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UN nuclear agency chief concerned over Ukraine plant outages

Detailed News On Page-07

Pak-Indonesia enhanced trade ties urged

Detailed News On Page-08

Babar tells Zalmi bowlers to 'do more'

Detailed News On Page-06



Briefs

Chaudhry Sarwar to join PML-Q

DNA



LAHORE: Former Punjab governor Chaudhry Sarwar has decided to join PML-Q, citing sources, media reported on Thursday. Sources said that Chaudhry Sarwar will reach Lahore from London tomorrow. The senior politician will hold a meeting with PML-Q chief Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain and announce joining the political party. Earlier, Sarwar was a PTI leader and Punjab governor during former premier Imran Khan's government.

Khar to leave for Bahrain

SAIFULLAH

ISLAMABAD: Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Hina Rabbani Khar will visit Bahrain today (Friday) to participate in the annual Manama Dialogue. According to Foreign Office, the Minister of State will participate in the round table and panel discussions on regional security challenges. She will also meet other world leaders on the sidelines of the event. It is pertinent to mention that the Minister of State will also undertake three days of official visit to UK from Monday to attend the Commonwealth Day and Commonwealth Foreign Affairs Ministers Meeting in London.

Progress in technology crucial

DNA

LAHORE: Adviser to Prime Minister on Kashmir Affairs and Gilgit-Baltistan Qamar Zaman Kaira says advancement in the field of Science and Technology is inevitable for the progress of country. Addressing the students in connection with the Science Fair at Forman Christian College in Lahore on Thursday, he stressed upon students to invest their abilities to acquire scientific knowledge as no nation can make progress without seeking the knowledge of science.

IMF deal to be signed within days

Ishaq Dar says IMF 'satisfied' with Pakistan; calls for charter of economy

SHUJAAT HAMZA

ISLAMABAD: Finance Minister (FM) Ishaq Dar has said Pakistan will not go bankrupt emphasizing the country needs a charter of economy. "Wrong propaganda about economy is hazardous for Pakistan. Agreement will be reached with IMF within two days. Imran Khan undermined the confidence of development institutions and he deviated from IM program which led to accelerate inflation in the country", he said this while addressing a seminar on "Reviving economic stability through strengthening of Public Financial Management" in Islamabad on Thursday. He went on to say budget deficit soared due to ill conceived policies in the past. Pakistan economic woes rose in 2018. Coalition government has inherited economic crisis. He alleged that Pakistan lacked foreign investment owing to wrong policies of PTI government in the past.

Continued on Page 06

Foreign reserves rise above \$4 billion mark

DNA

KARACHI: The State Bank of Pakistan (SBP)-held foreign exchange reserves rose above the \$4 billion mark after the cash-strapped nation received a \$500 million loan from a Chinese bank. The central bank, in its weekly bulletin, said that its foreign exchange reserves have increased by \$487 million to \$4,301 million as of the week ended March 3, which will provide an import cover of around a month. The SBP received \$500 million last week from

Continued on Page 06



GWADAR: Chief of Army Staff General Syed Asim Munir meets the troops during visit to the port city of Gwadar. – DNA

COAS lauds resolve of Baloch people

Says Armed Forces committed towards ensuring peace, prosperity

DNA

RAWALPINDI: Chief of Army Staff General Syed Asim Munir has visited the port city of Gwadar where he was given a security briefing with particular focus on CPEC. According to a statement released by the ISPR on Thursday, General Asim Munir was briefed on prevailing security situation, Formation's operational preparedness, CPEC security and efforts for ensuring a peaceful and secure environment. The Army Chief appreciated the efforts of all ranks and urged continuing working with professional commitment for the good of the people of Balochistan. He interacted with local notables, elected representatives and people from different walks of life.

Continued on Page 06

Taliban governor killed in blast



KABUL: The Taliban governor of Afghanistan's Balkh province was killed in a blast at his office on Thursday, police said. "Two people, including Mohammad Dawood Muzammil, the governor of Balkh, have been killed in an explosion this morning," the province's police spokesman Asif Waziri told AFP. He said it was unclear what caused the blast. The incident occurred at around 9:30 am when the governor arrived at his office from home.

Continued on Page 06

Imran says will talk to everyone except 'thieves'

Says govt is trying to delay polls, claims Nawaz wants him out of politics

STAFF REPORT

LAHORE: PTI Chairman Imran Khan said on Thursday that he doesn't "need the establishment", adding that he was willing to talk to everyone except "thieves". In an interview with BBC Urdu, the premier said that he only wanted elections to be held in the country as per the law and the Constitution, adding that he was willing to speak to anyone in this regard but did not need "crutches". "I was asked if I would speak to the establishment if they wanted to talk. I said I'm a political person, I will talk to everyone except thieves," Imran said, an apparent reference to the coalition government. The report said the PTI chairman clarified that he never invited Chief of Army Staff General Asim Munir or Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif to sit down for talks. "A statement has been

Continued on Page 06

LHC suspends Pemra's ban on Imran

ABID RAZA

LAHORE: The Lahore High Court (LHC) on Thursday suspended the Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority's (Pemra) orders to ban the live telecast of PTI chairman and former prime minister Imran Khan's speeches and press talks. Justice Shams Mehmood Mirza announced the judgement. He also sent the matter to the full bench for hearing and adjourned the proceedings till March 13.

Continued on Page 06



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador Adam Tugio of Indonesia called on the Foreign Secretary Asad Majeed Khan in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and exchanged views on a wide range of issues of mutual interest. They resolved to enhance bilateral economic cooperation between two countries with particular focus on trade and investment. – DNA

Maryam continues jibes at Faiz, Khosa

Claims Ex-CJP sought an extension from Nawaz

ABID RAZA

LAHORE: PML-N Senior Vice President Maryam Nawaz has claimed that former chief justice of Pakistan (CJP) Asif Saeed Khosa had sought an extension from her father and PML-N supremo Nawaz Sharif. In an interview, Maryam – who has rallied against Khosa in the past for being part of a "conspiracy" against Nawaz – said: "Place your hand on the Quran and tell [the world] was your extension as the chief justice not being talked about? 'If Nawaz Sharif sahab had agreed, and he (Khosa) would have gotten an extension, then Umar Ata Bandial would not be the [current] chief justice."

Continued on Page 06

Marriyum slams Khan's non-appearance

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Information and Broadcasting Marriyum Aurangzeb on Thursday taking a jibe at Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf Chairman Imran Khan, said that the foreign-funded Toshakhana thief, responsible for the return of terrorism in the country,

Continued on Page 06

Inside...

Imran failed to end political inheritance: Kundi
– Page 02

IT skills helpful for women to explore emerging business
– Page 03

Pak closely watching outcomes during China's 2 sessions
– Page 04

What will it take to end the war in Ukraine?
– Page 05

Indonesia jails two match officials over stadium crush
– Page 06

Georgia withdraws Foreign Agents Bill amid controversy
– Page 07

Russia pounds Ukraine with huge missile wave
– Page 08

MARCH 2023

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Imran failed to end political inheritance: Kundi

He refuted the allegations that PPP hesitated from elections saying that the party was ready to go into the polls and it was also working for KPK elections. Replying a question, he appealed to Apex court to fix the cases of Zulfikar Bhutto, Benazir Bhutto for hearing to give them justice

MULTAN: Minister of State for Poverty Alleviation and Social Safety, Faisal Karim Kundi, said on Thursday that Pakistan Tehreek Insaf Chairman Imran Khan tall claims to remove political inheritance ended in smoke as he miserably failed to prove his assertion. Addressing a news conference at Multan press club here, Faisal Karim Kundi said that Pakistan People's Party (PPP) always awarded tickets to its workers in the elections on merit basis. He said that PTI Chairman Imran Khan was a thankless person as he parted ways with his party leaders who stopped financing him. "If Imran Khan is a gallant leader, why he is seeking

bails in the court cases", Kundi remarked adding that PTI Chairman had taken away gifts from Tosha Khana along with him after no confidence motion against him. About PTI rally in Lahore on Wednesday, the minister said that PPP believes in free speech adding that peaceful protest was a democratic right and his party condemns untoward incident during the rally. He said that the interrogation about the incident was underway to bring the facts to light. Mr Kundi said that PPP leadership was paying visits to various parts of Punjab and they would give a 'surprise' in the upcoming elections. He refuted the allegations that PPP hesitated

from elections saying that the party was ready to go into the polls and it was also working for KPK elections. Replying a question, he appealed to Apex court to fix the cases of former prime ministers Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and Shaheed Benazir Bhutto for hearing to give them justice. To another question, the minister termed existing foreign policy better than the previous PTI government as UN Secretary General paid visit to Pakistan besides other foreign dignitaries. Criticizing PTI past regime, the minister informed that Imran Khan even couldn't organize local body elections dur-

ing his around four years tenure. The PTI approached National Assembly Speaker for reversal of resignations from NA after tendering resignations. "How can Shah Mahmood Qureshi being nominated as leader of the opposition as he himself announced his resignation as MNA on the floor of the house. He informed that the federal government had pledged to compensate to 2.8 million flood hit families with Rs 70 billion and they had disbursed the assistance among 98 percent affected people so far. PPP local leaders Khawaja Rizwan Alam, Naseem Labar, Rao Sajid and other workers were also present.—APP

Pakistani Men's garments export to China

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistani men's garment exports to China have seen a remarkable increase of 33% in the past year. This is a significant achievement, as it marks an important milestone in the strengthening of economic ties between the two countries, said Ghulam Qadir, Commercial Counsellor, Pakistan Embassy, according to Gwadar Pro on Thursday. He further said that the growth in exports is attributed to the increasing demand for Pakistani menswear in China, which is driven by rising disposable incomes and changing fashion trends. Chinese manufacturers are increasingly trusting Pakistan as a source of quality textiles and garments at competitive prices.—APP

British HC calls for end to gender gap in digital access

ISLAMABAD: The British High Commission Islamabad commemorated the International Women's Day by celebrating the UK's support to women and girls in Pakistan, with an affirmation to increase digital access for women. Earlier in the week, similar events were held at the British Deputy High Commission, Karachi and the British High Commission office in Lahore. UK's Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) in London marked this day by launching its first women and gender strategy. This new approach puts women and girls, in all their diversity, at the heart of everything FCDO does, using its diplomatic and development capabilities to improve lives, embolden and amplify women's organisations, and stand up to those intent on holding back women and girls. Chargé d'affaires, Andrew



Dalgleish, while speaking at the reception held at the High Commissioner's residence said: "Women and girls are at the heart of everything we do here in Pakistan and globally. The International Women's Day is a reminder to reiterate this commitment. The UK will do everything it can to ensure all girls and women, in all their diversity, have the freedoms and capability to fulfil their potential and dreams in Pakistan and everywhere else through education, empowerment, and protection".

Pakistan Minister of Climate Change, Sherry Rehman, the UK's Trade Envoy for Pakistan, Mark Eastwood (MP), and Maheem Rahman, Chief Executive officer of Infrazamin also spoke at the occasion and emphasised on ending gender gap in digital access. International Women's Day (IWD) is celebrated annually on 8 March to focus on the achievements of women all around the world; to look back on past accomplishments; and forward, at the opportunities which await future generations of women.—DNA



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Human Rights, Riaz Hussian Pirzada along with Sharmeela Rasool, UN Women's Country Representative and other guests during a seminar to celebrate Women's Day. —DNA

UN Women-Pakistan celebrates Women's Day

DNA

ISLAMABAD: In collaboration with the Ministry of Human Rights, U.N. Women held a national seminar on "Innovation and technology for gender equality: Creating Safe Spaces" to mark International Women's Day (IWD) in Islamabad. The event was organized under the Tahafuzz programme funded by the Office of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement (INL) of the U.S. Department of State.

The event was aligned with the global theme for International Women's Day, "DigitALL: Innovation and technology for gender equality," which recognizes the women and girls championing the advancement of transformative technology and digital education. UN Women's Country Representative Sharmeela Rasool welcomed the distinguished participants and highlighted the importance of creating safe spaces for women online and offline. She emphasized, "The gender equality is operational necessity to make innovation and technology gender responsive so that digital spaces are made safer for women."

President for increasing cooperation with Tanzania

ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi has underlined the need for increasing trade and economic cooperation with Tanzania for the mutual benefit of the two countries. He said that Pakistan greatly valued its ties with Tanzania and wanted to further boost economic and cultural ties with Tanzania. The President stated this while talking to Pakistan's High Commissioner-designate to Tanzania, Mr Siraj Ahmad Khan, who called on him, at Aiwan-e-Sadr, today. During the meeting, the President emphasized the need for high level political and cultural exchanges to

further strengthen bilateral relations between the two countries. He asked the High-Commissioner-designate to work for further strengthening the institutional capacity building support extended by Pakistan to Tanzania over the last five decades for the training of Tanzanian diplomats, bankers, railways and postal services. The President expressed the hope that the newly-appointed envoy would facilitate Pakistani diaspora in Tanzania and would work for promoting bilateral trade and people-to-people contacts between the two countries. He said that Pa-

kistan was offering online education and the students from Tanzania could benefit of the cost-effective virtual learning system of Pakistan. He added that 8000 foreign students from different countries were already enrolled in various distance-learning educational programmes being offered by the Virtual University of Pakistan. The President congratulated Mr Siraj Ahmad Khan on his appointment as Pakistan's High Commissioner-designate to Tanzania and expressed the hope that he would play his role to further improve bilateral cooperation with Tanzania.—APP

Peer Nageebur Rehman calls for national unity

QAZI SHOAB KHAN

ATTOCK: Renowned religious scholar and spiritual superior of shrine Eid Gah Sharif Peer Mohammad Nageebur Rehman while presiding over the mammoth religious gathering of Mehfil e Milad has urged upon the participants to forge harmony and unity among their ranks besides discouraging the internal and external conspiracies hatched by some nefarious designs against our beloved motherland. In his speech, Peer Mohammad Nageebur Rehman highlighting the significance of Night of Forgiveness (Shab e Baraat) has said that it is called holly night of prayer in Quran e Kareem. He was throwing light with reference to the Birthday celebrations of Holly prophet Hazrat Mohammad (PBUM) which was

also attended by thousands of followers from district Attock as well as other parts of the country and abroad. Speaking on the occasion, spiritual superior of shrine Eid Gah Sharif Rawalpindi Peer Mohammad Nageebur Rehman in his special prayers to Allah Almighty has also prayed for leading Pakistan towards prosperity and socio-economic progress as par other developed Muslim world. The Special Assistant to Prime Minister of Pakistan for poverty alleviation, social protection Mr. Faisal Kareem Kundi was the chief guest. The Special Assistant to Prime Minister of Pakistan for poverty alleviation, social protection Mr. Faisal Kareem Kundi while addressing the participants has said the ample opportunity of such gathering of faithful on this spiritual moments is also precious asset of our life to seek forgiveness

from Allah in our prayers at Eidgah Sharif. He said that the services of superior shrine of Eidgah Sharif rendered for the disseminating and preaching the message of Hazarat of Mohammad PBUM as well as peace and glorious of our dear motherland are to be written with golden words. Meanwhile, Peer Mohammad Hassan Haseeb ur Rehman while quoting the sayings of Hazarat Aisha Siddiq (RA) that the holly prophet Hazrat Mohammad PBUM had said that in their prayers four things include forgiveness, countless blessings and legitimate livelihood may be sought from Allah during this night. Peer Mohammad Hassan Haseeb ur Rehman said that the revelations of blessings from Allah Almighty are pouring upon us to beg before Allah who ask his faithful to come to him for any demand.

