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China ready to cooperate for peace, security: Wang Yi

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Cameron seeks calm on Israel, Lebanon border

Detailed News On Page-08



SL captain says aggression key to halt Test slide

Detailed News On Page-06



Cross-border infiltration

Pakistan asks Kabul to hand over terrorists' big guns

Pak calls for full implementation of ICJ judgement on Gaza

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

ISLAMABAD: In view of the recent spike in terrorism in Pakistan, the Foreign Office (FO) Thursday urged Afghan authorities to take immediate and effective action against the terror entities and hand over their leadership to Islamabad. Earlier today, at least one person was killed and four others were injured as multiple blasts were reported in different parts of Balochistan including the provincial capital Quetta. At her weekly briefing in Islamabad, FO spokesperson Mumtaz Zahra Baloch said, "Pakistan has been raising concerns over the terror threat emanating from Afghanistan." Responding to a question, she said the Indian external affairs ministry had not called the veracity of our credible evidence regarding New Delhi's involvement in extrajudicial and extra-judicial killings in Pakistan. "India is involved in terrorist incidents inside Pakistan," she added. The spokesperson also said Pakistan had also shared the evidence of India's involvement in terror acts with friendly countries and other relevant countries, especially the ones with which we need further cooperation in holding to account the individuals behind the terror acts. She said that India's charges of terrorism against Pakistan are neither new nor credible, describing them as ridiculous. The spokesperson pointed out that India has been involved in terror incidents and extrajudicial and extrajudicial killings in contrast around the world. Baloch also voiced serious concerns over the attacks on Muslim places of worship in India. She said there is a concerted campaign to demolish mosques in India and replace them with temples. These acts, she said, would remain a blot on the face of Indian democracy for the times to come. The spokesperson said Pakistan would observe Kashmiri Solidarity Day on

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Taliban reject UNSC report on Al-Qaeda camps

The report also said that Al-Qaeda maintained a "holding pattern in Afghanistan under Taliban patronage"

NEWS DESK

KABUL: Afghanistan's Taliban government rejected on Thursday a recent UN Security Council report claiming that new Al-Qaeda training centers have been established on its soil. The report was released this week by a UNSC committee pursuant to resolutions concerning Daesh, Al-Qaeda and associated individuals. It was based on assessments by the UN sanctions monitoring team, which cites intelligence provided by member states to warn that Al-Qaeda "was reported to have established up to eight new training camps in Afghanistan" and that it "maintains safe houses to facilitate the movement between Afghanistan and the Islamic Republic of Iran." The report also said that Al-Qaeda maintained a "holding pattern in

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ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Prime Minister Anwar-ul-Haq Kakar chairs a meeting of the Caretaker Federal Cabinet. - DNA

Pak-Maldives agree to strengthen relations

Caretaker PM holds a telephone conversation with President of Maldives

ADIL SHAHEEN

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan and Maldives on Thursday agreed to strengthen bilateral relations and explore avenues for enhanced cooperation, particularly focusing on trade and environmental initiatives. The bilateral relations were discussed during a telephonic conversation between Caretaker Prime Minister Anwar-ul-Haq Kakar and President of Maldives Dr Mohamed Muiz. The conversation was held on Thursday. The two leaders discussed the current state of bilateral relations and the need to enhance cooperation in various fields. They agreed to explore new avenues for trade and economic cooperation. The Maldives is a key trade partner for Pakistan, and the two countries have a long history of friendly relations. The conversation was held in a cordial atmosphere, and both leaders expressed their commitment to strengthening the bilateral ties. They also discussed the need to address environmental challenges and explore ways to cooperate in this field. The conversation was held for about 30 minutes. Both leaders expressed their satisfaction with the outcome of the conversation and their commitment to working together to strengthen the bilateral relations. They also discussed the need to address the challenges faced by both countries and explore ways to cooperate in this field. The conversation was held in a cordial atmosphere, and both leaders expressed their commitment to strengthening the bilateral ties.

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'Come what may' ECP to ensure polls on Feb 8, says CEC Raja

The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has announced February 8th (Thursday) as a public holiday

CHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) on Thursday expressed resolve and readiness to conduct the upcoming general elections on the designated date, February 8, despite security challenges in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan provinces. With just a week left in the February 8 polls, election preparations and campaigns go on in full swing but the country is reeling from consecutive incidents of violence which resulted in multiple deaths, especially on political parties' rallies in the two provinces, which are generally the most affected by the menace of terrorism. Security across the country has been heightened with the deployment of law enforcers to ensure the law and

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PM Kakar directs action against drug smugglers

Chairs cabinet meeting

MERTAB PRIZADA

ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Prime Minister Anwar-ul-Haq Kakar on Thursday directed to improve the performance of the Drug Regulatory Authority of Pakistan (DRAP) and accelerate action against drug smugglers and hoarders. Chairing a meeting of the Federal Cabinet, the prime minister instructed to

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Briefs

China urges int'l community to support UNRWA

Gaza faces unprecedented humanitarian disaster

DNA

BEIJING: China on Thursday called on the international community, especially major powers, to prioritise the loss of the people in Gaza, reconsider the decision to suspend funding, and continue to support the work of United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) for Palestine Refugees in the Near East. "As the ongoing Palestinian-Israeli conflict drags on into the fourth month, Gaza faces unprecedented humanitarian disaster. Under the current circumstances, there's no other choice than a ceasefire that can dissolve the crisis and there's no other task that is more pressing than protecting civilians," Chinese Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Wang Wenbin said during his regular briefing.

'Govt fully prepared to hold elections'

DNA

KARACHI: Caretaker Federal Minister for Information, Broadcasting and Parliamentary Affairs Marzua Sohail on Thursday said that the caretaker government was fully prepared and committed to conduct general elections on February 8. He was addressing a seminar on "Challenges and Roadmap for the New Government" organized by the Press Information Department. The minister said that as the government's spokesperson, he had been reiterating the caretaker government's commitment for holding elections as per the schedule given by the Election Commission of Pakistan.

Nawaz Shrif blasts PTI as Bilawal pledges for peace

Addressing a spirited crowd, Sharif questioned the efficacy of Khan's pledge to generate 10 million jobs and provide five million houses

STAFF REPORT

KHUZDAR: Pakistan Peoples Party chairman Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari on Wednesday deplored the wave of terrorism in Balochistan just ahead of election. "The PPP is on the receiving end of terrorism but the miscreants are sadly mistaken if they think I will retreat," thundered Bilawal. Speaking to a gathering in Khuzdar where he showed up as part of electioneering, Bilawal claimed that the PPP was the target of some elements who didn't want the party to form government in Balochistan. Their conspiracies would be foiled, he added. He said: "My brothers and sisters in Balochistan are in a state of agony. I understand the problems afflicting the Baloch and these people believe that the PPP can safeguard their rights." He said he would stand tall against terrorists and help resolve the issue of enforced disappearances.

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PTI's intra-party polls on Feb 5

MEHTAB PRIZADA

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf's (PTI) intra-party elections will be held on Feb 5 (Monday). The schedule of the internal elections has been issued. Party's federal election commissioner issued the schedule. In a statement issued on the social media website, the party said all registered voters will be eligible to take part in voting throughout Pakistan on the designated places for polling to elect a panel or a candidate of their choice. All the party members registered till Jan 31 would be eligible to take part in

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President for expanding ties with Russia, Italy, Mongolia

He was talking to the ambassadors-designates of Russia, Italy and Mongolia, who presented their diplomatic credentials



ISLAMABAD: Ambassadors of Russian, Italy and Mongolia presenting credentials to the President of Pakistan. - DNA

ANSA M BHATTI
ISLAMABAD: President Dr. Arif Alvi on Thursday urged the need to further expand trade, economic, cultural and people-to-people relations with Russia, Italy and Mongolia. He said that Pakistan offered immense investment opportunities for foreign investors, who should benefit from its business-friendly environment by investing in various economic sectors. The president expressed these views while talking to the ambassadors-designates of Russia, Italy and Mongolia, who separately called on him at the Awwaz-e-Sadr and presented their diplomatic credentials. Speaking to the Ambassador-designate of the Russia Federation to Pakistan, Albert P. Khorez, President Alvi expressed

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Mushaaal urges cultural diplomacy for Kashmir

The Seminar brought together Kashmir movement's political figures, academics, artists, and think-tank experts to share their insights on the distinct Kashmiri identity

MEHTAB PRIZADA

ISLAMABAD: In connection with commemoration of Kashmir Solidarity Day, the India Study Centre (ISC) at the Institute of Strategic Studies (ISSI) organized a Seminar and Exhibition on the theme of "Reflections of Resilience: Showcasing Kashmiri Identity Through Art."

lations (KIR). A young Kashmiri artist, Zohab Zaman, presented musical rendition of a patriotic Kashmiri song. Ambassador Sohail Mahmood, in his remarks, expressed gratitude to the speakers, attendees, and the students who took part in the accompanying art competition. He emphasized that art transcends the traditional boundaries of resistance and showcases the political struggle of Kashmiris under Indian illegal occupation and relentless oppression. The art exhibition, organized by the ISC, underscores the power of artistic expression and encapsulates the essence of the Kashmiri struggle, he said.

works of Malik Sajid, and the novels of Baharar Peer and Mirza Waheed. The DG ISSI advised not to assume art as just brushstrokes, but rather as an expression of emotions and lived experiences of a people enduring unabated repression but still fighting for their rights. He termed artists as torchbearers of the stories of Kashmir that most touch global consciousness. Ms. Mushaaal Hussein Mullick appreciated ISSI's initiative to engage the young Pakistani and Kashmiri artists, to explore the heritage and culture of Kashmir. She said today's innovative event expresses solidarity with the Kashmiri people in a most meaningful way and helps uplift the spirits. She shared her own passion for the arts and highlighted her personal contribution to depicting both the beauty of Kashmir and the travails of its people under occupation. She also compared the struggle of the Kashmiri people with that of the Palestinians. Ms. Mushaaal Mullick highlighted that New Delhi has depended on its cultural diplomacy to project a softer image of India to the world, whereas in reality, the BSF's "Hindutva" brigade in Occupied Jammu and Kashmir continues to attack the Kashmiri leadership, Kashmiri people, and even foreign tourists. She added that India has propagated a negative narrative of Kashmir through films that project the wrong image of Kashmiri culture and identity.



ISLAMABAD: Special Assistant to Prime Minister (SAPM) on Human Rights and Women Empowerment, Mushaaal Hussein Mullick, take keen interest in a painting during seminar and exhibition titled "Reflections of Resilience Showcasing Kashmiri Identity and Solidarity Through Art" at ISSI in the Federal Capital. —ONLINE

BFC will transform Pindi into business district

DNA

RAWALPINDI: The Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (RCCI) President Saqib Rafiq has stated that the Business Facilitation Center (BFC) will transform Rawalpindi into a business district. RCCI President Saqib Rafiq in a statement lauded the Punjab Government especially personal commitment and interest of Chief Minister Punjab Mansoor Khan to provide facilitation to the business community and termed it a vital step towards facilitating investment and industrialization in the region. He remarked that the establishment of the Business Facilitation Center for the business community in six cities of Punjab including Rawalpindi is a key initiative towards ease of doing business which will provide seamless interaction between the business community and 36 different departments.

