



Islamabad POST

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China warns US against suppressing it or risk 'conflict'

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Bilawal in NY for 'Women in Islam' moot

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Afghan govt seeks global recognition

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Toshakhana case

IHC suspends Imran Khan's arrest warrants

Directs Khan to ensure that he appears before the lower court on March 13

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

ECP issues

bailable warrants for Imran, Fawad

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad High Court (IHC) Tuesday suspended the non-bailable arrest warrants for Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan – issued by a local court in the capital in the Toshakhana case. IHC Chief Justice Aamer Farooq accepted the PTI chief's plea against Additional Sessions Judge Zafar Iqbal's decision and directed Khan to ensure that he appears before the lower court on March 13. Following the high court's decision, the sessions court, which was also hearing the Toshakhana case, ordered the former prime minister to appear before it, where he will be indicted. On February 28, Additional Sessions Judge Iqbal issued the former prime minister's non-bailable arrest warrants for continuously failing to appear before the court in the Toshakhana case. Islamabad police then raided Khan's residence in Lahore's Zaman Park but returned empty-handed as the law enforcers were informed that the former prime minister "wasn't present" there. Khan had then approached the same court for suspending the orders, but Judge Iqbal rejected his plea – prompting the deposed prime minister to move the IHC. Meanwhile, Minister for Defence, Khawaja Muhammad Asif on Tuesday said the federal government was in no hurry to arrest Imran Khan rather it was dealing with restraint. Addressing a news conference here, the Defence Minister said the former prime minister and Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf Chairman Imran Khan was desperately running here and there. Khawaja Asif said he (Imran Khan) was exposed before his supporters and the common man has come to know that he is a coward.

ISLAMABAD: The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) Tuesday issued bailable arrest warrants for Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leaders Imran Khan and Fawad Chaudhry in a case pertaining to "contemptuous" remarks against Chief Election Commissioner Sikandar Sultan Raja. A four-member bench – comprising ECP members Nisar Ahmed Durrani, Shah Mohammad Jatwi, Babar Hasan Bharwana, and Justice (ret'd) Ikramullah Khan – issued the order following the non-appearance of the leaders in the case proceedings. "Consequently, in the circumstances of the case, we have left with no alternative except to issue a bailable warrant of arrest against respondent in the sum of Rs50,000/- (fifty thousand) with two sureties in the like amount each," the verdict issued by the ECP read. It further mentioned that the bailable warrants shall be executed through the Inspector General of Police, Islamabad; directing the office to take follow-up action forthwith and list the matter on March 14.



LAHORE: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif chairs a meeting on Ramzan Package. – DNA

'Khan did not request to meet COAS'

Alarms Burma, North Korea like system being created in Pakistan

SHUJAAT HAMZA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Senior Vice President Fawad Chaudhry categorically rejected the speculations pertaining to PTI Chairman Imran Khan requesting to meet Chief of Army Staff (COAS) General Asim Munir. In a statement on Tuesday, Fawad Chaudhry said that Imran Khan has never made any request to meet the COAS or any of his representatives. He stated that President Dr Arif Alvi has "never approached the PTI Chairman with any suggestion of army chief for meeting Shahbaz Sharif" and that any speculations in this regard are "baseless".

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Govt is in no hurry to arrest Imran Khan

Asif says dealing with restraint, Afghan delegation expected to visit

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD, Minister for Defence, Khawaja Muhammad Asif on Tuesday said the federal government was in no hurry to arrest Imran Khan rather it was dealing with restraint. Addressing a news conference here, the Defence Minister said the former prime minister and Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf Chairman Imran Khan was desperately running here and there. Khawaja Asif said he (Imran Khan) was exposed before his supporters and the common man has come to know that he is a coward. Imran Khan, he said, had a chicken's heart, and courage cannot be bought with money. He suggested that Khan should learn to have some heart from Mian Nawaz Sharif.

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Mariyum lashes out at Imran

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Information and Broadcasting Mariyum Aurangzeb on Tuesday criticizing Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf Chairman Imran Khan said that a person who had hidden when police arrived to arrest him was now fine to hold election rallies. "This was not a movement to save the judiciary but a movement to be saved from judiciary", she said in a tweet targeting Imran Khan. Lashing out at the PTI chairman, she said "the foreign agent and Toshakhana thief" did not appear even when his non-bailable arrest warrants were issued. The minister said that the accused and his legal team were missing and the court was again waiting. – APP

Briefs

Rana's non-bailable warrants issued

DNA

ISLAMABAD: An anti-terrorism court (ATC) in Gujranwala Tuesday issued non-bailable arrest warrants for Interior Minister Rana Sanaullah. The court had announced the reserved verdict, dismissing the plea of Rana Sanaullah for exemption from personal appearance. The court also ordered to arrest Rana Sanaullah and produce him on March 28 next, said the court sources. Earlier, the ATC had issued bailable arrest warrants for the interior minister the previous month. The ATC had heard the case against the interior minister for threatening institutions.

Polio drive

PM Shehbaz Sharif talks to Bill Gates

Both sides also discussed other government-led programs, supported by the BMGF



DNA

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif had a telephone call with Mr. Bill Gates, Co-Chair of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF) today. The Prime Minister appreciated the valuable support extended by the BMGF to Pakistan in polio eradication and improving immunisation, nutrition and financial inclusion in the country particularly during the recent floods in the country. He also reaffirmed Pakistan's desire to further strengthen the fruitful partnership with the Foundation in all the ongoing areas of cooperation.

The PM stressed that Pakistan remained committed to ending all forms of polio in the country. While expressing concern over reporting of new cases in 2022 after one year without any Polio case, he noted that there has been a pause in polio cases since September 2022. Both sides also discussed other government-led programs, supported by the BMGF, to address malnutrition and stunting, essential immunization services, micropayment gateway RAAST, and digitalization of the National Savings Programme. In light of the last year devastating floods, which had adversely affected the ongoing polio vaccination efforts due to large scale displacements and destruction of healthcare infrastructure, the Prime Minister emphasized that the Government was actively implementing the special emergency response plan and will continue to adapt and find ways to reach out to children in these times. Mr. Gates acknowledged Pakistan's efforts to eradicate Polio, while reiterating his Foundation's continued support to Pakistan in its aim to ensure that no child would be at risk of paralysis due to poliovirus. Both sides agreed to continue working together on these shared objectives.

Parvez Elahi appointed PTI president

ABID RAZA

LAHORE: The Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Tuesday appointed Chaudhry Parvez Elahi as the party president weeks after he was roped in with the promise of the same post. "Ch Parvez Illahi is hereby, designated as President [of the] Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf," a notification signed by PTI Chairman Imran Khan read. In response to the appointment, Elahi thanked

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OPPOSITION TO DRONE ATTACKS

'PTI government was ousted by CIA'

Former British Ambassador Craig Murray claims Imran Khan deposed when he opposed drone strikes

LONDON: Former British Ambassador Craig Murray has alleged that US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) deposed Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan as prime minister for opposing United States drone campaign. Taking to Twitter, the former British Ambassador said that the former premier was ousted for his opposition to the US drone campaign "operating within and from Pakistan". "CIA's deposing of Imran Khan as Prime

Minister, for his opposition to the US drone campaign operating within and from Pakistan, is probably the most under-reported story of the last couple of years," Craig Murray wrote on Twitter. It is pertinent to mention here that Imran Khan was ousted as prime minister (PM) as the no-confidence motion moved by opposition parties against him succeeded. As many as 174 votes were cast in the favour of a no-confidence motion against PM Imran Khan. This was the first time in the history of Pakistan that a no-confidence motion against an elected prime minister has succeeded. Following the resignation of the NA speaker and deputy speaker, PML-N's Ayaz Sadiq as a panel of the chairman of the house chaired the proceedings on the matter.

Ahsan Iqbal says SC soft on Imran

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Claiming that PTI Chairman Imran Khan considered himself to be superior, Federal Minister for Planning and Development and PML-N leader Ahsan Iqbal on Tuesday said that the Supreme Court (SC) was lenient towards him. Talking to a private news channel, he said what to speak of lower courts, when Imran did not comply with the apex court orders. "For seven months he kept defying the SC order on the restoration of local bodies," Ahsan said, adding, "What a pity that the SC failed to issue him a contempt of court notice."

Japan provides grant aid to five development projects

MAHNOOR ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: The Government of Japan has decided to provide grant assistance up to USD 295,430 (equivalent to around PKR 76.4 million) to five NGO development projects in Pakistan. The grant contracts were signed between Mr. ITO Takeshi, Charge d' Affaires ad interim of Japan to the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, and representatives of the five NGOs at the Embassy of Japan in Islamabad on March 7, 2023. The five NGOs, including Rural Aid Pakistan, Rumbur Development Welfare & Conservation Society, Hana Development Council, Saibaan Development Organization, and Dir Area Development Organization, will implement the projects. Rural Aid Pakistan will receive a USD 65,617 grant (equivalent to around PKR 17 million) to install solar power irrigation systems in four agricultural villages in District Narowal, Punjab. This project will improve agricultural infrastructure in an environmentally-friendly and sustainable way, and then contribute to boosting farmer's income with the efficient increase in food crops. Rumbur Development Welfare & Conservation Society will receive a USD 51,907 grant (equivalent to around PKR 13.4 million) to construct check dams and protection walls for disaster prevention and an incinerator for hygienic environment in District Chitral, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. This project will enhance

security when natural disasters such as sediment flows caused by heavy rain occur, and also help environment preservation by introducing a proper disposal of waste. Hana Development Council will receive a USD 49,489 grant (equivalent to around PKR 12.8 million) to install electricity facilities in seven villages in District MandiBahauddin, Punjab. This project will make electricity available for the villagers and improve their living standards by enabling them, for example, to turn on a light at night and use

home electrical appliances and farm equipment. Saibaan Development Organization will receive a USD 56,418 grant (equivalent to around PKR 14.6 million) to pave one kilometer of link road in District Mansehra, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. This project will offer local people better transportation infrastructure, and then make it easier and safer for children to go to school as well as improve access to medical facilities and cities.

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Imran Khan was ousted to save nation: Zardari

PPP chairman says inflation went out of control during the PTI government

STAFF REPORT

VEHARI: Former President of Pakistan and the co-chairman of Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Asif Ali Zardari said on Tuesday that the ruling coalition had to topple former prime minister Imran Khan's government to stop him from "selling out the nation," media reported. Addressing a party workers' gathering in Vehari, Zardari said that the coalition parties had full cognizance of the economic challenges. "It's not that we didn't know how bad the economic situation was. We knew it. But we had to stop Imran Khan. Otherwise, he'd have sold the nation to Pakistan's enemies," Zardari said. The former president said Imran was a zero in the government and had no control over inflation or other things.

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Urdu translations of three Chinese books launched at ISSI

Pang Chunxue, Charge d' Affaires, highlighted the strong Pakistan-China relationship. Literature has always played a dominant role in understanding the visions of nations

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: The China-Pakistan Study Center (CPSC) at the Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI) hosted a book-launch event of three books authored by Chinese writers and translated by Pakistani authors. The books include, "Mao Zedong and Contemporary China", "How the Chinese Communist Party Manages the Development Issue", and "Beyond the Karakoram: A Photographic Dialogue Between a Chinese and a Pakistani Scholar". The Chief Guest at the event was Senator Dr. Musadik Malik, Minister of State for Petroleum; Guest of Honour on the occasion was Mr. Fahd Haroon, Minister of State/SAPM on Public Communication and Digital Platform. Ambassador Naghmana Hashmi, former Ambassador to China, and Dr. Hassan Daud Butt Associate Professor, Bahria University, reviewed the books. Dr.

Talat Shabbir, Director of the China-Pakistan Study Centre, welcomed the guests and highlighted the significance of literature in building people-to-people contacts. DG ISSI Ambassador Sohail Mahmood, in his remarks, underlined that Pakistan's relations with China were the "cornerstone" of its foreign policy. He highlighted the key features and growing trajectory of Pakistan-China 'All-weather Strategic Cooperative Partnership'; role of Chairman Mao in the Chinese revolution and China's modernization; the CPC's role in China's socio-economic development; and importance of further strengthening the Public Diplomacy dimension of Pakistan-China relations through such events. Ambassador Naghmana Hashmi in her remarks stressed upon Mao's vision in reference to the book " ". She argued that history has always been important in understanding modern China. The vision of the country is different from that of other nations world-

wide. It is pertinent to seek the understanding of these philosophies that China follows in its journey towards prosperity. Ambassador Hashmi stated that when one is able to understand these philosophical concepts, one can predict where China is heading. Dr. Hassan Daud Butt in his detailed presentation highlighted the geo-strategic, geo-economic and geopolitical significance of China in current international politics. The Communist Party of China plays important role in leading the country in the right direction, he underlined, while citing examples from the book under review. Ms. Pang Chunxue, Charge d' Affaires, highlighted the strong Pakistan-China relationship. Literature has always played a dominant role in understanding the visions of nations. These books translated into Urdu depict the commitments of both countries to understand each other. She stressed that such events would play a constructive role in expanding people-to-people exchanges. SAPM Mr. Fahad Haroon acknowledged that China's current leadership is following what Mao had envisioned decades earlier. He also reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to further deepen and broaden the relations with China. Senator Dr. Musadik Malik, in his address, shed light on the current international dynamics and how China is rising as a resilient nation under courageous and visionary leadership. He stressed that China's leaders have served in the best interests of their country and set a unique growth and development trajectory, which was something to be emulated. At the closing of the event, Chairman BoG Ambassador Khalid Mahmood gave his concluding remarks, which were followed by a presentation of memento to the speakers.



Government committed to boost tourism

ISLAMABAD: Advisor to Prime Minister on Tourism and Sports Awn Chaudhry on Tuesday said government committed to boost tourism and making all-out efforts to improve the infrastructure for tourists in the country. Addressing the Pakistani Pavilion in Internationale Tourism Borse Berlin (ITB) 2023 via zoom link, he said that Pakistan extended its full assistance in the tourism and hospitality industry to enhance foreign tourists' influx. "Pakistan is known for its bewitching natural beauty, cultural richness, and unparalleled hospitality offered to tourists," he added. Managing Director, PTDC Aftab ur Rehman Rana said that Pakistan was home to one of the oldest civilizations in the world, had innumerable locations of scenic beauty, world's highest mountains, many religious and historic places, unique arts and crafts and a rich culture and heritage. He further stated that Pakistan was now making all efforts to attract more foreign tourists. "I believe that our delegation participating in ITB 2023 will utilise this time in a most effective manner to promote the image of Pakistan as a tourist friendly destination," he added. - APP

WHO hands over latest ambulance to BHU Kalash

CHITRAL: The latest and well-equipped ambulance which was recently donated by World Health Organization (WHO) was handed over to the only Basic Health Unit (BHU) Bomburit, Kalash Valley here. A function was held at the BHU Bomburit, where in Deputy Commissioner (DC) Muhammad Ali was the chief guest while District Police Officer Ikramullah, Additional Assistant Commissioner Adnan Haider Maloki, Sub Divisional Police Officer Hasanullah, SHO Bomburit, District Health Officer Dr Fayaz Rumi, Dr Salim Saifulah, Dr Farman Nizar and Dr Willi Kalash and other guests were also present. Mohammad Khalil Shaikh, the elected chairman of this valley, while welcoming the guests, highlighted the problems of this area. On the occasion, Dr Wali Kalash, who belongs to the Kalash tribe and was the first doctor from this valley, said that there were many heart diseases here and he wanted to establish a diagnostic center here. - APP

