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Argentina Embassy holds 'Awakening of the Soul' exhibition

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Briefs

Imran Khan welcomes restoration of Iran-Saudi ties

DNA



LAHORE: Former prime minister and Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan on Sunday welcomed the normalisation of diplomatic relations between Saudi Arabia and Iran in a landmark development facilitated by China. Taking to Twitter, the former premier shared a news story of British publication regarding the restoration of diplomatic relations between Saudi Arabia and Iran, welcoming the development. Imran Khan noted that his government had taken an initiative to bring Riyadh and Tehran together for dialogue "as part of our policy of wider engagement for peace and unity of the Ummah". The PTI Chairman also appreciated the role of China in the diplomatic breakthrough. Earlier on March 10, Iran and Saudi Arabia agreed to re-establish relations after seven years of hostility which had threatened stability and security in the Gulf and helped fuel conflicts in the Middle East from Yemen to Syria.

IK disturbing law, order situation

BUREAU REPORT



LAHORE: Minister for Information and Broadcasting Marriyum Aurangzeb on Sunday criticized PTI chairman Imran Khan for disturbing the law and order situation in the country. Addressing a news conference in Lahore, she said that Imran Khan faked a drama of cipher after losing power last year, which badly damaged our foreign relations. She said that every single political gimmick of PTI leadership, including allegations of imported government has failed miserably. She said that Imran Khan handed over the country to the IMF and played with the country's economy. She further bashed Khan for playing Maryam Nawaz's audio yesterday and said he tried to connect the PML-N leader to himself, but she is nothing like him.

Country faces lawlessness, says Fawad

STAFF REPORT



LAHORE: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) senior leader Fawad Chaudhry said on Sunday the country was deprived of political rights and constitution. Speaking to media, Mr Chaudhry claimed the incumbent was feared by PTI chief Imran Khan. "The rulers want the martyrdom of the poor political workers", alleged Mr. Chaudhry. He was of the view that the country would not witness prosperity following the arrest of Mr Khan. Mr Chaudhry claimed there was no political future of the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N). On Wednesday, PTI Senior Vice President Fawad Chaudhry said establishment was calling the shots in the country.



LAHORE: Adviser to the PM on Political Affairs, National Heritage and Culture Engineer Ameer Maqam calls on PM M Shehbaz Sharif. – DNA

Section 144 imposed again

PTI postpones election rally after standoff

Punjab govt allows PTI to hold rally today; PTI informed

BUREAU REPORT

LAHORE: In a surprise move, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairperson Imran Khan on Sunday postponed his election rally in Lahore after the interim government refused to take back the Section 144 imposed in the provincial capital. Taking to Twitter, the PTI chief claimed that the Section 144 was imposed "illegally solely on PTI election campaign" despite other public activities ongoing in Lahore. "Only Zaman Park has been surrounded by containers & heavy police contingent. Clearly, like 8 March, Punjab CM & police want to provoke clashes to file more sham FIRs against PTI leadership and workers and to use as pretext for postponing elections," said the former prime minister. The PTI chief questioned how Section 144 can be imposed in the provincial capital despite

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ECP suspends by-elections for 37 NA seats

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) on Sunday suspended the election schedule for 37 National Assembly (NA) seats — which had fallen vacant after the resignation of PTI lawmakers — in light of the orders issued by the Islamabad, Peshawar, Sindh and Balochistan high courts. On Jan 27,

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'Leader vs jackal': Maryam ridicules Imran

Claims only her party could combat inflation

DNA



LAHORE: Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) Senior Vice President Maryam Nawaz on Sunday launched a broadside at Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan, saying he was postponing the election rally due to the fear of the police. Taking to Twitter, she heaped praise on PML-N supremo Nawaz Sharif, saying, "The one who left no stone un-

turned in bid to face the challenges posed by Musharraf and played a vital role in the independence of judiciary is Nawaz Sharif." On Saturday, PML-N senior vice president Maryam Nawaz claimed that only her party could combat inflation which continues to surge, making it difficult for the poor segments of society to have a square meal. The PML-N's chief party organiser shared a video montage of the PML-N supremo Nawaz's address delivered in 2007 and

Continued on Page 06

PTI decides to engage with diplomatic corps

Diplomats to be briefed about persecution of PTI workers

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The senior leadership of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf has decided to interact with the diplomatic corps based in Islamabad with a view to apprising it of persecution of its workers at the hands 'of the govt machinery'. The Vice Chairman of the PTI Shah Mahmood Qureshi told media people that the caretaker government has become party against the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf by disallowing even the election rallies. He said one of its die-hard worker Zille Shah was 'killed by the Punjab authorities'. Qureshi did not tell as to when they plan to engage the international community however he said a decision in the regard shall be made soon.

ECP to review PTI's petition

ISLAMABAD: The Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Sikandar Sultan Raja (CEC) has summoned a meeting of the commission on Monday to discuss a petition filed by two Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leaders, Dr. Babar Awan and Dr. Yasmin Rashid, regarding the imposition of Section 144 in Lahore and the ban on election rallies in Punjab. According to spokesperson for the ECP, the crucial meeting of the commission would be held on Monday at 10:30 a.m. to deliberate on the PTI's appeal. Meanwhile, the petitioner Dr Yasmin Rashid asserts that the ban on election rallies is a violation of fundamental rights, including the right to freedom of speech and assembly. The ban, imposed under Section 144, has been deemed "illegal" by the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf, who argue that it violates a Supreme Court order stating that campaigning is a constitutional right. The interim Punjab government had imposed the ban on election rallies citing security concerns.

Saudi-Iran rapprochement; where does Pakistan stand?

ANALYSIS / ANSAR M BHATTI

MARCH 10, 2023 would go down in the annals of history as a landmark day when arch rivals Iran and Saudi Arabia decided to mend their fences as a result of a deal brokered by China. Though the development and even other countries by development is likely to alter landscape because it was not lateral conflict, the spill-over effects were felt globally. Pakistan was not an exception either given the fact that both Saudi Arabia and Iran had always tried to strengthen their foothold in Pakistan for a variety of reasons.



The agreement turns out to be a rare example of successful Chinese mediation in Middle Eastern disputes and a likely gift to Beijing by the two Middle Eastern nations. Saudi Arabia broke off relations after Iranians stormed the kingdom's embassy in Tehran in 2016 in protest against the execution of a prominent Saudi Shiite cleric. Iran and Saudi Arabia are not directly fighting but they are engaged in a variety of proxy wars (conflicts where they support rival sides and militias) around the region.

In the past 15 years in particular, the differences between Saudi Arabia and Iran have been sharpened by a series of events. The 2003 US-led invasion of Iraq overthrew Saddam Hussein, a Sunni Arab who had been a major Iranian adversary. This removed a crucial military counter-weight to Iran. Saudis believed the overthrowing of Saddam regime opened the way for a Shia-dominated government in Baghdad and Iranian influence in the country has been rising ever since. Fast-forward to 2011 and uprisings across the Arab world caused political instability throughout the region. Iran and Saudi Arabia exploited these upheavals to expand their influence, notably in Syria, Bahrain and Yemen. Saudi-Iran rapprochement of course may help find a solution to these conflicts, which have adversely affected regional peace and stability. Nevertheless, there are certain quarters who strongly believe there may not be any significant breakthrough either in Yemen or Syria even after the Iran-Saudi détente, at least in the near future. Such elements have their own reasons in support of their argument.

As regards Pakistan's relations with Iran and Saudi Arabia after this 'peace deal', the situation is likely to take some interesting turns. Saudis have always been close friends of Pakistan, especially during the times when the country was hit hard by the economic and at times political crises as well. It was the Saudi support that could salvage Islamabad's economic woes most of the time. Even in the ongoing economic meltdown it is because of the Saudi support that prevented Pakistan from drifting towards a possible default. It remains a fact also that during the past months Saudi Arabian support has not been forthcoming and spontaneous. Attaching stings to its support has never been a practice. This time the Saudis linked any further financial assistance to Islamabad's agreement with the IMF. There are indeed some reasons if things have come to such a pass in terms of 'tepid' relations between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia.

The Pak-Saudi relations witnessed perhaps first jolt in 2015 when the Pakistan's parliament decided against military involvement in the Saudi-led coalition fighting Houthi rebels in Yemen. The then Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, who was considered a close ally of the Saudis, refused to send troops under the plea that since the Parliament had decided against it therefore it was not possible for him to entertain the Saudi request. Saudi Arabia had asked Pakistan to contribute ships, aircraft and troops to the campaign to restore President Abdrabbuh Mansour Hadi. Independent analysts earnestly believe that the then government did not want to entertain the Saudi request that is why it took the matter to the parliament and thus got it disapproved there.

It is a fact that both Iran and Saudi Arabia never resorted to a direct scuffle however the Saudis always considered Iran a potential threat for which they always needed support from Pakistan, even military, albeit Islamabad never acceded to this demand under the pretext that it believed in neutrality. In 2019 the then Prime Minister of Pakistan Imran Khan incurred upon himself the onus of mediation between Iran and Saudi Arabia. In October 2019 Imran Khan visited Iran and met with Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and President Hassan Rouhani. This mediation attempt came at a time when both Iran and Saudi Arabia were about to go to war over the Yemen issue. The Iranian government had told Imran Khan that the Islamic Republic was always ready, with or without a mediator, to hold talks with its neighbors, including Saudi Arabia. There were many reasons due to which Imran Khan's efforts could not yield any results but the main reason was a strong perception within the Iranian government ranks that Imran Khan had unleashed the efforts on the 'instructions' of the then American administration. Undoubtedly Iran and Saudi Arabia happen to be the most influential countries in the Muslim world. Their rapprochement will certainly have a positive impact especially on countries like Pakistan, which have been bearing the brunt of Iran-Saudi rivalry for a long time. Apart from government circles, the ordinary Pakistanis too have welcomed this development and genuinely believe it will usher in a new era of peace and stability in the region.

To be continued

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SCAN FOR LOCATION

Services under Sehat Card continue in KP

PESHAWAR: Free and subsidized provision of public healthcare service is one of the top welfare initiatives being offered by the government to facilitate the ailing community across the board.

Every political government tries to launch special healthcare and service delivery programs for the wellbeing of the masses. In this regard, the former government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has launched 'Sehat Card Plus' program under the social protection initiative in December 2015, which had initially covered free medical and surgical treatment of about 50 percent of the province. Primarily, the program was launched in Kohat, Mardan, Malakand and Chitral districts wherein as many as 1.8 million poor households (approximately 150 million people) were entitled to get free medical treatment up to Rs 540,000 at designated hospitals of the province. Later in February 2019, the program was extended across the country including all districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in its second phase with a target to provide free treatment including surgeries and medicines up to Rs. one million to each family of over 80 million people at 1000 designated hospitals. "Treatment under Sehat Card Plus (SCP) continued in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa despite financial constraints and around 9.7 million families were benefited from the incentive costing Rs 30 billion expenses in the second phase," said Riaz Tanoli, Chief Executive Officer, Sehat Cards Plus Program KP while talking to APP.

In the first phase, he said that 2.3 million people availed the facility and Rs 6 billion were spent on their treatment. The program initially covered three per cent of the population in four districts in 2015

and later extended to 51, 70 and 100 per cent population of the province till November 2019 in three different phases respectively, he added. Despite the change of government in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa after dissolution of the provincial assembly, he said, the program continued unaffected including in the tribal districts and the caretaker government had extended support by releasing funds for the project. According to officials in the health department, approximately Rs10 billion SCP payments to the hospitals were outstanding on part of the State Life Insurance Company (SLIC) and the government had to release Rs 4 billion to the insurance company every month to clear the backlog and keep the program running.

He said the government pays Rs2.5 billion per month to SLIC to bear the expenses under SCP and the insurance company retains Rs 1.5 billion from the amount in lieu of the liabilities and pays rest to the hospitals. He said there was no shortage of funds as the caretaker government of the province has so far released Rs 4 billion to SLIC and the outstanding amount would be cleared by May this year, he hoped. Ikhtair Wali Khan, the PML-N spokesperson and former MPA said that patients in KP had to wait for months to avail Sehat Card facilities, adding that former PTI government had neither made fully functional the regional health directorates for speedy resolution of financial and administrative issues of the employees of public sector hospitals nor improved healthcare services in respective districts to implement health reforms despite remaining in government for nearly 10 years. He said medical teaching institutions

(MTI) reforms act 2015 passed by the KP Assembly but deplored that the PTI government did not implement it fully in all public sector hospitals due to which the healthcare service delivery was adversely affected in the province.