Naveed for strengthening bilateral trade with UAE

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Commerce, Syed Naveed Qamar here on Thursday stressed the need for enhancing bilateral trade volume between Pakistan and United Arab Emirates (UAE). During a meeting with UAE Ambassador to Pakistan, Hamad Obaid Ibrahim Salem Al-Zaabi, the minister highlighted that there was huge potential for cooperation between the two countries in the field of renewable energy, agriculture, textile meat of bovine animals, petroleum oils, and hospitality sectors. He also observed that trade volume between the two countries stood at just US\$ 10,033.05 million in FY-2022. The trade included US\$1369.83 million in exports to UAE and US\$ 8663.22 million in imports into the country. He said the existing trade volume did not match the actual potential of both countries and needed to be

increased. UAE ambassador agreed with the minister's point of view and said Pakistan and UAE have re-

ligious, durable, historical, and cooperative relations

which needed to be enhanced with bilateral trade.



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of UAE Hamad Al Zaabi meeting with Federal Minister Navid Qamar, on Thursday.—DNA

Scientific approach vital for making progress

Qamar Zaman Kaira said the country was going through a critical phase but with the grace of Allah Almighty it would not default

LAHORE: Advisor to Prime Minister on Kashmir Affairs and Gilgit-Baltistan Qamar Zaman Kaira said on Thursday that all developed countries in the world had made enormous progress in the field of science which helped them to rule the world. Addressing the 'Scicon 1.0' here at Forman Christian College (A chartered University), he said, "Scientific approach always paves way for society to move forward." He said that no nation could become prosperous in the real sense without ensuring scientific development. Qamar Zaman

Kaira said that he was very happy to witness demonstrations by students of their projects. Promotion of science helped in bringing a lot of facilities for humans, besides finding treatments of different diseases, he said and added that advancement in science also helped in overcoming stubborn mindset approach. He said that today Pakistan had been facing a lot of challenges, adding that scientific approach would definitely help it to excel. He urged the students to benefit from the best available opportunities as this would yield

good results. There was a need to add value to our products to boost country's export, he said. He said, "It is unfortunate that despite being an agricultural country, Pakistan import wheat, pulses, sugar etc." He said that science provides solution to problems, adding that scientific approach was necessary for making progress in different fields of life. Later, Forman Christian College Rector Jonathan Addleton presented a souvenir to the Advisor to PM. Lahore Board Chairman Dr Mirza Habib Ali also spoke on the occasion. Earlier, Qamar

Zaman Kaira witnessed different projects of students and interacted with them. Students briefed the Advisor about their models and demonstrated their working as well. Talking to the media, Kaira said that elections would be held as per the constitution, adding that elections process would gear up gradually. He said there was a debate that elections in the country should be held at the same time, keeping in view the country's financial and security situation. He said, "If all stakeholders reach a consensus on

holding elections at the same time in the country it would help in saving billion of rupees." To a question, he said that Asif Ali Zardari believed in finding ways and giving sacrifices just for progress and stability of the country. To another query, he said that violence approach could not be defended at all. He said that Imran Khan should leave provocative language and politics of violence. Qamar Zaman Kaira said the country was going through a critical phase but with the grace of Allah Almighty it would not default.—APP



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National Days and Armed Forces Days

FEBRUARY

Feb 04 / Sri Lanka National Day

Feb 06 / New Zealand National Day

Feb 06 / Uganda Defece Forces Day

Feb 11 / DPR Korea National Day

Feb 16 / Lithuania National Day

Feb 18 / Gambia National Day

Feb 19 / Nepal National Democracy Day

Feb 23 / Brunei National Day

Feb 23 / Guyana National Day

Feb 23 / Russian Federation National Army Day

Feb 23 / Tajikistan Armed Forces Day

Feb 25 / Kuwait National Day

Feb 27 / Dominican Republic Independence Day

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

Enquiry

Edhi Ambulance.....115
PIA Flight Info.....114
PIA Cargo.....9280999
Railway Inquiry.....117
Railway Exchange9270831-5
WASA Rawalpindi..5555489

Hospitals

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

Departments

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

Islamabad Metropolitan

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

Water Tank

Islamabad.....0321-5744480



ISLAMABAD: First Lady Samina Alvi visiting various stalls on the occasion of Women Day function organized by Serena Hotels.—DNA

IT skills helpful for women to explore emerging business

Begum Alvi gave away medals among the distinguished students, while Vice Chancellor Air University Air Marshal Javed Ahmed conferred degrees on the graduates

ISLAMABAD: Begum Samina Alvi on Wednesday urged women to explore the field of information technology in view of its importance as the future of the economy. Addressing the 30th convocation of Fazaia Bilquis College of Education for Women at PAF Base Nur Khan, she said universities in the country needed to focus on cyber security, Artificial Intelligence, cloud computing, and data analytics as the world needs skilled professionals in these disciplines. Begum Alvi

said more and more companies, businesses, governments, and private organizations had adopted IT tools in their daily business processes and added that in the future, even more companies would shift to digital means. She said expertise in IT could prove a golden opportunity for Pakistan, which was struggling to improve its economy and enhance exports. "By investing in the IT sector, equipping the youth, especially women with relevant skills, the country can amplify the volume

of its exports and get out of the financial problems," she said. Felicitating the graduates, she said their journey in the pursuit of education did not end but was an ongoing process of learning with experiences. She termed women an important part of the country and urged them to apply knowledge to the best of their ability in practical life. "Enhance your knowledge, excel in your profession, and use it for the betterment of society," she told the gathering of

graduates. Begum Alvi quoted the saying of the founder of Pakistan Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah that "No nation can rise to the height of glory unless your women are side by side with you". She lauded Fazaia Bilquis College of Education for Women, which as a unique non-profit-teaching institution, was imparting high-quality education to women. She also appreciated President Pakistan Air Force Women's Association (PAFWA) for its support in promoting

education among women. Begum Alvi gave away medals among the distinguished students, while Vice Chancellor Air University Air Marshal Javed Ahmed conferred degrees on the graduates. Principal of the college, Ayesha Khurram, said 16 research publications had been started in collaboration with the Air University. She said the institution focused on the promotion of entrepreneurship and short courses to help women excel in diverse fields.—DNA

Women International Film Festival on March 11

ISLAMABA: Women International Film Festival (WIFF) is having its seventh-year run here on March 11-12 at the Pakistan National Council of the Arts (PNCA) with an amazing line-up of films all made by women from Pakistan and around the world. The event is supported by the Embassy of France in Pakistan and the Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany in Islamabad. The films to be screened during the two-day festival include, 'The great Melli s' by Beatrice Campagna (Italy) based on the complex relationship between a father, a world-famous illusionist, and a young musician daughter is resolved after many years in the very place that has most deeply united and divided them. 'Three wishes. One truth' by Cecilia Petrujino, (Argentina) based on Autumn 1984. Valeria is ten years old and lives in distress out

of her father's violence. Speaking about it is forbidden. On her birthday celebration, she finds a magical object that can help her to ease her sorrow. Now Valeria has a plan. Women of my family by Alissa Sophie Larkamp from Germany is a film as a personal stream of memories - the biographical fragments of a great-grandmother, grandmother and mother are marked by simple circumstances. Silk's balance by Elise Lorthois from France revolves around life of five women in their adventure, high lining in the middle of the mountains. Betty's burning by Camille Vigny (Belgium) shows how to end a toxic and violent relationship. 'Awaaz' by Halimah Tariq from Pakistan follows the story of Shakila Farooq, the first woman in Mardan to take a stand for educating hearing and speech impaired girls, she fights to change the mindset and

norms of a patriarchal society. 'Baira Gharakh' by Mehreen Jabbar from Pakistan highlights that nothing goes as planned when a wife, her husband, and his friend end up in the same house at the same time. Other films include, 'The most boring granny in the whole world' by Damaris Zielke from Germany, 48 hours by Azadeh Moussavi from Iran, Inadequate by Beyza Yildir from Turkey, Hot rod by Juliette Gilot from France, Nobody by Mingyu-an Li from United States, The woman under the tree by Karishma Kohli from United States, Late winter by Jasna Safic from Croatia, My mother's daughter by Ahmen Khawaja, Mariam Khan from Pakistan, Miso-phonia by Melodi Tözüm from Turkey, Saturated by Elisabetta Laurence from United Kingdom, File by Sonia K. Hadad From Iran, Toutes les nuits by Latifa Sa d from France.—APP

Chairman PRCS acknowledges role of women

ISLAMABAD: Chairman of the Pakistan Red Crescent Society (PRCS), Sardar Shahid Ahmed Laghari on Thursday acknowledged the crucial role being played by women volunteers in our society. "Women have always been at the forefront of humanitarian work, serving their communities with passion, dedication and selflessness, the chairman said in connection with International Women's Day. Recognizing the struggle that women face daily, the chairman said, "From providing healthcare services to delivering aid during disasters, women have always been there, making a difference in the lives of those who need it the most". He said women continue to face discrimination, violence, and inequality in Pakistan and around the world. "We must continue to work together to create a world where women are treated with respect and dignity, where their voices are heard, and their rights are protected", he said.—APP

Colorful festival by women artisans concludes

ISLAMABAD: National Institute of Folk and Traditional Heritage, Lok Virsa celebrated International Women Day in a colorful ceremony by women artisans at Heritage Museum that concluded here late Wednesday. Major features of the event included demonstration of work by female master artisans in various specialized craft fields like Kashmiri embroidery, Hazara embroidery, doll making, stone carving, truck art, decoration work, basketry work, calligraphy, motikari, etc. and a live folk music show to pay tribute to well-known female folk artists was held at Heritage Museum. International Women Day is celebrated throughout the world on March 8th as a focal point in the women's rights movement, bringing attention to raise awareness for women's equality and positive change in the society. The event 'Tribute to Women Artisans and Folk Artists' focused on promoting Pakistan's indigenous folk heritage and highlighting contributions of eminent master artisans and folk artists in the development of the society. Ms. Fareena Mazhar, Secretary, National Heritage and Culture Division was the chief guest on the occasion. On arrival, the Secretary was warmly received by Bilal Ahmed, Executive Director Lok Virsa. She witnessed the exhibition of folk crafts by the female master artisans. In his welcoming remarks, the Executive Director said that "women artisans and artists are no lesser than the male counterpart. Female folk can also work along with males to assist her family in financial need". Lok Virsa is striving for progress of women of Pakistan through various initiatives including holding various exhibitions, fairs, festivals, concerts, etc., he added. Amateur youth signers from various schools and colleges paid rich tributes to well-known female artists like Noor Jahan, Abdida Perveen, Nayyara Noor, Reshma, Mussarat Nazeer, etc. In her address, Ms. Fareena Mazhar, highlighted importance of celebrating International Women Day especially with reference to culture.—APP

One more infected with Coronavirus in RWP

RAWALPINDI: One more person was diagnosed with fatal Coronavirus during the last 24 hours, raising the district's tally of confirmed cases to 47,773. As per the latest data released by the District Health Authority here Thursday, the infected cases included 44,126 from Rawalpindi and 3,647 from other districts. The report added that the new case had arrived from the Rawal town area while five confirmed patients were quarantined at homes. The report further updated that 7,006,011 people, including 44,790 health workers, had jabbed themselves against the lethal Coronavirus (COVID-19) across the district since the vaccination administering drive launched on March 10, 2021. District Health Authority added that during the last 24 hours, 224 samples were collected, out of which 223 were declared negative, while the positivity rate was recorded at 0.45 per cent.—APP

Govt notifies ADR Rules 2023

ISLAMABAD: The federal government, in exercise of powers conferred by section 25(1) read with section 4(1) and other relevant provisions of the Alternative Dispute Resolution Act 2017, has made and notified the ADR Mediation Accreditation (Eligibility) Rules 2023. The rules called as the ADR Mediation Accreditation (Eligibility) Rules 2023 shall come into force at once, a notification dated February 21, 2023 of the Ministry of Law and Justice and issued here on Thursday said. According to the notification ords and expressions used but not defined in these rules would bear the meanings given thereto in the Alternative Dispute Resolution Act, 2017. The notification stated that an ADR Centre providing mediation services or a mediator would be eligible for accreditation where the end-to-end mediation process framework by which it proclaimed to be bound. The framework administered or recommended by an organisation listed in the annex to these rules and is adopted by the ADR Centre or mediator, with the permission of the organisation, if required, or developed by itself and is found by the accreditation committee to be confirmed in material aspects to the frameworks of the organisations referred to in the annex to these rules, it added. The notification further stated that in either of the cases, the applicant will sign a bond in favour of and in the form specified by the accreditation committee undertaking to remain faithfully bound to its mediation process framework.—APP

