



# Islamabad POST

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**Uzbek referendum to allow President to extend rule**

Detailed News On Page-07

**Relations with the US are at their lowest**

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**Swiatek reached Indian Wells' quarter finals**

Detailed News On Page-06



## Briefs

**Imran under threat due to his ego**

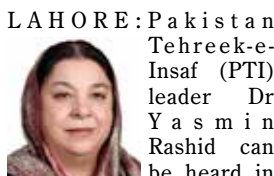
NEWS DESK



NEW YORK: Foreign Minister of Pakistan Bilawal Bhutto Zardari said on Wednesday that Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) chief Imran Khan is under the threat of arrest 'due to his ego'. He made the remarks during an interview on The Daily Show with Kal Penn, where talking about the possible arrest of the former prime minister, Bilawal said "Pakistan is facing a perfect storm". The foreign minister added that the courts asked Imran to appear and contest the cases against him, but "he [Imran] says I'm Imran, and I'm too important, and I'm not going to turn up to court".

**Yasmin seeks Alvi's intervention**

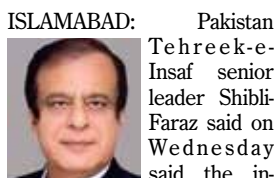
DNA



LAHORE: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leader Dr Yasmin Rashid can be heard in another purported audio leak on Wednesday, allegedly requesting President Dr Arif Alvi to intervene as the situation worsened during the police operation at Imran Khan's Zaman Park residence in Lahore. "The situation is very bad. Our workers have resorted to throwing petrol bombs and setting fires. Please explain it to Khan sahib otherwise people and policemen will be killed," Yasmin can be purportedly heard as saying.

**Shibli slates govt over violence**

SAIFULLAH



ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf senior leader Shibli Faraz said on Wednesday said the incumbent coalition government attacked the Zaman Park with its full force because it could not defeat the PTI's chief in the elections. He added the perpetrators of the Peshawar mosque tragedy were still at large despite the passage of once month but the whole focus was to arrest Imran and when govt attacked Zaman Park, it seemed govt invaded Kashmir.

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**Imran avoids arrest**

# LHC halts Zaman Park operation

PTI workers engage in violent clashes with Police, Rangers; LHC orders to halt operation till today

ABID RAZA

LAHORE: After a day-long escalation continued between PTI supporters and law enforcement agencies outside ex-premier Imran Khan's residence, the Lahore High Court (LHC) on Wednesday stopped the police operation at Zaman Park till 10am today (March 16) while the Islamabad High Court (IHC) disposed of a plea seeking the cancellation of the PTI chief's arrest warrants. The situation at Zaman Park was peaceful even as droves of PTI workers remained outside Imran's residence. Dawn.com's correspondent at the scene said that there were police was not present and the roads had been cleared for traffic. On Wednesday morning, Islamabad Police, backed by Punjab Police and Rangers resumed efforts — which began on Tuesday — to arrest the ex-premier in connection with the Toshkhana case. Imran has skipped indictment several times, which led to the judge issuing non-bailable arrest warrants for him. However, they were met with strong resistance from PTI workers, who pelted stones at them. The police responded with volleys of tear gas. After an hours-long back and forth — described by international media as "pitched battles" — the personnel pulled back to Mall Road, from where they cleared out.

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**IHC maintains Khan's arrest warrants**

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Wednesday maintained the non-bailable arrest warrants of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan in the Toshakhana case and directed him to approach the trial court for relief. The court asked the PTI's lawyer to submit an undertaking regarding the appearance of Imran Khan before the sessions court which would view the matter as per law. Chief Justice Aamer Farooq announced the verdict which was earlier reserved on the petition filed by Imran Khan against his non-bailable arrest warrants issued by the trial court in the Toshakhana case. The court heard the case after the removal of the objections of the Registrar Office. Earlier during the hearing, the petitioner's lawyer Khwaja Haris adopted the stance that the IHC had previously suspended

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# Imran doing 'politics' on women, children

Maryam says PML-N will contest elections

ALI HAMZA / DNA

LAHORE: Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) senior vice president Maryam Nawaz lambasted on Wednesday Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) chairman Imran Khan, saying the latter was doing politics on women and children. Maryam Nawaz presided over the meeting of Lahore Division, during which she said that his party will contest the elections and win. "We will not accept selection like in the past. We did not get complete relief from the elements of conspiracies," added Ms. Nawaz. Lavishing praise on PML-N supremo, Ms Nawaz said, "Nawaz Sharif is the leader with courage who protected his workers."

Continued on Page 06

**GB police chief transferred**

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The federal government on Wednesday transferred Gilgit-Baltistan Inspector General of Police (IGP) Muhammad Saeed from his post in the wake of the information minister's claim that GB police force was being used against Punjab police in the latter's attempt to arrest PTI chief Imran Khan from his Zaman Park residence in Lahore. Saeed was ordered to report to the Establishment Division with immediate effect until further orders,

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**NATIONAL DAY OF LITHUANIA**



ISLAMABAD: Minister for Inter-Provincial Coordination and Special Initiatives Sardar Ehsaan-ur-Rehman Mazari, Hon. Consul General of Lithuania Masud M Khan and his spouse cutting cake to celebrate National Day of Lithuania. — DNA

**Govt to act per ECP's decision on polls: PM**

Says has directed his party to finalize names of ticket-holders



SHUJAAT HAMZA

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday said the federal government was committed to fulfill its constitutional obligation of holding election and would act as per the decision of the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP). "No one should have a doubt on us regarding evading the elections. We will wholeheartedly participate in election and will follow whatever decided by ECP," he told a delegation of Council of Pakistan Newspaper Editors (CPNE) here at the PM House. Shehbaz Sharif said it was up to the ECP to decide over the matter, however, as president of Pakistan Muslim League (Nawaz), he had directed his party to finalize names of ticket-holders.

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# Institutions urged to not endorse 'London plan'

"All our hopes cling on to the judiciary and the establishment," says Imran

STAFF REPORT

LAHORE: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan on Wednesday urged the judiciary and the establishment not to become a party to the 'London plan'. Displaying tear gas shells that he claimed had been found around his residence, the PTI chief dismissed all Toshakhana charges against him as "frivolous". He also maintained that the court where he has been summoned is not "safe". Imran maintained that those currently in the government are the same people who were behind the Wazirabad attack during his party's long march. "All I had asked for was security," he said claiming that on his last appearances at the LHC and the IHC, "there was no security and no protection" whatsoever.

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**G-B force used at Zaman Park, says Marriyum**

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Information Marriyum Aurangzeb on Wednesday alleged that a Gilgit-Baltistan "force" was being employed to attack Punjab police as they tried to arrest Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) chief Imran Khan in the

Continued on Page 06

# Pakistan values relations with the outer world, says President

Envoys of Malaysia, Portugal, Kosovo, Lithuania & Ecuador present credentials to the President



ANSAR M BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: The President of Pakistan Dr Arif Alvi has said Pakistan valued its relations with the outer world and wants to further strengthen these relations. He expressed these views while talking to various ambassadors and high commissioners. The newly appointed envoys of Malaysia, Portugal, Kosovo, Lithuania and Ecuador presented their credentials to President Dr Arif Alvi, at a Credentials Ceremony, held at Aiwan-e-Sadr. The High Commissioner-designate of

Malaysia, Mr Mohammad Azhar Mazlan, Ambassador-designate of Portugal to Pakistan, Mr Manuel Frederico Pinheiro da Silva, Non-Resident Ambassador-designate of Kosovo to Pakistan, Mr Agon Vrenezi, Non-Resident Ambassador-designate of Lithuania, Mr Ricardas Degutis, and Non-Resident Ambassador-designate of Ecuador to Pakistan, Mr Pascual Del Ciooppo Aragundi, presented their credentials and also made separate calls on the President. Welcoming the High Commissioner of Malaysia, the President said that Pakistan and Malaysia enjoyed good relations and Pakistan wanted to further

strengthen bilateral relations with Malaysia in the areas of economy, trade, defence, education, tourism, science and technology. He underscored the need for further expanding bilateral trade for the mutual benefit of the two countries. He stated that Pakistan produced quality fruits, vegetables, dairy products, pharmaceuticals, sports and surgical goods, and access to Pakistani commodities in Malaysian and adjacent ASEAN markets could help meet Malaysia's requirements and enhance bilateral trade.

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# Pak-Russia co-op to develop rapidly despite sanctions

Russian investors must also explore business opportunities in CPEC through investments and joint ventures in 10 special economic zones offering huge incentives for foreign & domestic investors”, he added

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: Consul General of the Russian Federation Andrey V. Fedorov has said that despite sanctions on Russia by the western countries, the cooperation between Russia and Pakistan will develop rapidly as there were a lot of unexplored business opportunities in Russia Pakistan bilateral economic cooperation which should definitely be developed. Speaking at a meeting during his visit to the Karachi Chamber of Commerce & Industry (KCCI), he hoped that that the current high level of bilateral ties between the two friendly countries will be sustained and the true bilateral potential will also be realized. President KCCI Mohammed Tariq Yousuf, Vice President Haris Agar, Chairman of Diplomatic Missions & Embassies Liaison Subcommittee Zia ul Arfeen and KCCI Managing Committee Members were present on the occasion. Highlighting numerous areas of cooperation between Russia and Pakistan, he said that although bilateral trade was mainly concentrated on commodities but there was a huge potential in other sectors as well particularly the energy sector. “Furthermore, Pakistan produces leather goods and sports equipment of very high quality and has huge potential in information technology sector in addition to being a major

player in the pharmaceutical production and also surgical equipment which are the best in the world.” Expressing Russia keenness to develop trade and economic cooperation with Pakistan, he said that 2023 was the year which marks 75 years of diplomatic relations between Russia and Pakistan and during all these years, there were ups and downs but recently the bilateral ties have strengthened. “In 2022, significant boost of 38.6 percent was witnessed in Russia’s exports to Pakistan as compared to 2021.” Referring to recent talks between the foreign ministers of the two countries, he said that during these talks, the foreign ministers expressed willingness to enhance cooperation in a wide range of spheres including energy sector, fight against terrorists, trade & economic partnership, humanitarian, cultural and educational cooperation. Keeping in view series of government-to-government interactions at the highest level, he was fairly optimistic about enhanced bilateral cooperation. “When friends meet at the negotiation table, lot of agreements can be reached. The only thing needed is wishes and will from both sides which have been witnessed during meetings between Prime Ministers, Foreign Ministers and Defense Ministers of the two countries.” Earlier, President KCCI Mohammed

Tariq Yousuf, while warmly welcoming the Russian CG, stated that Pakistan and Russia have experienced many ups and downs in their bilateral relations, but mutual bilateral cooperation has strengthened economic relations, marked by enhanced govt. level talks between the two countries. “Despite friendly relations, the volume of trade is much below its potential as during the seven months of current fiscal year, Pakistan’s exports to Russia dropped by 45 percent to around \$45 million compared to \$82.34 million last year, which is a serious concern.” He noted that Pakistan was close to a final agreement with Russia for the import of discounted crude oil and petroleum products. The 40-50 percent discounted energy deal if settled, could reshape Pak-Russia trade and bilateral relationship to a greater extent, allowing both countries to structure their ties more effectively. This agreement was very critical for Pakistan’s economic growth, which could resolve part of energy needs and create breathing space. He stressed that Russian investors should enhance trade and investment cooperation in numerous sectors including the energy sector, construction and industrial machinery, mines, metallurgy, railways engineering, pharmaceutical products, fertilizers and chemicals etc.



Alamabad (Swabi): First Lady Begum Samina Arif Alvi inaugurating Teachers Training Facility at AA Training Center at Rashid memorial welfare organization. —DNA

## International Day to Combat Islamophobia

# Experts stress to build bridges, not divisions

ISLAMABAD: The Centre for Strategic Perspectives (CSP) at the Institute of Strategic Studies (ISSI) organised a Roundtable Discussion to Commemorate the “International Day to Combat Islamophobia.” Ambassador Rizwan Saeed Sheikh, Additional Secretary, MoFA was the Guest of Honour. The other participants included: DG ISSI Ambassador Sohail Mahmood; Ambassador Hissien Ibrahim Taha, Secretary General, OIC (via recorded message); Ambassador Khalil Hashmi, Permanent Representative of Pakistan to the United Nations, Geneva (via recorded message); Prof. Dr. Samina Yasmeen, Director and Founder, University of Western Australia’s Centre for Muslim States and Societies (on-line address); and Ambassador Khalid Mahmood, Chairman, BoG, ISSI. Dr. Neelum Nigar, Director CSP, made introductory remarks. DG ISSI Ambassador Sohail Mahmood, in his welcome remarks, stated that Pakistan’s vigorous diplomatic efforts played a pivotal part in the designation of 15 March as the ‘International Day to Combat Islamophobia’ by the United Nations General Assembly through an unanimously adopted resolution last year. He traced the evolution of Islamophobia as a phenomenon and its myriad manifestations – including denigration of Islam’s most sacred personalities,

desecration of the Holy Quran, and systematic social, political and economic discrimination against Muslims. In Pakistan’s neighbourhood, an ideological agenda was normalizing anti-Muslim sentiments and culminating in discriminatory legislation and policies. He stressed that at a time of extreme tumult in the world, it was imperative to avoid accentuation of religious or cultural fault-lines. “This is a time to build bridges, not to create further divisions.” “As we go forward, it is hoped that commemoration of this International Day worldwide would raise awareness about Islamophobia and strengthen the resolve to combat this pernicious phenomenon”, including through efforts for mutual understanding, dialogue and inter-faith harmony. Ambassador Taha, in his message, stated that on this commemorative day, OIC commends the achievement by the United Nations, for the designation of 15 March as International Day to Combat Islamophobia. This Day would serve as a continuous reminder about the danger of violence based on religion or belief, and, at the same time, as an opportunity for the international community to reiterate its commitment to fighting xenophobia, and to promoting the values of tolerance, understanding, inter-faith harmony, and peaceful coexistence

among different religions. Dr. Samina Yasmeen, in her keynote speech, said that Islamophobia represents a false sense that Muslims are outside the system and their rights do not matter; this can have generational impacts, particularly on children. Peace and cooperation in the society can be achieved if Muslims themselves become agents of change against Islamophobia in the society. Furthermore, tools need to be given to both Muslims and non-Muslims by engaging educational institutions especially in Muslim minority countries to work together and come up with new counter-narratives to address this issue. Dr. Yasmeen underscored the importance of building “partnerships” to foster better mutual understanding and combat Islamophobic attitudes. Ambassador Khalil Hashmi remarked that the triggers of Islamophobia and targeting of the Muslim community predates the attacks that took place in Christchurch on 15 March 2019. Various UN and Human Rights reports have highlighted the prejudices and attacks the Muslim community faces daily across the world and it is reinforced by biased media representation. Pakistan has played a lead role in raising awareness about this issue and the need to counter it for several years at international platforms.

