

**PTI intra-party election**  
**F.P. Report**

ISLAMABAD: PTI has announced to hold its intra-party elections on March-03. According to the election schedule, the nomination papers for intra-party elections can be submitted on February 23 and 24. Scrutiny of the nomination papers will be held on Feb 25, while other decisions with regard to the schedule will be held on Feb 27, while polling for the election will be held on March 03.



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**Two killed in blast**  
**F.P. Report**

MANSEHRA: At-least two people were killed and two others seriously injured when an explosion occurred in a house in Shinkyari area of Mansehra district, police informed on Thursday. DSP, Yaseen Janjua said initial investigation suggested that the explosion occurred due to explosive material stored inside the house that killed two people and injured as many others.

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ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Prime Minister, Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar chairing a meeting of federal cabinet.

## Caretaker setup safeguarding national interests, says PM

**F.P. Report**

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar on Thursday said the caretaker setup in a short span of time had left behind a useful strategy for the upcoming elected government that would ensure public welfare and protect national interests.

"The caretaker government always gave priority to national interests while taking policy decisions as it believed to work together for national stability and development," the prime minister said while chairing a meeting of the federal cabinet at Prime Minister office. He said the government had improved the national economy, adding "we are leaving country's economy in a better condition than before".

He appreciated and thanked his cabinet members and the civil servants for their tireless efforts during short tenure of the government. The federal cabinet expressed satisfaction over the steps taken by the caretaker government regarding restructuring of various institutions, promotion of foreign investment and providing facilities to businesses.

Appreciating the prudent leadership of Prime Minister Kakar on behalf of the federal bureaucracy, the cabinet secretary said that he had taken important difficult decisions in interest of the

country, which would have far-reaching results.

Among other agenda items, the cabinet, on the recommendation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, allowed Chief of Army Staff General Syed Asim Munir NI (M) to receive the "Turkish Armed Forces Legion of Merit" awarded by Turkiye in honor of his services regarding cooperation between the armed forces of Pakistan and Turkiye.

On the recommendation of ministry of finance, the cabinet also approved the extension of deputation period of Lubna Farooq Malik as Director General Financial Monitoring Unit (FMU) from June 9, 2023 to June 8, 2024.

The cabinet, on the recommendation of ministry of National Food Security and Research (MNFS&R), approved the signing of Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between MNFS&R Pakistan and Khalifa International Award for Date Palm and Agriculture Innovation. Under this MoU, the first Pakistan International Date Palm Festival will be held by September, 2024 to promote date production in the country.

The cabinet approved the decisions taken in the meetings of the Economic Coordination Committee

### Kakar, Naqvi hold farewell meeting

**F.P. Report**

ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar Thursday held a farewell meeting with Caretaker Punjab Chief Minister Syed Mohsin Naqvi and discussed matters of mutual interest.

During the meeting, the chief minister lauded the prime minister for steps taken by the government for economic stability in the country, under his leadership. The PM appreciated the chief minister for the measures taken for progress in different sectors in Punjab, particularly health, education and communications infrastructure.

Meanwhile, the Governor of Sindh Kamran Tessori also called on Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar wherein they discussed the overall political situation in the country.

held on February 13, 2024 and February 14, 2024. The cabinet also approved the decisions made in the meeting of the Cabinet Committee for State Owned Enterprises held on February 16, 2024.

### ECP notifies minority, reserve seats for women

**F.P. Report**

ISLAMABAD: The Election Commission on Thursday issued details of reserved seats for women and minorities in the Sindh and Punjab assemblies.

In the Sindh Assembly, the notification specifies that the PPP has been allotted 20 seats for women and 6 for minorities. Additionally, MQM-Pakistan has secured 6 seats, and GDA has secured 1 seat. MQM-Pakistan has secured 2 minority seats.

For the Punjab Assembly, notifications have been issued for reserved seats, with PML-N securing 36 seats for women, PPP getting three, PML-Q securing two, and one seat allocated to a woman affiliated with IPP. Decisions are pending on one minority seat in the Sindh Assembly and two seats for women.

Similarly, the decision could not be reached for the reserved seats in the Sindh Assembly for independent candidates affiliated with the Sunni Ittehad Council. In the Sindh Assembly, the number of GDA members has reached 3, PPP has secured 114 seats, and MQM has secured 36 seats.

Out of the 66 seats reserved for women in the Punjab Assembly, the Election Commission did not allocate 24 seats. Similarly, out of the eight seats reserved for minorities, no party was allocated separately. Considering numerical representation, the Sunni Ittehad Council's quota for women is 24, with three seats for minorities. The Election Commission will finalise the allocations by Friday.

### Punjab PA session called today

**F.P. Report**

LAHORE: A session of the Punjab Assembly will be held at 10am on Friday (today). A statement issued by the Governor House said, "Governor Balighur Rehman has summoned a session of the Punjab Assembly at 10am today, February 23, at the provincial assembly's chambers."

A statement by Rehman's spokesperson said the governor had signed upon the summary of summoning the Punjab Assembly. PML-N leader Hina Parvez Butt also confirmed that the assembly will convene tomorrow, stating that it would be the third time she would take oath as a member of the provincial assembly.

### Sindh PA's to meet on 24th

**F.P. Report**

KARACHI: The Sindh Assembly's session for the oath-taking of the newly elected MPAs has been summoned on Saturday (February 24).

As per details, Governor Sindh Kamran Tessori approved Caretaker Chief Minister Sindh Maqbool Baqar's recommendation and called the first session of the Sindh Assembly on Saturday.

## Organised drive against judges 'unfortunate'

### SC says misreporting of judgment in proscribed literature case created misunderstanding

**F.P. Report**

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court of Pakistan on Thursday said that many misunderstandings have been created owing to the misreporting of a judgment on the release of a person accused of distributing the proscribed literature.

A press release issued by the SC in the matter said that an impression was being given as the apex court violated the Second Constitutional Amendment (interpretation of Muslim) and has directed to abolish the sections of offenses against religion. This impression is completely wrong, it said.

It stated that the SC has ruled that even the accusations of the FIR in this case are believed they did

n't merit the applications of sections charged but rather section V of the Criminal Law Amendment Act 1932 related to the dissemination of proscribed literature under which the maximum punishment of publishing proscribed books is six-month imprisonment.

The press release said that the SC accepted the bail of the accused and ordered for his release keeping in view the rulings of Islam, constitutional sections and principles of law and justice, as the concerned person has already spent more than one year in prison.

It further said that it is sad that in such cases sentiments are inflamed and Islamic rulings are used to be forgotten. The written

judgment has quoted the relevant verses of the Holy Quran in this context, he added. It said that Chief Justice of Pakistan Qazi Faez Isa tried to ensure that the interpretation of the law by the court be aligned with Islamic sources of law as well as the country's constitution.

It further stated that if anyone felt there was a mistake by the court then avenues of legal recourse were always present, which the apex court or the chief justice would never stop anyone from approaching. The verdicts can be criticized within reason but an arranged campaign in the name of criticism without adopting the constitutional path of a review is unfortunate," the press release added.

## Inciting violence issue: Govt to take strict action

**F.P. Report**

ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Federal Minister for Information, Broadcasting and Parliamentary Affairs Murtaza Solangi said on Thursday that some elements were using social media platforms to incite violence, which was an illegal activity.

Addressing a press conference along with Prime Minister's Special Representative on Interfaith Harmony Hafiz Tahir Mahmood Ashrafi, he said the government would take strict action against such illegal activities under the law. He said that freedom of expression under Article 19 of the Constitution was not unlimited, rather it was subject to law of the land.

Under Article 19, derogatory remarks against judiciary, armed forces and brotherly countries were not allowed, Solangi remarked.

He said that the companies earning billions of dollars from the social media platforms could not abdicate themselves from the responsibility if their platforms were used to disturb law and order in any country and incite people to violence and hatred, he maintained.

The minister said that social media platforms X (formerly Twitter), YouTube, Facebook and Instagram had been continuously used for propaganda, lies, defamation of government officials and harassment, and the companies owning these platforms would have to control this illegal activity. "The state of Pakistan will not in any way allow these platforms to spread baseless, false and fabricated propaganda in the country", he added.

The minister said if this baseless propaganda was not stopped by these social media platforms, the state would have to take strict measures under the law. He said there were means of legal review against any decision of the judiciary and if anyone had a complaint, a review petition could be filed.

The minister stated categorically that no one would be allowed to take the law into their hands and disturb the peace and tranquility of the country. "Pakistan is a peaceful country with rule of law and lawlessness and anarchy will not be allowed to be spread in the country," he added. He said all foreigners living in Pakistan should feel assured that they were safe and their security would be ensured by the Pakistan government.



WEST BANK: Israeli officials working at the scene of a shooting attack by Palestinian gunmen near the Maale Adumim settlement.

### SIC writes to ECP for reserved seats

**F.P. Report**

ISLAMABAD: It is now time for the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) to announce parties' positions in terms of the number of seats they have in the National and provincial assemblies after the deadline given to winning independent candidates to join any political party after the general elections is over.

On the other hand, Sunni Ittehad Council (SIC) Chairman Sahibzada Hamid Raza has written a letter to the ECP in which he has requested for reserved seats for women and minorities. However, sources have told 24News that the party is yet to submit to the election commission priority lists for the purpose.

SIC chairman, on the other hand, has said that the party will soon submit these lists. Sources have further said that the ECP officials will hold consultations with each other over the matter before taking any decision. So far, 87 PTI-backed independents in the National Assembly, 107 in the Punjab Assembly, 90 in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) Assembly and nine in the Sindh Assembly have joined the SIC.

## KP caretaker cabinet holds farewell meeting

**F.P. Report**

PESHAWAR: A farewell meeting of the caretaker provincial cabinet was held here at Civil Secretariat, Peshawar on Thursday with caretaker Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Justice (R) Syed Arshad Hussain Shah in the chair.

Besides provincial cabinet members, Chief Secretary, IGP and administrative secretaries of the provincial departments attended the meeting. The participants of the meeting, on the occasion, offered Fateha for the former caretaker chief minister of the province.

Late Muhammad Azam Khan, paying rich tribute to his services for the province. Addressing the participants, caretaker Chief Minister Justice (R) Syed Arshad Hussain Shah extended his heartfelt felicitations to all of them for peaceful conduct of general elections in the province and paid tribute to civil administration, Pak Army and all other stakeholders for providing a peaceful environment for that purpose. "We all are grateful to Allah the Almighty for completing such an important constitutional responsibility," he stated.

Touching upon the performance of his caretaker

government in the province, Syed Arshad Hussain Shah said when he took over the government, the province was faced with two crucial challenges: Law and order and economic crisis. However, thanks to excellent teamwork, we have overcome those challenges to a great extent, the chief minister remarked and said that when they took charge, there were no funds even to pay salaries to the employees; the provincial government took every possible step in order to steer the province out of that situation.

"We strongly raised our voice to get the arrears of the province due to the federal government, and succeeded in getting an additional amount of Rs. 64 billion in a short span of time," he said and added that even now, around hundred billion rupees are still in the provincial treasury.

Speaking about the priorities of his caretaker set up, the chief minister said that despite the difficult scale condition, financial requirements of the police department have been fulfilled on priority basis in order to maintain law and order in the province. Similarly, he said that special attention was given to addressing the public issues in the newly

merged districts of the province. Cooperation of cabinet members, police, bureaucracy, media and general public in all these efforts was highly applicable, he remarked.

He maintained that the Khushhal Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Program has been prepared and launched in a short span of time, aiming at public welfare and sustainable development of the province, which would prove to be a road map also for the upcoming provincial government. The chief minister also thanked Jamil Swati, Dr. Akhtar Hussain and Brigadier (R) Syed Mujtaba Tirmizi for offering voluntary services for the caretaker provincial government adding that their role specially in materializing Khushhal Khyber Pakhtunkhwa program was commendable.

Touching upon the initiatives taken for well-being of the youth of the province, the chief minister said that about five lac youth would be sent abroad for employment during the next one year, under the Human Resource Export Strategy of the provincial government adding that a number of agreements have also been signed with local and foreign institutions for this purpose.

## Ex-Commissioner apologises over election rigging allegations

**F.P. Report**

RAWALPINDI: In a surprising turn of events, the Ex-Commissioner Rawalpindi, Liaquat Chatha, on Thursday withdrew all his allegations related to rigging in the general elections 2024 and apologized to the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP).

In a recorded statement before the ECP's investigative committee, Chatha revealed that he was under huge pressure due to retirement and surrendered before the authorities. The former commissioner clarified that he did not interfere any Returning Officer (RO) or interfere in anyone's support during the general election of 2024.

The ex-commissioner clarified that he never instructed any Returning Officer to show favoritism or intervene in the election process. "With a 32-year service record, I was scheduled to retire on March 13, 2024, and held concerns about potential loss of benefits in the future. I deeply regret my statement and offer a sincere apology to the nation," Chatha stated.

The former commissioner revealed that during his role as Punjab's secretary, he forged close ties with a political party official, aiming for future advantages. "The party official went into hiding due to involvement in the May 9 incidents, I was in touch with him and also used to assist him secretly," he said.

Liaquat Chatha disclosed a covert meeting with the leader of a political party in Lahore on February 11 and was tasked with devising a plan to "confirm" allegations of election rigging, however, concerned about the potential ineffectiveness of the accusations, he opted to conduct an emotionally charged press conference. The former Rawalpindi commissioner revealed that, according to the political leader, the plan had the backing of a particular party's top leadership. The press conference was strategically tied to a party's protest plan.

Chatha admitted that adding the Chief Justice's name was a deliberate move to fuel animosity among the people. He emphasized never receiving

any instructions for rigging from anyone, including the ECP. He extended an apology to all government employees for his rigging allegations.

"Throughout this time, I had direct contact with him and I kept on discreetly helping him on various issues. Consequently, my relationship with said prominent PTI leader evolved into a very close friendship based on a high-level of trust." The statement mentioned that Chatha, after the February 8 elections, had "secretly and discreetly travelled to Lahore" to meet the PTI leader on Feb 11.

"It was in this meeting, that he made an offer to me that if I play a role for supporting the PTI's ongoing narrative of rigging in elections and maligning state institutions, he would ensure a lucrative position for me in future." Chatha said that the PTI leader told him that the entire planning had been formulated after consultation and approval of the senior leadership of the PTI.

"This proposal was made by the said individual in consideration of the

fact that I was about to retire from service. He was also aware of the fact that I was under pressure due to this forthcoming retirement. After having remained a part of the services for 32 years, it is naturally hard for any civil servant to let go of all perks, privileges, and authorities." Chatha told the ECP that he had a detailed discussion on the proposed press conference and he was informed that the general direction which was needed to be adopted.

"Initially, it was proposed by me that I would write the entire narrative and submit the same as part of my resignation. However, this proposal was dropped by the said prominent PTI leader as such written resignation would not create any sensations for their narrative building," he said. After detailed discussions, he said, it was agreed that a press conference would be conducted by him at a time and date to be conveyed after consultation and approval of the senior PTI leadership. The primary aim of this proposed press conference, Chatha said, was to

create sensations and drama augmenting false narratives being built by the PTI.

Similarly, Chatha said, it was agreed that he would give sweeping and emotional statements by suggesting that all the seats were being won by the PTI candidates and that he helped in changing the entire results against the PTI. "Anyone having knowledge of the election process would know that such sweeping shifts cannot possibly be made in elections by the Returning Officers (ROs). However, these generalised statements were thought to be sufficient for purposes of malicious narrative building." It was with the same intent of creating drama and sensation that during the press Conference, Chatha said, he had stated that he attempted to commit suicide and that he should be hanged in public.

"These were well-thought statements which were made with the specific aim of creating drama and sensations, which aim was fulfilled to a large extent." Moving on, he noted

that the name of CJP Isa was taken with the aim of creating mistrust in the general public against him. "The chief justice did not have any role in the entire election process."

"However, I was specifically asked by said prominent leader of PTI to name the CJP. He told me that he had been specifically asked by his top leadership to do so. The aims behind naming the CJP were manifold." Similarly, Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Sikander Sultan Raja was named with the aim of raising questions on the entire elections process throughout Pakistan, he said.

Moreover, the former commissioner said he addressed the presser on February 17 when PTI had called for countrywide protests against rigging as part of the plan. "In the end, I feel extremely ashamed and embarrassed for making totally false, concocted, anti-state, and malicious statement in the press conference. This activity caused embarrassment for me as well as for entire bureaucratic fraternity," he added.









## Controversy erupts: Allegations of rigging rock City following general elections

### F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Following the conclusion of the General Elections 2024 across Pakistan, allegations of rigging have emerged, stirring controversy and casting doubt on the integrity of the electoral process. In Peshawar, the capital city of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, these accusations have intensified as local candidates' level criticism against the Deputy Commissioner/District Returning Officer (DC) and other officials.

Several candidates from Peshawar District have come forward, alleging that the DC Peshawar orchestrated electoral fraud by manipulating Form 47, contradicting the information provided in Form 45 issued by presiding officers. Similar accusations have been directed at Returning Officers in the region, raising concerns

about the transparency and fairness of the electoral procedures.

When approached by Frontier Post for comment, the Deputy Commissioner Peshawar vehemently denied all allegations of wrongdoing. He asserted that the district administration diligently ensured the conduct of free and fair elections, emphasizing the cooperation received from the local populace. According to the DC, the inhabitants of Peshawar demonstrated unwavering support and confidence in the administration throughout the electoral process.

Expressing commitment to transparency, the Deputy Commissioner affirmed that he and his team worked tirelessly to uphold the democratic principles enshrined in the electoral process. He reiterated the open-door policy of his office, emphasizing their role as public servants dedicated to serving the needs and interests of

the community.

Despite assurances from the district administration, the allegations of rigging have sparked debate and raised questions about the credibility of the electoral outcomes in Peshawar. As the investigation unfolds and voices on both sides continue to be heard, the pursuit of truth and accountability remains paramount in ensuring the integrity of the democratic process.

In response to the escalating allegations of election rigging in Country, the Federal Government has taken decisive action by establishing a Joint Investigation Team (JIT) to thoroughly examine the matter. This specialized team will be tasked with investigating the allegations and will also address any cases of false propaganda directed towards civil servants who were involved in overseeing the elections.



PESHAWAR: Caretaker Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Justice (R) Syed Arshad Hussain Shah chairing farewell meeting of Provincial Caretaker Cabinet.

### KP caretaker govt crafts budget

PESHAWAR (INP): The caretaker government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa unveils a budget plan spanning the next four months, from March 1 to June 30, 2024. Led by Finance Department official Ahmed Rasool Bangash, the budget allocation totals a substantial 560 billion rupees.

With the current fiscal period set to conclude on February 29, the Finance Department emphasizes the necessity of obtaining approval for at least one month's budget to ensure the seamless continuation of day-to-day operations. Failure to secure approval could render any expenditure unlawful.

The caretaker government, demonstrating foresight, has previously sanctioned budget allocations twice, each spanning four months.

Bangash clarifies that the cabinet holds the authority to endorse either four-month or one-month budget plans, pending approval by the permanent government upon its formation.

As stakeholders await the transition to a permanent administration, the interim government's decisive budgetary measures underscore its commitment to fiscal responsibility and governance continuity.

### Farmers pleads authorities

PESHAWAR (APP): Livestock Farmers Welfare Association here Thursday pleaded government to address their concerns and said that ill planning of concerned authorities has negatively impacted the interest of livestock farmers.

Addressing a press conference in Peshawar Press Club, livestock farmers alleged that ill planning and inconclusive policies of caretaker setup have created insecurity among the stakeholders associated with livestock sector.

They said that all the tenders and projects of livestock sector have been stopped while the discontinuation of funds has increased the problems of merged area farmers.

Livestock farmers said that vaccine of mouth and food disease and medicines used in breeding were not available that has put the future of farmers in jeopardy.

They also demanded an inquiry and threatened to go for legal option if tendering and projects of livestock were not resumed.

### PESCO notifies power suspension

PESHAWAR (APP): Peshawar Electric Supply Company (PESCO) on Thursday notified that due to maintenance work power supply will remain suspended from 500 KV Peshawar Grid Station on 23rd February from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. resultantly, consumers of Badaber feeder will face inconvenience.

Likewise, it said that power supply will remain suspended from Kurram Garhi Grid Station on 24th and 26th February from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. resultantly, consumers of Cantt 2 feeder and 66 KV Kuram Ghari transmission line connected 11 KV feeders will face inconvenience.

The power supply will also remain suspended from Bannu Grid Station on 24th, 25th and 26th February from 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. resultantly, consumers of City 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, Express, Fatima Khel 1, 2, Woolen Mill, Cantt 1, Jani Khel 1, 2 and Havede feeders will face inconvenience.

## KPTMA refutes any link with tax fraud case

PESHAWAR (APP): The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Textile Mills Association (KPTMA) has vehemently refuted a claim circulating in certain sections of the press alleging tax fraud amounting to Rs. 1.4 billion through the misuse of the Export Facilitation Scheme (EFS) by a so-called textile unit in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

In a statement issued here on Thursday, the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Textile Mills Association (KPTMA) clarified that the so-called textile unit has no affiliation with their organization, saying the associa-

tion condemns the actions of this unit and urged the authorities to take strict action against those involved in tax evasion.

In a recent development, it has been revealed that a so-called textile unit, which exists only on paper with no physical presence, operating in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), has been involved in tax fraud, evading taxes worth billions of rupees.

KPTMA underscores that its members boast a legacy of integrity and accountability, spanning back to the 1960s. Textile

mills under the KPTMA umbrella are situated at prominent locations like Gadoon, Swabi, Mardan, Peshawar, Kohat, Bannu, and Dera Ismail Khan. Notably, these mills operate within regulated industrial zones, adhering strictly to legal frameworks and governmental guidelines.

The families associated with these enterprises have upheld ethical business practices predating even the partition era.

KPTMA reiterates that its members recognize the importance of fulfilling governmental obligations,

including the timely payment of utility bills and taxes, to sustain the smooth functioning of governmental operations.

KPTMA has also emphasized the importance of transparency and accountability in the textile industry, and has called for all textile units to comply with tax regulations and other legal requirements.

The association has assured the public that they will continue to work towards promoting ethical and responsible business practices in the textile sector.

## NPC delegation condoles with Ali Gandapur

### F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) nominated candidate for Chief Minister-ship Ali Amin Gandapur said that the newly elected mandate will protect provincial rights and to ensure obtaining royalties of electricity and gas on the table of negotiation, on Thursday.

This he said claimed while talking to a delegation of Nowshera Press Club headed by the president Mushtaq Paracha at Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly Speaker House Peshawar. He claimed that PTI workers had bring silent revolution across the country with power of ballot.

The newly nominated Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa claimed that PTI led government will prioritize welfare of public and good governance in the province. He added that PTI government will not let down the workers in delivery of services.

NPC delegation showed condolence with Ali Amin

Gandapur on departure of his father and offered prayers for highest ranks of the departed soul in the Jannat. They also congratulated him on his nomination for Chief Minister slot in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

PTI leader and nominated Chief Minister candidate Ali Amin claimed that his government prioritize socio-economic uplift marginalized segments across Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. He claimed that PTI led government will ensure dignity of every citizen.

