



Islamabad POST

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Israeli war on Gaza "disgrace for civilization"

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Govt to 'engage' US authorities for Aafia's return

Detailed News On Page-08

Tariq reported for suspect bowling action

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Briefs

Justice Malik appointed LHC Chief Justice

Punjab Governor will administer oath to the new chief justice

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi on Thursday approved appointment of Justice Malik Shehzad as chief justice of the Lahore High Court. According to a spokesperson for the President House, Dr Arif Alvi also approved the appointment of Balochistan High Court Chief Justice Naem Akhtar Afghan as a judge of the Supreme Court. The spokesperson further said President Alvi had also approved appointment of Justice Hashim Khan Kakar as acting chief justice of Balochistan High Court. Meanwhile, Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz has decided to attend the oath-taking ceremony of Justice Malik Shehzad Ahmad Khan. Punjab Governor Balighur Rehman will administer oath to the new chief justice. After swearing-in ceremony, the new chief justice will be presented guard of honour. Arrangements have been finalised for oath-taking of Justice Malik Shehzad. Outgoing LHC chief justice Muhammad Ameer Bhatti retired from service on Thursday.

Ishaq Dar likely to become foreign minister

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Former Finance Minister and key PML N leader Ishaq Dar is likely to become the foreign minister. PML N sources have revealed that Nawaz Sharif has approved Ishaq Dar's name to head the ministry of foreign affairs. Sources say that Dar was still interested in the finance ministry however his past estranged relations with the Establishment proved as a stumbling block. Shehbaz Sharif is to make the final decision in this regard. Tariq Fatemi will act as PM Special Assistant on foreign affairs. The caretaker foreign minister Jalil Abbas Jilani shall also act as the Prime Minister Adviser on Foreign Affairs.

PTI demands impartial audit of polls results

Vows to continue its struggle until reclaim stolen mandate

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: PTI demanded a thorough and impartial audit of the results of the most rigged elections in the light of the assessment report of Pildat so as to take the mandate back from the mandate thieves and return it to the rightful public representatives. PTI Spokesperson said that after FAFEN and Pattan, Pildat, in its report Assessment of the Quality of General Election 2024, raised an alarming questions about the transparency, fairness and credibility of the general elections and ECP must answer the queries. He stated that the Pildat assessment reports showed that the fairness score of the 2024 general elections plummeted to its lowest level since 2013.

PIA, Pakistan Steel Mills Shehbaz wants privatization process spurred

PM Shehbaz also directed that immediate measures should be taken to strengthen the ability of the institutions in charge of privatisation in order to resuscitate the economy

ANSAR M BHATTI / DNA

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Thursday stressed for expediting the privatisation process of those State Owned Enterprises (SOEs), causing constant dent to the national exchequer, to stabilize the national economy and provide maximum relief to the common man. "Obstacles in the process of privatisation be removed at the earliest so that the country and the nation can get rid of losses of billions of rupees and improve the economic condition," he said while chairing a high level meeting on privatisation.

The prime minister also directed to take immediate steps for enhancing the capacity of departments linked with the privatisation process. Reviewing the complete list and progress report of all the institutions involved in the privatisation process, the prime minister directed to submit the detail of actions and goals with a clear determination of time frame. He also directed the Privatisation Commission and the Ministry to present pending issues related to the privatization to the cabinet soon after its formation for timely decisions as there was no room for further delay. Shehbaz Sharif, on the proposal of handing over the power distribution companies to the provinces,

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Moody's upgrades Pakistan's banking sector outlook

The international rating agency forecasted that the economy would return to a 2 per cent growth rate in 2024 after subdued activity in 2023

MONITORING DESK

ISLAMABAD: Moody's Investors Service on Thursday changed its outlook on Pakistan's banking sector from "negative" to "stable" citing its solid profitability, stable funding and liquidity, which it said "provide an adequate buffer" to withstand the country's macroeconomic challenges and political turmoil. The international rating agency — one of the top three global rating firms — said that the economic and fiscal pressures were easing for the country, as it forecasted that the economy would return to a 2 per cent growth rate in 2024 after subdued activity in 2023.

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On Imran Khan's desire

KP CM restores health card coverage for entire population

Allocates Rs 5 billion to State Life for health card services in the province

SHAMIM SHAHID

PESHAWAR: In an important move aimed at prioritizing public welfare, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur has reinstated the suspended health card for the entire population of the province. The decision was announced during a meeting chaired by the Chief Minister, where it was declared that free treatment under the health card scheme would resume for 100% of the province's population starting from the 1st of Ramadan. To support this initiative, an immediate release of Rs 5 billion was allocated to the State Life Insurance Company. This funding will facilitate the restoration of free treatment services under the health card scheme. Additionally, a decision was made to allocate five billion rupees per month to clear the arrears owed by the State Life Insurance Company. Gandapur emphasized that the welfare of the people remains a top priority for the provincial government, following peace and order.

Continued on Page 06

Punjab cabinet approves Ramadan relief package

ABID RAZA

LAHORE: The Punjab cabinet on Thursday approved the Ramadan relief package. The first meeting of the provincial cabinet, with Maryam Nawaz in the chair, approved the Ramadan relief package. Over 6.5 million package which includes 10kg flour, two kg rice, two kg oil, two kg sugar will be distributed among the needy people in the province. The chief minister tasked the district administration and food control authority to supervise the quality of the package.

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'Taliban must be asked to cut ties with TTP'

"Left unchecked, the TTP, supported by Al-Qaeda and some State sponsors, could soon pose a global terrorist threat," Ambassador Munir Akram warned the 15-member Council

NEWS DESK

NEW YORK: A top Pakistani diplomat has called on the UN Security Council to join Pakistan in demanding that the Taliban authorities terminate their relationship with the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), which is responsible for persistent attacks against Pakistan's military and civilian targets. "Left unchecked, the TTP, supported by Al-Qaeda and some State sponsors, could soon pose a global terrorist threat," Ambassador Munir Akram warned the 15-member Council on Wednesday. Speaking in a debate on the situation in Afghanistan, the Pakistani envoy said, "The Afghan Interim Government's failure to control the TTP and other terrorist groups erodes its claim of full control of its territory that it asserts in order to secure international recognition." He also urged the United Nations to undertake an investigation to find out how

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Pakistan calls for ceasefire in Gaza before Ramadan

FO spox called for provision of aid and medical facilities to the victims

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan on Thursday demanded an immediate ceasefire in Gaza as the Islamic holy month of Ramadan is likely to begin at the weekend. During the weekly press briefing here, Foreign Office spokesperson Mumtaz Zahra Baloch said that Islamabad strongly condemns the massacre of

Continued on Page 06

Forces killed 2 terrorists in KP areas

Weapons, ammunition & explosives were also recovered

DNA

RAWALPINDI: On night 6/7 March 2024, two terrorists were sent to hell by security forces in two separate operations in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province. An intelligence based operation was conducted in Khyber district. During the conduct of operation, after an intense exchange of fire, Terrorist ring leader Shamrooz @ Sheenay, was sent to hell by the security forces. In another operation conducted by the security forces in Dera Ismail Khan district, Terrorist Mansoor was also successfully neutralized. Weapons, ammunition & explosives were also recovered from the killed terrorists, who remained actively involved in numerous terrorist activities against security forces as well as extortion & target killings of innocent civilians, and were highly wanted by the law enforcement agencies. Sanitization operations are being conducted to eliminate any other terrorist found in the area. Locals of the area appreciated the operations and expressed their full support to eliminate the menace of terrorism.



ISLAMABAD: Chairman Joint Chief of Staff Committee General Sahir Shamshad Mirza calls on Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif. — DNA

PHC extends stay on oath-taking of reserved seats

SIC Chairman Hamid Raza moves LHC to claim the party's right to the reserved seats in NA

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

PESHAWAR/LAHORE: The Peshawar High Court Thursday extended the stay order on the oath-taking ceremony of lawmakers notified on reserved seats denied to the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI)-backed Sunni Ittehad Council till March 13. The court's order came during the hearing of the SIC's petition concerning the allotment of reserved seats. Adjourning the hearing of the case till the aforementioned date, the court also summoned the Attorney General for Pakistan Mansoor Usman Awan to appear before the court on the next hearing. A day earlier, the PHC barred the oath-taking of lawmakers notified on the

Continued on Page 06

Justice Mazhar Naqvi guilty of misconduct: SJC

SJC opines former judge "should have been removed from the office of Judge"

COURT REPORTER

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Judicial Council (SJC) Thursday held that controversial Supreme Court Justice (ret'd) Mazhar

Continued on Page 06



THE MISSING PIECE IN CRACK DOWN AGAINST TAX EVADERS

1st July 2022 was the implementation deadline set by the Government of Pakistan of the comprehensive Track and Trace System for the Cigarette Industry. However, even after the passage of 20 months, FBR has been unable to implement it.

Currently more than 200 cigarette brands, which have a market share of more than 50%, are being sold openly in the market without the tax stamps causing an annual loss of Rs. 300 billion. A nationwide crackdown against these tax evaders in the cigarette industry is a need of the hour.



*The above tax stamp is a sample image only.

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

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



Enquiry

Edhi Ambulance.....115
PIA Flight Info.....114
PIA Cargo.....9280979
Railway Inquiry.....117
Railway Exchange9270831-5
WASA Rawalpindi..5555489
CAA.....9281092



Hospitals

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



Departments

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

Water Tank

Islamabad.....0321-5744480

Pak needs to address education challenges on war footing

The seminar witnessed active participation from a diverse audience, including retired military officers, academics, and students, who engaged in a candid Question and Answer session, enriching the discussion on this crucial issue

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Centre for Aerospace & Security Studies (CASS), Islamabad successfully hosted a pivotal seminar titled 'Paving the Way for Educational Excellence in Pakistan: Policy, Curriculum, Access.' The seminar brought together esteemed speakers including Dr Faisal Bari, Dean, LUMS School of Education at the Lahore University of Management Sciences; Ms Mahrin Iqbal Siddiqui, CEO International Foundation for Education, Empowerment and Learning (IFEEL); and Dr Saima Ashraf Kayani, Chairperson Department of International Relations at Fatima Jinnah Women University. The proceedings were moderated by Air Vice Marshal Nasser ul Haq Wyne (Retd), Director Non-Traditional Security at CASS, with a vote of thanks and concluding remarks delivered by Air Marshal Farhat Hussain Khan (Retd), President of CASS. The seminar addressed key issues including the quality of education and challenges in higher education; out-of-school children and regional disparities and curriculum development. It also offered a platform to discuss the effects of the 18th Amendment on education policies, the viability of a unified syllabus, and the practicality of maintaining distinct educational streams in Pakistan's diverse landscape. Introducing the seminar, Air Vice Marshal Nasser ul Haq Wyne emphasised the cumulative impact of



neglecting education, noting Pakistan's significant lag in achieving primary and secondary education targets and the challenges facing the higher education sector, including political interference and insufficient resources; obstructing the nation's pursuit of developing a comprehensive, skilled workforce and significantly limiting the educational sector's contribution to national development. In his address, Dr Faisal Bari highlighted critical issues within Pakistan's education system, pointing out the nation's significant struggle to foster critical thinking skills, such as thoughtfulness, judiciousness, the ability

to embrace ambiguity, and the capacity for evidence-based reasoning. Discussing the transformative role of technology in higher education, particularly in the context of a new wave of automation, he warned of the potential for Artificial Intelligence (AI) to automate and eliminate numerous jobs, underscoring the urgency for educational reform. He further argued that the future of Pakistan hinges on its education system. Dr Bari stressed the need for substantial improvements at the school level, specifically in pedagogy and curriculum development and called for holistic strategies to incentivise and regulate universities, ensuring

they are aligned with the evolving demands of the workforce and the broader society. Speaking on the subject of 'Out-of-School Children and Regional Disparities', Ms Mahrin Iqbal Siddiqui shared that the existing educational infrastructure in Pakistan was insufficient to support the inclusion of its 26 million out-of-school children. Ms Siddiqui stressed the urgent need to launch an education campaign with the same intensity and urgency as the response to the COVID crisis, highlighting the potential of community mosques to play a significant role in raising awareness and sensitizing the populace about the importance

of education. She advocated for educational organisations to form partnerships with leading universities across Pakistan, suggesting that such collaborations could significantly enhance children's opportunities for higher education. Additionally, Ms. Siddiqui pointed out the necessity to bridge the gaps between formal, informal, and hybrid modes of education, ensuring a more cohesive and accessible learning environment for all. She proposed a simple yet effective approach of 'one room-one subject-one teacher' to address complex educational challenges. In addressing the controversies surrounding curriculum content, Dr Saima

Ashraf Kayani highlighted the necessity of removing political biases from the curriculum development process to better meet the changing needs of a dynamic society. She underscored the importance of implementing measures to ensure the curriculum is inclusive, relevant, and fosters critical thinking, while also respecting Pakistan's diverse cultural and regional backgrounds. In her final remarks, Dr Kayani advocated for a strategic revision of the education system, aiming to make it more reflective of and responsive to the country's complex identity and future needs. In his concluding remarks, President CASS Air Marshal Farhat Hussain Khan underscored the profound impact of education on national security, spanning both traditional and non-traditional realms. 'If we want to ensure our security, it is imperative to bring our out-of-school children into the educational fold,' he stated. President CASS also urged the country's leadership to transcend short-term electoral interests and invest in policies with benefits that may only be realised over time. He reinforced that educating (tarbiyat) was a collective responsibility of teachers, parents, and society. The seminar witnessed active participation from a diverse audience, including retired military officers, academics, and students, who engaged in a candid Question and Answer session, enriching the discussion on this crucial issue.

