



Islamabad POST

Friday, March 17, 2023

Pakistan's Credible Daily Newspaper

Price Rs. 25

Australian leader defends nuclear submarine deal

Detailed News On Page-07

US' Antony Blinken on rare Niger trip

Detailed News On Page-08



Infantino re-elected as FIFA chief

Detailed News On Page-06



Briefs

CICSC calls on PM Shehbaz

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee General Sahir Shamsah Mirza called on Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif at PM House in Islamabad on Thursday. During the meeting, they discussed the professional matters pertaining to the armed forces of Pakistan, a PM Office statement said. PM Shehbaz Sharif on Thursday said that the provision of higher education of international standard to the country's youth was among gov't's priorities. The prime minister, in a meeting with Pro Vice Chancellor of International Learning and Teaching at University of London Professor Mary Sattias in Islamabad.

Ahsan for action against hoarders

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Ahsan Iqbal has underlined the need for ensuring strict monitoring of edible items and taking action against the elements involved in their hoarding during the holy month of Ramadan-ul-Mubarak. Chairing a meeting of the National Price Monitoring Committee, the minister directed the provincial authorities to ensure a smooth supply of essential commodities, especially gram flour and dates in the open market, keeping in view their demand in the fasting month.

Police try to arrest Yasmin

BUREAU REPORT

LAHORE: A police team has tried to arrest Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Central Punjab President Dr Yasmin Rashid in Lahore from outside her clinic in Lahore, media reported on Thursday. A police team stopped Dr Yasmin Rashid's vehicle by installing a barrier near Shadman's underpass. Dr Rashid argued with the police officials who were insisting she goes with them.

Inside...

RCI organizes session for Women entrepreneurs - Page 02

Award ceremony for Afghan short documentary contest - Page 03

ICCI urges political leaders to sign charter of economy - Page 04

A Sigh of relief for the distressed - Page 05

Infantino re-elected FIFA president until 2027 - Page 06

Türkiye hails solidarity of Turk world after disaster - Page 07

'Ambassador for a Day' initiative by Canadian envoy - Page 08

Senate celebrations PM calls for unity in the face of crises

Says had to take tough decisions, assures masses of good times ahead

SHUJAAT HAMZA / DNA

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has admitted that the "tough decisions" taken by his government are leading to "inflation and hard conditions" for the common man but is hopeful that there is "light at the end of the tunnel". The premier assured the masses of good times ahead in his address during the special Senate session being held in Islamabad on Thursday to celebrate the golden jubilee of the upper house of parliament. He told the Senate that when the Pakistan Democratic Movement-led government took over the economy was facing very difficult challenges. The last government, he said, had signed an agreement with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) but did not adhere to its conditions. "We took over through a constitutional instrument and this coalition government faced a very difficult challenge and we had two choices," PM Shehbaz said, adding that the first option was that the current government could follow the path taken by the Imran Khan-led PTI government. "The other path was to show the highest level of responsibility, the highest level of maturity and the highest level of statesmanship," the premier said. The current government, he added, through a consultative process adopted a path which would protect Pakistan. "We had to take some bold decisions. And the process certainly led to inflation and tough conditions for the common man in

Continued on Page 06

Dar slams 'uncustomary' IMF attitude

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: Finance Minister Ishaq Dar on Thursday snubbed the demand for abandoning long-range nuclear missiles and said that nobody has any right to tell Pakistan what range of missiles it can have, also pointing out the "uncustomary" attitude of the International Monetary Fund (IMF). The minister's highly unusual statement came amid Pakistan's renewed efforts to mend ties with China, which has lately saved Islamabad from the default by refinancing two commercial loans. But Islamabad is still waiting for the rollover of a \$2 billion Chinese deposit that is maturing on March 23 (Pakistan Day). "Nobody has any right to tell Pakistan what range of missiles it can have and what nuclear weapons it can have. We have to have our own deterrence," said Dar while speaking during a special Senate session in front of ambassadors of many nations.

Continued on Page 06

Info Minister castigates Imran over 'blatant lies'

Mariyum says PTI workers were continuously attacking police personnel

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Information and Broadcasting Mariyum Aurangzeb has said that Chairman Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf Imran Khan was "uttering blatant lies". "Government has nothing to do with his arrest, nor his arrest has anything to do with the delay in elections as Imran is projecting in the foreign and domestic media", she said while talking to Sky News. The minister said Imran Khan was continuously breaking the law instead of cooperating with the police which was only implementing court orders. She said corruption cases were registered against Khan and he had to be arrested and brought to court to face the charges. The minister said that PTI workers were continuously attacking police personnel with petrol bombs. Rubbing allegations of police high-handed,

Continued on Page 06

PTI workers were well-prepared: IG

DNA

LAHORE: Punjab Inspector General of Police (IGP) Dr Usman Anwar on Thursday alleged that Pakistan Tehreek (PTI) workers were well-prepared to attack law enforcement agencies outside Zaman Park. He was addressing a press conference in Lahore on Thursday along with Punjab interim Information Minister Aamir Mir. The top cop of Punjab said FIRs were registered against people who damaged public property. "Shooting is very easy, but shooting in not bravery,"

Continued on Page 06

Eight terrorists killed, two kids martyred in gun battle

Last week, security forces killed at least nine terrorists in two separate operations

STAFF REPORT/DNA

RAWALPINDI: As many as eight terrorists were killed and two children were martyred in a gunbattle between security forces and anti-state elements in South Waziristan District. According to a statement issued by the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR), the security forces launched an operation in Zinghara area of South Waziristan after receiving intelligence about the presence of terrorists there. In the ensuing gunfight which also involved use of mortar fire, eight terrorists were killed, whereas two Army soldiers sustained injuries, the ISPR statement said. The ISPR further said unfortunately two children who caught up in the shootout also embraced martyrdom during the exchange of fire. Separately, on 15 Mar 23, an Intelligence Based Operation was carried

out in general area Boghra Rd, Chaman to search a suspected hideout of Terrorists, linked with recent firing incidents on law enforcement agencies and civilians in Chaman area besides planting of improvised explosive devices in surrounding areas. As a result



of continuous technical Surveillance and Reconnaissance of the area, a location of the Terrorists was identified and Security Forces along with CTD were inducted. Resultantly, while terrorists had already escaped, a huge cache of arms and ammunition including rockets, Improvised Explosive Devices and other accessories has been recovered. The recovery has helped avert an obvious terrorist activity at some urban areas like Quetta. Pakistan Army in step with Nation, remains determined to thwart attempts at sabotaging peace, stability and progress of Balochistan. Last week, security forces killed at least nine terrorists in two separate operations - six militants were killed during an intelligence-based operation (IBO) in Datta Khel area adjacent to North Waziristan district, and three more

Continued on Page 06



ABU DHABI: A week after the historic agreement between Tehran and Riyadh to restore diplomatic relations, Iran's top security official went to Abu Dhabi. Secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council Admiral Ali Shamkhani met UAE president Mohammed bin Zayed, and national security adviser Tahnoun bin Zayed today in Abu Dhabi.-DNA

