



Court cancels arrest warrants for ex-PM Imran Khan - Court adjourns hearing in corruption case until March 30.

Islamabad (News Agencies): Court in Pakistan has cancelled arrest warrants for former Prime Minister Imran Khan in a corruption case, according to Khan's lawyer. Faisal Fareed Chaudhry, part of Khan's legal team said the court in the capital, Islamabad, adjourned the session and instructed the former prime minister to ensure his presence at the next hearing on March 30.

The warrants were cancelled after Khan officially marked his appearance at the court. Khan's car reached the gate of the court building on Saturday during confrontations between police and supporters of his Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party.

"Imran Khan was outside the court in his vehicle, trying to enter the court," Chaudhry said. "However, police tried their level best to restrict him from entering the court and used brutal force against his followers."

Earlier on Saturday, police in Lahore stormed Khan's residence, breaking down the entrance gate to gain access as officers clashed with PTI supporters. Police said they arrested more than 60 people.

Usman Anwar, inspector general of the Punjab Police, said authorities completed a search and recovered



weapons, including Klashnikov rifles and a large number of bullets. Speaking at a press conference in Lahore, Anwar said police were fired upon by PTI workers inside the property. A heavy police contingent was present for the raid along with heavy machinery and water cannon. Footage showed police using cranes to break through the main gate of the house, after which they baton-charged the PTI workers who were resisting their entrance into the house. Khan

condemned the raid and said it was carried out while his wife was alone at home. "Punjab police have led an assault on my house in Zaman Park, where Bushra Begum is alone," Khan tweeted. "Under what law are they doing this?" Khan's court appearance came days after a dramatic standoff at his house in Lahore, where police sought to arrest him after the former prime minister failed to appear in court, leading to clashes between police and Khan's supporters.

US security forces brace for possible 'Trump' arrest - media



NEW YORK (Agencies): Federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies are reportedly discussing security preparations in the event that former President Donald Trump is indicted on felony falsification charges in the coming days, according to multiple media outlets, citing anonymous officials. The agencies are carrying out "preliminary security assessments" in and around a Manhattan courthouse to prepare for a possible indictment linked to an alleged "hush money" scheme involving a woman who claimed to have been intimate with the ex-president, five senior officials told NBC on Friday. While the officials stressed that the discussions are "precautionary" given that no charges have been filed, they said preparations are being made for an indictment that could come as early as next week.

Gold surges as US banking crisis rages



NEW YORK (Agencies): Gold prices continued to climb on Friday as investors turn their attention to safe haven assets amid concerns of further market turbulence triggered by the banking crisis in the US and Europe. The precious metal has been extending gains since Monday, when it opened trading at \$1,879 per ounce, to \$1,936 on Friday afternoon, having started the day at \$1,921. Investors traditionally turn to gold in times of market uncertainty, to hedge risks. Throughout history, the precious metal has been seen as a reliable investment instrument during periods of economic instability, stock market crises, military conflicts and pandemics.

US resumes Black Sea drone flights

WASHINGTON (Agencies): The US military sent another spy drone over the Black Sea on Friday, maintaining distance from the restricted airspace in which an MQ-9 drone, flying 'silently' without a transponder, crashed earlier this week after being intercepted by Russian jets. Flight tracking sites showed a UAV with the callsign Forte10, identified as a RQ-4 Global Hawk, circling over Romanian airspace before flying south and east. The drone circled over the eastern part of the Black Sea, but never came closer than 100 kilometers to Crimea. The Black Sea portion of the mission took only two hours, instead of the usual



12, one pro-Ukrainian observer tweeted, calling it "definitely the strangest route that I have ever seen the RQ-4 take." Unnamed US officials later confirmed the mission to Reuters, saying it was the first such flight since Tuesday's incident. However, the Pentagon had previously said another drone had been dispatched to monitor a possible salvage operation by the Russian Navy.

International court issues war crimes warrant for Putin



THE HAGUE (Agencies): The International Criminal Court said Friday that it has issued an arrest warrant for Russian President Vladimir Putin for war crimes, accusing him of personal responsibility for the abductions of children from Ukraine. Although world leaders have been indicted before, it was the first time the global court has issued a warrant against a leader of one

of the five permanent members of the UN Security Council. The court said in a statement that Putin "is allegedly responsible for the war crime of unlawful deportation of (children) and that of unlawful transfer of (children) from occupied areas of Ukraine to the Russian Federation." It also issued a warrant for the arrest of Maria Alekseyevna Lvova-Belova, the commissioner for Children's Rights in the Office of the President of the Russian Federation. The move was immediately dismissed by Moscow — and welcomed by Ukraine as a major breakthrough. Its practical implications, however, could well be limited as the chances of either facing trial at the ICC are extremely unlikely.

French govt faces no-confidence votes over pensions fight

PARIS (AFP/APP): French President Emmanuel Macron's government on Friday faced no-confidence motions in parliament and intensified protests after imposing a contentious pension reform without a vote in the lower house. The situation presents Macron, who has only made occasional public comments on the matter, with one of his biggest challenges less than one year into his second and final mandate. Prime Minister Elisabeth Borne on Thursday invoked article 49.3 of the constitution to impose the pension overhaul by decree, sparking angry demonstrations



nationwide that raged unabated on Friday. French opposition lawmakers on Friday retaliated by filing motions of no-confidence in the government, hoping to repeal the deeply unpopular law, which will hike the retirement age from 62 to 64.

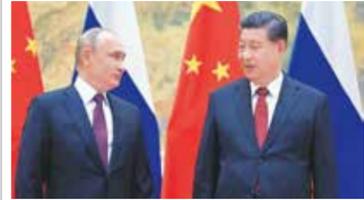
Australia tells Modi it cannot stop Khalistan Referendum voting

BRISBANE (APP): Tensions have risen between India and Australia after the Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese told Prime Minister Narendra Modi that his govt cannot stop legal right to expression of pro-Khalistan Sikhs in Australia after Modi govt demanded a ban on Khalistan Referendum taking place on March 19, at the Brisbane Exhibition and Convention Centre. Tensions have risen here ahead of Khalistan Referendum voting on March 19 as dozens of pro-Khalistan Sikhs rounded up and forced closure of India's honorary consulate in Brisbane and the Australian government issued an updated travel advisory advising its citizens against travelling to India due to a "high risk of violence" in certain



states, including Punjab. Few days before the March 19 voting organized by pro-Khalistan secessionist group Sikhs For Justice (SFJ), the Indian External Affairs Ministry spokesperson Arindam Bagchi has said that Prime Minister Narendra Modi had raised with his Australian counterpart Anthony Albanese the recent alleged incidents of attacks on temples in Australia as well as pro-Khalistani activities in that country.

Putin, Xi to usher 'new era' in ties during Moscow visit



MOSCOW (Agencies): Russian President Vladimir Putin and Chinese leader Xi Jinping will sign accords ushering in a "new era" of ties in Moscow next week, the Kremlin said on Friday. Xi will be in Russia from Monday to Wednesday, Beijing and Moscow announced, for talks with his strategic ally just over a year into Russia's military campaign in Ukraine. Kremlin advisor Yuri Ushakov said Putin and Xi would sign a key declaration "on strengthening [the two countries'] comprehensive

partnership and strategic relations entering a new era." China's foreign ministry called Xi's trip "a visit for peace" that aimed to "practise true multilateralism... improve global governance and make contributions to the development and progress of the world". The two leaders would exchange views on relations between their countries, and major international and regional issues, ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin told reporters. "The world has entered a new period of turmoil," he said. "China will uphold its objective and fair position on the Ukrainian crisis and play a constructive role in promoting peace talks," he added. In comments carried by Russian news agencies, Ushakov said the Kremlin "highly valued" Beijing's "restrained and considered position" on the conflict.

WHO sees Covid posing similar threat to flu this year

GENEVA (Agencies): The Covid-19 pandemic could settle down this year to a point where it poses a threat similar to flu, the World Health Organisation said on Friday. The WHO voiced confidence that it will be able to declare an end to the emergency some time in 2023, saying it was increasingly hopeful about the pandemic phase of the virus coming to a close. Last weekend marked three years since the UN health agency first described the situation as a pandemic — though WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus insists countries should have jolted into action several weeks before. "I think we're coming to that point where we can look at Covid-19 in the same way we look at seasonal influenza," WHO emergencies director Michael Ryan told a press conference. "A threat



to health, a virus that will continue to kill. But a virus that is not disrupting our society or disrupting our hospital systems, and I believe that that will come, as Tedros said, this year." The WHO chief said the world was in a much better position now than it has been at any time during the pandemic. "I am confident that this year we will be able to say that Covid-19 is over as a public health emergency of international concern (PHE-IC)," he said.

Underfunding forces rations cuts in poverty-stricken Afghanistan: UN agency



UNITED NATIONS (APP): The World Food Programme (WFP), a Rome-based UN food agency, announced Friday that a lack of funds has forced it to carry out deep cuts to life-saving assistance in March for at least four million people. The agency appealed for urgent funding for its operations in the country, where families are battling crisis after crisis, including growing hunger, since the Taliban takeover in 2021. Catastrophic hunger could become widespread across Afghanistan, and unless humanitarian support is sustained, hundreds of thousands more

people will need assistance to survive, the agency said in an alert. Due to funding constraints, at least four million people will receive just half of what they need to get by in March. Food stocks have run out before the next harvest is due in May, this is traditionally the most difficult time of the year for rural families, WFP said. The cuts come at a time when already vulnerable Afghans are just emerging from yet another freezing winter. Sub-zero temperatures combined with economic distress has pushed millions into despair, the agency added. WFP urgently needs \$ 93 million to assist 13 million people in April and \$800 million for the next six months. Although donors gave record amounts in 2022, since November last year WFP had been warning that funds would run out just as the lean season is reaching its peak in March and April.

About Khyber Mail The Khyber mail was first published in Peshawar, Pakistan in 1932. A newspaper in English by the eminent journalist Sheikh Sana Ullah. From 1932 to 1989 it has survived as leading English newspaper in the region by the sons of Sana Ullah i.e. Sheikh Zaka Ullah, Sheikh Inayat Ullah and Sheikh Saleem Ullah. The publication was shut down in 1989 due to various reasons. The current owner Rizwan Inayat son of Sheikh Inayat Ullah and grandson of Sheikh Sana Ullah, has restarted the family heritage but meeting with the requirement of the century, by giving the readers current happenings around the world with one touch anywhere any time and updating the reader to pace up with the world.

U.S. Embassy-funded PMIS Training concluded for Prison Staff in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

PESHAWAR (Staff Report): The U.S. Embassy-funded 'Prison Management Information System (PMIS) Khyber Pakhtunkhwa' has successfully concluded two rounds of Training of the Trainers. The two 5-day PMIS training sessions were conducted on 06 to 17 March 2023 for 84 prison staff members, including seven women participants at the Prison Training Academy in Haripur. The U.S. Embassy's International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Office (INL), with UNODC's technical support, aims to equip 40 prison facilities with computer networking in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and the Merged districts. The project also includes provision of IT equipment, development of PMIS, and trainings on the operation and management of PMIS for prison staff members. Through the PMIS training, participants were introduced to the PMIS manual and technical



modules that included barrack allocations, reallocations, barrack history, management of the visitors, and check-in and check-out of inmates. Participants were trained in the court production module, providing an overview of how efficiently the production process in the jail

is managed using the digital module. Hospital and medical management modules addressed prescriptions in OPD, hospital admissions, and adding, transferring, and dispensing medicine. The training concluded with the HR module covering staff profile management.

Partly cloudy weather predicted for most districts of KP

PESHAWAR (APP): The Provincial Meteorological Center Saturday predicted partly cloudy weather for most districts of the province with chances of isolated rain-thunderstorm and gusty winds over Swat, Chitral, Lower & Upper Dir, Shangla. Rain and thunderstorm is also expected in Buner, Malakand, Kohistan, Battagram, Torghar, Mansehra, Abbottabad, Haripur, Mohmand, Bajaur, Swabi, Mardan, Nowshera,

Charsadda, Peshawar, Khyber, Orakzai, Hangu, Kurram, Kohat, Karak, Bannu, Lakki Marwat, North & South Waziristan, Tank and D I Khan districts. Mostly cloudy weather is expected over most parts of Gilgit Baltistan region and light rain at mountainous places of the region. National Agromet Centre has also advised farmers to start harvesting and sowing of crops keeping in view changes in climate and temperature.

Governor urges people to collectively work for resolving country's current financial problems

PESHAWAR (APP): Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Haji Ghulam Ali here on Friday said that efforts were underway to overcome current financial crises urging nation to join hands for development and progress of the country. He was the chief guest in a ceremony organized by Institute of Architects and Design Exhibition. He said that the nation was capable to cope with any situation adding the financial problems of the country would be overcome very soon. He said that various projects had been launched in Peshawar to compete the world that was moving towards modernism and innovations. He expressed the hope that new residential schemes would address the problems of population that wanted to live in affordable and beautiful homes. The governor said that builders must ensure quality and standard in construction and designs earthquake proof buildings. It is worth mentioning that ceremony was attended by 35 famous brands related to field of architecture who presented various proposals and new ideas.

