



# Islamabad POST

Tuesday, March 28, 2023

Pakistan's Credible Daily Newspaper

Price Rs. 25

## EU threatens more sanctions against Russia

Detailed News On Page-07

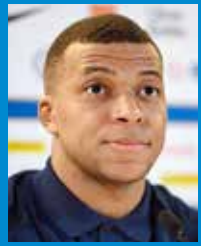
## Myanmar army chief vows to crush resistance

Detailed News On Page-08



## Mbappe vows to stop Irish teenager's run

Detailed News On Page-06



## Briefs

### Khan wants selection again

DNA



ISLAMABAD: Minister for Information and Broadcasting Marriyum Aurangzeb says the PTI Chief Imran Khan is not interested in elections in the country, but he wants his selection as Prime Minister again. Addressing a news conference in Lahore, she said the people of Pakistan remember Imran Khan's tenure as a 'black chapter in the history of the country. The Information Minister said the people are paying the price of Imran's four year misrule which was marked by corruption, incompetence and inefficiency. She said the PML-N is the only party that revived the national economy in the past and it would again provide relief to the masses by overcoming inflation and unemployment.

### Mansoor new Attorney General

STAFF REPORT



ISLAMABAD: President Arif Alvi Monday appointed Mansoor Usman Awan as the new Attorney General for Pakistan (AGP) after accepting Barrister Shehzad Ata Elahi's resignation, who left the post after less than two months in the office. The appointment was approved by the president under Article 100 of the Constitution, a statement from the Aiwan-e-Sadar said, adding that his status will be equal to a federal minister. Elahi was picked for the coveted post after Awan last year declined to become the attorney general as – despite the president approving his appointment – he was not officially notified.

### Sehr, Iftar Timing



### Ramazan 06, 1444

Sehr: 04:36 am  
Iftar: 06:29 pm  
Fiqua-e-Jafria  
Sehr: 04:26 am  
Iftar: 06:39 pm

## Inside...

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Israel's radicalization train is out of control – Page 05

Germany: Transport strike begins, causing chaos – Page 06

ICCI for focusing on Tajikistan to promote exports with CA – Page 07

Saudi, Iran top diplomats to meet during Ramadan – Page 08



RAWALPINDI: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif visits free flour distribution points established under PM's Ramzan Package for deserving families. – DNA

## Dedicated free flour centers for poor, not just BISP: PM

Says NADRA and PITB took up the challenge to include non-BISP people

STAFF REPORT / DNA

RAWALPINDI: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Monday said dedicated counters were being established for the needy people, not registered with Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP), to provide free flour bags to them at the distribution centres under Ramazan Package.

"A huge number of people who are not registered with BISP, deserve free flour bags as they are also living below the poverty line," he said while talking to media during his visit to a free wheat flour distribution centre. He said National Database Registration Authority (NADRA) and Punjab Information Technology Board took up the challenge to include non-BISP people by proposing a solution to this issue and

'Govt taking steps to facilitate investors'

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif says the government is taking every possible step to facilitate foreign investors. He was talking to a delegation of Reqdik Mining Company, headed by its Chief Executive Officer Mark Bristow who called on him in Islamabad on Monday. While talking to the delegation, the Prime Minister said Pakistan has immense investment

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## Judicial Complex clashes

## Imran gets interim bail in seven cases

The pleas stated that Imran would suffer "irreparable loss" if arrested

DNA



ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad High Court on Monday granted PTI Chairman Imran Khan interim bail in seven cases registered against him following clashes at the Federal Judicial Complex (FJC) on March 18 when the former premier had appeared in the Toshakhana case. In petitions filed in the IHC today, the PTI chief sought interim bail in the cases registered against him at Golra, Bara Kahu, Ramna, Khanna, and CTD police stations.

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## Imran moves IHC against Sanaullah

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) chief Imran Khan on Monday filed an application against Interior Minister Rana Sanaullah for issuing "direct threats" against him and his party at the Islamabad High Court (IHC). In an interview with a private

Continued on Page 06

## Pak condemns desecration of Quran in Netherlands, Denmark

Spokesperson called on all states to develop legal deterrence with a view to preventing and prosecuting such acts

SHUJAAT HAMZA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan on Monday strongly condemned yet another "abhorrent" act of desecration of the Holy Qur'an in the Netherlands last week. "Such hateful acts are racist, xenophobic and Islamophobic. Their repeated occurrence calls into question the legal framework behind which the Islamophobes hide and spread hatred with impunity," Foreign Office spokesperson Mumtaz Zahra Baloch said in a statement. She said Pakistan believed that freedom of expression came with responsibilities. "It is the responsibility of national governments and the international community at large to prevent such vile acts, which are perpetrated with the ulterior motive to provoke and incite religious hatred and violence," the spokesperson added. Pakistan also strongly condemned yet



## Israeli raid on Al-Aqsa Mosque condemned

NEWS DESK

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan strongly condemned the raid by Israeli forces on Al Aqsa Mosque on the third day of the holy month of Ramadan, expelling the worshippers and violating the sanctity of the Mosque – one of the holiest sites of Muslims. It is reprehensible that such attacks on Al-Aqsa Mosque by Israeli occupation forces, during the holy month of Ramadan, have become a regular feature in recent years. Such acts not only constitute grave violation of fundamental right to freedom of religion or belief of the Palestinian people but also an affront to the religious sentiments of over 1.5 billion Muslims around the world. The indiscriminate use of force by Israeli occupation

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## SC takes up PTI's plea

## ECP served notice over polls' delay

Five-member larger bench, headed by CJP Bandial heard the plea; Delay in polls: ECP decision obstructing court orders, observes Justice Akhtar

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

ISLAMABAD: Issuing notices to the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) for dragging feet on polls in Punjab, the Supreme Court of Pakistan Monday sought guarantees from the government and Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) to bury the hatchet for free, fair, and transparent elections. These developments came to the fore during the hearing of the plea regarding the date for general elections in Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa today (Monday). A five-member larger bench, headed by Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Umar Ata Bandial, heard the plea. The court also issued notices to governors of two provinces through the chief secretary. "The court only needs assurance from both sides. The elections should be peaceful, transparent, and fair. If the government and PTI want elections, they have to give assurances," Chief Justice Umar Ata Bandial said. He added the parties would decide what those assurances would be like not the court. "The parties should evaluate what is and what isn't good for the public. Pakistan's Constitution was not made for only setting up or toppling the governments," he remarked suggesting it was more than that.

Continued on Page 06

## Two SC judges raise questions over CJP powers



STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: In an unusual development in the top court, two judges of the Supreme Court raised questions over the powers of the chief justice of Pakistan (CJP), saying the apex court "cannot be dependent on the solitary decision of one man, the Chief Justice". In a 27-page detailed ruling – claimed to be the judgement in Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf's (PTI) plea over the delay in Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa elections – Justice Syed

Continued on Page 06

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# Karakoram and Karachi Express to be upgraded: Saad

Saad Rafique said that process of outsourcing three airports was under way, adding that Karachi, Lahore and Islamabad airports would be outsourced

LAHORE: Railways Minister Khawaja Saad Rafique has said that Karakoram Express and Karachi Express will be upgraded by June 30 this year. Addressing a press conference here on Monday, he said these trains would be upgraded on Green Line pattern. He said that upgradation of these two trains would provide good travelling options to passengers. He said that special Eid trains would also be operated, adding that seasonal trains would be run during summers, which include Awam Express, Shalimar Express and Bahauddin Zakaria Express. He said, "We are planning to run cargo train having a capacity of transporting 12,500 tonnes of cargo." He hoped that branding initiative would help earn handsome amount of revenue. He said that land of railways would be utilised for commercial purposes, as rules had been framed and sent to the cabinet and soon approval

would be obtained. Preparation for introducing solar system at stations, terminals, buildings, DS offices, headquarters was underway to reduce electricity expenses and soon the project would be announced. Railways had decided to reduce freight fares by 10-15 per cent, he added. He said that Hirok bridge would be completed by coming April 15. The minister said that efforts were being made to make Sibi-Harnai section operational before the end of this fiscal year. Saad Rafique said that process of outsourcing three airports was under way, adding that Karachi, Lahore and Islamabad airports would be outsourced. He said these airports would be outsourced after competitive bidding. He said, "The PIA restructuring have to be carried out and the matter had been discussed with international consultants." He said that efforts were being made to give restructuring roadm-

ap in few months besides starting it's implementation. Khawaja Saad Rafique hoped that in few months, Pakistan airlines would start flying to the UK. To a question, he said Nawaz Sharif remained in opposition for 19 to 20 years but not a single corruption case was proved against him. Terming Imran Khan a fascist, he said that he had nothing to do with democracy. He said Imran Khan was in himself a Sicilian mafia. "Imran Khan is not a leader, he behaves like a gangster," added the minister. To another question, he said that it was unfortunate that democracy in the country did not strengthen in the way it should be. He said that the parliament would strengthen when all political parties would understand that they had to set aside their differences in larger national interest. He stressed the need to stop levelling dirty allegations against each other.

## REO visits Rescue 1122 office

DNA

ATTOCK: Regional Emergency Officer (REO) Rawalpindi Dr Abdul Rahman visited the Rescue 1122 office here on Monday, to inspect the rescue building and emergency vehicles and equipment. The armed rescue team saluted REO on his arrival. District Emergency Officer Ali Hussain gave a detailed briefing regarding accidents and community awareness programs in the district. Dr Abdul Rahman expressed his satisfaction with the performance of Rescue 1122 Attock and said, "The team is purely an organization for public service." REO also inaugurated the newly constructed control room to control the increasing number of emergencies at present. Ranks were assigned to those who were awarded and congratulations were also given to all the promoted officials.

## Court Notice

In the Court of Waqas Ahmed Warriach Civil Judge Jhelum, Suit for Possession Through Partition, Case Title Farhat Awais vs Muhammad Arshad etc To, Shahid Mehmood son of Muhammad Anwar R/o Ghura Saleem P O Sanghol Tehsil & Dist Jhelum. Whereas in the above mentioned case it has been proved to the satisfaction of the court that the above mentioned Defendant cannot be served in the ordinary way, it is, therefore, proclaimed under order 5, Rule 20 CPC that if the said Defendant will/shall not appear personally or through a duly authorized agent or pleader in court at 08:00am on 30-03-2023, the proceeding will be taken ex-parte. No arguments of any nature shall be entertained thereafter. Given under my hand and the seal of this court.

# PRMI to modernise regulatory regime

LAHORE: Board of Investment (BoI) Secretary Asad Rehman Gilani said on Monday that the Board had launched the Pakistan Regulatory Modernisation Initiative (PRMI), which aims to modernise the regulatory regime and prevent regulators from becoming rigid. He said that one of the ways to do that was to talk to all regulators to identify the regulations that had been in their rule books for 75 years but were completely obsolete, adding that only the applicable regulations should be entered in the BoI registry and the rest should be removed. Talking to business community here at Lahore Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LCCI), he said that those laws under which notices were issued to businesses for minor infractions should be relaxed, and it would also eliminate the overload of notices. Gilani said, "We talk about investment but we have to take care of domestic investment along with FDI (Foreign Direct Invest-

ment). Our own people have established industry by working hard and now we have to nurture the domestic industry." Regulations would be minimized and any new regulation would be finalized after study and consultation with the business community, he assured. He mentioned that 70 different types of regulators were working in the country and it has become a regulatory regime that should not happen, asserting that under the PRMI, regulators would be trained and instructed on how to make regulations. He said that it had been noticed that there were 20 to 22 regulators in the IT sector alone. "We have created a registry, the purpose of which will be to give one application instead of going to different departments. The BoI will conduct clearance from all 22 departments. So far 10 regulators have expressed their willingness with us. After that we will move to other sectors like pharmaceuticals, steel, etc.," he

added. The BoI secretary said that 'Invest Pakistan' had been launched and 'we want the business community to sit with us for the Invest Pakistan programme and five year policies should be formulated. Business community should cooperate with us in the national interest.' LCCI President Kashif Anwar said that Lahore Chamber had always advocated for making the Rules & Regulations simple and business friendly and this would definitely help in ensuring Ease of Doing Business (EoDB). Pakistan directly needed promotion of foreign and local investment. According to Economic Survey of Pakistan, he mentioned, the ratio of total investment in the country was only 15 percent of Gross Domestic Product (GDP), while private investment in this was only 10 percent, while Net Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) was reduced to US \$1.87 billion in fiscal year 2021-22 from US \$ 2.6 billion in 2019-20. —APP



RAWALPINDI: Chief Secretary Gilgit Baltistan Muhiyuddin Ahmed Wani in a meeting with Director General SCO Major General Muhammad Shahid Siddique during his visit to SCO Head Quarters. —APP



ISLAMABAD: CEO and Founder of the Monal Group Luqman Ali Afzal gives award to Qaisar Malik, a devoted employee of the Monal Group for his outstanding performance.—DNA

## Pakistani rupee sheds value against US dollar

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistani rupee started the week in negative as it depreciated by 60 paisas against the US dollar in the interbank market on Monday. According to the information received from the forex traders, the local currency lost 60 paisas in value against the greenback as the trading resumed after a gap of four days and was currently being traded at Rs283.80. On Friday last, the rupee lost 0.53% against the US dollar to settle at 283.20 in the interbank market. A significant decline was followed by two days of appreciation that trimmed losses, but fundamental reasons for the rupee's weaker position remained. A stalled programme with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) together with reports that the staff-level agreement was still a bit further away meant the currency market did not take any positive cues. Pakistan is making efforts for resumption of the IMF's Extended Fund Facility (EFF) of over \$1 billion. The release of loan from the IMF will unlock further inflows from other international creditors. In a key development, Finance Minister Ishaq Dar on Sunday had said that "friendly" countries were expected to materialise their commitments with Pakistan that would pave the way to close the deal with the IMF and revive the economy.—DNA

