



## China's Xi arrives in Russia to meet Putin over Ukraine war

MOSCOW (Agencies): Chinese President Xi Jinping flew into Moscow on Monday where he was expected to press Beijing's role as a potential peacemaker in the Ukraine conflict while Russian President Vladimir Putin hoped for support against Western pressure. Xi will be the first national leader to shake Putin's hand since the International Criminal Court (ICC) issued an arrest warrant for him on Friday over the deportation of Ukrainian children to Russia since its invasion. Moscow said the charge was among a number of "clearly hostile displays" and Beijing said it reflects double standards. Russia is presenting Xi's trip, his first since securing an unprecedented third term this month, as evidence that it has a powerful friend prepared to stand with it against a hostile West that it accuses of trying to isolate and defeat Moscow. "We can feel the geopolitical landscape in the outside world undergoing drastic changes," Putin said in an article in China's People's Daily published on the Kremlin website, adding that he had high hopes for the visit from his "good old friend". For Xi, the visit is a diplomatic tightrope. China has released a 12-point proposal to solve the Ukraine crisis, but at the same time strengthened ties with Moscow. Chi-



na has repeatedly dismissed Western accusations that it is planning to arm Russia but says it wants a closer energy partnership after boosting imports of Russian coal, gas and oil following Putin's all-out invasion of Ukraine. Western sanctions on Russian energy mean Beijing has saved billions of dollars. Xi arrived in Moscow on Monday afternoon and was due to hold "informal" talks with Putin, followed by dinner. Formal talks are scheduled for

Tuesday. Xi wrote in an article published in Russia that the two countries adhered to the concept of "eternal friendship and mutually beneficial cooperation" and that China's Ukraine peace proposal, released last month, reflects global views. "Complex problems do not have simple solutions," Xi wrote in Rossiiskaya Gazeta, a daily published by the Russian government, according to a Reuters translation from Russian.

## Saudi king invites Iranian president to Riyadh

RIYADH (Agencies): Saudi Arabia's King Salman has invited Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi to a meeting in Riyadh, Raisi's deputy chief of staff said on Sunday. Planning is also underway for a meeting between the two countries' foreign ministers, after a Chinese-mediated deal restored diplomatic relations following a seven-year rift. Salman extended the invitation in a letter to Raisi, Deputy Chief of Staff Mohammad Jamshidi wrote on Twitter on Sunday. "Welcoming this invitation, the president emphasized Iran's readiness to strengthen cooperation," Jamshidi added. In a follow-up tweet in English, Jamshidi stated that Salman referred to Saudi Arabia and Iran as "brotherly countries" in his letter. Rela-



tions between the Sunni kingdom and the Shia republic broke down in 2016, after Iranian protesters stormed Saudi consulates following Riyadh's execution of a Shia scholar. Since then, they have backed opposing sides in the civil wars in Yemen and Syria, while Iran backs the Hezbollah movement in Lebanon and Saudi Arabia sides with Israel against this group, which it considers a terrorist organization.

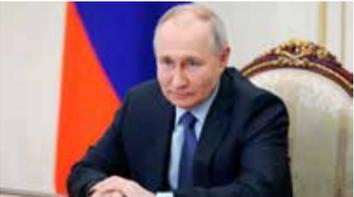
## US, South Korean forces rehearse amphibious landings



WASHINGTON (Agencies): The US and South Korean militaries have embarked on a large-scale joint exercise aimed at practicing amphibious landings, South Korean media has reported. The drills, which are part of the ongoing 'Freedom Shield' maneuvers, went ahead despite Pyongyang's repeated warnings. On Monday, South Korea's KBS TV channel, citing the country's military, reported that the 'Ssangyong' drills had kicked off on the eastern coast in North Gyeongsang Province, and are expected to conclude on April 3. The outlet said they

are the first after a five-year hiatus, with entire divisions taking part this time instead of just brigades. The exercise features more than 30 vessels from both countries, 70 aircraft, including F-35B stealth fighters and AH-64 attack helicopters, as well as 50 amphibious assault vehicles. Last week, the Yonhap news agency quoted South Korean military officials as saying that the 'Ssangyong' maneuvers were intended to demonstrate the "overwhelming" capabilities of the partner nations. "The upcoming training will demonstrate the South Korea-US alliance's will to realize 'peace through strength'," Marine Corps Commandant Lt. Gen. Kim Gye-hwan was quoted as explaining. According to Yonhap, participating in the drills for the first time are several dozen British marines, with military personnel from Australia, France and the Philippines observing them.

## Moscow opens criminal case over Putin warrant



MOSCOW (Agencies): The International Criminal Court (ICC) prosecutor and judges who issued an arrest warrant for Russian President Vladimir Putin have become the targets of a criminal case, Russia's Investigative Committee announced on Monday.

## Hunter Biden sues 'laptop from hell' repair shop



WASHINGTON (Agencies): Hunter Biden, the son of US President Joe Biden, filed a countersuit on Friday against the owner of the Delaware laptop repair shop where he allegedly abandoned his 'laptop from hell', claiming invasion of privacy - but still not admitting the laptop is actually his. Mac Shop owner John Paul Mac Isaac copied and shared Biden's private data without his permission for personal and commercial gain, the countersuit claims, charging the computer repairman with six counts of invasion of privacy. Biden's lawyers seek a jury trial, compensatory and punitive damages, and the return of any of Biden's data still in the possession of Mac Isaac or anyone he

shared it with. Biden had a "reasonable expectation of privacy" regarding his computer's contents for a full year after it was dropped at the Mac Shop, the countersuit argues, citing Delaware state law. While a repair authorization form "allegedly signed by Mr. Biden" agreed to relinquish any claims of loss or damage after 90 days, the filing points out that Mac Isaac initially said he didn't know who had dropped the computer off.

## Poland may end up 'joining' Ukraine conflict - diplomat

WARSAW (Agencies): Poland may end up "joining" the ongoing conflict between Russia and Ukraine should the latter fail to protect its "independence," the Polish ambassador to France, Jan Emeryk Rosciszewski, has said. The senior diplomat made the remarks on Saturday while speaking live to the broadcaster LCI. Rosciszewski squarely blamed the hostilities, which have been ongoing for over a year already, on Moscow, stating that it was "not NATO, not Poland, not France and not Slovakia" that was ramping up international tensions, but Russia. According to the diplomat, the situation now is "either Ukraine will successfully defend its independence, or we will be forced, in any case, to join this conflict." "Otherwise, our principal values, which are the basis of our civilization and our culture, will be in fundamental danger; so we will have no choice," Rosciszewski stated. The hawkish statement promptly



made headlines in international media, prompting the Polish mission in France to elaborate further on the remarks made by its head. According to a message released by the embassy on Sunday, Rosciszewski's comments were not actually an admission that Warsaw was ready to go to war with Russia, but merely a "warning" and a pledge to continue supporting Kiev. Poland has been among the most active supporters of Kiev in the hostilities against Russia, sending in assorted military hardware, including tanks and artillery pieces, to prop up Ukraine.

## UK apologizes to Afghan collaborators - media



LONDON (Agencies): The UK Ministry of Defence has belatedly apologized for requiring Afghan citizens who worked with London during the US-led NATO occupation of their country to have their documents approved by the Taliban before applying for resettlement in Britain, the Independent revealed on Sunday. The government confirmed that 37 applicants to the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Police (ARAP) program, designed specifically to relocate allies who worked directly with the British military during the war, had been told they would have to have their papers certified with Afghan government departments. Those departments have been run by the Taliban since the group returned to power amid the hasty withdrawal of NATO forces in 2021. Given that such individuals would be seen as enemy collaborators by the Islamic fundamentalists, the policy amounted to "asking them to sign their own death warrant," one UK lawmaker told the Independent. After initially denying that applicants had been given any such instructions for weeks, the ministry has apologized "unreservedly for this error."

## US pressuring Latin American nation on China ties



WASHINGTON (Agencies): The US is exerting its influence to try and get Honduras to change its mind on its recently announced plan to establish diplomatic relations with China, Reuters has reported. The Central American nation is one of fourteen countries globally that currently have ties with Taiwan instead. Beijing refuses to maintain official contact with states that recognize Taiwan in breach of its 'One China' policy. The Chinese government insists that the self-governing island is an inalienable part of its territory seized

by separatists. In its article on Saturday, the media outlet, citing anonymous "sources close to the matter," claimed that Washington is hopeful that in the absence of any formal agreement, Honduran President Xiomara Castro could still retract the statement she made on Tuesday. Reuters quoted an unnamed US government official as saying that there is so far little clarity on "whether it will be days or weeks or months," or if this is merely a "negotiating tactic." Whatever the case may be, Washington "will continue to make [its] case," the source added. One of the arguments the US is reportedly using to try to dissuade Honduras from switching its diplomatic allegiance to China is that countries in the region that have done so supposedly have not reaped the economic benefits they had hoped for.

## Tony Blair defends Iraq war

LONDON (Agencies): Former British Prime Minister Tony Blair has claimed that the US-led invasion of Iraq was more justified than Russia's ongoing military operation in Ukraine, despite all of his pre-war claims since being proven false. Speaking to Germany's DPA and two other European news agencies, Blair stated that the invasion - in which 46,000 British troops took part - was a legitimate response Saddam Hussein's domestic repressions and his use of chemical weapons against

the Kurds. "At least you could say we were removing a despot and trying to introduce democracy," Blair said. The invasion and subsequent occupation of Iraq ended up leading to the deaths of up to 210,000 civilians, according to the Iraq Body Count project. Plunged into instability, the country became a breeding ground for jihadism, and much of Iraq's northern reaches fell under the control of Islamic State (IS, formerly ISIS) terrorists following the US pull-out in 2011.

## Russia and Congo to ink energy deal - envoy



MOSCOW (Agencies): Russia and the Republic of Congo are planning to sign an intergovernmental agreement on the construction of a pipeline for transporting petroleum products to Brazzaville, according to Russian Ambassador Georgy Chepik. "It is assumed that this agreement will be signed before the Russia-Africa summit, and probably a joint venture will be created, which will deal with the practical issues, and a concession agreement will be signed," he told reporters on Friday. The Russia-Africa Summit will take place in

July 2023 in St. Petersburg. The ambassador specified that the pipeline will run between the two largest cities of the African country - Pointe-Noire and the capital, Brazzaville. "It is named after the points it crosses: Pointe Noire, Lutete, and Maloukou Trechot," Chepik explained. On the Russian side, the ZNGS Prometey company has shown interest in the project, and "it will most likely be involved in the intergovernmental agreement." The diplomat also said that Russian energy giant Lukoil, which has been working in Congo since 2019, will lead the development of cooperation between the two countries. "This is a very important, significant presence for us. It can only be compared with Rusal in Guinea and Alrosa in Angola. Lukoil is our most important economic presence here now," Chepik stressed.

**About Khyber Mail** The Khyber mail was first published in Peshawar, Pakistan in 1932. A newspaper in English by the eminent journalist Sheikh Sana Ullah. From 1932 to 1989 it has survived as leading English newspaper in the region by the sons of Sana Ullah i.e. Sheikh Zaka Ullah, Sheikh Inayat Ullah and Sheikh Saleem Ullah. The publication was shut down in 1989 due to various reasons. The current owner Rizwan Inayat son of Sheikh Inayat Ullah and grandson of Sheikh Sana Ullah, has restarted the family heritage but meeting with the requirement of the century, by giving the readers current happenings around the world with one touch anywhere any time and updating the reader to pace up with the world.

## Pesco notifies power suspension for Peshawar, Tarbela

PESHAWAR (APP): The Peshawar Electric Supply Company (Pesco) on Monday notified that due to maintenance work power supply will remain suspended from 132 KV Power Transformer on 21st March from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. resultantly consumers of 11 KV Sheikhan, Shahab Khel, Mashogagar and Sarband

feeders will face inconvenience. It said that power supply will also remain suspended from 132 KV Matani Grid Station on 21st March from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. resultantly consumers of 11 KV Matani City, New Matani, Old Matani, Darwargai, Old Azakhel, Maryamzai, Tela Band and Zangali feeders will

face inconvenience. The power supply will remain suspended from 132 KV Wah-Nishat Tarbela Transmission Line on 21st March from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. resultantly, extra load shedding will be carried out on 132 KV Nishat Tarbela, Right Bank, Gadoon grid connected feeders.