## Governor KP for addressing concerns of tribal districts

ISLAMABAD: Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Haji Ghulam Ali on Wednesday suggested Senate to constitute a committee for addressing concerns of people from tribal districts related to completion of the fresh census and delimitation of constituencies before holding the elections in the province. Speaking here in the special commemorative session summoned to celebrate the golden jubilee of the Senate of Pakistan, he said there is a need to remove the sense of deprivation among the people of tribal districts. Being a constitutional head of the province, he said it is my responsibility to put forth the demands of the people from tribal districts who are asking to fulfill the commitment made with them at the time of merger. — APP

## Health Secy for ensuring health care services

QAZI SHOAB KHAN

ATTOCK: Secretary Health Punjab Mr. Ali Jan Khan on Monday while showing displeasure over the sheer negligence and mismanagement of the health department Attock has advised the district health authority to ensure health care services to all outdoor and indoor patients extending self respect in their hospitals. The visiting Secretary Health also sought a detailed compliance report from the district health authority Attock within one month before initiating further proceedings against the delinquents involved in the misconduct of their official duties. He has passed on these directions during his surprise inspection of under Mother & Child Hospital Attock, Asfandyar Bokhari District Headquar-

ters Hospital Attock, Tehsil Headquarters Hospital Hassanabad and Hazro who was also accompanied with Chief Executive Officer, Health Authority Attock Dr. Asad Ismail, MS, DHQ Attock Dr. Jawad Elahi, District Health Officer Dr. Kashif Hussain, Deputy District Health Officer Attock Dr. Saeed Akhtar, MS, THQ Hazro Dr. Tufail Ahmed and other relevant officers of health department. On this occasion, Secretary Health Punjab Mr. Ali Jan Khan also directed to utilize the Rs.10.5 million of Health Council for up gradation and maintenance of different equipment installed in the DHQ Attock. He took a round of the on-going project of Mother and Child Hospital Attock being constructed with a cost of Rs.70 million which will be activated in

the next six months. He also reprimanded the MS concerned to make functional ETD machine of Rs.60 lacs installed in the hospital for the last many years. He assured that CT scan machine along with laboratory will be provided very soon besides instructed to appoint a well trained pharmacist and technical staff. The Secretary Health Punjab Mr. Ali Jan Khan also checked the provision of medicines and other health care facilities to the patients as well as unhygienic conditions of the wards. He said that posting and transfers of the health faculty are being made purely on merit without any political pressure. He said all available resources were being utilized by the provincial government to upgrade the health care system in the Punjab, he added.



PESHAWAR: Director General Khana-e-Farhang Iran Mehran Sikandaryan giving shield to Principal Government Degree College Peshawar Dr. Taj-ud-Din Tajwar during a conference on famous Iranian poet Hakeem Nizami. —APP

## Intelligentsia for export-driven model to fix balance of payments

ISLAMABAD: Economic experts on Wednesday stressed the need to restructure the economy of Pakistan on an export-driven model rather than incentivizing import in order to address the balance of payments challenges. The experts made the remarks during a seminar “Building Consensus on Pakistan’s Economic Future” organized by Islamabad Policy Research Institute (IPRI). Speaking on the occasion, former Governor State Bank of Pakistan Dr. Ishrat Hussain said during the entire 15 structural reforms Pakistan’s economy had seen through, it had been noted that there was complete consensus on reshaping the economy and driving it towards a growth-based economy. The salient features spelt out during the seminar were that Pakistan needed a high

growth rate; 1.5 million jobs are to be created to address the youth bulge in the market of whom 60 per cent are 15 years and above; need for investing in education and health and bringing around a robust social security net. The experts noted that fiscal deficit was the root cause of all imbalances in the economy and could only be tackled by reducing expenditures and by increasing taxation. A broad-based consensus was on revamping the civil services structures, which the panel believed was redundant, and out of utility. Pakistan’s other woe was faulty energy policy, and industrial production was its biggest casualty. Pakistan’s oil bill was over \$18 billion and that could be reduced to 50 per cent by opting for solar, but there was no recourse owing to ineffi-

ciency. Stress was laid on digitizing the economy and improving governance through a transparent mechanism of audit and finance. It was observed that Pakistan’s political elite does not have the capacity to carry out structural reforms, and one of the reasons was the big size of the government. CEO of the OI Watwer Company Pvt Ltd Dr Zubair pointed out the real estate sector could contribute up to Rs400bn in taxes whereas at the moment the share is less than Rs20bn. Broadening the tax base to the informal economy and acting against lobbies was the way out, he said. Acting President IPRI Brig (retd) Dr Raashid Wali Janjua said that Pakistan jumped from agrarian mode to the services sector, and missed the opportunity of erecting a sound manufacturing sector. — APP

<p><b>PUBLIC NOTICE</b></p> <p>Application for issuance of Letter of Administration / Succession Certificate by Ms. Khalida Yasmeen with regards to moveable &amp; immovable assets of deceased Mr. Ashiq Ali Malik citizen number 3430176337879 has been received. Following are declared as legal heirs:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Amna Ais (Daughter)2. Asad Ali (Son)3. Saud Ali Malik (Son)4. Khalida Yasmeen (Spouse)</li> </ol> <p>On the above application the objections of public at large are invited. Any aggrieved person may approach in person the undersigned for submission of objection (if any) within fourteen (14) days after publication of this notice.</p> <p>INCHARGE SFU, NADRA ISLAMABAD-DSFU</p>	<p><b>PUBLIC NOTICE</b></p> <p>Application for issuance of Letter of Administration / Succession Certificate by Ms. Rukhsana Noor with regards to moveable &amp; immovable assets of deceased Mr. Noor Ahmad citizen number 3740502365617 has been received. Following are declared as legal heirs:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Rukhsana Noor (Spouse)2. Muhammad Hassan Ahmad (Son)3. Ayesha Noor (Daughter)4. Muhammad Hanif (Son)5. Qaisia Noor (Daughter)6. Ramsha Ahmed (Daughter)</li> </ol> <p>On the above application the objections of public at large are invited. Any aggrieved person may approach in person the undersigned for submission of objection (if any) within fourteen (14) days after publication of this notice.</p> <p>INCHARGE SFU, NADRA ISLAMABAD-DSFU</p>	<p><b>PUBLIC NOTICE</b></p> <p>Application for issuance of Letter of Administration / Succession Certificate by Ms. Naila Nadeem with regards to moveable &amp; immovable assets of deceased Mr. Nadeem Hasan Asif citizen number 352005855059 has been received. Following are declared as legal heirs:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Naila Nadeem (Spouse)2. Rabia Hasan (Daughter)3. Shahid Hasnain Asif (Brother)4. Sardar Hassan Kamran Asif (Brother)</li> </ol> <p>On the above application the objections of public at large are invited. Any aggrieved person may approach in person the undersigned for submission of objection (if any) within fourteen (14) days after publication of this notice.</p> <p>INCHARGE SFU, NADRA ISLAMABAD-DSFU</p>	<p><b>PUBLIC NOTICE</b></p> <p>Application for issuance of Letter of Administration / Succession Certificate by Ms. Usma Eshwar with regards to moveable &amp; immovable assets of deceased Mr. Usma Eshwar citizen number 6110139296160 has been received. Following are declared as legal heirs:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Shahnaz Parveen (Sister)2. Surriya Jabeen (Sister)3. Sardar Begum (Sister)4. Sadeem (Sister)5. Hamid Mushatq (Brother)6. Safaora Rehmat (Sister)7. Saad (Sister)</li> </ol> <p>On the above application the objections of public at large are invited. Any aggrieved person may approach in person the undersigned for submission of objection (if any) within fourteen (14) days after publication of this notice.</p> <p>INCHARGE SFU, NADRA ISLAMABAD-DSFU</p>
<p><b>PUBLIC NOTICE</b></p> <p>Application for issuance of Letter of Administration / Succession Certificate by Mr. Awaiz Ahmad with regards to moveable &amp; immovable assets of deceased Mr. Muhammad Ahmad Abdulah citizen number 3740615611311 has been received. Following are declared as legal heirs:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Ibtisam Ahmed (Spouse)2. Shahida Koukab (Son)3. Samra Zuhair (Daughter)4. Muhammad Qasim (Son)5. Awaiz Ahmad (Son)</li> </ol> <p>On the above application the objections of public at large are invited. Any aggrieved person may approach in person the undersigned for submission of objection (if any) within fourteen (14) days after publication of this notice.</p> <p>INCHARGE SFU, NADRA ISLAMABAD-DSFU</p>	<p><b>PUBLIC NOTICE</b></p> <p>Application for issuance of Letter of Administration / Succession Certificate by Mr. Tauseer Ahmad with regards to moveable &amp; immovable assets of deceased Mr. Munir Ahmad citizen number 3013096111 has been received. Following are declared as legal heirs:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Shahnaz Parveen (Sister)2. Tauseer Ahmad (Son)3. Touseef Ahmad (Son)4. Nadiya (Daughter)5. Mehreen (Daughter)6. Rashida Rifat (Daughter)7. Sobia Iram (Daughter)</li> </ol> <p>On the above application the objections of public at large are invited. Any aggrieved person may approach in person the undersigned for submission of objection (if any) within fourteen (14) days after publication of this notice.</p> <p>INCHARGE SFU, NADRA ISLAMABAD-DSFU</p>	<p><b>PUBLIC NOTICE</b></p> <p>Application for issuance of Letter of Administration / Succession Certificate by Ms. Sultana Jabeen with regards to moveable &amp; immovable assets of deceased Ms. Almas citizen number 6110139296160 has been received. Following are declared as legal heirs:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Shahnaz Parveen (Sister)2. Surriya Jabeen (Sister)3. Sardar Begum (Sister)4. Sadeem (Sister)5. Hamid Mushatq (Brother)6. Safaora Rehmat (Sister)7. Saad (Sister)</li> </ol> <p>On the above application the objections of public at large are invited. Any aggrieved person may approach in person the undersigned for submission of objection (if any) within fourteen (14) days after publication of this notice.</p> <p>INCHARGE SFU, NADRA ISLAMABAD-DSFU</p>	<p><b>PUBLIC NOTICE</b></p> <p>Application for issuance of Letter of Administration / Succession Certificate by Mr. Talib Farooq with regards to moveable &amp; immovable assets of deceased Mr. Farooq Ahmed citizen number 3740439917643 has been received. Following are declared as legal heirs:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Ibra Bibi (Daughter)2. Talib Farooq (Daughter)3. Nafisa Bibi (Daughter)4. Rafia Bibi (Daughter)5. Umar Farooq (Son)6. Rana Farooq (Son)7. Sidra Farooq (Daughter)</li> </ol> <p>On the above application the objections of public at large are invited. Any aggrieved person may approach in person the undersigned for submission of objection (if any) within fourteen (14) days after publication of this notice.</p> <p>INCHARGE SFU, NADRA ISLAMABAD-DSFU</p>
<p><b>PUBLIC NOTICE</b></p> <p>Application for issuance of Letter of Administration / Succession Certificate by Mr. Nisar Ahmad with regards to moveable &amp; immovable assets of deceased Mr. Muhammad Aslam citizen number 3740283324025 has been received. Following are declared as legal heirs:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Razia Sultana (Daughter)2. Nisar Ahmad (Son)3. Bari Bibi (Spouse)4. Iftikhar Ahmad (Son)5. Muhammad Abrar (Son)6. Muhammad Mushatq Urf Sabir (Son)</li> </ol> <p>On the above application the objections of public at large are invited. Any aggrieved person may approach in person the undersigned for submission of objection (if any) within fourteen (14) days after publication of this notice.</p> <p>INCHARGE SFU, NADRA ISLAMABAD-DSFU</p>	<p><b>PUBLIC NOTICE</b></p> <p>Application for issuance of Letter of Administration / Succession Certificate by Ms. Uzma Naseem with regards to moveable &amp; immovable assets of deceased Ms. Sarwar Shaheen citizen number 3740592126454 has been received. Following are declared as legal heirs:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Uzma Naseem (Daughter)2. Abdul Rehman (Daughter)3. Aasma Naseem (Daughter)</li> </ol> <p>On the above application the objections of public at large are invited. Any aggrieved person may approach in person the undersigned for submission of objection (if any) within fourteen (14) days after publication of this notice.</p> <p>INCHARGE SFU, NADRA ISLAMABAD-DSFU</p>	<p><b>PUBLIC NOTICE</b></p> <p>Application for issuance of Letter of Administration / Succession Certificate by Ms. Saima Bibi with regards to moveable &amp; immovable assets of deceased Mr. Saeed Mash citizen number 6110119477731 has been received. Following are declared as legal heirs:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Saima Bibi (Daughter)2. Saima Bibi (Daughter)3. Ilyas Masih (Son)4. Arshad Masih (Son)5. Alice Bibi (Daughter)6. Ermanus (Daughter)7. Sajad Masih (Son)8. Akhtar Masih (Son)9. Seema Bibi (Daughter)</li> </ol> <p>On the above application the objections of public at large are invited. Any aggrieved person may approach in person the undersigned for submission of objection (if any) within fourteen (14) days after publication of this notice.</p> <p>INCHARGE SFU, NADRA ISLAMABAD-DSFU</p>	<p><b>PUBLIC NOTICE</b></p> <p>Application for issuance of Letter of Administration / Succession Certificate by Mr. Basit Abdul Majid with regards to moveable &amp; immovable assets of deceased Mr. Basit Abdul Majid citizen number 61101410861 has been received. Following are declared as legal heirs:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Basit Abdul Majid (Son)2. Anas Abdul Majid (Son)3. Rabela Majid (Spouse)4. Rabia Abdul Majid (Daughter)</li> </ol> <p>On the above application the objections of public at large are invited. Any aggrieved person may approach in person the undersigned for submission of objection (if any) within fourteen (14) days after publication of this notice.</p> <p>INCHARGE SFU, NADRA ISLAMABAD-DSFU</p>
<p><b>PUBLIC NOTICE</b></p> <p>Application for issuance of Letter of Administration / Succession Certificate by Mr. Nisar Ahmad with regards to moveable &amp; immovable assets of deceased Mr. Anwar Ul Haq Abbasi citizen number 4220173242831 has been received. Following are declared as legal heirs:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Uzair Abbasi (Son)2. Usama Abbasi (Son)3. Mahnoor Abbasi (Daughter)4. Shamsun Nisa Abbasi (Spouse)</li> </ol> <p>On the above application the objections of public at large are invited. Any aggrieved person may approach in person the undersigned for submission of objection (if any) within fourteen (14) days after publication of this notice.</p> <p>INCHARGE SFU, NADRA ISLAMABAD-DSFU</p>	<p><b>PUBLIC NOTICE</b></p> <p>Application for issuance of Letter of Administration / Succession Certificate by Mr. Malik Sajjad Hussain Awan with regards to moveable &amp; immovable assets of deceased Mr. Muhammad Awan citizen number 6110118955151 has been received. Following are declared as legal heirs:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Sara Ashraf (Daughter)2. Mehwish Ashraf (Daughter)3. Abdul Rehman Ashraf (Son)4. Anum Ashraf (Daughter)</li> </ol> <p>On the above application the objections of public at large are invited. Any aggrieved person may approach in person the undersigned for submission of objection (if any) within fourteen (14) days after publication of this notice.</p> <p>INCHARGE SFU, NADRA ISLAMABAD-DSFU</p>	<p><b>PUBLIC NOTICE</b></p> <p>Application for issuance of Letter of Administration / Succession Certificate by Ms. Zahida Parveen with regards to moveable &amp; immovable assets of deceased Mr. Fazal Elahi citizen number 3730123432951 has been received. Following are declared as legal heirs:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Zahida Parveen (Spouse)2. Laiba (Daughter)3. Muhammad Aqib (Son)4. Muhammad Saqib (Son)5. Muhammad Atif (Son)</li> </ol> <p>On the above application the objections of public at large are invited. Any aggrieved person may approach in person the undersigned for submission of objection (if any) within fourteen (14) days after publication of this notice.</p> <p>INCHARGE SFU, NADRA ISLAMABAD-DSFU</p>	<p><b>PUBLIC NOTICE</b></p> <p>Application for issuance of Letter of Administration / Succession Certificate by Mr. Khalid Mehmood with regards to moveable &amp; immovable assets of deceased Mr. Khalid Mehmood citizen number 6110118753481 has been received. Following are declared as legal heirs:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Touseeb Bibi (Daughter)2. Hamida Bibi (Spouse)3. Khalid Mehmood (Son)4. Nosheen Akhtar (Daughter)</li> </ol> <p>On the above application the objections of public at large are invited. Any aggrieved person may approach in person the undersigned for submission of objection (if any) within fourteen (14) days after publication of this notice.</p> <p>INCHARGE SFU, NADRA ISLAMABAD-DSFU</p>