# CS directs convenient distribution of free 'Atta'

PESHAWAR: Chief Secretary of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), Nadeem Aslam Chaudhry, along with the Deputy Commissioner of Peshawar paid a visit to several sales and distribution points on Monday, which have been set up to provide free 'Atta' to deserving individuals registered under the Benazir Income Support Program (BISP). During the visit, the Chief Secretary interacted with the locals and inquired about their experiences and the availability of the free 'Atta'. He directed all concerned officials to ensure that the distribution process is made as convenient as possible for the registered beneficiaries. The BISP was launched by

the government in 2008 to provide financial assistance to the poor across the country. The program aims to help alleviate poverty by providing regular cash transfers to eligible families. The government has taken various measures to support the vulnerable segments of society. The provision of free 'Atta' to deserving individuals is one such initiative that has been implemented to provide some relief to those who are struggling to make ends meet. The chief secretary praised the efforts of the local administration and directed them to continue their efforts to ensure that the distribution process runs

smoothly. He emphasized that the government remains committed to providing assistance to those in need, particularly during these difficult times. The distribution of free 'Atta' is being carried out through designated sales and distribution points across the province. Eligible individuals who are registered under the BISP are entitled to receive quota free of cost. The government's efforts to support the vulnerable segments of society have been widely appreciated, and the provision of free 'Atta' is just one example of the steps being taken to alleviate the hardships faced by the people.—APP

# GB Govt, Sightsavers sign LoU

GILGIT: Government of Gilgit Baltistan and Sightsavers on Monday signed the Letter of Understanding (LoU). Sightsavers is an International Development Organization working in 33 countries to eradicate avoidable blindness and promote the rights of people with disabilities. Sightsavers is in Pakistan since 1985 and has helped government and other partner hospitals to examine more than 80 million eye care patients and has supported more than 0.7 million cataract surgeries. Furthermore, to combat childhood blindness,

Sightsavers has trained 40,000 schoolteachers to screen children in schools. This has led to screening of more than 2 million children in Pakistan for eye health problems, mainly refractive errors, the main cause of school dropouts and compromised learning outcomes. Sightsavers has provided more than 140,000 eyeglasses free of cost to those children who were identified with weak eye sight. Sightsavers, in furtherance of its commitment in Gilgit-Baltistan, is willing to support the project of "School Eye Health Screening" in Gilgit Balti-

stan. Under this project, Sightsavers will screen the school-going children in Gilgit-Baltistan for common eye problems, provide free spectacles for children with refractive error and also surgical treatment in partnership with the department of health. Sightsavers will also provide ophthalmic screening equipment for the screening team. Furthermore, Sightsavers has also penned down its commitment to the establishment of a Low Vision and IT Resource Center in Special Education Complex, Gilgit Baltistan.—APP

## PUBLIC NOTICE

Application for issuance of Letter of Administration / Succession Certificate by Ms. Sobia Wazir with regards to moveable & immoveable assets of deceased Mr. Wazir Ahmed citizen number 3520180750931 has been received. Following are declared as legal heirs. 1.Amina Ali Rao (Daughter) 2.Sobia Wazir (Daughter) 3.Sadia Wazir (Spouse)4.Zubair Ahmed (Son)5.Umair Ahmed (Son)6.Imran Ahmed (Son) 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.

INCHARGE SFU, NADRA ISLAMABAD-DSFU

## PUBLIC NOTICE

Application for issuance of Letter of Administration / Succession Certificate by Ms. Amna Durrani with regards to moveable & immoveable assets of deceased Mr. Mohammad Nasir Durrani citizen number 4230111544705 has been received. Following are declared as legal heirs. 1.Amna Durrani (Daughter) 2.Rahila Ali (Daughter)3.Sultana Shaheen (Spouse) 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.

INCHARGE SFU, NADRA ISLAMABAD-DSFU

## PUBLIC NOTICE

Application for issuance of Letter of Administration / Succession Certificate by Mr. Mohsin Sadiq with regards to moveable & immoveable assets of deceased Mr. Muhammad Sadiq citizen number 3740509441643 has been received. Following are declared as legal heirs. 1.Madiha Sadiq (Daughter) 2.Mohsin Sadiq (Son)3.Hassan Sadiq (Son) 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.

INCHARGE SFU, NADRA ISLAMABAD-DSFU

## PUBLIC NOTICE

Application for issuance of Letter of Administration / Succession Certificate by Mr. Mohsin Sadiq with regards to moveable & immoveable assets of deceased Ms. Naheed Sadiq citizen number 3740508467736 has been received. Following are declared as legal heirs. 1.Madiha Sadiq (Daughter) 2.Mohsin Sadiq (Son)3.Hassan Sadiq (Son) 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. PID (I) No. 5916/22

INCHARGE SFU, NADRA ISLAMABAD-DSFU

## NDMA cautions for effective measures amid rain-thunderstorm forecast

The provincial and federal authorities were also demanded to ensure a pro-active approach by diverting traffic, providing alternate routes, imposing move or travel restrictions, to avert any situation of road closure with stranded people

ISLAMABAD: The National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) on Monday issued a detailed guideline for federal and provincial departments to ensure effective measures to cope with any emergent situation amid weather forecasts of more rain-thunderstorm across the country. The NDMA informed that as per the Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD) forecast more rain-wind-dust and thunderstorms with occasional gaps was predicted from March 28-31 March (Tuesday to Friday). The PMD informed that a westerly wave was likely to enter western parts of the country from March 28 and likely to grip upper and central parts of the country by

March 29 and would persist in upper parts of the country till March 31. The Authority in the light of the above forecast directed all the provincial disaster management authorities (PDMAs), Gilgit Baltistan Disaster Management Authority (GBDMA), State Disaster Management Authority (SDMA) and Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) Administration, National Highway Authority (NHA), National Highways and Motorway Police (NHMP), Frontier Works Organization (FWO), Rescue 1122, line departments, ministries and federal agencies to undertake measures as per respective mandate. However, following preemptive measures were to be ensured by all concerned

in addition to measures deemed appropriate as per on ground situation: Ensure widespread circulation of alerts and advisories, especially in local languages, to raise awareness and sensitize travellers or tourists and local communities in at-risk or vulnerable areas. It also directed to engage local communities at traditionally and historically dangerous and hazard-prone sites to enable round the clock monitoring and establish feedback mechanism for early warnings and alerts for at-risk population. And also ensure adequate awareness for farmers regarding impacts on standing crops, coordinate with relevant district and municipal administrations to ensure mitigation measures for flash or urban

flooding and to secure or remove billboards or hoardings in view of thunderstorm, high winds and hailstorms. The PDMA and DDMAs were also demanded to arrange and preplace necessary inventory and other essentials at strategic locations, vulnerable or choke points in coordination with NHMP, NHA, FWO, local C&W, Rescue 1122 and line departments. The provincial and federal authorities were also demanded to ensure a pro-active approach by diverting traffic, providing alternate routes, imposing move or travel restrictions, to avert any situation of road closure with stranded people. Local administrations to assess and plan deployment of additional resources and exercise control over traffic

leading to and in vicinity of vulnerable, choke points, tourist spots to prevent losses or damages and save precious lives. It also demanded to ensure that tourists, visitors and travellers in at-risk or affected areas be apprised and forewarned about weather forecast and road conditions in coordination with NHMP, law enforcement agencies (LEAs), NHA, FWO and C&W. The tourists, visitors and travellers were advised to check PMD Weather Forecast for information on snowfall, rain and for road conditions and landslides or high flow in seasonal nullahs from control rooms, help-lines, websites and social media platforms of NHMP, NHA, FWO, DDMAs, PD-MAs and C&W before undertaking journey.—APP



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 Exchange9270831-5

WASA Rawalpindi..5555489

CAA.....9281092



Hospitals

CMH.....5611111

MH.....561116

Canth 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



Water Tank

Corporation.....9209224

Potohar Town.....9209224

Rawal Town.....5773343



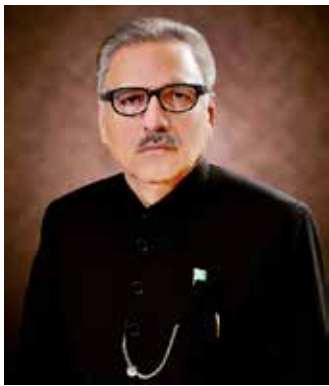
ISLAMABAD: People standing in a queue for purchasing 10kg flour bags outside the utility store at Sitara Market. —APP

Washerwoman not allotted quarter

President censures CDA's discriminatory allotment act

ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi has expressed displeasure over the Capital Development Authority (CDA)'s discriminatory and misogynist act of non-allotment of a residential quarter to a woman employee. The CDA had taken the plea that quarters could only be allotted to adult male working dhobis (washer men) as per past practice. President Alvi said that CDA had discriminated against the female employee, and upheld Wafaqi Mohtasib's orders directing CDA to allot the quarter to the female employee. While rejecting CDA's representation against the orders of the Wafaqi Mohtasib, he said that the most unfortunate part of the CDA's defence was that

allotment could only be made to a male and could not be made to a female for the same services. "This is highly discriminatory, CDA is directed to improve its rules that are ensuring such misogynist practices and send the report to Wafaqi Mohtasib of the same in 60 days," he said. The president underscored that Pakistan could not progress if its female equal members of the society were discriminated against in such a manner. He said that it was against the spirit of the founders of Pakistan, the fair practices of Islam, and also the Constitution. He directed CDA to comply with Wafaqi Mohtasib's orders and redress the grievance of the complainant and, if so required, and seek



the approval of the competent authority/forum without further loss of time. Shahnaz Begum (the complainant) had alleged that her late husband was an ex-washer man attached with CDA, and he had

applied for allotment of a dhobi quarter. She joined CDA as a washerwoman, after the death of her husband, and made a request for the allotment of a quarter, but CDA issued the same to another employee who was junior to her in the seniority list. Feeling aggrieved, she approached Wafaqi Mohtasib who passed the order that maladministration on the part of CDA was evident as it had discriminated against the complainant and was recommended to issue allotment orders for the quarter in question to the complainant and submit a compliance report within 30 days. The CDA filed a representation against the orders of the Wafaqi Mohtasib and contended that from

the beginning, the accommodation had been allotted to CDA's male employees (washermen) and it had never been allotted to any female (washerwoman). The CDA further argued that Dhobi had been defined as an adult male working dhobi and the relatives of dhobi meant adult blood relations viz. father, brother, and son. After perusal of the record and hearing the parties, it was observed that CDA had already issued an allotment of another quarter to a female washerwoman in the year 2000. The president, therefore, rejected CDA's representation and upheld Wafaqi Mohtasib's orders to issue the allotment letters of the quarter in question to the female dhobi.—APP

40 held with drugs in 35 counter narcotics operations

RAWALPINDI: Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) Pakistan has seized 512,008 kg of drugs, worth US\$ 12.490 million internationally, arrested 40 accused including two women, and two foreigners and impounded nine vehicles while conducting 35 counter-narcotics operations throughout the country last week. According to ANF Headquarters spokesman here on Monday, the seized drugs comprised 31.665 kg heroin, 438.700 kg hashish, 29,800 kg opium, 9,880 kg methamphetamine (Ice), 1.913 kg cocaine, 50 grams

ecstasy tabs (100 tablets) and 7.220 kg suspected material. ANF Balochistan recovered 127 kg drugs in three operations and arrested an accused involved in drug smuggling besides impounding a vehicle. The seized drugs comprised 25 kg heroin, 100 kg hashish and two kg methamphetamine (Ice). ANF Punjab recovered 96.297 kg drugs in nine operations and arrested 15 accused including a foreigner involved in drug smuggling besides impounding six vehicles. The seized drugs comprised 3.597 kg heroin, 19,200 kg

opium, 72.800 kg hashish and 0.700 kg methamphetamine (Ice). ANF KPK recovered 129.263 kg drugs in 11 operations and arrested five accused including a foreigner involved in drug smuggling. The seized drugs comprised 1.100 kg heroin, 124.600 kg hashish, 1.913 kg cocaine and 1.650 kg methamphetamine (Ice). ANF Sindh recovered 143.07 kg of drugs and 7.220 kg of suspected material in seven operations and arrested eight persons involved in drug smuggling and impounded a vehicle. The seized drugs com-

prised four kg opium, 1,020 kg heroin, 138 kg hashish, 50 grams ecstasy tabs (100 tablets). ANF North recovered 16.378 kg of drugs in five operations, arrested 11 persons including two women in drug smuggling and impounded a vehicle. The seized drugs comprised 6.600 kg opium, 0.948 kg heroin, 3.300 kg hashish and 5.530 kg methamphetamine (Ice). All cases have been registered at respective ANF Police Stations under CNS Act 1997 and further investigations are under process.—APP

Met Office forecast more rainfall from today

The westerly wave will likely persist in upper parts of Pakistan for next three days, according to the Met Office. Several areas of the country will receive rainfall

**DNA**  
ISLAMABAD: Met Office has forecast entry of a westerly wave in western parts of the country from Tuesday. This weather system likely to grip upper and central parts of country on 29th March (Wednesday) and likely to persist in upper parts till 31st March. This weather system will bring rainfall with gusty winds and hailstorm in the country from Tuesday to Friday. The westerly wave will likely persist in upper parts of Pakistan for next three days, according to the Met Office. Several areas of the country will receive rainfall. Kashmir and Gilgit Baltistan will likely receive a spell of rain and snowfall from April 1st. Rain, wind or thunderstorm with isolated heavy

falls and hailstorm will lash several areas of Balochistan including Nokkundi, Dalbandin, Quetta, Zhob, Barkhan, Harnai, Qila Saifullah, Qilla Abdullah, Chaman, Pishin, Sibbi, Loralai, Kalat, Khuzdar, Lasbella, Panjgur, Awaran, Kech from 28th to 31st March. Sukkur, Larkana, Jacobabad, Shaheed Benazirabad, Mirpurkhas, Hyderabad, and Karachi will receive rain on March 29-30. Dera Ghazi Khan, Rajanpur, Bhakkar, Layyah, Multan, Sahiwal, Okara, Pakpattan, Khanewal, ahawalnagar, Bahawalpur, Rahim Yar khan in southern Punjab will receive rainfall on March 29-30. Another westerly wave is expected to enter western and upper parts of the country on 01st April and likely

to persist over Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, upper Punjab, Islamabad, Kashmir and Gilgit Baltistan till 04th April. Strong wind and hailstorm may cause damage to lose infrastructure and standing crops (particularly wheat) in the country. Heavy Rains may cause flash floods in Quetta, Chaman, Pishin, Barkhan, usakhel, Jaffarabad, Kohlu, Zhob, Loralai and hill torrents of D.G Khan on 28th and 29th March while in Dir, Swat, Kohistan, Nowshera, Mardan, Waziristan, Bajur, Islamabad/Rawalpindi and Kashmir and urban flooding in Peshawar, Islamabad/Rawalpindi and Lahore from 29th to 31st March. Landslides may occur in hilly areas of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Gilgit-Baltistan, Kashmir, Murree and Galiyat during the forecast period.

