



Islamabad POST

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Ilham: Azerbaijan a multinational, multi-confessional country

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Pak-Bosnia ties from cordial to excellent

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Naomi Osaka off the mark at Indian Wells

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Emphasizes women empowerment Govt committed to steer country out of economic crisis

The Prime Minister also assured Pakistan's unconditional support to the Prime Minister of Azad Jammu and Kashmir for the Kashmir cause

STAFF REPORT / DNA

MUZAFARABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Friday reiterated the government's resolve to steer the country out of the challenge of economic crisis by bringing structural reforms in the economic sector to provide maximum facilities to the people of the country. He said that the government was fully committed to increase tax to GDP ratio, tap the huge potential of natural and agriculture resources, stop smuggling, power theft, and losses of the State Owned Entities. Addressing a cheque distribution ceremony among the affected people by torrential rains and snowfall in the area, the prime minister called for setting aside all the differences in the larger national interest to work as a nation to ensure that the country was developing at a faster pace. He directed the Prime Minister AJ&K to complete the survey as soon as possible so that the funds be distributed by March 13. On the request of the AJ&K prime minister, PM Shehbaz also announced to keep a helicopter of NDMA available for the region in case of emergencies to immediately reach out to the affected people in the hilly areas. He said Jammu and Kashmir was the jugular vein of Pakistan and it would not leave alone the people of Kashmir in this hour of difficulty. PM Shehbaz maintained that almost over 20 million children were out of school across the country. He said mosques would be utilized to provide education to such children. On the occasion, Fatima was also recited for those who passed away in the recent rains and snowfall in the area. Prime Minister Azad Jammu and Kashmir Chaudhry Anwaar-ul-Haq thanked Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif for his support in this hour of difficulty. He informed that during the recent rains, snowfall and landsliding in AJ&K, eight people were died while 88 houses were completely damaged.

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Policy of 'divide and rule' no more workable: PTI

Omar demands impartial inquiry into brutal killing of two PTI workers

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Secretary General Omar Ayub demanded an impartial inquiry into the brutal killing of PTI's two workers Mohsin Khan and Hasan Zia, who were cruelly martyred in district Shangla, Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa (KP) while peacefully protesting against the daylight polls robbery. Addressing a press conference along with PTI MNAs Shandana Gulzar Khan, Shahid Khattak and others, PTI Secretary General said that PTI's workers Mohsin Khan and Hasan Zia were brutally martyred and they would raise voice against this gruesome act of barbarism on the floor of the house. "I appealed to Chief Minister Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa Ali Amin Gandapur to order impartial inquiry into the brutal killing of the Insaf Student Federation (ISF) members so as to bring the culprits to justice," he added.

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ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif distributing Khatoon-e-Pakistan Awards among the high achievers women in their respective fields on the eve of Int'l Women Day. - DNA

President Alvi given farewell guard of honour

A smartly turned-out contingent of armed forces presented a guard of honour to President Arif Alvi

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi was presented with a farewell guard of honour on Friday, marking the culmination of his term as the 13th head of state, while Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Co-chairman Asif Ali Zardari is poised to become the new president with the support of the allied parties in tomorrow's election. Alvi was sworn in on September 9, 2018, as the president and his term ended

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Mushahid calls for release of Imran Khan

Demands allocation of reserved seats to SIC

ADIL SHAHEEN

ISLAMABAD: Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) Senator Mushahid Hussain on Friday called for release of PTI founder from jail and allocation of reserved seats to the Sunni Ittehad Council (SIC). The PTI-backed winning candidates joined the SIC as they contested Feb 8 elections as independents. Speaking on the floor of the Senate, Mushahid recalled that he had also demanded release of

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'Contempt of court'

Oath-taking of MNAs on reserved seats unconstitutional: PTI

PHC's verdict does not apply to Sindh and Balochistan, attorney general tells NA

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: Taking strong exception to oath-taking of Members National Assembly (MNAs) on reserved seats, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI)-backed and Sunni Ittehad Council (SIC) lawmaker Omer Ayub Khan Friday termed it "unconstitutional". His statement came after a number of newly elected lawmakers on reserved seats in the NA were sworn in. NA Speaker Ayaz Sadiq administered the oath to the MNAs amid ruckus and sloganeering by the PTI-backed SIC lawmakers. Taking the floor, Ayub - Imran Khan's pick for the leader of the opposition - said: "Today's oath-taking of MNAs on reserved seats is illegal and has no [legal] standing."

Continued on Page 06

Amid ruckus Punjab MPAs take oath on reserved seats

Lahore High Court objects to SIC's plea against ECP not giving them reserved seats in province

ABID RAZA

LAHORE: At least 21 women and three members of minority communities Friday took their oath as Members of the Punjab Assembly (MPAs) on reserved seats, as the provincial assembly's session was marred by the

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Briefs

Justice Malik sworn in as LHC CJ

Justice Khan replaces Justice Muhammad Ameer Bhatti as the chief justice

DNA

LAHORE: Punjab Governor Muhammad Balighur-Rehman on Friday administered oath to Justice Malik Shahzad Ahmad Khan as the new chief justice of the Lahore High Court (LHC). The new LHC chief justice arrived at the Governor House in Lahore for the swearing in ceremony, where the Punjab governor, Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz and a senior minister Marriyum Aurangzeb received him.

Presidential election

ECP turns down Achakzai's request

Commission remains resolute in its decision to conduct the election as planned

MAHNOOR ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has firmly decided to proceed with the scheduled presidential election, rejecting Mahmood Achakzai's plea for postponement. Sources within the Commission confirmed that the election for the 14th president will indeed take place tomorrow, adhering to the predetermined timetable.

Holiday Notice

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

Maryam assures Bilawal PML-N to vote for Zardari in presidential election

'Zardari to take care of you as he does of me', Bilawal assures Punjab lawmakers

ABID RAZA

LAHORE: Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari said that he came to Punjab to win support of his father Asif Zardari, a presidential candidate. Bilawal expressed these views while addressing the media along with Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz. Bilawal greeted Maryam Nawaz on assuming the charge as Punjab chief minister. He said that Ramazan relief package would serve the poor people of the province. "Polarisation emerged in the society that has to be buried to move forward," he added. The PPP chairman hoped that PM Shehbaz Sharif and the president would work together to solve all the problems. Addressing the meeting of the parliamentary party, Punjab CM Maryam Nawaz said that the PML-N would vote for Zardari. She said that problems are so complex that not a single party can solve them. The Punjab chief minister said that the Ramazan package was being distributed as per the record of the Benazir Income Support Programme.

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In response to Imran IMF clarifies no commentary on political issues

IMF says as international institution, it has 'narrow mandate on economic issues'

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: The International Monetary Fund (IMF) on Friday gave a cold shoulder to Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder Imran Khan's demand for an election audit, stating that as an international institution, it has a "narrow mandate on economic issues". A spokesperson of the Washington-based lender confirmed that it had

Continued on Page 06

COAS promises army's support for people of Balochistan

Army chief visits Balochistan's Awaran district where he was briefed on security situation of province





STAFF REPORT

RAWALPINDI: Chief of Army Staff (COAS) General Asim Munir on Friday promised the people of Balochistan that they will be supported by armed forces and law enforcement agencies for peace and prosperity in the province, said a statement issued by the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR). "The success of Balochistan is the success of Pakistan. The people of Pakistan are proud of the brave

people of Balochistan who have stood tall against all odds. Armed Forces of Pakistan and law enforcement agencies will continue to render their services in support of the people of Balochistan for peace and prosperity," said the army chief. The army chief made these comments during his visit to the Awaran district of Balochistan where he was briefed on the security situation of the province. According to the military's media wing, the army chief was also informed about the efforts being taken by the Pakistan Army in the socio-economic development and agriculture potential of Balochistan. During his visit to Awaran, COAS Munir interacted with the local elders, farmers and families of shuhada and assured them of the army's unstinting support for their security and welfare while paying rich tribute to the sacrifices rendered by the martyred. While interacting with the notables and farmers of Awaran, the army chief emphasised the importance of agriculture and the army's commitment to the Green Pakistan Initiative (GPI). "Farmers will be provided with all kinds of agricultural facilities, including the provision of easy agricultural loans, seeds, fertilisers, solar tube wells and guidance by agriculture experts so that they can cultivate their lands and become partners in the progress and


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Ambassador urges Pakistani investors to invest in Ethiopia

Ambassador Jemal Beker said that it was a high time for the business community of Pakistan to explore the lucrative market of Ethiopia

ABID RAZA

LAHORE : H.E. Jemal Beker Abdula, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia to the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, on Friday urged the Pakistani business community to invest in Ethiopia that offered comparative advantage in form of important geographical location, cheap and clean energy and skilled human resource. Addressing a Business Forum on Ethiopia-Pakistan Bilateral Trade at Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce & Industry, Lahore, the ambassador said his country was hosting the Invest Ethiopia Conference from April 28-30 in Addis Ababa to showcase extraordinary investment opportunities in Ethiopia. According to H.E. Ambassador Jemal Beker, it was a high time for the business community of Pakistan to explore the lucrative market of Ethiopia which was a gateway to the African continent of more than 1.4 billion people. He

said Ethiopia was a signatory to the African Continental Free Trade Area Agreement which means that whatever produced in Ethiopia could easily be traded to the entire Africa. The Ambassador highlighted the economic reforms carried out by the reformist Government of Ethiopia to build a home grown economy to achieve a robust and sustainable economic growth by creating an enabling environment for business community and foreign investors. He said under its economic reforms, Ethiopia had laid a major focus on its five economic sectors including agriculture and agro-processing, manufacturing, mining, Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and tourism. The government had set up a one-window facility and introduced multiple incentives to attract the foreign direct investment, he said, adding "do not mislocate yourself, Africa is the business, trade and investment destination of the 21st century." He said H.E. Dr. Abiy Ahmed, Prime Minister of Ethiopia, had charted the country on the path of progress and

prosperity with his visionary reforms paving the way for Ethiopia to become a manufacturing hub of Africa. The Ambassador said Ethiopia was producing cheap, clean and green energy close to 98 per cent from hydro and geothermal sources. "We are exporting energy to Kenya, Djibouti, Sudan and other neighbouring countries since our prime focus is to foster regional integration by sharing our resources." As regards the efforts for boosting trade volume between Ethiopia and Pakistan, he said the Embassy of Ethiopia in Islamabad last year in March mobilized a 75-member trade delegation to Ethiopia that helped connect both countries business community. "Now, we are planning Hijra Trip II to Ethiopia for the traders and investors of Pakistan this year in May," the ambassador said, exhorting the participants to register themselves for the delegation before end of April. The Ambassador also briefed the Pakistani business community about export potential of different products to Ethiopia including rice, pharmaceutical products, medical equipment, sports items and construction material. Likewise, Pakistan could import agricultural products such as coffee, tea, pulses, oilseeds and vegetables from Ethiopia. Vice President of FPCCI and Regional Chairman Zaki Aijaz also informed the business community about Ethiopia's business, trade and investment potential while recalling his visit to Ethiopia as part of the 75-member business delegation went to Addis Ababa last year. He also lauded the role played by H.E. Ambassador Jemal Beker Abdula for advancing bilateral relations including trade ties between the two countries.



CS instructs DCs to visit hospitals, schools

QUETTA : Balochistan Chief Secretary Shakeel Qadir Khan on Friday instructed the deputy commissioners to pay surprise visits to the hospitals, primary healthcare centers and educational institutions in the respective districts while presiding over the Commissioners and Deputy Commissioners conference held here. The chief secretary congratulated commissioners and deputy commissioners on successful conduct of elections in the province. He ordered that to take measures for the improvement of health sector as it is the responsibility of the provincial government to provide the best facilities in health sector and quality education to the masses. Chief Secretary Balochistan instructed the DCs to ensure the availability of doctors and paramedical staff in hospitals to provide best healthcare facilities to the people. He also ordered to take strict action against absent staff in Hospitals and Educational institutions. The chief secretary said that the attendance of all staff including doctors, nurses, paramedical staff, lady health workers should be ensured in the districts hospitals. He said that there is a need to restore the public's trust in these institutions by improving the condition of government hospitals in Balochistan. The district administration should take all measures to ensure complete supply of medicines as the health department has released funds for medicines, he concluded.—APP

Women empowerment can change economic fate

LAHORE : President of the Lahore Chamber of Commerce and Industry Kashif Anwar said that women empowerment, equal distribution of resources and increasing number in workforce can change the economic fate of the country. He said that Lahore Chamber of Commerce and Industry has always remained a step ahead for the promotion of women entrepreneurs. Meanwhile, the Lahore Chamber of Commerce and Industry organized a special event in connection with Women International Day at LCCI. LCCI Senior Vice President Zafar Mahmood Chaudhry, Convener Stand-

ing Committee for Women Empowerment and Executive Committee Member Fareeha Younas, Amina Wahaj, Captain (R) Saira Fazal, Additional IG (R) Punjab Shahzadi Gulam, Uzma Rehman also spoke on the occasion. On the occasion, an exhibition was also held where women entrepreneurs showcased their state-of-the-art products. LCCI President Kashif Anwar said that the celebrations are one of the LCCI efforts to achieve that position for Pakistani women for which they are entitled to. Lahore Chamber is successfully highlighting the problems being faced by women en-

trepreneurs which need to be solved on a priority basis. He said that Lahore Chamber of Commerce and Industry is acknowledging and honoring the services of women entrepreneurs who are showing outstanding performance in their respective fields. Kashif Anwar said that LCCI's aim is to present the eminent women who are known and recognized as high achievers so that our new generation can follow their footsteps. He said that Lahore Chamber of Commerce and Industry would continue to promote such activities to encourage women entrepreneurs.—APP

