



Islamabad POST

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President Lula tells Zelensky he wants to help for peace

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Iran's 'enemies' behind poison attacks: Raisi

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Achraf Hakimi charged with rape allegations

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Briefs

Fawad rebuts alleged audio leak

DNA



LAHORE: Another alleged audio leak surfaced on Friday, this time linked to senior PTI leader Fawad Chaudhry — who has categorically rejected it — purportedly talking about superior court judges. "I have no connection with this audio," tweeted Chaudhry. The leaked conversation, first publicly shared by journalists on social media, shows pictures of Chaudhry and his brother Faisal Hussain, identifying them as the people behind the voices talking about arranging a meeting between judges of the superior courts — a conversation that Chaudhry said never took place. A voice, implied to be Chaudhry's, can be heard saying that a senior judge of the Lahore High Court wants to meet a top judge of the Supreme Court.

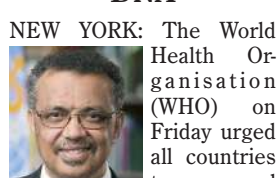
IMF deal won't lessen default risk

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Former finance minister Miftah Ismail has stated that the risk of Pakistan defaulting would not be lessened even if an agreement with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) is reached. During an interview with a private news channel, Miftah said that the risk of default would not decrease immediately, and the percentage of that risk would not drop instantaneously with the IMF agreement. He believed, however, that the agreement would be signed by next week because "necessary steps" had been taken. The ex-minister stated that certain political moves have to be taken, including on the prime minister's level as previously the global money lender had spoken directly to the premier. He added that talks must also be held with "friendly nations".

WHO chief wants to know about Covid origin

DNA



NEW YORK: The World Health Organisation (WHO) on Friday urged all countries to reveal what they know about the origins of Covid-19, following US claims of a Chinese lab leak and furious denials from Beijing. US Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) Director Christopher Wray told Fox News television on Tuesday that the FBI had now assessed the source of the Covid-19 pandemic as "most likely a potential lab incident in Wuhan". Chinese officials have angrily denied the claim, calling it a smear campaign against Beijing.

Holiday Notice
The offices of daily Islamabad POST shall remain closed on Saturday on account of weekly off therefore there will be no newspaper on Sunday.
— Editor

Economic crises Dar rejects financial emergency

Condemns Khan's criticism, reveals an additional \$500 million in "next few days" from China



ISLAMABAD: Finance Minister Ishaq Dar addressing a press conference. — Online

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Amid constant criticism over the current economic turmoil, Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue Ishaq Dar on Friday denied all reports suggesting Pakistan should impose a financial emergency, berating Imran Khan-led Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) for spreading "fake news" regarding Pakistan heading towards default. The finance minister recalled that when the Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) — a multi-party alliance — ousted Khan through a

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Rupee claws back on bailout revival assurances

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: The Pakistan rupee gained significant ground against the US dollar after Finance Minister Ishaq Dar's assurances of striking a deal with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) next week. The local currency appreciated by Rs6.63, or 2.38%, in the interbank market and closed at 278.46 against the greenback, as per the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP). On Thursday, the rupee slumped by nearly Rs19 against the US dollar due to the central bank's monetary policy review and concerns over a stalled IMF deal. The rupee slumped by Rs18.98 or 6.66% to close at 285.09 against the dollar in the interbank market as per the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP), down from Wednesday's close of Rs266.11.

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Imran seeks normal ties with Army Chief

"It is very important for the army to be strong, Khan says

ABID RAZA



LAHORE: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan said Friday he felt that Chief of Army Staff (COAS) Asim Munir was treating him like an enemy. "The establishment does not understand what politics is," the PTI chief said while speaking to journalists in Lahore, just days after his return from Islamabad where he secured bail in three cases. The former PM also said that if the COAS doubted his integrity so much, he should look into it personally and would find that "I am indeed innocent of any corruption". "It is very important for the army to be strong, Khan said. He also accused Gen (ret'd) Qamar Jawed Bajwa of "backstabbing" him, lamenting that the former COAS had spoken against Moscow right after he had gone there for a visit following the outbreak of the Russia-Ukraine war. During the talk with journalists, Khan also spoke about

Continued on Page 06

LHC orders release of arrested PTI leaders

BUREAU REPORT

LAHORE: The Lahore High Court (LHC) on Friday ordered the authorities to release Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Senior Vice Chairman Shah Mahmood Qureshi, Secretary General Asad Umar, and other leaders who were put behind bars during the party's 'Jail Bhao Tehreek' (court arrest movement). LHC's Justice Tariq Saleem Shaikh issued the order while hearing a petition filed by PTI Senior Vice President Fawad Chaudhry seeking the release of his party's detained leaders. The movement, according to the PTI rationale, aims to counter the "attack on constitutionally-guaranteed

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ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Qatar, Sheikh Saoud Bin Abdul Rahman bin Faisal Al Thani calls on Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif. — DNA

Maryam slams PTI over 'audio leak'
Says they will 'puncture' all four tyres of the 'truck'



STAFF REPORT

GUJRANWALA: Lashing out at former prime minister and Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan following party leader Fawad Chaudhry's "truck" remarks, Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz Senior Vice President Maryam Nawaz Sharif on Friday said that they will "puncture" all four tyres of the truck. "Now I don't need to say anything... wherever we see the truck going, we will understand [what is happening]," Maryam said while addressing a rally in Gujranwala. "We will puncture all four tyres of this truck." Talking about another alleged audio leak featuring former Punjab chief minister PTI leader Yasmin Rashid, she said it was not Maryam Nawaz who said that they "people" in Supreme Court. "Now, don't say the truck you have parked outside the court was driven by Maryam," she said while appraising about allegations she, her father Nawaz Sharif and other PML-N leaders have faced. Talking about a contempt of court case against her, PML-N VC said that why there was no

Continued on Page 06

PM hails fraternal ties with Qatar in diverse fields

Lauds Qatar for its humanitarian support in the aftermath of floods

SHUJAAT HAMZA

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Friday affirmed the fraternal relations between Pakistan and Qatar in diverse fields, based on common values and aspirations for future. The prime minister expressed these views in a meeting with Qatar's ambassador Sheikh Saoud Bin Abdulrahman bin Faisal Al Thani, who briefed him on various activities undertaken to enhance the brotherly relations between the two countries. Shehbaz Sharif acknowledged the mutual commitment of both sides to translate the deep-rooted relations into mutually rewarding economic ties. He thanked Qatar for its humanitarian support to people of Pakistan in the aftermath of unprecedented floods in 2022. He stressed the importance of further enhancing bilateral cooperation in all avenues of mutual interest and benefit. Qatari Ambassador thanked the prime minister for his stewardship in furthering the

Continued on Page 06

Coalition leaders mull over Punjab polls

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: The top leaders of Pakistan's coalition government held a meeting in the federal capital on Friday to mull over the Punjab elections, media reported. The meeting comes hours after President Arif Alvi announced April 30 as the date for elections in Punjab. According to sources, the all-important huddle discussed the Punjab elections and overall economic and political situation of the country. The meeting was attended by PPP co-chairman Asif Ali Zardari, PDM chief Maulana Fazul-ur-Rehman and Punjab interim chief minister Mohsin Naqvi.

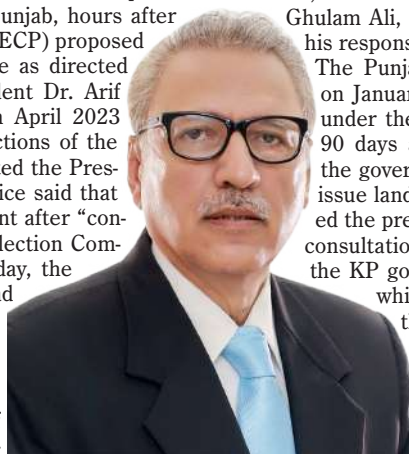
President announces April 30 as date for Punjab polls

Election Commission, in a letter to Governor KP, says it is waiting for his response in light of the SC order

ANSAR M BHATTI / DNA

ISLAMABAD: President Arif Alvi has announced April 30 as the date for the general polls in Punjab, hours after the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) proposed dates for the election in the province as directed by the Supreme Court (SC). "President Dr. Arif Alvi has announced the date of 30th April 2023 (Sunday) for holding the general elections of the Provincial Assembly of Punjab," tweeted the President's office on Friday. Dr Alvi's office said that the decision was made by the president after "considering the dates proposed by the Election Commission of Pakistan". Earlier in the day, the ECP — in a letter to President Alvi — had recommended that the polls for the provincial assembly in Punjab be held between April 30 and May 07. The election commission met — the third consecutive meeting — with Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Sikan-

dar Sultan Raja in the chair. "The commission is ready to fulfil its constitutional and legal obligations after the selection of a date by the president," the letter stated. However, in a letter to Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Ghulam Ali, the commission said it was waiting for his response in light of the SC order. The Punjab and KP assemblies were dissolved on January 14 and January 18 respectively, and under the law, elections were to be held within 90 days after their dissolution. However, after the governors' refusal to fix a date for polls, the issue landed in the Supreme Court which directed the president to announce the election date in consultation with the commission. It also ordered the KP governor to give an election date. Meanwhile, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf welcomed the development and appreciated the ECP for taking a "step in the right direction". In a video statement, senior PTI leader Fawad Chaudhry said,



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Swat Police arrest 64 POs including drug pushers

PESHAWAR: Swat Police have arrested 64 proclaimed offenders (POs) in crackdown against criminals including drug pushers and other criminal elements during last month.

According to a press release issued here on Friday, that Swat Police have also recovered 63,628 kilograms of hashish, 4,029-kilogram heroin powder, 0.844 kilogram of ice drug, 90 litres of liquor, one Kalashnikov, 5 rifles, 13 short-guns, 116 pistols, 1440 cartridges, 02 mortars and eight daggers and hundreds of people under preventive operation. It said that on the directives of Regional Police Officer (RPO) Malakand Region, Nasir Mahmood Satti and District Police Officer (DPO), Swat, Shafiullah Khan Gandapur a crackdown was launched against criminal elements wanted in cases of murder, attempted murder, theft, robberies and other heinous crimes. Similarly, an operation has also been carried out against narcotics pushers and several accused have been arrested during last month while huge quantities of hashish, heroin powder, ice drug and other narcotics were also recovered, and the accused sent behind bars. – APP

Non-bailable warrants issued for Farhat Shahzadi

LAHORE: A local court on Friday issued non-bailable arrest warrants of Farhat Shahzadi alias Farah Gogi, a close friend of former prime minister Imran Khan's wife Bushra Bibi, in a money laundering case. Judicial Magistrate Ghulam Mur-taza Virk issued the warrants on an application filed by Federal Investigations Agency's (FIA) investigation officer for the purpose. The investigation officer had approached the court for issuance of non-bailable arrest warrants. He submitted that the accused did not join the investigations despite the registration of the case and issuance of summons. The FIA had registered a case against Farhat Shahzadi under Sections three and four of the Money Laundering Act, two days ago. – APP

US Envoy appreciates rich cultural heritage of KPK

DNA

PESHAWAR: U.S. Ambassador Donald Blome visited Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) from February 28 to March 2 to deepen the United States' partnership with the people of KP through initiatives related to economic growth, education, security, and cultural preservation. To strengthen the U.S.-Pakistan economic partnership in KP, the Ambassador and KP Planning and Development Secretary Shah Mahmood Khan inaugurated a new U.S.-funded, \$24 million, five-year project to strengthen and modernize the agriculture sector and small and medium enterprises. Ambassador Blome also met with business leaders at FF Steel to talk about trade and commerce in the province, as well as environmental practices in business. To highlight educational activities, Ambassador Blome visited Abdul Wali Khan University Mardan to inaugurate a new English Works! program. The United States is providing scholarships for 215 KP students to complete a six-month program in Mardan and Charsadda to improve their English language proficiency and other skills needed for professional success. Since 2019, the United

States has provided more than \$3 million to support English language education in KP, benefiting more than 3,500 students and teachers in this province. Ambassador Blome also inaugurated a reconstructed higher secondary school in Akbarpura that was damaged in the devastating 2010 floods. The United States invested \$1.5 million to rebuild the school, which employs over 50 teachers and is educating more than 1,100 students. In addition, the Ambassador visited a government girls' primary school where a U.S.-funded program increases school enrollment among Afghan refugee and Pakistani host community girls. This program is part of the U.S. government's nearly \$60 million in assistance for refugees and their host communities in Pakistan in Fiscal Year 2022. Ambassador Blome also visited the historic Fort Bala Hisar to meet the Frontier Corps KP-North Major General and inaugurated the construction of eight U.S.-funded new joint check posts in the Newly Merged Districts. The following day, the Ambassador met the new Inspector General of KP Police, Akhtar Hayat Khan, to discuss U.S. support for KP police and their facilities. The Ambassador shared condolences for the



officers and citizens who lost their lives in the January 30 Peshawar Mosque attack while thanking him for the service and recognizing the bravery of the KP police. The Ambassador concluded his trip to

KP with cultural activities, including visiting the iconic Mahabat Khan Mosque in the heart of Peshawar. From 2002 to 2003, the United States provided more than \$14,000 to restore the Mughal-era

decorations on the lower walls of the mosque. The Ambassador also enjoyed a traditional KP cuisine during a meeting with food and culture enthusiast Shah Jee at a local restaurant. He wrapped

up his trip by welcoming a group of exchange alumnae to a movie screening at the Consulate to kick-start Women's History Month activities that will be arranged throughout the month of March.

