high and about 20 metres long. At the height of winter it was 12 metres tall. Local residents made it over a period of two weeks in autumn by re-directing water from the peaks of Tian-Shan, which tower more than 4,000 metres high in northern Kyrgyzstan. Kaldanov and others are being forced to adapt since natural glaciers in Central Asia - the main water source for the region - are slowly disappearing due to global heating.—APP

## Swiss to vote on pensions, retirement age

GENEVA : Switzerland, with an ageing population facing an ever-swelling cost of living, is holding referendums Sunday on two initiatives which would reshape pensioners' lives in different ways. A proposal to gradually raise the retirement age from 65 to 66 looks set to fail, but a second proposal seeking to boost pension payments could squeak through. That proposal, put forward by Swiss trade unions and entitled "Better living in retirement", calls for a 13th monthly pension payment each year, similar to the "13th month" salary many employees receive in Switzerland and other European countries. Opinion polls indicate that most Swiss voters favour the initiative, although the "yes" lead has dwindled, and the outcome remains unclear. Monthly social security payments in Switzerland can rise to 2,450 Swiss francs (\$2,780) for individuals and 3,675 francs for married couples. The payments do not go far in a country consistently ranked among the most expensive in the world. Rent for a typical two-bedroom apartment in Swiss cities is at least 3,000 francs, and a coffee costs upwards of five francs. If the Swiss approve the shift, they would not be the first in Europe - neighbouring Liechtenstein, another pricey nation which uses the Swiss franc, has had a similar system in place for years. "There is a purchasing power crisis," said Pierre-Yves Maillard, head of the Swiss Trade Union Federation (SGB) and part of the "yes" campaign. "Retirees are seeing their living standards erode," he told AFP last week. "The cost of living just keeps soaring," agreed Jakob Hauri, a retiree quoted by the campaign. Left-leaning parties support the initiative, but it is being fiercely fought by right-wing and centrist parties, and the Swiss government and parliament officially oppose it. The government has said the proposed hike would cost more than four billion Swiss francs a year, warning it would require tax increases and could threaten the financial stability of the social security system. It also maintains there would be limited social benefit from the proposed change, which would hand additional payments to all pensioners, regardless of their financial situation.—APP

## France to enshrine abortion right in constitution

PARIS : France is preparing to become the first country in the world to put the right to abortion in its constitution. On Monday, parliamentarians from the upper and lower chambers will meet in special session in the Palace of Versailles, summoned by President Emmanuel Macron. If, as expected, they vote for the government's motion by a three-fifths majority, then the country's 1958 constitution will be revised to enshrine women's "guaranteed freedom" to abort. It will be the 25th amendment to the Fifth Republic's founding document, and the first since 2008. Spurred by the end of federal protection of abortion rights in the US two years ago, supporters are exuberant over the revision - which they see as insurance against any similar backpedalling in France. Polls show around 85% of the French public support the reform. Resistance from right-wingers in parliament has failed to materialize. On 1 February French protestors voiced their support for abortion rights from a balcony during a debate on a draft law on the constitutionalisation of the right to abortion at the Senate in Paris.—APP

## Norway king returns home after Malaysia hospital admission

OSLO : Norway's King Harald has left hospital in Malaysia after being fitted with a pacemaker having fallen ill on holiday. He will continue his recovery in a Norwegian hospital, a statement said. "His Majesty will be on sick leave for two weeks," the royal palace said. "The crown prince will in that period be regent and take over the King's constitutional duties." At 87, King Harald is the oldest reigning monarch in Europe. He became king on 17 January 1991. He was taken to hospital after contracting an infection while on a private trip to the resort island of Langkawi. On Saturday, the royal palace said he had been fitted with a temporary pacemaker "due to a low heart rate". The king was discharged on Sunday and is flying home on a medical evacuation plane. The pacemaker "will make the return back home safer", the king's physician said.—APP



ISLAMABAD: Volunteers and IWMB staff busy in uprooting the invasive plants at Margallah Hills National Park in the Federal Capital. ONLINE

## Houthis accuse US, UK of disrupting Red Sea cables

Yemeni group says outage resulted from 'American and British hostile acts,' while there was no immediate comment from Washington or London regarding these accusations

