



Islamabad POST

Tuesday, April 05, 2022

Pakistan's First And Only Diplomatic Daily

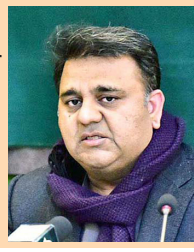
Price Rs. 20

Billionaire Elon Musk becomes Twitter's largest stakeholder

Detailed News On Page-08

Shahbaz wanted in corruption cases by court

Detailed News On Page-08



Can't give up cricket to politics: Ramiz

Detailed News On Page-06



Briefs

UN Chief wants Bucha probe

NEWS DESK

UNITED NATIONS: UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has called for an independent investigation into the killing of over 400 civilians in a Ukrainian city. "I am deeply shocked by the images of civilians killed in Bucha, Ukraine," he said in a tersely worded statement issued on Sunday evening. It was also posted on his official Twitter account. "It is essential that an independent investigation leads to effective accountability," Osnat Lubrani, UN Humanitarian Coordinator for Ukraine, shared the statement on Twitter.

NSA Moeed Yusuf resigns

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Amid political turmoil in the country, National Security Adviser (NSA) Moeed Yusuf resigned from his position. "Today, I leave extremely satisfied and content, most of all because I know that the NSA's office and the NSD are vibrant institutions with an exceptional team that will continue to make Pakistan proud," Moeed wrote on his official Twitter handle. He thanked Prime Minister Imran Khan for trusting him with the immense responsibility and allowing him to do justice to his role as the NSA. "Few individuals are fortunate enough to get an opportunity to serve their country in a high office."

PTI workers stand with Imran Khan

ABID RAZA

LAHORE: Prominent leader of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Dr Yasmin Rashid on Monday said that committed PTI workers would stand with Imran Khan till their last breath. In a statement issued here, she said that only a leader of Imran Khan's stature could steer Pakistan out of the challenges the country faced today.

Dy Speaker's conduct

SC mulls legality of the ruling

CJP says cannot issue an order without listening to arguments from both sides

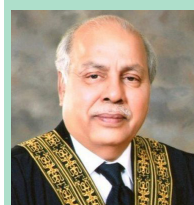
SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court on Monday adjourned the hearing and ignored a plea by PPP's counsel seeking the formation of a full court to hear the suo motu case pertaining to the ruling issued by the National Assembly deputy speaker which dismissed the no-confidence motion against Prime Minister Imran Khan. Chief Justice of Pakistan Umar Ata Bandial asked PPP counsel Farooq H Naek to present his formulations and if it would be appropriate, then the court would consider his plea regarding the formation of a full court. The chief justice also asked Naek that if he has no confidence in them, then they may rise from the bench. However, Naek said that he has full confidence on the bench. CJP Bandial also raised the question of the joint opposition leaders' absence from the parliamentary committee briefing on the alleged foreign conspiracy and further questioned the significance and relevance of the parliamentary committee meeting and its relevance in the matter. Justice Bandial further asked them regarding the ambit of Article 69 of the Constitution, which states that parliament proceedings could not be challenged in any court of law. As it adjourned the case, the top court said

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PTI proposes ex-CJP Gulzar as caretaker PM

SHUJAAT HAMZA

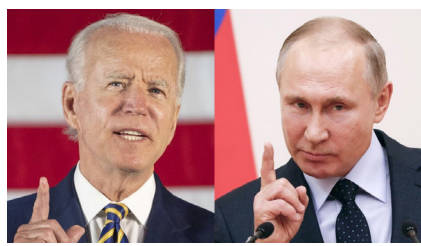


ISLAMABAD: The Core Committee of PTI has proposed the name of former chief justice Gulzar Ahmed as the caretaker prime minister, ex-information and law minister Fawad Chaudhry said Monday. The proposal of Gulzar - who laid down his robes on February 1, 2022 - comes after President Arif Alvi had sent letters to Prime Minister Imran Khan and Leader of the Opposition in the National Assembly Shahbaz Sharif to seek suggestions for the appointment of a caretaker prime minister. In case the two politicians can't reach a consensus over one name within three days, each one of them will

Continued on Page 06

Biden: Putin should face war crimes trial

Joe Biden, however, stopped short of calling the actions genocide



NEWS DESK

WASHINGTON: President Joe Biden on Monday called for war crimes trial against Russia President Vladimir Putin and said he'd seek more sanctions after reported atrocities in Ukraine. "You saw what happened in Bucha," Biden said. He added that Putin "is a war criminal" Biden's comments to reporters came after Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelenskyy visited Bucha, one of the towns surrounding Kyiv where Ukrainian officials say the bodies of civilians have been found.

Continued on Page 06

Russia denies killing Bucha civilians

NEWS DESK

MOSCOW: The Kremlin has categorically rejected accusations that Russian forces were responsible for killing civilians in Bucha, suggesting images of corpses lining the streets were "fakes". Ukrainian authorities said they were investigating possible war crimes, while Western leaders erupted in outrage over the deaths. Speaking to reporters on Monday, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said the facts and chronology of the events in Bucha did not

Continued on Page 06



ISLAMABAD: Governor Punjab Umar Sarfraz Cheema calls on PM Imran Khan. - DNA

Elections on demand of opp. parties: Imran Khan



MAHNOOR ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Imran Khan has said the elections have been announced on the demand of the opposition parties. Responding to telephone calls by Pakistanis on Monday, he said the opposition parties had been criticizing the performance of the government over the last three and a half years and now the question is why have they gone to the Supreme Court when their demand has been accepted and the assembly dissolved. The Prime Minister said the opposition parties want government only to abolish NAB and their corruption cases. He said they want to manage polls by making changes at different levels including the bureaucracy. Responding to a query, the Prime Minister said Pakistan cannot progress unless such people come to the parliament who think of the country. He said party tickets for the elections will be awarded after careful consideration and that he will personally interview the candidates.

PM imposed 'civilian martial law': Shahbaz

"April 3 will be remembered as a black day in the history of Pakistan," he says

SHUJAAT HAMZA

ISLAMABAD: PML-N President Monday lashed out at Prime Minister Imran Khan for imposing 'civilian martial law' in the country, terming his move "unconstitutional". Addressing a press conference, flanked by PPP Chairperson Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari and JUI-F leader Asad Mehmood, MQM-P Convener Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui, BNP-M Chief Akhtar Mengal and others, he said that PM Imran Khan, along with his party members, have blatantly challenged the Constitution of Pakistan. "April 3 will be remembered as a black day in the history of Pakistan," he said,

Continued on Page 06

Unconstitutional game played: Fazl

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman on Monday said Prime Minister Imran Khan has played an unconstitutional game to come into power so the apex court should declare the ruling of the Deputy Speaker null and void. According to a private news channel, Maulana Fazlur Rehman addressed a press conference in Islamabad on Monday and said Imran Khan cannot be a hero with one letter. Maulana Fazlur Rehman said it was the no-confidence motion that pushed Imran Khan towards

Continued on Page 06

IMF to 'continue its support to Pakistan'

Fund will engage in policies to 'promote macroeconomic stability'

DNA

WASHINGTON: The International Monetary Fund (IMF) on Monday said it will continue to support Pakistan "once a new government is formed" in the country. The statement from the Washington-based crisis lender comes amid political chaos in the country, especially in the aftermath of President Dr Arif Alvi's dissolution of the National Assembly following the dis-

missal of the no-confidence against Prime Minister Imran Khan the same day. According to the IMF-Pakistan spokesperson, the Fund will engage in policies to "promote macroeconomic stability, and enquire about intentions vis-a-vis programme engagement". The statement clarified that there was no concept of suspension within the IMF programmes. The IMF had expressed its reservations over

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Inside...

Yiwu-Karachi workshop opens new doors of co-op - Page 02

IPS initiative to be a bridge between policy, researchers - Page 03

ICCI calls for controlling prices of food items during Ramadan - Page 04

ICJ the only feasible route to Rohingya genocide ruling - Page 05

Humanitarian mine action vital for regional peace - Page 06

'Political instability in Pakistan always a cause of concern' - Page 07

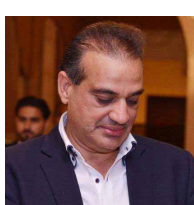
Shanghai to extend anti-covid lockdown - Page 08

The brewing constitutional crisis: wayforward

While the PTI leaders continue to celebrate their victory after creating a constitutional crisis, the opposition parties have rejected President's invitation to be part of process of picking up the caretaker set up

Comment

ANSAR M BHATTI



ISLAMABAD: Deputy Speaker National Assembly Qasim Suri, who happened to be the deputy speaker by virtue of a stay order of the court, prima facie acted 'unlawfully' by allowing the motion tabled by the former law minister Fawad Chaudhry and consequently passing a controversial ruling in which he outright rejected the lawful no-trust motion of the Opposition parties. This was the surprise Prime Minister Imran Khan had hinted at during his pre-vote meeting with the party leaders. The legal fraternity especially has expressed dismay over what it called the 'unconstitutional' step of the deputy speaker. There is also no dearth of experts who believe the deputy speaker had every right to pass this ruling, saying the con-

stitution empowered him to do so. They are of the view that parliamentary proceedings and ruling given by the speaker cannot be challenged in any court of law. Well said, but only those rulings cannot be challenged that are given as per the law. If the speaker oversteps his mandate and ignores law while passing a ruling, he ostensibly is liable to be proceeded against. Secondly, under Rule 28 of the National Assembly rules only the Speaker is authorized to pass any ruling. That is the point discussed in length by the apex court during its April 4 hearing. And even the speaker could not do so because a no-trust motion was already submitted against him. This particular aspect will now be mullied in the apex court. While the PTI leaders continue to celebrate their victory after creating a constitutional crisis in the country, the opposition parties have rejected the President of Pakistan's invitation to be part of the process of picking up the caretaker set up. During their news conference on April 4, they made it clear that they would not become part of any

such exercise since they strongly believe that the prime minister and the president acted 'illegally'. It is quite strange why the prime minister and his cohorts are celebrating the dissolution of assembly. It should have been in fact a matter of concern for them that another elected government has not been allowed to complete its term of five years. If Imran Khan's contention that the international conspiracy was hatched to get him removed is considered genuine, then the conspiracy undoubtedly stands successful. If this case, full marks have to be given to the hatches of this conspiracy that got him (Imran) out of power with such an ease. So much so, Imran Khan and his cronies are made to market this ouster as their great success. What a move by the planners!! It is now evident that the PTI government and the Establishment were poles apart particularly on international issues such as Ukraine, relations with the US and China. Imran Khan during his speech delivered on the first day of the security dialogue persistently defended

his visit to Russia. Similarly, he once again took the United States to the task. The very next day Chief of the Army Staff General Qamar Javed Bajwa called the Russian action in Ukraine an invasion and vowed to have stronger friendly relations with the super power. The Imran Khan government never said a single word about the Russian invasion despite the fact that various internal factors including the general public; think-tank, intelligentsia, wanted him to come up with a clear stand on the issue. To have friendly relations with the neighboring countries indeed is a solemn endeavour, which must be supported and welcomed; nevertheless such efforts need not be made in isolation. If the court upholds dissolution of the national assembly as valid, then elections will have to be held within 90 days. The PTI has already started the election campaign. Imran Khan again appeared on the national hook-up on Monday and appealed to the people to join him in a rally at the D Chowk against what he called the corrupt parties of the country.

According to law, he has ceased to exist as the prime minister and his role now is only of a caretaker who will hand over power to the interim prime minister and then depart. But he is still acting as the full fledged prime minister utilizing all govt resources, which, as a temporary PM he perhaps cannot. The Supreme Court is likely to give a short order today or tomorrow. The opposition lawyers were asking for a verdict even yesterday but the court said it has to hear all before reaching a conclusion. Summing up, the act of the dissolution of the national assembly is based on the so-called conspiracy hatched by the US and as a result the entire government had to go home. But intriguingly no potential protest was lodged with America. A soft-worded demarche was handed over to the US diplomat and that is it. If it were a conspiracy of such a gigantic scale, then the first thing, which Pakistan would have done, was to declare the US envoy as persona non grata. In fact, someone asked this question to the prime minister but he had no answer.



ISLAMABAD: An attractive view of seasonal flowers blooming on trees at G6 area. – DNA

TDAP to finalise annual business plan

ISHFAQ MUGHAL

FAISALABAD: The Trade Development Authority of Pakistan (TDAP) will finalise its Annual Business Plan in consultation with the Faisalabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry (FCCI) to make it progressive and result oriented, said Rana Shahzad Ahmad Khan, Director General TDAP Punjab. In a meeting with President FCCI, Mr. Atif Munir Sheikh, he discussed in detail the inherent potential of Faisalabad and said that a comprehensive strategy would be evolved for the diversification of exports from this city in addition to exploiting the available export opportunities in traditional and non-traditional sectors. Acknowledging the industrial, commercial, business and export edge of this vibrant city, he said that we must involve FCCI and other local trade bodies to give a boost to the export from this city. He said that we should change our strategy and discuss its activities

that may have local, regional, national or international dimensions. He said that TDAP will organize a trade and investment conference and potential buyers from all over the world would be invited to participate in it. He mentioned the African model and said that TDAP had organized a made in Pakistan exhibition in Africa but its focus was on to showcase engineering products. He said that TEXPO would be organized in Karachi during the month of August. "It is a regular feature but we intend to club it with other non-traditional items so that a wide range of exportable surplus could be showcased during this event", he said and added that trade officers have been posted in different potential markets and we must involve them to penetrate in these countries for sustained exports. He also stressed the need to explore non-traditional markets to expand our export portfolio. He said that webinars and online conferences could also be arranged to give much needed awareness to the young start-ups

about the emerging trends and market potentials. Mr. Atif Munir Sheikh President FCCI said that he was seriously working to transform Faisalabad from textile to a multidimensional export city by encouraging other segments of the economy. He particularly mentioned the Information Technology (IT) sector and said that it has recorded a robust growth of 47% and we must focus on it as there is no dearth of talented IT experts. He particularly mentioned the successful Pakistan Economic Conference (PEC) organized by the FCCI and said that the Prime Minister was to address its concluding session but due to political instability, it was deferred. He said that we have prepared 2-page recommendations on the economy exclusively for the Prime Minister. He also mentioned the new industrial estates being developed to attract maximum FDI with technology transfer. He said that 65 foreign companies have already established their units while many more are in the pipeline.