President says the family value system real strengths of Pakistan

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi on Thursday shared his 10 best reads of 2023 encompassing varying subjects including politics, history, Sufism, artificial intelligence (AI) and astronomy while giving his intellectual analysis in the perspectives of the modern-day world. The President, in a detailed video message, shared that the aim of his extensive study was motivated by his quest for exploration into Allah's universe, Sufism, democracy, Pakistan, his passion for artificial intelligence and global peace and development. The president recommended the people to read "Economic Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy" written by Daron Acemoglu and James A. Robinson which gave a mathematical analysis of the revival of democracies in the world either consequent to any struggle or accidents. It outlines the arduous journey of reclaim-

ing people's rights from dictators, spanning centuries of struggle as well as the resistance of the elite towards democracy. The book "Democracy and Islam in History" by SM Zafar delves into the democratic processes observed during the election of the four caliphs and how they established democratic and judicial institutions. It highlights the evolution and significance of consultative practices in Islamic history. The book references a letter by Hazrat Umar (RA), advising one of his judges to maintain accessibility to the masses, facilitate litigants, ensure the enforcement of decisions, and revise judgments if deemed against the spirit of justice. President Alvi also emphasized that while hearing the representations against the Ombudsmen's decisions, he kept special care of the impoverished litigants and those from remote regions. "The Impossible State: Islam, Politics, and Modernity's Moral Predicament" by Wael B. Hallaq explores the historical evolution of legis-

lative processes in Islamic history. It highlights that during the caliphates, rulers didn't enact laws rather, Muftis interpreted them based on the Quran, Sunnah, and past precedents. President Alvi outlined the five fundamental principles of an Islamic state: protecting life and property, ensuring freedom of thought and religion for all, and fostering a free society. The President also recommended Elif Shafak's "The Forty Rules of Love: On Mawlana Rumi and Shams Tabraizi," which explores Sufism and the profound friendship between Rumi and Tabraizi. Describing the Holy Quran as a guiding light for humanity, Rumi offered a distinctive perspective on love: "love yourself, love your family, love your neighbors, love your nation, love humanity, love everything created by Allah, love your prophet, and love Allah," encouraging people to begin their journey of love from the most immediate to the divine. Among the president's top reads was also "The God

Equation: The Quest for a Theory of Everything" by Michio Kaku, which charts the evolution of our understanding of the universe over time, from the Aristotelian concept of four elemental components—earth, water, fire, and air—to modern scientific discoveries such as magnetic fields, radio waves, atoms, and nuclei. It tells that the universe visible to humans constitutes just 5% of its total size, with dark matter comprising 26% and dark energy 70%. The President endorsed "On The Origin of Time" by Thomas Hertog, a student of Stephen Hawking, which delves into the anthropic principle of the universe's creation. The book supports the Quranic concept that Allah crafted the universe for humanity and out of love for the Holy Prophet. Quoting Stephen Hawking, the president mentioned that while we currently perceive three to four dimensions, there exist an additional 10 dimensions and parallel universes inhabited by diverse, undiscovered beings.

Underground cabling project accelerates

RAWALPINDI: The work on 'Underground Cabling Project' in Sadar area has been accelerated for timely completion in which power cables are being shifted to the underground wiring system. The project is aimed at getting rid of jumbling electric wires as well as to enhance beauty of the cantonment areas. Inaugurated in January 2024, phase I of the project includes shifting electric wires to the underground system in areas including Mall Road Service Road (North), Hyder Road, Bank Road, Canning Road and partial areas of Kashmir Road. In an interaction with APP here on Thursday, spokesman Rawalpindi Cantonment Board (RCB), Rasheed Saqib said that progress of the project was regularly being monitored by the concerned departments for its timely completion. He informed that in Rs.850.0 million worth mega project, IESCO was installing and commissioning the power cables, whereas RCB was executing civil work. Rs. 760.0 million will be spent on electrical equipment and transferring of electric cables to the underground system. Rs. 90.0 million will be spent on civil work of the project, he informed. To a question, the spokesman said that the CEO RCB has directed all concerned departments for presenting to him the project's updates which would be completed in 9 months.—APP

Level playing demanded NA

ISLAMABAD: D By removing discriminatory gas pricing among fertilizer manufacturers, the Government can facilitate new investments and promote efficiency to ensure sufficient urea availability for the farmers. In a media workshop, Ali Rathore – Chief Financial Officer, Engro Fertilizers, briefed the participants about the importance of a robust indigenous fertilizer industry, its key challenges and opportunities, and recent steps taken by the Government to reform the fertilizer sector. "The removal of subsidies for fertilizer manufacturers on SSGC.—APP

Chairman HEC meets delegation from University of Sussex, UK

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: The delegation from the University of Sussex, UK, met with Chairman HEC, Dr Mukhtar Ahmed. The delegation visited Chairman HEC as part of the "Bilateral Agreements and Inward-Outward Student Mobility Initiative" partnering with IBA-Sukkur-University to foster global collaboration for diverse skills, and industry partnerships, emphasising intercultural

research development, and ongoing relationships. The meeting was facilitated by the Pak-UK Educational Gateway Partnership Programme between Sukkur IBA and the University of Sussex sponsored by HEC and British Council, Pakistan. The participants at the meeting included the delegation led by Prof. Dr. Jeremy K. Hall, Director SPRU, University of Sussex, Prof. Dr. Asif Ahmed Shaikh, VC, Sukkur IBA University, Dr. Altaf H. Samo, Director EDC, Adviser HEC, (Academics), Muhammad Raza Chohan.

Prof. Altaf and Prof. Jeremy explained the development of the "Hinge Strategy" for global engagement being pioneered by both PIs which aims to address the critical societal issues ("grand challenges") in developing countries, specifically focusing on agriculture, human capital development, and resource management. Dr. Mukhtar Ahmed appreciated the development of the "Hinge Strategy" as an outcome of the Pak-UK Mobility Programme. He stressed the need to further develop this strategy in coordination with other national and international partners focused on improving food production using technological advancements, identifying new export-oriented agricultural sectors to generate foreign exchange revenues, and developing a strategy to engage youth and develop capabilities for the future. As part of the interactive discussion, the team explored various ways agriculture and technology can be used to enhance food production. Policymakers, for example, distinguished between agriculture policies that are technologically sophisticated, and export-oriented (e.g., in the tradition of Green Revolution Technology), that could enhance the capabilities and social wellbeing of impoverished agricultural communities (as it was done in Brazil). The Pak-UK team assured the chairman HEC that they have an extensive network to bring together such expertise for research and policy. The chairman offered the team to host the next consultative meeting on "Hinge Strategy" by bringing partners from other countries in Pakistan. HEC will assist in creating a network with national partners.





10 Minutes Drive From The Monal



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Briefs

Excise staff sets up mobile van at Trail 3 for vehicle services

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad Capital Territory's (ICT) Excise Department is offering convenient access to essential administrative tasks for vehicle owners through its mobile van which is stationed at Trail 3 on Thursday. The excise staff will be on-site, offering a hassle-free experience for vehicle owners seeking registration, transfers, and token tax processing, ICT spokesman Dr Abdullah Tabasum said. He said this unprecedented initiative not only caters to vehicular paperwork but also introduces the ICT Doorstep Service. The citizens are encouraged to avail the opportunity to obtain the Domicile Certificate, Birth Certificate, Power of Attorney, International Driving Permit, Fuel Permit (Domestic/Commercial), or Motor Vehicle Registration, all at one convenient location, he added. He further emphasized that the Facilitation Center's Doorstep ICT Vehicle will be present, providing a seamless and efficient solution for various administrative needs. Whether a vehicle owner looking to sort out your paperwork or in need of essential documents, this event promises efficiency with a touch of convenience to the masses, he added. By bringing these services directly to the community at Trail 3 parking, residents can save time and effort in completing necessary bureaucratic procedures. —APP

Underground cabling project accelerates

RAWALPINDI: The work on 'Underground Cabling Project' in Sadar area has been accelerated for timely completion in which power cables are being shifted to the underground wiring system. The project is aimed at getting rid of jumbling electric wires as well as to enhance beauty of the cantonment areas. Inaugurated in January 2024, phase I of the project includes shifting electric wires to the underground system in areas including Mall Road Service Road (North), Hyder Road, Bank Road, Canning Road and partial areas of Kashmir Road. In an interaction with APP here on Thursday, spokesman Rawalpindi Cantonment Board (RCB), Rasheed Saqib said that progress of the project was regularly being monitored by the concerned departments for its timely completion. He informed that in Rs.850.0 million worth mega project, IESCO was installing and commissioning the power cables, whereas RCB was executing civil work. Rs. 760.0 million will be spent on electrical equipment and transferring of electric cables to the underground system. Rs. 90.0 million will be spent on civil work of the project, he informed. To a question, the spokesman said that the CEO RCB has directed all concerned departments for presenting to him the project's updates which would be completed in 9 months of its initiation. —APP

UNFPA, Japan govt reach over half a million people with life-saving services

Almost 450,000 people were reached with information on health services, gender-based violence and family planning. Women dignity kits and new born baby kits were also distributed

SAIFULLAH ANSAR/DNA

ISLAMABAD: UNFPA and the Government of Japan have successfully completed a collaborative project of expanding the life-saving emergency interventions to meet the needs of women and girls in seven districts, of Sindh and Balochistan, which were badly impacted by the 2022 floods. Government of Japan provided the generous support of 1.85 million US\$ to UNFPA to reach the most vulnerable women and girls in areas where services and infrastructure of health and protection were damaged. The initiative focused on providing lifesaving sexual and reproductive health services and survivor-centred gender-based violence mitigation and response services to women and girls. The project was implemented in Qambar Shahdadt, Naushahro Feroz, Khairpur, Larkana and Dadu districts in Sindh and Lasbela and Jhal Magsi districts in Balochistan. Speaking at the closing ceremony, H.E. Wada Mitsuhiro, Ambassador of Japan, said 'With the infra-



structure damaged and health services disrupted, we recognized the situation was dire for pregnant women and risks of gender-based violence were increasing. We, the Government of Japan, thus prioritized lifesaving sexual and reproductive healthcare services for pregnant women and gender-based violence prevention in the flood affected areas. The gov-

ernment of Japan is committed to ensuring women's human rights and fighting against all forms of gender-based violence. Women, Peace and Security (WPS) is a fundamental pillar for sustainable development. Addressing the audience, Dr. Luay Shabaneh, UNFPA Representative said 'The floods were catastrophic and badly impacted the private life of women and girls including those who were pregnant or with disabilities. Women bear the brunt of disasters and are the last to receive the assistance. In most responses, the focus remains on shelters and food and the silent suffering of women and girls remains invisible. We acknowledge and appreciate the support of the Government of Japan through which the priority was given to the most urgent needs of women and girls.' Chief Guest of the ceremony, Dr. Sabina Durrani, Director General, National Health Emergency Preparedness & Response Network said 'Pakistan and the Government of Japan has a long standing relationship. Japan has always been

there for Pakistan in times of crisis and emergencies. Pakistan is also a disaster-prone country and therefore we must take a proactive approach to invest in preparedness and resilience. This will reduce the spending on response.' She also appreciated the support provided by UNFPA to the government of Pakistan on maternal health and family planning. Under the project, twelve Women and Girl's Friendly Spaces (WGFS) were established to provide women and girls with psycho-social support and referrals for protection services. Thirty-seven health facilities were supported with equipment and commodities to help continue the essential sexual and reproductive health services. This enabled safe deliveries of more than 15,000 babies and provision of contraceptive commodities to more than 50,000 women. Almost 450,000 people were reached with information on health services, gender-based violence and family planning. Women dignity kits and new born baby kits were also distributed.