## FOREIGN DESK

SANAA : Houthi Yemeni group accused on Saturday the US and UK of causing an outage in international communication cables in the Red Sea. This came in a statement issued by the Ministry of Transportation in the Houthi government (not internationally recognized), published by the Saba News Agency affiliated with the group. "The hostile acts against Yemen by naval military units belonging to Britain and the United States have caused an outage in the maritime cables in the Red Sea, jeopardizing the security and safety of international communications and the natural flow of information," the statement said. It considered that "such hostile acts pose a significant challenge to the stability of communication infrastructure and negatively impact technical, informational, and technological services that rely on these cables worldwide." The statement added that the United States and Britain "are using hostile and illegal methods in their war against Yemen to serve the Zionist enemy (Israel), in order to continue committing genocide against the Palestinian people

in Gaza." The ministry further emphasized that the Houthi group is "keenly interested in the security and safety of maritime cables in Yemeni waters and the interests of the countries associated with them, based on respect for international laws, agreements, and treaties, and the common interests between Yemen and other countries." The Yemeni group expressed its readiness "to provide all services and grant necessary permits to internet service provider companies to repair and maintain the outage in maritime cables in the Red Sea." There was no immediate comment from Washington or London regarding these accusations. On Monday, the international communications company SEACOM announced an outage in its infrastructure in the Red Sea, affecting the cable system in Africa. The international communications company said in a statement that the eastern African part of the cable system crossing the Red Sea malfunctioned on Feb. 24, affecting the flow of traffic (data) between Africa and Europe. An international coalition led by the United States has been conducting airstrikes targeting Houthi sites in various areas of Yemen since the beginning of this year in response to Houthi attacks in the Red Sea, a vital shipping lane and global supply

chains. In the face of airstrikes from Washington and London, the Houthis have announced that they now consider all American and British ships as military targets and condition the cessation of their attacks on ending the war on Gaza. Israel ignored the International Court of Justice's provisional ruling and continued its attack on the Gaza Strip, killing at least 30,320 Palestinians, mostly women and children, and injuring 71,533 since Oct. 7, according to Palestinian health authorities. Israel has pounded the Gaza Strip since a cross-border attack by Hamas, which Tel Aviv says killed nearly 1,200 people. The Israeli war on Gaza has pushed 85% of the territory's population into internal displacement amid acute shortages of food, clean water, and medicine, while 60% of the enclave's infrastructure has been damaged or destroyed, according to the UN. Israel is accused of genocide at the International Court of Justice. An interim ruling in January ordered Tel Aviv to stop genocidal acts and take measures to guarantee that humanitarian assistance is provided to civilians in Gaza. Hostilities have continued unabated, however, and aid deliveries remain woefully insufficient to address the humanitarian catastrophe.

## CONDOLENCE



APNS expresses profound grief over the sad demise of veteran publisher and senior colleague

**Sardar Abid Aleem**

Publisher and Chief Editor of

**Daily Millat, Faisalabad**

May Allah the Almighty rest his soul in eternal peace

and grant courage to the family to bear the loss.



All Pakistan Newspapers Society



**Briefs**

Ramadan 2024

**First fast 'likely' on March 12**

Ramadan moon to be born on March 10 and will only be visible by next day, says weather expert

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: With the country preparing for the upcoming month of Ramadan, which is less than two weeks away, it is likely that the holy month will commence on March 12 in Pakistan. As per weather expert Jawad Memon, though the moon for the month of Ramadan will be born on March 10, it will not be visible at the time and can only be seen via the naked eye by March 11. "First tarweeh will be observed on the night of March 11 [whereas] its 95% probable that the first fast will be on March 12," Memon said. As per tradition, the Central Ruet-e-Hilal Committee would convene in Islamabad – with zonal committees meeting in their respective domains – to receive and assess moon sighting reports and announce the sighting of the moon. The holy month, which is observed with religious fervour and zeal, will see millions of Pakistanis along with billions of Muslims around the world observing fast from dawn till sunset with the fasting hours falling between 12 to 17 hours – depending on the geographical locations across the globe. Like many other countries, Ramadan, in Pakistan, is marked by increased charity and public food drives with the people establishing roadside stalls for people returning to their homes in the evening. The month, usually, also witnesses increased business activities due to religious festivities as well as shopping trends in the run-up to Eid ul Fitr.

**'Relief to masses, govt's top priority'**

ADIL SHAHEEN

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PML-N) leader Hanif Abbasi has said that providing relief to masses will be coalition government's top priority. Addressing a news conference along with the PPP and MQM leaders at the Parliament House in Islamabad today, he said that their candidate for the slot of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif enjoys the confidence of allied parties. Abbasi said they enjoy the majority of the house. He maintained giving relief to the masses is our priority. PPP leader Aijaz Hussain Jakhri emphasized the importance of sitting together to address the problems faced by the country. MQM's leader Amin-ul-Haque said the parliament is the forum to address the problems of people. It is pertinent to mention here that Pakistan's National Assembly is under way to elect Pakistan's new prime minister (PM).