DPO reviews security plans for Census

SOUTH WAZIRISTAN: District Police Officer Shabir Hussain Marwat on Friday paid surprise visits to different police stations and reviewed the security arrangements made in connection with the ongoing census. The DPO visited different police stations, including Tiarza, Makin and Ladha where the SHO's concerned briefed him about the security arrangements. He checked in detail the modern security system, night vision cameras, police station records and modern weapons and ammunition in the Tiarza police station. The DPO directed that fool-proof security should be ensured for all census teams and no laxity would be tolerated in that regard. He said that he himself would monitor the security of census, adding, the blockades would be created at all entry and exit points. The census had an important role in the development of any area and conduct of ongoing census in peaceful manner was the responsibility of police which would be fulfilled in any case. The DPO also met with the census teams and inquired about the security, on which the teams expressed their satisfaction. At the Tiarza police station, the DPO met with Deputy Commandant of 313 Brigade and discussed in detail the security situation, establishment of lasting peace and the ongoing census. – APP

Moot to highlight economic impact of counterfeits held

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: Unilever Pakistan has partnered with Brand Protection System (BPS) to organize a conference to highlight the economic impact of counterfeit products in Pakistan. The conference fostered a discussion among industry leaders and experts on the current laws, regulations, and practices in IPR and explored possible solutions to tackle this critical issue. Counterfeit goods are estimated to comprise over 5% of world trade whereas in Pakistan, the FMCG sector faces 80% cases of counterfeit items being sold in the market. The proliferation of counterfeit products has become a growing concern and in 2022, the issue reached a new peak, with brands experiencing 10 times the number of counterfeit cases compared to oth-

er industries. This trend has had a significant impact on the country's economy, prompting businesses to take action. Amir Paracha, Chairman & CEO, Unilever Pakistan, highlighted: "As a responsible business, we have a duty to protect our consumers and the integrity of our brands. The rise of counterfeit products in the FMCG sector is a worrying trend that requires immediate action. Through collective effort and innovative solutions, we are determined to combat this issue and ensure that our consumers receive genuine and safe products." Muhammad Kashif Aslam, Managing Director, BPS added: "The growth of counterfeit market in Pakistan has become a severe threat to the country's economy. The proliferation of fake products not only affects the revenue of genuine businesses but also poses serious

health and safety risks to consumers. The need for a comprehensive approach to address this issue is more critical than ever." The conference provided an opportunity for stakeholders to delve deeper into the challenges posed by counterfeit products and the consequences they have on various sectors, serving as a platform for sharing knowledge and experiences to develop a comprehensive strategy to address the problem. The collaboration between BPS and Unilever Pakistan is a promising step towards combating this issue and safeguarding the integrity of Pakistan's economy and protecting the consumers from counterfeit products. The conference represents an important milestone in the collective effort to protect consumers and promote fair competition in the FMCG sector and beyond.

Indonesian cyclist en route to Makkah reaches Pakistan

ISLAMABAD: Two Indonesian cyclists, Asid Kusuma Atmaja and Yunus started their long-awaited spiritual journey to Makkah on bicycles from Indonesia in August 2022 to spread the message of peace, tolerance, and kindness. After traveling with bicycles across five countries; Malaysia, Thailand, Myanmar, Singapore, and Bangladesh, they took a flight to Pakistan. In Pakistan, they are staying in the premises of the Indonesian Embassy to obtain a visa for their next destination, which is Oman. They intend to travel to Makkah via Oman and the United Arab Emirates. Indonesian Ambassador Adam Tugio welcomed the two Indonesian cyclists and wished them a safe journey as they embarked on their unique adventurous trip to Makkah. The visiting cyclists are exploring Islamabad on their bicycles while displaying the flags of Indonesia and Pakistan and other visited countries to express the love and brotherhood between all brotherly nations and other visited countries. They were very warmly greeted by the people of Pakistan and received a lot of appreciation for their courage. Asid Kusuma Atmaina said,

"This is my first International tour on a cycle, the motivation behind starting this journey was pure love and devotion for the supreme power of this world, which is Allah, and the Holy Prophet Muhammad (PBUH)". Asid and Yunus encountered many challenges during their arduous journey such as visa issues, grueling weather conditions, language barriers, and security concerns. Sometimes they camped on the side of the road, slept inside mosques, and on many occasions, it was too cold to sleep. They said these challenges are only making them stronger and more steadfast in achieving their goals. Yunus shared that he had been yearning for this expedition since his college days. He finds it hard to comprehend that his biggest dream is actually turning into reality and he is more than halfway through his journey. The cyclists are also very popular and liked by millions from all over the world on TikTok. By sharing their journey through short videos, they hope to motivate youth to achieve great things in life and leave a legacy behind despite any challenges or hardships. – Online

SCCI urges govt to promote SMEs

PESHAWAR: Sarhad Chamber of Commerce and Industry president Muhammad Ishaq urged the government to take pragmatic steps for promotion of small and medium enterprises and large scale manufacturing industries. The SCCI chief called for revamping relevant institutions to put them on modern lines and resolve issues of the business community on fast track grounds. He mentioned that the traders' community is being faced with a host of challenges and issues as a result of the anti-industries and trade policies imposed by the present government. He added the situation is becoming alarming and deteriorating because of illegal actions by the departments concerned. The chamber president suggested the introduction of a strong monitoring and evaluation and scrutiny system in the government institutions. He demanded to provide facilities to traders and industries through one-window operation in a true spirit and sense. Ishaq was talking to members, traders and industrialists during the visit of provincial caretaker minister for

industries, trade, technical education and revenue department, Adnan Jalil here at the chamber's house on Friday. The chamber's former president Faiz Muhammad Faizi, former senior vice president Ziaul Haq Sarhadi, former vice president Abidullah Yousafzai, provincial chief SMEDA Rashid Aman, executive members Affaf Ali Khan, Faisal Afzal, Hamza Ibrahim Butt, Laal Badshah, Munawar Khurshid, Ms Qurtul Ain, and Waqar Ahmad, Muhammad Aurangzeb, Ghulam Bilal Javed, Ihsanullah, Aftab Iqbal, Fazal E Wahid, Saddam Gul, Rashid Iqbal Siddique, Shahrul Khan, Ishtiaq Muhammad, Women chamber president Ms Azra Jamshid, vice president Anila Khalid, along with senior officials from KPEZDMC, KPBOIT, KP TEVTA, SIDB, traders, industrialists and exporters were present during the meeting. The SCCI president demanded that KPEZDMC should stop issuing plot cancellation notices to industrialists. He sought a two-year extension in allotment of plots for the establishment of the industrial unit. He asked to ensure

provision of soft loans through banks to small scale businesses, industries and women entrepreneurs. He also emphasized that proactive steps should be taken for revamping and putting institutions on modernization. Ishaq called for encouraging colonization in existing industrial estates across the province. He demanded to ensure representation of the chambers in boards of all relevant government institutions. Azra Jamshid while speaking on the occasion stressed the need for introduction of flexible policies for women entrepreneurs and ensuring provision of loans from banks on easy terms. Adnan Jalil while responding to reservations, complaints of business community and various queries from the participants acknowledged that the business community, especially industrialists faced a number of issues, which mostly related to KPEZDMC. The caretaker minister said the provincial government is taking pragmatic steps for promotion of businesses, industries, trade and exports. He said the initiatives have been made to resolve issues of the business community on a fast-track basis. – Online

Commissioner inaugurates Gynae OPD in LMH

PESHAWAR: Commissioner Kohat Division, Muhammad Ali Shah Friday visited Liaquat Memorial Hospital (LMH) and inaugurated Out Patient Department (OPD) of gynaecology. He also visited the emergency ward, children's OPD, laboratory and pharmacy of the hospital. He also inquired about operational matters, the healthcare delivery system and services being provided to patients in the health facility. He also distributed gifts to children that are having treatment in the hospital. He urged staff to work with dedication and further improve the healthcare delivery system for the facilitation of patients. – APP

Aawaz II program highlights digital inclusion of women and vulnerable groups

STAFF REPORT

In connection with International Women's Day, Aawaz II programme of the British Council organised an Experience Sharing Forum in the federal capital to share and applaud the contributions of women and girls in addressing gender inequality and highlighted the significance to digital inclusion of women. The forum brought together stakeholders including representatives from the British Council, British High Commission Islamabad, government organisations, civil society, and community leaders to exchange their diversified experiences of addressing modern day issues and capitalizing on greater opportunities of

a transformational behavioural change for social inclusion of vulnerable groups. The speakers at the event explored ways to raise awareness about the digital rights of women and girls; making the digital space safe for them and highlighted Aawaz II experiences to address exclusion and intolerance. Dr Yasmin Zaidi, Aawaz II Team Lead, in her remarks, said, "Aawaz II works to address discriminatory gender norms in Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. She added, "Aawaz II Village Forum is the heart of the community engagement component of the programme, which works to ensure engagement of both dominant and marginalised to support the behaviour change to address the harmful practices such

as gender-based violence, child marriage and intolerance." The programme is working in 37 districts of Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to address gender-based violence, child marriage and intolerance. Rabiya Javeri Agha, Chairperson, National Commission on Human Rights

appreciated the efforts of Aawaz II for addressing gender-based violence, child marriage, and intolerance with the support from civil society partners. Ms Javeria stressed on enhance engagement between duty-bearers and communities for promoting social inclusion and rights

of vulnerable groups. The three-day experience sharing forum also included panel discussions and presentations related to United Nation's theme on International Women's Day, 8 March 2023 (IWD 2023) - "DigitALL: Innovation and Technology for Gender Equality". Experts including Sadaf Khan from Media Matters for Democracy, Mosharraf Zaidi from Tabadlab and Usama Khilji from Bolo Bhi highlighted various aspects to facilitate women inclusion in virtual space and strategies for reducing gender gap. Aawaz II aims to change behaviours and increase citizen-state engagement to promote a transformational change towards harmful practices of child marriage, gender-based violence, exclusion, exploitation and intolerance.



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For further information please contact the following.

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National Days and Armed Forces Days

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March 01 / Bosnia National Day

March 03 / Bulgaria National Day

March 06 / Ghana Independence Day

March 12 / Mauritius National Day

March 17 / Ireland St. Patrick's Day

March 20 / Tunisia Independence Day

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March 25 / Greece National Day

March 26 / Bangladesh National Day

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Emergency Ambulance.....1122

& Rescue Services.....4451122

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Motorway Police.....9270601-20

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Railway Exchange.....9270831-5

WASA Rawalpindi.....5555489

CAA.....9281092

Hospitals

CMH.....5611111

MH.....561116

Cantt Hospital.....9270907-11

DHQ.....5556311-4

RGH.....9290301-7

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PIMS.....9261170-79

Polyclinic.....9218300-09

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Rawal Town.....5773343

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Businessmen, Lawyers to work for dignity of judiciary

Zafar Bakhtawari former President ICCI, Jamshed Akhtar Sheikh, Imtiaz Abbasi, Ch. Muhammad Ali, Ashfaq Chatta, Khalid Chaudhry, Saifur Rehman Khan and others were in the ICCI delegation

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari, President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry leading a delegation visited Islamabad High Court Bar Association (IHCBA) to congratulate the newly elected President Naveed Malik, Secretary Rizwan Shabbir Kiani, Vice President Ali Hussain Bhatti, Joint Secretary Jameel Fayyaz Rajput and other office bearers. Raja Aleem Khan Abbasi, Vice Chairman, Islamabad Bar Council and Qaiser Imam Gondal, President, Islamabad District Bar Association were also present. Speaking at the occasion, Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari, President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry (ICCI) said that victory in IHCBA's election is a reflection of



the trust and confidence of lawyers' community on the leadership capabilities of new Office Bearers and hoped that they would deliver up to their expectations. He was optimistic that the leadership of Raja Aleem Khan Abbasi, Naveed Malik and Qaiser Imam Gondal will play a role to increase the re-

spect of the judiciary and the lawyers' community. He assured that ICCI will fully cooperate with them to increase the dignity of the judiciary. He said that no society can develop without justice, so it is important that the business and the lawyers' communities of Islamabad should work together for promo-

tion of justice in society. He further said that the outstanding performers from the lawyers' community will be given awards and will be promoted as role models in the society. He emphasized that the business and the lawyers' communities should work together to reduce the court cases by promoting

speedy justice through mediation. Naveed Malik, President, Islamabad High Court Bar Association, thanked Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari, President ICCI and all members of the delegation for visiting IHCBA to congratulate them. He said that ICCI has always encouraged the newly elect-

ed Office Bearers of IHCBA, which is laudable. He said that the business and the lawyers' communities are playing an important role in the development of the society and the economy, so through close cooperation, they can get resolved their common issues more effectively. Raja Aleem Khan Abbasi, Vice Chairman, Islamabad Bar Council said that it is the responsibility of all of us to establish a society based on justice for future generations. He said that the lawyers' and business communities should make joint efforts for a peaceful, clean and green Islamabad. Zafar Bakhtawari former President ICCI, Jamshed Akhtar Sheikh, Imtiaz Abbasi, Ch. Muhammad Ali, Ashfaq Chatta, Khalid Chaudhry, Saifur Rehman Khan and others were in the ICCI delegation.