Economic reforms, need of the hour

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Deputy Secretary Information of PML-Q Khawaja Rameez Hassan said in a press release that the world is busy expending its energies in the field of economy and technology whereas for 70 years we have preferred only power game. He said that if there is a state then there will be politics. Powers around the world are now active in the economic arena, while in Pakistan the rich are richer and the poor are forced to live below the poverty line. The biggest need at the moment is to present a charter of solutions based on economic reforms and emergencies. He said that the main reason for development in developed countries is the rule of law and constitution while in Pakistan law is the legacy of the powerful. There is no shortage of talent in Pakistan but a special class of talented people is being walled off. He said that the secret of national development lies in observance of law and constitution.

5 women among 6 abducted in Faisalabad

FAISALABAD: Six persons including five women were abducted from various parts of Faisalabad during the past 12 hours. According to police spokesman, one Dolat Khan and his accomplices seduced a girl Aneela Mukhtar and abducted her from Nawaz Park Raza Abad. Also, another man Ali kidnapped a girl Rukhsana from Johar Colony. Similarly, Jameel and his accomplices kidnapped a girl Naila alias Billo from Muhammad Ali Town whereas Nadeem and his accomplices abducted a married girl Iqra from Chak No 74-JB. – APP

ZA Bhutto was executed by judicial murder: Marri

ISLAMABAD: Central Information Secretary of PPP-P and member of the National Assembly Shazia Atta Marri has said that former Prime Minister of Pakistan Shaheed Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto was executed on today's date by a judicial murder and after so many years later, judiciary finally accepted that Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto's martyrdom was a judicial murder. Ms Marri said, today the Supreme Court has the opportunity to take decision in the favor of democracy. This she said in the commemoration of the 43rd death anniversary of former prime Minister and founder of PPP Shaheed Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto hereon today. She said that those who are celebrating after suspending the Constitution of Pakistan will be failed like they had faced failure before. Ms Marri added that Selected Imran Khan has made the country a "Banana Republic" while the state is based on the constitution of Pakistan and Imran Khan had dropped a bomb on the constitution while Deputy Speaker Qasim Suri was used as a suicide bomber. She said that selected Imran Khan had coup'd on the parliament by seeing his clear defeat ahead of no confidence motion. General elections could not be held tomorrow or the day after tomorrow by violating the constitution of the country. She further said that effective measures are required to be taken to stop the violation of the Constitution. Imran Khan made people cries by skyrocketing inflation, poverty, unemployment and anti-people policies. She said that the selected Prime Minister, who has increased highest inflation and poverty in the country run away without facing no confidence motion in the National Assembly and President Arif Alvi has been deviating from the constitution which comes under category of treason. – DNA

Over 8.19 million people vaccinated in Faisalabad

To facilitate the people these centers had been established in various areas of the city

BUREAU REPORT

FAISALABAD: Over 8.19 million (8,191,441) people have so far been vaccinated against COVID-19 in the district. District Health Of-

ficer Dr Atau Mun'im said on Monday that 4,609,780 citizens were injected first dose while 3,500,733 were administered the second dose of vaccine. He further said that 39,850 health workers were also given first dose while 41,078 received the second dose of vaccine. He said that sufficient stock of coronavirus vaccine was available in the district. He said that 37 vaccination centers and 20 mobile vaccination camps were operational in Faisalabad where registered people were being vaccinated. In order to facilitate the

people these centers had been established in various areas of the city including Allied Hospital, District Headquarters Hospital, Government General Hospital, Faisalabad Institute of Cardiology, Government General Hospital Samanabad, Children Hospital, Sports Complex Samanabad, Tehsil Headquarters Hospital Jaranwala, Samundri, Tandlianwala, Chak Jhumra, Sports Complex Chak Jhumrah, Sports Complex Jaranwala, Government General Hospital Chak 224/R-B, New Building RHC Khurrianwala, New Building THQ

Sammundri, New Building THQ Tandlianwala, Social Security Hospital Madina Town, Wapda Hospital, Rural Health Centers Mureed Wala, Chak 174-JB, Chak 134-JB, Chak 229/R-B, Chak 65-GB, RHC Lundianwala Jaranwala, RHC Khurrianwala Jaranwala, Pindi Sheikh Musa, Kanjwani, Mamukanjan, RHC Chak 400-GB, RHC Chak 153/R-B, RHC Chak 374-GB and Chak 469-GB, he added. He further said that timing of these vaccination centers was 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. except Sports Complex Samanabad center which would remain open round the clock.

Yiwu-Karachi workshop opens new doors of co-op

DNA

KARACHI: Yiwu-Karachi Workshop themed "Building the China-Pakistan Trade Corridor by Concerted Efforts of Governments and Business Sectors" was successfully held via video link. This event was jointly organized by Yiwu Municipal People's Government and Yiwu Bureau of Commerce. It aimed to promote key exchanges between Yiwu and Karachi, Pakistan's largest city and important port, build a bridge for deepening cooperation between enterprises from both sides, facilitate trade exchanges between small, medium and micro market players, and help implement the results of the China-Pakistan Joint

Statement. Mr. Li Bijian, Consul General of China in Karachi, Mr. Ye Bangrui, Mayor of Yiwu City, Mr. Wang Wei, Deputy Mayor of Yiwu City, Mr. Arif Ahmed Khan, Chief Executive of TDAP, Mr. Hussain Haider, Consul General of Pakistan in Shanghai, Mr. Irfan Iqbal, President of the Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce & Industry (FPCCI), Mr. Muhammad Idrees, President of Karachi Chamber of Commerce & Industry (KCCI) and others attended this event online. Representatives from the governments, chambers of commerce and enterprises of both sides joined the meeting and conducted in-depth exchanges. Mr. Li Bijian, Consul General of China in Karachi, said that there are close economic ties and huge development potential between Yiwu and Karachi. He hoped to further en-

hance mutual trade exchanges, promote trade balance, improve trade quality, and introduce more high-quality Pakistani products to enter China through Yiwu market. Meanwhile, bilateral investment needs to be increased, and Chinese enterprises are welcome to make the best use of Pakistan's favorable policies to invest in Pakistan and create more employment opportunities for the younger generation of Pakistan. He also proposed that the trade representatives of the two sides would deepen policy communication, strengthen exchanges and cooperation, and jointly cope with the opportunities and challenges in the post-covid era. Mr. Hussain Haider, Consul General of Pakistan in Shanghai, said, Yiwu-Karachi Workshop is a manifestation of the commitment of the two coun-

tries, particularly the two cities, to shore up their bilateral trade and investment relations. He was confident that the Karachi-based businesses would enter into mutually beneficial cooperative relations with their Yiwu counterparts to give a further momentum to the bilateral economic relations. He also assured that Pakistan's Consulate General in Shanghai would give full support and facilitation to these endeavors. Mr. Ye Bangrui, Mayor of Yiwu City, gave a brief introduction of the social and economic development of Yiwu. He said, Pakistan is an important trading partner of Yiwu. In 2021, the trade volume between Yiwu and Pakistan reached nearly 600 million US dollars. The imports from Pakistan to Yiwu has tripled. He also mentioned, Karachi is Pakistan's economic center, important port and largest city.

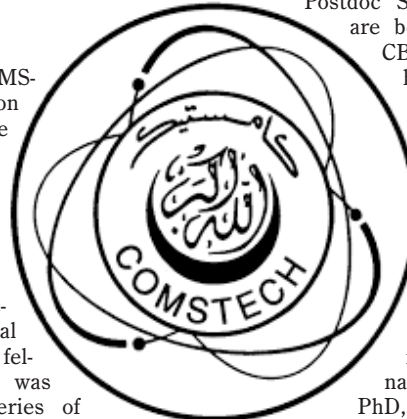


COMSTECH offers 50 fellowships for Yemeni nationals

DNA

ISLAMABAD: COMSTECH in collaboration with Embassy of the Republic of Yemen in Islamabad has launched COMSTECH-CCoE Yemen Programme for the capacity building of Yemeni scientists. According to an official of COMSTECH, the fellowship programme was launched after a series of meeting held between the Ambassador of Yemen, Mohammed Motahar Alashabi with the coordinator General of COMSTECH, Dr. Iqbal Choudhary to start this programme. Under this programme, COMSTECH has initially announced 50 fellowships for Yemeni nationals of 1-12 month duration. These fellowships are being offered by International Center for Chemical and Biological Sciences (IC-CBS), University of Karachi, University of Lahore and Health Service Academy, Islamabad, the official said. The 6-12 months Research Fellowships for M.S/ Ph.D. /

Postdoc Science and Technology are being offered at the IC-CBS. The 1-3 months public health related courses, training or workshops are being offered at Health Service Academy while the Medical technology related training courses of 1-2 months will be offered at University of Lahore. About the eligibility, the official informed that Yemeni nationals who are Masters, PhD, Post doc degree holders or enrolled can apply for this fellowship programme. The application deadline is May 5. Meanwhile, COMSTECH jointly offer fellowships to young scientists in OIC countries to enable them to spend 3 months at a relevant center of excellence in an OIC country, other than their own. The purpose of these fellowships is to enhance the research and development capacity of promising scientists, especially those at the beginning of their research career, helping them to foster linkages for further collaboration in the field of virology and vaccine technology.



Ramzan Sasta Bazar established in Hazara

ABBOTTABAD: Deputy Commissioner Kohistan Lower Shakeel Ahmed Monday visited Ramzan Sasta Bazaar and reviewed the preparations. He also issued instructions to make the shops functional, ensure cleanliness, display rate list and make the market fully operational. DC inspected the fruit, vegetable, grocery and utility store stalls inside the bazaar as well as controlled rate wheel flour stalls. Shakeel Ahmed directed to ensure the supply of goods at below-market prices and to ensure the provision of facilities to the people so that more people could benefit from the supply of goods at lower rates. Additional Assistant Commissioner Pattan Anis-ur-Rehman and TMA officials were also present on the occasion during the visit to DC. On the direction of the provincial government, Deputy Commissioner Battagram Ashfaq Khan has established Ramzan Sasta Bazar at the main bazaar to provide cheap items to the people during Ramzan. – APP

Facilitators of dengue breeding to be booked: DC

FAISALABAD: Deputy Commissioner Ali Shehzad said on Monday that cases would be registered against those who would found facilitators in dengue breeding in the district. Chairing a meeting of District Emergency Response Committee for anti-dengue here, he said that dengue became a constant issue and for its elimination, the entire society should make collective efforts. He said that assistant commissioners were also directed to hold Tehsil Emergency Response Committee twice a week to check and monitor the performance of surveillance teams. He said the government was concentrating on complete eradication of dengue, therefore, no negligence and delinquency would be tolerated in this regard. Additional Deputy Commissioner Headquarters (ADCHQ) Kashif Raza Awan, District Programme Coordinator for Anti Epidemic Diseases Dr Zulqarnain and others were also present on the occasion. – APP

CM to lay foundation stone of Swat motorway

FROM OUR CORRESPONDENT

PESHAWAR: Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Mahmood Khan has decided to perform ground breaking of another important project of Malakand Division, Swat Motorway Phase-II next week and directed the authorities concerned to finalize all the necessary pre requisites and arrangements for launching physical work on the project. He also directed the concerned quarters to expedite the progress on Dir Motorway project as well and quickly process the PC 1 for acquisition of land for the said project so that physical work on the

project could be initiated without any delay. He issued these directives while chairing a meeting of Pakhtunkhwa Highways Authority here on Monday. Member of Provincial Assembly Akbar Ayub Khan, Additional Chief Secretary Shahab Ali Shah, Secretary Finance Ikram Ullah Khan, Secretary Communications and Works Ijaz Ansari, Special Secretaries to Chief Minister Masood Younas and Muhammad Khaliq, Managing Director Pakhtunkhwa Highways Authority and other senior officials attended the meeting. The meeting reviewed in detail the overall progress on different road sector projects including

Swat Motorway Phase II and Dir Motorway. Briefing the meeting about progress on Swat Motorway Phase 2, it was informed that 88 km long motorway from Chakdara to Fatehpur would be constructed at a total cost of Rs. 58 billion adding that concessionaire agreement had been signed for the execution of the project while Rs. 6.7 billion were released for the acquisition of land for the project. Moreover, section 4 had been imposed for the acquisition of 70 km of land for the project. Touching upon the salient features of Swat Motorway Phase II, it was told that initially this motorway will consist of four lanes ex-

tendable to six lanes in future. As many as Nine interchanges would be constructed on this motorway including Chakdara Interchange, Shamozai Interchange, Barikot Interchange, Mingora Interchange, Kanju Interchange, Malam Jabba-University of Swat Interchange, Sher Palam Interchange, Matta Khawazakhela Interchange and Madin-Fatehpur Interchange. Some eight bridges would be constructed on the Swat River. Construction of four rest areas at different locations is also part of the project while link highways would also be constructed on need base. Briefing about Dir Motorway, it was informed that Expression of Interest for 30 km long Dir

Motorway had been floated earlier and said motorway would be constructed from Chakdara to Rabat. As many as three interchanges, four flyovers, 24 bridges and two underpasses would also be constructed besides construction of two tunnels. Talking on the occasion, the Chief Minister termed these projects as a milestone for the sustainable development of the area and said that the construction of these projects would help to promote tourism, trade and business activities in the area. Besides providing quality transportation facilities these projects would also create employment opportunities for the local people.

