



Islamabad POST

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'Enough, please': Pope Francis calls for ceasefire in Gaza

Detailed News On Page-08

Achakzai's house raid condemned at parliament

Detailed News On Page-08

Inzamam ul Haq criticizes Pak Cricket Board

Detailed News On Page-06

PTI calls for ECP's resignation

No reserved seats for SIC, rules ECP

In the dissenting note, ECP Punjab chapter member maintained that these seats will remain vacant till the time any such amendment in Articles 51 and 106 is made by the parliament

MAHNOOR ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) Monday ruled that Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI)-backed Sunni Ittehad Council (SIC) is not eligible for the reserved seats allotted to women and minorities, serving a major blow to the already embattled party. The commission's five-member bench – headed by Chief Election Commissioner Sikandar Sultan Raja – announced the split decision with a 4-1 majority. ECP Punjab member Hassan Bharwana dissented with the majority verdict, which was reserved on February 28. The remaining 77 reserved seats will now be allotted to other political parties. In the verdict, the ECP said it extended the deadline to submit a priority list for the reserved seats of women, and the SIC, before the February 8 polls, did not submit the required list which was "mandatory". The electoral body said the SIC cannot claim the share in the reserved seats for the women "due to non-curable procedural and legal defects and violations of mandatory provisions of the Constitution". The ECP verdict cited Article 51(6), saying the article clearly stated the reserved seats would be allocated to the political parties who contested elections and won general seats based on a "proportional representation system". It further stated that the percentage share of each political party shall be worked out with reference to

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Punjab cabinet: 15 ministers set to take oath

Mariyum Aurangzeb is expected to assume the Ministry of Planning and Development and Forests

ABID RAZA

LAHORE: The first phase of the Punjab cabinet expansion is expected to take place within the next one to two days, with 15 ministers taking the oath of office at the Governor's House. This initial phase will see a leaner cabinet, focusing on key portfolios. The swearing-in ceremony is scheduled to be held at the Governor House, a momentous occasion signifying the commencement of the new administration's tenure.

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ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi administering the oath of office to Mian Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif as the Prime Minister of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, at Aiwan-e-Sadr. – DNA

Presidential polls: Zardari, Achakzai set for showdown

ECP prohibits media coverage of scrutiny process of candidates' nomination papers



MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP), as per the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) and Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leaders, has approved the nomination papers of Asif Ali Zardari and Mahmood Khan Achakzai for the presidential elections. "No objection

Continued on Page 06

Amid political chaos

Shehbaz sworn in as prime minister

President Dr Arif Alvi administered the oath to the newly-elected premier in a ceremony which was attended by several dignitaries including Chief of Army Staff (COAS) Asim Munir

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz's (PML-N) Shehbaz Sharif on Monday took an oath as the country's 24th prime minister at the President's House in the federal capital. President Dr Arif Alvi administered the oath to the newly-elected premier in a ceremony which was attended by several dignitaries including Chief of Army Staff (COAS) Asim Munir. Meanwhile, leaders of the country's mainstream political parties such as Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), Pakistan People's Party (PPP), Muttahida Qaumi Movement-Pakistan (MQM-P), and Itehad-e-Pakistan Party (IPP), among others, attended the oath-taking ceremony. Those among the leaders included PML-N supreme Nawaz Sharif, PPP Co-Chairman Asif Ali Zardari, and PPP Chairman

Continued on Page 06

Erdogan calls PM

World leaders felicitate Shehbaz

Pakistan, under PM Shehbaz, set to achieve greater accomplishment in nation-building: Mao Ning

DNA/APP

ISLAMABAD: Crown Prince and Prime Minister of Saudi Arabia, Mohammed bin Salman has felicitated Shehbaz Sharif on taking oath as Prime Minister of Pakistan. In a cable message, Crown Prince wished Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif success,

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Briefs

PPP 'seeks' MQM-P's support

Zardari telephones Maqbool Siddiqui to muster support

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: As the presidential election is all set to take place on March 9, the PPP sought Muttahida Qaumi Movement-Pakistan's (MQM-P) support for the presidential election scheduled for March 9 as part of its efforts to muster the support of the political parties, a private news channel reported citing sources. The PPP has fielded its Co-chairman Asif Ali Zardari for the presidential election against Pashtunkhwa Milli Awami Party (PkMAP) chief Mahmood Khan Achakzai, who has support of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI)-backed Sunni Ittehad Council (SIC) lawmakers.

Bilawal condemns ruckus

PPP fully endorses national reconciliation

"We not only endorse it but also urge the Opposition to participate in this process for the broader interests of the country," he stated

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: Chairman of the Pakistan People's Party (PPP), Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, stated on Monday that the PPP fully supported the offer made by newly elected Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif for a 'Charter of National Reconciliation.' Speaking in the National Assembly, he recalled the Prime Minister's offer during his maiden speech in the House to collaborate on a Charter of National Reconciliation. "We not only endorse it but also urge the Opposition to participate in this process for the broader interests of the country," he stated.

Bilawal Bhutto congratulated the newly elected Chief Ministers of all four provinces and emphasized the need for them to play their role in saving Pakistan's "democracy and economy." He said that people did not vote for anyone to create a ruckus but to save them from this economic crisis. Bilawal Bhutto stressed the need for discourse among all the lawmakers.

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Transfers, postings start in federal govt

Asad-ur-Rahman Gillani appointed as principle secretary to PM

ADIL SHAHEEN

ISLAMABAD: As soon as Shahbaz Sharif became the prime minister, major changes in the federal bureaucracy have started taking up. Asad-ur-Rahman Gillani, a grade-21 officer, got the charge of principal secretary to the prime minister. The Establishment Division also issued a notification for the appointment of Asad-ur-Rehman Gillani as Principal Secretary to the

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Outrage over Brazilian tourist's gang rape in India

The couple had travelled to several parts of Asia on their motorbikes before arriving in India a few months ago

AGENCIES

NEW DELHI: The alleged gang rape of a tourist with Brazilian-Spanish dual nationality in the eastern Indian state of Jharkhand has led to outrage. The 28-year-old woman and her husband, who were on a motorbike tour, had stopped for

Continued on Page 06

Punjab's first state-run cancer hospital

Maryam issued directions for inviting the best doctors from around the world

ABBAS HASHMI

LAHORE: Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz said on Monday the Punjab government would establish first state-run cancer hospital in Lahore's Valencia Town. The chief minister visited the proposed site of the cancer hospital near Valencia Town where she was briefed on various aspects of the project. Maryam issued directions for inviting the best doctors from around the world for the proposed cancer hospital. She also issued instructions for building of an eatery for people attending the cancer patients.

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PTI calls for trial of Imran's military secretary in cipher case

"Bilawal does not know cipher's mechanism," insists Omar Ayub

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Secretary General Omar Ayub Khan Monday called for the trial of former prime minister Imran Khan's military secretary in the diplomatic cable case. Talking to journalists outside the Parliament House, Ayub, alongside PTI's newly elected chairman Barrister Gohar Ali Khan, said that keeping the cipher documents safe was the responsibility of the then-prime minister's military secretary. "If the case is to proceed, it should be proceeded against these persons [military secretary]." In January 2024, PTI founder Imran and party's senior leader Shah Mahmood Qureshi were sentenced to 10 years, each, in the cipher case.

BILAWAL MEETS COAS: PICTURE ON BACK PAGE

Speaking on the occasion, the PTI leader demanded a "judicial inquiry" into the cipher case. Commenting on the PPP chairman's address in the lower house of parliament, Ayub said Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari used unparliamentary words today. "Bilawal Bhutto does not know the cipher's mechanism." For his part, Barrister Gohar said that the party wanted to move forward, despite problems. Slamming the eight-party ruling alliance, the PTI leader said that

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Cipher case

Asad demands judicial probe

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: PTI leader Asad Qaiser on Monday demanded a judicial inquiry into the cipher case. Speaking on the floor of the National Assembly, the former NA speaker stated, "Our position on the cipher case is clear: we demand a judicial commission is formed and the truth will come out." The cipher case revolves around a diplomatic cable that the Federal Investigation Agency alleges was never returned by the PTI founder. The PTI has long maintained that the document contained a threat from the US to oust the PTI founder as the prime minister of Pakistan. Asad Qaiser recalled that an extremely hostile attitude had been adopted towards Pakistan's ambassador in Washington.

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RCCI inks MOU with WELDO

RCCI President Saqib Rafiq assured all kinds of support, close cooperation and assistance through the chamber platform

DNA

RAWALPINDI : The Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (RCCI) inked an MOU (Memorandum of Understanding) with Women Empowerment Literacy and Development Organization (WELDO). President Mr. Saqib

Rafiq, on behalf of RCCI and Manager Finance Mr. Umer Waqas from WELDO inked and exchanged the MOU documents. Senior Vice President Muhammad Hamza Sarosh, Vice President Mr. Faisal Shahzad, Former President Mr. Najam Rehman, EC member Abdul Rauf and Hussain Ali Marwat (Reintegration Manager) witnessed the MOU ceremony.

RCCI President Saqib Rafiq assured all kinds of support, close cooperation and assistance through the chamber platform. The prime focus and mission of WELDO is to provide impartial returns and reintegration services to returnees coming back to Pakistan through health, social, economic, and psychosocial support measures.