## Young doctors to be equipped with modern medical skills: VC KMU

PESHAWAR (APP): Khyber Medical University (KMU) Vice Chancellor Prof. Dr. Zia ul Haq on Monday said that young doctors are the center of our hopes and it is our mission to equip them with modern medical sciences and skills as well as high medical ethics. The shifting of KIMS and KIDS to the new buildings will not only solve all the problems that were hindering their all-around development, but it will also help make them an ideal post-graduate education and research center for the southern districts. He expressed these views as a chief guest at the white coat ceremony organized by the KMU-Institute of Medical Sciences, KIMS, and the KMU-Institute of Dental Sciences, KIDS, for the first-year students and the joint inauguration of the new buildings of the two colleges. Former VC Prof. Dr. Muhammad

Hafiz Ullah, Registrar Prof. Dr. Muhammad Saleem Gandapur, Deputy Commissioner Kohat Azmat Ullah Wazir, former principals of KIMS Prof. Dr. Tariq Mufti, Prof. Dr. Salim Khattak, Prof. Dr. Lal Mohammad Khattak, present Principal Prof. Dr. Mussarrat Jabeen, former Principal of KIDS Prof. Dr. Aziz Marjan, present Principal Prof. Dr. Fahim Ullah, a large number of faculty and students were also present at the occasion. Prof. Dr. Zia ul Haq while welcoming the newly admitted students said that you and your parents are lucky because you have got the opportunity to show your essence in a holy profession like medicine and serve the suffering humanity. He said that you have to be a good doctor and also have good morals. Prof. Zia said that from the next academic year, measures will be taken on an emergency basis to increase the number of seats for KIMS to 200 and for KIDS to 100, as well as to develop KIMS and KIDS as an ideal center for FCPS training in the southern districts. After shifting KIMS and KIDS to new buildings our target is to build two new medical colleges in Peshawar and Swat

region, on which work has already been started. He said that he will soon meet the top officials of the Planning Commission Islamabad to materialize the concept of KMU's own general hospital at Peshawar. He said that no other institution could match the progress that KMU has made during the last ten years, for which we are grateful to Allah Almighty. He said that if there is sincerity in the intentions, then Allah Almighty multiplies the reward of every action and effort. He advised the new students to develop their personalities and the spirit of service to humanity along with their studies. Earlier, VC Prof. Dr. Zia ul Haq and other guests inaugurated the new buildings of KIMS and KIDS. It is worth mentioning that the new buildings of the above two colleges have been constructed at the cost of 27.47 million rupees in a period of eight years from the annual development fund of the provincial government on an area of 120 kanals in KDA Kohat where academic facilities, as well as laboratories, library, cafeteria, hostels, gym and indoor sports facilities, will also be available.

## Five-day flower exhibition starts at University of Agriculture

PESHAWAR (APP): A five-day flowers exhibition started here on Monday at the University of Agriculture wherein 30 different varieties of spring flowers were put on display. Secretary Higher education Department Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Dawood Khan along with Vice Chancellor Prof. Dr. Jahan Bakht inaugurated the exhibition. The charming and colourful flowers attracted hundreds of visitors who were taking selfies with

the flowers. Chairman of Horticulture Department Prof. Dr. Abdul Martin, Dr. Masood Ahmed and Dr. Fazal Wahid briefed the chief guest and participants about the varieties of flowers. Whereas, the Vice Chancellor of the university provided details and information on flowers. Secretary Dawood Khan and Prof. Dr. Bakht said that such kind of exhibition was a good initiative that brings joy and peace to the people.

## Cloudy weather with scattered to isolated rain predicted for most KP

PESHAWAR (APP): The Regional Meteorological Center Peshawar on Monday predicted that partly cloudy to cloudy weather was expected in most districts of the province. However, it said scattered rain-thunderstorm with gusty winds are also likely to occur over Swat, Chitral, Lower & Upper Dir, Shangla, Buner, Malakand, Kohistan, Battagram, Torghar, Mansehra, Abbottabad, Haripur, Mohmand, Bajaur, Khyber and Kurram districts. Isolated light rain-thunderstorm with gusty winds are likely to occur over Swabi, Mardan, Nowshera, Charsadda, Peshawar, Khyber, Orakzai, Hangu, Kurram, Kohat, Karak, Bannu, Lakki Marwat, North & South Waziristan, Tank and D.I. Khan districts. During the last 24 hours, partly cloudy to

cloudy weather occurred over most districts of the province. However, rain-thunderstorm occurred over Abbottabad, Swat, Buner, Upper & Lower Dir and Chitral districts. Rain recorded (in mm): Kakul 34, Malam Jabba 11, Drosh 05, Mirkhani & Timergara (each) 02, Dir & Saidu Sharif (each) 01, Chitral & Buner (each) 01. The maximum and minimum temperatures recorded in centigrade at different stations of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa were Peshawar City 27/15, Chitral 21/09, Timergara 26/10, Dir 20/05, Mirkhani 25/05, Kalam 14/-01, Drosh 23/09, Saidu Sharif 22/09, Pattan 21/13, Malam Jabba 09/03, Takht Bhai 27/13, Kakul 19/06, Balakot 24/09, Parachinar 14/01, Bannu 25/13, Cherat 17/07, D.I. Khan 27/16.

## ANP congratulates Malgari Walkilan on winning district bar elections

PESHAWAR (APP): President Awami National Party (ANP), Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Aimal Wali Khan on Monday congratulated the ANP-backed lawyers' body 'Malgari Walkilan' for winning the election of District Bar Associations across the province. He said their win reflected that the lawyers were striving for the supremacy of democracy, rule of law and peace in the province. In a statement issued from Bacha Khan Markaz here, Aimal Wali said the victory of Malgari Walkilan on eight out of 11 of district bar seats was well deserved. Congratulating the elected represen-

tatives of Malgari Wakilan in Bannu, Mohmand, Swat, Shangla, Swabi, Mardan, Takhtbhai, Dir, Bajaur and Malakand and other districts, he said the role of the lawyers' community in advocating justice and upholding the democratic norms was of prime importance. He said owing to the threats faced by democracy in the present scenario, the responsibilities of the lawyers had increased manifold. He said people had pinned high hopes on elected representatives of the lawyers' community that they will keep hoisting the flag of the supremacy of the Constitution and law at any cost.

## PHC terms video of narcotics recovery mandatory for proceedings

PESHAWAR (APP): The Peshawar High Court (PHC) has termed it mandatory for the police, Anti Narcotics Force, Narcotics Control, Customs and Excise and Narcotics Eradication Teams to present a video of narcotics recovery from the accused for legal proceedings. The directive issued by Justice Muhammad Ibrahim Khan in a narcotics recovery case will be implemented from April 15th next. Justice Ibrahim Khan in his verdict directed the law enforcers to adopt this new

method for error-free proceedings from April 15th 2023. The reason behind filming a video of the narcotics recovery will help save the innocent people from induction in narcotics cases. The decision said if officials did not have a mobile camera for making a video, than the investigation team will be responsible for providing a camera for filming the video of recovery. The decision also bound the lower courts to adopt the new method of video evidence in cases related to narcotics recovery.

## Robbers loot Rs 3.7m from citizen in Swabi

PESHAWAR (APP): Two unidentified robbers riding a motorbike on Monday looted Rs 3.7 million from a citizen near a private bank in Topi Bazaar of Swabi district. According to police, two robbers held the owner of an Easypaisa and mobile phones shop at gunpoint after he withdrew money

from the bank and snatched Rs 3.7 million from him. Police said, on showing resistance, the robbers also fired at the victim, however, he remained unhurt. The accused after looting the money fled away. The Topi police have registered a case and started a search operation to arrest the escaped culprits.

## Women participation must for achieving national development: Mayor Mardan

PESHAWAR (APP): Mayor Mardan Himayatullah Mayar advocate on Monday said the dream of national development could not be achieved without the practical and effective participation of women in the political process of the country. Addressing a district public assembly organized under the auspices of the Jazba Programme of the South Asia Partnership Pakistan in Town Municipal Administration (TMA) Hall on Monday, he said that it was our duty to agree for all political parties to ensure their due share and make all possible efforts for the empowerment of women. Besides, the local resource person of the Jazba Programme Nusrat Ara, former ANP MPA Shahid Waheed, Aliya Nawab (PTI), Irfan Mohmand (PPP), Fakharuzaman Tanoli (PML-N), social workers Mohammad Shahid Khan, Hassan Ehsan and others also attended the function. Furthermore, women leaders, councillors, women voter networks, youth groups and members of the Jazba Forum also participated. On this occasion, awards were also distributed among the women poets while Local Resource Person of Jazba Programme Nusrat Ara, Rehana Shakeel and Nazneen Jan presented the charter of demand and called for ensuring of 33% representation of women in national, provincial and local governments and bounding political parties to issues 5% elections tickets to women for national, provincial



assemblies and local councils. Furthermore, the charter of demand also included equal partnership of women in decision-making for the operation of local government and appropriate and practical steps for guaranteeing women participation. The local resource person of Jazba Programme, Nusrat Ara said that efforts were being made in various districts to ensure the participation of women in the political process and creating awareness in this regard is continued. The purpose of the programme, she said is to guarantee gender equilibrium, awareness about women's rights and promotion of the useful role of Pakistan in the national political process. Other speakers called for the utilization of all available resources for the welfare and women's empowerment and taking of joint efforts for effective participation of women in the economic and political process. The speakers also stressed special focus on the legislation for the protection of the rights of constitutional rights. They also pinpointed that the number of women on major offices in the political parties is also nominal.

## 'Epic poetry' book on Pashtun spouse of Mughal Emperor Babur launched

PESHAWAR (APP): An epic poetry book on the Pashtun wife of Zahirud-Din Babur, the founder of the Mughal Empire that ruled much of South Asia for around 300 years, was launched here at Victoria Hall of Peshawar Museum. The book, entitled 'Bibi Mubarak and Babur', is authored in English by former Chief Secretary KP, Sahibzada Riaz Noor. Caretaker Chief Minister KP, Muhammad Azam Khan was the chief guest at the launching ceremony which was attended by famous personalities, intellectuals, writers and members of the Literary Society of Edwardes College Peshawar. Some of the speakers joined the event virtually and sent video messages to express applause and accolades for the author for bringing to the limelight a legendary woman of the Pashtun belt, who is relatively not much known in the pages of history. Babur married Bibi Mubarak,

daughter of Malik Shah Mansur, chief of the Yousafzai tribe and resident of Thana area of Malakand, for cementing relationships with a Pashtun chieftain who showed resistance during his expedition to the former sub-continent. She was the fifth spouse of the Mughal Emperor. "By writing the poetic book 'Bibi Mubarak and Babur', Sahibzada Riaz Noor has not only done a favour to literature but also to history," said Akbar S Ahmad, an anthropologist, scholar of Islam and Ibn Khaldun Chair of Islamic Studies at American University. "He has given us not only a poem rich in imagery, colour and emotion but a history lesson full of insights," he added in his virtual message from Washington. "Bibi Mubarak was so loving and loyal to her husband that she put herself in danger of travelling around 1100 km distance from Kabul to Agra for bringing back earthy

remains of her husband (Babur) to fulfill his wish of burial in Char Bagh (Kabul)," apprised Dr. Sayed Amjad Hussain, a US-based doctor with roots in Peshawar and author of several books. Raiz Noor depicts the life of Babur and his Yousafzai wife using well-chosen words to paint vivid imagery, he remarked. Former Chief Secretary and noted poet, Ejaz Rahim said the book penned by Sahibzada Riaz Noor had outclassed his own 24 books. He said the first book written by Riaz Noor 'Dragon Fly' in 2019 was about the lyrical poetry genre and this was about the epic genre. "Bibi Mubarak and Babur is a wonderfully rich and vivid narrative poem which brings into mind the epic of antiquity," observed Muneeza Shamsie, a writer. Whilst reviving epic poetry tradition, the book makes a significant contribution in shedding new light on roles women played in Mughal history, she added.

Speaking on the occasion, Caretaker Chief Minister, Muhammad Azam Khan highly appreciated the efforts made by Sahibzada Riaz Noor in highlighting the role of a Pashtun lady in the Mughal dynasty. He expressed his pleasure over a number of former bureaucrats from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa making their debut in literature by contributing books. Interestingly, five ex-Chief Secretaries were present in the hall for the book launch which was unprecedented. Azam Khan disclosed that he also had authored his memoir and the book was ready for going to press but he was tasked with the responsibility of serving as head of the interim government. He said he has now decided to incorporate experiences from his service as Chief Minister and print the book later. The author in his address gave references to establish the historical authenticity of events mentioned in his epic.