Ikhtair Wali said that shortage of staff in the SCP program, delay in release of funds by the previous government and lack of kidney and liver transplantation services were causing problems for patients of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Dr Riaz Tanoli said in a recent meeting with the Chief Secretary that it was agreed that SCP program won't be suspended despite financial constraints and the government would continue releasing payments for it in the patients' interest. He said that Rs 30 billion per year was required for smooth functioning of the SCP, he informed.

However, the meeting directed the health department to strengthen the monitoring of hospitals to ensure provision of quality healthcare to the patients under the program and through mutual agreements with the hospitals.

"The SCP was protected under a Universal Health Coverage Act passed last year and could not be changed, suspended or closed unless reverted by the assembly," he said. The patients at LRH complained about long delays for their turns in case of major surgeries. "I have waited for several days for surgery of my eye under SCP," said patient Yasir Khan, a resident of Taru Jabba Nowshera.

Admitted in Eye Ward of LRH, he said that most of the SCP patients were being treated by the junior doctors, adding the procedure to avail the treatment under the incentive was too lengthy and demanded simplification.—APP



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Austria in a meeting with Foreign Secretary Asad Majid, at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.—DNA

PIA adds 11 new destinations

KARACHI: Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) has added 11 new destinations to its network by signing a code-share arrangement with Malaysian Airlines.

According to the PIA spokesman, the national flag carrier had entered into a commercial arrangement — Special Prorate Agreement (SPA) — with Malaysia Airlines for destinations in Australia, New Zealand, Indonesia, Singapore, Thailand, Philippines, and Vietnam.

This partnership between Pakistan International Airlines and Malaysian Airlines allows national flag carrier to access 11 destinations through its counterpart's hub in Kuala Lumpur, he said. Under the agreement, the 11 additional destinations added to PIA network include Sydney, Perth, Melbourne, Adelaide, Auckland, Singapore, Bangkok, Phuket, Jakarta, Manila and Ho Chi Minh City.

Punjab govt to cancel licences of 56 salt-mining firms

ISLAMABAD The Punjab cabinet has decided to cancel the licences issued to 56 salt mining companies by the last government in violation of rules and regulations. The decision was taken at the ninth meeting of the provincial cabinet held with Punjab Chief Minister Syed Mohsin Naqvi in the chair. The cabinet also constituted a committee for the purpose.—DNA

Geological mapping of 50 Balochistan toposheets in progress

ISLAMABAD: The government is utilizing funds amounting to Rs100 million, during the current fiscal year, to advance an ongoing project of the Petroleum Division for the geological mapping of 50 Toposheets of 'outcrop area' to identify minerals' potential in Balochistan province. Last year, an amount of Rs 30 million had been allocated for the project under the Public Sector Development Programme (PSDP 2021-22). "Under the project, 50 geological mappings of Toposheets of Outcrop Area, out of 354 unmapped Toposheets of Balochistan, are being carried out. The geological maps provide a bird's eye view of the surface and (subsurface) distribution of various types of rocks and economic minerals that are found in a particular region," according to an official document available with APP. Through the mapping, the Geological Survey of Pakistan (GSP) wanted to

maintain a database for future exploration of the occurrences of metallic and non-metallic minerals potential, dimension stones, aggregates and limestone reserves for the industry. These maps are essential for all future detailed geological works including, minerals' exploration, civil engineering, soil surveys, land use, town planning, groundwater, earthquake hazards; environmental geology and soil conservation projects," the GSP said in the project detail. Worldwide experience suggests that geological maps of 1:50,000 scale provide the most useful information and meet the basic requirements of the majority of the demands, involving research in 'stratigraphy', structure & tectonics, sample collection for laboratory studies, mineral evaluation and identification of promising areas for further exploration of natural resources. According to the document, the total outcrop area of Balochistan is 335,360 square

kilometer (524 Toposheets) out of which 108,800 sq. km (170 Toposheets) have been mapped and published on a 1:50,000 scale and the maps are available.

The promising mineral potential outcrop area would be mapped under this project, following which its gained experience would be used in mapping the rest of the outcrop area. "This project will help map the outcrop area in detail on 1:50,000 scale and maintain a database for future exploration of the occurrences of metallic and non-metallic mineral potential, dimension stones, aggregates and limestone reserves for the industry in targeted potential areas of Balochistan," the GSP said in the document.

The information collected after geological mapping and laboratory testing of rock samples would generate a database for interpretation to lead the individual occurrences of mineral reserves and other natural resources.—APP

FS&HFA launches operation in Kohat

PESHAWAR: The inspection teams of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Food Safety and Halal Food Authority continued operations in Kohat and Dera Ismail Khan on Sunday, an official of the Food Department KP said here. The Food safety inspection teams of Kohat and Dera Ismail Khan are active against adulteration mafia in various markets with two production units have been sealed and fined for poor sanitation and production of substandard

food items in Dera Ismail Khan, the official informed. He disclosed that the Food Safety team of Kohat inspected bakeries, production units and ice cream factories with four bakery shops and an ice cream factory have been sealed for poor sanitation and use of non-food grade items. Large quantities of non-standard food items were destroyed, and a fine was also imposed, the official of the Food Authority told

media men. He said that on the instruction of the Director General Food Authority Shah Rukh Ali Khan, the inspection teams have speeded up operations in Kohat and Dera Ismail Khan in order to ensure good food to the common people. He said the Director General Food Authority also appealed to the Citizens that they should also bring into the notice of the food officials about such businesses involved in sales of substandard items. The DG Shah Rukh Ali Khan, he said, directed the Food safety inspection teams to take timely action against those who violate the law.—

People terming Swat valley tourists paradise

ISLAMABAD: A larger number of visitors including foreign dignitaries and domestic tourists are visiting Swat valley which is considering one of the beautiful and like a paradise for tourists that blossoms fill with lovely colors in every season. Talking to APP, Sajjad Hussain, a resident of G-10, said the scenic mountains are source of major inspiration and attractions for the tourists and also beautifying the Swat valley including Kalam, Bahrain, Madyan, Bishigram and others places. He said the beautiful followers, historical places, lovely weather, cleanliness and peaceful atmosphere also a key factor for our trip. "People of valley are so hospitable, loving and traditional delicious foods make the day so pleasant," he added.

He further said observing the nature can remove stress, depression and anxiety from the tourists and Swat valley one of the attractive sites called a heaven on the earth. Iman Ali, a resident of Karachi metropolitan city, visited along with his family to Swat valley by founding people very hospitable and fresh food are selling by locals in inexpensive rates compared to Murree and other tourist sites. He said people belonging to every age including women, children, young adults and students of various universities are visiting the Swat valley to enjoy the nature.—APP

3000 free plants distributed among students on Green Day

CHITRAL: Around 3000 free plants were distributed among the students of Chitral University during the Green Day in a simple but impressive ceremony held at the University auditorium on Sunday. Vice Chancellor Prof. Dr. Zahir Shah was the chief guest at the event, while Assistant Commissioner Chitral Dr. Muhammad Atif Jalib, Heads of Forest Department, Agriculture Department, Water and Soil Conservation Department and other departments of the Varsity also participated in the ceremony. Addressing on the occasion, experts said that since Chitral was a dry region where the mountains were often barren due to the lack of monsoon rains, therefore the people of Chitral had more responsibility to plant trees everywhere to control the lack of forests. The

Vice-Chancellor welcomed the guests and said that plants were not only essential for the survival of the humanity, but also fulfill all the needs of life from human beings to animals. He urged the participants to plant as many trees as possible to avoid the negative effects of climate change and make them successful.

Divisional Forest Officer Asif Ali Shah also highlighted the importance of plants and trees and said that natural disasters could not be prevented until we control the deforestation. These trees and plants not only provide us fresh Oxygen, but also act as natural check dams to reduce the speed of flash floods, he added. Director Admin Prof. Dr. Muhammad Nadeem thanked all the participants and urged all the stakeholders, especially the students, to convey these use-

ful messages to their family members and neighborhoods and also create awareness among the people about the importance of forests. Later, all the participants including the Vice Chancellor also planted saplings in the lawn of the Chitral University. On this occasion, 3,000 plants were distributed among the students free of cost including 2,000 fruit plants and 1,000 wild plants. Later twilve alking to APP, the Vice Chancellor said that after the disastrous flood last year, it was recognized on the international level that more forests could save such disasters. The whole world has seen the negative effects of climate change and due to this devastating flood, more than 50 billion \$ dollars was lost in the homeland and many people died and many people were displaced.—APP

Pakistan's first-ever EconFest concludes

LAHORE: Today was the second and last day of Pakistan's first-ever EconFest. This economic festival was jointly organized by the Pakistan Institute of Development Economics (PIDE), Research for Social Transformation and Advancement (RASTA), and the Pakistan Society of Development Economists (PSDE). The topics of discussion for today were policy; reforms; building brands and franchising; foreign aid; taxation; local government; law, justice, and economy; the urgency of economic reforms; and other important topics. Talking about branding and franchising in Pakistan, branding and franchising are still in the earlier stages. However, there is great potential for building Pa-

kistani brands that can create a name for Pakistan in international markets and also contribute to exports. However, many problems stand in the way of brand creation. The most critical issue that Pakistani brands and commerce face is the inconsistency of policy. Whenever a government or even a minister changes, the policies change which wastes businesses' investment. Another important issue that Pakistani brands face is that of intellectual property rights. As far as e-commerce and online advertising are concerned, there are mainly two platforms for advertising, i.e., Facebook and Google, which are very expensive. Moreover, business-to-customer (B2C) transac-

tions are concerned, there are issues of warehousing in international locations, returns, and payment mechanisms. In the session on taxation for development the panellists said that because the tax system is complex, individuals prefer to invest in real estate. However, even if the tax system is simplified, the real reason real estate is an attractive investment is that it allows people to park their undocumented. The businessmen participants in the session argued tax collection in Pakistan is low because the system is complex and rent-seeking by tax officials. The former Chairman of FBR, Shabbar Zaidi, claimed that the reality is that only 300 corporations pay the bulk of the collected taxes.—DNA

HVACR Society delegation visits RCCI

DNA

RAWALPINDI: A delegation of Pakistan Heating, Ventilation, Air Conditioning and Refrigeration (HVACR) Society visited Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry. The delegation was led by President of Pakistan HVACR Society Ahmed Nawaz. RCCI President Saqib Rafique welcomed the delegation and gave a brief briefing about the activities of the Chamber. He appreciated the role of HVACR in promoting local manufacturing and assured all support for the expo organized by HVACR in June 2023.

He assured the delegation that Rawalpindi would work closely with the HVACR Society for the development of Chambers-killed Works and the promotion of the industry. Proposals for innovation in heating, air conditioning,



ventilation, and refrigeration systems and locally manufactured eco-friendly components will be sent to relevant stakeholders. Ahmed Nawaz, president of HVACR Society, while

congratulating the newly elected officials, said that the efforts of Rawalpindi Chamber in promoting business activities are commendable. He said that the share of

HVACR in manufacturing and import substitution is more than 30%. While it has about 60% share in the construction industry. Senior Vice President Muhammad Hamza Saroosh,

Vice President Faisal Shahzad, Ex-President Chaudhry Abdul Rauf, Ex-President Nadeem A. Rauf and esteemed members of HVACR were also present.

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For further information please contact the following.

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Briefs

Khurram Dastgir meets Iranian Energy Minister

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Power Khurram Dastgir on Sunday met with his Iranian counterpart Ali Akbar Mehrabian at Tehran. During the meeting, mutual areas of interest were discussed, said a press release. The Iranian Minister appreciated the authorities of Pakistan for the construction of transmission line to import electricity from Iran to Gwadar on fast pace. He also expressed his interest to initiate more electricity projects with Pakistan. Khurram Dastgir thanked his counterpart for extending his cooperation in the energy field.—APP

PMNH to execute “QR Code Project”

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Museum for Natural History (PMNH) has planned to execute a novel initiative the “QR Code Project” to enable visitors to get educational insight into the natural history specimen collection through digital means.