RAWALPINDI: Former Prime Minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi along with Chaudhary Muhammad Akram keenly viewing Science & Arts Exhibition of Punjab College of Commerce.—DNA

Family planning initiative launched

NCRC consultation concludes on free education in KP

SHAMIM SHAHID

LAHORE : Director General Welfare Punjab and Chief Executive Officer PPIF Saman Roy while addressing a meeting regarding family planning services and easy access services to women said that family planning services are available to women, and introduced a network of trained women "nor workers" to ensure the delivery of information which was launched as a community-based family planning model which has been successful at the initial level. And seeing better results, its scope has been extended to 10 more districts Sheikhupura, Nankana, Faisalabad, Gujranwala, Kasur, Chiniot, TT Singh, Sargodha, and Lahore. He said that PPIF has provided women with family planning. Improving sanitation counseling and health services has made it possible to deliver these facilities to the doorsteps of the underprivileged. This model is supported by locally trained women serving as community resource persons. A pilot project was launched through the program in this cycle and was referred to as "Noor". Through this model, dissemination of information through group awareness sessions, audio-visual and print materials is ensured to bring family planning services to every individual. By empowering "Noor Workers" socio-economically, the provision of world-class family planning facilities is ensured for every household. Shops have been set up to provide sanitary and sanitary products, where the local population is provided with household items, and women's health and hygiene products, while family planning information is also provided to local women at these shops. Possible by the Chief Executive Officer PPIF said that these workers have been provided with "Business in Box" bags containing family planning products which the Noor workers will go door to door during their visits to provide family planning information, counseling, short-term contraceptive methods, and services as well as sells its products. It is expected to provide family planning facilities to 823 thousand married women through this intervention.—APP

PESHAWAR : In an effort to address the critical issues plaguing the access to quality education in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), the National Commission on the Rights of Child (NCRC) organized a pivotal provincial consultation on Free and Compulsory Education, said a press release issued here on Monday. A diverse array of stakeholders, including academia, social welfare advocates, media representatives and political leaders, gathered to confront the challenges ahead. The consultation uncovered a myriad of pressing concerns, including the pervasive influence of economic challenges hindering children's access to education. Moreover,

the alarming dropout rates among girls, primarily driven by socio-cultural norms, demand immediate attention. Urgent infrastructural enhancements are imperative, as evidenced by the dire state of many schools. Despite of constitutional mandate stipulating free and compulsory education for all children aged five to sixteen (Article 25A), a staggering reality persists: a mere fraction of the education budget is allocated to development plans, exacerbating the scarcity of higher secondary schools and perpetuating the challenge of inadequate school facilities, particularly in remote areas and newly merged districts. A glaring gap in inclusive education was also highlighted, particularly concerning children with disabilities, including those affected by

landmines in newly merged districts. Their needs have been consistently neglected, highlighting an urgent call for action to ensure their right to quality education. Nadia Bibi, Member KP, NCRC emphasized the constitutional obligation to provide free and compulsory education to all children, underscoring the urgency of addressing the current education crisis. Article 25A of the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan clearly states the state shall provide free and compulsory Education to all children of the age of five to sixteen years. "However, unfortunately, only 52.9 percent of children in Pakistan are in school and out of these, only 4.5 percent of children complete secondary-level education, making it the lowest in Asia.

Rescue 1122 receives 12885 disturbing calls in Feb

MUZAFFARGARH : District Emergency Service Rescue 1122 has received 20774 calls on emergency helpline, out of which, some 12885 were noted disturbing calls while 4567 were observed real emergency calls during the last month of February. District Emergency Officer (DEO) Dr Hussain Mian disclosed the details of the emergency calls while presiding over a monthly meeting held here on Monday. In the meeting, the DEO reviewed the monthly performance of the department. Sharing the details with participants of the meeting, he said that disturbing calls not only create problems for the performance of the department but it would also cause loss of the precious time for those people who missed their calls during real emergencies.

He urged the masses to avoid fake and disturbing calls on "emergency helpline" in order to save lives and times of other people. He further said that department has received 20774 calls on the "helpline" during the last month, out of which, 12885 were noted as disturbing calls while 4567 were observed as emergency calls including 754 of road accidents, 3568 medical emergencies, 22 fire emergencies, 22 crime, two building collapse and 199 other emergencies. The Rescue 1122 has rescued 4458 people, out of which, some 1899 persons were given first aid, while 2479 shifted to hospitals and 80 ill-fated persons died on the spot. He said that most of the emergencies were caused by violations of traffic laws. He further said that that violators must be treated strictly as per law of the country to minimize losses on roads.—APP

LESCO chief holds functional heads meeting

LAHORE : Lahore Electric Supply Company (LESCO) Chief Executive Officer Engineer Shahid Haider chaired a high-level meeting of all the functional heads of the company here at LESCO Headquarters on Monday. Director (Customer Services) Rai Muhammad Asghar, Director (Admin.) Zameer Hussain Kolachi, Chief Financial Officer (CFO) Bushra Imran, Director (HR) Nauman Ghafoor, Chief Engineer (Material Management) Ramzan Butt, Chief Engineer (P&D) Imran Mehmood, Chief Engineer (T&G) Zafar Iqbal, Chief Engineer (PIU) Tahir Mayo and Director (Safety) Fawad Khalid also attended the meeting. During the meeting, the LESCO Chief appreciated

the social media performance of the Public Relations Officer. The CEO directed the safety officials to ensure earthing and make the electrical hazard areas hazard-free, adding that the Director (Safety) should provide maximum safety awareness to the officers and employees to avoid accidents in future as safety of human lives is the primary duty of LESCO. He said that the authorities concerned of the material management of LESCO should take steps to improve the performance of material management. Similarly, the maintenance department must also take necessary steps by utilizing all resources to save the customers from any trouble related to power supply. Earlier

on, LESCO's starts technical staff training Lahore Electric Supply Company (LESCO) Regional Training Centre has started training classes for technical staff of the company. The LESCO spokesman told the media here Monday that on the instructions of Chief Executive Officer Engineer Shahid Haider, excellent courses and training programmes were being organized for the technical staff. The training programme also feature practicals to avoid more damage in any unexpected situation. LESCO staffs are also being trained to use modern technical, protective equipment and safety methods to protect their precious lives while performing field duties.—APP

First national immigration, welfare policy in its final stages

NAZIR SYAL

KARACHI : The Federal Secretary of Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development Dr. Arshad Mahmood on Monday said that they were about to finalize their first National Immigration and Welfare Policy. He said that the policy had many promising offers for the youth and about their proper selection, training and welfare benefits. While addressing the Inauguration ceremony of 2nd Korean Computer Based Testing (CBT) Laboratory here, the Secretary Dr. Arshad Mahmood said that approximately 10 million people were living abroad and they send \$31 billion remittances. He said that the Ministry was trying to restructure itself. Vice President of Human Resource Development (HRD) Service of Korea Kim Sung Jae and Consul General of Republic of Korea to Karachi Yi Sungho were also present on the occasion. Mahmood said that Korea pick up right kind of people and the emerging youth and train them. He lauded the pragmatism of South Korean government and their system. The Secretary said that the Korean model put the youth on a decent work profile. He said, "We would love to replicate this model for so many other countries." Mahmood said that the youth were the best ambassadors of Pakistan to South Korea and they would be new entrepreneur in Pakistan upon return. He said that the youth when leave the country they remain under the protected signature and receive facilities under 'Welfare Portal'. He said that around 130000 people had gone to South Korea, which was part of G20 economies and in many ways lead in semi-conductors and knowledge based economy. A EU delegation was coming tomorrow to us and they had shown their interest in hiring Pakistani youth for EU countries, he added. Consul General of Republic of Korea to Karachi Yi Sungho said that the economic relationship between Pakistan and Korea had continued to develop. He said that people-to-people exchange allowed both the countries to achieve mutual benefit in the current conditions. He said that Korea needed manpower for sustainable development. He further said that more young people from Sindh and Balochistan would had the opportunity to work in Korea in the future. Vice President of Human Resource Development (HRD) Service of Korea Kim Sung Jae also spoke on the occasion.

Naghban Ramadan package distribution begins March 05

Engineer AamirKhattak siad that Ration package will be distributed to 378496 families across the division

DNA

RAWALPINDI : Commissioner Rawalpindi Division Engineer AamirKhattak visited the industrial estate for the preparation of ration bags for the Nighaban Ramadan package. He made a detailed review of the quality and quantity of essential items included in the ration bags. After the visit, he presided over the meeting held with the Deputy Commissioners of all five districts and directed them to verify the data of the beneficiaries across the division and prepare the final list in the next two days. Apart from this, the quality of the essential items kept in the Ramadan ration package given to the beneficiaries should be ensured. During

the packaging of the ration, the Deputy Commissioner should personally monitor and ensure that there is no compromise in the specified quantity and quality of the items in all the packages and that the packaging should be completed by coming Monday. Deputy Commissioners should also finalise their transportation and security plan by tomorrow. He directed that transparency should be ensured during the verification of the list and in the meantime, those in the list who are no longer eligible for this package and those who are non-verified due to incomplete address or any other reason should be segregated in separate list. Commissioner Rawalpindi directed that a control room should be set up in the Deputy Commissioner's office

to monitor all the processes. Deputy Commissioner Rawalpindi Dr. Hasan Waqar Cheema, Additional Commissioner Coordination Syed Nazarat Ali, DGRDA Saif Anwar Jappa, DGPAA Ahmed Hasan Ranjha and other concerned officers attended this meeting in person whereas Deputy Commissioner Attock, Jhelum, Chakwal and Murree participated through video link. While giving a briefing on this occasion, Commissioner Rawalpindi was told that there are 378,496 households across the division who are eligible beneficiaries and guardians of NighabanRamzan package. A total of 68% verification has been completed across the division so far. 67,628 households in Rawalpindi district, 45181 in Jhelum district, 5541 in Mur-

ree district, 74624 in Attock district and 64654 in Chakwal district have been verified. Commissioner Rawalpindi directed that the relevant departments should complete all their arrangements on priority basis regarding the distribution of ration bags to ensure timely and best distribution of ration bags. This ration package consists of 10 kg flour while rice and 2 kgs sugar, ghee and Basin. Ration bags should be delivered at the doorsteps of the beneficiaries so that the beneficiaries do not have to face any problem or difficulty in providing the ration bags. Meanwhile, Commissioner Rawalpindi AamirKhattak's surprise visit to Murree during the recent rains. Commissioner Rawalpindi Division Engineer AamirKhattak paid surprise to Murree on hol-

iday to review the arrangements being made during current rains and snowfall. Commissioner Rawalpindi visited various facilitation centres including that of Jhikagali. On this occasion, Deputy Commissioner Murree Agha Zaheer Abbas Shirazi, Additional Deputy Commissioner Revenue Captain (retd) QasimJaz, AC Murree Abdul Wahab, Xen Highway, Rescue 1122 and other concerned officers were also present there. Commissioner Rawalpindi while reviewing the measures taken for the tourists during the snowfall said that the administrative officers should spend more time in the field to assess the situation themselves. He directed that implementation of Murree Contingency Plan should be ensured.