## Two killed, another hurt in firing

PESHAWAR (INP): Two people were killed and another injured in firing of unidentified armed men on a car here on the provincial capital on Thursday, police said.

According to details, unidentified gunmen riding a motorcycle sprayed bullets at a car at Nasir Bagh Road in Peshawar.

As a result of firing, two people including car driver were killed on the spot while another was critically injured.

The bodies and injured were shifted to hospital and police after registering a case into the incident started an investigation.

## Rotten chicken pieces discarded

PESHAWAR (APP): In a major operation here, a team of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Food Safety and Halal Food Authority on Thursday confiscated 8200 kg substandard and rotten chicken pieces and sealed a processing unit.

According to a spokesman of the Food authority, Deputy Director Zeeshan Mehsud acting on a tip-off conducted a surprise raid on a house in Phandun Road, Chuha Gujjar. During the operation, the team seized 8200 kgs of sub-standard and harmful chicken parts from a processing unit set up in a house.

The substandard and rotten chicken pieces and meat were being processed and supplied to the different markets here.

The food safety team seized the machinery and sealed the house. A case was filed against the owners and further legal action was initiated.

## Chances of rains forecast

PESHAWAR (APP): Chance of rain in Kohistan, Abbottabad, Mansehra and Kurram's plains area along with snowfall on mountains, the officials of the Meteorological Department said here Thursday.

When contacted the official of the Met Office disclosed that the weather will remain dry and cold in other districts of KP and during the last 24 hours, the lowest temperature in Kalam was recorded as minus 13 degrees Celsius.

The temperatures in the other parts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa including Minus 4 in Dir and Malam Jabba, Minus 3 in Chitral and Minus 1 in Drosh, the official of the Department of Meteorology said.

He said in Kakol and Balakot 1, Parachinar 2, Peshawar 5 and Takhtbhai 4 Celsius recorded and during the last 24 hours, the highest rainfall was recorded in Kakul 13 mm and Balakot 6 mm.



PESHAWAR: Chief Executive Officer KPHC Dr. Nadeem Akhtar addressing a ceremony regarding issuance of licenses to Category I hospitals.

## KPHC gives licenses to Category-I hospitals

PESHAWAR (APP): Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Healthcare Commission (KPHC) here Thursday organized a ceremony to give licenses to Category I hospitals of the province.

The ceremony was held in Postgraduate Medical Institute Hayatabad Medical Complex. The hospitals that were given licenses include Alfalah Hospital Abbottabad, Bahadur Khan Hospital

Batkheila, Jinnah Teaching Hospital Peshawar, Irfan General Hospital Hospital Peshawar, Sahab Orthopedic Hospital Peshawar, PIMS Hospital Peshawar, Abaseen General Hospital Peshawar, Kuwait Teaching Hospital Peshawar and Bacha Khan Medical Complex Swabi.

Addressing the ceremony, Chief Executive Officer KPHC, Dr. Nadeem Akhtar said that licenses were

given after examining the health delivery infrastructure of these hospitals adding that license is mandatory under KPHC Act 2015.

He also urged administration of hospitals to support efforts of the commission to end quackery and to guide people about those unauthorized medical practitioners that are jeopardizing lives of innocent people.

## Voucher stipend program launches for children

PESHAWAR (APP): The voucher stipend program was being launched to enroll out-of-school children in private schools in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Besides the disbursement of grant among female students with 80pc attendance in schools of underprivileged areas,

Shahab Khan, Senior Planning Officer of KP Education Department told APP on Thursday that the stipend program for retention of poor students have started yielding positive results. He said that bringing out of school children under education net was a big challenge.

For bringing about 300,000 children to schools in KP in the next three years, he said billions of rupees were required for the provision of free, uniforms, stationary and bags and construction of 10,000 new schools besides establishment of 1,000 Alternate Learning Pathways (ALP).

Shahab Khan said 15,667 new schools were needed to enroll 300 such children (aged 5-9 years) per school by next academic year, adding ALP centres were initiated for old aged out-of-school children.

Early Child Education (ECE) policy is ready while teaching materials including teachers' guidebook and handbook for ECE mode of learning were also prepared, adding transformation of Katchi into ECE was in progress besides completion of training of 790 master trainers and 425 teachers on ECE.

### Smuggling attempt foiled

PESHAWAR (INP): Railway Police in Peshawar conducted a successful operation at Peshawar City Station, apprehending two women for smuggling narcotics via train. The suspects were caught by SHO Jamal Abdul Nasir and other officers based on suspicion at the internal passage of Peshawar City Station. Upon inspection, more than 2 kilograms of narcotics were recovered from the possession of the women, including 1.6 kilograms of ice drug and 500 grams of heroin. The suspects had concealed the narcotics in plastic wraps hidden within women's undergarments and clothing. SSP Peshawar Mahrukh Kausar stated that the female suspects intended to transport the narcotics via Awam Express train from Peshawar to Gujranwala. Cases have been registered against both women at Cantt Railway Police Station Peshawar, and investigations have commenced.



PESHAWAR: Volunteers distributing free food among deserving people in Sadar Bazaar.

## Youth leaders vow to promote interfaith dialogue

### F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: A dedicated group of youth leaders has formally joined the SALGAI Foundation, taking a significant stride towards nurturing interfaith unity in Peshawar.

The youth leaders were chosen through a rigorous vetting process as part of a collaborative effort by the SALGAI Foundation and the Chanan Development Association (CDA). They affirmed their commitment to building a peaceful and inclusive society and promoting respect within their educational institutions and communities for interfaith harmony.



In a lively discussion at Cafe de Puta, University of Peshawar, they conferred on the need for peaceful coexistence among followers of different faiths. The young change-makers promised playing a proactive role in the execution of projects designed to foster interfaith dialogue and understanding within their

academic institutions, serving as catalysts for change. "This marks a critical milestone in the Aman Rang initiative. By investing in these dedicated youth leaders, the scheme spurs hope for a brighter future for Peshawar residents," said S. Yaser Shah, --- of the SALGAI Foundation.





## In brief

### Residents hold protest F.P. Report

HAFIZABAD: People of Mohallah Hasan Town, Mubarak Colony and Bahawalpura protested against worst sanitation condition against Administrator and Chief Officer Municipal Committee Hafizabad. According to details, streets and low-lying areas of Mohallah Hassan Town, Mubarak Colony and Mohallah Bahawalpur have inundated due to worst sanitation condition and people of these areas are facing hardship to go out from their homes. They said that all claims of Administrator and Chief Officer Municipal Committee were proved falls and Municipal Committee was become white elephant. The inhabitants demanded the Deputy Commissioner Sundas Irshad to take result-oriented steps for improving sanitation condition in the city. She should visit the area herself for getting awareness about factual situation of the areas, they suggested. Meanwhile, Zakat Day was observed to create awareness among people regarding performing of basic component of Islam to pay Zakat. In this regard, a walk was taken out led by District Zakat Officer Mian Sanaullah and Audit Officer Abdul Qadeer. Officer and field staff of the Zakat Department participated in the walk. The participants of the walk were carrying banners inscribed with slogans about importance of giving Zakat to the poor.

### F.A/F. Sc results announced F.P. Report

LARKANA: Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education (BISE) Larkana announced the results of the 11th and 12th class annual examinations, on Thursday. According to the results released by the Controller Education Board Larkana, Fakhruddin Ahmed Babar Abaro of the 11th class Pre-Engineering, Pre-Medical, Pre-Computer, 43324 male and female students belonging to Mehrar and Khairpur Nathan Shah of Dadu district along with districts of Larkana, Qamber Shahdaddot, Shikarpur, Jacobabad and Kashmore and Kandahabkot participated in the annual examinations of science, humanities regular, commerce department. Out of which 36411 candidates passed while 708 were failed while 680 candidates had copy case and 4 candidates. Results Due to various reasons, the results were withheld, similarly, 30667 candidates appeared in pre-medical group out of which 26396 candidates were successful and 409 were failed while 467 candidates had copy case and 31 candidates had papers not completed. Because the results were withheld, pre-engineering group 10666 candidates participated out of which 8504 candidates passed, 208 were failed while 138 candidates had copy case and 08 hopefuls.

### Seminar and rally held

MUZAFFARABAD (INP): The International Forum for Justice and Human Rights organized a seminar and protest rally in Muzaaffarabad to denounce the Kunan Poshpora mass rape by Indian troops on the eve of the anniversary of the tragic incident in Indian occupied Jammu and Kashmir. The event shed light on the atrocities committed against Kashmiri women by Indian forces on the nights of February 22 and 23, 1991, in Kunan Poshpora area of Kupwara district.



HYDERABAD: Former secretary irrigation, Khalid Haider Memon and VC ISRA University Ahmed Waliullah Qazi visiting various stalls during 7th job fair.

## Citizen demand inquiry against policemen

F.P. Report

MARDAN: A citizen of Par Hoti area appealed and demanded of the police high-ups to order an impartial inquiry following by taking a stern departmental action against some police officials who were allegedly involved in harassment and manhandling of his younger brother.

The complainant identified as Nasir Ali, stated in his application that his younger brother named as Hasnain Bacha-aged 19-years old- was missing from his home from February 2 to 7 in the month of February 2023. He added that officials of central Jail Mardan called on his mobile number on February 7, that his younger brother was present over there in the prison.

The complainant told that he along with his other relatives rushed to the Mardan Jail where they were informed by the prison officials that Hasnain Bacha was booked under two FIRs No. 157 and 137 by the personnel of Par Hoti police station and Hoti police station respectively.

He said that they were stunned when the prison officials told that, two FIRs- one for use of Ice drugs and the second for committing a rape-act with a neighbor minor, was registered against his brother. He blamed that his brother was booked under false and fabricated FIRs by the police officials as his brother was not involved in any kind of drugs or other illegal activities.

gal activities.

The complainant demanded of the police high-ups to carry out an impartial inquiry into the case as his brother was innocent. He also appealed for provision for speedy justice into the case. He alleged that some police officials were harassing and manhandling his brother. The applicant asked the authorities concerned to take stern departmental action against those officials who were found involved in the illegal arrest of his brother.

**Symposium on women empowerment held:** A training session was held under the auspices of Peyman Trust regarding creating leadership quality among women, government officials, private organizations, lawyers and media persons participated in the session.

In the session, people from different schools of thought expressed their views and said that the role of women cannot be ignored in any society, women have an important role in the development of the country. Therefore, we have to give women their rightful place in our society. The participants in the session said that the purpose of this session is that we should play our role to create leadership quality especially among women so that they can play their role better in becoming a peaceful and prosperous country.

**KPCTA organizing safari train trip to Takhtbhai:** Embark on an

extraordinary adventure with our train safari tour to Takhtbhai, where you will visit this UNESCO World Heritage Site. Takhtbhai is a testament to the grandeur of ancient Buddhist monastic centers.

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Culture and Tourism Authority (KPCTA) is going to organize a one-day guided tour on March 3, 2024 for women and families to explore the historical significance of this remarkable place. The tour will start from Peshawar Cantt Railway Station at 9:00 AM our route to Takhtbhai will take us through a series of stations including Peshawar City Station, Nasirpur, Pabbi, Nowshera, Risalpur, Mardan and end at Shahi Takhtbhai. Explore the remains of the 1st century AD Buddhist civilization.

On arrival, be greeted by the lively tunes of a traditional band performance. Our expert guides will provide valuable insights into the history and architecture of Takhtbhai. Savor the flavors of the local cuisine with a delicious serving of the traditional dish Chapli Kebab. Join us on a journey of discovery as we uncover the secrets hidden within Takhtbhai's intricate architecture and ancient monuments. Experience the beauty of the region on the train with comfortable seating and a welcoming atmosphere throughout the journey. The registration fee is Rs 6600 per person. Reserve your slot now and discover the secrets of Takhtbhai.

## Six killed in wedding party bus crash

DUNYAPUR (INP): At least six people were killed when a van carrying a wedding rammmed into a tractor-trolley parked on the roadside in Punjab's Duniapur.

16 others were injured including women and children with the local authorities warned the death toll could rise. Rescue sources confirmed that six individuals including three women, two men, and a child died on the spot, meanwhile, 17 others including 10 women, three children, and four men sustained injuries in the collision.

The rescue authorities swiftly shifted the injured individuals to the nearest hospital for medical assistance, where the condition of the seven women was said to be critical. In a separate road accident, at least five passengers died when a speeding car rammmed into a trailer parked alongside the road in Kot Addu, Punjab.

The resources sources said the ill-fated with five people was heading towards Kot Sultan, Layyah from Multan when the deadly accident took place. The bodies of the deceased have been shifted to the hospital by the rescue authorities.

## Anti-polio campaign from 26th

F.P. Report

ATTOCK: A meeting regarding the anti-polio campaign was held at the DC Office here on Thursday, chaired by Deputy Commissioner, Rao Atif Raza. In which Additional Deputy Commissioner Revenue Waqas Aslam Marth, Assistant Commissioners across the district, CEO Health Dr. Asad Ismail, MS Dr. Jawad Elahi, DHO Dr. Kashif Hussain, Representatives from the Department of Health, Education, WHO, and other relevant departments were also present. CEO Health Dr. Asad Ismail and DHO Dr. Kashif Hussain gave a detailed briefing to Deputy Commissioner and other participants regarding the upcoming polio campaign, scheduled from 26 February in the district.

Micro plan, training of anti-polio teams, door marking, display of awareness material and other arrangements were discussed in the meeting. Rao Atif has said to make the second five-day anti-polio campaign successful by all means starting from Feb 26. Micro plan, training of anti-polio teams, door marking, display of awareness material and other arrangements were discussed in the meeting. In this regard, comprehensive arrangements are being made throughout the district.

Polio teams will administer Polio drops will be administered to more than three lac children of under five years age across the district atcock amid tight security cover. In addition, roaming teams have been formed to go door-to-door to administer polio drops to the children. Foolproof security will be provided to all the teams administering polio drops.

## PTI backed candidates defeated strong politicians

F.P. Report

LAKKI MARWAT: Though protests against poll rigging are continuing in many parts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the Feb 8 general elections completely changed the political landscape of many areas in the province including Lakki Marwat district.

New faces backed by Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf emerged as victorious and strong candidates affiliated with Jamiat Ulema-i-Islam (Fazl) and Saifullah brothers group faced a defeat. JUI-F had the advantage to have a major vote bank in the southern region with Saifullahs claimants of having a strong influence of their family over electoral politics; the historic win by PTI aspirants has buried their political carcasses in this district.

Tariq Saeed Khan is one of the winners for the provincial assembly seat (PK-107, Lakki Marwat-III) who defeated the political stalwarts from JUI-F. Amidst the sprawling plains and rich cultural heritage, Khan emerged as a visionary leader in the heart of the southern district and he reshaped the political narrative of the region.

Hailing from the Maidadkhel clan of Marwat tribe, he brought a legacy of service and dedication to the forefront of his political endeavors. Educated at the prestigious Cadet College Kohat and equipped with M. Phil in Political Science, he grew up in a family with deep roots in the area politics as one of his elders Naseer Muhammad Khan served as MNA and MPA in the past.

"I inherited from my family the tradition of commitment to the welfare of the people", said Khan. He said that the historic win in elections had provided him with an opportunity to implement his vision of public service and welfare with a true spirit.

After joining the PTI in 2014, Khan soon rose to high ranks and was made the senior vice president of south Khyber Pakhtunkhwa chapter of the party. He earned recognition and popularity in the area on the basis of his tireless efforts to

reduce miseries of marginalized communities.

Though he missed a victory for the provincial assembly constituency (then PK-930 by a margin of around 500 votes in the 2018 elections, he remained in constant contact with constituents and focused on providing them with basic amenities of life. "I formulated a comprehensive strategy to bring a positive change in the living standards of local residents by focusing on infrastructure development including building roads, parks and hospitals", he claimed.

Along with revolutionizing the lives of underprivileged inhabitants, Tariq Saeed also remained steadfast in his support for PTI's core principles, actively participated in the party's activities and championed the ideals and narratives espoused by Imran Khan. He also spearheaded the protest drive against attempts to subvert democracy and undermine the integrity of the party and stood beside leadership during challenging times including protests at Zaman Park in Lahore.

The pinnacle of his political journey came in 2024 with a grandeur victory over political opponents. He defeated former federal minister Anwar Saifullah Khan, a political stalwart of the influential Saifullah family by a resounding lead of around 26000 votes.

This historic win not only consolidated Tariq Saeed's grip over local politics but also marked the end of an era dominated by the Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam-Fazl and Saifullah brothers in Lakki Marwat district for the last around two decades. The electoral victory also heralds a new dawn for the people, signaling the departure from the politics of old and a step towards a brighter and more inclusive future. Tariq Saeed Khan's political journey is the perfect example of strong resolve, dedication and service to the community. As he continues to lead the charge for progress and development in Lakki Marwat, his legacy serves as an inspiration for generations to come, reminding us all of the transformative potential of visionary leadership in shaping the destiny of nations.

## NAB delegation visits NUST Quetta campus

F.P. Report

QUETTA: In connection with anti-corruption awareness campaign, a delegation of National Accountability Bureau (NAB) Balochistan comprising of Director Jawad Ahmed Khan, Director Investigation Haroon Rasheed and Deputy Director Khurram Shehzad visited National University of Sciences and Technology (NUST) Baluchistan Campus, Quetta on 22nd February, 2024.

The main objective of the visit was to create awareness in youth on hazardous repercussions of corruption through collective efforts with aim to build a corruption-free society according to the vision of NAB leadership.

During the visit, both directors interacted with the participants and apprised on vision, mission, functioning of NAB (Balochistan) and role of students in eradication of corruption.

NAB officials emphasized students to adopt their lives wherein abhorrence against corruption will be integral part of their personalities. It is also argued that the teachings of Islam also assert on self-accountability and do not allow an iota of dishonesty and corruption. Nepotism, influence peddling, bribery, extortion and favouritism were underlined as forms of corruption, but unfortunately, these have been taken by the society as norm/right.

It was also emphasized that the collective efforts of

students as crucial members of society can play a pivotal role for laying foundation of a corruption-free society. Both guest speakers effectively and patiently responded to the questions candidly raised by the students and faculty members during the session.

On this occasion, the Acting Dean Dr. Imran Usman in his address appreciated the efforts of NAB Balochistan and also assured to extend all possible help in the anti-corruption awareness drive of NAB Balochistan. Afterwards, the guests visited various departments/wings of NUST Balochistan. Lastly, an awareness walk was also arranged wherein NAB officers, faculty members and students participated.



LARKANA: People visiting at the world famous archaeological site of Moen-Jo-Daro.

## Three days Youth Learning Festival kicks off to promote innovation

F.P. Report

SUJAWAL: The three-day Sujawal Youth Stem Learning Festival, organized by the School of Education and Literacy Department and UNICEF in collaboration with Thar Education Alliance at the Govt High School Ground Sujawal, started on Thursday.

Children from various government and private schools were delighted to receive great appreciation from fellow students, teachers, and visitors at their stalls. They had created models educating about climate change, the greenhouse effect, and clean, renewable energy.

There were around 60 models from 45 different schools to demonstrate different topics including hydroelectric cooler, volcanoes, layers of earth math park and agriculture system with artificial intelligence.

The stalls represented not just the schools but different districts of the Laar belt; Thatta, Badin and Sujawal. There were 31 government schools and 14 private schools from the three districts.

Partab Shivani, in his welcome address, highlighted that the purpose of organizing this festival in Sujawal, Thatta, and Badin is to elevate their education ranking. The festival, centered around the theme of climate change and youth empowerment by Generation Unlimited-UNICEF, aims to connect stakeholders and encourage them to take ownership and action.

He emphasized that the festival will conclude on February 24th, underlining the crucial role of district administration and relevant authorities. Additionally, Shivani stressed the importance of incorporating such activities into school plans to foster a STEAM learning environment. He expressed the intent to showcase the local talent on national and international platforms, enhancing their exposure.





ATHENS: Greek farmers honked their tractor horns in front of the Hellenic Parliament, after spending the night in central Athens as their protest against rising fuel and production costs stretched into a second day.

## British ship Rubymar has not sunk

LONDON (BBC): A British registered ship attacked in the Red Sea has been damaged but has not sunk, BBC Verify has discovered. Houthi fighters claimed to have sunk the Rubymar. It would have been the most significant incident since attacks on ships began in November. But the BBC has obtained an image of the listing ship - which shows it still above water. The vessel's owner said it was being towed to Djibouti but could still sink. Ships in the Red Sea have come under regular attack in recent months. BBC analysis shows the attacks have continued despite the US and UK launching strikes on Houthis in Yemen. Missiles hit the Rubymar near the Bab al-Mandab strait. The ship's owners - Blue Fleet Group - said one missile

had hit the side of the ship near its engine room and it was listing. A second missile hit the vessel's deck. The crew abandoned the ship and were taken to nearby Djibouti. That evening, a Houthi spokesman claimed the vessel had been sunk. But the BBC has obtained two images. The first is said and shows a vessel still above water. It is listing, but has not sunk. Although the ship's name is not visible, all of its characteristics match those of the Rubymar. The BBC has also obtained an image showing the same vessel in a similar position. A further satellite image also appears to show the vessel damaged, but above water. Again, all the characteristics match those of the Rubymar. The BBC has also been told by its owners that they are trying to tow

the ship to Djibouti. That was confirmed by a second source from the industry. It is unclear whether the vessel can be fully salvaged given the damage done. But Houthi claims to have sunk it appear to be incorrect. The Houthis say their attacks are a show of support for the Palestinians in the war between Israel and Hamas in the Gaza Strip. The attacks have prompted many shipping companies to stop using the critical waterway, which accounts for about 12% of global seaborne trade. The UK government has condemned the Houthi action as "completely unacceptable" and said it and its allies reserve the right to respond appropriately. US and British forces began carrying out air strikes on military targets across Houthi-controlled western Yemen in response last month.

## Giuliani can fight \$148m defamation verdict

NEW YORK (Reuters): Donald Trump's ex-lawyer Rudolph Giuliani secured a US bankruptcy judge's approval to challenge a \$148 million defamation verdict won by two former Georgia election workers after he showed that he would not be spending his own money to do so. US Bankruptcy Judge Sean Lane entered a court order allowing Giuliani to seek a new trial and challenge the amount of damages awarded to Wandrea "Shaye" Moss and her mother, Ruby Freeman, whom Giuliani had falsely accused of fraud after former Republican President Donald Trump's 2020 election loss. "We very much appreciate the judge's expeditious consideration of this matter and look forward to proceeding accordingly," Giuliani spokesman Ted Goodman said. Lane prohibited Giuliani from spending his own money on further litigation in the Georgia defamation case, requiring the former New York mayor to pay his attorneys with donations received by two legal defense funds. Lane signaled his intentions at a court hearing last month, but he said Giuliani must first provide more information about his donors. Giuliani filed additional disclosures in court, which listed Elizabeth Ailes, the widow of former Fox News CEO Roger Ailes, among the donors. Lane had previously expressed concern that a costly court battle could deplete Giuliani's resources and prevent him from paying Moss, Freeman, or any of the other people that have filed lawsuits against Giuliani. Giuliani's creditors include Hunter Biden, who sued Giuliani for violating his privacy over data allegedly taken from his laptop, former employee Noelle Dunphy, who has accused Giuliani of sexual assault and wage theft, and the voting machine companies Dominion and Smartmatic, who sued Giuliani for defamation. Giuliani has denied the allegations.

