



# Islamabad POST

Wednesday, March 29, 2023

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**MBS lauds China's efforts to restore Saudi-Iran ties**

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**Russia slams US Summit for Democracy**

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**Anthony Joshua seeks to fight Tyson Fury**

Detailed News On Page-06



**Experts see 'intrigue' in timing**

## Bill limiting CJP's powers introduced

The bill ensures that the three senior-most judges of the Supreme Court would decide on any suo motu case

ANSAR M BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: The federal cabinet approved the draft of a legislation on Tuesday seeking to curtail the discretionary powers of the Chief Justice of Pakistan, leaving the decision of any suo motu case up to the three senior-most judges of the apex court. The Law Minister later presented the bill in the National Assembly for approval. The bill ensures that the three senior-most judges of the Supreme Court would decide on any suo motu case being taken up by the apex court under Article 184 (3) of the Constitution. The bill, titled 'The Supreme Court (Practice and Procedure) Act, 2023', allows appeals within 30 days of a verdict being issued on a suo motu case and enforces that a bench be constituted to hear such an appeal within 14 days. Sources told media that the

**Imran not happy with govt plans to regulate judiciary**

DNA

LAHORE: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf Chairman Imran Khan on Tuesday slammed the government's proposed bill to limit CJP's powers as an attempt to control the judiciary. In a televised address, the former Prime Minister said that PML-N is repeating its history of attacking the judiciary. He said the government of crooks is ready to go to any extent to avoid elections. He said that the government wants to intimidate and scare anyone who

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government is expected to present the bill in the Senate also soon. The development comes amid a growing debate in the country over the discretionary powers of the Chief Justice of Pakistan to constitute benches, 'fix' cases, and initiate public interest proceedings under Article 184 (3) of the Constitution. The experts have expressed mixed reaction over this bill. Many believe the timing of the introduction of the bill is 'intriguing' and it may invite the attention of the Supreme Court. Salman Akram Raja, the lawyer of Imran Khan, said that the government needs to amend the Constitutions in order to change Supreme Court laws. He feared the laws shall further create divisions among the judiciary. Likewise another senior lawyer and former Chairman Senate Wasim Sajjad was of the view that there is no

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ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif addresses the National Assembly session. - DNA

**MQM-P rejects ongoing digital census**

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: Muttahida Qaumi Movement-Pakistan (MQM-P) senior leader Farooq Sattar has rejected the ongoing first-ever digital census - which is the 7th national census in the country - being conducted by the Sindh government employees. The development came after the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) chief statistician Dr Naem Uz Zafar on Sunday said that "it is not necessary that Karachi's population will show as 30 million" after the census. Addressing a press conference on Tuesday, the MQM-P leader expressed fears that a plan has been devised to show less population than the actual headcount of urban areas of Sindh. "46% of the population in Karachi has been counted," he said, adding that it seemed that the total population of the metropolis would be shown around 20 million in the census. The MQM-P leader also demanded a fresh census conducted by an impartial and private sector company. He also asked for access to the census data. Referring to the press conference by the head of the statistics department a day earlier, Sattar said that the statistics shared by the department indicated that their doubts are true. The MQM-P leader is of the view that the population of urban areas is being shown less and in rural areas, it is being shown more than the actual figures by the census authorities.

**Talks with Imran only after his apology, PM says**

PM regrets the PTI chief has been blackmailing the judiciary

DNA

ISLAMABAD: In a fiery address at the National Assembly on Tuesday, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif said he was of the clear opinion that talks between the government and Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan will only be possible if the former premier admits his "wrongdoings" and apologises to people for all the things he has said and done. Labelling Khan as a "fraud," the premier said that it was "not possible to talk" with someone who had "looted the country, attacked the judiciary and did not believe in the Constitution and justice", until he publicly apologised to people and admitted to having caused damage to the country and the Constitution. "I believe no discussions can be held with a person who consistently and condescendingly rejects invitations for talks on everything - be it COVID-19, the state of terrorism in the country, the apex

**Why 4-3 verdict changed to 3-2, Maryam asks SC**

BUREAU REPORT

LAHORE: PML-N Senior Vice President Maryam Nawaz on Tuesday raised questions over Supreme Court's March 1 verdict on a suo motu case about the elections in Punjab and Khyber-Pakhtunkwa, asking why the apex court's "4-3 verdict was changed to 3-2". In a tweet from her official handle, the ruling party leader apparently referred to the SC hearing of a petition filed by the PTI against the Election Commission of Pakistan's (ECP) decision to delay elections in Punjab till October 8. "Before deciding about the election, it

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### Briefs

**Elections to be held on 8th Oct**

DNA

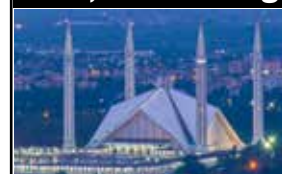
GUJRANWALA: Interior Minister Rana Sanaullah says general elections will be held on 8th October this year under caretaker setup. Talking to media in Gujranwala, he said general elections of national and provincial assemblies should be held at the same time according to constitution. He said national economy was damaged due to bad policies of Pakistan Tehrik e Insaf Chairman Imran Khan. Rana Sana Ullah said Imran Khan is working on the agenda of spreading anarchy in the country.

**Ahsan for long-term climate measures**

STAFF REPORT

BANGKOK: Minister for Planning and Development Ahsan Iqbal says despite facing severe climate disasters last year that caused damage of billions of rupees in Pakistan, the government is committed to long-term resilience and adaptation. He was addressing the 10th Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development-2023 in Bangkok.

**Sehr, Iftar Timing**



**Ramazan 05, 1444**

Sehr: 04:35 am  
Iftar: 06:30 pm  
Fique-e-Jafria  
Sehr: 04:25 am  
Iftar: 06:40 pm

**ECP had no authority to extend date: CJP**

The top judge remarks ECP's decision drafted in haste

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Umar Ata Bandial said on Tuesday that it is clear the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has no authority to extend the polling date. The CJP's remarks during the hearing of petition filed by the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) against the Election Commission of Pakistan's (ECP) decision to delay elections in Punjab till October 8. A five-member larger bench, headed by CJP Bandial, and comprising Justice Ijazul Ahsan, Justice Munib Akhtar, Justice Aminuddin Khan and Justice Jamal Khan Mandokhail presided over the hearing. As proceedings commenced, Attorney General of Pakistan (AGP) Usman Awan raised questions over the maintainability of the PTI's petition, arguing that matters related to the elections should be referred to the Lahore High Court (LHC) after two apex court judges issued their detailed opinion wherein they held that the earlier suo motu in the matter was dismissed by 4 - 3. He said that the LHC had not given the

president the authority to announce the election date. The AGP also requested the court to constitute a full bench to preside over the case. However, CJP Bandial stated that the present case was a completely different matter wherein, the apex court is examining whether the ECP had the authority to postpone the election date. He observed that the "question before the court is a simple one, can the ECP postpone the election date or not". "If it has the authority to do so, the proceedings will end right there," he said. The recently appointed AGP argued before the court that two SC judges had given their verdict on the matter earlier. However, CJP Bandial held that the opinion expressed by the two judges was not relevant in this matter.

"If the verdict was 3 - 4, then the 'breached' orders do not exist," responded AGP Awan. "In fact, if there were no court orders, then the president had no authority to give an election date even," he added, urging the court to first settle the issue of SC's March 1 orders. CJP Bandial observed that the AGP's

Continued on Page 06

**Pakistan opts out of US' democracy summit**

Pakistan boycotted the same summit during PTI regime also to appease China

SHUJAAT HAMZA

ISLAMABAD: Responding to media queries regarding invitation to attend the Second Summit for Democracy, the Spokesperson made the following remarks: "We are thankful to the United States and the co-host countries for inviting Pakistan to attend the Second Summit for Democracy being held on 29-30 March 2023. As a vibrant democracy, the people of Pakistan are deeply committed to democratic values and generations of Pakistanis time after time have upheld their faith in democracy, human rights and fundamental freedoms. This month, the nation is celebrating the 50th anniversary of the 1973 Constitution that is the fountain of democratic polity in Pakistan. We value our friendship with the United States. Under this Biden Administration, this relationship has widened and expanded substantially. We remain committed to further solidifying this relationship for peace, stability, and prosperity in the region. Pakistan has not been part of the Summit process, that commenced in 2021 and required countries to make certain national commitments. The Summit process is now at an advanced stage and therefore, Pakistan would engage bilaterally with the United States and co-hosts of the Summit to promote and strengthen democratic principles and values and work towards advancing human rights and the fight against corruption.

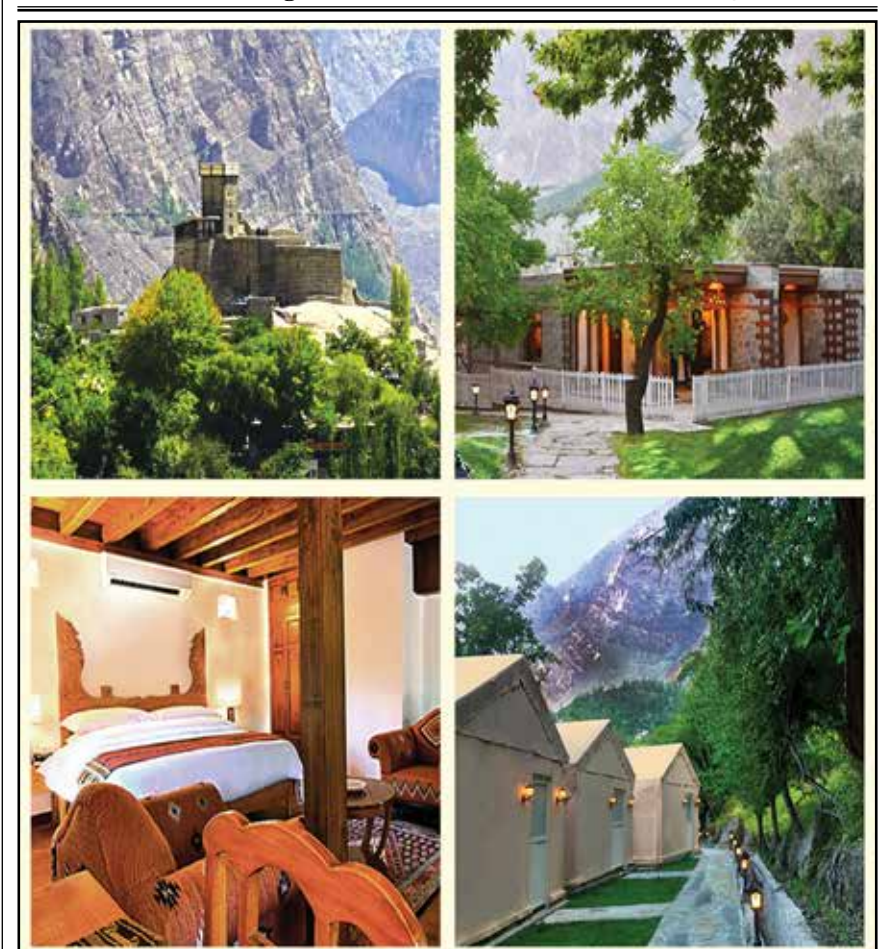
**'Khalilzad doesn't speak for US govt'**

DNA



WASHINGTON: The former United States envoy for Afghanistan, Zalmay Khalilzad, does not represent U.S. policy, a State Department spokesperson has said, asserting that the Afghan-born diplomat speaks in his "personal capacity". The spokesperson, Vedant Patel, was responding to a question from a Pakistani TV channel reporter about the perception that his recent tweets about the political situation in Pakistan reflect the views of the U.S. government. "Mr. Khalilzad is a private citizen, and any social media activity or comments or tweets that you might reference, those are done in his private capacity, does not represent U.S. foreign policy, and he does not speak for this administration,"

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## 109 shopkeepers arrested in crackdown

PESHAWAR: The district administration of Peshawar arrested 109 shopkeepers during a crackdown against profiteers in various localities of the provincial metropolis on Tuesday. The arrested shopkeepers include milkmen, bakers (nanbais), fruit & vegetable vendors, grocers and others.

The shopkeepers were arrested for profiteering, lacking an official price list, selling under-weight roti and unhygienic conditions in their facilities. On the directives of the Deputy Commissioner (DC) Peshawar, the officers of district administration carried out an inspection of shopkeepers on Charsadda Road, Dalazak Road, Kohat Road, University Road, Hayatabad, Mathani, Tehkal, Gulabhar, Warsak Road and various localities of the interior city and collectively inspected 514 shops and out of them arrested 109 persons while 54 others were issued warning for bringing improvement and avoiding of profiteering.—APP

## CS reviews flour distribution in KP

PESHAWAR: Chief Secretary Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Nadeem Aslam Chaudhry on Tuesday chaired a meeting and reviewed various measures for good governance and public welfare. The administrative secretaries of all departments were present at the meeting, where they were directed to closely monitor the distribution of flour and prices of food items in their respective districts. Furthermore, a plantation campaign is being launched in anticipation of spring, and the administrative secretaries have been tasked with monitoring the polio campaign at the district level. The implementation of the dengue control plan in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has also been emphasized.—APP

## Fawad expresses reservations over 'torture on PTI workers'

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) senior leader Fawad Chaudhry expressed on Tuesday his reservations over the "torture on the party workers". Speaking to media, Mr Chaudhry claimed, "The human rights have been violated from April 10 to March 21. The British citizen, Shahid Hussain has been freed and apology was offered on the release of Mr Hussain. "Did the people of Pakistan enjoy any rights," he questioned. Talking about Azhar Mashwani, Mr Chaudhry said, "Azhar Mashwani is a citizen of Pakistan, who has been disappeared for five days." "Yesterday, a ten-year old child was sent to the judicial remand", he lamented. Lamenting over the cases registered against PTI Chairman Imran Khan, Mr Chaudhry said, "In one day, 15 cases were lodged against Imran Khan, and the total number of cases against him now reached to 143." He said his party was geared up to send report against the caretaker chief minister, Islamabad IG and Punjab IG to the international organisations.