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National Days and Armed Forces Days

- MARCH
March 01/Bosnia National Day
March 03/Bulgaria National Day
March 06/ Ghana Independence Day
March 12 /Mauritius National Day
March 17/Ireland St. Patricks Day
March 20/Tunisia Independence Day
March 21/Namibia National Day
March 25/Greece National Day
March 26/Bangladesh National Day
March 27/Myanmar Armed Forces Day

Hotels & Restaurants

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

Emergency

- Bomb Disposal.....15
Fire Services Rawalpindi/ Islamabad.....1122 & 16
Emergency Ambulance.....1122 & Rescue Services.4451122
Motorway Police...9266044
Motorway Police.....9270601-20
Women Police Stations Islamabad.....9222596
Rawalpindi.....9270601-20

Enquiry

- Edhi Ambulance.....115
PIA Flight Info.....114
PIA Cargo.....9280979
Railway Inquiry.....117
Railway Exchange9270831-5
WASA Rawalpindi.....5555489
CAA.....9281092

Hospitals

- CMH.....5611111
MH.....5611116
Cantt Hospital...9270907-11
DHQ.....5556311-4
RGH.....9290301-7
Holy Family.....9290322-7
PIMS.....9261170-79
Polyclinic.....9218300-09
Shifa International 4603666

Departments

- CDA.....9221334-43
CDA.....9208301-04
Met Office.....9250360-6
RDA.....5555864
TMA.....5770886
Cantonment Board 9270151-3

Water Tank

- Islamabad.....0321-5744480

Uganda delegation briefed about the BISP activities

The visit of delegation, scheduled from March 4 to March 8, 2024, aims to explore into Pakistan's experiences in implementing social protection programs and to gain insights into various sides of BISP's operations

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: A 17-member delegation from Uganda, led by Mr. Aggrey David Kibenge, Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Gender, Labour, and Social Development of Uganda, embarked on a study visit to the headquarters of the Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) in Pakistan. The Secretary BISP, Mr. Amer Ali Ahmad, who welcomed the delegation at the inaugural session, and provided them an in-depth overview of BISP and its multifaceted initiatives. Secretary Amer Ali Ahmad highlighted the pivotal role of BISP in providing a safety net for those identified as beneficiaries in Pakistan over the past 15 years. Under the umbrella of BISP, programs such as the Unconditional Cash Transfer (UCT) - Kafalaat, have been instrumental in providing financial assistance



to 9.3 million deserving families. Moreover, BISP's Conditional Cash Transfer (CCT) programs for education, such as Taleemi Wazaif, have enrolled 9.2 million children, while Nashonuma, benefiting 1.7 million expectant and lactating women and infants, has played a pivotal role in addressing issues related nutritional needs. Highlighting the core features of BISP, Secretary Ahmad emphasized the importance of the National Socio-Economic Registry (NSER) database, covering 35 million households and 88% of Pakistan's total population. This robust database not only serves

Ramazan to commence on March 12; weather expert

ISLAMABAD: A weather expert Jawad Memon on Monday said Ramazan in Pakistan was expected to commence on March 12. Memon, speaking to a private news channel, disclosed that the moon for Ramazan is slated to appear on March 10, but visibility will only be feasible on March 11. "The first Taraweeh will be observed on the night of March 11," he asserted, indicating the beginning of the spiritual gatherings preceding the first day of fasting. "It is 95 per cent possible that the first fast will be on March 12," he disclosed. As communities eagerly await the arrival of Ramazan, preparations for spiritual reflection, increased prayer, and acts of charity are underway across Pakistan. The holy month serves as a time of heightened devotion and self-discipline for Muslims worldwide.-APP

PPAF honoured with Award

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund (PPAF) has been awarded the International Energy Workforce Award 2024 by the Energy Institute (EI), United Kingdom. The Renewable Energy Programme of PPAF stood out among entries from 29 countries, highlighting its commitment to building a diverse and skilled workforce for combating climate change in remote areas of Pakistan. According to the PPAF, the Renewable Energy Programme has so far implemented over 3800 projects with a cumulative capacity of 13.8MW, benefiting over 300,000 people. The program has had a positive impact on the lives of beneficiary communities, improving their quality of life, increasing economic activity and reducing the environmental impact. Every year, the EI Awards recognise organizations and teams globally that are making significant impacts in workforce development, engagement, and technical innovation. PPAF is dedicated to promoting equity, diversity and inclusion, and fostering future talents for the energy transition through collaborations with partners.-APP

HEC, WB review progress of higher education development

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: The Higher Education Development in Pakistan (HEDP), a pivotal initiative spearheaded by the Higher Education Commission (HEC), conducted its 9th World Bank (WB) Mission at the HEC Secretariat. Over the course of a week, exhaustive discussions were held concerning each of the six project components, meticulously evaluating their progress alongside considerations of safeguards and fiduciary aspects. The kick-off meeting was chaired by Executive Director HEC Dr. Zia Ul-Qayyum and Project Coordinator Dr. Mahmood Butt, who warmly welcomed the Mission team members and commended the dedicated efforts of the HEDP team. Dr. Zia Ul-Qayyum underscored the significance of project missions, characterising them as instrumental in tracking progress, documenting lessons learned,

and serving as vital checkpoints. He also solicited the team's continued support for faculty training throughout the remainder of the project's lifespan, noting HEC's commitment to conducting thorough evaluations of project progress. Ms. Inga Afanasieva, the Task Team Leader and Senior Economist at the World Bank, reaffirmed WB's unwavering commitment to bolstering Pakistan's Higher Education Sector through this project. She emphasised the pivotal role of extending support to critical areas such as the National Academy for Higher Education (NAHE), Affiliated Colleges (ACs), Financial Autonomy of universities, and faculty training. The joint review between HEC and WB facilitated a comprehensive assessment of each component's progress, culminating in mutually agreed-upon next steps aimed at maximizing support for the higher education sector throughout the project's remaining

duration. Highlighting the overall 83% project progress, the HEDP team presented a multitude of achievements, such as the award of 132 research grants including 43 Innovator Seed Fund grants, establishment of quality enhancement cells in 29 affiliated colleges (ACs), capacity-building of 3900 faculty members on the revised Undergraduate Education Policy (UEP), and significant strides in enhancing access to the Pakistan Education Research Network (PERN), among others. A notable aspect of the mission involved engaging project beneficiaries and academicians in a constructive dialogue at HEC Islamabad, providing valuable insights into the project's contributions towards bolstering research endeavors and elevating the quality of teaching and learning in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). Additionally, the mission encompassed visits to prominent institutions such as the Univer-

sity of Education (UoE), Government College University (GCU) Lahore, and associated ACs, along with a tour of the Data Center established at the University of Engineering and Technology (UET) Lahore. In a wrap-up meeting with Chairman HEC Dr. Mukhtar Ahmed, the WB team conveyed their appreciation for the hospitality extended by the HEDP and HEC teams throughout the mission. They lauded the substantial progress achieved since the last mission in July 2023, underscoring the collaborative efforts driving positive transformation within Pakistan's Higher Education Sector. HEDP is the flagship project of HEC aimed to support research excellence in strategic sectors of economy, improve teaching and learning, and strengthen governance in higher education. The HEC website, www.hec.gov.pk may be viewed to learn more about the project.

NEPRA approves key renewable energy projects

Alvi extended his gratitude to NEPRA, and all other stakeholders involved for their support and collaboration throughout the approval process

ISLAMABAD: In a significant development, the National Electric Power Regulatory Authority (NEPRA) has granted approval for two of the three Requests for Proposals (RFPs) submitted by K-Electric (KE) for the addition of renewable energy to its power generation fleet. These approvals are a milestone in KE's strategic plan to integrate renewable energy into its operations; thereby, contributing to a cleaner and more sustainable energy future. Under the approved RFPs, solar projects would be installed within KE's territory, aligning closely with the power utility's commitment to diversify its generation mix with renewable energy resources. Moonis Alvi, CEO of KE, emphasized the importance of these approvals, saying, "As we strive towards the goal to incorporate at least 30% renewables into our fleet by 2030, the approval of these RFPs by NEPRA serves as a cornerstone of our ambitious plan. The impending commencement of the installation process signifies a tangible step forward in KE's journey towards a greener energy ecosystem." "With the necessary regulatory approvals in place, KE is poised to initiate the implementation phase promptly, aiming at expediting the integration of renewable energy solutions into its system, he said, adding that this initiative underscores KE's unwavering commitment to sustainability.-DNA

Governor SBP inaugurates Financial Literacy Week

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Governor State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) Jameel Ahmad, Monday, said that SBP fully recognizes access to financial services a fundamental right, and SBP's mission is to empower every citizen by providing them with the tools and knowledge needed to participate fully in the economy. He was delivering his key note address via video link to the inaugural event of Pakistan Financial Literacy Week (PFLW) held here at Learning Resource Center, SBP, Karachi. The theme for

the week is 'Digital Bankari - fori aur asaan'. The event was attended by Presidents and CEOs of commercial banks, senior officials from the World Bank, Alliance for Financial Inclusion and other stakeholders. The Governor said that an inclusive financial sector is not only important for overall growth of the banking industry but also augments monetary policy transmission channels and increases its effectiveness. Jameel Ahmad stated that SBP has always been working on increasing the availability and utilization of financial services for people and businesses to meet their

financial services needs in a fair and dignified manner. He said that the key initiatives taken for expanding financial services to the unbanked and underbanked segments of the society includes implementation of national level strategies and policies such as National Financial Inclusion Strategy, National Financial Literacy Program and Banking on Equality Policy. He shared that SBP has been implementing a number of initiatives under the national level policies which are uniquely positioned to benefit all segments of population, i.e. RAAST, ASAAN Digital Account, ASAAN Mobile

Account and more recently Digital Banks and specialized schemes to enhance access to finance. The specialized schemes include SME Asaan Finance Scheme (SAAF), Refinance and Credit Guarantee Scheme for Women Entrepreneurs, Line of Credit for MSMEs, and Prime Minister's Youth Business and Agriculture Loan Scheme (PMYB&ALS). Governor SBP said that these initiatives have made an impact on advancing financial inclusion in Pakistan and as of June 2023, there were around 177 million bank accounts in Pakistan, of these, 83 million were unique accounts, which is 60% of the 137 million adult population. Total number of accounts owned by women were 49 million, of which unique accounts are 29 million.



ISLAMABAD: WHO Representative to Pakistan Dr. Luo Depeng called on Federal Secretary of Health Iftikhar Ali Shallwani.-DNA

AIRLINK FLAGSHIP STORE advertisement featuring images of various retail outlets and a list of partner brands including Samsung, Tecno, and Huawei.