# Taiwan chip firms flock to Japan as China decoupling accelerates

TOKYO (Reuters): Japan's efforts to rebuild its semiconductor industry are getting a shot in the arm as more and more Taiwanese chip companies expand here - not only to support a new TSMC plant but also excited about the Japanese sector's prospects. The influx comes amid shifting alliances and priorities in the global chip industry as the United States pushes to limit China's progress in cutting-edge semiconductors and strengthen partnerships between its allies. Fabless chipmaker Alchip Technologies, which specialises in customised chips known as application-specific integrated chips (ASICs), is illustrative of the China decoupling trend. In 2022, the bulk of its research and development engineers were based in China but Alchip has begun moving roles overseas, many to Japan, said a source who was briefed on the matter. The company said it is hiring in Japan, North America and Taiwan but declined to comment further on personnel matters. "We're expecting Japan semiconductor market growth, we're continuously capitalising on Japan ASIC opportunities and already engaging in several good projects," said Hiroyuki Furuzono, general manager of Alchip Japan. At least nine Taiwanese chip firms have set up shop or expanded operations in Japan over the past two years, according to a Reuters count. Chip design company eMemory Technology, for example, opened an office two years ago in Yokohama, which neighbours Tokyo, and has 11 employees after hiring from Japan conglomerates which once dominated the industry. "After we built the office there we are receiving more frequent communication with the customers and they

are more willing to talk in Japanese with our local people, so we see business is booming," eMemory President Michael Ho told Reuters. More Taiwanese chip sector firms are also looking at increasing their presence or making their first foray into Japan, said the source and another person with knowledge of the matter, adding that a weak yen has made such decisions easier. The sources declined to be identified as the information was not public. While Japan still boasts leading semiconductor material and equipment makers, it has seen its share of the global chip manufacturing market shrink to 10% from around 50% in the 1980s after trade tensions with the US and competition from South Korean and Taiwanese rivals. But in recent years Japan has thrown huge sums to rebuild its chip manufacturing sector, recognising that semiconductors are vital for economic security and spurred on by the global chip shortage during the pandemic as well as encouragement from Washington. TSMC, formally known as Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Co, will hold the opening ceremony for its first plant on the southern island of Kyushu, a chipmaking hub. The on-track plan contrasts with the troubled construction of TSMC's Arizona factory. It has also just announced plans for a second fab in Japan, bringing total investment in the venture to more than \$20 billion. The chipmaking giant, Reuters has reported, sees Japan as a natural fit in terms of an industrious work culture and a government that is easy to deal with and generous with subsidies. "The core strength of a strong semiconductor country lies not just in leading firms

but in a robust ecosystem," said Nori Chiou, investment director at White Oak Capital. "Japan's proactive government support, marked by substantial subsidies and minimal political interference, sets it apart, fostering superior progress compared to many other countries." In addition to TSMC, the Japanese government-backed chip foundry venture Rapidus plans to mass produce chips on the northern island of Hokkaido from 2027. Taiwan's Powerchip is also seeking government subsidies to set up a \$5.4 billion foundry in Japan. Taiwanese firms boosting their presence in Japan include TSMC-backed Global Unichip Corp (GUC), another fabless designer of ASICs, which said it is attracted by both the engineering talent and business opportunities. Additionally, Materials Analysis Technology (MA-tek), which inspects semiconductor materials and cites TSMC as its biggest client, opened a new lab in Kyushu late last year. Semiconductor equipment and maintenance firm Finesse Technology, another key TSMC contractor, is building a factory in Japan. TSMC supplier Marketch is also expanding in Japan, the sources said. Marketch declined to comment. "The trend will continue for the foreseeable future as part of decoupling," said Takamoto Suzuki, head of China economic research for trading house Marubeni. He warned, however, that Japan may not have sufficient young science industry workers to meet demand. The number of workers in Japan's chip-related businesses has declined by around a fifth over the last roughly two decades, although the government and universities have ramped up efforts to encourage students into the field.

## Private US moon lander reaches lunar orbit

NEW YORK (Reuters): A moon lander built by Houston-based company Intuitive Machines reached lunar orbit, heading for an attempt at the first US touchdown on Earth's nearest celestial neighbor in more than 50 years, and the first ever by a private spacecraft. The six-legged robot lander, dubbed Odysseus, entered a circular orbit 57 miles (92 km) above the lunar surface after firing its main rocket thruster for nearly seven minutes in an orbital insertion maneuver, the company said in an online statement. The spacecraft was expected to begin final descent with another blast from its main engine about an hour before landing, with touchdown planned for 5:30 p.m. EST (2230 GMT) on Thursday at crater Malapert A near the moon's south pole, according to Intuitive Machines' latest flight plan. The vehicle is carrying a suite of science instruments and technology demonstrations for NASA and several commercial customers designed to operate for seven days before the sun sets on the polar landing site. Odysseus remains "in excellent health," the company said, adding that for the duration of its lunar orbit roughly 239,000 miles (384,000 km) from Earth, mission controllers in

Houston would monitor flight data from the spacecraft and transmit images of the moon. Odysseus, a 13-foot-tall (4 meters) NOVA C-class lander, was launched six days ago, on Feb. 15, atop a Falcon 9 rocket built and flown by Elon Musk's California-based company SpaceX from NASA's Kennedy Space Center in Cape Canaveral, Florida. If the landing succeeds, the IM-1 mission would represent the first controlled descent to the lunar surface by a US spacecraft since Apollo 17, when NASA's last crewed moon mission carried Gene Cernan and Harrison Schmitt landed there in 1972. It also would mark the first "soft landing" on the moon ever by a commercially manufactured and operated vehicle and the first under NASA's Artemis lunar program, as the US races to return astronauts to Earth's natural satellite before China lands its own crewed spacecraft there. The IM-1 mission comes about a month after the lunar lander of another firm, Astrobotic Technology, suffered a propulsion system leak on its way to the moon shortly after being placed in orbit on Jan. 8 by a United Launch Alliance (ULA) Vulcan rocket making its debut flight. The malfunction of Astrobotic's Peregrine lander, which was

also flying NASA payloads to the moon, was the third time a private company had failed to achieve a lunar touchdown, following ill-fated efforts by companies from Israel and Japan. Those mishaps illustrated the risks NASA faces in leaning more heavily on the commercial sector than it had in the past to realize its spacelift goals. Although considered an Intuitive Machines mission, the IM-1 flight is carrying six NASA payloads of instruments designed to gather data about the lunar environment ahead of NASA's planned first crewed Artemis mission to the moon later this decade. Intuitive Machines was co-founded in 2013 by Stephen Altemus, former deputy director of NASA's Johnson Space Center in Houston and now the company's president and CEO. NASA announced last month that it was delaying its target date for a first crewed Artemis moon landing from 2025 to late 2026, while China has said it was aiming for 2030. Small landers are expected to get there first, carrying instruments to closely survey the lunar landscape, its resources and potential hazards. Odysseus will focus on space weather interactions with the moon's surface, radio astronomy, precision landing technologies and navigation.

## Somalia announces deal with Turkey

MOGADISHU (AP): Somalia announced a defense deal with Turkey that includes support for the Horn of Africa nation's sea assets and appears aimed at deterring Ethiopia's efforts to secure access to the sea by way of the breakaway region of Somaliland. Ethiopia signed a memorandum of understanding with Somaliland on Jan. 1. The document has rattled Somalia, which said it's prepared to go to war over it because it considers Somaliland part of its territory. Somaliland says Ethiopia agreed to recognize its independence in return for a naval port. Somali Prime Minister Hamza Abdi Barre described the defense and economic deal with Turkey as "a historic day for the country," after the council of ministers approved it. "Somalia will have a true ally, a friend, and a brother in the international arena," he said. Details of that agreement have not been made public, but Somalia sees such a deal as an act of aggression, even though Somaliland has enjoyed de facto independence for three decades. Somali President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud told reporters that senior officers from Ethiopia's military were in Somaliland "preparing the ground" for the territory's annexation.

## Ex-PM Thaksin gets visit from old ally Hun Sen

BANGKOK (Reuters): Thailand's influential ex-premier Thaksin Shinawatra, who was released this week from detention, was visited by former Cambodian leader Hun Sen, one of the tycoon's closest allies during his 15 years of self-imposed exile. Political heavyweight Hun Sen, the self-styled strongman of Cambodia, was prime minister for nearly four decades until handing over to his son last year. Hun Sen provided the billionaire with sanctuary during his exile, naming him a special advisor and allowing him to visit frequently and meet allies in Cambodia, frustrating Thaksin's rivals, who saw it as interference by a neighboring country. The activities of Thaksin, a towering figure over Thailand's tumultuous politics, are

being closely watched amid expectation he will exert influence on a government led by his family and allies, as he did while in self-imposed exile to avoid jail after being toppled in a coup. Thaksin was freed on parole due to his age and health, with the 74-year-old since seen wearing a neck brace, padded sling and using a wheelchair. A senior official who met him said he was "truly ill". "Two former prime ministers met and didn't talk about politics," Hun Sen posted on Facebook, with an image of him sitting on a sofa next to a somber-looking Thaksin wearing arm and neck supports. The full extent of Thaksin's health issues have not been disclosed and critics have questioned whether he is really ill. Thaksin made a dramatic return to Thailand in August the same

day as loyalist Srettha Thavasin being named Thailand's prime minister and Hun Sen ceding power in neighboring Cambodia. Thaksin was sentenced to eight years in prison for conflicts of interest and abuse of power but was transferred to hospital on his first night in jail with chest pains. His sentence was commuted to one year by the king and he was paroled after six months. Some analysts said Hun Sen's visit demonstrated their deep personal connection, one that could strengthen their countries' ties given their influence over their respective governments. "The visit reflects the politics of the elite in Southeast Asia," Siripan Nogsuan Sawadee, professor of political science at Chulalongkorn University,

is in their 40s, according to Western officials. Commanders say the older the soldiers, the more they experience chronic illness, such as ulcers, hernias and pinched nerves. Dima's assault company recently received seven new recruits ages 55 to 58. "What positions are they going to storm?" he asked sarcastically. "If he walks 4 kilometers with a backpack full of gear and weapons, he will fall down in the middle of the road." Nearby, Alyona Yalunka, a medic, cares for a 42-year-old injured soldier who goes by the battlefield name Kolmyk. She feeds him a piece of chocolate. "I will kiss these guys' feet to the bitter end, as long as they just stand, take up arms and protect my daughters," Yalunka said. Kolmyk looked up at her with glassy eyes as his painkillers started to kick in. "Now, I can rest," he said. In Kyiv, the parliament is grappling with legislation that would enable the military to draft more men so that those already in battle can get more rest or even be relieved of duty.

# Desperate for soldiers, Ukraine weighs unpopular plan to expand the draft

LYMAN, Ukraine (AP): When the Russian army mounted a full-scale invasion two years ago, Ukrainian men zealously rushed to recruitment centers across the country to enlist, ready to die in defense of their nation. Today, with Russia in control of roughly one-quarter of Ukraine and the two armies virtually deadlocked along a 1,000-kilometer (620-mile) front line, that spirit to enlist has faded: Many Ukrainian men are evading the draft by hiding at home or trying to bribe their way out of the battle. Along the frigid and muddy front line, commanders say their army is too small and made up of too many exhausted and wounded soldiers. As the war enters its third year, the most urgent and politically sensitive challenge pressing on Ukraine is whether it can muster enough new soldiers to repel an enemy with far more fighters at its disposal. Russia's population is more than three times as large as Ukraine's, and President Vladimir Putin has shown a willingness to force men to the front if not enough volunteer. The lack of soldiers isn't Ukraine's only predicament - it is also desperate for Western military aid, which has been harder to come by as the war drags on. But mobilizing enough soldiers is a problem only Ukraine can solve. To replenish its ranks, the Ukrainian government is struggling to find a balance between coercion and persuasion. The parliament is considering legislation that would

increase the potential pool of recruits by about 400,000, in part by lowering the enlistment age from 27 to 25. But the proposal is highly unpopular, forcing elected officials to grapple with questions that cut to the heart of nationhood: Can they convince enough citizens to sacrifice their lives? And, if not, are they willing to accept the alternative? A Ukrainian soldier fighting near the city of Avdiivka -- where soldiers retreated last week to save lives -- said his unit was recently outnumbered by about 5 to 1 when dozens of Russian soldiers stormed their position, killing everyone but himself and two others. "We were almost completely defeated," said Dima, who refused to provide his last name for security reasons. Roughly 800 kilometers (500 miles) away, a 42-year-old man hides at home outside of Kyiv, distressed. "I feel a sort of a guilt for being a man ... I cannot feel myself free," said Andrii, who insisted on using his first name only to speak about dodging the draft. Tens of thousands of other eligible Ukrainian men are estimated to be evading the draft, at home or abroad. Because there aren't enough new recruits, soldiers on the front line aren't getting enough rest in between rotations. Two years of grueling battles have left men fatigued and more susceptible to injury. When there are new recruits, they are too few, too poorly trained and often too old, according to interviews with two dozen Ukrainian soldiers, including

six commanders. Commanders say they don't have enough soldiers to launch offensives, and barely enough to hold positions amid intensifying Russian assaults. Brigades of 3,000-5,000 soldiers are typically fighting with only 75% of their full strength, according to Vadym Ivchenko, a lawmaker who is part of the parliament's national security, defense and intelligence committee. Some brigades have as few as 25%, he added. Dima, the soldier fighting near Avdiivka, was among a dozen men treated recently at a field hospital near the front. Doctors there said their work was like a merry-go-round: Soldiers sent back to fight after being treated often reappear weeks later with fresh wounds. Igor Ivantsev, 31, has been wounded twice in the span of four months. His body aches when he carries his machine gun, but doctors deem him fit to serve. Ivantsev said that of the 17 men he enlisted with, most are dead; the rest are like him, wounded. Ivantsev's commander, who would only provide his first name, Dmytro, said his exhausted and depleted company is working overtime to dig deeper trenches and build better locations from which to counter constant Russian artillery. "We have no people, nowhere to get them from," Dmytro said. At the start of the war, soldiers were rotated every two weeks for one week of rest, he said. But now his soldiers fight for a month, then get four days of rest. "We are not made of steel," said Ivantsev. The average Ukrainian servicemen

is in their 40s, according to Western officials. Commanders say the older the soldiers, the more they experience chronic illness, such as ulcers, hernias and pinched nerves. Dima's assault company recently received seven new recruits ages 55 to 58. "What positions are they going to storm?" he asked sarcastically. "If he walks 4 kilometers with a backpack full of gear and weapons, he will fall down in the middle of the road." Nearby, Alyona Yalunka, a medic, cares for a 42-year-old injured soldier who goes by the battlefield name Kolmyk. She feeds him a piece of chocolate. "I will kiss these guys' feet to the bitter end, as long as they just stand, take up arms and protect my daughters," Yalunka said. Kolmyk looked up at her with glassy eyes as his painkillers started to kick in. "Now, I can rest," he said. In Kyiv, the parliament is grappling with legislation that would enable the military to draft more men so that those already in battle can get more rest or even be relieved of duty.

An estimated 300,000 Ukrainian soldiers are currently fighting along the front line, while others serve elsewhere, lawmakers said. Putin has said twice as many Russian troops are in Ukraine. The Ukrainian military seeks to mobilize up to 500,000 more men, but realizing how unpopular such a move would be, lawmakers are treading carefully. Over a thousand amendments have been attached to draft legislation that even President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has yet to publicly endorse. Under the draft legislation, any individual who fails to respond to call up notices could potentially have their bank accounts frozen and their ability to travel outside the country restricted - provisions that Ukraine's human rights ombudsman has called unconstitutional. Lawmakers critical of the legislation, including Ivchenko, say the military hasn't adequately explained how a surge in conscription will meaningfully change the outcome of the war. The two countries have been at a near standoff for months following a failed counteroffensive by the Ukrainians over the summer. But the Russians have recently taken the initiative. "Will this law be enough for the armed forces to change the situation on the battlefield?" asked Ivchenko. While the legislation envisions a pool of at least 400,000 new recruits, a more realistic figure may be half that after accounting for draft dodgers and those with legitimate claims to defer enlistment, said Oksana Zabolotna, an analyst with the Center for United Actions, a government watchdog in Kyiv. The legislation's toughest sell are men like a 35-year-old website creator who insisted on anonymity to discuss his decision to hide at home in a suburb of Kyiv rather than join the war effort. He refuses to fight, he said, because he doesn't want to kill people; his plan is to raise enough money to escape Ukraine, which currently forbids men younger than 60 from traveling abroad. The legislation being

considered in parliament would, in theory, leave less room for men like him to hide by requiring all draft-eligible citizens to check in with the government via an electronic-tracking system. This system could also help balance a disparity in which recruitment patrols disproportionately target poor, rural areas to force draft dodgers to enlist. "Everyone understands it isn't equal," said Ivchenko, the lawmaker. While some bribe their way out of the draft entirely, others cut deals to be placed at a safe distance from the fighting, Ivchenko said. After an investigation into corruption, Zelenskyy last year dismissed all the regional heads of recruitment. The website creator hiding outside of Kyiv said he senses the government closing in, as if authorities are out to get him, one way or another. "It's a feeling that everyone wants to throw you in a meat grinder," he said. At a recruitment center in Kyiv, men are examined by doctors to determine their fitness to serve. Rustem Mineev, a 36-year-old railway worker, assumed he would be exempt from duty because his job is essential to the war effort. He was shocked when his workplace ordered him to get checked. "Of course, I am very scared," he said while waiting to get an X-ray. Dr. Olga Yevchenko, who is in charge of medical exams for new recruits, said some do try to bribe their way out. "It is difficult to make a decision," she said. "If a young man (comes), and he is completely healthy, you always know how it ends."



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## Public expense and self-serving politics

**T**HE Supreme Court of Pakistan has rejected a petition seeking recently-held general elections to be declared null and void and slapped a fine of 0.5 million rupees on the petitioner. According to the details, a petitioner namely Brigadier Retired Ali Khan requested the apex court to declare the February 8 general polls as null and void due to alleged violations of democratic norms and electoral integrity. The plea had also urged the court that the new elections should be ordered within 30 days under the direct supervision and oversight of the judiciary to ensure fairness, transparency, and accountability. A three-judge apex court bench led by Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Qazi Faez Isa undertook the proceedings on Wednesday, whereas the petitioner did not appear after filing the petition. The court was informed that the petitioner left the country a day earlier through a connected flight to Bahrain and is not available to pursue his plea.

Pakistan has been struck into acute socio-political and religious intolerance wherein the entire nation is polarized on ethnic, sectarian, religious, and political grounds with the least acceptance and no sense of coexistence with other competing factions and communities. During the Elections, multiple candidates run from a single constituency, and only the highest bidder is declared champion but every loser claims his victory alleging others of rigging without considering his political muscles and approval in the masses. At the time, almost all political parties accepted the results of the electoral districts where they succeeded, refusing results and demanding reelections where they faced a setback. The months-long exercise cost billions of rupees, valuable time, national efforts, and resources to cover this important milestone in the political history of the country. Now this landmark achievement could not be spoiled for removing ungrounded allegations and fulfilling the selfish demands of any individual candidate, political party, or its supporters. Whether any political party, leader, or supporters can bear the colossal cost of reelection from their pockets? or they only intend to accomplish their nefarious agenda at public expense through mere oral thrush.

Michel Foucault, a prominent philosopher, once asserted that we are perhaps living at the end of politics. With the decline of utopian visions and radical alternatives to capitalism, the focus shifted toward developing new types of relations with ourselves. Politics, which was once associated with parties and social structures, transformed into an individual, moral concern. In this context, the self became the battleground for contemporary politics. During the past decades, political change underwent a significant shift. Rather than external issues and foreign policy struggles, the emphasis turned inward, a struggle against our inner selves among the leaders. The collapse of collective grand narratives led intellectuals to explore self-transformation as the path to social change. The therapeutic sensibility emerged, treating the self as a mark of conquer. Politics degenerated into a quest for self-realization rather than collective transformation. Instead of addressing social issues, the confessional culture encouraged endless self-examination and self-empowerment.

Today's Pakistan confronts a similar challenge of self-projection, wherein political leaders deem themselves more important than the public, the country, and national prestige as well. This is the reason that no one is ready to accept his defeat and each one demands his victory even at the cost of the country's debacle and collapse of the democratic system. After all, the worst impact of self-politics lies in its focus on the individual, often overshadowing broader societal issues. As we grapple with our inner struggles, we must not lose sight of collective challenges that demand collective solutions, resilience, and teamwork to jointly achieve national goals. Otherwise, the system will collapse and we all will be losers, with no one to celebrate his victory as we experienced in the past over half a century ago. All must acknowledge the fact, that leaders are always recognized by nations, no nation is ever branded by its leader.

## American bias toward Palestinians

**T**HE United States which vetoed a UN Security Council resolution seeking a cease-fire in Gaza for the third time on Wednesday, defended Israel's occupation of Palestinian lands, arguing that the International Court of Justice (ICJ) should not order Tel Aviv to withdraw its forces from occupied territories. The US acting legal advisor at the Hague court told the adjudicators that any movement towards Israel's withdrawal from the West Bank and Gaza requires consideration for Israel's very real security needs.

The UN's top court kicked off its historic hearings into the legality of Israel's 57-year occupation of the Palestinian territories including the West Bank, Gaza, and East Jerusalem. During the week-long proceedings, more than fifty states along with the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), the League of Arab Nations, and the African Union (AU) will present their arguments by February 26. Wherein, the judges are expected to take roughly six months to issue their opinion on the question, which also asks them to consider the legal status of the occupation and its consequences for states.

The whole world in general, the Muslim community, Arab nations, and Palestinian people in particular are highly concerned about the ongoing US-Israel nexus at the United Nations which not only impairs the sovereignty of the global forum but practically renders it dysfunctional. The Biden administration mercilessly used veto power multiple times sabotaging various ceasefire efforts at the UN Security Council since Israel launched its brutal offensive in Gaza over four months ago. After months-long US-Israel teamwork at the UN headquarters in New York, American authorities reached the Hague court to protect their long-held ally at the global judicial forum. Historically, America's image as a global leader and responsible superpower was seriously tarnished due to Washington's unrestricted and unlimited support for Israel's unlawful actions and apartheid policies in illegally occupied territories over the past decades. The Biden Administration, the global community, and Hague judges must consult their history books or encyclopedias, as the Palestine dispute did not commence on October 7, but in the mid-1940s when nationless Jews from across the world reached Palestine and pushed out its centuries-old citizens from their motherland. After persistent failures of the UNSC, UNGA, and other forums, if Hague judges fail to deliver justice and do not acknowledge Palestinians' right to self-determination and statehood it will be a great setback to global multilateralism and will work as the last nail in the coffin of the United Nations.