FIA collaborating with Intl bodies

ISLAMABAD: Minister of State for Interior, Abdul Rehman Khan Kanju, stated during a session of the National Assembly on Monday that the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) was actively collaborating with international organisations to combat the issue of human trafficking. Responding to a calling attention notice regarding incidents of human trafficking, he said, "The Government of Pakistan is collaborating with the international organisations including UNODC to tackle human trafficking." Sharing the details with the House, he stated that a ministerial committee, headed by the Minister for Interior and comprising chief secretaries, was working round the clock to check human trafficking. The minister said an inter-agency task force had also been established to monitor the routes being used for human trafficking. He also urged people not to use illegal channels to move abroad. He said the capacity building of the relevant departments was also underway to enable them for dealing with this menace.—APP

Two govt. bills introduced in National Assembly

ISLAMABAD: The National Assembly on Monday witnessed introduction of two government bills which were referred to the relevant committees for further consideration. Minister for Parliamentary Affairs Murtaza Javed Abbasi introduced the Protection of Journalists and Media Professionals (Amendment) Bill, 2023 and the Press, Newspapers, News Agencies and Books Registration (Amendment) Bill, 2023. Both bills were referred to the relevant committee for further consideration. The Protection of Journalists and Media Professionals (Amendment) Bill, 2023 aims to transfer implementation of the Protection of Journalists and Media Pro-

fessionals Act, 2021 from the Ministry of Human Rights to the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting. Whereas, the Press, Newspapers, News Agencies and Books Registration (Amendment) Bill, 2023 seeks to substitute the words "Federal Government" with the words "Prime Minister" wherever occurring in the Press, Newspaper, News Agencies and Book Registration Ordinance, 2002. Minister for Parliamentary Affairs Murtaza Javed Abbasi also presented the report on the observance and implementation of principles of policy in relation to the affairs of the federation for the years 2013-14 to 2017-18 and for the years 2018-19 to 2019-20.—APP

Ufone 4G saunches WhatsApp service

**DNA**  
ISLAMABAD: Ufone 4G, the leading mobile company of Pakistan, is proud to unveil its WhatsApp Chatbot to enhance interactions with millions of customers, powered by leading Cloud communication platform E.Ocean. Customers can now avail various telecom services instantly and enjoy a superior digital experience by simply sending a message via WhatsApp on 03311333100. With the launch of high-powered WhatsApp chatbot, customers have the flexibility to choose their preferred language menu in Urdu or English, making it effortless for them to access a wide range of services round the clock. From managing post-paid bill payments, requesting new Ufone SIMs, topping up accounts via debit or credit card, renewing balances, subscribing to super cards, internet bundles & VAS bundles, monitoring account status, accessing customer support, getting tax certificates and subscribing to roaming bundles, this service has got you covered. Commenting on the launch, Syed Atif Raza, Chief Marketing Officer, Ufone 4G, said "Our foremost priority is convenience for our customers; hence, we are always exploring new opportunities to adopt latest technology that will not only help in digitalization of our process but also make lives of our customers hassle-free. The successful launch of our WhatsApp service will provide seamless services to our customers and enable them to get timely response on their queries and complaints. Customers will have a more streamlined experience that will be engaging and convenient. Ufone 4G prides itself on being a customer-centric organization that places great emphasis on meeting the ever-changing needs of its valued customers." Syed Aamir Jafri, CEO, Eocean, added "It is essential for companies to accelerate digital transformation to remain competitive and enhance customer experience.

Govt planning to provide targeted subsidy

ISLAMABAD: Minister of State for Finance Aisha Ghaus Pasha on Monday informed the National Assembly that the government was planning to provide targeted subsidy on petroleum products. Responding to various supplementary questions during Question Hour, she said that inflation jumped to 27.6 percent in January from 24.5 percent recorded in December. The average inflation during July 2022-January 2023 has reached 25.4 percent due to various reasons including the Russia-Ukraine war, higher international commodities prices, currency depreciation, and fiscal consolidation measures taken to improve the country's macroeconomic conditions, she added. She said wheat and other food items had to be imported at a higher cost due to the lingering impact of floods. However, the government was making hectic efforts to provide relief to the common man keeping in view the current inflationary trends, she added. The minister said the government has enhanced the stipends under Benazir Income Support Program (BISP) to support deserving families.—APP

PSX witnesses bullish trend, gains 58.32 points

ISLAMABAD: The 100-index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) witnessed a bullish trend on Monday, gaining 58.32 points, with a positive change of 0.15 percent, closing at 40,000.37 against 39,942.05 points on the previous day. A total of 64,511,856 shares were traded during the day as compared to 46,728,175 shares the previous day, whereas the price of shares stood at Rs 2,501 billion against Rs 1,294 billion on the last trading day. As many as 317 companies transacted their shares in the stock market; 135 of them recorded gains and 154 sustained losses, whereas the share price of 28 companies remained unchanged. The three top-trading companies were WorldCall Telecom with 5,040,140 shares at Rs 1.20 per share, Meezan Bank XD with 4,762,770 shares at Rs 92.75 per share, and Telecard Limited with 4,363,500 shares at Rs 7.29 per share.—APP

PARC to produce 150,000 4th-generation potato seeds

ISLAMABAD :The Pakistan Agriculture Research Council (PARC) would produce over 150,000 tonnes of high-quality fourth-generation seed potatoes to ensure the supply of virus-free seed to local growers to enhance per-acre output in the country. Accordingly, the PARC in collaboration with Korean Program on International Agriculture (KOPIA) will also establish 35 aeroponic greenhouses to produce first-generation seed potato tubers for large-scale cultivation to produce virus-free potato seed. Currently, Pakistan and Korea are working jointly on seed potato production through aeroponic technology and more than 30 per cent of potato seed requirements could be met from the tissue culture labs at National Agriculture Research Center (NARC), a PARC official told APP on Monday. He said the 2nd crop was ready for harvesting at the NARC, adding the PARC and KOPIA were collaborating on a project for Aeroponic Potato Seed Production System, with the goal of achieving higher productivity, reducing post-harvest losses, promoting farm-level processing, developing human resources.—APP



## Briefs

**Weak agri sector will never allow economy to grow**

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Economy Watch (PEW) on Monday said the plight of the agricultural sector will never allow the economy to develop. Inflation and poverty are continuously increasing due to collapsing agri sector, the food security situation is deteriorating and the import bill of agricultural inputs is increasing, it said. The growth of this important sector has been 2.2 percent to 2.6 since the last fifteen years which is very low while during this period there has been a tremendous increase in the population and the demand for the industrial sector, said Brig. (ret'd) Aslam Khan, Chairman of PEW. In a statement issued here today, he said that wheat, maize, cotton, sugarcane, and rice are the most cultivated crops which consume most of the water, labor and capital, but their production has increased by only 1.1% in the last two decades.—DNA

**Viral infections on rise due to changing weather**

ISLAMABAD: The change in weather is causing flu, cough and fever and other respiratory diseases among people especially children in the twin cities. Talking to a private news channel, Dr Zia Hassan said instructions were being issued to people including to protect themselves from cold and wear warm clothes, besides drinking soup and coffee to keep themselves warm. Informing about a viral infection that was spreading rapidly, he urged parents not to send sick children to schools so that other children could be protected from contracting the infection. Dr Zia shared that currently, there was a lot of pollution in the atmosphere and asked the citizens to take care of their health and use masks regularly. He said that there had been an extraordinary increase in the number of patients in the OPDs, including children, the elderly, youth and women. In the OPDs, he said patients were being advised to sit at a distance and wear masks to prevent the spread of viral infections. Dr Zia said that patients were also being instructed to use medicines regularly and take precautionary measures.—APP

**Spring sowing of Sino maize-soybean**

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The spring sowing of maize-soybean strip intercropping technology, a high-yielding solution from China and optimized based on Pakistan's local conditions by young Pakistani scientists, is just completed in Pakistan, Gwadar Pro reported on Monday. According to the National Research Center of Intercropping (NRCI), the Islamia University of Bahawalpur (IUB), the total area under cultivation with this technology this season is more than 1,100 acres across the country. The Chinese maize-soybean strip intercropping technology was introduced to Pakistan in 2018 by Dr. Muhammad Ali Raza, a post-doc who graduated from Sichuan Agricultural University (SAU), China and now acts as the Director of NRCI. Compared with the 400-acre land in 2022 spring, the demonstration area this season is increased by 175% year-on-year, a giant leap indeed. "This year, we have arranged demonstrations in three provinces i.e. Punjab, Sindh, and KPK, and the total number of demonstration arranged by NRCI is 71," Dr. Muhammad Ali Raza told Gwadar Pro. More specifically, in Punjab, maize-soybean strip intercropping trials are being carried out at 50 different locations.—APP

# Climate Change mitigation by solar radiation illusion

The former IPCC vice-chair vowed to transform the global climate science forum into the world's strongest and rigorous global voice of climate change

ISLAMABAD: Former vice-chair of Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and award-winning science commentator, Prof. Jean-Pascal van Ypersele who is also a candidate for the upcoming IPCC chair election said that solar radiation management was a premature technology and had huge risks associated to it. "It is a big illusion to think that strategies to mitigate climate changes can be simply replaced by adopting solar radiation management," he emphasized.

In an exclusive interview with APP, Dr Jean-Pascal van Ypersele said the IPCC, in its past three reports, had warned on the potential impacts of solar radiation management. The former IPCC vice-chair vowed to transform the global climate science forum into the world's strongest and rigorous global voice of climate change. Prof. van Ypersele is contesting for the chairmanship of the IPCC for the second time. Earlier, he lost the

polls to the Republic of Korea's Hoesung Lee and had managed to receive the second highest votes. Prof. van Ypersele has the official support of the Belgian government for his candidacy. He has experience of four decades in climate science and diplomacy. He remained IPCC vice-chair from 2008-2015 and has been active at the forum since 1995. Prof. Jean-Pascal van Ypersele said he had set a clear cut agenda of taking the IPCC to new heights of excellence and glory as the global environmental body. He said it is a useful and relevant body for all kinds of decision makers including businesses, policy makers, media, teachers and common people etc. Prof. van Ypersele said the decisions taken by the relevant stakeholders had serious repercussions and impacts that needed to be guided through proper and accurate science based data. He also expressed his intentions to turn the institution into an all inclusive institution.

