



Islamabad POST

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Detailed News On Page-08

Nikki Haley quits White House race

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Detailed News On Page-08

Rain, snowfall victims

Shehbaz directs relief measures in KP, other areas

He said the federal government will extend all possible assistance to the affected people in this hour of need

SHAMIM SHAHID

PESHAWAR: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has directed to take all possible measures for relief and rehabilitation of people affected by torrential rains and snowfall in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Chairing a meeting in Peshawar, he instructed the National Disaster Management Authority to take maximum steps, in collaboration with the provincial administration for rescue and rehabilitation of affected families. The Prime Minister said that provision of compensation amount to affected people should be ensured within next five days. He said the federal government will extend all possible assistance to the affected people in this hour of need. He further said all institutions should jointly take part in the rescue and relief efforts for affected people. The Prime Minister was informed about the losses and ongoing rescue and relief operation in the wake of torrential rains and snowfall in the province. It was informed that forty people lost their lives, while sixty-two others, including twenty-seven children, injured in the recent rains and snowfall. Besides, six hundred and thirty-five houses were damaged either fully or partially. The meeting was briefed that two million rupees each are being provided to the family members of those, who died in the rain related incidents, while five hundred thousand rupees each are being given to the injured. Similarly, seven hundred thousand rupees are being given to the owners of fully damaged and three hundred and fifty thousand rupees to partially affected houses. The Prime Minister was apprised that all leading highways of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa have been made functional, whereas work is underway on roads affected by snowfall and landslide. The meeting was further told that the National Disaster Management Authority, provincial and district administration are fully prepared to deal with any emergency situation that

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PHC bars oath-taking of lawmakers on reserved seats

Court directs ECP to submit its response on issue today

SHAMIM SHAHID

PESHAWAR: The Peshawar High Court (PHC) on Wednesday barred the oath-taking of lawmakers notified on reserved seats denied to the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI)-backed Sunni Ittehad Council (SIC). The directives were issued during today's hearing conducted by Justice Ishtiaq Ibrahim and Justice Shakeel Ahmad. The court issued a stay order preventing members from swearing in and directed the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) to submit its response in the said matter by Thursday. The development comes as the party had announced to challenge the electoral body's verdict, issued on Monday, wherein it rejected the SIC's — whom the PTI-backed independent candidates had joined — plea for allocation of reserved seats. The electoral body instead accepted applications of the opposing parties and decided that the seats in the National Assembly and provincial assemblies would not remain vacant and would be allocated by a proportional representation process of

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ISLAMABAD: Chief of the Army Staff General Syed Asim Munir calls on Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, at the Prime Minister's House. — DNA

PM, COAS Asim discuss security matters

Army chief congratulates PM Shehbaz

ADIL SHAHEEN

ISLAMABAD: Chief of the Army Staff General Syed Asim Munir on Wednesday called on Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif here at the Prime Minister's House. In the meeting, they discussed the Pakistan Army's professional as well as the security-related matters, a PM Office press release said. The army chief also congratulated Prime Minister Shehbaz on assuming the office and expressed good wishes for him.

ZAB was not given fair trial

Bilawal terms Supreme Court ruling historic

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court of Pakistan on Wednesday issued its reserved opinion on the trial, sentence, and execution of the late prime minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, saying that he did not get a chance to a "fair trial". A nine-member bench of the top court, headed by Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Qazi Faez Isa, reserved its opinion on the 2011 presidential reference seeking to revisit the sentence, and execution of the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) founder and former premier Bhutto on Monday. The bench also comprises Justice Sardar Tariq Masood, Justice Syed Mansoor Ali Shah, Justice Yahya Afridi, Justice Amin-ud-Din Khan, Justice Jamal Khan Mandokhel,

Continued on Page 06

Mariyam Aurangzeb senior minister Punjab, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa cabinets sworn in

CM Maryam congratulated and lauded the newly appointed members. "Young and very talented people have been inducted in the cabinet," she said

ABID RAZA

PESHAWAR/LAHORE: Newly elected members of the Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa cabinets were sworn in on Wednesday. In Lahore, Punjab Governor Balighur Rehman administered oath to the 18-member cabinet of Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz. The ceremony, held at the Governor House, was attended by Maryam, Punjab Assembly Speaker Malik Muhammad Khan and provincial police chief Usman Anwar among others. The cabinet members who were sworn in included Mairiyum Aurangzeb, Syed Muhammad Ashiq Hussain Shah, Muhammad Kazim Pirzada, Rana Sikandar Hayat, Khawaja Imran Nazeer, Khawaja Salman Rafique, Zeeshan Rafique, Bilal Akbar Khan, Sohaib Ahmed Malik, Azma Zahid Bukhari, Bilal Yasir, Ramesh Sindh Arora, Khalid Tahir, Faisal Ayub, Shafay Hussain, Sher Ali Gorchani, Sohail Shoukat Butt

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Election result buried 'May 9 narrative': Imran

People did not believe we committed treason, says PTI founder

COURT REPORTER

RAWALPINDI: Imran Khan, the founder of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), on Wednesday demanded punishment for those responsible for the May 9 riots, endorsing the statement of the Corps Commanders' Conference released by ISPR a day earlier. On Tuesday, the top military commanders reiterated

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Target achieved?

Ruling coalition secures two-thirds majority in NA

Coalition government comprises 229 members in the lower house

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) and its allies have secured a two-third majority in the national assembly (NA), following the allocation of reserved seats which were claimed by the Sunni Ittehad Council (SIC). The coalition government led by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, which includes the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP), Mutahida Quomi

Movement-Pakistan (MQM-P), Pakistan Muslim League-Quaid (PML-Q), Istehkam-e-Pakistan Party (IPP), Pakistan Muslim League-Zia (PML-Z) and Balochistan Awami Party (BAP), comprises 229 members in the lower house. To gain two-third majority in the 336-seat of national assembly, a government needs the support of 224 lawmakers, thereby strengthening the ruling coalition's control over governance and its capability to enact legislative agendas effectively. The PML-N commands on 123 seats in the lower house, in which 75 won in the February 8 elections and nine independents who later joined the party.

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Briefs

Omar Ayub picked as Opp leader in NA

Sher Afzal nominated for slot of PAC head

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: PTI leader Barrister Gohar Ali Khan announced on Wednesday that Omar Ayub Khan would be the opposition leader in the National Assembly. Barrister Gohar told reporters that parliamentary issues were discussed in the meeting with the PTI chief. He said the cabinet of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa was formed. He said the issue of reserved seats also was discussed with the PTI founder. He announced that the party would approach the Lahore and Sindh high courts for reserved seats and expressed hope that the judiciary would decide cases according to law.

Ninth Round of Pak-EU political dialogue

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The ninth round of Pakistan-Europe Union Political Dialogue was held today in Islamabad. Foreign Secretary Muhammad Syrus Sajjad Qazi led the Pakistani delegation while the EU side was led by Deputy Secretary General of the European External Action Service, Enrique Mora. The Political Dialogue covered the entire gamut of Pakistan-EU bilateral relationship encompassing all areas of mutual interest with a focus on Strategic Engagement Plan (SEP), trade and development cooperation, security, climate action, migration and mobility. Important Regional and global developments were also discussed.

To be elected as a Senator

Mohsin Naqvi tipped as new Interior Minister

Known for his close ties with both the Establishment and the PPP, Mohsin Naqvi enjoys a special bond with PPP Co-Chairman and anticipated President of Pakistan, Asif Ali Zardari, who affectionately refers to him as his son

ANSAR M BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: Renowned for his exceptional leadership as the former caretaker Chief Minister of Punjab and current Chairman of the Pakistan Cricket Board, Mohsin Naqvi is poised to take on the role of Federal Interior Minister while maintaining his position at the helm of the PCB. Insiders familiar with the matter reveal that Naqvi is anticipated to secure a Senatorial position before assuming the ministerial role, adhering to legal provisions that allow for 25 percent of ministers may be appointed from the Senate. Known for his close ties with both the Establishment and the PPP, Mohsin Naqvi enjoys a special bond with PPP Co-Chairman and anticipated President of Pakistan, Asif Ali Zardari, who affectionately refers to him as his son. During his tenure as Chief Minister of Punjab, Naqvi earned praise for overseeing day-to-day affairs with unwavering diligence and honesty, according to well-placed sources. His multifaceted experience and relationships make him a promising candidate for the crucial role of Federal Interior



Minister while continuing to contribute to the world of cricket as the Chairman of PCB. Insider information suggests that the Cabinet's oath-taking ceremony is anticipated to transpire post the presidential elections. It has been disclosed by reliable sources that the deferment of the oath-taking event was instigated by a specific request from Asif Ali Zardari. According to these sources, Mr. Zardari expressed concerns regarding potential shifts in support from certain allies, should they not secure portfolios aligned with their preferences. His foresight led to the strategic decision to delay the ceremony, demonstrating a calculated approach to ensure sustained backing from crucial allies.

COAS Gen Asim Munir attends rollout of HAIDER tank

The ceremony was also attended by Ambassador of China, officials of Chinese state company NORINCO

SAIFULLAH ANSAR / DNA

RAWALPINDI: Chief of Army Staff (COAS) General Syed Asim Munir graced the Heavy Industries Taxila (HIT) with his presence on Wednesday, presiding over the rollout ceremony of the HAIDER tank (Pilot Project), the military said. The ceremony, held at the prestigious military facility, marked a significant milestone in Pakistan's indigenous efforts in the field of defence, the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) said in a statement. The event was attended by key dignitaries, including the Ambassador of the People's Republic of China Jiang Zaidong, officials from the Chinese state company NORINCO, high-ranking officials from the Government of Pakistan and Pakistan Army, and various military and civilian officials from HIT.



TAXILA: Chief of Army Staff General Asim Munir, Ambassador of People's Republic of China Jiang Zaidong and others perform roll-out ceremony of HAIDER tank. — DNA

At the ceremony, HIT proudly unveiled the HAIDER tank, a product of collaborative efforts between NORINCO China and several industries within Pakistan. According to the ISPR, the HAIDER tank represents a leap in tank warfare capabilities, boasting cutting-edge technology and remarkable firepower, protection, and maneuver characteristics. Crafted with state-of-the-art advanced technologies, HAIDER stands as a testament to the relentless pursuit of excellence in defence innovation by Pakistan's defence industry. The COAS was given a detailed briefing on the technical capabilities of the HAIDER tank and the strides made in achieving indigenous in arms and armament. General Munir expressed his admiration for the technical prowess exhibited by the HAIDER tank and commended the collaborative efforts that led to its development. The COAS also visited other manufacturing facilities within the Heavy Industrial Complex, where he acknowledged the commitment of the officers and workforce in reaching another technological milestone. Upon his arrival, General Munir was warmly received by the Chairman of HIT, further emphasising the importance and support of the leadership in the development of indigenous defence capabilities. The rollout of the HAIDER tank not only marks a significant achievement for HIT but also underscores the growing collaboration between Pakistan and China in the field of defence technology.

Fairness of Feb 8 polls hits lowest since 2013 :Pildat

Post-poll satisfaction hit historic low matching 2002 score of 40% pointing to increasing public distrust: report

ADIL SHAHEEN

ISLAMABAD : The 2024 general elections recorded the lowest fairness score since 2013, indicating irregularities and growing distrust in the electoral process, according to a report released by the Pakistan Institute of Legislative Development and Transparency (Pildat) on Wednesday. The Pildat, a leading non-governmental election watchdog, has released its assessment of the February 8 elections, highlighting a concerning decline in fairness scores compared to previous election cycles. It said the overall fairness of the 2024 elections in Pakistan received a score of 49% which is three percentage points lower than the score received for the 2018 General Election, as per the report. Fairness assessment scores for the 2013 and 2018 elections stood at 57% and 52%, respectively. Overall, these scores, particularly the steady decline in them since 2013, are emblematic of the weakening of the democratic processes in Pakistan and they underscore the urgent need to restore public confidence in the electoral system, the election watchdog said. The Pildat also recommended enhancing transparency and accountability measures throughout the electoral process, calling on the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) to conduct a thorough investigation into the delays and deficiencies observed during the elections, particularly in

result compilation, transmission, and consolidation. Despite advancements, the pre-poll phase has stalled at a 50% fairness score since 2018, indicating persistent pre-election issues. The report said polling day's voting process score dipped to 58% in 2024 from 64% in 2018, yet showed a rise from 44% in 2013, reflecting fluctuating levels of voter experience. Moreover, it said no progress in result management since 2018 with the score stuck at 40% highlighting a critical need for an inquiry into Election Management System (EMS) operation. The post-poll satisfaction hit a historic low matching the 2002 score of 40% pointing to increasing public distrust in electoral outcomes, said the Pildat report. Quality of general election The report also highlighted the considerable delays in scheduling of the election, political repression, lack of impartiality from caretaker governments and state institutions, and worsening law and order in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan during the pre-poll phase. On polling day, the suspension of mobile phone and internet services not only compromised the EMS but also created problems for public participation in the electoral process, it said. After polling was completed, the delay in the announcement of the provisional results beyond the deadline fixed in Section 13(3) of the Elections Act, 2017, prompted serious questions about the credibility of the election. The election watchdog also noted that widespread allegations of discrepancy between

Forms-45 and Form-47 have also added to the concerns about the credibility of the election. "The delay in the publishing of Forms 45, 46, 48 and 49 on the ECP website - a violation of Section 95 (10) of Elections Act, 2017 - has further damaged the credibility of the election." Pildat's recommendations The Pildat recommended the ECP to conduct a thorough and impartial investigation into the delays in the transmission, consolidation, and announcement of provisional results. Moreover, the ECP was also urged to probe the lack of contingency planning to meet result issuance deadlines in case of the EMS inoperability and the failure to publish signed copies of Forms 45, 46, 48, and 49 within 14 days of polling day as required under the Elections Act, 2017. "We also recommend that, in order to bring the controversies relating to GE2024 to a close, a clear path be decided for the way forward. There are only two possible avenues to consider. The election watchdog demanded that the number of election tribunals be adequately increased to decide all election petitions within the legal deadline of 180 days to avoid inordinate delay. In addition to the election tribunals, the Pildat also called for constituting a commission of inquiry like the one formed to probe the 2013 general election. "The incoming National Assembly and the Senate should deliberate and decide whether a Commission of Enquiry be constituted to ensure accountability, transparency and political stability."



