

WINDOW ON THE WORLD



Iranian Zoroastrian youth carry torches to set fire to a prepared pile of wood in a ceremony celebrating their ancient mid-winter Sadeh festival in outskirts of Tehran, Iran, on Tuesday. Hundreds of Zoroastrian minorities gathered after sunset to mark their ancient feast, creation of fire, dating back to Iran's pre-Islamic past. (AP/PTI)

Sultan Ibrahim sworn in as Malaysia's 17th King

KUALA LUMPUR, Jan 31 (AP)

THE billionaire sultan who rules Malaysia's Johor State was sworn in as the nation's new King on Wednesday under a unique rotating monarchy system.



Sultan Ibrahim Iskandar, 65, took his oath of office at the palace and signed the instrument of the proclamation of office in a ceremony witnessed by other royal families, Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim and Cabinet members. A coronation ceremony will be held later.

One of the richest men in the country, Sultan Ibrahim has an extensive business empire ranging from real estate to telecoms and power plants. The candid monarch has close ties with Anwar and his rule could bolster Anwar's unity Government, which faces a strong Islamic Opposition.

Nine ethnic Malay State rulers have taken turns as King for five-year terms under the world's only such system since Malaysia gained independence from Britain in 1957. Malaysia has 13 States but only nine have royal families, some that trace their roots to centuries-old Malay kingdoms that were independent States until they were brought together by the British. Sultan Ibrahim's election to the national throne by his fellow rulers in October was widely expected based on an established rotation order. Sultan Nazrin, the ruler of Perak State and next in line to the throne, was reelected as Deputy King.

US pilot safely ejects before F-16 fighter jet crashes in sea

SEOUL, Jan 31 (AP)

A US AIR Force pilot safely ejected from an F-16 fighter jet that crashed into waters off South Korea's southwestern coast on Wednesday, in the second such crash in less than two months. The unidentified pilot was conscious and was transported to a medical facility for assessment, the US 8th Fighter Wing said in a statement. It said it closely worked with US and South Korean mission partners to recover the pilot, who experienced an unspecified in-flight emergency and ejected before the plane crashed into sea.

The cause of the crash, which reportedly occurred in waters near the port city of Seosan, was being investigated. There were no immediate reports of casualties or property damage caused by the crash.

"We are very thankful to the Republic of Korea rescue forces and all of our teammates who made the swift recovery of our pilot possible," said Col Matthew C Gaetke, the wing's commander, referring to South Korea's formal name. "Now we will shift our focus to search and recovery of the aircraft."

The 8th Fighter Wing, which is composed of two F-16 squadrons, previously experienced an F-16 crash in December. It then said the pilot experienced problems during a routine training flight and was safely recovered after ejecting the aircraft before it crashed into sea near the port city of Gunsan.

The incidents in South Korea follow a November 29 crash of a US Air Force Osprey aircraft during a training mission off Japan's coast that killed all eight people on board.

Germany seeks to boost immigration of young Indian skilled professionals

NEW YORK, Jan 31 (ANI)

THE German Secretary of State at the Federal Foreign Office Susanne Baumann on Tuesday said her country needs well-trained workers and is opening its arms to young, skilled professionals of India in the field of green technology, IT and medical science.

"We are here with twofold message, the first part is Germany needs well-trained workers in many professional areas and the second part of this message is that we open our arms for talented young Indian workers, students," Baumann told ANI.

She was accompanied by Leonie Gebers, German State Secretary, Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs to India and the delegation paid their visit to Delhi's Don Bosco Technical Institute. When asked about the sectors in which Germany is looking for skilled Indian workers, Baumann said, "The need in Germany is quite big because of economic and demographic reasons. But what we are especially looking for are professionals in the field of green technology, IT and in the medical field. We have very good experiences for example, with nurses coming from India." Sharing her thoughts on the young Indian skilled market, Leonie Gebers expressed that "India is a great country and has a lot of potential, whereas Germany has modernised its immigration legislation, and to cater to the German labour market needs, we look at India for different sectors and find ways to cooperate because, at the end, both sides can profit from cooperation."

N Korea tests cruise missiles to boost attack capabilities

SEOUL, Jan 31 (AP)

NORTH Korea said on Wednesday it conducted a test-firing of long-range cruise missiles with an aim to sharpen its counterattack and strategic strike capabilities, in its latest display of weapons threatening South Korea and Japan.

The report by North Korean State media came a day after South Korea's military detected the North firing multiple cruise missiles into waters off its western coast, the third launch of such weapons this month. The event extended a provocative streak in weapons testing as North Korea continues to raise pressure on the United States and its Asian allies amid a prolonged freeze



Test firing of Hwasal-2 cruise missile in North Korea on Tuesday.

(AP/PTI)

in diplomacy.

North Korea's official Korean Central News Agency said that the weapon tested on Tuesday was the Hwasal-2 and that the launch did not affect the security of neighbours. The report didn't specify the exact numbers of missiles fired or the specifics of their flight performance.

The North has previously described the Hwasal-2 as nuclear-capable and that their range is up to 2,000 kilometres, a distance that would include US military bases in Japan.

North Korea in recent years has been expanding its lineup of cruise missiles, which are designed to be fired from both land and naval assets.

Compensate for World War II losses: Poland to Germany

BERLIN, Jan 31 (AP)

THE Foreign Minister in Poland's new pro-European Union Government said Tuesday he would like Germany's leaders to think in a "creative" way about compensating Poland for huge losses it suffered at German hands during World War II.

The request was greatly toned down from that of Poland's previous Right-wing Government, which had demanded USD 1.3 trillion in reparations for Nazi Germany's invasion and occupation in 1939-45.

German officials have consistently said that while Berlin

recognises its historical responsibility, the issue of reparations was settled decades ago.

