



# Islamabad POST

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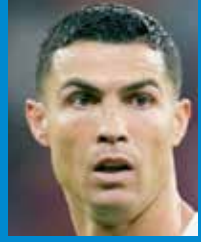
Detailed News On Page-07

**Prince William makes surprise Poland visit**

Detailed News On Page-07

**Ronaldo on brink of more int'l history**

Detailed News On Page-06



## PM Shehbaz says

# Political chaos main reason for economic woes

## Pakistan Day celebrated with zeal

SHUJAAT HAMZA

ISLAMABAD: On the 83rd Pakistan Day, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif stated that "political chaos" was the main reason for the country's economic instability. In his message, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif urged the nation to pay tribute to the sacrifices of the country's founding fathers but not lose sight of the challenges staring the country in the face. "The challenges are topped by a combination of economic instability and the inability to settle the rules of the game. An environment of political chaos explains why we have failed to develop our economy on a sustainable basis," said the PM. The premier said that for Pakistan to "achieve great heights", the countrymen will "have to forge unity in our ranks, equip ourselves with national purpose and vow to wage a struggle in line with the legacy of our forefathers". "Let us use this day to introspect and hold ourselves to account. Only those nations that are capable of analysing their past, learning from their mistakes and making amends can achieve true glory," said PM Shehbaz. 'Muslim leadership made a prudent decision' In his message on the occasion of Pakistan Day, President Arif Alvi said that the persecution of minorities, violation of human rights and brutalities in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK) prove that the Muslim leadership of that time made a prudent decision. "This day also serves as a reminder to take stock of our successes and failures as a nation," said President Alvi. He added that Pakistan's post-independence "established state institutions", made the country's "defence impregnable, achieved nuclear deterrence, curbed terrorism, overcame



## Govt to constitute task force against anti-army campaign

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Interior Ministry has decided to constitute a special task force against the anti-army campaign, according to sources. As per details, the task force will include officers from FIA, PTA and NADRA. It was revealed that more than eight Tiktak accounts, 44 Twitter accounts and 50 Facebook accounts did the propaganda. The police and law enforcement agencies will also assist the task force, and they will also give suggestion to the task force, sources added. Earlier, Prime Minister (PM) Shehbaz Sharif strongly condemned the smear campaign against the army chief General Asim Munir. The PM said the smear campaign against the Army Chief is intolerable and this is the continuation of that campaign against the state institutions. He had directed Interior Minister Rana Sanaullah to take strict against those who are running smear campaigns against the state institutions. Only the anti-state elements can run such campaigns against an Army Chief purely selected on merit as the nation is standing behind its armed forces. Last year, the Federal Investigative Agency (FIA) arrested 19 social media activists involved in propagating trolling posts against army after a helicopter crash in Balochistan in August.

Continued on Page 06

## Briefs

### ECP has violated constitution

DNA

LAHORE: The Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) chairman Imran Khan has said that ECP has violated the constitution by postponing the Punjab elections till October. Reacting to the postponement of the elections, he said: "Today everyone must stand behind the legal community – the judiciary and lawyers – with expectation that they will protect constitution. For if this is accepted today, then it is the end of rule of law in Pakistan."

### Govt ready for 'grand dialogue'

MAHNOOR ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Law Minister Azam Nazeer-Tarar has said the coalition government is ready to hold a grand political dialogue if PTI Chairman Imran Khan shows a willingness to bring down political heat. "Imran Khan should send two people from his side while two people from the coalition government will sit together to discuss things," he said addressing a press conference on Thursday.

### Sehr, Iftar Timing



Sehr: 04:42 am  
Iftar: 06:26 pm  
Fique-e-Jafria  
Sehr: 04:32 am  
Iftar: 06:36 pm

# ECP's decision in national interest

## Marriyum says ECP took decision after consulting all stakeholders

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Information and Broadcasting Marriyum Aurangzeb on Thursday said that the decision of the Election Commission of Pakistan to postpone the Punjab Assembly elections was in the interest of Pakistan. "The Election Commission took the decision keeping in mind the economic, political and security situation", she said in a statement. The minister said that the ECP had saved the country from a big constitutional crisis and this decision would bring political stability in the country. Marriyum Aurangzeb maintained that under Article 218 of the Constitution, the ECP has to ensure transparent, impartial and fair elections. Article 224 required that at the time of elections, caretaker governments should be established at the federal and provincial level, she maintained.

Continued on Page 06



## Govt sets up JIT on Judicial complex riots

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The government has set up a joint investigation team over the Islamabad riots, Interior Minister Rana Sanaullah said on Thursday. Imran Khan attacked the judicial complex with armed groups, he stressed while addressing a press conference. Instead of facing the law, Imran Khan is using tricks, he said, adding that Imran Khan has several cases of corruption including kickbacks, foreign funding, Toshakhana and concealing facts. Imran Khan has been on a campaign for snap polls since his ouster from

Continued on Page 06

# Kingdom stood by Pakistan through thick and thin: Envoy

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Saudi Ambassador Nawaf bin Said Al-Malki, reviewing the historic relations between two brotherly countries, said the Kingdom had always stood by Pakistan through thick and thin since its independence in 1947. Addressing an event, organized by the embassy's media bureau, the other day, to confer awards to winners who participated in a short video competition on Pakistan and Saudi Arabia relations, he said Saudi Arabia paid special attention to its relations with Islamic countries, particularly Pakistan as it was one of the most important Islamic countries for the Kingdom. The Saudi envoy said, "The relationship between two countries is based on sincerity, brotherhood and pure love for each other." He, eulogizing Saudi Press Attaché Dr. Naif Alotaibi and his team for organizing such an informative activity on behalf of the royal embassy, felicitated the winners of competition and expressed the hope that it would further boost their confidence and help



them in their future endeavors. During his welcome address, Dr. Naif Alotaibi said this healthy competition was organized to celebrate 70-year bilateral relations between the two countries as in March, 1953 the Governor General of Pakistan Ghulam Muhammad during his first official visit to Kingdom of Saudi Arabia held an exclusive meeting with King Shah Abdul Aziz bin AbdurRehman Al-Saud. Briefing the audience, he informed that the

royal embassy received 114 videotapes on Pak-Saudi relations which had always been a fascinating chapter in the diplomatic history of two countries. He said the videos were of good quality and content adding that out of the total, ten documentaries were selected for the prizes. The first prize holder got \$2,000 while those who stood second and third were given \$1,500 and \$1,000, respectively, he said adding that the remaining seven video clip makers received \$500 each, however, other contestants were awarded vouchers of SAR 2,000 and free visas to perform Umrah. It is worth mentioning here that a silent video enthralled the audience very much as the story was a mouthpiece of overseas Pakistanis who were not only earning bread and butter for their families but also adding a huge foreign exchange in the national kitty. It showed that after the death of a Pakistani laborer, how the Saudi government supported his family and translated his daughter's dream into reality of becoming a doctor.

## Mending feces PTI hires lobbying firm in US

DNA

WASHINGTON: Seeking to build good relations with the US decision-makers after accusing the country of toppling its government, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) has hired another lobbying firm to promote the party's image. Documents that surfaced yesterday confirm that PTI USA signed a contract with a Washington-based lobbying firm, Praia Consultants LLC, to support the party's goals for "good relations with the United States and the Pakistani diaspora in the US." The contract was signed on February 21 for six months, according to the documents filed with the US Justice Department under the Foreign Agents Registration Act. PTI USA, which is based in New York, is the principal client of the lobbying firm which will be paid \$8,333.00 per month. "During the term of this agreement, the firm shall provide expert advice regarding the client's relationship with the United States government and institutions. Furthermore, the firm shall organise meetings with several key US decision-makers and will provide guidance in terms of the content of the meetings, the contract states. Additionally, the agreement will continue for an additional six months till January 31, 2024, if both parties have no objections and provide written approval thereto by June 30, 2023.

## Postponement of Punjab polls

# PTI to move top court against ECP decision

## PTI decides to attend parliament's joint sitting

ANSAR M BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Senior Vice President Fawad Chaudhry has said his party will challenge the Election Commission of Pakistan's (ECP) decision to postpone the date for general elections in Punjab from April 30 to October 8 in the Supreme Court (SC). A day earlier, the election organising authority announced the postponement of the upcoming elections in the largest province of the country – citing security reasons as the major cause behind the change of plan. In light of the Supreme Court's split ruling last month, President Arif Alvi announced the date for the Punjab polls after consulting the ECP.

Continued on Page 06

## Sh. Rashid seeks CJP's suo moto

### Says ECP has created constitutional crisis by delaying polls

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Awami Muslim League (AML) chief Sheikh Rashid Ahmed said on Thursday the decision of Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) to put off the elections in Punjab had created constitutional crisis in the country.

Continued on Page 06

Estd. 1860

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## 4.4 magnitude earthquake jolts part of Punjab

SARGODHA: Tremors were felt in different parts of Punjab on Thursday after a magnitude 4.4 earthquake jolted the adjoining areas. According to Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD), tremors were felt in Sargodha, Chinot, Hafizabad, Faisalabad, Nankana Sahib and its adjoining areas. The PMD said that the magnitude of the earthquake was recorded at 4.4 on the Richter scale and the epicentre was 30km away from Sargodha at a depth of 30km. Earlier on March 21, tremors were felt in different parts of Pakistan, India, Afghanistan, China and other countries after a magnitude 6.8 earthquake jolted the Afghanistan-Tajikistan border region. The cities include Islamabad, Lahore, Peshawar, Jehlum, Sargodha, Swat, and its adjoining areas. The PMD said that the magnitude of the earthquake was recorded at 6.8 on the Richter Scale and the epicentre was the Hindu Kush region in Afghanistan at a depth of 180km. — DNA

## Traffic Police launches 'Warning Book'

PESHAWAR: City Traffic Police (CTP) Peshawar here on Thursday launched a 'warning book' for distribution among the people for creating awareness about traffic rules to ensure provision of the best traveling facilities to them. According to Chief Traffic Officer (CTO) Peshawar, Qamar Hayat Khan, the purpose behind the launching of the warning book was to persuade people to follow traffic rules and also create awareness among them. He said that with the issuance of the warning book the ratio of the challans would decrease as now in case of the violation of traffic laws, this book would be given to them to inform them regarding penalties against the violators. The CTO said that after giving the warning book, the name of such drivers and motorists would be registered on the software of the City Traffic Police and in future, such violator will not only be challan rather legal proceedings will also be initiated against him.—APP

## APNS extends felicitations to Shami on conferring Hilal-e-Imtiaz

### DNA

KARACHI: The APNS expresses its pleasure on the conferring of Hilal-e-Imtiaz to the veteran editor and former President of APNS, Mr. Mujib-ur-Rahman Shami by the President of Pakistan. Ms. Nazafreen Saigol Lakhani, President and Mr. Sarmad Ali, Secretary General of the All Pakistan Newspapers Society have congratulated Mr. Shami on receiving the prestigious award in recognition of his life long services for the promotion and development of journalism and print media in the country. The APNS office bearers wished Mr. Shami a long life and continued contribution to the cause of print media and press freedom.



ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi conferring the Pakistan Civil Award of Hilal-i-Imtiaz upon Muhammad Ramzan Chhipa in recognition of his services in the field of Public Service at the Investiture Ceremony on Pakistan Day, held at Aiwan-e-Sadr. — DNA

# President confers Pakistan civil awards on 135 individuals

### DNA

ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi on Thursday conferred Pakistan's civil awards on 135 citizens as well as foreign nationals on Pakistan Day, in recognition of their excellence and gallantry in their respective fields. The awards were conferred at an investiture ceremony held at the Aiwan-e-Sadr here, also attended by the cabinet members, diplomats and family members of the recipients of the awards. The president distributed the civil awards in 10 categories including Nishan-i-Imtiaz, Tamgha-i-Imtiaz, Hilal-i-Imtiaz, Hilal-i-Quaid-Azam, Sitara-i-Shujaat, Sitara-i-Imtiaz, Presidential Award for Pride of Performance, Tamgha-i-Shujaat and Tamgha-i-Khidmat. The president conferred Nishan-i-Imtiaz on Sartaj Aziz, Mir Hasil Bazinjo and late Justice (Retd) Rana Bhagwandas for their public service; Ahmed Ali Chagla (art), late Sufi Ghulam Tabassum (poetry), Muhammad Qavi Khan (drama, film) and Jahangir Khan and Jansher Khan (sports).

