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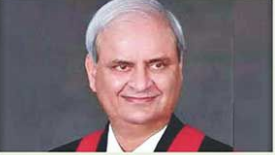
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CM Maryam lauds ASP
 Shehribano Naqvi

Simultaneously Publishing from Islamabad, Sargodha and Karachi

Justice Malik Shehzad appointed Lahore High Court chief justice



Soon Times Correspondent

ISLAMABAD
 President Dr Arif Alvi on Thursday approved appointment of Justice Malik Shehzad as chief justice of the Lahore High Court.

According to a spokesperson for the President House, Dr Arif Alvi also approved the appointment of Balochistan High Court Chief Justice Naem Akhtar Afghani as a judge of the Supreme Court.

The spokesperson further said President Alvi had also approved appointment of Justice Hashim Khan Kakar as acting chief justice of Balochistan High Court.

Meanwhile, Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz has decided to attend the oath-taking ceremony of Justice Malik Shehzad Ahmad Khan. Punjab Governor Balighur Rehman will administer oath to the new chief justice.

After swearing-in ceremony, the new chief justice will be presented guard of honour. Arrangements have been finalised for oath-taking of Justice Malik Shehzad.

Outgoing LHC chief justice Muhammad Amer Bhatti retired from service on Thursday (today).

Justice Amer Bhatti served for two years and eight months as Lahore High Court chief justice. He took charge of his office on July 6, 2021. Justice Amer Bhatti served the judiciary for 13 years.

Security forces kill two terrorists in separate operations in KP



Soon Times Correspondent

RAWALPINDI
 Security forces killed two terrorists including a ring leader in two separate operations conducted in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on night between March 6 and 7.

The Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR), in a statement, said an intelligence based operation (IBO) was conducted in Khyber district.

During the operation, terrorist ring leader Shamrooz alias Sheenay, was killed by the security forces in exchange of fire.

In another operation conducted by the security forces in Dera Ismail Khan district, terrorist Mansoor was also successfully neutralised.

Weapons, ammunition and explosives were also recovered from the killed terrorists, who remained actively involved in numerous terrorist activities against security forces as well as extortion & target killings of innocent civilians, and were highly wanted by the law enforcement agencies.

PML-N's govt To 'engage' US authorities for Aafia Siddiqui's return



Soon Times Correspondent

ISLAMABAD
 Senator Ishaq Dar said Thursday that the new government led by Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) will engage the US authorities once again for the return of Aafia Siddiqui — a Pakistani neuroscientist languishing in American jail for over a decade.

Dar, in his address to the Senate, said that the PML-N government in, 2013, had interactions with US officials and the then-prime minister Nawaz Sharif made a request in the White House, but unfortunately, it was not accepted.

"I had 3 detailed meetings with Antony Blinken [secretary of state] and I put all my efforts for the return of our daughter to Pakistan and gave many solutions but, unfortunately, nothing happened,"

CJCSC Gen Shamsahad calls on PM Shehbaz

Nawaz's counsel says NAB failed to prove ownership of Avenfield properties
 PM Shehbaz thanks world leaders including Modi for felicitations on assuming office



Soon Times Correspondent
 ISLAMABAD
 Chairman Joint Chief of Staff Committee General Sahir Shamsahad Mirza on Thursday called upon newly-elected Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, said a statement released by the Prime Minister's Office.

calling on the prime minister. A day earlier, the prime minister also had a meeting with Chief of the Army Staff (COAS) General Asim Munir on Wednesday.

The army chief congratulated the premier on his newly assumed position and expressed good wishes. Important matters including national security were discussed in the meeting, said a statement by the PMO.

Issues concerning the operational affairs of the Pakistan Army and the defence situation were also discussed, added the statement.

In a similar set of meetings, the PM met a Zardari-led delegation of the PPP with party chairperson Bilawal Bhutto Zardari in attendance. The PMO said the former president assured PM Shehbaz on the PPP's support for the new government and its efforts towards economic stability, development, and prosperity of the country.

On Sunday, PM Shehbaz won the prime minister's election after clinching 201 votes against his PTI-backed opponent, Omar

Ayub Khan. Shehbaz took the oath of office on Monday at a simple but impressive ceremony at the Aitwan-e-Sadr, attended by the services chiefs, government functionaries and senior politicians from the ruling coalition parties and other dignities.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif Thursday thanked his Indian counterpart, Narendra Modi, for congratulating him on assuming the top office, in a rare public exchange between the heads of the two arch-rival states. "Thank you Narendra Modi for felicitations on my election as the Prime Minister of Pakistan," wrote PM Shehbaz on his official X-handle.

Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) President Shehbaz was elected as the country's prime minister for the second time consecutively after he secured 201 votes with the backing of allied parties primarily Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) and the Muttalhidha Qaumi Movement-Pakistan.

Pakistan calls for ceasefire in Gaza before Ramadan



Soon Times Correspondent

ISLAMABAD
 Pakistan on Thursday demanded an immediate ceasefire in Gaza as the Islamic holy month of Ramadan is likely to begin at the weekend.

During the weekly press briefing here, Foreign Office spokesperson Mumtaz Zahra Baloch said that Islamabad strongly condemns the massacre of civilians in Gaza by Israeli military.

She called for provision of aid and medical facilities to the victims of war immediately.

Ms Baloch said Israeli forces are committing serious violations of human rights in Gaza — we demand an immediate ceasefire during the fasting month in Gaza.

Regarding Indian-occupied Kashmir, the FO spokesperson said that Kashmiris are being martyred in staged encounters.

India is involved in human rights violations in Occupied Kashmir, she said.

The FO spokesperson urged the international community to take notice of the atrocities in Occupied Kashmir. She demanded that the Kashmir issue should be resolved according to the resolutions of the United Nations.

Ms Baloch reiterated Pakistan's support to the ongoing struggle for self-determination of Kashmiris.

She demanded that atrocities on the Hurriyat leadership in Occupied Kashmir should be stopped.

PHC extends stay On oath-taking of lawmakers notified on reserved seats



Soon Times Correspondent
 PESHAWAR
 The Peshawar High Court on Thursday extended the stay order on the swearing-in ceremony of lawmakers notified on reserved seats, a move contested by the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI)-backed Sunni Ittehad Council, till March 13.

The five-member bench, headed by Justice Ishfaq Ibrahim and included Justice Ijaz Anwar, Justice Atiq Shah, Justice Shakeel Ahmed and Justice Arshad Ali, heard the Sunni Ittehad Council's (SIC) petition concerning the allocation of reserved seats.

The court adjourned the hearing until March 13, and summoned Attorney General Mansoor Usman Awan to appear on the next hearing.

Punjab cabinet approves Ramadan relief package

The chief minister tasked the district administration and food control authority to supervise the quality of the package.



Soon Times Correspondent
 LAHORE
 The Punjab cabinet on Thursday approved the Ramadan relief package. The first meeting of the provincial cabinet, with Maryam Nawaz in the chair, approved the Ramadan relief package. Over 6.5 million package which includes 10kg flour, two kg rice, two kg oil, two kg sugar will be distributed among the needy people in the province.

The chief minister tasked the district administration and food control authority to supervise the quality of the package.

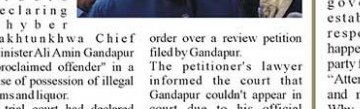
Earlier on Wednesday, an 18-member Punjab cabinet took oath. Punjab Governor Balighur Rehman administered oath to the cabinet members at a ceremony held at the Governor's House, which was also attended by Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz.

The ministers include Mariyoun Aurangzeb, Syed Muhammad Ashiq Hussain Shah, Rana Sikanar Hayat, Khawaja Imran Nazir, Khawaja Salman Rafiq, Zeeshan Rafique, Bilal Akbar Khan, Sohail Ahmed Malik, Azma

Zahid Bokhari, Bilal Yasin, Ramesh Singh Arora, Khalid Tahir, Faisal Ayub Khokhar, Shafay Hussain, Sardar Sher Ali Gorchani, and Sohail Shoukat Butt.

The names of the cabinet ministers were approved by PML-N supreme Nawaz Sharif. Mariyoun Aurangzeb has been given the portfolio of senior provincial minister. She will also hold the ministries of Planning and Development, Environment and Forest Department. Mujtaba Shujaur Rehman has been given the charge of finance minister.

Islamabad court overturns orders declaring Gandapur proclaimed offender



Soon Times Correspondent

ISLAMABAD
 A local court in Islamabad on Thursday overturned the orders declaring Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur "proclaimed offender" in a case of possession of illegal arms and liquor.

A trial court had declared Gandapur an absconder for evading the law in the case registered against him in Barakah Police Station after the recovery of five Kalashnikov rifles, a pistol, six magazines, a bullet-proof vest, three teargas shells, and bottles of alcohol in 2016.

District and Sessions Court Judge Shahrukh Arjmand nullified the trial court's order over a review petition filed by Gandapur.

The petitioner's lawyer informed the court that Gandapur couldn't appear in court due to his official engagements as the new KP CM. He requested the court to exempt Gandapur from the proceedings for today.

The lawyer stated that the trial court had declared Gandapur a proclaimed absconder for continuously skipping the proceedings in the case. He said that Gandapur hadn't received the court's summons due to non-compliance

Establishment, govt to be responsible if anything happens to imprisoned Imran Khan: PTI

"Vote ratio increased to 99.99% at polling stations after tampering".