National Days and Armed Forces Days

MARCH

March 01 / Bosnia National Day

March 03 / Bulgaria National Day

March 06 / Ghana Independence Day

March 12 / Mauritius National Day

March 17 / Ireland St. Patrick's Day

March 20 / Tunisia Independence Day

March 21 / Namibia National Day

March 25 / Greece National Day

March 26 / Bangladesh National Day

March 27 / Myanmar Armed Forces Day



Hotels & Restaurants

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



Airlines

Turkish Airlines.....8494949



Emergency

Rescue (Police).....15  
Bomb Disposal.....15  
Fire Services Rawalpindi/ Islamabad.....1122 & 16  
Emergency Ambulance.....1122 & Rescue Services.....4451122  
Motorway Police.....9266044  
Motorway Police.....9270601-20  
Women Police Stations Islamabad.....9222596  
Rawalpindi.....9270601-20



Enquiry

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



Hospitals

CMH.....5611111  
MH.....5611116  
Cantt Hospital.....9270907-11  
DHQ.....5556311-4  
RGH.....9290301-7  
Holy Family.....9290322-7  
PIMS.....9261170-79  
Polyclinic.....9218300-09  
Shifa International 4603666



Departments

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



Islamabad Metropolitan

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



Water Tank

Islamabad.....0321-5744480

# ICCI for focusing on Lithuania to promote exports with EU market

Engineer Muhammad Azhar ul Islam Zafar, Vice President ICCI emphasized the regular exchange of trade delegations to explore new areas of mutual cooperation between Pakistan and Lithuania

ISLAMABAD: Senior Vice President, the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) Faad Waheed on Wednesday said that Pakistan should focus on to promote trade and exports with EU market, particularly with Lithuania as it possessed very important economy among EU countries. He said that Lithuania's annual imports are over USD 30 billion and Pakistan has good opportunity to export many products to Lithuania including pharmaceutical products, electrical equipment, plastics and articles. He expressed these views while talking to Ricardas Degutis, Ambassador of Lithuania, based in Turkiye, during his visit to Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry. Ms. Vaida Stankeviciene Deputy Head of Mission and Masud Khan Honorary Consul General of Lithuania in Pakistan also accompanied him at the occasion. Faad Waheed said that Pakistan and Lithuania



have good potential to cooperate with each other in agriculture, science and technology, information technology, industrial sector and other fields to share expertise with each other and achieve mutually beneficial

outcomes. He said that many sectors of Pakistan's economy offer great prospects for foreign investment including oil & gas, mines & minerals, energy, automobile and urged the Lithuanian investors to explore invest-

ment and JVs in Pakistan. He urged Lithuania to open its embassy in Pakistan that would help boost trade and economic relations between the two countries. Speaking at the occasion, Ricardas Degutis, Ambassador

of Lithuania said that the bilateral trade between Lithuania and Pakistan is quite low which can be improved by promoting business linkages between the private sectors of both countries. He said that Lithuania is exporting many products including machinery, furniture, bedding & mattresses, mineral fuels & oils, electrical machinery, vehicles & miscellaneous chemical products and many of them can be exported to Pakistan. He said that Lithuania is now investing more in Life Sciences which offers a good opportunity for collaboration with Pakistan. He said that Lithuania is planning to organize a Life Sciences Conference in September this year and invited Pakistan professionals to attend it. Engineer Muhammad Azhar ul Islam Zafar, Vice President ICCI emphasized the regular exchange of trade delegations to explore new areas of mutual cooperation between Pakistan and Lithuania.—APP

## In-House Session held with Korea Institute of Defence

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The China Pakistan Study Centre (CPSC) at the Institute of Strategic Studies (ISSI) organised an In-House session with Korea Institute of Defence Analyses (KIDA) on "Pakistan-South Korea Relations." The discussion was chaired by Dr. Talat Shabbir, Director CPSC, ISSI. The participants included: Mr. Kim Ki-won, Research Fellow-KIDA, Mr. Noh In-Kyu, Associate Research Fellow-KIDA and Director Arsalan, Ministry of Defence, Mr. Malik Qasim Mustafa, Director

ACDC, Mr. Muhammad Ali Baig, Research Fellow, and Ms. Uroosa Khan, Research Associate/Editor Pivot. Dr. Talat Shabbir, Director CPSC in his welcome remarks, gave a brief overview of the working of the Institute and its organizational structure. He noted that the world today is in a state of transition and multiple centres of power are emerging and asserting themselves which is redefining the contours of the modern world. Major powers have a responsibility towards ensuring international peace and Pakistan is also trying to play its role in ensuring peace in South

Asia and beyond. He further said that ISSI would like to work on three core areas with Korea Institute of Defence Analyses (KIDA) and Republic of Korea (ROK). First, have a bilateral dialogue on Climate Change; second, initiate a discourse regarding Pakistan-RoK trade and investment co-operation; and, third have think-tank collaboration with Korea Institute of Defence Analyses (KIDA) to work together on areas of mutual interest. Mr. Kim Ki-won, Research Fellow-KIDA said that it is very important to understand Pak-RoK relations in all domains. He agreed that

think-tank collaboration is very important and also suggested to have cooperation in the domain of cyber security and emerging technologies. Mr. Malik Qasim Mustafa, Director ACDC while talking about nuclear safety, emerging technologies & cyber security noted that Pakistan today faces militarization within South Asia and in Indian Ocean Region (IOR) and India's aggressive militarization poses a threat to Pakistan. He emphasized that the International Community should recognize the security concerns in this region and respond to these reasonably and objectively.



## Khurram for provision of minimum load-shedding in summer

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Power Division Khurram Dastgir on Wednesday expressed his hope that the duration of power load-shedding would be minimum in the coming summer as compared to

last year owing to the addition of 2000 MW from Thar coal to the national grid system. Addressing at a press conference here, the minister said since April 2022, as many as 2000 MW of additional electricity has been injected the national

grid system. A new transmission line was also under construction to evacuate power from Thar coal power projects, he said. He expressed the hope that National Transmission and Despatch Company (NTDC) would complete the transmission line before the summer season. The minister said an agreement has been inked with Iran for the provision of 100 MW to Gwadar which was a good omen for the people of Gwadar. 29 kilometer long transmission line has already been laid to

import 100 MW electricity from Iran to Gwadar which would bring prosperity in the entire area, he added. He said work on the transmission line was kicked off in June 2022 and it was completed in a record time. The prime minister would shortly inaugurate the transmission line, he said. He said it would also ensure provision of round the clock electricity in Gwadar which would also attract foreign investors to invest in various projects. He said it would also help provide employment opportunities in Gwadar.—APP

## PWD renovates 2,104 houses, flats in Islamabad

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Works Department (PWD), Ministry of Housing and Works has upgraded and renovated as many as 2,104 houses and flats in various sectors of Islamabad, during the last five years. "The PWD has carried out EM works of as many as 1,119 flats and houses, while civil work is executed on around 985 of different categories, an official in the ministry told APP. The official said the ministry owned as many as 5,253 houses and flats of categories-I to categories-V located in various sectors in the federal capital. To a question, he said the Capital Development Authority (CDA) was responsible for the maintenance and renovation of Pak Secretariat, Islamabad, therefore, no fund had been spent on ministry's renovation. He said the Finance Division had already slashed the budget while making allocations. Hence, no funds had been surrendered to Finance Division, and all the funds allocated during 2021-22 in relevant heads were utilized by the general section, he added. The official said the PWD had started sending notices to the allottees of government accommodation in Sector I-9/4 about payment of electric meter bills for water motors installed at residential blocks. He said the Finance Division had allocated funds for payment of utilities in the relevant heads of accounts of the users while utility bills of the residential accommodation, including hostels, rest houses and judicial residences should be paid by the users.—APP

## Online Scrutiny System helps ensure transparency

ISLAMABAD: The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has implemented an Online Scrutiny System to aid the Returning Officers (ROs) in the rigorous scrutiny of nomination papers of candidates running for provincial assembly seats in Punjab. This system has proven to be a valuable legal tool, providing assistance and support to 297 ROs in their task of ensuring fair and transparent elections. By using this system, the ECP aims to ensure that the election process is free from any malpractices, and that only eligible and qualified candidates are allowed to contest in the elections. According to ECP official source, the special software links several government agencies such as the National Database and Registration Authority (NADRA), Federal Board of Revenue (FBR), National Accountability Bureau (NAB), State Bank of Pakistan (SBP), and Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) with the Election Commission Secretariat. The Cell, tasked to work round the clock, was also equipped with fax, telephone, and internet facilities. The necessary proforma and Standard Operating Procedure (SOPs) have been devised and provided to all the ROs to help them carry out their duties effectively. —APP

## Ashrafi for a combined strategy, plan of action against Islamophobia

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister's Special Representative for Interfaith Harmony and Middle East Hafiz Muhammad Tahir Mehmood Ashrafi on Wednesday said the world should devise a combined strategy and plan of action against Islamophobia. Addressing a gathering of religious scholars and leaders in connection with International Day to Combat Islamophobia, he urged the international community to take serious notice of burgeoning incidents of Islamophobia particularly in European countries, Canada, Great Britain, the United States, Australia and India to maintain peace and tranquility in the comity of nations on this planet. Ashrafi who is also the chairman of Pakistan Ulema Council said Islam was free of all kinds of terrorism and extremism and made it clear that the Islamic concept on the 'call of Jihad' was particularly meant to fight against the evil forces and help the helpless people in the society. Emphasizing on the certain parameters of Jihad, he mentioned that Islam did not permit killing of any innocent as "the murder of a human being is to be considered the murder of all humanity".He expressed his fear that there were certain elements who were trying to disrepute Islam and Muslims by distorting the actual meaning of Jihad. Ashrafi, the sensitizing need of the hour, urged the Muslim community to portray the soft image of Islam with its sound character as its loud and clear message was 'to do good and to be good'. "Keeping in view the significance of this day, let's pledge to eradicate the Islamophobia and disseminate the true teachings of Islam at every nook and cranny of the world," he maintained.— APP

## No one to be allowed to indulge in violence: CPO

RAWALPINDI: City Police Officer (CPO) Rawalpindi Syed Khalid Mehmood Hamdani here on Wednesday said that no one would be allowed to indulge in violence and block the roads during the protest. He said that no compromise would be made on the rule of law and the protection of lives and properties of the citizens was the out most responsibility of the police. According to a police spokesman, 28 accused who indulged in violent protest were rounded up by New Town, Sadqabad, Rattaamral, R.A.Bazar, Wah Cantt, Race Course, Waris Khan, Saddar Wah, Westridge, Bani and Gungmandi police. He informed that the accused netted under MPO-03 were being sent to jail. Talking about the protest by a political party, he informed that Waris Khan and City police had registered cases against those indulged in violent protests, blocked roads and resisted the police trying to maintain law and order.—APP

## PNCA opens solo show by Samina Afzal

ISLAMABAD, Mar 15 (AP-P):Pakistan National Council of the Arts (PNCA) here Wednesday opened a solo exhibition "Journey, discovery and fusion" at the National Art Gallery by Samina Afzal. The show is vibrant, flowing and emotional. While completing her Master of Fine Arts during the 1970s from the Punjab University, she remained a student of great artists like Anna Molka Ahmed and Zubaida Javaid. Samina paints using Dry Pastels, Acrylics and Water-colors as preferred media. The vivid expression and the passionate abandon is characteristically nuanced in all her paintings, fusing the artistic mood spread over half a century.

Samina's paintings have been collected by The Punjab Club, the Lahore Gymkhana, as well as by personal collectors. Samina continues her nostalgic rediscovery that celebrates women as the center-piece and colors of nature as the inspiration. She is well-known for her valuable contribution in promoting appreciation of art.

The exhibition was visited by a large number of audience including artists, students, VIPs, officials, etc. A large number of students visited the show and interviewed the artist about his techniques and art practice. PNCA is dedicated to promote Pakistani Art on Local and National scale. Our el-

evate and unique programs that present the traditional and contemporary art practices we reflect upon the excellence and cultural diversity of Pakistan as well as supports professional development of the artist. PNCA is committed to promote significant aspects of the country and encourages community participation in gallery activities, fostering curatorial practice to artist's own understanding of their work and encourages a healthy and sustainable local arts industry. PNCA has maintained a range of regionally focused visual arts exhibitions featuring both nationally and internationally recognized artists, said the organizers.—APP

**MARCH 2023**

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## Briefs

## FO clarifies media reports on Bilawal's retention of gifts

ISLAMABAD: The Foreign Office spokesperson on Wednesday said that Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari did not retain any gift and deposited all to the Toshakhana. Foreign Office spokesperson Mumtaz Zahra Baloch said this in a statement issued on misreporting in media regarding the retention of gifts by the foreign minister. "The Foreign Minister did not retain any gift and deposited all in Toshakhana of the Cabinet Division, in full compliance with the government policy," she said. She said, "However some of the gifts that were assessed by the Cabinet Division to be of value less than Rs 30,000 were returned to him in accordance with the laid down procedures."—APP

## NDMA dispatches 7th cargo plane to Turkiye

ISLAMABAD: The National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) as part of Pakistan's Assistance to quake-hit Turkiye through Special Air Cargo Dispatch on Wednesday dispatched the seventh cargo plane carrying 104 tonnes of 1,400 winterised tents. The NDMA on its official Twitter handle updated that on the directions of the prime minister the cargo plane with another 1,400 winterised fire resistant family tents were flown from Lahore. The NDMA has so far sent off 8,600 (Type II) tents through this special flight operation which started on March 11, whilst 2,595 have been dispatched via PIA and Pakistan Navy Ship making total 11,195 fire resistant tents.—APP

## Police arrest four for possessing illegal weapons

RAWALPINDI: Rawalpindi district police on the directives of the Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP), Operations, Rawalpindi conducted raids in different areas and netted four accused for possessing illegal weapons. According to a police spokesman, Sadiqabad, Naseerabad, Wah Cantt and Kahuta police rounded up Rashid, Husnain, Talha and Ali Haider and recovered four 30-bore pistols and ammunition from their possession. He said that strict action by the law on the directives of the SSP was being taken against the lawbreakers and the operations against aerial firing and illegal weapon holders would continue. He further informed that in an operation, Naseerabad police foiled a bid to smuggle wheat flour and arrested Hassan Khan with 220 flour bags.—APP

## ANF recovers 9000 intoxicated tablets; arrests two

RAWALPINDI: Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) while conducting four operations in different areas of the country managed to recover 9000 intoxicated tablets, eight charras-filled capsules, and 278 grams of Ice drug and arrested two accused, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman here on Wednesday. He informed that ANF in an operation conducted a raid near Zero Line, Torkham border area and recovered 9000 intoxicated tablets. In another operation at Peshawar International Airport, an Abu-Dhabi-bound passenger resident of Waziristan going on flight no PK-217 was rounded up with eight charras-filled capsules. The spokesman informed that in the third operation near Karachi Main Super Highway area, 250 grams of Ice drug was recovered from the possession of an accused resident of Karachi. 28 grams of Ice drug was also recovered from a parcel booked for Australia at a private courier office in Karachi.—APP

## Pak, China to focus on agricultural industry chain

As for future, we will begin with three aspects: standardized cultivation as first, especially facility agriculture due to systematic agricultural facilities is one of the keys of agricultural modernization

## DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan, China will focus on construction of the entire agricultural industry chain system, deep processing of agricultural products and related industrialization development.

