



Islamabad POST

Friday, March 31, 2023

Pakistan's Credible Daily Newspaper

Price Rs. 25

Europe's security under threat, UK's King Charles warns

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Jair Bolsonaro returns to Brazil after 3 months

Detailed News On Page-0



Rs 7 billion allocated for Women League

Detailed News On Page-06



Briefs

Rana calls for 'greater dialogue'

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Interior Minister Rana Sanaullah has said that "a greater dialogue" was the need of the hour in order to address the issues that are currently plaguing Pakistan. "Yesterday, the Chief Justice said that the political temperature needed to be lowered," said Sanaullah while talking to media men outside the Supreme Court in Islamabad on Thursday. He added the coalition government also wanted to bring down political temperature. "But onus is on Iman Khan for raising the political temperature of the country to such heights," he alleged. "Imran wants chaos and anarchy in the country." Rana Sanaullah called for holding greater dialogue among all stakeholders including opposition parties and treasury benches, establishment and judiciary to steer country out of crises.

Govt pursuing personal gains

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Leader of the Opposition in Senate, Dr. Shahzad Waseem, strongly criticized the government, accusing it of passing the Supreme Court (Practice and Procedure) Bill 2023 for personal interests. Opposing the Bill, during Senate session, he alleged that the government had launched a vilification campaign against institutions. Senator Manzoor Kakar has emphasized the importance of seeking the opinion of key stakeholders to further improve the existing system. Former Senate Chairman, Mian Raza Rabbani, expressed concern over the redundancy of Parliament.

Bilawal meets with diplomatic corps

Climate issues posing serious challenges: FM

Says Pakistan facing the consequences of devastation of climate change

DNA/APP

ISLAMABAD: Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari on Thursday said the international community needed to work together to overcome challenges caused by the climate catastrophe, Covid-19 pandemic, tough economic conditions and heightened geopolitical tensions. He was speaking at an Interfaith Iftar dinner hosted in honour of the diplomatic corps here at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Islamabad-based ambassadors, high commissioners and heads of missions representing countries from both predominantly Muslims and non-Muslims, joined the Iftar. Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Hina Rabbani Khar, National Assembly Speaker Raja Pervez Ashraf, Foreign Secretary Asad Majeed Khan, ministers and parliamentari-

ans attended the event. Speaking on the occasion, FM Bilawal Bhutto extended greetings to the guests on the blessed month of Ramadan. Pakistan, he said, was facing the consequences of the devastation of climate change followed by the economic challenges in the wake of Covid-19 pandemic. He said the government had the monumental task of reconstruction and rehabilitation of people affected by the floods. The government was making consistent efforts to extend assistance to the least fortunate at the bottom of the social pyramid, he remarked. He thanked the international community for extending support to Pakistan during the recent floods. Bilawal stressed efforts to adopt a collective strategy to provide economic support to the poor, especially the women.

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'Elections should be held on time'

Imran says PDM govt and handlers "threatening the very foundation of Pakistan"

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan made it clear that whether a five-member or full court bench heard his petition against the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP), "it makes no difference to us because all we want to know is if elections will be held within the 90 days' constitutional provision". In a statement on Thursday, PTI Chairman said that he had consulted his top legal experts before dissolving provincial assemblies in Punjab and Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa (K-P). "All of whom were absolutely clear that the 90-day Constitutional provision on holding of elections was inviolable. Now Imported government of crooks, their handlers and a compromised ECP are making a complete mockery of Constitution," he added. Imran said the PDM government and its handlers are "threatening the very foundation of Pakistan by cherry-picking which articles of

Entire nation pins hope on SC: Qureshi

SAIFULLAH

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leadership reiterated that they would stand with the Supreme Court (SC) in all circumstances and hoped that the constitution would stand victorious amid the imported government's constant efforts to put a crack within the judges of the apex court. Talking to media here on Thursday, PTI Vice Chairman Shah Mehmood Qureshi flanked by PTI Central Secretary General Asad Umar and PTI Senior Vice President Fawad Chaudhry said

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ISLAMABAD: President Jamiat Ulema e Islam (F) Maulana Fazal ur Rehman calls on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif. - DNA



ISLAMABAD: Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari interacting with diplomats at an Interfaith Iftar dinner hosted in honour of the Diplomatic Corps, on Thursday, at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. - DNA

Govt to withdraw review against Justice Isa



DNA

ISLAMABAD: Dubbing it an act of state-led vengeance by the former Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) led regime, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif Thursday announced a decision had been taken to call off the curative review petition filed against Justice Qazi Faez Isa. "On my direction, the government has decided to withdraw the Curative Review Petition against senior most Judge of the Supreme Court, Justice Qazi Faez Isa," tweeted the PM. PM Shehbaz said that the curative review was based on the ill will to "harass and intimidate" Justice Isa at his predecessor's (Imran Khan) "behest". A separate statement issued by the PM Office shared that a cabinet meeting chaired by the premier had already given assent to taking back the reference. It added that Law Minister Azam Nazeer Tarar has been directed by the PM to take back the curative plea. Last year in July, the federal cabinet had approved the withdrawal of the curative review petition. Meanwhile, Justice Shahid Waheed of the Supreme Court observed on Thursday that judges could not raise objections regarding the constitution of benches

Election delay case Justice Amin recuses himself from bench

Justice Isa and Justice Amin had said cases under Article 184(3) should be postponed

SHUJAAT HAMZA

ISLAMABAD: Justice Amin-Ud-Din Khan on Thursday recused himself from a five-member bench hearing the election delay case after a Supreme Court order halted proceedings under Article 184(3). Hours after Justice Aminuddin Khan recused himself from a Supreme Court bench hearing the PTI's petition against the Election Commission of Pakistan's decision to delay polls in Punjab, the SC said that a new bench will take up the case at 11:30am today (Friday). The SC order, read out by the court staff, stated that the decision regarding the members of the bench will be taken on

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'Judges cannot raise objections on benches'

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Justice Shahid Waheed of the Supreme Court observed on Thursday that judges could not raise objections regarding the constitution of benches, saying that if they do so they would become a complainant and it would no longer be appropriate

UAE leader names son as crown prince

PM Shehbaz felicitates Sheikh Mansour Bin Zayed

DUBAI: The United Arab Emirates president named his eldest son as the crown prince of Abu Dhabi late on Wednesday, making him the oil-rich Gulf monarchy's likely next leader. President Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, 62, sometimes known as "MBZ", tapped Sheikh Khaled, 41, his jiu-jitsu-loving son, as the crown prince of the UAE's richest emirate. Meanwhile, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Thursday extended felicitations to Sheikh Mansour Bin Zayed Al-Nahyan on his appointment as the vice president of the United Arab Emirates. "May this new chapter be filled with success and

prosperity for the UAE and its people," he said in a tweet. The prime minister also congratulated Sheikh Khaled Bin Mohamed Bin Zayed Al-Nahyan on his appointment as the Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi. "As a brotherly country, we look forward to continuing our strong partnership and working together towards a brighter future for our people and the region," he wrote on Twitter. MBZ's ascension to the presidency last year prompted speculation over who would succeed him as Abu Dhabi crown prince, with Sheikh Khaled and Tahnoon both tipped for the honour. The UAE, one of the world's biggest oil producers, has become a major power in the Middle East.

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UAE's ambitions for global sustainability

OPINION

HAMAD OBAID AL ZAABI

AS the UAE prepares to host the largest United Nations climate change conference, COP28, later this year, UAE President His Highness Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan recently announced 2023 as the "Year of Sustainability" to emphasize the importance of sustainability in shaping more prosperous future. This announcement signifies the UAE's commitment to sustainable development and its recognition of the global climate emergency that can only be addressed through collective action. The Year of Sustainability will include a range of initiatives to reduce the UAE's carbon footprint, increase environmental awareness, and



promote sustainability in the public and private sectors. The UAE has emerged as a global leader in sustainability in recent years as a result of its ambitious vision, strategic investments, and robust pro-climate policies. With a rapidly growing population, the UAE has recognized the need to transition to a more sustainable future and has taken bold steps to achieve this goal. One of the key pillars of its sustainability agenda is renewable energy, as the UAE has set a target of generating 50% of its electricity from clean sources by 2050. In 2020, the UAE commissioned the world's largest single-site solar energy project at Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum Solar Park with a capacity of 1.2 gigawatts (GW). Significant reforms are also underway in the transport sector, with sizeable investments in the country's mass transit systems, such as the Dubai Metro. Dubai's road and transport agency wants to see 100% electric and hydrogen-powered vehicles across the emirate's

public transport network by 2050, and around USD 160 billion is also being invested in a range of ambitious schemes aimed at achieving carbon neutrality through the UAE's Net Zero by 2050 Strategic Initiative. In addition to its domestic efforts, the UAE has also emerged as a leader in global sustainability initiatives. The country is a signatory to the Paris Agreement on climate change and has pledged to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions by 23.5% by 2030. The UAE also hosts the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA) and has convened several important international conferences on sustainability, including the World Future Energy Summit and Abu Dhabi Sustainability Week. The UAE's sustainability efforts have received widespread global recognition. In 2021, the UAE was ranked first in the Middle East and North Africa region in the Global Green Economy Index. The UAE's commitment to sustainabil-

ity is a model for other countries to follow, and the Year of Sustainability will be a turning point for the country and for the world as the UAE demonstrates that sustainability is not only achievable, but essential for our future. As we look ahead to COP28 and beyond, the UAE and Islamic Republic of Pakistan can advance regional and global cooperation through collective efforts to create a more sustainable, equitable and prosperous future for all, especially for the most vulnerable countries on the Climate Risk Index. In conclusion, the UAE's role in sustainability is an inspiring example of what can be achieved when a nation prioritizes sustainable development through its investments in renewable energy, water conservation, and global initiatives. As the world confronts the urgent challenges of climate change and environmental degradation, the UAE's leadership in sustainability is more important than ever. - The writer is the Ambassador of United Arab Emirates to Pakistan

Senate approves SC bill 2023

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: The Senate on Thursday approved the Supreme Court (Practice and Procedure) Bill, 2023 that would limit chief justice of Pakistan's discretionary powers to take suo motu notice. The bill was moved in the Senate after it was approved by the National Assembly a day earlier. At least 60 senators approved the bill while 19 lawmakers voted against it. Before the final vote on the bill, a motion was presented to send the bill to the Senate Standing Committee on Law and Justice for further debate but it was rejected. The motion for the urgent approval of the bill was then presented which was accepted by a majority of lawmakers. Once the bill was tabled in the Senate, Law Minister Azam-Nazir Tarar explained that the proposed law is providing the right to appeal in suo motu cases and to appoint a different lawyer in the appeals. As the opposition leader was making his speech, the PTI senators hold a

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Sehr, Iftar Timing

Ramazan 09, 1444

Sehr: 04:32 am
Iftar: 06:31 pm
Fiq-e-Jafria
Sehr: 04:22 am
Iftar: 06:41 pm

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Promotion of 2,000 police officers, personnel completed

QAZI SHOAB KHAN

ATTOCK: Inspector General of Punjab Police Dr Usman Anwar while congratulating the newly promoted police officers has urged upon them that all these promotions of the police force have only one goal to leave no stone unturned in the protection and service of the citizens of Pakistan along with the security of Pakistan with their new determination and courage. Police sources on Thursday said that due to utmost efforts of the IG Punjab Police the process for promotion of around 2,000 police officers and personnel of the Punjab Police have been completed in accordance with their merit and seniority. The promotion board sessions chaired by the Punjab IG Police has recommended the promotion of 41 DSPs to the rank of SP, 85 inspectors to the rank of DSP and 270 sub-inspectors to the posts of inspectors as well as senior traffic wardens. Sources further said, the notification of the officers who have been promoted to the posts of DSP from Inspectors will be issued soon. According to which, 85 inspectors who were promoted include Khalid Mahmood, Syed Abrar Haider Naqvi, Waseem Afzal, Ghulam Mujtaba, Muhammad Azam, Shabbir Ahmed and Umar Farooq, Shahzad Gul, Mukhtar Ahmed, Muhammad Aslam, Muhammad Irshad, Abdul Rauf, Sajjad Hussain, Amjad Hussain, Sarfraz Hussain, Mohammad Nasrullah Khan, Qalb-e-Sajjad, Shahzad Faiz, Sajjad

Rashid, Rizwan Khalid, Riaz Ahmed, Muhammad Tariq Javed, Razaqat Ali, Zubair Akhtar, Riffat Mahmood, Jamil Qaiser, Abdul Ghaffar, Ijaz Ahmed, Mohammad Naeem, Tahir Mushtaq, Muhammad Usman, Aamir Hussain, Zafar Iqbal, Babar Nawaz, Javed Iqbal, Muhammad Munir Ahmed, Muhammad Khalid Aleem, Shahida Yasmin, Tahir Abbas, Mustafa Kamal Ehsaan, Kashif Riaz, Khalid Mahmood, Shakeel Ahmed, Naeem Akhtar, Shakeel Ahmed, Arshad Mahmood, Iftikhar Ahmed, Zulfiqar Ali, Gul Khattab, Zulfiqar Ahmed, Muhammad Akramullah, Muhammad Azim, Raza Hussain, Asif Rahim, Nasir Abbas, Ghazanfar Ali, Muhammad Nawaz, Muhammad Amir Waheed, Saeed Ahmed, Muhammad Yasin, Muhammad Naveed Zaman, Muhammad Idris, Kishwar Sultana, Muhammad Afzaal, Muhammad Numan, Muhammad Sarwar Awan, Tariq Maqsood, Muhammad Javed, Irfan Akbar Butt, Maqsood Ali, Nazia Baqir, Nabila Basheer, Khalid Bilal, Arshad Iqbal Goraya, Zafar Iqbal, Sher Muhammad, Aamir Shaheen, Shahid Mehmood, Imran Ahmed, Muhammad Afzaal, Muhammad Ilyas Baig, Matloob Ahmed, Muhammad Arshad Mahmood and Shahid Ali. Similarly, the process of more than 1500 promotions on the posts of constables to head constables, head constables to ASIs, ASIs to sub-inspectors in the ranges and districts has also been almost completed and a notification of these promotions is being issued in a phased manner. Meanwhile, the IGP met 41 DSPs who

were promoted to the rank of SP at the Central Police Office and pinned badges of the new ranks to the promoted officer along with Additional IGs, DIGs and other senior officers. On the occasion, IG Punjab Dr. Usman Anwar has congratulated all the promoted officers and officials and directed them to perform their duties more diligently than before. IG Punjab while addressing the SPs said that as the department has ensured the solution of your problems, convert this honour into the spirit of service to the people and provide them immediate and all possible relief while solving the problems faced by them. Dr. Usman Anwar said that I hope that you will convey the progress and justice received from the department to the people and ensure all possible justice to the oppressed while stopping the hands of the oppressors. Dr. Usman Anwar said that departmental promotion according to merit and seniority is the basic right of every officer and official in which no delay or hindrance shall be tolerated. IG Punjab said that after the permission of the Election Commission, the vacant posts in the police force are being filled through departmental promotions. IGP added that in second phase, process of promotion of officers and officials is also going on according to merit and seniority. The preparation for the next promotion board from inspector to DSP is complete and this board will also be held as soon as possible, police sources added.