"Nation to bear burden of IMF loan which would be spent on elites".

PTI to pursue case against ROs on basis of Form 45: Shoab Shaheen.

Soon Times Correspondent
 Islamabad
 Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) spokesperson Shoab Shaheen said that the incumbent government and the establishment would be responsible if anything happened to the incarcerated party founder Imran Khan.

"Attempts are made to threaten and murder the PTI founder. Why do terrorists choose to target only Adiala Jail instead of other jails across the country?" Shaheen said while talking to journalists outside the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) office in Islamabad on Thursday.

His statement comes after the Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) claimed to have arrested three "Afghan" terrorists and recovered a map of Adiala Jail, a

hand grenade, and Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) from their possession.

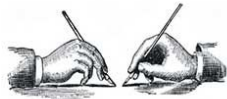
Khan, the only prime minister to be voted out of his office, is currently imprisoned in Rawalpindi's Adiala Jail as he serves several sentences in the Toshakana, un-Islamic marriage, and the eiphar case.

A failed assassination attempt was also made on Khan's life in November 2022 when he was leading an anti-government rally in Wazirabad. He sustained bullet injuries in his leg.

"Tampering" of records
 Despite Khan not being unable to run in the elections and remaining behind bars, his party secured a sizeable number of seats in the

National Assembly, and party leaders claim that their mandate was "stolen" or they would have secured an even bigger number.

In his conversation with journalists, Shaheen alleged that the average count of votes had been shown by up to 99.99% at some polling stations after "tampering" of records related to the 2024 nationwide election results which were factually "impossible."



Saman Rai
 Director General / CEO PPIF
 population welfare Department ,
 Govt of Punjab

Women's Day

As we approach International Women's Day, let's take a moment to appreciate and honor the incredible contributions of women from all corners of the globe. This day is not just a celebration but a reminder of the ongoing journey towards equality, respect, and empowerment. In line with the aspirations of FP2030, it's crucial to highlight the importance of family planning as a cornerstone of women's empowerment. Access to comprehensive family

planning services allows women to take charge of their own lives, health, and futures. This empowerment contributes significantly to the well-being of families, communities, and nations at large. Let's use International Women's Day as an opportunity to reaffirm our commitment to supporting and uplifting women everywhere, ensuring they have the resources and freedom needed to make informed choices. Together, we can make a difference.

The Historical crisis of climate change in Gilgit Baltistan:

Maqsood Hussain

According to some accounts, Gilgit Baltistan is home to some of the world's highest peaks, such as K2 and Nanga Parbat. It also shares borders with China to the north and India to the east, is where the Himalayan, Hindu Kush, and Karakoram mountain ranges converge, and has more glaciers than any other place on Earth outside of the polar regions up to 7,000. What's more concerning is that these glaciers are melting faster than before.

This so-called "Paradise on Earth" for GB is deeply concerning for natives, as they are experiencing hellish lives in the aftermath of climate-related issues and political and socioeconomic instabilities. Though climate is an ecological crisis, according to Fraser, it is a "general crisis... of economy, society, politics, and public health... whose effects metastasize everywhere, shaking confidence in established worldviews and ruling elites" (Fraser 2021, 95). Yes, as a result, climate change has a ripple effect, and it has rocked everything as postulated; the current situation in Gilgit Baltistan does not contradict the preceding assertion.

The climate crisis is like a train wreck in slow motion. As a resident of Skardu, I can attest first-hand, along with other locals, to the quick changes in temperature and season duration. A study on the fluctuating temperatures in Great Britain was conducted using daily data from 1955 to 2018 and temperature evaluations. The results revealed a downward trend in the country's summertime temperatures.

"The falling trends in summer temperatures decreased the flow of water in the Indus River and its tributaries, which seriously disturbed water supply in the upper valleys and lower plain areas for agricultural purposes," the research noted. Therefore, the primary planting seasons spring and summer affect crop yields as well. The disparity in temperature between these seasons has a profound effect on fruit flavors and yields.

The flood of 2022 was destructive for the whole world. Though rain seems to give some relief, it has the potential to clean up and gather momentum when it comes to more quantity than usual. The Indus River and its numerous tributaries record their maximum volumes in the summer because of ice melting

from the rugged highlands, maintaining a very constant equilibrium that has endured for ages. However, this balance has been upset by rising temperatures. Irreversible glacier melts have led to the creation of more than 3,000 glacial lakes in Gilgit-Baltistan, of which more than 30 are prone to glacial lake outburst floods (Ministry of Climate Change 2021). The project summary can be deciphered as follows: Due to rising temperatures, glaciers in Pakistan's northern mountain ranges (the Hindu Kush, Himalayas, and Karakoram) are melting rapidly, and a total of 3,044 glacial lakes have developed in Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP). Of these, 33 glacial lakes have been assessed to be prone to hazardous glacial lake outburst flooding (GLOF). GLOF are sudden events that can release millions of cubic meters of water and debris, leading to the loss of lives, property, and livelihoods amongst remote and impoverished mountain communities. Over 7.1 million people in GB and KP are vulnerable; in these areas, 26.7 percent and 22 percent of the population, respectively, are below the poverty line.

