Dar reiterates resolve to overcome economic challenges

Minister for Finance and Revenue Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar has expressed the resolve of the government to overcome the economic challenges and steer the economy toward growth. Highlighting the role of accountants in the economic development of a country, the Finance Minister stressed on high-quality corporate reporting based on international standards.

Pakistan can never be separated from its lifeline, Kashmir: Kaira Advisor to Prime Minister of Pakistan for Kashmir Affairs and Gilgit-Baltistan Qamar Zaman Kaira said that Pakistan was incomplete without the freedom of its jugular vein Kashmir. "The ever-lasting deep-rooted geographical and blood relations o Kaira said. He declared that Pakistan had always been the only option for an early and peaceful settlement of the Kashmir issue

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Barkat Rice Mills (Pvt) Limited

Digital Education Action Plan

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif inaugurates Teleschool Pakistan mobile



Govt announces Ramazan Relief Package of Rs5b

ISLAMABAD: The govern- ghee, sugar, cooking oil, tea, dates, Ramazan Relief Package worth Rs 5 billion to provide maximum relief to the poor segment of society during the holy month of Ramazan across the country.

While addressing a press conference, Minister for Industries and Production Syed Murtaza Mahmud said that the first priority of the federal government is to save the people from hardships and inflation.

He said that the package has come into force from today (March 21) and would continue till the last day of the holy month. The Federal Government, he said, is already providing five basic food items to the public at subsidized rates through the Utility Stores Corporation.

In order to facilitate the public the Prime Minister has extended the scope of the relief package by increasing the number of subsi-

subsidized rates include flour, also be given on spices.

ment on Tuesday announced a besan, dal mash, dal mong, milk, tea, Rs 50 per kg on dates, Rs 30 drinks, and spices.

While giving details about the package the USC official said that to make the process of obtaining subsidy more simple and transparent it has been divided into two parts, targeted and general.

He said that the targeted subsidy will be only for the users registered under the Benazir Income Support Program (BISP) while the people of the entire country will benefit from the general subsidy. Under targeted subsidy flour is available at Rs 400 per 10 kg bag, sugar at Rs 70 per kg and ghee at Rs 300 per kg.

While under general subsidy, a 10 kg bag of flour is available at Rs.648, sugar at Rs. 91 per kg and ghee at Rs.490 per kg.

The USC also provides a subsidy of Rs 20 on the white gram, super basmati rice, sella rice, broken rice.

Subsidy on gram flour is Rs.50 The items to be provided at per kg and a 10% discount will

A subsidy of Rs 100 per kg on per liter on milk and Rs 30 per bottle on beverages will be given,

he added. It should be noted that apart from flour, sugar and ghee, other subsidized items will be provided at the same rate for both general and targeted subsidy users.

Prime Minister Mian Muhammad Shahbaz Sharif has also released a free flour package for the citizens of Islamabad, which is organized by the USC Islamabad District Administration in collaboration with the distribution points and utility stores established in different areas of Islam-

This gift of free flour is being distributed to the poor and deserving families who are registered under the Benazir Income Support Program (BISP).

Each registered family will get one bag of 10 kg as a gift for the first time and the remaining two bags will be received after 7 days.

Prioritizing Education

PM for digitization of education, proper teachers' training

The prime minister observed that teachers' training in the country was not up to the mark

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Tuesday stressed that all resources and efforts should be utilized to introduce the modern modes of education including the digitization initiatives, besides imparting of the latest training to teachers.

He was addressing a launching ceremony of Teleschool Pakistan App, Google for Education and Digital Continuous Professional Development' initiative to further revolutionize the formal education medium in Pakistan.

The prime minister observed that teachers' training in the country was not up to the mark which was unfortunate and cited his experience in Punjab prov-

He said that he had directed for steps to improve the quality of about 40 training centers in the province during his tenure as the chief minister.

The prime minister urged the Minister for Federal Education to chalk out a mechanism in

Spokesman Report cial governments to improve the private sector. The best institution quality of education.

Representatives of develop-

modes of education.

initiatives would be realized.

the private sector.

consultations with the provindirectly trained by involving the utilized to further improve the which was unfortunate.

quality of teachers' training. Referring to the significance of

the latest technology in modern education, he underlined that if they wanted to equip the young generations with the latest education, they would have to give them laptops and other related gadgets, so that the future builders of the nation could get themselves acquainted with the new

that the vocational training programme should be taken forward in collaboration with the provincial governments and

Instead of making investments on the brick and mortar, they should invest over the young students by imparting them technical and skill training, he added.

The prime minister emphasized that the students should be

He said that about 100,000 laptops would be distributed among the high achievers across the country hinting that suck-like

The prime minister opined

tions in the private sector should be hired in a transparent manner

and investment be made on each student by imparting them proper training. The prime minister said that they would also establish a network of Danish schools in the far-flung areas of Balochistan for

which huge investments would be made. He expressed the confidence that the quality education to the students in remote area of the province would help bring them at par with the rest of the students

of the other parts of the country. He also urged that the educational requirements of the orphan

children should be taken care of. He said imparting the latest education to the young generations should be the goal of life

Appreciating the efforts of the federal minister, ministry and other partners, the prime minister said it was a good day for the education sector of the country as the latest technology would be

Minister for Federal Education and Professional Training Rana Tanveer Hussain said that quality of education was linked with teachers' training which was being focused.

The covid-19 pandemic had provided the world with the opportunity to adopt distance school learning methods, he added.

The minister said under the initiative, six channels were being launched which would prove a milestone in the education system of the country.

He said in Pakistan there were about 22.8 million out-of-school children and resources were not enough to cater to them, he said, adding the recent initiatives would be helpful in covering the

needs of these children. He said that the technical and skill development of the youth was vital and observed that the country's universities were not included among the world's top leading educational institutions

Speaking on the occasion, ment partners, parliamentarians and relevant officials were present during the ceremony.

Secretary for Federal Education and Professional Training Waseem Ajmal presented an overview of the initiative.

He said digital contents would be created and made available on different medium. A total of six digital channels were being launched for different ages.

He said after the Covid pandemic, 6000 quality videos

were prepared. Teachers would also be properly trained under the professional development initiative, he added.

Under the initiative, 150 chrome books were being distributed among the students while another 6,000 chrome books would be distributed soon, he added.

President and GCEO PTCL Hatem Bamatraf, in his remarks, expressed that they felt pride on being part of the latest educational initiative which would help transform the educational system in Pakistan.

Time not far off when terrorists will appear in courts with covered faces: Marriyum

Staff Reporter

Information and Broadcasting Marriyum Aurangzeb Tuesday said terrorists in the guise of party workers came to attack the court and the time was not far off when they would be appearing in courts with veiled faces.

Whether Imran Khan's spouse had got scared when goons of his Pakistan Tehreeke-Insaf (PTI) were assaulting the police and throwing petrol bombs, besides a mob attack on the Judicial Complex (Islama-

bad), she asked in a tweet. She said whether Imran Khan had any "remorse or shame" for the installation of a camera in the National Accountability Bureau

(NAB) cell of Maryam Nawaz and then watching her on his

Likewise, if he (Imran Khan) felt ashamed for ordering the personnel of security agencies to break into bedroom of Maryam Nawaz at night, she

She lambasted Imran Khan for directing the NAB officials to trespass the residence of (Prime Minister) Shehbaz Sharif's daughter. She also berated the PTI chief for dragging Faryal Talpur from hospital on an Eid day and harassing herself (the minister) in

Masjid-e-Nabyi and London. Whether his wife Bushra Bibi got frightened and cried while accepting diamonds and rings as a bribe, Marri-

LHC grants IK bail in NAB, terrorism cases

Imran Khan gets protective bail in terror case till March 27

LAHORE: The Lahore High Court (LHC) on Tuesday approved Pakistan Tehreeke-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan's protective bail in terrorism and corruption cases filed against him.

The former prime minister reached the high court in a "decoy vehicle" to seek protective bail.

Khan had filed two petitions, through his lawyer Salman Safdar, seeking bail in the terror cases filed against him. Justice Shehbaz Rizvi and Justice Farooq Haider took up the pleas.

During the last hearing, the court had directed Khan to ensure his appearance at 2:15pm on Tuesday if he wanted the court to hear his plea for protective bail in the

The court had also directed Khan's lawyer to verify his client's signature.

Khan, 70, is facing several legal cases, including one that prompted a failed attempt to arrest him after a court issued warrants for his arrest for not

appearing before it.

During today's hearing, the court awarded Khan a protective bail till March 27 (Monday). Islamabad's Counter-Ter-

rorism Department (CTD) and the Police Station Golra Sharif had filed cases against Khan and several other PTI leaders following clashes between the PTI workers and the police outside the Federal Judicial Complex after Khan reached there to attend the hearing of the Toshakhana case last week.

According to the police, the protesters resorted to arson and vandalism and attacked the law-enforcement officials who were performing their duty to maintain law and order in the capital.

The FIR stated that the workers destroyed a police checkpost and broke the main gate of the judicial complex.

As many as 18 people were arrested for arson, pelting stones, and vandalising the judicial complex's building, said the FIR. Agencies

6.8 magnitude quake rattles many cities of Pakistan

Several injured in quake-related incidents

ISLAMABAD/LAHORE/ PESHAWAR: An earthquake of 6.8 magnitudes jolted parts of Pakistan for at least 30 seconds on Tuesday; however, it was not immediately clear whether the tremor had caused any damage or casualties.

Earthquake tremors were felt in Lahore, Islamabad, Rawalpindi, Quetta, Peshawar, Kohat, Lakki Marwat, and other areas of the country.

The epicentre of the earthquake was Afghanistan's Hindu Kush region, while its depth was 180 kilometres, according to the Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD). The earthquake's effects were also felt in Peshawar, Swabi, Lodhran, DG Khan, Bahawalpur, Skardu, Kohat, Toba Tek Singh, Parachinar, Nowshera, and Khanewal.

Meanwhile. authorities concerned in all affected cities are visiting the areas to inspect the affected buildings and facilitate



tremor was felt in Lahore on Tuesday.

In light of the powerful tremors felt in several parts of the country, Federal Minister for Health Abdul Qadir Patel issued an emergency alert at the Pakistan Institute of Medical Sciences (PIMS) as well as Federal Government Polyclinic.

"The hospital administration should ensure advance measures

to deal with any emergency situation," he said. The moderate earthquake was followed by 3.7 magnitude aftershocks with a depth of 156 kilometres However, Pakistan was not the

only country affected by the earthquake tremors were strongly felt across much of Afghanistan and ity was reported in the incident, the even further east in parts of India. police confirmed.

been no bad news of casualties. We hope that all citizens of the country are safe," tweeted the Afghan government spokesman Zabihullah Muiahid. He said health centres across the

"So far, thank God, there has

country had been put on high alert. Large parts of South Asia are seismically active because a tectonic plate known as the Indian plate is pushing north into the Eurasian Several people sustained inju-

ries in earthquake-related incidents across the county; however, no death is reported so far. According to police, seven people were brought to the district hospital

in the Timergara area of Lower Dir. Most of the people were injured in a stampede during the earthquake, the official added. During the tremors, the roof of a house caved in Jamrud. No causal-

In twin cities — Islamabad and Rawalpindi — cracks emerged in various high-rise commercial and residential buildings and flats, triggering panic among the residents. A woman died when a wall of

her house collapsed in Lower Dir,

making it the first causality in the

moderate earthquake that jolted

most parts of the country. According to police, the incident took place in Dheri area of Lower Dir. The hospital sources confirmed that a woman died after the wall of her house fell on her due to the

Sarah Hasan, a resident of Islamabad, told Al Jazeera that the walls of her house vibrated as the earthquake rocked Islamabad. "It started off slowly and then

became strong," the 43-yearold said. "The house was vibrating, things were shaking. It started slowing down, and after a few minutes, it felt like everything is calm again." Agencies/AFP

The Spokesman

Naval war strategy vital President of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan Dr. Arif Alvi along with members of Air War College Institute Senate at AWCI, PAF Base Faisal.

For public facilitation

President stresses open-door policy by govt officials

Dr Alvi urges government officials to be just in their dealings

KARACHI: President Dr Arif need for instituting alternate making fast decisions, being anisms to reduce the case responsive to people's needs, and providing speedy relief to that this model had been quite the citizens in their complaints successful in other countries against the maladministration of government officials and

officials to be just in their dealings and adopt an open-door policy for the facilitation of the people's issues. people and putting the country on the path of fast-paced socio-economic development.

The president expressed these views while addressing the inauguration ceremo-

burden on courts, adding and was also in line with our culture.

He said that training in He also urged government ADR mechanism should be provided to government officials for the early resolution of The president also emphah-

sized the need for introducing crop insurance schemes ers against natural calamities.

ny of the Federal Insurance coverage in Pakistan was people in cases involving insur-Ombudsman (FIO)'s office in quite low as compared to other ance issues and bank frauds. regional countries, adding that He said that most people Addressing the ceremo- insurance products needed to were unaware of the servic- responsive to people's needs. v. the President stressed the be introduced in Pakistan.

He stated that there was a Alvi on Tuesday called for dispute resolution mech-lack of trust in insurance products in Pakistan, and Federal Insurance Ombudsman was playing its role in ameliorating this situation.

> He said that insurance companies had initiated pilot projects on crop insurance in Pakistan with the help of local and international funding. He added that the government would have to provide initial support and conducive environment in this regard.