Palestine envoy indebted to Pakistan for support



DNA

ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Palestine Ahmed Ameen Rabei has extended great thanks and gratitude to the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, its brotherly people, and its mighty Army for their permanent stance in support of right, justice, against injustice and occupation and also in support for the legitimate historical, and legal rights of the Palestinian people to end the occupation, and establish their Independent State with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital. The ambassador made these remarks while speaking on the occasion of celebrations of Pakistan Senate. The Prime Minister of Pakistan and other dignitaries also addressed the special session. The ambassador further said, it was a great pleasure and honor to join you on the occasion of the celebration of the golden jubilee of the Senate of Pakistan. "I also have the honor to convey to you the greetings, and heartfelt congratulations of President Mahmoud Abbas, President of the State of Palestine, and Speaker of the Palestinian National Council (the Parliament). "On behalf of all the Palestinian people, I also extend sincere congratulations

Continued on Page 06

Khan grateful to supporters Willing to talk to anyone for country's sake

Says his party would not let elections get delayed

BUREAU REPORT

LAHORE: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan reiterated on Thursday that he will hold talks with anybody else for the sake of the country. Taking to Twitter, Mr Khan went on to say that he had no issue for taking any initiative in terms of the prosperity and interests of the country. Expressing his gratitude for his supporters, Mr Khan said, "I want to express my gratitude to all of the workers who came from different parts of the country, including Lahore, to stand by my side in a bid to struggle for actual freedom." On the other hand, Mr Khan, while saying that he believed in supremacy of law, vowed to appear before the court on March 18. Speaking to a delegation of journalists,

Continued on Page 06

Plea to suspend arrest warrant rejected

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: An Islamabad court Thursday rejected Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan's plea seeking the suspension of non-bailable arrest warrants issued in the Toshakhana case. Additional District and Sessions Judge Zafar Iqbal announced the verdict reserved earlier redirecting the authorities concerned to arrest the former prime minister and present him before the court on March 18. He mentioned that the decision has been taken after reviewing each and every

Continued on Page 06

Since 1953

LEADING TOWARDS A BETTER FUTURE

TUFAIL CHEMICAL INDUSTRIES LTD.

RESPECT & TRUST
INTEGRITY
SUSTAINABILITY
EXCELLENCE

www.tufailgroup.com

TUFAIL

Our expansion is going to complete in **January 2021**.

Alhamdulillah, we are going to be the largest manufacturer of LABSA & SLES in Pakistan with annual capacity of **110,000 tons**.

Our teams are ready to serve local and international customers all over the globe.

OUR PRODUCT LINE INCLUDES:

- Linear Alkyl Benzene Sulphonic Acid 96%
- Sodium Lauryl Ether Sulphate 70% & SLS
- Formic Acid 85%
- Acetex Plus
- Sodium Sulphate Anhydrous 99%
- Sulphuric Acid 98%
- Aluminium Sulphate 14%

Head Office: Plot # FT-01-A3, Korangi Creek Industrial Park, Korangi - Karachi - Pakistan. (+92-21-3699901-06)

Lahore Office: First Floor, Flat No.2, Awami Complex, Near Block No.1, Uman Block, New Garden Town, Lahore - Pakistan. (+92-42-3583547/35864963)

SDPI, PCP sign MoU to boost social delivery service

ISLAMABAD: Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI) and Pakistan Center for Philanthropy (PCP) on Thursday signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to conduct research and evidence-based interventions for strengthening of social protection services, particularly in testing times. The Executive Director of SDPI, Dr. Abid Qaiyum Suleri said that the informal charity and philanthropy were critical in protecting people from economic shocks and can provide relief to the vulnerable communities when the state resources are constrained or can not reach in time. Both the institutions were eager to find research and evidence-based philanthropic and social delivery interventions, he said and added that there was a need to prevent thinning out of resources and increase the efficacy of such efforts. He stressed the need for finding solutions to increase the engagement of private sector in social delivery and channelizing their CSR and ESG agendas. Dr. Suleri further said that with the arrival of Ramadan, stocking and profiteering would rise which can undermine the philanthropic efforts and turn it into a zero-sum game. He maintained that such challenges call for strengthening collaboration between organizations like SDPI and PCP which are pivotal to find out pragmatic solutions for the policy makers and private sector.

The Executive Director of PCP, Shazia Maqsood said that Pakistanis were an extremely generous nation, but there was no data available to verify and support this claim. She stressed the need for evidence-based research and data to support such claims and drawing comparisons with developed countries in terms of GDP to philanthropy ratio. She added that the private sector and informal charities mobilize and reach affected communities swiftly and well before public social protection in the advent of climate disasters. She urged the authorities to simplify the regulatory environment and ensure ease of doing good just like ease of doing business to create a conducive environment for social delivery organizations. —APP

Mushaira in Attock

ATTOCK: A Mushaira was held in the District Council Hall regarding the celebration of Spring and Punjab Culture Day, presided over by the well-known jurist and literary figure Sheikh Ahsan-Ud-Din. The well-known poet Maheem Malik, Afifah Khan Saduzai, Javed Jadoon, Anjam were present in the ceremony. Salimi, Mushtaq Azim, Rifat Waheed, Nusrat Bukhari, Nazakat Ali Nazak and other local poets also participated. The poets, especially Maheem Malik, received great applause by reciting the best words. —APP

RCCI organizes session for Women entrepreneurs

DNA

RAWALPINDI: Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (RCCI) has organized an Orientation Session on Pakistan Single Window (PSW) for Women Entrepreneurs at chamber house. President RCCI Saqib Rafiq welcomed the audience and briefed the session. He informed that the major aim of RCCI was to provide a platform for achieving gender equality and women's economic empowerment through greater participation of women in cross-border trade by providing effective and sustained mechanisms of trading to women entrepreneurs and traders. The session provided an opportunity to women entrepreneurs to get information related to the single electronic platform to efficiently meet requirements for regulation of imports, exports



and transit trade and processes to improve ease of doing business and compliance. Vice President Faisal Shahzad, Chairperson Women Committee Ms Shadab Khan, Executive committee members, other distinguished members and women entrepreneurs and students from different institutes attended the session.

Pak direly needs women's financial inclusion: President

ISLAMABAD: President Dr. Arif Alvi on Thursday said Pakistan direly needed financial inclusion of women to turn fifty percent of its population into a productive workforce. He said helping women promote their business startups through information technology was the fastest route toward their empowerment. Addressing an event BizNet 2023 themed 'Celebrating Diversity, Inclusion and Pakistan Startups', he said financial empowerment of women and other under-represented groups such as differently-abled persons was crucial for the progress of the country. President Alvi emphasized gender parity at the level of organizations

and companies and urged them to ensure their representation in mainstream and leadership roles. In the digital age, he said, technology could increase the productivity and efficiency of a business. Inclusion of women in IT-related startups could also help them earn a livelihood from their homes, he added. He stressed that women needed to be encouraged to become bank account holders in order to keep authority over their finances. He pointed out that despite the rights enunciated by Islam for women, the culture and harassment were the two main impediments to their emancipation. He highlighted that it was

important for society to adopt a positive approach toward women by creating opportunities and ensuring a harassment-free culture for them. The president expressed concern that fifty percent of the women graduates of medical colleges quit pursuing their careers after wedlock, which was a big loss of a talented workforce. He proposed counseling parents, husbands, and women doctors to help them encourage in utilizing their professional capabilities. He mentioned that both religion and the country's law supported women's right to inheritance, however, ills in the society hindered this in a majority of cases. The president regretted that the busi-

ness loans for women offered by the State Bank of Pakistan were not even utilized by five percent of them. In this regard, he said, the responsibility lied on women parliamentarians and other prominent women to effectively communicate the message to ensure gender equity. He mentioned that the Special Technology Zones Authority could also play a role in advancing the role of women in diverse fields of economy. Birgit Lamm, Country head of Germany's Friedrich Naumann Foundation said her organization was committed to promoting entrepreneurship among the masses including women to help them engage in business activity in a dignified manner.

