



Islamabad POST

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China expresses concern over escalating tensions in Palestine

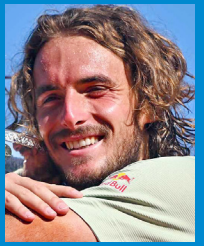
Detailed News On Page-08

Pak condemns Indian anti-Muslim violence

Detailed News On Page-08

Tsitsipas aims for top two after win

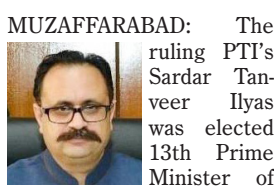
Detailed News On Page-06



Briefs

PTI's Tanveer Ilyas elected new AJK PM

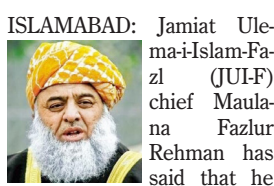
DNA



MUZAFFARABAD: The ruling PTI's Sardar Tanveer Ilyas was elected 13th Prime Minister of Azad Jammu and Kashmir unopposed amid the joint opposition's boycott of the election for the coveted post. Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) President Barrister Sultan Mahmood chaired the Legislative Assembly session to conduct the election for the new Leader of the House for the rest of the constitutional period, ending in June 2026. PTI's Tanveer Ilyas received 33 votes.

Fazl for 'immediate elections'

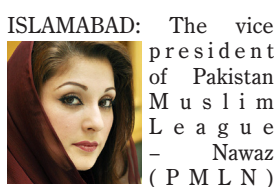
DNA



ISLAMABAD: Jamiat Ulema-Islam-Fazl (JULF) chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman has said that he plans on conveying to the new coalition setup his desire for "immediate" elections. Fazl said that the new government would operate for a year at the most. "In this new setup, the Jamiat Ulema-Islam has its own identity and we are telling them (coalition partners) that we still want elections immediately," he added. Referring to Khan but not naming him, Fazl continued: "Even though he is gone and we sent him packing, it is still our responsibility to return to the people the amanat that we struggled for."

Maryam slams Khan's statement

SAIFULLAH



ISLAMABAD: The vice president of Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) Maryam Nawaz on Monday while reacting over former premier Imran Khan's recent statement said it was not your gifts and your choice. Maryam Nawaz on his tweet said "Your gift is not yours but the gifts of the state. Now your dictation won't work! Open your eyes, your fake government and your future both are over! You will be held accountable, God willing!"

Priyantha Kumara lynching

Death, life sentences for culprits

75 others nominated in the case were given 2 years of jail sentence each



STAFF REPORT

SIALKOT: An anti-terrorism court on Monday awarded death sentence to six and handed life imprisonment to seven as it announced its verdict in Sri Lankan citizen Priyantha Kumara's lynching case. Seventy-five others nominated in the case were given two years of jail sentence each, while one was acquitted, Punjab Prosecution Department Secretary Nadeem Sarwar said in a press conference held in Lahore.

Kumara was lynched by a mob comprising hundreds of protesters, including the employees of the factory in Sialkot he was the manager of, on December 3. The mob had tortured him to death and later burnt his body. A first information report was registered against 900 workers of Rajco Industries on the application of Uggoki Station House Officer Armaghan Maqt under sections 302, 297, 201, 427, 431, 157, 149 of the Pakistan Penal Code and 7 and 11WW of the Anti-Terrorism Act. Scores of suspects were arrested in the following days. The incident had seen widespread outrage and condemnation across Pakistan with politicians, scholars and civil society members calling for swift punishment to be meted out to the perpetrators. "The prosecution team presented a total of 43 witnesses in order to prove the crime against suspects," Sarwar said in the press conference today, adding that forensic, audio and video evidence was also used to prove the crime. "In less than a month, the prosecution completed the testimonies of witnesses. After that, the court gave them full chance to defend themselves.

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Pak highly values ties with the EU

Chief of Army Staff expressed these views in a meeting with Romanian ambassador



NEWS DESK

RAWALPINDI: Romanian Ambassador to Pakistan Nicolae Goia called on Chief of Army Staff (COAS) General Qamar Javed Bajwa at GHQ on Monday. During the meeting, matters of mutual interest, regional security situations including the latest situation in Afghanistan, and enhanced bilateral cooperation with Romania were discussed. The COAS said that Pakistan values its relations with European Union (EU). "We earnestly look forward to enhancing mutually beneficial multi-domain relations based on common interest." Both reiterated the desire to further enhance bilateral relations in all fields. The visiting dignitary also ap-

preciated Pakistan's role in regional stability and pledged to play his role for further improvement in diplomatic cooperation with Pakistan at all levels. Earlier this year, Chief of Army Staff (COAS) General Qamar Javed Bajwa discussed regional security, including the situation in Afghanistan, as well as bilateral relations in meetings with European Union (EU) officials, the military's media wing said. According to the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR), Gen Bajwa is on an official visit to Belgium during which he met Secretary General of the European External Action Services (EEAS) Stefano Sannino and Chairman of the EU Military Committee Claudio Graziano.

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ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Saudi Arabia Nawaf Bin Saeed Al-Maliki calls on Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif. - DNA

PM for strong Pak-Saudi strategic, trade ties

ANSAR BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Monday expressed the desire to strengthen relations with Saudi Arabia in diverse fields including strategic ties, trade and investment. The prime minister expressed these views while talking to Saudi Ambassador Nawaf Bin Saeed Al-Maliki, who called on him to felicitate on assuming the office. PM Shehbaz Sharif said the government looked forward to benefiting from Saudi Arabia in its expertise in various sectors including education, health, information technology, and alternative clean energy resources. The Saudi envoy congratulated Shehbaz Sharif and expressed confidence that under his leadership, the friendly relations between the two countries would further grow.

PM, Qatari Amir discuss bilateral ties

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif here on Monday received a telephone call from the Amir of the State of Qatar Sheikh Tamim Bin Hamad Al Thani and discussed matters of mutual interest. The Amir extended warm felicitations to Shehbaz Sharif on the assumption of office as the Prime Minister of Pakistan and assured of full support in deepening Qatar's relations with Pakistan. The Prime Minister thanked the Amir for his gracious gesture. He underlined the importance Pakistan attached to its relationship with Qatar and reaffirmed the strong desire to further expand bilateral cooperation in diverse fields.

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Everything is on record; Imran Khan denies allegations

The former PM says filing of reference against Justice Faez Isa was a mistake

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: Ex-prime minister Imran Khan on Monday responded to the Toshakana controversy and said they were his gifts, so it was his choice whether to keep them or not. "Mera tohfa, meri marzi [my gift, my choice]," the PTI chairman, who became the first prime minister to be ousted through the no-trust vote, told reporters during an informal conversation. The issue came to light last week when Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif said that Imran Khan, during his tenure, sold Toshakana gifts in Dubai worth Rs140 million. "I deposited a gift sent by a president at my residence. Whatever I took from Toshakana is on record. I purchased the gifts after paying 50% of the cost," Khan said. He said that the PTI government changed the policy of retaining gifts and increased the price from 15% to 50%. "Had I wanted to make money, I would have declared my house as a camp office but I did not," he added.

Continued on Page 06

Khan to soon be convicted in funding case: PML-N

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Spokesperson of the ruling Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) Mairiyum Aurangzeb on Monday said ex-prime minister Imran Khan wanted a reference against the chief election commissioner (CEC) as the former was about to face a sentence in the foreign funding case. Addressing a presser, the PML-N leader accused Imran of lying to the nation for the past four years. She said that the man sitting on the prime minister's chair was lying so no one could question his performance. "Imran Khan wants a reference against the CEC so that the foreign funding case doesn't get decided within a month," she said. "But they can't do anything now as

Continued on Page 06

Pak strongly condemns Islamophobic incidents

ALI FURQAN

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan strongly condemns the recent abhorrent act of desecration of the Holy Quran during rallies in Sweden. Pakistan also strongly condemns the offensive remarks made by a Dutch politician, attacking Islam and the Muslim holy month of Ramadan, a foreign office statement said. These mindless provocative Islamophobic incidents serve no purpose other than hurting the sensitivities of over 1.5 billion Muslims living all over the world. Such actions are not covered under legitimate expressions of the right to freedom of expression or opinion, which carry responsibilities under international

human rights law, such as the obligation not to carry out hate speech and incite people to violence. Muslims, including in Pakistan, unequivocally condemn the practice of insulting Islam, Christianity and Judaism alike, and stand against all acts of violence on the basis of religion or belief. These principles must be equally respected and supported by all. The international community needs to show a common resolve against xenophobia, intolerance and incitement to violence on the basis of religion or belief, and work together for promoting inter-faith harmony and peaceful co-existence. That has been the spirit behind the OIC's recent initiative led by Pakistan at

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Tsitsipas aiming for 'top two' after Monte Carlo win - Page 06

CPEC projects to add millions of acre feet of water storage - Page 07

Israeli troops continue violence spree in Palestine - Page 08

Pakistan's journey of progress resumes: PM Shehbaz

PM Shehbaz said the project was a gift from the then PM Nawaz Sharif to the people of Islamabad aimed at facilitating them through a decent transport

SHUJAAT HAMZA/DNA

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Monday said the journey of progress of Pakistan has resumed from the point that faced a halt of development during the four years of the government of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf.

Addressing here at the inauguration of mass transit bus project on Peshawar More to Islamabad International Airport route, he said being the representative of the coalition government, he would ensure fast implementation of the delayed or suspended projects of public importance. The Islamabad Metro Bus Service project, which was due to become operational by 2018, faced a massive delay by the previous government and was launched within five days after PM Shehbaz Sharif assumed his office. The 25.6 kilometer bus route will benefit an estimated 50,000 commuters on



daily basis. PM Shehbaz said the project was a gift from the then prime minister Nawaz Sharif to the people of Islamabad aimed at facilitating them through a decent transport service. He regretted

that the route plan of Islamabad was reduced abruptly to cut the cost from Rs 16 billion to Rs 12 billion, which he said, caused immense loss to the materialization of the project.

He said though the development funds were available to complete the public welfare projects during the tenure of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf government, however the will to serve the masses

was lacking. PM Sharif mentioned that Pakistan Muslim League government during previous tenure had launched

Continued on Page 06

Improve law and order, curb criminal elements: AIG



SAQIB MUSHTAQ

BAHAWALPUR: A conference of South Punjab Police Officers was held under the chairmanship of Additional Inspector General of Police South Punjab Dr. Ehsan Sadiq. The video link conference reviewed the law and order situation and the Additional Inspector General of Police South Punjab directed the officers to take necessary steps to improve law and order and curb criminal elements. Dr. Ehsan Sadiq said that the police should work more vigilantly to prevent any possible terrorism in South Pun-

jab. The law and order situation has been maintained and the police have made many sacrifices in the discharge of their duties. The lights of peace are lit by the blood of the martyrs of the police. Ensure safety. He said that senior officers should not only check their duties in the field but also solve the problems of the officers and personnel on duty and encourage the soldiers. He said that protection of life and property of the people is the primary responsibility of the police. For this purpose, the personnel deployed in the South Punjab Police Office have also been assigned security duties at different places of the city

during Ramadan and the police is active for the protection of the citizens during the Iftar and Taraweeh sehri and also on patrol. Made effective. He said that with the advent of Eid, the trend of shopping in the bazaars will increase. Private CCTV cameras should be activated in the bazaars. I also pay attention to foot patrols. Women police personnel should also be deployed in the bazaars. The incidents of snatching of pickpockets and purses etc. should be prevented. Steps should be taken to maintain the flow of traffic in the streets and bazaars during rush hours. He also directed to improve the situation of police stations by making their information system more active and to thwart the activities of criminals. He directed that cases under investigation should be settled on merit as soon as possible. Strict action should be taken against the officers and personnel involved in the incident. Regional police officers briefed the meeting about security measures and operations against criminal elements in their respective regions.

Sindhi nationalist parties reject PPP, PMLN-MQM deal



DNA

HYDERABAD: Parliamentary Nationalist Parties of Sindh Rejected PPP and PMLN's Agreement with MQM and United for Local Bodies Election

In a joint Press Declaration after Sindh Qomi Conference held at Indus Hotel Hyderabad all Nationalist Parties, Political and Social Activists Collectively rejected the division of Sindh on a linguistic and racial basis, Sindh has long been facing global aggression. Sindh's sons, daughters, and elders sacrificed their lives and continue to maintain this homeland to this day. In every form either Military or Democratic, Government tries to divide Sindh with different names and Formulas, Sometimes the federal area formulas have been applied to digest our Motherland, The authorities dealing with MQM are busy day

and night conspiring to divide Sindh into the name of new Province, southern Province or administrative units. The House considers the MQM a terrorist organization that Islamabad uses to its detriment.

For the time being, the House has called on the nationalist parties and political social forums to establish unity for parliamentary politics in the PPP competition, Because PPP Bilawal and Zardari have harassed Sindh politically, economically, morally, culturally and psychologically. The PPP is responsible for pushing the dignified Sindh people into Burning eternal slavery, humiliation and disgrace by playing an enemy role. because Sindh has given its mandate to the Pakistan Peoples Party for parliamentary representation for over half a century. Now it is the moral duty of today's new generation to use their vote for the right of Sindh to thwart feudal aggression in the form of PPP.

2 held for making videos viral

DNA

FAISALABAD: Cyber Crime Wing FIA on Monday claimed to have arrested two accused for making objectionable videos viral on social media. A spokesman for the FIA Faisalabad said the accused, Ubair-ur-Reh-

man and Muhammad Ahsan of Sargodha, made the videos of children. On a complaint, Cyber Crime Wing conducted a raid and arrested the accused. The FIA team also recovered videos and other material from the accused while further investigation was underway, the spokesman added.