**Trump moves closer to Republican nomination**

WASHINGTON: Donald Trump won a string of Republican presidential contests on Saturday, edging closer to becoming the party's candidate in November's election as he attacked his likely opponent Joe Biden. The former president won the Missouri, Michigan and Idaho caucuses comprehensively, continuing his clean sweep of states so far. Mr Trump, 77, told supporters at a rally in Virginia that he was "on a rocket to the Republican nomination". He is on track to secure it next week. His last remaining rival in the race, former South Carolina Governor Nikki Haley, is still seeking her first victory and is without a clear path to the nomination given Mr Trump's commanding lead. He is projected to win all of the delegates available in Missouri and all in Idaho, according to CBS news, as well as all of those remaining in Michigan.

**A photo exhibition by Ferrante Ferranti 'From Troy to Lahore'**

The exhibition provided a window into Ferranti's extensive global travels, drawing inspiration from the epic tales of The Odyssey and The Iliad as well as the works of Swiss writer and poet Nikola Bouvier



DNA

ISLAMABAD: A photo exhibition by Ferrante Ferranti 'From Troy to Lahore' in the Footsteps of Alexander the Great and Nicolas Bouvier and curated by Shah Zaman Baloch was held at the premises of the French embassy. Deputy Head of Mission of the French Embassy Guillaume DABOUTS spoke on the occasion and introduced the artist to the audience. French Photographer Ferrante Ferranti presented his 40-year photographic exploration of civilizations "From Troy to Lahore" at French embassy in Islamabad. The exhibition provided a window into Ferranti's extensive global travels, drawing inspiration from the epic tales of The Odyssey and The Iliad as well as the works of Swiss writer and poet Nikola Bouvier. Ferranti's images have appeared in more than 60 books and been exhibited in a number of international cultural organizations, such as the Maison Open de la Photographie in Paris. The current exhibition at the French embassy in Islamabad offered a short sample of Ferranti's extensive portfolio, highlighting his recent exploration of Pakistan. Last year, Ferranti participated in the Lahore Literary Festival and returned to Pakistan in July to further explore beauty of Khyber-Pak-

tunkhwa and Gilgit Baltistan. Ferranti emphasized the significance of his visit to Pakistan, citing the country's rich history and cultural heritage as a source of inspiration for his work.

On the occasion, Ferrante Ferranti expressed gratitude to the embassy and the cultural section for their collaboration. He reflected on his journey, drawing parallels to the travels of historical figures like Alexander the Great and Nicola Bouvier. The artists said in 1980, at the age of twenty, he set off on an initiatory trip to Greece, and the legend of Alexander the Great in the footsteps of mythological heroes Ulysses and Aeneas. Rather than awaiting Apollo's prophecies at Delphi, the navel of the Greek world, they instead consulted the oracles in the East at Didymus, in Minor Asia, on the West at Cumae. Not far from Vesuvius and in the south in the oasis of Siwa. There Alexander the Great, young emperor of Macedonia, consulted the oracle of Amen and received the prophecy that he would conquer Asia and set out for the East. "Later, I went in search of the traces of this thousand-year-old palimpsest. In Anatolia and on the banks of the Euphrates, I took measure of the spiritual riches of these Territories at the crossroads between West and East. At Mount Nemrut, Greek Inscriptions told me the



story of a king born of Alexander's conquests. He added, Armenia, where he stepped off at ruined caravanserais, and to Georgia, where he visited churches overreaching the plains of Azerbaijan he had to wait until 1997 for a new guide to take him further East. 'Nicolas Bouvier burst into my life, and his book The Way of the World became the breviary of my travels. I followed in his feat steps in Iran, from Table to Persepolis, discovering Sufism', he added.

**Famine deepening Israel hits Gaza amid truce push**

Hamas says Israel's targeting of relief convoys, the latest of which was an aid truck in Deir el-Balah in the central Gaza Strip, is "an affirmation and insistence on its part to continue the war of genocide"

NEWS DESK

GAZA: As the US-backed Israeli genocidal war on the Gaza Strip entered day 149 on Sunday, massive aerial and artillery strikes continued to pound neighborhoods, homes and shelter centers and massacre more civilians, mostly children and women. Delegations from Hamas, Qatar and the United States have arrived in Egypt for "a new round of negotiations" toward a truce in the Gaza war, state-linked Al-Qahera News reported Sunday. Cairo, Doha and Washington have mediated in weeks of talks aiming to pause the fighting in the almost five-months-old war between Israel and Hamas sparked by the October 7 at-

