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Punjab Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi

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Speaker pledges unbiased attitude irrespective of party affiliation

KARACHI: The newly elected Speaker of the Sindh Assembly, Syed Awais Qadir Shah, pledged on Sunday to show an unbiased attitude towards MPs, irrespective of their party affiliation. Soon after taking the oath, he invited them to work together for the welfare of the people. Awais, who polled 111 votes in the election for the post of Speaker, thanked his party leadership for nominating him as Speaker. He also expressed his gratitude for the support of the people in electing him as MPA. The speaker said that it was a proud moment for him. He said this assembly passed a resolution for the creation of the country. The father of the nation, Quaid-e-Azam Mohammed Ali Jinnah, sat in this assembly, adding that Liaquat Ali Khan waved the Pakistani flag here. He said that the assembly, in line with the constitution, would complete the next five years.

New prime minister to take oath of office by March 1

ISLAMABAD: The country's new prime minister will take oath of his office by March 1, 2024, it was learnt on Sunday. President Arif Alvi will administer the oath at a ceremony to be held at the President's House either on February 29 (Thursday) or March 1 (Friday). Before that either on February 28 or February 29, the newly elected members of the National Assembly (MNAs) will elect leader of the House through 'show of hands'. Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Justice Qazi Faez Isa, Chief Election Commissioner Sikandar Sultan Raja, Joint Chief of Staff Committee Chairman General Sahir Shamshad Mirza, Chief of Army Staff General Syed Asim Munir, Chief of Naval Staff Admiral Amjad Khan Niazi, Chief of Air Staff Air Chief Marshal Zaheer Ahmad Babar, Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaarul Haq Kakar, members of his cabinet and foreign envoys will be in attendance. Similarly, high-ranking civil and military officials, judges of the Supreme Court and high courts, federal secretaries, attorney general of Pakistan, auditor general of Pakistan, chief ministers of Punjab and Sindh, provincial governors and other dignitaries will attend the event. According to well-informed sources in the federal capital, the prime minister after taking the oath of his office will request the president to also administer the oath to the MNAs who will become ministers in the first phase. INP

Govt stands committed to repay US\$ 1.0 billion Eurobond in April 2024

ISLAMABAD: Government stands committed to repay US\$ 1.0 billion Eurobond in April 2024, and launch of 1.5 billion Euro Bond in international capital market will be considered once feasible. The government plans to refinance US\$ 1.0 billion Chinese foreign commercial bank loan maturing in June 2024. The bilateral deposits \$3 billion Saudi Time deposits and \$1 billion China Safe Deposits were rolled over for one year in July 2023 and Dec 2023 respectively. Bilateral debt rearrangement has also been agreed with Exim Bank of China amounting US\$ 1.2 billion each for financial 2023-24 and next fiscal year 2024-25. Similarly, aim is also to mobilize additional financing from foreign commercial banks; and Government is committed to complete IMF's Stand-By Arrangement (SBA) program to pave the way for release of much needed foreign funding attacked with economic reforms programs agreed with the financial institutions. According to Annual Borrowing Plan financial

year 2023-24, released by Debt Management Office Finance Division Government of Pakistan as public disclosure requirement imposed by international monetary fund. Government's borrowing operations remained smooth during first half of 2023-24. Key borrowing activities that were carried out during this period included the interest expense was around Rs. 4.2 trillion, of which 88 percent was interest on domestic debt. Owing to expenditure rationalization measures taken by government, a federal primary surplus of Rs. 1.5 trillion was posted resulting into a federal fiscal deficit of Rs. 2.7 trillion. Around 77 percent of the financing of federal fiscal deficit was carried out through domestic sources while 23 percent through external sources. Government retired short-term treasury bills by around Rs. 1 trillion. Gross issuance of fixed rate Pakistan Investment Bonds (PIBs) amounted to Rs. 840 billion against maturity of Rs. 1.2 trillion. SABAH



ISLAMABAD: President Arif Alvi, in a group photograph, with the organizers & recipients of the awards at the 5th edition of HUM Women Leaders Awards-2024 ceremony held at the Jinnah Convention Center.

Education facilities critical for women empowerment: Alvi

VOM Report

ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi said the provision of health and education facilities were critical factors for achieving the goal of women's empowerment. He underscored the need for the provision of a harassment-free environment to women so that they could become part of the workforce and contribute to economic growth. The President expressed these views while speaking at the 5th edition of the HUM Women Leaders Award 2024. The President said, "Today we celebrate women leaders for their endeavors and men who contributed to the economic empowerment of women." Talking about the rights of women, he cited the saying of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) who said that a man who raised two daughters earned his place in paradise. President Dr Arif Alvi stated that women in human societies, through the ages, were epitome of love and hope and they taught children love and kept the family system intact. He pointed out that women suffered the most in wars and acts of genocide, adding millions lost their lives in genocides in the previous centuries. The President criticized the acts of genocide by Israeli forces in Gaza, saying that thousands of women and children were killed. The President further said genocide was committed in Gaza for the vested interests and in negation of humanitarian values. The President said that the Pakistani nation

had capability to overcome challenges as it did during the COVID-19 pandemic, through collective efforts and Pakistan remained the third most successful country in tackling the deadly disease. He urged the nation to work together and forge unity to address the numerous challenges including poverty, malnutrition, stunting and maternal and neonatal deaths. The President lamented that more than 26 million children in the country were still out of

of life. She urged women to come forward to avail the easy loans offered by banks for setting up businesses. Organizer of the Award Show, President Hum Television Sultana Siddiqui, said that the Women Leaders Awards were organized every year to acknowledge the role of women and felicitate women leaders and entrepreneurs who overcame obstacles through continuous struggle and made their mark in their respective fields.