The visitors of the museum will be able to scan a QR code through their smartphone or tablet to get information about any of the exhibited specimens. Education and awareness of the masses about the various environmental issues and natural resources of this country is an important function of PMNH. For this purpose, a modest Display Centre has been developed which is visited by a large number of students and other members of the public on a routine basis. The Teacher Guide is an essential part of the museum display to guide the visitors regarding exhibits or dioramas but with time, the integration of technology has become essential to offer seamless experiences and deliver knowledge efficiently so keeping in mind PMNH has decided to utilize the technology of QR Code.

The visitors can use their Smartphone camera to scan the code which will be available with each exhibit that links to the information about it, like audio transcripts explaining its history and scientific meaning. It can help visitors to gain knowledge independently as they walk through the exhibits without taking help from other resources. The idea is to leverage the visitor's smartphone using an app. The app will have the ability to scan the QR code through the digital camera on a smartphone or tablet and provide an educational multimedia experience and audio tours for the visitors. It would act as a visitor's digital guide without any human interference.

Talking to APP, the Director General, PMNH, Dr Saima Huma Tanveer informed that the QR project has been submitted to Pakistan Science Foundation (PSF) to acquire funding.

This was the much-needed initiative for educating science enthusiasts about the unique specimen exhibited in the museum after conservation, she said. “QR Code project will add more value to the only natural museum history collection as only visiting the museum without having any historical information is useless for the visitors”, Dr Saima Tanveer said.

The PMNH was established in 1976, under the patronage of the Pakistan Science Foundation (PSF), Ministry of Science and Technology, Pakistan. It has four divisions namely Botanical Sciences, Earth Sciences, Zoological Sciences and Public Services. The first three divisions are engaged in the collection, preservation, identification, and research activities related to plants, animals, fossils, rocks, and minerals resources of Pakistan, while the latter is responsible for public education through dioramas, exhibits, lectures, workshop, seminar, posters and film shows, etc. PMNH also provides consultancy and advisory services to public and private sector organizations. PMNH scientists work on various projects for the popularization of natural history through research publications.—APP



ISLAMABAD: The President of the English Speaking Union of Pakistan Khalid Malik and the Members of the Executive Committee posing for a picture with the Ambassador of Switzerland Georg Steiner on the occasion of a dinner hosted by the President at his resident. The Swiss ambassador delivered a key note speech about Switzerland-Pakistan relations.—DNA

Over 21m children to be vaccinated in polio drive

The Sehat Tahhafuz Helpline 1166 and 24/7 WhatsApp Helpline 0346-777-65-46 will be available to assist parents and caregivers in reporting missed children and providing related information

ISLAMABAD: A Polio vaccination campaign to immunize more than 21.54 million children under the age of five will kick off in Sindh and Punjab on March 13 (Monday). The five-day vaccination campaign is being held in two phases due to the concurring activities of the seventh national census.

In the first phase, over 17.41 million children under the age of five in 13 districts of Punjab and 16 districts of Sindh and Islamabad will be vaccinated from March 13 to March 17. The second phase will be held from April 03 to 07 – during the second week of Ramadan – to vaccinate more than 4.12 million children in 12 districts of Balochistan and 26 districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, including the seven endemic districts in the southern region of the province. Federal Minister for Health Abdul Qadir Patel urged parents and caregivers to ensure that

their children receive the life-saving polio vaccine so that they remain protected from poliovirus, which has been found circulating in environmental samples. “The presence of wild polio in the environment shows that the virus is circulating in our communities and posing a serious risk to our children,” said Abdul Qadir Patel, the Minister. “With Ramadan and Eid around the corner, population movements can increase the risk of further spread, therefore, it is critical that parents and caregivers vaccinate their children in this and every campaign,” said the Minister. “We have specifically designed this March campaign to reach areas where population movement is not just frequent but also expected during Ramadan and Eid festival,” said Dr Shahzad Baig, National Emergency Operations Center. “It is essential that we reach as many children as possible with the vaccine now to curb

Around 947,000 children to be immunized

RAWALPINDI: Chief Executive Officer(CEO) of District Health Authority Dr Ansar Ishaq has said that a week-long Anti-Polio drive will commence in the entire district on Monday(March 13). The CEO told APP that 3,723 teams, including 3,272 mobile teams, 289 fixed points, 214 Union council medical officers and 765 area incharges, would vaccinate polio drops to over 947,000 children under five years of age during the campaign from March 13 to 19. He informed that anti-polio drops would also be administered at 162 transit points while teams would be deputed at toll plazas so that no child could miss immunization. Meanwhile, Commissioner Rawalpindi Laiqat Ali Chhatta directed the official concerned to improve the anti-Polio micro plan devised during the previous campaign. He said the crippling disease was a national issue, and it was the responsibility of all to play an influential role in making the country polio-free. The Commissioner warned the officials that strict action would be taken against those responsible for fake entries. Laiqat said hiding facts was not a solution to any problem, but it complicated the issue. He informed that no polio sample has tested positive this year; however, he urged more devotion during the campaign. The Commissioner directed the officials to remain present in the field and ensure no kids could miss immunization.—APP

polio transmission,” he added.

No human case has been reported in Pakistan since September 2022 when a polio outbreak paralyzed 20 children – all of them in southern KP districts. Wild poliovirus was detected for the first time this year in sewage samples collected from two separate sites in Lahore in January. Two more samples have since then tested positive for polio – wild polio has been detected in a sample collected from D.I.Khan and variant poliovirus has been detected from Ghotki. The polio programme has taken all out efforts to ensure vaccination of children to keep them safe from this highly infectious disease in the context of positive environmental samples detected in some places. The Sehat Tahhafuz Helpline 1166 and 24/7 WhatsApp Helpline 0346-777-65-46 will be available to assist parents and caregivers in reporting missed children and providing related information.

Report on prospects of Chinese enterprises in green energy launched

DNA

ISLAMABAD: A ground-breaking report titled “Development Prospects of Chinese Enterprises in Green Energy Industry in Pakistan” was launched, Gwadar Pro reported.

It was launched by POWERCHINA and the Pakistan-China Institute (PCI), in collaboration with All Pakistan Chinese Enterprises Association (APCEA) and China Society for Hydropower Engineering (CSHE). Guided by President Xi Jinping's vision of “lucid waters and lush mountains are invaluable assets,” the latest government work report issued during the Two Sessions showed in the past five years, China's energy consumption per unit of GDP has dropped by 8.1%, and carbon dioxide emissions have dropped by 14.1%, which means a solid step forward to a “beautiful China”. Meanwhile, the proportion of clean energy consumption rose from 20.8% to over 25%. Achieving these goals are inseparable from the efforts of China's new energy enterprises,

which not only contribute to China's long-term goal of carbon neutrality, but also contribute to green development worldwide, in which cooperation between China and Pakistan in this regard as a good example. “Since we cooperated with local investors to build the Dawood 50MW Wind Power Project under the framework of the CPEC in 2015, as our first new energy project in Pakistan, including the Sachal 50MW Wind Power Project built in cooperation with Arif Habib, and the Tricon Boston 150MW Wind Power Project built in cooperation with Sapphire, the total power generation of our wind power projects in Pakistan has reached 1140MW. In addition, we have also cooperated with Atlas to build a 100MW

solar energy project,” Mr. Yang, Chief Representative of POWERCHINA in Pakistan and Chairman APCEA, told Gwadar Pro. He emphasized that all of these efforts are not just business opportunities but a kind of responsibility that they must take on. “We recognize that our actions have a far-reaching impact.” Yang indicated that the development of green energy is a systematic long-term project. “Considering the status quo of Pakistan's energy structure, the public and factories need to be encouraged to install household solar energy systems in order to reduce electricity costs without increasing the government's burden. At the same time, corresponding pumped storage

power stations and energy storage facilities should be planned and developed gradually to deal with the power instability that occurs with the large-scale development of green energy.” “Regarding other types of green energy, including bioenergy, geothermal energy, tidal energy, green hydrogen energy, taking biogas as an example, there are 13 million biogas facilities in the vast rural areas of China, and the fertilizers brought by agricultural production is undoubtedly an excellent source of biogas. Pakistan and China, both being big agricultural countries, if China's experience in this regard can play a role, the development of bioenergy in Pakistan will have bright prospects.”



CDA plants over 150,000 trees in federal capital

ISLAMABAD: The Capital Development Authority (CDA) has so far planted more than 150,000 saplings in the ongoing tree plantation campaign in the federal capital and surrounding areas with the help of residents since last two weeks.

“The campaign is in full swing on the directives of Chairman CDA Noor ul Amin Mengal and the children were engaged in planting saplings in different parks and free-of-cost fruit trees also distributed among citizens,” an official told APP

here Sunday.

He said that the CDA chief has given a target to officials concerned to plant around 500,000 saplings during the spring season and the plantation drive had already kicked off at the F-9 Park. The official said that the Authority was involving children to make the campaign a success, adding that, while the CDA, the private sector and civil society had an important role to make the tree plantation drive a success. Last year, he said the Environment Wing of the CDA

planted 250,000 plants and this year the target has been doubled.

The official said the fruit plants were being distributed among citizens for planting in their homes. Among them are peaches, apricots, pomegranates and other fruit saplings that are compatible with the local climate and environment. He said that 5,000 plants have been distributed free of cost during the week and about 20,000 plants during the next 15 days. Moreover, on the instructions of the CDA chairman, the authority would try its level best to meet the target of planting 500,000 saplings this year. The official said the CDA has also decided to increase the city's green cover by planting saplings on billions

of rupees of land it recovered from illegal occupants under the anti-encroachment drive. “The authority has recently launched a massive drive in the federal capital against the land grabbers to recover its precious land that had been unlawfully occupied by the mafia,” he added.

The official said the authority would carry out a comprehensive drive aimed at preventing re-encroachment of retrieved land and increasing green spaces across the capital. He said Islamabad was the only city in the world that had been developed on the concept of green city and “the CDA is taking concrete measures for conservation and enhancement of its green character.”—APP

Developing EVs in Pakistan a potential solution

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Developing EVs in Pakistan is a potential solution for the country both in terms of improving the quality of the environment and making full use of electricity, said Prof. Nauman Ahmad Zaffar, Director of Energy and Power Systems Cluster and the National Incubation Centre “Electric mobility has become indispensable for Pakistan. Entities striving to introduce electric mobility in Pakistan, including Lahore University of Management Sciences (LUMS) and local enterprises, are actively involved in diverse engagements related to the development of the Electric Vehicle (EV) value chain in the country,” he said in an interview to Gwadar Pro. Prof. Zaffar noted that the transport sector contributes almost 43% to the total airborne emissions in the country. Meanwhile, Pakistan has surplus electricity generation capacity, resulting in accumulation of a large sum of capacity payments. Under such situation, there is a need to introduce non-seasonal and flexible loads, and EVs have emerged as an effective solution. Many favorable factors, such as the Pakistani government's supportive attitude towards EV, have contributed to the development of the National EV policy. Pakistan's EV market is widely favored by international companies. Chinese companies, including Chery, MG, Changan, BAIC and Haval have also been making a push in recent years. Yin Tongyue, a member of the Chinese National People's Congress, chairman and Party secretary of Chery Holding Group, said that the automobile industry, as a pillar industry of the national economy, must shoulder historical, social, moral and economic responsibilities, seize the current new round of technological revolution and globalization, and advance China as an “auto power”. Chery has started its journey of R&D of fuel-efficient and new energy vehicles in 1999, making it the first ever Chinese auto manufacturer to enter the field of new energy technology. Through years of development, Chery has established a well-established R&D system for new energy technologies, covering vehicle integration, core technologies and core component development capabilities.

Old fuels exports witness 100pc increase

ISLAMABAD :Solid fuels exports, during the first seven months of the fiscal year of 2022-23, increased by 100 percent as compared to the exports of the commodity during the corresponding period of last year. During the period from July 22-Jan 23, solid fuels worth US\$ 5,000 were exported as compared to the nil exports the same period of last year.