DC for providing relief to citizens through Ramzan Bazaar

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) administration is all set to provide relief to the citizens by holding 'Sasta Ramzan Bazaars' at different venues for the provision of essential items and edibles at affordable prices. In connection to the bazaars setup, Deputy Commissioner ICT Irfan Nawaz Memon chaired a high-level meeting in which the Assistant Commissioner Secretariat, traders, residents, secretaries of union councils and other officials presented details about the arrangements of Ramzan Bazaar, said a press release issued here on Thursday. The DC directed the officials to ensure the availability of all essential commodities at affordable rates during the holy month of Ramzan. He also visited the site areas of bazaars and passed the directions for ensuring the security, cleanliness and lighting arrangements to facilitate the consumers. Speaking on the occasion, the DC said that the administration must keep an eye to control adulteration, profiteering.—APP

ICCI for exploiting mineral resources

DNA
ISLAMABAD: The tribal areas of merged districts are endowed with rich mineral resources including coal, copper, marble, limestone, soapstone, iron, gypsum, oil & gas and others, therefore, the government should provide maximum support to the business community in order to exploit these resources for generating business and economic activities to improve the health of the economy. This was said by Faad Waheed, Acting President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry while talking to Syed Jawad Hussain Kazmi, President, Khyber Chamber of Commerce & Industry during his visit to ICCI. Faad Waheed said that the merged tribal districts have good potential for business



activities in many sectors including mines & minerals, agricultural, transport, trade, services and light engineering. However, the unskilled workforce, low productivity,

outdated mining & cultivation methods and lack of storage facilities are some of the factors that are holding back these areas from their actual potential of economic

growth. He stressed that the government should address these issues to boost the economy of these areas. He assured that ICCI would fully cooperate with Khyber

Chamber of Commerce & Industry in resolving the key issues of the business community of the region. Speaking at the occasion, Syed Jawad Hussain Kazmi,

President, Khyber Chamber of Commerce & Industry (KCCI) highlighted the key issues of the business community of the tribal areas. He said that the underdeveloped road network, lack of efficient public transport services and use of old mining methods are major hurdles in promoting business activities in the merged tribal areas. He said that the SMEs of these areas have great potential to promote business activities in various sectors including mining equipment, light engineering, agricultural tools, spare parts for automobile industry & hydropower equipment and stressed that the government should address their key issues and support them in business development that would help strengthen the local economy. Both sides exchanged views on a range of matters of mutual interest.

Briefs

Women empowerment essential: Experts

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Women were the backbone of all developing countries, agreed experts during a Roundtable Discussion at the Institute of Regional Studies (IRS). Ambassador Nadeem Riyaz, President IRS in his inaugural address said that while it was true that Pakistan had reflected immense cognizance in registering women as engines of economic growth, their role in sectors such as agriculture remained largely uncredited. In that, implementation of available legislations to recognize the role of women was an essential component which still needed attention. Dr Shabana Fayyaz, Chairperson and Associate Professor at Department of Strategic Studies Quaid-i-Azam University said that Women's Day was a subtle reminder of the fact that as a society role of men in strengthening women empowerment was a major factor that required to be highlighted more than it was. She said that the fact that women in Pakistan were cognizant of their rights and could voice up for them was a blessing in itself.

Motorway Police to implement ITS

ISLAMABAD: The National Highways and Motorway Police (NHMP) has planned to introduce the Intelligent Transport System (ITS) on motorways M1, M2, M3, and M4 in the next two years. Talking to APP here on Thursday, an official of NHMP said that the Motorway Police had signed an agreement with the Frontier Works Organization (FWO) through the National Highway Authority to implement the ITS on various motorways including M1, M2, M3, and M4 over the next two years. He said that with this new system, commuters would no longer be stopped unnecessarily on the motorway. He said that the Lahore-Sialkot motorway had adopted a completely humanless system and the road users on this motorway will not be stopped for challan payment but will be required to pay the challan along with the toll tax when they exit the motorway.—APP

ANF seizes 28 kg drugs

RAWALPINDI: Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) has seized 28 kg drugs and 9000 intoxicated tablets in three operations conducted in different areas and arrested an accused, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman here on Thursday. He informed that in an operation near Peshawar Haji Camp Bus Stand, ANF recovered 24 kg charras and four kg opium from a parcel being sent to Lahore. In another raid at International Mail Office Rawalpindi, ANF recovered 242 grams weed from a parcel booked for London. He informed that in third operation at Karachi Pakistan International Container Terminal, ANF recovered 9000 intoxicated tablets from a container being sent to Dubai. ANF also arrested an accused resident of Karachi.—APP

Eight kite sellers, flyers arrested

RAWALPINDI: The Rawalpindi district police on the directives of City Police Officer, Syed Khalid Mehmood Hamdani here on Thursday continued a special crackdown against kite sellers and flyers and managed to net eight. According to a police spokesman, all police stations of the district had been directed to accelerate ongoing operations against kite-flying ban violators while special teams constituted to control kite-flying under the supervision of senior police officers were conducting raids in different areas. The spokesman said that Taxila, Waris Khan, Gungmandi, and Chakri police conducted raids and recovered hundreds of kites, kite flying string rolls, two 30-bore pistols.—APP



ISLAMABAD-Mar08: Models wearing party dresses walks on ramp during fashion show to mark the International Women's Day, at a local hotel, in Federal Capital, Organized by SAARC Chamber Women Entrepreneurs Council (SCWEC). —Online

Pak closely watching outcomes during China's 2 sessions

The digitization of the economy is another crucial step to increase the integration of the digital economy and manufacturing

DNA

ISLAMABAD : Pakistan being one of the close allies of China and a key partner in Belt and Road (BRI), is closely watching the outcomes and developments happening during the Two Sessions. Any significant change in China's socio-economic, political and strategic arena might have a direct impact on Pakistan's regional and global engagement, according to an article published by Gwadar Pro on Thursday. Eyes are currently fixed on the National People's Congress (NPC) and the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC), as nearly 3000 NPC deputies and around 2000 CPPCC members gathered in Beijing to finalize China's national, regional, and global meaningful

presence forward. This year's "Lianghui" or "Two Sessions" are happening amidst a unique backdrop as China gradually opens up in the post-COVID-19 pandemic era. Legislators from all corners of the country have convened to deliberate on matters of national interest and review key government work reports that aim to promote China's global engagement and economic progress.

As the world watches, the Two Sessions will showcase China's whole process of people's democracy, highlighting its ability to build consensus and chart a path forward for the nation's future. In October 2022, the 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China (CPC) declared its commitment to advancing the rejuvenation of the Chinese nation through a path

to modernization.

As the country embarks on this new journey of modernization in 2023, the unveiling of measures during the "two sessions" holds great significance not only for China but for other nations around the world deeply connected with China. These measures will not only shape China's future but will also impact global economic and political dynamics. As such, nations and international organizations will closely monitor the outcomes of the Two Sessions. The "Two Sessions" are the meetings where NPC and CPPCC gather to make crucial decisions regarding China's national progress having far-reaching implications. There may be several other crucial appointments and confirmations, such as those of the Premier, State Council, Cabinet, and the

CPPCC members. These decisions will set the tone for implementing China's domestic and international policies and will significantly impact China's future and global standing. China has announced an official economic growth target of approximately 5% for 2023 as part of its efforts to reinvigorate the world's second-largest economy. In addition, the country will increase its defense budget by 7.2%, representing a slight uptick from the previous year. Despite the uncertain global economic outlook, China remains optimistic about the prospects of its economy this year. This confidence is significant as the Chinese government is bringing the targets forth for 2023 closer to achieving them. China represents the world's most promising market, with a middle-income population exceeding

400 million. Some experts predict that this middle-income group will exceed 800 million within the next 15 years. The private sector is expected to play a critical role in the coming year to boost growth. The digitization of the economy is another crucial step to increase the integration of the digital economy and manufacturing. Pakistan is also carefully observing the developments and outcomes of the Two Sessions. The investments in the second phase of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) and the establishment of the industry in Special Economic Zones (SEZs) are deeply linked with economic growth in China and the capacity of Chinese businesses to invest in Pakistan. The decisions made during the sessions will have far-reaching implications for Pakistan as the country grapples with the

challenges and pressures from IMF. The demands of the international financial institutions have been placed for the government to comply. Despite growing challenges, the recent support from the China Development Bank (CDB), and an expected high-level visit from Pakistan in the coming days might help achieve a significant level of cooperation to thwart the global and regional economic, political and strategic pressures for Pakistan. As an all-weather strategic friend, China has always stood by Pakistan in challenging times and is likely to support Pakistan in the near future.

The outcomes of the Two Sessions are expected to add another important block in the stronger friendship between China and Pakistan that will make the future stronger and brighter together.

BISP registers over 0.4m households in NSER from flood affected districts

ISLAMABAD: Benazir Income Support Program (BISP) has so far registered over 4,00,000 households in the recently launched dynamic National Socio-Economic Registry (NSER) survey through its registration centers at Tehsil level. Around 1,70,000 households have been registered in the NSER from the flood-affected districts so that the losses incurred by the households can be estimated to provide assistance. According to an official source, the launch of the first ever dynamic NSER in the history of Pakistan will enhance the country's capacity to cope with disasters, pandemics and economic instability by adopting a more effective data collection mechanism for the poor households. The NSER is a landmark achievement and is linked with National Database Registration Authority (NADRA) for data collection as well as validation and can al-

low swift registration of six distinct types of information for the registry which shall be validated through NADRA. The six different types include registration of missed-out households, eligibility appeal cut-off for poor but ineligible households with widows or elderly people, roster updates for regular changes such as marital status, inclusion of new born, changes or correction in education, health, disability and employment information of household members, gauging information on households impacted by disasters and their re-registration, reassessment of ineligible households for last two years and reassessment of eligible or beneficiary households for last three years. The registry provides registration and information update opportunities to all citizens. Since this registry is linked with NADRA, only NADRA-au-

thenticated information can be registered or updated. Besides registration centres, an app will also be launched through Google play store which will facilitate the already registered households in changing or correcting their information. While mobile registration is also planned for far-off areas which will register household information at their doorsteps. It is pertinent to mention here that the NSER which is the scientifically based real-time data collection was launched by BISP to identify deserving families and households across Pakistan and to provide them with targeted cash assistance. The BISP was launched in 2008 as the largest social safety net programme in the country with an aim to provide financial assistance to households living below the poverty line. While initiating the programme the foremost challenge was the unavailability of reliable

data on poverty.

Although programmes like Bait-ul-Mal and Zakat were functional; however, they too did not possess any scientific data because these programmes were providing financial assistance at a very small scale. Keeping in view that people were suffering from inflation and needed swift financial assistance, the government started targeting poor households with the help of parliamentarians. BISP also started exploring options for introducing a scientific-based targeting mechanism with the technical assistance of the World Bank. The targeting mechanism was piloted in 16 districts in 2009 while the successful piloting was followed by a nationwide roll-out in 2011. This door-to-door survey resulted in the accumulation of data from 27 million households which helped target those below the poverty line.—APP

PPF invites applications for fellowship program

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Press Foundation (PPF) has invited applications for the 12th batch of PPF Investigative Reporting Fellowships. The Fellowships aim to facilitate Pakistani journalists to produce investigative reports that meet the professional, ethical and legal standards. PPF will provide support to journalists, to professionally investigate and report on issues relating to human rights, transparency, environment, inequity, governance and corruption, said a PPF statement issued on Thursday. The fellowships will include honorarium of up to sixty thousand rupees (Rs. 60,000), capacity building workshops as well as editorial and technical support while last date to submit applications is March 19 (Sunday). Selected participants will work under the supervision of a senior journalist who will act as project editor during the term of the fellowship. Each fellow will be expected to produce six stories during this fellowship program. Journalists with a minimum experience of three years working for print, television, radio and online media can apply for the fellowships. Female journalists are encouraged to apply. The criteria for female journalists and journalists from Baluchistan, FATA, Gilgit-Baltistan and Azad Kashmir may be relaxed for otherwise qualified applicants. The duration of the fellowship is three months. The aspiring candidates may send their CVs in English or Urdu as per the following format. 1. Fellowship application form in either English or Urdu language 2. Professional resume/CV 3. Press card or official letter of the organization 4. Links or clippings of at least three articles that were published or aired in the last twelve months. Applications should be sent to fellowships@pakistanpressfoundation.org.—APP

People with Insomnia more at Risk for a Heart Attack

ISLAMABAD : Approximately 1 in 3 adults Trusted Source in the U.S. not getting enough sleep, insomnia is a common health problem. Lack of sleep can lead to a long list of chronic health issues Trusted Source, including heart disease, diabetes, stroke, high blood pressure, obesity and depression. According to a new study published Friday in Clinical Cardiology, people who suffer from insomnia were 69% more likely to have a heart attack compared to those who didn't. The research was taken from an average of nine years of follow-up among patients. Additionally, researchers found that people who slept five or fewer hours had the highest chance of suffering a heart attack. Those with diabetes and insomnia had double the

risk of having a heart attack. They gathered data from 1,184,256 adults (43% were women). The average age was 52 years and 13% (153,881) had insomnia. Being diagnosed with insomnia was determined by having any of the following: trouble falling asleep, trouble staying asleep or waking early and not being able to fall back to sleep. It's important to note that 96% of patients did not have a previous history of heart attack. Heart attacks occurred in 2,406 of patients with insomnia and 12,398 in the group who didn't have insomnia. Results showed a direct correlation between insomnia and having a heart attack among all patients, regardless of age, sex, follow-up duration, and common comorbidities (including diabe-

tes, high blood pressure or cholesterol). Specifically, those who slept five or fewer hours a night were 1.38 and 1.56 times more likely to experience a heart attack compared with those who slept six and seven to eight hours a night. Yonna E. Dean, a medical student at Alexandria University in Alexandria, Egypt, and author of the study explained the main takeaways from the study. First, "insomnia puts us at risk of developing heart attacks; subsequently, patients should be educated about the importance of sleep in maintaining a healthy heart," Dean told Healthline. "Sleep should be incorporated into the primary preventive guidelines for cardiovascular disease." Second, "insomniacs should be regularly screened for coronary ar-

tery disease. Lastly, excessive sleep could be equally and sometimes even more harmful than sleep deprivation, Dean added. Sleep and heart health. The connection between sleep and the heart has many layers. "One layer is the amount of sleep — people who do not get enough sleep are not able to provide their body with the amount of all the different sleep stages needed to maintain optimal functioning," said Michael A. Grandner, Ph.D., MTR, volunteer medical expert for American Heart Association's (AHA) Go Red for Women initiative, co-author of the AHA's new Life's Essential 8 cardiovascular health score Trusted Source. Also important is sleep quality. "Even if you get enough sleep, sometimes sleep can be shallow and frag-

mented, which also prevents your body from performing all the maintenance it needs during that time. Other dimensions are important too," Dr. Grandner explained. For example, a recent study Trusted Source showed that irregular sleep patterns on their own can contribute to atherosclerosis risk, and people who are very sleepy during the day also are more likely to have cardiovascular events, Dr. Grandner added. "Sleep is vital in helping the body repair itself," said Wafi Momin, DO, a cardiologist with UTHealth Houston Heart & Vascular and Memorial Hermann. "Getting at least seven hours of sleep each night helps your body recover and allows you to function normally the following day."