The devastation caused by the flood is unprecedented, as 17 people lost their lives during heavy rains and flash floods in Gilgit-Baltistan (GB), according to the Gilgit-Baltistan Disaster Management Authority (GBDMA). The Gilgit-Baltistan Disaster Management Authority (GBDMA) said that losses totaling Rs7,406 million had happened throughout GB, with 17 people having perished and six more being injured as a result of the floods. 22 powerhouses were harmed by the floods in Gilgit-Baltistan, according to GBDMA. There were 78 damaged drinking water supplies and 49 damaged roadways. In addition, 56 bridges sustained damage, and 500 irrigation canals suffered damage. According to the GBDMA, Rs7406 million in losses have resulted from the flood. These are the facts: most communities are aware of them and are implementing mitigating measures, but the government's financial support is insufficient and not substantial enough. In fact, throughout the last 20 years, Pakistan's contribution to greenhouse gas emissions has grown tremendously, from 0.3% of the global total at the turn of the millennium to 0.9% in 2021 (Government of Pakistan 2021a). Pakistan ranks among the top 20

global emitters of greenhouse gases (GHG) in absolute terms, yet it is a very small emitter per person. Methane in agriculture and carbon dioxide in the energy sector are the primary sources. The Pakistani authorities should prioritize mitigation, but in order to meet international GHG reduction obligations, we must step up our efforts. Reforming energy prices, subsidies, and taxes which might potentially help raise substantial and easily obtainable funds should be among the primary initiatives, e.g., to help finance the Sustainable Development Goals; implementing technology-based measures for green and inclusive development; and garnering more external support in the form of financing and know-how transfer.

Currently, the GB community is working on ice stupas. An oasis could be created in a parched region by utilizing pipes, gravity, and nighttime temperatures to create artificial glaciers at lower elevations. Instances of neighborhood-based and grassroots programs focused on sustainable development and environmental preservation: specialists from Baltistan University, a nearby institution, have teamed up with the people of Husainabad to construct man-made glaciers, also known as ice stupas. These structures, which resemble the towers found in Buddhist temples, are used to gather and store copious amounts of water during the winter so that it can be utilized during the dry season, especially in the months of March and April when water is most needed for the cultivation of wheat, maize, and potatoes. Sonam Wangchuk, an engineer in Ladakh, India, developed the method in 2013. As we stand at the precipice of a defining moment in Gilgit Baltistan's history, it is imperative that we unite in a concerted effort to confront the longstanding crisis of climate change. Through increased collaboration among communities, governments, and organizations, we can foster resilience and implement sustainable solutions to mitigate the adverse impacts of environmental degradation. Urgent investment in renewable energy, conservation initiatives, and infrastructure projects is essential to safeguarding the region's ecological diversity and securing a prosperous future for generations to come. Let us advocate tirelessly for policy reforms, raise awareness,

Russia-Iran Cooperation in the Changing World



Dr. Muhammad Akram Zaheer

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

They see a common threat with Russia and believe that working together is crucial for their mutual security. Even though there

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

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

Halal Food In China

by Aamir Mahmood

When I came in China, I started to worry Halal and secondly I was not used to eat their food. Therefore, I started to cook by myself, I ask my mother every time how to cook this and that dish as I am young one in my family and I never cook. First I found nearby market for vegetables, at the same I started to worry from where to buy Halal Chicken and other meats. Slowly by Slowly I came to know where to buy. In China, they don't write Halal word on food, there is specific word for Halal, "Qing Zhen". This is written in Chinese characters like this "清真". If you are

new here, you must recognize these two words. Later on I found a very famous muslim restaurant whose branches are everywhere in China. Its name is Lanzhou Lamian, it is written in Chinese characters like this "兰州拉面". I heard that it has branches in Islamabad , Karachi, Lahore as well. It has branches now almost in every country. They prepare biryani as well as noodles. The most famous foods in China are noodles, rice, steamed bread (Mantou), Baozi etc. In almost every university, hospital, airport etc. There is Halal Hotel.Chinese people drink warm water after boiling. They love Chinese green tea. There are

hundred types of green tea is grown and marketed here. Once I found pakistani basmati rice here. It is big market for rice here. In almost every big market Halal chicken, beef, mutton and other meats are available, so don't worry about halal food here, just remember two chinese character for halal and you can find it easily. Here I found many halal companies and factories want to get internationally recognized halal certificate, for this, they can pay you to visit them and verify halal food and get certificate. As China is also big halal market and they want to export to other countries as well.



