



Islamabad POST

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Women backbone of our family system, society, says Sherry

Detailed News On Page-06

Iran concerned over Israeli role in Caucasus

Detailed News On Page-07



Ten Hag backs Fernandes as Man Utd captain

Detailed News On Page-06



Punjab Assembly elections

ECP announces schedule: polling to be held on April 30

Election Commission invites Interior, Defence secretaries today for consultations

SHUJAAT HAMZA / DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Election Commission of Pakistan has announced election schedule for general election in Punjab. "Polling for election of Punjab provincial assembly will be held on April 30," the election commission announced. According to the election schedule, candidates could submit their nomination papers from March 12 to 14, while scrutiny of the papers will be held on March 22. The candidates could withdraw their nomination papers upto April 05 and election symbols to candidates will be allotted on April 06, the ECP announced. It is pertinent to mention here that President Dr Arif Alvi announced April 30 as the date for elections in Punjab. The announcement from President Alvi came minutes after the ECP suggested dates for the election in the province in light of the Supreme Court verdict. President announced the date after considering the dates proposed by the election commission, the President's office tweeted. The ECP had proposed Punjab election date between April 30 and May 7 in a letter written to President Arif Alvi. Earlier, the Supreme Court had ordered the ECP to hold elections in Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa within 90 days. The apex court announced its decision in a split verdict of 3-2 after the completion of the hearing on the suo moto notice. CJP Justice Umar Ata Bandial, Justice Munib Akhtar and Justice Muhammad Ali Mazhar supported the verdict, while Justice Jamal Mandokhail and Justice Mansoor Ali Shah opposed the admissibility of the suo moto notice and dissented from the majority verdict. The Punjab and KP assemblies were dissolved on Jan 18 and Jan 14, respectively, after former prime minister Imran Khan had announced the dissolution of provincial assemblies in an attempt to force the government to hold snap polls. As per the Constitution of Pakistan, polls need to be held for the dissolved assemblies within 90 days.

ECP, KP governor's meeting fails to yield result

SHAMIM SHAHID

PESHAWAR: The meeting in Peshawar on Wednesday between a delegation of Election Commission of Pakistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa governor ended without result as the latter has failed to give any date for elections to the provincial assembly. Sources said that a consultation between the ECP delegation and KP Governor Haji Ghulam Ali failed to produce any result as the latter did not suggest any election date during meeting. The governor will hold another meeting with Chief Election Commissioner Sikandar Sultan Raja next week. The ECP delegation comprised secretary election commission, special secretary and the DG law. The ECP delegation gave briefing to KP Governor Ghulam Ali. Earlier the ECP delegation reached Peshawar on the invitation of KP Governor Ghulam Ali to make consultations on general elections in the province. Governor of Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa (KP) Ghulam Ali on Monday had invited the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) for consultation, saying he would give a date for polls after deliberation. A few days ago, the Supreme Court announced its verdict after two-day-long proceedings in the case regarding the delay in the announcement of the date for provincial elections in Punjab and KP.



ISLAMABAD: Activists of Women March hold placards on the occasion of International Women Day, in front of the NPC, on Wednesday. – Online

6 terrorists killed in Datta Khel IBO

The killed terrorists remained actively involved in terrorist activities

NEWS DESK

RAWALPINDI: The security forces on Wednesday killed six terrorists in an intense exchange of fire during an Intelligence Based Operation (IBO), conducted in general area Datta Khel, North Waziristan District. According to the Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR) news release, the killed terrorists remained actively involved in terrorist activities against the security forces and civilians. The forces also recovered weapons and ammunition from the killed terrorists. The locals of the area appreciated the security forces' response and expressed their full support to eliminate the menace of terrorism from the area.

Section 144 imposed

PTI suspends election rally amid chaos

PTI blasts govt for abusing protestors, destroying property

BUREAU REPORT

LAHORE: The Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Wednesday told its workers to return to their homes "peacefully" after police arrested several people for violating CrP Section 144. The party workers and supporters were taken into custody from the Zaman Park area where PTI Chairman Imran Khan's residence is located, after the Punjab Home Department imposed Section 144 – banning public rallies ahead of the PTI's election campaign and Aurat March, which were planned for today. In a statement, PTI senior leader Hammad Azhar blamed the Punjab caretaker government and the Centre for seeking "chaos" and said that despite the polls' schedule being

Cops suspended for baton-charge of Aurat March

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Interior Minister Rana Sanaullah said on Wednesday that police personnel who behaved violently with the participants in Aurat March in Islamabad had been suspended. Taking to Twitter, he said those persons who misbehaved with the women in the march were also being identified. He also vowed strict legal action

Sindh's concerns to be addressed

SAIFULLAH

ISLAMABAD: Following Pakistan Peoples Party's (PPP) "grave" concerns over the ongoing digital census, Planning Minister Ahsan Iqbal directed the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) to meet with Chief Minister Murad Ali Shah on Wednesday (today). The News reported. PBS' Statistician Dr Naeemuz Zafar along with his team will hold a meeting with Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah to address his concerns over the ongoing first-ever digital population census 2023. The seventh meeting of the Census Monitoring Committee was held on Tuesday by

Briefs

Info minister slams Imran's campaign

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Information and Broadcasting Mariyum Aurangzeb said on Wednesday that Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf Chairman Imran Khan's "save judiciary" movement was a slap on the face of the justice system of the country. In a tweet, the minister termed Imran Khan as a foreign-funded agent and Tashkhan thief who handed over a \$190 million amount from national exchequer to an individual and received bribery through Al Qadir Trust. She said that a judicial absconder's campaign was not to save the judiciary but an effort to avoid appearing in courts to escape arrest.

Ex ISI chief being probed, Sana reveals

Defends govt decision to impose Section 144
Maryam demands court martial of Faiz Hameed

DNA

LAHORE: Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PML-N) senior vice president Maryam Nawaz has demanded the court martial of former DG ISI Lieutenant General (Lt Gen) Retired Faiz Hameed. In an exclusive interview with a web channel, Maryam Nawaz alleged that Faiz Hameed had played role in toppling the PML-N government for two years and backing PTI chief Imran Khan's government which brought destruction to the country. She said that Faiz Hameed must see his court martial for his unconstitutional role and exemplary punishment should be given to him. "I knocked on the court's door against Gen Faiz Hameed when he was the head of the ISI. I submitted the entire evidence along with



Ex ISI Chief FAIZ HAMEED Interior Minister RANA SANAUULLAH

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: The investigation agencies were conducting an inquiry regarding former Inter-Services Intelligence chief Lt Gen (ret'd) Faiz Hamid and any progress about it will be shared, Interior Minister Rana Sanaullah said Wednesday. The minister shared the information while addressing a press conference in Islamabad, following the imposition of Section 144 in Lahore ahead of Aurat March and Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf's (PTI) election rally. "Only the institution can conduct Faiz's court martial," Sanaullah said, adding that the General Headquarters (GHQ) holds the military trial, not the interior ministry. He said that whatever was being

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Masses left at IMF's mercy

BUREAU REPORT

LAHORE: Former Punjab chief minister Chaudhry Parvez Elahi lambasted on Wednesday Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, claiming the latter left the masses to rely on the mercy of IMF. Mr Elahi held a meeting with former lawmakers and other leaders, during which he took a dig at PM Shehbaz Sharif and Finance Minister Ishaq Dar, saying, "The performance of PM Shehbaz Sharif and Ishaq Dar has been exposed." "The inept rulers have been failed to take the country out of the quagmire. Imran Khan will revive the country's economy once he will come to power," added Mr Elahi.

Will the elections take place in Punjab?

There are clear indications that both the KP and Punjab governments do not want to hold elections

ANSAR M BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: The Election Commission has announced the schedule of the general elections in Punjab province according to which polling shall take place on April 30. The date was given after the apex court verdict regarding holding of elections within 90 days. The KP Governor is yet to announce the date. The meeting that took place between the governor and the Election Commission officials remained inconclusive and both sides resolved to meet again next week. Earlier the Governor had written a letter to the Election Commission asking it to come to his office for consultations. According to inside sources the ECP officials strongly objected to the wording used in the Governor letter and suggested him to use his words carefully. The ECP also conveyed to the Governor that as per the Supreme Court verdict he was to announce poll date and not to dictate the Election Commission.

There are clear indications that both the KP and Punjab governments do not want to hold elections. According to some sources, even the Election Commission is not in a mood to hold elections, however since the apex court has asked it to undertake this drill that is why it is following the orders with this 'hope' that at some stage the entire process may come to a standstill. Those who want delay in elections are banking on economic, political and law and order situations which, according to their assessment, may go from bad to worse thus providing an excuse to such elements to wrap up the entire process. On Wednesday March 8, the PTI rally in Lahore was baton-charged and tear-gassed. From the face of it, the government wanted the PTI workers to resort to violence and hullabaloo in response to police action, nevertheless sensing the 'intrigue' the PTI leaders instead announced to postpone the rally. It was a correct decision. The electronic media is not allowed to tel-

cast Imran Khan speeches, live or recorded, after the PEMRA slapped a ban a few days ago therefore he could have gone unheard in that situation. PTI is knocking the court door today challenging this ban and it is quite evident that the PTI chief may get some relief as there are many court verdicts that disallow such a blanket ban on independence of speech. Sources believe the matter may once again land in the Supreme Court as the Election Commission may not get the desired support required to organize elections in a free and fair manner. Sources believe the government seems to be playing with fire by expressing its intent to hinder a constitutional process. According to the government circles the desired results can only be achieved if the PTI chairman is arrested because his arrest may trigger severe unrest. But this is the one side of the story. What impact the unrest will have on the already shaken and dead economy of Pakistan can be anybody's guess.

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Govt. taking steps to provide relief to people in Ramadan

PESHAWAR: Standing Committee of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Caretaker cabinet was Wednesday informed that the government is taking steps to provide relief to people during the fasting month of Ramadan and ensure availability of edibles on reasonable rates. The meeting was chaired by Caretaker Minister for Food, Fazal Elahi and attended by caretaker minister, Sawal Nazir, CM's aide, Himayatullah, secretary food, Abid Wazir and concerned officials of finance department. Chairing the meeting, Fazal Elahi told that government is utilizing resources to provide relief to people and facilitate them during Ramadan. He told that Rs. 35 billion was being spent on distribution of subsidized flour to people. He said that Ramadan food package is also under consideration and added that Prime Minister would soon announce food package for Ramadan. He also directed officials to ensure transparency id distribution of flour. - APP

ICCI demands empowerment of women for sustainable growth

Govt should take strong measures to bring them into the mainstream of economy

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry celebrated the International Women's Day to highlight the role of women in the economic development of the country. The theme of the event was "Empowered Women Progressive Nation". Parveen Khan Durrani, Honorary President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry chaired the event. She was made Honorary President of ICCI for one day in commensurate with the importance of International Women's Day. Speaking at the occasion, Parveen Khan Durrani said that women account for half of our total population but only 20 percent of them are participating in the formal economy, which shows that Pakistan is not utilizing the talent of 80 percent women to promote its formal economy. She stressed that the government should take strong measures to bring them into the mainstream of



economy for their empowerment that would ensure the sustainable economic growth of the country. She said that empowered women would pave the way for progressive

and stressed that the government should take steps for their economic empowerment. She said that the women have good potential to start businesses and em-

phasized that the government should announce special incentives for them in the upcoming budget to increase their financial inclusion for inclusive growth of the

country. Fatma Azim, former Senior Vice President ICCI, Nasira Ali and others also spoke at the occasion and stressed for creating a better ecosystem for women. They

stressed the need of providing women equal opportunities in all fields of life so that they could play a more effective role in the economic development of the country.

Google to support over 1,550 women developers in Pakistan

ISLAMABAD: Google is organizing seven Women Techmakers (WTM) events in Pakistan this year to support and empower more than 1,550 women developers across five cities. WTM is a global initiative by Google to provide visibility, community, and resources for women in tech said a news release. The seven events - which will comprise rallies, workshops, networking events and conferences - will run from March 8 to May, and provide training in various entrepreneurship areas including leadership, technical skills, and how to overcome unique challenges facing women in tech. The first event will start on March 8, which marks International Women's Day (IWD). The IWD theme for WTM events this year is #DareToBe, where we encourage women to have the courage and confidence to dream big and take risks. Whether it's bold, resilient or innovative, we invite everyone to think about all the ways they will "Dare To Be" in 2023. Local WTM Ambassadors will host the events with support from Google. The WTM Ambassador program supports women in tech who are looking to create impact and give back to their communities. As ambassadors, they will engage with their communities by participating in one or more leadership activities quarterly. - APP

CDA sealed One Constitution Avenue's marketing & sales dep

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Building Control Department of the Capital Development Authority has sealed the Marketing and Sales Department of One Constitution Avenue. CDA took over the management of One Constitution Avenue after taking over all the records. Director Estate Management II has been appointed as Administrator. According to the details, the lease was canceled on the basis of non-payment in the light of Supreme Court orders. Earlier in 2015, the lease was also canceled and the Supreme Court gave the developer one more chance to pay the dues and the developer failed to pay as per the schedule given by the Supreme Court. Failing which authority after confiscating record took over control of the office of one constitution. Furthermore, Capital Development Authority has been appointed Director Estate Management-II as Administrator One Constitution. The One Constitution Avenue Resident Committee will run the day-to-day management matters along with the CDA Committee. The committee constituted by CDA will include officers of Estate Department, Finance Wing, Enforcement and Building Control. It pertinent to mention here that according to the order of the Supreme Court, One Constitution Avenue was responsible for 17.50 billion rupees, out of which the annual installment of 2.916 billion rupees for the year 2021 was paid, but the installment of 2.916 billion rupees for the year 2022 was not paid to CDA. In this regard, through several letters, the administration of One Constituency was directed to deposit Rs.2.916 billion to CDA by December 31, 2022, as well as deposit a renewed and enhanced bank guarantee of Rs.2.916 billion. On non-compliance of the instructions, CDA issued a final lease termination notice dated February 7, 2023 and directed them to submit their bank guarantee to CDA in light of the orders of the Supreme Court of Pakistan and the Public Accounts Committee. No amount has been paid despite several notices/reminders which is in clear violation of Supreme Court of Pakistan orders of 9 January 2019. After the above facts CDA decided to cancel the lease of said land.