# 'Computerized ID cards should be mandatory for marriage'

Advocate Hifza Bukhari while presenting a provincial comparison of marriage laws shared that only Sindh has a minimum age of marriage of 18 years for both boys and girls. Balochistan, KPK, and Punjab have the minimum age of marriage for girls 16 years, and for boys 18 years.

DNA

LAHORE: In a meeting connected with International Women's Day held in Lahore, the lawyers demanded the government to bring amendment in the Child Marriage Restraint Act 2015 of Punjab to make provision of the Computerized National Identity Card mandatory for marriage. The meeting was organized by Potohar Organization for Development Advocacy under its project "Reducing Early Age Marriages to Enhance Gender Equality" support by Norwegian Embassy in Pakistan. PODA is a women's rights organization working for women's social, economic and political empowerment specifically of rural women whose voices are missing altogether in the media and at policymaking level as well. Hira Imam, the representative of the host organization, PODA provided a brief of the project that is focused on ending early age mar-



riages. She told the audience that with the support of the people from the grassroots level that is connected with the amendment in law, PODA is striving hard to reduce and ultimately end early age marriages which is clearly vi-

olation of a girl child.

The meeting was attended by Advocate Hifza Bukhari, Finance Secretary of Supreme Court Bar Association Pakistan, Advocate Rabia Bajwa, newly elected Vice President of the Lahore High

Court Bar Association, and Advocate Sabahat Rizvi, the newly elected General Secretary of Lahore High Court Bar Association. Advocate Sabahat Rizvi is the first-ever female General Secretary elected for the LHCBA since

its inception in 130 years. The lawyers urged the legislators of four provinces to extend coordination on reducing early marriages to bring harmony in the law as after 18th Amendment, it's the responsibility of the provincial assemblies to address the problems linked with early age marriages in the best interest of the people. Advocate Hifza Bukhari while presenting a provincial comparison of marriage laws shared that only Sindh has a minimum age of marriage of 18 years for both boys and girls. Balochistan, KPK, and Punjab have the minimum age of marriage for girls 16 years, and for boys 18 years. Advocate Rabia Bajwa, Vice President of the Lahore High Court Bar Association said that parliamentarians should be mobilized to bring legislative amendments, and media houses should also be engaged to create awareness to change social norms and culture to support legislative amendments. She applauded the role of PODA for making effort while adopting multipronged approaches.

## Pakistan making all-out efforts to facilitate Afghan people

Pakistan has Integrated Border Management System (IBMS) in place at main crossings, which supports One Document Regime (valid visa/ passport).

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistani authorities are making all-out efforts to facilitate the movement of around 385,000 Afghan people a month through the Pak-Afghan border crossing points by introducing the Integrated Border Management System, exclusive counters, and other measures.

According to an official source, around 13,000 people travel to and from Afghanistan a day through the Pak-Afghan crossing points, including pedestrians, patients, traders, tourists, and transporters. The monthly volume of public movement through the crossing points stands at approximately 385,000 passengers, in addition to hundreds of trade convoys.

Currently, Pakistan has five crossing points operational with Afghanistan, which include Chaman, Torkham, Khariachi, Ghulam Khan and Angoor Ada. The official, rubbishing the propaganda by Afghan and Indian media against Pakistan by reporting incidents of perceived mistreatment of Afghans by the Pakistani authorities at the crossing points, said despite limited resources and strength, Pakistan is manning over 100 counters at the crossing points to ensure smooth processing of a heavy inflow of cross-border movement. No other bordering country had such an exodus at their border crossings, he said. About 79 counters have been placed at Chaman and

Torkham, the busiest crossing points. Pakistan has the Integrated Border Management System (IBMS) in place at main crossings, which supports One Document Regime (valid visa/ passport). However, to facilitate the Afghan brethren, Pakistan also allows a large number of Afghans especially patients, journalists, women and traders to cross the border on Tazkera (non-valid) document on humanitarian grounds. Exclusive counters at crossing points have been made operational for Afghan patients and women only. The Afghan nationals entering into Pakistan either on valid or invalid documents

are allowed to extend/renew their status to stay in Pakistan.

"The border crossing for Afghan people even those without passports, to earn a livelihood, or visit a relative, address any medical emergency, or get an education is an exclusive offer extended by Pakistan, which no other neighbour offers," the official commented. As per official data, due to insufficient documents or no documents, around five to six thousand Afghan nationals are refused entry every month for obvious reasons. A few among those who face refusal falsely create a nuisance about mistreatment by Pakistani authorities at border crossing points.—APP

## Senate body irked over vacant Pak chairs abroad

ISLAMABAD: The Senate Standing Committee on Federal Education and Professional Training on Tuesday expressed displeasure over the vacant Pakistan chairs abroad since 2008. The Committee which met here with Irfan-ul-Haque Siddiqui in the chair was appraised that a total of 14 Chairs had been vacant since 2008 under different nomenclatures such as the Quaid-i-Azam Chair and Allama Iqbal Chair, Chairs in Urdu and Pakistan Studies. The Chairman Committee deemed the matter 'criminal negligence' and stressed the need for an in-depth probe of the matter, so that those responsible for this apathetic attitude may be taken to task. The Committee was informed that out of the 14 just six chairs were advertised due to budgetary constraints and the selection process was completed in 2021 wherein a panel of three scholars was selected for Cambridge University. The process was terminated by the University and the Ministry was directed to re-advertise the position as per their set of procedures. The Committee was informed that Chairs for Urdu and Pakistan Studies are currently vacant in China, Egypt, Germany, USA, UK, Turkey, Hong Kong, Iran, Jordan, Nepal and Kazakhstan. The Committee stressed the need for stringent action against this negligence that has held back the softer side of the country. Deliberating over the matter, Chairman Committee Senator Irfanul Haque Siddiqui directed that the Ministry submit a comprehensive report regarding the issue in the next meeting. Discussing the recent clashes between student groups at Quaid-i-Azam University in light of the briefing by Dr. Niaz Ahmed Akhtar, Vice Chancellor of the said university, the Committee stressed the need to investigate the matter in detail and ensure that the root cause be ascertained. Chairman Committee Senator Irfanul Haque Siddiqui welcomed the newly appointed Vice Chancellor of Quaid-i-Azam University and assured him of the Committee's all out support. Deeming the need for the revival of Student Unions in Universities, Chairman Committee Senator Irfanul Haque Siddiqui was of the view that grouping must be based related to educational interests and on national heroes in place of ethnicity. This he said would play an important role in diffusing ethnic fault lines and infusing in students a sense of national unity. Committee Senator Irfanul Haque Siddiqui directed Dr. Niaz Ahmed Akhtar to formulate a Commission and submit a detailed report to the Committee on the causes of the issue and recommendations of ways that it can be curbed.—DNA

## Pak needs to adopt Mauritius model of tourism

ISLAMABAD: Mauritius High Commissioner to Pakistan Rashidul Soobadar has offered Pakistan's tourism sector to adopt the Mauritius model of tourism and the untapped real potential of national tourism and uplift its economy. He said the Mauritius had a very strong and organized tourism sector which was contributing significantly to its national exchequer. Talking to APP, the high commissioner said the sector over the past 50 years had been able to build a brand of tourism which catered for high spenders since with a population of 1.2 million we were visited by 1.5 million tourists each year which indicated a marvelous achievement in the sector. Mauritius has a strong road infrastructure and standard hotels quality transport is also vital to facilitate and attract tourists, also provides a peaceful secure environment for visitors. He said a good will gesture between two nations of annually visit of Pakistani eye specialist doctors team from Al-Shifa Trust Eye Hospital was also strengthening bilateral relations. The Mauritius government arrange free eye camp for a week long trip of doctors, where all type of patients and eye surgeries come in effect during the team stay.—APP

## PAC directs NFS&R to provide 10-year of research record

ISLAMABAD: The Public Accounts Committee (PAC) on Tuesday directed the Ministry of National Food Security and Research (NFS&R) to provide 10-year agricultural research records. Chairing the meeting, PAC Chairman Nour Alam Khan decided that the committee would not review the audit paras of the NFS&R ministry as it did not conduct the Departmental Accounts Committee (DAC). The PAC chairman directed the authorities concerned to carry out the DAC immediately otherwise stern actions to be taken against the responsible. He urged the authorities to conduct proper research on the agriculture sector which was the backbone of the national economy. MNA Syed Hussain Tariq apprised the committee that Pakistan was an agricultural country lamenting that the NFS&R ministry was not playing a pivotal role in conducting the research work.—APP



ISLAMABAD: PTI leaders Fawad Chaudhry and Shireen Mazari launching dossiers about the state of human rights in Pakistan.—DNA

## Wildlife dept focusing on public awareness

PESHAWAR, Mar 28 (APP): The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Wildlife Department is focusing on public awareness as implementation of the relevant laws for ensuring protection of wild species in biodiversity rich Newly Merged Districts is found to be very challenging. "The policy of imposing restrictions and charging of fines over violation cannot achieve the desired goals of preserving wild fauna in a region which is full of biodiversity but remained out of the bound of Wildlife Protection Laws for about 60 years," observed Abdul Haleem, Divisional Forest Office (DFO) Wildlife Khyber District. The effective procedure of gaining public cooperation for biodiversity conservation in such locations is only to educate people about importance of flora and fauna, he opined while

talking with APP. In response to a question about killing of four leopards in a short span of couple of months in mountainous region of Khyber district, Abdul Haleem said it also reflected good number of big cats in the region. The killing of leopard through poisoning and shooting is in retaliation of livestock depredation in the area, Haleem added. The killer of two leopard cubs in Tirah was arrested by Wildlife Department soon after the incident through involvement of local police. However, soon after the arrest, a mob of locals reached outside police station and forced law enforcers for release of the detainee, Haleem shared. Adherence to laws by people of the region needs time and capacity building on which Wildlife Department is focusing through display

of billboards at different locations, he added. Similarly, Haleem continued, social media is also used for creating awareness besides constitution of Village Conservation Committees (VCC) which keep liaison will locals and inform them about importance of biodiversity and wildlife. He said poor law and order situation is also a big impediment for Wildlife Department in reaching to different biodiversity hot spots located in isolated areas in hilly terrains near the Pak-Afghan border. He said there were strong evidences about presence of different wild species in Khyber District including common leopard, markhor, black bear, musk deer, uryal, monkeys and several kinds of birds including khaleej and monal pheasant. The area also has habitat for snow leopard and there

is strong possibility about presence of the rare species in area of Rajgal alpine range near Spinghar area of Afghanistan. Haleem was also of the opinion that if Monal pheasant is found in an area, there is also possibility about presence of snow leopard because both have almost same habitat. The alpine region of Khyber District is mostly snow clad and very chilling and it must have snow leopard if a scientific survey is being conducted in the region, he believed. Haleem said the whole merged areas are full of forest and rich biodiversity which needs special attention and measure for protection. In the upcoming season of migration, a large number of birds would pass through the region and make stop overs at different locations. Protec-

tion of these arriving birds can only be made possible through involvement of local communities by offering them some incentives, he suggested. He also admitted incidents of poaching and illegal hunting of rare wild species in the region and said Wildlife Department is trying its best but due to lack of staff cannot keep check in such a large area. In the whole Dara Adam Khel area where recently a leopard was killed, Haleem said Wildlife Department has only two staffers. While in Hassan Khel mountainous region of Khyber District only four employees are responsible for wildlife protection. He said the KP Wildlife Department is working with due dedication and devotion to perform its duty and has also made several raids and imposition of fine on offenders.—APP

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## National Days and Armed Forces Days

### MARCH

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



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



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Railway Enquiry.....117  
Railway Exchange 9270831-5  
WASA Rawalpindi..5555489  
CAA.....9281092



### Hospitals

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MH.....561116  
Cantt Hospital...9270907-11  
DHQ.....5556311-4  
RGH.....9290301-7  
Holy Family.....9290322-7  
PIMS.....9261170-79  
Polyclinic.....9218300-09  
Shifa International 4603666



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



### Islamabad Metropolitan

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



### Water Tank

# President for expanding relations with Tajikistan

The President congratulated Mr Muhammad Saeed Sarwar on his appointment as Pakistan's Ambassador to Tajikistan and urged him to work for further cementing bilateral relations with the brotherly country of Tajikistan

### DNA

ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi has called for the expansion of trade and economic relations with Tajikistan, adding that steps should be taken to enhance trade and investment cooperation with Tajikistan for the mutual development of the two brotherly countries.

The President stated this while talking to Pakistan's Ambassador-designate to Tajikistan, Mr Muhammad Saeed Sarwar, who called on him, at Aiwan-e-Sadr, today. Talking to the Ambassador, the President mentioned that Pakistan had deep historical and cultural linkages with Tajikistan, stating that Pakistan wanted to build enhanced, result-oriented and sustainable engagements with all the Central Asian States under its "Vision Central Asia"



policy. He underscored that Pakistan remained committed to strengthening political, economic and energy connec-

tivity with Central Asia and that the CASA-1000 energy project was an important component of this strategy.