ISLAMABAD: Azerbaijan Embassy in Pakistan held a photo exhibition dedicated to the 100th birth anniversary of National Leader of the Azerbaijani people Heydar Aliyev at Allama Iqbal Open University, one of the leading higher education institutions of Pakistan.—DNA

SC (Practice Procedure) Bill not person-specific

PESHAWAR: Members of the Peshawar High Court Bar Association (PHCBA) Thursday termed the passage of the Supreme Court (Practice and Procedure Bill 2023) by the Parliament historic as it had fulfilled an old demand of the lawyers' community. They said the new law was not person-specific as all the litigants now had the right to file appeals in cases decided under Article 184 (3) of the Constitution. PHCBA member Gohar Rehman Khattak, who is also a former president of Peshawar Bar Council, told APP that the government deserved appreciation for the historic legislation, which would provide the much-needed relief to the people affected by the judgments pronounced under Article 184 (3). It would also enhance public confidence in the judiciary.

"The bill is not person-specific. All those who were convicted in suo moto cases can now file appeals against the verdicts," said the constitutional expert. Former prime ministers Muhammad Nawaz Sharif and Syed Yousaf Raza Gillani and senior politician Jahangir Tareen might also get relief from the new law, he added. Under the new law, any aggrieved person might file an appeal against the SC verdict within 30 days of its enforcement, he remarked. "The right of appeal in suo moto cases is the oldest demand of the lawyers' community, which has now been fulfilled," Ashfaq Malik, a senior constitutional lawyer, said.—APP

22 profiteers arrested, six booked during March

VEHARI: The teams of the district administration here on Thursday conducted operation against profiteers and arrested 22 shopkeepers and booked six others for selling commodities on high rates during a crackdown launched across the district during this month. A meeting to this effect reviewed the performance of price control magistrates. The Deputy Commissioner (DC) Vehari Syed Asif Hussain Shah said that shopkeepers would not be allowed to sell commodities on high rates. He said that implementation of controlled price lists was being ensured strictly and violators were not only being fined but FIRs were also being registered against them. He directed the price control magistrates to ensure visit the markets on daily basis to prevent price hike.—APP

Ombudsman Punjab presents annual report to governor

LAHORE: Ombudsman Punjab Maj (ret'd) Azam Suleman Khan presented the annual performance report of the Office of the Ombudsman Punjab for 2022 to Governor Muhammad Balighur Rehman at the Governor's House on Thursday. Advisers and consultants of the Ombudsman Office were also present on the occasion. Ombudsman Azam Suleman explained various aspects of the annual performance report, stating that the ombudsman office successfully resolved 29,970 complaints, out of a total 31,149, resulting in an impressive 96% resolution rate. Of those, 26,511 complaints were addressed within 45 days, while 3,459 applications took longer than 45 days due to some administrative factors. He highlighted that the effective handling of public complaints has resulted in

a cumulative financial relief of Rs 13.842 billion for both plaintiffs and the government. This relief included the recovery of 29,363 kanals of state and private lands in various districts, valued at Rs 9.117 billion. The total financial assistance provided to the plaintiffs amounted to Rs 4.725 billion, he added. The ombudsman also provided a breakdown of the top 10 departments against whom his office received the highest number of complaints in 2022. The revenue department had a total of 5,584 complaints, followed by the police with 4,324 complaints, the Local Government & Community Development with 3,681 complaints, school education with 1,791 complaints, Housing, Urban Development & Public Health Engineering with 1,690 complaints, Primary & Secondary Healthcare with

1,461 complaints, higher education with 983 complaints, Communication & Works with 959 complaints, Accountant General Punjab with 946 complaints, and irrigation with 821 complaints. In addition, the ombudsman reported that 150 eligible complainants were provided with regular employment in provincial government departments by his office under Rule 17-A of the Punjab Civil Servants (Appointment and Conditions of Service) Rules, 1974. Apart from this, the Home Department carried out the province-wise verification of 1,044,062 arms licences on the intervention of the ombudsman office, Khan mentioned. Meanwhile, the Chief Provincial Commissioner for Children resolved 246 cases relating to violation of child rights and violence against them.—APP

CM visits free flour centres in Bahawalpur

LAHORE: Caretaker Chief Minister Punjab Mohsin Naqvi is making continuous visits for the monitoring of historic free flour package initiated by the Prime Minister and the Punjab government as he visited free flour distribution centres at Bahawalpur on Thursday. Mohsin Naqvi inspected centres established at Government College of Technology and Government Abbasia High School, said a handout issued here. Mohsin Naqvi inquired from the visitors about arrangements made at the centres and provision of free flour. He talked with men and women standing in the queues and listened to their problems. He issued orders on the spot for quick resolution of their complaints. Mohsin Naqvi urged the citizens to get themselves registered in the Benazir Income Support Programme. The CM inspected flour distribution process among the deserving people and he himself made the verification of CNICs of few men and women with regard to their eligibility. Mohsin Naqvi directed that there should not be any undue waiting for the citizens at the centers, adding that the elderly citizens should be provided flour on priority basis. The CM remarked that he felt pleased over seeing nice arrangements made at the centres in Bahawalpur where male and female visitors are getting flour bags on their turns by standing in the queues. He underscored that the government is resolving the issues relating to the verification process jointly with NADRA and Benazir Income Support Programme. CM Mohsin Naqvi stated that the people are getting relief through this historic package of the federal and the Punjab government, adding that situation has significantly improved owing to continuous monitoring process. Commissioner Bahawalpur division, RPO Bahawalpur, Deputy Commissioner and DPO Bahawalpur were also present on the occasion.

Prize distribution ceremony of Happy Home School

KAMRAN GUJJAR

JHELUM: Jhelum Happy Home Secondary School organized the annual prize distribution ceremony. Principal Mrs. Shamim Khalid and staff welcomed

the chief guest Ifthar Hussain Malik and other participants of the event. According to the details, a grand prize distribution ceremony was held at Happy Home Secondary School Jhelum. Principal Mrs. Shamim Khalid

and staff were the chief guests. A warm welcome was given to the students who secured outstanding positions in the annual examination and certificates of appreciation were given to encourage all the staff.



Govt sets target to enhance foreign reserves

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Finance and Revenue Muhammad Ishaq Dar on Thursday informed the Senate that the country's reserves would jump to \$ 10 billion by Friday adding that target has been set to enhance it to \$ 13 billion by June. Replying to various supplementary questions during the Question Hour, the minister said that Pakistan would not default and arrange all financial liabilities. Not a single international obligation was deferred in last 11 months and actual external debt had also decreased, he said. He said Pakistan Muslim League (PML-N) government inherited \$ 4.6 billion foreign reserves when came into power in 2013. The then PML-N government not only fetch the country out of financial crisis but also put it on road of progress and prosperity with 6

per cent gross domestic product (GDP) growth, he added. He said Pakistan's economy was included among top 24 growing economy in the world and 5th best economy in Asia during the said period. He went on to say that he was punished merely for bringing fiscal discipline in the country. He had been already advocating since 2013 for charter of economy, he added. He conceded that inflation was high in the country but it was due to flaws policies of the past government. Regarding State Bank of Pakistan (SBP), the minister said various amendments were made in the past in this regard. Now, the SBP was totally independent and fixed Monetary Policy accordingly, he added. The minister said that the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP's) Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) has raised the policy interest rate by 1,000

basis points, from 7 per cent to 17 per cent, since September 2021. This makes Pakistan among the emerging markets with the strongest monetary policy response to inflation and external account stress, he said. The interest rate increases are complemented by other measures taken by the SBP to restrict demand-side pressures. They include administrative restrictions on imports; revisions in prudential regulations for auto and consumer financing; linking of mark-up rate on the SBP's refinancing schemes (EFS and LTFF) with the policy rate; and increase in the cash reserve requirement (CRR) for banks to 6 per cent from 5 per cent. He said all these were aimed at moderating the demand-side pressures on inflation and the external account.—APP

Telenor delegation visits PTA

ISLAMABAD: A delegation from Telenor, led by Ms. Ine Elisabeth, Head of Investment Management, Asia Hub and Ms. Arisa Siong, Director Public & Regulatory Affairs Asia, visited Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) headquarters, today. They met with the Chairman PTA, Mr. Muhammad Naveed to discuss future prospects, issues, and matters of mutual interest. The two sides discussed Telenor's future plans for enhancing connectivity and agreed on mutual collaboration to further bolster efforts in the digital transformation of the country.—DNA



ISLAMABAD: Chairman PTA, Mr. Muhammad Naveed in a meeting with Telenor delegation at PTA Headquarters, Islamabad. Senior PTA officers were also present.—DNA

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For further information please contact the following.

Maj (r) Sabih Ur Rehman
Mobile: 0300 8553342

National Days and Armed Forces Days

MARCH

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



Hotels & Restaurants

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



Airlines

- Turkish Airlines.....8494949



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- DHQ.....5556311-4
- RGH.....9290301-7
- Holy Family.....9290322-7
- PIMS.....9261170-79
- Polyclinic.....9218300-09
- Shifa International 4603666



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- Met Office.....9250360-6
- RDA.....5555864
- TMA.....5770886
- Cantonment Board 9270151-3



Islamabad Metropolitan

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



Water Tank

- Islamabad.....0321-5744480



ISLAMABAD: Position holder students pose for group photo with Principal Prof Alia Durrani at annual prize distribution ceremony. – APP

CCP warns consumers of risks associated with mobile App

DNA

ISLAMABAD, 30 MARCH 2023: The Competition Commission of Pakistan (CCP) warns and cautions the general public about the rising trend of mobile app-based micro-credit and nano-loan facilities. These applications, available on Google PlayStore and AppStore, offer short-term financing to borrowers but are currently facing numerous complaints and challenges in their track-and-trace process. As a result, the CCP has initiated an enquiry against these applications, which are observed to constantly change their premises and/or companies/undertakings behind such applications. Until the conclusion of the enquiry, the CCP deems it necessary to alert the general public about the many issues observed and how to avoid these issues. CCP has also intimated to SECP, FIA, and PTA in this regard. Most of these applications operate without complying with Pakistan's regulatory framework. Therefore, it is important to ensure that the applications from which consumers are

borrowing are duly registered and are operating under a regulatory regime. Moreover, these applications may tend to take complete control of the user's device by requiring the user to agree to standard access permissions for the app. This may affect the privacy of the user as well as make the user vulnerable to the operator of such applications. Therefore, users are cautioned to carefully read the terms and conditions displayed so that they can make an informed decision.

When applying for a loan through these mobile app-based micro-credit and nano-loan facilities, users are presented with various terms and conditions that outline the time period for which the loan is extended, the exact amount of loan disbursed, deductions made from the total loan requested, payment and repayment methods, and any hidden charges. However, it has been observed that these terms and conditions are often at variance with what is advertised, resulting in deception or fraud.

The applications also require the user to fill in two or more emergency contacts, which are considered as collaterals/guarantors by the opera-

tors. Recovery agents have reportedly been known to harass and abuse borrowers and their contacts for the sake of repayment. General public is made aware that these lenders will, on maturity, make calls to the consumer as well as the emergency contacts for recovery of the loan.

To avoid falling prey to fraudulent activities, it is important for the public to be aware that there have been instances where recovery agents have given their personal account details instead of the lender's valid account. This can result in payments not being adjusted against the repayment and cause further inconvenience to borrowers. Consumers need to be careful and only make payments on the registered accounts of the mobile app-based micro-credit and nano-loan facilities.

CCP strongly advises the public to exercise caution and due diligence when using mobile app-based micro-credit and nano-loan facilities. As per the initial findings, these applications have well over 10 million downloads by the general public, mostly the vulnerable consumers, belonging to the lower to middle income class.

Pakistani exports will get a boost

ISLAMABAD: Former President of Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) Dr. Shahid Rasheed Butt on Thursday said the removal of Pakistan from the European Union's list of high-risk countries is a great achievement. The development will have a positive impact on the overall business environment, it will save time and cost of exporters, will boost exports, and improve international borrowing capabilities, he said. Shahid Rasheed Butt said that Pakistan will now be able to explore new markets in the continent and the Pakistani companies doing business with the 27-member bloc will not face additional regulatory requirements. The new development would add to the comfort level of our business community and it will ease the cost and time of legal and financial transactions by Pakistani companies and individuals in the EU, he said. The high-risk countries list includes nations that do not have a robust regulatory and legal system to prevent financial crimes and terror financing that could pose significant threats to the financial system. When a country is added to the list, it is subjected to enhanced scrutiny and additional measures that increase the cost of doing business. – DNA

LPG to benefit 14,000 GB's domestic consumers

ISLAMABAD: Advisor to Prime Minister on Kashmir Affairs and Gilgit-Baltistan Qamar Zaman Kaira said that 14,000 domestic consumers of GB would benefit from the liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) plant before next winter. He was presiding over a meeting between the Ministry of Kashmir Affairs and officials of Sui Northern Gas Pipeline Limited here on Thursday, said a press release. He said that the newly constructed air mix LPG plant in Gilgit would be made operational. Kaira directed the authorities concerned to timely complete all works related to the project and ensure gas supply to the consumers. In view of the needs of the peo-

ple, the plant should be made operational immediately after Eid, he added.

