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Landslide win for Ilham Aliyev in Presidential election

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Diplomats are main pillars of the state: FM

Detailed News On Page-07



M Rizwan slams 'average' players obsessed

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PTI candidates' clean sweep in KP

'Unity' govt likely after polls results

PTI backed independent candidates likely to grab over 100 NA seats; PML N and PPP likely to finish second and third respectively; no party to get simple majority

THOSE HEAVY WEIGHTS WHO WON

THOSE BIG-WIG WHO LOST



SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT / DNA

ISLAMABAD: After the split mandate in the general elections in which no party has secured even simple majority, it is very much likely that a unity government may be facilitated in order to achieve political stability. So far the PTI backed independents have won more seats than any mainstream political parties including PML N and the PPP. Surprisingly the big political figures hailing from PML N have lost in the elections. These figures include Rana Sanaulah, Khawaja Saad Rafiq, Barjis Tahir, Amir Muqam, Javed Latif etc. While PPP big wig from Lalamsa Qamar Zaman Kaira also lost in elections. The powers-that-be would try their best to put in place a government which could steer the country out of crisis. This task can only be performed by an inclusive government. It is likely that the PML and PPP may be encouraged to form an alliance. In order to further strengthen this alliance the like-minded independents may also be made part of this alliance. The PML N will talk to MQM also and invite it to be part of this unity government. Similarly JUI F Maulana Fazlur Rehman will also be approached. If the PTI is able to form an alliance with any smaller party then it may get the reserved seats quota as well which would increase its strength significantly. On February 8, a large number of people across the country exercised their right to vote to elect their representatives for national and provincial assemblies - on 855 constituencies - despite suspension of mobile phone and internet services. The 2024 elections surpassed the previous ones in 2018

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PTI rules out alliance with PML-N, PPP

ADIL SHAHEEN

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) on Friday said that it is in a position to form government at the Centre and ruled out forging an alliance with Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) and Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N). "We are not in contact with PPP or PML-N," Barrister Gohar told Geo News. He claimed that PTI is winning 150 National Assembly seats and would be able to achieve the required number of seats to form government at the Centre. "We are not intending to form a coalition government with PPP and PML-N, Barrister Gohar Ali Khan. "We will form the government at the Centre and Punjab," he added. He said the PTI has a clear lead in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and will form government there as well. "PTI will remain in Parliament and will play its role." He said independent candidates belong to PTI and asserted they would not join any party against party directives amid fears of horse trading.

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ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Anwaarul Haq Kakar chairing the Federal Cabinet meeting. - DNA

Elections held in free manner

No state-sponsored rigging in elections

56 terrorist incidents take place across country on election day: Gohar Ejaz

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Minister for Interior Dr. Gohar Ejaz said on Friday that a total of 56 terrorist incident were taken place on February 8 Election Day to sabotage the electoral process. Briefing media persons about the overall security situation and challenges specifically regarding election day, he said that the biggest challenge of the caretaker government was to provide security to the people of the country on election day. Denying allegations of state-sponsored rigging, Interim Interior Minister Gohar Ijaz on Friday asserted the

government was partial and the election results proved it. "Had the government acted with mala fide intent, the results would not have been as they are," Ijaz, who was flanked by Interim Information Minister Murtaza Solangi, said during a press conference. Sharing details of the casualties, the minister informed that 3 military jawans, 2 levies jawans, 7 police officials, 4 civilians including 2 minors lost their lives in the incidents. The government had made a difficult decision to shut down the mobile service across the country in a

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Govt held peaceful polls: Solangi

Says there was no shutdown of Internet on election day

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Federal Minister for Information, Broadcasting and Parliamentary Affairs Murtaza Solangi on Friday, felicitating nation over the peaceful and orderly conduct of general elections, said the caretaker government had fulfilled the solemn pledge of holding elections in line with time-frame, given by Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP). Addressing a press conference along with Caretaker Interior Minister Dr Gohar Ijaz, he said despite speculations and multiple challenges, "we have consistently stood by our stand regarding the conduct of elections". Replying to a question, he said there was no shutdown of Internet on election day and added the fixed broadband was functioning and social media platforms were fully used by the subscribers.

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Briefs

'Buyers of Independents have reached Islamabad'

Faisal says Nawaz Show has come to an end and Go Nawaz Go happened

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Former senator Fawad Khan said the 'sale' of independent winners has begun and their 'buyers' have reached Islamabad. Speaking at a private TV channel transmission, the PTI former leader said, "Nawaz Show has come to an end and Go Nawaz Go happened." He said it was surprising that MQM-P was leading in more than expected seats. "If PPP sits in opposition with the independents, the country will face destruction."

Salman Akram Raja moves court

Court bars ECP from announcing final result

BUREAU REPORT

LAHORE: In another major upset, PTI-backed independent candidate Salman Akram Raja had to face defeat at the hands of IPP candidate Awn Chaudhry in Lahore's key NA-128 constituency, according to unofficial results. Awn Chaudhry bagged 172,576 votes whereas Salman Akram Raja could manage to secure 159,024 votes. The Lahore High Court barred Election Commission from announcing final result on this seat.

Holiday Notice

The offices of daily Islamabad POST shall remain closed on Saturday on account of weekly off therefore there will be no newspaper on Sunday. - Editor

Delivers 'victory' speech

Let's bury the hatchet, Nawaz asks opponents

Says he has asked Shehbaz Sharif to meet Fazlur Rehman, Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui, Asif Ali Zardari

ABID RAZA

LAHORE: Nawaz Sharif, the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz's (PML-N) candidate for the premiership, said Friday he seeks to form a united government after his party "emerged victorious" in the February 8 general election. "I have tasked Shehbaz Sharif to meet Fazlur Rehman, Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui, and Asif Ali Zardari today," Nawaz told a charged crowd in Lahore's Model Town, which was there to listen to his "victory speech". However, as the results trickle in, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI)-backed candidates are leading with more than 90 seats to their name, while the PML-N is trailing behind. The party's top leaders, on the contrary, said that their candidates have won a majority of the seats and will form

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Shoeb Shaheen alleges rigging in elections

DNA

ISLAMABAD: PML-N candidate Tariq Fazal Chaudhry has emerged victorious from the National Assembly constituency of NA-47 Islamabad II. According to provisional results, Chaudhry secured 102,502 votes beating PTI-backed candidate Mohammad Shoaib Shaheen who could only clinch 86,396 votes. Shaheen is staging a sit-in in front of the

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Kakar for plans to attract foreign business

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar on Friday directed all the ministries to formulate a strategy within five days for the establishment of the development projects with a potential to attract foreign investment. The prime minister, chairing a meeting to review the progress on execution of investment agreements in different sectors with GCC countries, directed the ministries to present their respective strategies on doable projects to the Special Investment

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IPP chief Tareen loses on both seats

Jenangir Tareen contested from NA-149 and NA-155 Lodhran-2 but was unable to clinch victory as per unofficial results

BUREAU REPORT

LAHORE: Jahangir Tareen, the chairman of Isteqdam-e-Pakistan Party (IPP), faced defeat in both constituencies of the National Assembly in the Feb 8 polls. Tareen contested from NA-149 and NA-155 Lodhran-2 but was unable to clinch victory as per unofficial results. The results from 369 polling stations in Lodhran revealed that PML-N candidate Sadiq Khan Baloch emerged victorious in NA-155 with 117,671 votes, while Tareen gar-



nered only 71,128 votes. Similarly, Tareen suffered defeat in NA-149 Multan where he secured 50,166 votes. PTI-backed independent candidate Malik Amir Dogar triumphed in NA-149 with 143,613 votes. Rizwan Hans, the PPP candidate, secured the third position in NA-149 with 14,625 votes, according to unofficial results. Jahangir Tareen's defeat in

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Landslide win for Aliyev in Presidential election

The Pakistani delegation deeply appreciated the warm hospitality extended to them throughout the entire exercise. The bond between Pakistan and Azerbaijan, forged during their shared challenges in the conflict with Armenia, was evident in the overwhelming support from the Azerbaijani people

ANSAR M BHATTI IN AZERBAIJAN

BAKU: Azerbaijan's President Ilham Aliyev was on course for a landslide re-election win, an exit poll showed, in a vote he called early after recapturing the region of Nagorno-Karabakh from Armenia. According to the results, the sitting president Ilham Aliyev secured 92.05% of the vote.

The polling started at 8 am and continued till 7 pm without any break. The Central Election Commission had made elaborate arrangements to ensure that the elections are held in a free and transparent manner. The international observers visited various polling stations and observed the election process. The Pakistan delegation, including this scribe, also visited more than 10 polling stations and interacted with the polling staff as well the voters.

The Pakistani delegation deeply appreciated the warm hospitality extended to them throughout the entire exercise. The bond between Pakistan and Azerbaijan, forged during their shared challenges in the conflict with Armenia, was evident in the overwhelming



support from the Azerbaijani people. The moment the locals learned about the Pakistani delegation's presence, they expressed their gratitude with a heartfelt standing ovation, echoing the solidarity and friendship between the two nations. The gesture resonated not only with the polling staff and local observers but also with the voters, creating a memorable and meaningful connection between the two nations. Before the Patriotic War, Pakistan was relatively unknown to most Azerbaijanis, with only a handful of people, particularly the elderly, being familiar with it. However, in the aftermath of the war, the awareness of Pa-

President Alvi greets Azeri President

ISLAMABAD President of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan Arif Alvi congratulated President of the Republic of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev on his victory in the election. "Congratulations to Ilham Aliyev on his decisive victory in Azerbaijan's Presidential elections. Your leadership continues to inspire progress and stability. Pakistan looks forward to strengthening our enduring friendship and cooperation. Best wishes for your continued success!" Arif Alvi said in his post shared on X. - DNA

Strengthening the bond between the two nations, Azerbaijan has initiated direct flights from Pakistan to Azerbaijan, marking yet another milestone in their flourishing bilateral relations. This move not only fosters greater connectivity but also underscores the mutual commitment to deepening diplomatic and people to people ties and fostering cooperation between the two countries.

Meanwhile, candidates who participated in the presidential election of the Republic of Azerbaijan - Gudrat Hasangulyev, the Chairman of the Whole Azerbaijan Popular Front Party, Fazil Mustafa, the Chairman of the Great Establishment Party, Elshad Musayev, the Chairman

of the Great Azerbaijan Party, Razi Nurullayev, the Chairman of the National Front Party, as well as independent candidates Zahid Oruj and Fuad Aliyev - made phone calls to President Ilham Aliyev, who won the election with the great trust of the people of Azerbaijan. Each candidate sincerely congratulated the re-elected President of the Republic of Azerbaijan on his resounding victory in the democratically, transparently, and fairly conducted election. They emphasized that the results of the voting were a clear expression of the Azerbaijani people's confidence and trust in their head of state, as well as a manifestation of the high value and support given to the country's resolute policies towards socio-economic development and the welfare of its citizens. The President of the Republic of Azerbaijan thanked them for their congratulations. The head of state positively evaluated the demonstration of a political culture based on constructive dialogue among the candidates participating in the presidential election and noted that a number of proposals voiced by the candidates during the pre-election campaign process will be taken into consideration.

Jamali visits election control room

QUETTA : Caretaker Home and Tribal Affairs Minister Mohammad Zubair Jamali on Friday visited the election control room set up at the provincial Home Department to chair the review meeting on the post-election situation. Chief Secretary Balochistan, Shakeel Qadir Khan participated in the meeting through the video conference. Additional Chief Secretary Home and Tribal Affairs Zahid Saleem briefed the minister and chief secretary on sit-ins at different places in the province. Commissioner, Deputy Commissioner and DIGs also updated the participants on the final stages of elections. Chief Secretary Balochistan Qadir Shakil, on the occasion, said that the rule of law shall prevail in all circumstances. "Our security challenges are not over. Officials should solve the issues of the result soon," he added. Earlier, the Home Minister maintained peace in Balochistan as our priority. He congratulated the bureaucracy, and security forces for their pivotal role in conducting peaceful elections.—APP

KP Finance minister visits KPRA headquarters

PESHAWAR : Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's caretaker Minister for Finance, Revenue and Excise Mr. Ahmed Rasul Bangash visited Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Revenue Authority (KPRA)'s headquarters here on Friday. Newly posted DG KPRA Fouzia Iqbal and former DG KPRA Abid Ullah Kakakhel briefed the minister on the working of KPRA, its inception and its progress over the years. The minister lauded the role of KPRA in the provincial tax receipts and also praised the performance of KPRA staff. "Own source revenue is crucial for development of the province and it is the only way to get complete financial independence and fiscal self-reliance," he said directing the KPRA team to escalate their efforts to further boost their revenue collection and pave way for achieving their current year's revenue target which is Rs42 billion. The outgoing Director General KPRA Abid Ullah Kakakhel told the minister that he is confident on the KPRA team's capabilities.—APP

Sindh Police lauded for exceptional election security

KARACHI : Inspector General of Police Sindh, Riffat Mukhtar Raja, expressed his appreciation on Friday for the exemplary security measures implemented by the police during the recent general elections. He lauded the commendable execution of the election code of conduct, highlighting the impressive performance of all personnel in ensuring the security of polling stations and buildings across the province during the general election. Riffat Mukhtar praised the meticulous implementation of contingency plans across various classifications of polling stations, including highly sensitive, sensitive, and normal ones. He commended the successful execution of priorities outlined in the Joint Election Contingency Plan.—APP

IG orders security monitoring during vote count

IG Punjab Dr. Usman Anwar said that more than 1 lakh 30 thousand officers and personnel, including women personnel, performed election security duties

ABID RAZA

LAHORE : Punjab Police ensured foolproof security arrangements in all the districts of the province including the provincial capital on the occasion of Election 2024, at all the polling stations and sensitive places of the province, Punjab police personnel remained on high alert and performed their duties very diligently, full security was provided to all the voters, polling staff, citizens due to which the polling process continued

in a peaceful and transparent manner throughout the province. Punjab police personnel helped the disabled and elderly people who came to the polling stations to cast their votes. IG Punjab Dr. Usman Anwar said that more than 1 lakh 30 thousand officers and personnel, including women personnel, performed election security duties. All control rooms of the Punjab Police established at the provincial, regional and district levels reviewed the election process and all the situations moment by moment.