The President asked the Ambassador to work for improving Pakistan's image, besides expanding trade, energy, and

commercial relations with the host country. He underlined the need for establishing academic linkages between the educational institutions of both countries. He added that Pakistan was offering online and distance education through the Virtual University of Pakistan and Allama Iqbal Open University, and Tajik students could benefit from it by getting access to their educational content.

The President also stressed the need for highlighting the anti-minority and anti-Muslim policies of India as well as the atrocities being committed by the Indian Security Forces in the Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IOJK). The President congratulated Mr Muhammad Saeed Sarwar on his appointment as Pakistan's Ambassador to Tajikistan and urged him to work for further cementing bilateral relations with the brotherly country of Tajikistan.

## Experts from ANTAM, UN-CSAM visit PMAS-AAUR

RAWALPINDI: Experts from Asian & Pacific Network for Testing of Agricultural Machinery (ANTAM), UN Center for Sustainable Agriculture Mechanization (UN-CSAM), Engineers & Senior Management officers from Centre for Agriculture and Bioscience International (CABI) and Punjab Agriculture Department Field Wing have visited, Pir Mehr Ali Shah, Arid Agriculture University Rawalpindi (PMAS-AAUR) to collaborate for the establishment of agricultural machinery testing and

standardization center at the university. During the visit, Vice Chancellor, PMAS-AAUR, Prof. Dr. Qamar-uz-Zaman proposed to establish agricultural machinery testing facility and standardization and certification centers in different zones to promote agricultural mechanization in Pakistan.

The VC said that the agricultural machinery testing and standardization center would not only come up with a machinery performance rating system, but would guide the prospec-

tive users in the selection of agricultural machinery according to tested performance.

While highlighting the importance of this center, he said that providing better and standardized agricultural machinery to the farmers, it would also enable them to increase their per acre agricultural production. Pakistan is currently facing a serious wheat crisis, to deal with and we have to take every step that will help us to deal with it," he said. After visiting

laboratories, center for precision agriculture, engineering workshops and detail discussions, the delegation expressed keen interest for mutually collaboration in development of machinery testing and calibration procedures, formulation of standardization procedures and codes, skill development, capacity building of machinery operators, licensing, certification and introducing latest and emerging technologies with PMAS-AAUR.—APP

## ICP intensifies crackdown against traffic rules violators

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Capital Police intensified crackdown against the traffic rules violators and issued 9518 fine tickets to road users for not fastening seat belts and 8222 for using mobile phones while driving during the ongoing month, a police public relations officer said. He said that, following the special directions of Inspector General of Police (IGP) Islamabad, Dr. Akbar Nasir Khan, a special campaign is underway to check violations while various squads headed by Chief Traffic Officer Islamabad are performing duties at main roads and boulevards of the city and taking stern action against the violators. A campaign is underway to ensure a disciplined traffic system in the city and citizens are also requested to follow the traffic rules in order to maintain a disciplined traffic system in the city. Islamabad capital police personnel have been directed to ensure implementation on traffic rules and regulation irrespective of status and rank and demonstrate patience and politeness while issuing traffic violation tickets to the road users.—DNA

## Six outlaws arrested, drugs and weapons recovered

### DNA

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad capital police apprehended six outlaws from different areas of the city and recovered drugs and weapons with ammunition from their possession, a police public relations officer said. He said that, following the special directions of Inspector General of Police (IGP) Islamabad Dr. Akbar Nasir Khan, the Islamabad capital police has intensified crackdown against the criminal elements in order to eliminate the crime from the city. Following these directives, the Kohsar police team arrested an accused namely Fazal Kareem and recovered 120 gram heroin from his possession. Likewise, the Ramna police team arrested an accused namely Zohaib and recovered one 30 bore pistol from his possession.

## PM directs for releasing uplift funds for merged districts

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Tuesday directed for the immediate release of development funds for the merged districts of the erstwhile Federally Administered Tribal Areas. During a meeting with a five-member delegation of the National Assembly members from the merged districts, the prime minister directed the relevant authorities to get the approval of the funds required for the schemes concerned from the Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) of the Cabinet as soon as possible. PM Shehbaz said the government was committed to prioritizing the development of the merged districts. He said the government was taking concrete steps for the development of financially weak areas of the country. The MNAs, including Minister for Religious Affairs Mufti Abdul Shaqoor, Minister for Overseas Pakistanis Sajid Tori, Moulana Jamal ud Din, Ali Wazir, and Mohsin Dawar informed the prime minister about the problems and the ongoing development projects in their constituencies. Minister for Finance Ishaq Dar and Minister for Economic Affairs Division Ayaz Sadiq also attended the meeting.—APP

## Wanted member of thief gang held

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad capital police Aabpara police team arrested an accused involved in theft activities and recovered stolen valuables from his possession, a police public relations officer said. He said that, following the special directions of Inspector General of Police (IGP) Islamabad Dr. Akbar Nasir Khan, the Islamabad capital police has intensified crackdown against the criminal elements involved in theft activities in order to eliminate the crime from the city. Following these directions, the Aabpara police station team used technical and human resources and succeeded in apprehending an accused involved in theft activities. The accused was identified as Waseem. Police team also recovered stolen valuables from his possession.—DNA



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Poland hosted an Iftar dinner for the senior journalists. Seen in the picture are Ansar M Bhatti Editor Daily Islamabad POST, Mateen Haider GTV, Mohsin Raza Khan Such TV and Ali Furqan Voice of America.—DNA

## Judiciary should interpret constitution in totality: Qamar

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Commerce, Syed Naveed Qamar on Tuesday said all judges of the court should unite to interpret the Constitution not through the lens of an individual but the entire judiciary. He was addressing the lower house of the parliament on the special motion moved by Minister for Parliamentary Affairs, Murtaza Javed Abbasi to debate on current political situation and political and legal coercion taking place due to it. Qamar said the country was at the crossroads of its history. "Unfortunately, we have seen historically there have been encroachments on the role of each institution on the other during the martial law regimes," he added. The minister said it was the executive that acted above all and other institutions including judiciary served as subservient to it during the dictatorial rules. He said the dictator and former president late General (R) Pervez Musharraf tried to amass all the powers of the legislature and tried to infringe the powers of the Chief Justice of Pakistan but it were the political parties that stood against him. He regretted that the courts had already started to take sides and forgot to stick to its role in letter and spirit as per the constitution. The suo moto power was also being abused time and again, he added. "Once again, we are at the spot to decide either to let constitution crumpled or ensure national justice that is guarantee to nation's security," the minister noted. Syed Naveed Qamar said by the time a decision was made the country would remain the same as it was today. "The courts should make history by making decisions that are acceptable to the entire nation that will be written in golden words," he ended. Earlier, the Minister for Parliamentary Affairs addressed the house to table the special motion. He said this house was formed by the trust and representation of the masses and was bound to give direction to them at these times of crisis and uncertainty.—APP

## '29 cases registered against Imran in Islamabad'

### DNA

ISLAMABAD: A record of the cases submitted before the Islamabad High Court on Tuesday revealed that 29 FIRs had been registered against PTI Chairman Imran Khan in the federal capital. IHC's Chief Justice Aamer Farooq heard the petition filed by Mr Khan seeking details of cases filed against him in Islamabad while Faisal Chaudhry represented the former premier in the case. The documents revealed that 28 cases were registered against the defiant politician at various police stations in the capital city while one case had been filed by the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA). They showed that the former premier was booked in 15 cases in single day on May 26 following his party's long march against the coalition government.

## NdcTech modernizes core banking platform for Samba Bank

### DNA

ISLAMABAD: NdcTech, a premium technology services firm transforming banks and financial institutions globally has successfully modernized the core banking system of Samba Bank onto the latest release of Temenos Transact. Samba Bank Limited is a subsidiary of Saudi National Bank (SNB) KSA in Pakistan, offering personal and corporate banking services, including current and savings accounts, loans investments and a host of digital services. The bank serves a sizable customer base and has a branch network across 14 major cities in Pakistan. Over the years, Samba Bank has fostered a long-term partnership with NdcTech and Temenos to fulfill their

vision of hyper-scaling the bank's presence through digitization rather than traditional channels. The bank needed to upgrade to a modern, flexible, and scalable core banking system that could support its business growth objectives. Moving onto the latest release of Temenos Transact is a steppingstone for the bank to harmonize its IT infrastructure and speed up digitization. The flexible, modular, and scalable platform by Temenos is API driven making it capable to fulfil the complex needs of banks and financial institutions. NdcTech' unique implementation methodology incorporating innovative tools and techniques accelerated this transformation for the bank. The team successfully upgraded all modules for Samba bank includ-

ing Core, Retail, Lending, Deposits, FCM, and Trade finance to the latest release of Temenos Transact. NdcTech combined the use of the latest version of Pakistan Model Bank to meet the local regulatory requirements, update tax changes, and modernize trade processes for the bank. NdcTech also incorporated Image-Based Cheque clearing system and low balance alert system for the bank to reap benefits of the modern functionalities for seamless banking operations. Samba Bank is now on the path to realize the benefits of the dynamic and efficient platform to achieve long term growth. The bank has gained greater product agility, improved time-to-value and accelerated speed of innovation to make business decisions rapidly.



## Briefs

## Pakistan believes Xi's Moscow visit highly significant

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistani officials and experts have termed Chinese President Xi Jinping's state visit to Russia significant and looked forward to deeper cooperation and improved bilateral ties between the two countries as well as their greater contributions to world development.

In an interview with Gwadar Pro, Senator Mushahid Hussain Syed called Xi's visit to Moscow an assertion of China's more assertive, proactive and confident role in global affairs, following up on China's historic, successful mediation between Iran and Saudi Arabia, which has totally rattled and shaken the West.

Political economist and CEO Asian Institute of Eco-civilisation Research and Development Shakeel Ahmad Ramay termed the meeting very significant globally as well as bilaterally.

## China-led AIIB to support Pakistan

DNA

ISLAMABAD: "While liquidity continues to tighten, we need to help those countries that are insolvent. The Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) stands ready to support the world's most vulnerable countries, and we have increased our multilateral assistance to countries including Pakistan.

In addition, we are considering post-earthquake support for Turkey," said AIIB President Jin Lihun, according to a report published by China Economic Net (CEN) on Tuesday.

During the China Development Forum 2023, Jin said that the international community is confronted with multiple risks and challenges. Prolonged high inflation, tight Labour markets and spillover effects from high commodity prices are likely to keep central banks tightening monetary policy all over the world.

"At the same time, supportive policies during the pandemic have led to higher government debt, with bond yields rising and bond prices falling globally," said Jin. Risks to financial stability have increased. At a time of higher debt levels, the situation may be even more troubling for some developing countries and low-income countries with high levels of debt, said Jin, adding that risks also exist in the banking sector in some advanced economies. For those developing countries, higher uncertainty means a change in investors' risk tolerance.

NANDARA SHAHID

ADHD stands for Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder which includes two types of conditions; Inattentiveness and Hyperactivity. This disorder develops in children and continues up to adulthood.

For a common person, knowing how to diagnose ADHD, should not be the matter of concern but they shall be aware of how to behave around people suffering from such a condition. This is the reason why spreading awareness about ADHD is crucial. Pakistan is far off from western countries in managing such issues due to lack of awareness, late diagnosis, long untreated period and difficulty in approaching a proper mental health specialist. There is also a lack of specialty in this field. Moreover, first line medications for such patients are psycho stimulant medicines which are not easily available in Pakistan. So psychiatrists have to go for second line medications for managing the behavioral issues of their patients. We as part of the society should learn to be understanding, compassionate and patient towards people with ADHD because divisions only lead to more divisions. "NOT A DISABILITY BUT A DIFFERENT ABILITY" PARENT'S

## NUTECH students secure top positions in Imagine Cup



DNA

ISLAMABAD: NUTECH students Junaid Hasan and Syeda Manahil Javed of the CS department

batch 2019 secured first positions in Regional and National Finals in Microsoft Imagine Cup 2023 in partnership with HEC and have now moved for World Championship.

Their product Journovolt aims to introduce an automated news reporting channel which reports authentic, genuine, bias-free news while simultaneously reducing

the expenses and costs that are required to run a usual news broadcasting channel.

Over the past 19 years, more than two million competitors have signed

up for Microsoft's global student technology competition to build something that matters to them, make a difference in their communities, and innovate for impact.

Rector NUTECH Lt Gen (R) Moazzam Ejaz appreciated the efforts of all students and congratulated the winning team for achieving a milestone for NUTECH.

## NDMA attends annual Asia Pacific Forum at Bangkok

ISLAMABAD: Chairman National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA), Lieutenant General Inam Haider Malik and Member Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) Idrees Mahsud are attending the 10th annual meeting of Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development (APFSD) from March 27-30 in Bangkok, at the United Nations Conference Center (UNCC).

Federal Minister for Planning and Special Initiatives Prof. Ahsan Iqbal is leading the Pakistani delegation for the event. The theme for the ongoing APFSD's meeting is "accelerating the recovery from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) and the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at all levels in Asia and the Pacific", a news release said.