SMEDA to organize workshop on March 08

ISLAMABAD: The Small and Medium Enterprises Development Authority (SMEDA) is going to organize a workshop on "Regulatory Compliance for Hotels and Restaurants" for profitable business growth on March 08 (Wednesday). The session is being offered by SMEDA under National Business Development Programme (NBDP) for SMEs, to extend non-financial advisory services to small and medium businesses, according to a source in the authority. The objective of the training program includes laws and regulations governing the hotels and restaurants industry, ensuring compliance proactively, building your brand for business success through compliance and winning customer loyalty. The workshop offers highly subsidized one-day and three-day demand base training to enable relevant SMEs and their staff to enhance their institutional and sectoral expertise. The training session would be attended by SMEs and their staff from the relevant sector.—APP

Overseas minister pays visit to Turkish Embassy

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development (OP&HD) Sajid Hussain Turi paid a condolence visit to the Turkish Embassy and expressed grief and sorrow over the deaths and destruction caused by the earthquake. The Minister said that Pakistanis share the grief of their Turkish brothers and sisters in this difficult hour, said a press release. May Allah raise the ranks of those martyred in the earthquake and grant patience to the bereaved families, he added. Pakistan and Turkey are two brotherly countries and are always with each other in pain and suffering. Federal Secretary Zulfiqar Haider was also accompanied by Federal Minister Sajid Hussain Turi.—APP

Dhamial Police arrest eight gamblers; recover Rs 13,830 stake money

RAWALPINDI: Rawalpindi district Police have arrested eight gamblers and recovered Rs 13,830 stake money, four mobile phones and valuables from their possession, said a police spokesman on Friday. He informed that Dhamial police conducted a raid and arrested eight gamblers namely Sagheer, Mujahid, Ghulam Shabbir, Anayat, Tanveer, Bashir, Jaffar and Altaf who were allegedly involved in betting while playing cards. A case has been registered against them while further investigation is under process. Superintendent of Police, Sadr Muhammad Nabeel Khokhar said that gambling is the root cause of other evils and those involved in such crimes do not deserve any concession.—APP

RPO pays surprise visit to Police Lines Mess

RAWALPINDI: Regional Police Officer (RPO) Rawalpindi Region, Syed Khurram Ali here on Friday paid a surprise visit to Police Lines Mess. The RPO inspected the kitchen and the quality of food being supplied to the force. He also ate food with the police personnel present in the mess and inquired about the standard of the food. The RPO directed the Superintendent of Police, Headquarters and Deputy Superintendent of Police, Headquarters to regularly conduct surprise visits to the mess to check food quality. Timely delivery of quality food to the police jawans posted on point duty in the field should be ensured, Syed Khurram Ali instructed the authorities concerned.—APP

President for inclusive approach towards persons with disabilities

ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi on Friday stressed an inclusive approach towards persons with disabilities in all areas of life particularly education to help them make active members of society. Except for a few mental disorders, he said, the system should accommodate children with different abilities in regular schools and provide tailor-made jobs to them in accordance with their skill set. Addressing the 5th Cerebral Palsy Conference here at Pakistan Institute of Medical Sciences (PIMS), he said physically and mentally challenged children needed care and empathy from the society and also the readiness to accept them as any other child. Cerebral palsy is a group of disorders that affect a person's ability to move and maintain balance and posture. President Alvi said the persons with physical, visual and hearing deficiencies had the same intellectual capacity as other people and thus needed support by the society to help them function better. The president emphasized raising awareness in the society to be empathetic towards the persons with physical and mental weaknesses. He regretted that the children with cerebral palsy are often stereotyped and called for shunning taboos affiliated with them. He mentioned that First Lady Samina Alvi through awareness campaigns put her best efforts in highlighting the cause of persons with special needs besides stressing facil-

ities for them at public places. President Alvi said training of doctors was very important for taking curative measures, adding that good professional training with the help of technology could help the health experts play their due role in mainstreaming the persons with disabilities. The president recalled that the country's visually-challenged diplomat Saima Saleem effectively represented Pakistan at the United Nations and delivered a speech using braille. He also laid focus on preventive treatment to reduce rate of malnutrition, stunting and maternal mortality. In this regard, he said, educating the masses and the role of midwives was important. He expressed confidence that the conference would help raise consciousness about cerebral palsy. President Pakistan Academy of Cerebral Palsy Professor Javaid Iqbal said cerebral palsy affects two out of 1,000 children and causes multiple physical, mental and other problems. He said the academy aimed at creating interdisciplinary forum to improve communication and teamwork in providing services and care for children with cerebral palsy. Executive Director PIMS Muhammad Naeem Malik said PIMS since its inception was providing treatment to the people and approximately one million people annually get treatment in the hospital. — DNA

Digital population census 2023 under way smoothly

ISLAMABAD: Spokesperson of Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, Muhammad Sarwar Gondal on Friday said that the country's first-ever digital population and housing census got underway across the country. He said around 121,000 field enumerators have been deployed for the purpose. Talking to the PTV news channel, Muhammad Sarwar Gondal said during this phase, door-to-door enumerators are visiting door-to-door houses with the latest tablet technology to collect household family data, adding, the aim of the census was to collect and collate details such as property usage,

types of businesses and the demographics of individuals, nationals and residents alike. "The government aim of conducting this census was to plan better policies for the growth and development of the society", he added. To a question, Gondal replied, "There were already many reservations over the sixth population census conducted in 2017, and now after a long gap of five years, we are again conducting a digital population census with the co-ordination of all provincial stakeholders." He urged residents to actively participate and that their personal information provided would remain

confidential. "All nationals and residents, families and private sector companies should co-operate with the census teams, as it benefits everyone and contributes to advancing the development of the country's services." "Every piece of information provided to the census teams contributes to serving the community, whose members are an integral part of the country's comprehensive developmental policy plans," he mentioned. He said, "The census teams, instead of recording complete details, will only collect UTN numbers, which will be provided to those citizens who

will save their data digitally." To another question, Gondal replied, "A web portal with the address self.pbs.gov.pk has already been launched for the purpose." "Evidence-based authentic data as per international standards will be used for delimitation of constituencies in the next general elections as well as for public policy planning." The success of the census only depends upon the quality of data collection, therefore, we had conducted quality training programs for enhancing the capacity of field staff on concept and tablet usage, he concluded.—APP

IHC issues notification about security

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad High Court (IHC) Registrar office has issued notification regarding security and other SOPs in connection with appearance of Imran Khan in IHC on March 09. Entry into court room of Chief Justice Amir Farooq will be allowed through pass. The court has directed Islamabad management and Islamabad police to make security arrangements. According to circular directives have been issued to lawyers of Imran Khan to provide list of 15 names and Attorney General (AG) office and Advocate General (AG) Islamabad 5 names each. Islamabad journalist association has been directed to furnish list of 30 journalists. The court has ordered that the list of all relevant persons be provided before 3 P.M on March 08. It is pertinent to mention here that the matter of extension in bail of Imran Khan in attempt to murder case is fixed for hearing at 3 p.m in court room No 1. **Online**

8,647 graduates get training in freelancing centers

ISLAMABAD: The Ministry of Information Technology has provided financial assistance for the establishment of about 20 training centers under the National Freelance Training Program to impart IT training to fresh graduates. "As many as 8,647 graduates were trained through International standard IT courses and these students contributed to the country's economy by earning \$23 million through freelancing after training, said an official of the Ministry of IT. He said, during the year 2022, around 1,638 new IT companies got registered with Pakistan Software Export Board, while 761 call centers and 1,463 freelancers were also registered with the PSEB. He said the ministry was also establishing specialized incubation centers in agriculture and textile, aerospace technologies, gaming and animation to create more businesses in these areas and boost exports. For the provision of early-stage investment, he said Ignite was starting an accelerator program so that early-stage startups can sustain their businesses. Ignite is collaborating with international partners like Plug & Play, orbit, DMZ, 500 global and hub 71 so that the local startup ecosystem can be exposed to international investors. He said that about 33 million people have got themselves registered for freelancing courses under the Digi Skills Programs of Ignite, which is 75% more than the target. By June 2022, the freelancers trained with Digi Skills have earned a whopping \$290 million, adding to the country's foreign exchange reserves.—APP

76 kite sellers, flyers arrested in special crackdown

RAWALPINDI :Rawalpindi district police on the directives of City Police Officer, Syed Khalid Mehmood Hamdani here continued a special crackdown against kite sellers and flyers and managed to net 76. 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. Police teams recovered 3200 kites and kite flying string rolls from the possession of arrested kite sellers and flyers, he said. The spokesman informed that New Town police arrested a kite seller namely Jan Muhammad and recovered 2000 kites and kite flying string rolls from his possession. Senior Superintendent of Police, Operations Capt. ® Muhammad Amir Khan Niazi said that all available resources were being utilized to control kite flying. He said, Police under the supervision of Senior Police Officers on Thursday night and Friday conducted raids in different areas and rounded up the kite flying ban violators. Police had made a comprehensive security plan to maintain high vigilance in the city as well as to curb kite flying. The spokesman further informed that divisional superintendents of Police had also directed the police teams to accelerate operations against kite sellers and flyers. He said that strict action in accordance with the law was being taken against the kite flying ban violators and they were being sent behind the bars. —APP

PTA and CCP sign MoU for collaboration

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) and the Competition Commission of Pakistan (CCP) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to establish cooperation and collaboration in areas of mutual interest. The signing ceremony was held at the CCP Headquarters in Islamabad. Chairperson CCP, Ms. Rahat Kaunain Hassan; Member Finance PTA, Mr. Muhammad Naveed and senior officers from both organizations were in attendance. The collaboration between PTA and CCP will have a significant impact at the national level, particularly in areas where common interests exist, such as promoting competitive commercial and economic activity in the market. The areas of collaboration include establishing a coordination mechanism to enable smooth working relations, facilitating the transition of society towards digitalization, promoting the adoption of new ICT technologies, and utilizing ICTs as a contributor and enabler to

achieve respective SDG targets. Ultimately, this will contribute towards the realization of a Digital Society, which aligns with the Government of Pakistan's "Vision 2025." In addition to capacity building on the experience and knowledge available to both organizations, the MoU also includes conducting sessions, discussion forums, and trainings on relevant issues and technological advancements. CCP Chairperson called for regulators' collaboration in response to Paki-

stan's economic crisis, emphasizing the need for effective policies and frameworks to attract investment, promote competition, and protect consumers. She urged for innovative and unconventional solutions in creating an enabling environment under the current economic challenges. Speaking at the occasion, Member (Finance) PTA added that both organizations can leverage their collective strengths to enhance the digital landscape in Pakistan and drive economic growth.



Briefs

Wali
Kakar new
Balochistan
governor

ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi on Friday appointed Malik Abdul Wali Kakar as the governor of Balochistan.

The president made the appointment on the advice of the prime minister in accordance with Articles 48(1) and 101 of the Constitution.—APP

Railways
track
rehabilitation
in full swing

ISLAMABAD: The rehabilitation work on railways track was in full swing, improving the speed of the locomotives to carry passengers to their respective destinations on time, Pakistan Railways officials said on Friday.

The infrastructure, including the track and signalling system from Karachi to Peshawar, Main Line-I (ML-I), and doubling of track from Lahore to Peshawar (462.20 Km) was also being revamped, he told APP.

The official noted that the length of the track was 1,726 kilometres and the department has planned to improve speed up to 160 kilometres per hour in the project of up-gradation of ML-I under the China-Pak Economic Corridor (CPEC). In this regard, the official said that a modified PC-I amounting to Rs. 9.851 billion has got approval from the Executive Committee of the National Economic Council (ECNEC). To improve the speed of the trains and ensure fixed timings, he said the procurement of 230 passenger coaches and 820 High Capacity Wagons under the Public Sector Development Programme (PSDP) project was also under process.—APP

PTI's flawed
economic
policies
slammed

ISLAMABAD: Senator Dr Afnan Ullah Khan Friday said that the Pakistan Tehreek e Insaaf government's flawed economic policies and mismanagement had brought the country on the verge of collapse and that it will take time to get back on track. "Imran Khan had no right to question the economic policies of the current government as it had been striving hard to undo the "mess" created by the previous PTI regime", he said while talking to PTV news channel. He said Imran Khan had apparently lost his senses after being ousted from power through a successful no-confidence motion and was in dire need of psychological counseling, adding, Niazi had made the constitution, law, and judicial system of the country a "joke". He said that the country had been isolated due to Khan's bad foreign policy, economic instability, and closure of work on China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) and power production projects. Replying to a question, he said the government has categorically said that the next general elections would be held at its right time and no one would be allowed to take the law into his hands.—APP

Change of Name

I Muhammad Maaz s/o Jehad Ali resident of Ghauri Town Phase 7 4c-2 Islamabad registered with FBISE at SSC level under Registration No. 2114501072 passed SSC Annual Examination 2021 under Roll No. 1011591 do announce that I have decided to substantially change my name from Maghaz to Muhammad Maaz which is written as Muhammad Maaz in Board's documents/record. Hence the same may be changed. That the statement give above is true and correct to the best of my knowledge, belief and nothing has been concealed or withheld.



ISLAMABAD: A Senator Seemee Ezdi, chairperson senate standing committee on climate change and members of the committee are being briefed during their visit at Islamabad wildlife management board visitor information Center, at trail05.—DNA

Senate body on climate
change visits Trail-5

Rina Saeed Khan, Chairperson IWMB, apprised the committee that IWMB is endeavouring to enhance partnership with corporate sector and civil society for preservation of wildlife

STAFF REPORTER

ISLAMABAD: The Senate standing committee on climate change on Friday visited Trail-5. The Senate Committee was welcomed by Chairperson Islamabad Wildlife Management Board (IWMB) Rina Saeed Khan upon their arrival. Thereafter, the Committee chairperson Seemee Ezdi and members along with school children participated in a walk to raise awareness about 'World Wildlife Day'. Senator Seemee Ezdi in her message on 'World Wildlife Day' reiterated that "Wildlife plays a crucial role in sustaining our ecosystem and

biodiversity and the Government of Pakistan should create awareness and engage all stakeholders in their pursuit of preserving the valuable species for future generations".

The Senate body was briefed by IWMB officials about their efforts and steps taken for the conservation of Margalla Hills National Park. Rina Saeed Khan, Chairperson IWMB, apprised the committee that IWMB is endeavouring to enhance partnership with corporate sector and civil society for preservation of wildlife. She added that the IWMB Act which empowers the Board is still pending and once it's implemented, the Board will

be able to raise finances by charging entry fee to visitors and imposing fine to the public for littering.