Two dacoits arrested after encounter

FAISALABAD: The police on Monday arrested two robbers during an encounter after a dacoity. A police spokesman said four dacoits entered the house of Muhammad Usman in Rehman Villas Chak No 226-RB and looted Rs 50,000 and other valuables at gunpoint. In the meantime, the police reached the spot and the accused opened firing on the officials. In retaliation, the accused, Zeeshan Ashraf, and his accomplice received injuries while the others fled. Meanwhile, Ali Hasan of Chak No 234-GB received injuries when his motorcycle struck against a tree after looting a citizen on Jaranwala Road. Later on, police arrested the accused. In another incident, dacoits injured 45-year-old Mehmood Tahir and his son Muhammad Waseem when they resisted during a dacoity in Sadar Jaranwala police limits. - APP

Power shutdown notice

FAISALABAD: The Faisalabad Electric Supply Company (Fesco) issued a shutdown notice for Wednesday due to necessary repair, maintenance and expansion of electricity lines. According to the notice issued by the company, power supply from Hyundai Nishat, Karas Paint, Coca Cola, Orient Material and FIEDMC feeders emanating from 132-KV FIEDMC grid station and Scarp-1 feeder originating from 132-KV Chak Jhumra grid station will remain suspended from 8 am to 2 pm on Wednesday (April 21). - APP

KP Govt to continue shelter homes

PESHAWAR: Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Mahmood Khan has termed the establishment of Shelter Homes (Panagahs) as pro-poor and a welfare initiative of PTI government and said that no shelter home established in the province would be closed. This he said while chairing a meeting held here on Monday to review the latest situation of the shelter homes in the province. Provincial Minister for Social Welfare Anwar Zeb, Special Assistant to Chief Minister on Information Barrister Muhammad Ali Saif, Chief Secretary Dr. Shehzad Bangash, Principal Secretary to Chief Minister Amjad Ali Khan, Secretary Social welfare, Director Pakistan Baitul Mal and other relevant officials attended the meeting.

The chief Minister said "The provincial government will provide resources on priority for shelter homes adding that the government has intended to run these shelter homes on a permanent basis." He directed the authorities concerned to make necessary amendments in the relevant laws for this purpose. He also directed them to submit proposals to re-functionalize the program "Koi Bhoka Na Soye" in the province. Earlier, briefing the participants about the latest situation of Shelter Homes, it was informed that at present, a total of 10 shelter homes under the resources of provincial government were functional in the province including Peshawar, Charsadda, Mardan, Bannu, Swabi, Abbottabad, Mansehra, Daraban Kala, Swat and Kohat. - APP



ISLAMABAD: PTI Chairman Imran Khan holds meeting of party leaders. - DNA

FCCI congratulates Hamza Shahbaz on his election as CM

ISHFAQ MUGHAL

FAISALABAD. Mr. Atif Munir Sheikh President Faisalabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry (FCCI) has congratulated Mr. Hamza Shahbaz on his election as Chief Minister Punjab. In a statement issued here today, he hoped that being a young and energetic Chief Minister he would further gear up the progress of this province. However, he expressed concern over the mishap during his election in the Punjab assembly but

hoped that he would now fully focus on the daunting challenges faced by the people and business community of this province. He was optimistic that the Chief Minister would have direct dialogues with the business community to prepare a comprehensive, balanced and pro-industry and people-friendly budget in consultation with the stakeholders. He said that overall progress of Punjab is directly linked with accelerated industrial growth and the new Government must focus on it. He also demanded complete restructuring of

the taxation system to facilitate the business community. He said that all taxes must be clubbed to save taxpayers from visiting different offices for the clearance of their tax liabilities.

He also repeated the demand of the District Finance Commission to ensure equitable distribution of available resources for the balanced growth of the province. He said that the discretionary powers of the Chief Minister must also be curtailed to negate the motion that maximum funds were spent on Lahore.

More honourable to resign instead of voting for opp party: Justice Munib

ISLAMABAD: Supreme Court judge Justice Munib Akhtar on Monday said that it was more honourable for a lawmaker to resign instead of voting for the opposition party. He made these remarks while hearing a presidential reference seeking interpretation of Article 63-A. Chief Justice Umar Ata Bandial and Justice Jamal Khan Mandokhail were other members of the bench. During the course of proceedings, Additional Attorney General (AAG) Aamir Rehman pleaded the court to adjourn the hearing and stated that attorney general Khalid Jawed Khan had resigned from the post. Upon this, Chief Justice Bandial said that the attorney general's arguments had already been completed. Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) counsel Babar Awan in his arguments urged the court to issue notices on former prime minister Imran Khan's petition seeking a lifetime ban on defecting lawmakers. Chief Justice Bandial said that all the respondents were here too and this was a case of constitutional debate. Babar Awan requested the court to hear the party's separate petition related to dissident lawmakers. He said that this petition had nothing to do with lettergate.

Babar Awan said that it had been a week that the country was functioning without a federal cabinet. He said that the new Attorney General had not been appointed so far and asked who would argue on behalf of the government. The

Chief Justice asked Babar Awan whether he would endorse the attorney general's arguments. Babar Awan replied that he would not support the former AGP's arguments in the case. He pleaded the court to grant him time till tomorrow to present his arguments. Advocate General Islamabad Niazullah Khan Niazi said that he endorsed the former attorney general's arguments. He said that a vote was a trust that a political party gave to an MNA. He said that conscience could not be sold for money. Lawmakers could be forced to pass anti-national legislation in return for money, he added. He said that the situation in Punjab was in front of everyone and all the stakeholders were looking at the court. He pointed out that dissident lawmakers could not even go out in public today. Justice Jamal Khan said that the parliament had not clarified about lifetime disqualification. He pointed out that the parliament was still in existence and the said Article should be discussed in the parliament house. The AG Islamabad said that the court was responsible for interpreting the Constitution. Justice Jamal Khan Mandokhail said that the parliament should be allowed to make amendments itself. Chief Justice Bandial said that amendments to the Constitution were made in 1998 when decisions on horse-trading were taken and Article 63-A was included in 2010, under the 18th Amendment. - APP

OctaFX to support charitable initiatives

DNA

LAHORE: International Forex broker OctaFX launches its annual Ramadan charity campaign aimed at supporting local communities by financing humanitarian activities in numerous regions of the world. The broker invites its clients to participate in a dedicated trading campaign where every 100 lots they trade between 4 and 29 April will increase the charity fund by 3 USD of its own funds.

Over a period of three Ramadan seasons, OctaFX helped realise several charitable projects through collaboration with humanitarian organisations in Indonesia, Malaysia, Nigeria, and Pakistan.

Partnering with the PERTIWI Foundation, each month, OctaFX distributes essentials and child care products to 80 families with children in Malaysia. This project commenced last year during Ramadan when OctaFX and PERTIWI carried out the first distribution in Petaling Jaya, Selangor Darul Ehsan.

In an effort to support education and literacy incentives in Nigeria, OctaFX partnered with the KIR foundation and set up eight reading corners with 1,200 books in Abuja, Ibadan, Lagos, and Port Harcourt. OctaFX's collaboration with the JDC Foundation resulted in providing IT coaching centres with teaching aid equipment in Pakistan. The broker also financed machinery for free dialysis centres across the country as part of the project.

Narcotics deptt recovers 18 kg heroin

PESHAWAR: Director General Excise, Taxation and Narcotics Control, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa during a crackdown Monday recovered 18 kilograms high quality heroin from a car bearing registration number No 103AEB on Motorway Road near Pir Zakori Bridge. During the search operation two drug smugglers were also apprehended including a woman and a case was registered against Tayyab son of Mohammad Ashiq, Anam Shafiq son of Mohammad Sharif and W/O Mohammad Shafiq residents of Lahore. The crackdown was conducted while acting in a tip off received by Majid Khan AETO Provincial Incharge Excise Intelligence Bureau, (EIB-1) and EIB-5. - APP



MARDAN: At the invitation of the former Deputy of the National Assembly of Pakistan, the Ambassador of Kazakhstan to Pakistan visited the Centre for Children with Speech and Hearing Impairment located in Mardan. - DNA

Workshop on Pak-Indonesia trade held at KCC

DNA

KARACHI: Khairpur Chamber of Commerce & Industry and TDAP Sukkur Office organized a session/workshop on Bilateral Trade between Pakistan and Indonesia in view of the potential of Sukkur and Khairpur regional products. Wherein, H.E Dr. June Kuncoro, Con-

sul General of Indonesia and Mr. Djumara Supriyadi, Consul for Economic & Trade Affairs of Indonesia attended the session along with the team of Indonesian Consulate. Ms Shabnam Zafar, Founder member Khairpur CC&I and Mr. Bashir Ahmed Arain, President of Khairpur CC&I gave a warm welcome to the Indonesian delegates. A pres-

entation was also made by the Indonesian Consulate on the recent Development of Bilateral Trade between Indonesia and Pakistan. Also, TDAP Sukkur delivered a detailed presentation on market potential and production capacity of regional products, specifically Dates. As one of the exporter has received export order of 150 tonnes dates recently from

Indonesia with the efforts of Pakistan Trade Mission Jakarta. Engineer Abdul Fateh Sheikh, Amir Ali Ghauri President Sukkur Chamber of Commerce & Industry, Irfan Samad, Abdul Majeed Qureshi, Ali Jibran, Khalil Ahmad Sheikh, Omar Dharja, Prof. Abdul Salam were also present in the session. The program ended with a question and answer session.

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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

**Emergency**

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

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

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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

Govt to remove sense of deprivation of Balochis

PTI government pushed the country towards verge of bankruptcy and cronies of former prime minister Imran Khan have become billionaires by plundering national wealth, he added

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Central leader of Pakistan Muslim League (PML-N) Khawaja Muhammad Asif on Monday said that the incumbent coalition government was fully cognizant of grievance of the Balochistan's people adding that we have to resolve their issues in order to remove sense of deprivation of the people. Speaking on a point of order in the National Assembly, he urged the members of

Balochistan National Party Mengal (BNP-M) to raise voice for the rights of Baloch people and never abandon this platform for addressing longstanding issues of the people of the province. He regretted that the provincial assembly was not playing its due role to address grievances of the people of the province. Gawadar port was made operationalized during PML-N tenure but unfortunately, its benefits could not be trickled down to the masses, he added. He said Balochi people were our



brother and the government would fulfill its responsibility. Coming hard on the previous Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) government, Asif said the PTI government caused devastation to the country during its tenure. PTI government pushed the country towards verge of bankruptcy and cronies of former prime minister Imran Khan have become billionaires by plundering national wealth, he added. He regretted that the PTI was instigating unrest and violence in the country. The

PTI wanted anarchy in the country, he added. Asif said gigantic issues including inflation are confronted to the coalition government. However, he said time and peace were required to deal with such challenges. Earlier, speaking on a point of order Nafeesa Shah of PPP emphasized the need for reducing political tension in the country in order to take matters towards improvement. She said a plan should be formulated to effectively deal with the economic issues.

Promotion of cigarettes poses serious threat

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Cigarette companies are continuously promoting cigarettes through advertising and gift schemes in violation of the law. Cigarette companies are luring people to smoke in various ways, which is one of the main reasons for the failure of government policies to protect public health. According to a recent survey for the first quarter of this year, vendors and consumers are being lured in by illegally sold cigarette brands through reward schemes, cash prizes, and attractive discounts to increase sales and use of cigarettes.

Posters for cigarettes, incentive letters to consumers, and vendors inside packets are also being issued and events to introduce nicotine products are also being organized on a large scale. As per law, reward schemes to attract consumers and incentives for vendors are banned in Pakistan with all kinds of cigarette advertisements. The law prohibits online advertising of cigarette products, point-of-sale advertisements, or displays. It also prohibits all types of reward schemes, cash prizes, or free cigarettes to increase cigarette sales and promote smoking in Pakistan. Illegal brands of cigarettes have also taken

advantage of the negligence of the concerned agencies to launch discount schemes in various cities of Punjab. Survey reveals that the Royal Tobacco Company is offering huge discounts on its brands in different cities, free packets, and cups bearing the name of the tea company. It has introduced a new picket-free scheme on five empty packs in Gujranwala. Illegal incentives and reward schemes are also spreading to other cities in Sindh where Civil Tobacco and Watan Tobacco Company have showered cash and motorcycles and other prizes on shoppers and consumers at the launch of brand new Goldmark in Sukkur.

Christian employees hail CDA for Easter allowance

ISLAMABAD: The Christian employees on Monday expressed gratitude to the administration of Capital Development Authority (CDA) for granting special allowance and two holidays on the eve of Easter. The authority had approved the Easter allowance for its all the serving Christian employees on the occasion of Easter-2022. In the light of the CDA board decisions, the authority's chairman had approved the allowance, enabling the minority to celebrate the festive event with religious fervor. The allowance was paid to non-gazetted employees equal to their running basic salary while the gazetted employees paid an amount of equal to half of their running basic salary. The daily wage, contract and daily paid (muster roll) employees also received the allowance as per their regular salary scales. - APP

Sherry hits hard at Imran for indulging in foreign gifts' trade

ISLAMABAD: PPP Vice President and Senator Sherry Rehman on Monday hit hard at former prime minister for concealing the details of Toshakhana gifts which she claimed the latter had sold at profit. In a statement, the PPP senator lamented that when former PM Imran Khan was asked about the details of Toshakhana gifts by Pakistan Information Commission last year, the government flatly refused to divulge details. She said Imran called others thieves and corrupt, but he hid the information regarding gifts himself. She derided the PTI government claim that if the details of record were divulged, they might have hurt our ties with the countries which presented these gifts. She wondered that Imran thought about hurting our relations with other countries at the time of revealing details of Toshakhana gifts but he forgot about these ties when in order to save his government he was waving 'threat letter' during his public rally. She said Imran was running away from transparency and tried to rely on the Official Secret Act. She was of the view that buying gifts according to law was not an issue, but hiding details and selling gifts at profit was illegal. She alleged Imran bought gifts from Toshakhana at very cheap price but sold them at exorbitant rate thus minting profit. She bemoaned that when Imran himself was indulged in the trade of buying and selling Toshakhana gifts, he was calling people who were asking about details of these gifts country's enemy. - DNA

ITP launches crackdown

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Traffic Police (ITP) has constituted special enforcement squads to take action against amateur drivers and bike riders not using helmets. Following directions of Inspector General of Police (IGP) Islamabad Muhammad Ahsan Younis, Senior Superintendent of Police (Traffic) Mazhar Iqbal who has also appealed the parents to refrain handing over vehicles or bikes to their under-age children. SSP (Traffic) has also directed all Zonal DSPs for strict action against amateur drivers and to ensure steps for safe road environment in the city. He directed to ensure renewed efforts for awareness about traffic rules among citizens by ITP education wing. He directed ITP's teams to visit educational institutions to create traffic sense as several students have joined ITP as traffic volunteers. The SSP (Traffic) said that purpose of action against amateur drivers and motorcyclists with helmets is to ensure their own safety as it should not be considered a punitive measure.