Chairman highlighted the role of the legislative assembly in facilitating the implementation of the SDGs, and Pakistan's plan to craft indigenous National Development Goals (NDGs) in line with global protocols. He emphasized on representatives of governments, civil society, and experts of organizations to work with interoperable cooperation for achieving SDGs. The Chairman NDMA also outlined the importance of the first goal, which focuses on eradicating poverty and lays the foundation for achieving all SDGs. He discussed the urgent need for food and energy security and put forth his views on how this can be achieved by unshackling access to these necessities from manipu-

lation by geopolitical interests. He recommended setting up a global Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) financing fund, aimed at providing support to countries affected by security threats and instability, such as Syria and Afghanistan, which are among the most vulnerable yet the most ignored by global humanitarian aid. The Chairman NDMA underscored the critical importance of investment protection through robust resilience and stable insurance, as well as the risks associated with non-participating think tanks that may pose a threat to strategic infrastructure development. He emphasized that greater attention to poverty needs during disaster relief efforts is crucial and this should not be confused with

assistance calculations. Chairman NDMA also called for tangible action plans to make SDGs sustainable, ensuring that populations have equal access to wealth and opportunities. He noted that DRR is a key step toward the safety of all members of society. He highlighted that benchmarking of revised SDGs on yearly updated plans, with country-specific and attainable goals designed to achieve clean and green energy access, which was seen as a driver of all enablers. Overall, the participants emphasized the importance of greater cooperation and collaboration to achieve SDGs and pledged to keep working together toward a more sustainable future.—APP

## President urges world to take steps against Islamophobia

DNA



ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi on Tuesday urged the international community to take effective steps against the growing trend of Islamophobia by discouraging extremist elements. In this regard, he stressed promoting inter-faith harmony and dialogue among various religions to remove negative perceptions about Islam. The president strongly condemned the incidents of desecration of the Holy Quran in Denmark and Netherlands and said that hate speech against religions could not be termed as freedom of expression. He said the blasphemous incidents rooted in Islamophobia were hurting the sentiments of Muslims across the globe. He pointed out that blasphemy was contrary to the internationally defined principles of freedom of expression. Alvi said Islam focuses on promoting peace and brotherhood among mankind and stressed an action by the world to counter Islamophobia.

## AIU announces spring semester 2023 admissions

ISLAMABAD: Allama Iqbal Open University (AIU) has announced Spring Semester 2023 admissions in different disciplines which will continue till April 18. An official communique issued here Tuesday said that the varsity had launch two-and-a-half-year MA/MS alternative BS program in Accounting and Finance, Economics, Gender and Women's Studies, Islamiyat, Mass Communication, Arabic, English and Pakistan Studies. The students who have completed

BA and BSc would be eligible to apply for these disciplines with an admission fee of Rs 15,500, it said adding that after completing four semesters BS degree would be awarded to them. The BS four year program would include admission in Accounting and Finance, Economics, Pakistan Studies, Islamiyat, Arabic, History, Sociology for which students of FA, FSc could apply. Similarly, the admission fee for Associate Degree Program (BA Program) four semesters General BA.—DNA

## Dealing with ADHD

REACTION: According to a psychiatrist Dr. Aasma Kiyani "parents are usually exhausted when they approach mental health specialists so they are mostly comfortable with the diagnosis of their child and are more interested in treatment prognosis". She further explained that it is very easy for parents to notice the symptoms of hyperactivity in their children if they see them overactive or uncontrollable around the house. However, the symptom of inattentiveness is not very frequently caught in parent's sight and this results in a late diagnosis which may lead to academic decline, nutritional deficiencies, physical injuries, exhaustion, harm to oneself, parenting burden etc. Thereby, parents are suggested to build conversations with their children and try to understand what their child is going through. Similarly, the Headmistress of Special Children Bahria College explained how sometimes parents even after bringing their children to such schools are not ready to accept that their children are "special" or have a disorder. Self confidence originates from one's family. However supportive their friends are, if a person's family is

not ready to accept their ADHD, the person would never be able to accept himself. This lack of awareness among parents would portray a wrong image to their child that they are not a part of this society and a mere burden on their parents. Families have to ensure that they remain to be a perpetual support for their children. OTHER COMMON REACTIONS: Other people that a person with ADHD frequently might come across could be their fellow peers, classmates and teachers at school etc. It is equally important that they know how they should react around such people. Young people don't really understand which of their actions can affect another person mentally or emotionally. Hence, they are always requested to be compassionate and patient towards people with ADHD in specific and in general toward all. The medically able people have more social skills compared to a person suffering from this disorder so they shall be the ones to make the first step to initiate a friendship and not judge them. Secondly, the schools in Pakistan play a great role in such people's lives. If teachers hold a student with ADHD respon-

sible for disturbing the decorum of the classroom and punish them instead of putting themselves in their shoes and understanding their situation, it would lead to nothing but resentment. Teachers should be supportive, should make such children sit in the front row and repeatedly question if they are understanding or not.

Moreover, if they believe that the student has attention problems and may have a specific disorder, the message must be conveyed to parents as soon as possible and with immense care and respect. We suggest that educational institutions should start awareness campaigns and steps against bullying to not only protect people with ADHD but everyone against discrimination. Furthermore, following the analysis of the situation in Pakistan regarding this issue, we would like to urge the government to set up more special schools with all sorts of facilities for such people. Conclusively, after conducting several surveys we found out that there is a major lack of awareness about ADHD in Pakistan than in any other country. We have taken the initiative to spread awareness among common people aiming to remove the stigma around ADHD and encourage people to seek a diagnosis for their symptoms.



ISLAMABAD: Women are leaves a wheat flour distribution center carrying three heavy bags on her head. The federal government's well-intentioned initiative to provide free flour to the needy this Ramadan has been met with criticism after stampedes and disorder claimed at least six lives at similar distribution points across the country at Sitara Market, in Federal Capital.—Online

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## NA Speaker, Deputy condemn Al-Aqsa Mosque desecration

ISLAMABAD: National Assembly Speaker Raja Pervaiz Ashraf and Deputy Speaker Zahid Akram Durani on Tuesday strongly condemned the desecration of the holy Al-Aqsa Mosque by Israeli forces and the denial of access for Palestinians to offer prayers during the holy month of Ramadan. Expressing solidarity with the Palestinians on behalf of the Parliament and people of Pakistan, the Speaker and his deputy in a statement called for urgent action by international human rights organizations to address the ongoing violations of basic human rights in Palestine and Kashmir. They urged the international community to take immediate steps to protect the rights of Palestinians in occupied Jerusalem, as well as addressing the human rights violations in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK).—DNA

## US, China, UK top three destinations of Pak exports

ISLAMABAD: The United States (US) remained the top export destination of Pakistani products during the eight months of the current fiscal year (2022-23), followed by China and the United Kingdom (UK). Total exports to the US during July-February (2022-23) were recorded at US\$ 4044.494 million against the exports of US\$ 4410.227 million during July-February (2021-22), showing a decline of 8.29 percent, according to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP). This was followed by China, wherein Pakistan exported goods worth US\$ 1334.747 million against the exports of US\$ 1841.168 million last year, showing a decrease of 27.50 percent. UK was the third top export destination, where Pakistan exported goods worth US\$ 1329.832 million during the months under review against the exports of US\$ 1472.927 million during last year, showing a decline of 9.71 percent, SBP data revealed. Among other countries, Pakistani exports to Germany stood at US\$ 1141.651 million against US\$ 1132.029 million last year, showing an increase of 0.84 percent while the exports to UAE were recorded at US\$ 945.023 million against US\$ 1180.589 million last year.—DNA



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## Scottish National party's new leader

**I**umza Yousaf's election as leader of the Scottish National party is a turning point for his nation – but it remains to be seen whether his nation will turn for him. Mr Yousaf has devoted his working life to the goal of Scottish independence, but he takes power just as the cause's standing has dipped in the opinion polls. That probably explained why, in his acceptance speech, Mr Yousaf emphasised what he would do to help Scots with the cost of living crisis and how the SNP would support public services. In backing him, party members decided to stick with the progressive agenda of his predecessor Nicola Sturgeon.

The Scottish independence movement can be seen as a reaction to the dysfunctional and unresponsive nature of British politics. It was the SNP's opposition to Iraq that drew Mr Yousaf into its orbit. Scottish politics has been reshaped in the wake of the financial crash of 2008 and the decade of austerity that followed it. The pro-union parties – Labour, Liberal, Conservative – had two-thirds of all seats in the first two parliaments at Holyrood; since 2011, they have been in a minority. At the last general election, the SNP won 48 seats, reducing the once dominant Labour party to just one Scottish MP. Mr Yousaf will be the first Muslim to head a country in western Europe. Steered by a person of colour, the SNP can make the case that it champions a pro-immigrant civic nationalism more eloquently than the Tories, who, despite being led by Rishi Sunak, stir ethnic nativism when it electorally suits them. Mr Yousaf's political aim is not to lead a devolved administration as part of the United Kingdom, but to head an independent nation in the European Union. This makes electoral sense. Support for independence in Scotland is three times higher among those people who want to be inside the EU, who represent two-thirds of Scottish voters, than it is among those who want to be outside the EU. Mr Sunak's attempt to mend ties with the EU is also an acknowledgment that this SNP message is cutting through. While the case for Scottish independence has some gaps, it is far more comprehensively thought through than Brexit.

To succeed, Mr Yousaf will have to win over those opposed to independence – a strategy espoused by his socially conservative, pro-business opponent, Kate Forbes. Her attacks on Ms Sturgeon's record rocked a party that is used to keeping disagreements behind closed doors. But Mr Yousaf wisely reached out to Ms Forbes in his victory speech, displaying in public an understanding that the SNP's success rests on being a broad church that can straddle Scotland's divides. It is sobering to note that the pollster Sir John Curtice thinks that the SNP will eventually get a referendum: "If you want to save the union, you have to change public opinion, but making the case means explaining why Brexit is to Scotland's advantage." Good luck with that.



## TikTok neither a loaded gun nor a Kraken

**R**ob Joyce, director of Cybersecurity at the United States National Security Agency, compared it to a "loaded gun". Christopher Wray, director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation claimed it could use it to "suppress information".

Kevin McCarthy, speaker of the House of Representatives, vowed to "protect Americans from the technological tentacles". Although their remarks sound like Hollywood clichés, what has fired up Washington is neither an alien force invading the Earth nor some Kraken unleashed from the depths of the ocean, but simply a smartphone app. Although, to be more accurate, it is not the app that has got them in a tizz and all riled up. It is the twin facts that it is immensely popular – having 150 million users in the US and 1 billion around the world – and not a US product. Compounding those "sins" is the fact that its parent company is Chinese.

Despite the app's US operations being totally run by a US company with a US team in accordance with US regulations, and the company's only relationship with the parent company being the latter gets its deserved profits according to the shares it holds, many US lawmakers and security top brass have a knee-jerk reaction to its origins.

The app is TikTok. It is the app's Chinese DNA that prompted the grilling of Shou Zi Chew, the Singaporean CEO of the American company, with silly questions such as whether TikTok can be connected to a family Wi-Fi and whether it could be used to control other family devices via that Wi-Fi. Anybody with a middle school diploma knows the answer to the former is "yes" and to the latter is "no". By asking such questions the members of the US House Energy and Commerce Committee put on a performance of remarkable technological illiteracy in order to demonstrate to the US public they are working hard to protect them against a Chinese threat entirely of their own fabrication.

At the beginning of the March 24 testimony, Earl LeRoy "Buddy" Carter, US Congress representative from Georgia, said "Welcome to the most bipartisan committee in Congress". By that he meant both Democrats and Republicans are of one mind when it comes to China. The US' suppression of TikTok because it has been developed by a Chinese company is now par for the course in Washington, which keeps teeing up such cheap shots. The only way for the US to restore the credibility it has lost with such wayward drives, is to provide an open, fair, just and nondiscriminatory environment for companies in the US, as Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning said.

But having become stuck in the bunker of Washington's "anti-China" mentality for so long, the US lawmakers will no doubt keep blasting away with the same old shots, confident that having worked in the past to hit the deck they will do so again.