President Alvi said that to provide coverage to farm- Federal Insurance Ombudsman and Banking Ombuds-He said that insurance man were providing relief to

es and role of the five federal

ombudsmen that were providing speedy justice within 60 days to people against the maladministration of government agencies, banks, insurance companies, tax authorities, and in cases of sexual harassment at workplaces and provision of property rights to

He said that people needed to be informed about the services of the federal ombudsmen that had already provided quick relief in thousands of

The president said that communication means could help provide justice to greater number of complainants and help state institutions become more

He said that responsive

ness had become essential for modern day governments and digital technologies were helping states in becoming more efficient and improving service delivery.

The president said that all the good decisions of the ombudspersons and government agencies should be publicized to create greater awareness about their services and

Federal Ombudsman Tax, Dr Muhammad Khawar Jameel highlighted the significant role played by the Insurance Ombudsman in facilitating the citizens. He also gave an outline of the steps taken by his office to address the grievances of general public regarding the insurance disputes.

Political stability, youth empowerment vital for growth: Ahsan

Staff Reporter

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives, Professor Ahsan Iqbal here on Tuesday reiterated that political stability was must for taking the country towards progress, prosperity and bright future.

"If we want to lead the country towards progress, then we need to ensure political stability and continuation of policies," the minister said while addressing the launching ceremony of PM's Youth Development Initiatives under the vision of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif.



Ahsan Iqbal said that youth population, hence there was dire need to provide them opportunities of education, skill development and employment for brighter

He said, being the minister form two-third of country's for planning it was his responsibility to lead them to better future so that they could play due role in the economic development of the country.

Terming the youth as future of Pakistan, the plan- kistan Knowledge Corridor feet. APP

generation not to pay heed towards anybody's propaganda, adding that they should take steps keeping in view their goals and objectives. He said, Pakistan was recognized in the world by its youth who have been getting education in top educational institutions across the world.

The mister underlined the need for providing sports facilities to young people saying as many as 250 minisports complexes would be established in the country to help them harness their

He said, under the US-Pa-

ning minister urged the young Project, thousands of Pakistani students would go to top institutions of America for Ph.D on scholarships. The minister also announced establishment of 21 sub-campuses of top universities in different districts of country.

> Meanwhile, the minister reminded that Pakistan was facing scourge of terrorism in 2013 and no foreign investor was ready to invest here. However, when the PML government took over, it worked on three Es (Energy, Economy, Education) and rid the country of power shortage and consequently the country was able to stand on its own

New York City braces for Trump indictment after protest call

Barricades erected around Manhattan courthouse ahead of first-ever criminal case against Trump

a possible indictment of Donald Trump arrested on Tuesday. over an alleged hush-money payment to porn star Stormy Daniels during his 2016 campaign.

It would be the first-ever criminal case against any US president. On Saturday, Trump urged followers on social media to protest what he said was his looming arrest.

In his call for protests, Trump raised concerns for law enforcement that supporters might engage in violence similar to the Jan. 6, 2021, attack on the U.S. Capitol in Washington.

Fearing a trap, however, several far-right grassroots groups have opted not to heed his call, security analysts

A grand jury, which heard further

NEW YORK: Workers erected barri- who is seeking the Republican nomicades around a Manhattan courthouse nation for the White House again on Monday as New York City braced for in 2024, had predicted he would be

On Monday the grand jury heard from a witness, lawyer Robert Costello, who said Trump's former fixer Michael Cohen had handled the hush-money payments without Trump's involve-

"Michael Cohen decided on his ownthat's what he told us-on his own, to see if he could take care of this," Costello told reporters after testifying to the grand jury at Trump's lawyers' request.

Cohen, who testified twice before the grand jury, has said publicly Trump directed him to make the payments on Trump's behalf.

An indictment could hurt Trump's comeback attempt. Some 44% of Republicans say he should drop out testimony on Monday, could bring of the presidential race if he is indictcharges as soon as this week. Trump, ed, according to a seven-day Reuters/

Ipsos poll that concluded on Monday. The investigation by Manhattan District Attorney Alvin Bragg is one of several legal challenges facing Trump. His office did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Cohen pleaded guilty in 2018 to federal campaign finance violations tied to his arranging payments to Daniels, whose legal name is Stephanie Clifford, and another woman in exchange for their silence about affairs they claimed with Trump.

The Manhattan District Attorney's office had asked that Cohen be available as a rebuttal witness, but he was told on Monday afternoon that his testimony was not needed, according to his lawyer Lanny Davis. Cohen told MSNBC he had not been asked to return on Wednesday.

New York Mayor Eric Adams told reporters police were monitoring social media and keeping an eye out for "inappropriate actions" in the city. The New York Police Department said there were no known credible threats.

If charged, Trump would likely have to travel from his Florida home for fingerprinting and other processing. Law enforcement officials met on Monday to discuss the logistics, several media outlets reported.

 $Sources\ have\ said\ Bragg's\ office\ was$ presenting evidence to a grand jury about a \$130,000 payment made to Daniels in the final weeks of the 2016

Trump's fellow Republicans have widely criticized the probe as politically motivated.

Florida Governor Ron DeSantis, Trump's rival for the Republican presidential nomination, said on Monday Bragg was imposing a "political agenda" that compromised the rule of law, but he also took a veiled swipe at Trump. Reuters

Security forces kill three terrorists in DI Khan



Staff Reporter

RAWALPINDI: Three terrorists were killed in Khutti area of Dera Ismail Khan on late Monday night in an exchange of fire with the secu-

According to ISPR, terrorists opened fire on a police check post and on receipt of the information, security forces immediately cordoned the area, blocking all possible escape routes. The fleeing terrorists were intercepted in general area of Saggu in Dera exchange of fire, three terrorists were strengthen our resolve.

sent to hell. Weapons and ammunition were also recovered from them.

However, during the exchange of fire, three soldiers including Havaldar Muhammad Azhar Iqbal, Naik Muhammad Asad and Sepoy Muhammad Essa embraced martyr-

Sanitization of the area is being carried out to eliminate any terrorists there.

The ISPR further stated that the Pakistan Army is determined to eliminate the menace of terrorism and such Ismail Khan District. After intense sacrifices of our brave soldiers further

Minorities' property worth Rs27b recovered: SC told

ISLAMABAD: Head of the Minority Rights Commission Shoaib Sadal on Tuesday informed the Supreme Court (SC) that so far property belonging to minorities worth Rs 27 billion had been recovered from illegal possession.

Shoaib Sadal also told the two-judge bench headed by Justice Ijaz ul Ahsan that the provincial governments were not cooperating with the Commission regarding many assets and prayed for issuance of directives to the provincial governments and their police chiefs in that

hearing a suo moto case regarding the rights of minorities, that the Commis-

Justice Ijaz ul Ahsan remarked that the court would hear the answers of all respondents together.

Evacuee Trust Property Board (ETPB) lawyer Hafiz Ahsan Ahmed said that several assets of the ETPB had been illegally occupied in various cities, which could not be retrieve despite many attempts. Representative of Hindu Council

Dr Ramesh Kumar alleged that the ETPB was showing a 'dhram shala' as commercial property. A detailed report about the prop-

He informed the bench, which was erty of Auqaf Department was also submitted to the bench.

The case was subsequently sion had also submitted its reply to adjourned for an indefinite time. APP

Pakistan, KSA vow to expand strategic partnership

Staff Reporter

Saudi Arabia and Iran will pave the tive development. way for initiation of meaningful dialogue for peace, security, trade between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, and development in the region.

during a telephonic conversation expand and diversify the bilaterwith his Saudi counterpart Prince al strategic partnership. They also Faisal bin Farhan Al Saud on Tuesday. stressed the vital role of high-level Bilawal Bhutto Zardari congrat-

ulated Prince Faisal bin Farhan Al

Saud on recent normalization of relations between Saudi Arabia and Iran ISLAMABAD: Foreign Minister announced through "Trilateral Joint Bilawal Bhutto Zardari has says Statement" and appreciated the leadnormalization of relations between ership of the Kingdom for this posi-

Reaffirming the fraternal relations the two Foreign Ministers reiterated He expressed this confidence their mutual commitment to further exchanges for cementing ties between the two countries

NDMA orders 50,000 tents for quake-hit people of Turkiye, Syria

Staff Reporter

ISLAMABAD: The National Disaster Management Authority, on the directions of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, has ordered 50,000 tents, including fireproof ones for the quake-hit people of Turkiye and Syria. man Lt General Inam Haider Malik, who called on Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif in Islamabad on Tuesday.

The Chairman said that thousands of tents and 2,597 tons of relief assistance were dispatched Turkiye and Syria through ships, while 36, 402 winter tents were sent to Turkiye This was briefed by NDMA Chair- through special flights.

UNHCR lauds Pakistan's support for hosting refugees



Staff Reporter

ISLAMABAD: UN Refugee Agency Representative in Pakistan Ms. Noriko Yoshida called on Minister for Economic Affairs Sardar Ayaz Sadiq in Islamabad on Tuesday.

The Minister said Pakistan has been hosting millions of Afghan in the reparation of Afghan refurefugees for over four decades.

number of people has strained the country's resources and social services, infrastructure, such as healthcare, education, and housing. The Pakistan government is

The presence of such a significant

making efforts and has been actively working with the UNHCR to assist

Wednesday, March 22, 2023

Sindh cabinet approves Rs15.6b Ramazan package

The cash transfer to the targeted low-income families would be made through BISP

Spokesman Report

KARACHI: Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah presiding over a cabinet meeting at CM House approved been increased from Rs50,000 to Rs15.6 billion Ramzan package to be Rs100,000 for producers or dealers, given to 7,810,482 low-income families by transferring cash of Rs2000 to each family as a subsidy for purchasing Rs20,000 for pushcart vendors. 30 kilograms of wheat flour at a rate of Rs 65 per kg.

low-income families would be made through Benazir Income Support Program (BISP) for which the eligible families would receive a message on their cell phone and those who do not receive such a message and their average income is less than Rs50,000 per month can send a message/CNIC number on Toll-Free 8171 Facility for inquiring about eligibility for the Ramzan Bazars would be established subsidy," the CM said and added that approximately 7,810,482 families with municipal committees/town commit-BISP's Proxy Means test (PMT) score tees, or Market Committees were being in the range of 01 to 60, for cash transfer of Rs. 2,000/family under the relief scheme, said a spokesperson of the CM House on Tuesday.

The meeting was attended by provincial ministers, advisors, Special Assistants, Chief Secretary, PSCM, and other concerned officers.

mechanism, particularly the price hike 1122 for which a draft bill was presentduring the month of Ramazan 2023, ed. the cabinet approved amendments in "Sindh Essential Commodities Price did not have a dedicated Emergency Control and Prevention of Profiteer- Response service and only relies on

ing and Hoarding Act-2005.

Under the amendments, the fine for the failure of the display price list of essential commodities has Rs 20,000 for retailers other than pushcart vendors, and Rs10,000 to

The fine for the retailer's failure to declare stock of essential commodi-"The cash transfer to the targeted ties from Rs 50,000 to Rs100,000 and sale of different commodities at a higher price than the notified/company price the fine has been increased from 50,000 to Rs100,000. The cabinet decided to launch a drive against Profiteering and Hoarding.

Secretary GA told the meeting that in Karachi a network of existing Bachat bazaars was being utilized where while in other districts local councils, encouraged and AC/DC would supervise the establishment. In some areas Fruits associations are being encouraged to establish their own stalls with lower prices. Association manufacturers and suppliers would be encouraged to provide discounts.

The Sindh cabinet decided to estab-In order to improve Price Control lish Sindh Emergency Service Rescue

The cabinet was told that Sindh

charitable organizations/NGOs.

The functions of Rescue 1122 include Ambulance Service, Water Rescue, Fire Fighting, Urban Search & Rescue, Building Safety, Motor Bike Rescue Service, Community Safety, Training of Community/Govt Institutions/ Schools Etc, Certification for Basic Life Support (CPR, Fire drills, safety standards, etc.)

The meeting was told that the New Uniform Cadre Rescue Service was introduced in the province. The two batches of Rescue Service Personal, comprising 405 cadets have been trained at National Rescue Academy Punjab.

The meeting was told that a complete range of Fire Fighting, Ambulatory, Search & Rescue, Water Rescue, and Animal Rescue shall be provided through trained uniform personnel. Command & Control of Rescue 1122 is fully functional and responding the Emergency Situations. It is Fully Functional in the Karachi and Larkana Divisions and partially functional in the other nine districts of the province. Expansion in other Divisional HQs shall be completed within a short span of time. The CM directed the Rehabilitation dept to establish Satellite Stations within three months.

The cabinet approved the draft Bill 'Sindh Emergency Rescue Service-1122' and referred it to the

The Sindh home department told the cabinet that under the Provin-

cial Policy Directive for the security of tional through its independent board the Oil Pipeline System approved by the Provincial Cabinet on February 6, 2023, the responsibility of neutral-

izing all threats posed to the National

Network of Oil Pipeline System from

assigned to the home department - the

police and concerned district admin-

Monitoring critical, non-traditional security threats of terrorism posed to the National Network of Oil Pipeline System under NACTA the cabinet

has assigned the task to the police and district administration. The cabinet approved a draft Bill for the establishment of the Institute of Mother and Child Health at Shaheed

Benazirabad Act-2023. It would be as

an autonomous body to be made func-

of governors.