The Hilal-i-Pakistan award was given to Ambassador (ret'd) Robin Lynn Raphael for her services to Pakistan. The president conferred the Hilal-i-Imtiaz award on Khawaja Abdul Hayee (education), Engineer Professor Ahmed Farooq Bazai (academic), Hakeem Rizwan Hafeez (health), Dr Raja Ali Raza (engineering), Raees Ahmed (arts), late Amjad Islam Amjad (arts), late Arif Nizami, Mujibur Rehman Shami and Altaf Hassan Qureshi (journalism); Bilquees Bano Edhi (social services), Muhammad Ramzan Chhipa, Sardar Ahmed Nawaz Sukhera, late Maroof Afzal, Senator Talha Mahmood, Capt (ret'd) Sher Alam Mehsud, Justice (ret'd) Fazal Karim, Sultan Ali Alana and Hilalur Rehman (public service); Dr Gohar Ejaz (philanthropy) and Khawaja Masood Akhtar (sports exports). The president conferred the Hilal-i-Quaid-Azam award on Dr James M. Shera for his services to Pakistan. The Sitara-i-Shujaat award was given to Malik Muhammad Hassan, late Malik Gangrai, Malik Shumali Khan, late Fiza Tariq Malik, Raja Mustafa Ali, Muhammad Afzal Sheikh and Sajid Kiani (Gallantry) and Mansoor Ahmed Khan (services to Pakistan). The president awarded Sitara-i-Imtiaz to Muhammad Afzal Javed and Zafarullah Khan (services to Pakistan), Dr Saeed Akhtar (medicine), late Humayun Khan (agriculture), Dr Sharif Malik (medicine), Mahfoozur Rehman (education), Fakhar-e-Alam (hosting), late Saghar Siddiqui (poetry), late Shama Khalid (art); late Ziauddin, Javed Chaudhry and Nadeem Malik (journalism); Dr Anees Ahmed and Maulana Hanif Jalandhari (religious scholar), and Waqar Ahmed Malik (public service). Among others who were also conferred the Sitara-i-Imtiaz award included Syed Murat Mahmood (public service), Imdadullah Bosal (public service) and Mirza Ishtiaq Baig (social service); Lt Gen Noman

Zakaria, Major General Muhammad Idris Dastgir, Brigadier Salman Rashid Hussain, Muhammad Iqbal Khan, Asim Ali Khan, Samina Chagali, Dr Amir Malik, Tahir Rai and Riazuddin Sheikh (public service); Behroz Sabzwari and Tariq Mahmood (art). The president awarded Presidential Award for Pride of Performance to Dr Ayesha Siddiqua (medicine), Anjum Shaheen (acting); Taskeen Zafar, Syed Shamoon Hashmi and late Prof. Jahazeb Niaz Khan (art); Shahida and Irfan Mehsud (sports); and Tika Khan and Hafiz Tahir Khalil (journalism). In recognition of their gallantry, the Tamgha-i-Shujaat award was conferred on Amir Nawaz Shaheed, Muhammad Kamran Shaheed, Sher Ahmed, Tanveer Hussain Tonio, Amjad Ahmed Sheikh, Mazhar Nawaz Sheikh, Bashir Ahmed Barohi, Zeeshan Ahmed, Naved Ahmed, Ziaur Rehman, Javedullah Shaheed, Dr Akbar Nasir Khan, Sohail Zafar Chattha, Sadiq Shah, Raja Muhammad Majid, Bilal Raja, Mubashir Saleem,

Minhas Ahmed Khan, Ijaz Hafeez, Aqeel Ahmed Siddiqui and Waseem Ahmed Khan. President Alvi conferred Tamgha-i-Imtiaz on Sindh Governor Kamran Tessori, Achad Bhuglah (services to Pakistan), Jehan Ara (IT), Uzma Batool (medicine), Dr Rizwan Uppal (health), Dr Tanvir Khaliq (medicine), Prof. Dr Khalid Mehmood (medicine), Der Zahoorul Haq (higher education) Dr Samreen Hussain (education), Rustam Ali Lone (art), Arif Khan (art), Nigar Nazar (art), Dr Ikramullah (Qiraat) and Bisma Maroof (sports). The recognition of their public service, the president conferred Tamgha-i-Imtiaz on Cristina VON Sperling Afridi, Saima Saleem, SP Sumera Azam, Shehzad Afzal Khan, Major Muhammad Ali Tehseen, Major Atif Naveed, Saleh Azeem, Insaaf Shah, Amin, Khawaja Adnan Zaheer, Ahmed Farooq, Imran Rasool, Nadeem Akhtar Sherazi, Tahir Akbar Awan, Syed Ali Hasnain Hussain and Dr Asif Bashir.

Minhas Ahmed Khan, Ijaz Hafeez, Aqeel Ahmed Siddiqui and Waseem Ahmed Khan. President Alvi conferred Tamgha-i-Imtiaz on Sindh Governor Kamran Tessori, Achad Bhuglah (services to Pakistan), Jehan Ara (IT), Uzma Batool (medicine), Dr Rizwan Uppal (health), Dr Tanvir Khaliq (medicine), Prof. Dr Khalid Mehmood (medicine), Der Zahoorul Haq (higher education) Dr Samreen Hussain (education), Rustam Ali Lone (art), Arif Khan (art), Nigar Nazar (art), Dr Ikramullah (Qiraat) and Bisma Maroof (sports). The recognition of their public service, the president conferred Tamgha-i-Imtiaz on Cristina VON Sperling Afridi, Saima Saleem, SP Sumera Azam, Shehzad Afzal Khan, Major Muhammad Ali Tehseen, Major Atif Naveed, Saleh Azeem, Insaaf Shah, Amin, Khawaja Adnan Zaheer, Ahmed Farooq, Imran Rasool, Nadeem Akhtar Sherazi, Tahir Akbar Awan, Syed Ali Hasnain Hussain and Dr Asif Bashir.

## DC for fully implement the code of conduct in Ramazan

### DNA

ATTOCK: District Peace and Interfaith Harmony Committee meeting was held on Thursday under the chairmanship of Deputy Commissioner Attock Rao Atif Raza in which district officers and all members participated. They presented their recommendations and suggestions which were implemented by the administration as per law. Deputy Commissioner while addressing the meeting, expressed his views that those who spread mischief will be dealt with iron hands. The district administration has completed the preparations for Ramazan. The public is requested to fully implement the code of conduct issued by the administration in Ramazan. DC said that we should show full unity and sacrifice in Ramazan, which was taught by our Prophet Muhammad PBUH to the Muslim Ummah. Unity is the foundation of islam and by following it, we can live a successful life, he said and added that there is a need for people of all schools of thought to come together in one place.

## KSA stood by Pakistan through thick:i Envoy

ISLAMABAD: Saudi Ambassador Nawaf bin Saud Al-Malki, reviewing the historic relations between two brotherly countries, said the Kingdom had always stood by Pakistan through thick and thin since its independence in 1947. Addressing an event, organized by the embassy's media bureau, the other day, to confer awards to winners who participated in a short video competition on Pakistan and Saudi Arabia relations, he said Saudi Arabia paid special attention to its relations with Islamic countries, particularly Pakistan as it was one of the most important Islamic countries for the Kingdom. The Saudi envoy said, "The relationship between two countries is based on sincerity, brotherhood and pure love for each other."—APP

# Minister directs to resolve hardships of deserving people

### QAZI SHOAB KHAN

ATTOCK: Caretaker provincial minister Health Punjab Dr. Jamal Nasir on Thursday while hearing the complaints of the people at free flour distribution points in Attock has directed the district administration to ensure removal of all unnecessary bottlenecks and resolve the hardships of deserving people during the holy month of Ramazan. He was also accompanied by Deputy Commissioner Attock Rao Atif Raza, ADCR Attock Mr. Waqas Aslam Marth, Assistant Commissioner Attock Ms. Shagufta Jabeen, Deputy Director Public Relations Attock Mr. Shahzad Niaz and other relevant heads of the provincial department. On this occasion, he was also briefed about the provision of food items and distribution system of wheat flour to the consumers. He said that the



caretaker government of the Punjab is fully committed to make all out efforts for provision of all basic facilities to its people within its available resources. Hearing the complaints of the people on spot, Caretaker provincial minister Health Punjab Dr. Jamal Nasir has assured to resolve their problems on priority basis. Meanwhile, the caretaker

health minister Punjab also took a round of Government Asfandiyar District Headquarters Hospital Attock and physically reviewed the operational and administrative issues of the indoor treatment of the patients came across the district. DC Attock Rao Atif Raza, Chief Executive Officer Health Dr. Asad Asmi, MS Dr. Jawad Elahi, and other

health faculty was also present on the occasion. The visiting caretaker minister Health while taking exception of the multiple complaints of the patient management system, referral serious patients, life saving drugs, clinical tests of the patients has also advised the management of the health department to check these problems with the assurance to resolve without further loss of time, he added.

# Islamia College Peshawar: An education icon

PESHAWAR: Established in 1913 at the foothills of Koh-e-Sufaid, Islamia College Peshawar (ICP), which has held aloft the torch of educating the people of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa for the past 110 years, also saw the historic independence movement of Pakistan. One travelling through the historic Jamrud Road can't remain unimpressed while passing under the shadows of its domes, lush-green lawns and majestic edifice of its beautiful architecture. It reminds visitors of the glorious role of its students played during the Pakistan Movement led by the father of the nation, Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah. "The history of the Pakistan Movement is incomplete

without mentioning the role of the students of ICP," said Younas Khan, Chairman Pakistan Studies Department, ICP while talking to APP on Thursday. He said the legendary Quaid visited ICP in 1936, 1945 and 1948 to acknowledge the outstanding role of its students during the completion of his mission for Pakistan. On April 12, 1948, Quaid-e-Azam visited ICP as the first Governor General of Pakistan where he presented glowing tributes to the services of its students towards making Pakistan. "I am indeed very happy to be present here today and to have the privilege of addressing students of this great Darul Uloom, who are the future builders of Pakistan. Remember your government

is like your own garden. Your garden flourishes by the way you look after it and the efforts that you put towards its improvement. Similarly, your government can only flourish by your patriotic, honest and constructive efforts to improve it," Quaid said. He wished to construct a university near ICP which was fulfilled by the government within a gap of one year by establishing the University of Peshawar in 1949. Quaid-e-Azam became an honorary member of the Khyber Union, a debating society of the college in 1936. His love for the college can be judged from his will written on May 30, 1939, in Mumbai wherein he declared ICP, the Muslim University Aligarh and Sindh Madrassatul Islam Karachi

as among the inheritor of his property. "The Quaid Trust later paid Rs10,811,600 in different installments to the college. The amount was spent on the of Quaid-e-Azam College of Commerce, University of Peshawar, construction of Jinnah residential quarters for the college employees, Jinnah College for Women and the newly constructed Takbeer block and others projects," he said. The college, which is a beautiful combination of the Aligarh and Deoband School of Thoughts, is a mere testimony to the greatness of its Founder, Nawab Sir Sahibzada Abdul Qayyum Khan besides glorious history of strength and commitment. "The idea to establish a college clicks in the minds of

Nawab Sahib and Sir George Roos-Keppel, the then Chief Commissioner NWFP (Now KP) in early 1909 when they met the Pathan students during their visit to the Muslim University Aligarh," says ex-principal ICP, Prof G.D. Khilji in his memoirs. The students requested them either to construct a Frontier hostel in Aligarh or a college may be built for them in the frontier province. As a token, the students raised some sixty-odd rupees and gave them to Roos Keppel to form a Frontier Hostel Fund or any other project. Keppel later passed the money on to Nawab Sahib, who gave it to his personal servant Habibullah, who always accompanied him.—APP

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**National Days and Armed Forces Days**

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



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**Water Tank**

# ICCI donates Rs.4m for quake victims of Turkiye

Engr. Muhammad Azhar ul Islam Zafar, Vice President ICCI said that the people of Pakistan consider Turkiye their second home and would always stand with them in every thin and thick hour

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari, President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry (ICCI) leading a delegation visited the Embassy of Turkiye and presented a cheque of Rs.4 million to H.E. Dr. Mehmet Pacaci, Ambassador as a token of support for the help and rehabilitation of earthquake victims of Turkiye. Speaking at the occasion, Ahsan Bakhtawari said that Pakistan and Turkiye have deep rooted relations and the Pakistani nation stands in complete solidarity with the brotherly people of Turkiye in the wake of the unprecedented earthquake that struck it in February 2023. He said the entire Pakistani nation is saddened over the huge damage and loss of lives caused by the earthquake. He said that the business community of Pakistan will continue to provide all possible support to the people of Turkiye in the post-disaster rehabilitation and reconstruction process. He said that Turkiye is



one of the best friends of Pakistan and Pakistan would never forget the support of Turkiye during the earthquake of October 2005 and devastating floods of 2010 and 2022 in Pakistan. He assured that ICCI would continue to provide more financial support to the people of Turkiye in these difficult times. He also discussed the matters for further improving bilater-

al trade and economic relations between Pakistan and Turkiye. H.E. Dr Mehmet Paçaci Ambassador of Turkiye thanked ICCI delegation for visiting his Embassy to express solidarity with the people of Turkiye and to provide financial support. He also expressed gratitude to the leadership and the people of Pakistan for extending humanitarian assistance

in the aftermath of the massive earthquake in his country. He said that Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif was the first foreign leader who visited Turkiye after the devastating earthquake to express solidarity with the people of Turkiye, which showed Pakistan's love and affection for his country. He said that Pakistan has already sent hundreds of tons of relief