### GOLD PRICE IN PAK

| Gold Rate     | 24K Gold   | 22K Gold   | 21K Gold   | 18K Gold   |
|---------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| Per Tola Gold | Rs 230,127 | Rs 210,950 | Rs 201,361 | Rs 172,595 |
| Per 10 Gram   | Rs 197,246 | Rs 180,809 | Rs 172,590 | Rs 147,934 |
| Per Gram Gold | Rs 19,724  | Rs 18,080  | Rs 17,259  | Rs 14,793  |
| Per Ounce     | Rs 559,210 | Rs 512,609 | Rs 489,308 | Rs 419,407 |

### FOREX RATES

| Currency          | Buying | Selling |
|-------------------|--------|---------|
| US Dollar         | 283.2  | 286     |
| China Yuan        | 41.09  | 41.31   |
| Japanese Yen      | 2.06   | 2.11    |
| Saudi Riyal       | 75.2   | 76      |
| U.A.E Dirham      | 77.25  | 78      |
| UK Pound          | 340.5  | 344     |
| Euro              | 298.5  | 301.5   |
| Australian Dollar | 187    | 189.4   |
| Canadian Dollar   | 207.5  | 209.5   |

### Emergency Numbers

| Organization                       | Phone No       |
|------------------------------------|----------------|
| Rescue 1122 HQrs                   | 091-2264224-25 |
| Rescue 1122 Mardan                 | 0937-9230770   |
| Fire Brigade Cantt:                | 091-9212534    |
| Fire Brigade City                  | 091-2566666    |
| Police Emergency                   | 091-9212222    |
| Edhi Ambulance                     | 091-2214575    |
| Red Crescent Ambulance             | 091-2210836    |
| Emergency Ambulance                | 091-2590846    |
| Civil Defence, Peshawar            | 091-9212176    |
| Lady Reading Hospital              | 091-9211430    |
| HMC Peshawar                       | 091-9217140-46 |
| KTH Peshawar                       | 091-9216340-8  |
| Irnam Hospital                     | 091-9216115    |
| Mission Hospital                   | 091-2212371    |
| Al-Khidmat Hospital                | 091-2215945    |
| Fauji Foundation Hospital          | 091-9212771-4  |
| Frontier Foundation Blood Services | 091-5703463    |
| Hamza Foundation, Peshawar         | 091-5841632    |
| Sui Gas, Peshawar                  | 091-9213016    |
| Wapda Complaint Peshawar           | 091-9212041    |
| PIA, Peshawar                      | 091-9213351    |
| Airport Inquiry                    | 114            |
| Railway Inquiry                    | 117            |



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## Pakistan Political Situation

The political situation in Pakistan is currently tense and uncertain. The country has been facing a multitude of challenges, including economic instability, corruption, and political polarization. One of the major issues that Pakistan has been grappling with is the struggle between the ruling Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party and the opposition parties, particularly the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) and the Pakistan People's Party (PPP). The opposition parties have been accusing the government of vote-rigging in the 2018 elections and of failing to deliver on its promises of economic stability and development. This political deadlock has resulted in a number of protests and demonstrations, with opposition leaders demanding the resignation of Prime Minister Imran Khan and fresh elections. The government, on the other hand, has been accused of using strong-arm tactics to suppress dissent and silence opposition voices. Moreover, Pakistan has also been facing economic challenges, with high inflation and a weak currency adding to the burden of the common people. The government has been criticized for its inability to bring about much-needed economic reforms and for relying too heavily on foreign loans to shore up the economy. In addition, corruption has been a persistent problem in Pakistan, with politicians and bureaucrats accused of embezzlement, money laundering, and other corrupt practices. The government has vowed to crack down on corruption, but progress has been slow, and there have been allegations of selective accountability. Given the complexities of the political and economic situation in Pakistan, it is important for the government to engage in meaningful dialogue with the opposition parties and civil society to find solutions to the country's challenges. It is also crucial for the government to prioritize economic reforms and take measures to address corruption. Furthermore, it is imperative that the government uphold the principles of democracy and freedom of expression, and refrain from using force to silence dissenting voices. Only by working together can Pakistan overcome its challenges and build a brighter future for its people.

## Russian Oil and Pakistan

Russia is a major producer of oil and gas, and its export of these resources has had an impact on many countries around the world, including Pakistan. The impact of Russian oil on Pakistan's economy has been mixed, with both positive and negative effects. On the positive side, Russia has been a significant source of oil for Pakistan, which has struggled with energy shortages and a heavy reliance on imported energy. Pakistan has been importing oil from Russia since 2015, and these imports have helped to diversify the country's energy mix and reduce its dependence on oil from the Middle East. Moreover, Russia has been investing in Pakistan's energy sector, with a number of Russian companies involved in projects such as the North-South gas pipeline and the construction of a liquefied natural gas terminal in Karachi. These investments have helped to boost Pakistan's energy infrastructure and increase its capacity to generate and distribute energy. However, there are also negative impacts of Russian oil on Pakistan's economy. One of the most significant is the impact on the country's balance of payments, as Pakistan is heavily reliant on imports of oil and gas to meet its energy needs. The cost of these imports can put a strain on the country's foreign exchange reserves, which are already under pressure due to other factors such as a large trade defi-

cit and debt repayments. Moreover, the price of oil is subject to fluctuations in the global market, which can have an impact on Pakistan's economy. For example, the sharp drop in oil prices in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic led to a decline in Pakistan's oil imports, which helped to reduce the country's trade deficit but also led to lower revenues for oil producers and exporters. In addition, the close relationship between Russia and Pakistan has been a source of concern for some members of the international community, particularly the United States, which has been pushing for greater engagement with Pakistan as part of its strategy to counter Chinese influence in the region. The U.S. has expressed concerns about Russia's growing influence in Pakistan, particularly in the energy sector. In conclusion, the impact of Russian oil on Pakistan's economy is complex and multifaceted. While Russia has been a significant source of oil for Pakistan and has invested in the country's energy sector, there are also concerns about the impact on Pakistan's balance of payments and the close relationship between Russia and Pakistan. Ultimately, it will be important for Pakistan to balance its energy needs with its broader economic and political interests, and to engage with the international community in a constructive and transparent manner.

## Pakistan Nuclear program and IMF loan

Pakistan's nuclear program and its negotiations with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) for a loan are two of the most pressing issues facing the country today. While the two topics may seem unrelated, they are in fact closely linked and have important implications for Pakistan's future. Pakistan's nuclear program, which began in the 1970s, has been a source of controversy and concern for the international community. Pakistan is one of nine countries that possess nuclear weapons, and its possession of nuclear arms has led to tensions with neighboring India, which also has nuclear capabilities. Despite international pressure to halt its nuclear program, Pakistan has continued to develop and expand its nuclear capabilities, citing security concerns and the need for deterrence. The country has conducted multiple nuclear tests and has been increasing its arsenal, which is estimated to include between

165 and 200 nuclear warheads. While Pakistan has maintained that its nuclear program is for defensive purposes, the international community remains concerned about the potential for nuclear conflict in the region. Moreover, Pakistan's possession of nuclear weapons has strained its relations with the United States, which has been a key source of economic and military aid for the country. This brings us to the issue of Pakistan's negotiations with the IMF for a loan. Pakistan has a long history of seeking financial assistance from the IMF to support its struggling economy. In 2019, the country secured a \$6 billion loan from the IMF to help address its balance of payments crisis. However, the IMF has imposed strict conditions on the loan, including measures to reduce Pakistan's fiscal deficit and debt, as well as structural reforms to improve governance and increase transparency.

## Where has Iraq's oil wealth gone?

— By Jehan Alfarrar

Iraq is the second-largest crude oil producer in OPEC after Saudi Arabia. Yet despite the country's vast oil wealth and significant revenues from crude oil exports, Iraq imports some 40 per cent of its gas from Iran and is still struggling to meet the basic energy needs of its residents. Severe shortages in power supply and energy have left many households with only a few hours of electricity per day and a lack of clean and hot water. Twenty years since the war to 'liberate Iraq', the promise of a prosperous, oil-financed and democratic Iraq has yet to materialise. The legacy of the US-led war on Iraq has been characterised by political instability, sectarian violence, corruption and a failure to establish a sustainable and accountable government. While the 2003 invasion may have removed a dictator from power, the US-led reconstruction effort has failed to establish a transparent and accountable system, leaving Iraq struggling to rebuild and establish a functioning democracy. For years since the US-led invasion, the lack of political stability and security not only devastated the country's economy, infrastructure and social fabric but also meant Iraq was unable to attract significant foreign investment. This was exacerbated by the emergence of extremist groups such as Daesh. Iraqis, however, have been battling another perhaps more pervasive issue – corruption.

– Corruption and mismanagement

In October 2022, a probe uncovered a staggering \$2.5 billion of embezzled tax funds, in what was described as the 'heist of the century'. The embezzlement case, which involves a network of senior officials, politicians and businesses, is only one of a number of major corruption scandals which made headlines in the country amidst estimates of nearly \$320 billion lost to corruption from the state coffers in the 15 years after the Saddam era. Officials and politicians in Iraq are often accused of syphoning off public funds and resources for personal gain, in-

cluding oil revenues. From ghost salaries and ghost employees, to bribery and even oil smuggling, this rampant corruption which has plagued Iraq for decades has greatly reduced the amount of funds available for investment in the country's inefficient energy sector, its infrastructure and economic development overall. Despite being a major producer of crude oil – with exports in March 2022 bringing in a record \$11.07 billion in revenue, the highest since 1972 – Iraq's limited refining capacity and inadequate infrastructure have left the country reliant on the import of refined petroleum products to meet domestic demand, mainly from Iran. Combined with poor governance and the absence of accountability, a lack of transparency has hindered the country's ability to effectively manage the distribution of its oil wealth; leaving the public with little information on how oil revenues are being spent and how contracts are being awarded.

– Ongoing disputes

The central government in Baghdad has also been seeking – and failing to assert its control over – some of the country's oil-rich regions, particularly in the Kurdish-controlled areas in the north. While the majority of Iraq's oil wealth is located in the southern and southeastern regions of the country, where vast oil fields are located, the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG)-controlled region in the north of Iraq is also home to significant oil reserves, estimated to be around 45 billion barrels. The KRG began exporting oil independently in 2014, in defiance of the central government in Baghdad, with the establishment of its own pipeline to Turkiye. The Baghdad government, which manages and regulates the oil industry including the production and export of oil, opposed the KRG's independent oil exports, and the two sides engaged in a legal dispute over the matter. In February 2022, Federal Iraq's Supreme Court ruled that the KRG's production and

export of oil and natural gas is unconstitutional and that all contracts between the KRG and international oil companies are illegal. The ruling was rejected by the KRG and the dispute remains. Iraq's oil wealth remains a key driver of its economy, but the country faces serious challenges in addressing the significant gap between supply and demand and effectively managing and distributing its resources for the benefit of its citizens, whose daily lives are impacted by the lack of reliable energy, with businesses and schools forced to close during power cuts and many households resorting to generators or other alternative sources of power. Fueled by widespread dissatisfaction with the government's corruption, economic mismanagement and failure to provide basic services, a series of massive demonstrations erupted across Iraq in October 2019 demanding change.

Iraq has recently been looking less towards America and more towards China for the development of its energy sector, highlighted by the 2019 'oil for construction' deal. In February 2023, the country signed deals with Emirati and Chinese companies to develop its gas and oil fields in a bid to become more self-sufficient and reduce dependence on Iranian imports. The government of Prime Minister Mohammed Al-Sudani has also announced the dismantling of the largest oil smuggling network in the Basra Governorate, which involves high-ranking officers and senior staff. With an estimated 145 billion barrels of proven oil reserves and significant untapped oil resources, Iraq has the potential to address a lot of its deep-seated economic challenges. But one thing remains clear, effective governance and transparency are crucial if Iraq is to successfully capitalise on its oil wealth and direct it towards the development of the country to meet the needs and demands of its citizens and provide stability.