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National Days and Armed Forces Days

APRIL

April 04 / Senegal	National Day
April 07 / W. H. O.	World Health Day
April 12 / Somalia	Armed Forces Day
April 15 / DPR Korea	The Day of the Sun
April 16 / Denmark	National Day
April 17 / Iran	Army Day
April 17 / Syria	Independence Day
April 18 / Zimbabwe	Independence Day
April 24 / Holy See	Anniversary of His Papacy of his Pontificate
April 25 / DPR Korea	Armed Forces Day
April 26 / Tanzania	National Day
April 27 / Sierra Leone	Independence Day
April 27 / South Africa	Freedom Day
April 30 / Sweden	Birthday of His Majesty
April 30 / Netherlands	Birthday of Queen



Hotels & Restaurants

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



Airlines

Turkish Airlines.....	8494949
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Emergency

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



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CAA.....	9281092



Hospitals

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



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

Islamabad Metropolitan

Corporation.....	9209224
Potohar Town.....	9209224
Rawal Town.....	5773343

Water Tank

Islamabad.....	0321-5744480
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ISLAMABAD: CEO Serena Hotels South and East Asia, Aziz Boolani and Mrs Aziz Boolani presenting a gift to the outgoing Ambassador of Somalia Khadija Al Makhzoumi. Ambassador Khadija has been elected as the Member of the Somali Parliament. – DNA

IPS initiative to be a bridge between policy, researchers

IPS has invited universities throughout the country, especially those interested in carrying out policy-relevant research, to take advantage of the platform to find a senior former or serving policy practitioner. IPS will publish the resulting research work, which will help form a research ecosystem

DNA

ISLAMABAD: There is a pressing need to bridge the gap between public policy and academic research and revolutionize higher education research in Pakistan. The Institute of Policy Studies (IPS), as part of its 'Promoting & Indigenizing Policy Research Initiative', aims to form this vital link between policy practitioners and policy researchers. The inaugural session, titled 'Brainstorming Research Ideas - Governance and Public Policy', was held with Dr Syed Tahir Hijazi, member of IPS' National Academic Council, eminent academician and policy practitioner, who is leading this project. Present on the occasion were Khalid Rahman, chairman IPS, Naufil



Shahrukh, General Manager Operations IPS, Mirza Hamid Hasan, former federal secretary, and other participants. The initiative aims to create a countrywide community of policy researchers to address governance issues through research and exchange of ideas. The

role of eminent research supervisors in universities is critical for the success of this project. IPS will facilitate the supervisors and research students by providing them complete guidance, connectivity in the policy circles, data, and meaningful insights through a pool of

mentors across the country, including retired and serving bureaucrats volunteering for this national cause. To reap full benefits of this initiative, IPS will take on board all relevant senior academics, government officials, ministers, governance and development consult-

ants, etc. depending upon the focus area - administrative services, economy, finance, internal security, policing, health, education, etc. - to interact with the research supervisors and scholars. IPS has invited universities throughout the country, especially those in-

terested in carrying out policy-relevant research, to take advantage of the platform to find a senior former or serving policy practitioner. IPS will publish the resulting research work, which will help form a research ecosystem. In this regard, the ministries and government departments can also share their research needs with the think-tank. Experience has shown that the ministers and bureaucrats mostly don't have the time or patience to read lengthy reports and prefer a synopsis. Here the media can play a key role in promoting the research ecosystem by converting the research works into bite size reports besides disseminating the key points through social media so that they reach the desired government officials and ministers.

Over 52% surplus witnessed in Pak-Bangladesh trade

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's goods and services trade with Bangladesh witnessed surplus of 52.82 percent during first eight months of financial year (2021-22) as compared to the corresponding period of last year. The overall exports to Bangladesh were recorded at \$559.118 million during July-February (2021-22) against exports of \$375.669 million during July-February (2020-21), showing growth of 52.82 percent, SBP data revealed. Meanwhile, on year-to-year basis, exports to Bangladesh during February 2022 also increased by 44.62 percent, from US \$ 52.440 million to US \$75.842 million. Similarly on month-on-month basis, exports of Bangladesh were decreased by 9.56 percent during February 2022 in comparison with exports of US \$83.867 million in January 2022, SBP data said.

Overall Pakistan's exports to other countries witnessed an increase of 28.11 percent in eight months, from US \$16.092 billion to US \$ 20.616 billion. On the other hand, the imports from Bangladesh during the period under review were recorded at \$ 67.025 million against \$53.668 million last year, showing an increase of 24.88 percent. Meanwhile, year-to-year basis, imports from Bangladesh during February 2022, however decreased by 14.27 percent from US \$8.656 million last year to US \$7.420 million. On month-on-month basis, the import from Bangladesh also dipped by 16.98 percent during February 2022 when compared to the import of US \$8.938 million in January 2022, SBP data said. The overall imports into the country increased by 49.11 percent, from US \$32.123 billion to US \$47.901 billion. – DNA

Missing persons commission disposes of 6,275 cases

ISLAMABAD: Missing Persons Commission has disposed of 6,275 cases from out of 8,539 cases registered by the commission, said monthly report released by Commission of Inquiry on Enforced Disappearances (ColoED) here on Monday. According to the report, the ColoED has registered 8,463 cases upto February 2022. During March 2022, some 76 more cases were received by the commission and total numbers of cases have reached to 8,539. The Missing Persons Commission disposed of 61 cases in March 2022 and thus total disposal of Missing Persons upto March 31, 2022 is 6,275 and balance as on March 31, 2022 is 2,264.

Awareness drive held to control sacred papers desecration

ISLAMABAD: An awareness drive was held in the fruits and vegetables markets of the federal capital to control the sacred papers desecration on Monday. Educating people for not using outdated newspapers carrying religious content for the packing of fruits and vegetables. All Pakistan Muqadas Aarag Union President Sheraz Ahmed Farooqui apprised the public that the district administration had imposed Section 144 to curb the desecration of the holy scripts. In the light of Section 144, he said the commercial use of sacred messages published in the newspapers, advertisements and other means of communication was totally banned. He said the people allegedly involved in this un-Islamic practice would be tried under the Penal Code of Pakistan's Section 295-B and could be awarded life imprisonment. Talking to APP, Farooqui expressed satisfaction on the packing of fruits and vegetables being imported from Peshawar because the brokers of that area were using plain papers instead of old newspapers. He lamented over the packing of fruits and vegetables coming from Sindh as the brokers were using newspapers which were mostly containing the Quranic verses. He said a plan, in consonance with Islamabad Capital Territory Administration, had been devised to crackdown in the fruits and vegetables markets for addressing this social and religious issue in a couple of days. – APP

Certificate distribution ceremony held at RAC

Ceremony was held in collaboration with Rotary Club Rawalpindi and District Health Authority Rawalpindi

DNA

RAWALPINDI: A certificate distribution ceremony was held at Rawalpindi Arts Council for officers and workers to recognize their outstanding performance during the polio campaign. The ceremony was held in collaboration with Rotary Club Rawalpindi and District Health Authority Rawalpindi. On this occasion, Additional Deputy Commissioner Headquarters Marzia Saleem, UCMOs and District Health Management teams including District Health Authority CEO Dr. Faiza Kanwal, Rotary Interna-



tional District Governor Masroor Sheikh, Former Senior Vice President RCCI Noshirwan Khalil Khan were also present. Additional Deputy Commissioner Marzia Saleem on the occasion said that all the teams have done extraordinary services to run a full-fledged campaign to eradicate polio. No case of polio has been reported in any district of Punjab including Rawalpindi. Polio workers deserve huge recognition. Former Senior Vice President RCCI Noshirwan Khalil Khan also lauded the role of Rotary International in helping the District Government in eradicating Polio.

IHC adjourns case against Rana Shamim

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Monday adjourned hearing of a contempt of court case against ex-chief justice Gilgit Baltistan Rana Shamim in his controversial affidavit matter till April 26. Chief Justice Athar Minallah heard the case. Additional Attorney General (AAG) Qasim Wadood, Rana Shamim and others appeared before the court. The AAG informed the court that the Attorney General for Pakistan could not attend the proceedings due to his engagements in the Supreme Court. At this, the court adjourned the case till April 26. It may be mentioned here that the IHC initiated the contempt of court proceedings against Rana Shamim after his affidavit was published in a newspaper, accusing ex-chief justice Saqib Nisar of influencing a case involving former prime minister Nawaz Sharif and his daughter Maryam Nawaz. – APP

Gold prices decline by Rs100 to Rs131,200

ISLAMABAD: The price of 24 karat per tola gold witnessed a decrease of Rs100 and was sold at Rs131,200 on Monday against its sale at Rs131,300 in the local market the previous day. The price of 10 gram 24 karat gold also decreased by Rs85 to Rs112,483 from Rs112,568 whereas that of 10 gram 22 karat went down to Rs 103,109 from Rs103,388, All Sindh Sarafa Jewellers Association reported. The price of per tola and ten gram silver remained constant at Rs1520 and Rs1303.15 respectively. The price of gold in international market increased by US\$1 and was traded at US\$1926 against its sale at US\$1925, the association reported. – APP

IHC seeks written arguments in PECA case

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Monday sought written arguments from petitioners in the cases challenging amendments in the Prevention of Electronic Crime Act (PECA). Chief Justice Athar Minallah heard the petitions filed by the Pakistan Federal Union of Journalists (PFUJ), the Pakistan Broadcasters Association (PBA) and other journalists' bodies. The court was told that Attorney General of Pakistan Khalid Jawed Khan could not attend the proceedings due to his engagements in the Supreme Court. After this, the court sought written arguments from the respondents and adjourned the case till April 7. – APP

'Police committed to resolve public grievances'

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Police is committed to resolve public grievances on priority and to protect the lives and property of the citizens. It was stated by the Inspector General of Police (IGP) Islamabad Muhammad Ahsan Younas while listening issues and grievances of public as well as retired and serving officials during khuli kacheri held at Central Police Office. The IGP strictly directed all zonal officers to listen to public complaints and resolve them purely on merit. "No laxity would be tolerated in this regard" he maintained. During the khuli kacheri, Islamabad Police chief listened to the grievances of the citizens and marked their applications for timely action on merit. He also directed them to send reports to his offices in the given time frame. Muhammad Ahsan Younas emphasized that Islamabad police would not leave any stone unturned to save the lives and property of the citizens adding that Islamabad police is taking many steps to facilitate public.

Briefs

RDA Inflows surge to \$3.92 bln in March

ISLAMABAD: Inflow of remittances under Roshan Digital Account (RDA) rose to US \$3.92 billion by the end of March 2022 as compared to US \$3.632 billion till end of February last year, according to a latest data released by the State Bank of Pakistan.

The data showed that the inflows of remittances during the month of March were recorded at \$290 million as compared to \$250 million in February and \$222 million in January, 2021.

Roshan Digital Account (RDA) was launched by State Bank of Pakistan in collaboration with commercial banks operating in the country.

These accounts provide innovative banking solutions to millions of Non-Resident Pakistanis (NRPs), including Non-Resident Pakistan Origin Card (POC) holders, seeking to undertake banking, payment and investment activities in Pakistan. As per data, expatriate Pakistanis from 175 countries had deposited the funds to 388,494 accounts opened through RDA.

The number of accounts has also been increased from 365,182 in February to 388,494 in March 2022, which means some 23,312 new accounts were opened in March.

The scheme that started in September 2020 received lukewarm response from the overseas Pakistanis who deposited only \$7 million in the opening month, however with the passage of time the interest kept on increasing as the inflow reached to \$40 million in October 2020 and \$110 million in the subsequent month. - APP

Brazilian coach train Pakistan players

ISLAMABAD: The training camp of volleyball players for selection for the upcoming international events is being held at Pakistan Sports Complex Islamabad under the supervision of Brazilian coach Cristiano Rodrigues.

"Currently 22 players are undergoing training to participate in Asian Games, Commonwealth Games and South Asian Games," a PSB spokesman said on Monday. This is the first phase of the camp, which continue until September, this year." He said the PSB had the services of the Brazilian coach on the directions of then Federal Minister Dr. Fehmid Mirza. He said Iranian coach Rahman Mohammadir would also join the camp to train players from June till September. - APP

Elections to be held on EVM: Faisal Javed

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leader Senator Faisal Javed Khan has said that general elections would be held on Electronic Voting Machine (EVM) and Overseas Pakistanis would be able to vote via internet voting.

In a statement, he said that "PTI kicks off its election campaign and Parliamentary Board to be formed soon".

He said that the ideological and die-hard workers of the party should be given top priority. He called the opposition to also get ready.

Air Quality of Capital improves

ISLAMABAD: The air quality of the federal capital revived after repeated days of polluted air as the hazardous atmospheric pollutants were recorded below permissible limits of national environmental quality standards (NEQS). The Pakistan Environmental Protection Agency (Pak-EPA) in its 24 hours data of regular ambient air quality monitoring report recorded declined ratio of air pollutants in the capital's atmosphere.

The most hazardous pollutant, responsible for serious respiratory and chronic heart diseases, particulate matter of 2.5 microns (PM_{2.5}) was recorded 25.4 microgrammes per cubic meter which was below the permissible limits of NEQS of 35 microgrammes per cubic meter which was a 24-hour mean value. - APP



ISLAMABAD: Deserving People standing in queue to receive food to break their fast at Khanna Pul Area. - DNA

ICCI calls for controlling prices of food items during Ramadan

DNA

Muhammad Shakeel Munir, President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry said that holy month of Ramadan has started and called upon the local administration to formulate a proper price control mechanism for food items and their easy availability in markets and commercial areas during this month to save people from any problems. He stressed that all relevant departments of the administration should take necessary measures to ensure an abundant supply of needed food items so that the people should not face any shortage during the month of fasting. He further urged that proper arrangements should be made to ensure a smooth supply system in markets and industrial areas as precautionary measures to avoid any shortage of food items.



Muhammad Shakeel Munir said that the demand for food items in Ramadan goes up as compared to normal

days, however, any shortage of needy items causes price hike putting more financial burden on the common

man. He emphasized that all concerned government departments including ICT Administration, should

work in close coordination to save people from any unnecessary shortage of food items in Ramadan.

The ICCI President also called upon the traders to ensure easy availability of food items to the people in shops during the month of Ramadan. He further said that traders should cooperate with the ICT Administration to overcome any shortage of required items during the holy month so that the people can be saved from all kinds of troubles.

ICCI Senior Vice President Jamsheed Akhtar Sheikh and Vice President Muhammad Fahim Khan said that the role of local administration is very important in making the supply system smooth and efficient during the month of Ramadan and expressed hope that the administration would play active role in this regard. They also requested the market associations to cooperate with the local administration in ensuring the smooth supply of food items during the month of Ramadan.

