

# Independent

dailyindisb@gmail.com Chief Editor: Syed Farooq Shah www.dailyindependent.com.pk Islamabad

Vol. XIV No. 47 Reg. mails-B / ID-445 Tuesday February 27, 2024, Shaban 16, 1445 A.H. Ph: 2158688, 2158997 Pages 4: Rs. 12

## Speaker convenes NA session on Feb 29 after President objects to summary

President Alvi believed NA is incomplete sans allocation of reserved seats; PML-N led alliance says NA session must be called within 21 days

ISLAMABAD (INP): The National Assembly Secretariat has convened the lower house of parliament's session on February 29 at 10am following President Arif Alvi's refusal.

In a statement on Monday, the secretariat said the NA session is bound to take place on the 21st day of the general elections under Article 91 of the Constitution.

The president could have summoned the session on the 21st day but he did not, the secretariat officials said. The NA secretariat said the president and speaker's notification is not required to summon the session on

the 21st day of the polling. Earlier today, sources said that outgoing Speaker Raja Pervaiz Ashraf has "decided" to convene the inaugural session of the new lower house of parliament on February 29 amid a looming constitutional crisis. The development came moments after President Arif Alvi reportedly rejected a summary to summon the NA session, sources said, in which MNAs-elect will take oath.

Alvi believed that the NA was incomplete sans the allocation of all the reserved seats to the political parties. While the Election

Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has allocated reserved seats to political parties, it has not awarded reserved quota to the Sunni Ittehad Council (SIC) after the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI)-backed independent candidates joined their ranks. The ECP, however, said that the matter of SIC reserved seats is "pending before the commission". The PML-N-led alliance, who claimed winning the majority in the February 8 general elections, was of the view that the NA session must be called within 21 days after the elections, what their lead-

ership said as per the Constitution.

The sources said that the decision was made during an emergency meeting headed by NA speaker and attended by the officials of the NA Secretariat and constitutional experts. The NA speaker decided to call the session under Article 91 (2), the sources added. There was no constitutional hurdle in summoning the NA session despite the president's denial, constitutional experts briefed the speaker. The president was bound by the law to convene the NA session within 21 days after the elections, they added.



LAHORE: Governor Punjab Baligh Ur Rehman administering the oath to the Newly-elected Chief Minister Punjab Maryam Nawaz at Governor House.

## Maryam Nawaz sworn in as first-ever female CM of Punjab

Wins chief minister's election with 220 votes against SIC's Rana Aftab Ahmad; Governor Balighur Rehman administers oath to Maryam; Doors of CM's office opened for ruling, opposition members, says newly elected CM

LAHORE (Online): The newly-elected first ever female Chief Minister of the Punjab Maryam Nawaz has taken the oath of her office at the Governor's House in Lahore today.

Punjab Governor Muhammad Baligh-ur-Rehman administered the oath. On this occasion, Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz Quid Muhammad Nawaz Sharif, PML-N President Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif, members of Punjab Assembly, along with a large number of party leaders and workers were present.

Earlier, during the session of the provincial assembly held in Lahore, Maryam Nawaz of Pakistan Muslim League-N was elected as the first ever woman Chief Minister of Punjab.

She secured two hundred twenty votes. Speaker Malik Muhammad Ahmad Khan announced the result of the voting process.

Sunni Ittehad Council had fielded Rana Aftab Ahmad Khan as its candidate. However, the Council boycotted

the entire electoral process. INP adds: The newly elected Chief Minister of Punjab Maryam Nawaz has assured that the doors of CM office and her heart will remain opened for ruling and opposition members round the clock.

In her first speech on floor of the assembly as chief minister on Monday, she thanked Allah Almighty for giving her respect and congratulated the speaker and deputy speaker on assuming their respective offices.

"I hope that under your leadership, the House will hold democratic values high," she stressed.

Maryam Nawaz regretting the absence of the opposition members said she wished they were here. "Being democratic workers, we understand how important it is to compete in politics.

We have also faced difficult times when every tide was against us, and cruelty and brutality were inflicted on us. But thank God, we did not leave the field," she stressed.



Pak Navy demonstrates successful shooting down of aerial target by Surface to Air Missile.

## Pak Navy demonstrates combat readiness, war fighting potential

KARACHI (INP): Pakistan Navy demonstrated combat readiness and war fighting potential by Live Weapon Firing (LWF) of FM-90B Surface to Air Missile in the North Arabian Sea.

Commander Pakistan Fleet, Vice Admiral Muhammad Faisal Abbasi graced the occasion as Chief Guest.

During the firepower demonstration, PN Ship successfully hit the aerial drone target thereby reaffirming PN's war fighting capability and combat potential.

Missile firing was conducted on the culmination of the sea phase of PN's Major Maritime Exercise SEA SPARK-2024. The exercise was conducted to validate PN's operational plans and assess war preparedness. Chief Guest Vice Admiral Muhammad Faisal Abbasi commended officers and men for their commitment and professionalism.

He reiterated the resolve of Pakistan Navy to ensure seaward defence of Pakistan and safeguard national maritime interests at all costs.



KARACHI: Syed Murad Ali Shah Speaker on the Assembly floor after being elected as Chief Minister of Sindh.

## Syed Murad Ali Shah elected as Chief Minister Sindh third time

PPP candidate secures 112 votes to become province's chief executive in contest against MQM-P's Ali Khurshidi; He prays for courage to run province and bring all parties in harmony;

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

The third time lucky, has served twice as Sindh's chief minister from 2016 to 2018 and then from 2018 to 2023, and this will be his third consecutive term.

Taking the floor after his election, CM Murad thanked PPP and its top leadership for choosing him for the post. "I have been chosen for the third time for leading the province and I have been

electd as the member of this House for the fifth time," he said.

Recalling his early days in politics, Murad said that his father had told him and his brother that one of them should contest in the 2002 polls as he couldn't at that time. He said that PPP leader Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto, who was in exile at that time, encouraged him to take part in the polls. e recalled the "time" when talks of his arrest were on the rise but Bilawal said that "Murad will be my CM from jail" if he is sent to prison. Murad also mentioned how he reformed himself without criticism. "PPP will not play with the security of the country for just a few seats that were taken away from us. Instead, we will fight a legal war for them," he said.

## Pakistan to seek loan package plus climate finance from IMF

ISLAMABAD (INP): Pakistan will seek a loan package from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) plus 1.5 billion dollars climate finance, sources said on Monday.

The country is exploring the possibility of increasing the program to \$7.5-8 billion, reportedly seeking addition of climate finance in the next bailout package, sources said.

Climate finance will be sought to expand the loan package. The International Monetary Fund provides affordable long-term financing for countries dealing with climate change and pandemics. According to sources, the authorities are looking for options to increase the upcoming IMF bailout package to 7.5 to 8 billion dollars with possible application for climate finance.

Sources said that the IMF Board of Governors in its meeting in December last year had approved enhancing the quota of all countries and this decision will also be implementable over Pakistan.

## CM election has no legal mandate, claims Opposition

LAHORE (APP): Sunni Ittehad Council (SIC) leader and nominee for the slot of Punjab chief minister Rana Aftab Ahmad has said that the chief minister's election has no legal mandate, questioning that how the process will proceed further as the house isn't complete yet. Speaking to the media outside the Punjab Assembly here on Monday, Rana said that the SIC had sufficient numbers and they wanted to tell the house that their members were standing outside fearing their arrest.

