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UN Chief calls for immediate end to war in Ukraine

Detailed News On Page-07

PTI leaders being treated as terrorists

Detailed News On Page-08



Morata calls for life bans for racist chants

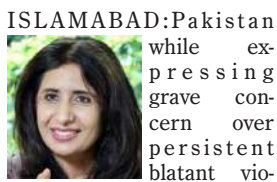
Detailed News On Page-06



Briefs

PM takes up matter of Arshid's murder with Kenya: FO

AGENCIES



ISLAMABAD: Pakistan while expressing grave concern over persistent blatant violations of human rights in Occupied Kashmir has said the international community should take notice of these violations. Pakistan has expressed its concerns over the security of Palestinian people. This was said by Foreign Office spokesperson Mumtaz Zahra Baloch in her weekly press briefing here Thursday. She added Pakistan will continue its moral, political and diplomatic support to Kashmiris. She held Foreign Minister (FM) Bilawal Bhutto has recently completed his two days visit to Hungary. During his visit 3 memorandum of understanding were signed. One among these memorandum of understanding relates to mutual cooperation between foreign service academies of two countries. She stated the number of Pakistani students in the universities of Hungary will be increased by 100 percent. Foreign minister addressed annual conference of Head of missions in Hungary. He also visited Germany and Lithuania. Foreign ministers held important meetings on the sidelines of Munich conference.

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Next 72 hours are very important

DNA

RAWALPINDI: AML chairman Sheikh Rasheed has said that next 72 hours are very important. In a message on Twitter on Thursday, the nation has pinned hope with the judiciary only and rest is all disappointment. "Only the judiciary will steer the country from the crisis," he added. He said that 13 parties could not win the elections at any cost. Sheikh Rasheed termed the prime minister's press conference on austerity measures as joke with the nation. "The inflation giant will devour the government. All are worried except Sharif family, Maulana Fazlur Rehman and Asif Zardari," he added.

Suo Moto on KP, Punjab polls

SC questions dissolution of Assemblies

Justice Minallah wonders whether assemblies were dissolved as per the Constitution or not

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

ISLAMABAD: Justice Athar Minallah and Justice Mansoor Ali Shah of the Supreme Court (SC) on Thursday raised questions on the dissolution of Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa assemblies. The observation from the judges came during the hearing of the suo moto notice on the election date for the Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa assemblies. Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Umar Ata Bandial had taken suo motu notice day earlier and formed a nine-member bench to hear the case. The bench held its first hearing today. Apart from Justice Minallah, Justice Shah and CJP Bandial, the bench includes Justice Ijazul Ahsan, Justice Munib Akhtar, Justice Yahya Afridi, Justice Sayeed Mazahar Ali Akbar Naqvi, Justice Jamal Khan Mandokhail and

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Justice Naqvi faces complaint in SJC

DNA

ISLAMABAD: A complaint has been filed in the Supreme Judicial Council (SJC) seeking an investigation against Supreme Court's Justice Syed Mazahar Ali Akbar Naqvi over alleged involvement in malpractice and misuse of authority. Mr Naqvi came in the spotlight after Interior Minister Rana Sanaullah released an audio of an alleged conversation between the top court's

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Forces hunt down 8 terrorists in Kech

Attempt to ambush convoy in foiled

NEWS DESK

RAWALPINDI: The military's media affairs wing said on Thursday that it had foiled an attempt to ambush a convoy of security forces in Balochistan's Kech district, adding that eight militants were killed in the follow-up operation. According to the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR), terrorists attempted to ambush a convoy of security forces on February 22 in the evening. The statement said "alert and combat ready troops foiled



Two security personnel martyred

ISLAMABAD: Two security personnel were martyred on Thursday when unknown armed persons opened fire on security check post on ChamanRoghani Road. According to a private news channel, unknown armed motorcyclists opened indiscriminate fires at the security personnel on Roghani Road near Chaman, as a result of which two security personnel have reportedly been martyred. After the attack, the unknown motorcyclists managed to flee. Security forces reached the site immediately after the incident and cordoned off the area while a search operation was underway to arrest the culprits. - APP

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ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif greets PPP Chairman Asif Ali Zardari. -DNA

JAPAN EMPEROR'S BIRTHDAY



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Human Rights Mian Riaz Pirzada, Ambassador of Japan Mitsuhiro Wada and others cutting a cake during a ceremony to commemorate Japanese Emperor's 63rd Birthday. - DNA

Austerity policy to be strictly enforced
PM Shehbaz directs to form oversight body

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Thursday said the austerity policy he had announced a day earlier would be enforced strictly and no laxity in that regard would be tolerated.

Another news and pix on Back Page

The prime minister, chairing a meeting to review the implementation of the austerity policy, said the "historic" decisions made to promote austerity and simplicity would have a far-reaching impact that also got applied to the public. He directed the formation of a monitoring committee to

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President Alvi signs finance bill

ISLAMABAD: President DrArifAlvi on Thursday signed the Finance (Supplementary) Bill, 2023, generally known as the mini-budget, as the government rushed to fulfil the IMF conditions to unlock an economic bailout that the country needs to avoid the risk of default. The Prime Minister Secretariat sent the bill to the President Secretariat on Wednesday evening for assent, two days after it was passed by the National Assembly. "The president gave the approval to the bill in accordance with Article 75 of the Constitution," the media wing of President House said in a statement today. - DNA

Emperor's 63rd Birthday

Japan Ambassador terms Emperor as symbol of unity

Ambassador WADA together with the guests cut a cake to mark the Emperor's Birthday

MAHNOOR ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: To celebrate the 63rd Birthday of His Majesty the Emperor Naruhito, the Ambassador of Japan H.E. Mr. WADA Mitsuhiro hosted a reception at a local hotel in Islamabad on February 23rd. H.E. Mian-Riaz Hussain Pirzada, Minister for Human Rights, was the chief guest on the occasion. The reception was attended by the Ministers, Parliamentarians, senior government officials, members of the diplomatic community and other dignitaries from the public and private sector. Ambassador WADA together with the distinguished guests cut a cake to mark the His Majesty the Emperor's Birthday, which is on February 23rd. Since his accession to the throne on 1st May 2019 as the 126th Emperor of Japan,

His Majesty the Emperor Naruhito stands as the symbol of Japan and the unity of the people. His Majesty and the Imperial Family also facilitate the good relations with foreign countries including Pakistan. While welcoming the guests on the occasion, Ambassador WADA stressed Japanese businesses' high expectation in new business opportunities in Pakistan, referring to recent investments by Japanese companies. The Ambassador also emphasized that among the approximately USD 77 million that was announced at Geneva Conference, around half of its humanitarian and rehabilitation assistance has already been disbursed. He expressed his gratitude to the people of Pakistan for showing their trust and affinity toward Japan, and stated

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SAY NO TO INVISIBLE CORRUPTION.

Inside...

