



Islamabad POST

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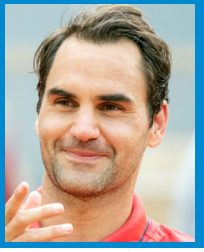
Detailed News On Page-08

EU must speed up W. Balkans accession

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Federer plans return in October 2022

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Four, including 3 Chinese nationals killed in KU blast

The explosion occurred at 1:52pm in a van near the Confucius Institute – a Chinese language teaching centre at Karachi University; PM, Interior Minister condemn blast



NAZIR SIYAL / DNA

KARACHI: Four people, including three Chinese nationals, were killed while several others sustained injuries in a car explosion on the premises of the University of Karachi. The explosion occurred at 1:52pm in a van near the Confucius Institute – a Chinese language teaching centre at Karachi University. Following the blast, rescue and security agencies

rushed to the location and cordoned off the areas, initiating rescue operations. The deceased Chinese nationals have been identified as the director of the Confucius Institute Huang Guiping, Ding Mupeng, Chen Sai, and their Pakistani driver, Khalid. Police sources said that there were seven to eight people in the van; however, an exact number of casualties is yet to be determined.

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Pak condemns terrorist attack

ANSAR BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan on Tuesday condemned the attack in Karachi. In a statement the Ministry of Foreign Affairs said, 'We strongly condemn the reprehensible terrorist attack in Karachi which claimed innocent lives, including those of Chinese nationals working at the Confucius Institute. The Government and people of Pakistan extend their deepest condolences and sympathies to the families of victims who lost their lives in the incident'. The statement further said, 'The law enforcement agencies are investigating the incident to apprehend the culprits and bring them to justice. Local authorities are also providing all possible assistance to the injured. The cowardly incident is a direct attack on the Pakistan-China friendship and ongoing cooperation. Pakistan and China are close friends and iron-brothers.'

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ISLAMABAD: UAE Ambassador to Pakistan Hamad Obaid Ibrahim Al-Zaabi, calls on Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, Hina Rabbani Khar. – DNA

End load-shedding by May 1; PM orders

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Tuesday, in a big move to facilitate the general public, announced an end to load-shedding of electricity across the country from May 1 and onwards. The prime minister, also famed as 'Shehbaz Speed' for his efficiency to deliver at a fast pace, declared that the government had operationalized 20 out of 27 major power producers, which were shut down for a year. Chairing a high-level meeting to devise a policy to address the shortage of electricity, PM Sharif said the step was an 'Eid gift' for the public who had been suffering frequent power outages in summers. The prime minister directed the authorities concerned to resolve all the issues pertaining to load-shedding by April 30 so as to ensure a smooth and uninterrupted power supply to consumers. He stressed establishing an integrated and sustainable fuel system to meet the requirements of power generation and also a plan keeping in view the hot season in particular. PM Shehbaz called for a long-term effective plan to eliminate the loss of feeders of the power distribution companies.

Two soldiers martyred

DNA

SARAROGHA: Two soldiers were martyred after terrorists attacked security forces in the Sararogha area of South Waziristan District. According to the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR), the Pakistani troops had promptly

Continued on Page 06

PM visits Chinese Embassy; vows to hunt down culprits

The PM met Chinese Charge'd Affaires and sympathized with the govt and the people of China



STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif Tuesday visited the Chinese Embassy here and conveyed his condolence over the death of Chinese nationals in a blast that took place in Karachi earlier in the afternoon. The prime minister met Chinese Charge'd Affaires Pang Chunxue and sympathized with the government and the people of China as well as the bereaved families.

The prime minister, who was accompanied by Interior Minister Rana Sanaullah, Planning Minister Ahsan Iqbal and Information Minister Marriyum Aurangzeb, assured a swift probe into the tragedy to take the culprits to task. "I want to assure you on my behalf, on behalf of the Government of Pakistan and the people of Pakistan, that we will hunt down the perpetrators, culprits, killers. We will not rest until

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'Imran should submit his replies in ECP'

SHUJAAT HAMZA

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Information and Broadcasting Marriyum Aurangzeb said on Tuesday that Pakistan Tehreek-Insaf leadership should reply questions regarding prohibited foreign funding case. In her reaction to Chaudhry Fawad's statement, she said that Imran Khan abused and threatened to anyone who asked any question. She alleged that Imran Khan wanted that everyone should believe in his lies and he should not be held accountable for corruption. "They want questions of their own choice and answers of their own wish," she said while taking a dig on PTI. "Imran wants

match of his choice, umpire and players of his choice where decisions are made on his will," she remarked. Imran Khan wanted judges of his choice, lawyers of his choice and verdicts of his will, she said. The minister while denouncing the PTI chairman, said that Imran did not believe in the constitution or law, as he considered himself as the Constitution.

Continued on Page 06

Briefs

Bilawal to take oath today

DNA

KARACHI: PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari announced Tuesday he will be taking oath as a federal minister tomorrow, and is likely to be appointed as the foreign minister. Bilawal made the announcement in a press conference after a meeting of the PPP's Central Executive Committee (CEC) after Adviser to the Prime Minister on Kashmir Affairs and Gilgit-Baltistan Qamar Zaman Kaira said last week his party chairman would take oath within two days. Bilawal was present at the time when the initial federal cabinet members took oath, however, he did not take the oath. But Information Minister Marriyum Aurangzeb had assured that the PPP chairman would take the oath after he returns to Pakistan.

Will continue sit-in till elections: Imran

SHAMIM SHAHID

PESHAWAR: PTI Chairman and former prime minister Imran Khan on Tuesday once again called upon the nation to get ready for his call to launch a long march on Islamabad, saying that the "decisive moment" in the history of the country had arrived. "The entire nation will have to take to the streets for the future of their children and for the freedom of the country," he said while addressing the party lawmakers in Peshawar. While reiterating allegation that a 'foreign conspiracy' was behind his ouster from power,

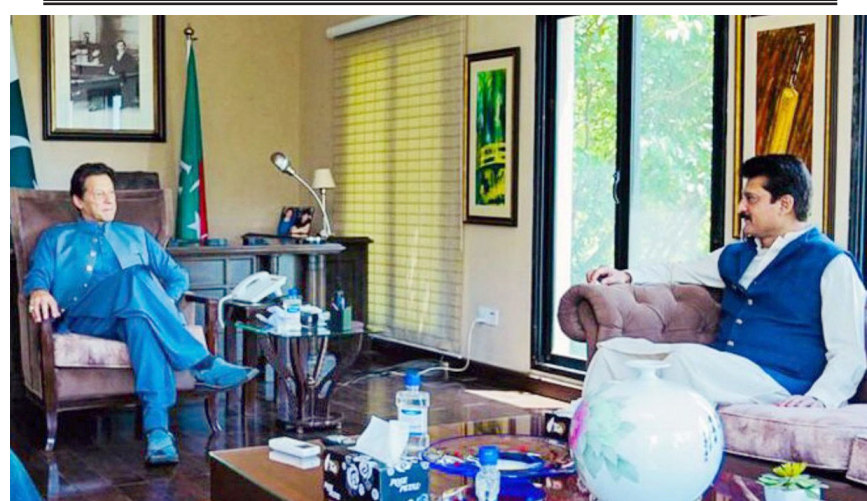
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Elections not possible before 2023: ECP

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) on Tuesday indicated that holding general elections may not be possible before May 2023 as it outlined the timeline of processes – including the census and delimitation – that it said must be conducted before the country can go to polls. In a press release issued by

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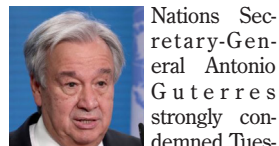


ISLAMABAD: Leader of the Opposition Senator Shahzad Waseem called on Chairman PTI Imran Khan. – DNA

UN chief condemns Karachi attack

FOREIGN DESK

UNITED NATIONS: United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres strongly condemned Tuesday's terrorist attack in Karachi in which four persons were killed, including three Chinese nationals. In a statement read out by UN Deputy Spokesman Farhan Aziz Haq at the regular noon briefing in New York, Guterres, who is in Moscow, expressed his condolences to the families and wished those injured a quick recovery. The UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator in Pakistan, Julien Harneis, also strongly condemned Tuesday's attack in the Karachi University, saying he was "deeply saddened" by the resulting loss of life.



UN Chief urges Russia to halt civilian attacks

Guterres stressed the need for immediate humanitarian corridors to get civilians out of besieged cities like the port of Mariupol, and get food, medicine and other basic goods in

NEWS DESK

MOSCOW: After failing to convince Russian President Vladimir Putin to halt his war in Ukraine by sending an emissary, U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres was in Moscow on Tuesday to meet Putin in person. The U.N. chief arrived in Moscow after visiting Ankara, Turkey, where the government has been leading the push for a ceasefire. In his first formal meeting in Moscow on Tuesday, Guterres sat across from Russia's Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov and said he remained "extremely interested in finding ways in order to create the conditions for effective dialogue, create the conditions for a ceasefire as soon as possible." But after his "very frank discussion" with Lavrov, Guterres told reporters it was "clear that there are two different positions on what is happening in Ukraine," suggesting the Russian diplomat had given him little to fuel hope of any imminent step back from hostilities. Guterres was to meet Putin later Tuesday and then later in the week, travel from Moscow to Kyiv to meet Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, who blasted the U.N. chief's decision to visit Moscow first as Russia's bombardment of Ukrainian cities continues. The U.N. chief acknowledged the global body's inability to effect any change at all on the ground in Ukraine, and said he was "concerned about the repeated reports of violations of international humanitarian and human rights law and possible war crimes," reiterating his call for

Tensions surge after Moldova blasts

CHISINAU: Moldova's president said a series of attacks in the Russia-backed breakaway region of Transnistria on Tuesday were an attempt by factions within the territory to increase tensions, and the Kremlin voiced serious concern. She spoke after Moldova's Security Council held an urgent meeting prompted by two blasts which damaged masts that broadcast Russian radio in the region, where authorities said a military unit was also targeted. The Moldovan authorities are sensitive to any sign of worsening security in Transnistria, an unrecognized Moscow-backed sliver of land bordering southwestern Ukraine, especially since Russia invaded Ukraine. "From the information we have at this moment, these escalation attempts stem from factions from within the Transnistrian region who are pro-war forces and interested in destabilising the situation in the region," President Maia Sandu told a news conference. She said the security council had recommended improving

Continued on Page 06

an "independent investigation for effective accountability." Guterres stressed the need for immediate humanitarian corridors to get civilians out of besieged cities like the port of Mariupol, and get food, medicine and other basic goods in "To that end, I have proposed the establishment of a Humanitarian Contact Group, bringing together the Russian Federation, Ukraine and the United Nations, to look for opportunities for the opening of safe corridors, with local cessations of hostilities, and to guarantee that they are actually effective," he told reporters after the meeting with Lavrov, calling the dire circumstances in Mariupol "a crisis within a crisis." Lavrov said Russia was "ready to cooperate with our colleagues from the U.N. to alleviate the plight of the civilian population" in Ukraine. Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov and U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres speak to journalists during a news conference in Moscow, Russia, April 26, 2022. Over the weekend, Zelenskyy said it was "simply wrong" for Guterres to visit Russia before Ukraine, telling reporters "there is no justice and no logic in this order." "The war is in Ukraine, there are no bodies in the streets of Moscow. It would be logical to go first to Ukraine, to see the people there, the consequences of the occupation," he said. The deputy head of Zelenskyy's office, Igor Zhovkva, said Sunday on "Meet the Press" that the Secretary-General was "not really" authorized to speak on behalf of the Ukrainian government. The merits of Guterres' itinerary will likely be judged on Putin's response to the Secretary-General's request for an immediate ceasefire in Ukraine.

PM Shebaz speaks with Bill Gates

NEWS DESK

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif Tuesday spoke on the telephone with Co-Chair of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF) Bill Gates and reiterated his government's commitment to eradicate all forms of polio from the country. The telephonic interaction came after Pakistan recently reported a polio case in a child in North Waziristan, after a hiatus of 15 months. While noting that only one case of polio was recorded in 2021, the prime minister stressed that his government remained committed to eradicating all forms of polio from the country. He expressed grave concern on the first case of polio virus in 2022, after 15 months, which was recently confirmed in a child in North Waziristan. He noted that a special emergency response plan for South Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa province was already under implementation to scale up and improve the quality of the polio eradication programme and increase security of front line health workers. During the telephonic conversation, the ongoing public health and social sector programmes supported by BMGF in Pakistan were discussed, including polio eradication and the Foundation's support towards improving immunisation, nutrition and financial inclusion services in Pakistan. The prime minister underscored that Pakistan deeply valued its co-operation with BMGF. He reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to further solidifying its fruitful partnership with the Foundation in all the ongoing areas of work. Pakistan has maintained progress towards polio eradication and appreciated the invaluable assistance provided by BMGF in that regard, he added.