Courtesy: Middle East Monitor

## Dieting (Horrible culture)

— By Arisha Irshad Ali

Diet culture is reaching the sky. Diet without dieting can cause thousands of issues. Would you prefer to be slim and deal with gut syndrome? Social media seems like public health Platforms. Where unqualified people became the master of those who want to lose weight. People still don't understand the dilemma behind it. How it should be possible to lose 10 kgs in a week? Yes, if you do it means you are having some serious health issues. If you are fine and follow the advice, of bastard which help you to lose weight instantly. Congratulations! You are in the right hands which bond to make you ill. Some people starve themselves to fit into their dream dress. We need to be realistic that all models' magazines are filtered and edited through the professional picture. People tend to take a selfie and judge themselves as ugly. How you can judge yourself with one angle where we are matter having 360 Degree illustration. Selfies just show a few parts of the body, not a whole image. This should be correct as this cheat sheet will solve a lot of psychological issues. KETO diet and other diets that guarantee weight loss. Does having a thin body indicate that you are healthy? Being healthy and being thin are two whole different things. Advertisement market illustrates that being slim is directly proportional to health. A fat active man can be healthy rather than a slim who needs support for walking. Our

gut is having a diversified bacterial culture which needs multiple sources of nutrition. What if you switch to only a protein diet? This means you make some bacteria overeat, and different will starve. These microorganisms are required for us to function by the human body's ecosystem. Repeated having same food intake will increase your focus issue as your gut bacteria communicate with the hypothalamus. Which produces cortisol, which increases anxiety, and depression. This link will help you to understand that how much it is important to feed your stomach with colourful whole grains in order to achieve the sustainable mood which can make your day A bright one. Women deal with a lot of psychological problems as a result of the pressure to have the ideal figure. Their poop-like dietary customs disrupt the balance of their bodies. This resulted in hormonal disequilibrium, which later on may contribute to infertility. Diet can also mess up the poop pattern. An individual who once had three bowel movements per day is now doing so three times per week. This abrupt change is concerning. This demonstrates how your body's homeostasis is being disrupted. People ought to choose colourful vegetables. You must walk for the finest digestion and engage in cardio exercise. Gut health is highly link with mental health. To attain the desired state of mind, body, and lovely life. Gastro-

intestinal health and mental health are closely related since eating the correct foods seems to enhance cognitive function. We must relax our thoughts about fat. High density lipoprotein is preferable than low density lipoprotein in terms of our health. Men require 18% body fat, while women require 25%. Women need more fat than males because they are the ones who procreate and have to go through the menstrual cycle on a regular basis. Even during pregnancy, girls avoid eating healthy foods because they believe it would damage their figure, which causes issues with the baby and delivery. The coin has a reverse side. Plus size modelling is currently becoming more popular. This is fantastic in some ways, but what if fat becomes the norm? Obesity is known to cause chronic illnesses with a high mortality rate. It is concerning that we are not just accepting but even glorifying obesity. Happy us, happy stomach. We don't have to starve ourselves to accomplish this. Omega3s are fantastic for humans. Twice a week, oily fish is a need. Losing a few extra pounds will be made easier with mindful eating. wherein we savour the flavour and chew every bite. When using a smartphone while eating, you won't be able to control how much you eat, but when eating mindfully, you will be able to watch your eating patterns and say "No" to unnecessary calories. There will be win-win situation.

## Letters to the Editor

### Youth in politics

The time has come for us to address a critical issue, and as a young person from Pakistan, I urge that if the youth's voice is to be heard, it should be through our intellectual contributions, which can then be channelled into a movement. I believe that my country must thrive, with youth play-

ing a vital role. However, the political elite in Pakistan has consistently deprived youth of any involvement in politics and governance. Due to the inept and cynical policies of gerontocracy, we experience setbacks every few years. There is much more to this issue than I can summarize here. I respectfully request that you review

my essay and assist me in publishing it because your prestigious agency is the only platform that can make a real difference. I believe that my voice, as well as the voice of other young Pakistanis, deserves to be heard.

– Azfar Khan Niazi  
– Islamabad



## French Development Agency commits support to polio eradication Pledges \$55 million to help support Polio Programme operations

ISLAMABAD (APP): The French Development Agency (AFD) has become part of global polio eradication partners with its commitment to filling the funding gap of the Government of Pakistan in its efforts to end polio. A delegation of the AFD and Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation met the Special Health Secretary and visited the National Emergency Operations Centre (NEOC) for Polio Eradication. The meetings were part of the delegation's week-long visit to Pakistan to help support the country in the areas of health and social protection. During a briefing at the NEOC, the AFD committed to supporting the Pakistan Polio Eradication Initiative (PEI) in immunization activities, disease surveillance, polio campaign monitoring and other technical areas, and filling the funding gap of \$55 million (under the PC-1 for polio eradication, 2022-2026) that the programme needed. NEOC Coordinator Dr Shahzad Baig emphasized the significance of the polio infrastructure to



Pakistan's healthcare: "We are very grateful to the French Government for this support. The Pakistan Polio Eradication Programme is a vital part of our healthcare system and investing in polio is an investment in the country's overall health system," he

said, adding "The polio infrastructure has proven how it can offer the most reliable support for the most challenging of health emergencies, like we saw with the COVID-19 response, which capitalized on the experiences of polio surveillance teams."

## Challenges faced by QAU require immediate attention: Minister

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Education and Professional Training Rana Tanveer Hussain on Monday said Quaid-e-Azam University (QAU) is a prestigious institute and the challenges faced by the university require immediate attention. He said this during a meeting with the Vice-Chancellor (VC) of the QAU Dr. Niaz Ahmad Akhtar who called on him here. The minister highlighted the role and importance of accountability for institutions saying that no institute can thrive without accountability as it plays a vital role in effi-

cient and effective management. He at the outset reiterated his resolve to ensure that all the current issues of QAU would be addressed on a war footing. The minister assured Dr. Niaz of complete cooperation while highlighting his high expectations. QAU VC Dr. Niaz Ahmad Akhtar appreciated the trust put in him by the minister and assured the minister that all the ongoing challenges of QAU will be addressed immediately. He said that he considers this position a trust and will dispense his duties with utmost honesty.

## SAU veteran professor honoured with life time achievement award

HYDERABAD (APP): Dr. Abdullah G. Arijio, a veteran Professor of Sindh Agriculture University Tando Jam has been honoured with the "Life Time Achievement" award in recognition of his services in the field of education and research. According to a university spokesman, the lifetime achievement award has been awarded to Dr. Abdullah G. Arijio during 41st international congress of Zoology held at Punjab University Lahore. Dr. Abdullah G. Arijio, former Chairman and Professor (Retd) of the Department of Parasitology (Zoology), Faculty of Animal Husbandry and Veterinary Sciences Sindh Agriculture University Tando Jam received his award from Dr. Shahid Munir, the Chairman of the Punjab Higher Education Commission in

presence of a large number of scientists from universities and other research institutions across the country. The spokesman informed that Dr. Arijio had played an important role at the national and international level through his research in collaboration with German and American universities. He authored five books in the field of parasitology and his 106 research papers have been published in various international and national journals. Dr. Abdullah G. Arijio also supervised 6 Ph.D and more than 70 M.Phil and M.Sc scholars during his academic career. He also received the university's best teacher award in 2015, and in March 2015 he was awarded the zoologist of the year award by the Higher Education Commission Islamabad.

## Health week kicks off in Punjab

LAHORE (APP): On the direction of Punjab Caretaker Minister for Primary and Secondary Healthcare Dr Jamal Nasir, the health week was inaugurated at Mian Mir Hospital here on Monday. The health week would continue across the province from March 20 to 22. According to official sources, Special Secretary Health Ammara Khan and Health Services DG Ilyas Gondal kicked off the health week. The Special Secretary also reviewed health facilities being provided in camps set up for

screening of different diseases. In 295 health facilities, 400,000 patients were being screened against eight diseases. Camps had been set up in 26 DHQs and 125 THQs hospitals for screening of different diseases. The screening was also being carried out in 108 rural health centres and 36 basic health centres. Health services DG Ilyas Gondal said that screening of hepatitis B & C, PCR and HIV testing would be carried out. He said that vaccination of hepatitis B was also underway.

## Int'l Day for Elimination of Racial Discrimination to be marked on Mar 21

ISLAMABAD (APP): The International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination will be marked on March 21 (Tuesday) across the globe including Pakistan to remind people of racial discrimination's negative consequences. It also encourages people to remember their obligation and determination to combat racial discrimination. The International Day to Eliminate Racial Discrimination is a chance for people to voice opinions for promoting equality across backgrounds and cultures. Various activities and events are arranged in many countries worldwide on this day. Previous activities included a webcast from the UN headquarters on March 21 featuring special appearances of UN leaders. Young people also have the option of posting their opinions regarding dis-

cussions on human rights and racial discrimination at Voices of Youth, which is UNICEF's online bulletin board for youth. Other activities include essays, photo projects, and published articles. The International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination was established six years after an event, known as the Sharpeville tragedy or Sharpeville massacre, which captured worldwide attention. This event involved police opening fire and killing 69 people at a peaceful demonstration against the apartheid "pass laws" in Sharpeville, South Africa, on March 21, 1960. The UN General Assembly called on the international community to increase its efforts for eliminating all forms of racial discrimination when it proclaimed the day as a UN Day of observance in 1966.

## Closing Ceremony of 1st chief of the Naval Staff International Sailing Regatta 2023



KARACHI (Staff Reprot): Closing ceremony of 1st Chief of the Naval Staff International Sailing Regatta 2023 was held at Karachi. Chief of the Naval Staff Admiral Muhammad Amjad Khan Niazi graced the ceremony as Chief Guest. International sailors from Australia, Bahrain, Egypt, Malaysia, Oman, Singapore, Sri Lanka, and Thailand along with participants from Pakistan took part in the event. The five days long event comprised races in Laser Standard, Laser 4.7 and Windsurfing categories. A total of twelve races were held in each category. While addressing the audience, Chief of the Naval Staff appreciated the participants and congratulated the winners for their achievements in various categories. He added that Pakistan Navy

will continue to organize National and International level sailing events with an aim to promote Sailing and provide a platform for promising national players who possess ability to reach glory of excellence. Later, Chief Guest gave away the prizes to winners and runners ups of different categories. In Laser Standard, Khairulnizam Mohd Afendy from Malaysia secured first position and Asri Bin Azman from Malaysia stood the runner-up. In Laser 4.7 category, Noppassorn Khunboonjan from Thailand stood first and Issac Goh from Singapore got 2nd position. Whereas, in Windsurfing category Raja Qasim Abbas from Pakistan clinched the 1st position and Muhammad Izzuddin from Malaysia secured 2nd position.

## Health week kicked off in Muzaffargarh

MUZAFFARGARH (APP): Local health department organised Health Week on Monday to offer free of cost health facilities to commoners, particularly needy strata of society. Medics of different specialties including gynae, pulmonology and medicines will check patients with regard to their respective illnesses and offer requisite treatment. Pathologists will collect blood samples to hold free-of-cost tests, especially for poor and non-affording patients. Tests of malaria, hepatitis and diabetes will be conducted on the spot. The week will be supervised by CEO Health, Dr Zafar Abbas, CEO District Health Authority, Dr Zia ul Hassan and the Medical Superintendent of DHQ hospital.

## SABS University announces admission policy 2023-2024

HYDERABAD (APP): The management of Shaheed Allah Buksh Soomro (SABS) University of Art, Design and Heritages Jamshoro has announced the admission policy for the year 2023-24. The university spokesman informed here on Monday that the policy was discussed and approved in the meeting of the admission committee chaired by the Vice Chancellor Prof. Dr Arabella Bhutto. The admission committee included all chairmen, the registrar and in-charge admissions. According to the approved policy, the candidates who have passed intermediate in the last five years will be allowed to apply for admission. The minimum criteria for candidates in intermediate will be 45 percent while 50 percent for aspirants in architecture, whereas the test will consist of 60 percent drawing and 40 percent mcqs.

## 15 food outlets fined

SARGODHA (APP): Punjab Food Authority (PFA) on Monday imposed fines on fifteen food points and a milk carrying vehicle in the division over violation of authority's rules. According to PFA officials, a food safety team headed by Deputy Director (Operations) Shahbaz Sarwar checked various food units in the division, and imposed a fine of Rs 197,000 on 15 food outlets over violations. Meanwhile, the food safety team also imposed a fine of Rs 3000 on a milk supplier for selling sub-standard milk in the city. The team also got registered a case against a person for adulteration in Khoya (condensed milk) in Kotmomin.

## Indus Highway's restoration underway after devastating floods

ISLAMABAD (APP): The National Highway Authority (NHA) has been working on a number of road schemes and bridge construction projects to permanently restore the affected sections of the Indus Highway (N-55), which is a major roadway that connects various cities and towns. Talking to APP here on Monday, an official of NHA said that various sections of the Indus Highway (N-55) spanning 281 kilometres,

## 3rd Round of Pakistan and China Bilateral Political Consultations

BEIJING (APP): The Third Round of Pakistan-China Bilateral Political Consultations (BPC) was held in Beijing. Foreign Secretary Dr. Asad Majeed Khan led the Pakistan delegation while the Chinese side was led by Vice Foreign Minister Sun Weidong. BPC is a regular institutional mechanism between Pakistan and China. The two sides reviewed the entire spectrum of bilateral relations, and agreed to expand and reinforce political and security cooperation, bilateral trade, economic and financial cooperation, cultural exchanges, tourism, and people-to-people ties. Pakistan and China will also enhance high level engagements and dialogue mechanisms and make the channels of communication even more robust. Noting the completion of a decade of China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), the two sides reaffirmed their commitment



to CPEC that remains a major pillar of bilateral cooperation and a symbol of ever deepening friendship between Pakistan and China. They also agreed to remain engaged in expansion of CPEC including on participation of third parties to enhance regional connectivity and cooperation. Foreign Secretary thanked the Chinese side for its consistent and generous support for economic stability of Pakistan and the humanitarian assistance during the devastating floods in 2022. Vice Foreign Minister Sun reaffirmed China's support for Pakistan's sovereignty, territorial integrity and economic security.