Governor attends ceremony at GCF

Governor said that the promotion of quality education is the top priority of the government and added that steps have been taken to facilitate students and improve facilities in educational institutions

PESHAWAR: Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Haji Ghulam Ali here Thursday highlighted the importance of young generation for the development of the country and said that youngsters should venture into new fields of technology and prepare themselves to meet the challenges of current world. He expressed these views as a Chief Guest in a ceremony held at Government College Faqirabad (GCF). The ceremony was also attended by Mayor Peshawar, Haji Zubair Ali, Chairman Peshawar Board, Nasrullah, Principal Government College Faqirabad, Dr. Taj-ud-Din and faculty members. Addressing the ceremony, KP Governor urged students to work with dedication and added that their hard work and honesty would open new vistas of progress and growth for themselves. He also urged students to abide by the golden principles of discipline, unity, mutual respect, honesty, and tolerance in their lives to achieve success. He said that students should use the contemporary digital platform to acquire knowledge of their respective fields. Governor said that the promotion of quality education is the top priority of the government and added that steps have been taken to facilitate students and improve facilities in educational institutions. He also laid the foundation stone of a new academic bloc in the college and announced the renovation of the college hall. He said that steps would be taken to make arrangements for parking in the college. Haji Ghulam Ali also distributed certificates among students for their performance in intermediate examinations. On the occasion, City Mayor, Haji Zubair Ali announced 50,000 rupees for the student of the college Touqeer Zia who topped the Peshawar board in 2021-22. —APP

2 killed, 3 injured in dumper-car collusion

QAZI SHOAB KHAN

ATTOCK: A couple lost their lives while three others including their two daughters seriously injured by car-dumper collusion here on Fatehjang-Rawalpindi road near Hattar check post in the early hours of Thursday. Police and rescue 1122 sources said that Ghulam Fareed along with his wife, two daughters and mother in law was coming towards his native town when a speedy dumper recklessly driven by unknown driver rammed over them Fatehjang-Rawalpindi road near Hattar check post resultantly Ghulam Fareed and his wife Intiaz Bibi was killed on the spot while the couple's daughters identified as 16 years old Areeba Fareed and 9 years old Areeha Fareed besides Fareed's mother in law identified as 65 years old Anwar Bibi were injured.

Parliamentary contacts vital for boosting Pak-Kosovo ties

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: Speaker National Assembly Raja Pervez Ashraf on Thursday stressed in enhancing Parliament-to-Parliament contacts, which he termed vital for deepening the economic, political and cultural ties between Kosovo and Pakistan. The speaker expressed these views during a meeting with Ambassador of the Republic of Kosovo to Pakistan Agon Vrenezi who called on the former. He also believed that establishing parliamentary friendship groups between the parliaments of both countries would take bilateral ties to new heights. "Pakistan attaches great importance to its ties with Kosovo. Despite the long distance between the two countries and the absence of Resident Missions, Pakistan and Kosovo people are



very close to each other," he added. The Speaker also highlighted the devastating impacts of climate change on Pakistan, particularly the devastating floods of 2022. Ambassador of the Republic of Kosovo to Pakistan Agon Vrenezi

expressed his gratitude to the Speaker for the warm reception. He shared that it was his first visit to Pakistan and that he found the capital to be a calm and beautiful place. He also apprised that Kosovo had a young and

resilient population, and its current leadership was eager to establish linkages with other countries around the world. The ambassador expressed his appreciation for Pakistan being one of the first countries to recognize Kosovo's independence.

Diplomats join Senate Golden Jubilee celebration

DNA

ISLAMABAD: European Union Ambassador, Dr Riina Kionka extended her sincere congratulations to the Senate on its golden jubilee. She said people used to delegate their power to the elected representatives and they held them accountable. "Democracy is the core value of EU States. The EU is supporting Pakistan in strengthening its parliament and democracy for the past 60 years of strategic relations," she added. Ambassador of Indonesia to Pakistan, Adam M. Tugio said that relations between Indonesia and Pakistan parliament were getting stronger and stronger. He said that parliamentarians of both the countries were exploring ways to strengthen these relations. Ambassador of Turkiye, Dr. Mehmet Paçacı congratulated the Upper House on its 50th anniversary and expressed that he was honoured to address at this occasion. He said, "We considered the joy of Pakistan as our joy and its success our success." The Senate which promotes peace and harmony of the nation through equal representation of the provinces has been a true success, he said, adding, "Through the history, we have witnessed that on several occasions Pakistan and Turkiye never left each other alone in tough times." Ambassador of Belarus to Pakistan Andrei Metelitsa congratulated the Chairman Senate and people of Pakistan for celebrating 50 year of the Senate of Pakistan. He said that Belarus and Pakistan had established cordial bilateral and parliamentary relationships. He said that high level delegations of Pakistan had also visited Belarus many times. He also invited the Chairman Senate to visit Belarus along with the parliamen-

tarians' delegation. Ambassador of Kazakhstan to Pakistan Yerzhan Kistafin congratulated the Senate over its golden jubilee and invited the Senators to visit his country with an aim to enhance parliamentary relations. Ambassador of the Syrian Arab Republic Ramez Alraee thanked the Pakistani government for extending help to Syrian people in difficult times especially during the recent earthquake. He also wished prosperity and progress for Pakistan. Ambassador of the Royal Thailand to Pakistan Chakkradit Krachaiwong also congratulated the Senate over its golden jubilee celebrations and said that ties between Pakistan and Thailand would increase in the coming days. Ambassador of Islamic Republic of Iran in Pakistan, Mohammad Ali Hosseini said that Pakistan and Iran had strong parliamentary relations which would be further strengthened in the coming days. Ambassador of the Russian Federation, Danila Ganich said the Senate served as a solid and reliable pillar of democracy. He added that it had helped the norms of the multiethnic societies existing in Pakistan. He vowed that the Russian Federation would continue to strive to promote mutually beneficial ties. Deputy Head of Mission of China, Pang Chunxue extended her heartfelt congratulations to the Senate and People of Pakistan. She said Pakistan was a good country with an honoured history, culture and talented and hardworking nation. She added that the Senate played an important role in strengthening democracy, national cohesion and unity in various ways. Chunxue said this was the fourth year to implement the spirit of the 20th National Congress of Communist Party of China and the 10th anniversary of China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). High Commissioner of South

Africa, Mthuthuzeli Madikiza extended felicitations to the Upper House on the occasion. He also underlined the support of the parliament, particularly the Senate, in endorsing the UN Resolutions for the independence of African countries and racial discrimination in African countries. Madikiza said Pakistan should move forward to promote ties with African countries and partake in its development agenda. Jordanian Ambassador to Pakistan Maj. Gen. (R) Ibrahim Yala Al Madani, while speaking in the Senate extended congratulations to the leadership and people of Pakistan for celebrating 50 years of the Senate of Pakistan. He said that Pakistan and Jordan were enjoying brotherly relations based on a solid foundation of mutual respect and joint cooperation on political and military aspects. Yemen Ambassador to Pakistan Mohammed Motahar Ali-Shabi congratulated the people of Pakistan on the completion of 50 years of Senate of Pakistan. He said that Pakistan was an important country in the Islamic world and internationally. He said that Yemen and Pakistan were enjoying excellent bilateral ties. He also appreciated Pakistan's support for peace in the region. Mauritius High Commissioner to Pakistan Rashidally Soobadar congratulated the Chairman Senate and his team for arranging an event to celebrate 50 years of the Senate of Pakistan. He said that strong institutions were very important for the country to make progress. Ambassador of Turkmenistan to Pakistan, Atadjan Movlamov said, "I am very pleased to convey heartfelt congratulations and best wishes on the auspicious occasion of the 50th anniversary of the upper house of the Parliament".