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Consultative workshop on Peshawar's Prosperity five year Plan held

PESHAWAR (APP): A consultative workshop on Peshawar Prosperity five Years Plan was organized with the objective to holding discussion on economic development of Peshawar and Khyber Pakhtunwa. According to a press release issued

here on Saturday, the workshop was organized by Small and Medium Enterprises Development Authority (SMEDA) and Centre for Governance and Public Accountability (CGPA) here at a local hotel. The SMEDA and CGPA are jointly developing Peshawar Prosperity Plan under the project "Mobilizing Economic Reformers to Keep Critical Civic Space Open in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province. Stakeholders from industries, academia, civil society and government departments participated in the workshop. During the workshop, tangible projects and interventions were suggested for the development of SME sector in the province. It was also agreed that a comprehensive report on Peshawar prosperity plan will be developed in light of these suggestions and be shared with concerned departments for further implementation. It merits mention here that Peshawar Prosperity five Years Plan (PP5P) aims at developing actionable and realistic targets for the five years which can contribute to improving business ecosystem in Peshawar.

entrepreneurship Development, Availability of Adequate Industrial Infrastructure, Improving Awareness Regarding Relevant Laws, Rules and Regulations, Simplified Laws, Rules and Regulation, Marketing and Linkages Development, Capacity Building of SMEs, Easy access to Finance, Ease in Licensing, NOCs, Registrations, Documentation, Introduction of Modern Technology, Technical and Vocational Skill and Improving Business Ecosystem for Women Entrepreneurs. Improvement in the above 10 areas can bring tangible results in improving the overall business ecosystem and can help improve the economic development, adds the press release. For the development of the PP5P, action planning method of the technology of participation will be utilized. The method requires systematic and methodological involvement of the stakeholders not only in the planning stages, but also in the implementation stages. The key milestones need to be identified by the stakeholders themselves.

Ten thematic areas have been identified for PP5P through intense stakeholders' engagement through Public Private Dialogues (PPDs). These thematic areas included En-

trepreneurship Development, Availability of Adequate Industrial Infrastructure, Improving Awareness Regarding Relevant Laws, Rules and Regulations, Simplified Laws, Rules and Regulation, Marketing and Linkages Development, Capacity Building of SMEs, Easy access to Finance, Ease in Licensing, NOCs, Registrations, Documentation, Introduction of Modern Technology, Technical and Vocational Skill and Improving Business Ecosystem for Women Entrepreneurs. Improvement in the above 10 areas can bring tangible results in improving the overall business ecosystem and can help improve the economic development, adds the press release.

GOLD PRICE IN PAK

Gold Rate	24K Gold	22K Gold	21K Gold	18K Gold
Per Tola Gold	Rs 223,291	Rs 204,683	Rs 195,379	Rs 167,468
Per 10 Gram	Rs 191,387	Rs 175,438	Rs 167,463	Rs 143,540
Per Gram Gold	Rs 19,138	Rs 17,543	Rs 16,746	Rs 14,354
Per Ounce	Rs 542,597	Rs 497,381	Rs 474,773	Rs 406,948

FOREX RATES

Currency	Buying	Selling
US Dollar	282.7	285.5
China Yuan	41.09	41.49
Japanese Yen	2.06	2.11
Saudi Riyal	75.2	76
U.A.E Dirham	77.25	78
UK Pound	341.5	345
Euro	299.5	302.5
Australian Dollar	186	188.4
Canadian Dollar	204	206.2

Emergency Numbers

Organization	Phone No
Rescue 1122 HQrs	091-2264224-25
Rescue 1122 Mardan	0937-9230770
Fire Brigade Cantt:	091-9212534
Fire Brigade City	091-2566666
Police Emergency	091-9212222
Edhi Ambulance	091-2214575
Red Crescent Ambulance	091-2210836
Emergency Ambulance	091-2590846
Civil Defence, Peshawar	091-9212176
Lady Reading Hospital	091-9211430
HMC Peshawar	091-9217140-46
KTH Peshawar	091-9216340-8
Irnham Hospital	091-9216115
Mission Hospital	091-2212371
Al-Khidmat Hospital	091-2215945
Fauji Foundation Hospital	091-9212771-4
Frontier Foundation Blood Services	091-5703463
Hamza Foundation, Peshawar	091-5841632
Sui Gas, Peshawar	091-9213016
Wapda Complaint Peshawar	091-9212041
PIA, Peshawar	091-9213351
Airport Inquiry	114
Railway Inquiry	117

Wapda's Noor-ul-Ain wins BoK KP Women Squash Championship

PESHAWAR (APP): Noor-ul-Ain of Pakistan Wapda clinched the trophy of the All Pakistan Bank of Khyber Women Squash Championship after defeating Rushna Mehboob of ZTBL in the final played at Qamar Zaman Squash Complex on Saturday. Bank Khyber HR Head Mohammad Asif was the chief guest along with squash legend Qamar Zaman, Vice President Ehsanullah, Chief Organizer and Chief Referee Manoor Zaman, Associate Secretary Sajjad Khalil, Muhabullah Khan. Finance Secretary Wazir Gul, Coach Adil Faqir and other personalities were present. In the final, WAPDA's Noor Al Ain won the final against Roshana Mahboob of ZTBL in a thrilling 3-2 battle, the score was 11-8, 2-11, 11-5, 6-11 and 11-5. In the four-day Championship, the best 32 top-ranked players from all over the country participated in which Pakistan Army, Pakistan WAPDA, players from SNG-PL, ZTBL, Punjab, Sindh and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa were involved. Among the top rank players participating in the

tournament are Noor Al Ain, Maryam Malik, Komal Khan, Noor Al Huda, Mehwish Ali, Roshana Mahboob, Kainat Amir, Umm Kulsoom, Amna Malik, Hira Aqeel, Sana Bahaduri, Zahra Abdullah, Manahl Aqeel, Hafsa Yusuf, Maira Husain, Naheed Faiz, Wajiha Altaf, Nimra Aqeel, Ayesha Shehbaz, Maleeha Shah, Bushra Shehbaz, Sara Noor, Nashia Shahid and Mashal Khan showed their best game. Squash legend Qamar Zaman and President KP Squash Association Dawood Khan paid tribute to Bank of Khyber for sponsoring the Championship. They said that the bank has always played its role in the promotion and development of sports. They congratulated the MD of Bank of Khyber and his team and appealed to other financial institutions to emulate them. Bank of Khyber HR Head Muhammad Asif congratulated the organizers for organizing the best competitions and expressed determination that Bank of Khyber will continue to play its full role in the development of sports.

Annual Spring Sports Festival in City Gulbahar Girls College begins

PESHAWAR (APP): The most fascinating, joyful and colorful Annual Jashan-e-Baharan (Spring Sports Festival) got underway here at City Gulbahar Girls College under the aegis of Director Sports and College Management with almost all the eight departments are taking part in six different Games. Principal of the City Gulbahar Girls College Professor Tahir Dar was the chief guest on this occasion who formally inaugurated the Sprint Sports Festival carrying six different Games including Netball, Kabaddi, Table Tennis, Badminton,

Taekwondo, Tug of War besides Musical Chair, Spoon Race, Chal Pari, Skits, Qirat, Naat and Delamination Contests would also be organized. Director Sports Miss Miss Najma Qazi, daughter of gold medalist hockey Olympian Qazi Salahuddin, said that they have started the events well before the final day and prize distribution ceremony on Tuesday (March 21). She disclosed that FA, FSc-I, FA, FSc-II, BS English, BS Chemistry, BS Urdu, BS Home Economics, BS Political Science, BS Islamiyat and a team of all Athletes who got admis-

DC directs to provide fire-fighting equipment in public place

ABBOTTABAD (APP): In order to control and prevent the fire incidents, a meeting of all stakeholders was held under the chairmanship of Deputy Commissioner Abbottabad Khalid Iqbal on Friday. The meeting discussed the prevention of fire incidents, their control, implementation of SOPs, and ensuring the safety of

citizens' life and property in public places. The DC issued directives to ensure the provision of fire-fighting equipment at all public places, including petrol pumps, CNG stations, schools, colleges, hospitals, shops, hotels, restaurants, transport, and all other public places, to ensure the safety of citizens' lives and property.

55 suspects arrested during search operation

KOHAT (APP): Police here on Friday arrested fifty five suspects and recovered arms from their possession during a search operation, in the limits of Pindi Road. According to the police spokesman, District Police Officer (DPO) Shehzada Umar Abbas supervised the search operation. The police searched 160

houses and arrested 55 suspects besides recovering one Kalashnikov, two repeaters, four pistols, 14 chargers and hundreds of cartridges from their possession. Lady police, sniffer dogs, bomb disposal squad and armored vehicles equipped with heavy machine guns also took part in the search operation.

Awareness walk, seminar held to mark World TB day

TANK (APP): The District Tuberculosis (TB) control office has organized an awareness walk and seminar in connection with the World TB Day on Saturday. The awareness walk was also participated by District TB Control officer Dr Arshad Nawaz, Public Health coordinator Dr Imran, other staffers of health department and local dignitaries. Later, a ceremony was held in DHQ hospital Tank for creating awareness about TB, its precautions and treatments. Addressing the event, District TB Control Officer Dr Arshad Nawaz said

that TB was a curable disease with continuous treatment of six months. He said that organizing today's walk and this seminar were aimed to make people aware of this life threatening disease. He advised that the patients with cough for more than two weeks must get their TB test, adding, test and treatment of TB were being done free of charge. He informed that five public and 19 private centers were set up in Tank for diagnosis and treatment of TB wherein all the services from diagnosis to provision of medicines were free of cost.

Inter-Club Kabaddi begins in village Surizai Payan

PESHAWAR (APP): Inter-Club Kabaddi Championship of the Peshawar District got underway here at village Soorizai Payan, a suburban village, situated 30-kilometer away from provincial capital Peshawar. After an interesting competition in the match, the team of Qadeem Kali defeated Hiko Daman village by 37-35 in the opening match. Former International Kabaddi player and Secretary General KP Kabaddi Association Syed Sultan Shah Barri was the chief guest on this occasion who formally inaugurated the Championship. Or-

ganizing Secretary Malang Jan, and a large number of spectators were also present. Talking to APP, Syed Sultan Shah Barri said that steps have been taken for the promotion of Kabaddi in Peshawar. He said the association is making every effort for the promotion and development of traditional Game Kabaddi. He said the semi-finals and final would be organized on Monday wherein great enthusiasm was witnessed among players and the event attracted a large number of spectators.

DC plants sapling to start plantation drive

KOHAT (APP): Deputy Commissioner Dr Azmatullah Wazir on Saturday planted a sapling at Sani Khel area of Dara Adamkhel to start plantation drive in the district. Director Agriculture, Representatives of 115 wing and elders of the area were present on this occasion. Speaking on the occasion, DC Azmatullah said that plantation is the need of the hour

to reduce global warming. He said that global warming is dangerous so people should take part in this drive and plant maximum sapling to save the area from warming in future. He said that plantation can play vital role not only against global warming and weather change but to clean the atmosphere and save people from different diseases.

sion on sports basis in various subjects. During the Jashan-e-Baharan Sports Festival, she said, awards of achievements would also be given to the students in academics, Qirat, Naat, Speeches, outstanding players who excelled in different Games at national and international levels.

Speaking on this occasion, Principal Professor Tahira Dar said that the management of the college with the help of Directorate of Higher Education, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, wants to involve the students in healthy sports activities besides providing them due opportunities to excel academically.



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IMF Tranche

While Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif claims that the IMF deal is imminent, there are conflicting reports that indicate that this might not be the case just yet. Experts claim that the IMF is waiting on a final guarantee from the government in the shape of a written commitment to secure funding from allied states to shore up our accounts once the IMF bailout tranche has been released. It is unclear why the IMF is turning this into a non-negotiable when it already is for Pakistan's economic situation. The bailout tranche is only viable if more funding is unlocked as a result. Loans, aid and rollovers from friendly states are currently contingent on the IMF programme's resumption, which is why it is strange to see the IMF circle back and delay its own funding for something that is only unlocked as a result of the resumption. On part of the government, it should finalise the last steps quickly and get the programme started. Each week of delay has cost us, with imports all but banned, and the rupee continuing on its steep downward trend. Investors and businesses are waiting for the staff-level agreement to be inked, and we have heard that this is almost done too many times in the past few months to believe it at face value. Of course, no one seems willing to discuss the real issue—that Pakistan will not head towards stability simply because the IMF tranche comes even, or even once the allied funds are deposited in our accounts. Serious questions need to be asked as to why Pakistan's production numbers continue to drop, and low-growth statistics dominate. Experts have also pointed toward the defence budget and how investment in strategic aims can no longer remain this high a priority due to financial constraints. There is a need for reevaluation and some restructuring. However, unfortunately, none of the political leadership or indeed institutions look ready to engage in this discussion.