IG Police pays tributes to all women of society

LAHORE : Inspector General Police Punjab Dr. Usman Anwar has paid rich tributes to all the women of the society. On exclusive message of International Women's Day, Dr. Usman Anwar said that Punjab Police salutes all brave mothers, sisters, daughters of nation especially of martyrs and ghazis. He said that on International Women's Day, Punjab Police reiterates its determination to fight against gender based crimes, sexual harassment and violence against women. The IG Punjab said that today's woman is more conscious, courageous and empowered than ever before and in all departments of Punjab Police, women are showing excellent skills and performance alongside men. He said that women serving in Punjab Police are our pride and valuable asset, lady police officers and official play an outstanding role in law and order, crime control and community policing. The IG Punjab said that providing equal opportunities and favorable environment to women is indispensable for sustainable economic and social development. Punjab police is ensuring prompt registration of FIRs and arrest of culprits in case of crimes against women. Dr. Usman Anwar said that Women Safety App, Helpline 15, Anti-Women Harassment and Violence Cell are active for the protection of women. He said that the welfare of women serving in the Punjab Police is the first priority and all possible measures are continue in this regard. Earlier on, IG Punjab met with the heroes of the Ichra incident. Inspector General Police Punjab Dr. Usman Anwar said that due to the timely action and wise handling of the police team in the Ichra incident, the country was saved from a major tragedy. IG Punjab Dr. Usman Anwar said that due to this incident, awareness has been raised among the public about showing extremist reactions without confirmation or investigation. IG Punjab said that the Punjab Police is a leaden wall against all kinds of extremism, vandalism, arson, killing by violence. IG Punjab said that the entire team, including the jawans of the Dolphin Squad, played an important role in saving the woman's life by responding in time.—DNA

Alvi orders swift release of cancer machinery

President Alvi has upheld the decision of the FTO directing the Collector of Customs, Lahore to get released a radiation machine within 07 days, for the treatment of cancer patients

ADIL SHAHEEN

ISLAMABAD : President Dr Arif Alvi has upheld the decision of the Federal Tax Ombudsman (FTO) directing the Collector of Customs, Lahore to get released a radiation machine within 07 days, for the treatment of cancer patients, which had been lying with M/s Gerry's Dnata (Pvt) Ltd since 2023. He directed the release keeping in view the sensitive nature of the equipment and the noble cause of serving humanity, particularly the cancer patients. He stressed that in case of non-compliance the Collector Customs shall initiate necessary proceedings as per law.

The President regretted that the radiation machine had been lying in the shed of the Collectorate of Customs, Lahore since 04.04.2023 and the Gerry's was refusing to release the machine without payment of the extra cost for keeping the shipment with it in the warehouse, despite the fact that Customs authorities had issued a Delay and Detention Certificate (DDC) for waiving off the storage/demurrage charges. He lamented that the Gerry's did not consider it a serious matter, and refused to release the machine without a huge payment of warehouse charges, thus, making those cancer patients and poor people of Pakistan suffer who get treatments from public sector hospitals of the country.

"Exploitative business in this manner without a compassionate understanding of issues is regrettable", he added. As per details, the CEO of Mayo Hospital Lahore (the complainant) had filed a complaint with FTO against the Collectorate of Customs, Allama Iqbal International Airport (AIAP), Lahore on the refusal of M/s Gerry's to honour the Delay and Detention Certificate (DDC) issued by the Assistant Collector of Customs and release the machine. According to him, Mayo Hospital had imported a Cobalt-60 Source to give radiation to cancer patients and was the only machine available for patients in public sector hospitals. The machine was lying in the shed of

the Collectorate of Customs, AIAP since 04.04.2023 due to the non-availability of funds to pay the outstanding charges to M/s Gerry's. The Customs authorities had forwarded the matter to the Manager Cargo of Gerry's Dnata Shed, AIAP, Lahore, which had refused to release the consignment without payment of outstanding charges. The Complainant had requested to waive off charges and release the equipment on an urgent basis but to no avail. Feeling aggrieved, he approached FTO, who asked the Collector of Customs AIAP, Lahore to immediately coordinate with Gerry's to release the goods. The Gerry's then filed a representation against FTO's decision with the President.

The President, after hearing the case, noted that the Gerry's had not implemented the DDC by not releasing the machine in violation of the provisions of the Customs Act 1969. He highlighted that the legislature had imposed penal consequences upon those who failed to honour the duly issued DDC and the provisions of the Act were to be strictly construed and were mandatory. He referred to Section 14-A of the Customs Act which provides that if any agency or persons managing or owning a customs airport fails to entertain a DDC issued by the officer of the Customs, such agency or person shall be liable to a penalty not exceeding five hundred thousand rupees.



ISLAMABAD : Chairman Pakistan Red Crescent Society, Ambassador of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus in Pakistan Ms. Dilsad Senol along with the volunteers cutting cake at a seminar on International Women's Day Celebration under theme "Invest in women accelerate progress.—DNA

RCCI inks MOU with NAVTTC

RAWALPINDI: The Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (RCCI) has signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with National Vocational and Technical Training Commission (NAVTTC). President Mr. Saqib Rafiq on behalf of RCCI and Mr. Shafiq Hussain Khokhar on behalf of NAVTTC signed and exchanged the MOU documents at a ceremony held at NAVTTC Head Office, Islamabad. Chairperson NAVTTC, Ms. Gulmina Bilal Ahmed, Muhammad Amir Jan, Executive Director, Muhammad Hamza Sarosh, Senior Vice President, Faisal Shahzad, Vice President, among others, witnessed the signing ceremony. Under the agreement, a structured program for providing paid internships, work-based Trainings, Jobs to NAVTTC graduates within RCCI. NAVTTC trained graduates will be facilitated in securing apprenticeship, work-based training and jobs through collaborative efforts with industry. RCCI President Saqib Rafiq on this occasion urged that there is a need to revamp syllabus and curriculum as per industry need and demand.—APP

CDA takes action against illegal constructions

ISLAMABAD : The Capital Development Authority (CDA), on Tuesday, took vigorous actions to eliminate illegal constructions in the federal capital. In the regard, the Building Control Section, along with the Enforcement Directorate, with the assistance of the district administration and Islamabad Police, took strict action against the violation of building by-laws in Islamabad Zone 5 and sealed several buildings. According to the details, notices have been issued to the owners of 40 buildings in Islamabad Zone 5 which were being constructed without the approval of the CDA for violation of building by-laws. The operation against the city encroachment and the buildings constructed against the building by-laws will continue. It should be noted that for the past several months, the CDA has been engaged in conducting operations against illegal encroachments, illegal constructions, and the violation of building by laws in the federal capital.—DNA

FBR fails to meet revenue targets

FBR has reported a failure to meet its revenue collection objectives for the second month in succession

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) has reported a failure to meet its revenue collection objectives for the second month in succession, sparking discussions regarding the government's inclination towards emergency fiscal policies. This continual shortfall requires the generation of an additional Rs 18 billion each month for the fiscal year 2023-24 to address the revenue deficit effectively. A deviation greater than 1% from the set target might necessitate the introduction of a supplementary budget, a measure aligned with the prerequisites of an agreement with the Interna-

tional Monetary Fund (IMF). Data indicates that the FBR's revenue collection lagged by 1.3% and 4.6% for January and February 2024, respectively. Confidential sources have revealed that February witnessed a revenue collection of Rs 681 billion, falling short of the Rs 714 billion target by Rs 33 billion. January's revenue also did not meet expectations, with a shortfall of Rs 9 billion, totaling a Rs 42 billion deficit over these two months. This financial gap has been linked to opposition within the FBR against the Finance Minister's initiatives for reforming and streamlining the tax collection process. Reports suggest that this opposition has escalated to the extent of strike threats by the FBR's senior management,

significantly compromising the integrity and functionality of the institution. Rumors within the FBR suggest an anticipation of improved revenue metrics with the induction of a new Finance Minister, indicating the present downturn as a deliberate tactic to establish authority and leverage favorable terms with the incoming fiscal policy leadership, thus resisting the proposed reforms. This turmoil reflects underlying issues, potentially leading to the implementation of a mini-budget in accordance with IMF stipulations. However, such measures may inadvertently result in increased financial burdens on the populace.

ISSI hosts roundtable on women's inclusion

ISLAMABAD : Marking the International Women's Day (IWD), the Centre for Strategic Perspectives (CSP) at the Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI) hosted a roundtable discussion titled, "Women's Inclusion in Policy Discourse of Pakistan." The keynote speaker at the roundtable discussion was Ms. Fauzia Vigar, Federal Ombudsman for Protection Against Harassment of Women at the Workplace. Other discussants included: former Ambassador

Seema Ilahe Baloch; Dr. Salma Malik, Associate Professor, QAU; Major Wajih Arshad, Assistant Director, Information Operations Division, ISPR; Ms. Atiya Amir, Deputy Controller Program, Radio Pakistan; Ms. Shanza Faiq, Assistant Director, Foreign Minister's Office; and Dr. Fareeha Armughan, Head-Center of Evidence Action Research, SDPI. In her introductory remarks, Dr. Neelum Nigar, Director CSP, aligned the discussion with IWD 2024 theme, envisioning a gender-equal

world free from bias. She emphasized that the conversation will shed light on the pivotal role of women in shaping and participating in policy discourse across key domains such as the economy, foreign policy, diplomacy, energy, and the media within the specific context of Pakistan. In his remarks on the occasion, DG ISSI Ambassador Sohail Mahmood emphasized the pivotal role of women in shaping policies for Pakistan's socio-economic development and fostering an inclusive decision-making process.—APP

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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

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Monal.....0334-5421812



Turkish Airlines.....8494949



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



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



Hospitals

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MH.....5611116
Cantt Hospital...9270907-11
DHQ.....5556311-4
RGH.....9290301-7
Holy Family.....9290322-7
PIMS.....9261170-79
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CDA.....9208301-04
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RDA.....5555864
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Islamabad.....0321-5744480

Bosnia, Pak ties from cordial to excellent, says Ambassador

Film "Qou vadis, Aida?", on the occasion the 32nd anniversary of Independence Day of Bosnia and Herzegovina

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Mr. Emin Cihodarevic Ambassador Embassy of Bosnia and Herzegovina has said he was pleased to present the film "Qou vadis, Aida?", on the occasion the 32nd anniversary of Independence Day of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The film is not only a cinematic masterpiece, but a painful reminder of the Srebrenica genocide, the worst atrocity on European soil since World War II. A large number of guests hailing from various walks of life attended the reception. The ambassador said, it was an undeniable reality that the relations between Bosnia and Herzegovina and Islamic Republic of Pakistan are special: alongside the enduring link of the permanent support that Pakistan give to Bosnia and Herzegovina on its path to preserve freedom and democracy. "Our relations have an out of ordinary dynamic, they permanently develop and diversify. There



no single field, either political, defense, economical, cultural or social one, where we not able to

give positive examples and good practices'. He said he was confident that the friendship between

the people of the two countries and bilateral relations between two governments will contin-

ue to flourish and achieve new heights. While giving a high-light of the film, the ambassador

said, it was not coincidence that we chose this moment to screen "Qou vadis, Aida?", as we mark our 32nd year of independence, recognizing all of the stories, tragic and heroic, personal and collective, well-known and yet-to-be-told, that are part of my country's history already. 'Aida's drama and her emotions are the heart of the story. I would like you to take away the feelings and questions the film raises. How many things would have been different if we had more empathy and solidarity? Did this tragedy have to have such a terrible outcome? He said, he would like to express his gratitude to the Pakistan National Council of the Art for hosting this evening, as well as Mr. Danish Iqbal, Honorary Consul of Bosnia and Herzegovina in Lahore, Mr. Asad Saleem, Honorary Consul of Bosnia and Herzegovina in Peshawar and Mr. Khawaja Abdul Ghani Majid, Honorary Consul of Bosnia and Herzegovina in Karachi who so generously contributed to the success of tonight's event.

China to advocate for green transformation of steel industry

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Green and low-carbon transformation has become a general trend of global development. Therefore steel industry has to keep abreast with times.

"It has also become an inevitable choice for shaping the core competitiveness of steel companies," noted Wang Lanyu, a deputy to the 14th National People's Congress (NPC), and President of Hebei Iron

and Steel Group (HBIS), one of the world's largest steelmakers, according to China Economic Net (CEN). "We've made big efforts to push green transformation," said Wang Lanyu, adding that The first phase of a 1.2-million-tonne hydrogen metallurgy demonstration project, the world's first of its kind in hydrogen energy development and utilization, was completed, leading the direction of utilizing hydrogen energy in the country's steel

industry. Also, in April 2016 HBIS purchased Smederevo Steel mill and HBIS Serbia Company was incorporated and become a showpiece of China Mid-east European Country Industrial Cooperation and Belt & Road Initiative. In Wang Lanyu's view, as a resource and energy intensive industry, the steel industry still has a long way to go to accelerate green transformation and development. At this year's Two Sessions, Wang offered suggestions on accelerat-

ing the realization of the value of low-carbon steel materials, speeding up the construction of green transformation demonstration areas in the steel industry, and improving the green energy consumption support system of the steel industry. As China has promised to peak carbon dioxide emissions by 2030 and achieve carbon neutrality by 2060, it is committed to transforming the steel industry into a low carbon-emitting one amid its long-term green pledges.