Through the LPG plant, the people of Gilgit would be provided with essential gas utility, Kaira said, adding the plant would also be important for the protection of forests and the environment in the region as people won't have to rely on wood to heat their homes. Qamar Zaman Kaira has always served the people of Gilgit-Baltistan without any political considerations. The ministry had always supported Gilgit-Baltistan on issues like budget, wheat supply, and boundary, Sui Gas officials said, adding the LPG plant was complete and a consumer center had been set up. – APP

Dar for automated system to update population data

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Finance and Revenue Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar on Thursday proposed replacing traditional census practices with a more cost-effective and efficient automated system that updates information using the National Database and Registration Authority (NADRA) and other modern technologies.

During the Senate question hour, Dar responded to a question from Senator Bahramand Khan Tangi and emphasized the potential of technology to transform traditional practices and streamline the process of enrolling the population. The new approach would eliminate the need for expensive census expenditures. Dar said the government spent billions of rupees on the 2017 cen-



sus, but Sindh, Balochistan, and partially South Punjab raised objections over its accuracy. Eventually, the constitution was amended to allow the holding of the 2018 general elections based on the last census. Regarding the holding of separate general elections in Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Dar objected, stating that according to the 18th amendment, elections in the country should be held simultaneously. In Oc-

tober, there will be two sitting governments, and the question is whether they will be dissolved or if a caretaker government will be appointed to ensure impartiality. However, the constitution does not allow for this.

Minister for Finance and Revenue Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar stated that the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) is making every effort to conduct the 7th Population & Housing Census digitally, in accordance with the decision of the Council of Common Interests (CCI) in its 45th meeting held on April 12, 2021. The CCI directed that "the process of the next census should start as early as possible according to international best practices by using the latest technology." – APP

No threat to Taliban's unity: experts

DNA

ISLAMABAD: A divide between pragmatists and traditionalists within the Taliban will remain but are less likely to end up in revolt anytime in the future. The ideological bonding of the Afghan Taliban seems impervious to existing differences between them. The contemporary tussle is because of the Taliban's transition from insurgency to a political movement. These were the views expressed by experts at the roundtable discussion organized by the Institute of Regional Studies, Islamabad, on 'Political Power Struggle within Afghanistan and its spillover effect on the region'. Speaking on the occasion, Mr. Slaman Javed, DG, Pak-Afghan Youth Forum said the economic struggle was graver than the political struggle right now in Afghanistan, adding

that, the ethnic challenges were there for a long but were not of existential nature. Mr. Javed opined that there would be no foreign intervention in Afghanistan particularly from the U.S. in the future. He also stated that the Afghan Taliban probably would start working on establishing a security framework as agreed in the Doha agreement to curb militancy in Afghanistan, for that, capacity building of the National Resistance Forces was essential, he stressed. Mr. Abdul Basit, a Research Fellow at Rajaratnam School of International Studies, Singapore, said that the Taliban was currently interplaying between traditionalism and pragmatism and this would remain a challenge for the Taliban how they successfully navigate through this transition, he added. In case the Taliban failed to adopt a flexible approach there would be

more chaos in Afghanistan, he cautioned. Earlier, Mr. Syed Imran Sardar, from IRS argued that if the tussle within Taliban as well as between Taliban and several other groups was real and growing, there would be more tensions in the region, particularly in the bordering areas. Mr. Nizamuddin Khan Salazar, Executive Director at Khorasan Diary, dispelled the impression that there was a trust deficit between the Taliban leaders which was often highlighted in the international media. He maintained that this was the Taliban's ideology that continued binding them despite differences on several political and governance issues and there were no cracks as such on the ideological front, he added. However, ISK's presence in Afghanistan was the only threat to the Taliban as the said organization was maintaining a rigorous network in the country.

Foodpanda, TCF join hands

ISLAMABAD, Mar 30 (APP):Pakistan's leading food and grocery delivery platform Foodpanda is proud to announce its partnership with The Citizens Foundation (TCF), a non-profit organization dedicated to promoting education for less privileged children in the country. Through this partnership, Foodpanda aims to support TCF's numerous initiatives by raising awareness about their cause and encouraging donations from Foodpanda's customers, said a press release issued here on Thursday. As part of this collaboration, Foodpanda will distribute flyers through Pandamart containing the information as to how donations can be made to TCF. The customers would also be able to make direct donations to TCF via the Foodpanda app. These initiatives, in addition to creating awareness about TCF's programs, also provide customers with an easy and convenient way to support TCF's mission of providing quality education to less-privileged children in Pakistan. – APP

COURT NOTICE

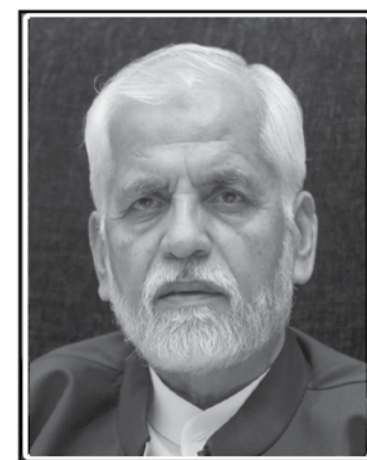
In the Court of Waqas Ahmed Warriach, Civil Judge Jhelum

Suit for possession through petition

Case title Rizwana kousar etc VS Azad hussain etc.

Against Azad hussain s/o muhmaad yaqoob R/o ladhari Tehsil Dina District Jhelum. As there is not possible to call the defendants through Summons in the instant suit so through proclamation in Newspaper, you are directed to appear in the court on 06-04-2023 at 08:00AM, otherwise ex-parte proceedings will be initiated.

CONDOLENCE



APNS expresses profound grief over the sad demise of veteran publisher and senior colleague

Mr. Mumtaz Ahmed Tahir

Publisher and Chief Editor

Daily Aftab, Lahore/Multan

May Allah the Almighty rest his soul in eternal peace

and grant courage to the family to bear the loss.



All Pakistan Newspapers Society

Briefs

NAB chairman to get salary, perks equivalent to SC judge

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The chairman National Accountability Bureau (NAB) salary and perks has been made equivalent to Supreme Court judge. As per details, an official notification was issued by the Law Ministry which stated that the privileges of chairman NAB Lt-Gen (r) Nazir Ahmed has been equated to Supreme Court judge privileges. The federal government had appointed Lt Gen (ret'd) Nazir Ahmad as the new chairman of the National Accountability Bureau (NAB). The development came after Aftab Sultan resigned as the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) chairman citing personal reasons. According to a notification issued by the Ministry of Law and Justice, Nazir Ahmad was finalised for the position 'after detailed deliberation' between the Leader of the House and the Opposition Leader Raja Riaz. Aftab Sultan had presented his resignation to Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, a statement released by the Prime Minister's Office stated. Sources revealed that Aftab Sultan resigned from his office after "he was asked to do certain things which were not acceptable to him." Sources further disclosed that Sultan had some reservations over National Accountability (Amendment) Act, 2022 which has limited the anti-corruption watchdog's powers.

'Overseas Pakistanis ready to donate Rs20bn for polls'

DNA

RAWALPINDI: Awami Muslim League (AML) chief Sheikh Rashid Ahmed claimed on Thursday that overseas Pakistanis were ready to give Rs20 billion donation for elections if the Supreme Court gave an assurance. In a series of tweets, the former interior minister said there would be "rule of jungle" in the country if the Constitution and laws were defied. He also cast doubts on holding of elections in October if they were not held within 90 days of the dissolution of assemblies. He warned of civil war in the country. The strong ally of PTI Chairman Imran Khan called for trial under treason charges of those defying the orders of the Supreme Court. As for the judges of apex court hearing elections case, he said: "Allah has given an opportunity to the current bench to drive Pakistan out of the ongoing serious crisis." He said attempts were being made to recreate 1997-like situation in the top court, warning that there would be dreadful consequences this time. "Dividing Supreme Court would be tantamount to constitutional treason," he said.

Rs 7 bln allocated for Women's League: PCB

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) has allocated a budget of Rs seven billion for organizing the Women's League with an objective to empower women in the cricket game. Chairman PCB Najam Sethi briefed the National Assembly Standing Committee on Inter Provincial Coordination (IPC) on Thursday that PCB paid Rs two billion in terms of tax during the Pakistan Super League (PSL) 8. "PCB's next goal is to revive the women cricket by organizing the Women League for which a budget of Rs seven billion has been allocated." The Committee which was held under the Chairmanship of MNA Nawab Sher lauded the Management of PCB for their tireless efforts to successfully.

Alvi directs varsity to pay pension share to professor

President concluded that since IIUI had conceded the entitlement/claim of the complainant before the Wafaqi Mohtasib, therefore, it had no legal or moral justification to backtrack or seek reversal of the Mohtasib's orders. He directed IIUI to comply with the Ombudsman's order and rejected the representation

DNA

ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi has upheld the order of the Wafaqi Mohtasib directing a university to pay the pension share of its former professor who had served the university for 14 years. The President said that pension was a hard-earned right that accrued to an employee by dint of his long, continuous and faithful service, and the deprivation or delay in the grant of this right could not be permitted, except in accordance with the law. As per details, Professor Dr Ali Asghar Chishti (the complainant)

had served at the International Islamic University Islamabad (IIUI) from June 1985 to August 1999 as a faculty member and he joined Allama Iqbal Open University (AIU) after applying through the proper channel. After his retirement from AIU in 2020, he made the request to IIUI for the transfer of pension share but the same was not done despite the issuance of a letter of liability in his favour. Subsequently, he approached the Wafaqi Mohtasib (WM) for relief, which passed the order in his favour as during the hearing, IIUI admitted his claim and assured him to redress his grievance. Later,

IIUI chose to file a representation with the President against the orders of WM. The President upheld the order of the Mohtasib directing IIUI to transfer the pension share of the complainant as per his request and based his order on a decision of the Supreme Court. He stated that it was an admitted fact that pension was not a bounty but rather an employee earned it by dint of his long, continuous and faithful service. He added that the hard-earned right, that accrued to an employee, was in the nature of "property", and constituted a fundamental right to livelihood under

Article 9 of the Constitution of Pakistan. He stressed that the deprivation, even a part of this amount, could not be permitted, except in accordance with the law. The President also cited another judgement of the Supreme Court, dated 21.02.2013, wherein Government Departments, Agencies and Officers had been directed to not cause unnecessary hurdle or delay in finalizing the payment of pensionary/retirement benefits in future. In its judgement, the Court had stated that any violation of these directions shall amount to criminal negligence and dereliction of duty, and if any delay in the finalization of

pension benefits cases of government servants, widows or orphan children was brought to the notice of the Court, the head of the concerned department would also be held liable for the contempt of the Court and would be dealt with strictly in accordance with the law. The President concluded that since IIUI had conceded the entitlement/claim of the complainant before the Wafaqi Mohtasib, therefore, it had no legal or moral justification to backtrack or seek reversal of the Mohtasib's orders. He directed IIUI to comply with the Ombudsman's order and rejected the representation.

MOU with PIDE would give EDB an edge: Haque



ISLAMABAD: A Memorandum of Understanding was signed between the Pakistan Institute of Development Economics (PIDE) and the Islamabad Engineering Development Board (EDB). —DNA

DNA

ISLAMABAD: A Memorandum of Understanding was signed between the Pakistan Institute of Development Economics (PIDE) and the Engineering Development Board (EDB) in Islamabad. The PIDE was represented by its Vice-Chancellor, Dr. Na-

deem ul Haque and EDB by the Chairman, Mr. Almas Hyder. According to PIDE Press Release, the MoU document covers formal collaboration on areas of mutual research interest leading to the development of Pakistan's Engineering Goods and Services Sector on modern lines. Speaking at the event, Vice-Chancellor, PIDE, stressed the

need to map out and determine the contribution of the engineering industry to the economy in terms of GDP share, investment, and employment generation, and identification of top performers. There is also a need to understand why firms do not grow and why they are not exporting. Mr. Almas Hyder echoed the Vice-Chancellor's sen-

timents. Furthermore, the Memorandum of Understanding with PIDE would give the EDB an edge when proposing policy interventions for development of the engineering industry as these would be based on updated information regarding the current state of the industry. Research and policy go hand in hand, and the industry needs to be mapped out more. The Memorandum

of Understanding (MoU) seeks to promote cooperation in research activities between two institutes. The need to cooperate to achieve the mutually beneficial goal of promoting research and development of the engineering industry, serving critical decisions and policymakers of the country with credible research-based analysis is acknowledged by the MoU.

IMF should not be made an adversary

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Economy Watch (PEW) on Thursday said that Pakistan needs the IMF to avoid a default. The international organization does not need us. An important international organization like the IMF is being deliberately made an enemy of Pakistan for which a heavy price will have to be paid, it said. Our leaders should immediately stop making irresponsible statements and false accusations against IMF as it is damaging the reputation of the country, said Brig. (ret'd) Aslam Khan,

Chairman PEW. He said in a statement issued here that the leading politicians and economic managers of the bankrupting country have not only repeatedly threatened the IMF but also claimed to subdue it which is the height of irresponsibility. Aslam Khan said that after threats, the IMF was blamed for demanding a cut in Pakistan's missile program, on which the IMF had to issue a clarification. A few days before this, the international organization was accused of obstructing the election, on which IMF had to provide an explanation, he added.

Aslam Khan said it seems that the IMF is being deliberately made an enemy so that it decides not to lend to Pakistan. The IMF does not trust Pakistan due to the habit of our leaders breaking promises. Now, baseless are being made which are disturbing for the institution and it is tarnishing the reputation of our leaders and country. The Arab countries that promised to give loans to Pakistan last year are still not cooperating and Pakistan while Pakistan will not be able to survive for long without a six billion dollar loan, he observed. Under such challenging

circumstances, the conspiracies against the IMF are disturbing, he said, adding that the recent announcement of petroleum subsidy without the permission of the IMF has further increased the mistrust. He said that an economic manager has been claiming for several months that the IMF's programme will be restored within days and dollars will be coming from Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and other friendly countries within days but nothing is happening. The baseless claims have not achieved anything other than damaging the reputation of the country, he said.