He expressed his displeasure over Punjab Assembly Speaker Muhammad Ahmad Khan's "regretful" attitude, saying that he "bulldozed the proceedings by stopping him at the point of order." He said "We will play the role of a vibrant opposition in the house. Punjab will be run on the basis of opposition's performance." "SIC would also move the court against the incomplete election of Punjab chief minister ship. You will have to take the opposition on board to run the house smoothly," he said.

## CJP summons SJC meeting on Feb 29

ISLAMABAD (INP): Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Justice Qazi Faez Isa on Monday summoned a meeting of the Supreme Judicial Council (SJC) on February 29 to consider the complaints of misconduct against former apex court judge Mazahir Ali Akbar Naqvi. Mazahir Naqvi is probably the only judge who is facing proceedings of misconduct after his resignation. Last week, an SC larger bench by a majority of 4 to 1 held that the proceedings, which had already been initiated by the SJC against a judge, shall not abate on his resignation or retirement.

"It is the prerogative of the SJC to proceed with the matter accordingly," read the order.

## Armed Forces commemorate fifth anniversary of Operation Swift Retort

Independent Report

RAWALPINDI: The Armed Forces of Pakistan, along with the Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee (JCSC) and Services Chiefs, commemorate the fifth anniversary of "Operation Swift Retort."

February 27, 2019, marked a significant event in our history, demonstrating the resolve of the people of Pakistan and the professionalism of the Armed Forces in response to unwarranted aggression from India, motivated by political considerations and electoral concerns. Despite desperate Indian attempts to favourably shape the information space, the events of that fateful day showcased absolute operational ascendancy of Pakistan's Armed Forces over the Indian side.

The steadfastness and competence of Pakistan's Armed Forces were acknowledged by military experts and analysts throughout the world, effectively debunking frivolous Indian claims which could not stand to factual scrutiny.

The strategic foresight to return the downed pilot in interest of peace, from a position of strength and after having dominated the opposing force decisively, is unanimously hailed, to this day, by the international community as a remarkable gesture of political maturity and superior statecraft.

As a state committed to peace, we shall continue to emphasize the importance of peaceful coexistence with our neighbours. Any aggression against the people of Pakistan, our sovereignty and territorial integrity, will however be responded immediately, with full might and without any hesitation. Every single time.

## Solangi says: 71,000 Out-Of-School Children brought back to schools in capital

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Minister for Information, Broadcasting and Parliamentary Affairs Murtaza Solangi Monday informed the Senate that around 71,000 Out-Of-School Children (OOSC), out of 81,000, had been brought back in educational institutes of the federal capital, with 86 per cent enrollment. Responding to a motion regarding the increasing number of out-of-school children and its impact on the country's future, he said, that last year during an inter-ministerial conference, which is one of the biggest forums, provinces had been asked to play their active role in increasing enrollment of the OOSC in educational institutes.



MULTAN: Activists of Muslim League (PML-N) are distributing sweets among each other after Maryam Nawaz elected as Chief Minister Punjab during celebration demonstration, in Multan.



ISLAMABAD: Peoples Party (PPP) Co-Chairman, Asif Ali Zardari exchanging views with a delegation of Awami National Party (ANP) led by Zamarud Khan, Dawood Khan and Nawabzada Umar Farooq during meeting held in Islamabad.

## Balochistan MPA, Senators announce support for PPP

ISLAMABAD (APP): Newly elected Member of Balochistan Assembly from Awami National Party, Zamarud Khan, Senators Dawood Khan and Nawabzada Umar Farooq called on President Pakistan Peoples Parliamentarians (PPPP) Asif Ali Zardari. They announced their support for Asif Ali Zardari in the Senate and Presidential elections, said press release issued here by the party secretariat.

Zamarud Khan MPA also announced to support for PPP in forming the government in Balochistan. The ANP also announced to play a more dynamic role in government formation in Balochistan. Ali Madad Jattak and Mir Ali Hasan Brohi were also present on the occasion.

## FM Jilani lauds "bold decisions" of interim govt as term nears conclusion

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Foreign Minister Jilani Abbas Jilani on Monday lauding the "bold decisions" of the caretaker government on economic and foreign policy fronts thanked the colleagues and cabinet members for their tireless efforts to serve the national cause.

The foreign minister, in a series of posts on his X timeline, called it a "great honour" to serve Pakistan and its people.

He said that despite confronting various challenges, on the economic and foreign policy front, the caretaker government under the leadership of Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar took bold decisions, to stabilize the economy, avert a major crisis in the country's neighbourhood

and demand global action against climate change.

The interim government also called for an end to the unimaginable violence orchestrated by Israel in Gaza and send relief goods to our Palestinian brothers and sisters, he added.

"As we complete our constitutional mandate and hand over to a new government, I would like to appreciate the hard work, dedication, and commitment of all my cabinet colleagues who worked tirelessly for the national cause," the foreign minister remarked.

He expressed gratitude to the officers of the Foreign Office who supported him and continued to lead by example both at home and abroad, showcasing the very best that Pakistan has to offer.

## IHC issues notice to NAB against Toshakhana verdict

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Islamabad High Court (IHC) has issued a notice to the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) in response to the plea filed by Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder against his sentence in the Toshakhana reference.

Chief Justice IHC, Amir Farooq and Justice Mian Gul Hassan heard

the plea on Monday. Defense Counsel, Barrister Ali Zafar, argued that some baseless and strange findings were observed during the trial.

"You will raise all these concerns during the arguments proceedings," CJ, IHC, responded.

The court issued notice to NAB against the plea of Bushra Bibi's sentence.



## Daily Voice of Masses Independent

### Spirit of '74

For three days in 1974, starting Feb 22, Lahore witnessed an epochal meeting of 38 Muslim nations as it hosted the Second Islamic Summit Conference. Those were heady days, coming only a few months after the October 1973 war, when the Arabs had reversed some of the ignominious losses of the 1967 conflict. Moreover, the Arabs had flaunted their 'oil weapon', targeted at all states that openly supported Israel, and perhaps for the first time in the postcolonial period, there was a feeling that the world of Islam had agency of its own.

Giants of the Muslim world attended the moot. This included the summit's host and architect Zulfikar Ali Bhutto along with other leaders, including Anwar Sadat of Egypt, Muammar Qadhafi of Libya, Faisal of Saudi Arabia and Palestinian icon Yasser Arafat. The credit for the success of the 1974 summit goes to Bhutto. Though he may have had many shortcomings, Bhutto — a democratically elected leader — was a committed internationalist and had the vision to make Pakistan a leader in the Muslim world. Our reputation today, both within the Muslim world and in the larger international community, is far from the dizzying heights reached in 1974. One lesson that can be drawn is that a leader elected by the people and aware of their aspirations is alone qualified to guide the nation on the world stage. Another of the summit's successes was Pakistan's recognition of Bangladesh, which closed the blood-stained chapter of the separation of East Pakistan, as Mujibur Rahman embraced Bhutto in Lahore.

Yet, 50 years after that momentous meeting, many of the issues that plagued the Muslim world remain. For example, Palestine's children still cry out for an end to their slaughter. Moreover, the people of Kashmir remain unable to choose their own destiny, thanks to Indian intransigence. Elsewhere, the stateless Rohingya live in foetid refugee camps, victims of Myanmar's ruling junta, while hundreds of millions of other Muslims the world over face disease, illiteracy and hunger, even as some of their richer brothers in faith live lives of unimaginable luxury. Sadly, in far too many Muslim states, strongmen are disconnected from the desires of their people. Perhaps the spirit of '74 needs to be channelled to guide the Muslim world through these rough waters. Particularly, through unity and pursuing a minimum common agenda, the community of Muslim states can attempt to address multiple problems, and pursue the noble goals enunciated at the Lahore Summit. Education, with particular focus on science and technology, is required to improve the lot of Muslim populations. Furthermore, democracy within the Muslim world — developed through organic processes and not 'imported' from others — is needed to bring qualitative improvements to the lives of nearly 2bn people.