President for improving legal framework to strengthen transparency

DNA

ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi on Thursday emphasized the need to improve the legal framework to strengthen transparency in government departments and financial accountability. Speaking at a meeting during his visit to the Auditor General of Pakistan (AGP), the president said transparency could be improved by documentation of the economy and digitizing the government's transactions. The AGP Muhammad Ajmal Gondal also briefed the president about the role and performance of the office. President Arif Alvi said the use of modern technology will improve the performance of the AGP. He stressed the need to create awareness about the

role of the AGP, its activities and the audit findings. He said the parliamentary oversight was important to ensure the judicious use of the public money and promote transparency in the government departments and financial accountability. President Alvi appreciated the AGP's role in improving parliamentary oversight and transparency in the government sector. He said the Auditor General's role in identifying flaws and stabilizing the government's financial management system is very important. During the meeting, the Auditor General of Pakistan informed the president about the role of the office. President Arif Alvi said the use of modern technology will improve the performance of the AGP. He stressed the need to create awareness about the

CDA eliminate illegal constructions in Capital

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Expeditious actions are being taken on the direction of the Chairman Capital Development Authority (CDA) to eliminate illegal constructions and illegal use of constructions from the city of Islamabad. In this regard, Building Control Section along with Enforcement Directorate on Thursday with the assistance of District Administration and Islamabad Police taking strict action on non-conforming use of buildings in Jinnah Garden, Phase One, several buildings were sealed. According to the details, 51 buildings in Jinnah Garden, Phase One have been sealed for non-conforming use and notices have also been issued to the owners to eliminate illegal constructions and illegal use of constructions.

BISP increases Kafaalat stipend to 9.2 million beneficiaries

ISLAMABAD

: Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) has increased the amount of Kafaalat stipend from Rs. 8,750 to Rs. 10,500, benefiting women of 9.2 million beneficiary families across the country. This was informed to the Probationary Officers of the Benazir Income Support Programme during their visit to the BISP office on Thursday. The Probationary Officers visited the BISP office to enhance their understanding of BISP's mission and various initiatives. "The visit was aimed to provide a comprehensive overview of BISP's role in supporting vulnerable communities and promoting socio-economic development," a BISP news release said. BISP Secretary Amer Ali Ahmed, in his briefing on the organization's functions, highlighted the programmes launched to financially support low income and underprivileged

segments of society. He said the Benazir Kafaalat Stipend, the quarterly stipend, had been raised from Rs. 8,750 to Rs. 10,500, benefiting women of 9.2 million beneficiary families across the country. Similarly, under the Benazir Taleem Wazifa, 8.9 million children had been enrolled, and 1.5 million women were receiving benefits under the Ashraf Maham programme, he added. He said mobile registration vehicles were deployed for enrollment in remote areas of Balochistan and Sindh. "As a part of constant improvement and evolution, a new payment system is being introduced," he added. Women are being provided training through a Digital and Financial Literacy Program, BISP Savings Scheme and a Call Center have also been introduced to promote the culture

Elahi to be indicted on Feb 14

LAHORE

: The anti-corruption court in Lahore (Feb 14) to indict FTI imprisoned leader Parvez Elahi and other accused in alleged corruption cases. Judge Zubair Shahzad said he will hear the reference of alleged corruption in development projects. Parvez Elahi and the other accused were presented before the court. Copies of the reference were also given to the accused.—APP

Hashoo Group, NEST launch hospitality scholarships

ISLAMABAD

: Continuing its mission to promote accessible education and employment opportunities for the economically upliftment of Pakistan, the country's leading hospitality and tourism conglomerate, Hashoo Group, has collaborated with the National Endowment Scholarships for Talented (NEST) of the Ministry of Federal Education & Professional Training (M/FEPT, Government of Pakistan, Islamabad. This collaboration will introduce dedicated Hospitality Scholarships in Pakistan, to benefit from the Nursing, Arts, & Culture promote the Hospitality & Tourism Sector, marking the first time in the country. The hospitality sector is one of the highest employment-generating sectors, both internationally

and locally. Through this impactful initiative, underprivileged students across Pakistan will be eligible to receive scholarships for their two-year Diploma/Associate Degree Program in hospitality and tourism offered by Hashoo School of Hospitality Management (HSHM). Additionally, this partnership will provide a gateway for underserved students of the Hashoo Foundation - the corporate social responsibility arm of the Hashoo Group, to benefit from the Hospitality & Culture NEST offers. Hashoo Group and NEST will also actively explore opportunities nationwide to support talented and underprivileged students who could greatly benefit from financial assistance on their educational journey. The main objective of NEST is to provide scholarships to needy yet talented students who need additional resources to continue their studies. Mr. Wassam Ajmal Chaudhry, Chief Executive Officer-NEST/Federal Secretary M/o Federal Education & Professional Training, Government of Pakistan, Islamabad, expressed his point of view by calling this partnership a step in the right direction, empowering underprivileged youth. He added that enabling hospitality and tourism-related scholarships to NEST's ambit is a constructive gesture that has diversi-

IGP listens to problems of police employees

LAHORE

: Inspector General of Police Punjab Dr. Usman Anwar held an open court at the Central Police Office, met with the police employees and their families, after listening to their problems, issued relief orders. IG Punjab Dr. Usman Anwar sent the application of ASI Mukhtar Ahmed's son for recruitment on family claim to ARG Admin for action. IG Punjab directed the DG Welfare to provide relief on the requests of Constable Asif of Lahore and Constable Inam ulah of Faisalabad for assistance in medical expenses.—APP

Regional agriculture trade spurs food security innovation

ISLAMABAD

: Innovative indigenous solutions, and digital integration of agriculture data can play a pivotal role to unlock the potential of regional agriculture trade and support progress towards food security and SDG2, said speakers at a report launch. The report titled, "Potential of Innovation for Food Security and Regional Trade in Agriculture", was launched by Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI) in collaboration with Canada Fund for Local Initiatives (CFI). Speaking on the occasion, Dr. Nigar Ahmed, SDPI Joint Executive Director, remarked that recurrent climate events, pandemic and supply chain disruptions have caused food price inflation shock and exacerbated food insecurity in Pakistan and across the region. Considering these novel challenges, agricultural productivity and regional food security can be leveraged by technological innovations and strengthening regional agricultural trade. He highlighted that 2022 floods have severely undermined the ability of 73% of households in flood affected areas to afford basic nutrition stalling the progress towards SDG2. Moreover, the situation is much more for Afghanistan with 52% of the population unable to meet their nutritional demand. The hackathon organized by SDPI under the project provided a platform for startups to network and showcase their ideas and work to public and private sector to advance towards regional agriculture trade integration and food security. Dr. Haroon Sarwar, Economic Consultant, Ministry of National Food Security & Research, lauded SDPI's initiative to provide a platform for startups working in food security in the form of a Hackathon in 2023. The participation of startups from Balochistan and even Afghanistan was a promising sign for food security. He emphasized that the current problems confronting agriculture in Pakistan and region is the poor access of small holding farmers to finances. He said that bridging the gap between small farmers and financial institutions can help scale up their profitability and ultimately reduce food insecurity in the country. Highlighting the regional trade potential, he said, there is a natural appetite for agriculture trade between Pakistan and Afghanistan with both countries having much to offer to each other. However, the trade potential is obstructed by political and strategic barriers. He said that SDPI and Ministry of Food Security and Research can present a compelling case for enhancing collaboration in research and data sharing in agriculture for both countries and a dashboard can help identify areas for trade collaboration. Dr. Samreen Babar, Associate Professor, Bahria University, said that the Hackathon organized by SDPI provided a platform to students and startups to pitch their innovative ideas and bridge them to mentors for guidance.—DNA

ment for promising minds to come together, develop new ideas, and make significant contributions to the country's economic development. He said that academia has cutting-edge research while industry faces many challenges, therefore, close cooperation between Bahria and ICCI would help resolve issues of industry and produce innovative products for exports. He

ICCI, BU to collaborate to promote entrepreneurship

President ICCI stressed for close academia-industry linkages to address industrial problems and improve industrial productivity



FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: Ahsan Zafar Bahkhtawari, President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) along with a delegation met with Vice Admiral (R) Asif Khaliq, Rector, Bahria University, and discussed prospects of collaboration between the two institutions to

promote entrepreneurship and improve the competitiveness of the industrial sector. Speaking on the occasion, Vice Admiral (R) Asif Khaliq, Rector, Bahria University, briefed the ICCI delegation about the initiatives of his institution. He said that Bahria is working to groom today's youth into tomorrow's leaders. He said that Bahria is providing an environment for promising minds to come together, develop new ideas, and make significant contributions to the country's economic development. He said that academia has cutting-edge research while industry faces many challenges, therefore, close cooperation between Bahria and ICCI would help resolve issues of industry and produce innovative products for exports. He

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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

Hotels & Restaurants

- Serena Hotel.....111 133 153
Marriott.....051-2826121
Moral.....0334-5421812

Emergency

- Rescue (Police).....15
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Fire Services Rawalpindi/ Islamabad.....112 & 16
Emergency Ambulance.....1122
& Rescue Services.....4451122
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Motorway Police.....9270601-20
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Rawalpindi.....9270601-20

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MH.....5611116
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DHQ.....5553114
RCH.....9290301-4
Holy Family.....9290322-7
PIMS.....9281170-79
Polyclinic.....9218300-09
Shifa International 4630966

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- CDA.....9221334-43
CDA.....9218301-04
Met Office.....9255090-6
RDA.....5555964
TMA.....5770886
Contentment Board 9270151-3

Water Tank

Islamabad.....0321-5744860



ISLAMABAD: A beautiful view of the Faisal Avenue. The city presents a cleaner look after Wednesday rain spell and hailstorm. -Photo Mudassar Raja

OIC ombudsmen pledge to address global injustices

President of OICOA and Chief Ombudsman of Turkiye, Seref Malkoc, highlighted the escalating issue of Islamophobia in European countries and lamented the collapse of humanity witnessed in the ongoing Palestinian genocide

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: The ombudsmen of the Organisation of Islamic Co-operation (OIC) countries have reiterated their commitment to addressing global injustices, with a particular focus on the dire circumstances faced by the people of Palestine.

rain in person, while the one from Iran participated virtually, creating a diverse and unified front against these grave concerns, said a news release issued here on Thursday.

Secretary General of OICOA and Federal Tax Ombudsman of Pakistan, Dr. Asif Mahmood Jaf stated, "We must elevate our collective voice to echo the cries of the innocent who suffer daily. The brutalities of the Zionist regime cannot go unchallenged," calling for decisive and impactful advocacy beyond empathy. Dr. Jaf

emphasized the need for unified strength and action within the Ombudsman community, saying, "Now, more than ever, our solidarity, effort, and cooperation are vital. We possess the power to drive change." President of OICOA and Chief Ombudsman of Turkiye, Seref Malkoc, highlighted the escalating issue of islamophobia in European countries and lamented the collapse of humanity witnessed in the ongoing Palestinian genocide. He expressed disappointment in the silence of global leaders

amidst the despair and devastation. Malkoc applauded South Africa's initiative in bringing Israel's actions to the International Court of Justice and expressed hope that Palestinians would rise from the ashes. The Board Members unanimously condemned the ongoing atrocities and supported the leadership of OICOA's call for immediate and practical intervention. They pledged support from their respective ombudsman offices for bringing the atrocities of the Zionist Israeli

Govt officials visit Murree to view arrangements for tourists

The Relief Commissioner had also warned that no compromise would be on negligence on part of the officials concerned. Snow should also be removed within shortest possible time frame while using heavy machinery, the Relief Commissioner ordered

RAWALPINDI Deputy Commissioner (DC) Murree, Agha Zahid Abbas Shirazi on Wednesday night visited Express Highway and other areas to review arrangements made to facilitate tourists and the ongoing operation to remove snow and clear roads. The DC informed that the Municipal Corporation "Murt" had cleared all the roads and kept the traffic flowing despite the difficult weather conditions. Traffic was slow due to traffic rush and slippery roads within the limits of Municipal Corporation Murree, the DC said.

