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Foreign Office spokesperson  
Mumtaz Zahra Baloch

## Naval Chief oversees conduct of Exercise Seaspark 2024



RAWALPINDI: Chief of the Naval Staff Admiral Naveed Ashraf on Thursday visited naval ships at sea, creeks areas on the coastal belt of Sindh and coastal areas of Balochistan to oversee the conduct of Exercise Seaspark 2024 and meet the deployed troops in the exercise. Exercise Seaspark 2024 is a major maritime exercise of Pakistan Navy (PN) which is regularly conducted after every two years on two force concept i.e. Blue Force (own force) and Orange Force (enemy force). The purpose of the exercise is to plan and conduct naval operations as per wartime procedures to check operational readiness, major mobilisation of personnel and practice coordination between various elements of PN to undertake complex operations, an Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR) news release said. During the operations at sea, the PN warships and aircraft also detected Indian Navy ships, submarines and aircraft, attempting to covertly observe the exercise and interpret PN war plans. Accordingly, necessary safeguards were taken by the PN. During the visit of Maritime Headquarters at Karachi, the Chief of the Naval Staff was given a briefing by the Orange and Blue Naval Force Commanders on the conduct of operations by the respective forces. Thereafter, the Naval Chief visited Keti Bandar Post and Battalion Headquarters of Pak Marines at Shah Bandar where he was briefed on combat readiness for defence of Creeks areas which constitutes the South Eastern maritime boundary with India. During the visit, the Naval Chief interacted with the troops deployed in difficult marshy areas and appreciated their devotion and high morale. Later on, the Naval Chief also visited Jinnah Naval Base at Ormara and naval ships operating at sea. During the visits, the CNS expressed his satisfaction on the professional excellence, high morale and perpetual readiness of the Pakistan Navy to ensure impregnable maritime defence of motherland and reaffirmed its resolve to safeguard national maritime interests. PR



ISLAMABAD: A delegation of Karakoram International University, Gilgit-Baltistan and University of Baltistan, Skardu, called on President Dr Arif Alvi, at Aiwan-e-Sadr.

## Prime Minister to prioritize investment for development of new iron ore deposits in country

VOM Report

ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar has asked the companies associated with the steel industry to prioritize investment for development of new iron ore deposits in the country. He was talking to a delegation of Pakistan Association of Large Steel Producers led by Senator Nauman Wazir. The Prime Minister said the caretaker government within its short tenure, took all possible measures to restore the economy of Pakistan. He said the government has taken steps to create conducive environment for business by providing facilities to the private and business sector to increase the country's exports, tax revenue employment opportunities. The Prime Minister said all steps taken under the Special Investment Facilitation Council are yielding positive results. He said the business community and investors supported Pakistan in difficult times. The Prime Minister directed the relevant departments to resolve all issues related to the steel industry on priority basis. The steel producers' delegation appreciated the efforts of the caretaker government to facilitate investment in the country especially by resolving problems of industrialists and



reforming the FBR. They especially lauded the steps to prevent smuggling of steel, due to which the country's industry benefited greatly. Discussing problems faced by the industry, the delegation also presented some proposals and suggestions in this regard. The meeting was briefed about the large-scale industry of steel and copper in Pakistan

which recorded copper exports worth 1.35 billion dollars in the last financial year. The meeting was told that there is a vast potential for development in steel sector of the country as its annual per capita consumption is 40 kilograms and contributes a tax revenue of 400 billion rupees to the national economy. It also provides thousands of employment opportunities.

## President for enabling environment to nurture youth's intellectual abilities

ISLAMABAD: President Arif Alvi on Thursday called for providing an enabling environment for youth to nurture their intellectual abilities and benefit from their innovative ideas for the country's prosperity. He said that Pakistani youth were blessed with enormous potential, brilliant minds, and bright ideas, however, they needed an appropriate platform to transform their ideas into competitive and quality products to increase the country's exports and reduce imports. The president gave these remarks while addressing the season finale of the National Idea Bank (NIB) Third Edition, organized by the National University of Technology (NUTECH) in collaboration with ASPIRE Pakistan, at Aiwan-e-Sadr. The event was attended by members of the academia and business community. Highlighting the importance of innovative and emerging technologies, the president said that he was a staunch supporter of promoting a knowledge-based economy and stressed the need for talent hunting through forums like the NIB for socio-economic development. He appreciated the role being played by NIB as a repository of innovative ideas that would serve as a catalyst for the country's transformation to a brighter and prosperous future. The president said that innovative and technological solutions needed to be timely adopted for the country's development. He remarked that he had been advocating for internet voting for granting the right to vote to overseas Pakistanis as well as using Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) in Pakistan's electoral process. He further said that EVMs, if adopted, could have streamlined the electoral process. The president also voiced concern over the elite capture of the system, which only safeguarded the interests of the elite and failed to address vital socio-economic challenges, particularly educating over 26 million out-of-school children. He also stressed the need to focus on issues such as malnutrition and stunting as well as neonatal mortality rate. The president criticized the existing world order, based on vested interests, that failed to stop the ongoing Israeli atrocities in Gaza. Chairperson ASPIRE, Hassan Syed, briefed the audience about NIB as a platform for fostering innovation, creativity and collaboration to bring together leading minds, entrepreneurs and visionaries to explore ground-breaking ideas and initiatives aimed at shaping the future of Pakistan. Rector NUTECH, Lt Gen (R) Moazzam Ejaz, said that NIB was providing an excellent platform for youth to transform their innovative ideas into successful products. He added that the support of universities, markets, businesses and local industries was essential for providing youth with a launching pad and mentorship. Project Director, Shahzama Memon, apprised that since NIB's inception, it had promoted more than 6000 business ideas and consequently, over 40 local start-ups had been established. She informed that in the 3rd Season of NIB, almost 2400 ideas were received out of which 67 ideas were selected as the national-level winners. The president also awarded recognition shields to the participants who came up with top-15 novel ideas in the NIB Season III finale. APP