Women diplomats lauded for serving country with leadership

A video tribute to Pakistani women in diplomacy was presented for reaching new heights and representing the country at international stage with panache

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: The Foreign Office on Wednesday paid glowing tributes to women diplomats of Pakistan and the world over for their invaluable services while representing their countries and proving themselves the icon of professionalism. Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Hina Rabbani Khar and the women diplomats of Pakistan and other countries joined the event held in connection with the International Women's Day, at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. MoS Khar in a fireside chat said Pakistan's women in diplomacy were making remarkable imprints in their field and contributing immensely to the progress of the country. She said these contributions had played a significant role in the progress of the country and added that the women of Pakistan were always up to set new benchmarks. She highlighted that the stellar

contributions of Pakistani women diplomats had left an indelible mark on the canvas of diplomacy. She acknowledged the meritorious services of female Pakistani diplomats in the service of the country, who are working in Pakistan and abroad with traditional zeal, enthusiasm and hard work. To young diplomats, she advised not to get bogged down by circumstances around them and focus on good learning experiences.

A panel discussion among the women diplomats highlighted the significant role played by them for their countries. Those who participated in the discussion included High Commissioner of Maldives in Pakistan Farzana Zahir, Austria's ambassador Andrea Wicke, European Union ambassador in Pakistan Dr Riina Kiyonka, Charge d'Affaires of China Pang Chunxue and Philippines Charge d'Affaires Maria Agnes. Speaking to APP, Secretary Ministry

of Information and Broadcasting Shahera Shahid said women comprised 45 percent of her ministry, who were showing exemplary professional excellence in their respective areas. She said the country's 51 per cent women population could be turned into a valuable workforce if provided equal opportunities. She said while celebrating the Women's Day, the moment also needed a word of acknowledgement for men for extending

support and helping the women shine and thrive in their fields. Earlier, Foreign Office Spokesperson and Director Asia Pacific Mumtaz Zahra Baloch in her welcome address felicitated the women diplomats who contributed to their countries with zeal and zest. A video tribute to Pakistani women in diplomacy was presented for reaching new heights and representing the country at international stage with panache.



City Police arrest two drug peddlers

PESHAWAR: Capital City Police Peshawar arrested two notorious drug peddlers during a crackdown against narcotics and ice drugs on Wednesday. On a tip of information, Rehman Baba Station House Officer (SHO) Asif Ali Khan along with police personnel conducted raids against drug peddlers in the suburban localities and arrested two accused. The arrested accused have been identified as Abubakar alias Dada son of Saifullah and Imran son of Mukhtiar. The accused hails from different localities of the district. Police have also recovered two kilograms of hashish and 0.5 kg of ice drug from their possession. Both accused have confessed to peddling ice and other narcotics. Police have registered cases against both accused and further investigations were in progress. - APP

Plight of women in IIOJK highlighted

MIRPUR: International Women Day was observed in Azad Jammu & Kashmir on Wednesday, with the renewal of the pledge to ensure due empowerment, safeguard equal rights and dignified status to maintain high respect and honor of the women folk at par with opposite gender in all segments of the society. Special ceremonies including, walks, seminars and symposiums were the hallmark of the day observed throughout Azad Jammu Kashmir side by side with the rest of the world. The Women Day is observed on March 8 every year since the year of 1900 across the globe in light of the charter under the manifesto of the United Nations to highlight the importance of the women's role in society. The day was marked with

special ceremonies held under the auspices of various Women Organizations in all ten districts of AJK with the resolve to maintain the equal rights and status of the females who have reached 51 percent of the total population of the country irrespective of any discrimination of gender besides maintaining their respect, honour and dignity to ensure the maximum utilization of the talent and abilities of the women folk for the betterment and uplift of the country and the nation. Addressing a gathering at Azad Kashmir Radio Mirpur complex, speakers including Mrs. Khushbakht Jameel, seasoned educationist Soniya Khan, Mrs. Aaliya Syed, eminent women cricket coordinator, banker Ms. Madhya Syed and others highlighted the role of

eminent women social workers engaged in serving the ailing humanity besides for the uplift of the women in different sectors of life. Speakers strongly condemned the continued tragic incidents of sexual violence including rape and killing of innocent Kashmiri women by the Indian occupational forces in bleeding Indian illegally occupied Jammu Kashmir state in the wake of the increased acts of state terrorism for their "offence" of launching struggle for the liberation of the motherland from Indian forced and unlawful rule. Speakers called upon the United Nations and international human rights organizations to immediately intervene to get the Indian atrocities against innocent Kashmiris including women, stopped in Indian occupied Kash-

mir, which India has turned into hell to curb Kashmiris' just struggle for the liberation of the motherland from Indian yoke. The celebration of women's day reminds to promote and raise awareness about the equal importance and status of women folk, at par with male members, at all times in society - since the importance of the role of lady members in any of the society could not be set aside and the equal rights, dignified status, respect and honor of women was imperative in all respect, speakers observed. They added that the role of women in the progress and prosperity and uplift of any nation and the country could be primarily imperative side by side the male members of the society. -APP

Reduction of corruption in maritime sector vital

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: "The Pakistan Single Window is a promising development that would be a game changer for the Maritime Industry in Pakistan. It has the potential to streamline processes, reduce corruption and enhance transparency. All stakeholders need to join hands to help the government build the legal environment to the level of international standards and unleash the potential of growth that can take Pakistan's blue economy into a new era in the region." This was stated by Faisal Sabzwari, Federal Minister of Maritime Affairs in his message at the National Seminar on Good Governance, Best Practices and Integrity Measures in Maritime Industry of Pakistan. Muhammad Rajpar, Vice Chairman Karachi Port Trust and Member Board of Directors of Port Bin Qasim, representing the Federal Minister on the occasion, appreciated the efforts of the Global Compact Network Pakistan (GCNP) and Maritime Anti-Corruption Network (MACN) in bringing the stakeholders together for collective action to promote good governance by combating corruption in the Maritime industry. He emphasized the need for modern infrastructure, security, competition, lack of skilled workforce,

financing, environmental issues and a complex regulatory framework that needs to be addressed to unleash the full potential of the blue economy. The Seminar was organized to launch Collective Action against corrupt practices in the Maritime industry and was attended by a large number of stakeholders including representatives from shipping companies, shipping agents, customs agents, freight forwarding association and other sectoral bodies and associations, port & shipping authorities, custom officials and related government departments. Majid Aziz, President GCNP in his welcome remarks appreciated the presence of stakeholders in such a large number which reflected their commitment to participate in the drive for collective action to improve the performance of the blue economy in the country. He exhorted all to join the movement to reduce corruption and unfair practices. Fasihul Karim Siddiqi, Executive Director GCNP explained the objectives of the Seminar and specially thanked Jonas Erlandsen, Senior Lead, South Asia MACN, Mathias Bak, Associate MACN and Martin Zapata, Academic Programmes Senior Officer, International Anti-Corruption Academy (IACA) for their participation as this would benefit stakeholders by their knowledge and experience in combating the menace of corruption through best practices in South Asia. Naveed Abbas Memon, Chief Domain Officer, Pakistan Single Win-

dow (PSW) made a very comprehensive presentation on initiatives taken by Pakistan Single Window in improving good governance in the Maritime sector. Mayhar Mustafa Kazi, Partner, RIAA Barker Gillette presented a very lively and informative paper on legal reforms for improving good governance in Maritime industry and issues of shortage claims. Jonas Erlandsen, Senior Lead, South Asia MACN in his presentation introduced MACN and highlighted their initiative and experience in combating corruption in the industry while Mathias Bak, Associate MACN made a presentation on the global best maritime practices. Commander Idrees, Assistant Professor Maritime Department, Bahria University Karachi made a presentation on preparing educated youth for the promotion of good governance in the Maritime sector of Pakistan. A Panel of experts discussed various initiatives and challenges in good governance and best practices in the Maritime sector. The panel discussion which was moderated by Muhammad Akram, Project Manager GCNP comprised of Shah Zaman, Managing Director Zaman Agencies Pvt. Ltd, Ex-Senior VP (KCAA), Martin Zapata, Academic Programmes Senior Officer, International Anti-Corruption Academy (IACA), Rizwan, Head of Compliance & Customs Affairs, DP World and Shinji Roberto Nagasawa, Programme Management Officer, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC).

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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



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Islamabad Metropolitan

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



Water Tank

Islamabad.....0321-5744480

Serena hotels networking breakfast

First Lady talks about gender parity thru different initiatives

The invitees included members of the diplomatic community, representatives of international agencies, corporate sector, representatives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Serena associates, and other women

MAHNOOR ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Begum Samina Alvi, wife of President Dr Arif Alvi on Wednesday termed talented women the 'future of Pakistan' said their inclusion in decision-making and equal job opportunities was crucial for the country's progress. Speaking here at an event to mark 'International Women's Day', she said the day serves as an important opportunity to reflect on the challenges that stand in the way of women's rights. Samina Alvi said women being the country's fifty percent population still had a long way to go in terms of their inclusion and empowerment. "Pakistan can only progress with the participation of women in all fields of life, particularly in trade, business, FinTech (financial technology), digitalization, and finance," she said. She emphasized programmes by national and international agencies to set up micro-enterprises, women's chambers, and industrial academia linkages. According to Global Gender Gap Index Report 2022, she said, Pakistan ranked low in economic participation and opportunity, educational attainment, and health and survival, but was placed higher in political empowerment. It may be mentioned here that Serena Hotels hosted a networking breakfast to celebrate International



Women's Day to honour, appreciate, and laud women who have excelled through achieving success in their professional careers. The invitees included members of the diplomatic community, representatives of international agencies, corporate sector, representatives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Serena associates, and other women who have

been striving to change behaviours for the betterment of women. These women are focused on paving way for the young and talented women in exploring their potential for career development and economic independence. The meet and greet started in the foyer where the women had an immersive experience of arts and crafts on display,

along with an auditory delight of soulful melodies where a beautiful cake was cut towards the end of the ceremony, reiterating the celebration of Women's Day. The Chief Guest for the occasion was the First Lady, Begum Samina Arif Alvi, the guest list included accomplished women from all walks of life who graced the occasion with their col-

lective presence. Keynote speakers were, Ms. Naima Ansari, who has been part of the Islamabad Women Chamber of Commerce and Industry. Ms. Ayla Majeed, the first Muslim, South Asian, Pakistani woman in the role of Vice President (VP) of the ACCA and Ms. Kashmala Khan Former Federal Ombudsperson for Protection against Har-

assment of Women at the Workplace, shared their experiences with the audience. Begum Samina Alvi also spoke about the efforts that the government has been making for gender parity through different initiatives and emphasized on the importance of providing women an inclusive and fair working environment, regardless of the field they

choose. Serena Hotels has been celebrating the International Women's Day for almost a decade, the company truly believes in gender equality. The Serena Hotels is the only company in Pakistan to be EDGE (Economic Dividends for Gender Equality) Certified, and is a founding member of the Male Champions of Change, Pakistan Chapter.

Pak-Italy to strengthen Olive supply chain

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistani society was committed to promoting Olive culture in the country, agreed a panel of experts from the Embassy of Italy and the Institute of Regional Studies (IRS). The experts were addressing a Roundtable discussion on "Holistic Development of Pakistani Olive Supply Chain" organized by the IRS here on Wednesday. Representatives from the Italian embassy and government, along with stakeholders in Pakistan's agriculture industry, gathered today to discuss the development of the Pakistani Olive Value Chain. The project began in March 2022 and has involved stakeholder training in preparation for today's discussions, which aimed to gather necessary input from all parties involved. Italian Ambassador, in a welcome speech at a stakeholder discussion, ex-

pressed that the best kind of olive needs experts and if Pakistanis get used to using olive oil, the Italian government would love to continue the project. Dr. Constantino Parma, who represents the government and international organizations, spoke next and stressed the importance of collaboration in the project. He thanked all the attendees and emphasized the need to determine an action plan. Dr. Gianluigi Cartone, a rural policy expert from CIHEAM Bari, presented his recommendations for a holistic development of the Pakistani Olive Value Chain, including a SWOT analysis and suggestions for increasing production through the use of machines. To support the growth of the olive industry in Pakistan, stakeholders agreed on the formation of a Pakistan Olive Oil Association/Council, which would include representation from public and

private sector stakeholders to regulate and govern the sector. The association would provide training and guidelines on best practices, such as HACCP, GMP, and Global GAP, to promote awareness of healthy food and olive tourism. Other stakeholders also shared their ideas, such as a competition for the best olive oil globally and locally, the importance of standardization and certification, and the need to implement OliveCulture as a cultural movement to connect producers and share knowledge. Hareem Amna shared the learnings from her study tour, including the efforts of women entrepreneurs in Italy in building their farms. Sara Babar appreciated the effort of the Italian team and their knowledge-sharing with Pakistan to help grow the Olive Value Chain. Azmat Ali Awan suggested a competition to find the best olive oil, and Buzdar

shared his experiences in cultivating olives. Aariz Iqbal stressed the need for implementation of OliveCulture and the importance of collaboration between private and public sectors to achieve standardization, sustainability, and certification. Dr. Tariq highlighted the high demand for olive cultivation in Balochistan and the efforts to supply 1.5 million certified olive plants this season. The event concluded with the formation of the Pakistan Olive Oil Association/Council and a focus on promoting awareness of healthy food and olive tourism through olive festivals, expos, and roadshows. Overall, the event was a promising step towards the development of the Pakistani Olive Value Chain, with stakeholders agreeing to work together to overcome challenges and leverage opportunities to drive growth in the sector.