ity (NHAI) officials to provide immediate assistance to the administration and advised the tourists to get information about weather conditions before visiting Murree. He asked the visitors to follow the advisory issued by the tourist district administration. Monitoring of various roads was being conducted from the control room through CCTV cameras, he informed. According to MET Javed had directed the Murree administration to remain alert particularly during snowfall. The Relief Commissioner had also warned that no compromise would be on negligence on part of the officials concerned. Snow should also be removed within shortest possible time frame while using heavy machinery,

the Relief Commissioner ordered. The flow of traffic on the roads should be ensured at all cost, Nabeel Javed said. It is the responsibility of the administration to provide all possible facilities to the tourists according to the weather condition, he said. The tourists had also been requested to check the weather conditions before coming to Murree. Murree attracts a large number of tourists and the administration was striving to facilitate them and avoid any untoward incident, Nabeel Javed added. ADRG, Qasim Jaz while appreciating efforts of the departments concerned said that all the personnel concerned were in the field despite extreme cold and snow. Agencies

Nosheen advocates women's empowerment in political arenas

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) candidate for the constituency NA-73, Syeda Nosheen Bilkhar on Thursday highlighted the impactful role of women candidates in the upcoming elections. Talking to a private news channel, she emphasized that the positive changes in women's confidence and problem-solving abilities when represented in elections. The PML-N candidate clarified that while she was not in favor of women's marches, she advocates for the fundamental respect of women. She stressed the need for a respectful environment for women in society. In response to a query, Nosheen highlighted the influence of family dynamics on voting, noting that husbands and brothers often vote based on the requests of women in her constituencies. She acknowledged the evolution within the PML-N, traditionally a male-dominated

party. She highlighted the party's shift, providing general seats for women, and praised Maryam Nawaz's leadership, anticipating more women participating in the upcoming election. Nosheen supported the active involvement of women in decision-making processes, emphasizing that their voices should be shaping policies and strategies. She pointed out that women more than men, face domestic issues such as property matters.—APP

'Cultural heritage sites' protection crucial: minister

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Federal Minister for National Heritage and Culture Syed Jamal Shah Thursday said that it was important to preserve the cultural heritage sites of the country and promote artistic growth among the youth. Talking to a Private news channel, minister said that caretaker government was actively working to promote calligraphy in madaris as the visual art was part of Muslim heritage, adding, Calligraphy needs to be promoted to advocate peace, love and harmony in present society. He mentioned that caretaker government has worked to establish a heritage channel under the Culture Division to preserve and protect the collection of folk literature of Pakistani languages, especially children's folk literature. He said the scope of culture is unlimited, adding, every nation who is staying connected with their culture are the ones that develop the most. Responding to a question, he said caretaker government had taken revolutionary steps for promotion of art and culture with introducing various project including heritage channel, children contents on youth, cinema promotion and youth related programs. In another question related to forthcoming elections, he assured for a peaceful and timely conduct of elections in country, adding, public need to choose representatives on merit instead of focusing on political affiliations.

Five accused of Hundi business held

ISLAMABAD: In major crackdowns by FIA Commercial Banking Circle against Hundi business, five suspects were held on Thursday. The arrested accused were identified as Muhammad Isa Khan, Rahatullah, Tahweed Muhammad, Yasir Wasim and Ahmed Shah. The accused were arrested from Qamber Bazar and Tinsarghar district Lower Dir. During the raid, domestic and foreign currency worth more than Rs 2.4 million including 7400 Saudi Riyals, 300 IARD Dirhams and 100 US Dollars were recovered from the accused. Record related to hundi reference was also recovered. Case has been registered against the accused, while further investigation was underway, FIA.—APP

Movie "Kazakh Khanate diamond sword" screened

MAHNOOR ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: In a bid to further strengthen cultural relations, Pakistan National Council of Arts, Minister for Information and the Embassy of Kazakhstan organized screening of a movie titled "Kazakh Khanate - Diamond Sword" here at PNCA, auditorium on Wednesday. Caretaker Minister for Information and Broadcasting Jamal Shah and Ambassador of Kazakhstan ILE Yezhan Kastafin along with Director General PNCA Muhammad Ayoub Janahi and large number of people attended the movie screening. Addressing the screening ceremony of a Kazakh movie at the Pakistan National Council of Arts, Minister for Information and Broadcasting Murtaza Solangi underlined the need for promoting cinema in the country to foster cultural values of tolerance and harmony in the society. He said, "Nothing impresses, edu-

cates and illuminates better than cinema. Probably hundreds of high-pitch, hyperbolic and hyper-venerating speeches cannot educate you like this movie. I am sure, can educate and sensitize you better." He expressed gratitude to the ambassador of Kazakhstan in Pakistan and Caretaker Minister for Culture and Heritage Jamal Shah for inviting him to speak on the screening of "Kazakh Khanate". "Nobody probably in this auditorium can truly represent cinema better than Jamal Shah. He lives and breathes cinema," he said while expressing the resolve to work with his cabinet colleague to promote the culture through cinema. "We will try both with and without the government to do our job to address the challenges people face today," he said while highlighting the urgency for the next elected government to address the poly crises such as culture of intolerance, extreme polarization amid the heavily divided global landscape. "We have huge challenges in front of us and one of those challenges in the domain

of culture and perception is extreme intolerance, and personality cult and cult worship that won't be cured by criminalizing things," he noted. The minister said, "Law will and shall take its course but when it comes to dealing with long term consequences, there is nothing better than culture. In culture, cinema holds special place, so we must promote good cinema." He assured the "Kazakh envoy of all-out support of the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting and its attached departments. "Kazakhstan is not a far away land" as it was connected with Pakistan both geographically and culturally, he added. "There is a great future for cooperation between Pakistan and Kazakhstan," he said, noting that the screening of the film "should be a learning experience and a point of departure to deepen our relationship to new heights." Federal Minister for National Heritage and Culture Jamal Shah said that it was a really educational movie, which specifies that honour, solidarity and dignity are about anything else. The minister

also noted that the movie screening reflects the growing cultural and collaborative ties between Pakistan and Kazakhstan. He emphasized the paramount importance of cultural exchanges, acknowledging the rich cultural heritage and picturesque landscapes of the region. Jamal Shah expressed a keen interest in enhancing collaboration in film and cinema to further fortify bilateral cultural ties. The Ambassador of Kazakhstan ILE Yezhan Kastafin stressed that through the prism of the film, the life of the people of that time, the geopolitical conditions of the formation of the Kazakh Khanate, as well as details of costumes and battle scenes were conveyed. He said that this is a movie based on footage for a great historical show. The Ambassador commended PNCA and National Heritage and Culture Division for collaborating Kazakhstan movie screening. The movie was screened in the Urdu language. Kazakh Khanate: Diamond Sword tells the history of fifteenth century Eurasia.

NESPAK INVITATION FOR BIDS

CONSTRUCTION OF LAHORE BYPASS FROM KALA SHAH KAKU EXIT TO KLM TO MULTAN ROAD NEAR RADIO STATION (30 KM) AND EXTENSION OF KLM START POINT TO SAGGIAN ROAD AND MAIN RAVI BRIDGE (10 KM) National Engineering Services Pakistan (Pvt) Limited, NESPAK, invites sealed bids (Technical and financial in separate sealed envelopes) from drilling Contractors/ Companies, registered with Income Tax and Sales Tax Departments and who are on Active Taxpayers List of Federal Board of Revenue and Provincial Revenue Authority having valid PEC registration in relevant category, for carrying out the geotechnical investigations for the subject project.

Bidding document (i.e. Bid Invitation Letter, BOQ & Qualification Criteria) can be downloaded from NESPAK (www.nespak.com.pk) and PPPA (www.ppra.org.pk) website or can be obtained on submission of a written application from the address mentioned below.

The bidders shall submit a bid security amounting to Rs. 75,000/- (Rupees seventy-five thousand) at the time of submission of bids in the form of pay order or bank draft in favour of M/s NESPAK.

Companies capable of carrying out subject work are requested to furnish complete information in accordance with the requirement of bidding document. Sealed bids (inclusive of all taxes) prepared in accordance with the instructions in the bidding document, must be submitted on or before February 19, 2024 up to 1300 Hours at the address mentioned below.

Technical bids would be opened on the same day at 1400 Hours after their receipt in the presence of those bidders who wish to be present. Financial bids would be opened after evaluation of technical bids at time, date and venue announced and communicated to the technically responsive bidders in advance. NESPAK reserves the right to accept or reject any/all offers according to provision of PPPA Rules.

GENERAL MANAGER/HEAD GEOTECHNICAL & GEOENVIRONMENTAL ENGINEERING DIVISION NESPAK House, 1-C, Block-N, Model Town Extension, Lahore Pakistan - 54700, Tel: +92-42-9990000 Ext. 300 & 310, Fax: +92-42-99211950 E-mail: geotech@nespak.com.pk PID L 2416

Briefs

Excise to facilitate citizens for vehicle registration

ISLAMABAD: In a move to streamline essential civic services and bring them closer to the community, Deputy Commissioner (DC) Islamabad, Irfan Nawaz Memon on Thursday initiated an exclusive drive to facilitate citizens at Tri-3 parking lot from 3 to 5 pm. The excise staff will be onsite, offering a hassle-free experience for vehicle owners seeking registration, transfers, and token tax processing. ICT spokesman Dr Abdullah Tabson said. He said that this unprecedented initiative not only caters to vehicular paperwork but also introduces the ICT Doorstep Services. The citizens are encouraged to avail the opportunity to obtain their own Domestic Certificate, Birth Certificate, Power of Attorney, International Driving Permit, Fuel Permit (Domestic/Commercial), or Motor Vehicle Registration, all at one convenient location, he added. He further emphasized that the Facilitation Center's Doorstep ICT Vehicle will be present, providing a seamless and efficient solution for various administrative needs. He said that whether you're a vehicle owner looking to sort out your paperwork or in need of essential documents, this event promises efficiency with a touch of convenience to the masses. —APP

ECP to dispatch ballot papers in Balochistan, KPK by air

ISLAMABAD: The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has decided to dispatch the ballot papers for general elections in some areas of Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa by air to ensure prompt delivery. "The ballot papers will be airlifted to Gwadar, Panjgur, Kach, Kharan, Bajaur and Kurram Agency," the spokesman of the ECP told APP. The spokesman said the ballot papers of National and Provincial Assemblies of the said areas will be sent by helicopter and C-130. About the printing of the ballot papers, he said the printing of ballot papers for three seats of National Assembly of Federal Capital has been started and the task will be completed shortly. The spokesman said the printing of ballot papers of all constituencies of National and Provincial Assemblies from Balochistan has been completed. He said that around 90 percent printing of ballot papers of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, 80 percent of Punjab and 60 percent of Sindh has also been completed. —APP

Kashmir Solidarity Day to be observed with Zeal

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister of Azad Jammu and Kashmir, Chaudhry Anwar-ul-Haq, has announced that Kashmir Solidarity Day on February 5 will be observed with zeal and fervor, sending a clear message to India that millions of people in Pakistan and Azad Jammu and Kashmir stand shoulder to shoulder with the oppressed people of Indian illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir in their struggle for freedom of their motherland. According to Kashmir Media sources, during a joint press conference with All Parties Hurriyat Conference AJK (APHC-AJK) leaders in Islamabad, Prime Minister Anwar-ul-Haq stated that the day would be marked as a public holiday, and business activities would be halted. He emphasized the need for rallies, processions, and other programs to express unity with the oppressed people living under illegal Indian occupation in Jammu and Kashmir. PM Anwar-ul-Haq expressed strong condemnation of India's actions on August 5, 2019, and recent decisions by the Indian Supreme Court. He reiterated the commitment to the rightful struggle for self-determination. —APP