House rent increased in Twin-cities by 20pc in six months

ISLAMABAD: House rents in the twin-cities of Islamabad and Rawalpindi have increased by more than 20 percent during the last six months, adding further to the woes of inflation-hit city dwellers. According to an anecdotal survey conducted by APP, house rent in Islamabad city, Rawalpindi Cantt, Chakdala Cantt, Satellite Town and newly established housing schemes in Islamabad has increased by more than 20 percent. Similarly, Ghauri Town, PWD, Media Town, Soan Garden, Jinnah Garden, Bahria Town, Gulzar-i-Quaid, ChakShehzad, ChathaBakhtawar, Shehzad Town, Margalla Town, BharaKahu, Khayaban-e-Sir Syed, British Homes, and Gulraiz 1&2 witnessed a surge in house rent

prices by 20 percent. According to the Inflation Monitor Report issued by the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) for February 2022, house rent topped the list of contributions to the urban Consumer Price Index (CPI) as it weighted 19.26 during the last month of the current fiscal year. The report revealed that house rent prices soared in 2022 by 6.13% from 4.77% a year ago, reaching the second spot in the list of 10 weighted contributions to the urban CPI in February 2022. Real estate agent Ahsan Khan said: "Previously, the rent prices used to surge in winter due to the arrival of people from neighboring hilly areas and drop down in summer when these people leave after spending the days of harsh winter in

the twin-cities." However, he added, from the last two years, the prices never dropped even in the summer. "I got a housing unit on rent in Gulraiz-1 for a price of Rs18,000 per month in November 2021. When we decided to vacate the house, the owner signed a contract with a new dweller for renting out the same house at a price of Rs25,000 per month. I am afraid the rent prices will go further higher till the next winter," informed a resident of Kashmir who, along with his family, spends every winter in Rawalpindi to avoid the odd weather conditions in the hilly area. According to another report of the SBP, the urban housing demand is going up by 350,000 units every year, of

which the demand is met for only 150,000 units. At the same time, prices of land and construction material have also been increasing manifold, making it more difficult for individuals, investors, and other stakeholders to fill this gap by constructing additional housing units. "Increasing house rent prices indicates there is a visible gap between the demand and supply. The number of rural people settling down in the cities is way larger than the number of housing units built annually. The increasing rents mean that urban housing is now turning into a major crisis for those living and working in cities and majority of them don't own a house," said the owner of a private construction company in Islamabad. - APP

WAPDA expedites construction work on 12 dams

ISLAMABAD: Water and Power Development Authority (WAPDA) has expedited construction work on 12 Small and Medium Dams aimed at enhancing, clean energy generation, water availability and climate resilience across the country. As per detail given by the official sources, the dams were dual purpose projects as it were designed to store rains and floodwater along with hydropower generation in all the federating units of the country. He added that the small and medium dam projects initiated in Balochistan included Winder Dam project that would produce 0.3 megawatts (MW) energy and water storage capacity of 0.036 Million acre-foot (MAF), Naulong Dam to produce 4.4 MW power and store 0.20 MAF water, Hingol Dam to generate 1 MW electricity and 1.41 MAF water storage, Garuk Dam to have 0.3 MW power production capacity and 0.05 MAF water storage and Pelar Dam to produce 0.3 MW energy and would conserve 0.099 MAF water. In Sindh, the NaiGaj Dam would produce 4.2 MW electricity and store 0.30 MAF water, whereas the Darawat Dam was expected to produce 0.45 MW energy and store 0.12

MAF water after completion. The WAPDA has also started work on different small and medium dams in Khyber PukhtonKhwaw including the KurramTangi Dam of 83.4 MW hydropower potential and 1.2 MAF water storage capacity, Tank Zam Dam having 25.5 MW power generation and 0.345 MAF water storage capacity and DarabanZam Dam would produce 0.75 MW energy and 0.069 MAF water storage capacity. The WAPDA official further said the Authority had started construction work on different small dams in Punjab including Ghabir Dam having 0.15 MW power production capacity and 0.066 MAF water storage, and Papin Dam of 0.3 MW power and 0.089 MAF water storage capacity hydropower projects that were at various stages of development. He informed that keeping in view the energy demands, project completion pace and availability of funds the Authority has decided to ensure swift culmination of construction and development work on the projects as it would not only help address water and energy issues rather would generate jobs for the local communities and start tourism and business opportunities. - APP

ICT admin imposes fine on profiteers

ISLAMABAD: The special teams headed by Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) administration magistrates on Monday imposed fines over Rs 20,000 on 20 shopkeepers for overcharging customers. The shopkeepers of various markets were fined during surprise raids conducted by magistrates, a spokesman for ICT administration said.

Islamabad Deputy Commissioner Muhammad HamzaShafaqat said the ICT administration was ensuring strict adherence to rate list of food items in markets during Ramadan to clamp down on profiteering. He said stern action was taken against profiteers in the city, heavy fines were imposed on the offenders on the spot for

overcharging. He said daily price-checking would continue unabated in the holy month. As per details, magistrate Model Town (Humak) made 13 inspections and imposed fine of Rs 5000 to shopkeepers on price hike. Similarly, magistrate sub-division sector I9 imposed fine Rs 15,000 for overcharging the customers. Magistrate

ICT made 25 inspections and imposed Rs 2000 fine. Likewise, other magistrates inspected the prices of essential commodities and issued fine and warned as per law. Assistant Commissioner, (Industrial Area) inspected shops and stalls in the jurisdiction for adherence to notified rates, display of price lists. All those in violations were fined. - APP

Supernet receives Shari-ah Screening Certificate

ISLAMABAD: Supernet Limited ("SNL"), a subsidiary of Telecard Limited has been awarded Shari-ah Screening Certificate by Meezan Bank Limited, based on the review of consolidated financial statements of SNL, certifying its compliance with KSE Meezan Islamic Index Criteria set out by Pakistan Stock Exchange, this was announced in a notice by Telecard sent to Pakistan Stock Exchange.

According to Meezan Bank letter, Meezan Bank Limited, in the capacity of Banker to the book building, reviewed the Consolidated Audited Financial Statements of Supernet Limited based on June 30, 2021 which are in compliance with KSE Meezan Islamic Index Criteria set out by Pakistan Stock Exchange, said a news release issue here on Monday.

On the basis of reviewed financial statements, it is allowed to participate in initial offering of Supernet Limited with the provision that the investee will be required to purify its dividend income as per company's annual dividend purification rate determined on semi-annual basis in KMI- All Share Islamic Index.

This is pertinent to highlight that the Shari-ah compliance status of the company's financial statements may vary from one financial period to the other. So, this certificate shall remain valid as long as company's latest available financial statements are for the period ended June 30. - APP

Over 310 farmers trained

ISLAMABAD: The Ministry of National Food Security and Research, in collaboration with provincial governments, has initiated a comprehensive training programs for cotton growers across the country in order to enhance crop output by introducing latest techniques of cultivation and best crop management practices.

In this regard, over 310 leading farmers were provided training on cotton production technology in Punjab, who would further train farmers at at gross root level to enhance cotton production in the country, said Cotton Commissioner in the Ministry of National Food Security and Research Dr Khalid Abdullah. Talking to APP here on Monday, he said that these master trainers were provided training on about the use of latest cotton production technologies, including use of mechanized agriculture, latest cultivation tools and other inputs to achieve higher per-acre output.

Meanwhile, over 147 farmers were also provided training under better cotton initiative projects for enhancing cotton production by adopting European production technologies, he said adding they were trained on proper cotton picking, health and safety, female empowerment and the prevention of child labour.

Cotton is Pakistan's largest industrial sector which has played an important role in the economic development of the country and remains a key livelihood source for more than one million farmers, he said adding that government attached greater importance from the development of crop and introduced different incentives to encourage the farmers to bring maximum areas under its cultivation. - APP

CDNS to provide Islamic investment opportunities

CDNS had set Rs 352b annual collection target for the year 2019-20 as compared to Rs 350b for the previous year (2018-19)

ISLAMABAD: The Central Directorate of National Savings (CDNS) has decided to start Islamic finance and will start implementing its procedural work from next month to provide the facility of Islamic finance in the institution. In this regard, under Islamic Sharia Compliance, Prize Bonds and Savings Certificates will be issued for investment in accordance with Sharia Principles, the senior official of CDNS told APP here on Monday. The CDNS will provide Islamic investment opportunities to its consumers in an institution like the rest of the private and public sector banking, where Islamic sharia business has now reached 20 percent. Replying to a question, he said the CDNS collected Rs 850 billion fresh deposits in the last seven months of cur-

rent fiscal year 2021-22 from July 1st to March 31st. The CDNS has set an annual gross receipt target of Rs 980 billion from July 1 to June 30 of the previous fiscal year 2020-21 to promote savings in the country, he said. The senior official said the CDNS had set Rs 250 billion annual collection target from July 1 to June 30 for the year 2020-21 as compared to Rs 352 billion for the previous year (2019-20) same time span to enhance savings in the country. The CDNS had set Rs 352 billion annual collection target for the year 2019-20 as compared to Rs 350 billion for the previous year (2018-19), he said. The senior official said that (CDNS) has started working to increase new investment opportunities and promote digital

investment through many new projects. The CDNS in collaboration with State Bank of Pakistan is developing digital Prize Bonds, which will be available through online electronic channels, he said. He said the CDNS is in process of launching its first Mobile App for online purchase and encashment of National Savings Schemes. The official said that for better and efficient transfer of funds electronically, the CDNS is going to adopt RAAST in the current month of January for speedy flow of funds through its financial tributaries, he said. Initially, the CDNS has opened three separate accounts in State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) to avoid/stop direct access to the Non-Food Account-1 for its Alter-

native Delivery Channel (ADC) operations, iLink Payment, UPI Payment and RAAST payment. The Finance Division will allocate budget ceiling on a daily basis and the CDNS will operate within the allocated funds limit. Accordingly, the PFM Act, 2019 is adopted in its true spirit for the Alternative Delivery Channels of CDNS. He informed that the CDNS interest rates were linked with the PIB policy set by the SBP. He said the CDNS had opened new avenues for public and private investment to document the country's economy and ensure transparency in the financial system. Replying to another question on the current revision of CDNS certificates' profit

rates, he said the CDNS had maintained the same interest rate on the savings certificates investment due to the market situation and as per Pakistan Investment Bonds (PIB) policy decision. The National Savings had received an increased investment of Rs 80 billion by June 30 2021, from the newly registered Premium Prize Bond of Rs 40,000 and Rs 25000 by the institution, he said. The senior official said that during last year (2020-21), investors withdrew Rs 300 billion after the suspension of the said bond. He said new registered Premium Prize Bonds of Rs 40,000 and Rs 25,000 were registered by the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) and encashed only by the registered financial institutions under the SBP. - APP

China's Covid-19 epidemic

THE Chinese mainland added 1,366 new locally-transmitted Covid-19 cases in the last 24 hours, the National Health Commission said on Monday (April 4, 2022). Of the locally confirmed cases, 425 were reported in Shanghai, where the military and thousands of healthcare workers have been sent to help execute coronavirus tests for all of its 26 million residents. Shanghai, which began a two-stage lockdown last Monday that has been expanded to confine practically all residents to their homes, also registered 8,581 fresh asymptomatic Covid-19 cases. China's financial capital has now asked residents to self-test using antigen tests for Covid-19. The new cases were detected amid the People's Liberation Army (PLA) dispatching more than 2,000 medical personnel recruited from across the army, navy and joint logistics support forces to Shanghai. Multiple provinces such as Jiangsu, Zhejiang and Beijing have sent healthcare workers to Shanghai, according to media reports, with some estimates putting the total number at more than 10,000. It is China's largest public health response since it tackled the initial Covid-19 outbreak in Wuhan, where the novel coronavirus was first discovered in early 2020. The PLA had reportedly dispatched over 4,000 medical personnel to the province of Hubei, where Wuhan is, back then. Last month, China had witnessed its worst outbreak since the pandemic broke out and the country had recorded over 56,000 infections - more than the total cases in Wuhan two years ago. The country's Covid-19 death toll remained unchanged at 4,638 and the recovery of 1,848 patients brought down the number of patients currently undergoing treatment to 25,724, including 54 in critical conditions. While countries around the world are working to flatten the coronavirus curve, global Covid-19 cases on Sunday topped 490 million. According to the John Hopkins University data, the world has witnessed over 6.15 million deaths due to the Covid-19 since the start of the pandemic more than two years ago. In the latest data on Monday morning, the University's Center for Systems Science and Engineering (CSSE) revealed that the current global caseload stood at 491,352,180 cases, while the total deaths record stands at 6,152,703. The United States continues to record the highest number of cases with a total of 81,832,612 so far, followed by India with a total of 43,028,863 cases. Meanwhile, the World Health Organization (WHO) in its latest report said that the number of fresh covid cases across the world between March 21 and March 27 have dropped by 14 percent as compared to the previous week. In another development, a new variant of the Covid infection XE has sparked fresh concerns. According to the WHO, the variant has far more transmissibility rate than the Omicron variant.