The Function of the institute includes treatment and carrying out investigation and treatment of various diseases in the field of gynecoloshort to long term basis has been gy, obstetrics, pediatrics, pediatrics surgery, and neonatology in the Institute and its branches. It would provide support to other mother and child health care facilities. It would strive towards the development of molecular sciences and genetic research both for diagnostic, therapeutic, and preventive purposes for all diseases and disorders affecting mothers and children.

The institute would hold examinations and award and confer degrees, diplomas, certificates, and other academic distinctions to and on the been suggested - can be modified for persons; and carry out and promote project-specific needs.

research, surveys, experiments, and demonstrations.

It would undertake the steps for implementation of the Sindh Newborn Screening Act and would develop a reference lab for the purpose of this Act, providing an advanced testing facility for newborn screening and providing guidelines to all relevant institutes dealing with newborns.

The cabinet approved Sindh Resettlement and Rehabilitation (P&R) Policy 2023 with main features such as improving the conception, planning, and execution of projects and ensuring projects are socially sustainable.

Initial R&R assessment to be an integral part of project design where small parcels of land are required, a negotiated approach to be preferred for acquisition and where affected persons have lost the entire land parcel, the effort will be made to provide landfor-land of the same or better quality.

Under the policy, the affected businesses will be compensated for the loss of income and aided in re-start businesses. Communities shall be given options including self-managed on-site resettlement where possible or project-sponsored sites with amenities.

A Resettlement Action Plan (RAP) will be prepared for every project with compensation/resettlement options, budget, and implementation arrangements. A model entitlement matrix for 11 categories of affected people has

Free wheat flour

FAISALABAD: A large numbers of women are stands in a queue to collect free wheat flour bags at Model Bazaar in the city, As Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif said that around 15.8 million households of Punjab would be distributed free wheat flour during the holy month of Ramazan.



Ruet-e-Hilal Committee to meet today for Ramadan moon-sighting

PESHAWAR: The Central Ruete-Hilal Committee will meet today Ruet-e-Hilal committees will also be (Wednesday) in Peshawar for the Ramadan moon-sighting under committee for Islamabad will meet in tee would also invite people from the committee chairman Maulana Abdul the building of the Ministry of Reli-

The Central Ruet-e-Hilal Commitof Augaf Department, Peshawar on 29 (Wednesday evening).

relief package

held at their respective offices. The gious Affairs

An official of the Ministry of Relitee for the sighting of the crescent of gious Affairs told The News along Ramadan ul Mubarak 1444 AH with with holding meetings of the commitits chairman will meet in the building tee in all provinces in rotation, the purpose for holding the meeting this consensus on the sighting of the cresthe country," he said.

CM seeks report on hurdles in

The meetings of zonal and district cent of Ramadan on the same day. He said that along with receiving calls for evidence, the commitprivate Ruet committee to record

> their statements. The committee will also cross-question people recording their evidence to ascertain the same.

"We want to create consensus on this issue so that the holy month of March 22 corresponding to Shaban time in Peshawar is also to create Ramazan falls on the same day across

Special squad constituted to prevent one-wheeling during Ramzan

RAWALPINDI: City Traffic Police (CTP) Rawalpindi constituted a special squad of 70 personnel to crack down against one-wheeling across the city during the holy month of Ramazan ul Mubarrak.

While, special pickets have also been established on important highways where strict action will be taken against the perpetrators of one-wheeling without discrim-

Chief Traffic Officer Rawalpindi Taimoor Khan said that the Rawalpindi Traffic Police were using all resources to maintain flow of traffic as well as to prevent one-wheeling.

The mechanics who would alter motorcycles for one-wheeling will also be nabbed, he added.

CTO said that an effective and comprehensive strategy has been evolved to deal with one-wheelers.

He also appealed to the parents to keep an eye on their children on these special days and avoid giving them a motorcycle or vehicle at a young age so that they could be safe from fatal accidents. APP

Baochistan to adopt Child Marriages Prohibition Act', FSC told

ISLAMABAD: The Federal Shariat Court was informed on Tuesday that a legislative bill titled, "The Balochistan Child Marriages Prohibition Act, 2021" had been prepared to prevent child marriage in the Province.

A bench of the Federal Shariat Court comprising of Chief Justice Justice Dr. Syed Muhammad Anwer, Justice Khadim Hussain and Justice M. Shaikh, Judge, heard the suo-moto case regarding forced marriage of a 5 years old girl in Baluchistan, District Khuzdar.

During the course of hearing, all federating units were represented by their respective Law officers. The officer representing the Province of Balochistan submitted a report that they have drafted a bill titled, "The Balochistan Child Marriages Prohibition Act, 2021". The Government of Balochistan has prepared a draft law to prevent child marriage in the Province, following a Suo Moto notice taken by the Federal Shariat Court in a matter where a five -year-old girl was forcefully married. APP

Farmers take out rally, demand pro-agriculture steps

Staff Reporter

MULTAN: Hundreds of farmers took out rally and demanded of the government to take immediate steps for the promotion of agriculture in the country. The rally was led by Chairman Pakistan Kissan Ittehad Khalid Khokhar and attended by farmers from across the region. They were carrying banners and placards inscribed with different slogans.

Khalid Khokhar talking to media persons stated that government should take measures to reduce the cost of inputs. Similarly, barren land should also be made fertile by taking different initiatives.

The prices of inputs increased manifold and it was also affecting agriculture production. Farmer's friendly policies can help the country get rid of economic crises.

Constitution-1973 termed big achievement of democratic forces

MULTAN: President Young Pakistanis Organization (YPO) Naeem Iqbal Naeem on Tuesday appreciated the unanimously accepted Constitution of 1973 and termed it a big achievement of democratic forces in the country.

While talking to APP regarding Golden Jubilee of the Constitution of 1973, Naeem stated that all the political parties developed a consensus on it. The introduction of some important Islamic principles in the

constitution will be remembered ever. Naeem also hailed introduction of Council of Islamic Ideology and "Sharia Court". The both are of vital importance for guidance of people, he maintained. He however also urged authorities concerned to ensure strict implementation ondelivery of human rights. APP

Hamdard Foundation distributes Ramzan ration

PESHAWAR: The Hamdard Foundation Pakistan (HFP) here on Tuesday distributed the Ramzan package among $555\,\mathrm{deserving}$ families living in the surrounding villages of the provincial metropolis

The Ramzan ration was distributed among deserving families of various villages including Shahi Bala, Mathra, Pajaggi, Abdarra, Buddhu, Samarbagh, Akoon Ahmad, Pistakhara, Plaosai and Landi Arbab.

Elders of these areas appreciated the efforts of HFP and urged the affluent to help out poor and deserving people in the holy month of Ramzan. They said that society should join hands to support those who are unable to purchase daily-use items in the holy month. APP

KP govt starts distribution of free flour bags among needy

PESHAWAR: The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government on Tuesday started distribution of free flour bags among poor households under the Federal Government's Ramzan package. Each deserving family was given three 10-kilogram bags of flour in

KP, according to an official statement here. Those families, who were registered in the Benazir Income Support

Programme (BISP) would benefit from this landmark initiative. With a subsidy of Rs. 19.77 billion, the program aims to cover 5.75 million households and 36.8 million individuals in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa d during Ramzan. APP

the distribution centres in their respective areas to promptly address any issues and submit a report. Moreover, any complaints regarding provision of free flour should be resolved immediately, he said and empha-

supply of free flour

LAHORE: Caretaker Chief Minister Punjab Mohsin Naqvi

has expressed concerns over reports of disorder in certain

cities related to distribution of free flour under the Ramazan

to provide a detailed report on the matter. The CM also

ordered to improve arrangements for supply of free flour

so that citizens do not face any difficulties.

In response, he directed the provincial administration

Commissioners, regional police officer, deputy commis-

sioners and district police officers have been directed to visit



sised the need to expedite verification process for citizens while ensuring that they receive their flour supply without any delay. Agencies

.. 6:20 pm



Namaz Timings Maghrib

.....7:43 pm

EMERGENCY
Rescue (Police) 15
Bomb Disposal 15
Fire Services Rawalpindi/
Islamabad1122 & 16
Emergency Ambulance 1122 &
& Rescue Services 4451122
Motorway Police9266044
Motorway Police 9270601-20

Women Police Stations

- 1411115		
Islamabad 922259		
Rawalpindi 9270601-2		

walpindi	9270601-
ENQ	UIRY

Edhi Ambulance	115
PIA Flight Info	
PIA Cargo	9280979
Railway Inquiry	117
Railway Exchange	9270831-5
WASA Rawalpindi	5555489
CAA	9281092
HOCDIT	ALC

HOSPIT	ALS
CMH	5611111
MH	561116
MH	561116
Cantt Hospital	9270907-11
DHQ	5556311-4
RGH	9290301-7
Holy Family	9290322-7
PIMS	9261170-79
Polyclinic	9218300-09
Shifa International	4603666

DEPARTMENTS

CDA	9221334-43
CDA	9208301-04
Met Office	9250360-6
RDA	5555864
TMA	5770886
Cantonment Board	9270151-3
Islamabad Metropol	itan
Corporation	9209224
Potohar Town	9209224
Rawal Town	5773343

COMPLAINTS

Water Tanker Service E-7, F-10 & F-11 G-5, G-6, G-7, G-8, ...9203883 G-9, G-10, G-11, G-12, H-8 ..9266316 Wapda Islamabad......9217579-80 Sui Gas Complaint..... 119, 9272249 Wasa Water Tank0331-5022125

PNCA celebrates Pakistan Day with cultural program

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan National Council of the Arts (PNCA) here Tuesday arranged colorful cultural programmes to celebrate the forthcoming Pakistan Day on March 23.

Students from various educational institutions of Rawalpindi and Islamabad participated in various competitions including speeches, national songs, paintings and calligraphy.

The competitions engaged the youth in visual narration of historical moments of Pakistan Movement and the struggle of freedom fighters. Besides depicting the culture and traditions of the country, such events also educate the youth regarding the struggle of freedom fighters through soft expressions of art, said the organizers.

Celebrating the national days with art and cultural programmes is a regular feature of PNCA's activities that not only celebrate the occasion but also involve young talent to create awareness among the masses about the importance of historical days.

Tanveer for enhanced Pak-Maldives collaboration in tech education

The education minister says both countries can increase student exchange programs.

Staff Reporter

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Federal Education and Professional Training, Rana Tanveer Hussain Tuesday called for expanding cooperation between Pakistan and Maldives in the field of technical and vocational train-

During a meeting held with the Higher Education Minister of Republic of Maldives, Dr. Ibrahim Hassan on Tuesday, Rana Tanveer said that both countries can increase student exchange programs.

Emphasizing the importance of the relationship between Pakistan and Maldives, the minister highlighted the brotherly relations between the two countries and praised the hospitality shown to Pakistanis by the people

He said that Pakistan and Rawalpindi.

Maldives have been enjoying cordial relations which are based on common faith, culture, historic links, mutual trust, and commonality of interest.

The minister said that an MoU on Education and Professional Training to oversee, pursue and coordinate the entire collaboration between two countries should be formulated and stressed the importance of practical implementation of MoUs as soon as possible. Rana Tanveer was briefed that

The Maldives National University has been connected with the leading Universities in Pakistan including LUMS, NUST, PMAS Arid Agriculture University Rawalpindi and others. Last week, MNU 04 faculty

members completed their two weeks training in the agricultural field at Agriculture University



the two countries and we believe that with engagements the opporter of the Republic of Maldives, amongst the highest in the world.

He said that there is a great tunities would be capitalized for Dr. Ibrahim Hassan apprised potential for cooperation between the benefit of the two countries.

Rana Tanveer that Maldives has Higher Education Minis- 98 percent literacy rate which is there are opportunities to further

world, including Pakistan.

enthusiasm for centuries.

celebrating the arrival of spring. APP

global levels.

Staff Reporter

Senate Chairman extends warm wishes on Nowruz

ISLAMABAD: Chairman Senate Muhammad Sadiq Sanjrani has

extended his warmest wishes to those celebrating Nowruz around the

In a message of congratulations, he emphasized that Nowruz represents a day of peace, harmony, and mutual understanding, and that the arrival of spring has been celebrated with the same passion and

The Senate Chairman expressed his hope that this year's Nowruz celebrations would serve as an opportunity to share happiness and

He called on Allah Almighty to grant all of us the chance to spread

Nowruz festival marks the beginning of the Persian New Year and

is observed on the first day of the vernal equinox, which falls on or

around March 21st each year. It is a time for renewal, reflection, and

Japan provides 760m yen for installation of weather surveillance Radar in Multan

promote the values of peace, love, and harmony at both regional and

this important message throughout Pakistan and beyond.

He said that Maldivian Students (approx. 30) are also pursuing their higher education especially MBBS in Pakistani Medical Universities Colleges.

Yearly 6-8 MBBS/ BDs Seats are offered to Maldivian students under Pakistan Technical Assistance Program (PTAP).

Rana Tanveer assured Dr. Ibrahim Hassan that students from Maldives will be given more seats in medical and art colleges in Pakistan.

The federal minister said that Pakistan attaches great importance to its relations with Maldives both in a bilateral context and within the framework of the SAARC, OIC, UN and Commonwealth.

"Our cooperative relations are demonstrative of the fact that two countries are natural allies and expand mutual ties", he said.