Transforming lives with climate-driven insights

An overwhelming consensus emerged among the participants regarding the profound value of early warning systems and weather forecasts based on comprehensive, updated information that accurately reflects realities on the ground



ISLAMABAD: PAKISTAN—The Second Climate Application Forum brought together members of the Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD) and key sector institutions to engage in a meaningful dialogue about the generation and application of evidence-based climate information. The gathering provided stakeholders with a venue and an opportunity to meticulously review and, if necessary, revise their climate risk-informed, anticipatory preparedness plans in view of the comprehensive Winter 2024 forecast. It also served as a platform for the PMD to customize their climate information to effectively meet the needs of the public. An overwhelming consensus emerged among the participants regarding the profound value of early warning systems and weather forecasts based on comprehensive, updated information that accurately reflects realities on the ground. This approach was shown to support informed decision-making and play a vital role in minimizing the impact of natural hazards on infrastructure and communities. The participants agreed that these forecasts need to be presented in a simplified format, detailing specific areas of impact, thereby informing anticipatory action plans. The forum emphasized the importance of delivering localized, precise, and actionable agri-meteorological advisories to members of the agriculture sector. By doing so, farmers and livestock raisers could reap the benefits from these advisories and establish more resilient and sustainable agricultural practices. Mahr Sahibzad Khan, Director General of PMD, encouraged the participants to collaborate and explore creative solutions for a sustainable and resilient future. The meeting was jointly organized by the Regional Integrated Multi-Hazard Early Warning System (RIMES) and the Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD) under the CARE Project. The World Bank-funded Climate Ad-

New currency banknotes to be introduced in next two years

ISLAMABAD: Deputy Governor at State Bank of Pakistan Saleem Ullah Thursday disclosed that new banknotes with improved security features will be introduced in the next two years where SBP has announced an art competition to engage local artists, designers, and art students in shaping the visual identity of the upcoming currency. In an exclusive interview with a private news channel, he said that this visionary initiative comes as part of SBP's commitment to revamp the existing banknote series and address concerns related to counterfeit currency circulation within the country. He said that it was an "established practice" to introduce new banknotes every 15 to 20 years for security purposes. After 2025 Pakistan will soon introduce easy and technology-based standard currency notes to facilitate the public. —APP

Unified forces gear up for upcoming general election security

ISLAMABAD: In a review meeting led by the District Election Officer (DRO), representatives from all constituencies, law enforcement agencies and key institutions have convened to strategize for the upcoming general elections 2024. ICT spokesman Dr Abdullah Tabson on Thursday said that notably, commanding officers from the Pakistan Army on election duty and SSP operations were present, emphasizing the gravity of the situation. The assembly delved into a comprehensive review of the anticipated challenges on election day and potential threats, as special attention was given to security measures at sensitive polling stations in the federal capital constituencies, he added. He further said that the highlight of the meeting was the unanimous approval of a robust security plan for the impending elections. A collaborative effort is set to unfold, with the Pakistan Army, Pakistan Rangers, sensitive institutions, and the police working in unison to execute the approved security blueprint. This strategic alliance aimed to ensure a secure and smooth electoral process, marking a pivotal step towards a transparent. —APP

Google supports upcoming general election 2024 in Pakistan

ISLAMABAD: As Pakistanis prepare to vote in the National election to elect representatives for the National Assembly and Provincial Assemblies on February 8, Google has committed to collaborating with the government, industry, and civil society to provide voters with helpful and authoritative information while keeping their platforms safe from abuse. In a news release issued on Thursday, Google said, "We know that in the run-up to elections, people need useful and relevant information to help them navigate the electoral process. We make reliable information easily available with helpful product features, showing data from trusted, nonpartisan organizations on how and where to vote across our products." Google's ranking systems are designed to elevate authoritative information and provide context to users on various election-related information. Additionally, the Google homepage will include links directing voters to authoritative information on "how to vote" and "how to register to vote." For news and information related to the election, YouTube's recommendation system will prominently surface content and relevant content from authoritative sources, including local and national news sources on the homepage, in search results, and the "Up Next" panel, to connect people to high-quality election news and information. To assist the media and the public in exploring what voters care about in this election, Google has launched a Google Trends page, a tool that helps surface the top queries, topics, and interests in parties running in the elections. The page also includes data on the top election-related topics searched in each part of the country, providing unique insights into what people are searching for. Google will run a series of workshops to equip journalists with the right resources to inform their news coverage during elections, including teaching them about tools for news verification, digital security, and using Google Trends, Qureshi, Google's Country Director for Pakistan, stated. "In the lead-up to the election, we have focused our efforts on supporting Pakistanis who are expected to cast their vote by helping them connect to useful and relevant election-related information online. We have also invested in the news ecosystem and trained journalists and newsmen on reporting authoritative and credible news ahead of the election cycle. Recently, we launched a Google Trends Pakistan General Election page to make it easier for the media to find this data for their stories." Google and YouTube have longstanding policies to keep their platforms safe, including during elections. YouTube's Community Guidelines include policies against hate speech, harassment, incitement to violence, technically manipulated content, and certain types of election misinformation. The platforms rely on a combination of machine learning and human reviewers to identify and remove content that violates their policies. Qureshi added, "Election integrity is a top priority for YouTube, and we've been working to ensure the right policies and systems are in place to support the country's elections. On top of connecting people to authoritative and quality information, we remove violating content in a timely manner with the help of machine learning and trained reviewers. —DNA

Solangi grieved over demise of Sarakli novelist Aslam Rasulpuri

ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Federal Minister for Information, Broadcasting and Parliamentary Affairs Murtaza Solangi on Thursday expressed deep grief and sorrow over the death of Sarakli novelist, researcher, critic and intellectual Aslam Rasulpuri. In his condolence statement, the minister said that the literary services of late Aslam Rasulpuri would be remembered for a long time. By citing the Sindh poet Sachal Sarnast, Bodi Sindhi and Hani Laloghari's Sarakli poetry, Aslam Rasulpuri brought out the harmony of the sources of Sindh and Sarakli traditions of Sufism. He said this research achievement of Aslam Rasulpuri would always be remembered. Murtaza Solangi prayed to Allah Almighty to rest the departed soul in eternal peace and grant courage to the bereaved family to bear this loss with fortitude. —APP

Chicken, eggs prices reach at Rs 460 per kg

ISLAMABAD: The price of poultry chicken reached Rs 460 per kg and the price of poultry eggs reached Rs 415 per dozen in the open market in the twin cities of Islamabad and Rawalpindi. The meat of the poultry chicken has reached Rs 800 to 810 per kg in the open market, according to the survey conducted by APP here on Thursday. The price of poultry chickens and eggs has been going above Rs 415 to 420 per kg and dozen for the past few months, which is getting away from the purchasing power of consumers day by day. The prices of poultry items have increased by 20 percent in the twin cities of Islamabad and Rawalpindi during the last one month, which has created huge volatility in the market. According to the market survey, during the last three in the twin cities, a 25 per cent increase was witnessed in the price of poultry chicken, while as same as 35 per cent increase in the price of poultry eggs in the same period. Meanwhile, talking to APP, former Chairman of the Pakistan Poultry Association (PPA), Dr. Sajjad Arshad said that the increase in the current prices of poultry was due to demand and supply issues. He said that the increase in poultry business inputs and cost of doing business was seen across the country due to which the market was in crisis. He said that many people related to the chicken business in the country were affected by the current crisis and especially small businesses and poultry farms were closed, adding the poultry business in the four provinces including Punjab, Sindh, Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is suffering from the current economic crisis. Sajjad said that the country's economic conditions are also an important issue and the poultry feed ingredients imported from foreign countries are very expensive, in which soybean is important. He said that many soybean ships have stopped at Karachi port, which has an inevitable impact on poultry prices. Pakistan Poultry Association (PPA) has also called for a further increase in the prices of chicken and there was an increase observed in the prices of poultry items in the twin cities of Islamabad and Rawalpindi. —APP

Al-Shifa to begin genetic testing

ISLAMABAD: Al-Shifa Trust Eye Hospital announced Thursday that genetic testing is being planned to prevent and control eye cancer in children. To this end, a genetic testing lab is under construction and will start functioning in five months. Pakistan is witnessing a high prevalence of eye cancer in children as compared to neighboring countries; therefore, the trust has decided to redouble its efforts to combat the menace, it said. Prof. Dr. Tayyab Afghani, consultant and HOD of Orbit and Oculoplastic Department at Al-Shifa Trust Eye Hospital, said that about 700 children with eye cancer are treated annually at various trust facilities. This number is double that of neighboring India. India registers only 2000 children per annum with eye cancer while its population is five times larger than Pakistan, he added. He informed that genetic testing of parents can help control this occurrence in future generations. Genetic tests can be done on a tissue sample removed during a biopsy or surgery. These tests provide information about how likely cancer will be possible in children, he informed. Prof. Dr. Tayyab Afghani said timely detection could restore sight as the problem gets more complicated and may cause vision loss, loss of the eye, or even total blindness. Eye cancer should not be taken lightly, and a doctor must be consulted without delay as the number of people with eye cancer is on the rise. Still, he added that patients are brought to hospitals only in the final stages of the problem. Afghani said most children facing eye cancer belong to low-income families living in remote areas, and healthcare facilities are not available to them as specialized eye hospitals are not located near them. He said that some tumors are incurable, while others may severely disfigure eyes, requiring complex surgical procedures. However, eye problems due to cancer need more time and effort to be treated. The genetic testing lab building is under construction on the premises of Rawalpindi Eye Hospital, and all the equipment has been purchased. Genetic tests will guide parents about the possibility of high chances of eye cancer in children in advance, he said.



RAWALPINDI: February 01 - A vendor carrying cages of birds searching for customers to be free as mercy. —APP

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Statehood is right of Palestinian people

SHORTLY before his trip to the Middle East on Wednesday, UK Foreign Secretary David Cameron told Arab ambassadors at a welcoming reception on Monday that the United Kingdom is welcoming recognition of a Palestinian state so that Israelis and Palestinians can live side by side in separate countries. Although that proposal was greeted by Husam Zomlot, head of the Palestinian mission in London, as a "historic" change, as the UK's recognition of a Palestinian state would be "a contribution to a peaceful solution rather than an outcome". Yet Cameron set very strict prerequisites for the UK's recognition of a Palestinian state, which he said the UK would then seek to persuade its allies to support — Hamas releasing all hostages and agreement by Israel and Hamas to a peace-oriented ceasefire. Neither of those will be any easier to realize just because the UK is calling for them. The two conflicting parties' hatred against each other has been allowed to fester for so long that it has become ingrained. The UK has played an ugly role in this process by indulging Israel's continuous encroachment on the living space of Palestinians starting from the war in 1948, which has resulted in about 5.9 million Palestinians being displaced from their homes over the years. Even if the two requisite conditions were met, the future Palestinian state envisioned by the UK government, according to Cameron's remarks, would be nothing but a de facto proxy of the West. "We have a responsibility there because we should be starting to set out what a Palestinian state would look like, what it would comprise, how it would work". Cameron and those like-minded Western politicians who are trying to hide their own agenda under their so-called two-state solution should be reminded that the real two-state solution the UN and the broad international community have agreed on is strictly stipulated. It envisions an independent State of Palestine alongside the State of Israel with their boundaries based on the 1967 lines and with East Jerusalem as the capital of the Palestinian state. The two should be equal with each other in every regard on an international law. As an independent sovereign state, Palestine's sovereignty belongs to its people and no country has any legitimate power or right to dictate its internal affairs. By implanting "authorities" recognized by the West, if not Israel, in the "Palestinian state" as Cameron seems to suggest, what the UK has essentially proposed will be a one-state reality akin to apartheid. Currently, 139 of the 193 UN member states recognize Palestinian statehood. The Palestinian people have never compromised and will by no means sacrifice their statehood for the recognition of the UK and its allies. Statehood is what the Palestinians are entitled to and what is long overdue. It is not a gift that can be condescendingly given by any country.