Two sessions unleash "China new economic development shift"

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Two sessions 2024 have made global waves by unleashing China's new economic shift from traditional development models to new quality productive forces to shape up future industrial and manufacturing systems that will help realize the dream of all-inclusive modern China on the face of earth. In the backdrop of fast-evolving triers of developments when global powers have been grappling to set the direction to align with artificial intelligence technologies, cutting-edge big data, high-tech green growth and quantum science, China has come forward with conspicuous plan to unlock next stage economic transition. Indeed, credit goes to NPC lawmakers and CPPCC advisors for outlining "out of box game-changing strategy having gathered at globally-important two sessions held in Beijing, according to a report carried by Gwadar Pro on Thursday.

As per the breadth and depth of innovative economic paradigm, new quality productive forces suggest advanced productivity that is free from traditional economic growth models and productivity development stages. It constitutes high technology, high efficiency and high quality, and recalibrate with the new development philosophy. Unorthodox technological breakthroughs, astute allocation of production factors, deep industrial transformation and upgrading are the driving forces. It demands the improvement of workers, means of labor, subjects of labor and their optimal combinations. Bolstering high-quality development is the order of day that reigns supreme in the new era. In spite of future growth doctrine in all sectors, there are a slew of stumbling blocks that impede high-quality development, which must be navigated by a new productivity theory. In order to unleash and prop up new quality productive forces, govern-

ment work report 2024 delivered by Premier Li Qiang on behalf of the State Council has charted the course. It suggests that sci-tech innovation can give birth new industries, new models and new growth drivers, which anchor development of new quality productive forces. It demands implementation of sci-tech innovations in specific industries and industrial chains in a timely manner. It asks for intensification of green transformation of growth models to achieve carbon neutrality. It is writ large that initiative of deepening reform formulates a new kind of relations of production appropriate to the development of new quality productive forces. Reason is that Deeper reforms of the economic system and the science and technology management system help to remove bottlenecks that hinder the development of new quality productive forces. To my understanding, if requirement of developing new quality productive forces is applied in befitting

manner it will help smooth the virtuous cycle of education, science and technology as well as talent, and improve the procedure of talent training, introduction, use and flow. Success of new quality productive forces lies in interplay of industry and supply chain improvement, up-gradation, cultivation of emerging sectors, future-oriented industries such as hydrogen power, new materials, bio-manufacturing, commercial spaceflight, quantum technology and life sciences. Meanwhile, new economic development shift will pave way for promotion of innovative development of the digital economy and launch of an Artificial Intelligence Plus initiative. It will consolidate and enhance China's leading position in industries such as intelligent connected new-energy vehicles China also plans to expedite efforts to build a contingent of personnel with expertise of strategic importance and groom first-class scientists and innovation teams.

Teaching children essential life skills crucial

ISLAMABAD: An expert in child development, Dr Babar Saleem stressed the importance of teaching crucial life skills to children at a young age to ensure their overall development and future achievements. "Empowering kids to take on tasks independently, fostering confidence, resilience, and a sense of responsibility will serve them well throughout their lives," Saleem told a private news channel. From simple tasks like cooking basic meals to maintaining personal hygiene, these foundational skills set the stage for a fulfilling and self-sufficient life, he added. "Starting with tasks like cracking eggs and handling kitchen utensils safely lays the groundwork for autonomy. By gradually increasing complexity and responsibility in the kitchen, children learn to navigate challenges and develop problem-solving skills", Saleem maintained. He stressed empowering children to set goals and work towards them cultivates a sense of purpose and direction. "Teaching kids to break down their objectives into manageable tasks and adhere to deadlines fosters discipline and organization", he added. He said by keeping the children engaged and focused on achieving their aspirations, parents help instill a sense of accountability and structure in their lives. Similarly, he said maintaining a clean and organized living space is not just about aesthetics—it is about promoting good hygiene habits and a healthy lifestyle. "Teaching children the importance of cleaning up after themselves in the kitchen and elsewhere reinforces responsibility and respect for their environment. These habits translate into other aspects of their lives, promoting overall well-being and self-care," said Saleem. The child development expert maintained that teaching children to sort, wash, and fold clothes not only contributes to household chores but also instills a sense of independence and competence. "Demonstrating proper care for different fabrics and garments teaches children to respect their belongings and take pride in their appearance", he added. Saleem underscored the need to encourage children to maintain relationships with extended family members that strengthen bonds and reinforce a sense of belonging. "Whether through regular phone calls or visits, staying connected with relatives nurtures empathy and compassion. These connections provide a support network outside the immediate family and contribute to a child's emotional development", he said. —APP

President Alvi appoints three judges

DNA

ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi on Thursday approved the appointment of a judge of Supreme Court as well as the Chief Justice of Balochistan High Court. The president appointed Justice Naem Akhtar Afghan as Supreme Court judge who was serving as Chief Justice of Balochistan High Court. The president approved the appointment under Article 175 A of the Constitution. The president also approved the appointment of senior most judge Justice Muhammad Hashim Khan Kakar as Caretaker Chief Justice of Balochistan High Court. The president made this appointment of the caretaker Balochistan High Court chief justice in accordance with the Article 196 of the Constitution. President Alvi also appointed senior most judge Justice Malik Shehzad Ahmed Khan as Chief Justice of Lahore High Court, in accordance with the Article 175 (A) of the Constitution.

Chairman Senate addresses Senators at a farewell event

Chairman Senate took pride in the achievements of the Senate during challenging times, noting the nation's collective efforts to protect national interests and achieve remarkable successes

DNA

ISLAMABAD: - Chairman Senate, Muhammad Sadiq Sanjrani thanked all Senators for their unwavering commitment to the honorable conduct of the Senate, acknowledging the valuable contributions of the outgoing members. He emphasized that their efforts and services would serve as a guiding light for new members, contributing to the sustainable development of Pakistan. He expressed these views while addressing Senators at a farewell dinner hosted in

honor of outgoing Senators from the Upper House of the Parliament. In his speech, The Chairman recognized collaborative efforts and co-operation of Leader of the House, Senator Ishaq Dar, and the Leader of the Opposition, Senator Dr. Shahzad Wasim, along with leaders of other parliamentary parties in promoting high values and ensuring harmonious proceedings in the House. Highlighting the professionalism and political insight of the Senators, Chairman Senate credited their active participation in legislative debates and committee meetings

for the effectiveness of the Senate's proceedings. He applauded their collective efforts to interpret public sentiments and address national aspirations, contributing significantly to the survival of democracy. Chairman Senate took pride in the achievements of the Senate during challenging times, noting the nation's collective efforts to protect national interests and achieve remarkable successes. He also mentioned key reforms in the internal procedures and rules of the Senate aligned with international standards. The Chairman highlighted the Senate's

achievements in parliamentary diplomacy, building relationships with parliamentary chambers worldwide and signing a Memorandum of Understanding with the Libyan Parliament. He acknowledged initiatives such as the Education Parliamentarians Caucus, promoting education for all, and the establishment of a parliamentary budget in collaboration with the Congressional Budget Office. Moreover, Chairman Senate outlined the Senate's commitment to e-enablement, emphasizing the Digital Senate initiative to modernize IT infrastructure.

Chinese PV in global in markets such as Pakistan

DNA

ISLAMABAD: "In 2023, China's photovoltaic application market has indeed achieved unexpected development, reaching 216.88GW, a staggering year-on-year growth of 148.1%, exceeding the predictions of all industry insiders. With the growing demand for green electricity, we predict that domestic new installed capacity will remain at a high level this year," Liu Yiyang, Deputy Secretary General of China Photovoltaic Industry Association (CPIA), forecasted. "We should follow this general trend, seize the opportunities, and intensify efforts to promote high-quality development of new energy in China," in accordance with what President Xi stressed during a recent group study session on new energy technology and China's energy security, a series of key points related to new energy including photovoltaics could be traced in

the 2024 Government Work Report released on March 5, according to a report published by Gwadar Pro on Thursday. "Lucid waters and lush mountains are invaluable assets." Upholding the idea of President Xi, China's sustainable development has ushered in a new era. The Work Report pointed out that last year, China's exports of the "New Three", namely electric vehicles, lithium batteries, and photovoltaic products has increased by nearly 30%. In the new year, controlling fossil energy consumption, strengthening the construction of large-scale wind power and photovoltaic bases, promoting the development and utilization of distributed energy, and developing new energy storage, such "new quality productive forces" are still indispensable parts of the government work report. "According to CPIA statistics, China's PV production capacity growth rate will still remain in a double-digit range in 2024, appar-

ently due to our products are supplied to the whole world. Therefore, new global PV installed capacity this year will still show a positive growth trend." Liu told the reporter that past year, China's PV industry exports has shown an increase in volume but a decrease in price, mainly due to the large drop in PV prices, which has led to a slight decline in export value. Whereas, the growth in export volume is still speedy, and the concentration of the top ten exporting countries has declined. "In the future, emerging markets such as Pakistan, the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Jordan should be the next oasis for domestic companies, cause these countries are rich in light resources, as well as many of which are plagued by high electricity prices. It's reasonable that there is great potential for us to cooperate with these countries to further develop the PV industry." "Taking Pakistan

as an example," Liu analyzed, "the Chinese development model of source-grid-load-storage integration could be copied here. In the initial stage, the distributed, independent renewable energy storage systems will solve the daily power consumption problems that plague residents. As the scale expands, it will even solve the power consumption of some small-scale industrial parks. In the long run, as such system would be connected to some local national power grids and supplemented to some extent, it may be able to solve the problem of large-scale industrial power consumption." "As a consequence, Belt and Road countries and developing countries, including Pakistan, have rigid demand for our PV and energy storage products. However, the current power generation cost of these products is just slightly lower than the price of local traditional energy, thus they are relatively less attractive.

آغوش کالج مری

کفالت یتیم سے
جنت کا حصول بھی... رفاقت رسول بھی

تقدیر بدلنے کا فن جانتی ہے
تو کیا ہی افضل ہو کسی یتیم کی دعا لے لی جائے

آپ بھی زکوٰۃ و عطیات دے کر شامل ہو جائیں... لاکھوں دعاؤں میں

ACCOUNT NO.
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Month of Ramadan in Palestine

As the Islamic Holy month of Ramadan approaches, the US Biden administration scrambles to find a temporary ceasefire between the Palestinian resistance in Gaza and the Zionist Entity. This sudden shift towards pressuring their Israeli allies to accept a truce is born of a fear for an escalation of unprecedented proportions. According to a report published in Axios, the US government has given their allies in "Tel Aviv" until mid-March to find a temporary truce with the Palestinian resistance in Gaza. The article alleges that Washington has even threatened to cut off its weapons supply to the Zionist Entity if it does not comply. In recent weeks there have been various reports of frustration building within the US government and even that the American President, Joe Biden, has used explicit language in private to describe Israeli Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu. It is impossible to tell whether the numerous leaked reports, citing unnamed US officials are all true or not, and the truth of the dialogue making US-Israeli relations is hard to ascertain. However, it is clear that there is an American push for there to be at least a temporary halt to the genocidal assault on Gaza and there are many indications that a Ramadan truce may be in reach. Before going further in this line of analysis, there is always the possibility that foreign policymakers in Washington are either too incompetent to reach a ceasefire, or that there is an active conspiracy that is being implemented to aid the Israeli regime in what could be believed to be a calculated escalation ladder. If either of these two scenarios are about to unfold, they will represent blunders in American diplomatic and military history. This Ramadan, the Zionist regime has already declared that it will not allow Palestinians from the West Bank to visit al-Aqsa Mosque and sent strong warnings to Palestinians from the 1948 occupied territories to stay away. The people of occupied Jerusalem will be severely restricted also. With the genocide unfolding in Gaza, the Palestinians living in occupied Jerusalem may end up gathering to voice their frustration at Israeli occupation forces, which will undoubtedly lead to clashes. If the assault on Gaza is ongoing, or is to escalate, it will only make this situation more severe and could also lead to an escalation in the West Bank. In May 2021, repeated attacks against worshippers and residents of occupied East al-Quds led to a unified revolt launched by the Palestinians of 1948, West Bankers, and the people of occupied al-Quds. This revolt, often referred to as the 'Unity Uprising', came as a result of a building anger throughout the entire month of Ramadan, which culminated in the resistance in Gaza launching Operation Sword of al-Quds. As of now, there are more Zionist forces operating inside the occupied West Bank than there are in the Gaza Strip, in many areas people are completely confined to their villages and local areas. This caging in of the population inside the West Bank, which is also collectively horrified by the genocide being carried out against their people in Gaza, could transform into an uprising at any time and attacks on al-Aqsa Mosque could be the catalyst for such an escalation.