Dr. van Ypersele said the IPCC is an intergovernmental organisation involving a variety of scientists who know the reality of their regions and that it was important to involve as many developing country scientists as possible so that the IPCC could have a holistic view of both the climate challenges and its solutions. He mentioned that he had the experience of working in an inclusive manner whereas inclusivity according to him meant in particular gender equality and a better developing country scientists' participation. Moreover, he also underlined the need to create better balance between young scientists who had innovative and new ideas and senior scientists having more experience and wisdom. He added that the paramount principle of IPCC should be respect for all, making the working environment as collegial as possible because the IPCC had people from different regions and cultures. "I want to take IPCC to

new heights of glory as it already had received a Nobel Peace prize. I believe we can still serve the needs of international community better. The IPCC needs to be a strong voice to raise the awareness and to fill those gaps in effective action and funding on climate change. It's not the mandate of the IPCC to fill those gaps, whereas it can work in partnerships for the cause with not only the UN and donor agencies but with everybody," he said. Responding to a query on slow climate action despite globally acknowledged and convincing scientific data on environmental degradation due to global warming, Prof. van Ypersele said this question should be part of the subject of the next IPCC report as there was much evidence on climate which was not translated into action. Dr. van Ypersele said another side effect of solar radiation management is potential impact on monsoon stability and the health

of the ozone layer. Being a strong supporter of the global target of limiting earth warming below 1.5°C to avert worst climate impacts such as heat waves and floods, Dr. van Ypersele said if carbon dioxide (CO2) emissions are left unattended to spike up in business as usual fashion then it will have wide ranging effects causing worst climate catastrophes. He added that out of the total annual global CO2 emissions of 40 billion tonnes through human activities such as burning coal, oil, or gas, some 10 billion tonnes were absorbed by the ocean and 10 billion tonnes by the forests and soils and the remaining accumulates in the atmosphere which is the main reason the global temperature increases. He added that the CO2 absorbed by the ocean acidify the ocean water. "This is not good for marine life, and solar radiation management would not help at all if the CO2 emissions are not strongly reduced," he said.—Agencis

**Mohsin Leghari takes oath**

ISLAMABAD: The newly elected legislator of Pakistan Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Mohsin Khan Leghari on Monday took oath as Member of the National Assembly. Speaker National Assembly Raja Perwaiz Ashraf administered the oath from the member. Later, he signed the roll of members as required by the rules. It is pertinent to mention here that, PTI candidate Muhammad Mohsin Khan Leghari has won the by-election from the National Assembly's constituency NA-193 Rajanpur-I. Mohsin Leghari had bagged 90,392 votes followed by PML-N candidate Ammar Ahmed Khan Leghari with 55,218 votes. The seat was vacated after former PTI MNA Sardar Jafar Khan Leghari had passed away on December 31, 2022 after a prolonged illness.—APP

**ANF recovers over 74 kg drugs; arrests five**

RAWALPINDI: Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) recovered over 74 kg drugs while conducting seven operations across the country and arrested five accused, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman here on Monday. He informed that ANF and ASF in an operation at Islamabad International Airport recovered over two kg Ice drug from the possession of a Qatar-bound passenger, resident of Swabi. In another operation, 131 heroin-filled capsules were recovered from the possession of a Dubai-bound passenger, resident of Khyber Agency netted at Islamabad International Airport. In third operation at Lahore International Airport, 30 heroin-filled capsules were recovered from the possession of a Bangkok-bound passenger, resident of Pakpattan. The spokesman informed that ANF in an operation in Faisalabad managed to recover 4.8 kg opium and rounded up two accused, residents of Faisalabad. ANF and FC in two different operations in Khyber recovered 43 kg charras.—APP

**PTDC hopeful for boom in tourism sector**

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Tourism Development Corporation (PTDC) after taking numerous measures to promote tourism in Pakistan by projecting and marketing the country's history, culture, arts and tourism, was hoping to achieve a boom in the tourism sector. After realizing the growth potential of the tourism sector in the country, the PTDC initiated devising policies, strategies and frameworks to attract tourists coming from various parts of the country and the world. "Pakistan is rich with cultural heritage and potential for immense tourism due to its unmatched landscape, natural beauty, diverse culture, and cuisine," said a press release issued by PTDC on Monday.—APP

**SSP supervises security arrangements**

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Yasir Afridi is supervising security arrangements during appearance of Imran Khan in Islamabad High Court, police said on Monday. Islamabad police tweeted that an important meeting was chaired by the IGP Islamabad over the expected court appearance of Imran Khan to discuss security arrangements. Senior officers of police including the operations DIG and SSP attended the meeting. It was decided that field supervision of security arrangements would be supervised by SSP Yasir Afridi. Amir Kiyani was entrusted with coordination on behalf of the PTI, while Malik Jameel Zafar would be head of coordination between the police and PTI through Kiyani. A central control room has been set up at the Safe City Headquarters. Meanwhile, Section 144 is in force in Islamabad and violators will be arrested. In light of court orders, only concerned persons will be allowed to enter the court premises, the police tweeted.

## China's economy seeing a strong rebound

DNA

ISLAMABAD: "China's economy is seeing a strong rebound, and the IMF's January forecast puts its GDP growth at 5.2 percent this year—a sizeable increase of more than 2 percentage points from the 2022 rate," said IMF managing director Kristalina Georgieva. According to a China Economic Net (CEN) on Monday, the robust rebound means China is set to account for around one third of global growth in 2023—giving a welcome lift to the world economy, she said during the China Development Forum 2023. Beyond the direct contribute to global growth, Georgieva said IMF's analysis shows that a 1 percentage point increase in GDP growth in China leads to 0.3 percentage point increase in growth in other Asian economies, on average. For the world economy, however, spring is yet to come. "We expect 2023 to be another challenging year, with global growth slowing to below 3% as scarring from the pandemic, the war in Ukraine, and monetary tightening weigh on economic activity. Even with a better outlook for 2024, global growth will remain well below its historic average of 3.8%," she said. Among the weak global economy, Georgieva said policymakers had acted decisively in response to financial stability risks, adding that IMF will continue to monitor developments closely and pay close attention to the most vulnerable countries, in particular low-income countries with high levels of debt. In addition, Georgieva highlighted two opportunities for policymakers at the meeting. One is to raise productivity and rebalance the economy away from investment and towards more consumption-driven growth. The second is green growth. China has played a constructive role in addressing global challenges, including its contributions to Poverty Reduction and Growth Trust and helping highly-indebted countries, Georgieva said and called on all countries to work together to foster more peace and prosperity—a global economy in full bloom.



ISLAMABAD: A vendor busy in preparing traditional food item (jalebi) to attract the customers during Holy fasting month of Ramazan.—APP

## Pakistan earns \$476 mln by exporting transport services

The export of postal and courier services also declined by 0.24 per cent, from \$4.190 million to \$4.180 million, the data revealed

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan earned US \$476.840 million by providing different transport services in various countries during the seven months of the current fiscal year (2022-23) as compared to the corresponding period of last year. This shows a growth of 9.91 per cent as compared to \$433.860 million earned through the provision of services during the corresponding period of the fiscal year (2021-22), the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) reported. During the months under review, the exports of sea transport services witnessed an increase of 49.11 per cent, going up from \$66,020 million last year to \$98,440 million during the months under review. Among the sea transport services, the exports of freight services increased by 110.62 per cent from \$39,450 million last year to \$83,090 million whereas the exports of other sea transport services decrease by 42.23 per cent from \$26,570 million to \$15,350 million current year, the PBS data revealed. The exports of air transport rose by 3.44 per cent

going up from \$354.190 million last year to \$366.390 million during July-January (2022-23). Among the air transport services, the exports of passenger services increased by 7.55 per cent, from \$230.050 million to \$247.430 million, whereas the exports of freight services surged by 3.46 per cent, from \$17,910 million to \$18,530 million, in addition, the export of other air transport services also dipped by 5.46 per cent from \$106.230 million to \$100.430 million. Meanwhile, the exports of road transport services during the months under review witnessed a decline of 17.23 per cent by going down from \$9,460 million to \$7,830 million during this year, it added. Among the road transport services, the exports of freight services increased by 33.17 per cent, from \$1,990 million to \$2,650 million during the fiscal year under review, while other road services dipped by 30.66 per cent to \$ 5,180 million from \$7,470 million. The export of postal and courier services also declined by 0.24 per cent, from \$4.190 million to \$4.180 million, the data revealed.—APP

## India has intensified state terrorism

ISLAMABAD: In Indian illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir, the All Parties Hurriyat Conference has said that Indian state terrorism in the sacred month of Ramadan has increased manifold and Indian troops are killing, arresting and brutalizing Kashmiris mercilessly to punish them for demanding their basic right

to self-determination. According to the Kashmir Media service, Senior APHC leader Ghulam Ahmed Gulzar in a statement issued in Srinagar said that Indian state terrorism has turned Kashmir into a mourning place where thousands of Kashmiris have lost their loved ones as well as livelihoods

and are living in abject poverty. He deplored the horrible increase in Indian state terrorism during Ramadan and said that Hindutva forces have no regard for this sacred month. The APHC leader said that Indian forces have not only intensified their genocidal campaign but have also stepped up the siege and search operations, especially during Sehara and Ifar timings. This wave of intimidation, he said, is meant to spread fear and

terror among Kashmiri Muslims and also to disrupt their prayers. He urged the people to pray for the freedom of Kashmir from Indian slavery in the holy month of Ramadan and appealed to philanthropists to demonstrate generosity and help the poor and needy during the sacred month. Ghulam Ahmed Gulzar also called on the Muslim Ummah to feel the pain of oppressed Kashmiris and come forward to save them.—APP

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Member APNS / ABC Certified

Vol: 03 Issue: 200

Email: [dailyisbpost@gmail.com](mailto:dailyisbpost@gmail.com)

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## Nord Stream saboteurs must be revealed

Veteran US investigative journalist and Pulitzer Prize winner Seymour Hersh, who revealed in February that the United States was behind the operation to blow up three of the four Nord Stream gas pipelines last September, claimed last week that the White House is now attempting a “cover-up” of the sabotage by feeding false alternative narratives to the media.

He was referring to a story run by The New York Times early this month, which alleged that “a pro-Ukrainian group carried out the attack”. The information “originated with a group of CIA experts in deception and propaganda whose mission was to feed the newspaper a cover story”, Hersh wrote. “The disinformation professionals inside the CIA understand that a propaganda gambit can only work if those on the receiving end are desperate for a story that can diminish or displace an unwanted truth”.

The displacement gambit being offered — that a team of six people using a rented yacht were responsible for the pipeline explosions — has failed to convince experts, who say the sabotage could only have been carried out at the state level. Initial probes by Swedish and Danish investigators suggest that the blasts were equivalent to “several hundred kilos of explosives”, which damaged the pipelines up to 100 meters under the Baltic Sea, setting off an environmental nightmare as half a million metric tons of methane was leaked.

Danish seismic monitoring equipment on the island of Bornholm detected the equivalent of a 500 kilogram TNT explosion in the sabotage event that destroyed both pipes of the Nord Stream 1 pipeline and one of the Nord Stream 2 pipelines. The alternative rent-a-yacht scenario prompted Jan Oberg, director of the Transnational Foundation for Peace and Future Research, to call the narrative “dumb, improbable and unlikely”. It is interesting to note that while Washington has rejected Hersh’s detailed revelation as “utterly false and complete fiction”, pointing to it being based on anonymous sourcing, it has yet to say anything negative about The New York Times’ account of the attack, even though it quotes unnamed US officials denying any US government involvement. Given the attack was on transnational infrastructure and the substantial and worrisome environmental consequences from the blasts, in terms of both the greenhouse gas emissions and the disturbance of heavy metal contaminants in the seabed sediment, it is both necessary and urgent that an independent, impartial, objective and transparent investigation be conducted as soon as possible under the auspices of the United Nations, with broad participation by international experts to determine the culprits. The deliberate sabotaging of transboundary infrastructure by any party amounts to an act of international terrorism that must be dealt with collectively by the international community.



## How Covid began: look to the future

We may never know for certain how a disease that brought the world to a standstill and has killed almost 7 million people emerged. While many experts believe that Covid-19 arose through human contact with infected animals, most likely via a wet market in Wuhan, China, a significant number believe it probably escaped from the city’s Institute of Virology. Others retain an open mind. But politics has turbocharged a scientific question. Donald Trump hyped the lab leak theory without evidence; yet some scientists fear that, in the haste to challenge xenophobic buck-passing that was fueling anti-Asian hate crime, others may have been too quick to dismiss entirely a genuine possibility.

The simmering, rancorous debate began heating up again late last month when it emerged that the US Department of Energy had concluded, though with “low confidence”, that a lab escape was probably to blame. The FBI agrees, while four other US agencies blame natural spillover and two — including the CIA — remain undecided. Then, a new analysis of gene sequences taken from swabs from the market showed that some Covid-positive samples were rich in DNA from raccoon dogs, bolstering the case that it began through infected animals sold at the site. As the row gathers pace, Joe Biden has ordered the release of intelligence on the pandemic’s origins. The matter has been further complicated by a morass of wild rumour and conspiracy theories, suggesting without evidence that the emergence or dissemination of the virus might have been deliberate. As one expert noted: “The hypothesis of a lab-associated origin became synonymous with deliberate efforts to engineer viruses and malevolent intent, and this has not been helpful.”

The World Health Organization concluded from its initial investigation that a lab leak was “extremely unlikely” to have caused the pandemic, but the second phase of its inquiries has stalled as Beijing has failed to share more data. China has a history of cover-ups, including over the deadly Sars outbreak; officials in Wuhan attempted to hide early Covid cases, arresting people who posted about the mysterious new disease; the top leadership in Beijing reportedly waited six days to warn the public after determining that a pandemic was likely; and officials have promoted disinformation implying that the virus might have come from a US lab. We do not need to know Covid’s origins to defend ourselves against future pandemics. It is clear that closer contact with wild creatures increases the risks of viruses jumping from animals to humans. We also know that dangerous diseases have escaped from labs before, and that biosecurity is too often poor. Whichever risk led to the pandemic, both must be addressed urgently. Radically expanding disease surveillance, preserving natural habitats, rethinking industrialised farming, and improving vigilance at and monitoring of laboratories, are all required. This, rather than the blame game, is what politicians should prioritise.

# Israel’s radicalization train is out of control

Daoud Kuttab

The slogan “Jordan is Palestine” was perhaps the biggest source of concern to many. The “Jordan is Palestine” argument was a source of concern that Israel planned to further expel Palestinians from the Occupied Territories to the east of the Jordan river and thus de-establish Jordan to the degree that it would become a Palestinian state.