Urged the nation to work together and forge unity to address the numerous challenges including poverty, malnutrition, stunting and maternal and neonatal deaths

school. In comparison, enrollment of children in Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and India were higher, he mentioned. He said China focused on health and education sectors to lift 700 million people out of poverty and Pakistan should adopt the same path. The President also lauded the nation, particularly women and youth for their participation in the voting process during the general election. Speaking on the occasion, First Lady Samina Alvi commended the efforts of organizers and added that these awards recognized and encouraged our unsung heroes; our sisters for their valuable contribution in different walks

The President and the First Lady along with other distinguished personalities bestowed awards on women leaders for their outstanding contribution in the fields of education, health and business. Sheba Najmi, Khurshid Bano, Razia Korejo, Huma Fakhar, Bibi Amna, Sania Saeed, Sheema Kimani, Sadiqa Salahuddin, Numaira Saleem, Dr Amany Asfour, Dr Anjad Saqib and Dr Izzeldin Abuelaish were the recipients of awards for their significant contributions to society. Ministers, diplomats and members of civil society also attended the ceremony.

Punjab Assembly elects PML-N's Malik Ahmed Khan as speaker, Malik Zaheer deputy speaker

LAHORE: The Punjab Assembly on Saturday elected Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) candidates Malik Ahmed Khan and Malik Zaheer Ahmed Channer as the House's speaker and deputy speaker, respectively, after hours-long voting and counting process. Malik Ahmed secured 224 votes to become the Custodian of the House while Channer secured 220. Meanwhile, in the election of the speaker, Sunni Ittehad Council (SIC) candidate Ahmad Khan Bhachar bagged 96 votes, while two votes were rejected out of the total 322 ballots cast during the polling. After newly-elected Speaker Malik Ahmed administered the oath to Channer as deputy speaker, the assembly session was adjourned till 11am on Monday. The provincial legislative will elect the chief minister in the next session. Today's Punjab Assembly session to elect the House's speaker and deputy speaker kicked off this evening after a delay of one-and-a-half hours as the protests inside and outside the legislative marred the timely beginning of the meeting. The second session of the newly-elected provincial assembly, presided over by outgoing Speaker Sibtain Khan, saw members of the PML-N and SIC chanting slogans against each other. A heavy contingent of police and prison vans were also present outside the assembly to ensure the maintenance of law and order during the assembly session. After his election as the new Punjab Assembly speaker, Malik Ahmed was sworn in during oath-taking administered by the outgoing speaker. Earlier, six MPs, including Pakistan Muslim League-Quaid (PML-Q) leader Chaudhry Shafay Hussain and Sunni Ittehad Council's (SIC) Hafiz Farhat Abbas and Waseem Khan Badozai, and independent candidates Rai Murtaza Iqbal Khan, Fateh Khaliq, Tashakul Abbas Warraich, who were not present in the House's inaugural session on Friday, took their oaths. The sworn-in MPs then marked their attendance in the register after the oath, following which the session was briefly adjourned for 20 minutes for the Maghrib prayer. After this, the polling for the new speaker was conducted. As many as 322 MPA-elects cast their votes during the polling. The elections for the speaker and deputy speaker posts are being held via a secret ballot under Rules 9 and 10 of the Rules of Procedure of the Provincial Assembly of Punjab, 1997. PML-N's Malik Ahmad Khan and Channer submitted their nomination papers for the slot of Punjab Assembly speaker and deputy speaker, respectively. Meanwhile, SIC members Ahmad Khan Bhachar and Muhammad Moeenuddin Riaz Qureshi submitted their papers for the speaker and deputy speaker positions. Earlier during the session, SIC leader Sahibzada Hamid Raza termed the assembly's proceedings "unconstitutional" and "illegal" without the presence of the party's MPA-elects on the reserved seats. He said that SIC members were being barred from attending the assembly sessions. "A new history of politics of revenge is about to be made. We will not let the PA proceedings continue without members on the reserved seats," he added. Meanwhile, Rana Aftab termed the Punjab Assembly "incomplete" and vowed to challenge any move made by the House in the court. Agencies

Air Chief Marshal@ Hakimullah laid to rest

ISLAMABAD: Air Chief Marshal (Retired) Hakimullah passed away at the age of 88 at PAF Hospital, Islamabad on Friday after a prolonged illness. The Former Air Chief was laid to rest at his native village, Sheikh Kali in Charsadda with full military honours. A smartly turned out contingent of Pakistan Air Force presented gun salute at his grave. After the burial, floral wreaths were placed at the grave of the deceased on behalf of President of Pakistan, Prime Minister, Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee, Chief of Army Staff, Chief of Naval Staff, Chief of the Air Staff and other dignitaries. High ranking civil and military officials attended the last prayers of the deceased and conveyed their condolences to the bereaved family. Air Chief Marshal (Retired) Hakimullah was born on 15 October, 1935 in Charsadda district of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. He completed his training at the then Royal PAF College Risalpur and was commissioned in the GD(P) branch of Pakistan Air Force on 11 January, 1957. He excelled as a fighter pilot, demonstrating exceptional skills and enthusiasm in deterring enemy aims during both the 1965 and 1971 wars. DNA

Shehbaz Sharif stresses joint efforts against poverty, unemployment, ignorance

LAHORE: President Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) and prime minister-designate Shehbaz Sharif has stressed the need of joint efforts to get rid the country of poverty, unemployment and ignorance. In a statement issued on Sunday, he said that political stability was of significance importance for economic stability in the country. Shehbaz Sharif said that the today need of national unity for political and economic stability was greater than it was felt every before in the country's history. He said that adopting the attitude of simplicity and frugality, we would have to spent maximum resources on welfare of the people. The PM designate said that political stability and a peaceful atmosphere were extremely important for attracting foreign investment.