PESHAWAR: Chairman Pakistan Tahrik-e-Insaf Imran Khan addressing party leaders and parliamentarians. - DNA

Operation Al-Badr South Punjab has been launched

For the success of the operation, the police liaison and information system of all the districts of South Punjab has been made very effective

SAQIB MUSHTAQ

LODHARAN: In order to curb the rising crime rate in South Punjab, Operation Al-Badr has been launched to crack down on 10,000 criminals. And police of 210 police stations were mobilized to take action against those involved in the robbery. This is the biggest operation against criminals in the history of Punjab Police. In Multan 4000, Bahawalpur region 3500 and 2500 persons have been identified in Dera Ghazi Khan region Operation Al-Badr also includes Special Branch CTD and CIA (criminal investigation authority). For the success of the opera-



tion, the police will continue to have the support of sensitive agencies. For the success of the operation, the police liaison and information system of all the districts of South Punjab has been made very effective. For this purpose, a central control room has been set up in the office of Additional Inspector General of Police, South Punjab. An order has been issued to curb illegal activities and tighten surveillance at inter-provincial borders. In an exclusive interview with Islamabad Post, Additional Inspector General of Police South Punjab Dr Ehsan Sadiq said that the day is not far when South Punjab will become the cradle of complete peace.

78 profiteers arrested

PESHAWAR: District administration Peshawar during crackdown against profiteering arrested 78 shopkeepers from various localities of the provincial capital on Tuesday. A mega crackdown under the supervision of Divisional Commissioner, Riaz Khan Mehsud was in progress against profiteers in district Peshawar. In this connection, the officers of the district administration conducted raids in the bazaars of various localities and collectively arrested 78 shopkeepers for profiteering. - APP

KPFA confiscates unwholesome meat

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Food Authority Tuesday raided outlets of two international fast food chains in Abbottabad and confiscated unwholesome meat and substandard cooking oil. A Food Authority team led by Assistant Director Dr. Rukhsar Ali and assistant commissioner also inspected various eateries, including two restaurants, and confiscated substandard cooking oil and adulterated tomato ketchup. The team also sealed refrigerators and freezers of the food outlets. - APP

CM to launch 'Rescue 1122' helpline

KARACHI, Apr 26 (APP): Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah shaping up development portfolio for next financial year, 2022-23 has decided to launch Rescue Helpline '1122' with a fleet of fire tenders and ambulances to meet any untoward incidents. - APP

Mehbooba pins hopes on ISC to undo Modi's illegal actions

DNA

SRINAGAR: People's Democratic Party (PDP) chief, Mehbooba Mufti, has said that she hopes the Indian Supreme Court will not only stay the scrapping of special status of Indian illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir but also reverse all laws extended to the territory after the 5 August 2019 actions. Mehbooba Mufti, in a tweet said IIOJK was robbed of its legal and constitutional special status, divided into two union territories and disempowered. "Yet it took SC (Supreme Court) 3



years to list the case. Hope the Hon'ble court stays not only revocation of Article 370 but also reverses all the illegal laws brought in," she said. Mehbooba Mufti's reaction came against the backdrop of the Indian SC agreeing to list after the summer vacation a bunch of petitions challenging the repeal of special status of IIOJK and its division into two union territories. On August 5, 2019, the Modi-led government illegally scrapped provisions of Article 370 of the Indian Constitution and split the territory into two union territories - Jammu and Kashmir, and Ladakh.

'Imran made my life difficult for going after Arif Naqvi'

DNA

LAHORE: Bashir Memon, the former director-general of the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA), has claimed that former prime minister Imran Khan made his "life difficult" after he started probing Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) financier Arif Naqvi. Memon made these revelations in an exclusive interview with a private television channel Tuesday. The former FIA chief said that Naqvi-owned Abraaj Group has a controlling stake in Karachi's largest power utility, KElectric (KE). He said that the utility used to delay payments to the Sui Southern Gas Corporation (SSGC) on one pretext or another. With KE a major consumer and lack of payments causing problems for the gas utility, the latter would cut-off gas supply. In turn, KE would start shutting down power across Karachi. Memon claimed that this tactic helped create unrest in the city and prompt both, the federal and Sindh governments, to get involved. The matter would be resolved after KE would make a partial payment and the gas supply would resume. However, all this ended up doing was increasing the payables which KE owed SSGC to around Rs87 billion. The issue finally drew the FIA's attention and Memon launched a probe. The former prime minister told me many times that you have destroyed Arif Naqvi, Memon said. "I told him that the person whose money is stuck should be worried and the person who is not paying the due amount should be ashamed but you are making our lives difficult. What is our fault? We neither took anyone's money nor we going to receive it," the former FIA director-general said.



Memon said he told the former prime minister that SSGC, which is supposed to receive money from Naqvi's company, is a government entity while this [KE] is a private entity that owes them millions. This, Memon claimed, only further angered Imran who instead chose to chastise the investigator. "That's when he told me that Naqvi had financed the PTI during the elections. Now, the Election Commission's investigation has shown that PTI received \$2.1 million [from Naqvi]." When Naqvi was arrested at Heathrow Airport, London, he gave two names and numbers, of our former prime minister and President Arif Alvi, claimed Memon. When I learnt that the Shanghai Corporation was considering the acquisition of KE, I wrote to the Security Exchange Commission of Pakistan (SECP) asking them to make sure if they [Abraaj Group] have mentioned these Rs87 billion as a liability in their balance sheet or who will pay this, the former FIA chief stated. Memon said that the KE and SSGC pending payments were one of the biggest cases which he had investigated in his life. "I would have recovered the money had I been given free-hand [to investigate]," he added.

Three PTI leaders arrested

ISLAMABAD: Three leaders of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), including two members of the National Assembly (MNAs), were arrested after the Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Tuesday cancelled their interim bail in the Sindh House attack case. IHC's Justice Tariq Mehmood Jahangiri announced the decision on the interim bail petitions filed by PTI Youth Wing's leader Ray Tanveer, and MNAs Faheem Khan and Attallah. The petitioners' lawyer adopted the stance that his clients wanted to go to the Sindh House but they were stopped forcibly. The case registered against them was baseless. The state counsel, however, apprised the court that the accused along with their followers attacked the Sindh House and damaged its building. The police said they wanted to arrest the accused for more investigation. After listening arguments from both sides, the court dismissed the interim bails of the accused, who were arrested from outside the courtroom. - APP

Ahsan Iqbal calls Imran Khan an 'anarchist'

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Planning Ahsan Iqbal on Tuesday accused former prime minister Imran Khan of attacking state institutions and the Constitution to exact revenge for his democratic ouster from office, adding that attacks on the top electoral body were aimed at influencing its decision on the foreign funding case. Addressing the media in Islamabad on Tuesday morning, Iqbal claimed that Imran Khan ruled the country for a quarter to 4 years with an iron fist. Repeatedly referring to the former prime minister with his family name 'Niazi', Iqbal said that not even dictators had as much power and facilities to rule as Imran Khan had. The federal minister went on to explain how Imran combined numbers in the lower and upper houses of parliament to bulldoze several laws during his tenure. "But in the past four years, Imran used his negative and sadist approach to destroy the country's economy, foreign policy, international standing, put relations

with economic stakeholders under great strain," he said, adding that Imran also soured relations with US, China and Europe. "He carried a begging bowl, hoping for a phone call from the US president." Referring to the foreign funding case, Iqbal stated that those who had funded Imran Khan from abroad had helped destroy every sector in Pakistan. "Now you dare to question us about the state of the economy after taking power just four days ago?" he asked. Promising to clear the country of thorns and let the flowers bloom again, Iqbal said that the previous government had allowed the Rs16 billion metro bus extension project to rot away for four years. "The Imran Khan government had no care for the troubles of the common man," the planning minister said, adding that the government led by Shehbaz Sharif revived and started the project in just five days. Expanding further on the foreign funding case, Iqbal accused Imran of blackmailing the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) through a series of threats.

Pakistan, Japan agree to enhance co-op in IT

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan and Japan on Tuesday agreed to enhance bilateral cooperation in the field of information technology between the two countries. Talking to Ambassador of Japan to Pakistan Mitsuhiro WADA, Federal Minister for IT Syed Amin Ul Haque said Pakistan greatly values its relations with Japan. The minister said that it is vital to enhance cooperation between the two countries in the field of IT and telecommunication. Syed Amin Ul Haque said that Pakistan has great potential in the field of IT and Japan can benefit from expertise of Pakistani IT professionals. Japanese IT companies can hire the services of Pakistani IT experts, he added. He said that Ministry of IT & Telecom would extend every possible cooperation to facilitate Japanese companies. Ambassador of Japan said Pakistani youth were able and talented and Pakistan's IT experts can be beneficial for Japan. He also lauded the steps of Ministry of IT & Telecom for the uplift of IT and telecom sector Senior officers of the Ministry of IT were also present in the meeting.



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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



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Marriott.....	051-2826121
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Airlines

Turkish Airlines.....	8494949
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Rawal Town.....	5773343

Water Tank

Islamabad.....	0321-5744480
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ISLAMABAD: Former State Minister for Information Farrukh Habib and Ali Nawaz Awan talking to media on the occasion of a protest in front of the office of the Election Commission of Pakistan, on Tuesday. – DNA

Use of AI stressed for Socio economic development

The Covid pandemic has shown us how digital technologies and AI-based models have addressed public health management challenges. Likewise, AI can play a substantive role in achieving 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Arms Control & Disarmament Centre (ACDC) at the Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI) hosted a Webtalk on "Artificial Intelligence for Socio Economic Development in Pakistan" by Dr Yasar Ayaz, Chairman, National Centre of Artificial Intelligence (NCAI), NUST on April 26, 2022. In his welcome remarks, Ambassador Aizaz Ahmad Chaudhry, Director-General ISSI said that AI is a dual-use technology. It can be used for socio-economic development as well as for military purposes. Earlier in his introductory remarks, Malik Qasim Mustafa, Director ACDC, said that AI is widely accepted as the major driving force of the fourth Industrial Revolution. The COVID-19 pandemic has shown us how digital technologies and AI-based models have



addressed public health management challenges. Likewise, AI can play a substantive role in achieving 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It is high time for Pakistan to harness AI for its socio-economic development. "AI is a new electricity," Dr Yasar

Ayaz said this in his webtalk. He highlighted the achievements and ongoing efforts of various research labs in the field of healthcare, medical image analysis, disaster management, Urdu speech recognition, crowd management, vehicle recognition system, firearm

detection system, and advanced driver and training assessment system. While talking about the access of developing countries to these technologies, he said that in terms of AI infrastructure, the developed world is leading the race. However, the developing states

are actively contributing their part in software development.

While expressing his views on the importance of data for AI, Dr Munam Ali Shah, Associate Professor Department of Computer Science, COMSATS, Islamabad, said that AI systems in every field rely heavily on big data and data analytics. There is a need to develop a data management system at the national level for efficient and intelligent use of data.

The presentations were followed by an interactive question and answer session.

In his concluding remarks, Ambassador Khalid Mahmood, Chairman BoG ISSI, stated that AI is a double edge sword. It could be used for military purposes and accelerates the progress toward socio-economic development. He also highlighted the key concerns like human-machine interaction, protection of human rights and the global digital divide.

AIOU inaugurates 'Students Facilitation Centre'

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) yesterday inaugurated a 'Student Facilitation Centre' at its Regional Campus Islamabad in order to facilitate the students. With the establishment of this center, students will be able to solve their problems including sending assignments and admissions at one platform. Inaugurating the Centre, Director General Regional Services Dr. Malik Tauqeer Ahmed Khan said that the establishment of Student Facilitation Center in Islamabad Region is an important step. The other regional offices have also their facilitation centres which only need to be activated. He said that there is also need to improve student services in 54 regional offices of the university. Dr. Tauqeer Ahmed said that steps are being taken for adopting automation and computerization system. Allama Iqbal Open University is the largest

university in Pakistan where a large number of female teachers were hired as tutors. He said that this is the age of media and digital world, we need to prepare ourselves according to the requirements of modern age. He further added that the students who could not pay their fees, they would not be deprived of education. In that regard, AIOU's Islamabad region was awarding up to five lakh fee waiver to needy students, however, free education is also being provided to the inmates of jails. He said that they are performing their national service. As per AIOU's manifesto, by using the latest technologies, the students will be facilitated at their door step. Regional Director Ahsan Shakur said that we will train the students so that they can send admissions on their own computer, find a tutor, improve the services and make it even better. He said that live Facebook sessions are also being conducted with the students in which the problems and questions of the students are being answered.

