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Poisoning of students unforgiveable crime, says Khamenei

Detailed News On Page-0

Greek PM asks court to expedite rail crash cases

Detailed News On Page-07

Verstappen wins season-opening Bahrain GP

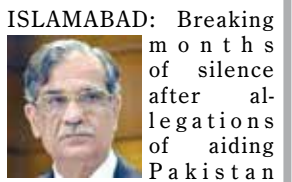
Detailed News On Page-06



Briefs

Fmr CJP Saqib Nisar breaks silence

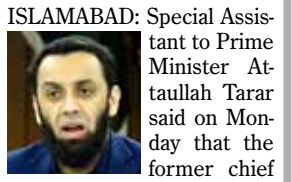
DNA



ISLAMABAD: Breaking months of silence after allegations of aiding Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Imran Khan, former chief justice Saqib Nisar Monday said that in his erstwhile court verdict, he did not "completely" declare ex-premier Sadiq and Amin (truthful and honest).

Saqib Nisar still playing facilitator

DNA



ISLAMABAD: Special Assistant to Prime Minister Attaullah Tarar said on Monday that the former chief justice Saqib Nisar was still playing a facilitating role for the former premier Imran Khan. Addressing a press conference here on Monday, Attaullah Tarar said the former CJ was calling the judges for the facilitation of Imran Khan while suggesting he should not get himself involved in the politics. He said that false cases were registered against the government of Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz in past.

TV actor Qavi passes away at 80

DNA



ISLAMABAD: Veteran film and television actor Qavi Khan has passed away in Canada. He was 80 years old. A recipient of the Pride of Performance award, the senior actor was staying with his children in Canada these days owing to his illness. He was said to be suffering from cancer, and was being treated in Canada. Qavi Khan was one of the first actors of Pakistan Television Corporation when it was launched in 1964 with its drama Nazrana.

PTI chief to be arrested upon court appearance

Mariyum says Khan hiding behind women and children to avoid arrest

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

ISLAMABAD: Federal Information Minister Mariyum Aurangzeb has lashed out at PTI Chairman Imran Khan who dodged police on Sunday to avoid his arrest, claiming that the day, he will appear before the court, he will be arrested. Mariyum Aurangzeb said that 'a foreign-funded agent, a Toshakhana gifts thief' was acting like a jackal and hiding behind women and children to avoid arrest for his crimes. Addressing the media persons here, she said when the police contingent left, the cowardly Imran Khan came out and started bragging and abusing the institutions. Castigating, Imran Khan, she said this person had held the law and constitution of Pakistan as a hostage. The minister observed that despite all his actions, he was being treated by the justice system leniently. She said it was clear to everyone that the louder, he would scream, the sooner he would get relief. Mariyum Aurangzeb said Imran was aware that if he would attack, bully and threaten the Judiciary, he would get bail. Criticizing Imran for his constant refusal to appear in courts,

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Kh Asif opposes Imran arrest

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: PML-N senior leader and Defence Minister Khawaja Asif has said that it would be better to let PTI chief Imran Khan flee than to arrest him. Talking to the media men in Islamabad on Monday, Khawaja Asif said "The whole nation witnessed the other day what a coward Imran Khan is. He was hiding like a mouse." "Look at their double standards, ShibliFaraz said Imran Khan was not at his Zaman Park in Lahore but after some time he made an address from the same place," the minister recalled. Asif said the government would benefit from Imran Khan's cowardice. Responding to a question, the PML-N leader said minor difference of opinion in a coalition government is a routing. "The PPP has always sided with the allies," he added.

Public rally in Lahore on Wednesday Banning live telecast a clear fascism: PTI Imran Khan moves LHC against Pemra's ban on broadcast of his speeches

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leadership came down hard on the fascist government for imposing ban on airing speeches of PTI Chairman and registering another two FIRs against him and vowed that these brutal tactics would not work because he was the leader of the 220 million people who loved him immensely. PTI Vice Chairman Shah Mehmood Qureshi, PTI Senior Vice President Fawad Chaudhry and PTI Central Secretary Information Farukh Habib on Monday declared that the cabal of crooks could not achieve their nefarious designs through such fascist tactics, as the PTI and Imran Khan's popularity were increasing with each passing day. They said that the imported government was looking to escape the elections because the gang of thieves were cognizant of the fact that they would face a humiliating drubbing at the hands of PTI since the real electoral contest would be between PTI and independent candidates who could not secure PTI's tickets in the forthcoming elections. In his strong reaction, Qureshi said that the fascist group occupying Islamabad once again resorted to silence the voice of Chairman Imran Khan through PEMRA.

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Court dismisses Khan's appeal

DNA

ISLAMABAD: A district and sessions court of Islamabad on Monday rejected Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) chief Imran Khan's plea seeking the suspension of the non-bailable arrest warrant issued for him in the Toshakhana case. Additional Session judge Zafar Iqbal announced the verdict he had reserved earlier in the day after a brief hearing of the case. During today's hearing, Khan's lawyers Ali Bukhari, Qaiser Imam and Gohar Ali Khan appeared before the court. Bukhari contended that his client has always followed court orders. While Imam argued that if Imran Khan is willing to appear then the police cannot arrest him. At this, the judge remarked that the PTI chief could have approached the Islamabad High Court for the suspension of the warrant. However, Imam told the judge that they want the sessions court to suspend warrant. While Bukhari added that PTI chief was at his Zaman Park residence in Lahore.



ISLAMABAD: Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Hina Rabbani Khar holds a meeting with her German counterpart Dr Tobias Lindner here on Monday. - DNA

ECP officials summoned for KP election date

The apex court had ruled for elections in KP and Punjab

SHAMIM SHAHID

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Governor Haji Ghulam Ali Monday summoned officials from the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) to initiate an "active and meaningful consultative process" regarding the date for the elections in the province - following Supreme Court's verdict on polls. The governor, in a letter written to the ECP, has summoned the officials on March 6 or March 7. The letter has been written in response to a letter sent by the commission for the announcement of the election date.

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9 security men martyred in Bolan blast

Interior Minister vows to bring culprits to justice

STAFF REPORT

QUETTA: In yet another terror incident, at least nine personnel of the Balochistan Constabulary were martyred while nine others sustained injuries in a bomb attack in Bolan, SSP Kachhi Mahmood Notezai told media on Monday. According to the police, the blast occurred near the Kambri bridge area of Bolan and the injured are being shifted to Divisional Headquarters Hospital. Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) of Kachhi, Mahmood Notezai, said that the preliminary evidence suggests it was a suicide attack, however, the exact nature of the blast could be ascertained after the investigation. He said that a bomb disposal team reached the site of the incident and the area is being searched after the explosion. The police said that three of the injured are in critical condition and are being shifted to the Combined Military Hospital (CMH) in Sibi.

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President, PM vow to eradicate terrorism

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi and Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Monday expressed their resolve to free the country from the menace of terrorism. In their separate statements, both strongly condemned the suicide attack on the personnel of the Balochistan Constabulary in Sibi that led to their martyrdom. President Alvi said terrorists would not be successful in carrying out their nefarious agenda. PM Sharif said terrorism in Balochistan was part of the nefarious designs to create instability in the country. The president and the prime minister paid tribute to the valour of martyred troops.