Economy will improve with reduction in political tensions

ISLAMABAD: Dr. Murtaza Mughal, President of Pakistan Economy Watch (PEW), on Friday welcomed the much-needed flexibility in the stance by the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leadership. The PTI leadership's position is becoming softer, which will reduce political tensions and improve the economic situation, he said. Dr. Murtaza Mughal said in a statement issued here today that the IMF and many international organisations appear to be complacent due to the steps taken over the last few months. He said that the tone of the central leadership of PTI has changed, which should be answered positively so that the speed of reduction in political tension can be accelerated. The government can work for economic improvement. With improvements in the economic situation, it will be possible for the government to provide meaningful relief to the people, he added. Dr. Mughal said that the credit rating agency Moody's has improved the rating of Pakistan. At the same time, the IMF has also expressed its willingness to send a new mission to Pakistan after the formation of the cabinet. The IMF's attitude should be that it has no complaints at this time and wants to work with Pakistan. He said that the formation of the new cabinet would be a test for Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif. In this regard, he should ensure merit and not consider any pressure. The failed economic experts should not be re-tried, and those elements should not be entertained in any way whose actions have aggravated the economic crisis in the country instead of reducing it. He said that many arrested leaders and activists of the PTI got bail, after which Imran Khan demanded to bring the perpetrators of the May 9 tragedy to justice, which shows that there is a softening of stance on both sides. Imran Khan has also said that neither he nor anyone from his party is against the army and the establishment. On the other hand, the PTI leadership has also announced dissociation from two vloggers based in western countries. The situation shows that there has been little progress from the PTI at the highest level, but the ice is melting and things are improving. The tone of the opposition will benefit the government and contribute positively to the overall situation, he observed. Reduced political temperatures will help the government deliver, and rumours will die down, which will be good for the country's future, he said. Meanwhile, the PM has directed the formation of a review committee on the proposal of handing over the power companies to the provinces with directions to submit recommendations to him. While presiding over a meeting on privatisation, he directed that transparency in the privatisation process should be ensured at the institutional level and that effective and tried-and-tested methods of international standards of monitoring should be adopted.

President Arif Alvi presented farewell guard of honour

DNA

ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi on Friday was presented a farewell guard of honor at the Aiwan-e-Sadr, marking the culmination of his term. The smartly turned-out contingents of the armed forces presented the guard of honor which was reviewed by the outgoing president. The national anthem was played as the president stood at the saluting dais. Later, he also shook hands with the officers and staffers of the Aiwan-e-Sadr. The farewell guard of honour was given a day before the next presidential election scheduled to be held on Saturday. Dr. Arif Alvi was sworn in as the 13th President of Pakistan on September 9, 2018.

CASS hosts seminar on 'climate resilience

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Centre for Aerospace & Security Studies (CASS), Lahore, hosted a seminar titled 'Climate Resilience & Strategic Preparedness: Safeguarding Pakistan's Security Interests'. The event discussed the challenges that Pakistan faces in the wake of global climate change, which can poten-

tially threaten state security and social cohesion.

The seminar commenced with opening remarks by Mr Ameer Abdullah Khan, Senior Researcher at CASS, Lahore, who spoke about the different aspects in which climate change is interrelated with the national security of Pakistan. This was followed by a keynote address by Mr Ali Tauqeer Sheikh, member Loss & Damage Fund Board and

World Bank Consultant, who spoke about strategic preparedness in the face of ecological uncertainty while outlining policies and priorities from global to domestic levels. Mr Ahmed Rafay Alam, an environmental lawyer, shed light on governance-related challenges, which augment climate-induced threats to Pakistan's security. The last speaker, Ms Sarah Hayat, Climate Law and Policy Ex-

pert, discussed the need for climate adaptation and mitigation as a way forward to a secure future for Pakistan.

In his concluding remarks, Air Marshal Asim Suleiman (Retd), President, CASS Lahore, said that despite contributing minimally to global greenhouse gas emissions, Pakistan has endured the harsh realities of climate change. He highlighted that the crisis does not stop at natural disasters, rather it extends to straining the economy, political stability, and social fabric of Pakistan, besides intensifying regional tensions. The President acknowledged Pakistan's initiatives to combat climate change, however, he stressed the need for international cooperation, considering this to be a shared endeavour. The seminar highlighted various key points.



Korean envoy commends Aziz Jan Trust

ISLAMABAD: Korean Ambassador to Pakistan, Park Ki Jun has expressed commendation over endeavor by Aziz Jan Trust of equipping youth with modern Information Technology (IT) skills with the objective of fostering opportunities that empower individuals to grow and make earnings. The Korean envoy expressed his appreciation during visit to Mohsin and Huma Mass IT Training Institute (MHIT) Peshawar. Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Aziz Jan Trust, Afan Aziz who is also Honorary Consul of South Korea for Khyber Pakhtunkhwa accompanied Korean Ambassador. The visiting guest was informed that Mohsin and Huma IT Training Institute has been established on August 27, 2023, by Aziz Jan Trust in collaboration with Saylani Welfare Trust. During visit, Korean envoy met with students attending IT classes and was briefed about six months performance of the center. Afan Aziz apprised Park Ki Jun that MHIT center is providing training to youth free of cost with the vision to equip new generation with current IT knowledge leading to generate self-employment through free lancing. The students are offered IT course in different disciplines including graphic designing, video animation, IT essential, Web & Mob App, Python, AI Chatbot, Techno Kids, CCNA, Cyber Security, Flutter, IT to graphic designing and IT to Web & Mob App. A total of 1273 students have availed from the opportunity of learning different courses within six months of MHIT center. The aggregate total of two batch of students is 2896 out of which 2442 are male and 312 are female, Afan added. The Korean Ambassador highly appreciated the initiative after listening the success stories of different students who after getting few months training got livelihood opportunities in shape of online jobs and free lancing.--DNA

Women empowerment central to development

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Syed Muhammad Abbas, Secretary General of Rawalpindi Islamabad Tax Bar Association (RITBA), said on Friday that the empowerment of women is a major issue in Pakistan that needs to be addressed. Cultural norms, education, economic possibilities, violence, and political representation all link together in Pakistan, and we should all join hands to improve things and support women for the greater good. Speaking at a ceremony organised in connection with International Women's Day, Syed Muhammad Abbas said that women have made a remarkable contribution in all walks of life and in the legal profession. As the Secretary General of the RITBA, I applaud the resilience, intelligence, and dedication of women in shaping the legal landscape of the country.



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Briefs

Two sessions unleash "China new economic development shift"

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Two sessions 2024 have made global waves by unleashing China's new economic shift from traditional development models to new quality productive forces to shape up future industrial and manufacturing systems that will help realize the dream of all-inclusive modern China on the face of earth. In the backdrop of fast-evolving triers of developments when global powers have been grappling to set the direction to align with artificial intelligence technologies, cutting-edge big data, high-tech green growth and quantum science, China has come forward with conspicuous plan to unlock next stage economic transition. Indeed, credit goes to NPC lawmakers and CPPCC advisors for outlining "out of box game-changing strategy having gathered at globally-important two sessions held here, Gwadar Pro reported on Friday. As per the breadth and depth of innovative economic paradigm, new quality productive forces suggest advanced productivity that is free from traditional economic growth models and productivity development stages. It constitutes high technology, high efficiency and high quality, and recalibrate with the new development philosophy. Success of new quality productive forces lies in interplay of industry and supply chain improvement, up-gradation, cultivation of emerging sectors, future-oriented industries such as hydrogen power, new materials, biomanufacturing, commercial spaceflight, quantum technology and life sciences. Quote from German Ambassador, H.E. Alfred Grannas "Empowering women means embracing diversity, fostering inclusion, and unlocking humanity's full potential.

Quote from European Union Ambassador, H.E., Dr Riina Kionka

ISLAMABAD: "This initiative is all about inclusivity and inspiring girls to be future leaders. We are excited that Seher Raza has stepped into the role of EU Ambassador for a day. She is from Dera Ismail Khan and aspires to join the foreign service of Pakistan. We need more women in diplomacy."—APP

DHS, MCI celebrates Int'l Women's Day

DNA

ISLAMABAD: On the directives of Deputy Commissioner Islamabad, the Directorate of Health Services (DHS), Metropolitan Corporation Islamabad (MCI) here on Friday organized an event to celebrate the International Women's Day. Deputy Commissioner Islamabad along with Coordinator World Health Organization (WHO) as chief guest, attended the ceremony, said a press release. In their speeches, they highlighted the importance, hard work and dedication of women in polio eradication program. According to the spokesman of the Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) administration, the Deputy Commissioner said that women workers had done great job during polio campaigns and achieved the set targets successfully. He said that women were working in every field of life and getting recognition for their talents. Chief Metropolitan Officers, District Health Officer Islamabad, Director Health Services and Area Coordinator WHO were also present on the occasion. The chief guest distributed certificates among women polio workers in recognition of their services. All the distinguished guests and participants also took a token walk to raise awareness regarding International Women Day.



ISLAMABAD: CEO Serena Hotels Global Aziz Boolani along with women artisans from Balochistan inaugurating the Crafts Festival, at Islamabad Serena Hotel. Nageen Hayat Director NOMAD Art Gallery is also present.— DNA

Canadian HC hosts ambassador for Day event

Aligned with this year's theme for International Women's Day 2024, "Invest in Women: Accelerate Progress," the program offered the "Ambassadors for the Day" a unique opportunity to interact with diplomats

MAHNOOR ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: To celebrate International Women's Day 2024, the High Commission of Canada hosted its second annual Ambassador for the Day on March 8th. This year, the initiative gained widespread support from the diplomatic community in Pakistan, including the Delegation of the European Union to Pakistan, the Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany, the Embassy of Austria, the Embassy of the Republic of Bulgaria, and the British High Commission Islamabad, as well as the Government of Pakistan including the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the National Heritage and Culture Division, and the Pakistan National Council of the Arts. The initiative aimed to provide the opportunity for six Pakistani young women to step into the shoes of the Head of Mission for Canada, the EU, the UK, Germany, Austria, and Bulgaria to experience the day-to-day responsibilities of this important role. Aligned with this year's theme for International Women's Day 2024, "Invest in Women: Accelerate Progress," the program offered the "Ambassadors for the Day" a unique opportunity to interact with diplomats, engage with representatives of the Government of Pakistan, civil society, and the media, as well as take part in various cultural diplomacy activities that offered insights into the workings of a diplomatic mission and the world of diplomacy in Pakistan. The participants commenced the day by meeting with their respective Heads of Mission and their internal teams of diplomats while assuming the role of Head of Mission and taking control of official social media accounts. They then attended an official lunch engagement with Senator Sherry Rehman hosted by H.E., Dr. Riina Kionka, Head of the Delegation of the European Union to Pakistan and H.E. Alfred Grannas, Ambassador Federal Republic of Germany to discuss the how the international community must continue to engage on combatting climate change and its devastating impacts, as well as advancing progress of women's participation in politics. Continuing their journey as diplomats, the six "Ambassadors for the Day" attended a briefing by the



Photo by Mudassir Raja

Spokesperson at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Pakistan, and later participated in a "Women in I.T. reception and panel discussion" hosted by the British High Commission. The day culminated with a collaborative cultural diplomacy event at the Pakistan National Council of the Arts where the participants greeted guests and toured them around the various art exhibits and attractions including: Canada's "Drawing into Threads: Embroidery as Encounter," an interactive textile arts collaboration between Canadian and Pakistani artists showcasing the multi-sensorial rich-

ness of embroideries that reflect the fusion of Canadian & Pakistani heritage and the rich people-to-people connections that tie the two nations. The Austrian Calliope exhibition honored remarkable women from Austria who have shaped and continue to shape the world. It features luminaries from various fields, including society, culture, science, and politics, spanning from the early 19th century to the present, aiming to provide a deeper understanding of these women's contributions, showcasing their work, activism, creativity, and intelligence.

UN, Danish embassy host day event

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD, Pakistan, 7 March 2024: Today the UN Resident Coordinator Office in Pakistan, UN Women and the Embassy of Denmark hosted an International Women's Day (IWD) Gala in Islamabad highlighting the importance of investing in women to shape a better future for all in Pakistan. The gala, titled "Empowering Women: A Smart Investment for Pakistan", was building on this year's IWD's theme, "Invest in Women: Accelerate Progress." It emphasized that empowering women economically and ensuring

women's and girls' rights across all aspects of life is the only way to secure a prosperous and just economy, and an inclusive and fair society. "Let today be not only a celebration of the amazing abilities and achievements of women and girls across Pakistan, but also the turning point where we committed to reinforce our collective efforts to invest in their advancement and well-being," said Mr. Mohamed Yahya, UN Resident & Humanitarian Coordinator in Pakistan, in his welcome remarks. "When women overcome challenges, achieve gender equality, and fully participate in society, everyone wins."