PNCA to resume music classes after Ramadan

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan National Council of Arts (PNCA) would resume music classes after the month of Ramadan as many students got themselves registered in these courses. Talking to APP, official of PNCA Masroor Shah said these courses aimed at exploring and polish hidden talent of artistic souls of the young generation. The new session of Pakistan National Council of the Arts under the supervision of professional musicians and artists. Various classes including singing, tabla, painting, guitar, violin, rubab, keyboard, piano, flute, sitar, acting, and dance would be resumed after Ramadan. – APP

GDA awards contract for development of I-12

ISLAMABAD: The Capital Development Authority (CDA) has approved lowest bid worth Rs 542 billion for the development of two sub-sectors of I-12 that were facing an inordinate delay for the past. The development work included construction of streets, a drainage system and the sewerage network in sub-sectors I-12/2 and I-12/3, a CDA spokesman said on Tuesday. The federal apex agency, he said was paying special focus on the city's development "Once I-12 fully developed, it will be a major contributor to affordable housing in Islamabad," he added. According to a senior official of the authority during past it had awarded contracts for construction of major and service roads in the sector but both the contracts could not be completed due to some unknown reasons. In 2020, the CDA approved PC-1 worth Rs 8.21 billion for the development of the sector, including complete infrastructure development, electrical and mechanical works and provision of amenities and other services. According to the PC-1, the sector was to be fully developed by 2023. The I-12 sector was launched decades ago and has over 6,000 plots. However, no serious attempt was made for the development of the sector. Besides other challenges, the under-developed sector was also being used as a dumping site for many years. – DNA

Khawaja Asif assumes charge as Defence Minister

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Member National Assembly (MNA) Khawaja Muhammad Asif on Tuesday assumed charge as Minister for Defence. He was received by Secretary Defence, Lieutenant General (R) Mian Muhammad Hilal Hussain here at the Ministry of Defence, said a news release. Defence Minister held introductory meeting with the senior Officers of the Ministry. He was also briefed about the role and functions of Ministry and its allied Organization, in detail. Speaking on the occasion, Khawaja Asif said: "We are proud of our Armed Forces and the government would provide maximum support to enhance their capabilities and professionalism". He assured that the government would provide resources and equipments, in order to make defence of the country impregnable. He stated that National Defence of the country would be strengthened as it is confronting enormous internal and external challenges.

Campaign against underage drivers in full swing

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Traffic Police (ITP) campaign against underage drivers was in full swing as several motorists got fine tickets and some impounded to various police stations. The ITP had launched a special traffic education and enforcement campaign this month to educate the masses on traffic laws, said police spokesman on Tuesday. The deputy superintendent of police under the supervision of senior superintendent of police (traffic) Rai Mazhar Iqbal was ensuring strict action against the violators in all traffic zones. Similarly, the police had formed special squads to ensure smooth flow of traffic at various major highways and squares of Islamabad during peak hours in Ramadan. The ITP education wing teams were also present on important roads to give safety tips to road users. The SSP traffic has appealed the parents to demonstrate responsibility by not allowing their young children to ride the bike or car to avoid accidents. He added that the purpose of operation was aimed at protecting precious lives. – APP

Netizens laud issuing tickets to university buses

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Traffic Police received hundreds of additional complaints as well as compliments from netizens when it posted on its official social media page about issuing challan ticket to a university bus for speeding. "Islamabad Traffic Police (ITP) took immediate action on the complaints received from citizens against university buses for speeding. The ITP issued challan tickets to the respective buses and asked the university administration to counsel the drivers. In this regard, services of the ITP Education Wing can be obtained," the Police wrote on its official Facebook page. The post attracted the attention of thousands of social media users who appreciated the move besides complaining about the buses of other universities and institutions. Mehran Khan noted in his comment that buses of all the universities violated the traffic rules. They pose serious threats to other commuters by running beyond the speed limit and wrong overtaking. Similarly, Muhammad Khan Mahsud, said: "Unfortunately, university buses generally do not comply with traffic laws, which creates problems for normal traffic, and speeding is their hobby. In my opinion, the traffic police as well as the university administration should take notice." – APP

ICCI demands single digit GST in upcoming budget

Muhammad Shakeel Munir said that the sales tax rate was 5 percent in UAE, Oman & Taiwan, 7 percent in Singapore, 8 percent in Iran & Sri Lanka as compared to 17 percent in Pakistan, which should be brought down to less than 10 percent in order to facilitate the growth of trade and industrial activities and reduce inflation for the general public

STAFF REPORT / DNA

ISLAMABAD: Muhammad Shakeel Munir, President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry (ICCI) said that the 17 percent General Sales Tax (GST) in Pakistan was quite high as compared to many other countries, which was a major cause of high inflation and high cost of doing business. He called upon the government to introduce a single digit GST in Pakistan in the upcoming budget that would bring down the production cost, provide good relief to the common man in prices and facilitate the better growth of business activities. He said this while addressing an Iftar Dinner hosted by renowned businessman Iqbal Butt. Baser Daud former President, Muhammad Naveed Malik former Senior Vice President ICCI, Mustafa Malik, Zeeshan Sadiq, Nadar Khan and others were present at the occasion. Muhammad Shakeel Munir said that the sales tax rate was 5 percent in UAE, Oman & Taiwan, 7 percent in Singapore,



8 percent in Iran & Sri Lanka as compared to 17 percent in Pakistan, which should be brought down to less than 10 percent in order to facilitate the growth of trade and industrial activities and reduce inflation for the general public. He said that high tax rates in Pakistan were a major hurdle in promoting tax culture and bringing more people into the tax net as high tax rates always encouraged tax evasion. He stressed that the government should focus on rationalization of taxes to make them affordable for taxpayers that would be helpful in promoting tax compliance and enhancing tax revenue of the country. ICCI President said that the current tax system was quite complicated and difficult, which was not conducive to promote business activities. He urged that the government should develop a simplified tax system that should facilitate the growth of business and investment activities besides increasing the tax revenue. He said the number of taxes should also be minimized to ease the problems of taxpayers.

Briefs

Lok Virsa
Eid Bazaar
attracting
people

ISLAMABAD: National Institute of Folk and Traditional Heritage LokVirsa 'Eid Bazaar' attracting a large number of people specially young girls who come to buy different items including chunri, traditional paranday, khussay, jewellery, hand-made embroidery, mehndi, traditional bangles adding colors to festivities. Talking to APP, LokVirsa official AnwarulHaq said that from bangle makers to henna artists, the Eid Bazaar included almost everything people look for ahead of Eid. The festival has brought female glass bangle makers from famous districts, has set up art and craft bazaar, garments and henna stalls, artisans' displays and other attractions. He also told that fun lovers including youngsters termed the festival an excellent recreation and shopping opportunity. He said that the overall ambience of the festival was different from typical shopping centers. The event will continue till Chand Raat. Eid shopping is at its peak as women are seen visiting shops to buy various items ranging from clothes to bangles. - APP

Sports goods
exports
increased
35.23%

ISLAMABAD: The export of sports goods from the country witnessed an increase of 35.23 percent during the first three quarters of fiscal year (2021-22) as compared to the export of corresponding quarters of last year (2020-21). The country exported sports goods worth \$259.851 million during July-March (2021-22) as compared to the export of \$192.160 million during July-March (2020-21), showing growth of 35.23 percent, according to the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS). Among the sports products, the exports of footballs also increased by 40.33 percent as it surge from \$94.730 million last year to \$132.936 million during the current year. The gloves exports rose by 16.36 percent by going up from US \$48.731 million last year to US \$56.702 million during the current year, the PBS data revealed. Likewise, the exports of all other sports goods also increased by 44.18 percent from \$48.699 million last year to US \$70.213 million during the current year. Meanwhile, year-on-year basis the sports goods' export witnessed an increase of 21.74 percent in March 2022 as compared with the export of the same month of last year. The sport goods exports in March 2022 were recorded at \$31.451 million against exports of \$23.693 million in March 2021. During the period under review, the footballs and gloves exports also increased by 61.63 and 8.17 percent respectively whereas the exports of all other sports products increased by 4.15 percent. - APP

Air quality
monitoring
improves in
capital with
latest gadgets

ISLAMABAD: The air quality monitoring in the federal capital has improved after induction of the modern gadgets in the pollution gauging equipment of the Pakistan Environmental Protection Agency (Pak-EPA). The International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD) has handed over specialised equipment known as Environmental Dust Monitor to the Pak-EPA that can monitor very fine particles suspended in the air injurious to human health, an official of the environmental watchdog told APP while elaborating the details of the latest equipment. He said that the air quality of the federal capital on Tuesday was reported consistently healthy since the past week as the ratio of air pollutants was recorded below the permissible limits in the atmosphere due to reduced vehicular traffic in peak hours. - APP

Educating Afghans vital for
positive image of Pakistan

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Educating Afghan children was extremely important to send out a positive image of Pakistan across the world, said Ms. Fajer Rabia Pasha, Executive Director, Pakistan Alliance for Girls Education (PAGE). She was delivering a talk at a session titled 'Challenges & Responses in the Field of Education: A Tale of Pak-Afghan Post-War Societies'. The session was jointly organized by the Pak-Afghan Youth Forum (PAYF) and the Institute of Regional Studies (IRS) under the former institute's series titled 'Stories We Live By'.

Reflecting on her personal experiences as a student and as an activist, Ms Pasha narrated how her years in England triggered her passion to set up her first learning center in order to facilitate women, in order to improve their livelihoods. Economic empowerment, education incentives, settlement of post-marriage issues were at the core of the interventions among others that her institute worked upon, she added. In 2013, Ms Pasha moved back to Pakistan. Her intent, she added was to lay the foundation for a conducive learning environment for girls, in particular. Whether it was in the realm of politics, social justice or merely at the core of human exist-

ence, Ms Fajer observed, educating girls was imperative to move toward a sustainable future. She said that PAGE had been working with the Afghan refugees since 2015. As a developing country, though Pakistan lacked the resources to attend to the vulnerable groups but the responsibility to engage with them rested with us as their host country. She explained her experience when PAGE set up the first school for refugees. She said that the refugee community took ample time to decide on sending their children to school. Ms Fajer highlighted that despite the intent to expand PAGE's initiatives in cities such as Lakki Marwat, which was underway, certain indigenous factors still had

the potential of serving as bottlenecks in conservative societies. Describing the challenges associated with the Afghan students, Ms Pasha said that poverty lied at the heart of the alarmingly low enrolment rate of young Afghan girls and boys attending school. This was the case as most of the student lot was working as fruit/vegetable vendors to support their families. She added that cultural values were also an important determinant. Assuring families, that the cultural and familial values in their children will remain unchanged was hence, a major priority in all of the initiatives designed by PAGE. Additionally, awareness on the significance and

long-term impacts of educated girls was a notable part of PAGE strategy. She further said that it was imperative to introduce capacity-building trainings for the teaching staff in order to bring them to terms with the kind of progressive mind-set that was imperative to liberate young Afghan girls and that PAGE was seriously focused on addressing the issue. Ms Pasha added that the refugees stationed in Pakistan at present were being taught Afghan curriculum and were tested via Afghan Board. In that, she said that it was imperative to accept them as our own children if the larger aim was to put out a positive message regarding Pakistan.

Hurriyat
leaders
hailed for
forging
greater unity
under APHC
banner

ISLAMABAD: The All Parties Hurriyat Conference General Secretary, Molvi Bashir Ahmad Irfani has hailed Hurriyat leaders for expressing resolve to work under the banner of APHC to resist fascist Indian government's brutal repression and strive for achieving the UN-recognized right to self-determination from the APHC's single platform. According to Kashmir Media Service, he maintained that forging greater unity to get rid of Indian illegal occupation was the need of the hour. He added that BJP-led Indian government not only wants to occupy the Kashmiris' land, but it also intends to destroy their identity, culture and brotherhood. The APHC leader said the only way to thwart New Delhi's nefarious designs is to stand together with the freedom struggle to secure people's lives, property, and Jammu and Kashmir's demographic character. He said that the APHC with the backing of all Hurriyat leaders and the people of the territory will not let go the struggle for their rights and freedom. - APP



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Qatar Sheikh Saoud Bin Abdulrahman Bin Faisal Al-Thani shaking hand with Speaker National Assembly Raja Pervaiz Ashraf at Parliament House. - DNA

IWGA to launch eGaming
project at 2022 World Games

ISLAMABAD: The International World Games Association (IWGA) will launch its eGaming project at the 2022 World Games in Birmingham, Alabama USA. Hagen Bosdorf, the IWGA TV and Marketing Coordinator, said it was a way to promote various sports. "The IWGA sees eGaming as a way to promote various sports of the World Games. We strive to reach a younger target audience. Based on this, the IWGA Board has approved our eGaming strategy through to 2025," the IWGA quoted Bosdorf as saying on its official website. He said eGaming was the digital, virtual version of a sport as known from FIFA or the NBA. "This is the area we want to promote and develop for The World Games. We are not focusing on eSports and its successful games. That is a different area and not one we want to promote." He said the core of the World Games Plaza in Birmingham, Alabama was

the Sports Garden, where different sports could showcase themselves. "Fans and visitors will be able to try the sports out for themselves there. In this area there will be an eGaming pavilion, where we will present virtual versions of archery, racquetball and softball," he added. According to Bosdorf the three federations WA Archery, WBCS Softball/Baseball and IRF Racquetball are able to offer digital versions of their sports. "So in the short time available, it is possible to start the IWGA eGaming project with these three examples." He said visitors could try these three sports in eGaming themselves. "We will also create a focus day with each of the international federations, where the World Games winners and medalists will also compete in virtual gaming. "We plan to crown the first virtual winner of the World Games in eRacquetball. The tournament will start online and worldwide, and will end

during the World Games. The other two sports will be less competitive. As mentioned, it's about promoting our sports," he added. Bosdorf said eGaming could not and should not replace real sport. "But it is a way to introduce younger people to new sports through gaming, to promote the World Games sports programme in advance of the event, and to connect with fans." He said every sports federation was dealing with the topic of eGaming, but the possibilities of visualization and digitization differed between sports. "The IOC and its federations are also pursuing a strategy of promoting eSports to some extent, but are focusing on the virtual variants of Olympic sports," he added. He said the IWGA was planning to develop and offer eGaming for fans and athletes in up to ten sports of the World Games during TWG 2025 in Chengdu, China.