# It is time to phase out fossil fuels

Saber Chowdhury

The pace and scale of what has been done so far, and current plans are insufficient to tackle climate change," the authors of the report warn. Despite these and previous warnings by scientists, the world is dragging its feet on taking the drastic climate action needed to keep the world from warming more than 1.5 degrees Celsius – the threshold beyond which climate change will have the most devastating consequences for humanity. We are already witnessing what climate chaos can do to our civilisation. Our nations – the United States and Bangladesh – are already suffering. Millions of Americans and Bangladeshis have been hit by floods

**O**n March 20, the United Nations' top experts on climate science released a synthesis report on climate change. In it, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), the world's peak climate science body declares that we have fallen dangerously behind in trying to control climate change as our greenhouse gas emissions continue to grow instead of decline. "The pace and scale of what has been done so far, and current plans are insufficient to tackle climate change," the authors of the report warn. Despite these and previous warnings by scientists, the world is dragging its feet on taking the drastic climate action needed to keep the world from warming more than 1.5 degrees Celsius – the threshold beyond which climate change will have the most devastating consequences for humanity. We are already witnessing what climate chaos can do to our civilisation. Our nations – the United States and Bangladesh – are already suffering. Millions of Americans and Bangladeshis have been hit by floods, droughts and other extreme weather made worse by climate change. We have lost countless lives and suffered enormous economic losses due to our inaction. As elected representatives in the US and Bangladeshi legislatures who care for the fate of our communities, we call for immediate action on climate change. We know that we cannot limit global warming to 1.5C unless we cut significantly our carbon emissions. That is why, we need to agree to phase out fossil fuels starting right now. The IPCC report is the latest and direst warning that we need to reduce drastically our reliance on fossil fuels. Burning of coal, oil and gas has been the source of 64 percent of carbon dioxide emissions since the industrial revolution; over the

past 10 years, this ratio has grown to 86 percent. Carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases drive up the Earth's temperature, which creates a spiralling crisis of extreme weather, rising sea levels, disease, biodiversity loss, water stress and poverty. Despite being aware of this problem for decades, the fossil fuel industry continues to put profits first and ignore scientists' warnings. That is why, we need leaders who will put the people first. We need leaders at international financial institutions like the World Bank to firmly commit to addressing climate change and better supporting vulnerable nations – not doubling down on fossil fuel investments. Since the Paris Agreement was signed, the World Bank has continued to invest billions in fossil fuel projects. It has fallen behind on its already meagre climate commitments, which are less ambitious than the baseline targets set by other development banks. The World Bank and other international financial institutions need to take immediate action and commit to a fossil fuel phase-out that complies with the 1.5C target. We also need elected officials in nations across the globe to work in concert to address this planetary crisis. We need heads of state to pick up the pace on talks to end fossil fuels and follow the example of those who are leading the way. Tuvalu, Vanuatu and the European Parliament have endorsed the Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty. Colombia says it will ban new oil and gas exploration. Costa Rica and Denmark created the Beyond Oil and Gas Alliance, a growing cluster of countries driving forward the managed phase-out of oil and gas production. That list needs to grow. Developed nations like the United States

hold a much greater responsibility for climate change than the nations most affected by it, like Bangladesh. Yet, the latter are forced to foot the bill for the devastation wrought on their shores. We cannot continue to allow wealthy countries to externalise the damage of their pollution spree.

That is why, we also need leaders to uphold the promise of support made at last year's COP27 to nations at the front line of climate change and contribute meaningfully to an international loss and damage fund.

International cooperation, commitments and treaties work because they provide accountability and set deadlines. As we work simultaneously on domestic efforts – from Bangladesh's visionary Mujib Climate Prosperity Plan to the United States' Inflation Reduction Act – we must commit as a global community to phase out fossil fuels.

A global commitment to phase out fossil fuels would inject urgency and decisiveness into a debate where we have no more time left to lose. That is why, we have joined hundreds of parliamentarians from across the world calling for stronger international collaboration to end fossil fuels.

This year, a political opportunity to make that possible is on the horizon. The first "global stocktake" – a convention held by the United Nations to measure the progress of countries and other shareholders in meeting the goals established in the Paris Agreement – is our chance to get a reality check, hit the political reset button and start working hard to avert the most devastating consequences of climate change.

It is time to end the cause of this carnage and seize the moment to phase out fossil fuels for good.

–Courtesy: Al Jazeera

# The war over Israel's identity is far from over

Osama Al-Sharif

In his evening speech, Netanyahu said he wanted to avert civil war and was keen on preserving unity. He added that he was ready for dialogue, which he had always supported. In fact, he had ignored numerous appeals by President Isaac Herzog to sit with the opposition and find a compromise. And when Herzog proposed his own compromise, Netanyahu and his extremist partners in the ruling coalition brushed it away. But by prolonging the crisis, Netanyahu has painted himself into a corner. He now finds himself between a rock and a hard place. If he scraps the proposed

**A**fter more than 12 weeks of anti-government protests, culminating in Sunday night's mass demonstrations following the sacking of Defense Minister Yoav Gallant, a beleaguered Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu finally caved in to pressure and announced on Monday evening that he was suspending the passing of a controversial law to limit the powers of the judiciary. On Monday, as Israel went through a series of general strikes that paralyzed the country amid an unprecedented state of polarization, with signs that the country was inching toward violent confrontations between those who are against the judicial overhaul and those, on the far right, who support it, Netanyahu decided he had no more moves to make. In his evening speech, Netanyahu said he wanted to avert civil war and was keen on preserving unity. He added that he was ready for dialogue, which he had always supported. In fact, he had ignored numerous appeals by President Isaac Herzog to sit with the opposition and find a compromise. And when Herzog proposed his own compromise, Netanyahu and his extremist partners in the ruling coalition brushed it away. But by prolonging the crisis, Netanyahu has painted himself into a corner. He now finds himself between a rock and a hard place. If he scraps the proposed reforms, his coalition government will surely collapse, throwing the country into a vortex and killing his political career. And if he pushes on in a few weeks' time, the protests and the strikes, not to mention the serious divisions within the military establishment, will resurface. Now, in order to keep

his shaky coalition united, he has struck a deal with ultranationalist Minister of National Security Itamar Ben-Gvir, who agreed to the suspension of the judicial overhaul plan in return for him being allowed to head his own armed militia outside the jurisdiction of the army and police.

In reality, Netanyahu has done more damage to Israel's security and unity in the space of a few months than any external foe has ever done since the state was created. Netanyahu is an opportunist who is ready to do anything to protect himself from being removed from office as his corruption trial continues. He is also using the far right, a mixture of religious and ideological extremists, to deliver his objective of weakening – and in effect neutralizing – the Supreme Court in Israel. It is a symbiotic relationship, in which the far right is using Netanyahu's judicial coup to change the character of the Israeli state. And this is what it boils down to in the end. The anti-government camp wants to defend the identity of the state as a secular and democratic entity, even if it is only for the benefit of its Jewish citizens. Supporters of the coalition government – what can only be described as a "dream team," bringing together the far right, ultranationalists, settlers, Orthodox Jews and religious Zionists – have a wide and conflicting agenda, ranging from turning Israel into a religious autocracy, with Taliban-like beliefs, to extending Israeli rule over all of the West Bank and beyond.

Netanyahu was able to hammer together a coalition that few in Israel believed would last for long – but long enough to pass laws that would keep him from jail. It now appears that his gambit has failed. The reaction to his constitutional coup has been resounding, with leaders of allied

countries and Jewish groups across the globe, including the US, united in rejecting it. It also pushed former army, police and intelligence officers, as well as politicians from all shades of the political spectrum, to issue a warning that Israel is heading toward dictatorship. The timing of this crisis is also crucial. The West Bank is on fire, with the Israeli army losing control of the security situation as settlers and Palestinian activists engage in retaliatory attacks. Tensions are also rife along the northern borders with Lebanon, while there are fears that Iran could be weeks away from building a nuclear weapon. The military establishment has warned that the Israeli army is witnessing deep divisions, with public calls for mutiny by thousands of reservists.

The opposition, which can claim victory over the coalition, will be emboldened by Netanyahu's decision to back down – for now. But this is just one battle in a long war that is now raging between the secular-liberal camp and the extremists. Former Prime Minister Yair Lapid promised on Monday that he would push to adopt a written constitution for Israel; one that codifies the separation of powers and prevents a future constitutional coup. This war will rage on for years, with what some analysts have called the "soul of Israel" at stake. It is unfortunate that the fight for a democratic and secular Israel is not linked to ending the occupation. It should be. Israel cannot free itself from the tyranny of self-serving racist, ultranationalist and ultrareligious groups unless it finally delinks itself from the Palestinian people and allows them to live in freedom and security along its side.

–Courtesy: Arab News



## Briefs

## Bill limiting CJP's powers introduced

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need to amend the Constitution for this since the law only relates to procedural changes. He was of the view that since the law relates to the Supreme Court therefore the apex court may also be taken on board before the enactment. It may be mentioned here that the new law may not affect the ongoing case where a five member bench is hearing the election commission's decision to delay the elections; however as per the new law the Supreme Court verdicts can now be challenged in front of a larger bench. So even if this five-member bench gives a verdict for holding of elections within 90 days or bare minimum time, then the government, as per the new law, shall have the right to challenge the decision. Right now, when the Supreme Court announces a verdict it is considered final though there is a provision of review yet scope of the review is very limited.

## 'Khalilzad doesn't...

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Patel told reporters at his daily news briefing, as he set the record straight. Asked about the political crisis in Pakistan in which death threats were being held, the spokesperson urged all sides to respect the rule of law and allow the people to democratically determine their country's leadership in accordance with the constitution and laws. "So we have previously stated that any implication of violence, harassment, or intimidation has no place in politics, and as we do with our partners all around the world, we encourage all sides in Pakistan to respect the rule of law and allow the people of Pakistan to democratically determine their own country's leadership pursuant to their own constitution and laws," he added.

## ECP had no authority...

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arguments were based on a "technical point" while the bench was seeing the question raised in the application. He also urged the AGP to refrain from "complicating" the matter by asking questions that would delay the proceedings. The CJP asked Awan to raise these points in a separate application, saying that the issue before the court was not about "the fixing, rather the postponement of the election date". Justice Mandokhail remarked that the court would examine how the ECP was empowered to extend the election date. Justice Aminuddin Khan questioned whether the election schedule could be "reduced to less than 90 days", while Justice Ijazul Ahsan observed that the ECP "has the right to adjust the election schedule within 90 days", but added that it could not exceed the 90-day limit. "Ninety days have been surpassed even now," observed Justice Mandokhail, adding that polls "must take place under all circumstances but now the question is who will exceed the election date beyond the 90-day limit". "The other question is, should an assembly be dissolved at the whims of one person alone," remarked Justice Mandokhail. PTI's lawyer Ali Zafar responded that "prime ministers and chief ministers are elected representatives of the people. If the premier's own party wishes to initiate a vote of no confidence against them, then the assembly can be dissolved," said Justice Mandokhail.

## Why 4-3 verdict changed...

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will have to be decided why 4/3 [verdict] was changed to 3/2? What were the motives behind it and who was involved?" the PML-N leader questioned. Referring to the dissenting note of the apex court judges, Maryam further said that no decision by the apex court would be accepted forcefully before clearing the ambiguity surrounding the apex court's March 1 verdict on Punjab and K-P polls.



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of UAE Hamad Alzaabi presenting a souvenir to Ambassador of Iran Ali Hosseini on the occasion of football match played in connection with the Diplomatic Football League at the UAE embassy. – DNA

## Bianca Andreescu injured, Sabalenka surges in Miami

Australian Open champion Aryna Sabalenka needed just over an hour to beat former French Open winner Barbora Krejčíková 6-3 6-2, while Elena Rybakina beat Elise Mertens 6-4 6-3

MIAMI: Former U.S. Open champion Bianca Andreescu left the court in a wheelchair at the Miami Open on Monday after sustaining a lower left leg injury that forced her to retire from her last 16 meeting with Ekaterina Alexandrova. After the opening set was hit by a two-hour rain delay, Canadian Andreescu went down while moving across the baseline during the third game of the second set, grabbing her ankle and screaming in pain. Andreescu was in tears as the broadcast picked up the 2019 Flushing Meadows champion screaming: "I've never felt this kind of pain before", when the medical staff arrived to treat her. She was eventually helped to her feet and shared a hug with Russian Alexandrova before leaving Hard Rock Stadium in a wheelchair to a standing ovation from the crowd. Alexandrova advanced 7-6(0) 0-2 (ret.) and will next face Petra Kvitová, who defeated Varvara Gracheva 7-5 7-6(5). "I'm just really sorry that it happened to (Andreescu)," Alexandrova said. "Seeing her on the court in so much pain, it's just painful to watch. You cannot help, you just can do nothing, which is terrible. And I think she's going to be fine soon, and I'm wishing for her speedy recovery." Australian Open champion Aryna Sabalenka needed just over an hour to beat former French Open winner Barbora Krejčíková 6-3 6-2,



while Elena Rybakina beat Elise Mertens 6-4 6-3. Rybakina, who won the Indian Wells crown in California, would become only the fifth woman to win the "Sunshine Double" if she triumphs in Miami. Earlier, Stefanos Tsitsipas beat Chilean qualifier Cristian Garin 6-3 4-6 6-4 to set up a meeting with Russian 14th seed Karen Khachanov, who won 6-2 6-4 against Czech Jiri Lehecka. Tsitsipas, still dealing with an ongoing shoulder issue and playing his first match of the Miami fortnight following a bye and walkover, respectively, in the opening two rounds, had 12 aces and saved three of four break points in the

two-hour match. "I was waiting for a very long time to get out there and play," said Tsitsipas. "It almost felt like a vacation this last week, staying in Miami, so I am glad I got started. I won't lie, it was difficult out there against an opponent that has shown good tennis against top players in the past." The match remained on serve until Tsitsipas broke for a 5-3 lead in the opening frame before going on to hold to love to grab the first set without facing a break point. Tsitsipas was tested early in the second set when he fell behind 0-40 and needed to win five consecutive points to hold serve and draw level at 1-1 but could not re-



peat that escape at 4-5 as Garin broke to love to force a decider. The Greek squandered two break point chances in the opening game of a third set but got the break he would need at 4-4 when Garin double-faulted while at 40-30 in a game the Chilean went on to lose before Tsitsipas served out the match. Argentine Francisco Cerundolo stunned fifth seed Felix Auger-Aliassime 6-2 7-5, while Frenchman Adrian Panatta knocked out eighth seed Hubert Hurkacz 7-6(5) 7-6(0) and American Frances Tiafoe lost 6-3 6-4 to Lorenzo Sonego. In other women's matches, third seed Jessica Pegula beat Poland's