This was stated by Chen Wei, Vice Mayor of Qingzhou City, in an interview with China Economic Net (CEN). "Through bilateral cooperation projects, the two sides can increase the added value and utilization rate of Pakistan's agricultural products, helping local farmers increase their income. Meanwhile, the transformation and output of our agricultural technology can generate profits, which is undoubtedly a win-win situation," said Chen Wei.

A Documents of Understanding (DoU) was signed lately between National University of Sciences and Technology, Pakistan (NUST), Weifang Engineering Vocational College, Qingzhou Municipal Government and Weifang National Comprehensive Pilot Agriculture Zone, through which four sides will carry out a series of high-level agricultural industrialization construction.



Transform our current agricultural infrastructure should be priority among priorities," Dr Hussain Ahmad Janjua, Principal, Atta-ur-Rahman School of Applied Biosciences (ASAB), NUST said. "Different initiatives such as development of high yielding varieties,

seed hybridization projects, plant molecular biology and automation of farms are on our list."

In answer to Dr Janjua, Chen Wei told the CEN that the four sides have agreed to work together in promoting technology cooperation under the framework of CPEC,

with the focus on construction of the entire agricultural industry chain system, deep processing of agricultural products and related industrialization development. "As for future, we will begin with three aspects: standardized cultivation as first, especially facility

agriculture due to systematic agricultural facilities is one of the keys of agricultural modernization."

The reporter learned that take the SAS self-controlled soilless cultivation technology as an example, using soilless cultivation facilities to cultivate fruits and vegetables in hilly areas can save land to the greatest extent.

At present, the first demonstration park has started construction in Qingzhou, which can increase the utilization rate of idle waste land in low hills by 5%-10%, release 40,000-80,000 mu (2667-5333 hectares) of land, and drive more than 10,000 people to achieve reemployment.

"Secondly, precise crop fertilization and harvest loss reduction are also our focus. Based on soil composition tests and fertilizer field experiments, we'll scientifically guide local farmers to improve fertilizer utilization efficiency and crop yield through formula fertilization.

In addition, advanced agricultural machinery equipment and technology can also help Pakistani farmers to reduce the loss of machine harvest," Pan added. "The last but not the least, improving the level of the entire industrial chain of agricultural products needs to be resolved urgently in Pakistan.

## Joint Statement on U.S. Pak energy security dialogue

The delegations look forward to the United States-hosted U.S.-Pakistan Energy Security Dialogue in 2024

## DNA

ISLAMABAD: The United States and Pakistan concluded the Dialogue on March 15, 2023, chaired by Pakistani Federal Minister for Energy Khurram Dastgir Khan and U.S. Department of State Assistant Secretary for Energy Resources Geoffrey Pyatt. Pakistan and the United States affirmed a mutual commitment to advance the transition to renewable energy and promote a more stable, secure, and prosperous energy future for both nations. Officials and experts engaged on energy issues

and areas for cooperation, including Pakistan's renewable energy transition, electric vehicles, and increasing the participation of women in the energy sector.

Both governments resolved to continue deepening bilateral partnership through the U.S.-Pakistan "Green Alliance" framework. The "Green Alliance" framework will help the United States and Pakistan jointly face climate, environmental, and economic needs, especially through partnership on renewable, sustainable, and clean energy. The United States and Pa-

kistan acknowledged their long history seeking to advance energy cooperation and sustainable economic growth. For over 50 years, the United States has invested in Pakistan's power generation, including in clean energy through hydropower, which continues to benefit millions of Pakistanis today. Through the Energy Security Dialogue, the two governments made new commitments to advance energy cooperation. The United States announced new programs in Pakistan, including a \$500,000 project to restore electricity infrastructure in flood-affected areas in Sindh, a

grant to further research and development of electric vehicles at the Lahore University for Management Science, and support for a second cohort of the U.S.-Pakistan Women's Council's Future of Women in Energy Scholars Program launched with Texas A&M University to support women's leadership in renewable energy. The two governments committed to work together in the coming year to help Pakistan reach its goal of 60 percent renewables by 2030. The delegations look forward to the United States-hosted U.S.-Pakistan Energy Security Dialogue in 2024.

## Sherry alleges Imran Khan for risking others' lives

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Climate Change, Senator Sherry Rehman on Wednesday alleged that Imran Khan was risking the lives of his party workers and policemen to avoid arrest. In a series of tweets, the federal minister said no political leader has ever put up such a drama to avoid arrest as the cowardly Khan has put up. Sherry Rehman said Imran Khan, who preaches the rule of law, and his baton-bearing force were flouting the law since yesterday. "Arresting in a dignified manner increases the stature of a politician. Our leaders have always believed in their workers and fans. Shaheed Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto, Shaheed Mohtarama Benazir Bhutto, Asif Ali Zardari and others always faced the law and court with a smile and gave arrests," she added. President Asif Ali Zardari welcomed those who came for his arrest with respect and treated them with tea, she said. "President Zardari had a smile on his face and a dignified manner. He got arrested in such a way that the eyes of the arresters were ashamed. Today, when Imran Khan is hiding from arrest, I remember the time when President Zardari was encouraging us while going to jail," Sherry Rehman said. Shaheed Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto, Mohtarama Benazir Bhutto, Faryal Talpar and others were arrested without question or resistance, she said, adding, "Hiding from the police and arrest, Imran Khan has made fun of himself. Which political leader shields workers and women to avoid his arrest?" Sherry Rehman added that Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf has held Zaman Park hostage since yesterday.—APP

## Petaro-Sehwan Road project in progress: NHA official

ISLAMABAD: An official of National Highway Authority (NHA) on Wednesday said that the construction of additional two lane carriage way N-55 was in progress from Petaro to Sehwan road. The 128-kilometer long road has four segments. Talking to APP, the official said, "The progress on under Package-1/A, having the 20 km stretch of road from Mehran University to Petaro has been completed and is open for traffic." Similarly, under Package-1/B, the 20 km stretch of road from Petaro to Khanote has also been completed and is also open for travelers, he added. He said that Package-1/C, which covers the 24 km stretch of road from Khanote to Manjhand, was recently re-tendered, and the contract has been awarded to M/s Aitmaad Builders & Developers. The contractor and the consultants have mobilized at the site in January 2023 and have established a camp at Khanote. He stated that earthwork has started in the first 10 km stretch of road, and the physical progress stands at four percent on Package-1/C. Under the Section 1, CAREC Tranche-1, he said, "The stretch of road from Manjhand to Sehwan, which spans 66.370 km, has been awarded to M/s Xinjiang Bexin Road & Bridge Group Co. Ltd." He said, "The progress on this patch stands at 86 percent, with construction activities like earthwork and bridge construction at Amri taken in hand for the balance eight kilometers." He underlined, "The completion date for CAREC Tranche-1 stretch has been set for September 2023, which is subjected to availability of funds."—APP



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Communications Moulana Assad Mehmood calls on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif.—DNA

## Golden Jubilee celebration of Constitution on 23rd

The Chair of the Committee Senator Mian Raza Rabbani and other Members lauded the comprehensive strategy and also gave their input, where required, to make it more inclusive and comprehensive

ISLAMABAD: The Parliamentary Advisory Committee to oversee the preparations for the Golden Jubilee celebrations of the Constitution 1973 in its fourth meeting approved the media strategy for the celebrations and decided to start the celebrations from 23 March. The committee also approved designs for the commemorative stamps and coins. Moreover, the meeting reviewed the progress regarding the construction of the Constitutional Monument, and restoration of its old National Assembly Hall in the State Bank building in Islamabad. Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Marriyum Aurangzeb while sharing details of the media strategy for the coverage of the commemoration said that all departments of the ministry including PTV, Radio Pakistan, DEMP, PID, EP Wing, PEMRA had planned certain activities related to the celebra-

tions. Some of which were airing of special programs, documentaries, podcasts, exhibitions, quiz contests, mushairas, publications of articles, news supplements etc, she added. It was shared that all activities would be given ample coverage on print, electronic and digital media both in private and public spheres with special emphasis on regional channels. The Chair of the Committee Senator Mian Raza Rabbani and other Members lauded the comprehensive strategy and also gave their input, where required, to make it more inclusive and comprehensive. Federal Minister for Finance Ishaq Dar apprised the Committee that matters related to the restoration of the old Assembly Hall at the SBP building had been addressed, and hopefully would be completed in a few months. The Committee proposed to

declare the said Hall a national heritage. Moreover, he also shared sample designs for the commemorative coin, one of which was approved by the Committee. The Committee lauded the speedy response of the Minister concerning dedicated tasks. Additionally, the meeting also took cognizance of the; reports of the Sub-Committees on Education and Declarations, the construction of a constitutional monument, and finances related to the event among others. Former Senator Dr Jehanzeb Jamaldini said that the Senate should review its role and determine whether it has succeeded in addressing the issue of federating units. He said that the powers of every institution are determined in the constitution of the country, but unfortunately, some of them have exceeded their powers. He said that democratic institu-

tions have been weakened in the past and urged the institutions not to intervene in parliamentary affairs in future. The supremacy of parliament is the only way to resolve the issues being faced by the country, he maintained. Senator Atta ur Rehman said that the constitution of Pakistan should be respected and the state should be built as per the teachings of Islam. Senator Behramand Tangi welcomed all the former senators and others for attending the session. He demanded more financial powers for the Senate, especially in the budget and hoped that the Chairman of the Senate would play his role. Senator Danesh Kumar said that the Senate represents all federating units of the country. He said that seats were reserved for minorities in Parliament after the passage of the 18th amendment and demanded more seats for minorities to address the issue of community. Senator Danesh Kumar appealed

to all political leaders to shun their differences for Pakistan and contribute together to resolve the issue. Senator Farooq H. Naek said that the Senate has played a central role in the advancement of Pakistan during the last 50 years and it has been a symbol of democracy and solidarity. He said that the Senate is a platform to protect the rights of the people by maintaining balance in Parliament. "We must acknowledge challenges lying ahead and we need to work together beyond party politics," he added. Senator Hidayatullah said that Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto gave the constitution to the country and he would be remembered for this great achievement. He said that the economic situation of the country is worse and political wisdom should be demonstrated to overcome these crises. Senator Faiz Muhammad highlighted the issue of missing persons and asked the Chairman of the Senate to play his role in addressing these issues.—APP

## Khan using party workers as shield

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Muslim League - Nawaz (PML-N) Member of the National Assembly (MNA) Maiza Hameed on Wednesday lashed out at Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan for allegedly using his party workers as a "shield" to avoid arrest.

"Imran Khan needs to appear before the court like other political leaders and get his case proceeded as per law. He should not worry if he is not involved in any crime," she said while talking to a private news channel.

"The PTI supporters are creating a serious law and order situation by not following court orders and harassing the law enforcers and damaging state machinery," the MNA said.

"Imran Khan is known for leveling baseless allegations against political opponents and the PML-N's top leadership was victimized during his four-year tenure," she added.

"The government will make an example out of anyone who tries to take the law into their own hands," she said in response to a question.—APP

## ECC allows supply of indigenous gas to fertilizer plants

ISLAMABAD: The Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) of the cabinet here on Wednesday allowed supply of indigenous gas to fertilizer plants to meet urea requirement in the country for Kharif 2023.

The meeting of the cabinet committee was chaired by Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar, finance ministry tweeted.

"The ECC meeting, chaired by Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar, allowed supply of indigenous gas to fertilizer plants to meet urea fertilizer requirement in the country for Kharif 2023."—APP

## LSMI production goes up by 1.48%

ISLAMABAD: The output of the Large Scale Manufacturing Industrial (LSMI) sector witnessed an increase of 1.48 per cent during January, the first month of the calendar year 2023, as compared to December 2022, the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) reported. However, according to the provisional quantum indices of LSMI for January 2023 released by the PBS, on a year-on-year (YoY) basis, the big industry production went down 7.90 per cent in January 2023 when compared with January 2022. Overall the LSMI showed a decline of 4.40 per cent during July-January 2022-23 when compared with the same period of last year. The main contributors towards overall negative growth of 4.40 per cent were food (0.32%), tobacco (0.55%), textile (2.71%) garments (3.81%), petroleum products (0.69%), cement (0.86), pharmaceuticals (1.22%), and automobiles (1.55%).—APP

## Commissioner urges parents to vaccinate children against polio

RAWALPINDI: Commissioner Rawalpindi Laiqat Ali Chhatta on Wednesday urged parents to vaccinate their children against the deadly polio virus. He said this while visiting the area of Westridge to review the performance of anti-polio field teams. The commissioner himself administered the polio drops to children under five years of age and directed the officials concerned to remain present in the field and ensure the monitoring of polio workers so that no child could miss immunization. On the occasion, Laiqat informed that around 379,246 children had been administered the polio vaccine so far. He said that around 3,273 polio teams, including 3,272 mobile teams, 289 fixed points, 214 union council medical officers, and 765 area incharges, were participating in the drive to complete the task of vaccinating over 947,000 children in the district.—APP



## Iran and Saudi Arabia: a cautious start

Perhaps the first major diplomatic example of a post-America Middle East,” wrote one analyst. He was describing Iran and Saudi Arabia’s agreement last week to resume diplomatic relations – a surprise to most observers, and something of a coup for China, which brokered it. The volatile rivalry between the two nations has been one of the great geopolitical faultlines since the Iranian revolution of 1979. Security concerns, claims to regional leadership, ethno-sectarian rivalries and other factors have all played their part. The repercussions have been profound. The tensions contributed to Iran’s all-out support for the Syrian regime, fuelled the war in Yemen, where more than 150,000 have died, and accelerated the disintegration of the state in Lebanon. Ties were cut in 2016 when Iranian protesters stormed Saudi diplomatic missions over Riyadh’s execution of a revered Shia cleric. But while last week’s announcement was welcome, it is only a beginning. Assuming the deal goes ahead – there are two months for details to be ironed out – the containment of Saudi-Iranian tensions will not necessarily lead to a deeper rapprochement, let alone end Lebanon’s woes or the complex and multifaceted conflict in Yemen. Talks between Riyadh and Tehran had been taking place since at least 2021. In 2019, an attack on a major oil facility that briefly knocked out half the kingdom’s output intensified security fears. The huge cost and reputational damage of the Saudi intervention in Yemen (in support of the internationally recognised government) gave an initially gung-ho Riyadh pause too. Driving through Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman’s economic “Vision 2030” will require vast foreign investment. For Iran, the benefits are obvious: a first step out of political and economic isolation. It also blames Saudi-funded media for encouraging anti-government protests and wants broadcasts reined in. Meanwhile, China has positioned itself as an alternative to a withering US-led order and as a responsible peacemaker, offering a riposte to criticism for its support for Russia. Until now, China has focused primarily on trade and economic interests in the Middle East. Now those interests are making it think more broadly about regional stability. It reportedly plans to host a major summit for Iran and Gulf monarchies this year. But as it becomes more enmeshed, it may find it harder to maintain its neutral status. Its involvement could also pave the way for a new era of diplomacy in which democracy and human rights don’t even get lip service.