Switzerland keen to develop trade ties with Pakistan

SIALKOT: Ambassador of Switzerland in Pakistan Georg Steiner has stressed the need for making sincere efforts to strengthened mutual trade ties between Pakistan and his country. Addressing a meeting of exporters at Sialkot Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI) here on Tuesday, he said that Switzerland was keen to boost trade ties and enhance mutual trade volume between the two countries. Senior Vice President (SVP) SCCI Wahab Jahangir, Vice President (VP) Amer Majeed Sheikh and Sialkot business community were also present. The Swiss Ambassador promised full cooperation to ensure easy access of Sialkot exporters to Switzerland international trade markets. He said bilateral trade and business relations among two countries should be further promoted with the exchange of trade delegations. The ambassador said that both of countries had been enjoying the cordial relations. He said that exchange of goods would facilitate creation of economic relations. "Our

government fully supported Pakistan for rehabilitation of flood victims," he said. Ambassador Georg Steiner said that the people of Pakistan were very hospitable. "I have come to Pakistan in September 2022, and found hospitality of Pakistan very impressive," he said. He said Switzerland is one of the most globalised countries in the world. He stressed that contribution of women was crucial in society. He also showed keen interest in SCCI's documentary "Sialkot, the City of Progressive People", which was screened during the meeting. For improving bilateral trade, Sialkot business community suggested that exchange of trade delegations and one-to-one meetings of businesspeople should be arranged. SCCI President Abdul Ghafoor Malik, in his welcome address, said that Switzerland and Pakistan enjoyed the most cordial relations since the independence of Pakistan. He said that the SCCI, a representative body of the private sector of the city, was greatly contributing to the economic uplift and development of the country. - APP

China's enterprises encouraged to invest in Pakistan in shoe industry

ISLAMABAD: China's enterprises are encouraged to invest in Pakistan in shoe industry, China Economic Net (CEN) reported on Tuesday. Recently, Wenzhou Council for the Promotion of International Trade (WCPIIT) organized a video conference on shoe leather industry, aiming to encourage Wenzhou's export-oriented enterprises to invest in Pakistan and promote in-depth and effective cooperation between China and Pakistan. Hussain Haider, Consul General of the Consulate General of Pakistan in Shanghai, addressed the event, believing that the seminar provides a good opportunity for China-Pakistan exchange of shoe leather industry. "Pakistan is rich in leather raw materials, synthetic leather materials, machinery and other related products. I hope that Chinese entrepreneurs can see the development potential and invest in our shoe leather industry," Haider said. Ahmed Fawad Farooq,

Secretary General of Pakistan Footwear Manufacturer Association, introduced quality leather products made in Pakistan. Farooq said the Pakistani Government is guiding and supporting its leather industry by providing policies such as exemption of import duties, reduction of regulatory duties and encouragement of automation. On behalf of the Chinese side, WCPIIT vice president Zhu Qianji said that the conference provides a new platform and new opportunities for the development of leather industry, and further broadens the overseas trade channels of Wenzhou footwear and leather enterprises. "WCPIIT welcomes and is willing to work with the Pakistani Consulate General in Shanghai to connect enterprises from Pakistan and Wenzhou," Zhu said. According to Wenzhou Shoe Leather Industry Association, Wenzhou is in a critical period from the shoe

capital of China to the shoe capital of the world. This seminar will add new development momentum for the city's international trade of such industry. During the seminar, enterprise representative introduced the development situation of Wenzhou shoe leather industry. He said that Wenzhou is accelerating the innovation of industrial and supply chains. A number of well-known enterprises at home and abroad have emerged, gradually forming a development pattern of regional brands cluster and complete industrial chain. "In the future, with the support of big data and other digital technology, the industry will achieve rapid development and iterative upgrading," he added. The two sides also had an in-depth discussion on how to de-intermediate Pakistani footwear raw materials into China and how to build a cooperation platform. - DNA



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Belgium Charles Delogne and climate scientist /ex-IPCC Vice-Chair Prof. Prof. Jean-Pascal van Ypersele visited ISSI & met DG Amb Sohail Mahmood.—DNA



ISLAMABAD: UAE Ambassador Hamad Obaid Al Zaabi exchanging views with Federal Minister for Law and Justice Senator Azam Nazeer Tarar. —DNA

Denmark can extend green technologies to Pakistan

DNA

FAISALABAD: Ambassador of Denmark in Pakistan Jakob Linulf on Tuesday said completion of high-end value-added textile chain was imperative to reorganize textile on modern, scientific and competitive lines, and Denmark could share its experience and extend green technologies to Pakistan. Addressing the business community at the Faisalabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry (FCCI) here, he said his visit to Faisalabad was to explore new opportunities in this sector. He expressed satisfaction on bilateral trade relations between Pakistan and Denmark, and said that Denmark is a country of traders and merchants. He said Denmark had long standing relations with Pakistan and around 50 Danish companies, including Muller and Maersk, were already working in Pakistan. He said that Denmark was providing chemicals and technologies to Pakistan while a wastewater treatment plant had also been established with the funding through the IFU and

DANIDA Sustainable Infrastructure Finance. He proposed direct linkages between the business communities of the two countries and assured full assistance in this regard. About the GSP Plus, he said that it should continue till the stabilization of Pak economy. Responding to a question, he said that Pakistan must enhance its agriculture production to meet growing needs of its population. He also appreciated quality and taste of Pakistani fruit and said that there was huge potential for its preservation and processing. He said that Denmark could also extend technological support to Pakistan to preserve milk and produce a long chain of its value-added products for exports. Earlier, Dr Khurram Tariq, President FCCI, welcomed the guest and said it was the second largest chamber of Pakistan with 8,000 members hailing from 118 sectors and sub sectors. He said the FCCI was involved in aggressive business diplomacy to protect the legitimate interest of its members in addition to

helping the government in policy making on important economic issues. He appreciated the establishment of a water treatment plant with the funding of Denmark and said that he would seek help from the ambassador to advise them so that more infrastructure related projects could be initiated with the help of IFU. He lauded the landmark achievements of Denmark in the fields of solar energy and dairy development and: "We also intend to avail the experience of Danish experts for the promotion of these sectors, including poultry". A brief question-answer session was also held in which Vice President Haji Aslam Bhalli, Engineer Ahmad Hassan and other executive members participated. vLater, Senior Vice President Dr Sajjad Arshad offered vote of thanks while President Dr Khurram Tariq presented FCCI memento to the ambassador. Mr Jakob Linulf also recorded his impressions in the FCCI visitor's book.

Pak NAVY ship seized narcotics

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Navy Ship while deployed on Regional Maritime Security patrol seized huge quantity of drugs in a counter Narcotics Operation at North Arabian Sea. Pakistan Navy Ship while undertaking maritime security operations intercepted a suspicious stateless fishing boat at sea. Upon search of the boat, Navy troops seized 280 Kg narcotics (Crystal and Ice) worth approximately US \$15M in international market. The vessel and crew members were later handed over to LEAs for further legal proceedings. The successful anti-narcotics operation by Pakistan Navy Ship reaffirms PN resolve to deny illegal activities in maritime zones of Pakistan. - DNA

IK's indictment inevitable come what may: Tarar

ISLAMABAD: Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Interior Attaullah Tarar Tuesday said PTI chairman Imran Khan would have to face indictment in the Toshakhana case at every cost as it was a fit case of 'technical money laundering and undervaluation' of foreign gifts he received as prime minister during three-and-a-half-year period. Addressing a news conference here, he said Imran Khan was fearful of his arrest, but the indictment had to be done and now it was up to him to face it cowardly or gracefully. He alleged that the PTI chief committed billions of rupees in 'technical money laundering as he used Farah Gogi for transporting precious foreign gifts abroad. Explaining the modus operandi, he said Farah Gogi was used to transport the precious gifts abroad for selling purposes, adding "if a person wears a Rs one billion wristwatch or Rs 500 million bracelet onboard a flight, no immigration staff will ask for their value." Attaullah Tarar appealed apex court for the Toshakhana case's live broadcast, and said it was unfortunate that the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf chairman remained using delaying tactics to avoid appearing before the courts. He said if Imran Khan failed to appear before the court, the government would follow the instructions of the court and ensure producing him before the court. He urged Imran Khan to appear before the courts wherever he had been summoned and defend himself in a legal way. He said Imran Khan was scared of facing cases and imprisonment because he had been involved in crimes of stealing gifts from Toshakhana and others. He said fake receipts were arranged by Imran Khan from a local trader in Islamabad for the Toshakhana gifts sold out abroad, which was also a crime. Attaullah Tarar said that an amount of Rs 1.6 billion was embezzled and transacted into the accounts of Farah Gogi, a close aide of Imran's wife Bushra Bibi. The SAPM said all this amount was bribed money for which 10-12 accounts were opened to keep it. He said a huge amount was received for the posting and transfers in the Punjab province in connivance with the wife of Usman Buzdar, Bushra Bibi and Farah Gogi. - APP



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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

MARCH

- March 01 / Bosnia National Day
- March 03 / Bulgaria National Day
- March 06 / Ghana Independence Day
- March 12 / Mauritius National Day
- March 17 / Ireland St. Patrick's Day
- March 20 / Tunisia Independence Day
- March 21 / Namibia National Day
- March 25 / Greece National Day
- March 26 / Bangladesh National Day
- March 27 / Myanmar Armed Forces Day



Hotels & Restaurants

Serena Hotel.....111 133 133
Marriott.....051- 2826121
Monal.....0334-5421812



Airlines

Turkish Airlines.....8494949



Emergency

Rescue (Police).....15
Bomb Disposal.....15
Fire Services Rawalpindi/ Islamabad.....1122 & 16
Emergency Ambulance.....1122 & Rescue Services.4451122
Motorway Police.....9266044
Motorway Police.9270601-20
Women Police Stations Islamabad.....9225596
Rawalpindi.....9270601-20



Enquiry

Edhi Ambulance.....115
PIA Flight Info.....114
PIA Cargo.....9280979
Railway Inquiry.....117
Railway Exchange 9270831-5
WASA Rawalpindi.5555489
CAA.....9281092



Hospitals

CMH.....5611111
MH.....561116
Cantt Hospital.....9270907-11
DHQ.....5556311-4
RGH.....9290301-7
Holy Family.....9290322-7
PIMS.....9261170-79
Polyclinic.....9218300-09
Shifa International 4603666



Departments

CDA.....9221334-43
CDA.....9208301-04
Met Office.....9250360-6
RDA.....5555864
TMA.....5770886
Cantonment Board 9270151-3



Islamabad Metropolitan

Corporation.....9209224
Potohar Town.....9209224
Rawal Town.....5773343



Water Tank

Islamabad.....0321-5744480

Japanese embassy holds Karate Workshop

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Embassy of Japan in cooperation with the Japan Karate Association (JKA) of Pakistan organized Karate Workshop on March 7th at the Hamidi Hall of Pakistan Sports Complex Islamabad. This workshop was held under the title of "7th JKA National Karate Camp" and was participated by Pakistani people who love Karate from Islamabad, Rawalpindi and Peshawar. The Workshop with the presence of Mr. SHIINA Katsutoshi, leading Karate player from Japan and JKA official instructor, 7th Dan (The levels consist of "Kyu(10 to 1)" and "Dan(1 to 10)") offered opportunities for the participants not only to enhance their skills but also to explore the excitement of Karate as the Japanese martial arts. Mr.



SHIINA was assisted by his co-instructors Mr. KANDA Osamu, Ms. TANAKA Junko as well as the instructors from JKA Pakistan during the workshop.

Mr. ITO Takeshi, Charge d' Affaires, Embassy of Japan in Pakistan together with the Deputy Director General (Technical) Mr. Muhammad Shahid Is-

lam from Pakistan Sports Boards inaugurated this one-day Workshop. Mr. ITO witnessed the training sessions and expressed his gratitude to Mr. SHIINA

and his team for arriving all the way from Japan to supervise and give valuable tips to the young karate learners in Pakistan. Later Mr. ITO presented certi-

icates to the participants of the training camp.

While appreciating the participants for showing their keen interest in traditional Japanese martial arts of Karate, Mr. ITO said that the purpose of holding this karate training camp was to provide an opportunity to the Pakistani youth to learn "real" karate which requires courtesy as well as mental endurance together with physical strength. He hoped that this training opportunity would prove beneficial for them to further polish their karate skills and also further strength ties between Japan and Pakistan through cooperation in various sectors including sports.

Mr. ITO also thanked Japan Karate Association of Pakistan for holding Karate Workshop in Pakistan.—DNA

Digital skills a must to bridge digital disparity

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Women must have digital literacy, access to digital products, internet services and knowledge of e-commerce to bridge digital gender divide, said Shaza Fatima Khawaja, Special Assistant to Prime Minister on Youth Affairs. She was speaking at a seminar on "DigitALL: Innovation and Technology for Gender Equality" organized by Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI) here on the seminar International Women's Day 2023. Ms Shaza Khawaja said that Pakistan ranks 90th out of 122 countries on the digital gender divide and also second worst performing globally on Gender Gap Index. She informed the audience about various initiatives, including Digital Pakistan Policy that included ICT for girls, laptop scheme and Digiskills programme, taken by the government. She said these programmes have been executed by the Ministry of Information and Technology to upskill young children, men and women in Information Technology (IT). IT is a fast-transforming market and yet the employment prospects of IT graduates remain low due to the structural issues in academics, she said and added that the IT Ministry, in collaboration with IT industry and academia, is work-

ing on short courses to meet the industry's demands by upskilling students and ensure market competitiveness and higher employment prospects.

Dr. Abid Qaiyum Suleri, Executive Director of SDPI, said that policies in Pakistan are usually gender blind, therefore, a more gendered and inclusive approach is needed in policy making. He said that Fin-Tech has increased access to financial services for women particularly through mobile phones, yet over three-fourth of women in Pakistan lack access to internet services. He further said that for many women, cyberspace is no longer safe. He stressed the need for improving online safety of women to provide them a safe and conducive environment.

Shamama Arbab, Co-founder of Euro Industries, highlighted that only 1.5% women in Pakistan have access to internet and only 30% have mobiles while half of them lack access to internet, which shows the huge disparity. She stressed on equity rather than equality in digital services and skills through incentives like mobile sims with free internet packages and audio-enabled applications for women. She urged the government to issue gender credits to encourage organizations to increase women participation in their workforce. Elucidating the role of corporate and development

partners, she stressed that upskilling initiatives must be the part of corporate social responsibility to emancipate women in rural and underdeveloped areas.

Hina Nasir, Director Marketing and Public Relations, Special Technology Zones Authority (STZA), suggested setting up community centres with internet and computer devices, and teachers to provide women with a safe learning environment. She stressed that literacy and access to Fintech is critical but the discussion must involve men to make them allies in women's emancipation. Ayesha Nasir, Founder of Scaryammi said that mothers make a significant portion of women using digital platforms, enabling them to become IT savvy without formal training. Stressing the need for upskilling mothers, she said that it will have a spill-over impact in terms of gender parity in digital access. Rabia Umaira Ahmed, Journalist/ RTI Activist said that trolling and online harassment has shrunk the digital space for many women, making them highly unsafe. She called for evaluating the safety of digital spaces for women and the efficiency of authorities in handling and addressing complaints. She emphasized that unless digital spaces are made safe for women, and men are sensitized to these challenges, we cannot achieve gender parity.

SAUDIA becomes first airline to offer "Your Ticket Your Visa" service

ISLAMABAD: SAUDIA, the national flag carrier of Saudi Arabia, has announced the launch of "Your Ticket Your Visa". The first-of-its-kind service provides guests with even easier access to the Kingdom through a digital integration system that links transit visas with flight tickets. "Your Ticket Your Visa" service is introduced in collaboration with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Interior, the Ministry of Hajj and Umrah, the Pilgrims Service Program, and the Saudi Tourism Authority. The new service, which covers all international airports in the Kingdom, will allow guests to stay in the Kingdom for up to 96 hours, during which they can travel around the Kingdom and perform Umrah. The digital integration with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs facilitates the issuing of the transit visa and links it to the flight ticket within three minutes. Captain Ibrahim Koshi, CEO of SAUDIA, said: "The launch of this innovative and seamless Stopover Visa is the first of its kind in the aviation industry and a significant milestone in our digital transformation program.

