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Mighty Britain Withdraws HMS DIAMOND Destroyer from Red Sea after getting hit by Houthis

LONDON (Agencies): In a significant development, Britain has decided to withdraw its destroyer, HMS DIAMOND, from the Red Sea due to mounting tensions and security concerns. The vessel faced a series of intense clashes with Yemeni forces, enduring three separate attacks that included missile strikes and drone assaults. Yemeni authorities have claimed responsibility for damaging the destroyer during these incidents. While Britain officially cites "technical reasons" for the withdrawal, the situation on the ground suggests a more urgent need to safeguard the vessel and its crew. The Red Sea region has become a hotspot for conflict, with Houthi rebels launching strikes against international shipping. The recent attacks on HMS DIAMOND have raised alarm bells among Western nations.

The United States and the United

McDonald's sales

dented by Israel-Gaza

boycotts

NIAMEY (Agencies): McDonald's has

missed a key sales target, partly due

to customers boycotting the firm for

its perceived support of Israel. The fast

food chain reported its first quarterly

sales miss in nearly four years due to

weak growth in its international busi-

ness division. Its boss previously ac-

knowledged the impact of the conflict,

blaming "misinformation". Shares in

McDonald's fell about 4% after the

announcement. McDonalds is one of

several Western corporations including Starbucks and Coca Cola that have

seen boycotts and protests against them

by anti-Israeli campaigners. The firm

said that the Israel-Gaza conflict had

"meaningfully impacted" performance

in some overseas markets in the fourth

quarter of 2023.

to the Houthi rebels, emphasizing that further attacks on ships could trigger significant consequences. Approximately 15% of world maritime trade normally flows through the waters south of the Suez Canal, making the situation critical for global commerce

Kingdom have issued stern warnings

British Defence Secretary Grant Shapps has directly accused Iran and maritime security concerns.

of aiding the Yemeni rebels with intelligence and surveillance. This underscores broader geopolitical tensions in the region. The UN Security Council has adopted a resolution condemning Houthi attacks and demanding an immediate halt. The international community closely monitors developments as the Red Sea remains a flashpoint for conflict

minister Keizo Takemi attended the



U.S. public health agency CDC sets up office in Tokyo



TOKYO (Agencies): The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention opened a regional office in Tokyo on Monday, aiming to enhance cooperation with Japan and other Asian countries to better handle possible future pandemics following COVID-19 Mandy Cohen, chief of the U.S. public health agency, and Japanese health opening ceremony of the CDC East Asia and Pacific regional office held at the official residence of U.S. Ambassador to Japan Rahm Emanuel. The CDC has previously opened regional offices in countries including Brazil, Oman and Vietnam. U.S. President Joe Biden mentioned a plan to launch a CDC regional office in Japan when he visited the country in May 2022. "International collaboration, transparency, and science, especially among partner countries like Japan, are key,' Emanuel said in a statement, noting the opening of the new office in Tokyo "brings together American, Japanese, and regional expertise to track, respond to and defeat diseases."

UAE in Talks to Acquire Egypt's Coastline for \$22 Billion

DUBAI (Agencies): The United Arab Emirates has expressed an interest in buying the Ras El Hekma area on Egypt's northern coast as a form of economic support for Cairo, Egyptian newspapers have reported. The privately-owned Egyptian newspaper Al Mal stated on Sunday that the anticipated project for the development of the city of Ras El Hekma in the north coast includes the finalisation of agreements between the Egyptian Ministry of Housing and several Emirati sovereign entities, most notably the Ministry of Finance. The partnerand cash contributions, with the Emithat the agreement between the Egyp- ed to buy essential commodities.

tian government and several Emirati companies and entities is nearing completion for the development of the city of Ras El Hekma. This agreement is expected to result in the injection of billions of US dollars into the Egyptian central bank, estimated at around \$22 billion. The development of the city of Ras El Hekma is part of the Egyptian state's 2052 plan for placing the city on the global tourism map. The anticipated Emirati investments are expected to increase the availability of US dollars in Egyptian banks. Egypt has been facing a worsening foreign currency ship contracts will be based on in-kind shortage over the last two years. Since March it has kept its currency fixed rati party paying around \$22 billion in against the dollar despite a widening exchange for purchasing land in that gap with the black market rate. Years area. Similarly, the Egyptian newspa- of prodigious borrowing abroad has per Al Youm Al Sabea, which is close left Egypt with heavy foreign debt and to the authorities, reported on Sunday a shortage of the hard currency need-

New York Times reveals videos of Israeli soldiers celebrating destruction of Gaza



LONDON: A New York Times investigation has revealed videos of Israeli soldiers mocking Palestinians and celebrating the demolition of their homes and neighborhoods in Gaza. Since Israel's invasion in October, soldiers have been using social media platforms to share unsanctioned glimpses into their operations, sparking outrage and condemnation. In footage analyzed by the newspaper, soldiers can be seen vandalizing shops and classrooms, making offensive remarks about Palestinians and advocating the construction of Israeli settlements in Gaza. In one clip, a soldier is seen giving a thumbs up to the camera as he drives a bulldozer down a street in Beit Lahia, in northern Gaza, pushing a battered car toward a half-collapsed building. The caption for the piece, which was shared on TikTok along with a military anthem, read: "I stopped counting how many neighborhoods I've erased."

Gene Therapy Breakthrough: Crispr-Cas9 Blocks Painful Hereditary Disorder

LONDON (Agencies): In a groundbreaking development, gene therapy has emerged as a beacon of hope for individuals suffering from angioedema, a hereditary disorder characterized by painful and unpredictable swelling attacks. This condition, which affects approximately 50,000 people worldwide, can be severely debilitating, impacting airways and, in some cases, leading to fatal outcomes. Researchers administered a single dose of the revolutionary gene therapy Crispr-Cas9 to patients, and the results were remarkable. Those treated displayed minimal signs of further symptoms, sug-challenging disorder.

gesting a potential permanent cure for this distressing condition. Dr. Hilary Longhurst, a clinical immunologist at Auckland Hospital and the principal investigator, expressed optimism about the therapy's efficacy. Angioedema manifests as swelling in soft tissues and can affect various parts of the body. With this breakthrough, the door opens not only for angioedema patients but also for addressing other genetic conditions. The promise of gene therapy shines brightly on the horizon, offering relief and transformation for those who have long grappled with this

Senegal on the brink after elections postponed

unstable region is on the line as protesters clash with police outside the National Assembly. Inside, lawmakers have passed a contentious bill to extend President Macky Sall's tenure and delay elections after he called off a planned election with just three weeks to go. Khalifa Sall, a leading opponent and a former mayor of Dakar, who is not related to the president, called the delay a "constitutional coup" and urged people to protest against it. His political coalition has vowed to go to court. Thierno Alassane Sall, another candidate, also no relation, called it "high treason" and urged his supporters to gather in

DAKAR (Agencies): Senegal's reputa- front of the National Assembly to protion as a bastion of democracy in an test and "remind MPs to stand on the right side of history". The proposal needed the support of three-fifths (i.e. 99) of the 165 deputies to pass. The ruling Benno Bokk Yakaar coalition, of which President Sall's Alliance for the Republic party is part, has a slight majority in parliament. There was a heated atmosphere in the chamber, and it was reported that some opposition MPs had been removed by security forces after they tried to block proceedings. In the end 105 MPs voted for the proposal. A six-month postponement was originally proposed, but a last-minute amendment extended it to 10 months, or 15 December.

Dubai Real Estate Market Records Over \$9.6 Billion in Sales in January 2024

DUBAI (Agencies): According to a recent report from property portal Property Finder, the Dubai real estate market has started 2024 with a record-breaking sales figure of \$9.6 billion (AED35.4 billion), representing a 27 percent increase compared to the previous year. The market experienced a year-on-year growth of 17 percent in recorded sales transactions, surpassing 11,000 compared to 8,712 in January 2023. The report also indicates that the market is expected to continue its growth trajectory in the coming months. The report further reveals that among individuals looking to purchase properties, 58 percent expressed their interest in apartments, whereas 42 percent were specifically seeking villas or townhouses. On the other hand, in the rental market, a substantial 80 percent of tenants were found to be in search of apartments, while 20 percent were interested in villas or townhouses. Apsearch of apartments were discovered to prefer furnished properties, whereas larger options.



36.1 percent were specifically looking for unfurnished options. Conversely, tenants who had the means to afford villa or townhouse rentals displayed the opposite trend, with around 57 percent seeking unfurnished units and 42 percent in search of furnished options. Roughly 36 percent of tenants were in search of one-bedroom units, while 31 percent were specifically looking for two-bedroom apartments, and 22 percent had their sights set on studios. When it came to villas or townhouses, 43 percent of tenants were seeking proximately 62.2 percent of tenants in three-bedroom units, while 34 percent were searching for four-bedroom or

Russia Suspends Banana and Flower Imports from Ecuador After U.S. Arms Deal



MOSCOW (Agencies): Russia has suspended imports of bananas and flowers from Ecuador, weeks after Ouito agreed to a U.S. weapons deal that will result in Ukraine receiving fer to exchange the Soviet-era equipthe South American country. The \$200 million deal. The United States Russian agriculture watchdog, Rosselkhoznadzor, said in a statement ment would be shipped to Ukraine to that authorizations for five Ecuador- help Kyiv in its conflict with Russia.

an exporters were suspended from Tuesday due to the detection of pests. Nine out of 10 bananas imported by Russia come from Ecuador, according to Russian media. The restrictions on certain flower imports will come into force on Friday. Ecuador is one of the world's top exporters of flowers, mainly roses. The decisions come in the wake of Ecuadoran President Daniel Noboa's announcement on Jan. 10 that he had accepted a U.S. of-Soviet-era military equipment from ment for modern U.S. weapons in a has said that the Ecuadoran equip-

Chile's Former President Sebastian Piñera Dies in Helicopter Crash



SANTIAGO (Agencies): The news of the tragic demise of Chile's former President, Sebastian Piñera, reverberated across the nation. Piñera, a 74-year-old billionaire tycoon, met with a fatal accident in the picturesque vacation spot of Lago Ranco in southern Chile. The announcement came via an official statement from his office, expressing deep regret over the loss of the former leader. Piñera's passing occurred approximately 920 kilometers (570 miles) south of the capital, Santiago.Details surrounding the accident

remain scarce. Chile's Interior Minister, Carolina Toha, confirmed Piñera's death, but specifics about the cause of the crash are yet to be disclosed. Piñera's legacy is multifaceted. During his first presidency (2010-2014), he presided over a period of rapid economic growth and a significant reduction in unemployment. His leadership coincided with challenging times for Chile's trade partners and neighboring countries.Piñera's second term (2018-2022) was marked by social upheaval. Violent protests erupted, driven by demands for greater equality. Accusations of human rights violations cast a shadow over his administration, culminating in a commitment to draft a new constitution. Beyond politics, Piñera was a successful businessman. His estimated fortune of \$3 billion ranked him as Chile's fifth wealthiest individual.

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.











15696, polling stations set up in KP: Shamshad Khan

Pakhtunkhwa Election Commission is all set to hold free, fair and transparent general elections in the province wherein 15,696 polling station have been set up. Addressing a press conference here, Provincial Election Commissioner Shamshad Khan said that all preparations including appointment of polling agents and staff had been complet-

PESHAWAR (APP): The Khyber February 8. He said that 45.44 mil- The election commissioner said that lion ballot papers had been printed, adding that Police, FC and Pakistan Army would be deployed for security. The police and army would be deployed in sensitive and highly sensitive polling stations for security purposes, he added. Shamshad said that Form 45 would be signed by presiding officers after the polling while IMS would work both oned for the elections to be held on line and offline during the elections.

a strategy had been developed in the snow-covered areas as well to ensure turnout. He said that arrangements had been made for results at Qayyum Stadium, Eidgah and RO office in Peshawar. Shamshad said that election campaigns would end tonight. He urged people to leave home on February 8 and cast their vote to change the destiny of the

CS, IGP inspect polling arrangements in Haripur

peaceful conduct of general election, the security arrangements for the gen-Chief Secretary Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Nadeem Aslam Chaudhry and IGP, Akhtar Hayat Gandapur on Monday paid a visit to Haripur district. On the occasion DPO Haripur, Muhammad Umar Khan, DC Haripur, Khan Muhammad, SP Investigation Haripur, Amjad Hussain and district officers were present on the occasion, said an official press release. DPO Haripur Muhammad Umar Khan gave a de-

eral election. The Chief Secretary and IGP paid a visit to the polling station established at Post Graduate College Haripur and inspected the security arrangements. The Chief Secretary directed the district administration to ensure a peaceful atmosphere and conduct of free, fair and transparent polling on the election day. He also issued directives for provision of drinking water, washrooms and other and staff to the polling stations.