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## World powers must start working together on space security

Dr. Amal Mudallali

**A statement by the head of the House Intelligence Committee, Rep. Mike Turner, set Washington on fire last week. He disclosed that his committee had information about a "serious national security threat," without specifying what it was. Turner requested US President Joe Biden to "declassify all the information related to the threat."**

The statement was so ominous that "all hell broke loose," as Rep. Jim Himes said. He revealed that he was "getting phone calls about whether people needed to head for the hills of West Virginia." The hills of West Virginia is a reference to a Cold War hideout for the US government in case of a nuclear war. The press was fast in reporting that the threat was a "Russian anti-satellite nuclear weapon." It brought the issue of destructive anti-satellite tests to the forefront of the debate on space security in the age of strategic instability.

The reporting on the story was mired in confusion, with some claiming American officials' fear of a "nuclear weapon" that Russia might put in space, while others said that Moscow was "still far from completing the project" or that the launch of such a weapon "does not appear imminent." As panic was setting in, the White House was quick to dial down the threat. National Security Council spokesman John Kirby confirmed that the US has information that Russia has the "troubling" capability of an anti-satellite weapon, but it has not been deployed yet and it does not pose an "immediate threat to anyone's safety" or "cause physical destruction here on Earth."

There was no mention of a nuclear weapon in this statement. House Speaker Rep. Mike Johnson also downplayed the threat, as did Secretary of State Antony Blinken, who said "this is not an active capability." But a few days later, he thought the threat was real enough to raise the issue with the foreign ministers of China and India at the Munich Security Conference.

Russia described the American warning about a new nuclear capability in space "a malicious fabrication." Turner's Republican colleagues called his release of

the information "reckless" and questioned his motives. Rep. Andy Ogles accused Turner of having an ulterior motive and said that Turner's move was to ensure funding for Ukraine. He also accused him of trying to guarantee passage of the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act's Section 702, whose renewal is facing opposition in Congress. Congress and Washington's tendency to turn everything into a political fight overshadowed the real issue at hand: space security. Satellites and their growing number and advanced technology are raising concerns about future wars in space, with the US signaling in recent months that both Russia and China are seeking to turn space into a

**Russia described the American warning about a new nuclear capability in space "a malicious fabrication." Turner's Republican colleagues called his release of the information "reckless" and questioned his motives.**

"warfighting domain," as Space.com reported.

The US is concerned about the safety of its satellites and is taking measures to protect and update its satellite capability. In what was referred to as a coincidence, the US Space Force launched six satellites that can "detect and track missile launches" the same day the report about Russia's new "weapon" in space came out, according to the Space.com report. The New York Times reported that the US is moving to a new system to "put constellations of smaller and cheaper satellites into orbit to counter space-based threats of the sort developed by China and Russia."

The new system relies on "blanketing" low Earth orbit with small, cheaper satellites, such as the Starlink internet communications system, the report added. Anti-satellite weapons are being developed by different powers in a more contested space, with some having already been deployed, including by Russia. Russia's anti-satellite weapons test capability is known. Its last one was in 2021, when it destroyed one of its old

satellites while it was in orbit. This test produced more than 1,500 pieces of trackable space debris in low Earth orbit, endangering the International Space Station. This debris will continue to pose a threat to other satellites and spacecraft for years to come. The US, China and India have also conducted destructive anti-satellite tests, producing thousands of pieces of space debris and adding to the threat to the safety and sustainability of space. Recently, the US has become very active in trying to stop anti-satellite tests to preserve the security of space and stop debris generation and its lethal effect on space objects.

In December 2022, the US successfully persuaded

Cold War, the US and Russia were able to compartmentalize their differences and agree on an arms control regime. This rejection came after Russia "rescinded" its ratification of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty because of the "US failure to ratify the treaty," as the Kremlin said.

But despite the concerns about Russia's intentions, experts doubt that Moscow will explode a nuclear weapon in space. Brian Weeden, of the Secure World Foundation, told Reuters that Russia "would undermine its credibility if it detonated a nuclear weapon in space." Both Russia and China argued, when they voted against the US resolution on anti-satellite tests at the UN, that their main concern and the main threat to space security was the placing of weapons in space.

Moreover, both Moscow and Beijing presented in 2008 and updated in 2014 a draft treaty on the Prevention of the Placement of Weapons in Outer Space. But the US rejected the treaty as "fundamentally flawed." The UN and its multilateral processes could offer a forum to engage in a serious process on space security and preventing war in space. But if last year's First Committee (Disarmament and International Security) meeting was any indication, there is little hope even at the UN. During the annual meeting of the committee in October, there were two opposing draft resolutions: one sponsored by the UK and supported by the US and their allies talking about the norms and principles of responsible behavior in space; and one by Russia supported by China and their allies with the goal of agreeing on a legally binding international instrument to prevent an arms race in space. Each side proposed a different working group.

This fragmentation on the multilateral level and last week's "panic" in Washington offer an urgent lesson about the importance of starting to compartmentalize space security and deal with space as a separate domain not linked to conflicts on Earth. It is also time to move from norms and voluntary rules in space to legally binding and enforceable instruments.

Arab News

## Ukraine threatened by democracy's enemy within

Mohamed Chebaro

**THESE are difficult days for Ukraine, and for the West as a whole. As Ukraine is about to start the third year of the Russian-imposed war against its people and territories, the fight for its survival as a nation - threatened by a larger, more superior and relentless neighbor - hangs in the balance.**

Will the democratic world, which claimed in February 2022 that Ukraine was defending freedom and its core values, such as adherence to the international rule of law, abandon Ukraine to its fate? Will it let all the efforts unravel due to those same values of freedom and democracy being employed by policymakers in the US and some EU countries to block the continued flow of crucial weapons and funding for Ukraine? Well, the calls from the likes of US President Joe Biden, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky and UK Foreign Minister David Cameron demanding the quick release of funds to keep the efforts to stop Russia on track should be heeded immediately, if the Western world is to prevent its imminent slide into isolationism and fragmentation, which would be quickly capitalized on by its few but very capable enemies.

I am minded not to be inclined to believe that the Gaza war and its distracting dynamics of potential escalations has anything to do with the Western world teetering on the brink. It is surely a question of domestic democratic processes and problems that are at play in the US and some EU countries in an election-charged year. Many national players are maximizing their brinkmanship in an effort to win power, even if this comes at the expense of their nations fulfilling their obligations, causes damage to their geostrategic postures and loses them face on the world stage as they renege on their promises. And it all hangs on the whims, desires and calculations of the likes of Republican US House of Representatives Speaker Mike Johnson, who continues to prevent the chamber from voting on the Ukraine assistance package. He seems to be playing into far, President Donald Trump's partisan hand to corner the White House and at least hurt Biden's chances of reelection later this year. That is if we do not believe those who say that this is happening because Trump is a Russian appeaser.

On the ground, the Ukrainian army is increasingly on the defensive against the more numerous and better-armed Russian forces, two years on from the start of the Russian invasion. After last year's failed counteroffensive, Zelensky has named a new army chief, claiming that 2024 could be successful if Kyiv makes effective changes in its approach to its defense. But the second full winter of war is heralding semi-static front lines, with soldiers' morale taking a hit, especially when they feel short of consistent ammunition supplies, as well as fighting personnel, but above all due to their inability to see any light at the end of the tunnel. Today looks so different from the end of 2022, when the supply of arms and men saw morale riding high, yielding successful offensives that returned Kharkiv in the northeast and Kherson

in the south. Last year produced a series of disappointments and, after the fall of Bakhmut in May, the Russian noose started to slowly but surely tighten, leading to the fall of Avdiivka in the last few days. The only good news for Ukrainians in recent months has come from the Black Sea, where Kyiv has succeeded in pushing back Russian naval forces to carve out a vital maritime corridor for cereal exports.

Ukraine's withdrawal from the city of Avdiivka has no doubt handed Vladimir Putin a major symbolic victory ahead of Russia's presidential election next month. It has also further exposed Kyiv's critical shortages of weapons and soldiers. Avdiivka was even tougher than the battle for Bakhmut, according to the Ukrainian military, which pointed to Russia's massive deployment of heavy equipment and air power, with Soviet-era combat vehicles supported by drones and planes.

The scale of Ukraine's losses - in terms of both territory and troops, with an estimated 70,000 killed and 120,000 injured - is not the major downside, despite its gravity and unsustainability. The problem is the wavering support, mainly from the US and some countries in the EU. In terms of arms, the situation is uncertain because of friction in Washington over continuing aid against the backdrop of the forthcoming presidential election. The EU has unblocked its latest aid package of 50 billion (\$54 billion), but not without difficulties, while it remains way behind on pledges of ammunition deliveries. Without assistance and with its own defense industry badly depleted, Ukraine will not be able to confront Russia, which has mobilized its economy for war.

The losses have also been heavy on the Russian side. But unlike Kyiv, Moscow appears to be able to fill its ranks with a mix of patriotic propaganda, coercion and financial incentives, on top of having a bigger population. The cost of its invasion is estimated at \$1.3 trillion in previously anticipated economic growth to 2026, while about 315,000 Russian troops have either been killed or injured so far, according to US officials. The onus is clearly on the US and the EU to deliver on their promises to Ukraine. But how to do that with an increasingly polarized population and diminished outlook on shared values such as democracy, which the Russian invasion of Ukraine had an objective to undermine? History is never fair and, even though the Ukrainians have paid in land and blood to hold on to the democratic ethos through which they wish to ensure the future of their hard-earned independence, a Trumpian speaker in the US House of Representatives - ironically, through an expression of his democratic right - is stalling the approval of the US aid package.

The democratic world could seem to be losing not only its moral compass and its national security interests, but also squandering Eastern Ukraine in a way that shows that the lessons from the Second World War about the price of appeasement have not been learned. Two years on, it seems that Ukraine is at the mercy of the democratic enemy within.

## Fear is part of life in Russia

Dan Storyev

to be wrong. To me, fear has been a stimulus to grow smarter and stronger more quickly. Whether I was in Minsk in 2020, Moscow in 2021, or Izium in 2022, fear would push me and my colleagues to improve our operational security, wear flak jackets, and generally act with more care and competency.

Similarly, Russian activists use their fear to inform their tactics and strategies. They keep an emergency suitcase packed with everything they would need during their first days in prison, just in case. They use encrypted messaging apps and pseudonyms. Recently, most Russians have been picking protest methods that are less likely to land them in prison - shifting from mass street actions to more sustainable, covert tactics like sabotage and graffiti. The reminders of activists' fears are woven into pop culture. The Russian rap-rock band

Anacondaz begins their album "My Children Won't Be Bored" with the words of a mother instructing her daughter to take an old phone with a "fresh SIM card" to a protest, along with milk and lemon juice to relieve the pain of tear gas. Of course, fear can also paralyze one into inaction, resulting in disillusion and apathy. To produce conscious action fear must be combined with hope, such as hope for a "beautiful Russia of the future" that Navalny always called for. This hope is the polar opposite of fear, but the two are still connected. Many Russians would define the "beautiful Russia of the future" as fundamentally free of fear, the fear of corrupt judges, drunk police officers, and the ever-present police state.

Hope might be a beautiful thing, but hope for a free Russia grew in the most gloomy conditions. Navalny's fate is a testament

to this. The last known video of the assassinated politician has him joking around, mocking the judge. His messages from the prison are bristling with sarcasm and pop-culture references. Navalny's optimism carried him through the absurd and horrific tribulations that the Kremlin unleashed against him. And one of Navalny's key messages was "don't be afraid." But what if we are afraid? We certainly should be. If you are in Russia, you should be terrified. If you are abroad you, too, should be worried. Putin's nuclear-armed regime has kidnapped and killed dissidents beyond Russia's borders. It is waging a war at the gates of Europe and becoming ever more emboldened. Soon, Putin will be re-anointed as Russia's ruler after killing his main political opponent.

There are plenty of reasons to be afraid. That is why we should embrace fear, acknowledge it, and let it fuel our hope. We must under-

stand that if we don't want to live in fear, we need to strive for democratic change in Russia. Only a free Russia at peace with itself and its neighbors can rid the whole region of fear. To achieve this transformation, activists within Russia have to carry on Navalny's legacy by building resistance to the Kremlin. And those in the West, whether policymakers or regular citizens, need to help Russian democracy, as they are well positioned to do so. They can write letters to Russian political prisoners, donate to NGOs and independent media, and make sure the world's attention is on the Russian resistance.

We need to make sure that Navalny's death does not go in vain. We cannot let fear paralyze us but stir us into action instead. We must ensure that the lives of political prisoners in exile are a key issue for Western foreign policy - while welcoming pro-democracy Russians who fled their country. That is how we all build the beautiful Russia of the future.

The Moscow Times



# Ukraine is switching to self-reliance mode

AS the second anniversary of the full-scale Russian invasion approaches, Ukraine finds itself at a crossroads. Waning external assistance is now a reality that threatens its future. For months now, United States President Joe Biden has been unable to push through Congress an aid package for Ukraine due to opposition within the Republican Party. Meanwhile, Europe is grappling with its own limitations. Germany, despite increasing its military aid, has stopped short of providing pivotal Taurus missiles. The United Kingdom's ongoing support is also clouded by uncertainties surrounding its upcoming general election.

But even if European assistance were to remain at its maximum potential - a scenario far from the current reality - the aid remains woefully inadequate when compared with Russia's firepower and resources. For instance, France's recent plan to provide 3,000 155mm shells monthly pales in comparison to Russia's daily barages of up to 20,000 shells. As support for the Ukrainian army from its allies has declined, the Russian war machine - adept at circumventing sanctions and fuelled by unchecked oil sales - has intensified its offensive. Ukraine, now facing a dire shortage of critical military supplies, such as artillery shells and air defence munitions, including Stingers and even Patriot missiles, has been forced into a defensive posture. The waning effectiveness of Ukrainian air defences has led to its heightened vulnerability to aerial assaults and increased civilian casualties.

Despite the challenges, Ukraine has not succumbed to despair. Instead, it has embarked on a path of self-reliance, a journey marked by resilience and strategic innovation in the face of adversity. Ukrainian defence is transitioning from urgent procurement to boosting its own weapons production and forming strategic partnerships with foreign defence companies. This shift is meant to enhance Ukraine's native defence capabilities in the long term. Ukraine's innovative approach to the use of drones, particularly first-person view (FPV) drones, epitomises its focus on self-standing. The effective-

iveness of these low-cost devices is underscored by their versatility and precision. Capable of neutralising enemy infantry in trenches and destroying high-value targets like armoured vehicles, these drones have altered warfare dynamics.

By way of example, one report

***This shift is meant to enhance Ukraine's native defence capabilities in the long term. Ukraine's innovative approach to the use of drones, particularly first-person view (FPV) drones, epitomises its focus on self-standing. The effectiveness of these low-cost devices is underscored by their versatility and precision. Capable of neutralising enemy infantry in trenches and destroying high-value targets like armoured vehicles, these drones have altered warfare dynamics. By way of example, one report on Russian equipment losses indicates that from September 17 to October 17, FPV drones were involved in about 35 percent of elimination operations. During this period, 388 cases of Russian equipment destruction were documented with 146 units destroyed by FPV drones. The attacks destroyed \$140m in equipment, including a \$25m Tor air defence system. Because they have become such a critical component of Ukraine's***

on Russian equipment losses indicates that from September 17 to October 17, FPV drones were involved in about 35 percent of elimination operations. During this period, 388 cases of Russian equipment destruction were documented with 146 units destroyed by FPV drones. The attacks destroyed \$140m in equipment, including a \$25m Tor air defence system. Because they have become such a critical component of Ukraine's

military strategy, FPV drones are now at the centre of a nationwide effort to scale up production. Not only are companies expanding their own production lines, but there are also open calls and courses for ordinary citizens to help in the assembly effort. As a result, Ukraine aims to manufacture at

least a million such drones in 2024. The scale-up of production has also helped decrease the cost of each drone from \$400 to \$350. By comparison, a US anti-personnel kamikaze drone, the Switchblade 300, can cost 12 times more, and a barrage munition, the Switchblade 600, can be 200 times more than a Ukrainian-made FPV drone. Ukraine's focus on self-sufficiency extends to the production of heavy weaponry, of which the 2S22

Bohdana self-propelled artillery unit is a prime example. At least 30 Bohdanas have been manufactured during wartime. Reportedly, none has been lost so far with only a few units damaged and under repair.

In total, 25 enterprises and about 400 specialists are involved in Bohdana production, which has been kept decentralised to protect it from enemy attacks. Scaling up the manufacturing of this howitzer is crucial because Ukraine's allies have not been able to supply enough 155mm artillery systems to meet its needs. National production is also significantly decreasing the cost of one unit - currently at about \$2.5m. Ukraine has also sought to establish various defence cooperation schemes with allies. One example is the collaboration with Germany's Flensburg Fahrzeugbau Gesellschaft, which will establish a repair centre in western Ukraine, significantly boosting maintenance efficiency for assets like Leopard tanks while providing on-site training for Ukrainian mechanics.

Another German arms manufacturer, Rheinmetall, has already set up a repair workshop for tanks in Ukraine and has recently announced plans to establish a factory to produce 155mm ammunition in a joint venture with a Ukrainian partner. Ukraine has also concluded an agreement with the Czech Intergovernmental Defence Cooperation Agency for the establishment of a weapons production cluster and with Swedish BAE Systems for the joint manufacturing of the CV-90 infantry fighting vehicle. This drive towards self-reliance is not just a wartime response but a strategic vision. Ukraine aims to build a robust defence industry that can reduce its dependence on external support, help win the current war and develop a strong military deterrent against future threats. It also aims eventually to become a significant arms exporter, leveraging its defence sector for economic and geopolitical gains. The shift towards self-reliance and innovative strategies stands as a testament to Ukraine's resilience. Support from its allies may be diminishing, but Ukraine's determination to win this war and ensure a bright future for its citizens is not.

# Trump's making America irrelevant to Europe

Madeline Albright famously called America the "indispensable nation." Is former President Donald Trump making America the irrelevant nation? Trump finally broke days of silence on Russian opposition figure Alexey Navalny's death but failed to mention Russia or condemn Russian President Vladimir Putin in his first public comments. Meanwhile, congressional Republicans have continued to follow his lead, stalemating assistance for Ukraine, the one nation standing up to Putin's armies.

House Speaker Mike Johnson has resisted calls to bring a Senate-passed aid package for Ukraine up for a quick vote, instead allowing the House to adjourn for a nearly two-week recess. There may be majority support for Ukraine aid in the chamber as whole, but Johnson faces stiff opposition from his right flank over additional aid, with Trump urging Republicans to reject it.

These moves followed Trump's recent threat to tell Russia to "do whatever the hell they want" to any NATO member nations who lag in their military spending. The result Rising fears of a new and frightening turn in the United States have left an increasing number of European leaders determined to strike out on their own.

Even comments from President Joe Biden addressed to a recalcitrant Congress such as "the way they're walking away from the threat of Russia, the way they're walking away from the threat of NATO, the way they're walking away from meeting our obligation, it's shocking," haven't helped. Indeed, much was made at the annual Munich Security Conference over congressional failures. Most European leaders headed home from Munich, more convinced than ever that the United States is on the cusp of abandoning them. For many, it is clear democracies must begin considering in concrete terms how to defend themselves without the American nuclear and security umbrella under which they have thrived for more than a half century.

Before leaving, Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen even announced her country would be handing over all her nation's artillery to Ukraine as well as F-16 fighters. "We have to do more," Frederiksen said, as Saturday marks the two-year anniversary of Russia's invasion of Ukraine. The first steps toward a new direction for such a Europe - without America - are already being taken. In Berlin, Ursula von der Leyen, the former German defence

David A. Andelman

minister who has deftly steered the continent for five fraught years as the European Commission's president, announced Monday that she would be seeking a second term. High on her agenda, she says, would be the creation of Europe's first commissioner of defense.

Creating such a pan-European ministry goes far beyond simply reshuffling bureaucrats in Brussels, however. First, there's the question of budgets. Already, America's reduced funding is being felt across Europe. As CNN reported, American support of Ukraine is still bleeding resources from the US Army's Europe and Africa Command, now left with \$3 billion to fund \$5 billion in operational needs including the ferrying of weapons and equipment to Ukraine and even NATO member Poland. Without congressional action, funding for US operations in Europe could run out in May, with Army Secretary Christine Wormuth expecting the Army would "have to sort of rob Peter to pay Paul."

Von der Leyen has also said that upping European defense production would be a top priority for her second term - not to mention sorting through vastly divergent budgets of the various countries. With respect to Ukraine, despite his initial protestations of eternal solidarity, French President Emmanuel Macron's government has committed just 640 million euros (\$686 million), compared with Germany's 17.7 billion euros (\$19.1 billion) in military aid, according to calculations from Germany's Kiel Institute, an economic research institute and think tank. Although the French figure has been disputed, the institute does say "France's contributions "are far below the UK's," which is only in the middle rank of European suppliers. Still, as a bloc, Europe at about 85 billion euros (\$92 billion) has already passed the United States at 66.2 billion euros (\$71.6 billion) in total commitments to Ukraine. US military assistance has been higher than the EU's has been, though this has now been halted in the face of Congressional inaction while EU aid is only accelerating.

Then there is the nuclear issue. The US has an estimated 100 nuclear weapons deployed at air bases in Belgium, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands and Turkey - though all launch codes are in US hands. France is the only European Union country with its own arsenal - the world's fourth largest. With 290 operational warheads, it's the largest in Europe, though barely 5 percent the size of

Russia's. France has refused to cede control of such weapons to any other power, though that could change. In a recent visit to Sweden, Macron suggested that while nuclear deterrence is in "France's vital interests," such plans should have a "clear European dimension, which gives us a special responsibility." Britain, while no longer in the EU, has an arsenal of 225 nuclear weapons. At the Munich Security Conference, the shadow (opposition) British Foreign Secretary David Lammy said his Labour Party, if elected in elections this year, would propose "a new U.K.-EU security pact."

All these efforts and pledges represent a dramatic change in direction for a continent that for decades has remained chained unflinchingly to America as its guarantor. To oversee this process, Europe needs a strong and resolute individual for its first defense czar. One front-runner is Estonian Prime Minister Kaja Kallas, who's already taken the lead in a EU plan to deliver 1 million artillery shells to Ukraine.

"We need a combat-effective Europe, able to provide for its own defense. This is the only way to build deterrence by denial that would be credible enough to avoid war and stop Russia's cycle of aggression," Kallas wrote last year for Politico Europe. "Since the invasion began, we have seen Russia fire Europe's monthly artillery production in a single day in Ukraine. Capacity and sustainability will determine the outcome of this war." Kallas has a clear motivation in taking on such a post - a Russian bull's-eye on her back. Last week, the Kremlin placed her on a wanted list, apparently the first head of government to be targeted. (It accused her and others of destroying or damaging monuments in memory of Soviet soldiers.) And at Munich, she proposed seizing all of Russia's assets frozen abroad and turning them over to Ukraine - before November's US presidential election.