PESHAWAR : Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif meets with families affected by rains and snowfall in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, directs relief measures.—DNA

ECP seeks additional PML-N lists for NA women's seats

ISLAMABAD : The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) sought more lists of women from the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) to allocate nine additional National Assembly reserve seats after their initial list was exhausted. The PML-N's priority list for the National Assembly (NA) in Punjab has been depleted, prompting the ECP to ask for nomination papers from nine more women affiliated with the PML-N. These nomination papers will be accepted based on the new priority list provided by the PML-N, following the schedule. The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has released a schedule for granting extra seats to women, specifically to parliamentary parties such as PML-N, after refusing to allocate certain seats to the Sunni Ittehad Council (SIC). According to schedule, the issuance of the public notice is set for Thursday, with PML-N's nominated candidates to submit their nomination papers to the Joint Election Commissioner of Punjab by March 9. The preliminary list of candidates is slated for release on March 10, followed by the completion of the scrutiny of nomination papers by March 12. Appeals regarding the acceptance or rejection of nomination papers can be lodged until March 14. The Appellate Tribunal is expected to announce its verdict on the appeals by March 16.—APP

9 percent of Pakistanis being wasted to smoking

The PIDE report said that tobacco use is associated with many adverse health effects, but the tax revenue it generates cause tobacco tax policy inertia in Pakistan and other countries

ISLAMABAD : The uphill task for the new government is to synchronize efforts of health and finance ministries to counter the menace of smoking. With 24 million active tobacco users, Pakistan is among the world's top tobacco-consuming countries, says a report prepared by Pakistan Institute of Development Economics (PIDE). Capital Calling, a think tank, has stated in a report that Pakistan has become a breeding ground for multinational cigarette companies. As a result, the markets are filled with cheap and illicit

cigarettes. According to an estimate, cigarette prices are the cheapest in Pakistan as compared to other countries in the region. The think tank pressed on the need to tax cigarettes in accordance with the guidelines set by the WHO, that calls for holding cigarettes companies to account for the health and environment losses they make. It added, "The cigarette industry managed to influence decision making, which not only resulted in Rs567 billion loss in potential revenue but also put extra burden on the country's fragile healthcare system." The PIDE report,

however, adds that tobacco use is associated with many adverse health effects, but the tax revenue it generates cause tobacco tax policy inertia in Pakistan and other countries. "Despite evidence that higher tobacco taxation discourages tobacco consumption, Pakistan's tax policy is among the weakest action areas in the country's fight against tobacco," it says. "One explanation could be that the policymakers, who consider the tobacco industry a major contributor to government coffers, are reluctant to raise taxes fearing the revenue loss.—APP

Sh. Rashid's name removed from ECL: LHC

RAWALPINDI: Awami Muslim League chief and former federal minister Sheikh Rashid's name was removed from the Exit Control List (ECL) on Wednesday. Justice Sadaqat Ali Khan and Justice Mirza Waqas Rauf of LHC Rawalpindi bench heard the petition seeking removal of Rashid's name from the no-fly list. The court said the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) claimed that Sheikh Rashid was not involved in any case so why his name continued to be on the ECL. Officials of the ministry of interior informed the court that Rashid's name would be excluded from the list after formation of the new cabinet.—APP

Preparations for Pak Day parade kick off

Parade will showcase Pakistan's latest military equipment

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: The federal government has started preparations for the Joint Services Parade to celebrate Pakistan Day on March 23 at Shakarparian Parade Ground located in the capital city Islamabad. According to details, the preparations are underway for a grand parade where the armed forces, along with Rangers, FC, and police units, will march together in unity. Women will also play a significant role in the parade. The parade will showcase Pakistan's latest military equipment including the modern jets of the Pakistan Air Force like the JF-17 Thunder and F-16s.

ISSI hosts seminar on GSI: China's world view

ISLAMABAD : The China Pakistan Study Centre (CPSC) at the Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI) hosted a seminar entitled "Global Security Initiative (GSI): China's World View." Senator Mushahid Hussain Sayed, Chairperson Senate's Standing Committee on Defence, delivered the keynote address. Eminent speakers including diplomats and former and serving high ranking officials presented their perspectives. The seminar provided valuable insights into China's vision for global security and development and how China wishes to engage with different countries and global organizations through this pivotal framework. Senator Mushahid Hussain Sayed, during his keynote address, highlighted that the Global Security Initiative

(GSI) is part of composite whole i.e., China's vision of common destiny, based on the concept of indivisible security, UN Charter, international law and five principles of peaceful co-existence, which is in contrast with the cold war, zero-sum mindset. He highlighted that China's world view is rooted in the strategic culture of China and contemporary security scenario. He stressed that GSI reflects the strategic thought of China, which is derived from various sources and aspects of China's national experience including the Silk Road, the Great Wall of China, PLA's Long March, and "the century of humiliation" that the country recovered from. He lauded Pakistan's abiding friendship with China, citing steadfast support of both countries for each

other's issues of core interest. He highlighted that the future belongs to connectivity and regionalism, not the Cold War. He suggested that the rise of multipolarity necessitates multilateral approach to global security issues, including laudable initiatives like GSI. In his welcome remarks, DG ISSI Ambassador Sohail Mahmood underscored the importance of China's flagship Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) that has been a global, innovative and successful venture of China laying down a comprehensive framework for cooperation and development. He added that President Xi Jinping has since successfully proposed three other major global initiatives, namely the Global Development Initiative (GDI), the Global Security Initiative (GSI), and the Global Civilization Initiative (GCI).—APP

Administration activated for price control : Maryam

ABID RAZA

LAHORE : Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz on Wednesday said administration had been directed across Punjab to ensure price control and arrest the hoarding culture, as she expressed her determination to provide relief to the people who have been crushed by a record-high inflation, especially food prices. There will be zero-tolerance, Maryam told a press conference and added that officials at the district level had started carrying out raids to check the practice of selling daily use items on higher rates and creating artificial shortage. As the PML-N government

has activated the price control committees in Punjab, she asked the owners of storage facilities [godowns] to get the same registered with the district administration within three days so that the officials could have an idea about the stored items and the traders could escape government action. The chief minister also promised strict action in case anyone tried to create law and order situation, stating no one would be spared. Any attempt to damage the public property would be dealt with an iron hand, said the chief minister who added that the critics only knew about arson and protest - a clear reference to the PTI. "I know some people in the opposition criticise

[her government]. They are not in right state of mind," she remarked. "Criticism for the sake of criticism represents a defeated mindset", Maryam said, but added that she was open to criticism and would learn from genuine critique. Maryam said she had a firm belief that Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif would also work on reducing the prices to arrest inflation. About the special relief package under Negahban Ration Programme, the Punjab chief minister admitted that a one-time relief to over 30 million people wasn't enough as poverty had reached an unprecedented level. Sharing the initiative's details, Maryam said the government had a digital proof of each of

6.5 million bags containing QR codes, which would be distributed among the deserving families, adding that they had used the Nadra and BISP data for preparing the lists. The chief minister said the Punjab Food Authority had been directed to check each producer to maintain quality and discourage the sale of substandard items - a practice which is one of the main reasons behind many diseases and health issues rampant in the country. As far as the future line of action to deal with the poverty challenge is concerned, Maryam said the provincial government would conduct a province-wide survey in the coming months to prepare a Punjab Socioeconomic Registry.

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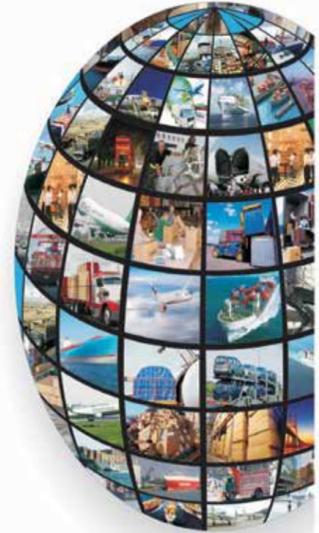






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Islamabad Marriott Hotel launches 'Kiku'

A gateway to authentic Japanese cuisine

DNA

The Islamabad Marriott Hotel has announced the grand opening of 'Kiku', an elegant new addition to Islamabad's culinary scene. The inauguration ceremony was attended by the Ambassador of Japan, H.E. Mr. WADA Mitsuhiro, who expressed his delight and endorsement of Kiku as "the only authentic Japanese restaurant in Islamabad." The restaurant's name, Kiku, translates to 'chrysanthemum' in Japanese, a symbol of rejuvenation and nobility, reflecting the restaurant's commitment to providing guests with an authentic and exquisite dining experience. The restaurant offers a meticulously curated menu of contemporary Japanese cuisine, prepared by highly skilled chefs who have



mastered the art of Japanese culinary arts. There is also a live sushi bar, teppanyaki and Robotayaki stations complemented by vibrant music played by a DJ. Kiku's interior has been designed to transport diners to Japan, with a serene and elegant ambiance that combines traditional and modern design elements. The opening of Kiku marks a significant milestone in the city's dining landscape, promising an unforgettable journey into the heart of Japanese culture and cuisine. Mr. David Richard O'Hanlon, the General Manager of the Islamabad Marriott Hotel said: "Kiku is more than just a restaurant; it's an invitation to explore and appreciate the rich culinary traditions of Japan." The cultural bridge is being built through the culinary exchange, and Islamabad Marriott is proud to offer its guests an unparalleled authentic Japanese dining experience.

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. Patricks 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

Hotels & Restaurants



Serena Hotel.....111 133 133
Marriott.....051- 2826121
Monal.....0334-5421812



Turkish Airlines.....8494949



Emergency

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



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CAA.....9281092



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

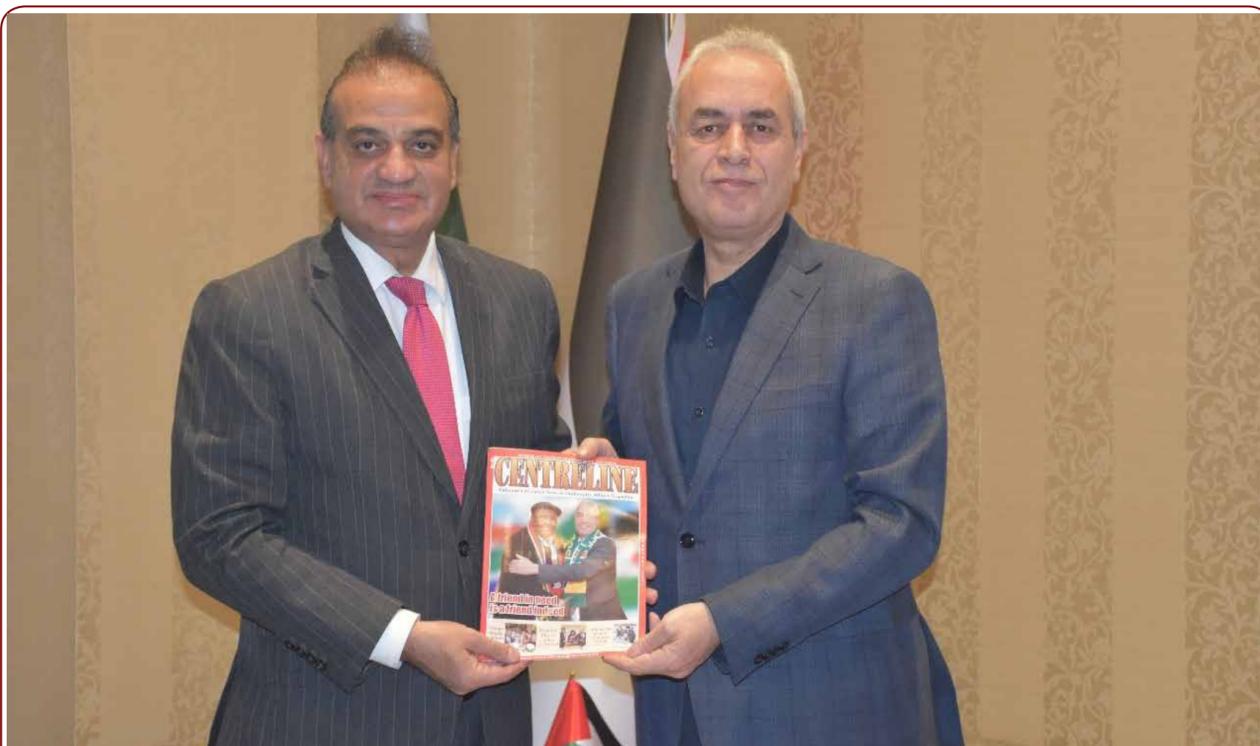


Departments

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

Water Tank

Islamabad.....0321-5744480



ISLAMABAD: Chief Editor Centreline/Daily Islamabad POST Ansar Mahmood Bhatti presenting a copy of Centreline magazine, which carries a special report on Gaza, to Ambassador of Palestine Ahmed Rabei. The Ambassador briefed the senior journalist about the latest Gaza situation. The Ambassador thanked the government and the people of Pakistan for extending whole-hearted support to Palestine at this particular juncture. —DNA

