



Islamabad POST

Tuesday, March 12, 2024

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Murphy wins best actor Oscar for Oppenheimer

Detailed News On Page-06

Activist Shaun King converted to Islam

Detailed News On Page-07



Carey steers Australia to whitewash NZ

Detailed News On Page-06



During the month of Ramazan Shehbaz directs uninterrupted gas, power supply

He said that the government was not meant for doing businesses rather its responsibility was to extend all kind of facilities

ANSAR M BHATTI / DNA

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Monday directed for ensuring uninterrupted gas and power supply to the consumers during the holy month of Ramazan. He also directed for provision of every possible facilities to the private sector, local and foreign investors in the exploration of gas and oil, refining and distribution of these natural resources. The prime minister chaired a high level meeting on petroleum sector, PM Office Media Wing said in a press release. The meeting was attended by Senators Ishaq Dar and Dr Musadik Malik, Sheza Fatima Khawaja, Ahad Khan Cheema, Jahanzeb Khan, Muhammad Aurangzeb, Ali Pervaiz Malik and relevant senior officers. Addressing the participants, he said that the government was not meant for doing businesses rather its responsibility was to extend all kind of facilities to the private sector and ensure protection of the rights of the consumers especially the vulnerable segments of the society. He also asked for taking steps for promotion of global investment in exploration of Tight Gas and undersea oil and gas reserves, regretting that Pakistan's maritime area was huge in size when compared with Balochistan province but no steps were taken to explore its hidden natural resources. He stressed upon exploration of undersea natural resources including oil and gas reserves and their full utilization was among the top priorities of the government. Emphasising to enhance the petroleum refining capacity of the country, he sought the formulation of a comprehensive strategy to do away with the circular debt of oil and gas sectors and work out a durable solution to the issue. He also instructed to reduce the gas

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Ramadan starts in Pakistan

Ramadan crescent was first spotted in Lahore followed by Peshawar

SHAMIM SHAHID

PESHAWAR: The Ramadan moon has been sighted in Pakistan and the first Roza will be observed across the country today (Tuesday), the Central Ruet-e-Hilal Committee announced on Monday evening. Moon sighting committee chairman Maulana Abdul Khahir Azad made the official announcement following a meeting in Peshawar. The clerics from all schools of thought attended the huddle to ascertain the beginning of the ninth Islamic month. The Ramadan moon was sighted in Lahore and Peshawar before the official announcement. The moon sighting body had requested all the Pakistanis for assistance in this regard with wishes that the holy month begins across the country on the same day. Meanwhile, meetings of other zonal and district Ruet-e-Hilal committees were held simultaneously at their respective places on Shaban 29 after Asr prayers, for the Ramadan moon sighting of Hijri year 1445. The holy month, which is observed with religious

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ISLAMABAD: Nawaf bin Saeed Ahmad Al-Malkiy, Ambassador of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to Pakistan calls on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif. - DNA

Saudi envoy calls on PM Shehbaz

Air Chief calls on Prime Minister Shehbaz

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Nawaf bin Saeed Ahmad Al-Malkiy, Ambassador of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to Pakistan, called on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif earlier today. The Prime Minister thanked the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, His Majesty King Salman bin Abdul Aziz, and His Royal Highness Crown Prince Muhammad bin Salman, for their kind wishes on his re-election as Prime Minister. Given the special fraternal relationship

Continued on Page 06

Canadian envoy meets CM Maryam warns of strict action against 'agitators'

Maryam Nawaz said law would come into action if there was a threat of damaging public property or harming the people

ABID RAZA

LAHORE: Those trying to destabilise the country under the garb of politics and democracy will not get any lenient treatment, said Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz - a day after the police crackdown on the SIC [PTI] leaders and activists who staged protests against alleged rigging in the Feb 8 polls. Maryam said law would come into action if there was a threat of damaging public property or harming the people, when a reporter asked a question on the subject during an informal and short interaction. "It isn't political victimisation", the chief minister stressed and added that one had to act like a responsible citizen in case of protest. Maryam said, "If you think that [you] will use your democratic right to spread

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JUI-F decides to launch 'protest movement'

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Jamiat-e-Ulema Islam-Fazl (JUI-F), a former allied party in Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM), decided to launch a protest movement against the newly-formed federal government as the party accused the 2024 general elections of being 'rigged'. Sources told that Maulana Fazlur Rehman-led JUI-F would stage public gatherings in Sindh, Balochistan and

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Briefs

Justice Afghan takes oath as SC judge

Former president Alvi had approved Justice Afghan's appointment

ADIL SHAHEEN

ISLAMABAD: Justice Naeem Akhtar Afghan Monday was sworn in as a Supreme Court judge in the oath-taking ceremony administered by CJP Qazi Faez Isa in the apex court in Islamabad. The development comes after former president Arif Alvi last week, had approved the appointment of Justice Afghan, who was serving as Balochistan High Court chief justice, to the country's top court under Article 175(A) of the Constitution. Meanwhile, Justice Muhammad Hashim Khan Kakar is poised to become acting chief justice of the BHC, under Article 196 of the Constitution following Alvi's approval.

Govt plans series of amendments

PML-N senator highlights immediate priority of seeking assistance from IMF as first step

DNA

ISLAMABAD: PML-N Senator Irfan Siddiqui has revealed plans for a series of constitutional amendments once the coalition government, led by his party, comes into power. In a special conversation with a private news channel, Senator Siddiqui outlined key changes, including the abolition of the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) and caretaker governments through constitutional amendments. Senator Siddiqui emphasized the importance of protecting the local government system and restoring articles 62 and 63 to their original form.

Islamophobia march on 15

Omar demands restoration of social media sites

They are blocking social media even today. We demand that social media sites be restored, says Omar Ayub

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leader Omar Ayub Khan on Monday called on the authorities concerned to restore the social media sites in the country. "They are blocking social media even today. We demand that the social media sites should be restored," said the PTI leader while speaking to media persons in Islamabad. X, formerly Twitter, has remained largely restricted in Pakistan since February 17 with people accessing the popular site using a VPN. Speaking to a local media channel, former caretaker information minister Murtaza Solangi said that the interim government had nothing to do with the X shutdown in Pakistan. "This fascist government has completely lost its mind. Different social media platforms like Facebook, X, and Instagram are being blocked and their speed has also been slowed," said Omar. He said that the sites were being blocked so that the citizens were unable to get their hands on "right and fast information". "We strongly condemn

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Senate polls to be held on April 2

Lawmakers will elect senators on vacant seats in upper house of parliament

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: In order to fill 48 vacant seats, the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) Monday announced holding the Senate elections on April 2. Fifty-two seats in the upper house of parliament will fall vacant after the expiration of the 6-year term of the incumbent Senators on Tuesday. The elections, however, would be held to elect 48 senators as 4 reserved seats for the erstwhile Federally Administered Tribal Areas (Fata) had been abolished after the 25th Constitutional amendment. The electoral watchdog

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Tajik President felicitates President Asif Ali Zardari



STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: President of Tajikistan, Mr Emomali Rahmon, made a telephone call to President Asif Ali Zardari and extended his warmest felicitations to him on becoming the President of Pakistan. Both the Presidents reiterated their desire to further strengthen bilateral cooperation in the areas of mutual interest. Talking to his Tajik counterpart, President Asif Ali Zardari stated that Pakistan highly valued its ties with the brotherly

Continued on Page 06

PM Shehbaz's 19-member federal cabinet sworn in

Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif once again requested President Asif Zardari to include the Pakistan Peoples Party in the cabinet in the second phase



ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari administering oath of office to members of Federal Cabinet at Aiwan-e-Sadr. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif was also present on the occasion. - DNA

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari on Monday administered the oath to a 19-member federal cabinet of newly elected Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif. Earlier, PM Shehbaz had sent a summary to President Zardari to appoint the cabinet, comprising 18 federal ministers and a minister of state. The PML-N's main ally, the PPP, has refused to become part of the federal cabinet. The oath-taking ceremony took place at the President House in Islamabad. The national anthem was played to inaugurate the ceremony, following which the Holy Quran was recited. According to a summary sent by the premier to President Zardari

Continued on Page 06

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National Days and Armed Forces Days

MARCH

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

Hotels & Restaurants



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



Turkish Airlines.....8494949



Emergency

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



Enquiry

Edhi Ambulance.....115
PIA Flight Info.....114
PIA Cargo.....9280979
Railway Inquiry.....117
Railway Exchange 9270831-5
WASA Rawalpindi.5555489
CAA.....9281092



Hospitals

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



Departments

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

Water Tank

Islamabad.....0321-5744480



ISLAMABAD: Chief of Air Staff, Air Chief Marhsal Zaheed Ahmed Babar Sidhu calls on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif.—DNA

Federal Ombudsman disposes of 193,030 complaints in 2023

During the outgoing year 2023, this office received and processed a record number of complaints which stood at 194,106 that is 18% higher than the preceding years

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Federal Ombudsman office (Wafaqi Mohtasib Secretariat) has disposed of 193,030 complaints, which is 22 percent higher than the previous year. Briefing the delegation of Associated Press of Pakistan's (APP) Youth Media Training Program (YMTP), Senior Advisor, Wafaqi Mohtasib Secretariat, Moiz Bokhari said that during the outgoing year 2023, this office received and processed a record number of complaints which stood at 194,106 that is 18% higher than the preceding years. He said that a system of strict monitoring, follow up and verification of the implementation of each

and every decision was in place and an impressive implementation rate of 85.4% was recorded in 2023, adding that 88% complaints were disposed of within the prescribed limit of 60 days. The senior advisor informed the delegation that the officers of the Wafaqi Mohtasib Office were dispensing justice to the people at their doorsteps. Our Investigation Officers visited the remote and far off areas of the country and decided 3149 cases, which spared the complainants from taking the trouble of visiting the Wafaqi Mohtasib office at the headquarters or the major cities of the country, he added. Dilating on the international linkages of this office, the senior advisor observed that the of-

fice of the Wafaqi Mohtasib was an active member of the International Ombudsman's Institute (IOI) the OIC Ombudsman Association (AOA) (OICOA) and the Asian Ombudsman Association.

He said that the Wafaqi Mohtasib was re-elected unopposed as President of the AOA by the General Assembly of the Asian Ombudsman Association, which was a 47-member strong professional body of Ombudsmen of the Asian Region representing more than two third of the world population, which was indeed a great honour for the country. He said that the Wafaqi Mohtasib Secretariat was often referred to as the poor man's court since it strives to bring administrative justice to the people especially to those belonging to the marginal-

ized and deprived segments of the population. He said that owing to the hard work and dedication of our officers and by employing instruments like the Khuli Katcharies and the Informal Resolution of Disputes (IRD) programmes, this office had been able to redress large number of public complaints, thereby providing relief to a sizeable segment of the people in a hassle-free manner. It was started in April 2022 in some offices but latter extended to other as well in view of its massive success in speedy resolution of public problems. He said that there was a great deal of improvement in redressing the public complaints which are lately exhibiting an upward trend due to increase in population and other factors. He elaborated that during the year 2022 this

office received 164,174 complaints, which swelled to 194,099 in 2023 which is, a reflection of the public trust and confidence in this office. He particularly referred to the steps taken for resolution of the problems and welfare of the Overseas Pakistanis, pensioners and prisoners specially the women and juvenile prisoners in jails, which resulted in considerably improving their lot. He informed that now there were 18 Regional Offices and four Complaints Collection Centers, covering nearly the entire length of the country. Advisor (Appraisal) Wafaqi Mohtasib Secretariat Shahid Hamayun, Advisor Media Inam Ul Haq Javed, Registrar Muhammad Saqib Khan and Director General Admin Muhammad Safdar also briefed the delegation.