PESHAWAR (APP): PTo ensure the tailed briefing to the CS and IGP on needed facilities to the people on the polling day. The Inspector General of Police KP directed the police officers to ensure implementation of code of conduct issued by the Election Commission in letter and spirit. He said no unauthorized person should be allowed to enter polling stations while discipline among voters and their body search must also be ensured. The IGP also directed the police force to safe shifting of the polling material

انخابي نشان **نرازو**







MOs imposes Rs 3.28mln fine on election rules violators

PESHAWAR (Agencies): The Monicial data Rs 510,000 was imposed on contesting and parting candicode of conduct. According to offi- Rs 370,000 in DI Khan Division.

toring officers (MOs) in various dis- in Peshawar division, Rs 725,000 in tricts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa have Malakand division, Rs 344,000 in so far imposed Rs 3.28 million fine Hazara Division, Rs 205,000 in Mardan division, Rs 849,000 in Kohat, dates over violation of the election Rs 205, 000 in Bannu division and

Two drug peddlers held; 70 kg hashish recovered

cise police on Tuesday foiled bids resident of Shaheedabad, Jameel to smuggle narcotics and held two Chowk, Ring Road, Peshawar, was drug peddlers while recovering 70 kg hashish. According to a spokesman of the Excise department, Excise Intelligence Bureau Peshawar acting on a tip-off foiled a bid to conducting an operation on Marsmuggle large quantities of drugs to Punjab via motorway and recovered 48 kg of hashish recovered from vehicle number BA 2778 on Motorway

PESHAWAR (Agencies): The Ex- A drug peddler Muhammad Sabir, arrested on the spot. Similarly, Excise Police Station Mardan Region recovered 24 kg of hashish from vehicle number AYR 592 while dan Charsadda Road. Suspect Ijaz Ahmed, resident of Baghbanpura, Lahore, was arrested on the spot. The Excise police registered cases Service Road towards Akbarpura. and started further investigation.

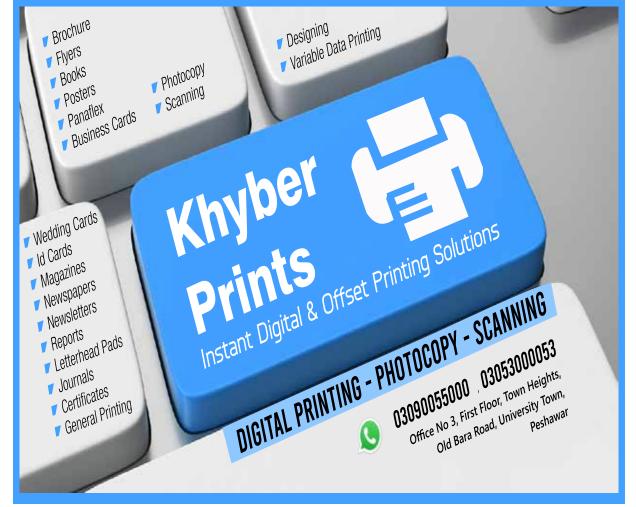
Voters with expired identity card can cast votes-ECP

having expired national identity card can cast their votes in the upon Thursday (February 8). Spokeskistan KP, Sohail Ahmad told APP that all those voters whose identity ued, all the voters have to take the identity cards, he added.

PESHAWAR (Agencies): Voters original copy of their identity card to the polling station otherwise they would not be allowed to excoming general elections to be held ercise their right of franchise. He said the ECP took this decision to man of Election Commission of Pa- allow the participation of hundreds of thousands of voters in elections. A large number of people were apcards are expired are eligible for proaching and asking about their casting votes. However, he contin- eligibility due to the expiry of the









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Elections in Pakistan: A Beacon of Hope Amidst Challenges"

As Pakistan braces itself for the upcoming 2024 general elections, the nation finds itself standing at a crucial crossroads, grappling with economic turmoil, political uncertainties, and security threats. The impending elections, featuring three prominent candidates, carry immense significance for the trajectory of the country. At the forefront of the race is Nawaz Sharif, a three-time former prime minister, whose return from exile in the United Kingdom adds a layer of complexity to the political landscape. His political journey has been riddled with twists, military tensions, and corruption allegations. Running on the ticket of the center-right Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PML-N), Sharif emerges as the front-runner, presenting a vision for the nation's future. Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, representing the center-left Pakistan People's Party, brings with him the weight of a political dynasty and a legacy steeped in history. Aspiring to lead the next governing coalition, Bhutto aims to carve a path forward for the country. Imran Khan, the charismatic former prime minister, faces a different battle as legal issues bar him from participating in the elections. His party, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), contends with challenges, with supporters decrying his arrest and alleging political motivations behind it. As the nation prepares to cast its votes, several critical issues loom large on the horizon. The economic crisis stands out as one of the most pressing challenges, with the rupee's freefall, soaring inflation, dwindling foreign reserves, and frequent blackouts disrupting daily life. The incoming government must navigate these treacherous waters, seeking stability and fostering economic growth. Security concerns continue to cast a shadow over Pakistan, with terrorism remaining a persistent threat. Escalating tensions with neighboring Afghanistan and Iran add layers of complexity to the security landscape. Moreover, the longstanding border dispute with India necessitates deft diplomacy and strategic decision-making. Amid these challenges, the democratic spirit of Pakistan endures. Citizens yearn for transparent elections where their voices genuinely matter. The hope lies in strengthening democratic institutions, ensuring a fair electoral process that reflects the will of the people. As the nation stands on the brink of change, the 2024 elections in Pakistan serve as a beacon of hope. The outcome will shape the future trajectory of the country, determining how it addresses economic challenges, navigates security concerns, and upholds the principles of a resilient democracy. It is a moment for citizens to exercise their democratic rights and for leaders to rise to the occasion, steering Pakistan towards a brighter and more stable future.

Battling Hunger: How New Ideas are Helping Farmers in Pakistan—By Hoor Babar



An essential agricultural revolution quietly reshapes the story of hunger in Pakistan's vast landscapes. Farmers are embracing cutting-edge techniques that promise higher yields while promoting the longterm health of the soil to achieve sustainability. These changes have broad implications in a country where agriculture plays a major economic role, employing around 38% of the labor force and contributing roughly 24% of the GDP. One such technique that is becoming more and more popular is "crop rotation," which is a tactic used by farmers all around the nation. Recent research indicates that crop rotation can raise total crop output by as much as 20%, which is noteworthy in a country where food security is still a major worry. In Pakistan, technology has emerged as a vital ally in the fight against hunger at the same time. A symbol of the technological revolution, drones are giving farmers accurate information on their crops. The Pakistan Telecommunication Authority reports that over 15 million more people are now broadband subscribers in rural regions, a notable rise. This suggests that farmers are increasingly able to utilize digital tools and get knowledge that was previously unattainable. The cooperative efforts of farmers and communities demonstrate the communal dimension of this fight against hunger. Community-driven initiatives are becoming more prevalent in Pakistan due to its different agro-climatic zones. For example, the "Punjab Irrigated-Agriculture Productivity Improvement Project" was started

to improve water management techniques and increase production in Punjab, where agriculture is the primary industry. But the battle against hunger doesn't stop in the fields-it affects every link in the food supply chain. About 24.3% of Pakistanis are estimated by the World Bank to be living below the country's poverty line. With the increasing prevalence of direct interactions between farmers and customers, local markets are emerging as critical nodes in addressing this dilemma. In addition to ensuring farmers receive just remuneration; this change improves community access to fresh fruit that is sourced locally. With this comprehensive strategy, even minor adjustments are producing notable results. The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) reports that planting drought-resistant crops in areas where water is lacking has enhanced agricultural resilience overall by 15%. These adjustments support a more dependable and sustainable food supply. As we travel across Pakistan's diverse landscape, which includes both steep mountains and lush plains, the battle against hunger takes on a collective hue. Intelligent farming methods, technological developments, and community collaboration are driving a transformation of the nation's agricultural landscape, which is intricately linked to its economic fabric. This path towards abundance and sustainability holds promise for a hunger-free Pakistan, where every plate is filled and no one experiences the feeling of hunger in a country where about 20 million people experience food insecurity.

Make no mistake, a new Civil War is a very real prospect for the US— By Tarik Cyril Amar

Let's sketch a big country in three broad strokes: First, its population is over 333 million. These citizens privately own about (or at least) 339 million guns. They are unique in that no other state in the world has more private guns than people. They easily outdistance, for instance, Yemen, a country with a martial culture that has gone through years of civil war and yet there are only about 53 firearms per 100 inhabitants. Second, polarization is unusually high and virulent: As of 2020 already, a political scientist at one of America's most prestigious universities, found that "political polarization among Americans has grown rapidly in the last 40 years — more than in Canada, the United Kingdom, Australia or Germany," for instance. The result: America is special, but not in a good way. "None of the wealthy, consolidated democracies of East Asia, Oceania, or Western Europe," a 2022 paper published by the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace pointed out, "have faced similar levels of polarization for such an extended period." Last year, another Carnegie Endowment paper found that even while some of the perception of polarization on specific policy questions (such as gun control or abortion) is exaggerated, that perception itself is detrimental to the country's cohesion. Because "the people who are most involved in civic and political life hold the least accurate [here meaning: highly negative] views of the other side's beliefs" and there is a high degree of what political scientists call "affective polarization." Put simply, all or many of those citizens, collectively hoarding so many guns that over 40% of households are armed in one way or the other, do not like or even merely respect "the other side" of the political spectrum - not at all and ever less. Third, the country also displays a pronounced cultural preoccupation, really almost obsession, not merely with the idea of civil war as such or the specific history of its own very bloody civil

war in the nineteenth century. Rather its elites and general population are fixated on a coming civil war, which, as of 2022, a whopping 43 percent considered likely in the next ten years. Debates, high-brow books, articles, and popular culture feature this fantasy prominently and persistently. We are talking, of course, about the United States of America. While it would be easy to adduce more criteria and data points, there is no need. The above is sufficient to demonstrate that it would be shortsighted to pooh-pooh the risk of a second civil war in America, for two reasons: It is not a mere fantasy, owing its current national resonance to "hype" and the titillation of imagining a liberatingly apocalyptic future of chaos and every man and woman for themselves (and, in the US, I guess, every other gender that wishes to participate). Smart Americans realize this as well. Barbara F. Walter, for instance, is a prominent political scientist who has worked extensively with the CIA to develop a model of civil war predictors, for any country but the US, of course. She has now come to warn that the model begins to fit America itself disturbingly well. She may have her centrist biases – the usual exaggeration of "Russian influence" included - but her core points are valid: The US is turning into an anocracy, that is, in essence, a regime that only pretends to be a democracy. (In fact, that is what it has always been, I would content.) And there is a substantial constituency of those who feel threatened by losing their former social status and preeminence. Those happen to be phenomena strongly correlated with a risk of civil war. Let's also not forget that America is proving its enormous capacity for global disruption every day, even without civil war at home. While some observers may - even gleefully - hope that Americans fighting each other would finally have to let go of the rest of us, that is a very dicey bet. With an elite narcis-

sistically obsessed with global "primacy" and "indispensability," about 800 bases worldwide, an arsenal of thousands of nuclear warheads, and a nasty habit of blaming others for its own failures, a new American civil war would not exclude aggression abroad. Moreover, declining as it is, the US is still a key part of the global economy, much more so than in 1860, when its first civil war already had serious repercussions for the rest of the world. In sum, it may attract preppers with camo baseball hats, beards, and pump guns, but don't let that fool you: American Civil War 2.0 is a serious issue. So, what about it? What can we reasonably guess about how likely it really is and what shape it might take if it happens? To start with the latter question, perhaps the first thing to note is that big civil wars can start small and local. That is, by the way, the real significance of the recent, open tensions over migration and border control between the state of Texas and the federal government in Washington. They did involve armed forces and much foreboding rhetoric, but, fortunately, no shots were fired. Yet those glibly dismissing the incident as mere political theater are wrong. Because, as the New York Times has noted, it was not only Texas that defied the US government. Rather, "many Republican state leaders publicly expressed defiance in terms that echoed armed conflicts." Indeed, the second thing to note is that, due to America's federal structure, a new civil war would most likely begin with secession. In the fracas between Washington and Texas, 25 Republican governors openly sided with rebellious Texas. This was a perfect illustration of how one local flashpoint could quickly suck in the rest of the country by creating a logic of ultimate polarization and then secession. This logic has not yet fully unfolded. Its contours, however, have emerged clearly.