ADB, UNICEF join hands to strengthen climate resilient

The agreement was signed by Yong Ye, ADB Country Director for Pakistan, and Abdullah Fadil, UNICEF's Representative in Pakistan, at UNICEF's Pakistan office in Islamabad

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) signed a Letter of Understanding (LOU) on Wednesday to collaborate on water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) and solid waste management interventions under an ADB-funded project in the cities of Rawalpindi and Bahawalpur in Punjab province of Pakistan. The agreement was signed by Yong Ye, ADB Country Director for Pakistan, and Abdullah Fadil, UNICEF's

Representative in Pakistan, at UNICEF's Pakistan office in Islamabad, according to a press release. "ADB and UNICEF are joining forces and renewing our shared commitment to strengthen policy, legislative framework, and institutional capacity in municipal service delivery, this time to improve the quality, coverage, and reliability of urban services under the Developing Resilient Environments and Advancing Municipal Services (DREAMS) Project," said Mr. Ye. "The collaboration will enable us to support the government's efforts to address water

supply and solid waste management challenges in these two important and rapidly growing cities." Under the new partnership, ADB and UNICEF will collaborate to support inclusive, resilient, and sustainable urban infrastructure and services in Rawalpindi and Bahawalpur through public awareness and communication campaigns that will improve behaviors and practices related to water, sanitation, and solid waste management. The understanding reached between ADB and UNICEF Pakistan offices will help promote sustainable, inclusive, and low-carbon municipal services that will benefit up to

1.5 million urban dwellers in the two cities of Punjab, the most populous province of the country. "Signing of this agreement further strengthens the existing collaboration between ADB and UNICEF in Pakistan," said Mr. Fadil. "Both organizations are committed to leveraging collective expertise and knowledge to help increase equitable access to water, sanitation, and hygiene services and to reduce the vulnerability of citizens, especially children and women, to growing climate change and environmental degradation." The close synergies between ADB's DREAMS

project and UNICEF's WASH program present a significant opportunity to enhance the impact of the programs, ultimately leading to positive outcomes in water, sanitation, and hygiene that will benefit communities in Pakistan. The agreement will also pave the way for collaboration in future phases of the DREAMS project and other projects in Pakistan. This is the second formal agreement between the two organizations at the country level, following the collaboration to procure emergency medical supplies and equipment during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Senators urged strengthening of democracy

ISLAMABAD: Senators in the upper house upon their retirement on March 11, stressed upon strengthening of democracy in the country for a prosperous future of Pakistan on Wednesday. Deputy Chairman Senat Mirza Muhammad Afridi accepted the resolution from senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar Leader of the House and Senator Dr. Shahzad Waseem, Leader of the Opposition, who moved the resolution under Rule 263 of the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in the Senate, 2012, that the requirement

of Rule 41 of the said Rules regarding question hour be dispensed with for remaining sittings of the current session. Senator Professor Dr. Mahar Taj Roghani in her farewell speech appreciated the Chairman Senate Sadiq Sanjrani and Deputy Chairman Senate Mirza Afridi for smooth conduct of senate sessions. She suggested that the oath of the senators should not be mandatory for senators because they don't justify it with their acts when coming into power. She said that, she did her

best in her tenure as senator but still feel depressed for not contributing enough in the development of the country. She also suggested that the bills passed by the Senate should not be sent to the National Assembly for further approval because the Senate has the status of upper house, however the bills passed by the National Assembly must come to the Senate for approval. Senator Moul Bux Chandio in his farewell speech said that Pakistan has to be run by politicians therefore politicians must believe in dialogue

and talk to each other in country's best interest. He said 18th amendment is an amendment for survival of Pakistan and Pakistan People Party will not tolerate any conspiracy to end this amendment. He said politicians and political parties must learn from their mistakes and further strengthen democracy by forgetting past mistakes. He said the democracy will be matured if it is not derailed and would be more strengthened after mistakes. He also thanked his party leadership for nominating him for senatorship.—APP

PTDC highlights Pakistan's tourism potential

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Tourism Development Corporation (PTDC), in collaboration with the Trade Development Authority of Pakistan (TDAP), Pakistan mission in Germany, provincial tourism departments, and private tour operator

companies is proudly representing Pakistan at Internationale Tourismus Börse (ITB) Berlin 2024, a leading international travel expo of tourism. From 5th to 7th March 2024, over 5,500 exhibitors from 170 countries are showcasing the potential

of their tourism destinations in Berlin, Germany. This year's theme is "Beauty has an Address", said a news release on Wednesday. Managing Director of PTDC, Aftab ur Rehman Rana, in his message on this occasion, informed that Pakistan's flag

is once again waving among the flags of nations at the world's biggest travel show at Messe Berlin Exhibition Ground. PTDC has managed to send a delegation of 11 exhibitors to showcase Pakistan's rich tourism potential in this leading global travel show. He said that Pakistan's participation in ITB Berlin 2024 is aligned with the country's tourism.—APP



ISLAMABAD: The Ambassador-designate of Pakistan to Portugal, Dr Muhammad Khalid Ejaz, called on President Dr Arif Alvi, at Aiwan-e-Sadr.—DNA

Services' exports earn \$4.44 bln in 7 months

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan earned \$4,447.97 million by exporting various services during the first seven months of the current fiscal year (2023-24), the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) reported. The export of services, however, witnessed a decline of 2.42 percent when compared to the exports of \$4,558.41 million during the same period last year. The services' imports into the country increased by 28.76 percent, going up from \$4,790.38 million last year to \$6,168.13 million during the first seven months of the current fiscal year. Based on the figures, the services' trade deficit widened by 641.56 percent during the period under review, going up from \$231.97 million last year to \$1,720.16 million this year. Meanwhile, on a year-over-year (YoY) basis, the services' exports from the country decreased by 1.47 percent, going from \$688.10 million in January 2023 to \$677.96 million in January 2024. The imports went up by 53.09 percent, growing from \$649.96 million to \$995.04 million, according to PBS data. On a month-to-month (MoM) basis, service exports decreased by 7.25 percent in January 2024 when compared to exports of \$730.99 million in December 2023. The imports on a MoM basis increased by 15.84 percent during the month under review when compared to imports of \$859.00 million in November 2023. Meanwhile, merchandise exports from July-February (2023-24) increased by 14.2 percent and were recorded at \$20.341 billion compared to the exports of \$17.815 billion during the same period of the last year. The imports during the period decreased by 14.1 percent and reached \$34.213 billion as compared to the imports of \$39.810 billion in the same period last year.

FBISE launches automated public service system

ISLAMABAD: Federal Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education (FBISE), has launched a fully automated public service system to facilitate the students. According to the details given by the federal board, this initiative offers important services to the students. The students can benefit from the facilities including Online issuance of Migration/NOC certificate, result verification, and duplicate result card. This facility will also abolish the need for manual processes and provide applicants with a quick service delivery in three minutes. The system will soon expand and provide additional services like change of subjects, cancellation of results, and correction of session details. This system allows users to directly process the application, requiring applicants to provide their registration number, year of examination, and postal address, so that they could get a direct link to access the services through WhatsApp or Email. The FBISE sources informed that issued documents could be verified through the unique tracking ID or verification link system. Meanwhile, Chairman Federal Board Qaiser Alam, praised the efforts of Dr. Bashir Khan Yousafzai, Secretary Federal Board and IT team for developing the automated system to facilitate the students. He emphasized the Board's commitment to improve efficiency, transparency and accessibility in education administration. The system empowers students and helps the education system by introducing advance-thinking initiatives that adhere to the highest standards of quality and services. For more information about the system, the Secretary Federal Board can be contacted on the following number: 051 9269502.—APP

ANF recovers 122 kg drugs in 11 operations

RAWALPINDI: Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) while conducting 11 operations across the country managed to recover 122 kg drugs and arrested 12 accused, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman here on Wednesday. He informed that 36 kg opium was recovered near Ring Road Peshawar and 22 kg methadone was recovered from Liberty Chowk Lahore area while an accused was also arrested during the operation. 18 kg hashish was recovered from Torkham Road Khyber and in fourth operation, 12 kg hashish and 7 kg opium were recovered near Faisalabad road. An accused was also netted. 10 kg hashish was recovered from the possession of an accused arrested in Balochistan. 7 kg hashish, 100 grams heroin and 50 grams Ice drug were recovered from a drug smuggler nabbed near Qasimabad in Hyderabad. The spokesman informed that 3.6 kg hashish was recovered near Labor Colony Peshawar and three suspects were arrested. ANF Lahore recovered 2 kg hashish from a parcel sent to Karachi at Cargo Office Lahore. 2 kg Ice was seized from a courier office in Lahore and two suspects were rounded up. 1.4 kg hashish, three 30 bore pistols with 7 magazines.—APP

INVITATION FOR BIDS (IFB)
Contract No.: 4641/ADCP/NCB-01

1. PAKISTAN Water and Power Development Authority (WAPDA) through the Chief Engineer/PT (Indus Telemetry) IBIS, WAPDA invites sealed bids from bidders/firms/companies for the Procurement of Acoustic Doppler Current Profiler (ADCP) & Accessories for Installation of Telemetry System for Real-Time Discharge Monitoring at 27 Key Sites on Indus Basin Irrigation System (IBIS).

2. The bidding shall be conducted in line with the Single Stage Two Envelope procedure of the Public Procurement Rules 2004 and any Regulations, Regulatory Guides, Procurement Guidelines or Instructions issued by the Authority from time to time, and is open to all potential bidders.

3. A complete set of Bidding Documents may be purchased by an interested eligible bidder on submission of a written application to the office given below and upon payment of a non-refundable fee of Rupees 5000/- (Pak Rupees Five Thousand only) from the date of publication of Invitation for Bids (IFB). The method of payment will be in the form of pay order or bank draft from any scheduled bank in Pakistan in favor of Chief Engineer/PT (Indus Telemetry), IBIS Project, WAPDA.

4. All Bids must be accompanied by a Bid Security 2% of Bid Amount or equivalent amount in a freely convertible currency and must be delivered to the office of Chief Engineer/PT (Indus Telemetry), IBIS Project, WAPDA at or before 26.03.2024 (15 days response time) at 11:30 AM. Electronic bidding will not be permitted. Late Bids will be rejected. Bids will be publicly opened in the presence of the Bidder's designated representative and anyone who choose to attend at the address below on 25.03.2024 at 12:00 PM.

5. The Employer reserves all its rights regarding rejection of bids as defined in Clause 33(1) of PPPA Rules 2004.

6. The local bidders i.e., original manufacturers/ distributors/ suppliers/ contractors etc. must be registered with Income Tax & Sales Tax Departments.

Chief Engineer/PT (Indus Telemetry)
Room No. 536, Wagda House Lahore
Tel # (+92-42) 99202271, (+92-42) 99202211/2171
Facsimile (+92-42) 99204031 | Email: cepdibis@gmail.com

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Briefs

China's two sessions takes place at a pivotal time

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Against the backdrop of sweeping global, regional, and local transitions, Ambassador (Retd) Syed Hasan Javed, a renowned Pakistani sinologist, has emphasized the significance of China's Two Sessions, which are being held at a particularly critical moment. The Two Sessions, referring to the National People's Congress (NPC) and the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC), are annual gatherings that bring together China's top legislators and political advisors to discuss national policies across various sectors, China Economic Net (CEN) reported on Tuesday. Amb Syed Hasan Javed observed that the current two sessions are taking place at a time of profound transitions affecting strategy, foreign relations, politics, economy, technology, environment, culture and society. "China, as a global powerhouse, is at the forefront of these transitions, and the Two Sessions are a crucial platform for charting the country's following course and set the direction, parameters and targets for the future," he said in an exclusive interview with CEN.