While deliberating about the precautionary measures taken by IWMB for the coming fire season. Chairperson IWMB stated that "Fire Coordination Group", a What's app group, headed by the Federal Minister for Climate Change has been created and all the relevant stakeholders have been made part of the group for effective coordination and timely action. Furthermore, the Senate Body suggested that IWMB should take necessary action against the domestication of wild animals. Senator Dr. Humayun Mo-

hmand opined that domestication is detrimental to health and welfare of wild animals and it should be criminalized. The Senate Committee lauded the efforts of leopard rangers and volunteers who were engaged in the rescue operation of leopard. The visiting delegation included Senator Taj Haider, Senator Abida Muhammad Azeem, Senator Khalida Ateez, Senator Dr. Humayun Mohmand, Chairperson Islamabad Wildlife Management Board Rina Saeed Khan, Senior Joint Secretary Ministry of Climate Change (MoCC) Syed Mujtaba Hussain and other senior officers of relevant departments were also in attendance.

'Women's confidence key
to eliminate harassment'

ISLAMABAD: Women's confidence and media awareness are the key weapons to eliminate harassment from the society where all stakeholders need to play a collective role actively for the protection of rights of women, former Fed ral Ombudsman for Protection against Harassment of Women at Workplace Kashmala Tariq Friday stressed on Friday.

Talking to a private news channel, Kashmala said that the Federal Ombudsman for protection against Harassment has been strengthened and empowered to protect the rights

of women, adding, we have ensured that there is effective implementation of workplace harassment laws across the country in order to enable women to reach their full potential. She said with the Ombudsman awareness drives women now are more aware of their rights and they feel protected at workplaces and actively taking part in economic activities. Ombudsman objective is to create awareness in society and provide free of cost legal services regarding harassment faced by females, she mentioned. We need

to work on breaking stereotypes and giving women the strength to raise their voices, she added. She also lauded the performance and achievements of the Ombudsmen in providing expeditious and free-of-cost justice to the people against administrative injustices. She further suggested that all institutions, offices and organizations should have internal harassment committees and CCTV cameras to report their status of compliance with the law on workplace harassment. Replying to a question, she said a sharp increase in in-

cidents of violence against women and physical harassment has been witnessed across the country during the last few years, adding, the media need to work more on the rights of women in society.

To another question, she said the Ombudsman anti-harassment cell does not only act on complaints filed by women but also entertains complaints of men and transgender persons, adding, registering a complaint is not a difficult task official pages are available on every social media forum where a complaint could be lodged easily.—APP

Two-day Hunza
Festival in Federal
Capital from March 4

ISLAMABAD: Two-day Hunza Festival will kick off in the Federal Capital from March 4 featuring number of cultural and fun activities from Hunza region for the enthusiasts of twin cities. The event which is being organized by Hunza Cultural Forum (HCF) will not only display the beauty of the valley but will also promote the rich tourist opportunities available in the land. The event aimed at promoting various colorful aspects of the valley including cultural heritage, art and crafts and tourism opportunities of the fairy tale land of Pakistan. The event will feature intriguing folk instrumental music by traditional bands from Hunza Valley, folk songs in various languages of the Valley including Burushaski, Wakhi, Shina, and Domaki, display of traditional handicraft products and organic cuisine of Hunza Valley and other regions of Gilgit-Baltistan are also a part of the event. Hunza Awards are also part of the event through which social, cultural, educational, and professional contributions of the Hunzokut will be highlighted. Hunza Film Festival will provide a platform to the creative people from the Hunza region to screen their film and documentary work based on the culture and heritage of the valley. The 2023 edition of the Hunza Festival is held after the gap of two years as the activity was suspended due to the Coronavirus pandemic.—APP

PM orders inquiry into
Bara Kahu flyover collapse

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif Friday taking note of the collapse of the under-construction flyover at Bara Kahu formed a committee to inquire into the incident. The inquiry committee headed by former Interior Secretary Shahid Khan will examine every aspect of the incident that occurred on Thursday. The committee was directed to prepare an inquiry report on an emergency basis and submit it to the prime minister. PM Sharif said that no negligence would be tolerated in the construction of the Bara Kahu flyover project.

Walking daily for just
11 min can prevent
risk of early death

ISLAMABAD: Just 11 minutes a day (or 75 minutes a week) of brisk walking, dancing, riding a bike, playing tennis or hiking would be sufficient to lower the risk of death caused by diseases such as heart disease, stroke and a number of cancers, according to a new study.

The recommended physical activity a week is 150 minutes. But managing at least half with moderate to intense activity level, that is 75 minutes a week or 11 minutes a day, can prevent one in 10 early deaths, said a team led by researchers at the University of Cambridge, UK.

"If you are someone who finds the idea of 150 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity a week a bit daunting, then our findings should be good news. Doing some physical activity is better than doing none. This is also a good starting position - if you find that 75 minutes a week is manageable, then you could try stepping it up gradually to the full recommended amount," Soren Brage from the MRC Epidemiology Unit at the varsity said.

Cardiovascular diseases - such as heart disease and stroke - are the leading cause of death globally, responsible for 17.9 million deaths per year in 2019, while cancers were responsible for 9.6 million deaths in 2017, Medical Daily reported. The study, published in the British Journal of Sports Medicine, found that 75 minutes per week of moderate activity was enough to reduce the risk of developing cardiovascular disease by 17 per cent and cancer by 7 per cent. For some specific cancers, the reduction in risk was greater - head and neck, myeloid leukaemia, myeloma, and gastric cardia cancers were between 14-26 per cent lower risk. For other cancers, such as lung, liver, endometrial, colon, and breast cancer, a 3-11 per cent lower risk was observed.—APP

Pharmaceutical
goods' export
increases

ISLAMABAD: The export of pharmaceuticals goods from the country has witnessed an increase of 32.37 percent during the first seven months of the fiscal year (2022-23) as compared to the corresponding period last year. Pakistan exported pharmaceutical products worth US\$ 205.138 million during the period from July-January (2022-23) as compared to the export of US\$ 154.973 million during July-January (2021-22), showing a growth of 32.37 percent, according to the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS). In terms of quantity, the export of pharmaceutical goods also rose by 104.67 percent from 16,718 metric tons to 34,217 metric tons, the data revealed. Meanwhile, on a year-on-year basis, the pharmaceutical goods' export increased by 77.19 percent during the month of January 2023 as compared to the same month of last year. The pharmaceutical exports in January 2023 were recorded at US \$30.114 million against the export of US\$ 16.996 million in January 2022, the PBS data revealed. On a month-on-month basis, the exports of pharmaceutical goods however decreased by 3.41 percent in January 2023 as compared to US\$ 31.176 million in December 2022.—APP

SC hears
Right to vote
to overseas
Pakistanis
case

ISLAMABAD: During the course of hearing of the case related to grant of right to vote to overseas Pakistanis Supreme court (SC) has remarked there is only difference of May and Shall in old and new law and court should be told how the new amendment by parliament runs contrary to the constitution.

The case came up for hearing before a 3-member bench of SC presided over by Justice Ijaz ul Ahsan Friday. Justice Munib Akhtar remarked parliament enacted law to grant right to vote to overseas Pakistanis where in it was said steps be taken in connection with right to vote to overseas Pakistanis. The court declared the law in harmony with the constitution. In 2021 the government added the word compulsory in the law. In 2022 the parliament restored the law to its old form. There is difference of only May and Shall in old and new law. Tell us how the new amendment made by parliament runs contrary to the constitution.

The court gave more time for preparation when the lawyers could not give satisfactory reply on inquiring by the court. The court maintained the plea for declaring the law unconstitutional is not included in the petition of Chaudhry Arif.

The court while directing Election Commission (EC) to file its report and the respondents to file written submissions adjourned the hearing of the case for indefinite period.—Online

Three-day
Islamabad
Taste festival
kicks off

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Taste - the Capital's Signature Food Festival with its Spring edition kicked off here Friday at f-9 park to support culinary and music industry.

Presented by Imarat Group of Companies, the event features over 80 eateries, music arena, various artist performances and amusement activities, the 3-day event has been planned to give people a break from usual daily routine and spend time in quality recreational activities. The signature food festival happening since 2019 nationwide was supporting culinary and music industry of Pakistan, said the organizers. Islamabad Taste Fest is back with Spring Edition on 3rd, 4th and 5th March 2023 featuring eateries, music madness and a festive celebration of hospitality and culinary industry.

During the festival, musical performances, live Performance/Concert of trending and popular musicians/singers including Young Stunners Live Concert, Farhan Saeed Live Concert, Rdb Manj Live Concert, Nehal Naseem Live Concert.—APP

Nigeria’s election: A fresh start?

It is perhaps unsurprising that many Nigerians are dissatisfied with the outcome of the presidential election. The winner, Bola Tinubu of the ruling All Progressives Congress (APC), ran on the slogan “It’s my turn”. It seemed to epitomise the uninspiring campaign of an immensely wealthy veteran powerbroker trailed by corruption claims, which he denies. The main opposition Peoples Democratic party (PDP) candidate, Atiku Abubakar, and the outsider challenger, Peter Obi of the tiny Labour party, want the results scrapped, citing problems with both voting and counting. Under the APC’s Muhammadu Buhari, Africa’s most populous country and largest economy, with dynamic arts and culture, and a thriving tech sector, has endured two recessions, high inflation and low growth. A botched attempt to replace banknotes worsened matters. In a global index of the commitment to reducing inequality, Nigeria ranks 159th of 161 countries. Multiple security crises include jihadist insurgencies in the north-east, deadly clashes between farmers and herders, and kidnappings by armed gangs. The hope of a fresh start produced a surprise surge for Mr Obi, who won not only the capital, Abuja, but also Lagos, the country’s economic hub and Mr Tinubu’s former fiefdom. If not exactly an outsider – the 62-year-old businessman is a former state governor and previously ran as the PDP’s vice-presidential candidate – his energy, frugality and commitment to reform and bridging ethnic and religious divides stood in sharp contrast to his rivals. But despite inspiring grassroots fervour, especially among the young, he faced an uphill struggle without major resources or a serious party machine behind him. The turnout was strikingly low even by Nigeria’s usual standards – down from 35% of those registered to vote in 2019 to just 29%. Though the polls themselves were mostly peaceful, turnout was affected by fuel and currency shortages and insecurity, and there was evidence of voter suppression in places. Many electors missed their chance because voting sites opened hours late. Yaiga Africa, a leading civil society organisation, and EU observers both expressed concerns about the process. This was the country’s seventh election since the end of military rule in 1999, and its most competitive. It offered welcome hope that the rotation of power between the two main parties might end. Mr Obi is now better positioned for the next contest. He has also demonstrated voters’ hunger for something better; some hope that might prod the main parties to shape up. Others suggest that Mr Tinubu could outperform low expectations, suggesting that Lagos’s development when he was governor shows that he at least knows how to get things done within a deeply flawed political system. But whatever result this election returned, it needed to deliver it as cleanly and efficiently as officials had boasted it would. The government can hardly complain if voters feel short-changed by the process and its result.

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Russia after a year of sanctions

Sergey Aleksashenko

Western sanctions related to the oil industry targeted revenues rather than production. As a result, Russian oil production increased by 2 percent in 2022. On February 5, an EU ban on the import of refined petroleum products from Russia came into effect, but there is no evidence yet that it has impacted the Russian economy. Since the beginning of 2023, production of gasoline and diesel fuel climbed by 7 percent compared with the previous year which

After Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, Western countries imposed numerous sanctions against Russian banks and companies, which significantly affected the Russian economy. Yet the economic collapse some expected never came. This allowed President Vladimir Putin to declare confidently at the beginning of this year: “2022 was a challenging year for us, and we managed to get through the risks that emerged ... quite successfully.” Indeed, the Western sanctions did not undermine Russia’s economic potential to an extent that the Kremlin would lose the ability to finance its war in Ukraine. The events of 2022 have confirmed that the Russian economy is inefficient but resilient and that the Kremlin is able to mitigate any destabilising effect the economic downturn may have on the political front. The sustainability of the Russian economy is determined by its place in the global division of labour: it stands at the very beginning of technological chains as a supplier of natural resources. Since the global economy cannot grow with-

out increasing its consumption of natural resources, the demand for Russian raw materials is maintained. This, to a large extent, has protected the Russian economy from the impact of sanctions. In 2021, Russia provided 17.5 percent of oil sold on the world market, 47 percent of palladium, 16.7 percent of nickel, 13 percent of aluminium (not including China), and almost a quarter of potash fertilisers. Hypothetically, the world economy could give up Russian raw materials, but only at the cost of price hikes and potentially years of recession, which is not in the interests of Western politicians. The United States’ attempt to close the access of Russian aluminium to the world market in 2018 led to an instant jump in the price of this metal by 20 percent, which forced the White House to abandon the announced plans. That is why, in 2022, the West imposed some of the harshest sanctions on Russian export sectors, such as steel, coal and processed wood, where the global economy has spare capacity. The combined share of these raw materials in Russian exports in 2021 was 11.7 percent, so restrictions on sales to Europe did not have a significant impact on Russia’s economy at large. However, they did affect significantly the economies of certain regions where these sectors are dominant. For example, in November-December 2022, coal mines in Kemerovo, Russia’s core coal production region, were able to sell just 50-60 percent of extracted coal. In Karelia and Arkhangelsk, where there are many woodworking enterprises, industrial production contracted by 15.5 percent and by 19.8 percent respectively. In Lipetsk, it collapsed by 15.4 percent due to a drop in production at the largest Russian steelmaker, Novolipetsk Steel. Western sanctions related to the oil industry targeted revenues rather than production. As a result, Russian oil production increased by 2 percent in 2022. On February 5, an EU ban on the import of refined petroleum products from Russia came into effect, but there is no evidence yet that it has impacted the Russian economy. Since the beginning of 2023, production of gasoline and diesel fuel climbed by 7 percent compared with the previous year which could in part be the result of increased demand from the Russian army. The decline in exports of gas to Europe – which is not so much sanctions-related but a consequence of Putin’s “freeze and split” strategy for Europe – has had a more significant impact, with production falling by 18-20 percent. If the situation does not change, gas production may shrink by an additional 7-8 percent in 2023. The impact of the sanctions on the Russian economy was significant but it was not as severe as some expected. It contracted by 2.1 percent in 2022 – much less than the predictions of 5-6 percent made in the spring. The fall in GDP was cushioned by the high oil and gas prices which brought in windfall profits. Revenues from hydrocarbon production and exports increased by 28 percent compared with 2021, and high inflation in the first half of 2022 led to an increase in nominal revenues from taxes. Financial sanctions, such as the freeze on the accounts and assets of the central bank and commercial banks, and the restriction on payments and access to capital mar-