Getting enough shut-eye can also help manage blood pressure, blood sugar and weight, all of which contribute to heart health. "Regular, consistent sleep also helps regulate blood pressure, sugar levels as well as weight," Dr. Momin said. "These health problems are linked to heart diseases such as heart attack and stroke so getting plenty of sleep and regulating these risk factors can be of much help." Sleep deprivation, a consequence of insomnia, puts the body under stress, triggering cortisol release which could accelerate atherosclerosis, Dean explained. A study Trusted Source conducted on patients who developed acute myocardial infarction (MI) found that the concentration of cortisol in their hair was elevated in the month preceding the MI.—APP

CDA plans to increase fine on water wastage up to Rs. 25,000

ISLAMABAD: The Capital Development Authority (CDA) has planned to increase the fine for repeat offenders against water wastage up to Rs. 25,000, as part of a conservation plan to ensure judicious use of the resource during this summer season.

"The authority has noted that Islamabad usually faces a shortage of water with a large number of people engaged in wasteful activities, such as washing their cars and allowing water to overflow into the streets," an official told APP.

He said that although existing laws permit the civic agency to impose a maximum fine of Rs 5,000 on those found wasting water however this punishment has failed to yield satisfactory results in the past.

The official said the residents of posh areas of the federal capital easily pay the fine and continue to waste water, leading to shortages of this vital resource, adding that to combat this challenge, the authority has planned to increase the fine for repeat offenders.

He said that the CDA has already announced to take strict legal action against those involved in water wastage to ensure its judicious use as well as saving from the acute shortage.

The official said that the authority would also form special teams for issuing notices to those residents of the capital city who were involved in the wastage of water and the challans of repeat offenders to be sent to the CDA magistrate for further necessary action.—APP

Pak-China AI medical lab put into operation

DNA

ISLAMABAD: A China-Pakistan Joint Artificial Intelligence (AI) medical diagnosis lab has started working here in the Akbar Nazki Teaching Hospital, Islamabad and it will provide free cervical cancer screening to 10,000 Pakistani women in its first phase of operation. "It can also be used in the early diagnosis of other high-incidence of clinical tumors, such as breast cancer, gastric cancer, oral cancer, etc.," said the project lead from Landing Med, a Chinese medical technology company that provided three cervical cancer screening devices along with 5,000 sets of supporting consumable items to Pakistan last December for the lab construction. Different from a traditional clinical procedure where patients have to visit the hospital several times for specimen collection, report analysis, and treatment, the AI-powered lab streamlined the operation by processing the specimen, scanning the slides and uploading them to the 5G cloud platform. Once data upload is complete, a medical team in China can make a diagnosis remotely and a report can be generated in about 5 minutes.

IT parks to generate job opportunities

ISLAMABAD: The state-of-the-art Information Technology Parks across the country would generate job opportunities for IT professionals, attract millions of dollars in precious foreign exchange, boost the IT industry and increase its exports after their completion. "Work on IT parks in Karachi at the cost of Rs 41 billion and Islamabad IT park at the cost of Rs 13.72 billion is underway. At their completion, they would provide job opportunities for 20000 and 15000 IT professionals respectively," said an official of the Ministry of Information Technology. "Karachi IT Park is the largest IT project of its kind in Pakistan, which will benefit not only the citizens of Karachi but also the IT professionals and companies of Sindh and the rest of Pakistan," he added. The Establishment of IT Park, Karachi was approved by the Executive Committee of the National Economic Council (ECNEC) in its meeting held on June 4, 2021, at a capital cost of USD 186.658 million including USD 158.416 million.—APP

Refugee rights: a warning from history

Britain did not sign up to the 1951 United Nations refugee convention by accident, nor was the country bamboozled into the European convention on human rights and cooperation with the Strasbourg court that enforces the convention. It was an architect of those institutions. The ambition was to lay solid foundations of European cooperation for the establishment of a peaceful democratic order after the second world war. Winston Churchill was a leading advocate of that project. The party of Churchill has decided to dispense with this part of his legacy. The decision is not explicit: Conservatives never disparage Britain's most venerated prime minister. But the idea has taken hold in Tory ranks that human rights are an incumbrance and that the apparatus of international law that enforces them is a clunky hand-me-down from a bygone age. In particular, a duty of asylum for refugees has come to be seen as a loophole that allows crooks to dump undeserving foreign freeloaders on British shores. The legal requirement to consider asylum seekers humanely is seen as an affront to national sovereignty by meddlesome foreign judges. That view is expressed by the government's illegal migration bill, the ostensible purpose of which is to stop the traffic in people crossing the Channel in small boats. Those journeys are already illegal, and there is no evidence that the passengers will be deterred by the deprivation of fundamental rights. The real function of the bill is performative. Brexit was meant to be the method by which control was reasserted. It failed, not because leaving the EU had no impact. Free movement of labour from the rest of the continent was ended. But fear of infiltration by foreigners is liquid and overruns any policy vessel designed to contain it, and cynical politicians are always on hand to channel the flow. This is not practical policy but a campaign with a dual purpose. If it doesn't get the Conservatives re-elected, it might bolster Ms Braverman's position in the leadership contest after a defeat. Mr Sunak's endorsement of the strategy suggests that he, too, thinks Britain has had enough of human rights; that they are an obsolete hangover from the mid-20th century. That is not the image he presents to the rest of the world. His recent success in negotiating a deal with the EU over Northern Ireland was meant to demonstrate a collaborative, law-abiding spirit distinct from the maverick unilateralism extolled by Boris Johnson. In relations with the EU, Mr Sunak seeks reconciliation, in the spirit of solidarity and respect for postwar institutions that are despised by despots and xenophobes. But a British government's contempt for human rights law is succour to the enemies of democracy. The prime minister wants to be a responsible statesman abroad and a populist at home. There might be an electoral strategy somewhere in that combination, but there is no discernible point of principle.

What will it take to end the war in Ukraine?

Serhiy Kudelia

Even if Russian forces ultimately seize the largely destroyed Bakhmut, the heavily fortified Ukrainian positions around the Sloviansk-Kramatorsk agglomeration would hinder any further movement. On the other hand, the Ukrainian counteroffensive

More than a year after Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, the war appears to have reached a deadlock. Since the liberation of Kherson by Ukrainian forces last November, both sides have been engaged in positional warfare with only minor changes in territorial control. The widely expected Russian winter offensive barely moved the front line and failed to seize long-contested towns in the Donbas region, such as Avdiivka, Mariinka, Bakhmut and Vuhledar. Meanwhile, the Ukrainian army used heavily fortified positions and Western-supplied arms to successfully repel Russian armoured assaults. Even if Russian forces ultimately seize the largely destroyed Bakhmut, the heavily fortified Ukrainian positions around the Sloviansk-Kramatorsk agglomeration would hinder any further movement. On the other hand, the Ukrainian counteroffensive will likely target the southern areas of the Kherson and Zaporizhia regions where Russian forces have been building layered defence lines since the fall. Given the increased density of Russian forces along the southern front line, it will be hard for Ukrainians to repeat the sudden pincer movements which allowed for the quick liberation of occupied towns in the Kharkiv region and parts of Donbas last year. If there are no decisive shifts on the battlefield over the next six months, however, the pressure for peace talks from Western governments will most likely grow. So would Ukraine and Russia be ready for negotiations? The string of successful military operations that led to the humiliating retreat of the Russian army last year strengthened public confidence in Ukraine's eventual victory. In a January survey of Ukrainians residing in the country, 89 percent of respondents said they were optimistic about Ukraine's future. The majority explained their optimism with their anticipation of victory over Russia. NATO's willingness to provide Ukraine with increasingly

more advanced weaponry, such as long-range artillery, air defence systems and tanks, has further boosted such expectations. As a result, while in May 2022, 59 percent of survey respondents favoured negotiations with Russia, by January, the number had slumped to 29 percent, with 66 percent opposing such talks. Most importantly, the Ukrainian leadership and the public have started defining victory in maximalist terms. For 82 percent of those surveyed, peace with Russia is possible only upon the return of all territories occupied since 2014, including Crimea and the Donetsk and Luhansk provinces. There is also overwhelming public support for joining NATO with more than 80 percent in favour of it in all regions of the country. Membership in the alliance is viewed by many as a non-negotiable position. Only 20 percent of respondents indicated they would support giving up on this goal for the sake of peace with Russia. Territorial claims and foreign policy are not the only irreconcilable differences between Ukraine and Russia. Ukrainian leaders have also indicated that a complete victory would require the transformation of Russia's political regime and reparations from Moscow. As Ukraine's Foreign Affairs Minister Dmytro Kuleba stated during the 2023 Munich Security Conference, until Russia changes, the "war will continue in one or another form". In a recent interview, the head of the Ukrainian military intelligence service, Kyrylo Budanov, claimed that the return of all territories would mark the end of the first phase of the war only. In the subsequent stage, Russia's territories bordering Ukraine would have to be demilitarised to establish a "security zone around Ukraine ... 100 kilometres in depth". These post-war scenarios, thus, presume Russian President Vladimir Putin's removal from power as the main condition for peace. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy had already established this expectation in October when he signed a decree dismissing the possibility of talks with Putin. Such a position, in his view, should incentivise other members of the Russian political elite to "start thinking about what to do internally so that someone would agree to come to a negotiating table with them". While Ukraine is weary of negotiating personally with Putin, the Russian leader sees the war in broader terms as a conflict with the Western alliance and dismisses Ukraine as a Western puppet state. His press secretary Dmitry Peskov argued in a recent interview that by supplying arms to Ukraine, France, the United Kingdom and the United States had entered into a "direct military confrontation" with Russia. Hence, the Kremlin is willing to accept only Western leaders as counterparts in peace talks. Moscow further rejects the legitimacy of the Ukrainian authorities on ideological grounds, accusing them of "favouring Nazis and promoting Nazi sentiments within the society". The only Ukrainian politicians that the Kremlin has indicated as possible negotiating partners have long fled to Russia and, hence, could not realistically represent Ukraine. Since the West insists that nothing about Ukraine can be discussed "without Ukraine", the prospect of such talks seems particularly remote at this point. Another crucial obstacle to negotiations is Russia's rigidity in its war aims, which combine territorial, ideological, and strategic demands. The annexation of four Ukrainian regions last September, only partially controlled by Russian forces, established a pretext for additional territorial demands. At the same time, a law adopted by the Russian State Duma in 2020

precludes any consideration of territorial concessions by establishing criminal responsibility for calls or actual attempts to yield parts of Russian territory. Ideologically, Russia remains committed to framing the war as the fight against Ukrainian "neo-Nazis", which has to end with regime change in Kyiv. Strategically, Putin presents the war as an existential fight to preserve the unity of the Russian state and prevent its subordination by the West. This, in his view, justifies the need to push back the Western presence from its borders and ensure that Ukraine remains outside of the Western alliance. The latter demand has been indirectly endorsed by China in its newly released 12-point peace plan. While recognising the importance of upholding the principles of sovereignty and territorial integrity, it calls for respecting the "legitimate security interests" of other countries and rejects the pursuit of security by "strengthening or expanding military blocs". Although public opinion has been a weak constraint on the Kremlin's decision-making, its immense propaganda efforts suggest that Russian leaders still take public attitudes seriously. Over the last year, at least a third of Russians have consistently preferred talks over continued military operations. This share reached a peak of 44 percent in the fall of 2022 when Russian forces suffered a series of defeats in the southern and northern parts of Ukraine. Similarly, in a February survey, 40 percent of respondents said they would like to see Russian troops withdraw from Ukraine without achieving their goals. Even more, about two-thirds of respondents (66 percent) indicated that they would support the signing of a peace agreement and an end to the military campaign if such a decision came from Putin. This suggests that the Russian leadership has a wider leeway in choosing the direction of this war, including a path of de-escalation, than its Ukrainian counterparts. While both sides currently dismiss the possibility of negotiations, there are five factors that may make them more likely in the coming months. First, since the start of the war, Russia and Ukraine have repeatedly adjusted their expectations. For Russia, this meant yielding territories that it seized and giving up on certain operational objectives, such as the capture of Kyiv and Kharkiv. For Ukraine, it meant withdrawing from major cities, like Mariupol and Severodonetsk, and restraining its offensive operations. So far, these adjustments have left both sides confident that they could still achieve their goals through the continued use of force. If the battlefield stabilises and the front lines become static, the idea of talks may become more compelling, especially if the casualty rates remain high. Second, a substantial escalation of violence and the rising threat of the use of weapons of mass destruction could also encourage the warring sides to engage in diplomacy. The signing of the two Minsk agreements in September 2014 and February 2015 was preceded by swift offensive operations that threatened one of the parties with total defeat. A similar turn of events may unfold if Ukraine manages to push the Russian army back to pre-2022 lines and threaten the capture of territories controlled since 2014. Alternatively, Russia could expand its offensive to the borders of the Donetsk and Luhansk provinces and threaten new regions in Ukraine's south or east. In either scenario – a Russian victory or a Russian defeat that could trigger the use of nuclear weapons – West-