# IESCO installs 8,702 net metering connections

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad Electric Supply Company (IESCO) has installed 8,702 net metering connections having a total generation capacity of 106.43 megawatts (MW) in various circles of the company from January 2016 to February 2023. Manager Public Relations Asim Nazir Raja told APP here that the company had received 9,177 applications of net metering with 114.29 MW capacity during the said period. The National Electric Power Regulatory Authority (NE-

PRA) issued licences to 9,122 net metering connections with an accumulative capacity of 113.68 MW so far, he added. He said that the import and export of billing units had been started from 7781 net metering connections with a total capacity of 95.35 MW. The total exports and imports from these connections stood at 133,529,246 units and 167,307,686 units respectively, he said. Asim said that the company had paid an amount of Rs 2,327,559

to the connections' holders up to June 2022. To a question, he said that the company had authorised to grant licences up to 25 kilowatts (kW) capacity while over 25 kW capacity, NENPRA issued licenses for net metering connections. It is pertinent to mention here that the net-metering project had been launched in 2016 countrywide. It allows any domestic, commercial, industrial and other consumers to have at least a three-phase

meter connection. Under the arrangements, such a consumer may sell the additional energy to the respective power distribution company and make stocktaking (calculations) with it at the end of the month. Since the system allows the consumers to generate electricity from one kilowatt to one megawatt, NEPRA issues licences to the applicants seeking generation below 25kW in the service area jurisdiction of all distribution companies.—APP

# ICP apprehend 11 outlaws

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad capital police apprehended 11 outlaws from different areas of the city and recovered drugs and weapons with ammunition from their possession, a police public relations officer said. He said that, following the special directions of Inspector General of Police (IGP) Islamabad Dr. Akbar Nasir Khan, the Islamabad capital police has intensified crackdown against the criminal elements in order to eliminate the crime from the city. Following these directives, the Kohsar police team arrested four drug peddlers and bootlegger namely Ifeanyichukwu Elijah, Qamar Shahzad, Yousaf Masih and Rameez Elahi and recovered 3390 gram

heroin and 10 liters liquor from their possession. Similarly, the Bani Gala police team arrested an accused namely Arbaz Mumtaz Anwar and recovered two 30 bore pistols with ammunition from his possession. Shalimar police arrested an accused involved in drug peddling namely Nelson Ruzzy and recovered 550 gram heroin from his possession. Moreover, the Tarnol police team arrested an accused namely Khalid and recovered 1050 gram hashish from his possession. The Sangjani police team arrested three accused namely Muhammad Ali, Shafi Ullah and Adil and recovered 1120 gram hashish and two 30 bore pistols with ammunition

from their possession. Furthermore, the Khanna police arrested an accused namely Sani Mukhtiar Masih and recovered one 9mm pistol with ammunition from his possession. Cases have been registered against the nabbed accused and further investigation is underway. CPO/ DIG Operations Islamabad Syed Shehzad Nadeem Bukhari directed all senior officials for effective crackdown against the accused involved in drug peddling and possessing illegal weapons and said that the safety of the lives and property of the citizens is our prime responsibility. The performance of police officials in this regard would be reviewed on a continuous basis, he maintained.—DNA

## Hassan Niazi sent to jail

ISLAMABAD: A session court in Islamabad has rejected the physical remand plea against Barrister Hassan Khan Niazi, the nephew of former Prime Minister Imran Khan for resisting the force at a police picket. As per details, the judicial magistrate Mureed Abbas has sent Barrister Hassan Khan Niazi on judicial remand to jail. The police had urged the court for the physical remand of Hassan Niazi for five days. Earlier, a session court in Islamabad sent Barrister Hassan Khan Niazi, on two-day judicial remand for resisting the force at a police picket. It is important to mention here that Barrister Hassan, the nephew of former Prime Minister Imran Khan, was arrested by Islamabad police from outside Judicial Complex, despite securing bail.—DNA

# Gov't urged to promote regional trade

ISLAMABAD: The Coordinator to Federal Tax Ombudsman Meher Kashif Younis Thursday said Pakistan needs to improve its overall relationship with neighbouring countries to boost volume of regional trade. Speaking at a seminar on "Diversification of Marets " held under the aegis of Gold Ring Economic Forum, a strategic think tank, he said there are several second-tier export markets where we need to penetrate deeper that include Australia, Canada, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Hong Kong, Vietnam and Turkey etc. He said Pakistan's exports go to about 200 countries. Pakistan tries to pursue a very inclusive geopolitical policy to retain all these markets. And obviously, it makes sense if it takes special diplomatic care of the markets from where anything between 1% and 20% or more of its total export earnings originate. Meher Kashif Younis said what's perturbing is that we have so far not exploited the true potential of exports within Asia — the region that is now serving as the growth engine of the world economy. He said in addition to China (with our annual exports at \$2.781bn), only three Asian countries feature on the list of export destinations from where we earn half a billion dollars. In FY22, export earnings from the UAE totalled \$1.843bn (5.9pc of the total), followed by Bangladesh at \$871m (2.8pc of the total) and Afghanistan at \$552m (1.8pc of the total). He said our export earnings from the US, China and the UK account for more than a third of total exports of goods and services. And more than two third of the total comes from 11 nations.—APP

# NA Speaker emphasizes importance of unity

ISLAMABAD, Mar 23 (APP):National Assembly Speaker Raja Pervaiz Ashraf on Thursday highlighted the importance of the Pakistan Resolution and emphasised the need for unity, collective thinking, and dialogue to address the crises faced by Pakistan right now. In his Pakistan Day message, he stressed the need to forget bilateral differences and work towards the development of the country. He emphasized the importance of adopting the guiding principles of Faith, Unity, and Discipline of Quaid-e-Azam to overcome the crises currently faced by Pakistan, and to repeat the spirit of March 23, 1940. Speaker Ashraf highlighted the importance of political stability for economic stability and called for collective thinking and dialogue to resolve conflicts. Condemning the Indian government's atrocities against minorities, he also expressed solidarity with the people of Indian illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IOJK) and recognised the sacrifices made by Pakistan's armed forces and law enforcement agencies. Deputy Speaker of National Assembly Zahid Akram Durrani, in his separate message, also emphasised the significance of the Pakistan Resolution and the sacrifices rendered by Pakistan's armed forces and law enforcement agencies for the country's survival.—APP

## IRSA releases 67,900 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD: Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Thursday released 67,900 cusecs of water from various rim stations with an inflow of 62,400 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, the water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1423.46 feet and was 25.46 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. Water inflow in the dam was recorded as 19,900 cusecs while outflow was 25,000 cusecs. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1094.85 feet, 44.85 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water were recorded as 19,600 cusecs and 20,000 cusecs respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded as 27,400, 38,300, 24,900 and 6,000 cusecs respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 11,900 cusecs of water was released at Nowshera and 3,700 cusecs released from River Chenab at Marala.—APP

## ICP action against tinted glasses vehicles

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad capital police crackdown against vehicles having black paper and tinted glasses has been intensified. Special squads are constituted to take action against such vehicles, a police public relations officer said. He said that, following the special directions of Inspector General of Police (IGP) Islamabad Dr. Nasir Akbar Khan, the Islamabad capital police constituted special squads to take action against vehicles having tinted glasses and black papers in the capital city. Following these directions, the Islamabad capital police aim to enforce a zero tolerance policy as it is a moral responsibility to spread awareness regarding road safety while enforcing laws. Islamabad capital police officials are well trained through seminars and have been instructed to treat citizens in a professional manner. Citizens are requested to ensure the smooth flow of traffic on roads.

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## Briefs

## Holy month of Ramzan commences in IIOJK

ISLAMABAD: In Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK) announcements were made from mosques throughout the territory on Wednesday that Ramzan, the holy month of fasting, would commence from Thursday (today). According to Kashmir Media Service, the announcements came soon after the central Ruet-e-Hilal Committee of Pakistan announced that the Ramzan moon was sighted and the first of the holy month will fall on Thursday. Various religious bodies including Anjuman Auqaf Jamia Masjid, Srinagar and Kishtwar and Anjuman-e-Shari Shiaan also announced the beginning of the holy month of Ramzan from Thursday. As per reports, the Ramzan moon was not sighted in India and Bangladesh.—APP

## PAF contingent takes charge of guard duties at Mazar-e-Iqbal

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Day was celebrated at all PAF Bases and installations with traditional zeal and fervor on Thursday. The day-long celebrations started with special prayers after Fajar for the solidarity, progress and prosperity of Pakistan and the Muslim World, a Pakistan Air Force (PAF) news release said. To commemorate this auspicious day in a befitting manner a guard mounting and wreath laying ceremony was held at the mausoleum of great poet and philosopher Allama Muhammad Iqbal. A smartly turned out contingent of Pakistan Air Force took over guard duties from Sattij Rangers. The Chief Guest, Air Vice Marshal Syed Imran Majid Ali, Air Officer Commanding, PAF Airmen Academy, Korangi Creek laid a floral wreath and offered Fateha at the grave of Allama Iqbal on behalf of Chief of the Air Staff, Airmen and Civilians of Pakistan Air Force.—APP

## Ramzan festivity brings lively atmosphere

ISLAMABAD: On the first day of Ramzan, rain of light to moderate intensity in Islamabad like other parts of the country had turned the weather pleasant and a large number of faithful visitors rushed to mosques at Sehri time to focus more on religious observances. Imams and muezzins of all the mosques in the country had been instructed to keep the place tidy and ensure an adequate supply of power and water during the holy month to meet the requirements of the increased number of Muslims, according to a report aired by PTV news channel.

Like every year, this year too the hustle and bustle in mosques had increased with the advent of Ramzan, said a citizen, Abbas.—APP

## Business community urges to explore new global markets

Imports into Pakistan had increased from \$43.6 billion in 2011 to \$73.1 billion in 2021. A similar trend was reported for Bangladesh, while Vietnam's imports increased from \$106 billion to \$330 billion in the same time period

ISLAMABAD: Federation of Pakistan Chamber of Commerce and Industry's United Business Group (UBG) Chairman Shahzad Ali Malik on Thursday stressed the urgent need for re-visiting and adopting new trade strategies to explore new global markets for boosting exports. Talking to a delegation of industrialists and traders led by Momin Ali in Lahore, he said that one of the key issues that Pakistan faces was the lack of access to consumers in its key markets. Although the European Union had provided duty-free access to several items under the GSP Plus scheme, Pakistan's exporters don't meet EU

standards, he said and emphasised the need to bring production lines at par with international standards to dominate in foreign markets for enhancing exports, said a press release issued here. Malik termed the lack of diversification in exports as one of the biggest challenges that Pakistan faced. He said exporters from Pakistan were heavily concentrated in textiles and cereals, which dominate the top 10 products exported from the country. He said although Bangladesh had a similar composition, it exports more value-added apparel and garments, while Pakistan's top 10 export products include lower value-added bed linen and towels. He said, on the other hand, Vietnam had expanded its export basket to include more high-value-added and sophisticated products. It exported more than \$33.6 billion worth of cell phones in 2021, becoming its second-largest exporter in the world. Whereas, it had reported zero exports in 2007. He said a major reason for the inability of Pakistan's exporters to participate in exporting activities was the lack of competitiveness, which is associated with low levels of productivity and high trade costs. Shahzad Ali Malik said as the increase in trade deficit creates

jitters amongst policymakers, they often resort to increasing trade restrictions and imposing inward-looking policies to reduce the trade deficit. He said import restrictions and an increase in import tariffs on several commodities had resulted in a shortage of goods and a reduction in manufacturing activities in the country. He said imports into Pakistan had increased from \$43.6 billion in 2011 to \$73.1 billion in 2021. A similar trend was reported for Bangladesh, while Vietnam's imports increased from \$106 billion to \$330 billion in the same time period. He said it was important

to note that imports increase as economies grow and consumer demand expands. However, unlike Bangladesh and Vietnam, Pakistan had not increased its exports, leading to a burgeoning trade deficit. He said Pakistan and the US must address the tariff issues as increased market access could help boost the capabilities of Pakistan's exporters. Finally, he said it was imperative to reduce the trade costs incurred by domestic producers. One of the biggest deterrents to participation in exporting activities was the presence of information asymmetries, Malik added.—Agencies

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## PAC holds exhibition "Roshni Ka Safar"



DNA

RAWALPINDI: A photo exhibition titled 'Roshni Ka Safar' was organized at the Punjab Arts Council to mark Pakistan Day. The exhibition was inaugurated by Naheed Manzoor

and Director of Arts Council Waqar Ahmed. Rare photographs of Pakistan Movement related events, activities, Pakistan Movement workers and sacrifices were kept in the exhibition. The arrival of refugees to Pakistan after independence in 1947 and

the atrocities on the way have also been revealed in the exhibition. On the occasion of the inaugural of the photo exhibition, the chief guest Naheed Manzoor said that freedom is the greatest blessing in the world. Pakistan is the realization of the dreams of the Muslims

of the subcontinent. "After seeing the photo exhibition, one gets lost that Pakistan was made after so many sacrifices and difficulties. Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah made a dream come true by working day and night. Our young generation is very hardworking and worthy. Young generation has to protect Pakistan on ideological basis. The objective of the photo exhibition is to bring to light those who sacrificed for Pakistan in front of the new generations," she added. Director Arts Council Waqar Ahmad said that the resolution passed in Lahore on March 23, 1940 proved to be a forerunner of independence. Keeping in mind the struggle with which the founder of Pakistan worked tirelessly to achieve Pakistan, we have to take a pledge on the occasion of Pakistan Day that we will not hesitate to make any sacrifice for Pakistan. Allah has blessed Pakistan with abundant resources.