kets, had the most immediate impact on the economy. In the spring of 2022, it took just a week for inflation in Russia to accelerate to more than two percent per week and for the dollar to appreciate by 60 percent to the rouble. The Russian financial authorities were able to mitigate this initial fallout by imposing restrictions on current and capital transactions and refusing to convert the rouble, thus strengthening the exchange rate and suppressing inflation. However, the gradual build-up of pressure on the balance of payments associated with restrictions on trade in Russian hydrocarbons led to a fall in the current account balance and a weakening of the rouble by more than 20 percent in the second half of the year. A more severe blow to the Russian economy came from the “moral sanctions” – the voluntary withdrawal of foreign companies from Russia. The most significant effect was the shutdown of automobile plants, which belonged to international companies. As a result, the production of new cars in Russia fell threefold, and sales – by 59 percent. The manufacturing industry in the Kaluga and Kaliningrad regions, where such plants were concentrated, shrunk by 20 percent. When considering the drop in industrial production and services, we should take into account the fact that throughout the past year, many foreign companies sold their assets to Russian businesses. This process, especially if we are talking about large production facilities, takes several months and requires the consent of the Russian government. During this time, current activities may stop, but after the transaction is legally formalised, the companies can resume their work. This means that to a certain extent, the economic decline reflected in shrinking gross domestic product (GDP) for 2022 may be partially compensated in 2023. The Russian government was also able to mitigate the effect of the sanctions on the general population by increasing spending. Public expenditure went up by 32 percent of the planned budget for 2022 or \$113bn. About half of the additional budget was directed to the military, but much of the rest was spent on new social programmes, including additional indexation of pensions, increased benefits for families with children, deferment of payroll tax payments, etc. The Russian government was able to cover the extra expenditure from the fiscal reserve accumulated in previous years, the National Wealth Fund (NWF). At the beginning of 2022, the liquid part of it amounted to \$113.5bn or 7.3 percent of GDP. The entire budget deficit for 2022, which equalled 3.3 trillion roubles (\$50bn), was financed from it. It is likely that in 2023, the fiscal reserve – which now has fallen to 4.6 percent of GDP or \$87bn – will be used to cover the budget deficit again. The pressure on the Russian government budget will inevitably increase in the coming years because the sluggish economy will not be able to generate enough revenues. As a result, the fiscal reserve may disappear completely by 2025-26, but that will not lead to a budgetary crisis. The overall Russian public debt is below 20 percent of GDP which allows the government to borrow from the domestic market. It seems that the past year of sanctions and economic downturn is continuing a trend of stagna-

tion in the Russian economy rather than starting a new one. In the first eight years of Putin’s presidency (2000-2008), the Russian economy grew at an average rate of 7 percent annually as a result of the economic reforms of the 1990s, high oil prices and extensive foreign borrowing. By contrast, between 2012 and 2021, the Russian economy grew on average by 1.4 percent. This slow growth had a lot to do with Putin’s authoritarian approach to political and economic decision-making after he returned to the presidency in 2012. While cracking down on political competition, he also dismantled the progressive system of arbitration courts, which had provided a much higher level of legal protection for businesses. Putin also launched a massive programme to rearm the military at the expense of investment in human capital development. After the annexation of Crimea in 2014 and the unleashing of the armed conflict in eastern Ukraine, sanctions were imposed against Russia limiting many companies’ access to modern technology. The research and development sector was also undermined, especially by criminal cases launched against Russian scientists, who were accused of treason. These factors severely worsened the business climate in the country and diminished economic growth. In the short term, the Kremlin will do its best to cushion the Russian population from the effects of the economic crisis. It is already looking to compensate for falling revenues from slumping oil and gas prices (down 43 percent for October 2022-January 2023 compared with January-March 2022) by introducing changes to oil tax rates. Putin also declared he wants Russian businesses to contribute voluntary payments to the budget to boost its revenues. This additional revenue will be used to finance not only the Russian army but also the families of regular and mobilised soldiers. Other social benefits and programmes will also be maintained. This will ensure that when the time comes for the presidential elections in March 2024, a considerable amount of the population would not mind seeing Putin re-elected with 70-75 percent of the votes. In the longer term, the Russian economy is still unlikely to experience a collapse. That is because even the most onerous sanctions have a limited effect. Iran is a good example of that. The country has been under US sanctions since 1987, but its GDP grew by 3.3 percent on average between 1990 and 2020. Like Iran, Russia will gradually lag behind the global economy and it will not achieve more than 1.5-2 percent annual growth. In the long term, the sanctions will have severe consequences for the technological development of the Russian economy. For ordinary Russians, this would mean a gradual decline in the quality of goods on store shelves and the inaccessibility of services that were customary until the war. Economic stagnation, however, is unlikely to lead to social or political unrest. The decline of the standard of living will be very slow and uneven, while the repression of dissidents and the political opposition will grow, making the cost of protest very high.

—Courtesy: Al Jazeera

EU must reinvent itself for a third time

Jean Pisani-Ferry

On climate change, the EU positioned itself as a global agenda-setter after the US withdrew from the Paris Agreement in 2020. But with the US fully recommitted to the climate fight and investing heavily in clean energy subsidies, Europe must redefine its stance. Will the bloc develop its own version of the Biden administration’s Inflation Reduction Act and embark on a subsidy race with the US and China? Or will it build on its own DNA

Tectonic changes in the global system are forcing all countries to redefine their strategic outlooks and growth models. But while changes are affecting every country, the EU faces a far more serious challenge that could put its very existence at risk. This is not the first time that the EU has found itself at a crossroads. Global crises tend to throw the bloc into an existential spiral that calls into question its priorities, structure and purpose. Whether Europe remains a major global player depends on its response to an unprecedented confluence of emergencies. The most prominent is undoubtedly the war in Ukraine, which has provided a stark reminder that the EU must develop its own security identity to defend its borders. But other issues are equally pressing. The escalating rivalry between the US and China is redrawing the map of global power. As the world increasingly divides into competing blocs, Europe must decide whether to align itself entirely with the US or retain a modicum of policy autonomy. On climate change, the EU positioned itself as a global agenda-setter after the US withdrew from the Paris Agreement in 2020. But with the US fully recommitted to the climate fight and investing heavily in clean energy subsidies, Europe must redefine its stance. Will the bloc develop its own version of the Biden administration’s Inflation Reduction Act and embark on a subsidy race with the US and China? Or will it build on its own DNA and respond with trade and competition instruments? European leaders’ recent statements suggest they are leaning toward the former. Either way, they must decide in a timely fashion. Europe has reinvented itself twice before, and this inflection point is significant enough to call for a third reinvention. In the mid-1980s, as stagnant growth and high unemployment led economists and political scientists (particularly on the American right) to

coin the term “eurosclerosis,” then-European Commission President Jacques Delors began drawing up plans for an economically integrated continent. Those plans became the single market program and laid the groundwork for the creation of the eurozone. Globalization proved to be another turning point. In the early 2000s, the UK Chancellor of the Exchequer Gordon Brown questioned the wisdom of pursuing European integration when the whole world was already rapidly integrating. As Russia and China had entered the global economy and joined the International Monetary Fund and World Trade Organization, regional integration seemed passe. The EU’s response to Brown’s challenge was to reinvent itself as a shaper of global standards. Over the past 20 years, European policymakers have taken a leading role in designing the rules-based international order, exporting regulatory standards for accounting, safety, privacy and consumer protection. As The Wall Street Journal put it, the EU became “the world’s regulator,” using its rulemaking as a form of soft power. But this type of soft power works only in a world governed by rules. Harvard’s Joseph S. Nye Jr., who introduced the concept in the late 1980s, explained that the difference between hard and soft power is that the former is fungible – meaning transferable from sphere to sphere – whereas the latter is not. In other words, military power can help countries gain economic power and vice versa, but regulatory strength does not translate into military or even economic clout. That is why the EU must reinvent itself again. In a world where autocrats and their supporters increasingly flout the rules that govern the Western-dominated liberal order, the EU can no longer rely on rules-setting to pursue its strategic goals. It needs a new purpose and identity. To this end, Marco Buti and Marcello Messori have come up with a framework that attempts to reconcile the EU’s domestic and foreign policy agendas. The EU, they argue, should

build on its comparative advantages and focus on delivering European public goods. This concept makes a lot of sense. It is broad enough to apply to defense, security, energy and climate action. It is also compatible with the EU’s subsidiarity principle, which holds that decisions should be made by member states whenever sufficient to reach common objectives. It would enable policymakers to switch from centralized tools to local initiatives when needed and could serve as a practical yardstick for deciding what counts as excessive centralization of power. Moreover, citizens could easily understand why some actions fall within the EU’s jurisdiction, while others remain the responsibility of member states. But even if it adopted this framework, the EU would still have some difficult choices to make. The reason why the EU lacks a common defense policy is not that member states fail to see that they would be better off acting together; it is that they do not trust each other and distrust the EU’s institutions even more. Similarly, European countries recognize that a common energy policy is in their collective interest; the reason they have failed to agree on one is that their national priorities differ widely. The EU’s recent spree of emergency borrowing to mitigate the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic offers important insights into the current state of European integration. Instead of being directed toward common initiatives, most of the money that was raised through the emergency program was transferred to individual member states. On balance, the subsidiarity principle would seem to favor endorsing the European public goods approach. But European countries must overcome individual reservations and learn to work together. The road toward a new European model may be mapped out, but it will be long and difficult.

—Courtesy: Arab News

Briefs

Dar rejects financial emergency

FROM PAGE 01
no-confidence motion, the leaders of the coalition government had decided to keep aside all political interests in the wider interest of the state. "My presser today would be a reality check for Imran Khan," Dar said angrily as the PTI leaders have been calling him out since the rupee plunged to a historic low of 285.09 a day earlier while February's inflation hit nearly a 50-year high of 31.5%. Expressing his surprise and concerns over Khan's continuous criticism of the coalition government, he said: "I am unable to understate whether he (Khan) has a problem in his leg or brain." Instead of protecting the national interest, PTI's leadership tried to sabotage the International Monetary Fund (IMF) deal, Dar said. "Khan's attitude is selfish." Pakistan is desperately trying to convince the Washington-based lender to release an overdue tranche of \$1.1 billion which will open other financial avenues for Pakistan. Referring to Khan's remarks about default, the finance minister said that the PTI chairman's statements "adversely affect" the country's financial markets. He, however, admitted that the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) reserves fell below \$3 billion. It should be noted that the liquid foreign reserves held by the country stand at around \$9 billion as of February 24 while the net reserves held by commercial banks stand at around \$5.5 billion. The finance minister revealed that China has renewed a facility under which Pakistan expected an additional inflow of \$500 million in the "next few days".

Rupee claws back on bailout revival assurances

FROM PAGE 01
A day earlier, Dar had assured that Pakistan would strike a staff-level agreement with the Washington-based lender next week as the negotiations are about to conclude. The finance minister — who took charge in September last year after Miftah Ismail was removed — also said that the economy is headed in the right direction and blamed miscreants for spreading rumours about Pakistan's possible default. "Anti-Pakistan elements are spreading malicious rumors that Pakistan may default. [...] SBP forex reserves have been increasing and are almost US \$1 billion higher than four weeks ago despite making all external due payments on time," FinMin Dar said. The finance minister added that the negotiations with IMF are about to conclude and we expect to sign SLA with the Fund by next week. "All economic indicators are slowly moving in the right direction," he added.

LHC orders release of arrested PTI leaders

FROM PAGE 01
fundamental rights" and the "economic meltdown" by the incumbent government". The court arrest movement was launched on February 22. The party's senior leaders, including Qureshi, Umar, along with party workers voluntarily surrendered themselves to the Lahore police on the first day of the campaign — and later, some of the others followed suit. The PTI Chairman Imran Khan on Wednesday, however, welcomed the Supreme Court (SC) verdict in the election suo motu notice and announced the suspension of the "Jail Bharo Tehreek", saying the party will move forward with election campaigns in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) and Punjab. In a split verdict, the top court had asked the president to consult with the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) and fix a date for elections in Punjab while the governor KP was ordered to announce a date for the election in the province.