## Travel alert: Motorway M3 to be closed from Sharqpur to Nankana on Tuesday

ISLAMABAD (APP): A 500 KV electricity wire installation is set to take place on Motorway M3 which will result in the closure of the motorway for all types of traffic from Sharqpur to Nankana on March 21 (Tuesday). The closure will be in effect from 8 am to 5 pm, said a press release issued by National Highways and Motorway Police (NH&MP). Passengers travelling from Lahore to Multan will be affected by the closure and will be diverted to GT Road from the Sharqpur Interchange. Similarly, those travelling from Multan to Lahore will be diverted to GT Road

from the Nankana Interchange. In anticipation of the closure, a special briefing has been given to drivers of Public Service Vehicle (PSV) drivers to use GT Road from Lahore to Multan. Individuals seeking more information regarding the closure and alternate routes can contact the helpline at 130. This development is significant as the installation of the 500 kV electricity wire will improve the reliability and stability of the electricity transmission network. However, it will result in temporary inconvenience for motorists travelling on the Motorway M3.

## World Poetry Day to be marked tomorrow

ISLAMABAD (APP): World Poetry Day will be marked on March 21 (Tuesday) across the globe including Pakistan, to appreciate and support poets and poetry around the world. It is held annually on March 21 and is an initiative of the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). Many people around the world celebrate World Poetry Day on or around March 21 each year. Government agencies, educators, community groups and individuals get involved in promoting or participating in the day, which is an opportunity for children to be introduced to poetry in classrooms. Poets may be invited to read and share their work with audiences at bookstores, cafes, universities and

schools. Awards and other forms of recognition are made to honour poets and their work. Exhibitions and poetry evenings are also organised to showcase the work of various poets. In November 1999, UNESCO designated World Poetry Day to be held on March 21 each year. The organization recognised the important role of poetry in the arts and in cultures throughout the world and over time, besides promoting the efforts of small publishers with regard to publishing poetry. The day also focused on encouraging a return to the oral tradition of poetry recitals, as well as strengthening the association between poetry and other forms of expression, such as dance, music, and painting. The first World Poetry Day was held on March 21, 2000.

## PTI's "disgusting" smear campaign against COAS deserves strongest condemnation: PM

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Monday said that the "disgusting" smear campaign of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) against Chief of the Army Staff General Asim Munir, at the behest of Imran Niazi, deserved the strongest condemnation. On Twitter, the prime minister said that Imran Niazi was stooping to unprecedented lows in his desperation for power and going to the extent of damaging the country and undermining its armed forces and their leadership. The campaign against the COAS was intolerable and the continuation of a conspiracy against the national institutions, according to a PM Office press release. The prime minister urged overseas Pakistanis to raise their voice against the "foreign-funded" campaign. He said as

the dirty political game was being played through the expatriates, they should not become part of the conspiracy. He said Imran Khan was violating the constitution by dragging the institutions and their leadership into his "dirty" politics. The prime minister also instructed the interior minister to strictly deal with those running such a smear campaign against the institutions. He also warned of strict legal action against those fanning chaos and subversion in the country. A campaign against an army chief appointed purely on merit for the first time in the country's history could only be an agenda of the anti-Pakistan elements, he added. "The whole nation stands by its institutions and is united against miscreants," the prime minister remarked.

## Imran spreading chaos & anarchy in country: Javed Latif

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister Mian Javed Latif on Monday said Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) chief Imran Khan was spreading chaos and anarchy in the country only to achieve his political interests. Talking to a private television channel, he said Imran Khan was attacking national institutions to regain power and added that due to the poor policies of the PTI government country was facing an economic crisis and other challenges. The coalition government was taking all-out

measures to steer the country out of challenges, he added. He said that it was the need of the hour to work together for the well-being of Pakistan. The coalition government will not allow any person to spread anarchy in the country, he added. In reply to a question, he said Imran Khan should face court trials and prove himself guiltless rather he was trying to hide in Zaman Park. The PTI chief should respect the courts and obey the law of the country, he added.

## Khubaib Foundation organizes funds raising event in UK

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Khubaib Foundation on Monday organized funds raising event in Manchester United Kingdom (UK) to generate funds and raise awareness for the victims of recent earthquakes in Turkey and Syria. The event aimed to bring attention to the plight of those who have lost their homes and loved ones and encourage people to donate generously towards the cause, said a news release received here. The event was attended by a number of prominent Philanthropists, busi-

ness community and representatives of INGOs. Engin Altan, a renowned Turkish actor famous for his role as Ertugrul in the popular Turkish drama series Dirilis and Ertugrul especially travelled from Istanbul to participate in the event. On this occasion, Chairman Khubaib Foundation, Nadeem Ahmed Khan apprised the audience about the current situation in earthquake-affected areas and also appealed for urgent financial assistance and donations for needy people in Turkey and Syria.

## Rescue 1122 recovered the dead body of minor girl from Dhamtoor bypass road

ABBOTTABAD (APP): Rescue 1122 Abbottabad Monday recovered the dead body of a five-year-old girl named Samaviya Noor, daughter of Safir Ahmed, who drowned in the Bilal Town Garga Nullah after a heavy downpour in Abbottabad yesterday. Despite a four hour long effort rescue workers could not recover the dead body of the minor

girl due to darkness and the heavy flow of the water in Nullah. Today morning the rescue operation led by Emergency Officer Fahad Ali Masood started in the area of Kala Pul, Bilal Town and Dhamtoor. After a three-hour search operation the dead body of the girl was found on Dahmthor Bypass and was shifted to DHQ Hospital.

## SRSO organizes theaters in flood affected districts for community awareness

KARACHI (APP): The Sindh Rural Support Organization (SRSO) organized theatres in the different flood-affected districts of Sindh Province for community awareness. In this connection, a theatre was organized at village Abdul Latif Shar UC Hyndari Taluka Tharhi MirWah, Khairpur on Monday, under UNICEF supported Integrated Services Project. It aims to create awareness among flood-affected communities regarding key child rights and provide Psychosocial Support through theatre performance. The famous tv Comedian Sohrab Soomro and his team performed at the event and spread key messages regarding child protection, health, nutrition, mental health, and early child marriages. A large

number of men, women and children from flood-affected villages of the UC attended and were entrained from the theatre. UNICEF representatives, Rizwan Shaikh and Sajid Leghari participated. Speaking on the occasion, SRSO UNICEF Project Manager, Naveed Ishaq Memon told that SRSO is implementing UNICEF-supported Community Engagement and Social Mobilization for Raising Community Awareness on Health, Nutrition, Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) and Referral Mechanisms for Integrated Services, adding that the project is being implemented in most-flood affected 37 UCs of 5 districts of Sindh including Larkana, Dadu, Khairpur, Kamber-Shahdadkot and Naushahro Feroz.

## 5 more tested positive for coronavirus in RWP

RAWALPINDI (APP): Five more people were diagnosed with fatal coronavirus during the last 24 hours, raising the district's confirmed cases to 47,794. As per the latest data released by the District Health Authority here on Monday, the infected cases included 44,142 from Rawalpindi and 3,652 from other districts. Among the new cases, three cases had arrived from Potohar town and two from Rawalpindi Cantonment area. "Presently, 15 confirmed patients are quarantined at homes while no one at any

district health facility", the report added. The report further said that 7,006,011 people, including 44,790 health workers, had jabbed themselves against the lethal Coronavirus (COVID-19) across the district since the vaccination administering drive launched on March 10, 2021. In addition, District Health Authority updated that during the last 24 hours, 308 samples were collected, out of which 303 were declared negative, while the positivity rate was recorded at 1.62 per cent.

## 95 pc diseases preventable through oral hygiene: President

ISLAMABAD (APP): President Dr. Arif Alvi on Monday said 95 percent diseases can be prevented through oral hygiene and urged the general public to adopt the practice for their own health. In his message to the nation on World Oral Health Day, he emphasized cleaning the mouth twice a day with a toothbrush or a Miswak (tooth-cleaning twig). The president



mentioned that The Holy Prophet (Peace be upon Him) used to clean his mouth and teeth frequently. He

quoted a Hadith as saying that cleanliness in Islam is considered as half the faith. He said about 21 Hadiths in Sahih Bukhari laid stress on cleaning and use of Miswak. Dr Alvi said oral diseases are difficult and expensive to treat and thus could be prevented through proper oral hygiene. He warned that betel nut could cause oral cancer and thus needed to be avoided.

## Rangers arrest gang of street criminals

KARACHI (APP): Pakistan Rangers Sindh and Police in a joint intelligence-based operation in Qasba Colony, Katti Pahari area arrested five-member gang of street criminals and recovered illegal arms from their possession. Arrested were identified as Sulaiman alias Bhai, Muhammad Zahoor, Afzal Khan, Muhammad Haroon and Abdul Ghani alias Sheena, said a news release on Monday. Accused Sulaiman alias Bhai had been arrested earlier also after an encounter with police. During initial interrogation accused Zahoor revealed that he was head of the gang and he was also involved in providing arms on a rental basis to criminal elements.

## 25 booked for power pilfering

SARGODHA (APP): Faisalabad Electric Supply Company (FESCO) task force team caught 25 people for pilfering electricity from direct lines across the district during the last fortnight. A spokesperson for the FESCO Sargodha division said on Monday that on the directions of Superintendent Engineer Fesco circle office Sargodha Ibrar Ahmad, the task force during a raid at various areas of the district, caught a power pilferer from first sub-division, 4 from second sub-division, 4 power theft from third sub-division, 13 from Bhalwal sub-division and 3 power pilferers from Johrabad sub-division.

## CPWB takes victim girl into custody

LAHORE (APP): Child Protection and Welfare Bureau (CPWB) has taken an innocent housemaid Mehak, who was subjected to torture by the house owner, into its custody. In a press statement issued here on Monday, CPWB Chairperson Sara Ahmed said that on a helpline -1121 call, the team rescued 13-year old Mehak from Mayo Hospital quarter. The girl was tortured with sticks and have marks on her head, face, arm and other body parts, she said and added that legal action would be initiated against the people involved in the torture after medico legal report.

## Int'l Day of Forests to be marked tomorrow

ISLAMABAD (APP): The International Day of Forests will be marked on March 21 (Tuesday) across the globe including Pakistan which promotes the importance of forests and trees in our lives and addresses issues such as deforestation. The UN works with governments, community organizations, and the general public to promote both local and global activities for the International Day of Forests. Activities include tree planting campaigns, photo exhibits that portray the importance of forests and trees and sharing of infographics, videos, news, and messages via social and other media. Forests cover about one-third of the world's land mass.

## IRSA releases 80,100 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD (APP): Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Monday released 80,100 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 63,600 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1425.17 feet and was 27.17 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 22,700 cusecs while outflow as 30,000 cusecs. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1095.30 feet, which was 45.30 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet.

## Five bids to smuggle 3795 flour bags foiled

RAWALPINDI (APP): The Food Department Rawalpindi and district police here on Monday foiled five bids to smuggle 3795 wheat flour bags. According to a district administration spokesman, the authorities of the food department along with Potohar Division police conducted raids in different areas and rounded up five drivers namely Sabaz Ali, Noor Muhammad, Sahib Gul, Arab Gul and Wiki Khan and recovered 3795 wheat flour bags. He informed that the accused were trying to smuggle wheat flour bags out of Rawalpindi division. The Food Department Rawalpindi and district police on the directives of Deputy Commissioner

(DC) and City Police Officer, Rawalpindi also conducted raids at two godowns and recovered 230 flour bags besides netting Basit Khan and Hazrat Khan. He said strict action in accordance with the law was being taken against wheat smugglers and hoarders. He further informed that District Administration on the directives of the Punjab government had set up 10 mega points to supply free flour to poor and deserving people. Four mega points had been set up in Rawalpindi while one each established at tehsil level he said and informed that four counters were set up at each mega point including two for men and two for women.

## Int'l conference on computing, mathematics, engineering technologies held

SUKKUR (APP): A Two-day international conference on computing, mathematics and engineering technologies (iCoMET) 2023, organized by department of electrical engineering, held at Sukkur IBA University here on Monday. Sukkur IBA University hosted 4th iCoMET-2023, aimed at providing a platform for researchers and students to present their work on various disciplines, especially "Sustainable Technologies for Socio-Economic Development". The conference focused on sustainable technologies for socio-economic development. The two-day conference included a number of interna-

tional and national guest speakers, who addressed on different topics. According to the organizers of the conference, researchers and keynote speakers from USA, Italy, Sweden, Norway, Turkey and Japan along with six national speakers participated in the conference. In the opening session of the conference, The Vice Chancellor Sukkur IBA University Prof Dr Asif Ahmed Shaikh welcomed the international and national participants in the International Conference and said, since day one it is our endeavour to encourage a culture of research and innovation at our university.