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## EU’s dilemma on being hijacked by US

Since it is the United States that has defined China as a “threat” to Europe, the European Union now finds itself in a dilemma, as some of its members are more receptive of that view than others. After the US launched its campaign to suppress the development of China’s high-tech industry in 2018, with its actions targeting Huawei, it coerced its European allies to tag along, albeit many have done so with no great enthusiasm. Now with Washington having broadened and intensified its efforts to impede China’s development, it is no longer just Europe’s 5G networks that Washington is intent on hijacking for its cause. It wants to dictate the EU’s economic and trade policies. That has the EU uncomfortably caught on the proverbial horns as its two key institutions have different views on the merits of the US allegation. As a Politico article published on Monday said, the EU’s top ranks are split over China. Ursula von der Leyen, head of the EU’s executive commission, has a cozy relationship with the Joe Biden administration and is toeing Washington’s hard line on China, while Charles Michel, chief of the bloc’s council, wants to maintain cooperative relations with China. The upshot of that, as the Politico piece observes, is “a potential clash is looming” over the EU’s China policy, with the council arguing that the commission should consult national governments more before rushing to do Washington’s bidding. The tensions between the council and the commission over the EU’s China policy have come to a head over the timing of the next EU-China Summit, with the commission insisting that the next summit with China, which had been penciled in for June, cannot take place before the next summit with the US. However, Washington has indicated that Biden won’t attend a summit in Europe before June – which would push the EU-China summit into the second half of the year. There is a lot at stake for the EU. The split between “the EU’s dueling powerhouses” is not only about the bloc’s immediate economic interests, but also about its autonomy. The outcome of the tussle between the council and the commission will decide whether its economic and foreign policy is decided in Brussels or in Washington. Although it seems to be a choice between being “pro-US” and “pro-China”, it is in reality a choice between the EU having freedom of action and it being a geopolitical tool of the US. In making that choice, the European countries should bear in mind that it is the US that is hurting European interests more than any other party. Washington’s total disregard for European interests is evident in its Inflation Reduction Act. They should also reflect on the fact that it is the long-gestating machinations of Washington that have resulted in the largest and most damaging conflict in Europe since World War II. It is not their dependency on China that European countries should worry about, but their dependency on the US.

# Recklessness vs Nuclear Restraint

**Tanzeela Khalil**

If Pakistan were to give up its considered approach of restraint and responsibility and adopt an approach as aggressive as that of India, Pakistan retains several options to reciprocate the Indian nuclear-rattling. Without necessarily engaging in arms race and quantitatively improving its nuclear forces, Pakistan can counter Indian threats of preemptive counterforce targeting by moving away from its known policy of keeping the nuclear warheads and delivery systems in a de-mated form. Such a measure is likely to result in the repetition of concerns over these weapons

Pakistan and India have a longstanding and complex relationship marked by political, military and territorial disputes. India’s growing alliances and strategic cooperation with several countries, particularly the United States, has created imbalance of power in the South Asian region leading to increased tensions and instability vis-à-vis its nuclear neighbour Pakistan. America has been providing military arsenal to India, including advanced weapon systems and training, which increases India’s military capability as well as the risk of military conflict with Pakistan. India with a larger military has remained engaged in several military conflicts with Pakistan in the past, posing a constant threat of aggression. The most recent Indian nuclear brinkmanship, during 2019 Pulwama-Balakot crisis, reflected a resolve at Indian side not to hesitate from escalating the conflict to a nuclear level. The Western accommodation of India’s irrational actions has given impetus to its aggressive doctrines. Pakistan, on the other hand, exercised restraint and prevented the crisis from escalating. Pakistan’s restraint, however, should not be mistaken for its inability to respond to any military aggression from India, rather it should be seen and acknowledged as responsible nuclear behavior. Pakistan’s minimal nuclear capability provides a credible deterrent against Indian military aggression. Given India’s ever-increasing conventional and nuclear capability – thanks to unbridled simultaneous access to Western and Russian suppliers – Pakistan must continue to maintain the credibility of its nuclear arsenal by improving the reliability of its weapons, and enhancing the

survivability of its nuclear forces. Pakistan continues to maintain a robust, secure, and flexible nuclear command and control system to ensure that its nuclear weapons always remain under centralized control unlike India where nuclear capable missile systems are being “accidentally” fired. India does not seem to be at peace with a stable nuclear deterrence with Pakistan and has always tried to create and exploit space for conventional war. India, in its desire to dominate the region, remains dismissive of the deterrent equation that has emerged over the past several decades. Indian unwillingness to be governed under a deterrent relationship is manifested in its adoption of provocative conventional doctrines like the Cold Start (CSD) and responding to Pakistan’s corrective countermeasures (Nasr) with counter-threats of revising its N-doctrine and adopting preemptive counterforce options. If Pakistan were to give up its considered approach of restraint and responsibility and adopt an approach as aggressive as that of India, Pakistan retains several options to reciprocate the Indian nuclear-rattling. Without necessarily engaging in arms race and quantitatively improving its nuclear forces, Pakistan can counter Indian threats of preemptive counterforce targeting by moving away from its known policy of keeping the nuclear warheads and delivery systems in a de-mated form. Such a measure is likely to result in the repetition of concerns over these weapons falling into the wrong hands. However, Pakistan’s professional operationalization of its nuclear deterrence without any known safety or security lapses should be reassuring.

Following the departure from the policy of keeping nuclear warheads de-mated from delivery systems, Pakistan can also potentially cannisterize its N-capable missiles. Since similar Indian actions have not raised concerns of pre-delegation, raising of similar concerns on reciprocal Pakistani actions would only consolidate the Pakistani perceptions of a Western lack of appreciation of Pakistan’s threat perception. As the readiness of Pakistan nuclear forces increases, adopting higher alert levels could also become a possibility, if and when the Indian threat of preemptive misadventure becomes imminent. While alert levels that dictate launch on warning protocols may not be pragmatic in the peculiar South Asian geography, launch under attack and Launch on Launch will start to appear the only viable available option for Pakistan to maintain credibility of its nuclear deterrent. All the measures make perfect sense under the Cold War nuclear deterrence playbook. But their replication in the South Asian environment – however inevitable it becomes – could be much more dangerous than similar actions that maintained the uneasy peace during the Cold War. Imagine the March 2022 Indian “accidental firing” of Brahmos missile occurring in an environment where Pakistan maintained a Launch on Launch posture – all hell could have broken loose. Pakistan’s restrained nuclear behavior merits Indian reciprocity rather than its continued nuclear bluster and never-ending dismissal of Pakistan’s nuclear capability. Pakistan has been unilaterally shouldering the responsibility of maintaining regional peace, which should not be taken for granted.

## Debates about Islamic reform loom larger as Ramadan approaches

**James M. Dorsey**

A recent Amnesty International analysis of the law suggests that it remains rooted in orthodox Islamic jurisprudence. The law codifies problematic practices inherent in the kingdom’s male guardianship system. It entrenches a system of gender-based discrimination in most aspects of family life, including marriage, divorce, child custody, and inheritance, even though it also sets a minimum age for marriage. Under the law, women are required to obtain the consent of their male legal guardian to get married. The law further obliges a wife to “obey” her husband. It conditions her right to financial support, such as food and accommodation, on her “submit(ting) herself” to her husband

Reform of Islamic jurisprudence was the elephant in the room when two prominent Saudi clerics recently clashed publicly on whether apostasy was punishable with death under Islamic law. The debate’s timing on a Saudi state-controlled, artsy entertainment channel, Rotana Khaliyya, suggested as much. The debate aired days before the kingdom’s Ministry of Islamic Affairs severely restricted celebrating Ramadan. Islam’s holy month of fasting begins on March 22. What lends debates like the discussion about apostasy greater significance is that they feed into a competition between Saudi Arabia and various other players for religious soft power in the Muslim world. The rivalry pits Indonesian reformists against state-aligned Saudi and Emirati propagators of a socially liberal but autocratic interpretation of Islam. Saudi and Emirati-backed Islamic scholars reject jurisprudential reform and reserve the right of legal interpretation for the ruler and his clerical surrogates. Last year, Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed Bin Salman went as far as nominating himself as the primary interpreter of Islamic law. Mr. Bin Salman asserted in an interview with The Atlantic that “in Islamic law, the head of the Islamic establishment is wali al-amr, the ruler.” Mr. Bin Salman meant that literally. The crown prince, in contrast to many Muslim rulers, seldom, if at all, solicits the opinion of Muslim scholars to legitimise his policies. “Bin Salman puts religion at the service of his politics while protesting against the use of religion by his opponents,” said scholar and author of a book on the Muslim World League Louis Blin. The League is Mr. Bin Salman’s principal vehicle for propagating his autocratic version of a moderate form of Islam. To be sure, Mr. Bin Salman and United Arab Emirates President Mohammed bin Zayed have enacted far-reaching social reforms that have enhanced women’s social rights and professional opportunities. Also, the two men have eased restrictions on gender interaction and embraced Western-style entertainment. However, they anchored these changes in civil law and ignored the need to synchronise religious jurisprudence. What drives the reformist zeal of Messrs. Bin Salman and Bin Zayed is not change because it is the right thing to do. The two men’s primary concern is securing the survival of their autocratic regimes. To do so, they need to cater to youth aspirations, diversify their oil export-dependent economies, ease social restrictions to compete for foreign talent, and project an image of tolerance. Their reforms serve that purpose but go no further. Exhibit A is Saudi Arabia’s first-ever personal status law. A recent Amnesty International analysis of the law suggests that it remains rooted in orthodox Islamic jurisprudence. The law codifies problematic practices inherent in the kingdom’s male guardianship system. It entrenches a system of gender-based discrimination in most aspects of family life, including marriage, divorce, child custody, and inheritance, even though it also sets a minimum age for marriage. Under the law, women are required to obtain the consent

of their male legal guardian to get married. The law further obliges a wife to “obey” her husband. It conditions her right to financial support, such as food and accommodation, on her “submit(ting) herself” to her husband. Moreover, men can initiate divorce without conditions, while women face legal, financial, and practical barriers. In divorce, a mother does not have equal rights to her children; the father is granted guardianship as a matter of principle. Finally, the law institutionalises discrimination between men and women in inheritance, giving men a much larger share of assets than their female counterparts. Similarly, recently announced restrictions on the public celebration of Ramadan were designed to shift the core of Saudi identity from religion to nationalism. They also intended to strengthen government surveillance and control. With the restrictions, Mr. Bin Salman apparently wanted to be seen as walking in the footsteps of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the 20th-century visionary who carved secular Turkey out of the ruins of the Ottoman Empire and abolished the caliphate. The new rules curtail the time allotted to evening prayers, forbid worshippers to bring their children to the mosque, ban the filming and broadcasting of prayers, curb donations for organising the breaking of the fast by worshippers, and oblige mosque officials to supervise the fast-breaking in courtyards rather than inside the mosque. The measures resemble restrictions the government tried to impose last year. However, online uproar forced the government to retract a ban on broadcasting uninterrupted live Ramadan footage from the two mosques viewed by Muslims worldwide. Looking for a silver lining in the restrictions, Indian Muslim thinker and Secretary-General of the Islamic Forum for the Promotion of Moderate Thought A. Faizur Rahman, said in a telephone interview that Mr. Bin Salman likely sees the reported measures as a way to counter the ritualisation of Islam. That also is the message in the crown prince’s plan to build a futuristic downtown Riyadh with the Mukaab, a 400-metre-high square virtual reality cube, at its centre. Critics have denounced the plan because the envisioned cube resembles the Kaaba, a black cuboid-shaped stone structure at the center of Mecca’s grand mosque. Mr. Rahman described the Ramadan restrictions as “a bad imitation of Atatürk. It’s an expression of power. It’s saying I am the ruler.” Some analysts believe that Mr. Bin Salman, like Mr. Atatürk in the past, wants to remove religion from the public square and relegate it to the private sphere. In contrast to the waning years of empire and Turkey’s early republican period, Mr. Bin Salman has opted for achieving his goal by decree with no semblance of public debate. To be sure, Mr. Atatürk’s reforms, including introducing French-style militant secularism, were unpopular and enacted by a one-party state. Nevertheless, they followed a fierce battle of ideas in rival publications in the last 15 years of the empire about the role and the nature of Islam that was fresh in people’s minds. Clerics, nationalists, and intellectuals voiced opinions ranging from the advocacy of European positivism and materialism, secular

nationalism, calls for religious reform, and even rebukes of Islam and the Qur’an to fierce opposition to any reformation of religious discourse and rejection of the notion of a nation as opposed to a pan-Islamic state. Citing Sura 16 Verse 125 of the Qur’an, Mr. Rahman, the Indian Muslim intellectual, argued that Mr. Bin Salman’s approach, that brooks no dissent and in which debate is often choreographed, was “not the way to reform society. Reform has to be voluntary through the art of persuasion. It’s neither Islamic nor good to impose your will.” Where Mr. Bin Salman opts for a top down-dictate that focuses on form rather than content, his foremost ideological rival focuses on a bottom-up approach that embraces jurisprudential reform in pursuit of a moderate Islam that is pluralistic, inclusive, and unambiguously endorses the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Last month, Indonesia’s Nahdlatul Ulama, the world’s largest and most moderate civil society movement, called in a document composed in the tradition of Islamic jurisprudence to abolish the caliphate and replace it with the notion of the nation-state. The document was issued after consultations in the second half of 2022 in some 230 religious seminars across the Indonesian archipelago in which the proposition of jurisprudential reform was debated. In 2019, 20,000 Nahdlatul Ulama religious scholars issued a fatwa or religious opinion that erased the concept of the kafir or infidel in Islamic jurisprudence and replaced it with the notion of a citizen. While apostasy, like blasphemy, is on the bucket list of Nahdlatul Ulama’s jurisprudential reforms, it was unusual for Saudi clerics to clash on television over interpretations of Islamic law. The debate interrupted Saudi Islamic scholar Abd Al-Rahman Abd Al-Karim, a proponent of the classical Islamic legal proposition of the death penalty for apostasy, against Ahmad al Ghamdi, the former head of the Mecca chapter of the Authority for Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice. In 2016, Mr. Bin Salman clipped the wings of the Authority, a once-feared religious police force, by banning it from “pursuing, questioning, asking for identification, arresting and detaining anyone suspected of a crime.” Since leaving the Authority, Mr. Al-Ghamdi has emerged as a religious liberal advocating the very things on which his police unit once cracked down. These include mixing genders, listening to music, and the forced closure of shops and businesses during prayer time. In the debate with Mr. Al-Karim, Mr. Al-Ghamdi appeared to adopt Mr. Rahman and Nahdlatul Ulama’s approach of bottom-up reform based on persuasion. Countering Mr. Al-Karim, Mr. Al-Ghamdi asserted, “People who do not adhere to the Islamic faith are free to do so. They must not be coerced. The same is true for people who converted to Islam and then became apostates. There are unambiguous verses in the Quran regarding their freedom to do so. Allah said (in the Quran), ‘there is no coercion in religion.’”