Asfandiyar Wali's wife passes away

ISLAMABAD: Awami National Party (ANP) President Asfandiyar Wali Khan's wife passed away in Peshawar, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on Monday. According to private news channel, She was the mother of ANP's provincial president Aimal Wali Khan. Her funeral prayer time will be confirmed later. She will be buried in Wali Bagh, Charsadda.—APP

Efforts on to improve National Planning Framework

ISLAMABAD: Chairman Planning Commission, Muhammad Jehanzaib Khan said here Monday that efforts were afoot to improve National Planning Framework with consensus through consultation with provinces and other stakeholders and present it to the National Economic Council to make it part of National Framework. He was speaking at the inaugural ceremony of the National Planning Framework workshop organized by Ministry of Planning, Development and Special Initiatives. It is pertinent to mention that the National Planning Framework is to define national objectives for planning and development at the national level and to ensure that developmental policies and projects are aligned with the planning framework. Khan said it was the responsibility of the government to ensure public welfare and prosperity, adding there was need to clearly define federal and provincial jurisdictions about sectors and areas for development. He further emphasized that there was need to change the mindset that provincial governments lack human capacity and financial resources, stating that provinces were rich in human, natural, and financial resources.—APP

Agriculture infrastructure handover ceremony held

ISLAMABAD: The USAID's Economic Recovery and Development Activity (USAID-ERDA) on Monday formally handed over nine completed agriculture infrastructure schemes to the farming communities of tehsil Safi and Ambar, District Mohmand in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province. The ceremony was attended by representatives from USAID-ERDA, the local government, and community members. These interventions irrigating 200 acres of barren land in tehsil Ambar and Safi of Mohmand District, will significantly improve the agricultural productivity of the region. USAID-ERDA provided vegetable and maize seeds to the farmers community, further supporting the program's goal of enhancing agricultural productivity. On this occasion, Shakil Ahmad,

Additional Deputy Commissioner, District Mohmand said, the Government of Pakistan deeply appreciates the continued support of USAID-ERDA in developing our communities. These infrastructure projects will have a lasting positive impact on the lives of the farmers in Mohmand District. This project is a game-changer for our community, he said. He said, the improved watercourses and storage tanks will allow us to cultivate our land more efficiently and increase our yields. Malik Sahib Khan, Farmer, Tehsil Ambar, District Mohmand said, we are grateful to USAID-ERDA for their support. "USAID-ERDA is committed to working with local communities to improve their livelihoods and build resilience. We are confident that these projects will empower the

farmers of Mohmand District and contribute to the long-term development of the region. Engr. Behram Jan, Water Management Specialist, USAID-ERDA said. Most of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's population, including those in the Newly Merged Districts (NMDs), rely on agriculture and natural resources for their livelihoods. However, these sectors face challenges due to inadequate water supply, inefficient water management and poor resource utilization. In response to these challenges, USAID-ERDA has been actively working in Mohmand, Khyber, Buner, Kohat, Bajaur, Orakzai and Dera Ismail Khan Districts to improve water management infrastructure and promote sustainable agricultural practices.—Agencies

NDMA to host first-ever Int'l expo on disaster risk reduction 2024

ISLAMABAD: In a proactive approach to disaster management, National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) is all set to organize first-ever Pakistan's International Expo on Disaster Risk Reduction (PIEDRR) 2024, which is scheduled to be held on April 23 to 25, here at the Pak China Friendship Center. Capitalizing on success of the previous year's expo, Pakistan Expo on Disaster Risk Reduction,

this year PIEDRR 2024 is dedicated to fostering dialogue, collaboration, and the exchange of knowledge to create safer, more resilient societies capable of withstanding global disasters, a news release said issued here on Monday.—APP

Al-Shifa Trust treated 30 mn people in three decades

DNA

ISLAMABAD: President Al-Shifa Trust (AST) Eye Hospital Maj. Gen. (Retd) Rehmat Khan on Monday said that diabetes is becoming more and more common in Pakistan, which is one of the primary reasons for vision problems. Recent reports suggest that every fourth person in the country has diabetes, and 25 percent of them do not know they have the problem, which results in severe eye problems, he said. Gen. (Retd) Rehmat Khan said that diabetic retinopathy, a condition where the blood vessels in the eye's retina are harmed, is on the rise. Talking to the media, he said that diabetic retinopathy is the most typical reason for vision problems. Finally, losing one's sight. Every day, hundreds of people in Pakistan lose their vision also due to avoidable conditions like cataracts,



he added. He said that over 2.6 million individuals suffer from preventable visual impairments, and cataracts are a significant contributor to preventable blindness in those aged 50 and above. About 42 percent of school-age children suffer from refractive error-related disorders. Since the founding of Al-Shifa Trust, 30 million people have received treatment, and 90,000 surgeries have been completed. Almost one million OPD patients are received in a month, and ten thousand surgeries are performed monthly at the trust's hospitals in Rawalpindi, Chakwal, Kohat, Muzaffarabad, and Sukkar. He said that

the scope of services would increase with the completion of the under-construction hospital at Gilgit-Baltistan and the new block at Chakwal Hospital. Together with the Eye Bank, Light House, Research Center, Eye Cancer Center, Glaucoma, Retina, and Paediatric Referral Services departments, AST runs the most cutting-edge children's eye hospital in Asia. At its six facilities, AST offers all services to 80 percent of patients free of charge. It also manages the most extensive outreach program, setting up free eye camps nationwide, particularly in remote places. According to him, 70 percent of the Rs 4 billion in annual costs are funded by donations. The threat of blindness has gotten out of control because of ignorance and a lack of district-level services. With the population now over 250 million, a new study is also required to evaluate the seriousness of the issue.

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Briefs

Death anniversary of actress Tahira Wasti

ISLAMABAD: The 12th death anniversary of legendary television actress Tahira Wasti was being observed on Monday (today). Born in 1944 at Sargodha, Tahira Wasti started her career with writing articles in a magazine at the age of 16. She started her TV career as an actress from a PTV drama "Jaib Katra" in 1968. Tahira Wasti played leading roles in dramas like "Afshan", Shaheen, Aakhri Chatan, Kashkol, Jaangloos and Daldal. She died on this day in 2012 in Karachi. —APP

All housing projects to be completed on time

ISLAMABAD: All housing projects for registered workers in the industrial sector would be completed in stipulated time periods across the country with all required facilities. An official source told APP, that a mega project of 2056 residential flats in Peshawar for industrial workers had been completed and handed over to the workers since last year. The sources said that the price of each flat was Rs 2.6 million, out of which a Rs 300,000 subsidy would be provided by the government and the remaining amount would be paid by the beneficiaries through easy installments. A three percent quota has been allocated for widows and two percent for persons with disabilities. Those working in industries for three years are eligible for flats to be awarded on an ownership basis through a lucky draw in a transparent manner. It is the mega housing project of the KP Government, completed in line with the vision of the federal government to provide affordable and low-cost housing facilities for people. The Labor Complex, having these residential flats, is equipped with all facilities, including drinking water, roads, mosques, schools, parks, grounds, electricity, and gas. Four large tube wells and overhead tanks have been constructed for uninterrupted water supply to its inhabitants.

CDA allots 157 govt residences

ISLAMABAD: The management of the Capital Development Authority (CDA) has allotted 157 Government residences of different categories to officers and other employees of authority. The residences were allotted on the basis of seniority on General Waiting List. However, the allocation of residences was made through balloting. In all 57 houses were allotted 8n A category, 38 houses 8n B category 25 in C category, 17 in D category while 20 houses were allotted in D category in sectors G-6, G-7, G-8, G-9, G-10, G-11 and F-6. The CDA Chairman on the occasion said that welfare of employees would remain management's top priority.

COMSTECH, LRBT organize cataract eye camp for needy

The objective was to provide essential eye care services to the marginalized segments of society, raise awareness about eye health and restore vision by conducting cataract surgeries enabling individuals to regain their sight

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: The Committee on Scientific and Technological Cooperation (COMSTECH), in partnership with the Layton Rahmatulla Benevolent Trust (LRBT) and the local community, has successfully completed a 12-day free Eye Camp in the remote area of District Muzaffar Garh at Basti Merani, Mori Saharo, Tehsil Ali Pur.

The objective was to provide essential eye care services to the marginalized segments of society, raise awareness about eye health and restore vision by conducting cataract surgeries enabling individuals to regain their sight. The committed medical team from LRBT attended to over 1,000 patients,



providing them with free medicines and eyeglasses. Additionally, 188 individuals were identified for further investigation and cataract surgery. Selected patients were transported

from the remote locations to the LRBT Secondary Hospital in Larr, Multan. Where, they received high-quality cataract surgeries, resulting in improved

vision and enhanced quality of life. A total of 169 persons benefited from these surgical interventions. All expenses related to the eye camp, including medicines,

eyeglasses, and transportation of patients from their villages, were fully covered by COMSTECH. COMSTECH remains steadfast in its commitment to leveraging science and technology for the betterment of healthcare, education, food security, and environmental protection at the grassroots level. "We are proud to have played a role in restoring sight and improving the lives of those who needed it the most," said Prof. Dr. M. Iqbal Choudhary, Coordinator General COMSTECH. He further mentioned that this collaborative effort exemplifies the positive impact that can be achieved through partnerships and extended his gratitude to the leadership of LRBT and its team of experts.

New govt asked to improve investment climate

Pakistan's external payments demand massive financing that goes above the present SBA. Debt sustainability is highly risky, and the net debt stock is anticipated to be high at 70% of GDP

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Brigadier (ret'd) Aslam Khan, Chairman of Pakistan Economy Watch (PEW), said on Monday that the new government should try to improve the country's investment climate. He said that high electricity and gas tariffs and record interest rates discourage local and foreign investors. Aslam Khan said that business people are not ready to invest in Pakistan, which has the most expensive electricity and gas and interest rates ranging from 23 to 25 percent. He said that international banks are refusing to lend to those planning to invest in Pakistan and encouraging them to invest in India and Bangladesh on soft terms, which is unfortunate. He said economic affairs cannot be conducted as before, and extravagant expenditures cannot be made. The time has come to decide on merit; therefore, politicians should be kept away from the Ministry of

Finance, and the Planning Commission should not be put at the mercy of a politician. Pakistan lacks funds; therefore, he demanded that the practice of creating new institutions be stopped.

Aslam Khan said that the National Highway Authority was created because some influential people were obsessed with building roads by taking huge loans. They did not want any interference from the Planning Commission or other institutions; therefore, a new institution was created. The deficit of the NHA has exceeded twelve hundred billion rupees, so these failed institutions should be closed down.

He said the average growth estimate for 2024 is two percent, presenting a weak economic rebound. The threat of inflation is quite natural and is predicted to remain higher than 20 percent. The rate of unemployment and poverty has increased, and the trade deficit is putting pressure on reserves. Risks connected to subpar investment, low exports,

low productivity, and a crisis in the energy sector hinder sustained recovery. Suppose the tax system's shortcomings are fixed. In that case, it will be easier for the government to raise the necessary funds for development expenditures.

Pakistan's external payments demand massive financing that goes above the present SBA. Debt sustainability is highly risky, and the net debt stock is anticipated to be high at 70% of GDP.