## Govt. spends Rs. 3,930.72 million on IT-related projects in eight months

ISLAMABAD (APP): The government has released funds amounting to Rs 5.156 billion to execute Information Technology related projects during the eight months of the current fiscal year under the Public Sector Development Programme (PSDP 2022-23). According to official data available with APP, the government has authorized the utilization of development funds amounting to Rs 5,156.57 million out of a total allocation of Rs. 6330.70 million for various ongoing and new projects of the Ministry of Information Technology and

Telecommunication. Out of the total authorized/dispensed amount, the total amount spent on the development projects during the corresponding period (July-February) stood at Rs 3,930.72 million. According to the disbursement mechanism of the Planning Division, the development funds allocated in the Federal budget are released at the rate of 20 per cent in the first quarter (July-September), followed by 30 per cent each in the second and third quarters, and the remaining 20 per cent in the last quarter (April-June) of a fiscal year.

## Diversion tunnel A of Dasu Hydropower Project will be ready by mid April

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 1.5-Km long diversion tunnel A, with 20-meter width and 23-meter height of Dasu Hydropower Project will be ready by mid April to cater for the increased water flows during the high-flows season. Diversion system of Dasu Hydropower Project is comprised of two tunnels - tunnel A and tunnel B adding that the tunnel B has already been completed, source told APP here. The diversion tunnel B has the discharge capacity, sufficient to divert water of River Indus during the current lean-flows season, they said. They said the mighty River Indus has already successfully diverted following completion of diversion tunnel

B. Instead of its natural course, River Indus was now flowing through a 1.33-Kilometer long diversion tunnel with 20-meter (m) width and 23-m height. Consequently, construction activities have been initiated on the starter dam, leading towards construction of the main dam of Dasu Hydropower Project. Dasu Hydropower Project is a vital component of the least-cost, green and clean energy generation plan of WAPDA. The project is being constructed across River Indus, upstream of Dasu town in Upper Kohistan district of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The 4320 MW-Dasu Hydropower Project is planned to be completed in two stages.

## PR sells 3,705 metric tons scrap through transparent bidding

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Railways (PR) has sold around 3,705 metric tons of scrap through fair and transparent bidding and reserved almost 11,836 metric tons for railways' use. "The railways scrap is an asset of the country while scrap disposal target per annum is in billion of rupees which is added to the national exchequer," an official source in the Ministry told APP. He said that copper scrap has not been disposed of for some time while some scrap was recently given on Government-to-Government basis and the department had received heavy amount in this regard. Around 18,867 metric tons of scrap is yet to

be auctioned and its estimated value was around Rs 2358.375 million at a cost of Rs125 per kg without taxes, he added. He said that Ministry of Railways has the concerned officers to speed up the sale auction process of pending scrap. To a question, he said Pakistan Railways is trying its level best to transform itself into a profitable organization despite financial constraints. The department in this regard has developed a two-pronged action plan that included concentration on core activities and emphasis on revenue generation through non-core activities. He said Pakistan Railways has been serving the nation since independence.

## Oil Updates: Crude price falls; Goldman Sachs cuts Brent oil forecasts

RIYADH (Agencies): Oil prices fell on Monday to their lowest in 15 months on concerns risks in the global banking sector may cause a recession that would lead fuel demand to decline and ahead of a potential hike in US interest rates this week. Brent crude futures for May settlement fell \$2.32, or 3.2 percent, to \$70.65 a barrel at 10:10 Saudi time. The contract earlier declined to as low as \$70.56, its lowest since December 2021. Last week, Brent fell nearly 12 percent, its biggest weekly fall since December. US West Texas Intermediate crude



for April delivery was at \$64.59 a barrel, down \$2.15, or 3.2 percent. It earlier fell to \$64.51, also its lowest since December 2021. The contract declined by 13 percent last week, its biggest weekly drop since last April. Kuwait Oil Co. on Monday declared a

state of emergency due to an oil leak in the west of the country. Production was not affected because of the oil leak and there were no injuries reported, the company said in a statement. Iraq's Prime Minister Mohammed Shia al-Sudani and Haitham Al Ghai, Secretary General of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries stressed the need to coordinate among oil-exporting nations to ensure prices do not fluctuate and impact both exporter and consumer countries, the Iraqi government said in a statement.

## Wheat falls 1.3 percent, corn down as Black Sea grain export deal extended

SINGAPORE (Agencies): Chicago wheat and corn futures slid on Monday, with prices under pressure after a deal to export grains from war-torn Ukraine was extended over the weekend, easing some of the concerns over global supply, according to Reuters. Soybeans ticked lower on ample supplies from newly harvested record crop in Brazil. "There wasn't huge amount of doubt about the Black Sea deal but as far as today's market action goes, I think the extension of the deal is putting pressure on prices," said Phin Ziebell, an agribusiness economist at National Australia Bank. The most-active wheat contract on the Chicago Board of Trade was down



1.3 percent at \$7.01 a bushel, as of 0342 GMT, and corn lost 1 percent to \$6.28 a bushel. Soybeans eased 0.3 percent to \$14.71-3/4 a bushel. The deal allowing the safe Black Sea export of Ukrainian grain was renewed on Saturday for at least 60 days — half the intended period — after Russia warned any further extension beyond mid-May would depend on the removal of some Western sanctions.

## Bitcoin thrives in chaos, breaks above US\$28,000

HONG KONG (Agencies): Turmoil in the banking sector, hotter-than-expected inflation data, and renewed hopes for a dovish Federal Reserve has Bitcoin reaching levels not seen in about nine months. The largest digital coin topped US\$28,000 for the first time since June 2022, trading at around US\$28,200 at 9.45am in London on Monday. Bitcoin is now up more than 70% since the start of the year. Other tokens have rallied as well, with Ether gaining



almost 50% since Dec 31 and Solana, one of last year's most beaten-down coins, more than doubling. Crypto markets have now regained all ground lost since hedge fund

Three Arrows Capital and crypto lender Celsius Network collapsed during a tumultuous stretch last summer. The havoc in traditional banking markets, which saw Swiss lender Credit Suisse Group AG lurch into a government-mediated takeover by rival UBS Group AG on Sunday and several US lenders fail in past weeks, is propping up crypto by fueling expectations that central banks will have to pause rate increases.

## Saudi National Bank says its Credit Suisse investment has 'no impact' on growth plans or profits

RIYADH (Agencies): Credit Suisse's largest shareholder Saudi National Bank has confirmed there is "no impact" on its growth plans or profitability after the troubled Swiss lender was bought out by UBS. The SNB made a SR5.5 billion (\$1.4 billion) investment in the bank in November 2022, but as of a month later it only represented 0.5 percent of the Saudi firm's total assets and approximately 1.7 percent of its investments portfolio. Banking



giant UBS is buying Credit Suisse for almost \$3.25 billion, in a deal orchestrated by regulators in an effort to avoid further market-shaking tur-

moil in the global banking system. Swiss authorities pushed for UBS to take over its smaller rival after a plan for Credit Suisse to borrow up to 50 billion francs (\$53.76 billion) failed to reassure investors and the bank's customers. In a statement to the Saudi stock exchange, SNB said: "Changes in the valuation of SNB's investment in Credit Suisse have no impact on SNB's growth plans and forward-looking 2023 guidance."

## Yen falls, dollar defensive as central banks calm markets

TOKYO (Agencies): Currency markets showed some cautious optimism after global authorities moved to stem contagion from a simmering banking crisis, with the safe haven dollar on the back foot and the yen tumbling amid a rebound in Treasury yields. The risk-sensitive Australian dollar jumped to a two-week high, while the euro edged higher for a third straight day. Over the weekend, the Federal Reserve, European Central Bank, Bank of England, Swiss National



Bank, Bank of Canada and Bank of Japan announced joint action to enhance market liquidity. That followed Swiss authorities' negotiation of a buyout of Credit Suisse by UBS, but

at a huge discount and with massive debt writedowns. The currency market's "initial response has been a 'risk positive' one", Ray Attrill, head of a foreign-exchange strategy at National Australia Bank wrote in a note to clients, pointing to the yen's slide and Aussie's rebound in particular. The yen dived 0.6% to 132.59 per dollar as 10-year Treasury yields jumped 12 basis points to 3.52% to start the week, pulling away from the low of 3.369% from Thursday.

## Investors dump Credit Suisse stock, bonds after UBS rescue

LONDON (Agencies): Investors dumped Credit Suisse shares and bonds on Monday after rival UBS agreed at the weekend to take over the 167-year old bank for just a fraction of its market value, with hefty backstops from the Swiss government. Credit Suisse shares slid by almost 62% in Swiss premarket trading to around 0.61 Swiss francs (US\$0.6578), while the value of its additional tier 1 (AT1)



bonds — a type of contingent convertible bonds that is considered to be the riskiest type of debt banks can use —

dropped as low as 1 cent on the dollar after the bank said 16 billion Swiss francs worth of the debt will be written down to zero. The debt is being written down on the orders of the Swiss regulator as part of its rescue merger with UBS, it was announced on Sunday, which angered bondholders. A US\$1 billion AT1 bond with a coupon of 4.5% was bid as low as 1 cent on the dollar, Tradeweb pricing showed.

## Saudi Arabia launches \$234m funding program to boost Kingdom's growing film sector

RIYADH (Agencies): Saudi Arabia's Cultural Development Fund has launched a \$234 million Film Sector Financing Program to prop up the budding film sector in the Kingdom. As the name suggests, it is aimed at supporting the Saudi film industry by offering financial packages to local and foreign firms to empower the private sector and boost local con-



tent. The packages will be broadly focused on small and medium enterprises in the sector. "We are excited

to announce that we have partnered with strategic financial institutions across the country to provide companies working in the film sector with the financial solutions to shore up the film sector, establish financial sustainability for film projects, and enable healthy market dynamics," said the fund's chief executive, Mohammed Bindaayel.

## UBS CEO says bank can handle Credit Suisse takeover risks

ZURICH (Agencies): UBS can handle the risks from taking over Swiss rival bank Credit Suisse, UBS chief executive Ralph Hamers told broadcaster SRF. In a package orchestrated by Swiss regulators on Sunday, UBS will pay 3 billion Swiss francs (US\$3.23 billion) for 167-year-old Credit Suisse and assume up to US\$5.4 billion in losses. Hamers, who will lead the combined entity as



chief executive, said UBS would be able to manage the risks that could emerge from a so-called superbank. "We have a

very good capital ratio at UBS, and we also have a very good liquidity position. So we have contained the risks in the markets," Hamers said in the interview broadcast early on Monday. "The second step for us is to transform CS's investment bank into an investment bank like UBS has. We call this a capital-light investment bank. In doing so, we are not taking so much risk."

## US regulator sells Signature Bank assets to another lender

SAN FRANCISCO (Agencies): The US banking regulator has struck a deal to sell most of the assets of the failed Signature Bank to another institution, the agency said on Sunday. Signature Bank was seized by the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC) a week ago after it imploded in the wake of the collapse of Silicon Valley Bank (SVB) earlier in March, a failure that has sent convulsions through the global banking sector. The FDIC is also seeking a similar deal to sell off parts of SVB, according to Bloomberg.

Flagstar Bank, a subsidiary of New York Community Bancorp, will take over all the deposits and some loan portfolios of Signature Bank, the regulator said in a statement. Signature Bank held deposits of US\$88.6 billion as of December 31, 2022, the statement said, adding that the bank's 40 branches would open under Flagstar on Monday. About US\$60 billion in loans and US\$4 billion in deposits related to Signature Bank's digital banking business will remain under the regulator's control, according to a statement.

## Saudi retail pharmacy chain Nahdi posts \$236m profit for 2022

RIYADH (Agencies): Nahdi Medical Co., one of Saudi Arabia's leading retail pharmacy chains, recorded SR888 million (\$236.40 million) in net profit for the fiscal year 2022, recording a 9.3 percent rise over the previous year. The company recorded revenue of SR8.6 billion for 2022, representing a 6.8 percent increase over the previous year. The company said the growth was primarily driven by the strong performance of the pharma segment, the return of religious tourism to normal levels, and other strategic initiatives. Commenting on the strong set of operational



and financial results, CEO Yasser Joharji said: "2022 will be remembered as a landmark year in which we set new benchmarks, accelerated the delivery of our strategy, became a publicly listed company, grew our regional footprint, and added beats to the lives of more guests than ever before."

## Spurred by TikTok, some Americans return to cash to curb spending

WASHINGTON (Agencies): Mancured fingers meticulously place cash in transparent envelopes marked 'food,' 'gas' and other categories, demonstrating in a TikTok video a retro technique for controlling what you spend that is newly popular with some money-conscious Americans. Returning

to cash to control spending may be old fashioned, but in an era of high inflation, a growing number of consumers find that it works. Judia Griner, 25, started "cash stuffing" two years ago when she was a student at Old Dominion University in Virginia. Now, her TikTok account has more than 200,000 followers.