Diplomatic Football League quarterfinals on March 11

The League was being organized by Mubasher Sanjrani, a League founder who is also a former International Football and Futsal player of the Pakistan national team

ISLAMABAD: The quarterfinals of the RBS Diplomatic Football League Season 6 would be played here at the Islamabad Club Futsal Ground on March 11. The RBS diplomatic Football League Season 6 has entered into the knockout stages with eight diplomatic teams. The league started in December last year in which 13 teams participated with their Ambassadors, Diplomats, local staff and students representing more than 26 nationalities. After playing, the league matches only eight teams Brazil RBS united, Afghanistan, Nigeria, Iran, Russia, Thailand, Islamabad Club and AAA United qualified for the knockout stages. The last five teams on the bottom of the table league were Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Malaysia, Indonesia and UK united. The knockout quarterfinal matches would be played on March 11 while the final on March 18 here at Islamabad Club Futsal Ground. The League was being organized by Mubasher Sanjrani, a League founder who is also a former International Football and Futsal player of the Pakistan national team. He is a member of the Senate Committee on Pakistan Football Development. The Diplomatic Football League was one of the most anticipated league in Islamabad since its beginning for the diplomatic community, which provide healthy sports activity to the participating teams. It has also promoted a soft and friendly image of Pakistan in front of the whole world.—APP

President APCOYF pays tribute to Pakistani women

ISLAMABAD: President, All Pakistan Chinese Overseas Youth Federation (APCOYF), Aasma Ismail Butt on Wednesday paid tribute to the women of Pakistan who had played a key role in the development and welfare of the country. In her message on the International Women's Day, the Federation President said the women of Pakistan were brave, fearless and talented. Aasma Butt said the women should always be treated with respect, so that their self-confidence increases and they should take active part in the nation building. The President said, "Our women are our pride. We are proud of them who have become part of Pakistan's development by using their abilities as among them are those who work hard to educate their children, enable them to be good citizens for the country." The towering feminine figures of the nation included Fatima Jinnah who fought for the freedom of Pakistan with her brother Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah. Begum Kulsom Nawaz, who took an exemplary and outstanding performance alongside men for the revival of democracy in the country and became an example for other women. Arfa Karim, the daughter of Pakistan, who made the world of IT stunned with her abilities, she added. The President APCOYF said the history of the country was full of such priceless and unique achievements of women. "Our women are not weak at all. Women should be treated with respect in society because this woman is also our mother, sister, daughter, daughter-in-law and wife. These all relations are respected and honorable to us, those nations who violate these relationships are always ruined," she added. The importance of women in Pakistan should be the same in assemblies and institutions too as the present-day woman was no less than any man, she added.—APP

Two more tests positive for Coronavirus

"Presently, four confirmed patients are quarantined at homes while no one at any district health facility", the report added

RAWALPINDI: Two more people were diagnosed with Coronavirus during the last 24 hours, raising the district's tally of confirmed cases to 47,772. As per the latest data released by the District Health Authority here on Wednesday, the infected cases included 44,125 from Rawalpindi and 3,647 from other districts. Among the new cases, one of each case had arrived from Rawal town and the Rawalpindi Cantonment area. "Presently, four confirmed patients are quarantined at homes while no one at any district health facility", the report added. The report further said 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. In addition, District Health Authority updated that during the last 24 hours, 261 samples were collected, out of which 259 were declared negative, while the positivity rate was recorded at 0.76 per cent.—APP

NADRA' playing pivotal role to empower women

ISLAMABAD: Chairman National Database and Registration Authority, Tariq Malik Wednesday said that NADRA was playing a pivotal role to empower Pakistani women in the digital age by ensuring their social, economic and political rights and providing them with computerised national identity cards (CNIC). "NADRA is the only organisation that has provided equal opportunities to the women to get higher seats and be a part of the organisation", he said while talking to the PTV news. In this regard, 204 females officers have been made in-charge of NADRA registration centres. A number of initiatives have been taken for social, political and eco-

nomical empowerment of women, he said, adding, the government is determined to mainstream women's issues in its policies. "CNIC has been made mandatory to get registered in voters list and vote casting, he said, adding, women's right to vote can only be ensured by having a copy of CNIC." He highlighted that with public awareness NADRA was providing technical advice about gender equality and empowerment of women. He said NADRA had set up 19 women-only centres and 222 mobile registration vans across the country, adding, women drivers, security guards and female staff were being appointed in NADRA offices. He said 97 per cent

of the total registration was being registered in a short span of time, adding, a 121 million voter list has been finalised countrywide. He said that registration of women is tantamount to empowering them so that they can play a constructive role in national policy making. NADRA remains steadfast in its commitment to achieve gender equality through preferential registration. He stated that NADRA has done fresh registration (issued identity card for the first time) of 55% of the total registration of women from July 2022 to February 2023. In total, NADRA has registered 6.3 million women across the country, which is 46% of the total registration. He said NADRA was

sending female-only mobile units to register women in selected districts of KPK, Balochistan, Chaman and many others to end cultural barriers. All these initiatives have reduced the gender gap to 8.6% from 12% in the last one year, he added. Chairman said that soon after taking over charge as NADRA chairman, he established a separate Inclusive Registration Department (IRD) headed by women and female biker service for carrying out processes of CNIC renewal and modification at the doorsteps of applicants. NADRA women's biker service is a great facility and its network should be spread throughout the country, he said.—APP

Briefs

USC completes preparation for Ramadan relief package

ISLAMABAD: In order to provide maximum relief to the poor masses across the country, the Utility Stores Corporation (USC) has completed all the preparation work for the Ramadan relief package. The USC spokesperson on Wednesday said that an ample supply of all subsidized food items has been ensured so that the public does not face any kind of problem, said a press release issued here. The corporation is providing special subsidy on basic food items under the Prime Minister's Relief Package and these subsidy includes flour, sugar, ghee, rice and pulses. The recent wave of inflation, uncertainty in general market prices, non-availability of dollars and increase in general sales tax have led to price revisions by USC suppliers, he added. There is no change in prices for customers registered under the Benazir Income Support Program (BISP) adding that ghee is being available at Rs 300 per kg, sugar at Rs 70 per kg, while a 10 kg bag of flour at Rs 400 per kg. Ghee will be available for general consumers at Rs 490 per kg after the price hike.—APP

IHC dismisses petition against allowing Aurat March

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad High Court (IHC) has dismissed petition against allowing Aurat March declaring it non maintainable. The petitioner had challenged the notification issued by Deputy Commissioner (DC) allowing to hold Aurat March. The counsel for the petitioner told the court the notification from DC on allowing Aurat March is in blatant defiance of article 31 of the constitution. As per constitution of Pakistan, Islam is religion of Pakistan. Article 16 of the constitution was ignored while according permission. The court remarked banners and placards are things of past. The court inquired what apprehension you have now. Has the constitution not given them the right to freedom of assembly. The counsel for petitioner told the court some restrictions have been imposed on freedom of assembly. It is not possible in an Islamic state.—Online

NIDM workshop on Remodelled National Disaster

ISLAMABAD: The National Institute of Disaster Management (NIDM) held a two-day workshop on local needs gap analysis and framework of Remodelled National Disaster Preparedness & Response at the National University of Technology (NUTECH) here on Wednesday. This is the first leg of workshop series based on multi-hazards preparedness nationwide being organized by NIDM, a research partner of the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA), a news release said. Chairman NDMA Lieutenant General Inam Haider Malik and NUTECH Rector Lieutenant General (R) Moazzam Ejaz inaugurated the first session. The workshop aims at identifying gaps in disaster management and chalks out calibrated preparedness regime according to Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction in Pakistan. Rector NUTECH, in his welcome note, commended NDMA's futuristic approach towards disaster preparedness and response system. He remarked that NUTECH would be key partner with NDMA in initiating national discourse for identifying lacunae through lessons learnt during Floods 2022 and earmarking research areas to find out indigenous solutions for better disaster management in the country. Chairman NDMA discussed the contours of Remodelled National Preparedness and Response System.—APP

Speakers for revamp of Pak defence production model

The fundamental objective, it was stressed should be the capacity and capability-based development of the private industry through public-sector support

ISLAMABAD: The speakers here on Wednesday were of the view that given the prevailing geopolitical and geo-economic environment, there was an urgent need to revamp and transform Pakistan's existing archaic public-controlled model regarding defence production. "To exploit its defence production potential to the fullest, Pakistan needs to develop and progress in the fields of education, quality human resource, research and development, industrialization, technology, academia-industry linkages and provide an enabling environment to the private sector." This was the key message of the eminent speakers at the seminar on 'Defence Production Potential in Pakistan: Increasing through Public-Private Partnership-A Policy Construct' organized by the Centre for Aerospace and Security Studies (CASS), a news release said. The keynote address was delivered by former Chair-



man Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee, General (R) Zubair Mehmood Hayat. The seminar was chaired by President CASS Air Marshal (R) Farhat Hussain Khan, while Air Vice Marshal Faheem Ullah Malik, Director at CASS moderated the proceedings.



The fundamental objective, it was stressed should be the capacity and capability-based development of the private industry through public-sector support. In this regard, DPEs should create a conducive environment for the private sector and fund their

Research and Development (R&D). It was important for the public sector to own the private sector to foster indigenous R&D and transfer of production. Representatives of Defence Production Establishments (DPEs), retired and serving military officers, scholars

from various think tanks, and other relevant stakeholders participated in the seminar and forwarded well-considered proposals for the improvement of existing defence production processes. Other distinguished speakers included Vice Admiral (R) Ifthikhar Ahmed Rao,

former Deputy Chief of Naval Staff (Operations) and Managing Director Karachi Shipyard; Air Vice Marshal (R) Asad Ikram, Senior Advisor, Project Phoenix, Air Headquarters and Tanveer Sultan Awan, Chairman, Hajvairy Technologies (Pvt) Limited.

CPSC launches three Chinese books at ISSI

ISLAMABAD: The China-Pakistan Study Center (CPSC) at the Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI) has hosted a book launch ceremony for three books authored by Chinese writers and translated by Pakistani authors. The books included, "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". Senator Dr Musaddiq Malik, Minister of State for Petroleum, and Fahd Haroon, Minister of State/SAPM on Public Communication and Digital Platform were the chief guests at the event held the other day. Former Ambassador to China Naghmana Hashmi and Dr Hassan Daud Butt, Associate Professor from Bahria University reviewed the books. Dr Talat Shab-

bir, Director of the China-Pakistan Study Centre, highlighted the significance of literature in building people-to-people contacts. DG ISSI Ambassador Sohail Mahmood on the occasion underlined that Pakistan's relations with China were the "cornerstone" of its foreign policy. He highlighted the key features and growth trajectory of the Pakistan-China "All-weather Strategic Cooperative Partnership"; the role of Chairman Mao in the Chinese revolution and China's modernization; the CPC's role in China's socio-economic development; and the importance of further strengthening the Public Diplomacy dimension of Pakistan-China relations through such events. Naghmana Hashmi in her remarks stressed on Mao's vision in reference to the book. She said history had always been important in understanding modern

China and the vision of the country was different from that of other nations worldwide. "It is pertinent to seek the understanding of these philosophies that China follows in its journey toward prosperity." Hashmi said that when one was able to understand these philosophical concepts, one can predict where China is heading. Dr Hassan 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. Pang Chunxue, Charge d' Affaires, emphasised 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 added. She stressed that such events would play a constructive role in expanding people-to-people exchanges. SAPM Fahad Haroon acknowledged that China's current leadership was following what Mao had envisioned decades earlier. He also reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to further deepen and broaden its relations with China. Senator Dr Musaddiq Malik shed light on the current international dynamics and how China was rising as a resilient nation under courageous and visionary leadership. He stressed that China's leaders had served in the best interests of their country and set a unique growth and development trajectory, which was something to be emulated.—APP

Circular debt hindering growth

ISLAMABAD: Chairman of National Business Group Pakistan, President Pakistan Businessmen and Intellectuals Forum, and All Karachi Industrial Alliance, and former provincial minister Mian Zahid Hussain on Wednesday said it is impossible to achieve a satisfactory growth rate in the presence of circular debt and failed state-run companies. Circulating debt has increased over Rs2.6 trillion while the losses of failed state-owned companies have reached Rs1879 billion rupees which have made it necessary to get rid of them, he said. Mian Zahid Hussain said that these companies are siphoning off foreign debt and taxpayers' money for decades. Talking to the business community, the veteran business leader said that the IMF's emphasis on reforms in the energy sector is welcome but insufficient. Instead of continuously increasing the price of electricity, the price of electricity can be reduced by 3 rupees per unit by controlling theft, eliminating line losses, and improving bill collection. He said that the K-Electric team has reduced losses by 50%. Now this institution is investing 484 billion rupees till 2030 to get 30% of electricity from renewable sources. If K-Electric can reduce its losses and improve quality, why can't other power companies reduce their losses, he questioned. The business leader noted that the current framework of almost all power sector companies discourages efficiency and load shedding continues despite excess generation. The performance of state-owned distribution companies is weak, they have failed to meet targets related to power transmission and distribution losses, recovery of bills, investment, and public safety. According to a report, on their poor performance from 2016 to 2020, the national treasury suffered a total loss of 13 trillion 55 billion rupees, while every day five to six thousand megawatts of electricity is stolen or wasted.—DNA

Dismay expressed over delay in NHA projects

ISLAMABAD: National Assembly Standing Committee on Communications expressed its displeasure on the National Highway Authority (NHA) for the delay in projects, showing negligence, and leaving the responsibilities on the private contractors without supervision. The committee that met with Muhammad Abdul Ghafar Wattoo in the chair here at Parliament House on Wednesday expressed also dismay on the absence of Member Punjab, who was supposed to brief the committee on the misprocurement conducted by NHA while awarding of the Lodhran-Multan section of National Highway N-5. The committee noted that Member Punjab remained absent and delayed an important briefing on the project of a hundred million rupees. The committee said that unusual delays in the project rise the prices of the projects and cause inconvenience to the road users.