ern mediation efforts may be re-energised in order to push for de-escalation. Third, Ukraine's continued fighting capacity has become highly dependent on further supplies of advanced weaponry from NATO allies. Western countries, however, have been approaching the limits of their production capacity and have become concerned about the depletion of their own stockpiles. In addition, some US Congress members have become more outspoken about the need for greater oversight of arms deliveries to Ukraine. Meanwhile, public support for military aid provisions has declined, with a quarter of Americans (26 percent) saying that the US gives too much aid to Ukraine and only 48 percent explicitly in favour of providing it with armaments. While Europeans largely support further assistance to Ukraine, many, particularly in Germany and Austria, have become increasingly impatient with the war and would like to see it end sooner. In a recent poll, 48 percent of respondents in nine European Union member states favoured quick peace even if Ukraine surrenders some of its territories as a result. Hence, Kyiv appears under greater pressure to achieve military success by the end of the year. Absent substantial progress on the battlefield, its Western allies might condition further assistance on tangible steps in seeking a negotiated ceasefire with Moscow. Fourth, Russia may also be more willing to consider diplomatic paths out of the war if it faces a sudden resource shortage. The sharply rising energy exports to China and India have, so far, allowed Russia to offset the losses from the collapse in Russian energy supplies to Europe. Even more so, its total energy export earnings increased substantially in 2022. The Western economic leverage, thus, proved insufficient to limit Russia's resources for the war, but may still work if other countries, like China and India, join the effort. Even if Russia keeps receiving windfall profits from energy sales, its declining firepower on the battlefield point to munition problems, such as a shortage of artillery shells and ballistic missiles. This means securing arms supplies from countries like China may be crucial for Russia's capacity to wage the war with the same ferocity. If Beijing maintains its current of ficially stated neutrality and abstains from direct military support to Russia, Moscow will be forced to re-evaluate the long-term viability of its military campaign. Finally, the moderation in the goals of the warring sides may be another factor leading to the launch of the talks. This, however, will likely require a change in the current leadership in Russia or a reversal of Zelenskyy's earlier stated positions on humanitarian or strategic grounds. Still, a shift from maximalist to moderate objectives may indicate the opening of a bargaining space for the two sides, which appeared non-existent for most of the previous year. As it stands today, peace talks between Ukraine and Russia seem outside of the realm of the possible for both sides. However, the prospect of an endless war or a major defeat for one of the sides may make negotiations suddenly appear the only alternative available. Whether both sides then choose to pursue them will depend on the developments far away from the battlefield.

—Courtesy: Al Jazeera

World must get tough on divisive Israeli government

Yossi Mekelberg

The new Israeli government has already managed to deepen the divisions inside Israel, prompting hundreds of thousands to take to the streets in protest and alienating some of its closest foreign allies. What stands out about the slight, though important, shift in British policy is that this is an unprecedented warning to the Israeli government that the UK is not prepared to engage with those elements that are clearly antidemocratic and which are leading

In a dry manner characteristic of British diplomatic tradition, UK Foreign Secretary James Cleverly replied to concerns raised by his country's politicians about developments in Israel by stating that: "The UK government has not engaged Itamar Ben-Gvir in his role as minister of national security, and we have no current plans to do so." On the face of it, it does not sound like much of a radical change in British dealings with the state of Israel, but it might be just a small crack in what have been, up to now, extremely solid relations between the two. And it might be a cue for other countries with diplomatic, military and economic relations with Israel to distance themselves from at least certain members of the current government and its harmful policies. The new Israeli government has already managed to deepen the divisions inside Israel, prompting hundreds of thousands to take to the streets in protest and alienating some of its closest foreign allies. What stands out about the slight, though important, shift in British policy is that this is an unprecedented warning to the Israeli government that the UK is not prepared to engage with those elements that are clearly antidemocratic and which are leading the moves to further entrench the occupation and impose collective punishment and violence on the Palestinians. Cleverly's clarification of his government's position provided only an incomplete answer to a letter from a group of UK parliamentarians who wrote to him toward the end of 2022, when Israel's coalition government under the sway of the far right was formed, to "express our grave concern about the annexationist policies of the incoming government of Israel." Naturally, much attention is being paid to the two chief pyromaniacs, Ben-Gvir and Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich. The latter, who is also a defense minister, called for the Palestinian town of Huwara to be "erased" altogether following the events of last month. But this coalition government as a whole is even worse than the sum of its parts. To not engage

with Ben-Gvir, considering his criminal and thuggish past and reprehensible antidemocratic and supremacist attitude, is almost self-explanatory, and it could be expected that other countries will follow suit. Cleverly may not have explicitly endorsed the MPs' observation that "the incoming government of Israel (is) building on the policies of its predecessors which have produced a one-state reality: Effectively, Israel controls the lives of Palestinians throughout the occupied Palestinian territory." But for all intents and purposes, by publicly referring to a key member of this government with immense influence on developments on both sides of the Green Line, he has clearly accepted the basic tenets of the letter. Notwithstanding the important fact that, for the first time in a long time, the British government is indicating its disapproval of Israel's policies toward the Palestinians, the question is whether it will go further than this. As the security situation in the West Bank is deteriorating, especially for Palestinians, the UK could be expected to apply the same logic to others who are as culpable for depriving millions of Palestinians of their basic rights for more than 55 years. Moreover, will other countries who care for both Israeli democracy and improving the lives of Palestinians, not only in the West Bank but also in Gaza, not to mention the avoidance of widespread violence and bloodshed, be prepared to add their voices and take tangible measures to convey a similar message to the Israeli government? Thus far, the international community is taking a very tentative approach. To an extent, this derives from the fact that there are other issues higher up on the global agenda. Countries also prefer to take time before passing judgment and forming a policy toward the new realities created by this government. There is also a perceptual difficulty in terms of harshly responding to the behavior of a government that was elected democratically. However, as much as these are understandable considerations, they cannot justify inaction when the first step taken

by a democratically elected government is a judicial coup in order to harm that democratic system, and whose major reasoning for this is to ensure free rein for expanding the illegal settlements, legalization of the outposts, and depriving millions of Palestinians of their human, political and civil rights. For now, the British foreign secretary has reiterated there will be no change when it comes to bilateral relations with Israel and working closely with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. However, this differentiation might quickly prove to be artificial and unsustainable. At the end of the day, the UK government is fully aware that there is collective responsibility and, while for a short time it can signal its displeasure with the vile and damaging policies and actions of Religious Zionism and its leaders, it will also have to reevaluate its relations with the one who heads this government, Netanyahu. After all, Netanyahu's administration has already decided to legalize nine outposts, not only in violation of international law, but despite widespread condemnation by some of its closest friends in the international community. This was quickly followed by the pogrom launched by Israeli settlers against the town of Huwara, during which they torched homes and vehicles in a horrific act of vandalism that Israel's security forces failed to prevent. Police violence is also increasingly being used against Israelis who protest the damage being done to their democracy. If this does not stop, do not be surprised if right-wing elements or even the police themselves, considering the incitements against the pro-democracy protesters, use firearms against them. Should this happen, responsibility will lie entirely with the government. It is not too late to stop the madness that is taking place in Israel and in Palestine, but doing so will take much more than not engaging with Ben-Gvir. The international community has the power and influence to do so if it acts swiftly and with a clear and united voice.

Courtesy: Arab News

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TikTok becomes political football, again

FBI director Christopher Wray said in a US Senate hearing on Wednesday that TikTok "is a tool that is ultimately within the control of the Chinese government – and it, to me, it screams out with national security concerns". In the same hearing, the director of the US Central Intelligence Agency, William Burns, claimed that the agency's future will be defined by the United States' on-going technology race with China. The remarks followed the release of the Annual Threat Assessment of the US Intelligence Community, which pointed to alleged Chinese cyber surveillance as the biggest national security threat. There is no evidence TikTok is collecting the personal data of users for the Chinese government. Yet on March 5, US-based Business Insider reported that data collected by online pharmacies, as well as social media posts, and message and search logs, were being provided to prosecute women seeking abortions or abortion-inducing medication, a direct result of the overturning of the ruling in the Roe versus Wade case in June 2022. Guess where their data come from – not TikTok. It is Google and Facebook that are providing the data. And it is not just the US spook establishment that sees a red menace in the popular video-sharing app. The White House backed a bill introduced on Tuesday by a dozen senators to give President Joe Biden's administration new powers to ban TikTok and other foreign-based technologies if they are considered to pose a national security threat. The Restricting the Emergence of Security Threats that Risk Information and Communications Technology (RESTRIC) Act is intended to "comprehensively address the ongoing threat posed by technology from foreign adversaries, such as TikTok", claim its sponsors. To call TikTok an adversary is ridiculous. As is Wray's claim that TikTok could drive narratives to divide US people over the Taiwan question. As if that is something that concerns the majority of the US public. US society is certainly divided but that is because of wealth gaps, racism and other domestic blights, including the bitter feuding within Congress where TikTok and other alleged Chinese security threats are merely political footballs. On Feb 28, commenting on the US government's ban on members of federal agencies having TikTok on their devices, the Foreign Ministry replied that the US government so lacks confidence that it even fears an app that young people like. It should fear the ire of the public. As one comment posted in response to a Reuters tweet about the proposed ban on TikTok said, it is nothing but "politically motivated prejudice and discrimination" and millions of young American voters will teach the politicians a good lesson.

Briefs

IMF deal to
be signed
within days

FROM PAGE 01

The country gained economic stability from 2013 to 2018. Global agency had predicted Pakistan will become part of G-20 countries till 2030. Pakistan had become 24th largest economy of the world during PML-N previous government. Pakistan was the best market of Asia but today I am feeling trouble unfortunately in telling that Pakistan ranked 47th in global economic list in 2022. Pakistan economy plummeted to lowest level due to ill-conceived policies of previous PTI government. The per capital income increased only 30 dollars during the last four years. As compared to it the per capita income during PML-N tenure rose to 373 dollars. He claimed Imran Khan increased Pakistan debt 24 billion dollars. We are taking measures for improvement in national economy. We will soon overcome economic crisis. Pakistan is facing myriads of challenges including Pakistan products access to international market, he pointed out.

Foreign
reserves...

FROM PAGE 01

The Industrial and Commercial Bank of China (ICBC) as part of the institution's \$1.3 billion facility, just days after it had received \$700 million from the China Development Bank. Pakistan hasn't received funds from any friendly country except for China as the \$350 billion economy struggles to revive the stalled IMF programme. Cash-strapped Pakistan has been trying to secure the IMF bailout to avert a debt default, unlock more funding and stave off severe supply shortages. There are \$7 billion of repayments in the coming months, including a Chinese loan of \$2 billion due in March, according to Fitch Ratings. The nation needs to repay about \$3 billion dues in the upcoming payments while \$4 billion is expected to be rolled over, SBP Governor Jameel Ahmad said in an analyst briefing after the announcement of the monetary policy rate — which has been jacked by to a 27-year high of 20%.

COAS lauds
resolve...

FROM PAGE 01

While interacting with locals, the Army Chief emphasized that handful of misguided elements cannot shake the resolve of the people of Balochistan and the Armed Forces who are committed towards ensuring peace and prosperity. General Asim Munir laid particular emphasis on socio-economic development of the area. He announced welfare projects relating to education, installation of solar systems, fisheries, water, health, sports and livelihood. General Asim was accompanied by Balochistan Chief Minister and Quetta Corps Commander Lt-Gen Asif Ghafoor during the visit to Gwadar.

Taliban
governor...

FROM PAGE 01

"When the governor was coming to his office, the man blew himself up in the office. The governor and a local man were martyred. A mujahid along with another civilian was injured," officials told. No group claimed responsibility for the attack. Taliban usually blame such attacks on the banned terror outfit Daesh. Muzammil is one of the highest-ranking Taliban officials to be killed in such circumstances since the group returned to power in August 2021. He was initially appointed as the governor of the eastern province of Nangarhar where he led the fight against Islamic State militants, before being moved to Balkh last year. UN warns of aid cuts over Taliban crackdown on women's rights The UN envoy in Afghanistan warned on Wednesday that a Taliban administration crackdown on women's rights is likely to lead to a drop in aid and development funding in the country, where women fear being cut from public life as much as violent death. — Online

Indonesia jails two match officials over stadium crush

"I am sentencing the defendant to a year and a half in prison," presiding judge Abu Achmad Sidqi Amsya told the court in the city of Surabaya

SURABAYA: An Indonesian court on Thursday jailed two football match officials for negligence over one of the worst stadium disasters in the sport's history. The crush in October at a venue in the East Java city of Malang killed 135 people after police fired tear gas into packed stands when supporters invaded the pitch. Hundreds of people fled for narrow exits, resulting in a stampede that left many trampled or suffocated to death, including more than 40 children. Abdul Haris, a match organiser, was found guilty of negligence and handed 18 months in prison. Prosecutors had sought a sentence of six years and eight months. "I am sentencing the defendant to a year and a half in prison," presiding judge Abu Achmad Sidqi Amsya told the court in the city of Surabaya. It is Indonesia's first ruling on the tragedy. The judges also found security official Suko Sutrisno guilty of negligence and sentenced him to one year in prison. "The defendant did not anticipate the chaos because there has never been an emergency situation before. The defendant also did not



understand his job as a security official well," the judge said. Both men have seven days to appeal the verdict. Three local police officers have also been charged over the incident and are awaiting verdicts. The former director of

the company that runs Indonesia's premier league has been named as a suspect and remains under police investigation. Police described the October 1 pitch invasion as a riot and said two officers were killed, but survivors accused the police

of using excessive force. Officers were seen kicking and beating supporters on the pitch before indiscriminately firing tear gas into the stands. Football's world governing body FIFA outlaws the use of such riot control methods inside stadi-

ums. The tragedy has forced Indonesian officials to confront failings in various aspects of the domestic game, which has been blighted for years by shaky infrastructure, mismanagement and violence.