Govt working to minimize
impact of inflation: Talal Ch

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) leader Talal Chaudhary on Tuesday said that present government under the leadership of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif was taking steps to minimize the impact of inflation on the common man. Talking to a private news channel, he said that within a few weeks the government

has announced a relief package for public in the holy month of Ramazan and reduced the prices of sugar and flour, adding that the policies of PTI regime not only had a devastating impact on the national economy, but also affected the common man. Pakistan Muslim League-N government believed in performance and better administration, he said, adding that people-friendly government was paying its full attention to reduce infla-

tion rate and taking solid steps in this regard. Incumbent government has a vision to make a common man prosper after adopting people-friendly policies, he mentioned. Replying to a question, he said that PML-N believed that the transparent elections were the only way forward to bring the political stability, adding that they are ready for general elections in the country, but only after electoral reforms.

Wheelbarrows
should be
removed from
the markets

The wheelbarrows were not removed before Eid then protests would be staged after Eid

DNA

ISLAMABAD: President of All Pakistan Anjuman-e-Tajir and Traders Action Committee Islamabad Ajmal Baloch, Secretary and Convener Traders Committee ICCI Khalid Chaudhry, President Traders Association G-10 Markaz Abid Abbasi, Secretary General Azhar Amin, President G-11 markaz Chaudhry Aftab Gujjar, Secretary Syed Qaiser Abbas and President of F-10 Markaz Mehr Allah Dad have said that Ehsas programmers have installed wheelbarrows around G-10, G-11 and F-11 Markazs in Islamabad for millions of rupees. Markets

lost value and CDA encroachments increased. Billions of rupees of investment of traders destroyed Interior Minister Rana Sanaulah and Chairperson Benazir Income Support Program Shazia Murree should immediately issue orders to remove the wheelbarrows installed in the markets as these wheelbarrows are a disgrace to the beauty of the markets. They further said that if it is necessary to install wheelbarrows then ground should be allotted for them in the markaz but those who are allotted space must be residents of the federal capital. While the current allottees are not locals or Pakistanis, they can be a security risk.

Gwadar's 300MW
coal power plant
to end energy
scarcity by 2023

ISLAMABAD: The long-standing vagaries of the port city of Gwadar due to growing energy scarcity would end by October, 2023 after the completion of the 300megawatts coal-fired power plant. The 300-megawatt (MW) coal-fired Gwadar Power Plant would cater the needs of some 150,000 local people by the end of 2023 under the 2050 Master Plan of Gwadar, said an official source while sharing exclusive updates of the project. The power plant of an independent power producer was one of the key energy projects under the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), he added. The project aimed at improving reliability on local power supply that would help gradually solve the problems in current economic development and urban construction in Gwadar region, which was being restricted by the shortage

of power. "We are currently spending millions of dollars per annum to generate electricity from diesel generators. I hope the plant would be operationalised soon to solve the port's power scarcity issues. The power plant is of great significance to deepening the energy cooperation between China and Pakistan, boosting the development of the Belt and Road Initiative, improving the overall power structure of Balochistan, and promoting local economic development in Gwadar Port. All major projects under CPEC in Gwadar, including Gwadar Power Plant, the New Gwadar International Airport Project, the China Pak Friendship Hospital, China-Pak Technical and Vocational Institute in Gwadar, the Gwadar East-bay Expressway Project, Gwadar Free Zone, and GwadarPort would become a shining pearl in the region.

Court issues
warrants
against
accused

ISLAMABAD: An Accountability Court (AC) on Monday issued arrest warrants against a co-accused in a reference against former secretary law and justice Arshad Farooq. AC-III Judge Syed Asghar Ali heard the case reference filed by National Accountability Bureau (NAB) regarding the matter. NAB Prosecutor Waseem Javed and defence lawyers appeared before the court. At the outset of hearing, the NAB told the court that the bureau had decided to challenge the acquittal of accused Arshad Farooq before the high court. The NAB requested the court to grant time in that regard. Meanwhile, the court issued arrest warrants against co-accused Sultan Ahmed over continuous disappearance in the case. The further hearing of the case then adjourned till May 11. - APP

NDMA issues
heatwave
alert

ISLAMABAD: Owing to high pressure in upper atmosphere, the day temperatures are likely to increase gradually in most parts of the country from April 26 till May 2, 2022 as predicted by Met department. National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) has directed PDMA, SDMA, GBDMA and ICT administration to ensure precautionary measures, alert medical services and rescue departments to maintain requisite facilities such as heat stroke centres, said a news release. PDMA/ DDMA have also been instructed to coordinate with relevant departments for issuance of necessary guidance to the travelers regarding over pressure/heat in tyres, ensure agricultural/dairy farmers and cattle breeders are well informed of the situation and requirement of water. General public is also advised to avoid unnecessary exposure to sunlight. - APP

IRSA releases
87443 cusecs
water

ISLAMABAD: Indus River System Authority (IRSA) Tuesday released 87443 cusecs water from various rim stations with an inflow of 86043 cases. According to the data released by IRSA, the water level in the Jhelum River at Mangla Dam was 1079.30 feet, which was 29.03 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet whereas the inflow and outflow of water was recorded a 25800 and 28,000 cusecs respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa and Sukkur was recorded as 46073, 45039 and 28110 cases respectively. - APP

PIDE unveils much-awaited sludge audit

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Institute of Development Economics (PIDE) unveiled its much-awaited study titled, 'PIDE Sludge Audit' at the Gun and Country Club, Islamabad. The sludge means unjustified frictions that make it difficult for people to achieve what they want, frictions that make processes difficult to navigate and entail burdens, and unnecessary interaction between citizens and public institutions - administrative burdens. A few examples may include, complicated application forms, duplicative paperwork, waiting in queues to get a task done, and securing attestations/verifications. The question may arise why does sludge matter? It matters because it constrains GDP growth, costs the economy in terms of waste of resources, reinforces inequality, and can also be used as a tool for rent-seeking. It is pertinent to note that PIDE is the first research think tank in Pakistan that has attempted to quantify sludge. PIDE has quantified sludge considering three dimensions: time consumed, monetary cost, and psychological cost. Through its sludge reports, PIDE aims to highlight the sludge involved in different activities, and induce the concerned agencies to work for reducing sludge. Then it intends to pin down areas where sludge can be reduced either by shortening the procedure or through digitization. The estimated cost of sludge to the economy is staggering. According to the PIDE Sludge Audit, in various sectors, the sludge at the national level costs Pakistan 39% of the GDP. The PIDE conference on sludge primar-



ily focused on sludge audits of the Islamabad-based real estate sector and health sector, both having four studies each. The real estate part includes sludge audits of obtaining permission for a high rise building from the Capital Development Authority (CDA), obtaining permission and residential construction from the Capital Development Authority (CDA), obtaining construction permission from the environmental protection agency, and buying and selling a plot in a private housing society. The health sector section includes sludge reports on

setting up a pharmaceutical unit, a private hospital, a diagnostic center, and setting up a pharmacy. Dr. Idrees Khawaja, Chief of Research and Dr. Ahmed Waqar Qasim, Research Economist at PIDE presented the studies. Both researchers proposed slashing various steps, encouraging digitization and letting go of 'control' culture, to cut down the cost of sludge. Representatives from the Ministry of Planning Development and Special Initiatives, Board of Investment (BoI), CDA, EPA, Islamabad Healthcare Regulatory Author-

ity, Federal Public Service Commission (FPSC), Drug Regulatory Authority of Pakistan (DRAP), and academicians attended the conference. The study was supported by Research for Social Transformation and Advancement (RASTA) - a flagship research program of PIDE. It is the largest social sciences research network in Pakistan. RASTA's mission is to develop a research culture and network of academia and think tanks across Pakistan producing high-quality, evidence-based policy research to inform Pakistan's public policy process. - APP

Refugee crisis in Ukraine

In a record time, under two months, the Russia-Ukraine conflict has created one of the biggest refugee crises in recent decades. Since hostilities broke out, more than 11 million people are believed to have fled their homes in Ukraine, according to the United Nations. Nearly five million have left for neighbouring countries, while another 6.5 million people are presumed to be displaced inside the war-torn country. This is unprecedented. The sheer scale of suffering and human displacement makes this one of the largest refugee outflows over the past six decades. And as long as the conflict continues, millions more will flee. Already, the flow of refugees from Ukraine is far greater than the numbers from Syria, Afghanistan and Iraq. The ongoing refugee crisis has become increasingly challenging for Europe. Several European countries are likely to face difficulties in terms of managing refugee affairs, given the large numbers of Ukrainians seeking refuge. Poland, Moldova and Romania are among the countries currently facing a tough situation where entire cities have been transformed into shelters, putting severe pressure on housing, hospitals and government assistance programmes. Europe has come in for genuine praise for its solidarity but also approbation for how poorly some European countries treated refugees from Syria and Africa in the past. In the meantime, Russia continues its military operations in East Ukraine with Russian forces gaining control of a number of towns and villages. The World Bank notes that damage to Ukraine's infrastructure has so far reached roughly \$60 billion. This is a conservative estimate of course. UN has warned of an impending crisis of displaced persons inside Ukraine. Those numbers are likely to rise as the conflict grinds on. With fast moving events, the next few weeks and months are likely to shape the eventual outcome of the Ukraine crisis, and international geopolitics for sure. The international community thus must exert every effort to reach a ceasefire and establish peace in Ukraine. Last month, Russian and Ukrainian foreign ministers met in the southern Turkish city of Antalya, the highest-level meeting of the two sides since the war began on February 24. The Istanbul process remains the most significant opportunity and still relevant to bringing both sides to the negotiation table and hammer out an agreement that might lead to peace.

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Beijing's Omicron challenge

THE COVID-19 pandemic situation in China has shown no signs of easing, with 2,666 locally transmitted confirmed cases reported on Sunday, according to the National Health Commission's daily report on Monday. Worse, apart from Shanghai, the epicenter of the latest wave of novel coronavirus infections, 17 other provincial-level regions on the Chinese mainland saw new local cases, including Beijing where 14 new cases were reported. The news sparked panic-buying in parts of the capital with people rushing to strip supermarket shelves of goods in anticipation of a lockdown. Whether the capital or large parts of it will be locked down depends on the results of the three rounds of nucleic acid testing being carried out in Chaoyang district and other areas, which will give a clearer picture of the overall epidemic situation in the city. More measures will follow in light of that.

Beijing has already activated its emergency response mechanism, and contact tracing, testing, and quarantining are underway. It is a race against time. The more quickly and efficiently the dynamic clearing measures are carried out, the more likely they are to cut the transmission chains and the lower the possibility of a citywide lockdown. But as Pang Xinghuo, deputy director of the Beijing municipal disease prevention and control center, cautioned, there was undetected transmission of the virus for a week and there are escalating risks in the capital posed by imported cases, outbreaks outside Beijing as well as increased flows of people during the upcoming public holiday.

Hopefully, the lessons have been learned from the extended lockdown in Shanghai, and officials have done all they can to ensure secure and stable supplies of foods and vegetables and that residents have access to medical resources for non-COVID-19 needs. Dispelling people's worst imaginings in this way will foster trust and cooperation in the strict measures that will be adopted to contain the virus. If supplies of food and other daily necessities remain readily available, the express delivery system continues to operate smoothly and people get the medical treatment they need, anxieties will abate to a great extent, as it is the concern about not being able to get food and necessary medical care, rather than the virus itself, that is the most worrying aspect for many.

The challenges Beijing and the rest of the country are facing in their battle against the virus require officials and the public to join hands in forming an unbreakable line of defense against the virus. There is light at the end of the tunnel, but the tunnel will be shorter, if the spread of the virus is controlled swiftly.