He said that Pakistan will be prosperous only when all its units were prosperous. Shehbaz Sharif said that he has set a bright example of economic development and stability in the past and practical and concrete measures will be taken to improve the economy. He said, "Alive nations face challenges and difficulties with bravery and hardwork. We will move forward together and solve the problems faced by the country." The PML-N President said that during his government, he saved billions of rupees on development projects in Punjab and set a new record of economy and savings. It was a golden era of prosperity, he added. Shehbaz Sharif said that he will lead the country on the path of prosperity and development under the prudent leadership of the people. INP

International PATS exercise to enhance military cooperation kicks off

"20 friendly countries including Saudi Arabia, Turkiye, US and others participating in the event," says ISPR



RAWALPINDI: The opening ceremony of the 7th International Pakistan Army Team Spirit (PATS) Exercise-2024 was held at the National Counter-Terrorism Centre (NCTC), Pabbi in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa (KP), the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) said in a statement on Sunday. The director general of Military Training opened the 60-hour-long Patrolling Exercise which aims at enhancing military-to-military cooperation under a complex international security environment. A total of 20 friendly countries including military observers are participating in the event. Major participants include Pakistan, Bahrain, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Maldives, Morocco, Qatar, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Turkiye, United States of America and Uzbekistan while Azerbaijan, Belarus, China, Myanmar, Germany, Indonesia, Japan and Oman will

witness the exercise as military observers, the military's media wing said. The Pakistan Army Team Spirit is a mission-specific and task-oriented professional military exercise organised annually in Pakistan. The exercise calls for the highest standard of physical fitness, mental agility/robustness, and professional military expertise for quick decision-making in varied situations during the conduct of challenging missions in a near real environment. "The aim and objectives of this exercise revolve around perseverance acclaimed through the team spirit. The exercise would help hone basic soldierly attributes besides interoperability through sharing of innovative ideas and mutual best practices," the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) added. PR

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Stabilizing the economy

ASHRAF JEHangIR QAZI

This is based on a talk by Mueen Afzal, former secretary of general finance, a prominent philanthropist and chairman of several national institutions, at the Institute of Strategic Studies in Islamabad on February 21, 2024. Recently one of Pakistan's most respected economic mandarins, Mueen Afzal, gave a talk at the Institute of Strategic Studies in Islamabad on the subject of stabilizing the Pakistan economy. A recent report says "the country is headed for inevitable default". Pakistan's external debt has rocketed to over \$124 billion and its domestic debt has exploded to over \$140 billion, making a total national debt of over \$270 billion – well over a trillion dollars. This comes to over \$100,000 for every man, woman and child in Pakistan. This is the odious "debt trap" or rather "death trap" in which 90 per cent of the population of Pakistan is imprisoned for life by the thriving and thieving ruling 10 per cent.

Mueen Afzal said he had been asked three questions. One, could Pakistan manage this debt? Two, was CPEC viable? And, three, are economic experts useful? Mueen sagely responded by saying debt was like an illness and its treatment depended on its severity and on the cooperation of the patient. Similarly, with regard to CPEC he noted it was viable provided the debts incurred were put to good use and repayment obligations and capacity were borne in mind. As for experts, he observed that public finance required practical commonsense more than academic expertise although its importance was undeniable.

Accordingly, stabilizing the economy depended on the state of the macro-situation. Pakistan's imports at over \$60 billion per annum were almost twice its exports. The gap was more or less filled by remittances which was on capital account. As long as the trade gap was kept under control the rupee could be kept stable, inflation contained and growth sustained. Otherwise, a vicious circle would set in as foreign exchange reserves would rapidly diminish (sending Pakistan to the ICU of the IMF for the 25th time). However, to sustain growth over the longer term, the social sectors including child and healthcare, education including vocational education, population growth, infrastructure development, job security, living wages, reduction in corruption, etc would require much greater attention and priority. Unfortunately, there is very little budgetary space for these priorities because of military, administration, and debt repayment expenditures (which are increasingly financed by incurring further debt.) IMF programmes can at best help prepare the ground for longer-term domestic and foreign direct investment which are essential for growth rates that lift all boats. But for this political stability is a prerequisite. Mueen Afzal mentioned two economists whose writings have fundamentally influenced thinking on development economics. One is Thomas Piketty. According to him, prior to World War I tax revenues of advanced countries like the US, the UK, France and Sweden were never more than 8-10 per cent of GDP since government expenditures were largely for the police, the courts, the judiciary, the military and some infrastructure. The governance priorities of early industrial capitalism largely served feudal-bourgeois interests. It was only after World War I (and the Russian Revolution) that government policies became conscious of poverty. The shared experience of the horrors of modern war from the US civil war and the Franco-Prussian war to the first and second world wars (1870 to 1950) impacted the class basis of politics. As a result, there was a three to four-fold rise in tax revenues to address the needs of veterans and their families who were overwhelmingly from the lower classes that had all suffered the ravages of war.

After World War II and the start of the cold war, the concept of social welfare as a major principle of governance came to the fore to challenge the appeal of Russian communism. Tax revenues in the advanced industrial countries accordingly dramatically rose to more than 50 per cent of GDP. An awareness of the need to address the consequences of egregious inequalities informed the politics of Western democracies whether ruled by progressive pro-labour or conservative pro-business parties. Piketty, however, noted the "South Asian conundrum" according to which tax revenues in impoverished underdeveloped and densely populated countries like India and Pakistan remained at 15-20 per cent of GDP. Despite the socialist or nationalist rhetoric, politicians and bureaucrats presumably regarded poverty as so overwhelming a reality that it could only be managed not resolved (even when drawing up long-term perspective plans.) The other economist mentioned by Mueen was Stefan Dercon who wrote Gambling on Development. He visited Pakistan where he observed there was no need for governmental expertise in public finance which essentially required sensible decision-making. Mueen cited examples of procurement prices for cotton and rice that were above market prices which made no sense as they drained public resources, raised prices for consumers, and could not be sustained. Similarly, charging below market prices for gas, petroleum and electricity had contributed to the circular debt which had become a monster. He recalled a prime minister telling him that if he did not have the money to provide certain services all he had to do was to ask for it. Apparently, the great man did not realize (or did not care) there were "twin holes" in export and tax revenues as a result of which the people of Pakistan were "paying through their noses" for these services today. In the same way, Sui gas prices were set with the profitability of the producer in mind instead of the needs of the consumer. As a result, Quetta, which is the capital of Balochistan in which the Sui gas fields are located and is the coldest of all the provincial capitals – and the people of Balochistan are the poorest and most exploited people of Pakistan – was the last to receive Sui gas. Mueen was too polite to draw political conclusions but they were not lost upon his audience.