Joe Biden reelection bid faces resistance

NEWS DESK

LACONIA: Steve Shurtleff was at Joe Biden's side in 2019 when he filed papers in the New Hampshire State House to run for president. He repeatedly trekked across the state with Biden to court primary voters. And when Biden ultimately won the presidency, it was Shurtleff, then the Democratic state House speaker,

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Staff-level deal with IMF likely next week

'Positive signs from the IMF have minimized the risk of Pakistan's default'

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan is likely to sign a staff-level agreement with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) next week, as the fund is satisfied with Islamabad's efforts to meet the commitments for the revival of the stalled loan programme, media reported, citing sources. The sources privy to the development have declared the development as a positive sign for the revival of the stalled loan programme after the 9th review as the IMF has appreciated Islamabad's efforts. Furthermore, the IMF is seen as confident with the commitments of the State Bank Governor Jameel Ahmed. The international lender has given the signal for the staff-level agreement with Pakistan, which is likely to be signed next week. It may be noted that the IMF was assured of the targets set in MEFP four times and the last condition of betterment in the foreign reserves was met with the rollover of Chinese loan, the sources said. The sources further added that the positive signs from the IMF have minimized the risk of Pakistan's default. Prior to the development, the agreement was expected to be signed on February 9 and later the finance minister Ishaq Dar claimed the signing of the agreement on February 14. - DNA

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Pakistan committed to Doha Plan of Action

Shehbaz says partnerships of LDCs with developed nations crucial for global prosperity

NEWS DESK

DOHA: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Monday said Pakistan was committed to implementing Doha Programme of Action considering it as an opportunity to accelerate sustainable prosperity in the least developed countries. Addressing the fifth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries (LDC5) in Qatar's capital Doha, the prime minister said partnerships of LDCs with developed nations, as well as the private sector and civil society, was significant for global prosperity. PM Sharif emphasized exploring the opportunity to ensure sustainable development in the places where international assistance was needed the most. He called upon the international community to join hands in tapping the full potential of the LDCs helping them make progress on the road to prosperity. He said the LDCs needed major investments in health, education and social protection systems, adding that vast



resources were required to fully implement Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The prime minister highlighted that many of the LDCs were already in or at risk of debt distress. Left unchecked, he said, economic distress and vaccine inequity would make recoveries longer and more painful than necessary. He said Pakistan was committed to safe and effective vaccines and allocation of resources for LDCs. He pointed out that it was a matter of great concern that six LDCs had been classified as under extreme burden and added that the needy nations required a system of social protection.

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Rabbani says no difference between PTI, Shehbaz govt

'The PPP is seemingly at crossheads with the Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM)-led government over governance and economic issues'

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Senator Raza Rabbani Monday likened the incumbent government to the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) regime, which the sitting rulers had vehemently opposed. According to an official statement, the former Senate chairman - whose party is in the ruling alliance - said: "It seems be it the PTI or present governments want azadi [freedom] from Parliament and the Constitution, 1973." The PPP is seemingly

at crossheads with the Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM)-led government over governance and economic issues as the country sees historic inflation and reels from the damage caused by cataclysmic floods. In light of ongoing issues, Rabbani has sought clarifications from

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Belarus to hold national exposition in Karachi on 10th

This B2B event will provide an opportunity to conduct direct negotiations between Belarusian and Pakistani businessmen

ISLAMABAD: Belarus is national exposition on the International trade & industry Fair from March 10 to 12 to be held in Expo Center Karachi. Belarus will be represented by two national booths under a single brand 'Made in Belarus'.

Chemistry, Physical-Technical Institute, Institute for Meat and Dairy Industry, Belarusian Institute for System Analysis, as well as representative of universities (Belarusian State University, Belarusian National technical University, Belarusian State Technological University).

and Pakistani businessmen. The Belarusian delegates are planning to meet potential Pakistani partners from FPCCI and other regional chambers of commerce and industry, as well as representatives of the Pakistan Business Council, the Council on Scientific and Industrial Research, Sindh Engro Coal Mining Company, associations of chemicals and carpets manufacturers, iron&steel, yarn and tires merchants.



ISLAMABAD: Maj. Gen. (Retd) Nadir Khan, Amb-designate to Ukraine called on Minister of State Hina Rabbani Khar.—DNA

Hindu community celebrates holi festival

SUKKUR: The Hindu community of Sukkur, Khairpur, Ghotki, Jaccabad, Kashmore-Kandhkot, Shikarpur and other districts of northern Sindh are celebrating the annual religious festival of Holi here on Monday. Community members are spraying red, yellow and silver powder on each other, as the Holi is regarded as the beginning of the spring season.

Next mayor of Karachi will belong to PPP as single largest party

Ghani, who is also PPP Karachi Division President, said that PPP had secured 84 seats in the city while Jamaat-e-Islami had clinched 82 UCs

ISLAMABAD: Sindh Labour and Human Resources Minister, Saeed Ghani, has said that an attempt is being made under a conspiracy to make the recent local government elections in Karachi controversial. Talking to media persons here outside the Election Commission of Pakistan head office on Monday, Ghani said that the Pakistan People's Party had emerged as the single largest party in Karachi in the latest local government polls as the next mayor of the city would belong to the PPP.

said the ECP had decided to itself conduct the hearing of the cases of these six UCs. Ghani informed media persons that local government elections in Karachi held on January 15 were the most transparent and fair polls in the history of the city. He said that not a single bullet was fired anywhere whereas no death was reported due to any violent incident during the polling in Karachi.

Murree hotel owners asked to get registration within 15 days

RAWALPINDI: The Punjab Tourism Department on Monday asked the hotel owners of district Murree to obtain registration with the department within 15 days. During a meeting with the Murree Expressway and Patraria area hotel owners, Assistant Director of Operations Punjab Tourism Syed Khurram Hasan and field supervisor Zahid Iqbal told the owners of hotels and restaurants that registration and licensing were necessary with the Department of Tourist Services.

Mid-career foreign diplomats visit SCCI

SIALKOT: The Mid-Career Foreign Diplomats from nine countries on Monday extended their full support and cooperation to Sialkot exporters for promotion of their bilateral trade and ensuring the direct easy access of Sialkot-made products to these countries. They visited the several leading industrial units in Sialkot, amid tight security here on Monday.

that inheritance of skilled craftsmanship in manufacturing surgical instruments from a history spanning over a century enabled us to manufacture premium quality surgical instruments which were exported to over 140 countries around the world. "I am pleased to share the guests that in addition to achieving business excellence, we have also done exceptional work in Social Sector Development and the welfare of the people through projects including Sialkot International Airport, Sialkot Dry port Trust, Sialkot City Development Program, Sialkot Export Processing Zone, Sialkot Business and Commerce Center, Sialkot Tannery Zone, and AirSial, he added.

Chief Collector Customs honors Director PAJCCI with award

BUREAU REPORT PESHAWAR: Chief Collector Customs Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Muhammad Saleem has honored Director Pak-Afghan Joint Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PAJCCI), Zia-ul-Haq Sarhadi with award for effective projection of problems faced by business community of the province. The award was conferred to Zia-ul-Haq Sarhadi during a meeting with chief Collector Customs at his office, says a press release issued here on Monday.

Before offering award, Chief Collector Customs highly appreciated services of Zia-ul-Haq Sarhadi for highlighting the problems being faced by business community especially those associated with Pak-Afghan trade. The business community of KP and officials of relevant government departments have great regard for services rendered by Zia-ul-Haq Sarhadi for promotion of trade between Pakistan and Afghanistan, Muhammad Saleem remarked.

cause of promotion of commercial activities in the region. He plays an effective role in highlighting of different problems through contacting high ups of different departments besides issuing press statements in this regard. His services for establishment of Azakhel Dry Port and for making it promotional are acknowledged and appreciated by office bearers of different trade bodies.