It is a testament to SAUDIA's commitment to supporting the Kingdom's strategic goal of reaching 100 million visits by 2030 and we are confident it will positively impact the growing number of transit passengers while enhancing our position as a hub that connects East and West. The new service will also encourage passengers to perform Umrah, visit key destinations and attend events and Saudi seasons." The launch of the new service comes in line with SAUDIA's commitment to promote King Abdulaziz International Airport in Jeddah and strengthen its role in the region by configuring SAUDIA's flights coming from the east and departing to the west, facilitating travel procedures by collaborating with the Jeddah Airports Company, and coordinating with the Saudi Tourism Authority to provide incentive packages for those wishing to benefit from "Your Ticket Your Visa" service.—DNA

Colourful, joyous Holi festival celebrated with great enthusiasm

In addition to that, Mukhi Aishwar Lal and Faqir Gokal Das Chohan exchanged Holi greetings with Muslim compatriots in Shikarpur and Kandhkot and prayed for the progress and prosperity of Pakistan

ISLAMABAD: The colorful festival of Holi was celebrated with great enthusiasm and fervor on Tuesday, as people of all ages came together to spread joy and happiness. Talking to APP, a teacher and activist Kishore Kumar said that the event started from Monday morning with the bonfire that is lit on Holika Dahan symbolizes the destruction of evil and the triumph of good. He said that the festivities began early in the morning with people applying gular (colored powder) on each other's faces, exchanging sweets, greetings, and dancing to the beats of drum. He said that the streets were filled with the sounds of laughter and the sight of vibrant colors as people splashed each other with water and colored powder. He said that the celebrations were not limited to just one community, as people from all walks of life participated in the festivities, showcasing the unity and diversity of Pakistan. Kishore stated that Holi celebrates the arrival of Spring at the end of winter and it is a festive day to meet others, play and laugh, forget and forgive, and repair broken relationships. In the meanwhile, colorful events were held in different localities of the Sukkur region and temples of the Hindu community, where children and women also participated with warmth and religious devotion in the day-long proceedings. Special ceremonies are being held at Sadhu Bela Temple, situated on the Indus River, Liaquat Chowk Temple, Sukkur and Balmiki Sabha Temple of Saddar Mohallah Shikarpur, Station Road, Khairpur, Pakistan Chowk Kashmir- Kandhkot, Mirpur Mathelo and other areas. Holi festival proceedings in Shikarpur were led by veteran Hindu astrologist Mangay Ram and other local social activists. Holi festival also celebrates with devotion and colorfully by the Bagri community, a scheduled caste of the Hindu community, in Kandhkot and Noshehroferoze. In addition to that, Mukhi Aishwar Lal and Faqir Gokal Das Chohan exchanged Holi greetings with Muslim compatriots in Shikarpur and Kandhkot and prayed for the progress and prosperity of Pakistan.—APP

Uniform matric syllabus to go English from next year

ISLAMABAD: From the next academic year, all of the 9th and 10th grade textbooks will be in English language as part of the third phase of the uniform education curriculum. The process of regular consultation with education experts has also been started with regard to make changes to the 9th and 10th grade curricula. In this respect, the printing of English-language books will be completed before the start of the next academic year. Under the plan, the curriculum from nursery to middle has been changed to English this year. Hence, free textbooks will be provided in all schools from nursery to middle by April 1, 2023. Meanwhile, this year's Punjab Boards matriculation and intermediate passing percentage will remain at 33%. Moreover, a proposal to raise the passing score for exams administered by education boards in 2025 to 40% is currently being considered. However, the final decision will be taken after consulting the Punjab Board Committee of Chairmen. It is worth mentioning here that more than 4,000,000 appear in the examination annually under the education boards across Punjab. The Board of Intermediate & Secondary Education (BISE) Lahore has released the registration schedule for the 2023-2025 term for admissions in 9th class.—DNA

US govt announces scholarships for flood-affected students

ISLAMABAD: The U.S. government announced 500 new scholarships to Pakistani university students from flood-affected districts to assist them in completing their degrees. U.S. Ambassador Donald Blome announced the scholarships at an event celebrating the achievements of female scholars in honor of International Women's Day at the Higher Education Commission in Islamabad. Present at the event were Federal Minister of Planning Ahsan Iqbal, Higher Education Commission Chairman Dr. Mukhtar Ahmed, National Disaster Management Authority Chairman Lieutenant General Inam Haider Malik, Higher Education Commission Executive Director Dr. Shaista Sohail, USAID Mission Director Reed Aeschliman, university vice chancellors, students, and alumni. The United States, through USAID, has supported scholarships for meritorious yet financially disadvantaged students to pursue higher education at top Pakistani universities. In partnership with the Higher Education Commission, the U.S. government has awarded over 6,000 scholarships through the Merit and Needs Based Scholarship Program. Sixty percent of those scholarships have been awarded to women as part of the U.S. government's support for women's higher education. "International Women's Day not only serves as a day to celebrate the social, economic, cultural, and political achievements made by our mothers, grandmothers, sisters, aunts, and daughters. It is also a call to action to accelerate gender parity and to dismantle gender stereotypes", said Ambassador Blome. HEC Chairman Dr. Mukhtar Ahmed remarked, "U.S. government support to strategic sectors in Pakistan, especially the higher education sector, is commendable. Not only have these scholarships helped secure university education for many underprivileged students, lifting themselves and their families out of poverty, they have helped supply Pakistan with crucial skills and knowledge sets to drive the economy." Federal Minister of Planning Ahsan Iqbal said, "Pakistan has suffered from catastrophic floods where millions of people lost their homes and livelihoods. The humanitarian response by the United States and other donors is commendable. We welcome U.S. support for flood-affected students." Jennifer Andleeb, a scholarship alumna, shared the challenges she faced in attaining higher education and how this scholarship transformed the trajectory of her life. She emphasized that positive changes in society could only happen by investing in education, and that empowered, educated women are critical to ensuring a brighter future for Pakistan.—DNA

One more diagnosed with fatal Coronavirus in RWP

RAWALPINDI: One more person was diagnosed with Coronavirus (COVID-19) during the last 24 hours, raising the district's tally of confirmed cases to 47,770. As per the latest data re-

leased by the District Health Authority here on Tuesday, the infected cases included 44,123 from Rawalpindi and 3,647 from other districts. The report added that the new case had arrived from the Federal Capital area while two confirmed patients were quarantined at homes. The report updated that 7,006,011 people, including 44,790 health workers, had jabbed themselves against the lethal Coronavirus (COVID-19) across the district since the vaccination administering drive launched on March 10, 2021. It further added that during the last 24 hours, 156 samples were collected, out of which 155 were declared negative.—APP

'Decade of Learning' event held

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The British High Commission hosted Pakistan's leading education experts, academics, and policy makers for a two-day event in Islamabad to mark the impact of ten years of UK support for education reform in Pakistan. Titled 'A Decade of Learning: Informing Education Policy and Practice,' the event showcased the positive outcomes and lessons learnt through eight UK supported education programmes. The event also delivered sessions outlining other global education development initiatives taking place to highlight best practice, and facilitated discussions on interventions needed to further improve education standards in the next decade as well as ways to increase the number of girls accessing 12 years of education.

Pakistan has benefitted from the UK's largest ever bilateral education portfolio, totalling more than £900m investment over a decade. This funding has helped increase the number of children in schools, improved teaching quality, upgraded teaching facilities and influenced uplifts in public sector spending. The structural reforms brought through UK interventions have benefited more than 15.6 million children including 8.1 million girls.

Planning, Development and Special Initiatives, Federal Minister, Ahsan Iqbal was the chief guest at the inaugural session, which was chaired by British Chargé d'affaires, Andrew Dalgleish.

Chargé d'affaires, Andrew Dalgleish said the following: "A focus this year for the Commonwealth is on securing a better future for young people. I am therefore delighted that the UK and Pakistan, working in cooperation, have achieved such impressive results over the last ten years in improving education and therefore outcomes, particularly for girls. Quality education is the key that will unlock Pakistan's full potential."

Police continue crackdown on kite sellers; arrest seven

RAWALPINDI: Rawalpindi District Police here on Tuesday continued special crackdown against kite sellers and flyers and arrested seven accused besides recovering over 77 kites, kite flying string rolls, and other items from their possession. According to a police spokesman, Rawalpindi district police on the directives of City Police Officer, Rawalpindi Syed Khalid Mehmood Hamdani conducted raids in different areas and rounded up seven accused including kite flyers and sellers. He informed that Sadiqabad, R.A.Bazar, Race Course, and Rawat police held seven kite flyers and sellers namely Akramuddin, Bilal, Danial, Wasal, Kashif, Jahanzaib and Mian-dad and recovered 77 kites and kite flying string rolls from their possession. The spokesman informed that divisional superintendents of Police had also directed the police teams to accelerate operations against kite sellers and flyers. Senior Superintendent of Police, Operations Rawalpindi said that strict action in accordance with the law was being taken against the kite flying ban violators and they were being sent behind the bars.—APP

Two firecracker dealers held

RAWALPINDI: Police have arrested two firecracker dealers and recovered a large number of firecrackers and material from their possession during a crackdown here on Tuesday, informed a police spokesman. Those arrested were identified as Sajjad and Afrash. Ganjmandi police have registered separate cases against both of them and further investigation was in progress. SP Rawal Town appreciated the police team and said that actions will be continued against those selling fireworks.—APP

Briefs

\$ 101 bln investments needed by the year 2030

ISLAMABAD: Total investments worth \$ 101 billion will be required in the country's transmission, distribution, and ancillary infrastructure by the year 2030 while around \$ 5 billion alone investment will be needed to install 10,000 MW solar-based projects announced by the prime minister.

According to the Annual State of Renewable Energy Report 2021-22 of the Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI), an additional \$65 billion would be needed by the year 2040 on account of completing the in-progress renewable energy projects, additional hydropower, transmission, and phasing out of coal and replacing with hydropower. The growth of renewable capacity (wind, solar, and bagasse) is forecasted to accelerate in the next 8 years, with the total generation capacity increasing to 21% i.e. from 2949 MW to 13,686 MW by 2030. This accounts for 7,932 MW, 5,005 MW, and 749 MW of solar, wind, and bagasse additions, respectively, said the report.—APP

ICT admin takes action against encroachers at Sabzi Mandi

ISLAMABAD, Mar 7 (APP): The Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) administration on Tuesday booked thirteen offenders and seized various stalls and carts for blocking the main double road at Sabzi Mandi in sector I-10.

Assistant Commissioner Sadder, Sania Hameed during a surprise inspection of the market arrested nine violators who were accused of creating deliberate congestion at the main double road of Sabzi Mandi, which is the only direct access to the market, said the press release issued here.

The teams removed all encroachments and confiscated the stalls, carts, and materials and warned violators of stern action. The AC directed the market staff committee to clear my main double road and maintain security, cleanliness and lighting arrangements to facilitate citizens to buy essential items at affordable prices.

Sania Hameed directed the contractor to shift all garbage and combustible material from the market on urgent basis to avoid any unfortunate incidents.

Meanwhile, during the anti-encroachment operation at Mandi Mor the teams took out illegal trespassing and arrested four violators for blocking the service road.—APP

Secretary Information GB visits APP headquarters

ISLAMABAD: Secretary Information Gilgit-Baltistan (GB), Zameer Abbas visited the Associated Press of Pakistan (APP) headquarters here on Wednesday.

Zameer Abbas held meetings with top APP management including Executive Director, Adnan Akram Bajawa; Director News/Digital Media, Shahid Saleem and Director Urdu Service, Abdul Jabbar Zakriya and discussed various professional matters related to news collection, operation and dissemination.

He was briefed about the APP operations and utilizations of latest technology in creating quality news content for print, electronic and social media.

The GB Secretary Information also visited various sections of the premier news agency including English Reporting, Central News Desk, Urdu Service, Chinese Service, Foreign Desk, Economic Desk and Digital Media Service. He appreciated the performance of APP in projecting government policies and transforming the news agency into the dynamic organization by providing news content in almost all genres. The GB Secretary Information was accompanied by Deputy Director, Information Department Shams-ur-Rehman.—APP

Women's access to education, health critical

Samina Alvi emphasized raising awareness about the health issues concerning women, such as breast cancer and mental illness

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Begum Samina Alvi, wife of President Dr Arif Alvi on Tuesday said guaranteeing equal rights to women, particularly their access to education and health, was critical for the development of society.

Speaking at a painting exhibition by former ambassador Naela Chohan in connection with International Women's Day, Samina Alvi stressed empowering women by providing them equal opportunities to help them attain their full potential. The solo exhibition titled 'Art from the heart' at the Pakistan National Council of Arts (PNCA) depicted the struggles of women. Chohan's statement artwork on breast cancer named 'Bosom' reflected the perils in the life of a woman in a 'triangle of death, suffering and hope'.

Samina Alvi emphasized raising awareness about the health is-



sues concerning women, such as breast cancer and mental illness. She mentioned that breast cancer was one of the leading causes of death among women. Also, the country's 24 percent population suffered mild to moderate psychiatric issues, with the majority of it comprising women. She mentioned that phenomenal work had been done by President Alvi and herself in the social sector, particularly breast cancer awareness, financial inclusion of women, persons with

disabilities, and issues related to mental health. Samina said the President's House had also initiated the task of improving access to mental health facilities in Pakistan through a collaborative effort towards the prevention of mental health disorders across the country. With the help of various stakeholders, she said, a mental health helpline and Artificial Intelligence-based chatbots were being launched to provide counselling. She said a recent study by a screening centre in a public sec-

tor hospital revealed that 32 percent of the respondents mentioned that media was their prime source of information on breast cancer and the reason for getting themselves screened. Samina said art could prove as an effective tool of soft diplomacy and lauded the paintings by Naela Chohan that highlighted the issues pertaining to women. Former Ambassador Naela Chohan, who served as High Commissioner to Australia besides her diplomatic assignments in 10 countries, said

her paintings have a strong visual voice to create awareness about social and women's issues. In recognition of her strong advocacy for women's rights, she said, UNESCO held a solo exhibition of her paintings, which is kept on permanent display at its headquarters in Paris since 2002. Director General PNCA Ayoub Jamali said PNCA was committed to promoting significant aspects of the country and encouraged community participation. Naela Chohan has opted for various modes in her paintings including mixed media and oil on canvas, paper collage, and batik on silk. The themes of her artwork such as 'Suffering since immemorial', 'Fading glory', 'Dignity of labour', and 'The dancing puppet' speak for themselves about the women's cause. The exhibition will remain open to the public till March 9 and the proceeds will go to charity.

Chinese, Pakistani officials discuss luggage industry coop

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Representatives from Zhejiang Ruian Municipal Government and the Consulate General of Pakistan in Shanghai held an online trade and investment matchmaking meeting. According to China Economic Net (CEN) on Tuesday, the two sides conducted in-depth discussions on trade and investment cooperation in luggage and other key industries in Ruian City, and reached consensus on accelerating bilateral cooperation.

At the meeting, Hussain Haider, Consul General of the Consulate, stressed Pakistan's demand for middle and high-end luggage and bags and explained the trade and investment policies of Pakistan. He pointed out that Pakistan's overall policy on foreign investment is lenient,



and foreign investors are free to invest in Pakistan except in a few prohibited sectors, with no shareholding limit. "Under China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, Pakistan is introducing more favorable reform measures to attract Chinese investment, which will also create better conditions for Ruian enterprises to do business in Pakistan,"

Haider said. Ruian, a major manufacturing hub for bags, leather shoes, auto parts and electrical equipment in east China's Zhejiang province, is rapidly developing an export-oriented economy. In these areas, both China and Pakistan have complementary industrial structures and strong demand for cooperation, which has laid

a solid foundation for bilateral industrial cooperation.

Chen Peng, vice mayor of Ruian, proposed to promote China-Pakistan cooperation on a regular and systematic basis. He also sent an official invitation to Haider, hoping he would lead a delegation to Ruian for a field visit and looked forward to early results of bilateral cooperation. Haider hoped to hold an online "B2B" matchmaking meeting for business representatives of both sides to achieve direct dialogue between trade and investment circles, and hold an offline investment conference to accelerate the implementation of cooperation projects. Representatives from Ruian Bureau of Commerce, Municipal Council for the Promotion of International Trade, and Ruian Luggage Industry Association attended the meeting.