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The view on Rishi Sunak's tax plans

THE "anti-growth coalition", as it was named by Liz Truss during her brief premiership, just keeps on growing. The latest to sign up is the International Monetary Fund (IMF), which has this week warned Rishi Sunak of cutting taxes and suggests instead a boost to public spending. It is a timely intervention. For the past few months, the right of the increasingly rightwing Tory party, including Ms Truss, has clamoured for lower taxes — supposedly in the name of economic growth, but more likely in the desperate hope of electoral survival. Mr Sunak has made it clear that he will indulge them, promising "more to come" on tax cuts, January began with a slice taken off national insurance contributions, and the debate around the March budget is not whether taxes will be cut but which ones are for the chop. Now along comes IMF to wag an admonishing finger — and enervate Boris Johnson's minister from Jim Callaghan onwards knows you don't want one of those. Just because the IMF says something, it ain't necessarily so. In 2011 John Lapsley, then its acting managing director, flew to London to support George Osborne's austerity plans. Two years later, its boss, Christine Lagarde, pulled a swift U-turn, and warned that spending cuts were tanking the economy. The very next year, in 2014, she U-turned again, claiming the UK was doing well. The reality is that ever since Britain's hubble economy went pop in 2008's crash, growth has been utterly anemic. The financial crisis that IMF did not spot produced a baffly ailing economy, which the IMF signed off as being in good health. This in turn led a crisis of cynical, extractive politics, at which IMF officials are doubtless appalled. The IMF is staffed by economists; it crunches data and makes economic forecasts. But it is ultimately a political institution, and the conflict between what its spariest economists say and what its bosses do can be stark. In 2016, two years after the Washington-based Fund and the Treasury proposed cutting public spending so large that many think they are impossible. The striking warning this week by doctors and NHS leaders that the health service now faces an "existential threat" is just a foretaste of what is to come across the public sector. Borrowing to invest in social housing, in public services, in mitigating the climate crisis, makes sense; they are investments in people that should pay their way long into the future. Financial chicanery to bring a few thousand at someone inheriting a large estate is just a cynical attempt to stave off electoral annihilation. Whenever the general election does come, voters will not need the IMF's guidance to reach that conclusion.

EU must do more to help Europe's farmers

Khaled Abou Zahr

Farmers' anger is growing across Europe, from the Netherlands to Romania and through Germany, Italy and France. Farmers in France are angry due to their government's perceived lack of consideration, rising production costs and increased European regulations. The stakes are high as, according to official census data, between 2010 and 2020, France lost 20 percent of its farms. Their protests, which began with highway blockades and an explosion at an environmental office, highlight issues like the impacts of climate change, delayed agricultural legislation and the decline in farm numbers. Moreover, farmers cite challenges for young entrants to the industry and noncompliance with the so-called EGalim law, which aims to strengthen...

I STAND with the farmers of France and the rest of Europe. I stand with these men and women who dedicate their lives, day in and day out, to working the land. I support them during a period when policy-makers, detached from reality, are jeopardizing the livelihoods of an entire profession and endangering the rest of the world with the risk of food penalty. I stand with them as they uphold tradition and the values of hard work, while fighting for their future and ours. This situation was expected. Just as weak politicians have been bullied by mobs on energy, cornering Europe when the Ukraine war started, they are now doing the same with agriculture and food supplies, putting not only farmers but the entire population in danger. This is something I warned about in a previous column in October 2022, which was titled "Sustainability needs sensible approach to benefit planet, not just few." Farmers' anger is growing across Europe, from the Netherlands to Romania and through Germany, Italy and France. Their motivations may differ, but they are mainly expressing their discontent, through protests and blockades, against the EU's agricultural policies. The focal points might be different, such as protests over fuel prices, Ukrainian competition or new environmental measures. But although the factors may seem different and local, the root cause is one that affects all farmers across the EU: Brussels' flawed policies toward globalization and climate change. This unrest emphasizes the vital role of agriculture in providing food and securing the future. Farmers' anger is growing across Europe, from the Netherlands to Romania and through Germany, Italy and France. Farmers in France are angry due to their government's perceived lack of consideration, rising production costs and increased European regulations. The stakes are high as, according to official census data, between 2010 and 2020, France lost 20 percent of its farms. Their protests, which began with highway blockades and an explosion at an environmental office, highlight issues like the impacts of climate

change, delayed agricultural legislation and the decline in farm numbers. Moreover, farmers cite challenges for young entrants to the industry and noncompliance with the so-called EGalim law, which aims to strengthen the balance in commercial relationships between suppliers and distributors, and environmental norms. The recent tax increase on non-road diesel — which was scrapped last week — added to their grievances. Farmers also criticize the EU's Common Agricultural Policy, pointing to delayed payments. The government's response, including Prime Minister Gabriel Attal meeting farmers, aims to ease tensions, but the farmers have threatened to escalate their protests, potentially impacting the Paris International Agricultural Show, a highly symbolic annual event that is due to take place on Feb. 24. In Germany, farmers are demanding the reinstatement of tax relief for diesel used in agricultural vehicles and the removal of vehicle tax on tractors. They are also calling for a reevaluation of the "Farm to Fork" strategy, urging the EU to stop penalizing farmers. As European Parliament elections approach, these agricultural concerns may significantly influence the political landscape. As reminded by a historical article in French newspaper Le Figaro this week, farmers' discontent has deep roots and a legacy of protests. The core of their dissatisfaction lies in issues such as inadequate remuneration, complex environmental regulations and a history of grievances related to competition from imports and fraudulent practices. Historical protests, notably the 1907 Languedoc winegrower revolt, set a precedent. Their stand against foreign wine imports and fraud set the stage for organized agricultural movements. As European Parliament elections approach, these agricultural concerns may significantly influence the political landscape. Over the years, farmers have engaged in various protests, including the setting up of barricades, sabotage and destroying goods, reflecting their dissatisfaction with agricultural policies and economic challenges.

In more recent history, the 1976 tragedy in Montredon-des-Corbières marked a turning point, as clashes with law enforcement resulted in fatalities, highlighting the severity of farmers' grievances. Despite attempts to avoid violence, subsequent actions — such as Jose Bove's 1999 dismantling of an under-construction McDonald's outlet — showcased farmers' ongoing struggle for visibility and recognition. These events underscore the enduring nature of farmers' dissatisfaction and the evolution of their grievances over time. France is not the only country with such a history, with the number of protests around Europe growing in the last decade. Indeed, we should remember the 2022 Dutch farmers' protests and road blockades. In an interview at the time, journalist Roger Striland explained that the main concern was nitrogen pollution affecting natural areas. The government, led by Mark Rutte, proposed radical measures, suggesting that 60 percent of farms either transition or cease operations to combat this phenomenon. But the Netherlands has a high concentration of livestock, with 11 million pigs, 4 million cows and 100 million chickens for a population of 18 million people. Therefore, this decision understandably provoked frustration, putting about 30,000 farms in jeopardy. With the Netherlands being the world's second-largest agricultural exporter, the move also caused concerns about its impact on food supplies. The main issue is that all proposed transitions to less-polluting technologies require significant investments, which cannot be undertaken by the farmers alone. This highlights the risk of imposing environmental regulations without a logical and smart transition. It also shows the disconnect between EU regulators' noble environmental goals and the bare necessity of feeding the population. The EU has achieved great things and enhanced the lives of people throughout the continent, but it needs to reassess these policies in order to protect and safeguard its future. Without farmers, there is no life.

— Sourced by Arab News

Sudanese people's dire plight should not be ignored

Dr. Majid Rafizadeh

Expressing the challenges she faces, Manal Adam Yousif, a woman in her 20s from the town of Nyala in South Darfur state, told UN Women: "Unfortunately, our house and all other houses in the neighborhoods were robbed. So, I am very afraid for the rest of my family. We just fled with the clothes we are wearing ... winter brings many diseases." She went on to share the difficulties she is encountering, mentioning that her son and several other children are unwell

THE protracted conflict in Sudan, which is now its 10th month, has caused a dire humanitarian crisis that is inflicting profound suffering upon millions, both within the country and in neighboring nations. The repercussions of this war are particularly acute for women and children, who bear the brunt of the devastating effects. As the situation unfolds, the pervasive hardships extend beyond national borders, casting a wide-reaching shadow of distress that demands urgent attention and concerted international efforts to alleviate the plight of those affected by the conflict. Sudan currently bears the unfortunate distinction of harboring the highest number of displaced individuals globally, also marking it out as the center of the world's most extensive child displacement crisis. Commenting on the enduring repercussions of the conflict, which began last April, Marie Davit, the acting country director of CARE Sudan, said: "Loss of life, mass displacement, gender-based violence, hunger, cholera are all on the rise and occurring at an alarming rate. Between 70 and 80 percent of hospitals in conflict-affected areas are no longer functional. This crisis demands more attention, and funding." New data from the International Organization for Migration reveals a staggering 10.7 million people displaced by conflicts in Sudan, including 9 million who remain within the country. This organization is requesting coordinated international efforts to further enhance the humanitarian response and address the colossal displacement crisis. Among the displaced, 1.7 million have sought refuge in neighboring countries, with the majority (62 percent) of these being Sudanese. This mass displacement is exacerbating humanitarian needs in an already deeply troubled region. Chad hosts the highest percentage of those leaving Sudan at 37 percent, followed by South Sudan at 30 percent and Egypt at 24 percent, while Ethiopia, Libya and the Central African Republic host the remaining refugees. This mass displacement is exacerbating humanitarian needs in an already deeply troubled region. Amy Pope, director general of the International Organization for Migration, said: "As of today, one in every eight internally displaced persons in the world live in Sudan." She highlighted the overwhelming needs of these displaced individuals, including critical shortages of food, shelter, healthcare and sanitation. This is placing them at heightened risk of disease, malnutrition and violence. Despite the severity of the situation, the current humanitarian response falls short of addressing critical needs. As Pope emphasized, it is important not to turn away from the millions of people who are in desperate need of support. The protracted conflict in Sudan continues to exact a severe toll on the lives of ordinary citizens. The widespread devastation extends to critical infrastructure, encompassing healthcare facilities, educational institutions, transport networks and essential utilities such as power and water. This extensive damage has significantly curtailed access to fundamental necessities and essential, life-saving services, plunging communities into desperate circumstances. The resulting scarcity has not only led to heightened susceptibility to disease outbreaks, hunger and malnutrition, but has also exacerbated the vulnerability of the population to sexual and gender-based violence. Women and girls find themselves particularly at risk within the prevailing chaos. This underscores the urgent need for comprehensive humanitarian intervention. Expressing the challenges she faces, Manal Adam Yousif, a woman in her 20s from the town of Nyala in South Darfur state, told UN Women: "Unfortunately, our house and all other houses in the neighborhoods were robbed. So, I am very afraid for the rest of my family. We just fled with the clothes we are wearing ...

winter brings many diseases." She went on to share the difficulties she is encountering, mentioning that her son and several other children are unwell. Yousif also highlighted her financial constraints, stating: "I do not have the money to take (my son) to the hospital. I hope the war will stop and there will be safety and stability so that we can return to our jobs and families." The international community must ensure the safety of women and girls in conflict-affected areas. Addressing this crisis requires a comprehensive and coordinated approach, including mobilizing international humanitarian organizations and governments to provide immediate relief and support to conflict-affected regions. They need to deliver emergency relief supplies, including food, clean water, medical supplies and shelter, to address the pressing needs of displaced individuals, as well as initiate efforts to restore some of the critical infrastructure to enhance people's access to essential services. Another approach would be to establish mobile healthcare units and clinics to provide medical assistance to those facing health challenges. This would address issues such as disease outbreaks, malnutrition and the general wellbeing of the population. It would also facilitate access to medical care, especially for vulnerable groups like children, women and the elderly. In addition, the international community must ensure the safety of women and girls in conflict-affected areas. Temporary learning spaces can also be set up in order to ensure that children affected by the conflict can continue to have access to education. Finally, there is a need for robust diplomatic efforts and negotiations to bring about an end to the conflict. In a nutshell, the dire situation in Sudan underscores the profound and far-reaching impacts of this conflict, particularly on the lives of ordinary individuals. The urgent need for a comprehensive and coordinated response from the international community.