Mazdoor Kisan Committee demand funds for developmental projects



Soon Times Correspondent
Nowshera Soon Sakesar.
Meeting of Mazdoor Kisan Committee was held under the chairmanship of President of Mazdoor Kisan Committee Malik Zahid Farooq Awan. After the recitation, the proceedings of the previous meeting were read out, which was unanimously approved by

the meeting. Addressing the meeting, General Secretary Mazdoor Kisan Committee Malik Nazir Awan said, Nowshera, the main city of Soon Valley, has been given the status of tehsil for 11 years. But the building of the tehsil complex has not been completed yet. The cost of the land

purchased for the judicial building has not yet been paid to the people. Road construction and repair are important to boost the tourism industry. The roads are crumbling. The new police station building has been under construction for almost two years but is still limited to foundations. Medicines are rare in THQ Hospital. Doctors write prescriptions and show patients a way out instead of admitting them to the hospital. Street lights were installed in the city at the cost of lakhs of rupees, but they are falling apart. The meeting unanimously passed a resolution to provide funds for construction and repair of roads, tehsil complex, police station, judicial complex and trauma center.

CM Punjab Visits Sargodha Medical College

Soon Times Correspondent
Sargodha:
Chief Minister of Punjab Maryam Nawaz Sharif came to Sargodha after the first cabinet meeting. Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif visited Sargodha Medical College on Faisalabad Road. She reviewed the proposed site for the Sargodha Institute of Cardiology. She was briefed on the Institute of Cardiology project. Cardiology ward, cath lab, angio ward, nursing doctor hostel and other departments will be established in the cardiology institute. She was further informed in briefing that the Institute of

Cardiology includes CCU, ICU and OPD. The Chief Minister said, for the construction of the hospital, the ease of transportation of the people should be kept in mind. Sargodha DHQ Hospital will also be upgraded. Member National Assembly Dr. Zulfiqar, Senior Provincial Minister Maryam Aurangzaib, Provincial Minister Khawaja Salman Rafiq, Khawaja Imran Nazir, Sohail Bharath, Advisor Parvez Rashid, Chief Secretary, Secretaries, Commissioner Sargodha, RPO, Deputy Commissioner and other officials were also present on this occasion.

Akmal Khan asks lawyers to avoid unnecessary adjournment of cases:



Soon Times Correspondent
Bhera:
District and Sessions Judge

Muhammad Akmal Khan said, a cordial relationship between the bench and the

bar is necessary to provide speedy justice to the people. Lawyers should avoid unnecessary adjournment of cases. He was talking to a delegation consisting of President of Tehsil Bar Bhera Chaudhry Muhammad Anwar Bola Advocate, General Secretary Malik Usman Shahzad Advocate and Joint Secretary Chaudhry Tayyab Hussain Panjutha Advocate. District and Sessions Judge Muhammad Akmal Khan said, steps are being taken to solve the problems of Bhera bar on priority basis and to construct judicial complex Bhera soon. The Bhera Bar delegation thanked him for this. Later, the delegation also met Senior Civil Judge Faiz Ahmed Ranjha and discussed various issues with him.

Sunni Ittehad Council to protest on swearing-in of reserved seats

Soon Times Correspondent
LAHORE
The Sunni Ittehad Council (SIC) decided to protest on the occasion of the swearing-in of the members on reserved seats in the Punjab Assembly session. PTI-backed member Rana Aftab said that females elected on fake mandate would be prevented from taking the oath. "No stranger will be allowed to vote on the occasion of the presidential election" Aftab stressed. MPA Ahmed Khan Bhaicher said that the newly elected women were not legally members of the house.



Apart from this, regarding the March 9 presidential election, the SIC called a meeting of the parliamentary party in the Punjab Assembly. Polling agents and other matters for presidential candidate SIC nominee Mehmood Khan Achakzai will be finalised in the meeting. Lahore:

AUC Ventures organized "The Microsoft Skills for Jobs" program



Rizwan Jalali
Karachi:
The Microsoft Skills for Jobs program was organized by AUC Ventures at a local hotel in the city. The aim of the program was to provide guidance to the young generation in the IT sector and

prepare them for global competition. The program started with the recitation of the Holy Quran, after which AUC's CEO Asad Ullah Chaudhry of the University of Oxford said, AUC has conducted more than 400 workshops in Pakistan and internationally in the United Arab

Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Iran etc. AUC has already provided Internet technology. Abid Majeed (Executive Director, AUC) urged the Pakistani business community in Pakistan to work in IT and invest in more startup companies. Former President of FPCCI Zakaria Usman also appreciated the efforts of AUC and urged the business community to work with AUC to promote technology in Pakistan. Jibran Jamshed also spoke about Microsoft's vision on this occasion and emphasized the need to adopt Microsoft technology. Director of NASTP, Dr. Shoaib Anif, spoke on the importance and adoption of cyber security. PWC's Executive Director Syed Abdul Qadir also spoke about cyber security and global challenges.