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Ghazi Salahuddin

Lives people live

night? So, we now have to wait for the momentum to be picked up by the new formations. Even when everything appears to be unresolved and indefinite, there is not a moment to be wasted. Stating this has become a cliché but this country is in dire straits and even when we are condemned to be governed by the same people, our survival would depend on the oxygen of new ideas and the execution of new strategies. Naturally, that midnight press conference was the breaking news of the week. The entire media was readily throbbing with excitement. A

but people are still entitled to cast their votes. They talk about the will and the power of the people. The preamble of the US constitution begins with these words: "We the People". But this concept of the empowerment of the people is alien to our system. So many of them are not adequately aware of the rights and responsibilities of the citizens. Just the rigour of living, every day being a battle for survival, has effectively dehumanized a large section of the population. In the run up to the February elections, I could not make out any elec-

Incidentally, being a journalist also allows me to peep into the gilded lives of the rich and the famous. It is an agonizing experience of a different kind. The obscene manner in which wealth is flaunted in this country, without any regard for social justice, raises thoughts that cannot be easily expressed. There is a third angle to which I am also exposed as a journalist. There are so many courageous and committed individuals who have dedicated their lives to social development. One could say that in this vast sphere of darkness, there are occasional glints of light. But these endeavours, inspiring as they are, can hardly defeat the gloom that is spreading.

By way of concluding my thoughts about the social degradation of Pakistani society that the politicians do not very much care about, let me conclude with the observations of a close relative who visited this week a health project in a rural community of Sindh. This project is run by a group of Pakistani physicians working in the United States. According to the doctors serving this community, the most urgent problem is that of addiction – opium for men and 'gutka' for women. It is widely present and the consequences are devastating. In urban areas, drug overdosing is a growing concern. About 700 people die every day in the country due to drug overdosing-related complications. Pakistan does not fare well in the democracy index. It is one of the top ten nations with the greatest prevalence of opioid addiction. And this is only one social indicator. Do rigged elections belong in this list?

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An ominous moment it was – at around midnight – when they finally announced their consensus to form the new government and agree on names for major positions at the helm of the state. And though the deal was foretold, there was an ample sense of drama when a joint PML-N and PPP press conference was held late on Tuesday night at Zardari House in Islamabad. What would be an obvious arrangement took twelve very long days to be finalized. But this new beginning is still dogged by the uncertainties the disputed elections have spawned. The Election Commission of Pakistan is in the process of hearing about 300 challenges to its preliminary results.

Can the pieces of the political puzzle finally fall together? Not very likely, of course. We have our history of elections that are sought to be managed or others that throw up unintended results. Whatever the elections are meant to achieve, we have the gift of arriving at the opposite end of it. That is how the launching of a creatively designed alliance is also looking like a phantom of instability.

I said that the moment was ominous. What was the urgency of holding the press conference at that hour when so much time seemed to have been at their disposal to hold one consultation after another? Was there a deadline to meet? Or did they suddenly realize that time was precious and it was now slipping away? And did the sense of urgency dawn on them at that hour of mid-

Incidentally, being a journalist also allows me to peep into the gilded lives of the rich and the famous

new round of speculation about how the political scenario would change was set into motion. Many observers invoked the experience of that interim PDM government with Shehbaz Sharif as the prime minister and suggested that it would be an action replay of that alliance. However, the vital difference is that the PPP will not join the federal cabinet. In the midst of all this thrill that is continuing with the critical consequences of the midnight press conference, what is there for the ordinary citizens of the country who constitute the flesh and blood of our society? Where do they figure in this game? Do they really matter?

Technically, elections are all about them. Every one of them, provided they are eighteen and above, is a legitimate voter and this is a position of power in any genuine democracy. We may not be a functioning democracy in many ways,

toral excitement or involvement in any political campaign on the part of the people on the streets. Since my early years in journalism, I have strived to remain close to the people. Walking through crowded bazaars and participating in public gatherings, while talking to strangers, is a favourite pastime. These people feel ignored and abandoned and see little hope for a change in their condition. At present, poverty and inflation have grabbed them by the neck. They can hardly breathe.

In my view, it is a matter of considerable significance that a little more than half of the registered voters did not cast their votes on February 8. Considering the frenzy with which news channels cover politics, at the cost of exploring the realities of Pakistan, one would think that this country is fully engaged in politics and related developments.

Disclaimer: Views expressed by writers in this section are their own and do not necessarily reflect The Asian Telegraph's point-of-view

Today in History

History of Pakistan



Pakistan emerged on the world map on August 14th, 1947. It has its roots into the remote past. Its establishment was the culmination of the struggle by Muslims of the South-Asian subcontinent for a separate homeland of their own and its foundation was laid when Muhammad bin Qasim subdued Sindh in 711 A.D. as a reprisal against sea pirates that had taken refuge in Raja Dahir's kingdom. The advent of Islam further strengthened the historical individuality in the areas now constituting Pakistan and further beyond its boundaries.