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Maryam criticizes senior judges

Says the cabal of five targeted Nawaz Sharif

STAFF REPORT

SARGODHA: PML-N Senior Vice President Maryam Nawaz, in a fiery speech on Thursday, came down hard on a "cabal of five", among which were former and serving members of the judiciary, whom she accused of "conspiring" against PML-N supremo Nawaz Sharif. Addressing a workers' convention in Sargodha, Maryam - who is currently on a reorganisation tour to shape her party's narrative - said: "Ever since this watch thief left the government, our ears are tired of hearing 'there was a conspiracy, there was a conspiracy'." "Today, I will tell the nation that the real conspiracy took place against Nawaz Sharif," Maryam roared. On the PML-N leader's cue, a video screen showed a combo picture of the five people she held responsible, saying: "The

Fawad announces to set up protest camps outside jails

ISLAMABAD: PTI leader Fawad Chaudhary has announced to set up protest camps outside jails. Talking to the media on Thursday, he said that 214 workers were arrested from Lahore. "The arrest of only 81 workers has been registered while nothing is told about the remaining workers," he added. The PTI leader said that the workers will raise their voice outside the jails where the arrested workers will be lodged. Meanwhile, the PTI workers arrested from Lahore have been shifted to Mianwali and DG Khan jails. On the other hand, the anti-terrorism court remanded Abbad Farooq in the police custody for 14 days. However, PTI leaders Shah Mahmood Qureshi, Asad Umar, Umar Sarrfraz and Azam Swati could not be produced in court. - DNA

people of Sargodha should also see the ones behind the conspiracy". The pictures included ex-Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) chief Lt Gen (ret'd) Faiz Hameed, former chief justices Asif Khosa and SaqibNisar, and two sitting Supreme Court judges, who are currently part of a top court bench hearing a suo motu case to determine who has the constitutional responsibility and authority to announce the date for elections in Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The Pakistan Bar Council has called on one of the judges to "voluntarily recuse to remain as part of the bench". "What can you see on the screen? Can you see the cabal of five? Those visible on the screen are responsible for Pakistan's crisis," she said, alleging that the ex-ISI chief, who had "appointed himself the chief of army staff", was their head. "Because he wanted to be [the] chief and he needed pawns.

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SBP set to increase interest rates in off-cycle review, say investors

ISLAMABAD: The State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) is set to raise interest rates as early as this week in an off-cycle review, investors said, as the country faces pressure to mend its finances amid a \$1 billion loan it is seeking from the International Monetary Fund. Market participants in a recent treasury bill auction are expecting at least a 200 basis points increase in the central bank's policy rate, which stands at 17 per cent. The expected increase is based on the rates the government set in the auction to raise the funds.

The government raised Rs258 billion in the auction on Wednesday. The cut-off rates for the three-month, six-month, and 12-month tenors jumped 195 bps, 206 bps, and 184 bps higher than the previous auction. The cash-strapped country is undertaking key measures to secure IMF funding, including raising taxes, removing blanket subsidies, and artificial curbs on the exchange rate. While the government expects a deal with IMF soon, media reports say that the agency expects the policy rate to be increased.

The next meeting of the central bank's Monetary Policy Committee is scheduled for March 16. Off-cycle rate reviews are not uncommon though. Assistant Vice President of Research at Pak Kuwait Investment Company, Adnan Sheikh, said that a rate hike is imminent, and it could be as soon as Friday. "The next policy meeting is too far. Given the circumstances, it's already being priced in," Sheikh said. The SBP and the IMF did not immediately respond to requests for comment. —APP



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif chairs a meeting on austerity measures. — DNA

President for creating awareness on non-communicable diseases

BUREAU REPORT

PESHAWAR: President, Dr Arif Alvi here on Thursday underlined the need for creating mass awareness about non-communicable diseases and active role of all stakeholders including political leadership and media in that regard. Addressing as a chief guest during the third international public health conference on 'Breaking the manacle: non-communicable diseases' at Khyber Medical University (KMU), he said that most of the

diseases including cancer were non-communicable and if diagnosed and treated at early stage could save many precious lives. The president said lung cancer was also curable if diagnosed timely, and late diagnoses and treatment of the disease could prove fatal. He said precautionary and preventive measures should be taken on priority to save people from communicable and non-communicable diseases. President, Dr Arif Alvi said that Pakistan had achieved great success against fatal coronavirus after taking

solid preventive measures, which was widely appreciated. He suggested that special programs should be aired and broadcast on media especially during morning shows for public awareness about causes and treatment of communicable and non-communicable diseases for a healthy and prosperous society. The president called for implementation of the already existing health policies in letter and spirit to save lives including mothers and children. We have all the required

policies but lack implementation," he maintained. He said the rapidly increasing population was exerting extraordinary pressure on the economy and national resources, adding that about nine million pregnancies were being reported annually in the country including about 50 percent unwanted pregnancies. Dr Arif Alvi said that contraceptive techniques were being used in the world to control the unwanted pregnancies and high birth-rate and suggested the use of such techniques here also to overcome the issue of

overpopulation and poverty with a view to create balance between economic resources and population. The president observed that wrangling among political forces would hardly serve any purpose rather focus should be made on resolution to the issues of national priority. Dr Arif Alvi advised the doctors' community to do intellectual exercises and convince their patients during the treatment process for a healthy and prosperous Pakistan. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Governor, Ghulam Ali, Advis-

er to the caretaker chief minister, Dr Abid Jamil, Vice Chancellor KMU, Dr Ziaul Haq and others concerned were present. The president was accorded warm welcome after arrival at KMU. Earlier, the president was briefed about the objectives of the international conference by the vice chancellor and the organizers. The conference was attended by national and international doctors, health experts, scholars, faculty members of KMU and students.

Golden Ring Economic Forum delegation visits ISSI

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: A delegation from the Golden Ring Economic Forum (GREF), Lahore, led by its Chairman Lt. Gen. Sikander Afzal (R), visited the Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI). Other members of the delegation included Engr. Hasnain Reza Mirza, President; Mr. Meher Kashif Younus, Vice President; and Dr. Shahid Hasan, Director BoG. Ambassador Sohail Mahmood, Director General, led the ISSI side. Other participants included Dr. Neelum Nigar, Director CSP, Ms. Mahrukh Khan, RF, Mr. Muhammad Naeem Salik, Research Fellow, and Mr. Muhammad Taimur Fahad Khan, Research Associate.

The GREF delegation highlighted its role as a think-tank focussing on long-term economic and strategic issues that are of importance to Pakistan. The discussions pertained to Pakistan's relations with Turkiye, Russia, China, Iran, and Central Asian Republics. The exchange of views focussed on the political, diplomatic, trade, investment, energy, and people-to-people aspects of these relationships.

Ambassador Sohail Mahmood underscored the importance of injecting enhanced economic content into these relationships, stressing that as an imperative. He underlined that while prudently handling the geo-politics, Pakistan's task was to accentuate its pivot to geo-economics. In this context, he added, mobilization of efforts for enhanced trade, investment, economic cooperation, and connectivity was indispensable.

KPEZDMC issues LoI to InfraCo Asia for solarization of economic zones

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Economic Zone Development and Management Company (KPEZDMC) has issued a Letter of Intent (LoI) to InfraCo Asia to undertake a complete feasibility study for the solarization of economic zones in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The LoI signifies the commitment of KPEZDMC and InfraCo Asia to work together in exploring the potential of solar energy and expanding its use in the province's economic

zones. Solar energy is not only a critical component of the global efforts to combat climate change, but it also has the potential to play a transformative role in promoting sustainable economic development. By harnessing the province's immense potential for solar energy, KP can, thus, reduce its reliance on fossil fuels, minimize its carbon emissions, and create new opportunities for businesses and employment in the region, said a news release issued by the British High Commission in Pakistan.



"Innovation and collaboration are key to driving sustainable economic growth. Through this partnership, we aim to harness the potential of renewable energy while also creating new op-

portunities for businesses and people in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa," said Jo Moir, Director, British High Commission, Pakistan. The Sustainable Energy and Econom-

ic Development (SEED) Programme has been providing technical support to the Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa since its inception, culminating in the signing of the LoI.