The strongest response to this argument comes from Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, who has often said that “Palestine is Palestine and Jordan is Jordan.” Never did the Jordanians expect that this issue would reflect the opinion of a senior Israeli

One of the most worrisome issues for the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan has been the threats by right-wing Israeli extremists to deport a large number of Palestinians to the country. The slogan “Jordan is Palestine” was perhaps the biggest source of concern to many. The “Jordan is Palestine” argument was a source of concern that Israel planned to further expel Palestinians from the Occupied Territories to the east of the Jordan river and thus de-establish Jordan to the degree that it would become a Palestinian state. The strongest response to this argument comes from Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, who has often said that “Palestine is Palestine and Jordan is Jordan.” Never did the Jordanians expect that this issue would reflect the opinion of a senior Israeli minister, especially since the signing of the 1994 peace agreement between the two countries. However, on Sunday, Israeli Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich gave a speech in France from a podium that was adorned with a map based on the logo of the former Irgun militia, which was considered a terrorist organization by the British. This has correctly caused uproar in Jordan. The map (minus the gun that appears on the original Irgun logo) shows Israel expanding into Jordan, south Lebanon and southern Syria, and even a small part of what is now Saudi Arabia.

The map was noticed coincidentally after reports emerged of what Smotrich said at the event regarding the Palestinians. Smotrich has previously said his last name was derived from the Ukrainian town of Smotrych, where his ancestors lived. His attempts at negating the very existence of Palestinians and adopting the claim of being the original Palestinian is an almost verbatim echo of what another former Ukrainian, Golda Meir, said in 1969. The then-Israeli prime minister said in an interview with Frank Giles, deputy editor of The

Sunday Times, “There was no such thing as Palestinians.”

This quote has been frequently used to illustrate Israel’s denial of Palestinian history and is considered to sum up the Palestinians’ sense of victimization by Israel. It is considered to be a successor to the early Christian Zionist phrase “A land without a people for a people without a land,” and a predecessor to the academically discredited 1984 book “From Time Immemorial” and the 2017 satire “A History of the Palestinian People.” Edward Said described it as Meir’s “most celebrated remark,” adding that her “jingoistic comments concerning Palestinians remain one of her defining — and most damning — legacies.” At the Rabat Arab League Summit in 1974, Jordan gave up representing Palestinians and recognized the Palestine Liberation Organization as the “sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people.” In 1988, Amman severed all ties with the West Bank and, since then, all maps of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan have excluded the areas west of the river.

The PLO received a boost of sorts when the First Intifada erupted in 1987 and the local intifada leadership insisted on the organization representing them. The PLO even received official Israeli acceptance when Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin exchanged letters of recognition with it in 1993. Rabin’s letter was addressed to PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat and it stated: “Mr. Chairman, In response to your letter of September 9, 1993, I wish to confirm to you that, in light of the PLO commitments included in your letter, the Government of Israel has decided to recognize the PLO as the representative of the Palestinian people and commence negotiations with the PLO within the Middle East peace process.”

Now, nearly 30 years later, we are back to below square one. A senior Israeli minister has negat-

ed the existence of the Palestinian people and indirectly denied everything that happened not only at that White House signing ceremony in 1993 but also in 1994, when Israel and Jordan signed the Wadi Araba treaty, making Jordan the second sovereign Arab country to sign a peace agreement with Israel.

Many in Palestine and Jordan still remember the fact that the Herut party, which formed the nucleus of what is now the Likud, had a saying that the Jordan river “has two banks, this one is ours and the other one too.”

Smotrich’s statement and the map provoked immediate and angry responses from Palestinians and Jordanians. Palestinian Prime Minister Mohammed Shtayyeh said that Smotrich’s statement was perfect evidence of the “extremist, racist, Zionist ideology that governs the current Israeli government.”

In Jordan, Prince Hassan bin Talal slammed the Israeli minister and called what he said and the map he stood in front of “a violation of laws and morals.” Jordanian Sen. Mohammed Momani, a former deputy prime minister and the secretary-general of the Mithaq party, called on the government to immediately denounce the statements and the map that Smotrich stood behind. “The statement must be condemned and diplomatic as well as political action must be taken against this radical Israeli government,” he told AmmanNet. On the eve of Ramadan and amid the worries of King Abdullah and others that things could get worse, the map and the statements by a senior Israeli Cabinet minister — which have not been (so far) condemned by the prime minister of Israel — put the Jordanian government, King Abdullah and the Palestinians in a very difficult position, as they are unable to get the Israelis to stop their radicalization train that is out of control.

Courtesy: Arab News

# Saudi-Iran deal opens the door to peace in Yemen

Dr. Majid rafizadeh

The Iranian leaders appear optimistic that the detente between Tehran and Riyadh will indeed bring peace to Yemen. In a meeting with UN Special Envoy for Yemen Hans Grundberg just a few days after the agreement was sealed, Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian insisted that his government “backs any negotiations which would help establish peace and stability in Yemen.” It has also been reported that Iran’s permanent mission to the UN believes the deal with Saudi Arabia stands to contribute to the realization of a permanent ceasefire in Yemen. A statement released by the mission said that the reinstatement of diplomatic ties would have “positive” implications

One of the most important issues linked to the recent agreement between Saudi Arabia and Iran is a possible end to the conflict in Yemen. This month’s deal was a step in the right direction, as the Iranian government has asserted that rapprochement with the Kingdom will help achieve this critical objective. The Iranian leaders appear optimistic that the detente between Tehran and Riyadh will indeed bring peace to Yemen. In a meeting with UN Special Envoy for Yemen Hans Grundberg just a few days after the agreement was sealed, Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian insisted that his government “backs any negotiations which would help establish peace and stability in Yemen.”

It has also been reported that Iran’s permanent mission to the UN believes the deal with Saudi Arabia stands to contribute to the realization of a permanent ceasefire in Yemen. A statement released by the mission said that the reinstatement of diplomatic ties would have “positive” implications on the bilateral, regional and international levels. “It appears (therefore) that reestablishment of political relations between Iran and Saudi Arabia will accelerate the achievement of a ceasefire in Yemen,” the statement noted. Several other positive developments have occurred since the Saudi-Iranian pact was reached. For example, the UN has initiated “intense” diplomacy as a result. Grundberg told the UN Security Council this month that there has been “a step change in the scope and

depth of the discussions.” He also urged Yemen’s internationally recognized government and the Houthi rebels “to seize the opportunities” created by the new momentum. Grundberg added: “The parties must seize the opportunity presented by this regional and international momentum to take decisive steps towards a more peaceful future ... This requires patience and a long-term perspective. And this requires courage and leadership.”

One critical step that would help bring peace and stability to Yemen would be for Iran to stop delivering weapons to the Houthis. The Iranian government can order the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps to refrain from providing any military assistance to the Houthis. Fortunately, the Iranian leaders have pledged that they will do so, according to The Wall Street Journal, which reported that Tehran has agreed to “halt covert weapons shipments to its Houthi allies” in a move that could inject new momentum into efforts to end one of the region’s longest-running civil wars.” By halting its deliveries of weapons to the Houthis, Iran’s legitimacy will be enhanced not only in the region, but also on the global stage due to the fact that Tehran will show that it is respecting international law and honoring the UN’s arms embargo on the Houthis. UN Security Council Resolution 2216, which was passed in 2015, stipulates that “all Member States shall immediately take the necessary measures to prevent the direct or indirect supply, sale or transfer to” the Houthis. It covers “weapons and ammunition, military vehicles and equipment, paramilitary equipment, and spare parts for the aforementioned, and

technical assistance, training, financial or other assistance, related to military activities or the provision, maintenance or use of any arms and related materiel, including the provision of armed mercenary personnel whether or not originating in their territories.” One of the major reasons for the intensity, scope and length of the conflict in Yemen is the Houthis’ ability to acquire weapons, without which there would be a greater incentive for the group to reach an agreement in order to bring an end to the conflict. While Yemen does not pose a national security threat to Iran, it does to Saudi Arabia, since it shares a border with the Gulf state. Generally speaking, when non-state actors believe that a government is backing them financially and militarily, they will have less incentive to reach a deal. Another benefit that the Iranian government will gain from shifting its policy toward the Houthis and halting its weapons deliveries is economic. Halting its financial, advisory, intelligence and political support to the Houthis would not only enhance Tehran’s legitimacy, but it could also save the Iranian leaders a significant amount of money. In a nutshell, thanks to the Saudi-Iranian agreement, Tehran can play a critical role in bringing peace and stability to Yemen. And the latest development to come out of Tehran — Iran’s reported decision to stop arming the Houthis — is a positive step in the right direction, which will undoubtedly increase regional peace, security and stability.

—Courtesy: Arab News



## Briefs

## ECP served notice over polls' delay

FROM PAGE 01  
The SC's top judge said that the Constitution was interpreted while keeping the life and happiness of people in mind. "The current situation is alarming. Elections can only be held when the conditions are favourable," he said and insisted that one could not run away from the facts. The chief justice maintained that the country's atmosphere had turned poisonous due to political intolerance. "The present political situation is terrible. Politicians are at each other's throats," he said. Justice Bandial asked both the government and the Imran Khan-led party to decide what is best for Pakistan. Sharing his remarks regarding the ECP, the top judge said that it was merely an institution. "The election commission requires facilitation and support for [conducting] polls." Apart from sending notices to all parties mentioned in the PTI's plea, the apex court has also sent a notice to the governors of both provinces through chief secretaries.

## Two SC judges raise questions...

FROM PAGE 01  
Mansoor Ali Shah and Justice Jamal Khan Mandokhail pointed out that it is important "to revisit the power of 'one-man show' enjoyed by the office of the Chief Justice of Pakistan [Umar Ata Bandial]". The development comes minutes after the Supreme Court served notice to the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP), adjourning the hearing on PTI's petition challenging the electoral body's orders to put off Punjab Assembly elections till October 8. "This court cannot be dependent on the solitary decision of one man, the Chief Justice, but must be regulated through a rule-based system approved by all Judges of the Court under Article 191 of the Constitution, in regulating the exercise of its jurisdiction under Article 184(3) including the exercise of suomotu jurisdiction; the constitution of Benches to hear such cases; the constitution of Regular Benches to hear all the other cases instituted in this Court; and the constitution of Special Benches," it read.

## Dedicated free flour centers...

FROM PAGE 01  
developing a system which would be fully operational by today (Monday). Under this system, he said the non-BISP deserving people would be eligible to get free flour from the separate counters after registering their names in the system. The prime minister said from tomorrow (Tuesday), the people who have not yet received any flour bag, would be provided all three bags at a time so that they would not have to travel again for the purpose. He said this was the first time in the country's history that free flour was being provided to deserving people, therefore the administration had to face a big challenge in the beginning but the process was getting streamlined.

## Pakistan condemns...

FROM PAGE 01  
another "abhorrent" act of desecration of the Holy Quran in Denmark, calling it the manifestation of growing hatred and Islamophobia. "The recurrence of such willful and vile acts is a troubling manifestation of growing hatred, racism and phobia against Muslims and their faith," Foreign Office Spokesperson Mumtaz Zahra Baloch said in a statement. She said the repeated occurrence of such premeditated acts called into question the efficacy of legal framework behind which Islamophobes hide and incite hatred with impunity. She said the exercise of the right to freedom of expression could not be used as a smokescreen to deliberately denigrate the Holy Scriptures or personalities of any religion.

## Germany: Transport strike begins, causing chaos

"A labor struggle that has no impact is toothless," Verdi chief Frank Werneke was quoted as saying by the German public broadcaster Phoenix. While acknowledging that the strike would inflict pain on commuters, he stressed that "one day of strain" with the hope of reaching a wage agreement is better than weeks of industrial action

## NEWS DESK

BERLIN: Germany faces a major transport disruption as workers at airports, ports, railways, buses and metro lines started a nationwide strike on Monday, demanding pay hikes amid soaring inflation. The 24-hour walkout was announced by the Verdi union, which represents nearly 2.5 million public sector employees, and EVG, which represents 230,000 workers in the railways and bus companies.

"A labor struggle that has no impact is toothless," Verdi chief Frank Werneke was quoted as saying by the German public broadcaster Phoenix. While acknowledging that the strike would

inflict pain on commuters, he stressed that "one day of strain" with the hope of reaching a wage agreement is better than weeks of industrial action. The nationwide strike comes as employers, primarily the state and public sector companies, have rejected Verdi's demand for a 10.5 percent rise in monthly salaries, and EVG's demand for a 12 percent rise for the workers it represents.

In a bid to prevent supply gaps, Germany's transport minister Volker Wissing on Sunday ordered states to lift restrictions on truck deliveries, while asking airports to allow late-night takeoffs and landings "so stranded passengers can reach their destinations." However, according to German

media, all major international airports in the country have been affected by Monday's strike with around 400,000 passengers believed to have faced delays or cancellations. In Frankfurt, all incoming and outbound flights have been canceled or delayed by a full day. In a tweet, the airport announced that airport operations "will be heavily disrupted" throughout today and there will be "no regular passenger flights". The German airport association had earlier estimated that about 380,000 air travelers would be affected on Monday with what local media dubs the "mega-strike", while the state-owned rail company Deutsche Bahn (DB) expected it to have a "massive impact" on

its entire rail network.