More than 32 thousand CCTV cameras were used to monitor the election process. While RPOs, CPOs, DPOs remained present in the field and kept reviewing the security and traffic arrangements. IG Punjab said that for the general elections, effective measures have been taken to maintain the flow of traffic on all highways and public places. Indiscriminate actions were taken against display of weapons, aerial firing, fighting, sabotaging the election process and violation of Article 144. IG Punjab Dr. Usman

Anwar said that Punjab Police has ensured measures under comprehensive strategy for election security and the police officers remained in contact with all institutions including security agencies, armed forces, district administration, Strict surveillance was continued at the border areas check posts to prevent and repulse anti-national and evil elements. Additional personnel, Dolphin Force, Quick Response and other teams have been deployed at 5577 highly sensitive polling stations. Dr. Usman

Anwar personally monitored the security arrangements for the election 2024. Punjab Police ensured the compliance of the code of conduct of the Election Commission and in this regard, operations will continue as per the law until the election process is completed. IG Punjab Dr. Usman Anwar said that Punjab Police is fully prepared for post-election security arrangements, security has been increased across the province including Lahore, any nefarious attempt by anti-peace elements will not be allowed to succeed.



ISLAMABAD: A large numbers of people arriving at Rawal Lake during pleasant weather, in the Federal Capital. —ONLINE

EU urges Pakistan for full election investigation

The bloc regrets lack of level-playing field, curbs on freedom of assembly, freedom of expression, access to internet

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: The European Union, while reacting to allegations of rigging in Pakistan's general elections, has called upon the relevant authorities to ensure a timely and full investigation of all reported election irregularities and to implement the recommendations of the upcoming EU Election Expert Mission report. "The EU welcomes the increased number of women registered to vote compared to the last elections," Peter Stano, lead spokesperson for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, said in a statement on Friday. "We regret the lack of a level-playing field due to the

inability of some political actors to contest the elections, restrictions to freedom of assembly, freedom of expression both online and offline, restrictions of access to the internet, as well as allegations of severe interference in the electoral process, including arrests of political activists," it added. "We therefore call upon the relevant authorities to ensure a timely and full investigation of all reported election irregularities and to implement the recommendations of the upcoming EU Election Expert Mission report." The EU stated that it has taken note of the completion of the polling in the elections, which took place on 8 February in Pakistan,

following several months of postponement and uncertainty, and in a context of a tense security environment. "The participation by the Pakistani people to exercise their right to vote, despite systemic barriers still faced by women and persons belonging to minorities, demonstrates their commitment to democracy and the rule of law," the spokesperson added. Also read: Govt says 56 incidents reported on election day despite suspension of cellular services The spokesperson said that the authorities were faced with the challenging task of countering serious terrorist threats and attacks. The EU condemns all acts of violence, which took place in the lead up to the elections and calls on all parties and ac-

tors to use peaceful and democratic mechanisms to settle differences, refraining from further violence. "The EU attaches paramount importance to political pluralism, democratic values, independent media, vibrant civil society, judicial independence and international human rights standards, which are key for democratic elections," the spokesperson said. "We call on all political actors in Pakistan to engage in a peaceful and inclusive dialogue aiming at the formation of a stable government and to respect human rights in line with the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, as well as with international treaties to which Pakistan is party."

New govt will have to focus on budget, repayments

KARACHI : Chairman of National Business Group Pakistan, President Pakistan Businessmen and Intellectuals Forum, All Karachi Industrial Alliance, and former provincial minister Mian Zahid Hussain said on Friday that elections had been held, and the people are now waiting for the official results. He said that when the new government is empowered, it must start preparing the budget and plan for debt repayments. Mian Zahid Hussain said the government will need another IMF program for debt servicing as the current agreement will be completed by the end of next month. Speaking to the business community, the veteran business leader said that all the political parties have prioritized the economy in their manifestos, so the public hopes that the new government will take steps to provide some relief amid severe economic punishment. The business leader said servicing local and foreign debt had become a major problem. The volume of these loans and their interest has increased so much that the government is forced to borrow even for operational spending. The main reason for the increased debt is the tax system's weakness. In addition, large sums of money have been wasted on political agendas rather than improving the economy. He said the resources have been wasted on many poorly designed projects, most of which have been completed for political benefits. Mian Zahid Hussain said that the debt has reached 82 % of the GDP, 667 % higher than the government revenue, which equals 328 % of our exports. —DNA

Farewell ceremony in honor of MS LUMHS held

HYDERABAD : A farewell ceremony was organized in honor of Medical Superintendent Dr. Shahid Islam Junejo on his retirement by the administrative officers, doctors, nurses and paramedical staff associations of the University Hospital, here. The ceremony was held at the lecture hall of Civil Hospital Hyderabad. Addressing the ceremony Dr. Shahid Islam Junejo said that I have spent 27 years in the administrative and other departments of the hospital and fulfilled my responsibilities during this period with hard work and dedication. I served this hospital with all my heart and will never forget the love I received from my colleagues here. Dr. Shahid paid gratitude to the Almighty Allah thanks and said medical is a sacred profession. We have to fulfill our responsibilities with hard work and dedication. He said that during my tenure as Medical Superintendent, I tried to solve all the problems of the hospital and was quite successful due to the team spirit of the entire staff.—DNA

Water level in Mangla Dam plummeting

MIRPUR : As a result of intermittent snowfall on the upper Himalayan region, the AJK-based country's second largest reservoir Mangla Dam located in the Mirpur district, gradually drying as low rain was witnessed in this part of the region. The water level in Mangla dam was reported as 1147.65 feet on Friday, against the maximum conservation level of 1242 feet and the live storage capacity of 1.686 MAF in the reservoir, official sources told APP here. The water level in the dam is gradually reducing due to less rain in the region, the sources added. Mangla dam, the largest reservoir in terms of water storage capacity in the country, was filled to its maximum conservation capacity.—APP

Polio eradication drive to begin in AJK on Feb 26

Earlier, chairing a meeting held here to review arrangements for the 5-day national polio eradication drive in this district, the Deputy Commissioner advised the parents to fully cooperate with the mobile teams of paramedic staff

MIRPUR : A five-day polio eradication drive will begin in Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK), on February 26. According to official sources, anti-polio campaign will continue till March 01, 2024, and during the drive, various teams would administer polio drops to a large number of children below five years of age. The drive will cover 10 districts of the AJK, Health Department sources told APP on Friday. Giving details, the health authorities said that in Muzaffarabad, more than 1.20 lakh children up to five years of age would be provided polio vaccines. At least 3995 mobile teams of para-medical staff have been assigned duties to visit door-to-door to administer polio vaccine to the children of five years of age, to protect them from the crippling disease. During the campaign across AJK, a total of 448 fixed centers at local government hospitals and sub-ordinate health facilities would be established by the State Polio Eradication Committee of the AJK State Health Services Department with the coordination of the World Health Organization (WHO). In the AJK, over 5000 workers will visit door-to-door to immunize children under 5 years of age to protect them from the dangerous disease. The fixed centers would also be set up at state-run hospitals, basic health units, rural health centers, as well as various other spots to vaccinate the children to protect them from polio disease. A total of 169 transit points would be set up to make the polio eradication campaign successful, the sources added. The sources further said that a total of 844 area In charge will supervise the drive at union council's of 35 tehsils while a total of 245 union councils throughout AJK State, would also be covered during the drive. A central polio control room will be set up in the office of the Provincial Program Manager, EPI, in AJK State's metropolis, Muzaffarabad, to monitor the drive and for receiving complaints, there is an official phone number 05822-920791. In the lake district of Mirpur, at least 73082 children under 5 years of age will be administered polio vaccine. Deputy Commissioner Mirpur Yasir Riaz Chaudhry told APP that in Mirpur district, over 400 mobile teams of paramedics are responsible to cover 28 zones, during door-to-door visits. The team would also provide service to 41 fixed centers and 14 transit points. Earlier, chairing a meeting held here to review arrangements for the 5-day national polio eradication drive in this district, the Deputy Commissioner advised the parents to fully cooperate with the mobile teams of paramedic staff.—DNA



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National Days and Armed Forces Days

FEBRUARY

Feb 04/Sri Lanka

National Day

Feb 06/N. Zealand

National Day

Feb 06/Uganda

Army Day

Feb 11//Iran

Revolution day

Feb 16/DPR Korea

National Day

Feb 16/Lithuania

National Day

Feb 18/Gambia

National Day

Feb 19/Nepal

Democracy Day

Feb 23/Uzbekistan

National Day

Feb 23/Brunei

National Day

Feb 23/Guyana

National Day

Feb 23/Russia

National Army Day

Feb 23/Tajikistan

Armed Forces Day

Feb 25/Kuwait

National Day

Feb 25/Kuwait

National Day

Hotels & Restaurants



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



Turkish Airlines.....8494949



Emergency

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



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Railway Exchange9270831-5
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Hospitals

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MH.....5611116
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DHQ.....5556311-4
RGH.....9290301-7
Holy Family.....9290322-7
PIMS.....9261170-79
Polyclinic.....9218300-09
Shifa International 4603666



Departments

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

Water Tank

Islamabad.....0321-5744480

ICCI, FPCCI to work closely to address key issues

He said that the FPCCI would work with the newly elected government to address the economic challenges, tackle the issue of rising inflation, reduce high policy interest rate, improve exports, enhance forex reserves, and revive the economy

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari, President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) called on Atif Ikram Sheikh, President, Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI), and discussed with him the ways and means to work closely to address the key issues of the business community.

Talking to President ICCI, Atif Ikram Sheikh, President FPCCI said that the business community is the backbone of the economy and FPCCI would take all possible measures to resolve their issues and facilitate them in business development. He said that the FPCCI would work with the newly elected government to address the economic challenges, tackle the issue of rising inflation, reduce high policy interest rate, improve exports, enhance forex reserves, and revive the economy. He said that he would take all



chambers of commerce and trade associations on board on important matters of the economy to present a consensus voice of the business community to the government. He said that he would work closely with the newly elected government to promote ease of doing business in the country and improve the economy. He said that ICCI is doing good work for the

business community and he would always cooperate with it in efforts to promote a business-friendly environment and facilitate the better growth of trade and industry. Speaking on the occasion, Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari, President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry said that the economy of Pakistan is facing multiple challenges and the President FPCCI should co-

operate with the newly elected government to steer the country out of economic crisis and put it on the path of sustainable economic development. He said that Pakistan has good potential to boost exports of IT, pharmaceutical, textiles, and other sectors and FPCCI should work with the government to address the issues of the export sector and create a conducive environment for export promotion.

Ahsan Bakhtawari said that the FPCCI should start working on budget proposals in consultation with all chambers of commerce and trade associations to present a comprehensive document of proposals based on the input of the business community for the forthcoming budget to the government. He assured that ICCI would fully cooperate with FPCCI in promoting the business and economic activities in the country. Faad Waheed, Senior Vice President ICCI hoped that Atif Ikram Sheikh would act as a bridge between the government and the private sector and play a role to create a conducive business environment in the country.

Chinese scientists create Artificial Intelligence (AI) baby

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Chinese scientists have created the world's first Artificial Intelligence (AI) baby. A group of Chinese scientists have claimed to have developed an AI child possessing abilities and behaviors akin to a three to four-year-old human. Dubbed "Tongtong" or "Little Girl" in Chinese, this AI creation is being hailed as a significant milestone by the artificial general intelligence (AGI) community. The unveiling of this creation took place at the Frontier of General Artificial Intelligence Technology Exhibition by Chinese researchers. According to reports, this innovative AI model not only exhibits learning capabilities but also demonstrates a degree of emotional attachment, a feature unprecedented in AI development thus far.

Cabinet defers plot allotment policy

STAFF REPORT/DNA

ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar on Friday directed the Capital Development Authority (CDA) to make special focus on the construction of vertical buildings for providing houses to maximum people, instead of using valuable agricultural land in the allotment of plots to the employees. Chairing the meeting of the Federal Cabinet, he also directed to formulate policy in this regard. The policy

of allotment of plots to the CDA employees was presented to the Federal Cabinet in light of the decision of the Islamabad High Court. According to the decision of the Islamabad High Court, the CDA had to determine the difference in the income of the CDA by giving employees at concessional rates. The Cabinet deferred the decision on the proposed allotment policy. On the recommendation of the Interior Ministry, the Cabinet also approved the open bidding for the procurement of

services of a category A audit firm, issued by the State Bank of Pakistan for the audit of National Database Registration Authority (NADRA). It modified the decision taken by the Federal Cabinet in 2019, according to which only four large and reputed audit firms could be hired for the audit of NADRA. However in this decision, all the category A firms registered in the SBP have been provided equal opportunities for the audit of NADRA. The meeting was apprised that to make the

audit of NADRA, more effective, transparent and in line with the international standard, it was important to provide equal opportunities to all the category A firms registered with the SBP for audit of NADRA. Meanwhile, the cabinet, on the recommendation of Ministry of Information Technology and Telecommunication, approved nomination of the project of "Cyber Security for Digital Pakistan" as "National Computer Emergency Response Team (NCERT)".