Open House for Diplomatic Missions

Murree Brewery Company Limited located in Rawalpindi is an icon reflecting the past and the present history of the subcontinent.

Murree Brewery Company is pleased to invite friends from diplomatic missions to visit us and share the experience of our efforts towards keeping it afloat for over 160 years of operation.

We cordially invite diplomatic missions to visit us on any Saturday from 10 am to 1:30 pm to enjoy our hospitality and our products tasting. However, since, we are located in the Red Zone / Prohibited area and it will be mandatory to obtain No Objection Certificate (NOC) from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs well in advance of the intended visit date. We look forward to welcoming you all soon.

For further information please contact the following.

Maj (r) Sabih Ur Rehman
Mobile: 0300 8553342

Pakistan's First And Only Diplomatic Daily

Editor-in-Chief: Ansar Mahmood Bhatti

Deputy Editor: Abid Raza

Member APNS / ABC Certified

Vol: 03 Issue: 192

Email: dailyisbpost@gmail.com

Phone: 051-2266165 / 051-2261960

Off: Awan Plaza, Block 18-A, G-8 Markaz Islamabad

Honduras' move the right call

President Xiomara Castro of Honduras tweeted that she instructed Chancellor Eduardo Reina to manage the opening of official relations with the People's Republic of China on March 15. By announcing her country will establish diplomatic ties with the People's Republic of China, President Xiomara Castro of Honduras has made the right choice. Castro was honoring her pledge made during her campaign, and will open the way for further cooperation with the world's second-largest economy. Her government's announced negotiation with China on building a hydroelectric dam is but one example. In a statement, Taiwan's "foreign ministry" asked Honduras not to "fall into China's trap", but their definition of "trap" is rather vague and contrary to the Honduran people's interests. With Honduras gone, the number of countries in this world recognizing Taiwan has dropped to 13, and the day will come when it falls to zero. Geographically, South America is a long way from China. But near or far, everyone knows there is only one China and Taiwan is part of it. Analysts said Honduras move was not unexpected given Xiomara's campaign comments and recent discussions with China about financial assistance - in February Reina announced Beijing would provide the funding for another dam along the Patuca River. "I think we are somewhat prepared, so I don't think it's going to be a big issue," Yao-yuan Yeh, the director of the Taiwan and East Asia Studies Programme at the University of St Thomas in Texas told Al Jazeera. "But it could cause the public in Taiwan to have a little panic since we've been abandoned by another country again." China has been trying to deepen links with Taipei's remaining allies since Tsai Ing-wen was first elected president of Taiwan in 2016. Several countries, including the Solomon Islands, have made the switch.

In Central America, a region that the United States has long seen as within its sphere of influence, Nicaragua broke off diplomatic relations with Taiwan in 2021. If Honduras does switch, only Belize and Guatemala will formally recognise Taiwan, which will be left with just 13 formal diplomatic allies around the world, compared with 22 when Tsai took office.



AUKUS deal a bad thing

At a National Press Club event on Wednesday, former Australian prime minister Paul Keating derided the AUKUS submarine deal as being "irrational in every dimension". Saying that the deal meant Australia was suborning its sovereignty "to the whim and caprice" of US administrations, Keating was scathing in his criticism. He has struck the nail on the head as the deal damages Australian interests any which way you look at it. The latest data from Australian consulting firm Adroit estimates the cost of the AUKUS program will be 368 billion Australian dollars (\$244.32 billion) - and you can bet your bottom dollar, it will run over budget - which will be paid by Australian citizens who will effectively be subsidizing the design of the next UK attack class Astute submarine "simply to be able to grab half a dozen for ourselves on the way through" even though "they will be of little military benefit to anybody, even to the Americans". But it is a sizeable windfall that will be welcomed by the defense companies of the two transatlantic powers. The cost to Australia however is "off the scale". Directed by the US, AUKUS takes China as an imaginary enemy. The deal will inevitably worsen relations between Australia and its largest trading partner. On Feb 8, the first Australian coal-carrying ship in two years arrived at Zhanjiang port, Guangdong province, after the two sides made concerted efforts to repair their relations following the damage done to them by the previous Australian administration. But with Australia taking further steps on a "dangerous and unnecessary journey" those efforts to mend ties are in jeopardy. As Keating warned, no "softer or polite language" can disguise Australia's commitment to rattling a sword in the neighborhood on behalf of the US to impress upon the region "the US' esteemed view of its untrammelled destiny". In doing so it is arraigning itself with an Atlantic power "which upon any defeat or setback will see that power likely repair ten thousand kilometers across the moat of the Pacific, as it retreated from Iraq and Afghanistan", leaving the scarred locals to pick up the pieces. Australia is also damaging its own credibility by exploiting a loophole in the nuclear non-proliferation mechanism, which grants nuclear fission materials exemption from the International Atomic Energy Agency monitoring if they are used for non-explosive military use. The AUKUS deal will set a bad precedent by transferring nuclear technologies to a non-nuclear nation. So the AUKUS submarine deal is damaging as well as costly for Australia whichever way you look at it, and as such, the Anthony Albanese government should take time to reconsider it.

A Sigh of relief for the distressed

Abdul Rashid Shakir



Starting from 15th of March, District Administration across the province will distribute free flour bags to the registered beneficiaries through 20,000 Points of Sale (POS), including 6000 Utility Stores, 2000 Karyana Stores registered with BISP and some 12,000 trucking points to cover all the potential recipients across the Province. Quality and quantity of flour in the bags would be strictly monitored through active liaison of the relevant district

Political instability, financial mismanagement and broken promises with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) are hitting the masses hard in current crises of high inflation, depreciation of rupee against dollar and higher commodity prices in the International market. "To buy or not to buy, that is the question" for a common man in the wake of massive hike in the prices of basic necessities of life like food items, clothes and shelter. Unchecked spike in the circular debt of energy sector, higher electricity and gas tariff, untargeted and unaccounted-for subsidies in the different sectors of economy are adding woes to the precarious economic conditions of the people. Surge in the fuel cost not only raises travel fares for the commuters but also causes the prices of every item to shoot up because of enhanced shipping charges incurred on transporting goods from farms and factories to the markets.

And above all, depleting income resources because of closure of industrial units and high rate of unemployment further aggravates the whole mix. Similarly, for the Governments too, things are not that much easy to manage. Sustaining the bleeding State Owned Enterprises (SOEs) like Steel Mills, PIA, GENCOS DISCOs and others; making exorbitant amount of funds available for ensuring national defense and maintaining law and order in the country; and arranging for the high debt repayment costs besides recurring expenditures of the civil administration like salaries, pensions, POL and others are undoubtedly akin to achieving an uphill task for the country's financial managers, given the limited economic pie available. However,

it is not a hard nut to crack that in such a testing time, any pro-poor intervention of the authorities in power is not only a sigh of relief for the poverty-stricken segments of society but also a quick relief pill for the ailing economy.