HEC kicks off teachers capacity building

ISLAMABAD: Higher Education Commission (HEC), Pakistan has launched a capacity building training programme for faculty of nine divisions of the Punjab in collaboration with Higher Education Department, Punjab under the Higher Education Development in Pakistan (HEDP) project. A two-day training was organised by the HEDP project team of HEC at the University of Education, Lahore for faculty of 60 affiliated colleges of Lahore district. The first batch comprising 109 participants, including over 60 percent women, was trained in the capacity-building workshop. The training comprised of six modules: a) Transition to Semester System; b) Academic Advisement & Career Progression; c) Use of Technology in Education; d) Learning Assessment & Feedback; e) Curriculum & Course Development; and f) Teaching Methodology: Andragogy and Pedagogy. The activity is led by Programme Specialist, HEDP, Mr. Asad Khan and the Post-Secondary Education Reform Unit (PERU) team, a component of the project responsible for execution and rollout of Undergraduate.—APP

Mismanagement of directives of the Government

CHAUDHRY M. LATIF



The current coalition government of PDM, no doubt, comprises of multiple political parties embracing every nook and corner of our beloved country. It is extensively represented at the national level which has lawfully and validly come in power by operation of provisions of the constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan. Good governance is the desire and demand of every citizen. Leaving aside the political arena, whoever stands at the helm of affairs of the government must know that the civil service structure is a useful device, and efficient and efficacious tool to achieve the objective of implementation of public oriented directives which especially when aiming at the welfare of the downtrodden segment of our society. But when such beneficial decision face failure in the field the situation tarnishes the position of the government and defeats the sacred purpose. In such a phenomenon the concerned district

authorities including the representatives of the public who happen to be the organ of ruling party should be held responsible and taken to task. Ramadan Package has to be conducted on war footing. Key to the ideal achievement are the golden principles of unity, faith and discipline. Violation of any of these cherished fundamentals could lead to a catastrophe and positive efforts of the federal government go waste. The substantial issues confronting the nation are lack of foreign exchange due to less exports and less inflow of foreign remittances, extravagance in expenditure in all spheres of life. Reckless attitude of the affluent personalities of the country, shortcomings of the ruling leadership to motivate the public at large within and outside the country, lack and delayed decisions of austerity measures, absence of the feelings for voluntary donations of resources to the government to safeguard the honor of the nation, are some of the causes of financial difficulties. The imminent threat of the drought in 2025 as foreseen by the international experts on the subject also needs immediate at-

tentation of the government, for micro level reservoirs of rain water lest it should be too late. There is no denying the fact that it is a genuine arduous task to steer the ship with such a large number of political elements cherishing divergent manifestoes. This combination has resulted in an unprecedented number of flag holders earning bad name for the government instead of jointly grappling with the formidable public problems arising in the field. Charity begins at home. If each Senator, MNA, MPA and flag holders offer to donate local as well as foreign currency to the government exchequer they could setup an enviable precedent. The larger the number of flag holders, the larger the number of police force required for each flag. The consequence would be that the citizens are left at the mercy of decoits and are being looted in the streets while no police force of visible. Police is the target of terrorists on the one hand and are also faced with an apathetic attitude of the public on the other. The public feels that the police force never arrives to rescue them besides their un-

healthy behavior. Women are the easy and common target of the criminals. The incidents seem to be recorded by the cameras but not seen by the police in time who take up a futile exercise after the occurrence. Another aspect which consumes the major chunk of the police force is the condemnable psyche and demand of protocol duty. A line has to be drawn between the urgency of security and luxury of simple protocol. Observing such a difficulty for the police force once there was a political will in Azad Jammu and Kashmir and the government of the time declared to have only five flags for the President, the Prime Minister, the Speaker, and both chief justices. It certainly spared the police force and improved their performance. Even today the crime rate in Azad Kashmir is much less as compared to provinces of Pakistan where there is too much status mindedness in the bureaucracy resulting in their inaccessibility to the public. The Federal Government is often criticized for taking delayed decisions in urgent situations, and simultaneously their abrupt and unplanned decisions which face fate of failure.

For example the government could not implement one holiday a week although it was a useful and economical decision, distribution of free flour to the poor and other disappointing feature is the supply of subsidised petrol without providing proper mechanism. It is the talk of the town these days that Pakistan, although, a nuclear power is being insulted and subjected to undue and unjustified terms by the IMF, at the instance of our enemies. There is always an opportunity in every difficulty. The state should take bold political decisions and get closer to China and Russia, the near and neighboring powers with easy access. Both the said countries are inclined to help Pakistan in the sphere of energy. We have already been subjected to discrimination in case of purchase of energy from Iran whereas India has been allowed to purchase fuel from Iran and Russia while for Pakistan it is tabooed. The IMF has deliberately caused irreparable financial and prestige loss to Pakistan in the comity of nation. —The writer is Retired Additional Chief Secretary of AJK and Advocate Supreme Court of AJK.

Khunjerab Pass to reopen for trade from April 1

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Khunjerab Pass, a key land border crossing between Pakistan and China at Khunjerab, is be-



ing reopened for trade activities from April 1, Gwadar Pro reported on Thursday quoting an official notification. The Pass was once closed to contain coronavirus transmission between the two countries. Right now relevant parties are making efforts to green-light customs clearance, hoping to drive up cross-border trade and business in the post COVID-19 era. Khunjerab Port is the only land port linking Pakistan and China. Khunjerab Pass on the Pakistan-China border is a strategic point on the Karakoram Highway, which links Gilgit-Baltistan, Pakistan and Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region, China. The Pass usually remains open from April 1 to November 30 every year, and remains closed from December 1 to March 31 of the following year because of cold weather and lack of oxygen at a high altitude. It is pertinent to mention that Khunjerab Pass is temporarily open twice earlier this year to transport goods from China to Pakistan. The two temporary openings have facilitated 128 cross-border personnel visits, 328 vehicles' passes and more than 6,000 tons of goods exportation.

Country's exports witness 5.7% decrease

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Commerce Syed Naveed Qamar on Thursday informed the Senate that the country's exports had shown 5.7 percent decrease during the period of July-December 2022 as compared to the same period last year. Responding to various questions during Question Hour, the minister said that high international commodity prices and global demand contraction in Pakistan's export destinations (China, UK, and US), suboptimal production by export-oriented industries, export supply chain disruption caused by floods specially cotton and rice, liquidity issues of exporters, high cost of financing and disruption in provision of energy at concessionary rates to export-oriented sectors were few reasons in the decline of exports. He said, "The government is going in International Monetary Fund (IMF) programme and as per the lender conditions, we have to withdraw subsidies given for export oriented sectors."

"Moreover, we are not facing food insecurity as we have sufficient stock but global recession and other factors may cause downward trend in country's exports." Responding to another question, he said, "Pakistan exports has reached historical high level of \$ 31.8 billion in FY 2021-22, having an increase of 26 per cent as compared with FY 2020-21 owing to government's unprecedented support to export oriented sectors to reduce their cost of manufacturing and enhance exports during last three fiscal years. Sharing the breakup of last three years, the minister said that total country's exports stood at \$ 21.4 billion in fiscal year 2019-20, \$ 25.3 billion in 2020-21 and \$ 31.8 billion. To a separate question, Naveed Qamar replied, "Pakistan's exports to China under China-Pakistan Free Trade Agreement (CPFTA) in FY 2021-22 is registered to the tune of \$ 2.49 billion."

China's developing status

BY passing the "PRC Is Not a Developing Country" Act with a unanimous 415-0 on Monday, the US House of Representatives exposes to the world how those governing the only global superpower look at international politics as a game, rather than as a tool for harmony and coexistence.

For years, the US has always sought to alter the World Trade Organization's rules that allow a member to claim itself as a developed or developing economy, which were ironically made under the US' leadership with the purpose of ensuring that Western "democracies" have a larger say in the organization. It is upon discovering that developing countries benefit from these rules that the US, in order to maximize its interests, sought to alter the rules despite oppositions from almost all major developing economies. To make rules favoring oneself and distorting them to better favor oneself – Even a kindergarten would shy away from the US' deed, namely transforming rules to fit one's own agenda.

Now the Act is targeted at China and most international organizations it participates with. Considering its background, the US seems to intend to make China the first of a row of dominoes they can push down.

In some US politicians' narrative, China's developing country status is like a Schrödinger's cat. When the US needs China's market, China is a "developing country". When the US wants to blame China, shift more international duties to it and deprive it of the few incentives enjoyed by all developing countries, China becomes a "developed" one. The politicians' nonsense is wasted on Capitol Hill. China is not a Schrödinger's cat, and viewing as such only hinders global cohesion.



So called 'Summit for Democracy'

THE so-called "Summit for Democracy," meticulously organized by the US, kicked off on Tuesday. This time, it has paid more attention to the form than the first summit. In order to avoid criticism of "American-centrism," the Biden administration invited Zambia, Costa Rica, South Korea and the Netherlands as co-hosts, representing the five continents. According to the US, leaders from 121 countries and regions were invited to attend, eight more than at the first summit. However, most of the summit will take place online, undermining the form and influence that the so-called Summit for Democracy desperately seeks. Data shows that there have been over 100 mass shootings in the US so far this year, breaking a 10-year record. When many American families are living in a "nightmare," Both the motives and outcomes of the so-called "Summit for Democracy" are anti-democratic, and it completely serves the diplomatic and geopolitical interests of the US. By drawing ideological lines and using the standards set by the US, it divides the international community into the so-called "democratic and non-democratic camps," and creates division and confrontation in a world that urgently needs unity and cooperation. Reports on the summit have generally emphasized that it is aimed at dealing with the conflict between Russia and Ukraine and China's rise. It is not surprising that it will once again become a propaganda event for Washington to persuade other countries to cooperate with its "competition" strategy. Such a face is not only ugly but also somewhat sinister. If Washington really attaches importance to this "Summit for Democracy," what it needs to do most is to use this opportunity to write a prescription for itself, as some American media outlets have pointed out, "The best thing that the U.S. could do to 'bolster' the cause of democracy in the world is to improve our own practice of it here."

Unleashing an Iranian tiger

James M. Dorsey

"Evidently, de-escalation will reduce the cost of regional security for all parties and free up more potential for trade and cross-border investments and partnerships that the region needs," said Bijan Khajepour, a keen observer of the Iranian economy. Iranian hopes have been buoyed by plans by the United Arab Emirates to boost annual trade with Iran to US\$30 billion in the next two years, up from \$20 billion in 2022, Emirati interest in Iranian infrastructure, including strategic Arabian Sea port of Chahbahar, and prospects for Saudi investment in Islamic republic

A Gulf investor with an analytical and artistic bent, Ali al-Salim pinpointed the long-term challenges Saudi Arabia faces as it reestablishes relations with Iran. While most analysts focused on the immediate reduction of regional tensions and the possible opening for an end to the eight-year-long Saudi military intervention in Yemen as a result of a Chinese-mediated agreement to restore diplomatic relations between two Middle Eastern arch-rivals, Mr. Al-Salim is looking at Iran's long-term competitive edge compared to the kingdom.

"As relations between Saudi and Iran begin to thaw, the logic for Saudi's ambitious 'Trojena' ski resort will come further into question. Iran boasts world-class ski resorts an hour from Tehran and 90km of slopes. Oh, and it's all natural, even the snow," Mr. Al-Salim said on Twitter.

Mr. Al-Salim was referring to a yet-to-be-built resort on mountain peaks overlooking Neom slated to be home to 7,000 people by 2026 and annually attract 700,000 visitors. Trojena would be the Gulf's first outdoor ski resort. Neom is Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman's US\$500 billion fantasia. It is a futuristic science-fiction-like new city and tourism destination along the Red Sea in a mostly unpopulated part of the kingdom.

Somewhat incongruously, the Olympic Council of Asia has awarded Trojena the right to host the 2029 Asian Winter Games.

In contrast to Iran's up to 5,600-metre high, 600-kilometer-long Alborz mountain range that stretches along the Caspian Sea, snow falls occasionally on Trojena's 2,400-metre high Sarawat mountains.

To compensate for its shortage, Trojena plans to create an outdoor ski slope by blasting artificial snow on the mountains. This slope would be powered by renewable energy.

In Mr. Al-Salim's mind, Trojena appears to be emblematic of the broader challenge posed by an Iran that eventually is freed of the shackles of crippling US sanctions and has rebuilt its economy. Unshackled and recovered, Iran brings to the table much that Saudi

Arabia has and more. With a population close to 90 million, Iran is almost three times the size of the kingdom. It ranks as the world's third-largest oil and second-largest natural gas reserve holder. Beyond boasting one of the Middle East's largest domestic markets, an innovative and technology-savvy youth, a deep-seated identity rooted in empire, and a battle-hardened military, Iran occupies strategic geography at the crossroads of Central Asia, the Middle East and Europe, and a coastline along the Arabian Sea, the western end of the Indo-Pacific.

To be sure, Iran has a long way to go to fully capitalize on its assets with no immediate prospect of its clerical regime doing what it would take to persuade the United States to lift sanctions, rebuild confidence with its neighbors, including Saudi Arabia, and introduce necessary political, economic, and social reforms.

As a result, Saudi Arabia has a first-starter advantage, which Mr. Bin Salman is bent on exploiting with his social reforms and efforts to diversify the Saudi economy to reduce the kingdom's dependence on oil exports, of which Trojena is one building block.

Even so, the restoration of diplomatic relations with Saudi Arabia constitutes a first step to strengthen the Iranian economy. This would enable Iran to position itself as not just a formidable political rival but also an economic competitor.

"Evidently, de-escalation will reduce the cost of regional security for all parties and free up more potential for trade and cross-border investments and partnerships that the region needs," said Bijan Khajepour, a keen observer of the Iranian economy.

Iranian hopes have been buoyed by plans by the United Arab Emirates to boost annual trade with Iran to US\$30 billion in the next two years, up from \$20 billion in 2022, Emirati interest in Iranian infrastructure, including the strategic Arabian Sea port of Chahbahar, and prospects for Saudi investment in the Islamic republic.

Saudi Finance Minister Mohammed al-Jadaan

recently told a private sector forum of Saudi Arabia's sovereign wealth fund that investment in Iran could happen "very quickly."

Optimistically, Mr. Al-Jadaan went on to say that "there are a lot of opportunities for Saudi investments in Iran. We don't see impediments as long as the terms of any agreement would be respected."

Mr. Al-Jadaan's remarks did not refer to US sanctions, the elephant in the room. Instead, he hinted at Iran's need to clean up multiple legal and operational ambiguities that pose obstacles to foreign investment, even without considering externally imposed restrictions.