Govt disburses development funds of Rs 603 billion

ISLAMABAD: The Federal Government has released Rs603.5 billion out of total allocation of Rs900 billion for various ongoing and new social sector uplift projects of the federal ministries and division in first nine months (July-March) of fiscal year 2021-22 under its Public Sector Development Programme (PSDF). The government also released Rs4.6 billion for the Earthquake Reconstruction and Rehabilitation Authority (ERRA), according to the latest data released by the Ministry of Planning, Development and Reform. The detail shows that Rs 68.126 billion out of total allocation of Rs 68.154 billion have been disbursed for the Cabinet division, Rs 1.489 billion have been disbursed for Aviation Division, and Rs 48 million have been released for Board of the Investment. Similarly, the government disburses Rs 10.7 billion for Climate Change Division, Rs 1.129 billion for Commerce Division, Rs 89.66 billion for communication division, and Rs 1.3 billion for Defense Division. Likewise, the government also disbursed Rs 85.46 billion for Finance Division, Rs 480 million for Establishment Division, Rs 5.1 billion for Federal Education and Professional Training Division, and Rs 24.4 billion for Higher Education Commission. - APP

Admin imposes Rs 56,000 fines on profiteers

RAWALPINDI: Rawalpindi District Administration conducted 517 raids in seven tehsils of the district to check profiteering during last 24 hours and imposed Rs 56,000 fines on 48 rules violators while five shops were sealed besides netting a violator. According to a district administration spokesman, strict action in accordance with the law was being taken against profiteers and hoarders and the violators were being sent behind the bars. 281 raids were conducted in Gujranwala and fines amounting to Rs 15,000 were imposed on the violators. Similarly, operations were also conducted in Kotli Sattian, Kahuta, Kalara Syedan, Murree, Taxila, Rwp Cantt, Rawalpindi City, Rwp Saddar division and other areas and the teams took action against the rules violators. The Commissioner had instructed the officers concerned to visit different markets on daily basis and take strict action in accordance with the law against profiteers to provide relief to the citizens. Cases should also be registered against the rules violators and they should be sent behind the bars, the Commissioner said adding the rate lists must be displayed at prominent places at the shops. - APP

IHC rejects plea against Nawaz diplomatic passport

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Monday dismissed a plea against issuing a diplomatic passport to Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) supreme Nawaz Sharif by the incumbent government. Earlier in the day, the IHC reserved its verdict on the petition and said that it could not decide on the matters without having any evidence of it. The court said that the petitioner could not provide any notification to prove his point. The court while rejecting the plea also imposed a fine of Rs5,000 against the petitioner. "It is mandatory for an absconding convict to surrender himself to jail authorities," the court said in its verdict. On April 15, a petition was filed in the IHC by Naeem Haider who asked the court to ensure arrest of Nawaz Sharif upon his return to Pakistan. "Nawaz Sharif is an absconding convict and therefore authorities should be barred from issuing diplomatic passport to him," it

said. The petitioner while making Nawaz Sharif, secretary interior and foreign affairs' secretary as respondents in the case asked the Islamabad High Court to take up the matter today and issue arrest warrants for the PML-N supreme. The registrar IHC admitted the petition and formed a bench for the hearing to be headed by Chief Justice Athar Minallah. Prime Minister (PM) Shehbaz Sharif had directed the interior ministry to issue a diplomatic passport to former prime minister Nawaz Sharif. Shehbaz Sharif after assuming charge of his office got a briefing from the diplomatic staff about the issuance of a passport to the PML-N supreme. Pakistan's mission in London was directed to issue diplomatic passports to former prime minister Nawaz Sharif and former finance minister Ishaq Dar. However, the diplomatic staff said only Nawaz Sharif can be issued a diplomatic passport, not Ishaq Dar, on which PM Shehbaz Sharif directed to issue a normal Pakistani passport to Dar.



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif interacting with Metro Buses staff at the inauguration of Peshawar Morr to New Islamabad International Airport in Islamabad. - APP

Railways upgrades over 643 coaches to facilitate passengers

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Railways has so far upgraded around 643 coaches from its own resources to increase revenue of the department and ensure comfortable travel for its passengers. Around 168 coaches were upgraded in 2016-17, 192 in 2017-18, 260 coaches in 2018-19 and 23 in 2020-21, while taking several steps to improve financial position of the organisation which include starting of new trains with the same rolling stock and human resources, an official in

the ministry told APP. He said that Railways was also planning to repair another 472 coaches which were either out of service or non-functional since long and required heavy or light maintenance. The official said that 205 coaches were available in the workshops under periodical overhauling and repair while around 228 coaches available in Lahore division and in Carriage Factory and C&W Shops held up since long for repairs. To a question, he said that Pakistan Locomotive Factory Risalpur had manufactured 102 new locomotives at a cost of Rs 18.155 billion which includes foreign exchange of Rs 12.339 billion since 1993. He said the factory's up-gradation plan would be executed in the forthcoming manufacturing plan of locomotives as per requirement of Pakistan Railways. The official said the feasibility study of the up-gradation of Locomotives Factory Risalpur was under process and would be completed as soon as possible. - APP

HEC invites research proposals on CPEC issues

The CPEC-CRG awards will be selected competitively, using a merit-based, independent, transparent evaluation and selection process based on international standards. The amount of funding will range up to PKR 25 million with a maximum project duration of 2 years

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Higher Education Commission (HEC), has invited faculty members of public and private sector universities and degree awarding institutions to submit research proposals that can help address issues pertaining to socio-economic development of Pakistan and China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), in particular. According to official sources, the CPEC Collaborative Research Grant (CPEC-CRG) is one of the key components of recently launched HEC initiative, namely "Academic Collaboration under CPEC Consortium of Universities". The CPEC-CRG is anticipated to support promising research partnerships between Pakistan and China in specific priority areas of

national interest, utilizing research potential and experience of China in resolving national challenges in these areas, and the sources informed. The CPEC-CRG awards will be selected competitively, using a merit-based, independent, transparent evaluation and selection process based on international standards. The amount of funding will range up to PKR 25 million with a maximum project duration of 2 years. In exceptional cases, budget allocation to



individual project may go up to PKR 30 million. The preference will be given to proposals on socio-economic impact assessment of completed and on-going projects, launched under CPEC portfolio. The Principal Investigator (PI) must be a faculty member (PhD or MPhil / MS MBA, FCPS / FRCS) working on regular/contract basis (contract duration must be equal to or more than the project duration) in the Higher Education Institutions (public or private) of Pakistan that are members of CPEC Consortium of Universities, as per the list provided on HEC website. The project team may include researchers from one or more universities and must include at least one Co-PI from Chinese universities that are members of CPEC Consortium of Universities. The applications on prescribed template along with requisite documents must be submitted via HEC online portal, i.e., research.hec.gov.pk. For further information regarding proposal submission requirements and evaluation process, please refer to the Call for Proposals Guidance available on: <http://www.hec.gov.pk/site/cpec-crg>. However, queries regarding CPEC-CRG Collaborative Research Grant may be directed to: saima.asghar@hec.gov.pk. The HEC announced that deadline for Full Project Proposal Submission is May 20.

Briefs

Govt notifies transfer, posting of officers

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The federal government on Monday notified transfer and posting of high ranked officers. According to a notification issued by Establishment Division, Dr. AnooahMasood Ch., a BS-18 officer of Police Service of Pakistan, presently posted as Officer on Special Duty (OSD) in Establishment Division, is transferred and her services are placed at the disposal of Government of the Punjab, with immediate effect and until further orders.

PTI failed to deliver during three years

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Muslim League-N Member National Assembly Ali GoharBaloch Monday criticized that the previous PTI government had disappointed the nation by failing to deliver during its three-year-tenure, where unemployment and poverty was jumped high. "PTI has no political agenda and has done nothing for the welfare of poor people", he said while speaking to a private new channel on Monday. He said that PML-N has used its constitution right for removing PTI government, adding, PTI was miserably failed and its leadership with its incompetency disappointed nation.

MNA Ali Gohar said that the tall claims of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf had proved hollow slogans, adding that leveling allegations and using derogatory language against political opponents could not help increase the PTI's stature in the people's eyes. PML-N government had introduced the vision of development for all, he said, adding that the country would progress under the able leadership of Prime Minister Shabbaz Sharif. - APP

Govt to provide equal opportunities to Balochistan

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif Monday said that the incumbent government would provide equal opportunities of progress to the skilled workforce of Balochistan. The prime minister, in a meeting with former speaker of Balochistan Assembly and acting president of Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz's Balochistan chapter Jamal Shah Kakar, said it was among the government's priorities to accelerate the pace of development in Balochistan. Jamal Shah Kakar congratulated the prime minister on assumption of the office of the prime minister and also appreciated him for putting the country back on the course of development. - APP

PM directs for early completion of welfare projects

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif Monday directed the Planning Commission to ensure early completion of the projects of public welfare, also asking the ministries and divisions for mutual cooperation. The prime minister, in a meeting with Deputy Chairman of Planning Commission Jahanzeb Khan, said the government would resume its development journey, without letting a penny of public exchequer to be wasted. He also reiterated his resolve not to let the public welfare projects face any more criminal negligence. He said the government would bring about economic and commercial development through comprehensive planning and consistency of policies. - APP

ICCI hails PM for inaugurating Metro Bus Service for airport

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Muhammad Shakeel Munir, President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry (ICCI) hailed the initiative of Prime Minister Shabbaz Sharif for inaugurating the Islamabad Metro Bus service from Peshawar Morr to Islamabad International Airport and termed it a very positive development to facilitate the commuters. He said that Islamabad is the capital city of the country, but is still without a respectable public transport facility on its major routes except for metro bus service. He hoped that the Shabbaz Sharif government would consider introducing quality public transport service on all major routes that are connecting with Islamabad from the surrounding areas so that the people could be facilitated in commuting. He also welcomed the assurance of the Prime Minister for fast implementation of the delayed or suspended projects of public importance. Muhammad Shakeel Munir said that many public sector development projects are started, but they get delayed due to various hurdles and their cost overruns many times besides taking lot of time in completion. Citing an example, he said that when the construction of Islamabad International Airport



was started in 2006, its cost was estimated at Rs.37 billion, but when the airport was completed after delay of many years, it cost has exceeded Rs.100 billion, which shows that how much money of the taxpayers is wasted due to unnecessary delay in projects of public importance. ICCI President hoped

that the new coalition government led by Prime Minister Shabbaz Sharif would speed up the work on all ongoing public sector development projects to ensure that they are completed on time to save the wastage necessary cost and time. He assured that the business community would fully cooperate with

the new government in its efforts for accelerating the pace of public sector development projects on time so that our infrastructure could be further improved, which would greatly facilitate the growth of trade and industrial activities and facilitate the revival of the economy. Jamshaid Akhtar

Sheikh, Senior Vice President and Muhammad Faheem Khan, Vice President ICCI also welcomed the inauguration of orange line metro bus services for airport and hoped that the new government would ensure the completion of all important public sector development project within time.

Rank wearing ceremony of NHMP officers held

ISLAMABAD: Rank wearing ceremony of promoted officers from SP (Grade 18) to SSP (Grade 19) of Police Service of Pakistan serving in National Highways and Motorways Police was held at NHMP, Central Police office, Islamabad. The IG, NHMP Inam Ghani, DsIG, SSSP and other senior officers were present in the ceremony. IG, NHMP Inam Ghani, congratulated the newly promoted officers and advised them to work hard with dedication and devotion for the good name of the department. Timely promotions in service is an important milestone and responsibilities increase with the higher rank. At the end IG Inam Ghani, DIG Operations Saad Akhtar Bharwana, and DIG (HRM) Ali Ahmed Sabir Kayani pinned the Badges to the promoted officers, Afnan Amin, Gulfam Nasir, and Liaqat Hayat. Expressing best wishes for the promoted officers, IG, Inam Ghani said that all the officers of National Highways and Motorways Police should serve the community and commuters with loyalty, selfless service, honesty and professionalism. - APP



Restaurants offering special Ramadan deals

ISLAMABAD: During the holy month of Ramadan, local restaurants are offering special 'Sehri deals' to attract the customers, as the trend of arranging 'sehri' meals for friends and family is getting momentum. According to traditional food spots of Islamabad and Rawalpindi claimed that they are offering special Sehri packages especially for the families as after coronavirus restriction they have permission to use their halls and serve customers. The tradition of eating out on 'Sehri' is popular among the people where foodies were witnessing in large to enjoy desi delights like 'makhnich-olay', 'nihari', 'sri-paya' and 'paratha', said a customer while speaking to a private news channel. Everyone is busy in their

life and can not get enough time to prepare Sehri at mid night so, many restaurants are offering special sehri buffet to make our Ramadan more special, said a lady customer. A number of hotel and restaurants become lively during Ramadan as the trend is getting momentum, said another customer, adding, mostly youngsters are seen to be flocked in restaurant and hotel to enjoy the Ramadan meals. The trend of 'Sehri' arranging outdoor with the passage of time has increased all across the country including Capital city as discount deals attracting toward customers, said a visitor. To make Sehri memorable, some exciting and tempting deals for Ramadan are available in various food points in the country, said a citizen. - APP

Food exports up by 18.92% to \$3.961b in 3 quarters

ISLAMABAD: Food exports from the country witnessed an increase of 18.92 percent during the first three quarters of the current fiscal year as compared to the corresponding period of last year, Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) reported. The exports of various food commodities were recorded at \$3,961.469 million during July-March (2021-22) as compared to the exports of \$3,331.257 million in July-March (2020-21), according to PBS data. The food commodities that contribute in positive growth in trade included rice, the exports of which grew by 14.96 percent, from \$1,560.429 million to \$1,793.909 million. Among the rice commodities, the exports of Basmati rice went up from \$408.117 million to \$496.389 million, an increase of 21.63 percent whereas the exports of other rice commodities climbed up from \$1,152.312 million to \$1,297.519 million, showing growth of 12.60 percent. The other food commodities that contributed in positive growth included fish and fish preparations, the exports of which increased by 2.04 percent, from \$303.782

million to \$309.979 million whereas the exports of fruits increased by 4.22 percent, from \$378.575 million to \$294.538 million. The exports of vegetables increased by 1.09 percent, from \$245.739 million to \$248.413 million; leguminous vegetables (pulses) by 100 percent, from zero exports to \$0.068 million; tobacco by 59.35 percent, from \$24.736 million to \$39.418 million; spices by 18.05 percent, from \$70.524 million to \$83.251 million; oil seeds, nuts and kernels by 131.41 percent, from \$76.348 million to \$176.678 million; meat and meat preparations by 1.18 percent, from \$247.010 million to \$249.934 million whereas the exports of all other food items increased by 56.86 percent, from \$424.114 million to \$665.282 million. Meanwhile, on year-on-year basis, the exports of food commodities increased by 10.22 percent during the month of March 2022 as compared to the same month of last year. The food exports during March 2022 were recorded at \$526.466 million against the exports of \$477.668 million. - APP

Twin cities' bankers protest against Saturday as working day

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: The bankers across the twin cities of Rawalpindi and Islamabad on Monday staged protests outside the press clubs and State Bank of Pakistan buildings against the government's decision of declaring Saturday as a working day.