Agricultural equipment reaches Pakistan

ISLAMABAD: The first shipment of agricultural equipment under the Green Pakistan Initiative (GPI) has reached Pakistan from China via the Khunjerab Pass, despite challenging weather conditions. The cargo includes 20 tractors, drip irrigation systems, hose reel-based irrigation systems, satellite, and drone intelligent control platforms. Additionally, the convoy brings smart agriculture management platforms and the Internet of Things (IoT) for agriculture. Since its inception in July of last year, GPI has been a significant part of the government's new plan for economic recovery. With Pakistan still in the early stages of industrialization, much of its existing machinery and equipment, including power plants, is due for replacement, making this initiative especially critical for the country.—DNA

Govt resolved to promote local languages

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif extending greetings on the Saraiki Culture and Saraiki Ajrak Day being observed on Wednesday, reiterated that the incumbent government would play its role in promoting the local languages, literature, and cultures of all the regions in the country. The prime minister, in his message, said that all the colors of the Saraiki region were beautiful while being rich in different cultures and traditions. Calling the Saraiki dialect "very sweet" he said it was not only spoken in South Punjab rather in Balochistan and India as well.—DNA

FPCCI chief Atif invites Russia to be part of CPEC

H.E. Albert Khorev assured that the Embassy of Russia will cooperate to increase bilateral trade and will help Pakistan in investment promotion, shifting of modern machinery, development in Oil and Gas exploration, mining, transport, and hydel power generation

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Mr. Atif Ikram Sheikh President FPCCI and H.E. Albert Khorev, Russian Ambassador to Pakistan have agreed to increase bilateral trade. Both sides reaffirmed their commitment to fostering stronger cooperation to increase the bilateral trade volume. This commitment reflects the shared interest in fortifying the enduring friendship and economic partnership between the two countries. H.E. Albert Khorev Russian Ambassador to Pakistan and Mr. Pavel B. Burlakov, Acting Trade Representative, yesterday visited the Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce & Industry Capital Office in Islamabad and met Mr Atif Ikram Sheikh President of FPCCI, Mr. Kairam Aziz Malik Chairman and Malik Sohail Hussain Chairman Coordination FPCCI & other members. During the meeting, the matters of enhancing cooperation in diverse fields, including tourism, trade, investment, technology, and exchange of business delegations were discussed. On this occasion, President FPCCI Mr Atif Ikram Sheikh said that the total bilateral trade amounted to \$666.85 million in 2022-23. He said that Pakistan possesses trade potential in various product categories for export to Russia, including USD \$ 3.2 billion worth



of Knitted apparel and USD \$ 987.3 million worth of cotton products. Additionally, opportunities exist to export leather apparel, citrus fruits, vegetables, salts, and primary polyethylene to Russia. Atif Ikram Sheikh further said that Pakistan's exports to Russia encompass a diverse range of products, including citrus fruit, leather apparel, ready-made garments, potatoes, home textiles, woven cotton fabrics, surgical and medical apparatus, woven fabric of synthetic staple fibre, and salt, among others. Key imports from Russia to Pakistan consist of wheat and meslin, dried leguminous vegetables, bituminous coal, and similar solid fuels manufactured from coal. he said, adding Paki-

stan looks forward to expanding trade, opening up new avenues for cooperation, and further strengthening the longstanding bonds of friendship between the two countries. President FPCCI Mr. Atif Ikram Sheikh invited Russia to take advantage of CPEC by developing road network in Wakhan corridor for linkages with Lowari tunnel for exporting items and boosting trade through the warm water with the gulf region. "Russia is the world's second and third largest producer of gas and oil respectively and we can learn and take guidance from Russian technology and experience in enhancing gas and oil exploration and production," Atif Ikram suggested.

Mr. Karim Aziz Malik, Chairman of the Capital Office, said that there is a huge trade and investment potential between Pakistan and Russia. "Enhancing economic trade and investment relations is a prime priority of Pakistan. He further said that Russia valued its relations with Pakistan and both countries had a "good level of cooperation and aimed to enhance it further." He said there is a "great potential between both economies that needed to be explored more. Malik Sohail Hussain emphasizes and advocates border trade with Russia and a currency swap agreement and said that Pakistan could export many products to Russia including textile goods, pharmaceuticals,

surgical instruments, IT products and services, sports goods, leather products, fruits and vegetables. He further said that the business community could play an important role in forging stronger relations between the two countries. He emphasized evolving institutional mechanisms to promote economic and commercial cooperation as well as to enhance awareness about trade and investment opportunities available in the two countries Russian Ambassador to Pakistan H.E. Albert Khorev invited Pakistani businessmen to explore huge untapped Russian market where their merchandise could get a good place for having good quality. He said both countries should take sector-specific measures to enhance mutual trade that did not reflect its potential. He said there is a great potential for increasing trade between the two countries and for this purpose contact between the two governments, businessmen and people needs to be increased.

H.E. Albert Khorev assured that the Embassy of Russia will cooperate to increase bilateral trade and will help Pakistan in investment promotion, shifting of modern machinery, development in Oil and Gas exploration, mining, transport, and hydel power generation. He said Russian investors are showing interest in Pakistan.

Call to open border with Afghanistan, Iran

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Senator Mushahid Hussain Syed on Wednesday requested the upper house play its role in opening borders with neighboring countries, especially Afghanistan and Iran, for trade. Speaking on the point of order in the upper house, the senator said that a delegation from Afghanistan has arrived in Pakistan for the request to open up the border for trade.

He said, "The trade between Pakistan and Afghanistan is around 5 billion US dollars, but due to the closure of borders, entire business activity is closed, due to which Afghan traders are facing difficulty." He said, "Three landlocked countries, including Afghanistan, and Tajikistan need land opening opportunities through Gawadar, but unfortunately, Pakistan's relations with its neighboring countries are not satisfactory." He said, "Pakistan has been a host country for all its neighboring countries for 40 years, and the same role must continue in the future for prosperity and peace in the region."

He requested the chairman and deputy chairman of the senate to play their roles to facilitate a meeting of Afghan traders and to take up the issue at the highest level for the opening up of borders.

Women empowerment key to ensure progressive society

Samina Alvi said it was the responsibility of everybody to ensure a conducive environment for girls and women to provide proper education and training, enabling them to live a life with dignity and respect

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: First Lady Begum Samina Alvi, On Wednesday while emphasizing the importance of women's role in the country's development, said that a progressive and inclusive society could not be possible without empowering women in every sector of life. Addressing an event organized in connection with International Women Day by the Behbud Association of Pakistan, Samina Alvi said it was the responsibility of everybody to ensure a conducive environment for girls and women to provide proper education and training, enabling them to live a life with dignity and re-

spect. Appreciating the role of the association in empowering women, she said that since its inception, the Behbud Association has empowered around one million women by providing skills and training in various fields. She said women comprised half of the total population of the country, and their participation was very important to ensuring the economic development of the country. The first lady pointed out that the women's literacy rate in the country was much lower as compared to the men. She said Pakistan also needed to improve its current rating of 142 out of 147 countries in the Global Gender Gap Index. She said improving the women's literacy rate would automatically

improve the overall literacy rate of the country, as educated women will never let their children become illiterate. As regards her campaign on creating awareness about breast cancer, Samina Alvi said self-examination was very critical to ensuring early diagnosis of the disease, adding that early diagnosis of breast cancer was curable. Similarly, she also called for creating awareness about mental health, which is very important to avoid mental stress and keep people healthy. She urged the business community, especially, to help establish vocational training centers for the differently abled to enable them to stand on their own two feet and contribute towards the country's

development. Earlier, the first lady distributed shields among the staff of the association. Lt. General Dr Nigar Johar, on the occasion said the Behbud Association was playing important role in empowering women. She said Islam had taught women to have equal opportunities to work shoulder to shoulder with men. President of the Behbud Association of Pakistan, Abida Malik, informed her that a 100-bed hospital was under construction under the umbrella of the association and would be completed within one year. The Behbud president also appreciated Samina Alvi for playing a remarkable role in creating awareness about breast cancer and other health and social issues.

Current tenure of PM Sharif will be better than previous one

ISLAMABAD: Chairman of National Business Group Pakistan, President Pakistan Businessmen and Intellectuals Forum, and All Karachi Industrial Alliance, and former provincial minister Mian Zahid Hussain said on Wednesday that the current tenure of Mian Shahbaz Sharif as Prime Minister would be better than the previous term. During his first term as Prime Minister, he made a deal with the IMF and made tough decisions, laying the foundations for economic reforms that saved the country from bankruptcy, he said. Mian Zahid Hussain said that PM Sharif's efforts saved the country from bankruptcy but caused political damage to his party. Talking to the business community, the veteran business leader said that the PM would try hard to improve the country's economy. The business community is sure he will save the country by sacrificing his reputation for economic stability. The business leader said the Prime Minister wants to take everyone along to ensure the country's development. His determination in this regard is commendable. In these circumstances, all political parties must cooperate with him in the country's interest. However, he said, some parties are not concerned about the economy or the plight of the public, and they would continue to push personal interests. Mian Zahid Hussain said that the PM should initiate efforts for the Charter of the Economy and the Charter of Reconciliation so that he can focus on national development.—DNA

Promoting green technology along belt and road vital

DNA

ISLAMABAD: "To boost green development of Belt and Road, we must adhere to the principles of extensive consultation, joint contribution and shared benefits. It is essential to strengthen international cooperation, promote green technology, and policy support for green finance. We should also strengthen the alignment with green international standards and enhance the development of green Belt and Road," said Wang Tongzhou in an interview with China Economic Net. Regarding green devel-

opment, Wang, a member of the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) and chairman of Beijing-based China Communications Construction Co Ltd, put forward four specific suggestions. Firstly, he appealed for stronger policy guidance and institutional support. "We can establish a coordination mechanism for overseas investments by state-owned enterprises, where enterprises should mutually support each other in expanding overseas operations." "Secondly, we look forward to more support for the development, promotion, and application of

green technology. We should reduce carbon emissions and energy consumption of the whole industrial chain, and establish several green BRI project benchmarks," Wang said. Thirdly, he suggested that we should actively convey China's confidence in green development to the world, promote the alignment of the green BRI construction with the cooperation on climate change and biodiversity under the UN framework. "We should also enhance the global application of the "Two Mountains" concept introduced by Chinese President Xi Jinping by executing green infrastructure.

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ISLAMABAD: Portuguese Ambassador in Islamabad, Frederico Silva visiting an exhibition by women artists from all over Pakistan to commemorate Women's Day 2024 at PNCA, in Federal Capital.— ONLINE

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Genocide by starvation

Imagine you are at home, with your wife and children. It's dinner time before you put your three children to sleep. The room is cold, the propane cooking cylinder is empty, and there is no food, no electricity, and no drinking water. Your youngest child, Manar, cries, "I'm hungry. We haven't had food for the last four days." She rubs her dry bluish hands together, "Uhf-uh-ih-uhhf ... I'm cold." The words escape her chattering teeth. You, let's say your name is Nader, look at Manar's feeble body, her pale skin has lost color. The once bouncy curly black hair had become tangled and knotted like a cluttered eagle nest, unwashed for more than a month. Ahmad asks his wife, "Noora, did you search the cabinets and closets for dry food?" Noora takes a deep breath, "More than ten times, our kitchen is as empty as our stomachs." She looked at the cold floor in despair, her face twisted into a sorrowful mask. "Press this against Manar's stomach," he said in a low voice and handed Noora a bag full of sand. "It'll help her sleep, again." It wasn't the first night they put their children to sleep with a sack of sand on their stomachs. This has become a common method for the people of Gaza to suppress hunger. It was after midnight when Manar stopped crying, and that is when Nader and Noora had a chance to close their eyes, not knowing how miserable the next day would be. Unsure of the time, Nader jumps from the floor mattress to a strong pounding at the door. Loud pandemonium and commotion outside, he looks at his watch, 3:45 am. His first thought was that the Israeli military was ordering residents to vacate the building before blowing it up, as they had done dynamiting blocks of buildings in his neighborhood a week earlier. Noora and the children are awake. Manar crawls to the corner with her siblings and wraps herself around her mother. Nader leaps to the door to find his brother, Ali, who is also his neighbor on the other side panting for air. "Come Nader ... come, let's go." He stopped to catch a breath after running up the stairs. "Flour trucks". His chest ballooned and deflated several times, until he eventually said, "Trucks arriving at the Nabulsi roundabout." Ali moved sideways to make way for neighbors clumping down the stairs. The children's faces lit up. Their eyes like laser light, wide open, were waiting for Nader's response. "There were Israeli tanks at the roundabout. They ordered me to stay home yesterday and didn't allow me to bring water," Nader said. "The UN is distributing the flour. The Israelis allowed the trucks in." Ali looked down the stairs, "Let's go before it's too late." He urged Nader. Nader turns his head toward his children. Manar's laser-focused eyes turn into a vacant stare, open mouth. He clenched his teeth, pulled the winter coat from the hook, closed the door behind him, and followed his older brother Ali down to the street. This week and after five months of pleading for "Israel" to allow more aid trucks into Gaza, Biden joined other inept Arab dictators in an inconsequential gesture dropping 38,000 meals to 2.4 million in Gaza; a stunt by the incompetent leaders that is aimed more at mollifying international outrage against "Israel" than a genuine desire to alleviate the mounting starvation levels in Gaza. The made-for-TV theatrical airdrop of a mere 38,000 meals was like a grain of sand on the beach of Gaza. The parachuted meals were equivalent to providing a minuscule 0.005 of the daily meal for every citizen of Gaza, or the equivalent of offering 5 loaves of bread per 1000 individuals.