He said that in the grim economic situation, some political actors have conspired to bring under their control an institution that earns hundreds of billions of rupees annually, which should be reversed; otherwise, that institution will also be destroyed due to corruption. He said that just as chartered democracy has nothing to do with democracy, the chartered economy cannot improve the economy because investors decide by looking at ground realities instead of fancy words.

New cabinet will be the ideal balance of knowledge

ISLAMABAD: Chairman of National Business Group Pakistan, President Pakistan Businessmen and Intellectuals Forum, All Karachi Industrial Alliance, and former provincial minister Mian Zahid Hussain said on Monday that the new Federal Cabinet would be the best combination of understanding, competence, and experience.

He said Dr. Gohar Ijaz, Aurangzeb Khan, and Mohsin Naqvi's experience and abilities should be fully utilized in the new federal cabinet. Mian Zahid Hussain said that immediate progress should be made towards a new agreement with the IMF and that fundamental economic reforms should be initiated. Talking to the business community, the veteran business leader said that Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's government will resolve long-delayed matters and will be taken forward rapidly, in which the role of President Asif Ali Zardari and the People's Party will be laudable.

The business leader added that the presence of Asif Ali Zardari in the presidency would be a boon for the system. Specific terms of the agreement with the IMF need to be fully implemented and the lender's leniency is appreciable because the situation is improving because of it.—APP

A Solar inks MoUs on module supply in Pakistan

ISLAMABAD: China's leading photovoltaic supplier, JA Solar, signed three memorandums of understanding (MoUs) with Garibsons, SM Solar, and Wasiq Traders in Pakistan. According to Gwadar Pro on Monday JA Solar will collaborate with these local companies to promote Pakistan's green and low-carbon energy transformation. According to the agreement reached during Solar Pakistan 2024, JA Solar will provide Garibsons and SM Solar with 200 MW PV modules to promote the use of renewable energy, reduce dependence on traditional energy sources, and contribute to the green and sustainable development of energy in those companies. Wasiq Traders is a trading company and importer of PV modules and inverters, with PV module imports ranking first in Pakistan. The company plays an important role in trading various commodities and has established an extensive business network with international suppliers and customers. As JA Solar's distributor in Pakistan, it will introduce JA's products to local market to promote the development of local PV industry. JA has officially entered the n-type product market since the release of its first n-type module product in 2022. To meet the market demand for high-efficiency n-type products, JA Solar launched its n-type high-efficiency DeepBlue 4.0 Pro module series in 2023, based on 182mm*199mm rectangular wafers. The 2465mm*1134mm (72-cell) flagship module has a power output of up to 635W with 22.8% efficiency, making it the highest power product among the current 182 series modules on the market. The n-type flagship modules feature high power generation, high efficiency, and high reliability. In terms of reliability, the DeepBlue 4.0 Pro series has been fully recognized by international authorities in a variety of application scenarios. It features additional advantages, including resistance to salt spray, ultraviolet radiation, humidity, and hotspots, resulting in enhanced reliability and resistance to harsh weather conditions. It can meet the needs of the Pakistani market for high-performance photovoltaic products.—APP

ANF recovers 991 kg drugs in 12 operations

RAWALPINDI: The Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) while conducting 12 operations across the country managed to recover 991 kg drugs and arrested 10 accused, said an ANF official here on Monday.

He informed that 1914 intoxicated tablets and capsules were recovered from the possession of two suspects arrested at Karachi Airport. 4.8 kg heroin was recovered from a parcel booked for UK at Lahore Airport and two accused were arrested. 4 kg Ice was recovered from a passenger going to Doha at Peshawar Airport. 600 grams weed was recovered from a parcel sent from UK at a courier office in Multan. 600 grams heroin was recovered from a passenger going to Doha at Lahore Airport. In another operation at Lahore Airport, 92 heroin-filled capsules were recovered from a Jeddah-bound passenger. 270 kg heroin and 238 kg morphine were recovered from Chaman area and 350 kg hashish was recovered from an area near Chaman Road Quetta. 100 kg opium was recovered from Nokundi Chagai and 21 kg hashish was recovered from South Asia Pakistan Terminal Karachi. In 11th operation, 2.4 kg hashish was recovered from two suspects netted near Expresses Highway, Islamabad. In 12th operation, 250 grams hashish was recovered from an accused rounded up in Haripur. Cases under the Anti-Narcotics Act have been registered against the arrested accused and further investigations are under process.—APP

Yousuf Dehelvi remembered

ISLAMABAD: The 47th death anniversary of the renowned Pakistani Calligrapher Muhammad Yousuf Dehelvi was observed on Monday. Born in Delhi in 1894, the inventor of Dehlavi style, Yousuf Dehelvi carved coins and currency notes of Pakistan after independence and also created monogram of Radio Pakistan with Quranic verse. He is also recipient of the honor of calligraphy for the Ghilaf-e-Kaaba (Kiswah). The calligraphy of the Qur'anic verse Wa Qulu Lin-nasi husna on the monogram of Radio Pakistan is also his work. He died on this day in 1977 in a road accident in Karachi.—APP

Pakistan's cutlery export to China surged 25% in 2023

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The significant increase in Pakistan's export of cutlery and base metal tools to China by 25% in 2023 highlights the positive trade relations between the two countries. Sources from Ministry of Commerce told CEN that Pakistan's exports of tools and cutlery of base metal to China crossed \$10 million during 2023, an increase of 25%. "Pakistan exported pliers, pincers, tweezers & similar tools (commodity code 82032000) worth \$3.57

million to China in 2023, whereas scissors, tailors' shears & similar shears, & blades (commodity code 82130000) crossed \$2.39 million in 2023", he added. "In Wazirabad, the bustling markets are teeming with workshops and storefronts, where artisans diligently ply their trade, preserving age-old techniques while embracing modern innovation. It is a testament to the resilience and ingenuity of its people. The city's craftsmanship has garnered global acclaim, with its products sought after by connoisseurs and collectors

worldwide", he stated. Faisal Shahzad, affiliated with a cutlery business in Wazirabad said that the industry not only provides employment opportunities but also serves as a source of pride for the local community. "Wazirabad stands as a shining beacon of craftsmanship and tradition in Pakistan, a testament to the enduring legacy of its artisans and their dedication to perfection in every piece they create. If we request the Chinese to invest and shift their related industries here, our export could be much bigger than.

Gwadar Port maintenance dredging project completed

DNA

ISLAMABAD: () Gwadar Port Maintenance Dredging Navigation Channel project was completed,

ensuring a depth of 14 meters at the navigational channel of Gwadar Port. Now it is enough to accommodate large ships of more than 50,000 tons and this will further enhance

the throughput capacity of Gwadar Port. In this regard a Completion Ceremony for Maintenance Dredging Navigation Channel project was held at Gwadar Port on 8th March. The project

was officially started on April 7, 2023. "The desilting process came into action to restore the original depth of navigational channel at Gwadar Port offering heavyweight ships to float well. It will ensure seamless movement of all types of vessels and will facilitate them to dock at ease without any hiccup," GPA Desilting Project Director Dawood Baloch told Gwadar Pro. "As per plan, we reclaimed 14 meters of natural and original operational depth at Gwadar Port at a cost of Rs 4.7 billion," another GPA official said. He expressed satisfaction on the pace of operation. China Overseas Port Holding Company (COPHC) official said that undoubtedly, no desilting activity was taken place in the last 7 years. Last Gwadar Port desilting operation was executed in 2015.






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Chinese aims to boost strategic capabilities

THE Chinese military has vowed to implement President Xi Jinping's call to enhance strategic capabilities in emerging areas, with military lawmakers and experts stressing the importance of new quality productive forces including artificial intelligence (AI), unmanned technologies, aerospace and cyberspace in modern warfare. Xi, also general secretary of the Communist Party of China Central Committee and chairman of the Central Military Commission, on Thursday called on China's armed forces to forge a stronger sense of mission, deepen reform and promote innovation to comprehensively enhance strategic capabilities in emerging areas. He made the remarks while attending a plenary meeting of the delegation of the People's Liberation Army (PLA) and the People's Armed Police Force (PAP) at the second session of the 14th National People's Congress, or China's national legislature, the Xinhua News Agency reported on the day. Xi said China's drive to accelerate the development of new quality productive forces has provided rare opportunities for the development of strategic capabilities in emerging areas. He called for enabling new quality productive forces and new quality combat capabilities to effectively integrate with and boost each other. Xi urged efforts to coordinate maritime military preparedness, maritime rights and interests protection, and marine economy development. He called for optimizing the aerospace layout to promote China's aerospace system development, and for building a cyberspace defense system to enhance the ability to safeguard national cybersecurity. Six lawmakers from the Chinese military spoke at the meeting on topics ranging from defense capabilities in cyberspace and the application of AI to the development and utilization of unmanned combat capabilities. After the meeting, lawmakers and political advisors from the PLA and the PAP said that technology must be firmly endorsed as the core combat capability to comprehensively enhance strategic capabilities in emerging areas, so the Chinese military should push forward technology innovations and applications and promote the effective supply of technologies toward new quality combat capabilities, the PLA Daily reported on Sunday. Strategic capabilities in emerging areas are a focal point in major power competition, a vantage point in high-end warfare, and an acting point in enhancing new quality combat capabilities, Han Shengyan, a military lawmaker, was quoted as saying by the PLA Daily. Citing military lawmaker Hao Jingwen, the PLA Daily report said that drone swarm technologies in air, sea and land have been developed and successively deployed in regional conflicts, so China needs to realize important roles emerging areas and new quality combat capabilities could play in modern warfare, be aware of their development trends, plan battlefield applications of advanced technologies in advance, and conduct active research in fields such as big data, the Internet of Things and AI, so as to be able to win future warfare. Lü Yuncheng, another military lawmaker, said that intelligentized unmanned combat systems have been widely deployed in actual combat in recent regional wars and military operations around the globe.

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US' hollow response to Gaza starving

PALESTINIANS in Gaza must be confused. Most know that it is American bombs that Israeli forces have used to pulverize nearly every square centimeter of their besieged enclave. American food parcels are now landing on them too. Death or dinner; bombs or bread. Most Palestinians in Gaza probably have not watched or read "The Hunger Games," but the feeling that their lives are being toyed with is strong. Emphasizing the absurd lethal lottery of the aid drops, five Palestinians were killed and 10 injured when one pallet crashed into them after its parachute failed to open. The international community has violated so many of the cardinal principles of international law and aid delivery that trashing the "do no harm" principle seems barely worth a mention in this context, as 23 Palestinians have thus far died from starvation and dehydration. Correction: 23 Palestinians have been starved and dehydrated to death. In Gaza, there are few large, clear drop zones, such as those used in Syria for example. The parachutes can land on dangerous, unsafe, semi-destroyed buildings. Winds, not least in the upper atmosphere, can carry them off course, which is why some pallets have landed in the Mediterranean. There are no forces to receive and secure the aid packages, let alone ensure that they get to the most needy. In fact, the fittest and strongest are most likely to get there first, not the ones dying of starvation. It becomes a dangerous scrum, as those surviving on grass and animal feed fight for every last morsel. Yes, the current American leadership has developed a bizarrely last-minute aversion to seeing Palestinian babies and others dying of starvation. It does not look good, but then again nor did the carpet-bombing of much of Gaza. This conscience was barely pricked when schools, hospitals, mosques, churches and homes crumpled under the 900-kg bunker busting bombs the US had supplied. It is one thing for local powers like Jordan and Egypt to arrange airdrops. These states can hardly push Israel into a change of behavior. They understandably wanted to do something. But the US is a global superpower. Israel depends on it for military aid, economic partnership and diplomatic backing and shielding at the UN. An American president has a thicket of powerful levers he could deploy should he wish. Biden has yet to do so, although reports do indicate plans are afoot to delay future transfers of American weaponry to Israel. For the US to resort to aid drops when it could instruct Israel to open the land borders and allow full access for trucks is extraordinary. Rather than build a new port in Gaza, why did the US not insist that Israel's port of Ashdod be used? Let us be clear. The fastest and most efficient way to get lifesaving aid to a population that is starving is via trucks, not air. The maritime route will take time to get up and running, though in the long run there will be benefits of Gaza having a port, providing Israel does not bomb it. As aid agency Doctors Without Borders made clear, this is all a "distraction." The US could also have reminded Israel that, as the occupying power, it has legal responsibility for the welfare of the population under occupation. It is Israel that should be supplying that aid, not US taxpayer.