Briefs

World Obesity Prevention Day highlights alarming global issue

ISLAMABAD: Today, the world marks World Obesity Prevention Day, drawing attention to the staggering rise in obesity rates worldwide. The prevalence of obesity has reached unprecedented levels, posing significant health risks to over one billion people, according to research published in the British journal 'The Lancet'. A team of international scientists underscores the urgent need for changes in how obesity is addressed, as it has become a pervasive public health crisis. Obesity not only increases the risk of life-threatening diseases such as heart disease, type 2 diabetes, and cancer but also contributes to a myriad of other health complications. The data, sourced from 2022, reveals that approximately 88 million adults and 159 million children are affected by obesity globally. The study sheds light on the disparities in obesity rates between countries, with factors such as age playing a significant role. Notably, the United States ranks 10th for men and 36th for women in terms of obesity rates, while India ranks 19th for women and 21st for men, and China ranks 11th for women and 52nd for men. —APP

AIU offers academic programs for Overseas Pakistani

ISLAMABAD: Allama Iqbal Open University (AIU) has offered admissions in more than 40 academic programs for Overseas Pakistani and international students. According to the AIU, the programs offered include Associate Degree in Arts (BA), Associate Degree in Commerce (B.Com) BA open courses, BS Programs in 22 subjects, B.Ed (1.5 Years, 2.5 Years and 4 Years), one-year Postgraduate Diplomas in 10 subjects and certificate courses in 3 subjects. Overseas and International students can apply till March 25, 2024 through online mode only. It is pertinent to mention here that these programs are offered under the online management system. All teaching activities from admissions to examinations will be online. —DNA

Another spell of rains predicted

ISLAMABAD: The Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA) spokesperson in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Taimur Ali Monday asked the administration in districts to advise tourists and locals in sensitive highlands to be aware of weather conditions and take precautionary measures. Talking to a private news channel, he said that the authority had reissued an alert for another spell of rains in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa and asked district administrations of the province to adopt measures to prevent fatal incidents. He advised the masses to keep themselves protected from viral diseases which usually breakout in such season. —APP

Emirates supports local charity in Islamabad

ISLAMABAD: In its 25th year of operations in Islamabad, Emirates Airline has stepped up to support children in the local community by teaming up with SOS Children's Village Islamabad. The airline collaborated with the charity organisation to provide much-needed blankets to the orphaned students and their caretakers. Emirates' charitable initiative, led by Salem Al Mana, Emirates' Regional Manager - Pakistan and other members of its local sales team, re-



RAWALPINDI: A labourer loading foamic sheets on loader rickshaw at Said Pur Road. —APP

PPAF, NCSW celebrate Int'l Women's Day

The conference emphasized the vital importance of investing in women's potential and acknowledging their invaluable contributions to society and sustainable economic growth

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund (PPAF), in collaboration with the National Commission on the Status of Women (NCSW), the Ministry of National Heritage and Culture Division, the Ministry of Human Rights, and the Punjab Government, hosted a National Women's Conference on Economic Empowerment in Islamabad to commemorate International Women's Day. The conference emphasized the vital importance of investing in women's potential and acknowledging their invaluable contributions to society and sustainable economic growth. A prominent highlight of the event was the awarding of the annual PPAF Amtul Raqeeb Awards to female

community leaders from marginalized areas across the country, celebrating their resilience and inspirational leadership within their communities. Additionally, four special accolades were given to outstanding individuals for their exceptional commitment and innovation, setting the stage for further progress and excellence in their respective fields. The event was attended by representatives from government institutions, the donor and diplomatic community, academia, civil society, and students from educational institutions. During a welcoming address, Nadir Gul Barech, CEO of the Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund (PPAF), underscored the essential link between gender equality and sustainable development goals, including good

governance, human rights, and environmental sustainability. He highlighted the central role of women and girls in PPAF's initiatives, noting the significant impact that empowering women has on their lives and communities. Barech detailed PPAF's efforts in enhancing women's access to financial resources, providing assets, interest-free loans, and technical and financial training to reduce poverty and promote inclusion. He emphasized the importance of giving women a voice, including them in decision-making processes, and removing barriers to their participation in development, reinforcing the organization's commitment to women's empowerment. Nilofar Bakhtiar, Chairperson of the National Commission on the

Status of Women (NCSW) and the chief guest of the conference, stressed the importance of inspiring a new generation of women to break free from fear and pursue their dreams by equipping them with the skills necessary to become leaders who can significantly contribute to Pakistan's social and economic well-being. Bakhtiar stated, 'We cannot achieve true development without equal opportunities for women in education, health, and employment.' She underscored the need for equal opportunities and skill development for women, citing them as both a moral and practical imperative. She envisioned the event as a beacon of optimism, signaling a shift towards a future where women lead the narrative of Pakistan's development and prosperity. Bakhtiar

also shed light on the significance of national narratives 'Paigham-e-Pakistan' and 'Dukhtar-e-Pakistan,' initiatives that promote unity, peace, social cohesion, and the empowerment of women. The audience also heard from former Inspector General of Police, Helena Iqbal Saeed, Dr Aneha Hasan, Dr Saima Afzal, and Dr Bakhtawar Khalid, who shared their journeys to success despite facing adversities. They emphasized that success is a journey requiring continuous effort, perseverance, and dedication. Girl students from various colleges in Islamabad and Rawalpindi impressed the audience with their performances themed around the Economic Empowerment of Women, earning accolades from a panel of judges for their creativity and insight.

Pakistani experts praise two sessions

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistani experts have lauded the significance of the "Two Sessions" in fostering global economic stability in the context of jointly building the Belt and Road Initiative, particularly China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) initiatives. They believe that the foreign policies and incentives for foreigners in China during these sessions are pivotal in enhancing economic cooperation and promoting sustainable development in the region. Muhammad Asghar, a Media expert in China told China Economic Net that the strategic discussions held during the Two Sessions serve as a platform for fostering stronger ties between Pakistan and China, paving the way for mutually beneficial partnerships that contribute to global economic stability. I feel honored to attend the CPPCC Spokesperson briefing held ahead of Two Sea-

sons in 2024. I'm attending different meetings and briefings during the six-day Two Sessions. I will focus on jointly building the Belt and Road Initiative President Xi Jinping launched a decade ago to build a community with a shared future. I'm lucky that I witnessed the previous five to six Two Sessions during my assignments which I have good experience of it", he stated. He further said that the Pakistan Economic Corridor is a flagship project of jointly building the Belt and Road Initiative. Several projects have been completed in Pakistan under CPEC. "I am also looking forward to attending Foreign Minister Wang Yi media interaction and also opening and closing ceremonies of Two Sessions in the People's Great Hall", he added. Shahid Afriz Khan, a Foreign Expert in Beijing said that the strategic discussions and initiatives undertaken during these sessions serve as a testament to the strong partnership between China.

MQM convener suggests parliamentary

ISLAMABAD: Convener of Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM) Pakistan, Dr Maqbool Saddiq on Monday suggested a parliamentary committee to probe rigging allegations in the general elections. Speaking on the floor of the National Assembly, he said, "I would suggest the Prime Minister to constitute a parliamentary committee to probe rigging allegations in the recently held general elections." Khalid Maqool said that his party has always supported Pakistan's interests over personal interests. He congratulated the people for participating in election, members of the National Assembly, the Speaker and Deputy Speaker, and the Prime Minister for their election. He appreciated the opposition party for participating in the democratic process despite all reservations. MQM leader said that at present, Pakistan is facing economic challenges and requires the good intentions of political leaders to bring the country out of the crisis. —APP

Aneeq urges Muslims to champion Quranic knowledge

ISLAMABAD: Former terfaith Harmony, Aneeq Caretaker Minister for Religious Affairs and In-

terfaith Harmony, Aneeq Ahmed on Monday emphasized the responsibility of every Muslim to spread knowledge of the Holy Quran. Addressing a seminar on 'Purposeful Life' organized by the Asr School System, he expressed optimism about potential of the younger generation and said, "The Holy Quran teaches us about conquer-

ing the universe." Aneeq, highlighting the disparity between knowledgeable and ignorant, stressed, "Those who have knowledge and those who are ignorant can never be equal." He underscored the eternal guidance provided by the Quran, stating. —APP

Upper House adopts 6 bills to amend ordinances

ISLAMABAD: The Senate on Monday adopted six different bills to amend ordinances and sent to the concerned committees for further deliberations. Senator Mohsin Aziz, introduced a bill to further amend the Provincial Motor Vehicles Ordinance, 1965 (The Provincial Motor Vehicles (Amendment) Bill, 2023) which was adopted and sent further to the concerned committee. Senator Mohsin Aziz, introduced a bill further to amend the State Bank of Pakistan Act, 1956 (The State Bank of Pakistan (Amendment) Bill, 2023) which also adopted by the upper house and sent further to the concerned committee for deliberations. Senator Mohsin Aziz, introduced another Bill to further amend the Factories Act, 1934 (The Factories (Amendment) Bill, 2023) which was adopted by the upper house and sent to the concerned committee for further deliberations. Senator Mohsin Aziz, introduced the bill to further amend the Pakistan Penal Code, 1860 (The Pakistan Penal Code (Amendment) Bill, 2023). —APP

ANF recovers 128 kg drugs in five operations

RAWALPINDI: Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) while conducting five operations across the country managed to recover more than 128 kg drugs and arrested five accused, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman here on Monday. He informed that 40 heroin-filled capsules were recovered from a passenger going to Jeddah at Peshawar Airport. 63 kg hashish was recovered from Zakhakel Khyber area and 58.8 kg hashish was recovered from two suspects rounded up near National Highway Hyderabad. In fourth operation, 4.8 kg hashish was recovered from an accused arrested from Noor Shah Road Sahawal. 1.2 kg hashish was recovered from the accused netted near G.T Road Suhawa Jhelum. Cases under the Anti-Narcotics Act have been registered against the arrested accused while further investigations are under process. —APP

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تقدیر بدلنے کا فن جانتی ہے
تو کیا ہی افضل ہو کسی یتیم کی دعا لے لی جائے

آپ بھی زکوٰۃ و عطیات دے کر شامل ہو جائیں --- لاکھوں دُعاؤں میں

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Europe is fearful and desperate