## Beyond environmental policy

Umar Farooq

The time has come for Pakistan to redefine its relationship with the environment — not as a passive recipient of international aid, but as an active steward of its own natural legacy.

Pakistan's environmental predicament is a poignant illustration of the disparity between a nation's contribution to global greenhouse gas emissions and the severity of its climate-related challenges. Despite accounting for less than one per cent of global GHG emissions, Pakistan is significantly impacted by climate change. The country has been experiencing an alarming increase in environmental disasters, such as flash floods, extended drought periods, and intense heatwaves. According to a World Bank report, the recent climate-induced disasters in Pakistan, including a heatwave and devastating floods, caused over 1,700 deaths, displaced more than eight million people, and resulted in more than \$30 billion in damages and economic losses.

The combined risks of extreme climate-related events, environmental degradation, and air pollution could reduce Pakistan's GDP by 18pc to 20pc by 2050. These occurrences highlight Pakistan's vulnerability to climate extremes and indicate the urgency for comprehensive strategies to adapt to and mitigate these effects. The reliance on international climate aid, often limited to small grants for seminars and PR campaigns, does not help much. International donors pledged over \$9bn to assist Pakistan in recovering from devastating floods last year, but unfortunately the funds never materialised.

The example of the Amazon rainforest's contribution to its own rainfall is a striking illustration of the significant role local ecosystems play in their

own environmental health. Despite its global significance, the Amazon primarily sustains its climate through its own biological processes, a concept that can be applied to Pakistan's environmental situation. The focus on seeking international climate aid and support, while beneficial, may have only a limited impact on Pakistan's environmental restoration. Pakistan's environmental health, like the Amazon's, is significantly influenced by its own conservation and sustainability practices and we need to address environmental challenges through internal efforts.

Addressing Pakistan's environmental challenges necessitates a fundamental shift from the prevailing mindset and policy framework. The need of the hour is not just an environmental policy, but a comprehensive land use policy. This policy should be multidimensional, encompassing agriculture, nature conservation and restoration, industrial practices, and housing strategies.

The agriculture strategy in Pakistan's proposed land use policy must confront existing practices that have degraded natural capital. The agriculture sector with its distributional consequences is responsible for more than 50pc of GHG emissions. Traditional agricultural methods have led to extensive land degradation, water scarcity, and a decrease in biodiversity. The latest figure indicates that the per capita availability of water in Pakistan has declined to 1,017 cubic metres per person in 2021, significantly below the threshold for water scarcity, while rent-seeking farmers-turned-industrialists heavily lobbying for sugarcane cultivation in the south have made it worse. This has not only contributed to environmental degradation but also made sugarcane a critical part of the con-

sumption basket, despite its intensive water usage and ecological impact. To counteract this, a shift to sustainable agricultural practices is imperative. Practices like efficient water use, organic farming, and crop diversification can rehabilitate the land, conserve water, and enhance biodiversity.

Similarly, nature conservation and restoration, is crucial. Past neglect and overexploitation of natural habitats by unsustainable timber extraction have led to a significant loss of biodiversity and ecosystem services in the country. Forests span merely 5.7pc of Pakistan's total land, with the remaining forested areas facing rapid decline. The pressures of commercial logging and the increased demand for resources such as fuel, fodder, building supplies, resin, and charcoal by the growing population have severely impacted forest ecosystems. A strategic focus on restoring and conserving natural habitats — forests, wetlands, and grasslands — is vital. Another billion-tree tsunami is badly needed.

This is a country which is already beyond water scarcity level, unfortunately ruled by an elite that has had a never-ending affair with subsidised golf courses, which require millions of gallons of water every day. For housing, the strategy should prioritise sustainable urban planning, which includes vertical expansion, efficient land use, sustainable urban transport systems and the integration of green spaces within urban areas. As Pakistan stands at a critical environmental crossroads, the path ahead is clear: a profound shift in policy and mindset is essential. Embracing a comprehensive land use policy that holistically addresses agriculture, conservation, industry, and housing is not just a choice, but an imperative for a sustainable future. - Courtesy Dawn

Zarrar Khuhro

When Hamas and its allies attacked Israel on Oct 7, the assault made headlines. Its aftermath — Israel's genocidal campaign against the entire Palestinian people — continues till today.

However, it quickly dawned on the beleaguered right-wing government of Benjamin Netanyahu that the attack was a godsend because (a) a government at war could ignore its political problems, and (b) it provided an opportunity to implement the Final Solution to the Palestinian issue.

But first, a degree of consent had to be manufactured — you can't eradicate an entire people out of the blue — and the Palestinians had to be depicted as mindless barbarians shedding Jewish blood. So, headlines about 40 beheaded babies — a lie repeated by the US president — dominated international media along with tales of sexual assaults by Hamas fighters.

But, as with almost all Zionist claims, it soon became clear that there was little to no proof backing these accusations. Indeed, had Western media bothered to carry out some due diligence, it would have become apparent that the claims were not supported by evidence. Take the New York Times, which ran a piece claiming to have verified video evidence regarding the alleged rape of an Israeli woman named Gal Abudsh. However, Gal's own parents and sister came out to deny the claim, after which it emerged that NYT's 'video evidence' only verified the woman's identity, and not the alleged rape.

The article also quoted ZAKA, the same Israeli group that spread the false story about beheaded babies. Interest-

## Pack of lies

ingly, ZAKA's own co-founder Meshi Zahav was accused of "horrendous acts of sexual abuse of men, women and children", following which he took his own life. The NYT also launched a series of podcasts based on the same article, which was pulled after it became clear that the information it relied on was inaccurate.

However, the claims are repeated to this day, most recently by Hillary Clinton who continues to justify Israel's murderous actions as "self-defence". Social media was another vector for misinformation, with prominent Israelis posting a video in which they claim a Hamas fighter is heard singling out female captives for rape. Once translated, it became clear that the fighter is saying "No, no, she is a female captive, leave her ... go back to your place."

Similar accusations were made by pro-Israeli Moroccan journalist Mahdi Baladi about freed Israeli hostage Maya Regev. Baladi falsely claimed that Regev's medical reports stated she was raped by multiple men, a claim that was not verified by the hospital where she was treated or by her family.

More recently, activist Sandra Ifrah claimed on a French TV channel CNEWS that a 13-year-old hostage was raped and needed an abortion while another hostage had 67 different sperm samples in her. Later, she retracted these false claims in a tweet by saying that she was "under the influence of emotion". She didn't bother to specify what she was apologising for and the TV channel has continued to repeat this lie.

But now, evidence has finally emerged of systematic sexual harassment and rape in Palestine, except this evidence will not be discussed on Western media because

the perpetrators are Israeli and the victims Palestinian.

UN experts have said that there have been numerous cases where "Palestinian women and girls in detention have also been subjected to multiple forms of sexual assault, such as being stripped naked and searched by male Israeli army officers. At least two female Palestinian detainees were reportedly raped while others were reportedly threatened with rape and sexual violence". Photographs of women in "degrading circumstances" have also been posted online by Israeli soldiers.

Lama Khater, a Palestinian mother of five, who was released by Israel in November, says that in her first interrogation she was threatened with rape and the murder of her family. She and other female prisoners were sexually harassed and not even provided access to sanitary pads.