Prepration for Pakistan Day

ISLAMABAD: A view of pan-flex banners hang on street light polls on a green belt at Constitution Avenue in connection with Pakistan day ceremony to be held in President House on 23rd March, in Federal Capital.



Photo: Online by Sultan Bashir

Commissioner chairs meeting to review Dadhocha dam progress

RAWALPINDI: Commissioner Rawalpindi Division Tuesday presided over a meeting to review the progress on the Dadhocha dam project.

Director Development, Nazia Sudhan, ADC Revenue, Nabil Ali, Xen Small Dams and other officers concerned attended the meeting.

The meeting was informed that Dadhocha Dam after construction would help meet the water shortage of domestic, agricultural and industrial use.

the dam would also become a spot for fish farming and

Development and Additional at present, Rawalpindi's water Liaquat Ali Chattha here on Deputy Commissioner of Revedemand was 65 million gallons nue to attend the Dadhocha per day, which would reach 90 Dam court hearing on March million gallons in the coming 22 along with the legal team. years.

The team was instructwith full preparation so that the importance of this dam could be properly highlighted and the stay order taken on its

construction could be vacated. The people whose land comes in the area of the dam The Commissioner said that compensation, the Commis-

A delay in the construc- said. a great tourist point in the tion of this dam would be an extreme injustice to the people top countries suffering from sioner added. Agencies

He directed the Director of of Rawalpindi, he said adding,

The amount of water availed to appear before the court able was 51 main gallons, he informed.

After completion, the dam would be able to provide 35 million gallons of drinking water to the people of Rawalpindi. Water scarcity had become a global problem and would be given fair and right many countries were considering different ways to meet the shortage, Liaquat Ali Chattha

the water crisis," he added.

Due to the non-construction of dams, the per capita availability of water here had decreased four times in the last 50 years, the Commissioner said adding, after the construction of dam a huge amount of water could be saved from being lost during floods every year.

Rs 6492.480 million had been allocated for Dadhocha Dam being built at a distance of 25 km from Rawalpindi city, he informed.

Dadhocha Dam would have a gross storage capacity of 60,000-acre feet after "Pakistan is also one of the construction, the Commis-

IG Punjab directs to arrest professional criminals in Pindi

ISLAMABAD: The Government of Japan has provided an additional

amount of 760 million yen for a project titled "Installation of Weath-

Secretary, Ministry of Economic Affairs Dr. Kazim Niaz, and repre-

The objective of the project is to help improve the Pakistan Mete-

orological Department's capabilities in meteorological observation,

weather forecasting and dissemination of warnings through the instal-

sentative of the Embassy of Japan Ito Takeshi, signed the exchange

er Surveillance Radar" in Multan amounting to 2.042 billion yen.

notes on behalf of their governments in Islamabad.

lation of a sophisticated radar system.



RAWALPINDI: Inspector General of Police Punjab Dr. Usman Anwar on Tuesday directed the Rawalpindi Police officials to arrest professional criminals, active organized gangs and proclaimed offenders operating in the garrison city.

While chairing a meeting held here at the RPO office, the IGP said the negligence in the registration of cases on the part of Rawalpindi Police would not be tolerated. Regional Police Officer (RPO) Syed Khurram Ali, City Police Officer (CPO) Rawalpindi Syed Khalid Hamdani and other officers participated in the meeting.

Addressing the occasion, the IGP said that all issues related to police welfare should be monitored by the supervisory officers themselves and the district Police officers must ensure immediate measures for their redressal.

He said that the objectives of establishing protection centers should be ensured by all means. Punjab Police were prominent in terms of its best measures and performance, he added.

Earlier, as per the vision of IGP Punjab, a blood donation camp was organized at Police Lines Headquarters for the treatment of special children of police officials' families and affected by thalassemia. The $camp\ was\ organized\ with\ the\ support\ of\ philanthropist\ organizations$ Spring and Sundas Foundations.

In the medical camp, special children of police officers and constables were examined and various types of tests were conducted.

SP, Headquarters Maham Khan also distributed certificates of appreciation among doctors and their teams on the occasion. Agencies

Sherry Rehman condemns Imran Khan's allegations against govt

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Climate Change Senator, Sherry Rehman on Tuesday strictly condemned the allegations levelled by former prime minister and the PTI chairman Imran Khan of his murder plot against the government.

In a series of tweets, the Minister said Imran Khan was using different tactics to avoid court appearances

and charges. Senator Sherry Rehman queried, "Are their lives at risk only in the court premises? Is there no danger to his life in rallies and meetings?" She added that Imran Khan sought immunity from the court and accountability by using the excuse of security concerns. "Imran Khan will have to provide proof of murder charges against the government," she

"It can be, he (Imran), after sometime, claim that his statement was false information, urging them to 'political'," Sherry Rehman said. take responsibility for preventing



Promoting responsible journalism NA Speaker emphasizes media's

role in combating false information, ISLAMABAD: National Assembly Speaker Raja Pervaiz Ashraf on Tuesday emphasized the crucial role of media in combating the spread of dissemination of fake news to avoid harmful effects on society.

He congratulated the newly elected officials of All Pakistan Newspapers Society (APNS) and called for unbiased dissemination of information and urged media organizations to foster inclusion and tolerance.

The Speaker also highlighted the media's role in addressing economic the Finance Secretary of APNS. APP

(APNS) and their dedication to the development of media in the country.

He encouraged them to continue their efforts towards a vibrant and responsible media landscape that serves the interests of the people of Pakistan.

and social problems facing the coun-

try, combating moral decline, intoler-

The Speaker expressed optimism

about the newly elected officials of

the All Pakistan Newspapers Society

ance, and societal uncertainty.

He congratulated the newly elected officials of the APNS, including Naz Afrin Sehgal Lakhani as President, Sarmad Ali as Secretary General, Amtanan Shahid as Senior Vice President, and Muhammad Aslam Qazi as Vice President.

Additionally, SM Munir Jilani was congratulated for being elected as the Joint Secretary, and Shahab Zuberi was congratulated for being elected as

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Bureau Chief Lahore:

Asim Nazir Ahmad Naveed Ahmad Khan Saleem Zaman Khan. (mszk786@gmail.com Syed Afraz Ali Nazish

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0346-5008408 Whatsapp:

Nowruz is a cultural symbol of unity, joy, peace and love

owruz, which means "new day" in the Persian language, is the most important festival of the year in Iran. It is also one of the oldest festivals in the world. Millions of Iranians, regardless of their religion, race, faith or ethnicity, will on Tuesday celebrate this ancient and traditional Iranian festival. Nowruz, a pre-Islamic holiday, has been celebrated for nearly 3,000 years and marks the first day of spring, the rebirth of nature and victory over

Nowruz is considered to be a secular holiday that has roots in the Zoroastrian faith. Some of the most popular customs and traditions of Nowruz include Haft Sin, which represents seven symbols to celebrate the beginning of the Iranian new year. Seven different items that start with the same letter are arranged on a table: sabzeh (green sprouts from lentils, wheat, barely or citrus seeds) which symbolizes rebirth; serkeh (vinegar), which is a symbol of patience and immortality; seeb (apple), which is a sign of health and fertility; sumac, which represents compassion and love; seer (garlic), which is thought to protect the person from evil and affliction; senjed (silverberry), which also represents affection and love; and samanu, a brown-colored pudding made from wheat that is a symbol of abundance and affluence.

Nowruz is also celebrated by many Iranians abroad, as well as by many groups of people in several other countries along the Silk Road, including Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, India, Iran, Iraq, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Turkey, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. Nowruz was added to the UN-ESCO List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity in 2009. And the UN General Assembly proclaimed March 21 International Nowruz Day in 2010.

Finally, in Iran, Nowruz holidays go on for 13 days. Relatives and friends visit each other (the younger are expected to visit the elderly first, out of respect). Guests are offered tea, cookies, pastries, snacks, fresh and dried fruits, and mixed nuts. On the 13th day, known as Sizdah Bedar, families go outdoors for picnics. Playing pranks is also customary on Sizdah Bedar, similar to April Fool's Day. Many Iranians also travel to Fars Province in order to congregate at the tomb of Cyrus the Great.

Unfortunately, the economic situation of the country has placed financial pressure on many people. Azita, a school teacher and mother of three living in Tehran, said: "This is the second year that I cannot afford to entertain guests with fruits, pastries or mixed nuts. These are very expensive now. I can only offer tea. My family and parents never had such a financial problem in the past. I am very embarrassed. But many other people are in the same situation as well." One of the problems ordinary people face is that the value of Iran's currency has plummeted, falling as low as 500,000 rials to the US dollar. This has negatively impacted people's purchasing power. This is all happening while the unemployment rate and inflation are very high.

In summary, not only does Nowruz mark the first day of the year and spring in Iran, it is a cultural symbol of unity, joy, peace, love, health, strength and forgiveness. Happy Nowruz to all Iranians and those who celebrate it around the world. May the new year bring happiness, peace, love, health and strength to all.

20 years on from US-led invasion, Iraq still matters

Sir John Jenkins

esopotamia has always been a place where imperial fantasies go to die — and are just as perpetually reborn. As it happens, this year is not only the 20th anniversary of the US-led invasion of Iraq, on Sunday to be exact. It is also the 2,354th anniversary of the defeat of the Achaemenids by Alexander the Great at the Battle of Gaugamela; the 2,076th anniversary of the defeat and death of the Roman Triumvir Marcus Licinius Crassus at the hands of the Parthians at the Battle of Carrhae; the 1,660th anniversary of the defeat and death outside Samarra of the Roman Emperor Julian at the hands of the Sassanians; the 879th anniversary of the collapse of the Crusader state of Edessa at the hands of Nuruddin Al-Zengi; and the 106th anniversary of the capture of Baghdad from the Ottomans by Gen. Stanley Maude, on March 11 to be exact.

Over the past month or so, there has been a deluge of commentary on the aftermath of 2003. I have read most of them. And I have now just finished reading perhaps the most startling of them all an article in The Interpreter by Paul Bremer, the head of the Coalition Provisional Authority, appointed by President George W. Bush in 2003, entitled, "What Went Right in Iraq." It is a list of what Bremer believes to have been his and the CPA's great achievements. It is only a pity, I suppose, that we lack similar reflections

This was folly. But it was also folly to believe that an Iraqi social fabric that had been ripped apart by Saddam and by sanctions could simply be stitched back together again by military force, provincial reconstruction teams - often with little local knowledge — and the edicts of imperial proconsuls. On May 1, 2003, President Bush famously declared "Mission Accomplished." That was folly too. What followed was a vicious civil war, as a result of which Iran, which had originally been intimidated by the US show of force, emerged as the ultimate victor.

The irony is that a plurality of Iraqis in early 2003 had, in varying degrees, welcomed the US-led military intervention. They wanted something better and they certainly wanted an end to the socially destructive isolation in which they had lived for more than a decade. Even in 2010, the year that Nouri Al-Maliki stole the elections from Ayad Allawi, with US acquiescence, there was still a chance to salvage something from the wreckage. But having arrived in Iraq proclaiming the virtues of democracy, when Iraqis actually voted for change, the US decided that change was too risky. So much for liberal pieties.

This has, of course, had a damaging impact on the region. Whatever the virtues of successive Iraqi prime ministers (and virtue is often lacking), they do not govern the country. Hidden half out of sight, Iran and its ideological allies do. The corruption of sanctions has been replaced by the exploitative and extractive corruption from Darius, Crassus, Julian, Count Josceof its neighbors, Iran and Syria. And the also know that their country, whatever dor to Saudi Arabia until January 2015.

own country in 2003 — control the only instruments that matter: the bureaucracy and the army. If a new conflict with Iran happens, they will drag Iraq, like Lebanon, into it.

It has also had a massively damaging impact on Western politics. The cumulative loss of confidence in the inevitability of progression has caused a dramatic loss of faith in governments everywhere, notably in the US and the UK, but in practice more widely. Iraq was not the only cause: the financial crisis of 2007/8, the rise of China, the consequences of unchecked migration and the explosion of social media have all contributed. But the high hopes of the millennium, with the end of the Balkan Wars and the apparently inexorable global diffusion of social liberalism, have given way to a much darker mood. The catastrophe of Iraq is exhibit No. 1 for those who claim that governments should never be trusted.

Perhaps in the long run we shall see this simply as a welcome return to realism and a salutary humility about the possibility of shaping the world in our own image. Recent developments in the that empires fought over Mesopotamia. Gulf show that regional governments are beginning to make their own arrangements for security in the face of Western uncertainty.