3 power generation facilities in Thar Block-II to generate 1,320MW

ISLAMABAD: "After the successful commercial operation of EPTL 2x330MW Power Plant on 10th July 2019, TEL Power Plant on 1st October 2022 and ThalNova Power Plant on 17th February 2023, the three power generation facilities in Thar Block-II are fully capable of generating gross output of 1,320MW to promote power utilization in Pakistan." This was stated by Zhang Ke, spokesperson of the TEL and ThalNova Power Plant project in an interview with Gwadar Pro. Zhang said that during the entire course of construction and commissioning, the TEL and ThalNova Projects have created thousands of jobs for the locals. At the peak stage, there were more than 1,200 Chinese and over 5,000 Pakistani employees working at the site, including engineers, laborers and security personnel. He said that upon the accomplishment of these projects utilizing local coal resources, Pakistan will be able to ease its long-term reliance on imported coal for power generation, which will considerably reduce Pakistan's foreign currency expenditure. He believed that the benefits of cheaper electricity will boost the economy locally and nationally, with more investment opportunities, more infrastructures, more jobs, and more consumption that will bring the economy to a more virtuous circle. Upon the success of the Reliable RUN TEST (RRT) of the ThalNova 1X330MW Power Plant project, the spokesperson confirmed that during action, all systems were satisfying, and all tests on environmental protection, stability, safety, economic efficiency etc., were qualified on relevant standards and contractual requirements. He conveyed that during the construction of these CPEC projects, employment opportunities and skill training were offered to local citizens, and better income improved their living standards. Zhang said that his company also funded several schools in the Thar region that offer better education for the children. "We believe that the people in Thar will all have a brighter future. CPEC not only facilitates the industrialization, economy, and livelihood of the people.—DNA

Can poor sleep impact your weight loss goals?

ISLAMABAD: Sleep is essential for maintaining Trusted Source key bodily functions and mental health. Sleep deprivation has multiple health consequences, including Trusted Source heart disease, diabetes, and depression. Research also shows that inadequate sleep is associated with obesity. Studies also show that those with irregular sleep cycles are at a greater risk of obesity Trusted Source and cardiometabolic risk. Understanding more about how sleep affects obesity risk could aid the development of effective treatment and prevention strategies for the condition. Recently, researchers investigated the effects of sleep quality on the compliance with a weight loss program. They found that better sleep was linked to greater adherence to a 12-month weight loss intervention. The study was presented at the American Heart Foundation's

Epidemiology, Prevention, Lifestyle, and Cardiometabolic Health Scientific Sessions 2023 Trusted Source. How better sleep changes behavior For the study, the researchers recruited 125 adults with overweight or obesity and an average age of 50 years old. Each took part in a 12-month behavioral weight loss intervention. At the beginning of the study, after six months and after 12 months, the researchers used questionnaires and wearable devices to assess six dimensions of participants' sleep: •regularity •satisfaction • alertness •timing • efficiency • duration The researchers also recorded participants' attendance to group intervention sessions, daily adherence to caloric intake via a phone app, and changes in average daily moderate-vigorous physical activity. In the end, they found that participants

with better sleep health were more likely to attend group intervention sessions, and were more likely to adhere to caloric intake goals. They also found a statistically insignificant link between sleep quality and physical activity. "We had hypothesized that sleep would be associated with lifestyle modification," says Dr. Christopher E. Kline, an associate professor in the department of health and human development at the University of Pittsburgh and one of the study's authors, in a press release. "Although we did not intervene on sleep health in this study, these results suggest that optimizing sleep may lead to better lifestyle modification adherence.—APP

IRSA releases 94,300 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD: Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Tuesday released 94,300 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 55,300 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1444.90 feet and was 46.90 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 20,400 cusecs while outflow as 55,000 cusecs. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1105.20 feet, which was 55.20 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded 17,600 cusecs and 22,000 cusecs respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded 57,900, 40,500, 34,100 and 10,600 cusecs respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 7,900 cusecs of water released at Nowshera and 3,000 cusecs released from River Chenab at Marala.—APP

ANF recovers over 168 kg drugs; arrests seven

RAWALPINDI: Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) while conducting nine operations managed to recover over 168 kg narcotics and arrested seven accused, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman here on Tuesday. He informed that in an operation near Islamabad Motorway, ANF recovered 18 kg charras from secret cavities of a vehicle and arrested an accused, resident of Khyber. In another operation, ANF foiled a bid to smuggle drugs from Peshawar to Punjab and recovered 12 kg charras from the possession of two drug smugglers. In the third operation near G.T. Road Peshawar, ANF seized 200 intoxicating tablets and one kg charras from the possession of an accused, resident of Khyber. In a joint operation on Karachi Super Highway, ANF and Rangers recovered 12 kg charras from the possession of two smugglers. In a raid conducted near Lahore Bund Road Bus Stop, ANF seized Ice drug absorbed in bed sheets. The spokesman informed that in sixth operation, a raid was conducted in the Gwadar Nagoor area and ANF recovered 90 kg charras buried underground. Over six kg drugs including three kg opium, 1.2 kg charras, one kg Ice drug and one kg suspicious material were recovered from the secret cavities of a car intercepted on Quetta-Sariab Road. In the eighth operation, ANF managed to recover 30 kg charras from a remote area in Dalbadin. He informed ANF also managed to net a Proclaimed Offender resident of Sheikhpura wanted in different drug smuggling cases.—APP

Four bids to smuggle 1830 flour bags foiled

RAWALPINDI: The Food Department Rawalpindi and district police here on Tuesday foiled four bids to smuggle 1830 wheat flour and 'maida' bags. According to a district administration spokesman, the authorities of the food department along with Potohar Division police conducted raids in different areas and rounded up four drivers namely Shehzad Rasool, Usman, Rukhsar and Afzal and recovered 1680 wheat flour and 150 'maida' bags. He informed that the accused were trying to smuggle wheat flour bags out of the Rawalpindi division. The Food Department Rawalpindi and district police on the directives of the Deputy Commissioner (DC) and City Police Officer, Rawalpindi were strictly monitoring all the exit points of Rawalpindi district to foil wheat and flour smuggling bids, he added. He said, 18 bids were foiled during the last five days and teams recovered 5,874 wheat, flour and fine flour (maida) bags from the possession of the arrested accused.—APP

NHMP resolving road users concerns regarding lane discipline among heavy vehicles

ISLAMABAD: National Highways and Motorway Police (NHMP) is working to resolve the concerns raised by road users against lack of abidance to lane discipline among heavy vehicles, which is causing congestion and posing danger to other motorists. Talking about the issue, an official of the National Highways and Motorway Police (NHMP) told APP on Tuesday that heavy vehicles face a weight issue that damages the road which makes the extreme left lane bumpy and difficult to maintain. As a result, he said loaded trucks prefer to use the right lane to avoid damaging their vehicles and causing accidents. The official said that the Motorway Police had been trying to enforce lane discipline and ensure that transport goods vehicles remain on the extreme left lane. Despite their efforts, the problem persists, and the number of enforcement and issued challans (tickets) remains high, he maintained. To solve this issue, he said that it was essential to extend the grand truck roads up to three lanes on each side to accommodate the traffic load.—APP

CDA plants over 150,000 trees in federal capital

ISLAMABAD: The Capital Development Authority (CDA) has so far planted more than 150,000 saplings in the ongoing tree plantation campaign in the federal capital and surrounding areas with the help of residents since last two weeks. "The campaign is in full swing on the directives of Chairman CDA Noor ul Amin Mengal and the children were engaged in planting saplings in different parks and free-of-cost fruit trees also distributed among citizens," an official told APP. He said that the CDA chief has given a target to officials concerned to plant around 500,000 saplings during the spring season and the plantation drive had already kicked off at the F-9 Park. The official said that the authority was involving children to make the campaign a success, adding that, while the CDA, the private sector and civil society had an important role to make the tree plantation drive a success. Last year, he said the Environment Wing of the CDA planted 250,000 plants and this year the target has been doubled. The official said the fruit plants were being distributed among citizens for planting in their homes. Among them are peaches, apricots, pomegranates and other fruit saplings that are compatible with the local climate and environment. He said that 5,000 plants have been distributed free of cost during the week and about 20,000 plants during the next 15 days.—APP

Agriculture credit disbursement up by 28.3% in 7 months

ISLAMABAD: The agriculture credit disbursement increased by 28.3 percent during the first seven months of the current fiscal year as compared to the corresponding period of last year, the finance ministry said in a recent report. During July-January (2022-23), the agriculture disbursement stood at Rs.949.9 billion against the disbursement of Rs.740.3 billion from July-January (2021-22), showing a growth of 28.3 percent, according to monthly Economic Update and Outlook. The increased disbursement of agriculture credit is expected to further boost wheat production, leading to a target of 28.4 million tonnes, indicating a promising outlook for farmers and the agricultural sector. However, favorable weather conditions, the availability of high-quality seeds, and sufficient fertilizers would be critical in achieving the targeted output. According to the report, so far, the estimates of ongoing Rabi season for wheat sowing in 2022-23 have achieved 96 percent, covering 21.94 million acres. Furthermore, the Kissan Package 2022 is expected to have a positive impact on the agriculture sector's productivity. Meanwhile, during Rabi 2022-23 (December 2022), urea and DAP off-take stood at 833 thousand tonnes, 39.2 percent higher than December 2021, and 158 thousand tonnes, 35.2 percent higher than December 2021 respectively.—APP



Islamabad: Chairman Senate, Muhammad Sadiq Sanjrani inaugurating the education parliamentarians caucus Pakistan at c-block budding senate of Pakistan.—DNA

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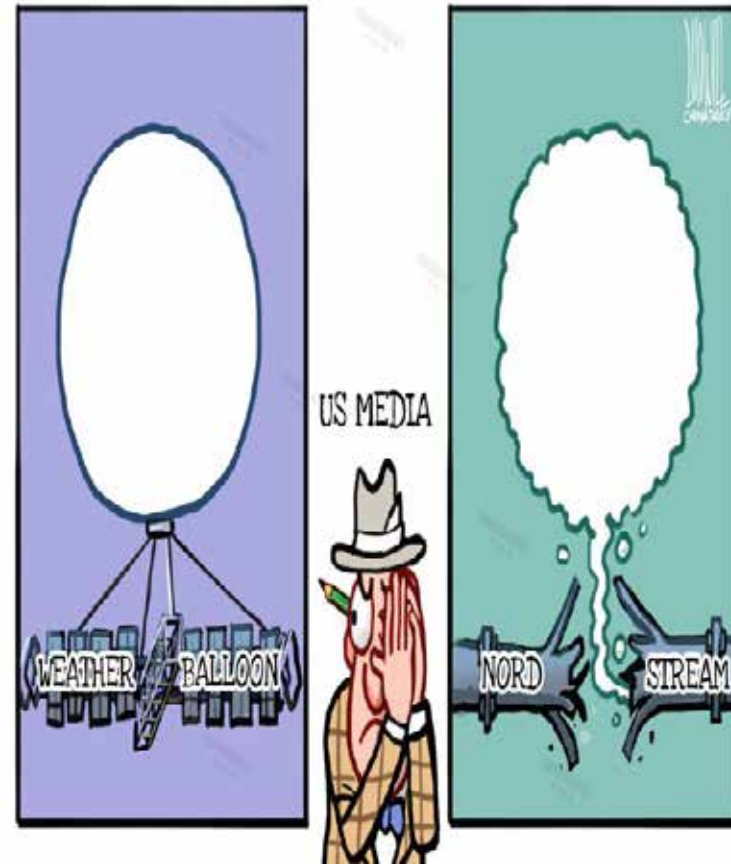
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Off: Awan Plaza, Block 18-A, G-8 Markaz Islamabad

Tunisia's one-man show

Why do you think that, at 67, I would start a career as a dictator?" Tunisia's president, Kais Saied, told the New York Times in 2021, quoting the words of the French statesman Charles de Gaulle. Mr Saied had good reason to be defensive. Just weeks before he had sacked the prime minister, suspended parliament and assumed executive power. Mr Saied's "self-coup" took place at the height of the pandemic. His argument was that his regime might seem authoritarian but it would largely confine itself to containing political threats. However, he now appears a familiar post-revolutionary figure: a dictator who, facing multiple crises and out of his depth, opts to eliminate the opposition. The list of critics rounded up by Tunisia's police is growing. Over the past few weeks the leaders of Islamist and secularist parties were dragged from their homes. Also behind bars are prominent critics, including lawyers, business executives and the director of a popular radio station. Mr Saied has criminalised dissent, hiding behind the absurd conspiracy theory that he was jailing "terrorists" and "traitors". The president also launched an attack on the judiciary. He declared enemy "accomplices" those judges who might exonerate dissidents of the flimsy charge that they were part of a treasonous cabal. Presidential scapegoats had included corrupt politicians, speculators and foreign agents. However, it took a repugnant turn into racism when Mr Saied picked on black migrants. Last month, he falsely claimed there had been a years-long plot to bring "hordes" of criminal immigrants from sub-Saharan Africa to the country "to transform the demographic composition of Tunisia". The demagoguery inspired physical attacks on a tiny, vulnerable minority, many of whom were also taken in custody. While the president won praise from racist French politicians, it drew a sharp rebuke from African neighbours, who began evacuating their citizens last week. Tunisia was the birthplace of the Arab spring – and had been the Arab world's only real democracy. It is now a one-man show shunned by voters. In December just 11% of the electorate turned out to cast ballots in elections to the new, toothless legislature. Mr Saied came to power because Tunisians had grown disillusioned with a political class that seemed unable to resolve the country's problems. In the last decade, GDP had not grown more than 1% and unemployment has not fallen below 15%. Tunisia does have resources, both human and natural. But corruption and cronyism flourish. With fuel and food prices rising, Tunisia is running short of dollars, and turned to the International Monetary Fund for a \$2bn bailout. The money won't be lent to a dictatorial regime without support from civil society – notably Tunisia's powerful labour union – which Mr Saied has been repressing. If it were then the IMF runs the risk of the debt being repudiated by a new administration. The rising tide of migration from the country to Europe is a warning that the government is failing. Tunisians are likely to be in the streets. In 2010, the army sided with the protesters, not the regime. Whether history repeats itself is a gamble that the president, lacking subtlety or guile, unfortunately appears ready to take.



A provocative meeting

According to a recent report by the Financial Times, Taiwan leader Tsai Ing-wen will meet with US House of Representatives Speaker Kevin McCarthy in California next month while on transit to Central America. Tsai has previously made use of her "visits" to the few countries in Central America and the Caribbean that are still among the island's "diplomatic allies" to have a "transit stay" in the United States. But the situation this year is drastically different from that of 2019, when she made her last such trip and spent four days on a "transit stay" in the US out of an 11-day trip to four Central American countries. Today, neither Sino-US relations nor the situation in the Taiwan Straits is comparable to how they were four years ago. Both are more complicated and fraught with risks, as not only is the Joe Biden administration intent on playing the "Taiwan card" as part of its strategy to contain China, but the secessionist-minded Tsai administration is speculating on that. The fight against the COVID-19 pandemic should have provided a chance for the two sides of the Straits to de-escalate tensions. However, due to the collusion between the Tsai administration and Washington, the tensions have only escalated. Then House speaker Nancy Pelosi's reckless visit to the island in August directly pushed the tensions across the Straits as well as between China and the US to the brink of conflict. Pelosi's provocation sparked strong condemnation from China and prompted it to hold military drills around the island as a warning that it would not tolerate any attempt to sever the island from its motherland. The no-comment replies from Taipei and Washington suggest that the purpose of the "anonymous sources" from the United States in releasing the information this time is to test the reaction of the Chinese mainland. Those parties that are trying to probe Beijing's reaction with such unverified reports should save the trouble as they should know that Beijing will by no means tolerate any actions in support of "Taiwan independence". At present, both Washington and Taipei are trying to weave the Taiwan question into the fabric of the world's concerns over the Ukraine crisis in a bid to eliminate Beijing's space to resolve the Taiwan question peacefully. But the two issues are different in nature. The Taiwan question concerns China's sovereignty and territorial integrity. The consequences of any meeting between Tsai and McCarthy will be solely on the heads of the secessionists and their US patrons.