Peace and stability of South China Sea

The current tension in the South China Sea is caused by the Philippines unilaterally changing the status quo and rushing to build permanent facilities to serve the illegitimate interests of some politicians. In total disregard of basic historical facts and international consensus, the Philippines has spread a large amount of false information and taken a series of highly unprofessional and irrational decisions and actions, which is an extremely dangerous brinkmanship of conflict and war. Only by returning to the negotiating table can the stakeholders avoid a rapid escalation of the conflict and an uncontrolled deterioration of the situation, and restore peace, stability, development, prosperity and sustainable security to the South China Sea region and all littoral states in the South China Sea. Historical facts are crystal clear: The Philippines' territory has nothing to do with China's Nanshai Zhudao. China's islands in the South China Sea have never been within the territory of the Philippines, and any illegal territorial claim is a malicious challenge to the basic status quo of international law and international order. The territory of the Philippines is defined by a series of international treaties, including the 1898 Treaty of Peace between the United States of America and the Kingdom of Spain (the Treaty of Paris), the 1900 Treaty between the United States of America and the Kingdom of Spain for Cession of Outlying Islands of the Philippines (the Treaty of Washington), and the 1930 Convention between His Majesty in Respect of the United Kingdom and the President of the United States regarding the Boundary between the State of North Borneo and the Philippine Archipelago. It is the Philippines' deliberate militarization of the South China Sea that has changed the status quo on Ren'ai Jiao and the surrounding waters. Originally, Ren'ai Jiao was uninhabited. The Philippines attempted to entrench its illegal occupation of some islands and reefs of China's Nanshai Zhudao and in the 1970s it started to build military facilities on some islands and reefs it had invaded and illegally occupied. On May 9, 1999, the Philippines sent BRP Sierra Madre (LT-57), a military vessel, to intrude into China's Ren'ai Jiao and illegally ran it aground on the pretext of "technical difficulties." Many times the Philippines promised to tow away the vessel. This has been confirmed by informed sources in the Philippines and international researchers on the South China Sea issue (Figure 1, 2). However, in the past 25 years, Philippine politicians have conveniently forgotten about this commitment. Furthermore, it has sent senior officials to board the grounded vessel in disguise and unsafely and unprofessionally operated government vessels to dangerously collide with Chinese law-enforcement vessels. Escalating the confrontation to the extremely dangerous level of "paramilitary operations" with a series of complex and spillover irresponsible actions is an extremely irresponsible escalation of the crisis, moving it closer to the brink of conflict and war. Mankind has experienced too many tragic cases since the Cold War. Some politicians lacking strategic vision and political literacy are bent on stirring up strained regional nerves for their own selfish interests, creating extremely dangerous potential major crises.

New Govt. and macroeconomic challenges

Qamar Bashir



The selection of a Minister for Finance from the private sector or a politician nominated by a political party carries distinct advantages and disadvantages. A finance minister from the private sector brings expertise in financial management and economics, offering potential for efficiency and market confidence. However, they may lack political experience and accountability to the electorate, potentially leading to disconnect from public needs and resistance from

In one of his recent interviews, Ishaq Dar emphasized the necessity of strict fiscal and financial discipline for the country's future financial layout. He pledged to bring the previously untaxed real estate sector into the tax net. He mentioned his ousting in 2017, implying that his efforts to firmly impose financial discipline and tax the real estate sector were the reasons behind it. This move was perceived as an attempt to control the defense budget and regulate the real estate sector, which is often associated with influential entities. Dar's assertive stance cost him the finance ministerial position, despite being the favored choice of the PML(N) government and enjoying unwavering support from Nawaz Sharif. His removal from contention for the finance ministry effectively ended his career in that capacity and marked the elimination of staunch supporters and loyal colleagues of Nawaz Sharif. Furthermore, Dar's expulsion from power sent a clear message to the PML(N) government, Nawaz Sharif, and Shahbaz Sharif, asserting the dominance of those in power. It served as a warning for them to remain compliant or face consequences, including the threat of exposing electoral irregularities and potentially losing their majority in the National and provincial assemblies. Such actions could lead to public humiliation and international criticism for undermining the electoral process, a risk that neither PML(N) nor PPP would be willing to take, thus ensuring their compliance throughout their tenure in power. The selection of a Minister for Finance from the private sector or a politician nominated by a political party carries distinct advantages and disadvantages. A finance minister from the private sector brings expertise in financial management and economics, offering potential for efficiency and market confidence. However, they may lack political experience and accountability to the electorate, potentially leading to disconnect from public needs and resistance from bureaucratic structures. On the other hand, a politician-appointed finance minister brings political acumen and representation, ensuring policy continuity and facilitating coalition building. Yet, they may face pressures of political interference, partisanship, and patronage, potentially compromising technical expertise and leading to suboptimal outcomes. In both cases, the precarious and fragile economic and financial outlook of the country will not be a bed of roses for the new incumbent of the finance ministry, most likely a renowned banker from the private sector, which is also a vote of no confidence on the political nominees of the coveted slot. Soon after assuming power, the new finance minister, amongst other pressing challenges, will be faced with a daunting challenge of macroeconomic and fiscal consolidation given that Pakistan's macroeconomic landscape is marked by several critical challenges. It grapples with a burgeoning external debt burden,

which stood at around \$126.3 billion by the end of 2022, significantly straining its financial resources. This is compounded by a persistent fiscal deficit, which has hovered between -7.6% and -7.8% of GDP for last many year until it was brought down by stringent measures of the interim government from Rs 945.3 billion last year to Rs. 112.0 billion during Jul-May FY2023. The current account has posted a deficit of \$2.6 billion for FY2023, a reduction from the previous year's deficit of \$17.5 billion reflecting a stark imbalance between imports and exports. The Pakistani Rupee has also experienced significant depreciation, moving from around 115 PKR per USD in early 2018 to over 307 PKR per USD in recent times, which increases the cost of imports and debt repayments. Furthermore, Pakistan's foreign exchange reserves have been critically low, with figures around \$8 billion at points in 2023, barely covering a few months of imports. The banking sector faces its own set of challenges, with non-performing loans and substantial exposure to government debt, indicating a sizable portion of banks' assets tied up in government securities. The challenge of reigning historic high inflation rates will remain high on the agenda of the government. Though due to stringent measures of the interim government Consumer Price Index (CPI) inflation has declined to 29.4 percent in the month of June 2023 from 38.0 percent recorded in May 2023, the food inflation (urban) has declined from 48.1 percent to 40.8 percent, sensitive price indicator (SPI) also declined by 0.07 percent on the week ended 20th July, 2023 but the inflation nonetheless remain very high which is affected the entire population of the country especially the most vulnerable, poor and middle and middle middle classes of the society. These macroeconomic anomalies have translated to real challenges for the Pakistani people. It has reduced economic activity and rising prices has disproportionately affected lower-income groups, pushing them further into poverty and widening the wealth gap. Inflation makes basic necessities like food and healthcare less affordable, impacting health and well-being. Stagnant or declining economic activity translates to fewer jobs and lower wages, hindering upward mobility and reducing overall quality of life. The volatile economic environment creates anxiety and uncertainty for individuals and families, impacting mental health and overall well-being. To navigate its challenges, the new government of Pakistan should adopt a stratified approach, categorizing macroeconomic interventions into short, medium, and long-term programs. In the short term, immediate fiscal consolidation is crucial, entailing spending cuts on non-essentials and improved tax collection efforts to reduce the budget deficit. Concurrently, monetary policy may need tightening to control inflation, by maintaining a tight monetary policy

stance to curb inflation and ensure it returns to more moderate levels. A market-determined exchange rate is also essential to buffer external shocks, rebuild foreign reserves, and support competitiveness and growth coupled with actions to ensure exchange rate stability and immediate measures to mitigate energy sector losses. Short term measures should also include implementing cost-side power sector reforms to improve the sector's viability and protect fiscal sustainability. Regularly scheduled adjustments in electricity and natural gas prices should continue to bring them closer to costs. Over the medium term, comprehensive tax reform to broaden the tax base and energy sector restructuring will be vital. The government should prioritize efforts to mobilize additional revenues, particularly from non-filers and under-taxed sectors. This can help create fiscal space for further social and development spending. Strengthening public financial management is also essential to ensure efficient utilization of resources. Continued spending discipline is crucial to achieving budgetary targets. Efforts to control non-priority spending, including provincial spending, should be sustained to ensure that budgeted primary surplus and debt goals remain achievable. Action should be taken to address undercapitalized financial institutions and ensure financial stability. Vigilance over the financial sector is crucial to safeguarding against potential risks. This period should also see the initiation of state-owned enterprise restructuring and efforts to strengthen the financial sector, enhancing its resilience and access to credit, especially for small and medium-sized enterprises. In the long run, Pakistan's focus should shift to broad structural reforms, a key to boosting employment and ensuring inclusive growth. This includes improving the business environment, leveling the playing field for investors, advancing state-owned enterprise (SOE) reform agenda, strengthening governance and anti-corruption institutions, and building climate resilience. The reform should also be introduced in labor markets, education, and healthcare to enhance productivity and competitiveness. Long term measures should necessarily include reevaluation of existing trade and investment policies to create a conducive environment for foreign direct investment, alongside significant investments in infrastructure and human capital, will lay the foundation for sustained economic growth. This phased approach requires meticulous planning, steadfast policy implementation, and ongoing adjustments, with stakeholder engagement at each step to ensure these programs' effectiveness and sustainability.

—The writer is Former Press Secretary to the President Retd

Washington's escalating war on the Global South

Hannan Hussain

Daniel Kritenbrink, Assistant US Secretary of State, recently criticized major sources of economic investment and trade for scores of developing world countries, while the U.S. draws ire for trying to brazenly dictate and define the 'rules-based' order. From Brazil's own chairmanship of the Group of 20 (G20) to a developing world agenda dominating Africa's strategic autonomy, Washington stands reduced to a bystander as it attacks long-term trade and economic relationships set in motion by the developing world. All this is a telling contrast to the successes

Washington's credibility crisis in most of the world shows no signs of a 'U-turn.' The Biden administration appears hell-bent on clamping down on the legitimate rights, liberties, and economic freedoms of the Global South, a long-neglected segment of the global population that refuses to take sides in great power competition. Daniel Kritenbrink, Assistant US Secretary of State, recently criticized major sources of economic investment and trade for scores of developing world countries, while the U.S. draws ire for trying to brazenly dictate and define the 'rules-based' order. From Brazil's own chairmanship of the Group of 20 (G20) to a developing world agenda dominating Africa's strategic autonomy, Washington stands reduced to a bystander as it attacks long-term trade and economic relationships set in motion by the developing world. All this is a telling contrast to the successes of the Group of 77 (plus China), a dominant cluster of Global South progress that uses diplomacy and heft to accomplish what Washington simply couldn't. Look back to the 3rd South Summit organized under the framework of the Group of 77 and China in Kampala. It was focused on the theme of "Leaving No One Behind". The gathering yielded dynamic opportunities to strengthen South-South cooperation, with or without the United States. Moreover, the focus was to promote imperatives for a fairer and more responsive global governance system, a mechanism that the U.S. has willingly undercut through international financial institutions. "This year marks the 60th anniversary of the founding of the Group of 77, and over the past six decades, the Global South has followed the right path of equality, mutual trust, mutual benefit, solidarity, and mutual assistance," said Chinese President Xi Jinping's special representative, Liu Guozhong during his distinct take on the Global

South. The timing of such conventions couldn't be more consequential. As the top decision-making body of the Group of 77, the Summit plays a major role in positioning the developing world at the center of governance reform amid pressing challenges. United States has shown an aggressive aversion to accommodating over a quarter of sustainable development targets, while the G77 continues to address risks that could trigger a decline in the development outlook of the Global South. Similarly, modest economies continue to witness disproportionate exposure to rampant food insecurity. Millions continue to enter the vulnerability bracket, as resource allocation bottlenecks in international financial institutions threaten to widen progress disparities. In light of these challenges, reforming the global financial system is key to ensuring the "common development of human society." It can also put an end to unfair treatment and meager representation of the Global South. Washington's push to block currency diversification, and hamper trade and supply chain autonomy renders it the chief impediment to developing world independence. To address these challenges, the G77 offers a united view on global financial reform from nearly 100 countries. After all, the presence of stringent Western lending conditions risk encroaching upon the rights and sovereignty of developing powers, making flexible financing and better lending terms pivotal for a just and equitable global financial system. As a staunch proponent of multilateralism itself, China's support for reforming the World Trade Organization (WTO) serves as a game-changing pursuit, while the U.S. works to undercut and politicize major dispute settlement mechanisms at the body. G77's efforts to offset U.S. risks and break ground can help resolve critical resource access issues for Global South economies, support trade

inclusivity at the WTO, and prevent marginalization of developing countries in global financial decision-making. For a grouping that represents 80 percent of the world population and over 40 percent of the global GDP, G77+China has little to gain from a discriminatory U.S.-influenced "rules-based order" that effectively subjugates developing world economies. For decades, G77 has risen beyond U.S. hegemony to firmly position itself as the biggest organization for multilateral coordination, while promoting significant initiatives to drive sustainable infrastructure and development financing for all. Among them lies the Global Development Initiative and the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), despite widespread U.S. opposition and skepticism. Washington's "America first" obsession cannot alter the fact that such initiatives are organic and important levers for emerging and low income economies alike. All to strengthen their alignment with the UN Sustainable Development Agenda, and streamline global resource mobilization. As recently as August last year, the world's second-largest economy committed a \$10 billion special fund for GDI while the U.S. pressed for military interventions and regional conflict spillovers. It wasn't the U.S. but China that allocated billions under the Global Development and South-South Cooperation Fund, indicating the latter's willingness to foster meaningful partnerships on poverty, hunger, climate change and debt sustainability. As a result, the more that the U.S. wages its war against the Global South, the stronger the imperative to crush Western hegemony and give developing world progress its undeniable weight.

—Source: Al Mayadeen English

Briefs

Shehbaz directs relief measures in KP, other areas

FROM PAGE 01
may arise due to expected snowfall in next couple of days. Later, addressing a cheques distribution ceremony among rain affected people of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in Peshawar, Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif said the federal government will provide all possible assistance to them. He stressed preparedness to save generations to come from effects of climate change. Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif said Pakistan is among seven countries badly affected by climate change. He stressed the need for effective coordination and training of all the stakeholders to cope with natural disasters. The Prime Minister directed the concerned authorities to conduct a survey for assessment of damages and compensate affected people within five days. On this occasion, the Prime Minister condoled with the bereaved families who lost their dear ones in rain related incidents.