## Sanjrani urges unity on Pakistan Day

ISLAMABAD: On Pakistan Day, Senate Chairman Muhammad Sadiq Sanjrani congratulated the nation and emphasised the historical significance of the occasion, reminding the people of the struggles and sacrifices made to achieve independence and urging them to reflect on the values that underpin their nation. In his Pakistan Day message, he said the day serves as a reminder of the determination and resilience of the Pakistani people and their unwavering commitment to their principles. He reminded the people of the historic resolution passed in Lahore under the leadership of Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah that led to the creation of Pakistan within just 7 years. Sanjrani stressed the need for all stakeholders to rise above political affiliations and work together for the development and prosperity of the country. He urged political parties and institutions to adopt a common plan of action for a prosperous country and learn from the mistakes and problems of the past. Sanjrani also praised Pakistan's armed forces for their key role in operations against terrorism and enemies of peace at the global level. He described the Pakistan Army as one of the best professional and fearless forces in the world, and emphasized the need to maintain a strong national defense to ensure Pakistan's sovereignty and territorial security. Sanjrani called on the nation to take a firm pledge for the strength and exaltation of their beloved country, following the thoughts of philosopher and poet Allama Muhammad Iqbal and Father of the Nation Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah. He emphasized that the country's problems could only be overcome through collective efforts, and urged all Pakistanis to work towards a common goal of progress and prosperity for the country.—DNA

## Khan need to face court trials: SAPM

ISLAMABAD: Special Assistant to Prime Minister (SAPM) Malik Ahmad Khan on Thursday said that Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf Chief Imran Khan should face court trials instead of misleading the nation through lies and baseless propaganda against state institutions. "If Khan obeys the law and constitution so much, he should appear before the court as per orders," he said while talking to a private news channel.

Imran Khan was trying to create political instability through lawlessness in the country, the SAPM claimed, adding, he was not only criticizing the politicians but also defaming the national security institutions.

Niaz and his supporters should express patience and wait for the next general elections which would be held on time, he mentioned. Replying to a question, he said that strict action would be taken against all those involved in activities contrary to the law and the Constitution.—APP

## Rashdi for participation of young people in politics

ISLAMABAD: Former member provincial assembly Sindh and human rights activist Mehtab Akbar Rashdi on Thursday congratulated the nation on the occasion of Pakistan Day and stressed on the participation of young blood in politics for strengthening the rule of law and democracy for the uplift of the country.

Talking to a Private news channel, she said today was the day to renew the promise that we would not hesitate to make any sacrifice for the stability and development of our country and to achieve this goal as a united nation. We have to fulfill our responsibilities as a responsible nation to deal with the challenges that we are facing at this time, she said, adding, we need to pay attention to the issues faced by our young blood and women in the country.—APP

## "CPEC Goat" turned into a symbol of goat farming

ISLAMABAD: A newly-born baby goat named "CPEC Goat" is now walking, running and playing in one and only "Goat Farm" developed and run by China Overseas Ports Holding Company (COPHC) in Gwadar Free Zone at Gwadar Port. According to a Gwadar Pro's report on Thursday, her birth and life is a symbol of the new beginning of systemized livestock farming in Gwadar. Previously, it was out of the question to start goat farms for goats and animals because Gwadar was just a fishing town and neither broke the ground for animal husbandry business nor developed a sense of developing goat farms throughout its history. "CPEC Goat" now is enjoying her life with nutritious food, hygienic ambience and medical care available in the farm, said Muhammad Zubair, a chief caretaker employed by COPHC in an interview with Gwadar Pro. "CPEA Goat" is among 25 other new goat breeds housed in the farm which is located in the proximity of the 12-km-long Koh-e-Batil, he said. "Currently we have more than 120 goats of different breeds including Makkan Chini, Gallabo, Teddi, local and Rajan puri," he revealed. The best breed that demonstrated a high survival rate is the local one, he mentioned. "In the farm we keep goats healthy following consistent grooming practice that includes brushing off hair and grime, washing with clean water, and so on. The goats' shelter is clean and spacious enough for them to feel at ease. The shelter's roofs are sufficiently ventilated in order to protect them from adverse weather conditions," he detailed. Goat Farm is sufficient enough to raise more than 400 goats in the coming days.—DNA

## China's Tianjin college helps empowering Pakistani youth

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Luban Workshop, an initiative jointly advanced by Pakistan and Tianjin Modern Vocational Technology College, China and Punjab Technical Education and Vocational Training Authority (TEVTA) is empowering local youth by equipping them with technical know-how. "So far, 33 Pakistani graduates have received both Pakistani vocational training certificate and Chinese academic certificate", Ms. Zhang Ying, director of International Department, Tianjin Modern Vocational Technology College told China Economic Net (CEN). Under this initiative, stu-

dents first take a six-month course of Luban Workshop, then a 24-month study on electrical automation at Tianjin Modern Vocational Technology College, and six-month internship in enterprises in alliance with the workshop. "Eight enterprises in Pakistan have entered into industry-education alliance with Luban Workshop, providing employment opportunities to the students", Ms. Zhang added. Unveiled at the Punjab TEVTA in 2018, the workshop primarily serves the industrial modernization of Lahore and Multan to help Pakistan's industrial transformation and agricultural mechanization. To cultivate technical talents with necessary capabilities, 32 teachers from Pakistan



and China have developed six textbooks, one set of simulation software, 160 pieces of courseware, and nearly 1,500 minutes of teaching videos.

The star course, Industrial Automation and Robotics which has been included in the technical education and

vocational training system of Punjab, has completed 4,000 class hours of teaching in the local area, trained 13,572 technical youth in neighboring provinces, and seen all the students find

"In collaboration with MNS University of Agriculture, Multan, we carry out an ag-

ricultural machinery training program. Following a two-month training last October and November, a Chinese company donated a self-propelled corn harvester to MNSUAM and more modern machinery are yet to be introduced to Pakistan", Ms. Zhang told CEN.



23 مارچ پاکستان

"قوم کو معاشی، معاشرتی، تعلیمی اور سیاسی اعتبار سے متحد کریں تو مجھے یقین ہے آپ ایسی طاقت بن جائیں گے جسے سب تسلیم کریں گے"

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## Europe's green transition: moving to the slow lane?

Germany's pro-business Free Democratic party (FDP) has long been an uncompromising defender of the biggest domestic car industry in Europe. A couple of years ago, it campaigned against proposals for a national speed limit on autobahns – a move that would have helped reduce Germany's CO2 emissions. But as a coalition partner in Olaf Scholz's Social Democrat-led government, it is taking environmental obstructionism to a new level. The FDP is the driving force behind German opposition to Brussels' plans to ban sales of new cars with internal combustion engines from 2035. Until this month, the date was considered a done deal, and constitutes a vital pillar of the EU's strategy to reach net zero emissions by 2050. But Germany is now insisting that the European Commission offers a get-out clause, allowing car manufacturers to carry on producing the engines if they can find a way to deliver carbon-neutral "e-fuels" to run them. The highly technical nature of this debate risks obscuring its dangerous implications for Europe's climate ambitions. In the context of economic pressures triggered by the war in Ukraine, there are disturbing signs that the mood music on net zero targets is changing. Italy's prime minister, Giorgia Meloni, has begun to talk darkly about the potential impact of the "environmental push" on the country's economic fabric. Her deputy, Matteo Salvini, has described the timetable for transition to electric vehicles as "economic and social suicide", and a "gift" to China. The danger is that where Germany has self-interestedly led regarding its own flagship industry, other countries with their own preoccupations may follow. In the Netherlands, the success of a pro-farmer party at recent elections has led to speculation that a pledge by The Hague to halve nitrogen emissions by 2030 may not be met. EU plans to reduce emissions from intensive agriculture more generally have been scaled down. Other green goals, on chemicals and biodiversity, are being challenged. Climate laggards such as Poland and Hungary, whose governments have barely paid lip service to the 2050 zero emissions target, are doubtless scenting the possibility of fruitful alliances. Rather than risk a prolonged and damaging standoff with Berlin, it seems likely that Brussels will offer some heavily caveated concessions on cars. But as Germany's exasperated Green vice-chancellor, Robert Habeck, reportedly observed this week, this standoff has meant that "the largest ever piece of EU climate-protected legislation is starting to be undone". As the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change warns that the threshold 1.5C target for global warming is almost certain to be breached in the 2030s, this is a very bad look indeed. Europe, given its wealth and its industrial history, bears a special responsibility in the battle to contain global heating. Hard times have undoubtedly made the politics of fulfilling net zero pledges more difficult, and handed an opportunity to the populist right in particular. But the response cannot be to delay and water down necessary action in the hope that, Mr Micawber-style, some new technology turns up to solve the problem. As cold political winds begin to blow, the pace and necessity of Europe's green transition urgently need defending.

# Chinese President's visit of Russia

Syed Ali Nawaz Gilani

The two countries have engaged in a number of high-profile joint initiatives, such as the Belt and Road Initiative and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, and have worked closely on issues such as opposing U.S. sanctions and promoting a multipolar global governance system. Despite these shared interests, the relationship between China and Russia is not without its challenges. For example, there are concerns among some Chinese analysts about Russia's long-term economic viability and the potential for the country to drag China down with it. However, as Yan Xuetong notes, "the China-Russia relationship is characterized by mutual

President Xi's visit to Russia marks a new milestone in our strategic partnership," said Russian President Vladimir Putin during a joint press conference with Chinese President Xi Jinping. President Xi, who is on a three-day visit to Russia, responded by stating that "China and Russia are comprehensive strategic partners of coordination, not allies targeting anyone, but partners with sincere mutual assistance and support." The leaders' comments reflect the deepening ties between the two nations, as they seek to bolster economic and military cooperation amid tensions with the United States and its allies. During his visit, President Xi met with President Putin to discuss a range of issues, including trade, energy, and security. The two leaders signed a series of agreements aimed at boosting economic cooperation, including a \$1.5 billion investment deal between the China Development Bank and Russia's Far East Development Fund. In addition, the two sides agreed to expand cooperation in the energy sector, with China set to import more Russian natural gas and work with Russia to develop a liquefied natural gas plant in the Arctic. The visit also saw the signing of a joint statement on global governance, which called for greater respect for international law and the United Nations Charter, as well as the promotion of multilateralism and the reform of global governance institutions. The growing partnership between China and Russia has been a cause for concern for some Western countries, who fear that the two nations are seeking to challenge the existing global order. However, President Putin has dismissed these concerns, stating that "we don't have any plans to create some kind of military alliance." President Xi echoed this sentiment, stating that "we will continue to adhere to the principle of non-alignment, non-confrontation, and not targeting any third party." Despite these assurances, the strengthening of ties between China and Russia is likely to have significant consequences for the world, particularly in terms of shifting geopolitical alliances and economic power. CHINA RUSSIA RELATIONS: In 1949, a patriotic anthem was composed in the