NHA was asked to answer about the open gutters on the road of Hyderabad-Karachi which could become the reason for traffic road crashes and cause tire bursts. Responding to the query, NHA officials informed that to avoid stealing of sewerage coverings, the flaps have been welded and in addition to that, a demand has been sent to the Frontier Works Organization (FWO) for required coverings.—APP

Ayisha Siddiqi a 'hope for bright future

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday said young Pakistani girls, such as human rights and climate change activist Ayisha Siddiqi, were hope for the country's bright future. In his tweet on International Women's Day, he said the young trailblazers were using their talent to make the world a better place. Ayisha Siddiqi, 24, recently made it to the Time magazine's Women of the Year which acknowledged her efforts in raising her voice for a safe planet. "These girls represent hope and a promise of a brighter future," the prime minister said. Siddiqi co-founded Polluters Out, a global youth activist coalition, and helped launch the Fossil Free University, an activism training course. She focused on including the rights of humans and nature in climate law. She is also working to help set up a youth climate justice fund to correct the imbalance of resources, activists have compared to the fossil fuel industry. PM Shehbaz Sharif paid tribute to the country's women for their heroic struggle and incredible contribution to society. "The odds could not have been heavier, but their resolve to navigate through them is what gives us hope in the future," he said.—APP

H-9 College holds natural sciences quiz competition

ISLAMABAD: An intercollegiate natural sciences quiz competition among the students of various ICT colleges was held at the Islamabad Model College for Boys H-9. The competition was held to promote scientific knowledge and to provide an opportunity for students to showcase their understanding of natural sciences. The chief guest of the occasion was Dr. Gulam Sarwar, an educationist, scientist, chemist and researcher. Many subjects, including biology, chemistry, and physics, were included in the competition. Islamabad Model College for Boys G-10/4 got the first position. The winning team faced stiff competition from the team of Islamabad Model College for Girls I-8/3, who was placed at second. The third position was gained by Islamabad Model Postgraduate College for Girls F-7/2 Islamabad, whose performance was appreciated by the audience. The principal of the college, Prof. Javaid Iqbal Mughal, commended all the participants for their hard work and dedication, and he encouraged them to continue pursuing their passion for natural sciences.—APP

Further hike in interest rates being planned

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Economy Watch (PEW) on Wednesday said the government is considering a further hike in the interest rates which will close many businesses and leave millions unemployed. There are reports of an interest rate hike of two to three percent which if carried out will be a doomsday scenario for the businesses, it said. Every condition of the IMF should not be blindly followed and the plight of the masses should also be considered, said Brig. (retd) Aslam Khan, Chairman PEW. He said that the gov-

ernment is skinning masses under the guise of IMF conditions but elites are completely insulated from the impact of these strict conditions. Among all the measures taken so far, the surcharge of 3.82 paisa per unit of electricity is the cruellest which will affect the people badly, he said. The purpose of this surcharge is to reduce the circular debt which reached Rs2.6 trillion in the month of December last year, he informed. The main reason for the accumulation of the circular debt is the corruption of the elite, politicians, and the bureaucracy but the people are being pun-

ished for it, he observed. Aslam Khan said that no government has any interest in the welfare of the people and all aim is to reap the undue benefits which have bankrupted the country despite taking record loans. The central government took loans worth Rs47 trillion in the month of January, which has brought the total debt to 55 billion and it is increasing rapidly. Politicians and other powerful circles do not care about anything except their own interests and because of their irresponsibility, the country is not avoiding default but moving towards default. But there seems to be no realization of the impending calamity among all circles ruling Pakistan. The warring political forces are refusing to pull back from the point which is set to bring down the entire system.

Police issue 44,952 general verification certificates in 2023

ISLAMABAD: Police facilitation centres of Islamabad district facilitated the citizens with different services and issued over 44,952 character certificates in 2023, a police spokesman said. According to police, Inspector General of Police (IGP) Islamabad Dr Akbar Nasir Khan has directed to ensure maximum facilitation and services to citizens with the main objective of minimizing the gap between public and the police. Police facilitation centers, the source said, received 45,458 applications for general police verification certificates during the ongoing year.—APP

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President calls for greater role of women

ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi called for a greater role of women in economic, political and social spheres to utilize their potential for ensuring further progress and prosperity of Pakistan. Speaking at a Women Leaders Awards ceremony organized by a television channel here in connection with the International Women's Day, he said women should work outside of their homes and the society should provide them appropriate opportunities to excel in their respective fields. Men should take it upon themselves to address concerns of women regarding harassment at workplaces, he remarked. Dr Alvi said Pakistan lagged behind other countries in terms of gender parity and practical steps were needed out to bridge the gap among

men and women in terms of social and economic inclusion. He shared the example of Quaid e Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah whose sister Fatima Jinnah stood shoulder to shoulder with him during the movement for creation of Pakistan. "We cannot afford to keep women confined to the homes, if we want to make economic progress," he emphasized adding countries like China made phenomenal progress by making women part of the economic endeavours. The President said Islam gave rights to women including her right to inheritance many centuries back, at a time when there was no concept of these rights in other societies. In the western world, women were given these basic rights just in the last century, he pointed out. He cited the example

of Hazrat Khadija (AS), the wife of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), who was a business woman in her own right. The male dominated business class should encourage their male family members to become part of economic ventures, he advised. The President said banks had made available loans for women who should be guided and mentored so that they could avail these loans from financial institutions and start their own businesses. He said it was unfortu-

nate that majority of women in our country were deprived of the right of inheritance despite teachings of Islam, he noted. Talking about girls' education, he said more than 20 million children in Pakistan were out of school whereas countries like India, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka had achieved almost hundred percent enrollment at the primary level. In Pakistan, the enrollment of children in primary schools was at 68 percent, he appraised. The President said the initiatives of social protections like Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) contributed to the social and economic empowerment of women. The programme was a success because women were made direct beneficiaries as money was put in their hands and they were given respon-

sibility to take decisions for the financial betterment of their families, he added. He said the process of digitization was helping women to work from the security of their homes. He said Pakistan took a significant step when it gave representation to women in Parliament, adding more such proactive steps were needed to increase participation of women. Talking about the issue of increasing population, he said there were nine million unwanted pregnancies in the country every year and the issue could be tackled by making women aware about the availability of long term contraceptives. He said the awards were recognition of women who contributed to the betterment of society in diverse social and economic spheres. Begum Samina

Alvi, wife of President Dr Arif Alvi also spoke on the occasion and highlighted different initiatives taken for the empowerment and welfare of vulnerable sections of society especially women and children. President Hum Network Sultana Siddiqui in her remarks told about the annual event of awarding women leaders for their contributions and achievements. Earlier, President Alvi and prominent personalities from different walks of life gave away awards to women leaders including Parveen Saeed, Khawar Mumtaz, Karen Armstrong, Sabina Khatri, Laraib Atta, Amna Nawaz, Dr Zeba Sattar, Ronak Iqbal Lakhani, Naseem Salahuddin and Naem Ahmed Mirza for their lifelong work that brought vital and positive changes in society.—APP



UK's Illegal migration bill

The problem with the government's illegal migration bill is not just that it is inhumane and unworkable. It is that the inhumanity and unworkability look calculated. They are not simply bugs of the project; they may even be features. The government has said it will return all those who enter the UK via small boats or dispatch them to a third country – though Rwanda has not yet received one person in exchange for its pocketing of £120m. It remains to be seen whether Rishi Sunak's meeting with Emmanuel Macron on Friday will lead to arrangements for returns to France. To save money, tens of thousands of people could be warehoused in mass detention camps. The home secretary, Suella Braverman, says modern slavery rules will not prevent removals. If the aim was truly to cut costs to taxpayers and save lives by curbing dangerous small boat crossings, there would be two obvious places to start. The first would be to tackle the sclerotic Home Office bureaucracy, where mismanagement and inadequate resources have created a logjam. Across Europe, only Germany had a larger backlog in 2021, and it received more than three times as many applications. The second would be to expand safe, legal routes for asylum seekers, instead of slashing them. There is no legal requirement for people to seek asylum in the first safe country they reach. The government's own actions are of questionable legality, as it has acknowledged. It has briefed that there will be a "brake" on rights, raising the question of how it can avoid obligations under the European convention on human rights. The Conservatives have a long record of gimmicky, unrealisable pledges to halt irregular migration. But the bill will allow them to say that they "got tough" but were obstructed by the courts and Labour – positioning themselves as representing the will of the people against elite institutions and the soft-touch left (never mind that the public appear to take a more nuanced view on asylum and migration). Mr Sunak can sell himself to the Tory right as not just a technocrat but a man "taking back control" and facing down "spurious human rights claims". That Ms Braverman's vision is unrealisable makes her rhetoric no less sinister and damaging. She claimed: "By some counts there are 100 million people around the world who could qualify for protection under our current laws. Let's be clear: they are coming here." This is a dangerous nonsense. The majority of these are displaced domestically; three-quarters of the rest are hosted by low and middle income countries. Across Europe, the right has seized upon and demonised migration and asylum. As the targeting of asylum seekers surges, with far-right groups attacking the hotels where they are housed, the government's playbook is not only callous but dangerous and inflammatory. Its legislation must be opposed in political and humanitarian terms, as well as pragmatic ones.

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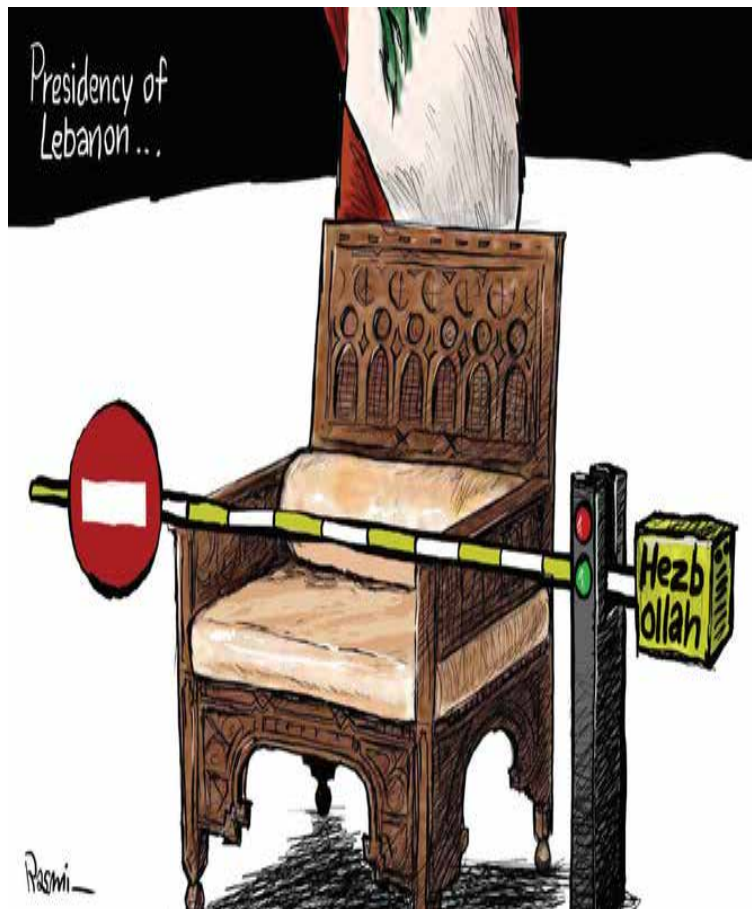
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US solar ban thaw can act as springboard

Solar panels imported from China that have been stuck at the US border for months due to a ban imposed by Washington last year targeting the country for alleged human rights violations are now starting to make it through customs. For example, Trina Solar, a major Chinese producer, has had more than 900 megawatts of its solar panels cleared by US customs over the past four months, enough to power more than 150,000 homes. This is alleviating the gridlock in the US market that was a result of the US' "Uyghur Forced Labor Protection Act", which went into effect in June last year. The act effectively prohibits imports of products made in the Xinjiang Uyghur autonomous region on the grounds that they are allegedly made with "forced labor". It requires importers to provide sourcing documentation back to the raw materials to prove otherwise for the goods to be cleared to enter the US. US Customs and Border Protection had reportedly seized more than 1,000 shipments of solar energy equipment from China under the new law as of October. The US act, based on lies by anti-China forces, aims to create trouble on Xinjiang-related issues in a bid to contain China's development through political manipulation and economic bullying in the name of "human rights". The claims of "forced labor" have been firmly rebutted by the Chinese government, which has also accused the US of trampling on market rules and disrupting global industry and supply chains with the act. Like a double-edged sword, the ban, while greatly hurting the interests of Chinese solar panel manufacturers, has also affected many US businesses in the clean energy sector given the highly complementary and interconnected nature of the two economies. Xinjiang now accounts for about 45 percent of the world's supply of polysilicon, a material that is widely used in solar panels, and the ban on imports from the region has also hiked solar panel costs and delayed green infrastructure projects in the US, which may pose a threat to the Joe Biden administration's clean energy ambition of generating more than 40 percent of energy through solar by 2035. The recent thaw in Chinese shipments is thus more like an expediency of Washington to ease domestic woes than a policy change toward China, yet it in a way also reflects how a cooperative rather than confrontational approach can best serve the interests of both. History proves that China-US relations are not a zero-sum game where one side thrives at the expense of the other, as some politicians in the US perceive them to be. Apart from green energy and climate change, there are many other sectors where China and the US can develop and prosper together. Hopefully, the US will recognize that sooner rather than later, and that understanding can help guide the development of bilateral ties in the future.