Role of Muslim Hands in flood relief efforts lauded

SHUJAAT HAMZA

KARACHI: On behalf of Commanding Officer 8th FP, the ceremony has been arranged in recognition of INGOs/NGOs providing relief support in Operation MADAD (floods-2022) with Pakistan Navy. Commander Coast Rear Admiral Raja Rab Nawaz HI (M) acknowledged the support and service of Muslim Hands in Sindh and Balochistan with the Pakistan Navy and ensured the same kind of support in the future for serving the vul-



nerable communities. Earlier this month, the "Muslim Hands", active in relief, rehabilitation, and reconstruction projects in flood-hit areas of the country handed over 20 houses to flood victims in Mastung and Jafarabad while the construction of around 200 other houses has entered the final stage.

Executive Director of Muslim Hands in Pakistan Syed Javed Gilani, speaking to a news agency, said that 'Muslim Hands' has successfully reached 1 million beneficiaries through its Emergency response in flood-affected regions across Pakistan during the past six months. The organization perpetrated about USD 8 million for rescue, relief, and rehabilitation projects out of which USD 4 million has been spent/distributed. He told that 222,928 people were provided with ready meals, and food baskets, 4,782 with winter kits, and 4,527 with other Non-Food Items. In the health sector, 259 medical camps and 10 basic health centers were established where more than 120,000 people were provided with free checkup medicines and other health facilities apart from 2400 herbal medicine and 64 wheelchairs.

80 companies participate in GIKI Career Fair

PESHAWAR: About 80 multinational and national companies from across the country participated in Ghulam Ishaq Khan Institute of Engineering Sciences and Technology Career Fair, said a press release issued here on Thursday. The event was inaugurated by Eric Zong, Director, Pakistan Partner Development Department, Huawei. Distinguished officials of the companies, Pro-Rectors, deans and heads of the departments, faculty members, research associates, Engineers, directors, members of Career Fair committee and students have attended the ceremony.—APP

Shah Mehmood shifted to Attock Jail amid tight security

QAZI SHOAB KHAN

ATTOCK: Vice Chairman Pakistan Tehreek e Insaaf ex-Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs Shah Mehmood Qureshi was shifted to Attock Jail here on Thursday amid a tight security in line with the jail filling movement launched on the call of PTI leader Imran Khan. He was kept in the relevant barrack of the district jail reserved for the political detainees with all facilities as per jail manual. While shifting to Attock Jail he was also extended warm

welcome by a large number of PTI workers and office bearers include PTI district president Attock Qazi Ahmed Akbar, former provincial minister Punjab Syed Yawar Abbas Bokhari, Bgr. (R) Asim Nawaz, Mr. Akbar Khan Tanoli, Malik Ahmed Nawaz who expressed their complete solidarity with Shah Mehmood Qureshi at the premises of Attock Jail. Speaking on the occasion, Syed Yawar Abbas and Qazi Ahmed Akbar vowed that more than 500 PTI workers from Attock along with thousands activities from all over the

six tehsils of the district were ready to offer their volunteer arrest on the instructions of their leader Imran Khan. They said that the imported alliance government of PML(N) dragged the country at the verge of collapse besides creating miserable inflation for the general people. PTI leaders said that the present rulers had looted the people of the country for their personal gains who were manipulating to get the elections delayed through political engineering as they were afraid of their defeat in the elections due to their

misdeeds. They had tried to implicate their leader Imran Khan by registering 70 self-fabricated FIRs who was facing their atrocities for want of his people. They stressed upon the caretaker set up to conduct the elections within 90 days in pursuance of the Article 224 of the Constitution of Islamic Republic of Pakistan. They also expressed their hope that Supreme Court of Pakistan would definitely prevail to initiate the election process if the government failed to fulfill its constitutional commitments, they added.

World shall commit to end India's use of sexual violence in IIOJK

ISLAMABAD: Legal Forum for Kashmir (LFK) and Islamabad Institute of Conflict Resolutions (IICR) organized a roundtable debate titled Targeting Vulnerable Groups as a Weapon of War: India's Abuse and Impunity in Kashmir. Every year on 23 February Kashmiris throughout the world along with the survivors of Kunan Poshpora mass rape in IIOJK organize acts of resistance, remembering, and contemplating in commemoration of the horrific rape and torture of women in twin villages in district Kupwara, north of Kashmir. The survivors of these atrocities continue to fight for recognition and recognition even in the face of overwhelming odds. The fact that they are still seeking legal recourse is a testament to the

power of the law as a form of archiving memory, as well as to their own resilience and determination. The expert speakers for the roundtable discussion included Ms Mushaal Hussain Malik, chairperson Peace and Culture Organization; Ms Farzana Yaqoob, Former Minister

of Social Welfare and women development AJK; Dr. Salma Malik, Professor at the department of Defense and Strategic Studies Quaid e Azam University Islamabad; Dr. Waleed Rasool, Lecturer, International Relations at Riphah International University and Ms Urooj Raza

Sayyami, Political Assistant to Ex-Chief Minister Punjab on Human Rights. The roundtable conference was moderated by Ms Neha Ayub, Research Scholar, Centre for International Peace and Stability, NUST. Ms Mushaal Hussain Malik highlighted the issues of

Kashmiri women and expressed that the women in Kashmir are living under constant fear. Despite the threat of being abused or humiliated, they are playing an important role in freedom struggle of Kashmir. There are huge number of Kashmiri women living in refugee camps in Azad Kashmir who have faced worst kind of abuses by Indian occupational forces. We must present those cases at international forums and make joint petitions and educate people. Ms Urooj Raza Sayyami expressed her serious concern about the role of media towards Jammu and Kashmir. She stated that India is illegally using weapons and are violating the human rights in Indian occupied Jammu and Kashmir.



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For further information please contact the following.

Maj (r) Sabih Ur Rehman
Mobile: 0300 8553342

National Days and Armed Forces Days

FEBRUARY

- Feb 04 / Sri Lanka National Day
- Feb 06 / New Zealand National Day
- Feb 06 / Uganda Defece Forces Day
- Feb 11 / DPR Korea National Day
- Feb 16 / Lithuania National Day
- Feb 18 / Gambia National Day
- Feb 19 / Nepal National Democracy Day
- Feb 23 / Brunei National Day
- Feb 23 / Guyana National Day
- Feb 23 / Russian Federation National Army Day
- Feb 23 / Tajikistan Armed Forces Day
- Feb 25 / Kuwait National Day
- Feb 27 / Dominican Republic Independence Day



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- Cantonment Board 9270151-3

Islamabad Metropolitan

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- Potohar Town.....9209224
- Rawal Town.....5773343

Water Tank

- Islamabad.....0321-5744480



ISLAMABAD: An old man is busy in preparing traditional Basket weaving with Tree branches at his workplace in Golra area in Federal Capital. – Online

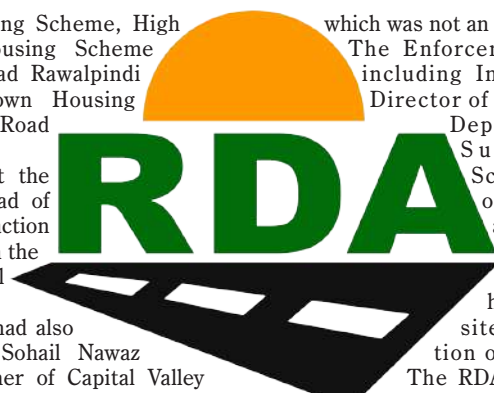
RDA seals site office of illegal housing scheme

The RDA spokesman said that the DG had advised the citizens not to invest in any illegal and unauthorized housing scheme and check the status of the housing projects on RDA website www.rda.gop.pk

RAWALPINDI: The Rawalpindi Development Authority (RDA) on the directives of the Director General (DG) Muhammad Saif Anwar Jappa here on Thursday sealed the site office of illegal housing scheme namely Capital Valley at Mouza Katarian and Thallian. According to an RDA spokesman, the RDA Enforcement Squad, in an operation against illegal housing schemes, sealed the site office.