Palestinian activist Ahd Tamimi, was also subjected to sexualised remarks during her detention but perhaps her high profile status saved her from greater indignities. The Israelis certainly didn't hold back because of her age because that has never been a barrier; in 2021 a Palestinian NGO reported the rape of a 15-year-old boy by Israeli security forces to the US State Department. Israel reacted by declaring the NGO a terrorist organisation and sealing its offices.

The latest UN report confirms what Palestinians have been alleging for years, that Israel uses sexual abuse and humiliation as a tool to subjugate Palestinians; this dates to the Nakba, and former Israeli soldiers are on record, talking about how they raped Palestinian women and girls. Truly, when it comes to Israel, every accusation is a confession. - Courtesy Dawn

## Commerce News

### IT Minister forecasts bright future as Pakistan's IT exports surge

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Federal Minister for Information Technology and Telecommunications, Dr. Umar Saif on Monday said that IT exports have seen a steady increase over the past five months, with a notable 13% surge observed in the last 30 days.

In an interview with a private news channel, he expressed confidence in the trajectory of the IT sector, suggesting that if this momentum continues, the country may soon achieve its target of reaching \$10 billion in IT exports.

Acknowledging the vital role of the IT industry in the national economy, Dr. Saif emphasized the importance of providing ample incentives, facilities,

and rewards to support its growth.

Over the past five months, various initiatives have been implemented to boost IT exports and facilitate industry growth, he added.

One crucial aspect highlighted by Dr. Saif was the necessity for quality education and skill development among the youth to compete effectively in the global market. To address this, significant investments have been made in skills training, with new courses introduced in universities, backed by approximately 5 billion rupees in funding.

Dr. Saif revealed that over 75,000 IT students graduate annually from universities across the country. Plans were underway to test and

qualify these graduates, aiming to integrate 30,000-35,000 of them into the industry each year, with a broader goal of adding 100,000 individuals to the workforce annually.

Highlighting Pakistan's strong presence in the global online freelancing market, Dr. Saif noted that the country boasts over 1.5 million registered freelancers, ranking second globally after the United States.

To further bolster this sector, initiatives like the 'e-rozgar' program have been launched, intending to establish 10 thousand 'e-rozgar' centers nationwide.

Addressing challenges related to international transactions, Dr. Saif discussed efforts to enable freelancers to receive payments through PayPal.

### Business plan competition begins at NTUF

FAISALABAD (APP): An All-Pakistan Business Plan Competition (APBPC) commenced at National Textile University Faisalabad (NTUF) here on Monday. Dr. Sajjad Ahmad Baig, Dean Faculty of Faisalabad Business School (FBS), inaugurated the competition, which will continue for two days. He stressed the need for creative business ideas, entrepreneurial spirit and innovation which were imperative to complete with the rest of the world in rapidly evolving technological landscape.

He said that in this era of cutting-edge technology, the ability to translate ideas into action and embrace innovation were paramount for success. The contest would foster crucial skills besides encouraging young minds to think critically, solve problems creatively and contribute to shaping future of business.

He said that the two-day competition would serve as a platform.



ABU DHABI: Ambassador Faisal Niaz Tirmizi, Pakistan's Envoy to UAE and Dr. Abdelouahab Zaid Prof., General Secretary, Khalifa International Award for Date Palm and Agricultural Innovation, signed the MOU signed a Memorandum of Understanding in Abu Dhabi. The signing ceremony was witnessed by H.E. Sheikh Nahyan Mubarak Al Nahyan, Minister of Tolerance and Coexistence of the UAE.

### Govt. takes multiple steps to reduce losses in SOEs: Solangi

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Federal Minister for Information, Broadcasting and Parliamentary Affairs Murtaz Solangi informed the Senate on Monday that the government had taken multiple steps to reduce losses in State-Owned Enterprises (SOEs).

Winding up the debate on a motion moved by Senator Mushtaq Ahmed regarding the performance of SOEs, which according to a World Bank report is worse in Asia, he said further reforms, including

the restructuring of the loss-making institutions would be decided by the newly elected government and the Parliament.

The minister said "There is consensus on the need to end losses in State-Owned Enterprises (SOEs); however, there are differing opinions. Some believe that privatization is the sole solution, while others argue for professional management to enhance their efficiency."

He said "The final decision on this matter will

be made by the elected government and the parliament," adding that more than 200 institutions were currently experiencing losses, including those in the power, communication sectors, and Pakistan Railways.

According to a report from the Ministry of Finance, he said, these institutions had incurred losses amounting to Rs730 billion.

However, profitable institutions earned an overall income of Rs570 billion, he added.

### LCCI congratulates Maryam Nawaz, lauds her vision on economy

LAHORE (APP): The Lahore Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LCCI) on Monday congratulated Maryam Nawaz for becoming the first-ever woman Chief Minister of Punjab and welcomed her pledge to make Punjab and economic hub.

LCCI President Kashif Anwar, Senior Vice President Zafar Mahmood Chaudhry and Vice President Adnan Khalid Butt said here that it

is a historic moment and the business community pins high hopes on the Punjab Chief Minister and is optimistic that she would live up to the expectations of people of Punjab and would record matchless achievement in its economy.

"Five year agenda including making Punjab an economic hub, establishment of more IT parks, plan to give relief to the masses.

### SNGPL cuts off another 169 meters on gas theft

LAHORE (APP): The Sui Northern Gas Pipelines Limited (SNGPL), during its ongoing crackdown against gas pilferers, disconnected another 169 connections besides imposing Rs2.8 million fine in Punjab. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Islamabad, According to a spokesman of the SNGPL, in Lahore, the regional team disconnected 17 connections on illegal use of gas.

### Pakistan, UAE sign MoU for promotion of date palm cultivation

ABU DHABI (APP): Pakistan and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) on Monday signed a Memorandum of Understanding here aimed at boosting agricultural innovation and research related to the development and promotion of various aspects of date palm cultivation and the allied industry. Ambassador of Pakistan to UAE Faisal Niaz Tirmizi and General Secretary of Khalifa International Award for Date Palm and Agricultural Innovation Dr. Abdelouahab Zaid Prof. signed the document.

The signing ceremony was witnessed by Minister of Tolerance and

Coexistence of the UAE Sheikh Nahyan Mubarak Al Nahyan, according to Pakistan's embassy in UAE.

The MoU will help in promoting cooperation and sharing of expertise between the two sides. It will also provide an opportunity for Pakistani farmers to increase the cultivation of date palm including through innovative ideas.

Being one of the pioneers, the UAE will provide technological support to Pakistan to increase date palm cultivation as Pakistan's rich topography presents immense potential in this sector.



HYDERABAD: Children purchasing jujube from vendor at fruits market.

### German SMEs need to explore Pakistan for JVs, investment: President ICICI

ISLAMABAD (INP): President Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI), Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari has said that Pakistan offers good opportunities to foreign investors and German Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) should explore Pakistan for JVs and investment.

He was talking to a German delegation led by Matthew De Shaw, Country Head Pakistan of the German Association of Small and Medium Size Businesses (BVMW) which visited the ICICI to discuss collaboration between the SMEs of

Germany and Pakistan to achieve win-win results for both countries. President, German-Pakistan Chamber of Commerce, Pervaz Akhtar also accompanied the delegation.

Addressing the delegation, Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari said that Germany was a very important country for Pakistan and we want to further strengthen business and investment relations between the two countries. He said that Pakistan and Germany should focus on improving bilateral trade as the current trade volume between them is not up to the desired level.



SIALKOT: Imran Bawani, GM/CEO CMA, CGM Pakistan addressing to exporters at Chamber of commerce.