In recent months, Germany has been hit by strikes in several sectors, including the postal service, airports and local transport. Workers demand higher pay to cope with soaring inflation that hit 8.7 percent in February and the rapidly aggravating cost-of-living crisis. Like other European countries, Germany has been struggling with skyrocketing inflation since the start of the war in Ukraine last year that massively pushed up food and energy prices. Russia launched its "military operation" in Ukraine in February 2022 following Kiev's failure to implement the terms of the 2014 Minsk agreements and Moscow's recognition of the breakaway re-

gions of Donetsk and Luhansk. Since then, the US and its European allies have imposed unprecedented economic sanctions against Moscow while supplying many consignments of heavy weaponry to Kiev. Earlier this month, airports in Bremen, Berlin, Hamburg and Hanover canceled more than 350 flights after security staff walked out. Bus and metro staff in Frankfurt also organized a strike. Monday's walkout in Germany, which is set to bring the country to a grinding halt, comes as the industrial action in neighboring France over President Emmanuel Macron's pension reform plans has emerged as a massive political crisis with protesters calling for the president's ouster.

## 'Govt taking steps to...

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opportunities in mining, information technology, energy, and communication and infrastructure sectors. The Prime Minister said the Reqdik project will be a game changer for Balochistan that will usher a new era of development in the province. On the occasion, the Prime Minister directed to establish project support team for the implementation of Reqdik project. The Prime Minister was briefed that seventy percent of the workers in Reqdik project belongs to Balochistan. It was further informed that a school has been set up by the Reqdik Company in cooperation with the Community Development Committee of the area.

## Six killed in suicide...

FROM PAGE 01  
Islamic State group has proved an increasing threat. The attacker was identified by Afghan forces who shot at him in front of a business centre near the foreign ministry, interior ministry spokesman Abdul NafyTakor tweeted. "With his killing, the explosives carried by the attacker also exploded which killed six civilians and wounded a number of others," he said. Italian NGO Emergency, which operates a hospital in the capital, confirmed it had received two dead and 12 wounded, including a child. No group has claimed responsibility for the attack. Monday's blast was the second attack near the foreign ministry in Kabul in less than three months.

## Imran gets interim...

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A two-member IHC division bench, comprising IHC Chief Justice Aamer Farooq and Justice Miangul Hassan Aurangzeb, heard the former premier's petition. The pleas, filed through Barrister Salman Safdar, stated that Imran would suffer "irreparable loss" if he was arrested. "Furthermore, being head of the single largest political party, there is an apprehension that his political adversaries and opponents would be able to further their nefarious designs and political ambitions if pre-arrest bail is not granted to the petitioner," they added. Earlier, a video on PTI's official Twitter showed the PTI chairman entering the court premises as a huge contingent of the Islamabad police surrounded his vehicle.

## Imran moves...

FROM PAGE 01  
news channel on Saturday, the minister had said that "the country's politics has been brought to the level where the existence of only one of the two [PTI and PML-N] is possible". Sanaulah had also said that when the ruling party feels that its existence is under threat, it can go to any extent against its chief political rival—without considering "what is illegal or undemocratic". Seeking the IHC's intervention on the matter, Imran has requested the court to block his arrest and prevent the respondents from acting on their "plans". Notably, in addition to Sanaulah, the federal government, IG Islamabad and SSP operations have been made respondents to the case.

## Israeli raid on Al-Aqsa..

FROM PAGE 01  
forces against defenseless Palestinians defies all humanitarian and human rights norms and laws. By carrying out the illegal raids, Israel has backed out on its own recent commitment to respect the sanctity of Ramadan. Pakistan calls upon the international community to take urgent action to put an end to the Israeli transgressions that have been particularly ascendant since the beginning of this year. The statement released by Foreign Office said, "We reaffirm our unstinted support for the Palestinian people and the Palestinian cause, and renew our call for a viable, independent and contiguous Palestinian State, with pre-1967 borders, and Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital being the only just, comprehensive and lasting solution of the Palestinian question, in accordance with the relevant United Nations and OIC resolutions".

Miami Open  
Carlos Alcaraz, Sabalenka and Andreescu march into last 16

MIAMI GARDENS: Top-ranked Carlos Alcaraz of Spain beat DusanLajovic of Serbia 6-0, 7-6 (5) and will face American Tommy Paul on Tuesday. World No. 2 ArynaSabalenka of Belarus cruised past Marie Bouzkova of the Czech Republic 6-1, 6-2 on Sunday. "I lost the first and only match that I played against Tommy" Alcaraz said. "I know that he's a really talented and really tough player, so I have to play at my best. Let's see what's going to happen on Tuesday." Paul and fellow American No. 10 Taylor Fritz advanced in straight sets.

Bianca Andreescu of Canada — beat 2020 Australian Open winner Sofia Kenin of the United States 6-4, 6-4.

Andreescu advanced to the tournament's fourth round for the third time. She had seven aces to Kenin's

one, and double-faulted only once as she won the third straight matchup between the Grand Slam champions. Andreescu converted all three of her break opportunities.

In other matches, BarboraKrejckikova of the Czech Republic outlasted American Madison Keys 7-6 (4), 6-3.

Also, Ekaterina Alexandrova of Russia defeated world No. 9 Belinda Bencic of Switzerland, the gold medalist at the Tokyo Olympics, 7-6 (8), 6-3; MarketaVondrousova ousted Karolina Pliskova 6-1, 6-2 in an all-Czech matchup; SoranaCirstea of Romania beat KarolinaMuchová of the Czech Republic 7-5, 6-1; and VarvaraGracheva of Russia defeated Magdalena Frech of Poland 6-1, 6-2. On the men's side, Botic van de Zandschulp of the Netherlands outlasted world No. 4 Casper Ruud of Norway 3-6, 6-4, 6-4. Van de Zandschulp had

12 aces to Ruud's six, but they each had three double-faults. Van de Zandschulp will face Emil Ruusuvuori of Finland in the next round. Paul beat Alejandro DavidovichFokina of Spain 6-3, 7-5, helped by eight aces. Fokina had six double-faults.

Fritz defeated Denis Shapovalov of Canada 6-4, 6-4. Shapovalov had seven double-faults. Fritz will face world No. 8 Holger Rune of Denmark, who defeated Diego Schwartzman of Argentina 6-4, 6-2. "It's going to be a tough match I think for a round of 16," Fritz said. "Myself playing Holger is a very tough draw. I'm excited to play him. We've never played before. I'm not entirely I guess sure what to make of his game. Obviously, he's very good." Also, AndreyRublev of Russia dispatched MiomirKecmanović of Serbia 6-1, 6-2. — APP

## Japan needs Russian energy – PM

TOKYO: Japanese companies will continue to participate in Russian energy projects on Sakhalin Island due to their importance for Tokyo's energy security, Prime Minister Fumio Kishida announced at a meeting of the upper house of parliament on Monday. Kishida told lawmakers that last year Tokyo managed to cut reliance on Russia's energy resources by slashing oil imports by 90% and coal by 60%. Japan, which currently chairs the Group of Seven industrialized nations, remains in "close cooperation with the countries of the G7 and the world community" on the issue of energy supply, the prime minister said. At the same time, the Japanese government expects demand for liquefied natural gas (LNG) to grow. "Therefore, in what concerns projects on Sakhalin, they are important for ensuring energy security in our country," Kishida argued, explaining that the country will keep its stake in the new operator of the Sakhalin-1 oil and gas project. Japan's Sakhalin Oil and Gas Development Co (SODECO) owns a 30% stake in the Russian Far Eastern offshore project. — DNA

## South Africa chase record 259 to win incredible T20

CENTURION: South Africa chased 259 - the highest pursuit in T20 history - to beat West Indies by six wickets in a record-breaking second T20 international. Opener Quinton de Kock smashed 100 from 44 balls as the hosts incredibly won with seven balls to spare in Centurion. Johnson Charles had earlier hit a 39-ball century in West Indies' 258-5, the fastest T20 ton for their men's side. But De Kock and Reeza Hendricks, who hit 68 from 28, shared an opening stand of 152 and the Proteas won at a canter. They took 29 from the second over and reached 100 after 5.3 overs in a continuation of a remarkable display of six-hitting on a flat pitch at altitude. Their total of 102-0 after six overs was the highest powerplay score in a men's T20 international involving Test-playing sides. De Kock was caught in the 11th over and Hendricks in the 13th but their blistering start meant the Proteas were able to be relatively measured afterwards, captain Aiden Markram hitting an unbeaten 38 from 21 balls to take them over the line. Charles beat the Windies record previously held by Chris Gayle by eight balls, also making it the joint fourth fastest ton in men's T20 internationals. The right-hander was eventually bowled for 118 from 46 balls as West Indies racked up their highest T20 score, only for South Africa to do so themselves. South Africa's pursuit of 259 is the highest T20 chase, beating Bulgaria's pursuit of 243 against Serbia in 2022 The 517 runs combined is the highest match aggregate in a men's T20 Johnson Charles' 39-ball century is the fastest in men's T20s by a West Indies player and joint fourth-fastest by anyone in men's T20 history His century is the second-fastest by any West Indies player, one ball slower than DeandraDottin's hundred against South Africa for the Windies women in 2010 West Indies hit 22 sixes, equalling Afghanistan's record for a men's T20 international innings South Africa's total of 150-0 is the highest score after 10 overs in a T20 De Kock, whose 43-ball century was his first in T20 internationals, reached his fifty from 15 balls - beating his own record (17 balls) for the fastest T20 fifty for South Africa South Africa's David Miller. — DNA

## Mbappe determined to thwart teenager Ferguson

PARIS: Kylian Mbappe is determined to prevent teenager Evan Ferguson from adding another chapter to his football fairytale as France face the Republic of Ireland in a Euro 2024 qualifier. Mbappe scored two goals in Friday's 4-0 rout of the Netherlands and will captain the French in Dublin on Monday. Ferguson was on target as the Republic beat Latvia 3-2 in a friendly last week on his first senior start. "He's a good striker, an important striker for that team," said Mbappe. Ferguson, 18, scored twice to help Brighton reach the FA Cup semi-finals and has been attracting rave reviews in his first season in the Premier League. "We've seen some clips about him, of course," added the 24-year-old Paris St Germain star, who scored three goals in December's World Cup final. "But we hope tomorrow he's going to do nothing and that means we are going to win and we're going to do our job. But he is a good player." Mbappe's double against the Dutch took him to 38 senior international goals, just three fewer than Michel Platini, the next target in his sights. He said: "For me, it's an honour to be at

this stage. That's my next target and I'll keep going. It might be tomorrow, it might not. "Obviously Michel Platini is a legend of French football, but I'll get past that mark at some point." France manager Didier Deschamps fully expects his captain to do just that, but is confident collective, rather than individual, objectives will continue to



fuel him. He said: "That's Kylian, he's full of ambitions, always setting himself new objectives, new goals.

"But the group, the collective, comes first. He's gone past people quickly, but his motivation is to keep going." In the short term, adding three points to those banked on Friday night is the



main concern and while a comprehensive victory proved the perfect start to the campaign, Mbappe is acutely aware that there is a long way to go.

He said: "We can't get ahead of ourselves, but nonetheless I thought it was a really strong performance that we put in.

"But we're not going to qualify just by beating the Netherlands, we still have a really difficult match ahead of us on Monday." Those sentiments were mirrored by Deschamps, who knows from experience how dangerous the Irish can be after Robbie Brady fired them into a 1-0 lead over the Euro 2016 hosts from the penalty spot in Lyon before Antoine Griezmann struck twice to secure a place in the quarter-finals. He said: "There is a new generation now with new players. Ferguson poses a threat, a good player, (Mikey) Johnston as well has joined the team. It is a mix of young and experienced players. "But our team is different too. Ireland are known for being direct and vertical in how they play, but of what I've seen in recent games, they are capable of playing the ball along the ground as well." — Agencies



## Briefs

## Spain mulls options as wildfires gain in size

TÁBARA: Walking through the charred remains of the forested hillsides of Sierra de la Culebra that were devastated by Spain's worst wildfire last year, Pablo Martin Pinto is blunt.

"We are moving from the era of big forest fires to mega forest fires in Spain," says this wildfire expert from Valladolid University, warning that such vast blazes were "here to stay".

Last year, Spain suffered nearly 500 wildfires that devastated huge swathes of land, with experts warning that such California-style blazes were likely to increase. Although spring has only just begun, some 700 firefighters have been battling Spain's first major forest fire which has so far burnt through some 4,000 hectares of land, forcing 1,500 people to flee.

Firefighters said such a blaze was more typical of summer than spring. "We have to learn as much as we can from what has happened," said Martin Pinto. If Spain experiences "another summer in which temperatures don't fall below 35C for 20 days and it doesn't rain for four months, the vegetation will be liable to go up in flames" with the first lightning bolt, he warned.

Located in the northwestern region of Castilla y Leon, Sierra de la Culebra was ravaged by fires in June and July, with more than 65,000 hectares burnt – a fifth of the total area affected in Spain last year.

## China's economic recovery adds certainty to global growth

BEIJING: After a good start this year, the Chinese economy will buoy steady and sustained development, adding certainty to global growth clouded by upheavals, an official said on Saturday. The country has hit the "fast-forward" button on its economic growth after it optimized the epidemic prevention and control measures, said Han Wenxiu, executive deputy director of the office of the Central Committee for Financial and Economic Affairs, at the economic summit of the ongoing China Development Forum 2023.

Passenger flows, logistics, and business trips in China are normalizing fast, while the domestic demand has recovered, said Han, citing major economic indicators in the first two months.

The country's retail sales, a gauge of consumption growth, increased 3.5 percent year on year in the January-February period, reversing declines seen in the previous three months. In the period, China's value-added industrial output went up 2.4 percent year on year, while the index gauging the country's service industry output rose 5.5 percent. With the accelerated implementation of supporting policies, the confidence of enterprises and investors is also on the mend, Han said.—DNA

## Australian gov't strikes deal on climate policy

CANBERRA: Legislation for the Australian government's signature climate policy is set to pass parliament after the Greens agreed to support the bill.