PHC bars oath-taking...

FROM PAGE 01
political parties on the basis of seats won by political parties. In its ruling, the ECP stated that the SIC could not claim the share in the reserved seats for the women "due to non-curable procedural and legal defects and violations of mandatory provisions of the Constitution." The reserved seats were awarded to all political parties as per their strength in the assemblies, except the PTI-backed SIC. Following the allocation of reserved seats, Pakistan League-Nawaz (PML-N) and its allies have obtained a two-thirds majority (230 members) in the National Assembly. At the onset of the hearing, the court questioned whether the high court can be moved on the issue of reserved seats. Elaborating on the plea, the petitioner's lawyer Qazi Anwar cited Articles 51 and 106 of the constitution stressing that the PTI-backed independent candidates had joined the SIC within the three-day deadline. "This is an accepted fact and no one can ignore it," remarked Justice Ibrahim. Lamenting the ECP's decision, Anwar stressed that the electoral body's decision to "distribute" the party's reserved seats to other parties.

Punjab, KP cabinets sworn in

FROM PAGE 01
and Mujtaba Shujaur Rehman. Talking to journalists after the oath-taking ceremony, CM Maryam congratulated and lauded the newly appointed members. "Young and very talented people have been inducted in the cabinet," she said. Earlier, a PML-N insider told media that Azma Bokhari was being given the portfolio of information ministry while Marriyum — who has been brought to Punjab from the centre to assist the CM — would also get an important ministry. Both were inducted into the assembly on reserved seats for women. In KP, the provincial cabinet comprising 15 ministers and five advisors was administered oath by Governor Haji Ghulam Ali. During the oath-taking ceremony, held at the Governor House in Peshawar, the newly elected cabinet members chanted slogans in favour of PTI founder Imran Khan and also carried a frame featuring his photograph. The ministers sworn in included Arshad Ayub Khan, Shakeel Ahmad, Fazal Hakim Khan, Muhammad Adnan Qadri, Aqibullah Khan, Muhammad Sajjad, Meena Khan, Fazal Shakoor, Nazir Ahmad Abbasi, Pakhtoon Yar Khan, Aftab Alam Khan Afridi, Khaleequr Rehman, Syed Qasim Ali Shah, Faisal Khan Tarakai and Muhammad Zahir Shah. Syed Fakhar Jehan, Muzamil Aslam, Muhammad Ali Saif, Mashal Azam and Zahid Chanzeb were appointed as advisers to chief minister.

KK keep playoffs hopes alive with win over QG

The win for Karachi came after three back-to-back losses

DNA

RAWALPINDI: Hasan Ali's fourer, followed by Tim Seifert's quick 49-run knock to help Karachi Kings thump Quetta Gladiators by seven wickets in the Pakistan Super League (PSL) 9 here at Rawalpindi Cricket Stadium on Wednesday. Chasing a paltry 119-run target, Karachi Kings completed the pursuit with 4.3 overs to spare when Shoaib Malik smashed Usman Tariq for six. Captain Shan Masood fell early in the chase with 13 runs on the board, however, Seifert and James Vince steadied the ship with a 50-run partnership off 39 balls. Vince scored an anchoring 27 off 28 with the help of four boundaries before he fell to Akeal Hosein. Seifert switched gears after the wicket and added 44 runs for the second wicket with Malik but could not finish the game as



he fell with his team requiring 12 runs. He top-scored for Karachi Kings with 49 runs from 31 balls, which featured eight boundaries including two sixes. Malik scored played an anchoring

27-run knock from 20 balls and saw his team chase down the total in the 16th over. For Quetta Gladiators, Mohammad Amir, Abrar Ahmed and Akeal Hosein picked one wicket each. Earlier, Karachi

Kings' captain Shan Masood opted to bat first after winning the toss, and the decision bore fruits as Blessing Muzarabani removed Jason Roy (15) with 20 runs on the board. Saud Shakeel and Kha-

waja Nafay knitted a 47-run stand for the second wicket in 36 balls before Hasan Ali picked his first wicket to send the former back to the pavilion. Shakeel top-scored for Quetta Gladiators with promising innings of 33 runs off 28 balls, which featured two fours and two sixes. Ali struck again in the same over to remove Nafay (17) and opened the floodgates as Quetta Gladiators failed to recover after this double-wicket over. After that, captain Rilee Rossouw played a cautious knock of 10 runs from 16 balls, while Akeal Hosein smashed a six during his 14-run cameo in 13 balls. No other batter could provide resistance against tight bowling by Karachi Kings bowlers as Quetta Gladiators were booked at 118 in the last over after being 65-1 at one point. Hasan Ali led the bowling attack for Karachi Kings with figures of 4-15, while Muzarabani and Zahid Mahmood bagged two wickets each.

ASEAN, Australian leaders call for cease-fire in Gaza

SYDNEY: The leaders of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and Australia on Wednesday called for an "immediate and 'durable' cease-fire in the Palestinian besieged enclave of Gaza." "We reiterate our shared concern about the dire humanitarian situation in Gaza," the leaders said in a joint statement, dubbed the Melbourne Declaration. Condemning attacks "against all civilians and civilian infrastructure," the declaration called for an "immediate and durable humanitarian ceasefire." Melbourne hosted a special summit of the ASEAN and Australia to mark 50 years of official relations between the Southeast Asian bloc and Canberra. The declaration said Gaza is witnessing a "humanitarian crisis," including restricted access to food, water, and other basic needs. It also extended its "support" to the UN agency for Palestinian refugees in the execution of its mandate, as well as UN Senior Humanitarian and Reconstruction Coordinator for Gaza Sigrid Kaag to discharge her task effectively and efficiently, and begin the work on post-conflict reconstruction. "We call for rapid, safe, unimpeded and sustained humanitarian access to all those in need, including through increased capacity at border crossings, including by sea," said the declaration. "We call on all parties to the conflict to protect civilians and to abide by international humanitarian law and international human rights law," it said, calling for "immediate and unconditional release of all hostages, especially women, children, the sick and the elderly." "We underscore the importance of release from any arbitrary detention," it demanded, urging all parties concerned to work toward a peaceful resolution to the conflict to realize the two-state solution based on the pre-1967 borders. Israel has launched a deadly offensive on the Gaza Strip following a cross-border incursion by the Palestinian group Hamas on Oct. 7, 2023. The ensuing Israeli bombardment has killed at least 30,631 people and injured 72,043 others with mass destruction and shortages of necessities. The Israeli war has pushed 85% of Gaza's population into internal displacement amid acute shortages of food, clean water, and medicine, while 60% of the enclave's infrastructure has been damaged or destroyed, according to the UN. Israel stands accused of genocide at the International Court of Justice. An interim ruling in January ordered Tel Aviv to stop genocidal acts and take measures to guarantee that humanitarian assistance is provided to civilians in Gaza. — Agencies

Shabnim Ismail bowls fastest delivery in women's cricket

NEW DELHI: Shabnim Ismail delivered the fastest delivery in women's cricket on Tuesday with a 132.1kph ball to Delhi Capitals captain Meg Lanning while representing Mumbai Indians in their Women's Premier League (WPL) encounter. The South African bowled the second ball of the third over of the match and while the lbw appeal was not ruled in her favour the 35-year-old still etched her name in the record books as the first woman to go past the 130kph mark, according to the International Cricket Council. Ismail had also bagged the record for the fastest delivery in women's international cricket having registered 128kph against West Indies in 2016. Despite setting a new record, Ismail, who exited international cricket last year, was not impressed with her overall bowling against Delhi after allowing 46 runs in four overs as Mumbai went down by 29 runs at the Arun Jaitley Stadium. Ismail said she initially didn't know that she had bowled the fastest delivery and told broadcasters after Delhi's innings that she was unhappy with the quality of her bowling. "I was not sure, I don't look at the big screen when I'm bowling," Ismail said. "Personally, I'm very disappointed with my bowling. But Delhi Capitals played really well today." Mumbai's bowling coach, former India quick Jhulan Goswami, told reporters she too didn't know that Ismail had set a new mark with the ball. "I also did not know it was 130-plus," she said, adding that he was not overly concerned with Ismail's otherwise expensive spell. — Agencies

SA urges cease-fire talks to prevent unbelievable tragedy

JOHANNESBURG: South Africa's foreign minister warned Tuesday that if talks on the release of hostages and a cease-fire in Gaza fail, there will be an "unbelievable tragedy and catastrophe." Naledi Pandor told public broadcaster SABC that they have asked their ambassador at the United Nations to make all efforts to talk to other ambassadors and encourage the passing of an urgent resolution for a cease-fire. "We think at the moment that everybody should be focused on an immediate cease-fire," Pandor said. She added that if a cease-fire is not reached, the world will witness a terrible catastrophe even worse than what it has seen unfolding. "I wish I could say to the people of Palestine and all Muslims 'Ramadan Mubarak' (Blessed Ramadan), but for the people of Palestine, I'm just seeing a deadly situation if the world does not address this urgent matter of an immediate cease-fire," said Pandor. The top diplomat said if countries with the most powerful militaries such as the US and UK could come together and say they see the harm, suffering and denial of food and water to Palestinians and send their troops to safely escort hundreds of aid trucks into Gaza, this would be a gesture of humanitarian peace that would save lives. "At this moment...I remain terrified that we are going to see more harm to the people of Palestine...I'm totally feeling useless as a human being that we are unable to rescue people from their deadly situation," she said. South Africa has condemned Israel's war on Gaza and late last year, it accused Israel of genocide at the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in the Netherlands. An interim ruling by the court in January ordered Tel Aviv to stop genocidal acts and take measures to guarantee that humanitarian assistance is provided to civilians in Gaza. Israel has launched a deadly offensive on the Gaza Strip following a cross-border incursion by the Palestinian group Hamas on Oct. 7, 2023. — Agencies

Hesson, Sammy contenders for Pakistan coaching role

The Mohsin Naqvi-led PCB is interested in appointing a strong coaching staff for the cricket team

OUR CORRESPONDENTS

ISLAMABAD: Mike Hesson and Daren Sammy are among the contenders for the coaching role of the Pakistan national men's cricket team, according to sources. Hesson and Sammy are currently working as head coach for Islamabad United and Peshawar Zalmi, respectively, during the ongoing Pakistan Super League (PSL) season nine. Meanwhile, Sir Vivian Richards is being considered by the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) for the role of mentorship. The Mohsin Naqvi-led PCB is interested in appointing a strong coaching staff for the cricket team. However, appointing well-known coaches would be a tall order since most of them are working

with leagues all over the world. In order to fill the vacancy in time for the upcoming T20I series against New Zealand at home, the PCB is also considering the possibility of appointing local coaches along with foreign consultants. The five-match T20I series between Pakistan and New Zealand is likely to be played in the second week of April, according to sources. It must be noted Mickey Arthur, Grant Bradburn and Andrew Puttick, who were transferred to the National Cricket Academy (NCA) in Lahore after a change in their portfolios in November 2023, left their respective positions in January this year. In April 2023, Arthur was named Director of the Pakistan men's cricket team while Bradburn was roped in as head coach of the Pakistan national

men's side earlier last year. Former South Africa cricketer Puttick worked as batting coach since April 2023. The decision was taken amicably between all the parties involved, according to PCB. Pakistan men's Future Tours Programme for 2024, April — New Zealand to Pakistan (5 T20Is), May — Pakistan to the Netherlands (three T20Is), Ireland (two T20Is) and England (four T20Is), June — ICC Men's T20 World Cup USA/West Indies 2024, August — Bangladesh in Pakistan (two Tests), October — England in Pakistan (three Tests), November — Pakistan to Australia (three ODIs and three T20Is), November/December — Pakistan to Zimbabwe (three ODIs and three T20Is), December/January — Pakistan to South Africa (two Tests, three ODIs, three T20Is).

Election result buried 'May 9 narrative': Imran

FROM PAGE 01

their commitment that planners, instigators, abettors, perpetrators and desecrators of martyrs' monuments and attackers of military installations on May 9, 2023, would certainly be brought to justice under the relevant provisions of the law and Constitution. The Corps Commanders' Conference noted with concern the spread of organised misinformation and fake news by certain nefarious elements to sow despondency and divisions within the society. The meeting, held at the General Headquarters in Rawalpindi with Chief of Army Staff (COAS) Gen Syed Asim Munir in the chair, urged the proud people of Pakistan to remain positive and united and wholeheartedly participate in the progress and development of the country. "Malicious efforts to create distortions, confusion and disinformation are absolutely futile and only part of an organised campaign being launched for narrow political interests, to blur the abhorrent activities that took place," the ISPR said in a statement. Speaking to the media at Adiala Jail today, Imran Khan said, "Identification of individuals involved on May 9 should be made through CCTV footage, just as individuals involved in the Capitol Hill attack in the United States were apprehended with the help of CCTV footage."

Ruling coalition secures...

FROM PAGE 01

After the allocation of 23 reserved seats (17 for women, 4 for minorities), the total reached at 107. Following the election commission of Pakistan (ECP) ruling on remaining reserved seats, the party clinched 15, out of 20 reserved for women and 1 out of 3 reserved for minorities, cementing its status as the largest party in the national assembly. The Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) holds 73 seats including 54 general seats, 16 women and another three reserved seats for minorities. Followed by the Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM) with 22 seats, including 17 general seats and five reserved seats — four women and one minority. Furthermore, the PML-Q has obtained five seats including three general, one independent and one seat reserved for women was also allocated to it. The Istehkam-e-Pakistan Party (IPP) has secured four general seats including one reserved for women and both the PML-Zia and Balochistan Awami Party (BAP) have garnered one seat each. The Sunni Ittehad Council (SIC) holds the second position with 82 seats, while the Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam Fazl (JUI-F) was holding 11 seats in the lower house. Among these, the party won six general seats and acquired four women and one minority seat.