The protesters hailing from various banks of the country demanded restoration weekend holidays and Ramadan timings. The protesters held placards and chanted slogans for the restoration of the weekend holidays. Rizwan Ahmed, a protester said that a banker was working for 12-13 hours on average as his or her working timings used to start from 9am till 5pm without any break for prayer or lunch and used to pack at 8pm. He said, "We use to reach office at 8:30am and the new timings of 8:00am are forcing to reach office at 7:30am which means an individual will have to leave his or her house at 6:45am to reach in time which is burdensome and insane especially during Ramadan". He urged the government to revise its decision and



should not announce increase in working hours of banks as the banking staff was already facing tough working routine. Shumaila Asjad, a female protester while chanting slogans said that the employees of other public departments used to have a completely different routine who were hardly serving for 5-6 hours and also had

prayer breaks. She said after the Friday protests in Karachi, a countrywide protest will be launched which has perturbed the quarters concerned. The concerned authorities are showing the stereotype attitude and propagating on social media that the notification for Saturday as working day will be withdrawn and working

hours will be extended. This is sheer discrimination and forced labour for bankers who are already serving for 10-12 hours," she added. The protesters were of the view that the protests were held across the country outside press clubs of the respective cities and were determined to continue their struggle despite hot weather and tough situation.

Pak-China's youth exchange program inspires hope

Fortunately, the arrival of the China-Pakistan youth exchange community brought hope to her, who was mired in anxiety

ISLAMABAD: To help poor families and deepen China-Pakistan ties, China-Pakistan youth exchange community launched a public welfare activity themed "Belt and Road, Passing the Love" in Pakistan. According to a report published by Gwadar Pro on Monday, the volunteers looked into the specific conditions of the local poor groups in advance and identified 200 families in dire need of help. The community members allocated the daily necessities for each family, including rice, flour, oil, sugar, beans,

dates, etc, that are enough to meet the needs for one to two months. Dressed in costumes with the "China-Pakistan Friendship" logo, the volunteers went through the rugged roads and delivered the supplies door-to-door. Chinese friends are providing timely help. Now we can have a happy Ramadan with a peaceful mind, said a family member of Ms. Mayra who received the support. Mayra comes from Village Rajkandi in the hilly region of Azad Jammu Kashmir, goes through a monumental struggle in her life. She

has an elderly mother, four sisters, and a brother in her family. Her father died 13 years ago and she has been dependent on her uncle ever since. Three years ago, her uncle was paralyzed and the whole family had to rely on assistance to survive. Fortunately, the arrival of the China-Pakistan youth exchange community brought hope to her, who was mired in anxiety. Upon receiving the supplies, Mayra's uncle excitedly held the volunteer's hand for a long time and said with tears in

his eyes: "Chinese friends are providing timely help. Now we can have a happy Ramadan with a peaceful mind." There are many families like Mayra's. Many people in this area are women, children, orphans, and the elderly, who cannot work and have no source of income. Due to the language barrier, the local recipients expressed their gratitude with simple words and smiles. So far, the community has visited more than 1,400 poor families, poor primary schools, refugee camps, and orphan-

ages to bring love to special groups such as the lonely elderly, the disabled, and impoverished students. Since 2017, the public welfare campaign has won the support of the Chinese Embassy in Pakistan, Chinese universities, Overseas Chinese Association of Pakistan, Chinese enterprises, and overseas students. Ma Bin, Secretary-General of Overseas Chinese Association of Pakistan, said that Chinese enterprises and individuals in Pakistan actively assume social responsibility. - APP

IRSA releases 89343 cusecs water

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Indus River System Authority (IRSA) Monday released 89343 cusecs water from various rim stations with an inflow of 79359 cases. According to the data released by IRSA, the water level in the Jhelum River at Mangla Dam was 1077.30 feet, which was 27.03 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet whereas the inflow and outflow of water was recorded at 21727 and 30,000 cusecs respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa and Sukkur was recorded as 40243, 34126 and 26570 cases respectively. Similarly, from the Kabul River, a total of 10000 cusecs of water was released at Nowshera and 14632 cusecs were released from the Chenab River at Marala.

POL import bill surge 96% to \$14.812b in 9 months

ISLAMABAD: The imports of overall petroleum group witnessed an increase of 96.09 percent during the first nine months of the current fiscal year (2021-22) as compared to the corresponding period of the last year. During the period under review, the total imports of the petroleum group stood at \$14.812 billion, as against the imports of \$7.553 billion last year, according to the latest data issued by the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS). Among petroleum commodities, the import of petroleum products rose by 111.45 percent, from \$3.447 billion last year to \$7.289 billion during the period under review.

The imports of petroleum cured also increased by 82.25 percent, from \$2.023 billion last year to \$3.687 billion during July-March (2021-22) whereas the imports of liquefied natural gas surge by 91.78 percent from \$1.731 billion to \$3.320 billion. Similarly, the import of liquefied petroleum gas grew by 46.32 percent, from \$351.256 million to \$513.964 million whereas the imports of all other petroleum group commodities also increased by 64.48 percent, the data revealed. Meanwhile, on year-on-year basis, the petroleum group imports witnessed an increase 68.19 percent during the month of March 2022 as compared to the same month of last year. The petroleum imports during March 2022 were recorded at \$1864.055 million against the imports of \$1108.315 million. On month-on-month basis, the petroleum imports into the country also increased by 48.83 percent during March 2022 when compared to the imports of \$1252.494 million in February 2022, the data revealed. - APP

Heavy traffic during last minute before Iftar

ISLAMABAD: With last minute before Iftar, the traffic jams has become a matter of serious concern for motorists where number of vehicles were found trapped in long tailbacks at the major key points of city roads across the country which leads to fatal road accidents. Traffic snarls are a frequent sight at various busy roads of cities especially before iftar as a majority of the motorists chose a particular time to leave for their homes, this resulted in a traffic mess, said a report aired by a private news channel. Motorists and commuters, who were witnessed stuck up on roads for more than two to three hours have complained that due to reckless driving, wrong parking and encroachment on roads the traffic mess often leads to fatal road accidents and flow of traffic is disrupted. A female commuter commented that i have spent one hour to reach home which is normally covered in twenty minutes in wake of massive traffic jam. "Citizens need to change a caring attitude for ourselves and for others in this very special period," said a motorist. - APP

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Editor-in-Chief: Ansar Mahmood Bhatti
Deputy Editor: Abid Raza

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Email: dailyisbpost@gmail.com

Phone: 051-2266165 / 051-2261960

Off: Awan Plaza, Block 18-A, G-8 Markaz Islamabad

China's anti-virus fight

CHINA is still facing a severe COVID-19 pandemic situation, with 2,723 locally transmitted cases reported on Sunday, of which 2,417 were in Shanghai, and 20,639 asymptomatic cases, according to the National Health Commission. Fifteen other provincial-level regions also saw new local infections. While it is imperative to continue to take strict prevention and control measures including lockdowns to curb the latest resurgence of the novel coronavirus as soon as possible, it is equally important for the local governments to help major enterprises resume operation and production in an orderly way on the premise of safety. This is in compliance with the spirit of the central authorities' policy that seeks to contain the spread of the virus at the "minimum cost" to the economy and people's livelihoods.

That the long-lasting wave of infections in Shanghai and some other places has threatened to disrupt many of the country's industry and supply chains makes the task of production resumption even more pressing. Take the auto industry for example. Auto manufacturers in Shanghai and Jilin province, which have both been hit hard by flare-ups of the virus, have been forced to temporarily suspend production, which has had repercussions throughout the industry as their combined auto production accounts for more than 20 percent of the country's total and many of the major auto R&D centers are based in these two places. Thus it is encouraging that five factories of China FAW Group in Changchun, capital of Jilin, have resumed production on Sunday, with nearly 8,000 workers returning to work. More than 25,000 workers at FAW's 276 auto parts suppliers have also returned to work, according to the local government.

To ensure the smooth flow of logistics and stabilize the industrial and supply chains, the central authorities will also unveil a "national unified pass" system to help transportation companies and freight drivers who have often found themselves stranded on blocked highways due to lockdowns. According to a national teleconference attended by Vice-Premier Liu He on Monday, officials at all levels must stick to a people-centered approach and not block the smooth flow of freight transport on any excuse so long as the driver has the pass and a negative nucleic acid test result. He also vowed the government will improve the working and living conditions of logistics workers and offer them financial support. All this sends a strong message that maintaining normal economic activities carries the same significance as keeping the virus at bay. Officials who fail to understand this risk failing their duties because they can't see the wood for the trees.



Refugees deserve dignity

RIGHT now, there are almost 85 million people around the world who are living as refugees. They are refugees not by choice. No one in their right mind would wilfully decide to abandon their home, their community, their family and take on an existence that is daunting at least, full of perils, dangers and unknowns at best, and embark on a life on the edge of humanity. Refugees are such because they have found themselves in an intolerable situation, one where circumstance or violence, catastrophe or chaos has meant there is no choice but to go. It is a decision that is never taken lightly, one that is often the most fundamental choice between living or dying.

The upheavals of our times, the uncertainties of our era, the lure of a better life elsewhere away from deprivation and misery add to the wave of humanity that seeks shelter and havens elsewhere. And with so many now living as refugees, we with fixed roots – the sureties of families and societies, normal lives where our paths are certain and our fulfilment of hope better served – would do well to remind ourselves daily that we are indeed blessed.

We must also remind ourselves and others too that refugees are people with the same needs and wants, with rights too.

In recent days, the United Kingdom government has reached an agreement with Rwanda to send refugees there. This is not the only such "outsourcing" of refugees, dealing with a problem by sending it far away. Out of sight being out of mind as it were – much easier to deal with than putting proactive policies in place that would allow refugees to legally begin a new life in Britain.

While this outsourcing may offer political advantages in boosting domestic support, it does little to enhance the international standing. In contrast, Canada has proven itself to be a beacon to the world for so many, always willing to open its doors and reach out and embrace the desperate and desolate.

For every refugee, the end goal is to either return to their home, communities, family and friends, or to start a new life where families can be built, lives made, futures assured. Placing unrealistic outsourcing models in place does nothing to solve a refugee or migrant crisis.

It simply inserts another impediment and prolongs the journey for the unfortunate who had no other choice but to embark on their journeys of uncertainty. Quick fix solutions are just that. Long-term solutions are needed. The world needs more compassion.

Under Israeli surveillance: Living in dystopia, in Palestine

Jalal Abukhater

The surveillance I experience in Jerusalem and Ramallah still cannot compare with what my fellow Palestinians go through in Hebron, where a significantly more intrusive surveillance regime is being tested. There, the Israeli military installed face-scanning cameras...

IT has been more than five months since the United States sanctioned the Israeli spyware company NSO Group, and stories about the use and abuse of its Pegasus product continue to break. As various organisations try to push for further measures against Israel for supplying human rights abusers with this tool to further their violations, it is important to remember that Israeli military and surveillance technology is first developed for and tested on Palestinians, before being exported. Unsurprisingly, Pegasus has already been found on the phones of six Palestinian human rights activists, one of whom is now suing NSO in France. Another target happened to be my friend and colleague whose field of work is directly connected to the relationship between Palestine and the International Criminal Court (ICC) in The Hague. The thought that the Israelis have had full access to our personal conversations and exchanges in group chats has been quite disturbing, to say the least. However, this is not the first time Israel has violated my privacy and it won't be the last. As a Palestinian and a Jerusalemite, I find myself living in a surveillance society, not that different from the dystopian science fiction books and films that are popular these days.

Jerusalem and the West Bank are some of the world's most surveilled places. Not a moment passes without

us being made aware of the scale of intrusive surveillance constantly monitoring us: advanced facial recognition cameras, licence plate readers, spyware on our computers and mobile devices, as well as technologies that enable Israeli authorities to listen in to any – and all – of our phone calls.

Let me walk you through the routine surveillance that I go through as an average Palestinian. The surveillance starts in my home; it starts on my phone and computer. A recent report in the Middle East Eye quoted a former member of the Israeli army's elite intelligence unit 8200 as saying that Israel can listen to any telephone conversation that takes place in the occupied West Bank and Gaza on the only two mobile networks that serve us, Jawwal and Wataniya.

According to the army veteran, the Israelis listen in on politically active Palestinians and on ordinary Palestinians to find "pressure points"; an example of the latter "might be finding gays who can be pressured to report on their relatives, or finding some man who is cheating on his wife".