Apple officials rolling out its Apple TV

ISLAMABAD: Apple is officially rolling out its Apple TV, Apple Music, and Apple Devices apps for Windows users this week. These apps, which were initially in preview last year, have now shed the preview tag after collaboration between Apple and Microsoft. The goal is to encourage Windows users to move away from iTunes reliance. With these apps, iTunes is only necessary for accessing podcasts and audiobooks on Windows. The Apple Music app provides access to the iTunes library and allows for song and album purchases, while Apple TV enables users to watch movies and TV shows from their iTunes library and stream subscription content. Apple Devices allows PC users to backup, restore, and sync content to their iPhones and iPads. Microsoft has been involved in the development of these apps and has welcomed their launch. They have also integrated iCloud Photos into Windows, allowing users to link their iCloud Photos library directly to the built-in Photos app on Windows 11. However, these new Apple apps are only available on traditional x86-based PCs running Windows 10 or Windows 11, with no indication yet of ARM64 versions for Qualcomm-powered Windows devices. —DNA

Independent Candidate Sajid Khan wins NA-26 election

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Independent Candidate Sajid Khan has won the election for National Assembly constituency NA-26 Mohmand by securing 41,489 votes. According to the unofficial result issued by the Returning Officer/ECP, his runner-up was Jamiat Ulema e Islam Pakistan Candidate Muhammad Arif, who bagged 19,930 votes. Overall voters' turnout remained 27.27 percent

Pakistan reaffirms polio eradication commitment

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Federal Secretary for Health Iftekhar Ali Shallwani has reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to ending polio and called for continued support and stronger global partnerships to help Pakistan reach this key milestone. The health secretary virtually addressed a special session on polio eradication on the sidelines of 2024's UNICEF Executive Board meeting through video conference on Thursday. The special session was aimed to shore up support for childhood vaccinations across member states and to mark 50 years of the Expanded Programme on Immunization (EPI) which was launched globally in 1974

to combat communicable diseases through systematic mass vaccination efforts. Highlighting the instrumental role of mass vaccinations in reducing childhood mortality and protecting millions from diseases like measles and polio, Secretary Shallwani said: "Childhood vaccination rates in Pakistan have significantly increased since the launch of EPI in 1978. Today, endemic polio is restricted to a small region in Southern Khyber Pakhtunkhwa with only six reported cases last year, which is a testament to our progress." He added that Pakistan's target remains zero cases and the country is much closer to this goal than ever before. "Challenges such as insecurity, access issues, and refusals persist, hindering our

progress. But our tenacity and resilience, coupled with strong partnerships, drive us forward." The health secretary also highlighted the strong synergy and partnership between the country's EPI and Polio Eradication Programme to reach children with life-saving vaccines, stating that continued support to strengthen EPI is needed to help sustain zero polio after eradication. In conclusion, Secretary Shallwani called for global solidarity and continued support from partners like UNICEF. "I want to thank UNICEF for being a champion of public health in Pakistan and for standing by us, during the highs and lows. Together, we can make polio eradication a historic legacy."

Vawda alleges sale of independent winners

ISLAMABAD: Former senator Vawda has said the 'sale' of independent winners has begun and their 'buyers' have reached Islamabad. Speaking at a private TV channel transmission, the PTI former leader said, "Nawaz Show has come to an end and Go Nawaz Go happened." He said it was surprising

that MQM-P was leading in more than expected seats. "If PPP sits in opposition with the independents, the country will face destruction. Unrecognised PTI-backed independent candidates will sit in treasury benches," the former PTI leader said. What I am saying will prove in next 72 hours. It was expected that

the independent candidates would have the upper hand. People will remember Junejo's tenure of 1985 when they will look at the game of independent candidates, he said. He added the PTI's popularity is based on its own popularity and hatred of the Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) government. — DNA

Tax World, apparel sourcing concludes

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The popular exhibition "Tax World, Apparel Sourcing Paris" concluded successfully with the participation of Pakistan from 5 to 7 February 2024. 19 exhibitors from Pakistan's fashion and apparel sourcing sectors. Showcased his designs at TexWorld/Apparel Sourcing Paris. Texworld/Apparel Sourcing Paris closed its doors on 07 February at the Porte de Versailles Exhibition Centre. More than 1,280 exhibitors participated from 28 coun-

tries and welcomed different buyers from all around the globe. Over the three day event, thousands of attendees excitedly returned to the floor for networking and sourcing. Pakistani exhibitors were displaying the global range of fashion products along with major manufacturing countries like Bangladesh, China, India, Indonesia, Korea, Turkey, and Taiwan. "The Denim Village brought together international companies from Bangladesh, China, India, and Pakistan, offering raw materials and finished products in the central part of Hall 7.3." Pakistan, China, India,

Türkiye, Korea, along with Indonesia and Thailand represented major national pavilions. 19 Pakistani firms were present at the exhibition; among them were A&J Apparel, Ijaz Apparel Karsaz Textile Industries, and Premium Textile Mills, representing clothing fashion. In the denim segment, products were on display from Liberty Mills, Sapphire Finishing Mills, Serena Textile Industries, and Shekhani Industries. Mr. Mohd Uzair Mujeeb, the director of MRC Textile Pvt Ltd, said, "We have participated in this fair for the first time, and it was our inaugural experience.

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Briefs

Qamar
ul Islam
wins NA-53
election

ISLAMABAD Pakistan Muslim League (N) candidate, Raja Qamar ul Islam has won the election for National Assembly constituency NA-53, Rawalpindi-II by securing 72,006 votes. According to the unofficial result issued by the Returning Officer/ECP, his runner-up was Independent candidate, Ajmal Sabir Raja who bagged 58,476 votes. The voters' turn-out remained 53.07%.—APP

PFC to take
part in 3-day
LAS VEGAS-USA
expo

ISLAMABAD : Pakistan Furniture Council (PFC) will take part in a three-day International Las Vegas-USA Expo starting on February 13 to explore business opportunities and find new global markets. Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of PFC Mian Kashif Ashfaq, talking to a delegation of furniture manufacturers led by Muhammad Araib, said, "PFC is in touch with the Trade Development Authority of Pakistan for participating in all international mega events," according to a news release here on Thursday. He said, "This fair attracts thousands of global manufacturers from all over the world who showcase their products." He said, "PFC will exhibit its high-quality international products to capture their share in the Intel market." He said, "It's an excellent opportunity to showcase Pak products and develop business deals with international buyers." He said, "This fair also offers professional buyers a sourcing platform with a wide variety of products ranging from the basics to the most creative and qualitative." Mian Kashif said, "The main purpose of attending the foreign fairs is to help strengthen the national economy, and TDAP is facilitating the manufacturers of export products." He said, "He will also hold a series of marathon meetings with tycoons for investment to avail the government of an unprecedented special package for foreign investors."—APP

Rescue 1122
releases
alternative
numbers

RAWALPINDI : Punjab Emergency Service (Rescue 1122) has released alternative telephone numbers to deal any emergency after suspension of mobile phone service. Rescue 1122 spokesman Zahid Lateef said here on Thursday that the people might face difficulties in contact Rescue 1122 through its emergency call number (1122) due to suspension of mobile phone and internet service. Therefore, the Rescue 1122 has released alternative emergency call numbers 041-9201540 and 041-9201541 and the people could contact Rescue 1122 through land-line numbers in case of any emergency, he added.—APP

Pak Embassy
in Beijing
decorated on
Chinese New
Year

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Embassy in Beijing was decorated with lights and traditional lanterns to show solidarity with the people of China ahead of the Chinese New Year and Spring Festival starting from February 10. Pakistan Ambassador to China Khalil Hashmi felicitated the people of China and shared his good wishes and greetings on the auspicious occasion of Chinese New Year and spring festival. Chinese New Year is the festival that celebrates the beginning of a new year on the traditional Chinese calendar. The first day of the Chinese New Year begins on the new moon that appears between January 21 and February 20. The 'Year of the Dragon' officially begins on February 10, 2024 and ends on January 28, 2025.—APP

Floral Art Society Pakistan
elects new office bearers

The meeting ended on a cheerful note with the guests enjoying the delicacies

DNA



ISLAMABAD: FASP Magnolia Chapter's General Body Meeting was held at the Presidency. The First Lady, Mrs Samina Alvi very graciously hosted the occasion. A competition titled, "Imposed Class" was arranged.

The members were divided into two categories, Novice and Experienced. The same props and plant material was provided to the contestants and they were asked to create their own designs. Nusrat Bilal, Shaista Khawar, Wiqarunnisa Boolani and Aisha Zahid were the



esteemed judges. The competition ended in one hour and the formal meeting started with Farah Khurshed's welcoming words. The President, Wiqarunnisa Boolani appreciated everyone's efforts and thanked, the First Lady, Mrs Samina Alvi for taking the time out from her busy schedule and hosting the event. Two of the judges, Aisha Zahid and Shaista Khawar were then invited on the

stage to express their views. The following results were announced by the President, Wiqarunnisa Boolani. For Experienced Category: 1st: Ghazala Abdullah 2nd: Huma Ehsan 3rd: Nahida Raza Very Highly Commended: Sadia Amir Highly Commended: Faiezah Shahid For Novice Category: 1st: Samina Tariq 2nd: Farah Khurshed 3rd:

Shakila Khalil Very Highly Commended: Faheema Yusuf Highly Commended: Shazia Imran Commended: Nazneen Malik Dad The First Lady delivered the prizes to the winners. A small token of love was given to the honourable judges and the birthday girls. The meeting ended on a cheerful note with the guests enjoying the delicacies.

Balochistan launches solar
projects under CPEC

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Balochistan Caretaker Chief Minister Mir Ali Mardan Khan Dombki inaugurated an extensive solarization project of converting various public department buildings including educational, institutions, healthcare facilities and civic departments over renewables that will provide clean, affordable and uninterrupted power supply to the public facilities of Balochistan. The Balochistan government, with the support of Chinese government, has completed the solarization of 12 educational institutions, computer labs & hospitals that have been equipped with modern solar power facilities. The Chinese Ambassador to Pakistan Jiang Zaidong participated in the inaugural ceremony and expressed his views through video link

held at Chief Minister's secretariat, Gwadar. He reported on Thursday, Pakistan's total solar installed capacity was 1.24 GW by 2022, representing a 17 percent increase over 2021. The government has proposed many initiatives to increase the share of solar energy in the country. By now, Pakistan's Solar Energy Market is estimated to increase at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 49.68 percent from 1.30 gigatonnes in 2023 to 9.77 gigatonnes in 2028. In the specific case of Balochistan, according to the Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation Program, Pakistan's total technical solar and wind potentials are 2,900 GW and 340 GW, respectively. Additionally, Balochistan has the potential to implement greater than 14 GW of Renewable energy within 5-10 years through least-cost pathways, including PV utility scale plants of 9,500 -

11,500 MWp. Balochistan's geography, irradiance, and location make it one of Pakistan's most high-potential provinces, with respect to renewables. Decentralized microgrids paired with solar generation could be used to increase reliable electricity access for rural residents. While microgrids generally only provide basic electrification (high quality lighting and charging of a mobile phone), it is able to do so for multiple households at a significantly lower cost over the long run. An estimated 36 percent of Balochistan is electrified, so this pairing has immense potential for the province. In the future, the province is poised to become the country's most booming solar power growth hub. In a remarkable turning point, International Energy Agency (IEA) recently reported solar energy is set to attract more capital investment than tra-

ditional oil for the first time ever. In 2023, an average of approximately USD 1 billion per day (USD 380 billion for the year) are being invested in the solar industry, exceeding investment in oil production for the first time (USD370 billion for the year). "Under such a background, Pakistan stands at a crucial juncture," Ali Majid, Pakistan General Manager of Global leading solar provider LONGi, underlined, "through constantly renovate clean energy technology, not only solar, we can secure a sustainable and clean energy future while reaping the economic benefits that come with the global shift towards renewable energy sources. Obviously, the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) has also played a crucial role in fostering solar energy cooperation between the two countries, we are going to play a leading role in the industry, making CPEC a greener corridor."

Pakistan's exports to
Afghanistan increase
by 3.63% in 6 months

The overall imports into the country witnessed a decrease of 14.69 per cent, from \$29.588 billion to US \$25.241 billion, according to the data

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's export of goods and services to Afghanistan witnessed an increase of 3.63 per cent during the first six months of the current fiscal year (2023-24) as compared to the exports of the corresponding period of last year, State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) reported. The overall exports to Afghanistan were recorded at US \$260.716 million during July-December (2023-24) against exports of US \$251.580 million during July-December (2022-23), SBP data revealed. On a year-to-year basis, the exports to Afghanistan decreased by 26.83 per cent from \$38.297 million in December 2022, against the exports of \$28.019 million in December 2023. Meanwhile, on a month-on-month basis, the exports to Afghanistan also witnessed a decline of 46.02 per cent during December 2023 as compared to the exports of \$51.911 million in November 2023, the SBP data revealed. Overall Pakistan's exports to other countries witnessed an increase of 4.99 per cent in the first six months, from US \$14.222 billion to US \$15.288 billion, the SBP data revealed. On the other hand, the imports from Afghanistan into the country during the months under review were recorded at US \$4.425 million against US \$13.253 million last year, showing a decline of 66.61 per cent in July-December (2023-24). On a year-on-year basis, the imports for Afghanistan decreased by 28.39 per cent from US \$1.729 million in December 2022, against the imports of US \$1.238 million in December 2023. On a month-on-month basis, the imports from Afghanistan into the country witnessed a nominal decrease of 3.95 per cent during December 2023, as compared to the imports of US \$1.289 million during November 2023, according to the data. The overall imports into the country witnessed a decrease of 14.69 per cent, from \$29.588 billion to US \$25.241 billion, according to the data.—DNA

Power
shut down
schedule for
twin cities

DNA

ISLAMABAD: According to Islamabad Electric Supply Company (IESCO)'s spokesman, System Maintenance/Development Work is in process. Therefore power supply of below mentioned feeders/areas will be temporary suspended as per given schedule: On 24th 10 February 2024, 09:00 AM to 02:00 PM, Islamabad Circle, Islamabad Club-1, CDA Flats, G-6, ISI, UC Road, Wahidabad, Athal, Marvi, F-10/2, G-9/1, U Phone, Old United, Flour Mill-2, Bila Road, Rail Way Road, Bhara Kahu, Bahara Kahu-2, Pindi Point, Beirut, Nimble, TDCC, PAF, Bari Imam, I-11/1,2 Feeders, Rawalpindi City Circle Affandi Colony, Khurram Colony, KRL, Tariq Shaheed, Gulzar Quaid, Tamasabad, Liaquat Bagh, Gulshanabad, Jamia Masjid, Gwalmandi, Dhok Hasu, Dhok Najo, Abu Bakar, Azizabad, Madinah Colony, Officer Colony, PNT Wani, Saham, Chakra, Range Road, Benazir Bhutto Feeders, Rawalpindi Cantt Circle, Kalayam, Bhangali, Syed Kasran, CB Khan 2, Hyde Road, Sprint Plaza, Tipu Road, Jail Park, River Garden 2, Model Town, Gulistan Colony.