Women's Rights: Suffering under Men's abuse

— By Dr. Saira Asad

The gender-based violence against women has become an important debate nowadays. In Pakistan, generally, it is observed to show violent behaviour towards women to fulfil one's will. It is a sign of the weak male gender, who opts for this sort of attitude and tries to malign women to show his domination. Usually, the Islamic role has been interpreted by this group of people as letting them do whatever they want. They just need their desires to be met at once by showing violent behaviour. In this regard, the case is highlighted of a well-educated man from Rawalpindi, who wanted to fulfil his desire of getting rich by showing violent behaviour towards his then-wife. He wanted his wife's property share immediately. He was continuously under the pressure of his family to abuse his wife, and according to their thinking, by keeping a woman under constant pressure, she would surely bring all her property share from her living parents. His mother, who was a widow as well, showed the most wicked plan along with her daughter, son-in-law, younger son, and his wife. Such widows still play a wicked role in the lives of their children. These wicked women and men are still living in our surroundings, who just want their desires to be filled their way, showing shocking and amazing social, and family values. Throughout 17 years of marriage, the woman was being played as a victim in every sense. She was criticized and abused by her family, relatives, based on her education, bringing up, etiquette, and well-being of her children. The jealousy and greed were obvious. Those with this sort of mentality don't digest good character and hard-working girls. They just want to steal whatever the other girl is having due to her hard work. They try to create every sort of hurdle in the way of such girls as this family has created. They are termed psychopaths by experts as their desire for wealth was not being fulfilled, and they started to torture and abuse the girl. The whole plan was being heard by the girl as she was there all the time. The family used to make video conference calls with the daughter and brother-in-law on a daily basis behind closed doors to malign the girl and grab all sorts of her valuables and money. The wicked plan was being made against her. As soon as their meeting ended, the husband and his family started to implement as the family decided. The family had the plan to start a fight immediately. The victim was dragged by the hair,

pulled, punched on her whole body, and kicked along with the abuses of the whole family. As they all were on the point as heard by a girl, this is the right way to grab someone's property. This particular family is accustomed to doing the same as they have done the same within their family and after getting the property they divorced the girl, who was their close relative as well. Their younger brother did the same with his ex-wife. They grab property, jewellery, car, and sons of girls and immediately run door to door to get hold of another girl to marry their sons. They are habitual of doing this for years as they did this with their uncle's wife from the father's side, as well as from their mother's side. Just to see the real face of such people, the mother, dragged her unmarried sister and mother from their house and forced them to sign papers of the house in her name. Horrifying and shameful characters are still present in our surroundings. They take the help of Islam and show they are doing all on the Islamic values. The plan was to first grab property and push two grown-up kids onto the expense of the girl's parents. The whole family was witnessing everything and encouraged the man to beat her up. Such a plan to shun the responsibilities of being a father is shameful. One can not think of such a person and a family, who planned in such a way. They are not even honest with their children. They are black stains in our society. On the other hand, the family was observed as isolated, and lacking social, moral, Islamic, and ethical values. Not even a single person from their family was observed in the life of 17 years visiting their houses. All the time, they were fighting with everyone and never allowed anyone to enter their house. Whenever the girl's family tried to visit their daughter, they started to abuse her and, used to say, people came to their house to eat. The girl was blamed for eating their food, even her husband used to snatch the plate from her hands while eating his food. Such shameful and lowest values are shown. The highlights are lessons for those parents, who are seeing such people involved in these sorts of behaviour should be brought to the court. Regarding this family, the court has come up with the decision of fard-e-jurm. Such wild wolves should be taken head-on, who are too weak to take the pressures and responsibilities of one's wife, and children.

Courtesy: Pakistan Today

Libya has a water problem despite its abundance of 'black gold'

— By Dr Mustafa Fetouri

Libya is one of the driest countries in the Middle East-North Africa region, which is itself home to eleven of the fifteen driest countries in the world. The average annual rainfall in Libya is less than 26mm, with rain mainly in the winter months, and occasionally in early spring, around this time of year. When it does rain, it tends to be in short downpours. The UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) believes that about four million Libyans, half of them children, will face serious water problems unless the issue is tackled soon. According to data from the World Resources Institute (WRI), Libya is projected to be among the top fifteen countries that will have severe water stress by 2040. Water stress is measured by comparing the withdrawal of water against the available renewal quantities of surface and underground water. Water withdrawal includes domestic use, agricultural, industrial and livestock consumption, as well as waste. According to the WRI, the country has a serious fresh water deficit for drinking, agriculture and other economic activities. Since Libya has no natural rivers and rainfall is hardly retained at all on any large scale, it is indeed facing a serious water problem. Something has to be done. There are many reasons for the problem, some of which are beyond human control, such as the dry climate, the lack of rain and harsh desert conditions making evaporation a major issue. However, things like climate change, water mismanagement, urbanisation and a lack of long-term investment in recycling technology, for example, can be tackled by governments and people alike. Solutions exist, but they require strong political will and better policies. Libya actually has large underground aquifers in the desert, which were discovered when oil companies were looking for water sources in the 1960s. Unfortunately, most of these water reserves are hundreds of kilometres away from the

large population centres. Some 70 per cent of the seven million Libyans live in and around the northern coastline, with relatively few scattered in the isolated oases across the vast desert that covers nearly 95 per cent of the country. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, most of the fresh water needs were met using desalination plants on the coast. Libya has nearly 2,000 km of coast on the Southern Mediterranean. As the population grew, though, and its water needs also grew, expensive desalination became increasingly unsustainable. Libya today is about 97 per cent dependent on the aquifers. These aquifers are part of the largest underground water reserves in the world. Beneath Libyan territory lies the Nubian Sandstone Aquifer System, the world's largest known aquifer covering two million square kilometres beneath Libya, Chad, Sudan and Egypt. Just over a third lies beneath Libya. It is estimated that the water could last for over 100 years, if exploited efficiently, despite the fact that most of it is not renewable. With its abundance of "black gold" — oil — Libya was able to establish in 1983 the Great Man-Made River (GMMR) authority to build a canal to take water from the deep aquifers to the population centres in the north and north east, and then manage the project after its completion. Initially, 70 per cent of the water was intended for irrigation purposes. In August 1984, the then leader Muammar Gaddafi laid the foundation stone of the project at the Sarir basin, one of several underground water reservoirs found in at least three locations: Kufra in the south east; Sirte in the centre; and Murzq basin in the south west. The largest of these reservoirs are Al-Sarir and Murzuq. Four months after surviving the US bombing of his home on 15 April 1986, Gaddafi inaugurated the Brega Plant to produce the huge pipes needed for the GMMR. Each pipe is four metres in diameter

and made of pre-stressed concrete with a very long life expectancy. At the time, Libya was under sanctions and boycotts led and reinforced mainly by the US at the height of bad relations between the two countries. Not a penny was borrowed from abroad to finance the construction of the GMMR, estimated at \$33 billion. Instead, Libya used its national funding policies even when oil, its main source of revenue, dropped to as little as \$10 per barrel in the 1980s. The US didn't give up in its attempts to derail the project. When work started on phase II of the GMMR to take water to Tripoli in 1992, the US accused Libya falsely of building unground bunkers for chemical weapon production. Today, the GMMR is threatened by political instability, negligence, illegal connections drawing water from the pipelines and badly maintained water networks within cities. The NATO bombing of Libya in support of the anti-Gaddafi rebellion in 2011 damaged the Brega pipe-making plant, killing six of the facility's security guards. Some of the open reservoirs holding water to be pumped into cities are going dry, while not enough money is made available to maintain the overall network. Currently, the GMMR delivers around 2.5 million cubic metres of water every day, but when power shortages persist during military clashes among the different factions, that figure falls dramatically, and cities like Tripoli suffer from a lack of fresh water. To avoid water shortages and gain the maximum benefit of its "black gold" investments, Libya needs leaders who have the political will and determination to take the nation back to the level that was seen when the GMMR was first mooted all those years ago. The solution to the water issue is there, under our feet. We need to protect and develop it properly.

Courtesy: Middle East Monitor

Radio Pakistan a national asset

— By Naveed Aman Khan

ON 14 August 1947, the first official announcement of the independence of Pakistan was aired from Lahore station of Pakistan Broadcasting Service. And it is a matter of record that broadcasting has performed significantly since then contributing enormously to socio-economic development of the country. Over the years, it has evolved and continues to captivate audiences despite, of course, challenges offered by immense competition and new technologies. Being a state institution, Radio Pakistan has always played a pivotal role in the promotion of national ideology and policies of the state. As the official organ of the state, Radio Pakistan builds national narratives positively in the midst of war of conflicting interests. It also counters anti-state propagandas by some hostile countries and networks. It would not be an exaggeration to say that Radio Pakistan is a soft image builder of the state. From a defence point of view, it is helpful in the execution of civil and military communications as it is a dependable source of information. Since independence on August 14, 1947, Radio grew as an invisible but powerful medium. Radio in Pakistan has been prominent in educating, informing, guiding and entertaining audiences in the country, along with the Pakistani diaspora worldwide. FM Radio was fast food to be consumed on the go. Radio is a popular medium in remote rural areas where affordability and access to television is an issue. The audience for radio is mostly youngsters who have access to mobile phones, with pre-installed FM radio stations and car drivers who contribute to the listener base whereas the elderly are seen com-

fortable with transistors. Radio Pakistan owns broadcasting stations with 80 transmitting units including 23 medium wave and 57 FMs. As many as 46 channels are also available online on Radio Pakistan's website and mobile phone App including shortwave channels, world service and external services. Radio Pakistan facebook followers are 2.6 million, twitter followers 9,64,000, Instagram followers 26,000 and YouTube subscribers 16,000. This is not only reflective of Radio Pakistan's continued popularity and relevance but also the fact that the institution is trying to keep pace with the technological developments and new trends in broadcasting. To promote the country's policies, Radio Pakistan broadcasts Programs, news and commentaries in several foreign languages. Radio Pakistan has a bilingual website (English and Urdu) for the promotion of the state agenda across the world. Despite the presence of popular radio stations such as BBC, VOA and Radio Ceylon in the country, Radio Pakistan's programming has been at par with international stations. The network offered tough competition to the well-established radio stations from around the world. As a reputable organization, Radio Pakistan transmits in several languages including Urdu, English and Chinese, reaching a worldwide audience. The reach of Radio Pakistan is eighty-eight per cent of the country. Till the 1990s, Radio Pakistan enjoyed a monopoly over the radio sector in Pakistan. The monopoly did not let Radio Pakistan succumb to low standards. It produced high-quality programming delivered to audiences from all walks of life. Adver-

tising on the radio in Pakistan started in 1961. It became so popular that advertisers had to book slots and later on asked for more advertising time. Radio Pakistan also played a crucial role in informing audiences about floods, earthquakes and other natural disasters. It is a matter of great concern that a national institution, which is older than Pakistan, is suffering hugely mainly due to the neglect of the policy and decision makers. Radio Pakistan has an elaborate network and trained manpower that can be used to complement efforts of the Government to accelerate the pace of socio-economic development and effectively counter anti-Pakistan propaganda. However, the institution is facing financial crisis, stemming from the misperception that Radio Pakistan is a commercial entity whereas it is a public service institution just like a host of other ministries, divisions, departments and institutions that generate no revenues but contribute their share to the overall development of the country. No doubt, the Government itself is facing financial difficulties but it is a faulty approach to allow national institutions to rot or fade away. There is dire need to reform and modernize this national institution and for this purpose, the Government must make necessary investment, which would be worth-making in view of the contribution of Radio Pakistan in the ideological defence of the country. As for financial problems of Radio Pakistan, the Senate Sub-Committee, headed by Senator Irfan Siddiqui, has come out with an ingenious proposal that needs immediate attention of the Government.

Courtesy: Pakistan Observer

Letters to the Editor

Libraries

Books are among the most valuable things in the world. We need to realize that books give us hope and motivation when we are feeling down. Unfortunately, many of our youth do not understand the value of books, and those who do value them often lack the resources to purchase

them. In this situation, we all need libraries where students can access books and do something productive in their spare time. The lack of libraries is a severe problem in Pakistan, particularly in Karachi. The number of libraries is limited, and even when students are fortunate enough to find them, the majority

of the books they need are not available. We must work to address this issue. For those who read this, I urge you to donate your books to libraries. It may be helpful for our youth and enable them to learn and grow.