I've been working hard to navigate these systems of surveillance my whole life. From self-censorship to carefully choosing where I would express myself, I have developed many methods to ensure I can speak my mind without risking persecution, blackmail or imprisonment. Still, I am aware that despite not doing anything wrong, I am never completely safe – I know people who are doing time in Israeli prisons merely because of their social media activity. The speech and socialisation behaviours that are considered normal and protected in the democratic world are criminalised in apartheid Israel to maintain population control. The Israeli surveillance continues once I step out into the street. In the centre of East Jerusalem and the Old City, hundreds of cameras equipped with facial recognition technology track our movements. In 2014, there was one security camera for every 100 Palestinians in the city, according to a report published by Who Profits, a research centre focusing on companies profiting from the Israeli occupation. In 2017, the Israeli government announced its plan to install a further 765 cameras with advanced software with facial recognition capabilities, providing live feedback of individuals' profiles as they move around the city. Thus, a walk in the city of Jerusalem is never a relaxing one for we, Palestinians. Knowing that I am watched the entire time, I constantly worry about doing something that may be misinterpreted by authorities and turn me into a target. I become unnecessarily

alert and calculative of every step I take.

Whenever I meet with friends in public, we all resign ourselves to the idea that our pattern of behaviour is being watched and analysed in real time. In February, Israeli authorities openly admitted to using a cellular tracking system to target and threaten Palestinians who participated or were near Sheikh Jarrah and Jerusalem protests last May.

The surveillance I experience in Jerusalem and Ramallah still cannot compare with what my fellow Palestinians go through in Hebron, where a significantly more intrusive surveillance regime is being tested. There, the Israeli military installed face-scanning cameras at checkpoints in the heart of the city. It enables soldiers to identify Palestinians before even checking their ID cards. The "Hebron Smart City" programme, as Israeli authorities have dubbed it, provides real-time monitoring of the city's population and can sometimes see into private Palestinian homes, according to testimony gathered by the Washington Post. The Israeli authorities have plans to establish similar "smart city" programmes in the entire West Bank. In Hebron, the application of the Blue Wolf system involves soldiers raiding homes and pulling Palestinian children out of bed to photograph them. Recently, a video was released by B'Tselem showing sleepy Palestinian children in their pyjamas being shouted at by soldiers who ordered them to be photographed. The Israeli soldiers were even heard asking the children to smile and "say cheese" before taking their photographs.

No Israeli would want to be exposed to the same level of surveillance; proposals by law enforcement officials to install such facial recognition cameras in public spaces in Israel were fiercely rejected by politicians. The use of NSO Pegasus software by Israeli police against citizens of Israel was widely debated and condemned as well. But under apartheid, one standard applies to Israelis and another to Palestinians.

For Israeli companies engaged in developing the surveillance and spyware technologies, the occupied territories are just a lab where their products can be tried before being marketed and exported worldwide for profit. For the Israeli government, this surveillance regime is both a tool of control and a money-making business.

For we Palestinians, it is yet another systematic violation of our rights under the ever-deepening repression of the Israeli apartheid state.

– Courtesy: Al Jazeera

How chemicals are causing harm to planet

Ranvir S. Nayar

Consumers, too, can play an increasingly important role in ensuring that the industry becomes more responsible, not only by making environment-friendly purchasing decisions, favoring greener chemicals over more toxic ones, but also by reducing...

FOR many years, the battle to fight the pollution of our planet, and the oceans in particular, has focused on plastics and the growing threat they pose, and with good reason. Millions of tons of plastic waste already pollute every corner of the Earth and microplastics have seeped into the oceans where they are systematically destroying fragile, and even not-so-fragile, ecosystems that took millions of years to develop. But plastics are just a part, albeit perhaps the most visible, of the chemical pollution that is seriously threatening all forms of life everywhere around the globe. Besides plastics, there are at least 350,000 other synthetic products that are of great concern to ecologists. They include pesticides, insecticides, domestic cleaning products, industrial compounds, cosmetics, pharmaceutical products and paints. The list is long

and ever-growing as scientists churn out new products to satisfy never-ending human greed. A study conducted this year found that the production and disposal of extremely dangerous chemicals has reached such proportions that the toxic mix has pushed the planet outside the stable environment that has existed for 10,000 years. Chemicals also seep into the soil and enter the food chain through agriculture, animal products and even drinking water. Discussion of incidents in which drinking water has been polluted by industries that are either too greedy or too careless to deal with their waste properly could fill thousands of pages.

Yet despite all the evidence of the growing damage that chemicals cause to the environment, to plants and animals, and to human health, chemical production continues to increase at a rapid pace all around the world. It is a burden beyond comprehension and obviously beyond the coping capacity of the Earth, which is showing the widespread effects of damage caused by chemical production.

Even with all the warning signs, the chemical industry continues to churn out more and more of the same, damaging products. Estimates predict that global chemical sales are set to almost double in value from \$3.7 trillion in 2019 to \$6.2 trillion in 2030.

And while many of the giants of the chemical industry are Western firms, production has increasingly been shifting rapidly to Asia, the Middle East and Africa. It might not be entirely coincidental that in many countries in these regions the regulation of the industry, and pollution caused by it, is rather minimal. Environmentalists say that instead of making the necessary investments in ensuring proper and responsible production methods, and disposal procedures for waste, the chemical companies instead have been happily shifting these costs to society – and, of course, to the environment and human health.

Proponents of the chemical industry would point out that the global population is increasingly dependent on chemicals and cannot live without them. Yes, this is certainly so. Chemicals have indeed invaded all aspects of our daily lives. But the question is not whether we need chemicals, it is more about how they are produced and how they are disposed of.

Most crucially, solutions exist that promote "green chemistry" and the production of products that use chemicals that either exist in nature or which can be disposed of safely by the consumer or the producer. There must be an obligation on the chemical industry to adopt stricter environmental and safety standards, which is something it has been lobbying hard against for several decades.

Consumers, too, can play an increasingly important role in ensuring that the industry becomes more responsible, not only by making environment-friendly purchasing decisions, favoring greener chemicals over more toxic ones, but also by reducing consumption and moving toward a zero-waste policy.

We have seen how consumer preferences and the shaming of polluting companies has worked in the energy industry, by forcing it to adopt greener practices. Similar pressure can work with the chemical industry but it will require much greater awareness of chemical pollution and the dangers it poses to human health, the ecosystem and the entire planet. Currently, awareness levels about the dangers of chemicals are generally low, even in the most well-informed societies, and those who take on the chemical industry are still considered fringe elements – in a similar way, perhaps, to how climate activists were viewed three decades ago. Only when the chemical warriors are embraced by the mainstream can the real battle to save the planet from these noxious products begin in earnest.

– Courtesy: Arab News

Understanding Turkish diplomacy in conflict settings

Omer Ozkizilcik

Türkiye's relationship with Russia is exemplary of Ankara's strategy. In Syria, Libya, and Karabakh, it either engaged directly in conflict or supported its ally...

A COMBINATION of hard power and diplomacy has been the key to Ankara's achievements. From bringing Ukraine and Russia to the negotiating table to normalising relations with regional states and organising events like the Antalya Diplomacy Forum, Türkiye appears to be on the diplomatic offensive. Given its string of activity in recent years, from the Caucasus to the Mediterranean, one facet of Ankara's diplomacy efforts is worth examining: those in conflict and crisis settings.

To explain Turkish foreign policy in these areas, one needs to understand Türkiye's three-pillar approach, which is grounded in hard power, refraining from zero-sum games, and the pursuit of realpolitik to facilitate diplomacy. This approach, combined with the conduct of Turkish diplomats, has allowed it to enter serious negotiations with its counterparts or even pressure others to come to the table. Türkiye's relationship with Russia is exemplary of Ankara's strategy. In Syria, Libya, and Karabakh, it either engaged directly in conflict or supported its ally and brought Russia to the negotiation table and compelled Russia to sign agreements or make deals. In Syria, after a week of military operations during Operation Spring Shield, Türkiye managed to reach an agreement with Russia. Before that, a two-month-long negotiation period and continuous meetings between Turkish and Russian diplomats had not yielded any results.

The coordination and co-operation between Turkish generals and diplomats enabled Türkiye to safeguard over three million Syrians in Idlib. In other words, in contrast to the rhetorical condemnations and threats of sanctions, it was action on the ground that resonated with Moscow. As seen now with the Ukraine conflict, the former two cannot deter the Kremlin's aggression.

Overall, one can expect this to lead to an enhanced Turkish role in the region, from the Black Sea to the Middle East, to secure its recent gains and fill the void left by the US' focus on China without antagonising potential regional allies.

– Courtesy: TRT World

Briefs

Death, life sentences for culprits

FROM PAGE 01

Today, the ATC Gujranwala, upon the crime being proven, has punished 88 accused while one has been acquitted. "This is a very good day as the law punished those who took away an innocent life. It is now hoped that the elements spreading religious extremism will be dealt in the same manner." The ATC had indicted 89 individuals on March 12. According to the challan submitted by the police, 80 of the accused are adults while nine of them are minors. Judge Natasha Naseem had conducted the trial in Lahore's Kot Lakhpat jail. The statements of the accused had been recorded under Section 342 of the Code of Criminal Procedures (CrPC). Five prosecutors, including Senior Special Prosecutor Abdul Rauf Watoo, appeared during the trial. The prosecution had made 46 eyewitnesses part of the challan.

Pak highly values ties with the EU

FROM PAGE 01

During his meetings with the officials, the army chief discussed matters of mutual interest, the security situation in the region and bilateral relations, the statement added. Gen Bajwa said Pakistan valued its relationship with EU countries and looked forward to enhance mutual cooperation based on common interests.

Pakistan's journey of progress...

FROM PAGE 01

the mass transit projects in Lahore, Rawalpindi and Multan. He pointed out that the PTI government regrettably took stay orders from the courts to suspend the projects of public importance. He said the Orange Line mass transit train, which was a gift from China, faced litigation by the PTI that caused its delay by over two years. He said other than a few technical points regarding survey of the Orange Line project, no trace of corruption was found by the courts. PM Shehbaz Sharif said during the PTI government, the national economy suffered immensely and even the defence expenditure was borne by the debt money. The prime minister expressed gratitude to China and Turkey for contributing towards the launch of public transport system in Pakistan. He termed China a great friend that stood by Pakistan throughout the history, adding that the Chinese leadership always supported Pakistan at all international forums. He mentioned that China greatly contributed towards strengthening Pakistan's economy and expressed gratitude to Chinese President Xi Jinping for China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) as a game changer for the country. He urged China to also support Pakistan in the launch of Karachi Circular Railway for the benefit of people of the metropolitan. PM Sharif thanked Turkey for supporting Pakistan since its establishment and recalled that the Muslims of sub-continent had also supported the cause of freedom of Turkey. He said Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan was a leader with a vision and stood by Pakistan during various challenges. Shehbaz Sharif said 15 buses would be taken from Punjab Mass Transit Authority, Rawalpindi for an interim period till the new fleet was added to Islamabad metro service. He announced free-of-cost metro bus service for passengers during the holy month of Ramadan. Chairman Capital Development Authority Engineer Farhad Iqbal said on instructions of PM Shehbaz Sharif, the CDA and National Highway had made possible the launch of the project within five days. He said 15 buses with orange skin would be run on the route in collaboration with Turkish company, besides the four buses as airport shuttle. He said ticketing system of the metro bus had been completed, however would be opened with approval of the prime minister.

Tsitsipas aiming for 'top two' after Monte Carlo win

Tsitsipas became the sixth player to win back-to-back Monte Carlo Masters in the Open era, emulating Nadal, Juan Carlos Ferrero, Thomas Muster, Bjorn Borg and Ilie Nastase

DNA

MONTE CARLO: Stefanos Tsitsipas said he is aiming to finish the season in the world's top two after successfully defending his Monte Carlo Masters title with a hard-fought victory over Spain's Alejandro Davidovich Fokina on Sunday's final. Third seed Tsitsipas hammered 21 winners and made only 11 unforced errors in the Monaco sunshine to win 6-3, 7-6 (7/3) in an hour and 36 minutes. It was the 23-year-old Greek's eighth ATP title and first in 11 months as he made the perfect start to the clay-court season. "I can definitely have a great season and maybe finish it in the top two," said the world number five, whose triumph in Monaco was his fourth tournament success on clay. "This year I really want to have good results on

grass and on hard courts because I'm sure I can score big ATP points there.

"If I manage to win matches there with as much consistency as on clay, I think I have a great chance of finishing the year in the top two. It's one of my big goals." Novak Djokovic, Daniil Medvedev, Alexander Zverev and Rafael Nadal currently sit above Tsitsipas in the ATP rankings.

Tsitsipas became the sixth player to win back-to-back Monte Carlo Masters in the Open era, emulating Nadal, Juan Carlos Ferrero, Thomas Muster, Bjorn Borg and Ilie Nastase. "It's great, especially because the fans were there. It was livelier than last year," said Tsitsipas, who beat Andrey Rublev in the 2021 final, which was held behind closed doors due to the Covid pandemic. He is gearing up for another tilt at the French Open title after los-



ing last year's final at Roland Garros to Djokovic despite leading by two sets. "I think my tennis is excellent on all surfaces, although

not repeat those heroics in his first ATP final, losing for the third time in as many meetings with Tsitsipas. "I always thought about being in the final here one day... I hope to be here again next year," said Davidovich Fokina, who also reached the quarter-finals last year before retiring injured after one set against Tsitsipas. The world number 46 struck first on Sunday, breaking in the third game, but Tsitsipas hit straight back with a magnificent forehand up the line to level the first set at 2-2.

The set remained on serve until game eight, when Tsitsipas broke as Davidovich Fokina fired a backhand into the tramlines. The Greek star wrapped up the opener with a hold to love, capped off by an ace. World number five Tsitsipas carved out two break points in the first game of the second set, and took total control of the final

as Davidovich Fokina sent a baseline shot spinning long. The underdog continued to battle hard, though, breaking back in the fourth game as Tsitsipas framed a backhand into the crowd, with 22-year-old Davidovich Fokina waving his arms in delight.

But Tsitsipas continued to put the Spaniard under pressure and took his third break point of a marathon game to lead 5-4 and tee up the chance to serve for the title. Tsitsipas produced a nervy game, though, and Davidovich Fokina powered away a smash to extend the match. The second set went into a tie-break, where Tsitsipas raced into a 5-1 lead with the aid of a shot that clipped the net cord and landed on the edge of the sideline. Davidovich Fokina saved one championship point, but Tsitsipas secured the trophy at the 2nd time of asking with a wonderful passing shot after some defiant defence by him.