The governing Labor Party on Monday secured the support it needs from the left-wing party to implement its safeguard mechanism. The centerpiece of the government's commitment to reduce Australia's carbon emissions by at least 43 percent from 2005 levels by 2030, the mechanism will impose emissions limits on the country's 215 largest-polluting facilities.

Those facilities, including mines, factories, smelters, and processors, will be required to cut their emissions by 4.9 percent every year till 2030 or pay for carbon offsets.

According to projections, it will reduce Australia's carbon footprint by a cumulative 205 million tons by 2030.—APP

## ICCI for focusing on Tajikistan to promote exports with CA

Zafar Bakhtavari, former President ICCI said that the direct air links of Pakistan with Central Asia, including Tajikistan, are very important for Pakistan, as they will strengthen people to people contacts, increase exports, and promote tourism

## DNA

ISLAMABAD: Ahsan Zafar Bakhtavari, President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI), said that Tajikistan is a gateway for Pakistan in Central Asia and Pakistan can significantly improve its business relations with these countries by establishing close relations with Tajikistan. He urged that Pakistan's embassy should cooperate with the private sector in promoting trade and exports with Tajikistan. He said this while talking to the Muhammad Saeed Sarwar, Ambassador-designate of Pakistan to Tajikistan during his visit to ICCI.

Ahsan Bakhtavari said that Tajikistan is an import-based country and Pakistan can export many products to it including textiles, pharmaceuticals, surgical instruments, cement, sports goods, and leather products, for which cooperation of the embassy is im-



portant. He said that there is a distance of only 16 kilometers between Tajikistan and Pakistan at Wakhan strip, and if this route is made usable, there can be a significant improvement in bilateral trade between the two countries. He said that ICCI would consider sending a delegation to Tajikistan to explore its market. Speaking at the occasion, Mohammad Saeed Sarwar,

Pakistan's Ambassador-designate to Tajikistan, said that the business community is playing an important role in promoting the country's trade and exports, and assured that he would try to explore new opportunities for Pakistan's export to Tajikistan. He said that a transit trade agreement has been signed between Pakistan and Tajikistan, and its implementation would

improve trade relations between the two countries. He said that the government is focusing on exports and the Pakistani foreign missions would cooperate in this mission. Faad Waheed, Senior Vice President ICCI said that the Chamber has established a facilitation desk for the Central Asian Countries to facilitate the business community in finding new opportunities for doing business with these

countries. He said that the cooperation of the embassy will be helpful in making the desk more effective. ICCI Group Leader Khalid Iqbal Malik said that the role of embassies in promoting Pakistan's business interests in the international market is very important and hoped that Pakistan's embassy in Tajikistan would play an active role in this regard. He said that embassies should

be given annual targets for exports so that our exports can grow faster.

Zafar Bakhtavari, former President ICCI said that the direct air links of Pakistan with Central Asia, including Tajikistan, are very important for Pakistan, as they will strengthen people to people contacts, increase exports, and promote tourism. He said that the embassy of Pakistan in Tajikistan should play a direct flight between Istanbul, Islamabad and Dushanbe. He said that Pakistan provides easy access to Tajikistan and other Central Asian countries to the outside world through its Gwadar and Karachi ports, so the close relations will be a win-win outcome for Pakistan and Central Asian countries. Rizwan Chheena, Sheikh Ejaz, Ameer Hamza, Muhammad Shabbir, Khalid Chaudhry, Munizh Majid and others also spoke at the occasion and shared useful ideas to improve trade and economic relations between Pakistan and Tajikistan.

## NATO membership 'easier' compared to EU: Estonian FM

European Commission issued its opinion on the application of Ukraine's EU membership on June 17 last year, after which the European Council granted Kyiv candidacy status

BRUSSELS: Estonia's foreign minister said on Monday that it is "easier" to become a NATO member in comparison to obtaining full membership to the EU "According to objective criteria, becoming a NATO member is, of course, easier. It is interesting how quickly Ukraine is now turning to NATO standards, life itself dictates this," Urmas Reinsalu said during an interview with Ukrainian news agency RBC-Ukraine. Ukraine is seeking to become a full member in both structures amid the Moscow-Kyiv war.

During the interview, Reinsalu said that while Ukraine has taken major steps rapidly, the political aspect with regards to Ukraine's membership is also crucial and that the upcoming NATO Summit in the Lithuanian capital Vilnius in

July 2023 is important in sending a clear message about further actions by the alliance, rather than indicating rhetoric. "Ukrainian President (Volodymyr) Zelensky signed an application to join NATO. This is an objective reality. NATO must also respond to this. Of course, no one says that during the current war, Ukraine will become a full member of NATO. These are the realities of security," Reinsalu said. With regards to Ukraine's membership to the EU before the end of the Moscow-Kyiv war, Reinsalu said that he believes the negotiations on this matter should not be related to the conflict, as such a case would mean Russia has a "veto" on the process. "If we remember, it was his (Russian Presi-

dent Vladimir Putin) main demand not to let Ukraine into the Euro-Atlantic structures. If we say that everything will be frozen, that all these achievements and processes will be frozen until the end of the war, then in a sense, Putin will psychologically get what he wanted," Reinsalu said.

He also noted that it took Estonia more than seven years to join the EU after it received candidate status, saying that he believes the efforts made by Ukraine could shorten this time frame in the case of Kyiv, but that membership discussions would revolve around years rather than months. "This is a political decision. How was it a political decision to grant you candidate status last June. It is one

thing - objective criteria, and I am sure that Ukraine, with its determination, will fulfill all of them, the seven goals that have been named. Then it will move on to making political decisions. Among some European countries there is a hidden or open indecision in this sense. And it's not even specifically about Ukraine, but about the expansion of the EU as such," he added. The European Commission issued its opinion on the application of Ukraine's EU membership on June 17 last year, after which the European Council granted Kyiv candidacy status. Last December, Ukraine's parliament adopted several bills recommended by the European Commission to further the country's EU accession process.—Agencies

## Azerbaijan once again proposes reintegration talks

BAKU: Azerbaijan on Monday once again proposed to hold talks in the capital Baku with representatives of the Armenian population in Karabakh for their reintegration into Azerbaijani society.

"As a follow-up to the meeting held in Khojaly on March 1 and the invitation presented on March 13, the Office of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan proposes once again to hold a meeting in Baku in the first week of April for the purpose of reintegration of the representatives of the Armenian public of Karabakh," said a presidency statement. It said that the meeting will also aim to discuss the implementation of infrastructure projects in the region, which was liberated from nearly 30 years of Armenian occupation following a 44-day conflict back in the fall of 2020. On March 13, Azerbaijan invited representatives of Armenian residents living in the Karabakh region for a second round of talks on their reintegration, the first of which took place on March 1 at the headquarters of the Russian peacekeeping contingent stationed in the region. Baku has accused Armenia of intervening in the dialogue between Azerbaijan and its Armenian residents in the Karabakh region, describing the use of "provocative statements" against Azerbaijan's territorial integrity by Yerevan as "unacceptable." Relations between the two former Soviet republics of Armenia and Azerbaijan have been tense since 1991, when the Armenian military occupied Nagorno-Karabakh, a territory internationally recognized as part of Azerbaijan, and seven adjacent regions. In the fall of 2020, in 44 days of clashes, Azerbaijan liberated several cities, villages and settlements from Armenian occupation.—Agencies

## Gandhi expulsion India's parliament adjourned after protests

NEW DELHI: India's parliament was adjourned on Monday after noisy protests by opposition lawmakers over the expulsion from the house of top opposition figure Rahul Gandhi. Gandhi was stripped of his parliamentary seat on Friday in a move that critics say heightens concerns about creeping authoritarianism in the world's largest democracy. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Hindu nationalist government has been widely accused by political opponents and rights groups of using the legal system to target and silence critics. Members of Gandhi's opposition Congress party wore black shirts and scarves as parliament opened on Monday. Some threw paper at the speaker, who then adjourned proceedings. "I want to run the House with dignity," Speaker Om Birla said. "Proceedings of the House are adjourned till 4 pm." Gandhi's expulsion came a day after he was convicted of defamation in Modi's home state of Gujarat for a 2019 campaign-trail remark seen as an insult to the premier. Gandhi, 52, is the leading face of Congress, once the dominant force of Indian politics but now a shadow of its former self. He is the scion of India's most famous political dynasty and the son, grandson and great-grandson of former prime ministers, beginning with independence leader Jawaharlal Nehru.—APP



Kuala Lumpur: A Pakistani delegation comprising scholars and artists participated in the World Buddhist Conference 2023 organized by Young Buddhist Association Malaysia.—DNA

## EU threatens more sanctions against Russia

The move also drew swift condemnation from NATO spokesperson Oana Lungescu, who called it "dangerous and irresponsible". The US says there has been no indication Russia has moved nuclear weapons across its border

## FOREIGN DESK

BRUSSELS: The EU's foreign policy chief Josep Borrell has cautioned Belarus about allowing Russia to station tactical nuclear weapons on its territory.

Borrell tweeted: "Belarus hosting Russian nuclear weapons would mean an irresponsible escalation & threat to European security. Belarus can still stop it, it is their choice. The EU stands ready to respond with further sanctions." In an interview on Saturday, Russian President Vladimir Putin said the move was triggered by Britain's decision last week to provide Ukraine with armour-piercing

rounds containing depleted uranium. Tactical nuclear weapons are intended for use on the battlefield. They have a short range and a low yield compared with much more powerful nuclear warheads fitted to long-range missiles. The move also drew swift condemnation from NATO spokesperson Oana Lungescu, who called it "dangerous and irresponsible". The US says there has been no indication Russia has moved nuclear weapons across its border.

"We have not seen any reason to adjust our own strategic nuclear posture," the US Defense Department said in a statement. On Sunday, Ukraine called for

an urgent meeting of the UN Security Council, with Ukrainian Security Council Secretary Oleksiy Danilov saying the Kremlin had taken Belarus "nuclear hostage". It is a "step towards the internal destabilisation of the country," he added. Putin said Russia planned to maintain control over the nukes it sends to Belarus, with the construction of storage facilities to be completed by 1 July. He didn't say how many nuclear weapons Russia would keep in Belarus, which shares a long border with Ukraine and NATO members Poland, Lithuania and Latvia. The US government believes Russia has about 2,000 tactical nuclear

weapons, including bombs that can be carried by tactical aircraft, warheads for short-range missiles and artillery rounds.

Putin argued that by deploying its tactical nuclear weapons in Belarus, Russia was following the lead of the United States, noting the country has nukes in Belgium, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands and Turkey. "We are doing what they have been doing for decades, stationing them in certain allied countries, preparing the launch platforms and training their crews," Putin said, speaking in an interview on state television that aired Saturday night. "We are going to do the same thing." The Russian leader

claimed the move would not violate existing nuclear-non-proliferation agreements.

Russia currently stores tactical nuclear weapons at dedicated depots on its territory. Moving part of the arsenal to a storage facility in Belarus would up the ante in the Ukrainian conflict by placing them closer to the combat zone and NATO states. This will be the first time Moscow has based nuclear weapons outside of its borders.

Before the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, it stationed nukes in Ukraine, Belarus and Kazakhstan. However, they were transferred back to Russian territories in 1996.

## 'US biggest dictator of the world'

MOSCOW: A Russian official on Monday accused the US of being the biggest dictator of the world who violates the sovereignty of other countries.

"Hypocritically speaking about freedom of choice, the United States, which has proclaimed itself the main dictator of the world, will in fact simply abuse the countries whose sovereignty and democracy it violated," head of Security Council Nikolay Patrushev said in an interview with Russian newspaper Rossiyskaya Gazeta, commenting on the upcoming Summit for Democracy. Patrushev said the event, scheduled for Tuesday and Wednesday in Washington, will be "another meeting in favor of the world order, where Washington wants to play a central role forever, and dissidents will be expected to be labeled as 'non-democratic states'." Patrushev said the US will declare itself as "the defender of international law" and that its geopolitical opponents will be accused of "war crimes and corruption," while its own "acts of genocide and financial fraud" will be ignored.—APP

## Prince Harry in UK court for phone-tapping case

BIRMINGHAM: Britain's Prince Harry – the Duke of Sussex, who has stepped down from his royal duties and left the UK with his wife Meghan Markle – made a surprise appearance at London's High Court on Monday to attend a hearing in which he sued the publisher of the Daily Mail newspaper for wiretapping and privacy breaches. Harry and six other renowned names, including Sir Elton John and Baroness Doreen Lawrence, have brought a lawsuit against the Associated Newspapers Limited (ANL) for misuse of private information. The action claims the individuals have been "victims of abhorrent criminal activity." The media giant is accused of commissioning individuals to "surreptitiously listen into and record people's live, private telephone calls" and the impersonation of individuals to obtain medical information from hospitals and clinics. The claimants also accuse the ANL of accessing bank accounts, credit histories and financial transactions through illicit means and manipulation. "These individuals have been the subject of public interest during the course of their careers and personal lives. They are united in their desire to live in a world where the press operates freely, yet responsibly. A press that represents truth, is sourced in fact and can be trusted to operate ethically.—DNA

## Kenya braces for fresh protests despite police ban

NAIROBI: Kenyans were bracing on Monday for a new round of anti-government demonstrations over the high cost of living after the opposition vowed the action would go ahead despite a police ban.

Veteran opposition leader Raila Odinga has urged people to take to the streets every Monday and Thursday, even after protests a week ago turned violent and paralysed parts of the capital, Nairobi.