If we hold our nerve, there is still much that we can do together. For Iraq is not vet so far gone that it cannot recover. There is deep resentment among many Iraqis about the way in which Iran has instrumentalized their weakness. And Iraqis

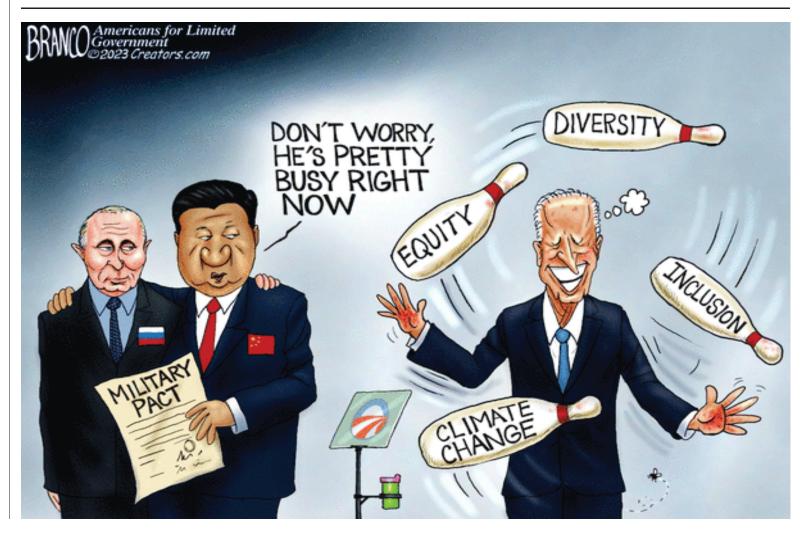
new Iraqi elites — often strangers to their its origins, remains central to the region as a whole. Mesopotamia is where the Arab, Persian and Turkish worlds meet, It is a gateway to the Indian Ocean and to Transcaucasia. All the great Abrahamic faiths belong there. It is the desert and the sown, the shrine cities of the south and the mountains of the north, all watered by the great river systems of the Tigris and the Euphrates.

The distinguished Iraqi social scientist Ali Al-Wardi wrote of the duality of Iraqi identity. It is now more like a plurality. And that makes Iraq special. But it needs support. Reintegrating Iraq into the wider Arab world, where it belongs, needs to take account of — and celebrate — that plurality. And it will take time and patience.

If others wish to loot Iraq and supply weapons to their proxies, those with Iraq's best interests at heart should instead build schools, hospitals, clinics, power plants and businesses. Make people's lives better, not worse. It will take decades. But it will be worth it. And that is the only way to give Iraq back its independence and its position as the keystone of regional security.

After all, there has always been a reason

Courtesy: Arab News Sir John Jenkins is a senior fellow at Policy Exchange. Until December 2017, he was corresponding director (Middle East) at the International Institute for Strategic Studies, based in Manama, Bahrain, and was a senior fellow at Yale University's Jackson Institute for Global Affairs. He was the British ambassa-



Real change between KSA, Iran would benefit all

Hassan Al-Mustafa

ver the past few months, during my visits to the Saudi capital, Riyadh, and my discussions with different people on the developments of the relationship between Saudi Arabia and Iran, I realized there was a general agreement that the Islamic Republic of Iran, a neighboring country, should have normal diplomatic relations with Saudi Arabia, that there is nothing against the Iranian people, and that the only way to resolve the existing differences is transparent and practical dialogue.

So, there is a prevailing agreement among important elites that good relations between Tehran and Riyadh are a Saudi interest in the first place, and that they would support the stability and security of the Arab Gulf and help to address the roots of regional tension. Without such relations, the region will continue to suffer from turmoil and security crises, which may develop into a direct armed confrontation, with dire consequences for everyone.

Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan expressed this Saudi conviction in an interview with Asharq Al-Awsat newspaper last week. He said: "We, in the Kingdom, hope to open a new chapter with Iran and bolster cooperation that would consolidate security and stability and push forward development and prosperity, not just in both our countries, but the entire region."

But why this Saudi position? In my opinion, there is a big project called Saudi Vision 2030 and, for this vision to succeed, it needs an atmosphere of security and economic stability. This vision cannot achieve its goals if tensions persist in the Arabian Gulf and acts of piracy, terrorism and the targeting of vital oil installations continue.

In addition, the Saudi government does not but rather it wants to invest in infrastructure and

projects such as NEOM, Qiddiya, Riyadh Air and The Red Sea project that will bring more tourists, create new jobs, contribute to advancing the local economy and diversify the Kingdom's sources of

Returning to the discussions that took place during my visits to Saudi Arabia, there was, as I indicated, a desire to solve problems with Iran. However, at the same time, there was a history of distrust due to the multiple centers of power in Iran on the one hand and its failure to abide by its commitments more than once on the other. This made supporters of dialogue prefer to slow down and ask whether the Iranian leaders were serious this time about reaching permanent good relations with Saudi Arabia.

It is not possible to predict what the Iranian leadership is thinking. However, what is certain is that the agreement announced in Beijing on March 10 between Saudi Arabia and Iran, under Chinese auspices, would not have taken place without a strong Iranian desire to ease tensions with neighboring countries.

It must have realized that, for years, it suffered from regional isolation, its economy declined and it lost much of its reputation, which reflected negatively on the internal situation, causing several social and economic disturbances.

Hassan Fahs, a Lebanese researcher specializing in Iranian affairs, said in an article published on the Independent Arabia website that the Iranian side "has reached an implicit conviction and recognition of the strategic mistake that the regime contributed to making about seven years ago, when it allowed some extremist groups to violate all diplomatic norms and international covenants that protect diplomatic representations and attack the Saudi embassy in the capital, Tehran, and its consulate in the city of Mashhad.

This attack complemented the support that Tehran was offering to the Houthi group in Yemen, want to deplete its budget with conflicts and wars, which posed a threat to the strategic and national security of Riyadh." Therefore, according to Fahs,

"Iranian officials, especially in the diplomatic apparatus, did not hesitate to confirm their serious desire to restore relations and resolve the dispute with Riyadh and resume diplomatic and political relations with it"

This analysis is consistent with the data of the current reality, especially since such a strategic step could not have taken place without the approval of Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei, who in turn entrusted the task of negotiation to the Supreme National Security Council and its Secretary-General Ali Shamkhani, who communicates directly with Khamenei.

This shows Khamenei's desire to follow the smallest details and prevent any interference that may obstruct the agreement, given his knowledge of the existence of revolutionary forces that have extremist rhetoric against Saudi Arabia.

This supreme political will in Iran will be effective if the IRGC adheres to the political decision and stops supporting armed militias and spy cells in the Gulf, or at least lifts the lid on the anti-Saudi groups in the region.

The non-compliance of all state institutions in Iran, including the IRGC, would harm the Saudi-Iranian agreement and impede the building of trust, which is the basis for any future development or cooperation.

The Arab Gulf region has suffered greatly in recent years from security incidents and racist and sectarian rhetoric. Citizens in different countries, particularly Saudi Arabia and Iran, want to live in peace and therefore it is necessary to work for the success of dialogue and push for a real change in the relationship, which would be in the interest of

Courtesy: Arab News Hassan Al-Mustafa is a Saudi writer and researcher interested in Islamic movements, the development of religious discourse and the relationship between the Gulf Cooperation Council states and Iran.

Govt flexing muscles to manage power supply in summer - I

Raziq Ali Shah

esaidover 150,000 industrial and commercial consumers were being shifted to Advanced Metering Infrastructure (AMI) System by June to control power pilferage by ensuring round-the-clock monitoring of meters.

The minister informed that bidding process for installing 1-4MW Solar Micro-Grid stations in rural areas is also on cards as the government has already waived sales tax and duties on the purchase of solar panels. "Easy loans were also being disbursed among the people for installing solar panels on minimum interest rate."

As the Prime Minister has already inaugurated 1,100 MW K-3 nuclear power plant in Karachi (KANUP) completed with the assistance from China, the government has also embarked on number of initiatives like cutting short the business time, replacement of inefficient electricity equipments, solarization, reduce energy consumption at the government buildings, awareness campaigns and approval of Conservation Policy.

An overview of the measures reveal that solarization of the government entities would save 300 to 500 MW per month, massively

slashing the fuel import bill. Under the National Energy Conservation Plan, judicious utilization of energy would be ensured and early closure of restaurants, hotels, and markets and production of incan-

descent light bulbs and inefficient electricity

fans would help the government save around Rs62 billion annually.

Production of inefficient electricity fans will be stopped from 1st July as they alone consume 12,000MW electricity. Additional duties would be levied on production of such fans to save Rs15 billion. Moreover, stopping production of incandescent light bulbs from 1st February is also helping out the government by saving Rs22 billion.

Usage of streetlights is also being curtailed to 50%, hoping to save Rs 92 billion while all government institutions will install efficient devices to save electricity.

Around 30% reduction in electricity consumption at the government institutions has also been announced while the Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority would ensure energy saving campaign

through TV and radio channels. The government has also released Rs 48.560 billion for different projects of National Transmission and Despatch Company (NTDC) and Pakistan Electric Supply Company (PEPCO) under annual Public Sector Development Program (PSDP) during the eight months of the current fiscal

According to the Planning Commission, the government had allocated Rs 42.983 billion for various NTDC/PEPCO projects with Rs 20.773 billion foreign aid component. A sum of Rs 42.566 billion has been spent so far on various projects with Rs 35.120 billion disbursed under foreign aid component till December 2022.

Concluded

China, Russia vow to deepen coop, strengthen coordination

Energy cooperation is an important cornerstone of practical cooperation of the two countries

Jinping and his Russian counterpart, Vladimir Putin, have vowed during a coordination on multilateral platforms and in international affairs.

Xi arrived in the Russian capital on Monday afternoon for a state visit through Wednesday. When Xi reached the Kremlin, he was greeted by the Kremlin Commandant at the alighting of 200 billion dollars set by the two prespoint. Putin warmly shook hands and took photos with Xi. Earlier in the day, the Chinese leader was welcomed by Russian Deputy Prime Minister Dmitry Chernyshenko and other senior Russian officials by the ramp upon arrival at the Moscow Vnukovo Airport.

It is Xi's first visit to a foreign country this year, and also the first one since his reelection as Chinese president earlier this month.

Noting that he was pleased to pay another state visit to Russia at the invitation of Putin, the Chinese president said that Russia was the first country he visited after he was elected president 10 years ago and memories from that visit remain fresh today.

Putin extended a warm welcome to Xi for his state visit to Russia and once the quality and quantity of investment again warmly congratulated him on his reelection as Chinese president.

Over the past 10 years, the two leaders have stayed in close contact. In a signed article published Monday on Russia's newspaper Russian Gazette and the website of RIA Novosti news agency ahead of the visit, Xi recalled that "over the years, I have maintained a close working relationship with Pres-

MOSCOW: Chinese President Xi bilateral and international occasions."

Under their guidance, China-Russia relationship is thriving meeting here to further deepen bilat- with new dynamism and vitality. The eral practical cooperation, and step up past years have witnessed such booming cooperation areas as economy, trade and energy. Take two-way trade. Over the past decade, bilateral trade has surged from less than 90 billion U.S. dollars in 2013 to more than 190 billion dollars last year, and is approaching the target idents.

> In addition to the fast expansion in volume, the trade structure has also been continuously optimized. Exports of automobiles and spare parts from China to Russia have increased rapidly in recent years. By the end of last year, the number of automobile dealers of Chinese brands in Russia had climbed to 1,041. Meanwhile, quality Russian products like chocolate, ice cream, honey, flour and alcohol have become more widely available for Chinese

> Energy cooperation is an important cornerstone of practical cooperation of the two countries. Russia is now one of China's leading energy suppliers.

> "Our two sides need to raise both and economic cooperation and step up policy coordination to create favorable conditions for the high-quality development of our investment cooperation," X urged in the signed article.

In the eyes of the Chinese leader, there is a profound historical logic for China-Russia relationship to reach

The two countries should further ident Putin. We have met 40 times on deepen practical cooperation in varithe Chinese president's visit, bilater-



ous fields and strengthen coordination al ties will grow deeper to benefit the and collaboration on multilateral platforms such as the United Nations to boost their respective national development and rejuvenation, and be a bulwark for world peace and stability, Xi said during Monday's meeting.

His remarks were echoed by the Russian president. With concerted efforts by both sides, Russia-China relations in recent years have delivered fruitful results in various areas, Putin said, adding that Russia stands ready to continue to deepen bilateral practical cooperation, step up communication and collaboration in international affairs, and promote world multi-polarity and greater democracy in international relations.

In the signed article, Xi described his visit to Russia as "a journey of friendship, cooperation and peace." Russian officials and scholars believe that with people of the two countries and the world at large.

The Russian people respect President Xi very much and eagerly look forward to the old friend's visit, said Galina Kulikova, first deputy chairperson of the Russia-China Friendship Association. Kulikova has been engaged in Russian-Chinese public diplomacy for more than 65 years and was awarded the Friendship Medal, China's highest state honor. She said that Xi's visit shows that China attaches great importance to bilateral relations and will promote practical cooperation between the two

Russia and China have set an example for relationship between major countries, said Vasily Kashin, director of the Center for Comprehensive European and International Studies of Russia's National Research University-Higher School of Economics.

efficient, responsible and future-oriented, have played a stabilizing role in international affairs," he said.

During the meeting, the Chinese leader noted that Russia will hold the presidential election next year, and under Putin's strong leadership, Russia has made good progress in development and rejuvenation. Xi said he is confident that the Russian people will continue to give firm support to Putin.

Xi's visit also comes at a time when the Ukraine crisis is grinding on. During Monday's meeting, the two sides had an in-depth exchange of views on the Ukraine issue

Xi stressed that, on the Ukraine issue, voices for peace and rationality are building. Most countries support easing tensions, stand for peace talks, and are against adding fuel to the fire. A review of history shows that conflicts in the end have to be settled through dialogue and negotiation.

China released a document on its position on the Ukraine crisis, advocating the political settlement of the crisis and rejecting the Cold War mentality and unilateral sanctions, said Xi.

China believes that the more difficulties there are, the greater the need to keep space for peace. The more acute the problem is, the more important it is not to give up efforts for dialogue. China will continue to play a constructive role in promoting the political settlement of the Ukraine issue, said Xi.