ICJ the only feasible route to Rohingya genocide ruling

Dr. Azeem Ibrahim

The Rohingya have a pressing need for their formal status to be established. Bangladesh's concerns are understandable, as they fear having to cope with a permanent refugee population that adds to the demands on their state

IN 2016, it was possible for me to write a book, "The Rohingyas: Inside Myanmar's Hidden Genocide," that described the Rohingyas as "unknown" and perhaps the most under-acknowledged persecuted community on the planet. At the moment, the Rohingya community is broadly split into three sections. The bulk, perhaps about 1.1 million, are in refugee camps in Cox's Bazar in Bangladesh. Authorities in the country are struggling with the implications of this, trying to ensure the refugees do not enter the domestic labor force, while looking to relocate them if at all possible. About 600,000, mostly elderly, still live in Myanmar's Rakhine state in the internal camps they were forced to enter in 2013. It was the threat to this community in particular that led the International Court of Justice to issue a 2020 ruling demanding urgent action to protect them from the Myanmar authorities. A further 400,000 Rohingyas are scattered across India, Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand, plus some in Pakistan. They have no official refugee status and are mostly dispersed among the labor force, often in conditions akin to slavery. The legitimate demands of the Rohingyas are for citizenship in Myanmar and a return to Rakhine. The obvious problem is that this was hard

enough to safely arrange before the 2021 military coup in Myanmar, and is impossible now. Bangladesh is in a difficult position. It has a long history of forcibly returning Rohingya refugees, in part because it does not wish to legitimize the actions of the authorities in Myanmar, and it is a poor country with enough domestic problems of its own. Regardless of where the Rohingyas are currently located, a number of issues need to be a part of any discussions with Myanmar's national unity government. Such talks are something to which they seem amenable. Firstly, the Rohingya name must be accepted and used. There is no justification for pandering to the views of the older leadership of the National League for Democracy that the Rohingyas are "Bengalis." Usage of the community's proper name on a consistent basis is a more powerful statement than might initially appear to be the case. Linked to this, any discussion with the national unity government must be on the basis of removing all restrictions on the citizenship of the Rohingyas that were introduced over the past five decades. The evidence that emerged during 2021 suggests that playing down the rights of the Rohingyas is not a means through which to bring about a democratic and inclusive Myanmar. In addition, all lands seized from the Rohingyas since 2010 - in other words, during the country's democratic period - must be returned. In combination, these actions will be a challenge for the Myanmar authorities, not least because they will have to address 60 years of carefully curated prejudice, but they nevertheless form the basis for a secure settlement. As noted, the ICJ has identified the predominantly elderly community of Rohingyas, who were unable to flee and remain in Rakhine, as being particularly at risk. Any interaction with Myanmar's military authorities will be difficult but, ideally, the UN should regain control over the camps the Rohingyas were forced into. A restating of the ICJ's warning to Myanmar's government would be very valuable. It made it clear that any violence against the residents of the camps would clearly cross the threshold set for the determination of genocide, as there would be no ambiguity about the extent to which it was being carried out as a deliberate act of state policy. A clear statement of intent from the US about bringing charges of genocide and assigning judicial and criminal

justice assets to this task would also help to protect this vulnerable subgroup of Rohingyas. Washington last month announced that it has formally determined that the actions of the Myanmar military against the Rohingyas amount to genocide and crimes against humanity. The generals currently in control of Myanmar might have no plans to visit the US or the EU any time soon, but they do travel to other Association of Southeast Asian Nations countries and need external connections through which to launder their wealth. The Rohingyas have a pressing need for their formal status to be established. Bangladesh's concerns are understandable, as they fear having to cope with a permanent refugee population that adds to the demands on their state. The Rohingyas have no desire to remain in Bangladesh indefinitely, so the key is to ensure adequate support is provided for now and that efforts are made to enable them to work. It is also important to resist attempts by the Bangladeshi authorities to relocate the refugee camps. Again, the US can exert a disproportionately large level of influence when other bodies, such as the UN's refugee agency, struggle to be heard. In some ways, the existing case brought before the ICJ by Gambia accusing authorities in Myanmar of genocide against the Rohingyas has stalled as a result of the military coup in the country in February last year. However, it is still gathering information that could inform a future judgment and, in the meantime, it seems the court's clear ruling in 2020 has had at least some effect in protecting the Rohingyas that remain in Myanmar. The ICJ is the only feasible route to a genocide ruling because China and Russia will veto any attempt to achieve this through the UN Security Council. The US could bring its own case, on the basis of its own recent report on the subject, or throw its weight behind Gambia's. Either option would give the case a higher international profile. More importantly, perhaps, it would increase the threat that those who are eventually found guilty of genocidal actions will face proper justice. In the former Yugoslavia, the process to achieve a similar outcome has been slow, even with the eventual co-operation of Bosnia, Croatia and Serbia, but effective, with many of those found guilty of war crimes or ethnic cleansing now serving lengthy prison sentences.

- Courtesy: Arab News

Construction of highways: How can quality of work be ensured?

Mumtaz Ahmed Bhatti



No inquiry should be made on any development project before it is completed. All the requirements of engineers such as technical allowance, vehicles, fuel as required. Executive engineers should not be called for unnecessary meetings

COUNTRIES and nations develop with the construction of highways. Countries around the world that are rapidly moving towards development. These countries paid full attention to the construction of highways in their countries. Developed countries built national highways and also focused on farm-to-market roads. In Punjab, Mian Shabbaz Sharif constructed Form to Market Roads in five phases

under khadim e Alla Rural Roads Program. A team of Pakistani and Korean engineers was formed to test the quality of these roads. The team tested the material samples of these roads from reputed laboratories in Lahore and Taxila. In the Annual Development Program Punjab 2021-22, there are 592 ongoing road schemes with an estimated cost of Rs. 211,371.910 million. The expenditure till June 2021 is Rs. 128,562.069 million. Monitoring & Evaluation has given very serious observation on the quality of work of many road projects in Punjab. Corruption has been identified in various road projects. Action should not be taken only against executive engineers, sub-divisional officers and sub-engineers if corruption is proved in road projects. Action must be taken against the engineers, contractors, consultants and all the officers involved in corruption in the road projects. There are 323 on-going road schemes in Baluchistan. The estimated cost is Rs. 94040.018 million and till June 2021, the expenditure has been Rs. 34284.062 million. Engineers are facing difficulties in working in Baluchistan due to security issues. Some engineers have been kidnapped and killed. Despite all these difficulties, the engineers of Baluchistan are working. And the quality of work of development projects is improving day by day. Engineers of Baluchistan have also disproved the perception that development work in Baluchistan is completed in files rather than on the ground. There are complaints of corruption and irregularities in development projects in some areas of Baluchistan like other provinces but before forming any opinion should also take the point of view of the engineers who are working on the development projects. According to Baluchistan Provincial PSDP, the targets set for development projects could not be achieved from last three years. It is important to know the reasons why the targets could not be achieved. Shortage of funds was the reason or something else. Where corruption complaints are coming from one thing that is common is that quality control material tests are not performed as much as required. If all the required tests are performed then the failure rate of the test increases and it becomes clear

that substandard material is being used in the road. Development projects are executed by executive engineers and their juniors. The duties of the Superintendent Engineers and Chief Engineers also include inspecting the projects under construction in their jurisdiction so that substandard material is not used in the projects. Should corruption be found in a project, should it be the responsibility of the executive engineer alone or should it be the responsibility of all those who inspect it? This is because the officers receive TA, DA on inspection and there is huge expenditure on fuel. There is also the impression that corruption is rampant in the roads sector. That is why some engineers are working hard for Posting in the roads sector. Officers involved in corruption are very influential and it is very difficult to take action against them. Corruption will end when there is strict legal action against influential officials involved in corruption. Development Projects in Sindh Province There is an impression that development projects in Sindh are constructed from sub-standard materials. This impression is completely wrong. I visited some of the road projects being constructed in the cities of Sukkur, Khairpur, Larkana and Shikarpur in Sindh. All roads are very good in terms of quality. When I visit some other cities of Sindh and roads of Balochistan then I will write in detail on the roads of Sindh and Balochistan. The quality of work of all development projects, including highways, can be improved and ensured. If the posting of engineers is on merit, there is no political interference, the opinion of non-technical persons should not be given priority over technical persons. Boards should be formed in every department for transfer and posting. No engineer should be transferred before three years without solid reasons. No inquiry should be made on any development project before it is completed. All the requirements of engineers such as technical allowance, vehicles, fuel as required. Executive engineers should not be called for unnecessary meetings. Ensure that no engineer has to pay bribe to Planning Commission, Planning and Development or Finance Department for any project. Improvement is possible only if the necessary steps are taken.

Ukraine war must end

THE ongoing talks between Russian and Ukrainian officials, despite military activity on the ground, could be early indicators of a likely breakthrough, which could result in an end to the mayhem and improve relations between the two troubled nations. While both sides are battling it out in Ukrainian cities, officials of the two countries continue their video discussions aimed at bringing about a rapport and end the mindless violence. Fortunately, there are indications that a breakthrough might emerge if both sides tone down their strident views and show a willingness to reconcile differences and patch up for a better tomorrow. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky has admitted that the talks are getting realistic but more time is needed to reach an agreement. He also suggested that his country could accept international security guarantees, which many analysts consider a break from Ukraine's past insistence on joining Nato. Moscow, of course, is totally opposed to its joining the alliance. Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov has also admitted that the two countries are close to an agreement. Russia has for long demanded that Ukraine be kept out of Nato. Vladimir Medinsky, Russia's chief negotiator, has revealed that Ukraine was keen on getting the status of a neutral state, such as Austria or Sweden, which a Kremlin spokesperson acknowledged could be seen as a compromise agreement. The conflict has prolonged for over a month, taking a dreadful toll in terms of military and civilian casualties on both sides. Cities have been destroyed and about three million people, mostly women and children from Ukraine, are seeking refuge in neighbouring countries. It has also taken a huge toll on global economics, badly hurting the weaker nations. Russia is also under pressure to end the military actions in Ukraine. Besides the strong action initiated by the Western countries in recent days, it is also facing the pinch of the ongoing conflict. Last month, the International Court of Justice ordered Russia to suspend military operations in Ukraine immediately. While Russia initially rubbished the "apparent absurdity of the lawsuit" and skipped the hearings, it did file a written document asking the ICJ not to impose any measures. The two countries should ensure that the negotiations are wrapped up at the earliest to bring an end to the continuing bloodshed. This is not the time for tough posturing and engaging in a conflict; allowances must be made, concessions given, and military actions brought to a swift end. There are numerous instances from the past, especially in Europe, of nations agreeing to live together without battling it out. Russia and Ukraine have to set an example, by reconciling their differences and closing an unsavoury chapter that threatens to blow up normalcy in a crucial part of the globe.

Russia has effectively admitted defeat in Ukraine

Justin Bronk

Russia needs a ceasefire soon, however, because the current rate of equipment and personnel losses is not sustainable, and in any case, they are making little meaningful progress except in the east

ON March 25, the Russian Ministry of Defence announced that the "first phase" of the invasion of Ukraine was over. A mere month earlier, President Vladimir Putin had vowed to completely destroy Ukraine's military capabilities and to replace the Ukrainian government, which he claimed without any evidence was a neo-Nazi junta planning to commit "genocide" in Donbas. To that end, on February 24 the Russian army and airborne forces attempted a lightning assault on Kyiv, and simultaneously launched offensives against Kharkiv, Sumy, Chernihiv, Kherson, Melitopol, Mariupol and on the line of contact in the Donbas region. The subsequent month of unexpectedly vicious high-intensity combat has seen Russian forces fail to take all the cities, with the exception of the smaller southern cities of Kherson and Melitopol, which fell in the first days. In return, the Russian army has taken extremely heavy losses; between 7,000 and 15,000 personnel killed and more than 2,000 vehicles visually confirmed as destroyed or captured. The new announcement by the Russian government is a direct response to these failures. It is an admission that, at least for now, Russia cannot return Ukraine to its control by force. Instead of regime change ("denazification" according to Russia), the new claim is that Russia's goal is a more limited focus on taking territory and destroying Ukrainian forces in the Donbas. This is a serious crisis for President Putin's regime. To justify the "special military operation" against Ukraine, he has used extreme rhetoric and baseless claims of neo-Nazism and genocide in Ukraine for months. Since the invasion began, ordinary Russians have been presented with a barrage of "Z"-themed pro-war propaganda, patriotic speeches and rallies designed to stir patriotic fervour. During the first few days, when Russian leaders still assumed they would quickly defeat Ukraine, Russian state media carried pronouncements that President Putin's invasion had reshaped the world order and put an end to both the "Ukraine question" and a unipolar United States-led, NATO dominated world. Perhaps even more importantly, Russia's military power and history - both conventional and nuclear - are a cornerstone of national identity and national pride, and Russians have long looked down culturally and politically on Ukraine and Ukrainians. All of this makes the current situation extremely difficult for the

Russian government to explain to its people. In the information climate carefully created by the Russian government for its people, how could the mighty Russian military have failed to destroy the much weaker Ukrainian army? How can a supposedly high-tech "special military operation" that would be conducted in a short time by elite forces have led to tens of thousands of dead, wounded and captured Russian troops and more than 2,000 destroyed Russian vehicles? How is it that the Ukrainian people - supposedly being oppressed by an unpopular neo-Nazi junta imposed by shadowy hostile Western forces - are now fighting with fierce anger and almost total national unity against their Russian "liberators"? Most of all, how can the Russian government - supposedly a nuclear superpower, and the self-proclaimed heir of the victory over Nazi Germany in 1945 - make a ceasefire deal that leaves the supposedly "genocidal", "neo-Nazi" Ukrainian government in power? By creating a narrative justification for the invasion that was completely divorced from reality, the Russian government has created a situation where almost any possible outcome to the war now will be extremely hard to justify to its own people. Russia needs a ceasefire soon, however, because the current rate of equipment and personnel losses is not sustainable, and in any case, they are making little meaningful progress except in the east. In fact, in the past week, Ukraine has retaken significant territory around Mykolaiv and Kherson in the southwest, around Irpin and Makariv to the west of Kyiv and Trostyanets to the east of Kyiv. With each passing day, the Ukrainian hand in the ongoing ceasefire negotiations becomes stronger rather than weaker. In this context, the Russian announcement of a new phase of the war that will focus on the Donbas has two purposes. Firstly, it represents a pragmatic military strategy. The Donbas is the part of Ukraine where Russian forces stand the best chance of achieving major military successes - they are attempting to concentrate sufficient forces to break the Ukrainian defence line along the Donets River and have gained important ground around Izyum in the past week. It makes sense to prioritise overstretched forces where they have the best chance of achieving tangible results, which will improve their bargaining position in ceasefire talks. Secondly, this is the start of an effort to moderate the expectations created by the completely unrealistic view of the war that the Russian government has fed its people. Despite this, some in the Russian government seem to find it hard to accept these reduced ambitions and the reality that they imply. On March 27, the propagandist known as "Putin's mouthpiece", Dmitry Kiselyov, stated on Russian television that "Russia will never cede Ukraine to anyone ... it has to be part of Russia, even against Ukraine's own will." Furthermore, Russia continues to conduct missile strikes throughout Ukraine including in Lviv in the west, and is finding it difficult to disengage its forces around Kyiv, Kharkiv, Sumy and Kherson due to strong Ukrainian counterattacks. Therefore, while a new phase of the invasion has been announced, it remains to be seen if Russia can successfully focus on the Donbas as stated.

- Courtesy: Al Jazeera

Briefs

SC mulls legality of the ruling

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that it could not decide on the case without listening to everyone. "The ruling cannot come out of thin air," CJ Bandial said as he adjourned the case till 12:05 pm tomorrow. Farook H Naik argued before the court today for two hours whereas Raza Rabbani and Makhdoom Ali Khan still have to present their arguments. Naik urged the court to decide on the case today but the court said it needed more time to hear the arguments of other lawyers. Justice Ijazul Ahsan said the court's decision will have far-reaching ramifications so it could not make haste in announcing its decision without giving the other party an opportunity to present their argument. On Sunday, Qasim Suri, the deputy speaker, dismissed the no-confidence motion against PM Imran Khan citing Article 5. Subsequently, President Arif Alvi dissolved the National Assembly on the advice of the prime minister. As a constitutional crisis gripped the country, the apex court took a suo motu notice to resolve the matter. As the hearing started today, a petition filed by the opposition seeking the formation of a full bench to hear the case was dismissed as the CJ said that the formation of a full bench would create delays in other cases.