PFF elections process to begin after Eid-ul-Fitr

"In the first step we are holding the elections for district associations," he said while not giving any date for PFF governing body elections. He affirmed that the mandate of FIFA-accredited NC will expire in June this year but it was not possible to hold election before it

AFZAL JAVED

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Football Federation Normalisation Committee chairman Haroon Malik has failed to give the election date for the country's football governing body, saying it is not possible to complete the electoral process before the NC term expires on June 30. Speaking at a press conference along with Minister for Inter-Provincial Coordination Ehsan-ur-Rehman Mazari, Haroon announced that the elections for district football associations would be held on May 15. "In the first step we are holding the elections for district associations," he said while not giving any date for PFF governing body elections. He affirmed that the mandate of FIFA-accredited NC



will expire in June this year but it was not possible to hold the election before it. "The constitution

is clear regarding the football federation's elections. Eight departments and four provinces have

voting rights for the process." Moreover, he added that the ministry of IPC was extending its full

support to the PFF NC for holding elections. IPC minister Mazari, who had given seven days ultimatum to Haroon for announcing the election date last week, said FIFA blocked the funds of the PFF for its inability to hold the elections. "We want PFF elections at the earliest," he said, adding they want to promote the sports in the country. It may be noted here that the football affairs in Pakistan have been mired in crisis since 2015 in the absence of an elected body. FIFA appointed a Normalisation Committee in September 2019 to put the country's football back on track. FIFA also suspended PFF membership for a 15-month period during that time after the Normalisation Committee was thrown out of office. The FIFA suspension was only lifted in June last year and extended the mandate of the NC by one year after it regained control of PFF in May.

Australia beat India by nine wickets to win third Test



INDORE: Travis Head and Marnus Labuschagne held their nerve on a viciously turning Indore pitch to guide Australia to a nine-wicket victory Friday and only their second Test win in India since 2004. After Australia were thrashed in the first two Tests inside three days, the series now stands at 2-1 to the hosts with one match remaining. Labuschagne finished on 28 not out and Head on 49, having lost opener Usman Khawaja to only the second ball

of the day. The dogged victory secured Australia a berth in the ICC World Test Championship final in June at The Oval. India will be sure of their place in the final if they win the fourth Test in Ahmedabad. "I just tried to take it one step at a time," said Head. "We have seen it throughout the series that with the wickets, the quality of bowling, anything can happen. "So we were just trying to take it one ball at a time. It's just nice to contribute." In a low-scoring and fre-

netic encounter, Australia skittled India for 109 on day one with spinner Matthew Kuhnemann giving the hosts a taste of their own medicine with five wickets. In reply Australia made a solid start before collapsing to 197 all out before lunch on day two, their last six wickets tumbling for just 11 runs. Eight wickets for spinner Nathan Lyon saw India bundled out for 163 in their second innings, setting up a victory target of 76. Australia made the worst of starts with Khawaja, the

hero of the first innings, out second ball of the day. The opening batsman edged Ravichandran Ashwin to keeper Srikanth Bharat for a duck. A stunned Khawaja, who had looked supremely assured in the first innings, reviewed the decision but the dismissal was upheld — to jubilation from the noisy Indore crowd. Virat Kohli was convinced he had caught gum-chewing Labuschagne, the world number one Test batsman, at slip off Ashwin in the seventh over but India's review was unsuccessful. After 45 minutes, Labuschagne and Head changed gears. Head launched Ashwin for a six over mid-on and the next over drilled Ravindra Jadeja down the ground for a four as the shackles came off. Labuschagne too got in the act, hitting Jadeja for a four and dismissing a short Ashwin delivery on a half-volley for four more to bring a rare Australia win in India in view. A flurry of more boundaries quickly reduced the deficit, calmed nerves in the Australian dressing room and silenced the home crowd. It is only the third time that India — who have won their last 15 home series — have lost a game at home in the last decade. — APP

PSG star Hakimi charged with rape allegations

PARIS: Paris Saint-Germain and Morocco defender Achraf Hakimi was charged with rape on Friday, French prosecutors said. Hakimi, 24, was questioned by prosecutors on Thursday about accusations made by a 24-year-old woman, and subsequently charged. The Madrid-born player, who was a key part of Morocco's historic run to the semi-finals of the World Cup in Qatar last year, trained with his PSG teammates on Friday morning. A PSG spokesman said the club "gives its support" to Hakimi and "places its trust in the justice system". Hakimi allegedly paid for his accuser to travel to his home in the Paris suburb of Boulogne-Billancourt last Saturday while his wife and children were away on holiday. The woman went to a police station on Sunday and was questioned by prosecutors on Wednesday, according to sources close to the case. On Monday, Hakimi appeared at the FIFA Best awards ceremony in Paris, where he was named in the FIFPro men's world team of the year. The player's lawyer Fanny Colin said Hakimi "firmly denies all the accusations against him" and that he was the victim of "an attempted racket". She said Hakimi welcomed the charge laid against him because "he finally has the possibility to defend himself". Rachel Flore Pardo, the lawyer for the alleged victim, told AFP: "My client maintains everything that she said. She made the choice to speak exclusively to prosecutors and does not want the affair to become a media issue, mainly to protect her safety." Under French law, being charged does not necessarily mean the case will go to trial. "Returning to action" Reigning French champions PSG are top of Ligue 1 and face Nantes on Saturday before travelling to Germany where they play Bayern Munich in the second leg of the Champions League last 16. The French side trail 1-0 from the first leg. On Friday, PSG said the right-back, who has been receiving treatment for a thigh injury, would return to action "next week", suggesting he would be in squad for the Bayern match. Daily newsletterReceive essential international news every morning. Legal proceedings against Hakimi do not prevent him from leaving France. — DNA

Mane in frame for return against PSG

MUNICH: Bayern Munich forward Sadio Mane is in the frame for a return to the starting lineup in Wednesday's second leg with Paris Saint-Germain, after manager Julian Nagelsmann on Friday promised "more minutes" for the returning striker. Speaking ahead of Saturday's Bundesliga clash at Stuttgart, Nagelsmann said Mane will continue his return following three months on the sidelines after a leg injury ruled him out of the World Cup. The Senegal forward made his first appearance since November when he came off the bench for 25 minutes in Sunday's 3-0 win over fellow title-chasers Union Berlin. Nagelsmann suggested that Mane would again feature off the bench against Stuttgart. "He's making a good impression. We will try and give him more minutes," said Nagelsmann. "It was a serious injury but his fitness levels are good. Sadio is part of the usual competition for spots." Nagelsmann said his side needed to "walk the tightrope" with team selections ahead of the "incredibly important game" against PSG while considering their push for domestic honours. Bayern hold a 1-0 advantage ahead of Wednesday's return Champions League fixture and sit equal on points with Borussia Dortmund in the league. Bayern could be three points behind at kickoff should Dortmund win Friday's home clash with RB Leipzig but Nagelsmann implied the priority was to ensure progression to the Champions League quarter-finals. — APP



ISLAMABAD: A student take part during 9th Higher Education Commission Intervarsity Women Rowing Championship at Rawal Dam in Federal Capital, Organized by Rawalpindi Women University Directorate of Students Affairs . — Online

United ready to 'fight' for result at Liverpool

Ten Hag's third-placed team are still chasing four trophies in his first season at Old Trafford, while Liverpool, who fell agonisingly short of an unprecedented quadruple last season, have struggled

LIVERPOOL: Erik ten Hag says Manchester United are prepared to "suffer" and "sacrifice" at a hostile Anfield as they seek a win against Liverpool that would keep them on the fringes of the Premier League title race. Victory on Sunday would keep alive United's slim hopes of catching leaders Arsenal while defeat would bolster Liverpool's hopes of a late push for the top four. "I'm looking forward to it, the ambience, the atmosphere," said Ten Hag, fresh from winning the League Cup last weekend to end the club's six-year trophy drought. "It will be great, it will be hostile against us, but we like that. "I know these players, my squad, my team, will be prepared to go there and fight and to go there with confidence. We know it's going to be difficult, we know we will have to suffer and we will have to sacrifice to get a good result." Ten Hag's third-placed team are still chasing four trophies in his first season at Old Trafford, while Liverpool, who fell agonisingly short of an unprecedented quadruple last season, have struggled. Jurgen Klopp's men have, though, been

in form in recent weeks, winning three of their past four league games, leaving them

10 points behind United and six points behind fourth-placed Tottenham.



Ten Hag was reluctant to read too much into the switch in fortunes of the two clubs. "We are still in the season now," he said. "It's always a pattern, never does it always go so consistently. "It's fluid and I am sure Liverpool have really good management, a really good playing philosophy and a really good strategy. We are aware of that but we are not talking about other clubs. "We are talking about us and I think we are in a good direction and with our philosophy, strategy and culture, we have to keep making progress. It's all about that." United's away form against their rivals has been one black mark in a fine season, with defeats against City and Arsenal. But the United boss sees no reason why they cannot win at a raucous Anfield this weekend and complete a league double over Liverpool this season. "We have to play and to make it our game," said the Dutchman. "Of course we know the ambience will not be supporting us and you have to deal with that. But our players, they like it. They like to play in such atmospheres." — APP

PSL 8th Edition



SATURDAY 07:00 PM
MARCH 04, 2023
Gaddafi Stadium,
Lahore, Pakistan



President announces April 30...

FROM PAGE 01
"The Supreme Court, in its order, had allowed the president and the ECP to go beyond the 90-day time limit, but had used the word 'bare minimum', implying that the extension should be as small as possible." "We think that the ECP has taken a step in the right direction and the president now will announce a date for polls." Congratulating the nation over the development, Fawad said it is a victory for PTI, the nation, and the Constitution of Pakistan. The apex court had noted in its verdict on March 1 that in "ordinary circumstances" the polls should have been held on April 9 as announced by the president. "However, we are informed that on account of the delay in the emergence of the date for the holding of the general election, it may not be possible to meet the 90-day deadline stipulated by the Constitution.

PM hails fraternal ties with...

FROM PAGE 01
brotherly bilateral relations and assured reciprocity and support from the Qatari side in this regard. Qatar hosts around 250,000 Pakistani diaspora, playing an important role in the development of both the nations. This year marks the 50th Anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Pakistan and Qatar. Both sides are committed to celebrating this anniversary in a befitting manner.

Imran seeks normal ties with Army Chief

FROM PAGE 01
the upcoming general elections and said: "We [PTI] will win the election despite Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) umpires." He declared that overseas Pakistanis stood with his party and would keep supporting PTI. In response to a query regarding his recent trip to Islamabad when he was due to be present in four courts, Khan said that the decision to travel to the capital by road, instead of air, was made late at night. "There was news that they wanted to arrest me from the airport and take me to Balochistan." The PTI chief expressed concerns that he was "in danger from those who should protect me". He also said that going to jail would earn the party more votes. Khan also said that women who had been elected on reserved seats also wanted to be considered as candidates for the post of the Punjab chief minister. "If the decision for the post is made now, there will be a massacre," Khan laughed.

Maryam slams PTI over 'audio leak'

FROM PAGE 01
contempt of court case when Nawaz Sharif was sacked for not taking salary from his son. "Nawaz Sharif's daughter is here in Gujranwala. Where is your [Imran Khan] daughter? The person who cannot give justice to his own daughter how can he give justice to Pakistan," she said. Maryam said that when a person like Imran Khan gets certificate of Sadiq and Ameen then the courts get disrespected.

Briefs

Lula tells Zelensky he wants to help for peace

BRASÍLIA: Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva on Thursday renewed a proposal for his country to take part in international mediation concerning Ukraine, during a call with his counterpart Volodymyr Zelensky.

"I have just had a video meeting with the president of Ukraine. I reaffirmed Brazil's desire to speak with other countries and participate in whatever initiatives around the construction of peace and dialogue," Lula posted on Twitter. "War cannot be of interest to anyone." Zelensky confirmed the phone call and thanked Brazil for supporting a UN resolution on February 24 that demanded Russia immediately and unconditionally withdraw its troops from Ukraine. "We highlighted the importance of upholding the principle of sovereignty & territorial integrity of states," Zelensky said of the call on Twitter. "We also discussed diplomatic efforts to bring peace back to Ukraine and the world." The conversation between the two presidents came a day after Brazil's Foreign Minister Mauro Vieira met with his Russian counterpart Sergei Lavrov during the G20 meeting of foreign ministers in New Delhi. — Agencies

Japan to send medical team to Türkiye

DNA

TOKYO: Japan will dispatch a third medical team to southern parts of quake-hit Türkiye on Saturday, the country's Foreign Ministry said. The 41-member Japan Disaster Relief (JDR) medical team will include doctors, nurses, pharmacists, medical coordinators, and task coordinators, said the ministry in a statement on Friday. It will relieve the second JDR medical team which is already providing medical assistance to people affected by two strong earthquakes in southern Gaziantep province. "Japan will continue to provide seamless and effective assistance as much as possible until the restoration and reconstruction of Türkiye," the ministry added. Japan is currently conducting its largest overseas medical mission in history in the Oguzeli district of Gaziantep, following the twin earthquakes that hit Türkiye on Feb. 6, killing over 45,000 people across 11 provinces. As Türkiye and Japan enjoy warm ties, Tokyo dispatched the JDR Urban Search and Rescue Team of 74 members soon after the natural disaster. The first JDR Medical Team had 75 members, while the second has 65. Besides, Tokyo also sent members of JDR Self-Defense Force Units to Türkiye.