He said Metropolitan Planning and Traffic Engineering, RDA had also submitted applications at Police Station Rawat to lodge First Information Reports against three illegal housing schemes namely At-

lantic City Housing Scheme, High Capital City Housing Scheme at Chak Beli Road Rawalpindi and Century Town Housing Scheme at G.T. Road Rawalpindi. He informed that the Enforcement Squad of RDA was taking action in accordance with the law against illegal housing schemes. He said a notice had also been issued to Sohail Nawaz Cheema, the owner of Capital Valley



which was not an approved project. The Enforcement Squad RDA including Incharge/Assistant Director of Building Control, Deputy Incharge and Superintendent Scheme carried out the operation as the administration was running an illegal housing scheme's site office in violation of the rules. The RDA spokesman said

that the DG had advised the citizens not to invest in any illegal and unauthorized housing scheme and check the status of the housing projects on the RDA website www.rda.gop.pk. He said the DG had also directed the MP&TE Directorate to take strict actions against illegal and unauthorized housing schemes and encroachments without any discrimination. RDA had also requested Islamabad Electric Supply Company, Sui Northern Gas Pipelines Ltd and PTCL not to extend their services to illegal housing schemes as their status was unapproved and illegal, he added. – APP

Keeping active throughout life linked to delay in dementia onset

ISLAMABAD: A long-term study has found that remaining physically active throughout adulthood may delay the onset of dementia, and even small amounts of exercise can be helpful. Dementia is not a specific disease but is rather a general term for the impaired ability to remember, think, or make decisions, which interferes with doing everyday activities, says the US Centres for Disease Control. It affects about 44 million people globally and that number

is projected to triple by 2050. About 40 percent of the risk of dementia may be attributed to factors that can be modified. Physical activity is one such factor and has been linked to a modest reduction in the risk of all-cause dementia, cognitive decline, and later-life cognition. The study conducted by researchers at University College London and published online in the Journal of Neurology Neurosurgery and Psychiatry, examined data from 1,417 individuals

who completed surveys regarding their exercise habits at various stages of adulthood, spanning from ages 36 to 69. The National reported. Participants who remained physically active at least once to four times a month during all five survey periods performed better on cognitive tests at age 69 compared to those who exercised frequently during only one period. The study, which set out to assess how timing, frequency and maintenance

of being physically active, spanning over 30 years in adulthood, is associated with later-life cognitive function, also found that individuals who began exercising in their 60s showed improved cognitive function compared to those who were inactive. Engaging in leisure-time physical activity, even at light levels, at any point in adult life has a positive effect on cognition, and the benefits accumulate over time, the study concluded. – APP

Govt's 'austerity plan' will steer country out of economic crisis

The economic challenges facing the country at present were mainly due to the poor economic performance and corrupt practices by the previous government, he said while talking on a private news channel

ISLAMABAD: Special Assistant to Prime Minister and former deputy speaker National Assembly Faisal Karim Kundi on Thursday expressed hope that the government's austerity plan will steer the country out of the current economic crisis soon. The economic challenges facing the country at present were mainly due to the poor economic performance and corrupt practices by the previous government, he said while talking on a private news channel. He said "big and bold decisions" were the need of the hour to stabilise the country's economy. Replying to a question, he said that Pakistan People's Party did not believe in political victimization of any political leader as PPP itself faced victimization and rendered sacrifices for democracy which will always be remembered. He said that the inefficiency of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf leadership was being exposed with each passing day, adding, PTI's so-called marches had failed badly and now its 'jail bharo tehreek' will fail as well. He further mentioned that Imran Khan's government had adopted flawed foreign, domestic and economic policies due to which the country stood isolated, adding, PTI leaders were painting a rosy picture in the last four year's public gatherings, but the situation on the ground was vice versa. He said the elections will be held on time and the coalition government will complete its term. – APP

OGDCL produces 33,061 BPD oil

ISLAMABAD: Oil and Gas Development Company Limited (OGDCL) has produced around 33,061 BOPD, 772 MMCFD gas and 730 TDP LPG during the first half of the current fiscal year, ending on December 31. The production witnessed a little decline as compared to 36,788 Barrel per Day (BPD) oil, 827 Metric Million Cubic Feet per Day (MMCFD) gas, and 814 Tons per Day (TPD) Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) during the same period of the year 2021-22 due to certain reasons, according to the company's first-half financial report for the year 2022-23 available with APP. The company said it, being the national flagship of the country's Exploration and Production (E&P) sector, was making all-out efforts to play a pivotal

The company said it, being the national flagship of the country's Exploration and Production (E&P) sector, was making all-out efforts to play a pivotal role in enhancing the energy security of Pakistan

role in enhancing the energy security of Pakistan. "In this context, the company during July 2022 to December 2022 contributed around 46%, 29% and 37% towards the country's total oil, natural gas and LPG production respectively," it said. During the period under review, OGDCL drilled four wells comprising three exploratory/appraisal and one development that yielded three discoveries in Punjab and Sindh provinces. As of December 31, the company operated 49 exploration blocks, out of which 23 were with 100 percent share and 26 under joint ventures. – APP

NA Speaker condemns killing of 11 innocent Palestinians

Raja Pervez said cruelty and brutality of Israeli Army unleashed on innocent Palestinians was a serious violation of modern principles

ISLAMABAD: Speaker National Assembly, Raja Pervez Ashraf on Thursday strongly condemned the killing of 11 innocent Palestinians by Israeli forces. In a condemnation here, the Speaker National Assembly said the killing of 11 innocent Palestinians and the wounding of 102 people due to the aggression of the Israeli Army was highly condemnable. Raja Pervez said the cru-

elty and brutality of the Israeli Army unleashed on innocent Palestinians was a serious violation of modern principles. "International human rights organizations should take notice of the Israeli Army's aggression against Palestinians living in Palestine," Raja Pervez Ashraf said. The Parliament and people of Pakistan expressed full solidarity with the Palestinian people, he added.