Izmir's model

Dr M Ali Hamza



Four, Izmir's rich cultural heritage is preserved through the restoration of historic landmarks; ancient Agora, Kadifekale Castle, Clock Tower etc., and the promotion of cultural tourism. Pakistan can leverage its own cultural heritage to stimulate economic growth while preserving its identity. Revitalizing historic sites, promoting cultural events, and integrating heritage preservation into urban development plans can foster a sense of pride and belonging among citizens. Five, Izmir has implemented various green initiatives, including urban parks, bicycle lanes, and waste management programs, to promote environmental sustainability

IN the realm of urban development, developed countries and cities often serve as laboratories, offering valuable lessons to others facing similar challenges. Izmir, Turkey's third-largest city, stands as a prime example of successful urban transformation and sustainable development. Both Izmir and Pakistani cities face rapid urbanization, traffic congestion, and environmental challenges. They share a rich cultural heritage, with historical landmarks contributing to their identity and tourism potential. Additionally, both prioritize economic growth and seek to diversify their economies. Both regions also value community engagement, recognizing the importance of involving citizens in urban planning processes. Despite differences in scale and context, these shared similarities provide opportunities for mutual learning and exchange of best practices, facilitating collaboration towards sustainable development and improved quality of life for residents. As Pakistan wrestles with rapid urbanization and the many issues accompanying it, there are valuable lessons it can learn from Izmir's experience. From innovative infrastructure projects to community engagement initiatives, here's what Pakistan can learn from Izmir. One, Izmir's journey towards sustainable urban planning began with a comprehensive vision that integrated economic growth, environmental preservation, and social equity. Pakistan and newly elected government can copy this approach by prioritizing long-term sustainability over short-term gains. Yes, shortsightedness has been an issue with all political parties in Pakistan. Countries with short-term planning typically focuses on immediate goals and challenges, such as addressing current economic fluctuations, responding to social crises, or managing political instability. In contrast, long-term planning involves strategic foresight to anticipate future trends and challenges, such as demographic shifts, technological advancements, and environmental sustainability. While short-term planning is reactive and often tactical, long-term planning requires vision, coordination, and investment in infrastructure, education, and innovation. In case of Pakistan long-term planning requires a sense of nationalism and inclusivity in political dialogue. All major political stakeholders have to keep the state interests before personalized benefits. How did countries like Turkey and Indonesia brought such level of inclusivity? That needs a separate article. But in any case, balancing short-term needs with long-term objectives is essential for en-

uring the sustainable development and resilience of countries in an ever-changing global landscape. The political elite in Pakistan has to recognize this fact and must abandon short-termism, and then implementing zoning regulations, green spaces, and efficient public transportation systems can mitigate urban sprawl and environmental degradation. Two, Izmir's efficient public transportation network, including metro, tram, and ferry services, has revolutionized mobility within the city. As Pakistan's ever-increasing population adding to traffic congestion and air pollution, it needs to invest in similar mass transit systems. Just to put on record, Mr Shahbaz Sharif, the then Chief Minister of Punjab and current Prime Minister of Pakistan launched mass transit system in Lahore; the capital of Punjab, with the technical help of Turkish experts, but that plan has been spoiled when opposition took charge of the government. Again, it is witnessed that government in power do not entertain the advice of opposition, so change in government brings in change in the already executed projects; Egos are prior to long lasting benefits for the citizens. Anyhow, addressing challenges like overcrowded and poorly maintained vehicles, inadequate infrastructure, unreliable schedules, safety concerns, and limited coverage and accessibility requires investment in modernizing transport systems, improving regulations, and promoting sustainable alternatives. Prioritizing and encouraging public transportation also reduces carbon emissions, which is the need of the hour. Three, in general Turkey, but specifically Izmir is situated in a seismic zone and it has prioritized disaster preparedness and resilience in its urban planning strategies. Pakistan, prone to natural disasters such as earthquakes and floods, can adopt Izmir's proactive approach by enforcing strict building codes, establishing early warning systems, and investing in disaster response infrastructure. Thank you to President Gen. Pervaiz Musharraf (late) who established the National Disaster Management Authority after the devastating earthquake of 2005 in Pakistan. NDMA is gradually improving its capability and can have program of mutual learning with AFAD. Four, Izmir's rich cultural heritage is preserved through the restoration of historic landmarks; ancient Agora, Kadifekale Castle, Clock Tower etc., and the promotion of cultural tourism. Pakistan can leverage its own cultural heritage to stimulate economic growth while preserving its

identity. Revitalizing historic sites, promoting cultural events, and integrating heritage preservation into urban development plans can foster a sense of pride and belonging among citizens. Five, Izmir has implemented various green initiatives, including urban parks, bicycle lanes, and waste management programs, to promote environmental sustainability. Pakistan can combat pollution and improve public health by investing in renewable energy, green spaces, and waste recycling facilities. Embracing eco-friendly practices not only enhances quality of life but also attracts investment and tourism. Six, Izmir has embraced technology and innovation to enhance urban services and streamline administrative processes. Pakistan can harness the power of digitalization to improve governance, increase transparency, and deliver efficient public services. Implementing smart city solutions, such as digital infrastructure and e-governance platforms, can enhance the overall urban experience for residents. Seven, Izmir's success in urban development is attributed, in part, to active community engagement and participatory planning processes. Pakistan can foster inclusive decision-making by involving citizens, civil society organizations, and local stakeholders in the planning and implementation of development projects. Empowering communities to voice their concerns and contribute to shaping their urban environment promotes social cohesion and ownership. The element of community engagement on sustainable basis seems to be the weakest one in the context of Pakistan. Eight, Izmir's economy thrives on a diverse range of sectors, including manufacturing, trade, and tourism. Pakistan can foster economic diversification and entrepreneurship by investing in education, vocational training, and small-scale industries. Supporting local businesses and startups not only creates job opportunities but also reduces dependency on a single sector, ensuring long-term economic resilience. One of the dilemmas with our political governments is, that they focus more on resource allocation than resource generation. This temperament and approach need to be reversed. As Pakistan confronts the challenges of rapid urbanization, it can draw inspiration from Izmir's model of sustainable development. Pakistan can chart a path towards inclusive and resilient cities. The lessons learned from Izmir serve as a roadmap for Pakistan to build vibrant, liveable, and prosperous urban centres for future generations.

Tensions between Lebanon and Israel

Dr. Muhammad Akram Zaheer



There have been ongoing conflicts between Lebanon and Israel along their border since October 8, 2023. These clashes are related to the war in Gaza, but they are not a new occurrence. While they may differ in scale and intensity compared to previous border clashes, they follow a pattern of measured retaliation

THE ongoing clashes between Lebanon and Israel mean that there are continuous fights or conflicts happening between the two countries. These clashes involve ongoing, or continuous, instances of violence or disagreement. It could be in the form of military actions, disputes, or other confrontations between Lebanon and Israel. The situation is still unfolding, and tensions persist between the two nations. As of my last knowledge update in January 2022, I do not have specific information about any recent Lebanon-Israel clashes that may have occurred after that date. I recommend checking the latest news sources or reliable news websites for the most up-to-date information on any developments related to Lebanon-Israel clashes. However, historically, tensions have existed between Lebanon and Israel, primarily related to territorial disputes, the presence of militant groups, and broader regional conflicts. The border area between Lebanon and Israel, particularly along the Blue Line (established by the United Nations in 2000), has been a source of periodic tensions. Issues such as the presence of the militant group Hezbollah in Lebanon, cross-border attacks, and disputed territories have contributed to sporadic clashes between the two countries. The situation in the region is complex, involving political, religious, and geopolitical factors.

There have been ongoing conflicts between Lebanon and Israel along their border since October 8, 2023. These clashes are related to the war in Gaza, but they are not a new occurrence. While they may differ in scale and intensity compared to previous border clashes, they follow a pattern of measured retaliation. Israeli officials are increasingly warning that these border clashes could lead to a full-scale war with Lebanon. In response, Hezbollah officials argue that such a war would be equally costly for Israel. Both sides express a commitment to finding a diplomatic solution to the border tensions. Hezbollah conditions any negotiations on this issue on the end of the war in Gaza. The leader of Hezbollah, Hassan Nasrallah, has stated that the primary goals of the border escalation are to support Hamas and bring an end to the Gaza conflict. Historically, Lebanon and Israel have a record of border clashes, with the most recent ones occurring in June, when Israel claimed that Hezbollah had set up tents near the disputed village of Ghajar. In July, exchanges of fire wounded three Hezbollah members, and Israeli tear gas targeted Lebanese journalists and parliament members along the border. Notably, there is no internationally recognized land border between Lebanon and Israel, as both parties have not agreed to delineate it. The United Nations established a 120-km "line of

withdrawal," known as the Blue Line, in June 2000 after Israel's withdrawal from southern Lebanon. This line helps determine compliance with United Nations Security Council Resolutions 425 and 426. The United States recently helped Lebanon and Israel agree on their maritime borders. Now, the U.S. is trying to prevent a big war between the two countries by calming tensions along their land borders. There are 13 disputed points on this land border, and the U.S. had already helped settle 7 of them in the past. The remaining 6 are causing issues, especially two points called B1 and the "Wazzani reservation." Last August, the U.S. envoy, Amos Hochstein, mentioned that the U.S. might help in solving the land border disputes. This idea gained importance recently due to increased military activity along the border. During a visit to Lebanon, Hochstein said the U.S. wants a diplomatic solution to the border conflict. He suggested temporary measures to ease tensions while acknowledging the difficulty of finding a long-term solution. Hezbollah, a group in Lebanon, changed its usual stance by expressing openness to indirect talks with the U.S. and Israel about the land borders. However, they set a condition that these talks should only happen if the conflict in Gaza ends. This is a significant shift from Hezbollah's previous refusal to negotiate about Lebanon's southern land border.

Briefs

Shehbaz directs un-interrupted

FROM PAGE 01
sector losses through smart metering and identify and take strict action against the thieves of gas and oil. "I will not allow any more wastage of the people's hard-earned money and the loss to the national exchequer," the prime minister remarked. He instructed strict monitoring of the LPG sector to ensure provision of the commodity to the consumers at low price. Prime Minister Shehbaz directed the relevant authorities to ensure uninterrupted gas supply to the industrial sector, besides ensuring the installation of energy efficient machinery in the industries. He also called for encouraging the domestic consumers to prefer using electricity instead of gas in their daily lives.