## Gohar Ejaz for effective system to provide quality water supply, sanitation services to twin cities



ISLAMABAD: Federal Interior Minister Dr Gohar Ejaz said on Thursday that water supply and sanitation were basic needs and an integrated, comprehensive and effective system must be devised so that quality facilities could be provided to the people of twin cities. He said this while presiding over a meeting held regarding water supply and sanitation in Islamabad and Rawalpindi. Federal Minister for Information, Broadcasting and Parliamentary Affairs Murtaza Solangi also participated in the meeting. Representatives of Chief Commissioner Islam-

abad, the Local Government Department, Rawalpindi Development Authority and the Cantonment Board also attended the meeting. The existing system of water supply, sanitation and waste disposal in the twin cities was reviewed in the meeting. The meeting was informed that 8,000 sanitation workers disposed of 2,300 tons of waste daily with an annual budget of Rs 7 billion but still, the sanitation situation in both cities could not be described as satisfactory. The meeting was informed that currently, the twin cities were facing 47 per cent water scarcity. "We want the capital to be an example for other cities," the interior minister said adding decisions will have to be made today to meet the needs of tomorrow. He said in this regard, the implementation of all necessary actions should be ensured as soon as possible. Ensuring good sanitation is essential for improving water supply systems, he maintained. APP

## Pakistan's total liquid foreign reserves reach \$ 13.149 billion

KARACHI: The total liquid foreign reserves of Pakistan slightly increased to US\$ 13,149.1 million in the week ended on February 9, 2024 while foreign reserves held by State Bank reached \$ 8,056.5 million. The State Bank of Pakistan, in a statement issued here on Thursday, informed that foreign exchange reserves held by the central bank increased by \$ 13 million to \$ 8,056.5 million during the week under review. Meanwhile net foreign reserves held by commercial banks stood at \$ 5,092.6 million. Total liquid foreign reserves held by the country, in the previous week ended on February 2, 2024, were \$ 13,097.6 million. Among them, foreign reserves held by the central bank were \$ 8,044 million while net foreign reserves held by commercial banks were \$ 5,053.6 million. APP



## Pakistan calls for UNSC's urgent intervention to impose ceasefire in Gaza

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan on Thursday called upon the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) to fulfill its responsibility mandated under the UN Charter and to urgently intervene to impose a ceasefire and bring an end to the massacre of the Palestinian people. "The siege of Gaza must be lifted to prevent further deaths and suffering from famine and non-availability of decent medical care. Pakistan stands resolute in its unwavering diplomatic, moral, political, and humanitarian support to the besieged people of Gaza," Foreign Office spokesperson Mumtaz Zahra Baloch said in her weekly press briefing. Calling for an immediate reversal of the decision by some countries to suspend UNRWA's funding, she reiterated Pakistan's endorsement of the OIC's condemnation of ongoing Israeli military aggression against Gaza and the expansion of indiscriminate attacks on the Rafah city. She said that the OIC had raised alarm on expansion and escalation of the pace of the Israeli aggression and warned against an unacceptable attempt to

forcibly displace the Palestinian people from their own land. "Israel's merciless onslaught against the 1.4 million displaced people in Rafah is a blatant defiance of the provisional measures outlined by the International Court of Justice in its interim order," she remarked. Highlighting the Kashmir issue, the spokesperson said India's campaign to curb dissent in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK) remained in full swing. "On 10th February 2024, India's National Investigation Agency (NIA), conducted multiple raids on 15 properties of Jamaat-i-Islami, Kashmir in different cities. These raids were part of an ongoing crackdown against the Kashmiri political organizations. Jamaat-i-Islami is one of the six political organizations already proscribed by India," she said. The spokesperson urged the Indian authorities to end intimidation and persecution of the Kashmiri political activists and parties, also calling for the release of all Kashmiri political prisoners and activists. APP

## Japan and Pakistan have rich and diverse cultural heritage, Amb Japan

### Japan Foundation Exhibition "Yakishime: Earth Metamorphosis" Inaugurated at PNCA

VOM Report

ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Federal Minister for National Heritage & Culture Jamal Shah and H.E. Mr. WADA Mitsuhiro, the Ambassador of Japan to Pakistan, together with the other distinguished guests inaugurated the exhibition at the National Art Gallery to provide an opportunity to the visitors to witness the evolution of yakishime from its ancient roots to contemporary expressions. Ambassador WADA, while speaking at the inaugural ceremony, expressed his deep admiration for this time-honored traditional Japanese art of producing ceramic art and crafts, and said that "one of the unique characteristics of Japanese culture is the fusion and coexistence of tradition and innovation. We are good at

adding new interpretation to tradition, while respecting old methods and tastes." Ambassador WADA mentioned that Pakistan is also known as a production center of traditional potteries with Blue Pottery from Multan which has common attractions with Yakishime. "I feel a sense of warmth and simplicity from both of them," he further added. The Ambassador said both Japan and Pakistan have rich and diverse cultural heritage and the cultural linkages between the two friendly nations, and it can be traced back in history such as the Gandhara civilization. "In terms of the fusion of tradition and innovation, I am looking forward to see the new phase of Pakistan's traditional arts in next generation as well," the Ambassador further added.