Magda Linette 6-1 7-5 in a match where she broke four times during a 28-minute first set and then erased a 5-2 double-break to avoid being pushed into a decider. Pegula, a Miami semi-finalist last year who lives about 30 minutes from the tournament venue, has not dropped a set over her first three matches and will next face Russia's Anastasia Potapova, a 6-4 7-6(4) winner over China's Zheng Qinwen. Italian 25th seed Martina Trevisan enjoyed a 6-3 6-3 win over former French Open champion Jelena Ostapenko, the Latvian 24th seed, to reach the quarter-finals of a WTA 1000 event for the first time. – DNA

## After Conte, Spurs focus on season

LONDON: Tottenham chairman Daniel Levy admits the Premier League club have a "fight" on their hands as they scramble to save their season after Antonio Conte's turbulent reign came to an end. The Italian's departure appeared almost inevitable after his extraordinary post-match rant following a 3-3 draw at bottom club Southampton earlier this month. But Sunday's divorce by "mutual agreement", with just 10 Premier League games remaining, is a gamble by the Spurs hierarchy, who are desperate to secure a place in the lucrative Champions League next season. Tottenham are fourth in the Premier League table but are just two points ahead of Newcastle having played two games more – finishing in the top four guarantees entry into Europe's elite club competition. Cristian Stellini, Conte's assistant at Spurs, will take charge for the rest of the campaign, with former midfielder Ryan Mason working as his deputy. With the club out of all cup competitions, at least Stellini can afford to put all of his eggs in one basket. "We have 10 Premier League games remaining and we have a fight on our hands for a Champions League place," Levy said in a club statement issued late on Sunday. "We all need to pull together. Everyone has to step up to ensure the highest possible finish for our club and amazing, loyal supporters." The writing appeared to be on the wall for Conte when he tore into his "selfish" players after they let a 3-1 lead slip against Southampton, saying they did not want to play under pressure and criticising the club's culture. The 53-year-old's contract was set to expire at the end of the season and he had remained coy over the prospect of extending his stay in north London. During his 16-month reign Conte portrayed Tottenham's problems as beyond his control, subtly hinting at frustration with Levy's transfer policy without explicitly condemning him in public. – DNA

## MBS thanks China for efforts to restore Saudi-Iran ties

RIYADH: Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman Al Saud has appreciated China's efforts in brokering a rapprochement deal between Riyadh and Tehran. In a telephone conversation with Chinese President Xi Jinping on Tuesday, bin Salman "expressed Saudi Arabia's appreciation for the Chinese initiative to support the development of good neighborly relations between Saudi Arabia and Iran," the official Saudi Press Agency (SPA) reported. Iran and Saudi Arabia agreed to resume their diplomatic relations and reopen their embassies and diplomatic missions after seven years of estrangement. The detente between the two Middle Eastern powers followed several days of intensive negotiations hosted by China. Top Saudi and Iranian diplomats have held two phone calls over the past few days and are expected to meet during the ongoing Muslim holy month of Ramadan.

According to an unnamed Saudi official, Xi had expressed his desire for China to be a "bridge" between Saudi Arabia and Iran during bilateral talks at a summit in Riyadh last December, and bin Salman welcomed the bid. The Chinese state broadcaster CCTV reported that during Tuesday's phone call, Xi expressed Beijing's readiness to keep supporting the follow-up process of the Riyadh-Tehran talks. He also hoped that Saudi Arabia and Iran will "uphold the spirit of good neighborliness and continue to improve their relations on the basis of the results of their talks in Beijing." Also in his remarks, the Chinese president said his country stands ready to expand practical cooperation and people-to-people exchanges with Saudi Arabia, and push for greater development of a China-Saudi Arabia comprehensive strategic partnership. – Agencies

## Christchurch washout hits SL World Cup hopes

CHRISTCHURCH: Sri Lanka's hopes of securing automatic qualification for the World Cup took a major blow on Tuesday when heavy rain and gusting winds forced the second one-day international against New Zealand to be abandoned without a ball being bowled. Steady rain meant the covers stayed on all day at the Hagley Oval in Christchurch, with organisers calling the match off at 1630 local time (0330 GMT) with more showers forecast. – Agencies

## Fury can 'redeem himself' by fighting me - Joshua

LONDON: Anthony Joshua says Tyson Fury can "redeem himself from the circus" of a collapsed undisputed heavyweight bout by agreeing to fight him. Talks between Oleksandr Usyk, the WBO, WBA (Super) and IBF champion, and WBC title-holder Fury broke down last week. Joshua, 33, faces American Jermaine Franklin on Saturday in his first bout in 2023. He says he wants an all-British fight with Fury, whatever the outcome against Franklin at the O2 Arena. Joshua said: "There's no better time to get Fury in the ring than now because he needs me to redeem himself from this circus, this meltdown. He needs me so there's no better time than for him to call my name out and I'm someone that will take on any challenge." Behind the scenes at Joshua's Texas training camp Joshua was in talks with his British rival over a fight last year following successive losses to Usyk, but could not reach an agreement and Fury fought Derek Chisora at Wembley Stadium in December instead. Fury then set his sights on facing 36-year-old Usyk in what would have been first undisputed heavyweight contest since 1999. – Agencies

## Talks with Imran only after his...

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committee meeting or the Kashmir conference," PM Shehbaz added. "In a democracy, we have no weapons, merely dialogue," the PM said, emphasising that it was not possible to give in to Khan; "however, we are short on time." Speaking about the dissenting note issued by two judges of the Supreme Court (SC) who raised questions over the powers of the chief justice of Pakistan (CJP), the prime minister said the "move was a ray of hope". He further added that the "decision" yesterday had been made by four of the seven members of the bench and since the Parliament is empowered to make laws in the country, it, must do what it can to make laws that will facilitate the "decision". A day earlier, in a 27-page detailed note – considered to be a 'judgement' – for the apex court's March 1 verdict in Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa suo motu, Justice Syed Mansoor Ali Shah and Justice Jamal Khan Mandokhail pointed out that it is important "to revisit the power of 'one-man show' enjoyed by the office of the CJP [Umar Ata Bandial]". "The voices for change stemming from the judiciary itself is certainly a ray of hope for the country," Shehbaz said, adding that if the house did not play its part in making the "needed" changes, the nation will not forgive them. "Today, we must decide whether we want to help the millions of people in this country or we want to facilitate one favourite," the prime minister said. Shedding light on the recent fiasco witnessed during the court proceeding of the PTI chief, the premier said that a certain "favourite" does not appear before any court, no matter how many notices have been issued to him. "He gets an extension in different courts in the dark of the night and makes a mockery of the judiciary," PM Shehbaz lamented, criticising Khan for his remarks against a sitting woman judge and the fact that no action has been taken in this case so far.

## Imran not happy with govt plans to regulate judiciary

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doesn't follow their illegal orders. Imran Khan came down hard on PDM government's blackmailing tactics against top judiciary. He also condemned the human rights abuses and targeted campaign against PTI workers and leaders. Contrary to his traditional stance that he would never hold talks with the "crooks and looters" – the terms he often uses for the leadership of Pakistan Democratic Movement – Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan said Tuesday that he was ready to sit in all kinds of all parties conference (APC) for "upholding the Constitution". Khan made the remarks during a meeting with Council of Pakistan Newspaper Editors (CPNE) President Kazim Khan, who called on him at his Zaman Park residence in Lahore. During the meeting, the PTI chairman, then in the same breath added: "PDM is not a political alliance but a group of thieves."



ISLAMABAD: Famous Cricket player Haris Rauf has been made the goodwill ambassador of Islamabad Capital Police. IGP Islamabad Dr. Akbar Nasir Khan conferred the honorary rank of DSP on Haris Rauf. – DNA



## Briefs

## French authorities raid banks in massive tax fraud case

PARIS: French authorities raided five banks on Tuesday as part of an investigation into suspected cases of massive tax fraud and money laundering, prosecutors said. Some 150 investigators conducted searches in Paris and the financial district La Defense, the financial prosecutor's office (PNF) said in a statement. The raids follow five preliminary investigations that were opened in December 2021 in connection with suspected money laundering and aggravated suspected tax fraud related to dividend payments, the statement said. The operation "required several months of preparation", the statement said, and involved 16 investigating magistrates and more than 150 financial investigators. Prosecutors from Germany, where similar tax frauds came to light in recent years, were also involved in the raids, the statement added. A spokesman for Societe Generale confirmed to AFP that the French bank was being searched by authorities, but he said he did not know the reason. French rival BNP Paribas and its Exane unit, financial group Natixis and British banking giant HSBC are the other targets of the raids, according to Le Monde newspaper. A group of European news outlets published an investigation dubbed the "CumEx-Files" into the tax fraud in 2018. Its title referred to trading of shares with ("cum" in Latin) and without ("ex") dividends. The amounts involved are suspected to have reached 140 billion euros (\$151 billion) over a period of 20 years, the media group said in 2021. Tuesday's raids stem from so-called "Cum-Cum" tax fraud. "The fraud involves a foreign shareholder in a company listed in France temporarily transferring the shares he owns to a French banking institution, around the date the dividend is paid out," the PNF said.—Agencies

## Strong quake jolts northeastern Japan

TOKYO: A strong earthquake jolted northeastern Japan on Tuesday, said the Japan Meteorological Agency. According to the agency, the earthquake measuring 6.1 on the Richter scale hit off Aomori province in northeastern Japan. The quake was reported at around 6:18 p.m. (09:18 GMT) in parts of Hokkaido, Aomori, and Iwate provinces, according to the agency. "The tremor originated off Aomori's eastern coast at a depth of around 20 kilometers (12.5 miles)," it added. According to the US Geological Survey, a 6.2 magnitude quake hit the Hokkaido region of Japan. There was no confirmation of any damage when the last reports came in.—Agencies

## Kremlin 'regrets' lack of Nord Stream probe

MOSCOW: Russia will continue to push for an independent international investigation into the Nord Stream pipeline sabotage despite UN Security Council members failing to back a proposal by Moscow this week, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov has said. "We believe everyone should be interested in an objective investigation, which would involve all stakeholders [and] every party that could help shed light on the organizers and executors of this terrorist act," Peskov stated on Tuesday. He added that Moscow will "keep up the effort not to let anyone allow this issue to slide into oblivion." On Monday, Russia sought to pass a resolution which would have instructed the UN secretary general to conduct a "comprehensive, transparent and impartial international investigation" of the sabotage. Brazil, China, and Russia voted in favor of the draft document, while 12 other members of the UN Security Council abstained.—DNA

## Pak can earn billions of dollars through export of pink salt

Ahsan Bakhtawari said that the global market of pink salt is around US\$ 12 billion, but Pakistan's annual export of this salt is just around US\$ 70 million, which is far less than the actual potential of the country

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari, President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry said that Pakistan is the only producer of pink salt in the world and the government should cooperate with the private sector in value addition of this salt that would enable the country to earn billions of dollars through its exports around the world. He said this while talking to a delegation of Miracle Salt of USA that visited ICCL led by its President Nadeem Ahmed. Ahsan Bakhtawari said that the global market of pink salt is around US\$ 12 billion, but Pakistan's annual export of this salt is just



around US\$ 70 million, which is far less than the actual potential of the coun-

try. He said that Pakistan is exporting 90 percent of pink salt in raw form @ of

US\$ 60-80/ton and many other countries are earning much higher margins

by value addition of Pakistan's raw pink salt and exporting it to other mar-

kets. He stressed that the government should fix the minimum export price of pink salt and help the business community in its value addition to boost its export. Speaking at the occasion, Nadeem Ahmed, President, Miracle Salt of USA said that they are interested to invest in Pakistan's pink salt to produce its valued added products as this salt has great potential for exports in the global market. He said that the Government of Pakistan should announce a policy of pink salt and regulate its trade and exports that would attract more foreign investment to Pakistan. Karim Aziz Malik, Muhammad Naseem, Mr. Martin and others were in the delegation.