Women politicians grasp crucial
role in electoral process

ISLAMABAD: Women from different age groups, political parties, and constituencies have actively contested in the General Election 2024, which depicts advancement in gender equality. The election results also show that women are gaining ground in various constituencies, said a report aired by a private news channel. Senior Leader of Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Nafisa Shah said that active participation of women in politics and elections is a democratic norm that helps in addressing issues of women. Promoting the political participation of women is a necessary step that will help to achieve gender equality and it will also portray a positive image of the country in the world, said Independent candidate Shandana Gulzar while hailing active participation of

women in elections. Another contestant Rehana Imtiaz Dar expressed her commitment and dedication to the welfare of the country and expressed confidence in winning polls based on her massive social work. Representation of women in Pakistan's Parliament is an important metric to evaluate progress in bridging gender inequities in the country, said a youngster while appreciating the active role of women in General Election 2024. The emergence of these courageous women candidates serves as an inspiring narrative of change and progress that signals a transformational era of the political landscape, said a women social media user. While giving details of female candidates who participated in the election, Seemab Tahir from

Rawalpindi said that overall turnout of women voters in the election was better than last year and it is a positive development that a huge number of women contested in the election. Rehana Imtiaz Dar, former MNA from Lahore and Alia Hamza Malik also hailed the role of women in politics. Ayesha Nazir Jatt daughter of former MNA Nazir Jatt from Vahari commented that it was observed that women ran door-to-door campaigns against male candidates and appealed to exercise of right to vote. Mrs. Talat Basra wife of Shaukat Basra from Bahawalnagar said participation of woman in the electoral process was increasing rapidly unlike in the past and Pakistani women are more aware of their political participation rights the past now.—APP

IESCO releases
power
suspension
schedule

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Club-1, CDA Flats, G-6, ISLUC Road, Wahidabad, Athal, Marvi, F-10/2, G-9/1, U Phone, Old United, Flour Mill-2, Bila Road, Rail Way Road, Bhara Kahu, Bahara Kahu-2, Pindi Point, Beirut, Nimble, TDCC, PAF, Bari Imam, I-11/1,2 Feeders, Rawalpindi City Circle Affandi Colony, Khurram Colony, KRL, Tariq Shaheed, Gulzar Quaid, Tamasabad, Liaquat Bagh, Gulshanabad, Jamia Masjid, Gwalmandi, Dhok Hasu, Dhok Najo, Abu Bakar, Azizabad, Madinah Colony, Officer Colony, PNT Wani, Saham, Chakra, Range Road, Benazir Bhutto Feeders, Rawalpindi Cantt Circle, Kalayam, Bhangali, Syed Kasran, CB Khan 2, Hyde Road, Sprint Plaza, Tipu Road, Jail Park, River Garden 2, Model Town, Gulistan Colony, Pak View, Lal Kirti, Adiala.—APP

PRCS strengthens emergency
response for general election 2024

DNA

ISLAMABAD: In support of government efforts to manage emergencies, the Pakistan Red Crescent Society has strategically positioned advanced ambulances, trained responders, and first aid personnel near polling stations nationwide to ensure swift response to any unexpected incidents during the General Election 2024. Additionally, a comprehensive emergency response plan has been formalized, with skilled personnel appointed at various locations in major cities. Collaborating with all relief agencies, the Pakistan Red Crescent Society

remains steadfast in its commitment to fulfilling its duties during emergencies. Volunteer teams were also dispatched to hospitals across the country to facilitate blood donations in anticipation of potential adverse situations. The Regional Blood Donor Center in Islamabad has maintained an adequate supply of blood units to address emergencies. Sardar Shahid Ahmed Laghari, Chairman of the Pakistan Red Crescent Society, underscored, "The Red Crescent has consistently stood by the nation. Our Emergency Response Teams (ERTs) have demonstrated exemplary

dedication, while trained personnel have shown readiness by diligently performing their duties, emphasizing that peace, security, and impartial humanitarian aid are fundamental to our mission." Chairman Laghari further stated that PRCS Blood Donor Volunteers are on high alert, stationed at various hospitals nationwide not only to facilitate blood donations but also to provide immediate assistance to dedicated health teams working tirelessly in hospitals. Emergency Response Teams were established in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the Merged Areas formerly known as FATA, Balochistan,

Sindh, and Punjab. Nearly 80 trained members and 27 new ambulances were allocated for emergency response in major cities. The National Headquarters continues to efficiently operate the 24/7 Control Room, closely collaborating with district administrations and participating in mutual consultations for the appointment of Emergency Response Teams. As part of the Mass Casualty Incident (MCI) initiative, PRCS remains steadfast in its commitment to further enhance readiness for emergency response and crisis situations throughout the country in an effective manner.

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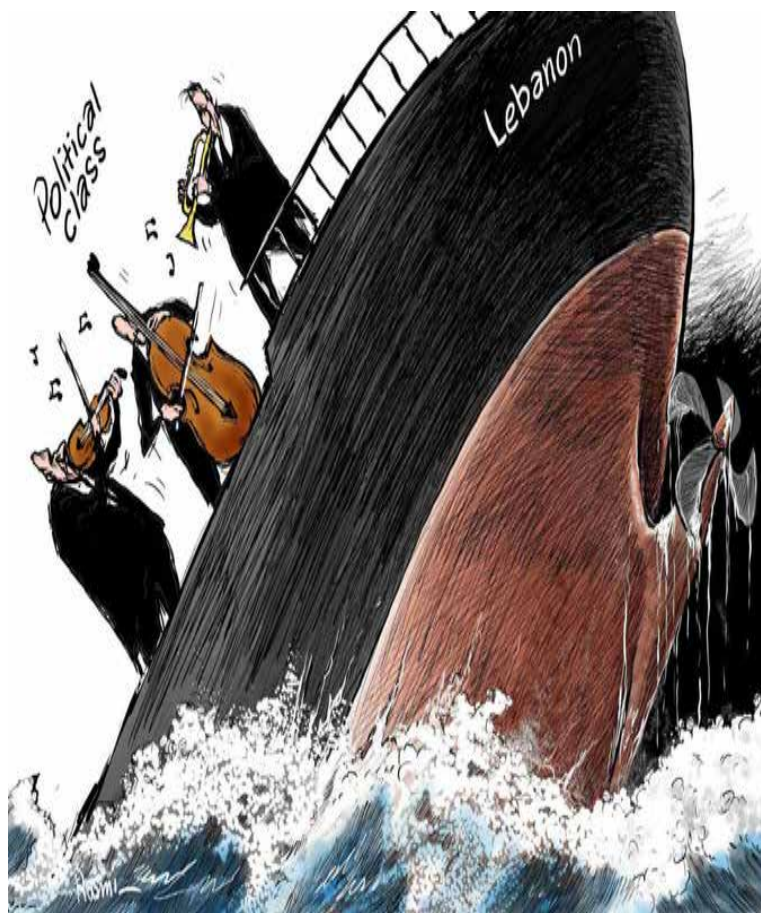
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The view on an Israeli assault on Rafah

THE last refuge is no longer a refuge. Around half of Gaza's 2.3 million people have found some kind of shelter in Rafah, often under canvas, raising the border city's population fivefold. Now, though desperate, traumatised and exhausted, many are readying to flee again. Benjamin Netanyahu has said that Israeli troops will soon enter, despite warnings from António Guterres, the UN secretary general, that it would "increase what is already a humanitarian nightmare with untold regional consequences". Strikes on the city appeared to be intensifying on Thursday. The UN has warned that a ground offensive could lead to war crimes. It is hard to see how devastating civilian casualties would not result, given what has happened in less crowded areas. Israel said in late January that it had killed only about 30% of Hamas fighters – around 10,000, including 1,000 killed in the group's murderous attack on 7 October, which claimed 1,200 mostly Israeli lives. The total death toll stands at 27,000 people, more than 11,000 of them children. Another 66,000 have been injured. A quarter of the population is starving. Israel has reportedly told Egypt that it will allow people to leave Rafah after it moves in. But not everyone is capable of fleeing again, and there is nowhere safe to go. Some of those who have tried to leave the city in recent days have not been heard of since making the attempt. Fierce fighting continues in the Gazan city of Khan Younis. Overall, more than half of Gaza is still under evacuation orders, and Israel has said that fighting will continue in the north, where it had previously said operations were completed, due to the reappearance of Hamas combatants and officials.

Where fighting has ceased, a wasteland is left. Homes, schools, bakeries, hospitals, mosques, churches, sewage infrastructure, aid centres – all erased from the earth. In the words of one witness: "It's like after an atomic bomb." The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA) has also complained that it has not been able to deliver aid to the north for more than a fortnight. A major ground offensive in Rafah threatens to cut off Gaza's lifeline completely, since aid comes via the city's crossing with Egypt. Meanwhile, each day of war increases the need for those deliveries. The US has, belatedly, invested heavily in attempts to pursue a ceasefire and the release of hostages. Antony Blinken, the secretary of state, said the Hamas counteroffer to proposals from the US and Israel contained clear non-starters, but offered "space to pursue negotiations". However, Mr Netanyahu's response made it clear that American shuttle diplomacy is of limited use while Washington's pressure essentially amounts to urging and imploring. He insisted that "absolute victory" is needed, and that there will be months more fighting. Nor is the prime minister willing to listen to freed hostages, and relatives of those still held, as they plead for a deal. The extreme right, upon whom he depends for political survival, would not tolerate such an agreement. Mr Netanyahu is far from being the only obstacle on the Israeli side to a ceasefire and the release of hostages. But there can be little if any progress while he remains at the helm. He is too busy pursuing his personal interests to serve his country's.



The view on Labour's green retreat

ON Thursday, they finally made it official. For the first time, the EU's climate change service confirms, global warming has exceeded 1.5C above preindustrial levels across an entire year. The speed and scale of that rise represents a terrifying precedent if it is not reversed, and a shocking act of collective damage to the planet. It also casts Thursday's other grim climate announcement – Labour's long-trailed decision to retreat from its signature commitment to spend £28bn a year equipping the economy to reach its climate targets – into even starker relief. Labour ended up choosing an embarrassing day to make its announcement. But the truth is that any day would have been a bad day for such a humiliating rowback. There are three big reasons why Labour is wrong. The first is the economics. This was clearly central to Sir Keir Starmer's decision to backpedal on his green commitments. With higher interest rates and a stagnant economy making borrowing more expensive, Labour is afraid that fulfilling its 2021 green prosperity pledge will breach its self-imposed fiscal rule of reducing government debt as a proportion of economic output. As a result, the party's previous commitment to a greening strategy to drive economic growth has been subsumed into a more fiscally hawkish approach, with implications for all government spending. In essence, the hope is that financial services growth will permit the green agenda to become more affordable. This is a large and potentially dismaying strategic change. It flies in the face of the lessons of the Biden administration's investment in clean energy as an engine for reducing inflation. Then there is the politics. Labour should not kid itself. The public response to the green retreat will be dispirited and in many cases outraged. Fairly or unfairly, voters will conclude that Labour is too cautious, that it cringes pre-emptively and that Sir Keir does not seem to believe in much. The response will not, on the whole, be relief that Labour provides a safe pair of hands on the economy. While environmentally anxious voters will be alienated, and fiscal conservatives will remain unconvinced, many traditional Labour voters will simply be left asking what the party is for. With this decision, a future Starmer government may even have sown the seeds of its own eventual demise. The third reason why Sir Keir is wrong is simply that he is ducking the biggest argument of our times. The climate crisis cannot wait. The EU announcement is the latest indicator that governments of the world are stalling on their previous pledges. Labour's policy switch puts a contentious short-term judgment about UK business and politics above the proven need for decisive action on climate. Changes to pledges like the home-insulation scheme echo Rishi Sunak's policy of unpicking the big decisions and thus continuing our dependence on fossil fuels. This is a big moment for Britain. Labour's unquestioning loyalists may tell themselves that economic credibility is the rock on which everything redistributive rests, that the commitments to climate goals remain, and that perhaps Sir Keir is a Labour dark horse who will prove worthy of comparison with Clement Attlee when he gets into No 10.