Indonesia's National Police sacked its local chiefs for both Malang city and the province of East Java after the tragedy.

The government also suspended all competitive football games but league matches resumed last month, without fans in the stands. Indonesian President Joko Widodo ordered an investigation and pledged to demolish and rebuild the Kanjuruhan Stadium according to FIFA standards.

A task force investigating the crush has called on the head of Indonesia's football association and all the members of its executive committee to resign, but they have refused to do so. The match was a clash between fierce East Java rivals Arema FC and Persebaya Surabaya, with Arema losing 3-2. FIFA head Gianni Infantino in October called the crush "one of the darkest days for football". — APP

Our bowling was not up
to mark: Babar Azam

ISLAMABAD: Peshawar Zalmi Skipper Babar Azam feels not up to mark bowling cost them the game of the Pakistan Super League (PSL) 8 against Quetta Gladiators. Peshawar Zalmi and Quetta Gladiators added another classic to their epic rivalry on late Wednesday as the latter chased down a towering 241-run target with eight wickets in hand and 10 balls to spare at the Pindi Stadium. In a match that saw 483 runs being scored — the highest run aggregate for an HBL Pakistan Super League match — records tumbled regularly. Some were broken in the run chase after only being made in the first innings. For example, Babar Azam's record for most fours in an HBL PSL innings (15) lasted less than two hours as

Jason Roy clubbed 20 fours in the run chase. "You feel disappointed when you lose after scoring 200 runs. Jason Roy should be given the credit for his outstanding display. Our bowling was not up to the mark and we couldn't execute the game plan as we wanted too," he said in a presser after the end of the game on late Wednesday. The prolific batter said the wicket in Rawalpindi was also a batting one. "But the wicket here also supports the bowlers. The upcoming next two matches were very crucial for us. We will try to score 280 runs in the next match." He said the team he played was the best. "You always go with the winning combination and this team has won us matches in the past. Salman Ar-

shad performed very well for Zalmi last year but his performance was not the same in this edition. So we have to rest a player, so that he can sit back and regain his form." To a question, he said it was his wish to score a century in PSL and he did but it would have been better if Islamabad had won. About Saim Ayub who scored (74 off 34), he said the way he's playing throughout the tournament it is outstanding and he was improving his batting with every game. "He is improving day by day and I'm keeping an eye on all performing youngsters in the league. It is good for Pakistan that many players will come up. The more they will play they would get better. Gladiators opener Jason Roy said it was his best

innings in T20 cricket. "I was all the way till the end which is an incredible feeling as an opener. This innings will go on down to me as the greatest. This is my best T20 innings ever. It will definitely live long time in my memory. I'm feeling on top of the world." On Babar Azam and Saim Ayub's innings he said, "That was incredible to watch; unfortunately, it was against us. I mean, it is the sort of stuff I watch on TV loads of times, with Babar the way he plays. I think that was his eighth hundred, and to watch it first-hand, it was extremely special, and he is a beautiful player to watch. And he was helped extremely well from the other end with his opening partner (Saim), the youngster coming through." — APP

Emma Raducanu
wrist injury returns
before Indian Wells

LONDON: Emma Raducanu will "hopefully" be able to play at Indian Wells but says last year's wrist problem has returned. The 20-year-old British number one is due to play Danka Kovinic of Montenegro on Thursday in the 16,000-capacity Stadium 1. But Raducanu had strapping on both of her wrists during Wednesday's one-hour practice session with her coach Sebastian Sachs. "The same issue that I had last year has started to flare back up," she said. Speaking to BBC Sport, she added: "I've definitely been managing my load. It's something that has just come back, so I'm trying to be as cautious as possible. "I'm going to do everything I can to be there tomorrow. "I think we always play through pain and it's just a matter of how much can you take - I'm looking forward to hopefully being out there tomorrow." The initial injury, which forced Raducanu to end last season early and miss the Billie Jean King Cup Finals in Glasgow, only affected her right wrist. There were not too many signs of discomfort in Wednesday's practice session, although she did take her hand off the racquet a couple of times. It was the first time Raducanu had practised since the weekend, and on Tuesday she pulled out of the Eisenhower Cup exhibition event in which she had been due to play mixed doubles with fellow Briton Cameron Norrie. Fresh concerns about her wrist follow a bout of tonsillitis, which cost Raducanu the chance to play in last week's ATX Open in Austin, Texas. — Agencies

Bangladesh stun world
champions England in
T20 series opener

CHATTOGRAM: Bangladesh's Najmul Hossain Shanto scored a half-century before all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan got the hosts over the line for a six-wicket win against Twenty20 world champions England in Chattogram on Thursday to kick off their three-match series. Put in to bat, England looked to be in control when openers Jos Buttler (67) and Phil Salt stitched together an 80-run partnership, but Buttler received little support after Salt was dismissed on 38 and the visitors were restricted to 156-6. Hasan Mahmud was the pick of the bowlers for Bangladesh as he took two wickets, while four of his team mates claimed a wicket apiece. After a brief opening stand between Litton Das and Rony Talukdar, Shanto (51) combined with debutant Towhid Hridoy for 65 runs to give Bangladesh some momentum, but the pair were then dismissed in consecutive overs as the chase looked in danger of being derailed. Shakib, who was the hero in Bangladesh's one-day international win over England earlier this week, came to their rescue once again, scoring 34 off 24 in a calm knock under pressure to secure his side's first-ever T20I win over England. — APP

Bayern cruise past PSG
to reach UCL last eight

MUNICH: Bayern Munich forward Eric-Maxim Choupo-Moting scored against his former club and Serge Gnabry added a late second as the Germans beat Paris St Germain 2-0

on Wednesday to reach the Champions League quarter-finals. The 33-year-old Choupo-Moting, who played for PSG from 2018-20, tapped in from a Leon Goretzka assist in the

61st minute. Substitute Gnabry struck on the break in the 89th minute to seal the hosts' 3-0 aggregate win following their 1-0 victory in the first leg in Paris. The result established Bayern as one of the title favourites going into the last eight and left PSG's star-studded squad including world champion Lionel Messi and Kylian Mbappe without a shot at Europe's premier club trophy for another year. The quarter-final draw will take place on March 17. PSG, without injured forward Neymar, were sharper in the early stages and went close through Mbappe and then a double effort from Messi in front of the goal in the 25th minute. Bayern gradually took the fight to the visitors and had a chance of their own when Musiala's 32nd-minute shot was blocked by keeper Gianluigi Donnarumma. Despite PSG captain Marquinhos being taken off with a rib injury in the 36th minute, the visitors almost went ahead two minutes later when under pressure Bayern keeper Yann Sommer lost possession in the box. — APP

Quality of work of development
projects is improving or deteriorating

Are all the rules and regulations being followed to maintain the quality of the development projects constructed in Punjab, Sindh, KP, Balochistan, AJK, GB and Islamabad? Professional complainants must be discouraged at all levels



MUMTAZ AHMED BHATTI

CONSTRUCTION departments are very important all over the world because the development of any country depends on the construction departments. The value of construction departments in Pakistan increases as politicians here get votes in the name of development projects. For the construction of development projects, from the tendering process to construction and post-construction monitoring, complete rules and regulations

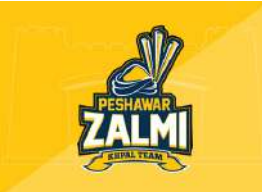
have been made, which are very important for the construction departments to follow. Are all the rules and regulations being followed to maintain the quality of the development projects constructed in Punjab, Sindh, KP, Balochistan, AJK, GB and Islamabad? Those who violate these rules and regulations will be prosecuted and punished. NHA, Housing and Works, CDA, PKHA, W&S, C&W, PEHED, Irrigation, PPH, Local Government and Community Development and all development authorities are construction departments through which development projects are complete. During the construction of development projects, the rules and regulations are fully implemented and some development projects are also constructed in which all the rules and regulations are ignored and constructed with substandard materials. Complaints about poorly constructed development projects are also being brought to the higher authorities. Mostly engineers of construction departments do not give importance to observations of M&E and do not

attend to the observations. One thing that is common in the development projects where there are complaints of corruption is that quality control material tests are not carried out in proportion to the number that should be carried out to maintain the standards. All the required tests should be done and if the failure rate in all the tests increases, it becomes clear that sub-standard material is being used in the development projects, then immediate action should be taken and legal action should be taken against those responsible, but unfortunately. No action is taken against anyone. Complaints have been received from the public regarding the quality of development projects and serious observations have been made by the M&E, inquiries have been made or all complaints and observations have been dumped. Development projects are executed by Executive Engineers and their juniors and all the responsibilities are placed on them too. While Chief Engineers and Superintendent Engineers have the responsibility to inspect the ongoing projects under their jurisdiction

and ensure that all development projects are being constructed as per the prescribed standards and if sub-standard materials are being used, a Take action without wasting time. Should corruption be found in development projects, should it be the sole responsibility of Executive Engineers and SDOs. Should responsibility be imposed on all those who inspect these projects? because they receive huge price of the inspections under TADA. There is a widespread perception that engineers in the road sector seek appointments through bribery and political recommendation because opportunities for corruption are high in roads sector. Officers involved in corruption are very influential and it is very difficult to take action against them. Corruption will end when there is strict legal action against influential officials involved in corruption. If the posting of engineers is on merit, there is no political interference, the opinion of non-technical persons should not be given priority over technical persons. Boards should be formed in every department for transfer and posting. No engineer should be trans-

ferred before three years without solid reasons. No inquiry should be made on any development project before it is completed. All the requirements of engineers such as technical allowance, vehicles, fuel as required. Executive engineers should not be called for unnecessary meetings. Ensure that no engineer has to pay bribe to Planning Commission, Planning and Development or Finance Department for any project. Improvement is possible only if the necessary steps are taken. Professional complainants must be discouraged at all levels as their blackmailing tactics benefit the black sheep sitting in Anti-corruption, FIA, NAB. Engineers working on development projects have to suffer for long periods of time due to false applications and development projects are also affected. What is the percentage of truth in the complaints sent by the public and the observations made by M&E regarding development projects? Are the allegations made about the quality of work factual or a conspiracy to defame the engineers and construction departments.

PSL 8th Edition



FRIDAY 07:00 PM
MARCH 10, 2023
Pindi Club Ground,
Rawalpindi

Imran says
will talk...

FROM PAGE 01

circulating that I want to talk to the army chief [but] I don't need the establishment." Imran further said that a political party that enjoyed the support of the people did not need "crutches". Asked whether the establishment's attitude towards him had changed after the change in the military command, the ex-premier told the publication that "it didn't make any difference to us."

He said that cases against the PTI were made during the tenure of former army chief General (retired) QamarJavedBajwa. "Prior to this, such custodial torture was never inflicted on senior people. "We had thought it would change when the new army chief would come but there has been no change and [our difficulties] have increased," he said. According to BBC Urdu, the PTI chief also touched on election and noted that the Supreme Court had ordered to hold polls in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Punjab within 90 days. He further said that the president had also made an announcement in this regard.

LHC
suspends...

FROM PAGE 01

On Sunday, the media regulator had slapped a ban on Imran's speeches and press talks with "immediate effect" after he had lashed out from former army chief QamarJavedBajwa for what he called "protecting incumbent rulers in their alleged corruption cases". Subsequently, the PTI chief approached the court. He argued that Pemra's order was "purely driven out of vengeance". As the LHC took up the petition, Justice Mirza asked how such a ban could be imposed on the head of a political party. "This is against freedom of speech," he remarked. However, Pemra's counsel argued that the matter should be heard by a full bench. "I request the court that this is not its jurisdiction," the government lawyer also said.

Maryam
continues...

FROM PAGE 01

She said there were even talks of increasing the retirement age of Supreme Court judges, which she claimed was for Justice (retd) Khosa's benefit. Maryam said that a delegation had conveyed the then chief justice's message to Nawaz, who was in jail at the time, adding that the PML-N supremo had refused to grant an extension. During the interview, Maryam also spoke about former Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) director general (DG) retired Lt-Gen Faiz Hamid and said that he had "confessed" to his crime. Maryam defined Gen Hamid's remarks as "confession of his crime", adding: "If he has accepted it and confessed to it, then the institution of the armed forces [should] itself take notice because his confessional statement has come."

Marriyum
slams...

FROM PAGE 01

It did not appear in the court again today using the pretext of security. In a tweet, she said that there was no security problem for the "Avoid the Judiciary" movement, but if the court summoned him, he made excuses of disability and old age. The minister said that "video link jhackal" will not present himself for accountability because he was also "a foreign agent and a watch thief."

Briefs

Nigeria postpones election for state governors

MAIDUGURI: Nigeria's election commission has postponed the March 11 election for state governors, the country's election commission said.