## Russia slams US Summit for Democracy as 'neocolonial practice'

She urged the US and its allies to stop trying to "democratize" others and drawing dividing lines and to return to abidance with international law and join efforts on creating conditions for peaceful coexistence and mutually beneficial cooperation

MOSCOW: Russia on Tuesday called the two-day US Summit for Democracy starting on Wednesday a "manifestation of neocolonial practice." In a comment on Foreign Ministry's website, spokeswoman Maria Zakharova said the true goal behind the "summits for democracy" is "to renew and legalize the US tools of external control" of internal affairs of states, force them to look at the world through the lens of the "rules-based order" to serve Washington's global interests. "Simultaneously, an ideological platform is being formed for fighting those, who the American political elites are trying to label as 'autocracies.'" These are, in the first turn, Russia and China," Zakharova stressed. According to the spokeswoman, under the slogan of

countering "autocratic regimes," Washington is trying to consolidate the Western community and pull supporters from outside. "We believe it is the height of hypocrisy on the part of the American authorities to claim leadership in promoting democratic values on a global scale in conditions when their reputation in this area cannot even be called dubious, it has been completely destroyed," she said. Zakharova claimed that the organization of regional sessions and appointment of co-chair countries were done "for show," and in reality, the US totally controls the whole process through non-governmental organizations. The spokeswoman said she expects from the Summit for Democracy "pompous hypocrisy" and anti-Russian statements, taking into account that one of its principal

goals is Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, who "grossly tramples" democratic freedoms in Ukraine - shut down several dozens of media outlets, prohibited opponent political parties, cracking down on religious institutions. "The fact that such characters are invited to speak at the event clearly demonstrates how far Americans are from their stated goals of promoting democratic values," she said. Zakharova also called "regrettable" the decision by UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres to take part in the event. "We strongly oppose the imposition of 'democracy' in the American reading as an indisputable, even the only 'measure of things.' Against the background of chronic internal problems, the US has no moral right to

lecture others. "Binary thinking in the spirit of 'here is black, and there is white' or 'good guys against bad' does not work in real life. And it is certainly not suitable for building serious relations with sovereign states," she argued. Zakharova said the influence of "neoliberal elites" is declining, their calls and promises are losing trust, while the multipolar world order, based on respect for independence and rights of all people, is gaining pace. She urged the US and its allies to stop trying to "democratize" others and drawing dividing lines and to return to abidance with international law and join efforts on creating conditions for peaceful coexistence and mutually beneficial cooperation.—Agencies

## Scottish parliament poised to confirm Yousaf as first minister

EDINBURGH: Scotland's parliament is set to confirm Humza Yousaf as the new first minister on Tuesday after he narrowly won the contest to succeed Nicola Sturgeon as Scottish National Party (SNP) leader. Yousaf beat two SNP rivals on Monday to clinch the party's top job, vowing to rejuvenate its signature policy of pursuing independence for Scotland which has stalled in recent months. The 37-year-old will be the youngest first minister since devolution reforms created the Scottish parliament in 1999, and the first leader of a national UK party from a minority ethnic background. "We should all take pride in the fact that today we have sent a clear message that your colour of skin, or your faith, is not a barrier to leading the country we all call home," Yousaf said in his victory speech. Promising to be a leader "for all of Scotland", he pledged to "kickstart" a civic movement that would "ensure our drive for independence is in fifth gear". "We will be the generation that delivers independence for Scotland." Members of the Scottish Parliament (MSPs) will vote to confirm a new first minister later on Tuesday, with Yousaf ensured of succeeding Sturgeon given the SNP is the largest party in the devolved assembly. He will then be sworn in at a ceremony on Wednesday, following formal approval from King Charles III - whom Yousaf wants to dislodge in favour of an elected head of state for Scotland. The seismic shift in Scottish politics follows Sturgeon's surprise resignation announcement last month after more than eight years at the helm. The 52-year-old said she was quitting because she felt unable to give "every ounce of energy" to the job. But it followed a difficult period for her government, during which support for independence slipped. Recent surveys show around 45 percent of Scots support Scotland leaving the United Kingdom - the same tally recorded in a 2014 referendum which London insists settled the matter for a generation. The Conservative government in London was quick to rebuff Yousaf's demands for a fresh plebiscite.—APP

## Greece to hold early elections on May 21

ATHENS: Greece is set to hold early elections on May 21, the country's prime minister announced on Tuesday. If a clear majority is not secured in the first round of the elections, a second round will be held by early July, said Kyriakos Mitsotakis in an introductory statement during a weekly cabinet meeting. Mitsotakis argued that the government has a duty to expose faults of the current simple proportional election system, which he said is tended to produce instability. The first ballot will determine who will govern, while the second round will determine how to govern, he said, adding that Greece needs a strong leadership in this "extremely unstable world." "This is why citizens should know who they are voting for as prime minister," he said. Mitsotakis urged to citizens to vote for his conservative Nea Dimokratia (ND) party to form a single-party government.—DNA

## UK raises terrorism threat level in N. Ireland

BIRMINGHAM: The UK government on Thursday raised the terrorism threat level in Northern Ireland from "substantial" to "severe." In a statement, Secretary of State for Northern Ireland Chris Heaton-Harris said that the decision to raise the threat level is taken by the domestic intelligence agency MI5, independently of ministers. An attack is judged "highly likely" when the threat level is "severe." "The threat level to Northern Ireland from Northern Ireland Related Terrorism is constantly monitored and is subject to a regular formal review each year," according to the government. Last year, the threat level was lowered from "severe" to "substantial" for the first time in 12 years. "In recent months, we have seen an increase in levels of activity relating to Northern Ireland Related Terrorism, which has targeted police officers serving their communities and also put at risk the lives of children and other members of the public," Heaton-Harris said. A New Year's message from the Irish dissident group the New Irish Republican Army (IRA) caused concerns as it pledged to "use all means at its disposal" to end British rule in Ireland. "As we enter 2023, Ireland remains under occupation and our national sovereignty is denied by a foreign government," said the Jan. 2 message from the New IRA, a splinter group formed after the disarmament of the IRA.—Agencies

## Dozens killed in fire at migrant detention center

MEXICO CITY: At least 39 migrants died in a fire that broke out at an immigration detention center in a Mexican city on the US border, the Mexican government said Tuesday. The fire broke out shortly before midnight at the National Migration Institute (INM) facility in Ciudad Juarez, prompting the mobilization of firefighters and dozens of ambulances. An AFP journalist saw forensic personnel remove a dozen bodies from the INM's parking lot, where several other bodies were laid and covered with blankets. "The National Migration Institute (INM) of the Interior Ministry regrets the deaths - so far - of 39 foreign migrants, caused by a fire," an INM statement said. A rescuer, who asked not to be identified because he was not authorized to speak to the media, said there were about 70 migrants, mostly Venezuelans, at the center. Numerous migrants have been detained in the center in recent days after local authorities rounded up street vendors, some of whom were foreigners, from the area. A Venezuelan woman who gave her name as Vianly stood outside the immigration center, desperate for information about her 27-year-old husband who had been detained there. "He was taken away in an ambulance," she told AFP, adding that her husband had documents allowing him to remain in Mexico.—APP

## Israeli protesters vow to stay put

TEL AVIV: An Israeli protest leader has vowed that demonstrations will continue across the occupied territories after prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu announced that a controversial plan to overhaul the regime's judiciary will be delayed until next month. "As long as the legislation continues and is not shelved, we will be on the streets," Shikma Bressler, one of the main leaders of the protest movement, said after Netanyahu made the announcement in a televised address on Monday. Bressler said Netanyahu and his coalition colleagues are clearly determined to press ahead with their "dictatorship laws" in the next Knesset session, which is slated to be held a month from now. She said the proposed changes, which would limit the Supreme Court's powers to rule against the legislature and the executive, giving the Israeli parliament (Knesset) the power to override Supreme Court decisions with a simple majority of 61 votes out of 120, was "harming the economy and the security of Israel." Netanyahu announced on Monday evening that he was temporarily freezing the bill that would alter the makeup of Israel's judicial system. He said he was determined to pass the judicial reform. He spoke after tens of thousands of Israelis demonstrated outside the Knesset and workers launched a general strike in a dramatic escalation of the mass protest movement aimed at halting his plan. The chaos shut down much of cities and threatened to paralyze the economy.—Agencies



ISLAMABAD: MOS for Petroleum Dr. Musadik Malik in a meeting with delegation of Barrick Gold Corporation, led by its president and CEO Mark Bristow. Canadian High Commissioner to Pakistan Ms. Leslie Scanion also present.—APP

## Armenians conducted illegal settlement policy in Lachin

BAKU: During the occupation, Armenians conducted a policy of illegal settlement in Lachin, said President Ilham Aliyev as he received Masim Mammadov, Special Representative of the President in Lachin District, which is included in East Zangezur economic region. "Armenians were brought to the city of Lachin and several villages from foreign countries and settled there. This is considered a war crime according to all international conventions. Unfortunately, the Armenian state has not yet been brought to justice for this war crime," the head of state noted. "From now on, ensuring the security of Lachin District and returning the displaced people there as soon as possible are priority tasks for us," said President Ilham Aliyev as he received Masim Mammadov, Special Representative of the President in Lachin District, which is included in East Zangezur economic region. "All engineering and fortification work in Lachin District along the border with Armenia has almost been completed. So we have acquired very favorable positions in the direction of the Azerbaijan-Ar-

menia border, we are reinforcing ourselves in these positions, and we will remain in these positions," the president underlined.

"Although the district came under our control when the Second Karabakh War ended, the city of Lachin was not in our hands. Because the road from Armenia to Karabakh passed through the center of the city of Lachin," said President Ilham Aliyev as he received Masim Mammadov, Special Representative of the President in Lachin District, which is included in East

Zangezur economic region. "On August 26, we returned to the villages of Zabukh, Sus, and the city of Lachin. After that, I visited the city of Lachin, raised the Azerbaijani flag in the center of the city, and declared that we would live in our native land forever," the president stated. Lachin District was occupied a few days after the occupation of Shusha. It was a great tragedy for our country, it was a great tragedy for the people of Lachin, and it was yet another act of betrayal on the part of the PFPFA-Musavat treach-

erous duo, said President Ilham Aliyev as he received Masim Mammadov, Special Representative of the President in Lachin District, which is included in East Zangezur economic region.

"The PFPFA-Musavat duo aspired to power, tried to seize it by all means, and the transfer and sale of land to Armenia was actually an opportunity for them to achieve this ugly goal of theirs. This is how they evaluated it - they believed that if the people of Azerbaijan were exposed to major suffering, this would provide them with additional opportunities. Unfortunately, this is what happened," the head of state added. "The occupation of Shusha and then Lachin caused a very serious political crisis in Azerbaijan. Taking advantage of this opportunity, the PFPFA-Musavat treacherous duo seized power illegally one month after the occupation of Lachin, and this opened the way for even greater tragedies," said President Ilham Aliyev as he received Masim Mammadov, Special Representative of the President in Lachin District, which is included in East Zangezur economic region. "Less

than a year later, in April 1993, Kalbajar was occupied, and thus a geographical connection was established between the territory of the former Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Region and the territory of Armenia. This, of course, was the key contributor to the defeat in the first Karabakh war," the president added. Earlier Azerbaijan Army's tank units conducted drills at the combined-arms training range. In accordance with the combat training plan for 2023, tank crews successfully accomplished the assigned tasks of overcoming natural and artificial obstacles in the area, driving combat vehicles, and destroying imaginary enemy targets in motion and motionless states. Exercises to increase the knowledge and skills of military personnel, as well as to improve their combat skills are underway. Azerbaijan periodically holds drills to improve its military personnel's combat readiness. The drills also aim to improve interaction and combat coordination between the servicemen during operations, as well as to develop commanders' military decision-making and unit management skills.





**Briefs**

**PM grieved over death of Umrah pilgrims**

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister (PM) Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif expressed his deep grief over the death of Umrah pilgrims who were killed in a bus accident in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The prime minister expressed his sympathies with the bereaved families and prayed for the early recovery of the injured, said a press release issued by PM Office Media Wing on Tuesday. The prime minister also prayed for the departed souls. According to media reports, at least 20 Umrah pilgrims died and 29 others were injured after a bus carrying them overturned, collided with a bridge, and caught fire in Aqaba Shaar in the Asir region. - APP

**Tareen group mulls forming new party**

DNA

LAHORE: A splinter group of former Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leaders has proposed forming a new political party named 'Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf Nazriyati (PTIN) or Haqeeqi Tehreek-e-Insaf (HTI) to contest the upcoming elections, media reported Tuesday. Members of the Jahangir Khan Tareen (JKT) Group put forth a proposal during an Iftar dinner which was attended by several members of the dissident PTI groups and leaders including Raja Riaz and Awn Chaudhry. The Tareen group is mulling over the proposal and it has not finalised its plan as of yet. Moreover, the group also plans on holding discussions in the future and considering alliances with Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) and Pakistan Muslim League-Quaid (PML-Q). The JKT group is becoming increasingly active in politics and plans to contact more former PTI members and leaders to join their cause. Participants in the meeting expressed dissatisfaction with former prime minister Imran Khan's policies and a desire to distance themselves from his politics. Further consultations and monitoring of the country's politics will also be held. Tareen was once a close confidant of Khan but formed his group within the PTI. Riaz, who leads the opposition in the National Assembly, replied that he was occupied with a meeting. However, Imran Shahid, JKT's political secretary, verified that an iftar-dinner had taken place. When asked about their future political strategy, Shahid stated that the group would inform the media when there were any updates on this matter.

**China spent \$240 billion bailing out BRI countries**

DNA

BEIJING: China spent \$240 billion bailing out 22 developing countries between 2008 and 2021, with the amount soaring in recent years as more have struggled to repay loans spent building "Belt & Road" infrastructure, according to a study published Tuesday. Almost 80 per cent of the rescue lending was made between 2016 and 2021, mainly to middle-income countries including Argentina, Mongolia and Pakistan, according to the report by researchers from the World Bank, Harvard Kennedy School, AidData, and the Kiel Institute for the World Economy. China has lent hundreds of billions of dollars to build infrastructure in developing countries, but lending has tailed off since 2016 as many projects have failed to pay the expected financial dividends. "Beijing is ultimately trying to rescue its own banks. That's why it has gotten into the risky business of international bailout lending," said Carmen Reinhart, a former World Bank chief economist and one of the study's authors.