### PSX stays bullish, gains 490 more points

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 100-index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) continued with bullish trend on Monday, gaining 490.11 points, a positive change of 0.78 percent, closing at 63,305.93 points against 62,815.82 points the previous trading day.

A total of 452,868,834 shares valuing Rs 16.491 billion were traded during the day as compared to 377,974,404 shares valuing Rs16.011 billion the last day.

Some 345 companies transacted their shares in the stock market; 207 of them recorded gains and 114 sustained losses, whereas the share prices of 24 remained unchanged.

The three top trading companies were K-Electric Limited with 54,064,451 shares at Rs 4.44 per share, Kohinoor Spinning with 53,374,000 shares at Rs 4.57 per share, and WorldCall Limited with 22,971,314 shares at Rs 1.31 per share.

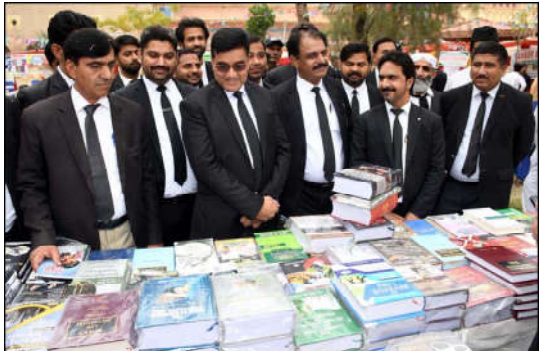


## Interim CM appreciates institutions for conducting free, fair elections in KP

PESHAWAR (APP): The caretaker Chief Minister Syed Arshad Hussain Shah on Monday appreciated all institutions for conducting free, fair and peaceful elections in the province. Addressing a press conference regarding the performance of his government, he said that when he assumed charge of the chief minister's office, there was no money in the provincial kitty even for payment of salaries to the government employees. He said that in a very short period, the interim government managed funds and now there were 100 billion rupees in the empty treasury, adding that the Prime Minister of Pakistan Anwar ul Haq Kakar showed great compassion due to which the provincial

government has left a surplus budget of 62 billion. He said that the caretaker government did not take any loans, but rather managed to get an additional 20 billion rupees from the federal government in the form of the NFC award. Arshad Hussain further mentioned that Rs 20 billion was received under the head of net hydro profit instead of 12 billion rupees. The government gave admissions to as many as 33,000 students across the province, while development projects worth 190 billion rupees were approved by ECNEC. The CM said that the government also managed to get the due rights of the province on

gas under Article 158 of the Constitution. Similarly, industrial zones were established in various districts for industrial development in the province, he said and claimed that an investment of RS 50 billion was expected from these industrial zones besides generating employment opportunities for 70,000 people in the province. The CM said that the establishment of two medical colleges in the province was approved while an agreement was signed with Google to train 20,000 KP youth at its own expense. Similarly, an agreement with the British Council was in the final stages to provide scholarships to 10,000 students.



LARKANA: District and Session Judge Syed Sharafuddin Shah visiting book stalls after inaugurating 3rd Law Books Festival 2024 at District Court, organized by District Bar Association.

## KP PSC tentatively selects 85 candidates for BPS 17

PESHAWAR: As a consequence of competitive written examination, psychological test and viva voce, the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Public Service Commission (PSC) has tentatively selected 85 candidates for appointment as PMS Officer in BPS-17. The selectees include Ms Aziza, Muhammad Umair, Ms Minahil Gohar, Muhammad Hamza Muhtahir, Muhammad Arif, Syed Ali Wajahat Ayub,

Riaz Ahmad, Tabish Ali Khan, Junaid Zakir, Ms Yameen Sana, Ms Faryal Shuaib, Farhad Ullah, Mujahid Wasim Durani, Zeeshan Iqbal, Muhammad Usama, Ms Fatima Khaliq, Ms Nida Shams, Muhammad Bilal, Danial Khan, Yasir Israr, Sajid Ali Khan, Taimoor Ul Hassan, Nasir Kamal, Ms Ammara Arif Baloch, Asad Zahoor, Syed Ahmad Jamal Shah, Ms Sara Saeed, Ms Anmol Anwar, Adil Shehzad, Mujahid Khan.

## Notorious criminal allegedly killed by his own accomplices

BUREWALA (APP): A notorious outlaw who killed a trader a few days back was allegedly shot dead by his accomplices during an exchange of firing between police and the criminals, in the limits of Model Police Station Burewala.

According to police sources, On February 15, the alleged outlaw named Shehzad alias Kaba Butt had killed a known trader Malik Muhammad Akram on refusal to pay extortion money. The outlaws had escaped towards Sindh province. A police party arrested him from Sindh. When the police team was taking him to a particular site for recovery of arms, the accomplices of the outlaw attacked the police party. The police team also retaliated.



LAHORE: Opposition leaders in Punjab Assembly are holding protest demonstration against alleged rigging in General Election 2024, at Punjab Assembly in Lahore.

## CM Mohsin Naqvi inaugurates new road

LAHORE: Punjab Caretaker Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi with the provincial cabinet visited Mazar Bibi Pak Daman late Sunday night and inaugurated the new 25-foot wide road linking Mazar Bibi Pak Daman with the Empress Road. The CM inspected the road which links Mazar Bibi Pak Daman directly with the Empress Road and appreciated its high quality construction work. He also

inspected the new parking place for the facilitation of pilgrims near the Empress Road. Mohsin Naqvi stated that the pilgrims would be provided a lot of facilitation with the new route going towards Mazar Bibi Pak Daman, adding that the traffic congestion issue would also be resolved in this area. He paid a visit to Mazar Bibi Pak Daman and prayed for prosperity, stability, integrity and peace of the country.

## FIA arrests three suspects for illegal money transfers

PESHAWAR (APP): The Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) Commercial Banking Circle during a crackdown on the illegal currency market on Monday arrested three persons for their involvement in hawala/hundi transactions and recovered illegal money from their possession. On the directives of Director Peshawar Zone Nasir Tanoli, the crackdown was initiated and arrested individuals identified as Najibullah, Muhammad Irfan Banat, and Saleh Hussain.

## Ban imposes on mobile use in KP schools

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

## Rain, snowfall spell likely to prevail till Friday in KP

PESHAWAR (APP): The provincial meteorological office on Monday predicted that a new spell of rain and snowfall in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa was likely to persist from today to Friday next.

The office informed that intermittent and heavy rains with snowfall in upper parts and hilly areas were likely to occur till Friday, next. These weatherly conditions will cause a mercury drop in upper parts and also add to chilly conditions in plain areas. The rainfall and snowfall were likely to occur during evening hours in the upper parts. The weather remained cloudy since early morning in the provincial metropolis, the Met office said, adding that light rain was expected on Monday and likely to prevail during the current week. On the other hand, the Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA) has informed the district administrations regarding arranging preemptive measures to deal with any situation DG PDMA. Muhammad Qaisar Khan has also asked the general public to remain at a distance from electricity wires.

## PHC seeks details of cases against Senator Shibli Faraz in three days

PESHAWAR (APP): A two-member bench of Peshawar High Court (PHC) comprising Justice S M Attiq Shah and Justice Waqar Ahmed on Monday sought details of cases from NAB, government and anti-corruption department against PTI leader Senator Shibli Faraz. The court ordered the Deputy Attorney General that a detailed report of cases must be submitted within three days and adjourned the hearing till March 5. Earlier, the counsel of the Senator Shibli Faraz, Muhammad Inam

Yousafzai Advocate, requested the court to seek details of the cases against him. The court said that on the last hearing, it ordered that the matter should be referred to the concerned court. The petitioner's lawyer responded that they did not know the number of FIRs were registered against Shibli Faraz. The DAG told the court that there was no case against Shibli Faraz by the federal government and NAB had not issued any notice.