Cognizant of their responsibility to provide as much relief to people as possible within their limited financial resources, the Government of Punjab has come up with an innovative and out-of-the-box plan to provide a bit of relief to the depressed and down-trodden sections of the community. With the help of Federal Government, it has finalized a hefty Ramadan Relief Package, worth Rs. 53 Billion, to supply free flour to 100 Million people of its 120 Million population, which accounts for more than 80% of its total population. As per the approved package, around 15.83 Million households in Punjab that earn up to Rs. 60,000 per month will receive 03 bags of 10 Kg flour each (30 Kg) free of cost during the holy month of Ramadan. To make the distribution process hassle-free, an intended recipient would write ATA space his CNIC number (ATA CNIC) and send it to 8070 for getting himself/herself registered in the Package.

Starting from 15th of March, District Administration across the province will distribute free flour bags to the registered beneficiaries through 20,000 Points of Sale (POS), including 6000 Utility Stores, 2000 Karyana Stores registered with BISP and some 12,000 trucking points to cover all the potential recipients across the Province. Quality and quantity of flour in the bags would be strictly monitored through active liaison of the relevant

district administration and the flour mill owner, in order to provide good standard flour to the people.

The entire distribution process would be made smooth, transparent and effective with the use of technology. Punjab Information Technology Board (PITB) has developed a user-friendly Mobile App for the purpose. The intended recipient would scan his/her CNIC via this App at the dedicated Point of Sale (POS) to confirm his/her registration with the Programme and to get a confirmation coupon. On producing the said coupon, he/she will receive a 10 Kg flour bag from the delivery counter. This joint venture of the Federal and Provincial Government of the Punjab is a right step in the right direction to ameliorate the sufferings of common people hit hard by the inflation and high cost of living.

The Caretaker Chief Minister Punjab, Syed Mohsin Raza Naqvi has directed all his cabinet colleagues and the provincial machinery to ensure their physical presence in the field during the holy month of Ramadan to keep an effective check on the smooth supply of free and quality flour to the residents of Punjab during Ramadan under this historic relief package.

Though a good start, more such humanitarian interventions are eagerly needed to shield the low and middle income segments of society being terribly tormented by the tragic onslaught of rising commodity prices and ever-escalating cost of almost everything that matters to all and sundry. It is hoped that the Government of Punjab would come up with more such people-centric and humanitarian initiatives for the welfare and socio-economic uplift of the people of Punjab.

The Saudi-Iran détente and its regional implications

Marwan Bishara

The fact that the agreement was signed after two years of difficult negotiations holds promise. But do not expect the long archrivals to turn archangels after normalising their diplomatic relations. There remains a great deal of distrust and too many points of friction to tackle and resolve. With no love lost, the renewed Saudi-Iranian relationship may turn into a marriage of convenience driven by national interest and shaped by political and economic calculus. Or, it may become a marriage of inconvenience - one that is eroded by divergent ideological and regional agendas.

On March 10, Saudi Arabia and Iran announced an agreement to restore bilateral relations. That's good news.

The deal was conceived out of need and out of desire: The Saudi-Iranian need to end a conflict that has proven costly and toxic to both nations and disastrous to the Middle East, and the Chinese desire to play matchmaker, to fill the strategic void left by the United States and Russia, and to demonstrate its credentials as a trustworthy global partner.

The fact that the agreement was signed after two years of difficult negotiations holds promise. But do not expect the long archrivals to turn archangels after normalising their diplomatic relations. There remains a great deal of distrust and too many points of friction to tackle and resolve.

With no love lost, the renewed Saudi-Iranian relationship may turn into a marriage of convenience driven by national interest and shaped by political and economic calculus. Or, it may become a marriage of inconvenience - one that is eroded by divergent ideological and regional agendas.

Riyadh and Tehran have agreed to reactivate the cooperation and security agreements signed in 1998 and 2001, respectively, but a return to the status quo ante of the 1990s is challenging if not improbable after a dozen years of hostility.

Indeed, their proxy conflicts have been utterly devastating with their sectarian overtones, undermining the two countries' security, crippling their economies and tearing their societies apart. The more they interfered the more Yemenis, Syrians, Iraqis, Lebanese and Bahrainis suffered. That's why the way forward is not the way back for the two regional powers. In light of the new and complicated regional order - or rather disorder - they helped create, the two nations must chart a new and sustainable path forward that serves their and their neighbours' national interests. This begins with refraining

from intervening in each other's affairs, wasting fortunes on undermining other Middle Eastern societies, and in the process, engaging in a costly arms race to the bottom.

Like other peoples, Iranians and Saudis would want their leaders to focus their attention on domestic affairs, not foreign bravados, pursuing democratic harmony at home instead of spreading anarchy abroad. A new way forward is an opportunity to lower tensions, mitigate the damages, and compensate neighbours for the harm done to them. It is indeed morally incumbent upon the two oil-rich nations to help Syrians, Yemenis and other victims of proxy conflicts rebuild their shattered lives. China and the West should also help. Beyond that, I believe it is in everybody's best interest if the protagonists try a hands-off approach to regional affairs, especially as their regional overreach allowed foreign powers to exploit and aggravate their conflict.

Indeed, Riyadh and Tehran must now take a common, firm stand on foreign interference, especially Western support for Israel's colonialism and apartheid - predictably the only country to openly oppose the new Gulf détente, which it is, no doubt, determined to sabotage.

They must also reject all attempts by global powers to intervene directly or through proxies in the Middle East. That includes China.

Beijing, which mediated between Riyadh and Tehran and hosted the final celebratory handshake, has emerged as the biggest winner of the new deal. It will gain greater credibility and prestige as a responsible global player, having helped resolve a complicated conflict in a tough region considered part of the US area of influence. Moreover, as the sponsor, China will probably want to stay involved in order to see through the reconciliation and normalisation process, which gives it greater access to the oil-rich region it needs to fuel its economy and mili-

tary in the long run. In other words, unlike other regional mediations that came at a cost to their sponsors, this could prove profitable to China, and at the expense of its global rival, the US.

The Biden administration has welcomed the de-escalation in the Gulf, which it says could also help put an end to the war in Yemen, but it is unable to hide its anger and disappointment. This is especially so since Beijing succeeded in championing a diplomatic breakthrough in the Middle East after Washington tried to block its mediation between Russia and Ukraine.

The US's grinning mouth fails to hide its teeth-grinding, as China undermines US plans to expand the so-called Abraham Accords to include Saudi Arabia, or to impose a new nuclear deal on Iran through sanctions and regional pressure. Although it is too early to tell, the Chinese-sponsored agreement may well scuttle the American-Israeli scheme of polarising the region in favour of a pro-Israel and anti-Iran bloc.

But then again, Saudi Arabia is not about to turn its back on the US or switch alliances. It is far too dependent on Washington in military and economic affairs. But like other regional actors, large and small, Riyadh is also going hybrid, merely adding one more relationship to its diplomatic mix, aimed at securing its own interests first and foremost.

So will Iran, which has already developed relations with Russia and China. It may well add the US to the mix, if or when the latter agrees to lift the sanctions and strike a fair nuclear deal.

In other words, the Saudi-Iran deal is an indication of a changing region and shifting geopolitics. Welcome to the new Middle East, where states are acting more independently of global powers, shaping and balancing relationships and alliances, instead of being shaped by them.

-Courtesy: Al Jazeera

Briefs

New wave of rail strikes begins in UK

LONDON: Railway workers on Thursday began a 24-hour strike action, the first of four planned walkouts, which is expected to cause massive delays and disrupt transportation once again across the country.