**Palestine warns against fascism of Israeli officials**

Fascism is enabled by militias ties to power and threatens regional and international peace and security. Ben Gvir's reported agreed militias of racial terror will only serve to target, kill, and torture the undefended Palestinian people, en masse

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The State of Palestine has warned against the unaccountable fascism, unrestrained power, and unabated criminality of Israel's officials, sustained by an undemocratic and social system of Jewish supremacy, oppression, racism, and apartheid. Fascism is enabled by militias ties to power and threatens regional and international peace and security. Ben Gvir's reported agreed militias of racial terror will only serve to target, kill, and torture the undefended Palestinian people, en masse. The government of Israel is responsible for the repercussion of this deliberate decision, which only confirms Israel's absolute contempt for Palestinian rights and lives and flagrant breach of the international

community's parameters of a just solution. We will not stand idly by as a proud terrorist and an anarchist form and lead another Jewish militia with the declared aim of ethnically cleansing the land of its people. The Palestinian people have an unassailable right to defend themselves, their families, homes, and lands, from this State terrorism. The warning signs are clear. Since the beginning of 2023, Israel has killed over 90 Palestinians including 17 children. Condemnations of and concrete actions against Ben Gvir's militia of racial terror are necessary. Likewise, the Secretary-General of the United Nations must uphold his obligations and provide immediate international protection for the Palestinian people. The rights of the Palestinian people to live as free and independent people in their homeland, in dignity, in peace and security,

are neither negotiable nor tradable for internal political fixtures. The rights of the Palestinian people are inalienable and universally recognized and only their realization will end this international crisis and lead to region and international peace and security. On Sunday, Palestine called for US and international action to stop Israeli violations in the flashpoint Al-Aqsa Mosque in occupied East Jerusalem, Anadolu reports. On Saturday, Israeli forces raided the flashpoint site late in the day and forced worshippers out of the complex, according to the Palestinian news agency Wafa. In a statement, the Palestinian Foreign Ministry called for forcing Israel to comply with its commitments and "halt violations of holy sites in Jerusalem, including Al-Aqsa Mosque, before it is too late." The ministry termed the Israeli assault on

worshippers inside Al-Aqsa as "a serious escalation" and held Tel Aviv fully responsible for its consequences. Tensions have been running high across the occupied West Bank in recent months amid repeated Israeli raids into Palestinian towns. Nearly 90 Palestinians have been killed by Israeli fire since the start of this year, according to Palestinian figures. Fourteen Israelis have also been killed in separate attacks during the same period. For Muslims, Al-Aqsa represents the world's third-holiest site. Jews, for their part, call the area as the Temple Mount, saying it was the site of two Jewish temples in ancient times. Israel occupied East Jerusalem, where Al-Aqsa is located, during the 1967 Arab-Israeli War. It annexed the entire city in 1980, in a move never recognized by the international community.

**Afghanistan: Girls' education activist arrested by Taliban**

KABUL: A prominent Afghan campaigner for female education has been arrested by the Taliban, even as teenage girls and women remain barred from classrooms. Matullah Wesa, 30, had often received threats - he has spent years travelling across Afghanistan trying to improve access to education for all children. The Taliban did not say why Mr Wesa is in custody. His house was also raided. His arrest follows the detention of a number of other activists who have been campaigning for women's education. In February Prof Ismail Mashal, an outspoken critic of the Taliban government's ban on education for women, was arrested in Kabul while handing out free books. - DNA



ISLAMABAD: Germany's Representative for Afghanistan, Ambassador Erik Kurzwil called on Foreign Secretary Asad Majeed Khan. The Foreign Secretary reiterated Pakistan's desire for a peaceful, prosperous, stable and connected Afghanistan. - DNA

**IMF deal after KSA, UAE confirm support**

ISLAMABAD: The staff level agreement (SLA) between Pakistan and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) will only be signed when the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) and United Arab Emirates (UAE) confirm financial support, reported media, citing sources. "As soon as support confirmation from KSA and UAE are received by the IMF then the staff level agreement will be signed with the IMF," sources told the publication. It was reported that Finance Minister Ishaq Dar had informed diplomats in Islamabad at an Iftar dinner on Sunday that the issues with the IMF will be settled soon. Almost 46 days have passed since the IMF and Pakistan concluded review talks here in Islamabad on February 9 and the very next day Finance Minister Dar claimed that the virtual talks have begun and the staff-level agreement would be signed within a few days. However, it is yet to be secured after the passage of 46 days. On the issue of cross-fuel subsidy, there have been dissenting views within the Finance Ministry because the timing of the announce-

ment could not be endorsed at all. It remains to be seen how the ministry will satisfy the global lender on the subsidy. The bureaucrats from the ministry have resisted the scheme tooth and nail but the government went public with it. The move was undertaken by the Prime Minister's Office. "We have made it clear that such schemes cannot be implemented in view of the IMF's known opposition to subsidies. At this point, the revival of the IMF programme is imperative and such schemes would jeopardise the whole process," officials who spoke on the condition of anonymity told the publication. They added they did not know about any progress on the contentious cross-fuel subsidy issue at this point in time. In case the IMF programme is revived then the question will arise as to how the next 10th and 11th reviews will be accomplished. The 10th review was due on February 3 of this year. While the 11th review would be due on May 3 and it is not yet known how both sides would proceed even after the revival of the programme. - DNA

**Ukraine receives Leopard, Challenger battle tanks**

"They return to their homeland better equipped but to no less danger. We will continue to stand by them and do all we can to support Ukraine for as long as it takes"

KYIV: Germany and Britain have delivered the first consignment of battle tanks to Ukraine - providing much-needed ground support as Russian forces intensify attacks in the east of the country. The Leopard and Challenger tanks were promised to Kyiv earlier this year and arrived on Monday in time for an expected spring offensive by Ukraine's forces. German Chancellor Olaf Scholz told journalists on Monday that Berlin provided "very modern" Leopard battle tanks to Kyiv with the defence ministry later saying 18 were delivered. "Our tanks have made it into the hands of our Ukrainian friends as promised and on time," German Defence Minister Boris Pistorius said in a statement. Ukraine's Defence Minister Oleksiy Reznikov said he inspected a "new addition" to the country's forces - Challenger tanks as well as Germany's Marder infantry fighting vehicles, plus Cougar armoured trucks and Stryker armoured personnel carriers from the United States. "A year ago, no one would have thought that our partners' support would be so strong," Reznikov said. Reznikov praised Britain's Challengers calling the tanks works of "military art" and posting a video showing him sitting in one on an open field. As Ukraine gains conventional firepower, Russia vowed to follow through on a plan announced by President Vladimir Putin to deploy tactical nuclear weapons in neighbouring Belarus, an initiative that drew widespread criticism. In London, Britain's government said Ukrainian crews - who have been training to use the Challenger 2 - are now ready to deploy to the front line. "Ukrainian tank crews have completed training on Challenger 2 tanks in the UK and have returned home to continue their fight against Russia's illegal and unprovoked invasion," the ministry of defence said in a statement. The training began shortly after London announced in January it would send 14 of the tanks to Ukraine. The crews learned how to command, drive and "effectively identify and engage targets", said the ministry. "It is truly inspiring to witness the determination of Ukrainian soldiers having completed their training on British Challenger 2 tanks on British soil," said Defence Secretary Ben Wallace. "They return to their homeland better equipped but to no less danger. We will continue to stand by them and do all we can to support Ukraine for as long as it takes." Putin said last week that Moscow would be "forced to react" if Britain follows through on its promise to deliver to Ukraine armour-piercing ammunition fired by the tanks that contain depleted uranium. - DNA

**Decides to stage more public gatherings during Ramazan**

LAHORE: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) decided on Tuesday to continue its mass contact campaign. After Lahore, the PTI had decided to stage more public gatherings during the month of Ramazan. In connection with the holding of more gatherings in Punjab, the PTI had decided to stage "power show" in Central Punjab and then in South Punjab. As per the party sources, the PTI would stage a "power show" in Central Punjab, South Punjab and North Punjab, while the party was likely to hold the next gathering in Lodhran.

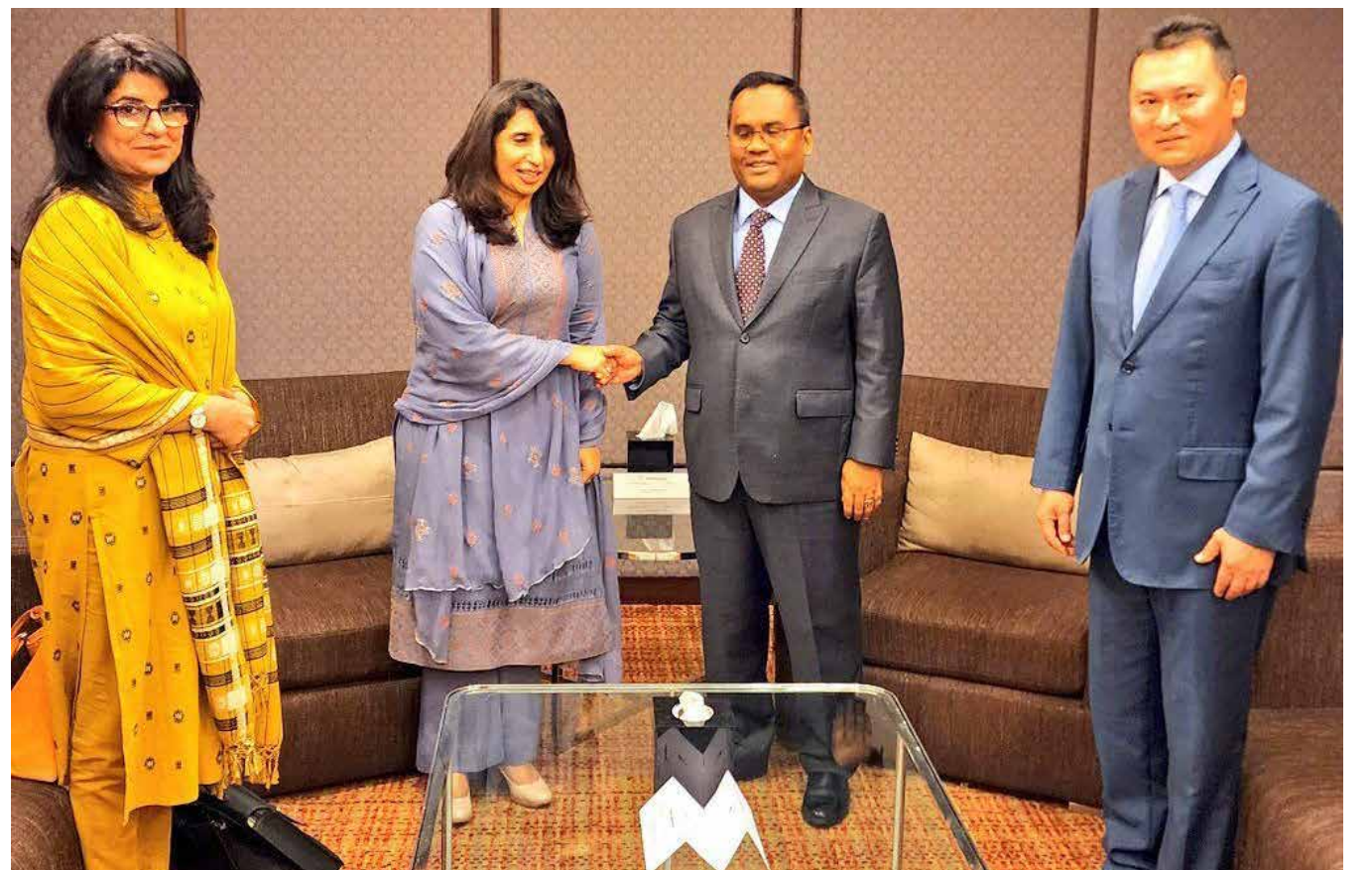
**PTI vows to continue mass contact campaign**

The PTI vowed to continue its public campaign irrespective of the elections date, while the schedule for the "power show" will be announced after detailed consultations. On the other hand, earlier today, PTI senior leader Fawad Chaudhry expressed his reservations over the "torture on the party workers". Speaking to media, Mr Chaudhry claimed, "The human rights have been violated from April 10 to March 21. The British citizen, Shahid Hussain has been freed and apology was offered on the release of Mr

Hussain. "Did the people of Pakistan enjoy any rights," he questioned. Talking about Azhar Mashwani, Mr Chaudhry said, "Azhar Mashwani is a citizen of Pakistan, who has been disappeared for five days." "Yesterday, a ten-year old child was sent to the judicial remand", he lamented. Lamenting over the cases registered against PTI Chairman Imran Khan, Mr Chaudhry said, "In one day, 15 cases were lodged against Imran Khan, and the total number of cases against him now reached to 143." - DNA

**3 children, 3 adults killed in Nashville shooting**

NASHVILLE: Three children and three adults have been killed after a woman opened fire at a primary school in Nashville, Tennessee, local officials said, in the latest instance of deadly gun violence in the United States. The shooting happened on Monday morning at The Covenant School, a private Presbyterian school with a student body of about 200 that teaches preschool through sixth grade. The three children, all nine years old, had gunshot wounds, officials said, and they were pronounced dead upon arrival at the Monroe Carell Jr Children's Hospital at Vanderbilt. The adult victims were all over 60, according to authorities. Their roles at the school were not immediately clear. The Metropolitan Nashville Police Department said on Monday afternoon that the suspect, a 28-year-old Nashville resident they identified as Audrey Hale, had been fatally shot by officers after they entered the building. Police said Hale had an assault rifle, handgun, as well as a pistol and entered the building by shooting through a door. Hale also had detailed maps of the schools and left behind a "manifesto", police said. - Agencies



KUALALUMPUR: Pakistan-Malaysia BPC was held in Kuala Lumpur. Talks co-chaired by AFS Mumtaz Zahra Baloch and Deputy Secretary General Dato Norman Bin Muhammad. They agreed to expand and strengthen bilateral strategic partnership and enhance multi-dimensional cooperation. - DNA