But police on Sunday announced the rallies would be banned. "We will not allow violent demonstrations," Inspector General of Police Japhet Koome told reporters. "The demonstrations they plan tomorrow (Monday) are illegal and will not be allowed."

A university student was killed by police fire during the previous Monday's clashes while 31 officers were injured as running battles erupted between riot police and demonstrators in Nairobi and opposition strongholds in western Kenya. More than 200 people were arrested, including several senior opposition politicians, while protesters – including Odinga's own convoy – were hit with tear gas and water cannon.

It was the first major outbreak of political unrest since President William Ruto took office more than six months ago after defeating Odinga in an election his rival claims was "stolen".—DNA



## Briefs

N. Korea fires  
ballistic  
missile,  
S. Korea says

SEOUL/BUSAN: North Korea fired two short-range ballistic missiles off its east coast on Monday, South Korea's military said, just as a U.S. aircraft carrier staged combined naval exercises with South Korea in a warning to Pyongyang. The missiles flew about 370 km (230 miles) after being launched from North Hwanghae province at 7:47 a.m. (2247 GMT on Sunday), South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) said. The North's latest launch came as a U.S. carrier strike group led by USS Nimitz joined military exercises with South Korea in international waters off the southern island of Jeju. The carrier is scheduled to arrive at a naval base in Busan on Tuesday in its first docking in South Korea for nearly six years, partly to mark the 70th anniversary of the alliance, Seoul's defence ministry said. In September, another aircraft carrier USS Ronald Reagan visited the port. The drills were designed to improve the execution of U.S. extended deterrence - its military capability, especially nuclear forces, to deter attacks on its allies - by deploying American strategic assets amid the North's growing threats, a South Korean navy official said. - Agencies

ECC defers  
summary  
to increase  
drug prices

ISLAMABAD: The Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) of the Cabinet on Monday deferred summaries of Ministry of National Health Services, Regulations and Coordination on fixation MPR of 54 new drugs and increase in prices of 119 drugs. The ECC, met with Minister for Finance and Revenue Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar in chair, also considered a summary of Ministry of National Health Services, Regulations and Coordination for maximum retail price of Remdesivir 100 mg injection and decided not to increase the price of Remdesivir 100 mg injection and the existing MRP Rs. 1892/vial shall remain fixed. The meeting was attended by Minister for Power Khuram Dashtir Khan, Minister for Industries and Production Syed Murtaza Mahmud, Minister for Commerce Syed Naveed Qamar, Minister of State for Finance and Revenue Dr. Aisha Ghous Pasha, Minister of State for Petroleum Musadik Masood Malik, Shahid Khaqan Abbasi and MNA/SAPM on Revenue Tariq Mehmood Pasha. - APP

Myanmar  
army chief  
vows to crush  
resistance

## WEB DESK

NAYPYIDAW: The pageantry of Myanmar's annual military parade did little to mask the sinister message - the country's armed forces won't stop fighting those opposing their rule, whatever the cost. A civil war has engulfed the country since a military coup in 2021. The conflict has killed tens of thousands of people, and more than a million have been displaced. But General Min Aung Hlaing, the head of the military government, showed no signs of backing down in a rare speech. The regime, he said, would deal decisively with what he described as "acts of terror" by armed resistance groups. And, he added, countries which have condemned his coup - supporters of terror, he branded them - were wrong and should join the military in shaping its own form of democracy. It was a lavish parade, with Gen Min Aung Hlaing cutting a regal figure as he inspected the thousands of multi-coloured and impeccably-ordered troops in an open-top jeep - an unapologetic extravagance when so many Burmese people are enduring terrible economic hardship, but one which was meant to demonstrate a man in uncontested command of his army and country.

Saudi, Iran top diplomats  
to meet during Ramadan

Both ministers spoke by phone for the second time in a few days

## NEWS DESK

RIYADH: Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan Al Saud and his Iranian counterpart, Hossein Amirabdollahian, have agreed to meet during the ongoing Muslim holy month of Ramadan, the Saudi state news agency SPA said on Monday, under a deal to restore ties. Both ministers spoke by phone for the second time in a few days, SPA said. "During the call, a number of common issues were discussed in light of the tripartite agreement that was signed in the People's Republic of China. The two ministers also agreed to hold a bilateral meeting between them during the ongoing month of Ramadan," SPA said. Ramadan is likely to end on April 20. Earlier this month, Iran and Saudi Arabia agreed to revive relations after years of hostility that had threatened stability and security in the Gulf and helped fuel conflicts in the Middle East from Yemen to Syria.



The deal between the regional powers, Sunni Muslim Saudi Arabia and long-time rival Shi'ite Iran, brokered by China, was announced after previously undisclosed talks in Beijing between top security officials from the two countries. Analysts say both sides stand to benefit from de-escalation, as Iran seeks to undercut U.S. efforts to isolate it in the region and Saudi Arabia tries to focus on economic development. Saudi Arabia cut ties with Iran in 2016 after its embassy in Tehran was stormed during a dispute between the two countries over Riyadh's execution of a Shi'ite Muslim cleric. The kingdom also has blamed Iran for missile and drone attacks on its oil facilities in 2019 as well as attacks on tankers in Gulf waters. Iran denied those allegations. Yemen's Iran-aligned Houthi movement has also carried out cross-border missile and drone attacks into Saudi Arabia, which leads a coalition fighting the Houthis, and in 2022 extended the strikes to the United Arab Emirates.

Maryam  
reiterates  
'bench-  
fixing' stance

## DNA

LAHORE: In reaction to the questions raised by two Supreme Court judges regarding the powers of the chief justice earlier today, Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) Senior Vice President and Chief Organiser Maryam Nawaz has said the judgement is reflective of her party's narrative regarding "bench-fixing". "If the constitution of the [Supreme Court] bench is not fair, then how will the decision be considered fair?" she said while presiding over a meeting of PML-N spokespersons Monday. Earlier, Minister for Information and Broadcasting Marriyum Aurangzeb says the PTI Chief Imran Khan is not interested in elections in the country, but he wants his selection as Prime Minister again.

US 'very in favour' of  
possible TikTok ban

## WEB DESK

WASHINGTON: After several other countries, the United States (US) may also impose a ban on Chinese owned video-sharing app, TikTok as the White House is "very in favour" of the restriction. A US senator has drafted a bill to target technologies with links to foreign governments, a move that may come as a national security measure as tensions rise between Washington and Beijing. However, the social media influencers think that the potential ban could affect not only the influencer market in US but

also the country's economy. British publication The Guardian reported that the popular app has come under intense scrutiny from Congress amid fears of Beijing's accessibility to sensitive user data. TikTok is owned by a Chinese firm ByteDance, and US Senator Mark Warner of Virginia said the country's laws require the parent companies to make user data accessible to the ruling Communist party. The publication quoted Warner as saying that the proposed legislation for a ban "has also picked up support in his congressional chamber from 11 Democrats". However, he fell short of words in clarifying whether Biden's administration would endorse a ban, particularly against TikTok.



ISLAMABAD: CEO of Barrik Reko Diq Mining company, Mark Bristow along with a delegations calls on Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif. - DNA

Pakistanis among  
190 migrants saved  
by rescue ship

Italian PM Giorgia Meloni's government is forcing migrant rescue ships to dock further and further north along Italy's coastline

TRIPOLI: Around 200 migrants including people from Pakistan were rescued from a wooden boat approximately 20 hours after they departed from Zawiya in Libya. Some 190 migrants were rescued by Doctors Without Borders (MSF) off the coast of Libya early on Friday (March 24). The migrants also included people from Bangladesh, Egypt, Eritrea, Syria and Palestine who were rescued from a wooden boat approximately 20 hours after they departed from Zawiya in Libya. They arrived at the southern Italian port of Bari on Sunday evening (March 26) aboard the MSF vessel Geo Barents. Many sang songs and listened to music during navigation, as they waited to reach a safe port in Italy. A migrant from Pakistan, Toseef, who used to sing at weddings, sang a love song and dedicated it to his wife who was still in Pakistan. Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni's government is forcing migrant rescue ships to dock further and further north along Italy's coastline. - DNA

At least 16 dead in  
Ecuador landslide

QUITO: At least 16 people have died in a landslide in the south of Ecuador caused by months of heavy rainfall, the government said on Monday. The mudslide happened late on Sunday night, burying dozens of homes, injuring 16 people and affecting around 500, the Risk Management Secretariat (SNGR) said in a statement. It comes just over a week after 15 people, including a Peruvian, were killed when a strong quake struck in the southwestern border region with Peru. Since January, heavy rains have been responsible for the deaths of 22 people. Ecuador President Guillermo Lasso said on Twitter that firefighters had been deployed to the village of Alausi in Chimborazo province, around 300 kilometers (180 miles) south of the capital, "to attend to the affected citizens." Images shared on local media showed dozens of rescuers and civilians trying to clear debris in the dead of night with only torches for light. Heavy rains since the beginning of the year have destroyed 72 homes and damaged more than 6,900, according to the SNGR. There have been close to 1,000 dangerous events, such as landslides and flooding, caused by the rains this year. The earthquake on March 18 in the provinces of El Oro and Azuay caused 22 landslides that blocked roads. Afterwards, the government called a two-month state of emergency in more than half the country, allowing economic resources to be redistributed from other areas to provide aid to those affected. - Agencies

Joe Biden holds second democracy  
summit amid doubts over progress

## WEB DESK

WASHINGTON: World leaders will gather virtually this week for the second U.S.-organized Summit for Democracy, an event critics say illustrates the halting progress the Biden administration has made in advancing human rights and democracy as a focus of its foreign policy. Starting Wednesday, the event involves 120 countries, civil society groups and technology companies and will include strategically important nations where rights groups have expressed concerns about the state of democracy, such as India, Poland and Israel. Rights advocates have praised the administration for putting a spotlight on democracy, but say there is little evidence the countries joining the summit have made progress on improving their democracies, and that there is no formal mechanism to hold participants to the modest commitments made at the first meeting. The administration has also been reluctant to make the hard choices needed to show it is putting human rights at the heart of its foreign policy, experts said. "I think this administration, like any other administration, has just found that that is too difficult," said Tess

McEnery, who worked on human rights issues in the Biden administration until August 2022 and is now with the Project on Middle East Democracy. She added that because the U.S. is unable to drastically change the relationship with countries vital to its strategic interests like India, "instead we have a summit." Crises like the war in Ukraine have only made Biden's goal of rallying democracies against autocratic rulers more difficult. Washington has accused Russia of committing atrocities in its invasion and rallied other countries to support Ukraine. But this has sometimes come at the expense of a firm line on democracy and rights elsewhere, including in Venezuela, where a U.S. delegation visited in March to try to convince its authoritarian government to pump more oil. "The Biden administration has gone so far as to ... negotiate with one dictator to counter another," showing willingness to set aside principles to address pressing problems, said Christopher Hernandez-Roy with the Center for Strategic and International Studies, in a briefing call ahead of the summit. U.S. officials reject criticism that they have pulled punches on human rights or democratic backsliding, but say they are aware of "legitimate criticism" directed at the administration over the issue.

World Bank warns of 'lost  
decade' in global growth

WASHINGTON: Average potential global economic growth will slump to a three-decade low of 2.2% per year through 2030, ushering in a "lost decade" for the world's economy, unless policymakers adopt ambitious initiatives to boost labor supply, productivity and investment, the World Bank warned on Monday. Failure to reverse the expected broad-based slowdown in potential gross domestic product (GDP) growth would have profound implications for the world's ability to tackle climate change and reduce poverty, it said in a new report. But concerted efforts to boost investment in sustainable sectors, cut trade costs, leverage growth in services, and

expand labor force participation could boost potential GDP growth by up to 0.7 percentage point to 2.9%, the report said. "A lost decade could be in the making for the global economy," said World Bank chief economist Indermit Gill, although he said policies that incentivize work, increase productivity, and accelerate investment could reverse the trend. The World Bank is also watching developments in the banking sector, which come as rising interest rates and tightening financial conditions drive up the cost of borrowing for developing countries, Ayan Kose, director of the World Bank's forecasting group, told reporters. - Agencies

Pak origin Humza Yousaf  
to be Scotland's leader

## NEWS DESK

LONDON: Scottish nationalists picked Pakistani origin Humza Yousaf to be the country's next leader on Monday after a bitterly fought contest that exposed deep divisions in his party over policy and a stalled independence campaign. The 37-year-old practising Muslim succeeds Nicola Sturgeon as leader of the governing Scottish National Party (SNP) and will take over as head of the semi-autonomous government once he wins an approval vote in the Scottish parliament. Setting out his goals, Yousaf said he would concentrate on tackling the cost of living crisis, ending the divisions in the party, and making a renewed push for independence. "The people of Scotland need independence now, more than ever before and we will be the generation that delivers independence," he said in a speech in Edinburgh after the results were announced. Yousaf's victory was confirmed at the country's national rugby ground after a six-week campaign where the three candidates spent much of the contest criticising each other's record in a series of personal attacks. The SNP's unity, which had been one of its strengths, broke down over arguments about how to achieve a second independence referendum and the best way to introduce social reforms such as transgender rights. Yousaf takes over a party with an overriding objective to end Scotland's three-centuries-long union with England. His predecessor stepped down after the British government repeatedly blocked a route to a new vote on independence. While about four in 10 Scots support independence, according to a poll this month, the departure of Sturgeon - a charismatic and commanding leader - may initially slow some of the momenta behind a break up of the United Kingdom.

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