Laying out a roadmap for Saudi and Gulf investment in Iran, Mr. Khajepour suggested that initially, investors could target non-sanctioned industries, such as food and pharmaceuticals while developing "creative banking and financial solutions" that would enable circumvention of sanctions.

Furthermore, Mr. Khajepour held out the possibility that the United States could provide waivers for investments that address water scarcity and climate change.

If and when sanctions are lifted, the sky is the limit.

Opportunities range from cooperation on petroleum products and petrochemicals, development of an offshore Saudi-Iranian-Kuwaiti gas field, and connecting electricity grids, to investment in transportation linkages, according to Mr. Khajepour.

Saudi interest in getting in on the ground floor of Iran's eventual reemergence extends beyond geopolitical, security, economic, and commercial considerations.

Economic cooperation has the potential to blunt the impact of an unleashed Iran by making the kingdom a partner. "Iran's rise is inevitable. When it happens, the Middle East will be a different place. Saudi Arabia knows that. It sees the short- and long-term benefits of recalibrating relations with Iran. Iran hasn't quite thought that far but ultimately it will," said a European official who closely monitors Middle Eastern developments.

Netanyahu will have to face reality eventually

Dr. Dania Koleilat Khatib

A rational actor would have thought through all these outcomes, but Netanyahu does not seem to be one of them. How will the US look at Israel once it legitimizes Ben-Gvir's illegitimate paramilitary force? How will Israel be different from some rogue country in South America? Can the US, which praises Israel for being an oasis of democracy in a desert of dictatorships, still stand by its ally? Will the US stand by an Israel where the rule of law is subjugated by the will of those in power and where the aim of the entire system is to preserve itself rather than serve the people

AMID protests and increasing international pressure, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Monday agreed to suspend his proposed judicial overhaul. While in a televised speech he said he had decided to delay the vote "in order to give time for discussion," in reality all he is doing is he is buying time to try and figure out how to solve the dilemma he is facing.

At this point in his career, in his sixth term in power, Netanyahu has one main target: staying out of jail. As a seasoned politician, he is driven by a sense of survival. He is facing accusations of fraud, breach of trust and bribery, which he denies. He needs to stay in power to stay out of jail. However, to do that, he needs to please the band of extremists in his government. And pleasing them means upsetting the street and Israel's allies.

Before Netanyahu paused his reforms, the Histadrut labor federation – the General Organization of Workers in Israel – announced a general strike. The prime minister could not handle the general discontent or the international indignation. On the other hand, he cannot afford to lose any of his extremist partners. Hence, the best way to solve this dilemma was to postpone taking a decision.

Netanyahu is the king of deal-making. He is pragmatic and he does what it takes to get what he wants. Being pragmatic does not necessarily mean he is rational. Buying time will not change the choices he will face at some point in time. What he is banking on is making interim deals that can somehow become permanent. Netanyahu is very skilled at making distinctions between those whose acquiescence he requires and those he can simply discount.

Yoav Gallant, a member of Netanyahu's Likud party who reached the rank of major general in the Israel Defense Forces before entering politics, was fired by Netanyahu for objecting to the judicial reform. On

the other hand, he had to humor Itamar Ben-Gvir, who is an integral part of his coalition. In return for supporting the delay, Ben-Gvir will be allowed to head his own armed militia outside of the jurisdiction of the Israeli army and police. This militia will not have to abide by the normal rules of engagement. Are we now back to the times of the Haganah and its offshoot, the Irgun? Probably. How will world opinion perceive such terrorism? Today is different from the early 20th century. Transgressions can easily be documented using a smartphone and spread all over the world. Will the world accept a new Haganah? Will the world's Jewry identify with it? Probably not, and most likely they will be disgusted by it.

Where do the Palestinians stand in all this? They will be evicted from their homes, persecuted and even killed, and there will be no functioning justice system to defend them. Though the judicial system has always been biased against them, it was always there as a platform through which they could air their grievances. They do not even have the right to exist as a people, according to far-right Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich, a main pillar of Netanyahu's coalition. The Palestinians have no choice but to resist. A third intifada? Probably.

A rational actor would have thought through all these outcomes, but Netanyahu does not seem to be one of them. How will the US look at Israel once it legitimizes Ben-Gvir's illegitimate paramilitary force? How will Israel be different from some rogue country in South America? Can the US, which praises Israel for being an oasis of democracy in a desert of dictatorships, still stand by its ally? Will the US stand by an Israel where the rule of law is subjugated by the will of those in power and where the aim of the entire system is to preserve itself rather than serve the people. However, Netanyahu is not thinking as a states-

man, he is thinking as a politician. Tactical gains are what matter to him. What he can get now is what is most important. And his current most important goal is to stay out of prison. He is dividing the country, he is empowering the fanatics, he is driving away the Jewry worldwide and slowly losing the country's allies. Nevertheless, this does not seem to matter. Netanyahu's plan seems to be to hang on to power as long as he can and delay the inevitable. While hanging on to power, he tries to make deals and put on a balancing act to eliminate the negative externalities that might result from those deals.

He postponed the judicial overhaul to calm the raging streets and appease international allies. In parallel, to get the acquiescence of Ben-Gvir, he allowed him to have his militia that will go on a killing spree. Again, he can always use terror accusations against the Palestinians and a public relations campaign to attenuate the gravity of the crimes committed. This is the art of transactional politics aimed at keeping one's position and gaining time.

However, Netanyahu does not seem to realize that this is not sustainable and it will blow up in his face at some point. When this tactic no longer works, what can he do? Provoke a fight with Lebanon or Iran, similar to what Ehud Olmert did in 2006 to divert public attention away from corruption accusations? Maybe, but this option involves too many risks and did not work well for Olmert. In fact, Olmert had to resign after his adventure in Lebanon as his popularity tanked. He eventually ended up in jail in February 2016.

In short, Netanyahu is buying time using these tactics of self-preservation. However, at some point, this will no longer work and he will be forced to face a tough reality, in which he will be held accountable.

– Courtesy: Arab News

Briefs

Climate issues posing

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He mentioned that the Benazir Income Support Programme was the most effective mean to provide financial assistance to the downtrodden in the country. Dean of Diplomatic Corps to Pakistan Atadjan-Movlamov emphasized the significance of interfaith communication for global peace and harmony. The members of the diplomatic corps appreciated the gesture of the Foreign Ministry in holding the Iftar with the concept of interfaith harmony. United States Ambassador Donald Blome told APP that the interfaith Iftar was a wonderful tradition that represented the spirit of brotherhood among countries. China's Charge d'Affaires Pang Chunxue while talking to APP said the breaking of fast by the diplomatic representatives from all over the world demonstrated a beautiful concept of interfaith harmony.

Norway's Ambassador Per Albert Isaas lauded Pakistan's hospitality in the special month of Ramadan that brought together people from different religions.

High Commissioner of Maldives Farzana Zahir told APP that promoting tolerance and acceptance of different religions created the basis for people to live together peacefully. Ambassador at large for Kartarpur Corridor Sardar Ramesh Singh Arora said the event sent a positive message about the perception of Pakistan among the international community. Member of the National Assembly Ramesh Kumar Vankwani said bringing together the envoys from different religions in the month of Ramadan was a beautiful symbol of building relationships beyond religious borders.

Imran interested..

FROM PAGE 01

Constitution they will abide by". "So petrified are they of elections and so desperate to whitewash their convicted leaders that they are prepared to destroy the Constitution and any semblance of Rule of Law," PTI Chairman added.

Entire nation pins hope..

FROM PAGE 01

that the entire nation pinned hope on the apex court to get the country out of the prevailing numerous crises.

Qureshi expressed hope that eventually the constitution would win, adding that it was PTT's stated and principled position from the day one to respect democratic values. He stated that efforts were afoot to create such a situation in order to delay the polls because the political rivals didn't have the courage to face the PTI in the political arena.

Qureshi went to say that according to PTT's lawyers, the powers of the SC can be extended but cannot be curtailed or limited. He said that people of Pakistan were very intelligent and they were well-aware of the priorities of the rulers, who put the country into the worst crises for their own vested and petty political mileage.

Speaking on the occasion, Asad Umar said that Pakistan's constitution was in danger and no one should be doubted in this regard now. He said that the constitution was a social contract and if this contract was broken, nothing would be left, adding that PTT would stand with the constitution in all circumstances. Asad condemned the attempts to create fissure within judges of the superior court of the country. He warned that attack on the SC from outside would be construed as an attack on Pakistan. He stated that whatever the ruling of the apex court, the whole of Pakistan including PTI would support it. Talking to media on the occasion, Fawad Chaudhry made it clear that it was constitutional and legal obligation to hold polls within 90 days after dissolution of the assemblies.

Azerbaijan takes control of strategic heights in Lachin

The expert assessed this as one of the most important operations that have been carried out by the Azerbaijani Army after the Second Karabakh War

NEWS DESK

BAKU: The triumphant Azerbaijani army has carried out another bloodless military operation to regain lands under Armenian control, cutting off roads used by Armenia and separatists in smuggling weapons, ammunition, and manpower into Karabakh. On March 30, the Azerbaijani Defense Ministry said that with regard to the commissioning of the new Lachin road, several heights between Jagazur and Zabukh villages of Lachin District, main and auxiliary roads, as well as large areas along the border have been taken under the control of units of the Azerbaijani Army. In remarks for Aznews, Azerbaijani military expert Ramil Mammadli commended the Azerbaijani

army's successful military operation to bring under control several strategic heights between the villages of Jagazur and Zabukh, as well as the area along the border with Armenia.

The expert assessed this as one of the most important operations that have been carried out by the Azerbaijani Army after the Second Karabakh War.

"As is known, so far the Azerbaijani Army has taken control of very important strategic positions in the territory of Karabakh and Zangazur and beefed up its military tactical capabilities, and has taken serious steps to successfully continue the processes that may take place in the future. Taking the positions under control in the territory of Jagazur and Zabukh villages by the Azerbaijani army means that the Azerbaijani

Army controls the road in the direction of Shusha and Khankandi, passing through the territory of Lachin District," the expert said. He also added that over the last two years, Azerbaijan repeatedly reported about the transportation of weapons and ammunition, and military equipment to the Karabakh economic region, i.e. to the territory under the temporary control of Russian peacekeepers. However, this has been neglected despite Azerbaijan has repeatedly expressed it internationally. And after the clash on March 5, Azerbaijan concretely demonstrated its position and officials once again voiced their views on this issue.

"Apart from taking control of the high grounds in the direction of Jagazur and Zabukh, the Azerbaijani army is looking to set

up checkpoints on the road to Khankandi in the next stage. This will ensure all vehicles and people going in the direction of Khankandi are identified unambiguously. In my view, checking the identity of passengers and vehicles entering and exiting Khankandi should be clear for Azerbaijan," the expert stressed.

As for the definition of "new Lachin road", the pundit noted that the new Lachin road is the road built after the statement of November 10, 2020. "As we know, the previous road passed through Lachin city, and the new Lachin road, as you can see, passes through the villages of Zabukh and Jagazur and is directed to Khankandi," R. Mammadli added. Touching on the issue of whether the old road passing through Lachin city is being used or not,

the expert said that it is impossible at all because Lachin District is under Azerbaijan's control. However, after passing by Lachin District, in the territory of Shusha District, vehicles deviate onto the old road. Ramil Mammadli also stressed the importance of the Azerbaijani army's control of the checkpoint starting at the border with Armenia.

"Azerbaijan considered it appropriate to start the process from the territory of Lachin and did so. Of course, it is planned to set up an Azerbaijani checkpoint in the direction of Khankandi. In general, the control function of the Azerbaijani army will be implemented in the direction of Lachin and Khankandi, or rather, from Armenia, in the direction of Lachin and Khankandi," the military expert added.

Sinner into Miami semis after beating Ruusuvuori



DNA

MIAMI: Italy's Jannik Sinner eased into the semi-finals of the Miami Open after a comfortable 6-3, 6-1 win over Finland's Emil Ruusuvuori on Wednesday. The game was delayed for two hours by rain with Sinner 2-0 up in the second set but the stoppage did nothing to change the momentum of the match.

In the last four, Sinner will face the winner of the other quarter-final between world number one Carlos Alcaraz and American Taylor Fritz

which was postponed due to heavy rain on Wednesday and is expected to be played on Thursday. The 23-year-old Ruusuvuori was the first Finnish player to feature in a Masters 1000 quarter-final since Jarkko Nieminen a decade ago, but he came up against Sinner in determined mood. The 21-year-old from South Tyrol has not dropped a set so far in Miami and he coped well with the first break point of the match, holding in the fourth game. The Italian, who has not lost to a player outside the top 50 this year, never

looked back after that brief threat, breaking the Finn's serve for 3-2 and again to win the set. An early break in the second further established his control of the match and while the rain made him wait for victory, he needed just 74 minutes on court to finish off the 54th-ranked Finn. "I just won the important points, especially in the first set, and I am happy with my level today," said Sinner. "After the rain, the condition was different and I think I adapted well," he added. With his 20-4 record, Sin-

ner could face another semi-final meeting with Alcaraz who beat him in the last four in Indian Wells earlier this month. While Sinner said he would see both the Spaniard and Fritz as challenging opponents, it is clear he would relish the chance of revenge against Alcaraz, who also beat the Italian en route to the US Open title in September. "I would be happy to play again him again because I look forward to these kind of matches. I feel like he makes me a better player," he said.

Rs 7 bln allocated for Women's League: PCB

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) has allocated a budget of Rs seven billion for organizing the Women's League with an objective to empower women in the cricket game. Chairman PCB Najam Sethi briefed the National Assembly Standing Committee on Inter Provincial Coordination (IPC) on Thursday that PCB paid Rs two billion in terms of tax during PSL 8. "PCB's next goal is to revive the women cricket by organizing the Women League for which a budget of Rs seven billion has been allocated." The Committee which was held under the Chairmanship of MNA Nawab Sher lauded the Management of PCB for their tireless efforts to successfully organize the PSL-8 in the Country. Sethi said PCB was also making countless efforts to revive the domestic and international cricket in the country and has to revive all the cricket clubs.