People across Britain has once again hit by a wide range of railway strike as tens of thousands of the Rail, Maritime and Transport Union (RMT) members have started a series of walkout.

Last month, the union members rejected the pay offer from train operators and decided to take a four-day strike action on March 16, 18, 30 and April 1.

Following the walkout decision, the union said they are seeking "an unconditional offer" from 14 rail operators and Network Rail, which runs the rail network. Early Thursday, the RMT criticized the rail operator bosses for "awarding themselves" while "lecturing" rail workers for pay restraint.

"... Bosses at several rail companies have awarded themselves annual pay rises of between 15-275% whilst most rail workers have been subject to a pay freeze," it said in the statement. The train companies where staff are striking are Avanti West Coast, C2C, Chiltern, CrossCountry, East Midlands Railway, GTR (Thameslink, Great Northern and Southern), Great Western Railway, Greater Anglia, LNER, West Midlands, (including London Northwestern Railway), Northern, South Western Railway, South-eastern, and TransPennine Express.—APP

UK latest country to ban TikTok

LONDON: Chinese-owned social media app TikTok has been banned from government devices in the United Kingdom, it was announced on Thursday. The ban is effective immediately and includes phones used by government ministers and civil servants, according to a statement given to the UK's House of Commons by Oliver Dowden, the Secretary of State in the Cabinet Office. "This is a precautionary move. We know that there is already limited use of TikTok across government, but it is also good cyber hygiene," the minister said in his address to MPs. ByteDance, the company which owns TikTok, has been accused of handing users' data to the Chinese government. The company has strongly denied this. According to the UK's National Cyber Security Centre review, "there could be a risk around how sensitive government data is accessed and used by certain platforms". Beyond the TikTok ban, devices across the government will now only be able to access third-party apps that are on a pre-approved list, according to Dowden.—APP

Clashes in Greece as thousands protest train tragedy

ATHENS: Greek police fired tear gas and protesters hurled firebombs on Thursday as more than 40,000 people took to the streets to slam the government and voice outrage at last month's train disaster that killed 57 people.

Television footage showed clashes breaking out at Synagoga Square near parliament in central Athens.

Police fired tear gas and stun grenades as demonstrators tried to surround them, hurling firebombs and rocks. As protesters retreated, they smashed traffic lights and shop windows and set rubbish bins on fire, AFP reporters said. The February 28 tragedy exposed decades of safety failings in Greek railways and has put major pressure on the conservative government ahead of national elections. Police said 25,000 people protested in Athens on Thursday, as well as around 8,500 in each of the country's next largest cities, Thessaloniki and Patras. Brief clashes also broke out in Patras, police said.—APP

Türkiye hails solidarity of Turkic world after disaster

Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban said Hungary helped Türkiye right after the earthquakes, stressing the historic ties between the countries. "We are proud to support you (Türkiye) in the rebuilding process in the upcoming period," Orban added

NEWS DESK

ANKARA: Türkiye will never forget the solidarity shown by the Turkic world after the Feb. 6 earthquakes that ravaged the southeast provinces; President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan said Thursday as he addressed the opening of the extraordinary summit of the Organization of Turkic States (OTS) in the capital Ankara. "We called for international help, and OTS members were among the first to respond. You did not leave us alone in our most difficult moment. Our beloved nation will never forget your support," Erdoğan told the heads of the member states. "We will once again show at the highest level that the Turkic world is of one heart and band together," he noted.

Erdoğan once again expressed Türkiye's commitment to rebuilding the devastated region, assuring that authorities were working to remove the rubble, move the displaced into



temporary shelters, and already "rapidly" constructing permanent residences. "We plan to deliver to the right owners a total of 650,000 residences, 319,000 of which to be completed within the year," he said, adding, "With the support of our friendly and brotherly nations, we will revive our disaster zone as soon as possible."

China-Pak joint exhibition kicks off in Beijing

Its location makes it a veritable gateway between East and West and enhances its geopolitical pre-eminence

DNA

BEIJING: A China-Pakistan joint exhibition on Gandhara culture & art kicked off here at the Palace Museum, which will showcase the cultural heritage of Gandhara, an ancient region. Hu Heping, Minister of China's Ministry of Culture and Tourism (MCT), inaugurated the exhibition titled "Gandhara Heritage along the Silk Road". The exhibition will remain open up to June 15, according to China Economic Net (CEN). At the occasion, Faraena Mazhar, Federal

Australian PM defends nuclear submarine deal

CANBERRA: Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese on Thursday rejected criticism of the AUKUS deal with the US and UK made by his country's former Premier Paul Keating, saying the world has changed since the 1990s. Albanese said in an interview with a local Radio 3AW Melbourne that he does not want to get into an argument with Paul Keating. "I fundamentally disagree with his view. And I disagree with his attitude towards the state of the world in 2023," he said, according to a transcript posted on his official website. Keating, who was prime minister from 1991 to 1996, slammed Albanese's government on Wednesday for a tripartite deal with the US and UK to build a nuclear submarine, calling it the Labor party's worst international decision.—Agencies

Secretary, Ministry of National Heritage & Culture Division, Pakistan, said that Pakistan is a unique country whose strategic location has given it importance not only in the past, but also in the present era, and it will continue to enjoy the same status for all the time to come.

Australia PM defends nuclear submarine deal

Amb. Sajjad Haider visits Minsk State Linguistic University

DNA

MINSK: Ambassador of Pakistan to Belarus Sajjad Haider Khan visited the Minsk State Linguistic University and had a fruitful discussion with the Rector, Mrs. Natalya Lapteva and Vice Rector on Educational Affairs Mrs. Betenia Elena. The two sides discussed the collaboration between the University of Modern Languages Islamabad and the Minsk State Linguistic University (MSLU). They discussed possibilities of establishment of Pakistan culture center in MSLU, commencement of an Urdu language courses and holding Pakistani culture days at the university. The two sides also exchanged views on exchange of visits by the two Rectors of the universities. The Ambassador also offered to host two to three interns from the university for a period of three months.



Japan, South Korea move past differences

TOKYO: In an apparent warming up of bilateral ties, South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol on Thursday flew to Japan for a two-day official trip, the first by the country's head of state since 2011. Yoon met with Fumio Kishida, the prime minister of Japan, in Tokyo, and the two will hold their first bilateral summit in four years. The top-level exchange between the two Asian nations comes after years of bilateral conflicts rooted in wartime disputes that have impacted diplomatic, trade, and people-to-people ties. The two leaders are expected to discuss North Korea, China, and supply chains, besides bilateral issues. As Tokyo and Seoul appear to move past their differences, Pyongyang Thursday launched an intercontinental ballistic missile eastward, triggering

condemnation from Seoul, Tokyo, and the US. Ahead of his trip to Tokyo, Seoul decided to drop its demand for settlement with Japanese firms to solve the decades-long issue of war-time forced labor and sexual exploitation. Instead, a public foundation in Seoul will pay compensation to the victims. Yoon has pledged to "faithfully implement the solution," according to Tokyo-based Kyodo News. As the two Asian nations move to mend ties, businesses from the two nations announced Thursday that they will "establish a foundation to promote exchanges between the youth of their respective countries." Tokyo has also agreed to end export controls on trade items with Seoul as South Korea will withdraw its complaint against Japan at World Trade Organization. To