7 killed as Russian missiles pound Lviv

LVIV: Russian forces launched missile attacks on the western city of Lviv and pounded other targets across Ukraine on Monday in what appeared to be an intensified bid to wear down the country's defenses ahead of an all-out assault on the east. At least seven people were reported killed in Lviv, where plumes of thick black smoke rose over a city that has seen only sporadic attacks during almost two months of war and has become a haven for large numbers of civilians fleeing intense fighting elsewhere. Ukrainian Prime Minister Denys Shmyhal, meanwhile, vowed to "fight absolutely to the end" in strategically vital Mariupol, where the last known pocket of resistance in the seven-week siege consisted of Ukrainian fighters holed up in a sprawling steel plant. - APP

PM, Qatari Amir discuss bilateral ties

FROM PAGE 01

In particular, the Prime Minister underscored the resolve to forge deeper economic engagement between Pakistan and Qatar - including in the trade, investment, energy, communications, food security and other key sectors. The Prime Minister also appreciated the measures taken by Qatar for the well-being of the Pakistani workers in the fields of security, health and infrastructure. The Prime Minister appreciated the role played by Qatar in the Afghan peace process and expressed the desire that both countries should continue to work together for peace, stability and humanitarian assistance for the people in Afghanistan. The Prime Minister extended cordial invitation to The Amir to visit Pakistan at an early date. The two leaders agreed to remain in close contact and take forward the process of consolidation and further expansion of Pakistan-Qatar relations.

Everything is on record; Imran...

FROM PAGE 01

The former prime minister insisted that the establishment gave him three options, contradicting the Pakistan military's statement that the options were not put forth by it. Khan's comments came after Director-General Major General Babar Iftikhar, in a press briefing on Thursday, had said that during the deadlock between the Opposition and the government, the PM Office had contacted the military leadership to help resolve the political crisis.

Khan to soon be convicted...

FROM PAGE 01

the cases are set to be decided within the next 30 days." She went on to add that Imran's "theft" had been exposed as the 16 accounts that he hid had now come to the fore. According to her, illegal funding has been proven and the evidence is now available, and the former premier will be facing sentencing now. The PML-N leader alleged that funding for the cancer hospital went to Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf's accounts "An amount of \$7 million pertaining to the foreign funding wasn't declared." She noted that PTI leader Asad Umar had filed a petition against the documents to be made public.

Pak strongly condemns...

FROM PAGE 01

the UN General Assembly to designate 15 March as the International Day to Combat Islamophobia. Pakistan's concerns have been conveyed to the authorities in Sweden and The Netherlands. They have been urged to take cognizance of the sentiments of the people of Pakistan and the Muslims worldwide and take steps to prevent Islamophobic incidents. We call on the international community to demonstrate solidarity and commitment to the ideals of building peaceful and harmonious societies for the betterment of humanity.

Chelsea book FA Cup final clash with Liverpool



LONDON: Thomas Tuchel praised Chelsea's focus and composure as they beat Crystal Palace 2-0 on Sunday to earn an FA Cup final showdown with quadruple chasers Liverpool. Tuchel's side had to work hard to break Palace's stubborn resistance in the semi-final at Wembley, but Ruben Loftus-Cheek's ferocious strike put them on course for a third successive FA Cup final appearance. Mason Mount put the result beyond doubt with a fine

finish of his own, ensuring Chelsea of a date with Liverpool in the final at Wembley on May 14. It will be Chelsea's fifth FA Cup final in the last six years as they look to make amends for losing in the showpiece against Arsenal and Leicester in 2020 and 2021 respectively. It was a welcome tonic after Tuesday's painful Champions League quarter-final exit at Real Madrid, where the Blues scored three times to overturn a 3-1 first-leg deficit only to go out

after extra time. "I thought the performance was very controlled and very serious. It was hard, the opponent changed system twice, but we took care of their counter-attacks," Tuchel said. "It was very challenging physically and mentally. We are the team with the most minutes in Europe." Tuchel has won the Champions League, Club World Cup and UEFA Super Cup in his reign, but he is yet to lead Chelsea to a domestic trophy. With three consortiums in the running

to buy Chelsea following the British government's sanctions on Russian billionaire Roman Abramovich after the invasion of Ukraine, the Blues could have a new owner by the time they return to Wembley. Beating Palace keeps them in contention to end a troubled season with silverware, although Liverpool, who beat Premier League leaders Manchester City 3-2 in Saturday's semi-final, will provide far tougher opposition. The Reds have already beaten Chelsea in the League Cup final on penalties this season and Tuchel knows how tough it will be to avenge that loss. "We will be well prepared because we play against one of the best teams in the world. They are in outstanding form. It will be another hard fight," he said. "I don't care about the trophies they try to win. We were unlucky to lose in the shoot-out in the League Cup. "We will try to make it hard for them. It is unbelievably difficult to beat them. But that is what a cup final is about. We need everything at the top level." - Agencies

PSG on brink of French title

PARIS: A Kylian Mbappe penalty proved decisive as Paris Saint-Germain beat bitter rivals Marseille 2-1 on Sunday, meaning they could clinch the Ligue 1 title this week. Mbappe converted from the spot in first-half stoppage time after the referee awarded a penalty for handball on a VAR review, restoring PSG's lead following Neymar's early opener and a Djelekalet-Car equaliser. PSG are 15 points clear of second-placed Marseille with six games remaining and Mauricio Pochettino's side - who also have a far superior goal difference - stand poised to reclaim the



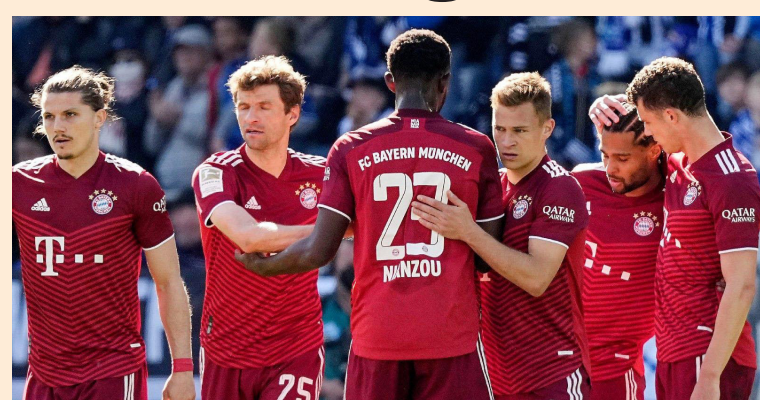
trophy they relinquished to Lille last season. If Marseille fail to beat Nantes on Wednesday then PSG can clinch their eighth Ligue 1 title in 10 seasons if they have a better result against Angers at the same time. Despite the apparently high stakes for the biggest fixture in French football, there was a distinctly flat atmosphere at the Parc des Princes. Authorities banned Marseille fans from the game over concerns of possible violence, a recurring theme in France in recent months. Meanwhile PSG 'ultras', the most vocal members of their support, have decided to stay silent until the end of the season in protest at the club's management and at results in a campaign marked by the Champions League last-16 exit to Real Madrid. - APP

India agrees to visit Pak in 2023

LAHORE: Baseball Softball Federation of India (BSFI) has written a letter to Pakistan Olympic Association (POA), confirming their participation in Baseball event of South Asian Games 2023, scheduled to take place in Pakistan. In a letter received to POA, BSFI congratulated Pakistan for getting Asian event's hosting and wished them good luck. "Greetings from Baseball Softball Federation of India. Please accept our heartfelt congratulations and best wishes on your hosting of the XIV South Asian Games, a major multi-sport event in Pakistan in March 2023," the letter read. "We understand that Baseball has also been included in these games. We, at the Baseball Softball Federation of India, are pleased to confirm the participation of our team in the event. Kindly arrange to send a formal invitation to us enabling us to make preparations for the event." The letter noted that the South Asian Games 2023 in Pakistan. Athletes from Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan (Host), Sri Lanka will participate in the event. - DNA

Bayern one win from 10th straight Bundesliga title

BERLIN: Bayern Munich can secure a 10th straight Bundesliga title next weekend after they bounced back from their Champions League exit with a 3-0 win at Arminia Bielefeld on Sunday. An own goal by Bielefeld defender Jacob Laursen and strikes by Serge Gnabry and Jamal Musiala saw Bayern move nine points clear. "A bit of frustration was released after we were knocked out," Gnabry told DAZN. Bayern returned to winning ways five days after conceding a last-gasp equaliser at home to Villarreal to crash out of the Champions League with a 2-1 aggregate defeat in the quarter-finals. "I've had a hard time dealing with it," Bayern midfielder Joshua Kimmich, who was outstanding Sunday, said. "It's still in the back of your mind." There are four league games left but Bayern can secure the title by beating second-placed Borussia Dortmund in next Saturday's top-of-the-table clash in Munich. "We definitely want to clinch it against Dortmund," Kimmich added. Bayern were ahead after less than 10 minutes in Bielefeld when a Kimmich pass found its way to Robert



Lewandowski, who got a touch before Laursen helped it over the line. Bayern had a let-off when Japan midfielder Masaya Okugawa clipped the ball over DayotUpamecano before firing past Manuel Neuer, but the goal was ruled offside. - Agencies

Xi's 'common prosperity' initiative hits snag

"Xi's push to attain common prosperity, however, has been fanning concern that the world's most populous country would become a less attractive market, as the goal may place a heavy burden on the rich so that the government can coercively rectify economic inequality," the report by Kyodo News said

AGENCIES

LONDON: With fears of further economic slowdown, China is said to have decided to suspend President Xi Jinping's "common prosperity" initiative, a media report claimed on Monday. To end widening gap between the rich and poor in the world's largest population, Xi introduced this policy last August at the 10th meeting of the Central Committee for Financial and Economic Affairs. However, economic data coming out of the world's

second-largest economy amid the COVID-19 pandemic pressure appears to have put a spanner in the ambitious project of Xi, who is expected to seek a third term later this year at a summit of the Communist Party of China (CPC). "China has decided to suspend the full promotion of President Xi Jinping's ambitious 'common prosperity' policy for the time being, with the economy slowing amid the COVID-19 pandemic," a Chinese source familiar with the matter told Japan's Kyodo News on Monday. China had decided

to levy more regulations on the country's lucrative sectors including the IT and financial industries. Xi explained: "Common prosperity will raise incomes of low-income groups, promote fairness, make regional development more balanced, and will stress on people-centered growth. "We will first make the pie bigger and then divide it properly through reasonable institutional arrangements. As a rising tide lifts all boats, everyone will get a fair share from development, and development gains will benefit all our

people in a more substantial and equitable way." Xi later told World Economic Forum. "Xi's push to attain common prosperity, however, has been fanning concern that the world's most populous country would become a less attractive market, as the goal may place a heavy burden on the rich so that the government can coercively rectify economic inequality," the report by Kyodo News said. However, as China "has shown clear signs of losing growth momentum against a backdrop of the nation's 'zero-COVID' policy," the

report said, adding: "Xi has concluded that strengthening surveillance on companies would shrink corporate activities further." Earlier in the day, China's National Bureau of Statistics said the country's economy expanded 4.8% on an annual basis to 27 trillion yuan (\$4.25 trillion) in the first quarter of the current year. The focus of the CPC appears to have shifted to stabilizing economic and social development. Besides paying hefty amounts of fines under China's anti-monopoly laws, "big Chinese enterprises and business

leaders are believed to be compelled by the central authorities to take steps that could contribute to narrowing income disparities, such as making donations and providing social support." Several factors seem to have added to the economy "losing momentum" including a lockdown in many regions of China which has badly hit the supply chain inside the country besides disruption of the global supply chain due to Russia's war on Ukraine. China has set a target of 5.5% growth in gross domestic product this year.

Briefs

UBG Welcomes PM's decision for formation of NEAC

DNA
KARACHI: The leaders and members of UBG have welcomed the decision of Prime Minister to form National Economic Advisory Council (NEAC) consisting of leading economists and industrialists to tackle numerous economic challenges and find a way out of prevailing economic crunch. The decision of formation of NEAC indicates that revival of economy of Pakistan is on the top priority of the government hence business community have a great sigh of relief, UBG said. Welcoming the decision of Prime Minister to form NEAC consisting of leading economists and industrialists to tackle numerous economic challenges and find a way out of prevailing economic crunch Patron in Chief SM Muneer and President UBG Zuberi Tufail said that the decision of formation of NEAC indicates that revival of economy of Pakistan is on the top priority of the government hence business community have a great sigh of relief. UBG urged the trade bodies of Pakistan to formulate their proposals and suggestions how to rescue the country from the current economic crises for onward submission to NEAC.