Courtesy: RT

Essence of Democracy Upheld Free Fair Elections Integral Democratic Progress - By: Awrang Khan

Free and fair elections hold significant importance within the intricate realm of democratic governance, serving as a unifying force that embodies the aspirations and opinions of an entire nation. Ensuring a transparent, inclusive, and honest process is crucial for a functioning democracy, extending beyond mere voting. A free and fair election is akin to a solemn pledge, upholding the fundamental tenets of democracy, fostering a sense of confidence among the populace, and genuinely mirroring the desires of the people. In the heart of every democratic society, elections serve as the mechanism through which power transitions from one leader to another. Ensuring the integrity of elections is crucial, as it allows for a level playing field where every individual's voice is heard and where the people have the power to elect their representatives. With a focus on collective aspirations and national direction, it transcends individual agendas. Transparency is crucial for ensuring the integrity of any election. Ensuring that all individuals have convenient access to information regarding candidates, political parties, and the electoral process is of utmost importance. Having clear guidelines regarding campaign finances, candidate eligibility, and party objectives enables individuals to make informed decisions aligned with their personal beliefs. Ensuring free and fair elections entails providing equal opportunities for everyat hand requires dismantling obstacles to voting, addressing inequities, and safeguarding the rights of all communities. Ensuring the inclusion of all individuals not only promotes fairness, but also enriches decision-making processes with a wide range of perspectives. Certify robust legislation for elections is of utmost importance. It is crucial that these laws are unambiguous, capable of being enforced, and effective in preventing fraudulent activities such as voter suppression and bribery. A neutral electoral commission is crucial to ensure that all individuals adhere to these regulations and maintain the integrity of the election, free from any external interference. A vibrant and unbiased media serves as a vigilant guardian of political integrity. They closely monitor candidates, parties, and election institutions. Providing up-to-date and impartial news enables individuals to gain a clear understanding of current events, empowering them to make informed decisions rooted in truth rather than deception. Technology plays a significant role in modern-day elections, especially in the digital era. Sharing information, reaching a wider audience, and improving election management are some of the benefits it offers. However, it also poses potential dangers such as cyber threats. Ensuring a fair electoral process requires striking a delicate balance between harnessing technology effectively and safeguarding against potential issues. The global community also plays a significant role. Inter-

national organisations and collaborative efforts facilitate the exchange of best practices, offer technical assistance, and monitor electoral processes. International oversight plays a crucial role in building trust, both domestically and internationally. The threat of interference, whether it originates internally or externally, poses a significant risk to the integrity of elections. Ensuring the security of our cyber infrastructure, combatting the spread of misinformation, and safeguarding the independence of election bodies are all vital in safeguarding elections from external influences. The importance of free and fair elections extends beyond the act of voting. Addressing any post-election issues or disagreements in a transparent manner is crucial. Resolving disputes in accordance with the law not only demonstrates the strength of the democratic process, but also convevs a sense of respect for citizens' choices. The significance of free and fair elections goes beyond the mere act of casting votes. They embody a dedication to truthfulness, inclusivity, and ethical conduct. The commitment mentioned here serves as the foundation of a robust democratic society. In the realm of modern governance, countries grapple with various challenges. However, the significance of free and fair elections cannot be overstated. These elections play a pivotal role in shaping the trajectory of democratic progress, ensuring that the voice of the people reverberates within the corridors of power.

The Power of Wise Voting

one to participate. Addressing the issue

As we approach the upcoming general election, it is imperative that we reflect on the significance of our votes and the impact they can have on the future of our community, region, and country. The act of voting is not merely a civic duty but a powerful tool that shapes the direction of our society. In these challenging times, with pressing issues ranging from economic recovery and social justice to environmental sustainability, each vote holds the potential to contribute to positive change. However,

Letters to the Editor

this potential can only be realized when citizens make informed and thoughtful choices at the ballot box. Voting wisely involves understanding candidates' stance on key issues, evaluating their track record, and considering their vision for the future, examining policies that impact our lives and future generations.Informed voting requires fact-checking and reputable sources, as misinformation can hinder sound decision-making. It's our responsibility to filter through noise and seek truth. Local elections significantly impact communities, shaping school board decisions and city governance. Voting responsibly and engaging in constructive dialogues with diverse perspectives is crucial for a diverse and inclusive environment. In conclusion, I urge my fellow citizens to recognize the power vested in our votes and to use this power wisely. By making informed decisions and participating in the democratic process, we can collectively contribute to building a brighter and more prosperous future.

Sincerely, - Zooha Indher, Sukkur

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A new era of enhanced learning experiences awaits students in Islamabad

ISLAMABAD (Agencies): In a commendable effort towards enhancing the educational landscape, Deputy Commissioner (DC) Islamabad, Irfan Memon, on Sunday paid a comprehensive visit to various schools alongside Special Secretary Education, Mohiuddin Wani. As government schools in the federal capital undergo a transformative journey, led by the vision of DC Irfan Memon and supported ernment schools across the city. Un-

by the Ministry of Education, a new era of enhanced learning experiences awaits students. This concerted effort reflects a commitment to providing a modern and conducive environment for education in the heart of the capital. The ICT spokesman while talking to APP said that the focal point of their visit was to assess the progress of the ongoing upgradation process in govder the vigilant leadership of DC Irfan Nawaz Memon, a remarkable initiative is underway to elevate the standard of government schools in Islamabad. The primary objective of this upgradation endeavor is to create an optimal learning environment for students. During their school visits, Memon and Wani keenly reviewed the advancements being made in equipping these educational institutions with modern facilities.

PR putting maximum efforts retrieve 13,972 acres land

Railways has accelerated the efforts to retrieve the major portion of around 13,972 acres of land worth billions of rupees found under the illegal occupation of private individuals and different government departments across the country. "Around 5,809 acres were occupied in Punjab, 1,181 acres are under encroachment in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, 5,948 acres in Sindh and 1,034 acres land occupied in Balochistan," an official in the Ministry told APP. He said the category of land under illegal occupations included commercial, residential, agricultural and various persons or departments. Giving details of the land, the official said that official added.

ISLAMABAD (Agencies): Pakistan around 769 acres were commercial in all the provinces, 3,309 residential, 5,512 acres agricultural and 4382 were under encroachment of various persons or departments. The official said the department had also decided to accelerate its ongoing anti-encroachment operation against land grabbers across the country to recoup its land from different individuals, groups, and even business organizations which were using it for residential, commercial and agriculture purposes for decades. "The joint procedure orders have been issued to all Divisional Superintendents of Pakistan Railways to retrieve the railway land from encroachers," the

Comprehensive security measures unveil for General Elections 2024 in Islamabad

tegic move towards ensuring the safety and integrity of upcoming general elections 2024, Islamabad Capital Police Chief, Dr. Akbar Nasir Khan, led a crucial meeting with key law enforcement officials, which was attended by divisional CPOs, SSPs, DPOs, SPs, SDPOs, SHOs, admin officers, and Muharars, focused on comprehensively planning security protocols. According to the ICP spokesperson, one standout initiative involves the establishment of a central control room in Safe City Islamabad, where Dr. Akbar Nasir Khan will personally oversee all security arrangements. The officers received comprehensive briefings ally, he added.

ISLAMABAD (Agencies): In a stra- on adherence to regulations set by the Election Commission of Pakistan, with a stern emphasis on zero tolerance for any violations. He further emphasized that strict legal actions await those engaging in the display of arms, engaging in aerial firing, or inciting riots. To facilitate a seamless electoral process, measures will be implemented to ensure smooth traffic flow and efficient parking. The sensitive polling stations will be equipped with surveillance cameras to enhance security, while a dedicated focus will be on assisting journalists, foreign observers, and election coverage teams in carrying out their duties profession-

26 outlaws netted, drugs, weapons recovered

ISLAMABAD (Agencies): Islamabad Capital Police (ICP) apprehended 26 outlaws including twelve professional beggars from different areas of the city during the last 24 hours and recovered drugs and weapons from their possession. According to an ICP spokesperson, following the special directions of Islamabad Capital City Police Officer (ICCPO) Dr. Akbar Nasir Khan, the Islamabad Capital Police has intensified its crackdown against the criminal elements to eliminate crime from the city. Meanwhile, the Karachi Company police team arrested an accused namely Sagar and recovered 50 li- 30-bore pistol from his possession.

quor bottles from his possession. The Golra police team arrested an accused namely Nasir Ali and recovered one 30 bore pistol with ammunition from his possession. Likewise, the Sangjani Police team arrested two accused namely Wali Muhammad and Muhammad Irfan and recovered 875 gram of heroin from their possession. Likewise, the Shams Colony police team arrested an accused namely Nnamokoejike and recovered 15 bottles of liquor from his possession. The Khanna police team arrested an accused namely Rehman Ullah and recovered one

Shazia Mari, Muhammad Khan Junejo gear up for Head-to-Head Battle in NA-209 Sanghar I

HYDERABAD (APP): A One-to-one the first time, and now a tough comister and Central Information Secretary PPP Shazia Atta Mari and GDA candidate Muhammad Khan Junejo is expected on National Assembly Constituency NA 209 Sanghar I. Former MNA, Muhammad Khan Junejo has the support of various parties including MQM and recently he has parted ways with PPP and joined Grand Democratic Alliance (GDA)). Both candidates in this constituency were showing strong positions. In the past, this constituency has been a stronghold of the PML (Functional). However, in the last election, Shazia Mari secured this seat for the PPP for

contest between Former Federal Min- petition is expected in this constituency once again. The total number of voters in this constituency is 607,638, with 281,283 female voters and 326,355 male voters. A total of 442 polling stations will be set up, including 847 booths for male voters and 776 booths for female voters. Shazia Mari while talking to "APP" said we have provided all the basic facilities to the people in the urban areas including Achro Thar area of this constituency, which were not provided in the last 70 years. She highlighted efforts to provide clean drinking water and employment opportunities and the best road network to the people.

Flag March conducted in connection with election security

lice on Tuesday conducted a Flag March across the district regarding the security of General Elections 2024. Sukkur Police, Rangers and other law enforcement agencies participated in the flag marches which were supervised by SSP Zubair Nazeer Shaikh, SSP and other senior officers. Special security arrangements had been made for the safe delivery of the polling Sukkur.

SUKKUR (APP): Sukkur district po- material, said SSP. He informed that cameras were being installed at the polling stations. All the officers would be present in the field to continuously monitor security arrangements adding that the display of the weapons would be completely banned. The implementation of the code of conduct issued by the Election Commission of Pakistan would be ensured at all costs, said SSP

Missing girl reunited with her family

ISLAMABAD (Agencies): Islamabad Capital Police (ICP) Bhara Kahu police station team on Tuesday reunited the missing girl with her parents by using technical and human resources. According to ICP spokesperson Muhammad Taqi Jawad, the Bhara Kahu police station team received an application from a citizen in which he stated that his daughter, namely Manahil had been missing and could not be traced despite hectic efforts by family members. Upon receiving the application, the Bhara Kahu police station team used technical and human resources and successfully traced the missing girl and reunited her safely with her family. The parents appreciated the police team's efforts and thanked the Islamabad Capital Police for immediate assistance. The citizens are requested to dial "Pucar-15 tor report via the "ICT-15 App" regarding any suspicious person or activity.