## CIMPA School at LUMS Fostering a global mathematical excellence

LAHORE: The Department of Mathematics at LUMS has been designated as the Emerging Regional Centre of Excellence (ERCE) for its significant contributions to the promotion of mathematics

and Algebraic Geometry for Applications, scheduled from February 26 to March 8, 2024. The Centre International de Mathématiques Pures et Appliquées (CIMPA), established in France in 1978, is dedicated to fostering mathematical



research in developing nations. LUMS' initiative aims to equip participants with modern algebraic and geometric methods and their real-world applications. The CIMPA School features renowned mathematicians from all over the world who share their expertise as speakers. The distinguished lineup includes Dr. Thomas Kahle from Otto-von-Guericke Universität Magdeburg.

# International News

## Understanding on prisoners, truce as Gaza talks resume

WASHINGTON: White House National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan on Sunday said talks have reached a tentative understanding to secure the release of prisoners held by Hamas in exchange for a temporary ceasefire in Gaza. Last week witnessed hectic diplomatic activity as multinational talks were held in Paris and Doha with Qatar's Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani planning to visit the French capital in a couple of days. The talks are a "continuation of what was discussed in Paris" and "will be followed by meetings in Cairo," Al-Qahera News, which is linked to Egyptian state intelligence services, reported earlier. In negotiations, Hamas has demanded a ceasefire and Israel's withdrawal from Gaza, which Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has dismissed as "delusional" as

he vows to press further into the territory. "The representatives of Israel, the United States, Egypt and Qatar met in Paris and came to an understanding among the four of them about what the basic contours of a hostage deal for temporary ceasefire would look like," Mr Sullivan told CNN. However, the intense diplomacy has little effect on the ground as the health ministry in Hamas-run Gaza said on Sunday that at least 29,692 people have been killed in the Palestinian territory during Israeli strikes. The toll includes 86 fatalities in the past 24 hours, while 69,879 people have been injured since the conflict began on October 7. Qatar and Egypt serve as intermediaries between Hamas and Israel. The US media reported that Hamas was briefed on the Paris talks on Sunday and it has not yet agreed to the deal.

Mr Sullivan said "there will have to be indirect discussions by Qatar and Egypt with Hamas because ultimately they will have to agree to release the hostages". His comments follow an Israeli official's statement to CNN that Tel Aviv will send a delegation to Qatar to continue talks on the release of prisoners and a pause in military operations in Gaza. Axios, a US media outlet, mentioned that the delegation would have a "limited mandate" and that the talks would be "technical". Responding to a question about Israeli premier's post-war Gaza plan, Mr Sullivan expressed concerns, saying, "From what I've seen in the reporting, I have some concerns." On Thursday, Mr Netanyahu presented a document to his cabinet, seeking open-ended control over security and civilian affairs in the Gaza Strip.



A man holds a fire during a protest of European farmers over price pressures, taxes and green regulation, on the day of an EU Agriculture Ministers meeting in Brussels, Belgium.

## Australian pilot, two passengers released from brief kidnap in Papua New Guinea

SYDNEY (Internews): An Australian helicopter pilot and two local workers were released unharmed in Papua New Guinea on Monday within hours of being kidnapped at gunpoint in the remote highlands, police said, following negotiations with security forces. The three had landed at a remote telecoms site

near Mount Sisa in the province of Hela when an armed group took them away, David Manning, the police commissioner of Papua New Guinea, said in a statement. But they were released safe and unharmed after large numbers of security personnel responded and negotiated with the group through local leaders.

## Palestinian Prime Minister Shtayyeh resigns

RAMALLAH (Internews): Palestinian Prime Minister Mohammad Shtayyeh said on Monday he was resigning to allow for the formation of a broad consensus among Palestinians about political arrangements following Israel's war against the Islamist group Hamas in Gaza. The move comes amid growing U.S. pressure on President Mahmoud Abbas to shake up the Palestinian Authority as international efforts have intensified to stop the fighting in Gaza and begin work on a political structure to govern the enclave after the war. His resignation must still be accepted by Abbas, who may ask him to stay on as caretaker until a permanent replacement is appointed. In a statement to cabinet, Shtayyeh, an academic economist who took office in 2019, said the next stage would need to take account of the emerging reality in Gaza.



Palestinian Prime Minister Mohammad Shtayyeh convenes a cabinet meeting in Ramallah, West Bank

## Bus crash kills 9 ANC supporters after electoral rally

DURBAN: At least nine supporters of South Africa's ruling ANC were killed in a bus crash as they were travelling home after attending a key electoral rally, police said on Sunday. Road and traffic authorities said about 70 people were aboard the vehicle when it lost control and rolled over near the eastern town of Paulpieters-burg. Eight people were killed in the impact. A ninth died later in hospital, police said. Dozens were injured, several critically, authorities said.

The victims were among the tens of thousands of people that crowded into a football stadium in Durban on Saturday for the launch of the African National Congress's election manifesto. Many were bussed in from across South Africa by the party, a common political practice in the country. The accident happened early on Sunday morning when the bus was taking some supporters back to the northeastern province of Mpumalanga, authorities said.

## Ukraine downs nine Russian drones, three missile force says

MOSCOW (INP): Russia launched 14 attack drones and a barrage of missiles at Ukraine overnight, with air defence systems destroying nine drones as well as three guided missiles over the Kharkiv and Dnipropetrovsk regions, Ukraine's air force said on Monday. Russia also launched two S-300 missiles from anti-aircraft missile systems and one air-to-surface Kh-31P missile, the air force said on the Telegram messaging app. It was not clear what happened to the missiles and drones that were not downed.

## Indonesia's largest party eyes probe into alleged election irregularities

JAKARTA (Internews): The biggest party in Indonesia's parliament is seeking a legislative investigation into alleged violations around this month's presidential election and plans also to file a case with a top court, a senior party official said on Monday. The Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (PDIP) backed

Ganjar Pranowo for the presidency, who finished a distant third behind Defence Minister Prabowo Subianto, the clear winner of the Feb. 14 election according to unofficial vote tallies and an ongoing preliminary count by the poll body. We found there was abuse of power, ranging from legal aspects to the use of state facilities."

## Lukashenko wants to extend his rule to 36 years

MOSCOW: Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko, who has held power since 1994, said on Sunday he intended to seek re-election next year, which could extend his rule to 36 years. He was speaking on the day Belarus, a neighbour and ally of Russia, held parliamentary elections deemed as a sham by the opposition and the West. "Tell them I will run in the (2025) election."

## US airman dead after setting himself on fire outside Israeli embassy in protest over Gaza conflict

WASHINGTON: A US airman has died after setting himself on fire outside the Israeli embassy in Washington at the weekend in protest over the assault in Gaza, the Air Force said on Monday. The shocking act was an escalation of recent protests across the United States against Israel's actions in Gaza. Emergency responders on Sunday had rushed to the scene in response to a "call for person on fire outside the Israeli Embassy," the capital city's fire department. The unnamed man had filmed himself shouting "Free Palestine" as he lit himself on fire, according to footage shared on social media. He was transported to hospital with "critical life-

threatening injuries," the fire department said, and an Air Force spokeswoman said Monday morning he had died on Sunday night. A spokesperson for the Israeli embassy said no staff were injured. In the video, the man wearing military fatigues and declaring he will "not be complicit in genocide" before dousing himself in liquid, lighting himself on fire and yelling "Free Palestine!" until he collapses. The video was reportedly first shared in a livestream on the social platform Twitch. With the death toll in Gaza nearing 30,000, according to the health ministry in the Palestinian enclave, international pressure has been increasing on the United States to rein in ally Israel and call for a ceasefire.