Who is Tyrian Jade Khan White?

Qamar Bashir



In 1987, Imran Khan, the most eligible bachelor of the 1980s and 1990s, reportedly met Sita White in 1987. The daughter and heiress of the late British industrialist and billionaire Lord Gordon White, as well as a prominent American industrialist. She fell instantly in love with the stunningly handsome young man. In contrast to other brief relationships, his relationship with Sita White lasted over six years. Reportedly, they decided to have a child in 1991, and their daughter Tyrian Jade was born at Cedars-Sinai Medical Center in Los Angeles in June 1992. Khan reportedly refused to accept Tyrian as his daughter nonetheless a Los Angeles court ruled in 1997 that Khan was Tyrian's father. Tyrian's mother died on May 13, 2004 at the age of 43 due to complications from childbirth. In her will dated February 27, 2004, Jemima Khan was appointed as guardian of her daughter, Tyrian Jade Khan-White. Tyrian was raised in California primarily by her maternal parents and later by Jemima. She did not appear to have received the love from her father that she deserved, unlike her two handsome step brothers. In her early years, she led a relatively private life and avoided the spotlight. Tyrian was able to create a successful life for herself despite the controversy surrounding her birth and the paternity dispute between her parents. She attended the American University in Washington, D.C., and went on to work in digital marketing. Due to his political disposition, Khan did not maintain visible contact with her, as evidenced by the fact that there is only one photograph of both of them online, taken when she was likely under the age of ten. Tyrian White is currently moderately active on social media and maintains a twitter account (@Tyrianwhite) and a facebook account (Tyrianwhite). In her Twitter profile photo, she can be seen standing between her two handsome step brothers with pride and happiness. According to some sources, despite the fact that her Twitter location indicates she is in New York, she has been living in London with her stepmother and step brothers who appear to be enjoying living together. They also occasionally post pictures of themselves smiling and happy on social media. Jemima, despite being divorced, exhibited exceptional character; she stood by her ex-husband whenever he was in need and took great care for his sons and alleged stepdaughter. Khan, surprisingly, never denied his colourful bachelor lifestyle. When an Indian host confronted him about being in relationships with a number of high-profile women, he responded with a smile, "You have missed naming many others." The British newspaper, "The Times" referred to his numerous girlfriends as "mysterious blondes" because of his reputation as an ascetic bachelor and playboy who frequented London's nightclubs. Zeenat Aman, Sarah Crawley, Stephanie Beacham, Goldie Hawn, Kristiane Backer, Susannah Constantine,

Marie Helvin, Caroline Kellett, Liza Campbell, Anastasia Cooke, Hannah Mary Rothschild, and Lulu Black were among them. Emma Sergeant, an artist and the daughter of British investor Sir Patrick Sergeant, was his first girlfriend from 1982 until they broke up in 1986. She was also a frequent visitor to Pakistan. Afterwards, he had a brief relationship with the artist Susie Murray-Philpison, who painted several artistic portraits of Khan during their time together. It remains a mystery when and how he became a devout and practising Muslim, an accomplished philanthropist, an educator, a reformer, a politician, and an environmentalist. His interest in Islam reportedly began in the early 1980s, when he met his religious mentor, who taught him the significance of prayer, charity, and other aspects of the faith. Khan's faith grew stronger over time, and he began to devote more time and effort to promoting Islamic values and principles. In recent years, Khan has become even more outspoken about his faith, making a number of high-profile statements regarding the significance of Islam in his life. He has also taken steps to promote Islamic values in Pakistan, including launching a campaign to encourage more charitable giving and assistance for the poor and needy. On the basis of his repentance and service to Islam and the needy people of Pakistan, the question is whether he is exonerated of his past deeds. When a person repents for his past sins, he can receive forgiveness and attain spiritual redemption in many religions and spiritual traditions. In Islam, such a person can receive His forgiveness and mercy, as well as a renewed commitment to living a righteous life and a sense of inner peace. When a Christian confesses his sins and asks for forgiveness from God, he receives salvation, eternal life, a renewed sense of purpose, and a commitment. In many other spiritual traditions, the act of repentance and turning towards a higher power or divine source is regarded as a crucial step towards spiritual growth and enlightenment, as well as a state of spiritual purity and grace. The Quran states, "Except for those who repent, believe, and perform good deeds." Allah will replace their evil deeds with good ones for them. Quran 25:70. Ataa' ibn Abu Rabaah stated that Allah, The Exalted, replaces a person's bad behaviour with a good one. Al-Hasan Al-Basri stated, "Allah, The Exalted, replaced their evil deeds with good ones, their polytheism with worshipping Allah alone, their immorality with chastity, and their unbelief with faith" (in Islam). According to Abu Al-Aaliyah, Qataadah, and others, sincere repentance transforms past sins into good deeds. It adds, "Indeed, we are Allah's, and to Him we shall return," and asks for forgiveness. In this sense, such sins are transformed into acts of obedience. Mr. Imran Khan, whose courage and candour are his most notable characteristics, admitted his past lifestyle and conceded that he had never been a saint, but that he had renounced his past life and devoted his life to the cause of Islam and to achieving honour and dignity for Pakistan and its people. As unforgiving as our nation is, we will continue to confront him about his past, regardless of his current conduct as a practising Muslim leading a pious life and fighting around the world against "Islamophobia, courageously advocating against the desecration of the Holy Quran and the publication of blasphemous cartoons of the Holy Prophet (PBUH) on all national, regional, and international forums, and finally persuading the United Nations declare 15th March as International day to combat Islamophobia in 140 countries around the world. He advocated and exerted pressure on other countries of the world to pass laws prohibiting their citizens from insulting Hazrat Mohammad (PBUH), as such insults hurt the feelings of more than one billion Muslims worldwide, and the right to freedom of

speech comes with responsibility and sensitivity for the feelings, aspirations, and sentiments of other people. His contributions in the realm of philanthropy are equally remarkable. During the 1990s, he served as the Special Representative for Sports for UNICEF and promoted health and immunization programmes in Bangladesh, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, and Thailand. Khan was appointed tourism ambassador in the caretaker government of Moeen Qureshi in 1993. During his time in London, he worked for the cricket charity Lord's Taverners. He constructed the first and only cancer hospital in Pakistan at a staggering cost of over \$25 million. He founded Narmal College in the Mianwali District, which is affiliated with the University of Bradford. The Imran Khan Foundation, which assists needy people throughout Pakistan, accepted the challenge of lighting up villages in Dera Ghazi Khan, Mianwali, and Dera Ismail Khan as part of the project "Lighting a Million Lives" by establishing solar charging stations in the selected off-grid villages and providing villagers with solar lanterns that can be regularly recharged. Among the few projects he has led in his personal capacity are the construction of a cutting-edge cancer hospital in Peshawar and Karachi. I conducted an internet search to compare his accomplishments in promoting and protecting Islamic values and philanthropic contributions, but no other politician, religious scholar, or leader of our nation could even come close to matching his characteristics and accomplishments. Currently, the Islamabad High Court is hearing a petition filed by a likely front man for both the incumbent government and the establishment, requesting that Khan be disqualified for concealing his alleged daughter Tyrian White on his nomination forms for the 2018 general election. In the petition two questions were posed. The first is that he is the father of Tyrian, a fact he concealed on his nomination form for the 2018 election, and the second is that he did not disclose his daughter Tyrian's assets and liabilities. First is completely unwarranted, as he was only required to declare the assets and liabilities of his legitimate children, who were registered as such in the NADRA data. Moreover, only residents of Pakistan are subject to Pakistan's tax laws. According to the Income Tax Act, a person is considered a resident of Pakistan for income tax purposes if they are physically present in Pakistan for 183 days or more during the tax year (1 July to 30 June), regardless of their nationality. The relevant provision states, According to section 116 of the Internal Revenue Code, a non-resident is not required to file a statement of wealth. Both sons and the alleged daughter of Imran Khan and his ex-wife are non-Pakistani residents and are not even Pakistani citizens. Since Tyrian is an American citizen and Jemima and her two sons are British citizens, none of them are subject to Pakistani law. The California court rendered a decision ex parte without conducting a DNA test or hearing Khan's argument. Moreover, a U.S. court has no jurisdiction over a citizen of Pakistan, and the question of Tyrian's paternity has never been litigated in any court of law in Pakistan, nor has a decision been rendered. Therefore, by any stretch of the imagination, Tyrian is not Khan's daughter for practical purposes, and he was not required to declare her or her assets and liabilities on Form B of the nomination forms. Above all both Jemima and Tyrian are the heirs of unimaginable wealth sufficient to buy more than half of Pakistan at the prevailing market price. The petitioner and the court perhaps knew this also that the entire wealth of Khan is in Pakistan and if he needed more, he just had to ask either Jemima or Tyrian and he would get whatever he wanted. Upon perusing the website of the election commission and closely examining Form "B," it was crystal clear that the candidate was required to disclose the assets and liabilities of his dependent children. The exact wording is "I hereby declare that I, my spouse(s),

and dependent children do not own any immovable or movable property, including bonus shares, securities, insurance, policies, or jewelry, other than those listed below. In 1992, Ms. Tyrian was born. In 2018, she was 26 years old when the elections were held. Likewise, the two sons were born in 1996 and 1999, so they were all adults and responsible for their own financial and economic matters. The malfeasance of the petition is understandable, as filing such a futile appeal was akin to firing a legal weapon to malign Khan's character and portray him as a person with lax moral values and moral turpitude. However, it is difficult to comprehend why the court has admitted this obviously futile appeal. This legal weapon is employed by the government in connivance with the establishment in alongwith brute administration power, igniting religious sentiments, constructing a vile political narrative and banning Khan's speeches from mainstream media. Over 76 FIRs were filed against Khan on frivolous and unfounded grounds in an effort to wear him down and break his will and determination against the government. Our interior minister said in a media interview that the punishment for fathering an illegitimate child is death by stoning and nothing less, ignoring the verdict of his leader, Ms. Maryam, who stated, when asked to comment on the video of former Governor Sindh Zubair's sexual engagement, that it is Zubair's private affair and between him and Allah. During her public addresses and media interactions, Ms. Maryam, who has conveniently distanced herself from the failures and incompetence of the government, spews venom and accuses Khan of fathering an illegal and immoral child. Currently, another weapon has been added to the arsenal by using the shoulder of PEMRA, which had banned the media from broadcasting Khan's addresses to the public, while ignoring the public's demonstrated propensity to abandon traditional media in favour of social media, thereby closing their ears and eyes to the government's narrative as well, which is even more dangerous for the government. Intriguingly, while the government is increasing the power and lethality of its arsenal, Imran Khan's popularity is increasing in the same proportion. The government and its allied political parties are losing the necessary political capital to win elections, and at the same time they are reinforcing the public's perception of their incompetence and inability to manage financial, economic, and administrative issues confronting the people with each passing day. Whereas the government is using every weapon at its disposal to defame and discredit Khan, they are unable to make even the slightest dent in his popularity. Rather, every additional weapon used bolsters his perception as a fighter, validates his commitment and resolve to stand against all odds without fear or rising tides, and validates his grit and determination to stand for the cause of the people and the country. According to him, all that humans can do is exert effort, and Allah the Almighty will always determine their success. Perhaps the government and its allies should reconsider their strategy; they should pause and reset the political clock. Otherwise, they will quickly realise that the length of the delay in holding free, fair, and transparent elections will increase Khan's political capital proportionally and decrease their own. Therefore, it is in the government's best interest to expeditiously pave the way for free and fair elections in order to preserve any remaining political capital.

—The writer is a Former Press Secretary to the President of Pakistan

The West Bank is on fire and who can stop it?

Yossi Mekelberg

Within Israel, the main worry is of the government committing a judicial coup, but many of those who protest against it are too short-sighted to see the link between the erosion of Israel's democracy and the occupation and oppression of Palestinians. In the near term, of even greater concern is the belief among Israeli settlers in the West Bank, and not an unsubstantiated one, that at last they have a government that truly

As in Akira Kurosawa's acclaimed film, "Rashomon," where the four different witnesses of an heinous crime provide four mutually contradictory versions of events, there are many – too many – versions about who carries responsibility for the lack of a solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and for the suffering caused by it. It is mainly a blame game that lacks an end game outlining a peaceful path forward to resolving it. However, under these circumstances there are certain acts and behaviors that are unequivocally and unacceptably wrong, and last week's pogrom committed by Jewish settlers against the Palestinian residents of the town of Huwara is one of them. Justifying such an act as revenge for the earlier killing of two settlers, as condemnable as that was, is a contemptible excuse, and those responsible for this barbaric act should face the full force of the law. We are barely two months into 2023 and already 66 Palestinians – militants and civilians – and 13 Israelis, one of them a paramilitary police officer, have been killed, and this is before we enter into the tense period when the holy festivals of Ramadan, Passover and Easter will take place in close succession. Much of what is taking place in relations between the Israelis and the Palestinians is disturbing, especially when non-combatants are on the receiving end, but the scenes of 400 Israeli settlers rampaging through the Palestinian West Bank town of Huwara and setting ablaze houses and cars are the most alarming for a very long time. These extreme elements among the settlers seem to have prepared their attack well in advance and were looking for an opportunity to carry it out. The two settler brothers had been killed when a Palestinian gunman, who was reportedly wearing a shirt bearing the insignia of the Nablus-based Lions' Den militant group, six of whose members were killed during an Israeli raid while five other civilians including two elderly men were killed in the same raid, shot them as they were stuck in a traffic jam in Huwara. In this cycle of violence, with hardly anyone in either community willing or capable of putting their full weight behind containing it,

the next loss of life is only a matter of time. What is most frustrating is that this deteriorating security situation is taking place in circumstances both predictable and preventable. With the formation of the most far-right, provocative and anti-Palestinian government in Israel's history, the writing that has been on the wall for a long time has become even more ominous. On the Palestinian side, it deepens their despair of Israel's oppressive occupation ever coming to an end, and also of their own leadership playing any positive role in improving any aspect of their lives. Consequently, the hubs of the armed struggle are beyond the traditional Palestinian centers of power, and there are now independent groups or even individuals carrying out attacks. Within Israel, the main worry is of the government committing a judicial coup, but many of those who protest against it are too short-sighted to see the link between the erosion of Israel's democracy and the occupation and oppression of Palestinians. In the near term, of even greater concern is the belief among Israeli settlers in the West Bank, and not an unsubstantiated one, that at last they have a government that truly represents them and will implement their religious-messianic ideology, which will turn a blind eye to, if not facilitate, terror attacks on Palestinians at will as they behave as an armed militia while the IDF is either unwilling or too afraid to stop them. Grief, even anger at the killing of two young settlers, regardless of how clearly damaging the settlements are for Israeli-Palestinian relations, is understandable, but to commit a pogrom against innocent people in Huwara is a particularly unacceptable and unforgivable act of terrorism. By torching cars and houses, and not for the first time, this gang of racist zealots were clearly prepared to burn entire families alive. It was through sheer luck and the initiative of local people and emergency services that they were led to safety, and that an even worse tragedy did not take place. This group of settlers might be relatively small in number, but they practice and weaponize a most

dangerous and distorted version of Judaism and Zionism, which acts in direct defiance of the authority of the state. The representatives of these settler militias boast of the atrocities that they are more than happy to carry out while the security forces don't dare to, according to them. Ironically, on the very same day of this outburst of violence, senior officials from Jordan, Egypt, Israel, Palestine and the US met in the Jordanian coastal town of Aqaba to discuss how to quench the burning conflict between Israel and the Palestinians, but their joint communique comes across as something between desperation and wishful thinking. De-escalation of the situation, committing to past agreements, avoiding unilateral measures and confidence-building moves are all commendable objectives, but didn't these horses bolt a long time ago? What stands out about this meeting is that it took place at all, as things seem to be falling apart as both the PA and the Israeli government are losing ground to non-state militant groups that take the law into their own hands, be they Lion's Den or some among the settlers. One could welcome stopping unilateral actions, but legalizing outposts or expanding settlements is one of the pillars of the Israeli coalition government's agreements. In his flippant and customary irresponsible manner, Israel's Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir said: "What happened in Jordan (if it happened), will remain in Jordan," in other words he and his party have no obligation to adhere to it, while other right-wing politicians expressed sympathy with the vandals who attacked Huwara, not to mention several who encouraged such criminal acts. At this rate, the sympathy that large parts of the world have shown throughout the years for Israel's security concerns is going up in flames together with the burning houses in Huwara. It is first and foremost for every decent Israeli to distance themselves from these settler-terrorist gangs, and for the authorities to stop handling them with kid gloves and make sure that they are brought to justice.