A woman can do whatever she wants: Shazia Noreen



Soon Times Correspondent
Sargodha:
International Women's Day. On this day to pay tribute to Pride of Sargodha city, Mrs. Imtiaz, known as Shazia Noreen Bangash our representative Shehzada Imran met her. She is an entrepreneur and has the honor of being the president of Sargodha Chamber of Commerce and Women of Sargodha Chambers of Business. While talking to our correspondent she said, woman is a beautiful creation of Allah. My belief is that the creation of woman

is intended to imply that she is the perverse time partner of her patron. In our Islamic history, a woman who was given a great status by Allah, she was a trader at one time, she was also the wife of the last Prophet (PBUH). So women should come to work in every field. She said, Benazir Bhutto was our first female Prime Minister who was a brave and fearless woman. In the same way, the Chief Minister of the largest province in the present era is Maryam Nawaz, who is a woman. So I think that a woman can do whatever she wants.

Azma Bukhari hints at 'Never Again' app launch. What it's about?



Soon Times Correspondent
LAHORE
Punjab Information Minister Azma Bukhari announced that the Punjab government, on the directive of Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz, is set to launch "Never Again" app

aimed at enhancing women's safety. Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz, the first woman chief minister in the country's history, is said to be deeply committed to ensuring the protection and rights of women.

Azma Bukhari elaborated on the chief minister's dedication to women's safety, stating that the "Never Again" app would be a crucial tool in monitoring and addressing women's rights and security concerns. The minister hinted at additional projects in the pipeline, emphasizing that certain non-issues were being unnecessarily magnified in the country. In addition to women's safety initiatives, Bukhari shed light on Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz's plan for environmental improvement in the province. She pledged to increase the number of dumping sites in Lahore. Furthermore, a comprehensive plan for waste management in smaller cities has been undertaken, she added. She said that the first meeting chaired by Maryam Nawaz was specifically dedicated to discussing strategies to combat inflation, indicating a strong commitment to addressing economic challenges in the province.

Imprisoned Fawad Chaudhry's family can meet him once a week



Soon Times Correspondent
ISLAMABAD
Former federal minister Fawad Chaudhry's meeting with family in jail has been fixed every Thursday. Justice Saman Riffat Imtiaz of Islamabad High Court (IHC) heard the plea seeking meeting between Fawad Chaudhry and his family. The plea was filed by Fawad's spouse Hiba Fawad. During the hearing, the state counsel informed the court that the jail administration had fixed Thursday for Fawad Chaudhry's meeting with family.

The IHC judge disposed of the plea of Hiba Fawad after ensuring that it was entertained. Fawad Chaudhry has been detained in a graft case. He allegedly awarded contract to a contractor in violation of rules and minted money.



Chinese FM urges US to honor commitments on bilateral ties



BEIJING: The United States should take an objective and rational view of China's development, and match its words with actions to honor the commitments on China-US relations, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi said Thursday. Speaking at a press conference on the sidelines of the country's annual legislative session, Wang said China-US relations bear on the well-being of the people of both countries, and the future of humanity and the world. "Our position is the three principles proposed by President Xi Jinping -- mutual respect, peaceful coexistence, and win-win cooperation," Wang said. Noting that peaceful coexistence is the baseline, Wang said conflict and confrontation between two major countries like China and the United States would have unimagined consequences. The US side's wrong perception of China still persists, and the comments it made have not been truly fulfilled, Wang said, adding that the tactics employed by the US side to suppress China are constantly changing, its list of unilateral sanctions continues to lengthen, and its groundless accusations against China have reached an inconceivable level. "If the United States says one thing and does another, where is its credibility as a major country? If it gets jittery whenever it hears the word 'China'.

Indian navy rescues crew after ship hit by missile in Gulf of Aden



NEW DELHI: The Indian navy on Thursday said it "swiftly" responded to a maritime incident in the Gulf of Aden and rescued 21 people. According to an official statement by the navy, Barbados-Flagged Bulk Carrier MV True Confidence was reportedly "hit by a drone/missile" in the south-west of Aden on Wednesday, resulting in fire onboard and critical injuries to some of the crew members forcing the crew to abandon the ship. "INS (Indian Navy Ship) Kolkata, deployed for maritime security operations arrived at the scene of action and rescued 21 crew members, including one Indian national, from the life raft using its integral helicopter and boats," the navy said, adding that critical medical aid was provided to the injured crew by the ship's medical team.