Pakistan has put efforts towards gender equality and women empowerment over the years, and has passed a number of pro-women legislations. Women's labour force participation doubled from 13 per cent in 1992 to 22.5 per cent in 2018, but it remains among the lowest rates in South Asia and in the world. Most women workers are concentrated in the informal economy while women's key role in agriculture remains undervalued and, often, unpaid or underpaid. "As we gather to celebrate International Women's Day, it is with immense pride and gratitude that we acknowledge the remarkable contributions of women in Pa-

kistan and across the globe, said Ms. Nilofar Bakhtiar, Chairperson of the National Commission on the Status of Women (NCSW). "We celebrate the resilience and achievements of women and girls around the world. Let us remember that gender equality is not just a woman's issue but a human rights issue that requires the effort of all genders and we must continue to advocate for justice, equality, and dignity for all." Achieving gender equality is one of the pillars of the cooperation agreement between the United Nations and the Government of Pakistan, and is at the heart of the United Nations' Global Goal 5.

New quality productive forces set to energize NEVs in new era

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Not long ago, cars without drivers were beyond our imagination; today, driverless cars are running around the globe. Not long ago, it was universally acknowledged that only airplanes could fly; today, "cars with wings" also have the opportunity to soar in the sky. Just as the new energy vehicles, one of the New Three in China's foreign trade, the

low-altitude economy is also an indispensable element of the new quality productive forces mentioned in the 2024 Government Work Report. Meanwhile, new energy vehicles combined with advanced technologies such as artificial intelligence power grids provide an all-round engine for domestic technological development in the new era. "We should explore low-speed driverless driving in limited scenarios by establishing low-speed driverless driving

+ energy replenishment pilot areas at night, moving the electricity load during the day to the low period at night, and transforming charging from active behavior to automated roaming, services, thereby forming a win-win situation for the power grid, users, charging station operators, and car companies. Relevant policies and pilots will also be applicable to scenarios such as users' autonomous parking at night and low-speed

logistics," He Xiaopeng, Deputy to the 14th NPC, Chairman & CEO of XPeng, noted. He pointed out that as of December 2023, there were a total of 20.41 million new energy vehicles in the country. However, with the accelerated penetration of NEVs, the construction of charging infrastructure still faces a series of challenges. Besides, disordered charging by users and breakthrough of ultra-fast charging technology, also brings challenges to the stability of the power grid. "Autonomous pile-seeking charging could to a great extent activate night charging scenarios as well as improve the utilization rate of charging infrastructure, whereas, this idea still lacks the support of relevant policies.

Fauzia Waqar recognizes role of women in shaping future

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Federal Ombudsman for Protection against Harassment at Workplace Fauzia Waqar Friday paid tribute to the Pakistani women for their role in shaping a brighter future for society. Talking to PTV news in connection to International Women's Day she said that the nation is of its talented and passionate women. She highlighted that multiple events are taking place to acknowledge the achievements of women in the country. She said that Punjab Police's actions to prevent gender-based crimes, especially violence against women, harassment and other incidents, are commendable. She affirmed that joint actions with the Punjab Police will continue to prioritize women empowerment. She emphasized the government's commitment to ensuring women's equal participation in policy matters including human rights, climate change, education, and health. She reaffirmed the commitment to protect women's rights and eradicate violence against them. Praising Pakistani women for their dedication and leadership.

ANF recovers 114 kg drugs in four operations

DNA

RAWALPINDI: Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) while conducting four operations across the country managed to recover 114 kg drugs and arrested five accused, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman here on Friday. He said, 3.6 kg Ice was recovered from a parcel book for Bangladesh at a courier office in Karachi. 72 kg hashish and 13 kg opium were recovered from the possession of an accused rounded up near Giga Mall Rawalpindi. In fourth operation, 12 kg hashish and 5 kg opium were recovered from Karachi Road Kalat area and two accused were arrested. In fifth operation, 9 kg hashish was recovered from two suspects arrested near Burhan Interchange Attock. Cases under the Anti-Narcotics Act have been registered against the arrested accused and further investigations are under process. Climate Resilience & Strategic Preparedness: Safeguarding Pakistan's Security Interests




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China's diplomatic character

THE second session of the 14th National People's Congress (NPC) held a press conference at the Media Center Hotel in Beijing on the morning of March 7. Wang Yi, a member of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China Central Committee and Chinese Foreign Minister, was invited to answer questions from Chinese and foreign journalists on "China's diplomatic policies and foreign relations." During the 90-minute press conference, Wang answered 21 questions, covering topics including major-power relations, regional and global hot issues, and global governance. He outlined a comprehensive and multi-dimensional diplomatic landscape of China's diplomacy, providing external observers with a clearer perspective on China's diplomatic approach with greater certainty, credibility and predictability for the future. This year's press conference continues the style of previous ones, providing a well-organized and detailed exposition of Chinese diplomacy with a clear and concise outline. Many of the statements were particularly memorable, such as the "four questions for the US": If the US says one thing and does another, where is its credibility as a major country? If it gets jittery whenever it hears the word "China," where is its confidence as a major country? If it only wants itself to prosper but denies other countries' legitimate development, where is international fairness? If it persistently monopolizes the high end of the value chain and keeps China at the low end, where is fairness in competition? Apart from this, the "red, yellow and green lights" theory addressing the crux of China-Europe relations, and support for "an Africa that is truly independent in thinking and ideas" also conveyed a wealth of information.

The press conference during the annual two sessions is a prime opportunity, both domestically and internationally, to gain insights into China's diplomatic achievements of the previous year, the current year's diplomatic direction and development, and to observe the overall strategy of Chinese diplomacy. Specifically, this year's press conference exhibits three prominent characteristics. First, following the Central Conference on Work Related to Foreign Affairs at the end of last year, which clearly established the pillars of building a community with a shared future for mankind as a scientific system, the focus of this year's press conference has become even more pronounced. China's distinctive goals, tasks, and approaches in developing major-country diplomacy with Chinese characteristics are now clearer and more prominent. Whether it is promoting the framework of major-power relations that contributes to overall stability and balanced development, or leading the reform of the global governance system with the principles of fairness and justice, Chinese diplomacy maintains principled positions while also demonstrating moral responsibility. This substantially promotes a deeper understanding among various sectors regarding Chinese diplomacy and the current international situation. Third, a profound impression of the entire press conference is that the character and style of China's diplomacy are prominent amid the current turbulent international environment.



Pakistan's presidential election

JUST hours before the presidential elections, the PTI-backed Sunni Ittehad Council (SIC) candidate Mahmood Khan Achakzai has demanded the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) postpone the polls till the electoral college is completed. In a letter written to Chief Election Commissioner Sikander Sultan Raja, Achakzai stated that the electoral college as "prescribed by law and Constitution" for a presidential election was "still incomplete" because "some reserved seats" in the National Assembly and all provincial assemblies are still vacant. "...As yet no one was elected on those reserved seats and without nominations and proper election on these seats, if the presidential election is conducted as per the schedule that would be a denial of their votes, which otherwise is against the fundamental rights, law and constitution," stated the letter, written by Achakzai, who is contesting the election against PPP supremo Asif Ali Zardari. The presidential candidate added that the electoral college cannot be completed till the seats are filled. He added that till the seats are not filled the presidential polls would be "illegal, unlawful and against the spirit of the Constitution". He also mentioned the Peshawar High Court (PHC) stay order on the reserved seats which he believes would give a "clear verdict" in favour of the PTI-backed party. "Under the above circumstances, it is submitted that the proposed election to the office of the President of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan is clearly impossible, therefore the same may kindly be postponed or delayed till completion of electoral college accordingly in the best interest of justice, fair play and equity," said Achakzai. The presidential elections are scheduled to be held on Saturday (today) with Achakzai going against the clear favourite Pakistan Peoples Party Co-chairperson Asif Ali Zardari. Elections for the president are held with the assemblies and both houses of Parliament voting for the candidates. In the February 8 general elections PTI-backed independent candidates gave a surprise as they managed to win a huge number of seats across the country. However, all the candidates contested the elections as independents since the PTI was denied its election symbols through a Supreme Court ruling backing the ECP verdict on the party's intra-party elections. Considering such a situation, the PTI allied with the SIC and its independent candidates joined the party in all assemblies to get its share of reserved seats. They also approached the ECP on the issue. On March 4, the election commission ruled that PTI-backed SIC is not eligible for the reserved seats allotted to women and minorities. Following the electoral body's verdict, the party challenged the decision in the PHC. The court Wednesday barred the oath-taking of lawmakers notified on reserved seats denied to the SIC. A stay order preventing members from swearing-in was also issued while ECP was directed to submit its response in the said matter. A day earlier, the PHC extended the stay order on the oath-taking till March 13. The same day, SIC also approached the Lahore High Court (LHC) and a petition on the issue was also filed in the SHC by the party.

Maryam: A trailblazer in politics and governance

Qamar Bashir



Through her relentless dedication, astute political insight, adept utilization of modern technology, and effective leveraging of social media platforms, Maryam Nawaz amassed unprecedented political capital within the PML(N). Surpassing even seasoned stalwarts such as her uncle and father, she positioned herself as the natural heir to the legacy of Nawaz Sharif and emerged as a leading contender for the future Prime Ministership of the country. Her strategic approach and forward-thinking methods have solidified her status as a formidable force within Pakistani politics, poised to shape its trajectory in the years to come. In a hypothetical scenario where the elections were solely between PTI and PML(N), Maryam Nawaz's political prowess could have likely secured a comfortable one-third majority in parliament

MARYAM Nawaz is widely regarded as a bold and tenacious figure, unafraid to confront political and non-political adversaries, including the judiciary and the civil administration. She has demonstrated remarkable courage in standing up to powerful forces, refusing to yield even when faced with threats of arrest or imprisonment. Her fearless demeanor and unwavering resolve have earned her a reputation for being unyielding in the face of adversity. She confronts her opponents with a fierce determination, akin to that of a lioness protecting her pride, and is not hesitant to take them to task with ruthless precision. Maryam Nawaz emerged as a unifying force in orchestrating a coalition against the formidable government led by Imran Khan. Through her eloquence, persuasive arguments, tireless efforts, and thorough preparation, she managed to unite previously disparate factions into the Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM). Her skillful leadership played a pivotal role in toppling the Imran Khan administration, ultimately leading to the appointment of her uncle as Prime Minister. Maryam Nawaz spared no effort in fiercely advocating for her father, who had been labeled a fugitive, an absconder, and a convicted criminal, resulting in a lifetime disqualification from holding public office. Through her relentless determination, she navigated legal challenges and successfully facilitated his return as a VVIP figure, minimizing any potential risks. She remained steadfast until all legal proceedings against her father were dismissed, ultimately securing his eligibility to contest elections once again. In the absence of her father in exile and with much of the PML(N) leadership imprisoned during PTI's government, Maryam Nawaz took on the responsibility of keeping the party alive and active. She organized and led massive public gatherings, meticulously planning each event with careful attention to detail. From her attire selection to her elegant gestures, and the incorporation of engaging videos and songs, she captivated the public's attention and successfully galvanized support for the party. Her leadership during this challenging period played a crucial role in maintaining the party's relevance and connection with the people. During the 2024 election campaign, Maryam Nawaz emerged as the frontline leader of the PML(N), spearheading successful public gatherings nationwide. With remarkable agility, she traversed from city to city, energizing supporters with her impassioned speeches and meticulous preparation. Her dedication to detail extended to her attire, always adorned with a firmly placed dupatta on her head, symbolizing her connection with tradition and culture. Each public meeting under her stewardship became a resounding success, showcasing her ability to inspire and mobilize the masses. Through her relentless dedication, astute political insight, adept utilization of modern technology, and effective leveraging of social media platforms, Maryam Nawaz amassed unprecedented political capital within the PML(N). Surpassing even seasoned stalwarts such as her uncle and father, she positioned herself as the natural heir to the legacy of Nawaz Sharif and emerged as a leading contender for the future Prime Ministership of the country. Her strategic approach and forward-thinking methods have solidified her status as a formidable force within Pakistani politics, poised to shape its trajectory in the years to come. In a hypothetical scenario where the elections were solely between PTI and PML(N), Maryam