Moscow denies to talk with US about prisoners exchange

MOSCOW: Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova denied on Friday that top Russian and US diplomats discussed an exchange of US national Paul Whelan who is serving a prison sentence in Russia for espionage. In a post on Telegram, she called "lies" comments by US State Department spokesman Ned Price, who said Secretary of State Antony Blinken "put forward a serious proposal" during a short contact with Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov on the sidelines of the G-20 ministerial meeting in New Delhi on Thursday. "Oh, how interesting. I asked Sergey Viktorovich if Blinken had raised the topic of Whelan yesterday. It turned out that the US secretary of state did not even stutter on this score. "Everything that the State Department said yesterday that Blinken expressed concern about the situation around a US citizen is a lie. The incredible behavior of the American administration," Zakharova said. Zakharova on Thursday said Blinken "asked for contact with Lavrov," and the two diplomats then spoke "on the go." —APP

APNS greets Haroon Shah on becoming adviser

Annual General Council meeting of APNS on March 20

The Executive Committee expressed its concern over the delay in payments by the Federal as well as Sindh, Punjab and KPK provincial governments

DNA

KARACHI: The Executive Committee of the APNS at its meeting held on March 02, 2023 at Karachi, adopted the Annual Report for the year 2022-23 as well as the Annual Accounts for the year 2022. The Executive Committee appreciated the Secretariat's efforts in recovering current and old dues. The members of the Executive Committee considered the state of print media freedom of press in the country. Mr. Nadeem-ur-Rehman Memon, Secretary Information, Sindh attended the meeting of the Executive Committee on special invitation by the President. The members apprised him on the problems faced by member publications based in Sindh. The Secretary acknowledged the issue of non-payment of non-budgeted dues for previous years as well as delayed payments of budgeted dues and assured that the Sindh



Information Department intends to sort out the issues and have requested the provincial government to allocate a certain amount in the budget to streamline the payment system. He reiterated that a tri-partite reconciliation to verify the old outstanding as well as budgeted and non-budgeted dues will be completed in 15 days. The Executive Committee expressed its concern over the delay in payments by the Federal as well as Sindh, Punjab and KPK provincial governments. The members emphasized that pub-

lications are going through acute financial hardships because of non-payment of these dues. The Secretary General, Ms. Nazafreen Saigol Lakhani informed them of ongoing discussions with the Federal and provincial governments and commitments made by both governments to work with the APNS to expedite the recovery of dues. The Secretary General informed the Executive Committee members that she is exerting all efforts to ensure recovery of dues as soon as possible. The following attended the meeting: Sar-

mad Ali, President, Shahab Zuberi, Vice President, Nazafreen Saigol Lakhani, Secretary General, Mohsin Bilal, Joint Secretary, Bilal Farooqui (Daily Aghaz), Najamuddin Sheikh (Daily Deyanat), Muhammad Yunus Mehar (Daily Halchal), Kazi Mustafa (Daily Ibrat), Syed Akbar Tahir (Daily Jasarat), Javed Mehr Shamsi (Daily Kaleem), Mirza Zafar Javid (Daily Kawish), Muhammad Manzoor Rana (Daily Mashriq, Quetta), Mr. Mushtaq Ahmed Qureshi (Monthly Naey Ufaq), Ms. Zahida Abbasi (Daily Nau Sijj),

Salman Qureshi (Monthly Naya Rukh), Mubasher Mir (D/Pakistan, Lahore), Faisal Zahid Malik (Daily Pakistan Observer), and Muhammad Saleem (Daily Sindh Sujag). Mumtaz Ali Phulpoto (Daily Awami Parchar) attend the meeting as special observer. The following attended the meeting on Zoom: Jamil Athar, Sr. Vice President, Muhammad Awais Khushnood, Finance Secretary, Mumtaz A. Tahir (Daily Aftab), Waseem Ahmed (Daily Awam, Quetta), Ansar Mahmood Bhatti (Monthly Centreline), Fauzia Sha-

heen (Monthly Dastak), Muhammad Waqaruddin (Daily Dunya), Bilal Mahmood (Weekly Family), Imtina Shahid (Daily Khabrain), Rukhsana Saulat Saleemi (Weekly Nikhar) and Dr. Waqar Yousuf Azeemi (Monthly Roohani Digest). Meanwhile the President, Secretary General and the members of the Executive Committee greeted Pir Haroon Shah on becoming the Adviser to the KPK government. The office bearers wished his best of luck for his future assignment.

Corruption scandal: MEPs Eva and Marc to stay in jail

BRUSSELS: The pre-trial jail detention of MEPs Eva Kaili and Marc Tarabella, who are accused of being involved in the cash-for-favour scheme that has engulfed the European Parliament, was on Friday extended by Belgian authorities.

Greek MEP Kaili, who was arrested and jailed in early December, has had her detention extended by two months, the Federal prosecutor's office announced on Friday. Her Belgian counterpart will appear before judges again in a month.

Both have been charged with participation in a criminal organisation, corruption and money laundering as part of an investigation into the illicit lobbying allegedly carried out by Qatar and Morocco in a bid to influence EU decision-making. Both countries have vehemently denied the claims. Tarabella's lawyer, Maxim Töller, reiterated in a statement that his client



is "an innocent man" and lambasted his continued detention as "difficult to accept". He however welcomed "as good news" the decision to transfer him "to a prison closer to his family". There was no word on Tarabella's attempts to have the investigating judge, Michel Claise, removed from the case for alleged bias.

Three other people have been charged as part of the investigation. These include

Francesco Giorgi, Kaili's life partner and a former parliamentary assistant, who was released last week but placed under electronic monitoring; NGO director Niccol Fig-Talamanca who was released from detention last month without conditions; and former MEP Pier Antonio Panzeri. Panzeri, Giorgi's former boss and a former chair of the Parliament's delegation for relations with the Maghreb countries and

human rights subcommittee, has recognised being one of the leaders of the criminal network and cut a deal with Belgian authorities but remains in prison. Italian MEP Andrea Cazzolino, for whom Giorgi also worked and who also chaired the delegation for relations with Maghreb countries after Panzeri, is meanwhile wanted by the Belgian authorities but is fighting the extradition from his native country.—DNA

Cambodia opp leader jailed 27 years for treason

PHNOM PENH: Cambodian opposition leader Kem Sokha was on Friday sentenced to 27 years in jail for treason, a verdict that ruled him out of elections this year and was immediately denounced by the United States as a "miscarriage of justice." Kem Sokha was accused of hatching a "secret plan" in collusion with foreign entities to topple the government of longtime Prime Minister Hun Sen, upon his arrest in 2017. The 69-year-old co-founder of the now-dissolved Cambodia National Rescue Party (CNRP) has long been a prominent adversary of Hun Sen, who critics say has wound back democratic freedoms and used the courts to stifle opposition. Kem Sokha has repeatedly denied the charges against him, which rights groups say were designed to bar him from politics ahead of July's elections. Immediately after the verdict at the Phnom Penh court, he was placed under house arrest and banned from meeting foreigners and anyone who is not a family member without permission of the court. His daughter Kem Monovithya tweeted his house was now under police surveillance. US ambassador W. Patrick Murphy, who was at the court, slammed the trial and sentence as a "miscarriage of justice". "The United States is deeply troubled by the conviction of respected political leader Kem Sokha," he told reporters. Last August, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken met Kem Sokha during a visit to Phnom Penh, where he also raised concerns about the kingdom's ailing democracy in talks with Hun Sen. UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Turk urged the government to promptly release Kem Sokha.—APP

China-made Chery to repeat its sales miracle

DNA

ISLAMABAD: China-made Chery vehicle to repeat its sales miracle in Pakistani market, Gwadar Pro reported on Friday. "It's an amazing experience! Good interior space and a powerful engine make TIGGO 4 the best option for a car in its price range!" Abdul, from Balochistan, could not hide his excitement to share his TIGGO 4 driving experience with other consumers at a recent test drive event held by Clifton, one of Chery's offline dealers in Pakistan. Many consumers, like Abdul, were patiently waiting for the test runs of Chery's TIGGO 4 and TIGGO 8. "Pakistan's current economic difficulties have adversely affected the delivery schedule of booked orders in the auto sector. I believe these force majeure conditions will pass quickly and we will soon have Chery TIGGO series at our doorsteps," said another customer.

Automobile sales in Pakistan hit a 31-month low of 10,867 units in January 2023 amid a partial halt in small car production due to restrictions on the import of components and a surge in prices following a massive devaluation of the rupee. However, production and sales of jeeps and pickups showed a notable growth in January, compared to the previous month, despite all the odds. Sales of jeeps and pickups in January increased to 4,846 units from 3,232 units in December 2022, a month-on-month growth of 49.93%, according to the data of Pakistan Automotive Manufacturers Association (PAMA).

Ukraine's Bakhmut 'practically surrounded'

WEB DESK

KYIV: The head of Russian mercenary group Wagner said Friday the group had "practically encircled" Bakhmut, an industrial city in eastern Ukraine that has seen the fiercest fighting of Moscow's invasion. The Kremlin meanwhile warned the West against providing more arms to Ukraine, as key Kyiv backers President Joe Biden and German Chancellor Olaf Scholz were set to meet in Washington. Ukraine has said it will defend "fortress Bakhmut" for as long as possible but this week officials said the situation was becoming increasingly difficult. Russia is determined to seize Bakhmut — a now-destroyed city once known for its sparkling wine — as part of its wider aim of capturing the entire Donetsk region. "Wagner paramilitary group units have practically surrounded Bakhmut, only one road remains" to be captured, Yevgeny Prigozhin said in a video on Telegram. The stocky 61-year old has regularly been posting about advances of Wagner, his once-shadowy force that has taken centre stage in the fight in eastern Ukraine.—APP

German ex-general urges talks for Ukraine truce

FOREIGN DESK

BERLIN: A former German general has called for talks to be launched between Moscow and Kyiv to end the Russia-Ukraine war that began a year ago. "It's trench warfare, like in the First World War. From my point of view, it's become a war of attrition. Basically, you have to see how you can negotiate an armistice. I think the time is now," said ex-Brig. Gen. Erich Vad in an exclusive interview with Anadolu. The West should still maintain its military aid to Kyiv, however, to ensure that the country is not "undetermined in future negotiations," said the former military policy advisor of then-Chancellor Angela Merkel. Vad criticized Ukraine's Western allies for lacking a "real political strategy" on Ukraine's war objectives.

Türkiye launches 'risk shield' against future disasters

ANKARA: Earthquakes were naturally the No. 1 item on the agenda of the first meeting for the National Risk Shield Model, a program aiming to boost preparedness and resistance against future disasters, from floods and landslides to drought and forest fires. Nearly one month after the two deadly earthquakes claimed thousands of lives in Türkiye's south, President Recep Tayyip Erdogan on Friday hosted a group of experts at the Dolmabahçe presidential office in Istanbul, a few days after he announced the launch of the program. Speaking at the meeting, Erdogan said Türkiye was going through a difficult period following the impact of two earth-

quakes and about 12,000 aftershocks. "We have the sorrow of the loss of more than 45,000 citizens and 115,000 others injured. We are working day and night to heal the wounds stemming from this disaster that directly affected the lives of about 14 million people and forced 3.5 million people to migrate to other cities," he said. Erdogan said they were in the process of rebuilding and rubble removal following the conclusion of search and rescue efforts. "Once the damage assessment work is completed, we will have a clear picture of how many new residences we should construct. Currently, there are 214,000 buildings either demolished or heavily

damaged and in the need of demolition," Erdogan said. He said the rebuilding was underway in new areas in affected provinces. "We are relocating cities to areas with stable ground, from plains to the mountains," he said. Erdogan also underlined that rebuilt areas would adhere to the rule of "horizontal architecture," with buildings consisting of four floors at most, in building complexes constructed by the Housing Development Administration (TOKI). He said they were consulting with scientists and engineers in the rebuilding process. The model will guide Türkiye to review measures in areas under risk from disasters and include steps to

be taken during and after the disasters. Scientists from around Türkiye and the world and technical personnel from the country's public agencies specialized in the prevention and reduction of fallout from disasters will be involved in shaping the model. The Ministry of Environment, Urban Planning and Climate Change will be coordinating the creation of the model. Erdogan said they also considered including more "crises" to combat while devising the risk model. "We should include planning against pandemics, terrorism, migration flow and economic crisis as well. We have to consider terrorism trouble we are exposed to due to the re-

gion's geopolitics and social chaos. We need to adapt an approach beyond politics," Erdogan said. Along with the technical approach, the model will derive from the views and proposals of sociology experts. Professor Orhan Tatar, earthquake and risk reduction department head at Türkiye's Disaster and Emergency Management Authority (AFAD) says it is a "national mobilization move" and urged every specialist to contribute to the model. Speaking to Anadolu Agency (AA) ahead of Friday's meeting, Tatar said they needed healthy contributions by everyone, from decision-makers to academics, scientists and other experts for the process. "Every city has different disasters

they can be exposed to in the future. (The state) has done a lot of work to prevent the fallout but we still have work to do," he said. Most of Türkiye is located on the Anatolian tectonic plate, which sits between two major plates, the Eurasian and African, and a minor one, the Arabian. As the larger African and Arabian plates shift Türkiye is being literally squeezed, while the Eurasian plate impedes any northward movement. Thus, Türkiye sits on several fault lines. Türkiye also risks aggravating forest fires amid concerns over climate change that intensifies the severity and size of fires, while floods because of unprecedented precipitation claimed dozens of lives in the country's north in 2021.—Agencies



MOSCOW: Amb Shafqat Ali Khan called on Senator Andrey Denisov Vice Chair of the Foreign Relations Committee of the Federation Council. Views were exchanged on bilateral relations, ideas to enhance parliamentary cooperation & topical issues of regional & international politics.—DNA

Briefs

PHC
postpones
by-polls on
NA seats

DNA

PESHAWAR: The Peshawar High Court (PHC) on Friday ordered the postponement of the by-polls scheduled to be held this month on the National Assembly seats, reported media. The court issued a notice to the concerned parties while issuing an order postponing the by-elections that had been scheduled to take place on March 16 and 19. Today's hearing was held on the petition filed against National Assembly Speaker Raja Pervaiz Ashraf's acceptance of the resignations of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) members of the assembly, requesting the court to postpone the by-polls. The PHC announced its decision to postpone the by-elections on the NA seats and issued an order suspending the election schedule. Later, the court adjourned the hearing till March 7. It should be noted that by-elections were to be held on a total of 24 seats in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa (K-P).