PTI proposes ex-CJP Gulzar...

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send two names to the parliamentary committee responsible for appointing a caretaker prime minister. The eight-member parliamentary committee, comprising National Assembly and Senate members, with equal representation from the government and Opposition, will be formed by the NA speaker. PTI Chairman Imran Khan will continue as the prime minister despite being de-notified as the premier, till the appointment of a caretaker prime minister. The President's Secretariat said in a presser issued after Sunday midnight. Earlier, President Dr Arif Alvi on Monday sent a letter to incumbent Prime Minister Imran Ahmad Khan Niazi and Leader of the Opposition in the outgoing National Assembly Mian Muhammad Shahbaz Sharif, to propose a suitable person for the caretaker prime minister. The letter has been written under Article 224 A (1) of the Constitution of Pakistan in the wake of the dissolution of the National Assembly on Sunday. The letter says that in case the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition in the outgoing National Assembly do not agree on any person to be appointed as the caretaker Prime Minister within three days of the dissolution of the National Assembly, they shall forward two nominees each to a Committee to be immediately constituted by the Speaker of the National Assembly.

Biden: Putin should...

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Zelensky called the Russian actions "genocide" and called for the West to apply tougher sanctions against Russia. Biden, however, stopped short of calling the actions genocide. The bodies of 410 civilians have been removed from Kyiv-area towns that were recently retaken from Russian forces, Ukraine's prosecutor-general, Iryna Venediktova, said. Associated Press journalists saw the bodies of at least 21 people in various spots around Bucha, northwest of the capital. "We have to continue to provide Ukraine with the weapons they need to continue the fight. And we have to gather all the detail so this can be an actual - have a war crimes trial," Biden said. Biden lashed out at Putin as "brutal." "What's happening in Bucha is outrageous and everyone sees it," Biden added.

Humanitarian mine action vital for regional peace

Azerbaijani presidential aide Hikmat Hajiyev emphasized that the Azerbaijani regions liberated from Armenian occupation in the second Karabakh war (2020) are the most mine-contaminated area in the world

DNA

BAKU: Azerbaijan's history has been replete with Armenian-committed atrocities against its innocent civilians over the last century. These atrocities culminated during the first Karabakh war (1988-1994) when Armenia's armed forces committed crimes against humanity and war crimes against innocent Azerbaijanis.

The planting of mines in Azerbaijan's former occupied territories is one of the vivid examples of Armenia's long-lasting inhuman policy against its neighbor. The liberated lands of Azerbaijan, which were occupied by Armenia for 30 years, are now regarded as the world's most mine-littered territory. Despite Armenia's hostile and destructive stance, Azerbaijan has consistently sought opportunities for regional peace-building initiatives. The international conference on the theme "Humanitarian mine action and sustainable development goals (SDGs)," co-organized by the Azerbaijan Mine Action Agency (ANAMA) and the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) in Baku on March 31 - April 1, 2022, was another significant step forward for Azerbaijan in its efforts to promote regional peace.

The conference aimed to bring together key players from the international community, mine action operators, government agencies, and civil society to discuss the



importance of humanitarian mine action in combating the threat of mines to people's lives and livelihoods. Azerbaijan sees the demining of its liberated territories as a key factor for regional peace and prosperity. Speaking at the event, Azerbaijan Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Leyla Abdullayeva stressed that humanitarian mine action is vital for ensuring regional peace.

"Humanitarian demining is very important in terms of ensuring peace, stability and security in the region. As you know, Azerbaijan is carrying out large-scale restoration and reconstruction work in the liberated

territories. It is important to clear the area of mines so that people can return to their native lands safely and with dignity," Abdullayeva underlined. The Azerbaijani government has made demining a priority, allocating large sums of money to these activities in liberated areas, the spokesperson said. The Azerbaijani government has prioritized demining, allocating large sums of money to these activities in liberated areas, the spokesperson said. Moreover, Azerbaijani presidential aide Hikmat Hajiyev emphasized that the Azerbaijani regions liberated from Armenian occupation in the

second Karabakh war (2020) are the most mine-contaminated area in the world.

Hajiyev stated that Azerbaijan faces critical issues such as the restoration and reconstruction of liberated territories, as well as the return of internally displaced persons. The threat of mines is one of the most significant obstacles in this regard, and Azerbaijan hopes for serious international support in eliminating this threat.

Hajiyev described as accurate only 25 percent of minefield maps provided by Armenia. "They planted mines instead of trees in our territories. Both soldiers and civilians were killed and injured in the blasts. Unfortunately, only 25 percent of the mine maps provided by Armenia were useful," Hajiyev stressed. Earlier it was reported that Armenia submitted to Azerbaijan all mine maps of liberated territories as a result of talks held through the Russian Defence Ministry's mediation on December 4, 2021.

In his remarks at the event, ANAMA Chairman Vugar Suleymanov stated that since November 10, 2020, over 25,000 hectares of land have been cleared of mines, and over 55,000 mines and unexploded ordnance have been discovered and neutralized on the liberated territories. Suleymanov stated that Azerbaijan's Karabakh region ranks first in the world for mine pollution and that due to the magnitude of the problem, the Azerbaijani government prioritizes demining of the liberated territories.

US deploys Patriot missile system to Philippines: Report

Patriot missile system has been deployed in Aparri in Cagayan province

AGENCIES

WASHINGTON: The US has deployed a Patriot surface-to-air missile defense system to the Philippines, a media report said on Monday. It is the "first time as part of annual joint war games," the Filipino daily Inquirer reported. The Patriot missile system has been deployed in Aparri in the Cagayan province, which is located in the northern Philippines facing south of Taiwan, it said. This is the first time the US

has deployed the system overseas by land and sea, the report added. The US and Philippines are holding the "largest-ever" joint military exercise across the Luzon island from March 28 to April 8. Some 5,100 US military personnel and 3,800 Philippine soldiers are participating in the exercise in the archipelago nation. The joint military exercise, known as Balikatan 2022, is focusing on "maritime security, amphibious operations, live-fire training, urban operations, aviation oper-

ations, counter-terrorism, humanitarian assistance, and disaster relief," according to the US Embassy in Manila. The American and Philippine soldiers practiced joint landings, parachute jumps, and live firing drills. Meanwhile, Philippines Foreign Secretary Teodoro Locsin and China's State Councilor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi held bilateral talks in the eastern Chinese province of Anhui on Monday. "Both agreed that maritime issues should be put in a proper place in bilateral re-

lations. It is particularly important to prevent improper steps that could disrupt or even undermine bilateral relations and stability in the South China Sea," China's Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Hua Chunying said in a brief statement on Twitter. Wang stated that China is ready to work toward the goal of building "five homes," including a peaceful, safe, secure, prosperous, beautiful, and amicable home with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), as outlined by Chinese President Xi Jinping.

We can't give up cricket to politics, says Ramiz Raja

KARACHI: Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) Chairman Ramiz Raja has said that we cannot give up cricket to politics while reacting to Pakistan-India cricket. In an interview with foreign media, the PCB chairman said that Cricket Australia has welcomed the four-nation tournament, while the International Cricket Council (ICC) has not yet revealed its thoughts about the four-nation tournament. Raja said that India, England, and ICC have not yet made a statement regarding the four-nation tournament, and Pakistan has proved its foolproof security and ability to host cricket on the international level. The former cricketer said that the international broadcaster told him that the Pakistan-India T20 World Cup match had broken all the records of viewership. Talking about the Pakistan Super League (PSL), Raja said we plan to make PSL better, and the PCB will definitely take it towards the auction. It is pertinent to mention that Raja has sent the proposed plan of the four-nation Super Series to the ICC, while a copy of the draft of the series has also been sent to Australia, India, and England. - APP

Swiatek cried for '40 minutes' after Barty's retirement

MIAMI: World number one Iga Swiatek said she cried for 40 minutes after learning of three-time Grand Slam champion Ash Barty's shock retirement last month. Swiatek took over the top ranking on Monday after Australian Barty decided to call time on her career at the age of 25. "I was crying for 40 minutes," Swiatek told the BBC on Monday. "Mainly, it was because of Ash's retirement. I didn't know it was going to happen and it really surprised me. "I always had this vision that we would all play until we are 35 or something until our bodies are so tired that we can't anymore. "I needed time to actually understand what she must have thought. Her decision was really brave and I felt a lot of emotions because of that." Swiatek said she also became emotional after finding out that she could take over the top spot, which the 20-year-old Pole did after a second-round win at the Miami Open. She eventually went on to lift the title. "I realised after two hours of being really emotional that 'Hey, you don't know what is going to happen yet and you still have to win some matches,'" Swiatek said. "So I told myself 'let's wait with the emotions and with being excited because I have work to do.'" - Agencies



United 'not favourites' for top-four spot: Rangnick

MANCHESTER: Manchester United interim manager Ralf Rangnick said they are "not favourites" to finish in the Premier League's top four after slipping to seventh with a 1-1 draw against Leicester City. The Old Trafford club are three points outside the top four with eight games left. "It doesn't help at all to look at the table every weekend and speculate and anticipate what might happen, how many points might we need," Rangnick told reporters. "Right now we are not the favourites, for sure, for number four. "I'm not a fortune teller, so I don't know where Manchester United will be next season. For us, it's my job, our job... to finish the season on the highest and best possible note." United play at Everton on Saturday and Rangnick said getting the three points was their only focus. "The season is not over. We still have another eight games to play and I think then it's time to draw the right conclusions and take the right decisions for next season," he added. - APP

Rampant Spurs go fourth in Premier League



LONDON: Tottenham powered into fourth place in the Premier League with a 5-1 rout of Newcastle, while West Ham's 2-1 victory pushed Everton deeper into relegation trouble on Sunday. Antonio Conte's side staged a stirring comeback to make it five wins from their last six league games. Newcastle struck first through Fabian Schär, but Ben Davies equalised before the break in north London. Matt Doherty, Son Heung-min, Emerson Royal and Steven Bergwijn netted after half-time as Tottenham

climbed above bitter rivals Arsenal on goal difference. Arsenal, who have two games in hand on Tottenham, can regain fourth place if they avoid defeat at Crystal Palace on Monday. Regardless of that result, Tottenham are firmly in the race to qualify for next season's Champions League, despite Conte's claim that it would be a miracle to finish in the top four. "It's very difficult to be in the race for the Champions League. We want to stay there until the end. We have to continue to play this way

Russia denies killing ...

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support Ukraine's version of events. He said Russian "experts at the Ministry of Defence have identified signs of video fakes and various fakes", without elaborating. "We would demand that many international leaders do not rush to sweeping accusations and at least listen to our arguments," he added. Peskov also said Russia's diplomats would press on with their efforts to convene a United Nations Security Council meeting to discuss what Moscow has called "Ukrainian provocations" in Bucha despite their first effort to arrange such a meeting being blocked. Peskov declined to comment on whether the furore over Bucha would affect peace talks between Moscow and Kyiv, which had been set to resume via video conference on Monday. On Monday, Polish Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki called for an international investigation into what he termed a "genocide" carried out by Russian troops in Ukraine, including in Bucha.

PM imposed 'civilian martial law': Shahbaz

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adding that PM Imran Khan imposed civilian martial law, while General Pervez Musharraf also took a similar unconstitutional decision on November 3, 2007. He termed the four-year tenure of the former PTI-led government a period of "an individual government, totalitarian and fascist." On March 24, speaker of the National Assembly Asad Qaiser granted leave to the no-confidence motion against Prime Minister Imran Khan, according to the will of the House. Recalling Sunday's ruling of the NA deputy speaker regarding the no-confidence motion, he asked, "if Qasim Suri termed the motion as 'unconstitutional', why wasn't it raised earlier?" "PTI used Article 5 to prevent themselves from the embarrassment that they would have faced after their defeat in case of voting on the no-confidence motion," Shahbaz said. Regarding the "foreign threat letter" controversy, the leader of the Opposition in the National Assembly said that Pakistan's Ambassador Asad Majeed hosted a farewell dinner on March 16 and invited all US officials, even those who were accused by PM Imran Khan.

Unlawful game played: Fazl

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the elections by dissolving the assembly unconstitutionally. The Jamiat Ulama-e-Islam (JUI) head Maulana Fazlur Rehman also said that the country is currently in a constitutional crisis because the Deputy Speaker has given an unconstitutional ruling. He appealed to the court to reject the ruling of the Deputy Speaker and Members of the National Assembly (MNAs) should be given the right to vote on the no-confidence motion. To avoid rigging in future elections, Maulana Fazlur Rehman said the electoral reforms should be carried out first and then elections. Maulana said PM Imran dissolved the assembly on the basis of the presumption of ruling the Deputy Speaker.

IMF to 'continue...

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the government's recently announced amnesty scheme and shared doubts over the financial impact and financing sources of the prime minister's relief package on electricity and petroleum prices. The talks on the seventh review of the \$6bn Extended Fund Facility started on March 4. The Fund had been concerned over the "one step forward, two steps back" approach of the government on critical reforms having serious budget implications going forward. There are three critical areas, including tax amnesty, untargeted subsidy on petroleum products and general subsidy on electricity rates.

Nadal inspires Alcaraz to Miami Open crown

Nadal was among the first to congratulate Alcaraz upon his win on Sunday, hailing a "historical" triumph

DNA

MIAMI: Carlos Alcaraz believes watching boyhood idol Rafael Nadal helped him become the youngest ever Miami Open champion on Sunday. Alcaraz, who turns 19 next month, showed why many believe he is currently the hottest young prospect in men's tennis with a 7-5, 6-4 victory over Norway's world number eight Casper Ruud to land a first ATP Masters crown. Only two men have won titles at this level at a younger age - Michael Chang, who was 18 years and five months old when he won in Toronto in 1990, and Rafael Nadal, 18 years and 10 months when he was victorious in Monte Carlo in 2005. Alcaraz dropped just one set on the way to his Miami triumph and now will head off to compete on his preferred surface of clay buoyed

by the biggest win of his career. There's a long way to go before even getting close to replicating the legendary career of 21 Grand Slam-winning compatriot Nadal but Alcaraz says he plans to have fun trying. "I have always looked up to Rafa. I always watched his big moments and matches and learned a lot from that," Alcaraz, who received a congratulatory call from Spain's King Felipe VI, after a famous win which saw him collapse to the floor upon winning the final point, told AFP. "When I fell to the floor, all the times I have dreamed of this came to me," added Alcaraz, beaten by Nadal in the semi-finals at Indian Wells last month. Nadal was among the first to congratulate Alcaraz upon his win on Sunday, hailing a "historical" triumph. "The first of many to come I'm sure," Nadal wrote on Twitter. Much is expected of Alcaraz



whose passionate, all-energy displays in the latter stages of the Miami Open energised the Florida crowd. He insisted afterwards that his target now is to win a Grand Slam - and this was certainly a good start. It was the more understated Norwegian, 23, however, who looked more comfortable in the early stages of what was his 10th ATP final by breaking early and keeping the pressure firmly on his precocious opponent. Despite the majority of the crowd backing the Spanish player, he was unable to take a break opportunity at 3-1 with Ruud proving he possesses the kind of mental strength to thrive in such high pressure situations. Yet when another chance came to pierce the world number eight's service game, Alcaraz, who reached the last four in Indian Wells last month, grabbed it before holding his own serve to put a lively first set firmly back

in the balance at 4-4. A blistering forehand set up two more break points and although Ruud saved the first, he then hit wide to put Alcaraz in the driving seat to land the opening set.