— Sourced by Arab News

Briefs

Talks undergo for Red Sea naval mission

ROME: Italy's Foreign Minister Antonio Tajani said Wednesday that discussions have taken place on launching a European Union naval mission to protect ships in the Red Sea which will be led by either Italy or France. The command of this mission will either be in Italy or France. We are working together with (Italian Defense Minister Guido Crosetto, but it is important to protect commercial ship traffic. In addition to the Atalanta mission, there will be another one with new engagement rules. Therefore, it will have the capability to shoot down unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) or missiles attacking Italian ships or commercial ships of other countries. This is a military defense mission aimed at securing maritime trade traffic. Tajani said in a TV program on the Italian state broadcasting service Rai. He said they are continuing to discuss the EU naval mission, which is aimed at protecting commercial ships in the Red Sea from attacks by Houthi forces in Yemen. Crosetto had also mentioned that Italy, France and Greece are interested in commanding the EU mission and they submitted proposals—APP

Thousands strike in Finland over labor reform

HELSINKI: A massive Finnish strike movement kicked off on Thursday, grounding most air traffic and closing workplaces in a protest against proposed government labour reforms that include social security cuts. About 300,000 people are expected to take part in the two days of strike action. With air traffic widely disrupted, national carrier Finnair has cancelled 550 flights, affecting 60,000 passengers. Train services between the country and metros, buses and trams in the capital will grind to a halt on Friday, while various unions called for stoppages in the energy sector, schools and healthcare services. Industry, restaurants, hotels, postal workers and other retail sectors and services are also affected. A protest called by the Central Organisation of Finnish Trade Unions (SAK) gathered around 13,000 people in Helsinki on Thursday, police said. The biggest problem is that they are trying to force us on the unions' powers to negotiate the (collective) agreements which are usually done by the employers lawyers and the unions' lawyers. 30-year-old demonstrator Henri Merto, who works as a ship crewman, told AFP—APP

Dozens of terrorists neutralized in Türkiye

ISTANBUL: Turkish Armed Forces' relentless efforts in combating terrorism persist with unwavering determination, Zeki Aktarık, the spokesperson of Türkiye's Ministry of National Defence has said, during a press briefing at the ministry. Aktarık highlighted the ongoing operations against various terrorist organisations, including PKK/KCK/YPG/YPJ, Daesh, and FETO, both within the country and across borders. He stated that in the past week alone, 63 terrorists have been neutralized in operations, bringing the total number of terrorists neutralized since January 1, 2023, to 2,541. Emphasizing the success in preventing illegal border crossings, he expressed that in the past week, 188 individuals, including 6 associated with FETO and 1 with Daesh, were apprehended, while 3,441 were stopped from crossing the border illegally. Since the beginning of 2024, 686 people have been apprehended, and 18,594 have been prevented from illegally crossing the borders, he said. He reiterated the commitment to maintaining the security and integrity of the nation's borders and the continued efforts against various terrorist threats both domestically and beyond—APP

China ready to cooperate for peace, security: FM

2024 'crucial for advancement of Chinese modernization on all fronts,' says Wang Yi

NEWS DESK

BEIJING: As China marks 75 years of its founding this year, Beijing is ready to cooperate with other nations for peace and security, the country's top diplomat said. China stands ready to work with all countries to cement the foundations of peace and security, pool strength for friendship and cooperation, follow the right path of multilateralism, and build a future of development and prosperity," said Foreign Minister Wang Yi, addressing foreign diplomats in Beijing. He said the ongoing year "is crucial for the advancement of Chinese modernization on all fronts." Building a community with a shared future for humanity is the noble goal China is pursuing in its major foreign policy theme for the new era," Wang told a New Year reception on Wednesday night, the ministry said. Recalling diplomatic efforts by China last year,



Wang said Beijing's diplomatic 'service has risen to challenges and forged ahead with a great sense of responsibility.' 'China has remained committed to dialogue and cooperation, served as a staunch pillar in healthy interactions between major countries, and acted on the principles of amiability, sincerity, mutual benefit and inclusiveness,' he said. China, he

Opp gets top seat at Taiwan's legislature

TAIPEI CITY: A lawmaker from Taiwan's opposition Kuomintang (Nationalist) Party was elected Speaker of Legislative Assembly on Thursday. Han Kuo-yu rose to top seat at the Legislative Assembly, locally known as Yuan, after 13 elections resulted in a divided house of 113 lawmakers. Han, 67, is the first president-elect to be elected speaker. The ruling Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) an unprecedented third-term win but lost majority in the legislature which is expected to create hurdles in the president-elect's policies. Han won in the second round after he failed to secure majority as Kuomintang won 52, DPP 51, Taiwan People's Party (TPP) eight, and the independents won two seats in the January elections. In the first round, the TPP voted for their own candidate, triggering runoff for the post speaker and later obtained from voting paving way for Kuomintang to get the coveted seat with support from the independents. The results mean that the opposition party is likely to dominate the agenda in Taiwan's 11th Legislature, which has a 42% representation by women. All lawmakers were sworn-in on Thursday and the term of legislature, which has 54 new members, ends in 2028. Taiwan's election results are seen crucial as Beijing deems the ruling DPP as "separatist," since under their rule, Taipei has increased interaction with the US, China's arch rival. China has routinely flown its jets and sailed naval vessels around Taiwan, which it calls its "breakaway province" while Taipei has insisted on its independence since 1949. "If the DPP refuses to repent and keeps following the evil path of separatism, provocations and the old road of cross-strait confrontation, it will only push Taiwan into a more dangerous situation," said Chen Binhua, the spokesman for China's State Council Taiwan Affairs Office.—Agencies

Centuries-old mosque torn down in Indian capital

DELHI: Bulldozers have knocked down a centuries-old mosque in India's capital, a member of the building's managing committee said Thursday, during a demolition exercise. The mosque, known as the 'Madrassa-e-Ahliya', was built in the 17th century and was a landmark of the city. The demolition comes at a sensitive time in India with nationalist activities emboldened in their long campaign for the replacement of several prominent mosques with Hindu temples. The mosque was demolished in the morning, with bulldozers tearing down the structure from a forest reserve. The demolition comes at a sensitive time in India with nationalist activities emboldened in their long campaign for the replacement of several prominent mosques with Hindu temples. The mosque was demolished in the morning, with bulldozers tearing down the structure from a forest reserve. The demolition comes at a sensitive time in India with nationalist activities emboldened in their long campaign for the replacement of several prominent mosques with Hindu temples. The mosque was demolished in the morning, with bulldozers tearing down the structure from a forest reserve.

and the graves has been removed and buried elsewhere," Read said. India court allows Hindus to pray inside disputed mosque. The Delhi Development Authority, the city's main land management agency responsible for carrying out the demolition, has agreed to fund the construction of a new Hindu temple in the north-western city of Ayodhya, built on grounds once home to the centuries-old Babri mosque. That mosque was torn down in 1992 in a campaign spearheaded by members of Modi's party, sparking sectarian riots that killed 2,000 people nationwide, most of them Muslims. Hindu activists groups also laid claim to the disputed Gyanvati mosque in the Hindu holy city of Varanasi to enhance Hindu supremacy, have rapidly grown leader since Modi took office in 2014, making the country's roughly 20-million-strong Muslim minority increasingly anxious about their future.

Fidan talks ties with Swedish, Turkmen counterparts

ANKARA: Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan held two separate phone calls with his Swedish and Turkmen counterparts, Turkish diplomatic sources said Thursday. Fidan and Swedish Foreign Minister Tobias Billström discussed the Nordic country's NATO membership, the preparations for the next meetings of the Türkiye-Sweden-Finland joint mechanism and Turkish-EU relations, sources informed. After more than a year of delays, the Turkish Parliament ratified Sweden's bid and President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan signed the formal accession protocol last week. Sweden and Finland dropped decades of military non-alignment and applied for NATO membership in response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine nearly two years ago. Finland became the 31st nation of the alliance last April after securing approval from Türkiye, as well as Hungary, which is yet to greenlight Sweden's membership bid. NATO membership applications remain unanimous ratification by all alliance members. With Turkish diplomat Rashid Meredo, Fidan discussed energy, civil aviation, as well as bilateral ties and opportunities for cooperation on multilateral platforms, sources added. Türkiye and Turkmenistan have been working on a pipeline project that would bring gas from the latter to Türkiye and ultimately to Europe via Azerbaijan in the Caspian Sea—APP

ship, of which we are sincerely proud," Orlic said. Addressing Azerbaijan's liberation of territories occupied by Armenia, the chairman emphasized that Azerbaijan, as a sovereign state, has the right to employ military and political strategies to reclaim its territorial integrity. "The protection of state sovereignty and territorial integrity is a sacred right that holds the greatest importance for everyone in the world and has a clear strategic nature, is guaranteed by the UN Charter to every state, and must be observed without exception. This is precisely Serbia's clear position as well, and we state it openly to all. Unfortunately, our two countries are aware that not every country's position on this is equally principled across the world. That is why we need to fight jointly for the observance of the international law principle, and Serbia and Azerbaijan are on the same side in this respect.—DNA

Japan earthquake death toll reaches 238

TOKYO: Thousands of people still remain displaced as the death toll climbed to 238, a month after a 7.8 earthquake hit the port city. With the government working to build temporary spaces for earthquake-hit people, the officials have acknowledged that shifting people to safer places has not gone smoothly. According to the latest figures, more than 14,000 people are still displaced since the New Year's Day earthquake that hit the Noto Peninsula in central Japan. 10,000-based Kyodo News reported. About 19 people are still missing. People have been adjusted in temporary evacuation centers, including gymnastics halls, music and sports centers, and without running water supplies. People in Ishikawa province are also facing complications in a stable supply of food and other necessities while many businesses are struggling to resume work as their personnel are among the victims of the earthquake. Roads and other communication lines are still broken while the salvaging of debris from roads and broken infrastructure. The fishing community in coastal Ishikawa province has been hit hard as 18 fishing ports have been left completely unusable as seabed upheaval due to the earthquake affecting 60 out of 69 fishing ports in the region.—APP

Aliyev's contributions to Azerbaijan deserve global admiration

BAKU: President Ilham Aliyev's outstanding contributions to Azerbaijan's growth deserve global admiration, Chairman of the National Assembly of Serbia Vladimir Orlic told media. "Based on all the results achieved over the past 20 years, Azerbaijan deserves the world's sincere congratulations and admiration. Without strong and capable political leadership, the great deeds and impressive results, of course, would not have been possible, and the credit for them should be given directly to President Ilham Aliyev," he said. Orlic emphasized that during this period, a strong friendship has developed and strengthened between Serbia and Azerbaijan, accompanied by the establishment of a strategic partnership and comprehensive cooperation that continues to set new records. "The relationship we have today is founded, first and foremost, upon the great friendship, mutual respect,



and support of our leaders, President Aleksandar Vucic and President Borislav Stefanovic, which is also followed by all others: our governments, parliaments, as well as our citizens. We will continue to strengthen this relationship.