## Briefs

LHC halts  
Zaman Park  
operation

FROM PAGE 01  
LHC's Justice Tariq Saleem Sheikh, while hearing a petition filed by PTI leader Fawad Chaudhry seeking to stop the "atrocities" outside Zaman Park, passed these orders. Earlier, the court had instructed Punjab Inspector General Usman Anwar, the provincial chief secretary and Islamabad police (operations) head to appear in court by 3pm. As the LHC took up Chaudhry's petition, Imran's lawyer stated that what had happened outside Zaman Park today was a violation of fundamental rights. "Imran's residence has become a war zone. The police have been stationed there for the past 21 hours," he said. For his part, Punjab Advocate General Shaun Gill said that the matter was pending before the Islamabad High Court (IHC) and Fawad's plea could not be heard in the LHC. Here, Justice Sheikh remarked: "They [the PTI] have filed a plea in the IHC against the arrest warrants ... until a decision comes, we can halt the police operation."

IHC  
maintains  
Khan's...

FROM PAGE 01  
the arrest warrants of Imran Khan and ordered him to appear before the trial court on March 13, but he could not attend the proceedings on that day. To the court's query, the lawyer said his client was present at his residence on the said date, while they had told the sessions court that the complaint against him was not maintainable. Legal procedure was not followed as the District Election Commissioner was not authorized to file a complaint against his client. Only the Election Commissioner of Pakistan (ECP) could lodge a such complaint as per law. Khwaja Harris also produced the undertaking of Imran Khan, which was received through WhatsApp. - APP

Pakistan  
values  
relations...

FROM PAGE 01  
He also thanked Malaysia for its consistent support to Pakistan at international fora on various issues. During his meeting with the Ambassador of Portugal, the President said that Pakistan and Portugal had great scope of cooperation in the fields of trade, agriculture and investment. He emphasised the need for greater interactions at the highest level to boost bilateral cooperation. He said that Pakistan was a large market with a population of over 220 million, and would like to invite Portuguese companies to invest in Pakistan in diverse fields. He said that business delegations should be facilitated to explore areas of cooperation. He expressed satisfaction over the formation of Parliamentary Friendship Groups between the two countries that would further boost bilateral ties.

GB police  
chief  
transferred

FROM PAGE 01  
according to a notification from the division. A separate notification said that Dar Ali Khan Khattak was now transferred and posted as the GB IGP with immediate effect. Earlier in the day, Information Minister Marriyum Aurangzeb claimed that a "Gilgit-Baltistan force" was being used to attack Punjab police "who are trying to implement court orders to detain Imran Khan". Her news conference came as clashes between PTI workers and law enforcers took place outside Imran's Zaman Park residence as police were attempting to detain the PTI chief in pursuance of the arrest warrants issued by a local court in Islamabad on Monday.

Acting BHC meets Pakistani  
CWG-2022 medal winners

Arshad Nadeem, a Pakistani javelin thrower who won a Gold medal at 2022 Birmingham Commonwealth games. He created a new national and Commonwealth Games record with a throw of 90.18m and became the first-ever athlete from South Asia to breach the 90m mark

AFZAL JAVED

ISLAMABAD: The Acting British High Commissioner (BHC) Andrew Dalglish on Wednesday met with Pakistan's medal winners in the 2022 Commonwealth Games to celebrate the UK and Pakistan's shared relationship through the Commonwealth. This coincides with a week of Commonwealth events which started on Monday 13 March with 'Commonwealth Day', with King Charles III leading a multi-faith service at Westminster Abbey in London, said a news release issued by the Embassy. During his meeting with the Commonwealth Games medal winners, Andrew Dalglish discussed with them their experiences at the 2022 Birmingham Commonwealth Games, what the Commonwealth means to them, Commonwealth youth engagement and their future plans for



the 2026 Commonwealth Games in Victoria, Australia. The Acting British High Commissioner said, "Celebrating our shared Commonwealth connections with medal winners from the 2022 Birmingham Common-

wealth Games has been an absolute pleasure. The Commonwealth is this year focused on youth engagement. It not only offers young people avenues of development through sport, it is also investing in harnessing

their strengths to deepen trade and investment partnerships, respond to the global threat of climate change and champion democratic values. The Commonwealth's offer to young Pakistanis is a strong one."

Arshad Nadeem, a Pakistani javelin thrower who won a Gold medal at the 2022 Birmingham Commonwealth games. He created a new national and Commonwealth Games record with a throw of 90.18m and became the first-ever athlete from South Asia to breach the 90m mark. Muhammad Inam Butt, a professional wrestler from Gujranwala. Inam won a silver medal for Pakistan in the 2022 Commonwealth Games. He had also won gold medals at the 2010 and 2018 Commonwealth Games. Zaman Anwar, a Pakistani professional wrestler. He won a silver medal for Pakistan in 2022 Commonwealth Games and gold at the 2016 South Asian Games. He also participated at the 2014 Commonwealth Games. Muhammad Sharif Tahir, a 20 years old Pakistani wrestler. He competed at the 2022 Commonwealth Games, winning a silver medal in the men's freestyle 74 kg event.

ITC Open Tennis kicks  
off from 18th March

OUR CORRESPONDENT

ISLAMABAD: ITC Open Tennis Tournament will be starting from March 18th at Islamabad Tennis Complex (ITC) to provide the opportunities to youngsters from twin cities to show their skills in the two days event. According to the tournament chief organizer and former Davis Cup coach Fazal Subhan said that Khadija Laghari had been appointed as the chairperson organizing committee of the tournament while Kamran Khalil would act as tournament director with the collaboration of Islamabad Tennis Complex and Impetus. He said that eight categories of competitions will be held in the two days tournament, including men's singles, men's doubles, women's singles, boys under-18, ladies under-18, boys under-14, boys and girls under-12 (mixed) and boys and girls under-10 (mixed) categories. The finals of the tournament will be held on March 19, whereas prizes and certificates will be distributed among the winning players after the final competitions as all arrangements have been finalized for the successful organization of the event.

Sethi asks CM to ensure  
fans' safety during final

LAHORE: Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) management committee chairman Najam Sethi appealed to CM Punjab Mohsin Naqvi before Pakistan Super League (PSL) season 8 final, scheduled on March 19 at Gaddafi Stadium, Lahore. Taking to Twitter after Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) chairman Imran Khan announced a political public gathering at Minar-e-Pakistan in Lahore on PSL 8 final day, Sethi appealed to CM Punjab for making sure the safety of fans coming to watch the grand finale. "Mohsin Naqvi, PSL 8 multi-million dollar final on 19 March will be played before 25k people at Gaddafi Stadium & 100m across the globe. This is Pakistan's finest showcase. Punjab government must ensure failsafe security & smooth traffic flow to facilitate people's access to the stadium," he wrote. - DNA

Swiatek beat Raducanu  
and into quarter-finals

DNA

INDIAN WELLS: World number one Iga Swiatek continued her Indian Wells title defense with a 6-3 6-1 victory over Emma Raducanu on Tuesday to set up a quarter-final against unseeded Romanian Sorana Cirstea. Swiatek came under pressure early in the opening set but some clean ballstriking helped her hold for a 3-2 lead after two tight service games. She raised her level further to break Raducanu in the next game before pulling away. Having wrapped up the first set when Raducanu sent a shot long from the baseline, Swiatek grabbed an early break in the second to heap the pressure on the Briton, whose unforced errors began to mount. Swiatek, bidding to become only the second female player to successfully defend the Indian Wells title after Martina Navratilova in 1990-91, raced to a 5-1 lead playing flawless tennis and running her opponent ragged. The U.S. Open champion closed out the win when



Raducanu struck the net on serve in a tame end to her fine run in the Southern California desert. Earlier in the day, Coco Gauff rallied from a break down in the final set to beat Swede Rebecca Peterson 6-3 1-6 6-4 and reach the quarters for the first time. After taking the first set, the sixth-seeded American began to struggle with her forehand in the second and an opportunistic Peterson

applied the pressure by coming into the net. But after suffering an early break in the decider, Gauff stepped up her defense, fending off three break points at 4-4 and breaking Peterson for a fourth time on match point to book her spot in the last eight. Gauff, who turned 19 on Monday, was later serenaded with a rendition of 'Happy Birthday' by the crowd. "Today, it was just a mental thing,

staying in the match," Gauff said. "I wasn't playing my best in some moments and wasn't serving as well as I'd like to, but I think my mentality kept me in today." Next up for Gauff is a meeting with Belarusian second seed Aryna Sabalenka, who survived a second-set scare to beat 16th seed Barbora Krejickova 6-3 2-6 6-4. Sabalenka sent down 11 aces in the match to secure victory and get revenge on the Czech, who beat her at last month's Dubai Tennis Championships. Elsewhere, seventh seed Maria Sakkari outlasted big-serving Czech Karolina Pliskova 6-4 5-7 6-3 in a two-hour and 45-minute match to reach the quarters. With the win the Greek keeps alive her hopes of capturing a first Indian Wells crown after making the final last year. Sakkari will next face Czech 15th seed Petra Kvitova for a semi-final spot, after the two-times Wimbledon champion saved four match points en route to a 6-2 3-6 7-6(11) win over third-seeded American Jessica Pegula. I play for these emotions," Kvitova said.

Morocco joining  
2030 World Cup bid

RABAT: King Mohammed VI of Morocco announced on Tuesday that his country had joined the bid by Spain and Portugal to host the centenary World Cup in 2030. The announcement means that war-torn Ukraine

is likely to be dropped from the bid. King Mohammed made the announcement in a message delivered as he was named the winner of the African Football Confederation 2022 Award of Excellence in Kigali, where

world governing body FIFA is holding its annual congress. A spokesman for the Spanish football federation told AFP it would meet with its Portuguese and Moroccan counterparts in Kigali on Wednesday, but made no mention of Ukraine. "The presidents will announce any news regarding the candidacy for the 2030 World Cup in Kigali," the spokesman added. Spain and Portugal declared their joint candidacy in 2021, before adding Ukraine to their bid last October. In contrast to the distance between Ukraine, and Spain and Portugal, Morocco is separated from Spain only by the Strait of Gibraltar. A South American bid including Uruguay, Argentina, Paraguay and Chile is set to challenge the Iberian bid, and Saudi Arabia hopes to lead a joint ticket with Egypt and Greece. The World Cup has had joint hosts before. In 2002 Japan and South Korea shared the competition. In 2026, the finals will be played in the United States, Mexico and Canada, when 11 of the 16 planned venues will be in the US. - Agencies

Brazil footballers fall  
victim to crypto scam

SAO PAULO: Three Brazilian footballers, including Nottingham Forest midfielder Gustavo Scarpa, say they have fallen victim to a multi-million-dollar cryptocurrency scam, according to local media reports. Scarpa, his former teammate Mayke at Sao Paulo club Palmeiras, and William Bigode of Rio de Janeiro club Fluminense all claim to have lost huge sums to a crypto firm called Xland, which promised investors returns of up to five percent a month on their money, according to the reports. "I've always seen stupid people fall victim to pyramid schemes and scams. Finding myself in a situation like that is horrible," Scarpa, 29, said in a WhatsApp audio message aired Sunday by Brazil's biggest broadcaster, TV Globo. Scarpa, who was named Brazilian league player of the year in 2022, and 30-year-old defender Mayke filed complaints with police in November, shortly after winning the league title with Palmeiras. Scarpa says he invested 6.3 million reais (\$1.2 million) in Xland. Mayke says he invested around four million reais (\$762,000). Both say they were persuaded to invest in the company by William Bigode, a former Palmeiras teammate. But Bigode, 36, says he is also a victim. "I'm not a scammer, I didn't take anyone's money. I'm a victim, too, because I haven't gotten my own money back to this day," he said on Instagram. - DNA

## Erling Haaland leads City to 7-0 rout of Leipzig

I told him (Guardiola) I would love to score a double hat-trick but what can I do?," Haaland said. De Bruyne curled in a stunning seventh goal for good measure seconds before the final whistle.

MANCHESTER: Erling Haaland became the third player in Champions League history to score five goals in a game as he led Manchester City to an unrelenting 7-0 rout of RB Leipzig in the second leg of their last-16 tie on Tuesday. The victory, which equalled City's biggest European win, sent Pep Guardiola's side into the quarter-finals 8-1 on aggregate, with Ilkay Gundogan and Kevin De Bruyne also on target for City in a devastating display at the Etihad Stadium. It was a record-breaking night for the 22-year-old Haaland, who became Manchester City's top goalscorer in a season as he took his tally for the campaign to 39 goals, vaulting him past Tommy Johnson's mark from 1928-29. He also became the youngest player to reach 30 Champions League goals as he moved on to 33, hitting that mark in 25 games, the fewest ever. "It's a big night. Firstly, I'm proud to play in this competition, I love it. Five goals. To win 7-0 is amazing," he said. "My super strength is scoring goals. Should I be honest? A lot of goals today, I didn't think. I was just trying to get it into the back of the net," he added. "A lot of it is being quick in the mind and trying to put it where the goalkeeper is not." Haaland hinted he was in for a big night with a quick-fire brace, slotting home a penalty in the 22nd minute after Benjamin Henrichs was adjudged to have handled in the box following a VAR review, with the Norwegian celebrating with a knee slide and salute. He found the net again 19 seconds after the kickoff. Haaland pressured Leipzig's

keeper into a poor clearance that fell to De Bruyne. The Belgian's shot came back off the crossbar and bounced up for Haaland to head home. His fifth hat-trick in all competitions this season arrived in first-half stoppage time when Ruben Dias's header bobbed along the line and Haaland rushed in to force it into the net. "Fabulous," Guardiola said on Haaland's night. "He has a huge competitor mentality, he's there and yeah, scored five goals which is not easy." Gundogan made it 4-0 in the 49th, driving a low finish into the bottom corner from the edge of the area, before Haaland capped his history-making night with two more from close range in the 53rd and 57th minutes. Guardiola substituted the Norwegian in the 62nd minute, perhaps sparing Leipzig further humiliation, but denying Haaland the opportunity to score a record-breaking sixth in a single Champions League game. "I told him (Guardiola) I would love to score a double hat-trick but what can I do?," Haaland said. De Bruyne curled in a stunning seventh goal for good measure seconds before the final whistle. Manchester City have never hoisted the Champions League trophy, coming closest in 2021 when they lost 1-0 to Chelsea in the final. They lost to Real Madrid in last season's semis. Leipzig manager Marco Rose knew before kickoff Haaland would pose a massive challenge, and he was right. "He had a great night. He was so hungry," Rose said. "He scored goals with the foot and head, won second balls, deep runs. It looked really simple." - Agencies

Institutions  
urged to...

FORM PAGE 01

"It is unprecedented that an ex-prime minister faces a murderous attack and after that, he is refused security and it is this [security] that we are requesting for in court and that judge, in turn, issued warrants against me," Imran said. The ousted premier maintained that the "warrants simply said that the police should ensure my appearance in court", and added that the LHCB president is willing to ensure the same a surety bond. The PTI chief also said that his "bag was packed" and told his supporters that he was ready to go, but "all our workers knew that they have suffered custodial torture [...] and out of that fear they have been fighting outside since last night".

G-B force  
used at...