Two breaks at the start of the second set further cemented Alcaraz's dominance, the teenager racing into a 3-0 lead which was too tall a mountain for the combative yet ultimately outclassed Ruud. "I didn't expect to reach the final so I can't be too upset," said the Norwegian. "Carlos is very aggressive and a great mover. You think you've hit a winner but he is there to return it." It was an emotion-charged afternoon for Alcaraz and his camp who were boosted before the match when coach Juan Carlos Ferrero, the former world number one, who has been absent from the tournament following the death of his father, turned up to surprise his protegee.

Briefs

April battles:
Beginning
of historic
victory

NEWS DESK

BAKU: One of the glorious pages in Azerbaijan's Karabakh war history, the 2016 April battles later dubbed the four-day war, bolstered a national soldier's combat spirit and paved the way for the ultimate victory gained by Azerbaijan over Armenia in 2020. These battles demonstrated that the Azerbaijani people and state will never accept the occupation and Azerbaijan once again declared to the enemy that it would restore its territorial integrity at any cost. Four years later, the Azerbaijani Army has made history and ensured the country's territorial integrity. On April 2, 2016, intensive artillery shelling of Azerbaijani frontline positions and settlements by the Armenian armed forces made the counter-offensive necessary. As a result of four-day battles, the Azerbaijani army liberated several strategically important heights and restored control over 2,000 hectares of land. The positions in the direction of Tartar region's Talish village and Sugovushan settlement, Jabrayil region's Lalatapa height and Jojug Marjanli village, as well as Goranboy region's Gulustan village, were cleared of enemy forces. The threat to the lives of Jojug Marjanli residents in the Jabrayil region was completely eliminated following the liberation of the Lalatapa height.

Regime shelling
kills 3 children
in Idlib

IDLIB: Three children were killed on Monday in an attack by the Bashar al-Assad regime and Iran-affiliated terror groups, in violation of a truce in Syria's northwestern Idlib de-escalation zone, according to civil defense forces. Regime forces and allied Iranian militias shelled the village of Maarat Naasan in northwestern Idlib province, the sources said. Three children were killed in the attack, they added. Monday's attack coincided with four airstrikes by Russian warplanes in southern Idlib, according to local sources. Idlib falls within a de-escalation zone forged under an agreement between Turkey and Russia in March 2020. The regime, however, has consistently violated the terms, launching frequent attacks inside the de-escalation zone. Syria has been mired in a vicious civil war since early 2011 when the Assad regime cracked down on pro-democracy protests with unexpected ferocity. In the past decade, around half a million people have been killed and more than 12 million had to flee their homes.

Spanish PM
calls to probe
Russia

OVIEDO: Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez on Monday said Russia should be investigated for "war crimes and genocide." "Putin's unjustified aggression has again brought war to the EU's doorstep, the horror of the war, as we've seen in recent days," he said at an economic forum in Madrid, referring to the bloody scenes of dead civilians discovered in the Kyiv suburb of Bucha after Russian troops retreated. "We will do everything possible to ensure that those who committed these crimes do not go unpunished and can appear before the International Criminal Court to respond to these alleged crimes against humanity, war crimes, and why not say it — genocide," Sanchez continued. His use of the word "genocide" makes the Spanish premier stand out from other global leaders. On Sunday, NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg and US Secretary of State Antony Blinken both declined to use the term when asked on CNN, although they condemned Russia's actions. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, on the other hand, insists his country is experiencing genocide and says the scenes in places like Bucha or the bombing of the maternity hospital in Mariupol prove it.

'Political instability in Pakistan always a cause of concern'

DNA

BEIJING: Pakistan is the only all-weather strategic cooperative partner of China. The political instability in Pakistan is always a cause for concern, said Dr. Wang Xu, Executive Deputy Director of Centre for South Asian Studies, Peking University. In his article published by China Economic Net on Monday, he referred to no-trust motion against Prime Minister Imran Khan and dissolution of the National Assembly and said the political uncertainty is growing in Pakistan. The article says, "with the

time-honored history and solid foundation of friendship, and having just celebrated the 70th anniversary of the establishment of formal diplomatic ties, the two countries are confident enough to maintain and shape the steady development of bilateral ties that have been friendly for generations, regardless of the international and domestic political changes. Chinese President Xi Jinping described China and Pakistan as good brothers and good partners sharing a special friendship. In the history, no matter how international and regional situations change, China and Pakistan

have always stood by each other, sharing joy and sorrow, understanding and supporting each other's core interests. This is because the two countries have a high degree of consistency in safeguarding their joint and regional common interests of development and security. During the Cold War, China and Pakistan supported each other to break the geo-containment of the superpower, worked together in safeguarding regional peace and stability in South Asia. The two countries cooperated with each other to promote the normalization of China-U.S. relations, which changed the global

landscape of Cold War at one stroke. Since the turn of the century, both countries have supported each other in formulating and implementing counter-terrorism strategies in accordance with their respective national conditions, and have jointly opposed "double standards" and "stigmatization" in counter-terrorism by international and regional hegemonism. In the past decade, the U.S. adjusted its global strategy to promote great power competition in the name of "Asia-Pacific Rebalancing" and "Indo-Pacific strategy", and even hastily withdrew its troops from Afghanistan

in disregard of the ground reality, resulting in political, economic, security and humanitarian crises. As neighbors of Afghanistan, China and Pakistan have always supported the political settlement on Afghan issue, taking into full consideration the historical and practical factors of the Afghanistan, and have been cooperating with each other to promote the post-withdrawal era of Afghanistan from chaos to stability and prosperity. In the meantime, the cooperation between China and Pakistan in the field of development, especially the construction of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor

(CPEC), has injected new impetus into the in-depth development of bilateral relations. In April 2015, President Xi Jinping paid a historic state visit to Pakistan. Both leaders agreed to upgrade the bilateral relationship to an all-weather strategic cooperative partnership and continue to promote the construction of the CPEC, building a closer China-Pakistan community with a shared future in the new era. CPEC has brought 25.4 billion dollars in direct investment to Pakistan, created more than 70,000 jobs directly, and launched a large number of social and livelihood priority projects.

Azerbaijan
defuses
55,000 mines

BAKU: Azerbaijani mine clearing experts have so far defused 55,000 landmines and explosive ordnance in regions liberated from the Armenian army in November 2020. Azerbaijan's mine disposal teams continued to clear areas of landmines and live explosive devices in the Karabakh and neighboring regions. It is estimated that the Armenian army has planted hundreds of thousands of mines in different regions. The Azerbaijan Mine Clearance Agency (ANAMA) is conducting an operation using cutting-edge equipment to locate and defuse explosives that are endangering the lives of innocent people as well as army deployed in Karabakh and neighboring territories. The Ministry of Emergency Situations, Border Services Command and Turkish Armed Forces (TAF) special mine research squads have been collaborating with ANAMA to clear the areas of mines and explosives.

Iraq digs up
mass grave
in Najaf

BAGHDAD: A mass grave believed to be of opponents of the Saddam Hussein regime was found in Iraq's southern Najaf province, according to local authorities on Monday. "The grave was discovered near one of the complexes under construction in Najaf," the Najaf governor's office said in a statement. The statement said the grave is believed to include the remains of protesters executed by the former regime in the 1990s. A popular uprising broke out in southern Iraq during the 1991 Gulf War, and spread to the outskirts of the capital, Baghdad, to which the Saddam Hussein regime responded by using force to quell the protests. Since the fall of the former regime in 2003, international and Iraqi experts have found dozens of mass graves of the victims of the uprising.

Baku celebrates
Int'l Children's
Book Day

BAKU: International Children's Book Day has been celebrated in Baku. Initiated by the International Board on Books for Young People (IBBY), the day has been celebrated in many countries since 1967 on the birthday of the great storyteller Hans Christian Andersen on April 2. The first Children's Book Festival was held in the country as part of the celebration. The festival was organized by the Azerbaijan Publishing Houses Association to inspire a love of reading and to call attention to children's books. The two-days festival brought together not only readers of different ages, but also all those involved in book art, including writers, publishers, artists, editors, book distributors, librarians, teachers, critics, translators and journalists. The festival with the participation of various publishing houses, book houses, as well as private individuals aroused great interest among young readers. Fairy tale hours, meetings with authors of children's books, and various projects were presented as part of the festival.



KHARTOUM: Meer Behrose Regi, ambassador of Pakistan to Sudan received in his office Dr Irfan Nezirolu, ambassador of Turkey in Khartoum. — DNA

Briefing on Uzbekistan's
chairmanship of SCO held

NEWS DESK

ASHGABAT: The briefing dedicated to Uzbekistan's chairmanship in the SCO 2022 was held in Ashgabat, reports "Dunya" IA correspondent. The event, organized by the Embassy of Uzbekistan in Turkmenistan, was attended by the heads of foreign diplomatic missions and international organizations, representatives of government agencies, public organizations and the media of Turkmenistan. The participants were informed about the main priorities of the chairmanship of Uzbekistan in the SCO in 2022 and new initiatives of the leadership of the country aimed at further build-

ing up multifaceted cooperation within the framework of the SCO Family. It was noted that based on its constructive domestic policy, the peaceful and constructive nature of Uzbekistan's foreign policy aspirations, official Tashkent prioritized in the SCO the issues of using the capabilities of this organization to comprehensively promote international cooperation for the sake of peace in the world, while strictly adhering to the principles of maintaining openness and non-direction of the SCO Platform against third states and other structures. The main attention within the framework of Uzbekistan's chairmanship is paid to the comprehensive expansion of constructive in-

teraction with the UN. In this regard, the participants were informed about the decision adopted by the heads of the SCO member states to award the Head of the UN Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia (UNRCCA) Natalia Gherman with the anniversary medal "20 years to the SCO" in recognition of her special merits in strengthening peace, stability, security and common prosperity in Central Asia, as well as deepening cooperation between the SCO and the UN. The medal and certificate were presented to the UNRCCA Head Natalia Gherman in a solemn ceremony. The UNRCCA Head highly appreciated the chairmanship of Uzbekistan in the

SCO, as well as the ongoing work on the comprehensive development and expansion of good neighborly relations in the Central Asian region. Natalia Gherman expressed her confidence that cooperation will be further strengthened during the current chairmanship of Uzbekistan. A presentation was also held on the results of the first Tashkent International Investment Forum, which took place on March 24-26 this year. It was noted that the Investment Forum was the first event of its kind in Central Asia and in the world as a whole, which took place in difficult conditions of an unprecedented increase in geopolitical tensions in the international arena.

Russia limits
visa-free entry
for West

MOSCOW: Russia on Monday suspended visa-free entry to its territory for holders of diplomatic passports, members of official delegations, and journalists from "unfriendly countries." Russian President Vladimir Putin signed the relevant decree on retaliatory visa measures, amending visa agreements with the EU, Norway, Iceland, Switzerland, and Denmark. On March 7, the Russian government issued a list of countries that were "taking unfriendly actions against Russia, Russian companies, and citizens," referring to the economic sanctions imposed amid the Russia-Ukraine war. According to the decree published on the government's website, the list includes Albania, Andorra, Australia, Great Britain and

its Jersey, Anguilla, British Virgin Islands and Gibraltar, EU member states, Iceland, Canada, Liechtenstein, Micronesia, Monaco, New Zealand, Norway, South Korea, San Marino, North Macedonia, Singapore, US, Taiwan, Ukraine, Montenegro, Switzerland, and Japan. The Russia-Ukraine war, which started on Feb. 24, has met international outrage with the EU, US, and UK, among others, implementing tough financial sanctions on Moscow. At least 1,417 civilians have been killed in Ukraine and 2,038 injured, according to UN estimates, with the true figure feared to be far higher. More than 4.2 million Ukrainians have also fled to neighboring countries, with millions more displaced inside the country, according to the UN refugee agency.

161 children killed in
Russian attacks

KIEV: At least 161 children have been killed and 264 others injured since Russia launched its war on Ukraine on Feb. 24, the Ukrainian Prosecutor General's Office claimed on Monday. The data is not yet complete, the office said in a statement, noting that work is underway to determine the casualties in several regions, particularly in the besieged southeastern city of Mariupol, some areas of the capital Kyiv, northern Chernihiv, and the easternmost Luhansk regions. Currently, it said, the number of most affected children is in Donetsk, Kharkiv, Chernihiv, Mykolaiv, Luhansk, Zaporizhzhia, Kherson, Sumy, and Zhytomyr areas, as well as in Kyiv.

Meanwhile, the Russian army's bombardments damaged 869 educational facilities, with 83 of them entirely destroyed, the statement claimed. It also claimed that there have been 4,204 documented "crimes of aggression and military crimes," as well as 2,219 "crimes against the national security" of Ukraine. The Russian war against Ukraine, which started on Feb. 24, has been met with international outrage, with the European Union, US and UK among others implementing tough financial sanctions on Moscow. At least 1,417 civilians have been killed in Ukraine and 2,038 injured, according to UN estimates, with the true figure feared to be far higher.