Shaheen Afridi achieves milestone in PSL



Lahore Qalandars' captain becomes third bowler to take 100 wickets in cricket tournament. Shaheen Afridi has achieved a new milestone by becoming the only third bowler to take 100 wickets in the Pakistan Super League (PSL). Lahore Qalandars' captain reached to three figures by dismissing Naseem Shah of Islamabad United during a 23rd PSL 9 match at the Pindi Cricket Stadium in Rawalpindi on Wednesday. Shahab Riaz held the distinction of being the first bowler to achieve 100 wickets in PSL history, leading the league's all-time wicket-takers with an impressive tally of 113 wickets. Meanwhile, Hasan Ali is on the second spot with 107 wickets. He reached the three-figure mark by dismissing Islamabad United's Alex Hales during the 15th PSL 9 encounter last week in Islamabad. United's captain Shadab Khan (87) is at fourth while his teammate Faheem Ashraf (73) is at fifth. It must be noted that defending champions Lahore Qalandars are still at the bottom of the points table despite bagging a 17-run win over Islamabad United. Lahore Qalandars held the upper hand against Islamabad United while defending the target of 163 runs.



Hamas says cease-fire talks to resume next week, making a truce before Ramadan unlikely

South Africa urges top UN court to impose more emergency orders on Israel to end starvation in Gaza

CAIRO Hamas said Thursday that its delegation has left Cairo and that talks on a Gaza cease-fire and hostage release will resume next week, making it extremely unlikely that mediators will broker a deal before the Muslim holy month of Ramadan. Egyptian officials had earlier said the negotiations reached an impasse over Hamas' demand for a phased process culminating in an end to the war. But they did not rule out a deal before Ramadan, which is expected to begin on Sunday and has emerged as an informal deadline. Hamas spokesman Jihad Tabah said Israel "refuses to commit to and give guarantees regarding the cease-fire, the return of the displaced, and withdrawal from the areas of its incursion." But he said the talks were still ongoing and would resume next week. There was no immediate comment from Israel. The U.S., Egypt and Qatar have been trying for weeks to broker an agreement on a six-week cease-fire and the release of 40 hostages held in Gaza in exchange for Palestinians imprisoned in Israel. The Egyptian officials said Hamas has agreed on the main terms of such an agreement as a first stage, but wants commitments that it will lead to an eventual, more permanent cease-fire. South Africa urges top UN court to impose more emergency orders on Israel to end starvation in Gaza. Hamas has said it will not release all of the remaining hostages without a full Israeli withdrawal from the territory. Palestinian militants are believed to be holding around 100 hostages, and the remains of 30 others, captured during Hamas' Oct. 7 attack into Israel that triggered the war.

Israeli tank in 'likely scenario' fired machine gun at reporters after deadly shelling, report finds



BEIRUT: An Israeli tank crew killed a Reuters reporter in Lebanon in October by firing two shells at a clearly identified group of journalists and then "likely" opened fire on them with a heavy machine gun that lasted in an attack that lasted 1 minute and 45 seconds, according to a report into the incident published on Thursday. The report by the Netherlands Organisation for Applied Scientific Research (TNO)-which was contracted by Reuters to analyse evidence from the Oct. 13 attack that killed visual journalist Issam Abdallah - found that a tank 1.34 km away in Israel fired two 120 mm rounds at the reporters. The first shell killed Abdallah, 37, and severely wounded Agence France-Presse (AFP) photographer Christina Assi, 28. A Reuters investigation in December covered TNO's preliminary finding that a tank in Israel had fired at the journalists. In its final report on Thursday, the institute revealed that audio picked up by an AI Jazeera video camera at the scene showed the reporters also came under fire from 0.50 calibre rounds of the type used by the Browning machine guns that can be mounted on Israel's Merkava tanks.