According to the data released by the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, the exports of petroleum products (Excl) increased by 26.41 percent, worth US\$ 27,677,000 as compared to exports of US\$ 21,894,000 during the same period last year. Meanwhile, the petroleum group and coal exports also increased by 9.33 percent as the exports recorded during the current fiscal year were US\$ 169,735,000 as compared to the exports during the same period of last year which were US\$ 155,250,000.

During the period under review, the petroleum crude exports increased by 6.52 percent, worth US\$ 142,053,000 in the current fiscal year, as compared to the exports of US\$ 133,356,000 during the same period of last year.—APP

Jalib remembered on 30th death anniversary

ISLAMABAD: The 30th death anniversary of revolutionary poet Habib Jalib was observed on Sunday to pay glowing tributes to him for his notable services in the field of literature.

Habib Jalib was born on 24 March 1928 in Hoshiarpur of Indian Punjab. He was titled as the poet of the people by his followers. Habib Jalib migrated to Pakistan after the partition and worked with a newspaper as a proofreader.

His simple and attractive style touched the hearts of people and remained loyal to his progressive school of thought despite being jailed for several times but also remained resilient when it comes to his poetry.

He is among the most influential Urdu poets in Pakistan, who supported democratic ideals and expressively opposed martial laws and authoritarian rule.

Some of his famous literary works of the great political and social activist of his time include “Zulmat Ko Zia”, “Watan ko Kuch Nahi Khatra”, “Main Ne Uss Se Yeh Kaha” and “Aisay Das-toor Ko”. His famous poetry books are Sire-Maqtal, Zikr Behte Khoon Ka, Gumbad-e-Bedar, Kulyaat e Habib Jalib, Is Shehare-Kharabi Main, Goshay Main Qafas K, Harfe-Haqq, Harfe-Sar-e-Daar and Ehade-Sitam.

He was awarded Nishan-i-Imtiaz and Nigar Awards by the government of Pakistan for his services in the field of literature. A greatest poet of his era Habib Jalib died on March 12, 1993.—APP

OGDCL spuds 4 wells, makes 3 discoveries

ISLAMABAD: Oil and Gas Development Company Limited (OGDCL) has drilled four exploratory wells and made three discoveries with an expected production potential of 3,007 BPD oil and 2.7 MMCFD gas during the first half of the current fiscal year, ending on December 31, 2022.

“OGDCL has spud 4 wells including 3 exploratory wells; Shahpurabad-1, Chak 20-1 and Gaja Wah-1 and 1 development well; Chanda-7, and it discovered three oil and gas reserves in Toot Deep-1 in district Attock, Punjab province and Chak 5 Dim South-3 and Kot Nawab-1 in district Sanghar of Sindh province,” according to the company's first-half financial report for the year 2022-23 available with APP.

Moreover, the company completed the drilling and testing of six wells pertaining to previous fiscal years. During the period under review, OGDCL produced around 33,061 BOPD, 772 MMCFD gas and 730 TDP LPG. The production witnessed a little decline as compared to 36,788 Barrel per Day (BPD) oil, 827 Metric Million Cubic Feet per Day (MMCFD) gas, and 814 Tons per Day (TPD) Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) during the same period of the year 2021-22 due to certain reasons. The company said it, being the national flagship of the country's Exploration and Production (E&P) sector, was making all-out efforts to play a pivotal role in enhancing the energy security of Pakistan. “In this context, the company during July 2022 to December 2022 contributed around 46 percent, 29 percent and 37 percent towards the country's total oil, natural gas and LPG production respectively,” it said. As of December 31, the company operated 49 exploration blocks, out of which 23 were with 100 percent share and 26 under joint ventures.—APP

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China outcompetes US with Iran-KSA deal

For long, China has insisted that security and development are two keys to solving the problems and conflicts in the Middle East. And now the keys have opened a most sophisticated lock as Saudi Arabia and Iran announced the agreement to resume diplomatic relationship under a China-brokered deal in Beijing. One party after another, including the UN secretary-general, has expressed its welcome to the tri-lateral joint statement. It is in the interests of all and serves the value of all to turn rivalry into friendship so as to seek common prosperity to minimize possible conflicts even bloodshed. Peace is the most precious property of human kind in international relations and China has kept that property well.

China doesn't mean to compete, but it is leaving the US behind in the race toward peace. While China makes peace, the US makes war. The US as the world's only superpower has appeared in almost every region with conflict, but its existence always makes things worse. In the Middle East alone, it prolonged the Syrian civil war, complicated the Israel-Palestine conflict, and played the regional countries against each other.

The essential difference lies in their ultimate concern, namely that China pursues peace and security for all while the US pursues its own hegemonic interests and those for the lobby groups and military-industrial complex. It is the ends that decide the means.

May peace return to the Middle East. China will work toward the goal and hopes the world's only superpower will join its cause.

IMF Loans at the expense of the Business community

Sardar Yasir Ilyas Khan



This primarily revolves around the high cost of lending, increased tariffs, fuel prices, labour cost, high cost of raw materials due to increased duties, import taxes and ban on imports in general. The tax to GDP ratio must increase over 9% in order for the country to be able

D evaluation of the rupee has enhanced the debt burden for Pakistanis and collective liabilities have exceeded \$100 billion. The business community has constantly been pushing all the governments that have come and gone to introduce structural reforms in order to control costs and unnecessary expenditures. All state-owned enterprises should have been privatised long ago which are in losses with atrocious liabilities that would overburden any new buyer willing to acquire them. Despite global recessions and natural disasters over 170 countries world-wide are able to manage their affairs without the support of the IMF, then why can't Pakistan? A country which has the 5th largest reserve of minerals, 5th largest producer of mangos, top 10 in terms of rice and cotton production with an area of over 850,000 sq kilometers and a coastline with the finest beaches and the potential to develop the best waterfront properties. These loans have become a greater burden for Pakistan's current and future generations as opposed to being considered as a form of relief. Con-

stant escalation in the tariffs, increase in GST, additional taxes on real estate, retail, increased import duties and constantly rising food inflation are all factors which have turned the people of Pakistan into survivors and will force industries to relocate elsewhere. Unofficially it has been estimated that inflation has reached over 50%, this number is shocking when compared to the UK which is facing only 11% inflation and Switzerland which has merely touched 3.3%. The increased cost of living and doing business in Pakistan has become the leading reason behind all the brain drain problems we are facing. Furthermore, Pakistan will continue to face a fiscal deficit year on year until FBR does not broaden the tax net.

The tax system has already been declared as one of the most complex in the world which badly needs restructuring. FBR has been trying to scrutinize the real estate industry which drives nearly 60 allied industries and is already encumbered with taxes such as advance capital gains tax, stamp duty, advance income tax, tax on property retention, tax on

deemed income, cvt foreign assets, property tax, tax on rental income etc. FBR needs to prevent any further rise of taxes on both large and small scale industries as well as all those sectors which are contributing to the economy, if the cost of doing business exceeds any further businesses will have no choice but to relocate to the middle east or the west.

This primarily revolves around the high cost of lending, increased tariffs, fuel prices, labour cost, high cost of raw materials due to increased duties, import taxes and ban on imports in general. The tax to GDP ratio must increase over 9% in order for the country to be able to meet its expenditures. The Government's decision to increase GST is also a temporary solution, hence the undocumented economy of markets across Pakistan needs to be brought on board and added to the tax net so that the entire weight of the tax liability does not fall onto the shoulders of the average taxpayer and businessmen across the country.

—The writer is the CEO of Centaurus President Citizens Development Former President Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry

Saudi crown prince balances on Saudi-US-Israeli-Iranian tightrope

James Dorsey

The agreement was a rare example of successful Chinese mediation in Middle Eastern disputes and a likely gift to Beijing by the two Middle Eastern nations. Saudi Arabia broke off relations after Iranians stormed the kingdom's embassy in Tehran in 2016 in protest against the execution of a prominent Saudi Shiite cleric. A day before the Iranian announcement, the United Arab Emirates took the hedging of its bets a step further by agreeing with Iran to increase aviation cooperation.

Last year, the UAE reopened its embassy in Tehran that it closed at the time of the rupture in Saudi-Iranian diplomatic relations. The reestablishment of Saudi Iranian relations further came as Iran upgraded its

Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman has become adept at walking tightropes. Mr. Bin Salman's latest balancing act may be among his most challenging. In a surprise development, Saudi Arabia and Iran, together with China, announced that the two Middle Eastern nations were reestablishing diplomatic relations. The Saudi Iranian agreement was reached in a meeting in China of the two countries' national security advisors.

The agreement was a rare example of successful Chinese mediation in Middle Eastern disputes and a likely gift to Beijing by the two Middle Eastern nations. Saudi Arabia broke off relations after Iranians stormed the kingdom's embassy in Tehran in 2016 in protest against the execution of a prominent Saudi Shiite cleric. A day before the Iranian announcement, the United Arab Emirates took the hedging of its bets a step further by agreeing with Iran to increase aviation cooperation. Last year, the UAE reopened its embassy in Tehran that it closed at the time of the rupture in Saudi-Iranian diplomatic relations. The reestablishment of Saudi Iranian relations further came as Iran upgraded its perception of Saudi Arabia as a security threat, Gulf efforts to prevent disputes with Iran from spinning out of control have not stopped the Islamic republic from increasing its military capabilities with the recent addition of a new warship and 95 missile-launching fast boats to its naval fleet and the reported acquisition of Russian Sukhoi-Su-35 fighter jets. To be sure, Iranian weaponry is no match for Saudi Arabia's armoury of sophisticated US and European weapon systems. Even so, Iran's military and Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) are battle hardened and have proven to be creative in compensating for handicaps that result from harsh US sanctions. Nevertheless, the announcement followed reports that Saudi Arabia had suggested that it could establish formal diplomatic relations with Israel in exchange for a legally binding US commitment to Gulf security, US support for a peaceful Saudi nuclear program, and more expansive American arms sales to the kingdom. Tehran would likely view the deal as targeting the Islamic republic. The reestablishment of relations between Riyadh and Tehran doesn't take the Saudi suggestion off the table. If anything, it positions both Saudi Arabia and Iran as constructive players in reducing regional tension, provided the agreement helps end the war in Yemen and proxy wars elsewhere. Moreover, the agreement could give a new lease on life to so far failed efforts to revive the 2015 international agreement that curbed Iran's nuclear program. The agreement could force a change in some of the dynamics of the Saudi proposal.

Israel is a wild card even if a few would doubt the importance of an enhanced Israeli contribution to Gulf security facilitated by formal diplomatic relations between Saudi Arabia and the Jewish state.

Saudi Arabia, like the UAE, likes Israel's covert war against Iran involving attacks on targets in the Islamic republic and Syria. At the same time, the Gulf states fear that they could be targets of Iranian retaliation.

A US defense commitment could reduce that fear. It could

also embolden Israel at a moment that reestablished Saudi relations with Iran could change the dynamics of the two countries' rivalry. Earlier this month, Admiral Alireza Tangsiri, the Revolutionary Guards navy commander, warned Gulf countries against supporting Israel's covert war. "If they wish to attack us from the territory of any country or take advantage of the airspace of any country... We will indeed retaliate twofold and crush any area (from) which plots against Iran's interests originate," Mr. Tangsiri said. Even so, fear of Iranian retaliation may be a lesser concern in negotiating a US-Saudi-Israeli deal that faces formidable obstacles. Moreover, reopening of Saudi relations with Iran may further calm those fears. The upside of a three-way deal is evident. It would enable Mr. Bin Salman to address his most immediate defense needs, significantly advance redrawing the Middle East's geopolitical map, and establish a framework for the kingdom's relations with the United States and China. If concluded, the deal would create a pillar of a new initially bi- and, ultimately, tri-polar 21st-century world order with the United States and China as the initial superpowers, joined by India at a later stage, and multiple middle powers, like Saudi Arabia, with enhanced agency and leverage. It would also open the door to recognition of Israel by multiple Muslim-majority states, particularly in Asia. Equally importantly, the deal would reestablish Gulf confidence in US reliability as a regional security guarantor. The US focus on China as a strategic adversary and its more recent prioritisation of the war in Ukraine, coupled with a past US reluctance to respond to Iranian attacks on Saudi and Emirati targets and disagreements over oil production levels and human rights, have undermined that confidence. The difficulty is that overcoming the multiple obstacles to the proposed Saudi deal would likely involve policy, if not political change, in the United States, Saudi Arabia, the broader Muslim world, and Israel.