The most graphic evidence, though, of just how far Europe is moving away from America and toward self-sufficiency was an opinion column Monday by Estonian President Alar Karis that discussed the region's defense without a single reference to the United States or Donald Trump. "Any European country would struggle to face Russia alone," Karis observed. "But when we're united, we're invincible." Or in a direct slap at Trump, German magazine Der Spiegel noted: "NATO, of course, is not (debt) collection agency." **CNN**

# Taiwan's missteps will only hasten reunification

ON Tuesday, Taiwan's "coast guard" reportedly "repelled" a mainland coast guard boat numbered 8029, potentially exacerbating tensions following the recent boat incident on Feb 14. If Taiwan continues to provoke the mainland, its authorities may face significant consequences.

The Spring Festival celebrations have been marred by the tragic incident in the waters off Kinmen island: in excuse of so-called prohibited or restricted waters, the violent law enforcement actions of the "Taiwan coast guard" caused a mainland fishing vessel to capsize, in which two of the four fishermen on board died, heightening tensions across the Taiwan Strait. It is within the lawful rights of the Chinese mainland to carry out regular patrols and law enforcement operations in the waters between Xiamen and Kinmen to ensure the safety and livelihoods of fishermen and uphold order in the region. On Monday, the mainland's coast guard boarded a tourist ship from Kinmen, which was carrying 11 crew members and 23 passengers, to conduct a "routine check" that lasted approximately half an hour.

The measures are similar to the mainland's patrols and law enforcement moves following former US House of Representatives speaker Nancy Pelosi's reckless visit to Taiwan in August 2022, and

they signify not only the mainland's assertion of sovereignty in accordance with UN Resolution 2758, but also the gradual establishment of a new normal in governance and institutional progress toward cross-Strait reunification. Taiwan has accused the mainland fishermen of "crossing the line", while the mainland's official response highlights the illegitimacy of Taiwan's violent law enforcement. In reality, it is the "Taiwan coast guard" that crossed the line. Taiwan has failed to recognize the inherent illegality and excessive violence of its law enforcement process, which is not only a rejection of the mainland's policy of "people on both sides of the Taiwan Strait are one family" and the integration of Fujian and Taiwan, but also a brutal attack on mainland fishermen.

Taiwan fails to acknowledge that its so-called regulations are not valid under Beijing's legal framework, and the mainland had been tolerating its law enforcement actions in the past merely out of goodwill. Taiwan should accept Beijing's new normal law enforcement process in the waters between Xiamen and Kinmen and refrain from further encroaching on the lawful rights of mainland fishermen. In fact, Taiwan should change its law enforcement practices and

Tian Feilong

review the aggressive nature of its "coast guard".

More important, it is futile on the part of Taiwan to use external intervention to oppose Beijing's new normal law enforcement measures. The Taiwan authorities and external forces trying to interfere in the country's internal affairs must know that the new normal in cross-Strait relations presents a big challenge to the recently elected island leader Lai Ching-te and his administration. Cross-Strait relations are now in transition, with the US using Taiwan as a leverage to target Beijing. However, the pro-independence agenda of Taiwan's ruling Democratic Progressive Party - and its collusion with anti-Beijing external forces - have led to internal divisions in Taiwan.

Besides, Beijing cannot accept any new cross-Strait discourse which deviates from the 1992 Consensus that there is only one China and Taiwan is an integral part of China, and it will respond accordingly to any "Taiwan independence" rhetoric and action that undermine the one-China principle. As a matter of fact, the Taiwan Affairs Office of the State Council's categorical rejection of the island's unilateral earmarking of the "prohibited or restricted waters" and condemnation of its violent law enforcement means

Beijing has progressed a lot on the way to realizing national rejuvenation. The Taiwan Affairs Office's move also affirms that the waters between Xiamen and Kinmen are the traditional fishing grounds of fishermen from both sides of the Strait whose legitimate rights are protected by mainland laws. As such, law enforcement by the mainland coast guard in the waters between Xiamen and Kinmen is the best institutional guarantee to prevent similar incidents.

Also, the new normal governance arrangement need not be subject to cross-Strait negotiations and instead should be implemented directly by the mainland based on the principle of sovereignty. The DPP has refused to acknowledge the 1992 Consensus ever since outgoing island leader Tsai Ing-wen took office in 2016, seriously undermining cross-Strait relations. That has made it impossible to hold talks to resolve cross-Strait disputes. Making matters worse is the DPP's hostile stance and "de-Sinicization" policy, which incidentally led to the tragic Kinmen incident. The "further actions" can extend beyond the current law enforcement by the mainland's coast guard and include criminal prosecution and sanctions against personnel, ensuring that those responsible for the Kinmen tragedy pay a heavy price.

The China Daily

# Prepare for battle between President and US Army

Phil Tinline

AMERICAN democracy is in dire peril. Enraged at the establishment's cowardly response to external threats, a megalomaniac demagogue rides a wave of popular support, appearing before a series of fervently attended political rallies. He threatens to oust an old, sickly, unpopular president, and seize power. Once in control, he clearly means to rule as a strongman.

Sixty years have passed since movie audiences first got to see this scenario played out in the Hollywood thriller Seven Days in May, which starred Burt Lancaster as a mutinous general, and Kirk Douglas as the officer who thwarts his would-be coup. Today, as fears intensify about what Donald Trump plans to do if he recaptures the presidency, the anniversary is a reminder that the nightmare of American dictatorship did not begin with Trump, or the attack on the Capitol. The fear goes all the way back to the Declaration of Independence, which warned of the 'absolute Tyranny' that George III was supposedly plotting to impose on the colonists. Such

spectres have haunted America ever since.

Seven Days in May was based on a novel by two political journalists, written to dramatise the creeping fear of the early 1960s that elements in the military posed a serious threat to American democracy. President Eisenhower left office in 1961, warning of the "unwarranted influence" of the military-industrial complex: the "potential for the disastrous rise of misplaced power" could, he said, "endanger our liberties". The generals bitterly resented the new President Kennedy's assertion of control over spending, strategy and troop indoctrination.

Liberal public figures denounced senior officers' scarily anti-democratic statements. One congressman cried: "We want no military czars in this country. We want no men on horseback." President Kennedy himself took the threat seriously enough to encourage the director John Frankenheimer to turn Seven Days in May into a movie, to alert America to the threat. Burt Lancaster's 'General Scott' was

inspired partly by a former general, Edwin Walker, who Kennedy forced out of the army for trying to indoctrinate his troops with far-right propaganda. Walker denounced Kennedy as a communist and, for a time, seemed to be the 'man on horseback' that right-wing extremists yearned for. But Scott was also based on the ferocious chief of the air force, General Curtis LeMay, who clashed with Kennedy over the botched covert invasion of Cuba in 1961, and his terrifyingly gung-ho approach to nuclear war.

So why didn't the movie's nightmare scenario actually happen? One reason was that, as ever when fact inspires fiction, messy reality becomes overly neat and simple. There was a crucial difference between the two men the movie melded together. One was a general, the other a former general. Walker became a public demagogue, but was not powerful; LeMay was powerful, but did not turn demagogic while in uniform. Eventually, he did take part in a far-right push for power - as the

presidential running-mate of the segregationist George Wallace. But when they lost, he accepted the result. So on one level, Seven Days in May was simply a centrist nightmare that did not come to fruition. Its lesson is that you can't watch over democracy by looking for vague spectres; you have to be specific about the nature of the threat. But with that in mind, eternal vigilance remains the price of liberty.

This vigilance has proven to be a price worth paying under a new Trumpian paradigm. It's little surprise that fears of military coups and civil wars have crept back into the cultural landscape: take A24's bluntly titled 'Civil War' slated to release this year. Perhaps, the film's trailer leads us to believe, a dystopian future of gun-toting secessionist militias is closer to becoming reality than we'd like to think. If he wins in November, Trump seems prepared to deploy soldiers against protestors. Today, the military's willingness to disobey the president may yet become a hot political issue once again: this time, not to destroy democracy, but to save it.

The Telegraph

# The world's moral failure in Gaza should shame us all

Martin Griffiths

AS the Group of 20 (G20) meets in Brazil this week, the reported death toll in the Gaza hostilities is nearing the 30,000 mark. I hope this gives the foreign ministers convening in Rio de Janeiro a reason to reflect on what their countries have or have not done to stop this.

To say that the war in Gaza is pitiless and is an example of utter humanitarian failure is not news. There is no need to restate the obvious. Instead, allow me - on behalf of my humanitarian colleagues - to warn you not just about today but what I fear for tomorrow.

What has been unfolding in Gaza for the past 138 days is unparalleled in its intensity, brutality and scope. Tens of thousands of people killed, injured or buried under the rubble. Entire neighbourhoods razed to the ground. Hundreds of thousands of people displaced, living in the most abject conditions even as winter sets in. Half a million people on the brink of famine. No access to the most basic needs: food, water, health care, latrines. An entire population is being strangled by its humanity.

The atrocities befalling the people of Gaza - and the humanitarian tragedy they are enduring - are there for the world to see, documented by brave Palestinian journalists too many of them have been killed while doing so. No one can pretend not to know. No

one can pretend not to know either that humanitarian agencies are doing their best: Nearly 160 of our colleagues have been killed, yet our teams continue to deliver food, medical supplies and safe drinking water. We are doing everything we can, despite the security risks, the collapse of law and order, the access constraints and the personal tragedies. Despite the defunding of the largest UN organisation in Gaza. And despite the deliberate attempts to discredit us.

The humanitarian community which I represent has just released a plan outlining what we need to increase the flow of aid into and across Gaza. None of it is unreasonable: security guarantees; a better humanitarian notification system to reduce risks; telecommunication equipment; removal of unexploded ordnance; use of all possible entry points. But although I have often said that hope is the currency of the humanitarian, I have little hope that the authorities will give us what we need to operate. I want nothing more than to be proven wrong.

We know without a shadow of a doubt that humanitarian agencies will be blamed - we are already being blamed - for the lack of aid in Gaza, despite the courage, commitment and sacrifice of all our teams there. But make no mistake: The deprivations that the people of Gaza have

been enduring are so severe that no amount of aid is enough.

The obstacles we are facing every step of the way are so enormous that we can only provide the bare minimum. The October 7 attacks on Israel are horrific - I have condemned them repeatedly and will continue to do so. But they cannot justify what is happening to every single child, woman and man in Gaza.

So my message to the G20 foreign ministers this week is clear: We have been pleading with Israel, as the occupying power in Gaza, to facilitate aid delivery - to little or no avail. We have been calling for the immediate and unconditional release of all hostages - to little or no avail. We have been urging the parties to abide by their obligations under international humanitarian and human rights law - to little or no avail.

We have been exhorting countries which have stopped funding UNRWA to reverse their decision - to little or no avail. Today, we implore you, G20 members, to use your political leadership and influence to help end this war and save the people of Gaza. You have the power to make a difference. Use it. Your silence and lack of action will only lead to more women and children thrown into the open graves of Gaza. Humanitarian agencies are doing everything they can. Are you?





DUBAI: Ambassador Faisal Niaz Tirmizi, Pakistan's Envoy to UAE and Muhammad Zubair Motiwala, Chief Executive, Trade Development Authority of Pakistan participated in a panel discussion during Pakistan Middle East Trade Development Conference 2024 held at Pakistan Association Dubai.

## PSX stays bullish, gains 355 points

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 100-index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) continued with bullish trend on Thursday, gaining 355.19 points, a positive change of 0.58 percent, closing at 61,914.34 points against 61,559.16 points the previous trading day.

A total of 324,830,445 shares valuing Rs 13,966 billion were traded during the day as compared to 362,771,035 shares valuing Rs12,492 billion the last day. Some 352 companies transacted their shares in the stock market; 185 of them recorded gains and 143 sustained losses, whereas the share prices of 24 remained unchanged.

The three top trading companies were Pak Elektron with 23,114,152 shares at Rs 22.74 per share, Cnergyico PK with 21,245,331 shares at Rs 3.95 per share, and Pak Intl Bulk with 16,257,000 shares at Rs 6.22 per share. Services Industries Limited witnessed a maximum increase of Rs 29.56 per share price, closing at Rs 657.00, whereas the runner-up was Systems Limited with a Rs 23.03 rise in its per share price to Rs410.40.

Indus Motor Company Limited witnessed a maximum decrease of Rs 82.07 per share closing at Rs 1,466.01, followed by Reliance Cotton Spinning Mills Limited with Rs 43.126 decline to close at Rs 531.88.

**Rupee gains 17 paise against dollar:** The Rupee on Thursday gained 17 paise against the US dollar in the interbank trading and closed at Rs 279.32 against the previous day's closing of Rs 279.49. However, according to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of the dollar in the open market stood at Rs 279.5 and Rs 282.3, respectively. The price of the Euro increased by Rs 1.3 to close at Rs 303.36 against the last day's closing of Rs.302.06. The Japanese Yen remained constant at Rs 1.86, whereas an increase of Rs 1.7 paise was witnessed in the exchange rate of the British Pound, which was traded at Rs 354.38 compared to the last closing of Rs 352.68. The exchange rates of the Emirates Dirham and the Saudi Riyal decreased by 5 paise each to close at Rs 76.04 and Rs 74.47 respectively.

## Institute of Business Administration Karachi hosts USAID's student services trainings

F.P. Report

KARACHI: As a partner university of USAID's Higher Education System Strengthening Activity (HESSA), Institute of Business Administration (IBA), Karachi hosted a four-day training concentrated on two areas crucial to the advancement of student support services at Pakistani higher education institutions including Mental Health and Microenterprise Development (MED).

Dr. Kari Trexler Ellingson, Associate Vice President for Student Development at the University of Utah, led the Mental Health segment, focusing on strategies for fostering micro-counseling skills. Subsequently, Islam M. Orban, Chief Investment Officer, Arweqah, KSA, served as the lead trainer for Microenterprise Development.

Participants from diverse departments representing 16 public sector universities across Pakistan actively engaged in the training sessions, fostering a rich exchange of ideas. In the mental health segment, they focused on learning about micro-counseling skills, career counseling and student

mental health, and understanding and working with trauma. Those in the MED stream delved into identifying best practices in university-based incubator design, crafting a winning incubator roadmap, and developing ecosystem support interventions that enhance incubation centers at higher education institutions.

In his closing remarks, Chief of Party USAID-HESSA, Dr. Kenneth Holland said that after interacting with the IBA students and faculty, he found them to be impressive as the students are very ambitious and aspiring to give back to their country by excelling in their prospective careers and contributing on different fronts.

He also stated that the HESSA will contribute to the fruition of the students' aspirations of becoming successful professionals and emerging entrepreneurs by equipping them with valuable skills.

Dr. Holland and Ms. Gwendolyn Schaefer, Assistant Director, Institute of International Education, US distributed certificates to all the participants.

The objective of this training program was to empower participating

Pakistan and the Middle East, providing networking opportunities for Pakistani traders, particularly with UAE buyers. Ambassador Faisal Niaz Tirmizi explained that the UAE market was continuously growing, offering ideal opportunities for dedicated Pakistani companies with sound business plans to maximize their potential.

Panel discussions during the conference focused on developing strategies to enhance market penetration and overcome challenges effectively. SVC of the Pakistan Dairy Association, Usman Zaheer, underscored the importance of dairy exports to the UAE market from Pakistan, emphasizing the need for value-added dairy products.

Ali Tanveer appreciated the support of the Government of Pakistan, which enabled FrieslandCampina's penetration into the UAE market. Moderating the panel discussion, Dr Shehzad Amin

proposed the creation of an incubator cell at the Pakistan Association Dubai for new companies and exporters aiming to enter the UAE market.

TDAP Chief Executive Muhammad Zubair Motiwala endorsed the idea and pledged support from TDAP to establish the business incubator center at PAD to promote new export businesses. He also highlighted the Agro Food exhibition to be held in Karachi in August 2024, inviting businessmen from the UAE to participate.

The event was attended by Chairman Al Awar Livestock Trading Est., Abdullah Ali Mohammed Al Awar, VC Rashid Abdullah Al Awar, CEO Pakistan Dairy Association, Dr Shehzad Amin, Director of Business Development & Optimization Ali Tanveer Khan, MEPA, FrieslandCampina, and other leading Pakistani businessmen and exporters.



universities to enhance existing student services and introduce innovative programs. By focusing on mental health and MED, the training sessions aimed to equip university representatives with the necessary skills and knowledge to facilitate students and make higher education more accessible. The USAID's HESSA training

hosted by IBA, Karachi stands as a testament to collaborative efforts in advancing the quality and effectiveness of higher education services across diverse institutions.

The training concluded with a formal closing ceremony and a thank you note to IBA, Karachi for hosting the training sessions.

## BOP partners with Benazir Income Support Program



F.P. Report

LAHORE: The Bank of Punjab (BOP), a leading public sector bank with the largest touch points nationwide, is proud to announce a significant partnership with the Benazir Income Support Program (BISP), aimed at facilitating the efficient disbursement of cash grants to BISP beneficiaries across Pakistan. The agreement, marking a crucial milestone in our commitment to supporting socio-economic development and financial inclusion nationwide, was signed on February 21st, 2024, at the BISP headquarters in Islamabad. BOP has become the first public sector bank who will provide service to BISP.

The signing ceremony, graced by esteemed dignitaries including Dr. Amjad Saqib, Chairman of BISP; Mr. Amer Ali, Secretary of BISP; Mr. Zafar Masud,

President & CEO of the Bank of Punjab; Mr. Nofel Daud, Chief Digital Officer of BOP; and Mr. Imran Ashraf, Head of Digital Banking, Bank of Punjab, along with other senior executives of BISP & BOP, underscored the collective resolve to enhance the welfare and empowerment of BISP beneficiaries.

Under this collaboration, BOP will extend its services to serve BISP beneficiaries not only through its extensive branch network but also through ATMs, partner banks, and agent networks across all provinces of Pakistan. BOP will serve approximately 2 million beneficiaries, including 190K beneficiaries across 15 districts of Baluchistan, over 193K beneficiaries across 8 districts of Punjab, 215K beneficiaries across 3 districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK), and over 459K beneficiaries across 5 districts of Sindh. Through our multi-channel approach,

combining branch banking, digital platforms, and strategic partnerships, BOP is poised to ensure seamless and timely distribution of cash grants to eligible recipients.

Zafar Masud, President of Bank of Punjab, emphasized BOP's unwavering commitment to social responsibility and its significant presence in all provinces of Pakistan. "As a leading financial institution deeply rooted in communities across Pakistan, BOP is honoured to partner with BISP in their mission to alleviate poverty and promote financial inclusion. This collaboration

underscores our dedication to driving positive social impact and empowering individuals and families to build a better future."

BISP, Pakistan's flagship social safety net program, plays a vital role in mitigating poverty and enhancing the well-being of vulnerable segments of society. By leveraging BOP's extensive reach and expertise in financial services, BISP aims to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of cash transfers, ultimately empowering beneficiaries to improve their livelihoods and pursue their aspirations.

As part of our commitment to transparency and accountability, BOP will adhere to stringent operational protocols and regulatory standards in the disbursement process. Additionally, we will deploy robust monitoring mechanisms to ensure the integrity and security of every transaction, safeguarding the interests of both BISP and its beneficiaries.

This collaboration exemplifies BOP's dedication to driving inclusive growth and prosperity across Pakistan. Through strategic partnerships and innovative solutions, we remain steadfast in our mission to build a more prosperous and equitable future for all Pakistanis.

## Shipping activity at Port Qasim

KARACHI (APP):

The movements of ships was recorded at the port where eight ships namely, Xpress Salween, Maersk Cabo Verde, MSC Ellen, Wide Alpha, Chemroad Haya, Corona, Ullswater and Agia Erini Force carrying Containers, Chemicals, Palm oil, LPG and Coal, berthed at Container Terminal, Engro Terminal, Liquid Terminal, SSGC Terminal and Bulk Terminal respectively on Wednesday.

Meanwhile two more ships, Medi Chiba and XT Dolphin with Canola seeds and Palm oil also arrived at outer anchorage of the port during the same day.

A total of six ships were engaged at PQA berths during the last 24 hours, out of them four ships, Simaisam, Xpress Salween, Wide Alpha and MSC Ellen left the port on today morning and four more ships, Maersk Cabo Verde, Vayasas, Torm Elizabeth and Chemroad Haya are expected to sail on today afternoon. A cargo volume of 252,114 tonnes, comprising 206,028 tonnes imports cargo and 46,086 tonnes export cargo, including containerized cargo carried in 6,181 Containers (3,771 TEUs Imports and 2,410 TEUs export) was handled at the port during last 24 hours.

## Economic crisis of Pakistan

Manahil Khan

The country is currently running on foreign loans taken on high rates of interest. It will have to repay \$80 billion in the coming three years

**Escalating inflation**  
With inflation running at over 30 percent - a 50-year high - putting food on the table for the poorest, who comprise one-third of Pakistan's population, has become harder than ever before.

When the recent stampedes over food flooded social media, so did the deeper questions: How did the country end up here? What does this economic crisis mean for the majority of the Pakistani people and for Pakistan's international projects, especially those with China under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), which Pakistan considers vital for its future.

**Root causes of the crisis**  
The country's current situation has multiple causes, including overall poor economic management, corruption, and excessive spending on non developmental sectors. In a country where half the population is under the age of 22, investing in the education and technical skills of youth can generate opportunities for a

more sustainable economy.

**Currency depreciation**  
The unceasing decline in the value of Pakistan's currency over the months has been triggered by the country's inability to repay its foreign debt. Pakistan is essentially running on foreign loans, an economic model that only leads to borrowing more, which eventually results in bankruptcy. Between February 2023 and June 2026, Pakistan will have to repay around \$80 billion in foreign debt.

**Chinese debt dynamics**  
As of December 2022, Pakistan held \$126.3 billion in external debt and liabilities, of which 30 percent is owed to China. As much as the Chinese government has supported Pakistan's infrastructure development through CPEC, which Pakistan is determined to benefit economically from in the future, for now, the federal government having to repeatedly turn to the Chinese for refinancing and a rollover of debts.

Although the Chinese government and commercial banks have helped Pakistan by deferring debt repayment or rolling over debts in the past, it is hard to predict if China will continue to do so.

So far, of the numerous

projects agreed upon under CPEC, only a few have been completed. Chinese frustration over endless delays in project completion, halting of projects, and security threats to its nationals working in Pakistan has resulted in hesitation to invest in new projects. Yet Pakistan remains one of the biggest beneficiaries of Chinese loans.

Many blame China for the high interest it charges on loans that have burdened many developing countries including Pakistan. Instead of the promised economic growth through CPEC, China's loans may have worsened Pakistan's economic crisis. But it is still too early to conclude whether CPEC debts will drain the Pakistani economy or open up opportunities for growth in the future.

**Conclusion**  
For now, transparency over government spending is the need of the hour, along with restructuring the country's economy from one that overspends on non developmental sectors and excessively relies on foreign debt with high interest to a model that is sustainable.