## Brazil's Bolsonaro calls mass protest amid legal firestorm

SAO PAULO: Brazil's ex-president Jair Bolsonaro stakes his legal woes to the street on Sunday, calling for a mass protest from supporters amid accusations he plotted a coup to stay in power. The 68-year-old former army officer has urged his backers to attend a "peaceful rally in defence of the democratic rule of law" in the economic capital Sao Paulo which organisers hope will draw at least 500,000 people. Bolsonaro has had his passport seized by police as he and his inner circle face scrutiny over plans to try to remain in power after he lost 2022 elections to President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva. The far-right former president Bolsonaro has denied the accusations and he refused to answer questions during a half-hour interrogation on Thursday at federal po-

lice headquarters in Brasilia. "No one attempted a coup in Brazil. That is the great truth," Bolsonaro told radio station CBN Recife. A week after Lula took office on Jan 1, 2023, thousands of Bolsonaro supporters stormed the presidential palace, Congress and Supreme Court, urging the military to intervene to overturn what they called a stolen election. Bolsonaro, who was in the United States at the time, denies responsibility, and has even suggested the protesters were not really his supporters. However, investigators allege months of anti-democratic maneuvers by Bolsonaro, from a plan to discredit Brazil's electronic voting system with a "disinformation" campaign ahead of the elections to "legitimise a military intervention" if he lost.



## Solangi informs Senate HEC not abolished Pakistan Studies from degree programs

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Federal Minister for Information, Broadcasting, and Parliamentary Affairs Murtaza Solangi informed the Senate on Monday that Higher Education Commission (HEC) had neither decided nor given any suggestion to the universities to eliminate any particular course of study, including the Pakistan Studies from their degree programmes.

Responding to a motion moved by Mushtaq Ahmed regarding the abolition of the subject of Pakistan Affairs by the Higher Education Commission (HEC) from the syllabus at the graduation level, he said, "As per the concerned min-

istry and HEC, no decision or proposal has been issued to abolish the subject of Pakistan Affairs or any other course from the syllabus at the graduation level."

He further elaborated that all undergraduate policies recommended by the HEC encompassed the minimum standards required for such programmes, adding universities were operating autonomously within the framework of their respective laws.

He said a course on Pakistan ideology and the constitution had been introduced for all undergraduate degree programmes. The minister said this

course was a blend of Pakistan Studies and the constitution.

He said the HEC was also holding consultations with the concerned stakeholders to prepare a two-credit-hour compulsory course for all undergraduate degree programmes.

Senators Walid Iqbal, Prof. Dr. Mehr Taj Roghani, Fawzia Arshad, Sania Nishtar, Syed Waqar Mehdi and Ali Zafar collectively called for the immediate reinstatement of the Pakistan Studies subject. They proposed incorporating the recently introduced subject on the Ideology and Constitution of Pakistan as an additional chapter within the curriculum.



ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Blind Cricket team called on the President Dr. Arif Alvi at Aiwan-e-Sadr.

## President lauds blind cricket team for bringing fame to Pakistan

ISLAMABAD (APP): The members of the Pakistan Blind Cricket team on Monday called on President Dr. Arif Alvi here wherein he lauded them for bringing laurels to Pakistan besides highlighting globally the capabilities of differently-abled persons.

In the meeting held at the Aiwan-e-Sadr, the president said that through their participation in tournaments, the team also inspired other blind cricketers.

He said that during the recent years, blind cricket got special attention and recognition in Pakistan. The

active role of the Pakistan Blind Cricket Board in promoting and holding contests is welcoming, he added.

Calling for the encouragement of the blind cricket team, the president also called for acknowledgement of the cricketers' impressive role to highlight the team's efforts and achievements.

The team management briefed the president about the team's performance. The team members thanked President Alvi and First Lady Samina Alvi for their encouragement.

First Lady Samina Alvi was also present in the meeting.

## Mushaal urges world to take notice of rising incidents of custodial rape by Indian forces

ISLAMABAD (APP): Special Assistant to the Prime Minister (SAPM) for Human Rights and Women Empowerment Mushaal Hussein Mullick urged the international community and human rights organizations to take notice of the rising tendency of custodial rape and using rape as a weapon of war by inhuman and brutal Indian forces.

Mushaal, who is also the wife of unlawfully incarcerated senior Hurriyat leader Yasin Malik, said that the brutal occupation forces

had been using sexual abuse of women in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK) as a weapon of war for over last seven decades but the international community and world powers observed criminal silence in this regard.

She said that the notorious Indian law enforcers involved in the heinous crimes, were given a license to carry out all inhuman, immoral and unlawful acts to silence the dissenting voices in the occupied

valley.

Mushaal pointed out that the dirty and ugly face of India was exposed by the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), which revealed that India had recorded 275 cases of custodial rape between 2017 and 2022, adding that these incidents, documented across various states, involve perpetrators from law enforcement, armed forces and other custodial facilities, reflecting a misuse of power under the guise of state protection.



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

## US Envoy says: Women empowerment crucial for promoting peace and stability

ISLAMABAD (APP): The US Ambassador to Pakistan, Donald Blome, highlighted on Monday the crucial role women play in promoting peace and stability, said that their inclusion is vital not only for economic benefits but also for societal progress.

Speaking at the Breaking Barriers Through Diversity and Inclusivity Conference, Ambassador Blome said that empowering women is not just about gender but also a matter of human rights and economic necessity.

He pointed out that societies investing in empowering women experience better education, health, and economic outcomes. "When women are

given equal opportunities, communities thrive, economies prosper, and nations progress," he added.

Studies have shown that when women are involved in peace processes, resulting agreements are more durable and sustainable. Their unique perspectives and experiences bring a different dimension to conflict resolution, fostering inclusivity and long-lasting solutions, he added.

He expressed delight in seeing representatives from fourteen U.S. minority-serving institutions and the All-Pakistan Women Universities Consortium at the event.

He said diversity is the cornerstone of progress and

innovation, and President Biden has underscored that in America, "Diversity is our strength; the promise of America is that it is big enough for everyone to succeed." "It is through diversity that we gain access to a multitude of perspectives, ideas, and talents, propelling us forward into a brighter and more inclusive future," he added.

The ambassador said, "Today, we celebrate diversity in all its forms, including Regional, Cultural, Linguistic, Ethnic, Age, Religious belief, Gender, and others." He said, "In particular, we focus on the essential role of women in society and the importance of advancing women's inclusion."

## PPP regrets President's linking NA session with reserved seats

ISLAMABAD (INP): PPP leader and former federal minister Sherry Rehman has said that President Arif Alvi was again violating the law by not convening the session of the National Assembly despite the requisition summary sent to him earlier.

Talking to media here on Monday, Sherry Rehman said Arif Alvi was the president of Pakistan and not of a political party.

She said PPP was a political and democratic party which always discouraged politics of division and hate.

Sherry said session of National Assembly will be held automatically after 21 days as per the Article

91(2) of the Constitution if President Alvi did not convene the session. The Constitution did not link the National Assembly session with any pending issue, she elaborated.

Sherry remarked Arif Alvi's tenure has already been marred by controversies. "As he was about to leave the presidency, he is safeguarding the interests of PTI and not of his presidential oath," the PPP leader added.