Soviet Union to celebrate Chinese leader Mao Zedong's visit to Moscow. The song, titled "Moscow-Beijing," was a rousing military march that extolled the virtues of solidarity between the two socialist nations. The opening lyrics, "Russians and Chinese are brothers forever," encapsulated the fraternal bond between the two countries, with the Soviet Union depicted as the big brother to the newly-formed People's Republic of China, still reeling from the devastation of World War II and a civil war. Although China gratefully accepted Soviet aid, the perception of being treated as a junior partner would ultimately sour the relationship between the two nations. The world's economic superpower, China is now the senior partner to a Russia that has been weakened by its war with Ukraine and is more dependent than ever on China for economic, technological, and diplomatic support. Trade figures indicate that Chinese exports to Russia rose by almost 20 percent in the first two months of this year to reach \$15 billion, while imports from Russia surged by over 31 percent to \$18.65 billion. The Chinese yuan has surpassed the US dollar to become the most-traded currency on the Moscow stock exchange. Furthermore, Russia has overtaken Saudi Arabia as China's largest oil supplier, with nearly 24 percent year-on-year growth in the first two months of 2023. In light of these figures, it's clear that China holds the upper hand in the relationship. Its economy is over ten times larger than Russia's, and it boasts a modernizing military, technological superiority, and significant global diplomatic clout. As President Xi Jinping and President Putin meet in Moscow, it remains to be seen how the two nations will navigate their relationship in a world where China is now the big brother. Over the past few years, China has been expanding its diplomatic outreach, with President Xi visiting more than 50 countries since taking office in 2013. This has helped to establish China as a major player in international affairs, with its growing influence being felt in everything from trade and investment to geopolitics and security. CHINA'S DIPLOMATIC STRATEGY: One key aspect of China's diplomatic strategy

has been to forge closer ties with Russia, which is also seeking to assert its position as a global power in the face of mounting pressure from the West. The strategic partnership between China and Russia has been growing stronger in recent years, with the two countries working together on a range of issues, from energy and infrastructure to military cooperation and global governance. THE NEW WORLD ORDER IN MAKING: The relationship between China and Russia has always been one of strategic importance. As China continues to rise as a global superpower and Russia looks to maintain its influence in the world, the two countries have developed a close partnership that has only grown stronger in recent years. According to Chinese analyst Yan Xuetong, "the current China-Russia relationship is the best it has been in history." This sentiment is shared by many experts, who see the two countries as increasingly aligned in their geopolitical objectives and shared opposition to Western dominance. The two countries have engaged in a number of high-profile joint initiatives, such as the Belt and Road Initiative and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, and have worked closely on issues such as opposing U.S. sanctions and promoting a multipolar global governance system. Despite these shared interests, the relationship between China and Russia is not without its challenges. For example, there are concerns among some Chinese analysts about Russia's long-term economic viability and the potential for the country to drag China down with it. However, as Yan Xuetong notes, "the China-Russia relationship is characterized by mutual trust, mutual benefit, and win-win cooperation." As the two countries continue to work together on key global issues, their partnership is likely to remain a key factor in shaping the new world order.

—The writer is Secretary General of Pakistan China Friendship Association and can be reached through Syeed.Gilani@gmail.com

# From Iraq to Ukraine: Reflections on imperial hubris

Marwan Bishara

I have exposed the pretexts for the Iraq war and warned repeatedly against the dangers of Washington's Middle East adventures well before and after the invasion, as I have later done for Moscow's attack on Ukraine. As we mark the 20th anniversary of the Iraq war, instead of writing with hindsight or introspection, as many have done in the past few days, I would like to revisit some basic ideas exactly as I wrote them years ago and over the past year. They reveal how these imperial wars of choice are destined to fail and why they bring about destruction

Twenty years ago, as the United States prepared to wage war on Iraq, then-Democratic Senator Joe Biden voted in favour of President George Bush's reckless adventure. On the other side of the world, in Moscow, Russian President Vladimir Putin opposed it, denouncing it as a mistake and a major escalation that would destabilise the international system. Today, it is the savvier and more seasoned Putin who is waging an imperial war in Ukraine – a blunder that now-President Biden has pounced on, warning of its destabilising implications for the world. Over these two decades, I have written extensively about the savage, arrogant and reckless wars the Kremlin and the White House have waged in a relentless show of imperial hubris, whether in Ukraine, Iraq, Afghanistan or elsewhere. I have exposed the pretexts for the Iraq war and warned repeatedly against the dangers of Washington's Middle East adventures well before and after the invasion, as I have later done for Moscow's attack on Ukraine. As we mark the 20th anniversary of the Iraq war, instead of writing with hindsight or introspection, as many have done in the past few days, I would like to revisit some basic ideas exactly as I wrote them years ago and over the past year. They reveal how these imperial wars of choice are destined to fail and why they bring about destruction instead of democracy, chaos instead of stability and humiliation instead of victory. Here are excerpts from three articles I wrote for the International New York Times (previously known as the International Herald Tribune) about the invasion of Iraq and three I wrote for Al Jazeera English about the invasion of Ukraine. Targeting Iraq: Waging war seldom leads to lasting peace September 18, 2002 Those who advocate an attack on Iraq have short memories. Since World War II, the use of force by the United States has consistently failed to neutralize its adversaries beyond the short term. And in the Middle East, wars and covert operations have only produced further conflict. [...] Washington's logic of force has failed in the Middle East and elsewhere. All three major American wars of the last half a century – in Korea, Vietnam and the Gulf – ended in stalemate or defeat. A global response to Sept. 11 could usher in a new era of multilateral cooperation and revamped international law to deal with the new transnational threats. An attack on Iraq would do exactly the opposite. The immediate threat to world stability is coming not from the Iraqi dictator but rather from the democratically

elected government of the world's superpower. Americans, the ball is in your court. War and the Arab world: Not in the name of democracy February 27, 2003 The Bush administration should be careful when it talks about democracy in the Middle East. The idea is too valuable, and too vital, to be used as cynical camouflage for other agendas, whether those are based on oil interests, or Israel's, or the desire to have a solid military beachhead in a volatile region. [...] It's time for democrats – Westerners, Arabs and others – to confront war-mongering politicians with a geo-ethics, to oppose war with the same unwavering opposition they oppose dictators. Democrats the world over, foremost among them American democrats, must put their values above their interests, their humanity above their fear, to help create coalitions across continents and religions to make peace and democracy possible for all. Fighting fire with fire: The Israelization of American policy June 27, 2003 For the past few months I have watched with bewilderment as America has adopted Israel's mistaken strategy in the Middle East. Will America take as long as Israel to realize that starting a war is nothing like finishing it, and that military occupation does not bring about peace or security? [...] Attaining national security in a transnational world means accepting and respecting interdependence. Once security is understood as a universal right, interdependence becomes a sign of wisdom, not weakness. If America must draw on another tradition, why not look to the long history of Jewish tolerance and survival – or to America's own constitutional tradition? It is time to dust off those great documents sitting on the White House shelves. Ukraine: To war or not to war? January 27, 2022 The much-anticipated war in Ukraine may have not started, but it has already achieved most of its objectives. Which begs the question: why persist on the path to war, a bloody destructive war with assured blowbacks, when diplomacy could finish the job? The main protagonists, Russia and the United States, are cynically using the good old Cold War playbook to advance their national interests at the expense of Ukrainian, indeed European, and international security. The Biden administration could certainly accommodate the Russian red line since Ukraine is not even on the path for NATO membership. In return, Russia may provide the necessary assurance and commitment to an independent and free Ukraine. Presidents Putin and Biden have shown clever brinkmanship; they should

not let it get out of control because of personal and national pride. It is high time to reject warmongering and embrace appeasement; yes appeasement; mutual strategic appeasement to avoid another devastating European war and dreadful world crisis. tin's five fatal mistakes in Ukraine October 6, 2022 Russia's justifications for its invasion of Ukraine, like the United States' excuses for its invasion of Iraq two decades earlier, prove that world powers have failed to learn the lessons of imperial hubris – theirs and others. From the ancient Greeks and Romans through to the more recent French, German and British powers, geopolitical arrogance is notorious for breeding fatal political stupidity. So why then do world powers continue to make the same costly mistakes, expecting different results? Does arrogance breed madness too? Remember, the smart learn from their own mistakes, the wise learn from the mistakes of others, but only the foolish learn from neither, as we see in Ukraine today. The world after the Ukraine war February 20, 2023 Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine has been catastrophic. It has led to the loss of tens of thousands of precious lives, the displacement of millions of people, and the destruction of countless homes, civilian buildings and infrastructure. It has also unravelled Russia's moral and strategic standing in the world, as it has become clear just how badly prepared the Russian army really is and how exaggerated Russian economic might has been. The war has also been disastrous for the rest of the world. Not only has it destabilised energy markets, fuelled inflation and disrupted the supply of foods and commodities, but it has also exposed and aggravated the poor state of world affairs, accelerating nuclear proliferation, fuelling an arms race, crippling the United Nations, and undermining international law, multilateral cooperation, and humanitarian assistance. Although we have made major strides forward as a human civilisation, culminating in healthier, richer, better-educated generations, we seem attracted, if not addicted, to destructive conflicts that could set us back generations. History teaches us that great powers decline or perish because of reckless wars, but to no avail. For decades, Russia and America have followed in each other's footsteps, fighting wars they could not finish except in humiliation and massive destruction. And then came Ukraine, alas. Stupid, indeed. —Courtesy: Al Jazeera



## Briefs

## Political chaos main reason for economic woes

FROM PAGE 01

the COVID-19 pandemic, and displayed the spirit of sacrifice and cooperation in the face of natural calamities". "We still have a long way to go to ensure the rule of law, strengthen democracy, reduce inequalities in our society, empower women, provide the rights of persons with disabilities, eradicate terrorism and extremism, ensure the political and economic stability of the country, and protect the human rights of our citizens," said President Alvi. On the 83rd Pakistan Day, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif stated that "political chaos" was the main reason for the country's economic instability. In his message, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif urged the nation to pay tribute to the sacrifices of the country's founding fathers but not lose sight of the challenges staring the country in the face. "The challenges are topped by a combination of economic instability and the inability to settle the rules of the game. An environment of political chaos explains why we have failed to develop our economy on a sustainable basis," said the PM. The premier said that for Pakistan to "achieve great heights", the countrymen will "have to forge unity in our ranks, equip ourselves with national purpose and vow to wage a struggle in line with the legacy of our forefathers". "Let us use this day to introspect and hold ourselves to account. Only those nations that are capable of analysing their past, learning from their mistakes and making amends can achieve true glory," said PM Shehbaz. In his message on the occasion of Pakistan Day, President Arif Alvi said that the persecution of minorities, violation of human rights and brutalities in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK) prove that the Muslim leadership of that time made a prudent decision. "This day also serves as a reminder to take stock of our successes and failures as a nation," said President Alvi. He added that Pakistan's post-independence "established state institutions", made the country's "defence impregnable, achieved nuclear deterrence, curbed terrorism, overcame the COVID-19 pandemic, and displayed the spirit of sacrifice and cooperation in the face of natural calamities". "We still have a long way to go to ensure the rule of law, strengthen democracy, reduce inequalities in our society, empower women, provide the rights of persons with disabilities, eradicate terrorism and extremism, ensure the political and economic stability of the country, and protect the human rights of our citizens," said President Alvi.

## ECP's decision in national interest

FROM PAGE 01

The minister stated that the Election Commission took this decision after consulting all of the stakeholders. There were reservations that because of one man's ego, elections were being forced on two provinces, she said. If elections in two provinces were held on April 30, it would have created a controversy for ever as the terms of Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa assemblies would have ended six months before National Assembly and other two provincial assemblies. The process of the census is going on in the country and it was not possible to hold elections in two provinces before the census and in other provinces after the census. Castigating Imran Khan, she said the Constitution cannot act on the whims of one person who could violate it anytime, dissolve the assembly whenever he wants. She said Imran Khan instigated his followers to injure the law enforcement agencies personnel, attack the ECP and storm the court premises. She said one person could not dictate when the election should be held, and when the decisions should be made.