The Ambassador expressed his appreciation for Pakistan National Council of the Arts for extending their collaboration in arranging this exhibition at the National Art Gallery. To showcase the depth of traditional Japanese cultural heritage from its earliest origins to contemporary works, a Japan nFoundation's travelling pottery exhibition "Yakishime: Earth Metamorphosis", one of the most basic or primitive means of producing ceramics, opened up at the National Art Gallery of the Pakistan National Council of the Arts (PNCA) for visitors to get familiar with this unique and centuries old cultural facet of Japan. The exhibition, which runs until February 29, is jointly organized by the Japan Foundation and the Embassy of Japan in Islamabad in collaboration with the Pakistan National Council of the Arts (PNCA).

This captivating showcase focuses on a traditional Japanese ceramics technique yakishime (firing unglazed wares at extremely high temperatures) and introduces its history and evolution that has developed in distinctive directions in Japan from 4th and 5th centuries through present day. It features over 80 exquisite pieces from the earliest examples to the present through yakishime wares, tea vessels, food vessels, jars, containers and more that have become an essential part of everyday life in Japan. It also presents a wide range of non-utilitarian objects created by the contemporary ceramic artists working in yakishime styles aiming to provide an opportunity to communicate this distinctively Japanese sensibility and aesthetic to the people abroad.

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## How accurate were election surveys?

BILAL I GILANI

Scientific statistical polling applied to the political landscape has its origins in the early 20th century. A famous episode is narrated from 75 years ago in which for the US presidential election in 1936, a survey was conducted by Literary Digest (a major publication of that time) with close to three million readers participating in the postal ballot. The contest was between Landon and Roosevelt for president of the United States. The digest suggested that Landon would win. However, Princeton trained Dr Gallup used a far smaller (but statistically chosen random sample), predicted that Landon would lose, and Roosevelt would win and went on to also predict by how many percent the Literary Digest would be wrong in its prediction. When the election results came, the non-random sample of the Literary Digest was wrong and the few thousand strong sample by George Gallup was not only right about the horse race but also about how wrong the media survey was. This was the start of political polling in the US and in the coming decades political polls became part and parcel of any political campaign and discussion. Pakistan got its first statistical sample political poll in 1979 when Dr Ijaz Gilani, trained at MIT USA set up what was then called the Pakistan Institute of Public Opinion. Since 1979, political polling has gained currency in Pakistan slowly but surely. Together with political polling came criticism – some substantive, others purely hypothetical and speculative. The key question asked is: are pre-election surveys able to predict election outcomes? If yes, how accurately? I as a pollster get asked this question a lot and my response is: Yes they are able to predict the elections significantly better than any other tool or instrument available for political analysis. For any pollster, Election Day is like the Day of Judgement – you pass or you fail. How has General Election 2024 been for political polling in Pakistan? As I explain below, it has been a success and a triumph of not just Gallup Pakistan as a pollster but also a triumph of the scientific tool and method we and many others across the industry apply. Let me explain. In January 2024, Gallup Pakistan released on its website a report titled 'Political Weather Report One Month Before the General Election 2024' (available for public scrutiny on the Gallup Pakistan website). The report made the following key assertions which were proven correct on February 8, 2024.

How accurate were election surveys?  
 Punjab: The PTI and PML-N were in a tough competition in Punjab, 34 per cent and 32 per cent of the sample survey respondents saying they would vote for the two parties respectively. The General Election 2024 results show that the predicted outcome was razor-thin close to the actual outcome. PTI-backed independents got more votes than the score was 35 per cent for the PTI and 34 per cent for the PML-N. The same survey suggested that, despite significant efforts, the PPP was unable to raise its vote bank and the study suggested a 6.0 per cent vote bank for the PPP which has also been proven correct. Lastly, the report said: "Survey results show that Punjab vote bank reflects return to 2018 General Election political landscape". This has proven to be correct as well as the share of votes that the top three parties has received is almost the same as what they got in Punjab in the 2018 general election. In 2018, the PTI was 1.0 per cent ahead of the PML-N in Punjab. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa: The report suggested that KP has an overwhelming support for the PTI (45 per cent of the survey respondents said they would vote for it), and trailing much behind would be JUI-F at 15 per cent, PML-N (9.0 per cent), PPP (7.0 per cent) and ANP (7.0 per cent). The election results match almost completely within this prediction. The PTI has received 44 per cent votes, JUI-F 15 per cent votes, PPP received 6.0 per cent votes and ANP got 7.0 per cent. The prediction and the election result is within a 1-2 per cent margin.