Alleged murderer wounded in encounter

MULTAN (Agencies): An accused of murder being in custody suffered gunshot wounds by the firing of his own accomplice during a police encounter in the limits of Alappa police station. A police spokesman said Sub Inspector Mohammed Ramzan was taking back the accused named Jamshed, son of Bashir along with police team at 12 a.m. yesterday night after recovery of snatched valuables. According to details, when the police reached out to Mochi Wala, some three number of the accomplices appeared to open fire on the police team. Police responded with a similar fire opening which continued for a short time. As soon as the firing stopped, it was found that the accused, Jamshed lying wounded on the ground. SHO of the police station rushed to the spot after reporting the incident.

Three killed in road mishap

SARGODHA (APP): Three persons were killed in a road mishap here at Noor purr,Sargodha road, under the jurisdiction of Quaidabad police station on Tuesday. Police spokesperson said that Muhammad Sagheer (44) r/o Quaid abad, Muhammad Imran (38) r/o Khushab and Muhammad Altaf (34) r/o Khushab was heading to Sargodha on pickup when they reached near Chuna wala adda their pickup collided with a speeding dumper. Resultantly, they all died on the spot. Rescue 1122 team and police concern reached the spot shifted the bodies to hospital for necessary legal formalities.

ICP busted thief gang, huge cache of booty recovered

ISLAMABAD (APP): Islamabad Capital Police (ICP) Anti Robbery and Dacoity Unit (ARDU) police team arrested a wanted member of a thief gang involved in numerous theft activities and recovered stolen gold ornaments, valuables and cash from his possession. Spokesperson of Islamabad Police said on Tuesday that following the special directions of Islamabad Capital City Police Officer (ICCPO) Dr. Akbar Nasir Khan, the Islamabad Capital Police has intensified crackdown against the criminal elements in order to eliminate the crime from the city. Following these directions, the Anti Robbery and Dacoity Unit (ARDU) police team used technical and human resources and succeeded in apprehending a wanted member of a thief gang involved in numerous theft activities.

ECP' 24 hours central control room service to monitor polls, helpline 111-327-000 for public complainants functional: DG

Shinwari Tuesday said that the ECP is fully confident and prepared for the peaceful conduct of elections, and safe delivery of polling materials where 24-hour central control room service will address public grievances on priority. Talking to a private news channel, he said that district-level central control rooms have been set up for strict monitoring of the election process and redress of grievances, adding, these control rooms will continue to function till the results of the elections are declared and the officers in the central control room will monitor the election process along with the monitoring team. He said that the control room will maintain communication with relevant personnel and stakeholders, including preliminary findings, Returning Officers parent.

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Additional and District Returning Officers. He Director General (DG) of Election said apart from WhatsApp, the com-Commission of Pakistan, Haroon plaints can be submitted through email at complaints@ecp.gov.pk, or the dedicated helpline 111-327-000. The Election Commission has also been issuing warning notices to several candidates for violating the electoral code of conduct, he said, adding, the district monitoring teams appointed by the Election Commission in the provinces and federal capital Islamabad are also performing duties actively and removing prohibited advertising material and hoardings on daily basis. Replying to a question, he said that the entire monitoring system set up by ECP aims to ensure a fair and transparent electoral process, adding, the purpose of monitoring is to maintain the atmosphere of peace and order at the polling stations and to make the election fair and trans-

PTA DG on 'Safer Internet Day' stresses public awareness to protect information on digital accounts

ISLAMABAD (APP): Director General of the Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA), Ahmed Shamim Pirzada Tuesday on 'Safer Internet' Day emphasized to create media awareness among the general public for the responsible and safe use of social media platforms. Talking to the PTV news, he said that while acknowledging the digital impact on children, the PTA is dedicated to ensuring a safer internet that meets their educational needs and promotes positive online interactions, adding that the public urged to refrain from clicking on links from unknown numbers as well as unknown senders. "Keeping the digital safe is a shared responsibil-

ity, and all the stakeholders need to come together to keep the dialogue alive on creating a safer space for children," he added. To prevent the propagation of false information via phoney accounts, PTA has strictly instructed social media sites and companies to tighten the account verification procedure, he added. He said that PTA has also asked to open their separate offices to bring these companies under law, adding, PTA also providing comprehensive educational resources and guides to users, emphasizing best practices for securing their accounts, recognizing phishing attempts, and protecting personal information.

ICCPO inaugurates Officers Mess, stable at security division in diplomatic enclave

ISLAMABAD (Agencies): The Is- the importance of ensuring effective Mess and Stable at the security divi-Akbar Nasir Khan interacted with officers issued directives for the enhancement of security measures at the embassies. Emphasizing the need for effective monitoring on both internal and external routes of the diplomatic enclave, the ICCPO stressed "ICT-15" application.

lamabad Capital City Police Officer surveillance through the Safe City (ICCPO) Dr. Akbar Nasir Khan on centralized camera systems, he add-Tuesday visited the Diplomatic En- ed. He further said, the Islamabad clave and inaugurated the Officers Capital Police remains steadfast in its commitment to maintaining a sion. During the visit, the ICCPO Dr. peaceful environment and ensuring the protection of the lives and property of the citizens within the Federal capital. He urged the citizens to cooperate with the police and report any suspicious activities or items by dialling the helpline "Pucar 15" or at

800 rescuers, 1376 scouts to perform duty during elections

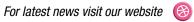
cue posts were set up in the district would not be tolerated, he added.

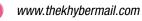
FAISALABAD (APP): The Punjab where 37 ambulance vehicles and Emergency Services (Rescue 1122) 116 motorcycle ambulances would has finalized its plan for the gener- remain available. The staffers' leaves al elections in the district. District were cancelled and volunteers were Emergency Officer Faisalabad Zafar also deputed. He said that 800 rescu-Iqbal while chairing a meeting said ers and 1,376 scouts would perform that Rescue 1122 teams would be rescue duty. Emergency Officer Ophigh alert across the district to deal erations Engineer Tariq Mehmood with any situation during the gen- would monitor rescue activities and eral elections. He said that 134 res-negligence, lethargy or delinquency

ECP to announce unofficial results of all 859 constituencies till February 9

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Election 11 National Assembly and five Commission of Pakistan (ECP) will Provincial Assembly constituenannounce unofficial results of all 859 constituencies of the Nation- original ones set for destruction al and Provincial Assemblies on as per the court order, he said. He February 9 which will be issued by the Returning Officers. "The ECP has already completed all the arrangements to conduct free, fair and transparent general elections across the country on February 8," the ECP spokesman told APP. He said the ECP has completed the printing of 260 million ballot papers for all constituencies in the country ahead of the 2024 general elections. The spokesman said the National Assembly ballots are identifiable by green paper, whereas Provincial Assembly ballots are printed on white paper. Except for some districts, the distribution of printed ballot papers has been finalized across the nation." The printing, which commenced on January 14, concluded by February 3. In compliance with a Supreme the election drive slated to con-Court directive, ballot papers for clude on February 6 at 12 pm.

cies underwent reprinting, with the said that this time, a total of 260 million ballot papers were printed, reflecting a 54.74% rise in candidates compared to the 2018 elections. He said that this time, a total of 260 million ballot papers were printed, reflecting a 54.74% rise in candidates compared to the 2018 elections. Despite a 195% surge in demand for special paper, effective management led to a reduction from 2400 tonnes to 2177 tonnes. The distribution of printed ballot papers comprises 5% single-column, 50% double-column, 30% three-column, 11.15% four-column, and 2.4% five-column formats, gearing up for the scheduled February 8 polls. Political parties and independent candidates are actively participating in campaigns, with















Over 120 million to exercise right of vote to elect representatives: Solangi

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Fed- one or the other pretext and careeral Minister for Information, Broadcasting and Parliamentary Affairs Murtaza Solangi on Tuesday said that on February 8 over 120 million Pakistanis would cast their votes to elect public representatives of their choice to run the affairs of the state as envisaged in the Constitution Addressing a press conference along with Minister for Interior Dr. Gohar Ijaz he said that last year on August 17, 2023, after oath-taking of the caretaker cabinet, he had committed in a press conference that the caretaker government would provide all possible assistance to the Election Commission of Pakistan to conduct free and fair elections. He said that rumour-mongers' claims, representatives to run the affairs of that elections would not be held on

taker setup would linger on, had proven wrong. The minister said that the Ministry of Information yesterday had launched an online media helpline for the convenience of local and foreign journalists during the elections. He said that the Pakistani nation had been fighting the scourge of terrorism for decades and between 2008 and 2013 law and order situation was not good. The 2008 elections had to be postponed for one month following the martyrdom of Benazir Bhutto. He said that a few incidents of terrorism could not deter the masses who would come out to use their right of vote in a large numbers to elect their the state.

World urged to pay attention towards Kashmiris' sufferings

Kashmir Solidarity Symposium underlined the urgent need for global attention and support towards sufferings faced by the people in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir. The symposium, organize to mark 'Kashmir Solidarity Day' was hosted by the Jammu Kashmir Peace & Justice Organization in Muzaffarabad, according to press statement received here. Speaking on the occasion, Chief Jammu Kashmir Peace & Justice Organization, Tanveer-ul- Islam expressed profound gratitude to the government and people of Pakistan and peace-loving individuals worldwide for their solidarity with the oppressed people of Jammu and Kashmir. "Observing Kashmir Solidarity Day every year of Pakistan's unwavering commit- compatriots on the global stage.

ISLAMABAD (APP): Speakers at a ment to the Kashmiri cause," he said, highlighting the day's significance in sending a resolute message of support to Kashmiris across the Line of Control. The historical roots of the Kashmir conflict, dating back to the partition of British India in 1947, were outlined by Tanveer. He lamented on decades of tension, wars, and human rights violations and unfulfilled promise of a plebiscite mandated by United Nations Security Council resolutions in 1948 and 1949. He highlighted the importance of beefing up support for Kashmir cause through diplomatic channels, calling for practical assistance to address the humanitarian crisis in the disputed region. He also stressed the need of empowering the Kashmiri diaspora to advocate on February 5 is a potent reminder for the rights of their struggling

Int'l workshop on 'ethical research in clinical trials' to start on Feb 7

ISLAMABAD (Agencies): Two-day workshop for physical or virtual International workshop on 'Ethical Research in Clinical Trials' will be held under the auspices of COMS-TECH and UEARS from February 7-9, to address the challenges of research integrity in clinical trials in low-middle-income countries and propose the best suitable guidelines to improve the quality of research in this domain. The workshop to be held in Cairo, Egypt, is aimed at imparting knowledge and training about research integrity and creating a network of professionals working in the field for continuous learning and exchanges. According to an official of COMSTECH, the meeting and its workshop will help devise solutions for the challenges being faced in clinical trials by low income countries. Students, scientists, researchers, experts, healthcare managers, government offisouth countries can register for the many would have suffered

participation. Globally, the pursuit and dissemination of knowledge enjoys a place of distinction, and the public expects to reap considerable benefit from the creative and innovative contributions of scientists. As science becomes increasingly tangled with major social, philosophical, economic, and political issues, scientists become more accountable to the larger society of which they are a part. Therefore, it is more important than ever that those individual scientists and their institutions periodically reassess the values and professional practices that guide their research as well as their efforts to perform their research work with integrity. Behind every medicine and intervention that people have ever taken, are thousands of patients who have volunteered to participate in clinical trials, which cials, think tanks, health NGO's, and have led to many breakthroughs in policymakers from the domain of disease prevention and treatment multi-centre clinical trials research in the last few decades. Without from across the world and global the willingness of these individuals.