A Clash of Civilizations: the Russian vs. the Nordic Pavilion

James Dorsey

The Sami-themed Venice pavilion is the latest Nordic step in recognizing the groups' rights and addressing past wrongs. Despite having their own elected parliaments in Scandinavia that focus on cultural, educational, and developmental issues, many Samis feel that racism remains rife and that they still have little say about what happens on or to their land

RUSSIA and the Nordic countries' pavilions at this year's Venice Biennale, the world's most prestigious art exhibition, project two different concepts of civilisation, nationalism, and sovereignty that have come to blows in Ukraine. Newly renovated, brooding, and inward-looking, Russia's art nouveau pavilion stands empty and abandoned after its Lithuanian curator and artists resigned in protest against Russia's invasion of Ukraine. A lone armed guard is what is left of what would have been Russia's cultural contribution. The pavilion, located in Giardini, a Venice city park,

is expected to attract protesters instead of visitors. By contrast, the modern structure representing the Nordic states, - Sweden, Norway, and Finland, - radiates light and openness at a time that Russia's actions have prompted Swedes and Finns to consider trading in their long-standing neutrality for membership in Moscow's nemesis, the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO). The Nordic pavilion also breathes the kind of inclusiveness and historical reconciliation that is diametrically opposed to Russian President Vladimir Putin's concept of a Russian world whose borders are defined by representations of Russian civilization rather than international law.

By dedicating their gazebo to the Sami and letting artists from an indigenous minority populate it, Scandinavians opted to project an ethnicity that views them as colonisers. "It acknowledges the Sami as a nation that exists across contiguous borders; it makes space for a different notion of nation," said Jolene Rickard, an art historian specialising in indigenous art and a member of the Tuscarora Nation, a Native American tribe.

The unprecedented gesture projects a national and ethnic identity that, even though it crosses internationally recognized boundaries and is civilisational, is all-encompassing, welcoming, and harmonious. It jars with the civilisationalism advocated by Mr. Putin and his autocratic counterparts in Asia, Europe, and the Americas, that is fuelled by anger, grievance, righteousness, and a quest for an imaginary past.

By implication, the Nordic pavilion puts forward a 21st-century notion of sovereignty that acknowledges that multiple 21st-century common challenges and identities transcend national borders.

It is a notion that embraces globalization rather than a definition of sovereignty that puts the nation-state beyond international law and the supervision of supranational organisations like the United Nations; views the nation as a homogeneous, ethnocultural entity where minorities or immigrants are accepted only if they agree to assimilate; and embraces economic protectionism as a defence against globalization.

A traditionally semi-nomadic people who number some 100,000, the Sami are scattered across northern Finland, Norway, Sweden, and Russia's Kola Peninsula. For much of the last two centuries, they were culturally repressed and endangered by deforestation and settlement on lands where they lived, hunted, and herded reindeer.

Definitions of nationalism, civilisationalism, and sovereignty are one aspect of the Sami struggle and perhaps not the one that is foremost in Sami minds. More immediate for them are their critical 21st-century challenges that have shaped their quest: the impact of climate change, the building of wind turbine farms on their land, land dispossession for mineral extraction, and dam construction.

The Sami-themed Venice pavilion is the latest Nordic step in recognizing the groups' rights and addressing past wrongs. Despite having their own elected parliaments in Scandinavia that focus on cultural, educational, and developmental issues, many Samis feel that racism remains rife and that they still have little say about what happens on or to their land.

As a result, Samis may feel that Nordic states could do more. Even so, the principles underlying the Nordic engagement entail a vision of identity, nationalism, and civilization that holds out the prospect of a world in which grievances and challenges are addressed non-violently in accordance with accepted norms and rules. Despite the rise of populist anti-migrant sentiment in countries like Sweden, Nordic engagement contrasts starkly with Russia's track record of violent confrontation, brutal military aggression, and land grabs in violation of international law. The juxtaposition of the Russian and Nordic pavilions at the Biennale graphically illustrates the battle for the shape of this century's world order that is being fought in the streets of Ukrainian cities, towns, and villages. It is a battle not only over Ukrainian sovereignty and territorial integrity but also over the definition of the concepts of sovereignty, nationalism, and civilisation.

Why Israel's provocations at Al-Aqsa Mosque could backfire

Ramzy Baroud

This time around, however, the Palestinians fear that Israel wants more than mere provocations. It plans to "impose a temporal and spatial division of Al-Aqsa Mosque," according to Adnan Ghaith..

SINCE April 15, the Israeli occupation army and police have raided Al-Haram Al-Sharif in East Jerusalem on a daily basis. Under the pretense of providing protection for provocative "visits" by thousands of illegal Israeli Jewish settlers and right-wing fanatics, the Israeli army has wounded hundreds of Palestinians, including journalists, and arrested hundreds more. Palestinians understand that the ongoing attacks on the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound carry deeper political and strategic meanings for Israel than previous raids. Al-Aqsa has experienced routine raids by Israeli forces under various guises in the past. However, the mosque has acquired additional meaning in recent years, especially following last May's popular Palestinian rebellion, mass protests, clashes and Israel's war on Gaza, which Palestinians tellingly refer to as Operation Saif Al-Quds (Sword of Jerusalem).

Bennett's behavior is consistent with that of previous Israeli leaders, who have escalated violence in Al-Aqsa as a way to distract from their own political woes or to appeal to Israel's powerful constituency of right wing and religious extremists. In September 2000, Ariel Sharon raided the compound along with thousands of Israeli soldiers, police and like-minded extremists. He did so to provoke a Palestinian response and to topple the government of his arch-enemy, Ehud Barak. Sharon succeeded, but at a high price, as his "visit" unleashed the five-year-long Second Intifada, also known as the Al-Aqsa Intifada. In 2017, thousands of Palestinians protested an Israeli attempt to install security cameras at the entrances to the holy shrine. This measure was also an attempt by

former Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to appease his right-wing supporters. But the mass protests in Jerusalem and subsequent Palestinian unity forced Israel to cancel its plans. This time around, however, the Palestinians fear that Israel wants more than mere provocations. It plans to "impose a temporal and spatial division of Al-Aqsa Mosque," according to Adnan Ghaith, the Palestinian Authority's top representative in East Jerusalem. Following the 1994 killing of 29 worshippers by Jewish extremist Baruch Goldstein and the subsequent fatalities at the hands of the Israeli army at the Ibrahimi Mosque in Hebron, Israel partitioned the mosque. It allocated the larger space to Jewish settlers while restricting access to Palestinians, who are only allowed to pray at certain times. This is precisely what Palestinians mean by temporal and spatial division, which has been at the heart of Israel's strategy for many years. Bennett, however, must tread carefully. Palestinians are today more united in their resistance and awareness of Israel's designs than ever before. An important component of this unity is the Palestinian citizens of Israel, who are now championing a similar political discourse to that of the Palestinians in Gaza, the West Bank and East Jerusalem. Appealing to right-wing voters by attacking, humiliating and provoking Palestinians is no longer an easy task, as was often the case. As Sword of Jerusalem has taught us, Palestinians are now capable of responding in a unified fashion and, despite their limited means, even putting pressure on Israel to reverse its policies. Bennett must remember this before carrying out any more violent provocations.

- Courtesy: Arab News

Stateless Ukrainians: No nationality and now, no home

Kristina Fried

Critically, Europe has excluded stateless individuals from its refugee response plan, which offers immediate protection to Ukrainian nationals and permanent residents. Although Moldova, Poland, Slovakia, Hungary, and Romania have promised to admit all refugees...

AS Europe mobilises to accommodate the growing number of Ukrainians fleeing the country - now more than four million - stateless Ukrainians are fighting a losing battle for protection and recognition. Not recognised as nationals by Ukraine or any other state under the operation of its laws, stateless Ukrainians, who number approximately 40,000, are denied access to basic rights and have been the targets of pervasive discrimination as they seek refuge abroad. European states must act decisively within their international legal obligations to ensure protections for all refugees, irrespective of nationality, race, or ethnicity. After the dissolution of the Soviet Union, people in former Soviet nations who fell through the gaps of new nationality laws became stateless. Racism and ethnic discrimination left certain minority groups particularly vulnerable. For example, Roma represent one of the largest groups of stateless people in Ukraine - and one of the most discriminated against across Europe. Lacking a nationality - and the corresponding ability to establish one's legal identity - has

severe consequences. Nationality is often referred to as a "gateway right", without which access to other basic rights is extremely challenging. Statelessness creates barriers to accessing work, healthcare, education, and housing, and even to pursuing redress for those rights violations in court. Without a legal identity, it is as though stateless people do not exist.

When stateless people become refugees, these risks multiply. Stateless status - which should alone be grounds for protection - is regularly overlooked in immigration proceedings, despite being a critical factor in the assessment of a refugee or asylum claim. Where their refugee or asylum claim is denied, stateless people are often indefinitely detained [PDF] simply because there is no state that recognises them as nationals to which they can be "returned".

With Europe facing what UNHCR Commissioner Filippo Grandi called "the fastest growing refugee crisis since World War II", stateless Ukrainian refugees are forced to confront these problems head-on. One stateless Ukrainian woman expressed her fear of leaving, even as her home was bombed: "I'm afraid that if I decided to leave I wouldn't be able to cross checkpoints or borders because I don't have documents. I'm also very scared they'd separate me from my children because I have no proof that I'm their mother."

But the lack of legal protection is not the only problem stateless refugees are facing. Racial and ethnic minorities - such as the Roma, whose intersecting ethnic and stateless identities make them doubly vulnerable to discrimination - are finding it particularly difficult to access the protection they so desperately need. Many have recounted horror stories of waiting for days in camps without food or water, while their Ukrainian citizen counterparts were welcomed with open arms. States' lack of comprehensive legal frameworks addressing statelessness - in violation of their international legal obligations - is largely to blame for the chronic disenfranchisement of stateless people.

To be sure, many European states have created safeguards against statelessness. Ten states have a procedure for identifying stateless individuals and conferring a dedicated stateless status. Other states have piecemeal procedures, but no comprehensive frame-

work that allows for both determination and protection. Ukraine's new framework, adopted in 2021, establishes a stateless status determination procedure and a process for naturalisation.

However, these safeguards do not fully comply with states' legal obligations, nor do they offer sufficient protection for stateless refugees. As of December 31, 2021, only 55 stateless Ukrainians - out of 737 applicants - have been recognised as stateless. They will still have to wait three years before they can apply for naturalisation and gain access to their full rights. Now that process has been interrupted. Meanwhile, most European states, including all but one of Ukraine's immediate neighbours, lack adequate legal frameworks for the protection of stateless people. Even those with comprehensive frameworks fall short in their implementation, with stateless people - particularly ethnic minorities - unable to access basic rights and vulnerable to detention.

Critically, Europe has excluded stateless individuals from its refugee response plan, which offers immediate protection to Ukrainian nationals and permanent residents. Although Moldova, Poland, Slovakia, Hungary, and Romania have promised to admit all refugees, including those who are stateless, experts worry that without dedicated protections, stateless refugees will be left behind. Importantly, these ad hoc policies do not consider that many stateless refugees are at increased risk because of their ethnicity or race - officials have prevented Roma refugees from entering Hungary and Slovakia, and they have experienced widespread discrimination in Moldova.

European states must make the necessary policy and legislative changes to fulfill their legal obligations respecting stateless people. Statelessness is not a new problem in Europe, but as the number of Ukrainian refugees continues to rise, it has taken on a new sense of urgency. Granting stateless Ukrainians immediate, non-discriminatory protection is the first step. But long-term, systemic change is needed to ensure that stateless people across Europe can finally access their most fundamental right - the right to a nationality.

- Courtesy: Al Jazeera

Briefs

Four, including 3 Chinese nationals...

FROM PAGE 01
The van entered the premises through the Maskan gate, they said. Of the four people who sustained injuries, two have been identified as Chinese national Wang Yuqing and a security guard named Hamid. The explosion was initially reported to have been caused by a gas cylinder. However, the police later said that the blast could have been a suicide attack. Sources further added that the victims were returning to the Confucius Institute from the Institute of Business Administration (IBA). Deputy Inspector General of Police (DIG) East Muqaddas Haider, while speaking to media said that it is the bomb disposal squad's responsibility to determine the nature of the blast, adding that the process of identification is underway. He, however, expressed concerns that the blast could have been a terrorist attack targeting Chinese nationals. Meanwhile, Karachi Police chief Ghulam Nabi Memon said that according to the initial investigation, a burqa-clad woman may be involved in the suicide blast. "The police have obtained the CCTV footage of the blast and it is currently being analysed," Haider said, adding that it is being ascertained whether the burqa-clad woman seen in the footage was the suicide bomber or not," said the DIG. Karachi police chief Ghulam Nabi Memon said the bomb disposal unit was determining the nature of the blast and would soon release the report. "...four people who have been injured are being treated at different hospitals, while the bodies of the deceased have been shifted to Chippa mortuary," Memon told journalists. The police official lamented that the people who were killed in the blast were teachers — three foreigners and one Pakistani. He added that it was too early to say who was behind the blast.