Sindh: The report suggested the PPP would be the single largest party in Sindh with 44 per cent votes. The current election data shows 44 per cent of the voters in Sindh have voted for the PPP. In other words, the electoral outcome predicted by Gallup Pakistan matched the actual outcome. This however does not mean that all public polls are able to predict accurately. Polls like any other research can be professional or unprofessional. The level of predictability depends on adherence to the correct method, observance of professional integrity. We therefore encourage readers to be 'sophisticated poll watchers' who might decipher between good and bad polls. The judgement must be done scientifically and some of the key things to look at in a good poll are: working of question, sample composition (is it representative of the various social and demographic groups within the society it is claiming to be representative of), the sample selection method, and lastly if the firm doing political surveys has any track record of doing surveys. Survey research is a science and it can only be done and supervised by those who are trained in this field. All scientific surveys are prone to errors but their error is measurable. Pollsters should have the courage to face reality when predictions are in error and celebrate when they are on the dot. Fortunately this prediction falls in the latter category. The overall electoral outcome is remarkably similar to the predicted ratios at the macro level. Any irregularity at the macro level can thus be addressed on a case-to-case basis. An important implication of pre-election surveys and election data broadly matching is also a vindication of the election's integrity and transparency. For the 2024 general elections in Pakistan, this source of evidence should also be used and this author's personal assessment is that Election 2024 did reflect the broad will of the nation and the trust it posed in the parties.

There might be irregularities at the constituency level and those must be investigated under law thoroughly and to the satisfaction of all principles of justice and law. However, claims of widespread stealing of the people's mandate are not proven through pre-election surveys.

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Kamila Hyat

## The people have spoken

What we see in the National Assembly – following the polling which took place amidst various rumours of foul play or unfair play – essentially depicts the rage of the people.

This rage is easy to understand. In some ways, the mandate given to one particular group reflects the kind of mandate given to the PPP in 1970 when small-time candidates, including shopkeepers and vendors, defeated feudal lords in a vital contest that marked the start of democracy in Pakistan.

The people have once again shown where they stand and what they think of all the institutions in the country and why they believe in a party that essentially did very little for them during its tenure in power. But then it is also true that both the PML-N and the PPP did not do anything of significance either.

The rage can be seen at the micro level in households. There are reports from across Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) of breakdowns in the usual filial relationships. In KP, a father who was contesting a provincial seat shot dead his son because he had announced that he was voting for the PTI and had put up a party flag outside their home.

This of course is an extreme example, but across the country, houses are divided. Many young voters opt for the party they think has taken the best stance against systems in the country and who still believe in the cult-like charisma of its real

leader. The rage has significance. Some believe it has so much significance that it could multiply in the days ahead. This cannot be determined with certainty, but this rage is not surprising in a country which, according to top economists, has no resources and where inflation has defeated people so badly that they are unable to put a meal on the table or send children to school.

The financial condition of most families has become worse. When a wage earner falls sick, most families fail to cover the medical bills. A few months ago, protests erupted in Punjab against the increasing costs of gas and electricity. Protesters tore up the bills or set them on fire. These small but significant episodes highlight the anger that lurks in the country. This is always dangerous and can take even more dangerous forms in the future.

We understand the reasons for this rage in a nation that has the highest infant and maternal mortality rate in the South Asian region. We also understand the desperate situation in which people live. In many ways, the manner in which they voted was intended to reflect this. The question is: as governments are formed, one way or the other, with alliances coming up amongst candidates from mainstream parties, will there be further demonstrations and exhibitions of the anger that now lies among the youth? This is a dangerous situation. Anger like this led to the Arab Spring a decade or so ago and to other incidents in countries across Africa, Asia and Latin America. We need to watch carefully what direction this anger will take now and the fact that it is more strongly embedded amongst people aged between 18 and, say, 40 or 50. There can be many ways to display public anger. We have seen this happen in many places. The question

for us is whether anything can be done to cool the rage that lurks everywhere. Will some actions that help people carve out a better standard of living for themselves make a difference?

The answers are uncertain, and it is questionable whether any government in Pakistan can make these changes. We know that the public exchequer is essentially empty. A new deal with the IMF has to be reached in March, and we already know that this deal will not be kind to desperate people or to households that simply cannot manage on the income they have. What the government can do in this situation is difficult to say. The danger therefore lurks of a new outbreak of rage, this time in a more dangerous form, perhaps, with the arrest of PTI workers in small groups in Punjab and other places certainly not helping matters.

No government will be in a situation to make a difference at any speed. The main challenge for those who come to power will be to persuade people that change will happen in, say, eight years or more and to put forward a full blueprint for this. Eight years or a decade seems a long time to wait for the young but if significant alterations in our badly marred system can be made by then, this would still carry some weight, provided that the plan of action was put across clearly to people everywhere. These people have already shown that they are savvy both in terms of technology and in their ability to determine where and what they want to vote for.

It is extremely difficult to say precisely how the much-awaited change is to come. Many analysts have said that Pakistan will suffer a period of between three and seven years of worsening economic times. Perhaps only after this will it make some kind of recovery based on

what actions the government takes. Whether the people are willing to wait is difficult to determine. The wave of voting that has shocked many in the country shows the times have changed and the people are no longer willing to accept things that were always accepted in the past.

There are some assessments that outside powers may intervene in the democratic process, which has been restored to the country after long years and periods of autocratic rule, and this will only worsen the situation for many. This again is something we do not know much about. The forces that could intervene are of course unwilling to show themselves, but major changes are needed. Steps like land reforms, something which never happened in Pakistan but began quickly in India soon after the country appeared on the map of the world, must be implemented.

The taxation system needs to change, but how this will be done and how people will react to it is difficult to say. For now, we live in a time of rage and a time of mass anger. Households have been divided, and society has been cut across lines of age as well as belief. There is now more hatred than ever before. This makes it extremely difficult to ensure that peace and harmony can continue in a country where so many people clearly believe that the events of the past were not just and that they have suffered as a result.

The coming days will be volatile and through them, we can only wait to see which turn is taken and how the future is worked out by whatever government comes to power.