—Courtesy: Arab News

Briefs

Japan provides grant aid...

FROM PAGE 01
Dir Area Development Organization will receive a USD 71,999 grant (equivalent to around PKR 18.6 million) to construct a micro hydropower station in District Upper Dir, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. This project will supply reliable, low-cost, and environmentally-friendly electricity to local people. Its availability will allow them to turn on a light at night and encourage them to use heating appliances in winter instead of bonfires. At the signing ceremony, Mr. ITO congratulated the five organizations on winning the grants from the Government of Japan. He also expressed his expectation that these development projects in cooperation with local communities would have a positive impact on uplifting the living standards of Pakistani people at the grassroots level. The Government of Japan will provide further flexible and timely support for local NGOs through grant assistance to improve the social-welfare of the people of Pakistan at the grassroots level.

Imran Khan was ousted to...

FROM PAGE 01
"Now that he is out of power, he criticizes the rising inflation," Asif Zardari said, adding that Imran Khan was directly responsible for the country's current economic situation. PPP's co-chair said during his tenure, there was no inflation and the stock market was above the 35,000-point mark. He said the inflation went out of control during the PTI government and hasn't been controlled ever since. Zardari said the government had full cognizance of the spiraling inflation, but expressed the belief that his supporters would understand the economic situation and not hold it against the party. Zardari said he has personal contacts with the people of Vehari. The PPP supremo said Imran Khan did not win the by-election in Rajanpur on the basis of popularity, but due to price-hike and the women voted for his party because they run the kitchen for the family.

'Khan did not request to meet...

FROM PAGE 01
Fawad said that PTI Vice Chairman Shah Mehmood Qureshi and I have been named in another FIR. He went on to say that under an agenda, fake FIRs were being registered against PTI leadership with the aim to strangle politics in Pakistan and create a system like Burma and North Korea. He mocked that another FIRs could be registered against him for kite flying and staring at police from rooftop. About Rana Sanaullah arrest warrant, he said: "I hope interior minister will not resist arrest and comply with orders and will not even appeal as this is against PML-N policy as narrated by their leaders in consecutive Pressers." He said that problem was all institutions including media was de facto subservient to establishment so ground realities were bitter, for reforms establishment should partner in change, they needed to understand changing realities of Country.

Parvez Elahi appointed PTI...

FROM PAGE 01
the PTI chief and said that "no one has respected me like Imran Khan, and we all have to work together to strengthen him". In a major development late last month, the former Pakistan Muslim League-Quaid (PML-Q) leader announced joining the Imran Khan-led party along with 10 of his party's former MPs. Khan and Elahi enjoy close ties as the former Punjab chief minister vowed to stand by the ex-prime minister and ensured they remained in power in Punjab — major hub of the country's politics.

PSL cricketers back Women's League exhibition matches

The United States froze some \$7 billion in central bank assets after the Afghan government was toppled by Taliban forces in 2021, with a further \$2 billion frozen in European banks

AFZAL JAVED

RAWALPINDI: After the 24 action-packed HBL PSL 8 matches across the four cities of Pakistan, all eyes are on the upcoming Women's League exhibition matches which are all set to take place at the Pindi Cricket Stadium on 8, 10 and 11 March. The women's matches will start at 2pm and will be followed by the men's matches at 7pm. As 10 foreign players from seven countries will be a part of the exhibition matches, top players representing the six HBL PSL franchises are also all praise for the PCB's initiative for the soft launch of the Women's League. Islamabad United right-arm pacer Hasan Ali said: "We all know how past editions of the HBL PSL have helped in unearthing talent for Pakistan. Similarly, I am hopeful, the talent will come forward in the women's cricket by hosting these exhibition matches.

"It is an opportunity for young players to learn the art of this game by sharing dressing room with some of the biggest stars of women's cricket." Karachi Kings' Shoaib Malik said: "I am thrilled to see the inclusion of women's league exhibition matches in the HBL PSL 8. It will provide a much-needed platform to showcase the immense talent and potential of women cricketers. This is an excellent opportunity to create a level playing field and encourage gender equality in sports.

"By promoting women's cricket in Pakistan, we can inspire the next generation of athletes and help them realise their dreams. I fully support this initiative and hope to see the women's league grow from strength to strength in the years to come." Lahore Qalandars' explosive left-handed batter Fakhar Zaman said: "This is a great initiative taken by the PCB to organise exhibition matches for the women cricketers. As the HBL PSL matches helped



our players grow and be selected for the national team, the Women's League will also provide the same opportunity to the women cricketers to play fearlessly and get a chance to represent the national side in the future. "It is always a different and an amazing feeling to play in front of the home crowd. It is also an opportunity for upcoming women's cricketers to come to the ground and see the current female star players play in front of them."

Multan Sultans' Shan Masood said: "The hosting of exhibition matches is a huge step forward in women's cricket. As we have seen in the past how HBL PSL has helped in producing talented players for Pakistan cricket, I hope the exhibition matches will also play the same role for women's cricket. "We could see our women's cricket going in the right direction, the only difference between our side and the top sides of the world can be covered through the wom-

en's league. I can see by playing these league matches at home, the players will improve their skills which will ultimately help our women's team to win matches for the country in the future."

Peshawar Zalmi captain Babar Azam said: "My best wishes are with both sides playing in these exhibition matches. This is a huge opportunity for our women cricketers, the way they are being promoted and with the involvement of foreign players in these matches, it will provide a massive learning experience to our young women players. "This will also provide a chance to our local players to learn from the foreign players and understand their game, get to know more about their experience related to the game and how they play this game. "I urge the fans to support women's cricket the same way you support HBL PSL by coming to the ground and witnessing the great skills from

the women players." Quetta Gladiators captain Sarfaraz Ahmed said: "As the HBL PSL provided a chance to our local players to play this game, similarly, the exhibition matches are a start of a new era for women's cricket, where the young girls will come forward and take this game professionally. "The exhibition matches will provide great exposure to our women cricketers, they will gain a lot when they will play alongside the top cricketers of the world. Our male cricketers also learned a lot during previous editions of the HBL PSL."

Squads:

Amazons - Bismah Maroof (captain), Aliya Riaz, Anam Amin, Areesha Noor, Danni Wyatt (England), Eymen Fatima, Fatima Khan, Fatima Sana, Gulam Fatima, Gull Feroza, Kainat Imtiaz, Laura Delany (Ireland), Maia Bouchier (England), Nashra Sundhu, Sadaf Shamas, Sidra Nawaz, Tammy Beaumont (England) and Tess Flintoff (Australia)
Super Women - Nida Dar (captain) Aimen Anwar, Chamari Athapaththu (Sri Lanka), Iram Javed, Jahanara Alam (Bangladesh), Laura Wolvaardt (South Africa), Lauren Winfield-Hill (England), Lea Tahuhu (New Zealand), Muneeba Ali, Natalia Parvaiz, Omaira Sohail, Sadia Iqbal, Shawaal Zulfiqar, Sidra Amin, Syeda Aroob Shah, Syeda Masooma Zahra, Tuba Hassan and Umm-e-Hani

Schedule:

8 Mar - 1st match, 2pm, Pindi Cricket Stadium. Shozab Raza and Saleema Imtiaz (on-field umpires), Tariq Rasheed (third umpire) and Humaira Farah fourth umpire. Mohammad Anees (match referee)
10 Mar - 2nd match, 2pm, Pindi Cricket Stadium. Shozab Raza and Humaira Farah (on-field umpires), Tariq Rasheed (third umpire) and Saleema Imtiaz (fourth umpire). Mohammad Anees (match referee)
11 Mar - 3rd match, 2pm, Pindi Cricket Stadium. Tariq Rasheed and Saleema Imtiaz (on-field umpires), Shozab Raza (third umpire) and Humaira Farah (fourth umpire). Mohammad Anees (match referee).



ISLAMABAD: The participants of karate workshop demonstrate their skills at the Pakistan sports complex which was organized by the Embassy of Japan in cooperation with the Japan Karate Association (JKA) in Federal Capital. — Online

Afghan govt meets every condition for recognition

FOREIGN DESK

KABUL: Afghanistan's Acting Foreign Minister Amir Khan Muttaqi said that the Taliban government meets every condition for recognition, and it is up to the international community to make a decision. Amir Khan Muttaqi in an interview with BBC said that no single government in the world is not recognized due to the closure of schools or the existing conditions set by the world on the Taliban-run administration. "We can see dictatorial, Kingdom, Republican, and Emirate governments being recognized by the international community. Is there a single regime in the world that is not recognized based on the conditions the world has put in place on the Taliban regime?" Muttaqi said. He further added, that out of ten issues having been discussed by the foreign governments, only girls' education has not been resolved, and this is a great achievement for the current regime. In response to the question regarding the ban on female students' education, Muttaqi did not comment on whether the group will lift the ban or not. In his remarks, Muttaqi highlighted that major challenges including drug and security issues have been resolved, there are no cross-border issues with neighboring countries, and Afghani is the only stable currency in the region.

Fritz, Swiatek headline Indian Wells main draw

INDIAN WELLS: American Taylor Fritz will take on either compatriot Ben Shelton or Italian Fabio Fognini as he begins his title defence at Indian Wells this week, with top-ranked Iga Swiatek facing a potential third-round showdown with 2019 champ Bianca Andreescu. Fritz battled through excruciating pain to end Rafa Nadal's 20-match winning run and claim his first Masters 1000 championship last year and will hope for another story-book finish after the main draw was announced on Monday. Facing a depleted men's field, Fritz could run into Denmark's Holger Rune in the quarter-final. Seventh-seed Rune also won his first masters title last year when he outlasted 22-times major winner Novak Djokovic in Paris. Red-hot Daniil Medvedev, who collected his third straight title in Dubai this month, is on a collision course to meet third-seeded Norwegian Casper Ruud in the final eight, while Spain's top-seeded Carlos Alcaraz could face Canadian Felix Auger-Aliassime in the quarters. World number one Djokovic withdrew from the tournament on Sunday and Nadal, who aggravated a hip problem in his second-round loss at the Australian Open and has not played since, also pulled out. On the women's side, Swiatek looks as though she could have little trouble collecting a second straight title in the southern California desert after cruising to victory a year ago amid a blockbuster unbeaten streak. — Agencies

UEFA to refund Liverpool fans who had tickets for 2022 UCL final

SPORTS DESK

LONDON: UEFA is to refund Liverpool fans who had tickets for the 2022 Champions League final in Paris. It follows a recent independent report that found Uefa bears "primary responsibility" for the chaotic scenes before the game against Real Madrid. Fans were penned in and sprayed with tear gas outside Paris' Stade de France as kick-off was delayed by 36 minutes. Uefa said the refund scheme "covers all of the Liverpool FC ticket allocation for the final, i.e. 19,618 tickets". "We have taken into account a huge number of views expressed both publicly and privately and we believe we have devised a scheme that is comprehensive and fair," said Uefa general secretary Theodore Theodoridis. "We value the input from the Liverpool FC supporter organisations Spirit of Shankly and Liverpool Disabled

Supporters Association as well as the open and transparent dialogue throughout this period. "We recognise the negative experiences of those supporters on the day and with this scheme we will refund Liverpool fans who had bought tickets and who were the most affected by the difficulties in accessing the stadium." Liverpool were also part of the process of securing refunds for their fans and, as supporters bought tickets from them directly rather than Uefa, the club will administer the process. Uefa and French authorities initially blamed ticketless fans for the events outside the stadium. The report, which Uefa commissioned after the 28 May final, said there was "no evidence" to support the "reprehensible" claims. It added that "it is remarkable no one lost their life" and the collective action of Liverpool supporters was "probably instrumental" in preventing "more serious injuries and deaths" outside the stadium.

The report made 21 recommendations in an attempt to ensure "everything possible is done" to prevent any similar incident happening again at a major sporting event. Spirit of Shankly and the Liverpool Disabled Supporters' Association said they "welcomed" the "unprecedented" refund from Uefa. "With a promise to reimburse supporters, Uefa have gone some way to acknowledging their part in the fiasco," said a statement. "But it does not excuse Uefa, exempt them from criticism or lessen the need for them to implement all of the recommendations made by the independent inquiry. "We will work alongside Liverpool and publish details once we know how and when refunds will be processed." Liverpool manager Jurgen Klopp, whose side lost 1-0 to Real Madrid in the final, said it was "super important" that the club's fans had been exonerated for the situation which occurred before the game.

Somalia working to 'stop violence': President Alvi

DNA

DOHA: Somalia is working closely to restore peace in its northern breakaway region of Somaliland amid heightening tensions between the region's authorities and local clan forces, President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud told Al Jazeera. "We believe that unity is the only solution... but we don't want this unity through violence, which makes matters worse," Mohamud told during an interview. Violence erupted after leaders of the Sool, Sanaag and Cayn provinces of Somaliland — which claimed independence from Somalia in 1991 — announced their intention to rejoin Somalia. Fighting broke out last month around the town of Lascaod in Sool, killing at least 80 people and displacing more than 185,000, according to the UN.

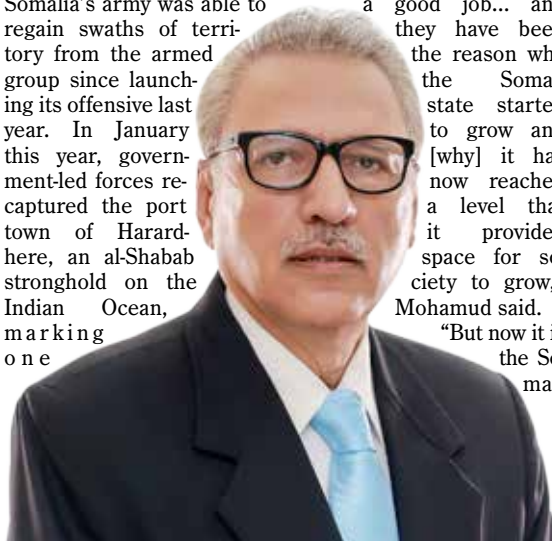
"We've been advocating for the last couple of weeks on how we can first stop the violence and then open a space for dialogue," Mohamud said in a wide-ranging interview in which he talked about the state's fight against the al-Shabab armed group, a sweeping drought in the country and gender violence. In August last year, a few months after being re-elected for a second time, Mohamud declared an "all-out war" against al-Shabab, which has been waging a rebellion against the government since 2007. "So many people have tried to stop this via peaceful means. Now the Somali government decided to solve this through an all-out war," he said. "There's no other option other than to take this terrorist group to a level where it cannot threaten the stability of the country," Mohamud said, adding

that the ultimate aim was to create the right environment for political inclusion, and attract foreign investment as well as Somalis to return to the country. With support from the US army, African Union (AU) forces and local assistance, Somalia's army was able to regain swaths of territory from the armed group since launching its offensive last year. In January this year, government-led forces recaptured the port town of Harardhere, an al-Shabab stronghold on the Indian Ocean, marking

one of the most significant victories of the offensive. Al-Shabab responded with a number of attacks in the capital and other cities, including targeting the mayor's office in Mogadishu and an attack on a military base. "The AU has done a good job... and they have been the reason why the Somali state started to grow and [why] it has now reached a level that it provided space for society to grow," Mohamud said. "But now it is the Somali

army, police and intelligence agencies [that] are running the operations with the support of AU and other international partners. "Challenges will remain in place," said the president, referring to when AU forces leave next year. "But we are organising... on one hand we're fighting and, on the other, we are building the security sector." The threat of famine in Somalia has been present since the country went through five consecutive failed rainy seasons. It now faces a sixth. In an assessment last December, the UN estimated that eight million people were badly food insecure and that more than 700,000 could suffer famine between April and June this year if aid supplies are not increased. However, in its latest report in late February, UN experts said that while food insecurity remains "extremely critical", they were

no longer projecting famine. "We averted a famine," said Mohamud. "There is no famine risk now and there is no risk of famine in the short term, but it's looming." Climate experts and humanitarian workers have warned that trends in recent weeks, including expectations of below-normal rainfall, are worse than those in 2011 when a quarter of a million people died in Somalia due to famine. There are also concerns among human-rights organisations that data to assess the level of famine is not accurate due to the state of security in certain areas. Mohamud also acknowledged the issue of gender violence by Somali forces. In 2021, two UN reports denounced what they described as an "alarming" 80 percent increase in sexual violence in Somalia compared with 2019, mostly carried out by al-Shabab fighters.