— Nosheen Siddiqui
— Karachi



Despite Challenges, our Goal for a Polio Free Pakistan is firm, says Health Minister

ISLAMABAD (APP): A delegation of the French Agency for Development and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation met Federal Health Minister Mr. Abdul Qadir Patel to discuss avenues for cooperation in social protection and health, with a focus on polio eradication. The delegation was visiting Pakistan to identify the country's needs as it works towards interrupting poliovirus transmission in 2023, and to understand areas for support in light of the climate catastrophe of 2022, which left more than 33 million people in need of aid. During the meeting on polio eradication, Minister Abdul Qadir Patel said, "Our health service infrastructure was severely damaged in many districts and thousands of people lost their homes and livelihoods, placing a severe strain on our social protection mechanisms after the 2022 floods. We are still recovering, but despite these toughest of times, Pakistan



has not diluted its focus from polio eradication. We owe our children of Pakistan a polio free future, like children all over the world, deserve a life free from a preventable paralytic disease." The Gates Foundation delegation was led by Jay Wenger, Global Head for Polio Eradication, while the French Agency for Development delegation was headed by Agnès Soucat, Director of Health and Social Protection. The delegation members appreciated the progress made by Pakistan last year and they

expressed their wish that the end to polio was very much in sight with only seven districts remaining polio endemic. All polio cases after 2021 have been reported from southern Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. "Thanks to the generous support of the international community, Pakistan has been aggressively fighting the poliovirus. Support from donors to close the gap on funding so we can successfully conduct immunization campaigns - the impetus needed to make it to the end of this journey.

PM praises umpire Aleem Dar for his meritorious services

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Saturday appreciated umpire Aleem Dar for his meritorious services to international cricket and said Pakistan was proud of him. On his Twitter handle, the prime minister said Pakistan thanked umpire Aleem Dar for his meritorious services to international cricket, as he stepped down from the 'ICC Elite Panel of Umpires'. "His flawless umpiring across all formats of the game has won praise across the cricketing world. Pakistan is proud of him!" he added in a tweet. The record-holding 54-year-old Dar had officiated in 435 men's tests, ODIs and

T20s including four world cup finals to his cap. The International Cricket Council (ICC) on its Twitter account, posted that Dar had a long and celebrated career as an international umpire. He made his international debut in 2000 and quickly rose through the ranks, with his sound decisions in matches earning him acclaim from the players and fans. "Dar was appointed to the ICC International Panel of Umpires in 2002 and officiated at the 2003 ICC Men's Cricket World Cup in South Africa. Dar continued his rise as he was appointed as a member of the Elite Panel of ICC Umpires in 2004.

ACS for early repairing, renovation of Damdama

MULTAN (APP): Additional Chief Secretary (ACS) South Punjab Capt. (R), Saqib Zafar, directed officials concerned to complete the repairing and renovation work at Damdama as early as possible. He expressed these views during his visit to Damdama here on Saturday and took strict notice of the lack of proper maintenance. Speaking on the occasion, ACS South said that Qasim Bagh Fort was a historical and tourist place and every day hundreds of tourists visit the shrines and Damdama located on the fort. He directed to do repair and renovation of Damdama in the best manner and cleaned the portraits and other articles displayed in the art gallery on daily basis. Metropolitan Corporation officials have started painting work at an art gallery and other parts of Damdama after receiving orders from the Secretary Local government of South Punjab.

Punjab govt imposes Section 144 in Rawalpindi

RAWALPINDI (APP): Punjab government on Saturday imposed section 144 in the district Rawalpindi to control the overall law and order situation. The Punjab government's Home Department has issued a notification for the implementation of Section 144 in Rawalpindi. Orders were issued by the Additional Chief Secretary (Home), Government of Punjab for immediate implementation of Section 144. According to the notification issued by the Punjab government, there is a fear of security threats in view of the law and order situation and terrorists may target public places. Rallies, meetings and other gatherings will not be allowed and a complete ban on gatherings of more than four people should be ensured. No person will be allowed to carry arms and enforcement of Section 144 would be for one day, March 18.

Power shutdown notice

FAISALABAD (APP): The Faisalabad Electric Supply Company (Fesco) issued a shutdown notice for Sunday due to necessary repair, maintenance and expansion of electricity lines. According to the notice issued by the company, power supply from al-Faisal, Elyas Garden, Roshan Wala, Masood Abad, Chenab Garden, Mujahid Abad, Government General Hospital and Muzaffar Colony feeders linked with 132-KV Sammudri Road grid station will remain suspended from 9:30 am to 1:30 pm while Kanwan Wala, 8:30 am to 5:30 pm on Sunday (March 19). Similarly, electricity supply from DHQ, Aasiyan, Muazzam Shah, Hindoana, Chenab Nagar, Muslim Bazaar, Jhumra Road/Raza, City, Badshahi Masjid, Dawar, Sakhi Abdul Wahhab and Shah Burhan feeders connected with 132-KV Chiniot grid station, Faisal, Sheikhupura Road, Paradise, Hamdard-1, Zia Town and Raza Town-1 feeders originating from 132-KV SPS grid station, Civil Line, DHQ, Jubilee and Abdullah Pur feeders linked with 132-KV Chak No.

"Dare To Be" Conference celebrates International Women's Day



ISLAMABAD (Staff Report): Google Developers Group Islamabad and Women Techmakers Islamabad, jointly hosted a conference to mark International Women's Day (IWD) on the theme "Dare To Be." The conference was a resounding success, featuring valuable insights from talented tech women and the industry's brightest minds. The event celebrated diversity by inviting not only professionals, but also students from various backgrounds, the transgender community and the differently abled, to motivate them to embrace their aspirations, ambitions, dreams, and share them with others. This year's IWD theme was about encouraging each other to be their authentic selves, and to break

stereotypes. The conference explored what it means to be audaciously bold, to walk through the world with courage and confidence. The conference kicked with a keynote by Ali Naqi Rizvi, Co-Manager, Google Developers Group (GDG), who explained the background of GDG Islamabad, introduced the team, and took a trip down memory lane. Sarwat Rizvi, Women Techmakers Ambassador & Data Science Consultant, Convergent Business Technologies, dove into the details on what our theme "Dare To Be" truly means, how the agenda for this year's IWD was intricately designed to provide a platform to the next generation of female leaders and underrepresented communities.

Joint Statement on U.S.-Pakistan Climate and Environment Working Group

ISLAMABAD (Staff Report): The United States and Pakistan concluded the second meeting of the Climate and Environment Working Group in Islamabad. Pakistan's Minister for Climate Change Sherry Rehman and the U.S. Department of State's Assistant Secretary for the Bureau of Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs Monica Medina led the delegations. Officials and experts engaged on climate and environment issues, including climate change, energy transition, water management, climate-smart agriculture, air quality, biodiversity, and waste management including plastics recycling. The delegations discussed the impacts of the devastating floods in Pakistan in 2022 and emphasized the importance of building resilience to the impacts of climate change. The United States expressed support for Pakistan's "Living Indus" initiative to restore the ecological health of the Indus River Basin in Pakistan. The two governments recommitted to tackling the climate crisis through cooperation on climate change mitigation and adaptation. Both governments resolved to contin-



ue deepening their bilateral partnership through the U.S.-Pakistan "Green Alliance" framework. The "Green Alliance" will help Pakistan and the United States jointly face the climate, environmental, and economic needs of the present and future, especially through partnership on agriculture, water, and clean energy. Regarding agriculture, the delegations discussed the importance of adopting modern farming practices and innovative seed varieties to bolster resilience against climate change. On water management, the governments identified technical assistance, governance, and water efficiency mechanisms as areas ripe for cooperation. Both governments emphasized the importance of supporting nature-based solutions and building community resilience to climate change.

'Bundle of bail packages' seemed Imran above law, constitution: Marriyum

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister for Information and Broadcasting Marriyum Aurangzeb said on Saturday "bundle package of bails" given to Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf Chairman Imran Khan was a message that he was above the Constitution and law. In a tweet, without naming Imran Khan and PTI, she said those terrorists who attacked police, the judicial system

and the state "got a bundle package of bail". The minister said it was a message for those who were attacked and got injured in the line of duty that "the foreign agent, Toshakhana watch thief" was above the Constitution, law and justice system. She said that followers of "terrorist Imran" had not thrown petrol bombs on police and rangers but on court orders also.

Pak-China ready to advance bilateral cooperation

BEIJING (APP): China is ready to work with Pakistan to advance friendly cooperation and promote the construction of China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) and all-round cooperation between the two countries for greater progress, Chinese State Councilor and Foreign Minister Qin Gang said during his meeting with Pakistan's Foreign Secretary Asad Majeed Khan in Beijing. Noting that the iron-clad friendship between China and Pakistan has withstood the test of time and the changing international landscape, Qin said China appreciates Pakistan for its strong support on issues concerning China's core interests. Asad Majeed Khan said Pakistan

regards its relations with China as the most important bilateral relationship and firmly pursues the one-China policy. Pakistan is willing to further deepen cooperation with China in various fields, strengthen coordination and cooperation on international and regional affairs and constantly consolidate the all-weather strategic cooperative partnership between Pakistan and China, he added. They discussed Pakistan-China bilateral cooperation and reaffirmed the significance of China-Pakistan strategic ties in the evolving regional & international milieu, Spokesperson, Pakistan's MFA tweeted after the meeting.

University of London alumni reception held

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister for Law and Justice Senator Azam Nazeer Tarar Friday lauded the role of the University of London for contributing to legal education in Pakistan. The minister while speaking at the University of London Alumni Reception here, said that the University's external law programme has significantly contributed to legal education. The reception was attended by Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Narcotics Atta Tarar, British Council Regional Director for South Asia Adrian Codway and Pro Vice Chancellor University of

London Professor Mary Stiasny and Regional Head South Asia for University of London Saad Wasim. Prominent speakers included Zahir Riaz and the chairperson for the competition commission of Pakistan Rahat Kunain were also present on the occasion. The event was also attended by the senior members of the Pakistan Bar Council, distinguished Alumni of the University of London and the British Council Head for Pakistan, the Chevening Head for Pakistan and key Employers and students of the University of London.

Govt enhances budget allocations for provision of quality education: Farah

QUETTA (APP): Balochistan government's Spokesperson Farah Azeem Shah on Friday said that the provincial government has increased five per cents of the education budget to remove the backwardness and to ensure the provision of quality education. The recruitment of 10,000 teachers is being implemented, 62 schools have been upgraded, and construction of a power plant and airport in Gwadar has been

completed which will be made operational on March 23, she added. She expressed these views while addressing a press conference at the Chief Minister's Secretariat here. Farah Azeem Shah said that the government of Balochistan was determined to make the youth skilled while in this regard, all possible measures were being taken to end the educational backwardness by equipping the youth with quality education.

Joint statement of 9th Session of Pakistan-Australia Joint Trade Committee (JTC)

ISLAMABAD (Staff Report): The 9th Session of Pakistan-Australia Joint Trade Committee (JTC) was held at the Ministry of Commerce. The Secretary Commerce, Muhammad Sualeh Ahmad Faruqi in opening remarks mentioned that Pakistan values its trade relations with Australia. He highlighted that Australia has emerged among the major development partners of Pakistan. Leader of the Australian delegation, The leader of Australian delegation, Mr. Gary Cowan, First Assistant Secretary, North and South Asia Division, thanked the Pakistani side for hosting the 9th session of JTC and mentioned that Australia is looking forward to discuss matters of bilateral



trade and mutual importance. The Additional Secretary (Trade Diplomacy), Mr. Ahsan Ali Mangi led the Pakistani delegation during the JTC session. Matters pertaining to market access, rights related intellectual property rights especially with regard to Pakistan rice exports, import procedures in agricultural, Information Technology and Trade promotion were discussed.

Alibaba Group's Daraz facilitates donation of around US\$320,000 for flood relief efforts in Pakistan

KARACHI (Staff Report): In response to the devastating floods that hit Pakistan last year, Daraz has announced that it will facilitate a donation of around US \$320,000 from its China-based parent company Alibaba Group to support efforts to rehabilitate communities affected by the disaster. The donation will be made to The Citizens Foundation, a globally recognized and respected non-profit organization working since 1995 to provide quality education to the underserved population of the country. The funds will be utilized to build a school in the Badin District of Sindh for 180 children to resume their education at the earliest possible, and its upkeep for the next five years. Daraz Pakistan will be managing the overall partnership with The Citizens Foundation to govern the construction of the school and monitor the project's

progress on a monthly basis. Ehsan Saya, Managing Director, Daraz Pakistan, stated, "The country has been through the worst natural disasters in its history, affecting a significant number of our population and infrastructure. Recovering from the losses caused will not be linear. As organizations and individuals, we must all step up to help in whatever capacity we can. At Daraz, generosity of spirit is one of our core values which we try to live by every day, especially at difficult times that affect our nation. We are proud to be a part of Alibaba Group, which is contributing to helping communities rebuild their lives. The gift of education is the best way to give back to society in the most meaningful manner, and we are confident that we will be able to transform many lives through this partnership with The Citizens Foundation."