Shusha to host World Azerbaijanis' 5th Congress

BAKU: The fifth World Azerbaijan Congress will be held in Azerbaijan's liberated Shusha city, the State Committee on Work with Diaspora reported on April 18. The preparations for the Fifth World Azerbaijan Congress are nearing completion. The congress will be held in Shusha, Azerbaijan's cultural capital, which was liberated from Armenia's 30-year occupation by the mighty Azerbaijani army. The congress participants will first visit Baku's Alley of Martyrs I and II before departing for Shusha. The event is expected to draw 400 diaspora representatives from 65 countries. Following the official opening ceremony, there will be a report on the activities of the State Committee on Work with Diaspora, discussions on "Challenges facing the Azerbaijani Diaspora in the post-war period", "Contributions of the Azerbaijani Diaspora to the restoration and reconstruction of Karabakh". It should be noted that the congress will be the first major event of the diaspora after the liberation of Karabakh, which demonstrated high organization and unity in recent years and played a special role in informing the international community about Azerbaijan's realities. - APP

Sanctions against Russia would cost Serbia

BELGRADE: Imposing sanctions on Russia would cost Serbia dearly, Aleksandar Vucic, the country's president who recently won a second term, said on Sunday. In a statement to TV Pink, Vucic said his personal views on Russia-Ukraine conflict differ from the official view of the Serbian state. "Russia has been supporting Serbia's territorial integrity since 2001. Whether Serbia imposes sanctions on Russia or not, it costs Serbia dearly. I believe that we will get Russian gas at a more affordable price compared to other countries in Europe," he added. Serbia, which is almost entirely dependent on Russian gas and oil, has come under criticism for declaring neutrality in Russia's war on Ukraine and refusing to impose sanctions on Moscow. "This war also affects Serbia. Our duty is to act in accordance with public international law and to respect principles," he said. - APP

CPEC projects to add millions of acre feet of water storage

DNA

ISLAMABAD: With the completion of the ongoing mega hydropower projects in Pakistan, the country will add millions of acre feet (MAF) of water storage and thousands of MW of hydel power to the national grid, and these projects are also bringing a crop of hydroelectric engineers

in the country. According to Gwadar Pro, currently, Chinese companies in joint ventures are executing mega hydropower projects in Pakistan, including Dimer Basha Dam Project (DBDP), Mohmand Dam and Hydropower Project (MDHP), Dasu Hydropower Project (DHPP), etc. These projects allow young Pakistani engineers to learn and share their

experiences with foreign experts, especially Chinese engineers. Young engineers who get training from Chinese engineers have bright prospects, as Pakistan has immense potential for hydropower generation. "DBDP has so far created 16,500 jobs and will be training more than 1000 engineers," said Pakistan Water and Power Development Authority (WAPDA) Chairman

Lt Gen Muzammil Hussain (Retd), while briefing Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on the progress of the project on Sunday. Mr. Muzammil Hussain said, "Putting together DBDP and Mohmand and Dasu, Pakistan would have a new crop of engineers on hydrology and about 1,600 of them will be taking Pakistan's future". WAPDA is implementing a multi-pronged strategy for unprecedented

hydropower and water storage development in Pakistan under the vision of "Decade of Dams". The low-cost hydel electricity - which stands at 9406 MW at present. The Government plans to uplift its existing 30% to at least 50% in the National Grid. Hydrology engineers have a bright future in Pakistan, as WAPDA is currently constructing as many as 10 mega projects to help ensure wa-

ter, food and energy security of Pakistan. Collectively, these projects are expected to create 35,000 employment opportunities as well as contributing significantly towards socio-economic uplift of underdeveloped areas. For example, DBDP, which is expected to be completed in 2029 will save Pakistan US\$ 2.5 billion every year and will irrigate 1.2 million acres of land.



ISLAMABAD: PM Shehbaz Sharif received, Sheikh Saoud Abdulrahman Al-Thani, ambassador of Qatar to Pakistan. - DNA

Kabul denies news to stop co-op with Uzbekistan Railways

DNA

TASHKENT: Termez hosted a meeting of the heads of Uzbekistan and Afghanistan railway departments, reports "Dunya" IA correspondent. According to the official website of JSC "O'zbekiston temir yo'llari", the delegation of Afghanistan was led by the head of the Afghan Railways Baktulrahmon Sharafat. The Afghan side expressed gratitude for the measures taken by the Uzbek side to strengthen bilateral relations and the substantial assistance provided to Afghanistan. At the same time, the Afghan side denied reports that Afghanistan allegedly plans to stop cooperation with Uzbekistan Railways JSC. Baktulrahmon Sharafat specifically emphasized the intention to strengthen bilateral cooperation and plan for its further expansion. It is stressed that the Afghan side expressed full satisfaction with the work of the SE Sogdiana-Trans (subordinated to Uzbekistan Railways JSC) for the operation of the railway line "Khayratan - Mazar-i-Sharif", which has been operating since the date of commissioning of this line, since 2011. It was stated that due to the current situation in Afghanistan in the second half of 2021, there was a significant

decrease in railway freight turnover. Thanks to the joint work carried out in the first quarter of 2022, the volume of cargo turnover reached last year's level (more than 1.1 million tons). During the talks, the Afghan side stressed its readiness, together with Uzbekistan Railways JSC, to organize work to maximize the use of opportunities to speed up the unloading of wagons, thereby increasing the volume of incoming cargo at the Khayratan station, as well as accelerating the rehabilitation of the Naibot and Mazar-i-Sharif stations. Within the framework of the meeting, a visit to the Educational Center for Training Afghan citizens in the city of Termez, created on the initiative of the President of Uzbekistan, was organized. In addition, the Afghan delegation visited the training center at the Termez locomotive depot, where young Afghan railway specialists undergo practical training. The members of the delegation talked with promising personnel of their country, got acquainted with the conditions of training and life created for them. The issues of further cooperation in the educational sphere were discussed. In particular, it is planned to create a field training center on the basis of the Hairaton station in Afghanistan together with Uzbek railway workers to train and improve the

skills of Afghan railway specialists. The delegation of Afghanistan separately emphasized the importance of implementing infrastructure, especially railway projects, since at present one of the vectors for the development of cooperation between Afghanistan is the interest in participating in projects for the integration of Central Asia with South Asia. In this regard, a separate point of negotiations was the issue of accelerating the implementation of the project "Construction of the Mazar-i-Sharif - Kabul - Peshawar railway. In particular, details on the organization and conduct of a field expedition along the route and thereby contribute to accelerating the preparation of a feasibility study for the construction of a new railway line. At the end of the publication on the Uzbek-Afghan negotiations, the Information and Analytical Media Center of JSC "O'zbekiston temir yo'llari" addressed journalists and media representatives, especially in the current conditions, in the era of the diversity of fake information on the Internet. It is emphasized: "We kindly ask you to approach the issues of coverage of topics related to geopolitics with knowledge, be careful with all kinds of links and reposts, interpretation of information, and most importantly - check and recheck the data."



Iran warns Israel against 'slightest move'

Israel was blamed for a series of sabotage attacks at Iran's key nuclear facilities and the killing of a number of leading Iranian nuclear scientists

TEHRAN: Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi on Monday threatened to strike "at the heart" of Israel if Tel Aviv makes the "slightest move" against Tehran. Speaking at a military parade marking the National Army Day, Raisi said if Iran's security is threatened by arch-foe Israel, its armed forces would retaliate strongly. "Our message to Israel is that if you seek normalization of ties with countries in the region, you must know that even your slightest movements are not hidden from our intelligence, security and military," Raisi said at the rally attended by top military officials.



"And you must know that if you make a slightest move against Iran, the destination of Iran's armed forces would be the heart of Israel," he added. During the ceremony, the Iranian military displayed a range of homegrown weapons, drones and defense systems at the parade on the outskirts of Tehran. Kaman-22, a long-range strategic drone belonging to Iran's Air Force, which is capable of carrying different kinds of cargo with flight duration of 24 hours, was displayed for the first time. According to military officials, it has an operational range of more

than 3000 km and capable of flying up to 8000 meters in air. A series of fighter jets belonging to the Iranian army also performed aerial maneuvers on the occasion. Raisi said Iran's military has developed self-reliance under the pressure of US sanctions, saying it was in the "best condition" today. This year's National Army Day parade came weeks after Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) claimed responsibility for an attack on what it claimed was an Israeli "strategic center" in Erbil in northern Iraq's Kurdish region.

The attack, which involved a dozen ballistic missiles, came in response to the killing of two IRGC members in an Israeli airstrike on the outskirts of the Syrian capital, Damascus. Last week, Raisi told visiting Iraqi Foreign Minister Fuad Hussein that Iran was "closely watching" the actions of Israel and will not allow them to "endanger the security of the region through any country". Israel was blamed for a series of sabotage attacks at Iran's key nuclear facilities and the killing of a number of leading Iranian nuclear scientists. - Agencies

CCCC distributes nets to fishermen of Gwadar

ISLAMABAD: As part of corporate social responsibility, the management of China Communication Construction Company (CCCC) and Pakistan Army during a ceremony distributed fishing nets to the poor fishermen in Gwadar. According to Gwadar Pro, the purpose of the distribution of nets was to enable the needy fishermen of Gwadar to earn a living with dignity. The ceremony was attended by Mr. Liu Fangtao, project manager of Eastbay Expressway (EBEW), Brigadier Fahad Mansoor of Commander 440 Brigade, Assistant Commissioner, officials from Gwadar Port Authority and Gwadar Development Authority and representatives of local fishermen.

The fishermen expressed gratitude to the Pakistan Army and CCCC for helping them. They also raised Pak-China Friendship slogan and lauded the role of CCCC in uplifting the life of common people in Gwadar. "The nets are being distributed amongst the poor and needy fishermen of Gwadar," said Mr. Fangtao, adding that the completion of EBEW will lead to the development of North Free Zone and will create numerous jobs for the locals. He said, people of Gwadar will get maximum benefits from the projects. Brigadier Fahad Mansoor thanked the Chinese Government and management of CCCC for their efforts regarding the welfare of local fishermen. - APP

What's behind South Africa's flood disaster

DURBAN, SOUTH AFRICA: South Africa, the continent's most industrialised country, has largely escaped the tropical cyclones that regularly hit its neighbours. But last week, storms pummeled the east coast city of Durban, triggering heavy floods and landslides that killed more than 440. Here are the main questions behind the floods and devastation. Instead, the rains were part of a normal South African weather system called a "cut-off low" which can bring heavy rain and cold weather. "Cut-off low pressure systems are common. Their frequency becomes high during autumn and spring seasons, and they are differing in strength," said Puseletso Mofeng with the South African Weather Service.

Some of these systems are very intense, causing heavy rain, hail, strong and potentially damaging winds and heavy snowfall. A cut-off low in April 2019 killed 85 people in Eastern Cape and KwaZulu-Natal provinces. If the storm system itself is a known phenomenon, the difference this time was the intensity of the deluge. Here, experts point the finger at climate change - warmer seas charge the atmosphere with more moisture, which then gets dumped as rainfall. "We've seen in Durban three (severe) floods in less than 10 years. Does it have to do with climate change? Definitely," said Mary Galvin of the University of Johannesburg. "We are feeling the impact of what will certainly be unpredictable, more frequent, severe and extreme weather events." A recent UN report says what was once considered a one-in-a-hundred-year flood event could end up happening several times a year by 2050. Durban experiences floods every year, but not as severe as these. The city is built on a hilly area with

many gorges and ravines - a topography that University of KwaZulu-Natal urban planner Hope Magidimisha-Chipungu says is conducive to floods. If the soil is not properly stabilised in the hilly areas, it's obvious you were going to have landslides," she said. Some have suggested Durban's storm-water drainage system may not have been well maintained, which authorities of the 187-year-old city dispute. Durban city is not alone in experiencing extreme weather conditions in South Africa. Along the west coast, Cape Town almost ran out of water in a 2018 drought. "Climate predictions and all models show wet areas will get wetter and dry areas will get dryer. So Durban... unfortunately will be wetter," said Galvin.

- What about planning? - Durban is one of South Africa's fastest-growing cities, with economic growth outpacing the national average by 2015. Massive, unplanned migration created housing shortages, which resulted in the mushrooming of shack dwellings, locally called informal settlements. "The ways in which South African cities were designed were very exclusionary in nature," said planner Magidimisha-Chipungu. "The spatial planning and the apartheid legacy (placed) the urban poor in the periphery and in the low-lying areas" along riverbanks, she said. Around a quarter of the metro's 3.9 million people live in 550 informal settlements around the city. At least 164 of them were built on floodplains, according to Galvin. A host of recent crises have further sapped resources - the coronavirus pandemic, massive unemployment and riots and looting that erupted last year. It's "like the seven plagues" happening in succession, said Galvin. - Agencies

Ukraine claims 20,600 Russian troops killed

KYIV: Some 20,600 Russian soldiers have been killed since the war began in Ukraine on Feb. 24, the Ukrainian military said on Monday. Ukrainian forces have destroyed 167 Russian aircraft, 147 helicopters, 155 unmanned aerial vehicles, 790 tanks, 2,041 armored vehicles and 381 artillery systems, according to the Ukrainian General Staff's latest update. Some 130 Russian multiple rocket launcher systems, 1,487 vehicles, 76 fuel tanks, 67 anti-aircraft systems and seven boats have also been destroyed, it added. At least 1,982 civilians have been killed and 2,651 injured in Ukraine so far in the war, according to UN estimates, with the true figure believed to be much higher. More than 4.8 million Ukrainians have fled to other countries, with over 7 million more internally displaced, said the UN refugee agency. - Agencies

Spain to reopen Kyiv embassy: PM

OVIEDO: Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez announced on Monday that Spain will reopen its embassy in the Ukrainian capital Kyiv in the coming days. "We're reopening the embassy as a show of Spain's commitment to the Ukrainian people," Sanchez said in an interview with Spanish broadcaster Antena 3. The embassy was fully evacuated on Feb. 25, a day after Russia began attacking Ukraine in its latest incursion into the country. At the time, Foreign Minister Jose Manuel Albares said Spain's ambassador to Ukraine would return to the embassy as soon as it was safe to do so. Speaking on Monday, Sanchez said what is playing out in Ukraine is not "a war between Russia and Ukraine." "It's a war waged by (Russian President Vladimir) Putin on everything that the European Union represents: democracy, freedom and a model of prosperity based on social justice," he said. Sanchez also admitted that the war is taking an "obvious" economic toll on Spain and that the country will soon reduce its growth forecasts. "But if we hadn't done anything and if we had allowed Putin to just take over Ukraine, the cost would have been even higher," he added. At least 1,982 civilians have been killed and 2,651 injured in Ukraine since the start of the war on Feb. 24, according to UN estimates, with the true figure believed to be much higher. More than 4.8 million Ukrainians have fled to other countries, with over 7 million more internally displaced, said the UN refugee agency. - APP

Most pavilions of Dubai expo to stay continue

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Sheikh Nahyan Bin Mubarak Al Nahyan, Minister of Tolerance and Coexistence and Commissioner-General of Expo 2020 Dubai, has said that Expo 2020 Dubai offered hope to the entire world for a better future, especially amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. In an interview with the Emirates News Agency (WAM), Sheikh Nahyan stressed that the UAE's hosting of Expo 2020 Dubai has proven the success of the nation's journey and approach, supported by the vision of its leadership, adding that the major event attracted the world's attention to the UAE and the commercial, investment and economic opportunities it offers. The world spoke the language of humanity in the UAE, a country known for its giving, for six months, and offered hope for a better future, he added, noting that most pavilions will remain standing in the city, and related cultural and academic events will continue. He also commended the distinguished Emirati model of volunteering at Expo 2020 Dubai, affirming that nearly 33,000 volunteers provided leading services and facilitated the visits of over 24 million guests.