HANOI (Agencies): Working towards a low-carbon economy is obviously in Vietnam's economic interest, and the Vietnamese government is facilitating a long-term national energy roadmap to reach net zero emissions by 2050, Vietnam News Agency reported on Monday. Vietnam needs global part-

ners to support its green transition through long-term and low-interest financing for renewable energy projects, said Prime Minister Pham Minh Chinh at the annual Vietnam Business Forum (VBF) held here in the country's capital on Sunday. According to the latest report by the International

Finance Corporation (IFC), Vietnam will need 368 billion U.S. dollars, or 6.8 percent of gross domestic product (GDP) per year, through 2040 to tackle climate change. "Working towards two targets, becoming a high-income country and achieving carbon emission neutrality in the next 30 years.

## Kessie's stunner hands Barcelona comeback win over Real Madrid

BARCELONA (Agencies): LaLiga leaders Barcelona's pursuit of a 27th Spanish title gained momentum after substitute Franck Kessie scored a stunning goal in added time to secure a 2-1 comeback win over Real Madrid on Sunday. Barca took a huge step towards winning their first league title in four years by beating the champions for a third successive time. The result left second placed Real 12 points adrift of the leaders. Roared by almost 100,000 fans in



a sold-out Camp Nou, Barca were the better side and earned a well-deserved win against a Real Madrid side that at times seemed resigned to their fate.

"We have to be honest... We never gave up, but we are already four games behind them. Nothing is impossible, but the truth is that it's very difficult (to win the title)," Real goalkeeper Thibaut Courtois told Movistar Plus. It was an electrifying game from the start with Barcelona pressing high and they almost scored in the sixth minute with a point-blank header by Raphinha that Courtois brilliantly stopped with a reflex save using his right fist.

## The meteoric rise of Jordanian teen Abdullah Shelbayh

WIMBLEDON (Agencies): When Abdullah Shelbayh decided to turn pro last May after giving college a try for a year, he probably could not have predicted that he would rise from 1,293 to 276 in the rankings within the span of nine months. With no match-play under his belt between October 2021 and June 2022, Shelbayh quickly shook off the rust and enjoyed a strong start to his professional career, winning two of his first five ITF tournaments last year before making the semifinals



on his Challenger Tour debut in Mallorca. It was a week in Bahrain last month, however, that proved to be truly life-changing for the 19-year-old Jordanian. Competing in just his third

Challenger tournament of his career, and ranked 399 in the world, Shelbayh battled his way through a tricky draw to become the youngest Arab in history to reach the final of a Challenger Tour event. En route to the championship match, the teenage lefty knocked out world No. 79 Jason Kubler in the quarter-finals to post his first victory over a top-100 opponent and walked away from Bahrain with a runner-up trophy, 75 valuable ranking points and a career-high mark of 276.

## Silva hits out at referee for showing three red cards

MANCHESTER (Agencies): Fulham manager Marco Silva was left furious with referee Chris Kavanagh after he and two of his players were sent off in the space of 40 seconds during Sunday's 3-1 loss to Manchester United in their FA Cup quarterfinal. Silva plus two of his players — Willian and Aleksander Mitrovic — were shown red cards when a melee erupted midway through the second half at Old Trafford. Fulham were leading 1-0 and



looked poised to reach the FA Cup semifinals for the first time since 2002 when Willian was shown a red card for handling the ball in the box after

a VAR review. The Cottagers then lost their cool. While Silva said he received his marching orders for leaving the coach's area, he was also seen speaking angrily to the referee. Asked if he could repeat what he said, the Portuguese manager snapped: "I don't remember. That he was a really nice guy, or the decision was fair or something like that." Mitrovic was shown a red card for confronting Kavanagh and nudging him with his shoulder.

## Danny Lee wins LIV Golf Tucson with birdie in a playoff

MARANA (Agencies): Danny Lee birdied his final two holes for a 2-under 69 and then won LIV Golf Tucson on the second hole of a four-man playoff on Sunday by making a 25-foot birdie putt from off the 18th green for his first win in nearly eight years. It was the second playoff in LIV Golf since the Saudi-funded series began last year. Dustin Johnson won the playoff outside Boston last year. Lee finished at 9-under 275 and got into the playoff with Carlos Ortiz (65), Brendan



Steele (70) and Louis Oosthuizen (70). Oosthuizen bogeyed the par-5 17th to fall one behind, only to birdie the 18th to join the playoff. Lee nearly squandered a great chance to win on the first

playoff hole when he put his approach 5 feet from the hole on No. 18 on the first extra hole. He pushed it to the right. Ortiz was eliminated after the first extra hole when he went long off the 18th green, chipped to 6 feet and missed the par putt. Going back to the 18th hole, Lee again looked as though he wasted a good opportunity when his approach from the fairway missed the green to the right, leaving him a tough spot with the pin all the way to the right side of the green.

## Sharjah Self-Defense victorious at AJP Tour Abu Dhabi International Jiu-Jitsu Championship

ABU DHABI (Agencies): The AJP Tour Abu Dhabi International Pro Jiu-Jitsu Championship ended at Mubadala Arena on Sunday with Sharjah Self-Defense Sports Club the big winners, forcing Baniyas Jiu-Jitsu Club to settle for second and Al-Ain to take third. The event was organized by the UAE Jiu-Jitsu Federation, or UAEJFF, in association with Abu Dhabi Jiu-Jitsu Pro. Mansour Al-Dhaheri, member of the board of directors of the UAEJFF, said that the AJP championships were on a par with the highest international standards at the or-



ganizational and technical levels. "As anticipated, the AJP Tour Abu Dhabi

International Pro Jiu-Jitsu Championship was a great success, especially in terms of attendance since it was able to attract a good number of seasoned stars. The event was also successful in giving hundreds of male and female players from about 50 nations a highly competitive environment, demonstrating that the UAE is the home of champions and their first choice of destination for achieving glory." Al-Dhaheri said that the competition offered UAE athletes and their competitors a favorable environment to prepare for international and continental contests.

## Team by team analysis of the Saudi Arabian Grand Prix

JEDDAH (Agencies): Team by team analysis of Sunday's Saudi Arabian Grand Prix, second round of the season in Jeddah (listed in championship order): RED BULL (Sergio Perez 1, Max Verstappen 2) Perez started from pole for the second year in a row and took his fifth career win after leading for all but the first three laps. Verstappen started 15th and held on to the championship lead thanks to popping in the fastest lap right at the end. The second one-two finish in two races



is the team's best start to a season. Both drivers pitted on lap 18 during the safety car period, switching from medium to hard tyres. ASTON MAR-

TIN (Fernando Alonso 3, Lance Stroll retired) Alonso finished third, was demoted to fourth and then reinstated to his 100th career podium. The Spaniard collected a five second penalty for a grid infringement, and was then given a 10 second post-race penalty when the team failed to serve the first one properly. That was reversed after a review. Stroll retired with an engine recovery problem, his stopping on track triggering the safety car on lap 18.

## China, S.Korea bag titles at All England Open

BIRMINGHAM (Agencies): Li Shi Feng defeated fellow Chinese shuttler Shi Yu Qi to win the men's singles title at the All England Open badminton championships on Sunday, while South Korea's An Se-young smashed her way to the women's title. The all-Chinese men's final ended 26-24, 21-5, beginning neck-and-neck in the first game and ending in a decisive victory for 23-year-old Li in the second. "Before this week I didn't expect to reach the finals let alone win the title," said Li, who started playing badminton when he was six and considers China's Lin Dan as his badminton hero. "I want to thank all the fans and my coach." Losing compa-



triot Shi Yu Qi told reporters: "I made a few mistakes — I know the gap was big." The All England event, with more than 155 matches and over 50 hours of badminton, contributes towards potential Olympics qualification, with rankings announced after April deciding which players will go to the Paris Games in 2024. China

has dominated Olympic badminton since the sport made its debut at the Games in Barcelona in 1992, with 47 medals including 20 golds. In the women's singles, to the thunderous roar of her name, South Korea's An beat Tokyo 2020 Olympics gold medallist Chen Yu Fei of China 21-17 10-21 21-19. An beat 25-year-old Chen in a fierce battle in the women's final that at times had Chen on her knees and An skidding across the court on her stomach more than once to make a shot. "I'm so tremendously happy," said An, 21, who had knocked Tokyo Olympics silver medallist Tai Tzu Ying of Taiwan out in the semifinals on Saturday.

## Alcaraz '100%' No 1, says Medvedev

INDIAN WELLS (Agencies): Daniil Medvedev, routed in straight sets by Carlos Alcaraz in the Indian Wells final, says the 19-year-old Spaniard has "100%" earned his return to No 1 in the world, despite the absence of Novak Djokovic. Alcaraz's first Indian Wells triumph — his third Masters 1000 title — will move him back to the summit he held at the end of last year after his US Open triumph made him the youngest man ever to reach No 1. Medvedev said it should take no shine from the achievement that Djokovic, who won a record-equaling 22nd Grand Slam title at the Australian Open in January, is missing In-



dian Wells and the upcoming Miami Open because his unvaccinated status means he can't enter the US. "Oh yeah, 100%," Medvedev said when asked. "It's for sure unfortunate Novak cannot play all the tournaments, and I'm sure everyone would love to see him play because it's just good to see Novak play.

## Rybakina beats Sabalenka to claim Indian Wells title



INDIAN WELLS (Agencies): Wimbledon champion Elena Rybakina beat a misfiring Aryna Sabalenka 7-6(11), 6-4 on Sunday to claim the Indian Wells title and avenge her loss to the Belarusian in the Australian Open final. Rybakina, playing in her first WTA 1000 final, came back from a break down to grab a tightly-con-

tested first set during which second seed Sabalenka committed 10 double faults and the Kazakh 10th seed never trailed the rest of the way. Rybakina, who beat defending champion and world number one Iga Swiatek to reach the final, dropped serve when Sabalenka landed a forehand lob just inside the baseline for a 3-2 lead followed by a routine hold that gave the Belarusian control. But Rybakina refused to back down and immediately held at love to steady the ship before Sabalenka handed back the break with an untimely double fault that levelled the match at 4-4 from where the duo remained on serve to force a tiebreaker.

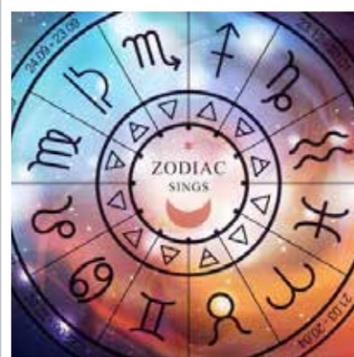
## Antetokounmpo, Lopez to the fore as Bucks bounce back against Raptors

LOS ANGELES (Agencies): Giannis Antetokounmpo bagged a triple-double and Brook Lopez delivered a huge fourth quarter as the Milwaukee Bucks returned to winning ways with a 118-111 victory over the Toronto Raptors on Sunday. The Eastern Conference leaders, jolted by a lopsided loss to Indiana on Thursday, returned to form with a dogged comeback behind win over the Raptors at Milwaukee's Fiserv Forum. Toronto led by eight near the end of the third quarter, but were overpowered down the stretch with Lopez scoring 17 of his 26 points in the final period to drag Milwaukee over the line. Antetokounmpo, meanwhile, finished with 22 points, 13 rebounds and 10 assists as Milwaukee improved to 51-20 at the top of the Eastern Conference, 2.5 games clear of the in-form Philadelphia 76ers. Fred VanVleet



led Toronto's scorers with 23 points. In other games on Sunday, Austin Reaves scored a career-high 35 points as the Los Angeles Lakers bounced back from Friday's agonizing loss to Dallas to see off Orlando 111-105. The Lakers, battling to remain in the hunt for a postseason berth in the Western Conference, were left shell-shocked after a buzzer-beating loss to the Mavs on Friday. It looked as if history might repeat itself on Sunday as the Magic closed to 101-101 with 2 minutes and 39 seconds remaining.