Garnering bi-partisan support in the United States for a formal agreement with Saudi Arabia seems near impossible, with many on both sides of the aisle in Congress ambivalent about the kingdom.

If a US commitment is possible, Mr. Bin Salman would have to demonstrate that he is a reliable US partner. US doubts about Saudi Arabia have been fueled by Mr. Bin Salman's brutal crackdown on dissent and freedom of expression; his conduct of the war in Yemen; and, at times, disruptive foreign policy moves, including the 3.5-year long Saudi-led economic and diplomatic boycott of Qatar. "The Saudis...need to show that they are a responsible partner," said former US diplomat and prominent analyst Martin Indyk.

The kingdom "cannot have it both ways. If it wants that kind of commitment from the United States, it has to line up with the United States... If our security relationship with Saudi Arabia is to be deepened because the Saudis want it, then there are certain obligations that come with that," Mr. Indyk asserted.

One way Mr. Bin Salman could demonstrate responsibility

would be by negotiating the terms of US support for the kingdom's nuclear program.

Saudi Arabia is pushing to build 16 nuclear power plants. The kingdom last month received bids for the first facility. Saudi Arabia has consistently said that its program is for peaceful purposes and that the kingdom is committed to putting its future facilities under the supervision of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

Yet, as Iran inches ever closer to nuclear weapons capability, Saudi Arabia also aims to acquire the knowledge and technological building blocks to match Iran if it crosses a threshold for nuclear weapons production.

Saudi leaders, including Mr. Bin Salman, have warned that Saudi Arabia would develop its capability if Iran became a nuclear power.

Saudi Arabia has denied reports that it was building a facility for extracting yellowcake from uranium with the help of China. Saudi Arabia has large uranium deposits of its own. These are developments that the United States wants to stop in its tracks by convincing the kingdom to accept safeguards required under US law that the Saudis have so far rejected. The safeguards would force Saudi Arabia to drop its insistence on producing nuclear fuel, even though it could buy it more cheaply abroad. The US Atomic Energy Act stipulates that countries that cooperate with the United States on nuclear energy must forgo domestic uranium enrichment and reprocessing of spent fuel. US officials fear that the Saudi insistence potentially amounts to backing out of a 2009 memorandum of understanding with the United States in which the kingdom pledged to acquire nuclear fuel from international markets. Yet, even if Mr. Bin Salman could convince the United States of his sense of responsibility and meet US conditions for nuclear cooperation, Israel remains the wild card. The crown prince and other senior Saudi officials have made clear that they want a formal relationship with Israel, but that will only be possible by resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in a way that considers both parties' interests. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu heads a government that wants anything but.

Mr. Netanyahu appears to assume that support of the Palestinians in Saudi Arabia and elsewhere in the Arab and Muslim world has diminished to the extent that given the choice of backing the Palestinians and security and technological cooperation with Israel, particularly against Iran, the kingdom will opt for Israel. That calculation may only work in the unlikely event that the US makes a legal commitment to Saudi and Gulf security and the kingdom meets the United States' nuclear conditions. For his part, Mr. Bin Salman may assume that if Saudi Arabia and the United States come to terms, Mr. Netanyahu will follow suit. That may be a risky bet. As much as Mr. Netanyahu wants formal relations with Saudi Arabia, he is unlikely to put his political future in danger by risking a crisis with his predominantly far right and ultra-religious coalition partners who want to see the back of the Palestinians, the sooner, the better.

Briefs

PTI postpones election rally after standoff

FROM PAGE 01

the announcement of the election schedule. "I AM TELLING ALL PTI WORKERS NOT TO FALL INTO THIS TRAP. Hence we have postponed rally till tomorrow," said the PTI chief. Former premier and Pakistani Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) chief Imran Khan has said that he is facing security threats from interior minister Rana Sanaullah and others, media reported on Sunday. Imran Khan, in an interview, discussed the political and economic situation of the country. He said that the ruling Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PML-N) is creating rifts between PTI and the military. He questioned which power took the decision to stop him from coming into power. Khan said that he is facing security threats from Rana Sanaullah and others. The former premier alleged a 'powerful circle' was controlling the police during the PTI government.

"I want to ask a question who decided to stop Imran Khan from coming into power? I am facing security threats from Sanaullah. If I announce to give NRO to them, then the intensity of security threats to me will be reduced." Criticising the incumbent government, he said that the current rulers created an environment of fear like the former military ruler ZiaulHaq's era. "I have never seen such atrocities on political workers earlier. I cannot even imagine that the country will see such a situation." He slammed the government saying that 80 cases were lodged against him in which he is accused of murder, terrorism and contempt of religion. "They are trying to trap me in cases to stop me from leading the election campaign and just visiting the courts."

Hours before the rally, the police started blocking the roads leading to Zaman Park. The road leading from Mall Road to Canal Road and Harbanspura to Zaman Park was closed. Moreover, a heavy contingent of police has been deployed on various routes.

New protests hit Greece over train tragedy

ATHENS: Thousands of demonstrators staged fresh protests in Greece on Sunday as anger grows over the country's deadliest rail crash, ratcheting up pressure on the government over the tragedy. Protesters flooded Athens' Syntagma Square in front of parliament, waving banners that read "We won't forget, we won't forgive" and "We will become the voice of all the dead". Fifty-seven people, many of them students, were killed when a passenger train and freight train collided head-on in central Greece on February 28. Four railway officials have been charged but public anger has focused on long-running mismanagement of the network, and the country has been rocked by a series of sometimes violent mass protests. On Sunday about 12,000 demonstrators gathered outside parliament while 5,000 took to the streets of the second city Thessaloniki, police said. "It was anger and rage that brought me here," Markella, a 65-year-old Athens protester who gave only one name, told AFP. Another demonstrator, 26-year-old Alexandros, added: "We're getting desperate. You don't know what to say, what to do - all you can do is join the protest." The rallies came in response to calls from various bodies, from trade unions to political groups, to take to the streets. According to a police statement, "an isolated incident occurred when a small group of people hurled marbles, stones and other objects at the police forces on Karaiskaki Square, causing minor damage".

A total of ten arrests and two detentions were made and no injuries were reported. The biggest protests over the crash so far came on Wednesday when tens of thousands demonstrated nationwide, with clashes erupting, while workers staged strikes. Public and private sector employees are expected to walk out again Thursday. — Agencies

Intelligentsia for indigenous civil society mobilization

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Renowned intellectuals, technocrats, religious scholars and academics representing a cross-section of Pakistani society gathered for a special moot of the National Academic Council of Institute of Policy Studies (IPS) to contemplate measures to mitigate the ongoing national crisis, what they termed as extremely complex, multidimensional and unprecedented since the country's independence. The veterans suggested launching of a strong, indigenous, civil society, nationwide struggle to help pull the country out of the morass within the constitutional framework. They described the ongoing situation a systemic failure whose root cause was moral crisis, corruption and institutional decay. As such the experts recommended imposition of a 'governance emergency', which they said, was more critical than an economic or security emergency. The speakers also underscored the importance of proper education of youth and the new generation to make them productive citizens and viewed that the continuously deteriorating political crisis demands holistic democratic, electoral, and holistic structural reforms. Moreover, there was a dire need to devise a state-of-the-art political system on realistic and pragmatic foundations to promote credible and competent leadership which can address the lack of dialogue and the know-



ing-doing gap, they urged. Speaking on the occasion, Khalid Rahman, IPS' chairman, called for the mobilization of Pakistan's indigenous civil society, with the inclusion of all stakeholders, that can bring consensus and clarity of ideas, and devise out-of-the-box solutions to mitigate the perpetual crisis. He also proposed the system of proportionate electorate to ensure representative democracy and good governance in the country. Dr. Shahida Wizarat, eminent economist and author, said Pakistan has long relied on external actors, especially IMF and the World Bank, for economic support, which then

dictated the country's policies and developed the nation's consumer mindset. The foremost thing to troubleshoot the economic crisis is to eliminate foreign economic managers in favor of indigenous solutions and seek alternatives to IMF, she remarked. Just as strength is needed for the creation of a state, it is needed for its stability too, stressed Mufti Abdul Rahim, head, Jamiatul-Rasheed, Karachi, suggesting that in the current situation, the strength must be drawn from within by forging a consensus, documenting true facts, construc-

tively criticizing the institutions including establishment, streamlining media, and empowering the role of religious institutions and faith-based initiatives.

Along with introducing democratic, electoral, and governance reforms, efforts are needed to ensure check and balance, accountability, and the functionality of all state institutions, stressed Senator (r) Javed Jabbar, former federal minister and public intellectual. Moreover, there is a need of a new management paradigm based on enhancing the functionality of governance structures through measures such as the integration

of local governance units at the national level, he stressed. The hybrid national moot was also addressed by Dr. Qibla Ayaz, chairman, Council of Islamic Ideology, Ahmad Bilal Mehboob, founder president, PIL-DAT, Mufti Muneeb-ur-Rahman, president, Tanzeem-ul-Madaris Ahle Sunnat Pakistan, Muhammad Akram Sheikh, eminent jurist, Dr. Syed Irfan Haider, vice-chancellor, Ziauddin University, Syed Abu Ahmad Akif, former federal cabinet secretary, Dr. Anwar-ul-Hassan Gilani, former vice chancellor, University of Haripur, Dr. Junaid Ahmed Zaidi, former rector COMSATS, Dr. Syed Tahir Hijazi, former member governance, Planning Commission of Pakistan, Waqar Masood Khan, former federal secretary (finance), Mirza Hamid Hassan, former federal secretary, Water and Power, Ambassador (r) Syed Abrar Hussain, vice chairman, IPS, Prof. Jaleel Aali, prominent intellectual and former head, Urdu department, F.G. Sir Syed College, Dr. Naveed Butt, physician, Federal Government Services Hospital, Nazeer Ahmad Mahar, governance specialist and executive director, The Research Initiative, Dr. Fakhrul Islam, director Pakistan Study Centre, Peshawar University, Brig. Tughral Yamin, former dean CIPS, NUST, Dr. Masood Mehmood Khan, faculty at Curtin University, Australia, Dr. Noreen Saher, associate professor/chairperson, Department of Anthropology, IIUI, and Shahzad Iqbal Sham, senior research fellow IPS.

ECP suspends by-elections for 37 NA...

FROM PAGE 01

the ECP had announced by-elections for 33 NA seats on March 16. On February 3, the commission said by-elections for another 31 NA seats would take place on March 19. But earlier this month, the high courts of Peshawar, Sindh and Balochistan had suspended by-elections in their respective provinces while IHC had suspended the de-notification of three PTI leaders. In four separate notifications issued on Sunday, the electoral watchdog said that until further orders from the relevant courts, it was suspending the election schedule for one NA seat in Balochistan, three in Islamabad, nine in Sindh and 24 in KP. The NA seats were vacated after Speaker Raja Pervez Ashraf swiftly moved to accept the resignations of PTI lawmakers, pending since April 2022, in an apparent bid to scuttle the opposition's purported plan to bring a confidence motion against PM Shehbaz Sharif. After stalling the process for eight months, the NA speaker accepted the resignations of 34 PTI MNAs on Jan 17 and 35 MNAs on Jan 20, including Awami Muslim League chief Sheikh Rashid. On Jan 25, the ECP de-notified 43 more PTI lawmakers after Ashraf accepted their resignations, following with the PTI had approached the courts.

'Leader vs jackal': Maryam...