He said the previous PCB management had disrupted the structure of domestic cricket and now the department was heading for a revolution. "PCB doesn't take any grant or funds from the Government of Pakistan, but generates its own revenues to reinvest in the development of cricket throughout the country at all levels." The Committee was also briefed regarding the rehabilitation of Niaz Stadium, Hyderabad. The PCB representative informed that the Stadium was taken back by the Civil Administration, Qasimabad, Hyderabad in 2018 without any prior notice or intimation. He said now, PCB management desires to take charge of the stadium.

The Committee directed the PCB management to have a meeting with the District Administration Hyderabad to resolve the issue of administrative charge of Niaz Stadium. The Committee also appreciated the remarkable performance of AFP for promotion of sports, however, directed the Secretary, Ministry of IPC to substantially enhance the annual grant of Federation. The Committee further directed the Ministry to conduct the free and fair elections in all the Sports Federations. MNAs Syeda Nooshen Ifthakhar, Zulfiqar Ali Behan, Ms. Shahida Rehmani, Sardar Riaz Mahmood Khan Mazari, Makhdom Syed Sami Ul Hassan Gillani, Ms. Asiya Azeem and Ms. Wajiha Qamar and Engr. Sabir Hussain Kaim Khani (MNA/Special Invitee) attended the meeting. - DNA



Australian F1 chief keen on night race

MELBOURNE: The chairman of the Australian Grand Prix has said he is keen on the event changing to a nighttime race but admitted on Thursday it would take years of planning. A handful of F1 races currently held under artificial lights, including Singapore and Abu Dhabi, saw global TV ratings boosted by the spectacle, Paul Little said.

"I'd love to not rule out a night Grand Prix," he told the Melbourne Herald Sun newspaper. "I just think if we could make that work, that would be amazing. An amazing spectacle but also great for reaching the rest of the F1 audience." A night race would be more favourable for European and US audiences. "There is no question more people would watch it if they could see it live at a reasonable hour on the other side of the world," Little said. "So I think we will continue to explore the viability and the capability of doing that." Sunday's grand prix, the third of the season, is due to start in Melbourne's Albert Park at 3 pm, but has previously been run as late as 5 pm. While it could be held at night, getting the infrastructure in place to make it happen would not be easy, given the expense, Little said. - Agencies

Manchester United back in the black

The 20-times English soccer champions won the domestic League Cup in February for their first trophy since winning Europa League in 2017

LONDON: Manchester United (MANU.N) swung to a second-quarter net profit on the back of higher commercial revenue and lower wages, the club said on Thursday. Net profit came in at 6.3 million pounds (\$7.78 million) in the three months to Dec. 31, against a 1.4 million pound loss a year earlier. Revenue fell almost 10% to 167 million pounds, with increased commercial revenue outweighed by a drop in broadcasting revenue and lower match-day revenue because there were fewer home games than in the same period last year. United's American owners, the Glazer family, launched a formal sale process late last year and have received several bids, including from Sheikh Jassim Bin Hamad Al Thani, British billionaire Jim Ratcliffe and Finnish businessman Thomas Zilliacus. The Old Trafford club did not provide any details about the sale on Thursday. United said ticket sales for the current 2022/23 season have surpassed the record set in 2016/17, hitting a cumulative 2.3 million tickets sold. The 20-times English soccer champions won the domestic League Cup in February for their first trophy since winning the Europa League in 2017 - their longest wait for silverware since 1983. The Red Devils currently sit third in the Premier League and have reached the semi-finals of the FA Cup and quarter-finals of the Europa League. Prices for adult season ticket renewals have been increased by about 5% for next season, club said. Short-term borrowing at the end of last year jumped 95% to 206.2 million pounds, the club said. Forecasts for annual revenue and core profit remain unchanged, United added. - DNA

Indonesia: Sadness after FIFA pulls Under-20 WC

Indonesians inundated the Instagram page of Central Java governor Ganjar Pranowo - one of the leading candidates in next year's presidential election - with negative comments after he opposed Israel's participation

DNA

JAKARTA: Indonesian football players, fans and pundits reacted with anger and sadness Thursday after FIFA pulled the Under-20 World Cup from the host nation weeks before it was due to kick off, following protests against Israel's participation. The humiliating loss came after two influential governors advocated banning Israel from the competition. Indonesia and Israel do not have formal diplomatic relations, and support for the Palestinian cause in the world's most populous Muslim-majority nation

runs high, fuelling local opposition to hosting the Israeli team. FIFA's decision to find a new host - thereby nixing Indonesia's automatic qualifying spot - puts the country's most popular sport back in the doldrums and facing another bout of isolation. Some of the archipelago nation's football prodigies took to social media with fury and heartbreak after losing the chance to play at what FIFA bills as the "tournament of tomorrow's superstars". "Energy, time, sweat, and even blood we have put in, but in a moment failed because of political reasons. Here's our big dream that you've destroyed," wrote

19-year-old striker Rabbani Tasnim. An Indonesian FA video showed players with heads bowed and their coach in tears after receiving the news late Wednesday that FIFA would seek a new host. "We, the players, are now affected, not just us but all footballers," said 18-year-old striker Hokky Caraka. On Thursday morning, flower boards for the players popped up outside the FA headquarters in central Jakarta, including one that read "do not give up on your dream". Indonesians inundated the Instagram page of Central Java governor Ganjar Pranowo - one of the leading candidates in next

year's presidential election - with negative comments after he opposed Israel's participation. Bali's governor had also joined the anti-Israel chorus and around a hundred conservative Muslim protesters held an anti-Israel rally in Jakarta this month. "Very painful" But there was popular support for the tournament the country was handed in 2019, with many viewing it as a source of national pride. Jakarta pledged to guarantee Israel's participation despite its pro-Palestinian stance, yet opposing voices became too loud for FIFA. "This is truly a very painful incident for the Indonesian

people. Those who made the noise and made us fail... must be held accountable," said Akmal Marhalhi, expert at football watchdog Save Our Soccer. Indonesian officials said losing the tournament could cost the country hundreds of millions of dollars. FIFA threatened further sanctions and could exclude Indonesia from 2026 World Cup qualifiers that began in October. It was banned for a year in 2015 over government interference. But for Indonesia's fervent fans, it was the loss of their first ever major football tournament that hurt the most. "I am very disappointed because it has been my dream

to watch Indonesia hosting a global football event," said 40-year-old supporter Jarnawi, who like many Indonesians goes by one name. The game in the country has long been dogged by shaky infrastructure and fan violence, and is still reeling from a deadly stadium stampede last year that killed more than 130 people. But it was the clash of politics and sport that ultimately cost it the tournament many had long hoped for. "We are talking about youths who want to play soccer. They do not have any more interests," said pundit Justin Lhaksana. "Why is this issue blindly mixed with political games?"

Justice Amin recuses...

FROM PAGE 01

Friday and the case will be decided before a bench that does not include Justice Khan. In an unexpected development earlier, the five-member apex court bench hearing the case was dissolved after Justice Khan distanced himself from it. "After yesterday's judgement, I recuse myself from hearing the case," Justice Khan said. He referred to a judgement, authored by himself and Justice Isa, issued a day earlier which noted that the chief justice of Pakistan (CJP) did not have the power to make special benches or decide its members, and said that all hearings based on suo-motu notices and cases of constitutional significance - under Article 184(3) - should be postponed until they are legislated upon. The original bench - which had conducted three hearings on the PTI petition - was constituted by CJP Umar Ata Bandial. It was headed by the CJP himself and included Justice Ijazul Ahsan, Justice Munib Akhtar, Justice Jamal Khan Mandokhail and Justice Khan.

Judges cannot raise...

FROM PAGE 01

for them to hear the case. He made the remarks in a dissenting note for a suo-motu case pertaining to pertaining to the 2018 regulation of the Pakistan Medical and Dental Council (PMDC) that suggested an award of 20 additional marks to candidates for memorising the Holy Quran by heart to get MBBS or BDS degrees. In a separate five-page dissenting note, Justice Waheed said that the case at hand merited the bench to pass a "regulatory order". He noted that the attorney general had asked for an adjournment in order to file a concise statement, while the PMDC had told the court that the regulation in question had been withdrawn and asked for time to bring it on record. "So, in my view, the requests for adjournment alone were to be considered by the bench, and our order ought to have been confined to it. This means a regulatory order was to be passed. On the contrary, I find that the said requests have been left unattended but certain other points have been discussed in the order which has led me to record this dissenting note," he said.

UAE leader names...

FROM PAGE 01

Sheikh Khaled's appointment was welcomed by other Gulf rulers including fellow energy giants Saudi Arabia and Qatar, as well as leaders of the UAE's six other emirates.

Sheikh Khaled has served as a member of the Abu Dhabi Executive Council and as chairman of the Abu Dhabi Executive Office, and sits on the board of state oil giant ADNOC. He has been closely involved in youth and environmental projects as well as sports, promoting jiu-jitsu and helping bring NBA basketball games to Abu Dhabi. Abdul Khaled Abdallah, a professor of political science from the UAE, said Sheikh Khaled had already represented his father on trips abroad as part of his preparations for leadership.

Senate approves

FROM PAGE 01

protest in the upper house. When PTI Senator Ali Zafar was given a chance to speak, he said that he had two objections to the bill. "Only constitutional amendment can be made in 184/3. If you pass laws this way then it will be struck down within 15 days," warned the senator. He added that the right to appeal can only be given through the Constitution. Zafar said that the Senate's standing committee had sent a constitutional amendment for the right to appeal. He also warned that by opening past cases the Supreme Court will have to hear thousands of cases again.

Briefs

Wage negotiations in Germany fail

BERLIN: Negotiations over pay raises of public sector employees in Germany ended Thursday in a stalemate. The negotiations stretched unsuccessfully for over three days. "In the end, we had to conclude that the differences could not be bridged," said Frank Werneke, head of the Verdi union, in Potsdam on Thursday morning. The head of the German civil servants' association DBB, Ulrich Silberbach, also made a similar statement on behalf of his union. Shortly afterwards, Federal Minister of the Interior Nancy Faeser announced: "Our firm intention as employers was: we wanted to reach a good collective agreement for the more than 2.5 million employees of the federal and local governments. We went a long way toward accommodating the unions. But the unions were not ready for an agreement." Now there will be mediation, the interior minister said. In mediation, independent conciliators appointed in advance make a proposal for a solution within set deadlines. The collective bargaining parties then renegotiate this proposal. During the period of mediation, no strikes were allowed. Faeser and Karin Welge, the chief negotiator for the municipalities, regretted that the unions had declared failure.—APP

Japan to provide \$470M to Ukraine

TOKYO: Japan has decided to provide two aid packages totaling \$470 million to Ukraine for the reconstruction of the country and energy recovery. Japan's Ambassador to Ukraine Matsuda Kuminori and Ukraine's Deputy Prime Minister for Restoration Oleksandr Kubrakov signed "notes for the Grant Aid 'the Programme for Emergency Recovery Phase 2' (grant amount: 53,072 billion yen (400 million US dollars))" on Wednesday, said a statement by the Japanese Foreign Ministry. The statement said that the aid will provide Ukraine with the equipment necessary to conduct demining and debris clearance, which it said are "prerequisites for recovery and reconstruction," as well as livelihood reconstruction, recovery of agriculture, and strengthening "democracy and governance." It said the second aid is valued at \$70 million and will be transferred to Kyiv through the UN Development Program (UNDP). The aid will be used to support the restoration of energy infrastructures damaged by "Russian attacks," and thereby "contributing to recovering and enhancing power supply to Combined Heat and Power Plants (CHPs) which provide Ukrainian people with electricity, heat and water.—Agencies

115 new Corona cases reported

ISLAMABAD: Health officials on Thursday said that 115 new Coronavirus cases were reported during the last 24 hours across the country. As per the data shared by the National Institute of Health (NIH), the case positivity ratio was 2.08 percent while 22 patients were in critical condition. No death was reported from the Coronavirus in the last 24 hours while 5,520 Covid-19 tests were conducted. As many as 623 tests were conducted in Lahore out of which, 25 cases were confirmed with a ratio of 4.01 percent, while 387 tests were conducted in Islamabad out of which 15 cases were reported confirmed with a ratio of 3.88 percent. Thirty-five cases were confirmed from 456 tests in Karachi with a ratio of 7.68 percent. Meanwhile, Minister for National Health Services, Regulations, and Coordination, Abdul Qadir Patel said the government has strengthened the role of Border and Health Services in Pakistan to deal with any sub-variant of Covid-19.—APP

Pak poised to get EU GSP Plus Scheme for next 10 years

Faad Waheed, Senior Vice President ICCI said that timely financial decisions are very important for the business community as delay in them disturbs business plans

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Former Governor Punjab Chaudhry Muhammad Sarwar said that he had played an active role in getting the GSP plus scheme from the European Union for Pakistan and he is still working hard to get an extension of this scheme for Pakistan. He said that Pakistan will hopefully get the EU GSP Plus facility for the next ten years. However, he said that Bangladesh has increased its exports by five times with the GSP plus scheme of the EU, while Pakistan could not take full advantage of this facility. He emphasized that the business community should try to take full advantage of this facility in order to enhance exports to EU countries. He said this while addressing the business community during his visit to Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI). Ch. Muhammad Sarwar said that exports and remittances combined have



brought around USD 300 billion to Pakistan in the last five years, but even today we are forced to accept every condition of the IMF for just USD 2 billion, which is the outcome of our inappropriate strategy. He said that the business community has a key role in the development of the economy as it creates jobs, promotes wealth creation and boosts tax revenue of the country. However about 20 departments are in pursuit of the business community due to which doing business in Pakistan is a

difficult task. He said that many overseas Pakistanis have achieved great progress in various fields and if they are given better incentives and better protection in Pakistan, many of them are keen to invest in their home country. He said that if the government gives better incentives to overseas Pakistani pensioners, they can bring millions of dollars into the country. He said that the pensioners of the developed world want to live in cheap countries in their old age and Pakistan can take advantage of

this situation. He said that if the country's 20 largest business groups are taken into confidence, they can help to pay off Pakistan's debt. He further said that the real estate sector has the potential to discharge all the debt of Pakistan, but they need to be taken into confidence in this regard. He also showed concerns over the loss-making SOEs including PIA, Pakistan Steel Mills, Railways, DISCOS and circular debt of electricity and gas companies. He said that without solving these problems, the

recovery of the economy is a difficult task. He said that his party has made plans in its manifesto to address all these problems besides envisaging task forces to bring reforms in all sectors of the economy. He said that he has always cooperated with the business community and will continue to do so in future as well. Speaking on the occasion, Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari, President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry said that all political parties should agree on a charter of economy to

steer the country out of the current crisis and added that Chaudhry Muhammad Sarwar can play his role in this regard. He said that seats should be reserved for the business community in the parliament so that the interests of the business class and investors can be better protected in the legislative process, which will improve our economy. He hoped that the political parties will include this issue in their manifesto, which will ensure better promotion to the business interests of Pakistan. Faad Waheed, Senior Vice President ICCI said that timely financial decisions are very important for the business community as delay in them disturbs business plans. He called for immediate reforms in loss-making SOEs. He was of the view that sidelining the business community has derailed Pakistan. Engr. Muhammad Azharul Islam Zafar, Vice President ICCI said that the construction industry has an important role in the economic revival of the country.