## Babar youngest cricketer to get Sitara-e-Imtiaz

Squash legends Jahangir, Jansher receive highest civilian award

DNA

LAHORE: Pakistan captain Babar Azam on Thursday became the youngest cricketer to be conferred with the country's third-highest civilian award Sitara-e-Imtiaz. Pakistan's all-format captain Babar was conferred with the award by Governor Baligh Ur Rehman at an investiture ceremony held at the Punjab Governor House as part of Pakistan Day celebrations. With the conferment of the award, Babar has become the youngest cricketer to be awarded Sitara-e-Imtiaz at the age of 28 for his outstanding achievements in the field of sports. Pakistan captain Babar Azam on Thursday became the youngest cricketer to be conferred with the country's third-highest civilian award Sitara-e-Imtiaz. Pakistan's all-format captain Babar was conferred with the award by Governor Baligh Ur Rehman at an investiture ceremony held at the Punjab Governor House as part of Pakistan Day celebrations. While on the occasion of Pakistan Day [23rd March], several sports personalities received civilian awards for their services in respective sports. President of Pakistan, Dr Arif Alvi presented



Nishan-e-Imtiaz to both Jahangir and Jansher on Thursday. After receiving the award, Jahangir took to twitter to share his feelings. "Perseverance is the hard work you do after you get tired of the hard work you already did. I want to share this lesson with the youth, never give up! I dedicate this

award to the resilient people of Pakistan, my fans & everyone who was part of my journey. Pakistan zindabad!" he wrote. Jahangir and Jansher led Pakistan's dominance in the world of Squash. Jahangir Jahangir won British Open for record consecutive 10 times and World Open six times. In 1981 at the age of 17,



Jahangir became the youngest winner of the World Open, beating Australia's Geoff Hunt in final. Meanwhile, Jansher won the World Open a record eight times, and the British Open six times. He remained number one in the world from January 1988 till January 1998 (118 months). He took retirement in 2001. Previously,

Jansher received Hilal-e-Imtiaz, Sitara-e-Imtiaz and Pride of Performance awards for his services in squash. Jahangir is currently doing social work alongside former Test cricketer Shahid Afridi. He is the president of Shahid Afridi Foundation (SAF) who worked tirelessly in COVID-19 crisis and floods in Pakistan.

## Govt sets up JIT on Judicial complex riots

FROM PAGE 01

the prime minister's house in April last year. He was ousted through a no-confidence motion. He has been blaming the regime change on a US-backed plot while the US has been denying any wrongdoing. Addressing the joint session of the parliament yesterday, the minister stressed that if elections are not held simultaneously, there will be a crisis in the country. He added that the crises have been created and a party and its leader are behind this. He recalled that anti-national activities began in 2014 and from 2013 to 2018, every day a situation was created that could harm the state. "Imran Khan was brought to power by manipulating the election. There is no fault of the current government in the current economic situation." He said Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif called for joint efforts and invited all the parties to join hands for overcoming the economic crisis but one party and its leader showed resistance.

## PTI to move top court against ECP decision

FROM PAGE 01

Addressing a joint press conference on Thursday, Fawad, flanked by PTI Secretary General Asad Umar, announced that they are moving the top court against the ECP for "breaching the Constitution". "There is no other option but to hold elections on April 30," insisted the PTI stalwart. He added that the former ruling party's petition would seek the court's order for holding elections in the province as per the previous schedule. Turning his guns towards Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif-led coalition government, Fawad said that the joint sitting of parliament convened on Wednesday was aimed at an "attack on the Supreme Court". Meanwhile, the PTI lawyers categorically stated that the Election Commission had committed contempt of court by postponing the elections till October this year. Prominent lawyers Ali Zafar and Azhar Siddiqi while speaking in various TV talks shows said the ECP was trying to set a new precedent which according to them was against the spirit of the Constitution. Those who support ECP decision including leading lawyer Irfan Qadir said that ECP was within its right while delaying the elections. He was of the view the Election Commission had to mandate to do so.

## Sh. Rashid seeks CJP's suo moto

FROM PAGE 01

He has written a letter to the CJP for taking suo moto notice. In a series of tweets, a strong ally of PTI Chairman Imran Khan said the polls, as per the Constitution, must be held within 90 days of the dissolution of the assemblies. He said it was a test for the Supreme Court to decide whether it allowed the unconstitutional and illegal government to run or try them under Article 6. Chief Justice of Pakistan Umar Ata Bandial had said the apex court would intervene in case of any abuse of authority or mala fide on part of the ECP in holding of elections, he said, adding that the caretaker government had lost its credibility. He said the government had damaged Pakistan's reputation, adding that it had also put the democracy at risk just to counter Imran Khan. He said Pakistan had been pushed closer to the civil war. "How people can accept the government when it is defying the Constitution," Mr Ahmed said. He said Turkiye did not change its election schedule despite deadly earthquake that claimed thousands of lives, adding: "Public looks towards Supreme Court for decision". "There is puppet show in Pakistan and country has stuck in the limbo," he wrote. The former interior minister lashed out at the ruling government, saying it had become a sign of disaster for the country.

## Murray, Raducanu knock out of Miami Open



MIAMI: Two-time champion Andy Murray suffered a straight-set loss to Dusan Lajovic in the first round at the Miami Open. Former world number one Murray, winner in both 2009 and 2013, was beaten 6-4 7-5 by the 76th-ranked Serb. It comes a week after the fatigued 35-year-old Scot lost to Jack Draper in the third round at Indian Wells. Fellow Briton Kyle Edmund is also out after losing 7-5 7-5 to Wu Yibing, while Emma Raducanu was defeated in the women's draw by Bianca Andreescu. Murray, currently 52nd in the world, won a remarkable seven deciding sets among several marathon victories in an exhausting opening to his 2023 season. But he was unable to produce the response required after Lajovic, 32, forced the first break of serve in game seven and went on to clinch the opening set. Murray hinted that another memorable comeback could be on the cards as he broke back immediately to stay in the second set at 5-5. However, Lajovic moved quickly to extinguish those hopes with another break and was relieved to serve out the match in straight sets when Murray framed a forehand. Emma Raducanu was knocked out of the Miami Open by Can-



ada's Bianca Andreescu after an absorbing first-round match where both players showed glimpses of their huge potential. The British number one, 20, lost 6-3 3-6 6-2 against 22-year-old Andreescu, who also won the US Open as a teenager. Both players have been beset by injury but produced a hard-fought match where a single break won the first two sets. The decider was initially tight before Andreescu won the last four games. "You never know what you're going to expect, I just wanted to play my best with what I had and I think I did that," said Andreescu, who plays Greek seventh seed Maria Sakkari next. "Emma played amazing and is an incredible player. I have a lot of respect for her and her results show how good she is." In the men's draw, fellow Britons Andy Murray and Kyle Edmund both also suffered opening round defeats. 'Fearless Alcaraz fuels prospect of Djokovic duel' Raducanu, ranked 72nd in the world, enjoyed a productive week in Indian Wells before moving on to Miami, having reached the last 16 in the Californian desert despite her preparation being hampered by a bout of tonsillitis and the recurrence of a wrist injury. – DNA

## Argentina to play friendly against River Plate

LONDON: Argentina have agreed to play a friendly against River Plate on Friday, following their first game since their World Cup triumph when they host Panama at the Monumental stadium in Buenos Aires on Thursday. The match between Lionel Scaloni's squad and Martin Demichelis' side will be played at the Argentine Football Association (AFA) ground behind closed doors. The informal fixture was arranged following an invitation to participate in River's training and will be part of a national celebration for the world champions as they reunite on Argentine soil. Local media reported that Scaloni will use players who do not feature against Panama and Demichelis will field players who will not line up against Universidad de Chile in a friendly on Saturday. The Argentine national team, who also host Curacao on March 28 in the province of Santiago del Estero, will travel on March 27 to Paraguay to receive a tribute from the South American Football Confederation, CONMEBOL, for winning their country's third World Cup in Qatar last year. – Agencies

## Kane 'motivated' to break goal record against Italy

MILAN: Harry Kane is ready to break the all-time England goalscoring record in his team's opening Euro 2024 qualifier against Italy, manager Gareth Southgate said on Wednesday. Tottenham striker Kane is locked with Wayne Rooney on 53 goals for his national team after missing a penalty in England's World Cup quarter-final defeat to France. But Southgate says he has put that disappointment behind him coming into Thursday's Group C clash in Naples. "We've seen with his performances and goalscoring with his club, he's put it behind him," Southgate told reporters. "I know he's going to have added motivation tomorrow night to come back and show everybody what he's about in an England

shirt. For us that's a good position." England have a poor record against the world's top sides and Thursday will be an acid test against the team that snatched Euro 2020 triumph from them at Wembley before dumping them down to the second tier of the Nations League. "We've been involved in some of the biggest matches in world football, they know the level that's required, they know they have the ability to compete at that level," Southgate added. "Whatever we've done in the past is irrelevant tomorrow night, because we have to start again and have the humility to work hard to qualify again, and it's a great fixture for us to get that underway. "Italy didn't qualify for the World Cup

but they still have some outstanding players and they will be highly motivated as well." West Ham midfielder Declan Rice said that narrow defeat to France in Qatar hasn't discouraged England from aiming for the major tournament success which has evaded them for nearly six decades.

"I think if we look at ourselves after that France game, we took a lot of positivity from the game even though we lost," said Rice. "I think as a group of players there was a real belief in the room that we can compete with the best but it's down to us now to go that one step ahead – beat a top nation, and win a trophy. "That's all that's on our mind, starting tomorrow night, trying to beat Italy and starting our campaign off well." – Agencies

## Ronaldo on brink of more int'l history

Ronaldo - now playing in Saudi Arabia for Al Nassr - has scored a men's record 118 Int'l goals

LISBON: Cristiano Ronaldo will become the most-capped men's international footballer if he plays in Portugal's Euro 2024 qualifying opener against Liechtenstein on Thursday. Ronaldo, 38, moved level with Kuwait forward Badier Al-Mutawa on 196 caps when he faced Morocco at the World Cup. And he is now part of new Portugal manager Roberto Martinez's first squad. Ronaldo - now playing in Saudi Arabia for Al Nassr - has scored a men's record 118 international goals. There were question marks about his international future after he left the pitch

in tears following Portugal's elimination by Morocco at the quarter-final stage. He has scored nine goals in 10 appearances for Saudi Arabia's Al Nassr after leaving Manchester United in November following a controversial interview in which he criticised the club. Martinez has said Ronaldo, who made his international debut in 2003, "is very important for the team" and "I do not look at the age". "Records are my motivation," Ronaldo said on Wednesday. "I want to become the most-capped player in history. That would make me proud.



"But it doesn't stop there. I still want to be called up very often." Kristine Lilly is the most-capped female footballer of all time, having played 354 times for the United States. Ronaldo continues to make history Ronaldo's latest record will further cement his status as one of the greatest footballers of all time. The Portuguese's glittering career has seen him win seven domestic top-flight titles, 11 other major domestic trophies, five Champions Leagues, four Club World Cups and one European Championship. The former Sporting Lisbon, Manchester United, Real Madrid and Juventus forward has also won the Ballon d'Or five times and been named the Best FIFA Men's player twice.

He became the first player to score 800 top-level career goals in November and also holds a host of other men's individual records for both club and country including: Most Champions League goals (140) Most Champions League appearances (183) Most Champions League wins (5) Only player to score in three Champions League finals Appeared in most European Championships finals (5) Most goals in European Championships finals (14) Most Euro and World Cup final goals combined (22) Most international goals in world football (118) The first player to score 10 hat-tricks in men's international football. – Agencies



## Briefs

First  
3D-printed  
rocket lifts  
off but fails

WASHINGTON: The world's first 3D-printed rocket launched successfully on Wednesday, marking a step forward for the California company behind the innovative spacecraft, though it failed to reach orbit. Billed as less costly to produce and fly, the unmanned Terran 1 rocket launched from Cape Canaveral, Florida at 11:25 pm (0325 GMT Thursday) but suffered an "anomaly" during second-stage separation as it streamed towards low Earth orbit, according to a livestream broadcast by aerospace startup Relativity Space. The company did not immediately give further details. While it failed to reach orbit, Wednesday's launch proved that the rocket – whose mass is 85 percent 3D-printed – could withstand the rigours of lift-off. The successful launch came on the third attempt. It had originally been scheduled to launch on March 8 but was postponed at the last minute because of propellant temperature issues. A second attempt on March 11 was scrubbed due to fuel pressure problems.—APP

French  
unions dig in  
after Macron  
defends  
reform

PARIS: France braced for more transport woes and a new day of nationwide protests on Thursday after a defiant President Emmanuel Macron pledged to implement a contentious pensions overhaul by year-end.