The former minister accused Arif Alvi of always trying to create a constitutional crisis. "He should avoid indulging in any unconstitutional issue before his exit from presidency," she added.

## Asad Umar, Ali Nawaz, Raja Khuram acquitted in long march vandalism

ISLAMABAD (APP): The District and Sessions Court of Islamabad has acquitted Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leaders, including Asad Umar, Ali Nawaz Awan and Raja Khuram Nawaz in the long march vandalism case. Judicial Magistrate Shaista Kundi acquitted the former members of PTI. Ali Nawaz Awan and Raja Khuram Nawaz appeared before the court on Monday, whereas Asad Umar did not appear.

## Citizens to get civic facilities by Excise deptt at Fatima Jinnah Park

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Excise Department is providing civic facilities to residents of the federal capital to get their vehicle registration as well as access of various essential services at Fatima Jinnah Park (Bolan Gate) here on Monday, under the ICT doorstep initiative.

On the directives of Deputy Commissioner Islamabad, the excise staff will be stationed at the park's parking lot from 3.00 to 5.00 pm, and the citizens hailing from nearby areas of Fatima Jinnah Park Bolan Gate F-9 can get civic facilities through a dedicated van. ICT Spokesman Dr Abdullah Tabassum said. He said that whether you need a fuel permit for domestic or commercial use, or looking to register your motor vehicle seamlessly, the on-ground service will ensure a swift and straightforward process. This initiative aims to streamline processes and provide ease to the public regarding vehicle registration, transfer, and token tax procedures, he added.

## Suspect involved in Libyan boat accident was sentenced to 20 years in prison

ISLAMABAD (APP): Special Judge Central-I Gujranwala Mohammad Naeem Shaikh, upon completion of the trial in Libyan boat accident case, sentenced accused Shahzad Elahi to 20 years imprisonment and a fine of Rs. 14 lac.

According to the details, accused Shahzad Elahi had received Rs. 23 lac for sending the complainant to Italy, however the victim named Ahsan Iqbal died in a Libyan boat accident.

The most heartbreaking incident in which more than 300 Pakistanis died, and more than 100 of them were from Gujranwala alone.

The Federal Investiga-

tion Agency (FIA) in Gujranwala taking action against human traffickers, had arrested 814 people, including 93 of those who were suspects in the tragedy.

The human traffickers first used the border routes of Afghanistan, Iran and Turkey for their illicit trade.

From those countries, they made their victims to get to Turkey and onwards to Greece.

Youths aspiring to migrate to Europe were enticed by traffickers who collected between Rs 2.5 to Rs 3 million per person. The traffickers told the youths that they would take them first to Libya by air from where they would travel to Italy by boat.



ISLAMABAD: Chief Minister Gilgit-Baltistan Haji Gulbar Khan is meeting with Governor Gilgit-Baltistan Syed Mehdi Shah.

## PRCS organizes blood donation camp at the U.S. Embassy

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

It is worth mentioning that the PRCS conducts blood donation camps at the US Embassy twice a year. On this occasion, Chairman of the Pakistan Red Crescent Society, Sardar Shahid Ahmed Laghari, shed light on the low rate of blood donations in the country and

commended the cooperation extended by the US Embassy. The awareness campaign regarding blood donations continues throughout the year under the auspices of the Pakistan Red Crescent Society. Chairman Laghari emphasized that the campaign to raise awareness about the critical need for blood donations persists throughout the year under the auspices of PRCS. He reiterated the significance of this noble act in saving lives, stressing the indispensable role that regular blood donations play in alleviating the suffering of patients in dire need of transfusions. His call resonated particularly with the youth and members of intellectual circles, urging them to embrace their responsibility in this regard.

## 1 dead, over dozen injured as passenger coach rolls over into ditch

ISLAMABAD (APP): A passenger coach carrying intercity travellers crashed into a ditch near the Lower Dir district on Monday, killing at least one person on the spot while injuring more than a dozen.

According to the Deputy commissioner the incident occurred when the driver of the passenger coach lost control and overturned the vehicle into the ditch, a private news channel reported.

Following the accident, ambulances rescue crews, and security forces rushed to the area.

The injured were shifted to the District hospital in Dir.

As per the initial police report, the accident occurred due to overspeeding.



LAHORE: Newly-elected Chief Minister Punjab Maryam Nawaz gives congratulatory hug to her Father Former Prime Minister Nawaz Shareef after taking oath at Governor House.

## Senate passes seven private members' bills, refers four to committees

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Senate on Monday passed seven bills and witnessed the introduction of four private members' bills which were referred to the relevant committees for further consideration.

Moved by PML-N Senator Kamran Micheal, the House passed the Christian Marriage (Amendment) Bill, 2023 as reported by the Standing Committee. However, an amendment proposed by the mover in the bill was also adopted.

PTI Senator Seemee Ezdi moved the Criminal Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2023 and the Easements (Amendment) Bill, 2023 as reported by the Standing Committees. Both bill were passed by the House.

The House passed four other bills including the Injured Persons (Medical Aid) (Amendment) Bill, 2023; the Criminal Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2023; the Federal Institute of Management Sciences Bill, 2023 and the Pakistan Institute of Engineering and

Technology Bill, 2023. These bills were moved by PTI Senator Prof. Dr. Mehr Taj Roghani; JJ Senator Mushtaq Ahmed, Independent Senator Naseeb Ullah Bazai and PTI Senator Fida Muhammad. The bill introduced in the House included the Equal Scales of Salary and Allowances Bill, 2024; the Wapda University Islamabad Bill, 2023; the Universal Health Coverage Bill, 2024 and the Constitution (Amendment) Bill, 2024. MQMP Senator Khalida Ateeb moved the Equal Scales of Salary and Allowances Bill, 2024 which aimed to ensure uniform and equal scales of salary, allowances and compensation in the autonomous and semi-autonomous bodies, statutory bodies, corporations, companies, authorities and other organizations or entities under the administrative control, directly or indirectly, or having share the capitals, of the Ministries and Divisions of the Federal Government and ancillary matters to end discriminatory.



Officers warmly welcome Mr. Syed Tariq Mahmood-ul-Hassan, the newly appointed Managing Director of Pakistan Bait-ul-Maal, upon his arrival at the PBM Head office Islamabad.

## DC directs ACs to intensify action against kite-flying

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Deputy Commissioner (DC) Islamabad on Monday directed all Assistant Commissioners (ACs) to intensify actions against kite-flying in their jurisdictions for the safety of the public.

In a proactive move to safeguard citizens, the Deputy Commissioner called to initiate a robust campaign against kite-flying.

Meanwhile, the Assistant Commissioner City, accompanied by Abpara police, executed a targeted operation against kite-flying enthusiasts. Ten individuals involved in the illicit trade of kites were apprehended, with a cache of dangerous materials, including metal ropes, seized.

Similarly, in the Industrial Area, four offenders were promptly detained and handed over to law enforcement authorities.

The crackdown comes in response to the imposition of Section 144, a measure aimed at curbing the alarming trend of kite-related incidents. Under this directive, strict measures have been mandated, empowering authorities to swiftly detain and prosecute both participants and vendors involved in the dangerous activity.

Expressing grave concern, the Deputy Commissioner sought public support, emphasizing the inherent risks posed by kite-flying, including the potential loss of life and damage to the infrastructure.



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Jordan to Pakistan Dr Maen Khreasat, Ambassador of United Arab Emirates (UAE) take keen interest in a painting during painting exhibition of Suzan Alsaid title "Touch of the Love" at Pakistan National Council of the Arts in the Federal Capital.