Election 2024, Revenge and retribution

Qamar Bashir



Allegations have surfaced suggesting that the Election Commission may have intervened to alter results, particularly due to PTI's lead in many constituencies. At 2:30 pm, notable snapshots of election results revealed Dr. Yasmeen Rashid leading over Nawaz Sharif in Lahore, while Nawaz Sharif trailed behind Gustasib Khan in Mansehra. Amin Gandpure maintained a substantial lead over Maulana Fazal ur Rehman, and Atta Tarar trailed behind Bilawal Bhutto. PTI's Qaiser secured a significant lead, as did Zartaj Gul, Aminpur Gandapur, and Salman Akram Raja

ON election day, a multifaceted portrayal emerges from both social and traditional media, heralding the peaceful conclusion of the voting process. Despite efforts from all political parties, including state machinery, to diminish PTI's influence, they misread the pulse of Pakistani voters. The dynamics of voting were reshaped by factors such as the influx of young and women voters, increased digital literacy and penetration, and the pervasive influence of social media platforms like WhatsApp. These elements were pivotal in this election, unlike in previous ones, marking a new era of voter empowerment in Pakistani politics. While the state favored PML(N), the tactics employed by the state were thwarted by voters' resentment over the heavy-handed crackdown on PTI leadership and supporters. Through their ballots, voters triumphed over planned irregularities, intimidation tactics, and pre-election rigging, underscoring a collective rejection of state interference. The high voter turnout exemplified heightened public engagement and a desire for change. Overall, the prevailing mood among voters was one of seeking retribution for perceived injustices and asserting their autonomy in the electoral process. The internet and mobile services were terminated throughout the day. Which were criticized by PPP and PTI criticized it, alleging an attempt to suppress voter turnout and manipulate the outcome. This move sparked debates in traditional and social media, condemning it for impeding citizens' rights and hindering transparency in the electoral process. The services were partially restored after 6 pm but were again slowed down between 9 pm and 12 midnight, slowing down the reporting of election results. This disruption occurred at a critical juncture, coinciding with the unexpected strong performance of PTI and PPP representatives, and the underwhelming showing of PML(N). Returning offices cited server downtimes and technical difficulties as reasons for the delay, yet failed to provide clear explanations or confirm results compiled by presiding officers. The Election Commission intervened, instructing returning officers not to compile or issue results independently, but to forward them to the Commission for announcement, if deemed appropriate. The slow down of mobile services lead to rumors that since the PTI is winning in most of the seats, therefore, the state might step in to help its favorite party. Despite widespread complaints from political parties about the prolonged delay, PML(N) remained conspicuously silent on the matter. Media outlets were abuzz with discussions on the implications of these delays, with many speculating about potential foul play or deliberate obstruction. The prolonged uncertainty fueled deep frustration among voters and raised doubts about the transparency and integrity of the electoral process. Calls for accountability and transparency are echoing across traditional and social media channels, with demands for swift action to address the delays and ensure the timely release of accurate results. The slow pace of result announcements cast a shadow of uncertainty over the election outcome, heightening tensions and under-

scoring the need for urgent measures to restore public confidence in the electoral process. At midnight, despite the slowdown in reporting, notable developments emerged in various constituencies across Pakistan. Shoib Shaheen in Islamabad secured a comfortable lead in PS 27, while Taj Mohammad of PTI surged ahead against the JUI candidate. Palarosan of PPP emerged victorious in Khairpur, while Ali Amin secured a commanding lead over Maulana Fazal ur Rehman. However, Jehangir Tareen of IPP faced defeat in both seats. Fazal Mohammad of PTI was also in the lead, and Umer Ayub clinched victory in 18 Haripur with a significant margin against PML(N). Asad Qaiser of PTI emerged victorious over the JUI-F candidate with a substantial lead, and Mr. Zubair Khan of PTI secured a win in Battagram PK 34 against a JUI-F candidate. Meanwhile, Nawaz Sharif appeared to be leading with a clear majority. At 12:30 am, these results prompted a sense of quiet unease in the PML(N) media center, where Nawaz Sharif was scheduled to deliver a victory speech. Journalists, who had been prepared for the event, were informed accordingly. However, a tweet from state representatives suggested optimism for PML(N) in Balochistan constituencies. Despite this, the dismal results in Punjab and KP provinces shifted discussions on TV channels toward the possibility of a PPP and PTI coalition government. At around 2:30 am the Election Commission officially rebuked TV channels for disseminating inaccurate election results, asserting its sole authority in compiling and accepting final results. Mr. Rauf Hassan, the PTI spokesperson, in an interview at 2:23 am, claimed that PTI has secured over 130 seats in the National Assembly and has dominated the KP province. Despite PTI's apparent success, concerns arise over the election process's slowdown and fears of potential rigging in favor of PML(N). At 12:37 am in Karachi, Khalid Maqbool Siddique of MQM Haqparast confidently claimed victory in 18 to 19 out of 21 seats, breaking all previous records. He pledged to serve all citizens of Karachi, regardless of gender, race, or ethnicity. Mr. Faisal Wadha while commenting said everything was normal. The election server is once again down, and will be down again in Election. He said that PTI independent will be on sale and will be bought by those parties who will offer them better terms and conditions and rest loyal supporters will sit in the opposition. He said that the result was fully expected and suited the establishment. According to him it was a plan to stage a win by the independents and then, make a weak coalition government. While reacting to a question that the unexpected performance of the PTI was a sympathy factor which was mainly triggered due to illogical and senseless courts verdicts against the PTI chairman and his wife. Asif Ali Zardari expressed satisfaction with the incoming results and congratulated Bilawal Bhutto on the outstanding performance, asserting that the next government would be formed by the PPP. Meanwhile, TV commentators, who had previously speculated on a strong PML(N) victory and discussed the potential

oath-taking of Nawaz Sharif as Prime Minister and Maryam Nawaz as Chief Minister of Punjab, shifted their focus. They now deliberated on the likelihood of a PPP and PTI coalition government at the center, advising PML(N) to gracefully accept defeat and assume the role of the opposition. Allegations have surfaced suggesting that the Election Commission may have intervened to alter results, particularly due to PTI's lead in many constituencies. At 2:30 pm, notable snapshots of election results revealed Dr. Yasmeen Rashid leading over Nawaz Sharif in Lahore, while Nawaz Sharif trailed behind Gustasib Khan in Mansehra. Amin Gandpure maintained a substantial lead over Maulana Fazal ur Rehman, and Atta Tarar trailed behind Bilawal Bhutto. PTI's Qaiser secured a significant lead, as did Zartaj Gul, Aminpur Gandapur, and Salman Akram Raja. Rehana Dar emerged victorious over Khawaja Asif in Sialkot, while Barrister Gohar Ali led by a wide margin. Shaukat Basra of PTI also held a lead over PML(N), while Mir Muqam faced a significant defeat. Notably, Nafisa Shah and Sarfraz Bugti of PPP secured clear victories, and PTI claimed victory in Nankana Sahib, with Mian Javaid Latif, a PML(N) stalwart, suffering a substantial loss. Earlier, the Human Rights Commission expressed concern regarding the termination of internet and mobile services in the lead-up to the elections. Local and international observers have provided observations on the conduct of the elections thus far. Local observers have noted issues such as irregularities, voter intimidation, and violence in certain areas, raising concerns about transparency and fairness. Similarly, international observers have emphasized the importance of free and fair elections, calling for impartiality, transparency, and adherence to electoral laws. They stress the need for accountability and transparency to ensure public confidence in the electoral process. Both local and international observers continue to monitor closely and provide assessments to uphold democratic standards. As the tumultuous events of the 2024 elections in Pakistan unfold, a narrative emerges of resilience and determination amidst adversity. Despite challenges ranging from disruptions in communication to incidents of violence and intimidation, the Pakistani electorate has demonstrated an unwavering commitment to democracy. The power of the vote has prevailed over attempts to manipulate and suppress it, as voters have asserted their agency and sought to shape the future of their nation. As the dust settles and the results begin to take shape, it is clear that the path forward will be marked by continued vigilance, accountability, and a steadfast dedication to upholding democratic principles. In the face of uncertainty, Pakistan stands poised to embrace its democratic destiny, guided by the collective will of its people and the promise of a brighter tomorrow. – Press Secretary to the President (Rtd) Former Press Minister at Embassy of Pakistan to France Former MD, SRBC

EU's adaptability key to its future success

Dr. Majid Rafizadeh

The enlargement of the EU to include many more Central and Eastern European countries in the early 2000s brought about political and economic transformation, enhancing stability and cooperation in the region. Moreover, the EU has played a pivotal role in promoting peace and diplomacy. The union was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2012 for its contribution to the advancement of peace, reconciliation, democracy and human rights in Europe. The Schengen Area, which was established in 1995 and allows for passport-free travel among member...

AS the EU this week marked the 32nd anniversary of its creation, it is a fitting moment to reflect on the journey of this historic alliance. The EU has undergone profound transformations, while facing numerous challenges and achieving notable successes. In the Dutch city of Maastricht, a significant moment transpired on Feb. 7, 1992, as the Treaty on European Union was officially signed. This milestone not only established explicit regulations for the impending single currency, but also outlined frameworks for collective foreign and security policies, as well as fostering closer collaboration in justice and home affairs. The formal inception of the "European Union" was thereby marked by the enactment of this pivotal treaty. The journey of the EU has not been without its hurdles. The union has confronted economic crises, political divisions, the unprecedented global challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic and, more recently, the Russia-Ukraine war. In addition, the economic disparities among member states, as exemplified by the struggles of Southern European countries during the eurozone crisis, underscore the ongoing challenge of achieving economic convergence. Furthermore, it is worth noting that the EU has grappled with political divisions, most notably during the Brexit saga. The decision of the UK to leave the union in 2016 highlighted internal fissures and raised questions about the cohesion of the bloc. The aftermath of Brexit has necessitated a reevaluation of the EU's structures and policies, particularly in areas such as trade, security and immigration. In spite of these challenges, the EU has achieved significant milestones that have shaped its identity as a global player. For example, the creation of the euro currency in 1999 stands out as a symbol of economic integration and the fostering of trade and stability among nations. The enlargement of the EU to include many more Central and Eastern European countries in the early 2000s brought about political and economic transformation, enhancing stability and cooperation in the region. Moreover, the EU has played a pivotal role in promoting peace and diplomacy. The union was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in

2012 for its contribution to the advancement of peace, reconciliation, democracy and human rights in Europe. The Schengen Area, which was established in 1995 and allows for passport-free travel among member states, exemplifies the bloc's commitment to fostering unity and cooperation. When it comes to the economic perspective, it was believed that one of the primary advantages of EU membership would lie in the economic benefits derived from the single market. Member states have access to a vast consumer base, facilitating trade and economic growth. Indeed, the free movement of goods, services, capital and people has not only boosted economic activity but has also promoted cultural exchange and understanding among European citizens. Another issue is related to environmental sustainability and social justice, which has led the EU to implement progressive policies. From stringent environmental regulations to the protection of workers' rights, the EU has sought to create a harmonious and equitable society. Additionally, there has been an emphasis on research and innovation, which has propelled Europe to the forefront of technological advancements, fostering its competitiveness on the global stage. While the EU has undoubtedly brought about positive changes, it is not immune to criticism. For example, the eurozone crisis of the early 2010s exposed the flaws in the common currency framework and revealed the challenges of maintaining economic harmony among diverse economies. Austerity measures imposed on struggling member states led to social unrest and raised questions about the effectiveness of the EU's economic policies. Moreover, the handling of migration issues has been a divisive topic. Disagreements among member states on burden-sharing and the lack of a unified approach have strained relations, revealing underlying tensions and disparities in the EU's response to humanitarian challenges. In addition, the democratic deficit, characterized by a perceived lack of accountability and transparency in decision-making processes, has been a recurrent concern. Some critics argue that unelected officials in Brussels exert too much influence, potentially undermining the

democratic principles member states hold dear. To strengthen the union, its leaders face the critical task of reinforcing it to navigate an ever-evolving geopolitical landscape. This includes implementing effective mechanisms to address economic disparities among member states. This can be achieved by focusing on promoting sustainable economic growth among all members, investing in education and innovation and fostering job creation to achieve greater convergence. And, in order to counter criticisms of a democratic deficit, EU institutions should prioritize transparency and inclusivity. Engaging with citizens through open dialogue and ensuring that decision-making processes are more accessible can help rebuild trust and strengthen the democratic foundation of the union. More fundamentally, the EU ought to develop a unified and compassionate approach to migration, addressing both the humanitarian aspects and the concerns of member states. A comprehensive migration policy, based on solidarity and burden-sharing, can contribute to a more cohesive and cooperative union. The EU has achieved significant milestones that have shaped its identity as a global player. Finally, as the world faces challenges such as climate change, cybersecurity threats and global health crises, the EU must constantly adapt its policies to address these issues collectively. Strengthening cooperation in areas of common interest will reinforce the EU's role as a leader in addressing global challenges. This can include embracing technological advancements and fostering innovation. Investing in research and development, promoting digitalization and ensuring that member states are equipped to navigate the digital age will also contribute to the union's competitiveness on the global stage. In a nutshell, the EU's ability to adapt and overcome challenges and conflicts will determine its role in shaping the future of Europe and beyond. By addressing economic disparities, building a common approach to migration, adapting to global challenges and fostering innovation, EU leaders can chart a course for a stronger and more resilient union. – Sourced by an Arab News

Briefs

'Unity' govt likely after polls results

FROM PAGE 01
in various aspects, including a record budget allocation of Rs48 billion, a substantial increase in the number of voters exceeding 50% of the total population, an unprecedented ratio of independent candidates, a total of nearly 18,000 candidates, and a substantial amount of paper required for printing 260 million ballots. More than 1.4 million polling staff performed their duties at 90,675 polling stations – of which 16,766 were declared as extremely sensitive. To ensure voter turnout, February 8 was declared as a public holiday.

PTI rules out alliance with PML-N, PPP

FROM PAGE 01
His statement comes shortly after PML-N senior leader Ishaq Dar claimed that independent candidates, who are emerging victorious in the 2024 general elections, are in contact with the party. "The independents have contacted us and they will join any party in the next 72 hours as per the Constitution," said the former finance minister while speaking to Geo News on Friday as the election results continue to pour in. Dar said that the PML-N cannot force anyone to join the party, adding that they are being contacted by candidates who are willing to join their party.

No state-sponsored rigging in elections

FROM PAGE 01
high-level meeting on February 7 after the two deadliest terrorist incidents in which 28 innocent lives were lost, he added. The minister said that the government had received intelligence reports that the terrorist would carry out activities in different places through detonated devices. He congratulated the deployment of hundreds of thousands of regular and civil armed forces, other law enforcement agencies and civilian officials across the country for successful conduct of the general elections. Dr. Goher said that 61 incidents of violence were also reported across the country during elections adding, all the incidents were being investigated in details and the action would be taken against culprits. He said that deaths of 28 people and serious injuries to 64 others in terrorist incidents just one day prior to the elections forced the state to take several measures for ensuring safety of the citizens. This also included the difficult decision of suspending the mobile phone services across the country to disallow terrorists the means to communicate, coordinate and conduct terrorist operations, he added. The minister said mobile devices were also instrumental in initiating the trigger mechanisms for modern explosive devices for mass casualties. The government was fully aware that suspension of mobile services would impact the transmission of election results across the country and delay the process, however, the choice between this delay and safety of the citizens was quite straightforward and the decision was taken, he said. Physical transportation of election results from widely spread polling stations and especially in distant places in Balochistan, KP and even in rural areas of Punjab and Sindh, with such elaborate security measures was also a laborious and time consuming exercise, he maintained. The minister said even with such stringent security measures in place, the election day saw 61 incidents of violence including terrorist attacks employing sophisticated weapons and explosive devices which consumed the lives of 16 citizens and caused injuries to 54 others. He said that all institutions involved in this historic exercise, especially the Election Commission of Pakistan which had little control of the security situation, deserved acknowledgement and gratitude rather than criticism and denigration.