(The author is student of Department of Economics at UOP)

## Pak economy: Challenges, opportunities and expectations

Syed Aliyan Hassan

Pakistan's economy stands at a crossroads, navigating a complex web of challenges, promising opportunities, and the soaring expectations of its citizens. As the year unfolds, the economic landscape of the country reflects both the aspirations for growth and the hurdles that must be overcome to realize its potential. This article delves into the multifaceted aspects of Pakistan's economy, analyzing the pressing challenges it confronts, the avenues of opportunity it can explore, and the collective expectations that shape its trajectory.

**Challenges:**  
1. Inflation and price instability: One of the foremost challenges gripping the economy is the persistence of inflation. Rising prices of essential commodities have eroded the purchasing power of the masses, particularly impacting vulnerable segments of society.

2. Fiscal deficit and public debt: Pakistan's fiscal deficit continues to be a critical concern. The imbalance between government revenues and expenditures has led to a ballooning public debt, posing risks to economic stability.

3. Energy shortages: The shortage of reliable energy remains a substantial obstacle to industrial growth and economic productivity. Power outages disrupt business operations, hampering investment and job creation.

4. Unemployment and underemployment: With a youthful population, Pakistan faces the challenge of providing sufficient employment opportunities. High unemployment and underemployment rates

hinder social progress and stability.

5. Informal economy: The informal sector, although significant, often escapes taxation and government oversight. This results in a narrower tax base and limited regulatory control.

**Opportunities:**  
1. CPEC and regional connectivity: The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) stands as a transformative initiative that can propel economic growth. Enhanced regional connectivity opens doors to new trade routes and investment potential.

2. Export diversification: Pakistan boasts a rich array of exportable goods, ranging from textiles to agricultural products. By focusing on value-added goods and expanding market access, the country can reduce trade deficits and boost

economic growth.

3. Technology and digital economy: The burgeoning technology sector presents a unique opportunity. From software development to e-commerce, embracing digital transformation can foster innovation and create employment opportunities.

4. Renewable energy: Investing in renewable energy sources not only addresses energy shortages but also aligns with global sustainability goals. It reduces reliance on costly imported fuels and positions Pakistan as a champion of environmentally friendly solutions.

**Expectations and the road ahead:**

The citizens of Pakistan hold high expectations for their economy, including improved living standards, enhanced job prospects, and better access to essen-

tial services. To fulfill these expectations and navigate the challenges, a comprehensive approach is imperative:

**Economic reforms:** Structural reforms in sectors like taxation, energy, and governance are essential for sustainable growth and fiscal discipline.

**Investment climate:** Creating an environment conducive to investment by streamlining regulations and ensuring policy consistency can attract both domestic and foreign capital.

**Social safety nets:** Prioritizing social safety nets can shield vulnerable populations from economic shocks and reduce poverty rates.

**Education and skills development:** Investment in education and skills training is crucial to equip the workforce with skills relevant to a rapidly evolving job market.

**Sustainability:** Balancing economic growth with environmental sustainability is vital for ensuring long-term prosperity.

**Conclusion:**  
The economy of Pakistan encapsulates a blend of challenges and opportunities. By addressing economic hurdles through comprehensive reforms, capitalizing on opportunities for growth, and meeting the expectations of its citizens, Pakistan can embark on a path toward sustainable development, enhanced prosperity, and a brighter economic future. With the right strategies and concerted efforts, the nation can overcome challenges, seize opportunities, and realize its true potential on the global economic stage.

(The author is student of Department of Economics at UOP)

### Court Notice

In the Court of Murtaza Khan Civil Judge-II/Tangi, next date of hearing 04/03/2024, suite No. 71/1, case title Akhtar Muhammad vs. Bakhtiar Muhammad etc. Notice to Aizaz s/o Jehanzaib r/o Dado Kaly Tehsil Tangi District Charsadda (defendant). In the above title case the defendant is directed to appear before this Court at 8:30 am on 04/03/2024 either personally or through attorney or counsel, in failure ex-parte proceeding will be initiated against defendants. Given under my hand and seal of the Court.

### Court Notice

In the Court of Murtaza Khan Civil Judge-II/Tangi, next date of hearing 29/02/2024, case title Ali Haider vs. Tahir etc. Notice to Kamran s/o Maaz Ullah r/o Mamoo Bari Band presently residing at Saudi Arab (defendant). In the above title case the defendant is directed to appear before this Court at 8:30 am on 29/02/2024 either personally or through attorney or counsel, in failure ex-parte proceeding will be initiated against defendants. Given under my hand and seal of the Court.





## In brief

## Ex-Brazil player guilty

BRASILIA (BBC): A court in Spain has found a former Barcelona and Brazil footballer Dani Alves guilty of raping a woman in a Barcelona nightclub. He has been sentenced to four and a half years in prison. The 40-year-old, who is one of the most decorated footballers in history, had denied sexually assaulting the woman in the early hours of 31 December 2022. His lawyer had asked for his acquittal and said she would appeal against the verdict. A lawyer for the victim welcomed the verdict, saying that it "recognises what we have always known: the truth [as told] by the victim and the suffering there has been". As well as handing Alves a four-and-a-half year sentence, the court said he should face a further five years' probation. The prosecution had asked for a nine-year prison sentence. In Spain, a claim of rape is investigated under the general accusation of sexual assault, and convictions can lead to prison sentences of four to 15 years. According to Spanish media, the court took into account Alves's decision to pay the victim 150,000 (£128,500) in damages regardless of the outcome of the trial when it decided on the length of his prison term.

## Baseball Championship

FAISALABAD (APP): The 11th HEC All Pakistan Inter-University Baseball Championship concluded at the Government College Women University, Faisalabad, here on Thursday. The Punjab University Lahore won the first position, Lahore College for Women University second while the GCWF and Sargodha University jointly secured the third position. The first team was given trophy and cash prizes of Rs 90,000, second Rs 72,000 and third teams Rs 25,000 each. Vice-Chancellor Prof Dr. Zill-i-Huma Nazli congratulated the winning teams and said that sports make a person mentally and physically healthy.

## Awais qualifies for Snooker final

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan's Awais Ullah Munir has qualified for the ACBS Asian Men's Snooker Championship 2024 at Doha, Qatar. In the semifinal, Awais beat Amir Sarkhosh (Iran) 4-1 (57-36, 0-80, 75-15, 67-47, 69-32). Awais would face the winner of the second semifinal between Ali Alobaidli (Qatar) and Ali Gharahgozliou. Earlier in the quarterfinals, Ali Alobaidli (Qatar) beat Muhammad Naseem Akhtar of Pakistan 4-3 (52-61, 07-64, 02-77(62), 91-08, 79-16(71), 66-28, 69-19) while Awais outplayed Milad Fathpour Kashani of Iran 4-1 (67-43, 21-74(59), 136-0(83), 68-22, 78-01(78). The final of the championship will be played on Friday.

## Best facilities being provided for sports

FAISALABAD (APP): University of Agriculture Faisalabad (UAF) Vice Chancellor Prof Dr Iqbal Ahmad Khan has called for promoting sports activities in society as it is showing a declining trend. He was addressing a sports gala of the Laboratory Girls High School while Principal Officer Laboratory School and College System Dr Anjum Zia, Principal Laboratory Girls High School Shehla Hamid and others were also present.

# Roy, spinners make it three in three for Gladiators

LAHORE (Monitoring Desk): Quetta Gladiators have defeated Islamabad United by three wickets in the eighth match of the Pakistan Super League (PSL) season nine.

With this win, Gladiators registered their third win and are one of the only two teams to have a trio of victories with Multan Sultans. Sultans occupy the top spot while Gladiators are the second. Islamabad are at third despite losing.

While chasing the target of 145, Gladiators had to toil hard to reach the finish line. On the back of skipper Rilee Rossouw's 34\*, they chased down the total in the 19th over while Mohammad Amir chipped in with valuable 11\*.

At the start of the chase, Jason Roy demonstrated an

impressive performance, scoring 37 runs off 18 balls at a remarkable strike rate of 205.55.

Roy's partner Saud Shakeel was dismissed earlier today in the second over to Naseem Shah. Meanwhile, Khawaja Nafay contributed 9 runs off 9 balls before being dismissed by Rumman Raees.

The team faced early setbacks, but Rilee Rossouw, serving as the captain, displayed resilience, finishing the innings not out with a commendable score of 34 runs off 38 balls, maintaining a steady strike rate of 89.47. The team experienced further setbacks with Sarfaraz Ahmed getting lbw by Shadab Khan after contributing only 1 run off 6 balls. Sherfane Rutherford played a significant role, scoring 29

runs off 23 balls, but he eventually succumbed to Naseem Shah. Akeal Hosein faced an unfortunate run-out, managing to contribute 8 runs off 2 balls at an impressive strike rate of 400.00.

Mohammad Wasim and Mohammad Amir managed to add a few runs to the total, with Amir finishing not out with 11 runs off 6 balls at an outstanding strike rate of 183.33. The team concluded their innings with a total score of 139/7 in 18.2 overs, maintaining a run rate of 7.58. For United, Naseem and Shadab took two wickets each while Hunain and Rumman took one wicket. Earlier, the formidable batting lineup of the United Kingdom managed to score 138/9 in the allocated 20 overs after being asked to bat first.



## Pakistan outplay India in first match

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan downed India by five wickets in the first match of the Pakistan-India Blind Cricket series at the International Cricket Council (ICC) Cricket Academy Dubai, United Arab Emirates (UAE) on Thursday.

Naima Alvi Bawany, the daughter of President of Pakistan Dr Arif Alvi, flicked the coin for toss of the Pakistan-India match.

Pakistan won the toss and invited India to bat

first. India scored 212 runs and set a target of 213 runs for Pakistan. Indian captain Dargah Rao scored 61 runs while Venkateswara Rao hit 49 runs. For Pakistan, Badar Munir and Kamran Akhtar took two wickets each.

The Green-shirts achieved the target (213 runs) in 19.2 overs after a thrilling contest and won by five wickets. Vice-captain Badar Munir's played an unbeaten innings of 129 runs off 63 balls while

Skipper Nisar Ali scored 18 runs.

The second match of the three-match series would be played on Friday. It may be mentioned that the said series was a Triangular Blind Cricket T20 cricket series to be played between Pakistan, India and Sri Lanka.

But as Sri Lankan team missed the series due to non-issuance of NOC on time, therefore it was turned into India-Pakistan blind cricket series.

## Netherlands Embassy hosts reception to honor hockey team

ISLAMABAD (APP): Ambassador of the Netherlands in Pakistan, Henny de Vries, hosted a reception on Thursday to honor the Dutch hockey team, emphasizing the crucial role of sports diplomacy in nurturing international relations and building bridges between nations.

This historic visit has significant cultural and sporting importance as the team hailing from Oldenzaal in the Netherlands becomes the first hockey team to visit and compete against a Pakistani team in over 22 years, said a news release of the embassy.

Commenting on the occasion, Ambassador Henny de Vries said

"Hockey holds a special place in the hearts of both the Dutch and Pakistani people, and it is this week is a testament to the power of sports in bridging cultures and fostering understanding. The matches played in Lahore, and the upcoming match in Islamabad, have not only showcased the skill and ability of our athletes but have also provided an opportunity for cultural exchange and mutual appreciation."

The ambassador expressed her gratitude to Khawaja Junaid Hockey Academy for extending the invitation to the club and to the Higher Education Commission (HEC) for their invaluable support.

The presence of such

influential voices from the media, sports, and diplomatic community underscored the collective commitment to leveraging sports as a vehicle for strengthening international relations. Through initiatives such as these, the ambassador emphasized the willingness to continue leveraging the power of sports to foster mutual understanding and friendship between the Netherlands and Pakistan.

The event was attended by esteemed guests, including media representatives, sports personalities, diplomats, and other stakeholders committed to promoting sports and international cooperation.



SARGODHA: Players in action during inter-collegiate Girls Handball tournament organized by Sargodha Education board at Govt Women College Farooq Colony.



MULTAN: Players of Peshawar Zalmi participating in a practice session for the next match against Multan Sultans during PSL-9 T20 match at Multan Cricket Stadium.

## Ahmed moves in ITF World Jr semis

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan's Ahmed Nael Qureshi has moved in the boys singles semifinals of ITF Pakistan Zainab Ali Naqvi Memorial World Junior Championship Leg-2 here at PTF -SDA Tennis Complex on Thursday.

Ahmed beat Dong Hyeon Euom of Korea in a straight sets (6-4,6-2) and moved into the semifinal of the championship. In boys singles quarterfinals, Jacob Kailiang Shen (HKG) beat Jiwan Park (KOR) 6-3,2-6,6-3; Shijie Chen (CHN) beat Ahtesham Humayun (PAK) 6-7(3), 6-3, 6-1; Kaigaoe Kang (CHN) beat Oscar Reilly (NED) 6-4,6-4; Ahmed Nael Qureshi (PAK) beat Dong Hyeon Euom (KOR) 6-4,6-2.

In girls singles quarterfinals, Ekaterina Pestereva (RUS) beat Gehansa Don (SRI) 6-0,6-2; Paramet Tackaew (THA) beat Chaewon Whang (KOR) 6-2,6-2; Stefaniya Neporent (BLR) beat Jingke Yan (CHN) 6-3,6-4; Kira Kalinouskaya (BLR) beat Katsiaryna Dubik (BLR) 3-1 (retd).

In boys doubles semifinals, Dong Hyeon Euom (KOR) and Jiwan Park (KOR) beat Bilal Asimand Ahmed Nael Qureshi (PAK) 7-5,6-1.

## Elina Svitolina: The star and the kids who play on through horror

WIMBLEDON (BBC): As the crowd cheered Elina Svitolina on to Centre Court for her Wimbledon semi-final, millions of people back in her native Ukraine tuned in to support. They have been a constant. Sheltering from Russian shells in bomb shelters and underground stations, they have still found a screen to watch.

And as Ukraine supports Svitolina, so Svitolina supports Ukraine.

Just months before her run to the last four at the All England Club in July 2023, Svitolina had been in her home country, seeing the damage of the invasion first hand. She was back again in November. Each time, she is struck by "the horror and the consequences" of the Russian invasion., external "It was a mixture of feelings for sure," she tells BBC Sport of her trips home. "It is amazing to be back, but also a bit scary because the big cities are under air raid alert all the time." "But what surprised me was the spirit of the

people. The unbreakable spirit that they built over the two years of the war is amazing." Some of that spirit, born of conflict, travelled with Svitolina into the rarefied surroundings of the All England Club.

As her Wimbledon semifinal against Marketa Vondrousova went on, as she faced big points, Svitolina thought back to the people she had met at home. "Those brave soldiers that are defending our country," she says. "I think about those people, how they feel when they are there facing really dangerous moments. And there's me in the perfect conditions in Centre Court at Wimbledon, just playing tennis. Earlier in the tournament, Svitolina had beaten Belarus' Victoria Azarenka.

Belarus has hosted Russian troops, allowing their allies to launch the invasion across another front, close to Kyiv. Svitolina, like all Ukrainian players, has vowed not to shake hands with either

Russian or Belarusian opponents until peace is restored and Ukrainian territory is returned.

At Wimbledon, Azarenka, who has condemned the violence against Ukraine., external was booed by a Court One crowd, who assumed she was being unsporting. A month before Svitolina herself had been jeered by fans at the French Open after she refused to shake the hand of another Belarusian - Aryna Sabalenka - following a defeat.

It has been a controversial and, for some, confusing stance, but Svitolina stands by it. "Everyone should fight on their own front," she says. "Of course the main front is our soldiers, and we try to support them with everything that we've got... with money... trying to help them to fight the enemy." "Also it is important to help them not lose their spirit.

They still follow the sport, they read the news. For us, it's our united decision to fight this war."

## Mehwish of Wapda upset Sana in Torsam Khan National Women Squash

PESHAWAR (APP): Spirited Mehwish Ali of Pakistan WAPDA took a sweet revenge by upsetting her strong rival Sana Bahadur of Pakistan Army in the Torsam Khan All Pakistan National Women Squash championship played here at Qamar Zaman Squash Complex on Thursday. Mehwish took revenge from her strong rival Sana Bahadur, who defeated her in the final of the PSA McDonald Women Open Squash championship played at Karachi recently.

Mehwish was two sets down against Sana Bahadur, a promising 16-year-old special player. Despite Deaf and Dumb, Sana played like a rock showing her superiority in all sections of the game with some fine length shorts were also witnessed. The final match was played at a fast tempo and both Mehwish Ali and Sana Bahadur presented some classic displays of nicks, drops and full length shorts which were largely enjoyed by the jam-packed spectators who responded well with their cheering hands.

Taking the first set at 10-12, Sana Bahadur played well and did

not give much chance to Mehwish Ali to strike back. It was the first set in which both tied right from the out-set at 5-5, 6-6, 7-7, 8-8, 9-9, 10-10 and Sana took the set 10-12 by playing key two nick shots.

It was the second set in which Mehwish took the lead and raced up to 7-3 but Sana while sensing the lead, came back strongly and leveled the tally at 7-7, followed by the same at 8-8, 9-9, 10-10, 11-11 and again Sana took the set by 11-13. This time her two brilliant length shorts had no answer with Mehwish Ali and thus she took two sets lead. Mehwish Ali, after going two sets down, managed her position, took some tips from her well qualified coach Riaz Khan. She was also helped out by former gold medalist squash Amir Atlas during a break which clicked quickly and thus Mehwish Ali took the third set 12-10. The set was tied at 6-6, 7-7, 9-9, 10-10 before Mehwish took the set by 12-10.

Mehwish Ali totally changed her game by concentrating mostly on length shorts, which helped taking two more games by 11-9 and 12-10.

Mehwish Ali was good in her shorts including some drops and nicks and thus taking the match 3-2.

In the U15 Boys final Nouman Khan (Army) beat Ahmad Rayyan Khalil (PAF) by 3-1, the score was 11-7 11-8, 8-11, and 11-3.

In the semi-finals of the same category Nouman Khan beat Rehan Alamgir of PAF by 3-0, the score was 11-1, 11-5 and 11-6 and Ahmad Reyan Khan of PAF beat Rayyan Bahadur of PAF by 3-0, in the second semi-final, the score was 11-4, 11-7 and 11-8.

Director Sports PAF Group Captain Yasir graced the closing ceremony as the chief guest along with former World Champion Legend Qamar Zaman, Director Blue Tone Squash Academy Wazir Gul, Wing Commander Yasir was also present, Executive Member Sher Bahadur, Asian Champion Aamir Atlas Khan Wapda Sports Manger Mrs. Nadia,

Directorate Senior Coach and Chief Organizer Munawar Zaman Coaches, Amanullah Khan, Chief Referee Adil Faqir, players officials were also present.

## India v England: 'Bazball doesn't need to be debated after every Test'

LONDON (BBC): It is not advisable to play cards against Ben Stokes.

After the bluff of not playing in a World Cup that he played in, he is now not ruling out bowling on the tour of India, having been convincing when he initially said he wouldn't.

The timing of Stokes potentially becoming an all-action all-rounder for the fourth Test in Ranchi could not be better, given the shellacking England took in the third Test. The last and only time they were beaten by more than that 434-run margin, Don Bradman made a double century.

The rout in Rajkot supercharged the debate around the way England play their cricket, a conversation that seems to follow every defeat.

No doubt they were awful, with the last two days probably the worst they have played since Stokes took over as captain. But some of the outrage has been disproportionate, without the memory of where England were less than two years ago.

Being 2-1 down after three Tests in India would have been a scoreline with merit at the start of the series, albeit if back then we did not know how depleted India would be, or about the chances England had to be 3-0 up. On the subject on depletion, it is worth remembering the lack of Harry Brook and Jack Leach.

It is possible to be a huge fan of England's approach and also demand more on the occasions when they could and should have done better.

Not every Test has to put Bazball on trial. If we are asking England to play in a drastically different fashion, then we are asking for a different captain and coach.

There are obvious areas of improvement. Jonny Bairstow needs a score to ensure he plays his 100th Test in Dharamsala next month. The batting unit needs to sense the opportunity to grab a Test by the scruff of the neck. In Rajkot, the 875 runs India scored was the most England

had conceded in a Test for 70 years, not helped by dropped catches and a use of the DRS system that lurches from too eager to not at all.

Most out of sorts has been Joe Root, who has become the personification of the Bazball debate. A run of six innings without a half-century is the longest since the tail end of his captaincy, stooping to a nadir with his reverse scoop at Jasprit Bumrah in the first innings in Rajkot.

Along with the need for runs and to rediscover his identity, Root is tied up in an England rhetoric that is becoming an increasing source of frustration for some. Earlier this week, coach Brendon McCullum said of Root: "Do we want just a normal Joe Root, or do we want a Joe Root that is even better?" McCullum is a fine speaker who commands respect. But even for him, a suggestion one of England's finest batters could become better with a more aggressive approach feels like a stretch.





## In brief

### Police arrest two gang members

RAWALPINDI (APP): District Police have arrested two members of a robbery gang involved in looting a citizen here on Thursday. According to a police spokesman the accused, identified as Subhan and Noman had robbed a house in the area of Kalar Syedan. He informed that an investigation in this regard has been initiated. Important disclosures are expected from the accused, he added. Superintendent Police (Sadar) appreciated the police action and reiterated that those who attack the lives and property of citizens will not escape from the grip of the law.

### Police arrest two bike lifters

RAWALPINDI (APP): Police have arrested two bike lifters and recovered six stolen and a snatched motorcycle from their possession, said a Police spokesman here on Thursday. He informed that a team under the supervision of SHO, Naseerabad Police Station managed to net two bike lifters namely Bilal and Zahid and recovered six stolen, a snatched motorcycle and other items from their possession. A case has been registered against the accused while further investigation is underway. Superintendent of Police, Potohar Nisar Nawaz said the accomplices and facilitators of the accused would also be sent behind bars.

### Two 'car snatchers' booked

RAWALPINDI (APP): District police have arrested two suspects who snatched a car from a citizen at gunpoint. According to a police spokesman, an effective operation was launched against the criminals by Rawat police here Thursday during which the accused, identified as Gohar and Shahzeb were arrested. The stolen car has been recovered, he informed. According to details, the accused booked the car online and snatched it at gunpoint. SP Sadar while congratulating the police team said that the arrested accused would be brought to court with solid evidence.

### 17 drug peddlers netted

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



ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Minister for Information Murtaza Solangi and Caretaker Federal Minister of National Heritage & Culture Syed Jamal Shah along with Ambassador of Japan to Pakistan H.E. Mitsuhiro Wada cutting cake to celebrate the 64th Birthday of His Majesty the Emperor.

## Ashrafi denounces misuse of apex court ruling ambiguities

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister's Special Representative for Religious Affairs, Hafiz Muhammad Tahir Mahmood Ashrafi, and Pakistani Diaspora in the Middle East and Islamic Countries, Thursday denounced attempts by certain individuals to exploit ambiguities arising from the Supreme Court verdict in the Mubarak Ahmed Sani case for political purposes.