Food for thought

rights, and life skills about adolescent development. Recognizing that young married couples are frequently excluded from the planning and execution of such initiatives, despite their substantial need for life-skills education, SMK actively engaged and involve married youth in this endeavor. This proactive approach ensures that the insights and needs of married youth are considered and integrated into the program. Gender equality on all SMK projects serves as the central pillar of their mission to uplift and promote gender equality, every intervention within the project is strategically oriented towards achieving a minimum of 50% female participation. The overarching goal of the project is to diminish gender-related and social barriers faced by women and girls in their behavioral change interventions. Among these interventions, the establishment of Adolescent Friendly Spaces (AFS) is a prominent initiative within the broader behavioral change program. In order to keep the motivation level high, Adolescent Friendly Spaces remain open as per the attendants' time of convenience. Many adolescents are either in school or are engaged in other activities most of the day. They may therefore find it difficult to miss school sessions or opportunities for employment to visit the center unless it is an absolute emergency. Facilities offering services to adolescents should therefore arrange special sessions during late afternoons, after school/work, or during weekends to make it possible for adolescents to attend. APC also offers free of cost services to the financially challenged communities and in addition to this, a free of cost assessment is arranged periodically at each AFS for Head-to-Head assessment. It is also true that young people are attracted to a facility that provides comfort, safety and where there are adequate seating arrangements, friendly environment and (low-moored) people around in the vicinity. This is very much adhered to this fact. Mentors and Peer Educators selected to work in a Youth youth-friendly space must be well acknowledged and satisfied with their role and where there are adequate seating arrangements, friendly environment and (low-moored) people around in the vicinity. This is very much adhered to this fact. Mentors and Peer Educators selected to work in a Youth youth-friendly space must be well acknowledged and satisfied with their role and where there are adequate seating arrangements, friendly environment and (low-moored) people around in the vicinity. This is very much adhered to this fact.

AB KHAN

And a woman who held a babe against her bosom said Speak to us of Children. And he said: Your children are not your children. They are the sons and daughters of Life's longing for itself. They come through you but not from you. And though they are with you yet they belong not to you. You may give them your love but not your thoughts. For they have their own thoughts. You may house their bodies but not their souls. For their souls dwell in the house of tomorrow, which you cannot visit, not even in your dreams. You may strive to make them like you, but seek not to make them like you. For life goes not backward nor tarries with yesterday. By Khalid Ghannam. The temperature in Upper Hunza Valley in the town named Shishe was minus 3 degrees when I arrived to visit Aga Khan Rural Support Program (AKRSP) job project called Adolescents Friendly Centers (AFC). The facility from the outlook was located underneath majestic barren mountains with two adjoining rooms and a small playground. After a scenic journey of one hour and half hours from Hunza, driving on Karakoram Highway and pecking into the breathtaking view of Attabad Lake, this facility was worth a visit. Enter this 12x14 size room, a pleasant surprise in-store. The room was full of children aged in the bracket of 8 years to 19 years. Sitting on carpeted floor, the attendants were focused with full devotion to the lecture, their teacher was delivering. Assisting the teacher were two other associates, one managing the digital screen, one Laptop and other navigating in the class room. In one quick glance at the room, two senior elderly persons were also spotted sitting quietly and listening to the teacher. They happened to be the parents of the student. Adolescence is characterized as a pivotal stage in an individual's life, marked by the attainment of maturity. This period is rich with dynamic changes, encompassing cognitive, physical and emotional transformations, excitement, inquiries, and challenging decisions, often accompanied by a desire to experiment. During this phase, young individuals require access to information about their bodily changes and the necessary skills to equip them for a fulfilling future. As they progress through adolescence, young people embark on varying forms of relationships with their peers, family members, and adults. Effective communication and other relational competencies play a crucial role in ensuring that these relationships are gratifying and marked by mutual respect. Nevertheless, individuals must also acquire the ability to navigate these newfound emotions to make responsible decisions about their life, reproduction, and parenthood. In today's world, we are living in what is can be called contemporary societies and the reproductive health of young people is a cause of concern. Zeroing in on Gilgit Baltistan as a case study, adolescents represent the forthcoming generation of Gilgit-Baltistan. The Gilgit-Baltistan Council (GBC) aimed to assume pivotal roles in the future social and economic status as per the statistics. The Shilat Mandi Khanduan project also known as (SMK) ensures not only to impart awareness concerning Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights/Family Planning (SRHR/FP) but also strives to nurture and foster fundamental life skills development of these young ladies. The age at which mothers bear their first child significantly impacts infant mortality rates. Research conducted within hospitals and clinics underscores the fact that adolescents constitute a significant portion, up to 10%, of maternal fatalities. These

vulnerabilities stem from a lack of information and awareness about their health, along with susceptibility to uncommunicable infections. AKRSP has established adolescent-friendly spaces (AFS) at the Union Council level. These organizations (LSOs) levels within each district, leveraging existing infrastructure. These spaces are serving as platforms for young individuals to acquire vital life skills and actively participate in civic engagements. Moreover, these AFS are outfitted with internet connectivity, affording opportunities for virtual and technological learning, tailored to the specific needs and context of the community. A community-based organization works as a collaborative partner responsible for providing the physical space and identifying adolescent girls and boys, irrespective of their school attendance, for enrollment in the AFS. AKRSP provides comprehensive training to peer-to-peer educators, covering their field of topics. These include Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights/Family Planning, effective parenthood practices, gender equality, ethical considerations, the promotion of positive cultural aspects, child

rights, and life skills about adolescent development. Recognizing that young married couples are frequently excluded from the planning and execution of such initiatives, despite their substantial need for life-skills education, SMK actively engaged and involve married youth in this endeavor. This proactive approach ensures that the insights and needs of married youth are considered and integrated into the program. Gender equality on all SMK projects serves as the central pillar of their mission to uplift and promote gender equality, every intervention within the project is strategically oriented towards achieving a minimum of 50% female participation. The overarching goal of the project is to diminish gender-related and social barriers faced by women and girls in their behavioral change interventions. Among these interventions, the establishment of Adolescent Friendly Spaces (AFS) is a prominent initiative within the broader behavioral change program. In order to keep the motivation level high, Adolescent Friendly Spaces remain open as per the attendants' time of convenience. Many adolescents are either in school or are engaged in other activities most of the day. They may therefore find it difficult to miss school sessions or opportunities for employment to visit the center unless it is an absolute emergency. Facilities offering services to adolescents should therefore arrange special sessions during late afternoons, after school/work, or during weekends to make it possible for adolescents to attend. APC also offers free of cost services to the financially challenged communities and in addition to this, a free of cost assessment is arranged periodically at each AFS for Head-to-Head assessment. It is also true that young people are attracted to a facility that provides comfort, safety and where there are adequate seating arrangements, friendly environment and (low-moored) people around in the vicinity. This is very much adhered to this fact. Mentors and Peer Educators selected to work in a Youth youth-friendly space must be well acknowledged and satisfied with their role and where there are adequate seating arrangements, friendly environment and (low-moored) people around in the vicinity. This is very much adhered to this fact.

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IMF green lights \$4.7B for Argentina

BERLIN: The International Monetary Fund approved a fresh \$4.7 billion for Argentina, praising the new administration of President Javier Milei as he enacts "bold" cost-cutting to bring the country's ailing economy back on track. The new disbursement — which brings to around \$40.6 billion the amount lent to Argentina as part of a \$44 billion aid programme — is intended to "support the new authorities' strong policy efforts to restore macroeconomic stability," the IMF said in a statement. IMF chief Kristalina Georgieva praised the Milei government's "bold actions to restore macroeconomic stability and... address longstanding impediments to growth." Milei, a libertarian and self-described "anarcho-capitalist," took office in December vowing to slash taxes and end decades of economic crisis. Argentina is grappling with severe economic struggles after decades of mismanagement, with unemployment levels to 40 percent, and pushed inflation to an annual rate of more than 200 percent. Milei, a 53-year-old outsider, won a resounding election victory on a wave of fury over the crises marked by debt, rampant money printing, inflation and fiscal deficit. But his cost-cutting measures have also prompted backlash and mass protests, with many citizens fearing he will leave them less well-off.—DNA

Myanmar enters 4th year of post-coup crisis

YANGON: Soldiers patrolled the deserted streets of Myanmar's largest city Thursday, three years after a coup ended a short-lived experiment in military rule, as the embattled junta faces growing challenges to its rule. Streets and markets in commercial Yangon were largely empty. AFP reporters said, as opponents of the military called for a people to stay indoors in a "silent strike" against the coup. In the colonnaded downtown — which once thronged with huge democracy protests — there was a heavy military presence, with soldiers carrying machine guns on patrol and manning checkpoints. A procession of around 100 monks holding pro-military banners and religious flags passed down one road, stirring the largely quiet atmosphere in the city of 8 million people. "I am the great of our unity against the coup," she said, requesting anonymity for security reasons. On the eve of the anniversary of the coup, the junta extended by six months the state of emergency it declared on February 1, 2021 when it rounded up the last lamest Jung San Kyi and members of her party. The military claimed widespread fraud had taken place during polls weeks before when Jung's National League for Democracy (NLD) had trounced a military-backed rival in a vote—APP

Briefs KP political figures receive threats

SHAMIM SHAHID PESHAWAR: The Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) on Thursday released a list of political figures who received threats ahead of the general election 2024. According to the Counter Terrorism Department, 15 politicians from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) have received threats from terrorists. Here's the CTD list of Political leaders who received threats, MNA Mo-hsin Durrani, Ex-minister minister Intiaz Qureshi, Senator Hidayatullah, Former PML-N MNA Amir Magam, Former PTI MNA Feroz Khan, Former MNA Muhammad, JUI-F's Malik Adnan Wazir and Ehsanullah, Senator Bakht Ashraf, Senator Mandaqat Rashid. The CTD spokesperson stated that the police officials of concerned districts have been informed about the threats and directed for additional security of the listed politicians.

Cabinet okays increase in prices of 146 medicines

FAISAL SHEIKH ISLAMABAD: The federal cabinet on Thursday approved the increase in the prices of 146 lifesaving medicines. Sources divulged that a significant surge in the prices of 146 medicines had been authorised, ranging from 20 to 60 percent. Over 12 antibiotics have received approval for a minimum price hike of 60 percent, while 8 tuberculosis medications have also experienced a surge in prices, varying between 20 and 60 percent, as confirmed by reliable sources. More than five heart medications, three blood thinners, and two blood pressure medications had received approval for a price hike.

Security Forces conduct IBO

DNA RAWALPINDI: On 1 February 2024, security forces conducted an intelligence based operation in Dera Ismail Khan District, on reported presence of terrorists. During the conduct of operation, intense fire exchange took place between own troops and terrorists as a result of which IJT Terrorist lead Ashraf Sheikh and Terrorist Barhan Ullah were sent to hell. Weapons, ammunition and explosives were also recovered from the killed terrorists who remained actively involved in numerous terrorist activities including target killing of innocent civilians.