"The commission has taken the difficult but necessary decision to reschedule the governorship and state House of Assembly elections which will now take place on Saturday 18th March, 2023," Festis Okoye, an Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) official, said in a statement. He said the commission may not have adequate time to reconfigure 176,000 election accreditation machines to be used in 774 local government areas (counties) across the country before March 11, the initial date for the second round of the poll.

On March 3, a court ordered the INEC to allow some political parties to have access to election materials used in the Feb. 25 presidential poll.

While accepting the court order, the electoral body also sought permission to reconfigure the Bimodal Voter Accreditation System, or BVAS machines, ahead of the election for state governors, a request granted by the court on Wednesday.—APP

EBRD to invest up to \$1.6B in Türkiye

ANKARA: The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) will invest up to 1.5 billion (\$1.6 billion) in southern Türkiye over the next two years after powerful earthquakes shook the region on Feb. 6. The EBRD aims to support the recovery, reconstruction and reintegration of the region's economy to preserve human capital, livelihoods and jobs in the affected cities, the bank said in a statement on Thursday. The bank provides 600 million in credit lines to local lenders for businesses and individuals directly affected by the earthquakes, as well as new lending to companies participating in recovery and reconstruction efforts in the area. It will also support the reconstruction of sustainable infrastructure in the affected cities, cooperating with municipalities such as Hatay and Gaziantep. The bank will also focus funds on the reconstruction of the railway network to re-establish connectivity between the southeastern region and the rest of the country.—APP

10 Leopard tanks delivered to Ukraine: Poland

WARSAW: Poland on Thursday said it had delivered to Ukraine the additional 10 Leopard 2A4 tanks it had promised, while allies would send theirs shortly.

"We're talking about a battalion of heavy tanks which, in the case of Poland's share, have already been delivered and, in the case of our allies, they will be delivered to Ukraine very soon," Defence Minister Mariusz Blaszczak told reporters.

Warsaw had promised to ship a total of 14 German-made Leopard 2 heavy tanks to Kyiv.

The first four were delivered in late February, on the first anniversary of the Russia-Ukraine conflict. Blaszczak said the tanks to follow from allied countries included eight from Canada, eight from Norway and at least six from Spain.

"I spoke to Spanish Defence Minister Margarita Robles. There may be four additional ones," Blaszczak said. Poland has been spearheading efforts to send the modern Leopard 2 tanks to Ukraine.

Germany initially resisted the pressure from allies to authorise the move but early this year, Berlin agreed to send its own Leopards and greenlighted the deliveries from other countries. Blaszczak also said Poland would set up a service hub for the battle tanks used in Ukraine.—APP

Georgia withdraws Foreign Agents Bill amid controversy

Foreign ministers of several EU member states, including the Baltics, echoed concerns about the foreign agent law, urging Georgia to uphold principles of "democracy, rule of law and human rights"

FOREIGN DESK

TBILISI: Georgia's ruling Georgian Dream Party withdraws controversial Foreign Agents Bill after massive protests. Tens of thousands of Georgians took to the streets claiming the proposed bill would stifle freedoms in the country. Overnight Wednesday police used water cannon and tear gas to disperse the thousands gathered outside the parliament building. The law, drafted by the ruling Georgian Dream Party, if approved, will make all media outlets and non-governmental organisations

that receive 20% of their funding from abroad register as "foreign agents". This would subject them to monitoring and possible sanctions. It has been slammed by the country's civil society, media and analysts, who say it "threatens the fall of Georgian democracy". Authorities have claimed the law is necessary to improve transparency.

66 arrests were made at the demonstration on Tuesday evening, including the leader of the opposition Zurab Japaridze, while 50 police officers were injured. Protesters also reported injuries, with a number of officers reportedly seen

laughing as they dispersed the crowds. International organisations and western states have also condemned the law, with the EU warning Georgia it could hamstring the country's EU ambitions.

On Tuesday, European Union foreign policy chief Josep Borrell described the law as "a very bad development for Georgia and its people". "The European Union urges Georgia to uphold its commitment to the promotion of democracy, the rule of law and human rights, and recalls the right of people to a peaceful protest," he added.

Foreign ministers of sever-

al EU member states, including the Baltics, echoed concerns about the foreign agent law, urging Georgia to uphold the principles of "democracy, rule of law and human rights".

Fights have broken out in the parliament in recent days as the law has been debated.

Georgia's president, Salome Zurbishvili, has said she would veto the bill, though parliament can override presidential vetoes. Khatia Dekanoidze, a member of the opposition National Movement Rally, told parliament: "Everyone should understand that saving our country, saving our

young generation, saving our future lies only through the European path." The bill, dubbed a Russian-style law by opponents, received initial approval in parliament.

In Russia, a foreign agent law has been used to silence organisations and news outlets that criticised the government.

Protesters blocked both entrances to the parliament building last night, chanting: "No to Russian law!" "Russians!" "Slaves!"

As the bill was being debated on Tuesday, the US Embassy said in a statement it raised "real questions about the ruling party's

commitment to Euro-Atlantic integration."

"Today is a dark day for Georgia's democracy. Parliament's advancing of these Kremlin-inspired laws is incompatible with the people of Georgia's clear desire for European integration and its democratic development," they said. Georgian Dream chair Irakli Kobakhidze defended the draft law, following the unrest.

He said that people had been misled with 'disinformation', defending the legislation as necessary to reveal who was financing those who criticised the Georgian Orthodox Church.

UK legislation on migrants breach of int'l law: UNHCR

NEWS DESK

NEW YORK: The new UK bill against illegal migrants violates the international treaty for refugees and therefore is a violation of international law, said an official of the UN's refugee agency. "The proposed law does breach the international convention, and hence it is in breach of international law and of international humanitarian cooperation indeed," Matthew Saltmarsh, a spokesman for the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), told Anadolu in an exclusive interview. According to the UNHCR, the UK currently hosts around 230,000 refugees. The number of asylum seekers has also been rising, and last year, there were nearly 75,000 asylum claims in the country.

If the legislation is passed, there will be a ban on asy-

lum seekers in the UK and the country would be closing down its asylum system, said Saltmarsh. "The right to asylum is universal, and the right to asylum is fundamental. That is agreed internationally and in international law, and that is the fundamental tenet on which the Refugee Convention rests."

According to Saltmarsh, it is a concern that people are taking dangerous routes and putting their lives in danger to get to the UK, but it is not a situation unique to the country. While the number of refugees is increasing in the UK, the situation is not exceptional, he said, stressing that many countries have been hosting refugees for years, and in large numbers. "There are large numbers of asylum seekers and refugees in many other countries," he said. "Take Türkiye for example. Türkiye for many

years has hosted millions of Syrian refugees and continues to do so, but also other countries in Europe (such as) France and Germany. (There are) countries now in Eastern Europe which host many Ukrainian refugees."

Regarding the expected detention of people coming to the UK illegally, Saltmarsh said there are issues regarding the conditions under which they will be kept. "Detention of asylum seekers and refugees is extremely problematic. There have been many issues with it in terms of the conditions under which people are detained, in terms of the impact that it has on people's mental health," he said. The cost of detaining refugees is expensive, he noted and wondered where these people are going to be housed.

In response to the UK's new bill, which involves initially sending refugees coming to the UK to Rwan-

da, Saltmarsh said the agreement on Rwanda is still being challenged in the courts, so it's unclear if people would be able to go to Rwanda.

"Sending asylum seekers to Rwanda we don't think is the solution. Rwanda is itself a less wealthy country that has a number of its own refugees that it hosts already. But also we don't think that the asylum system in the country is robust enough to be able to process those claims and to safely accommodate the asylum seekers," he said.

For people seeking asylum in the UK, there are very few safe and legal channels, with long and complicated procedures and schemes. "Sadly, there are very few safe and legal routes to the UK. The UK has in the past been a generous country for resettlement to refugees. At the moment, it has a very limited number of places for resettlement," said Saltmarsh.

China's steady economic recovery opening new avenues

ISLAMABAD: "China's economy is staging a steady recovery, with marked improvement in consumer demand, market distribution, industrial production and business expectations, and this momentum can help partner countries like Pakistan to explore new avenues of cooperation for further growth, especially in the manufacturing sector," said Prof. Dr. Hassan Duad Butt, former project director of China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). In an interview with China Economic Net, Dr. Hassan stated that China's rapid economic recovery after a decisive victory against Covid-19 is of immense importance for the world in general. Therefore, China's emphasis on economic stability, high-quality growth and sustainable development is a ray of hope for many countries, including Pakistan and other BRI countries, in this time of geopolitical uncertainty. In 2022, while overcoming major difficulties and challenges, the Chinese economy maintained stable performance on the whole, with GDP reaching more than RMB 121 trillion (USD 18 trillion) and achieving 3% growth, a sign of strong resilience. Dr. Hassan maintained that, "while the set GDP growth target of 5% in 2023 is the lowest in dozens of years, it still means sufficient economic activity to mitigate some of the economic risks and challenges." The GDP growth target, along with other economic development goals set by the Chinese government, promises sufficient economic activity and stability through the continuity of policies. Hassan quoted the words of Chinese Premier Li Keqiang that "should be carried out in a more coordinated way to create synergy for high-quality development," which is an indication of the government's confidence in the strong growth momentum by remaining the factory of the world setting higher economic indicators compared with last year.—DNA

UN nuclear chief raises alarm over power outages at Ukraine plant

VIENNA: The UN nuclear agency's chief warned on Thursday of the danger of repeated electricity outages at Ukraine's Zaporizhzhia power plant, after a new missile strike left it running on diesel generators. Electricity is essential to operate pumps that circulate water to cool reactors and pools holding nuclear fuel. "Each time we are rolling a dice," IAEA chief Rafael Grossi told the agency's board of governors. "And if we allow this to continue time after time then one day our luck will run out." Grossi has been in consultations with Kyiv and Moscow for several months to try to set up a protection zone around the plant, but the talks appear to have stalled. "We must commit to protect the safety and security of the plant," Grossi said. "And we need to commit now. What we need is action. 'Let me remind you - this is the largest nuclear power station in Europe,'" he said. Grossi noted this was the sixth time that the Zaporizhzhia facility had been cut off from the electricity grid since Russia captured it a year ago, and the first time since November. "This cannot go on," he said, adding, "I am astonished by the complacency - what are we doing to prevent this happening?" he asked, vowing to pursue his efforts. The strike came during a fresh wave of Russian attacks across Ukraine which killed at least nine people and led to power outages across the country. "The last power line between the occupied Zaporizhzhia NPP and the Ukrainian power system was cut off as a result of rocket attacks," the operator Energoatom said. The emergency diesel generators can provide the facility's energy needs for 10 days, it said.—APP



ISLAMABAD: Yerzhan Kistafin, Ambassador of Kazakhstan to Pakistan calls on the Foreign Secretary Asad Majeed. Both sides discussed means and ways to strengthen bilateral relations while focusing on enhancing connectivity through trade & people to people contact. – DNA

Will China's next premier be a moderating influence on Xi?

NEWS DESK

HONG KONG: The pro-business track record of the man poised to become China's top economic official will make his term a test of whether he might moderate President Xi Jinping's tendency to intervene. Li Qiang, 63, who is expected to be chosen China's premier on Saturday, will have to grapple with a slowdown in the world's second-largest economy, which is dealing with emerging from the COVID-19 pandemic, weak global demand for exports, lingering US tariff hikes, a shrinking workforce and an aging population. Xi, who has bolstered the state sector, has said that he wants the ruling party to return to its "original mission" as China's economic, social and cultural leader. That has been accompanied by tighter control over some industries, more aggressive censorship of TV and pop culture and the spread of a "social credit" system that penalizes the public for offenses ranging from fraud to littering. Xi took China's most

powerful role in 2012. Now, observers are watching whether Li can roll out pragmatic policies during his five-year term. But the process of political decision-making in China is opaque, making analyzing the country's direction a difficult matter for outsiders. Expectations are based on Li's performance as the party chief of the country's largest city - Shanghai - and as the governor of neighboring Zhejiang province, a hub of small and mid-sized business. And, perhaps more importantly, his close ties with Xi.

Li was quoted as saying in a 2013 interview with respected business magazine Caixin that officials should "put the government's hands back in place, put away the restless hands, retract the overstretched hands." Li hailed Zhejiang's businessmen as the most valuable resource in the province, pointing to e-commerce billionaire Jack Ma, and he highlighted his government's cutting red tape. In contrast, Li has also strictly enforced some state controls, including rules meant to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

When his local rule has been out of tune with national policies set by the president and his team, he has eventually fallen into step, seen as key to his rise.

Under President Xi, entrepreneurs have been rattled not just by tighter political controls and anti-COVID curbs but more control over e-commerce and other tech companies. Anti-monopoly and data security crackdowns have wiped billions of dollars off companies' stock-market value. Beijing is also pressing them to pay for social programs and official initiatives to develop processor chips and other technology. A native of Zhejiang, Li studied agricultural mechanization and worked his way up the provincial party ranks. In 2003, he started an executive MBA program at Hong Kong Polytechnic University, common among ambitious party cadres. Priscilla Lau, a former professor of the university and former Hong Kong delegate to China's legislature, said Li attended her class on Hong Kong's free-market economy for a chamber in the city and said he recalled

her class when they met in Shanghai more than a decade later. "It shows he's very diligent," Lau said. Li's working relationship with Xi began in the 2000s when the latter was appointed party chief in Zhejiang.

Following Xi's eventual move to Beijing and appointment as party general secretary, Li was promoted to Zhejiang governor in 2013, the No. 2 role in the provincial government. Three years later, Li was appointed party chief of Jiangsu province, an economic powerhouse on the east coast of China, marking the first time he held a position outside his home province. In 2017, he was named party boss of Shanghai, a role held by Xi before the president stepped into China's core leadership roles. In the commercial hub of Shanghai, Li continued to pursue pro-business policies. In 2018, electric car producer Tesla announced it would build its first factory outside the United States. It broke ground half a year later as the first wholly foreign-owned automaker in China.