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Toshakhana case. The minister's presser comes as clashes between PTI workers and law enforcement agencies intensified for the second day, as the Punjab police tried to arrest Imran after an Islamabad sessions court issued a non-bailable arrest warrant against the former premier. Marriyum claimed that Imran wanted "anarchy and chaos across the country", adding that the incumbent government had nothing to do with his arrest. She furthered that if the government wanted to arrest him, they had state powers in place, as well as the "same powers Imran used to jail his political opponents". Commenting on the claims of a security bond in the case, the minister said that the court issues a warrant and then orders relief, and if it wanted to provide relief then it would not risk the heads of police officials.

Imran doing  
'politics'...

FROM PAGE 01

Nawaz came from London and went to jail with his daughter in the bogus cases. That is what bravery is all about." She took a jibe at Mr Khan, saying he was afraid to appear before the court from his residence in Zaman Park. On Tuesday, Ms Nawaz said that her party had geared up to win elections." Addressing a convention, Ms Nawaz lavished praise on the PML-N supporters, saying, "The passion of the workers is forcing me to contest elections from Sheikhupura.

Reminding the deposed premier about "making a case against the interior minister", Ms Nawaz said Mr Khan had made a bogus case against Rana Sanaullah. "Today, Rana Sanaullah has been appointed as the interior minister, while Imran is hiding in his home," she added.

Govt to act  
per ECP's...

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He said the government was cognizant of the fact that timely election led to a stronger State and its progress. In the same context, he mentioned that the government had initiated work on census and the funds had been released despite financial constraints. The prime minister said the country was passing through political and economic challenges, however said that all political parties of the Pakistan Democratic Alliance (PDM) coalition contributed positively towards improvement in situation. During 11 months of the tenure, he said, the government successfully overcame the shadows of default. He regretted that the previous government stepped back from the agreement inked with the International Monetary Fund (IMF). He said it was not a private but a State deal, and the non-implementation of which resulted in big loss of the country.



## Briefs

## Major strike hits 'Russia's Amazon'

MOSCOW: Operators of Wildberries pickup points across Russia's major cities have staged a strike because of new fines that the online retailer began to impose on them over damaged and lost goods, several local media outlets reported on Wednesday.

The retailer has reportedly imposed a new rule for pickup point owners, under which the full cost of items are withheld from store owners if the buyer complains that they were faulty. It has also reportedly introduced a fine of 100,000 rubles (\$1,300) for owners of Wildberries pickup points who disseminate offensive and false information about the company or its customers and partners.

On Tuesday, the owners of Moscow pickup points gathered in protest near the office of the e-commerce giant. Pickup point operators also stopped work in St. Petersburg, Barnaul and Ekaterinburg.

"The financial aspect leaves much to be desired. We need transparency of earnings and penalties, even if they remain in force," one of the protesters told Russian business daily RBK, adding that those who gathered are planning to demand fair conditions from management.

One of the operators claimed that the fines create difficulties with paying wages to employees.

In response to queries from RBK about the strike at the company's office, Wildberries' press office said the information about the rally was fake. According to the 'Caution, Moscow' Telegram channel, the pickup point owners prepared a collective demand but could not deliver it to Wildberries management because it was not accepted at the firm's head office.—Agencies

## Niger says it killed '30 jihadists'

NIAMEY: Jihadist-hit Niger last week killed about 30 members of the Boko Haram group and detained 960 followers, most of them women and children, who had fled neighbouring Nigeria, official sources said.

State TV channel Tele Sahel said late Tuesday that on March 7 aerial surveillance spotted a "massive movement of people" along the Kamadougou Yoge River, which marks the border between the two countries, who were heading towards Lake Chad. The report said they were members of the Boko Haram jihadist group, who were fleeing their hideout in Sambisa forest in northeast Nigeria after coming under pressure from their rivals, the Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP). ISWAP split from Boko Haram in 2016 and rose to become the dominant group in the region's long-running jihadist turmoil. It seized swathes of territory under Boko Haram control after leader Abubakar Shekau was killed in clashes with ISWAP in May 2021.—APP

## European bank stocks plunge

BRUSSELS: European banks were rocked by another turbulent session on Wednesday, plunging as much as 10% amid concerns over the global fallout from the collapse of Silicon Valley Bank last week and the dramatic fall of Credit Suisse, which lead to several bank stocks, including Credit Suisse, being temporarily halted from trade.

By midday, European banks were down 6.66% in London. The Paris Stock exchange also took a big hit as the French bank Société Générale fell by 10.6% and BNP Paribas by 10.3%.

This marks the biggest decline for Société Générale since 24 February 2022 and since 16 March 2020 for BNP Paribas. Switzerland's second-largest bank, Credit Suisse, which has been plagued by a series of scandals, saw its main shareholder announce on Wednesday that it couldn't provide extra financial help.

The group has been struggling to recover from a number of highly publicised financial scandals.—DNA

## US accuses Russia of 'recklessness' after jet incident

The skies over the Black Sea are the scene of regular interactions between drones and aircraft from NATO countries and the Russian armed forces

## NEWS DESK

WASHINGTON: Washington has summoned Russia's ambassador to the US to the State Department to express its "strong objection" after a Russian fighter jet struck an American surveillance drone over the Black Sea on Tuesday, causing US forces to bring the drone down in international waters.

"What we saw, again, were fighter aircraft dumping fuel in front of this UAV and then getting so close to the aircraft that it actually damaged the propeller on the MQ-9," said Pentagon Press Secretary, Pat Ryder. "Because of the damage, we were in a position to have to

essentially crash it into the Black Sea," he added.

In a statement, the US military described Russia's intercept as "reckless, environmentally unsound, and unprofessional," adding that "aggressive actions by Russian aircrew are dangerous and could lead to miscalculation and unintended escalation."

Russia's Ambassador to the US, Anatoly Antonov, was later summoned to the state department. Beforehand, he justified the actions of the Russian pilots, claiming that the US would have reacted similarly if the situation was reversed.

"This drone can carry 1,700 kilos of explosives. This drone can carry a few

bombs. You'll see what will be the action of the United States if you see such a Russian drone very close, for example, to San Francisco or New York, what will be the reaction of the United States? For me, it's clear," Antonov said.

In a press briefing, US diplomatic spokesman, Ned Price called the incident a "brazen violation of international law."

He added that the US ambassador in Moscow had also conveyed Washington's protests in a message to the Russian Foreign Ministry.

The US military says a Russian jet Su-27 jet collided with the unmanned aerial vehicle over the Black Sea, forcing the drone down.

The US European Command said in a statement that two Russian Su-27 fighter jets "conducted an unsafe and unprofessional intercept" of a US MQ-9 drone that was operating within international airspace over the Black Sea.

It said one of the Russian fighters "struck the propeller of the MQ-9, causing US forces to have to bring the MQ-9 down in international waters," adding that several times before the collision, the Su-27s dumped fuel on and flew in front of the MQ-9 in "a reckless, environmentally unsound and unprofessional manner."

"This incident demonstrates a lack of competence in addition to being

unsafe and unprofessional," it added.

White House National Security spokesman John Kirby said US President Joe Biden was briefed on the incident by national security adviser Jake Sullivan.

Russian and US aircraft have operated over the Black Sea during the course of the war but this is the first known such interaction, a potentially dangerous escalation at a critical time in the fighting.

The Reaper drone, manufactured by the US company General Atomics, is a remotely piloted aircraft of the MALE (medium altitude long endurance) type, equipped with ultra-modern on-board sensors (optronic

ball and radar) to carry out surveillance operations at a cruising speed of 335 km/h. With a wingspan of 20 metres, it has an endurance of more than 24 hours of flight. It can carry several types of weaponry: laser and/or GPS-guided bombs (GBU) or Hellfire missiles. Its ground crew consists of four people.

In addition to the United States, several European armies have Reaper drones in their fleets, including the British, Italians, French, and Spanish.

The skies over the Black Sea are the scene of regular interactions between drones and aircraft from NATO countries and the Russian armed forces.

## Saudi Arabia threatens oil embargo

RIYADH: Saudi Energy Minister Prince Abdulaziz bin Salman has warned Western states against capping the price of crude oil supplied by the kingdom, adding that any attempts to impose a ceiling would be met with a halt of sales and production cuts. He added that other major oil producers would most likely follow suit.

"So, if a price cap were to be imposed on Saudi oil exports, we will not sell oil to any country that imposes a price cap on our supply, and we will reduce oil production, and I would not be surprised if others do the same," bin Salman said in an interview with Energy Intelligence on Tuesday.

According to the minister, price-cap policies inevitably exacerbate market instability and volatility, and would negatively impact the entire oil industry across the globe. He compared the oil-price cap with the US proposal to adopt the so-called NOPEC legislation, stressing that the potential impact of such measures on the oil market are similar.

NOPEC (No Oil Producing and Exporting Cartels Act) would allow OPEC and national oil companies to be sued under US antitrust law for anti-competitive attempts to limit global supply of oil and the subsequent impact on crude prices.

In December, the EU, G7 nations, and their allies introduced a collective ban on Russian seaborne oil exports, along with a price cap of \$60 per barrel.—DNA

## Russia's oil revenue sinks as price cap bites

PARIS: Russia's oil-export revenue sank by almost half in February compared to last year as Western powers tightened sanctions on the country, the International Energy Agency said on Wednesday.

The country earned \$11.6 billion from its oil exports last month after the European Union imposed a ban on Russian petroleum products alongside a price cap agreed with the Group of Seven and Australia, according to the IEA.

This was down from \$14.3 billion in January and a 42 percent drop from \$20 billion in February last year.

Russia, however, was still shipping "roughly the same" amount of oil to world markets, according to the IEA, which advises wealthy nations.

"This indicates that the G7 sanctions regime has been effective in not restricting global crude and product supplies, while simultaneously curtailing Russia's ability to generate export revenue," the IEA said.

Russian oil exports fell by 500,000 barrels per day to 7.5 million bpd in February, with a big drop in shipments to the EU, but it was still near pre-war levels.

"Recent tanker tracking data suggest that Moscow has managed to re-route most of the barrels previously destined for the EU and US to new outlets in Asia, Africa and the Middle East," the IEA said.—APP

## Lebanon central bank chief snubs European investigators

BEIRUT: Lebanon's under-fire central bank governor Riad Salameh failed to appear Wednesday before European investigators, with his legal team claiming the hearing would have been "in conflict with national sovereignty", a judicial source said.

Salameh, 72, is part of the Lebanese political class widely blamed for a crushing economic crisis that began in late 2019 and which the World Bank has dubbed one of the planet's worst in recent history.

He faces accusations including alleged embezzlement in separate probes in Lebanon and abroad, with investigators examining the fortune he has amassed during three decades in the job. He denies all the allegations.

Salameh had been summoned to appear at Beirut's justice palace on Wednesday morning but objected to the session and instead sent a legal representative, the judicial official told AFP on condition of anonymity as they are not authorised to speak to the media.—APP

## Uzbekistan referendum to allow president to extend rule

Constitutional amendment, which planned to reduce the autonomy of the Republic of Karakalpakstan, a desert region of Uzbekistan and one of the poorest in the country, has been abandoned

TASHKENT: A constitutional referendum set for late April in Uzbekistan could extend President Shavkat Mirziyoyev's rule of the Central Asian nation for at least another decade, authorities announced Wednesday.

Mirziyoyev came to power in 2016 after the death of his predecessor Islam Karimov and has pushed through significant economic and social reforms. The constitutional amendment would allow the 65-year-old to stand for re-election in 2026 and, if re-elected, to remain in power until 2033 or even 2040.

According to a draft proposal, the president's term would be extended to seven years and candidates would "have the right to run... regardless of the number of consecutive terms" already served.

The proposed new constitution, which would amend two-thirds of the current basic law, will be put to a vote on April 30. Mirziyoyev, after taking power in 2016,



was re-elected for five years with more than 80 percent of the vote in October 2021 in an election that international observers said was devoid of real competition.

Validated almost unanimously by the two chambers of parliament, the proposal also plans to make Uzbekistan a "social state" where "the

human being, his life, his freedom, his honour and his dignity are the supreme values".

The constitutional amendment, which planned to reduce the autonomy of the Republic of Karakalpakstan, a desert region of Uzbekistan and one of the poorest in the country, has been abandoned.

In July 2022, demonstrations broke out in Karakalpakstan to denounce the draft proposal, which resulted in an official death toll of 21 people, the internet being cut off and the declaration of a state of emergency.

After the death of his predecessor, Mirziyoyev carried out major economic and social reforms. During his first visit to the region in early March, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken called on Uzbekistan to respect fundamental freedoms and continue ongoing reforms.

In particular, Mirziyoyev has put an end in recent years to forced labour in the cotton fields, including child labour, a measure that has been hailed worldwide, and the country wants to join the World Trade Organization.

Uzbekistan announced at the end of January that it had demarcated its border with Kyrgyzstan, a source of recurrent problems since the fall of the Soviet Union.—APP

## China announces naval drills with Russia and Iran

RUSSIA, China and Iran are holding a five-day maritime exercise, seeking to bolster their naval security, Beijing's Defense Ministry announced on Wednesday. The ministry said the three-nation 'Security Bond-2023' wargames in the Gulf of Oman run from March 15 to 19, and that several unspecified countries will also be joining.

"This exercise will help deepen the practical cooperation between the navies of the participating countries, further demonstrate the willingness and ability to jointly maintain maritime security," the ministry stated, adding that it will "inject positive energy into regional peace and stability".

China's guided-missile destroyer Nanning will be taking part, the ministry said, noting that 'Security Bond-2023' will build on the drills held by China, Russia and Iran in 2019 and 2022.

In late 2019, similar three-nation exercises took place in the Indian Ocean and Arabian Sea, with a spokesman for the Iranian military, Abolfazl Shekarchi, saying the goal was to counter terrorism and piracy. In 2022, the 'Security Bond' maneuvers encompassed the northern part of the Indian Ocean and involved the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, the elite branch of Tehran's military.

Earlier this week, Russian Defense Minister Sergey Shoigu said cooperation between Moscow and Beijing had "reached a whole new level," with the partnership serving as "one of the main deterrents to the aggressive activities of the United States and its henchmen in the Asia-Pacific region."

In late February, China conducted another naval drill with Russia, along with South Africa. While Pretoria called it a means of increasing coordination between the three countries, Western media branded the move "controversial" in view of the Ukraine conflict. The US also weighed in, with the White House spokeswoman Karine Jean-Pierre stating in January that Washington "has concerns about any country... exercising with Russia" as Moscow continues its military campaign in Ukraine. —APP

## 60 mln people will cast vote in Türkiye's elections

ANKARA: Türkiye is gearing up for the May 14 elections for the presidency and parliamentary seats as the number of voters has increased. In the last presidential elections in 2018, the number of eligible voters was 56.3 million, but this year it stands at 60 million. The election comes at a time of struggle for recovery following the Feb. 6 earthquakes that killed tens of thousands of people in the country's southeast. Some 3 million people have left the provinces hit by what authorities call the "disaster of the century" and will likely cast their votes from the places they have relocated to. It is estimated about 1.5 million among them are eligible to vote. Authorities mobilized to ensure access to voting for earthquake survivors. The Interior Ministry has sent text messages to survivors to remind them to update their address information by March 20 if they have relocated. Eligible voters can apply to local branches of the civil registration directorate, local election boards or use the e-government portal. Officials are also mulling extending the March 20 deadline and giving a more flexible option for voters registered previously in the disaster-hit zone for an easier address information update. It will also be a landmark vote for the visually impaired, who, for the first time in the history of the Republic of Türkiye, will be able to vote alone. Anadolu Agency (AA) reported on Wednesday that the Supreme Election Council (YSK) would provide special "templates" for visually impaired voters so they can cast their ballots without assistance. In past elections, they were assisted by their next of kin or any other voter present at the polling station at the time, raising concerns that they would be steered to vote for a party they did not support. Visually impaired voters will be provided with the same ballots as other voters along with templates.—APP



LONDON: On sidelines of Commonwealth Day celebrations MoS Hina Rabbani Khar met Commonwealth Secretary-General Patricia Scotland.—DNA

## European states decry Israeli bill

All Israeli settlements are illegal under international law. The United Nations Security Council has condemned Israel's settlement activities in the occupied territories in several resolutions

LONDON: Britain and a dozen other EU member states condemn the Israeli parliament's approval of a bill that will enable settlers to return to areas of the West Bank evacuated in 2005 as part of the so-called Disengagement Law. In a joint statement on Monday, the UK and the EU countries, including France, demanded that Israel halt the looming dispossession of several Palestinian families from their homes in East al-Quds. They declared their "strong opposition to Israel's settlement expansion policy" and sternly warned about the forced evacuation of Palestinian families from the Silwan and Sheikh Jarrah neighborhoods in

East al-Quds. "It is very worrying that Israeli authorities intend to continue demolishing Palestinian houses in the occupied West Bank and East al-Quds during the [Muslim holy] month of Ramadan," the statement read.