A LEADING Establishment newspaper in Europe says that “what is driving European politics at present - is fear”. The headlines ring out with apprehension: “Germany’s élites run scared, as Putin rains down death on Ukraine”. The British Prime Minister calls an emergency press conference to warn of ‘democracy at risk’ from ‘extremism’ on the eve of a by-election win by George Galloway, an articulate, if somewhat unruly, ‘thorn’ in the side of conventional politics (but hardly any ‘extremist’). In the US too the liberal sphere is in meltdown over the publication of a just-released book: *White Rural Rage: The Threat To American Democracy*, in which “rural whites are [described as] the most racist; xenophobic; anti-immigrant; anti-gay; and conspiracy-minded, anti-democratic” demography in America. They “don’t believe in an independent press or free speech”, and are “most likely to accept or excuse violence”. Of course, the fear is being – in the first instance – diverted outwards towards the claim that this is somehow Russia’s ‘doing’ – a looming ‘menace’ further stoked by claims of President Putin’s ‘imperial aspirations’, way beyond Ukraine. There is however (to invert the usual MSM meme), absolutely no evidence for these claims (from anything Putin has said over the years). What is spooking the West more immediately is the cascading defeats inflicted on Ukrainian forces, after the Avdeevka rout. The new Ukrainian commander, General Syrski, in the wake of the flight, announced a retreat to new defence lines, but as some had predicted, it turned out that the ‘more favourable lines’ Syrski promoted did not exist. Ukrainian photographers Konstantin and Vlada Liberov who document the war from the ground demanded from Syrski: “So what is the next ‘fortetsia’ - Pokrovsk? Or just Konstantinovka?” “Where is this second line of defence?” Yuri Butusov, editor-in-chief of *Censor* – following his trip to this area – asks: “There are no words. Gap: here in Kiev - the supreme commander-in-chief says one thing, but at the front something completely different is happening. I want to say that no field lines of fortifications have been built beyond Avdeevka so far. I saw Russian drones attacking our soldiers in their burrows - in the middle of a field”. These tripwire forces, Macron claimed, would form strategic deterrents to Moscow’s military room for manoeuvre – oases of ‘untouchable’ NATO, scattered through Ukraine. His colleagues, horrified, demurred; they saw the emplaced tripwires as the conveyor belt leading to WWII: ‘Madness’, and ‘no thank you’. The ‘other leg’ to European desperation was given away by PM Sunak’s rush to the microphone in the wake of the Rochdale by-election outcome to warn that democracy is in peril from extremism. One commentator opined: ‘Rishi Sunak was right’: “This is not politics, not even of the radical kind ... It is inchoate, incoherent rage which is ready to make common cause with anyone else, who is enraged even on contradictory grounds”. If this reaction sounds a bit over the top – just because George Galloway overwhelmingly won in Rochdale – let us ‘join up the dots’ for you:



India’s supremacy obsession

A CCORDING to Indian media reports, the Indian Navy is stepping up its presence in the Indian Ocean as it is set to open a new base on March 6 on “strategically important” islands near the Maldives, from where New Delhi will start withdrawing its troops in the next few days. India has long viewed the Indian Ocean as its backyard. This hegemonic mentality is the basis on which India engages with smaller South Asian neighboring countries. Since last year, India had been told its troops “cannot stay” in the Indian Ocean archipelago of the Maldives, which shows the resentment of South Asian countries toward India’s hegemonic mentality and its hypocritical “Neighborhood First” strategy. During these last few days, India was clearly hoping to exert pressure on the Maldives government to change its mind, Xie Chao, an associate professor at the Institute of International Studies, Fudan University, told the *Global Times*, adding that the new base India is going to set up can be seen as punishment to the Maldives, after it demanded that India withdraw its troops. However, it is also a means to check China’s influence in the region. “This move is very typical of India, and expected,” Xie said. The new base will augment India’s “operational surveillance” of the region, according to a statement issued by the Indian Navy on Saturday. An Indian official, cited by *Indian media outlet Economic Times*, mentioned that the new base would “give India a strong foothold in the area to keep an eye on the military and commercial activities of adversaries in the area.” Considering the importance of the Indian Ocean route for trade, particularly for China and other countries, India’s actions indicate a confrontational approach aimed at asserting control over the region by leveraging its geographic advantages. Long Xingchun, a professor at the School of International Relations, Sichuan International Studies University and president of Chengdu Institute of World Affairs, believes that the new base is more of a political gesture rather than having real military significance. “As India loses its foothold in the Maldives, it wants to send a message that it is still the regional hegemon,” said Long. While the top Indian diplomat boasted about India’s aid to its neighbors, what he tried to conceal was how India used the aid to tighten its control over them. Once these countries try to break free from India’s influence, India will play the “aid” card to affect their India policy. Amid the India-Maldives diplomatic row over the withdrawal of Indian troops, the Indian government has proposed a 22-percent reduction in aid to the Maldives for the 2024-25 financial year. Nepal experienced India’s carrot-and-stick approach much earlier. In 2015, India provided significant assistance to Nepal after a deadly earthquake in the country. But in the same year, India reportedly imposed a blockade at a crucial crossing on the border with Nepal due to India’s dissatisfaction with Nepal’s passing of a new constitution and enhanced cooperation with China. This caused an economic and humanitarian crisis that severely affected Nepal and its economy. India’s so-called aid to its neighbors does not alleviate, but rather exacerbates their sense of insecurity due to India’s bullying and tightened control.

Shahbaz Sharif, a loyal and steadfast leader

Qamar Bashir



Once Shahbaz Sharif assumed office as Prime Minister in April 2022, his primary objective was to secure the return of Nawaz Sharif to Pakistan without facing any risks. In pursuit of this goal, Shahbaz Sharif made significant concessions to the military establishment, compromising civilian powers in the process. Notably, he enacted the Pakistan Army (Amendment) Bill 2023, which granted full legal status to the military’s extensive business interests, criminalized criticism of the armed forces...

S HAHBAZ Sharif, who today took oath for the second time as the country’s 25th Prime Minister amid looming financial and economic challenges, stands out as a rare example of unwavering loyalty to his elder brother, Mr. Nawaz Sharif. Despite numerous offers of the premiership by various army chiefs, including Musharraf, in exchange for shifting his allegiance, Shahbaz Sharif’s loyalty has remained steadfast. His resolve has never wavered, and no amount of wealth, power, or worldly riches has been able to weaken his deep-seated love, respect, and allegiance to his brother, though both are diametrically opposite on ideological considerations and philosophically bent of mind. Shahbaz Sharif demonstrated his unwavering loyalty when he was directed by Nawaz Sharif to assume the role of Prime Minister in a coalition government in April 2022. Despite knowing that accepting the premiership at that tumultuous time, with the ousted Prime Minister Imran Khan enjoying immense popularity and leading widespread public protests against his removal, would be an immense challenge, Shahbaz Sharif did not falter. He held his fort amid long marches, large rallies, numerous sit-ins, drawing unprecedented crowds that exerted immense pressure on the country’s administrations. Many, including myself, have pondered whether Nawaz Sharif would have accepted the premiership under such challenging circumstances in April 2022, given the country’s financial, economic woes, assertive establishment and high degree of political uncertainty. It’s likely that the response from readers and myself would lean towards a resounding “no.” This raises a critical question: why did Nawaz Sharif instruct his loyal brother to assume the premiership in such trying times. Once Shahbaz Sharif assumed office as Prime Minister in April 2022, his primary objective was to secure the return of Nawaz Sharif to Pakistan without facing any risks. In pursuit of this goal, Shahbaz Sharif made significant concessions to the military establishment, compromising civilian powers in the process. Notably, he enacted the Pakistan Army (Amendment) Bill 2023, which granted full legal status to the military’s extensive business interests, criminalized criticism of the armed forces, and authorized them to engage in activities related to national development and strategic interests. Additionally, the Official Secrets (Amendment) Bill 2023 was passed, granting security agencies broad discretionary powers to arrest individuals deemed threatening. The legislation also prohibited approaches to military installations and offices, with suspects subject to trial in military courts. Furthermore, Shahbaz Sharif’s administration appointed numerous military officers to sensitive civilian po-

sitions, including Chairman NADRA, Chairman NAB, and Chairman PTA. By October 2023, reports indicated that over 1,000 military officers, including 104 serving and retired Lieutenant Generals and Major Generals, had been placed in civilian roles across various ministries, divisions, and Pakistan’s diplomatic missions abroad. By capitulating critical and sensitive positions of the country and granting unparalleled powers to the military, Shahbaz Sharif fulfilled his end of the deal. In return, the establishment facilitated Nawaz Sharif’s return to Pakistan under VIP status, despite being a declared absconder and convicted criminal, previously disqualified from holding public office. Upon Nawaz Sharif’s return, the establishment swiftly resolved all legal cases against him, including the disappearance of his prison sentence and disqualification. The stage seemed set for Nawaz Sharif’s potential fourth term as Prime Minister. However, it appears that either bringing Nawaz Sharif back to power was not part of the deal, or the establishment reneged on their agreement with the PML(N). In Scenario C of the article titled “Will Nawaz’s hopes die down soon?” published on December 10th, 2023, it was concluded that based on past bitter experiences with Nawaz, the Establishment would never bring back Nawaz Sharif as the Prime Minister. The scenario suggested that to navigate resistance and controversies surrounding Nawaz Sharif’s leadership, the Establishment might orchestrate conditions during pre-poll and after poll 2024, where Nawaz will have no choice but to abdicate power in favor of his brother, Shahbaz Sharif. In pursuit of this strategy, the results of the 2024 elections were orchestrated in a manner that significantly undermined Nawaz Sharif’s electoral prospects. Nawaz suffered a decisive defeat, losing one seat by a significant margin and barely managing to secure a victory in Lahore, a stronghold contested fiercely by his rival candidate. In contrast, Shahbaz Sharif emerged victorious in all his contested seats, clearly indicating the establishment’s preference for him as the chosen candidate. Nawaz Sharif, who had set securing a simple majority in the parliament as the single most important condition to assume the premiership for the fourth time, found himself demoralized and humiliated by the election outcome. His hopes, pinned on assurances from the establishment, were dashed, leaving him feeling betrayed and dejected. As predicted in the article, Nawaz Sharif found himself with no choice but to relinquish the premiership in favor of his younger brother. This raises an important question: why did Nawaz Sharif believe that something unfavorable for himself would be beneficial for

his brother? Upon closer examination, the answer lies in Nawaz’s uncompromising nature, which, at times, becomes his biggest liability, and Shahbaz’s compromising nature, which, conversely, becomes his biggest asset. Nawaz Sharif is characterized by his unwavering commitment to freedom of thought and action, refusing to succumb to pressures and intimidation until his limit is reached. When pushed beyond this threshold, he responds with a vengeance, disregarding potential consequences. He possesses a strong vision and dedication to a specific ideology, particularly in promoting democratic values. Since the 1990s, Nawaz Sharif has emerged as a formidable challenger to the dominance of the military establishment in Pakistan. He has actively pursued policies aimed at curbing the military’s influence, including efforts to assert civilian control over intelligence agencies and challenge the military’s dominance in national security decision-making. Despite facing threats, intimidation, and periods of exile, Nawaz Sharif has remained steadfast in his commitment to advancing civilian authority and democratic principles. His resilience in the face of adversity underscores his determination to uphold fundamental values and principles in Pakistani politics. In contrast, Shahbaz Sharif’s with his pragmatic approach to governance, often necessitating compromises with various stakeholders, including the military establishment and coalition partners. He willingly engaged with the establishment leading to perceptions of accommodation and compromise with the military, especially during periods of political turbulence or when facing pressure from powerful institutions. He has at times adjusted his positions and policies to accommodate the demands of coalition partners, even if it meant making concessions on certain issues even at the expense of ideological purity and principles and the integrity of governance or undermined democratic norms. Nawaz Sharif, as the elder brother, may have come to the realization more than anyone else that his prolonged periods of exile have disconnected him not only from his voter base but also from any lasting favor within the establishment. He may have recognized that his ideological and visionary approach to politics has been overshadowed by the tactical compromises of his younger brother, Shahbaz Sharif, and the theatrics orchestrated by his daughter, Maryam Nawaz, and her inner circle. In this political landscape, his close associates such as Khaqqan Abbasi, Mufta Ismail, Mohammad Zubair, Asif Kirmani, Danyal Aziz, Khawaja Asif, and Khawaja Saad Rafique find themselves marginalized, with little influence or relevance.