kyo and Seoul are also expected to resume a bilateral security dialogue, halted for the past five years. "It is aimed at boosting cooperation at a time of repeated ballistic missile launches by North Korea," Japanese public broadcaster NHK reported. It was in 2019 that then-South Korean President Moon Jae-in visited Japan to attend a G-20 summit in Osaka. However, no bilateral meeting was held by the two sides. Meanwhile, as the US ramps up its efforts to widen its alliance at the military and trade levels against China's expanding influence in the wider Asia-Pacific, Tokyo, Seoul and Washington have reportedly held over 40 trilateral meetings at different levels over the past year. History issues have long "haunted South Korea-Japan relations

and from the US perspective, undermined the trilateral alliance against the region's challenges facing them all," Jingdong Yuan, an international affairs scholar at the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), told Anadolu via email. On an optimistic note, Yuan, however, said Yoon's trip is a signal that the two countries are "willing to move forward and not allow the history to derail their cooperation in responding to more imminent threats to their security." "It is made possible, obviously by President Yoon's decision to move beyond the past, with his March 1 speech clearly setting out South Korea's approach to managing its relationship with Japan, characterizing the latter as a country no longer a colonizer but one sharing many democratic values

with South Korea and one upholding the rules-based order in the region," he explained. He said the South Korean court's decision on "how the forced labor should be compensated also helps to disentangle this specific issue from the overall bilateral relationship." In response to a question about the potential focus of the bilateral summit, Yuan said the South Korean president "will place more emphasis on how Seoul and Tokyo can cooperate in responding to the many challenges but will refrain from singling out China as the reason why the two countries are coming together." "They will be more explicit on the North Korea threats to their and the region's security even though Seoul will not rule out completely approaches to diplomatic management-of-and possible solutions to the nuclear issue.—Agencies

US and Russia resume contact after drone incident

WASHINGTON: US and Russian officials have resumed contact, following the downing of a US drone over the Black Sea after an encounter with Russian fighter jets.

Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin spoke to his Russian counterpart on Wednesday, after the incident which brought the two countries the closest to conflict since Moscow's invasion of Ukraine last year.

"We take any potential for escalation very seriously," said Austin at a Pentagon press briefing. "That's why I believe it's important to keep the lines of communication open."

"I think it's really key that we're able to pick up the phone and engage each other. And I think that that will help to prevent miscalculation going forward," he added.

The call between Austin and Russian Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu was the first since October. The US Air Force MQ-9 Reaper was ditched into the waters south of Ukraine, after a Russian fighter jet sprayed it with fuel and struck its propeller.

Russia has denied that it downed the surveillance drone, which was flying into international airspace.

Washington says it is working to declassify surveillance footage from the drone showing Tuesday's crash. Austin, who stood with Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Mark Milley at the briefing, said the incident would not stop the US from flying wherever international law allows.—DNA

Top UAE, Iran security officials meet

DUBAI: The United Arab Emirates' national security adviser held talks Thursday in Abu Dhabi with his Iranian counterpart, whose visit to the UAE comes days after a surprise rapprochement between Tehran and Riyadh. Sheikh Tahoun bin Zayed Al Nahyan, a brother of the UAE's president, received Ali Shamkhani, the secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council, the official WAM news agency said. The two officials discussed "bilateral relations and opportunities to advance them in a way that serves the mutual interests of the two countries," WAM said, without elaborating. Sheikh Tahoun previously met Shamkhani on a visit to Iran in 2021, the first trip of its kind since relations between the two countries were downgraded in 2016. Shamkhani called his UAE visit "a meaningful beginning for the two countries to enter a new stage of political, economic and security relations," Iran's state news agency IRNA said.—APP

'Tonnes of uranium missing from Libyan site'

NEW YORK: The United Nations' International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) has said approximately 2.3 tonnes of natural uranium had gone missing from a site in Libya not under government control, news agencies have reported. IAEA chief Rafael Grossi told the organization's member states this week that inspectors reported that 10 drums containing uranium ore concentrate had gone missing and "were not present as previously declared" at the location in Libya. The IAEA will conduct further activities "to clarify the circumstances of the removal of the nuclear material and its current location", the organization said in a statement on Wednesday without providing further details on the site, according to news agencies Reuters and Agence France-Press. "The loss of knowledge about the present location of nuclear material may present a radiological risk as well as nuclear security concerns," the IAEA said, adding that reaching the site required "complex logistics". Libya in 2003, under leader Muammar Gaddafi, renounced its nuclear, chemical and biological weapons programme after secret discussions with the United States and United Kingdom. Gaddafi's regime had obtained centrifuges that could enrich uranium.—APP

PSDF & Zong 4G successfully train 10,000 youth

ISLAMABAD: Zong 4G, Pakistan's leading telecommunications provider, is proud to announce that it has successfully reached another major milestone in its long-term partnership with Punjab Skills Development Fund (PSDF). This partnership has enabled Zong 4G to provide e-learning opportunities to 10,000 students through a customized course called "How to e-lance". 10,000 promising and underprivileged students in Pakistan have been given access to e-education opportunities thanks to this game-changing collaboration between Zong 4G and PSDF. PSDF is a non-profit organization that helps people and organizations improve their employability by offering skills training and support. The "How to e-lance" course gave students and recent graduates the tools they needed to launch successful freelance careers on reputable websites like Fiverr and Upwork. The official spokesperson of Zong 4G said, "We are proud to have achieved this milestone with our partner PSDF. Digital learning is a vital part of our mission to use technology to empower people and communities. 10,000 deserving students in Pakistan now have access to critical knowledge that can support them in launching their freelance careers. This, in our opinion, will contribute to the development of a more sustainable and inclusive digital economy.—DNA

Briefs

Peshawar Zalmi defeats Islamabad United



LAHORE: Peshawar Zalmi defeated Islamabad United by 12 runs at the Gaddafi Stadium in Lahore on Thursday during the Eliminator of ongoing Pakistan Super League (PSL) season eight. Chasing a target of 184 runs, Islamabad were restricted to 171-6 in 20 overs. Peshawar Zalmi had set Islamabad United a target of 184 runs after being asked to bat first at the Gaddafi Stadium in Lahore on Thursday during the ongoing Pakistan Super League (PSL) season eight Eliminator. During the run-chase, Azmatullah Omarzai provided an early wicket to Peshawar as Rahmanullah Gurbaz was sent back to the hut after scoring 10 runs. However, Alex Hales and Sohaib Maqsood took the attack to the opposition with some clean hitting. The duo added 115 runs for the second wicket partnership and put their team in the driving seat. The century stand was finally broken by Aamer Jamal, who clean bowled Sohaib Maqsood but not before the right-hander had scored 60 runs in 48 balls. —DND

UAE President orders \$3m to rebuild West Bank village

DNA

DUBAI: United Arab Emirates President Mohamed bin Zayed Al-Nahyan ordered provision of \$3 million to support rebuilding efforts in the West Bank village of Huwara after the recent events, WAM reported on Thursday. A meeting was held in the Department of Municipalities and Transport in Abu Dhabi to discuss the mechanism for implementing the initiative and providing support to the Palestinian delegation, which was headed by Mayor of Hawara. Huwara is a Palestinian town located in the Nablus Governorate of West Bank, was set ablaze by radical Jewish settlers this month, after two settlers were shot dead by a Palestinian gunman. Dozens of cars and homes were on fire and one Palestinian was killed by Israeli fire during the incident.