Pakistan condemns terrorist attack

FROM PAGE 01
Pakistan attaches great importance to safety and security of Chinese nationals, projects and institutions in Pakistan Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif strongly condemned blast and expressed his deep grief and sorrow over loss of lives. The prime minister expressed his condolences with the bereaved families and prayed for the early recovery of the injured, the PM Office Media Wing said in a press release. He said they shared the grief of bereaved families, who lost their dear ones in the heinous incident. Meanwhile, Interior Minister Rana Sana Ullah Khan also strongly condemned blast in van at Karachi and expressed deep grief over loss of precious lives in the incident. The minister sought report from Chief Secretary and IG Sindh into the incident, said a press release.

'Imran should submit...

FROM PAGE 01
She said it was Imran's mindset that if any court asked a question, it should be insulted and ridiculed and allegation of a conspiracy should be levelled. Marriyum Aurangzeb said it was part of Imran's policy that if the Election Commission asked any question, time should be wasted for 8 years and then threaten it to be sieged. Similarly if media raised any questions on his government performance, his reaction was to close television channels, programs and ban newspaper columns, he filed lawsuits against them and introduced black laws and put media persons in jails and they were physically attacked. The minister said that if political opponents raised questions, it was strategy of despot Imran to put them in death row, violate the sanctity of the four walls.

Europe tour: Pakistan beat Netherlands in first match

The Pakistan team will leave for Spain on May 1 to play a 3-match series against Spain. All 3 matches of the series will be played in Barcelona on May 2, 3, and 4. Later on May 5, the national team will fly back home

SPORTS DESK

ISLAMABAD: World No 18 Pakistan started their Europe campaign on a high note as they thrashed a World No. 4 Netherlands 5-3 in the first of the two matches against the tough European side at Breda on Tuesday. According to information made available here by Pakistan Hockey Federation, Pakistan got off to a flying start in the match as they took lead in the first quarter with Ejaz scoring a scintillating goal. However, the Netherlands bounced back as they scored two back-to-back goals to get a 2-1 lead. In the third and fourth quarters, Pakistan team played aggressively to win the match 5-3. Pakistan's Mohammad Rizwan put up a splendid show as he scored three goals, while Mubbasher Ali and Ejaz scored on goal apiece. The win was encouraging for a Pakistan side, whose seven players debuted against a strong Netherlands team. Pakistan will play their second match against the Netherlands on Wednesday at the same venue. Then on Thursday, they will attend a training session in Belgium. They will play their only match against Belgium on Friday. The Pakistan team will leave for Spain on May 1 to play a three-match series against Spain. All three matches of the series will be played in Barcelona on May 2, 3, and 4. Later on May 5, the national team will fly back home.



Trump beats McGill to secure Snooker C'ship QFs berth



SHEFFIELD: Former World Champion and the world number three Judd Trump defeated his Scottish counterpart Anthony McGill 13-11 to move into the last-eight of the ongoing World Snooker Championship, here on Tuesday. The 2019 champion Trump, who faced Scotland's McGill in the second-round fixture, defeated the latter by 13-11 in the Best of 25. The second-round fixture between Trump and McGill turned out to be a see-saw battle. Both cueists engaged in a tough competition with McGill pulling ahead and Trump levels and vice versa. The scores remained tied at 5-5 till the 10th frame. The former champion Trump then decided to gear up as he took the lead (8-5) by winning three consecutive frames and pushed McGill on the back foot. McGill, on the other hand, did not hold back and responded swiftly by winning the 14th frame and cutting the lead to 8-6 only for Trump to restore and extend his lead to four frames advantage by winning back to back frames 10-6. The Scottish cueist McGill then dominated Trump in the next seven frames as the 17th-ranked player won five out of them to cut the latter's lead to just one 12-11. — APP

Pakistan strongly condemns Israeli terrorism at Al Aqsa

Pakistan's Permanent Representative to OIC, Ambassador Rizwan Saeed Sheikh strongly condemned the attacks on innocent worshippers in Al-Aqsa Mosque by the Israeli occupation forces. Rejecting the attempts to divide the blessed Al-Aqsa Mosque

DNA

JEDDAH: Permanent Representative of Pakistan to OIC Ambassador Rizwan Saeed Sheikh Condemns the Israeli Aggression against Al-Aqsa Mosque at the Meeting of OIC Executive Committee An open-ended extraordinary meeting of the OIC Executive Committee was held in Jeddah to discuss the ongoing Israeli aggression against Al-Aqsa Mosque. The meeting was held at the level of Permanent Representatives to OIC. The OIC Executive Committee is currently composed of Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, Turkey, The Gambia, Niger, Mauritania and the OIC Secretary General. Other Member States were also invited to the meeting so as to develop a unified stance. The Final Communiqué issued by the meeting condemned in the strongest terms the ongoing incursions of the extremist colonialists into Al-Aqsa Mosque, with the protection and support of Israeli forces. The Communiqué affirmed that there could be no security



and stability without return to Palestinian people and Muslim Ummah of Al-Quds Al-Sahrif and Al-Aqsa Mosque, Islam's first Qibla and third holiest site. In his statement at the meeting, Pakistan's Permanent Representative to OIC, Ambassador Rizwan Saeed Sheikh strongly condemned the attacks on innocent worshippers in Al-Aqsa Mosque by the Israeli occupation forces. Rejecting the attempts to divide the blessed Al-Aqsa Mosque, temporally and spatially, Ambassador Sheikh urged the OIC Member States

to do their utmost to stop Israel from crossing this red line. He stated that closure to worshippers of Al-Ibrahimi Mosque in Al-Khalil was yet another affront to the sanctity of Islamic holy sites in the occupied territories. Reiterating Pakistan's steadfast support to the Palestinian Cause, the Permanent Representative expressed deep concern over the series of Israeli actions in the occupied AI-Quds Al-Sharif, aimed at changing its legal status, demographic composition and Arab-Islamic character. He added that the letter and spirit of UNSC Resolution number 2334 must be upheld not only to the extent of occupied Palestinian territories but also in other similar situations characterized by blatant disregard and violation of the relevant UNSC Resolutions. Condemning the widespread and systematic Israeli crimes against unarmed Palestinian people, he emphasized the importance and urgency of ending the Israeli occupation of Palestine, which was the root cause of all systematic violations against basic human rights and freedoms of Palestinians.

Federer plans tournament return in October 2022

BERN: Roger Federer intends to return to tennis after what will have been more than a year away from the tour by playing at the Swiss Indoors in October. The event in Basel announced in a statement posted on its website on Tuesday that the 20-time Grand Slam champion "has officially entered the tournament and will appear on the entry list with the protected ATP ranking" of No. 9. His agent, Tony Godsick, confirmed to The Associated Press that is Federer's plan. Federer's first match there is scheduled for Oct. 25, according to the website. The 40-year-old Swiss star has not played a competitive match since losing to Hubert Hurkacz 6-3, 7-6 (4), 6-0 in the Wimbledon quarterfinals on July 7. Soon after that defeat, Federer had surgery to repair damage

to his meniscus and cartilage in his right knee — the third time in a span of 1 1/2 years that knee was operated on. Federer has won a men's record eight championships at the All England Club. He and Novak Djokovic are tied for the second-most overall major tennis titles won by a man; they trail Rafael Nadal, who has 21. Federer said in an interview with a Swiss newspaper in November that he expected to miss Wimbledon this year — it starts on June 27 — and was not sure when, if ever, he might be able to play again at a high level, although he did "want to see one last time what I'm capable of as a professional tennis player." In February, Federer and Nadal announced they were both planning to participate in the Laver Cup in London on Sept. 23-25. — Agencies

Djokovic defend Wimbledon title

NOVAK Djokovic can defend his Wimbledon title after organisers said players who are not vaccinated against Covid-19 will be allowed to compete. The Serbian world number one, 34, was not allowed to play at the Australian Open in January following a row that centred around him being unvaccinated. "The requirement set out by the government to enter the UK does not include mandatory vaccination," All England Lawn Tennis Club chief executive Sally Bolton told a news conference. "Therefore, while it is of course encouraged, it is not a condition of entry." Wimbledon takes place from 27 June to 10 July. After the high-profile saga around the Australian Open, which ended with him being deported because of his Covid status, Djokovic then missed other tournaments including Indian Wells and Miami because of coronavirus rules for entry to the United States. During that period he also lost the world number one ranking to Russian Daniil Medvedev but has since reclaimed it and has been back at tournaments with many countries relaxing their entry requirements regarding vaccination. Djokovic reached his first final of the year last weekend, losing to Russian Andrey Rublev in the Serbia Open in Belgrade. — Agencies

Momentum in Istanbul talks should be maintained

Erdogan also reiterated support for the negotiation process in the Russia-Ukraine war and said Turkey would welcome a guarantor position

DNA

ANKARA: The positive momentum achieved in the Istanbul talks should be maintained, President Recep Tayyip Erdogan told his Russian counterpart, Vladimir Putin, during a phone call Tuesday in which they discussed the recent developments in Ukraine. A leader-to-leader meeting should also take place, the Turkish president told Putin, the Turkish Presidency said in a statement. NATO member Turkey shares a border with Ukraine and Russia in the Black Sea, has good ties with both and has been working as a mediator. It has hosted two separate talks between Ukraine

and Russia and has been pushing to host a leaders' meeting. "President Erdogan, who stated the importance of achieving a cease-fire, working on humanitarian corridors effectively and carrying out evacuations in a safe manner, noted that Turkey would continue doing its utmost to halt this course of events damaging everyone and ensure lasting peace," the statement said. He also repeated an offer to host the Russian and Ukrainian leaders for peace talks, it said. Meanwhile, Putin told Erdogan in phone call that Ukraine should order its military to lay down arms at Azovstals steel

plant. He also told the Turkish president that there are no military operations going on in Mariupol, the Kremlin said. Erdogan also spoke with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy on Sunday. The president noted that the likelihood of further peace talks with Russia in Turkey depends on his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin, he added that Kyiv wants substantive talks to happen. Erdogan also reiterated support for the negotiation process in the

Russia-Ukraine war and said Turkey would welcome a guarantor position. Underlining Turkey's readiness to provide all means of support during the negotiation process, including mediation efforts, Erdogan said evacuations must be ensured in Mariupol, where the situation is worsening by the day. Turkey is one of the most active countries working to ensure a permanent cease-fire between Ukraine and Russia. Its delicately balanced act of assuming a role as a mediator by keeping communication channels with both warring sides open provides a glimmer of hope in diplomatic efforts to find a solution and achieve peace in the Ukraine

crisis. With its unique position of having friendly relations with both Russia and Ukraine, Turkey has won widespread praise for its push to end the war. Since the beginning of the conflict, Ankara has offered to mediate between the two sides and host peace talks, underlining its support for Ukraine's territorial integrity and sovereignty. While Ankara has opposed international sanctions designed to isolate Moscow, it also closed its straits to prevent some Russian vessels from crossing through them. In a breakthrough, Russian and Ukrainian delegations met for peace talks in Istanbul on March 29 as the war entered its second month with casualties piling up on both sides.

Tensions surge after...

FROM PAGE 01
the combat readiness of security forces, increasing the number of patrols and checks near Moldova's border with Transnistria, and monitoring critical infrastructure more closely. Russia has had troops permanently based in Transnistria since the collapse of the Soviet Union. Kyiv fears the region could be used as a launch pad for new attacks on Ukraine. "In the early morning of April 26, two explosions occurred in the village of Maia, Grigoriopol district: the first at 6:40 and the second at 7:05," Transnistria's interior ministry said. No residents were hurt, but two radio antennae that broadcast in Russian were knocked out, it said. Separately, Transnistria's Security Council reported a "terrorist attack" on a military unit near the city of Tiraspol, Russia's TASS news agency reported.

Will continue sit-in till...

FROM PAGE 01
Imran said his party will march on Islamabad to give United States a message that Pakistan is sovereign country and will never become anyone's puppet. The ousted premier claimed that the US used the same modus operandi in Pakistan that it applied for regime change in Iran and Chile. Calling the incumbent rulers "dacoits", the former prime minister said that 60% of the PML-N-led government's federal cabinet is on bail. "Asif Zardari, Nawaz Sharif, Shahbaz Sharif all own offshore companies... I will bring the nation together to fight the war of the future," he remarked.

Elections not possible before...

FROM PAGE 01
the body's Media Coordination and Outreach Wing, the commission said that it had received a letter from the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) on April 18 stating that the seventh population and housing census would be initiated from August 1. According to the statement, the ECP would be provided the results of the fresh census on December 31. In such a scenario, the delimitation of constituencies being conducted by the ECP on the basis of the 2017 census would become "irrelevant" and the electoral watchdog would be bound by the Constitution to start the process anew from January 1, 2023 — which would require at least four months. "Similarly, electoral lists will also need to be reviewed," the press release added.