ISLAMABAD: Saudi Ambassador to Pakistan Nawaf bin Saeed Al-Malki meets Chairman Senate, Sadiq Sanjrani.—DNA

PMA holds two-day annual conference

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Medical Association (PMA) has arranged its two-day annual conference which was attended by medical practitioners from across the country. Addressing the event, Speaker National Assembly Raja Pervez Ashraf said that the sacrifices rendered by healthcare professionals, especially during COVID-19 are unmatched. He paid tribute to the doctor community for their commitment and dedication to providing a health care system to the common people in Pakistan. He also applauded the role of the Pakistani Medical Association to support health professionals. While talking about the restoration of PMDC, he said that the objective behind the restoration of PMDC was to support the doctors' community and to acknowledge their pivotal role in providing health care to common people. "Our doctor community is our pride because of their professionalism and commitment." The speaker said that wherever and whenever he visited any foreign land he always gets compliments about the Pakistani doctors. Parliamentary Secretary for Climate Change Naz Baloch said that PMA's role is important in raising the issues of the doctors' community and for making improvements in policies to strengthen patient care services across the country.—APP

A grid of 12 public notices for succession certificates, each containing details of the deceased, heirs, and application information.

Petition seeking non fixation of case before justice Naqvi filed

The petitioner has requested that reference filed against Justice Naqvi be fixed for hearing early and no case be fixed for hearing before Justice Naqvi till the decision of this reference. Justice Naqvi be not included in any bench till the decision of the reference

ISLAMABAD: A new petition has been filed by advocate Mian Dawood in Supreme Judicial Council (SJC) praying that reference filed by him against Justice Mazahir Ali Naqvi be heard early besides separating Justice Naqvi from court matters. The petitioner has already filed reference against Justice Mazahir Ali Naqvi.

already pending hearing in SJC against Justice Mazahir Ali Naqvi. We came to know from the cause list issued for the current week that Justice Naqvi is still hearing the cases. Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) has included in the bench with him. CJP has made Justice Mazahir Naqvi head of a separate bench too. Voices are being raised all over the country for accountability of Justice Naqvi. Including Justice

Naqvi by CJP in the benches is violation of norms of justice. Due to this step by the CJP message was given to the people that Justice Naqvi is being backed. Fixing cases for hearing before Justice Naqvi runs contrary to the principles of justice. He said that such steps from CJP will raise question on the credibility of the decisions of cases pending hearing with Justice Naqvi. The decisions of the bench will be considered suspi-

cious of which Justice Naqvi will be a member. The prestige of the judiciary was further hurt in the eyes of people due to this decision of CJP. The petitioner has requested that reference filed against Justice Naqvi be fixed for hearing early and no case be fixed for hearing before Justice Naqvi till the decision of this reference. Justice Naqvi be not included in any bench till the decision of the reference.—Online

Briefs

Railways earns Rs28 bln in six months despite flood devastation

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Railways has earned significant revenue of Rs 28.263 billion during the last six months from July to December 2022 from its regular operations despite closures of train operations during flood devastation.

"The expenditure in the same period was Rs. 52.990 billion, out of the total expenditure, whereas 35 percent of it was related to pensions and 33 percent to salaries of the department," said an official document available with APP.

In the same period, July-December, 2022, Pakistan Railways received a subsidy of Rs. 21.750 billion as a grant in aid from the federal government. However, the net deficit for the period July-December was Rs. 2.977 billion, it said.

Pakistan Railways is trying its level best to transform itself into a profitable organization despite financial constraints. The department in this regard has developed a two-pronged action plan that included concentration on core activities and emphasis on revenue generation through non-core activities. Pakistan Railways has been serving the nation since independence. There have been decades of neglect when it comes to investment in railway infrastructure and rolling stock. This neglect has adversely impacted the financial need of the department.—APP

CTP providing 24/7 licensing services

RAWALPINDI: The City Traffic Police (CTP) on the directives of Deputy Inspector General (DIG) Traffic were utilizing all available resources to provide 24/7 licensing services to citizens. City Traffic Officer (CTO) Rawalpindi, Tamoor Khan during a surprise visit to the Driving License Branch of CTP Headquarters here on Monday informed that CTP had introduced a 24-hour driving license service to facilitate the citizens.

Special arrangements were made at CTP headquarters to provide round the clock driving license facilities to the public. He said that CTP were also making efforts for the provision of other related services and facilities to the public.—APP

PTDC to showcase Pakistan's tourism potential

ISLAMABAD, Mar 6 (APP):Pakistan is all set to showcase its rich tourism potential in the three-day mega tourism event titled "ITB Berlin 2023", to be held from March 07-09 at Berlin Expo Center City, Germany.

Pakistan Tourism Development Cooperation (PTDC) along with other provincial and regional partners will showcase Pakistan's rich tourism potential in the event. According to the PTDC official, ITB (Internationale Tourismus-Börse) Berlin is the world's largest tourism trade fair held every year in Berlin which is expected to be attended by over 10,000 exhibitors and 160,000 visitors. The tourism boards, tourism departments tour operators, travel agents, hotels, system suppliers, airlines and car rentals agencies from more than 180 countries are among the companies that will be present at the event as exhibitors. Participation of Pakistan in this International Tourism Exhibition can help create a soft image of the country internationally and enhance the Business to Business (B2B) and Government to Government (G2G) linkages in the tourism and hospitality sector of Pakistan and Germany. "The event will provide an opportunity to showcase the great potential of Pakistan's tourism industry and create linkages with the leading international players of the tourism industry which will greatly help attract more tourists", the official added.—APP



ISLAMABAD: A view of tree which cause allergy, the pollen count in the capital has increased manifold which causes problems for the people sensitive to pollen, in Federal Capital. Online

Govt expenditures stand at Rs 203.11 bn under PSDP

The government also authorized the utilization of Rs 3.3 billion for the Climate Change Division out of which only Rs 854 million have been spent during the period under review

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Federal Government has spent Rs 203.11 billion under the Public Sector Development Programme (PSDP) 2022-23 in the first seven months of the current fiscal year.

The government, however, has authorized the utilisation of development funds amounting to Rs 371.88 billion out of a total allocation of Rs 727 billion for various ongoing and new social sector uplift projects of the federal ministries and division in the first seven months (July-January) of the fiscal year 2022-23 under

its Public Sector Development Programme (PSDP). According to the disbursement mechanism of the Planning Division, the development funds allocated in the federal budget are released at the rate of 20% in the first quarter (July-September), followed by 30% each in the second and third quarters, and the remaining 20% in the last quarter (April-June) of a fiscal year. The government also authorized/disbursed Rs225 million for the Earthquake Reconstruction and Rehabilitation Authority (ERRA) out of which Rs 207 million have been spent so far, according to the latest data re-

leased by the Ministry of Planning, Development, and Reform. The detail shows that Rs 95.1 billion out of a total allocated amount of Rs 160.2 billion have been disbursed to corporations while Rs 276.6 billion have been disbursed to the federal ministries out of a total allocation of Rs 563.3 billion. For National Highway Authority (NHA), the government has disbursed Rs 46.5 billion out of a total allocation of Rs 117.2 billion, whereas for NTDC/PEPCO, the government has disbursed Rs 48.6 billion. The federal government has also disbursed/authorized

Rs 87 billion out of a total allocation of Rs 87.01 billion for various development projects of the cabinet division, however, only Rs 30.7 billion have been spent on the development projects of the cabinet division so far. Similarly, the data shows that Rs 2.47 billion have been disbursed to Aviation Division, and Rs 282 million have been disbursed to the Board of Investment.

The government also authorized the utilization of Rs 3.3 billion for the Climate Change Division out of which only Rs 854 million have been spent during the period under re-

view. For Higher Education Commission (HEC), the government has authorized the release of Rs 18.4 billion, and Rs 41.8 billion for provinces and special areas, Rs 550.6 million for the Commerce Division, Rs 63 million for the Communication Division (other than NHA), and Rs 1.35 billion for Defense Division. Likewise, the government also disbursed Rs 511 million to Finance Division, Rs 710 million to Establishment Division, Rs 2.4 billion to Federal Education and Professional Training Division, and Rs 14.2 billion to Housing and Works Division.