FROM PAGE 01

PTI leader Hammad Azhar today's presser, juxtaposing her father and the PTI chief who was removed from power via a no-confidence motion in April last year. Earlier today, Imran Khan called off his party's election rally in Lahore after the Punjab caretaker government imposed Section 144 (ban on public gatherings) in the provincial capital. On Saturday, Khan announced a fresh rally in Lahore today after which the district administration banned public gatherings through the invocation of Section 144 in the Punjab capital, citing concerns in the wake of a PSL match in the city. While they termed their decision to call off their rally a move to ensure peace is maintained in the country, the PML-N leaders call them out for being 'cowards'. Maryam then quote-tweeted a picture shared on the official handle of the PML-N, showing Nawaz's rally on one hand and another picture showing Khan who can be seen trying to elope. Those who planned to lie down in front of the tanks are taking sanctuary under their beds," she captioned that picture.

Israel hits areas in Syrian regions

WEB DESK

AMMAN: Israel launched several rocket strikes on areas in Syria's Hama province and the coastal Tartous countryside on Sunday, Syrian state media reported. Rockets flew from across northern Lebanon towards their targets, with three military personnel injured according to the report, which gave no further details. An Israeli military spokesperson declined comment. An Israeli air strike knocked Aleppo airport out of service on Tuesday and caused "material damage" to the airport, according to Syrian state media. Western intelligence sources say the airport attack targeted Iranian arms shipments delivered by air under the cover of humanitarian aid and relief air by dozens of planes that were landing at the airport for people affected by last month's earthquake. Israel has in recent months intensified strikes on Syrian airports and air bases to disrupt Iran's increasing use of aerial supply lines to deliver arms to allies in Syria and Lebanon, including Lebanon's Iran-backed Hezbollah.

Zalmi down United in a thrilling PSL game

ISLAMABAD: Peshawar Zalmi thumped Islamabad United by 13 runs in a thrilling 29th match and the last game at Pindi Stadium Rawalpindi, of the HBL PSL 8 on Sunday afternoon. Zalmi suffered a middle-order collapse to stutter to 179 for eight and then overcame Faheem Ashraf's late charge to dismiss Islamabad for 166 in 19.4 overs. The result meant Islamabad United and Multan Sultans finished their league matches on 12 points each. However, Multan Sultans were placed second and Islamabad United third on net run-rate, meaning Multan Sultans will meet table-toppers and defending champions Lahore Qalandars on 15 March in the Qualifier and Islamabad United will again take on fourth-placed Peshawar Zalmi in Eliminator 1 on 16 March. The March 15 Qualifier

would be a repeat of the HBL PSL 7 final between Lahore Qalandars and Multan Sultans. The winner of the said Qualifier would progress to the March 19 final, while the losing side will have another opportunity to earn a place in the final when they take on the winner of the March 16 Eliminator 1 in Eliminator 2 on March 17. After Islamabad United's top and middle-order made a mess of a straight-forward run-chase by slipping from 65 for three to 111 for eight, No.8 batter Faheem Ashraf came to the party and slapped four sixes and two fours in a 13-ball 38 to give his side some hope. In association with Mohammad Wasim (14 not out), the left-hander added 55 runs from 24 balls for the ninth wicket. With 21 runs required in

the final over, Faheem struck a six off the second ball to bring the target down to 14 from four balls. However, Khurram Shahzad castled Faheem and Fazalhaq Farooqi off successive deliveries to seal a memorable win for Peshawar Zalmi, who in the previous two matches had failed to defend totals of 240 and 242. While Khurram finished with figures of three for 13 in 10 balls, spinner Sufiyan Muqeem caused the middle-order collapse by accounting for Shadab Khan (25), Asif Ali (5) and Hasan Ali (0) to finish with figures of three for 37. Jimmy Neesham picked up the prized scalps of middle-order batters Rahmanullah Gurbaz (33) and Colin Munro (15) to end with two for 23, while Aamer Jamal scooped the wickets of top-order batters Alex

Hales and Sohaib Maqsood (15 each) to finish with two for 28. Earlier, Mohammad Harris and Bhanuka Rajapaksa put on 115 runs in 58 balls for the second wicket to put Peshawar Zalmi on course for another colossal total when they took their side to 116 for the loss of Saim Ayub (0) at the halfway stage. But the Strategic Timeout turned things on its head as Islamabad United roared back to capture seven wickets for 63 runs to restrict Peshawar Zalmi to 179 for eight. This included an unfinished 18-run ninth wicket stand from 21 balls between Khurram Shahzad (11 not out) and Sufiyan Muqeem (6 not out). Harris top-scored with an attractive 79 off 39 balls with seven fours and five sixes, while Rajapaksa slapped four fours and two sixes in a 25-ball 41.—APP

Kohli gets Test ton after three-year wait

AHMEDABAD: India's superstar cricketer Virat Kohli hit his first Test century since November 2019, ending his long drought on day four of the fourth Test against Australia on Sunday. "King Kohli" reached his 28th



Test hundred off 241 balls with a single off Nathan Lyon, sparking wild celebrations at the world's biggest cricket stadium in Ahmedabad. Appearing to tear up, he acknowledged the crowd and the dressing room before kissing the lock on his gold chain as he smiled and looked up to the sky. Commentator Ravi Shastri screamed, "a 600-kilo gorilla is off his back. He will grow a couple of inches taller by this evening". A placard in the crowd read "Here to see King Kohli ruling in his kingdom" as children in India shirts bowed in respect.—Agencies

Indian Wells: Murray, Raducanu and Jack Draper win

SPORTS DESK

CALIFORNIA: British trio Andy Murray, Emma Raducanu and Jack Draper all won to reach the third round at Indian Wells. Raducanu, the 2021 US Open champion, fought back from 4-1 down in the first set to beat Poland's Magda Linette, the 20th seed, 7-6 (7-3) 6-2. She will now face Brazil's Beatriz Haddad Maia, the 13th seed, for a place in the last 16. Murray beat Moldova's Radu Albot 6-4 6-3 to set up a meeting with Draper, who beat compatriot Dan Evans 6-4 6-2. Raducanu, 20, continued her return to form after shuffling off illness and a recurring wrist injury to beat Danka Kovinic on Thursday. The world number 77 fought back to win the opening set on a tie-break, then eased through the second set for her first back-to-back victories since September. Raducanu suffered an ankle injury before January's Australian Open and tonsillitis forced her to withdraw from last week's Austin Open, while the wrist injury that cut short her 2022 season required attention from a physiotherapist on Saturday. "I feel better, it was still a challenge, I wouldn't say I was 100% but better than the first-round match," Raducanu, who earned her biggest win by ranking since landing the major title in New York, told BBC Sport.

PSL 8: Playoffs lineup complete

LAHORE: Peshawar Zalmi defeated Islamabad United by 13 runs on Sunday to ensure that both teams will lock horns in the Eliminator 1 of the ongoing Pakistan Super League (PSL) season eight. The result also confirms that defending champions Lahore Qalandars will face Multan Sultans in the Qualifier of the tournament. Qualifier, the winner of which will qualify directly for the final, will be played on March 15, meanwhile the Eliminator 1 will be held on March 16. The loser of the Qualifier and winner of Eliminator 1 will clash in the Eliminator 2 on March 17 for a spot in the final. Chasing a target of 180 runs, Islamabad were all out for 166 in 19.4 overs.—DNA

Bangladesh stun England to seal T20 series

WEB DESK

DHAKA: Mehidy Hasan Miraz shone with ball and bat as Bangladesh stunned England to win the second Twenty20 international by four wickets and seal the series 2-0. Mehidy bowled a career-best 4-12 to help the hosts bowl out England for 117 before he hit 20 off 16 balls as Bangladesh raced to 120-6 in 18.5 overs. Najmul Hossain top-scored at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Dhaka with 46 not out for Bangladesh, who have now won at least one series in one format against all Test-playing countries. The hosts won the first match of the series by six wickets in Chittagong.

Sent into bat first, England were rarely in the contest after losing their way in the middle of the innings as their batsmen struggled to cope with a low and slow wicket in Mirpur. Shakib Al Hasan, Taskin Ahmed, Hasan Mahmud and Mustafizur Rahman each complemented Mehidy with a wicket apiece. Ben Duckett top-scored with 28 while Phil Salt made 25 off 19 balls. Taskin dismissed opener Dawid Malan for five but Salt and Moeen Ali showed positive intent to put on 34 runs for the second wicket. The visitors then lost Salt, skipper Jos Buttler (four) and Ali (15) in consecutive overs to ruin their prospect of putting in a big total.

Mehidy then struck twice in one over to dismiss Sam Curran (12) and Chris Woakes (0) to deny England a late recovery. Bangladesh in their reply lost both their openers Liton Das (nine) and Rony Talukdar (nine) cheaply but young Towhid Hridoy made 17 to steady the innings. Najmul and Mehidy put Bangladesh in charge with a 41-run stand. England sniffed a chance with a few late wickets as Jofra Archer wracked havoc to finish with 3-13. However, Najmul thwarted the visiting side with his unbeaten 47-ball innings featuring three boundaries. Taskin completed the win with consecutive fours off Chris Jordan in the nineteenth over.

Israel sees one of its biggest-ever protests

TEL AVIV: Hundreds of thousands of Israelis rallied against the government's judicial plans on Saturday night, in what organisers said were the biggest street protests in Israel's history. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu says the changes - which would curb the power of courts - will restore balance between the branches of government. Opponents say they threaten democracy. At one of Saturday's rallies, opposition leader Yair Lapid said this was Israel's "greatest crisis". In a separate development, Israeli troops shot dead three armed Palestinians near the West Bank city of Nablus on Sunday, the Israeli army said. It said the gunmen had fired at an Israeli army post. Palestinian officials have not commented on the incident. There has been a marked surge in violence between Palestinians and Israel in recent months. On Saturday, protest organisers said as many as 500,000 demonstrators took to the streets across Israel for the 100th consecutive week, in what the Haaretz newspaper called "the largest demonstration in the country's history". About 200,000 people turned up in Tel Aviv, many carrying Israel's national flag. Netanyahu's hard-line government had earlier sought to remove the district commander - but the move was blocked by the country's attorney general. The clash over the commander's position is significant. It comes amid predictions of a possible constitutional crisis, involving Israel's civil service and security forces being unable to take orders from the government, if no compromise is reached on the planned reforms, says the BBC's Tom Bateman in Jerusalem. On Saturday, a record crowd of 50,000 marched in the northern city of Haifa.—APP



JAKARTA: Ambassador Muhammad Hassan presenting a Pakistan-made football to H.E. Yassona H. Laoly, Minister of Law and Human Rights of Indonesia. The Ambassador was participating in the National Inmates Sports Day at the Inmate's Rehabilitation Centre Jakarta.—DNA

Briefs

Farooq Naek
elected
unopposed
as Member
of IPU's
Committee

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's Senator Farooq H. Naek has been elected unopposed as a Member of Inter-Parliamentary Union's Standing Committee on Human Rights and Democracy. The election took place during a meeting of the Asia-Pacific Group of Inter-Parliamentary Union in Bahrain's capital Manama. In his speech to the Parliamentarians from the Asia-Pacific Group Member countries, Senator Farooq H. Naek expressed his gratitude to them for supporting his candidacy. He assured that he would represent the Asia-Pacific Group effectively. The IPU is a global organization of National Parliaments based in Geneva, Switzerland, dedicated to promoting peace through parliamentary diplomacy and dialogue. It currently has 178 members and 14 Associate Members. Chairman Senate Muhammad Sadiq Sanjrani has congratulated Senator Farooq Hamid Naek on being elected as member of the Inter-Parliamentary Union's Standing Committee on Human Rights and Democracy. Expressing confidence in Senator Farooq H. Naek's abilities, the Senate Chairman said he is a highly respected lawyer and Parliamentarian of Pakistan, who has unwavering commitment to the promotion and protection of human rights and democracy. Senator Farooq H. Naek was elected unopposed as a Member of Inter-Parliamentary Union's Standing Committee on Human Rights and Democracy. The election took place during a meeting of the Asia-Pacific Group of Inter-Parliamentary Union in Bahrain's capital Manama.