He further mentioned that Pakistan would continue to provide diplomatic and moral support to the oppressed Palestinian people at all regional and international forums. The National Assembly Speaker also prayed for the elevation of the ranks of the martyrs and the speedy recovery of the injured and expressed heartfelt sympathy to the affected families. – APP

Citizens urged not to allow children to fly kites

RAWALPINDI: The District Administration and Rawalpindi District Police have urged the citizens not to allow their children to violate the kite flying ban imposed by the provincial government else strict action in accordance with the law would be taken and the ban violators would be sent behind the bars. According to a police spokesman, police rounded up 700 kite sellers and flyers during January and February and recovered over 25,000 kites with a large number of kite flying string rolls from their possession. He informed that Sadiqabad police on Thursday managed to unearth a kite factory and rounded up three, Mirza Tofeeq, Abdul Wahad and the factory owner on recovery of thousands of kites and raw material. He said Rawalpindi district police had adopted a zero-tolerance policy against kite sellers, flyers, aerial firing and strict action in accordance with the law was being taken against the violators. He said that Police had registered cases against the kite flying ban violators. – APP

POL import bill contracts by 9.27%

ISLAMABAD: The imports of the overall petroleum group contracted by 9.27 percent during the first seven months of the current fiscal year (2022-23) as compared to the corresponding period of the last year, the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) reported. The total imports of the petroleum group during July-January (2022-23) stood at \$10,611.740 million, as against the imports of \$11,696.009 million during the same period of last year, according to PBS data. Among petroleum commodities, the import of petroleum products declined by 14.73 percent, from \$5,734.241 million last year to \$4,889.800 million during the time period under review. Likewise, the imports of liquefied natural gas declined by 20.84 percent and dropped from \$2,769.741 million last year to \$2,192.489 million this year. – APP

HEC Launches Cohort III

DNA

ISLAMABAD/LAHORE: National Academy of Higher Education (NAHE), Higher Education Commission (HEC) has launched the third cohort of National Faculty Development Programme (NDFP) for newly inducted faculty members of higher education institutions (HEIs) at HEC Regional Centre Lahore. Twenty-three faculty members from public sector HEIs of Pakistan are attending the programme. NAHE has been organising NDFP since 2020 for the Interim Placement of Fresh PhDs (IPFP) applicants in online mode. However, in 2022, a programme was redesigned to face-to-face mode and was launched for the newly inducted faculty members.

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Biden's fight-to-the-end speech

Russia has suspended its participation in the New START nuclear arms reduction treaty with the United States, saying that Washington must create the conditions for the resumption of the full functioning of the Treaty and, accordingly, "comprehensively ensuring its viability". That Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergey Ryabkov told reporters on Wednesday that Moscow would reconsider its decision should the US stop its reckless anti-Russian campaign points to the reason why its move should not be taken as a show of weakness or bravado on Russia's part but rather a natural response to the campaign the US is waging against it through a proxy. Something that US President Joe Biden reinforced with his fight-to-the-end speech at the Royal Castle in Warsaw on Tuesday to mark the first anniversary of the conflict in Ukraine. The one year anniversary of the Ukraine conflict should have prompted serious consideration of how to put an end to the conflict rather than pouring oil on the fire. The stage setting for Biden's speech was an ugly parody of that for the "Tear down this wall" address then US president Ronald Reagan made at the Brandenburg Gate in Berlin, on June 12, 1987, which heralded the end of the Cold War, if not the era of a unipolar world. The comparison between the two speeches only testifies to how poorly the US has played its hand in the course of the time span between them. The poor judgment of successive US administrations has made a mockery of US Secretary of State Antony Blinken's claim that the US has been acting responsibly. That it has been acting to the contrary was highlighted by his admission that "we are posturing appropriately for the security of our own country and that of our allies". Even though the US is not being threatened and any perceived threats to its allies are a consequence of its own designs. With the US' intention of dragging down Russia at the cost of Ukrainian lives becoming more barefaced, there is no doubt that Europe is drifting further away from a lasting peace mechanism that it was trying to form on the continent. Something those wholeheartedly cheering Biden's speech in Warsaw on Tuesday night would never admit to, since no snowflake would ever feel responsible for an avalanche. But no matter how high Biden has enhanced his listeners' morale with his democracy-autocracy cliches, those in Warsaw and elsewhere that he was seeking to rally to the US' banner must beware the substantial changes to be brought about by the ball the Russian leader has kicked to their half of the court.

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Modi vs the media

Following the deadly sectarian riots in Gujarat in 2002 – in which more than 1,000 people, overwhelmingly Muslims, were killed – Narendra Modi, then the state's chief minister, was asked whether he would have done anything differently in retrospect: "The one area where I was very, very weak ... was how to handle the media," the now prime minister replied. Last week's multi-day raid on BBC offices in Delhi and Mumbai by tax authorities came just weeks after the government lambasted the corporation and blocked its documentary on his handling of the riots and treatment of the Muslim minority in India. The authorities say this is routine. But, as many in India have made clear, this looks more like retaliation than regular bureaucratic proceedings. A spokesman for the ruling Bharatiya Janata party took the opportunity to describe the BBC as the "most corrupt organisation in the world". Mr Modi's government has overseen a systematic and escalating crackdown on free media, dissent and civil society more generally, particularly where its aggressive majoritarianism has been challenged. Last year, human rights and press freedom groups warned that journalists have been baselessly charged under counter-terrorism and sedition laws and prevented from travelling abroad. Their targeting has emboldened Hindu nationalists to harass them online and in person. Indian companies and journalists are clearly at greatest risk. But the decision to take on the BBC is an indication of the BJP's growing confidence. Allegations that Mr Modi was complicit in 2002's violence are not new, though the documentary revealed that a British government document found him "directly responsible" for not stopping the killing of Muslims. Mr Modi, who has always denied any culpability, was cleared of all charges by a supreme court panel. By using emergency powers to block a programme never due to be aired in India, forcing social media companies to take down posts containing clips and links, and detaining students who planned screenings, officials merely fuelled the desire to watch it. Similarly, attacking the BBC does far more to discredit Delhi than the broadcaster. India is enjoying being courted by other nations as an economic giant and counterweight to China in Asia. This year, it will host the G20; there is talk of a White House visit for the man who was barred from entering the US after the riots. But its standing rests not only on its economic and geopolitical might, but also its democratic status – despite its erosion by Mr Modi. The contrast between the outspoken criticism from embattled voices in India and complacency from powerful leaders elsewhere, is glaring and disgraceful. David Cameron's government led the international rehabilitation of Mr Modi. That Mr Modi cares about his international reputation is evident from the attempts to silence critics.

Pakistan's economy won't stabilise' unless ruling elites give up privileges

Raza Rumi



Pakistan will have to focus on privatizing loss-making public sector enterprises that accumulated losses of more than Rs. 1 trillion each year. The time has also come to open up the subject of rationalizing the defense expenditure. Undertaking reforms and cutting down such wasteful expenditures requires a national policy agenda that has the buy-in of all political stakeholders, including the military. Big political players – the ruling PDM alliance and former PM Imran Khan – are desperate to incarcerate

Pakistan's economic crisis poses a great challenge for a coalition government struggling to keep the country afloat. The country's foreign exchange reserves lurk around \$3 billion, barely enough to finance 18 days of imports. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) is expected to sign off on yet another bailout package for Pakistan. This may provide temporary reprieve for the dollar starved economy, but with external debt piling up fast, and payment obligations of \$20 billion to be made by December 2023, it seems that even the IMF tranche would not substantially assuage concerns over Pakistan's balance of payments. The Parliament has approved a bill levying taxes and excise duties to meet the IMF condition of mobilizing an additional Rs 170 billion of additional tax revenues. The bulk of this revenue will come through the applicable sales tax rate, a type of an indirect tax, which has been increased from 17% to 18%. Concurrently, the government has also implemented a price hike in petroleum products, to contain the flow of runaway circular debt in the energy sector. Given constraints centered around debt, trade deficits and inflation, what appears to be a balance of payments crisis is in effect a crisis of governance. The rupee was already devalued to meet the IMF demand of leaving its valuation at the mercy of market forces. The net devaluation in recent months has been more than 30%, and this is proving to be a major driver of inflation which was recorded at 27.3% in January 2023, calculated year-on-year. The dollar value impacts transportation of goods and services, imports that the manufacturing sector relies upon, and necessities such as cooking oil and tea. Many of Pakistan's exported goods themselves use imported raw materials and, therefore, even a 1% devaluation has a multiplier effect. The country's exports, \$31 billion in FY 22, are not increasing, while its imports, \$80 billion in FY 22, are inelastic, thereby leading it into a perennial shortfall of foreign exchange and pushing it into a literal 'debt trap'.