David Warner, Zampa star as Australia beat WI in 1st T20

Australia beat the West Indies by 11 runs in the opening clash of their three-match series

SPORTS DESK

HOBART: David Warner slammed 70 off 36 balls in his 100th Twenty20 international and Adam Zampa grabbed three wickets as Australia beat the West Indies by 11 runs in the opening clash of their three-match series on Friday. The hosts crunched 213-7 after being sent in to bat on a windy and cold Hobart evening. The visitors put up a valiant fight but they could only manage 202-8, with Zampa taking 3-26. Warner, who became only the third man after New Zealand's Ross Taylor and India's Virat Kohli to play 100 internationals in each format, hit 12 fours and a six in his explosive knock to anchor the Australia innings. "Pleasing to get the win on the board. I feel refreshed and a lot of energy," said Warner. "I said I want to play the Twenty20 World Cup and finish there and I'm excited and it's a good journey we've got going through the next six months." The West Indies hammered 16 off the opening over from Jason Behrendorff in a per-



fect start to the chase and put on 72 without loss in the six-over powerplay, just five shy of what Australia managed. But when Johnson Charles fell for 42 to Zampa and Brandon King for 53 to Marcus Stoinis after an 89-run stand, the wheels began com-

ing off. Stoinis accounted for Shai Hope (16) and Glenn Maxwell removed Rovman Powell (14). It left the West Indies needing 72 from the final five overs, but when Zampa snared two more wickets in four balls it blunted the charge and the win proved out of reach. "We struggled to get partnerships, but it was a good game of cricket," said West Indies skipper Powell. "We just have to back ourselves a little bit more." Warner smacked five boundaries from his first 10 balls, including four in Jason Holder's opening over. The 37-year-old brought up his 25th T20 half-century off just 22 balls to send a clear message to selectors that he plans to be in contention for the World Cup later this year. He was eventually out to a slower Alzarri Joseph delivery, gloving to Nicolas Pooran behind the stumps. With Travis Head and Steve Smith rested, Josh Inglis opened with Warner and was equally aggressive in thumping 39 off 25 balls until removed by Holder, offering Powell a simple catch at mid-off. Mitchell Marsh was dealing with Covid in the lead-up but showed few ill effects in hitting a giant six off Andre Russell to help Australia reach 110-1 at the halfway mark before being caught behind off Joseph for 16. The run rate eased when Warner departed before Tim David took up the mantle with an explosive unbeaten 37 off 17 balls.

Rizwan slams 'average' players obsessed with averages

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Mohammad Rizwan shared his perspective on player mentality, stressing the importance of prioritizing the team's needs over personal interests. In an interview with Cricbuzz, he dismissed the idea of fixating on individual statistics, stating that players solely concerned with averages are average themselves. "Firstly the teams that you are representing keep that [role] in front and if you think of yourself in that case... like players who think like let me save myself, he won't go far. Those players who look at averages are average players. If someone is performing it will be there in the stats for people to see, like say India's Virat Kohli, he is getting his average higher but he is not focusing on



that because average players look at average and big players will look at the team and the situation and my focus remains on what is the requirement of the team," Rizwan said. "The team says Rizwan look at board and play accordingly. I maintain the

same thing in my own life too but it is not easy. In T20 playing the new ball and in ODI go after 25 overs when the ball is a bit old that is not easy and it is a mind game," he added. Rizwan also shed light on team management's rationale behind splitting his

opening combination with Babar Azam in T20Is. "Our management and captain said that we are trying out different things for the World Cup and for that we want to see what can be our best XI. Like say we can have left-right combination at the top and Saim Ayub is left-hander. There is Fakhar Zaman also... so for World Cup we were experimenting with left-right combination," Rizwan said. "I don't think it is a wrong decision and if I am destined to [open] in that case I will do it in future and I am not angry with the thinking process of the management and neither is Babar Azam. Look they said, we are going to West Indies and there will be spin and every country is trying for left-right combination and so our management is also giving that a thought," he concluded.

Fraser-Pryce to retire after Paris Olympics

MIAMI : Jamaican sprint legend Shelly-Ann Fraser-Pryce, a three-time Olympic gold medalist and 10-time world champion, said she will retire after this year's Paris Olympics in an interview published Thursday. Speaking to the American magazine Essence, Fraser-Pryce said she is forcing herself to retire at age 37 to spend more time with her family. "My son needs me," Fraser-Pryce told the magazine. "My husband and I have been together since before I won in 2008. He has sacrificed for me. We're a partnership, a team. It's because of that support that I'm able to do the things that I've been doing for all these years. And I think I now owe it to them to do something else." She is focusing on her training for one last chance at Olympic glory in France, what Fraser-Pryce said is about "pushing boundaries" as well as "showing people that you stop when you decide." "I want to finish on my own terms." Fraser-Pryce has won eight Olympic medals, including 100-meter gold at 2008 in Beijing and 2012 in London and a Tokyo Olympic title as part of Jamaica's 4x100 relay. Her medal haul also includes silver at 100m in Tokyo and 200m in London plus a 2016 Rio 100m bronze. She won 100m world titles in 2009, 2013, 2015, 2019 and 2022 plus a 200 world crown in 2013 and 4x100 relay golds in 2009, 2013, 2015 and 2019. "There's not a day I'm getting up to go practice and I'm like, 'I'm over this,'" Fraser-Pryce said. – Agencies

Salman backs Azam Khan's role clarification

ISLAMABAD: Former Pakistan captain Salman Butt has voiced his support for wicket-keeper batter Azam Khan, in his request for clear definition of his role and performance expectations within the national team. Azam had recently expressed his frustrations about getting inconsistent chances with the national team in a discussion with veteran cricketer Shoaib Malik. "I have always understood that when I play league cricket, I get a complete opportunity because they know I can win them games, so they are calling me here. That means either you are putting doubts in my mind that I am not good at this level, then it's okay, then I will find my own way," Azam Khan had said. While speaking on his YouTube channel, Butt highlighted Khan's concerns about the coaching staff's treatment towards him, suggesting that the young player feels undervalued and lacking in confidence due to their actions. "See, he made some right points there related to the coaching staff. He said that he is being made to feel that he isn't good enough. He is still very young. He will realize later in his career that some coaches aren't real coaches; they are just there to praise the players. They want to please the players just so that they can retain their position," Butt said. Highlighting the importance of giving the 25-year-old more opportunities, the former captain emphasized that the young player should have been given a chance to play the entire series. "He (Azam Khan) should have gotten a chance to play the entire series. In a couple of matches, he went to bat when the required run rate was close to 13, which isn't easy for any batter. However, if you want to play international cricket, you have to be fit. With the kind of talent that he has, he can perform a lot better if he works on his fitness," he added. It is worth noting that Azam Khan made his international comeback during the recently concluded five-match T20I series against New Zealand, but unfortunately, his performance fell short of expectations. During the series, Azam managed to score only 22 runs in three matches, averaging 7.33 with a strike rate of 115.78. – Agencies

Nissanka creates history for SL in first ODI

DNA

COLOMBO: Batter Pathum Nissanka became the first Sri Lankan batter in the country's history to score a double century in the 50-over format when he achieved that feat against Afghanistan in the first ODI. He also became the player who now has the highest individual score in Sri Lanka's ODI history, surpassing the iconic 189 scored by Sanath Jayasuriya against India in 2000. Nissanka remained unbeaten at 210 in the match in an innings peppered with 20 fours and 8 sixes as Sri Lanka put on a total on 381/3. Opener Avishka Fernando was the next highest scorer with his 88 while middle order batter Sadeera Samarawickrama chipped in with 45. Fareed Ahmad Malik was the pick of the bowlers with 2 wickets for 79 runs. Earlier, Afghanistan captain Hashmatullah Shahidi won the toss and elected to field in the opener of a three-match one-day international series at Pallekele on Friday.

Cody to face Roman at Wrestle Mania 40

WASHINGTON: The 2024 Royal Rumble winner, Cody Rhodes, is set to face the Undisputed WWE Universal Champion Roman Reigns at WrestleMania 40, confirmed Chief Content Officer WWE Triple-H on Thursday. Rhodes had been the focal point of the #WeWantCody trend on social media, with wrestling fans showing full support for him. The American Nightmare made his official decision for WrestleMania 40. Cody was given the chance to pick his opponent for WrestleMania 40 after winning the Royal Rumble for the second consecutive year. The WrestleMania XL Kick-off Press Show concluded in a fiery and deafening manner. While fans weren't entirely against The Rock, there was a loud "Rocky Sucks" chant as well. Rhodes interrupted the collision course and confrontation between The Rock and Roman Reigns, declaring, "This is nonsense." He emerged and announced that he is selecting Roman Reigns as his opponent for WrestleMania 40. The Rock didn't appear pleased that his WrestleMania 40 match had been hijacked because Roman Reigns himself opted to face The People's Champ. The Rock then posted an image illustrating the significance of The Bloodline and the esteemed Samoan wrestling lineage. Nevertheless, the crowd remained firmly in support of Rhodes. In a dramatic conclusion to the press conference, The Rock slapped The American Nightmare before several individuals rushed to the stage to separate them - including Triple H himself. While Cody vs. Roman Reigns is now confirmed, The Rock is evidently unhappy and directed a string of insults towards Triple H backstage. Earlier, it was reported that WWE is adamant about keeping The Rock vs. Roman Reigns as the headline match for WrestleMania 40, despite significant backlash involving The Rock, Reigns, and the overlooked Rhodes. Sources indicated that The Rock's participation in the ring at WrestleMania 40 was confirmed, stating, "There is 'no scenario' where Rock is not wrestling Roman Reigns at WrestleMania 40, unless something unforeseen happens, like an injury." However, that may no longer be the case after Thursday night's events. – Agencies



Shoeb Shaheen alleges rigging in elections

FROM PAGE 01
RO Office against what he has called "rigging". The PML-N also grabbed seat in NA 46 where Anjum Aqeel was able to defeat PTI backed candidate Amir Mughal. The third Islamabad seat went to the Independent candidate Khurram.

Kakar for plans to attract foreign business

FROM PAGE 01
Facilitation Council without any delay, a PM Office press release said. In the meeting, he was apprised of the progress on the international agreements in various sectors including energy, finance, logistics, food security, water, minerals and others. Caretaker ministers for communications, maritime affairs and railways, law and justice, climate change, finance, energy, and food security attended the meeting besides the deputy chairman of the Planning Commission and senior officers.

IPP chief Tareen loses on both seats

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both constituencies marks a significant setback for his party and raises questions about his future political endeavours.

Djokovic, Tsitsipas could face each other at Davis Cup

The Serb is likely to play for Serbia in the latter part of the tournament

OUR COOREPONDENTS

LONDON: Novak Djokovic and Stefanos Tsitsipas could face one another in the Davis Cup in the future as Greece may end up facing Serbia. Following the conclusion of the 2024 Davis Cup Qualifiers, the draw was conducted for the teams that did not progress to the Finals and those that emerged victorious in their lower-tier matches. The Davis Cup operates across various divisions where countries are positioned. There is the top division, where countries compete for qualification to the Finals, where the overall competition winner is determined. Having been defeated in the Qualifiers, the countries must once again battle to maintain their position in the Qualifiers for the upcoming season, and surprisingly, Serbia finds itself among them. Slovakia recently triumphed over Serbia, largely because Novak Djokovic did not participate, and surprisingly, they struggled to make an impact without him. They must now face a country from the

lower tier of competition seeking to replace Serbia among the elite nations. By sheer luck of the draw, which took place recently in London, Greece will

have the opportunity to challenge Serbia and secure their position among the top nations. Having emerged victorious in their most recent tie, they now have

a chance to ascend to the top level. This could potentially set up a showdown between Djokovic and Tsitsipas, posing a formidable challenge for both nations. It's highly likely that both players will participate, as Djokovic would be reluctant to see his country drop down while he remains active. This is because they would forfeit the opportunity to compete for the trophy until they return to the top flight. For Tsitsipas, it presents a unique opportunity to qualify for the Qualifiers, which may not occur frequently. It would be advantageous for Greece if Djokovic was absent from the matchup, and conversely, beneficial for Serbia if Tsitsipas did not participate. However, for tennis enthusiasts, the ideal scenario is witnessing both players competing for a spot among the elite. Regardless, this matchup poses a significant challenge for both countries, particularly if they field their strongest teams. Both Djokovic and Tsitsipas would need to deliver exceptional performances to secure victory. The ties are scheduled to take place in September following the US Open.



Briefs

Zelenskyy names ex-army chief 'hero of Ukraine'

KYIV : Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy on Friday awarded a "Hero of Ukraine" title to Valeriy Zaluzhnyi, after relieving him the day earlier of his duties as commander-in-chief. Under a decree posted on the presidential website, the award is presented for "outstanding personal achievements in the protection of state sovereignty and the territorial integrity of Ukraine." The same title was also awarded to the head of Ukraine's military intelligence, Kyrylo Budanov.

A presidential decree on Zaluzhnyi's dismissal signed by Zelenskyy was published on Thursday but had been widely expected. Zaluzhnyi is accused of being responsible for Ukraine's unsuccessful 2023 counter-offensive against Russia and is also suspected of having presidential ambitions. Russia started its "special military operation" in Ukraine in February 2022, and as it approaches its third year, prospects for its conclusion remain unclear.—APP

13 Sudanese migrants dead off Tunisia

TUNIS : Thirteen Sudanese migrants died on after their boat capsized off the coast of Tunisia, while 27 others remain missing, a court spokesperson told media reporters. Farid Ben Jha, the spokesman for the court in the coastal city of Monastir, said only two out of the 42 migrants who were on board the boat survived after leaving from Jebiniana, a small town near Sfax. He said an investigation was opened, adding that the migrants were likely "exploited in a human trafficking case or in the formation of a criminal group to reach Europe illegally". The victims were all asylum seekers from war-torn Sudan who had registered with the United Nations' refugee agency. They boarded a fragile metal boat made of scraps hastily welded together, according to the investigation's first findings. The search for the missing passengers is still underway.—APP

Stock markets steady before US inflation data

LONDON : Europe's main stock markets steadied Friday as traders reacted to more earnings updates from top companies, while awaiting revisions to US inflation data.