ZAB was not given fair trial

FROM PAGE 01

Justice Muhammad Ali Mazhar, Justice Syed Hasan Azhar Rizvi and Justice Musarrat Hilali. "Zulfikar Ali Bhutto did not get a fair trial and it was not in accordance with the Constitutional requirement of due process," said CJP Isa while announcing the short order. The court's decision comes after nearly 12 years after a presidential reference seeking to revisit the sentence, and execution of the PPP founder and former premier was filed by former president and PPP Co-chairman Asif Ali Zardari. Bhutto was executed on April 4, 1979, following a verdict of the Supreme Court in a murder case headed by former chief justice Iftekhar Muhammad Chaudhry which held five hearings of the reference. On December 12, 2023, the reference hearing resumed under a nine-member bench headed by CJP Isa following a decision to fix an instant case under the Supreme Court (Practice and Procedure) Act, 2023.

Strategies for cultivating Wellness

ASWA SOHAIL

WELLNESS is a holistic approach to health that encompasses physical, mental, and emotional well-being. In today's fast-paced world, prioritizing wellness has become increasingly important for maintaining a balanced and fulfilling life. This article delves into the various aspects of wellness and provides insights on how individuals can cultivate a sense of well-being in their daily lives. "Harmonizing the five Dimensions of Wellness: A Comprehensive Guide to Achieving Holistic Well-Being"

The dimensions of wellness encompass various aspects of an individual's overall well-being, emphasizing a holistic approach to health. Here are the key dimensions of wellness: Physical wellness encompasses various aspects of maintaining a healthy lifestyle, including physical activity, nutrition, sleep, and overall well-being. It involves recognizing the importance of regular exercise, healthy eating habits, and adequate rest to prevent illness and injury. Mental wellness encompasses various aspects of maintaining a healthy mind and emotional state, including self-awareness, resilience, and the ability

to cope with life's challenges. It involves recognizing the importance of mental health and taking proactive steps to improve one's mental well-being. Emotional wellness is a crucial aspect of overall well-being, focusing on effectively coping with life's challenges and fostering satisfying relationships. It involves developing the ability to experience and express a wide range of emotions, such as humor, joy, fear, anger, and sadness. Social wellness is a vital component of overall well-being, focusing on building healthy relationships, fostering connections, and developing a

strong support system. It involves creating and maintaining close friendships, feeling comfortable interacting with individuals and groups, and understanding one's responsibilities for the welfare of communities. Spiritual wellness involves being connected to something greater than oneself and having a set of values, principles, morals, and beliefs that provide a sense of purpose and meaning to life. It goes beyond religious beliefs and encompasses personal reflection, self-awareness, and understanding one's life purpose. **Strategies for Cultivating Wellness:** To enhance overall well-being, individuals can incorpo-

rate the following strategies into their daily routines. In the pursuit of holistic well-being, it is imperative to embrace a lifestyle that encompasses various key elements. Regular exercise not only enhances physical health but also uplifts mood and alleviates stress, laying a foundation for overall vitality. Complementing physical activity, healthy eating habits rich in essential nutrients are vital for sustaining well-being. Incorporating mindfulness practices like meditation, deep breathing, or yoga into daily routines fosters mental clarity and reduces anxiety. Prioritizing quality sleep is paramount for cognitive func-

tion, mood stability, and overall health. Additionally, nurturing emotional well-being involves building a robust support system and seeking professional assistance when necessary, fostering resilience and emotional balance. **Conclusion:** In essence, wellness is vital as it shapes nearly every aspect of daily life by promoting physical health, emotional resilience, social connections, intellectual growth, and spiritual fulfillment. By addressing various dimensions of wellness through healthy choices and self-care practices, individuals can lead happier, healthier lives with a sense of balance and fulfillment.

Briefs

Bulgaria's
prime
minister
resigns

SERBIA : Bulgarian Prime Minister Nikolai Denkov submitted his resignation to parliament Tuesday as part of a planned step with his party's governing coalition partner under an agreement following last year's elections. In a statement, Denkov described his resignation as an "invitation to negotiations" with the coalition partner, the Citizens for European Development of Bulgaria (GERB) party. "My resignation is not a political game but the result of a promise made before," he said. He added that his government will continue its duties until the next government is formed. According to an agreement between the GERB party and a bloc led by Denkov's We Continue to Change party, his nine-month term expires on March 6. Foreign Minister Maria Gabriel, who represents the GERB party, will take over as prime minister. Denkov became prime minister following a vote of confidence from parliament on June 6 last year. His resignation must be approved by parliament.—APP

Australian
man ties 3
Aboriginal
children with
cable

SYDNEY : A white Australian man has been charged with three counts of "aggravated assault" by police after tying three Aboriginal children with a cable. The incident in Western Australia has sparked anger with the state's Premier Roger Cook describing it as "disturbing" and "confronting." In footage posted live on Facebook by locals in the northern Broome area on Tuesday, the white man, 45, was seen restraining two children, aged 6 and 7, who were tied together with a cable around their wrists. The third child, aged 8, had left the scene before the police arrived but was later found by officers. The video "raises very strong emotions" and "anyone that saw that video would have found it confronting, would have found it disturbing," said Cook, according to ABC News. "This happened in Broome Western Australia today. ... Who gives this white man the ... rights to tie up 2 Aboriginal kids?" wrote Facebook user Nungarri Skeen, who shared the video of the incident on Tuesday. While the man has been granted bail awaiting a court date, police described the incident as "confronting." The "force" used by the man to restrain the children, who were seen screaming, "was not proportionate in the circumstances," said the police. Skeen's Facebook posts have triggered "hate" and "racist" reactions, with a netizen telling her: "Stop causing trouble." Police, however, asked the community members to "allow officers to thoroughly investigate the matter so that the full circumstances can be established." State's Commissioner for Children and Young People Jacqueline McGowan-Jones said she was "appalled" by the incident. "It would appear these are very young and small children.—APP

Abbas in Turkey

Peace only achieved through ending the occupation: Abbas

We will continue to work toward coming together under the political programs and international commitments of the Palestine Liberation Organization: President Abbas

NEWS DESK

ANKARA : President of the State of Palestine Mahmoud Abbas today affirmed that security and peace are only achieved by ending the Israeli occupation of the land of the State of Palestine, with its capital East Jerusalem, so that all the peoples of the region can live in security, peace and good neighborly relations. During a joint press conference with his Turkish counterpart Recep Tayyip Erdogan, which was held following a bilateral meeting in the Turkish capital Ankara, President Abbas assured that: "We will continue to unite our people and our land, and we will continue to work toward coming together under the political programs and international commitments of the Palestine Liberation Organization; the sole legitimate representative of our Palestinian people." The President said: "We meet again today, in extremely difficult circumstances inflicted upon our people and cause, adding: "I have discussed with His Excellency President Erdogan the latest developments in the Palestinian territories, ways to stop the



brutal Israeli aggression and the genocidal war waged against our people and their capacities in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, including Jerusalem, and the urgent efforts taken to introduce humanitarian aid into the Strip, prevent the displacement of Palestinians and stop the seizure of our clearance funds and the

strangulation of the Palestinian economy." The president, during the joint press conference, stressed that actions are being made to stop the Israeli attacks on the West Bank, including Jerusalem, and on Islamic and Christian holy sites, especially as the start of the holy month of Ramadan is approaching, which threat-

ens unrest due to Israeli restrictions and the attacks and bans imposed on Muslim worshippers' access to the Al-Aqsa Mosque, the third holiest site in Islam. The President added: "Actions made in the international arena and at international forums were also discussed in order to stop the aggression, provide interna-

tional protection to the Palestinian people and achieve a political solution, starting with granting the State of Palestine full membership in the United Nations by a decision of the Security Council, recognizing the state of Palestine by more countries, the convening of an international peace conference to implement the political solution and the provision of international guarantees, including a timetable for implementation. "We are counting on Turkey's support in this regard." He reiterated the state of Palestine's categorical rejection of the displacement of the Palestinian people from the Gaza Strip or the West Bank, including Jerusalem, stressing that the full Israeli withdrawal from the Gaza Strip must be made because it is an integral part of the Palestinian state and the plans of the occupation authorities to separate the Strip from the West Bank, including Jerusalem, re-occupy it, or force any territorial reduction of its territory cannot be accepted or dealt with. The President thanked his Turkish counterpart and the brotherly Turkish people for their continuous positions in support of the Palestinian people and their just cause.

Nikki Haley clearing path for a Trump-Biden rematch

WEB DESK

WASHINGTON : Former South Carolina Gov. Nikki Haley announced Wednesday that she is exiting the Republican presidential race, leaving former President Donald Trump as the party's presumptive nominee. She made the announcement during remarks in Charleston, South Carolina, following a series of losses in GOP nominating contests on Super Tuesday. Haley is not expected to endorse Trump, sources familiar with her plans told CNN prior to her address. Instead, she is calling on the former president to earn the support of voters who backed her. The plan appears to leave the room for her to endorse Trump ahead of the general election in November. Haley, who was Trump's US ambassador to the United Nations, was the last of a

dozen major candidates the former president vanquished in a GOP primary that he dominated from start to finish — including winning 14 of the 15 GOP contests on Tuesday — even as he skipped the party's debates and maintained a much lighter schedule of early-state travel than all of his rivals. Haley had vowed to stay in the race through at least Super Tuesday. She had also begun sharpening her attacks on Trump, questioning his mental fitness and lumping him together with President Joe Biden, the likely Democratic nominee, as one of two "grumpy old men." But her home state of South Carolina served as her fourth straight loss in 2024 — including one to "none of these candidates" in the Nevada primary, where Trump wasn't competing and there were no delegates at stake. (He opted to participate instead in the

party-run caucuses, which awarded delegates.) Haley had little hope of keeping pace with the former president with the race shifting into a new gear, moving from early-state contests in which retail politics take center stage to a national race with 56% of the party's delegates due to be awarded by March 12 — most of them in winner-take-all contests. Still, in her campaign, Haley became the first Republican woman to win two primary contests: Vermont and the District of Columbia. The wins prevented Trump from being able to say that he shut out Haley in every state, but the victories were not enough to award her with a significant delegate count. The former South Carolina governor's exit demonstrated how little Republican voters were swayed by arguments about electability — with the party's base remaining loyal to Trump, who has falsely

claimed he lost the 2020 election due to widespread fraud, despite general election polls showing that Haley was in much stronger position against Biden. "I have never seen the Republican Party so unified as it is right now," Trump told supporters at his election night party in South Carolina. After Trump won more than 50% of the vote in Iowa, where Haley placed a distant third, members of the Republican Party quickly consolidated around the former president and endorsed him. Former 2024 candidates, including biotech entrepreneur Vivek Ramaswamy, South Carolina Sen. Tim Scott and North Dakota Gov. Doug Burgum, campaigned with Trump on the eve of the New Hampshire primary. Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis also took a parting shot at Haley as he exited the field, calling her platform "a repackaged form of warmed-over corporatism."

OIC calls
Gaza ceasefire

JEDDAH : The Council of Foreign Ministers of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) called for an immediate and unconditional ceasefire against the comprehensive aggression against the Palestinian people in the Gaza Strip, and for providing humanitarian, medical and relief aid, providing water and electricity, and opening of humanitarian corridors to deliver urgent aid to the Gaza Strip without obstacles and in an adequate manner. This came during the Extraordinary Session of the Council of Foreign Ministers of the Member States of (OIC), which was held at the headquarters of the

OIC General Secretariat in Jeddah on March 05, 2024, at the request of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, State of Palestine, Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan and Islamic Republic of Iran. Given the continuation of the unprecedented barbaric aggression in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, specifically in the Gaza Strip, which has so far led to the martyrdom of more than 30,400 martyrs, 70% of whom are women and children, including 8,000 women, 12650 children and more than 71500 injured and the forced displacement of more than a million and a half Palestinians from their homes. Emphasizes its strong condemnation

of the unprecedented comprehensive barbaric aggression against civilians in the besieged Gaza Strip and the entire Occupied Palestinian Territory, including killing, bombing, and deliberate destruction, and the commission of atrocities against them, including the crime of genocide and its absolute rejection of targeting civilians under any pretext and forcibly displacing them from their homes, and their lands starving and thirsting them, and depriving them of safe access to humanitarian aid, in violation of all international norms and laws, and the most basic humanitarian principles and values: targeting civilians seeking to access basic aid arriving Gaza Strip and killing them in a despicable barbaric manner; calls on states and international organizations concerned to condemn this ignoble crime,

conduct investigations into them and hold their criminal perpetrators accountable; Holds Israel, the occupying power, fully responsible for the fate of civilians in the Gaza Strip and the ongoing genocide they are subjected to with all forms of weapons under bombardment, siege, and starvation, without electricity, food, or clean water, forcing them to abandon their homes. Calls for an immediate and unconditional ceasefire and cessation of the all-out aggression against the Palestinian people in the Gaza Strip, the provision of unimpeded and adequate humanitarian, medical, and relief aid, the provision of water and electricity, and the opening of humanitarian corridors to deliver urgent aid to the Gaza Strip, warns of the danger of continuing the crime of genocide and ethnic cleansing, including starvation.—DNA