Police finalize security arrangements for General Election 2024; 12,500 cops to be deployed

RAWALPINDI (APP): Rawalpindi Region Police on Tuesday finalized all the arrangements for the general elections 2024 scheduled to be held on February 8. According to Regional Police Officer (RPO) Rawalpindi Region, Syed Khurram Ali, during the election in the four districts of Rawalpindi region, more than 12,500 police personnel, and more than 4,000 officials of other law enforcement agencies would perform security duties. 5,490 polling stations had been established in 13 constituencies of the National Assembly and 26 constituencies of the Provincial Assembly across the region, the RPO added. In terms of sensitivity, there are 694 polling stations in Category A, 1371 in Category B and 3425 in Category C, Syed Khurram Ali informed. He said that 2,519 CCTV cameras had been installed across the region to monitor the situation from the central control room. Syed Khurram Ali further said that the control rooms had also been set up in all districts while a central control room had tive areas.



been set up in the regional office. Police forces in Rawalpindi, Attock, Jhelum and Chakwal along with other law enforcement agencies had also conducted a joint flag march and full dress rehearsal regarding the election, he added. The implementation of the code of conduct issued by the Election Commission of Pakistan would be ensured at all cost, Sved Khurram Ali said adding, that all available resources would be utilized to maintain law and order before and during the election. He informed that police parties and other law enforcement agencies personnel would also perform patrolling duties, particularly in sensi-

Terrorist ring leader among accomplice killed in N Waziristan IBO: ISPR

forces on Tuesday gunned down a terrorist ring leader alongwith his accomplice during an intense exchange of fire ensued amid an intelligence-based operation (IBO) conducted in the North Waziristan District of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province. According to the Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR),

the security forces, on the night

A history-sheeter injure in encounter

MULTAN (APP): A history-sheeter reportedly involved in more than 30 criminal cases was injured by the firing of his accomplices during a police encounter in the limits of Shah Rukhn Alam police station. The gangster, Mohammad Shoaib, son of Haq Nawaz, resident of Ahmedpur Kanaura, was taken back by the police after the recovery when some unidentified offenders ambushed the police team at 12:00 a.m. yesterday night. Police responded with a similar fire opening. As soon as the firing stopped, police discovered the accused lying wounded on the ground. The attacker escaped the scene by taking benefit of darkness of the night. SHO of Shah Rukn e Alam police station reached out along with other office officers to the affected area.

Five profiteers held

SARGODHA (APP): Price control magistrates arrested five shopkeepers accused of profiteering from various parts of the city,here on Tuesday. According to official sources, the magistrates inspected various points including Muhammadi market, Iqbal colony and its surroundings and apprehended five shopkeepers including Khizar, Hayyat, Akhtar, Javed and Asghar for overcharging and imposed hefty fines on various shopkeepers. Cases were registered against the accused

CS, IG police KPK visit Haripur

HARIPUR (APP): Chief Secretary, KPK Nadim islam Chaudhry, along with Inspector General (IG) Police Akhtar Hayat Khan Tuesday paid a surprise visit to Haripur district to ensure strict adherence to the code of conduct issued by the Election Commission and to implement robust security measures for the smooth conduct of the elections. During the visit, the chief secretary and IG also attended a detailed briefing given by the District Police Officer (DPO), Muhammad Omar Khan on the security arrangements for upcoming genera elections in the district. Nadim Islam Chaudhry inspected the polling stations at Post Graduate College Haripur and reviewed the security arrangements. He emphasized the importance of special attention to security arrangements to handle untoward incidents. Furthermore, he stressed the need to provide necessary facilities to voters at polling stations to ensure transparent and fair elections, including access to drinking water, washrooms, and other basic amenities.

Arrangements reviewed for general elections in Tank

DERA ISMAIL KHAN (APP):Deputy Commissioner Tank Muhammad Shoib has said that all available resources would be utilized to ensure a secure environment for the peaceful conduct of general elections on Feb 8 across the district. He expressed these views while chairing a meeting to review arrangements and discuss issues pertaining to the implementation of the prescribed code of conduct for upcoming general elections. The meeting was attended by officials of all relevant departments including Rescue 1122. During the meeting, the relevant officers were briefed on the code of conduct and security issued by the Election Commission and security-related measures taken for the peaceful conduct of polls in the

district.

of fire between the army troops weapons, ammunition and explosives were also recovered from the killed terrorists who remained ac- ISPR said.

RAWALPINDI (APP): The security of February 5 and 6, the operation tively involved in numerous terrorwas conducted in North Waziristan ist activities including target killing District, on reported presence of as well as extortion and abduction terrorists. The terrorist ring leader of innocent civilians. "Sanitization killed during the heavy exchange operation is being conducted to eliminate any other terrorist found and the terrorists was identified as in the area. Locals of the area ap-Ayubullah alias Mansoor. However, preciated the operation and expressed their full support to eliminate the menace of terrorism," the

Election campaign to end today: EC Sindh Sharifullah

KARACHI (APP): The Provincial at midnight on February 6 and 7. campaign. The drive time will end law.

Election Commissioner of Sindh He said that after midnight the per-Sharifullah has focused the atten- sons were prohibited from particition of all the candidates and po- pating in any meeting, procession, litical parties of the Sindh province corner meeting or any political acparticipating in the general electivity of this nature. He further said tions 2024 on clause No. 182 of the that strict legal action would be tak-Elections Act 2017 and said that en against any person, who violated today is the last day of the election the above-mentioned clause of the

DC imposes Section-144 for peaceful conduct of general election

apprehensions of mischief from unscrupulous elements to disrupt the peaceful atmosphere of the district and create situation detrimental to public security and in the light of ECP instruction regarding maintaining a code of conduct, the Deputy Commissioner has imposed Section-144 to this effect said on Monday that the display and brandishing of firearms in the run-u to the election, on election day, and post-election period will remain completely banned. The order said carrying or possessing mobile phones inside the premises of polling stations, except for presiding officers, will not be allowed. The entry of male into female poll- remain imposed.

DIR LOWER (APP): In the wake of ing booths on election day will also be banned. Standing on rooftops of polling stations and other buildings near the polling stations except the deployed staff of the LEAs will remain banned on election day and on 7th and 8th February. It said that the presence of persons not residents of the village and neighborhood Cr. P. C. in the district. A notification council within a radius of the 400 meters of the vicinity of the polling stations will be strictly banned. The use of loudspeakers other than those authorized by the ECP Code of Conduct will not be allowed and a complete ban on mobilization of all equipment used for developmental purposes like electric poles, gas pipes and construction material will

31 candidates including 20 independents contesting for NA-56, Rawalpindi-V

RAWALPINDI (APP): As many as 31 stan Party and Shehryar Riaz as an candidates including 20 independents are contesting general elections for National Assembly Constituency No. NA-56, Rawalpindi-V, while a total of 523,733 registered voters including 272,459 males and 251,274 females will use their right to franchise on the election day. Muhammad Hanif Abbasi, candidate of Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), Sumaira Gul, Pakistan Peoples Party Parliamentarians, Imran Shafique, Jamaat-e-Islami Pakistan, Muhammad Zia Ur Rehman Amazai, Jamiat Ulama-e-Islam Pakistan, Sajjad Akbar Abbasi, Tehreek Labbaik Pakistan, Sharjeel Mir, Istehkam-e-Paki-

independent candidate are in the run. According to details, all the arrangements had been finalized by the administration for the general elections and the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) had also announced a polling scheme for the constituency, NA-56. Rawalpindi district administration on the directives of Commissioner, Rawalpindi Division, Liaquat Ali Chatta had finalized administrative measures including security arrangements to maintain law and order. As many as 371 polling stations including 188 male, 181 female and two combined will be set up in the constituency to facilitate the voters.

Caretaker govt ensures best arrangements for peaceful conduct of polls: PM

ISLAMABAD (Agencies): Caretak- honour its commitment as a Comconduct of elections on polling day, across the country. He was talking to a delegation of the Commonwealth Observer Group (COG), led by former President of Nigeria Goodluck Ebele Jonathan who called on him, PM Office Media Wing said in a press release. The meeting was part of the COG's interaction with various stakeholders ahead of the upcoming general elections on February 8, 2024. The caretaker prime minand said that Pakistan was proud to serve the election process.

er Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq monwealth member state by inviting Kakar on Tuesday said that despite independent international observers numerous challenges, the best pos- to witness the general elections. He sible arrangements had been made also highlighted that the caretaker to ensure peaceful and seamless government had fulfilled its responsibilities to run the day-to-day affairs of the state and create a conducive environment ahead of the elections. Now it was the turn of the people of Pakistan to exercise their democratic right to vote, he added. Goodluck Ebele Jonathan thanked the caretaker prime minister and conveved best wishes of the Secretary General of the Commonwealth Patricia Scotland. He said the COG delegation would be visiting various polling ister welcomed the COG delegation sites throughout the country to ob-

Commissioner, RPO inquires after health of 'Chaudhwan terror attack' victims

DERA ISMAIL KHAN (APP): Combeing extended to the injured policemen missioner Dera Zafarul Islam and Regional Police Officer (RPO) Dera Nasir Mehmood Satti on Tuesday visited District Headquarters (DHO) hospital and inquired after the health of policeman, who got injured in a terrorist attack on Chaudhwan police station the other day. According to a police spokesman, the commissioner and RPO visited Trauma Center at DHO hospital Dera Ismail Khan and inquired after the health of under treatment policemen. The visiting officers also presented bouquets to the injured policemen and prayed for their early recovery. They also examined the treatment facilities

and issued necessary instructions for further improvement in the facilities. Speaking on this occasion, the commissioner and RPO acknowledged the bravery and courage of the injured personnel, saying, the policemen on duty fought bravely and courageously with terrorists. "You are the pride of police department and the nation," they asked the injured policemen. They said that such coward attacks in the night darkness could not weaken the resolve of police force, adding, the sacrifices of those who rendered their precious lives for the sake of country's sovereignty and its people's safety would not go in vain.

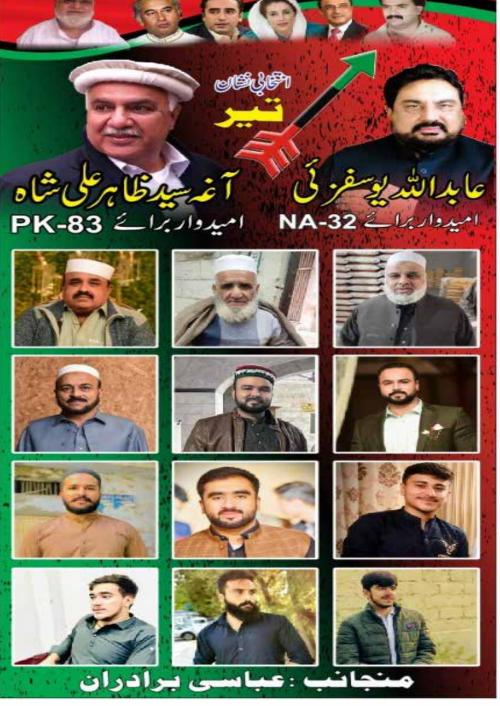
























Toyota raises annual net profit forecast as chip shortage eases

TOKYO (Agencies): Japan's Toyota raised its annual net profit forecast to a record high on Tuesday and reported strong sales in all regions in the first three quarters as the global semiconductor shortage eases. The weak yen is also boosting earnings for the auto titan, which now expects to book a net profit of \\ \frac{\dagger}{4.5} trillion (US\$30 billion) this financial year, up from its previous forecast of ¥3.95 trillion. Japan's Toyota raised its annual net profit forecast to a record high on Tuesday and re-



ported strong sales in all regions in the first three quarters as the global semiconductor shortage eases. The weak yen is also boosting earnings for the auto titan, which now expects to book a net profit of ¥4.5

trillion (US\$30 billion) this financial year, up from its previous forecast of ¥3.95 trillion. But it is also facing scandals involving rigged engine and safety tests at its subsidiaries, which analysts said could have an impact on its overall performance. "Sales volume increased in all regions" from April-December 2023, "profit structure improved while as marketing efforts together with cost-reduction efforts overcame soaring materials prices since the Covid-19 pandemic", Toyota said.