Lord Qurban
raises plight
of IIOJK
women in UK
Parliament

DNA

LONDON: The Member of British Parliament, Lord Qurban Hussain, has raised his voice for the suffering women of Indian illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir. Taking part in a debate held in the UK Parliament in connection with the International Women's Day, he said, "On International Women's Day, while we are discussing very important issues such as steps taken to support the education of women and girls in the United Kingdom and worldwide, we must not forget those women in conflict zones facing physical torture, verbal abuse, harassment, rape and murder with complete impunity. One of those areas is Kashmir, where I was born." He said that after the repeal of special status of IIOJK by Narendra Modi-led fascist government on August 05, 2019, there are thousands of Kashmiri men and women held in different prisons in different parts of India, booked under draconian law Public Safety Act or sedition, provocation and anti-India activities laws. He cited Kashmiri women leaders, Aasiya Andrabi, Fehmeeda Sofi and Naheeda Nasreen as examples of the women who have been held in New Delhi's infamous Tihar Jail far away from their home in IIOJK for a long period. Lord Qurban Hussain, who is Secretary of All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Kashmir, said Aasiya Andrabi, the founder and chairperson of one of south Asia's biggest women's organisations Dukhtaran-e-Millat, is one of the most prominent woman pro-freedom leaders of Kashmir, and is a science graduate in biochemistry, biotherapy, and bacteriology. Aasiya Andrabi is the first woman resistance leader from Kashmir, who has been booked under the Public Safety Act 20 times since 1993. He said, the charge against Aasiya Andrabi is simple; she fiercely advocates Kashmir's liberation from the Indian yoke. In October 1990 Andrabi married Dr Muhammad Qasim Fakhtoo, a resistance ideologist who happens to be Kashmir's longest-serving.

Special flight operation to
Turkiye from Pak continues

In addition to the efforts of the Government of Pakistan, a number of NGOs from Pakistan are on ground lending support to the recovery and rehabilitation process

DNA

ANKARA: The Government of Pakistan has initiated a special flight operation to transport 50,000 tents to Turkiye during the next two weeks. First aircraft of this special flight series, carrying 1200 winterized tents arrived at Adana from Pakistan tonight. In line with the glorious history of supporting each other under all circumstances, the Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif himself is monitoring the earthquake relief assistance from Pakistan. Under the directions of the Prime Minister, an air bridge was immediately established between Islamabad and Ankara on 6th February 2023 to transport rescue teams and deliver essential relief goods. Since then, earthquake relief supplies are being transported to brotherly Turkiye through air, land and sea routes.



Early Turkiye through air, land and sea routes.

Earlier, 10 special aircrafts, including three Pakistan

Air Force (PAF) C-130, one PAF IL-78, three Turkish

aircrafts, three PIA chartered flights have brought

earthquake relief assistance supplies to Turkiye. Relief assistance goods were also sent, via free belly space available on 29 regular PIA flights to Istanbul. Also, a 21 truck convoy brought 275 tons of relief supplies by road to Malatya. Three ships carrying winterized tents are already enroute to Turkiye and shall be arriving in Mersin this month. In addition to the efforts of the Government of Pakistan, a number of NGOs from Pakistan are on ground lending support to the recovery and rehabilitation process. During the recent visit of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif to quake affected areas, he reaffirmed the commitment that the people and Government of Pakistan stand in strong solidarity with Turkish brethren and are determined to extend every possible support till full recovery and rehabilitation.

President
of Cyprus
receives Saudi
minister of
investment

NICOSIA: President Nicos Anastasiades of the Republic of Cyprus received at the Presidential palace in Nicosia on Sunday the Saudi Minister of Investment, Eng. Khalid bin Abdulaziz Al-Falih.

At the outset of the meeting, Eng. Al-Falih conveyed to the President, the government and the people of the Republic of Cyprus the greetings and appreciation of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, and His Royal Highness Prince Mohammed bin Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, Crown Prince and Prime Minister. The meeting reviewed the bilateral relations between the two friendly countries, opportunities for joint cooperation, and ways to develop them in the field of investment.—APP

Coronavirus
claims 15
more lives
in Iran

TEHRAN: Iran's Health Ministry said Saturday that 15 additional people have died from the coronavirus in the past 24 hours and 569 contracted the infection amid a new spike in infections.

A daily bulletin by the ministry's public relations wing said the number of fatalities hit 144,956 while infections increased to 7,573,328. A total of 407 people infected by the virus are in critical condition and admitted to intensive care units in different hospitals across the country, it said. Four cities are currently in the high-risk "red" category on a color-coded COVID-19 map, 23 are in the moderate-risk "orange" category, 187 in the low-risk "yellow" category and 235 in the normal "blue" category. Iran was among the first countries in the Middle East to report the novel coronavirus in February 2020 after two deaths in the central city of Qom, followed by Tehran.

The region's worst-hit country grappled with at least seven waves of the virus, mostly fueled by highly-transmissible variants such as delta and omicron, before cases subsided. The situation was complicated by the slow pace of vaccination, which gained momentum after a new government took control in Tehran in late 2021. In June last year, after more than two years, Iran reported zero deaths from the virus. At the time, the number of fatalities stood at 141,318. Health Minister Bahram Einoollah at the time cautioned that continued adherence to health protocols must continue until the disease is fully eliminated.—APP

India remained 'partly free' in 2022, says US think-tank

WASHINGTON, MAR 12 (DNA) — India's status remained 'partly free' in 2022, with improvement in overall scores as compared to the previous year, in an assessment done by Freedom House, a US government-funded think-tank. The 2023 edition of 'Freedom in the World' is the 50th in this series of annual comparative reports, the organisation said. The report ranked 195 countries on the same parameters — and India got 66 marks out of 100. Some of the assessed parameters were 'electoral processes', 'political pluralism and participation', 'functioning of government', 'freedom of expression and belief', 'associational and organisational rights', 'rule of law' and 'personal autonomy and individual rights'. For some factors under the parameter 'political pluralism', India was found wanting. For example, while the participation of women voters has increased over time and quotas have ensured reservation of seats for the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in elections, the report said the political rights of Indian Muslims continue to be threatened. It talked about Citizenship Amendment Act (the rules for which are not yet framed) and possible disenfranchisement of Muslim voters, quoting "many observers".—APP

Iran confirms death sentence
for Swedish-Iranian dissident

Habib Chaab has been held in Iran since October 2020 after he vanished during a visit to Turkey and was put on trial in Tehran

TEHRAN: Iran's judiciary on Sunday confirmed a death sentence for a Swedish-Iranian dissident for "terrorism" over two years since his disappearance at an airport in Turkey, the judiciary's Mizan Online website reported. Habib Chaab has been held in Iran since October 2020 after he vanished during a visit to Turkey and was put on trial in Tehran — which does not recognise dual nationality. Chaab, who was found guilty on charges of "corruption on earth" and the formation of a rebel group, was sentenced to death on December 6. On Sunday, it was confirmed that Iran's Supreme Court had upheld the ruling. "The death sentence of Habib Farajollah Chaab on charges of corruption on earth through the formation, management and leadership of a rebel group called Harakat al-Nidal, and the design and execution of numerous terrorist operations in Khuzestan province, was approved by the Supreme Court," Mizan Online reported. Iran has accused Harakat al-Nidal of "cooperation with other terrorist groups" including in a 2018 attack on a military parade in Ahvaz in the southwestern Khuzestan region that authorities said killed 25 and wounded almost 250. Chaab is the latest person to be sentenced to death after being found guilty of being a member of Harakat al-Nidal, which Tehran calls a "terrorist group". Last week, a court in Ahvaz sentenced to death six men over attacks who had "carried out the orders of their European leaders". They were found guilty of "armed operations" between 2017 and 2019 that killed four people, including a soldier and two members of Iran's Basij paramilitary force, the report said. The Islamic Republic of Iran executes more people every year than any other nation except China, according to rights groups including Amnesty International. Last month, Iran's judiciary put to death a Kurdish militant who had been convicted of killing a police officer, a move condemned by rights groups who called him a political prisoner.—APP

'Punjab Minister
running UBG election
drive in Sindh'

LAHORE: The business community on Sunday expressed its serious concern over the involvement of Punjab caretaker government in trade politics and driving campaign for a particular group, violating the election code of conduct, as the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) rules bar a caretaker set-up from performing such acts. The Election Act 2017 unequivocally restricts a caretaker set-up to only run everyday affairs of the incumbent government as well as assist the ECP. They said that the Punjab Caretaker Minister for Industries, Commerce, Investment and Skill Development S.M Tanveer has started the election drive in favour of the United Business Group (UBG) in various official functions and meetings. In a hurriedly called meeting held here today, the representatives of various trade organizations, chambers of commerce and industrial associations of all major sectors of the country, have condemned such act of the Punjab Caretaker Minister, as he is visiting different chambers in interior Sindh along with the office-bearers of the UBG to persuade the members of his rival group of the Businessmen Panel (BMP) for voting in favour of his group, which has been the loser for the last three consecutive years in FPCCI elections. They said that Caretaker Minister of Industries has revived the Punjab Chamber of Commerce Coordination Committee, which includes the representatives of chambers, industrialists and govt officers with a view to take steps to solve the problems faced by the industry of Punjab, but actually this committee is being used to force the voters of BMP to join the UBG, which is totally unfair. They appealed the caretaker government to work only for ensuring the provision of all possible facilities to the investors instead of indulging its ministries in political affairs of the business community. They also criticized him to attend the UBG 41st meeting at Gohar Group of Companies head office in Karachi as a caretaker minister.—DNA

Exports continue to drop as
govt ignoring textile sector

DNA

KARACHI: Pakistan Hosiery Manufacturers and Exporters Association (PHMA) has expressed deep concern over continued decline in textile exports, which have dropped by around 28% year-on-year and almost 9% month-on-month, reaching \$1.20 billion in Feb 2023. PHMA Zonal Chairman Naseer Butt said that apart from the global market slowdown the government is also responsible for the constant decline in textile exports because of its delay in refunds to exporters, demanding the government to immediately release all pending Sales Tax Refunds, Custom Rebate claims, DLT claims and Withholding Tax claims to provide relief to the textile exporters so that they could focus on increasing their exports. He said that the drop in textile exports comes during a turbulent period for textile manufacturers, where they await the refunds payment

by the FBR, besides facing the issues of volatile exchange rate, high energy tariffs and climbing markup rate in the country. He warned that sudden withdrawal of power-sector subsidies to appease the IMF was likely to further hurt Pakistan's already declining exports. Power subsidy was due to end by June 2023 but the government withdrew it hastily before the cut-off date, he said. PHMA Zonal chief said that Pakistan's cotton production has dropped by 34.5% in February, which reflected the impact of last year's floods. In this scenario, a threat is looming over the textile industry, which requires around 14 million cotton bales annually. He said that textile industry has continued to suffer from the effects of domestic economic meltdown as well as global economic slowdown as its exports dropped for the fifth consecutive month. Naseer Butt explained that textile industry is a major contributor to Pakistan's economy and this decline

will have a significant impact on the overall exports. This is the reason why businessmen are demanding that the government take steps to address the challenges facing the industry and offer incentives to exporters by reducing interest rates and continuation of subsidized energy rates, he added. He complained about stiff competition from other countries, particularly Bangladesh and Vietnam, which have been able to win more orders owing to a relatively low cost of production and better infrastructure. The fall in textile exports is worrisome for Pakistan's economy and also for the worker employed at the industry, many of whom have already lost their jobs, he remarked. He cited the restrictions on imports, high interest rates and an overall slowdown in the global economy, as the decline in textile exports was expected due to a sharp drop in orders from the European and US buyers. He said that in previous years, the Covid-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on global

economies, and the textile industry is no exception, he pointed out, adding that restrictions on imports in Pakistan also caused shortage of raw material, which affected production activities at the textile industry. I believe textile exports will stay under pressure amid global economic slowdown and numerous national economic challenges, he remarked. He pointed out that the textile industry was facing some major challenges, which included the unavailability of cotton due to import restrictions and high financing costs owing to an increase in interest rate. Moreover, the withdrawal of subsidized energy tariffs, as per International Monetary Fund's loan conditions, would exacerbate the challenging outlook for the industry further. Textile sector, a major contributor to Pakistan's exports, is currently experiencing a shortage of raw material and unavailability of foreign currency for the import of essential machinery, which is impeding production, he said.