## DAILY HOROSCOPE: MARCH 21, 2023



to your friends and maybe take a new direction in life.  
 - **VIRGO**: You're full of energy and ought to be in high spirits for most of the day even if your people are concerned about recent news. You can buoy them without getting dragged down yourself.  
 - **LIBRA**: You're feeling pretty serious today and ought to be able to make good progress at work or with any important family business that comes up. Make sure all parties are on the same page!  
 - **SCORPIO**: Health and fitness are on your mind right now, and it's the perfect time to get started on some new program that's meant to improve your well-being. Even the tiniest steps can take you pretty far!  
 - **SAGITTARIUS**: Kids play a bigger role in today's activities than usual for you. If they're yours, they may just have louder needs than usual. If not, you might find a lost one or help a friend take care of theirs.  
 - **CAPRICORN**: Don't let worry consume you today, though it might be easy to do just that! You've got to let go of the stuff you can't control, and you should find that you turn the corner emotionally pretty soon.  
 - **ACQUARIUS**: Lend a hand whenever you're asked today. You should find that people are deeply appreciative and much more willing to cut you some slack in other aspects of your life in the future.  
 - **PISCES**: You've got to make sure that you're not simply overlooking that one big clue that could sew up all your confusion and doubt, so keep looking! It might take a few more days, but it's worth it.  
 - **TAURUS**: You need to take extra time to come to a decision today. You may have far more options than you think, but you'll never know if you bow to the pressure and jump on whatever's convenient.  
 - **GEMINI**: You have a good idea what you want to see happen, but you might need to refine your plan to bring it about. Now is a good time to get together with friends or family to get assistance.  
 - **CANCER**: You might butt heads with someone who has some power over you today, and while it might not work out all that well at first, it could turn into something really good and honest in the long run.  
 - **LEO**: Someone new breezes into your life today and might give you reason to rethink some deeply held opinion. It's a good time to open up

## US ready to ban Chinese airlines using Russia overflights – NYT

WASHINGTON (Agencies): The US Transportation Department is considering a ban on Chinese airlines' use of Russian airspace to fly passengers to the US, three officials from the administration of President Joe Biden told the New York Times on Friday. An order obliging Chinese competitors to abide by the same restrictions faced by US airlines was reportedly presented to the national security team and others last Monday. The proposal is the result of lobbying by US air carriers, who are losing up to \$2 billion annually in market share to foreign competitors



not subject to the ban on overflying Russian territory, according to industry trade group Airlines for America. A spokeswoman for the group confirmed it wants the Biden administration to "take action to ensure that foreign carriers overflying Russia do not depart,

land or transit through US airports." Airlines such as China Eastern, Emirates and Air India, whose home countries are not involved in the Ukraine conflict, have enjoyed a boom in business, since they can fly the shortest route without the need to circumvent Russia's vast territory. American carriers, on the other hand, have had to run long-haul flights with dozens of empty seats in the hope of making the plane light enough to avoid refueling on the increasingly circuitous routes required to avoid no-go zones, airline sources told the Times.

## Community health centers in Beijing offering influenza testing services

BEIJING (Agencies): Many community health centers in Beijing have started to provide influenza testing services for local residents amid the flu season, the Global Times learned from local health centers on Sunday. "After the normal registration process, patients can do an influenza antigen test, and the results will be ready in about half an hour," medical staff at the Second Community Health Service Center in Huijialou, Chaoyang district, told the Global Times. "If the test results are positive, the pharmacy is equipped with oseltamivir and other drugs to facilitate treatment for residents of the jurisdiction." On Thursday, the National Influenza Center released its 10th weekly influenza report. As of March 12, a total of 807 influenza-related outbreaks had been reported, adding to the 720 reported in the ninth week of the year. So far, more than 1,500 influenza outbreaks have been reported across the country over the last two weeks. Majiapu Community Health Center opened the A/H1N1 virus testing service in early March. "The demand from nearby residents is increasing. Since the service opened, 20 to 40 people have come to test the antigen every day, with more than 50 people at the peak." According to Luan Ran, deputy director of the center, a rapid test for swine flu antigen is also available. Patients can wait 30 minutes to get the test results, and doctors will treat the patients based on clinical symptoms. According to the Community Health Service Management Center of Chaoyang district, 38 community health centers in the district currently offer influenza virus tests, and 52 have oseltamivir to help patients. Many residents have expressed support for the arrangement. "The symptoms of influenza come quickly, and it may take a long time to go to the emergency department of a large hospital. We now can see the doctor nearby in the community and get the medicine immediately, which not only saves time but also helps us access treatment quickly. It is very convenient," a patient surnamed Yang told the Global Times on Sunday.

## Kuwait oil company declares state of emergency after onshore oil spill

KUWAIT CITY (Agencies): Kuwait Oil Company, the state-owned firm of one of OPEC's largest producers, on Monday declared a state of emergency following an oil spill on land. No people have been injured and oil production has not been disrupted after the incident, the company was quoted as saying by AFP. An oil leak has occurred in the west of the country, Kuwait Oil Company said. Kuwait's Al Rai newspaper published a photo of oil gushing out of an oil well, also saying that there have not been injuries reported or any disruption to production. No toxic fumes have been reported, either, company spokesman Qusai al-Amer was quoted as saying. The leak "occurred on land but not in a residential area", the spokesperson later told AFP, but declined to specify the exact location of the spill. Kuwait Oil Company has already sent emergency response teams to determine the source of the leak and contain the oil spill, the spokesman added. Previously, the company reported oil spills from the fields it operates in 2016 and in 2020. Kuwait, one of the largest producers in OPEC, pumps around 2.7 million barrels of per (bpd) of crude oil.

## Iraq to hold provincial elections on November 6

BAGHDAD (Agencies): Iraq's parliament has set November 6 as the date for elections for provincial councils, powerful bodies that were dissolved amid anti-government protests in 2019. "Provincial elections will take place on November 6, 2023," a statement from parliament said Monday, after lawmakers agreed on the date overnight. The elections for the councils, the first in a decade, will take place in 15 of 18 Iraqi provinces, excluding the three provinces in the autonomous Kurdistan region of northern Iraq. The provincial councils, created by the 2005 constitution following the fall of Saddam Hussein's regime, carry relatively significant power in federal Iraq, including allocating the budgets for health, transport and education. The last provincial elections took place in 2013, when loyalists of then prime minister Nuri Al-Maliki



came out on top. The next provincial elections should have taken place in 2018, but were postponed. A year later, amid vast anti-government rallies, protesters demanded and obtained the dissolution of the provincial councils, in part because critics accused them of being rife with corruption. Alaa Al-Rikabi, an independent MP who emerged in the aftermath of the October 2019 protest movement, condemned the return of the councils.

## Ex-Australian SAS soldier charged with war crimes over killing of civilian in Afghanistan



CANBERRA (News Agencies): A decorated veteran of the Australian Army's secretive special forces has been charged with a war crime after footage emerged of an Afghan farmer being mauled by a dog then executed in a field. Oliver Schulz, 41, had been celebrated for gallantry during his multiple tours of Afghanistan until damning helmet-camera video of his 2012 tour revealed to the public a disturb-

ing dark side of the elite Special Air Service Regiment (SAS). His arrest on Monday by federal police on a remote mountain property in New South Wales marked the first time a former or serving Australian soldier had been prosecuted over war crimes. "It will be alleged he murdered an Afghan man while deployed to Afghanistan with the Australian Defence Force," a statement from the Office of the Special Investigator (OSI) read. The OSI was set up after Australian special forces were accused of the murder of dozens of Afghan civilians and investigated for acts of brutality during the decade-long war. Soldiers had slit the throats of Afghans and planted weapons near their bodies to make it appear they were a threat, investigators found.

## EU seeks deal on artillery shells for Ukraine

BRUSSELS (Agencies): European Union ministers are meeting on Monday to try to finalise a plan to supply Ukraine with much-needed artillery shells, replenish its own national stocks and ramp up Europe's defence industry, as Russia continues to focus its attacks on the industrial east of the war-ravaged country. The 27-nation bloc's foreign and defence ministers will discuss the plan at a joint session in Brussels. Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba is due to provide an update of the latest developments in the year-long war and to set out his country's military needs. The EU's aim is to provide Ukraine with on million 155mm artillery shells this year. EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell, who is chairing the meeting, is seeking approval for a proposal to provide 1 billion euros (£875 million) to encourage member nations to provide artillery shells from their stocks and any orders for new rounds that they might have placed with industry. A further 1 billion euros would then be used to fast-track new orders and encourage member countries to work together on those

## Putin bans Kremlin employees from using iPhones

MOSCOW (Agencies): Blocking due to privacy concerns is not a one-way street, while Chinese software (TikTok) and hardware (Huawei) in particular are considered a danger and are therefore blocked, Russia is now taking a similar path: employees of the Russian presidential administration are no longer allowed to use Apple's iPhones due to data protection concerns, according to a report. The ban will apply from April 1, according to the newspaper "Kommersant". "For the iPhone, it's over: either you throw it away or you give it to the children," the paper quoted the participant of a meeting of the presidential administration. As a replacement, smartphones with a different operating

system would be issued. Government spokesman Dmitry Peskov was initially unable to confirm this information, but pointed out that smartphones should not be used for official occasions anyway. The US technology group Apple could not initially be reached for comment. Immediately after Russia's invasion of Ukraine just over a year ago, US and British intelligence agencies announced that they knew about Russian President Vladimir Putin's plans. However, it is unclear how they obtained this information. Putin has repeatedly stressed that he does not own a smartphone. According to Peskov, however, the Russian president occasionally uses the Internet.

## OPEC Secretary General calls for coordination between oil exporting countries

BAGHDAD (Agencies): OPEC's Secretary General Haitham Al Ghais and Iraq's Prime Minister met over the weekend and called for coordinated action among oil exporters globally in order to reduce volatility in the oil market and avoid adverse impacts for consuming countries, Reuters reported citing a statement by the Iraqi government. The official spoke during a meeting with Iraqi Prime Minister Mohammed Shia al-Sudani, who joined the call for coordination on oil markets. Neither official went into detail as to what such coordination could entail. Earlier this month, the Saudi energy minister said that OPEC+ would maintain its tighter supply plans. "There are those who continue to think we would adjust the agreement ... I say they need to wait until Friday Dec 29 2023 to demonstrate to them our commitment

to the current agreement," Abdulaziz bin Salman told Energy Intelligence in an interview. Meanwhile, Iraq's oil minister said over the weekend that Iraq—OPEC's second-largest producer—remains committed to the OPEC+ agreement on production limits. Hayan Abdel-Ghani, however, added that Iraq was prepared to boost oil production, too, if called upon to do so, The National reported. Iraq's government has plans to increase the country's oil production capacity substantially from the current rate of around 4.5 million barrels daily. However, the same government has repeatedly stated it is fully behind OPEC and its production adjustment measures. Outside OPEC, meanwhile, oil executives are warning that the cartel is back in the driving seat for global oil supply and this might mean higher prices down the road.

## Saudi to reopen consulate in Syria

RIYADH (Agencies): Saudi Arabia plans to reopen its consulate in the Syrian capital, Damascus, nearly 12 years after it was closed due to the outbreak of the civil war, Russia's Sputnik news agency reported. The agency quoted sources as saying that the kingdom may reopen the consulate in Damascus after the Eid Al-Fitr holiday, which follows the holy month of Ramadan. According to the agency, mediation efforts led by Russia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) have culminated in overcoming obstacles facing the two Arab countries, pointing out that the step comes after the deal reached between Iran and Saudi Arabia to restore diplomatic relations. The consulate reopening will be preceded by a visit by Saudi Foreign Minister Faisal Bin Farhan to Syria, during which he will meet Syrian regime President Bashar Al-Assad. In 2012, Saudi Arabia closed its embassy in Damascus and then severed diplomatic ties with the Syrian regime. Saudi also funded opposition fighters seeking to overthrow Al-Assad.

## Iraq and Iran sign deal to tighten border security

TEHRAN: Iraq and Iran signed a border security agreement on Sunday, a move Iraqi officials said aimed primarily at tightening the frontier with Iraq's Kurdish region, where Tehran says armed Kurdish dissidents pose a threat to its security, Reuters reports. The joint security agreement includes coordination in "protecting the common borders between the two countries and consolidating cooperation in several security fields", a statement from the Iraqi prime minister's office said. Iran's Supreme National Security Council secretary Ali Shamkhani signed the deal with Iraq's National Security Advisor Qasim al-Araji, in the presence of Iraqi Prime Minister Mohammed al-Sudani, the prime minister office said. "Under the signed security deal, Iraq pledges it would not allow armed groups to use its territory in the Iraqi Kurdish region to launch any border-crossing attacks on neighbour Iran," said an Iraqi security official who attended the signing. The frontier came into renewed focus last year when Iran's Revolutionary Guards launched missile and drone attacks against Iranian Kurdish groups based in northern Iraq, accusing them of fomenting protests that were sparked by the death of an Iranian Kurdish woman while she was being held in police custody. Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian, speaking in Tehran, said "Shamkhani's current trip to Iraq has been planned since four months and is focused on issues related to the armed groups in northern Iraq". The Islamic republic of Iran will in no way accept threats from Iraqi territories, he added. Iran has also accused Kurdish militants of working with its arch-enemy Israel and has often voices concern over the alleged presence of the Israeli spy agency Mossad in the autonomous Iraqi Kurdish region. Last year, Iran's Intelligence Ministry said a sabotage team detained by its security forces were Kurdish militants working for Israel who planned to blow up a "sensitive" defence industry centre in the city of Isfahan.

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