Over 332 fatalities in road accidents

ISLAMABAD: The most populous province of the country, Punjab witnessed a staggering number of accidents in February, resulting in 332 fatalities and over 7,000 serious injuries. Talking to APP here on Monday an official of Rescue 1122 said that rescue services provided aid in 31,487,001 accidents across Punjab last month. "Among the reported accidents, 7,016 individuals suffered severe injuries, and 332 people lost their lives"

he added. He said that the highest number of accidents occurred in Lahore, with a total of 7,193 incidents, followed by Faisalabad with 2,439 and Multan with 2,098 incidents. He said that of the 33,590 injured individuals, 27,278 were men, and 6,312 were women. He highlighted that motorcycles were involved in 27,261 accidents, rickshaws in 2,294, and cars in 3,590 accidents. In Lahore alone, he said

that rescue services provided aid in 7,193 accidents, and 1,276 individuals suffered serious injuries, with 23 fatalities. He said that emergency rescue services were provided to 6,112 men and 1,245 women involved in accidents in the provincial capital. He suggested that capping the speed limit of bikes at 60 kilometers per hour could potentially reduce road traffic crashes in Punjab. The official emphasized the need to promote

electric bikes, which are not only environmentally friendly but also have lower speed limits. The official stated that limiting the speed of bikes could help prevent accidents and save countless lives. He also called on citizens to take precautions while driving and consider the importance of following traffic laws, wearing seat belts, and using helmets while riding motorcycles.—APP

Sanjrani mourns legendary actor Qavi Khan's demise

ISLAMABAD: Senate Chairman Muhammad Sadiq Sanjrani has expressed his deep sorrow and grief over the loss of renowned film, TV and radio actor legendry Qavi Khan, who left us for his heavenly abode last day. In his condolence message, Chairman paid glowing tribute to Qavi Khan's contributions to the world of entertainment. "The vacuum created by Qavi Khan's death will not fill till last," he said, adding that his outstanding services in the showbiz industry will always be remembered. In this hour of sorrow, Sanjrani said, the bereaved family is being granted prayers and strength to bear this shock with courage and patience. May Allah forgive and elevate the deceased, and grant him a place in Jannah. Senate Deputy Chairman Mirza Muhammad Afridi, Leader of the House Senator Ishaq Dar, and Leader of the Opposition Senator Dr Shahzad Wasim also expressed their condolences and sorrow over Qavi Khan's passing.

Three-day Islamabad Taste festival concludes

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Taste, the capital's signature food festival with its Spring edition, concluded here late Sunday at F-9 park after attracting crowds of families and visitors. To support the culinary and music industry, the festival was presented by the Imarat Group of Companies. The event featured over 80 eateries, a music arena, various artist performances and amusement activities, with the aim to give people a break from their usual daily routine and spend time in quality recreational activities. According to the organisers, the signature food festival, been held since 2019 nationwide, was supporting the culinary and music industry of Pakistan. Islamabad Taste Fest was back with Spring Edition on the 3rd, 4th and 5th of March featuring eateries, music madness and a festive celebration of hospitality and the culinary industry. During the festival, musical performances, live performances/concerts of trending and popular musicians/singers, including Young Stunners, Farhan Saeed, Rdb Manj, Nehal Naseem, Raamis, Shamon Ismail, Waqar Ehsin, Falak Shabbir mesmerised the attendees from the twin cities. "Such events are an opportunity to introduce new tastes and enjoy the authentic traditional tastes in a cultural and festive environment as we get crowds of food lovers during this festival while musical performances add more colour to the festivities of live food," said a stall holder in the festival.—APP

Women entrepreneurship show concludes

ISLAMABAD: 'Her Hunar', an exhibition of eye-catching products to celebrate women's entrepreneurship concluded here late Sunday at Pak China Friendship Center after attracting a large number of visitors including families. Organized by the Trade Development Authority of Pakistan (TDAP), during the 2-day event, women entre-

preneurs from Northern Areas, Azad Jammu and Kashmir, Gilgit Baltistan, Chitral, Swat, and Rawalpindi Islamabad exhibited a range of high-quality and unique products. Besides handicraft products representing Pakistan, sideline activities of the event included live cultural performances, seminars, a

kids arena, and a food court featuring traditional cuisines from Gilgit Baltistan, Chitral, Swat, etc. According to the organizers, Her Hunar was more than just an exhibition tapping the potential of women entrepreneurs. It offered exciting sideline activities for people of all ages to enjoy and make memories.—

Pak-China coop to upgrade Pakistan's steel industry

DNA

ISLAMABAD: China can transfer its technology and equipment to Pakistan to promote the upgrading of Pakistan's steel industry," said Li Sheng, General Manager of the Pakistani Branch of China First Metallurgical Group Co., Ltd. in an interview with Gwadar Pro. Li added, "with China's transfer of technology and equipment, Pakistan's steel industry can be more concentrated and more environmentally friendly, because it can make better use of the existing low-quality mineral resources." The output of the steel industry in Pakistan is far from enough to meet the needs of its domestic market. According to Steel Statistical Yearbook, 2020 and data from World Steel Association, Pakistan's domestic demand for steel and iron averages 7.3 million tons per year, while its annual production is only 3.8 million tons. To narrow the demand-supply gap, Pakistan has been importing from different countries, incurring excessive costs. The poor quality



of Pakistan's mineral resources is one of the main reasons for its dependence on steel imports. Meanwhile, the mineral resources are relatively concentrated in Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa where the situation is relatively complicated, making it difficult to well exploit the mineral resources. While on the face of it, Pakistan's steel industry is relatively backward, the overall potential for development is huge. Li Sheng analyzed, "in the upstream, its domestic mineral resources are rich and coal and iron ore reserves are huge; in the downstream, Pakistan's real estate and construction services industry is developing rapidly, and the steel demand is increasing, which is very conducive to the develop-

ment of the industry." Pakistan has a mountainous terrain covering more than 60% of the country. Historically frequent geological activities have generated a large number of mineral resources. According to Li's research, Pakistani iron ore is stored across the country, mainly in Punjab and Balochistan, with proven mining reserves of about 950 million tons. Highlighting that the steel industry is the backbone of Pakistan's development and contributes 5% to the national economy, Wajid Bukhari, Secretary General of Pakistan Association of Large Steel Producers (PAL-SP) told Gwadar Pro that over 20 major steel industrial units were struggling towards diversification. It is essential to improve the steel competitiveness of Pakistan at the root level.

PNCA to highlight women issues through art tomorrow

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan National Council of the Arts (PNCA) is all set to unveil a fantastic new solo exhibition "Art from the Heart", by Naela Chohan who uses the medium of visual arts to counter narratives against Islam, Pakistan and women in general by Muslim women in particular here on March 7. Ms. Chohan is one of the Pakistani women artist who has dedicated themselves to gender inequality issues. The artist is deeply inspired by Mrs. Samina Alvi, First lady of Pakistan's commitment to creating awareness about Breast cancer which is a serious global issue, therefore Ms. Chohan intends to have one of her painting on the particular issue auctioned with all the proceedings from the auction going towards charity. The show will be open for general public from 7th March and will continue till 9th March, at National Art Gallery of PNCA. PNCA is dedicated to promote Pakistani Art on local and international scale. Our elevate and unique programs that present the traditional and contemporary art practices we reflect upon the excellence and cultural diversity of Pakistan as well as support professional development of the artist, said the organizers.—APP

IRSA releases 96,400 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD: Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Monday released 96,400 cusecs water from various rim stations with an inflow of 56,700 cusecs.