Why US trying to imprison Assange

JULIAN Assange is an Australian journalist in the United Kingdom, and the founder of WikiLeaks. He published documents that were given to him by a US soldier called Chelsea Manning, which showed US war crimes in Iraq, Afghanistan, and much more. The United States want to extradite Assange from the UK to America, and put him on trial for publishing these classified documents. They are threatening him with 175 years in prison. The reason this case is so serious is because it essentially makes journalism illegal. The United States claims Assange asked Manning for classified documents and that this is a crime. It's not. The US alleges that Assange having classified documents in his possession and publishing them is a crime. It's not. Asking for classified documents; protecting sources, these are things journalists do every single day around the world. But because these files were so embarrassing to the United States and exposed the brutality of their war crimes, they are threatening Assange with almost two centuries in prison; and to do it, they are accusing him of being a "spy" and a "hacker", charging him with 17 counts under the "Espionage Act", and with one count of "Conspiracy to Commit Computer Intrusion". The goal of this indictment is to make an example out of Assange, and make other journalists afraid to publish things that the public has a right to know. If extradited, Assange would be placed in the worst prison conditions imaginable, "Special Administrative Measures" (or SAMs): A strict regime of solitary confinement, no contact with other prisoners allowed, and barely any contact with your family. SAMs are internationally recognized as torture. Julian would be sent to the worst prison in America, ADX Florence, a super-maximum security facility in Colorado. On January 4, 2021, British judge Vanessa Baraitser blocked Assange's extradition because US prison conditions would be so oppressive in his current state as to drive him to suicide. Nevertheless, despite blocking the extradition on health grounds, she agreed with all the political and trumped-up charges. After this, the United States went to the English High Court to appeal her ruling and won by providing empty promises that they would supposedly treat Assange well— even though the United States has a history of violating extradition assurances. I exposed this when I published classified documents from David Mendoza's extradition from Spain to the US, a case previously cited in court by Julian's lawyers. After the US succeeded in overturning the lower court's ruling in Dec 2021, there was only one thing left: A signature from the Home Secretary, who allowed the extradition to go ahead. The above is everything that took place between 2020 and 2024, which brings us to the latest hearings at the Royal Courts of Justice in February 2024. Assange's lawyers are asking the High Court for permission to appeal on two grounds: Assange's lawyers argued that the judge was correct to block Assange's extradition on health grounds, but she was wrong to agree with all the political charges (equating him with a "hacker" and a "spy").

Weathering the economic storm: SIFC and CPEC

Qamar Bashir



Though the clouds of economic and financial challenges are very thick, and many hard decisions have to be made, there are a few silver linings as well. The monthly economic update for Feb 2024, noted restoration of market confidence which led to a pick-up in economic activity. GDP growth accelerated to 2.1% in Q1 FY2024, after two consecutive quarters of negative growth. The agriculture sector, the backbone of the country, posted impressive 5% growth and manufacturing activity registering 2.5% growth. The PKR has stabilized and the PSX has shown sustained performance improvements

POST-ELECTION, the incoming government is set to take charge amidst economic adversities. Though the hard decisions taken by the interim government supported by the armed forces' have significantly contributed to economic steadiness by spearheading actions such as busting illegal financial networks, curtailing cross-border smuggling, deporting numerous illegal aliens, and addressing smuggling and trade malpractices that were bleeding the economy. Additionally, it also put its weight behind the government's efforts to secure financial backing from allied countries, through sizable deposits and their subsequent rollovers which helped in maintaining a critical balance of payments. The coalition government, too, made tough choices, like hiking utility and fuel prices, which, albeit harsh, were pivotal in stabilizing the economy. However, Pakistan is still knee deep in economic and financial difficulties posing the new government with an immediate challenge: economic stabilization. The contraction of the real GDP, from a positive 6.2% in 2022 to a concerning -0.2% in 2023, coupled with projected modest growth of only 2% in 2024, paints a picture of economic stagnation. This decline in economic activity translates to a reduced ability to generate employment opportunities, with the unemployment rate surging from 6.5% in 2022 to a worrisome 8.5% in 2023, with estimates suggesting little improvement in the foreseeable future. Further compounding this challenge is the significant escalation of the Consumer Price Index, which rose from 12.1% in 2022 to a staggering 29.2% in 2023, and is projected to remain around 24% in 2024. This rampant inflation erodes the purchasing power of individuals and households, disproportionately impacting their ability to afford essential goods and services, thereby negatively impacting overall living standards. Furthermore, the nation grapples with the burden of substantial external and general debt, ranging from 80.7% to 76.8% of its GDP over the past three years. Additionally, the prevailing economic uncertainty discourages foreign investment which in 2022 was on \$ 2.7 billion compared to FDI of India which was \$ 80.2 Billion. This low level of FDIs, further restricting the availability of resources for modernization and expansion, threatens the prosperity for its people and stalls the nation's development engine, squeezing household budgets and eroding savings. Soon after assuming power, the new government would be faced with the daunting task of completing the last review of the IMF Stand by Arrangement (SBA). Next daunting challenge would be to reach an early agreement with the IMF staff on a new medium-term facility, which is conditioned with carrying forward critical reforms on restructuring of the FBR,

privatization of the loss-making SOEs including PIA, and the implementation of the SOE policy for improved governance and financial performance. The new government caught between lack of fiscal and budgetary space and ambitious plans outlined in its manifesto will be in a deep fix. Pre-Election promises such as inflation reduction, targeted subsidies for vulnerable populations, job creation, and support for agriculture, revitalize industries at all levels, encourage youth entrepreneurship through accessible banking, and foster agricultural advancement through initiatives like improved seeds, subsidized fertilizers will need a lot of fiscal space. It also promised to provide affordable utilities besides healing the wounds in Balochistan and KP province, knowing very well that transforming promises is tough though not impossible. It would need the collaboration of stakeholders, political and non-political alike, to define the priority areas and set clear objectives with a time-bound deadline. Though the clouds of economic and financial challenges are very thick, and many hard decisions have to be made, there are a few silver linings as well. The monthly economic update for Feb 2024, noted restoration of market confidence which led to a pick-up in economic activity. GDP growth accelerated to 2.1% in Q1 FY2024, after two consecutive quarters of negative growth. The agriculture sector, the backbone of the country, posted impressive 5% growth and manufacturing activity registering 2.5% growth. The PKR has stabilized and the PSX has shown sustained performance improvements. The inflation outlook for the upcoming month points towards a downward trajectory owing to better crops and a smooth supply of commodities. The industrial activity in December 2023 remained positive, exports are steadily increasing encouraging business confidence coupled with exchange rate stability, contributing to a positive economic outlook for Pakistan amidst ongoing challenges. To start with, the new government should fully activate three vehicles for rapid economic and financial stabilization, the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC), the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), and its agricultural sector. Firstly, SIFC can streamline the investment process, particularly for CPEC projects. By minimizing bureaucracy and offering a one-stop shop for approvals, SIFC can attract both domestic and foreign capital. Furthermore, SIFC can foster public-private partnerships within CPEC, encouraging innovation and job creation while ensuring the project's long-term sustainability. Additionally, SIFC can leverage Pakistan's dip-

lomatic ties to broaden CPEC's scope, attracting international investment and maximizing its transformative impact. Secondly, Pakistan's agricultural sector presents a wealth of untapped potential. SIFC can play a crucial role in attracting investment in modern farming techniques, storage infrastructure, and food processing. By focusing on value addition through processing and marketing, Pakistan can not only increase agricultural production but also create a more robust and profitable sector, fostering economic growth and prosperity. Banking upon these gains, the new government should immediately develop short, medium and long term strategies. In the short term the government would need to curtail development spending though vital for long-term growth and must prioritize projects with immediate economic benefits and efficient implementation. Salary increases for government employees should be weighed carefully against fiscal constraints. Infrastructure projects must be chosen for their potential to generate revenue and jobs. Price controls and subsidies need effective management to curb inflation. Investment in education, health, agriculture, and research and development remains crucial, but efficient resource utilization is paramount. Fiscal management, external debt control, job creation, and a commitment to transparency and accountability will be essential components of the government's strategy. Collaboration with international partners can provide crucial support. Beyond immediate stabilization, medium-term reforms are needed. These include gradual deficit reduction, a comprehensive debt management strategy, improved tax administration, energy market reforms, and enhanced workforce competitiveness. Sustainable development efforts focusing on climate-resilient infrastructure and innovation will also be crucial. In the long-term, human capital development through education and healthcare investments, combined with gender equality initiatives, will unlock Pakistan's full economic potential. Embracing technology and transitioning to a green economy will further drive sustainable growth. Adaptability, public engagement, and strong governance will be critical throughout this multi-phase recovery program. By taking decisive action and prioritizing the well-being of its people, the new government can navigate the current economic storm and emerge stronger.

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Russia-Iran cooperation in the changing world

Dr. Muhammad Akram Zaheer



The criticism in Tehran is based on two points. First, Iran hasn't prioritized developing its LNG industry like Qatar. Second, there is feeling that Russia pressures Iran to stay out of the European gas market, as Russia doesn't want Iran to become an alternative energy provider to Europe. Russia, led by Putin, sees energy exports as a tool...

THE countries Russia and Iran are becoming closer in terms of security and defense. They are working on a long-term agreement to cooperate more in other areas. This collaboration covers various aspects including trade, investment and joint projects. The relationship between the two countries has strengthened especially since the conflict in Ukraine. Iran says that trade between them has doubled and Russia is now the largest foreign investor in Iran. Both the countries believe that the West poses a threat to their interests. They think that Western powers are limiting their actions on the world stage and supporting movements that aim to change their governments. Both Moscow and Tehran see the West as a common enemy. This shared perception of threat and common interests is the foundation of their growing cooperation. However, within Iran there is a disagreement about the value of Russia as a partner. Hardliners see closer ties with Russia as a way to protect against the West while others, including many Iranians, think that direct talks with the United States and a revival of the 2015 nuclear deal would be better for Iran. This division in opinion is not likely to go away soon and Western powers may try to take advantage of it. The moderate and pragmatic wing in Iran is doubtful about Russia's role and sees promises of strategic relations with Russia as unrealistic. They see a common threat with Russia and believe that working together is crucial for their mutual security. Even though there are disagreements, they prioritize their strategic goals. The leaders in both Iran and Russia feel that not cooperating could be costly for both countries and there are benefits to working together. Russia is seen as a crucial supporter for Iran internationally especially in the