Australia introduces indigenous peoples referendum bill

CANBERRA: The Australian government of Prime Minister Anthony Albanese formally introduced a bill in parliament on Thursday to hold a referendum to recognize Indigenous people in the country's constitution and to set up the "Voice to Parliament." Attorney General Mark Dreyfus, who introduced the bill in parliament as a formal step toward the referendum, said it is a step to rectify a fundamental wrong in the constitution. "Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have occupied the Australian continent for over 60,000 years and represent the oldest continuous living cultures in human history," according to Dreyfus, who was quoted by ABC News

as saying. "They have maintained a relationship with Australia's land, waters, and skies time immemorial," he added. The referendum is expected to be held between October and December this year. Albanese, however, said they will first hold a discussion before making an announcement. "We'll wait, we won't preempt the passage of the legislation. When the legislation is carried, we will have a discussion and then make an announcement," he told a local broadcaster 10 News First, and the transcript was later posted on the Prime Minister's official website. He described the introduction of the bill as an opportunity for Australians to come together.

"In my view, this is important for respect for First Nations people, but it's also an opportunity for us to come together, a moment of national unity to recognize the great privilege that I have of living on a continent and sharing this continent with the oldest continuous culture on earth and, secondly, it is also just about consultation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, through a representative body, on matters that affect them. Last week, while unveiling the referendum question, Albanese said if the constitution is amended, it will have a new chapter titled "Recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples." Following the election victory of Al-

banese's center-left Labor Party in May last year, he announced that his government would include Indigenous people as original inhabitants in the constitution. Since the colonization of Australia by British settlers in 1788, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians have faced hardships, ranging from the loss of traditional culture and homelands to the forced removal of children and denial of citizenship rights, according to Australian Human Rights Commission. "This history of injustice has meant that many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders have been denied access to basic human rights, such as rights to health, housing, employment, and education," it added.—Agencies

KSA, China launch refinery venture

BEIJING: Saudi Arabia and China have launched a joint venture of integrated refinery and petrochemical complex for fine chemicals and raw materials under the multi-trillion-dollar Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). The \$12.2 billion project between China and Saudi Arabia, dubbed as a green and low-carbon initiative, was launched in Panjin city of northeastern Liaoning province, according to the Chinese daily Global Times. Aramco, a Saudi Arabian public petroleum company, said in a statement that the ground-breaking ceremony for the project took place on Wednesday. It added Aramco will hold a 30% stake while Norinco Group and Panjin Xincheng Industrial Group will hold 51% and 19% stakes, respectively. The complex is "expected to be fully operational by 2026," said Aramco, which is expected to "supply up to 210,000 barrels per day (bpd) of crude oil feedstock to the facility." Mohammed Y. Al Qatani, a senior Aramco official, said: "This complex is a cornerstone of our efforts to support a world-class, integrated Downstream sector here in China, as petrochemicals will play a vital role in our joint success." Once complete, Huajin Aramco Petrochemical Company (HAPCO) "will be a model for China's modern petrochemicals industry moving forward, able to deliver lower carbon products, chemicals.—DNA

'No one wants economic fragmentation or war'

OVIEDO: Upon his arrival in China on Thursday, Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez defended international cooperation around trade, climate change and the war in Ukraine. "Our points of view may be different in some areas, but we should continue building bridges and our mutual trust," said Sanchez during his speech at the Boao Forum for Asia on China's Hainan Island. On Friday, Sanchez will become the third European leader to visit Chinese leader Xi Jinping since the pandemic broke out, after the German chancellor and the European Council president late last year. Before his visit, Sanchez said the war in Ukraine will be a key point for his talks with Xi. "It's important to understand first-hand his position on peace in Ukraine and let him know that it will be the Ukrainians who will establish the conditions of peace," he told the media last week. However, his rhetoric at the Boao Forum has taken a more neutral and cooperative tone. Sanchez told the audience that he met with more than 40 global leaders over the last week at the Ibero-American Summit and the European Council meeting. "In every meeting, I've heard the same desire for peace, stability and prosperity. No one wants economic fragmentation or war," he said. He railed against economic protectionism and Russia's "illegal and brutal aggression in Ukraine," and called for more cooperation around global issues. "We should level the playing field and guarantee reciprocity among partners. This means opening to the East, so the West doesn't have to close in on itself," Sanchez said. Spain's Socialist Party leader also described his nation as "one of the best places in Europe to invest and do business," touting its geopolitical position and green energy.—DNA

King Charles warns Europe's security under threat

FOREIGN DESK

BERLIN: King Charles III called Russia's war in Ukraine a threat to Europe's democratic values in the first speech made by a monarch at the German parliament, but said allies like Germany and Britain can draw courage from their unity. Speaking mostly in German through the 30-minute speech, Charles underlined that "the scourge of war is back in Europe, the war of aggression against Ukraine has brought unimaginable suffering on so many innocent people." "The security of Europe as well as our democratic values are under threat. But the world did not stand idly by... we can draw courage from our unity," he added. Charles is on his first state visit since ascending the throne following the death of his mother Queen Elizabeth II last year, and his

choice to travel to Germany has been viewed as a bid to build bridges following Brexit. In Germany, the themes of reconciliation and a future ahead forged by common values have featured prominently in his speeches. Charles has blood ties to Germany, but the two countries had fought on opposing ends during two devastating

world wars. Speaking at the Bundestag on Thursday, he pointed to how far Britain and his hosts' country had come in putting behind their conflict-ridden past as he underlined the common values they now share. "Together we must be vigilant against threats to our values" and face them down resolutely, he said. On Friday, Charles will take

a further step in rapprochement by commemorating victims of allied bombings during World War II in Hamburg. Charles' mother, the late Queen Elizabeth II, had been a symbol of post-war reconciliation. It was World War I that had led the British royal family to drop their German name - Saxe-Coburg and Gotha - for Windsor.



UK accused of scapegoating migrants

LONDON: The British government has been widely criticized over its controversial asylum policies to tackle the mounting number of English Channel crossings by migrants in small boats, with some accusing it of "scapegoating" migrants for the country's "broken immigration policy." The increasing number of Channel crossings, a heated issue in the UK, is mainly rooted in Brexit, as well as global developments such as increasing conflict, violence and human rights abuses worldwide. Before Brexit, the UK was part of the European Union's Dublin Regulation, which allowed it to return some asylum seekers to EU member states without considering their asylum claims. When the UK left the EU

in 2020, it became a country that had to make new return arrangements with any EU member state. The UK's new policies on asylum seekers, or the "immigration problem," came under the spotlight mainly after it announced its Rwanda asylum plan in April last year, formally known as the UK and Rwanda Migration and Economic Development Partnership. Under then-Prime Minister Boris Johnson, people who were identified by the UK as being illegal immigrants or asylum seekers would be relocated to Rwanda, which the government claimed was a "fundamentally safe and secure country," for processing, asylum, and resettlement. The plan has been vehemently criticized by many NGOs and international organizations, includ-

ing UN institutions, as well as politicians. One of the points was that while the number of asylum applications in the UK hit a 20-year high of nearly 75,000 in 2022, it was still well below the EU average, as Germany received more than 240,000 asylum claims last year. Following controversies, court decisions and criticism, 2023 began with Prime Minister Rishi Sunak identifying the issue as one of his five priorities in a January speech, after a record number of more than 45,000 people crossed the English Channel in small boats in 2022, up more than 60% from the previous year. "Deeply concerning" new bill. Two months later in early March, the British government unveiled the Illegal Migration Bill, its toughest measure yet,

aimed at removing migrants entering the country in small boats. The plan includes detaining people for the first 28 days without bail or judicial review. The bill has been met with criticism from human rights organizations and refugee advocates, who argue that it violates international law and the UK's obligations under the Refugee Convention. The bill also triggered mass protests across the UK, with concerned citizens and NGOs accusing the government of scapegoating migrants. Calling on the government to review the move, "seeking asylum is not a crime" has been one of the slogans chanted at nationwide protests. The language used in the bill and its representation of "illegal migrants" has also drawn fierce criticism.

Qirjako Qirko, Albania's ambassador to the UK, has said that Albanian children in Britain are facing "racist bullying" in schools due to the debate over arrivals by small boats. The Refugee Council charity said the new bill "ignores the fundamental point that most of the people in small boats are men, women and children escaping terror and bloodshed from countries." Another backlash to the bill, which led to a nearly week-long conflict, came from BBC Sports presenter Gary Lineker, who said: "This is just an immeasurably cruel policy directed at the most vulnerable people in a language that is not dissimilar to that used by Germany in the 30s." A couple of days after the new bill was announced, Sunak and French President

Emmanuel Macron met in Paris, the first summit between the two countries in five years. During the discussions, Sunak pledged that the UK will pay France around £476 million (\$588 million) over the next three years as part of a deal to curb Channel crossings. From time to time, France has been blamed for "not fulfilling its moral obligation" in protecting vulnerable people and stopping smugglers from exploiting migrants seeking passage to the UK. One of the most recent accusations came from the International Organization for Migration (IOM), which said it is "deeply concerned" by the recently proposed changes to the modern slavery protection system in the UK as part of the new Illegal Migration Bill.—Agencies

Bolsonaro returns to Brazil after 3 months in US

WASHINGTON: Three months after leaving for the United States in the final hours of his term, Brazil's ex-president Jair Bolsonaro returned home Thursday to reenter politics - complicating life for his successor and nemesis, Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva. The far-right ex-army captain, who skipped town two days before Lula's inauguration on January 1, arrived back in Brasilia on a commercial flight from Orlando, Florida. Scores of supporters waving the Brazilian flag - one of Bolsonaro's symbols - were at the airport arrival area to welcome him, shouting and singing the national anthem, despite authorities' moves to block a planned welcome rally. "We've been waiting for this moment for a long time. We've been looking forward to it since January 1," Eva Melgaco, a 46-year-old beautician, told AFP. However, Bolsonaro left discreetly through another exit. Flashing a thumbs-up to TV cameras, he entered a motorcade that headed for the headquarters of his Liberal Party (PL), flanked by police cars. The homecoming is a high-stakes bet for Bolsonaro, who faces legal trouble on various fronts in Brazil - notably for his alleged role in inciting supporters who invaded the halls of power on January 8 in a failed bid to oust Lula, the veteran leftist who beat him in a divisive election in October. Tension was high in Brasilia, where the exuberant crowd of around 200 supporters at the airport was guarded by a heavy police deployment. Authorities said if necessary they were prepared to lock down the central plaza that is home to the presidential palace, Congress and the Supreme Court, where Bolsonaro backers rioted on January 8. Bolsonaro, 68, is set to start a new job next week as honorary president of the Liberal Party, earning 11,600 reais (around \$8,000) a month.—Agencies

Peru to withdraw its ambassador from Colombia

BOGOTA: Peru's government ordered the "definitive withdrawal" of its ambassador to Colombia on Wednesday. The decision to withdraw Felix Denegri Boza was due to the "interference" of Colombia's president. "This decision responds to the repeated interference and offensive expressions of President Gustavo Petro, who persists in distorting reality by not knowing that on Dec. 7, 2022, a coup d'etat perpetrated by former President Pedro Castillo took place in Peru," the Foreign Ministry said in a statement. The move was made after Petro said Saturday during the Ibero-American Summit held in the Dominican Republic's capital Santo Domingo that Castillo should have been at the meeting, not in jail. "Today he should be here. They took him out (of the meeting). He is in prison," he said before Peru's Foreign Affairs Minister Ana Cecilia Gervasi.—APP

Russia detains WSJ reporter

MOSCOW: Russia on Thursday detained US citizen Evan Gershkovich, a Wall Street Journal correspondent, on suspicion of espionage, state media said. "The Russian Federal Security Service (FSB) has thwarted the illegal activities of Evan Gershkovich, a US citizen born in 1991 ... who is suspected of spying in the interests of the American government," the FSB told the state-run TASS news agency. "It was established that Evan Gershkovich, acting at the request of the American side, collected information constituting a state secret about the activities of one of the enterprises of the Russian military-industrial complex. The foreigner was detained in Yekaterinburg while attempting to obtain classified information." Investigators have initiated a criminal case against the US citizen under Article 276 of the Russian Criminal Code (Espionage), the report said.—APP

Briefs

Qamar Bajwa says 'not responsible' for Nawaz' verdict

DNA

RAWALPINDI: Former army chief General (ret'd) Qamar Bajwa has revealed, in a reported interview with a local media outlet, that he was not responsible for the disqualification of former prime minister and PML-N supremo Nawaz Sharif. Bajwa was asked if he was responsible for disqualifying Nawaz when his case was heard by the Supreme Court. He replied that the apex court had begun hearings on the Panama Papers during PTI's second long march before he became the army chief. He maintained that the army could not influence everything and that the SC itself was doing "a lot of things". The former army chief was then asked if former ISI chief General Faiz Hameed could pull off the feat by himself, to which the ex-COAS stated that "when you are asking someone to do eight things, and if he does ten, you cannot ask him". He added that the phenomenon occurred all over the world with intelligence agencies doing many things of their own free will. The interviewer again questioned if Bajwa disqualified Nawaz, and his answer remained the same. "It was the decision of the five judges of the Supreme Court. When the judges give an order, what can you do? Justice Khosa also had a personal enmity with the Sharif family. Shahbaz Sharif divorced Justice Khosa's sister in the nineties," claimed the former army chief in the interview.