Even during the strict COVID lockdown in Shanghai last year, the factory managed to resume production after a roughly 20-day suspension, official news agency Xinhua reported.

Tesla vice president Tao Lin was quoted saying that several government departments had worked almost round-the-clock to help businesses resume work. "The Shanghai government bent over backwards," said Tu Le, managing director of Sino Auto Insights, a Beijing-based advisory firm.

On more complicated issues, not everything has been smooth sailing. Though Li helped shepherd an agreement between Chinese and European companies to produce mRNA vaccines, Beijing was not in favor and the deal was put on hold, said Joerg Wuttke, the president of the EU Chamber of Commerce in China. Before the citywide lockdown, Li appeared to have more leeway to manage the financial hub's smaller previous outbreaks than most other cities' leaders did.

French youth set to rally against gov't

PARIS: French youth groups mobilized Thursday for the third day of protests against the government's pension reform plan.

Protests and walkouts resumed this week for the sixth time since January, and thousands of people marched to object to the reform plan which triggered public outrage when it was announced last year.

The General Labor Confederation counted 3.5 million demonstrators in the streets across France on March 7, including 700,000 in Paris, while the Interior Ministry recorded 1.28 million people attending the protests, according to Le Figaro newspaper.

While people protested, the Senate debated the draft bill, and on Wednesday evening voted in favor of the most controversial point - article 7 which raises the retirement age from 62 to 64 in 2030 - by 201 votes to 115.

Reacting to this on Thursday morning, CGT's Secretary General Philippe Martinez told broadcaster France 2 that this move "will not change anything in the determination and the mobilization (of the workers)." Trade unions on Tuesday also asked to be "received urgently" by President Emmanuel Macron, and the government spokesperson Olivier Veran said that "the government's doors are more than open to the unions."—APP

Four Palestinians killed by Israeli army

RAMALLAH: Three Palestinians were killed by Israeli fire on Thursday in the West Bank city of Jenin, according to the Health Ministry.

A ministry statement said three young men were killed in the town of Jaba in Jenin. It identified the men as Sufyan Fakhoury, 26, Nayef Malaisha, 25 and Ahmed Fashafsha, 22. Eyewitnesses said Israeli forces opened fire on a Palestinian vehicle in al-Fawwara area in the town, killing its three occupants. They said Israeli forces sneaked into the town in a car carrying a Palestinian plate.

The Israeli army deployed snipers on the rooftops of houses in the town and detained a Palestinian amid clashes with gunmen, according to an Anadolu reporter.

Another Palestinian was injured by Israeli fire in al-Yamoun town, near Jenin, the Health Ministry said.

A 14-year-old boy died of wounds he sustained on Tuesday from Israeli fire during a raid in Jenin, the ministry said in a statement.—APP

Wani seeks UNHCR's urgent attention

MIRPUR: The World Muslim Congress (WMC) has asked the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHCR) to pressurise the government of India to establish a commission of enquiry as recommended by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) report on Kashmir to investigate the human rights violations being committed by its forces in the Indian illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IOJK). While speaking on behalf of the WMC in Geneva, Altaf Hussain Wani said that the government of India was brazenly violating international law by unleashing a reign of terror in Kashmir, said a news release issued here on Thursday. "The Indian government has employed different forms of strategies to suppress the peaceful resistance of the people of IOJK," he said, adding that the policy of repression ranges from excessive force, draconian laws, extra judicial and custodial killings, rape, torture and arbitrary detentions. Wani pointed out that the people of Kashmir were being deprived of all rights, including the right to life. He said that under the guise of draconian laws, the occupation authorities were rendering people landless, jobless and homeless in their own homeland. Referring to the ongoing demolition drive in the occupied territory, he said, "Under the grab of encroachment drive, houses are demolished."—APP

Briefs

Pak warns
against
reducing aid
to Afghanistan

DNA

NEW YORK: With 28 million Afghan people facing abject poverty, Pakistan has warned against ending or curbing humanitarian assistance to Afghanistan, saying it would be “morally wrong and politically counter-productive.” “Halting or reducing humanitarian assistance would hurt the very people — men, women and children — whose human rights the international community seeks to uphold,” Ambassador Munir Akram told the UN Security Council. Speaking in a debate on the situation in Afghanistan, the Pakistan envoy therefore called for the full funding of the UN Secretary-General’s \$4.2 billion recovery plan for the country. Voicing deep concern over recent developments, he joined others in expressing disappointment over further restrictions placed on the rights of Afghan women and girls, and hoped that the Afghan interim government will find a solution to those issues in line with Islamic injunctions. Ambassador Akram said that a more comprehensive international effort was required to revive the Afghan economy and its banking and financial sector as well as implementation of the several shovel-ready “connectivity” projects. Expressing major concern over the terrorist attacks within and from Afghanistan, he said that Pakistan has, in recent months, endured a series of such terrorist attacks emanating from externally-funded TTP and from other terrorist outfits in that country.

Section 144
lifted in
Lahore

DNA

LAHORE: The ban on public gatherings imposed in the provincial capital has been lifted, advocate general Punjab informed the Lahore High Court (LHC) on Thursday. The interim government led by Mohsin Naqvi imposed Section 144 in the provincial capital to avoid any untoward incident owing to multiple public gatherings in the provincial capital — Aurat March on International Women’s Day and Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf’s (PTI) election rally. The PTI challenged the move in the LHC, blaming the provincial authorities for obstructing the election process. At the outset of today’s hearing, Punjab’s top law officer informed the court that the government had lifted Section 144 imposed due to security threats. “Yesterday was a sensitive day, so the implementation of Section 144 was the right step.” At this, LHC disposed of PTI leader Hammad Azhar’s petition. Meanwhile, senior leaders of PTI including its chairman Imran Khan were booked in a case for “attacking police” and “using foul language” against national security institutions in Lahore after Section 144 was imposed in the provincial capital.

Pakistan
reports
uptick in
Covid cases

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan registered an uptick in Covid-19 infections and positivity ratio as the country diagnosed another 50 coronavirus cases with no fatality during the last 24 hours, showed the statistics released by the National Institute of Health (NIH) on Thursday morning. According to the NIH data, the death toll in the country remained the same at 30,644 whereas the number of total infections now climbed up to 1,577,338 after adding the fresh 50 cases. During the last 24 hours, 5,157 tests were conducted throughout Pakistan whereas the positivity ratio went up to 0.97%. The number of patients in critical care stood at nine.



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Argentina Leopoldo Fransisco Sahores, artist Alejandra Bubuli and curator Roma Ali witnessing exhibition ‘Awakening of the Soul’ organised by the Argentine Embassy. Detailed News and more pictures to be published in Monday edition. – DNA

Russia pounds Ukraine
with huge missile wave

“I heard a very loud explosion, very loud. We quickly jumped out of bed and saw one car on fire. Then the other cars caught on fire as well. The glass shattered on the balconies and windows,” said Liudmyla, 58, holding a toddler in her arms

NEWS DESK

KYIV: Russia launched a huge wave of missile strikes across Ukraine while people slept on Thursday, killing at least six civilians, knocking out electricity and forcing a nuclear power plant off the grid. The first big volley of missile strikes since mid-February shattered the longest calm since Moscow began a campaign to attack Ukraine’s civil infrastructure five months ago. Kyiv said it included an unprecedented six of Russia’s small arsenal of kinzhals hypersonic cruise missiles, one of Moscow’s most valuable weapons. “The occupiers can only terrorise civilians. That’s all they can do. But it won’t help them. They won’t avoid responsibility for everything they have done,” President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said in a statement, describing strikes that hit infrastructure and residential buildings in ten regions.

Russia’s defence ministry said it had carried out a “massive retaliatory strike” on Ukrainian infrastructure as payback for a cross-border raid last week on a village in Russia’s Bryansk region. Villagers in Zolochiv in Ukraine’s western Lviv region carried a body in a black plastic bag over the rubble of a brick house completely destroyed by a missile. They put the body into the back of a white van with two others, of at least five people killed there. A dog lay curled up on a carpet in the ruins. Oksana Ostapenko said the house belonged to her sister Halyna, whose body was still buried under the rubble with two other family members. “They still haven’t found them. We were hoping that they’re alive. But, they’re not alive,” she said. Another civilian was reported killed by the missiles in the central Dnipro region. Three civilians were separately reported killed by artillery in Kherson. In the

capital Kyiv, a seven-hour air strike alert through the night was longest of the Russian air campaign that began in October. “I heard a very loud explosion, very loud. We quickly jumped out of bed and saw one car on fire. Then the other cars caught on fire as well. The glass shattered on the balconies and windows,” said Liudmyla, 58, holding a toddler in her arms. “The child got scared and jumped out of bed,” she said. “How can they do this? How is this possible? They are not humans, I don’t know what to call them.” Moscow says its campaign of targeting Ukraine’s infrastructure far from the front is intended to reduce its ability to fight. Kyiv says the air strikes have no military purpose and aim to harm and intimidate civilians, a war crime. Ukrainian officials said it was the first time they had faced so many kinzhals missiles, which Ukraine has no way to shoot down. Russia is believed to have just a few doz-

en kinzhals, which fly many times faster than the speed of sound and which President Vladimir Putin touts as a weapon for which NATO has no answer. Ukraine said the attack had knocked out the power supply to the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant, Europe’s largest, severing it from the Ukrainian grid and forcing it onto emergency diesel power to prevent a meltdown. The plant, which Russia has held since capturing it early in the war, is near the front line and both sides have warned in the past of a potential for disaster. Moscow said it was safe. “The specialists at the plant are working quite professionally, the automation has started up,” said Renat Karchaa, adviser to the CEO of Russian state nuclear power operator Rosenergoatom. “There is no threat or danger of a nuclear incident.” U.N. nuclear watchdog chief Rafael Grossi appealed for a protection zone around the plant.

Case
registered
against
Imran, others

DNA

LAHORE: Case under terrorism and other clauses has been registered against Imran Khan and other leaders. The case has been registered on the report of DSP Sabir Ali in police station Race course. Imran Khan, Farrukh Habib, Hassan Niazi, Ijaz Chaudhry, Hammad Azhar, Fawad Chaudhry and Mehmood ur Rashid have been nominated in the case. The clauses of violation of section 144, attack on police officers, blocking roads and terrorism have been included in the case. According to FIR, the mob attacked with the intent to kill and Police were forced to resort to fire tear gas and shelling. Due to it one PTI worker was killed and several were injured. According to text PTI workers were told section 144 is imposed which should not be violated. 13 Police officers and police men were also injured due to attack and violence from the mob.

N. Korea fires
ballistic missile
ahead of US-
Korea drills

SEOUL: North Korea fired a short-range ballistic missile Thursday, Seoul’s military said, Pyongyang’s latest show of force just days before South Korea and the United States kick off major joint military exercises. Relations between the two Koreas are at one of their worst points in decades, with the nuclear-armed North conducting ever more provocative banned weapons tests as Seoul moved to ramp up security cooperation with Washington in response. Last year, Kim Jong Un’s regime declared North Korea an “irreversible” nuclear power and vowed to exponentially increase weapons production, including tactical nuclear weapons, as the US looks to move more assets to the region to defend ally Seoul. Seoul’s Joint Chiefs of Staff said that it “detected the launch of one short-range ballistic missile from the North’s western port city of Nampo at 6:20 pm (0920 GMT)”. It added it was analysing “the possibility that North Korea fired multiple short-range ballistic missiles from the same region simultaneously”. – APP

Cabinet decides to
make Toshakhana
record public

ISLAMABAD: The federal cabinet has decided to make the details and records of Toshakhana, a state repository that stores gifts received by public officeholders from other governments and foreign dignitaries, public, said Defence Minister Khawaja Asif. Mr Asif took to Twitter, stating: “The cabinet has allowed declassification of Toshakhana record. It would soon be posted on website of the cabinet division.” The Toshakhana department, which was established in 1978, and all the public officeholders, including parliamentarians and bureaucrats, are bound to report the gifts to the Cabinet Division. The department came under the spotlight when proceedings were initiated against former Prime Minister Imran Khan for “not sharing details” of Toshakhana gifts retained by him. The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has also disqualified the PTI chief as member of the

National Assembly in the Toshakhana case for not disclosing the gifts last year. A districts and sessions court in the federal capital is also hearing a criminal case against him for concealing details of the gifts he retained while serving as the prime minister. Earlier this year, the federal government had told the Lahore High Court (LHC) that public disclosure of Toshakhana details could cause unnecessary media hype and could be potentially damaging for Pakistan’s foreign relations. However, the LHC remarked that it would hold off an order to make details of the Toshakhana gifts public until it would be satisfied that these gifts were kept secret. A day earlier, a team of the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) reached Dubai, United Arab Emirates (UAE), for an investigation into the Toshakhana case against the PTI chief. The four-member team headed by NAB Director Rizwan Ahmed would collect information about sale of the precious watch which was received by Mr Khan as state gift from Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed Bin Salman. Sources said the team visited Umar Farooq, who had claimed to buy the watch, Pakistani embassy in UAE and some shops to conduct investigation. NAB has obtained records of gifts from the cabinet division and government treasury for investigation. – DNA

Indonesian envoy discusses trade,
economic links with minister

The two officials also exchanged notes on value addition industries and strategies to promote SMSEs and in particular



ISLAMABAD: Indonesian Ambassador for Pakistan, Adam M. Tugio paid a courtesy call on the Federal Minister for Industries and Production of Pakistan, Syed Murtaza Mahmud on 7 March 2023 to discuss efforts to deepening bilateral trade by exploring industries that have complementary and competitive edges, and promoting investment between the two countries. The two officials also exchanged notes on value addition industries and strategies to promote SMSEs and in particular those owned by women entrepreneurs considering their importance contribution to the economy of respective country. They further noted the importance of diversifying traded goods and expressed commitment to help facilitate business community of the two countries to expand trade for mutually beneficial cooperation. – DNA

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