Asia saw holiday-thinned trade, with investors there struggling to build on another record-setting day on Wall Street. "Today sees things slow down after a week that has seen yet another prominent role played by earnings, with Arm Holdings helping to bolster the tech story that underpins the gains seen for US markets," noted Joshua Mahony, chief market analyst at traders Scope Markets. Shares in Arm soared in after-hours US trading "after earnings pointed to the AI opportunity for the British chip designer", said Neil Wilson, chief market analyst at Finalto. The luxury sector was a focus in Europe, with French giant Hermes on Friday posting record annual sales and net profit. Hermes said it would reward all employees with a bonus following strong growth in every region last year. Shares in Hermes rose by more than four percent to 2,618 euros nearing the half-way stage in Paris, propelling the group above cosmetics giant L'Oreal in terms of market value. L'Oreal's stock price fell more than seven percent to 420 euros after it posted lower-than-expected results for the fourth quarter. Shares in LVMH, the world's largest luxury goods group, were down 0.3 percent to 802 euros, though it also reported record annual earnings last month. Gucci owner Kering was up 0.7 percent to 412 euros, a day after reporting slumping profits.—APP

Erdogan urges world spotlight on Israel's war crimes

"We are making intensive efforts to ensure that Israel's human rights abuses and war crimes are not overlooked on the international stage," Erdogan

NEWS DESK

ANKARA : Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan on Friday underlined Türkiye's strenuous efforts to draw attention worldwide to Israel's wrongdoing in over four months of the Gaza conflict. "We are making intensive efforts to ensure that Israel's human rights abuses and war crimes are not overlooked on the international stage," Erdogan said, addressing the 5th General Assembly of the Islamic Cooperation Youth Forum via video message in Istanbul. Underlining the importance of collective diplomatic action among Islamic countries in response to Israel's oppression in Gaza, Erdogan mentioned ongoing diplomatic efforts to encourage joint responses and solidarity. Additionally, he reaffirmed Türkiye's commitment to supporting the establishment of an independent, sovereign Palestinian state recognized worldwide. "We will continue our struggle until an independent, territorially inte-

gral Palestinian state is founded based on the 1967 borders, with Jerusalem as capital," he said. Erdogan emphasized the crucial importance of unity among young Muslim people, pointing to the ongoing "massacres" in the Gaza Strip and occupied Palestinian territories since Oct. 7. "Israeli occupying forces mercilessly martyred over 28,000 Palestinians, including many children and women, in full view of the world," he said. Erdogan underscored that places of worship, schools, hospitals, and civilian infrastructure have also been targeted in Israel's "Nazi-like attacks." In response to the onslaught, Erdogan affirmed Ankara's full solidarity with the Palestinians, undertaking initiatives ranging from delivering humanitarian aid to facilitating cancer patients' treatment in Türkiye. Israel launched a deadly offensive on the Gaza Strip following an Oct. 7 cross-border attack by Hamas, killing at least 27,947 Palestinians and injuring 67,459 others, while nearly 1,200 Israelis are believed to have been killed in

the Hamas attack. The Israeli offensive has left 85% of Gaza's population internally displaced amid acute shortages of food, clean water, and medicine, while 60% of the enclave's infrastructure has been damaged or destroyed, according to the UN. An interim ruling last month by the International Court of Justice told Israel to cease its abuses, but most international observers say it has been flouting the ruling. Tensions rise as rockets hit Northern Israel from Lebanon. The Israeli military announced late Thursday that at least 30 rockets fell in the Upper Galilee in northern Israel, rockets it said were launched from southern Lebanon, while alarm sirens sounded in the area. Israeli army radio said that about 30 rockets fell in an open area in Mount Hermon, in the Upper Galilee, without any injuries. On Thursday, the intensity of cross-border shelling between the Israeli army and the Lebanese Hezbollah party increased along the borders and nearby areas between the two sides. On the same day, the Israeli

army announced the hitting of a series of Hezbollah-affiliated targets in southern Lebanon, as well as an Israeli drone strike on a car in the southern city of Nabatieh. Palestinian Health Ministry reports 13 massacres in Gaza. At least 107 Palestinians were killed and 142 others were injured in the last 24 hours as Israel continues its onslaught on the besieged Gaza, the Palestinian Health Ministry said. "The Israeli occupation committed 13 massacres against families in Gaza, leaving 107 martyrs and 142 injured during the past 24 hours," the ministry said in a statement. "Many people are still trapped under rubble and on the roads as rescuers are unable to reach them," the statement said. Flouting the International Court of Justice's provisional ruling, Israel continues its onslaught on Gaza where at least 27,947 Palestinians have been killed, mostly women and children, and 67,459 injured since Oct. 7, according to Palestinian health authorities. Israel has pounded Gaza since a cross-border attack by Hamas,

which Tel Aviv says killed nearly 1,200 people. Israeli Police detain 18, including Canadian nationals, in Khan Younis. Israeli police detained 18 people, including three Canadian nationals from the same family, in the southern Gaza city of Khan Younis. "An Israeli special force, wearing civilian clothes, arrested the Palestinian Ahmed Hashem Al Agha and his sons Hashem and Baraa, who hold Canadian citizenship," Ahmed al Agha, dean of the Faculty of Law at the University of Palestine, told Anadolu. Al-Agha said the Israeli force reached the area where the displaced family was staying in the west of Khan Younis, wearing civilian attire and in civilian vehicles. They also arrested 15 other individuals from the al-Agha family, according to information Anadolu obtained. The Israeli army has launched a series of intense raids on Khan Younis and its surrounding areas since Jan. 22 as it advanced in the southern and western areas of the city, forcing thousands of Palestinians to flee.

Turkish intel assists capture of PKK terrorist

ANKARA : Security sources said on Friday that a PKK/YPG terrorist was captured by military police affiliated with the Syrian Interim Government with intelligence support from Türkiye's National Intelligence Organization (MIT). Terrorist Ahmet al-Hac Omer was identified as planning actions against the Turkish Armed Forces (TSK) and the Syrian National Army, a force working outside Damascus' control, in areas cleared of terrorism by the Turkish military. According to security sources, Omer, trained by the terrorist group in bomb-making and assassination techniques, was involved in transporting improvised explosive devices (IEDs) in Syria's northern Manbij district between 2022 and 2023. During a search of Omer's residence, authorities seized ready-to-use remotely controlled IEDs intended for assassinations and bomb attacks. Since 2016, Ankara has launched a trio of successful anti-terror operations across its border in northern Syria to prevent the formation of a terror corridor and enable the peaceful settlement of residents: Euphrates Shield (2016), Olive Branch (2018) and Peace Spring (2019). Türkiye also launched Operation Claw-Lock in April 2022 to target the PKK terrorist group's hideouts in Iraq's northern Metina, Zap and Avasin-Basyan regions near the Turkish border. In its more than 40-year terror campaign against Türkiye, the PKK - listed as a terrorist organization by Türkiye, the United States and the European Union - has been responsible for the deaths of more than 40,000 people, including women, children and infants. The YPG is PKK's Syrian branch.—APP

Altman in talks to raise trillions for chips

WASHINGTON : OpenAI CEO Sam Altman has held talks with potential investors, including the United Arab Emirates (UAE) government, seeking to raise trillions of dollars to reshape the global semiconductor industry and expand its ability to power AI, the Wall Street Journal (WSJ) reported Thursday. Altman is reportedly looking to resolve some of the biggest challenges faced by the rapidly expanding artificial intelligence sector - including a shortage of the expensive computer chips needed to power large-language models like OpenAI's ChatGPT. The global chip industry is currently dominated by just a few firms, including Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company (TSMC) and U.S.-based NVIDIA. While many countries have unveiled plans to support domestic chip production, the financial support they have offered pales in comparison with the vast sums of money Altman has reportedly been discussing with investors. The project could require raising as much as \$7 trillion, the Journal said, citing people familiar with the matter. Altman has held meetings with senior government officials from the UAE as well as SoftBank's CEO Masayoshi Son and representatives from TSMC, according to the WSJ. Both Bloomberg and the Financial Times have also reported on some of Altman's meetings in recent weeks. Altman has floated the idea of building dozens of chip-fabrication plants in the next few years with money from Middle East investors, and then paying TSMC to build and operate them, the WSJ said.

Kim vows to 'put an end' to South if force used

FOREIGN DESK

SEOUL : North Korean leader Kim Jong Un has vowed Pyongyang would not hesitate to "put an end" to South Korea if attacked, state media said Friday, as relations between the neighbours hit new lows. The nuclear-armed North this year declared South Korea its "principal enemy", closed agencies dedicated to reunification and outreach, and threatened war over "even 0.001 millimetres" of territorial infringement. "If the enemy dared to use force against our country, we will make a bold decision that will change history and will not hesitate to mobilise all the superpowers to

put an end to them," Kim said, according to Pyongyang's official Korean Central News Agency (KCNA). "Peace is not something to beg for or exchange through negotiations," he added. Kim made the comments during a defence ministry event marking the anniversary of the founding of the country's military, KCNA said. His statement echoed earlier remarks in which Kim said his military should "annihilate" the enemy if provoked, referring to South Korea and its ally the United States, state media reported last month. North Korea abolishes economic cooperation with South Korea and its ally the United States, state media reported last month. Images released by KCNA on Friday showed Kim holding hands with

his young daughter, Ju Ae, who some analysts say is being groomed as the next leader of the isolated country. The images also showed the pair receiving enthusiastic cheers from uniformed military soldiers, as well as posing for photographs with army commanders. Kim said Pyongyang's recent decision to define Seoul as its principal enemy was a righteous measure. "The decision to define (South) Korean puppets as the number one hostile nation and unchanging enemy" and to "occupy and put down their territory in the event of a contingency for the sake of our country's eternal security", he said, according to KCNA. South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol

said last week that the "irrational" North Korean government was likely to carry out multiple provocations, including cyberattacks and drone intrusions, ahead of the South's April election.

In January, Seoul's defence minister said North Korea would face the end of its regime if it ever waged war. North Korea's rubber-stamp parliament voted Wednesday to abolish laws on economic cooperation with the South, according to KCNA. Kim has also ramped up weapons testing, including this year's launch of a flurry of cruise missiles, which analysts said the North could be supplying to Russia for use in Ukraine.

Ukraine must change 'methods' of war: Syrsky

KYIV : The Ukrainian army needs to change its "methods" to win the war against Russia, Kyiv's new commander-in-chief Oleksandr Syrsky said Friday in his first comments in the role. The 58-year-old replaced commander Valery Zaluzhnyi this week in the biggest shake-up of Ukraine's military leadership since Russia's invasion began nearly two years ago. The veteran general faces a myriad of problems in his in-tray, not least of which a 1,000-kilometre (600 mile) deadlocked frontline that has barely moved in over a year of fighting. "Only changes and continuous improvement in the means and methods of warfare will allow us to succeed on this path," Syrsky said in a social media post. US Senate votes to start work on Ukraine aid in shock turnaround. The army needs "clear and detailed planning", he said, "taking into account the needs of the frontline for the latest weapons supplied by international partners". Ukraine's allies, particularly Washington and Brussels, are struggling to keep up aid packages that have so far allowed Kyiv to hold out against Russia. Syrsky is taking over the military at a time of uncertainty over what resources will be available and as Russia puts its economy on a war footing, ramping up production and recruitment. Despite successes on the battlefield, Syrsky is not a national icon like Zaluzhnyi, and he has a reputation for being indifferent to military casualties. He appeared to address this characterisation in his statement, saying: "The lives and well-being of our servicemen have always been and remain the main asset of the Ukrainian army".—DNA

Russian FM praises diplomats on their day

"Diplomats have always been one of the main pillars of the state. It is enough to recall their role in overcoming the isolation of Soviet Russia after the 1917 revolution

Sergey Lavrov thanks diplomats of Commonwealth of Independent States for joining events on occasion of Feb. 10, Diplomatic Workers' Day MOSCOW : Diplomats have always been one of the main pillars of the state, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said on Friday. Speaking in Moscow on the occasion of Diplomatic Workers' Day, which is celebrated in Russia on Feb. 10, Lavrov paid tribute to the memory of all the Russian diplomats who contributed to the development of Russia's international relations. "Today we remember our great predecessors. We also remember the comrades who died in the line of duty, and those who became victims of political repression. We always keep this memory, we are inspired by their service to the motherland," he said. Lavrov also thanked the diplomats from the Commonwealth of Independent States and "friendly" countries who took part in the ceremony, saying that Moscow "values this solidarity." "Diplomats have always been one of the main pillars of the state. It is enough to recall their role in overcoming the isolation of Soviet Russia after the 1917 revolution. ... This part of our common history should be well studied by Western countries, which are once again trying to isolate and 'cancel' us," he said, referring to sanctions and other measures taken after the start of the Ukraine conflict two years ago this month. Lavrov thanked all Foreign Ministry employees for their continuing contributions and sharing experience with the younger generations.—APP



Tunis: Former Tunisian Ambassador and member of the Geopolitical Group, R&D Department, Hatem Atallah, meets with Ambassador Javed Umrani. Both sides agreed to closely collaborate with think tanks from both countries and explore more avenues for research cooperation.—DNA

Greece to raise investment price for 'golden visas': PM

Greece plans to increase "golden visa" investment threshold to 800,000 euros for high-demand real estate

WEB DESK

ATHENS : Greece is planning to further raise the investment threshold for "golden visas" to foreigners to 800,000 euros (\$861,520) for real estate in cities and islands where demand is high, Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis said on Friday. Greece first launched its golden visa scheme in 2014, granting foreigners a renewable, five-year residence permit in the EU member state in return for a 250,000-euro property investment in the country. Last year, it raised the threshold to 500,000 euros in certain neighbourhoods of the capital

Athens and its second-biggest city of Thessaloniki, as well as on the islands of Mykonos and Santorini, two of its biggest tourism destinations. Speaking in parliament on Friday, Mitsotakis said the gov-



ernment was considering raising it further in certain urban areas and on islands. He did not name the areas. "What we are discussing with the finance minister, and I believe we will be able to announce something very soon, is a further significant increase in the threshold for golden visa investments," Mitsotakis said. He said the threshold could reach 800,000 euros. Greece has issued just over 17,500 golden visas since 2018, according to the latest available migration ministry data. Chinese citizens accounted for 61% of those. As well as residency in Greece, the visas allow travel within Europe's free movement Schen-

gen zone. Meanwhile, since its inception in 2013, the Golden Visa program has garnered substantial interest, with Greece receiving over 25,100 applications and granting 17,184 permits to buyers seeking to reside in the country. Chinese investors have dominated the program, accounting for nearly 60% of all visas issued, followed by 7% from Turkish investors. Prime Minister Mitsotakis emphasized that the program has significantly bolstered state revenues, contributing "more than 2 billion since it started." The surge in foreign interest, coupled with Greece's resurging economy and the Golden Visa program's

attractive price points, has fueled a substantial increase in residential property prices in Athens. According to Bank of Greece data, the price index for the capital city rose by 11.9% in the third quarter of 2023 compared to the same period a year ago, with previous quarters witnessing even higher hikes. The booming tourism industry has further exacerbated the housing situation for locals, as landlords turn to short-term leasing platforms like Airbnb. To address this, the government introduced a program last year offering low or interest-free loans to individuals under 39 years old, facilitating their efforts to acquire their first property.