Jashn-e-Baharan Festivities in Punjab

Abdul Rashid Shakir



Celebrations of Christian New Year, Chinese Lunar New Year and Iranian Nowruz are not but typical examples of such occasions full of traditional zeal and cultural zest, where people of all ages, genders and colors participate in activities full of jubilation and exuberance. They not only rejoice and cherish their rich cultural traditions but also pay resounding tribute to their outstanding

Rich culture, enviable heritage and colorful traditions are embodiment of vibrant societies, where historians diligently document all accomplishments in fine arts like architecture, sculpture, painting, poetry, music; and performing arts like theatre, dance and drama. People take pride in their history and celebrate various events to showcase remarkable achievements of the earlier generations in arts, culture and literature. Celebrations of Christian New Year, Chinese Lunar New Year and Iranian Nowruz are not but typical examples of such occasions full of traditional zeal and cultural zest, where people of all ages, genders and colors participate in activities full of jubilation and exuberance. They not only rejoice and cherish their rich cultural traditions but also pay resounding tribute to their outstanding artists, artisans, poets, playwrights, and heroes by arranging performances of the leading singers in folk and classical music, displaying their cultural heritage and handicrafts, staging theatrical performances, organizing sports events, and screening documentaries to educate younger generations on the achievements of their forefathers for the evolution of their societies in arts, culture, sports, language and literature. One such auspicious event full of festivities is Jashn-e-Baharan in Punjab, the celebrations to mark the commencement of Spring season. Under the vibrant leadership of Punjab's Caretaker Chief Minister Syed Mohsin Raza Naqvi, Government of the Punjab has taken lead in welcoming the Spring Season this year in a befitting manner with the elaborate planning and rigorous coordination of all relevant stakeholders, especially Punjab Information & Culture Department, Sports & Youth Affairs Department, Auqaf Department, District Administrations of Lahore and Faisalabad, Punjab Parks & Horticulture Authority (PHA) and Walled

City Lahore. Starting from 5th of March, Jashn-e-Baharan would last simultaneously in Lahore and Faisalabad till 12th of March. Major venues in Lahore include Jilani Park, Greater Iqbal Park, Hockey Stadium, National History Museum, Shahi Qila, Hazoori Bagh, and Alhamra Hall; whereas main venues in Faisalabad are Bagh-e-Jinnah, GC University Faisalabad, Agriculture University, Lyallpur Hall Chenab Club, Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan Auditorium, Iqbal Stadium and Sports Complex Various colorful and joyful programmes include Food & Artisan Mela, Cultural shows, Traditiona dances, Sports Mela (Cricket, Chess, Volley Ball, International Hand Ball Championship, Tent Pegging, Tug of War and National Kabaddi Takra), Marathon/Cyclothon, Music Gala, Digital Journey to the Making of Pakistan, Sound & Light Show, Fire Works, Mahafil-e-Mushaira, Comedy Shows, Theatre Plays, Painting and photography competitions, Band Carnival, Daastan Goi and Lucky Irani Circus. Moreover, all major roads of the two cities are well-decorated and beautifully illuminated. 42-Km long Marathon/Cyclothon of professional cyclists, Musical performances in folk, classical and popular music, and the revival of traditional Lucky Irani Circus are the prominent features of Jashn-e-Baharan celebrations. It is an undeniable fact that Music, theater, drama and literature are important wheels to transport the true culture of an area. Therefore, they prominently feature in the entire Jashn-e-Baharan celebrations. Celebrated singers like Arif Lohar, Malko & Afifa, Aima Baig and Sahir Ali Bagga would enthrall the visitors with their magical performances on different dates throughout the one week festivities. Renowned Qawaals like Sher Miandad would present Qawalis for the devotees in Mahafil-e-Samaa at Darbar Data Ganj Baksh, Darbar Hazrat Mian Mir, Mizare-Iqbal and Darbar Madho Lal Hussain. Comedy shows by theater artists and screening of the famous play of one of the acclaimed comic playwrights, Mr Anwar

Maqsood, "Sadhe 14 August" at Alhamra Hall Lahore throughout Jashn-e-Baharan week (5-12 March) are great sources of amusement and joy for the citizens. Mahafil-e-Mushaira, Band Carnival and Daastan Goi are also part of the celebrations in order to display true colors of Punjabi culture and traditions. Organizers of the Jashn-e-Baharan celebrations have also worked hard to make it a real infotainment event by packaging quality entertainment with valuable information. National History Museum, Lahore is screening "Digital Journey to the Making of Pakistan" throughout the week (5-12 March) to educate visitors on the arduous struggle of their forefathers for the independence of this beloved homeland for Muslims of the Subcontinent some seven and a half decades ago. And last but not the least, refreshing and recharging is also a pivotal part of the celebrations. How the organizers could have been non-cognizant of it. Food Fun Mela at Lahore's Jilani Park from 5-12 March enables the visitors to avail services of top 20 Food brands of Lahore for the satisfaction of their culinary taste. It can rightly be ascertained that Jashn-e-Baharan is a great source of hope and happiness in the current somber setting of despair and dejection, where people find very few opportunities to rejoice and relax. The best part of the entire celebrations is that they are fully sponsored by the private sector, incurring no financial burden on the public exchequer in these testing times of financial strain. Such innovative ideas must be encouraged because they afford us a unique opportunity not only to promote softer and progressive image of our society but also to help our people think positively by defeating the lethal pessimism caused by some untoward local and external factors.

—The writer is the Press Secretary to the Chief Minister Punjab. arshakir.pmo@gmail.com

Lack of preparedness

Taking these illegal activities and lack of preparedness for the imminent storm of the monsoon season, both the federal and provincial governments must wake up from RIP Van Winkle. The country's ailing economy cannot afford one more storm of catastrophic floods again. The National Disaster Management Authority and the Provincial Disaster Management Authority must be taken on board and the rehabilitation work should be started at a quick pace those who are still residing out of their homes due to stagnant flood water, they must be brought back to their homes safely

Kazim Laghari

The effects of climate change have largely become unstoppable. Though developed and developing countries have vowed to clamp down on green gas emissions, the practicable measures have still not been meted out completely. Subsequently, Pakistan has been affected badly by climate change's effects, as last year's torrential monsoon spells and rampaging floods have caused dozens of populations dislocated and most of the infrastructure of the country severely damaged including roads, railways tracks, and barrages. As Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif stated at the Geneva conference that the catastrophic floods and torrential monsoon spells have caused unprecedented devastation, affecting 33 million people immediately, and more than 800km of roads and 3,100 km of railway tracks have been destroyed badly. Notwithstanding, such a big loss to the country both the federal and provincial governments have allegedly not taken safety measures against containing the coming monsoon season. The time flew unnoticed manner, the sword of the monsoon spell and flooding season has hinged on the country not far from two months. Unfortunately, flood-affected people have still not been rehabilitated fully, some flood-affected are reportedly living on the sides of national highways and embankments because their houses and surroundings are yet inundated by flood water. The authorities have not paid heed to them for restoring their life and receding the stagnant and polluted flood water. In spite of being affected widely and severely, the Sindh province specifically is

reportedly not yet taken serious actions for rehabilitating the flood-prone. There are some reports that some areas of Sindh province especially the rural areas where people were residing peacefully before the floods have been drowned manipulated actions for saving the fields of influentials, though the canals and tributaries had created in the map which was designed in the British rule. In the case of flooding, they had designed particular areas in the map where the water can be stored or drained. But with the passage of time and the ineptitude of the government, these areas have been forcefully occupied by the locals and influentials. They have created their own embankments illegally and without permission. Moreover, in certain areas, the government's designed embankments which are under the supervision of the provincial Irrigation Department have been destroyed completely and cultivated for the crops. And the Irrigation department is not taking any legal action against those culprits who have demolished the government's embankments. Further, alleged reports of corruption have been heard in such illegal demolishing of the embankments, the reports added that the irrigation department's officials are involved in such illegal demolishing of the embankments. Given such an ineptitude scenario of the official department, things do not come over there, the woods are also destroyed in the areas of the Indus river illegally with the involvement of the forest department's officials. The loggers are cutting trees in the light of day but no one is asking them for this illegal action from the department.

Such deforestation is also one of the big causes of climate change and floods. Fortunately, the country is enjoying the blessing season of spring. In this timely opportunity, the governments should come forward and avail of the opportunity and start the plantation drives enthusiastically. The plantation drives should not only be encouraged but the drive strictly is implemented accordingly. As in this worst climate-hit situation, the trees will play a fortification role for our land and can save us from climate change-induced storms. The forest also must be taken care of unreservedly by the official departments. These forests have inestimable value for the lives to survive in this climate change monster's era.

Taking these illegal activities and lack of preparedness for the imminent storm of the monsoon season, both the federal and provincial governments must wake up from RIP Van Winkle. The country's ailing economy cannot afford one more storm of catastrophic floods again. The National Disaster Management Authority and the Provincial Disaster Management Authority must be taken on board and the rehabilitation work should be started at a quick pace those who are still residing out of their homes due to stagnant flood water, they must be brought back to their homes safely. And last but not least the government must draw a resilience policy for the storming season by putting the climate change saga in the mind.

—The writer is a freelance columnist and can be reached at lagharikazim@gmail.com

Briefs

Ex ISI chief being probed, Sana reveals

FROM PAGE 01
done was required and PTI Chairman Imran Khan will be arrested when need be. Moreover, the minister requested Jamat-e-Islami (JI) to organise Haya March on March 7 or 9, instead of March 8 when there are several events, including the Aurat March, which is held on account of International Women's Day "Aurat March is taking place on March 8, our mothers and sisters are marching in it," he said, adding that the day holds immense importance for the women. He said that the women take to the streets to highlight two separate narratives. While speaking about the ban on public gatherings imposed in Lahore, Sanaullah said that the government imposed Section 144 in light of security reports by the agencies. The interior minister said that the government imposed Section 144 in light of reports by the security agencies. He said that PTI had been asked to share the route of their rally but Khan's group didn't provide any details. "Fitna, anarchy, and chaos are his [Khan's] ways. There are no such people in the system who have stopped the Law Enforcement Agencies [LEAs]," he added. The minister said that there were several events, including Aurat March and Haya March, simultaneously taking place in Lahore. While mocking the PTI chief, Sanaullah said, "Imranfitna announced the burger march" and selected the same place for their election rally which the Aurat March rally organisers had already picked. He said that "fitna Khan found it fit to highlight his own fitna in between" all these happenings. Sanaullah said that everything was being done in the same area therefore any untoward incident can occur in such a situation. "On one hand, [Khan's] leg has a plaster on for five months and he can't move due to 72 years of age," he said, challenging Khan to appear in the courts if he has recovered from the bullet wounds he sustained in a bid on his life in Wazirabad last year. He said that the courts had been seeking replies from the deposed prime minister but he is getting relief instead. Sanaullah further stated that the courts had been seeking replies from the deposed prime minister but he is getting relief instead.

"Any further relief for him [Khan] will raise questions. Judiciary's impartiality will be hurt," he added. Heaping scorn on the PTI chief, Sanaullah said that Khan wanted to establish the state of Madina but his actions are totally opposed to it.

Maryam demands court...

FROM PAGE 01
the petition in court. The major evidence (in the petition) was the former general's visit to the house of Islamabad High Court's former judge Shahukat Aziz Siddiqui, and asked him to punish Nawaz Sharif and Maryam Nawaz and not approve their bail," she said, adding that Siddiqui said on camera that when he asked how come you (Gen Faiz) know that the father and the daughter duo will be sentenced, he (Gen Faiz) said they have worked for two years on that." Maryam Nawaz also declared chief justice Saqib-Nisar "the biggest criminal of the nation". She alleged that Saqib-Nisar had imposed a 'characterless person' on the nation. The PML-N chief organiser claimed that the nation cannot see development and prosperity without witnessing the exemplary punishments of such characters. Maryam added that Nisar's statement indicated that he is still active. She said that the nation knows about his [Saqib-Nisar] deeds regardless of how many lies he would tell everyone. She said that every individual will have to pay the price of the unconstitutional move.

Wolvaardt, Nida star in Super Women's eight-wicket victory

Wolvaardt belted a six to reach her half-century and also take her side home. Her 36-ball knock also included six fours, while Nida scored almost run-a-ball 23 with a four

AFZAL JAVED

RAWALPINDI: A sparkling half-century by South Africa's Laura Wolvaardt and an all-round performance by Nida Dar helped Super Women defeat Amazons by eight wickets in the Women's League exhibition match to go one-up at the Pindi Cricket Stadium on Wednesday.

Wolvaardt scored 53 not out and Nida Dar followed her three for 25 with the ball with 23 not out with the bat as the two batters put on 68 runs for the unbroken third wicket to help Super Women achieve the 132-run target with more than four overs to spare.