UK foreign secretary
to visit Poland

FOREIGN DESK

LONDON: British Foreign Secretary Liz Truss will travel to Poland on Monday evening to call for tougher sanctions against Russia, and hold talks with NATO and G7 countries in Brussels later in the week. Truss will meet with Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba in Warsaw this evening and Polish Foreign Minister Zbigniew Rau on Tuesday. She will announce £10 million (\$13.1 million) in support for groups working with survivors of sexual vio-

lence in Ukraine. This came after reports of alleged rape by Russian forces in the country. She will also visit aid groups supporting Ukrainian refugees. In a statement ahead of her visit, Truss said: "(Russian President Vladimir) Putin is yet to show he is serious about diplomacy. A tough approach from the UK and our allies is vital to strengthen Ukraine's hand in negotiations. "Britain has helped lead the way with sanctions to cripple the Putin war machine. We will do more to ramp up the pressure on Russia and we will keep pushing others to do more.

NATO marks 73rd anniversary amid security challenges

FOREIGN DESK

BRUSSELS: NATO marked its 73rd anniversary on Monday as Europe faces security challenges caused by the Russian war on Ukraine, which is regarded by many as the "biggest threat" Europe has faced since the Cold War and the "greatest destruction" witnessed since World War II. NATO was founded to restructure the security architecture in Western Europe after World War II. The alliance, which defines its main objective as securing the independence and security of the member countries through military and political means, is perhaps best known for its Article 5, which commits its

members to collective defense. Under Article 5, "the Parties agree that an armed attack against one or more of them in Europe or North America shall be considered an attack against them all." To date, the article has been invoked precisely once, in the wake of the Sept. 11, 2001 terrorist attacks in the US. Enlargement Founded in Washington on April 4, 1949, with 12 founding members, the alliance, currently has 30 members, including long-time pillar Turkey since its membership in 1952. Furthermore, Germany became a member in 1955 and Spain joined the alliance in 1982. The Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland became members in the 1999 enlarge-

ment. The 2004 expansion included Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia. Albania and Croatia joined the alliance in 2009 and Montenegro in 2017. In 2020, North Macedonia became the 30th member of NATO. NATO's main headquarters is located in Brussels, where decisions are taken unanimously by its 30 members. Allies meet at different levels to consult on security issues. Trans-Atlantic forum Each year, the foreign ministers of the member states meet two times and the defense ministers four times at the main headquarters. Leaders of NATO countries also meet at sum-



mits held in one of the member countries every 2 years. It functions as

a trans-Atlantic forum where its members consult and act jointly on se-

curity issues of common interest. This year, the leaders'

summit will be held in the Spanish capital Madrid on June 29-30.

Briefs

Elon Musk buys large stake in Twitter

NEW YORK: Elon Musk has taken a major stake in Twitter, regulatory filings showed Monday, sending the social media network's stock soaring and igniting speculation he could seek an active role in its operations. Musk, the world's richest man and CEO of electric vehicle company Tesla, is a frequent Twitter user who often posts controversial messages and announcements, and has long been critical of social media companies.

In one recent post he questioned Twitter's adherence to free speech and hinted at launching his own platform. According to a document filed with the US Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC), the South African-born billionaire acquired nearly 73.5 million Twitter shares - a 9.2 percent stake in the company. Based on Friday's closing price of the company's stock, his investment amounts to nearly \$2.9 billion. Investors responded quickly. At 7:15 am in New York (11:15 GMT) Twitter's stock was trading at about \$49, up by around 26 percent. "We would expect this passive stake as just the start of broader conversations with the Twitter board/management that could ultimately lead to an active stake and a potential more aggressive ownership role of Twitter," analysts Daniel Ives and John Katsingris of Wedbush wrote in a note.

Musk launched a poll on Twitter on March 25, saying "free speech is essential to a functioning democracy. Do you believe Twitter rigorously adheres to this principle?" More than two million people voted in the poll, with over 70 percent saying "no." - APP

IHC seeks TV licenses record from PEMRA

USMAN CHAUDHRY

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Monday sought relevant records from the Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority (PEMRA) in a case challenging issuance of TV licenses beyond the capacity. The court asked PEMRA to also inform in its report about the international practices and whether it had the capacity to telecast more channels. Chief Justice Athar Minallah issued the directives while hearing a petition filed by the Pakistan Broadcasters Association (PBA). At the outset of hearing, the chief justice remarked that PEMRA was a regulator and it should not focus only on collecting money. PEMRA's lawyer, however, requested the court to send the matter again to the Authority.

China battles Virus
Shanghai to extend anti-covid lockdown

The People's Liberation Army (PLA) on Sunday dispatched more than 2,000 medical personnel from across the army, navy and joint logistics support forces to Shanghai, an armed forces newspaper reported

NEWS DESK

SHANGHAI: Shanghai will remain under lockdown as it reviews results of an exercise to test all of its 26 million residents for COVID-19, authorities said on Monday. The city began its two-stage lockdown on March 28, initially in Shanghai's eastern districts, and later expanded to cover the whole city. The curbs, which have massively disrupted daily life and business operations in China's financial hub, were initially scheduled to end at 5 a.m. local time (9 p.m. GMT) on Tuesday. "The city will continue to implement seal and control management and strictly implement 'staying at home', except for medical treatment," the city government said on its official WeChat account. It did not give an

Global covid cases top 490mln

CALIFORNIA: While countries around the world are working to flatten the coronavirus curve, global Covid-19 cases on Sunday topped 490 million. According to the John Hopkins University data, the world has witnessed over 6.15 million deaths due to the Covid-19 since the start of the pandemic more than two years ago. In the latest data on Monday morning, the University's Center for Systems Science and Engineering (CSSE) revealed that the current global caseload stood at 491,352,180 cases, while the total deaths record stands at 6,152,703. The United States continues to record the highest number of cases with a total of 81,832,612 so far, followed by India with a total of 43,028,863 cases. Meanwhile, the World Health Organization (WHO) in its latest report said that the number of fresh covid cases across the world between March 21 and March 27 have dropped by 14 percent as compared to the previous week. In another development, a new variant of the Covid infection XE has sparked fresh concerns. According to the WHO, the variant has far more transmissibility rate than the Omicron variant. - DNA

indication of when the curbs might lift. The country sent the military and thousands of healthcare workers into Shanghai to help carry out COVID-19 tests for

all of its 26 million residents on Monday, in one of the country's biggest-ever public health responses. Some residents woke up before dawn to stand in queues for white-suited healthcare workers to swab their throats as part of nucleic acid testing at their housing compounds. The People's Liberation Army (PLA) on Sunday dispatched more than 2,000 medical personnel from across the army, navy and joint logistics support forces to Shanghai, an armed forces newspaper reported. About 38,000 healthcare workers from provinces such as Jiangsu, Zhejiang and the capital Beijing have been dispatched to Shanghai, according to state media, which showed them arriving, suitcase-laden and masked up, by high-speed rail and aircraft.



3-day workshop on report writing concludes at KMU

FROM OUR CORRESPONDENT

PESHAWAR: The Quality Enhancement Cell (QEC) Khyber Medical University (KMU) Peshawar has organized a three-day workshop on Self Assessment Report Writing. Participants from affiliated medical, dental, and nursing colleges and institutes of KMU attended the workshop. Miss Syeda Asiya Bukhari, Director, KMU-QEC, conducted, while Prof. Dr. Abdul Wahid Usmani, Jinnah Sindh Medical University, Karachi, moderated the workshop. Meanwhile, addressing the concluding session of the workshop as chief guest, Registrar KMU Prof. Dr. Muhammad Saleem Gandapur said that this workshop would prove to be a cause of enhancing the capabilities of the participants. He said that we have good clinicians but there is a shortage of excellent teachers. It is expected that this workshop will prove to increase the teaching skills of the participants. He said that quality should be maintained in the teaching process. Further development is not only a matter of time but also a great challenge for all of us.

Syeda Asiya Bukhari, Director, KMU-QEC, while talking to the workshop participants, said that you should focus on implementing what you have learned here in this three days workshop in your institutions. She said that writing a self-assessment report is essential for the success of any educational program. The purpose of self-assessment is to identify vulnerabilities in the educational program and to take improvement measures.

PTI dissident Aleem Khan slams PM Imran

LAHORE: PTI dissident Abdul Aleem Khan on Monday criticised Prime Minister Imran Khan and accused him of not being "sincere to the nation". Once a close aide of the PTI chairman, Aleem has grown disillusioned over the past few years and recently took a position against the party by deciding to support the joint opposition in the Punjab Assembly. Talking to the media in Lahore, he said he regretted dedicating 10 years of his life to the party. "I have supported the PTI with great loyalty, hard work and kept my ego aside. We thought there would be a Naya Pakistan in the face of Imran Khan," he said. "I'm sad that the person I spent 10 years of my life for is not sincere with the nation." Aleem criticised the premier over a number of issues ranging from the National Accountability Bureau "hounding" him to his insistence on retaining Usman Buzdar as the chief minister and then the nomination of PML-Q leader Pervez Elahi as the new Punjab CM. Aleem rued that he had been branded a "traitor to the PTI" as he called out his critics and claimed that no one in the party had sacrificed more than him. In a similar vein, he issued a challenge to the prime minister to bring forth any evidence of corruption against him, for which he said he was imprisoned for six months. "Why wasn't a reference made against me? What proof do you have? Bring it in front of the nation and tell them that these were Aleem Khan's misdoings and corruption ... I promise that if I turn out to be lying then I will shoot myself." he said. - DNA

Shehbaz wanted by court in corruption cases: Fawad

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakiatan Tehreek-e-Insaf leader, Chaudhry Fawad Hussain on Monday said that leader of PML-N Shehbaz Sharif was wanted by the court in corruption cases. In a tweet, he said the bail application of Shehbaz Sharif was in the court but instead of appearing there, he was loitering in Islamabad. "Had he been a common man, his bail would have been revoked by now" Chaudhry Fawad remarked. "We cannot become a nation unless the law is applied equally to the rich and the poor", he maintained.

2 facilitators of Panjgur, Naushki attacks nabbed

DNA

KARACHI: Karachi police and intelligence agencies have apprehended two alleged facilitators of the Panjgur and Naushki attacks during a joint raid in Karachi. Talking to the media, Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Investigation (Central) Shehla Qureshi said the raid was carried out in the city's Bilal Colony. Two facilitators of the recent terrorist attacks on security checkpoints in Baluchistan's Panjgur and Naushki were taken into custody, she added. The SSP said a hand grenade, a pistol, a laptop and mobile phones were seized from their possession. She pointed out that as many as 2,000 illegal SIM cards, a biometric machine and other electronic devices were also recovered from them.

Indian Army Captain faces court martial for killing 3 Kashmiris

ISLAMABAD: A Court of Inquiry set up by the Indian Army authorities on the pressure by international human rights organizations, has confirmed that the Indian Army troops were involved in the killing of three innocent Kashmiri youth in a fake encounter, staged by the soldiers in July 2020 in Amshipora area of

Shopian district Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK). According to Kashmir Media Service (KMS), the three youth, all labourers, hailing from Rajouri district of Jammu region identified as Imtiyaz Ahmed, Abrar Ahmed and Mohammed Ibrar, were martyred by the troops in a remote hilly village in Shopian district on July 18, 2020 and labelled as "terrorists". The Indian Army posted the pictures of the martyred youth on social media, which raised doubts about the Army's claim, leading to a strong demand for investigation of the killings by international human rights organizations. This forced the Indian Army to constitute a Court of Inquiry which found evidence that the troops had "exceeded" powers vested under the draconian law Armed Forces Special Powers Act and killed innocent youth in a fake encounter. In a bid to hush up the matter, the Indian Army has initiated general court martial proceedings against a captain for the killing of three men in the fake encounter. - DNA

Political crisis, a threat to the very future of federation

SHAMIM SHAHID

WHATEVER might be end of political crises created after the 'escape' of Prime Minister Imran Khan from facing the no trust motion and dissolution of National Assembly, in fact it could be considered another move of helping Imran Khan to come up with landslide majority through fresh elections. No one can neglect the fact that Prime Minister Imran Khan and his PTT's popularity was on decline due to poor governance, increasing price hike and economic disorder and accelerating nepotism and misuse of offices. However some "inner circles" on one hand suggested IK and his cohorts to ignore Election Commission of Pakistan notices in second phase of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa local bodies elections on one hand and persuaded the opposition for moving Resolution of No Trust in National Assembly on the other. It is crystal clear that spy masters made a great contribution in the process by instigating its loyal and influenced political groups like MQM, Jamhoori Watan Party, Baluchistan Awami Party and PTI dissidents of shifting to opposition camps. Though the opposition leaders initiated plans for tabling of Resolution of No Trust couple of months back but had tabled it on March 8th 2022 last. During this period, even till March

27th neither Premier Imran Khan nor his aides made some allegations pertained to what they called "foreign forces, without mentioning name of US" involvement in what he called opposition move against the government. But while addressing a well attended rally, Prime Minister had shown a fold-letter, telling the people "some foreign forces are involved in forcing or compelling opposition to do so." Though at that time he didn't mentioned name of US but at later stage, he himself and through his well wishers, aides, supporters and party workers directly mentioned name of US and EU in this respect. But there is a serious question how it is possible for Imran Khan to oppose or criticise US as he is already in very close links with UK and Jewish Lobby through his former in Laws. But former Governor Punjab Chaudry Sarwar has hinted what he called, "Libyan President Col Gaddafi, Iraq President Saddam Hussein, Egypt President Husni Mubarak like fate of Imran Khan and Pakistan in the light of such allegations." However, people within media and politico circles believe that Military Establishment still attaching great hopes with Imran Khan and his party. Military establishment is unhappy with the 18th Constitutional amendment, which gives maximum power to parliament and provinces, which is contrary to its (military establishment) inter-

ests. Military establishment favours Presidential form of democracy and PM Imran along with his aides already considering the parliamentary form of democracy main hurdle before implementation of his agenda. And outcomes Imran Khan's return through fresh elections with majority may be very harmful to the very future of the country as he wants to repeat what first ever military dictator Ayub Khan did with the country in 60's and later resulted in disintegration of Pakistan in 1971 last. Now responsibility rests not only with politicians but with custodians of all state organs to fulfill their responsibilities in averting the country of plunging into irreversible crises like of early 70'. Pakistan is a federation of four federating units, and it is based on parliamentary form of democracy. Earlier, the Presidential form had failed to keep integrated the federating units, therefore, after disintegration of Pakistan in 1971 last, late Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and leading nationalists and democratic minded politicians made it a federation. However, by sidelining wishes and dreams of anti-politico-democratic forces, not only late Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto but almost true nationalists, progressive and patriot democratic leaders have and are paying a lot for this heroic contribution of making an attempt to have "Pakistan as a federation."

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