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Disclaimer: Views expressed by writers in this section are their own and do not necessarily reflect The Asian Telegraph's point-of-view

## Today in History

### History of Pakistan

After the annulment of the partition of Bengal and the European Powers' aggressive designs against the Ottoman Empire and North Africa, the Muslims were receptive to the idea of collaboration with the Hindus against the British rulers.

The Congress Muslim League rapprochement was achieved at the Lucknow sessions of the two parties in 1916 and a joint scheme of reforms was adopted. In the Lucknow pact. As the scheme was commonly referred to, the Congress accepted the principle of separate electorates, and the Muslims, in return for 'weight age' to the Muslims of the Muslim minority provinces, agreed to surrender their thin majorities in the Punjab and Bengal. The post Lucknow Pact period witnessed Hindu Muslim amity and the two parties came to hold their

annual sessions in the same city and passed resolutions of identical contents.

#### KHILAFAT MOVEMENT

The Hindu Muslim unity reached its climax during the Khilafat and the Non-cooperation Movements. The Muslims, under the leadership of the Ali Brothers, Maulana Muhammad Ali and Maulana Shaukat Ali, launched the historic Khilafat Movement after the First World War to protect the Ottoman Empire from dismemberment. Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi (1869-1948) linked the issue of Swaraj (self-government) with the Khilafat issue to associate the Hindus with the Movement. The ensuing Movement was the first countrywide popular movement. Although the Movement failed in

achieving its objectives, it had a far-reaching impact on the Muslims of South Asia. After a long time, they took united action on a purely Islamic issue which momentarily forged solidarity among them. It also produced a class of Muslim leaders experienced in organizing and mobilizing the public. This experience was of immense value to the Muslims later during the Pakistan Movement. The collapse of the Khilafat Movement was followed by a period of bitter Hindu Muslim antagonism. The Hindus organized two highly anti-Muslim movements, the Shudhi and the Sangathan. The former movement was designed to convert Muslims to Hinduism and the latter was meant to create solidarity among the Hindus in the event of communal conflict. In retaliation, the Muslims sponsored the Tabligh and Tanzim organizations to

counter the impact of the Shudhi and the Sangathan. In the 1920s, the frequency of communal riots was unprecedented. Several Hindu-Muslim unity conferences were held to remove the causes of conflict, but, it seemed nothing could mitigate the intensity of communalism.

#### MUSLIM DEMAND SAFEGUARDS

In the light of this situation, the Muslims revised their constitutional demands. They now wanted preservation of their numerical majorities in the Punjab and Bengal, separation of Sindh from Bombay, constitution of Balochistan as a separate province and introduction of constitutional reforms in the North-West Frontier Province.

To be continued....

## Showbiz



### Demi Lovato recalls her first meeting with fiancé on Drew Barrymore Show

Demi Lovato has recently shared insight into her relationship with her fiancé, Jordan Lutes. During an appearance on The Drew Barrymore Show, Demi gushed over her partner as she recalled her first meeting with Jordan.

She told Drew, "It's really hard to meet people these days. So, to be able to walk into a creative space, and find someone that you instantly had a crush on!" Demi revealed that they began as friends for several months but later they fell in love.

When Drew asked what "something really weird that they do when no one else is around," to this, the singer replied, "There's so many things that come to mind. The best part of being with Jordan is that we are able to be our goofiest selves together." Demi also mentioned that her "favourite thing" is when they do random silly dances while brushing their teeth. The Never Been Kissed actress also questioned about her dream date and the pop star responded, "Anywhere with Lutes is great."

## Tech

### Dazzling drone fleets fly high in China

BEIJING: At the ancient resort town of Shexiang in southwest China's Guizhou Province, 500 drones with twinkling lights soared into the sky, forming patterns resembling a dragon, a phoenix and a lotus successively, as curious tourists pulled out cell phones to capture the incredible spectacle.

The drone fleets were hired by the local tourism company in charge of the resort management.

Yuan Yuan, chairperson of the company, said the performance was held four times last month, with the tourist number hitting a record high of 100,000 when it debuted on Jan. 18. "Even a small squid barbecue stall raked in a revenue of approximately 8,000 yuan (about 1,127 U.S. dollars) on that day, more than 10 times the usual amount," she added. Long Lipin, manager of the drone performance company called Digital Intelligence Culture, said the company based in the provincial capital of Guiyang has put on 12 drone fleet shows since last August, earning a total business revenue of 1.55 million yuan as of the end of 2023. From official celebrations such as the open-

ing ceremony of the Hangzhou Asian Games to commercial promotions, birthday parties and marriage proposals, drone fleet performances have become increasingly popular in China, with the market size constantly expanding in recent years.

Lu Lingyue, general manager of a leading drone performance company in east China's Jiangxi Province, said the company organized 175 fleet shows in 2023, about twice the number in 2022, with performances held in more than 100 cities at home and abroad. "Beyond catering to university and corporate clients for events such as founding anniversaries, we are witnessing a growing number of individual clients for personal celebrations like birthday parties and marriage proposals," said Lu, adding that enthusiastic fans occasionally engage drone fleets as a unique way to express their affection for their idols.

On Oct. 5, 2023, fans of Tan Jianci, a Chinese singer and actor, organized a drone fleet performance involving 500 drones to celebrate Tan's birthday in Hengdian in Zhejiang Province, attracting a sizable audience, including Tan himself. Xinhua

## Health

### Valentine's Day 2024: Scientists create gel to mend broken hearts — How does it work?

#### Hydrogel has been created to cure cancer, damaged cardiac tissue following new scientific discovery

Scientists have created a wood pulp hydrogel to strengthen anti-cancer medications and restore damaged cardiac tissue.