Addressing to the media persons with the Caretaker Minister for Information, Broadcasting, and Parliamentary Affairs, he asked the detractors of verdict to use legal avenues to address issues, rather than opting for street protests or violence. This is particularly crucial, considering the

impossibility of allowing the use of banned material in Pakistan.

Urging the Punjab government to submit a review petition to the Supreme Court of Pakistan, he emphasized the fundamental belief in the finality of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) as the last Prophet of Allah, which was an integral part of the Muslim faith. According to the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, this matter is settled. Every Muslim is entrusted with safeguarding the sanctity of the finality of the holy Prophet (PBUH).

He appealed to everyone to foster an environment that ensures the stability and peace of the country remains undisturbed.

The religious freedom

of every Pakistani, including non-Muslims, is enshrined in the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan. Similarly, the rights of non-Muslim Pakistanis are safeguarded in the constitution. It is essential to ensure the protection of their rights as well. Praising the efforts of law enforcement agencies for ensuring peaceful elections nationwide, he called upon YouTubers and social media activists to refrain from causing disturbances, emphasizing that Pakistani Muslims unanimously uphold the sanctity of the finality of the Holy Prophet. In every city, hundreds of Huffaz are present, demonstrating their love for their country.

## PTA strengthens measures against illegal SIM issuance

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) Zonal Office in Lahore, in close collaboration with the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) Cyber Crime Circle, conducted a successful raid against the franchise of a mobile phone company located in Raiwind.

The franchisee was found to be involved in the illegal issuance of SIMs, said a news release on Thursday.

During the raid, 256 active SIMs were discovered. The FIA team confiscated these active SIMs along with 16 BVS devices as evidence. One person was also apprehended on the premises by the FIA team.

FIA is currently investigating the matter. PTA had filed the complaint with FIA earlier based on information regarding the illegal issuance of SIMs by the sale channel. The recent raid is part of PTA's ongoing efforts to prevent the circumvention of the Multi-Finger Biometric Verification System (MBVS).

## ICT admin introduces convenient vehicle services

ISLAMABAD (APP): On the directions of Deputy Commissioner (DC) Islamabad Irfan Nawaz Memon, a new initiative has been launched to streamline vehicle-related services for the residents of Islamabad.

According to the spokesman of ICT, Dr Abdullah Tabasum, this initiative was aimed to provide easy access to essential services, bringing them closer to the community. The excise staff would be stationed at the parking area of Trail 3 from 3 to 5 pm, facilitating vehicle registration, transfer, and token tax processes, he added. The ICT

Doorstep Service initiative offers a variety of documents and permits, including Domicile Certificates, Birth Certificates, Power of Attorney, International Driving Permits, Fuel Permits (Domestic/Commercial), and Motor Vehicle Registrations.

This endeavor reflects a commitment to citizen-centric governance, prioritizing accessibility and ease of use for essential administrative tasks. Residents are encouraged to take advantage of these services conveniently located at Trail 3's parking area during the specified hours.

## Police devise plan to net kite flying ban violators

RAWALPINDI (APP): Rawalpindi district police have devised a plan to foil possible plans to celebrate the banned festival of Basant in Rawalpindi city areas on Feb 22 and 23, Thursday night and Friday and control aerial firing.

According to a police spokesman, more than 1500 police personnel would be deployed on large rooftops in densely populated areas to check kite flying on Thursday night and Friday. They would be equipped with binoculars as well as other resources to apprehend those violating the law by flying kites.

Drone cameras would also be used to track potential aerial firing and incorporation of chemical string in kites, he added.

The spokesman informed that police on the directives of City Police Officer, Syed Khalid Hamdani had finalized a plan to put a stop to expected activities that may take place despite the clear-cut ban on Basant. "Keeping in mind the need to protect the citizens from any untoward incidents, more than 1500 police officials have been deployed to thwart any plans for Basant and drone operators will be monitoring potential kite-flying," he said.

Police officials have reiterated time and again that flying kites is a potentially dangerous sport that can lead to the loss of life, and those found disregarding its cost to human lives will be prosecuted according to law. The

parents, teachers, scholars and civil society were also taken into confidence to play their role in preventing the celebration of Basant. The Rawalpindi police had also launched an awareness campaign about the hazards of the risky sport with the help of religious scholars, who were asked to make announcements on their respective mosques' sound systems about the demerits of kite-flying.

The police have finalized arrangements for live monitoring of all densely populated areas, while all Station House Officers (SHOs) have been directed to ensure strict surveillance of kite sellers in their areas.

The police teams are trying to trace and arrest culprits involved in buying and selling killer strings and kites through social media. Monitoring of courier services and passenger vehicles coming from Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa was also being tightened, so that any kites and chemical strings being brought to the city for Basant could be seized. It is pertinent to mention here that just like last year, the Rawalpindi Kite Flying Association had announced two separate illegal Basant celebrations in the city and cantonment areas. On last Thursday night and Friday, Basant was celebrated in Cantonment areas. Despite a government ban on Basant celebrations, the Kite Flying Association Rawalpindi had defiantly declared plans to celebrate the festival.

### PBA delegation meets PIO

#### Tariq Mehmood

ISLAMABAD (APP): A delegation of Pakistan Broadcasters Association (PBA) headed by Naeem Muhammad Mirza on Thursday met with Principal Information Officer Dr. Tariq Mehmood Khan in his office.

Dr. Tariq Mehmood Khan assured the delegation to resolve all their problems. He said that the ministry was well aware of the problems faced by the media persons and efforts were being made to resolve them on priority. At the end of the meeting, the delegation thanked the PIO.

### Josh Malihabadi remembered

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 42nd death anniversary of famous Urdu poet and prose writer Josh Malihabadi was observed on Thursday.

He is remembered as a 'Poet of Revolution'.

His real name was Shabbir Hassan Khan. His father Bashir Ahmad Khan Bashir, grandfather Muhammad Ahmad Khan Ahmad, and great grandfather Faqir Muhammad Khan Goya were all well-known poets.

Josh Malih Abadi started poetry at an early age. He started his practical life by working in Dar-ul-Tarjuma Usmania (Hyderabad State). He lost both his job and state citizenship due to a poem against the system of Hyderabad. He came to Delhi and published the magazine 'Kaleem'.

Josh Malihabadi also remained associated with All India Radio. He was also the editor of 'Aaj Kal', the official magazine of the Indian Government. He received the Padma Bhushan Award in 1954. After moving to Pakistan in 1955, he started to work along with the founder of Anjuman Taraqqi-e-Urdu Maulvi Abdul Haque in the preparation of the Urdu dictionary. He was also Editor of the magazine 'Urdu Nama'.

Josh Malih Abadi also wrote songs for films. The song 'Ae Watan Hum Hain Teri Shama Ke Parwanon Main, for the film 'Aag Ka Darya' became popular. He also wrote columns under the title of 'Ilm wa Fikr' in daily Jang. Josh's prominent poetry works include 'Roo-e-Adab', 'Shaer ki Raatain', 'Naqsh o Nigar', 'Shula Aur Shabnam'.

## Senators laud dedication, commitment of MoCC&EC, members at Climate body's farewell meeting

ISLAMABAD (APP): The members of the Senate Standing Committee on Climate Change on Thursday at the body's farewell meeting here appreciated the dedication and commitment of the Ministry of Climate Change and Environmental Coordination (MoCC&EC) and its participants for striving towards resolution of environmental conservation challenges.

The Chairperson, Senator Seemee Ezdi while opening the forum with the recitation of the verses of Holy Quran extended her warm gratitude to the member Senators for successfully completing their tenure at the Committee with landmark interventions intended to address challenges pertaining to environment and nature conservation.

The Committee was convened on a one-point agenda moved by Senator Fawzia Arshad on implementation of the guidelines of the National Climate Change Policy 2021.

Senator Ezdi thanked the committee members for supporting the body and making all its field visits a success.

The Committee organized eight field visits in total starting from its maiden visit to Pakistan Environmental Protection Agency (Pak-EPA) office and its smog control center, then to the Islamabad Wildlife Management Board (IWMB)'s Trail-6 Leopard Preserve Zone, fire control room at erstwhile Marghar Zoo (Margalla Wildlife Rescue Centre), Pakistan Meteorological Department office, Trail-5 visit followed by visits to Shahdara, Farash Town, and Mangroves Forest, Karachi.

She mentioned the Committee members gave a tough time to the Met Office officials during their briefing through very pertinent questions.

Senator Ezdi appreciated the capability of MoCC&EC officials and their successful representation of the country at COP-28 (28th meeting of the Conference of the Parties, Dubai) and lauded Secretary, Ministry Asif Hyder Shah for his efforts in

this regard. Senior Joint Secretary MoCC&EC, Muhammad Farooq while briefing on the agenda item apprised the Committee and the mover that all provincial climate action plans were aligned with the National Climate Change Policy 2021 which was submitted at the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and published at the MoCC&EC website.

He added that all multinationals' investment was being done after consulting this policy which was formulated by all stakeholders' consultation and the Ministry strictly abides by this policy guidelines.

Senator Fawzia Arshad said on the occasion that her concerns were related to the Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) that was an autonomous entity neglected in the policy endeavours.

She added that this policy should be clarified either it was enacted while considering Punjab or the federal capital as well. "What has been done for Islamabad alone? We need to highlight policy endeavours for Islamabad specifically as it faced unprecedented urban flooding phenomenon in its history. There 43 slums in its out of which 10 are being regularized that lacked proper amenities of water and sanitation," she added.

She commended the Ministry officials for their well-written and detailed brief in response to her query.

Secretary MoCC&EC, Asif Hyder Shah told the Committee that the federal capital owing to its small territory was performing better than the provinces in the areas of air pollution index, surface water treatment and others. He added that the Ministry's nomenclature and location was changed five times that made its restructuring a challenge for him whereas the Ministry had hired climate experts equal to the number of its civil service staff to ensure better and well-planned tasks. He mentioned that the flagship Living Indus Initiative was going to be awarded the UN's Award in March 2024.

### Delay in issuance of Passport

## Mohtasib takes strict notice

ISLAMABAD (APP): Expressing his deep concern over the persistent complaints of irregularities, malpractices, inordinate delays, and unsatisfactory facilities at the Passport Offices for the general public, the Wafaqi Mohtasib, Ejaz Ahmad Qureshi has directed immediate inspection by the Wafaqi Mohtasib's Inspection Teams at Islamabad, Lahore, Karachi, Quetta, Peshawar and other major cities.

He directed to look into these complaints and suggested urgent remedial measures.

It may be recalled that

taking suo moto notice of a large number of complaints against the delay in the issuance of passports, an Inspection Team from the WMS had earlier visited the Passport Office Islamabad on the directions of the Wafaqi Mohtasib to ascertain the causes of the delay and breakdown of the efficient delivery services there.

The Compliance Report submitted by the Passport Office as a follow-up was termed as unsatisfactory and lacking in substance by the Wafaqi Mohtasib.

The Wafaqi Mohtasib said that the Overseas Pakistanis are the worst

sufferers in the entire episode as in several cases either their visas expired or they have been unable to join their jobs abroad owing to this state of affairs.

The same is the case with those who want to proceed abroad in connection with their higher studies or family visits etc.

He said that the elements found responsible for creating artificial shortages and indulging in malpractices and other irregularities need to be exposed and dealt with an iron hand to ensure that things would run smoothly in the respective Passport Offices.

## Police launches crackdown against unauthorized number plates, helmets

ISLAMABAD (APP): Islamabad Capital City Police Officer (ICCP) Dr. Akbar Nasir Khan, on Thursday directed to the Islamabad Capital Police (ICP) to utilize all available resources to ensure the peace and tranquility within the federal capital.

A public relations officer said that, the police were ensuring data registration, identification documents and effective search of citizens enter-

ing the high security zone on a regular basis.

Moreover, action has been taken against motorcyclists over traffic rules violations on various checkpoints of high security zone, he added.

During the week, the police removed tinted glasses and improper number plates from bikes and issued challan tickets to motorcyclists for violations. Strict directions have been issued to

police officers and officials performing their duties at high security zone checkpoints to exercise their duty with full responsibility.

The protection of important public and private property and embassies located in the high security zone is of paramount importance. The Citizens are also urged to cooperate with the police and report any suspicious activity on "Pucar-15".



ISLAMABAD: CDA staffer busy installing new street lights near Faizabad in the Federal Capital.



Meeting on women to be held

KABUL (Khaama Press): The US Department of State and Boston University will hold a meeting on “Women’s Economic Resilience in Afghanistan” on February 27. Rina Amiri and Thomas West, representatives from the United States, are among the organizers of this session. Secretary of State Antony Blinken will also speak there. This meeting is held within the framework of the “Coalition for Women’s Economic Resilience in Afghanistan” initiative.

Head to attend ceremony

KABUL (Ariana News): The General Director of Physical Education and Sport of Afghanistan (GD PES) Mawlawi Ahmadullah Wasiq participated in the opening ceremony of the Games of Future competition hosted by Tatarstan-Kazan. On the sidelines of the ceremony, Wasiq also met with the Ministers of Sports of Russia and Tatarstan. Russian President Vladimir Putin and other officials also participated in the opening ceremony, GD PES said in a post on X.

Children, students to be taught in mother tongue: Residents

KABUL (TOLONews): On “International Mother Language Day”, some citizens of the country said they want elementary education to be taught in the mother tongue of students. The citizens said that education in their mother language will strengthen and expand languages in the country. “When we send our children to school for learning, we have to learn our other national languages like German, English and other languages which takes a year, and that’s a long time,” said Mohammad Ismail, a Nooristan resident. “Pre-school education for children who are seven

to eight years old, should be taught in their mother language and work on languages that are disappearing,” Samandar Samandari, a Badakhshan resident told TOLONews. Meanwhile, some writers asked the government not to allow differences between the languages of the country to emerge. Shafi Baburzai, a Pashto language poet, said: “If people speak it more or less, we should not consider one language inferior to another language. If languages are enriched, our identity will be enriched.” The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) celebrated this year’s International Mother Language Day with the theme “Multilingual education is a pillar of intergenerational learning.” UNESCO said: “Today, 250 million children and young people still do not attend school and 763 million adults do not master basic literacy skills. Mother tongue education supports learning, literacy and the acquisition of additional languages.” Noorhabib Nisar, deputy chief researcher of Afghanistan’s Academy of Sciences, said: “It is important that the countries themselves work for the development of the national and

local languages of their country.” “If there is prejudice in the language, that language will stop growing, so let’s try to keep the language open,” said Mohammad Mateen Munes, a member of Farsi-Dari literature Institute. According to the statistics of the Academy of Sciences, the number of languages in the country is 32. In 1999, February 21st was named International Mother Language Day in order to help linguistic and cultural diversity, and the United Nations General Assembly declared 2008 as the International Year of Languages.

Railway reconstruction work kicks off

KABUL (Ariana News): Work gets underway on Hairatan-Mazar section of Balkh to Uzbekistan railway line. Reconstruction of a section of the Mazar-e-Sharif-Uzbekistan railway line has started at a cost of \$6.3 million, Balkh provincial officials said. Local officials said the 75-km long line will start at Balkh airport and stretch to Uzbekistan. The reconstruction of this railway line has been contracted to an Uzbek company and is expected to be operational in three months, officials said. This railway line, which carries freight, links Hairatan land port to Mazar. “The cost of this contract is approximately five million and 300 thousand US dollars,” said Mohammad Shafiq Mahmood, the head of Balkh railway. Local authorities have said the reactivation of this line is important for economic growth and the expansion of trade ties. “We thank our friendly neighbor Uzbekistan for coming here and starting this project,” said Noorul Hadi Abu Idris, the deputy governor of Balkh. Mazar-e-Sharif-Uzbekistan railway transports commercial goods from the city of Termez in Uzbekistan first to the commercial town of Hairatan and then to the Maulana Jalaluddin Muhammad Balkhi Airport.

Youth issues to receive special focus



KABUL (BNA): Mawlawi Abdul Kabir, the Deputy Prime Minister for Political Affairs, has announced that the government will prioritize addressing the challenges faced by the youth. This statement was made during a meeting with Youth Council members from various regions of Kabul, according to an ARG press release. The council members highlighted that the previous administration was dominated by youth who were influenced by Western values, lacked understanding of Afghan values and Islamic principles, and did not prioritize national interests. They noted that this influence had permeated people’s minds over the past two decades. However, they expressed gratitude for the increased focus on the spiritual development of youth following the establishment of the Islamic Emirate in the country. The council members appreciated the Islamic Emirate’s openness towards the youth and discussed some of the issues they face. They emphasized that the Islamic Emirate is committed to preventing youth emigration due to unemployment and aims to create job opportunities within the country. The young participants view the Islamic Emirate as a system shared by all Afghans, and they pledged not to allow the youth to be exploited for Western propaganda or actions against the country and its system. Mawlawi Abdul Kabir acknowledged that Afghan youth, including school graduates, have been actively involved in the struggle over the past two decades and continue to play a significant role in the Islamic Emirate today. He stated that the Islamic Emirate and its youth are jointly focused on overcoming their challenges. He further added that the country has now achieved security, eradicated corruption, and operates under an independent system free from biases based on ethnicity, language, or affiliation. Appointments are made based on competence and knowledge, ensuring a fair system for all.

Prioritizing anticipated needs following natural disasters crucial



KABUL (BNA): Mullah Mohammad Abbas Akhund, the Acting State Minister for Disaster Management, in a meeting with Sawzan Saad, the coordinator of the Shelter Cluster NGO, emphasized the importance of prioritizing anticipated needs due to the significant casualties and damages caused by recent natural disasters in Afghanistan. According to a ministry statement, the meeting

focused on enhancing coordination between the ministry and the aid organization, which is actively involved in constructing shelters and providing non-food aid. Mullah Mohammad Saad reported that humanitarian aid has been gathered for over 130,000 vulnerable families during the winter season, with distribution currently underway for more than 97,000 families. She pledged to assist those affected by the Nuristan landslide. Looking ahead to 2024, Saad underscored the commitment to swift transfers of humanitarian aid to affected areas and ongoing collaboration with the ministry to address the aftermath of natural disasters.

Weaving occupation: A beacon of hope amid poverty in Afghanistan

KABUL (Khaama Press): Weaving by hand takes a lot of time; at least 3 to 4 hours, but Zinat’s hands are familiar with this difficulty. She now weaves quickly and then takes her hand-woven mats/washcloths to the market for sale. Each mat, woven with such effort and skill, sells for only five Afghanis. Zinat, who is over 50 years old, lives in the Kotal-e-Khair Khana area, one of the most crowded areas of Kabul. She used to be a teacher and has over 25 years of teaching experience. According to herself, she was retired from the previous government, but now she is forced to turn to weaving out of necessity. She has only one daughter who is fifteen years old. Her daughter dropped out of school and they both live in Zinat’s brother’s house. Zinat’s husband left during the ongoing crisis of unemployment in Afghanistan and now works in Iran. She has known weaving for a long time, but this is the first time she thinks she can only work this way. Zinat usually weaves “mats” and prepares its raw materials in her own special way. Zinat says, “I come home with a large woollen jacket from Lelami. I unravel it. From one jacket, I weave five or more mats.” Preparing raw materials for weaving and the weaving process itself are not difficult for her, but she always struggles in the selling part of the woven mats. On one hand, she sells each mat, woven with all that effort, for only five Afghanis, yet on the other hand, there is always a customer willing to buy. She says, “I live in my brother’s house. They sheltered me, but I have to find my bread.” According to Zinat’s belief, people can’t even afford to buy mats. She weaves mats in various sizes and colors, but sadly remarks, “The residents of

Kotal-e-Khair Khana cannot afford to buy because they are all poor.” She says she has been weaving for two years; she buys woollen jackets from Lelami, unravels them, weaves mats from the threads, and handles all the stages of selling them. For her, working in the market, going to shops, and boasting about her woven mats are not difficult because, as she puts it, this is her job. But the problem starts when her mats don’t sell. Zinat recalls a day when her mats wouldn’t sell, and she felt hopeless: “I got up from my place on Saturday morning; I had completed many hand-woven mats for sale, but I knew I would return home empty-handed again. So, I didn’t need to take the mats with me again and thought it would be better to do something else than to return home empty-handed.” She continues, “I went to the alley of Almari, threw

everything I had in the house, like clothes, scarves, shoes, and essentials, into a bag and went to the market of Kotal-e-Khair khana.” Zinat is in a situation where standing tall is difficult for her, but she is still concerned about her 15-year-old daughter who dropped out of school: “I feel ashamed in front of my daughter because, like a mother, I could never fulfill her wishes. Now, what can I do with just five Afghanis?” She reflects on her feeling that she could work and earn money: “I used to work passionately and love my profession. I felt like a strong woman and worked sincerely, but I retired.” She says Afghan women are resilient and want to work shoulder to shoulder with men, and she also wants to work. Zinat intends to continue her efforts and hopes to improve the living conditions of herself and her family in the future.

Suspects executed in football stadium

GHAZNI (Khaama Press): The Supreme Court of the de facto administration has announced that on Thursday the punishment of execution has been carried out on two individuals in a sports stadium in Ghazni province. The Taliban High Court said that two men have been executed on charges of murder in a stadium in Ghazni province, with the approval of Hibatullah Akhundzada, the leader of this group. The statement from the Supreme Court of the Taliban also claimed that the accusations against these two individuals were confirmed by the tripartite courts (primary, appellate, and cassation), and then their execution verdict was issued. The Taliban court identified the executed individuals as Syed Jamal and Gul Khan. According to the Taliban, Syed Jamal, a resident of Lora village in Maidan Wardak province, had killed a person named Amir Mohammad seven years ago, and Gul Khan had killed a person named Mohammad Qasim five years ago in Ghazni province. The Taliban claims both killings were carried out with a knife. This execution comes at a time when human rights organizations claim that fair trial procedures are not being followed in Taliban courts. A human rights organization called Rawadari stated in an investigative report that there are discriminatory decisions, torture, forced confessions from suspects, and lack of independence and impartiality in Taliban courts, violating the presumption of innocence. Earlier, the Taliban in Ghazni had called upon the residents of the province to come to the Ali Baba football stadium in the center of the province to witness the execution of these two men. According to the Taliban newsletter, some senior officials of this group, including the Chief Justices, had gone to Ghazni to witness the execution. It is worth mentioning that the first case of executing the execution verdict publicly was carried out last year in Farah province with the presence of senior officials of the Taliban.

Construction work on 2nd phase of Qosh Tepa Canal begins

KABUL (TOLONews): The Islamic Emirate said that construction work on the second phase of the Qosh Tepa Canal which stretches from Dawlat Abad district of Balkh province to Andkhoi district of Faryab province has begun. According to officials of the Islamic Emirate, the contracted companies have started digging and are in the second phase. “The remaining part of the Qosh Tepa Canal has been planned and this will take some time. Work on the second phase began yesterday (February 20) and the contracted companies are commencing to work gradually,” said Zabiullah Mujahid, the spokesperson for the Islamic Emirate. The Chamber of Agriculture and Livestock said that the Qosh Tepa Canal is key for national self-reliance and for producing various agricultural crops. “The wheat we use in the country is being imported from neighboring countries and the completion of the canal can make it self-sufficient in this area. The canal will help us become self-sufficient in the areas of agriculture and livestock which will turn Afghanistan from an importing to exporting country,” said Mirwais Haji Zada, the deputy head of the chamber. Political analysts say that the completion of the project will not cause positive climate changes but will also help Afghanistan’s significant economic growth.