— The writer is Former Press Secretary to the President

Strategic shifts: The UAE’s evolving role in the Libyan dossier

Fuat Sefkatli

This context positions Libya as an indispensable component of the UAE’s aspiration to act as a commercial conduit between China and Western nations. Within this geopolitical framework, the eastern part of Libya, predominantly under Haftar’s control, offers the UAE an unparalleled opportunity to assert itself as a regional power. This is attributed to both its proximity to the Mediterranean, affording valuable port assets, and its strategic significance for interventions in various African crisis zones.

F ROM being one of the most fervent external backers of warlord Khalifa Haftar’s failed assault on Tripoli in 2019 to a recalibrated actor in the complex civil conflict, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) has made a 180-degree course correction in Libya. Since the appointment of the Government of National Unity (GNU) led by Abdulhamid Dbeibeh in March 2021, questions regarding the UAE’s position in Libya have been frequently discussed. To understand the extent to which the UAE has transformed its ideological, interest-based, and geopolitical ambitions since intensifying its engagements in Libya since 2016, it is necessary to briefly look back at the recent past. Shortly after assuming office, Prime Minister Dbeibeh visited Abu Dhabi, where he held bilateral talks with Crown Prince Mohammed bin Zayed, focusing on the role the UAE could play in Libya’s reconstruction process. Additionally, in July 2022, the UAE mediated a power-sharing agreement between Dbeibeh and the eastern warlord Haftar, playing a significant role in appointing Farhat Ben Gadhara as the head of the Libyan National Oil Company (NOC). During this period, the UAE also withdrew funding to African-origin mercenaries in eastern Libya, indicating a breakdown in the Haftar-Wagner Private Military Company (PMC) and UAE consensus. Moreover, reports published by the state-linked think tank Emirates Policy Center (EPC) throughout 2022 and 2023, advocating for the unification of the central bank, execution of electoral processes, and cessation of political contestation, further elucidate the UAE’s adjusted trajectory in Libya. Firstly, the transition from the Trump era to Joe Biden’s presidency in the United States led to tense relations between the Gulf countries, including the UAE and Saudi Arabia. The Biden administration’s adoption of a ‘zero-tolerance’ policy towards certain regional behaviours necessitated the UAE to actively pursue new regional alliances and partnerships. A pivotal moment in this strategic redirection was the signing of the Abraham Accords in November 2020, which facilitated normalisation with Israel and symbolised a broader realignment in regional politics. This was closely followed by the initiation of a rapprochement process with Türkiye, leading to a discernible moderation of the UAE’s stance regarding the Libyan dossier. A critical aspect of this recalibration was the termination of financial support to the Wagner PMC and other Sudanese and Chadian mercenaries active in Eastern Libya.

This decision could be interpreted as a manoeuvre to sidestep potential confrontations with Türkiye, a nation possessing substantial political, economic, and societal influence in western Libya. Furthermore, the establishment of robust ties with the GNU underscored the UAE’s transition from a stance of conflict to one emphasising cooperation within the Libyan context. Secondly, Libya’s strategic position as a nexus connecting sub-Saharan Africa and the Horn of Africa to the Mediterranean renders it an exceedingly advantageous arena for the UAE, facilitating not only the control over commercial routes but also the augmentation of military influence. This context positions Libya as an indispensable component of the UAE’s aspiration to act as a commercial conduit between China and Western nations. Within this geopolitical framework, the eastern part of Libya, predominantly under Haftar’s control, offers the UAE an unparalleled opportunity to assert itself as a regional power. This is attributed to both its proximity to the Mediterranean, affording valuable port assets, and its strategic significance for interventions in various African crisis zones. Specifically, the logistical network established therein is of strategic importance for Sudan and Chad, nations where the UAE maintains direct engagements. The UAE has endeavoured to solidify its regional stature by leveraging the military frameworks of Western countries (the US, France, the UK) and international organisations (the UN, NATO) present in Libya. This scenario has ostensibly provided the UAE with a platform to showcase its capabilities and resources to Western counterparts. Nonetheless, the escalating backlash against oil blockades in eastern Libya has necessitated a recalibration of the UAE’s engagements in the region. This shift was significantly influenced by the international community, particularly the US and European nations, driven by the imperative to stabilise the global energy crisis. Furthermore, robust diplomatic engagements cultivated with the Dbeibeh administration by these nations and the UN, coupled with strategic agreements in the energy and construction sectors with the GNU, have precipitated the UAE’s migration towards a more pragmatic trajectory. A third aspect to consider is the apparent shift in the UAE’s initial counter-revolutionary stance during the early phases of the Libyan revolution. In the revolution’s nascent stages, some suggested that the UAE identified the Mus-

lim Brotherhood’s activities in Libya as a potential threat to the survival of its rule. The progression towards democratic processes and the incorporation of a moderated form of Islam were perceived by the UAE as precursors to the activation of different democratic Arab movements. This perception led to the UAE’s support for Haftar, who launched a campaign against so-called religious factions in the west under a ‘secular’ guise. Nevertheless, evolving regional and international dynamics, coupled with Haftar’s policies that antagonised stability, emerged as sources of anxiety for the Abu Dhabi leadership. Consequently, Haftar’s progressive estrangement from the control of Egypt and the UAE nudged these nations towards exploring alternative alliances. In the dynamics of Libya’s security landscape, the UAE’s approach has been notably articulated by its UN envoy, Mohamed Abushabab, during Security Council sessions in April and December 2023. Abushabab commended the facilitative efforts led by Senegalese diplomat Abdoulaye Bathily under the UN Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) in organising meetings of the 5+5 Joint Military Committee, comprising military officials from Tripoli and Benghazi. Further, Abushabab emphasised the critical need to initiate disarmament, demobilisation, and reintegration programmes aimed at unifying the military factions in Libya’s eastern and western regions. This perspective evidences a shift from the UAE’s prior positions, showcasing a contemporary inclination towards fostering a stabilised military context within Libya. It is, however, plausible to suggest that the UAE might assume a significant role in facilitating disarmament and reintegration, particularly in the east. Finally, statements in December 2023 proposed the simultaneous and phased withdrawal of all foreign military forces and mercenaries from Libya. This position suggests that the UAE, at least in the short to medium term, is unlikely to revert to employing a proxy strategy. It is pertinent to recognise the strategic importance of Türkiye’s military presence in the region, which is pivotal for ensuring stability and peace and acts as a deterrent against potential spoilers. In the current climate of advancing normalisation between Türkiye and Egypt, there are expectations for the UAE to moderate its narratives and actively pursue avenues for both political and military collaboration with Türkiye, specifically concerning the Libyan context.

— Source: Trt World

Briefs

No reserved seats for SIC, rules ECP

FROM PAGE 01
the total number of general seats in the National Assembly and the provincial assembly.

Punjab cabinet...

FROM PAGE 01
Among the anticipated cabinet appointments, Marriyum Aurangzeb is expected to assume the Ministry of Planning and Development and Forests, while Azma Bukhari is poised to become the Provincial Minister for Information.

PTI calls for trial...

FROM PAGE 01
they themselves were "crises" and added that they could not steer the country out of the crises.

Asad demands...

FROM PAGE 01
Pointing to the lawmakers sitting on the treasury benches, Qaiser asserted that all of them had called the cipher "false", but later on, the same diplomatic cable was used as a tool to punish the PTI founder and the former foreign minister, Shah Mehmood Qureshi.

Shehbaz sworn in...

FROM PAGE 01
Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari, Punjab, Sindh, and Balochistan chief ministers - Maryam Nawaz, Murad Ali Shah, and Sarfraz Bugti - were also present at the ceremony.



RAWALPINDI: Players of Peshawar Zalmi and Islamabad United in action during the PSL match at Rawalpindi Cricket Stadium. - Photo Mudassar Raja

Boulter beats Kostyuk in WTA San Diego final

Boulter won the biggest title of her career, beating Ukraine's Marta Kostyuk to claim the WTA San Diego Open title

SPORTS DESK

LOS ANGELES: Britain's Katie Boulter won the biggest title of her career, beating Ukraine's Marta Kostyuk 5-7, 6-2, 6-2 to claim the WTA San Diego Open title. The 27-year-old, whose only previous WTA crown came at Nottingham last June, moves into the world rankings top 30 for the first time in her career.

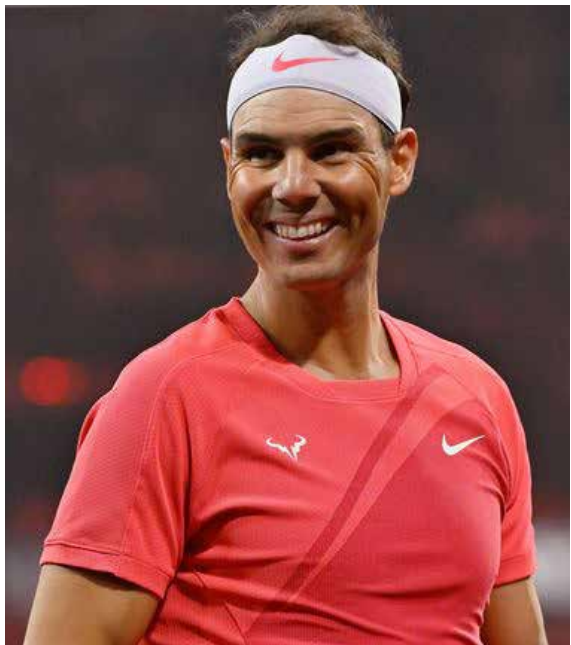
will move her to 27th in the world rankings. "I want to say a small special thank you to my boyfriend," she said. "He finished last night at midnight and I really want to embarrass him. He got on a 4.15 taxi this morning and six o'clock flight to be here today, so I do appreciate it."