STONE AGE

Some of the earliest relics of Stone Age man in the subcontinent are found in the Soan Valley of the Potohar region near Rawalpindi, with a

probable antiquity of about 500,000 years. No human skeleton of such antiquity has yet been discovered in the area, but the crude stone implements recovered from the terraces of the Soan carry the saga of human toil and labor in this part of the world to the inter-glacial period. These Stone Age men fashioned their implements in a sufficiently homogenous way to justify their grouping in terms of a culture called the Soan Culture. About 3000 B.C, amidst the rugged wind-swept valleys and foothills of Balochistan, small village communities developed and began to take the first hesitant steps towards civilization. Here, one finds a more continuous story of human activity, though still in the Stone Age. These pre-historic men established their settlements, both as herdsmen and as farm-

ers, in the valleys or on the outskirts of the plains with their cattle and cultivated barley and other crops.

RED AND BUFF WARE CULTURES

Careful excavations of the pre-historic mounds in these areas and the classification of their contents, layer by layer, have grouped them into two main categories of Red Ware Culture and Buff Ware Culture. The former is popularly known as the Zhob Culture of North Balochistan, while the latter comprises Quetta, Amri Nal and Kulli Cultures of Sindh and South Balochistan. Some Amri Nal villages or towns had stone walls and bastions for defence purposes and their houses had stone foundations. At Nal, an extensive cemetery of this culture consists of about 100 graves. An important fea-

ture of this composite culture is that at Amri and certain other sites, it has been found below the very distinctive Indus Valley Culture. On the other hand, the steatite seals of Nal and the copper implements and certain types of pot decoration suggest a partial overlap between the two. It probably represents one of the local societies which constituted the environment for the growth of the Indus Valley Civilization. The pre-historic site of Kot Diji in the Sindh province has provided information of high significance for the reconstruction of a connected story which pushes back the origin of this civilization by 300 to 500 years, from about 2500 B.C. to at least 2800 B.C. Evidence of new cultural elements of pre-Harappan era has been traced here.

To be continued....

Showbiz

'Oppenheimer' outcasted all movies in SAG Awards with Outstanding Performance

'Oppenheimer' won the award for Outstanding Performance by a cast in a motion picture



The cast of Oppenheimer is still going strong. The cast of the movie took home the Best Performance by a Cast in a Motion Picture award at the 2024 SAG Awards on Saturday. Barbie, American Fiction, The Colour Purple, and Killers of the Flower Moon were the other finalists. Kenneth Branagh, who portrayed the Danish physicist Niels Bohr in the movie, accepted the prize on behalf of the ensemble. "Thank you. It's my honour to say a few words briefly on behalf of this incredible cast on stage and to the extended family of Oppenheimer, who can't be here," he began. "So, thank you so much, Chris Nolan and Emma Thomas. Thank you for the opportunity. Thank you for your

respect. Thank you for the invitation to play a genuine part in making this so scary important film. Thank you to Donna Langley and Universal Pictures for believing in us, believing in us and in the film. Thank you Chuck Roven, Andy Thompson, and John Papsidera, thank you very much." "And, of course... thank you SAG-AFTRA. Thank you for this. Thank you for fighting for us. Thank you to every SAG-AFTRA member whose support and whose sacrifice allows us to be standing here better than we were before," he continued. "When we were all last together, it was at the premiere of this film on July 14, last year when the strike was just about to begin.

Tech

Social media platform X faces more disruptions in Pakistan

Popular microblogging site 'X', formerly known as Twitter, had its services disrupted in Pakistan on Monday for the third consecutive day. Users nationwide have grappled with prolonged inaccessibility to the platform, marking yet another glitch in internet instability in the weeks leading up to, during, and after the hotly-contested February 8 national elections. According to Downtidetector, X services were disrupted at around 1pm. The social media platform also experienced outages earlier in the day, it was reportedly not accessible around 10:30am and services were restored around noon. This is the third consecutive day of disruptions, which started soon after the now-former commissioner Rawalpindi alleged rigging and irregularities during the February 8 polls and said he played a part in the process. Rawalpindi Commissioner Liaquat Ali Chatha took responsibility for what he termed a "heinous crime," and implicated not only him-

self but also pointed fingers at the head of the election commission and the country's top judge – thrusting them into the spotlight. The 'confessions' came as the ECP has already been in the crosshairs of several rigging allegations in the aftermath of a tumultuous week and thick clouds of manipulation continue to linger over results, throwing further questions over the legitimacy of the ballots. Earlier according to NetBlocks, the metrics indicated that X/Twitter had been restricted in Pakistan for a continuous 24 hours, marking the lengthiest episode in a series of countrywide internet outages. Downtidetector highlighted at least 16 reports of potential issues on X across the country around 4:45 pm on Sunday, a number that escalated to 83 at a certain point. Real-time internet and social media outage monitoring services revealed that users attempting to access X were greeted with a disheartening message – "this site can't be reached."

Health

Quantity or quality; what you should prefer in sleep? Here's what expert suggests

Sleep is crucial for heart health but it is important to consider the quality of the sleep over quantity of time, according to an expert, who said the disruption may lead to increased intake of fatty food and sugary drinks.