Now that they have created a novel hydrogel that can be utilised to repair damaged heart tissue and enhance cancer therapies, you can cure a broken heart on Valentine's Day, according to SciTech Daily. Dr Elisabeth Prince, a researcher in chemical engineering at the University of Waterloo, collaborated with scientists from Duke University and the University of Toronto to design a synthetic material that is made of wood pulp-derived

cellulose nanocrystals. The material's unique biomechanical qualities are recreated by engineering it to mimic the fibrous nanostructures and characteristics of human tissues.

"Cancer is a diverse disease and two patients with the same type of cancer will often respond to the same treatment in very different ways," Prince said. "Tumour organoids are essentially a miniaturised version of an individual patient's tumour that can be used for drug testing, which could allow researchers to develop personalised therapies for a specific patient."

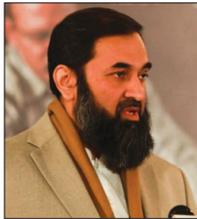
In his capacity as the head of the Prince Polymer Materials Lab, Prince creates artificial hydrogels that mimic biological systems for use in medicine. Large pores in the hydrogels' nanofibrous design allow nutrients and waste products to be transported, which has an impact on the materials' mechanical qualities and cell interaction.

These human-tissue mimic hydrogels were employed by Prince, a professor in the Department of Chemical Engineering at Waterloo, to encourage the growth of small-scale tumour replicas made from donated tumour tissue.





## ICCI organizes business role model award



ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) organized a business role model award ceremony to give awards to business leaders for achieving great success in their respective business fields. Governor Punjab Muhammad Baligh ur

Rehman was the chief guest, said a press release. Speaking on the occasion, Muhammad Baligh ur Rehman said that the business community is making a great contribution to the socio-economic development of the country and taking an active part in philanthropic activities, which is laudable.

He said that the Special Investment Facilitation Council has brought all stakeholders on the same page and hoped that the incoming government would turn around Pakistan's economy towards better growth and development.

He said that Pakistan needs to highlight positivity and discourage negativity to move forward. He highlighted the achievements of Edhi and Akhuwat as the outcomes of positive efforts. He acknowledged the need to bring out-of-school children to schools to educate them.

He threw light on the achievements of the Punjab Skills Development Fund from 2013 to 2018 which were made case studies by Harvard and the London School of Economics.

He said that the business community needs ease of doing business to improve the economy. He assured that he would support the representation of the business community in the syndicates of universities to promote academia-industry linkages to address issues of industry and improve economic growth.

Speaking on the occasion, Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari, President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry thanked the Governor Punjab for his support of the new industrial estate project of ICCI.

He said that the land for the said project has been identified in the district Chakwal and urged that the work on this important project should be expedited to complete it to promote industrialization and exports. APP



ISLAMABAD: Principal Information Officer (PIO) Dr. Tariq Mehmood Khan in a meeting with a delegation of Rawalpindi Islamabad Bureaus Journalists Association (RIBJA) at PID Headquarters.



ISLAMABAD: Special Representative to the Prime Minister for Religious Harmony & Islamic Countries and Chairman Pakistan Ulema Council, Hafiz Muhammad Tahir Mahmood Ashrafi addressing a press conference accompanied by the representatives of Private Hajj Tour Operators.

## Private Hajj bookings set to commence today: Ashrafi

VOM Report

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister's Special Representative for Religious Affairs and Pakistani Diaspora in Middle East and Islamic Countries, Hafiz Muhammad Tahir Mahmood Ashrafi on Thursday announced that the private Hajj organizers would start booking for the Hajj 2024 from today (Friday), February 16, nationwide.

Addressing a press conference along with Hajj Organizers Association of Pakistan (HOAP) Chairman Jamal Khan Tarakai, Vice Chairman Hajj Sanaullah and other representative, said the intending pilgrims within the country and abroad could grab this sacred opportunity till February 25.

Ashrafi who is also the chairman of Pakistan Ulema Council expressed optimism about the possibility of extending the application submission deadline by a month through private Hajj organizers' platform. He revealed that Hajj quota allocated to the private Hajj organizers was 89,604 pilgrims, with fifty percent quota of 44,802 pilgrims is reserved for Sponsorship Hajj Scheme.

Ashrafi urged the government to provide all possible assistance to the intending Pakistani overseas pilgrims for smoothly remitting their funds in the local financial institutions. He proposed that it would be far better if they could be allowed to send their money into the private Hajj organizers' accounts in Saudi Arabia through International Bank Accounts Numbers (IBAN).

Due to the special efforts of Chief of Army Staff General Syed Asim Munir and Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar, the cost of Hajj had been reduced due to controlling the dollar's value in financial market

Ashrafi informed that the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony had established a dedicated helpline in collaboration with HOAP for further convenience of the pilgrims. He expressed gratitude to the government of Pakistan and as well as Saudi Arabia for making state-of-the-art arrangements for the intending pilgrims in advance. Ashrafi said this year, due to the special efforts of Chief of Army Staff General Syed Asim Munir and Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar, the cost of Hajj had been reduced due to controlling the dollar's value in financial market.