The 45-year-old leader on Wednesday said he was prepared to accept unpopularity because the bill raising the retirement age by two years was "necessary" and "in the general interest of the country". Acting on Macron's instructions, Prime Minister Elisabeth Borne invoked an article in the constitution a week ago to adopt the reform without a parliamentary vote. The government on Monday narrowly survived a no-confidence motion, but the outrage has spawned the biggest domestic crisis of Macron's second term. The centrist president was first elected in 2017 with pledges to radically reform France. Macron's comments during a lunchtime interview on Wednesday, when most people would have been at work, have incensed union workers.—Agencies

Hajj draw  
resumes in  
DMC East  
after 4 years

KARACHI: Administrator DMC East Syed Shakeel Ahmed has been given another great credit, the Hajj draw which was stopped in Covid-19, has been restored. The employees expressed happiness over the resumption of Hajj draw and said that in this era of inflation, Administrator East Syed Shakeel Ahmed has done a great job by restoring hajj draw, four employees will be sent to Hajj. Administrator East Syed Shakeel Ahmed has said on this occasion that those people who get the great privilege of Hajj are very lucky, after four years, the Hajj draw was done in our hands, which is a matter of honor for us, Hajj has become very expensive, so four employees are sending on Hajj. He congratulated the four lucky ones on their names after the hajj draw. Meanwhile, he visited Faizan e Madina and met Molana Yaqoob Attari and others and inquired about the provision of municipal services in Ramadan and said that in the holy month DMC East will provide them whatever municipal facilities they need. DMC East has been displayed Banners on Masjids, Imam Bargahs in which there are numbers to register complaints of each department so that the prayer do not have to face problem in any kind of municipal context during Ramadan. He was accompanied by Focal Person Imtiaz Bhutto, Directors Tauqeer Abbas Khurshed Ali, Dr Asif, Azeem Haider, Muhammad Akram, Jam Rizwan and in-charge Rao Shamsad.—DNA

## Pakistan Day

Pak diplomatic missions  
celebrate across globe

DNA

MOSCOW: A ceremony to mark the Pakistan Day was held at the Embassy of Pakistan in Moscow today, on 23rd March 2023. The ceremony began with recitation from Holy Quran. Pakistan Ambassador to Russia H.E. Shafqat Ali Khan hoisted Pakistan flag. Pakistan national anthem was played on the occasion. Special messages of the President of Pakistan Dr. Arif Alvi and Prime Minister of Pakistan Shehbaz Sharif were read by Third Secretaries Mr. Muhammad Tayyab and Dr. Jetha Nand. The event was attended by the staff of the Embassy, members of Pakistani diaspora and friends of Pakistan. In Paris The Embassy of Pakistan Paris organized a flag hoisting ceremony to commemorate the Pakistan Day. The event was attended by officials of the Embassy as well as members of the Pakistani community residing in France. Messages of the President and Prime Minister were read out. In his remarks, Ambassador Asim Iftikhar Ahmad highlighted the significance of 23rd March 1940, when the Muslim community in the sub-continent passed the Pakistan Resolution, seeking a separate homeland where they could live according to their own culture, values, and faith. He praised the leadership of Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, Pakistan's founding father, who spearheaded the freedom movement – a political, constitutional and democratic struggle, that led to the emergence of Pakistan. He emphasized the impor-



Moscow



Baku

ance of unity and persistent hard work to achieve the desired objectives of progress and prosperity. The ceremony was followed by cultural performances by children and national songs. In Vienna Flag Hoisting Ceremony at the Embassy of Pakistan in Vienna to Com-

memorate National Day of Pakistan Ambassador Aftab Ahmed Khokher hoisted Pakistani flag in a graceful ceremony to mark the Pakistan day. The messages of the President and the Prime Minister of Pakistan were read on the occasion. Members of



Paris

Pakistani community from all walks of life participated in the event While thanking the community for attending the ceremony, Ambassador Khokher stated that Pakistan Day was being commemorated to pay homage to the founding fathers

of Pakistan who rendered invaluable services and sacrifices to create our beloved homeland. He also said that it was a day for reaffirmation of our resolve to make Pakistan an economically stronger and prosperous country.

UK to give depleted  
uranium ammo to Kiev

LONDON: Tensions have risen between Russia and the United Kingdom over a military aid package sent to Ukraine that includes armour-piercing tank ammunition containing depleted uranium. The UK's decision to send military aid to Ukraine containing depleted uranium ammunition has sparked a warning from Russian President Vladimir Putin, who has said that Moscow would be "forced to react" if the potentially lethal shells are provided. Annabel Goldie, a Minister of State at the UK Ministry of Defence, confirmed that the military aid package included depleted uranium ammunition as well as Challenger 2 battle tanks, which are highly effective in defeating modern tanks

and armoured vehicles. Depleted uranium is a by-product of the nuclear enriching process and is chemically and radiologically toxic. While the UK's Ministry of Defence has dismissed Putin's warnings and accused Russia of disinformation, Russia's Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu has warned that the UK's decision left fewer steps before a potential "nuclear collision" between Russia and the West. The Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND) has condemned UK's decision, calling it an "additional environmental and health disaster for those living through the conflict," according to AFP news agency. Depleted uranium ammunition has been linked to a number of health problems, includ-

ing cancer, and its use can release toxic or radioactive dust on impact. The United Nations Environment Programme has described depleted uranium ammunition as "chemically and radiologically toxic heavy metal". Hamish de Bretton-Gordon, former commander of the UK's Royal Tank Regiment, has called Putin's insinuations that the ammunition is some sort of nuclear weapon "bonkers". He told the Associated Press news agency that depleted uranium is a common component of tank rounds and is completely inert. The Institute for the Study of War has suggested that Putin has portrayed the ammunition as "escalatory in order to deter Western security assistance" despite the shells

not containing any fissile or radiological material. The issue of depleted uranium ammunition is not new, with concerns over its use first raised during the Gulf War in 1991. Since then, there have been numerous debates over the use of the ammunition, with some arguing that it is necessary for military effectiveness while others argue that the health and environmental risks outweigh any benefits. The joint statement by Putin and China's leader Xi Jinping at the end of their meeting on Tuesday warned against any steps that might push the Ukraine conflict into an "uncontrollable phase" and pointedly added that there could be no winners in a nuclear war.—Agencies

Makaneole inaugurates  
Pakistan Pavilion  
in San Francisco

LAHORE: United States Consul General to Lahore William K. Makaneole inaugurated Pakistan Pavilion at the Game Developers Conference (GDC) in San Francisco, California. According to a press release issued by the US Consulate here on Thursday, Makaneole formally inaugurated the first-ever 'Pakistan Pavilion' a trade booth at which more than 35 Pakistani game developers are showcasing their products to the U.S. and international vendors and investors. The Pavilion, jointly established by a USAID Investment Promotion Activity (IPA) and the Pakistan Software Houses Association (P@SHA), along with corresponding networking meetings will develop partnerships that grow Pakistan's gaming sector, increase U.S investment in Pakistan, and further cement the California-Punjab Sister Province/State initiative signed in January. Consul General Makaneole also formally launched the Green Gaming Challenge Awards, which will support game developing firms registered in Pakistan with up to \$100,000 to develop games that create awareness about climate change and highlight ways to mitigate climate-related challenges. The IT gaming sector of Pakistan is growing quickly, and this investment, through a USAID IPA, will increase IT exports from Pakistan and cultivate investment opportunities for international investors in Pakistani mobile gaming firms. Consul General Makaneole said, "Using games to educate the public about climate change is a great way to address this global concern. —DNA

Immigration spurs  
record growth in  
Canada's population

TORONTO: Canada's population, spurred by immigration, jumped by over 1 million last year, the largest increase since the Second World War baby boom, Statistics Canada (StatCan) reported Wednesday. The growth raised the population to 39.57 million, with international migration accounting for 96% of the increase, StatCan said in a news release. It cements and retains Canada's title as the fastest growing G7 country, with a growth rate of 2.7%. "This marks the first 12-month period in Canada's history where the population grew by over 1 million people and the highest annual population growth rate (2.7%) on record since that seen for 1957 (3.3%)," StatCan said. "This previous record population growth rate in 1957 was related to the high number of births during the post-war baby boom and the high immigration of refugees following the Hungarian Revolution of 1956." StatCan said the increase is largely due to the government of Prime Minister Justin Trudeau ramping up immigration to ease labor shortages and drive the Canadian economy. The government said the influx is necessary as the Canadian population ages. A record 437,180 newcomers arrived in Canada in 2022, and the government said that number will rise to 500,000 annually by 2025. Non-permanent residents also jumped last year to 607,782, fueled in part by Ukrainians fleeing from the war with Russia, StatCan said. Canada has the second largest Ukrainian diaspora in the world. But with the influx brings some potential problems, StatCan said.—APP

China has not crossed line  
on supporting to Russia

## FOREIGN DESK

WASHINGTON: US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said Wednesday that China has not crossed the line to provide lethal support to Russia. "As we speak today, we have not seen them cross that line," he said when asked at a Senate subcommittee hearing on the State Department's budget request if China is providing lethal support to Russia. Blinken said since the start of the war in Ukraine, the US has been "very clear" with Beijing about providing lethal support to Russia against Ukraine. "President Biden shared this directly with (Chinese)



President Xi (Jinping) about three weeks into the aggression when they spoke by video conference," he said. Blinken added that China was "very carefully" watching how countries around the world would respond to the war. "We opened a Pandora's

box around the world, where would be aggressors everywhere look at this and say, 'if they can get away with it, I can too,'" said Blinken. "And that is a world of conflict. That is a world of war. That is a world that we've been in before, and we've had to come in and do something about it." "But it's not a world that we want. So the stakes in Ukraine go well beyond Ukraine. And to your point, I think it has a profound impact in Asia," he said. In opening remarks to the committee, Blinken said the post-Cold War era is "over" but an "intense competition" is underway. "We, the United States, have a positive vision for

the future: a world that is free, that is secure, that is open, that is prosperous. And it's our belief that the budget that we put forward will help advance that vision and deliver on issues that actually matter to the American people, particularly by preparing us to effectively meet two broad sets of challenges," he said. "The first is the challenge posed by our strategic competitors – the immediate, acute threat posed by Russia's autocracy and aggression, most destructively, of course, through its brutal aggression against Ukraine, and the long-term challenge from the People's Republic of China," he added.

Prince  
William  
makes  
surprise visit  
to Poland

WARSAW: The UK's Prince William made a surprise visit to Poland on Wednesday, meeting with Polish officials and British soldiers. The British heir to the throne flew to Rzeszow in southeastern Poland near the Ukraine border, where he met soldiers from the 3rd Brigade Territorial Defense Force base and Poland's Defense Minister Mariusz Blaszczak. "This afternoon, I travelled to Poland to meet British and Polish troops, where I heard about their extraordinary work in support of Ukraine. My message to them on behalf of all of us, thank you!" William wrote on Twitter. William wrote that it was "fantastic" to be back in Poland. "Our nations have strong ties. Through our cooperation in support of the people of Ukraine and their freedom, which are also our freedoms and yours, these ties are further strengthened," he said. "I'm here because I want to personally thank the Polish and British troops working in close and crucial partnership. I also want to pay tribute to the inspiring humanity of the Polish people. You have opened your hearts as much as your homes."—Agencies

Oil prices  
fall amid US  
banking crisis

WASHINGTON: Oil prices fell on Thursday amid concerns surrounding the US banking sector and worry over lower oil demand. International benchmark Brent crude traded at \$76.27 per barrel at 10.14 a.m. local time (0714GMT), a 0.55% decrease from the closing price of \$76.69 a barrel in the previous trading session. At the same time, American benchmark West Texas Intermediate (WTI) traded at \$70.45 per barrel, a 0.63% fall after the previous session closed at \$70.9 a barrel. The US Federal Reserve raised its benchmark interest rate Wednesday by another 25 basis points despite a banking crisis, which saw the sudden demise of four banks in a matter of weeks. Fed Chair Jerome Powell said Wednesday that banking issues in the US could undermine the whole system if they remain unchecked. "History has shown that isolated banking problems, if left unaddressed, can undermine confidence in healthy banks and threaten the ability of the banking system as a whole to play its vital role in supporting the savings and credit needs of households and businesses," he said.—APP

Taiwan  
recalls  
ambassador  
to Honduras

BEIJING: The announcement came as Honduran Foreign Minister Eduardo Enrique Reina was heading to China to hold talks on the establishment of diplomatic relations with Beijing. Economic necessity and Taiwan's refusal to increase financial aid were behind Honduras' decision to establish diplomatic ties with China, Foreign Minister Eduardo Reina has said. Economic necessity and Taiwan's refusal to increase financial aid were behind Honduras' decision to establish diplomatic ties with China, Foreign Minister Eduardo Reina has said. (Reuters) Taiwan has recalled its ambassador to Honduras over a visit by Tegucigalpa's foreign minister to China. "Honduras ignored more than 80 years of friendship between (Taiwan and Honduras) when they sent their foreign minister to China, which has seriously damaged the feelings of our government and people," the self-ruled island's government said in a statement on Thursday. "We have decided to immediately recall our ambassador in Honduras to express our strong dissatisfaction." The announcement came as Honduran Foreign Minister Eduardo Enrique Reina was heading to China to hold talks on the establishment of diplomatic relations with Beijing, government officials said.—DNA

## Swedish parliament approves country's NATO accession bid

And since then, since June last year, we had the quickest accession process in NATO's modern history because we remember that Finland and Sweden applied in May. In June, they were already invited," he added.