Nawaz's political prowess could have likely secured a comfortable one-third majority in parliament. However, as a prominent TV anchor noted, these elections were perceived as a contest between the people and the establishment, leading to repercussions for parties seen as aligned with the latter. Consequently, PML(N) suffered setbacks, falling short of the desired one-third majority. This outcome dashed Maryam Nawaz's fervent desire to see Nawaz Sharif return as Prime Minister for a fourth term. Nevertheless, this electoral anomaly resulted in Shahbaz Sharif ascending to the Prime Ministership, thereby automatically positioning Maryam Nawaz as a leading candidate for the role of Chief Minister. Despite the setback at the federal level, this development affirmed her prominent position within the political landscape, potentially paving the way for significant influence and leadership at the provincial level. Maryam Nawaz's ascension to the role of Chief Minister of Punjab marks a historic milestone in Pakistani politics, garnering praise both domestically and internationally. Born in 1973 into one of Pakistan's most influential political dynasties, Maryam initially stayed away from politics until 2013, when her father, Nawaz Sharif, became Prime Minister for the third time. Since then, she has emerged as the apparent political heir of the Sharif family, while her brothers managed the family business. Her appointment as the first woman Chief Minister of Punjab signifies a significant step towards gender inclusivity in Pakistan's political landscape, echoing the nation's past milestone with Benazir Bhutto's prime ministership in the late 1980s and early 1990s. With her inauguration, Maryam joins a lineage of political leadership within her family, following in the footsteps of her father Nawaz Sharif, his brother Shehbaz, and Shehbaz's son Hamza. Her leadership holds promise for the prosperous and resource-rich province of Punjab, as she embarks on a journey to uphold her family's legacy while carving her path in shaping the province's future. Maryam Nawaz's elevation to the role of Chief Minister of Punjab marks a groundbreaking moment in Pakistan's political history, resonating both at home and abroad. With her leadership, Punjab stands poised to witness a new era of inclusive governance and progressive policies under her stewardship. Her appointment as Chief Minister of Punjab has sparked global attention, with media outlets and commentators weighing in on the significance of her historic achievement. From Arab News to Al Jazeera, various sources have highlighted the groundbreaking nature of her ascent, marking a significant stride for gender representation in Pakistan's political landscape. Described by Nikkei Asia as a female counterpart to Imran Khan in her political assertiveness, Maryam's elevation to this pivotal role symbolizes a departure from traditional gender norms in Pakistani politics. The Hindu and CNBC characterize it as a triumph for every woman in the nation. Maryam herself emphasized the importance of her win, declaring it a victory not just for herself but for every daughter and mother in the region. The symbolism of her success is underscored by her pledge to serve all constituents, irrespective of their political affiliations. She paid homage to her father's legacy while expressing her determination to continue the tradition of female leadership in Punjab. Her accent marks a watershed

moment in Pakistan's political history, paving the way for greater gender equality and empowerment in the nation's highest offices as reported by Fox News. Maryam Nawaz's journey to the chief minister's office has not been without challenges, as noted by DW and The Daily Sun. Facing opposition boycotts and enduring personal hardships, she has emerged as a resilient and determined leader. As highlighted by The Economic Times, Maryam's focus on governance and dedication to improving the lives of her constituents signal a departure from divisive politics, setting a precedent for future female leaders in Pakistan. In a bold vision for Punjab, Maryam Nawaz, the first-ever Chief Minister of Pakistan's richest and most prosperous province, sets her sights on transforming the province into a dynamic economic hub. Prioritizing the resolution of longstanding issues within Lahore and across the province, Maryam Nawaz aims to lay a solid foundation for growth. Key strategies include streamlining business regulations to attract investors, activating price control committees to alleviate inflationary pressures, and launching targeted initiatives like the "Nighebaan" Ramadan package to support vulnerable communities. Education emerges as a cornerstone, with plans to revitalize government school infrastructure and ensure parity in quality between public and private institutions. Simultaneously, healthcare reforms promise state-of-the-art facilities and free medications in emergency departments, underscoring Maryam Nawaz's commitment to improving public well-being. Transportation, social welfare, and digital infrastructure are also on the agenda, reflecting a comprehensive approach to development that prioritizes inclusivity and sustainability. At the heart of her vision lies fostering a business-friendly environment and implementing targeted relief measures. She aims to stimulate investment and ease the burden on citizens. As the province embraces sustainable practices and embraces technological advancements, Punjab is poised to emerge as a beacon of progress, where economic vibrancy is matched by social inclusion and environmental stewardship. Maryam Nawaz stands as a beacon of courage and resilience, driven by an unwavering love for her father and a steadfast commitment to keeping her family united in the face of adversity. Her unparalleled determination and fighting spirit have become legendary, inspiring all who witness her journey. Despite the intensity of political battles, she has shown remarkable magnanimity by extending olive branches even to her staunchest opponents. Her compassion for the vulnerable segments of society knows no bounds, as evidenced by her pledge to deliver a Ramadan package directly to the doorsteps of millions of households. Furthermore, her grasp of governance is evident in the quality of her addresses, where she meticulously identifies and addresses the myriad challenges facing the province. She outlines comprehensive solutions and shares her vision for development, prosperity, and happiness among the people. While the expectations are high and her convictions unwavering, only time will bear witness to the fulfillment of her lofty promises and aspirations. Maryam Nawaz's leadership journey is marked by hope, determination, and an unyielding commitment to serve the people and transform their lives for the better.

*Former Press Secretary to the President
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Former MD, SRBC*

Global Collaboration for transformative education

Zahra Ali



Collaboration with int'l educational institutions and industries assists in building a skilled and knowledgeable workforce

GLOBAL collaboration is essential to address current issues in education in Pakistan, requiring the collective efforts of educationists, policymakers, and various stakeholders. By fostering collaboration on an international scale, valuable insights and successful practices can be shared among professionals in the field. Through global partnerships, educationists gain access to a wealth of resources, including innovative teaching methods, research findings, and training programs. This exchange of knowledge allows for the adaptation of effective strategies to the specific needs and challenges of the Pakistani education system. Engaging with international experts provides policymakers with diverse perspectives and expertise, contributing to the development of informed and comprehensive solutions. This collaboration

helps align educational policies in Pakistan with global standards, ensuring that the curriculum, assessment methods, and educational infrastructure meet or exceed international expectations. International collaboration also opens doors to funding and investment opportunities, addressing critical issues such as infrastructure development, teacher training, and the integration of technology in education. Support from global organizations, donor agencies, and philanthropic foundations become more accessible through collaborative efforts. Cultural exchange and diversity are promoted through global collaboration, enriching the learning experience for students. Exposure to various perspectives and educational approaches contributes to the development of a more inclusive and well-rounded curriculum. By working together globally, educationists and

policymakers can address common challenges faced by many countries. This includes adapting to rapidly changing technology, promoting digital literacy, and addressing socio-economic disparities in education. Collaboration with international educational institutions and industries assists in building a skilled and knowledgeable workforce. This ensures that students are equipped with the necessary skills that they need to compete in a global economy. Finally, global collaboration fosters research and innovation in education, as experts from different parts of the world come together to tackle shared challenges. This collective effort can lead to advancements in educational practices and the development of effective solutions to address the evolving demands of the global job market.

Briefs

Govt committed to steer...

FROM PAGE 01
Meanwhile, Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif has said that Pakistan will continue to stand shoulder to shoulder with the Kashmiris in their just struggle for their inalienable right to self-determination. He expressed the resolve during his meeting with Prime Minister of Azad Jammu and Kashmir Chaudhry Anwar-ul-Haq during his visit to Muzaffarabad today. Meanwhile, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has announced to establish Pakistan Education Endowment Fund to enable the high achievers to continue their studies regardless of financial constraints. Addressing an event in connection with International Women Day in Islamabad today, he emphasized the importance to equip boys and girls with the modern education and skills in order to take forward the country on the path of development.

Policy of 'divide...'

FROM PAGE 01
Omar Ayub emphasized that PTI founder Imran Khan always told them to keep their struggle continue for the supremacy of the constitution and rule of law come what may. He went on to say that the country could only be pulled out of the deepening quagmire by adhering to the principle of the supremacy of rule of law and constitution. Omar Ayub recalled that during his first speech on the floor of the house, he stressed the need for the restoration of rule of law in its true spirit. Speaking on the occasion, PTI MNA Shandana Gulzar said that it was very painful chapter as Pakistan was being turned into Kashmir and Palestine. However, she added that even situation in Pakistan was more painful because Pakistanis were being killed at the hands of own people.

COAS promises...

FROM PAGE 01
development of Pakistan," said the COAS. Later on, the army chief inaugurated Cadet College Awaran and interacted with faculty members and students. He also appreciated the establishment of another Cadet College in Balochistan for the people of the area. He reiterated his commitment that the Pakistan Army will continue development and relief activities in Balochistan in collaboration with the concerned civil departments. Earlier on arrival, COAS was received by Balochistan's Corps Commander.

Oath-taking of MNAs...

FROM PAGE 01
Raising questions over the oath-taking, the PTI leader asked how will a country run without the rule of law. "The system cannot work like this." The reservations come as the Peshawar High Court (PHC) has extended the stay order on the oath-taking ceremony of lawmakers notified on reserved seats denied to the PTI-backed SIC till March 13. For his part, PTI Chairman Gohar Ali Khan told the speaker that the PHC had issued a stay on oath-taking of reserved seats lawmakers. The oath cannot be administered to them until the decision of the case, he added.

President Alvi given...

FROM PAGE 01
last year but due to the absence of the electoral college for the election of president, he continued to serve in the presidency. A smartly turned-out contingent of the armed forces presented a guard of honour to the outgoing president. The national anthem was played as the president stood at the saluting dais. Later, he also shook hands with the officers and staffers of the Awwan-e-Sadr. The farewell guard of honour was given a day before the next presidential election scheduled to be held on Saturday.

Australia supports cricket training for blind women

Australia's High Commissioner to Pakistan said that Australia's continuing support aimed to empower more women and girls with disabilities to realise their potential and broaden their horizons through sport

AFZAL JAVED

ISLAMABAD: The Australian High Commission, in partnership with the Pakistan Blind Cricket Council (PBCC) and Serena Hotels, supported a cricket coaching clinic and tournament for visually impaired women and girls from across Pakistan from 3 to 8 March in celebration of International Women's Day. The training built on Australia's support to the PBCC since 2018 which led to the formation of Pakistan's first international blind women's cricket team. Speaking at the award-giving ceremony at the conclusion of the tournament, Australia's Acting High Commissioner to Pakistan, Nicole Guihot said that Australia's continuing support aimed to empower more women and girls with disabilities to realise their potential and broaden their horizons through sport. "We are supporting the develop-



ment of blind women's cricket in Pakistan because sport breaks down barriers to inclusion, diversity and equity, fosters under-

standing and builds resilient communities," Ms Guihot said. Coaches Abdul Razzaq, Ibrar Shah, Shahida Shaheen, and Ta-

hir Mehmood Butt, who coached the national blind men's team, worked with the women to hone ball skills, enhance team cooper-

ation, and strengthen leadership. The Chairman of Pakistan Blind Cricket Council, Syed Sultan Shah, said, The Chairman of Pakistan Blind Cricket Council, Syed Sultan Shah, said, "Blind Cricket is a sport that has gained popularity in recent years for its unique approach to inclusivity. It provides an opportunity for people with visual impairments to compete at a high level, develop their skills and confidence, and become people of vision, both on and off the field. I hope that this initiative will inspire more people with disabilities to participate in sports and lead fulfilling lives." In 1922, two blind factory workers invented blind cricket in Melbourne, Australia when they used a tin can containing rocks as a ball. In 1928, the first sports ground and clubhouse for blind cricket was built in Kooyong, Melbourne. Today blind cricket is played at club level and nationally throughout Australia.

Naomi Osaka off the mark at Indian Wells

Four-time Grand Slam champion beat Italian qualifier 6-3, 6-1 to reach second round



INDIAN WELLS: Naomi Osaka powered through on a third match point to advance to the second round of the ATP-WTA Indian Wells Masters on Thursday with a 6-3, 6-1 win over Italian qualifier Sara Errani. The four-time Grand Slam champion from Japan, fighting to lift a post-motherhood ranking of 287, sealed victory with a forehand winner. Osaka then joked about

heading back to her hotel to change nappies on her infant daughter, born last summer. Thursday's victory featured five breaks of serve in the first set before the 2018 Indian Wells champion stepped it up for a straight-sets victory in 70 minutes. "It's a pleasure to be back playing - but once I get home, I'm a mom," she said. "When I was pregnant I really wanted

to return to playing. "I know I'll have to play well to improve... but I'm excited to start winning more matches." After losing in the Australian Open first round, the California-based player reached the Doha quarter-finals last month. She next faces Liudmila Samsonova for a third-round spot. Former WTA number one Caroline Wozniacki took a further step in her return to tennis, with the Dane finishing off a match interrupted the night before by rain. It took only a few extra minutes on court for the number 204 to conclude victory against Zhu Lin of China 7-6 (8/6), 6-1 with Wozniacki now facing Croat Donna Vekic. Venus Williams remained winless since August as the veteran lost a promising early lead and crashed out 2-6, 6-3, 6-0 to Nao Hibino of Japan. The 43-year-old Williams last competed at the US Open in August and earned her last victory two weeks before in Cincinnati. Britain's 250th-ranked Emma Raducanu scored a first-round win over number 96 qualifier Rebekha Masarova of Spain 6-2, 6-3, with the 2021 US Open champion next playing Ukrainian Dayana Yastremska. "I was really pleased with how I stayed focused, didn't get down and competed really hard in tough situations," said Raducanu, who overcame eight double-faults. In the men's draw, Australian Aleksandar Vukic lined up as the opening opponent for top seed Novak Djokovic after defeating Japan's Shintaro Mochizuki 7-6 (7/4), 7-6 (8/6). - Agencies