Ramadan starts in Pakistan

FROM PAGE 01
fervour and zeal, will see millions of Pakistanis along with billions of Muslims around the world observing fast from dawn till sunset with the fasting hours falling between 12 to 17 hours - depending on the geographical locations across the globe. Like many other countries, Ramadan, in Pakistan, is marked by increased charity and public food drives with the people establishing roadside stalls for people returning to their homes in the evening.

Omar demands restoration..

FROM PAGE 01
this as Pakistan cannot develop without social media and we demand to restore these sites without any obstruction and blockage," said the PTI leader. "Our candidates were defeated through rigging," claimed the PTI leader. He also slammed Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz and the police for lodging terror cases against the party workers during the protests held yesterday. He claimed that over 100 workers of his party were arrested during the protests yesterday. "PTI has always been a peaceful party and will remain one," he added. The PTI is among other parties that have rejected the 2024 general elections, claiming that the polls were rigged by their rivals. The Imran Khan-founded party had been holding protests across the country against the "rigging" in elections.

Senate polls to be held...

FROM PAGE 01
said that an official schedule of the elections would be issued on March 14. Polling would be held to elect members against seven general seats, two women, two seats for technocrats, including Ulema and one seat for non-Muslims from Sindh and Punjab. In addition to this, lawmakers from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) and Balochistan would elect members against seven general seats, two women and two seats for technocrats, including Ulema. Members of the National Assembly will elect one general seat and one seat for technocrats, including Ulema from the federal capital, it added.

Maryam warns of...

FROM PAGE 01
political chaos in the country, then I will not allow [you] to do so." The chief minister mentioned that she watched a video in which a woman attacked a police vehicle and got some individuals free by force. In which country it was allowed to help people flee by attacking the law enforcers, she questioned. Replying to another question, the chief minister admitted that the government did not have any organised system to fix rates and control prices and said there were governance problems which would take time to be addressed - a statement in the backdrop of rising inflation, especially food prices.

Carey steers Australia to whitewash NZ in Tests

The series sweep earned Australia valuable points in the World Test Championship standings

SPORTS DESK

CHRISTCHURCH: An unbeaten 98 from Alex Carey dragged Australia to victory over New Zealand by three wickets in a thrilling second Test on Monday to give the tourists a 2-0 sweep of the two-match series. Carey and Mitchell Marsh had struggled for form but their formidable 140-run partnership rescued Australia at the Hagley Oval. New Zealand's wait for a first home Test victory over their neighbours in more than three decades goes on. Carey and Marsh produced a vital partnership when the tourists had their backs to the wall at 80-5 in their chase of 279. At 220-5, a nail-biting Test took another turn on Monday afternoon when Black Caps seamer Ben Sears claimed Marsh and Mitchell Starc in successive deliveries. It left Australia needing a further 59 runs with three wickets remaining. Skipper Cummins joined Carey to bring the tourists home. "I kept to a really solid game plan and read the conditions and read



the bowlers," Carey said. "I guess losing one wicket this morning was okay. We got through to lunch and then that's when the game opened up a little bit and the partnership started to flow." The

series sweep earned Australia valuable points in the World Test Championship standings. New Zealand were left deflated after starting the fourth day with high hopes of a first home Test victory

over Australia in 31 years. When Australia resumed the day at 77-4, after a one-hour delay because of rain, Marsh was dropped on 28 by Rachin Ravindra in the second over. Travis Head was out on the next

ball from Southee. New Zealand were buoyant, aware that Marsh and Carey were struggling for form, with Marsh coming off back-to-back ducks. Carey had compiled just 27 from his three previous innings in the series. The Australian pair found their touch when it mattered most. Rather than be cautious, they went on the attack at more than five an over in the morning session as batting conditions became easier with the ageing ball. The breakthrough New Zealand desperately sought came after lunch when debutant Sears took his double. Marsh, who made 80 off 102 deliveries, went lbw and Starc followed first ball, caught at square leg by Will Young. The hat-trick ball however was wide of the mark and the new batsman Cummins edged it for four. Carey had an anxious moment when given out lbw to Matt Henry on 19 but on review, the ball tracker placed the ball outside leg stump. He gave few other chances in a 123-ball innings which included 15 boundaries. For New Zealand, Sears took 4-90 while Henry's 2-94 gave him nine wickets for the Test.

Oscars 2024

Oppenheimer sweeps awards as Murphy wins best actor



WASHINGTON: Cillian Murphy has become the first Irish-born winner of the best actor award, as Oppenheimer swept the Oscars. The film dominated proceedings, winning best picture, best director for Christopher Nolan, and best supporting actor for Robert Downey Jr. Murphy was named best leading actor for his acclaimed portrayal of theoretical physicist J Robert Oppenheimer. The actor said he was "overwhelmed" to have won, adding: "I'm a very proud Irishman standing here tonight." He thanked Nolan and producer Emma Thomas for "the wildest, most exhilarating, most creatively satisfying journey you've taken

me on". Murphy also paid tribute to "every single crew and cast member, you carried me through". He concluded: "We made a film about the man who created the atomic bomb, and for better or for worse, we are all living in Oppenheimer's world, so I'd like to dedicate this to the peacemakers everywhere." The ceremony saw Oppenheimer win seven prizes overall, while Poor Things took four - including best actress for Emma Stone - and The Zone of Interest scored two. Cillian Murphy wins the Oscar for Best Actor for "Oppenheimer" during the Oscars show at the 96th Academy Awards in Hollywood, Los Angeles,

California, U.S., March 10, 2024
Murphy said he was "a very proud Irishman standing here tonight" as he won best leading actor for Oppenheimer. Downey Jr won best supporting actor for his portrayal of US government official Lewis Strauss in Oppenheimer. Accepting the award, the actor joked: "I'd like to thank my terrible childhood, and the Academy, in that order. I needed this job more than it needed me," he continued. "I stand here before you a better man because of it." The star also paid tribute to his wife Susan Downey, who he said had found him as a "a snarling rescue pet", adding that she "loved me back to life, that's why I'm here". Downey Jr, best known for his run as Marvel's Iron Man, has enjoyed a hugely successful Hollywood comeback after serious drug addiction issues more than two decades ago, which saw him serve a prison sentence after missing court-ordered drug tests. He concluded his speech by telling the audience: "What we do is meaningful and what we decide to make is important." Host Jimmy Kimmel joked the cast and crew were "getting Oppenheimered at the bar", such was the film's success. As he accepted his first ever best director Oscar, Nolan said: "Thank you to those who have been there for me, believed in me for my whole career." - Agencies

Brendon McCullum says his side have been 'exposed'

LONDON: England have been "exposed" in India and have some "deep thinking" ahead, according to coach Brendon McCullum. The tourists won the first Test but then suffered four losses to go down to their first series defeat since McCullum took charge in 2022. "A lot of good will come out of this tour. I'm 100% positive about that," McCullum told BBC Sport. "We will be a better cricket team for the experience, although it hurts a lot at the moment." England's victory in the first Test in Hyderabad was one of their greatest overseas wins, particularly given India's formidable home record - the hosts have not lost a Test series in this country in 12 years. But the tourists squandered strong chances in the second, third and fourth Tests and were 100-1 on the first morning of the fifth before unravelling to lose by an innings and 64 runs. The latest reverse in Dharamsala means England have been beaten in seven of their past 12 Tests and are winless in three series. And New Zealander McCullum said this tour had "taught him more" about his team than ever before. "Sometimes you can get away with things, but when you're exposed in the way we have been in the back end of this series in particular, it does require some pretty deep thinking and some adjustment to make sure we're staying true to what we believe in," added McCullum. "If anything we got more timid as the series went on and that was because of the pressure that was applied to us by the Indian line-up." England will keep James Anderson around the squad if he wants to keep playing England's next Test series is against West Indies in July, followed by Sri Lanka at the end of the home summer. There are tours of Pakistan and New Zealand next winter, before India visit in the summer of 2025. The Ashes series in Australia in the winter of 2025-26 will be the last of McCullum's four-year contract. England recalled Ben Foakes to keep wicket in India after Jonny Bairstow had the gloves for last summer's Ashes. Though Foakes' glove work was excellent, his highest score with the bat was 47. Bairstow, who played his 100th Test in Dharamsala, also failed to make a half-century. - Agencies

PM Shehbaz's 19-member federal...

FROM PAGE 01
the cabinet includes 12 MNAs and three senators as federal ministers, as well as a minister of state. Three technocrats - Muhammad Aurangzeb, Mohsin Naqvi and Ahad Cheema are also included in the cabinet. The proposal for the appointment had been made under clause 1 of Article 92 (federal ministers and ministers of state) of the Constitution, which states: "Subject to clauses 9 and 10 of Article 91, the president shall appoint federal ministers and ministers of state from amongst the members of Majlis-e-Shoora (Parliament) on the advice of the prime minister." Federal ministers
Khawaja Muhammad Asif, MNA, Ahsan Iqbal Chaudry, MNA, Rana Tanveer Hussain, MNA, Azam Nazeer Tarar, Senator, Chaudhry Salik Hussain, MNA, Abdul Aleem Khan, MNA, Jam Kamal Khan, MNA, Amir Muqam, MNA, Sardar Awais Ahmad Khan Leghari, MNA, Attaullah Tarar, MNA, Dr Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui, MNA, Qaiser Ahmed Sheikh, MNA, Mian Riaz Hussain Pirzada, MNA, Mohammad Ishaq Dar, Senator, Musadik Masood Malik, Senator, Muhammad Aurangzeb, Ahad Khan Cheema, Mohsin Naqvi Minister of state, Shaza Fatima Khawaja.

JUI-F decides to launch...

FROM PAGE 01
Khyber Pakhtunkhwa as part of its 'protest movement'. The decision came after Maulana Fazlur Rehman completed consultation with party's central executive committee. The party has decided to chalk out new strategies against the alleged rigging. The protest movement would start from Sindh followed by Balochistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Punjab and end in Islamabad. Fazlur Rehman would himself lead the movement. Meanwhile, sources claimed that Maulana Fazl will leave for a 10-day private visit to Saudi Arabia tomorrow. He would perform Umrah and participate in a religious conference. In the February 8 general elections, JUI-F secured 10 seats in the provincial assembly of Balochistan. However, despite being part of the last coalition government, the party managed to secure only 4 seats in the National Assembly.

Saudi envoy calls on PM Shehbaz

FROM PAGE 01
between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, the Prime Minister said the Saudi Ambassador was the first envoy he was receiving after assumption of office. The Prime Minister highlighted that his government's priority would be to transform the time-tested bilateral relations between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia into a mutually beneficial, strategic and economic partnership, with a focus on attracting Saudi investment for bankable projects in Pakistan. The Prime Minister thanked the Saudi authorities for expanding the scope of the "Road to Makkah" initiative, which will facilitate Pakistani Hajj pilgrims. While extending an invitation to the Prime Minister to visit Saudi Arabia, the Saudi Ambassador assured the Prime Minister of the Saudi leadership's full support.

Tajik President...

FROM PAGE 01
country of Tajikistan which were based on shared religion, culture and history. He said that both countries needed to work together for further improving bilateral cooperation. While appreciating Tajikistan's high potential in hydel resources, President Zardari expressed Pakistan's desire to work with Tajikistan in this important area for the mutual advantage of the two brotherly countries. The President also exchanged greetings on the advent of the holy month of Ramadan and also felicitated the Tajik President on the upcoming Nowruz, Persian NY celebrations.