Foreign Minister Radek Sikorski spoke at a joint news conference with German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock in Berlin before their talks on improving bilateral relations that were strained under Poland's previous Government. "I will also ask the Minister (to make) the German Government think in a creative way about finding a form of compensation for these war losses, or of redress," Sikorski said when talking about a project in Berlin to memorialise Poland's suffering.



From left, Sweden's Queen Silvia, Brigitte Macron, French President Emmanuel Macron and King Carl Gustaf pose for a group photo after arriving at Stockholm Palace where the royal couple gives a gala dinner for the French presidential couple in Stockholm on Tuesday. French President Emmanuel Macron and his wife Brigitte are on a two-day State visit to Sweden. (AP/PTI)

Dogged by hunger, starvation, Ethiopians seek food aid

KAMPALA, Jan 31 (AP)

NEARLY 400 people have died of starvation in Ethiopia's Tigray and Amhara regions in recent months, the national ombudsman said on Tuesday, a rare admission of hunger-related deaths by a federal body.

Local officials have previously reported starvation deaths in their districts, but Ethiopia's federal government has insisted these reports are "completely wrong."

Ethiopia's ombudsman office sent experts to the regions, which are gripped by drought and still reeling from a devastating civil war that offi-

cially ended 14 months ago. They concluded that 351 people have died of hunger in Tigray in the past six months, with 44 more deaths in Amhara.

Only a small fraction of needy people in Tigray are receiving food aid, according to an aid memo seen by The Associated Press, more than one month after aid agencies resumed deliveries of grain following a lengthy pause over theft.

Just 14 per cent of 3.2 million people targeted for food aid by humanitarian agencies in Tigray this month had received it by January 21, according to the memo by the Tigray Food Cluster, a group of

aid agencies co-chaired by the UN's World Food Programme and Ethiopian officials.

The memo urges humanitarian groups to "immediately scale up" their operations, warning that "failure to take swift action now will result in severe food insecurity and malnutrition during the lean season, with possible loss of the most vulnerable children and women in the region."

The UN and the US paused food aid to Tigray in mid-March last year after discovering a "large-scale" scheme to steal humanitarian grain. The suspension was rolled out to the rest of Ethiopia in June.



Farmers gather under a bridge where hangs a dummy farmer as they block a highway on Tuesday in Jossigny, east of Paris. With protesting farmers camped out at barricades around Paris, France's Government hoped to calm their anger with more concessions on Tuesday to their complaints that growing and rearing food has become too difficult and not sufficiently lucrative. (AP/PTI)

India will provide skilled workers to world: Kiran Bedi

SINGAPORE, Jan 31 (PTI)

INDIA will provide a lot of skilled people to the world one day, especially to countries with ageing populations, Kiran Bedi, the former Lt-Governor of Puducherry, said on Wednesday, asserting that the country has "educated, skilled and literate youths."

Bedi, a former IPS officer, made the comments at the Asia Business Conclave 2024, which is being held in Singapore.

"One day, India will be providing a lot of skilled people to the world, especially countries with ageing populations," said the Magsaysay awardee who runs the Navjyoti India Foundation, an NGO started in the 1980s when she served as a Deputy Police Commissioner in Delhi. "India has educated, skilled and literate youths

both with experiences in urban and rural economies. These are English-speaking aspirational youths - that is a big advantage," said Bedi, who works with youths from all communities. She noted that Indian Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) have increased their focus on skills as part of training at their education centres and called for more collaborations among universities, institutions, skill development centres, professional institutions and NGOs.

Bedi asserted that foreign countries seeking skilled people from India should collaborate with Indian schools, skill institutions and other such bodies, for there is no dearth of Indian youth with aspirations. She said that Singapore and India must increase student exchange programmes as both countries are ambitiously working to draw skilled manpower.

Greek court acquits aid workers who rescued migrants crossing in boats

ATHENS, Jan 31 (AP)

A GREEK court on Tuesday acquitted a group of 16 aid workers and volunteers of charges connected with their efforts to rescue migrants making the dangerous sea crossing in small boats from neighbouring Turkey.

The trial on the eastern island of Lesbos on espionage and other charges had attracted international scrutiny, with rights groups accusing Greece of targeting the defendants for their humanitarian work.

While arrivals have dropped

in recent years, Lesbos remains a major landing point for migrants seeking a better life in Europe. On Tuesday, the Greek coast guards said two people died when a small migrant boat was wrecked on a rocky shore there during an overnight storm.

It said 57 survivors made it onto land, and one more person was reported missing.

Tuesday's court ruling followed a proposal by the prosecution for all the 16 defendants' acquittal, one of the defence lawyers, Haris Petsikos, told The Associated Press.

UN urges rivals in Cyprus to restart negotiations

UNITED NATIONS, Jan 31 (AP)

THE UN Security Council voted unanimously on Tuesday to extend the UN peacekeeping mission in Cyprus for a year and urged all parties including rival Green Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots to take steps "to de-escalate tensions in and around the buffer zone" dividing the Mediterranean island.

The Council also strongly encouraged all parties "to seize the opportunity" of UN Secretary-General António Guterres' appointment of a new personal envoy for Cyprus to restart negotiations between the two sides. Cyprus was divided into a breakaway Turkish

Cypriot north and an internationally recognised Greek Cypriot south in 1974 following a Turkish invasion that was triggered by a coup aimed at union with Greece. Numerous rounds of UN mediated talks have ended in failure, with the last push for a peace deal in July 2017 ending in acrimony.

That meeting also led to a shift by Turkey and the Turkish Cypriots toward seeking a two-State deal which they are still demanding, instead of pursuing their earlier aim of reunifying the country. The plan for a federation made up of Greek and Turkish speaking zones was endorsed by the UN Security Council.

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