PSL 8th Edition



WEDNESDAY 07:00 PM
MARCH 08, 2023
Pindi Club Ground, Rawalpindi



Govt. is in no hurry to...

FROM PAGE 01

The Minister said for the past few days Imran Khan had staged a drama. "No criminal in the past 75 years of history of the country had denied appearing before the courts. Especially political leaders and workers who have rendered huge sacrifices for the protection and safeguarding of their ideology and politics," he added. Khawaja Asif underlined that the biggest of the sacrifices was that of Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto which was acknowledged by the judiciary. Justice Naseem Hassan Shah accepted Bhutto's judicial murder, he added. The trend of respect for the courts and adoption of legal and constitutional ways out for justice was set by Mian Nawaz Sharif, he said, adding, "No political leader and even a common citizen had defied the courts ever."

The Minister mentioned that Nawaz Sharif faced many court hearings along with his daughter and also got detained and disqualified. But, he said Imran Khan was defying the courts and provoking his workers and followers to violently resist the law enforcement agencies (LEAs). Khawaja Asif said the government was handling this issue with restraint. The advocate of Imran Khan did not have legal documents prepared to appear before the courts, he added. "This is not the behavior of politicians and political workers but of an opportunist. He started his politics after receiving the political patronage of General Musharraf. From Musharraf to Bajwa his politics is not without the support of the establishment," he added. "He used to praise General Bajwa during his tenure and now criticises him," he alleged, adding, "What kind of people and breed they are? A politician should feel proud over his/her detention for his ideas and go to jail with pride for being victimized for his ideology," the Defence Minister said.

Instead, he said they (PTI Leadership) started weeping on TV and some of them in courts. He has no regard for his own integrity, adding, "He is using a fake plaster, multiple fractures heal in this time period." Imran Khan's political status was exposed after his dramas. "People have trust in Shaukat Khan Memorial Hospital and he has not abstained from misappropriating its funds for using donations to fund PTI," he added. "He asks people to court arrests and gets bail himself. Leaders give courage to their followers by setting an example. Mian Nawaz Sharif, his family members, brother and nephews faced detentions. We have allegations and fight them with honor."

Responding to media queries, he said Toshakahana Committee was formed and its new rules and regulations were underway as no one would be allowed to keep those gifts except perishable items. "You can keep chocolates if someone gives you." The federal government would keep those gifts as state property and would hold a periodical auction of those gifts whereas that amount would be deposited in the national treasury or donated to recognized welfare institutions, he said. Earlier, the Defence Minister condemned the terrorist attack in Balochistan and said this trend started over the past few months which was alarming and regrettable. He added that all the law enforcement agencies (LEAs) were fighting against terrorism as Pakistan Army, FC and others were rendering huge sacrifices. "We went to Afghanistan and got a positive response in this regard. A delegation is also expected from Afghanistan and there will be some development on this issue to stop its soil use for terrorism," he said.

Briefs

African Union postpones conference in Tunisia

JOHANNESBURG: The African Union has postponed a conference that was scheduled to take place in Tunisia this month amid mounting criticism of a government crackdown on migrants from sub-Saharan Africa.

"The Pan-African Network Conference on Fighting Illicit Financial Flows in Africa that was scheduled to convene in Tunisia from 15-17 March 2023 has been postponed," a spokeswoman for the AU said in text messages to Anadolu on Tuesday.

The AU did not give a reason for the postponement, but it has been critical of the North African country's treatment of migrants from sub-Saharan Africa. Tensions escalated last month between Tunisia and the African Union amid a flow of irregular migrants into the North African country.—DNA

Twin quakes could cost Türkiye more than \$100B

GENEVA: Last month's earthquakes could cost Türkiye more than \$100 billion, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) estimated.

Louisa Vinton, Türkiye representative of UNDP, said Tuesday 2.7 million people were displaced due to the earthquakes that jolted the region a month ago.

Nearly 600,000 buildings collapsed, she added in a weekly press conference.

"According to estimates so far, the damage (...) will cost more than \$100 billion," she said, speaking from Türkiye's quake-hit province of Gaziantep via video-link. On Feb. 6, two powerful quakes struck southern Türkiye. The magnitude 7.7 and 7.6 tremors were centered in Kahramanmaraş and rocked 10 other provinces — Hatay, Gaziantep, Adiyaman, Malatya, Adana, Diyarbakir, Kilis, Osmaniye, Sanliurfa, and Elazig. Some 13.5 million people have been affected by the devastating quakes. Several countries in the region, including Syria and Lebanon, also felt the tremors that struck in less than 10 hours.

More than 46,100 people were killed by the back-to-back quakes in Türkiye, according to the latest official figures. Thousands of others were injured.

Walkouts disrupt French public transport

PARIS: Walkouts jolted all of France on Tuesday with serious disruptions in public transport as well as oil refineries, local media reported. This is the sixth demonstration against the government's proposed pension reform plan. Labor unions have called for a nationwide strike while the Senate is still debating the reform plan. At the national railway company SNCF, 80% of the high-speed trains TGV Inoui and Ouigo were canceled, as well as almost all of the intercity lines, the daily Le Parisien said. Severe disruptions were also seen in the SNCF Paris region train lines. Parisian regional transport operator, RATP's only fully operational lines are 1 and 14, which are automated. The other RATP metro lines are having serious disruptions too, and most of the buses are not functioning in northern Lille city, while not a single tramway is operating in the southern Nice city. Some students also took action on Tuesday morning. Racine High School students in Paris blocked the building. TotalEnergies' management on Tuesday morning said that 64% of their refinery workers (190 workers) were on strike, the daily Le Figaro noted.

CGT Union announced that oil refineries have been blocked on this day, adding that fuel transfer to stations has been stopped, according to the same source.

TotalEnergies' management guaranteed consumers that they will not suffer from fuel shortages at the gas stations where stocks are quite high, Le Figaro added.—APP

ICCI for strong academia-industry linkages to boost economic growth

Adnan Mukhtar, Dr. Muhammad Usman, Muhammad Naveed Malik, Zareef Khan, Zia Khalid Chaudhry and others were in the ICCI delegation

ISLAMABAD: The developed countries have achieved phenomenal economic growth by promoting strong academia-industry linkages and Pakistan has to adopt the same approach to promote industrialization and improve its economic growth. This was said by Faad Waheed, Acting President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry during his visit to Centre of Research, Innovation and Commercialization (ORIC) of Air University, Islamabad along with a delegation.

Faad Waheed said that universities are producing many research projects, but they are not benefiting the local industry as they are not oriented to resolving the industrial prob-



lems. He said that with close academia-industry linkages, universities can help in improving the efficiency, productivity and competitiveness of local industry and producing value-added products to boost exports. He stressed

that universities should focus on applied research that would help in addressing major problems of the society. He said that ICCI is ready to provide mentorship & career counseling to students, facilitate their placement as interns

in local industry and help in commercialization of innovative business ideas of students. He emphasized that the universities should focus on fostering entrepreneurship in students that would enable them to promote business

start-ups and play an active role in the economic development of the country. Speaking at the occasion, Air Marshal Javid Ahmed HI(M) Retd, Vice Chancellor, Air University, Islamabad welcomed the ICCI delegation and said that

close cooperation between Air University and ICCI would produce beneficial outcomes for students and industry. He said that the industry should share its problems with universities so that academia can make efforts to resolve them. He hoped that ICCI's efforts would contribute in improving linkages between the academia and the industry that would lead to accelerated growth of the economy. Air Cdr. (Retd) Afzaal Ahmed, Director ORIC, Air University gave a detailed briefing to the ICCI delegation on industrial laboratories and other industrial innovations. Adnan Mukhtar, Dr. Muhammad Usman, Muhammad Naveed Malik, Zareef Khan, Zia Khalid Chaudhry and others were in the ICCI delegation.

Fresh \$40m cash aid reaches Kabul

The central bank has stated that the government appreciates the international community's support in shipping cash into the country aimed at helping vulnerable families during these difficult times

NEWS DESK

KABUL: Da Afghanistan Bank (DAB) on Tuesday announced that a \$40 million cash aid package had reached Kabul, and has been transferred to a commercial bank.

Afghanistan's central bank welcomed the aid, as part of the United Nations' humanitarian cash aid, and called on the international community for more cooperation across fields.

According to the central bank, this is the 60th aid package that has been dispatched to Afghanistan.

stan. Since the return of the Taliban to power in August 2021, the international community's cash aid has reached nearly \$2 billion.

The central bank has stated that the government appreciates the international community's support in shipping cash into the country aimed at helping vulnerable families during these difficult times. The central bank is trying its best to strengthen private banking and other sectors respectively.

Meanwhile, Afghanistan Central Bank will auction \$16 million on Wednesday, as part of the contin-

uous efforts to stabilize Afghan against foreign currencies in the local markets.

The winners of the auction are obliged to liquidate their accounts by the end of the day. As per the announcement, partial settlement of transactions is not allowed and the winners of the auction are obliged to transfer the payable amount to the central bank in cash within a certain time.

Despite the massive criticisms the ruling regime receives from the people of Afghanistan and the international community regarding the strict

policies, the de facto authorities have been able to manage the economy and keep the value of the local currency stable. This positive sign highlights that efforts are underway to find solutions to the financial and economic challenges the country is currently faced with. Compared to the Pakistani Rupee and Iranian Rial, Afghanistan has remained quite strong over the past year and a half. Many financial and economic experts relate the stable value of Afghanistan to the inflow of USD to Afghanistan under the umbrella of humanitarian cash aid.

IRC and Public Health Department, KP renew MoU for coop

PESHAWAR: To continue their commitment to work for environmental health and the provision of clean drinking water, sanitation and hygiene facilities, International Rescue Committee (IRC) and The Public Health Engineering Department (PHED) renewed the respective MoU in a somber signing ceremony in Peshawar, to further strengthen their collaboration. The International Rescue Committee (IRC) has a longstanding partnership since 2018 with PHED and both entities have worked closely on initiatives pertaining to environmental health. This collaboration entails but is not limited to staff trainings, knowledge sharing, joint project implementation and behavior change and climate smart water and sanitation systems. Speaking at the ceremony Muhammad Idrees, Secretary PHED said that such partnerships can play a significant role in improving the environmental health in the province. By working together, the PHED and IRC can leverage their strengths and resources under financing, technical expertise, and innovation approaches to address the prevalent challenges facing the sector. He further noted the potential economic benefits such as less burden on public health infrastructure and higher attendance ratios in schools. Shabnam Baloch, Country Director IRC-Pakistan, while speaking at the occasion shared that it is pertinent to foster gender and climate inclusive WASH interventions that take into account the different needs and experiences of men, women, and gender-diverse individuals in the new reality of climate change. Moreover, WASH interventions should be sensitive to the unique needs of women and girls, who are often disproportionately affected by poor WASH practices. This includes ensuring that facilities are safe, private, and accessible for women and girls. Ms. Shabnam further stressed that approaches of Behavior Change Communication (BCC) can play a crucial role in promoting and positive and sustainable WASH behaviors.—DNA

Iran will never back down from supporting Palestine

TEHRAN: Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian says the Islamic Republic will never retreat even one iota from its stance on supporting the Palestinian cause and resistance. Addressing a conference on the diplomacy of resistance in Tehran on Tuesday, Amir-Abdollahian said all Iranians will remain committed to the Palestinian issue until the establishment of a united government with al-Quds as its capital. Palestinians want the West Bank as part of a future independent state with East al-Quds as its capital. Elsewhere in his remarks, Amir-Abdollahian pointed to Iran's steadfastness in the "path of diplomacy and negotiations" to revive the 2015 nuclear agreement and expressed Tehran's resolve to continue its bids to reach an agreement based on its national interests. "We have explicitly told the US and the Western parties that observing Iran's red lines and securing national interests as well as reaching an agreement to which all parties would show their adherence are on our serious agenda," the top Iranian diplomat said. He added that Iran would never quit the negotiating table and it has proved that it has never retreated from its red lines even during the recent foreign-backed riots in the country. Iran showed to the world the peaceful nature of its nuclear program by signing the nuclear deal, formally known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), with six world states — namely the US, Germany, France, Britain, Russia and China. But, Washington's unilateral withdrawal in May 2018 and its subsequent re-imposition of sanctions against Tehran left the future of the deal in limbo.—APP

Session of Pak-Belarus working group on agri co-op held

ISLAMABAD: The 6th session of Pakistan-Belarus Joint Working Group on Agriculture Cooperation was held virtually today. Pakistan side was led by the Minister for Food Security and Research of Pakistan Chaudhary Tariq Bashir Cheema, accompanied by Zafar Hasan, Federal Secretary for Food Security and Research and other members. Ambassador of Pakistan to Belarus Sajjad Haider Khan also attended the session. Mr. Shagoiko Vadim, Deputy Minister of Agriculture and Food of the Republic of Belarus led the Belarusian side.

The session revolved around the discussions on enhancing cooperation in the field of agriculture, exploring joint venture op-



portunities, exchanging delegations, participating in fairs, and research collaborations. Both sides acknowledged the importance of agriculture as a key sector for economic growth and development and exchanged

ideas on promoting sustainable agriculture practices and boosting productivity. The officials from both countries expressed their willingness to work towards strengthening agricultural ties between Pakistan and Belarus, which

will benefit the farmers, consumers, and businesses of both countries. This session marks a significant step towards achieving this goal, and both sides look forward to more collaborations in the future.—Agencies

Afghan neighbours discuss road to peace

DNA

US froze some \$7 billion in central bank assets after the Afghan government was toppled by Taliban forces

TASHKENT - Russia and six nations bordering Afghanistan have set up a club to discuss ways to achieve long-term peace in the war-torn nation, with diplomats at the inaugural meeting on Tuesday calling for a freeze on Afghan central bank assets to be lifted. Special representatives from Russia, China, Iran, Pakistan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan convened in Tashkent and plan to meet regularly to discuss issues facing Afghanistan, Uzbekistan's foreign ministry said.

The group urged Western nations to lift the freeze on the Afghan central bank's assets, Uzbek special representative Ismatilla Ergashev said. "The representatives of these countries emphasised that the return of the money of the Central Bank of Afghanistan should be used primarily to pay the salaries of... school teachers and doctors, and at the same time to support the part of the population which is in a difficult situation," he told a briefing. "They also emphasised that nearly 25 million people in Afghanistan are starving and deprived of food." The United States froze some \$7 billion in central bank assets after the Afghan government was toppled by Taliban forces in 2021, with a further \$2 billion frozen in European banks. Washington has said that some of the funds would go to a foundation to benefit ordinary Afghans. The United Nations last month said six million people.