Britain invests \$100 million in AI research and regulation

LONDON (Agencies): Britain on Tuesday said it would spend more than £100 million (US\$125 million) to launch nine new research hubs in artificial intelligence (AI) and train regulators about the technology. "AI is moving fast, but we have shown that humans can move just as fast," technology minister Michelle Donelan said in a statement. "By taking an agile, sector-specific approach, we have begun to grip the risks immediately." Nearly £90 million would go towards the hubs,



which will focus on using AI in areas including healthcare, chemistry and mathematics, and a partnership with the US on responsible AI, the government said. Another £10 mil-

lion pounds would help regulators address the risks and harness the opportunities of AI, it said, such as developing practical tools to monitor risks in sectors from telecoms and healthcare to finance and education. Britain hosted an international summit in November on AI safety. More than 25 countries who attended signed the "Bletchley Declaration", which focuses on identifying risks of shared concern and developing cross-country policies to mitigate them.

Dollar firms near 3-month high as rate cut bets dwindle

SINGAPORE (Agencies): The US dollar was perched near a threemonth peak on Tuesday, buoyed by elevated Treasury yields, on growing expectations that the Federal Reserve is unlikely to cut interest rates aggressively this year. The dollar index, which measures the US currency against six rivals, was at 104.42, having touched 104.60 on Monday, its highest since Nov 14. The index is up 3% for the year so far after dropping 2% in 2023. Data on Monday showed US services sec-



tor growth picked up in January as new orders increased and employment rebounded, indicating a strong start to the year for the economy and comes after a blowout jobs re-year.

port last week. The string of robust US economic data has quashed any lingering hopes of early and steep interest rate cuts by the Fed, with Fed Chair Jerome Powell and other policymakers also pushing back against the notion. Traders have been scaling back rate cuts bets since the beginning of the year and are currently pricing in only a 15% chance of a cut in March, the CME FedWatch tool showed, compared with a 69% chance at the start of the

Germany's Scholz dismisses new corporate tax relief ideas

BERLIN (Agencies): German chancellor Olaf Scholz on Monday declined to consider corporate tax reform ideas floated by his ministers to revive the economy, saying the focus should instead be on finally passing an existing draft law aiming to offer companies fiscal relief. Germany's economy and finance ministers on Sunday floated the idea of reforming the country's corporate taxes, aiming to make local companies more competitive given challenges that include high energy costs. Asked about the debate at a news briefing, Scholz said the focus faces opposition in the Bundesrat, tive and conducive to investment".



should instead be on the Growth Opportunities Act, which envisages tax relief of around €7 billion annually and already passed the lower house of parliament last November. The law is now stuck in a parliamentary mediation committee as it the legislative body that represents the 16 German states at the federal level. The states and municipalities would have to shoulder the bulk of the expected tax revenue shortfall. "This is what we should be focusing on, this is practical, tangible and will take effect quickly," Scholz said. Economy minister Robert Habeck was quoted in weekly Welt am Sonntag on Sunday as saying it was important to consider tax relief and tax incentives for investment given that Germany has "an overall corporate taxation that is no longer competi-

Saudi Arabian firms to make parts for Lockheed's THAAD system

RIYADH (Agencies): US weapons maker Lockheed Martin has signed agreements for Saudi Arabian companies to manufacture parts of its Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) system, the company said on Monday. These sub-contracts will enhance manufacturing capabilities in Saudi Arabia and transfer exper- country's state news agency. The contise to strengthen the country's de- tracts come at time of rising tension fence industry. Lockheed said in a in the region as some shipping comstatement. State-owned Saudi Arabi- panies suspended transit along the Middle East Propulsion Company an Military Industries (SAMI) signed busy Red Sea route to avoid being 11 agreements at the Saudi defence attacked by Yemen's Iranian-backed Company (AIC) for Steel, the firm show in Riyadh, according to the Houthi group. The Houthis have added in statement.



launched waves of exploding drones and missiles at vessels since November in response to Israel's military operations in Gaza. The Biden administration has maintained backing for the Saudis to receive a Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) system first approved in 2017 to counter ballistic missile threats. The prime partners of Lockheed Martin's deal that will receive sub-contracts include (MEPC) and Arabian International

India's January palm oil imports hit 3-month low

MUMBAI (Agencies): India's palm oil imports fell to a three-month low in January, as refiners increased buying of rival soyoil due to negative refining margins for crude palm oil (CPO), five dealers told Reuters on Monday. Lower purchases by the world's biggest importer of vegetable oils could keep palm oil inventories elevated in top producers Indonesia and Malaysia and weigh on benchmark futures FCPO. January palm oil imports fell 12% from the previous month to 787,000 metric tonnes, es-



timates from dealers showed. Crude palm oil imports fell 16% to 541,000 tonnes last month, they said. Palm oil imports were down primarily because of a significant decrease in CPO buying, as refiners saw more negative margins compared to refined bleached deodorised (RBD) palmolein, said Rajesh Patel, managing partner at edible oil trader and broker GGN Research. "Soya Oil imports increased as prices were highly competitive compared to palm products. and refining margins were in positive territory," he said. Soyoil imports in January jumped 24% from a month earlier to 190,000 tonnes, but were far below the monthly average imports of 306,000 tonnes seen in the last marketing year ended on Oct 31, dealers estimated.

PIF launches new local business opportunities at Private Sector Forum

RIYADH (Agencies): The Public Investment Fund (PIF) will hold its second PIF Private Sector Forum, Feb. 6-7, 2024, at the King Abdulaziz International Convention Center in Riyadh. This event aims to foster partnerships between PIF, its portfolio companies and the private sector. It aligns with PIF's strategy to increase local content through its portfolio companies to 60

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percent by the end of 2025, and the Vision 2030 objective to increase private sector contribution to GDP to 65 percent by 2030. The Private Sector Forum will host a range of senior figures, including government ministers and PIF executives, as well as CEOs and thought leaders, and representatives of over 80 PIF portfolio companies. The event will also feature in total over

100 portfolio companies and government entities' booths and also expects more than 8,000 private sector participants from various strategic sectors. The 2024 PIF Private Sector Forum will complement PIF and its portfolio companies' efforts to further empower the local private sector, enhancing its competitiveness and capacity for innovation.

McDonald's eyes China expansion with 1,000 new outlets

BEIJING (Agencies): McDonald's Corp will open 1,000 more outlets in China this year, as it works to expand its presence into lower-tier cities in its second-largest market. "We think there's going to be an opportunity for us to continue to build out development and penetration in that market to many places where we don't really have McDonald's presence," CEO Chris Kempczinski said in an analyst call. The company, which also opened 1,000 outlets in China in 2023, reiterated its goal of having 10,000 mainland restaurants by the end of 2028. "We're very much on track from our devel-



opment aspirations, and we would expect to do something similar in 2024 from that standpoint," he said. The Chicago-based fast food giant is just one global chain looking to establish a bigger foothold in lesser-known Chinese cities, as bigger markets like Beijing and Shanghai become saturated.

Asian stocks inch higher as Chinese markets rebound

shares edged up on Tuesday thanks rose 0.3%, after a 0.7% decline from to a bounce in battered Chinese markets, although investors were cautious after a slide on Wall Street amid diminishing expectations of a near-term Federal Reserve rate cut, which in turn underpinned the dollar. Oil prices held largely steady as traders took stock of a visit to the Middle East by US Secretary of State Antony Blinken to discuss a ceasefire offer gained 0.3%, after having plumbed a in the region. MSCI's broadest index five-year low on Monday.

SINGAPORE (Agencies): Asian of Asia-Pacific shares outside Japan the previous session. Chinese stocks, which had initially opened lower on Tuesday, later reversed course, helped by recent signs of support from statebacked investors and as authorities have stepped in to stem heavy losses in the market. The blue-chip CSI300 Index was last more than 1.5% higher, while Shanghai Composite Index

Meta urged to update rules after fake Biden post

WASHINGTON (Agencies): With major elections looming, Meta's policy on deep fake content is in urgent need of updating, an oversight body said on Monday, in a decision about a manipulated video of US president Joe Biden. A video of Biden voting with his adult granddaughter, manipulated to falsely appear that he inappropriately touched her chest, went viral last year. It was reported to Meta and later the company's oversight board as hate speech. The tech giant's oversight board, which independently reviews Meta's content moderation decisions, said the platform was technically correct to leave the video online. But it also insisted that the company's rules on manipulated content were no longer fit for purpose. content has been created."



The board's warning came amid fears of rampant misuse of artificial intelligence-powered applications for disinformation on social media platforms in a pivotal election year not only in the United States but worldwide as huge portions of the global population head to the polls. The Board said that Meta's policy in its current form was "incoherent, lacking in persuasive justification and inappropriately focused on how

Societe Generale to cut almost 950 jobs

PARIS (Agencies): French banking group Societe Generale announced plans today to slash 947 jobs at its head office as part of a cost-cutting programme. The group's new chief executive, Slawomir Krupa, presented in September a strategic roadmap that included reducing costs by €1.7 billion by 2026 compared to 2022. Societe Generale said today that 5% of its head office staff would be cut as part of organisational changes "to simplify its operations and structurally improve its operational efficiency". The job reductions will be carried out "through internal transfers, end-of-year support, or voluntary departures", the had to be reined in to bolster competi- of Christian Workers.



tiveness and profitability. One move in that direction is the bank merging its Credit Du Nord network under the SG brand. The group will cut its branches significantly with 1,450 planned for 2025 down from 2,100 five years earlier. Several unions expressed concern over cuts which had leaked in the media without management reacting. "Where is the company's social rebank added. In a message to staff seen sponsibility?" asked Michael Plessiet by AFP, the bank said structural costs of the CFTC – the French Federation

OECD raises global growth outlook on US strength

PARIS (Agencies): The global econo- for major economies, the Paris-based my is on course to hold up better this year than expected only a few months ago as an improved outlook in the US offsets euro zone weakness, the OECD said on Monday. World economic growth is expected to ease from 3.1% in 2023 to 2.9% this year, better than the 2.7% expected in November in the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development's last outlook. In an update of its forecasts

OECD left its 2025 global estimate unchanged at 3.0%, when growth is expected to be boosted by major central banks rate cuts as inflation pressures subside. The US economy was expected to grow 2.1% in 2024 and 1.7% in 2025 as lower inflation boosted wage growth and triggers interest rate cuts, the OECD said, raising its 2024 forecast from 1.5% previously and leaving 2025 unchanged.

Lufthansa ground staff to add to Germany's strike woes

FRANKFURT (Agencies): Ground Duesseldorf. "There are likely to be staff at German airline Lufthansa will go on strike on Wednesday in the latest industrial action to hit Europe's biggest economy, the Verdi union said. Some 25,000 staff will take part in the walkout, which will last for around 27 hours from 4am, the union said in a statement on Monday. The workers are demanding a 12.5% pay increase over 12 months as well as one-off bonuses to counter inflation, it said. The strike will affect Germany's biggest airport in Frankfurt as well as those in Munich, Hamburg, Berlin and

major flight cancellations and delays," the union said. Lufthansa said it was working on a "special flight schedule" and more than 100,000 passengers would be affected. The airline said in a statement it had offered workers increases totalling more than 13% over the next three years, as well as the "prompt payment of significant inflation bonuses". But the union said it deemed the offer "totally unacceptable". "Lufthansa employees already have around 10% less in their pockets than three years ago.

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Sharjah's new English signings fail to prevent ILT20 hammering at hands of Abu Dhabi

SHARJAH (Agencies): The topsy-turvy nature of International League T20 in 2024 was once again illustrated in the clash between Sharjah Warriors and Abu Dhabi Knight Riders on Monday. Ahead of the game, the Warriors paraded two new recruits from England, in the form of Adil Rashid and Liam Livingstone. It looked like a scoop for the Sharjah side. Rashid is a seasoned cricketer who has played in 135 One Day Internationals for England and 104 Twenty20 Internationals, claiming more than 300 wickets across the formats. He has also played



in 19 Tests, in which he took 60 wickets. Livingstone has played in 35 ODIs and 28 T20Is for England. On the night, this counted for very little, except perhaps the performance of Knight Riders' Irishman Josh Little, who claimed the wickets of

Livingstone, Tom Kohler-Cadmore and Sean Williams for only 17 runs. This left the Warriors on 46-for-six in the 10th over, after David Willey earlier dispatched both openers cheaply. They never recovered and ultimately were dismissed for 75 in 17 overs. The last four wickets fell to another English evergreen, Ravi Bopara, who took all four for 15 runs. Warriors captain Kohkler-Cadmore was left to later bemoan the below-par starts early batters have been posting lately, after bright starts in their opening matches in the competition.