Wolvaardt belted a six to reach her half-century and also take her side home. Her 36-ball knock also included six fours, while Nida scored almost run-a-ball 23 with a four. In pursuit of a 133-run target, opener Muneeba Ali and Chamari Athapaththu put on 39 runs for the first wicket before the latter departed after scoring a rapid 23 from 13 balls with four fours and a six. Muneeba then added 31 runs for the second wicket with Wol-



vaardt before joining Athapaththu in the dressing room after scoring a 27-ball 33 with six fours. Nashra Sundhu and Anam Amin took a wicket each, conceding 18 and 23 runs, respectively. Earlier, Amazons, electing to bat first, were off to a flying start of 46 in 5.3 overs before they lost

their way and ended up at 132 for nine - thanks to a 35-ball 38 by top-scorer Aliya Riaz. The Pakistan all-rounder hit three fours and a six before she was smartly run-out by Chamari Athapaththu from extra-cover when the Sri Lanka captain had one stump to aim. England duo of Tammy Beaumont

and Danni Wyatt equally struck eight fours between them as they matched each other stroke by stroke. The partnership ended when Beaumont's 18-ball 24 innings was ended by Syeda Masooma Zahra. Three balls later, Wyatt fell to a good reflex action catch by Sadia Iqbal off Nida Dar as Am-

azons slipped from 46-0 to 49-2. The dismissal of the two openers opened floodgates from both ends as the Amazons failed to overcome a disciplined and accurate bowling by the Super Women and continued to lose wickets at regular intervals. Maia Bouchier (18 off 15) and Fatima Sana (13 off 10) were the only middle-order batters who helped their side to reach 132 for nine. For Super Women, Nida was as effective, economical and successful as ever when she returned figures of three for 25, while Tuba Hasan also impressed with figures of two for 18. Syeda Masooma Zahra, Umm-e-Hani and Lea Tahu-pu picked up one wicket apiece. The second match of the three-match series was played on Friday. Scores in brief: 1st match - Super Women beat Amazons by eight wickets Amazons 132/9, 20 overs (Aliya Riaz 38, Tammy Beaumont 24, Danni Wyatt 22, Maia Bouchier 18, Fatima Sana 13; Nida Dar 3-25, Tuba Hassan 2-18) Super Women 138-2, 15.5 overs (Laura Wolvaardt 53 not out, Muneeba Ali 33, Nida Dar 23 not out, Chamari Athapaththu 23) Player of the match - Nida Dar (Super Women).

England break ticket sales record

LONDON: The 2023 Women's Ashes has broken the ticket sales record for England women's fixtures, with 55,000 tickets already sold. With 100 days to go, the series has already sold more tickets than for all of England's games in 2022. All games in the women's multi-format series are to be played at Test match grounds for the first time. The series starts with a five-day Test match at Trent Bridge, Nottingham on Thursday, 22 June. England will be attempting to regain the Ashes after Australia won the last series in 2021-22. Australia also won the last series that was played in England in 2019, when the total attendance was 32,281. But 2023 marks the first year that the men's and women's Ashes are being played alongside one another on a joint platform and without any fixture clashes. "It's really exciting, and a big crowd makes such a difference," said England all-rounder Nat Sciver-Brunt. "The prospect of playing in front of a full Lord's or Edgbaston is pretty cool, it's what you grow up watching. We want to play in front of the biggest crowds we can and hopefully put on a show for them." The series consists of one Test match followed by three one-day internationals and three T20s, which are to be played at Edgbaston, the Kia Oval and Lord's. - Agencies

Dortmund have no time to lament Chelsea defeat

BERLIN: Borussia Dortmund coach Edin Terzic gave his players a night to digest their Champions League Round of 16 exit to Chelsea on Tuesday before picking themselves up for their Ruhr valley derby against bitter rivals Schalke 04 on Saturday. Dortmund, who were on a 10-game winning run in all competitions in 2023 prior to Tuesday, lost 2-0 at Chelsea and were eliminated. They won 1-0 win in Germany in the first leg. With the club joint top in the Bundesliga on 49 points with Bayern Munich, but in second place on goal differ-

ence, Terzic said there was no time to bewail the defeat to Chelsea for too long. "We know we were in a good form (coming to Chelsea). But confidence and good form won't be enough," Terzic told reporters. "Our season started in July and we said we want a good run in all three competitions. We dropped out of the Champions League against Chelsea. It is not something you have to feel ashamed for." Apart from their fine Bundesliga run where they hunt their first league crown in 11 years, Dortmund are also through

to the German Cup last eight where they face RB Leipzig in April. "But don't get me wrong. Tonight we are really disappointed," Terzic said. "But tomorrow morning we are going to stand up, recover and go for the next one. It is a big derby for us on Saturday." Few Dortmund fans would remember the Chelsea exit if there was silverware at the end of the season for their club, even fewer would if that included victory at local rivals Schalke on Saturday. The Royal Blues are back after a season in the second division and after a disap-

pointing start they have turned their season around in recent weeks. Schalke are unbeaten in their last six league matches, having won the last two, and have climbed off last place to 19 points and into 17th place, level on points with Hoffenheim and VfB Stuttgart in 16th and 15th respectively. They have also conceded just one goal in the six matches. "At the end of May we will see what we deserve," Terzic said. "This is what we want to do. We don't want anything for granted but we will see at the end of May."

Downgrading ties with Israel South African parliament passes historic resolution

This is a moment Nelson Mandela would be proud of. He always said our freedom is incomplete without the freedom of Palestinians. Today we took a step closer to the attainment of that freedom for Palestinians

FOREIGN DESK

CAPE TOWN: The National Freedom Party (NFP) said it was ecstatic that the draft resolution to downgrade South Africa's embassy in Israel has been passed by Parliament. "This is a historic moment for our country and a demonstration of our unwavering commitment to justice, human rights, and freedom," it said in a statement. "This is a moment Madiba would be

proud of. He always said our freedom is incomplete without the freedom of Palestinians. Today we took a step closer to the attainment of that freedom for Palestinians," stated NFP MP, Ahmed Munzoor Shaik Emam, who introduced the resolution. The NFP thanked all political parties that supported the resolution, including the African National Congress (ANC), United Democratic Movement (UDM), Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF), Afri-

can Independent Congress (AIC), the PAC, and Al Jama ah. "We are grateful for their commitment and willingness to stand up for human rights and justice," it said. "As the NFP - a Political Party with only two seats in parliament - we had to make sure that this resolution becomes Government policy. We can no longer stand by while Palestinian human rights are being trampled on," added Shaik Emam. "By passing this resolution, we are sending a powerful message to the world that South Africa remains a beacon of hope and a shining example of what is possible when we come together in pursuit of a more just and equitable world," he said.

Faheem Ashraf blitz propels Islamabad United to a nail-biting win

RAWALPINDI: Faheem Ashraf exhibited his class as he was once again the finisher for Islamabad United, hammering a quick-fire half-century to steer the home side to a nail-biting two-wicket win over Multan Sultans at Pindi Cricket Stadium Rawalpindi on late Tuesday. Faheem stole the show as he struck three boundaries and a maximum in the final over of the match to help Islamabad United to become the first team in HBL Pakistan Super League to score 18 off the last over to win a match. Islamabad United's chase of the 206-run target was beset by early blows as Alex Hales and Rahmanullah Gurbaz were both undone by Anwar Ali's slower deliveries. Colin Munro then rebuilt the innings with skipper Shadab Khan as the two hammered 59 runs in 30 balls. Munro was dismissed for his 21-ball 40 studded with four fours and three sixes when he misread a quicker one from Usama Mir that hit the top of middle and off stump. Azam Khan's dismissal for just three runs did not deter Shadab, who continued to attack from the other end as he accumulated 44 off 25 with the help of three fours and as many sixes. Shadab's wicket triggered a mini-collapse for Islamabad United as Asif Ali and Mubasir Khan soon followed him back to the pavilion. With the hosts requiring 46 off the final three overs, Faheem and Mohammad Wasim Jr stitched an explosive partnership of 28 runs in 12 deliveries. - APP

Cops suspended...

FROM PAGE 01
would be taken against those who pushed the women violently. Meanwhile, Climate Change Minister Sherry Rehman also criticised the incident while mentioning that it should not have occurred on March 8, International Day for Women. She also sought an inquiry into the incident. "The Islamabad police had no business baton-charging a small peaceful procession," she tweeted after a video of a police official pushing a female participant back emerged online. The Human Rights Commission of Pakistan also condemned the reported use of force by the Islamabad police against the women at the march. Afterwards, the Islamabad police also issued an apology. It said Islamabad IG had directed the DIG to take action against those involved.

Sindh's concerns...

FROM PAGE 01
Iqbal to review the progress of the digital census. It was briefed by Dr Zafar Sindh CM, chief secretaries of Punjab, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan, the National Database and Registration Authority's (NADRA) chairman, PBS chairman and other representatives attended the meeting. The meeting decided that the Census Monitoring Committee will meet every week for better coordination and to resolve all the problems immediately. The planning minister directed the PBS chief to address Sindh's concerns. The decision was appreciated by CM Shah. The minister said the government would take all the provinces on board and remove the concerns of the Sindh province, adding that the government believed in taking all decisions by consensus.

PCB officials plan to take tough stance at ICC meeting

The issue will be discussed at ICC meeting on March 20, along with other concerns

LAHORE: Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) officials are considering conditioning the departure of the Pakistan team to visit India for the ODI World Cup based on the Indian team's arrival in Pakistan for the Asia Cup scheduled in September. The issue will be discussed at the International Cricket Council (ICC) meeting on March 20, along with other concerns. A three-member team of the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) will fly to Dubai on March 17 to attend the meeting of the ICC and Asian Cricket Council. PCB

Management Committee Chairman Najam Sethi, Chief Operating Officer Salman Naseer, and Faisal Hasnain will represent Pakistan at the meetings. Sources indicate that the PCB officials will take a strict stance on the issue of the Pakistan team's participation in the ODI World Cup. While the Pakistan Board cannot boycott the ICC event, the issue of the Pakistan team's departure to India is critical. Before the ODI World Cup, Pakistan will host the Asia Cup in September. The Secretary of the Indian Cricket Board and President of the Asian Cricket Council, Jay Shah, recently announced that the Indian team would not visit Pakistan and that the Asia Cup would take



place in the UAE instead. Pakistan Cricket Board officials are unhappy with Shah's unilateral decision and plan to take the Indian board to the task at the ICC meeting. The PCB

officials will demand that if the Indian team is unwilling to come to Pakistan, Pakistan's matches scheduled in the ODI World Cup 2023 should be held in the UAE instead of India.

Ten Hag backs Fernandes as Man Utd captain

"He's giving energy to the team, running a lot with intensity, in the right way. He's pointing and coaching players, he's an inspiration for the whole team

DNA

LONDON: Manager Erik ten Hag has confirmed that Bruno Fernandes will continue to captain Manchester United in Harry Maguire's absence after 7-0 loss to Liverpool. When questioned if Fernandes would continue to lead the side when needed, Ten Hag on Wednesday told reporters, "Yes, definitely". "I think he is playing a

brilliant season and he has played a big role in us being where we are," the Dutch manager added, speaking ahead of Thursday's last 16 first-leg clash against Real Betis at Old Trafford. "He's giving energy to the team, running a lot with intensity, in the right way. He's pointing and coaching players, he's an inspiration for the whole team. "No one is perfect, everyone makes mistakes. I'm really happy to have Bru-

no Fernandes in my team and I'm happy with him as our captain with Harry not on the pitch." United striker Marcus Rashford also backed Fernandes, saying the midfielder is "the perfect player to play with". "He's been a good leader for us, even when he's not captain, which is always a good sign," Rashford told reporters. "He's helped other players become better leaders and the reality

is that we can't be an organised team in terms of just one leader being captain. "He's done a lot for us. I don't have anything negative to say about Bruno. As the manager said, nobody is perfect. I support him and I'm 100% behind him." Ten Hag called on his players to reset and bounce back when they face Betis, who are fifth in the LaLiga standings on 41 points and are unbeaten in their last four games - including a 0-0

draw with Real Madrid. "(The coach and players) are in the same boat, we do it together. We win and lose together. We made a mess on Sunday and we have to deal with that," Ten Hag said. "(The defeat) had a lot of lessons in it and it can help us in the future. We were really below average, especially mentality-wise. "We want to win trophies and you have to act different. After Sunday, we got

a big lesson, we take it and we have to move on, look forward. Use all the energy and focus on the next game." Ten Hag's side will be without Anthony Martial and Marcel Sabitzer for Thursday's game, while Donny van de Beek (knee) and Christian Eriksen (ankle) are long-term absentees. "We have a strong programme," Ten Hag told MUTV in an interview published on Wednesday. "But I think we are quite good."

PSL 8th Edition

THURSDAY 07:00 PM
MARCH 09, 2023
Pindi Club Ground, Rawalpindi

PTI suspends election rally amid chaos

FROM PAGE 01
announced, the party was not allowed for electioneering. "I am telling all my workers to return home peacefully. They want us to resort to chaos, but we will not let them succeed," he added. The former energy minister said that the police fired tear gas shells at workers in some places they are still doing the same.

In a notification issued, the Home Department observed that number of rallies and protests are held therein on daily basis at different places of Lahore, which not only pose serious security threats but also disrupt traffic and cause inconvenience to the public at large. There is also a history of terrorist activities in the rallies and protests, wherein, a number of police officials and civilians embraced shahadat, it noted. "Hence, in the context of the prevailing overall security situation in the wake of the recent wave of terrorism and latest threat alerts, it has been necessary to impose Section 144 of Cr.P.C, 1898 on holding of all kinds of assemblies, gatherings, sits-in, rallies, processions, demonstrations, jalsas, dharnas, protests and such like other activities across the district Lahore to avert any untoward incident," the notification added issued by Additional Chief Secretary (Home) Shakeel Ahmed. The order stated that due to prevailing threats, it is essential to ensure the security of the people and installations/buildings against any potential terrorist or untoward activity, in the larger interest of public safety, security, peace and tranquility.

Cops suspended...

FROM PAGE 01
would be taken against those who pushed the women violently. Meanwhile, Climate Change Minister Sherry Rehman also criticised the incident while mentioning that it should not have occurred on March 8, International Day for Women. She also sought an inquiry into the incident. "The Islamabad police had no business baton-charging a small peaceful procession," she tweeted after a video of a police official pushing a female participant back emerged online. The Human Rights Commission of Pakistan also condemned the reported use of force by the Islamabad police against the women at the march. Afterwards, the Islamabad police also issued an apology. It said Islamabad IG had directed the DIG to take action against those involved.