A behavioral sleep psychologist and clinical associate professor at Albert Einstein College of Medicine Dr. Shelby Harris while speaking with CBS News said: "Poor quality sleep really can influence our heart health." The body's balance of ghrelin and leptin, hormones that regulate hunger, is also disrupted by poor sleep, leading to increased consumption of high-sugar and high-fat foods, said Dr Harris. Sleep disorders such as insomnia are associated with heart. To improve the quality of sleep, experts suggest that one should limit caffeine and alcohol con-

"Once you have better quality then we try to work on the quantity of sleep possible," expert says

sumption. They also suggest reducing the time of using mobile phones before they sleep. "Once you have better quality then we try to work on the quantity of sleep possible," Harris said. "For some people, I might have them go to bed later and then I might slowly have them go to bed earlier over time as opposed to that shifting back and forth. Because that can create a lot of problems for people as well," she said. Harris said that sleeping pills and aids are not ideal for most people, however, she considered cognitive-behavioral therapy for insomnia an

alternative solution to taking medicines. She said that before prescribing pills to a person, she first carries out therapy sessions up to eight. "You work on not just the hygiene but you work on the timing of sleep. ... We work on thoughts about sleep, a lot of people put pressure on themselves to sleep and they worry about what's going to happen if they don't sleep and so we work on that aspect," she said. Speaking about the food choices, Dr Harris noted that it has importance on a good night's sleep, stating: "People should avoid consuming large or heavy meals, such as a big dinner, before going to bed." She recommended having a light meal that may include protein and carbohydrates. "That's a really good mix to help you throughout the night so you don't wake up hungry, which a lot of people do as well," added Dr Harris.



Ambassador invites businessmen to visit Nepal

SIALKOT: Ambassador of Nepal Tapas Adhikari visited Sialkot Chamber of Commerce and Industry and had an interaction with Mr. Abdul Gafoor Malik, President of the Chamber, and other executive members. A renowned businessman and Chairman Ashraf Group of Companies Ijaz Khokhar hosted the ambassador at his residence.

Ijaz briefed the ambassador about the Sialkot potential in various fields. During the interaction, the ambassador appreciated the contribution of Sialkot entrepreneurs making Sialkot as a hub of sports goods, surgical items, and kitchen cutlery products in Pakistan. He shared the intention to learn business from Sialkot and invited the business community to visit Nepal to participate in the forthcoming Nepal Chamber Expo-2024 in March and in the Investment Summit in April 2024.

The participation of Sialkot entrepreneurs would open a new avenue of bilateral business promotion, investment, and technology transfer that the Government of Nepal is ready to extend all kinds of support to foreign direct investment. He further said that Sialkot could be a role model for Nepal people that it has emerged from a small town to a global business hub because of the hard work, innovation, and entrepreneurship of its people. The ambassador opined that Nepal and Pakistan need more economic engagements and as Ambassador of Nepal, I want to tap the business opportunity in Pakistan that could be beneficial to both countries. He also shared that recently Nepal has been able to export 64 containers of Nepali tea to the Pakistani market after decades.

I further said that the meeting would be very beneficial for the business communities of both countries and would open a new avenue of cooperation. The ambassador said that Nepal is a tourist hub of South Asia and invited them to visit Nepal for business purposes as well as family and friends for holiday since Nepal is close, hospitable and has an easy visa regime for Pakistani nationals. Moreover, I shared that Nepali Sherpas are sharing their skills and expertise with Pakistani mountaineers and every year they bring a large number of foreign mountaineers in Pakistan which is becoming beneficial for Pakistani people.

Abdul Ghafoor Malik, President SCCI while welcoming me said that Nepal and Pakistan share cordial relations and this year would mark 64 years of strong bilateral relations, based on mutual respect, deep understanding, and a shared vision for peace and socio-economic progress of both countries. President SCCI said that both the countries need to focus on further enhancing our economic ties, and there was an ample scope of opportunities waiting to be explored. The ambassador also visited FIFA World cup football manufacturer 'Forward', surgical equipment manufacturer 'Elmed' and sports garment manufacturer 'Rajco' production units. Sialkot, a city of 7-lakh population, is an industrial hub of Pakistan which exports 2.5 billion US dollars, in particular sports goods, surgical items, and kitchen cutlery. Sialkot exports ten percent of Pakistani export. Sialkot is labeled as the football manufacturing capital of the world supplying 70 percent of global demand. It produces the sports goods of Adidas, Nike, Reebok, Puma, and other various brands. Small manufacturing units contribute a large share of exports and provide one third of employment to the residents of the city. Sialkot has its own private sector invested in public airports, dry ports, and airlines to promote business. DNA



LAHORE: In the final Polo match of the 61st National Polo Cup at the Polo Club Ground in the provincial capital, players are trying to grab ball from each other. ONLINE

Over 45.8 mln children to be vaccinated during 2nd national anti-polio drive of 2024

ISLAMABAD: The Health Ministry reaffirming Pakistan's resolve to protect all children from the disability-causing polio virus launched the second nationwide polio vaccination campaign of the year on Sunday.

More than 45.8 million children aged under five years will be vaccinated during the vaccination drive which will be held across the country from February 26 to March 3 and in 33 districts of KP from March 2 to March 6. During the campaign, the children will also be given vitamin A supplements to boost their immunity.

After administering polio drops to children to launch the drive, Federal Secretary for Health, Iftikhar Ali Shallwani said, "Polio is a terrible disease that has no cure and can leave children paralyzed for life. Unfortunately, it continues to be a threat to our children as some people refuse to vaccinate children based on misconceptions and false information about the vaccine." Shallwani further said that while the government remains strongly committed to ending polio in Pakistan and was making great progress, as decision-makers, parents and caregivers also have a huge responsibility to ensure their children's well-being. In a special message directed to parents and caregivers, the health secretary emphasized, "Polio vaccinators will be delivering this vital vaccine to your doorsteps next week. I



implore you to recognize the threat posed by the poliovirus to your children and ensure that you open your doors to facilitate their vaccination."