Aaqib Javed reveals Lahore Qalandars' PSL 9 struggles

KARACHI: Former pacer Aaqib Javed, the head coach of Lahore Qalandars, has opened up about his team's struggles during the ongoing Pakistan Super League (PSL) season 9. The defending champions Lahore Qalandars suffered six consecutive losses in the PSL 9 and crashed out of the play-off race. Javed, while talking to the media in Karachi, stated that the availability and injury issues of their players were the major factors behind the team's dismal performance. "We tried to create a balanced team, however, David Wiese's injury, Bhanuka Rajapaksa's as well as other players' absence caused problems for the team," said the former pacer. "Rashid Khan has always been the best option for our team, but unfortunately he could not participate this season." Aaqib Javed also reflected on Lahore Qalandars' approach in the remaining games against Karachi Kings and Quetta Gladiators. "We lost some matches in the last minute. But now it is a matter of honour for our team to win the remaining matches," he remarked. He expressed hope that his team will turn things around in the match against arch-rivals Karachi Kings. "Although we failed to defeat Karachi Kings for the past few games, they do not have a psychological advantage over us," Aaqib Javed said. "We have to play positive cricket and we can make a comeback," he added. He also praised Lahore Qalandars' captain Shaheen Afridi, who completed 100 wickets in PSL during their match against Islamabad United. "Shaheen [Afridi] has crossed the milestone of 100 wickets in PSL. It is a matter of honour for our team." - DNA



Halep to return from doping ban in Miami

INDIAN WELLS: Former world number one Simona Halep will resume her WTA career in the wake of a doping ban at the Miami Open this month, the Romanian said on Instagram on Thursday. Just two days after her four-year ban was reduced to nine months and she was cleared by the Court of Arbitration for Sport for an immediate return, Halep said she had accepted a wild card into the main draw of the prestigious hard court event in Florida - the second half of the "Sunshine Double" after this week's event at Indian Wells, California. "I'm thrilled to let you all know that I will be making my return to the WTA Tour in two weeks at the Miami Open!" Halep, who last played at the 2022 US Open, posted. "Thank you to the tournament for giving me this opportunity and I cannot wait to be back on court and competing. See you all soon!" The two-time Grand Slam singles champion was suspended last September by the International Tennis Integrity Agency (ITIA) after two separate doping infractions the previous year. The 32-year-old appealed to CAS in February, arguing her positive test for Roxadust - used to treat anaemia and banned as a blood doping agent - was the result of a tainted supplement. CAS determined that Halep had "established, on the balance of probabilities" that the banned substance did come from the contaminated product and her violations were therefore "not intentional." - Agencies

PSB guarantees new javelin for Nadeem ahead of PO

KARACHI: The Pakistan Sports Board (PSB) has promised that Arshad Nadeem will be provided a new javelin ahead of the Paris Olympics this year. While speaking to media, Director General PSB Shoaib Khoso said that Nadeem will be "given money to buy as many javelins as he wants". "Arshad is our national hero and has qualified for the Olympics. He will be given the support he needs in terms of buying a javelin," he added. Earlier, Nadeem had revealed, while talking to News, that the only international standard javelin that he has is currently out of shape. Consequently, Nadeem is currently training with a locally-made javelin but that could lead to injury. "I have been training for the Paris Olympics with a locally-made javelin for the past seven to eight years. The international standard javelin which I had is out of shape. For international competitions, I need five to six top quality javelins," Nadeem said. "Using sub-standard local javelin could also lead to injuries," he added. Nadeem also said that he is unable to prepare properly because "most of the times ground is not available for training due to events". The 27-year-old was also hopeful that he will get the opportunity to participate in couple of international events before the Olympics. Nadeem also said that he will leave for South Africa soon in order to fine-tune his training for Paris Games. The Mian Channu-born, who recently underwent a knee surgery, is also hopeful about regaining top fitness soon. Last year at the World Championship in Hungary, Nadeem created history for the country by becoming the first athlete to claim silver medal with a throw of 87.82 metre, just below India's Neeraj Chopra who won gold with a throw of 88.17m. During the event, he also qualified for the Paris Olympics. However, last year he missed the Asian Championship, Asian Games and Asian Throwing Championship because of fitness issues. Nadeem's personal best throw is 90.18 metre which he managed at the Commonwealth Games in Birmingham in 2022. The javelin throw event in the Paris Olympics will be held at the France's biggest venue Stade de France. The qualifying round will be held on August 6 with the final to be conducted on August 8. Arshad finished fifth in the Tokyo Olympics with a throw of 84.62m in the final. - DNA

Hazlewood stars as Aust dominate day one against NZ

Josh Hazlewood-inspired pace attack rolled New Zealand for 162 in two sessions at Hagley Oval in Christchurch

SPORTS DESK

CHRISTCHURCH: A five-wicket haul by paceman Josh Hazlewood ensured Australia had the upper hand on a wicket-laden opening day of the second Test against New Zealand on Friday. Fourteen wickets fell as Australia reached 124 for four at stumps after the Hazlewood-inspired pace attack rolled New Zealand for 162 in two sessions at Hagley Oval in Christchurch. Manus Labuschagne was unbeaten on 45, including eight fours, with night-watchman Nathan Lyon on one. New Zealand debutant Ben Sears, whose first delivery was whipped to the boundary by Steve Smith, claimed his first Test wicket two balls later when he had the Australian opener trapped in front for 11. Smith's fellow opener Usman Khawaja reached 16 before he was bowled by Matt Henry for the second time in the series. Henry also clean-bowled Cameron Green for 25 and had Travis Head caught behind for 21 to finish the day with figures of 3-39. Australia, looking to sweep the two-Test series, won the toss and put New Zealand into a bat on a green-tinged wicket. After being kept at bay by Tom Latham and

Will Young for the first 90 minutes, the tourists picked up wickets at regular intervals. Australia take charge of first Test after New Zealand collapse. Hazlewood finished with 5-31 in a masterly display of seam bowling while Mitchell Starc took 3-59. It moved Starc up to fourth

on the all-time Australian wicket-takers' list with 357, overtaking Dennis Lillee, who ended his stellar career with 355. Australia expected an early breakthrough when captain Pat Cummins elected to bowl in ripe conditions. Dogged resistance from Latham and Young saw New Zealand reach

47 before Young was dismissed for 14. From there, the New Zealand innings fell apart. They lost eight wickets for 60 runs before the Australian onslaught was frustrated by a ninth-wicket partnership of 55 by Henry and Tim Southee in his 100th Test. After Starc accounted for Young, Hazlewood bowled a precise line and length to claim the next four wickets including New Zealand talisman Kane Williamson, who was trapped in front for 17. Williamson, who received a standing ovation as he arrived at the crease for his milestone 100th Test, sought a review but he knew it was a lost cause and started to walk before the three red lights were shown. Hazlewood also accounted for Latham (38) and Daryl Mitchell (four), both caught by wicketkeeper Alex Carey as well as Ravindra caught by Usman Khawaja at first slip. The impressive Carey took five catches including Tom Blundell (22) off Cameron Green and Glenn Phillips (two) off Starc, who then dismissed Scott Kuggeleijn lbw with his next delivery. Hazlewood was also in on the action when he caught Southee (26) to give Cummins a wicket, then finished the innings in the next over when he had Henry (29) caught behind.



Punjab MPAs take oath on reserved seats

FROM PAGE 01
ruckus created by Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI)-backed Sunni Ittehad Council lawmakers. The oath to the newly inducted lawmakers on the reserved seats was administered by the Speaker Punjab Assembly Malik Ahmad Khan. The oath-taking ceremony was carried out amid noise and chaos in the provincial legislature by the Opposition members who chanted slogans all along as the lawmakers swore in. "These seats were our right, which was taken away from us and given to other parties," the Opposition members said while standing before the speaker's dais and chanting slogans. Since the conduct of the February 8 general elections, the PTI-backed SIC members have been demanding their right to the reserved seats in the National and Punjab assemblies, alleging that their mandate was stolen following the polls in the province and other parts of the country.

PML-N to vote for Zardari in...

FROM PAGE 01
"Fatima Jinnah and Benazir Shaheed are being remembered today. I had a meeting with Benazir Shaheed, my mother was a brave woman," she stated. She also expressed well wishes for Asif Zardari as a president. Maram Nawaz said that in the last five years, the constitution was violated by the outgoing president. She vowed to vote for Asif Zardari in the presidential election. Meanwhile, in a bid to woo Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) parliamentarians ahead of the presidential poll, Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Chairman Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari has assured that his father Asif Ali Zardari, who is poised to become the next president of Pakistan, will take care of Punjab's lawmakers as he does of him. With the ruling coalition on the same page regarding Zardari as the joint candidate, the presidential election is set to take place in the assemblies today (Saturday).

IMF clarifies...

FROM PAGE 01
received a letter from a PTI official sent on Khan's behalf on February 28 on the Fund's engagement with Pakistan under the loan program. "The IMF, as an international institution with a narrow mandate on economic issues, does not comment on domestic political developments. However, given the importance of the institutional environment for economic stability and growth, we do encourage the fair and peaceful resolution of all electoral disputes," said the spokesperson in a statement. The spokesperson shared that its engagement with Pakistan is focused on helping the government implement strong policies to deepen financial stability, address the longstanding economic and underlying balance of payments challenges, and restore sustained and inclusive growth for the benefit of all Pakistani citizens.

Mushahid calls for release of Imran Khan

FROM PAGE 01
ex-president Asif Zardari, former premier Yousuf Gilani and Javed Hashmi during the late General Pervez Musharraf's rule, and of Nawaz Sharif in 2018. He said he would demand release of the PTI founder, who is a former prime minister also, calling him a political prisoner. A "new chapter" has begun after the Feb 8 elections, he said and added that "there is a need for a healing touch". "Include everyone and give a general amnesty," the PML-N senator said, claiming that a "general amnesty was even given to TTP that killed our children." "And reserved seats that PTI deserves, it is their right and they should get it; they should not be deprived of it," he continued. Senator Mushahid also demanded all missing persons across the country should be recovered.

Briefs

Moldova's FM calls Türkiye 'stabilizing force'

CHI INĂU: Türkiye's role in the region is "stabilizing," Moldova's top diplomat says. Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Mihai Popsoi praised the "excellent" ties between the two countries in an interview with Anadolu Agency (AA) on the sidelines of the Antalya Diplomacy Forum (ADF) in Türkiye. He stressed the importance of platforms like the ADF during challenging times, stating, "Such a platform is exactly what our region and the world need so that leaders, ministers and prime ministers' sense of state can meet and discuss, frankly find solutions, and hopefully implement those solutions to the benefit of their people and the region." Emphasizing the "unacceptable" nature of the suffering in Gaza, he said: "We practice strong adherence to international law. We would also like to see peace and stability across our region. International law needs to be respected, the suffering needs to end, and all the victims should not suffer any longer. All those that have been kidnapped need to be liberated and everything needs to happen in line with international law." Popsoi described the relationship between Türkiye and Moldova, stating: "We have great bilateral relations with Türkiye. We have great contacts at the highest level." He also noted that Moldovan Prime Minister Dorin Recean attended the ADF on behalf of their country.—DNA

Italy investigates cop in VIP privacy scandal

ROME: An Italian police officer accused of delving into the private files of VIPs and journalists has sparked a privacy scandal this week, fuelling outrage across the political spectrum. Prosecutors are investigating the illegal accessing of information on hundreds of high-profile people, said to include figures as diverse as footballer Ronaldo, the rapper Fedez, Defence Minister Guido Crosetto and the late Silvio Berlusconi's girlfriend. The story dates back to 2022 when the newspaper Domani published an investigation into the income of Crosetto — then newly appointed to Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni's cabinet — revealing his work for defence companies. He lodged a complaint, prompting an investigation that led to Pasquale Striano, an officer of the Guardia di Finanza financial crimes police, deployed to the National Anti-Mafia Directorate (DNA). Between November 2019 and November 2022, it later emerged, Striano made tens of thousands of searches in official databases in what investigating prosecutor Raffaele Cantone described as a "frantic search for information".—APP

S.Korea boosts young doctors' pay

SEOUL: South Korea plans quick measures to improve pay and working conditions for young doctors, the government said on Friday, addressing a key demand by medical trainees who have walked off the job, but denying there was a full-scale healthcare crisis. Prime Minister Han Duck-soo said the current practice of forcing young doctors to work 36 hours at a stretch was partly responsible for their protest and must be changed. "We will start the trial as soon as possible," he said, adding that the government would consider limiting to 24 hours the period that resident doctors and interns must work continuously. More than 10,000 medical interns and resident doctors are protesting against a government plan to increase medical school admissions by 2,000 a year to tackle a shortage of doctors. The country has one of the world's fastest-ageing populations.—APP

President Ilham Aliyev

Azerbaijan a multinational, multi confessional country

Aliyev emphasized the importance of addressing Islamophobia and fostering diversity