Paraguay beats Olympic champions Brazil 1-0

CARACAS (Agencies): Olympic champions Brazil suffered a setback in their bid to secure a place at this year's Paris Games after their under-23 team slumped to a shock 1-0 defeat by Paraguay on Monday in the final four South American qualifying tournament. Fabrizio Peralta's header in the final seconds of the first half was enough to give Paraguay, who last competed at the Olympics



in 2004, an unexpected victory. Brazil's teenage prodigy Endrick, who

squandered a chance to put the 2020 Tokyo Games gold medallists ahead when he missed a penalty after 29 minutes. Brazil will next face hosts Venezuela, who beat them 3-1 in the preliminary stage earlier this month, on Thursday. Paraguay's next fixture will be against Argentina. The four countries face each other in the February 5-11 finals, with the two top will join Real Madrid later this year, teams securing Olympic berths.

Impressive Raducanu sets up Jabeur showdown at Mubadala Abu Dhabi Open

ABU DHABI (Agencies): Emma Raducanu will meet Ons Jabeur in a last-16 clash at the Mubadala Abu Dhabi Open presented by the Abu Dhabi Sports Council, after the Brit showed her class in a comfortable win over the Czech Republic's Marie Bouzkova on Monday night. Having returned to action at the start of the year following several injuries, Raducanu took some time to find her rhythm, and it was Bouzkova who looked the more assured in the opening stages as she won the first two games. However, the 2021 US Open champi-



on began to get a foothold in the game with a couple of exquisite drop-shots, an indication of what was to follow. And when she levelled the first set at 4-4, the balance of the contest swung in her fa-

vor. Raducanu won the next two games to claim the first set, and from that point onwards there was only ever going to be one outcome. A dominant display in the second set saw the Brit produce some wonderful tennis, and she eventually won 6-4, 6-1to book a date with world No. 6 Jabeur on Wednesday. On the prospect of facing Jabeur, Raducanu said: "We played here a year ago, just about, at the Mubadala Exhibition and it was a great match for the fans. She's definitely the home favorite here and rightfully so.

Djokovic, Nadal to headline 'Six Kings Slam' in Saudi Arabia

RIYADH (Agencies): Saudi Arabia will host a new elite tennis exhibition featuring Novak Djokovic and Rafa Nadal with three other Grand Slam winners in October, the country's General Entertainment Authority has announced. Carlos Alcaraz, Jannik Sinner, Daniil Medvedev and Holger Rune will also play at the 'Six Kings Slam', which will form part of the Saudi cultural and entertainment festival Riyadh Season, organisers said. With Sinner having recently won the Australian Open, Dane Rune is the only player on the six-man roster without a Grand Slam title. Spaniard Nadal, who signed up as an ambassador for



the Saudi Arabian Tennis Federation last month, said he was looking forward to the event. "After some other tennis players have done so, I am very excited to play for the first time in Riyadh," the 22-times Grand Slam champion said in the press release. While exhibition events in the Gulf are nothing new, they are usually played during breaks in the ATP season or after it has finished. The ATP has a full schedule in October, including mandatory Masters 1000 tournaments in Shanghai and Paris. Saudi Arabia will also host the season-ending Next Gen Finals for men's under-21 players in Jeddah from 2023 to 2027, the ATP announced last August. The oil-rich country has invested heavily in sports like soccer, Formula One and golf over the last few years. However, critics have accused the country of using sport to cover up its poor record on human rights and equality issues.

Rangers push past Avs in OT,2-1

NEW YORK (Agencies): Alexis Lafreniere scored 1:53 into overtime on Monday night for the host New York Rangers, who overcame a third-period deficit to edge the Colorado Avalanche 2-1 in a battle of division leaders. The Avalanche dominated the extra session before Rangers goaltender Jonathan up to the puck before eventually send-



Quick began the sequence that led to orado goalie Alexandar Georgiev. Arte-Lafreniere's goal. Quick fired a clear- mi Panarin forced overtime by scoring rado zone, raced into the neutral zone ing pass, and Mika Zibanejad caught in the third for the Rangers, who have won two straight to improve to 6-7-2 ing a drop pass between his legs to Lasince Jan. 1. Quick made 32 saves, in- With New York defenseman Braden freniere. Lafreniere shuffled the puck cluding point-blank stops of Nathan Schneider in front of him, MacKinnon and shot just as New York defenseman MacKinnon and Devon Toews in over- managed to get a shot around him and Erik Gustafsson skated in front of Coltime. MacKinnon scored late in the first over Quick's glove with 1:48 left.

game winning streak snapped. Georgiev, who played the first five seasons of his career with the Rangers, recorded 27 saves. The Avalanche struck first late in the opening period following an end-to-end rush in which MacKinnon did most of the work. MacKinnon took a pass from Cale Makar in the Coloand managed to keep his balance while weaving between a pair of Rangers

for the Avalanche, who had a three-

Bazball meets its match in the 'magic' of Bumrah

NEW DELHI (Agencies): England came prepared for the usual trial by spin that greets touring sides in India but a "magical" seam-bowling masterclass by Jasprit Bumrah in Visakhapatnam saw their hopes of victory in the second test vanish into thin air. To deal with the expected conditions, England picked spin-heavy attacks complemented by a lone fast bowler both in Hyderabad and Visakhapatnam. The frequency with which their batters played the sweep



shots also indicated their resolve to conquer the spin challenge. And after their spinners accounted for 18 of India's 20

wickets en route to winning the first test. the tourists would have been anticipating another spin-fest in Visakhapatnam. What they probably did not expect is that Bumrah would emerge as their main threat despite having hardly any assistance from the pitches so far in the series. Armed with an unorthodox slingshot action and a reversing ball, Bumrah went wide off the crease to create angles and operated with pinpoint accuracy to torment the batters.

NBA roundup: Clippers edge Hawks, extend win streak

GEORGIA (Agencies): Kawhi Leonard scored 10 of his 36 points in the final five minutes to help the visiting Los Angeles Clippers hold off the Atlanta Hawks 149-144 on Monday and extend their winning streak to four games. Leonard, named the Western Conference's Player of the Week earlier in the day, put the Clippers ahead with a putback basket at 4:52, then provided separation with six points over back-to-back posses-



sions -- a three-point play followed by a 3-pointer. He was 13-for-20 from the field with five 3-pointers. snapped.

James Harden scored 30 points, hitting six 3-pointers, and was 10for-10 from the free-throw line with eight rebounds and 10 assists. Atlanta's De'Andre Hunter matched his season high with 27 points. Trae Young, named the Eastern Conference Player of the Week on Monday, had 25 points and 12 assists, and Dejounte Murray scored 21. Atlanta had its four-game winning streak

Saudi Arabia to host 2024 West Asian Federation Women's Football Championship

RIYADH (Agencies): The eighth edition of the West Asian Federation Women's Football Championship is to be held in Saudi Arabia from Feb. 19-29, it was announced on Monday. The host nation will be joined by Jordan, Syria, Iraq, Lebanon, Palestine, and two guests, Guam and Nepal. It will be the first women's 11-a-side tournament to be held in the Kingdom and marks the Saudi women national team's first participation in a regional championship under the organization of the West Asian Federation. In a draw made on Monday in Amman, hosts Saudi Arabia, coached by Lluis Cortes, were given a tough group



along with Lebanon, Guam, and Jordan. Group B will see Palestine, Syria, Iraq, and Nepal battle it out for a top-two finish and semifinal spot. Lamia Bahaian, the vice president of the Saudi Arabian Football Federation, said: "We're absolutely thrilled to be hosting the WAFF Women's Championship.

F1 commission approves sprint format changes



LONDON (Agencies): Formula One teams agreed changes to the sprint format on Monday to make race weekends easier to follow. The teams, along with Formula One Management and the governing FIA, agreed to reorder the sessions on sprint weekends so that Friday has one free prac-'shootout'. The 100km race will then start rather than two.

be held on Saturday morning before qualifying for the main Sunday grand prix. Last year saw qualifying for the grand prix on Friday with sprint qualifying and the standalone race filling Saturday's schedule. The changes will be submitted to the FIA's World Motorsport Council on Feb 28 for formal approval. The 24-race season, starting in Bahrain on March 2, has six scheduled sprint weekends. The Commission also agreed at the meeting in London to increase the power unit allocation to four per driver for the 2024 and 2025 seasons. The drag reduction system (DRS) activation for tice followed by a sprint qualifying the race will also be one lap after the

Inter Miami criticised after Messi misses Hong Kong match

MIAMI (Agencies): The marriage of global football star Lionel Messi and MLS club Inter Miami is continuing along a bumpy road. Messi suffered injuries and inefficiency down the stretch last season, significantly diminishing an overwhelmingly positive first couple of months. During a long 2024 preseason road trip that included stops in El Salvador and Saudi Arabia, Messi and teammate Luis Suarez missed last Sunday's match in Hong Kong because of injuries. The team faced an angry backlash from fans, some of whom demanded refunds for their tickets. Inter Miami beat Hong Kong XI 4-1. Making matters worse, the coach of Inter Miami, Gerardo Martino, had said his prize star would "likely" play in Hong Kong. A large advertising campaign was built around the match, whose organizer is now said to be withdrawing US\$2 million in government grants for the event. "The (Hong Kong) govern-



ment, as well as football fans, are extremely disappointed that Messi could neither play in the friendly match, nor explain to the fans in person upon request," Hong Kong officials said. "The way that the organizer and Inter Miami handled the situation could not meet the expectations of the fans who showed strong support to Messi, especially those visitors who came all the way here for the match." Hong Kong sports, culture and tourism secretary Kevin Yeung said the deal required Messi to play at least 45 minutes. Inter Miami plays a 34-match regular season, in addition to other competitions.

need to moderate it in order to avoid

the appearance of egotism, which is

- VIRGO: It's time to try something

different at home or at work when

organizing tasks. It may be a tech

solution or just a new way of ap-

proaching your work, but it should

- LIBRA: You need to stretch your

wings and really take off today. Have

fun wherever you go! Even relatively

stressful events can be made lighter

thanks to your positive energy and

SCORPIO: You need to deal with a

do wonders right away!

DAILY HOROSCOPE: FEBRUARY 7, 2023

a no-no today.

high spirits.



- It's a general reading which may differ from person to person because of time date and year.
- ARIES: You're one step closer to achieving a dream. In fact, it could be the final step! You're definitely feeling the need for speed, and you ought to be able to charge even further ahead!
- TAURUS: You and a friend or coworker are locking horns over an issue that nobody else seems to understand. There's a lot more going on under the surface than they can see, though.
- GEMINI: Your smarts are helpful for everyone around you today. It's a good time to share ideas and see if you can help those who feel stuck. It's not that hard, and you should through the day easily. Your great find it exhilarating.
- CANCER: You're feeling a little bent out of shape over some financial issue that hasn't materialized to your liking, but there's no easy solution. Just keep working at it until vou start to make progress again. - LEO: You rightfully take pride in

- home repair or neighbor problem today even if you'd rather do anything else. The good news is that you can focus more completely on this issue than usual, so go for it!
- SAGITTARIUS: You're making the most of your communication skills today, and even if you don't mean to do so, you should impress the right people. You don't have to think about it very hard to get it done right.
- CAPRICORN: Money flows in and out of your life, just as usual, but right now you are much more keenly aware of every last dime. It may be a good time for you to rethink your budget or income.
- ACQUARIUS: You can skate energy helps you make the most of every moment! You may be able to squeeze a month's worth of projects into a few hours, so go for it!
- PISCES: You're feeling extra helpful today, and your friends should be extra grateful! You may just pop over with a surprise gift, or maybe your work or family today. It might you've got big plans to make their be something big! Of course, you lives easier for a while.