This was the second consecutive nationwide campaign of the year after poliovirus was detected in sewage samples from 19 districts in January and in 126 sewage samples in 2023. The first campaign of 2024 was held from January 8 to January 14, during which over 43 million children were vaccinated. On this occasion, the National Coordinator for Pakistan's Polio Programme, Dr Shahzad Baig, said that the Pakistan Polio Programme has devised a comprehensive mass vaccination and health services delivery plan for the year and will be working with a laser focus on

reaching missed children, reducing refusals, and increasing community engagement to build trust and goodwill for polio eradication efforts. "The wellbeing of all Pakistani children is our top priority, and we will continue to take all measures possible to ensure quality healthcare delivery to end this disease in the country. This is a critical campaign because poliovirus was found in multiple environmental samples in January, which means children are persistently at risk from this disease," said Dr Baig. "Viruses do not discriminate; they will find vulnerable children and target them anywhere; therefore, it is vital for parents to ensure that their children are vaccinated multiple times throughout the year to ensure that they remain protected," he said. INP

JUI-F to continue protests PPP to join federal cabinet in 2nd phase

ISLAMABAD: With the PML-N poised to assume government leadership later this week, potentially extending into the following week, anticipation is building for the inclusion of the PPP in the federal cabinet during the second phase. While the PPP leadership has explicitly stated their reluctance to join the cabinet, expressing support for Shehbaz Sharif as the prime ministerial candidate, sources closely connected to this unfolding scenario assert that the PPP may reassess its stance.

Against this backdrop, Shehbaz Sharif is anticipated to commence with a compact cabinet, initially comprising only a dozen or so ministers. Reliable sources affirm that the PPP has already communicated its preferences to Shehbaz Sharif regarding specific ministries. Consequently, there is a likelihood that Shehbaz Sharif will reserve those ministries, accommodating the PPP's interests.

Apart from PPP, MQM, which will be on board from the outset, is likely to get three key ministries. The party also wants Kamran Tesori to continue as the Sindh governor. Interestingly, despite fervent efforts, the JUI F, led by Maulana Fazl ur Rehman, finds itself on the outskirts of power corridors.

If this trend persists, it would mark an unprecedented occurrence in recent political history, with JUI F not securing a role in any government. Nevertheless, Maulana Fazl ur Rehman remains undeterred, actively seeking to assert his political significance by orchestrating protests. Strategically, he has identified Sindh as the battleground, a region where he believes Asif Ali Zardari holds the key to realizing his ambitions.

By selecting Sindh as his arena, Maulana aims to exert pressure on the PPP, with the hope of securing a share, even if modest, in the Baluchistan cabinet. His underlying strategy is to leverage a strong showing in Sindh as a bargaining chip, potentially leading to concessions not only at the provincial level but also at the federal level. DNA

A delegation from Senate of Pakistan participates in a session of WTO parliamentary conference held in Abu Dhabi

ISLAMABAD/ABU DHABI: A delegation from the Senate of Pakistan, spearheaded by Senator Saadia Abbasi, participated in a session of the World Trade Organization (WTO) parliamentary conference held in Abu Dhabi, UAE. Senators Saadia Abbasi, Bahramand Khan Tangi, and Samina Mumtaz Zehri, representing Pakistan on the global stage, actively engaged in discussions and collaborations during the conference. The session provided a platform for insightful deliberations on international trade policies, fostering diplomatic ties, and enhancing economic cooperation. SABAH

Pakistan's future linked with educated youth: Governor KP



PESHAWAR: Governor Haji Ghulam Ali of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa highlighted the crucial role of education in shaping Pakistan's future during his address to

personally engage with the heads of educational institutions, including vice-chancellors, to address these matters. He emphasized the importance of providing free education for disabled children, enabling them to contribute meaningfully to the nation. He also commended the students as valuable assets and stressed the need to protect and channel their energies positively for social development.

He acknowledged the challenges and expectations faced by today's youth in the realm of modern education and reassured them of the government's commitment to investing in education.

Expressing gratitude to the students for their visit, the Governor highlighted that he is the first governor actively engaging with various sectors and promptly addressing their concerns.

He concluded by urging the youth to excel not only in their education but also in contributing to the development of their families, regions, and the nation. INP

a 70-member student delegation. He underscored that providing quality education is a primary duty of both federal and provincial governments.

Governor Ali expressed a strong desire to ensure that no child faces educational deprivation due to adverse conditions. He encouraged both male and female students to invest their time in studies, reading, and utilizing social media and the internet for educational purposes.

Addressing concerns raised by the student delegation regarding issues such as fees and scholarships, he assured them that he would

Maryam Nawaz poised to make history as Punjab to elect CM today

LAHORE: The Punjab Assembly is set to witness a one-to-one contest for the post of chief minister (CM) today (Monday) as nomination papers of PML-N nominee Maryam Nawaz and Sunni Ittehad Council's (SIC) Rana Aftab were declared valid after scrutiny. Sunday noon was the deadline, announced by newly-elected Punjab Assembly Speaker Malik Ahmed Khan for submission of nomination papers for the post. Malik Ahmed Khan did the verification of nomination papers. He said that the election for the coveted slot will be held in tomorrow's assembly session. Maryam Nawaz, the political scion of PML-N supreme leader Nawaz Sharif, was nominated as the party's candidate for the coveted position of the chief minister of the country's most populous province, Punjab. Meanwhile, PTI - at the eleventh hour - named Rana Aftab Ahmed Khan as its new candidate for the post following the provincial police's attempt to arrest its earlier nominee, Mian Aslam Iqbal. PTI leader Hammad Azhar noted that party founder Imran Khan had earlier nominated Mian Aslam Iqbal for the post but heavy contingents of the police force were deployed outside the Punjab Assembly to arrest him. INP

CM Naqvi inaugurates new lab, collection center at SIMS



LAHORE: Inaugurated the newly built lab and collection center at Services Institute of Medical Sciences (SIMS) Lahore late Saturday night. The chief minister also cut the cake on the occasion of the inauguration of the 42nd project of the health sector. Later he went round different sections of the lab and the collection center. Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi appreciated Commissioner Lahore Division, Secretary Health, Secretary of Construction and Communications and his team for completing the construction of new lab and collection center in a shortest period of time.