With the exit of the United States from Afghanistan, and no immediate security imperative of the West, Pakistan's elites have been left high and dry, leaving those beneath them even worse-off. Given constraints centered around debt, trade deficits and inflation, what appears to be a balance of payments crisis is in effect a crisis of governance. Successive governments have failed to invest adequately in developing a skilled, healthy and educated workforce. Instead, they favored powerful groups and entrenched vested interests, and ensured that shady lobbies prospered at the expense of the taxpayer. Injections of aid from the developed world since the 1950s have helped maintain the status quo. The elites – particularly the military, the political class, large landowners and corporate industrialists – have ruled the country and have resisted reforms focused on restructuring of the taxation system, or investing in education, science and innovation, to create an export-led economy. With the exit of the United States from Afghanistan, and no immediate security imperative of the West, Pakistan's elites have been left high and dry, leaving those beneath them even worse-off. A 2021 study by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) cautiously estimated that the privileges and entitlements enjoyed by Pakistan's elite were worth more than \$17 billion per annum. This figure included benefits given out to real estate barons, the pampered industrial sector, and the military's corporate holdings, among others. The privileges they still enjoy today take the form of tax breaks, cheap input prices, higher output prices, or preferential access to capital, land, services, and even to some local markets. These privileges inevitably make the 'rules of the game' irrelevant, turning Pakistan into an unattractive destination for investment or innovation. The biggest recipient of state-financed privileges is the country's corporate sector, accruing an estimated \$4.7 billion per year. The second and third-biggest recipients of privileges were the country's richest 'one percent' – collectively owning 9%

of the country's total income – and the feudal land-owning class – composed of 1.1% of the total population, but owning 22% of all arable farmland. The rich landowning feudal class has always maintained a strong presence in Parliament. Most major political parties draw their candidates from a pool of 'electables' that usually hail from the feudal landowning elite classes. Control of land, capital, and caste networks are the usual determinants of victory in many democratic contests across Pakistan, especially in the rural areas. In addition to the state's financial support through a massive chunk of the budget, and tax breaks for military-affiliated commercial enterprises, privileges for the military also include preferential access to markets and land earmarked for residential or other development. Senior officers serving in the army in particular, and to some extent the air force and navy as well, accumulate immense perks and privileges as they rise up the chain of command. Military personnel also receive residential plots and commercial landholdings as benefits during service, in addition to pensions and cushy corporate jobs after retirement. As long as Pakistan's ruling classes are unwilling to give up a portion of their state-financed privileges – tax breaks, subsidies and concessions – the government's bloated yearly expenditures will not come down, resulting in a perennial budget deficit. For decades, the civil-military bureaucracy and the politicians who fronted for them have passed the burden of indirect taxes on to the general public. Truth be told, the IMF is not asking for anything radical; all it asks for is broadening the tax base and reducing the fiscal deficit. In the past, when faced with similar demands, the standard policy response by successive Pakistani governments has been to levy more indirect taxes and pass the burden onto the general public, particularly the poor and the fixed income groups. A recent news report that shocked many Pakistanis was how the Federal Board of Revenue had unilaterally decided to purchase 155 luxury vehicles, at a cost of over Rs. 1.6 billion, out of a World Bank loan meant to upgrade

its outdated information technology system. Provincial governments have placed orders for imported vehicles and even aircraft for bureaucrats and politicians. These are just a few examples in a long list of brazen expenditures that continue to divert public resources. For decades, the civil-military bureaucracy and the politicians who fronted for them have passed the burden of indirect taxes on to the general public. This strategy is quickly approaching its expiry date, as the political cost of transferring the burden onto the citizenry has become untenable for elected governments. The current ruling coalition is worried that rising inflation will erode its political capital and limit chances in the upcoming elections. And surely it will. The biggest recipient of state-financed privileges is the country's corporate sector, accruing an estimated \$4.7 billion per year. The second and third-biggest recipients of privileges were the country's richest 'one percent' and the feudal land-owning class. The antidotes to the current crises are well known: improving and expanding the tax system, mobilization of domestic and foreign investment which has been trapped below 15% of GDP, and fixing the energy sector that is a major source of the ballooning circular debt. Pakistan will have to focus on privatizing loss-making public sector enterprises that accumulated losses of more than Rs. 1 trillion each year. The time has also come to open up the subject of rationalizing the defense expenditure. Undertaking reforms and cutting down such wasteful expenditures requires a national policy agenda that has the buy-in of all political stakeholders, including the military. Big political players – the ruling PDM alliance and former PM Imran Khan – are desperate to incarcerate and politically eliminate each other. As the 1990s remind us, such intense political conflict does not lead to stability vital for a policy consensus. In the short-term, the ongoing intra-elite conflict is making matters worse. Given the rising inflation rates and deprivation, widespread social upheaval will be one of the inevitable consequences.

—Courtesy TFT

Overpopulation: Security-insecurity Paradox

Afnan Wasif

Above mentioned issues are disturbing. These all problems stem from population growth. Because we are creating such devastating problems through our own actions. And why we are doing so? Because existing limited resources make us unable to maneuver effectively in order to fulfill the needs of the masses. To overcome this problem, we are compelled to adopt artificial ways to increase our production. These ways in turn are degrading our planet immensely.

World is facing immense problems. There was a clear distinction between natural and man-made challenges faced by the world in the past. But in contemporary times, spheres of natural and man-made challenges are overlapping. One of the reasons for this overlapping is the sophistication of the world. All the challenges ranging from climate change to poverty, hunger, and lack of quality education, etc. revolve around one core issue and that is population. On 15 November 2022, the world's population reached 8 billion people, a milestone in human development. The world population is projected to reach 8.5 billion in 2030, and to increase further to 9.7 billion in 2050 and 10.4 billion by 2100. According to World Bank, the most recent number of individuals in Pakistan is 231 million. It was only 45 million in 1960. Scientists have predicted that Pakistan's population may peak at about 314 million in 2062. Why is the increase in population alarming? Human beings are dependent on natural resources. And natural resources are inversely proportional to population growth. With the passage of time, natural resources are continuously depleting. For example, the land for shelter is a natural resource. And how it is depleting could be seen on 14 February 2023, when AntónioGuterres, UN Secretary-General, remarked that Rising seas are sinking futures. Sea-level rise is not only a threat in itself. It is a threat multiplier. Rising seas threaten lives, and jeopardize access to water, shelter, food, and healthcare. The danger is especially acute for nearly 900 million people who live in coastal zones at low elevations –