PM visits Chinese Embassy...

FROM PAGE 01
they are caught and given exemplary punishment," the prime minister said talking to the Chinese media at the embassy. He instructed the authorities concerned to provide foolproof security to the Chinese nationals as well as the organizations. Calling it an attack on China-Pakistan cordial relations, the prime minister resolved that the Government would not let the bilateral ties be undermined through such acts. He said Interior Minister Rana Sanaullah would visit Karachi on Wednesday to assist the Sindh government in the investigation and extend all required cooperation from the Federal Government to nab the culprits.

2 soldiers martyred

FROM PAGE 01
responded to the terrorists that had fired at the security forces in Sararogha, South Waziristan District. But during the "intense exchange of fire", two soldiers were martyred while fighting gallantly, the military's media wing said. The martyred soldiers were identified as 26-year-old Lance Naik Umar Ali Khan, a resident of Bannu, and 23-year-old Sepoy Muhammad Siraj ud Din, a resident of Dera Ismail Khan. The ISPR said that "area clearance" is underway to "eliminate any terrorists found in the area". "Pakistan Army is determined to eliminate the menace of terrorism and such sacrifices of our brave soldiers further strengthen our resolve," said the ISPR.



Briefs

Head of HRW
announces
resignation

LONDON: The longtime leader of Human Rights Watch has announced that he will step down this summer as executive director after nearly three decades at the helm of one of the world's leading advocacy organisations.

Kenneth Roth, who announced his resignation on Tuesday, ran the New York-based group as it shared a Nobel Peace Prize in 1997 for its efforts to ban anti-personnel land mines. The group also pushed to establish the International Criminal Court for prosecuting war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide. Former ICC chief prosecutor Fatou Bensouda called Roth an inspiration. "Ken's fearless passion for justice, his courage and compassion towards the victims of human rights violations and atrocity crimes was not just professional responsibility but a personal conviction to him," she said. "Ken Roth turned Human Rights Watch into a juggernaut for justice," said Anthony Romero, executive director of the American Civil Liberties Union. "He has inspired a generation of human rights defenders to fight for a better world." After Roth steps down at the end of August, Human Rights Watch said deputy executive director Tirana Hassan will serve as interim executive director while it holds a search for Roth's successor.

"I had the great privilege to spend nearly 30 years building an organisation that has become a leading force in defending the rights of people around the world," said Roth. "I am leaving Human Rights Watch but I am not leaving the human rights cause." Human Rights Watch has been at the forefront of advocacy on some of the world's most pressing rights issues. According to Human Rights Watch, that earned Roth many enemies over the years. — Agencies

Azerbaijan,
Latvia discuss
military co-op

Baku: Minister of Defense of Azerbaijan, Colonel General Zakir Hasanov has met with a delegation led by Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Defense of Latvia Artis Pabriks. The delegation first visited the Alley of Honors to pay tribute to national leader Heydar Aliyev and prominent ophthalmologist, academician Zari-fa Aliyeva and laid wreaths and flowers at their graves. They also visited the Alley of Martyrs, laid wreaths and flowers at the graves of martyrs, who sacrificed their lives for the independence and territorial integrity of Azerbaijan.

Then an official welcome ceremony was held at the Defense Ministry. After the Latvian Defense Minister passed along the guard of honor, the national anthems of both countries were performed. Artis Pabriks signed the Book of Honor. Colonel General Zakir Hasanov welcomed the delegation and said he was pleased to see them in Azerbaijan. The Minister informed about the work done in the liberated territories after the victory in the Patriotic War under the command of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces, Ilham Aliyev. — APP

Cauliflower to boost
China-Pak agri co-op

BEIJING: Cauliflower opens up new chapter for China-Pak agricultural cooperation, says a report published by China Economics Net (CEN) on Tuesday. Since 2016, we have cooperated with Pakistan on cauliflower hybrid planting by carrying out experiments, demonstrations and promotions in multiple growing seasons. So far, our orders have doubled several times," said Sui Liying, Executive Deputy General Manager of Tianjin Tianlong Zaitian Agricultural Science and Technology Co., Ltd., in an exclusive interview with CEN.

"Pakistan imports more than 90 percent of the cauliflower seeds. Hybrid varieties are what we are badly in need of. Now, the major market share belongs to China. They can provide comparatively cheaper seeds," noted Muhammad Muzaffar Raza, a science officer of Vegetable Research Institute at Ayub Agriculture Research Institute (AARI). His viewpoint was echoed by leading grower Farman Khan, "since we planted Chinese varieties, our income has greatly increased. Our market is in short supply of Chinese cauliflower seeds frequently."

As a main vegetable on the table of Pakistanis, local cauliflower varieties in Pakistan have a long growth cycle and low yields, while high-end hybrid varieties are mostly monopolized by Western de-

veloped countries. However, cauliflower seeds of high quality from Tianjin have spanned a distance of nearly 4,500 kilometers and took root in Pakistan. "The yield per mu (0.067 hectares) of local varieties is 600-700 kilograms, while that of our varieties is basically 1,300-2,000 kilograms with certain late maturing variety even reaching 3,000-4,000 kilograms. In the past, Pakistan used to think the quality of Chinese seeds seems to be not as good as that from European countries and the U.S., but now they have changed this perception. Our seed variety has a germination rate of 90 percent, above the international standard of 85 percent. You buy the seeds at a low price, but their survival rate is high. Farmers can get a double advantage." Pakistani farmers choose Chinese seeds not only because of low prices. "If you only rely on low prices to occupy the market, but the quality is not guaranteed, you will soon be eliminated from the market."

In this regard, Sui also proposed corresponding measures. "Pakistan is located in South Asia, where the temperature is relatively high, so insects multiply rapidly, resulting in pests and diseases that seriously affect agricultural output. The heat and disease resistance of Chinese early-maturing varieties are more suitable for

Pakistan's climate. We have a special pest and disease nursery, that contains various pests and diseases that have accumulated for many years. We first select varieties here without using any pesticides, so the varieties that can grow have better resistance. Then we choose those varieties that perform well to transplant in other nurseries for selection." Regarding this, Sui Liying also mentioned the impact of the cauliflower harvest season on market price fluctuations. As a cold-loving cruciferous crop, a particularly hot climate may stunt the emerging curd of cauliflower, so heat-resistant cauliflower varieties are crucial to compensate for the reduced yield caused by the climate. The growing cycle is also another key factor that affects the price of the cauliflower market in Pakistan. Although cauliflower is available throughout the year in Pakistan, the early-maturing variety is more expensive. Cauliflower available in October can get higher earnings. In December-February when its yield reaches peak, losses may occur. "We have about 6,000 copies of cauliflower germplasm resources in Tianjin. Short-duration ones take 40-50 days, medium-duration ones 70-80 days, and long-duration varieties mature in 100 days plus. At present, Pakistan hopes that the weight of the single cauliflower is relatively large,

over one kilogram, with short-duration," Sui told CEN, "It is also our main breeding direction for the local market."

In 2019, the Tianjin Academy of Agricultural Sciences completed the world's first genomic sequencing of cauliflower, with China ranking top in global cauliflower's research. Last year, the cauliflower seeds exported from Tianjin accounted for more than 20 percent of Pakistan's annual planting volume, effectively helping the local area solve the problem of the cauliflower industry being monopolized by developed countries. Nevertheless, the pace of cooperation goes far beyond that.

"We have already achieved our first victory in the field of cauliflower. In the future, we plan to carry out joint breeding with large enterprises in Pakistan firstly, aiming to establish the largest vegetable seed R&D center in Pakistan, and bring varieties and technology together to Pakistan. Second, we will combine quality germplasm resources from China and Pakistan for joint breeding and directional breeding to cultivate varieties more suitable for planting in Pakistan," Sui made an outlook on future development plans, which was endorsed by Muhammad Muzaffar Raza, "Because of our good relations with China, except for seed technologies, we can import agricultural machineries like. — Agencies

EU must
speed up
Western
Balkans'
accession

BRUSSELS: The EU should stop inventing new accession criteria and speed up the Western Balkans' EU integration instead, the head of the European Parliament said on Tuesday.

The EU must "think of ways to accelerate the enlargement process in the Western Balkans" because stability in the "immediate neighborhood is vital" for the EU's own stability, Roberta Metsola said, addressing a conference on EU integration in the Bulgarian capital Sofia via video link.

Metsola underlined the need for the bloc to draw lessons from Russia's war in Ukraine in which "men, women and children are paying the ultimate price in protecting the homeland in protecting democracy in Europe," and see the accession process as a "powerful tool to counter the efforts of malign foreign actors." The EU must show clarity for Western Balkan countries because they "have been knocking on our doors for far too long," Metsola told the conference titled "The EU Meets the Balkans Forum: The Ukraine Lesson - EU Enlargement as Antidote to War." — Agencies

Chernobyl
nuclear
disaster
marks 36th
anniversary

MOSCOW: The Chernobyl nuclear power plant, the site in 1986 of the world's worst nuclear disaster, this February came under the control of Russian forces for a time during the continuing war on Ukraine, on the eve of the accident's 36th anniversary. The accident took place on April 26, 1986 after a sudden surge of power during a reactor systems test and destroyed Unit 4 of the nuclear power station at Chernobyl, some 110 kilometers (68.3 miles) from Kyiv, capital of the then-Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic. As many still remember the accident, its consequences continue to be discussed on the international stage.

The Chernobyl nuclear power plant was initially hailed as one of the greatest achievements of Soviet science. In the catastrophic explosion - linked to inadequately trained personnel - a 2,000-ton roof blew up and eight tons of radioactive fuel were released into the atmosphere. — APP

Türkiye
lifts indoor
face mask
requirement

ANKARA: Türkiye has removed the requirement of wearing face masks in all closed areas, which has been a part of Covid-19 measures in the country. The face mask rule will still be in force in public transportation vehicles and medical institutions until the daily number of virus-related cases drops below 1,000, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said on Tuesday following a meeting of the Coronavirus Science Board in the capital Ankara. The most important lesson that the country has learned from the deadly virus has been to become "self-sufficient by establishing a strong health infrastructure," he noted. — APP

Russia
expels 3
Swedish
diplomats

NEWS DESK

MOSCOW: The Russian Foreign Ministry said on Tuesday it summoned Sweden's ambassador, Malena Mard, and handed her a note about the expulsion of three Swedish diplomats from Moscow.

The step was taken in response to the expulsion of 3 Russian diplomats from Stockholm, Sweden's military support to Ukraine and "the cover-up of crimes of Ukrainian nationalists against the civilian population of Donbass and Ukraine," the ministry said in a statement. On April 5, Sweden expelled 3 Russian diplomats, accusing them of "not working in accordance with the Vienna convention (on diplomatic ties)."



KUALA LUMPUR: Pakistan High Commissioner to Malaysia Amna Baloch calls on Deputy Secretary General of multilateral affairs of Malaysian MFA Dato' Cheong Loon Lai. Both sides affirmed commitment to further intensify collaboration at multilateral forums. — DNA

Azerbaijan, Russia ink
several co-op accords

MONITORING DESK

BAKU: And Russia have signed a number of documents as part of a meeting of the intergovernmental commission on economic cooperation, local news sources have reported.

Azerbaijani Deputy Prime Minister Shahin Mustafayev and Russian Deputy Prime Minister Alexei Overchuk signed the minutes of the 20th meeting of the Azerbaijan-Russia Intergovernmental Commission. They also signed a memorandum of cooperation in the field of pensions. Moreover, the Azerbaijani Small and Medium Business Development Agency and the Russian Federal Corporation for the Development of Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises signed a memorandum of intent. Helicopter plant Speaking at the meeting, Shahin Mustafayev stated that a helicopter plant built jointly with Russia may be launched in Azerbaijan in the third quarter of 2022.

Noting that there are plans to increase the supply of mineral fertilizers and wheat from Russia to Azerbaijan, he stated that the Agroexpress project is promising and will contribute to the food safety of the two countries. He mentioned that Azerbaijan and Russia

have reached a number of agreements on cooperation, adding that a strategic level of interaction in several directions has been reached. Mustafayev recalled that there are eight road maps under which Azerbaijan and Russia are working in the areas of trade, transport, and investments. "Russia is Azerbaijan's third-largest trade partner. The positive dynamics of trade turnover will allow reaching a more significant growth, as evidenced by the indicators of the first quarter," he said. He added that Azerbaijan invested more than \$1.2 billion in the Russian economy and Russia invested more than \$6 billion. "We are creating all conditions for Russian investors to feel comfortable here," he said. Energy infrastructure Alexei Overchuk said that Russia can assist Azerbaijan in modernizing its energy infrastructure. He noted that a feasibility study of the project to link power systems of Russia, Azerbaijan and Iran is ongoing.