Briefs

President asks Punjab governor to continue in office

DNA
ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi Monday instructed Governor of Punjab Umar Sarfaraz Cheema to continue to hold the office. According to a President House statement, the president asked the Punjab governor to continue to serve till the decision on a summary for his removal was taken.

Pakistan flays India's anti-Muslim violence

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan on Monday strongly condemned the campaign of violence and targeted attacks against Muslims by fanatic Hindu mobs in various Indian states. The Foreign Office said the recent despicable attempt to hoist the saffron flag at Jahangirpuri's Jamia Masjid in New Delhi where Muslims were waiting to break their fasts, revealed the gravity of the state-sanctioned hysteria and hatred in India against Muslims. The Hindu mobs indulged in derogatory sloganeering, playing of provocative music and the brandishing of weapons by the procession of Hanuman Shobha Yatra with impunity, it said. "This incident has rekindled the horrific memories of Delhi pogrom of February 2020 which was aimed to discriminate, dispossess and dehumanize the Muslim community," the FO statement said. The Foreign Office said the Ram Navami riots, which spread out across many Indian states had shone a spotlight on the precipitous slide of India into a 'Hindu Rashtra'. "Harrowing scenes of demolition of houses, businesses and shops belonging to Muslims and the vandalization of mosques by local authorities in Madhya Pradesh and Gujarat reveal the deep penetration of Hindutva ideology into the fabric of Indian state and society," it said. - APP

Israeli troops continue violence spree in Palestine

DNA

JERUSALEM: Israeli troops shot and wounded two Palestinians on Monday during clashes that broke out during an arrest raid in the occupied West Bank. The Israeli military said it arrested 11 Palestinians in operations across the territory overnight. In a raid in the village of Yamun, near the city of Jenin, the army said dozens of Palestinians hurled rocks and explosives at troops. Soldiers "responded with live ammunition" toward "suspects who hurled explosive devices," the military said. The Palestinian Health Ministry said two men were hospitalized after being critically wounded. Israel has carried out a wave of arrest raids and other operations in recent weeks that it says are aimed at preventing further attacks after Palestinian assailants killed at least 14 people inside Israel. Two of the attackers came

China expresses concern over escalating tension

BEIJING: China on Monday expressed concern over the escalating tension between Palestinians and Israeli police at Al-Aqsa Mosque compound in Jerusalem. China has been following closely with concern the escalating tension between Palestine and Israel in Jerusalem, Chinese Foreign Ministry Spokesperson, Wang Wenbin said during his regular briefing here. He said that the issue of Jerusalem's status and ownership was complicated and sensitive and hoped that the parties concerned would act in accordance with relevant United Nations resolutions, maintain and respect the historical status quo of the holy sites in Jerusalem, stay calm and exercise restraint, and prevent the situation from deteriorating or even getting out of control. Wang Wenbin said that the escalating Palestine-Israel situation once again reminds us that the Palestine question should not be marginalized. He said that the international community, major countries in particular, should look squarely at the crux of the Palestine question and on the basis of the two-state solution, facilitate the early resumption of peace talks between Palestine and Israel to realize peaceful coexistence. China will continue to play a constructive role in this effort, he added. According to reports, hundreds of Palestinians clashed with Israeli police at the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound in Jerusalem on April 15, leaving at least 152 people injured. - Agencies

from in and around Jenin, which has long been a bastion of armed struggle against Israeli rule. At least 25 Palestinians have been killed by Israeli forces in recent

weeks, according to an Associated Press count. Many had carried out attacks or were involved in clashes, but an unarmed woman and a lawyer who appears to have

been a bystander were also among those killed. Israel captured the West Bank, along with the Gaza Strip and east Jerusalem, in the 1967 Mideast war. The Palestini-

ans seek those territories for a future independent state. Tensions have run high in recent days, during the confluence of the Muslim holy month of Ramadan and the week-long Jewish holiday of Passover. Palestinian protesters and Israeli police have clashed at a flashpoint Jerusalem holy site, known to Muslims as the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound and to Jews as the Temple Mount. Jordan and Egypt, which made peace with Israel decades ago and coordinate with it on security matters, have condemned its actions at the holy site. Jordan - which serves as custodian of the site - summoned Israel's charge d'affaires in protest on Monday. An Arab party that made history last year by joining Israel's governing coalition on Sunday suspended its participation - a largely symbolic act that nevertheless reflected the sensitivity of the holy site, which is at the emotional heart of the century-old conflict.

Iran blames US for delays to revive nuclear deal

TEHRAN: Iran on Monday said an agreement with world powers to revive the 2015 nuclear deal was still not in sight, blaming the United States for the delay. "More than one issue is still pending between Iran and the United States," Iranian foreign ministry spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh said. "Messages (from Washington) sent through (European Union coordinator Enrique) Mora these past weeks ... are far from providing solutions that could lead to an accord," he told reporters. Iran has been engaged in efforts to revive the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) with Britain, China, France, Germany and Russia directly, and the United States indirectly since April 2021. Mora, who coordinates the indirect US-Iran talks, visited Tehran last month for talks with Iranian officials, and later went to Washington. At the time, Mora said he hoped to close the gaps remaining in the arduous negotiations. - APP

PML-N fully capable of resolving energy crisis: Miftah Ismail

ISLAMABAD: PML-N leader Miftah Ismail on Monday said his government was fully capable of resolving energy crisis under the leadership of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif. Replying to the statement of Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI) leader and former federal minister Hammad Azhar, Ismail said the people would see a clear difference between the performances of his party and of the previous government. "No doubt we are faced with severe economic challenges but the PML-N is determined to revive the country's economy," he added. He said it was the government of Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PML-N) which installed modern in-expensive power plants, generated electricity from cheap coal and Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) and overcome loadshedding. During the last tenure of the PML-N, he said the electricity lines were laid down to improve the power transmission and distribution system. The project was aimed at reducing losses in the distribution and transmission of the power sector, which was unfortunately shut down by the government of PTI, he added. He regretted that the 'incompetent' government of PTI had halted all energy projects that eventually caused losses to the power sector. He expressed the confidence that the PML-N government would now again start working on the improvement of the electricity supply and distribution system. Miftah said PTI leaders had always lied to the nation that several power plants were operational in the country, adding that if there were sufficient plants already existed then why there was a power shortage and the country plunged into darkness. He said PTI should explain about installation of new 8000 megawatt power plants and energy projects under China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) during its tenure. - APP

Afghan Consul General for constituting Pak-Afghan Trade Facilitation Committee



FROM OUR CORRESPONDENT

PESHAWAR: Consul General of Taliban government in Peshawar, Hafiz Mohib Ullah has agreed on constitution of Pak-Afghan Trade Facilitation Committee, removal of obstacle in visas issuance and resolution of

problem hampering bilateral trade. This agreement reached during meeting of Afghan Consul General with Vice President of Pak-Afghan Joint Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PAJCCI), Zia-ul-Haq Sarhadi. According to a press statement issued here on Monday, Zia-ul-Haq Sarhadi who is also former Senior

Vice President of Sarhad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI) called on Afghan diplomat and apprised him about problems being faced by businessmen, exporters and dealers of Afghan Transit Trade. On this occasion, Commercial Attache, Waheedullah Himat, Deputy Attache, Hameedullah Fazil, Transport Attache, Ismail Shinwari and other officials were also present. Zia ul Haq Sarhadi after discussing the problems faced by businessmen also presented some suggestions for solutions to it, the statement added. He laid stress on joint efforts from both sides in issues including lack of dollars in Afghan banks, documentation problems and other hurdles being faced in daily basis by trading communities of both the countries. He also mentioned some problems in Transit Trade Agreement (APT-TA) making the document as redundant. He said 90 percent work has been done on the agreement while 10 percent is remaining. Zia suggested for involving stake-

holders from both the countries for giving their input for making APT-TA operational. While paying tribute to Taliban government, Zia ul Haq Sarhadi said they took a lot measures which benefited businessmen of both the countries and by reducing toll collection rates promoted business. There is economic crisis in Afghanistan where banks are short of dollars as a result of which businessmen could not get Letter of Credit (LC) and other documents, Zia added. He opined that if the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) continues the facility of 'E' form for Exporter and 'I' Form for Importers which it provided till December 13, 2021 or allow barter trade till the time economic crisis in Afghanistan are over that will help a lot in resolution of problems of business community. VP PAJCCI also appreciated efforts made by Afghan Consul General in promotion of bilateral trade and held out assurance of full cooperation to him from businessmen.

Escalating tension on Pak Afghan border

SHAMIM SHAHID

Situation on Pak Afghan border at different places is still tense whereas personnel of security forces on both sides are on high alert and going for blind-shelling and firing against each other. Situation is very tense in North and South Waziristan, whereas the Afghan Taliban showing sever anger what they called Pakistan's bombing on Pakistani tribesmen camp at Khost. The latest situation from Angoor Ada South Waziristan reveals that Taliban have closed the Pak Afghan border for every sort of traffic, transportation, travelling and even local pedestrians. Even the Taliban now are constructing a wall just on zero-point. Similar is the situation in Ghulam Khan North Waziristan and Kharlachi Kurram. Though bilateral trade, travelling in these areas is in progress. Media reported cross firing in scattered areas between Kunar and Afghanistan. There are reports of cross firing in Arandu and several other points at Chitral. Ullah Mujahid, spokesman of Taliban government through tweet messages, states, "The Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan strongly condemns Pakistan's attacks on refugees in Khost and Kunar. IEA calls on the Pakistani side not to test the patience of Afghans on such issues and not repeat the same mistake again otherwise it will have bad consequences." He further states, "bombing their homes and raiding women and children. And on the dark night dragged the people into prison, and kept up to 15000 political prisoners. At present, none of the

above acts of inhumanity exist, but all legitimate human rights are guaranteed." The reports retrieved from inside Afghanistan that on Saturday morning, Pakistan allegedly fired artillery shells against different areas of Kunar province. At least 41 shells hit the civilian population at Naday district, 69 at Dangaam and 10 at Shultan. The artillery shells hit a house at Shultan, causing lives to five including a mother and four children. One baby girl was seriously injured. Head of the family was a poor vendor, and was present in Asadabad, provincial headquarters of Kunar. reports also reveal that Pakistani Taliban sheltering in Sarkani area of Kunar province along with Pak Afghan border, also fired rockets against the Pakistani security forces in Bajaur. Afghans from Sarkani confirmed that around 40 rockets fired in response to Pakistani troops' artillery shelling. However, Pakistani authorities didn't issue any statement or any confirmation of such shelling etc. The tribesmen and Afghan authorities informed that from 30 to 36 civilians including women and children were killed when Pakistan's jet fighters reportedly bombed Gulan IDP's camp in Khost. This camp was established in June 2014 when thousands of tribesmen from Shawal mountainous area of North Waziristan slipped into Khost Afghanistan after commencing military operation Zarbi-Azab on June 15th 2014 last. Pakistani authorities are justifying such military strikes in the wake of recent deadly violent acts, in scattered areas of North and South Waziristan. Soon after Pakistan's al-

leged air strikes inside Afghanistan, the Taliban high ups in Kabul summoned Pakistan's ambassador to foreign office and issued the following statement, "Pakistan's ambassador to Kabul has been summoned to the foreign ministry. The meeting was also attended by Foreign Minister Maulvi Amir Khan Mottaki and Deputy Minister of Defense Alhaj Mullah Shirin Akhund. The Afghan side condemned the recent attacks by Pakistani forces in Khost and Kunar and insisted on the prevention of recurrence. The pious man said; All military violations, including in Khost and kunar, must be prevented, and such incidents strain relations between the two neighboring countries, which could be exploited by malicious and biased circles in both countries and have dire consequences. Finally, a letter of protest was handed over to the Pakistani ambassador, which conveyed it to the superiors." Whatever might be claimed on the part of Taliban but common Afghans from all over the world have denounced it through social media. Almost all Afghans believe, "it was not a protest but an apologetic move on the part of Taliban before Pakistan's Ambassador." Whereas after over 24 hours, Ministry of Foreign Affairs through its Office of the Spokesperson issued the following Press Release, "In response to media queries regarding recent incidents along the Pakistan-Afghanistan border, the Spokesperson stated the following: 1. In the last few days, incidents along Pak-Afghan Border have significantly increased, wherein, Pakistani

security forces are being targeted from across the border. 2. Pakistan has repeatedly requested the Afghan Government in the last few months to secure Pak-Afghan border region. Terrorists are using Afghan soil with impunity to carry out activities inside Pakistan. 3. Pakistan and Afghanistan have been engaged for the past several months through institutional channels for effective coordination and security along our long shared border. Unfortunately, elements of banned terrorist groups in the border region, including TTP, have continued to attack Pakistan's border security posts, resulting into martyrdom of several Pakistani troops. On 14 April 2022 as well, 7 Pakistan Army Soldiers were martyred in North Waziristan District by terrorists operating from Afghanistan. 4. Pakistan, once again, strongly condemns terrorists operating with impunity from Afghan soil to carry out activities in Pakistan. This is detrimental to our efforts of maintaining peace and stability along Pak-Afghan Border. 5. Pakistan requests the sovereign Government of Afghanistan to secure Pak-Afghan Border region and take stern actions against the individuals involved in terrorist activities in Pakistan, in the interest of peace and progress of the two brotherly countries. 6. Pakistan also takes this opportunity to reaffirm respect for Afghanistan's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity. Pakistan will continue to work closely with the Afghan Government to strengthen bilateral relations in all fields.



ISLAMABAD: Central Secretary Information PPP Faisal Karim Kundi calls on Ambassador of Palestine, Ahmed Jawad Rabei. PPP leader expressed grave concern over recent violence in Palestine on behalf of party leaders Bilawal Bhutto and Asif Ali Zardari. - DNA

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11# Block 18-A, Awan Plaza,
G-8 Markez, Islamabad-Pakistan
Ph: 051-2261960, 051-2266165