According to the data released by IRSA, the water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1447.13 feet and was 49.13 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam were recorded as 21,400 cusecs while outflow as 55,000 cusecs.

The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1105.60 feet, which was 55.60 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water were recorded 18,900 cusecs and 25,000 cusecs respectively.

The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded 62,000, 39,800, 34,100 and 10,200 cusecs respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 8,100 cusecs of water was released at Nowshera and 3,000 cusecs released from River Chenab at Marala.—APP

Half of world on track to be overweight by 2035

ISLAMABAD: More than half the world's population will be classed as obese or overweight by 2035 if action is not taken, the World Obesity Federation warns.

More than four billion people will be affected, with rates rising fastest among children, its report says. Low or middle-income countries in Africa and Asia are expected to see the greatest rises.

The report predicts the cost of obesity will amount to more than \$4tn (£3.3tn) annually by 2035.

The president of the federation, Prof Louise Baur, described the report's findings as a clear warning to countries to act now or risk repercussions in the future. The report in particular highlights the rising rates of obesity among children

and teenagers, with rates expected to double from 2020 levels among both boys and girls. Prof Baur said the trend was "particularly worrying", adding that "governments and policymakers around the world need to do all they can to avoid passing health, social, and economic costs on to the younger generation" by assessing "the systems and root factors" that contribute to obesity. The effects of obesity's prevalence on lower-income countries is also highlighted in the report. Nine of the 10 countries with the greatest expected increases in obesity globally are low or lower-middle income states in Africa and Asia.

Reasons include trends in dietary preferences towards more highly processed foods, greater levels of sedentary behaviour, weaker policies to control food supply and marketing, and less well-resourced healthcare services to assist in weight management and health education. Lower-income countries are "often the least able to respond to obesity and its consequences". The findings estimate that rises in obesity rates around the world will have a significant impact on the global economy, equating to 3% of global Gross Domestic Product. The report emphasises that its acknowledgement of the economic impact of obesity "is in no way a reflection of blame on people living with obesity". The data published in the report will be presented to the UN on Monday.

Obese is a medical term used to describe a person with a high excess of body fat. The report uses body mass index (BMI) to make its assessments. BMI is calculated by dividing an adult's weight by the square of their height.—Online

Quad setting itself up as core of divisive 'Asian NATO'

The Quad Foreign Ministers' Meeting held in New Delhi followed hard on the heels of the G20 Foreign Ministers' Meeting in the same city. Knowing that a small closed-door colloquy would be done after their big party dispersed, the rest of the G20 members should have been aware beforehand that their meeting was only a warm-up for the real guests of New Delhi.

A hanger-on of the United States, a partner with Russia and a neighbor with China, India, after contributing the observation "global governance has failed" in the G20 meeting, is doing a poor job in balancing its relations with the three.

The host did little to prevent the US from downgrading the G20 meeting into a Russia-bashing farce, and the joint statement issued after the Quad gathering was full of veiled attacks on China. Indeed, the Quad meeting shows that a NATO-style gang is being formed in the Asia-Pacific with the four as a geopolitical tool of Washington, a means-to-end for Japan, hedging-its-bets for a speculative India and an OK-I-am-in Australia, which doesn't want to be left out of anything led by the US.

In the joint statement, the bloc went to great lengths to sugarcoat its spearhead targeting China, by highlighting humanitarian aid as a key part of its agenda, as if the endless humanitarian crises the US has brought to the region and beyond after World War II are just tuition fees locals paid for their required lessons in US-style democracy. Not only is the Quad trying to expand its scope from security to almost all areas of an international body – just to gain more handles to drive a wedge between China and regional countries – it is also attempting to be the setter of the laws, rules, orders and values in the region. By saying in a panel discussion that as long as China abides by the rules of international institutions, standards and laws there would be no conflicts between China and the Quad, the only time China was mentioned, Japanese Foreign Minister Yoshimasa Hayashi just showed how fast Tokyo, as a let-me-do-the-dirty-work servant in the gang, has learned the US' tricks. Washington likes to try and claim the moral high ground so it can dangle a plumb bob into the yard of other countries to measure the integrity of their actions. The Japanese foreign minister also stated that the four countries were in tune, comparing them to a classical musical quartet, The Beatles.

He should perhaps be reminded that the four members of that group outgrew each other and they disbanded acrimoniously.

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China's 5 percent growth target

China sets its GDP growth target for 2023 at around 5 percent. We should enhance the intensity and effectiveness of our proactive fiscal policy. We should do more to implement a prudent monetary policy in a targeted way. Social policies should meet basic living needs... In the Government Work Report delivered by Premier Li Keqiang on March 5, a series of key targets and policy directions have provided an important window for observing China's future development. It is worth noting that the international community generally believes that the 5 percent target is "moderate," "gentle," and "cautious." In other words, it is lower than the expected target from the outside world. Previously, international organizations such as the International Monetary Fund, and the domestic economic community had expected China's GDP growth rate in 2023 to be around 5 percent or even higher. In fact, 5 percent is not low. China's GDP in 2022 has already reached a high of 121 trillion yuan, and 5 percent is equivalent to 6 trillion yuan, which is an increase exceeding the GDP of most countries in the world. Looking at the international institutions' expectations for global economic growth in 2023, it is approximately between 2.7 percent and 2.9 percent. It can be seen that the overall situation globally is not good. Entering 2023, this great resilience and vitality have been further released. The healthy rebound of the Chinese economy has significantly increased the confidence of the outside world in the Chinese economy, and their expectations for the Chinese economy are also rising. Data released on March 1 showed that China's Manufacturing Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) hit an 11-year high in February, and economic activities are rapidly rebounding. For a country as large as China to maintain steady development for so many years, this poses the most critical test to the country's governance ability. The Government Work Report has set other development targets for this year, such as creating around 12 million new urban jobs, keeping the urban surveyed unemployment rate of around 5.5 percent, and targeting increase in consumer price index (CPI) of around 3 percent. Every year has its own set of complex issues, but they cannot create major waves in front of China. Many previous risks and challenges have ultimately been transformed into concrete breakthroughs in China's reform. The evolution of hot topics during the annual two sessions can clearly reflect this. For example, concerns about environmental pollution once caused widespread anxiety about China's past development model, but they have served as greater driving force for the historic reform of transitioning to new growth drivers. Among the major economies in the world, China's certainty is particularly outstanding and becoming a key driving force for global economic recovery. Despite the many difficulties and challenges ahead, the overall mentality of the Chinese society is firm and confident on the path forward. The Communist Party of China has led and united the Chinese people to continuously strive for a better life, which is the deep-seated driving force and source of confidence behind China's stability and progress. This year's two sessions will see a change in the government's leadership. Unlike in Western countries, this will not mean a policy "U-turn." Instead, it will open a new chapter in a great relay race, where the next leg of the journey will continue with unrelenting effort.