DNA

BAKU: President Ilham Aliyev has welcomed participants to the international conference "Embracing Diversity: Tackling Islamophobia in 2024" held in Baku. The event, coinciding with the approaching holy month of Ramadan and the International Day to Combat Islamophobia, carries profound significance. Aliyev emphasized the importance of addressing Islamophobia and fostering diversity. Regrettably, Islamophobia trends across the world are on the rise. We are witnessing the portrayal of Islam as a potential threat, with doubt, discrimination and open hatred against the Muslims becoming increasingly widespread with each passing day. As stated in the UN resolution on the International Day to Combat Islamophobia, rise in instances of discrimination, intolerance and violence directed against religious communities are the source of concern. It is deplorable that today, Islamophobia has become integrated into the state policies of numerous Western countries that consider themselves democratic. These countries account for 80 percent of all the manifestations of Islamophobia that occurred around the world in the last year. In some European countries where Islamophobia has skyrocketed and been promoted as an official ideology, such insulting actions as the burning of our holy book of Quran and publishing caricatures of the Prophet Mohammad, are presented as the freedom of speech. France, along its traditional neocolonialism policy, is pursuing a policy of open pressure and discrimination, staging various Islamophobic campaigns. Legislative acts and political decisions that exclusively target Muslims, limiting their rights and freedoms, are often disguised as secularism. In this country, mosques, Muslim community centers and cemeteries are desecrated in one way or another, and Muslim citizens endure oppression. Instead of combating these manifestations that insult the feelings of the Muslims and holding the perpetrators accountable, the governments of those countries are inflaming the



Islamophobic sentiments, encouraging the persecution of Muslims and aiming to keep these subjects high on the agenda. Unfortunately, certain Western institutions that also portray themselves as democratic are engaging in anti-Islamic activities. Today, the European Parliament and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe have become platforms that promote Islamophobia and pursue policies based on this ideology. The present negative trend is also evident in the operations of some global media entities. They deliberately target Islamic faith and Islamic culture, distort the true essence of Islam, trying to equate it with terrorism and smear it. We strongly condemn these trends that increasingly aim to tarnish our religion. Looking at a world map, we can see that Muslims are the ones that suffer from terrorism the most. Azerbaijan is also a country that suffers from Islamophobia. Among the dire consequenc-

es of Armenia's 30-year long occupation of our lands was a deliberate destruction and annihilation of our cultural heritage of universal value, including the monuments associated with the Islamic faith. While initial estimates suggested that 65 mosques had been razed to the ground during the occupation, unfortunately, that number is steadily increasing as numerous new examples of Armenian vandalism against Islamic heritage continue to emerge. Furthermore, discoveries have been made regarding the hundreds of Muslim cemeteries razed to the ground, with the deliberate alteration and falsification of the designation of Muslim places of worship, mosques, and tombs. In most cases, these sites were used as barns for animals considered haram in our religion. Such offensive actions insult not only our feelings but also those of the Muslims of the world. In the meantime, destruction of Azerbaijan's Islamic historical and cultural

heritage in Armenia is regrettable. Azerbaijan has raised this matter with UNESCO, calling for a technical mission to be sent to that country for assessing the conditions of our cultural and religious sites subjected to destruction in Armenia for years. Unfortunately, to this day, UNESCO is yet to respond to our request. We take pride in Azerbaijan being a multinational and multi-confessional country. Representatives of all religions and ethnic groups live here in peace as one family. Religious equality and inclusivity, safeguarded in our country as an asset, embody the way of life for the Azerbaijani people, serving as a source of strength. Stemming from that, it is only natural that respect for multicultural values constitutes one of priority directions of our state policies. On the global scale as well, our country is doing its utmost to encourage and promote peace, peaceful coexistence, and humanism values. Azerbaijan supports harmonic relations among diverse cultures, and spearheads numerous global initiatives focused on intercultural and intercultural dialogue to foster mutual understanding. A vivid testimony to that is the long-standing tradition of hosting the World Forum on Intercultural Dialogue in Baku in May. In the XXI century there must be no place for Islamophobia, xenophobia or racism. Associating terrorism and extremism with any civilization or ethnic group is an erroneous approach. Using religion for political motives only serves to divide and incite confrontation in the societies. Such manifestations also deprive the humankind from the ideals of humanism and universal values, ultimately resulting in intercultural conflicts. Today's event showcases Azerbaijan's determination to combat Islamophobia as one of the challenges of the modern era. I am confident that this conference will make a contribution to concerted efforts in combating Islamophobia, and generating fresh initiatives aimed at promoting the culture of tolerance and peace founded on respect for religious and faith diversity. I extend my best wishes to you and wish conference success.

Gunmen abduct 275 pupils in Nigeria school attack

At least 275 pupils are missing after gunmen attacked a school in northwestern Nigeria in the second mass abduction within a week in the country. Local government officials in Kaduna state confirmed the kidnappings from Kuriga school on Thursday, but didn't provide figures as were working out how many children had been abducted. Reporting from the capital, Abuja, on Friday, Al Jazeera's Fidelis Mbah said school authorities told the state governor that about 25 of the abducted students had been returned to their parents, but 275 remained missing. A search and rescue team had been deployed to try and rescue the children. Mbah said that about 175 of those still missing are believed to be between the ages of eight to 15. Kidnappings for ransom are common in Africa's most populous country, where heavily armed criminal gangs have targeted schools and colleges in the past, especially in the northwest, although such attacks have abated recently. Idris Maiallura, the local councillor for Kuriga, said he had been to the school and that the gunmen initially took 100 primary school pupils but later freed them while others escaped.—APP

N.Korea's COVID curbs still strangling economy

PYONGYANG: Cross-border movement of people and trade have practically evaporated since the pandemic, Human Rights Watch says. Tightened border controls introduced to curb COVID-19 are still strangling North Korea's economic activity and informal trade networks more than 18 months after leader Kim Jong Un declared victory over the pandemic, Human Rights Watch (HRW) has said. North Korea was one of the first countries to act on reports of COVID-19 circulating in early 2020, sealing itself off from the outside world and its economic lifeline in China. As Pyongyang suspended freight shipments from China for two years, authorities also beefed up border barriers to prevent any movement between the countries — going as far as issuing a shoot to kill order for people and animals to prevent them from spreading COVID-19.

Satellite photos of six locations on the China-North Korea border show that fencing was expanded to cover 321 kilometres in 2023, up from 230 kilometres before the pandemic, HRW said in a report released on Thursday. Existing fences were also updated to include more watchtowers, guard posts, and secondary and tertiary layers of fencing, the rights group said.—APP

India allocates \$1.2B for AI projects

New Delhi: India approved a national-level artificial intelligence initiative with an investment outlay of 103 billion Indian rupees (\$1.25 billion), according to an official statement. "The India AI mission will establish a comprehensive ecosystem catalyzing AI innovation through strategic programs and partnerships across the public and private sectors," a government statement said late Thursday after a Cabinet meeting chaired by Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The initiative will involve the establishment of an AI innovation center, a platform for datasets, and increased startup financing, the statement noted. According to the government, the India AI Mission will aim to "propel innovation and build domestic capacities to ensure the tech sovereignty of India." "It will also create highly skilled employment opportunities to harness the demographic dividend of the country. India AI Mission will help India demonstrate to the world how this transformative technology can be used for social good and enhance its global competitiveness," the statement said.—Agencies

Macron wants to make abortion a right at EU level

"Today is not the end of the story but the start of a fight," Macron told the ceremony, which coincided with International Women's Day

WEB DESK

PARIS: French President Emmanuel Macron said on Friday that he wants the European Union to guarantee the right to an abortion in its Charter of Fundamental Rights. Macron was speaking at a ceremony held in Paris, where Justice Minister Eric Dupond-Moretti used a centuries-old press to seal the right to abortion into the French constitution, following an overwhelming vote by lawmakers on Monday. "Today is not the end of the story but the start of a fight," Macron told the ceremony, which coincided with

International Women's Day. "We're going to lead this fight in our continent, in our Europe, where reactionary forces are attacking women's rights before attacking the rights of minorities," he told the crowd attending the ceremony in Paris, in front of the Justice Ministry. "This is why I want to enshrine that guaranteed freedom to abortion in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union." Changing the EU charter, which would require unanimity, may prove difficult. While most of Europe has legalised abortion, some countries impose restrictions on women seeking to terminate a pregnancy, and deep divisions over abortion rights remain.

Last year, the government of EU member Malta backed down on a bill which would have allowed the abortion of pregnancies when the mother's health was at serious risk, saying instead that terminations would only be allowed when the mother's life was in danger. Along with Malta, Poland's anti-abortion laws are among the most restrictive in Europe. Pregnancy can be terminated only in cases of a threat to the mother's life or health or in a case of rape, and the number of abortions fell to 161 in 2022 from over 1,000 in 2020. Monday's vote by the two houses of the French parliament enshrined in Article 34 of the French constitution that "the law determines

the conditions in which a woman has the guaranteed freedom to have recourse to an abortion". Abortion rights are more widely accepted in France than in the United States and many other countries, with polls showing around 80% of French people back the fact that abortion is legal. "It's a smokescreen" In France, Macron's critics questioned why he pursued the measure in a country with no obvious threat to abortion rights but where women face a multitude of other problems. While some French women saw the step as a major win, others said that in reality not every French woman has access to abortion.

US does not dictate our foreign policy

BOGOTA: Colombia's president shot back at scolding from a US diplomat, saying his country will forge its own policy and that criticizing Israel is not the same as antisemitism. "The US does not dictate our foreign policy. Despite our differences, we find common ground and engage in dialogue," Gustavo Petro wrote on X. "There is genocide in Palestine, and it is being committed by (Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin) Netanyahu. Condemning this is not antisemitism, it is simply humanity," he added. The posting came after historian Deborah Lipstadt, the US' special envoy for monitoring and combating antisemitism, criticized both Petro and Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva. In a speech, Lipstadt took exception to Colombia and Brazil's remarks against Israel, saying: "They are crossing the line, and if they want to work closely with the US, these statements are not in their interest." Petro and Lula have strongly criticized over five months of Israeli attacks on Gaza, accusing Israel of committing "genocide" against the Palestinian people on several occasions. Israel has waged a deadly military offensive on the Gaza Strip since Oct. 7, 2023 attack by the Palestinian group Hamas, which Tel Aviv said killed nearly 1,200 people. At least 30,800 Palestinians have since been killed in Gaza and nearly 73,000 others injured amid mass destruction and shortages of necessities. The Israeli war has pushed 85% of Gaza'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.—Agencies

Over 230M survivors of female genital mutilation worldwide

WASHINGTON: The number of female genital mutilation survivors tops 230 million worldwide, UNICEF said in a new report Thursday, an increase of 15 percent since 2016 despite progress against the practice in some countries. "It is indeed bad news. This is a huge number, a number that is bigger than ever before," said Claudia Coppa, lead author of the report released to coincide with International Women's Day. Female genital mutilation, known as FGM, can include partial or total removal of the clitoris as well as the labia minora, and suturing of the vaginal opening to narrow it. FGM, which can cause fatal bleeding or infections, can also have long-term consequences such as fertility problems, childbirth complications, stillbirth and painful sexual intercourse. Africa is home to the most number of FGM survivors with more than 144 million, ahead of Asia (80 million) and the Middle East (six million), according to the survey of 31 countries where the practice is common.—DNA

Hong Kong issues new national security law bill

VICTORIA CITY: Hong Kong's Legislative Council has begun debating the draft of a new national security law for the Chinese territory after Chief Executive John Lee said it should be passed at "full speed". Discussions on the Safeguarding National Security Bill, as it is officially known, started at 11am (03:00 GMT) on Friday, and was adjourned less than 15 minutes later until March 11. The draft bill, some 212

pages long (PDF), was published online a few hours ahead of the session and includes new laws on treason, espionage, external interference, state secrets and sedition. Those found guilty of treason could face sentences of up to life imprisonment, while those convicted of breaching state secrets or espionage could face 10 and 20 years respectively. Punishments relating to alleged collusion with foreign forc-

es will also be increased, particularly if people are deemed to be working together rather than alone. Penalties have also been increased for sedition, currently addressed under a colonial-era law, to between seven and 10 years from two. And in contrast with the internationally-accepted standard for sedition, the bill's provisions say that people can be charged with the offence even without an

element of violent intent. Other provisions include allowing police to detain suspects for two weeks before charging them, compared with 48 hours currently, and giving police the ability to apply for permission to remove a defendant's right to a lawyer while in pre-charge detention. The bill also allows the authorities to cancel the passports of "absconders". In a statement, Lee urged the passage of the bill at "full speed" to enable the territory to move forward. Hong Kong "has to enact the Basic Law Article 23 legislation as soon as possible — the earlier the better."—APP

Turk: Expanding Israeli settlements a 'war crime'

UN rights chief Volker Turk said there had been a drastic acceleration in Israel's illegal settlement building in the occupied West Bank

FOREIGN DESK

GENEVA: Expanding Israeli settlements in the occupied Palestinian territories constitutes "a war crime" and risks eliminating "any practical possibility" of a viable Palestinian state, the United Nations rights chief warned on Friday. Volker Turk said there had been a drastic acceleration in Israel's illegal settlement building in the occupied West Bank, at the same time as it wages a relentless war in the Palestinian territory of Gaza. The UN high commissioner for human rights said creating and expanding settlements amounted to the transfer by Israel of its own civilian population into occupied territories. "Such

transfers amount to a war crime that may engage the individual criminal responsibility of those involved," he said in a report to the UN Human Rights Council. Reported Israeli plans to build another 3,476 settler homes in the West Bank colonies of Maale Adumim, Efrat and Kedar flew "in the face of international law," he said. Israel seized the West Bank, east Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip in the 1967 Arab-Israeli war. It is illegal under international law for Israel to establish settlements in these Palestinian territories. Despite opposition abroad, Israel has in recent decades build dozens of settlements across the West Bank. They are now home to more than 490,000 Israelis, living

in the same territory as around three million Palestinians. Israel gave the go-ahead for the homes fewer than two weeks after US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said any settlement expansion would be "counterproductive to reaching enduring peace" with the Palestinians. Turk said that during the period overed by his



report — November 1, 2022, to October 31, 2023 — some 24,300 housing units were added to existing Israeli settlements in the West Bank. That marks the largest number on record since monitoring began in 2017; It includes nearly 9,700 units in st Jerusalem, the UN rights office said. Turk's report found that the Israeli government's policies "appear aligned, to an unprecedented extent, with the goals of the Israeli settler movement to expand long-term control over the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and to steadily integrate this occupied territory into the State of Israel." At the same time, Palestinians are being forced from their homes by Israeli settler and state violence,

it said. It also pointed to forced evictions, non-issuance of building permits, home demolitions and movement restrictions imposed on Palestinians. "Settler violence and settlement-related violations have reached shocking new levels, and risk eliminating any practical possibility of establishing a viable Palestinian state," Turk warned. His report found there had been 602 settler attacks against Palestinians just since October 7, when Hamas's attack inside Israel, leading to war in Gaza. The UN rights office said it had documented nine Palestinians killed by settlers using firearms, and another 396 killed by Israeli security forces. Another two were killed by either Israeli security forces or settlers.