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Boeing's standards 'progressively declining' – top airline boss

NEW YORK (Agencies): US aerospace giant Boeing is in the "last chance saloon" in light of the long decline in the company's manufacturing performance, Tim Clark, the head of Emirates Airline, has said. One of the most high-profile figures in aviation, Clark told the Financial Times on Sunday that he had seen a "progressive decline" in Boeing's standards, which he put down to long-running management and governance missteps, including prioritizing financial performance over engineering excellence. Clark also said he was preparing to send his own engineers to oversee the US plane maker's production lines. "They have got to instill this safety cul-

Chile Wildfires Leave At Least 122 Dead



SANTIAGO (Agencies): The raging fires in Chile have become the world's third-deadliest wildfire event of this century. On Monday, Chile began two days of national mourning for their dead following a raging wildfire in the country that consumed the residential areas in the coastal cities of Valparaiso and Vina Del Mar. At least 122 victims' lives have been claimed by the wildfires thus far, and only 32 of those victims have been identified. Most of the deaths that have occurred were in Vina del Mar, a popular tourist area known for its beaches and botanical gardens. The search for hundreds who are missing continues, and some 14,000 homes are said to have been damaged by the fires, officials say.

6 people wounded,2 assailants killed during an attack at a Turkish courthouse



ISTANBUL (Agencies): Two people were shot dead while trying to attack a courthouse in Istanbul on Tuesday, Turkish Interior Minister Ali Yerlikaya said. The man and woman were killed during an "attempt to attack" a security checkpoint at the Caglayan courthouse at 11.46 a.m. local time (0846GMT), Yerlikaya posted on social media. Six people were injured in the incident, including three police officers. "I congratulate our heroic police officers. I wish a speedy recovery to our injured," the minister added. Caglayan, which is also known as the Istanbul Justice Palace, is a huge court complex in the Kagithane district on the city's European side. Yerlikaya later identified the attackers as members of the Revolutionary People's Liberation Party/Front, or DHKP/C, a far-left group that is considered a terrorist organization in Turkiye, the United States and the European Union.

World celebrates the Year of Dragon, gaining better understanding of Chinese culture



BEIJING (Agencies): As the Chinese Lunar New Year is just around the corner, the strong atmosphere of the Year of the Dragon is already palpable not only throughout China but also across the world, which is also the first Spring Festival since the UN listed the Chinese Lunar New Year as its floating holiday in its calendar of conferences and meetings. With Chinese dragon-themed products selling rapidly overseas, there is also a growing interest among foreigners in discussing the Chinese zodiac signs, which could further promote Chinese culture globally, experts said.



ture which is second to none. They've got to get their manufacturing processes under review so there are no corners cut etc. I'm sure [chief executive] Dave Calhoun and [commercial head] Stan Deal are on that...this is the last chance saloon," said Clark, who has held senior roles at Emirates since the 1980s and has been the airline's president since 2003.

One of Boeing's largest customers, Emirates in November placed an order for 95 wide-body Boeing 777 and 787 jets. Boeing's previous management made numerous mistakes, the Emirates boss claimed. Those included outsourcing some of its manufacturing and moving parts of the 787 production to South Carolina to cut costs following battles with unions at its primary base north of Seattle, Washington. Boeing lost "skills and competencies" through the move, argued Clark. He further stated that the US company's manufacturing processes needed a thorough review, while its management should put aside concerns about financial performance.

China's First AI Commercial Satellite in the World: What Do We Know About It?

BEIJING (Agencies): Beijing carried out a series of successful space launches this week that resulted in the delivery of several satellites into Earth's orbit. A Smart Dragon 3 carrier rocket lifted off from a launch facility off the coast of China's Guangdong province on February 3. The rocket successfully completed its mission by delivering nine satellites to their intended orbits, with one of these satellites, Xingshidai-18, being touted by Chinese media as the first in-orbit artificial intelligence (AI) commercial satellite in the world.

- What is Known About Xingshidai-18? Xingshidai-18, also referred to as Rongpiao, is an integrated sensing network satellite made by Guoxing Aerospace Technology Co., Ltd., a company based in the city of Chengdu in China's Sichuan Province. According to CGTN, Xingshidai-18 is outfitted with a "sixth generation 'satellite brain' system" de- wide and weighs 145 metric tons.



veloped by the satellite's maker and is designed to perform "verification of the synaesthesia fusion AI algorithm" upon reaching orbit. The media outlet also points out that Xingshidai-18 also features a "remote integrated platform capability for future communication networks."

- What is the Smart Dragon 3 Carrier Rocket?

Smart Dragon 3 (Jielong 3) is a solid propellant carrier rocket developed by China. It is 31 meters long, 2.65 meters

UN chief appoints independent panel to evaluate UNRWA



NEW YORK (Agencies): Secretary-General of the United Nations, Antonio Guterres, yesterday appointed an independent panel to evaluate the work of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNR-WA). This came as the Israeli government leads a smear campaign against the UN agency, claiming that about 12 of its 30,000 employees in Gaza participated in the attack carried out by the Palestinian resistance on Israeli military sites and towns on 7 October. To date, some 18 countries and the EU have our eyes."

suspended funding to the agency which provides essential services to millions of Palestinian refugees. The independent panel will be led by former French Foreign Minister Catherine Colonna, who will work with three European research organisations, namely the Raoul Wallenberg Institute in Sweden, the Chr Michelsen Institute in Norway and the Danish Institute for Human Rights, the UN said in a statement. The investigation aims to "assess whether the agency is doing everything within its power to ensure neutrality and to respond to allegations of serious breaches when they are made." On Sunday, UNRWA Commissioner-General, Philippe Lazzarini, said the UN agency is paying the price for raising its voice in drawing attention to the plight of the residents of the Gaza Strip, and to the "humanitarian catastrophe that is unfolding before

Japanese company to sever tie with Israel's Elbit over Gaza war

TOKYO (Agencies): Itochu Corp's 8001.T aviation unit will end its strategic cooperation with Israeli weapons manufacturer Elbit Systems Ltd ESLT.TA by the end of February over the war in Gaza, the Japanese trading house's executive said yesterday, Reuters reports. Itochu Aviation, Elbit Systems and Nippon Aircraft Supply (NAS) signed the strategic cooperation memorandum of understanding (MoU) in March 2023. Itochu plans to end the collaboration after the International Court of Justice (ICJ) ordered Israel last month to prevent acts of genocide against Palestinians and do more to help civilians, Itochu Chief Financial Officer Tsuyoshi Hachimura said. "The partnership is based on a request from the Japan's Defence Ministry for the purpose of importing defence equipment for the end of February," he said.



Self-Defense Forces necessary for Japan's security, and is not in any way related to the current conflict between Israel and Palestine," Hachimura told an earnings news conference. "Taking into consideration the International Court of Justice's order on January 26, and that the Japanese government supports the role of the Court, we have already suspended new activities related to the MOU, and plan to end the MOU by the

Netherlands halts F-16 sale to US firm, will send to Ukraine instead



PARIS (Agencies): The Netherlands scrapped plans to sell six F-16 fighter jets to a U.S. company and will prepare the planes for delivery to Ukraine instead, according to the Dutch Defence Ministry. The agreement increases the number of Dutch aircraft that will be

handed over to the embattled country to 24, it said. The Dutch had been negotiating with Draken International, a Lakeland, Florida-based provider of adversarial training services to the U.S. Air Force, after a deal to sell the company 12 F-16s fell through last year. The two parties ended talks on a new agreement for six F-16s after they concluded that the sale and delivery of the aircraft won't happen in the short term, the Netherlands said in a statement. The Netherlands, together with Denmark, is leading a European effort to provide Ukraine with F-16 capabilities.

Britain's King Charles diagnosed with cancer

LONDON (Agencies): King Charles has been diagnosed with a form of cancer, Buckingham Palace announced on Monday. In a statement, the Palace said the health issue was discovered during the king's recent hospital visit for his enlarged prostate. "Subsequent diagnostic tests have identified a form of cancer," the statement read, stressing that it was not prostate cancer. No further information on the exact type of cancer, its stage, or its prognosis has been provided. "His Majesty has today commenced a schedule of regular treatments, during which time he has been advised by doctors to postpone period, His Majesty will continue to undertake state business and official the disease, the palace added.



paperwork as usual," the statement read. The monarch remains "wholly positive about his treatment" and is looking forward to "returning to full public duty as soon as possible," it added. The king has made the decision to make his diagnosis public in order to avoid "speculation," as well public-facing duties. Throughout this as to raise cancer awareness "for all those around the world" affected by

the region" and the action, carried out

at approximately 3:30 p.m. local time,

was in self-defense. The UK Maritime

Trade Operations, or UKMTO, organi-

zation said on Tuesday it had received

a report of an incident west of Yemen's

Hodeidah. The US and its allies have

been conducting strikes against the

Houthis who have declared a blockade

US strikes Houthi targets in Yemen over 'imminent threat'



RIYADH (Agencies): The US military said early on Tuesday it had conducted a strike against "explosive uncrewed surface vehicles" belonging to the Houthis in Yemen on Monday afternoon. The statement by the US Central Command, or CENTCOM, said the vehicles "presented an imminent threat to US Navy ships and merchant vessels in

Minor damage to ship hit by projectile off Yemen's Hodeidah coast



WASHINGTON (Agencies): A cargo ship in the Red Sea suffered minor damage after being hit by a projectile while sailing off the coast of Yemen's Hodeidah, the United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations (UKMTO) agency and British maritime security firm Ambrey said on Tuesday. The ship, located 57 nautical miles west of Hodeidah, said a projectile was fired at its port side and a small craft was seen on its port side. The projectile passed over the deck and caused slight damage to the bridge windows, the UKMTO note said after receiving the report just after midnight GMT Tuesday. Ambrey said a Barbados-flagged, general cargo ship owned by a British company incurred physical damage from an unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) while sailing southeast through the Red Sea.

Finland to deploy fighters for first time to NATO's air policing missions



HELSINKI (Agencies): Finland is to send combat aircraft to NATO's Southern Air Policing mission, marking the first outof-area operational deployment for the Nordic country since joining the alliance. The Finnish Ministry of Defence (MoD) made the announcement on 2 February, saying the deployment of eight Finnish Air Force (FinAF) Boeing F/A-18 Hornet combat aircraft to Romania is part of a wider raft of NATO tasking outlined for the country's armed forces for 2024. "Participation of the Finnish Air Force fighter detachment in NATO air policing in Romania, Bulgaria, and the Black Sea would take place between 3 June and 31 July 2024. The maximum size of the [detachment] would be eight fighters, and about 70-100 people," the MoD said. Launched as part of NATO's enhanced Air Policing (eAP) package, the Southern Air Policing mission sees allied aircraft operate out of Mihail Kog Iniceanu Air Base in Romania and Graf Ignatievo Air Base in Bulgaria, alongside Lockheed Martin F-16 Fighting Falcons and MiG-29 'Fulcrum' combat aircraft of the two national air forces respectively.

of maritime traffic that supports Israel's war on Gaza. The allies said the strikes were necessary to safeguard the security of ships in the Red Sea and to support international trade. The US and the UK have led the attacks against the Houthis, with support provided by Australia, Bahrain, the Netherlands, New Zealand and Denmark.

Former Thai PM Thaksin Shinawatra charged with royal insult



BANGKOK (Agencies): Thai police have charged former prime minister Thaksin Shinawatra with lese majeste over comments he made almost a decade ago, officials said Tuesday, though it is not yet clear whether the case will go to court. Thailand has some of the world's strictest royal defamation laws protecting King Maha Vajiralongkorn and his close family, with each charge bringing a potential 15-year prison sentence. Controversial billionaire Thaksin, twice prime minister but ousted in a 2006 coup, returned from self-exile in August last year and was immediately jailed on old graft and abuseof-power charges. The 74-year-old was transferred to a police hospital almost straight away and has undergone at least two operations. Prayuth Pecharakun, spokesman for the attorney general's office, told reporters police filed lese majeste charges late last month against Thaksin, over comments he made in Seoul in 2015. Prosecutors will wait for police to complete their investigation before deciding whether to proceed with the case against Thaksin, Prayuth said. Thaksin denies the charge and has written to the attorney general asking for fair treatment, Prayuth said.

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