For his part, Putin said that Russia appreciates China for consistently upholding an impartial, objective, and balanced position and standing for fairness and justice on major internation- crisis, he said. Xinhua

"Russia-China relations, which are al issues, Russia has carefully studied China's position paper on the political settlement of the Ukraine issue and is open to talks for peace. Russia welcomes China to play a constructive role in this

The position paper mentioned by the two leaders was released last month by the Chinese Foreign Ministry to push forward the political settlement of the Ukraine crisis.

In the paper, China put forward a 12-point proposal to end the crisis by addressing both the symptoms and the root causes of the issue, and reiterated the necessity to end the crisis through dialogue and negotiation.

The peace proposal, since being offered, has been welcomed by many countries of the international community. Stephane Dujarric, spokesman for UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, hailed the position paper as "an important contribution."

Saeb Rawashdeh, a political analyst at the Jordan Press Foundation, said that on the first anniversary of the escalation of the crisis, China released the document expounding its position on the issue, hoping to promote an early resolution of the crisis through peaceful dialogue.

China's stance is in line with the universal expectations of peace-loving people around the world, he said.

As Wang Wenbin, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson, told a news briefing Monday, China always stands on the side of peace and dialogue, and on the right side of history. China will continue to play a constructive role in the political settlement of the Ukraine

Scientists mull building underwater telescope

BEIJING: Chinese scien- is constantly bombarded Chen believes that neutritists are working on a blue- by energetic particles from no detection could trace the print for a gigantic telescope outer space called cosmic to observe neutrinos, one of rays. In 2021, China's Large the most abundant particles High-Altitude Air Showin the universe, from deep er Observatory (LHAAwithin the seas or lakes.

have a roughly 30-cubic-kilo- to come from the same sunlight penetrates the darkmeter volume, will be submerged to a depth of more than 1 km, said Chen lar hypothesis is that the Mingjun, lead researcher of high-energy neutrinos and the project at the Institute of gamma rays are potential-High Energy Physics under ly produced simultaneous-

The aim of building such The particles are thought to cosmic rays," said Chen. be produced outside the solar of the origin of cosmic rays.

In the early 1900s, scientists discovered that Earth hints at this possibility, and

SO) detected 12 sources of

Chen said one popurays originate.

"If we can detect the two n underwater telescope is to particles together, we can ter neutrino detectors include detect high-energy neutrinos. determine the origin of the the cubic-kilometer-scale

When passing through the system. According to Chen, water, neutrinos will collide detecting the neutrinos that with the atomic nucleus and pass through the telescope produce secondary particles, will contribute to solving a emitting light signals that century-old scientific puzzle can be captured by detectors underwater.

Some research already

origin of this mystery space radiation.

As to why scientists deploy the telescope deep in the water, Chen said from The facility, designed to gamma rays that are thought 1 km below the surface, no ness; and since photosynthesis can not take place, there are no fish or microorganisms, either.

"The clean water will help increase the chance of detectthe Chinese Academy of lywhen high-energy cosmic ing neutrino signals," Chen Similar foreign underwa-

IceCube Neutrino Observatory, deployed near the South tain, Chen said, adding Pole, and the Baikal-GVD neutrino telescope, currently covering 0.5 cubic kilometers in Lake Baikal.

The planned Chinese detector will be much larger, Chen said. "It will be a 30-cubic-kilometer detec-

tor comprising over 55,000 optical modules suspended along 2,300 strings."

In February, his team completed the first sea trial to test the detecting system at a depth of 1,800 meters underwater. Most members of Chen's

team have spent years in the study of cosmic rays. They have participated in the project LHAASO, a giant cosmic ray detector located 4.41 km above sea level in southwest China's Sichuan However, hunting extra-

terrestrial neutrinos from deep water is more problematic than on the mounthat current challenges his team faces include developing detectors to meet higher requirements on waterproofing, as well as the high costs of underwater equipment and operations. Xinhua

London lights up with Ramadan decorations

LONDON: London's West End has been decorated to celebrate the holy month of Ramadan for the first time in history. The famous district of the UK capital has been decked out with fanoos lanterns and lights in the shape of crescent moons and stars, with the words "Happy Ramadan" erected on Coventry Street between Piccadilly and Leicester Square, to usher in the start of the holy month.

The area is popular among tourists from the Gulf and large segments of the city's Muslim population which makes up around 15 percent of the total - due to its internationally renowned shopping opportunities, restaurants and entertainment venues. Visitor numbers tend to surge during the holy month which has led to it being dubbed the 'Ramadan Rush."

News of London's new Ramadan-inspired decorations came days after the Royal Mint, the official manufacturer of the UK's coinage, issued a new gold bullion bar depicting the Kaaba in Makkah., the holiest site in Islam, at a price of £1,156.22 (\$1,414.43) per bar. Arab

US speeds up Abrams tank delivery to Ukraine war zone



WASHINGTON: The Pentagon is speeding up its delivery of Abrams tanks to Ukraine, opting to send a refurbished older model that can be ready faster, with the aim of getting the 70-ton battle powerhouses to the war zone in eight to 10 months, US officials told The Asso-

The original plan was to send Ukraine 31 of the newer M1A2 Abrams, which could have taken a year or two to build and ship. But officials said the decision was made to send the older MIAI version, which can be taken from Army stocks and will be easier for Ukrainian forces to learn to use and maintain.

The officials spoke on Tuesday on the condition of anonymity because the plan has not yet been publicly announced. Pentagon officials are expected to make the announcement soon.

The Biden administration announced in January that it would send the tanks to Ukraine — after insisting for months that they were too complicated and too hard to maintain and repair. The decision was part of a broader political maneuver that opened the door for Germany to announce it would send its Leopard 2 tanks to Ukraine and allow Poland and other allies to do the same.

It's unclear how soon the US would begin training Ukrainian forces on how to use, maintain and repair the tanks. That training pipeline could affect the amount of time it takes for the tanks to be used in battle. The Pentagon will also have to ensure that Ukrainian forces have an adequate supply chain for all the parts needed to keep the tanks running. AP

along Islamic lines. Kenya says 238 protesters arrested, 31 police hurt The international community has made the right to education for women

NAIROBI: Kenyan police said Tuesday they had arrested 238 people during the previous day's violent protests over the surging cost of living that also saw 31 police officers injured.

Protesters had joined demonstrations in Nairobi and other parts of Kenya on Monday in response to a call by veteran opposition leader Raila Odinga for a day of action against the government of President William Ruto. Police fired tear gas and water cannon against demonstrators, some of whom were hurling rocks and burning tires, as well as Odinga's motorcade.

It was the worst violence since Ruto took office six months ago after narrowly beating Odinga in an election his defeated rival claims

The inspector general of police, Japhet Koome, said in a statement that 213 people were arrested in Nairobi and 24 officers injured.

Afghanistan school year starts but no classes held

KABUL: Afghanistan's schools reopened education was given to us by our prin-Tuesday for the new academic year, but no classes were held as students were unaware of the start and hundreds of thousands of teenage girls remain barred from attending class.

Afghanistan is the only country in the going to secondary school.

Taliban authorities have imposed an austere interpretation of Islam since the withdrawal of the US-led foreign forces that backed the previous govern-

The education ministry made no public announcement of the reopening of schools, several teachers and officials said.

"A letter issued by the minister of

cipal to reopen the school today, but since no public announcement was made, no students came," said Mohammad Osman Atavi, a teacher at the Saidal Naseri Boys High School in Kabul. AFP journalists toured seven schools

world where girls are prohibited from in Kabul and saw only a few teachers and primary students arriving — but no classes were held. Schools also reopened in provinc-

storming to power in August 2021 after es including Herat, Kunduz, Ghazni and Badakhshan but no lessons were held there either, AFP correspondents reported.

Tuesday's start of the new academic year coincided with Nowruz, the Persian New Year, celebrated widely in Afghanistan before the Taliban returned to power but now unacknowledged by

the country's new rulers.

Hundreds of thousands of teenage girls meanwhile remain barred from secondary school.

"The Taliban have snatched everything away from us," said 15-yearold Sadaf Haidari, a resident of Kabul who should have started grade 11 this

"I am depressed and broken."

The ban on girls' secondary education came into effect in March last year, iust hours after the education ministry reopened schools for both girls and boys.

Taliban leaders — who have also banned women from university education — have repeatedly claimed they will reopen secondary schools for girls once "conditions" have been met, from obtaining funding to remodeling the syllabus

a key condition in negotiations over aid and recognition of the Taliban govern-

No country has officially recognized the Taliban as Afghanistan's legitimate

Afghanistan under the Taliban government is the "most repressive country in the world" for women's rights, the United Nations has said.

Women have been effectively squeezed out of public life — removed from most government jobs or are paid a fraction of their former salary to stay at home.

They are also barred from going to parks, fairs, gyms and public baths, and must cover up in public. AFP

Ethiopia rejects US war crime allegations as 'inflammatory'

ADDIS ABABA: Ethiopia's peace deal between the feder- Department also found crimes government on Tuesday accused the United States of unfairly apportioning blame for crimes committed during the two-year Tigrayan conflict.

"partisan," the foreign ministry said, adding: "The US statement is inflammatory."

Washington on Monday accused all parties to the conflict of committing war crimes.

But it singled out Ethiopian, Eritrean and regional Amhara forces for crimes against humanity, without mention-

ing the Tigrayan rebels. US Secretary of State Antony Blinken, who last week made his first visit to Ethiopia since a breakthrough November 2022

al government and Tigrayan rebels, on Monday made a forceful call for accountability on his return to Washington.

He said the State Depart-The US allegations were ment carried out a "careful review of the law and the facts" and concluded that war crimes were committed by federal troops from both Ethiopia and its ally Eritrea as well as by the rebel Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) and forces from the neighboring Amhara region.

"Many of these actions were not random or a mere byproduct of war. They were calculated and deliberate," Blinken said as he presented an annual rights

Blinken added that the State

against humanity by Ethiopian, Eritrean and Amhara forces, including killings and sexual violence, although he did not mention the TPLF.

Ethiopia's foreign ministry said the US statement "unfairly apportions blame among different parties in the conflict."

"The statement appears to exonerate one party from certain allegations of human rights violations such as rape and other forms of sexual violence despite the clear and overwhelming evidence about

its culpability," it said. "This partisan and divisive approach from the US is ill-advised," it added, calling it "unwarranted."

TPLF officials did not respond to AFP requests to comment about the US report. Blinken had called for

accountability during his trip to Addis Ababa, where he held an unusually long meeting with Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed and spoke separately with senior TPLF leader Getachew Reda.

But he did not directly mention war crimes or crimes against humanity and sounded upbeat about the prospects for peace during his visit.

The war badly soured US relations with Ethiopia, Africa's second most populous nation and long one of Washington's major partners on the

Abiy had earlier voiced anger



when Blinken during the war On Tuesday, the foreign spoke more generally about ministry said Washington's crimes against humanity, and statement "undercuts the the Ethiopian leader has rejectsupport of the US for an inclued UN-led efforts for a probe. sive peace process."

people died in the two-year conflict, making it one of the deadliest wars of the 21st century and dwarfing the toll from Russia's invasion of Ukraine. The war began in November 2020 when the TPLF, once the

The United States has esti-

mated that some 500,000

major powerbroker in Ethiopia, attacked military installations in the Tigray, triggering a major counteroffensive.

As allegations of atrocities mounted, the US imposed sanctions on Eritrea, an authoritarian state whose relations with Washington were already poor, and booted Ethiopia from a major trade pact, although it held back on further actions against the warring parties. AFP

Bull & Bears PSX 100-Share

Index Fluctuation		
Pakistan: PSX 100-Share Index		
Current	Prev. Close	
40,877.98	40,918.45	
Day's High	Day's Low:	
40,990.12	40,696.74	
Index Value	Change	
3,154,153,679	-40.47	
Percentage	Time	
-0.1%	21 Mar, 2023 5:00 pm	
Europe: FTS	E 100 Index	
Index Value	Change	
7,542.21	+138.36	
Percentage	Time	
+1.87%	21 Mar, 4:18 pm GMT	
USA: Dow Jones I	ndustrial Average	
Index Value	Change	
32,409.73	+165.15	
Percentage	Time	

Open Market Forex Rates

Asia Pacific: Nikkei Stocks Average

GMT-4

Change

-388.12

Time

20 Mar, 3:15 pm

GMT+9

+0.51%

Index Value

26,945.67

Percentage

-1.42%

Currency	Buying	Selling
Australian Dollar	187	189.4
Bahrain Dinar	749.76	757.76
Canadian Dollar	207.5	209.7
China Yuan	40.91	41.31
Danish Krone	40.59	40.99
Euro	301	304
Hong Kong Dollar	35.9	36.25
Indian Rupee	3.41	3.52
Japanese Yen	2.06	2.11
Kuwaiti Dinar	919.58	928.58
Malaysian Ringgit	62.85	63.45
NewZealand \$	176.66	178.66
Norwegians Krone	26.33	26.63
Omani Riyal	732.14	740.14
Qatari Riyal	77.42	78.12
Saudi Riyal	75.4	76.2
Singapore Dollar	208	210
Swedish Korona	26.5	26.8
Swiss Franc	304.1	306.6
Thai Bhat	8.26	8.41
U.A.E Dirham	77.2	78
UK Pound Sterling	344.5	348
US Dollar	283.7	286.5

Gold prices decrease by Rs.3100 to Rs. 204,100 per tola



ISLAMABAD: The per tola price of 24 karat gold decreased by Rs.3100 and was sold at Rs. 204,200 on Tuesday against its sale at Rs. 207,300 the previous day, All Sindh Sarafa Jewellers Association report-

The price of 10 grams of 24 karat gold also decreased by Rs. 2658 to Rs.175,068 from Rs. 177,726, whereas the price of 10 grams 22 karat gold went down to Rs.160,480 from Rs.162,916.