that's one out of ten people on earth. According to NASA, Antarctica is losing an average of 150 billion tons of ice mass annually. The Greenland ice cap is melting even faster – losing 270 billion tons per year. Above mentioned issues are disturbing. These all problems stem from population growth. Because we are creating such devastating problems through our own actions. And why we are doing so? Because existing limited resources make us unable to maneuver effectively in order to fulfill the needs of the masses. To overcome this problem, we are compelled to adopt artificial ways to increase our production. These ways in turn are degrading our planet immensely. It is becoming a sort of Security-insecurity Paradox. Although this particular term is used in Strategic studies to understand the phenomenon of war stating that when two countries each have nuclear weapons, the probability of a direct war between them greatly decreases, but the probability of minor or indirect conflicts between them increases. It might be applied to the phenomenon of disproportion between population growth and limited natural resources. Securing the needs of individuals indirectly causes harm to our planet in the shape of climate change, sea level rise, and global warming, etc. In developing and underdeveloped countries the picture is different. They are even unable to go for man-made options to meet the requirements of their masses. For example, Pakistan is striving hard due to its economic crisis nowadays. One of the core problems of Pakistan's fragile economy is the population. Its economy and limited resources are unable to bear the burden of about 230 million people. It is de-

structing the social fabric and cohesion of society. As people are deprived of their basic needs. They have no access to quality education, health, food, water, and shelter. It cannot even afford sophisticated technology to boost its agricultural yield and place industries to increase the wealth pie of the nation. Industrialization and the use of technology in the agricultural sector have severe implications for the earth. The recent flash floods of 2022 in Pakistan are an example of the effects of carbon emissions from industries including agriculture. In fact, its contribution towards global warming is negligible. But we suffered a lot. Why because other nations are trying to fulfill the necessities of their masses by other means. Ensuring the security of the masses of developed nations makes insecurity for the nations like Pakistan. The entire struggle in both traditional and non-traditional paradigms of security revolves around the population. Developing and underdeveloped countries must have to think to control their population as China did from 1979 to 2016 by adopting the one-child policy. Awareness among young couples is far more necessary as could be seen in Chinese society. As now in China, couples could have three kids. But they are reluctant to bear new babies as the living costs are too high and most importantly upbringing becomes much more difficult. Such policies and awareness must be implemented and spread respectively, in order to prosper while effectively utilizing limited natural resources to meet the needs of the general masses.

The author is a student of Strategic Studies at National Defence University, Islamabad. He tweets at @afnanwasif

Briefs

British Chargé d’Affaires meets Ukraine Ambassador

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Chargé d’Affaires at the British High Commission Islamabad, Andrew Dalgleish and Defence Adviser, Brigadier Simon Waddington welcomed the Ambassador of Ukraine, Markiian Chuchuk and Defence Attaché, Colonel Serhii Dolenko ahead of the one-year anniversary of the Russian invasion of Ukraine. The two sides discussed the global impacts the war has had, including effects on Pakistan’s economy and food and energy requirements. Chargé d’Affaires at the British High Commission, Islamabad, Andrew Dalgleish, while reaffirming the UK’s strong commitment to help Ukraine win the war, said the following: “The UK and our international partners stand united in condemning Russia’s aggression against a free and democratic country, targeting of homes and human rights violations. Russia’s blatant violation of the UN Charter must not go unanswered, otherwise it opens the door for other states’ territorial integrity and sovereignty to be attacked. UK will continue to do everything possible to help Ukraine.” Ukrainian Ambassador, Markiian Chuchuk said the following: “Russia denies the legitimacy of Ukraine as a sovereign state and seeks to destroy Ukrainian statehood by waging a highly intensive war on Ukrainian territory, killing many civilians, including women and children. Peace will come only after Ukraine’s territorial integrity has been fully restored within its internationally recognized borders.”

Turkey steps up rebuilding plans as quake toll nears 50,000

ANTAKYA: Turkey has stepped up plans to house victims of the devastating earthquake which struck its border region with Syria, the interior minister said, as the combined death toll in the two countries crept towards 50,000. Suleyman Soylu said 313,000 tents had been erected, with 100,000 container homes to be installed in the disaster zone which stretches for hundreds of kilometres inland from the Turkish and Syrian border. The number of people killed in Turkey has risen to 43,556, Soylu said, while in Syria the death toll was close to 6,000. The United Nations said more than 4,500 were killed in Syria’s rebel-held northwest, and the Syrian government said 1,414 people died in the area under its control. Soylu said more than 600,000 apartments and 150,000 commercial premises had suffered at least moderate damage. – Agencies



ISLAMABAD: A 9-member United States Senate delegation led by Senator Charles Schumer, Senate Majority Leader, called on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif. – DNA

PM for enhancing Pak-US ties

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Thursday highlighting the significance of long-standing cooperation between Pakistan and the United States underscored the need to make this partnership diverse and multidimensional. He underlined that parliamentary exchanges between the two countries, as vibrant democracies, were vital to promoting understanding of each others’ perspectives at the political level. The prime minister expressed these views while welcoming a six-member U.S. Senate delegation from the Democratic Party, which led by Senate Majority Leader Senator Chuck Schumer called on him here. Other members of the delegation included Senators Maria Cantwell, Amy Klobuchar, Gary Peters, Catherine Cortez Masto, and Peter Welch. – APP

PTI leaders being treated as terrorists in jails: Khan

‘Jail Bharo Tehreek’ enters 2nd day in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

BUREAU REPORT

LAHORE: Former premier and Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) chief Imran Khan said that the PTI leaders and workers are being treated as terrorists in the jails who surrendered before the authorities during Jail Bharo Tehreek, media reported on Thursday. Imran Khan addressed the workers and supporters on the second day of the Jail Bharo Tehreek in which a large number of leaders and activists surrendered before the authorities to protest against the incumbent government. He said that those who presented themselves for arrests during Jail Bharo Tehreek are being kept with terrorists in the jails. The PTI chief said that they are political inmates which should be kept in a separate barrack. Khan criticised the government for sending the political prisoners of Jail Bharo Tehreek to jails in different cities. “Are you thinking that we will be afraid after these steps? Why people would come out of their homes in Peshawar if they are feared of their arrest? You will see people coming out in Rawalpindi tomorrow. If we do not adopt a peaceful way of protest, then the nation will be enraged and it will be disastrous.” Regarding previous arrests and detentions,

Police to keep PTI leaders in separate jails

LAHORE: The leaders of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) who volunteered their arrest in Lahore as part of the “Jail Bharo” movement would be detained in various cities. Sources said PTI’s Senior Vice President Shah Mahmood Qureshi had been sent to Attock, General Secretary Asad Umar and Murad Raas to DG Khan and Azam Swati had been sent to Rahim Yar Khan. Former home minister Omar Sarfraz Cheema will be detained at Bhakkar jail while Waleed Iqbal will be kept in Layyah jail. Sources said 10 party workers would be kept with each leader in a jail. Meanwhile, the Punjab Home Department has created space to keep 10,000 people in the jails if the PTI workers and party leaders presented themselves for the arrest. Sources said barracks had been cleared to accommodate the party leaders and workers. Furthermore, police sources said the arrested people could be detained for one month and would not be allowed to meet anyone. – DNA

Imran Khan said that Pervaiz Elahi’s secretary is missing so far and no one knows about his whereabouts. A close relative of Moonis Elahi was abducted and brutally tortured. He said that Pervaiz Elahi has been given the position of president in his honour after his inclusion in the PTI. He slammed the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) once again. Khan said that they had never seen this kind of election commission so far. He alleged that ECP formed an anti-PTI caretaker set-up. Khan said that PTI had forwarded the names of 23 government officers for stopping their deputations due to their alleged involvement in May 25 incident. He added that the commission had deputed all those officers despite PTI’s reservations. Khan further alleged that the caretaker set-up is being controlled by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, whereas, Maulana Fazlur Rehman’s instructions are being followed in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP). “Both caretaker set-ups are partial to target PTI. The caretaker set-up is doing everything except free and fair elections. If elections are delayed, then what will be the legal position of the caretaker set-up after 90 days?” He criticised the record of the Joint Investigation Team (JIT) regarding the Wazirabad gun attack has vanished. The PTI chief said that the current rulers are targeting the judiciary due to the fear of elections.