According to the Israeli newspaper Haaretz, the Israeli parliament, known as the Knesset, approved on Monday a bill that would repeal the clauses of the Disengagement Law that ban Israelis from living in the region where the four illegal settlements of Homesh, Ganim, Kadim and Sanur previously stood in the northern occupied West Bank.

The bill, sponsored by Likud

Knesset member Yuli Edelstein and Israel's so-called national missions minister Orit Stroom, passed by 40 votes in favor and 17 against. "There is no longer any justification to prevent Israelis from entering and staying in the evacuated territory in northern Samaria (West Bank), and therefore it is proposed to state that these sections [of the disengagement law] will no longer apply to the evacuated territory," says the introductory text to the amendment. In 2005, then-Israeli prime minister Ariel Sharon enacted a law requiring unilateral withdrawal from the Gaza Strip and the northern West Bank, and the

removal of 25 illegal settlements in the two areas. Twenty-one settlements in Gaza have already been removed and 8,000 settlers have been evacuated. In the occupied West Bank, four illegal settlements were evacuated but the structures in them were maintained, and the areas were labeled closed military zones. Meanwhile, the Palestinian foreign ministry has condemned the Israeli parliament's latest move, calling on the international community to pressure Israel to prevent the enactment of the bill. "Proceeding with steps to enact this legislation is a dangerous escalation in the conflict and a belittling of the efforts

exerted to reduce tension and achieve calm," it said in a statement. The foreign ministry called on the international community and the Biden administration to exert real pressure on the current Israeli administration to stop the process. It warned that Israel's continued impunity pushes it to escalate its illegal unilateral steps and measures, which can lead to an explosion in conflict. More than 600,000 Israelis live in over 230 settlements built since the 1967 Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territories of the West Bank and al-Quds. All Israeli settlements are illegal under international law.—Agencies



## Briefs

**Pak does not need 'unsolicited advice', FO to Zalmay**

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Foreign Office on Wednesday dismissed a statement by former U.S. Special Representative on Afghanistan Reconciliation, Zalmay Khalilzad, and said that the country did not need "unsolicited advice". "Pakistan does not need lectures or unsolicited advice from anyone on how to cope with the challenges we face today," the Foreign Office spokesperson said in a statement. The statement came in response to a series of tweets by Zalmay Khalilzad where he suggested "steps" and said Pakistan faced a 'triple crisis of political, economic, and security'. The FO spokesperson said, "As a resilient nation, we will come out stronger from the present difficult situation."

**85 new Corona cases reported: NIH**

ISLAMABAD: Health officials on Wednesday said that 85 new Coronavirus cases were reported during the last 24 hours across the country. As per the data shared by the National Institute of Health (NIH), the case positivity ratio was 1.61 percent while 11 patients were in critical condition. No death was reported from the Coronavirus in the last 24 hours while 5,286 Covid-19 tests were conducted. As many as 957 tests were conducted in Lahore out of which, 24 cases were confirmed with a ratio of 2.51 percent, while 324 tests were conducted in Rawalpindi out of which five cases were reported confirmed with a ratio of 1.54 percent. 11 cases were confirmed from 419 tests in Islamabad with a ratio of 2.63 percent. Meanwhile, Minister for National Health Services, Regulations, and Coordination, Abdul Qadir Patel said the government has strengthened the role of Border and Health Services in Pakistan to deal with any sub-variant of Covid-19. The minister said there was a surveillance system at all entry points of the country including airports. There will be rapid tests and screening of passengers at all airports, he added. - APP

# Ukraine invites DeSantis after he calls war 'dispute'

In his response to a questionnaire by Fox News anchor Tucker Carlson, Mr DeSantis said: "While US has many vital national interests... becoming further entangled in a territorial dispute between Ukraine and Russia is not one of them"

WEB DESK

KYIV: Ukraine has invited Florida Governor Ron DeSantis to visit, after the Republican dismissed the Russian invasion as a "territorial dispute". Mr DeSantis is widely expected to run for president in 2024 and made his remarks in response to questions sent to possible Republican contenders. The former congressman said continued US support of Ukraine was not among the country's "vital national interests". The comment signalled he would probably scale back aid if he became president. It also aligned Mr DeSantis with former President Donald Trump, the leading contender for the Republican nomination, who has opposed US support for Kyiv and criticised the Biden administration's handling of the war. Their comments show the divide in the Republican Party between isolationists who are sceptical of providing military aid and the establishment party policy of supporting Kyiv. In his response to a

## Ties with US at their lowest: Kremlin

KYIV: Relations with the US are in a "lamentable state" and at their lowest level, the Kremlin says after Washington accused Russia of downing one of its Reaper drones. Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters there had been no high-level contacts with Washington over the incident but said Russia would never refuse to engage in constructive dialogue. The Russian Security Council Secretary and the former chief of Russia's Federal Security Service (FSB) Nikolai Patrushev said on Wednesday that Russia will try to get the wreckage of an American MQ-9 drone that fell into the Black Sea in order to study it. "I don't know if we will be able to get it or not, but we need to do it ... And we will definitely look into it," said Patrushev said on Russian state TV Rossiya 1. "As for the drone, the Americans keep saying that they are not participating in hostilities. This is yet another confirmation that they are directly involved in these events, in the war," he added. Patrushev said Russia already counters such actions. Meanwhile, the involvement of Russian fighter jets in the crash of a US spy drone, or unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV), is a signal that Putin is ready to expand the conflict zone, a senior Ukrainian security official says. "The incident with the American MQ-9 Reaper UAV, provoked by Russia in the Black Sea, is Putin's signal of readiness to expand the conflict zone with the involvement of other parties," Oleksiy Danilov, secretary of Ukraine's National Security and Defence Council, said on Twitter. - DNA

questionnaire by Fox News anchor Tucker Carlson, Mr DeSantis said: "While the US has many vital national interests... becoming further entangled in a territorial dispute between Ukraine and Russia is not one of them." The 44-year-old has not officially announced his intention to challenge Mr Trump for the Republican nomination, but has been taking all the necessary steps suggesting he will do so. When asked the same question on whether US backing for Kyiv was vital for Washington, Mr Trump said: "No, it is for Europe. But not for the United States." Ukraine's foreign ministry spokesman Oleg Nikolenko criticised Mr DeSantis's comments and tweeted his invitation to the Republican governor on Tuesday. "We are sure that as a former military officer deployed to a combat zone, Governor Ron DeSantis knows the difference between a 'dispute' and war," Mr Nikolenko said. "We invite him to visit Ukraine to get a deeper understanding of Russia's full-scale invasion and the threats it poses to US interests."

## NDMA dispatches 7th cargo plane to Turkiye

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) as part of Pakistan's Assistance to quake-hit Turkiye through Special Air Cargo Dispatch on Wednesday dispatched the seventh cargo plane carrying 104 tonnes of 1,400 winterised tents. The NDMA on its official Twitter handle updated that on the directions of the prime minister the cargo plane with another 1,400 winterized fire resistant family tents were flown from Lahore. The NDMA has so far sent off 8,600 (Type II) tents through this special flight operation which started on March 11, whilst 2,595 have been dispatched via PIA and Pakistan Navy Ship making total 11,195 fire resistant tents.

## Flash floods kill at least 13 in Turkish quake zone

ISTANBUL: Flash floods killed at least 13 people living in tents and container housing set up across Turkey's quake-hit region on Wednesday, piling more pressure on President Recep Tayyip Erdogan ahead of crunch elections. Several more people were swept away by the rushing water, which turned streets into muddy rivers in areas hit by last month's 7.8-magnitude quake, local media reports said. More than 48,000 people died in Turkey and nearly 6,000 in Syria in the February 6 disaster, the region's deadliest in modern times. Hundreds of thousands of Turkish quake survivors have been moved into tents and container homes across the disaster region, which covers 11 provinces across Turkey's southeast. - APP

## RCCI delegation calls on Ambassador of Uzbekistan



RAWALPINDI: RCCI delegation headed by President Saqib Rafiq called on H.E. Mr. Aybek Arif Usmanov Ambassador of the Republic of Uzbekistan, Islamabad. Senior Vice President Muhammad Hamza Sarosh, Former Vice President Mr. Shahraiz Ashraf Malik, Secretary

General RCCI Mr. Irfan Manan Khan were also present on the occasion. While talking to the Uzbek envoy, RCCI President gave a briefing on RCCI current activities and upcoming events. Ambassador Aybek Arif Usmanov lauded RCCI efforts for promoting trade and business activities in the region. He said that the relations between Pakistan and Uzbekistan are historic and friendly. Both countries share common history and faith, he added. The envoy informed that the Transit Trade agreement between Pakistan and Uzbekistan will promote mutual trade. Matters related to the exchange of business delegations, trades, expos, facilitation of bilateral trades, and visas also came under discussion. - DNA

## Imran using PTI workers as 'shield': Fazl

ISLAMABAD: Jamiat Ulama-i-Islam-Fazl (JUI-F) Chief Maulana Fazal-ur-Rehman on Wednesday said Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf Imran Khan had been hiding his workers to escape from arrest. Addressing a press conference here, he said Imran Khan was a "coward" who had not only used his party workers as a shield but also made them stand against the state. The state must establish its writ and ensure Imran's arrest for the "crimes he committed during his tenure", Fazal added. He said many political leaders

*Fazal said Imran Khan was striving to "implement his foreign agenda in the country", but he would not be allowed to do so at any cost*

were arrested during the tenure of Imran Khan's government which even failed to prove a single allegation in a court of law. "Imran Khan should show some courage and face the law," the JUI chief said, adding he was hell-bent upon spreading the chaos and anarchy in the country to achieve his ulterior motives. He said the country could not be run on the whims of Imran Khan, who first abandoned the Parliament and then resorted to "inciting violence in the country". Fazal said Imran Khan was striving to "implement his foreign agenda in the country", but he would not be allowed to do so at any cost.

## Chinese embassy provides 250 bullet proof jackets to police

ISLAMABAD: The delegation of the China Embassy on Wednesday visited the Central Police Office and provided 250 bullet proof jackets for Islamabad Capital Police, Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Police. Inspector General of Police (IGP) Islamabad Dr. Akbar Nasir Khan welcomed the delegation along with senior officers. Additional Secretary Interior Ministry Muhammad Ayub Chaudhry and IGP Islamabad Dr. Akbar Nasir Khan thanked the delegation and said that China has always provided all kinds of assistance in the work of the police which is a living example of Pakistan-China eternal friendship. The delegation including the Police Counselor China Embassy Mr. Li Qingchun, Second Secretaries Mr. Xu Peng and Mr. Liu Xinhua provided 250 bullet proof jackets to Islamabad Capital Police, Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Police in the ceremony. Additional Secretary Interior Muhammad Ayub Chaudhry was the chief guest in the ceremony while IGP Islamabad Dr. Akbar Nasir Khan, officers of Islamabad Capital Police, DIG Logistics Punjab Police Athar Ismail, Deputy Commandant Elite Force Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Irfan Tariq were also present on the occasion. A total of 50 bullet proof jackets were provided to CPO Headquarters Islamabad Owais Ahmed Malik, 100 jackets to DIG Athar Ismail from Punjab Police and 100 jackets to SSP Irfan Tariq from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Police. - DNA

## At least 11 dead in Colombia coal mine explosion

BOGOTÁ: At least 11 people died and ten more remained trapped following a coal mine explosion in central Colombia, the governor of Cundinamarca department said Wednesday. The accident in the municipality of Sutatausa occurred due to an accumulation of gases that exploded after a worker's tool caused a spark, Governor Nicolas Garcia told Blu Radio. The explosion happened late Tuesday night at a series of legal mines that are linked. Firefighters and rescue workers could be seen at the entrances to the mines in images from local media, with a handful of relatives awaiting information about their loved ones. The miners were trapped 900 meters (2,950 feet) underground, making access difficult for the more than 100 rescuers working on the search, Garcia said. "Every minute that passes means less oxygen," he said. Oil and coal are the main exports of Colombia, where mining accidents are frequent. In August, nine miners were rescued from a collapsed illegal coal mine in central Cundinamarca department. In 2021, the fourth largest Latin American economy recorded 148 deaths in mining incidents. - APP

## Cyclone toll rises above 270 in Malawi, Mozambique

BLANTYRE: Malawi and Mozambique were racing to rescue survivors from Tropical Cyclone Freddy on Wednesday as the death toll rose above 270 from one of the most powerful storms recorded in the southern hemisphere. Freddy tore through southern Africa for the second time in a month over the weekend and was still causing heavy rain on Wednesday, hampering relief efforts. Malawi's disaster management department said in a statement that the death toll from the second hit stood at 225, up from 190 on Tuesday, with 707 people injured and 41 missing. In neighbouring Mozambique at least 21 people had died as of Tuesday, according to the disaster agency. The overall death toll since Freddy first made landfall in February is now estimated at more than 270 in Malawi, Mozambique and Madagascar. Malawi's army, police, the local Red Cross and other aid agencies were conducting search and rescue operations, with commercial hub Blantyre one of the areas hardest-hit. Severe flooding and mudslides have swept away homes, broken bridges and destroyed roads. Heavy rain has continued to batter the Mozambican port of Quelimane and surrounding areas. - DNA

## Senate commemorates historic fifty years journey

ISLAMABAD: Chairman Senate Muhammad Sadiq Sanjirani here on Wednesday formally inaugurated the events at a ceremony in the parliament house by presiding over the special commemorative session summoned to celebrate the golden jubilee of the Senate of Pakistan. The Special Commemorative Session commenced with the recitation of the verses of Surah Al-Hashr (23 & 24) stating the omnipotence of the Almighty Allah and His exalted qualities like the Supreme in Might and the Majestic. The Senate Hall was decorated with the national flag, the flag of the Senate and the friendly countries. The Chairman Senate formally welcomed all the provincial and national leaders, former and current senators along with other guests to the memorable gathering held to celebrate and honour the half-century journey of the Upper House of the Parliament. Speaking on the occasion, he said the senate of Pakistan has an important role in legislation and the promotion of national cohesion. He said the Senate of Pakistan was formed in 1973 to ensure equal representation of all the federating units. - DNA

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