"In addition, we are ready to cooperate with Azerbaijan in the field of the non-energy atom. This year we will have another good reason to meet at the 11th Russian-Azerbaijani interregional forum in Azerbaijan," he said. Overchuk noted that the close and result-oriented dialogue within the framework of the intergovernmental

commission will promote the solution of strategic tasks, including stabilization of the situation in the South Caucasus. KAMAZ plant in Karabakh Moreover, Alexei Overchuk stated that it is planned that a plant of KAMAZ will be commissioned in Karabakh in the second quarter of 2022.

Noting that the parties will continue to work on the development of trade and economic cooperation, he emphasized that during this year, Russia and Azerbaijan will hold a number of events that will affect various spheres of activity. "It is necessary to continue to work actively within the framework of the North-South ITC. It is planned to complete in the fourth quarter of 2022 the reconstruction of the border crossing on the Russian side on the border with Azerbaijan, as well as to increase the number of throughput lanes," he said. The deputy prime minister mentioned that a huge number of Russian companies operate in Azerbaijan in a number of sectors. He also emphasized the importance of maintaining stable cooperation in the energy sector. "We are ready to cooperate in the energy sector, Russia has great experience in this direction," he said. Azerbaijan and Russia collaborate in a variety of fields, including economy, agriculture, customs, communications, high technology, and others.

Pakistan to set
up LNG terminal
in south

DNA

BEIJING: Pakistan is poised to embrace a new LNG terminal as Daewoo Gas has signed an EPCF contract with the Fourth Construction Co. Ltd (FCC) of China National Chemical Engineering Group Corporation (CNCEC). With a nameplate capacity of 2.5 million tons per annum (mtpa) of LNG, this project will consist of the ports, storage tanks, a distribution center and regas trains in the long run, according to a report published by Gwadar Pro.

The terminal will possibly be operated in the coast of Arabian Sea, south of Pakistan, according to Shahid Karim, CEO of Daewoo Gas. "This terminal is for liquid sales with adoption of Virtual Pipeline System Technique," said Zhou Hong, Chairman of CNCEC-FCC. Addressing the virtual signing ceremony, Karim said, "We hope that with

the commencement of this project Daewoo Gas will not only help meet the energy needs of Pakistan, but also contribute towards upgrading of natural gas industry in the country with its innovative technology."

Upon completion, this terminal will handle 10,000 metric tons of LNG per day at its peak, which will improve Pakistan's energy supply, according to Daewoo Gas. Zhou told Gwadar Pro, "Under the framework of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), this project will not only effectively fill Pakistan's energy gap, but also meet its demand for clean energy, energy conservation and emission reduction." "It is worth noting that the project will provide a comprehensive clean energy solution with higher efficiency, lower emissions and prices for both goods transportation and industrial power generation in Pakistan," Zhou added.

US interest rate hike could
cause "complexities" for Asia

FOREIGN DESK

WASHINGTON: The U.S. Federal Reserve's action to raise interest rate faster than expected would lead to financial "complexities" for Asia economies, especially those with debt in foreign currency, an International Monetary Fund (IMF) official said Monday evening.

The shock from the Russia-Ukraine conflict comes at a time when "the recovery from the pandemic is still incomplete and global financial conditions are tightening," Anne-Marie Gulde-Wolf, acting director of the IMF's Asia and Pacific Department, said at a virtual press conference.

"Monetary tightening in advanced economies," among other things, is leading to higher interest rates in Asia, "placing a further drag on growth," Gulde-Wolf told reporters.

There are various channels that Fed rate hikes could impact Asia, according to the IMF official. "The first one is the trade channel, which could actually be positive": appreciating U.S. dollar leads to higher demand and more exports from Asia to the United States, she said.

"But through the financial channels, there will be complexities that arise for Asia from higher funding costs, especially for those that have debt in foreign currency," Gulde-Wolf said.

Asia's debt now accounts for nearly 40 percent of the global total, compared with 25 percent in 2007, according to IMF estimation. Noting that Asia is now the region with the largest debt globally, Gulde-Wolf said there is corporate and sovereign debt denominated in foreign currency, both of which would be affected.

The IMF official, however, noted that Asia is "better prepared" now-

adays than at the time of the "taper tantrum" in 2013, when U.S. Fed signaled sooner-than-expected financial tightening, investors dumped financial assets in emerging markets en masse and moved their capital to safe-haven assets in developed markets, sparking market disruption and a surge in global borrowing costs.

"Most countries have higher reserves, better monetary frameworks and are generally more attuned to the risk," Gulde-Wolf said, while urging central banks to remain "watchful" and "nimble" in their policy actions.

According to the IMF's latest forecast, Asian GDP is expected to grow by 4.9 percent in 2022, 0.5 percentage point less than projected in January, and slower than last year's growth rate of 6.5 percent. "Despite the downgrade, Asia remains the world's most dynamic region, and an important source of global growth," Gulde-Wolf said.

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Briefs

Pakistan values its ties with US, says Khar

DNA

ISLAMABAD: State Minister for Foreign Affairs Hina Rabbani Khar on Tuesday said Pakistan valued its relations with the United States based on mutual respect, trust and equality. Khar expressed these views in a meeting with U.S. Chargé d'affaires Angela Aggeler who called on her here at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The State Minister said Pakistan wanted to strengthen its relations with the U.S. in diverse fields.

PM allocates portfolios to federal ministers, MoS

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif Tuesday allocated different portfolios to the federal ministers and minister of state. According to a notification of the Cabinet Division, in items of the rule 3 (4) of the Rules of Business 1973, Khuram Dastagir has been allocated the portfolio of Federal Minister for Power, Muhammad Hashim Notezai as Minister of State for Power, Sardar Ayaz Sadiq as Federal Minister for Economic Affairs, Mian Riaz Hussain Pirzada as Federal Minister for Human Rights and Murtaza Javed Abbasi as Federal Minister for Parliamentary Affairs. - APP

Palestinian man shot dead by Israeli forces

OCCUPIED WEST BANK: Israeli occupation forces shot and killed a Palestinian youth on Tuesday during a military raid on a refugee camp in the occupied West Bank. The Palestinian Health Ministry confirmed that 20-year-old Ahmed Ibrahim Oweidat succumbed to his critical wounds that he sustained in the head after being shot by Israeli live bullets at dawn today in Aqabat Jaber camp, near Jericho. The Israeli special force military raid into the camp also resulted in injuring three other youths. Oweidat's death brings the total number of Palestinians in the West Bank killed by Israeli forces in 2022 to 50. - APP

Putin ally says Ukraine heading for collapse

MOSCOW: The powerful secretary of Russia's Security Council said on Tuesday that Western and Ukrainian government policy was leading towards the break-up of Ukraine. The comments from Nikolai Patrushev amounted to a warning that Russia's war in Ukraine could lead to a carve-up of the country, for which Moscow would seek to pin the blame on its opponents. In an interview with government newspaper Rossiyskaya Gazeta, Patrushev - a key ally of President Vladimir Putin - said the United States had for years been trying to instil hatred for everything Russian in Ukrainians. "However, history teaches that hatred can never become a reliable factor in national unity," Patrushev said. "If anything today unites the peoples living in Ukraine, it is only fear of the atrocities of nationalist battalions," Patrushev said - a reference to units of Ukraine's armed forces that Moscow has branded as Nazis as part of its stated rationale for invading the country. - Agencies

UN Experts urge US to unfreeze Afghan assets

WEB DESK

NEW YORK: The United Nations experts have expressed concern about Afghanistan's grave humanitarian crisis and have asked the government of the United States to unfreeze the \$7 billion of Da Afghanistan Bank, Central Bank of Afghanistan. "We are gravely concerned about the growing humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan, which puts at serious risk the lives of more than half of the country's population, with a disproportionate impact on women and children." Reads the statement. In the statement, the United States was urged to reconsider its decision of freezing Afghanistan's assets and not allow its policies to violate the human rights of the Afghan people.



ISLAMABAD: US Charge d' Affaires in Islamabad, Angela P Aggeler Called on Minister of State for Foreign Affairs at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. - DNA

Azerbaijan keen to promote trade with Pakistan: envoy

Khazar Farhadov said that his country is enjoying cordial relations with Pakistan. He said Azerbaijan was giving much important to enhance mutual economic and trade cooperation with Pakistan

AGENCIES

PESHAWAR: Ambassador of Azerbaijan in Pakistan, Khazar Farhadov stressed the need for further strengthening mutual trade and economic cooperation with Pakistan. He invited the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa businessmen to make investments in potential sectors in Azerbaijan. He was addressing a meeting chaired by Sarhad Chamber of Commerce and Industry President Hasnain Khurshid Ahmad here at the chamber's house on Tuesday. SCCI Senior

Vice President Imran Khan Mohmand, Executive members Muhammad Aurangzeb, Pervez Khattak, Tameotah Khalilov and Shoab Khan from Azerbaijan embassy in Pakistan, importers, exporters, and traders were present during the meeting in a large number. Hasnain Khurshid while speaking on the occasion emphasized the need for further enhancement of bilateral trade and economic relations between Pakistan and Azerbaijan. He emphasized that joint initiatives and ventures should be launched to give further boost to the pres-

ent trade volume between Pakistan and Azerbaijan. The SCCI president viewed that vast opportunities were available for foreign investors to make investment in potential sectors in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, like oil, gas, mine, minerals, hydel power generation, furniture, handicrafts, precious and semi-precious stone, etc. KP is a safe and attractive province for investment and business, all the local and international investors can invest here without fear, says Khurshid. Therefore, the SCCI chief invited the Azari investors to make investment in all those

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Govt to devise policy for hike in PoL prices

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Finance Miftah Ismail on Monday



said the government would devise a policy to increase the petroleum prices. The elite class having big vehicles could not be given subsidy, however, those using less petrol such as motorcyclists would be given relief, he said while talking to a private news channel. Miftah said the present government would bring administrative improvement in next few months. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif had advised him that no economic pressure should be put on the common people, he added. He said the government would make all-out efforts to reduce budget deficit which had increased dur-

ing the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) regime. "We will collect more tax than our predecessors without levying any new tax." Replying to a question, the finance minister said devaluation of rupee and wrongdoings of the PTI government were the main reasons of inflation in the country. The present government was fully focused on addressing all the economic ills, he said, adding they had initiated talks with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in time. The government was not interested in reversing the State Bank bill at yet, he said. To another query, he said Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif would leave the office gracefully if a vote of no-confidence succeeded against him.

UN team in China ahead of rights chief visit to Xinjiang

AGENCIES

GENEVA: A United Nations team has landed in China ahead of a long-delayed visit by the U.N. human rights chief to Xinjiang, where rights groups and some Western governments allege the Chinese government is committing genocide and serious abuses against Uyghurs and other Muslim minorities. The U.N. human rights office said Tuesday its staffers arrived in southern China on Monday to prepare for the visit by High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet, expected in May. "The advance team of five is initially spending time in Guangzhou, where they are quarantining in line with COVID-19 travel requirements," spokeswoman Liz Throssell said. Bachelet an-

nounced in March that her office reached an agreement with China's government that she could visit Xinjiang in far-western China. The rights chief has long talked about hoping to visit Xinjiang, and her office has also been compiling a long-awaited report into alleged human rights abuses in the region. Almost 200 rights groups have urged Bachelet to release her report, which diplomats said has been ready - or very close to it - for months. The advance team is in China to make sure that Bachelet would gain "meaningful access" to fully understand the human rights situation in China, Throssell said. China denies the allegations and maintains its policies were meant to de-radicalize those influenced by jihadi propaganda following years of violent outbursts against Chinese rule in the region.

N. Korean leader vows to strengthen nuclear power

SEOUL: North Korean leader Kim Jong-un declared a resolve to further strengthen his regime's nuclear capabilities, as the country showcased a "giant" intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) at a military parade earlier this week, according to its state media Tuesday. Delivering a speech during the event, Kim vowed to boost the country's nuclear capabilities at the "fastest possible speed" at the nighttime parade to celebrate the 90th founding anniversary of the Korean People's Revolutionary Army (KPRA) held Monday, the official Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) reported. The KPRA is the anti-Japanese guerilla force known to have been created by national founder Kim Il-sung in 1932. Kim added that the North will make thorough preparations for using nuclear deterrence anytime. "The fundamental mission of our nuclear forces is to deter a war, but our nukes can never be confined to the single mission of war deterrent even at a time when a situation we are not desirous of at all is created on this land," Kim was quoted as saying. Among major weapons displayed was the North's Hwasong-17 ICBM, which it claims to have test-fired last month. It is called a "monster missile." "At that moment the spectators raised loud cheers, greatly excited to see the giant ICBM Hwasongpho-17 which soared into sky on March 24 to demonstrate the absolute power of Juche Korea and the strategic position of our Republic to the world," the KCNA reported, calling the ballistic missile "a great entity representing the strategic forces." He also warned that any force seeking military confrontation will perish, saying that the North is "now fully prepared for any type of war." "If any forces try to violate the fundamental interests of our state, our nuclear forces will have to decisively accomplish its unexpected second mission," he said. - Agencies