tensions with the West. The war in Ukraine has increased the importance of the alliance for both nations. While there is no formal alliance but there are an unwritten commitment between Moscow and Tehran for mutual protection. Despite past obstacles, the two countries have started to strengthen ties particularly in the energy sector. Before 2022, Russian companies were cautious due to Western interests but this changed when a \$40 billion agreement was signed in July 2022. The deal involves upgrading Iranian oil and gas sectors with a focus on projects like the North Pars gas field. However, questions arise about the reliability of the partnership specifically considering past withdrawals from projects. Iran also faces challenges in attracting foreign investment due to sanctions and economic issues. Despite assurances from Iranian officials, doubts exist about the long-term significance and success of the deal, given the geopolitical nature of the cooperation rather than purely commercial reasons. Someone from Iran criticized a deal between Iranian Oil Company (NIOC) and Russia's Gazprom. They questioned whether Russia would help Iran build the necessary infrastructure to export gas to Europe. The critics think it is not logical for Gazprom to invest in Iranian LNG (liquefied natural gas) infrastructure because they lack experience. They also doubt Russia's commitment to investing in Iran. The criticism in Tehran is based on two points. First, Iran hasn't prioritized developing its LNG industry like Qatar. Second, there is feeling that Russia pressures Iran to stay out of the European gas market, as Russia doesn't want Iran to become an alternative energy provider to Europe. Russia, led by Putin,

sees energy exports as a tool in its geopolitical competition with the West. Russia has no reason to help Iran upgrade its energy infrastructure for European markets and some in Tehran believe Russia might invest in Iranian projects to gain control over them and slow down Iran's emergence as an alternative oil and gas exporter to Europe. There is a competition between Iran and Russia in Asian oil markets. Some in Iran suggest exporting more oil to Europe instead of competing with Russia in Asia. Those in Iran supporting closer energy ties with Russia argue that Iran should think globally and prioritize political ties over economic gains. They see Russia's separation from the West as an opportunity for Iran. They believe that aligning with Russia helps the survival of the Islamic Republic as an anti-American model. It looks like the United States and Europe can't do much to stop Moscow and Tehran from getting closer. This is because they are working together in a way that makes leaders in both countries less worried about a big threat. Without a new nuclear deal and with Iran doing bad things, like violating human rights and hurting innocent protesters, becoming friends with the current leaders in Tehran seems unlikely. European countries might consider putting a lot of pressure and more tough actions on Iran. This could make Iran feel vulnerable and give them a reason to get closer to Russia. The same thing is happening on the Russian side. Russian actions in Ukraine have made it hard for them to become friends with the West in the near future. Instead, when the West puts pressure on Russia, it strengthens the reasons for Moscow to be friends with Iran. In simple terms, as long as the West keeps up the pressure on both Russia and Iran, Moscow and Tehran will probably work together more.

Briefs

Shehbaz wants...

FROM PAGE 01
directed to constitute a review committee, which would submit its recommendations to the prime minister. He made it clear that the responsibility of the privatisation process lied totally upon the Privatisation Commission and the Ministry. He also directed to remove all the bottlenecks in the process. He also stressed to ensure transparency of the privatisation process at the institutional level and to adopt effective international standards of its monitoring. The prime minister said that the country and its people were compelled to pay the heavy price of loss-making institutions, urging the quarters concerned to play their sincere role in getting rid of them.

Moody's upgrades...

FROM PAGE 01
The report also said it expected inflation to fall from 29pc to 23pc. "Pakistani banks remain highly exposed to the government via large holdings of government securities that amount to around half of total banking assets, which links their credit strength to that of the sovereign," the global rating agency said. According to the report, the macroeconomic conditions remained weak while government liquidity risk and external vulnerability were high. It said the recovery from the 2022 floods and "low base effects" will support a modest economic recovery. "However, high-interest rates and inflation will continue to curb private-sector spending and investment," it said, adding that banks were financing the sovereign's wide fiscal deficits, leaving little space to lend to the real economy "Initiatives to deepen financial inclusion and assistance for key sectors will only partly support credit demand," it added.

Taliban must be...

FROM PAGE 01
the TTP has acquired advanced military equipment and weaponry and to identify the sources of the TTP's financing, which is helping sustain its 50,000 fighters and their dependents and its terrorist operations. Regarding the reported border incidents, the exchange of fire by Pakistani security forces was always in response to cross-border attacks by the TTP and its affiliates against Pakistan's border posts and installations. "We would expect the UN to call on the Afghan Interim Government to prevent such cross-border attacks and infiltration by the TTP and other terrorists into Pakistani territory."

Pakistan calls for...

FROM PAGE 01
civilians in Gaza by Israeli military. She called for provision of aid and medical facilities to the victims of war immediately. Ms Baloch said Israeli forces are committing serious violations of human rights in Gaza. "We demand an immediate ceasefire during the fasting month in Gaza. Regarding Indian-occupied Kashmir, the FO spokesperson said that Kashmiris are being martyred in staged encounters. India is involved in human rights violations in Occupied Kashmir, she said. The FO spokesperson urged the international community to take notice of the atrocities in Occupied Kashmir. She demanded that the Kashmir issue should be resolved according to the resolutions of the United Nations.

KP CM...

FROM PAGE 01
He underscored the importance of the health card scheme as a significant public welfare initiative, reaffirming its continuity without compromise. Furthermore, CM Gandapur highlighted the government's commitment to ensuring transparency in the implementation of the scheme. He pledged to prioritize the allocation of funds for clearing State Life's arrears and outlined plans for introducing necessary reforms to enhance transparency and accountability, thereby maximizing the scheme's benefits for the people.



LONDON: High Commissioner of Pakistan to UK, Dr. Mohammad Faisal, spouse Dr. Sarah Naeem, Director General FCDO Mr. Owen Jenkins, British PM's trade envoy for Pakistan Mr. James Daly MP and guests cutting cake at Pakistan Day Reception. – DNA

PSL matches: Azhar advocates mic'ing up captain, coach

Azhar Mahmood believes that such a measure could enhance the strategic aspects of the game and provide teams with a competitive edge

OUR CORRESPONDENTS

ISLAMABAD: United's bowling coach Azhar Mahmood believes that the coach and the captain should be mic'd up during matches in the Pakistan Super League (PSL). Mahmood shared these thoughts after he felt that Islamabad made some crucial errors in the field during loss against Lahore Qalandars on Wednesday in PSL 9. "There should be a mic for communication between the coach and captain. This is our league which is why we can try such a thing. If commentators can speak to the crick-

eters [during the match], I think coach should be allowed to do the same," Mahmood said at the press conference after the match against Lahore Qalandars. Former Pakistan all-rounder Azhar Mahmood said on Wednesday that Islamabad United pacer Naseem Shah faces no injury. Mahmood said: "The way Naseem said: 'He rallied behind Hunain Shah, saying, 'Hunain is one of the most promising cricketers, and he has great skills.' Mahmood stated: "The United leaked runs in death overs as the T20 format is all about momentum." He expressed satisfaction



over the team's momentum despite the loss against the Qalandars, saying, "The team is moving towards betterment." Speaking about the conditions in Rawalpindi, Mahmood said: "You got to have wickets in hand in conditions like the Pindi Stadium. In today's match,

we lost wickets continuously. However, when Naseem Shah was playing, it seemed as if the runs would be chased." Mahmood also said that Lahore can't be taken lightly despite their poor performance in the event so far. "Lahore Qalandars are two-time PSL champions and they had nothing to lose. We made a few mistakes as well, which cost us the game," he added. It must be noted that Lahore finally clinched their first win of PSL 9 as they defeated home-side Islamabad United at Pindi Cricket Stadium, Rawalpindi on Wednesday night. After posting 162 on the board, courtesy of a fifty

by Rassie van der Dussen, the Shaheen Shah Afridi-led attack put up an impressive bowling performance to bowl out Islamabad United for 145 runs. **Scores in brief:** Lahore Qalandars beat Islamabad United by 17 runs. Lahore Qalandars 162-7, 20 overs (Rassie van der Dussen 64, Shaheen Shah Afridi 30, David Weise 24 not out; Rummam Raees 2-19). Islamabad United 145 all out, 18.5 overs (Faheem Ashraf 41 not out, Azam Khan 29, Naseem Shah 27; Zaman Khan 4-37, Shaheen Shah Afridi 2-32). Player of the match – Rassie van der Dussen (Lahore Qalandars).

Mountaineer Shehroze's 'incredible journey' continues

DNA

KARACHI: Naturalist John Muir once famously said: "the mountains are calling and I must go." The mountains also called a young Shehroze Kashif and he answered, just like Muir did. Time and again. And today the 21-year-old is one of the most accomplished young mountaineers in the world, having already scaled 13 of the 14 highest peaks in the world. As Shehroze plans to summit the 14th peak next month, his heroics were celebrated during a series of events in the city that included the Karachi premiere of his docu-

mentary "Above the Sleeping Giant" on Tuesday evening and a visit to the Kiran Foundation school on Wednesday where Shehroze was welcomed by star-struck kids like a hero. "It's been an incredible journey," Shehroze told The News. His journey wouldn't have been possible without the generous support of the Bilquis and Abdul Razak Dawood (BARD) Foundation. "I sold my car and my dad sold his plot of land to finance my expeditions. There was a time when there was little hope for me to realise my dream of conquering the 14 highest peaks but then BARD stepped in," he said. At the premiere, Shehroze narrated

several stories about his expeditions. One of them that will be etched on his mind forever was how he was lost in bad weather after submitting the treacherous Nanga Parbat in the summer of 2022 along with fellow climber Fazal Ali. It was a miracle that both of them survived. "There came a time we both thought it was all over. We had lost all hope," he recalled. The documentary received applause from the audience. It is set to inspire audiences globally, sharing the triumphs and challenges of Shehroze's record-breaking achievements, with its powerful message of perseverance, courage, and the pursuit of dreams.

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 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 Hosen picked one wicket each. Earlier, Karachi Kings' captain Shan Masood opted to bowl first after winning the toss, and the decision bore fruits as they booked the Gladiators on a paltry 118. Hasan Ali led the bowling attack for Karachi Kings with four wickets while Blessing Muzarabani and Zahid Mahmood bagged two wickets each. – Agencies

Usman Tariq reported for suspect bowling action

ISLAMABAD: Quetta Gladiator's off-spinner Usman Tariq has been reported for a suspected bowling action during the ongoing Pakistan Super League (PSL) season nine. His action was reported during his side's match against Karachi Kings yesterday, which was officiated by on-field Richard Illingworth and Asif Yaqoob. Usman Tariq has played three matches in the PSL 9 and managed only two wickets. Meanwhile, Quetta Gladiators succumbed to a seven-wicket defeat against Karachi Kings after being

bundled for a meagre 118. Karachi Kings, while chasing a paltry 119-run target, 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 Hosen. Seifert switched gears after the wicket and added 44 runs for the second

Dr. Faisal hails founding fathers' vision for Pakistan
High Commissioner hosts grand National Day Reception

LONDON: The National Day Reception of Pakistan was hosted by the High Commissioner of Pakistan to UK, Dr. Mohammad Faisal, at Pakistan House. Mr. Owen Jenkins, the Interim Director General for Indo-Pacific, Middle East and North Africa at the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) represented the UK Government as the Chief Guest at the ceremony. British Prime Minister's Trade Envoy for Pakistan Mr. James Daly MP, British Parliamentarians; Diplomats; Senior Civil and Military Representatives; Mayors; Councillors; eminent members of the Pakistani community; and British friends of Pakistan were among the 500 plus guests. The National Day Reception was held in advance (23rd March) due to the date falling in the holy month of Ramadan. While paying glowing tributes to our elders who led the struggle for Pakistan, the High Commissioner said that, "Our Founding Fathers articulated a remarkable vision for Pakistan, that transcended mere words; it encapsulated the collective aspirations of millions, setting the foundations for the birth of our beloved homeland." Dr. Mohammad Faisal added that a newly elected government had taken charge in Pakistan, heralding a pivotal advancement in Pakistan's democratic journey. With a profound understanding of the challenges that lay ahead, the elected leadership was firmly resolved to achieve prosperity, stability and inclusiveness. Pakistan looked to the future with renewed optimism and determination. He especially referred to the announcement by the Prime Minister in his address to the Parliament that Pakistan would strive to get the G20 membership before the end of this decade. He emphasized that Pakistan had turned the corner. – DNA

Punjab cabinet approves...