TASHKENT: Deputy Foreign Minister of Turkmenistan Vepa Hajiyeve, Head of the Department of Strategic Studies of Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Tajikistan Vafu Niyatbekzoda, Special Representative of President of Russia Zamir Kabulov, Special Representative of President of Uzbekistan Ismatulla Irgashev, Special Representative of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of China Yue Xiaoyong, Special Representative of President of Iran Hassan Kazemi Qomi and Deputy Foreign Minister of Pakistan Syed Ahsan Raza Shah pose for a picture during a meeting of special representatives of neighboring countries of Afghanistan, in Tashkent. — DNA

Israel strike knocks out airport in Syria's Aleppo

DAMASCUS: Israeli warplanes struck Aleppo airport before dawn Tuesday, causing significant damage that halted flights to and from Syria's war- and quake-battered second city, the defence ministry said. The airport has been a major conduit for aid flights since a February 6 earthquake devastated swathes of southeastern Turkey and neighbouring Syria, and they too were brought to a stop, a transport ministry official said.

"At exactly 2:07 am (2307 GMT Monday), the Israeli enemy carried out an air attack from the Mediterranean west of Latakia targeting Aleppo international airport," the defence ministry said in a statement.—APP

Turkish opp names Kılıçdarolu as presidential candidate

ANKARA: Türkiye's fractured opposition parties ended months of fractious debate on Monday and agreed to nominate the chairperson of the Republican People's Party (CHP), Kemal Kılıçdarolu, as their joint candidate against President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan in the upcoming May polls. "As a result of our meetings, we have decided that Kemal Kılıçdarolu will run as our candidate for president," Temel Karamollaoğlu, the chairperson of opposition Felicity Party (SP) said, after hosting a meeting with the leaders of six opposition parties.

In a joint statement following their meeting in the capital Ankara on Monday, the six-party opposition bloc announced their decision. The alliance of six opposition parties comprises the CHP, Good Party (IP), SP, Future Party (GP), Democrat Party (DP) and Democracy and Progress (DEVA) Party.

IP Chairwoman Meral Akşener rejoined the opposition alliance and attended the coalition's meeting on Monday. Akşener quit the bloc on Friday due to her unwillingness to support the candidacy of Kılıçdarolu for the upcoming elections. Regarding the upcoming presidential and parliamentary elections in Türkiye, President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan signalled that the elections would be held on May 14, when citizens will choose the president as well as all 600 members of the Turkish Parliament. In 2017, Turkish voters decided through a referendum to switch from a parliamentary system to an executive presidential system of governance. As of 2018, Türkiye did away with the premiership and fully shifted to a presidential system of government.—APP

Jewish settler groups storm Aqsa

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM: Dozens of Jewish settlers stormed the Aqsa Mosque in Occupied Jerusalem on Tuesday morning under heavy police protection. Led by far-right rabbi Yehuda Glick, the settlers entered the Mosque in groups through its Maghariba Gate and toured its courtyards under tight police protection. During their tours at the Islamic holy site, the settlers received lectures from rabbis about the alleged temple mount, and a number of them performed Talmudic prayers in the eastern area of the Mosque. Meanwhile, the Israeli occupation police imposed movement and entry restrictions on Muslim worshippers at the Aqsa Mosque's entrances and gates. The Israeli police also detained the female activist Nafisa Khwais in Old City early today. Last week, extremist Jewish temple mount groups called for storming the Aqsa Mosque on Tuesday and Wednesday in large numbers to celebrate the Jewish holiday of Purim. Jewish settlers try to impose Talmudic rituals at the Aqsa Mosque by launching repeated incursions into the holy site and provocatively dancing and chanting racist songs at the Aqsa gates.—Agencies

Briefs

Sindh refuses to help govt in 'flawed' census

DNA

KARACHI: The Sindh government has refused to help the federal government in connection with conducting digital census. Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah on Tuesday wrote a letter to Planning and Development Minister Ahsan Iqbal. In his letter, CM Shah called upon the federal minister to remove reservations ahead of the digital census. He pointed out that a full-fledged campaign for the awareness of census was not run by the federal government. The chief minister said that major shortcomings regarding connectivity of the tablets and data storage have come to light. He said that people were not taken into confidence regarding personal information. Mr Shah wrote that the first step of the population census i.e. house census has already been completed. He rued that the provincial government was not apprised of the results of experimental stage of the census.

The letter also reminded the federal government that it has not released funds under the heads of staff hiring, security, transportation and other necessary arrangements. In his letter, the chief minister also said that the district administration pointed out flaws in making blocs for conducting census but these faults were not removed so far.

Poland to deliver 10 Leopard tanks to Ukraine

WARSAW: Poland said on Tuesday that it will send 10 Leopard tanks to Ukraine this week, offering more of the vehicles that Kyiv says are crucial to countering Russia's invasion. Poland had promised to ship a total of 14 German-made Leopard 2 heavy tanks to Kyiv, with the first four already delivered in late February, on the first anniversary of Russia's offensive in Ukraine. "Poland already this week will deliver to Ukraine 10 Leopard 2A4 tanks," Mariusz Blaszczak told reporters in Warsaw before flying to Stockholm for a meeting of EU defence ministers. Blaszczak also said Poland would set up a service hub for the battle tanks used in Ukraine. "We are ready to launch a service hub in Poland that will repair and service the Leopard tanks delivered to Ukraine," Blaszczak said, adding that he would raise the issue in his talks with the German Defence Minister Boris Pistorius. "The fundamental issue that we will discuss is the low availability of spare parts for Leopard tanks," Blaszczak said. "I expect of minister (Boris) Pistorius that he influences the German industry, so that the spare parts to the Leopards are delivered," Polish minister added. Poland was spearheading efforts to send the modern Leopard 2 tanks to Ukraine, with Germany initially resisting the pressure from allies to authorise the move.



ISLAMABAD: Royal Highness Prince Fahad bin Mansour Al Saud and Ambassador of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in Pakistan Nawaf a group photo during Launching Ceremony Saudi Pakistan Tech House at local Hotel, in Federal Capital. – Online

China warns US against 'conflict and confrontation'

NEWS DESK

BEIJING: The United States should change its "distorted" attitude towards China or "conflict and confrontation" will follow, China's foreign minister said on Tuesday, while defending its stance on the war in Ukraine and defending its close ties with Russia. The US had been engaging in suppression and containment of China rather than engaging in fair, rule-based competition, Foreign Minister Qin Gang told a news conference on the sidelines of an annual parliament meeting in Beijing. "The United States' perception and views of China are seriously distorted," Qin said. "It regards China as its primary rival and the most consequential geopolitical challenge. This is like the first button in the shirt be-

lieved put wrong." Relations between the two superpowers have been tense for years over a number of issues including Taiwan, trade, and more recently the war in Ukraine but they worsened last month after the United States shot down a balloon off the US east coast that it says was a Chinese spying craft. The US says it is establishing guardrails for relations and is not seeking conflict but Qin said that meant in practice was that China was not supposed to respond with words or action when slandered or attacked. "That is just impossible," Qin told his first news conference since becoming foreign minister in December. "If the United States does not hit the brakes, and continues to speed down the wrong path, no amount of guardrails can prevent derailment, which will become conflict and confrontation, and who will

bear the catastrophic consequences?" Qin likened the Sino-US competition to a race between two Olympic athletes.

"If one side, instead of focusing on giving one's best, always tries to trip the other up, even to the extent that they must enter the Paralympics, then this is not fair competition," he said. During a nearly two-hour news conference in which he answered questions submitted in advance, Qin made a robust defence of "wolf warrior diplomacy", an assertive and often abrasive stance adopted by China's diplomats since 2020. "When jackals and wolves are blocking the way, and hungry wolves are attacking us, Chinese diplomats must then dance with the wolves and protect and defend our home and country," he said. Qin also said that an "invisible hand" was pushing for the escalation of the war in Ukraine "to serve

certain geopolitical agendas", without specifying who he was referring to. He reiterated China's call for dialogue to end the war. China struck a "no limits" partnership with Russia last year, weeks before its invasion of Ukraine, and China has blamed NATO expansion for triggering the war, echoing Russia's complaint. China has declined to condemn the invasion and has fiercely defended its stance on Ukraine, despite Western criticism of its failure to single Russia out as the aggressor. China has also vehemently denied US accusations that it has been considering supplying Russia with weapons. Qin said China had to advance its relations with Russia as the world becomes more turbulent and close interactions between President Xi Jinping and his Russian counterpart, Vladimir Putin, anchored the neighbours' relations.

ECP denies asking funds from prime minister's office

ISLAMABAD: The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has refuted media allegations claiming that it had asked for funds from the prime minister's office for upcoming elections in Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa assemblies.

In a statement issued on Monday, an ECP spokesman brushed aside the allegations and stated that the commission had not sent any such letter to Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif. This denial came after a section of media reported that the ECP had written a letter to the prime minister requesting additional funds to conduct upcoming elections in Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa assemblies. The ECP has already begun preparations to ensure that the process is conducted smoothly and transparently. – APP

Two strong earthquakes rock southern Philippines

MANILA: Two strong earthquakes jolted the southern Philippines on Tuesday, authorities said, with the second damaging buildings and forcing the evacuation of hundreds of villagers from their homes. A 6.0-magnitude quake struck at about 2:00 pm (0600 GMT), a few kilometres from Maragusan municipality in the mountainous gold-mining province of Davao del Oro on Mindanao island, the US Geological Survey said.

Local authorities said there were no reports of casualties or significant damage. But a shallower second quake, measuring 5.6 magnitude, hit nearly three hours later in the neighbouring municipality of New Bataan, triggering the collapse of some houses. New Bataan disaster officer Lynne Dollolasa said nearly 300 people were forced to leave their homes in Andap village, where "a number of houses collapsed".

About 100 people inside a shopping mall in Tagum city, in the adjacent province of Davao del Norte, were hit by falling glasses and plates as they fled the building, said Jay Suaybaguio, the provincial information officer. "I was in the third floor buying office supplies when the quake suddenly struck," Suaybaguio told AFP. "When we reached the first floor we saw broken bottles of wine and condiments. The lights went out but emergency lights turned on, helping us to find our way." – APP

Imran contacted me for help, reveals ex-CJP

The former CJP's comments come as PTI chief faces charges of corruption in the Toshakhana case for which a lower court has also issued non-bailable arrest warrants against him

ISLAMABAD: Former chief justice of Pakistan (CJP) Saqib Nisar has revealed that ousted prime minister Imran Khan "contacted him for help with court cases" two weeks back. Journalist Zahid Gishkori, while speaking on TV programme, said that the former CJP confirmed that he had spoken to Imran Khan. A contradiction came to the fore in the conversation of former CJP Nisar with two different journalists regarding contact with former premier Khan. At 10am, the former CJP told anchorperson Adil Shahzeb that he had no contact with the PTI chairman, but confirmed contact with the erstwhile DG ISI General (ret'd) Faiz Hamid, said Adil Shahzeb. It was a shocking response for journalist Adil. He said the ex-CJP questioned if he would lobby for Imran Khan and if his character was any less than the PTI chief. "Are my capabilities and intelligence levels any less than Imran Khan's that I would lobby for him?" Saqib Nisar was quoted as saying by the journalist. The former CJP's comments come as the PTI chief faces charges of corruption in the Toshakhana case for which a lower court has also issued non-bailable arrest warrants against him. – DNA

Bilawal in New York for 'Women in Islam' moot

UNITED NATIONS: Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari flew into New York Tuesday morning to begin a 5-day visit during which he will preside over a conference on 'Women in Islam', which is set to take place Wednesday on the sidelines of the 67th Session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW). He was received at New York's John F Kennedy International airport by Pakistan's UN Ambassador Munir Akram, Deputy Permanent Representative Aamir Khan, Consul General Ayesha Ali, and officials of the Pakistan Mission to the UN.

Later today, the foreign minister will participate in a high-level UN Security Council debate on 'Women, Peace and Security', sponsored by Mozambique in its capacity as the 15-member Council's President for March. On Wednesday, the one-day conference on Women in Islam will be held in the Economic and Social Council's chamber at the UN headquarters. It is being hosted by Pakistan in its capacity as the chair of the OIC CFM. The stated objective of the conference is to bridge the perception-reality gap on the rights of women in Islam and celebrate the experiences and successes of iconic Muslim women. – APP

Kyiv vows to send more troops into Bakhmut

KYIV: Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy publicly committed his troops to holding out in Bakhmut after days in which they had seemed likely to withdraw, apparently prolonging the war's bloodiest battle in a bid to break Moscow's assault force. Moscow has sent thousands of troops in waves over recent weeks to try to capture the eastern Ukrainian city and secure its first battlefield victory in more than half a year. Ukrainian forces have dug trenches further west and in recent days had seemed to be preparing to pull out. But Zelenskyy's remarks on an overnight address suggested Kyiv had elected not only to stay and fight on but to reinforce the city, apparently convinced that Russia's losses in trying to storm it would be greater than those of the defenders.

"The command unanimously supported" the decision not to withdraw, Zelenskyy said. "There were no other positions. I told the commander-in-chief to find the appropriate forces to help our guys in Bakhmut." Russia, which launched a full-scale invasion of Ukraine a year ago and claims to have annexed nearly a fifth of its territory, says taking Bakhmut would be a step towards seizing the surrounding industrial Donbas region, a major war aim. "The liberation of Artemovsk continues," Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu said in televised remarks, using the Soviet-era name for Bakhmut, re-adopted by the invading Russians. "The city is an important hub for defending Ukrainian troops in the Donbas." – Agencies

15 killed, 100 injured in Bangladesh building blast

DHAKA: At least 15 people were killed and more than 100 were injured in Bangladesh's capital Tuesday, officials said, after an explosion inside an office building in a bustling commercial district. The cause of the blast remained unclear but fatal building fires and explosions are common in Bangladesh, where safety enforcement is often lax. The blast shook the fourth and fifth floors of a seven-storey building in Gulistan, a major hub for wholesale goods in Dhaka. Several floors of the building and side walls were destroyed in the explosion, which sent rubble and splinters flying into crowded streets. More than 100 people were treated for head wounds, fractures and other injuries at Dhaka Medical College Hospital, hospital director Nazmul Islam told AFP. – APP

Government to arm new NAB chairman with more powers

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The federal cabinet on Tuesday approved amendments to the laws to further empower the chairman of National Accountability Bureau (NAB). As per the official sources, the federal cabinet approved the draft of NAB Laws (Amendment) Ordinance through circulation. "Cases declared inadmissible by accountability court can be sent by the NAB chairman to any other relevant forum," the text of the ordinance read. "The NAB chairman will be able to review the case declared inadmissible and give approval to dispose of it," it added.

"The agency concerned will be able to open the case from the adjournment stage on the directions of the NAB chairman," it stated. "On receiving the case from NAB, the concerned body will have the authority to collect evidence afresh. Under the NAB amendments, the case cannot be transferred from one regional court to the other," it declared. "In the absence of the NAB chairman, the deputy chairman will exercise the powers as chairman. In the absence of the deputy chairman, the federal government can delegate the powers of the chairman to any NAB officer," it stated.

US-Pakistan Counter terrorism Dialogue concludes in Islamabad

ISLAMABAD: Senior officials of the United States and their Pakistani counterparts opened the Pakistan-US Counterterrorism Dialogue on March 6 at the Pakistan Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Islamabad. The two-day policy-focused meeting was chaired by the U.S. Department of State Acting Coordinator for Counterterrorism Christopher Landberg and Pakistan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs Additional Secretary for the UN and Economic Diplomacy Syed Haider Shah. The Dialogue provided an opportunity to discuss the counterterrorism landscape in Pakistan and the broader region, with a focus on areas where the United

States and Pakistan can better collaborate to counter regional and global threats, improve cooperation, prevent and counter violent extremism, and combat terrorism financing. Both governments resolved to increase dialogue on these

topics and continue discussing paths to restart or introduce counterterrorism programs to assist Pakistan's efforts to better counter all forms of violent extremism. The Counterterrorism Dialogue underscores the

deepening cooperation between the United States and Pakistan in a range of areas. These partnerships are being advanced through high-level bilateral meetings like the recently concluded Trade and Investment Framework (TIFA) Council Ministerial in Washington, DC, and the upcoming Strategic Energy Dialogue and Climate and Environment Working Group meetings in Pakistan. The Counterterrorism Dialogue is just one example of an ever-stronger bilateral relationship based on shared values and interests, and it reaffirms the United States' and Pakistan's shared determination to contribute to both regional and global security and stability. – DNA



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