Nadal praises Alcaraz after Netflix Slam defeat

WASHINGTON: Rafael Nadal praised Carlos Alcaraz after suffering a 3-6 6-4 (14-12) at the inaugural Netflix Slam in Las Vegas. Nadal, who spent nearly a year on the sidelines with a hip flexor injury before encountering a muscle injury at the beginning of this season, expressed feeling "much better than expected" during the exhibition match.

ble figures such as Michael Douglas, Catherine Zeta-Jones, Charlize Theron, Danaï Gurira, Logan Lerman, and Manu Rios. The showdown, part of Netflix's ongoing initiative for live-streaming events, featured two Spanish superstars in an exhibition match that had been postponed from last year due to Nadal's injuries. It came just in time as both players prepare for the Indian Wells tournament this week.



Nadal is making his return to the tour after being sidelined for months due to injury, while the match also served as a physical test for Alcaraz, who recently sustained an injury to his right ankle at the Rio Open. "It's a good thing that as a player I will not face him many times," said Nadal.

Misbah reveals middle-order contenders for Pak

ISLAMABAD: Former Pakistan head coach Misbah-ul-Haq revealed the possible middle-order candidates for the upcoming T20 World Cup 2024. Speaking on a local sports channel, Misbah emphasised players who have been recognised as potential assets to strengthen Pakistan's middle-order batting lineup, which is pivotal for the team's success in the tournament.



preference for Saim Ayub, Babar Azam, and Rizwan, and while also a potential contender. "You should either place Babar at three or open with him, or let Rizwan play at three or open. Saim should be the opener because you need a left-hand, right-hand combination," he further added.

Inzamam criticizes PCB: Pak cricket being mismanaged

Ex-captain criticizes cricket board for dismissing Hafeez as team director over 'poor performance'

OUR CORRESPONDENTS

ISLAMABAD: Due to recent poor performance, the Pakistan cricket board removed Muhammad Hafeez from his position as Team Director. Inzamam-ul-Haq, former captain of the team, has criticized the move, saying it is unfair to "target" former players for administrative positions when the officials refuse to take accountability for the team's performance.

zamam. Inzamam said that previous PCB Chairman Zaka Ashraf treated him disrespectfully when he was at odds with the Board over claims of conflict of interest. "We had a meeting scheduled at the PCB office after this story about me having a conflict of interest



as chief selector broke out. "I was sitting with (PCB officials) Salman Naseer and Aliya Rasheed waiting for the chairman to come," he recalled. "But he went to the academy and from there called Naseer and Aliya to meet him and I was told to wait as he would not be seeing me. Only Aliya returned after a time and told me about the inquiry committee," he added.

World leaders...

FROM PAGE 01
and the people of Pakistan steady progress and prosperity. President of Tajikistan Emomali Rahmon also congratulated Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, emphasising that through joint efforts, both the countries would enhance and expand long-term bilateral partnership.

PPP fully endorses...

FROM PAGE 01
He said the Parliament was the mother of all institutions, and if this institution was strengthened, it would ultimately empower the masses. "The people of Pakistan are tired of poverty, unemployment, and inflation," he said, adding "they did not give their vote for you to come here and abuse each other and create a ruckus."

Transfers, postings...

FROM PAGE 01
Prime Minister. Earlier, Gilani was serving as Additional Secretary-in-charge. On the other hand, captain retired Khurram Agha was removed from the post of principal secretary to the prime minister. Notification has been issued to appoint Khurram Agha as Secretary Commerce Division.

Presidential polls...

FROM PAGE 01
was raised on the nomination papers of Zardari," said PPP's Farooq H Naek while speaking to the media in Islamabad. Whereas PTI's Amir Dogar, flanked by Pashtunkhwa Milli Awami Party (PkMAP) chief Achakzai and Ali Muhammad Khan, also announced that the electoral body has approved the nomination papers of the Sunni Ittehad Council's (SIC) candidate for the office of the head of state.

Outrage over Brazilian...

FROM PAGE 01
the night in Dumki district when the alleged attack took place. Police say that they have arrested four men and are searching for three more. The identities of the men, who are also accused of beating the woman's partner, have not been disclosed yet. The couple had travelled to several parts of Asia on their motorbikes before arriving in India a few months ago. Over the weekend, the woman posted a video on their Instagram page which has 234,000 followers. "Seven men raped me. They have beaten us and robbed us, although not many things [were taken] because what they wanted was to rape me," she said in Spanish, adding that the men beat them and threatened to kill them. In a separate video, the husband, who is Spanish, said: "My mouth is destroyed, but my partner is worse than me."

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Briefs

Tusk urges
EU sanctions
on Russian,
Belarusian
food imports

VILNIUS: Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk on Monday called on the European Union to impose "full" sanctions on food and agricultural imports from Russia and Belarus in response to bloc-wide farmer protests. Farmers across Europe have been protesting for weeks over what they say are excessively restrictive environmental rules, competition from cheap imports from outside the European Union and low incomes. "I would prefer that we, as the entire European Union, decide on sanctions against Russia and Belarus regarding food and agricultural products," Tusk told reporters on a visit to Lithuania. Latvia parliament bans food imports from Russia, Belarus. EU member Latvia already banned food imports from Russia and Belarus, including via intermediary countries, this month. "I am convinced that a joint EU decision will be incomparably more effective than individual decisions by the region's member states," Tusk added. He said he would propose a Polish parliament resolution urging the European Commission to impose "full sanctions" on the imports. Ukraine, once dubbed "Europe's bread basket", has seen its agriculture sector crippled by Russia's invasion, with many of Black Sea export hubs blocked and farmland rendered unusable by warfare.—DNA

EU fines
Apple 1.8
billion euros
over music
streaming
restrictions

BRUSSELS : The EU on Monday hit Apple with a 1.8 billion-euro fine (\$1.9 billion) for violating the bloc's laws by preventing music streaming services from informing users about subscription options outside of its App Store. The iPhone maker immediately vowed to appeal the first ever antitrust fine slapped on Apple by Brussels, the culmination of a case triggered by a complaint by Swedish music streaming giant Spotify. The European Commission said it "found that Apple applied restrictions on app developers preventing them from informing iOS users about alternative and cheaper music subscription services available outside of the app." "This is illegal under EU antitrust rules," the EU's powerful antitrust regulator said. "Apple's conduct, which lasted for almost ten years, may have led many iOS users to pay significantly higher prices for music streaming subscriptions because of the high commission fee imposed by Apple on developers and passed on to consumers," it added. Spotify's complaint in 2019 triggered a broad commission investigation into the iPhone maker in 2021, but Brussels narrowed its probe last year to focus on Apple's actions to prevent apps from giving users information about rival music subscription options.

One dead,
24 rescued
off Japanese
fishing boat

TOKYO : One person died and 24 others were rescued on Monday after their fishing boat lost power and drifted onto rocks in rough seas off Japan, the coast guard said. Dramatic television footage showed the 56-metre (180-foot) vessel on its side being pounded by waves as the crew huddled on deck and a helicopter hovered overhead. The tuna-fishing ship's crew included five Japanese nationals and 20 Indonesians. The vessel had engine trouble on Sunday afternoon off the Izu archipelago south of Japan's main island of Honshu, a coast guard spokesman told AFP. In an operation involving patrol boats and helicopters, all but one of the crew members had been rescued by Monday morning, he said. The body of the missing Japanese crew member was later found, the coast guard said.—APP

Akmal Saidov : Uzbekistan is always willing to engage in practical dialogue

The delegation of Uzbekistan took part at the High-level Segment of the 55th session of the United Nations Human Rights Council

NEWS DESK

TASHKENT: The delegation of Uzbekistan led by the First Deputy Speaker of the Legislative Chamber of the Oliy Majlis, Director of the National Centre for Human Rights (NCHR) Akmal Saidov took part at the High-level Segment of the 55th session of the United Nations Human Rights Council. According to the NCHR, during the speech of the delegation of Uzbekistan, it was noted that our country is consistently implementing its policy in the field of human rights, an example of which, in particular, is the updated Constitution of the country adopted during a national referendum in 2023. Uzbekistan has formally prohibited the use of the death penalty in its recently adopted new Constitution. Internationally recognized institutions of jurisprudence as the Miranda Warnings and Habeas Corpus are consolidated at the constitutional level. The Pro bono institute, which provides free legal assistance has been granted constitutional status. Notably, for the first time, the Con-

stitution guarantees the right to approach both international and national human rights bodies. Furthermore, it firmly establishes the status of national human rights institutions. The new Constitution for the first time enshrines the institution of constitutional complaints from citizens. In recent years, Uzbekistan achieved substantial results in the human rights protection. Forced and child labor has been completely abolished in Uzbekistan. Particularly, the complete eradication of forced and child labor has been achieved. The new Constitution of the country now not only ensures the prohibition of child and forced labor but also institutes criminal liability for such offenses. Implementing the National Human Rights Strategy over the past 3 years, the following results have been achieved: First. According to the recommendations of the HRC and UN treaty bodies, the position of the Children's Ombudsman was established. Now our parliament is adopting Law on the Children's Ombudsman. Second. In order to implement the provisions of the Convention on the Rights of Persons



with Disabilities, legal and administrative measures have been taken to improve the system of state support for persons with disabilities. Third. The Strategy for Achieving Gender Equality until 2030 was approved. Fourth. Uzbekistan openly condemns the use of torture, amendments have been made to the Civil Code to provide for the procedure for compensation for harm caused to victims of torture. Fifth. According to the recommendations of the UN

treaty bodies, the National Preventive Mechanism for the Prevention of Torture was created according to the "Ombudsman Plus" model. Additionally, Children's Ombudsman, the National Centre for Human Rights, and the Business Ombudsman have been empowered to oversee penitentiary institutions. Sixth. Uzbekistan actively participates in the UN World Programme for Human Rights Education. The country is implementing the National Programme for Human

Rights Education. Training and special courses "Human Rights", "Women's Rights", "Child's Rights" are being introduced in the system of professional education and universities. Training courses are being opened on the rights of persons with disabilities, women, children and migrants. An Electronic Platform for Human Rights Education has been launched. Furthermore, permanent training courses on combating the use of torture

have been launched for law enforcement officers and penitentiary institutions. Seventh. Collaboration with business structures on human rights issues is essential as well. Particularly, human rights training courses for entrepreneurs are organized. The National Action Plan on Business and Human Rights is currently being developed. Eight. The country is implementing consistent reforms in the political, judicial and legal spheres, increasing the role of civil society institutions, including on religious freedom. Uzbekistan places utmost emphasis on ensuring religious freedom within its borders, recognizing its historical experience of harmonious coexistence among diverse faiths and ethnic communities over the centuries. Throughout its long history, Uzbekistan's territory has been a home to a multitude of religions and belief. Traditional faiths in our nation have always coexisted peacefully. This harmony is not just a legacy, but a fundamental element of our traditions. Ninth.