FROM PAGE 01
Earlier on Wednesday, an 18-member Punjab cabinet took oath. Punjab Governor Balighur Rehman administered oath to the cabinet members at a ceremony held at the Governor's House, which was also attended by Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz. The ministers include Marriyum Aurangzeb, Syed Muhammad Ashiq Hussain Shah, Rana Sikandar Hayat, Khawaja Imran Nazir, Khawaja Salman Rafiq, Zeeshan Rafique, Bilal Akbar Khan, Sohaib Ahmed Malik, Azma Zahid Bokhari, Bilal Yas-in, Ramesh Singh Arora, Khalil Tahir, Faisal Ayub Khokhar, Shafay Hussain, Sardar Sher Ali Gorchani, and Sohail Shoukat Butt. The names of the cabinet ministers were approved by PML-N supreme Nawaz Sharif. Marriyum Aurangzeb has been given the portfolio of senior provincial minister. She will also hold the ministries of Planning and Development, Environment and Forest Department. Muftaba Shujaur Rehman has been given the charge of finance minister.

PHC extends stay on oath...

FROM PAGE 01
aforementioned reserved seats, preventing members from swearing in and directed the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) to submit its response in the said matter by today. The directives were issued during today's hearing conducted by Justice Ishaq Ibrahim and Justice Shakeel Ahmad. The court issued a stay order preventing members from swearing in and directed ECP to submit its response in the said matter by Thursday. The development came 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. Today's hearing of the plea was conducted by a five-member larger bench headed by Justice Ibrahim and comprising Justice Ejaz Anwar, Justice Atiq Shah, Justice Shakeel Ahmed and Justice Arshad Ali. The petitioner's lawyer, Additional Attorney General Sanaullah Khan and counsels of other parties in the case also appeared in the court. During today's hearing, the court ordered that the AGP appear before the court in person. "The attorney general has been contacted, he is in the Supreme Court today," Khan said. Justice Ibrahim remarked that the court had summoned the AGP. The AAG, when responding to the court, said the case preparation also requires time.

Justice Mazhar Naqvi...

FROM PAGE 01
Ali Akbar Naqvi was guilty of misconduct, suggesting that he should have been fired before his resignation. In a short statement on Thursday, the top judicial body opined that the ex-justice – facing several allegations – was guilty of misconduct and "should have been removed from the office of Judge". In a surprise move in February this year, Justice (ret'd) Naqvi had stepped down from his post following misconduct allegations – and within a day, Justice (ret'd) Ijazul Ahsan also resigned, raising questions over their untimely departure. In his resignation letter, the former judge had said: "[...] in the circumstances which are a matter of public knowledge and to some extent public record, it is no longer possible for me to continue to serve as a Judge of the Supreme Court of Pakistan. Considerations of due process also compel so." The SJC Friday reserved its opinion after completing the misconduct proceedings against its former judge Mazhar Ali Akbar Naqvi. The council, headed by Chief Justice of Pakistan Qazi Faez Isac and comprising Justice Sardar Tariq Masood, Justice Syed Mansoor Ali Shah, Chief Justice Balochistan Akhtar Afghan, and Chief Justice Lahore High Court Justice Amir Bhatti, conducted the proceedings.

Yadav, opens secure India's opening day honors
India reached 135-1 at stumps, still trailing England by 83 runs

India reached 135-1 at stumps, still trailing England by 83 runs

SPORTS DESK

DHARAMSALA: Kuldeep Yadav took five wickets to bundle out England for 218, with India's batsmen starting strongly on a dominant opening day for the hosts in the fifth Test on Thursday. Yadav returned figures of 5-72 and, along with fellow spinner Ravichandran Ashwin who took four wickets in his landmark 100th Test, bowled out the tourists in just 57.4 overs at the picturesque Dharamsala stadium. India reached 135-1 at stumps, still trailing England by 83 runs. Skipper Rohit Sharma, on 52, and

Shubman Gill, on 26, were batting at the close of play after in-form Yashasvi Jaiswal fell for 57. India's Rohit says England Tests made him better captain. The left-handed Jaiswal looked assured until his departure as he smashed spinner Shoaib Bashir for three sixes in an over, and consolidated his position at the top of the series by batting with 712 runs. Bashir, a rookie

off-spinner, got Jaiswal stumped to end a 104-run opening stand. Jaiswal, 22, went past 1,000 runs in just his 16th Test innings since his debut last year, becoming the second-quickest Indian to the mark after former batsman Vinod Kambli (14 innings). Veteran seamer James Anderson, 41, is just two wickets shy of becoming the third bowler to take 700 Test wickets, after Sri Lanka's Muttiah Muralitharan (800) and the late Australian great Shane Warne (708). Eng-

land elected to bat first in their bid for a consolation win and Zak Crawley started strongly with his 79 before the batting collapsed from 175-3. Top batsmen Jonny Bairstow (29), in his 100th Test, Joe Root (26) and skipper Ben Stokes – out for a duck – went back on the same team score of 175. England lost five wickets for eight runs in seven overs. Crawley, who raised his fourth half-century of the series in the first session, survived a few

sharp to hit the stumps. Bairstow, who received his 100th cap from Root with his family by his side in the morning, joined the former captain at the crease and looked solid as he smashed Yadav for two sixes. He went past 6,000 Test runs before Yadav got him caught behind off a googly that took the edge into the wicketkeeper's gloves. He made 29. Ravindra Jadeja struck four balls later to trap Root lbw for 26. Stokes was also given out lbw off Yadav for nought. In the first session, the openers had taken time to settle in, but Crawley soon found his groove, hitting 11 fours and a six. He put on 64 runs with Ben Duckett, who made 27. Yadav struck in his first over as Duckett's slog got a leading edge, with Gill running backwards to take a diving catch. India lost the opening Test but hit back to take an unbeatable 3-1 lead in the five-match series.



Briefs

Over 100 missing after Nigeria militant kidnapping

ABUJA: More than 100 people are missing after militants in northeast Nigeria carried out a mass kidnapping that targeted women and children from displacement camps, officials said on Thursday. Anti-militant militia leaders have blamed Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) for last week's attack in Borno state, the heart of a militant insurgency which has left more than 40,000 people dead and two million displaced since 2009. Several details about the attack in rural Ngala are still unclear and officials have given conflicting accounts. The number of people reported missing does not necessarily reflect the number held in captivity. The UN's Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) said the attack took place on Thursday last week and estimated over 200 people from camps for displaced people had been abducted. It said armed attackers took the women while they were out collecting firewood. "The United Nations strongly condemns the reported abduction of internally displaced persons (IDPs), many of them women, boys and girls," it said. "The exact number of people abducted remains unknown but is estimated at over 200 people." OCHA said the figure came from initial estimates from community leaders, and said headcounts were being carried out in four displacement camps to verify the number.—DNA

Niger isolated despite end of sanctions

NIAMEY: It's been two weeks since the lifting of tough sanctions on military-ruled Niger, but the pace of economic recovery is slow and the generals have shown no inclination to re-open the border with Benin and seek a diplomatic settlement with neighbouring nations. Barricades initially put up in anticipation of an armed intervention by regional bloc ECOWAS still block the road linking Niger to Benin. The political and economic standoff between Niamey and ECOWAS, which is demanding the release of deposed President Mohamed Bazoum and a return to constitutional order, has remained since the July coup that overthrew him. The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) announced late February it was lifting the most damaging sanctions, including a no-fly zone, border closures and asset freezes. Niamey's traders say they are starting to see an improvement in electricity supply after a period of disrupted transport and shortages of power, food and medicine. "Customers are coming in droves to get their hair done," said Mohamed, smiling outside his barber shop in the Dan Zama neighbourhood.—APP

Strikes cripple air and rail travel across Germany

Massive industrial action has paralysed air and rail travel across Germany as striking workers walked off the job to demand better pay to cope with the rising cost of living. Thursday's walkouts by the train drivers coincided with a strike by ground staff at national airline Lufthansa that led to mass flight cancellations at Germany's busiest airports, including main hub Frankfurt, due to last until Friday. Germany's train union head Claus Weselsky said. "With this, we begin a so-called strike wave," he told reporters. Reporting from an empty Berlin Central Station, Al Jazeera's Dominic Kane said there were no subregional trains moving at all, with only a few cross-country ones still active. "It's a similar picture right around the country," Kane said. Overall, about 80 percent of all long-distance trains, as well as regional and commuter trains in the country, were cancelled, leading to traffic jams in the streets and employees struggling to arrive on time for work.—APP



ISLAMABAD: A view of massive traffic jam at Blue area in the Federal Capital.— ONLINE

Palestine hails South Africa urgent ICJ appeal for Gaza

The Palestinian people are no longer at immediate risk or death by starvation

CAPE TOWN: Palestine has welcomed South Africa's urgent request for additional interim measures from the International Court of Justice (ICJ) to secure the safety of Palestinians in Gaza amid a deadly Israeli onslaught. South Africa on Thursday said it requested the Hague-based court to act urgently to prevent a "catastrophic famine" and "genocide" in Gaza. "The Palestinian people are no longer at immediate risk or death by starvation. The Palestinian people are dying of starvation," the Palestinian Foreign Ministry said in a statement. "Israel is massacring the Palestinian people seeking to obtain extremely limited humanitarian aid." South Africa exploiting World Court on behalf of Hamas: Israel Israel has accused South Africa of exploiting the ICJ to help the Palestinian resistance group Hamas by again petitioning the World Court to take measures against Israel. "South Africa continues to act as the legal arm of Hamas in an attempt to undermine Israel's inherent right to

defend itself and its citizens, and to release all of the hostages," Israel's Foreign Ministry said. "The repeated requests for provisional measures made by South Africa in order to assist Hamas are yet another cynical exploitation of the International Court of Justice in the Hague, which has already twice rejected the baseless attempts to deny Israel its right and obligation of self-defence," it said.

South Africa has asked the International Court of Justice (ICJ) to order additional emergency measures against Israel in response to the latter's breach of the measures already in place, the U.N.'s top court said today. In a statement issued today, the South African presidency warned that the desperate people of Gaza cannot wait anymore. "The threat of all-out famine has now materialized. The court needs to act now to stop the imminent tragedy by immediately and effectively ensuring that the rights it has found are threatened under the Genocide Convention are pro-

ected," it added. South Africa also asked the court to order that Israel take "immediate and effective measures to enable the provision of urgently needed basic services and humanitarian assistance to address famine and starvation" in Gaza. It added that the ICJ, also known as the World Court, should take these measures without scheduling a new round of hearings because of the "extreme urgency of the situation". On December 29, 2023, South Africa filed a lawsuit against Israel, citing its involvement in "acts of genocide" against the Palestinian people in the Gaza Strip, a move that was supported by dozens of countries, marking a historic precedent in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. South Africa submitted to the court a dossier of 84 pages, compiling evidence of Israel killing thousands of Palestinians in the Gaza Strip and creating conditions "conducive to inflicting physical destruction" on them, which is considered a crime of "genocide" against them.—Agencies

Gaza 'cannot afford' ceasefire delays: Sisi

NEWS DESK

CAIRO: Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi said that the situation in the Gaza Strip cannot afford any further delay in reaching a cease-fire agreement. "The humanitarian situation in Gaza cannot afford further delays in reaching decisive solutions for a cease-fire," al-Sisi said during his meeting with the Foreign Affairs Committee of the British House of Commons delegation in Cairo. The meeting discussed "the regional situation, particularly in the Gaza Strip," according to a statement by the Egyptian Presidency. Since Sunday, negotiations have been underway in the Egyptian capital Cairo involving Egypt, the US, Qatar, and

Hamas, according to the Egyptian state-run Al-Qahera News TV. A new round of talks for a Gaza cease-fire started in Cairo on Sunday with the participation of delegates from Egypt, Qatar, the US, and Hamas. According to Israeli media, mediators seek to bridge differences between Israel and Hamas on the details of the Israeli withdrawal from Gaza, as well as the prisoners to be released from both sides. Hamas is believed to be holding over 130 Israeli hostages since its Oct. 7 attack. Israel has waged a deadly military offensive, now on its 153rd day, on the Gaza Strip since an Oct. 7 Hamas attack, which Tel Aviv said killed nearly 1,200 people. More than 30,700 Palestinians have since been killed and over 72,000 others injured amid mass destruction