EU deal to nearly double renewable energy by 2030

BRUSSELS: The European Union reached a deal Thursday to almost double the share of renewables in the 27-nation bloc's energy consumption by 2030 amid efforts to become carbon neutral and ditch Russian fossil fuels. The provisional political agreement, which was reached after nightlong negotiations between the EU parliament and states, seeks to raise the share of renewable energy to 42.5 percent, from 22 percent today. The EU has set an ambitious target to become a "climate neutral" economy by 2050, with net-zero greenhouse gas emissions. The move also comes as it has sought to slash dependence on Russian fossil fuels after Moscow cut gas supplies last year and the bloc placed bans on seaborne crude and other petroleum products from the country. - APP

Several feared dead after 2 US army choppers crash

KENTUCKY: The governor of Kentucky said on Thursday fatalities were expected after two U.S. Army Black Hawk helicopters crashed during a routine training mission over the state late on Wednesday. The status of the crew members was not immediately known, the U.S. Army's Fort Campbell said in a statement to Reuters, without providing the number of people who were on board. "We've got some tough news out of Fort Campbell, with early reports of a helicopter crash, and fatalities are expected," governor Andy Beshear said in a post on Twitter, adding that local authorities and emergency services were responding to the accident. Crew members were flying two HH-60 Black Hawk helicopters, operated by the 101st Airborne Division, which crashed at around 10:00 p.m. ET (0200 GMT Thursday) in Kentucky's Trigg County, Fort Campbell's public affairs office said. "The command is currently focused on caring for the service members and their families," statement said, adding that cause of the crash was under investigation. - APP

Ukraine acknowledges Russian gains in Bakhmut

Meanwhile, Russia's FSB security service arrested an American reporter for The Wall Street Journal, Evan Gershkovich, on suspicion of spying for the United States

NEWS DESK

KYIV: Ukraine said on Thursday Russian forces had made some gains inside the eastern battlefield city of Bakhmut, but at a heavy price in lives lost that has blunted Moscow's offensive as Ukraine prepares a counterstrike of its own. In a potential escalation of Moscow's diplomatic feud with Washington, Russia's FSB security service arrested an American reporter for The Wall Street Journal, Evan Gershkovich, on suspicion of spying for the United States. The newspaper denied the allegations and demanded the immediate release of its "trusted and dedicated reporter". There was no immediate response from Washington. A U.S. diplomatic source said the

embassy had not been informed about the incident and was seeking information from the Russian authorities. The small mining city of Bakhmut has been the site of the bloodiest battle in Europe since World War Two as Russian forces have sought their first victory since mid-2022 in a huge winter assault. Ukraine has been on the defensive for nearly five months but says it is planning a counteroffensive soon. "Enemy forces had a degree of success in their actions aimed at storming the city of Bakhmut," the General Staff of the Ukrainian armed forces said in an overnight report. "Our defenders are holding the city and are repelling numerous enemy attacks." The report gave no details of the Russian gains. The Institute for the Study of War think tank said Russian troops and Wagner

mercenaries had captured territory in the south and southwest of the city over the past two days, and Wagner had occupied a metal plant in its north this week. Russian forces have been advancing slowly inside Bakhmut in intense street fighting for weeks. A month ago, Kyiv seemed likely to abandon the city but has since decided to stay and fight for it, hoping to break the attacking force. Deputy defence minister Hanna Malyar said in a social media post that losses were inevitable, but "the enemy's losses are many times greater". Serhiy Cherevatyi, a Ukrainian military spokesperson, told national television: "Bakhmut remains the epicenter of military activity...It's still constantly 'hot' there." As winter has turned to spring, the pressing question is how much longer Russia

can sustain its offensive, and when or if Ukraine will strike back. Ukrainian and Western officials point to signs that Russia's campaign is flagging. The number of daily Russian attacks on the front line reported by Ukraine's general staff has declined almost by half over the past four weeks. Russia's invasion has destroyed Ukrainian cities and set millions of refugees to flight. Tens of thousands of Ukrainian civilians and soldiers on both sides are believed to have died. Moscow, which says it sent troops because its neighbour posed a security threat, has vowed to press on fighting at least until it controls all the territory of eastern provinces, among five it claims to have annexed. Kyiv says it will fight on until all Russian troops are driven from its land.

APNS condoles death of Mumtaz A Tahir

DNA

KARACHI: The APNS expresses its profound grief over the sad and sudden demise of its senior colleague veteran publisher, Mr. Mumtaz A Tahir, chief editor Daily Aftab Multan and Lahore. "Nazafreen Saigol Lakhani President and Sarmad Ali, Secretary General of the All Pakistan Newspapers Society have stated that Mr. Tahir was a consistent upholder of the rights of regional press. His contribution to the cause of Newspaper industry would be remembered for long. He served continuously as member of the Executive committee of the APNS and was elected office bearer and chairman of various committees of the APNS for several terms during last four decades. The APNS offered condolence to the bereaved family and prayed that Almighty Allah rest the departed soul in eternal peace and give them courage and patience to bear the loss.

Nepra approves cut in electricity tariff

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The National Electric Power Regulatory Authority (Nepra) on Thursday conducted a hearing on the monthly fuel cost adjustment for February and approved to slash the electricity prices by 0.0006 paisa per unit. According to the official sources, the Nepra will issue the details of the decision later. The decision will not be applicable to the lifeline and K-electric customers. "In February, less electricity was generated from water and imported coal. Due to the closure of the Neelum-Jhelum Hydro-power Project, electricity generation through hydropower has decreased," the Nepra officials said. The authority expressed its displeasure over not fully including the electricity generated from Thar Coal in the national grid. The Nepra authorities also said that an additional burden of over Rs6.5 billion had to be borne due to the violation of merit order in February 2023. They added that due to the transmission line issues, an additional burden of over Rs5.6 billion had to be borne. "Does the National Transmission and Despatch Company (NTDC) has any future planning? We have been told that the Neelum-Jhelum Power Plant will start generating electricity in July," the Nepra chairman said during the hearing.

LHC strikes down Section 124-A of PPC

LAHORE: The Lahore High Court declared Section 124-A of the Criminal Law to be in conflict with the Constitution, recognizing the constitutional right to criticize state institutions. The Lahore High Court has declared Section 124-A of the sedition law as ultra vires to the Constitution. A single bench of the high court, comprised of Justice Shahid Karim, on Thursday pronounced the verdict reserved two weeks earlier on identical petitions challenging the sedition law. Petitioner's counsel Abuzar Niazi Advocate had argued: "Sedition laws are a legacy of the colonial history which were framed in 1860 and were used against slaves. Pakistan's constitution gives freedom of expression and opinion to every citizen. Even today, people are being booked under Section 124-A (sedition) over speeches against the government." During the last hearing, Deputy Attorney General Asad Ali Bajwa had represented the federal government. The court had then directed the federal government to submit details of sedition cases filed in 12 months. "The sedition law initially seems very ambiguous," Justice Shahid Karim remarked. DAG Asad Ali Bajwa had argued that Section 124-A had been in accordance with the Constitution. - APP

At least eight dead in India temple collapse

NEW DELHI: At least eight devotees were killed and around a dozen rescued on Thursday after about 25 people fell into a well at a Hindu temple in India, police said. The worshippers plunged into the stepwell - a stair-lined communal water source - after the floor covering it collapsed in the central city of Indore. "We have recovered eight bodies and rescued nearly a dozen," police official Manish Kapooriya told AFP, adding that rescue efforts were still ongoing. Television footage showed emergency workers using ropes and ladders to reach those trapped in the well in Madhya Pradesh state. Other videos showed the caved-in floor and mangled steel bars, and policemen using ropes to seal the area. Temples across India were brimming with devotees on the occasion of Ram Navami, the birthday of the Hindu deity Lord Ram. - APP



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister Board of Investment Chaudhry Salik Hussain meeting with Republic of Poland Ambassador to Pakistan Maciej Pisarski at his office. - APP

Turkey's parliament to vote on Finland's NATO bid

ANKARA: Turkey was set on Thursday to become the final NATO nation to approve Finland's membership of the US-led defence alliance in the wake of Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Ratification is all but certain after President Recep Tayyip Erdogan ended months of negotiations and blessed Finland's candidacy earlier this month. Erdogan controls parliament through an alliance with a right-wing party. Most opposition lawmakers also support the bid. Turkey's ratification will leave Finland - which has a 1,300-kilometre (800-mile) bor-

der with Russia - with only a few technical steps before it becomes the 31st member of the world's most powerful military bloc. Finland and its neighbour Sweden ended decades of military non-alignment and decided to join NATO last May. Their applications were accepted at a June alliance summit but the bids still needed to be ratified by all the members' parliaments - a process that stalled with Turkey and Hungary. Erdogan put up stiff resistance to Sweden's candidacy because of a series of long-standing disputes. The Hungarian parliament ratified Fin-

land's NATO membership on Monday after months of diplomatically charged delay. It was expected to approve Sweden's bid during the current session ending June 15. A spokesman for Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban on Wednesday called on Sweden to "clear the air" and address "an ample amount of grievances" for parliament to ratify its bid. Sweden still hopes to join the alliance in time for a July summit in Vilnius. Most analysts believe that Turkey will only vote on its candidacy after the country's May general election. - Agencies

31 killed after fire rips through Philippine ferry

Firefighter Jayson Ahijon, who was among the passengers, said people panicked as fire and thick smoke overwhelmed the vessel

MANILA: At least 31 people died and 230 were rescued after a fire engulfed a ferry in the southern Philippines, authorities said Thursday. The Lady Mary Joy 3 was travelling from Zamboanga City on Mindanao Island to Jolo Island in Sulu province when the fire broke out late Wednesday, prompting passengers to jump overboard, disaster officer Nixon Alonzo said. Rescuers, including the Philippine Coast Guard and fishermen, saved 195 passengers and 35 crew as the blaze ripped through the ferry off Baluk-Baluk Island in Basilan province. Basilan Governor Jim Salliman said 31 bodies had been retrieved, including 18 found inside an air-conditioned cabin. Photos released by the coast guard showed one of its vessels spraying water on the burning ferry as personnel in smaller boats plucked people from the dark water. Firefighter Jayson Ahijon, who was among the passengers, said people panicked as fire and thick smoke overwhelmed the vessel. Some jumped overboard before putting on life jackets. "It's beyond my imagination, the fire was spreading so fast," Ahijon, 36, said. Ahijon said he and several coast guard officers helped other passengers to safety, including a baby they put in a bucket and lowered over the side of the boat. Captain ran the vessel aground as the fire spread "so many more could survive since it would be easier to swim to shore", Commodore Rejard Marfe from Philippine Coast Guard told AFP. Salliman said at least three children, including a six-month-old baby, were among dead. Authorities also said 14 people were injured. - APP

Tyrian case: IHC reserves verdict on maintainability

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Thursday reserved its judgment on maintainability of a disqualification case against PTI chairman Imran Khan for not disclosing his alleged daughter Tyrian White in his nomination papers. A larger bench headed by Chief Justice Aamer Farooq and comprising Justice Mohsin Akhter Kayani and Justice Arbab Muhammad Tahir heard the case filed by a citizen Muhammad Sajid. Petitioner's lawyer Hamid Shah Advocate argued that Imran Khan had not disclosed his alleged daughter in an affidavit submitted to the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP). He said that Imran Khan was also not entitled to remain party chairman anymore as all facts had been mentioned in the petition about his disqualification. He said that the PTI chairman had no answers to the facts raised in the petition. Chief Justice Aamer Farooq remarked that so far Imran Khan had neither admitted nor denied the allegations. The lawyer said that Imran Khan had mentioned his wife Bushra Bibi, and sons Qasim Khan and Salman Khan in his affidavit. He had also stated that the two sons were living with their mother and they were not financially dependent on him, he said. The lawyer further said that Tyrian White was still unmarried and as per Islamic law, she would be considered his dependent. The lawyer said that one submitting a false affidavit has to be disqualified under Article 629(1)(f) of the constitution. Justice Mohsin Akhter Kayani said that the alleged father had not accepted her as his daughter. The ECP's counsel said that such petitions had been terminated in the past due to the lack of proof. He prayed the court to grant permission to submit some documents in this regard. Expressing annoyance, the court observed why the ECP had realized now to file documents. Why a heavy fine shouldn't be imposed on it, it said. - DNA

DSP among 4 police officers martyred in Lakki Marwat

"On the way, near the Pirwala turn, an IED blast occurred in which DSP Iqbal Momand and constables Ali Marjan, Waqar and Karamatullah were martyred," it added

DNA

LAKKI MARWAT: A deputy superintendent of police (DSP) and three constables were martyred when an improvised explosive device (IED) went off on the Pirwala Road in Lakki Marwat on Thursday, the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa police said. According to the police, the blast occurred as the personnel were en route to the Saddar police station, where policemen were fending off an attack under way. "The DSP, along with a heavy contingent, left for the police station after he received information regarding a terrorist attack there. "On the way, near the Pirwala turn, an IED blast occurred in which DSP Iqbal Momand and constables Ali Marjan, Waqar and

PM pays tribute to martyred policemen

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Thursday strongly condemned the attack on a police station in Lakki Marwat that resulted into the martyrdom of three personnel including a Deputy Superintendent of Police. The prime minister paid tribute to DSP Headquarters Iqbal Momand, and Sepoys Waqar, Marjan and Karamat who laid down their lives in the line of duty. The prime minister extended condolences to the families of the martyrs. He said the police were playing a wonderful role as the first line of defence against terrorism. PM Sharif said elimination of terrorism was vital for the stability of the country. He prayed for the speedy recovery of the driver of Armoured Personnel Carrier, Sardar Ali and the other six injured policemen. The prime minister directed the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government to provide the Martyrs' Assistance Package to the families of the martyred policemen and extend best treatment facilities to the injured. - APP

Karamatullah were martyred," it added. Lakki Marwat police spokesperson Shahid Hameed told media that terrorists opened fire at the Saddar police station in the early hours. Resultantly, an exchange of fire took place between the police and the terrorists. During the gunfight, six policemen were injured, he said. The wounded men, identified as Head Constable Farooq Shah and constables Amanatullah, Ashgar, Sardar Ali and Arif have been moved to the Lakki City Hospital. A police statement also revealed that the militants were equipped with advanced and heavy weaponry. "The police were on alert and the attackers had to flee when the police returned fire." The terrorists fled while taking advantage of the darkness, it added.