UN rights chief calls for
global peace mindset

'Rarely has humanity faced so many rapidly spiraling crises,' says Volker Turk, stressing 55 ongoing conflicts around world

WEB DESK

GENEVA: The world needs to "regain a mindset of peace," the UN human rights chief urged Monday amid 55 conflicts flaring up around the globe. "Rarely has humanity faced so many rapidly spiraling crises," Turk said during his global update at the 55th session of the Human Rights Council in Geneva. "A wave of conflict is battering people's lives, destroying economies, profoundly damaging human rights, dividing

the world, and upending hopes for multilateral solutions," he said. Noting that there are 55 ongoing conflicts around the world, he lamented that widespread violations of international humanitarian and human rights law are generating a "devastating impact" on millions of civilians. They caused displacement and humanitarian crises to already reach an "unprecedented scale," he said, adding that all of those conflicts have regional and global impact. "Overlapping emergencies make the specter of spillover conflict

very real. The war in Gaza has explosive impact across the Middle East. Conflicts in other regions – including in the Horn of Africa, Sudan, and the Sahel – could also escalate sharply. Increasing militarization on the Korean Peninsula raises threat levels," the human rights chief said. "The deteriorating security crisis in the eastern provinces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which the Council will address on April 3, is alarming." "In the Red Sea, as well as the Black Sea, attacks are creating shockwaves for the global transport of goods, adding to the economic pain

inflicted on less developed countries," Turk continued. Emphasizing the right to peace is the "mother of all human rights," he stressed, saying that without peace, all other rights are "quashed." "It is urgent that we devise ways to counter warmongering, fear, and the illogic of escalating hatred and hostility – which bring short-term profit to a few while ruining the lives and rights of millions," he said. "We need to regain a mindset of peace." "This means the art of de-escalation, keeping communication channels open, rebuilding trust.

BD Nobel winner
fears for future
as woes mount

DHAKA: Bangladesh Nobel peace laureate Muhammad Yunus says it is a "million-dollar question" why the prime minister hates him, but says many believe she sees him as a political threat. Yunus, 83, is credited with lifting millions out of poverty with his pioneering microfinance bank but has earned the enmity of long-time Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. Last month, several of his firms were "forcefully" taken over, weeks after his conviction in a criminal case his supporters say was politically motivated. "She calls me bloodsucker, calls me all the dirty things she can come up with," he said. "Why (does) she hate me? Some say it's political... (that) she sees me as a political opponent," he added, carefully avoiding directly accusing Hasina herself. In January, Yunus and three colleagues from Grameen Telecom, one of the firms he founded, were sentenced to jail for six months after they were found guilty of violating labour laws. All four deny the charges, and have been bailed pending appeal. Yunus, who is facing more than 100 other charges over labour law violations and alleged graft, said the forcible takeover of his companies was related to a lack of democracy.—

NASA, SpaceX
launch 8th
crew
rotation
mission

LOS ANGELES : NASA and SpaceX launched a new crew rotation mission to the International Space Station on Sunday. The mission, codenamed "Crew-8," is NASA's eighth commercial crew rotation mission with the company to the space station. A SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket launched the crew aboard a Dragon spacecraft from NASA's Kennedy Space Center in Florida at 10:53 p.m. Eastern Time (15:53 GMT) on Sunday, according to NASA. Shortly after the liftoff, SpaceX confirmed the main engine cutoff and stage separation. The Dragon spacecraft has separated from the second stage, and is heading to the space station. The spacecraft is scheduled to dock autonomously to the space station at about 3:00 a.m. Eastern Time (08:00 GMT) Tuesday. The Crew-8 mission carries NASA astronauts Matthew Dominick, Michael Barratt and Jeanette Epps, as well as Alexander Grebenkin of Roscosmos, Russia's state space corporation.—APP

French farmers
protest over
insufficient
income

PARIS : Insufficient income was the common problem of protesting French farmers, according to farmers' representatives. Farmers started protesting in mid-January for several weeks across the country, and demonstrated against the agricultural policy, as well as EU regulations. The 60th Agricultural Show in Paris started in a tense atmosphere on Feb. 24, due to farmers' anger. President of the Rome-based World Farmers' Organisation, Arnold Puech d'Alissac, told Anadolu that the reasons for the farmers' protests varied in each European country.—DNA

Spain
building fire
kills 3

MADRID : A fire that broke out in a building near Alicante in Spain's southeast has killed three people, including a child, authorities said on Monday. Some 120 people were evacuated following the fire in Villajoyosa. Fifteen lightly injured people were taken to hospital for treatment for smoke inhalation, police told AFP. The fire, which started at around 2:15 am (01:15 GMT) on the 11th floor of a 24-storey building, has been brought under control and the other residents were able to return to the building on Monday. The blaze erupted less than two weeks after another fire killed 10 people in the port city of Valencia in the same region, in a tragedy that shocked the country. The fire in Valencia devastated a 14-storey high-rise building and an adjoining 10-storey block which together housed 138 flats.—APP

Montenegro, Turkiye
enjoy 'excellent'
bilateral ties

ANKARA : Montenegrin Foreign Minister Filip Ivanovic said that his country enjoys "excellent" bilateral relations with Türkiye. "These relations are not only political or intergovernmental. We also have friendly relations between our peoples," Ivanovic told Anadolu at the Antalya Diplomacy Forum in southern Türkiye. "We have excellent cooperation in culture, tourism, and many other areas. We want to expand this cooperation and deepen our ties," he added. Ivanovic drew attention to the importance of Türkiye's diplomatic and mediation efforts to ensure stability, prosperity, and security in the Western Balkans region and praised the Antalya Diplomacy Forum. "The extremely positive and friendly approach of Türkiye towards different countries in the Western Balkans is something we highly value," he said. Assessing Israel's recent attacks on Gaza, Ivanovic said that the solution to the crisis should be within the framework of international law. Underlining Montenegro's support for a two-state solution, Ivanovic said: "What we ultimately want to see is an end to conflict, suffering, and a chance for the region to be rebuilt, giving people the opportunity to live in peace and prosperity." Flouting the International Court of Justice's provisional ruling, Israel continued its onslaught on the Gaza Strip where at least 30,534 Palestinians have been killed, mostly women and children, and 71,920 injured since Oct. 7, according to Palestinian health authorities. Israel has pounded the Gaza Strip since a cross-border attack by Hamas, which Tel Aviv says killed nearly 1,200 people. The Israeli war on Gaza has pushed 85% of the territory's population into internal displacement amid acute shortages of food, clean water and medicine, while 60% of the enclave's infrastructure has been damaged or destroyed, according to the UN. Israel stands accused of genocide at the International Court of Justice. An interim ruling in January ordered Tel Aviv to stop genocidal acts and take measures to guarantee that humanitarian assistance is provided to civilians in Gaza. Hostilities have continued unabated, however, and aid deliveries remain woefully insufficient to address the humanitarian catastrophe.—DNA

Thailand's
employment
growth up
in Q4

BANGKOK : Thailand's employment growth accelerated in the final quarter of last year due to expansion in the vital tourism industry, the country's economic planning agency said on Monday. The Southeast Asian country's labor force amounted to 40.3 million individuals in the fourth quarter of 2023, representing a 1.7 percent year-on-year increase, up from a 1.3 percent increase in the previous quarter, according to the National Economic and Social Development Council (NESDC). The growth was mainly attributed to an expansion of employment in the non-agricultural sectors, which rose 2.0 percent year-on-year to 27.9 million jobs, the NESDC said in a statement. Employment in the hotel and restaurant sectors jumped 8.0 percent from a year earlier, owing to a rebound in foreign tourist arrivals. However, manufacturing jobs contracted by 2.3 percent on the back of a slowdown in the production of key industrial products. The kingdom's unemployment rate was registered at 0.81 percent in the October-December period.—APP



ISLAMABAD: A view of metro buses stand at Secretariat station in the Federal Capital due to metro bus service closed during PSL matches in the Rawalpindi.—ONLINE

Malaysian PM discusses Gaza, Islamophobia in Australia

Anwar Ibrahim is in Melbourne to attend special ASEAN-Australia summit as 2 sides mark 50 years of official relations

FOREIGN DESK

SYDNEY : Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim Monday discussed the situation in the besieged Palestinian enclave of Gaza, and Islamophobia among other global issues during a trip to Australia. Anwar also inaugurated Al-Taqwa Sports Complex at Al-Taqwa College in Melbourne where he later engaged with students to discuss various issues. The Malaysian prime minister is in Melbourne to attend a special summit of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)-Australia summit as the two sides mark 50 years of official rela-

tions. Anwar told the participants that multiracial and religious communities "need to always respect and tolerate each other to live as a community," according to a post on his X account. "Give credit to your idealism against oppression, corruption, and abuse. You want greater justice and compassion and to stop inequality," Anwar said, according to Malaysian state-run Bernama News. Anwar was accorded an official welcome by his Australian counterpart Anthony Albanese who said: "Malaysia and Australia are longstanding friends and partners." "We're working together to grow business links between our countries, and to protect the stability of our

region," said Albanese on X. Earlier, Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim said that he would be "happy to reopen" the search for flight MH370 if "compelling" evidence emerged, opening the door to a renewed hunt a decade after the plane disappeared. "If there is compelling evidence that it needs to be reopened, we will certainly be happy to reopen it," he said when asked about the matter during a visit to Melbourne. His comments came as the families marked 10 years since the plane vanished in the Indian Ocean with 239 people aboard. "I don't think it's a technical issue. It's an issue affecting the lives of people

and whatever needs to be done must be done," he said. Malaysia Airlines flight 370, a Boeing 777 aircraft, disappeared from radar screens on March 8, 2014, while en route from Kuala Lumpur to Beijing. Despite the largest search in aviation history, the plane has never been found and the operation was suspended in January 2017. About 500 relatives and their supporters gathered Sunday at a shopping centre near the Malaysian capital Kuala Lumpur for a "remembrance day", with many visibly overcome with grief. Some of the relatives came from China, where almost two-thirds of the passengers of the doomed plane

were from. "The last 10 years have been a nonstop emotional rollercoaster for me," Grace Nathan, a 36-year-old Malaysian lawyer whose mother, Anne Daisy, 56, was on the flight, told AFP. Speaking to the crowd, she called on the Malaysian government to conduct a new search. Transport Minister Anthony Loke told reporters that "as far as Malaysia is concerned, it is committed to finding the plane cost is not the issue". He told relatives at the gathering that he would meet with officials from Texas-based marine exploration firm Ocean Infinity, which conducted a previous unsuccessful search, to discuss a new operation.