Sikandar Raza fined for showing dissent

KARACHI: Lahore Qalandars' all-rounder Sikandar Raza has been fined 10 per cent of his match fee by the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) on Monday. Raza was fined for a Level 1 breach of PSL's code of conduct for showing dissent at an umpire's decision in the ongoing Pakistan Super League (PSL) season 9. The incident occurred during the Lahore Qalandars vs Quetta Gladiators game at National Bank Stadium, Karachi on Sunday night. The Zimbabwe all-rounder, on three different occasions during the game, raised his arms, shook his head and gestured that the delivery should have been called a wide ball, leading to a violation of article 2.8, which deals with a player showing dissent at an umpire's decision during a PSL game. On-field umpires Chris Gaffaney and Rashid Riaz levelled the charge against Sikandar Raza while match referee Ali Naqvi imposed the fine. Raza gave away 32 runs without a wicket in his four overs during Quetta Gladiators' tense chase of 167 runs. The Gladiators required 14 off Shaheen Shah Afridi's final over with their mainstay Saud Shakeel and wicketkeeper batter Laurie Evans at the crease. They had an unwanted start to the over as Evans fell on the first delivery, courtesy of a sharp catch in the deep by Tahir Baig. - Agencies

Sinner, Alcaraz demolish Indian Wells opponents

INDIAN WELLS: Reigning Grand Slam champions Jannik Sinner and Carlos Alcaraz turned in dominating performances on Sunday to roll into the fourth round of the ATP-WTA Indian Wells Masters. The two hottest young racquets in the sport showed no mercy in quick-fire victories, with Australian Open champion Sinner overwhelming Jan-Lennard Struff 6-2, 6-4. "Almost perfect" Alcaraz, the reigning Wimbledon champion, stepped up his Indian Wells title defense with a 6-2, 6-3 victory over Canadian Felix Auger-Aliassime. The world number two Spaniard allowed his Canadian opponent no room to move, reaching the fourth round with his eighth match win in a row at the event. A pair of women's veterans showed new life in maternity comebacks. "It was almost the perfect match for me," said Alcaraz, who broke Auger-Aliassime's serve four times. "I moved well, played aggressive and had less mistakes." Sinner was equally ruthless as he attacked Struff, with the Italian winning his 17th match in succession dating to his country's Davis Cup victory in November. Sinner fired 27 winners past Struff, whose style gave the third seed a target on court. "We prepared very well, I tried to learn his moves," Sinner said. "I played well and served well under pressure. Overall I can be really happy about today, I felt really good on the court." Alcaraz won the last five games of the opening set and broke to start the second on his way to repeating his win over Auger-Aliassime from the 2023 quarter-finals. The second seed finished off victory on his first match point as Auger-Aliassime hit the net with his 23rd unforced error. It was a welcome show of strength from Alcaraz, who hasn't won a title since winning his second Grand Slam with a stunning triumph over Novak Djokovic at the All England Club last year. He exited the Australian Open in the quarter-finals then lost in the semi-finals at Buenos Aires last month before spraining his ankle and retiring from his opening match in Rio de Janeiro. - Agencies

US down Brazil to win CONCACAF Women's Gold Cup

US skipper Horan headed home in first-half injury time to settle a largely lacklustre finale to the 12-team tournament

OUR CORRESPONDENTS

LOS ANGELES: Lindsey Horan scored the only goal as the United States defeated Brazil 1-0 to win the CONCACAF Women's Gold Cup in California. US skipper Horan headed home in first-half injury time at San Diego's Snapdragon Stadium to settle a largely lacklustre finale to the 12-team tournament. "I'm very very proud of the team right now," Horan said afterwards. "We grinded out that win, again. It was a difficult game, Brazil challenged us in a different way. "I'm really proud of us finding a way to get a goal and finishing out the game and getting a trophy." Horan meanwhile said the US would take heart from the tournament victory as they build towards this summer's Olympics, noting the contributions of several younger players who have been drafted into the squad following last year's Women's World Cup last 16 exit. "You see some of them playing in their first final tonight, and it was an amazing tourna-

ment for them," Horan said. "Going into the Olympics we're going to see what they can do. I'm so proud because it looks like they're not young and inexperienced." The Brazilians failed to register a single shot on target in the first half, with

their best efforts a 10th minute free-kick from Dudi Sampaio that sailed over. Gabi Nunes also saw a speculative 15th-minute strike from the edge of the area go soaring into the stands. The American women were similarly off-target in the first half,



struggling to create much in the way of goal-scoring opportunities from open play. Horan had signalled her aerial threat in the 40th minute, stooping to direct a header that Brazil goalkeeper Luciana saved as it threatened to creep in. At that stage, Horan's near-miss was the only US shot on target of the half. But the breakthrough finally came on the stroke of half-time. Trinity Rodman broke down the right flank before passing back to right-back Emily Fox in space. Fox swung in an inviting deep cross to the back post and Horan was waiting to nod the header back across the goal to give Luciana no chance. The second half continued in much the same vein, with both sides creating little of note. US interim coach Twila Kilgore overhauled the US attack with a flurry of substitutions, bringing on Sophia Smith, Lynn Williams, Jaedyn Shaw and Midge Purce. US stunned 2-0 by Mexico in Gold Cup upset Those changes appeared to have delivered a second goal on 79 minutes when Williams pounced on a defensive mix-up to tuck away a confident finish.

Briefs

German FM criticises pope on Ukraine

FRANKFURT: German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock has sharply criticised Pope Francis's call for Ukraine to negotiate with Moscow, saying she didn't "understand" his stance. The pope sparked a furor at the weekend after saying in an interview on Swiss television that one should "have the courage to raise the white flag and negotiate", two years into Moscow's invasion of Ukraine. "I don't understand it," Baerbock said in a talk show on public broadcaster ARD late Sunday. "I think some things you can only understand if you see them for yourself," added Baerbock, who has travelled to Kyiv several times since the start of the war. Kyiv slams Pope's 'white flag' call, vows no surrender to Russia. When talking to children in Ukraine who are suffering because of the war, she said, "I ask myself: Where is the pope? The pope must know about these things." Baerbock said if Ukraine and its allies "don't show strength now, there will be no peace". "We must stand by Ukraine and do everything we can to ensure that it can defend itself," she added. Germany is the second-biggest supplier of military aid to Ukraine, after the United States.

Musk makes xAI's Grok chatbot open-source

WASHINGTON : Elon Musk said on Monday his artificial intelligence start-up xAI would open-source its ChatGPT challenger "Grok" this week, days after he sued OpenAI for abandoning its original mission in favor of a for-profit model. The billionaire has warned on several occasions against the use of technology for profit by big technology companies such as Google. He filed the lawsuit against Microsoft-backed OpenAI, which he co-founded in 2015 but left three years later, last week. "This week, xAI will open source Grok," Musk said in a post on X, the social media firm he owns. The move could give the public free access to experiment with the code behind the technology and aligns xAI with firms such as Meta and France's Mistral, both of which have open-source AI models. Google has also released an AI model called Gemma that outside developers can potentially fashion according to their needs. Elon Musk launches AI firm xAI as he looks to take on OpenAI. Tech investors including OpenAI backer Vinod Khosla and Marc Andreessen, co-founder of venture capital firm Andreessen Horowitz, have been debating about open-sourcing in AI since Musk filed the lawsuit against the ChatGPT maker.—APP

S. Korea moves to suspend striking doctors' licenses

SEOUL: South Korea said Monday it had started procedures to suspend the medical licenses of 4,900 junior doctors who have resigned and stopped working to protest government medical training reforms, causing health care chaos. The walkout, which started February 20, is over government plans to sharply increase the number of doctors, which it says is essential to combat shortages and South Korea's rapidly aging population, while the doctors argue it will erode service quality. Nearly 12,000 junior doctors – 93 percent of the trainee workforce – were not in their hospitals at the last count, despite government back to work orders and threats of legal action, forcing Seoul to mobilize military medics and millions of dollars in state reserves to help. The Health Ministry on Monday said it had sent administrative notifications – the first step to suspending the doctors' medical licenses – to thousands of trainee doctors after they defied specific orders telling them to return to their hospitals.—APP



ISLAMABAD: Sherdils demonstrating their skills during rehearsal ahead of the Pakistan Day parade on 23rd March.—ONLINE

Iran: US aid delivery to Gaza 'ridiculous, symbolic'

At least 31,112 Palestinians, most of them women and children, have been confirmed killed and 72,760 others wounded so far during Israel's genocidal war

FOREIGN DESK

TEHRAN : The spokesman for Iran's Foreign Ministry says the United States is the main party responsible for the start and continuation of Israel's on the people of Palestine in the Gaza Strip. "The American government stood by the Zionist regime in words and deeds," Nasser Kan'ani told reporters at his weekly press briefing in Tehran on Monday. Since the beginning of Israel's war in October, the US has been providing the regime with large-scale shipments of weapons, he added. He noted that the US has been exerting pressure on the Palestinian people, slamming the "painful inaction" of the international community, particularly the United Nations, over the past five months about the Israeli regime's

brutal attacks against Gaza. The Iranian spokesman further pointed to the "merely symbolic" move by the United States to airdrop humanitarian aid into Gaza and said Washington vetoed three resolutions calling for an immediate end to the war in the besieged strip and, at the same time, is sending its weapons to Israel. Kan'ani emphasized that the US resorts to "ridiculous and bitter" measures in an effort to rectify and justify its warmongering policy. However, the people of the world are aware of the realities on the ground and will never change their minds, he said. The US Central Command has announced that together with Jordan's air force it had "conducted a combined humanitarian assistance airdrop into Gaza ... to provide essential relief to civilians affected by the ongoing conflict." At least

31,112 Palestinians, most of them women and children, have been confirmed killed and 72,760 others wounded so far during Israel's genocidal war, which began following Operation al-Aqsa Storm by Gaza-based resistance movements on October 7. The war has devastated large swathes of Gaza, destroyed hospitals and displaced a major proportion of the population of 2.4 million in the world's "largest open-air prison." Iran seizes US cargo on oil tanker in reaction to cruel sanctions Elsewhere in the presser, Kan'ani said Iran's seizure of the US oil cargo carried by the Marshall Islands-flagged Advantage Sweet in the Persian Gulf was the "outcome of the American administration's cruel sanctions." He added that the US sanctions have inflicted terrible suffering on the Iranian people, particularly the patients with special diseases, as

they failed to receive the necessary life-saving medicines. A large number of Iranian patients have unfortunately lost their lives in the absence of the necessary medicines, the spokesman said. This is a kind of hypocrisy of the American administration, which hypocritically declares that it did not prevent the export of medicines while imposing extensive sanctions on all items exported to Iran," Kan'ani emphasized. "This is an obvious lie and Iran will never forget these hostilities." He added that a number of countries have refrained from selling medicines needed by certain patients in Iran, saying they are concerned about the imposition of US sanctions and economic punishment against their pharmaceutical companies. Reports said the confiscation took place upon a court ruling in favor of the patients afflicted with epidermolysis bullosa (EB) or butterfly

patients. In their complaint, the EB patients, who are characterized by extreme fragility of the skin and mechanically induced blistering, claimed damages against the US. Iran sends humanitarian aid for Gazans to ports in Egypt an'ani said the delivery of humanitarian aid to the war-stricken people in Gaza has been on Iran's agenda since the outset of the crisis in the strip, adding, "We have held many diplomatic consultations and talks through Egypt." Given Israel's blockade on Gaza, it is not possible for Iran to directly send its aid to Palestine, he noted. The Iranian diplomat said the Egyptian officials have repeatedly told Iran that Israel does not allow the aid to be distributed to the Palestinian people. "However, these [acts of obstruction] did not stop Iran's efforts and we sent aid through Egypt," Kan'ani said.