India's Modi visits Kashmir, first time since special status cut



INDIA: A rally was held by Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi in the main city of Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK) on Thursday during his first visit to the disputed region since Kashmir's semi-autonomous status was cancelled in 2019. The visit comes ahead of India's national elections due in May, the first since the region lost its autonomy. The last local elections in Kashmir were held in 2014. During the visit, Modi said the region's former rules and "dynastic politics" had limited IIOJK's potential. "Today, from Kashmir I extend my greetings for the coming Ramadan to the entire country," Modi said, ahead of the Muslim holy month of fasting, expected to begin in the coming days. "Jammu and Kashmir is not just a region, it is the crown of the country," said the Indian premier. "Various development works will also be dedicated to the nation," Modi said in a statement on social media platform X ahead of the visit, including programmes "boosting the agro-economy" as well as tourism. A government statement said Modi will also inaugurate infrastructure development around the revered Muslim shrine of Hazratbal. Freedom fighters in the Himalayan region have waged an insurgency since 1989, seeking independence or a merger with Pakistan -- which controls a smaller part of the Kashmir region and, like India, claims it in full. Thousands of armed police and paramilitary forces were deployed, and new checkpoints were set up across Kashmir's main city Srinagar, where the Hindu nationalist leader was scheduled to address a public gathering around midday. Modi's government claims New Delhi's direct rule of Kashmir brought about a new era of "peace and development" in the region, but critics and many residents say it heralded a drastic curtailment of civil liberties and press freedom.

Brazil's public sector gross debt rises in January



BRASILIA Brazil's government debt as a percentage of gross domestic product rose to 75.0% in January, despite a strong primary surplus in public accounts driven by interest expenses, central bank data released on Thursday showed. The 0.7 percentage point increase in gross debt from the previous month was primarily attributed to the impact of nominal interest accrued, reaching 79.9 billion reais (\$16 billion), a 52.8% surge compared to the same period last year.

The uptick was influenced by currency swap operations, which incurred a loss of 10 billion reais, contrasting with a gain of 16.1 billion reais in January 2023, said the central bank. Interest charges are also affected by the growth in the debt stock and associated costs. Despite the central bank reducing interest rates by 250 basis points since the beginning of a monetary easing cycle in August, the Selic benchmark rate remains high at 11.25%, compared with annual 4.49% inflation. Over 12 months, the interest expense reached 6.82% of GDP, marking the highest level since June 2017.



Britain's Conservative government announces tax cuts it hopes can lift its ailing election fortunes

LONDON British Treasury chief Jeremy Hunt sought Wednesday to bolster spirits within his Conservative Party with another tax cut for 27 million working people, hoping it can turn the political tide ahead of a general election this year. But with the tax cut trailed in advance and no major surprises in Hunt's economic statement to Parliament, speculation that the government planned to use the budget as a springboard for a May election appeared to have diminished. Even though the British economy has hit one definition of recession and public finances will remain stretched over coming years, Hunt had come under pressure from his Conservative peers to cut taxes. And he did, with a reduction in national insurance, which workers pay to qualify for a state pension, by 2 percentage points, to 8%. He also hinted at its eventual abolition. Hunt cut this tax on wages by the same amount in November, meaning that in combination, workers with average earnings will benefit to the tune of around 1,000 pounds (\$1,270) a year. "We will continue to cut national insurance contributions as we have done today so we truly make work pay," Hunt said in a packed and often rowdy House of Commons chamber. To the likely disappointment of many of his Conservative peers nervous about losing their seats in the upcoming election, Hunt made no mention of reducing the basic rate of income tax, which would have benefited retirees and savers, too. Poll after poll suggests the Conservatives, in power since 2010, are on course to lose to the main opposition Labour Party. Labour leader Keir Starmer challenged Prime Minister Rishi Sunak to call an election for May 2, while describing the budget statement as the "last desperate act of a party that has failed." There had been speculation that Sunak, who has the power to name the election date, might call it for May alongside local and mayoral elections. The general election must be held by January 2025. Sunak has previously said the vote is likely to take place in the second half of the year, potentially coinciding with the U.S. presidential election, but has kept his options open. He may be hoping the economic backdrop becomes more benign, with a "feelgood" factor emerging alongside higher economic growth, lower inflation and dropping interest rates and mortgage costs.

Long-sought Red Army Faction militant appears in court



KARLSRUHE, Germany Daniela Klette, a member of Germany's notorious Red Army Faction (RAF) militant group who was arrested last week, made an initial appearance on Thursday at the country's Federal Court of Justice, a spokesperson for the Attorney General said. Klette was detained in Berlin after three decades on the run, and is facing charges of armed robbery and at least one attempted murder committed between 1999 and 2016. A woman was seen being escorted out of a blue federal police helicopter in Karlsruhe, the city in southern Germany where the country's federal prosecutor sits and the court is located. A spokesperson later confirmed that Klette appeared in front of a judge but did not give details. The RAF, which arose out of the student protests of the late 1960s, was suspected of killing 34 people between 1972 and 1991. The group formally disbanded in 1998 with many members slipping back into ordinary lives. Police are still searching for two other members of the so-called third generation of the group, Ernst-Volker Staub and Burkhard Garweg. Both men were Volker for the same charges as Klette.