Hijab Mean for Iran's Clerical Class

Dr. Muhammad Akram Zaheer



Khamenei has set the tone for Tehran's response to the anti-hijab campaign, saying the women who organize protests have been "deceived" by foreign governments. Neither Khamenei nor Raisi seem interested in admitting that Iranian society is the driver behind the anti-hijab movement and that it is not, at its core, driven by a foreign conspiracy. In this context, the regime's leadership has pursued a three-pronged strategy to counter the movement's demands

In present-day Iran, there are very few clerics that openly reject the hijab. What there are many more of, however, are those who distinguish between it as a tradition to be upheld and something that should be enforced as compulsory. In other words, there are clerics that support the regime but suggest that flexibility in enforcing the hijab is in the interest of the country. For example, a few years ago, Mohsen Gharavian, a fundamentalist cleric, made headlines by suggesting that tourists coming to Iran should not be forced to wear the hijab. This sort of indirect and conditional critique is the furthest that hard-line circles will go. This group of clerics will not openly defy Khamenei on the issue, and his commitment to enforcing mandatory hijab-wearing is, as of today, still firm. Khamenei has set the tone for Tehran's response to the anti-hijab campaign, saying the women who organize protests have been "deceived" by foreign governments. Neither Khamenei nor Raisi seem interested in admitting that Iranian society is the driver behind the anti-hijab movement and that it is not, at its core, driven by a foreign conspiracy. In this context, the regime's leadership has pursued a three-pronged strategy to counter the movement's demands.

First, they deny the existence of popular demand in Iranian society, particularly among the younger demographic, to make wearing the hijab an issue of personal preference. Next, they look for ways to deter the public and anti-hijab

activists; and then, they limit the space for debate among the political and clerical class on this issue to maintain policy clarity and uniformity.

Over the course of the Islamic Republic's history, the regime's policies have often pitted its supporters and opponents against one another, but rarely have its actions resulted in actual violence breaking out between these two groups. This is the reality facing Iran today, however, as the country experiences more and more cases of supporters of the regime and the anti-hijab movement engaging in physical altercations in the streets. Notably, this is not a phenomenon limited to Tehran alone but has taken place across the country. The root of the problem goes back to when Khamenei first encouraged his supporters to "fire at will" against anyone who resists the regime and its policies. Put simply, pro-regime citizens can intervene and use violence to confront anything they deem "bad hijab," which is itself an extremely slippery concept. This also illustrates, once again, how Khamenei's political calculations about the best way to control society are eroding the role of the clergy and providing ammunition to the most radical elements in Iran. The danger, of course, is that there will be a violent counter response to the heavy-handed enforcement of the hijab law. The potential for a deeper societal conflict cannot be ignored. According to one independent study from 2020, 72 percent of Iranians are against mandatory hijab-wearing. By contrast, only 15 percent support it. One can imagine the possible tensions and violence that could erupt over this issue on the street level once

the Raisi government rolls out its campaign to fully enforce the hijab law, as the president has promised to do. Ultimately, Khamenei is fearful that any loosening of Iran's strict social-religious laws will invite demands for more change, which he sees as a Pandora's box. Furthermore, Khamenei is not inclined to give in to pressure—certainly not when it comes from grassroots activists, whom he dismisses as simpletons who have fallen victim to Western propaganda and machinations.

The issue of enforcing the hijab is, above all, about maintaining maximum political control and neutralizing opponents. As the opposition to mandatory hijab-wearing increases and the campaign against it gains momentum, there is a real risk of violence between supporters and opponents. This makes it harder for Khamenei to maintain policy uniformity on this issue, which he desires and has so far been able to achieve within the ranks of the regime. In particular, senior clerics will be pressured to take a clearer stance and not obscure their real positions as rooted in their religious interpretations of sharia law. This could become a source of widening divide among the ulema (meaning "religious scholars") in Iran, particularly among clerical supporters and opponents of the regime. Other than Afghanistan under the Taliban, which has even stricter rules on female dress, Iran is today the only country in the world where there is a law on mandatory hijab-wearing. There will be all sorts of pressures on the regime to change course, though that is highly unlikely as long as Khamenei is still alive.

Pakistan's energy crisis and delay in TAPI

Gul.i.AyeshaBhatti



It has also been dependent on energy-rich gulf states like KSA, Qatar, and Kuwait, for oil, LNG, and other petroleum products. However, it is cost-effective to explore CARs, Russia, and Iran nearby. In this regard, there are already a few projects pending like IP, TAPI, and CASA1000. Among them, TAPI is one of the world's greatest energy collaborations among the states

Sustainable energy sources are crucial in today's world, and having access to them may enrich everyone's prospects in life. A vital component of a nation's growth and development is a reliable source of energy. Numerous statistics showed that if cost-effective access to energy is made simple, human progress can reach its pinnacle. Pakistan is trying to explore regional coordination to overcome its energy efficiency. It has also been dependent on energy-rich gulf states like KSA, Qatar, and Kuwait, for oil, LNG, and other petroleum products. However, it is cost-effective to explore CARs, Russia, and Iran nearby. In this regard, there are already a few projects pending like IP, TAPI, and CASA1000. Among them, TAPI is one of the world's greatest energy collaborations among the states. The Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India Natural Gas Pipeline (TAPI) Pipeline project is one that Pakistan is anxious to get started on right now. The fourth-largest gas reserves in the world are found in Turkmenistan. Turkmenistan would be supplied with 1.4 billion cubic feet of gas altogether. The pipeline will travel from Turkmenistan to Chaman and then on to Multan, where it will be integrated into the Sui companies' network in Pakistan. "We are sincerely going ahead with the TAPI project and it would cost \$34 million," Musadik Masood Malik stated in an interview earlier in December.

The pipeline will carry natural gas from Turkmenistan's Galkynsh Gas Field to Pakistan, Afghanistan, and finally India. In November 2014, Turkmenistan (the biggest shareholder with 85% interest), Afghan Gas Enterprise (5%), Inter State Gas Systems (5%), and GAIL (5%), formed a special-purpose consor-

tium known as the TAPI Pipeline Company (TPCL) to carry out the project. On December 13, 2015, work on the project's construction began in Turkmenistan. The ceremony marking the beginning of the construction of the Afghanistan-Pakistan section of the pipeline was held in February 2018. By providing inexpensive gas to Pakistan, and India, transit fees for Afghanistan and Pakistan, and an energy market to Turkmenistan, TAPI will benefit the economies of all the member states. Consumers will receive more affordable, cleaner energy, which will boost the economy and lower inflation rates. It will provide earnings or revenues that may be applied to improving the social sectors, particularly those related to housing, health, education, and clean water. By increasing sub-regional economic cooperation and increasing the usage of natural gas resources, it is predicted that the TAPI initiative would alleviate poverty. It will result in the creation of jobs by increasing sub regional economic activity and increasing the usage of natural gas resources, it is predicted that the TAPI project would alleviate poverty. Designed to serve for 30 years, the pipeline was expected to commence operations in 2021, but it was stalled. It is expected to transport 33 billion cubic meters of natural gas a year. The project's supporters envision it as a contemporary continuation of the Silk Road. Pakistan has tried to convince other regional actors like Kazakhstan to be part of this project. Similarly, Russian authorities showed a great interest in participating in this project and supplying pipelines to Turkmenistan for the completion of 1st step of this project.

This much-touted and already-delayed gas pipeline project has seen various challenges throughout all this time. In March 2022,

it run into trouble as Asian Development Bank (ADB) halted all processing and due diligence operations until the Taliban regime is recognized and legitimized by the UN and major powers of the world. Later on, the Rise of TTP and the government of Pakistan's growing cold terms with the Taliban while dealing with it, seem like a big hurdle in the successful completion of TAPI in the given time. Therefore, rising uncertainty regarding security conditions in Afghanistan and in the adjusting region of Pakistan is a source of concern for TAPI member states. The dependence on ad hoc solutions to the issue and ongoing reliance on oil and gas imports show that the energy crisis has not yet been handled by the state effectively. Policymakers still need to craft long-term and sustainable policies including investing in the discovery of indigenous reserves, building hydropower projects, and conserving on alternative and renewable energy sources. Otherwise, Pakistan's independent foreign policy will be impacted by the energy crisis. From a geopolitical standpoint, state sovereignty depends greatly on energy security. Foreign providers' guarantees of consistent energy supply at reasonable prices are always accompanied by a long list of demands that frequently damage a country's reputation. Therefore, as a result of the nation's inability to satisfy even the most basic energy requirements of its citizens, investor trust in the state has been eroding, and visions of industrialization and economic self-reliance are still a long way off from becoming a reality.