He said HOAP had ensured to provide maximum ease and comfort to the pilgrims and furthermore, it had devised a self-accountability mechanism within the private Hajj organizers to address pilgrims' grievances immediately and penalize the particular Hajj organizers for bad conduct with the affected pilgrims. Concluding his remarks, Ashrafi said, "Hajj is a religious obligation that every capable person must fulfill once in life." Meanwhile, HOAP Chairman Jamal Khan

Tarakai announced that under the leadership of Pakistan Ulema Council Chairman Hafiz Muhammad Tahir Mahmood Ashrafi, a consolidated training programme was being initiated for pilgrims across the country. He said this comprehensive programme would help intending pilgrims to perform their religious rites in a more comfortable environment in the Kingdom.

To save themselves from any fraud, he asked the intending pilgrims to book their spiritual journey through registered Hajj organizers mentioning that their complete list was available on the official website of the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony. HOAP Vice Chairman Hajj Sanaullah said the private Hajj organizers were providing a big facility to Pakistan overseas pilgrims that they could directly travel to Saudi Arabia from their resident countries to perform this sacred obligation. Both leaders urged the government to provide transactional convenience to the overseas pilgrims so that they could send their remittances directly in the private Hajj organizers IBAN in Saudi Arabia.

## Achakzai urges public reject calls for disruption from losing candidates

QUETTA: Caretaker Balochistan Provincial Information Minister Jan Achakzai on Thursday urged the public to reject calls of agitation by the unsuccessful candidates and parties of elections, instead, he encouraged citizens to keep their role in efforts to promote national development and prosperity.

Minister Achakzai emphasized that creating chaos and blocking roads is not a solution to existing problems. He characterized such actions as attempts by "rejected individuals" to mask their disappointment with the electoral outcome.

He advised those with genuine concerns to seek legal recourse rather than resorting to disruptive protests. Furthermore, the Minister appealed to individuals blocking roads to consider the impact on ordinary citizens. He urged them to demonstrate peacefully on the side of the road, allowing for unimpeded traffic flow, if their intentions are truly focused on public well-being.

While acknowledging the democratic right to peaceful protest, he warned that obstructing roads and disregarding the law would not be tolerated for long. Such actions, he stated, undermine law and order and disrupt normal life for all.

## ANF recovers 122 kg drugs in nine operations



RAWALPINDI: Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) while conducting nine operations across the country managed to recover 122 kg of drugs and arrested two accused including a woman, said an ANF spokesman here on Thursday. He informed that 2 kg of Ice was recovered from a Bahrain-bound passenger netted at Lahore Airport.

660 grams of weed was recovered from two parcels sent from Thailand and the UK at a Rawalpindi Courier Office while 99 kg of hashish was recovered from the Panshi Road Turbat area. 1 kg hashish was recovered from the possession of a woman arrested near M-1 Motorway Islamabad.

800 grams of Ice was recovered from a parcel sent to Mirpur Khas from a courier office in Karkhano Market Peshawar. 17 kg hashish was recovered from the Zakhakhel Khyber area in two different operations and 1 kg hashish was recovered from Dera Ismail Khan. Separate cases under the Anti-Narcotics Act have been registered against the arrested accused and further investigations are under process. APP

## AJK Govt is determined to exercise accountability: AJK PM



MIRPUR: Azad Jammu and Kashmir Prime Minister Chaudhry Anwar ul Haq said that accountability was imperative for establishing good governance, merit, and the rule of law

from a true perspective. He expressed these views while presiding over an extraordinary meeting held at the DC Office in Bhimber Town on Thursday.

He further expressed that every penny collected in the name of tax would be spent on the welfare of the masses. He also stated that underprivileged and weaker segments of society would be taken care of in every possible way. The meeting was attended by top officials of the government, including Deputy Commis-

sioner Mirza Arshad Mahmood Jaral and senior officials of the nation-building institutions of the AJK government.

During the meeting, the AJK PM was given a detailed briefing regarding the administrative and financial matters of the university. Speaking on the occasion, the PM said that "the University of Bimber" would be an ideal and exemplary institution in which students not only from AJK but also from all over Pakistan would aspire to get admission. Providing quality education and health facilities to citizens was his government's top priority, he further explained. Prime Minister Haq asked the university authorities to synergize their efforts to make it an ideal place for study, education, and learning. Meanwhile, Prime Minister Chaudhry Anwar ul Haq also expressed his profound grief and sorrow over the death of Niaz Pasha Jadoon, Chief Editor and Publisher of Shamal Group of Newspapers. APP

## Sherry confirms nomination of Zardari for presidency

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) senior leader Senator Sherry Rehman clarified on Thursday that no formal discussions have taken place with Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) regarding coalition government formation. Talking to a private news channel, Senator Rehman emphasized that while there have been discussions with the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) regarding government formation, no such talks have occurred with the PTI.

Sherry Rehman expressed openness to dialogue with all parties, stating, "Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) seems to be confused; PPP's doors are open for everyone for discussion." Furthermore, she highlighted the ongoing formation of provincial committees and the process of provincial government formation with allies. Senator Rehman said that peaceful protest was the democratic right of everyone, but apolitical sit-ins and mob demonstrations could undermine national stability.

She underscored the importance of political and economic stability for the country's progress. APP

## Full court reference to honor Justice Nadeem Akhtar



KARACHI: Sindh High Court (SHC), on Thursday, held a full court reference in honour of Senior Puisne Judge, Justice Nadeem Akhtar to bid him farewell on the eve of his retirement.