STOCKHOLM: Sweden's parliament voted in favour of a bill for the country's NATO membership. The vote, which paved the way for the country's NATO accession and provides the necessary legal framework, passed with 269 votes in favour and 37 against, with 43 MPs not attending in Sweden's 349 seat parliament. "NATO membership is the best way to safeguard Sweden's security and to con-

tribute in solidarity to the security of the entire Euro-Atlantic area," Foreign Minister Tobias Billstrom told parliament during the debate that preceded the vote. Only two of the eight parties in the Swedish parliament – the Left and the Greens – were against joining the trans-Atlantic defence alliance. Swedish Foreign Minister Tobias Billström said on Wednesday that despite the current Turkish oppo-

sition, he was confident that Sweden could become a member by the next NATO summit in Lithuania in July. Finland and Sweden applied to NATO together, assuming that the two Nordic allies would join on the same timetable. They then ran into obstacles from Türkiye, however, which now opposes Swedish membership but not that of Finland. Hungary has not raised

objections to either application but has yet to hold a ratification vote. In another setback for Sweden, Hungary announced that it would vote on Finland's ratification on March 27, but Sweden's bid would be decided on "later." NATO, in the meantime, announced that it is continuing the military integration process of the two countries, though the application process is not

finalized. The alliance's Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg told reporters in Brussels on Tuesday that he was "absolutely confident," that Sweden would also become a full member of NATO. "I really believe that it will be good for NATO," Stoltenberg said. "It will be good for Finland, it will be good for Sweden, it will be good for all of us to have Finland and Sweden in as quickly as possible.

That is also the reason I worked hard to agree last year, which was a historic decision that all NATO Allies, also Türkiye and Hungary made to invite Finland and Sweden. And since then, since June last year, we had the quickest accession process in NATO's modern history because we remember that Finland and Sweden applied in May. In June, they were already invited," he added.—Agencies



## Briefs

## End to Taiwan ties nears as Honduras FM goes to China

DNA

TAIPEI: The Honduran foreign minister is travelling to China to "promote" the establishment of diplomatic ties, an official said, signalling the end is most likely near for the country's decades-long relations with Taiwan. At stake is China's growing footprint in Central America, once a steadfast base for Taiwan and where the United States is worried about Beijing's expanding influence in its backyard. Honduran President Xiomara Castro tweeted last week her government would seek to open relations with China. "Foreign Minister Eduardo Enrique Reina on instructions from President Xiomara Castro travelled to China on Wednesday to promote efforts for the establishment of diplomatic relations," presidential press secretary Ivis Alvarado said. China's Foreign Ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin said Beijing welcomed the Honduran government's positive attitude towards building relations, and was willing to develop them "on the basis of equality and mutual respect".

## After Iran, Saudi Arabia to re-establish ties with Syria

DNA

BEIRUT: Syria and Saudi Arabia have agreed to reopen their embassies after cutting diplomatic ties more than a decade ago, three sources with knowledge of the matter said, a step that would mark a leap forward in Damascus's return to the Arab fold. Contacts between Riyadh and Damascus had gathered momentum following a landmark agreement to re-establish ties between Saudi Arabia and Iran, a key ally of President Bashar al-Assad, a regional source aligned with Damascus said. The re-establishment of ties between Riyadh and Damascus would mark the most significant development yet in moves by Arab states to normalize ties with Assad, who was shunned by many Western and Arab states after Syria's civil war began in 2011. The two governments were "preparing to reopen embassies after Eid al-Fitr", a Muslim holiday in the second half of April, a second regional source aligned with Damascus told Reuters. Decision was the result of talks in Saudi Arabia with a senior Syrian intelligence official, according to one of the regional sources and a diplomat in the Gulf. The Saudi government's communication office, the kingdom's foreign ministry and the Syrian government did not respond to requests for comment. The sources spoke on condition of anonymity due to the sensitivity of the subject. The apparently sudden breakthrough could indicate how the deal between Tehran and Riyadh may play into other crises in the region, where their rivalry has fuelled conflicts including the war in Syria.

## Ukraine says Bakhmut assault loses steam

Russia's Wagner mercenaries, trying to capture Bakhmut in the longest and bloodiest battle of the war, "are losing considerable strength and are running out of steam", Kyiv's ground forces commander Oleksandr Syrskyi said in a social media post

NEWS DESK

WEST OF SOLEDAR: Ukrainian troops, on the defensive for four months, will launch a long-awaited counterassault "very soon" now that Russia's huge winter offensive is losing steam without taking Bakhmut, Ukraine's top ground forces commander said on Thursday. The remarks were the strongest indication yet from Kyiv that it is close to shifting tactics, having absorbed Russia's onslaught through a brutal winter and prevented Moscow from claiming its first victory since last August. Russia's Wagner mercenaries, trying to capture Bakhmut in the longest and bloodiest battle of the war, "are losing considerable strength and are running out of steam", Kyiv's ground forces commander Oleksandr Syrskyi said in a social media post. "Very soon, we will take advantage of this

opportunity, as we did in the past near Kyiv, Kharkiv, Balakliya and Kupiansk," he said, listing Ukrainian counteroffensives last year that proved turning points in the war, recapturing swathes of land. Reuters journalists near the front line north of Bakhmut saw signs consistent with the claim that the Russian offensive in the area could be flagging. At a Ukrainian-held village west of Soledar on Bakhmut's northern outskirts, the intensity of Russian bombardment had noticeably lessened compared to a Reuters visit nearby just two days earlier. "It was really hot here a week ago, but in the last three days it has been more quiet," said a Ukrainian soldier who used the call sign "Kamin" or "stone". "We can see this in the enemy's air strikes. If before there were 5-6 air raids in a day, today we had only one helicopter attack and it was too far and so ineffective," said the soldier, a member of an anti-aircraft unit in

the 10th Mountain Assault Brigade. A slow-down in Russia's assault on Bakhmut could be in part a consequence of Moscow diverting its troops and resources to other areas. Britain said on Thursday that Russian troops had been making gains further north this month, partially regaining control over the approaches to the town of Kremenna, a Ukrainian target. Intense battles were also under way further south. But any shift in momentum in Bakhmut, if confirmed, would be remarkable given the city's symbolic importance as focus of Russia's offensive, and the scale of the losses on both sides there in Europe's bloodiest infantry battle since World War Two. There was no immediate response from Moscow to the latest claims its forces in Bakhmut were losing momentum, but Yevgeny Prigozhin, the Wagner mercenary boss, has issued pessimistic

statements in recent days warning of a Ukrainian counterassault. On Monday, Prigozhin published a letter to Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu, saying Ukraine aimed to cut off Wagner's forces from Russia's regular troops, demanding Shoigu act to prevent this and warning of "negative consequences" if he failed. After Kyiv rolled back Russian forces in the second half of 2022, front lines have largely been frozen in place since Ukraine's last major offensive in November. Moscow has meanwhile sent hundreds of thousands of freshly called-up reservists and convicts recruited from prisons into battles both sides call a meat grinder. Ukraine had looked likely to pull out of Bakhmut weeks ago but decided to keep its troops there and fight on, a move some Western military experts described as a major risk given the need to preserve forces for a counterattack later this year.

## SBP likely to hike interest rate on IMF demand

DNA

KARACHI: In another bid to unlock the International Monetary Fund (IMF) programme, the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) is likely to further raise the interest rate by 2% during its upcoming meeting of the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC), reported The News. The staff-level agreement between the IMF and Pakistan was scheduled to take place on February 9. However, the government failed to convince the global lender. The Shehbaz Sharif-led government is taking desperate measures to get the much-needed funds, but the IMF is not satisfied with the prior steps taken by the incumbent government. The sources said that the IMF demanded Pakistan to jack up the interest rate by 4%. The fund was of the view that inflation was lower in Pakistan as per the interest rate.



PESHAWAR: Faithful offering dua to break their fast on first day of holy Ramzan at Dervish Masjid. – APP

## Resolution to designate March 23 as 'Pakistan Day' introduced in US HOR

DNA

WASHINGTON: For the first time in the history of Pak-US relations, a landmark resolution was introduced in the House of Representatives by Congressman Jamaal Bowman recognizing 23 March 2023 as "Pakistan Day" to "honor and celebrate the important role played by the Pakistani-American community in strengthening and inspiring the people of the United States." The resolution stated that it is proper and desirable for the United States to recognize and pay tribute to those who foster ethnic pride and enhance the profile of cultural diversity which strengthens the fabric of the communities of the United States. It further said that "Pakistan Day provides an

excellent means by which all residents of the United States can learn more about the rich Pakistani heritage, while fostering an appreciation for the ancient culture among future generations." Meanwhile, Pakistan's Ambassador to the United States Masood Khan thanked Congressmen Bowman for his initiative which he said would not only help further strengthening bilateral relations of the two countries but would also help bringing the people of the two countries closer to each other. He also thanked the leadership of American Pakistan Advocacy group, including its president and prominent community leader Ali Rashid and other officer-bearers, who had been working hard, maintaining a close liaison with the Congressman for introduction of the landmark resolution.

## Miftah blames Ishaq Dar for sabotaging IMF deal

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: Blaming Finance Minister Ishaq Dar for sabotaging the deal, PML-N leader Miftah Ismail claimed that International Monetary Fund (IMF) was not interested in releasing money to Pakistan as

the Washington-based lender had no trust in Islamabad government. Speaking during a session titled 'Pakistan in the Midst of Crisis' organised by a private university in Karachi, former finance minister said when he was heading the Ministry of Finance he spoke to the IMF officials and assured them that Pakistan would not make false statements or violate the agreement; however, when Ishaq Dar was sworn in 'he sabotaged the agreement'. He recalled that Pakistan had three times made sovereign commitments and then backtracked on them. "Now the IMF is not interested in giving money to Pakistan," he said, emphasising that the Fund doesn't trust the government in Islamabad.

## Indian court convicts Rahul Gandhi of defamation

AHMEDABAD: A court in western India found opposition leader Rahul Gandhi guilty of defamation on Thursday for a speech he made in 2019 in which he referred to thieves as having the surname Modi, and sentenced him to two years in prison. Gandhi was present at the court in Surat, a city in Gujarat, which is Prime Minister Narendra Modi's home state. He was given bail and the sentence was suspended for thirty days. Gandhi would appeal against the

verdict in a higher court, the president of his Congress party said on Twitter, calling Modi's government "cowardly and dictatorial". "The Modi government is a victim of political bankruptcy", Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge said. AHMEDABAD: A court in western India found opposition leader Rahul Gandhi guilty of defamation on Thursday for a speech he made in 2019 in which he referred to thieves as having the surname Modi, and sentenced him to two years in prison.

Gandhi was present at the court in Surat, a city in Gujarat, which is Prime Minister Narendra Modi's home state. He was given bail and the sentence was suspended for thirty days. Gandhi would appeal against the verdict in a higher court, the president of his Congress party said on Twitter, calling Modi's government "cowardly and dictatorial". "The Modi government is a victim of political bankruptcy", Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge said. – Agencies

**WHERE EACH STITCH IS WATCHED**

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## Saudi, Iran FM's hold Ramazan call, vow to meet 'soon'



RIYADH: The Saudi and Iranian foreign ministers spoke by phone to mark the beginning of Ramazan, vowing to meet "soon" to implement a landmark bilateral reconciliation deal, Riyadh said on Thursday. The Saudi minister, Prince Faisal bin Farhan, called Hossein Amir-Abdollahian and the pair "exchanged congratulations on the occasion of the holy month of Ramadan", which begins Thursday in both countries, the Saudi foreign ministry said in a statement posted on Twitter. "The two ministers agreed to hold a bilateral meeting soon in order to pave the way for the reopening of embassies and consulates between the two countries," the statement said. Saudi officials have said the ministers' expected meeting is the next step in a surprise Chinese-brokered rapproche-

"The two ministers agreed to hold a bilateral meeting soon in order to pave the way for the reopening of embassies and consulates between the two countries," statement said

ment announced on March 10 intended to fully restore diplomatic ties seven years after they were severed. Riyadh cut relations after Iranian protesters attacked Saudi diplomatic missions in 2016 following the Saudi execution of Shia cleric Nimr al-Nimr – just one in a series of flashpoints between the two longstanding regional rivals. The deal is expected to see Iran and Saudi Arabia reopen their embassies and missions within two months and implement security and economic cooperation deals signed more than 20 years ago. On Sunday, an Iranian official said President Ebrahim Raisi had favourably received an invitation to visit Saudi Arabia from King Salman, though Riyadh has yet to confirm. Amir-Abdollahian told reporters the same day that the two countries had agreed to hold a meeting between their top diplomats and that three locations had been suggested, without specifying which. The detente between Saudi Arabia, the world's biggest oil exporter, and Iran, strongly at odds with Western governments over its nuclear activities, has the potential to reshape relations across a region characterised by turbulence for decades. – DNA