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Briefs

Taliban's women persecution 'crime against humanity'

GENEVA: The Taliban's treatment of women and girls in Afghanistan could amount to a crime against humanity, according to a U.N. report presented on Monday at the Human Rights Council in Geneva. The Taliban seized power in August 2021, drastically curtailing women's freedoms and rights, including their ability to attend high school and university. In a report covering July to December 2022, the U.N. Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Afghanistan, Richard Bennett, found that the Taliban's treatment of women and girls "may amount to gender persecution, a crime against humanity". "The Taliban's intentional and calculated policy is to repudiate the human rights of women and girls and to erase them from public life," Bennett told the United Nations Human Rights Council. "It may amount to the international crime of gender persecution for which the authorities can be held accountable." A spokesperson for the Taliban-run information ministry did not immediately reply to a request for comment. The Taliban have in the past said they respect women's rights in line with their interpretation of Islam and Afghan culture and that they plan to open schools in future once they establish certain conditions for girls. Bennett said the Human Rights Council should send a strong message to the Taliban that the "abysmal treatment of women and girls is intolerable and unjustifiable on any ground, including religion". "The cumulative effect of the restrictions on women and girls has a devastating, long-term impact on the whole population, and it is tantamount to gender apartheid," he said. - APP

Shab-e-Barat to be observed

ISLAMABAD: The Shab-e-Barat, a night of forgiveness or day of atonement, would be observed with religious reverence across the country, including twin cities of Islamabad and Rawalpindi on Tuesday night. On this particular night, the majority of faithful would seek forgiveness from the Allah Almighty and the people whose rights were usurped consciously or unconsciously. They prefer to keep fast on the very next day to express submissiveness in the court of Allah Almighty and beg His countless blessings for both the worlds. A large number of people hailing from all schools of thought would offer the Sunnah of the Holy Prophet Muhammad Peace Be Upon Him by paying homage at the graves of their loved ones on Shab-e-Barat. Shedding light on the significance of this sacred night, Pakistan Ulema Council Chairman Hafiz Muhammad Tahir Mehmood Ashrafi urged the people not to block the roads adjacent to the graveyards due to wrong parking which causes nuisance to rest of the motorists. - APP

Kyiv: Forces holding on in 'hellish' Bakhmut battle

Russia is trying to encircle Bakhmut to secure its first major gain in more than half a year, at the culmination of a winter offensive that has brought the bloodiest fighting of the war

NEWS DESK

KYIV: Kyiv said on Monday its troops were still holding out in a "hellish" fight for Bakhmut, while Washington said that even if the eastern Ukrainian city should fall to a Russian offensive, it would not necessarily give Moscow momentum in the war. In the latest sign of a feud between Russia's military and the Wagner private army leading its Bakhmut assault, Wagner's boss demanded more ammunition and said his aide had been barred from the military's operational headquarters. Russia is trying to encircle Bakhmut to secure its first major gain in more than half a year, at the culmination of a winter offensive that has brought the bloodiest fighting of the war. Ukrainian troops have been reinforcing positions west of Bakhmut in apparent preparation for a possible retreat, but so far appear not to have decided to pull out. Speaking to reporters in the Middle East, U.S. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin said he would not predict when or if Ukrainian troops might leave the city, but that its fall "won't necessarily mean that the Russians have changed the tide of this fight".

"I think it is more of a symbolic value than it is strategic and operational value," Austin said. Moscow says capturing the city would be a step towards its major objective of seizing the full territory of the surrounding Donbas region. Kyiv says Russia's losses in trying to seize a city reduced to rubble could determine the future course of the war by destroying combat power ahead of decisive battles later this year. Volodymyr Nazarenko, a Ukrainian commander in Bakhmut, said there had been no order to retreat and "the defence is holding", albeit in grim conditions. "The situation in Bakhmut and around it is utter hell, as it is on the entire eastern front," Nazarenko said in a video posted on Telegram. President Volodymyr Zelenskiy's office said he had discussed the operation on Monday with his chief of the general staff and commander of ground forces, who both "spoke in favour of continuing the defensive operation and further strengthening positions in Bakhmut". Yevgeny Prigozhin, the Wagner boss who sent tens of thousands of convicts recruited from Russian prisons into battle around Bakhmut, issued the latest in a barrage of statements that have deepened

his rift with Russia's top brass. Prigozhin said he had written a letter on Sunday to the commander of the Ukraine campaign "about the urgent need to allocate ammunition". On Monday morning he said his representative at operational headquarters had had his pass cancelled and been denied access. There was no immediate response from the Russian Ministry of Defence. Since the start of this year, the Ukraine campaign has been commanded personally by Russia's top general, Chief of the General Staff Valery Gerasimov. Prigozhin claimed last week that his men had practically surrounded Bakhmut. But on Saturday he appeared in a video with a gloomier assessment, warning that the front would collapse should Wagner be forced to retreat - although it was not clear when the video was recorded. He has accused ministry officials of "treason" for failing to supply adequate ammunition to his forces, something the ministry has denied. Russian Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu, who has kept a low profile for most of the war, has been on a rare visit to his forces in Ukraine in recent days, awarding medals and meeting commanders. On Monday, he visited the eastern city of Mar-

iuopol, largely destroyed by Russian forces last year after a months-long siege. After losing ground throughout the second half of 2022, Russia launched a winter offensive of intense trench warfare, making use of hundreds of thousands of reservists called up late last year. Apart from Bakhmut, Russia's offensive has produced no notable gains, failing to seize ground in Luhansk province further north and taking heavy losses in particular around Vuhledar to the south. Kyiv, for its part, has focused mainly on defence for the last three months, trying to inflict high casualties while preparing for a counter-offensive when new weapons arrive and the muddy ground dries out. The Institute for War Studies think-tank said it was still not clear whether Ukraine would pull out of Bakhmut or stay on to continue wearing down the Russian force. Either way, Moscow's offensive appeared to be reaching its high-water mark. "The likely imminent culmination of the Russian offensive around Bakhmut before or after its fall, the already culminated Russian offensive around Vuhledar, and the stalling Russian offensive in Luhansk Oblast are likely setting robust conditions for a future Ukrainian counter-offensive," its researchers wrote.

Biden hails 'break-through' S. Korea plan

WASHINGTON: The United States applauded plans announced by South Korea to compensate victims of Japan's forced wartime labor, as President Joe Biden on Monday hailed the agreement as a "historic breakthrough" between two American allies. Seoul has looked to forge closer ties with Tokyo as a way to counter nuclear-armed North Korea, and the United States has described its trilateral relations with South Korea and Japan as central to Indo-Pacific regional stability. "Two of our closest allies, Japan and the Republic of Korea, have reached a historic breakthrough," Biden said on Twitter. "The United States stands with the people of both nations as we all move towards a safer, more secure, and more prosperous future." Earlier, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said Washington applauded Seoul and Tokyo "for their courage and vision, and call on the international community to join our commendation of this momentous achievement." South Korea-Japan ties have long been strained over Tokyo's brutal 1910-45 colonial rule of the Korean peninsula. Around 780,000 Koreans were conscripted into forced labor by Japan during the 35-year occupation, according to data from Seoul, not including women forced into sexual slavery by Japanese troops. Seoul's plan is to take money from major South Korean companies that benefited from a 1965 reparations deal with Tokyo and use it to compensate victims, South Korea's Foreign Minister Park Jin said. - APP

Zardari, Bilawal condemn terror attack

DNA
KARACHI: Former President of Pakistan and President Pakistan Peoples Party Parliamentarians, Asif Ali Zardari strongly condemned the terrorists' attack in Bolan, Balochistan. He expressed his deep sorrow and grief over the martyrdom of law enforcement personnel in the attack. Zardari said that terrorism is an unpardonable crime and the terrorists must not and cannot escape punishment. Asif Ali Zardari consoled with the families of the martyrs and prayed to Almighty Allah for the early recovery of the injured. In a separate message, Chair Pakistan Peoples Party and Foreign Minister, Bilawal Bhutto Zardari also condemned the terrorists' attack on security personnel in Bolan area of Balochistan and expressed profound sorrow and grief over the martyrdom of nine security personnel in the attack. Bilawal said that the planners and facilitators of this attack will be brought to book. He also prayed to Almighty Allah for early recovery of the injured.