Bitcoin rises 5% to highest in a month

LONDON : Bitcoin rose 5% on Friday to its highest in a month, marching back towards the level it reached in January on the back of optimism after the first US listed spot bitcoin exchange traded products received regulatory approval. The world's largest cryptocurrency rose as much as 5.16% to \$47,667. Crypto stocks set to start December on a high note as bitcoin hits near 19-month high has gained 10% this week, its most in a week since October. Bitcoin hit a two-year high just above \$49,000 in January.—APP

Briefs

OIC official visits Tajikistan

They also exchanged views on issues of mutual interest to Tajikistan and the OIC especially in areas of humanitarian, cultural and social affairs

DNA

JEDDAH: The Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian, Cultural and Social Affairs, and the Special Envoy of the OIC Secretary-General for Afghanistan, Ambassador Tarig Ali Bakheet, was received on Friday, 09 February 2024, in Dushanbe, by His Excellency Mr. Sirojiddin MUHRIDDIN, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Tajikistan.

After delivering a written message from the Secretary-General to H. E. the Minister, the two parties discussed the efforts of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation and the Republic of Tajikistan to support the Afghan people, in light of the resolutions adopted by the Council of Foreign Ministers in this regard.

They also exchanged views on issues of mutual interest to Tajikistan and the OIC especially in areas of humanitarian, cultural and social affairs. They agreed to keep the momentum resulting from their fruitful cooperation while highlighting the commitment of Tajikistan to support OIC goals and its active role in hosting multiple OIC events.

Balochistan launches solar projects under CPEC

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Balochistan Caretaker Chief Minister Mir Ali Mardan Khan Domki inaugurated an extensive solarization project of converting various public department buildings including educational, institutions, healthcare facilities and civic departments over renewables that will provide clean, affordable and uninterrupted power supply to the public facilities of Balochistan. The Balochistan government, with the support of Chinese government, has completed the solarization of 12 educational institutions, computer labs & hospitals that have been equipped with modern solar power facilities.

The Chinese Ambassador to Pakistan Jiang Zaidong participated in the inaugural ceremony and expressed his views through video link held at Chief Minister's secretariat, Gwadar. Pakistan's total solar installed capacity was 1.24 GW by 2022, representing a 17 percent increase over 2021. The government has proposed many initiatives to increase the share of solar energy in the country.

Women politicians grasp crucial role in electoral process

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Women from different age groups, political parties, and constituencies have actively contested in the General Election 2024, which depicts advancement in gender equality. The election results also show that women are gaining ground in various constituencies, said a report aired by a private news channel. Senior Leader of PPP Nafisa Shah said that active participation of women in politics and elections is a democratic norm that helps in addressing issues of women. Promoting the political participation of women is a necessary step that will help to achieve gender equality and it will also portray a positive image of the country in the world, said Independent candidate Shandana Gulzar while hailing active participation of women in elections.

Post-elections scenario

New govt shall be faced with multiple challenges

Militant attacks have risen over the past 18 months after a lull when many militant groups were driven into Afghanistan with a military operation in 2014

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan held a national election on Thursday to elect a new government, with multiple crises plaguing the country. Here are some of the challenges that will confront the government that takes charge: Pakistan narrowly averted sovereign default last summer through a last-gasp \$3 billion bailout from the IMF — but the lender's support ends in March, following which officials believe a new, extended programme will be needed. Negotiating a new programme, and at speed, will be critical for the new government, which will take over an economy beset by record high inflation and slow growth caused by tough reforms. A new programme means committing to steps needed to stay on a narrow path to recovery, but which will limit policy options to provide relief to a deeply frustrated population and cater to

industries that are looking for government support to spur growth. Political tensions have been high in the run-up to the election due to what former prime minister has called a crackdown on him and his party. The PTI founder been in jail since August, angering his millions of supporters. He has been sentenced to various jail sentences three times in the last week but more cases are pending against him — including one that accuses him of ordering violent attacks on military installations, which could entail the death sentence. The PTI founder maintains mass popular support in Pakistan, and a continued crackdown and his remaining in jail would only stoke tensions at a time when stability is needed to attract foreign investment to shore up the economy. Militant attacks have risen over the past 18 months after a

lull when many militant groups were driven into Afghanistan with a military operation in 2014. The groups — particularly the banned Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) — reorganised in Afghanistan after the Taliban returned to power there in 2021, and have been reportedly using advanced weaponry left behind by NATO-led forces. Militants have carried out a string of high-profile attacks and returned to strongholds inside Pakistan. But Islamabad's limited fiscal space limits its ability to fund another sustained military operation. An ethno-nationalist Baloch insurgency in the southwest, which also targets the interests of key ally China, has picked up steam. Beijing has invested heavily in mines in the mineral-rich Balochistan province and in the strategic port, Gwadar. The TTP attacks have caused unprecedented friction

between Islamabad and the Taliban, who were previously believed to have close ties, as has Islamabad's expulsion of hundreds of thousands of illegal Afghans, many of whom have lived in Pakistan for decades. Pakistan and Iran shared tit-for-tat air strikes on purported militant bases on each other's soil last month, and while the two seem to have fixed ties since, the incident has opened up a new security worry for Pakistan on its western border. Meanwhile on its eastern border, fresh tensions have risen with old foe India after Islamabad accused New Delhi of running an assassination campaign inside Pakistan. India is also going to the polls by May, and a return to power for India's Hindu nationalist government with a heavy mandate could further complicate matters for Pakistan's new government. — Agencies

ANP leader Hoti resigns

Hoti claimed the responsibility for his defeat from his ancestral constituency of NA-22 Mardan

STAFF REPORT

PESHAWAR: Ameer Haider Khan Hoti has resigned as the senior vice president of the Awami National Party (ANP). The ANP leader announced his resignation as the senior vice president in a social media post on X. Hoti claimed the responsibility for his defeat from his ancestral constituency [of NA-22 Mardan in the elections], acknowledging that the electorate did not pose confidence in him. He remarked that he would continue to be part of the caravan of Bacha Khan as a humble member of the party.

Malaysia's top court invalidates Kelantan Islamic laws

DNA

KUALA LUMPUR: Malaysia's top court on Friday declared more than a dozen Islamic laws enacted by the northeastern state of Kelantan as unconstitutional, in a decision that could affect the legality of Sharia in other parts of the Muslim-majority country. Malaysia has a dual-track legal system with Islamic criminal and family laws applicable to Muslims, running alongside civil laws. Islamic laws are enacted by state legislatures while civil laws are passed by Malaysia's parliament.

Forces kill terrorist in Balochistan

RAWALPINDI: On 9 February 24, security forces conducted an intelligence based operation in Qilla Saifullah District of Balochistan on reported presence of a high profile terrorist. During the conduct of operation, after intense fire exchange, HVT, Abdul Shakoor @ Nauman @ Abu Hamza Khurasani of Daesh was sent to hell. The killed terrorist was the mastermind of recent bombings in Qila Saifullah and Pishin on 7 February 24 and was highly wanted by the law enforcement agencies. — DNA



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Interior Dr. Gohar Ejaz and Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Murtaza Solangi addressing a press conference. — DNA

Uncertain election results

KSE-100 index plunges over 2,000 points

KSE-100 shares index falls below 62,000 mark by losing 2,145.53 points or 3.34%

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: The Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) opened

the day on a negative note as the benchmark KSE-100 index plunged over 2,000 points on Friday as uncertainty surrounded election 2024 results. The KSE-100 shares index, the benchmark of the country's capital market, fell below the 62,000 mark by losing 2,145.53 points or 3.34% during the intraday trading. Capital market expert Muhammad Sohail said that the index fell by 3% due to the "unexpected" results of the elections.

The stocks, a day before the general elections in Pakistan, closed on a higher note, boosted by a pre-election rally and hopes of an upgrade in the country's credit rating, but trading volumes remained thin as investors stayed cautious. The PSX gained 344.85 points or 0.54% to close at 64,143.87 points on Wednesday. The highest index of the day remained at 64,196.62 points while the lowest level was recorded at 63,927.29 points. S&P Global Ratings is expected to review Pakistan's sovereign rating post-election and it was reported that it could raise it to 'B' if the new government shows commitment to fiscal reforms and an International Monetary Fund (IMF) program.

Germany silent on Putin's call to free Russian hitman

NEWS DESK

BERLIN: Germany declined to be drawn on Friday on whether talks were underway on swapping a Russian state hitman serving a life sentence in a German prison for detained US journalist Evan Gershkovich, an idea floated by Russian President Vladimir Putin. A German government spokesman twice declined to answer questions on the proposals, which have repeatedly surfaced in media since Wall Street Journal reporter Gershkovich was first detained last March. "I can't say anything on that," deputy government spokeswoman Christiane Hoffmann said when asked if Russia was seeking such an exchange. "I don't want to address this concrete case, please," she added when asked if Germany was in touch with the United States on the matter. People in the entourage of Chancellor Olaf Scholz, who is visiting Washington for talks with President Joe Biden, also declined to comment. Gershkovich is in detention in Russia on what his newspaper and the US government say are cooked-up charges of spying. The man Putin wants to be released, Vadim Krasikov, is serving a life sentence for the 2019 murder in a Berlin park of an ethnic Chechen from Georgia who had abandoned the armed struggle against Moscow for Chechen independence.

US-Philippines drills unaffected by global conflicts

MANILA: Combat exercises between the United States and the Philippines involving thousands of forces each year will not be affected by America's focus on the wars in Ukraine and the Middle East, a US general. The Biden administration has been strengthening an arc of military alliances in the Indo-Pacific region to build deterrence and to better counter China, including in any future confrontation over Taiwan and the disputed South China Sea. But there have been concerns that the war in Ukraine and the Israel-Hamas conflict could hamper America's pivot to Asia and the Pacific and divert military resources intended for the region. "Certainly, it does not affect our presence," Maj. Gen. Marcus Evans, commanding general of the US Army's 25th Infantry Division, told The Associated Press in an interview late Thursday when asked to comment on those concerns. "If anything, it drives an increased sense of urgency to focus on these partnerships that we've developed decades ago and it's our responsibility to continue to build on these unique training opportunities," said Evans, who has 12,000 soldiers under his command. Evans, who is based in Hawaii, was in Manila for talks with his Philippine army counterparts ahead of largescale combat maneuvers between the US and Philippine forces. — Agencies

Japan offers \$300mn backing for chip research organization

The support comes at a time when Japan is making a major push to rebuild its chip manufacturing base

FOREIGN DESK

TOKYO: Japan's trade ministry said on Friday it would offer backing worth up to 45 billion yen (\$301 million) to an organisation, including chip foundry venture Rapidus, for research into cutting-edge semiconductor technology. The Leading-edge Semiconductor Technology Center (LSTC) is chaired by Rapidus Chairman Tetsuro Higashi and

includes research institutions and universities. The support comes at a time when Japan is making a major push to rebuild its chip manufacturing base. Underpinned by billions of dollars in subsidies, Rapidus aims to mass manufacture 2-nanometre logic chips in Hokkaido and compete with leading companies such as Taiwan's TSMC (2330.TW), opens new tab. TSMC, this week, announced it would build a second fab in Japan to begin operation by 2027 in a vote of confidence in the country as a base for manufacturing.

Joe Biden disputes special counsel's report

WASHINGTON: A special counsel report released to found evidence that President Joe Biden willfully retained and shared highly classified information when he was a private citizen, including about military and foreign policy in Afghanistan, but concluded that criminal charges were not warranted. The report from special counsel Robert Hur resolves a criminal investigation that had shadowed Biden's presidency for the last year. But its biting critical assessment of his handling of sensitive government records and unflattering characterizations of his memory will spark fresh questions about his competency and age that cut at voters' most deep-seated concerns about his candidacy for re-election. In remarks at the White House Thursday evening, Biden denied that he improperly shared classified information and angrily lashed out at Hur for questioning his mental acuity, particularly his recollection of the timing of his late son Beau's death from cancer. The searing findings will almost certainly blunt his efforts to draw contrast with Donald Trump, Biden's likely opponent in November's presidential election, over a criminal indictment charging the former president with illegally hoarding classified records at his Mar-a-Lago estate in Florida and refusing to return them to the government. Despite abundant differences between the cases, Trump immediately seized on the special counsel report to portray himself as a victim of a "two-tiered system of justice." Yet even as Hur found evidence that Biden willfully held onto and shared with a ghostwriter highly classified information, the special counsel devoted much of his report to explaining why he did not believe the evidence met the standard for criminal charges, including a high probability that the Justice Department would not be able to prove Biden's intent beyond a reasonable doubt, citing among other things an advanced age that they said made him forgetful and the possibility of "innocent explanations" for the records that they could not refute. "I did not share classified information," Biden insisted. "I did not share it with my ghostwriter." He added he wasn't aware how the boxes containing classified documents ended up in his garage. And in response to Hur's portrayal of him, Biden insisted to reporters that "My memory is fine," and said he believes he remains the most qualified person to serve as president. "How in the hell dare he raise that?" Biden asked, about Hur's comments regarding his son's death, saying he didn't believe it was any of Hur's business. — Agencies

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