Over 1800 polling stations planned in Multan for Punjab Assembly elections

MULTAN (APP): Deputy Commissioner Omar Jahangir on Friday chaired a joint meeting of the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) Multan officials, police and local administration to discuss arrangements for April 30 Punjab Assembly elections to be held across the province including Multan. ECP Multan officials, police and district administration have started making arrangements for people to use their right to vote in a peaceful manner on April 30 polling day. Omar Jahangir said that over 1800 polling stations would be set up in the district adding that code

of conduct would remain enforced throughout the whole process from election campaigning to polling. City Police Officer (CPO) Mansoor ul Haq Rana, Returning Officers, District officers, and ECP Multan officials were in attendance. Security arrangements would be made at all polling stations with special emphasis on those identified as sensitive polling stations. DC asked Returning Officers to visit polling stations for assessment of requirements for fool-proof arrangements. Officials also discussed the transportation plan to transport election material.

Youth need to be given higher education, skills: Governor Sindh

KARACHI (APP): Sindh Governor Kamran Khan Tessori on Friday said more than 64% of our total population consisted of youth and they needed to be given higher education and skills. In this regard, Shaheed Benazir Bhutto Deewan University (SBBD) was performing the most important duty of providing higher education to the youth, the Governor said, while addressing as a chief guest at the first convocation ceremony of the said university held at a local hotel. He said Karachi, despite being an economic hub of the coun-

try, was facing power outages, and gas and water shortages. Speaking to the students, the Governor said the convocation day was actually the parents' day. "The credit for the success of the graduating students goes to the parents and teachers, as it involves their day and night hard work." The governor asked the graduating students to rise from their seats and to clap as a token of appreciation for their parents and teachers. He expressed his delight that all the gold, silver and bronze medals were won by the female students.

LHC allows police to access Imran Khan's residence for investigations

LAHORE (APP): The Lahore High Court (LHC) on Friday allowed police to access Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf Chairman Imran Khan's residence in Zaman Park for completing investigations in connection with events that took place during police action for his arrest on March 14 and 15. Justice Tariq Saleem Sheikh passed the orders while allowing a civil miscellaneous application filed by the police for access to the residence of PTI chairman for investigations. The police had sought per-

mission to complete investigations of events that took place during the operation for the arrest of the PTI chairman on March 14 and 15. The police submitted that it had registered three cases so far in connection with the events and it was mandatory to visit the premises for completion of the investigations. Meanwhile, Justice Tariq Saleem Sheikh also disposed of a petition filed by PTI leader Fawad Chaudhry against the police operation launched for the arrest of the PTI chairman in Zaman park.

HEC kicks off first-ever batch of Women Leadership Programme for Sindh

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Higher Education Commission (HEC) via its Higher Education Development in Pakistan (HEDP) concluded the 5th cohort of the Women Leadership Programme. The training sessions were conducted at the NAHE regional centre in Karachi from March 13-17. Thirty future female leaders from all public sector universities across the Sindh province attended the training. Women from all disciplines medical, engineering, humanities, and others participated. Most of these are mid-career professionals working as Heads of

Departments, Registrar, and senior faculty members. This programme is a crucial step towards building the capacity of women leaders in the higher education sector of Pakistan. The programme kicked off under the leadership of Vice Chancellor Rawalpindi Women University, Prof. Dr. Anila Kamal and Advisor Academics, Curriculum and NAHE Engr. Muhammad Raza Chohan, who delivered detailed sessions on Gender and Workplace Communication, Art of Negotiation, and Governance in Higher Education, and recruitment policies respectively.

KPK officials concerned about terrorist threat to upcoming elections

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Chief Secretary of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Inspector General Police KPK have expressed concern about the security of the upcoming provincial assembly elections due to the involvement of terrorists in "Spring Offensive" in the province which is expected to intensify in the province from April to October. Briefing the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) during a meeting chaired by Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Sikandar Sultan Raja here Friday, they categorically stated that they cannot give any guarantee about the peace during the upcoming general elections due to bad law and order situation, financial woes and the

shortage of 56,000 police personnel. The IGP Khyber Pakhtunkhwa highlighted the alarming increase in terror incidents in the region. He revealed that various terrorist groups operating from different provinces in Afghanistan, including Badakhshan, Nuristan, Kantar, Nangarhar, Paktika and others, have been involved in terrorist activities in the province. According to the IGP, the province witnessed a total of 495 terror incidents in the year 2022, while the current year has already seen 118 incidents resulting in 100 fatalities and 275 injuries. The increase in terrorist activities has raised serious concerns about the security situation in the region.

84th meeting of Advance Studies, Research Board of IUB held

BAHAWALPUR (APP): The 84th meeting of the Advanced Studies and Research board of the Islamia University of Bahawalpur was held under the chairmanship of Vice Chancellor Engr. Prof. Dr. Athar Mahboob here Friday. The meeting approved the topics and examiners for 69 PhD theses. The policy of approval of PhD theses abstracts and titles was also discussed in the meeting. Similarly, multidisciplinary studies at PhD level in arts, social sciences and education were approved. Na-

tional level evaluation of PhD thesis was also approved in the meeting besides approval of amendments related to the semester progress report. It was agreed in the meeting that MPhil and PhD thesis would be submitted through digital means. Amendments and corrections in MPhil and PhD rules were also approved in the meeting. Director Advanced Studies and Research Board Prof. Dr. Asif Naveed Ranjha presented a report on the implementation of the decisions taken in the last meeting.

President Alvi's interview to CMG aired in prime-time transmission

BEIJING (APP): President Dr. Arif Alvi's exclusive interview with China Media Group (CMG) has gained immense popularity in prime-time transmission at various platforms. The president, in the recently held interview, expressed views on Pakistan-China bilateral relations, the construction of China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), governance and leadership of China. Different channels of China Media Group aired President Alvi's interview in their prime-time transmission and selected the most liked TV programs that are very popular among Chinese viewers. Two of the top programs in



this regard include Leaders Talk, in which the world's top leaders are invited to share their views on various global and regional issues for the Chinese audience. Similarly, Dr. Arif Alvi's interview was also broadcast on China Media Group's program XinWenLianBo which is the most popular

program presented by China Media Group. The popularity of this program can be gauged from the fact that it is viewed more than seven billion times a month. The interview of the President of Pakistan has been accorded significant coverage on TV channels as well as on the social media platforms of the China Media Group and Chinese internet users have reacted very enthusiastically. The members of Pakistani community in China also expressed happiness over the excellent coverage of President Alvi's interview in the prime-time broadcast of China Media Group.

Textile unit gutted

FAISALABAD (APP): Valuables in a textile unit were reduced to ashes in Khurarianwala police limits on Saturday. A Rescue 1122 spokesman said the fire erupted in a sampling room of Rana Textile Mills situated at Khurarianwala-Lahore Road due to unknown reasons. On information, fire fighters of the Rescue 1122 reached the spot and brought the fire under control. However, no loss of life was reported in the incident, he added.

30th passing out parade of Rangers recruits held

KARACHI (APP): The 30th passing out parade of Pakistan Rangers Sindh recruits was held at Rangers Training Center and school Karachi. Corps Commander Karachi was the chief guest of the passing out parade, said a news release on Friday. Director General Pakistan Rangers Sindh welcomed Corps Commander Karachi. The chief guest distributed prizes among the recruits who performed well during the training. Corps Commander Karachi said in his address that today the Rangers recruits were becoming a part of this proud organization and the day was a milestone in their future. He said it was the pride of Pakistan Rangers Sindh to carry out the responsibilities like the security of the international border, the successful operation against terrorists in Karachi, provision of the most effective security at various national and provincial level events with complete professionalism. The chief guest also paid tribute to the martyrs of Rangers and said the credit for the success of Rangers goes to the martyrs.

Excavation of graves

HARIPUR DR. PERVAIZ AWAN: Excavation the graves in search of valuable artefacts could not stop in district Haripur. According to the information, a well organized group is active in search of valuable artefacts in the old graves at different palaces across the districts that digs the graves in the dark of night and take away the valuable artefacts from the graves. In that regard, the other night few unknown persons excavated the grave of Mian Padhana Baba in the Padhana village of Khilabat and took away the valuable artefacts. People of the area told that some unknown people were seen wandering surrounding areas of the grave yard. They said that the religion of Islam condemns the desecration of graves. Committing the desecration of graves is not only highly condemnable but also punishable, they maintained. They demanded of the District Police Officer Haripur to look into the matter to save the desecration of graves of their relatives and beloveds.

Senate Chairman congratulates Lahore Qalandars and PCB on successful PSL

ISLAMABAD (APP): Senate Chairman Muhammad Sadiq Sanjrani has extended his heartfelt congratulations to the Lahore Qalandars cricket team for their remarkable victory in the final of Pakistan Super League (PSL). The Lahore Qalandars team displayed exceptional teamwork, skill, and perseverance throughout the tournament, which ultimately earned them the coveted PSL trophy. The Chairman praised the Lahore Qalandars players for their outstanding performance and commended them for bringing joy and excitement to cricket fans all over Pakistan.

Naval Chief underscores importance of sacrificing personal gains over national interests

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chief of the Naval Staff (CNS) Admiral Muhammad Amjad Khan Niazi on Friday underscored the importance of sacrificing personal gains for the sake of national interests while addressing the Bahria University convocation. The Bahria University (Islamabad Campus) held its 25th Convocation Ceremony, here, and Chief of the Naval Staff Admiral Muhammad Amjad Khan Niazi graced the occasion as the chief guest and awarded medals and merit certificates to the students achieving outstanding performance in academics,

a Pakistan Navy news release said. During the ceremony, 175 Under and Post Graduate students were awarded degrees including the award of 14 Gold and 14 Silver medals for students scoring positions in respective academic disciplines. While addressing the ceremony, the chief of the naval staff congratulated the students and their parents in the successful achievement of the academic milestone. He urged the graduates to contribute to society and emphasized the importance of possessing strong character and a positive outlook on life.

IGP orders two weekly sessions of change of investigation board

LAHORE (APP): Inspector General of Police (IGP) Punjab Dr Usman Anwar has issued orders for holding two weekly sessions of the change of investigation board for convenience of citizens and action on their applications without any delay. The sessions of the change of investigation board were being held regularly. According to details, the session of the change of investigation board was being held as per routine on Wednesday and Thursday, and the board consisting of three SPs, headed by DIG Ali Javed Anwar

Malik, was taking timely decisions on the change of investigation applications. In these sessions, more than 100 pending applications have been disposed of during the last 20 days and now no application for change of investigation was pending. The IGP directed Additional IGP Investigation Punjab Sultan Ahmad Chaudhry to monitor the work of the change of investigation board himself and said that decisions should not be delayed on applications, submitted by the citizens.

Ufone 4G, ConnectHear join hands to enable easy access for Deaf Community in Pakistan

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistani cellular company Ufone 4G and ConnectHear a social enterprise aiming to enable and empower persons with disabilities have collaborated to improve accessibility for the deaf community to enhance their socioeconomic integration. Ufone 4G, being a responsible corporate citizen, has been leveraging its technological expertise to promote equal access to social and economic opportunities, while ConnectHear, established in 2017, provides means of independent communication and information in sign language, said a news release. Through

its partnership with ConnectHear, Ufone 4G will provide free data access to ConnectHear's digital app that provides instant and remote access to sign language interpreters to help the deaf community communicate. Equipped with Ufone 4G's reliable and speedy data connection, people with hearing impairment will be able to communicate with ease and access no matter wherever they are in the country. More than 6 per cent of the Pakistani population is differently-abled which needs to be integrated into the country's socioeconomic ecosystem.

Pakistan Monument major source of attraction for tourists

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Monument is a major source of attraction for foreign dignitaries and domestic tourists at large due to its architectural beauty located at west viewpoint of the Shakarparian hills. Talking to APP on Saturday, Haroon Waheed, a resident of G-6, said he along his family visited a Pakistan Monument and enjoyed a lot by visiting Pakistan Monument's museum that reflecting and representing magnificent and rich cultural heritage and history of the country. He said Pakistan Monument had designed and constructed with a very unique style, adding that the architectural marvel commemorates the martyrs who sacrificed their lives for the country and symbolizes the patriotism of the Pakistani people. "The Monument's cleanliness and location besides Shakarparian hills is a source of inspiration for visitors and they love to visit the historical site to refresh their memories regarding Pakistan history and historical perspective," he said. Amna Ali, a resident of Lahore, said the lovely win-

ter season and peaceful atmosphere is also a key factor for our trip to enjoy the day. She apprised that security arrangement was laudable and commendable. She said there is dire need to further improve and modernize the cleanliness system and availability of other facilities as well. "People belonging to every segment of society are visiting the Pakistan Monument." Amna further said that its unique design and the scenic location has made its one of the most famous monuments of the country and making it one of the top places to visit in Islamabad and Rawalpindi twin cities. It is pertinent to mention here, the idea to create a national monument in Islamabad was first proposed by former President Pervez Musharraf. The government laid the foundation stone in 2004. In 2005, the Council of Architects and Town Planners organized an architecture competition to select a design for the landmark. The concept was simple that the monument had to signify a sovereign state and the strength of its people.