TTP
members
extorting
money
arrested

DNA

KARACHI: Special Investigation Unit (SIU) claimed to be arrested two 'TTP members' accused of extorting money from industrialists from Karachi's site area on Friday, media reported. Media acquired CCTV footage in which a person can be seen dropping a note for the factory owner, demanding extortion from the factory owners in the site area. SIU Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) arrested two operatives out of eight gang members of extortionists and claimed that the arrested criminals belong to outlawed Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), Sajna factions. SSP maintained that the accused were apparently in the water tankers business, while the extorted money was sent to Buner District in Malakand Division of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP). Last month, Karachi police arrested 'wanted terrorist' of the banned organisation TTP from the Chakiwara neighbourhood.

ANP hints
at parting
ways with
PDM govt

DNA

LAHORE: After reservations from the Balochistan Awami Party (BAP), Awami National Party (ANP), another ally party of the PDM government on Friday has hinted to part ways with the government over 'reservations', media reported. Senior ANP leader Senator Umar Farooq in an interview said they should not have joined the government after the ouster of Imran Khan's regime. "The party should come out of the coalition government and the final decision will be taken in a party meeting within a few days." The ANP leader further said that the main agenda of the meeting is to consult on parting ways with the government. The ANP lawmaker of the upper house said he has given an application to sit on the opposition benches in Senate. I will not support any bill of the government, said the annoyed lawmaker, Farooq said and added that we have not given any relief to the masses after coming into power. Taking on PML-N vice president Maryam Nawaz, the ANP leader said the daughter of the former prime minister wants to put the burden of failure on the PDM parties. Maryam should tell who is PM and which party has major ministries, he maintained.

Ukraine orders people
to leave liberated city

Meanwhile, head of Russia's Wagner mercenary force, says his fighters surrounded the eastern Ukrainian city of Bakhmut

NEWS DESK

KYIV: Ukraine has ordered the mandatory evacuation of vulnerable residents from the front-line city of Kupiansk and adjacent north-eastern territories as fears mount Russia will retake the key city and rail hub. "Mandatory evacuation of families with children and residents with limited mobility began in Kupiansk community," the Kharkiv regional military administration said on its website on Friday. "The decision was made ... taking into account the unstable security situation due to constant shelling of the territory of the community by Russian troops," it added. Ukraine made rapid gains in the northeast-

ern Kharkiv region late last year, driving deep into Russian lines, but its forces have been on the defensive for three months. In September, Russian troops retreated from key cities in the Kharkiv region, including Kupiansk. The city has been an important rail centre used by Russia since it took control after its February 24 invasion. Kupiansk, home to about 27,000 people before the beginning of the war, is near the front line in eastern Ukraine and locals fear it could be taken over again. Kharkiv region Governor Oleg Syngubov said on Thursday Russia "shelled" several settlements in the region with artillery, multiple rocket launchers and mortars, including the city of Kupiansk. Meanwhile, Russian troops and

mercenaries were closing off on Friday the last access routes to the besieged Ukrainian city of Bakhmut, which is located about 130km (80 miles) southeast of Kharkiv. Yevgeny Prigozhin, head of Russia's Wagner mercenary force, says his fighters surrounded the eastern Ukrainian city of Bakhmut and that Kyiv's troops had only one road left. Ukrainian authorities unearth people who were hastily buried in makeshift graves during Russia's brief occupation of villages and towns near Kyiv, to identify victims and investigate alleged war crimes. Meanwhile, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken spoke to his Ukrainian counterpart and discussed Blinken's brief conversation with Russia's Sergey Lavrov,

US spokesperson Ned Price said.

"The secretary underscored to foreign minister Kuleba the United States's enduring support for Ukraine as it defends itself against Russia's brutal attacks, including the ongoing targeting of civilian infrastructure and resulting civilian casualties," Price added. The US and Russian diplomats spoke on Thursday for roughly 10 minutes on the sidelines of the G20 conference in New Delhi, India. "I told the foreign minister what I and so many others said last week at the United Nations and what so many G20 foreign ministers said today: End this war of aggression. Engage in meaningful diplomacy that can produce a just and durable peace," Blinken said.

Indonesian cyclist
en route to Makkah
reaches Pakistan

ISLAMABAD: Two Indonesian cyclists, Asid Kusuma Atmaja and Yunus started their long-awaited spiritual journey to Makkah on bicycles from Indonesia in August 2022 to spread the message of peace, tolerance, and kindness. After traveling with bicycles across five countries; Malaysia,

Thailand, Myanmar, Singapore, and Bangladesh, they took a flight to Pakistan. In Pakistan, they are staying in the premises of the Indonesian Embassy to obtain a visa for their next destination, which is Oman. They intend to travel to Makkah via Oman and the United Arab Emirates.

Indonesian Ambassador Adam Tugio welcomed the two Indonesian cyclists and wished them a safe journey as they embarked on their unique adventurous trip to Makkah.

The visiting cyclists are exploring Islamabad on their bicycles while displaying the flags of Indonesia and Pakistan and other visited countries to express the love and brotherhood between all brotherly nations and other visited countries. They were very warmly greeted by the people of Pakistan and received a lot of appreciation for their courage. Asid Kusuma Atmaja said, "This is my first International tour on a cycle, the motivation behind starting this journey was pure love and devotion for the supreme power of this world, which is Allah, and the Holy Prophet Muhammad (PBUH)".

Asid and Yunus encountered many challenges during their arduous journey such as visa issues, grueling weather conditions, language barriers, and security concerns. Sometimes they camped on the side of the road, slept inside mosques, and on many occasions, it was too cold to sleep. They said these challenges are only making them stronger and more steadfast in achieving their goals.

Yunus shared that he had been yearning for this expedition since his college days. He finds it hard to comprehend that his biggest dream is actually turning into reality and he is more than half-way through his journey. The cyclists are also very popular and liked by millions from all over the world on TikTok. By sharing their journey through short videos, they hope to motivate youth to achieve great things in life and leave a legacy behind despite any challenges or hardships. - DNA

Iran blames
foreign enemies
for schoolgirl
poisonings

WEB DESK

TEHRAN: Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi has blamed a wave of poisonings of hundreds of schoolgirls around the country on Tehran's enemies. The so-far unexplained poison attacks at more than 30 schools in at least four cities started in November in Iran's Shia Muslim holy city of Qom, prompting some parents to take their children out of school. Iran's health minister said on Tuesday that hundreds of girls in different schools have been affected and some politicians have suggested they could have been targeted by religious groups opposed to girls' education. Raisi, speaking to a crowd in southern Iran on Friday in a speech carried live on state television, blamed the poisoning on Iran's enemies. "This is a security project to cause chaos in the country whereby the enemy seeks to instill fear and insecurity among parents and students," he said.

China beating
West in critical
technologies

NEWS DESK

MELBOURNE: China leads the world in 37 out of 44 critical technologies, with Western democracies falling behind in the race for scientific and research breakthroughs, a report by an Australian think tank has found. China is in a position to become the world's top technology superpower, with its dominance already spanning defence, space, robotics, energy, the environment, biotechnology, artificial intelligence (AI), advanced materials and key quantum technology, according to the report by the Australian Strategic Policy Institute (ASPI).

Cambodia opp.
leader sentenced
to 27 years

WEB DESK

PHNOM PENH: Cambodian opposition leader Kem Sokha has been sentenced to 27 years under house arrest after being found guilty of treason following a three-year trial in which a judge deemed that his election campaigning and civil society work were designed to encourage a 'colour revolution'. The judge at the Phnom Penh Municipal Court told the former president of the Cambodia National Rescue Party (CNRP) that he would be banned from politics and voting in elections indefinitely. Nor would he be allowed to meet anyone outside his family while under house arrest. Kem Sokha was arrested in September 2017 without a warrant in a midnight raid on his home and taken to a provincial jail.



ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's Ambassador to US of America, Masood Khan calls on Finance Minister Ishaq Dar. - DNA

Horrific numbers of Israeli settler attacks

Between 2010 and 2019, nearly 3,000 Israeli settler attacks killed at least 22 Palestinians and injured 1,258 others across the occupied West Bank

MONITORING DESK

OCCUPIED WEST BANK: On February 26, at least 400 Israeli settlers attacked several Palestinian villages in Nablus, including Hawara, killing one man and injuring hundreds of others. Settlers burned down more than 30 homes and at least 100 cars while beating Palestinians with metal rods and rocks. According to Israeli media, six settlers were arrested. On March 1, Bezalel Smotrich, Israel's finance minister who also handles civil administration in the occupied West Bank, said Hawara should be "wiped out". Israeli settlements are Jewish communities built on Palestinian land. Between 600,000 and 750,000 Israeli settlers live in at least 250 settlements and outposts built by the Israeli government and settlers, across the occupied Palestinian WB and East Jerusalem.

That is equivalent to roughly 11 percent of the total Jewish Israeli population. They live beyond the "internationally recognised" borders of their state, on Palestinian land that Israel militarily occupied in 1967 and continues to do so until today. Settlers also lived in the besieged Gaza Strip until 2005, when they were evacuated. Israeli settlements are illegal under international law as they violate the Fourth Geneva Convention, which bans an occupying power from transferring its population to the area it occupies. This is for a variety of reasons, including protecting civilians from the theft of resources by the occupying power and to prevent changes in the demographic makeup of the occupied territory. The majority of settlements have been built either entirely or partially on private Palestinian land. Despite being outside of Israel proper, these settlers are granted Israeli citizenship and receive

government subsidies that significantly lower their cost of living. In contrast, Palestinians living in the West Bank are subject to Israeli military law. The majority of settlers are armed and Palestinians living in the occupied West Bank and East Jerusalem suffer from hundreds of Israeli settler attacks each year. Such attacks, which include shootings, stabbings, arson, beatings and rock-throwing, have become more organised over the past few years. Every year, thousands of Palestinian trees and cars are burned by these settlers. Many of these incidents have been recorded on video showing that the attacks often take place under the protection or in coordination with the Israeli army, sometimes with soldiers and settlers shooting side by side. Between 2010 and 2019, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs recorded at least 2,955 settler attacks, in which at least 22 Palestinians

were killed, and at least 1,258 others were injured. The governorates of Nablus, Hebron and Ramallah had the highest number of incidents. Since the start of 2023, Israeli settler-related violence reached an average of three incidents per day compared with two incidents per day in 2022, and one incident per day in 2021, the UN told Al Jazeera. This is the highest daily average of settler-related incidents affecting Palestinians since 2006, it added. According to Israeli human rights organisation Yesh Din, which has been tracking settler violence since 2005, just seven percent of settler attacks have led to criminal charges with only three percent of investigations leading to a conviction. During the first two months of 2023, at least five Palestinians have been killed by Israeli settlers in the occupied West Bank. In comparison, three Palestinians were killed in 2022, five in 2021, none in 2022 and two in 2019.

Another
attempt on
Imran's life
in making,
claims Babar

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) senior leader Advocate Babar Awan on Friday claimed there was strong evidence suggesting that a plan was being hatched by foreign agencies to launch another assassination attempt on PTI Chairman Imran Khan. "Some people mocked my media talk adding that the government maintains two stances on Imran Khan's life attempt," Awan said speaking at a press conference at PTI's office in Islamabad.

"One was: no life attempt was made on Khan and the second he was attacked by a religious fanatic."

The former premier, who was ousted in a vote of no confidence last year, had reiterated twice that he would be attacked, while the joint Investigation Team (JIT) had also established Khan was shot at from three different directions, he added. "Once again, Imran's life is in danger and we have strong evidence to support it. New assassination attempts are being schemed against Khan," claimed the PTI stalwart. Demanding answers from the government regarding the security risks and threats facing the PTI chief, Awan underlined that more than 100 cases had been registered against Khan in Islamabad alone.

"Why these cases are being filed in Islamabad? Who shut the CCTV cameras? Who removed security from the anti-terrorism court (ATC), and who called the security personnel off the judicial complex?" He went on to say: "The lawyers of Islamabad deem the Kachehri (Judicial Complex) as a death trap".

Nobel laureate
sentenced to
10 years in
Belarus

MINSK: Belarusian Nobel Peace Prize laureate Ales Bialiatski was sentenced by a court in Minsk on Friday to 10 years in a maximum-security penal colony, Russia state news agency TASS reports. He was found guilty on the charge of smuggling, according to TASS. Exiled Belarusian opposition leader Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya slammed the sentencing of Bialiatski and other activists in the same trial as "appalling."

"We must do everything to fight against this shameful injustice & free them," she wrote on Twitter.

Germany called the 10-year prison term an attack by Minsk on civil society. On Twitter, German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock slammed the charges and trial against Bialiatski and co-defendants Valentin Stefanovich and Vladimir Labkovich as a "farce" adding they were being judged "simply because of their years-long fight for their rights, dignity and freedom of people in Belarus."

"The Minsk regime is fighting civil society with violence and imprisonment," Baerbock said, adding "this is as much a daily disgrace as Lukashenko's support for Putin's war (in Ukraine)." - Agencies

FIA offloads
passenger
over fake
passports

LAHORE: The Federal Investigation Authority (FIA) has offloaded an Abu Dhabi-bound passenger at Lahore airport for carrying a fake passport, media reported on Friday. As per details, the FIA immigration conducted a raid at Lahore airport and confiscated fake Pakistani passports which had Netherlands and Sweden visas. The passenger named Atif Irshad was the Abu Dhabi flight EY 242 was offloaded by the FIA. According to the initial information, the passenger got the passport and visa from an agent against Rs 30 lac. The fake passports were registered in the name of Ashir Azeem and Ali Raza. He had planned to go to Italy after landing in Abu Dhabi. Furthermore, accused was handed over to Anti-Human trafficking circle Lahore for further investigation. - DNA