Macron, French party leaders discuss Ukraine aid

PARIS: French President Emmanuel Macron on Thursday met leaders of the country's main political parties as he sought to hammer home the importance of greater support for Ukraine ahead of European elections this summer. Last week Macron stunned many in Europe by refusing to rule out the dispatch of Western ground troops to Ukraine, pointing to Russia's hardening stance. Although members of the opposition denounced his remarks, Macron has since doubled down on his calls to ramp up military aid for Ukraine, which is struggling on the battlefield two years into Russia's invasion. The president and party leaders were expected to discuss the war, including the results of an international conference to step up military support for Ukraine held in Paris last week. France's parliament will have a chance to vote on the country's Ukraine strategy, including a bilateral security treaty signed with Kyiv last month, after debates in the National Assembly lower house next Tuesday and the Senate upper house on Wednesday. Ahead of meeting the opposition, Macron had spoken to his predecessors Francois Hollande and Nicolas Sarkozy at the Elysee Palace late Wednesday. Canada says to provide \$2.2bn in Ukraine aid in 2024 Speaking to journalists after the talks, Hollande called for more aid for Ukraine as well as European unity. "The only possible response is to show that we are with the Ukrainians in total solidarity, that we are giving them all the support they need, without taking part in any combat ourselves," Hollande said. Asked about the possibility of sending troops, the Socialist former president said: "My position on military issues is: the less we say, the better." On Wednesday, government spokeswoman Prisca Thevenot said that it was "quite obvious" that the far-right National Rally (RN) was not aligned with Macron's call to do everything to ensure Russia's defeat.—DNA

Senegal to hold presidential election on March 24

KIGALI: Voters in Senegal will choose their next president on March 24, President Macky Sall announced Wednesday, signaling an end to weeks of political chaos which engulfed the West African country following the postponement of elections originally scheduled for Feb. 25. Sall announced the new poll date on the same day the Constitutional Council ruled that it would be unconstitutional to hold the presidential election after April 2, the date marking the end of the current term of the president. The Council ruled that the election should be held as soon as possible, opposing recommendations of the national dialogue convened by Sall, which had suggested that the election be held in June. The Council also maintained a list of 19 candidates nominated in January to participate in the presidential election. Sall said last month that he will step down when his mandate as president ends on April 2.—APP

Kim orders increased military readiness amid S.Korea-US drills

"Our army should ... steadily intensify the actual war drills aimed at rapidly improving its combat capabilities for perfect war preparedness," Kim

SEOUL: North Korean leader Kim Jong-un has ordered heightened readiness for potential war, during his visit to a military training base in the country's western region amid recent joint South Korea-US military drills. Kim examined training facilities and oversaw actual maneuvers of military units during a visit to the base. The state-run Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) did not reveal the location of the base in its report on Thursday. The North Korean leader said the military must "dynamically usher in a new heyday of intensifying the war preparations in line with the requirements of the prevailing situation," the KCNA reported. "Our army should ... steadily intensify the actual war drills aimed at rapidly improving its combat capabilities for perfect war preparedness," Kim added. The North Korean leader dressed in a black leather jacket, was captured on camera convers-

ing with groups of heavily armed soldiers in camouflage, supervising shooting exercises, and examining weapons, as depicted in photos released by the KCNA. Kim's visit coincided with the ongoing joint military drills between the United States and South Korea, known as Freedom Shield, set for March 4-14. The drills, expected to involve 48 field exercises including missile interception drills, bombing, air assault and live-firing, began on Monday with twice the number of troops participating compared with last year. North Korea has consistently condemned the military exercises conducted by the US and South Korea, asserting that they are practice runs for an imminent invasion. In retaliation to these drills, the country has carried out weapons tests. North Korea denounced joint drills of South Korea and the US while warning Seoul of dire consequences. On Monday, a spokesman for North Korea's Ministry of National Defense said in a press statement that the large-scale joint South Korea-US military drills are provocative and aim to increase uncertainty in the region. It called the drills "frantic" and "reckless" and a "military threat to a sovereign state and attempt for invading it." The spokesperson warned that the US and South Korea "will be made to pay a dear price for their false choice." North Korea's leader has repeatedly said his government is building up its defensive military arsenal in preparation for war by the West that could "break out at any time" on the peninsula. Last month, Kim repeated that Pyongyang would not hesitate to "put an end" to South Korea if attacked. In January, North Korea fired an artillery barrage near two South Korean border islands, prompting a live-fire drill by the South and evacuation orders for residents.—Agencies

Turkey signs energy coop deal with Somalia

ISTANBUL: Turkey signed an oil and natural gas cooperation deal with Somalia on Thursday, the Turkish Energy Ministry said, further strengthening bilateral ties after agreeing a defence deal last month. The energy ministry said the energy deal includes exploration, evaluation, development and production of oil in Somalia's land and sea blocks. "With this agreement, we will carry out joint activities to bring the resources of Somalia to the Somali people. We aim to strengthen Turkey's presence in the Horn of Africa with new collaborations in the field of energy," Energy Minister Alparslan Bayraktar said on social media platform X, formerly known as Twitter. The deal includes transportation, distribution, refining, sales and services operations of oil and other products from land and sea projects. In February, Turkey signed a defence and economic cooperation agreement with Somalia and will provide maritime security support to help the African country defend its territorial waters.—APP

UN chief calls for Ramadan truce in Sudan

UNITED NATIONS: United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres on Thursday called for a cessation of hostilities in Sudan during the Muslim fasting month of Ramadan, which begins early next week. "This cessation of hostilities must lead to a definitive silencing of the guns across the country, and set out a firm path towards lasting peace for the Sudanese people," Guterres told the U.N. Security Council. Sudan has been rocked by a brutal war that has killed thousands — including up to 15,000 in a single Darfur town, according to UN experts — and displaced millions since last April. Meanwhile, the war between army chief Abdel Fattah al-Burhan and his former deputy, Mohamed Hamdan Daglo, who commands the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces, has also 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. The UN's World Food Programme had warned on Wednesday that the nearly 11-month war risks triggering the world's largest hunger crisis. "The humanitarian crisis in Sudan is reaching colossal proportions," Guterres told the Council on Thursday.

UK launches appeal in N.Ireland amnesty law case

LONDON: Britain said on Thursday it had lodged an appeal after a ruling against its amnesty law for ex-soldiers and militants involved in Northern Ireland's decades of violence. Britain's offering of conditional amnesties to ex-soldiers and militants involved in three decades of bloody confrontation in Northern Ireland, called the Legacy Act, was ruled to breach human rights by a judge in February. Britain said it had lodged an appeal application with the Northern Ireland Court of Appeal, reiterating its commitment to going ahead with the plan, and in line with its guidance at the time of the ruling. The act involved a conditional amnesty for people suspected of crimes committed during the Troubles and introduces a ban on inquests and future civil actions related to the Troubles. A case against the act was brought forward by relatives of victims and the survivor of a shooting. A government spokesman said: "We remain committed to implementing the Legacy Act and delivering the Independent Commission for Reconciliation and Information Recovery (ICRIR) to provide better outcomes for victims and survivors of the Troubles by giving them more information about what happened to their loved ones."—Agencies

After long tussle, Sweden to become NATO member

Sweden set to become NATO's 32nd member as PM Ulf Kristersson visits Washington

FOREIGN DESK

WASHINGTON: Sweden is expected to formally join NATO in Washington on Thursday, two years after Russia's invasion of Ukraine forced a complete rethink of its national security policy and the realization of the alliance offered the best guarantee of safety. Swedish Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson is in Washington to hand over the final documentation, with the White House saying in a statement ahead of President Joe Biden's State of the Union Address that Sweden would join on Thursday. "Having Sweden as a NATO Ally will make the United States and our Allies even safer," the statement said. Kristersson said NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg had informed him that Sweden had been formally invited to join after all member

states accepted the country's accession protocol. "Sweden will soon be NATO's 32nd member," he said on X. The Swedish government said separately it would take the formal decision for the country to join NATO on Thursday. For NATO, the accession of Sweden and Finland — which shares a 1,340 km border with Russia — is the most significant expansion for decades. It is also a blow for Russian President Vladimir Putin who has sought prevent any further strengthening of the alliance. Sweden will benefit from the alliance's common defense guarantee under which an attack on one member is regarded as an attack on all. "We have to face the world as it is not how we sometimes wish it were," Kristersson said after Hungary became the last NATO member to ratify Sweden's accession last week. Sweden adds cutting-edge submarines and a sizable fleet of domestic-

ly produced Gripen fighter jets to NATO forces and would be a crucial link between the Atlantic and Baltic. Russia has threatened to take unspecified "political and military-technical counter-measures" in response to Sweden's move. While Stockholm has been drawing ever closer to NATO over the last two decades, membership marks a clear break with the past, when for more than 200 years, Sweden avoided military alliances and adopted a neutral stance in times of war. After World War Two, it built an international reputation as a champion of human rights, and when the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991, successive governments have parred back military spending. As recently as 2021, its defense minister had rejected NATO membership, only for the then-Social Democrat government to apply, alongside neighbor Finland, just a few months later. While Finland

joined last year, Sweden was kept waiting as Turkey and Hungary, which both maintain cordial relations with Russia, delayed ratifying Sweden's accession. Turkey approved Sweden's application in January. Hungary delayed its move until Kristersson made a goodwill visit to Budapest on Feb. 23, where the two countries agreed a fighter jet deal. Erdogan submits Sweden NATO bid to Turkish parliament Finland successfully joined in April 2023. Sweden's candidacy stalled due to an assertive push by Turkey, which demanded that Stockholm, known for its liberal asylum policies, crack down on Kurdish who have campaigned against Ankara. Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan later demanded action after protesters, enjoying Swedish laws on free speech, desecrated Islam's holy book the Quran. In a clear if unstated sweetener, the United States dangled the pros-

pect of F-16 warplanes to Turkey, which has faced the wrath of US sanctions over a major military purchase from Russia. The Biden administration in January approved \$23 billion in F-16 warplanes to Turkey swiftly after it ratified Sweden's membership. The United States simultaneously pushed ahead with \$8.6 billion in more advanced F-35 jets for Greece, a fellow NATO member that has a historic rivalry and frequent tensions with Turkey. Even with Turkey's blessing, Sweden faced another obstacle as it needed approval of a last country — Hungary, whose nationalist prime minister, Viktor Orban, has often thumbed his nose at Western allies. The Hungarian parliament ratified Sweden's membership on February 26. But in one last hiccup, Hungary could not formally sign the accession document due to a brief absence in the mostly ceremonial post of president.

Briefs

Court overturns orders declaring Gandapur PO

DNA

ISLAMABAD: A local court in Islamabad on Thursday overturned the orders declaring Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur "proclaimed offender" in a case of possession of illegal arms and liquor. A trial court had declared Gandapur an absconder for evading the law in the case registered against him in Barakahu Police Station after the recovery of five Kalashnikov rifles, a pistol, six magazines, a bullet-proof vest, three teargas shells, and bottles of alcohol in 2016. District and Sessions Court Judge Shahrukh Arjumand nullified the trial court's order over a review petition filed by Gandapur. The petitioner's lawyer informed the court that Gandapur couldn't appear in court due to his official engagements as the new KP CM. He requested the court to exempt Gandapur from the proceedings for today. The lawyer stated that the trial court had declared Gandapur a proclaimed absconder for continuously skipping the proceedings in the case. He said that Gandapur hadn't received the court's summons due to non-compliance by the process server, designated for delivering the legal documents. Accepting the request, the sessions judge directed the lawyer to submit surety bonds worth Rs50,000 on Gandapur's behalf and present a local person as the guarantor.

IHC reserves verdict on Toor's plea

COURT REPORTER

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad High Court (IHC) Thursday reserved its verdict on journalist Asad Toor's petition against arrest and alleged harassment by the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA). During the hearing today, IHC Chief Justice Aamer Farooq lamented the discrepancies in the inquiry initiated by the investigation agency and the First Information Report (FIR) registered against Toor. The development comes after Judicial Magistrate Muhammad Shabbir's court extended the journalist's physical remand by two days after his arrest in a case of running a campaign against institutions. It is pertinent to know that Toor is booked for allegedly running a malicious campaign against the judiciary on social media platforms X and YouTube. The FIR also states that the journalist, who had even gone on a hunger strike against FIA's arrest, had fueled anti-state activities through social media and he has been booked under the Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act 2016.

AC suspends arrest warrants of Hasan, Hussain

The court has suspended PML-N supremo's sons' warrants till March 14

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: An accountability court on Thursday suspended the arrest warrants of Hasan Nawaz and Hussain Nawaz — sons of Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) supremo Nawaz Sharif — in the Al-Azizia, Flagship and Avenfield cases. The decision was announced by accountability court judge Nasir Javed Rana in a verdict he reserved earlier today. The warrants were issued seven years ago when the court had declared them absconders. In today's hearing, both brothers were represented in the case by their lawyer Qazi Misbah, while National Accountability Bureau (NAB) prosecutors Sardar Muzaffar, Usman Masood and Sohail Arif also appeared in the court.