FWO Mining Initiative Workshop held in Bajaur

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Frontier Works Organization (FWO) in its initiative for enabling the miners in far-flung areas of the country arranged a six days long mining workshop to train miners in the far-flung areas with modern techniques and the use of machinery. The mining workshop was organized from March 13 to 18 at HQ Bajaur Scouts (Khar) with joint efforts of FWO and FC KP (North).

The aim of the workshop was to give general awareness to local youth about mining techniques and the use of machinery employed in mining projects. The team of trainers from the Construction Technology Training Institute (CTTI), run by FWO, imparted training during the week-long workshop in which more than 200 individuals participated from Bajaur and Mohmand district.

Pakistani investors take advantage of opportunities in Africa: Chairman PSATF

KARACHI (APP): Pakistani investors should take advantage of trade opportunities available in African countries rather than focusing only on Europe and North America. It was urged by Chairman Pakistan Southern African Trade Federation (PSATF) Muhammad Rafiq Memon during his visit to the Korangi Association of Trade and Industry (KATI) on Friday. He suggested that Pakistani traders and exporters should introduce their products in the African region as there were opportunities for cooperation between

Pakistani trading companies and the African business community in various sectors which would increase trade. Along with the Southern African Development Community, he said, the five countries that need to be focused on include the Southern African Customs Union, Botswana, Swaziland, Lesotho, Namibia and South Africa. Muhammad Rafiq Memon assured that Pakistan Southern African Trade Federation would provide all possible support, guidance and facilities to Pakistani trade delegations and exporters in

the regard. Earlier, President KATI Faraz-ur-Rehman said that Pakistani exporters were limited to traditional markets, while there were immense opportunities for trade in Africa and trade volume of the African market was higher than that of Europe, which exporters should take advantage of. President KATI said that it is a golden opportunity for textile industry manufacturers to increase their exports to the rest of the world including South America by setting up their units in South Africa.

Huawei replaces thousands of US-banned parts

SHANGHAI (APP): Huawei Technologies Co Ltd has replaced more than 13,000 parts in its products that were hit by US trade sanctions, the Chinese tech giant's founder said, according to a speech transcript posted on Friday by a Chinese university. According to the transcript of the February speech posted by Shanghai Jiao Tong University, Ren Zhengfei said Huawei



had over the past three years replaced the 13,000 components with domestic Chinese substitutes and had redesigned 4,000 circuit boards

for its products. He said production of circuit boards had "stabilised." The remarks, which Reuters could not independently verify, provided a window into Huawei's efforts to bounce back from US trade restrictions. Since 2019, Huawei, a major supplier of equipment used in 5G telecommunications networks, has been the target of successive rounds of US export controls.

London Metal Exchange discovers fraud at warehouse

LONDON (APP): The London Metal Exchange (LME) discovered "irregularities" with bagged nickel briquettes at one of its warehouses this week, which forced it to postpone the resumption of nickel trading during Asian hours until March 27. According to a statement from the LME, it had to cancel nine nickel warrants at one of its facilities after finding out that bagged nickel briquettes stored there were found to not have the weight specified in the contracts.



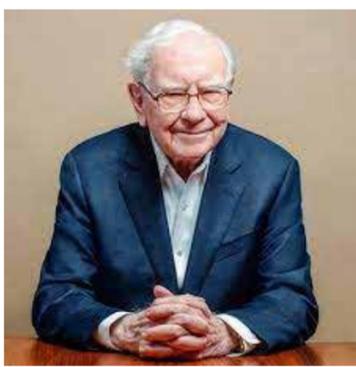
"The exchange has received information that a number of physical nickel shipments out of one specific facility of an LME-licensed warehouse operator have been subject to such irregularities," the exchange said in

the statement. A warrant amounts to around six tons of the metal, meaning around 54 tons of the LME's nickel was affected. The exchange said this represents 0.14% of its live nickel inventories. While the LME said it has no reason to believe that its other warehouses have been jeopardized, it has asked operators to recheck their stored warranted nickel. It added that metals which do not allow bagged delivery "are not susceptible to this type of irregularity."

Washington seeks banking crisis advice from Warren Buffet – Bloomberg

- Talks reportedly touched on the 'Oracle of Omaha's' possible investment in the banking sector

WASHINGTON (Agencies): Senior US officials have been in talks with billionaire investor Warren Buffet, discussing the unfolding banking crisis and possible ways out of it, Bloomberg reported on Sunday, citing sources within President Joe Biden's administration. Known as the "Oracle of Omaha," Buffett is one of the globe's most successful investors with a fortune worth roughly \$101.6 billion and is head of the Berkshire Hathaway conglomerate, which owns dozens of successful companies, including insurer Geico, battery maker Duracell and restaurant chain Dairy Queen. According to the report, there have been several conversations between the billionaire and Washington officials over the past week, with discussions focused on Buffett's possible investments in the banking sector and his advice regarding the



volatile situation in the industry. Further details of the discussions have not been disclosed, and no official confirmation of such talks has been given. Officials started seeking Buffett's financial acumen after the collapses of three US regional lenders earlier this month – Silvergate, Silicon Valley Bank (SVB) and

Signature – following mass deposit outflows. The bank runs were triggered by investor worries over the financial health of the institutions following recent interest rate hikes. The fallout has shaken the entire US banking industry, with dozens of other lenders seeing their stocks plunge despite extraordinary measures announced by regulators last week to assuage customers. Nearly 200 US banks currently face risks similar to those that led to the collapses, according to a study posted this week to the Social Science Research Network. Buffett has aided banks before. He invested \$5 billion in Goldman Sachs following the financial crisis of 2008 and the collapse of Lehman Brothers Holdings. Bank of America secured a capital injection from the billionaire in 2011 when its stock fell due to losses from subprime mortgages.

Bank fears return to haunt stock markets

LONDON (Agencies): Stocks markets tumbled again on Friday as fears of a banking crisis resurfaced despite massive financial lifelines thrown at embattled lenders to prevent contagion across the sector. Markets had rallied on Thursday after Wall Street titans including JP Morgan, Bank of America and Citigroup pledged to inject \$30 billion into First Republic Bank. Credit Suisse had also rebounded after it said it would borrow up to \$54 billion from the Swiss central bank. But shares of First Republic Bank and Credit Suisse dove back deep in the red on Friday, with the US lender slumping 33 percent and

Switzerland's second biggest bank dropping eight percent. The stock prices of other major banks also fell, with JP Morgan, Citigroup and Bank of America down at least three percent. The wider markets were also in the red. On Wall Street, the S&P 500 finished down 1.1 percent. In Europe, London stocks closed down 1.0 percent, while Frankfurt slumped 1.3 percent and Paris dropped 1.4 percent to cap a rollercoaster week. "The negative disposition for the broader market has a familiar driver: worries about the state of the banking industry," said market analyst Patrick O'Hare at Briefing.com.

UBS in talks to acquire Credit Suisse

GENEVA (Agencies): Switzerland's largest bank, UBS, is in talks to buy all or part of Credit Suisse, according to a report by the Financial Times. Credit Suisse – Switzerland's second-biggest bank – came under pressure this week as the failure of two US regional lenders rocked the sector. By the close of markets Friday, its shares had dropped 8%. The Swiss National Bank (SNB) and financial markets watchdog Finma told their US and British counterparts their 'Plan A' to stop the crisis of confidence facing Credit Suisse was to merge it with UBS, the FT reported Friday, citing unnamed sources. The Swiss central bank "wants

the lenders to agree on a simple and straightforward solution before markets open on Monday", the source said, while acknowledging there was "no guarantee" of a deal. UBS wants to assess what risks a full or partial takeover of its rival could pose to its own business, another source told the FT. When reached by AFP, both SNB and Credit Suisse declined to comment, while UBS and Finma did not respond immediately. Credit Suisse, which has been in turmoil for two years, has been seen as a weak link in the banking sector due to a series of scandals and a major restructuring programme launched last October.

Grim economic forecast issued for Germany

BERLIN (Agencies): Germany is facing a winter recession as the economy has continued to shrink amid the deepening cost-of-living crisis, the Ifo Institute for Economic Research reported on Wednesday. In the first quarter, gross domestic product (GDP) is expected to fall by 0.2%, the report suggests. The economy contracted by 0.4% in the fourth quarter of 2022 compared to the previous three months. A recession is defined as two successive quarters of contraction. The Ifo forecasts economic output in 2023 to remain at roughly the same level as the year before, contracting by 0.1%. "After a further

0.2% decline in gross domestic product in the first quarter, the economy will recover in the further course of the year. Starting mid-year at the latest, rising real wages will support Germany's domestic economy," Ifo economic researcher Timo Wollmershäuser said. According to the Ifo, high inflation rates are currently impacting consumer spending and construction activity through falling purchasing power and significantly increased financing costs. At the same time, industrial activity is recovering due to easing supply bottlenecks for intermediate products and sharp falls in energy prices.

Russia exit costs EU automaker almost \$700 million

BRUSSELS (Agencies): Czech carmaker Skoda Auto, a unit of Germany's Volkswagen, is closing in on a deal to sell its assets and exit Russia, the company's CEO Klaus Zellmer announced this week. Skoda has taken a hit of almost €700 million (\$742 million) from exiting its second largest market due to disruptions in logistics chains caused by Western sanctions. Exports of cars and spare parts to Russia have also been stopped. "The Volkswagen Group has analyzed various scenarios for the future of our business options in Russia," Zellmer told reporters, adding that "the preferred option is to sell the assets of Volkswagen Group Russia... to a third party." He declined to give details on the deal until they are agreed

by all parties, but noted that talks on the sale were "in the final stages." The automaker, which produced about 780,000 cars globally in 2022, suspended production at its two Russian factories in Kaluga and Nizhny Novgorod shortly after Ukraine-related sanctions were imposed by the EU. The facility in Kaluga has a production capacity of 225,000 vehicles per year, and assembled the Volkswagen Tiguan, Volkswagen Polo, and Skoda Rapid. Last year, Skoda's production in Russia plummeted to 18,300 cars from the 90,400 delivered in 2021, according to official data. The carmaker's net profit slumped 11.7% to €489 million in 2022, affected by a sharp rise in raw material prices and global supply chain disruptions.

Indonesians urged to abandon Western payment systems

JAKARTA (Agencies): The leader of Indonesia says the country must reduce its dependence on foreign payment systems to negate potentially disastrous economic consequences should the country ever find itself in the crosshairs of Western sanctions. Addressing a business forum in Jakarta this week, President Joko Widodo argued that Indonesia must shield itself from geopolitical disruptions, citing the sanctions attack on Russia's financial sector by the US, EU, and their allies over the conflict in Ukraine. "Be very careful. We must remember the sanctions imposed by the US on Russia. Visa and Mastercard could be a problem,"

Widodo said on Wednesday at a gathering that promoted the use of Indonesian-made products and services. Last year, Indonesia rolled out a Domestic Government Credit Card (KKP) program to facilitate transactions between the central and regional governments. The president urged the public sector to adopt this and other domestic systems, stressing that eventually "everyone should be able to use" locally-issued bank cards so that "we can be independent." "If we use our own platforms, and everybody is using them, from ministries and local administrations to municipal governments, then we can be more secure," Widodo said.

Strategic agreements to facilitate public-private cooperation signed during Arab Aviation Summit

RAS AL-KHAIMAH (Agencies): Three strategic multistakeholder agreements to facilitate public-private cooperation were signed during the 10th Arab Aviation Summit that concluded in the UAE, Emirates News Agency reported on Friday. Organized in Ras Al-Khaimah, the 10th

edition focused on sustainable aviation as a catalyst for driving growth and prioritising climate action in the Middle East market. Industry leaders called for renewed commitments to reduce emissions and implement decarbonization strategies to transition the sector to a greener future.

King Fahd International named top regional airport by Skytrax

RIYADH: The King Fahd International Airport has been named the best regional airport in the Middle East for the second year running by international air transport organization Skytrax. The company revealed the honor for the Dammam-based hub as it unveiled its ranking for the world's top 100 airports for 2023. The airport jumped six places from 2022 to be graded the world's 44th best, while other airports in the Kingdom also saw their rankings increase. Riyadh's King Khalid International Airport has risen from 29th to 27th place, while the King Abdulaziz International Airport in Jeddah has climbed three spots from last year to be ranked 41st globally. Prince Mohammad Bin Abdulaziz International Airport in Madinah climbed six positions to secure 52nd place in the world's best airports. More than 500 international airports participated in the World Skytrax Awards, in which the global rating agency assesses key performance indicators including check-in, arrivals, transfers, shopping, security, immigration, and departure. Singapore Changi Airport was named the World's Best Airport 2023 by the firm, with Hamad International in Doha coming in second and Tokyo Haneda Airport ranked third.