Briefs

Security forces kill 4 terrorists in North Waziristan

DNA

RAWALPINDI: The security forces Friday conducted an intelligence based operation in North Waziristan District, on the reported presence of terrorists, said a statement issued by Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR). During the conduct of the operation, intense fire exchange took place between own troops and the terrorists, as a result of which four terrorists were killed. Weapons, ammunition and explosives were also recovered from the killed terrorists, who remained actively involved in numerous terrorist activities in the area. A sanitization operation is being conducted to eliminate any other terrorists found in the area. Locals of the area appreciated the operation and expressed their full support to eliminate the menace of terrorism.

Interior minister on cards for Naqvi

DNA

LAHORE: Pakistan Cricket Board Chairman Mohsin Naqvi is expected to get a key role in the cabinet of newly-elected Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif. Sources said Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) and Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) have decided to field Naqvi as joint candidate from Punjab for the Senate elections. Naqvi, who had also served as caretaker Punjab chief minister, would contest the Senate polls as an independent candidate and he will be supported by the ruling alliance. He is expected to be given the portfolio of the interior minister in the federal cabinet. Last month, Naqvi was elected unopposed as the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) chairman for three years after his rival Mustafa Ramday decided to step down from the competition. Outgoing caretaker Prime Minister Anwaarul Haq Kakar nominated him for its Board of Governors.

Toor sent on 14-day judicial remand

DNA

ISLAMABAD: An Islamabad district and sessions court on Friday sent journalist Asad Ali Toor to jail on 14-day judicial remand in a case pertaining to an online campaign against the judiciary. Earlier this year, a five-member joint investigation team was formed to "ascertain facts behind a malicious social media campaign" against the judiciary in the aftermath of Supreme Court's decision to deprive the PTI of its iconic 'bat' symbol. On February 23, Toor was interrogated by the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) for nearly eight hours on the same matter. Three days later, the journalist was arrested and remanded to FIA custody for five days. According to the first information report, Toor was booked under Sections 9, 10 and 24 of the Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act (Peca), which deal with the offences of glorification of an offence, cyber terrorism and cyberstalking. According to the FIR, Toor "built a false narrative" and publicly launched a "malicious/obnoxious and explicit campaign" against "civil servants/government officials and state institutions". On Wednesday, the court had extended Toor's remand for two more days. Today, Judicial Magistrate Shabbir Bhatti sent the journalist to Adiala Jail on 14-day judicial remand and rejected the FIA's plea seeking a four-day extension in physical remand.

Speakers call for women inclusion; empowerment

Serena Hotels celebrates International Women's Day with a Focus on Inspiring Inclusion



MAHNOOR ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Serena Hotels proudly hosted a vibrant celebration in honor of International Women's Day, underscoring the theme of "Inspire Inclusion." The event,

held at Islamabad Serena Hotel, featured a dynamic panel discussion on "Breaking Barriers: Inspiring Inclusion and Diversity in Leadership." Moderated by renowned broadcast journalist Sidra Iqbal, the panel included esteemed personalities such as Dr. Sania Nishtar, a leading public health

and development expert; Azima Dhanjee, a disability rights activist; Dr. Noor Khan, a distinguished career diplomat; and Mr. Lansana Woneh, Acting Representative of UN Women Pakistan.

Distinguished guests from the diplomatic community, international agencies, corpo-

rate sector, representatives from the Pakistan Foreign Office Women Association and Islamabad Foreign Women Association and Serena associates participated to honor and appreciate women who have shattered stereotypes and achieved success across various spheres of life. Foreign Secretary Mr. Syrus Qazi and many Ambassadors and their spouses also joined in the celebration. Reflecting on the significance of the occasion, CEO Serena Hotels Aziz Boolani stated, "Today, we celebrate the resilience, strength, and achievements of women who have paved the way for generations to come. Our event aims to recognize their contributions and amplify the voices of those advocating for gender equality and inclusion." The Chief Guest for the occasion, Begum Samina Alvi, First Lady of Pakistan, graced the event alongside accomplished women from diverse backgrounds, symbolizing unity and collective empowerment. She also said 'we need to focus on girls' education to make our women strong enough to face the challenges of life with the strength of their minds. We also need to make continuous efforts to equip our women with vocational skills to utilize their potential and also to save them from economic exploitation'. As Serena Hotels continues to champion gender equality and diversity, events like these serve as catalysts for meaningful dialogue and action towards a more inclusive society.

Maryam advocates for woman CM in all provinces

ABID RAZA

LAHORE: Maryam Nawaz, Chief Minister of Punjab, insisted that every day was Women's Day, emphasizing that the celebration should not be confined to a single day, shared these remarks at a ceremony on International Women's Day. Maryam Nawaz advocated for greater inclusivity and equality by electing women as chief ministers in all provinces, highlighting her own historic position as the first female CM in any province. CM Punjab lauded the contributions of women, declaring them heroes serving society and the nation. She commended the efforts of the IG Punjab for establishing women's desks in police stations and acknowledged the valuable contributions of women police officers. The CM Punjab stated that she has taken initiatives to enhance the safety and security of women. She mentioned the establishment of a women's development department and the launch of the "Never Again" app. She strongly advocated for women's safety, emphasizing that women's harassment was a redline for her. She expressed her commitment to ensuring that every woman has the independence to pursue education and employment.

More Indian troops at border won't ease tensions: China

BEIJING: China believes that India's move to add more troops at their disputed border is "not conducive to easing tensions", a foreign ministry spokesperson said on Friday. India has freed up a contingent of 10,000 soldiers, previously deployed at its western border, to strengthen its disputed border with China, according to several media reports. The two countries have previously agreed to maintain dialogue through military and diplomatic channels, and recently held a constructive meeting on resolving border issues in the western section of the China-India border. India has deployed 10,000 soldiers from its western border to guard its 532 kilometre-border with China in Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh, bordering the Himalayas, according to Indian media. - Agencies

Afghanistan's economy has 'basically collapsed': UN

NEW YORK: The Afghan economy and especially regions affected by the devastating earthquakes in October last year, "are still hurting", the UN Development Programme (UNDP) said on Thursday, as restrictions on women and girls continue to thwart basic rights and economic progress. Kanni Wignaraja, Director of UNDP's Regional Bureau for Asia and the Pacific, who recently visited the country, told reporters in New York that 69 per cent of Afghans are "subsistence insecure" - meaning they do not have enough basic resources. "Something that really hit me ... was the harsh impact of continuous natural disasters," she said, adding that many parts of Afghanistan are facing "dramatic" scarcity of water further setting back development efforts. Since the takeover by the Taliban in 2021, the Afghan economy has contracted by 27 per cent, leading to economic stagnation, according to UNDP. Unemployment has doubled and only 40 per cent of the population has access to electricity. Sectors such as finance have "basically collapsed" and there are no major sources of economic activity such as exports or public expenditure, leaving small and medium enterprises (SMEs) and farmers as the lifeblood of the faltering economy. She also voiced concern over the situation of women and girls. There have been severe restrictions on women imposed by the Taliban, such as on their dress code and employment in various sectors. While they can work without restriction in sectors such as health or nursing, their

employment in the public sector dropped even further to about six per cent, Ms. Wignaraja said. "The biggest challenge is the continued edict that bans girls' education. Not being able to move forward after the sixth grade is a major stumbling block," she added. "Last year, no girl graduated the twelfth grade so how are they going to jump from sixth grade to moving into technical colleges or universities need for the medical field?" she exclaimed. The UNDP official also noted the challenges facing local economies and the lack of capital, especially in the private sector. UNDP is supporting microfinance initiatives, but with no cash flowing through the system, results are not at the level and scale required to spur growth. She expressed hope that recent funds from the World Bank for climate projects could prompt other global climate cash investments. "We can still work directly with the community to make this happen," she said. Ms. Wignaraja also visited Herat province, the epicentre of last October's earthquakes. "Just driving through villages and talking to villagers, there is a huge contrast," she said, noting that there are whole villages still living in tents without access to water and those that are starting to build permanent structures. "For me the bottom line is that we have to let household economies and local economies pick back up. People do not want to live in tents, they cannot survive the sandstorms in tents," she added. - APP

Joe Biden draws election battle lines in fiery speech

WASHINGTON: President Joe Biden delivered a fiery State of the Union address on Thursday, taking repeated swipes at Donald Trump and covering the broad themes of his re-election campaign. Mr Biden used the term "my predecessor" to refer to Mr Trump 13 times in a speech that lasted more than an hour. He accused his likely election opponent of "bowing down" to Russia and criticised him over the Capitol riot. Mr Biden also covered immigration, abortion, the economy and Gaza. The atmosphere in the House chamber was raucous at times, with loud cheering from Democrats and heckling from some Republicans. It was a spectacle more typical of a political convention than a State of the Union address - a constitutionally mandated report that is usually heavy on pageantry and policy. But this is an election year and the stakes for Mr Biden were high. He was feisty and confrontational as he sought to draw the battle lines for his nascent campaign. Unsurprisingly, many of his barbs were aimed at Mr Trump given he is almost certain to be his opponent in November's general election. "My predecessor failed the most basic duty any president owes the American people - the duty to care," he said in reference to Mr Trump's handling of the Covid pandemic. "That is unforgivable." He criticised Mr Trump for his recent comments about Russia and Nato, and said that he sought to "bury the truth" about the 6 January 2021 attack on the US Capitol. He blamed him for the Supreme Court decision to overturn the Roe v Wade ruling which guaranteed abortion rights and for blocking bipartisan immigration reforms. Mr Trump, meanwhile, had promised to react in real time to the speech on his Truth Social platform. "Biden is on the run from his record and lying like crazy to try to escape accountability for the horrific devastation he and his party have created," he wrote. - Agencies

Int'l Women's Day Gaza remembers 8,900 women killed by Israel

The Palestinian Health Ministry in Gaza reported on Friday that 30,878 Palestinians have been killed and 72,402 wounded by the Israeli occupation as genocide enters its 154th day

NEWS DESK

GAZA: The Government Media Office (GMO) revealed that Israel's genocidal aggression on Gaza has claimed the lives of 8,900 Palestinian women and left over 23,000 others wounded, with 2,100 still unaccounted for. The GMO said in a statement on Friday, "While the world celebrates International Women's Day on March 8, Palestinian women continue to pay a heavy price for freedom and dignity."

Describing Israel's killings of Palestinian women as brutal, the statement criticized the international community for its passivity vis-à-vis such violations. The Office highlighted that Israel's war has displaced over half a million Palestinian women, subjecting them to extreme hardships and depriving them of basic necessities like food and medicine. According to the statement, approximately 60,000 pregnant women are enduring difficult circumstances due to lack of access to essential healthcare and medical supplies. The Office added that hundreds of them "have lost their sons, newborns, or unborn children due to bombing, fear, and Israeli killing." The statement also addressed the plight of female Palestinian detainees, condemning the physical and psychological torture they endure. The GMO praised the "steadfastness" of the Palestinian women, emphasizing their need to defend their rights and life requirements rather than face killing, shooting, detention, displacement, and migration, as it claimed the Israeli occupation army has been doing for over five continuous months. The Office held the United States, the international community, and all relevant international organizations "fully responsible" for the genocide in Gaza and the harsh conditions imposed on Palestinian women there, criticizing both those who participated in the war and those who remained silent on Israeli crimes. The statement urged "all the countries of the free world and the international community" to work toward ending the Israeli occupation and taking action to save Palestinian women from ongoing Israeli crimes, "including killing, shooting, arresting, humiliating, torturing, and forcing them to leave their homes, cities, and residential areas."

NEPALI ARMY DAY



ISLAMABAD: Chief Guest Lt. General Inam Haider Chairman National Disaster Management Authority, Ambassador of Nepal Tapas Adhikari, Defence Attache Col Bhes Bahadur and others cutting cake to celebrate the Nepali Army Day. - DNA

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