ISLAMABAD: A session titled, Vipassana: stress management and inner peace for a better world, was held at the Nepalese embassy. Ambassador of Nepal Tapas Adhikari spoke on the occasion and highlighted the significance of the event. Vipassana teacher Khageswar Aryal led the session. — DNA

Hamas delegation exits Cairo as 'Israel' thwarts truce talks

Hamas spokesman Jihad Taha said Israel "refuses to commit to and give guarantees regarding the ceasefire, the return of the displaced, and withdrawal from the areas of its incursion." But he said the talks were still ongoing and would resume next week

NEWS DESK

CAIRO: Hamas said Thursday that its delegation has left Cairo and that talks on a Gaza ceasefire and hostage release will resume next week, making it extremely unlikely that mediators will broker a deal before the Muslim holy month of Ramadan. Egyptian officials had earlier said the negotiations reached an impasse over Hamas' demand for a phased process culminating in an end to the war. But they did not rule out a deal before Ramadan, which is expected to begin on Sunday and has emerged as an informal deadline. Hamas spokesman Jihad Taha said Israel "refuses to commit to and give guarantees regarding the ceasefire, the return of the displaced, and withdrawal from the areas of its incursion." But he said the talks were still ongoing and would resume next week. There was no immediate comment from Israel. The US, Egypt and Qatar have been trying for weeks to broker an agreement on a six-week ceasefire and the release of 40 hostages held in Gaza in exchange for Palestinians imprisoned in Israel. The Egyptian officials said Hamas has agreed on the main terms of such an agreement as a first stage, but wants commitments that it will lead to an eventual, more permanent ceasefire. Hamas has said it will not release all of the remaining hostages without a full Israeli

Israeli war on Gaza "disgrace for civilization": China's FM

FOREIGN DESK

BEIJING: China's foreign minister Wang Yi has condemned Israel's war in Gaza as a "disgrace for civilization" and reiterated Beijing's calls for an "immediate ceasefire." "It is a tragedy for humankind and a disgrace for civilization that today, in the 21st century, this humanitarian disaster cannot be stopped," Wang told journalists at a press conference on Wednesday. "No reason can justify the continuation of the conflict, and no excuse can justify the killing of a civilian population," Wang said. "The international community must act urgently, making an immediate ceasefire and the cessation of hostilities an overriding priority, and ensuring humanitarian relief an urgent moral responsibility." Beijing's top diplomat also said China supports "full" UN membership for a Palestinian state. "We support Palestine becoming a formal UN member," Wang said. "The catastrophe in Gaza once again reminds the world that the fact that the Palestinian territories have been occupied for a long time can no longer be ignored," he said. "The long-cherished wish of the Palestinian people to establish an independent country can no longer be evaded, and the historical injustice suffered by the Palestinian people cannot continue for generations without being corrected," he added. Beijing has been calling for an immediate ceasefire since the start of the current Israel war on Gaza in October 2023. China has historically been sympathetic to the Palestinian cause and supportive of a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

withdrawal from the territory. Palestinian resistance is believed to be holding around 100 hostages, and the remains of 30 others, captured during Hamas' Oct. 7 operation against the occupied Palestine (Israel). Hamas is also demanding the release of a large number of prisoners, including top militants serving life sentences, in exchange for the remaining hostages. Israel has publicly ruled out those demands, saying it intends to resume the offensive after any ceasefire with the goal of destroying

Hamas. The Egyptian officials say Israel wants to confine the negotiations to the more limited agreement. They spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to discuss the negotiations with media. Both officials said mediators are still pressing the two parties to soften their positions. Meanwhile, the Yemeni armed forces claimed responsibility for the attack on a US-owned ship in the Gulf of Aden, which set fire to the ship and killed and injured some of its crew members on Wednesday. The armed forces attacked US bulk carrier "True Confidence" in the Gulf of Aden, Yemeni army spokesperson Yehya Sariee said on Wednesday. Sariee added that the armed forces struck the US ship with a number of appropriate naval missiles, resulting in a fire onboard. "The operation was carried out after the crew of the US ship rejected warning messages from the Yemeni naval forces," he stressed. "Yemen's armed forces reiterate that all ships must heed their warnings, and seafarers must evacuate immediately after the first strike." The spokesman affirmed that the armed forces would continue to "uphold their religious, moral, and humanitarian duties" in support of the oppressed Palestinian people and that their military operations in the Red Sea would not stop unless the Israeli occupation's aggression against Gaza stops and its siege on the Gaza population is lifted.

Govt to be responsible if anything happens to Imran

"Why do terrorists only choose to target Adiala Jail instead of other jails across country," questions PTI leader

DNA

RAWALPINDI: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) spokesperson Shoaib Shaheen said that the incumbent government and the establishment would be responsible if anything happened to the incarcerated party founder Imran Khan. "Attempts are made to threaten and murder the PTI founder. Why do terrorists choose to target only Adiala Jail instead of other jails across the country?" Shaheen said while talking to journalists outside the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) office in Islamabad on Thursday. His statement comes after the Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) claimed to have arrested three "Afghan" terrorists and recovered a map of Adiala Jail, a hand grenade, and Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) from their possession. Khan, the only prime minister to be voted out of his office, is currently imprisoned in Rawalpindi's Adiala Jail as he serves several sentences in the Toshakana, un-Islamic marriage, and the cipher case.

Pakistan gender climate award 2024 winners announced



ADIL SHAHEEN

ISLAMABAD: To celebrate the International Women's Day, the Embassy of France and Agence Française de Développement (AFD), the European Union Delegation, the Embassy of the United Arab Emirates, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and the Civil Society Coalition for Climate Change (CSCCC), announce the winners of the second edition of the Gender Climate Award. The objective of the award is to highlight women's commitment and leadership in the fight against

women of Pakistan work in diverse fields ranging from civil society to academia, science to media, business and beyond. The award is designed to highlight the fact that climate change is not gender neutral. It impacts women and girls disproportionately, amplifying existing inequalities. With stark disparities in opportunity and access, climate change can have a negative impact on women's livelihoods, as well as their health and well-being. The critical contribution of women in agriculture and management of natural resources makes it imperative to optimize their potential in the fight against climate change. Quote by Aisha Khan, Executive Director, Civil Society Coalition for Climate Change (CSCCC) "Women are the future changemakers. They adapt, conserve and nurture. Their capacities and key roles have not always been recognized due to social and cultural constraints. It is time now to give visibility to their strengths and use their knowledge and skills to navigate the climate crisis. Investing in women today will brighten all our tomorrows." A nation-wide call for applications was launched under the three categories to attract a broad array of applicants. Applications were screened by a jury comprising of representatives from the Embassy of France, AFD, the EU Delegation, UNDP, and CSCCC. The award ceremony will take place on 8 May 2024 to honor the winners.

climate change under three categories: climate action, green business, and young climate journalism. The proud winners of the Pakistan Gender Climate Award 2024 are: Qandeel Rehman, (Climate Action), Umbreen Arif (Green Business), and Khalida Niazi (Young Climate Journalism). Each winner will receive PKR 1.2 million to advance their activity and use the funds to deepen the gender climate nexus in their area of work. The Pakistan Gender Climate Award 2024 seeks to shine a light on Pakistani women and recognize their leadership and contribution as equal partners in change. The dynamic and resourceful

Modi visits IIOJK for first time since special status revoked

Modi's government stripped the Muslim-majority territory of its special constitutional status nearly five years ago, splitting the former state into two territories directly ruled from New Delhi

SRINAGAR: Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday said he was working to "win hearts in [occupied] Kashmir", on his first visit to the disputed region's main city since its semi-autonomy was cancelled in 2019. Modi's government stripped the Muslim-majority territory of its special constitutional status nearly five years ago, splitting the former state into two territories directly ruled from New Delhi. The move, widely welcomed across India, angered many in the densely militarised territory. "I am working hard to win your hearts, and my attempt to keep winning your hearts will continue," the Hindu

nationalist leader said at a public rally in Srinagar. "[Occupied] Jammu and Kashmir is not just a region, it is the crown of the country," Modi said at the rally in a stadium attended by thousands. Modi took pride in having cancelled the region's constitutional special status and inherited protections of land and jobs for its permanent residents. He said the former rules and "dynamic politics" had limited the region's potential. "Today, from [occupied] Kashmir I extend my greeting for the coming Ramadan to the entire country," Modi said, ahead of the holy month, expected to begin in the coming

days. Thousands of armed police and paramilitary forces were deployed, and checkpoints set up across Srinagar. Modi also remotely inaugurated a slew of development projects and government schemes for boosting agro-economy and tourism in Indian-occupied Kashmir and other parts of India. The projects included new infrastructure around the revered Muslim shrine of Hazratbal in the city. The visit comes ahead of India's national elections due by May, the first since the region lost its autonomy. The last local elections in Indian-occupied Kashmir were held in 2014. Modi's government claims New Delhi's direct rule of Indian-occupied Kashmir brought about a new era of "peace and development", but critics and many residents say it heralded a drastic curtailment of civil liberties and press freedom. Security forces on motorboats along the river that runs through Srinagar. Most schools in the city were shut for the day, and the authorities had called on government employees to attend the rally. Omar Abdullah, a former chief minister of Indian-occupied Kashmir, accused the government of organising buses to bring in crowds, alleging that "almost none" would be attending willingly. — Agencies

Judge hunted by Taliban wins court case

LONDON: An Afghan judge who has been forced to go into hiding from the Taliban was wrongly refused relocation to the UK, the High Court has ruled. The anonymous claimant prosecuted Taliban and Islamic State group members, and has since avoided an assassination attempt, the court heard. The UK government argued he had not worked closely enough with the UK in Afghanistan to qualify for relocation. A UK government spokesperson says officials are "considering" the ruling. The Afghan judge is currently in hiding in an unspecified third country with his wife and children, two of whom are in poor health, it emerged in court. He lives with the constant "risk that they may be forcibly returned to Afghanistan", according to a ruling in his favour. Zoe Cooley, the claimant's solicitor, said the government had a "moral, as well as a legal, responsibility to bring our client and his family to safety". The ruling does not automatically qualify him for relocation but does mean the government must now reassess his application in light of the court's findings. Ms Cooley called on the UK government to act "very swiftly" to bring the judge and his family to the UK before it was "too late". — Agencies

Tarar assails PTI over May 9 mayhem

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) leader Atta Tarar on Thursday assailed the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) over the events that transpired on May 9. Expressing his thoughts, Tarar said: "The PTI leaders and extremists had themselves posted the videos on social media. You [PTI] cannot change reality by changing the statements every now and then." "Everything was recorded on the camera that happened on May 9. It is an old habit of May 9 rioters to continue speaking lies," Tarar said. He said: "A group that has been involved in attacks on the state cannot be considered a political party."

Govt to 'engage' US authorities for Aafia's return

Says Siddiqui can serve her remaining sentence in Pakistan

ADIL SHAHEEN

ISLAMABAD: Senator Ishaq Dar said Thursday that the new government led by Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) will engage the US authorities once again for the return of Aafia Siddique — a Pakistani neuroscientist languishing in American jail for over a decade. Dar, in his address to the Senate, said that the PML-N government in, 2013, had interactions with US officials and the then-prime minister Nawaz Sharif made a request in the White House, but unfortunately, it was not accepted. "I had 3 detailed meetings with Antony Blinken [secretary of state] and I put all my efforts for the return of our daughter to Pakistan and gave many solutions but, unfortunately, nothing happened," the senator said. Dar said that this issue would be the priority agenda of the new cabinet and all efforts would be made to engage the US administration afresh on this issue.

MQM will cast vote to Zardari: Kundi

ISLAMABAD: People's Party's Faisal Karim Kundi has said that the MQM will cast vote to Asif Ali Zardari in presidential election. Addressing a news conference alongside with Nadeem Afzal Chan, PPP leader said that Asif Zardari will bag over 400 votes in president's election. It is to be mentioned here that the presidential election of Pakistan has been scheduled on March 09 (Saturday). — DNA