Upcoming Indian polls raise concerns as BJP eyes 3rd term

The speakers claim the biased constitutional interpretations in India signal its shift from a secular state to a Hindu-centric one

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: While several South Asian countries are holding elections, the results of the upcoming Indian elections will significantly impact the country within and beyond its national borders. Concerns arise as the BJP eyes a third term, with potential repercussions including further escalation in Hindu fundamentalism and compromises on the rule of law. Besides, the results will also wield a substantial influence on regional dynamics and redefine India's interactions with its neighbors. This was observed during a roundtable, "Democracy in India: New Dynamics & Evolving Scenario," held at the Institute of Policy Studies (IPS), Islamabad. This roundtable was the first of a series of discussions being held to understand the decade of Bharatya Janta Party's (BJP) rule, marked by enormous changes in socio-political outlook and policy shifts, and navigate the future course to which India is heading in the backdrop of the general elections scheduled for May. The roundtable, chaired by Khalid Rahman, chairman, IPS, was addressed by DeMujeeb Afzal, author, associate professor, School of Politics and International Relations (SPIR), QAU, Dr Ferooz Adil, author and journalist, Iltihaf Ghani, journalist, Ambassador (r) Syed Abrar Hussain, vice chairman, IPS, Prof. Dr Fakhruddin, advisor, research and academic outreach, IPS, legal experts, scholars, and journalists. The speakers said the biased constitutional interpretations in India signal its shift from a secular state to a Hindu-centric one. This has undermined the rule of law, influenced by Hindu nationalism, leading to an autocratic bureaucratic

Jharkhand CM arrested in a corruption case

NEW DELHI: India's financial crimes agency has arrested a top opposition leader, hours after he resigned from the position of the chief minister of Jharkhand state. Hemant Soren, of the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM) party, has been accused of corruption. He denies the allegations. He was arrested by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Wednesday evening after seven hours of questioning. His party has named transport minister Champal Soren as the next chief minister of the eastern state. Mr Soren has challenged his arrest in India's Supreme Court, calling it politically motivated. The matter will be heard on Friday. He is the latest in a long list of opposition leaders who are facing high-profile investigations led by India's central agencies. The case against Mr Soren relates to a piece of land he allegedly owns in Ranchi city, the capital of Jharkhand. The ED claims he bought the property through "proceeds of crimes" by illegally selling land owned by the Indian army. Mr Soren denies the charge and claims the property was "wrongfully alleged to be owned" by him. The ED officials reportedly sent multiple summons to Mr Soren but he refused to appear for questioning. On Monday, officials reached Mr Soren's residence in capital Delhi but found he was "missing". The agency said it seized 3.6m rupees (\$43,381,424.202) and a car from the house. A day later, Mr Soren surfaced in Ranchi and said he would record his statement before the agency on Wednesday. - Agencies

structure with Hindu extremists capitalizing on divisive issues. Dr Mujeeb Afzal said the Indian constitution, initially constructed for the diversity within the nation, has transformed into a compromised rule of law. This is due to the influence of Hindu nationalism in shaping the constitutional discourse and its interpretation of the constitution, signaling potential challenges to its secular fabric. This has led to a bureaucratic structure mirroring an autocratic system reminiscent of the colonial past. He said with a unified secular discourse prevails at the national level, there is a tendency towards communism at the Congress level. The geographical and cultural

aspects, grounded in the concept of dharma, significantly influence how the constitution is interpreted and applied. Key manifestations include the revocation of Article 370 and the construction of Ram Mandir, prominently featuring in the BJP's manifesto. Notably, the judiciary has not actively intervened in such matters, he said. Dr Afzal said if this trend continued, it could lean more aggressively towards a Hindu perspective. In light of these developments, the question of constitutional legitimacy and interpretation remains a critical aspect of India's political landscape and democratic ethos. This was endorsed by Dr Ferooz Adil, who quoted Barack

Obama saying in 2023 about the precarious state of minorities in India, that they face pressures and lack safeguards, with no support from the state and its institutions, the continuation of such situation could strain Indian cohesion. He also observed that the Indian media landscape has been focusing more on dispersing narrative in a way that often causes erosion of democratic values. Dr Adil said the prevailing situation draws attention to a complex state of affairs in India, marked by challenges to minority rights, a shift towards extremist ideologies, loss of media integrity, erosion of trust in key institutions, and the emergence of an autocratic trend with potential implications for the country's democratic fabric. Iltihaf Ghani said India is an exclusive democracy in which the upper caste dominates politics and has a disproportionate amount of influence in governing the country. He said extremist Hindus intentionally stir up controversies on the sacredness of cows, disputes with Muslims, and historical rivalry with Pakistan. As the 2024 elections draw near, the radical elements are capitalizing on conflicts with Muslims. With these developments, India is gradually transitioning from a secular state to a Hindu state or rather an anti-Hindu state, where the emphasis on Hindu identity and ideology marginalizes and potentially discriminates against religious and ethnic minorities, said Abrar Hussain. In his concluding remarks, Khalid Rahman underscored the dichotomy within India's democratic framework, noting that while it is recognized as the world's largest democracy, the essence and values of democracy fall short.

Balochistan: 1 killed, several injured in multiple explosions

DNA QUETTA: At least one person was killed and four others were injured on Tuesday as multiple blasts were reported in different parts of Balochistan including the provincial capital Quetta, according to police. In Quetta, the explosion took place in the Spinny Road area. Police have cordoned off the area and are ascertaining the nature of the blast. Geo News reported. Explosions also took place in Nasarabad and Turbat districts of the province. According to police, at least three people were injured when a hand grenade exploded at the Dera Allah Yar Bhatti gate area in Nasarabad and one person was injured in a grenade blast in Turbat's main market. Bomb disposal squad and rescue teams have arrived at the site of a blast in Quetta where, according to police, at least one person has died in the explosion. Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Operations Quetta Tariq Jawad told the media that 8 to 10 kg of explosives were used in the blast in the provincial capital. He said the deceased of the blast has not been identified yet, adding the preliminary investigation showed the victim was a passer-by.

Ethiopia, Pakistan discuss economic cooperation



MEHTAB PIRZADA ISLAMABAD: The Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia and the Islamic Republic of Pakistan on Thursday explored different avenues for economic cooperation during a bilateral meeting held in Islamabad at the Ministry of Finance. I.E. Dr. Eyob Teklehaimanot, State Minister of Finance, led the Ethiopian delegation while the Pakistan side was led by I.E. Dr. Shamshad Akhtar, Finance Minister of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan. Governor of the State Bank of Pakistan I.E. Jameel Ahmad and senior officers of the Ministry of Finance of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan were also present during the highly level engagement between the two countries. Both sides had a productive discussion on the matters of mutual interest including the bilateral cooperation in financial sector of both countries. The two countries expressed the resolve to bolster economic cooperation between the two brotherly countries. Earlier, I.E. Dr. Eyob Teklehaimanot, Deputy Governor State Bank of Pakistan. During the meeting, cooperation between the two countries in the banking sector came under discussion.

37 British journalists issued visas to cover Pakistan elections

NEWS DESK LONDON: The international observers on the invitation of the caretaker government are set to monitor the February 8 general elections, including dozens of foreign journalists who have also been issued visas for coverage of polls. The government said the issuance of visas showcases the commitment to ensuring free and fair elections in accordance with the constitutional mandate. The caretaker government and the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) are committed to conducting elections with fairness and adherence to the constitutional mandate, said a source commenting on the visas issued to journalists and observers. On February 8, Pakistan's general elections guarantee a prompt and democratic power transition and the state institutions are resolute in guaranteeing the free and fair elections. The constitutional fulfilling their roles within the constitutional parameters assigned by the government, said the senior government source. Meanwhile, the Pakistan High Commission in London has granted visas to 37 British journalists, including The Times' Christina Lamb, The Telegraph's Dominic John, CNN's Kevrek Mick Brinkman, CNN's Shelley Joanna Marie, CNN's Lynne O'Donnell, Foreign Policy Magazine's Messey Dean Anthony, Sky News's Steven Harry Gerald, Sky News's Britton Jake Anthony, Sky News's Cortelia Lynch, Sky News's Shary Duncan, Sky News's Scholtes Katherine Victoria, Sky News's Adam Campbell, BBC News's Mohamed Madi, BBC News's Jamie Paul Jones, BBC News's Paul Michael Adams, BBC News's and Rajna Vaidyanathan, BBC News's. The list also includes Inogen Alexandru Bercanico, BBC News's Cunningham Christopher, Sky News's Mosker Richard, Sky News's Crawford Alex, Sky News's Pachael Thorpe, Sky News's Janus Bensch, Sky News's Emma Murphy, ITV's Lucky Watson, ITV's Natalie Wright, Producer, ITV's Natasha Stewney, ITV's Mark Nelson, ITV's Kenneth Stewney, Sky News's Stuart Ramsay, Sky News's Dominique Van Heerden, Sky News's Martin Wovles, Sky News's Toby Nash, Sky News's Millicent Florence Teasdale, Channel 4 News's Freddie Gomez, Channel 4 News's and John William Bever, Feature Story. On Jan 23, caretaker Federal Minister for Information Murtaza Solangi mentioned that 49 visas for Islamabad, Lahore and Karachi had been issued, with 32 requests still under process. The manual visa system in India was causing delays. Additionally, 174 requests for the electoral authority's Accreditation Cards for foreign media and their Pakistani staff were processed.

JUP Noorani announces electoral alliance with PPP

BUREAU REPORT PESHAWAR: Jamiat-Ul-Masoom-Pakistan (JUP) Noorani Group has announced electoral alliance with PPP for the Feb 8 elections. This was announced by the central vice president JUP Noorani Group, Syed Mohammad Sibtan Gillani, alias Taj Agha and Divisional President PPP Peshawar, Haji Misbahuddin, during a press conference here on Thursday. JUP and PPP leaders including Mubammad Ovais Qadri advocates, Mohammad Iqbal, and Shah Zuqarnam were also present on the occasion. Expressing his great view on the alliance, Gillani said that JUP Noorani Group and PPP entered into electoral alliance for general elections. The alliance, he said was reached out between both parties during a meeting of the former president Asif Ali Zardari and President JUP Noorani Group, Sahba-dabul Khair Dr. Mohammod Zubair, at Lahore. During the meeting, he said that Asif Ali Zardari and Sahba-dabul Khair Dr. Mohammod Zubair, have agreed on a formal electoral alliance and eight-point agreement.

Hamas Chief in Cairo for truce talks as death toll crosses 27,000

HAMAS official Osama Hamdan says the Palestinian group has not handed yet an official response to the proposed deal after four-way meeting in Paris

NEWS DESK GAZA CITY: As the US-backed Israeli genocidal war on the Gaza Strip entered day 138 on Thursday, massive aerial and artillery strikes continued to pound neighborhoods, homes, and shelter centers and massacre more civilians, mostly children and women. At least 27,019 Palestinians have been killed and 65,139 injured in Israeli strikes on Gaza since October 7, the health ministry in Gaza said on Thursday. In the past 24 hours, 118 Palestinians were killed and 190 injured, the ministry added. The Palestinian Health Ministry in Gaza says more than 30,000 displaced people in schools near Nasser Hospital in Khan Yunis have no water, food or baby formula. The ministry called on the UN and its institutions to intervene urgently to respond to the needs of the displaced. Meanwhile, Hamas official Osama Hamdan says the Palestinian group has not handed yet an official response to the proposed deal after the four-way meeting in Paris. "When things are ready and we submit our response to the deal, it would be natural to let that be known," he told Arab media. "But until this moment, there has been no response from our side to the proposal, and so, there is no agreement." Hamdan added that part of the Israeli government's plan is to leak news over the past few weeks to calm down the pressures from the opposition, and it seems like "he reached a point where the leaks are not helping, so he's spreading practical disinformation." Asked about the provisions of the deal, Hamdan replied, "The proposal is being studied, so I won't comment on that." Palestinian Information Center

Advertisement for 'Rising Stars Intra-Club Hockey League 2024' featuring a group of hockey players and the event details at Naseer Bunda Hockey Stadium, Islamabad, on Saturday, February 3, 2024.