ISLAMABAD: A foreigner couple purchasing vegetables from vendor at Sunday Bazaar in Federal Capital.— APP

Modi's repressive
policies hamper
Kashmiri journalism

NEW YORK: The owner of a sealed newspaper in Indian-occupied Kashmir says Prime Minister Narendra Modi's repressive media policies are destroying Kashmiri journalism, intimidating media outlets into serving as government mouthpieces and creating an information vacuum in our region of about 13 million people, as India descends into authoritarianism. Anuradha Bhasin, executive editor of The Kashmir Times, whose offices in Srinagar were sealed by the occupation authorities three years ago, in an opinion piece published in The New York Times on Saturday, wrote that Modi was taking steps that could replicate this disturbing model on a national scale. "His Hindu-chauvinist movement, which has normalized intolerance and violence against Indian Muslims, has already put severe pressure on India's once-rambunctious press, with journalists surveilled and jailed, and the government using strong-arm tactics against media outlets to ensure favourable coverage," Ms Bhasin wrote in her piece titled: Modi's Final Assault on India's Press Freedom Has Begun. But in January, she pointed out that draft amendments to digital media guidelines were introduced that would essentially allow the government to block any content it doesn't like. "In other words, the rest of India may end up looking a lot like Kashmir," Ms. Bhasin remarked. In 2019, Modi's government abruptly revoked Kashmir's special status without public input from the territory's people, sent in thousands of troops and shut down internet access, it was pointed out. The shutdown lasted nearly six months, forcing hundreds of journalists to line up for hours to file their stories via a single designated site that had internet access. Each had 15 minutes to do so. Internet speeds have been excruciatingly slow since. The next year new rules were introduced that empowered officials to label media content in Kashmir as "fake news, plagiarism and unethical or anti-national" and to punish journalists and publications.—DNA

Briefs

Chaudhry Sarwar joins PML-Q

LAHORE: Former Punjab governor Chaudhry Mohammad Sarwar on Sunday met Pakistan Muslim League Chief Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain and joined the PML-Q along with his companions. In this regard, a ceremony was organized here at Muslim League House, in which Pakistan Muslim League Secretary General and Federal Minister Tariq Bashir Cheema, Federal Minister Salik Hussain, Chaudhry Shafi, Begum Parveen Sarwar, Overseas Pakistani Businesswoman Sabahat from America, Ansar Farooq Chaudhry, Chaudhry Azhar Waraich, famous hockey player Muhammad Asif Bajwa, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) central members Mian Waheed Ahmed, Rashid Riaz, Tayyab Chaudhry and Mian Kashif Iqbal were present among others. While welcoming Chaudhry Mohammad Sarwar to the party, Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain said that politics of Chaudhry Sarwar was 100 percent transparent and a proof of his dedication towards people, adding that PML-Q gained strength after new development and would achieve popularity in Punjab as well as other provinces of the country. The number of overseas Pakistanis would also increase in the party. On the occasion, Chaudhry Mohammad Sarwar thanked the PML-Q leadership for welcoming him in the party, adding that he was not joining the party for the sake of any party position or any political gains. "I joined PML-Q with the spirit of serving the countrymen and the nation", he said. PML-Q was the political party that works for the real development of the country, he mentioned. "I am also grateful to my colleagues who have decided to join Pakistan Muslim League on my call" he said and added that his and party priorities would be the protection of national and country's interests. He mentioned that the party would also form a shadow cabinet to evaluate the government's performance in other sectors including foreign affairs, finance, energy, health, tourism and sports and make suggestions for improvement in these sectors. — APP

Talks with IMF to resume

DNA

ISLAMABAD: In order to ensure resumption of a loan program, Pakistan and the IMF are set to restart their talks from Monday. The two sides took a three-day break in the talks to consider the points they disagreed on, on Thursday. After a break, talks on the resumption of the \$6.5 billion loan program from the IMF will restart on Monday. According to the Finance Ministry sources, the State Bank of Pakistan and IMF officials had held talks on Thursday. They discussed the points finalized in the Memorandum of Economic and Financial Policies. The next installment of \$1.1 billion from the \$6.5 billion loan will be received in April in the form of a staff-level agreement that is likely to be inked next week. Pakistan has reportedly fulfilled all the pre-conditions of the IMF for the staff-level agreement.

SPRING CRAFTS FESTIVAL AT ISH



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Climate Change Sherry Rehman, General Manager Islamabad Serena Hotel Otto Kurzendorfer, Nageen Hayat and others taking interest in pieces of art on the occasion of Spring Crafts Festival jointly organized Serena Hotels and Nomad Art and Culture Center, Islamabad Serena Hotel. — DNA

Iran says it agrees prisoner swap with US, Washington denies

DNA

DUBAI: Iran and the United States have reached an agreement to exchange prisoners, Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian told state TV on Sunday, but Washington denied it as a "false" claim by Tehran. "Regarding the issue of prisoner swaps between Iran and the U.S. we have reached an agreement in the recent days and if everything goes well on the U.S. side, I think we will witness a prisoner exchange in a short period," Amirabdollahian said. "On our part everything is ready, while the U.S. is currently working on the final technical coordination." A White House official denied Amirabdollahian's statement about the prisoner swap with Washington, adding that the United States was committed to securing the release of Americans held in Iran.

77 new Corona cases reported

ISLAMABAD: Health officials on Sunday said that 77 new Coronavirus cases were reported during the last 24 hours across the country. As per the data shared by NIH, the case positivity ratio was 1.38 percent while 13 patients were in critical condition. No death was reported from the Coronavirus in the last 24 hours while 5,565 Covid-19 tests were conducted. As many as 1,065 tests were conducted in Lahore out of which, 30 cases were confirmed with a ratio of 2.82 percent, while 234 tests were conducted in Rawalpindi out of which one case was reported confirmed with a ratio of 0.43 percent while six cases were confirmed from 234 tests in Gilgit with the ratio of 1.78 percent. — APP

Ukraine, Russia say hundreds killed in battle for Bakhmut

NEWS DESK

KYIV: Ukraine and Russia claimed on Saturday that hundreds of enemy troops were killed over the previous 24 hours in the fight for Bakhmut, with Kyiv fending off unabating attacks and a small river that bisects the town now marking the new front line. Serhiy Cherevatyi, a Ukrainian military spokesperson, said that 221 pro-Moscow troops were killed and more than 300 wounded in Bakhmut. Russia's defence ministry said that up to 210 Ukrainian soldiers were killed in the broader Donetsk part of the frontline. While Moscow did not specify Bakhmut casualties, the eastern

Donetsk town, now nearly deserted, has been the site of one of the bloodiest and longest battles of the year-long war. Both sides have admitted to suffering and inflicting significant losses in Bakhmut, while the exact number of casualties is difficult to independently verify. British military intelligence said on Saturday that Russia's Wagner mercenary group has taken control of most of the eastern part of Bakhmut - an advance that the group's founder Yevgeny Prigozhin claimed on Wednesday. "In the city centre, the Bakhmutka River now marks the front line," the British Defence Ministry said in its daily intelligence bulletin. Ukraine insisted that it was holding on in Bakhmut

and was giving a "decent rebuff" to Russian forces, with the commander in charge of defending Bakhmut saying its protection was key for a Ukrainian counter-strike. "It is necessary to gain time to accumulate reserves and start a counter-offensive, which is not far off," the military cited Colonel general Oleksandr Syrskyi as saying on Saturday. Moscow says capturing Bakhmut would punch a hole in Ukrainian defences and be a step towards seizing all of the Donbas industrial region, a major target. Kyiv says the battle is grinding down Russia's best units. Prigozhin said on Saturday that he is now 1.2 km (0.75 mile) away from the administrative centre of the city. The centre is

on the west side of the Bakhmutka River. British intelligence said that with the river running through some open ground, "this area has become a killing zone, likely making it highly challenging for Wagner forces attempting to continue their frontal assault westward." But the situation remained dangerous for Ukrainian forces. "The Ukrainian force and their supply lines to the west remain vulnerable to the continued Russian attempts to outflank the defenders from the north and south," it said. Meanwhile, Ukraine's capital had most of its power supply restored, officials said, as the country again responded swiftly and defiantly to the latest Russian missile and drone barrage targeting critical infrastructure.

'History will hold Trump accountable' for Jan. 6

WASHINGTON: Former US Vice President Mike Pence offered his most forceful rebuke to date of his one-time boss Donald Trump on Saturday, saying that history will hold him accountable for his role in the Jan. 6, 2021, attack on the U.S. Capitol. Pence was in the Capitol when thousands of Trump supporters breached the building in an attempt to stop Congress from certifying the results of the 2020 presidential election, which Trump lost to Joe Biden. As the vice president has the constitutional role of Senate president, Pence was presiding over what had always been the ceremonial task of approving the votes of the Electoral College to select the president and vice president. Throughout the siege, Trump sent several tweets, one calling on Republicans to "fight" and others making false claims of voter fraud. He also criticized Pence for certifying the results.

"President Trump was wrong," Pence told assembled journalists and their guests at the Gridiron dinner, an annual white-tie event in Washington, D.C. "I had no right to overturn the election, and his reckless words endangered my family and everyone at the Capitol that day, and I know that history will hold Donald Trump accountable." Pence, who is considering a run for the Republican nomination for the 2024 presidential election, was whisked to safety by law enforcement during the attack. He rarely addressed Jan. 6 in the months following the incident, but has since upped his criticism of the rioters and the behavior of his former boss that day. He has sharply criticized Trump's conduct in recent media interviews, and in a memoir released in November, he accused Trump of endangering his family. — Agencies

Govt declassifies Toshakhana records

The names that appeared in the publicised Toshakhan records included Musharraf, Shaukat Aziz, Yousaf Raza Gillani, Nawaz Sharif, Imran Khan, Arif Alvi and Shehbaz Sharif

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: The federal government declassified the Toshakhana records and uploaded the whole 466-page data from 2002 to 2023 on the Cabinet Division's

website, media reported on Sunday. Those who acquired gifts from Toshakhana include former presidents, prime ministers, ministers and government officers. The names that appeared in the publicised Toshakhana records included Pervez Musharraf, Shaukat Aziz, Yousaf Raza Gillani, Nawaz Sharif, Imran Khan, Arif Alvi and Shehbaz Sharif. Earlier, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif-led federal government approved making details of Toshakhana gifts, received over the past two decades, public. The announcement was made by Defence Minister Khawaja Asif on his official Twitter handle. "The cabinet has allowed the declassification of Toshakhana records. It would soon be posted on the website of the cabinet division," the minister wrote in a tweet.

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Israeli forces kill three Palestinians in occupied West Bank

WEB DESK

OCCUPIED WEST BANK: The Israeli military says its forces shot and killed three Palestinian men who opened fire on soldiers in the occupied West Bank, the latest bloodshed in a year-long wave of violence in the region. The Palestinian Ministry of Health said the men were killed on Sunday by Israeli fire near the city of Nablus and identified them as Jihad Mohammed al-Shami, 24, Uday Othman al-Shami, 22 and Mohammed Raed Dabeek, 18. The Israeli army said "gunmen opened fire" at an army position near the Jit junction west of Nablus, with the sol-

diers responding with "live fire". "Three armed gunmen were neutralised during the exchange of fire and an additional armed gunman surrendered himself to the forces," the army said in a statement, noting that none of the Israeli soldiers was wounded. The soldiers, members of the elite infantry Golani reconnaissance unit, confiscated three M-16 rifles and a pistol used by the Palestinians, the army said. The Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade, an armed offshoot of Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas's Fatah party, claimed the men who were killed as members. Tensions between Israeli forces and settlers on one side and Palestinians on the other have esca-

lated over the past year. Israeli forces have arrested thousands of Palestinians in the West Bank and killed more than 200 Palestinians, civilians as well as fighters. More than 40 Israelis and foreign nationals have died in attacks by Palestinians over the same period. On Friday, an Israeli settler shot dead a Palestinian man near an illegal settlement in the northern occupied West Bank. A day before, a Hamas gunman opened fire in Tel Aviv, wounding three people, one of them critically, before being killed by police and passersby. The group said the attack was a response to an Israeli raid killing three Palestinian fighters in the West Bank earlier that day.

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