ISLAMABAD: Professor Jean Pascal Van Ypersele, the candidate for the post of Chair of the intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), accompanied by the Ambassador of Belgium to Pakistan Charles Delogne calls on Federal Minister for Climate Change Senator Sherry Rehman. - DNA

Sh Rashid slams govt for wrong priorities

RAWALPINDI: Awami Muslim League (AML) chief Sheikh Rashid Ahmad came hard on the government for pursuing wrong priorities, saying the arrest and disqualification of PTI Chairman Imran Khan were important for it rather than inflation and flailing economy. In a series of tweets, the former interior minister said the ban on speeches of the PTI chief and attempts for his arrest clearly showed the priorities of the government. He said PML-N supremo Nawaz Sharif was busy in visiting high-end stores in London but the poor people were forced to live in a state of humiliation. He hoped that the election schedule for Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa would be announced this week but feared that the Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) could go to any lengths to delay the polls. He also reacted to the hints dropped by Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari about quitting the government over unfulfilled promises regarding the rehabilitation of the flood victims. - DNA

ECC approves Hajj Policy 2023 with forex cover of \$90 million

As per policy Hajj quota allocated to Pakistan for the year 2023 is 179,210, which would be distributed between govt and private hajj schemes at a ratio of 50:50
ISLAMABAD: The Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) of the cabinet here on Monday approved Hajj Policy and agreed to provide foreign exchange cover of US\$90 million. The summary to this effect was presented by Ministry of Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony before the cabinet committee, the meeting of which was chaired by Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar. As per policy Hajj quota allocated to Pakistan for the year 2023 is 179,210, which would be distributed between the government and private hajj schemes at a ratio of 50:50, according to a press statement issued by the finance ministry. Out of the government and private hajj schemes, a quota of 50% each would be reserved for sponsorship scheme, it said adding for the year 2023, tentative hajj package for Northern region is PKR 1,175,000/- and for the South Region is PKR 1,165,000/- The ECC also approved Technical Supplementary Grant (TSG) of Rs 12 billion in favour of Planning Commission for conduct of 7th Population & Housing Census and Rs. 3,244 million in favour of Poverty Alleviation & Social Safety for National Poverty Graduation Programme (NPGP). The ECC deferred a summary presented by Ministry of National Food Security & Research on Urea Fertilizer requirement for the year 2023 with direction to incorporate the recommendations of committee framed by ECC on gas distribution plan headed by Shahid Khaqan Abbasi. The ECC also deferred another summary submitted by Ministry of Industries and Production on Solar Panel & Allied Equipment Manufacturing Policy-2023 with direction to review and revise the proposed policy considering inputs from all stakeholders. - APP

Indonesia landslide kills 11, dozens missing

JAKARTA: At least 15 people were killed and dozens feared missing after torrential rains and landslides battered one of Indonesia's outermost islands bordering the South China Sea, disaster officials said Monday (Mar 6). Pictures provided by the national disaster mitigation agency (BNPB) showed mud and debris from the landslides had inundated houses near a cliff on the remote Serasan island. Bits of metal torn off roofs and fallen trees were visible. The remoteness of the village where the landslide struck in the Natuna region of Riau province, combined with poor weather and downed communication lines, complicated rescue efforts, according to officials. "We've been updated that 50 people were missing, 15 dead people were evacuated," Natuna Search and Rescue Agency's head Abdul Rahman told AFP, revising an earlier toll. Riau Islands Disaster Mitigation Agency's spokesperson Junainah added that with the communication network in the affected area - between Borneo island and peninsular Malaysia - cut off, it was hard to get the latest information. "The weather is unpredictable. The wind is strong and the waves are currently high," said the official, who like many Indonesians goes by one name. A 60-person search and rescue team departed for the disaster-hit area from Penagi port in Natuna Island in the afternoon, BNPB spokesperson Abdul Muhari said in a statement on Monday evening. Muhari predicted that access to the far-flung island would be difficult. "Normally it takes five hours by fast boat," he said. "Tomorrow, the national disaster mitigation agency will deploy a helicopter to speed up the logistics delivery process," he told local television channel Kompas TV. A main road in the village was also cut off because of the landslides, further hampering the evacuation process. Indonesia is prone to landslides during the rainy season, aggravated in some places by deforestation, and prolonged torrential rain has caused flooding in different areas of the archipelago nation. Experts say the country's weather-related disasters are likely being made worse by climate change. Floods further south in Banjar district, in the Indonesian part of Borneo, have inundated more than 17,000 houses and disrupted lives for a month. Neighbouring Malaysia has also been hit with torrential rains and vast floods. At least four people have died and nearly 41,000 were evacuated last week in several states of the country. - APP

Government to stamp out menace of terrorism: Rana

SHUJAAT HAMZA
ISLAMABAD: Minister for Interior Rana Sanaullah Khan on Monday said the government would provide all resources to provinces for maintaining law and order and root out the menace of terrorism through effective measures. Addressing a press conference, he said there would be no cut in the resources of provincial governments and all requirements of law enforcement agencies would be fulfilled. "Though economic condition is very tough and austerity measures are being taken but the government would not compromise on needs of law enforcement agencies and all resources to be provided to them as per directions of the Prime Minister," he maintained. During the meeting of the Apex committee, he said that federal government had assured to provide all resources to the provinces for maintaining law and order. The minister said that entire nation was standing with the brave and courageous law enforcers who were even sacrificing their lives to eliminate terrorism. Rana Sana said that one civilian and eight personnel of the Balochistan Constabulary were martyred and 13 were wounded in a bomb attack in Bolan. He said that constabulary van was on its way back to Quetta from Sibi when an explosion occurred on the Kamabri bridge in the area bordering the Sibi and Kachhi districts. The minister said that a suicide bomber riding on motorbike rammed into the police van. He said that wounded personnel had been shifted to hospitals through helicopter and every possible treatment was being given to them. Regarding comments of Maulana Fazlur Rehman about postponement of elections in Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa amid security concerns, the minister said that his opinion regarding postponement of election was valuable. However, he said the decision to hold elections was not of the government but of the Election Commission of Pakistan. PDM would hold a meeting to discuss this matter as it seem difficult to run the election campaign in the current situation, he said. Regarding the possible arrest of Imran Khan, the minister said that things were clear against Imran Khan and he would have to appear before court to face the trial. He said that PTI leaders including dramatized the situation when Islamabad police team reached Lahore to arrest Imran Khan. "If Imran Khan is so much obedient to law, he should appear before the court as per orders," he added. The minister said the verdict of the court about Imran Khan would be accepted and implemented in case he was acquitted or awarded punishment. "Imran Khan will have to appear before the court in next hearings otherwise he will be presented there," he maintained.

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