Airport on being named the World's Best Airport for 2023. After being severely hit during the Covid-19 pandemic, it is pleasing to note that passenger numbers at Changi Airport are now at about 80 percent of pre-Covid-19 levels, and expected to return to pre-pandemic levels by 2024." The Skytrax rankings come after the Kingdom's General Authority of Civil Aviation ranked King Khalid International Airport first among Saudi Arabia's international airports with more than 15 million passengers annually, for scoring high on various performance in-

dicators including waiting times and security procedures. The Riyadh-based airport claimed the top spot for achieving a compliance rate of 82 percent, according to the latest performance report. The aviation authority evaluates airport performance on 14 crucial performance indicators, most notably waiting times for passengers during check-in and security procedures, the time spent by the traveler in front of the baggage track, passport and customs areas, criteria related to people with disabilities, and several other criteria based on best global practices.

Sabalenka beats Sakkari to reach first Indian Wells final

INDIAN WELLS (Agencies): Australian Open champion Aryna Sabalenka beat Maria Sakkari 6-2, 6-3 in a Stadium Court slugfest on Friday to reach the final of the Indian Wells WTA and ATP Masters 1000 hard court tennis tournament. World No 2 Sabalenka, who took her 2023 WTA record to 17-1, notched her fifth win in eight meetings against the seventh-seeded Greek and awaits the winner of the second semifinal between world No 1 and defending champion Iga Swiatek and Wimbledon champion Elena Rybakina. That's



a rematch of the Australian Open fourth round match in which Rybakina stunned top-seeded Swiatek on her way to a runner-up finish. Sabalenka's win ensured the final will feature a matchup of reigning Grand Slam champions.

Swiatek won both the French and US Opens last year. Playing with supreme confidence, Sabalenka opened with a quick service hold that featured two aces and broke Sakkari for a 3-1 lead. Sakkari immediately broke back as Sabalenka double-faulted on break point. But the Belarusian won the next five games to pocket the set and take a 2-0 lead in the second. Sakkari, perhaps trying to do too much in the face of Sabalenka's powerful groundstrokes, made three forehand errors to give her triple set point.

Ex-Liverpool midfielder Leiva retires due to heart condition

RIO DE JANEIRO (Agencies): Former Liverpool and Lazio midfielder Lucas Leiva announced his retirement from football on Friday due to a heart condition, bringing the curtains down on his 17-year professional career. The 36-year-old played nearly 600 games in his club career, the majority in Europe having signed for Liverpool in 2007, before moving to Italy's Serie A in 2017, where he played five seasons with Lazio. Leiva returned last summer to his boyhood club Gremio, mak-



ing 17 appearances and scoring three goals for the Brazilian side before being sidelined in December, when he was diagnosed with the heart issue af-

ter routine tests. "I would like to thank Gremio for all the support in these three months. Today I am announcing my retirement. It's been a difficult period," Leiva told a news conference. "I'm ending where I'd like, not the way I'd like. But I'm sure a new cycle will begin. I had a lot of hope that it could reverse, but it was not the case. My health comes first." The Brazilian, who won the South American under-20 championship in 2007, also earned 24 international caps.

NCAA Tournament roundup: Fairleigh Dickinson makes history against Purdue

MICHIGAN (Agencies): For just the second time in 152 tries, a No. 16 wore the slipper perfectly against a No. 1 seed in the NCAA Tournament. Sean Moore scored 19 and Grant Singleton added eight points, six rebounds, five assists and three steals as No. 16 Fairleigh Dickinson shocked No. 1 Purdue 63-58 on Friday night in an East Region first-round game in Colum-



bus, Ohio. Despite sporting the smallest team in Division I basketball, FDU

managed to overcome 21 points and 15 rebounds from 7-foot-4 All-America center Zach Edey. With the Knights (21-15) leading 61-58, Purdue's Braden Smith drove the lane, but Moore came from behind and blocked the shot. Fletcher Loyer's corner 3-point attempt for the Boilermakers (29-6) was off the mark, and Demetre Roberts sealed it with two free throws.

Saudi Arabia open to hosting two F1 races in near future

RIYADH (Agencies): Saudi Arabia would be open to hosting two Formula One races a year and it could happen in the near future, local organisers said on Friday. Sunday's race on the Jeddah Corniche street circuit will be the third grand prix held in the kingdom, where a new track planned for the 'entertainment city' of Qiddiya near Riyadh could be ready by 2027. "The idea of having two races in Saudi is doable," Saudi Automobile and Motorcycle Federation chairman Prince Khalid bin Sultan al-Abdul-



lah al-Faisal told selected reporters. "You have three races in the (United) States because the market is big there and there is a demand. So the demand is there (in Saudi Arabia), but the decision is not made. There's

a lot of things we need to consider. "The sport is growing, the demand is growing, so I would not be surprised if Saudi, in the near future, will host two races. I wouldn't be surprised," he added. "The demand is there and we have two beautiful facilities." The prince said Formula One was the biggest sporting event in Saudi Arabia, and there had been considerable investment in the Jeddah track, but there had been no discussion with commercial rights holders Liberty Media on hosting two races.

Canada's 'heartbroken' Beckie to miss World Cup after ACL injury

OTTAWA (Agencies) Canada and Portland Thorns forward Janine Beckie will miss this year's Women's World Cup after she confirmed on Friday that she has torn the anterior cruciate ligament (ACL) in her right knee. In a statement on their website, reigning National Women's Soccer League (NWSL) champions Thorns said Beckie will miss the remainder of the 2023 season and added that she will "have surgery in the



coming weeks to repair the injury." The 28-year-old, who was part of the Olympic gold medal-winning team at the Tokyo Games in 2021, has scored

36 goals in 101 appearances for Canada. "Heartbroken is an understatement," Beckie, who has also played for Manchester City and Houston Dash, said in a post on Instagram. "Having worked so hard during off-season for what was set to be one of the biggest seasons of my career, defending the title for Thorns and of course playing in the World Cup for Canada, being out for an extended period of time is a difficult pill to swallow.

Ireland's Grand Slam quest gets Biden's backing

DUBLIN: Ireland's bid to complete a Six Nations Gram Slam with victory over England has been given the presidential seal of approval, after U.S. President Joe Biden threw his support behind Andy Farrell's side. Biden, who often speaks with pride of his Irish roots, hosted Irish Prime Minister Leo Varadkar at a St. Patrick's Day event on Friday. While speaking at the event, Biden also introduced his distant relative and ex-Ireland fullback Rob Kearney, saying, "we've even



got a few of my distant Irish cousins here today..." "Rob stand up. I want to see you after this, pal. You know, Rob, I expect, we know, and this is no offence to anyone in the room, who

we are rooting for in the Grand Slam match between Ireland and England." In 2016, after Ireland beat New Zealand for the first time, Biden tweeted: "Congrats to cousin @KearneyRob on behalf of the Bidens. @IrishRugby's 1st win over New Zealand in 111 years." Top-ranked Ireland lead the Six Nations table by four points from second-placed France and will be looking to clinch a fourth clean sweep when they take on England in Dublin on Saturday.

Shaheen Shah Afridi single-handedly defends PSL title for Qalandars

LAHORE (APP): In a match of fluctuating fortunes, Shaheen Shah Afridi performed out of his skin with the bat and ball against Multan Sultans to win back to back titles for the Lahore Qalandars when they defended the total of 200 by one run in the final of the HBL PSL 8 at the Gaddafi Stadium on Saturday night. Qalandars' became the first team to two PSL in a row as they overpowered the same rivals last year. On a night of attrition, the showman Afridi proved his mettle first with the bat when he promoted himself after his team faced the barrel and played a cameo of 44 runs off 15 balls including 2 boundaries and five 6s to raise his team to 200-6 and later claimed four wickets for 51 runs to down Multan Sultan by one run in one of the most exciting finals of the league

cricket. With four runs need off the last ball to win, Shaheen Shah Afridi further strengthened his credentials as an all-rounder when he ran Khushdil Shah out on the last ball of the Sultans' innings to ensure win for his team and was adjudged 'Player of the Match' of the final. Multan Sultans needed 13 runs of the final over after some lusty hitting from all-rounder Abbas Afridi who plundered 22 runs off the penultimate over bowled by Haris Rauf but Zaman Khan, known for his nerve as a death-bowling bowler, conceded 11 runs to save the day for the Qalandars. Multan Sultans had started briskly in pursuit of 201 runs when Mohamamd Rizwan and Usman Khan had gleaned 41 runs off 3.3 overs before Usman Khan fell to David Wiese. Rilee Rossouw scored a quick-fire 52 runs off 32

balls while Mohammad Rizwan played a cautious knock of 34 (23) in a partnership of 61 runs off 42 balls but the Qalandars, known for their bowling prowess, took control of things after Kieron Pollard fell to Shaheen Shah Afridi in the 16th over with score at 146-4 and his fall started a mini-collapse which brought the Sultan to their knees. Shaheen Shah Afridi, who was mauled by Usman Khan and Mohammad Rizwan, had conceded 35 runs off his first two overs but came back strong that he grabbed four wickets in 12 balls including Pollard 19 (16), Tim David 19 (16), Usama Mir 0 (1) and Anwar Ali 1 (2). Khushdi Shah in a cameo of 25 (12) and Abbad Afridi 17 (6) tried to adversity into success and came close to win it for Sultans but they fell short by one run in pursuit of glory.

Marc Leishman captures first-round lead at LIV Tucson

TUCSON (Agencies): Australia's Marc Leishman made seven birdies and just one bogey to emerge with the lead after the first round of LIV Golf Tucson on Friday in Marana, Arizona. Leishman carded a six-under-par 65 at The Gallery South Course, putting him one stroke ahead of Matthew Wolff, Mexico's Abraham Ancer and South Africa's Louis Oosthuizen. Peter Uihlein, Chile's Joaquin Niemann and Spain's David Puig are tied for fifth at four under. Six players, including Kevin Na and Spain's Sergio Garcia, share eighth place at three under. Leishman, who started play at No 5, birdied two of his first three holes before register-



ing his lone bogey at the par-four 11th hole. He responded immediately with a birdie at the par-four 12th, then added four more birdies the rest of the way. "I'm enjoying my golf at the moment," Leishman said. "Playing with no consequences over the offseason kind of gave me a little bit of confidence with some of the shots I hit and how they turned out.

Rybakina knocks out Swiatek to reach Indian Wells final



INDIAN WELLS (Agencies): Elena Rybakina knocked out defending champion Iga Swiatek with a 6-2, 6-2 semifinal victory at Indian Wells on Friday to set up a clash against Aryna Sabalenka in the final. Two months after Rybakina knocked Swiatek out of the Australian Open in the fourth round, the Wimbledon champion once again put in an im-

pressive display against the world number one. Rybakina was in control from the start, breaking early to take a 2-0 lead, before going on to clinch the first set when Swiatek produced a double fault on set point. Swiatek tested Rybakina's serve in the first game of the second set, but the Kazakh held under pressure and then won the next four games to take a 5-0 lead. The Pole saved a break point to hold and avoid a bagel before breaking to further reduce the arrears, but Rybakina broke back immediately to extinguish the comeback and secure the win. "I really played well today, it was a really nice atmosphere to-night," Rybakina said in her on-court interview.

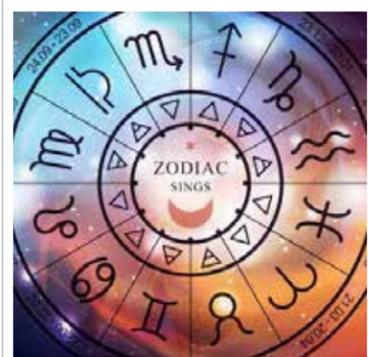
Djokovic to miss Miami Open over vaccine status

MIAMI: Novak Djokovic will miss next week's Miami Open after the Serbian was denied an exemption that would have allowed him to enter the US despite not being vaccinated against Covid-19, tournament director James Blake said on Friday. "We tried to get Novak Djokovic to be allowed to get an exemption, but that wasn't able to happen," Blake told Tennis Channel. "Obviously, we're one of the premier tournaments in the world, we'd like to have the best players that can play. We did all that we could. We tried to talk to the government, but that's out of our hands." Florida governor Ron DeSantis and the state's two US senators were among those calling on the Biden administration to allow world No 1 Djokovic to enter the US and compete at the tournament he has won six times. Djokovic,



35, is also missing the ongoing Masters event in Indian Wells, California due to inability to secure the exemption. The US currently bars unvaccinated foreigners from entry into the country, a policy that is expected to be lifted when the government ends its Covid-19 emergency declarations on May 11. Djokovic, who missed last year's Australian Open after being deported from that country due to his vaccination status, has said he would skip Grand Slams rather than have a Covid shot.