Sindh's concerns...

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Iqbal to review the progress of the digital census. It was briefed by Dr Zafar Sindh CM, chief secretaries of Punjab, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan, the National Database and Registration Authority's (NADRA) chairman, PBS chairman and other representatives attended the meeting. The meeting decided that the Census Monitoring Committee will meet every week for better coordination and to resolve all the problems immediately. The planning minister directed the PBS chief to address Sindh's concerns. The decision was appreciated by CM Shah. The minister said the government would take all the provinces on board and remove the concerns of the Sindh province, adding that the government believed in taking all decisions by consensus.

Briefs

French workers extend walkouts

FOREIGN DESK

PARIS: France had a wriggly Tuesday with thousands of workers objecting to the government's pension reform plan. Nationwide demonstrations were held in France's capital and other cities for the sixth time since January, after the plan triggered public outrage when it was announced last year. The General Labor Confederation counted 3.5 million demonstrators in the streets across France, including 700,000 in Paris, while the Interior Ministry recorded 1.28 million people attending the protests, according to the daily Le Figaro. The Senate is still debating the draft bill, and the deadline is March 12. Trade unions have set new mobilization days on March 11 and 15, in a statement released on Twitter after the sixth round of protests.

They also called on mobilizing women on Wednesday and the youth on Thursday, and they asked to be "received urgently" by President Emmanuel Macron, local media said.

Turkish delegation to visit Russia next week

NEWS DESK

ANKARA: A Turkish delegation will visit Russia's capital next week for technical talks ahead of a planned Turkish, Russian, Iranian, and Syrian foreign ministers' meeting, Türkiye's foreign minister said on Wednesday.

"An offer came from the Russians to hold a meeting at the technical level in preparation for a possible meeting of foreign ministers. We will also send our deputy minister to Moscow next week. "The Iranian side will also attend this meeting. At this meeting, preparations for the foreign ministers' meeting will be made," Mevlut Cavusoglu said at a news conference with his Iranian counterpart Hossein Amir Abdollahian in the capital Ankara. Cavusoglu said the only surviving mechanism for Syria is the Astana format. "Therefore, we said to the Russians that there is nothing wrong with Iran's participation," he added. On Dec. 28, 2022, the Turkish, Russian, and Syrian defense ministers met in Moscow to discuss counterterrorism efforts in Syria and agreed to continue the tripartite meetings to ensure stability in Syria and the wider region. About the possibility of the inclusion of Iran into the talks, Türkiye previously said Ankara would be "pleased if Iran is involved in this process."

Dozens arrested in Georgia riots

TBILISI: Dozens of protesters were arrested in Georgia during Tuesday's demonstrations in the capital, Tbilisi, against a draft law on foreign agents, the Interior Ministry said on Wednesday.

The ministry said police detained 66 people for "petty hooliganism and disobedience to the legal demands" of the authorities, and pledged to assess the legal consequences for those who helped a peaceful protest to spiral out of control. It added that "the violent actions" of protesters left about 50 officers injured, with several hospitalized and in need of surgery. The ministry said that during the clashes, "civilians were also injured," without providing further details. The Interior Ministry claimed that its officers repeatedly called on protesters to stand down, but to no avail, so the police "were forced to consistently use proportional force and special means of coercion" to restore order.

However, Georgian opposition lawmaker Giorgi Vashadze called the police response "disproportionate." Talking to journalists, he announced that another rally would take place in front of parliament in Tbilisi later on Wednesday, which he claimed would attract even more people than on Tuesday. —Agencies

Pro-Ukraine groups behind Nord Stream attacks: Report

NEWS DESK

NEW YORK: New intelligence reviewed by officials in the United States suggests that a pro-Ukraine group attacked the Nord Stream gas pipelines in September last year, according to the New York Times. The US officials said they had no evidence that Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy or other Ukrainian government officials were involved in the pipeline bombings, the Times reported on Tuesday. The explosions on the pipelines connecting Russia and Germany happened on September 26 in the exclusive economic zones of Sweden and Denmark. Both countries have concluded the blasts were deliberate but have not said who might be responsible. The US and NATO have called the pipeline attacks "an act of sabotage," while Moscow has blamed the West. Neither side has provided evidence. The new intelligence reviewed by US officials suggested the perpetrators behind the sabotage were "opponents of President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia," the Times reported, but did not specify the members of the group and who organized and paid for the operation, which would have required skilled divers and explosives experts. The US officials cited by the Times believed those involved were probably Ukrainian or Russian nationals, and that none were American or British. The Times said the officials were divided about how much weight to put on the new information

but said the intelligence had increased their optimism that US spy agencies and their partners in Europe would be able to find more information, allowing them to reach a firm conclusion about the perpetrators. Denmark, Germany and Sweden, who have taken the lead in investigating the attack, said last month that their investigations had not yet concluded. The US and the United Kingdom said on Tuesday they were waiting on those findings. "We need to let these investigations conclude and only then should we be looking at what follow-on actions might or may not be appropriate," said White House spokesperson John Kirby. Germany said on Tuesday it had taken note of the Times's report but that its own investigation had not yet produced results. A senior aide to Zelenskyy, Mykhailo Podolyak, meanwhile said that Kyiv was "absolutely not involved" in the blasts and has no information about what happened. The Times said any suggestion of Ukrainian involvement, whether direct or indirect, could upset the delicate relationship between Ukraine and Germany, "souring support among a German public that has swallowed high energy prices in the name of solidarity". NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg and Swedish Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson declined to comment on the report during a news conference in Stockholm. "There is an ongoing preliminary investigation in Sweden, so I do not intend to comment on those reports," Kristersson told

'Not our activity', says Ukraine Minister

STOCKHOLM: The Ukrainian government was not involved in the sabotage last year of the Nord Stream gas pipelines in the Baltic Sea, the country's defence minister said Wednesday. "This is not our activity," Defence Minister Oleksiy Reznikov told reporters in Stockholm ahead of a meeting with EU defence ministers, in response to a report in The New York Times on Tuesday that US officials had seen new intelligence indicating a "pro-Ukrainian group" was responsible for the sabotage. The Times report said US officials had no evidence implicating Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy in the pipeline bombing, and it did not identify the source of the intelligence or the group involved. But the attack benefitted Ukraine by severely damaging Russia's ability to reap millions of dollars by selling natural gas to Western Europe. It also stoked the surge in energy prices weighing on key Ukrainian allies, particularly Germany. The intelligence suggested that the perpetrators behind the sabotage were "opponents of President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia", the Times report said. On Tuesday, Ukrainian presidential adviser Mykhailo Podolyak tweeted that "Ukraine has nothing to do with the Baltic Sea mishap and has no information about 'pro-Ukraine sabotage groups'." The pipelines were ruptured by subsea explosives in late September, seven months after Russian forces invaded Ukraine. Authorities in Germany, Sweden and Denmark have opened inquiries into the incident. —APP

reporters late on Tuesday. The New York Times report came as Germany's ARD broadcaster and Zeit newspaper reported on Tuesday, without citing sources, that German authorities were able to identify the boat used for the sabotage operation. The German out-

lets reported that a group of five men and one woman, using forged passports, rented a yacht from a Poland-based company owned by Ukrainian citizens. They said the nationality of the perpetrators was unclear. Investigators found traces of explosives on the yacht,

which the group took from Rostock, Germany, on September 6, according to ARD and Zeit. They also reported that intelligence indicated that a pro-Ukrainian group could be behind the attack, but German authorities have not yet found any evidence.

S. Korea approves indirect arms delivery to Ukraine

SEOUL: Seoul authorized Poland to deliver AHS Krab self-propelled howitzers built with South Korean parts to Ukraine last year, Kim Hyoung-cheol, a senior official with South Korea's International Cooperation Bureau, told Reuters on Wednesday. The Krab was developed in Poland, but its latest version is fitted on the chassis of the South Korean K9 howitzer. The artillery piece equipped with a 155mm gun has been used by Ukrainian troops against Russian forces since Moscow launched a military operation in its neighboring state a year ago. In July, Seoul and Warsaw signed a deal under which Poland would acquire nearly 1,000 tanks, more than 600 artillery pieces, and dozens of aircraft. South Korean officials said in the past that the package was aimed at strengthening Poland's own defenses. Kim said South Korea's Defense Acquisition Program Administration (DAPA) had approved the delivery of the Krabs. "We reviewed all the documentation and possible issues inside DAPA... when we made [a] decision to give out [an] export license to Poland," he explained. Despite being among the world's top arms exporters, Seoul has so far refused to directly supply weapons to Kiev. "We have been in solidarity with the international community for peaceful, humanitarian aid to Ukraine and have not provided any lethal weapons," President Yoon Suk-yeol said last year. —APP



MINSK: Pakistan ambassador to Belarus, Sajjad Haider holds meeting with members of Belarusian business delegation representing petrochemical sectors. They're visiting for international industrial exhibition from 10-12 March in Karachi. — DNA

Israeli assault on Jenin

OIC, Turkiye, Jordan, Qatar and Egypt strongly condemn

DNA

DOHA: OIC, Jordan, Qatar and Egypt strongly condemned in separate statements Israel's assault on the northern West Bank city of Jenin and the killing of six Palestinians. The General Secretariat of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) today condemned what it described as "the horrific crime committed by the Israeli occupation forces in Jenin camp, which led to six martyrs and a number of wounded Palestinians, as well as the continuation of acts of violence and intimidation perpetrated by extremist settlers in the Palestinian town of Hawara; what is a clear extension of the open Israeli aggression against the Palestinian people in a blatant violation international humanitarian law."

"We condemn in the strongest terms the increased aggression and acts of violence by the Israeli forces and Israeli settlers in the West Bank," said a Turkish Foreign Ministry statement, stress-

ing that the killing of six Palestinians in Jenin and "the acts of violence and intimidation by Israeli settlers against the Palestinian residents of the town of Hawara in the West Bank are unacceptable." Jordan's Foreign Ministry said in a statement that Israel should immediately stop the military escalation against the Palestinian people, warning that the escalation will lead to further deterioration in the situation and more violence, as well as undermine efforts to achieve calm, calling for an end to the "illegitimate and illegal Israeli measures, and to seriously engage in effective negotiations to achieve a just and comprehensive peace that ends the occupation and achieve an independent Palestinian state with occupied East Jerusalem as its capital on the June 4, 1967 lines."

Qatari Foreign Ministry considered the assault as "a blatant violation of international legitimacy resolutions," warning of an explosion in the Palestinian territories while urging the international community "to take urgent action to stop the Israeli

aggression, provide protection for the brotherly Palestinian people and hold Israel accountable for its horrific crimes in the occupied Palestinian territories." In a statement, the Egyptian Ministry of Foreign Affairs affirmed, "its total rejection of the policy of repeated Israeli incursions and the resulting civilian casualties among the Palestinian people, which is accompanied by the destruction of property, the demolition of homes and the loss of lives, in clear violation of the rules of international law." This heralds a serious deterioration of the security and humanitarian situation in the occupied Palestinian territories and threatens to destabilize the region, it said. Egypt appealed to all international actors, led by the United States, the European Union, and members of the Security Council, "to assume their responsibilities to put an end to the ongoing unilateral and escalatory measures, and to create conditions to enable the efforts to bring calm and a peaceful settlement to bear fruit away from the existing destructive cycle of violence."

BRI created 420,000 jobs, lifted 40 million people out of poverty

BEIJING: In the past decade, the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) has galvanized nearly \$1 trillion, launched over 3,000 cooperation projects, created over 420,000 jobs, and lifted 40 million people out of poverty, Chinese Foreign Minister Qin Gang said here at a press conference on the sidelines of the first session of the 14th National People's Congress. He said that the Belt and Road Initiative has attracted the participation of over three-fourths of countries in the world and 32 international organizations. "Ten years after its inception, BRI has created an array of national landmarks, livelihood projects, and milestones of cooperation," he said according to Gwadar Pro. "The China-Laos Railway helps make land-locked Laos a land-linked country. Luban Workshops help young people in over 20 countries acquire vocational skills. The China-Europe Railway Express has completed more than 65,000 freight services, serving as a health train delivering medical supplies during the pandemic," he further specified. This year, China will host the Third Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation. "We will take this as an opportunity and work with relevant parties for more fruitful outcomes from the Belt and Road cooperation," he highlighted. Responding to a question on the so-called "debt trap", Qin said, "China should be the last one to be accused of the so-called debt trap. Data show that multi-lateral financial institutions and commercial creditors account for more than 80 percent of the sovereign debt of developing countries. They are the biggest source of debt burden on developing countries. —DNA

Iran warns against Israeli presence in Caucasus

FOREIGN DESK

ANKARA: Iran's Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian has said that the presence of the Israeli regime in the Caucasus region is among the important issues facing the region. "Iran warns all parties to be vigilant about Israel and not let Israel's presence in the Caucasus," Amir-Abdollahian said while speaking at a joint news conference with his Turkish counterpart, Mevlut Cavusoglu, in Ankara on Wednesday. He also said terrorism originating from Iraq's northern region is a common threat to both Iran and Turkey. Amir-Abdollahian said Iran and Turkey enjoy a high level of security cooperation regarding the fight against terrorism. "Terrorism origi-



nating from Iraq's Kurdistan region as well as the Daesh terrorism emanating from Afghanistan are among our common concerns," he said. "We believe that terrorism is

not good or bad, but an ominous phenomenon in any guise and form." He then made clear that within the framework of international law, Iran and Turkey reserve

the right for a "legitimate defense against any terrorist act" from any direction and by any group. Elsewhere in his remarks, Amir-Abdollahian said Iran supports the res-

toration of relations between Turkey and Syria. "We welcome the return of Turkey-Syria relations. We were interested in working to resolve misunderstand-

G7 to reconsider price cap on Russian oil

WEB DESK

BRUSSELS: : The Group of Seven is planning to reconsider the price ceiling for seaborne exports of Russian crude oil, possibly within the next few weeks, according to Elizabeth Rosenberg, Assistant Secretary for Terrorist Financing and Financial Crimes at the US Department of the Treasury. The price cap of \$60 per barrel that has been applied to shipments of Russian crude came into effect on December 5, and was supported by the EU and Australia.