The price of per tola silver decreased by Rs.50 to Rs2,200 whereas that of ten-gram silver went down by Rs.42.86 to 1,886.14 respectively.

The price of gold in the international market dipped by US\$14 to \$1968 against its sale at \$1982, the association reported.

ECC approves technical grant for Kuwait Petroleum Company

 $Ministry\ of\ Energy\ (Petroleum\ Division)\ submitted\ a\ summary\ on\ the\ credit\ facility\ from\ Kuwait$

Staff Reporter

ISLAMABAD: Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) of the Cabinet on Tuesday approved technical supplementary grant of Rs27 billion for Kuwait Petroleum Company.

The ECC met here with Minister for Finance and Revenue Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar in chair. Minister for Power Khurram Dastgir Khan, Minister for Industries and Production Syed Murtaza Mahmud, Minister of State for Petroleum Musadik Masood Malik, SAPM on Finance Tariq Bajwa, SAPM on Revenue Tariq Mehmood Pasha, federal secretaries and other senior officers attended the meeting, said a press

Ministry of Energy (Petroleum Division) submitted a summary on the credit facility from Kuwait and presented that the Government of Pakistan is utilizing a credit facility extended by Kuwait Petroleum Corporation



the term contract with PSO since 2000 and the term contract is extended every year.

The PSO deposits Rupee equivalent with the National Bank of Pakistan (NBP) after 30 days from the bill of lading date of each

(KPC) against the supply of Diesel Oil under shipment and NBP transfers the cargo cost to KPC, Kuwait,

> In the current situation, this account has witnessed huge exchange losses due to price rationalization in consultation with upheaval in the rupee-dollar parity during stakeholders concerned for consideration of

committed to cover these exchange losses. Considering the above situation, the ECC approved an immediate technical supplementary grant of Rs. 27 billion for Kuwait Petroleum Company.

The ECC considered a summary of Ministry of Kashmir Affairs and Gilgit-Baltistan on Wheat supply to Gilgit-Baltistan and approved immediate release of 25,000 metric tons to GB for the months of March and April, 2023 to avoid shortage of wheat in the region,

especially during the holy month of Ramazan. Keeping in view the current wheat price, the ECC granted an additional amount of Rs 2.9 billion through Technical Supplementary Grant to meet urgent requirement of Gilgit- Baltistan.

The ECC further directed the Ministry of KA&GB to submit a comprehensive plan for the last 12 months and the government is the ECC within 30 days.

Export of sports goods up by 18.28%

Staff Reporter

ISLAMABAD: The export of sports goods from the country witnessed an increase of 18.28 percent during the eight months of the current financial year (2022-23) as compared to the export of corresponding months of last year.

The country exported sports goods worth US\$ 270.158 million during July-February (2022-23) as opposed to the export of US\$ 228.400 million during July-February (2021-22), showing growth of 18.28 percent, according to the data released by the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS).

Among the sports products, the exports of footballs rose by 35.70 percent, surging from US\$ 114.521 million last year to US\$ 155.400 million during the current year.

The gloves exports, however, dropped by 6.28 percent by going down from US\$ 50.615 million last year to US\$ 47.435 million during the current year, the PBS

Likewise, the exports of all other sports goods increased by 6.42 percent to US\$ 67.322 million from US\$ 63. 263 million last year.

20.19 percent in February 2023 as opposed commodities by 13.10 percent.



to the export of the same month of last year.

The sports goods exports in February 2023 were recorded at US\$ 28.352 million against exports of US\$ 35.526 million in February 2022.

During the period under review, the export of footballs and gloves decreased by 23.30 and 33.86 percent respectively, whereas the exports of all other sports products also witnessed a nominal decline of 2.08 percent.

Meanwhile, on a month-on-month basis, the exports of sports goods decreased by 15.10 percent during February 2023, in contrast to the exports of US\$ 33.393 million in January 2023, the PBS data revealed.

On a month-on-month basis, the exports of footballs and gloves decreased by 11.080 Meanwhile, on a year-on-year basis, the and 31.12 percent respectively, in addition sports goods export witnessed a decrease of to the drop in the exports of other sports

UNDP delegation calls on Dar

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar Tuesday held a meeting with Resident Representative, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Knut Ostby and his team.

SAPM on Finance Tariq Bajwa, SAPM on Revenue Tariq Mehmood Pasha, Haroon Sharif, Sr. Adviser UNDP, Ammara Durrani, Assistant resident representative UNDP, Secretary Finance and senior officers from Finance Division attended the meeting, said a press release issued here. The UNDP team briefed the finance minister on the ongoing institutional arrangements being made by UNDP regarding the Climate Resilient Pakistan rehabilitation and recovery plan of action in flood-affected areas.

The UNDP team further extended support to the government in mobilizing financing for development in flood-affected areas and technical expertise for mobilizing SDG investments and climate financing for development.

Finance Minister Senator Muhammad Ishaq Dar welcomed the UNDP team and appreciated UNDP for being a great partner in taking flood relief measures in Pakistan and welcomed the financial proposals for unlocking Geneva pledges.

The Finance Minister also appreciated the key role of UNDP as development partner in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). APP

BISP Board approves new payment model for beneficiaries

Staff Reporter

ISLAMABAD: Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) Board on Tuesday approved a new payment model for beneficiaries by opening accounts in banks.

This was decided in the 58th Board meeting of BISP, chaired by Federal Minister for Poverty Alleviation and Social Safety and Chairperson of the program Shazia Marri in Karachi.

The Benazir Kafalat beneficiaries will soon be able to receive directly their quarterly payments by opening accounts in the banks of their own choice. The pilot of this new

payment model will be introduced in four selected districts of the country.

project, beneficiaries all over the country would be able to open up their accounts in banks of their choice.

The BISP board approved

to increase the quarterly stipend from seven thousand to eight thousand seven hundred and fifty rupees. The board also gave approval to a proposal of using

mobile units for registration of people in Balochistan and other remote areas. Chairman NADRA Tariq Malik was asked to make

extra efforts to help people make CNIC cards in remote areas of Balochistan. Further, the BISP Board approved an internship programme for fresh gradu-

ates of universities intending to gain experience through working with the Benazir After the success of the pilot Income Support Programme.

Birds' nests on sale

ISLAMABAD: Vendors are displaying birds nest along the roadside to attract the customers at G-8,



Soyabean, palm oil imports grow 148.67%, 9.87 pc

bean and palm oil into the country during the first eight months of the current financial year increased by 148.67 percent and 9.87 percent respectively as compared to the imports of the corresponding period of last year.

During the period from July-February 2022-23, the imports of soyabean oil into the country recorded about 148.67 percent positive growth as over 140,120 metric tonnes of the above-mentioned commodity costing \$203.578 million was imported for fulfilling the local requirements as opposed to the imports of 62,750 metric tonnes valuing \$81.866 million of the same period last year.

Meanwhile, over 2.151 million metric tonnes of palm oil worth \$2.681 billion were also imported during the period under review as against the imports of about 2.037 million metric tonnes valuing \$2.440 billion in the same period last year. According to the data

by the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, food group

ISLAMABAD: The imports into the country of edible oil including soya- during the first eight months of the current financial year grew by 3.

98 percent as food commodities costing \$6.687 billion were imported as compared to the imports of \$6.431 billion of the same period last year.

On the other hand, exports of food commodities from the country during the period under review registered 6.08 percent negative growth and reached \$3.226 billion in July-February 2022,23 as opposed to \$3.434 billion in the same period last year.

However, the imports of tea decreased by 6.45 percent, dry fruit and nuts by 43.43 percent, whereas the imports of spices also reduced by 34.31 percent as compared to the imports of the same period last year.

During the period under review about 159,562 metric tonnes of tea costing \$396.499 million were imported as compared to the imports of 177,613 metric tonnes valuing \$423.857 million in the same period last vear. APP

Cryptoverse

Bitcoin successfully passes banking crisis stress test

of stocks and bonds, bitcoin is suddenly looking like a safe haven. The infamously volatile cryptocurrency seems positively hale and hearty, just as a banking meltdown drives markets into the arms of a recession.

Bitcoin has risen 21% this month, while a choppy S&P 500 has lost 1.4% and gold has

"If you were going to describe an environment where there were successive bank runs because central banks are trying to fight inflation with fast rate increases, that is pretty close to as spoton a thesis for owning bitcoin as you've ever heard," said Stéphane Ouellette, CEO at digital asset investment platform FRNT Financial.

 $The \ cryptocurrency \ has, for \ now, severed \ its$ ties with stocks and bonds and tagged on to a rally in gold, fulfilling at least one part of creator Satoshi Nakamoto's dream-that bitcoin can

LONDON: As crisis stalks the traditional world serve as a refuge for suffering investors.

Bitcoin's 30-day correlation with the S&P 500 has slid to negative 0.12 over the past week, where a measure of 1 indicates the two assets are moving in lockstep.

A selloff in banks has wiped out hundreds of billions of dollars in market value and forced US regulators to launch emergency measures. The past couple of weeks have seen Silicon Valley Bank and crypto lender Silvergate go under, while Credit Suisse has teetered on the brink.

Let's not be carried away, though. This is "The bearish argument would be that these dynamics are temporary, and ultimately this

rally is not going to sustain," said Ouellette. It remains to be seen if bitcoin's bullishness will endure as attention shifts to the Federal Reserve's policy meeting this week where the

U.S. central bank must walk a fine line as it

fights inflation and bank stresses. Furthermore, the cryptocurrency's allure

hasn't all been about safety.

The rapid price rise has forced some short-sellers to cut their bets and buy coins back. Data from Coinglass shows traders liquidated \$300 million worth of crypto positions on Monday, with most of that total-\$178.5 million-short positions.

Nonetheless, bitcoin is resurgent.

It now commands nearly 43% of the total crypto market, its highest share since last June, according to CoinMarketCap data, while the total cryptocurrency market's capitalization has jumped 23% to \$1.1 billion since March 10.

"We're seeing a return to bitcoin's core ethos, that of a financial asset independent from the opacity and meddling of the centralized financial system," said Henry Elder, head of decentralized finance (DeFi) at digital asset invest-



ment manager Wave Digital Assets.

The mainstream bank crisis has also fueled some interest in DeFi, with the total value of tokens linked to such platforms rising to \$49 billion from \$43 billion over the past week, according to DappRadar.

Not all areas of the digital world have been immune to the banking fallout, though. The no. 2 stablecoin Circle USD or USDC lost its 1:1 peg to the dollar after disclosing its reserves were parked at the shuttered Silicon Valley Bank. As worries spread over USDC's ability to

maintain its peg, its market cap slid to \$36.8 billion last Friday from \$43.8 billion a week earlier, even as leading stablecoin Tether gained around \$4 billion.

Market participants said some USDC withdrawals were likely reinvested in bitcoin as well, helping fuel the rally.

"It's too soon to say that bitcoin has proven the narrative that it's an alternative in a banking crisis," cautioned Ed Hindi, Chief Investment

Officer at Tyr Capital in Geneva. But he added: "The rally we are currently witnessing in bitcoin will be looked back at as the point in time where its main property as a decentralized non-sovereign asset was stress tested." Reuters

Afghanistan recall Nabi for T20I series against Pakistan

The series, marked to be first multi-match bilateral series between these sides, will begin on March 24

ISLAMABAD: Afghanistan on Tuesday announced a 17-member squad with three reserve players for their threematch T20I home series against Pakistan, commencing this week in Sharjah.

Rashid Khan will lead a side that has some familiar names, including former skipper Mohammad Nabi, who had stepped down as captain after the 2022 ICC Men's T20 World Cup. However, senior batters Rahmat Shah and Hazratullah Zazai were not considered for the squad.

The 37-year-old Nabi, was dropped for the series against UAE where the ODI mainstay Rahmat Shah earned a call-up to the T20I side. However, Shah was dropped from the squad for the Pakistan series without making his T20I debut.

"Our team has been working hard in training camp and selectors have selected the best available players for the series," Afghanistan Cricket Board CEO Naseeb Khan said as quoted by the ICC on its



"I am confident that our team will see them emerge victorious." perform at their best and make our

Nabi, a veteran of 104 T20Is, returns nation proud. We wish our team the to the squad. Qais Ahmad, Darwish best of luck for the series and hope to Rasooli and Mohammad Saleem, who

were part of the UAE series, do not feature in the squad.

The series, marked to be the first multi-match bilateral series between these sides, will begin on March 24.

"We look forward to an exciting competition between two great teams. Both nations have passionate fans who support their teams with enthusiasm and pride," Naseeb Khan said.