Over \$1.8 billion in trade with Iran in past 11 months: MOIC

KABUL (TOLONews): The Ministry of Industry and Commerce said that in the past 11 months of the current year 1402 (solar year), trade has been done with Iran worth \$1.8 billion dollars. The officials of this ministry gave statistics that out of this, only nearly \$30 million are exports and the rest are imports from this country. According to them, the most exported items are cotton, raisins, almonds, sesame and watermelon seeds. Nooruddin Azizi, acting minister of Industry and Commerce, in a meeting with Abolfazl Chamandi, the Iran’s deputy economic affairs coordinator of Khorasan Razavi Governorate, discussed expanding trade relations between the two countries. The spokesman of the Ministry of Industry and Commerce, Akhundzada Abdul Salam Jawad, said: “In this meeting, Abolfazl Chamandi, the deputy economic affairs coordinator of Khorasan Razavi Governorate, said that they have come to provide information on the progress of activities regarding the agreements that were made between the two countries during the recent visit of the deputy Prime Minister for Economic Affairs, Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar, and the leadership of the Ministry of Industry and Commerce of this country, and we are moving step by step to implement the agreements. Razavi described the trade relations between the two countries as growing.” Meanwhile, the Afghanistan Chamber of Commerce and Investment (ACCI) said that the high customs tariffs of Iran is one of the reasons for a decrease in exports to that country and serious attention must be paid to the issue. Mirwais Hotak, head of the board of directors at ACCI, said: “If we have a memorandum of agreement with them and the preferential tariff is taken into consideration and the problems we have in transit, in transportation and in customs, it is clear that our exports to Iran will increase.” At the same time, a number of business people said that in addition to increasing trade with Iran, there is a need to facilitate transit through Iran so that business people can develop their business with India and China through Chabahar port. “We want the Islamic Emirate to talk to India and Iran to activate the Chabahar port soon, and through the Chabahar port we can build our way to Asia, Europe and China,” Zalmay Azimi, a business-

man told TOLONews. Meanwhile, the acting Minister of Agriculture, Irrigation, and Livestock has discussed Iran’s investments in livestock, agriculture, irrigation and horticulture sectors in a meeting with the deputy ambassador of Iran’s embassy in Kabul, and the deputy economic affairs coordinator of Khorasan Razavi Governorate. Mesbahuddin Mustaeen, the spokesperson of the ministry, said: “In this meeting, the Iranian delegation discussed work and investment in Afghanistan and increasing Iranian investment in the country.” Earlier, a delegation from Iran came to Afghanistan and discussed Iran’s investments in Afghanistan, trade development, and the establishment of Afghanistan-Iran Joint Chamber of Commerce with the officials of the Islamic Emirate.

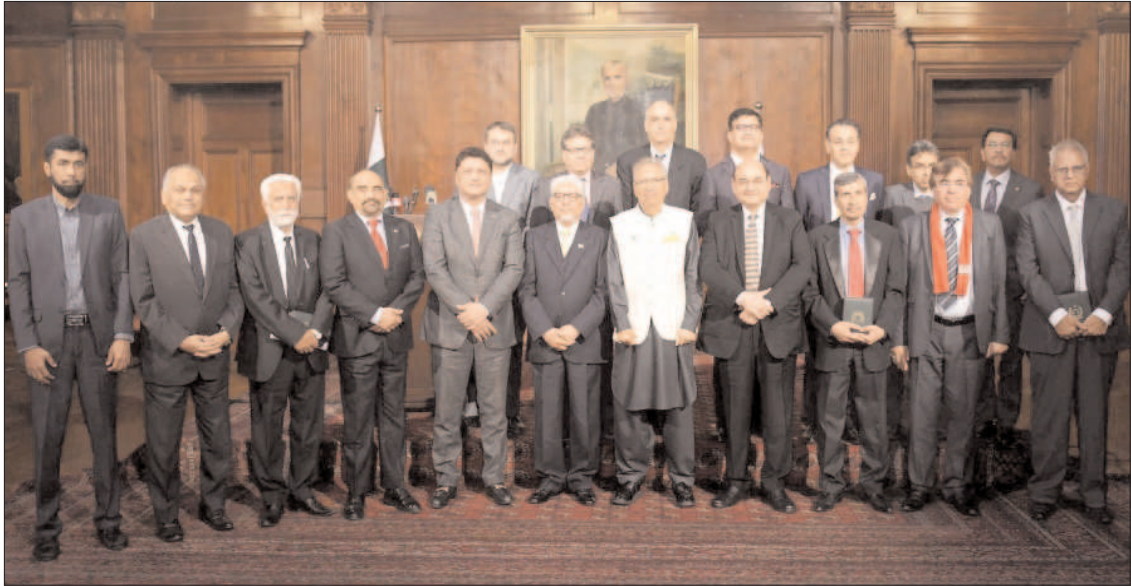
UN reports \$402.9m needed for earthquake recovery support

HERAT (Ariana News): The United Nations said in a report released Thursday that \$402.9 million is needed to support critical recovery and reconstruction efforts in Herat province following last year’s devastating earthquakes. According to the Post-Disaster Needs Assessment (PDNA) report, issued by the UN, the World Bank, the European Union, and the Asian Development Bank, the scale of October’s was staggering. Housing, the most severely affected sector, represents 41 percent (\$164.4 million) of the total recovery needs. The earthquakes damaged 49,578 houses, with 13,516 being completely destroyed. Education is second most impacted sector, with 180,000 students and 4,390 teachers currently facing disruptions. The agriculture sector, accounting for the majority of jobs and income in the affected areas, has also suffered considerable setbacks. The series of earthquakes on October 7, 11, and 15 killed over 1,500 people and injured more than 2,600 people. The assessment, with UNDP as the technical lead, covered nine districts with roughly 2.2 million people. It revealed that over 275,000 individuals were affected. Among these were 17,358 pregnant women,



17,146 infants, 3,976 people with severe disabilities, 3,207 elderly families, 6,806 women-led households, 3,176 individuals with chronic illnesses, and 147,000 children under 18. Herat, Injil, and Zindajan districts were the hardest hit, with rural and vulnerable communities suffering the most. The assessment also evaluated broader macro-economic and human impacts and proposed principles for a comprehensive recovery and reconstruction framework. It cautioned about persistent widespread poverty, slow economic recovery, job scarcity, banking sector instability, adverse impact on mental health and well-being, and climate vulnerability, exacerbating Afghanistan’s ongoing economic challenges. Way forward The PDNA emphasizes the critical need to transition from immediate humanitarian aid to long-term recovery. Recovery strategies should prioritize building community resilience, service restoration, earthquake-safe housing, livelihood options, social protection, and access to basic services, especially for the most affected families, the report stated. “As the United Nations and partners, we stand in solidarity with the people of Afghanistan in these challenging times. The findings of the PDNA highlight the profound impacts of the earthquakes on the Herat region. “We are committed to not only addressing the immediate needs but ensuring a sustainable and resilient recovery for those affected by the earthquakes. This tragedy presents an opportunity to rebuild stronger, more inclusive, and more resilient communities. The PDNA provides a blueprint for recovery and reconstruction aimed at forging a better future for those most affected in Afghanistan,” stated Indrika Ratwatte, Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator.





LAHORE: President Dr. Arif Alvi in a group photo with recipients of recognition shields at the award distribution ceremony for officers of Federal Insurance Ombudsman and representatives of insurance companies.

## Israeli occupation ‘unlawful, inhumane and must end’: Jordan

THE HAGUE: The International Court of Justice, the UN’s top court, on Thursday continued its hearing from dozens of states and three international organizations who question the legality of the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territories.

Representatives from countries including China, Iran, Iraq, Japan, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon and Libya were expected to deliver their positions during the third day of the hearing at the ICJ, also known as the World Court. Speakers from the UAE, Egypt and Saudi Arabia have already demanded Israel end its occupation of the Palestinian territories, with the Kingdom’s envoy to the Netherlands Ziad Al-Atiyah stating Israel’s continued actions were legally indefensible.

Ayman Safadi, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Jordan, said that “Israel is violating the rights of Muslims and Christians to the freedom of worship by banning Muslims from entering Al-Aqsa Mosque and not protecting priests from humiliation and abuse from Israeli extremists.” Safadi said that the “occupation was unlawful, inhumane and it must end.”

“Israel has been systematically consolidating the occupation, denying the Palestinians’ rights to self-determination,” Safadi closed his

remarks, saying “Palestinians are being killed in the hundreds every day in Gaza and in the West Bank because Israel is not being held accountable for its war crimes and violation of international law... rule that the Israel occupation, the source of all evil, must end.”

Hayder Shiya Al-Barrak, ambassador and head of the legal department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Iraq, called on the ICJ to stop the “systematic killing machine” against the Palestinian people and the end of “mass murder” and “genocide.” Al-Barrak talked of Israel’s “barbaric acts”, including “air strikes and rocket attacks targeting civilians.”

“These acts constitute war crimes executed with a criminal intent” and are serious violations of the laws of war, the Iraqi representative said, and added that Israel “must be held accountable”. The Iranian representative said the Israeli occupation force continuously violated Palestinians right to self-determination.

“The establishment of the Israeli regime was done through a violent process which involved the forcible displacement of native Palestinian people to create a majority Jewish colony in line with the Zionist movement,” Reza Najafi, Deputy Foreign Minister for Legal and International

Affairs said. Najafi listed a series of supposed ongoing violations by the Israeli occupying regime: prolonged occupation; alteration of the demographic composition in the occupied territories; alteration of the character and the status of the Holy City; discriminatory measures and violations of the rights of Palestinian people to permanent sovereignty over their natural resources.

Najafi added that “the expansion of settlements, segregated roads and barriers as well as checkpoints has created a system of apartheid which is isolating Palestinian communities.”In his closing remarks, Najafi said “the inaction or insufficient action of the Security Council” was one of the “main causes of prolonged occupation of the Palestinians,” and it was “paralysed due to the stalemate” caused by a “certain permanent member.”

Ma Xinmin, a foreign ministry legal adviser, meanwhile said Beijing “has consistently supported the just cause of the Palestinian people in restoring their legitimate right”. “In pursuit of the right to self-determination”, he mentioned, the Palestinian people’s use of force to “resist foreign oppression” and complete the establishment of an independent state is an “inalienable right”. — Arab News

## ATC cancels interim bail of Asad Umar

F.P. Report

LAHORE: Anti-Terrorism Court (ATC) has canceled the interim bail of former Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leader Asad Umar on the grounds of skipping the case hearing.

Asad Umar did not appear before the court on interim bail. Lahore’s Shadman police station has registered a case of arson. Senior Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf leader Asad Umar has announced his decision to quit politics, as well as his party completely.

The former minister announced his decision in a post on X, formerly Twitter. In the post, Asad Umar says he had decided to completely quit politics after more than a decade in public life. “As I had already stated publicly earlier that I disagree with the policy of confrontation with state institutions, and such a policy has led to a serious collision with state institutions, which is not in the interest of the country,” he said in the post.

Asad also wrote that he was resigning from his basic membership of the PTI. After more than one decade in public life, I have decided to completely quit politics. In a post on X he said: “I want to thank all those who have supported me in public life. In particular, I want to thank the NA-54 team and the voters who elected me twice. I have tried my best to serve the constituency that I was elected from. May Allah’s blessings shine upon the Pakistani nation.”

Earlier in May this year, Asad Umar announced his decision to step down from his position as the secretary general of the PTI, following a crackdown on the party after violent protests broke out on May 9 in the wake of party chief Imran Khan’s arrest. However, at that time, the former minister had neither quit the party nor politics.

Addressing a press conference on May 25, Umar claimed he was not stepping down from the party office “under pressure”. He had said that the past 13 months were “the most difficult time” for the PTI and cited the arrests of thousands of party workers. He said he had been in jail for 15 days, adding that everyone had condemned the May 9 riots as shocking.

## Court extends bails of Imran’s sisters

F.P. Report

LAHORE: A court in Lahore on Thursday extended the interim bail of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder chairman’s sisters Aleema Khanum and Uzma Khanum till March 16 in three cases.

The court extended bail of Imran Khan’s sisters in setting on fire a container in Kalma Chowk and office of Pakistan Muslim League (PML-N) in Model Town cases. Uzma Khanum and Aleema Khanum appeared before the anti-terrorism court judge Arshad Javed.

Moreover, the hearing on interim bail in the Jinnah House case was held in the Admin Court. Admin Court extended their interim bail till March 12 in Jinnah House case. Admin Judge Muhammad Naveed Iqbal heard the Jinnah House case.

Meanwhile, a high-profile court hearing on Tuesday in Lahore took an unexpected turn when Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leader Musrat Jamshed Cheema faced harsh criticism from the sisters of party founder Imran Khan.

# One killed in gun attack near West Bank settlement

JERUSALEM (AFP): Three Palestinian gunmen killed one person and wounded eight, among them a young pregnant woman, in a “terror attack” Thursday when they sprayed automatic weapons fire at vehicles near a Jewish settlement in the occupied West Bank, Israeli police said.

The shooters were “neutralized,” police said, and an AFP photographer later saw their bodies at the scene of the attack on a highway east of Jerusalem, where five cars were riddled with bullets. “The three terrorists... got out of their vehicle and started shooting automatic weapons at vehicles that were in a traffic jam on the road toward Jerusalem,” police said in a statement about the attack near the Maale Adumim settlement.

“Two terrorists were neutralized on the spot,” police said. “In the searches conducted at the scene, another terrorist was located who tried to escape and he was also neutralized.” The gunmen were identified as Mohammed Zawahrah, 26, his brother Kathim Zawahrah, 31, and Ahmed Al-Wahsh, also 31, by Israel’s internal security service Shin Bet.

Among those wounded was a 23-year-old pregnant woman who was in critical condition, said the emergency response service Magen David Adom and a spokesperson for the Shaare Tzedek Hospital. Violence was already on the rise across the West Bank prior to the Gaza war sparked by Hamas’s October 7 attack, but has escalated since then to levels unseen in nearly two decades, with hundreds killed in recent months.

Israel’s far-right National Security Minister Itamar Ben Gvir visited the site of Thursday’s attack where he told journalists: “The enemies... want to hurt us. They hate us.” He argued that “we need to distribute more weapons” and that “our right to life is superior to the freedom of movement” of residents governed by the Palestinian Authority under president Mahmud Abbas.

“There should be more restrictions and we should put barriers around villages and limit the freedom of movement” of people

from the West Bank, Ben Gvir added. Israel’s far-right Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich called for a “firm security response... and colonization” by building thousands of new housing units in settlements like Maale Adumim and across the West Bank.

“Our enemies must know that any harm done to us would result in more construction, more development and even more control over the entire country,” he said on X, formerly Twitter. The attack came after two people were shot dead last Friday at a bus stop in southern Israel near the town of Kiryat Malakhi. The West Bank has seen frequent Palestinian attacks on Israelis and near-daily raids by the Israeli military that often turn deadly.

Israeli troops and settlers have killed at least 400 Palestinians in the West Bank since the Gaza war broke out, according to the Palestinian health ministry in Ramallah. Israel captured the West Bank — including east Jerusalem, which it later annexed — in the Arab-Israeli war of 1967. Around 475,000 Jewish settlers currently live in the occupied West Bank, in settlements considered illegal by the United Nations and most of the international community.

The West Bank’s Palestinian population is about 2.9 million. The Palestinians claim the territory as the heartland of a future independent state, a goal being discussed by the international community as the Gaza war rages into a fifth month. Israel’s parliament Wednesday overwhelmingly backed a proposal by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu opposing any unilateral recognition of a Palestinian state.

The Gaza war erupted after Hamas militants attacked Israel on October 7, resulting in the deaths of around 1,160 people in Israel, mostly civilians, according to an AFP tally based on official Israeli figures. At least 29,410 people, mostly women and children, have been killed in Israel’s retaliatory military offensive on Gaza, according to the health ministry in the Hamas-run territory.

# Alvi: Efforts vital to prevent thalassemia among children

F.P. Report

LAHORE: President Dr. Arif Alvi stressing the need of community efforts for preventing thalassemia among children has emphasized mandatory testing before marriage.

He stated this while speaking as chief guest of a prize distribution ceremony of Sundas Foundation held at Governor House Lahore on Thursday. Director Sundas Foundation Khalid Abbas Dar, President Yaseen Khan, renowned journalists Sohail Warraich, Mubeen-ur-Rehman Shami and Salman Ghani also attended the event.

Addressing the participants, Dr Arif Alvi quoted the example of England regarding success in thalassemia control due to proper awareness, while Pakistan had to face shortage of blood donations for thalassemia children, adding that even with extensive campaigns, this shortage

could not be overcome. He further said that Pakistan has 26.2 million children out of schools, while our neighbouring countries India, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh have accomplished almost 100 per cent enrollment rate.

The president said that Pakistan built 50,000 schools in Punjab since its inception, while the state needed equal number of more schools to educate such a large number of children. He said that Pakistan has more than 2.5 lakh mosques, and proposed that those could be used as educational centres to address the issue.

Dr Alvi said: “Holy Prophet Hazrat Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him) gave status of community centres to mosques and Islam gave us golden principles for society; we all should get inspiration from Quran and Sunnah”. China made progress and achieved prosperity by focusing on education and health of its popula-

tion. He said Pakistan has the fifth biggest population in the world, which has immense potential for growth. The president stressed the best utilisation of this workforce.

Thanking the people working for thalassemia elimination and serving humanity, he said that they are our heroes and they would stand honoured before Almighty Allah; they should be given respect, and recognition of their services. Dr Arif Alvi lauded the philanthropic individuals and organisations for their generous financial support towards the treatment of these otherwise expensive medical conditions.

President Sundas Foundation Yaseen Khan said that the foundation was a leading non-profit organisation dedicated to voluntary blood transfusion services and treatment of thalassemia, hemophilia, and other blood-related diseases for the last 26 years.



MUZAFFARABAD: Women activists of International forum for justice chanting slogans during a protest ahead of Kashmiri Women’s Resistance Day.

# ‘Era of peace in Europe over’ says Ukraine, as Avdiivka falls to Russians

KYIV: Russia achieved its first major territorial success in more than nine months in the Ukraine war, capturing the eastern city of Avdiivka last week. The once-bustling community of 30,000 civilians was gone and it was doubtful whether the local employer, Europe’s biggest coking plant, could be returned to operability soon. But the capture offered Russian President Vladimir Putin bragging rights ahead of the election he faces in March.

Russian forces began to press Ukrainian defenders in earnest last October, after Ukraine’s three-month-long summer counteroffensive had ended, promising to deal Ukraine a winter blow. They formed a pincer to the north and south of the city, and during the four months of most intense fighting Ukraine’s Tavria forces commander, Oleksandr Tarnavskiy, estimated they had sustained 47,000 casualties, and lost 364 tanks, 248 artillery systems, 748 armoured fighting vehicles and five aircraft.

The news fell like a bombshell on the continuing Munich Security Conference, where Ukraine’s Western allies convened to survey a gloomy outlook for 2024. “The era of peace in Europe is over,” Dmytro Kuleba, Ukrainian foreign minister, told those present.

“And every time Ukrainian soldiers withdraw from a Ukrainian town because of the lack of ammunition, think of it not only in terms of democracy and defending the world-based order, but also in terms of Russian soldiers getting a few kilometres closer to your towns.” Ukraine’s President Volodymyr Zelenskyy also seized upon the moment to press allies for more weapons supplies. “Unfortunately, keeping Ukraine in artificial deficits of weapons, particularly in deficits of artillery and long-range capabilities, allows Putin to adapt to the current intensity of the war. This self-weakening of democracy over time undermines our joint results,” Zelenskyy told the confer-

ence. Many Ukrainians squarely blame the United States for the emboldening of Russia, as a \$60.6bn military assistance measure for Ukraine remains stalled in Congress. “In 2022, the [US] administration [of Joe Biden] submitted funding requests in the spring, almost immediately after the invasion,” wrote Kyiv School of Economics director Tymofiy Mylovanov.

“But in 2023, it waited until mid-fall to announce what it plans to submit,” he said. “Avdiivka demonstrates the cost of these political delays: human lives, lost territory, and encouraged Russia. If that’s the plan ‘to be with Ukraine as long as it takes’, then the US delays in aid have just prolonged the war.” The key to breaking the months-long impasse on the ground seems to have come from the air.

“Russian forces appear to have temporarily established limited and localised air superiority and were able to provide ground troops with close

air support during the final days of their offensive operation,” said the Institute for the Study of War, a Washington-based think tank. Sergei Shoigu, Russian defence minister, said Moscow’s forces had made 450 high-precision air strikes in the final days of the campaign for Avdiivka.

Many of those came in the form of glide bombs, massive unpowered munitions fitted with adjustable fins to travel further than ordinary inertial bombs and strike with greater precision. One Ukrainian soldier reported 60 being dropped on February 17 alone. The use of forward air power came at a cost. Ukraine shot down two Sukhoi-34s and a Sukhoi-35 over Donetsk on Saturday as they performed sorties to drop glide bombs. On Monday they shot down another Sukhoi-34 and a Sukhoi-35 striking Ukrainian positions with glide bombs, and a Sukhoi-34 on Wednesday.

In all, Ukraine said it shot down seven planes in five days. The first signs that Ukraine’s defences around

Avdiivka were failing came on Thursday, when geolocated footage showed Russian forces advancing to new positions south of the city. On Saturday, Ukraine’s newly appointed commander in chief, Oleksandr Syrskiy, said he ordered Ukrainian units to withdraw early in the morning in order to avoid encirclement and capture. Geolocated footage showed Russian troops entering Avdiivka along a railway line running past quarries to the northeast of the city and to the coking plant in the east. By evening Russia claimed “full control” over Avdiivka.

Shoigu also claimed that Ukrainian forces had withdrawn in great disarray, suffering a large number of dead, wounded and captured men. He may have overstated the case. The New York Times quoted unnamed Western officials confirming that a “significant” number of Ukrainian troops may have been captured. Two Ukrainian soldiers put the number at 850 to 1,000. But Tavria Group

spokesman Dmytro Lykhoviy said that report was influenced by Russian information operations, and the actual number captured was much smaller. It remains an open question whether Russian forces can keep repeating the formula that helped them capture Avdiivka in other areas of the front. Russian forces in the last week also ramped up their attacks on the eastern cities of Lyman and Kupiansk, which some observers believe are their next targets, on Robotyne, in western Zaporizhia, which Ukraine recaptured last year, and on Ukrainian positions on the left bank of the Dnipro river in Kherson. Beyond the symbolic loss of another town, the first since Bakhmut fell in May last year, Avdiivka may offer Russia few strategic advantages. “Avdiivka offers Russian forces limited avenues for future advance,” said the ISW. “Ukrainian forces have long fortified many of the surrounding settlements, which Russian forces are also struggling to capture.” — Aljazeera