DAILY HOROSCOPE: MARCH 19, 2023



- It's a general reading which may differ from person to person because of time date and year.
 - **ARIES:** Last night's dreams are stuck in your mind all day, and they may still be operating subconsciously. If anything strikes you as odd or notable, follow up until things become clearer.
 - **TAURUS:** You and your friends are all on the same page when it comes to your latest big plan, so you should focus on that and forget about old feuds. It's a good time for you to enforce the peace.
 - **GEMINI:** You might not be able to get much practical work done today, but if you focus on your creative side, you may be immensely satisfied with the results. It's a good time to pick up a new hobby.
 - **CANCER:** You are much more in tune with your friends and coworkers than you are on most days thanks to your surging emotional power. You may find that one person in particular is much easier to read.
 - **LEO:** You could be walking through an emotional minefield thanks to the odd psychic energy floating around and tweaking people's fears and

doubts today. If you set someone off, apologize and move on.
 - **VIRGO:** You're having a hard time keeping up with the details of today's projects at work or at school, details that made all kinds of sense just yesterday! Take a break and let yourself relax for a while.
 - **LIBRA:** You need to slow down and let the day's events progress on their own. Things aren't going to move at the pace you want them to, but you can still enjoy life's little pleasures along the way.
 - **SCORPIO:** You're having lots of fun today, no matter what activities are on your schedule! It's a great time to lift others' spirits and get them to join in the fun, so open up even more and acquire some followers!
 - **SAGITTARIUS:** Your mental energy is chugging along right now and you ought to be able to make progress on planning or other brainy activities even if everyone else is melting down or running in circles!
 - **CAPRICORN:** Something you see today opens up your heart at least a little and might get you thinking about volunteering or donating to a larger cause. See if you can get friends and family interested too!
 - **ACQUARIUS:** Something you share with coworkers or your mate becomes an issue today, but one that brings you closer rather than forcing a big fight! You may need to compromise, but that's no problem for you.
 - **PISCES:** You're focused outward today, and all that great energy is having a tremendous impact! Things are still pretty nutty, but you can compensate with a bit of extra nuttiness of your own.

Pro-Palestinian group launches campaign to check Israeli products in Ramadan across UK mosques

LONDON (Agencies): More than 20,000 leaflets urging Muslims to #CheckTheLabel and boycott Israel are being distributed at mosques across the UK, coinciding with the last Friday before the fasting holy month of Ramadan, organizers said on Friday. The initiative is part of a campaign launched by the UK-based Friends of Al-Aqsa — concerned with defending the human rights of Palestinians and protecting the Al-Aqsa sanctuary — to “Check The Label,” and is calling on Muslims in the UK and Europe not to break their fasts with the “taste of apartheid.” The boycott campaign has gained huge momentum in the run-up to Ramadan this



year, with press coverage from the UK to Morocco and Malaysia, FOA said in a statement. “Running since the early

2010s, #CheckTheLabel has had an unprecedented impact on the British public’s understanding of the connection between the products they buy and Israel’s illegal occupation of Palestine (and) many individuals have become ethical consumers who avoid buying Israeli produce as a result of this campaign,” FOA said. “This Ramadan, it’s more important than ever that we boycott Israel,” said Shamiul Joarder, head of public affairs at FOA. “By checking the label and avoiding Israeli dates, we can send a clear message: We won’t give our money to an apartheid state that breaks international law and kills Palestinian children.”

US helps powerstarved Lebanese businesses switch to solar



BEIRUT (Agencies): The US has launched a \$20 million fund to help Lebanese businesses install solar energy systems as owners struggle to stay afloat amid the collapse of the country’s electricity sector. US Ambassador to Lebanon Dorothy Shea launched the Solar & Renewable Energy Fund on Friday, saying it will help local businesses reduce operating costs, sustain their operations and maintain employment levels. “This fund will support the purchase and installation of solar power generation systems for at least 25 businesses,” she said. Lebanon’s crumbling power sector has forced businesses and households to rely largely on private diesel generators. Power now is available for only four hours a day, thanks to a \$60 million advance approved by the Cabinet in favor of the Electricite du Liban to supply fuel to operate the Deir Ammar and Zahrani plants. However, few trust the state’s sudden generosity. Jamal, a lawyer, said: “Increasing feeding hours to four hours may be a temporary trap to impose the new price on taxpayers, after which we will fall back into darkness.”

Quake aftermath: Fear of ‘Big One’ grips Istanbul



ANKARA (Agencies): The helmet-topped engineer drove his pointy instrument into the concrete to test whether Durmus Uygun’s building will crumble when the feared big quake finally strikes Istanbul. “I’m pretty confident but my children aren’t convinced, so we’re having this test done,” said Uygun, who lives in one of the Turkish megalopolis’ poorer and more densely packed neighborhoods. “If the result is good, we will live in peace. But who knows where we will be when the earthquake hits? We may be at the supermarket or at work — that’s what scares us.” In his fifties and wearing a black beret, Uygun is far from the only one living in fear in Istanbul. Turkiye’s cultural and economic capital is home to up to 20 million people, many still haunted by memories of the last “Big One” that struck just east of the city in 1999. More than 17,000 people died, including 1,000 in Istanbul. The city has grown substantially since then, becoming a magnet for people attracted by its booming economy — and oblivious to the active fault line running along its southern edge. That changed on Feb. 6, when a 7.8-magnitude earthquake killed more than 48,000 in southeastern Turkiye and nearly 6,000 over the border in Syria, leaving entire cities in ruins. A state of collective psychosis has since gripped Istanbulites, who have requested more than 140,000 checks of the type being conducted on Uygun’s apartment building.

UBS in talks to buy embattled Swiss rival Credit Suisse, FT says

BERN (Agencies): UBS Group AG is in discussions to take over all or part of Credit Suisse, the Financial Times reported on Friday, after an emergency funding lifeline failed to restore investor confidence in the smaller Swiss bank. The boards of Switzerland’s two biggest lenders are set to meet separately over the weekend to discuss a deal, the FT said, citing multiple people briefed on the talks. A source with knowledge of the matter said that Swiss regulators are encouraging UBS and Credit Suisse to merge, but that both banks do not want to do so. The regulators do not have the power to force the merger, the person said. Credit Suisse shares jumped 9 percent in after-market trading following the FT report. Credit Suisse and UBS declined to comment on the report. Credit Suisse, a



167-year-old bank, is the biggest name ensnared by market turmoil unleashed by the collapse of US lenders Silicon Valley Bank and Signature Bank over the past week, forcing it to tap \$54 billion in central bank funding. Credit Suisse executives were due to hold meetings over the weekend to chart a path forward for the ailing Swiss bank, people familiar with the matter have previously said.

Russia gives awards to fighter pilots involved in US drone crash



MOSCOW (Agencies): Russia has conferred state awards on the two fighter pilots involved in the downing of a US surveillance drone that crashed into the Black Sea, the Russian Defence Ministry said, while United States officials announced that its spy flights in the region have resumed. Presenting the awards on Friday to the Su-27 jet fighter pilots, Russia’s Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu lauded their

achievement in preventing the drone from flying into an area near Crimea to which Moscow has banned access. “The drone flew with its transponders off, violating the boundaries of the area of the temporary airspace usage regime established for the special military operation [and] communicated to all users of international airspace,” Russia’s defence ministry said in a statement, according to The Moscow Times. Pro-Kremlin political analyst Sergei Markov said the awards for the pilots were “a clear sign that Russia will keep downing” US drones. “This decision will receive a strong support from the Russian society that wants the government to toughen its policy,” Markov wrote in a commentary.

Slovakia to transfer 13 MiG-29s to Ukraine, after Poland gives four

WARSAW (Agencies): Slovak Prime Minister Eduard Heger has announced his country will deliver 13 out-of-commission Mikoyan MiG-29 fighter jets to Ukraine as part of Bratislava’s support to the nation’s struggle against the Russian invasion. “Promises must be kept,” Heger said in a tweet on Friday, adding that Slovakia’s military aid was designed to help Ukraine defend itself and “entire Europe against Russia.” The latest move comes one day after Polish President Andrzej Duda declared his country will supply the first four MiG-29 jets to Ukraine in the coming days, with more aircraft



to be delivered in the future. Slovakia secured 24 single-seater and twin-seater Soviet-made fighters following Czechoslovakia’s dissolution, according to data from the Slovak Ministry of Defence. Of these, the 11 remaining operational aircraft were withdrawn from service last August.

‘Anxious’ Qatar is tightening its security pact with France amid Iranian aggression & Saudi domination

DOHA (Agencies): Qatar has emerged as one of the key players in Middle Eastern geopolitics thanks to its vast reserves of natural gas. The ambitious ruling elite and expanding international alliances and soft power initiatives have allowed it to overcome structural weaknesses in the face of an increasingly aggressive Iran and a regional bellicose Saudi Arabia. With Iran looking to cement its position and turning increasingly to Russia as a critical ally, consolidating existing partnerships would make sense, especially in the defense sector. With its unfavorable geographical disposition, terrain unadapted to agriculture or industry, and relatively small population, Qatar lacks many of the elemental attributes required of a regional power hoping to expand its influence and defend itself robustly against its unwanted incursions by regional superpowers, namely Iran’s. Its position vis-à-vis these two competing factions

has generally been one of balance and mediation, though this has proven unachievable. It often sides with one or the other, depending on the dispute and the achievable outcomes advantageous to Qatari regional influence. — The Regional Balance Of Power Despite these structural deficiencies, Qatar has been astute in its use of media, international alliances, its role as a regional mediator, and its soft power initiatives through humanitarian action in Asia and Africa to promote its national interests on the international stage. Qatar has promoted itself as a mediating presence, supporting self-serving multilateralism that transcends borders, religions, and petty disputes. Its diplomatic prowess and use of cultural, ethnic, religious, and social norms to achieve its goals through dynamic strategic communication have led to the rise of Qatar as a serious player on the international geopolitical scene.

Germany plans highest-level Taiwan visit in decades

BERLIN (Agencies): Germany’s education minister has announced plans to visit Taiwan in the coming days, the first trip to the island by a high-ranking federal official in 26 years. Though China is likely to condemn the visit, Berlin says it does not signal any major policy shift against the People’s Republic. Minister of Education and Research Bettina Stark-Watzinger will travel to Taipei next week for a two-day visit, a spokesperson for her ministry said on Friday, noting that the trip would focus on cooperation on computer chips and green technologies. Though Taiwan proposed that Stark-Watzinger meet with ‘Foreign Minister’ Joseph Wu during her time on the island, Berlin “pushed back” against the request and would only agree to sit-downs with lower-level officials, the Financial Times reported, citing multiple people familiar with the negotiations. A Reuters source said that the minister



also would not see President Tsai Ing-wen “upon the instructions of the German government,” which is seeking to “avoid irritating China too much.” US could ‘shift focus’ from Europe to Asia ‘anytime’ — Berlin READ MORE: US could ‘shift focus’ from Europe to Asia ‘anytime’ — Berlin Germany’s One-China policy dictates that any delegation sent to Taiwan is to be limited to specialized ministers whose duties are unrelated to matters of sovereignty. It bars visits by the chancellor, as well as the interior, foreign, or defense ministers.

‘John Wick’ star Lance Reddick dies aged 60



NEW YORK (Agencies): Character actor Lance Reddick, best known for his role as Lt. Cedric Daniels on ‘The Wire’, died “suddenly...from natural causes” on Friday, his publicist, Mia Hansen, told the Hollywood Reporter. His body was reportedly found at his Studio City apartment around 9:30am. Reddick was 60 years old. While Reddick was already an established actor in several television series, including HBO’s ‘Oz’, when he was called to read the script for The Wire, his role on that show as the stern-faced Lt. Cedric Daniels made him a household name, and he was soon offered larger roles in films, including the John Wick franchise. He appears in the fourth John Wick film, due out later this month, and had several other completed projects in the pipeline, including John Wick spinoff ‘The Ballerina’ and a remake of ‘White Men Can’t Jump’. Reddick also lent his distinctive voice to video games, voicing ‘Destiny 2’ star Commander Zavala, and serving as both voice and face of Sylens in the Horizon games ‘Zero Dawn’ and ‘Forbidden West’.

Pentagon chooses Australian firm to build hypersonic test aircraft



WASHINGTON (Agencies): The U.S. Department of Defense selected Hypersonix Launch Systems, an Australian aerospace company, to develop a high-speed aircraft that can test hypersonic technologies. The aircraft will support a Defense Innovation Unit program called Hypersonic and High-Cadence Airborne Testing Capabilities, or HyCAT. The organization, which works to push technology from non-traditional companies to military users, is partnering with the Defense Department Test Resource Management Center and the director of hypersonics to help alleviate strain on government test infrastructure. “Commercial companies are forging ahead towards reusable and low-cost test vehicles,” Maj. Ryan Weed, a program manager in DIU’s space portfolio, said in a March 16 statement. “The HyCAT project represents a paradigm shift in viewing the hypersonic realm as a place for aircraft, not just missiles and weapons.” DIU gave no value for the contract. Hypersonix did not immediately respond to a request for details. The military services are pursuing about 70 programs aimed at developing aircraft and weapons that can travel at hypersonic speeds, or faster than Mach 5. Testing infrastructure has been a limiting factor in the technology development process, with many programs conducting only a few trials each year.

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