"As neighbors, we have a special bond and we hope to showcase not only our cricketing skills but also the spirit of friendship and sportsmanship," he

Afghanistan Squad: Rashid Khan (c), Rahmanullah Gurbaz (wk), Ibrahim Zadran, Usman Ghani, Sediqullah Atal, Najibullah Zadran, Afsar Zazai, Karim Janat, Mohammad Nabi, Azmatullah Omarzai, Gulbadin Naib, Sharafuddin Ashraf, Noor Ahmad, Mujeeb Ur Rehman, Fareed Ahmad, Fazalhaq Faroogi and Naveen Ul Haq.

Reserve players: Nangyal Kharoti, Zahir Khan and Nijat Masoud. APF

Japan beat Mexico to reach World Baseball Classic final

MIAMI: Japan came from behind twice to defeat Mexico 6-5 and set up a World Baseball Classic final showdown with the United States.

Munetaka Murakami drove in a walk-off two-run double in the bottom of the ninth inning after Japan superstar Shohei Ohtani launched a late rally that capped a thrilling duel at Miami's LoanDepot Park.

Japan, who trailed 3-0 and 5-3 during Monday's semi, now advance to a mouthwatering final against the star-studded USA in Miami

on Tuesday. Japan manager Hideki Kuriyama said after the win he had always believed in his players to dig themselves out

"I know the more important the game it is, I think the last players become the more have been the most consistcritical," Kuriyama said of the ent side in this year's tourna-

ninth inning rally. always the chance at the end, to Monday's semi-final. no matter how the game

plays out." Mexico counterpart Benji Gil meanwhile saluted the

"We have to take off our les Angels' Patrick Sandov-

hats to the Japanese team,"

"Neither team deserved to lose, but someone had to win. Both teams had a great performance. I think that Japan moves on, but the world of baseball won today."

Japan are chasing a record third World Baseball Classic crown after winning the tournament in 2006 and 2009.

The Asian powerhouses ment, averaging more than

But for extended periods Japan scoreless. it looked as if Mexico were ready to score an upset.

A superb pitching performance from the Los Ange-

al stymied Japan's vaunted

offensive power through the

the game wide open in the

After bagging two outs, Japan prodigy Roki Sasa-

ki gave up singles to Rowdy

Tellez and Isaac Paredes on

successive pitches before Luis

Urias blasted a homer to left

Irquidy replaced Sandoy-

But Mexico's resistance

Urquidy

Mexico meanwhile broke

first four innings.

Boston Red Sox new signing Masataka Yoshida smashed a three-run shot to tie it up at 3-3 and Japan were back in it.

finally broke in the bottom

of the seventh.

Yet Mexico responded well to start the eighth. Randy Arozarena doubled to lead off and then scored when Alex Verdugo doubled.

A Paredes single put Mexico up 5-3 and Japan were again chasing the game.

Hotaka Yamakawa's sac-fly to left field scored Takumu Nakano to trim the deficit to 5-4 heading to the

After Mexico went scoreless in the top of the inning it was left to Japan's golden boy Ohtani to start the fightback.

Ohtani doubled off centerfield to put Mexico Giovanny Gallegos to keep Japan alive and then the The Houston Astros' Jose pressure piled on the Mexican pitcher as Yoshida "I always believed there's nine runs per game en route al in the fifth and navigated walked and was replaced by a bases-loaded jam to keep pinch-runner Ukyo Shuto.

Murakami then stepped emerged up to crush a double to unscathed from another centerfield, and Ohtani bases-loaded situation in the and Shuto sprinted home for a stunning walk off win. sixth to frustrate Japan again.

keep performing at his best

The Mexican and teammate Verstappen are separated by one point in

LONDON: Sergio Perez may have had his best race yet in Sunday's Saudi Arabian Grand Prix but Formula One desperately needs the Mexican to keep it up in a season turning into a tale of two Red Bull team-

The evidence from Bahrain and Jeddah suggests Max Verstappen, who started 15th on Sunday and was second already by the halfway point, will otherwise have his third successive title wrapped up in short order.

Perez, who started on pole position under the floodlights in Saudi Arabia, and his championship leading teammate are separated by just one point, a fastest lap, with everybody else fighting for the lefto-

Neutrals will join Mexican fans in hoping the 33-year-old veteran, signed at the end of 2020 as solid support for the team's star talent, can at least give Verstappen a run for his money. Red Bull were dominant last year, and they have been in a league of their own so far in 2023 — dropping only one point (for a fastest lap) out of a maximum 88 available. They are enjoying their best

Only one driver — Mercedes' George Russell in Brazil last November — has beaten them since July 2022 and Red Bull have won 12 of the last 13 races with some predicting they could sweep all 23 this year. Verstappen won 15 of the 22 races last year

Mercedes boss Toto Wolff, who knows a thing or two about serial success after his team racked up eight constructors' championships in a row from 2014, put a more positive spin on the situation.

"We've had those years where we were as strong, but it's a meritocracy," the Austrian told reporters when asked about the sport's popularity taking a hit if Red Bull kept

winning everything. "Even if it is not great for the show that the same guys win all the time, it's because

'We shouldn't down talk it because I 15, 16, 17, 18, 19 and 20. What makes the sport so special is that you need to work

F1 needs Perez to

standings

start to a season with two one-two finishes.

to Perez's two triumphs.

"I've definitely never seen a car so fast," Mercedes' seven-times world champion Lewis Hamilton told reporters after finishing fifth in Jeddah.

they've done a good job and we haven't.

remember hearing voices like that in 2014, hard to win, and you deserve it as a matter

Pakistan a strong contender to win ICC World Cup: Wasim Akram

ISLAMABAD: Former captain and fast bowling great Wasim Akram believes that Babar Azam-led Pakistan are a strong contender to win the ICC ODI Cricket World Cup 2023, to be hosted by India in October-November.

Talking to Sports Tak, Akram said that Pakistan had a formidable fast bowling attack, possessing the quality to help their team lift the coveted trophy. "Our captain is a great player and we have one of the best fast-bowling lineups in the world," he said.

"Shaheen Afridi is currently in prime form. He has led his team to victory in the PSL-8 for the second time. He is developing pretty well as an all-rounder. Then there is Haris Rauf and Naseem Shah. (Mohammad) Hasnain is there, Ihsanullah is an exciting young fast bowler," he added.

He said that as the nature of pitches in India was largely batting friendly, team with a strong bowling unit will eventually succeed in making it through.

"I think because the World Cup is happening in India, it is the team with the stronger bowling attack that will succeed because the pitches tend to be batter friendly," he said.

Akram also talked about the Indian batter's shortcoming to tackle the in-swinging deliveries. He said although the angling deliveries had troubled them, they would find a way to pass the problem. "It is the angle that makes it difficult and especially when the ball comes in.

'At the same time, India have some great top-order players. Be it, Virat Kohli, be it, Rohit Sharma and KL Rahul, all of them are greats of the game and they will figure out the problems."

Indian top-order faced a similar challenge against Mitchell Starc in the recently-held 2nd ODI Australia. Starc created troubles for them with his sharp moving deliveries and dismissed them in his first spell.

"Let's give credit to Mitchell Starc. He bowled brilliantly and the pitch was also very lively. And the way the ball was seaming around at one point I thought I am seeing a match in Australia or New Zealand", he added. APP

Pakistan Day Sports Festival begins in Charsadda

PESHAWAR: Pakistan Day sports Festival organized by District Administration Charsadda and Frontier Corps got under way at Abdul Wali Khan Sports Complex Charsadda in a colourful opening ceremony with more than 500 athletes in four different.

The Festival would continue till March 23. More than five hundred athletes from three Tehsils of district Charsadda will participate in this festival including Tangi, Shabqadar and Charsadda.

The aim of the festival is to celebrate Pakistan Day in a grand manner. More than 500 players are participating in badminton, cricket, football and volleyball. The Badminton and football competitions will be held at Abdul Wali Khan Sports Complex. The volleyball and cricket matches will be held at Parang Sports Complex. Prior to this, the start of the Pakistan Day Sports Festival was held in a grand and colourful opening ceremony.

A total of 32 teams will participate in badminton while 16 teams each are taking part in football, volleyball and cricket competitions.

Major Faizur Rehman was the chief guest on this occasion who formally inaugurated the Festival with Captain Naveed, District Sports Officer Tahsinullah, Badminton National Coaches Nadeem Khan and Hayatullah, Volleyball Secretary General Khalid Waqar and Cricket and Football officials were also present.

Addressing the players on this occasion, Major Faiz-ur-Rehman said that the purpose of the Pakistan Day Sports Festival is to provide awareness to the youth regarding the importance of 23rd March 1940 where a Resolution was passed unanimously about the creation of Pakistan.

He said that in connection with Pakistan Day, other districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa were also organized, in which the youth participated fully. Later, Major Faizur Rehman formally inaugurated these games. APP

Crystal Palace name Hödgson as manager

LONDON: Crystal Palace have reappointed former England boss Roy Hodgson as their manager until the end of the season, with a mission to save the Premier League club from relegation.



The 75-year-old, who replaces the sacked Patrick Vieira, said the "sole objective" was to ensure survival in the English top flight. Hodgson, who was in charge at Selhurst Park between 2017 and 2021, takes over with Palace lying 12th in the Premier League, three points above the relegation zone after a 12-match winless run.

"It is a privilege to be asked to return to the club, which has always meant so much to me, and to be given the important task of turning the team's fortunes around," Hodgson said in a club statement.

"Our sole objective now is to start winning matches, and to get the points necessary to ensure our Premier League status. Palace chairman Steve Parish welcomed the former Liverpool

and Inter Milan manager back to the London club, saying Hodgson's experience would be crucial in the battle to avoid the drop.

Former Arsenal and France midfielder Vieira was sacked on Friday. AFP

Jha handed one-year ban for whereabouts failures

TORONTO: Kanak Jha, who competed for the United States in table tennis competitions at the Rio and Tokyo Olympics, has been given a one-year ban for three whereabouts failures, the U.S. Anti-Doping Agency (USADA) said.

The accumulation of three 12-month period is considered an anti-doping rule violation.

Jha, who helped the U.S. win team gold at the 2019 Pan



whereabouts failures within a failures on March 18, June 2 tion can be a chore, but it is and Sep 4 last year.

sion began on Dec. 1, 2022.

essential for clean sport, as The 22-year-old's suspen- effective no advance notice, out-of-competition testing is "Athletes providing accu- absolutely necessary because Am Games, had whereabouts rate whereabouts informa- many prohibited drugs have

CEO Travis Tygart in a state-Jha was the youngest

member of the U.S. team at the 2016 Rio Olympics; the then 16-year-old competed in the men's singles and team competitions. The fourtime national champion also represented the U.S. in the same two events at the Tokyo Games in 2021. Reuters

short detection windows and

without the Whereabouts

testing process, dopers would

win the day," said USADA

Three talking points from the Premier League weekend

MANCHESTER: Arsenal took League weekend. advantage of Manchester City's League action to open an eightpoint lead at the top of the table thanks to a 4-1 thrashing of managerless Crystal Palace.

north London is very different making. after Antonio Conte lambasted his Tottenham players for throwing away a 3-1 lead to drop two vital points in their bid for a top-four finish by drawing 3-3 at Southampton.

Only Leeds, who beat fellow strugglers Wolves 4-2, won from the sides threatened by relegaare separated by just four points.

The race for European places is also tightening as Aston Villa and Chelsea closed to within four points of the top six.

talking points from the Premier Arsenal's third.

Fatigued and frustrated after weekend off from Premier their agonising Europa League exit at the hands of Sporting Lisbon in midweek, Arsenal responded with a kind of stylish display that bore all the The mood on the other side of hallmarks of champions in the

> Mikel Arteta's side crashed out on penalties against the Portuguese giants after Gabriel Martinelli missed the crucial spot-

So, it was symbolic of Arsenal's new-found resilience that Martinelli was the man to put the Gunners on course for an tion, meaning the bottom nine easy afternoon at the Emirates by scoring the opening goal.

The Brazilian's cool finish laid the foundations for a sixth successive league win before Bukayo Saka struck twice either AFP Sport looks at three side of Granit Xhaka scoring

Champions City have a game in hand and host Arsenal in April, but Arsenal have control of the title race.

Antonio Conte arrived at Tottenham as the serial winner seen as capable of instilling a winning culture at a club used to underachievement.

Instead, the Italian looks set to join a number of Spurs managers to come and go without lifting a trophy.

Conte's contract expires at the end of the season and the question over his future now is whether he even sees out the remaining 10 Premier League games.

The former Juventus, Chelsea and Inter Milan boss called his players "selfish", lacking in heart and too used to not playing under pressure or stress. Spurs still sit fourth, but are

only two points ahead of Newcas-

tle, who have two games in hand.

is now beyond repair. When Steven Gerrard was sacked in October, only goals scored was keeping Villa out of the relegation zone.

Five months on, they are a club transformed under Unai Emery. Bournemouth were swept aside with ease 3-0 at Villa Park

four games for Emery's men. Indeed, only four teams have taken more Premier League points in total since the former Arsenal and Paris Saint-Germain boss was appointed.

Manchester United and Citv's progress to the FA Cup semi-finals this weekend has increased the possibility that seventh could be good enough for European football, which remains well within Villa's reach.



"We can add a new step, an over us, we have to fight starting objective, looking at the teams behind them. in the top 10 now," said Emery after all but guaranteeing surviv-

"But we are going to play here against Fulham, we are going to to try to add a new target in our al. "They have an advantage play here against Brighton, we minds." Reuters

are going to play at Brentford, at Chelsea. Of course, it is going to be very difficult, but we are going