Oman opens airspace, joining KSA in Israeli corridor

WEB DESK

DUBAI: Oman’s Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) on Thursday said the Gulf Arab state’s airspace will be open for all civilian carriers, a move that would enable Israeli airlines to utilise a Saudi-Oman corridor to cut flight times to Asia. Saudi Arabia, which like Oman does not have formal ties with Israel, last summer said it would open its airspace to all air carriers, but Israeli officials had said the corridor could not be implemented until Oman consented. “Enforcing international and local requirements against discrimination in dealing with civilian aircraft, the Civil Aviation Authority confirms that the sultanate’s airspace is open to all carriers that meet the requirements of overflying,” the CAA said in a statement on Twitter.

Ukraine defends front, Putin talks up nuclear arsenal

KYIV: Ukraine said its forces had repelled Russian assaults along the length of the front line on Thursday on the eve of the war’s anniversary, as President Vladimir Putin, empty-handed after a bloody winter offensive, talked up Russia’s nuclear arsenal. After a series of strident speeches in the runup to the anniversary of his invasion, Putin announced plans on Thursday to deploy new Sarmat multi-warhead intercontinental ballistic missiles this year. Earlier this week he suspended Russia’s participation in the START nuclear arms control treaty. Russia would “pay increased attention to strengthening the nuclear triad,” Putin said in remarks released by the Kremlin, referring to nuclear missiles based on land, sea and in the air. Ukraine and its Western allies have brushed off the nuclear talk as a diversion from a failing Russian military campaign on the ground, a year after Putin launched the biggest land war in Europe since World War Two. The last weeks have seen Russia mount infantry assaults across frozen ground in battles described by both sides as the bloodiest of the war. At a Ukrainian tank park near Bakhmut, the small eastern city that has become Russia’s main target, constant explosions could be heard echoing in the distance. “If we give up Bakhmut, everything else will get even more complicated. We can’t give it up, under no circumstance. We will hold through,” Junior Sergeant Oleh Slavin, a tank operator, told Reuters. “We are in place for now and trying to get all the territory back.” Western officials said Russia had planned an offensive to capture new territory ahead of the anniversary, using hundreds of thousands of reservists conscripted in recent months to give Putin a victory to announce. – Agencies

Khetran sent on remand as woman found alive

DNA

QUETTA: A district and sessions court in Quetta on Thursday granted police’s crime branch a 10-day physical remand of Balochistan Minister for Construction and Communications Sardar Abdul Rehman Khetran for his alleged connection with the gruesome murder of three people whose bullet-riddled bodies were found in a well in the Barkhan district on Monday night. Initially, Khan Muhammad Marri, a resident of Kohlu, claimed that the deceased are his wife and two sons. He then went on the allege: “Five slaves are still in the possession of Sardar Abdul Rehman.” The triple murder saga took a dramatic twist, when a police surgeon, after the post-mortem examination of the bodies, revealed that one of the deceased was a 17 to 18-year-old female. She said that the deceased was raped and tortured before being shot dead. The medico-legal officer said that the autopsy finds that the girl was shot thrice in the head and her face and neck were mutilated with acid to hide her identity. She said that the girl may not be Giran Naz but her daughter. Moreover, the other two were also tortured before being killed, she added. Meanwhile, the suspect denied allegations of involvement in the gruesome murder of three people. Talking to Geo News, he claimed that he is a “peaceful and law-abiding person”. “Accusations of owning a private prison and the murder of three people is a conspiracy to damage my political reputation,” he added. The minister accused his own son was behind conspiracy. On Wednesday night, Levies personnel recovered Marri’s wife Giran Naz – who had been presumed dead – and their five children including a girl, allegedly abducted by Khetran.

BBC: DG tells staff to report without fear

WEB DESK

LONDON: The BBC will not be put off from reporting without fear or favour, its Director-General Tim Davie has said in an email to staff in India. It follows searches at BBC offices in Delhi and Mumbai by tax officials.

Mr Davie thanked staff for their courage and said nothing was more important than reporting impartially. The BBC, which is co-operating with the investigation, recently aired a documentary critical of Indian PM Narendra Modi. India’s government called it “hostile propaganda” and attempted to block it being aired domestically. Mr Davie said the BBC would help staff do their jobs effectively and safely. “Nothing is more important than our ability to report without fear or favour,” he said in the email. “Our duty to our audiences around world is to pursue the facts through independent and impartial journalism.”

‘Catastrophic’: Palestinians recount fatal Israeli raid

Israeli forces have killed 11 Palestinians in Nablus in one of the deadliest raids since the 2000-05 uprising

MONITORING DESK

RAMALLAH: At least 150 Israeli soldiers in dozens of armoured vehicles swooped on Nablus on Wednesday in what turned out to be one of the deadliest military raids in the occupied West Bank since the mass Palestinian uprising or Intifada of 2000-05. Within four hours, the Israeli army killed 11 Palestinians and injured more than 80 people with live ammunition – some of them critically. The raid comes barely a month after 10 Palestinians were killed in a similar raid in the Jenin refugee camp about 41km (25 miles) away. Jenin and Nablus, which have emerged as the centres of limited armed Palestinian resistance, have become the scenes of increased deadly Israeli attacks.

Among the victims of Wednesday’s raids were three elderly men – aged 72, 66 and 61 – and a 16-year-old boy, while hundreds of others suffered tear gas inhalation. “They were shooting left and right, at anyone – those who had and didn’t have weapons. I was standing 2 metres away from a guy, watching the events, and he was shot and injured right next to me,” Khaled Jamal, a 25-year-old resident, told Al Jazeera. “It was catastrophic. Everyone inside and outside the hospital was crying at the scene before our eyes – men, women, children. Even the people who were at the hospitals for check-ups were crying,” he continued. Israeli undercover forces entered the Old City of Nablus on foot at dawn on Wednesday dressed as religious Muslim men and veiled women and hid inside a mosque in the

al-Halabeh quarter next to a house where two Palestinian fighters were taking shelter. The Israeli soldiers remained hidden inside the mosque until the morning, during which dozens of other soldiers took positions in and around the house and the neighbourhood, including snipers on rooftops, according to local residents. The two fighters, Hossam Isleem, 24, and Mohammad Abdulghani (also known as Mohammad Jneidi), 23, who belonged to the Lions’ Den armed group in Nablus, refused to surrender. A few minutes later, Israeli forces attacked the house with rocket-propelled grenades and armed drones, killing the men, according to residents. The Israeli army claims that Isleem, along with two other fighters in Israeli detention, Osama Taweel and Kamal Joury, was be-

hind a shooting that killed an Israeli soldier near the illegal settlement of Shavei Shomron in October. Akram Saeed Antar, a resident of the al-Halabeh area where the targeted house was located, said Israeli soldiers were firing indiscriminately. “It was at least three hours of destruction, explosions, and live ammunition that targeted all the residents in the area,” Antar said. “They killed elderly people, children, on the streets.” “The resistance fighters had basic rifles, they cannot resist shells, missiles, and drones,” continued Antar. Amid the operation around the house, Israeli forces attacked large crowds of Palestinians in several busy locations across Nablus, with live ammunition and tear gas that contained pepper spray, including from drones, as widespread confrontations broke out with residents.

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