Sudan soon to be 'world's largest hunger crisis'

PORT SUDAN : Sudan's nearly 11-month war between rival generals "risks triggering the world's largest hunger crisis," the United Nations' World Food Programme warned Wednesday. The war between army chief Abdel Fattah Al-Burhan and his former deputy, Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo, who commands the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces, has killed tens of thousands, destroyed infrastructure and crippled Sudan's economy. It has also uprooted more than eight million people, in addition to two million who had already been forced from their homes before the conflict — making it the world's largest displacement crisis. Now, "millions of lives and the peace and stability of an entire region are at stake," WFP executive director Cindy McCain said. "Twenty years ago, Darfur was the world's largest hunger crisis and the world rallied to respond," she said, referring to the vast western region of Sudan. "But today, the people of Sudan have been forgotten." The RSF are themselves descended from the Janjaweed militia, which was used by former dictator Omar Al-Bashir against ethnic minority rebels in Darfur in the early 2000s. In the current war, both the RSF and the army have been accused of indiscriminate shelling of residential areas, targeting civilians and obstructing and commandeering essential aid. The WFP is currently unable to access 90 percent of those facing "emergency levels of hunger," and says only five percent of Sudan's population "can afford a square meal a day." In crowded transit camps in South Sudan, where 600,000 people from Sudan have fled, "families arrive hungry and are met with more hunger," the UN food agency said. One in five children crossing the border was malnourished, it added. Across Sudan, 18 million people are facing acute food security, five million of whom are at catastrophic levels of hunger — the highest emergency classification short of famine.—DNA

Iran
confiscates
US oil cargo
in Persian
Gulf

TEHRAN : Iran has seized a US oil cargo over a lawsuit filed by patients with a rare skin disease, whose lives are at risk due to inhumane US sanctions. The US oil cargo was carried by the Marshall Islands-flagged Advantage Sweet in the Persian Gulf. Reports said the confiscation took place upon a court ruling in favor of the patients afflicted with epidermolysis bullosa (EB) or butterfly patients. In their complaint, the EB patients, who are characterized by extreme fragility of the skin and mechanically induced blistering, claimed damages against the US. They said that the Western sanctions, especially those by the US, have prevented a Swedish company from selling medicines to Iran and caused severe physical and mental harm to them. Since then, Mölnlycke Health Care, a Swedish medical device company headquartered in Gothenburg, has stopped selling pharmaceuticals and medical equipment, including special bandages for EB patients, to Iranian companies, citing the unilateral US sanctions. The move has deprived EB patients of essential medical items, killed many of them, and inflicted serious physical injuries such as amputation to some of the patients.—APP

5 UK special
forces
arrested in
Syria war
crime probe

LONDON : Five members of the British Army's Special Air Service (SAS) have been arrested by British military police on suspicion of committing war crimes during operations in Syria. The military's top brass on Tuesday said the troops used excessive force during a mission, killing a suspected militant in Syria, adding that they should have arrested the man instead. The soldiers from the elite force could face murder charges over the murder they committed two years ago. "We hold our personnel to the highest standards, and any allegations of wrongdoing are taken seriously. Where appropriate, any criminal allegations are referred to the service police for investigation," a spokesperson of the ministry of defense said. Meanwhile, an international humanitarian rights group has called for a full, immediate investigation, if "UK forces in Syria were alleged to have committed war crimes in Syria.—APP

Saudi business group briefed about SIFC potential

The delegation showed great interest in exploring investment opportunities in Pakistan under the umbrella of SIFC

DNA

ISLAMABAD: A high level delegation of Kingdom of Saudi Arabia visited Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC) on 6 March 2024. The group was headed by His Excellency Mohammed Bin Abdulaziz Alajlan, Deputy Chairman, along with members representing various sectors, operating under the ambit of Al Ajlan Holding Group. The delegation was warmly received by officials of SIFC and comprehensive briefs were given covering potential and investment opportunities in different sectors. The delegation showed great interest in exploring investment opportunities in Pakistan under the umbrella of SIFC. The visit

underscores longstanding Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and Pakistan, which are transforming into multi-domain cooperation through participation of public as well as private sector.



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Beyond the Great Wall: The Far-Reaching Influence of China's Two Sessions

China's 2024 Government Work Report highlights significant economic and social progress made in 2023, with a GDP growth of 5.2%, making it one of the fastest-growing major economies. The country achieved a commendable feat in job creation and maintained a stable urban unemployment rate and consumer prices. Looking ahead to 2024, China targets around 5% economic growth and plans to create over 12 million urban jobs

On Tuesday, March 5, 2024, the National People's Congress (NPC), China's legislature, convened for its opening meeting of the annual Two Sessions. In the meeting, Premier Li Qiang delivered the 2024 Government Work Report, setting forth the year's economic agenda. The report, a crucial policy blueprint for the coming year, detailed various initiatives including innovative fiscal policies, attracting foreign investment, expanding consumption, and enhancing green development strategies. This marks a pivotal moment in China's commitment to a sustainable and inclusive growth trajectory. China's 2024 Government Work Report highlights significant economic and social progress made in 2023, with a GDP growth of 5.2%, making it one of the fastest-growing major economies. The country achieved a commendable feat in job creation and maintained a stable urban unemployment rate and consumer prices. Looking ahead to 2024, China targets around 5% economic growth and plans to create over 12 million urban jobs. The country is also set to issue ultra-long special treasury bonds and lift foreign investment restrictions in manufacturing and service sectors. Furthermore, China will focus on modernizing its industrial system and fostering new productive forces, including hydrogen power, biomanufacturing, and AI. Commitments to ensuring stable agricultural production, promoting green development, and advancing the energy revolution also form key parts of the agenda, as the nation continues to prioritize ecological conservation and carbon neutrality goals. The Two Sessions, integrating the NPC and the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC), assembled nearly 3000 delegates representing a cross-section of China's multifaceted society. These sessions play a vital role in shaping China's policy landscape, their outcomes resonating far beyond the nation's borders, impacting global econom-



ic patterns and geopolitical shifts. Central to this year's discussions was the concept of Chinese-style modernization, a theme that resonated throughout the sessions. This approach uniquely combines China's rich cultural heritage, especially its Confucian values and traditional arts, with modern innovation, carving a distinctive path in the global development narrative. The delegates' focus on integrating these elements into contemporary development strategies highlighted a progressive yet rooted approach to national advancement. Technological innovation, a key focus area, saw China positioning itself at the forefront of the Fourth Industrial Revolution. Discussions underscored advancing sectors such as artificial intelligence and renewable energy, showcasing China's intention to harness technology as a catalyst for social and economic progress. Sustainable development, a mainstay of policy deliberations, mirrored China's vision for an ecological civilization. Strategies to enhance energy efficiency, reduce carbon emissions, and adopt sustainable technologies were debated, underlining a commitment to an environmentally sustainable growth model. Social harmony and inclusive growth were also focal points, addressing challenges like bridging the urban-rural divide and ensuring equitable access to critical services like education and healthcare. These conversations underscored China's aspiration for a society where progress is balanced and inclu-

sive, integral to its modernization process. Global engagement and cooperation received significant attention, with China reaffirming its commitment to initiatives such as the Belt and Road Initiative. This emphasized China's ambition to play a leadership role in fostering global collaboration and shared prosperity, redefining its position on the world stage. In conclusion, the 2024 Two Sessions marked a significant stride in China's journey towards an innovative form of modernization, aligning with its aspirations for global partnership and leadership. This blending of traditional values with technological innovation, paired with aligning domestic ambitions with global responsibilities, reinforces China's role as a key player in global affairs. These sessions provide a comprehensive insight into China's evolving policy direction, highlighting strategies to address both national and global challenges and aspirations, painting a future where China continues to be a pivotal force in shaping the global narrative. China's Two Sessions also attracted the attention of Pakistani experts. Zamir Awan can speak fluent Mandarin. He has served as a Counsellor for Science and Education at the Pakistani Embassy in China and has experienced the National People's Congress and Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference multiple times during his time in China. He stated that the two sessions are a key agenda on China's political calendar, and through continuous attention to them, people can understand the characteristics of Chinese politics and its global influence. The "the Belt and Road" and the China Pakistan Economic Corridor symbolize China's vision of achieving inclusive and sustainable development in the world. As an analyst, Yasir Habib Khan said, China's greater efforts to stabilize growth, nurture new growth drivers and open up wider to the outside world will offer tremendous opportunities for other countries. - By Cui Ru Journalist from China Media Group



China sets GDP growth target of around 5% for 2024

"This growth rate is well aligned with the objectives of the 14th Five-Year Plan and the goal of basically realizing modernization," Li said. "It also takes account of the potential for growth and the conditions supporting growth and reflects the requirement to pursue progress and strive to deliver"

CGTN: China has set an economic growth target of around 5 percent for 2024, according to a government work report delivered by Premier Li Qiang on Tuesday at the opening meeting of the second session of the 14th National People's Congress (NPC), China's national legislature, at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing. Li said that in setting the growth target, the Chinese government has taken into account the need to boost employment and incomes besides preventing and defusing risks. "This growth rate is well aligned with the objectives of the 14th Five-Year Plan and the goal of basically realizing modernization," Li said. "It also takes account of the potential for growth and the conditions supporting growth and reflects the requirement to pursue progress and strive to deliver." The premier stressed both stability and progress. He said that stability "is the basis for everything we do," urging localities and government departments to adopt more policies conducive to keeping expectations, economic growth and employment stable. He also warned officials against taking measures that could be "contractionary" or "inhibitive" in nature. Li said that making progress is still the goal of the government. He called for proactive actions to transform China's growth model, make structural adjustments and improve the quality of China's socioeconomic development. Aside from the GDP growth target of around 5 percent, Li also listed the following development targets for the year:

- Creation of over 12 million new urban jobs
- Surveyed urban unemployment rate of around 5.5 percent
- Consumer Price Index (CPI) increase of around 3 percent
- Growth in personal income in step with economic growth
- A basic equilibrium in the balance of payments
- Grain output of over 650 million tonnes
- A drop of around 2.5 percent in energy consumption per unit of GDP
- Continued improvements in the environment

The Chinese premier expressed his confidence in achieving these goals, citing China's advantages for economic development, including distinctive institutional strengths, a vast market, a complete industrial system, a huge and high-caliber workforce and growing sci-tech innovation capacity. "The underlying trend of economic recovery and long-term growth remains unchanged and will not change," Li said. The premier also acknowledged that achieving these targets is not easy. He said that the government will intensify counter- and cross-cyclical adjustments through macro policies, continue to implement a proactive fiscal policy and a prudent monetary policy, and strengthen coordination between policy instruments while developing new ones.

President Xi stresses developing new quality productive forces according to local conditions

According to Shan, his passion is inspired by Chinese President Xi Jinping, who stressed the role of technological innovation in leading the country's high-quality development during the delegation's deliberations at last year's Two Sessions



Chinese President Xi Jinping in deliberation with deputies from the delegation of Jiangsu Province at the second session of the 14th National People's Congress in Beijing, China, March 5, 2024. - Xinhua



CGTN: Shan Zenghai, a deputy to the 14th National People's Congress (NPC) and an engineer with a national award, has come well-prepared for this year's Two Sessions, the annual gathering of China's top legislature and top political advisory body. He has brought a photo showing the world's largest tonnage all-terrain crane developed by Xuzhou Construction Machinery Group, where Shan, a member of east China's Jiangsu Province delegation, is employed as the chief engineer. Shan's passion for innovation has driven him to make even more breakthroughs over the past year, with 46 independently developed key components and over 10 landmark products. According to Shan, his passion is inspired by Chinese President Xi Jinping, who stressed the role of technological innovation in leading the country's high-quality development during the delegation's deliberations at last year's Two Sessions. Developing new quality productive forces according to local conditions Reiterating the primary task of high-quality development during discussions with fellow lawmakers from Jiangsu on Tuesday, Xi, also general secretary of the Communist Party of China Central Committee and chairman of the Central Military Commission, called for more efforts to develop new quality productive forces according to local conditions and provide stronger incentives to promote innovation. As one of the engines driving China's economic growth, Jiangsu has become a front-runner in the country's modernization efforts. In 2023, Jiangsu's GDP reached 12.82 trillion yuan (\$1.78 trillion), a 5.8-percent increase over the previous year. Xi urged the province to speed up efforts to forge clusters of strategic emerging industries with international competitiveness and become an important front for developing new quality productive forces led by scientific innovation. He also urged the province to contribute more to the integrated development of the Yangtze River Economic Belt and the Yangtze River Delta. Deepening reforms to inject impetus for high-quality development During the group discussion, Xi noted that it is necessary to plan significant measures to further deepen reforms and continue injecting strong impetus into advancing high-quality development and Chinese modernization. China seeks to achieve a GDP growth rate of around 5 percent in 2024, a target set after the Chinese economy showed solidity and resilience in 2023 by recording year-on-year growth of 5.2 percent, according to the country's government work report submitted to the national legislature for deliberation earlier on Tuesday. The report also noted multiple difficulties and challenges in achieving this year's targets and said efforts should be made to maintain policy focus, work harder and mobilize the concerted efforts of all sides. Xi urged the reform of the science and technology, education and talent systems to clear the blockages to develop new quality productive forces and called for support to be given to the private economy and private enterprises and a reduction of the burden at the grassroots level to stimulate the innovative energies of the Party and the whole society.