UK boosts funds to safeguard Muslim communities

London : The United Kingdom will pump an additional 117 million pounds (\$150m) into protecting Muslim communities, the government said. The new funding, announced on Monday as the Muslim month of Ramadan began, will be used to install security cameras, alarms, and fences in mosques, Muslim faith schools, and other community centres. The move comes amid a rise in hate attacks since the start of the war in Gaza in October. "Anti-Muslim hatred has absolutely no place in our society. We will not let events in the Middle East be used as an excuse to justify abuse against British Muslims," Home Secretary James Cleverly said in a statement. An estimated four million Muslims live in the UK. Tell MAMA, a group monitoring Muslim hate, found that online attacks, physical assaults, and other forms of targeting, grew 335 percent last month compared with the same time in the previous year. "The prime minister has made clear that we stand with Muslims in the UK," Cleverly continued. "That is exactly why we have committed to this funding, giving reassurance and confidence to UK Muslims at a time when it is crucially needed."—DNA

Germany backs Georgieva for IMF chief

FRANKFURT: Germany, Europe's largest economy, voiced its backing Monday for a second term for International Monetary Fund chief Kristalina Georgieva, with finance minister Christian Lindner calling her "exactly the right person". Georgieva has navigated the IMF "through difficult times over the last years", Lindner said on X, formerly known as Twitter. "I am convinced that she is exactly the right person to steer the institution through the challenges ahead and to strengthen the IMF as an advocate for structural reforms in our economies." Bulgarian economist Georgieva, 70, said last week she would be "honoured" to helm the Washington-based financial institution for a second term. Her current term ends on September 30. IMF chief praises Pakistani authorities for maintaining economic stability Since she took office in 2019, the IMF has stepped in on numerous occasions to support countries facing significant financial hardship due to the Covid-19 pandemic and the economic impact of Russia's invasion of Ukraine.—APP

EU facing 'catastrophic' climate crisis risks

COPENHAGEN: Europe could suffer "catastrophic" consequences from climate change if it fails to take urgent and decisive action to adapt to risks, a new EU analysis warned Monday. Areas in southern Europe are most at risk, the European Environment Agency (EEA) said in its first report on the climate risks the continent faces. The dangers include fires, water shortages and their effects on agricultural production, while low-lying coastal regions face threats of flooding, erosion and saltwater intrusion. "Many of these risks have already reached critical levels and could become catastrophic without urgent and decisive action," the agency said. That doesn't mean northern Europe is spared the negative impact, as floods in Germany and forest fires in Sweden have demonstrated in recent years. "Extreme heat, drought, wildfires, and flooding, as experienced in recent years, will worsen in Europe even under optimistic global warming scenarios and affect living conditions throughout the continent," the EEA warned. The report lists 36 risks related to climate in Europe, 21 of which demand more immediate action and eight were "particularly urgent." At the top of the list were risks to ecosystems, mainly relating to coastal and marine ones.—APP

Norway 'deeply concerned' over humanitarian situation in Sudan

Our expectations to all parties to the conflict are clear: International Humanitarian Law must be respected, always and everywhere"

DNA

LONDON : Norway on Monday said it is "deeply concerned" about restrictions on humanitarian access in Sudan, and called for "urgent restoration" of safe and unhindered humanitarian access across the North African country. The war between the Sudanese Armed Forces and paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) that began in April 2023 has killed thousands, displaced millions and caused a food security crisis. Authorities loyal to the army are said to have blocked cross-border aid to the Darfur region, which borders Chad. But following intense pressure at home and internationally, Sudan last week approved the use of Al-Tina crossing for the delivery of aid supplies to Darfur. "Unfettered humanitarian access between RSF and SAF controlled areas is urgently needed. Denying access to humanitarian assistance is illegal according to International Humanitarian Law and may constitute a war crime," the Norwegian government

said in a statement. "The humanitarian consequences of the war in Sudan are alarming. More than half the population, some 25 million people, need humanitarian assistance. An estimated 18 million people are already facing acute hunger and the United Nations warns of a looming famine if conditions do not improve. Aid organizations are currently not able to reach many of them. Civilians must be protected. Using starvation as a method of warfare against civilians is strictly prohibited." A telecommunication blackout is also in place in the war-torn country since February, which, according to Norway, is "hampering humanitarian assistance" and is "a threat to the safety of civilians." "We are deeply concerned about the deliberate destruction of civilian infrastructure, including telecommunications, which has severe consequences for the civilians affected by the hostilities," the statement said. "Our expectations to all parties to the conflict are clear: International Humanitarian Law must be respected, always and everywhere."

American activist Shaun King, his wife convert to Islam

WASHINGTON : Renowned American activist and writer, Shaun King along with his wife, Rai King, have embraced Islam on the auspicious first day of Ramadan. The decision to convert was publicly announced via an Instagram Live session, where the couple recited the Shahadah, the Islamic declaration of faith, under the guidance of US Muslim scholar Omar Suleiman. Shaun King, aged 44, attributed his conversion to the past six months of turmoil and suffering witnessed in Gaza, expressing profound empathy for the resilience and faith displayed by the people amidst the devastation. He wore a Palestinian keffiyeh, symbolizing solidarity with the Palestinian cause, as he addressed the audience. King, known for his vocal



advocacy in social justice movements such as Black Lives Matter, has been actively supporting Palestine, particularly condemning Israel's actions in Gaza. His solidarity with the Palestinian plight has resonated with millions globally, fostering a deeper connection with Islam. The journey of Shaun King, marked by his activism against racism and hate crimes since his youth in Kentucky, has now led him to embrace Islam. Hav-

ing experienced multiple instances of racial discrimination and violence, King's path to Islam reflects a quest for spiritual solace and justice. King's conversion ceremony, witnessed by a global audience on social media, underscores the power of faith and resilience amid adversity. His advocacy for Palestine and his newfound embrace of Islam signify a deeper commitment to social justice and solidarity with oppressed communities worldwide. Shaun King's conversion to Islam serves as a beacon of hope and inspiration, resonating with those who seek peace, justice, and spiritual fulfillment in tumultuous times. With his voice amplified by millions of followers, King's journey promises to catalyze greater awareness and action towards building a more just and compassionate world.—Agencies

Ukraine halts Russian forces from entering Europe :Zelenskyy

'When Russian evil launched this war on February 24th, 2022, all Ukrainians rose up to defend their country. Christians, Muslims, Jews – everyone,' president says

NEWS DESK

KYIV: Ukraine's president said that Ukrainian forces have not allowed the Russian army to advance towards Europe. "Russian murderers and torture chambers are unable to march further into Europe because they are being held back by Ukrainians holding arms under the blue and yellow flag," Volodymyr Zelenskyy said in a video message. "When Russian evil launched this war on February 24th, 2022, all Ukrainians rose up to defend their country. Christians, Muslims, Jews – everyone," he added. Zelenskyy said the Russian army has been continuing its air attacks on Ukraine, but "we will further enhance our firepower and Ukrainian air defense. More air defense systems and other means of destruction of Russian aviation bring peace closer. I am grateful to everyone in the world who helps us with this. Ukraine will have more air defense systems – we

are working very hard on this." In his video message, he also dismissed Pope Francis' call for Ukraine to enter peace talks with Russia. "There used to be many white walls of houses and churches in Ukraine, but they have now been burned and damaged by Russian shells. This speaks volumes about who needs to stop for the war to end," he said. Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba also harshly criticized the Pope on Sunday for calling on his nation to have "the courage to raise the white flag," implicitly calling for its surrender to Russian forces. "The strongest is the one who, in the battle between good and evil, stands on the side of good rather than attempting to put them on the same footing and call it 'negotiations.' At the same time, when it comes to the white flag, we know this Vatican's strategy from the first half of the 20th century. I urge to avoid repeating the mistakes of the past and to support Ukraine and its people in their just struggle for their lives," Kuleba said.

Russia: Pope's Ukraine remarks aimed at West

MOSCOW: Russia said that a comment made by Pope Francis on "having the courage to raise the white flag" regarding Ukraine is addressed specifically towards the West rather than Kyiv. "The way I see it, the Pope is asking the West to put aside its ambitions and admit that it was wrong," Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova told Italian state news agency ANSA on Sunday. Expressing that Russia "never blocked negotiations" for peace in Ukraine, Zakharova said that everyone currently understands that the situation in the war-torn country is at a "dead end." This is why "many diplomats and countries are calling for negotiations," the spokeswoman added. Pope Francis said during an interview with Switzerland's public broadcasting service released on Saturday that he believes the "strongest" with regards to the situation in Ukraine is the one who has "the courage to raise the white flag and negotiate." Ukraine slammed Pope Francis' comments in later statements, with Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba defining the "strongest" one as the one who "stands on the side of good rather than attempting to put them on the same footing and call it 'negotiations.'" "Our flag is a yellow and blue one. This is the flag by which we live, die, and prevail. We shall never raise any other flags," he added.—Agencies

Briefs

Navy recovers bodies of 10 missing fishermen

DNA

KARACHI: The Pakistan Navy (PN) in coordination with Pakistan Maritime Security Agency (PMSA) recovered 10 dead bodies out of 14 missing fishermen from boat Al-Assad in a joint search and rescue operation. The Search and Rescue operation was started on 5th in open sea. Despite dense marine traffic in vicinity of accident, time lapse and choppy sea conditions the dead bodies of 10 missing fishermen were recovered on Monday, a Pakistan Navy news release said. The fishing boat Al-Assad with an onboard crew of 45 capsized in open sea off Hajmro creek on March 5th due to inclement weather. Search operation involved multiple assets of PN and PMSA including aircraft, helicopters, ships and speed boats. Major break through of search efforts materialised today when PMSS REMAT upon receipt of information from deployed units recovered 10 dead bodies of missing fishermen. The recovered bodies have been handed over to concerned civil authorities for further formalities. The conduct of continuous Search and rescue operation by PN and PMSA is a manifestation of PN's resolve to assist in every civil calamity at Sea.

Al-Qaeda's Yemen branch leader dies

DNA

SANAA, Yemen: The leader of Yemen's branch of Al-Qaeda is dead, the militant group announced late Sunday, without giving details. Khalid Al-Batarfi had a \$5 million bounty on his head from the US government over leading the group Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, long considered the most-dangerous branch of the extremist group still operating after the killing of founder Osama bin Laden. Al-Qaeda released a video showing Al-Batarfi wrapped in a funeral shroud of the Al-Qaeda black-and-white flag. It offered no details on the cause of his death and there was no clear sign of trauma visible on his face. Al-Batarfi is believed to be in his early 40s. "Allah took his soul while he patiently sought his reward and stood firm, immigrated, garrisoned, and waged jihad for His sake," the militants said in the video, according to the SITE Intelligence Group. The group made the announcement on the eve of Ramadan, the Muslim holy fasting month that Yemen will begin Monday. In the announcement, the group said Saad bin Atef Al-Awlaki would take over as its leader. The US has a \$6 million bounty on him, saying Al-Awlaki "has publicly called for attacks against the United States and its allies."