"All I can say is that the G7 is planning to re-evaluate the ceiling in March," Rosenberg told RIA Novosti on the sidelines of the CER-AWeek energy conference in the US oil industry capital, Houston. The official reportedly evaded the issue of the price ceiling's impact on supply-demand balance at the global crude market. She also declined to comment on the efficiency of the sanctions, or on their capacity to change policies pursued by Moscow.

Meanwhile, US Energy envoy Amos Hochstein said that price caps, imposed by the G7 and allies to force Russia to sell its crude and fuel at a discount, are working well.

China slams reports of Germany banning Huawei

FOREIGN DESK

BERLIN: Urging the German government to "listen carefully" to "domestic voices of reason," China has strongly denounced reports that Berlin is "considering" banning some components of Chinese companies Huawei and ZTE in its telecommunications networks. Referring to European data, the Chinese Embassy in Berlin said in a statement that "Huawei accounts for nearly 60% of Germany's 5G network equipment, making positive contributions to the construction of Germany's communication infrastructure."

"For a long time, Huawei has operated in compliance with laws and regulations, and its technology complies with safety standards," read the statement released Tuesday night. Earlier on Tuesday, an unnamed German Interior Ministry spokesperson had said the government was "carrying out a general review of telecoms tech suppliers," but added that it "was not directed at specific manufacturers."

"In recent years, countries and anti-China forces have continued to attempt to smear Huawei with trumped-up charges, but there has never been any evidence that Huawei equipment and components pose security risks," the Chinese embassy said.

Four dead in latest Egypt train crash

CAIRO: A train crash in Egypt killed four people and injured more than 20, officials said Wednesday about the latest in a series of deadly accidents blamed on ageing infrastructure and mismanagement.

The train overshot the station and ran into the buffers at the end of the track after passing through a stop signal, in the Nile Delta city of Qalyub north of Cairo, the National Railways Authority said. "That led to the derailment of the locomotive and the first carriage," it added in a statement. Pictures from the scene showed emergency crews overnight using a crane to lift the derailed coach that appeared to be partially crumpled. Egypt's health ministry later gave the final toll of four killed and 23 injured, doubling the number of dead that had been announced overnight. Families of those killed in the latest train tragedy will receive compensation worth 100,000 Egyptian pounds (around \$3,000), said the solidarity ministry. A similar amount will go to those seriously injured, a statement said. President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi has vowed to hold to account those responsible for recurrent deadly rail accidents in Egypt, the Arab world's most populous country. —Agencies

Briefs

Tens of thousands protest in Greece over train crash

DNA

ATHENS: Tens of thousands of people marched in Greece on Wednesday to protest over the country's deadliest train disaster on record, as workers staged a nationwide, day-long walkout. The crash on Feb. 28 killed 57 people and has stirred public outrage over the crumbling state of the rail network. Striking workers say years of neglect, underinvestment and understaffing - a legacy of Greece's decade-long debt crisis - are to blame. More than 40,000 people, among them transport workers, students and teachers, marched in central Athens chanting "Murderers!" and "We are all in the same carriage". A group of protesters clashed with police, who fired tear gas at the crowd. Thousands also took to the streets in Greece's second-biggest city of Thessaloniki, where a group of protesters hurled stones at a government building.

'Resilient Pakistan to sail through challenges'

DNA

NEW YORK: Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari has said the Pakistan nation, with the resilience and determination, would effectively overcome the current challenges including the economic crisis. "Pakistan has seen tough times in the past and fought them bravely. This time too, the nation will overcome the difficult situation," he told reporters here in New York. Bilawal arrived in 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 U.N. Commission on the Status of Women (CSW). The foreign minister said Pakistan from the platform of Council of Foreign Ministers is hosting an event on Islamophobia to shun negative perceptions regarding the human rights, particularly of women and minorities.

UN rights chief's comment unnerves India

GENEVA: United Nations human rights chief, Volker Turk's comments on the worrying human rights situation in Indian illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir have unnerved Narendra Modi-led Hindutva government in India. The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Volker Turk during his address at the 52nd session of the Human Rights Council in Geneva on Tuesday said that in recent months, he had the opportunity to discuss the worrying human rights situation in Kashmir with both India and Pakistan. - DNA

Award giving ceremony at French embassy

Women backbone of our family system, society: Sherry Rehman

We are very pleased to bring Gender and Climate Award to Pakistan said Nicolas Galey, Ambassador of France

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Climate Change, Senator Sherry Rehman on Wednesday said the women were like the backbone of our family system, society, country and economy in every sphere of life. In her speech which she delivered at the French embassy on the occasion of award distribution ceremony Ms. Sherry further said "I pay my respects and congratulations to the brave, hardworking and valiant women of Pakistan, including the women of the world." The purpose of celebrating this day was to encourage women, recognize their rights and spread awareness among people regarding the equal status of women, she added. "49% of Pakistan's population consists of women. Women across the country should have access to health, education and other basic facilities and an environment of equality," Sherry Rehman said. The Minister said on this day the women in the country were not demanding more, rather asking for their human, constitutional and legal rights. Women, she said should get their rights and status according to the constitution and law so that they could lead a socially and economically dignified life. It may be mentioned here that the Embassy of France and Agence française de développement (AFD), together with International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN Pakistan), announced the winners of the first Pakistan Gender and Climate Awards to mark the International Women's Day. The objective of this award was to highlight women's commitment and leadership in the fight against climate change and the need to adopt gender-responsive policy, in line with the Paris Agreement. "We are very pleased to bring the Gender and Climate Award to Pakistan, and I am very honored that Minister Rehman is honoring this event with her presence" said Nicolas Galey, Ambassador of France in Pakistan, "this award provides a platform for organizations and individuals in Pakistan to showcase their efforts in promoting gender equality and climate ac-



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Climate Change Sherry Rehman, Ambassador of France Nicolas Galey posing for a picture with the recipients of the awards. - DNA

tion and to inspire others to join the movement. This award echoes Pakistan's leadership in international climate change negotiations after the floods of 2022, particularly during the COP27 in Sharm El-Sheikh." Mr. Mahmood Akhtar Cheema, Country Representative of IUCN Pakistan said that "The Gender and Climate Award is in line with the gender policy objectives of the National Climate Change Policy of the Government of Pakistan (October 2021). The IUCN has also made up a concrete follow up to the launch

of the first national Climate Change Gender Action Plan of Pakistan, with the assistance of Green Climate Fund. The winners have received recognition, visibility, and support to scale their initiatives and to further advance gender and climate action in Pakistan." The award winner Humera Iqbal, said "We women thought carefully about our own values and set ourselves challenges to lead by examples. We are better able to defend our role in taking genuine action to protect the next generation because of the threat

that climate change poses to the entire world. We are stronger together". Irum Fatima, said "We believe in empowering women to play a key role in promoting environmental sustainability, thereby ensuring a sustainable future for generations to come." Mehreen Raza in her speech said "She-Guard is a shield to ensure women and earth's health. She-Guard is the silver lining for the most ignored problems of women health and climate change. She-Guard ensures that women problems aren't taboo anymore."

Russians claim control over Bakhmut's east

KYIV: The head of Russia's Wagner mercenary group said on Wednesday his forces had taken full control of the eastern part of the Ukrainian city of Bakhmut and NATO's secretary general said it could all fall to the invading army in the next few days. If Wagner boss Yevgeny Prigozhin's claim is true, it would mean Russian forces now control nearly half the city in their costly push to secure their first big victory in several months. But as one of the bloodiest battles of the year-long war ground on amid the ruins, Ukrainian defenders remained defiant. Last week they appeared to be preparing for a tactical retreat from Bakhmut, but Ukrainian military and political leaders now speak of hanging on to positions and inflicting as many casualties as possible on the Russians. The General Staff of Ukraine's armed forces said in its Wednesday morning report: "The enemy, despite significant losses, continues to storm the town of Bakhmut." Prigozhin said his fighters, who have been spearheading the Russian assault on Bakhmut, had now captured the city's east. "Everything east of the Bakhmutka River is completely under the control of Wagner," Prigozhin said on Telegram. The river bisects Bakhmut, which sits on the edge of a swathe of Donetsk province that is already largely under Russian occupation. The city centre is on the west side of

the river. But in Stockholm, NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg struck a pessimistic note. Speaking before an European Union defence ministers' meeting, he said Russia was throwing more troops into the battle. "They have suffered big losses, but at the same time we cannot rule out that Bakhmut may eventually fall in the coming days," Stoltenberg said. This would not necessarily be a turning point in the war, he added, but it showed "we should not underestimate Russia, we must continue to provide support to Ukraine". The Ukrainian military said earlier the main task of its troops in Bakhmut was to cause as many casualties as possible among the Russians and grind down their fighting capability. Russia, which claims to have annexed nearly 20% of Ukraine's territory, says that taking Bakhmut would be a step towards seizing the whole of the eastern industrial Donbas region, made up of Donetsk and Luhansk provinces. Western analysts say Bakhmut has little strategic value although its capture would be a boost to President Vladimir Putin and his military after a series of setbacks in what they call their "special military operation" in Ukraine. Kyiv says the losses suffered by Russia there could determine the course of the war, with decisive battles expected when the weather improves and Ukraine receives more Western military aid, including heavy battle tanks. - Agencies

WHO regional chief ousted over bullying claims

GENEVA: The World Health Organization has terminated the contract of its powerful Western Pacific regional director Takeshi Kasai following staff accusations of abusive and racist behaviour, a diplomatic source said Wednesday. The WHO executive board called a two-day, closed-door special session at its Geneva headquarters to discuss the case of Japanese doctor Kasai, who was suspended after allegations first surfaced in January 2022. "The regional director's appointment has been terminated", the source told AFP. A WHO letter said the decision was made "after careful consideration". The WHO said the executive board meeting was scheduled to consider "the recommendation of the regional committee", which was held in the Western Pacific headquarters in Manila last week - also in private. While the WHO did not say what that recommendation was, another diplomatic source told AFP that the Manila meeting had called for Kasai to be dismissed. - APP

Pakistan, Indonesia agree to enhance economic ties

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Finance Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar has said that Pakistan attaches great importance to its relations with Indonesia. Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar and Finance Minister of Indonesia, Ms Sri Mulyani discussed avenues of mutual cooperation in the economic and financial sectors to strengthen bilateral during the virtual meeting today. According to press statement issued by finance ministry, Special Assistant to Prime Minister, on Finance, Tariq Bajwa, Chairman SECP, Akif Saeed and senior officers from the finance division attended the meeting. The Finance Minister while greeting the Indonesian Finance Minister highlighted profound historical and brotherly relations between the two countries. He expressed satisfaction over the magnitude of economic and trade and investment cooperation between the two countries. Finance Minister of Indonesia Sri Mulyani emphasized deep rooted bilateral relation between both the countries and exchanged views to strengthen bilateral economic and trade relations with Pakistan. - DNA

NAB team quizzes Toshakhana watch buyer in Dubai

DUBAI: A four-member team of the National Accountability Bureau (NAB), led by Director Rizwan Ahmad, on Wednesday met with Umar Farooq Zahoor, the man who had purchased the watch from former prime minister and PTI Chairman Imran Khan gifted to him by Saudi Crown Prince Muhammad bin Salman, in Dubai. Zahoor took the NAB team to the consulate general and showed him the watch. The team also visited the store which not only confirmed that the watch was genuine but also that its price could not be determined. On the other hand, Zahoor's lawyer has confirmed the NAB team's meeting with his client and assured complete cooperation. Sources in the Pakistani consulate told a private news channel that Zahoor, after talking to the bureau team, also signed the documents, while sources in the NAB said that the team had also recorded the statement of Shafiq, Arts & Time owner, who had confirmed that the receipt of the watch deposited in the 'Toshakhana' was fake. Last year, Umar Farooq Zahoor had revealed that the watch, which had been gifted to Imran, and whose actual price was Rs280 million had been sold at \$2 million. Sources further disclosed that besides watch, Zahoor also showed to the team receipts of other things he had purchased from the former premier and other proofs. - DNA

Seven dead in Syria drone strike on arms factory

BEIRUT: Seven people including several civilians were killed Wednesday when a drone strike targeted a weapons factory belonging to Iran-backed factions in government-held eastern Syria, a war monitor said. It was not immediately clear who was behind the strike in Deir Ezzor province, where Iran-backed factions hold sway and where a US-led coalition and Israel have previously carried out attacks. "Seven people were killed and 15 wounded in a drone strike targeting a weapons factory and a truck loaded with weapons," both belonging to Iran-backed groups, said Rami Abdel Rahman, who heads the Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights. - APP

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Anti-India demos in AJK on Women's Day

MUZAFFARABAD: Anti-India demonstrations and other programs were held in Muzaffarabad and other areas of Azad Jammu and Kashmir on the occasion of the International Women's Day, today. A protest demonstration was staged in Muzaffarabad under the aegis of Pasban-e-Hurriyat Jammu and Kashmir to draw the attention of international community towards the deteriorating situation in IIOJK. A large number of people, mostly women, gathered at Burhan Wani Chowk and staged a sit-in protest. Holding banners and placards, they chanted slogans against India and in favour of Kashmir's freedom from Indian illegal occupation. - DNA

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