He also praised the quality of the new lab and the collection centre.

Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi inspected the reception of the new lab and collection center and interacted with the staff.

Speaking on the occasion, the CM said that the establishment of the best lab and collection center in a very short time was a good omen. The SIMS will also get revenue from the new lab and collection center, said Mohsin Naqvi. Secretary Health gave a briefing to CM about the project.

Provincial Ministers Dr. Javed Akram, Mansoor Qadir, Aamir Mir, Azfar Ali Nasir, Adviser Wahab Riaz, Chief Secretary, IG Police Secretary Construction and Communications, Commissioner Lahore, CCPO, Special Secretary Health, Deputy Commissioner Principal SIMS, MS Services Hospital and concerned officials were also present on the occasion. INP

India 'fully stops' water flow to Pakistan with Shahpur Kandi barrage on Ravi river

ISLAMABAD: The water flow of Ravi river has reportedly been stopped to Pakistan after the completion of Shahpur Kandi barrage which is situated on the borders of Indian Punjab and the state of Occupied Jammu and Kashmir, as per Indian media reports.

India Today reported that previously allotted 1150 cusecs water of Pakistan, will now benefit the region of Indian occupied Jammu and Kashmir (J&K). The water will be benefiting 32,000 hectares of land in the Kathua and Samba districts. Indian perusing the water terrorism agenda, now executing the latest project of Shakkandi barrage that would supposedly be used for 'irrigation and for hydro power generation' but at the cost of cutting the flow towards Pakistan.

Already India so far constructed many dams like Bhakra Dam on Sutlej, Pong and Pandoh Dam on the Beas and Thein (Ranjitsagar) on the Ravi.

The Indus Waters Treaty is a water-sharing agreement between India and Pakistan, arranged by the World Bank, signed on September 19, 1960.

The treaty divides the rivers into two categories: Eastern Rivers (Sutlej, Beas, and Ravi) which are allocated to India, and Western Rivers (Indus, Jhelum, and Chenab) which are allocated to Pakistan.

Indian media reported Shahpur Kandi dam completion allows India to make maximum use of the River Ravi water previously flowing towards Pakistan from the Lakhapur dam.

It is pertinent to note that former Indian Prime Minister Narsima Rao laid the foundation stone for the shahpur kandi in 1995 and remained disputed for almost over four and a half years.

Earlier, addressing the UN Security Council, Pakistan Permanent Representative in the United Nations Ambassador Munir Akram said Pakistan aims to reinvigorate the Indus River basin which provides food security to over 225 million people.

Pakistan has called for strict implementation of the 1960 Indus Waters Treaty to address the looming water crisis. He said that to this end, Pakistan has launched the multi-dimensional Indus projects. INP

Dhaka: The High Commission for Pakistan in Dhaka, in collaboration with the Bangladesh Chess Federation, organized the 1st Mian Sultan Khan Chess Tournament today at the Pakistan High Commission. The event was arranged to celebrate the skill, strategy and legacy of one of the greatest players of the game of Chess Mian Sultan Khan. Pakistani lone Grandmaster Mian Sultan Khan (Late), a three-time British Chess Championship winner, was revered as one of the greatest natural players of modern times, leaving an indelible mark on the global chess community. With an impressive turnout of 180 chess players from diverse backgrounds including the diplomatic community, public and private organizations, educational institutions, and the general public, the tournament showcased the fervor and passion for the game across Bangladesh. President of Bangladesh Chess Federation, Dr. Benazir Ahmed who is also President of South Asian Chess Council graced the occasion as the Chief Guest. General Secretary of Bangladesh Chess Federation, Syed Shahab Uddin Shamim, Grandmaster Niaz Murshed and Rani Hamid, Bangladesh's 1st International master



player were present as Special Guests. Ambassadors of various countries based in Dhaka including Ambassador of China H.E. Mr. Yao Wen, Ambassador of the Philippines, H.E. Mr. Tito L. Ausan Jr., Ambassador of Italy H.E. Antonio ALESSANDRO, High Commissioner of Sri Lanka, H.E. Mr. Dharmapala Weerakkody, Egyptian Ambassador H.E. Mr. Omar Mohie Eldin Ahmed Fahmy, were also present as special guests. Mohammad Minhaz Uddin emerged as Champion of the tournament and Mr. Zia Tahsin Tajwar as runner-up while Mr. Manon

Reja Neer and Md Abu Hanif clinched 3rd and 4th place respectively. Dr. Benazir Ahmed, President Bangladesh Chess Federation and Pakistan High Commissioner Syed Ahmed Maroof awarded trophies and cash prizes to the top performers of the tournament expressing their admiration for the participants' dedication and skill. Speaking at the Awards Distribution Ceremony, Dr. Benazir Ahmed appreciated the great initiative of Pakistan High Commission for providing the excellent opportunity to chess players in Bangladesh and the diplomatic com-

munity to connect with each other.

"The event will create positive vibes in the chess community of Bangladesh and Pakistan and also the diplomatic community in Bangladesh", Benazir Ahmed said and assured continuous support of Bangladesh Chess Federation to any such future endeavours of the Mission. Speaking at the concluding ceremony, Pakistan High Commissioner Syed Ahmed Maroof expressed his gratitude to the Bangladesh Chess Federation for the invaluable support in successfully organizing the tournament. He emphasized the significance of sports events in strengthening people to people contacts, transcending borders through the spirit of sportsmanship. He said that the tournament was aimed at celebrating the rich legacy of Mian Sultan Khan and bringing together the chess enthusiasts in Bangladesh and the diplomatic community for a healthy activity. Highlighting the impressive turnout of participants from diverse background, High Commissioner Maroof said that the event served as a powerful symbol of mutual respect and collaboration, fostering a spirit of camaraderie that transcends the boundaries of the chessboard. PR