tack. Their goal has been to secure a truce by the start of the Muslim holy month of Ramadan on March 10 or 11, but hopes have been dampened by a series of failed talks since a one-week pause in November. A Hamas source on Sunday told AFP its delegation to Cairo is being led by senior leader Khalil Al-Haya. "The delegation will meet Egyptian mediators and deliver the group's response to the new Paris proposal," the source said, in reference to negotiations held last month in the French capital with Israel's presence. PIC said that the Israeli occupation army continued to attack different areas of Gaza, killing and injuring hundreds of citizens. Scores of Palestinians were killed and injured when the Israeli army dropped bombs on people collecting humanitarian aid from a truck in Deir el-Balah in the central Gaza. This is the second major Israeli attack in the last five days on displaced Palestinians in Gaza who are waiting for humanitarian aid. Hamas says Israel's targeting of relief convoys, the latest of which was an aid truck in Deir el-Balah in the central Gaza Strip, is "an affirmation and insistence on its part to continue the war of genocide". "The occupation's continued targeting of aid convoys expresses an unprecedented level of criminality and brutality in contemporary history," a statement from Hamas said on Sunday. Israel is practising systematic starvation and deepening the humanitarian catastrophe in the Gaza Strip in complete disregard for humanitarian laws, the statement added. Israel has withheld a delegation expected to go to Cairo for truce talks, after learning that Hamas had not provided the expected list of captives held by the group that rules Gaza, according to the Israeli media.

**More than 30 killed in heavy rain in Pakistan**

SAID ALAM KHAN

PESHAWAR: More than 30 people have died in rain-related incidents in Pakistan during days of heavy downpours, with thousands of schools closed, officials said Sunday. Widespread heavy rain since Thursday has caused severe disruption in some areas of the country, including the closure of all schools in Balochistan province until Thursday. Eighteen children were among 26 killed in northwestern Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province as a result of collapsed buildings. "As a result of continuous rainfall over the past four days in KP, a total of 27 individuals have lost their lives," said Taimur Ali Khan, the spokesperson for the Provincial Disaster Management Authority in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Another person was killed in a landslide and more than 150 houses were also damaged. In southern Balochistan province, five people were killed when buildings collapsed on Thursday and Friday, said Jahanzain Khan, head of the disaster management agency. Damaged roads, floods and landslides have cut villages off from main towns in Balochistan, while major roads were blocked in Gilgit-Baltistan, local media reported.

**Govt stands by people in every hard time**

DNA

GWADAR: Balochistan Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti has said the people of Balochistan should not feel alone in hard times. Talking to media during his visit to Gwadar, he said the government would stand by with the people in every hard time. The process of water drainage from the city would be completed by tomorrow, he added. Bugti said the soldiers of Pakistan Army, Pakistan Disaster Management Authority (PDMA) and other organisation had taken measures by using all their resources in these testing times.

"The way the people of Gwadar cooperated with the aid agencies is admirable," the CM said. "Hundreds of houses were damaged due to rains and flood water. A committee has been formed to ascertain the damages for which the report will be submitted within 20 days," he concluded.

**Asad Toor sent on three-day remand**

Asad Toor vowed not to surrender his mobile phone nor reveal his sources

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: A district and sessions court of Islamabad on Sunday sent journalist Asad Toor to the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) remand for three days in the case pertaining to his alleged involvement in a vile social media drive against Chief Justice Qazi Faez Isa, Geo News reported. The FIA had pleaded with the court to grant vlogger Toor's remand for nine days, while the latter's counsels opposed the request. After hearing the arguments, Duty Magistrate Abbas Shah reserved the verdict which approved the FIA's plea and granted the journalist's remand for three days. During arguments before the court, Toor said he would neither surrender his mobile phone nor reveal his sources as sources were the most important thing for a journalist. He apprised the court that he was on a hunger strike. They provided him food but he willingly did not eat anything, he said. A journalist present in the courtroom made Toor end his hunger strike. The vlogger was on a hunger strike since his detention by the FIA on February 27. "Toor has not eaten anything in the last 36 hours," his counsel had told the media about Toor's health on February 29.

**Britain to bar entry to 'hate preachers' from Pakistan**

Decision follows an impassioned speech by British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak at 10 Downing Street

DNA

LONDON: The UK government is formulating plans to prohibit the entry of hate preachers holding extremist views from countries like Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Indonesia, The Daily Telegraph reported. The government, expressing concern over a perceived "shocking increase" in extremist ac-

tivity, is actively working to identify the most dangerous extremists from abroad, intending to include them on visa warning lists. As per the proposed measures, individuals on these lists would face automatic refusal of entry to the United Kingdom. This development follows an impassioned speech by British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak at 10 Downing Street, where he highlighted the threat posed by extremists

to the country's democratic and multi-faith values. Sunak asserted the government's commitment to preventing those aiming to undermine these values from entering the nation, stating, "The Home Secretary has instructed that if those here on visas choose to spew hate on protests or seek to intimidate people, we will remove their right to be here." In addition to addressing hate preachers, Sunak urged demonstrators protesting the Israel-Hamas conflict to ensure their actions are not exploited by extremists.



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