The CJ said that Justice Nadeem Akhtar has disposed off more than 15,000 different types of cases during his 12 year tenure in the high court and played an important role in providing justice to applicants. Justice Nadeem Akhtar reflecting on his experiences at the high court said that it was duty of every judge to hear the filed cases. The hearing time of the court is till 12'o'clock and after that the judges sit till night and write the verdicts, he added. APP

Chief Justice Sindh High Court Justice Aqeel Ahmad Abbasi, Justice Muhammad Shafi Siddiqui, Justice Naimatullah Phulpoto, Justice Salahuddin Panhwar and other judges of the high court participated in the full court reference while judicial officers, court officials and lawyers representing SHC Bar Association and other bars were also in attendance.

Chief Justice SHC Justice Aqeel Ahmad Abbasi, while addressing the reference, lauded the services of Senior Puisne Judge Nadeem Akhtar and said that one of the best judges of Sindh High Court was retiring on the day.

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## Senate Body discusses dismissal of steel mills clerics, gems exports

ISLAMABAD: The Senate Standing Committee on Industries and Production meeting held here at Parliament House on Thursday with Senator Khalida Ateeb discussed the issues of dismissal of clerics from steel mills mosques and exports of gems at low prices. Speaking on the occasion, Senator Atta Ur Rehman raised concerns about the dismissal of clerics from steel mills mosques and expressed deep regret over the closure of mosques, highlighting that prayers, even on Fridays, are not being held.

The ministry informed the committee that reinstating steel mill employees is not feasible due to the country's economic situation. The committee sought details on the non-payment of clerics' salaries in steel mill mosques, and officials disclosed that salary arrears of 33 hundred thousand rupees, with four months' salaries have already been paid. Despite the claim that all salaries were up to date until January 31, Maulana Atta-ur-Rehman pointed out discrepancies, leading the committee to recommend employee reinstatement and prompt resolution.

Meanwhile, the meeting was briefed by GM of Pakistan Gems and Jewelry Development that Pakistani precious stones are sold to Thailand at low prices. In Thailand, these stones are cut and sold for over 70 thousand rupees. The GM attributed export difficulties in gems and jewelry to non-accelerated legislation. Comparing with India's annual gem and jewelry exports worth 40 billion dollars, GMP revealed that Pakistan's average annual exports amount to 6 million dollars. INP

## Pak-China friendship strengthening with passage of time: SCCI

PESHAWAR: Sarhad Chamber of Commerce and Industry president Fuad Ishaq said there is no doubt that Pak-China friendship is unmatched which is further strengthening with the passage of time and its example is that events are being held on eve of new Chinese year across the Pakistan. Fuad Ishaq was speaking at an event at China Window Peshawar and inauguration of a culture exhibition, arranged by students of Shaheed Benazir Bhutto Women University Peshawar (SBBWU), held in connection with China New Year here on Thursday. The SCCI chief praised artwork and paintings of the students displayed during the exhibition and said citizens of Peshawar will get aware about Chinese culture through this event.

He said Pakistan and China are tied with strong trade, cultural and tourism relationships, and its example wasn't found anywhere in the world. China and its people have always extended support to Pakistan in their difficult situation, he added. Fuad Ishaq noted Pakistan and China relationship has touched new heights owing to unflinching leadership of the two countries and vigorous efforts initiated by government from both sides, particularly CPEC had further strengthened bilateral trade and economic cooperation between the two countries. The chamber president opined that CPEC is a game changer, which would bring economic prosperity and development in the whole region and stressed the need for early completion

of projects under CPEC. He said technology transformation is highly crucial in CPEC. The SCCI chief hoped both countries would take every possible measure to further improve bilateral trade and economic relations. Fuad Ishaq appreciated the China Window for arranging events on eve of China New Year and said the Chinese Culture Centre in Peshawar will prove a milestone in strengthening bilateral relations between the two countries. Later, the SCCI chief visited the culture exhibition and lauded artwork and paintings of students of SBBWU Peshawar. On the occasion, Fuad Ishaq also distributed certificates among students of the SBBWU Peshawar. APP

## DG Land CDA held by FIA after court terminates his bail

ISLAMABAD: Director General Land of the Capital Development Authority (CDA) Afnan Alam was arrested by the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) on Thursday in a case of illegal allotment of plots after termination of his interim bail by a lower court. Special Court Judge Sharukh Arjmand heard the interim bail case of Afnan Alam in a first information report registered by the FIA against the CDA officials about illegal allotment of plots. The defence lawyer during the course of proceedings rejected the allegations against his client, saying that he was not in the CDA in 2017 and was appointed as DG Land on July 19, 2021. He said that as per the FIR, the Member State was supposed to be investigated, while his client was not posted at that slot. Petitioner Afnan Alam said that neither he was served any notice nor was summoned for the inquiry. He said that the FIA had stated that the inquiry

had been completed. If it were so then why the Agency required his client's custody. Afnan Alam could not go abroad without permission as he was a government servant, he added.

Afnan Alam stated that he was not part of the allotment process, as only balloting of the plots was done during his tenure. Moreover, the co-accused had already been granted bails by the high court. The petitioner said that as per corruption rules, misuse of authority was not a crime, and prayed the court to confirm his bail saying that he was innocent in the case. The FIA's prosecutor said that the Agency required custody of the accused as it wanted more investigation from him. The applications for plots were submitted in 2017 and processed in 2022 during the tenure of Afnan Alam. Some 62 plots were allotted illegally, he added. After hearing arguments from two sides, the court terminated the interim bail of DG Land CDA. INP