Ramadan begins in Gaza amid Israeli airstrikes, food scarcity

Health ministry added that the death toll from the ongoing Israeli bombardments and shooting attacks, which started on October 7, climbed to 31,112 martyrs

NEWS DESK

GAZA CITY: Palestinians began fasting for Ramadan on Monday as the Muslim holy month arrived with cease-fire talks at a standstill, hunger worsening across the Gaza Strip and no end in sight to the five-month-old war between Israel and Hamas. Prayers were held outside amid the rubble of demolished buildings late Sunday. Some people hung fairy lights and decorations in packed tent camps, and a video from a UN-school-turned-shelter showed children dancing and spraying foam as a man sang into a loudspeaker. The Associated Press said. But there was little to celebrate after five months of war that has killed over 30,000 Palestinians and left much of Gaza in ruins. Families would ordinarily break the daily fast with holiday feasts, but even where food is available, there is little beyond canned goods and the prices are too high for many. As the US-backed Israeli genocidal war on the Gaza Strip entered day 157 on Monday,

massive aerial and artillery strikes continued to pound neighborhoods, homes, shelter centers and aid convoys, and massacre more civilians, mostly children and women. Palestinian Information Center (PIC) said that the Israeli occupation army continued to attack different areas of Gaza, killing and injuring hundreds of citizens. According to media sources, a number of civilians suffered injuries after the Israeli army bombed homes in al-Qarara town in northern Khan Yunis. 16 martyrs were reported following an Israeli attack on a house belonging to the family of Abu Shammala in az-Zeitoun neighborhood in Gaza City. The attack also killed and injured other citizens in nearby homes. The Israeli army also killed three sisters from the family of Barakat and injured other citizens in an Israeli aerial attack on a house in eastern Rafah. Another Israeli attack on a house in al-Sabra neighborhood in Gaza City injured a number of citizens. Other casualties were reported in different areas of Gaza following Israeli aerial,

artillery and shooting attacks last night and today. Meanwhile, two more children died of malnutrition and dehydration at the Kamal Adwan Hospital in Beit Lahia. In a separate incident, the Israeli occupation army released 56 Palestinian citizens, who had been kidnaped from different areas of Gaza during incursions. The faces and bodies of those citizens have showed signs of torture, according to the border and crossings authority in Gaza. The health ministry in Gaza said on Monday that the Israeli occupation army committed seven massacres in different areas of the Gaza Strip during the past 24 hours, killing at least 67 civilians and injuring over 106 others, while a large number of victims are still under the rubble of bombed buildings or lying on roads. In a statement, the health ministry added that the death toll from the ongoing Israeli bombardments and shooting attacks, which started on October 7, climbed to 31,112 martyrs and the number of the wounded surged to 72,760 people. Every

day, the Israeli army escalates its air and ground attacks on the Gaza Strip, which has been under relentless bombardment since a cross-border operation was launched by Hamas's armed wing, al-Qasam Brigades, on October 7. Besides the large number of casualties and the huge displacement of people, basic food, fuel, water and medical supplies have run out for the 2.3 million residents in Gaza due to the tight Israeli blockade and the massive destruction of infrastructure and facilities. Meanwhile, Jordan's Foreign Minister Ayman Safadi said on Monday restrictions imposed by Israel on Muslim worshippers' access to Jerusalem's Al-Aqsa mosque compound during the Muslim fasting month was pushing the situation toward an "explosion." In remarks on state media, Safadi said his country rejected Israel's announced move to limit access to the holy site during Ramadan, citing security needs with war raging in Gaza. Jordan echoes the Palestinian view that such restrictions were an attack on freedom of worship, he said.

Asfandiyar Wali's spouse passes away

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Awami National Party (ANP) chief Asfandiyar Wali Khan's spouse passed away. ANP spokesperson Zahid Khan verified the death of ANP chief's wife. The deceased was the mother of ANP provincial president Aimal Wali Khan. The deceased will be laid to rest in Charsadda, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The funeral prayer will be held at 5:30pm in Wali Bagh, Charsadda. President Asif Zardari, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz conveyed their condolences to Asfandiyar Wali Khan and his family.

JUI-F disowns woman MNA on reserved seat

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has issued a notification of success for a woman named Sadaf Ehsan for a reserved seat in the National Assembly from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on the quota of Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam. This move has sparked controversy within the Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (F) party, as Sadaf Ehsan is reportedly not a recognised member of the party. The head of JUI (F), Maulana Fazlur Rahman, has expressed his concerns over this issue. He has formally requested the ECP to annul the notification and conduct an investigation. According to Fazl, Sadaf is not a party member and her name does not appear on their list. He has demanded that the notification of Sadaf Ehsan be annulled and a notification for Hina Bibi, a recognized party member, be issued instead. Fazl calls for an investigation into whether the notification was issued by mistake or in collusion. He has urged the ECP to probe into the matter and determine the circumstances under which the notification of the unknown woman was issued.

Japan avoids technical recession

TOKYO: Japan has avoided falling into a technical recession after its official economic growth figures were revised. The revised data shows gross domestic product (GDP) was 0.4% higher in the last three months of 2023 compared to a year earlier. Provisional figures released last month indicated the second consecutive quarter of economic contraction. Two quarters in a row of an economy shrinking is typically considered the definition of a technical recession. But the revised figures still came below expectations, as some economists had forecast an upward revision to fourth quarter GDP of around 1%. Hopes that the country had skirted a recession were boosted last week when figures from the Ministry of Finance showed a sharp rise in the amount companies invested in their businesses.

President Asif Zardari presented guard of honour

Tajik President, Emomali Rahmon felicitates President Asif Ali Zardari



MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari on Monday was presented guard of honour here at the Aiwan-e-Sadr, a day after he was sworn in as the 14th President of Pakistan. The president arrived at the forecourt of the presidency in the horse-driven buggy. After the

national anthem, he inspected the guard of honour presented by the smartly turned-out contingents of the armed forces. President Asif Zardari presented guard of honour Later, the president shook hands with the officers and staffers of the Aiwan-e-Sadr. On Sunday, Chief Justice of Pakistan Qazi Faez Isa administered the oath of office to President Asif Ali Zardari, a day after he was elected to the office.

Case against journalist

CJP: FIA used SC's name to launch action

"Neither any Supreme Court judge nor registrar had filed any complaint to FIA," chief justice says

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

ISLAMABAD: Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Qazi Faez Isa Monday lamented that the Supreme Court's name was used to launch action against vlogger Asad Toor, highlighting the discrepancies in the First Information Report (FIR) registered by the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA). "The inquiry notice [sent to Asad Toor] stated that he is being summoned in an inquiry related to an anti-judiciary campaign whereas the FIR didn't even mention as such," the CJP Isa said. The top judge's remarks came during a hearing of a suo motu case, being heard by a three-member SC bench comprising the CJP, Justice Muhammad Ali Mazhar and Justice Mussarat Hilali, pertaining to the harassment of journalists over FIA's summons as part of the Joint Investigation Team's (JIT) probe into the anti-judiciary campaign. It is pertinent to know that on January 17, the then-caretaker government formed a JIT to ascertain the facts behind a malicious social media campaign against the SC judges after the apex court gave a verdict on the election symbol of PTI. The court, however, had then taken notice of the FIA's summons, sent to various journalists, and barred the agency from taking action against people over their criticism directed towards the apex court.

India implements 'anti-Muslim' citizenship law

Modi's government announces rules to implement the controversial law, weeks before vote due by May

NEWS DESK

NEW DELHI: The Indian government has notified the rules for the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), weeks before Prime Minister Narendra Modi seeks a rare third term for his Hindu nationalist government. The controversial law passed in 2019 by Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government allowed Indian citizenship to non-Muslim refugees from India's neighbouring countries. It declared that Hindus, Parsis, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains and Christians who fled to Hindu-majority India from mainly Muslim Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Pakistan before December 31, 2014, were eligible for citizenship. The law was declared "anti-Muslim" by several rights groups for keeping the community out of its ambit, raising questions over the secular character of the world's largest democracy. Modi's government had not drafted the rules for the law following nationwide protests over the passage of the law in December 2019.

PTI to continue protests till restoration of 'mandate': Khosa

PTI leader Latif Khosa demands release of PTI founder, leaders, workers

ABID RAZA

LAHORE: After dozens of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) workers were arrested in Lahore allegedly for violent protests, party leader Latif Khosa on Monday vowed that they would continue to hold demonstrations until their "mandate" is not given to them. Talking to media in Lahore, PTI leader Khosa said they had only one demand of conducting an audit of election results. The government could move on, if the mandate was restored, he maintained. He also demanded the release of PTI founder, leaders, especially female leaders, and workers. Claiming that police had assaulted PTI's workers, Khosa stressed that the party would continue its protests to uphold the people's right to self-govern and elect their representatives. "I will register an FIR against them for kidnapping. We'll see how this government can run," he said referring to police's arrest of PTI workers as abduction. He asked the police to tell on whose order they were carrying out action against the political activists.

The veteran politician apprised that he also went to the police station where he was made to sit for six hours in station house officer's room. However, he admitted, no police official misbehaved with him. He said he told police that he was a sitting MNA, therefore, he could not be arrested without the National Assembly speaker's permission. He said a case was lodged against PTI's Salman Akram Raja for blocking the road, which he denied was the case saying they only held a peaceful protest. He asked the authorities to show surveillance camera footage if arteries were blocked. Earlier, about 40 PTI leaders and workers had been booked under serious charges including terrorism, abduction, interference in public affairs and harassment. Sources said the PTI leaders and supporters had staged a protest on Mall Road in Lahore against alleged rigging in the general elections 2024. As per the first investigation report (FIR), at least 38 PTI workers including women are nominated in the case. It claimed that PTI leader Hafiz Farhat Abbas incited the party activists to damage public properties.

Russia accuses US of trying to meddle in presidential polls

Russia's SVR Foreign Intelligence Service said in a statement it had information that US President Joe Biden's administration had set out to meddle in the election, state media reported

MOSCOW: President Vladimir Putin's foreign intelligence service on Monday accused the United States of trying to meddle in Russia's presidential election and said that Washington even had plans to launch a cyber attack on the online voting system. Putin, who is almost certain to win the March 15-17 presidential election, has warned the West that any attempts by foreign powers to meddle in the ballot would be considered an act of aggression. Russia's SVR Foreign Intelligence Service said in a statement it had information that US President Joe Biden's administration had set out to meddle in the election, state media reported. "According to information received by the Foreign Intelligence Service of the Russian Federation, the administration of J. Biden is setting a task for American NGOs to achieve a decrease in turnout," the SVR was cited as saying. "With the participation of leading American IT specialists, it is planned to carry out cyber attacks on the remote electronic voting system, which will make it impossible to count the votes of a significant proportion of Russian voters," the SVR said.

The SVR, the main successor to the KGB's First Directorate foreign spying service, did not set out any evidence for its assertions. There was no immediate reaction from Washington. The West casts Putin as a dictator, a war criminal and a killer who has led Russia into an imperial-style land grab that has weakened Russia and forged Ukrainian statehood while uniting the West and handing Nato a post-Cold War mission. Putin casts the Ukraine war as an existential battle between a "sacred" Russian civilisation and an arrogant West which he says is in cultural, political and economic decline and which sought to humiliate Russia after the fall of the Soviet Union. The Kremlin last week said that Russia will not meddle in the November US presidential election, and dismissed American findings that Moscow orchestrated campaigns to sway both the 2016 and 2020 US presidential elections. Putin, Russia's paramount leader since the last day of 1999, has dropped a series of ironic remarks about the US election, saying that he finds Joe Biden preferable as the next US president to Donald Trump. - Agencies

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