India okays purchase of military equipment worth \$8.5bn

NEW DELHI: India on Thursday approved purchases of missiles, helicopters, artillery guns and electronic warfare systems worth \$8.5 billion as it sought to add more teeth to its military. The Defence Acquisition Council (DAC), the top government body for capital acquisition approvals for the Indian military, approved the orders worth 705 billion rupees (\$8.52bn) for all its services, the Defence Ministry said in a statement. All orders would be placed with Indian companies, it said, keeping with a push by Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government to boost domestic defence manufacturing. Flanked by fellow nuclear-armed powers China and Pakistan and running tensions with Chinese troops along its disputed Himalayan frontier. **Agencies**

Blinken on rare Niger trip

NIAMEY: US Secretary of State Antony Blinken arrived in Niger on Thursday for a rare visit to a country seen as a bastion of support for Western military operations in a region where Russia is making inroads. Blinken is the first US official at this level to visit the former French colony, where both France and the United States maintain forces to battle insurgencies in the troubled Sahel region. —APP



ISLAMABAD: Group photo of the Prime Minister Muhammad Shahbaz Sharif and Chairman Senate Muhammad Sadiq Sanjrani along with members of the Senate and diplomats on the eve of Golden Jubilee Celebrations of the Senate of Pakistan. — DNA

International Day of Women 'Ambassador for a Day' initiative by Canadian envoy



DNA

ISLAMABAD: To celebrate International Women's Day 2023 the High Commission of Canada in Pakistan hosted its first ever Ambassador for a Day on March 15th. This initiative aimed to provide the opportunity for a young Pakistani woman to step into the shoes of a Canadian diplomat and experience the day-to-day responsibilities of this important role. The Ambassador for the Day had the chance to meet with Canadian diplomats, engage with international donor agencies, foreign and Pakistani officials and participate in a range of activities that gave her unique insights into the workings of a diplomat's mission. She also joined in various meetings with the High Commissioner

where she had the opportunity to ask in-depth questions and meet the changemakers who are working to create positive change in Pakistan. "We are thrilled to launch the Ambassador for a Day event and to provide a unique opportunity for a young woman to experience the world of diplomacy first-hand," said the High Commissioner of Canada to the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, Her Excellency Leslie Scanlon. "Canada has a long and proud tradition of supporting gender equality and women's empowerment. Guided by Canada's feminist foreign policy, we are advancing and investing in a suite of feminist policies, programs and initiatives that promote women's socio-economic empowerment, encourage gender equity in climate change mitigation, and empower communities to address gender

norms. Through this initiative, we hope to encourage and inspire young girls and women in Pakistan to pursue their dreams and show them that they can make a difference." "This year's Ambassador for a Day is Nida Khan, a young and ambitious student from Chitral, who will be joining us at the High Commission. Nida aspires to become a diplomat one day, and represent Pakistan. As a passionate advocate for women's rights and inclusion, especially in sports, Nida hopes to learn more about the role of diplomacy in addressing these crucial issues. We are confident that Nida will bring fresh perspectives and ideas to the table and we look forward to a fruitful and engaging day with her," noted Her Excellency, Leslie Scanlon. Nida was also given the opportunity to manage Canadian High Commissioner's Twitter account for the day, sharing her unique experiences with the public, in line with the Government of Canada's theme for this year's International Women's Day "Every Woman Counts". The theme is a reminder that all women, from all ages and walks of life have a place in every aspect of a society, including the economic, social and democratic spheres. Gender equality, inclusion, and the promotion and protection of human rights are key Canadian values, which the Government of Canada is committed to promoting through its bilateral international development initiatives. The Ambassador for a Day event is a part of the High Commission's ongoing efforts to engage with local partners and communities to achieve the overarching goal of nurturing inclusion, equitable access, and equal opportunity.

'Iran agrees to stop arming Houthis as part of Saudi deal'

NEWS DESK

DUBAI: Iran has agreed to stop sending weapons to its Houthi allies in Yemen as part of a deal to re-establish diplomatic relations with Saudi Arabia that was brokered by China, the Wall Street Journal (WSJ) has reported, quoting US and Saudi officials. Tehran's move would hasten new efforts to achieve peace in Yemen, as it could put pressure on the militant group to reach a deal to end the conflict. A UN-sponsored truce in the country last year lasted only six months after the Houthis rejected calls for de-escalation and an extension to the ceasefire. Tehran publicly denies that it supplies the Houthis with weapons, but UN inspectors have repeatedly traced seized weapons shipments back to Iran. After last week's rapprochement gestures by Saudi Arabia and Iran, officials from both countries said Iran would press the Houthis to end attacks

on Saudi Arabia, the WSJ report noted. Saudi Arabia expects Iran to respect a UN arms embargo meant to prevent weapons from reaching the Houthis, the report quoted a Saudi official as saying, and diminish the group's ability to launch against the Kingdom and gain more ground in Yemen. The agreement to resume Saudi-Iran relations "gives a boost to the prospect of a [Yemen] deal in the near future," while Iran's approach to the conflict will be "kind of a litmus test" for the success of last week's diplomatic deal, according to a US official quoted by WSJ. Hans Grundberg, the special UN envoy for Yemen, flew to Tehran this week to discuss with officials on how end the Yemen war and then on to Riyadh. Iranian foreign minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian assured the UN diplomat that Tehran was ready to do more to help end the conflict in Yemen. Tim Lenderking, US special envoy to Yemen, also met with Saudi officials in an attempt to jumpstart peace talks.

FM for OIC body to ensure finance & trade equality



ISLAMABAD: Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari Thursday proposed to establish a special task force of experts at the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) forum to develop a strategy to secure equal treatment in the rules and structure of international finance, trade and taxation. "We must also demand a speedy debt restructuring for 60 financially vulnerable countries, the redistribution of unutilized SDRs (Special Drawing Rights) to develop-

ing countries, large lending by multilateral development banks, massive public-private partnership investments, sustainable infrastructure and the mobilization of promised climate financing of US\$100 billion," he said while delivering his opening statement as Chairman of the OIC Council of Foreign Ministers (CFM) at the two-day 49th Session of the CFM in Nouakchott, Mauritania. He said Pakistan had been hit hard by the devastating floods last summer after facing the negative impacts of COVID, inflation, economic collapse in Afghanistan, and consequences of the Ukraine war. He thanked the brotherly Islamic countries for their generous support for Pakistan in the hour of need. As regards the Palestine issue, the foreign minister said the OIC member states must continue to condemn Israel's repeated aggression against the Al Aqsa Mosque and in the occupied Palestinian territory. The people of Palestine must have their own state within the 1967 borders with Al Quds Al Sharif as its capital. "This may seem a daunting task today, yet I am convinced that the arc of history in the hand of Almighty tends towards justice." Regarding the Kashmir issue, FM Bilawal said the United Nations Security Council had adopted a resolution that the people of Jammu and Kashmir must be able to exercise the right of self-determination through a UN-sponsored plebiscite. However, India moved away from its commitment to implement the decision, and resorted to fraud and force. — APP

NOW IN PAKISTAN

**Invisible Braces
Dental Implants**

**Dr. Abrar & Associates
DENTAL SURGEONS**

House # 6-A, Ismail Zabeeh Road, (Service Road Parallel to Faisal Avenue) F-8/3, Islamabad.
e-mail: abrar_associates@yahoo.com | www.drabrarassociates.com
Ph: +92 51 228 7691 / +92 51 228 7692 | Fax: +92 51 228 7693